

LC1

ADVENTURE MODULE

Old School Adventures™ Module LC1

ASSAULT AGAINST THE MENACE ON THE MOUNTAIN

Adventure Module for Character Levels 1-3

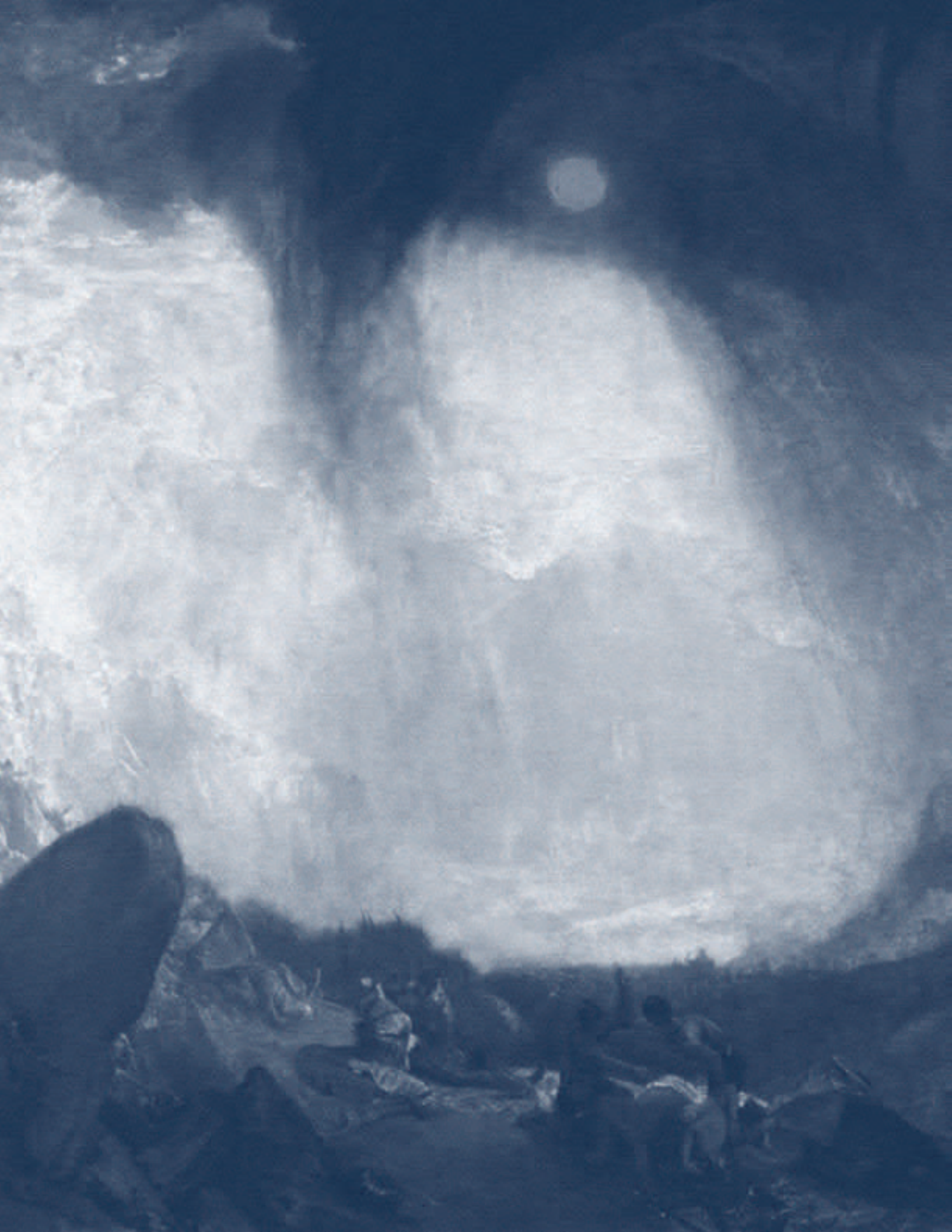


For Use With Oe/1e/BX Editions
and Compatible Retro-clones

by **Richard J. LeBlanc, Jr.**



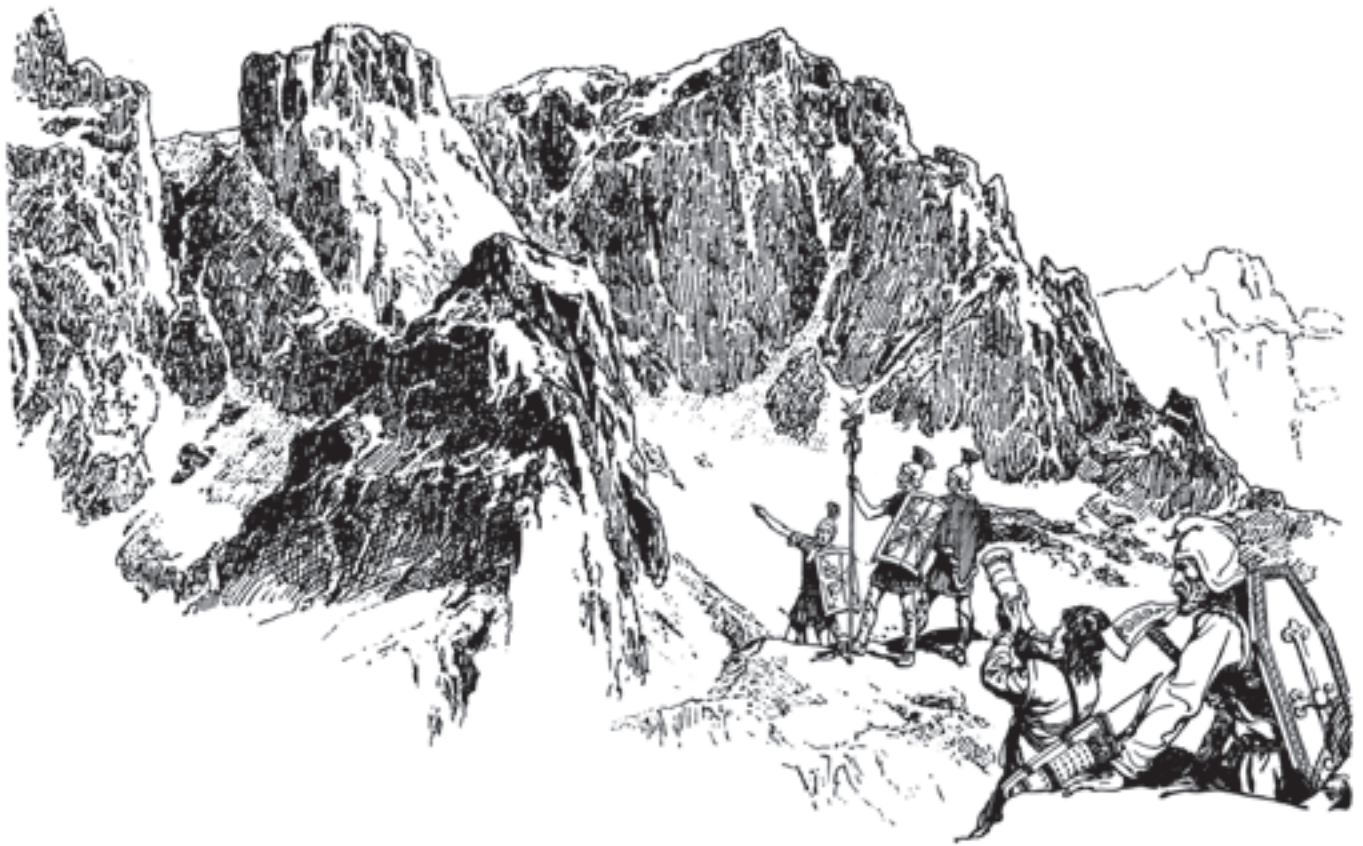
NEW BIG DRAGON
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ASSAULT AGAINST THE MENACE ON THE MOUNTAIN

