

HONOR OF THE CLAN



A Pits & Perils Adventure
For characters 5-7th level



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Honor of the Clan

All is not well in the Crimson Hills. Thulin Hammer-hand, leader of the Crimson Hills clan is missing. He and his guard disappeared on a trade mission to the Elves of Greywood; his son, Boran has been cast out of the Clan-home. Deception and dishonor are rife in these Dwarven halls.

Honor of the Clan is an adventure written for PITS & PERILS suitable mid-level (5th-7th) parties. It uses material from the core rule book as well as material from The Ruined Abbey of St. Tabitha by Oldehouse Rules. The Crimson Hills and Crimson Hills clan as well as the background information given on Dwarves are from the author's campaign, so referees should feel free to ignore that which does not fit with their own. While this adventure contains Orcs, Elves, Dwarves and all the standard fantasy fare it differs in a few places depending on the PCs choices. There is ample opportunity for combat but there is also ample opportunity for role-playing and diplomacy. It is all up to the PCs.

A Bit About Dwarves

Most mountain ranges have at least one Dwarven Clan inhabiting the under regions. These clans range in population from a few hundred to a few thousand. Each clan is headed by a Clan leader. The Clan leader is basically the "face" of the clan, he deals with non-dwarven interactions and represents the clan at the yearly Clan Moot. The clan leader mantle is a hereditary title passed from father to son in a given family. In the case of the Crimson Hills it has been the Hammer-hand family for the past five generations.

There are only two reasons why the clan leader mantle may not remain in a given family; there may be no male heir, (although this is rare, only one in twenty dwarven births are female). The second is if the family is dishonored in some way. There is a dichotomy to clan leadership that other races find odd but it works. The clan leader is "advised and guided" by the council of matriarchs, usually comprised the older females of the clan. One female from each family has a seat on the council. In regards to the females of the clan, they are rarely seen by non-dwarves. If there are indeed non-dwarves in the clan halls for whatever reason, the females will don hooded cloaks until the non-dwarves depart.

In regards to Dwarven families only the family patriarch or his designated successor is eligible for the mantle of clan leadership. Each family possesses a token, usually worn on a necklace, which marks the patriarch as such. This token, when held aloft by the rightful possessor will glow brightly as if there were a flame within. The token must be either willingly passed from patriarch to successor or accepted upon the death of the patriarch else it will not shine its light. Each family's token is different and distinct: The Stone-beards (master brewers) have a small silveron flagon as their token. The Hammer-hands (master weapon-smiths) have a hammer in a fist (obviously). The Oakenshields (master armorers) have a small silver shield. These are only a few examples.

Background for the Referee

Up until five Dwarven generations ago the clan leader mantle of the Crimson hills lay with the Oakenshield family. Gorin Oakenshield, the clan leader at the time was not blessed with sons. When he was bent and stooped with age the time had come to pass on the mantle. In this instance the council of matriarchs gathered and decided, with the blessing of Gorin, to mantle the Hammer-hand family. The Hammer-hand family ruled the Crimson hills wisely from that day to this. Some, most notably Uron Oakenshield, brother of Gorin felt the mantle should pass to him. Gorin however, always had misgivings about his brother's leadership skills or lack thereof and privately advised the council against mantling him. This hatred festered in the Oakenshield family these past five generations until finally it erupted in the person of Ulef Oakenshield and a vile plan was hatched to take back the mantle of leadership, no matter the cost.

Ulef Oakenshield, one of the few who knew the timetable of the upcoming trade mission to the Greywood elves, made contact with the Broken Fang tribe of Orcs who make their lair in a ramshackle, abandoned keep in the northern hill country. This act in and of itself, willing contact with orcs, is a banishing offense according to Dwarven law. He persuaded the chieftain of the tribe, most likely with a heavy purse, to waylay Thulin Hammer-hand and his retinue. The terms of the deal were: the death of Thulin and the return of one survivor with the Hammer-hand family token; which, because it was not willingly given, would not glow in the hand of Thulin's son Boran, thus showing to all (in Ulef's mind as he is actually insane) that Boran was not fit to be mantled. In addition to this Ulef planted evidence that it was indeed Boran who had contact with the orcs and arranged his father's demise. For this supposed transgression Boran was cast out of the halls of the Crimson hills. The council of matriarchs is due to meet to officially mantle Ulef Oakenshield, who has vigorously been campaigning and how has a decent power-base within the clan. If Boran

has any hope of foiling the evil Ulef's plan he must return with either his father or proof of Ulef's dishonorable dealings within two fortnights or he and the entire Hammer-hand family will be marked with dishonor forever.

Unbeknownst to most, the crafty orc chieftain did not kill Thulin and Ulef has recently received a blackmail threat from the chieftain; 3,000 pieces of gold or Thulin will be released and the chips will fall where they may. Ulef is now in state of near-panic as all his machinations could be discovered. He has now made contact with the guild of assassins (another banishing offense) and set a price on Boran's head.

Getting the PCs Involved

This adventure differs from some in that there is a great deal of background information that is available to the referee and is to be given to the players depending upon the choices that are made. The suggestions offered in the text are from the author's play-testing and campaign.

