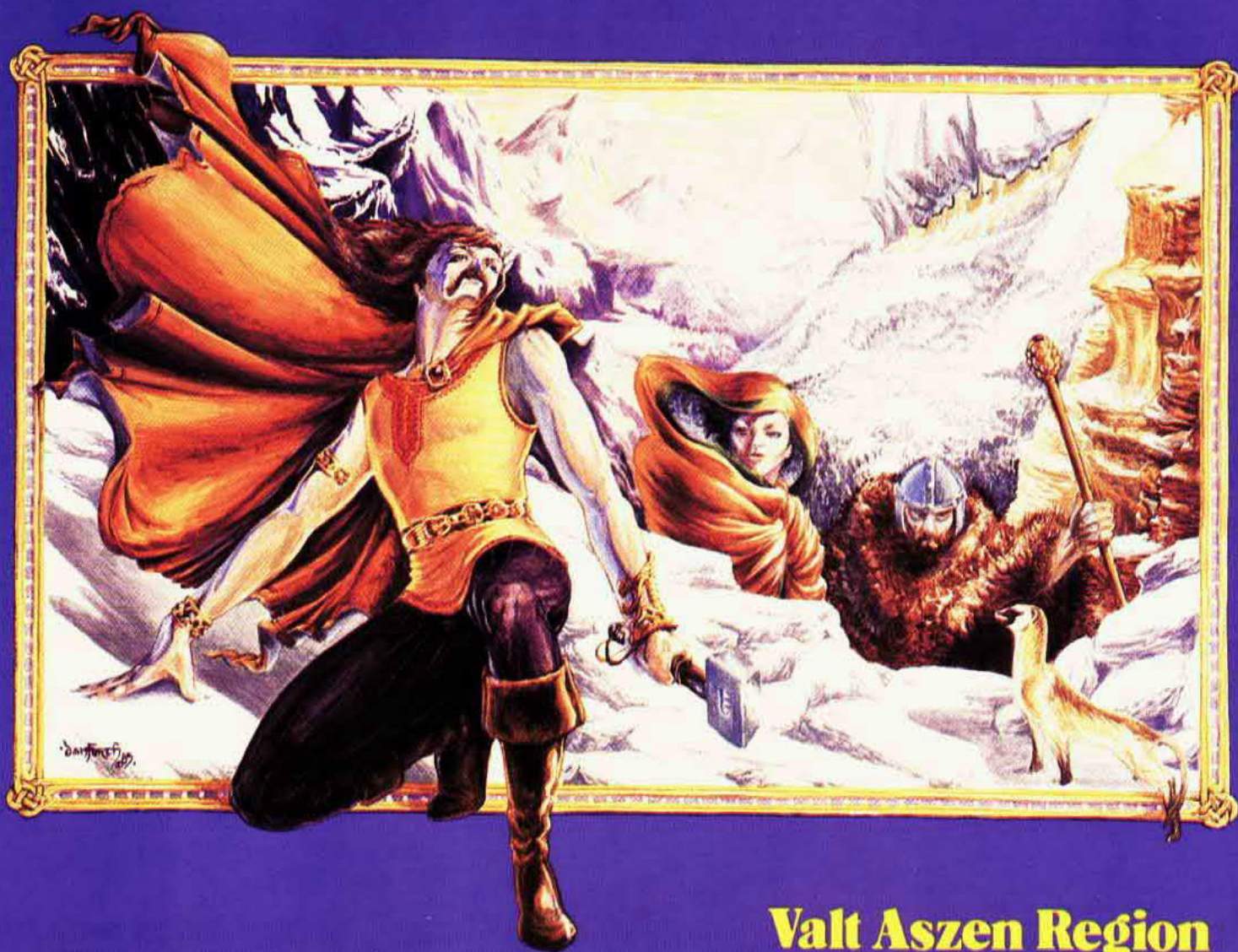


# DWARVEN HALLS

Campaign Pack for  
**SwordbeareR™**



**by Arnold Hendrick**

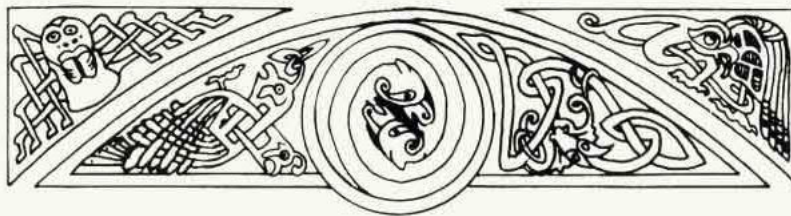
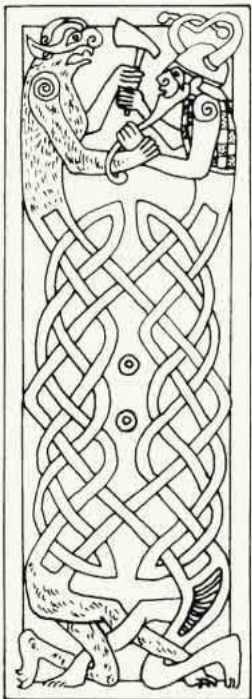
**Valt Aszen Region**

**Dwarven Culture**

**Strongholds**

**Adventures**





# DWARVEN HALLS

DWARVEN HALLS presents a full campaign setting for the SWORDBEARER adventure gaming system. The information included in this book could also be applied to almost any fantasy role playing game system.

Presented herein are:

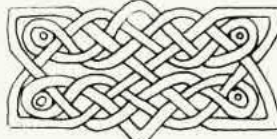
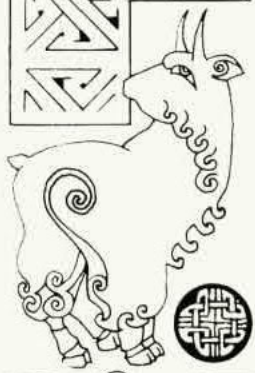
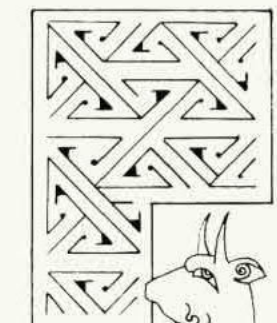
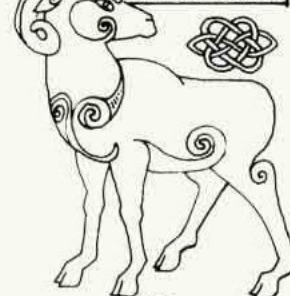
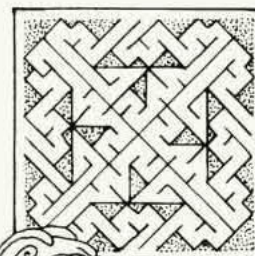
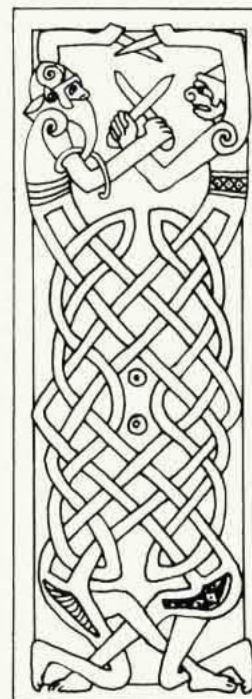
- The entire Valt Aszen region, including locations of the major Dwarven strongholds, the nearest human settlements, terrain, and the dangers of goblin raids, etc.
- A detailed look at Dwarven culture and society, including sections on internal and external government policy, traditions, and even names.
- A discussion of Dwarven strongholds and an in depth look at a typical stronghold. This includes the ruling clan, the leadership, politics, economics, crafts, etc. Also included are detailed floor-plans and maps of the stronghold and its fortifications.
- Four adventures in the area, as well as additional adventure suggestions, are also included to allow a Gamemaster to fully utilize the information included in this campaign pack.

More than just an adventure pack, DWARVEN HALLS presents an entire culture and maps a region for adventuring. This is probably the most in-depth study of Dwarven society ever presented and is a real 'must' for any serious fantasy role-player.



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# DWARVEN HALLS

Campaign Pack for **Swordbearer™**

**by Arnold Hendrick**



# DWARVEN HALLS

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# Preface

*Dwarven Halls* is the first in a series of adventures for *Swordbearer*. The series presents regions and information about the 'ancient lands' of man. This is the popular name for an area similar to Europe in size, and primarily populated by the human race. This adventure describes a remote mountain region on the northwest border of the ancient lands, and in these mountains various dwarven clans have carved out their strongholds.

*Dwarven Halls* does not force a specific plot upon a gamemaster. Instead, it describes the region, and the wide variety of events that might happen in adventures there. This includes details of a dwarven clan, NPCs (non-player characters) for that clan, maps of a stronghold, and more. The gamemaster simply selects the situations and events he prefers, and uses them to create his own, unique adventure. Plot suggestions are given in the back of this booklet.

Unlike most role-playing adventures, it is 'safe' for players to read this booklet (although their characters should 'pay' appropriate experience points for the resulting knowledge, see 'Player-Characters' below). Players with a 'beginner' gamemaster should avoid reading the last few pages of this booklet (the ones headed 'Advice to the Gamemaster'). These last few pages provide plot outlines for adventures — if the players are aware of them, the gamemaster must spend additional time creating new ones (a task that may prove difficult for beginners).

Any or all aspects of this adventure can be adjusted by the gamemaster, to suit personal tastes, provide surprises, etc. Even if nothing is changed, there is a wide scope for additional material. Only one of the six clans and strongholds is given here — a gamemaster may wish to design a second or third clan and stronghold, using the ones here as a guideline. This type of additional design work helps extend the useful 'life' of this information many fold. The primary guideline is simply realism: any modifications or additions should continue to make sense, and fit within the setting outlined here.

## Player Characters

**Number & Abilities:** This adventure is designed to challenge a party of three to eight adventurers with low to average skills (smaller groups can be balanced with better skills). Beginning characters can be used, although the gamemaster must use some discretion occasionally with the more powerful NPCs. If the players' characters have high skills in valuable areas (such as weaponry skills and magic), the gamemaster may need to outnumber in NPC encounters, or add 10 to 20 to NPC skills.

**Origin of Characters:** It is suggested that the gamemaster inform the players of their general origin, and how they came together. If a single adventure is being played, or this adventure will start a campaign, the gamemaster is advised to have all players start at the inn in Suthri, and originate from the ancient lands (predominately human) to the southeast. This allows a gamemaster to limit character races to those who routinely deal with humans (elves, dwarves, and halflings primarily).

In a campaign, the end of the previous adventure will automatically become the starting point for this one.

**Player Knowledge:** If a player has read this booklet, his or her character must 'pay' for this knowledge in experience. The first half of this booklet deals with general knowledge of the Valt Aszen region. The second half of this booklet deals with knowledge of a specific locale — the Dendural clan and their stronghold. Depending on how much is read, a player will need to pay for either one general knowledge skill (the Valt Aszen region), or two (the region, plus the Dendural locale). If beginning characters are used, these skills must

be 'purchased' using experience points. If pre-existing characters are used (in a campaign, for example), the character must 'pay' for the knowledge by losing skill rating in other skills. The one or two general knowledge skills each cost 1d6 (if the character is specialised in general knowledge) off other skills. The player can select which skill, or combination of skills, is reduced.

For example, a player reads the entire booklet, and then wants to use an existing character in the adventure. The character is not specialized in general knowledge, so each knowledge skill gained cost 2d6, for a total of 4d6. The player rolls this, ends up with 18, and thus must reduce other skills by a total of 18 points. He takes a few points from this skill, a few more from the others skills until the full price is paid.

**Note:** This procedure is not too unrealistic, since players tend to select skills they consider 'useless' for the reduction, and this can represent a tendency to forget or lose practice in unnecessary skills. The gamemaster may wish to prevent a character from reducing any skill below the normal minimum.

## NPC Format

A large variety of NPCs (non-player characters) are given in this adventure. Two different formats are used, one for 'specific' characters, and one for 'typical' characters.

**Specific Character Format:** In this format the name of the character is given, along with general personality traits, attitudes and normal dress (including any arms and armor normally worn). Basic characteristics are listed, along with all skills above the minimum level. Skills not listed are presumed at the minimum level (or perhaps a bit above, if the gamemaster desires). Remember, the gamemaster is free to alter these characters if he or she desires — to keep players on their toes!

**Typical Character Format:** In this format characters that fulfill a certain function are given; the format is designed so the gamemaster can easily 'conjure up' a variety of NPCs for the function. Basic characteristics are given in terms of dice rolls. These rolls may be different from the normal racial rolls, reflecting special qualifications for the function (i.e. warriors will tend to be stronger and faster, so the characteristic rolls may be changed somewhat to prevent weak slow characters from appearing in this function). Skills are listed as important, or merely useful to the character; all others are presumed unimportant. From this information alone, the gamemaster could create skill ratings if desired. However, a range of levels is also given, to the speed the skill creation where necessary.

For all typical characters, the average characteristic value or skill rating is noted in brackets [ ]. This tells the gamemasters what the 'expected' average result will be. When the gamemaster is short on time, he can simply use a number closes to the expected result, without bothering with any dice rolling.

**NPC Balance:** The number of players' characters, and their skill levels, can vary greatly. The gamemaster must decide just how formidable the players' characters are, and decide how to use NPCs. Generally, NPC opponents should provide a 'fair challenge' to the players — roughly equal numbers and equal skills is a good start. When in doubt, make the NPCs on the weaker side. On the other hand, it is entirely possible that some NPCs in a dwarven clan, or encountered anywhere, will be far more powerful than any player's characters. A good gamemaster will vary the abilities of NPCs, but give the players indirect 'clues' telling how weak or formidable the opposition.

## About Spirit Magic

In the 'ancient lands' and surrounding areas, spirit magic is considered an evil art. The popular impression is that spirit magicians perform wanton slaughter in their quest for spirits, and then use these to inflict even worst torments upon these still living. Anyone who

publicly avows use of spirit magic usually suffers a lynching, and those suspected of its use may be questioned in unpleasant ways either by local authorities, or vigilante groups.

A few religions do make minor use of some benign spirit magic spells, but the rites and procedures are closely held secrets among the highest levels of the clergy, and the sole source of spirit nodes is sacrificial animals. Such practices are dying because the secrets are sometimes lost. A few carefully hidden cults and black magicians also exist, who use spirit magic to their own nefarious ends. These individuals or groups avoid public attention, and generally aversion to it (something beginners will appreciate, since they won't have to learn the complexities of spirit magic!). A player's character could know some spirit magic, but like the NPCs here who know it, the knowledge and use should be kept secret as a simple safety precaution.