An Adventure for Character Levels 1-3



by **Richard J. LeBlanc, Jr.**

Based on the Story "The Very Old Folk" by H.P. Lovecraft

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Introduction

General Overview

If you plan on playing in this adventure as a character, please **stop reading** here. The information in this book is for use by the DM and knowing its details may spoil the enjoyment and surprise for all concerned.

Before attempting to run this module, it is suggested the DM read this module thoroughly to become familiar with the setting, situations, and story lines presented within.

Adult content warning: This module contains some content of a mature nature and may not be suitable for all audiences.

About the Story

The adventure in this module is based on the story “The Very Old Folk” by H.P. Lovecraft, though the story itself was never intended for publication. One Halloween night in 1927, Lovecraft was reading the Aeneid; this combination (of day and text) produced a dream that Lovecraft subsequently related in letters to three friends (Donald Wandrei, Frank Belknap Long, and Bernard Dwyer). The Wandrei version was printed first (during the summer of 1940) in the journal **Scienti-Snaps**, and given the title “The Very Old Folk.” Lovecraft’s letter to Long was quoted verbatim in Long’s 1963 book **The Horror From the Hills**. The letter to Dwyer first appeared in print in the Lovecraft collection **Selected Letters II** (1968).

About this Adventure

The adventure presented in this module consists of the following three “chapters”: 1) **Approaching the Mountain**, 2) **The Trek up the Mountain**, and 3) **The Final Assault**. Each chapter is designed to support a specific style of game play and, as such, certain parts of this adventure may not follow the standard conventions of the given rule sets (e.g., the random deaths and suicides as the throng makes their way up the mountain in the second part of the adventure). These breaks in convention have been included intentionally to help enhance a growing sense of dread and impending horror as the PCs approach their goal.

Boxed Text: Copy contained by a boxed frame is meant to be read directly to the players during the course of the adventure.

Adapting this Module for Different Old-school Rules Editions

This module is designed for use with almost any early edition of the original role-playing game (Oe, 1e, HB, BX) or comparable retro-clone (e.g., LL, S&W), but may require some tweaking to match your rules edition as outlined below.

Monsters: For all of the monsters used in this module, any information required to use those monsters in game play has been included. Movement rating indications must be multiplied by 10 for HB, BX, and BX-comparable editions. All monster hit point indications in this module have been calculated using d8 as the base hit dice for monsters. If you are using a rules edition that uses d6 for monster hit dice (e.g., white box only),

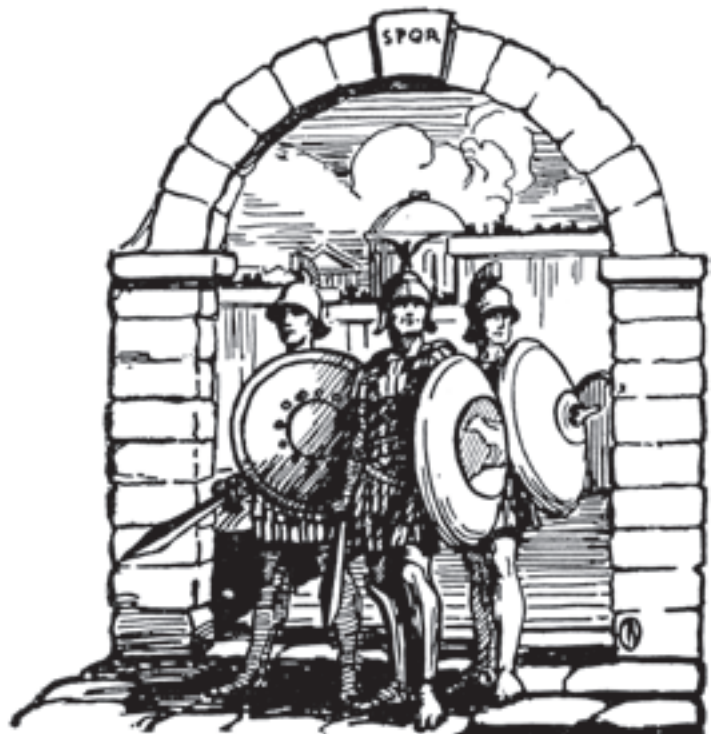
it is suggested that all hit point indications be reduced to 75% of the numbers indicated, or that experience point rewards for the players be increased to reflect the relative strength of those monsters.

NPC Hit Points: Hit Points for NPCs in this module have been calculated using variable hit dice (i.e., clerics=d6, fighters=d8, magic-users=d4, etc.) If you are using a rules edition that uses only d6 to calculate the hit points of classed characters (e.g., white box only), some adjustments may be necessary to adjust the strength of the NPCs in this module.

NPC Armor Class Listings: Given the variations that occur in Armor Class ratings for classed characters from edition to edition (owing to differences in both AC base and DEX bonus), all NPC stats for this module have been provided with three AC indications. The first AC rating noted (without parentheses or brackets) should be used for BX and BX-comparable rules editions (e.g., LL). The second AC rating noted (inside parentheses) should be used for 1e and 1e-comparable rules editions (e.g., OSRIC). The third AC rating noted (inside brackets) should be used for Oe and Oe-comparable rules editions (e.g. S&W).

NPC Spell Listings: If using Oe or BX rules editions, ignore spells listed inside parentheses. These spells are available to the NPC only when using a 1e comparable rules set. (This is due to spell unavailability outside of 1e, and/or rules defining number of spells per class level.)

Parenthetical Alignment Notations: For rules editions with a “simple” alignment system (lawful, neutral, chaotic), use the alignment noted outside the parentheses. For rules editions with a “dual-axis” alignment system (lawful good, lawful neutral, etc.), use the alignment noted inside the parentheses.



Background

PC BACKGROUND OPTIONS

The following options are presented as ways of introducing the PCs into the events detailed in this adventure. It is suggested that the DM review **The Menace on the Mountain** boxed text (at right, used to introduce the adventure to the players) before selecting one of the following options.