The PCs can get involved in this adventure in any number of ways. One involves the town of Dunkirk which is detailed in the Ruined Abbey of Saint Tabitha by Oldehouse Rules. Perhaps the PCs are returning from an adventure and decide to rest in Dunkirk. They may run across Boran Hammer-hand in the Green Maid Inn which is in the town of Dunkirk or they may foil an assassination attempt on Boran, the choice is up to the referee.

The Green Maid Inn

After the PCs return from an outing they may decide to stop and rest in the town of Dunkirk. The first place they will probably stop is the Green Maid Inn, which is renowned for its Dwarven brewed ale. The PCs may or may not notice a brooding Dwarf sitting at a corner table by himself. Once the PC's are seated and are awaiting their order the dour Dwarf stands up, raises his flagon and shouts "Here is to the Crimson Hills, may the Hammer-hands once again be honored there." PCs who have the INTELLIGENCE attribute may make a task resolution roll to recall the fact that Thulin Hammer-hand was the Clan leader of the Crimson Hills; this may make curious PCs wonder why the Hammer-hands are not welcome in their own home. This may lead to a conversation with Boran.

Boran (D/L/STR) AK:1 (Battleaxe) LL:4/+2 (Chain-mail) (21HP) Combat Move: Smash.

If approached by the PCs and bought a drink, Boran will tell them his story including his father's disappearance, the wrongful accusation and his subsequent banishment. If asked what can be done, Boran declares that he knows his father is not dead because "the place where he stands in my heart is not empty." He then states that he plans to find his father and right the wrongs that have been committed against his family. If the PCs have not already offered to help, Boran will ask if they are willing to aid him in his quest. (An INTELLIGENCE test will tell the PCs that one of the hardest things for a Dwarf to do is ask a non-Dwarf for help). If the PCs think to ask who might do this, Boran will state that he has his suspicions about Ulef Oakenshield but he has no proof. If asked for any clues Boran will mention the trade mission to the Greywood Elves. If the PC's do not think of it, Boran will suggest that the Elves may have information that will aid them. Some of the PC's may notice that as he speaks Boran is fondling a small silver hammer that is on a necklace; if asked he will say that it is his family token, returned by a survivor of the trade mission. Boran will go on to say that it is the other reason he knows his father is not dead. "It was not willingly given to me by my father, so if he were dead it would glow."

The Investigation Begins

If the PCs decide to help Boran, he will accompany them and fight by their side. The PCs have already been given one avenue of inquiry, that of the Elves of Grey Wood. If the PCs determine to speak the Elves, they may or may not decide to investigate the site where Thulin's party was ambushed as it is on the way to the Grey Woods. If the PCs decide to do this, they will note that the bodies of the slain Dwarves have already been removed by the people of the Crimson Hills. The Orc corpses were left where they fell. A full twenty Orcs were slain by Thulin and his six guards. If the PCs search the remains they will find a torn standard with what appears to be some sort of tusk or claw imaged upon it. PCs who have the INTELLIGENCE attribute should be given a task resolution roll to recall that the Broken Fang tribe of Orcs resides in an abandoned keep some ways to the North. Armed with this new information the PCs will now have a direct line of inquiry for the Elves.

The Grey Wood

The PCs may now proceed to the Grey Wood to make their inquiries of the Elves. The Grey Woods is a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees and covers quite a large area, at least 75 square miles perhaps more. As the party enters the wood it is as though a great hush has fallen over the world. The footfalls of the party are muted by the thick detritus of the forest floor and other sounds are softened by the thick foliage. It is almost as though speech would be in some way disrespectful to this ancient wood. The party will travel approximately one to three miles before they are met by an Elven warder patrol.

The Elves seem to materialize from the trees, their elusive grey-green cloaks seem to shift and merge with the colors of the forest.

Elven Warder (6) (E/L/varies) AK:1 (Longbow/dagger/spear/spell) SP:2 LL:3/+1 (leather armor) (9HP) Combat Move: Dodge or Volley. Spells: Varies, usually CALM, FOIL, or BOLT.

Seemingly from the very air itself the party hears "Blockéieren"(the Elvish command to halt). A group of six Elven warders surrounds the party with arrows nocked. This encounter can go very well or very badly if the party does something foolish. One suggestion is to have Boran steps forward with empty hands raised and exclaims,

"Hail and well met, please stay your shafts, I am Boran Hammer-hand and I am known to the Waisslander people (Dwarvish word for Elf) as they are to me."

An Elf, who is a little taller than the others steps forward raising his empty hands and says,

"Hail and well met again Boran Thulin-son."

"I am Eoran Greenstalk, I was part of the delegation sent to the Crimson Hills two seasons ago, and well do I remember you."

--Note to the referee--

This conversation can proceed anyway the referee wishes, perhaps one of the players can stand in for Boran and do the talking. I'm getting a little wordy here and I don't want this to read like a book so this is the upshot: Eoran and Boran remember each other fondly from the Elven visit to the Crimson Hills and Eoran was saddened to hear of Thulin's plight. One of the Warders in this party was on the Beyond Patrol when the ambush occurred. It was indeed Orcs from the Broken Fang tribe who attacked Thulin's party and the Orcs were seen leading a captive away from the battle site. However he cannot confirm that it was Thulin.

