

MM-4

Roadside Respite

Lloyd Metcalf



A Mini Mod
Quest

An adventure for 4-6 characters levels 4-5
compatible with 1E / OSRIC / LL AEC

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**A Mini Mod Adventure by
Lloyd Metcalf**

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Extra Playtesting:
Timothy Connolly, Empire Gaming (Farmingdale, NY) – And his
stalwart adventurers.

Introduction to Mini Mod Quests

Let's face it, not every GM has time to sit down and prepare adventures ahead of time. Friends just pop in and decide a round of RPG adventure would be fun.

A Mini Mod quest, in its purest form, is just what the title suggests: it is a side quest. These short adventures can serve many purposes. A Mini Mod can stand on its own as a quick one-off adventure, or several can be interjected into a longer adventure or campaign.

These shorts will keep your players entertained and give them things to do when other events are cooking with minimal time or preplanning required by the GM. They can serve to add depth to your world and act as springboards to further adventures. Mini Mods are purposefully simple in story arc, composition and design. They are intended to be straight-forward and uncomplicated diversions.

Instruction for Gamemasters

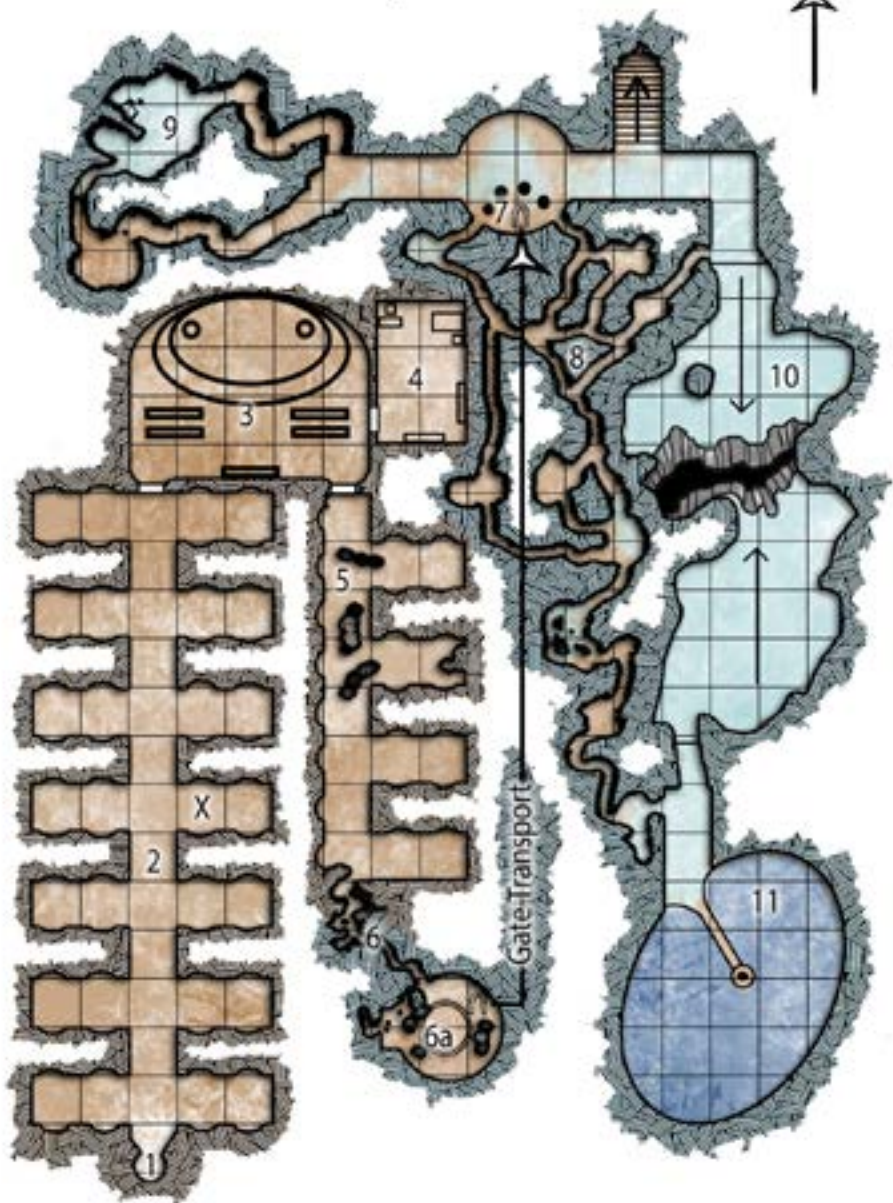
Much of the information is provided in such a way as to give the GM a quick setting, background, and an adventure to run on the spot with a lot of room for creativity in your own particular style. In this module, you will find passages that you may choose to read to your players to better immerse them in the story. In encounter passages, descriptions suggested to be read to players will be:

bold italicized for ease of use.

Throughout Mini Mod adventures the text calls for various ability checks. This refers to the practice of rolling a d20 with a successful result being that of the ability score or less.

Game mechanics vary slightly between systems. Every effort has been made to maximize compatibility. All variations or adjustments are left to the ultimate wisdom of the Gamemaster.

The Roadside Sepulcher



Gamemaster's Background Brief

Spoiler Alert for Players!

There is a roadside farmhouse cellar hole which is warded and protected from evil and dark deeds. The forest guardian put the wards in place through a powerful talisman. Undead apparitions invade the dreams of the living and sleep becomes impossible outside of an hour of pleading souls every 24.

Beneath a roadside statue is an entrance to a sepulcher. The well beneath the statue was the secret entrance, the main entrance has been long lost. Many dead remain in the sepulcher and a journal (pivotal to the storyline) is in the Parson's office. (**IMPORTANT:** Move this journal around if necessary to make sure the party gets it.)

A hundred years in the past, dark priests of Grenndig discovered an heirloom at the Torrine family farm that was an ancient holy relic. They traveled to the homestead to retrieve the relic and intended to open a gate to return to their temple. This was more secure than journeying overland with a powerful artifact. They required dead to animate and Eavelyn Torrine's unborn child to open the portal. Through the deceit of her husband, they got what they needed and absconded with the talisman.

The good talisman barred the priests from returning through the gate with its own magic. The temple wizards quickly shrouded the talisman after it started rebuking their actions, but it was too late to keep it from sealing the gate. They protected and warded the artifact while they began researching how to destroy or use it to their own ends. The temple soonafter was collapsed by an earthquake, and all but a few servants to Grenndig survived. Those in the temple sub-levels studying the talisman were trapped. It was assumed they were dead and the artifact lost. All hope of tunneling through hundreds of yards of stone and ice to see if the artifact fell victim to the collapse was quenched by the need for survival on the arctic tundra.