Unless the PCs are coming together from multiple backgrounds, it is suggested only one of the following options be used.

Option I: The Call of Adventure

In this option, the opportunity for adventure has availed itself, and the PCs answer the call for heroes.

In the western region of the republic, a sinister presence must be dealt with. Though the regional governor has assembled all sort of folk to form the assault (soldier and slave, tribesman and townspeople), there is always room for the brave and the strong willing to lend a hand. Whether for the opportunity of good to trump evil, the potential of personal glory, or the slimmest of chances there may be some treasure in this, you have answered this call for salararii (mercenaries*) to assault the menace on the mountain.

* *Payment for service at DM's discretion.*

Option II: The Call of Destiny

In this option, the PCs are members of the Vascone tribe, and join the cohort in an effort to save the lives of the members of their tribe, or possibly themselves.

For years, you and your Vascone brethren have lived in the sinister shadow of the very old folk on the mountain overlooking Pompelo. But the time has come for this menace to be dealt with, and destiny has called you to join the cohort assembled to assault this menace on the mountain

Option III: The Call of Duty

In this option, the PCs are actually citizens of the Republic and answer the literal call to duty of a superior.

A great menace must be dealt with. And though you are normally speculatores and exploratores (a scouting/recon unit of the Republic's army), you have been charged with joining the cohort in the matter of the menace on the mountain above the town of Pompelo.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Once an option has been chosen for introducing the players directly in the cohort (to assault the mountain), the following section should be read to the players. It describes in detail the events leading up to this moment, and establishes the situation in which the PCs find themselves.

THE MENACE ON THE MOUNTAIN

It is the Terrible Season of the autumn, and the wild people in the mountains are preparing for the frightful ceremonies which only rumour tells of in the towns. They are the very old folk who dwell higher up in the hills and speak a choppy language which the Vascones can not understand. (The Vascones, the tribe of the region, are an ancient race, having inhabited the area for over 35,000 years, recently conquered, and given status as citizens.)

One seldom sees these wild people from the mountain; but a few times a year they send down little yellow, squint-eyed messengers to trade with the merchants by means of gestures, and every spring and autumn they hold the infamous rites on the peaks, their howlings and altar-fires throwing terror into the villages. Always the same—the night before the Kalends of Maius and the night before the Kalends of November. Townsfolk disappear just before these nights, and are never heard of again. There are whispers that even the native shepherds and farmers who are not unfriendly toward the very old folk may find no exemption, for more than one of their thatched huts has been vacant before midnight on the two hideous Sabbaths.

This year the dread is even greater, for the people know that the wrath of the very old folk is due upon the town of Pompelo. Three months ago, five of the little squint-eyed traders had come down from the hills, and in a market brawl three of them had been killed. The remaining two had gone back wordlessly to their mountains—and this autumn not a single villager has disappeared yet. There is menace in this immunity, for it is not like the very old folk to spare their victims at the Sabbath. It is too good to be normal, and the villagers are afraid.

Some days ago, a hollow drumming began echoing from the hills. This spurred a series of events involving all sort of request, negotiation, investigation, and politic. It also elicited the involvement of persons at all levels (from a lowly immigrant messenger to the governor in the area), which has this lead to this very moment.

The slanting sun is now very low, and the whole hushed town of Pompelo seems draped in an unreal and malign glamour. A measured, hideous beating of strange drums floats down from afar in terrible rhythm. The numbers of the gathered throng count among themselves nearly 100 townspeople from Pompelo, over 50 Vascones from the surrounding hills, and dozens of Roman legionaries and lictors, as well as slaves temporarily pressed into military service; the entire assemblage waits silently for a native guide to be found to lead you into the hills, or this entire gathering may be for naught.

Suddenly, whispers float through the crowd—a young man has been found to point out the paths up the mountains. You are at once reassured and disconcerted. Reports of the coming cohort must have reached the hills, yet the sinister drums continue—as if the celebrants had some peculiar reason to be indifferent to the throng marching against them.

BACKGROUND

MAJOR NPCs

The following major NPCs play the biggest part in the assault on the mountain. Furthermore, they will be among the few characters able to make it all the way to the mountain. The majority of the throng will die along the way (see **Chapter II: The Trek up the Mountain**).

Livius Caelius Rufus (Quæstor)

Stats: Male; 2nd-level cleric; S:13; I:17; W:15; D:14, C:11; CH:9; HP:9; AC:8(8)[10]; #AT:1; D:1-6 or by weapon; M:12; AL:N(NG); ST:C/2; *detect evil*, (*detect magic*); equipment: mace.

Rufus is a provincial quæstor (regional supervisor of financial affairs) and a good friend of Commander Balbutius. He has a long, horse-like face with a pursed mouth and high-set ears.

As a scholar he has studied deeply in the black forbidden lore, and is the most aware of what the very old folk may be capable. It was at Rufus's urging that Proconsul Libo took interest in the menace, and overturned Commander Balbutius's decision to remain removed from the affair. He is the most likely person to be able to aid in dealing directly with the very old folk.

Publius Scribonius Libo (Proconsul)

Stats: Male; as normal man; S:12; I:15; W:14; D:12, C:13; CH:17; HP:5; AC:9(9)[10]; #AT:1; D:1-4 or by weapon; M:12; AL:L(LN); ST:NM; equipment: dagger.

Libo is proconsul (governor) of Tarraco. He wears a toga prætexta (toga bordered by a band of crimson), and has a shiny bald head and his wrinkled hawk face carries a grave look on his face in regards to the affair at hand.

Libo's original orders to Balbutius were to send his fifth cohort, under Asellius, to Pompelo; enter the hills at dusk on the eve of November's Kalends and stamp out whatever nameless orgies he might find—bringing such prisoners as he might take to Tarraco for the next proprætor's court. Now that Libo is a member of the cohort (and the highest ranking official among it), the fate of the entire throng is ultimately under his deciding hand.

Cornelius Balbutius (Legatus)

Stats: Male; 6th-level fighter; S:17; I:13; W:15; D:16, C:15; CH:16; HP:33; AC:0(1)[1]; #AT:1; D:1-8 or by weapon; M:12; AL:L(LN); ST:F/6; MI: **short sword +1**, **potion of healing**; equipment: plate armor, shield.

Balbutius is the legatus (general) out of Calagurris. He wears a gleaming helmet and breastplate, and his blue-shaven lips remain compressed in conscientiously dogged opposition to this entire cohort. He believes this drastic military action will stir up a dangerous sentiment of unrest amongst the Vascones, both tribal and settled; keeping peace with these "citizens" is more important than ridding the area of a "menace."

Sextus Asellius (Military Tribune)

Stats: Male; 5th-level fighter; S:15; I:12; W:12; D:15, C:13; CH:13; HP:25; AC:1(1)[2]; #AT:1; D:1-8 or by weapon; M:12; AL:L(LN); ST:F/5; equipment: plate armor, shield, short sword.