From here the party may decide to make their way to the Broken

Fang encampment that lies approximately two days journey to the north. If the party makes a favorable impression on Eoran, he will decide to accompany the party on their mission due to his great respect for Thulin and his friendship with Boran.

Eoran Greestalk (E/L/INT) AK:1 (Longbow/Longsword/Spell) SP:2 LL:5/+1 (Chain-mail) (16HP) Combat Move:Volley Spells: STUN, FOIL, BOLT, RUIN, CALM, MUTE.

As stated earlier, the Orc encampment lies two days to the north. The referee can use the Wilderness Random Encounter table on page 68 of the P&P basic rule book or use one of their own devising. If the party needs to rest or re-provision, especially if there was bad luck with the random encounter rolls they can stop at the town of Highcastle, which lay at the halfway mark between the Grey Wood and the Orc stronghold. Some details of Highcastle can be found in the adventure "The Siege of Gorush" by James George and is available on the P&P Google+ community.

Orcs of The Broken Fang

The strong hold of the Broken Fang tribe is an abandoned, crumbling, medium sized keep which may have been a watch station of old. The entrance is on the south wall which faces the direction of the party's initial approach. Only the battlements on the north and west wall are still strong enough to be used. The only interior building able to be used is the stone stable. This is now the abode of the chieftain of the tribe. Some of tribe dwells in tents in the open area of the courtyard and some outside, near the outer walls. The chieftain has placed several listening posts on the outer areas of the keep. If the party decides to try a stealthy rescue, the chances of happening upon one of these posts is 2 in 6.

One thing must be mentioned, if the party decides to negotiate with the chieftain, Boran will not speak to any Orc at all. To do so, to willingly have non-violent contact with an Orc would soil his honor.

--1 Entrance. This is the main entrance to the keep. The wooden doors are warped and dry-rotted, therefore they are left open, hanging from their hinges. The iron portcullis, while rusty is still serviceable and bars unwanted visitors. There are four orcs here on guard duty at any one time, two outside and two inside, who operate the portcullis.

AK: 1 (short sword or spear) LL: 1/+1 (leather scraps) (3 hp) ME: 30'.

--2 & 3 These are the two look-out posts, one here on the west wall, the other is on the north wall. Here guards walk the ramparts and keep an eye out for intruders or attackers.

8 orcs, 4 on each rampart. AK: 1 (short bow or spear) LL: 1/+1 (leather scraps) (3 hp) ME: 30'.

Each guard station also has a pile of medium sized stones which can be dropped on attackers.

--4 This area, close to part of a collapsed wall, is used by the orcs as the privy. It is possible to sneak into the keep through this area but it will basically be a crawl through filth. Not the most sanitary of situations.

--5 The stable is the only freestanding building still left in the keep. It is approximately 80' by 40' and is basically the Chieftain's throne room/living quarters. Thulin is also here, chained in one of the stalls. At the far end of the stable is the Chieftain's "throne"; a big wooden chair set up on a pile of squarish stones from the wall.

There are a few ways that this encounter can go; all of them depend on the PCs actions. First, the party can try and use force, bracing the beast in its very den as it were. Unless the party is overly large, or has at least ten hirelings this is a dicey proposition at best. The Broken Fangs have a decent tactical setup and at any one time there are at least 30 orcs here, not including females and younglings. However, if the PCs are feeling particularly violent, the referee is free to let them try. Second, the PCs may try to spirit Thulin out through stealth. This could be a viable option but the referee should have the PCs detail their plan and the referee should determine if the plan is both logical and tactically sound. A decent plan should have at least a chance of success. The third option offers the most role-playing opportunities. If the party approaches the keep with weapons either sheathed or peace-bonded and request an audience with the Chieftain the guards will at least relay the message. The referee can either use a CHARISMA resolution roll or play this out in full. If none of the party members speak Orcish, Eoran is fluent and can act as translator. Once the party gains an audience with the Chieftain, this is where the role-playing opportunities increase.

The party will be led through the squalid camp to the stone stable building. Once inside they will notice a few things, the interior is smokey from the fire-pit in the middle of the building, a rudimentary and not very effective chimney system has been set up but the fire combined with some burning torches makes for a dim environment. The Chieftain sits upon his "throne" flanked by two female Orcs. His Bugbear body guards stand approximately six feet away

on either side. The PCs also notice an Ogre, sitting in the corner gnawing on some type of meat haunch.

Thurogh, Orc Chieftain AK: 1 (long sword +1/short spear) LL: 4/+2 (chain mail) (12hp) ME: 30'. Thurogh is an older Orc, who wears an eye patch over his left eye, a nasty scar sneaks out from underneath the patch and runs down his cheek. He is over-large for an Orc, hugely muscled, with numerous other battle scars. He is also quite intelligent, obviously a capable opponent in battle.