The trapped servants of Grenndig carried out their death rituals. This brought them into service as specialized undead. They continue to study the artifact and experiment with it, however their resources are limited to the icy cavern. With undeath comes other limitations as well. They have had a hundred years to brood on their circumstances.

Introduction

While traveling, you have found yourselves on an unkempt road that is now no more than a couple of old ruts clearing a trail through the vegetation. There is a farmhouse cellar hole by the side of the road. This appears to have been a sizeable homestead in the past, judging by the cellar and surrounding overgrown fields. The wood and organic matter making up the abode have long since decayed and collapsed. All that remains is a stone-lined depression where a house once stood and a set of three stone steps toward the roadside cut from fieldstone. The bottom step has the word 'Torrine' etched deeply into its face. A few small saplings have found root and are growing just inside the stones.

The cellar is the remnants of a long-lost farmhouse over a hundred years past. The rubble in the cellar is mostly comprised of roots, vines, leaves, and rotted beams. A number of crockery shards, glass, and rusted remnants of farm tools can be found by the diligent searcher.

GM option: *The roadside statue may be easier if the party discovers a scroll of Read Magic in a sealed ceramic vessel within the cellar. This may be an option for a party with no or limited magic users.*

Those of good alignment who enter the cellar area will feel strangely at peace and notice a certain stillness about the place. *Detect Magic* will not reveal any magical items or direct effects, but will show the lingering remnants of a powerful protection ward cast long ago. Detecting wards or good will highlight the entire area. Evil characters or creatures will find the place quite the opposite, deplorable. In one way or another, evil-aligned beings will find the cellar hole simply repulsive in whatever manner offends their sensibilities the most.

For the good and weary traveler, the cellar hole can be a sanctuary for those who brave it. A very powerful *Protection From Evil* has been cast on the cellar, and, in addition to evil, it also repels predatory acts. A fox and a mouse are both neutral animals, however within the confines of the cellar, the fox would avoid attacking the mouse at all costs. If forced to do so, the act would cause him great distress and inner turmoil.

If the party chooses to rest within the confines of the cellar, they will remain safe and unharmed. They can return to this haven at any time and enjoy the benefits of the ward. Even if under hot pursuit by enemies, such pursuit

will end when they reach the cellar. Those outside the cellar are not affected. Lobbing projectiles into the cellar would not be an issue.

Setting camp anywhere within two days of passing the cellar hole will initiate a dream state possession. The party does not need to rest at the cellar hole itself. Resting in the cellar adds the benefit of security from wandering attacks. Whether the party rests within the cellar hole or not, the spirits of the area have been drawn to the living mortals. The dead are attempting to gain assistance through the dream state. Affected members will experience the dream as below. They will continue to experience the same dream or similar images of dark cultists twisting good to an evil end. The images are relentless and frightening. Until the matter is dealt with, characters will not be allowed to sleep more than an hour every night. This lack of sleep will begin to affect Dex, Con, Wis, and saving throws after 24 hours. All characters will diminish slowly without rest. Memorizing spells also becomes extremely difficult or impossible without rest.

The character with the lowest Wis score will certainly have the following dream. There is a 50% chance (rolled separately for each) other sleeping character will also dream the exact same vision. Elves and fey creatures are NOT immune to these effects. GM discretion can have the entire party fall asleep to become possessed. This last option may be required for parties that are more neutral or that are not always unified as a team.

You dream vividly of being inside a comfortable farm house with the smell of bacon and spiced potatoes nearby. There is a beautiful young lady in a blue dress with her back to you. She stands at an open doorway with warm summer air blowing around her, sunlight streams in from outside.

The sound of children laughing outside flows in with the sweet breeze. You realize you are not in control of your actions or feelings. Jealousy fills your body, even though you don't know the cause. Then rage consumes you.

The young woman looks over her shoulder and smiles warmly to you. She gestures to the food on the table and turns back to the sound of children.

You slice a piece of bread from a loaf and rise up with the long blade in your hand. An image of a half-woman/half-tree flashes before your eyes like lightning.

All the color drains from your vision, and everything becomes cast in red. Knife raised, you close in behind the lovely hostess.

You awaken with a jolt and a scream ringing through your ears. You can swear the scream is still echoing through the forest as you open your eyes.

Those unaffected by the vision will awaken to all dreaming characters suddenly sitting bolt-upright and popping their eyes open at the exact same moment.

The dreams will continue throughout the night. Some will be of robed figures with masks made of skull fragments. Some will be of a husband's tortured thoughts as he sends his children away into the unknown wilderness. Some will be of dark sacrifice and pain.

The Well



Here at the roadside, amidst vines and overgrown chokecherry branches, is a weathered five-foot-tall effigy of a woman with outstretched hands, palms up. Her face holds a sense of quiet bliss. The back plate of the statue is a network of tree roots. Across the arch of the back plate is delicate writing with lichen clinging into the recesses.

A quarter-mile beyond the cellar at the roadside will be found a shrine to a lost agricultural deity. The party may be led here with the very faint sound of children laughing through the trees or through moans and cries in the night. All those who are plagued with the dream state visions will recognize the image of the woman in the tree immediately.

It is a bluish stonework sculpture of a woman holding out her hands with palms turned up. From the waist down, she appears to be a tree with roots running to the base. She is surrounded by a stonework arched back plate. The entire altar is six feet tall, and the base is approximately five feet across. The markings are in an ancient elven script and unreadable even by the most knowledgeable in linguistics. The writing is not only ancient, but scrambled and warded. A *Read Magic* spell will make clear the message.

“From Earth, Sun, and Rain, I bring you life.”

When seeds of any sort are placed in the hands of the altar, a faint ghostly female tone will be sung. The sound will seem to quietly echo among the trees nearby. With the grating of stone, the altar will suddenly drop a half-inch, releasing dust and pulling apart a few of the light vines that have overgrown the base. A light push will send the altar sliding back with ease. It is counterweighted and plows dirt and vines out of the way as it slides back. A square stonework well four feet across goes straight down into utter darkness below the statue.

GM Note: *As a point of rescue, if players really get hung up on the seed riddle and the game comes to a screeching halt, the GM may opt to lay a hint after some time has passed. An innocent chipmunk may scamper onto the altar and set his acorn down causing the hand to shift slightly and scaring off the timid fellow. Placing another in the second hand would open the gate. A bird or mouse can also shoulder the burden of moving play along with a seed or two.*

Investigating the sides of the forty foot well reveals that there are broken steel supports protruding from the stone that would have held steel ladder sections in eight-foot intervals. All signs of any ladders for 32 feet down, for those who can see that far, have deteriorated and long since rotted away. The last eight-foot section of steel ladder remains intact among a pile of twisted protruding spikes of old steel ladder rails at the bottom.