Asellius is the military tribune (officer above centurion and below legatus) directly under Balbutius. His greaves are polished so brightly as to blind in daylight, and the sneer on his face is so

superior as to make all think they are inferior to him. Asellius supports Balbutius's belief that this action is more likely to stir up the natives (Vascones) than rid the area of the "menace."

Vercellius

Stats: Male; as normal man; S:11; I:12; W:9; D:15, C:9; CH:12; HP:4; AC:9(9)[10]; #AT:1; D:1-4 or by weapon; M:12; AL:L(LG); ST:NM; equipment: dagger.

Vercellius is the young volunteer who acts as the guide to take the cohort past the foothills, and point them to the path that leads up the mountains to the settlement of the very old folk.

Gorka (Vascone Chieftain)

Stats: Male; 5th-level fighter; S:17; I:12; W:12; D:18, C:13; CH:16; HP:24; AC:4(6)[4]; #AT:1; D:1-8 or by weapon; M:12; AL:N(NG); ST:F/5; equipment: **ring of protection +1**, shield, **short sword +1**, spear.

Gorka has a thick beard, an imposing brow line, and a statuesque presence. He acts as both the official leader of Pompelo, and the de facto leader of the "loose" tribesman in the area.

MEMBERS OF THE THRONG

Accompanying the cohort in the assault are the following members of the general throng:

Townfolk (2d12+80 in number)

A mix of broad-browed Roman colonists, coarse-haired Romanized natives, and obvious hybrids of the two strains—each has 1d6 hit points, and fight and save as a normal man. 50% of them are armed with pitchforks (doing 1d4 damage), and the other 50% are armed with hand axes (doing 1d6 damage).

Vascones (2d10+60 in number)

These coarse-mantled, black-bearded tribesmen fight and save as 1st-level fighters, and have a comparable number of hit points. Each carries two short spears (doing 1d6 damage each) and a short sword (doing 1d6+1 damage), but wears no armor.

Legionaries (2d8+30 in number)

These soldiers of the fifth cohort of the XIIth legion fight and save as 1st-level fighters, and have a comparable number of hit points. Each wears plate armor, carries a shield, and is armed with a dagger (doing 1d4 damage), a sword (doing 1d8 damage) and a javelin (doing 1d6 damage).

Lictors (2d6+20 in number)

Each of these imperial bodyguards fights and saves as a 1st-level fighter, and has a comparable number of hit points. Each wears only a military cloak and carries an axe (doing 1d6 damage).

Slaves (2d6+20 in number)

These male slaves have been temporarily freed to be pressed into emergency infantry service. Each has 1d6 hit points, and fights and saves as a normal man. Each wears only his normal clothing, but has been given a sword (doing 1d6 damage).

Attendants (3d4+10 in number)

A mixed number of male and female attendants have accompanied various Roman members of the cohort. Each has 1d6 hit points, and fights and saves as a normal man. They are, however, unarmed and unarmored.

Chapter I: Approaching the Mountain

ABOUT THIS CHAPTER

This purpose of this portion of the adventure is two-fold. First, it is meant to act as introduction of the major NPCs involved in the adventure and, second, it's meant to create suspense regarding what the PCs should expect to find when (or if) they make it to the top of the mountain.

TIME & MOVEMENT

The distance from the Pompelo (where the throng has gathered) to the base of the destination mountain is approximately 2 miles (2,000 Roman passus).

All members of the cohort are on foot, except for Libo, Balbutius, Asellius, Rufus, and 3-5 legionaries (and possibly the PCs).

If the PCs stay with the throng, the entirety of the throng will move at a rate of approximately 1-mile per hour (normal human outdoor/wilderness movement rating in game time), and reach the base of the mountain in approximately 2 hours (about 3 hours before midnight).

Should the PCs leave the throng to investigate elsewhere (even ahead of the throng), the morale (and the speed) of the throng will be lowered, reducing their movement rate to 1/2-mile per hour (equal to one-half the normal human outdoor/wilderness movement rating in game time), reaching the base of the mountain in approximately 4 hours (about 1 hour before midnight).

INTERACTING WITH THE THRONG

If the PCs move among the cohort as it approaches the mountains, they will have the opportunity to speak its members (both major NPCs and general members of the throng).

The chance of the various members of the throng interacting with the PCs depends on both the type of throng member and the background of the PCs (per **PC Background Options**, p.3), and are indicated as follows:

Chance of Interaction with NPCs based on PCs' Background

NPC	Freelance Adventurers	Vascone Tribesmen	Speculators/ Explorators
Rufus	100%*	100%*	100%*
Libo	—	—	50%
Balbutius	50%	—	25%
Asellius	75%	0	50%
Vercellius	—	—	—
Gorka	75%	100%	—
Townfolk	75%	75%	25%
Vascones	0	100%	10%
Legonaries	25%	10%	75%
Lictors	10%	—	75%
Slaves	10%	5%	25%
Attendants	10%	—	20%

*assumes they are inquiring about the very old folk

Rufus will be willing to talk to anyone with questions regarding the very old folk, especially those seeking wisdom about their ways. No matter what Rufus tells the PCs, it will be obvious he is excited about seeing the rituals of the very old folk firsthand, and death is not necessarily a concern. For each turn spent talking to Rufus, the PCs will learn one of the following pieces of information (otherwise, he will blather on about how he hunted down some book or other, or spent weeks or months translating it).

1. The rituals almost always involve a combination of verbal, semantic, and material components, and are performed centered around some sort of focal point, like an altar or an archway. Many of the ritualistic rites are too blasphemous to say aloud (and Rufus will refuse to do so).
2. The rituals are meant to invoke the assistance of other-worldly beings or gods, usually by opening a “gate” between this world and their own. The beings or gods perform some favor in return for some form of tribute.
3. The power of these other-worldly beings and gods are not beyond a mortal’s power to cope with. If one is familiar with the rituals, the beings will be bound effectively, and can be dispatched at will. It is when the binding is weak or ineffective the beings become truly dangerous.
4. The powers granted by these beings vary greatly and include, but are not limited to, the following: vision into other planes of existence, assurance of victory in battle, elongation of life, or simply to heighten sexual arousal and enjoyment.

Libo will limit his comments to the following...

“My concern is not some folk tale or rumour of what these people may be capable. My concern is the law of the republic. We have executed many a citizen before for the practice of Bacchanalia and we shall not stop now. We will stamp out whatever nameless orgies we find atop that mountain, and bring such prisoners as we might take to Tarraco for the next propraetor’s court.”

Balbutius will limit his comments to the following...

“We could better afford to antagonize the minority of colonists and civilized natives in this area by inaction, than to antagonize a probable majority of tribesmen and cottagers by stamping out these dread rites. And though I hold the rank of legatus, I am foremost a soldier. A soldier does what his superior requests. So I follow the proconsul’s commands, even if he is wrong.”

Asellius will limit his comments to the following...

“The natives are not ones to be excited. We are better served to leave our noses out of this, rather than rooting around this mountain like hungry pigs. We simply should not be here.”