Bugbear Guard (4) AK: 1 (mace) LL: 2/+2 (leather armor & shield) (6 hp) ME: 30'.

Frongash, Ogre AK: 1 (great club, +2 dmg) LL: 5/+1 (leather scraps) (15 hp) ME: 30'.

In the ensuing conversation, Thurogh will seem quite condescending to the party. He will first ask if they are representatives of Ulef Oakenshield. Hopefully the party is truthful in their answer. When the party answers in the negative, Thurogh will mumble,

"More's the pity." "If you do not represent that oaf then why are you here?" "With a another foul-beard nonetheless."

Once Thurogh finds out that the goal of the party is to secure the release of Thulin he chuckles and says;

"Ah, my...prize, I see. Well, the Dwarf has value to me, I'm sure we can all agree that my people and I must be properly compensated for his freedom." "The price for his release is five thousand pieces of gold." "Or perhaps a task." "If a task does not suit you perhaps a contest."

Basically there are three ways the party can set Thulin free: one is the five thousand gold. Second is the task. If asked about the task Thurogh will say;

"Approximately 2 miles to the west is the lair of a MANTICORE. This beast has evidently developed a taste for orc-flesh." "It raids my outposts weekly and has taken too many of my warriors." "Defeat this creature and return with its tail and you shall have the dwarf's freedom."

If asked about the task, Thurogh will laugh evilly and say;

"Simple, all that must be done is one of you must defeat my friend Frongash in single combat." "Accomplish that and you shall have the Dwarf."

Whichever course the party chooses, Thurogh will keep his word and release Thulin. Thulin is in decent health, he has a bandage on his head and one on his arm. Otherwise Thulin is hale and fit for travel.

Thulin, (D/L/WIS) AK:1 (Battleaxe) LL:6/+0 (Chain-mail) (39HP, at the moment 30) Combat Move: SMASH, SWEEP.

Thurogh can offer no concrete proof about Ulef's collusion other than their verbal agreement, nor will he agree to accompany the party back to the Crimson Hills; stating that "he doubts he would be welcome in Dwarven halls." Thulin can offer no concrete proof either only what he gleaned by listening to the Orcs talks amongst themselves; (he speaks Orcish). While this would hold more weight with the Council of Matriarchs it is not evidentiary. Concrete proof must then be found elsewhere.

Lair of the Manticore

Approximately 2 miles to the west of the Broken Fang camp lay the lair of the MANTICORE. At the base of one of the taller hills is a small copse of trees, within this copse is a cave in which the MANTICORE lairs. There is a 1 in 6 chance that the MANTICORE is asleep. If it is asleep and the party does not blow a bugle it can be surprised. If not then...

MANTICORE (C) AK: 3* LL: 6/0 (18 hp) ME: 30'

At the start of combat the MANTICORE will make a ranged attack with its spiked tail for 2d6 automatic hits to all within 30' a MANTICORE has enough spikes for 2 attacks there is a 50% chance it will make a second ranged attack (1-3 on a d6) then it will close to fight with its bite and 2 claw attacks.

The back of the lair is strewn with bones and moldering random body parts, some Orc, some perhaps human or Elven. The MANTICORE has the following treasure at the back of its lair, probably taken from previous victims. 250 SP, 150GP, gold ring set with an amethyst worth 50GP, gold necklace set with a sapphire, worth 75GP, MAGIC ROPE, PLATEMAIL +4, POTION OF INVISIBILITY, SCROLL of RUIN.

If the party successfully frees Thulin they will be free to return to the Crimson Hills. Thurogh will not offer the hospitality of the Broken Fangs. The referee may or may not want to use random encounter tables, depending on the party's state of health.

Three of Blades

On the return journey, at a place of the referee's choosing the party will be attacked by the Brotherhood of Blades (Assassins Guild). If the party manages to defeat the assassins they will find the proof Boran needs to clear his name.

The Brotherhood always works in teams of three. The method of attack is left up to the referee. As an aside, one method that was tried in play testing was a merchant wagon that seems to have a broken wheel. The "merchant" is one of the assassins, the other can be stationed in the wagon and the third may be camouflaged in the roadside brush. This is of course only a suggestion, the referee should feel free to use any tactics they so choose.

Assassin One, (F/C/DEX) AK:1 (short sword +2/dagger/poison) LL:4/+3 (Leather armor +2) (22HP) Combat Move:Dodge. Ambidextrous fighting with sword and dagger +1 dmg

Assassin Two, (T/C/DEX2) AK: (dagger/blowgun/poison) LL:5/+2 (Leather armor +1) (17HP) DAGGER +2 DAGGER +1,+3 vs. magic using creatures. Ambidextrous fighting with daggers dmg +1

Assassin Three (M/C/INT) AK: 1 (dagger/spell) LL:6/+0 pouch of SMOKE STONES, pouch of SLEEPING DUST, STAFF OF ICY DEATH, CIRCLET OF POWER. SPELLS: BOLT, FOIL, STUN, WARD, SLOW, VINE, OBEY, SP:6

This is a potentially deadly encounter as Assassin 1 & 2 have three doses of paralytic poison with which to coat their weapons. If it is too deadly the referee should feel free to scale the assassins back a bit in power level.