For falling damage, consult your rule book and add 2d10 for those that hit the rusted metal heap. A thief receives a 10% bonus to climb walls attempts

to make their way down the shaft. There are also a few solid trees nearby to anchor a rope for climbing.

Roadside Sepulcher

(See map for reference to numbered descriptions)

1. Bottom of the Well

At the bottom of the well, rusted and mangled remnants of ladder sections lay in a twisted mass jutting up at various sharp angles. Even stepping off the ladder at the very bottom takes some careful thought to avoid the sharp decaying steel rods. The air carries a scent of mildew and slow decay.

Once your eyes adjust to the scant few beams of light that penetrate the murk, you realize that this is no regular well. Through the steel bars and rubble, there is a ten-foot-wide, ten-foot-high passage leading off to the north. The passage has various east-west intersections at regular intervals. The bony remains of what must be a half-dozen grown humans clutters the first part of the passage. Skulls, femurs, and ribcages lie smashed and scattered with disregard around the stonework floor.

The bottom of the pit is damp, but not sodden. The stones are worn smooth and well-crafted. There is no light in the tunnel to the north outside of what dim light is coming from the shaft above.

Throughout areas 1-6, the GM can opt to roll various dungeon dressings on Table 1 or choose what fits best. The table is meant to be used when the game's pacing seems too slow or the haunting setting needs to be enhanced.

The GM can also create his/her own descriptions throughout the areas. The table is only included as a GM aid and can be completely ignored by an inspired GM or used in any way that supports the tale at hand. Some results may be used more than once, although it is suggested that any single result not be used more than twice.

Table 1: Ambience in Areas 1-6

1d12	Effect
1	One character (determine randomly) hears a man's sobbing echoing through the passages in the distance. The name 'Eavelyn' is suddenly whispered in their ear as if the speaker were right next to them.
2	An unseen chilled force touches the face of one of the party members.
3	Dragging footsteps are heard by all, and a child's voice cries for help from somewhere.
4	A small item (skull, bone, pottery shard) flies through the dark and shatters in front of the party.
5	A quiet moan of lament is heard in the distance.
6	One party member first feels a small disturbance of air. There is a breath on their neck – still nothing there. Then a strained voice whispers "Bring it home" from directly behind the character.
7	A dark void in the shape of a woman passes just at the edge of the party's light/vision range, accompanied by a light knocking on the stones. A decayed blue bonnet is found on the floor where she was seen.
8	The local temperature drops quickly. An ethereal smoky image of a man in dapper funeral attire appears with his eyes cast down. He opens his mouth to cry out and melts into darkness as he raises his sunken gaze.
9	Whispers echo from all around in many voices. Most are forlorn, pleading or sobbing.
10	One of the party members looks to one of his/her comrades. When they turn to face each other, the comrade looks to be wearing a mask made of bone. In a flash, they will see their companion covered in blood from the hands up. The vision only lasts for a second.
11	A small child's frightened voice is heard calling out "Mommy? Where are you?" very faintly.
12	A hollow intake of breath is heard nearby, followed by a distant sigh.

2. Burial Chambers

Along the dank tunnel north are seven east-west intersections at ten-foot intervals. Each visible ten-foot section of wall contains three horizontal seven-foot-long recesses, one above the other, from floor to ceiling. In each recess is a body - some skeletal, some wrapped in linens or in various states of decay. Mushrooms grow along the damp floor and from some of the cold bodies. The floor stones are damp and slick with slime. Darkness presses in from all around. A large thumb-sized carrion beetle buzzes toward the light of the shaft and lands on the wall near the well. Spider webs and thin

plant roots hang in clumps like lifeless hair into the passages.

The ten-foot sections of wall along the main passage each bear a simple family crest and a sconce in which a torch has long since burnt or decayed. There are 144 spaces to contain the dead. In these spaces, 99 skeletal remains line the halls in various states of decay, from fetid flesh with beetles having a feast to bones picked clean. Six additional skeletons are strewn in pieces about the floor. It appears that most of the bodies were treated by some ceremony and wrapped in linen.

GM note: *During playtesting, almost all players were completely convinced these remains would animate at any moment or in the future. It is advised that GMs take advantage of this situation and NOT animate these dead. One can have hidden rats spontaneously roll skulls or bones onto the floor at a character's approach. This has resulted in some great roleplay and tension-building. Some of the bodies are buried with farm tools and small bits of wealth, but should remain just simple remains. The players tend to make this setting more of an encounter than it is. For those who do not disturb the mold spores, the most common mutterings at the table have been, "That was too easy, now I'm nervous!"*

The fourth intersection's east passage along the hallway has been infected by mold spores of a most deadly nature. Anything but the lightest disturbance of the bodies or walls on either side of this section may cause mold spores to release. The spores will fill the 10'x20' space completely (50% chance with each disturbance). Detecting the mold is very difficult for even the most careful observer. The mold exists in the corpses and the cracks of the stonework and looks very similar to every other moldy nook and cranny of the passage.

Release of the spores requires all in the area of effect to save vs. death. A successful save means the character was able to get out of the area before damage could occur. A failed save means the mold spores entered into the character's lungs. The spores will settle after being airborne 5 minutes. *Cure Disease* or a means to destroy fungus or vegetation will kill the mold instantly once in the body (some leniency in classifying fungal spores and what may affect them is left to the GM's discretion to allow survival if required). The victim will still need to expel the remnants from their lungs. This will require a turn of hacking, coughing, and expelling. Any *Cure* spell will heal the lungs and extend the time a victim has to react. Any healing agent or citrus substance made into an inhalant, either through

evaporation, smoking, or other means, will kill the spores upon contact.

The spores take effect quickly. The round-by-round effects on an affected character are as follows:

Round 1 - Violent coughing spasms and lightheadedness

Round 2 - Nauseated; Str check required to remain standing

Round 3 - Mold embeds into the lung cavity and begins multiplying.

Breathing becomes virtually impossible. Lose 80% of maximum h.p.

Round 4 - Lungs are rapidly being liquified and the victim enters a comatose state (on a successful System Shock roll, the character is able to remain semiconscious but immobile). Death follows in 2 turns unless cured.