**Note:** This approach to spirit magic is designed to make the magic system easier to learn, by placing certain aspects 'off limits' to daily life. It also is logical within a societal framework without human sacrifice, since without a formalized method of acquiring spirit nodes, everyday use of spirit magic soon leads to massive killings and anarchy.

# 1. Valt Aszen Region

## SUTHRI

Suthri is a village in the southeastern corner of the Valt Aszen region, at the top of the Dtran River gorge. It is on the only trail from the region southward into the ancient lands, and owes its importance to the wood-slatted rope bridge over the river gorge. Anyone crossing that bridge will automatically travel through Suthri.

The village is populated mainly by outcasts or emigres from the dwarven clans, as well as fugitives and misfits from the human lands to the south. It is a dirty, unsavory place with no formal administration or law, no nobility, and a very low average social status (typical citizens range from status 2 to 8, 10 or higher is considered very wealthy by village standards).

Small groups of thugs regulate certain aspects of village life, but try to avoid offending people too much. A few years ago, when a band of cut-throat unemployed mercenaries took over the village by terror, dwarves from the Thrasir stronghold arrived, surrounded the village, and wiped them out. The lesson was that the dwarves prefer Suthri to remain a chaotic mudhole, and will quickly destroy anyone who tries to form a sound political unit and power base there.

The usually squalid and often dangerous life in Suthri becomes exceptionally difficult during the winter. The village relies on part-time hunters and travelling merchants to provide its food at the village market (see below). In the winter, food is always scarce, and high-priced. The very poor often starve, and thus are forced to migrate southward instead, to more fertile lands. The perpetual population decline in winter serves to Suthri a small village, going nowhere.

## PLACES OF INTEREST:

### The Resting Dwarf Inn

This is the only inn of the village, and is a large multi-story wood and stone building. The entire downstairs is a tavern, and the unofficial village meeting place. Upstairs are various rooms for rent to travellers, generally at very moderate prices. The inn is owned by a pair of dwarves with a formidable reputation, although they are rarely seen. Instead, their considerable wealth purchases them any necessary service. For example, rowdiness in the tavern is immediately stopped by local thugs who get one free drink an hour, provided they toss out anyone the barkeep considers undesirable. If these same thugs proceed to mug and rob the offender once he is out the door, nobody cares much! As a result, the tavern is normally quiet.

### The Market

The central square in Suthri is a large area of packed earth (or mud, in wet weather). Anyone is free to set up an awning or tent, from which they can hawk their goods. Sometimes a group of local thugs will organize a protection racket, but usually for just payment in kind (give me a slice of meat, and my boys won't dump the basketful in the mud!).

There are no regular stalls. The village relies on the irregular appearance of travelling merchants and traders, plus local freelance hunters.

## TALES OF THE DWARVES

A month's journey northward from the ancient kingdoms, up the gorges of the Dtran River, one enters the Lrfunj Alps, an impenetrable massif of ice-bound peaks. For millenia these forbidding sentinels have overlooked the dynastic ambitions of men. Wise merchants and knowledgeable sages can tell tales of hardy mountain-dwarves who hail from the Lrfunj. The most famous and best known stories deal with the great pass of the Valt Aszen. Here it is said the dwarven halls are made of beaten gold, but surrounded with snow and ice. Other tales say the Valt Aszen is a pass to the northwest, a gateway to the badlands of goblins and orcs, guarded by the indefatigable dwarves. All agree that the dwarves are reclusive.

Still, there are ancient elves who remember the Klenget Dynasty, two centuries past, and the year when Valt Aszen dwarves marched to the aid of man's empire. Those dwarves were remembered as intrepid fighters, with enchanted weapons and armor. Valt Aszen craftsmanship and metalwork became a byword for quality, and a few nobles still boast of one or two pieces. An occasional merchant still turns up with one or two items.

Today, the politics of the human kingdoms are fragmented. There is no unified dynasty, and the dwarves from Valt Aszen are simple a memory...

A large minority of the village population hunts part time, and routinely sell extras in the market. Grain dealers or successful freeman farmers travel from the south in the fall to sell their grains, and throughout the year small-time merchants know that they can usually sell foods above market value, while buying tools, equipment, arms, and armor below market value (although quality may be a bit inferior).

## Craft Shops

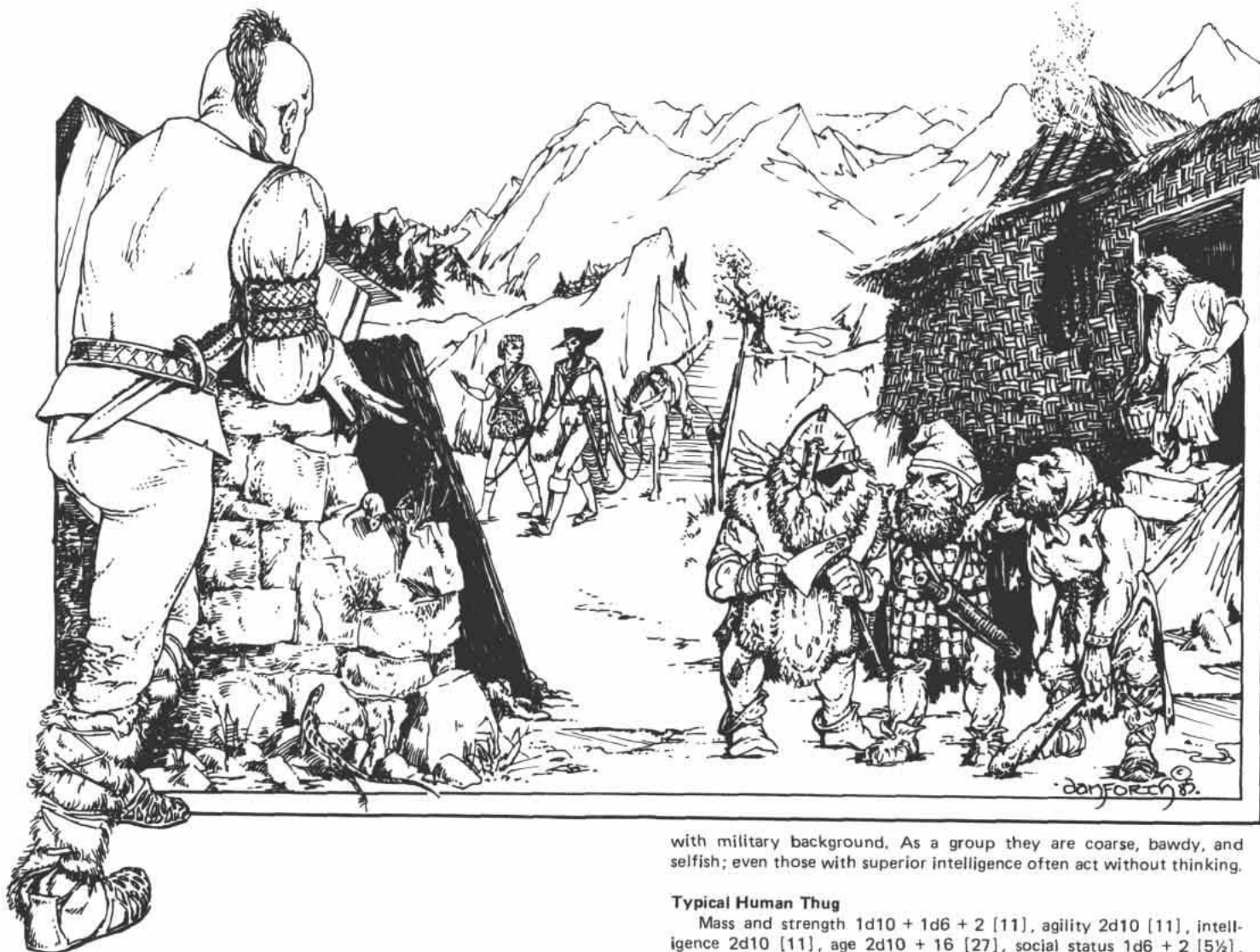
A large number of residents work on crafts in the front room (sometimes the only room) of their ramshackle homes. The village has a scribe, two tailor-leatherworkers, a potter, a jeweler-miner, a locksmith, and a miner-builder with cheap goods and services (status 3 to 6), but inferior skills (which range from 20 to 45). A couple of armorers are present, including 'Shortleg the Dwarf', a skillful fellow (armorer skill 78) who routinely turns out fine status 8 climbing gear with metal implements. He remains in Suthri due to his lameness and age, and because his goods are in demand, despite his competition also producing climbing equipment as often as arms or armor.

There is no skilled doctor/druggist except Jak Morselt, who is primarily interest in animals (see Traveler's Wayside, below), no magicians, and no bowyers. There are no resident artist or musicians with much skill — entertainment at the Resting Dwarf comes from wandering minstrels and bards.

## Traveler's Wayside

Jak Morselt is one of the wealthiest local residents (status 11), and operates a stable by the name above. A large, middle-aged human from the ancient lands (though he refuses to talk about his background, like most Suthri residents, he has exceptional skill with riding and animals, as well as a doctor/druggist. Jak's specialty is keeping horses and mules alive in the thin air of Suthri. Travellers coming northward often reach Suthri on half-dead animals, which they soon discover are little to no use in the Valt Aszen itself. Jak will buy these animals for low prices, and gradually nurse them back to strength. These he sells in turn to southward travellers, who are often in need of mounts. Now his prices are high, since nobody else has live riding or draft animals within a score or more of leagues. However, there is a limit to even Jak's abilities. He is unable to keep high-quality mounts (such as warhorses or coursers) in good shape. These deteriorate permanently to riding horse status, if not already below that state when he buys them.

As an extra service, Jak can provide northward travellers with guides and/or porters. Jak knows most everyone in town, and by 'putting out the word' can have porters and guides within a few hours. The first day's services of these people are one status level above normal in cost (this represent Jak's extra charge as middleman). Jake is unconcerned about the affairs of others, and invariably provides the services of the nearest, most available guide or porter — not necessarily the best.



## THUGS

Suthri has many small, informal groups of thugs, toughs, bullies, and cut-throats. Minor acts of violence are too commonplace for notice, murder is considered not uncommon, and unremarkable. Travellers in Suthri could encounter thugs in a variety of situations. For example, a group of toughs might demand a toll from anyone using the bridge over the Dtran River gorge. At the Resting Dwarf Inn bullies are given free drinks in return for 'bouncer' services (see description of the Inn, above). Anyone passing through, especially the rich, or a merchant, could meet thugs offering to 'protect' them from robbery. If the offer is refused, the thugs personally demonstrate what happens to those without protection. Anyone who stays overnight might be victim of a sneak attack by robbers, who try to carry off anything of value possible, including food, weapons, armor, clothing, mounts, and equipment of any sort. Even the poorest traveller is a potential victim, since the very poor in Suthri need food, and often avoid robbing wealthier travellers (who might put up too stiff a fight!).

Local residents survive by developing friendships and a system of debts owed with thugs, and by providing them with items of value in return for protection. The wealthier residents often have various groups in their pay, to play off one bunch against another. The partners in the Resting Dwarf Inn, and Jak Morselt (owner of the Traveller's Wayside) are the wealthiest citizens, and have almost everyone in their pay or obligation to some degree. Among the toughs themselves, there is no particular racial animosity, but plenty of hatreds by one individual toward another. The groups themselves are informal, often without a leader. Membership is quite variable, and is generally composed of whomever 'hangs out' together.

Thugs are generally dressed in leathers, including a jerkin or coat, with helmet or bracers added depending on status. The best of them may have an open metal helmet. Clubs of various sorts are the preferred weapon, although knives, daggers, axes, hammers, and rocks are also much in evidence. Shields are not commonly used, except by those

with military background. As a group they are coarse, bawdy, and selfish; even those with superior intelligence often act without thinking.

### Typical Human Thug

Mass and strength 1d10 + 1d6 + 2 [11], agility 2d10 [11], intelligence 2d10 [11], age 2d10 + 16 [27], social status 1d6 + 2 [5½], specializes in fighting, plus one other sphere (typically town or stealth, sometimes country). Important skills include a variety of weapon use and speed skills at adequate [42½/42½] to superior [73½/73½], with various types of clubs, knives, daggers, shortwords, axes, hammers, and whips popular. Fist fighting skills are at least adequate [53½ use, 42½ speed], often better. Underworld skill is always important, ranging from good [58] to superlative [88½]. A variety of other skills are useful, often at adequate [42½] to good [58] levels; common ones include ambush, conceal, stalk & slink, pickpocket, bribery, gambling and drinking.

### Typical Dwarfen Thug

Mass 2d6 + 1 [8], strength is mass + 1d6 + 1 [12½], agility 2d10 [11], intelligence 2d10 [11], age (2d10 × 2) + 15 [37], social status 1d6 + 2 [5½], specializes in fighting, plus one other sphere, usually stealth, sometimes town or country. Important skills include a variety of weapons at adequate [44/42½] to superior [75/73½] use/speed, typically including clubs of various sorts, knives, daggers, hand and throwing axes, hammers, rocks, and javelins. Underworld skill is important, ranging from good [58] to superlative [88½]. Many other skills are useful, including fist fighting skill at adequate [56½/42½] to good [72/58] use/speed levels, and others at adequate [42½] to good [58] levels, such as ambush, detect danger, conceal, stalk & slink, detect concealment, disarm trap, pickpocket, gambling, drinking, climbing or hunting. Typically, dwarfen thugs have no more than half these useful skills at adequate or higher levels.

### GUIDES

Adventurers travelling northward into the Valt Aszen may wish to hire a guide, who knows the trails and strongholds, and who can translate the dwarfen dialects into the common tongue of the ancient lands. Jak Morselt can arrange for a guide, and it is likely that one could be found with no more than a day of asking around town, starting at the

Inn or the Market. Three typical guide characters are given below, and are only a sampling of those available.



Varaka 'Silverfinger'

This young dwarf was born of outcast in Suthri, grew up as a street urchin, and now uses his flexible morals and handsome face in various sneaky endeavors. When he doesn't have a major project in the works, he will take guide work as a 'sideline'. Varaka is normally found lounging about with various bully groups, who enjoy his generous style and quick wit. Street urchins get a small 'commission' by finding patrons for Varaka's guide work, so anyone asking for a guide might be quickly directed to Varaka, or he to them.

Varaka is boastful, overstates his knowledge and abilities, and implies a familiarity with clan strongholds that he does not possess. Actually, he only knows the main trails and has never been inside a stronghold. Clan dwarves disdain him, as his dwarvish accent labels him as a gutter-rat. Varaka normally avoids combat, unless he is confident that the opponent is weaker, or less skillful. However, he realizes that outright flight makes him look bad, so he tends to hang back in any combat, and steps into the fray to finish off weakened opponents.