If the party manages to defeat the assassins they will find in the MAGICIAN'S pouch the contract which states the following:

Be it known to these three brothers that they have been awarded the contract that involves one Boran Hammer-hand of the Crimson Hills people. Proof of death is to be brought to one Ulef Oakenshield also of the Crimson Hills people who is the originator of this contract.

Here then, is the concrete proof that Boran needs to clear his name with the Council of Matriarchs.

Return To the Crimson Hall

Once the PCs return to the Crimson Hills clan, (hopefully with Thulin and Boran) The plans of Ulef Oakenshield will begin to fall apart quickly. The Council of Matriarchs will convene an emergency meeting and hear testimony from Thulin, Boran and possibly the party members. They will also examine the physical evidence taken from the assassins. The Council can meet for as long as the referee wishes. The PCs will (after testifying) be given food, drink and rest. Healing will also be provided as needed. Once the Council reaches a decision the PCs will be summoned to the meeting hall, the entire clan is gathered here as well. (They may or may not notice that they are escorted wherever they go in the halls). Ulef and ten of his closest cronies will be brought before the Council, weaponless, with bound hands. The Council will then render their decision: Ulef and his men will be banished from the Crimson Halls forever, effective immediately.

The PC's including Eoran will be asked to stand before Thulin and the Council. Thulin begins to speak:

"Be it known by all these present that these brave adventurers, who risked all for me and for the Crimson Hills People are no longer strangers to these halls, let be known that now and forever they are now Zwergen, (This the Dwarven word for the Dwarvish race)."

Once Thulin utters these words, all the females in the Hall of Meeting immediately drop their hoods, this includes the Council of Matriarchs. All of the PCs are now considered to be Dwarves and are therefore allowed unescorted access to the Halls as well as being allowed to see an un-cowled female. This is a high honor given to very few beings.

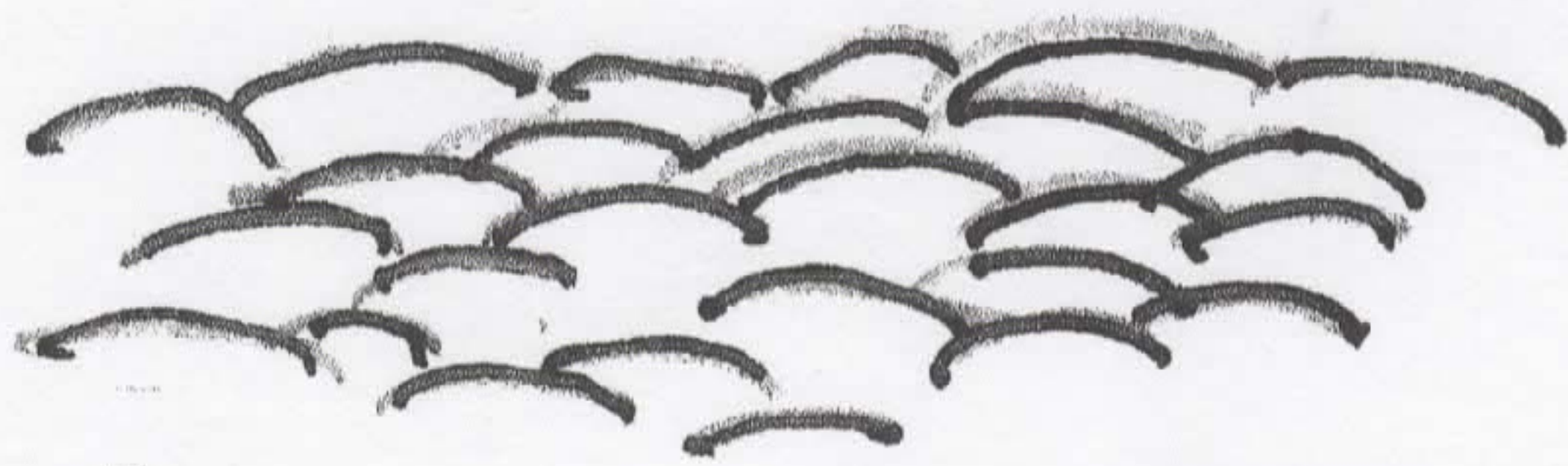
In addition Thulin presents each party member with a necklace with a silver disk attached. Etched into the disk is a representation of the Crimson Hills. He states that by these tokens all Zwergen people no matter the clan will know the bearer to be kindred. Thulin finishes by stating that forevermore the PCs will have an open hand in the Crimson Hills and succor will be given no matter the situation.

So, here ends Honor of the Clan, I hope you have as much fun playing it as I did writing it.

Afterthoughts & Credits

After reading through this adventure I realized that it may not be everyone's cup of tea. I wanted to write something that involved more than just hack-and-slash. Don't get me wrong, I love a good hack-and-slash adventure but I also like telling a good story. I was trying to strike a balance between the two. Hopefully I was successful.