Looting all 144 of the graves, if no characters are opposed to such activities, would yield: 20pp, 245gp, 350ep, 20sp, 800cp, one gold ruby ring (value 120gp), 2 16"x20" oil paintings (100gp each), 5 cast-bronze family crests lined with silver (50gp each) and 2 potions of healing. Also present are many items not of a saleable value. Many hoes, sickles, rotting clothing, swords, and the like are present but quite rusted and barely useable. Continuing to disturb the fungus in the above passage will risk continued sporing of the fungi.

3. Funerary

The north side of this room is curved with a large elevated stonework stage. It bears a low platform and rostrum. Facing the stage are sturdy hardwood benches. They are plain and utilitarian in nature and show very little decay, but much use and wear. The rests on the ends look as though a hundred thousand arms have rested there and they have caught many more tears of grieving.

There are two heavy oak doors in the southeast section leading out of the room, one on the south wall and one on the east. The door opening to the east seems to have been slashed or hacked at with an axe or tool of some sort.

The small platform is littered with 20 or more melted candles. It also holds many burnt incense sticks and long-ago dried and decayed herbs. Amid the various offerings are two drawings on wooden plaques that look as though they were made by children. One shows a simplistic house, a sun depicted in the usual childhood way, and a family holding hands in front. A mother,

father, two children, apparently a pig and various chickens were also important to the artist.

The second plaque is less lighthearted. It is rendered somewhat more thoughtfully by an older hand. It shows a man, a boy, and a girl with what can only be described as a large black shadow looming overhead raining blood.

To any character inspecting these plaques, the feeling of looming darkness does indeed seem real. At least one person who holds or closely inspects the darker plaque should feel a drop or two of liquid on their skin. When touched, they will discover it is blood (with no apparent source). While inspecting the plaques, all sounds in the tunnels are muted, close, almost suffocating. Echoes of the dreams will ring through the ears of those who have experienced them.

4. Parson's Office

The door to this 20'x30' room opens with surprising ease, as though the hinges had been oiled only yesterday. On the floor lay the decaying remnants of a beautifully woven large oval rug. On the south wall and the southern portion of the east wall are two large bookshelves. Each shelf is as much as 10 feet across and rises the full 12 feet to the ceiling. Most of the books appear rotted, decayed, and covered in black mold. Some of the shelves hold religious trappings: a thurible, incense, herbs, and holy symbols relating to an oak tree. In the northeast corner are a bed and a broken side table, with a collapsed dresser against the wall. The northwest corner bears a large desk facing south that remains intact. A figure is seated at the desk slumped forward and clutching a box.

The figure clutching the box is long dead, wearing black fine-woven clothes. What remains of the flesh on the face is stretched into a bared-teeth grimace of pain. Moving the skeleton in any way causes 150 large roaches to suddenly scurry out of the skull and other skeletal orifices.

The box is made of fine dark burlled walnut and finished to a high gloss. The hardware is untarnished and made of a white gold alloy that casts a slight blue reflection. The box is heavily haunted with trapped souls (see below). If opened, the inside of the box is found to be lined with deep blue velvet. Within is a clear imprint of an object roughly five inches across. The object appears to be of a double-spiral design. The box itself is worth 1,000gp and is considered a work of art.

The box is magically warded. No key is present in this room for its lock, but it remains unlocked. (If the key is found, the box's value goes up by 200gp. Opening the box will cause the temperature within 15 feet of it to immediately drop 20 degrees (for 1d4 rounds) as the spirits within are released. A ghostly face will appear momentarily from the interior and a light, echoing sigh will encircle the walls. The spirit is held and bound magically and cannot be turned. The sigh is the final word in a powerful awakening spell that will bind and waken the souls of the inner burial chamber (Area 5). Ghostly apparitions will quietly begin to move and rise from the bones and bodies in the inner chamber. The corporeal remains will remain undisturbed as the ghostly forms awaken. They are all bluish wisps in the likeness of who they were in life. All sixty haunts of the passage are bound to the material plane and will quietly begin to realize their sad situation. After 1d8 rounds, a great sadness overtakes them as they mourn for their loss and mortal imprisonment. They pine for their families and release to the afterlife. Through the door to the area will be heard the sobbing and mournful lament of the souls not allowed to depart this world.

On the desk next to the box is a moleskin book with the name Jonah Torrine on the cover. It appears to be a journal with many damaged pages. The following is all that remains legible:

Monday, June 20:

The rains have been heavy and relentless. Some beleaguered travelers presented themselves at the door, nothing unusual. We offered them the barn loft and breakfast. They appear to be monks of some distant land.

Tuesday, June 21:

The monks have repaid our open doors and breakfast with much-needed field work. The head of the band has discovered the family burial chamber shrine and seems preoccupied with what is there, asking many questions. Their hands in the field have been welcome since Eavelyn is with child and must not over-exert herself.

Thursday, June 23:

Our guests remain and they chant at night. We have told the children to stay away from them. Eavelyn seems to be of great interest to our guests. I have come to HATE them! They look at her and talk among themselves. We will need their hands to finish our peas and plant the second set of radishes.

Monday, June 27:

The infernal chanting at night. They turn my beloved against me! She will give her heart to them, I know it!! Something grows within her. In her eyes is hunger when she looks upon the children. She torments them with extra chores and punishment. I bring them food she denies them at night while she sleeps.

Thursday, June 30:

My beloved... she is somehow under the control of the monks! I have sent a plea to the forest guardian. I do not know if he will receive my message. This morning I found her in the hen house she had rent four hens open. Her wails are not of this world. I sent the monks away, I nearly thought I would need to find my sword. I fear they have gone to the shrine, but my beloved is out of control. I have sent the children away, as well, to the neighbors through the forest. Although it is a journey of ten miles, I can only hope they are safe.

Friday, July 1:

O Lady of the Harvest!!! What have I done? My Eavelyn is gone. I had dreamt of her in the house, smiling at the children outside. I don't know what happened. To my horror, when I awoke from the dream I was over my beloved with a long knife. My face covered in blood and the life draining from her eyes. All I could think to do was push her organs back inside her cold body.

Lady of the Harvest!! Where am I? What has become of me!!? I am a monster!! I shall seal myself in the shrine and the ancestors will judge my horrid deeds.

Sunday, July 3:

In the heirloom soul chest I relent my soul. I hide my essence from the mysterious monks within the talisman. The guardian never came. I can only hope that somehow I will be able to find the living to bring us aid and guide my children to a life of peace. They are chanting in the southern inner burial chamber, they collapsed the entrance and are bringing something dark to our family sepulcher.