Vercellius will be too consumed by his role as guide to talk to anyone. Furthermore, should anyone attempt to approach him, Libo will dispatch his own lictors to ward them off.

CHAPTER I: APPROACHING THE MOUNTAIN

Gorka will relate the following...

The sound of those drums... that's the sound of dread. They fill the Vascones with fear, for we all know someone that has died or disappeared with their sound. The Vascones worship many old gods that the Romans do not understand, but the Vascone gods are good gods. Whatever gods the very old folk worship cannot be good. There is something unnatural atop that mountain, and the time has come for that... that... that... whatever it may be, to be brought to naught. Even if I were the only man to ascend that mountain tonight, I would do everything in my power to rid the world of this evil.

Interacting with General Members of the Throng

Should other members of the throng interact with the PCs, they will submit their own point-of-view. The DM may roll randomly on the charts at the bottom of this page, or simply use the listings as inspiration for their responses.

ENCOUNTERS ALONG THE ROUTE

The following items may be read to the players as the group progresses toward the mountain. They may be expanded, interspersed, or diffused by other encounters as the DM sees fit.

Abandoned Farmhouse

In the flickering glow of the collective torchlight, you make out the shape of abandoned farmhouse a few hundred feet from the road. It appears to be covered in the most peculiar graffiti. You would imagine these splatterings on the walls of the structure are prayers to the gods to save the place and its inhabitants. But considering the place seems abandoned, it is unclear if the prayers have achieved their purpose.

Should any of the players take the time investigate the writing closely, it will be confirmed it is prayers to the gods to save the farm and the family from some vague menace known only as "Magnum Innominandum" (the "Great Not-to-Be-Named").

Should any of the players investigate the farmhouse's interior, it will appear as if the inhabitants were simply "plucked" from the place: a loaf of bread burns in the oven, a man's pipe smolders on the table, and a child's rattle lays broken on the floor.

Screams in the Darkness

A bloodcurdling scream pierces the darkness and shakes the entirety of your body! From nowhere three strangers jump out of the darkness, and grab at you as they moan in terror and agony! The sound startles the horses, sends several of the more meek among the throng darting into the darkness, and spurs the soldiers to draw their swords to the ready.

After a moment, you realize these men are local shepherds held tightly in the grips of fear. They look at you with deep desperation, as if they want to ask you something, but are unable to speak. They grab at your weapons.

The three shepherds (as normal men; hp:5,4,4) simply want to kill themselves. If they are able to grab a weapon, they will kill themselves in the most efficient and effective way possible (e.g., falling on a sword, slicing jugular with dagger). Any sort of attempt to remove their fear (e.g., remove fear, remove curse, etc), will cause them to fall unconscious for 5-8 turns each. When they do awake, they will be catatonic and remain so for 7-12 days. When they emerge from their catatonic state, they will remember nothing of the events that formed their distress.

Entering the Hills

The thin silver sickle of a young moon trembles over the woods to your left. The malevolent beating of the drums grow louder as you enter a rising gap in the hills. Steep wooded banks enclose you narrowly on either side. The curiously fantastic tree-trunks are displayed in the light of the cohort's bobbing torches.

The DM may proceed, at will, to Chapter II.

Interacting with General Members of the Throng

Townfolk & Vascones

Roll 1d6 or at DM's discretion.

1. Death from the very old folk occurs silently and suddenly. I have seen it.
2. Death from the very old folk comes wrapped in great pain and agony. I have seen it.
3. Death from the very old folk comes in prolonged terror. You beg to die. Then you die. I have seen it.
4. It is time to rid the world once and for all of this great evil.
5. I fear we are all doomed this night.
6. I will save my people. That is what I have to tell myself.

Legionaries & Lictors

Roll 1d8 or at DM's discretion.

1. This affair is none of our business. We should let the tribal scum die.
2. I serve Rome. No matter how foolish the mission.
3. We are on a fool's mission.
4. I fear I shall die this night.
5. Death is surely upon us all now.
6. I do not fear death. But I do fear evil.
7. No man, Roman or other, should live in this kind of fear.
8. We are servants of Rome, and this soil is Roman. We shall defend it.

Slaves & Attendants

Roll 1d8 or at DM's discretion.

1. This affair is none of our business. We should let the tribal scum die.
2. I fear we will all die this night.
3. I fear anxiety will drive me mad before evil has a chance to kill me.
4. I would flee this cohort if not for the fear of a legionarie killing me first.
5. I love Rome. But not enough to die.
6. Death is surely upon us all now.
7. I pray that we may all be spared.
8. (NPC is too busy praying to talk.)

Chapter II: The Trek up the Mountain

ABOUT THIS CHAPTER

This purpose of this portion of the adventure is to maximize suspense as the party moves from the base of the mountain to their ultimate confrontation. This is accomplished through a sequence of “random” deaths which occur among the general members of the throng as it maneuvers up the mountain toward the final confrontation.

TIME & MOVEMENT

The distance from the base of the mountain (where the throng has gathered) to the peak (where the very old folk are located) is approximately 1/4 mile (500 Roman passus). The way up the mountain is too steep and narrow to proceed on horseback, so the entire way will have to be made on foot, with the horses left at the base of the mountain. It will take the throng (or what will be left of it after ascending the mountain) approximately 7 turns to make their way to the top of the peak.

DEATH ON THE MOUNTAIN

Each turn after the third (see **Turn 3: The Horses Scream** below), a number of legionaries lictors, slaves, attendants, townsfolk, and Vascones will die as outlined on the following chart:

NPC Deaths per Turn*

NPC Type	Die Roll to Determine Number of Deaths	Number of Resulting Deaths
Townfolk	5d6	5-30
Vascones	4d6	4-24
Legonaries	3d6	3-18
Lictors	3d4	3-12
Slaves	3d4	3-12
Attendants	2d6	2-12

* after third turn ascending mountain

On page 9, a **Death Tracking Chart** has been included to aid the DM in tracking the number of NPCs dying (and still living) during the ascent up the mountain. This tracking sheet should be used as follows:

- Based on the total members of the throng (p.4), “black out” any unused squares for that NPC type. For example, if the throng contains 74 Vascones, and the **Death Tracking Chart** shows 80 empty squares for the Vascones, “black out” the final 6 squares, leaving the first 74 “blank.” This would show there are 74 (living) Vascones in the cohort.
- During each turn after the third (that is, at the beginning of each turn starting with the fourth), roll a number of dice for each NPC type as indicated by the **NPC Deaths per Turn** chart above.
- “Mark out,” (e.g., with “X’s”) a number of blank spaces for each NPC type as determined by the roll. For example, if rolling 4d6 for Vascones results in a total of 13, “mark out” 13 of the blank spaces left for Vascones on the **Death Tracking Chart**.

- Repeat this process for a total of four (4) turns. If, at any time during this process, the total of the various rolls for any particular PC type results in more “marks” than there are “blanks,” all the members of that particularly NPC group are considered to be dead. If, after the four turns, any spaces remain “blank,” these NPCs are considered to be still living, and have made their way successfully to the top of the peak (where the very old folk are located).