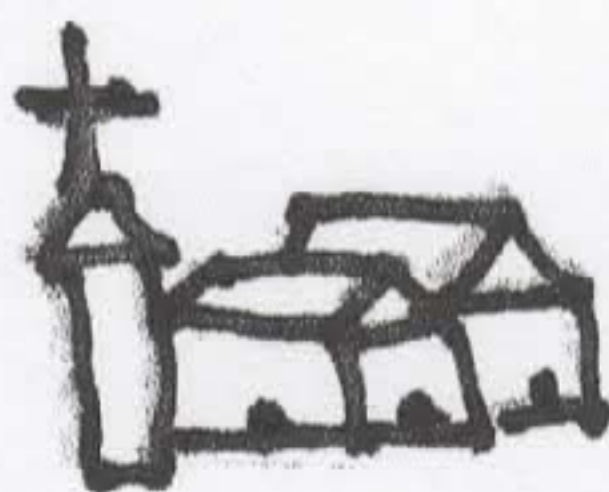
There is credit due to others as well. The Ruined Abbey of Saint Tabitha by James and Robyn George from Oldehouse rules details the town of Dunkirk and its environs. The town of Highcastle is from "The Siege of Gorush" by James George; this fine adventure was run at Pretzcon in 2013. Without these two fine people at Oldehouse rules none of this would be possible. Thanks for everything.