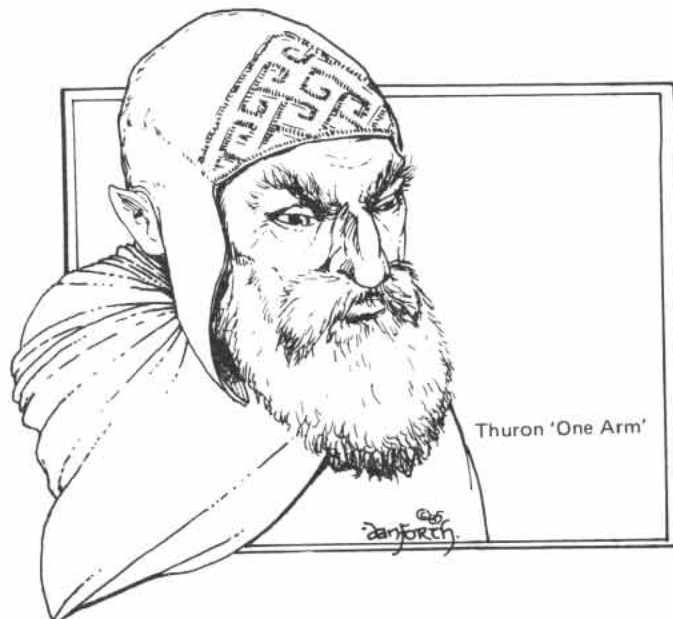
He normally goes armed with shortsword and knife, and feels the former gives him a look of prestige, so he uses it frequently in grand gestures, to spear a piece of food, etc. Outdoors he wears a fur-lined leather coat (2 armor on torso and legs), has a pack with bedroll and tent, but on journeys expects his employer to provide all other equipment, including climbing gear. He wears a couple pieces of tawdry jewelry with silver decorations, in which he implies some elemental nodes and spells are kept but that is fake, he knows no magic, and has no enchanted items.

**Character Data:** Mass 7, strength 10, agility 10, intelligence 12, age 26, social status 4, specializes in stealth and country. Skills include shortsword 28/22, knife 31/42, fist 44/47, evaluate opponent, ambush 39, detect danger 62, conceal 30, stalk & slink 30, detect concealment 19, disarm trap 27, pickpocket 18, underworld 49, diplomacy 64, haggling 59, bribery 25, gambling 48, drinking 40, climbing 30, tracking 26, wild food 27, hunting 20, leatherworker 12.

#### Thuron 'One Arm'

This older dwarf is a clan outcast, now living in Suthri, who makes a modest living from hunting and gathering. Guide work is a major sideline for him, and an important source of income. Thuron can be found either in the Market, selling meat or wild plants he's found, or at the Inn's tavern, spending what he got at the market (or taking in trade food brought to the tavern). He is quiet, reserved about himself, but with an arrogance one often finds in dwarves. The reason why he is an outcast, and has only one arm, is a subject of considerable speculation. Some say he lost it dabbling in spirit magic binding; others suggest he was responsible for some disaster within the clan stronghold that maimed him and killed others, while women hint that it was simply a birth defect, and the clan never fully accepted him. It is unknown whether he secretly wishes to return to a clan, or hates them all. As a guide, however, he can act as interpreter, and will enter a stronghold if invited.

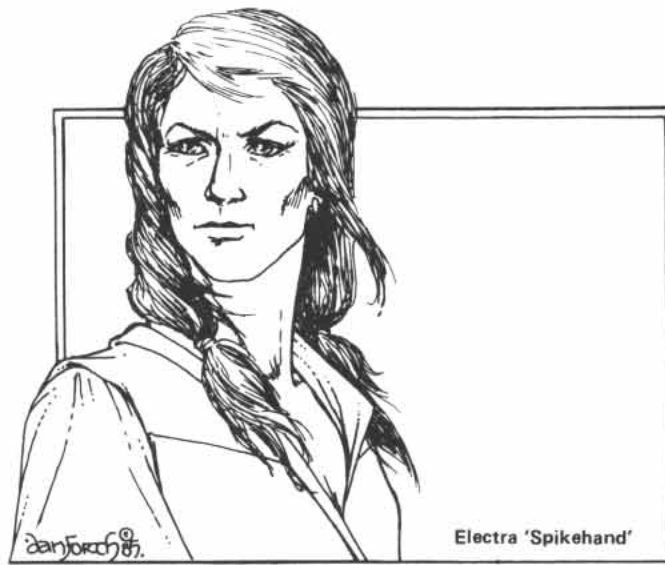
Thuron normally wears a full set of leathers, including hood, arm bracers, and heavy coat (2 armor everywhere). In his home (in Suthri) he has various climbing gear, hunting equipment, and outdoors travel



Thuron 'One Arm'

materials, along with a small horde of wealth. He recognizes that with one arm, he will never be a good climber — he will not willingly lead a vertical climb up or down, but will follow on a rope. He normally carries a hand axe and dagger as personal weapons.

**Character Data:** Mass 9, strength 12, agility 10, intelligence 9, age 49, social status 6, specializes in town and country. Skills include hand axe 39/24, dagger 42/35, evaluate opponent, detect danger 24, underworld 26, bribery 38, gambling 56, drinking 64, climbing 29, tracking 40, wild food 67, hunting 38 (prefers snares and traps).



Electra 'Spikehand'

A middle-aged human woman, she has an austere beauty in her weathered face and wire-strong frame. Nobody knows where she lives (actually, in a cave outside the village), and she appears in the village infrequently, mainly at the Market or Inn. It is common knowledge that she has friends within the dwarven clan strongholds, and so thugs avoid her. She is friendly, but very reserved, and has no lovers.

In fact, Electra loves the high peaks above all, and enjoys climbing there more than anything else in life. She is incredibly skillful, and is happy to serve as a guide and technical expert for anyone challenging the snow and ice cliffs. She is friends with clan dwarves having similar loves, whom she has met over the years. As a result, she avoids groups who look like trouble for a clan, and may abandon a group if their actions suggest hostility toward a stronghold.

Electra is exceptionally well outfitted with superlative but plain-looking cold weather clothing, which is equivalent to 1 value armor everywhere. She has unmatched climbing equipment, including an ice axe that she keeps close at hand always. The equipment also includes a rare set of dwarven climbing aids for hand and feet — metal crampons, a series of strap-on spikes for hands and feet. The ice axe can double as a weapon (equal to hand axe, but causes a thrusting wound), and her crampons can inflict nasty wounds as well (1d6 cut damage with each blow from a fist or kick). She rarely bothers to use

her dagger for anything except meals.

**Character Data:** Mass 11, strength 11, agility 16, intelligence 10, age 39, social status 7, specializes in country only. Skills include hand axe (ice axe) 42/69, dagger 29/18, fist 58/34, kick 59/31, detect danger 70, cooking 68, riding 25, swimming 52, climbing 91, tracking 28, wild food 84, hunting 33, fishing 47, tailor 26, leatherworker 20, can identify crystal, wind, and light/dark elements. However, she knows no magic spells, and never keeps a node — she believes magic is simply one of nature's beauties, and can't bear to imprison it.

## PORTERS

Draft and riding animals are normally unable to survive in the high altitudes and thin air of the Valt Aszen. As a result, porters are used to carry goods in and out of the mountains. Suthri has a surplus of low-status semi-starving residents happy to earn a bit of pocket change in addition to regular meals. A simple announcement at the Inn, the Market, or other public place will soon result in a deluge of applicants of all sizes, shapes, and ages. The most common, however, are gnomes. Over the years, as clan strongholds rise and fall, gnomes leave the mountains, or are forced out by problems or disasters. Many collect in and about Suthri, living a poor and meager existence, grateful for work (if only for food), and willing to survive almost any indignity. Many are social status one, and although free, their starvation level existence makes the lot of a slave seem luxurious!

### Typical Gnome Porter Character Data

Mass 2d6 - 1 [6], strength is mass + 2 [8], agility 3d6 + 2 [12½], intelligence 2d10 [11], age (3d10 × 2) + 7 [40], social status 1d6/2 [1½], specialized in stealth and country normally. Important skills include detect danger, concealment, and detect concealment at adequate [42½] to good [58] levels, disarm trap at adequate [44], underworld, wild food, and hunting all good [58] to superior [73½]. While a wide variety of skills would be useful to a gnome, most only have a few, such as various clubs or rocks at minor [24/28½] to adequate 39½/44 use/speed, stalk & slink at minor [28½] to good [59½], and cooking, tracking, and/or fishing at minor [27] to good [58].

## BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Many things could bring the players' characters into this region of adventure. A selection of such situations are listed below. A game-master could easily invent more, or add variations to the ones given.

In a continuing campaign, the situation includes suggestions for how the situation can fit into everyday encounters, to help the game-master 'direct' the campaign toward this adventure.

If this adventure is used alone, or to start a campaign, the game-master is advised to begin in the village of Suthri (see that section). Each situation below includes a possible encounter with characters currently staying in Suthri. This encounter can be skipped (of course) if the adventure begins elsewhere.

### The Ambassador

Ralls Leofren is a Knight Banneret to a Duke of the ancient kingdoms. He was commissioned to seek an alliance with the mountain dwarves (centuries ago the Duchy had such an alliance, and the Duke suddenly finds himself in need of allies again. Ralls has recently inherited his title. Besides being in no position to refuse, in fact he sees the task as a way to further himself, as well as help the Duke. Sir Ralls must leave most of his retainers at home on the estate, to protect his knighthood from distant relatives who thought they should have inherited the title instead. He can only take his half-brother Dayan Turham; and his young squire Lufkin Hurd. Sir Ralls asks these two to hire bodyguards/retainers for the journey.

In a campaign, the players' characters could encounter squire Lufkin or Dayan in the village square, or any tavern or inn, hiring retainers (Sir Ralls' estates happen to be nearby). Despite the popularity of such billets in general, the journey is long and far into the mountains — no others are willing to undertake such service at the moment. Once hired, the characters are introduced to Sir Ralls, outfitted in his livery, and provided with simple equipment appropriate to their current status. Then the party takes the high road to the Dtran River, and thence into the Valt Aszen.

In a single adventure, the players' characters in Suthri notice the commotion caused by the grand entrance of a nobleman and his two retainers at the town's tavern. Sir Ralls has reached the Valt Aszen. He has not yet found acceptable retainers, must hire someone, and the players' characters appear far more trustworthy than the general rabble and scum of Suthri.

### Sir Ralls Leofren

Sir Ralls is a young nobleman. He grew up amid noble intrigue and high class life, and is unfamiliar with wilderness and high adventure. Still, he is confident and eager to meet any challenge. He is sure that meeting the 'king of the dwarves' will take just a couple weeks, including successful conclusion of negotiations for a treaty. Any advice to the contrary he ignores as 'defeatist'.

Sir Ralls travels on his courser, typically wears a fancy breastplate, and often carries his closed, plumed helm under his arm among the public to help show his status (slings it over a saddlehorn when traveling, gives it to his squire when relaxing). On his belt are his broadsword (cutting longsword) and dagger. The rest of his fighting gear is packed on his warhorse, and in the care of his squire. This includes the rest of his knightly plate armor, a self bow, lance, and heavy shield. Sir Ralls is an aristocrat's aristocrat, and does not seek tests of arms to prove it. He knows his skills are not those of a master, and prefers to leave fighting to subordinates. However, he is not cowardly, and will fight if the situation requires it.

**Character Data:** Mass 12, strength 12, agility 9, intelligence 10, age 26, social status 18, specialized in town, leadership/administration. Skills include longsword 28/34, dagger 19/15, heavy shield 31/32, medium bow 26/9, detect danger 42, diplomacy 39, bribery 35, drinking 42, riding 71, politician 53, economist/administrator 27, personnel management 28, can read and write, speaks common human tongue well, and knows northern elvish also.



### Dayan Turham

A bastard son and half-brother to Sir Ralls. He normally acts as a loyal advisor and bodyguard for Sir Ralls, and steps forward to protect him from violence. Dayan will naturally assume command of any hired bodyguards, including the adventurers.

Dayan travels and relaxes in quilted leather under-armor garments (similar to leather armor, -2 protection everywhere), and in battle or other dangerous situations dons a mail coat, greaves, and closed helm to improve armor everywhere except his arms. He rides a warhorse with leather half bards, to which a metal chanfron is added in battle or in danger. His weapons are always close to hand, and include a saber (longsword that cuts and thrusts), dagger, heavy shield, and lance when mounted.

**Character Data:** Mass 11, strength 11, agility 12, intelligence 13, age 29, social status 16, specializes in fighting and town. Skills include longsword 45/49, dagger 62/29, heavy shield 39/52, lance 36/15, fist 42/34, evaluate opponent, detect danger 44, diplomacy 21, haggling 28, bribery 27, drinking 24, riding 69, climbing 18, warlord 21.

### Lufkin Hurd

A squire to Sir Ralls. He is an enthusiastic teenager on his first adventure. Lufkin dreams of heroics and ignores danger because he is too inexperienced to be afraid! He is tongue-tied except to those under age 20 (who he considers his peers, regardless of status), is unsure of himself socially, but tends toward precipitous and sometimes stupid actions. Real or imagined slights from anyone of lower social status make him reach for his sword, but toward those of higher status he maintains a respectful attitude, unless Sir Ralls' is also impuned.

Lufkin is proud of his fighting gear, and wears it constantly. This includes an open helm, mail coat, and leather boots (to the thigh, for leg armor of -2), plus a broadsword (cutting longsword), dagger, and light shield. On the road he is responsible for Sir Ralls' armor, arms and warhouse when not in use. However, Lufkin is also expected to serve his lord, and thus stays in or near his knight's rooms, rather than in the stable.

**Character Data:** Mass 11, strength 11, agility 13, intelligence 9, age 18, social status 15, specialized in fighting and town. Skills include longsword 33/27, dagger 21/13, heavy shield 29/28, gambling 20, drinking 18, dancing 22 riding 36.

### The Merchant

Tekla Beylard is a hard-bitten and enterprising merchant mistress. She is always looking for new profits, and recently acquired inform-

ation about the mountain dwarves, including which road to take to the Valt Aszen. She is now outfitting a trip there, and is hiring bodyguards. Tekla is married to Nogrr the magician, and he uses a trow pledge to insure loyalty from hired bodyguards. The trow is 'to protect Tekla, Nogrr and their possessions from attack or theft, until both return to this point' (the starting point of the trip).