5. Inner Burial Chamber

This long dark hallway is drier than the first chamber (Area 2). There is a layer of dust on the floor that swirls back and up as the door is opened. This makes it difficult to see or breathe for a moment. Various pieces of the ceiling have long since collapsed into the hallway. The far southern end of the passage is filled floor-to-ceiling with collapsed rubble, dirt, and stones, with only a narrow two-foot-wide passage through. If the soul from the box in Area 4 has not been activated, this room and the dust will be undisturbed with the exception of rodent and beetle travels near the walls. There are 60 bodies in the burial slabs. The remains in this drier room are better preserved and more intact than the bodies in the previous hallway. Many retain their burial clothing, albeit tattered and deteriorated.

Once the box in the parson's office (Area 4) has activated the incorporeal souls, they will be sitting on the alcoves or kneeling and standing in the hallway sobbing and moaning with great sadness. The tortured cannot leave the inner burial chamber. The movement of the souls will disturb and agitate the thick dust, making it difficult to see more than 15 feet in any direction. The shimmering souls will fade in and out of the dust reaching for the living. They will beg whoever enters to find the talisman and call the guardian to free them. In their desperation to gain the attention of the living and beg for help, they reach out to living flesh. All 60 of the forlorn souls are begging, sobbing, and pleading in desperate loneliness and sadness. They moan and wail in a cacophony of cracked ghostly voices.

Every hand that touches the living will impart some of the hopeless melancholy of a tormented soul. Some souls are more intent on imploring the living than others. Every time a soul touches the living, there is a 50% chance of requiring a save vs. spell. A successful save means the victim is unaffected and only feels some of the imparted sorrow. A failed save results in the temporary loss of one point of Wis as the victim is stricken with a great wave of hopelessness. (Note that priests reduced to Wis 8 or less can no longer cast spells or call blessings.)

Characters reduced to Wis 2 or less will become despondent and submit to despair, staring blankly or simply falling to the ground in hopeless sobbing shambles. Any further successful lamenentous attacks and the victim will die of despair and become an apparition. The effect of despair not resulting in death wears off after 2d4 turns, after which lost Wis returns at 1d2 points per turn.

The surviving who fall victim to the souls see no point in going on or fighting for an answer. Victims can be moved, pulled or otherwise removed from the inner chamber. They will not move to help themselves, and most fall limp when pulled at more than a slow shuffle. For some, the scars of the sadness may remain until they have found an equivalent joy to replace the sorrow of the visions they have shared.

The Souls may be turned as though they were Type 2 undead, but cannot be destroyed. They are immune to all weapons. They will only clear the way for the living if turned, but will continue to beg and plea for the talisman and the return of the guardian from a distance.

At least once, it is clear that one of the souls pleads for the party to take the talisman to the Torrine homestead.

6. Collapsed Passage

This narrow passage consists of remnants that survived a ceiling collapse. The passage winds around boulders and wall stones and up and down over dirt and debris. At the widest, it is no more than two feet across - at the narrowest, 16 inches. The narrow passage smells earthy, and the air is close. There is barely room to squeeze through, to say nothing of swinging a blade.

Burly characters will need to press sideways or dig and mine through some of the collapse to fit bulky armor.

Fifteen feet into the collapse, without warning, the air temperature drops to just below freezing. Breath can be seen, and moisture on the rocks has crystallized into ice. Further into the passage, the rock surfaces are glazed with ice, and long stalactite-like icicles hang precariously from the ceiling. A low humming can be heard ahead.

Crypt Thing	
Freq:	Very Rare
# Enc:	1
Sz:	Man
Mv:	120
AC:	3
HD:	6
#Att:	1
Dam:	1d8
SA:	Spec.
SD:	Spec.
MR:	Std
%In Lair:	100%
Int:	Very
Align:	Neut
XP:	160+4/hp
Treasure:	Crown & sword



6a. Summoning Gate

This round chamber has stones collapsed into it. There is a completely collapsed passage on the east side. The ice-coated upper half of a corpse protrudes from the collapse. The flesh has rotted off the skull, and the right hand clutches an ornate copper-colored short sword. The sword and hand are under four inches of clear ice on the floor. On the west wall is a large free-standing stone archway. It emits a low hum, and its vertically oriented interior looks like it contains rippling water that never spills out. The floor is covered in a sheet of ice. Before the gate, swaying slowly, a cloaked skeletal figure stands in utter silence. Its cloak swirls about it with unnatural slowness, as though the gate were emitting a watery wind. The skeletal figure wears a glorious crown beneath its hood. The crown is white gold with copper filigree inlaid and covered in blue-to-greenish gems that give it a cool, chilling appearance.

Crown of the North: This highly ornate crown grants the wearer +2 on all saves vs cold-based attacks. It also offers protection from the element of cold. The wearer can tolerate temperatures 20 degrees colder than normal

without suffering any ill effects. The total value of the crown is 1,400gp.

Short sword of shock: Short sword +2. This ornate short sword is forged from an ultra-conductive copper alloy. Within the pommel is a charged magical element that emits an electrical current when the sword is drawn from a scabbard. The blade is always lightly popping and sparking when not sheathed. The blade acts as a sword +2 in all respects. The additional +2 damage caused is magically electrical in nature.

Twice per day, the blade, upon command, can become energized with electricity, after which it will discharge into the next object or creature it strikes. The effect is that of Shocking Grasp cast by a mage of the sword wielder's level. It has a value of 3,000gp.

(See your favorite monster compendium or OSRIC monster list for details)

The crypt thing does not move to attack, nor is it undead. It is merely a gate guardian. Once attacked, it will retaliate; otherwise, it will stand before the gate and only move to rest its hand on any who try to pass, teleporting them in a random direction. Most teleports will send victims to the surface outside of the sepulcher.

Any character touched by or attempting to attack the crypt thing must save vs. spell. A successful save means the character can continue to act normally. A failed save results in teleportation as per the table below:

D% roll	Teleport location
01-20	100-1000ft north (and at surface)
21-40	100-1000ft south (and at surface)
41-60	100-1000ft east (and at surface)
61-80	100-1000ft west (and at surface)
81-90	Directly in front of entrance statue
91-100	To the cellar hole

If questioned about comrades who have disappeared, the crypt thing will assure all that their friends have been disintegrated.

The keeper will only answer questions with warnings to stay away from the gate, and a statement that he is the guardian of the gate. If pressed, he will say "Those not of Grenndig shall not pass!" and that he was "summoned by an unborn babe."

It is important to note that, while the crypt thing is not natural, it is also not an all-powerful being. It can be distracted or otherwise tricked. Consider it to have Int 15 and Wis 11 for such considerations. It cannot leave the circular room for any reason. Being forced beyond the boundary will result in it being teleported back to the gate.