The manner in which the various members of the throng die (each turn after the third) changes from turn-to-turn, the details of which are included in each respective text description to the players (**Ascending the Mountain**, below).

Additionally, it is suggested the DM make hidden “false” saving throws for each PC, suggesting they are each barely escaping their own death. This will heighten the sense of dread and anticipation, and hopefully create some paranoia within the group.

ASCENDING THE MOUNTAIN

Turn 1: At the Base of the Mountain

At the base of the mountain, the way up is so steep and narrow that those who are on horses are forced to leave them. Balbutius orders a squad of ten legionaries stay behind to guard them (even though bands of robbers are not likely to be about on such a night of terror).

Balbutius will assign the following marching order: 1) Vercellius (guide), 2) the legionaries, 3) Asellius and his lictors, 4) Balbutius and his lictors, 5) Libo and his lictors, 6) other Romans (including slaves, attendants, Rufus, and any Roman PCs), 7), townsfolk & Vascones (including the PCs as freelancers or as Vascones). Balbutius will not allow anyone to ascend out of order. Since the matter of the menace was forced upon him, this is one of the few areas where he can maintain control, and he will keep it.

If the PCs Choose to Stay Behind: If the PCs are Vascones, Gorka will have all the other Vascones draw their weapons and threaten to kill the PCs before the group makes their ascent. If the PCs are Romans (speculatores/exploratores), Asellius and his lictors will draw their swords and threaten to kill the PCs before the group makes their ascent. If the PCs are freelance adventurers, Rufus will inform them that leaving the cohort will not necessarily grant them safety, and their best chance to remain alive is to reach the top of the peak and stop whatever unholy rite is being performed there (not to mention they won’t be paid).

Turn 2: Skulking Forms in the Woods

The going is slow as the cohort ascends the mountain. The steepness and narrowness of the way makes the advance of so great a body of men exceedingly cumbrous and difficult.

The entire thrust of rock that is this mountain almost seems to breathe. The drumming is growing more frenzied, and the glow of the firelight from the peak grows closer.

At first you weren’t sure, but it now seems as though you detect a skulking form in the woods nearby.

CHAPTER II: THE TREK UP THE MOUNTAIN

If any of the PCs attempts to leave the cohort to investigate the skulking forms, they will find nothing. Furthermore, there is a 7-in-10 chance that any PCs who leave the cohort (for any reason, including leaving the mountain) will become lost (see **Rejoining the Cohort** below).

Turn 3: The Horses Scream

With utter and horrifying suddenness you hear a frightful sound from below. It is from the tethered horses—they are screaming—not neighing, but screaming. There is no light down there, nor the sound of any human thing, to show why they do so. The bonfires blaze out on the peak ahead. Terror lurks equally, before and behind.

There really is not much the PCs can do at this point but press on. If they have gotten lost searching for the skulking forms (and are still lost), they may continue to try to rejoin the party.

Turn 4: Death

The air grows perceptibly colder, more suddenly so than is usual at November's brink. It seems stirred by terrible undulations which you cannot help connecting with the beating of huge wings. Suddenly, all the torches begin to dim, and the cries of frightened legionaries and townsfolk mingle with the peal of screams from the haplessly tethered horses.

At this point, the members of the throng will begin to die and the DM should roll as directed in the section **Death on the Mountain**. If the PCs are still with the cohort, they will see the various deaths happen around them (read the passage below). If they area away from the cohort but find their way back before the cohort reaches the top of the peak, they will find a similar sight (the DM may read the passage below at his own discretion).

You look around and you see death. Numbers among the throng have cried out in agony and fallen dead to the ground. The evil seems to have chosen both randomly and equally from the entirety of the cohort. Legionaries and townsfolk, slaves and Vascones lay dead on the ground. None of the survivors are sure what to do. Some try to aid their fallen brethren (to no avail), others continue onward up the mountain, some fall to their knees and pray.

If the PCs attempt to assist any of the prone members of the cohort, they will find them to be unequivocally dead. There will be a "residue" of magic on the dead bodies (should the PCs be inclined to waste a *detect magic* spell), but there is no bringing them back (unless the PCs should be so inclined as to waste a *resurrection* or *wish* spell).

Turn 5: More Death

The air grows colder still, and the horses fall suddenly silent. Whether they have been frightened to death, killed by their guards out of mercy, or killed by this other-worldly presence is unclear. What is clear, however, is that death still moves about this mountain. Moans and cries echo from the throng.

The DM should make the next set of rolls as directed in **Death on the Mountain**.

At this point, or any point afterward, the DM may have the PCs discover the body of Vercellius.

So far, the dead around you have been the nameless, faceless members of the throng, but you now find one whose death seems a dark omen. It is Vercellius, dead on the ground from what appears to be a self-inflicted wound... he, who had been born and lived all his life in this region, and knew what men whispered about the hills.

Turn 6: The Maddening Crowd

The chill in the air now permeates your bones, like death digging into your soul. The closer you draw to the peak, the louder the drumming, the more menacing the bonfires, and the more your own demise seems inevitable. Evil grabs at you, unsettling you, threatening to drive you mad.

At this point, all the PCs should save vs. magic or be "maddened," causing them to grab the nearest edged weapon (even if it's not their own). Any characters failing their saving throw should roll 1d6 and react as follows: 1) attack the nearest character, 2-5) stand catatonic in fear, 6) attempt to kill themselves. This maddening will remain in effect until the character dies, the menace is eliminated, the maddening effect is removed through a *bless* or *remove curse* spell, or holy water is used on the affected characters.

As the characters are being maddened, the next wave of deaths will happen around them, and the DM should roll as directed in the section **Death on the Mountain**.

Turn 7: Reaching the Peak

Just beyond a ledge of rocks, the fire blazes bright and the drumming is so loud it is almost deafening. It seems you have reached your destination, and just in time. Your numbers are so thin, it may fall in your hands alone to end this madness. And your numbers suddenly get thinner... more of the cohort suddenly fall dead around you!

The DM should make the final set of rolls as directed in **Death on the Mountain**.

REJOINING THE COHORT

Should the PCs leave the cohort and become lost, the DM should referee their attempt to rejoin the cohort, head back to the base of the mountain, or reach the peak of the mountain. This is done by using the **Lost PC Flow Chart** as outlined below.

1. Starting from the "begin" space, the DM presents the PCs with their directional options from their current location (e.g, up, upper left, to the right)
2. The player will choose a compass direction from the available choices at the "begin" space on the flow chart.
3. Based on the direction the PCs choose, they will come to the next space on the flowchart. At that point, the DM will present the PCs with their directional options from that location.
4. Based on the direction the PCs choose, they will come to the next space on the flowchart or return to the current space. If they return the current space, the DM should not let the PCs know this. The DM will present the PCs with their directional options from the location and allow them to choose their next direction.