In a campaign, the player's characters could encounter Tekla and/or Nogrr almost anywhere, although such merchants would normally prefer to use a town or city with dependable law enforcement as their base (merchants prefer such areas, since it means they needn't worry so much about their possessions being stolen!). Tekla or Nogrr would recruit by announcement in the square, passing the word at inns and taverns, or by inquiries to the officers and noncoms of the local military forces (who may know of mercenaries or out-of-work soldiers).

In a single adventure, the gamemaster could have Tekla and Nogrr ride or walk into Suthri alone, somewhat bruised. They had a bodyguard, but were ambushed in the river gorge on the previous day, and just managed to escape. The bodyguards were killed or fled, and so Tekla is looking for more.

#### Tekla Beylard

A forthright woman with a no-nonsense business attitude. On the other hand, with no invitation she may strike up conversations, and often 'gives away' news and information in casual conversation. Her talkative style has helped her make friends in many places. Tekla tends to take Nogrr for granted, and orders him around as a matter of course. She will be motherly toward any human adventurers under age forty, and may take a romantic interest in a human male adventurer of age forty to fifty who shows himself to be honest, competent, and with strength of character.

Tekla dresses in a long tunic and light leather riding pants (does not count as armor), with a belt knife and no other weapons. She considers her business to be trading, not fighting, and avoids combat. If attacked, she uses Eyedust or Fear to try to repulse the enemy (or simply runs away). If that fails, her 'last ditch' escape is normally a Soar spell. Actually, in most combats, she simply relies on Nogrr to dispose with the opposition. In truly important trade deals she may use Eavesdrop where it is valuable, and keeps Longspeech as a means of summoning help from Nogrr.

**Character Data:** Mass 14, strength 13, agility 11, intelligence 14, age 42, social status 15, specialized in town and leadership/administration. Skills include fist 26/37, kick 32/19, knife 30/21, conceal 57, detect concealment 41, underworld 32, diplomacy 52, haggling 62, cooking 71, wild food 44, scribe 38, tailor 18, jeweler 23, economist/administrator 88, personnel management 52, she can read and write, speaks common human, and knows the international trading sign-language. She can identify and knows the basic spells for wind, and has wind nodes aligned to each possible spell carried about her person (usually in jewelry).



#### Nogrr Beylard

Tekla's husband. He is devoted to her, and follows her instructions like a servant. Nogrr protects Tekla with his magic, and is in fact far more formidable than she, but he either doesn't realize this, or does but still worships her. It never occurs to Nogrr that his wife might develop a romantic attachment to anyone else. He likes to be mysterious, and minimizes his use of magic. Of course, he never hesitates to use it in defense of Tekla or himself. When using magic, he will turn first to his metal dagger (in combat or crystal dagger (for help and healing), and only if these are inappropriate will he then use aligned nodes.

Nogrr dresses in long robes, and wears no arms or armor except his metal and crystal daggers. The metal dagger has Temper (passive enchantment) for a breakage value of 12, and enchanted with Torch, Shatter, Clarity, Slipside, Chop, Eyedust, and Blindeye (all active ranged). The crystal dagger is weaker than normal (breakage value of 5), and is enchanted with Cauterize, Excise, Salve, Purify, Splint, Resuscitate, and Cure (all active ranged). Any other elemental magic spell is available to him in an aligned node.

**Character Data:** Mass 11, strength 10, agility 8, intelligence 15, age 37, social status 15 (shares wealth with Tekla), specialized in magic only. Skills include dagger 43/22, detect danger 71, diplomacy 45, riding 48, scribe 84, economist/administrator 26, has regional knowledge of many human lands, speaks the common human language, northern elvish, and dwarvish (related to and understandable in the Valt Aszen), and can read and write. He can identify and know spells for all seven elements, and has spiritual knowledge as well.

#### The Bard

In local tavern Jylo Epsel, a halfling bard, offers interesting tales and news about a fabulous treasure — for the price of a drink and dinner. Although Jylo orders the best, this should still be within normal means, and not cause the adventurers much trouble. Jylo's tales are about dwarves of the Valt Aszen, in particular a long-gone clan with a fabulous horde, now buried in their stronghold by an earthquake. If pressed for more information, he will hint that he knows something about dwarven treasure hordes today in the Valt Aszen — something important. If not pressed, he will subtly volunteer such news.

In a scenario starting in Suthri, or some campaigns, he simply offers information for a price. The price is that the adventurers jointly cover his outstanding bills in town. These are very large, and will reduce by one social status level half of the adventurers (the half with a higher status). The information he offers is the news that a clan stronghold was recently decimated by the same type of earthquake that destroyed the ancient clan, and that ripe pickings in treasure are to be had — if one moves quickly. From his memory (he claims to have visited the stronghold years ago) he can draw a sketch map of the trail to the stronghold through the Valt Aszen, and how to get to the treasure room. He will only provide such maps when his bills are indeed settled.



In some campaigns, Jylo will instead offer to lead the adventurers into the Valt Aszen, to a stronghold he knows is now deserted, due to earthquake and winter famine. He suggests that all share in the dangers and the treasure, although as leader gets a double share due to his knowledge (his gain is one status level higher than normal, all others one status level lower than normal) — but there is still enough wealth so everyone can come out a noble (according to Jylo). If the adventurers are interested but refuse the double deal, the gamemaster may ultimately have Jylo offer equal shares instead (depending on how desperate Jylo is at that time — see below).

Regardless of the specific offer, Jylo is very convincing, and either the leader or the most influential character in the group will automatically 'buy' the deal and encourage the other adventurers to agree as well. The gamemaster will inform this player of it (sometimes by a secret not). This is because Jylo has used his Charm spell on that character. This is a spirit magic spell, and exhausts all four of Jylo's spirit nodes, reducing all characteristics by 4, and all skills by 40. Therefore, Jylo will be very tired afterward, retire to bed, sleep six hours, and then awaken the adventurers for an early start!

#### Jylo Epsel

The halfling minstrel and bard, is a happy, friendly fellow who sings

songs well and tells interesting tales for the price of his dinner. He deals in information, gossip, and news of all sorts — sometimes embellished or with interpretations added, to make it more interesting. He has excellent taste in clothes, food, drink, and lodging. Jylo constantly lives above his means, always needs help to stave off creditors, and more than once must make a midnight escape before the constabulary place him in debtor's prison. Thus he has travelled widely, but is rarely welcome to return anywhere. Jylo's good manners and grand style make him popular with the opposite sex, especially younger, gullible females with dreams of a better life. These liaisons with scullery maids, serving women, chambermaids, etc. are a prime source of news to him, and help him stay minutes ahead of the news. He always promises to take them to a better life, and always leaves without them. In short, he is a rascal and a rogue, but a nice one. He abhors violence, and believes a quick escape is infinitely preferable to crossing swords.

Jylo learned many secrets of spirit magic in his youth, and makes good use of them in everyday life. However, he is careful with these skills, and only uses them to slightly improve or enhance normal activities, to remain undetected. All his spirit-magic is alignment cast, and the favorite spell is Charm. At times he may use Illusion to make himself appear slightly more attractive to women, since even if they see through the illusion, they won't see much difference, and not suspect magic is involved!

**Character Data:** Mass 7, strength 9, agility 15, intelligence 16, age 29, social status varies from 5 to 12 (game master note: make it about equivalent to the average, or a point above, for the party of adventurers), and the apparent status is 2 - 4 levels higher. He specializes in town and general knowledge. Specific skills include fists 26/29, kick 25/18, detect danger 82, conceal 34, detect concealment 47, disarm trap 41, pickpocket 39, underworld 28, diplomacy 90, bribery 34, gambling 53, drinking 67, dancing 51, locksmith 28, musician 65, politician 42, knows most regions and races, speaks common human, northern elvish, dwarvish, halfling dialects, and others, has spiritual knowledge and knows all humors, advantaged with water but avoids elemental magic.

### The Scholar

King Yaruth recently ascended to the throne of Corbel, in the Old Kingdoms. Himself a coarse soldier, Yaruth was advised to attract philosophers to his court, and practice ancient arts and rites, to enhance the legitimacy of his regime. Among others, the dwarven scholar Havamel Ynglarm was mentioned as a name respected throughout the ancient lands. Unfortunately, trouble with rebels in the eastern marches has distracted the king with more pressing problems.

However, one of the royal concubines, Lyndia, has remained interested in the scholar. Famous for her charm, and the enemies she made among the old nobility, Lyndia is a beautiful but selfish power-seeker with few morals or scruples. Right now the King favors other concubines, and Lyndia needs a way to get back in favor. She has discovered that Havamel Ynglarm returned to his ancestral clan home — in the Valt Aszen. She plans to journey there, and charm him into returning with her to the court. Due to her many enemies, she seeks a bodyguard for the journey to the Valt Aszen and back.

In a campaign, any players who are nobles, have noble friends, recently performed a service for a noble, or were involved in any court intrigues, will hear of King Yaruth and his problems. The kingdom of Corbel could be conveniently nearby, and Lyndia the concubine would be in the tavern district (perhaps renewing old acquaintances), looking for bravos and bodyguards. She will try to charm some brawny but not too bright warrior into helping her, and bringing his friends — by intimating massive rewards from King Yaruth, and exaggerating her influence at court, perhaps by suggestions of positions in the royal bodyguard, officerships, or perhaps even titles of nobility.

In a single adventure, Lyndia has engaged bodyguards, but when she reaches Suthri has a falling out with the strong but dumb soldier leading them. She is now stranded alone in Suthri, and will work her wiles (as above) to acquire a new group to get her to Ynglarm's stronghold, and back home again with the scholar.

### Lyndia, the Royal Concubine

A beautiful woman who wears court dress in the city, or well-made but sturdy clothes in the country (the latter are leather, and provide 1 point of armor everywhere). All are designed to show her figure to best advantage. She normally carries four knives hidden about her person, and various aligned nodes in her jewelry. She has few morals, and none when her own advantage is concerned. Lyndia makes the most of her attractiveness to men, and this combined with successful use of diplomacy and personnel management skills is the equal of the Charm spirit magic spell!

She will avoid combat, often by appealing to other men in the area

to hold back the attacker (she is especially good at the 'beautiful, helpless female in distress' routine). If the fellow is just a pest, she may use a Slipside or Eyedust spell to make him look the buffoon. If violence cannot be avoided, but the opponent appears unskillful, she may use a knife; against a more skillful opponent she will try the following spells, in order: Flash, Blindeye, Fear.

**Character Data:** Mass 8, strength 8, agility 18, intelligence 14, age 23, social status 18, specialized in town and magic. Skills include knife 44/69, evaluate opponent, diplomacy 72, haggling 34, bribery 45, dancing 91, musician 88, personnel management 63, can identify and knows spells for Water, Wind, and Light/Darkness. She has aligned nodes for all spells of these elements, but uses them in moderation, to preserve them and conceal her interest and abilities in magic.



### Havamel Ynglarm

The scholar has retired to his clan stronghold in the Valt Aszen. However, after living a rich and respected life in the ancient lands, he is finding the conservative and harsh dwarven existence tiresome. Unless grossly insulted, he will probably succumb to Lyndia's invitation to return. Havamel normally wears rich scholarly robes and no armor, although he owns a suit of half plate with a closed helm, along with a hand axe and hammer — all of which he keeps in his baggage. On his person he carries a dagger, writing materials, brushes for painting, and a few rare books or scrolls that currently interest him. He is constantly looking for new reading material, and may pay well (status 4 - 8 treasure) for such. Despite his age, Havamel is still intelligent, wry, and not invulnerable to Lyndia's considerable charms.

**Character Data:** Mass 7, strength 8, agility 5, intelligence 18, age 82, social status 16, specialized in town and general knowledge. Skills include hand axe 39/24, hammer 36/22, dagger 40/47, evaluate opponent, detect danger 38, conceal 79, detect concealment 84, disarm trap 65, diplomacy 52, haggling 47, bribery 42, gambling 69, drinking 73, climbing 48, tracking 29, wild food 32, hunting 22, fishing 19, scribe 94, artist 72, knows all elemental magic spells except wind, but can identify non, has spiritual knowledge skills, knows most regions of the ancient lands, as well as most languages, and can read and write.

### Other Beginnings

A variety of other 'beginnings' can be used to start adventures into this region. A few of these are outlined below:

#### Mercenaries

A dwarf from one of the Valt Aszen clans is seeking to hire mercenaries. His clan anticipates renewed fighting with goblins, orcs or another clan (take your pick!), and needs reinforcements from abroad. This type of recruiting can occur in Suthri, or more distant towns, villages, or cities. Taverns, inns, village squares, and anywhere close to the barracks of guardsmen, militia, etc. are likely places for such a meeting. Naturally, the dwarven clan is trying to avoid parting with any of their treasure, so most of the payment is in superior arms and armor, made by the clan for the mercenaries, plus basic living and travelling expenses. The term of service is only until the middle (or late) fall.

#### Recover the Artifact

An ancient, enchanted artifact is in the treasure horde of a clan. Although its magic is not very powerful, it happens to also contain spirit nodes of a unique humor. A wizard and spirit magician arranges a meeting with the adventurers, and commissions them to recover this artifact. Alternately, the wizard/magician might simply hire the adventurers to 'scout out' the region and return with maps of the valley and the interior of the stronghold, with the actual theft to occur in the following year. It is possible that the wizard/magician might use a Charm (spirit magic) spell on each adventurer in turn to accomplish the goal, and an Illusion spell to make them think he has an immense treasure to offer them as a reward. These same spells would make the adventurers willing to take a Trow pledge to accomplish the job.

## Assassin

For decades two clans in the Valt Aszen have been involved in a deadly feud. In the last few years, one of these clans has been decimated, and is faced with extinction. In desperation, the clan has decide to hire 'outsider' assassins to kill the opposition's champion of champions, or its clan spokesman (gamemaster's choice). Contact and hiring is made outside the region, and the assassins will collect their pay (a substantial treasure) when they deliver the head of the victim to a pre-arranged place on a certain date, in the village of Suthri. The dwarf hiring the assassins will be willing to take a Trow pledge that the pay will be in Suthri on the appointed date, in exchange for the head.

## Passing Through

Beyond the Far Aszen plateau is the Northwest Badlands region, home for goblin and orc clans. The Valt Aszen is the best route over the Lrfunj Alps to or from the badlands. The adventurers could be commissioned to rescue a kidnapped princess or noble heir from the badlands, to assassinate an orcish warlord (who threatens to unite the clans), or any number of other missions. To get into and out of the badlands, they must travel through the Valt Aszen. An abbreviated form of adventure results, with the information here simply used as special events during the journey.