All fast movement in the area (such as running or attacking) requires either a Dex check to keep from slipping and falling or a means of keeping one's footing on ice (sand or crampons).

Regarding Grenndig

The gate is a portal far into the cold north deep within the bowels of a frozen temple. The receiving gate is locked away and forgotten by the living. The only passage out is through the gate or up the stairway (which is frozen over, blocked, and sealed, unless the GM decides otherwise).

This adventure doesn't venture past the recovery of the talisman. A creative GM may expand the cultist temples into the frozen lands of his/her own realm. There is a collapsed stairway in the northern part of the ice dungeon map that could easily be attached to an arctic temple. It would only require a sense of adventure.

Future Mini Mods will likely address this cult and even this same temple beyond the collapsed stairwell. The name Grenndig can be replaced with an appropriate dark god of the GM's choosing. Grenndig is the dark lord of death and emotional anguish. People under the shadow of the dark lord will often lament the death of their loved ones and ask Grenndig to return their souls. Many even pray and offer Grenndig fish, gold, or animals as they request he not torture their dead with eternal suffering. They may also ask to ease the suffering of the living who lament too long a loved one's passing. The cult priests will occasionally receive and offer dark blessings in return for offerings at the temple gate altars.

Raising zombies and skeletons as servants within the order is commonplace and has been a form of frontier justice meted out to criminals in many far-flung places. The priests themselves see reanimation as an honor, and great care and ceremony is taken to prepare for servitude after death. Many of the followers will quest specifically to find ways to retain their intellect and power during their undead servitude to Grenndig. This makes Grenndig-followers' undead very dangerous and unpredictable. Depending on their

success in their quests, they could be as witless as a common zombie or as ferocious and cunning as a dark high wizard.

7. Gate to the Temple of Grenndig

This is the receiving room of the Grenndig temple gate. The characters step through with a spark of energy and a flash of light. The entire circular room is comprised mostly of dark, dirt-filled ice with various boulders jutting out of the permafrost. This room, like Area 6a, has a floor covered in ice and is even colder. The ambient temperature is no more than 20° F and dips as low as 0° in some places. Once through the gate, characters cannot return without bearing a holy symbol of Grenndig or possessing the talisman. Characters who have a chosen deity will certainly feel they are offending their god by bearing the symbol of a follower. Clerics, paladins, and other holy characters who carry a holy symbol of Grenndig offend their deity and are may not replenish spells or abilities until they atone for the blasphemy.

Four undead Grenndig cultists sit unmoving on the floor, legs crossed and facing the gate (2 priests, 2 warriors – adjust at GM discretion). They are covered in a quarter- to half-inch of ice in silent, unbreathing meditation. They will awaken when any living creature comes within 3 feet. Upon awakening, they will remain deathly still until they can attempt to grapple or claw the trespasser by surprise (5 in 6 for surprise). Once one is awake, the spell is broken and all awaken.

Grenndig Undead Cultists:

Undead Priest	Undead Wizard
Frequency: Rare	Frequency: Very rare
#Enc: 1d4	#Enc: 1
Size: M	Size: M
Move: 120ft	Move: 120ft
AC: 7 (+armor, if any)	AC: 7
HD: 4	HD: 5
#Att: 1	#Att: 1
Dmg: By weapon, or claw 1d4 + hopelessness	Dmg: By weapon or claw 1d4 + hopelessness
Special Attacks: Cast as 3rd-level priest, touch causes hopelessness.	Special Attacks: Cast as 4th-level mage, touch causes hopelessness
Special Defense: Nil	Special Defense: Nil
MR: Nil	MR: 10%
%In Lair: Special	%In Lair: Special
Chance of magical item: 10%	Chance of magical item: 20%
Int: Very	Int: Very
Align: LE	Align: LE
Level /XP: 105 +3/hp	Level /XP: 160 +4/hp

The Grenndig undead retain the ability to speak and act similarly to how they did in life thanks to the holy symbol each wears. All follower undead carry the Grenndig holy symbol, which bears the image of a burnt skull. Without their holy symbols, the Grenndig undead will degenerate into zombies within 1d6 days. Any of the Grenndig holy symbols can, when held and upon the command word being spoken by a follower, multiply, producing another holy symbol once every 3 days. They are true undead and do not require sleep, food, or other mundane things. They can be turned as undead of Type equal to their hit dice. The priests in this sealed vault have continued to create undead (see Undead Tundra Ants, below). They cannot gain levels or advance their abilities beyond what they were at the time they entered servitude.

Undead Warrior	
Frequency:	Uncommon
#Enc:	1d6
Size:	M
Move:	120ft
AC:	7 (+armor worn)
HD:	3
#Att:	1
Dmg:	By weapon or claw 1d4
Special Attacks:	Nil
Special Defense:	Nil
MR:	Nil
%In Lair:	Special
Chance of magical item:	5%
Int:	Average
Align:	LE
Level /XP:	50+2/hp



Hopelessness: The undead priest and wizard ability to cause hopelessness upon hitting with a claw attack works similarly to the ability of the forlorn apparitions in Area 5. Every hit landed by the undead requires a save vs. spell. A successful save means the victim is unaffected and only takes normal damage. A failed save results in the temporary loss of one point of Wis, and the victim is stricken with a great wave of hopelessness.

Characters reduced to Wis 2 or less will become despondent and submit to despair, staring blankly or simply falling to the ground in hopeless sobbing shambles. Any further successful lamenntous attacks and the victim will die of despair and become an apparition. The effect of despair not resulting in death wears off after 2d4 turns, after which lost Wis returns at 1d2 points per turn.

Magic items for Grenndig undead should be rolled or chosen PRIOR to the party interacting with monsters. The Grenndig undead will certainly use any magical arsenal at their disposal intelligently.

8. Tundra Ant Tunnels



These tunnels are rough, round passages no more than five feet high. Anywhere from 10 to 40 undead tundra ants will be encountered throughout the chambers and the entire sealed temple. The GM should choose the number appearing based on the difficulty desired; using fewer than 10 is not recommended. The party should be able to dispatch the undead ants with relative ease if encountered alone.

Large chamber ceilings can reach as high as 10 feet, although most are lower. Tunnels wind in elevation, as well, but not by more than 20 feet. Chambers may hold some treasure, the nature of which can be rolled for on

Table 3; each chamber may be checked for once when it is first explored. All tundra ants in this cavern are undead created by the Grenndig priests. They remain in their tunnels most of the time unless called upon by the Grenndig undead who control them. The tundra ants retain only a little of their former lives and do seem to enjoy hoarding glittering items and slowly digging tunnels. Performing any free-willed activity requires a significant amount of time and consideration for the tundra ants in their zombified state, and commands given to them by their controllers must be simple and single-tasked.