Chapter III: The Menace on the Mountain

ABOUT THIS CHAPTER

During this chapter, the PCs and the remaining members of the cohort will come face to face with menace, and will be presented with an ethical dilemma. The PCs will discover that the demon which has been summoned by the very old folk gains its strength from the folk's blasphemous acts. Therefore, the only way to deal with the creature (temporarily or permanently) will be to stop the very old folk from engaging in those acts. Given the number of very old folk present, and the relatively low level of the PCs and the remaining members of the cohort, a complete slaughter of the naked (relatively defenseless) very old folk may be the only accomplishable option they have.

Given the events of this chapter and the number of characters (PCs and NPCs— including the major NPCs and any remaining members of the cohort) involved, the DM may have trouble managing the various conditions affecting them (e.g., charm effects, physical damage, etc.) It is suggested that the DM make a master list of all PCs and NPCs that enter the Henge of Haggurath (below), to aid in tracking their conditions and actions.

ARRIVING AT THE PEAK

If the PCs were separated from the cohort and tried to find their way back (via the **Lost PC Flow Chart**), it is suggested they reach the peak of the mountain and rejoin the rest of the cohort just as it arrives at the peak.

You finally reach the peak, and stand side-by-side with the few members of the cohort that have been spared, so far, from the terrible evil that inhabits this mountain. The drums are deafening, the chants are beguiling, and there are all sort of other unholy sounds swelling and swirling in the air around you.

There is a small pass in the rocks that enters the area of the very old folk and their dark ritual. A strange feeling overcomes you—a sort of obscene, depraved moaning in your soul. You want to look, but to do so would give into this dark urge and you feel there may be no coming back if you do.

Libo peeks into the pass, then stumbles backward in horror. Balbutius and Asellius gather the few remaining Romans* to prepare their assault. Gorka waves the few townfolk and Vascones* forward toward the pass.

Rufus stands in awe of what he sees happening just beyond the rocky pass. He turns around suddenly and puts his arms out to hold everyone back for moment. He reaches into a pouch on his belt, pulls out an aspergillum (holy water sprinkler), shakes it over himself, then proceeds to shake it over the others as they enter the pass ahead of you.

* assumes there are any left

At this point, the DM may suggest the PCs make any preparations they wish before making the final assault.

THE HENGE OF HAGGURATH

In the center of the rock formations at the top of this terrible peak, you find a looming stone altar within a circle of monoliths. Surrounding the altar are dozens and dozens of the very old folk engaged in unspeakable acts, mostly of a blasphemous sexual nature. There are a handful of drummers, but the sound they make is twenty-fold their number. Each of the folk bears the same strange arcane symbol seared into the skin on their chests.

Behind the altar, a strange, tall, dark man makes a terrible sign at the cohort, grabs a book from the altar, then vanishes.

As you look up from the altar, and peer into the smoke of the great bonfire behind it, your eyes adjust and see the unreverberate blackness of the abyss. A portal has been opened into another dimension, and a thick-necked demon with horns and fangs, laden with mucous and bathed in a bilious cancer of ash and smoke, stands framed in the doorway. You feel his presence trying to pierce the defenses of your mind.

Haggurath the Horrid

The demon framed in the portal is **Haggurath the Horrid**. As he is not technically in the material plane at the moment, no attacks made directly against him have any effect. Because Haggurath's presence here is tied to the symbols burned (scarred) on the chests of the very old folk, dispelling Haggurath requires that each of the very old folk be affected in one of the following manners (the manner need not be the same for all of them): 1) removal of the scarred tissue (by "normal" or magical means), 2) defacing the symbol by creating "additional scarring" which ruins the integrity of the original symbol, or 3) killing the person bearing the scar.

As an added effect of Haggurath's "lack of presence" in the material plane, he is unable to make any direct attacks on anyone who



is. His mere presence (even in another plane), however, charms all humans, humanoids and non-magical animals within the radius of the altar indicated by the dashed line on the **Map of the Henge of Haggurath** (p.12), causing them (on a failed saving throw vs. magic) to either obey his commands (50%) or act in a purely chaotic and hedonistic manner (50%).

For “dual-axis” alignment systems (e.g., 1e, HB): those of good alignment save at +2, and those of evil alignment save at -2. There is an additional +1 modifier for any characters who were sprinkled with holy water before entering the area.

For “simple” alignment systems (e.g., Oe, BX): Those of lawful alignment save at +2, and those of chaotic alignment save at -2. There is an additional +1 modifier for any characters who were sprinkled with holy water before entering the area.

Those who are charmed and following Haggurath’s commands will refer to him by name (e.g., “Haggurath wishes you to die!”)

Haggurath’s charm/control of any PC or NPC (except members of the very old folk bearing the symbol on their chest), can be negated through the use of any of the following spells: *bles*, *dispel evil*, or *dispel magic*.

Affecting any member of the tribe of the very old folk through the use the spells *bles*, *dispel evil*, or *dispel magic*, will break them from Haggurath’s control, but will not weaken Haggurath’s presence. Furthermore, on the first turn following the use of one of these spells, if the person bears the symbol on their chest, they must make a saving throw (vs. spells) or be charmed again by Haggurath (as detailed above) or return to his control (using chaotic evil as their alignment for dual-axis systems, and chaotic for simple alignment systems).

If the symbol on their chests is translated (e.g., through the use of *read/comprehend languages*), it will read roughly as the words “crawling chaos.”

If Rufus fails his saving throw:

Rufus turns to you and beckons, “Join us! Pledge your body to Haggurath and you shall live forever!” He then proceeds to rip the clothes from his body, and submit to the carnal desires that seem to overtake him, joining the blasphemous acts of the very old folk.

If Rufus makes his saving throw (or is broken from Haggurath’s control):

Rufus calls out to the remainder of the cohort, “The symbols. On their chests. They are spiritually bound to the vile beast. To dismiss the demon, we’ll have to kill them all. Every one. It’s the only way to stop this horror once and for all!”

Should the PCs ask Rufus if there is any other way to dismiss the demon, he will tell them that should he have time to study and research the topic (which could take months or even years to accomplish), he fears that even discussing the issue is wasting valuable time and could mean their own deaths. He is unaware that removing or defacing the symbols will work just as well.

The Very Old Folk

Surrounding the altar, engaged in blasphemous acts, are **50 very old folk** (30 males and 20 females; hp:5 ea.; all fight/save as normal men, doing 1-2 pts. of bare-handed damage). There are also **10 drummers** (all male, as above). Most are too consumed

by their acts to notice the presence of intruders. The PCs and the NPCs of the cohort will get a round of attacks without any counter-attacks from the very old folk. During the second round, 20 males and 10 females will attack, though the PCs and NPCs of the cohort will have the initiative. By the third round, the entire group of very old folk will be able to respond to Haggurath’s commands and join the attack.

If broken of Haggurath’s charm, members of the very old folk are still his followers, and will attempt to kill intruders by any means necessary (picking up swords and shields if they are able, or simply attacking with bare hands if no other option avails itself), and they will fight to the death (almost requiring every one of them to be slain during this encounter).