## Raiders

One interesting change from the usual adventuring is to have players be goblins or orcs. They are all part of a band coming out of the Northwest Badlands (enter the Valt Aszen over the Far Aszen plateau), whose sole purpose is to raid a dwarven stronghold. The players' characters can indulge in the worst sorts of evil. Despite an emphasis on bloodshed, pillage and plunder, there are other opportunities for role-play in such an adventure: various sorts of problems and arguments could easily occur within the raiding band. Neither goblins nor orcs are known for their discipline or obedience. Leadership decisions and especially the division of any plunder could cause serious problems.

## THE VALT ASZEN

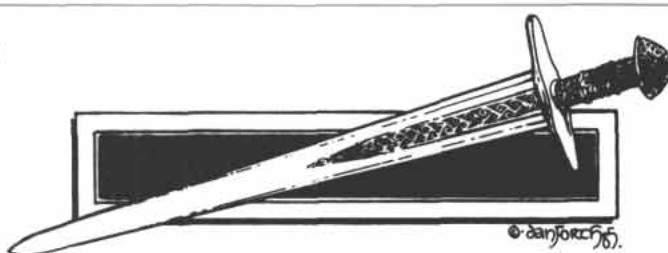
### General Geography

The Lrfunj Alps are a huge mountain chain running from southwest to northeast. They form an impenetrable 'back wall' to the Old Kingdoms, the traditional heartland of humans and their ambitions. Thus most men enter the alps by travelling northward and/or westward. The Lrfunj soar to 25,000 feet, and have many summits in the 18 - 22,000 foot range. Snow and ice is perpetual at the summits, except where the knife-edge ridges are peaks are so steep that it is bare rock. Only the best mountaineers, in the best weather conditions, can climb them.

Monsoon winds from the western ocean routinely provide a heavy fall and winter against the southern slopes, resulting in vegetation to remarkably high altitudes. No equivalent winds hit the northern slopes, which tumble down into the dry wilderness of the northwestern badlands, inhabited by random groups of orcs and goblins for the most part.

Many small passes exist in the Lrfunj, but most are over 10,000 ft. elevation, difficult to find, impassable in all but mid summer, and then very treacherous. It is impossible to move horse, much less wagons or carts, through such. The Valt Aszen is the only exception, rising to just 8,000 ft., and protected in its main vale with a dense forest of stunted pine. The valley itself runs from the deep Dtran River gorge northward, along the east shoulder of the Midgard Range, then westward along the south slope of the Forgarm Range to Mothurn Pass, the high point (8,047 ft.), beyond which is the high plateau of Far Aszen (a wind-swept plateau with light forests in its more protected vales and gullies). To the west of the Midgard Range a 'false pass' runs up the Thunor River, although mountaineers sometimes cross a high saddle (Lofars Col) to get to the Far Aszen plateau.

The entire Valt Aszen is a region of striking appearance. Mountain-sides soar thousands of feet upward, with knife-edge ridges, sharp peaks, and the blinding blue-white of snow and ice sparkling at the top. In the valleys streams and rivers have cut deep gorges, and stunted or scrub pine (rarely over 20 feet tall) is everywhere along the lower levels, although bare rock outcrops are not uncommon. It is a region of forbidding natural splendor and extremely high altitudes. Characters who do not acclimatize themselves will be very short of breath in the valley, and have serious troubles if they exert themselves in higher elevations. Altitude sickness is easily cured by moving to lower elevations again. Due to altitude and climate, most horses cannot survive a journey through the Valt Aszen. Only a few mountain ponies are available, and then only at extremely high prices (status 1d6 + 12). These are used mostly as special beasts to help with light burdens — the normal method for transporting goods is porters.



## Climate

**Summer** is the mildest season in the Valt Aszen, and the one where both residents and animals are most active. Full sunshine reaches the valley floor, storms are usually restricted to the higher peaks, with rain the likely result below. Storms themselves are usually brief (less than a day often), and temperatures during the night rarely drop below freezing in the valley. Hunting is very good, as animals are very active, preparing for the fall and winter.

**Fall** is heralded by the monsoons winds, which curl up the Lrfunj Alps and arrive here from the southwest or south. These storms become violent within a few weeks, and each one lasts longer and longer. Valley temperatures drop below freezing at night, while sunlight reaches the lower elevations less and less (assuming the weather is clear). On the high peaks the situation is often dangerous, due to high winds, and the risk of a long blizzard immobilizing the party in an uncomfortable (if not fatal) location.

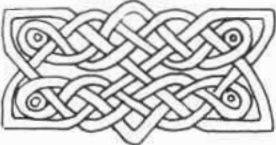
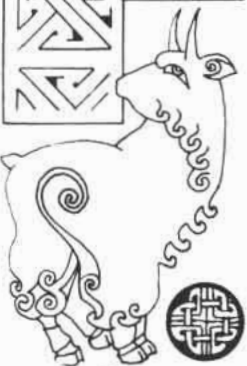
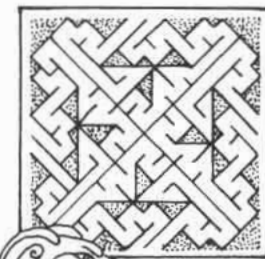
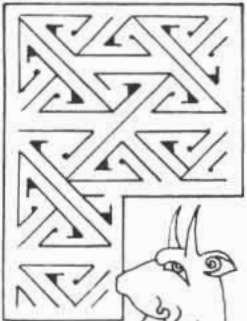
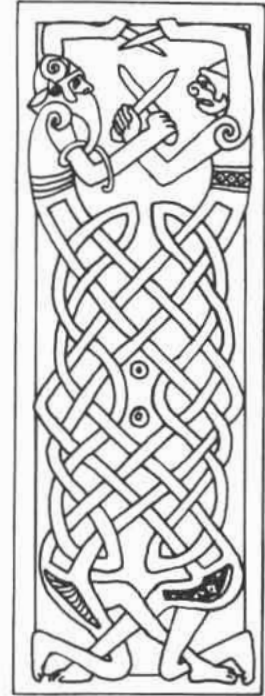
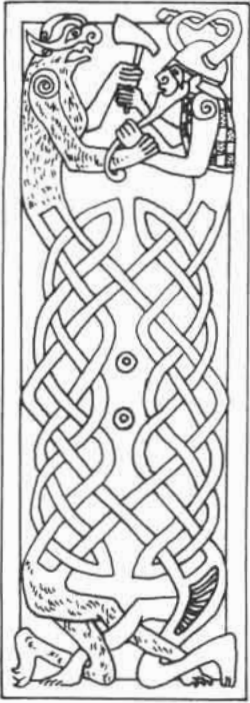
**Winter** is a season of continual snow and driving blizzards. Snow depth becomes very great in the valley — it is easy to get lost, and serious dangers are covered over. Winter blizzards can last a week or two, and almost always kill anyone in the open, unless they are extremely well prepared, have superb survival skills, and more than a little luck. Dwarves are more sensible and remain in their strongholds for the entire season. Sunlight rarely reaches the valley, usually it is in a twilight reflected from the shining ice on the peaks above. Temperatures are always below freezing, and become arctic at night.

**Spring** is a period of conflicting weather, as the summer winds swirl in to replace the westerlies. Storms can still be violent, but are shorter, and the average temperature increases. Avalanche danger is greatest in the spring. As the valley snows begin to melt during the middle of the season, dwarves and animals begin moving about, clearing away the winter ravages, and preparing for the busy summer once more.

Most travellers try to arrive in the Valt Aszen in the late spring or early summer, so they can cross the pass in the best conditions. Travel in early or mid spring is both difficult and very dangerous, especially on the upper elevations. Travel in the fall is increasingly dangerous as the fall advances, while travel during the winter is suicidal.

## MAP KEY

|  |            |               |
|--|------------|---------------|
|  | PEAK       |               |
|  | MOUNTAINS  |               |
|  | HILLS      |               |
|  | FOREST     | 1 Suthri      |
|  |            | 2 Thrasir     |
|  |            | 3 Frar'sagnir |
|  |            | 4 Dolgdis     |
|  |            | 5 Vilrylis    |
|  |            | 6 uz'Rhom     |
|  |            | 7 Kranttigz   |
|  | ROAD       |               |
|  | TRAIL      |               |
|  | GLACIER    |               |
|  | RIVER      |               |
|  | STRONGHOLD |               |
|  | TOWN       |               |
|  | BRIDGE     |               |



The information below refers to the regional map of the Valt Aszen. Use appropriate elevation and vegetation classes to determine how many hours are necessary to cross each league (see *Swordbearer*).

**High Peak Areas:** These are the steep knife-edge ridges that form mountain ranges. The dark line shows the ridge itself, the triangles the major peaks. The ridges are perpetually covered with snow and ice (vegetation class 0), except cliffsides so steep nothing but bare rock shows. Climbing up the side of the ridgeline is generally impossible, since vertical pitches in the thousands of feet are beyond the abilities of most anyone, especially given the altitude and weather conditions. Travel along the ridgeline is possible only to skillful mountaineers with technical climbing skill, which is needed each and every league. With the best of luck and skill, about one league a day can be traversed.

The strong winds and high altitudes prevent most flying (most flying animals move at lower elevations anyway). Flying is possible only with magic aid to counteract the wind, provide additional lift, and help resuscitate and refresh the flyer due to the thin air.

**Major Mountain Areas:** These are the lower slopes of the great ridgeline ranges. About 50% of the terrain is barren (1) in the summer, the rest (mostly on upper elevations) is snow and ice (0) where traversable. During the winter, snow and ice extend over everything. Technical climbing skills are not always needed, but without them travel time often doubles or triples. The terrain is so rugged that speed is not greatly affected by whether one goes up, down, or sideways on the slopes.

The two glaciers (one on the south face of Thjofr, one in the southwestern bowl between Baldrvig and Uroror) have even surfaces, treat as barren (1) ground. However, at the lower end of ice the glacier gradually fractures into an icefall. Icefalls are the most dangerous of mountain terrain, with hidden crevasses everywhere, and unstable ice slabs that can collapse and bury whole parties without warning. Travel takes nine hours per league, and without use of both successful technical climbing and mountaineering experience, it is very likely that misfortune will overtake someone (usually by falling into a crevasse hidden by snow).

**Broken Country Valley Floor Areas:** This is the 'base' of the Valt Aszen, and the countryside normally used for travel. It is covered with dense scrub and stunted pine forest (6), although 20% of the area opens onto clear ledges (4), while another 10% is deep sheltered vales that are densely forested (7). Winter snows lie deep, halving normal speeds unless a trail is cleared, and making it very easy to get lost.

**Trails:** These are the frequently used routes of the dwarves, when travelling. The trails are only passable to horses if they are led, and then extra time may be needed to help the animal over steep parts. Trails are fairly obvious in summer, but are not marked (dwarves know them by memory). In other seasons the uninitiated will rapidly lose the trail without tracking skill or a guide.

**Paths:** These are similar to trails, but completely impassable to horses, and every one to three leagues require technical climbing to surmount a vertical pitch or two (50 ft. to 100 ft. up). Those with tracking or climbing skill can follow a path, since it represents the easier way up or down. Paths are not often used — one will probably see more goats than dwarves on them.

**Stream & River Gorges** (stream shown to left, river to right): These are all very swift and ice-cold, but not very wide or deep. However, most all are in deep gorges twenty to one hundred feet down, with technical climbing required to go down one side, then again to climb the other. With such climbing equipment, rigging a rope over the stream or river itself at the bottom of the gorge is relatively easy. In the winter or spring snow bridges may (or may not) provide a safe route over the very narrow parts of the gorge.

**The Dtran River Gorge** (southeastern corner of the region only: A major river, and this gorge is generally hundreds of feet deep. The upper levels of the gorge often form ledges that make travel easy for a half league or league at a time.

**Bridges:** These are rope-only affairs built and maintained by the nearest dwarven clan. From the middle spring to early fall they are constantly maintained, and it is not uncommon to meet a dwarf at one. Tolls may be charged to strangers, especially non-dwarves. When the monsoon storms arrive in the fall, maintenance ceases until next spring, and the bridges rapidly deteriorate. In the winter and early spring some are swept away by wind, ice, or avalanche, and must be completely rebuilt.

The bridge over the Dtran River at Suthri is slightly larger, is still of rope, but has wood slats. Animals and carts may cross here, but only if unloaded (the cargo is carried across by porters). Residents of Suthri with the strongest weapon-arm usually control the bridge, maintain it, and charge tolls to all.

All bridge tolls are relatively small (affordable to anyone of status 5 or 6, or higher).

**Clan Stronghold:** This is the location of a dwarven hall, usually on a mountainside, cliff face, or ridge crest. All the strongholds are incredibly old, have natural caves with 'finishing' work inside, plus external stone fortifications. The six strongholds of the major clans are Krantigz, uz'Rhom, Vilrylis, and Frar'sagnir in the main valley, Dogdis at the head of the Thunor river valley, and Thrasir a few leagues from the village of Suthri.

**Village:** The only village is that of Suthri, in the southeast of the region. It is the usual gateway into the region, but is mainly populated by outcasts from the dwarven clans, and misfits from the human lands to the south. Various services to traders and travellers are offered, usually at exorbitant rates, and there is no central administration and law. It has an unsavory and very cutthroat reputation, which suits the dwarven clans (as it discourages outsiders from bothering them!).

## Country Skills

Climate and geography affect the normal use of some country skills. A 'factor' is used to represent this. Multiply the normal skill rating of a character by the factor to determine his or her actual skill in this region. If the character has general knowledge skill for this region, add 0.1 to the normal factor. For example, if a character is seeking wild food in the valley forest during the fall, and normally has a skill of 43, the character will instead have a skill of  $43 \times 0.8$ , or 34.4 (rounded to 34). If the character had knowledge of the region, the skill would be  $43 \times 0.9$ , or 38.7 (rounded to 39).

## Wild Food

Skill can only be used in valley floor pine forests; factors are 0.7 in spring, 0.9 in summer, 0.8 in fall, 0.2 in winter.

## Hunting

Skill can be used in valley floor, or on mountainside with an additional 0.6 applied to the normal total. Factors are 0.9 in spring, 1.1 in summer, 0.8 in fall, 0.4 in winter. Trapping is common, other hunting requires use of hand-hurled or longer ranged missile weapons.

## Fishing

Skill can only be used on valley floor rivers; factors are 0.6 in spring, 0.8 in summer, 0.5 in fall, 0.2 in winter.