The tunnels can be used to avoid the crevasse (Area 10) completely. The options should be clear to the party: go through the tunnels containing many undead tundra ants to battle in tight quarters, or brave the crevasse.

Undead Tundra Ant

Frequency: Common (in this temple)

#Enc: 1d4

Size: M (5' long)

Move: 60ft

AC: 7 (exoskeleton)

HD: 2

#Att: 1

Dmg: Bite 1d6 + sting 1d4 if holding with mandibles

Special Attacks: nil

Special Defense: nil

MR: nil

%In Lair: 90% (In this cavern)

Int: Animal (somewhat hive)

Align: N

Level /XP: 30 + 1/hp

Tundra ants are huge, five-foot-long ants with imposing mandibles. The colony will have various types of ants with particular duties and a queen who produces eggs. This colony, however, is undead, and there is no longer a queen.

The ant's anatomy is identical to that of its smaller relatives – head, thorax, nodes, and abdomen. The arctic ants have cream-colored exoskeletons with semi-translucent abdomens. They are efficient excavators (in life; undead ones are not) and will create long, interconnected tunnels through and beneath the permafrost layer.

When attacking, tundra ants will attempt to grapple and crush their prey with their mandibles. Once gripped, they attempt to curl their abdomen around and begin stinging the following round. Depending on the size of the victim, more than one ant will attempt to crush and sting a single prey item, preferring to work as a team.

In life, the ants carried a paralytic poison; the glands that produced it have long since died in the bodies of these zombies. The undead ants are slow and always lose initiative. A successful hit with a mandible requires a Str check to escape from. Attacks against a held character hit automatically until he or she escapes.

Table 3: Treasures of the Tundra Ant Chambers

2d4 Treasure		2d4 Treasure	
2	1d4 gems (10-40gp value) 50%: 100gp (multiple coin types)	6	heavy dwarven helmet
3	1d4 potions (half potions of healing, others at random)	7	1d6 gems (d% \times 10gp value)
4	nothing	8	200gp in coins, +1 dagger
5	1d4 \times 10cp		

9. Wizards' Solace

Someone with a beating heart must have lived here many years ago. The long-rotted remnants of a bed and headboard that had been pushed into a corner are covered in ice. Refuse, clothes, and some rusted chainmail pieces are scattered about the floor. In one corner sits a small roll-top desk that has fallen in on itself in a heap; in front of it, a crooked, dilapidated chair tries in vain to remain useful. Worn and rotting brown tapestries hang from the walls. The desk appears to have been held up off of the icy floor by slate stones. An eerie glow radiates from the floor and through the ice causing bluish green light to scintillate softly about the room.

This room is 15-20 feet across with a 15-foot ceiling. The exits are narrowed 10'x10' openings. The floor of this room consists of a sheet of ice about 4-5 inches thick at the center. Beneath the floor is a 30-foot-deep chasm with sheer peppered with ice and stone stalagmites at the bottom. The walls are covered with hundreds of phosphorescent fungi which emit soft blue and green light. The stalagmites rise up out of a pool of super-cooled water that is 10 feet deep at its deepest central point.

Super-cooled water: Super-cooled water is water that is cooled to approximately 10° F. It remains in a liquid state until disturbed or ice crystals are introduced, at which time ice crystals form rapidly throughout the water.

Those splashing down into the water must first avoid the large stalagmite spikes (save vs. death) or suffer 3d6 piercing damage.

After splashing down, the super-cooled water will immediately begin to crystalize and build up in large chunks around anything in it - including the character. This makes it all but impossible to swim, requiring a swim/Str

check that succeeds by 5 or more to stay afloat or swim to the edge. Trying to hack at the ice in the water only causes it to crystalize over anything that touches the water. The entire 10'x20'x15' pool will freeze into a semi-solid slush, more solid at the bottom than the top, within 5 rounds (5 minutes). Those who slip below the surface and cannot get their heads above the in time will be trapped and drown an icy death.

Hypothermia: GMs may have their own rules for hypothermia to fit their campaigns, but a rough option is given here to ease game play.

A character's first reaction to falling into very cold water is a cold-shock response. This entails hyperventilating immediately with fast, deep, and uncontrollable breaths. This response continues even if the victim goes underwater, which can lead to swift drowning. A character may attempt a single Wis check to come out of it through sheer willpower; if the check fails, the shock response will end after one minute if the character is still alive. If no further action is taken to warm the body, the victim will not be able to concentrate or think, his/her speech will become slurred, and his/her body temperature will begin to drop. This effect begins 5 minutes after exposure to super-cooled water. If no action that sufficiently warms the victim, he/she will stop breathing and die 15 minutes later.

Under the floor: There is no water immediately under the floor ice, but methane pressure has built up within the sealed cavern below as the arctic fungi have spored, died off and multiplied. The ice floor will hold a maximum of 210 additional pounds at the center, no more than 500 pounds dispersed throughout the room (even lying flat with weight distributed).

If the weight limit is exceeded, the ice will crack and, with minimal warning (1 round), blow upward. The upward snapping of the ice is not enough to cause damage. The room will fill with the smell of mold spores and decayed fungi immediately, and the air will fill with methane. Any open sources of flame or open sparks have a 25% chance (per flame source) each round of igniting the gas, turning the entire room into an enormous explosion. Any open nonmagical flame poses this risk, even in a hooded or bulls-eye lantern. This risk remains for 2d4 rounds, after which the methane has dissipated enough to prevent ignition.

If the air in the room ignites: Approximately 13,500 cubic feet of methane mixed with the oxygen in the air combusts, filling the area with an intense fireball. All characters in the room or up to 30 feet from one of its exits will

be affected by the explosion. Damage and other injurious effects depend on the location of the affected character, as described below. Anyone who survives and any object not incinerated will be ejected down one of the tunnels leading to the room by the jet-like blast, suffering further damage as described below. Any character in the center of the room at ignition has a 10% of being forced down by the blast into the super-cooled water and spikes in the chasm below. exits in the immediate area should save vs Breathe Weapon as if dragon breathe for ½ damage. Igniting the gas causes a jet-like effect and everything not burned to a crisp within the chamber will be violently ejected out of the 'exhaust' entrances. If an unlucky soul is near the center, there is a 10% chance they will be thrust down with great force into the super cooled water pool and spikes.

Explosion damage and effects: Characters well inside the room take 10d8 damage, characters in an entrance take 10d6 damage, and characters up to 30 feet away take 10d4 damage. A successful save vs. breath weapon results in only suffering half damage. Those within the chamber must also save vs. death or suffer burst eardrums, causing permanent deafness until magically healed. All others in the area of effect are deafened for 2d8 hours.