Slaying/Slaughtering the Very Old Folk

As the very old folk are slain/slaughtered, or as the symbols on their chest are removed/defaced, Haggurath’s presence will become obviously weakened.

You hear an otherworldly moaning and realize the demon’s presence is becoming threatened. The aperture of the portal is tightening, and even the vision of the creature seems more translucent than upon your arrival.

Dismissing Haggurath

When the last of the very old folk is “taken care of” (killed or symbols dealt with), the portal will close, the demon will be dismissed, and any remaining effects of Haggurath’s charms will be gone.

A strange, unpeaceful quiet settles in over the henge. The smoldering smell of sulfur hangs in the air, and through the smoky haze you can almost see the stars in the night sky above. In the flickering glow of the dwindling bonfires, you survey the carnage around you. You are at once repulsed by it and content in the result.

To think that this entire affair was brought on by the deaths of three of their number in a brawl in a market. Now fifty lay dead in front of you. Had you not slaughtered them all, you might fear their retribution. But, then again, there was the dark man from the altar who is now nowhere to be found.

Perhaps he has something in mind for you.

THE DARK MAN FROM THE ALTAR

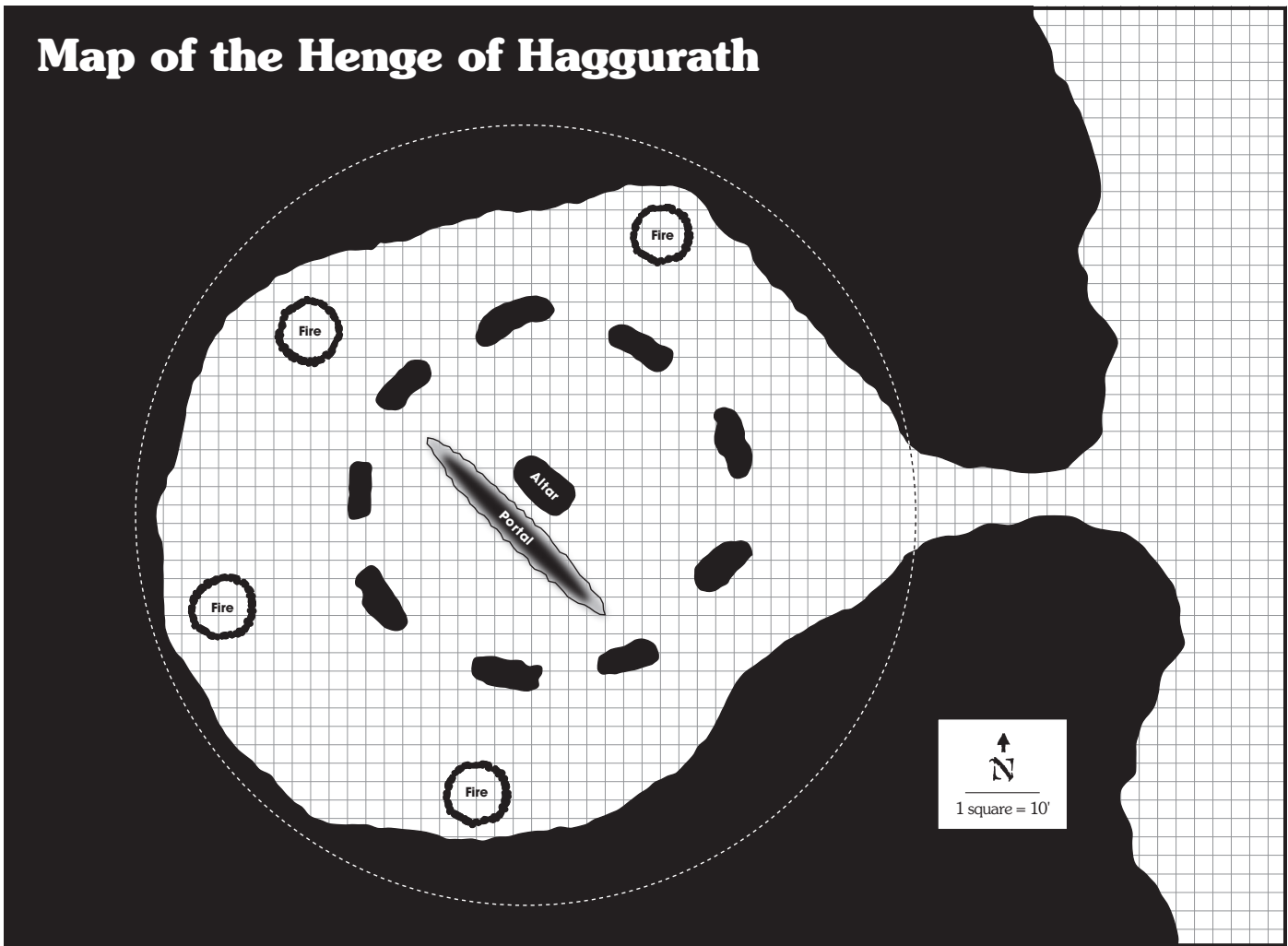
Once he disappears from the altar (when the PCs and NPCs enter the henge), there will be no further sign of the dark man. The following information about the man may be used as the DM sees fit.

The dark man is **Quintus Vespasianus**, a low-level evil cleric and devotee of Haggurath. He is also a bit of a coward, which explains his rather rapid departure. The book with which he absconded is the **Codex of Haggurath**, an ancient tome detailing the various rites and rituals associated with Haggurath.

With the codex as his guide, Vespasianus will find another tribe to infect, and other peoples in some new place will surely die, just as death befell the citizens living in the shadow of this mountain. And given enough time, Vespasianus will exact his revenge on the interlopers.

As long as Vespasianus lives, no one is safe.

Map of the Henge of Haggurath



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**Old-School Adventures™ Module LC1:
Assault Against the Menace on the Mountain,**
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It is the Terrible Season of the autumn, and the wild people in the mountains are preparing for the frightful ceremonies which only rumour tells of in the towns.

One seldom sees these wild people from the mountain; but a few times a year they send down little yellow, squint-eyed messengers to trade with the merchants by means of gestures, and every spring and autumn they hold the infamous rites on the peaks, their howlings and altar-fires throwing terror into the villages. Always the same—the night before the Kalends of Maius and the night before the Kalends of November. Townsfolk disappear just before these nights, and are never heard of again.

This year the dread is even greater, for the people know that the wrath of the very old folk is due upon the town of Pompelo. Three months ago, five of the little squint-eyed traders had come down from the hills, and in a market brawl three of them had been killed. The remaining two had gone back wordlessly to their mountains—and this autumn not a single villager has disappeared yet. There is menace in this immunity, for it is not like the very old folk to spare their victims at the Sabbath. It is too good to be normal, and the villagers are afraid.

A cohort has been assembled to end this menace once and for all, and there is always room for more heroes.



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