## Magic Nodes

Magicians searching for magic nodes will find this region rich in crystal and wind, depleted in fire and wood. The only exception is the valley floor areas of the pine forest, in which case the richness is in light/darkness while fire is depleted. See *Swordbearer* rules for details. Node hunting will involve all the normal rigors and dangers of travelling about the countryside, which can be imposed by the gamemaster at will.

## TRAVELING

Below are situations or events that could occur to a party of adventurers traveling through the Valt Aszen. It is suggested that the gamemaster simply select and apply likely events during the course of the adventure, in ways calculated to keep the action constant, and the danger everpresent.

## Mountaineering

Continual reference is made to technical climbing skills in this region, especially on the mountainsides and high peaks. This skill requires climbing gear (a social status 6 item, normally, but inferior grades at status 4 or 5 might be available in Suthri). Typical equipment includes 100 feet of stout rope, small stakes to anchor it (usually wood, metal if dwarven equipment, or high status equipment modelled after such), and an ice axe. This is similar to a small pickaxe, and can be used in combat similar to a hand axe, but the damage ability is only 1d6, and the wound type is thrusting. Breakage number does not change — the axe is rather strong.

A players' character can only justify suggesting (or if a leader, ordering) use of the techniques below by a successful use of climbing skill (to 'remember' that technique), a very hard intelligence test (to think it up independently), and/or general knowledge of an alpine region (to 'remember' seeing others doing it). When and if an accident occurs, characters or the leader will have a new opportunity to 'think up' or 'remember' the method of avoiding it. In this way, the gamemaster can enforce the distinction between a player's knowledge (which may be rather good regarding alpine climbing) and a character's knowledge (which may be very poor).

## Roped Travel

Knowledgeable mountaineers know that it is safer to travel roped

together, since if one falls, the others on the rope can hold him from falling far (a fall of 1d6 stories before the rope holds is typical). If too many fall at once, there is a chance that all will be lost, but this is very uncommon. Use of this technique requires most, but not all, members to have climbing gear. The leader of the rope is normally the most experienced climber, since the others will simply follow his or her route.

The main disadvantage of roped travel is that it is slower. Add an extra ½ hour per league to normal travel time, and then test either agility or climbing skill of each character on the rope (character him/herself can choose whichever), each failure adds another ½ hour to travel time for that league. Extremely knowledgeable mountaineers (make a second test of this) know that two or more ropes, each with two to four persons, is both safer and obviously faster than one long rope with many people on it.

### Vertical Free Climbing

This is the usual climbing method up or down vertical faces, with each person moving simultaneously. Typically, the best climber leads, and the rest follow — automatically if on a rope. As a result, the leader's climbing skill can be added to that of each one following, since they gain benefits from his or her original choice of the 'line' (route) up or down.

Climbs are organized into 'pitches' of 50 to 100 feet in length, with one skill check need per pitch by each person on it. Each pitch takes about an hour if the skill use is successful. If it fails, another attempt and another hour is needed (perhaps less if the character didn't fail by much). However, in the event of failure; another skill check is needed to see if the character falls — failure here means that not only is the time lost, but the character suffers a fall.

If a character falls while going up or down without a rope, an agility and a strength test are taken. If he/she passes both it was a minor slip, suffer one point of wounds to right or left leg (1d6, 1 - 3 right, 4 - 6 left). If he/she passes just one or the other, fall 1d10 stories (1d6 if the gamemaster is feeling nice). If he/she fails both, it is a very long fall, with very serious injuries or death, at the discretion of the gamemaster.

If a character falls while on a rope, he or she goes 1d6 stories unless at the top (highest person on the rope), in which case he or she goes 1d10 stories instead. The gamemaster could ask all others on the rope to make a strength test, and in the unlikely event that over half of the remainder fail this test, the whole rope slips down the slope to a very long and serious fall.

### Vertical Belay Climbing

This is a more sophisticated technique, used in going up or down vertical faces. The general procedure is similar to vertical free climbing, except only one person climbs on the pitch at a time. The others remain stationary and anchored at the top and bottom of the pitch, or sometimes on its middle. The stationary ones are ready to hold the rope should any fall occur and make sure there is a minimum slack on the line at all times. If a person falls from a pitch, and anyone is 'on belay' above, the fall is never more than a minor slip. If the only people 'on belay' are below, then the fall will be 1d6 - 1 stories.

The disadvantage of this procedure is that the leader up the pitch takes one hour, and then each person following up the pitch (each benefits from the leader's skill) is an extra half hour. If a character fails to successfully use climbing skill up the pitch, then he or she must try again, spending another hour (if leader) or half hour (if follower). As a result, belay climbing is more time consuming than free climbing.

### Notes to Gamemaster

How often vertical pitches appear is entirely left to the discretion of the gamemaster. Gorges and crevasses are obvious ones, and they are common when moving along the crestlines of the high peaks. At least one per league on mountainsides, especially if off a path, is also wise. Climbing up the side of a high peak requires mastering dozens upon dozens of vertical pitches. Each pitch is also exhausting, a character's strength is reduced 1 to 1d6 until a good (6 hour) rest.

The gamemaster can make pitches easier by giving all climbers on it a bonus to their normal climbing skill. Very difficult pitches may require additional strength tests, as well as successful climbing skill, and the most difficult might reduce skill as well. The climbers would be warned of the more difficult ones, and allowed an opportunity to spend extra time finding an easier route (successful use of climbing skill, and luck, might result in an easier way being found).

Bear in mind that unless the 'rope' has a skillful climber in the lead, the chances of falls are quite good if the party must master a number of pitches, and thus the level of injuries will be high. Characters injured to the point where they can no longer climb (due to incapacitation of

an arm or leg) will be lowered down in rope slings (or pulled up in such a from a crevasse), which takes double the normal time.

### Storms

Fierce storms, with blasting winds, freezing temperatures, and driving snow are an ever-present danger. Visibility drops to absolutely zero, making travel impossible (or nearly so — travel time is at least four times normal, as much as ten times normal). Each hour spent fighting the storm a character's strength is reduced by 1d6, plus suffering one burn wound of frostbite (roll for location: 1d10, 1, 2 - head, 3, 4 - right arm, 5, 6 - left arm, 7, 8 - right leg, 9, 10 - left leg). When strength is entirely lost, the character collapses unconscious from exhaustion, and unless rescued soon will freeze to death, as the unconscious body now suffers frostbite wounds at 2/hour, one of which is automatically to the torso (dice for location of other).

Storms appear suddenly, since only characters on the high peaks can see over the mountain chains to cloud banks approaching. Therefore, a good danger sense, or immediate action upon first warning, is needed to set up tents in some protected area. Characters specialized in the country sphere, or with regional knowledge skill for an alpine or arctic region, will know about building snow caves, and could attempt that instead. If one attempts to pitch camp after the storm arrives, gear may be blown away, tents ripped, and in some cases a gust might even sweep a character off the mountainside or peak (especially if he or she fails a strength test).

Storms in the valley during the summer are usually rain, sometimes sleet, and less violent. Travel is still possible, but at double the normal rate. If it rains or sleets for more than one day, for the rest of the storm and the first dry day afterward the valley is in mud, travel time is doubled again for that.

Storms last 1d6 - 2 days in summer (result of 0 or less means roll 2d6 for duration in hours instead), 1d10 - 1 days in spring or fall (result of 0 or less means roll 2d10 for duration in hours instead), and 1d6 + 1d10 days in winter. Note that once characters take cover from a storm, and if the cover holds up, their biggest problem becomes food and water.

### Crevasse

This is a 'crack' in the snow, ice or rock surface, often hidden by windblown snow. A small one inflicts 1d6 wound points onto a leg, due to a sprained ankle, cut, bruises, or broken bones. A large crevasse result in a fall of 1d6 stories, perhaps more, (see *Swordbearer*). If the gamemaster wants to be kind, he/she can have snow at the bottom of the deep crevasse cushion a character's fall, to prevent outright death.

Snow that blows over a crevasse sometimes becomes packed, forming a snow bridge. It is almost impossible to judge the strength of these — sometimes they can hold repeated crossings, sometimes they are marginal and collapse after a few cross, and sometimes they are so weak that they collapse under the first person.

Large cravasses are most common in the icefall, sometimes found on glaciers, and relatively rare elsewhere. Smaller crevasses are possible anywhere especially on the high peaks as well as the icefall.

### Avalanche

At any instant snow and ice may cascade off the high peaks or a cliffside, gathering momentum and mass down the mountainside until it tumbles into the valley and slows among the trees. A very common cause of avalanches is cornice collapse: the wind sculpt snow and ice so it overhangs the lee of a knife-edge ridge, forming a cornice with nothing but air beneath it. Eventually, it grows so large that it will fall. Another common cause is snow and ice building up on a rock face too vertical to give it a firm base. Changes in temperature, or even vibration, will cause it to slide off. For this reason, spring is the most dangerous season for avalanches.

Characters caught in the middle of an avalanche are normally smashed and buried — a sure death. Character near the edge of an avalanche route could escape if they see it coming (intelligence test of varying difficulty, depending on general knowledge of any alpine region), or as it arrives try to either jump away (hard agility test) or tough it out (hard strength test). Those who fail to escape, or tough it out may be partly or entirely buried, and require help digging out. Broken bones are not unlikely if one is buried. Snow will smother someone within a few minutes to a few hours, depending on how densely it is packed.

### Wild Animals

From the late spring to early fall characters travelling in the region will see various small ground animals and birds flying in the valley areas. However, larger hunters and grazers may also be encountered, although they are more rare.

### Alphawk

An extremely large bird of prey that cruises over the valley and lower mountainsides, seeking prey. It nests on mountainside cliffs, and in the late spring and early summer one adult guards the nest (with its eggs or youngsters) while the other hunts. It is during this period that Alphawks are most common, make the boldest attacks, and of course become fanatic in defense of their nests.

Mass and strength are  $2d6 + 2$ , agility  $3d6 + 6$ , intelligence  $1d6/2$ , preferred weapon is L1 beak (on head)  $1d6 - 1$  cut (at strength 2), secondary weapon is L0 talons on legs  $1d6 - 2$  cut (at strength 1), unarmored. See *Swordbearer* Bird of Prey for other details.

### Snow Cat

A powerful hunting cat that keeps to the valley floor forests, and uses its white fur coat for camouflage. Snowcat pelts are very valuable, but the animal is very difficult to hunt. Like all cats, snowcats prefer to attack from ambush, but are not above chasing down their prey. They have very large paws, and are not slowed when crossing firm snow.

Mass and strength are  $2d6 + 3$ , agility  $1d6 + 1d10 + 7$ , intelligence  $1d6/2 - 1$ , preferred weapon is L1 claws (on each leg)  $1d6 - 2$  cut (at strength 1), secondary weapon is L0 bite (with head)  $1d6 - 1$  cut (at strength 4). There is a 20% chance of spirit node. In all other respects, see *Swordbearer*, Great Cats.

### Ram

This is a territorial grazing animal with large horns, similar to a stag. It prefers the mountainsides to the valley, but can be found in the latter occasionally. Normally it will stand its ground, and only attack those who approach too closely. It only becomes fanatic if it has a new-found mate, and is still ready to fight for her.

Mass and strength are  $3d6 + 2$ , agility  $1d6 + 1d10 + 5$ , intelligence zero, preferred weapon is L2 horns on head (as spears with  $1d6$  thrust at strength 4), secondary weapon is L1 kick (by forelegs or hindlegs) with  $1d10 - 2$  smash (at strength 9). The horns have a 10% chance of a spirit node. In all other respects, see *Swordbearer*, Deer-Antelope-Stag and use Stag data.

### Yeti

This is a great white ape that lives on the mountainsides, and forges from the high peaks to the valley. It is extremely hardy, and survives the climate well. It is extremely cautious, and avoids intelligent races unless crazed or unbalanced by hunger. Yeti are quite rare, and considered simply a legend by many.

Mass and strength are  $3d6 + 7$ , agility is  $1d6 + 1d10 + 1$ , intelligence is  $1d6 - 1$  preferred weapon is L1 fist (either arm)  $1d6 - 3$  smash (at strength 2), secondary weapons is L0 bite (with head)  $1d6 - 2$  cut (at strength 8). In all other respects, see *Swordbearer*, Great Ape.

### Other Animals

Other animals may be used as well, see *Swordbearer* for Birds of Prey, Goats (similar to deer), and Cave Spiders. To compute weapon skills for any animal, including those above, see *Swordbearer*.

### Iceworm

This giant blue-white slug is a greatly feared creature. They are very rare, but tales of them exist throughout the Lrfunj Alps, including in the Valt Aszen. Iceworms are solitary scavengers that normally tunnel through the snow just below the surface, although they can go deeper, and even chew their way through solid ice. They have a voracious appetite for anything living or dead — normally they must content themselves with the bodies of small animals that die and freeze. They are not very quick, so most living animals can outrun them. Iceworms greatly dislike warm temperatures, and only travel over bare rock if desperate. As a result, hibernating animals try to find a natural earth or rock cave, to protect them while they sleep.

**Movement Rates:** Crawl  $5/25$  ( $1\frac{1}{4}$ ), step  $2/10$  ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ), trot  $10/50$  ( $2\frac{1}{2}$ ), regional travel uses foot rate. Speed unaffected in snow, tunnels through ice at half the above speeds. Moves at half speed over bare rock, and only if absolutely necessary.

**Mass:**  $(3d10 \times 3) + 1d10$ , ranges from 10 to 100, average 55. Lizard hit location, legs are considered part of body, gigantic size.

**Strength:** Mass -  $2d10$ , but minimum of half its mass, ranges from 5 to 98, average 44.

**Agility:**  $1d6 + 2$ , ranges from 3 to 8.

**Intelligence:**  $1d6/2 - 1$ , ranges from 0 to 2, average 0.67.

**Preferred Weapon:** L2 razor-toothed bite (on head),  $1d10$  cut (at strength 3).

**Secondary Weapon:** L0 body crush (any part of body except head, and in any direction as creature can extend pseudo pods),  $1d6$

smash (at strength 3).

**Armor:** Crystalline hide absorbs/deflects two (2) wound points everywhere, except burns from fire (no protection against that).

**Disease:** No chance.

**Spirit Node:** 90% chance, found in teeth, roll  $1d10$  for humor: 1, 2, 3 - vitriolic, 4, 5 - phlegmatic, 6, 7, 8 - choleric, 9, 10 - melancholy.

**Special Notes:** Wounds from the iceworm also inflict frostbite, which is an additional burn wound of one point to the same location. The iceworm is vulnerable to fire — any burn wounds from fire do double the normal damage. Unless enraged or very hungry, fire can sometimes drive these creatures away, especially after a few burns.