Ejection damage: Everyone in the room, at an entrance, or up to 30 feet down the passage will be violently hurled from the room by the blast. Those well inside the room take 3d6 damage, characters in an entrance take 2d6 damage, and characters up to 30 feet away take 1d6 damage from being thrown into walls, ceilings, and other obstacles.

10. The Crevasse

This large natural cavern is bathed in the bluish-green light of thousands of arctic phosphorescent fungi. The light seems to shift and dance slightly throughout the cavern as it reflects off ice shards and the smooth, wet floor. The floor slopes down to a gaping crack in the center of the chamber. On the opposing side, you can see it slopes up into another large chamber that is aglow with the eerie fungi.

A dozen feet into the cavern the air temperature is somewhat increased, moreso if there was an explosion in Area 9. The ambient temperature within the large cavern shifts between just above and just below freezing.

The already-slippery ice floor is made treacherously slick by a light covering of water from melting ice and runoff. The water run has worn the floor

down over many years, and its elevation drops toward the large crevasse in the center of the cavern.



The floor is worn at roughly a 12° grade toward the crevasse. While that may not sound like much, the floor's remarkable slickness requires

a successful Dex check simply to stand upon. Anyone on the 12° decline, whether standing, flailing, or falling, will find themselves helplessly sliding downward unless some action is taken. Over the 38-foot distance the floor drops approximately 8 feet in height before plummeting into the 30-foot crevasse. The gap narrows to a wedge at the bottom and continues to drop away down a five-inch-wide gap that runs the length of the crevasse draining the water out under the ice.

Falling over the edge will cause falling damage as normal, but with the added difficulty of wedging the fallen firmly into the V-shaped bottom.



11. The Talisman

This very large oval room is offset in a northeast-southwest orientation. Its floor is covered in four feet of water. A narrow elevated walkway extends nearly to the center. Upon the circular platform at the end of the walk is an ornate armature holding the talisman aloft. The armature seems surrounded in an aura of darkness, while the talisman is emitting a light that pushes and pulsates. The darkness seems to constantly be trying to encapsulate the talisman. The toiling magics create a constant arcing and popping as the forces battle one another.

The talisman is surrounded by *Continual Darkness* and *Protection From Good* spells. The armature seems to be amplifying the dark spell effects. Approaching the talisman causes the countermagic to lash out in chaotic ways.

1d6 Armature/Talisman spells		1d6 Armature/Talisman spells	
1	<i>Fear 15' Radius</i>	4	<i>Summon Zombie</i>
2	<i>Cause Light Wounds</i> (1 target)	5	<i>Darkness 15' Radius</i>
3	<i>Magic Missile</i> as 4th-level mage (1 target)	6	<i>Shocking Grasp</i> as 5th-level mage (1 target within 10')

Those able to reach the talisman can quell the effects by removing it from the armature. It can be completely quieted by placing it in the soul box. A *Remove Magic* cast on the talisman will suppress the countermagic effect and the positive effects from the talisman for 2d4 rounds. After being removed from the armature for 3d6 rounds, the talisman will persevere over the ill effects. All Grenndig servants and their creations will attempt to flee from the pain caused by the unleashed talisman held aloft.

Two Grenndig wizard servants are lying in the pool as guardians. If there has been an explosion in Area 9 or a large commotion in Areas 7, 8, or 10, they will split up and seek the intruders. Otherwise, the party entering Area 11 will cause them to levitate up out of the water and begin casting.

Return of the Talisman

The talisman is an intelligent magic item with Int 16 and Wis 16. It will speak to the holder and thank them for freeing it. It expresses remorse that the souls have caused such struggles for the heroes. It insists it be returned to the homestead and the guardian as soon as possible. The talisman has no idea how much time has passed in the ice caverns.

The talisman will not use or reveal any of its greater power as a relic. It may cast *Levitate*, *Cure Light Wounds*, and *Protection From Evil* at will and turn undead as 6th-level cleric to aid the party in their return to the homestead.

The apparitions will no longer reach for the living but instead greet them with pleasantries and ask them to return the talisman to the homestead while standing out of their way.

The party CAN opt NOT to return the talisman. The talisman is an ancient artifact of some hidden powers, primarily those that protect from evil. It can also amplify a priest's turn undead ability and fertilize crops. Its full power is only known by the guardian who agreed to let the Torrine family hold its protective power as acting forest wardens. The guardian uses the

talisman to create a blessed and protected forest that attracts and holds many sources of wildlife while repelling the darker forces throughout the woods.

Once at the homestead, the talisman cries out with great sadness through its possessor. It finds the loss of the homestead and the tragic death of its family horribly saddening. Once in the center of the cellar, a low magical pulse emits from the talisman throughout the forest. All goes quiet, the birds stop singing, the sounds of cicadas and crickets cease. The entire forest stands in utter silence.

After a short time, heavy footsteps can be heard over the hill behind the cellar in the forest leaves. Over the hill lumbers a giant-sized owlbear surrounded by an aura of golden light.

The guardian gingerly holds out a giant clawed paw before the holder of the talisman. If it is gifted back to the guardian, he places it in what can only be described as a marsupial pouch. The guardian speaks in a low, deliberate voice, slowly working his tongue around his beak to make words. The guardian prefers not to keep the heirloom box and offers it to the heroes as a reward. He hums a low, soft tune, and the apparitions leave the dreams of the possessed. After a moment, more trees shudder, the ground rumbles slightly, and toward the sepulcher, a light ascends as a feeling of peace covers all.

The guardian offers to protect the party and let them rest and heal under his stewardship.

The guardian will send the party into a deep sound sleep and heal all their lingering damage. He cannot heal the lingering sadness from the apparitions. During their rest, ward stones are raised, and the forest embraces and covers the cellar hole. The party will have only slept at most 10 hours during the magical transformation.

Two large moose are waiting at the end of the rest. The guardian offers to allow his wardens to escort the party to end of the forest and welcomes their return any time.

(Bonus xp rewards are completely at the GM's discretion and are only offered as a suggestion. The below are bonuses awarded by the author for completing the quest in addition to battles and in-game rewards.)
Retrieving the talisman itself is worth 700xp to each party member.
Resting and returning the talisman to the guardian is worth 1,200xp to each

party member.

Keeping the talisman may be other than a good act, but the artifact is worth 1,700xp as treasure to the possessor without revealing any further powers. The guardian will begin to hunt for this person as soon as he feels the talisman's presence in his forest.

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ISBN 2370000167415



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