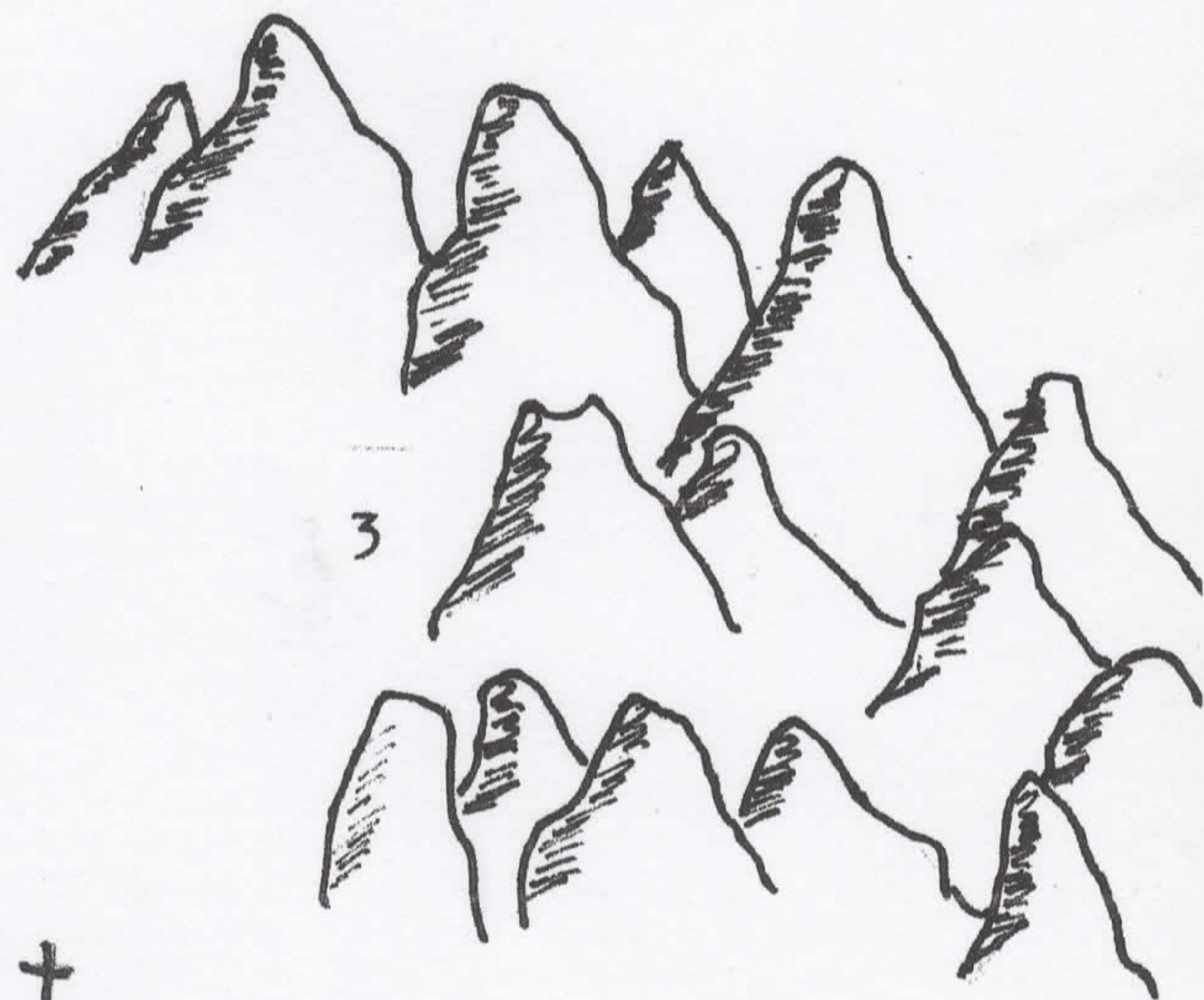
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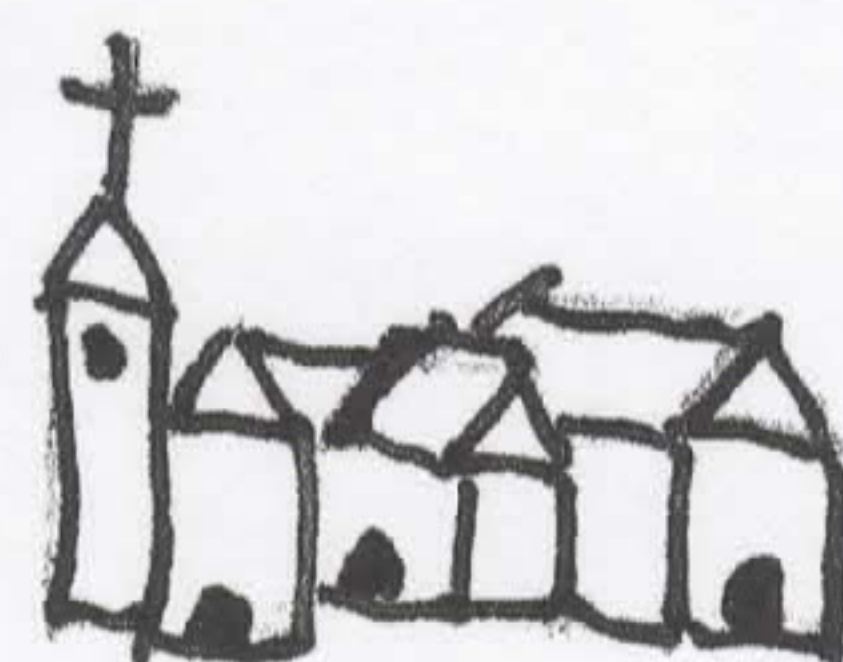
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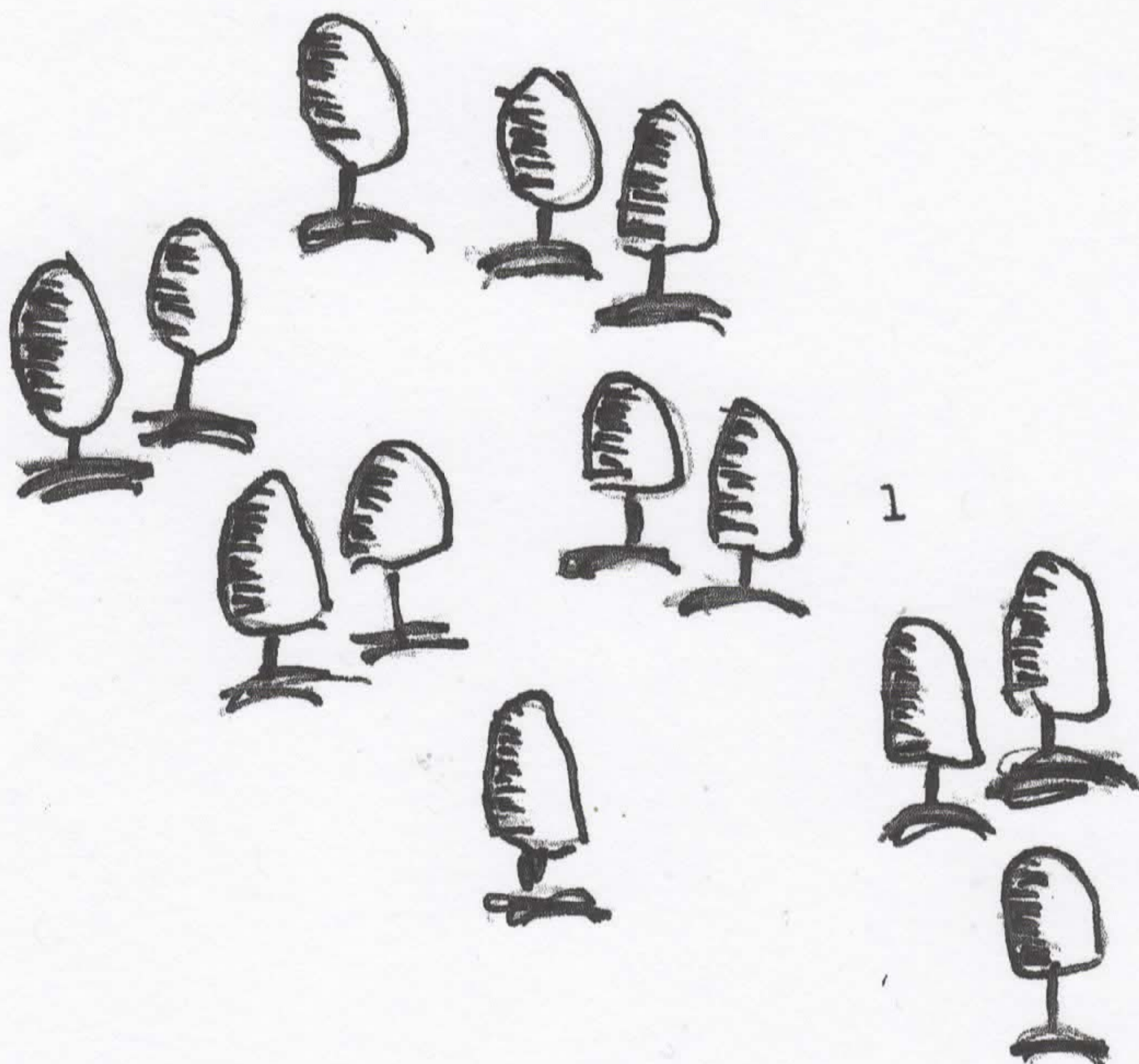