### Basket Bridge

One place, where a trail crosses a river or stream gorge, instead of a normal rope bridge, a basket bridge is rigged. This type of bridge can be useful if high winds are common, and is virtually the only feasible method of the opposite sides of the gorge of significantly different elevation. The gamemaster should decide which crossing has the basket bridge, if any.

The basket bridge is simply a large basket that runs along a strong cable. A second rope is used to steady it, and pull it across, usually a block-and-tackle arrangement to make the work easier (especially if pulling uphill). The rig is attached to the basket in such a way that one can pull oneself across in the basket, if necessary. Normally, though, the bridgeman simply remains on the 'uphill' side. The basket itself is capable of holding up to a mass of 40 to 50.



### Bridgeman:

An incredibly dumb hobgoblin works the bridge. The dwarves found him wandering about the region, and set him to this task, providing him with food. It is not unlikely the hobgoblin was the victim of a particularly vicious smash to the head which permanently reduced his brainpower (never very large in hobgoblins anyway). The hobgoblin has proved reliable in his new job, and no trouble to anyone — he is not violent, and tends to run from threats of violence. Of course, those unfamiliar with the region might be a bit disturbed at the sight of a drooling hobgoblin at the bridge (although he's without any weapons).

**Character Data:** Mass 15, strength 15, agility 7, intelligence 1, age 38, social status 2. Aside from operating and maintaining the bridge, he has no visible skills, and is unarmed. He communicates with gestures and grunts. He lives in a cave hidden along the gorge, further upstream, where he keeps spare bridge equipment and his food.

### Hobgoblin Scavenger

Buk'grer is a hobgoblin who survived the destruction of his clan and trekked the Far Aszen in search of food and other necessities for survival. If the characters have moved any significant distance into the Valt Aszen, and are currently not near a clan stronghold, there is a chance he will sight and trail the party. He will only attack stragglers, those who wander away from the party, or attempt to steal items at night if the watch is not set, or falls asleep. As a result, the adventurers will remain unaware of him, since he is not a danger to anyone awake and with the party. Adventurers who move out of sight of the party could sense danger, and if the night watch fails (or doesn't exist), a very good detect danger result would awaken a character as Buk'grer gets to the camp to make his thefts.

Buk'grer will only trail the party for a couple of days and nights. If he finds no opportunities for gain during this time, he will give up and look elsewhere. He will also fade away if the party moves close to a stronghold, or meets any dwarves (whom he fears greatly). The gamemaster may decide that Buk'grer is extremely hungry, in which case he may attempt a night attack or theft even if the watch is awake.

**Buk'grer, Hobgoblin Scavenger, Character Data:** Mass 14, strength 14, agility 12, intelligence 11, age 30, social status 0, specializes in fighting and country spheres. Skills include military flail 42/45, longsword 37/34, club 28/19, heavy shield 33/41, small claws 23/19, fangs 37/20, evaluate opponent, ambush 68, stalk & slink 63, detect danger 32, swimming 40, climbing 69, tracking 74, wild food 23, hunting 58, warlord 19.

### Bugbear Clan

If the adventurers stay off the main trails, or are at a point distant from all clan strongholds, they may encounter a party of bugbears hunting in the pine forests, or on the lower elevations of the mountainsides. Bugbears will not normally be found anywhere near Suthri or a clan stronghold (they greatly fear the dwarves). If the bugbears are downwind from the adventurers, they will smell them and lay an ambush. If they are upwind, the parties may stumble upon one another, unless one or the other is at a good lookout point, and happens to spot the other.

The bugbear hunters are likely to attack on sight (or from ambush where possible). They will avoid battle only if greatly outnumbered — food as promising as the adventurers they cannot normally afford to ignore! The hunting party includes youngsters, as well as a number of adult males. The remainder of the clan, mostly females and other youngsters, will be near the clan's cave. Living conditions here are very crude ('stone age' style). The adventurers may stumble upon the cave by chance, especially if seeking shelter from a storm and off the trail. The clan cave will probably be in a forested valley near a mountainside, less commonly on the lower slope of the mountainside itself.

Bugbears do not normally take live prisoners, but if the situation looks hopeless, the gamemaster may decide the bugbears have considerable meat already in storage, and will take prisoners. In this case, the adventurers will be imprisoned near the clan cave with ropes to tie them, and within a crude cage, where they are fed unsavory roots and dirty water. If unable to rescue themselves from this predicament, the gamemaster can have a dwarven hunting party come across the cave and wipe out the bugbears (whom dwarves consider a menace), freeing the adventurers.

A variety of bugbear character types are given below, from which the gamemaster can select the specific ones needed for his or her purposes:

**Bugbear Warrior Chief 'Dwarfbane':** Mass 21, strength 20, agility 14, intelligence 9, age 29, social status 5. He is armed with a dwarven battleaxe (captured) with 53/59 skill, plus spiked club 48/45, small claws 58/62, fangs 37/55. Other skills can be assigned if necessary. He

wears a dwarven-made leather vest for extra torso protection (−2), beyond the natural armor of the bugbear hide (−1 everywhere except head).

**Bugbear Mage:** Mass 15, strength 13, agility 2, intelligence 10, age 37, status 4. He is armed with a spiked club 35/33, and can both identify and knows the spells for crystal, wood, and light/darkness. He has aligned nodes hidden near the clan cave, and in battle will use spells in the following order (he only uses the later-listed more powerful spells if the first ones seem to fail): blackflash (has two such), warp (also has two), frostbite, and finally blindeye. He knows shadow, and will use it to hide if the battle goes badly. He knows save and splint, and will use them to cure wounded bugbears after the battle. He will not use healing spells during a battle except on the chief (too much chance of losing the node otherwise). The gamemaster may add additional non-combat spells from the above elements as necessary.

**Note:** The mage character need not be used unless the gamemaster needs magic to counteract magic skills of the adventurers or wishes the bugbears to win (or have a good chance of winning).

**Bugbear Hunter:** Typical characters mass 1d10 + 11 (16%), strength is mass − 1 (15% average), agility 2d10 − 1 (10), intelligence 2d6 − 1 (6), age [1d6 × 2] + 15 (22), social status 3, specialized in fighting and country spheres, typically with a double specialization in fighting (sometimes a double specialization in country instead). Important skills include spiked club (sometimes giant club or maul) at adequate [47/41½] to superior [78/72½] in use/speed, some have javelins with adequate [47] to good [62½] use and minor [26] to adequate [41½] speed. Tracking, hunting, and wild food are adequate [43½] to superior [74½], climbing is good [67] to superior [87½]. Useful skills include bolos if no javelins are carried, with minor [31½/26] to good [62½/57] use/speed, ambush and stalk & slink at minor [26] to good [57], as well as detect danger and concealment at minor [22] to adequate [37½]. Although advantaged with crystal, bugbears normally use nodes for keepwarm, a few may have clarity also. Hunters sometimes use chill spells. Enchantments are very uncommon, so most are reluctant to use spells in battle (they prefer to spend the 1d6 minutes to insure no loss of a node).

**Bugbear Youngster or Female:** Typical characters mass 1d10 + 1d6 + 5 [14], strength is mass − 1 [13], agility 2d10 [10], intelligence 2d6 − 1 [6], age (2d6 × 2) + 7, social status 2, specialized in fighting and country, females typically also specialize in arts/crafts, youngsters (if male) take a double specialty in fighting/country, or (if female) in arts/crafts. A few would-be mages specialize in magic, but this is only common if intelligence is 10 or 11, and then only if the clan has a tradition of mages. Important and useful skills vary widely. Fighting skills are normally with the club at minor [30/26] to adequate [45½/41½] in use/speed, sometimes javelins or bolos are added for a potential hunter, who might also try a more powerful club (spiked, giant, or a maul) if strength is great. Arts/crafts skills among females are adequate [31½] to good [47] and typically include one or more among tailor, pottery, doctor/druggist, leatherworker, artist and musician. Advantage with crystal works similarly to hunters: keepwarm and clarity are common, some females try to have vision also, to be more valuable to their mates.

### Griffin Hermit

This is a lonely, elderly female who is the only survivor of her family. She has taken up residence in the Valt Aszen, and likes it because she doesn't have to be in contact with anyone. However, she is curious, and may be seen flying over the valley, observing life there. The dwarves simply ignore her. When she does sometimes come closer for conversation (inevitably to ask a few questions, then fly away), her 'style' varies between wisdom and senility. She does have some friends among the dwarves.

The gamemaster may use her as a 'plot device' to prevent a situation from getting out of hand. For example, if the adventurers are involved in an outdoors battle with an enemy of superior power, the Griffin may appear to distract the enemy's attention, missile fire, etc. If this alone is not enough to even the odds (if it is, the Griffin will simply fly away), then perhaps the Griffin will get angry and attack, in effect becoming a temporary ally. Again, being a hermit, she will not stay long, and may even leave after inflicting a couple of serious hits.

Another device is to use her as indirect warning of future danger. She might land near the adventurers and ask why they are going a certain way — she's curious because it seems like certain death! The gamemaster may or may not reveal this opinion of hers, depending on how much help the gamemaster feels the adventurers need.

Finally, the gamemaster can simply use her for local color. She can ask a few casual, even nonsense questions and fly off.

Note that if the party attacks the Griffin if she comes close, the gamemaster can either have her fly away or get angry and attack,

depending on whether (a) the Griffin has any chance of surviving (if she doesn't, she won't attack), and (b) the gamemaster feels the party needs another battle situation at the moment (a good idea if the adventure is getting dull).

**Griffin Hermit Character Data:** Mass 12, Strength 11, agility 9, intelligence 1/14 (depending on current mental state), age 42, social status 0, specialized in fighting, stealth, and country spheres. Skills include beak (fangs), large claws, and small claws, all at 92/89, evaluate opponent, ambush 63, detect danger 81, conceal 81, stalk & slink 33, detect concealment 41, climbing 35, tracking 50, wild food 29, hunting 74, can identify and know spells for wind, light/dark, and fire, and has spiritual knowledge; she can speak a variety of languages passably, including most common tongues (including local dwarvish).

She has aligned nodes for most of the spells in the elements she knows. In combat situations, she generally uses flash or blackflash, and then dives to the attack, or retreats, depending on temperament. In desperate situations, she may use blindeye against a single enemy, or fear against a group. To satisfy her curiosity, she can use both eavesdrop to hear conversations and longspeech to ask questions, or make some senile comment — all while flying high overhead. To protect herself from the harsh conditions of the valley, weatherwise, she uses refresh, breeze, and if necessary, soar or lightweight. Although ignorant of keepwarm, she can use heat to warm a particularly cold part of her body (although it's a painful solution, and thus one she avoids). When sleeping, or wishing to be alone, she uses a shadow spell to improve her concealment. Remember, though, that she has fits of senility, and may select a particularly idiotic place for such activities — which could lead to those climbing a mountainside literally stumbling over her!

### Dwarf Trailman

This is a solitary dwarf, encountered on a trail, especially at a gorge bridge, near a recent avalanche, blowdown, etc. He or she will hail from the nearest clan stronghold, and is engaged in maintaining the trails, bridges, etc. as well as acting as a general scout and lookout for the clan. Trailmen have their first duty to warn the clan of strangers, so they normally avoid any serious encounter and disappear into the woods (they are, in reality, going to the nearest bluff or knoll, from which they can signal the stronghold). However, trailmen have peculiar personalities, and some may have some mild curiosity or interest in strangers who act friendly.

For complete details, including typical character data, see the chapter on Clan Dendural under 'Hunters & Trailmen' section.

### Dwarven Hunters

Dwarves will be hunting the valley, to replenish the clan stores for the upcoming winter. It is not unlikely that the adventurers will sooner or later run into such a party, usually (but not always) from the nearest stronghold. The attitude of the leader of the hunting group will determine whether the dwarves attack, ignore the adventurers, or are friendly. The gamemaster may wish to select a policy that helps him or her 'steer' the adventure in an appropriate direction. Otherwise, simply consult the Dwarven Society chapter, roll d100, and read the hunting leader's 'policy' in the External Options section.

For complete details, including typical character data, see the chapter on Clan Dendural and the section on 'Hunters & Trailmen.'

### Gnome Refugee

Although most gnomes are servants to the dwarves in the strongholds, and accept this role, from time to time one may rebel and flee a clan stronghold. Dwarves take a dim view of this, since the gnome might know secrets about the stronghold and the clan. Penalties for flight are severe, but normally do not include death unless the clan dictates it, or there is no other way to stop the escape.

Ylla Gollis is an escaped gnome (female) that the adventurers might encounter. They could find her exhausted and half-dead from exposure or wild animal attacks, or they could encounter her in good health (relatively). In either case, Ylla had been abused in work by dwarves, and dragged away from her own family-clan for the pleasure of a high personage in the dwarf clan that owned the stronghold (although this is normally against dwarven ethics). This last abuse was the reason for her escape. She has limitless hatred for the dwarves, and will either help the adventurers against them, or accompany the adventurers if they leave the valley. If the adventurers return her as captive to her clan stronghold, she will hate the adventurers just as much as the dwarf clan (and all her family and friends among the gnomes in that stronghold will also hate the adventurers).

**Ylla Gollis Character Data:** Mass 5, strength 7, agility 14, intelligence 18, age 24, social status 0, specialized in stealth and country.

Skills include improvised club 28/21, fist 32/25, detect danger 24, conceal 47, stalk & slink 39, disarm traps 56, detect concealment 47, pickpocket 51, underworld 40, diplomacy 28, cooking 29, wild food 37, tailor 24, leatherworker 19, personnel management 25. She has stolen basic travel needs, but lacks a tent. She has a leather helmet, an improvised club, and a stolen hammer which she wishes to learn to use.

**Note:** For added interest, the stolen hammer may be a clan heirloom, with a temper spell (doubles breakage) passively enchanted and plated with gold, silver and jewels (a status 12 treasure). It could even have an active contact shield (or protect the user) or shatter (to shatter metal things it hits) as well.



### Goblin Raiders

Times are hard in goblin country to the northwest. A party of raiders has crossed into the Valt Aszen looking for better pickings. Although unwilling to storm dwarven strongholds, they will waylay any individuals or groups on trails or off, and out of sight of a stronghold. The goblins will simply attack, kill as many as they can, and loot the bodies of anything and everything of value. Once the goblins make a few kills, they will probably not attempt to pursue a few survivors, since no goblin trusts his fellows enough to leave most behind and unwatched on the battlefield (he is likely to return from the pursuit and find no pickings left!).

The gamemaster may have these goblins directly attack the adventurers, or he may have them attack a group of dwarves. In the latter case, the adventurers may spot the battle, or looting, in progress and decide what to do. If they arrive after a battle, they might be able to save one of the dwarves, and thus acquire a 'friend' who could (possibly) provide an introduction into a clan stronghold.