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1-- Grey Wood

2-- Town of Dunkirk

3-- Crimson Hills

7-- Northern Hills

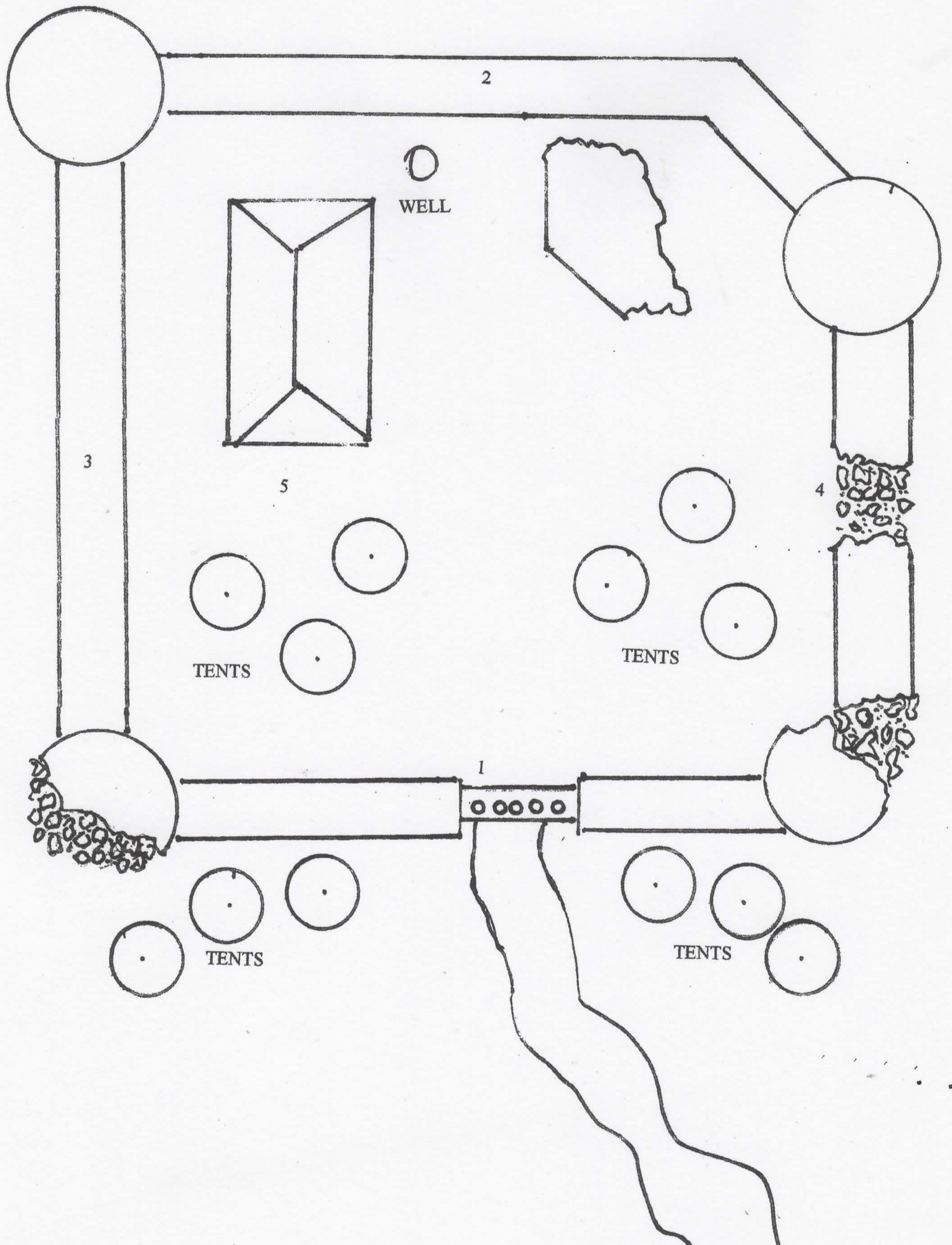
4-- Highcastle

5-- Ambush Site

6-- Broken Fang Encampment

This map is my own interpretation of
Dunkirk and its environs.
original map copyrighted by oldhouse Rules

Broken Fang Encampment



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