**Ushar, Goblin Leader, Character Data:** Mass 12, strength 15, agility 18, intelligence 16, age 27, social status 6, specializes in fighting and country. In battle his weapons skills are hand-and-a-half sword 42/57, heavy wooden shield 37/49, small claws 39/24, on both hands and feet. He has a shortsword 36/22 in reserve. He wears leather arm bracers and jerkin, and an open helm. He is advantaged in wood magic and has two wooden earrings, one enchanted with splint (active, contact) and one with warp (active, ranged). His shield is enchanted with heartoak (passive), doubling its breakage number.

**Typical Goblin Raiders:** Mass 2d6 + 1 [8], strength is mass + 3 [11], agility 2d10 [11], intelligence 2d10 - 1 [10], age (2d6 x 2) + 10 [24], social status 1d6/2 + 2. Important skills in battle are club, throwing axe, and/or shortsword at minor [27/27] to adequate [42½/42½] skill, plus a light or heavy wooden shield. About half have leather jerkin or coat, plus a random assortment of leather and metal open helms.

**Note to the Gamemaster:** Ushar, the leader, is the best of the group, and is not very formidable. The goblins are only dangerous in large numbers, or to very inexperienced adventurers.

### Dwarf Emigre

Young dwarves sometimes find no use in a clan for their chosen occupation, either because the clan already has too many experts in that area, or because the clan views such work with disdain. Other times simple youthful enthusiasm and a desire for change can lead to arguments and difficulties, which in turn gradually force the youth to try elsewhere. Leaving one clan and wandering around, looking for a new one, is an old tradition in the valley, and most clans are willing to welcome such a newcomer. Wanderers may visit the outside world before returning — dwarves of this sort compose part of Suthri's population.

Virtually any type of character from a clan could become an emigre, the gamemaster can look at the typical characters from Clan Dendural and select one. Age is normally low, and skills are often at the lower end of the scale. Below is an addition, a typical emigre who is interested in magic, and finds clans reluctant to tolerate a person with such a skill. This emigre could fall in with the adventurers, perhaps try to help them at some new stronghold, but ultimately become discouraged and, with the adventurers, seek to leave the valley. Adding this special character is suggested if the adventurers themselves are desperately short of magic. Otherwise, any other 'standard' dwarven character can be used.

**Nyren 'Redeye' Character Data:** Mass 8, strength 10, agility 9, intelligence 14, age 24, social status 5, specialized in town and magic. Skills include throwing axe 37/19, light shield 22/35, detect danger 22, conceal 26, detect concealment 31/24 (indoors/outdoors), underworld 39 (was friendly with gnomes), diplomacy 21, haggling 25, bribery 24, gambling 30, drinking 17, climbing 29, jeweler 14, miner 6, can identify and knows spells for fire, metal, crystal, and light/dark. He has no armor, and his only arms are a throwing axe and light shield. However, he has a variety of nodes, many aligned, about his person, kept in silver studs and decorations on his clothes, such as belt studs, wristbands with silver filagree, heavy boots with silver studs on the top, etc. For combat he has available Flash, Torch, Shatter, and Chill, plus Shield to cast upon himself. To avoid battle, he will use Shadow. If wounded by a cut or thrust, he can heal with Cauterize, and outside of battle, where 1d6 minutes can be spent to avoid the danger of node consumption, he will use this for the benefit of others. He also has Cure for diseases, and Keepwarm, plus Salve for burns. He can counter illusions, including Blindeye, with Clarity. He does not have any 3-node spells (since he lacks any 3-nodes), and lacks 2-power light/darkness nodes as well. All others (1-2 node fire, metal, or crystal, and 1-node light/darkness) are theoretically available, and he has enough nodes to make a realignment normally successful.

### Additional Travel Situations

Many additional situations can be constructed for use, as a game-master desires. Some ideas are given below:

#### Dwarven Warparty

If clans are at war, characters may run into a powerful wargroup near any trail or path, and will almost certainly be challenged by one as they approach a stronghold at war. Warparties tend to fight first and ask questions later, unless the clan is expecting mercenary aid. A warparty would include at least one champion of the clan, a scattering of hunters, and 'support troops' from other occupations (including armorers, miners, etc.). See Clan Dendural for details.

#### Dwarven Mountaineers

A small group of dwarves from a local stronghold are making a pleasure climb into the high peaks. Such a group would be encountered on the mountainsides, or along a high peak ridgeline. Attitude of the group is generally that of the clan, although the group leader may well be somewhat friendlier, especially if the adventurers appear to be mountaineers first (rather than heavily armed and armored fighters). Enjoying the challenge of the high peaks is something that can cut across racial boundaries. . . .

#### Orc Warband

The orcs from beyond the Far Aszen plateau may be at war, or about to start a war, and this is one band sent into the region to pillage, plunder, and kill. The band will attack anything except other orcs (it will question other orcs first, and then probably will begin fighting, as orcs don't get along too well').

#### In the Ice

In a mountainside hollow, or on the icefall edge of a glacier, a frozen body comes to light, and can be removed without too much effort. The bodies could actually be gargoyles in suspended animation (see *Swordbearer*) or could be any character with a Vampire spell bound into its spirit (see *Swordbearer*) and currently in suspended animation. The suspension lasts only as long as the character is within the ice — if removed and 'thawed out' in the sun or at a campfire, the character(s) come to life.

#### Waterfall

While near a river or stream, the characters notice a waterfall, and what appears to be a path down to it. The waterfall has sculpted some caves behind it, which could be secret places where a magician has stored magic nodes (which could then be stolen), treasure is stored, or is actually the dwelling of bugbears or some wild animal. It is even possible that raiding goblins or orcs have found it, and are currently using the cave as a 'secure base' for activities in the area (in this case, aside from evidence of habitation, there is probably little of value to be found).

#### Elemental Cliff

An ice cliff is actually a giant Crystal Elemental, or contains a smaller one on it somewhere, which the party disturbs. An entire cliff would produce a truly huge elemental (8-node or larger), and would require truly expert adventurers to overcome. Smaller elementals are advised if the party is of average experience, and very small ones if they are novices.

#### Wind Elemental

A windy storm blows through the area, and upon it is riding a wind elemental. As above, the size of the elemental can be adjusted to the size and experience of the party. Information on elementals can be found in *Swordbearer*.

# Dwarven Society

There are six ancient strongholds in the Valt Aszen: Kranttigz, Dolgdís, uz'Rhom, Vilrylis, Frar'sagnir, and Thrasir. All are very old, and have been expanded and improved over the centuries, only to be partly destroyed by cave-ins or avalanches and then rebuilt again, etc. Each stronghold is home for a dwarf clan. Note that the names of clans can vary, but the name of the stronghold (the place itself) is unchanging. Thus, the gamemaster can decide what sort of clan to 'install'

at each stronghold, to make his own adventure unique and surprising (even if some players have read this book).

### Clan Structure

A stronghold is governed by the 'high' or noble clan, whose clan name is used as the overall clan name. Although a dwarven stronghold is actually inhabited by a number of clans, including the high clan

and three to six 'sub'clans, the entire group is commonly called a 'clan.' Each high clan or subclan has thirty to sixty members, of which 50% are youngsters, 30% are adults, and 20% older adults. Older youngsters, all adults, and most older adults work at various tasks within or about the stronghold.

In addition, a clan has families of gnomes, who function as slave-servants. Individual gnomes are assigned specific menial tasks, and in return, are provided with food and other basic necessities, and allowed to live in the inner caverns of the stronghold. Given the harsh climate of the Valt Aszen, this arrangement is probably superior to trying to live in the wilderness outside, and most gnomes are resigned to their fates. The gnomes form their own families of four to five to take care of their children and elderly. All the gnomes live in close proximity, and families often help one another through times of hardship. Overall, the dwarves in a stronghold will outnumber the gnomes by 3:1 to 5:1, so the clan is not actually dependant on gnome servants, but simply uses them as a convenience.

Clans originally develop when individual dwarves, members of a subclan from another stronghold, or survivors from a disaster converge on a ruined stronghold and make it habitable again. The 'founders' usually form a new high clan with a new name (although sometimes a subclan from another stronghold is powerful enough to form the new high clan), and additional immigrants from other strongholds gradually form the subclans. It is a clan tradition for those dissatisfied with the jobs available (or unable to find any useful function) to leave a stronghold and seek a new place to live — usually at another stronghold. This tradition not only provides for constant but modest intermixing of clans, but also helps relieve undue population pressure, rebuild strongholds, and generally keep the region stable. This opportunity is traditionally afforded to dwarves only, no gnomes. Clans are honor-bound to receive an emigrant if he or she cannot find opportunity elsewhere and returns. However, this reflects poorly on the emigrant, who usually ends up with a menial position for life.

### Clan Duties

Life within a stronghold is divided into various areas, or functions. The exact organization varies from clan to clan, as well as the proportion of the clan involved in each. The pattern given here is only the stereotype, many exceptions can exist. Traditionally, members of the high clan and various subclans each participate in every area — specific functions are not assigned to specific subclans. Instead, dwarves have the freedom to work at occupations for which they are best suited, although there is powerful clan pressure to select a function needed by the clan (those who ignore the needs of the clan tend to lose status).

### Policy

General policy of the clan, and all administration, is done by the high clan. This function is reserved purely for this group. Officially, all adults of the high clan sit in council for these decisions, but the normal leader for everyday decisions is the council spokesman, who simply answers to the council for his (or her) decisions. It is rare to have a female spokesman. Although subclans have no official say in council, they often provide the leaders for the other functions (below), and just as often have family connections to the high clan, so the council members are powerfully influenced by the subclans.

This simplistic arrangement works reasonably well because clans are actually very small (almost never have more than a couple of hundred adult dwarves), so everyone knows everyone else personally, and decisions are based on this understanding. Furthermore, dwarves have a strong regard for tradition in policy, and are quite conservative. If there is any doubt, the traditional, usual way of doing things is normally the method selected.

### Hunting

This function is largely the preserve of males, and most high clan members are expected to serve under the Huntsmaster at some point in their lives. The Huntsmaster himself is traditionally from the subclans. Hunters are very active during good-weather seasons, and are responsible for replenishing the larder of the stronghold for the coming winter.

Actually, the Huntsmaster directs all normal outdoor activities, so scouting, trail and bridge maintenance, etc., are also in his department. A separate group of specialists, termed 'trailmen,' are normally responsible for this task. Hunter parties may be sent to aid a trailman if a particular task is especially complex.

### Champions

All adult males, and any females who volunteer, are given warrior training by the clan. Those who prove most skillful are chosen to join the 'champions' of the clan. Under the direction of the champion of

champions, they train youngsters in martial arts, and maintain the clan tradition of military preparedness. In times of war they are expected to be in the forefront of the clan battle line, with the champion of champions the usual warleader (on the battlefield — the high clan council still makes policy and strategic decisions). The overall number of champions in the clan is generally small (less than two dozen), and champions are non-productive clan members, since they have no other duties or functions. They do mount guard duty on the stronghold walls and towers themselves.

### Crafts

Dwarves are industrious in many ways, and all strongholds are situated with interior caverns and caves where mining goes on. The master miner directs these activities, which include constructing and supporting the mine tunnels and works. As a result, the miners also become responsible for all major building additions or repairs to the stronghold itself, duties which may often take more time and effort than mining! Another traditional craft function is metalworking, directed by the master metalsmith. Strongholds normally include a foundry for refining mined ores, and workshop areas (both near the foundry and in the living quarters areas), where all types of construction, finishing, and decoration occur. Dwarven metalwork, from weapons to armor to decorative items or jewelry, is quite famous. The most precious results are added to the clan treasure horde, while the rest are used by the clan itself. Standards in workmanship are very high. The usual recourse in cases where an oversupply occurs is to simply increase the standard of workmanship again, which slows down the rate of production to reasonable levels!

A less prestigious, but typical craft is clothwork, which includes clothing, linen, leathers, and even tapestries. Woodworking falls into this category, but the Valt Aszen dwarves do not commonly use wood — it is difficult to find good woods in any quantity (the stunted forest in the valley is a poor source of supply). The common building material is metal.

The other arts and crafts rarely have a formal department with a master. Instead, an individual dwarf learns it and practices it in the living quarters. Since the clan is small, the rest can draw upon such specialized skills as needed.

### Stores

The clan must survive half a year within the stronghold, on their accumulated resources and stores (during the winter). As a result, keeping track of stores, regulating their use, and advising the clan regarding them has become an important function. This function includes cooking and other service functions within the living quarters. Individual subclans do not cook and clean for themselves, the entire clan does it as a group. Stores is routinely dominated by females, and while males are found (in the minority), their status may suffer a bit for it. During the good weather periods, stores is also responsible for collecting plants, herbs, etc. from the outside to replenish that aspect of the larder.

Typically, clan members eat small meals at their own discretion during the day, and then the entire clan assembles in the common hall for the evening meal.

### Persons in Society

The high clansmen are expected to serve in various functions and gaining working skills before they are fully accepted into the high clan council. Even adults who rate 'full' council seats still work at other functions, although normally independently. Specific masters of functions, such as the huntsmaster, master miner, etc. are traditionally from the subclans. This gives subclans potential places of importance and opportunities for improvement. The degree of authority a master has over a high clansman working within his function is a 'grey' area that different clans resolve in different ways. Sometimes the master's authority is absolute, as long as the person is actually working at the function, regardless of normal status. Other times (and more commonly) the master simply makes polite 'requests' to the high clansman, and very often assigns the high clansman tasks with considerable independent authority and responsibility (such as a long-range hunting expedition, opening up a new area in the mines, or taking over a special field in the metalwork shop), to avoid potential conflicts. This has the additional advantage of making the high clansman responsible for success directly, and thus the high clansman is unable to blame the master if something goes wrong!

Clan and subclan names are carried by the males in dwarven society. If a female marries into another subclan, she changes her last name. It is traditional for high clan females to marry into a subclan, and perfectly acceptable for subclan females to marry into the high clan (although many marry into another subclan, and sometimes even

within their subclan, although marriage within the subclan is considered slightly scandalous). These marriage customs are called 'mating' by the dwarves, and are presumed to be for life. If the mating goes wrong, the conservatism and tradition in the clan almost forces the two to make the best of the situation — no 'divorce' exists, and remarriage is considered highly improper. Of course, various infidelities and scandals exist, but dwarves try to keep them as secret as possible. If the situation becomes too complex and unbearable, the dwarf or dwarves involved may simply emigrate to another clan/stronghold and start again.

Emigration from one land to another is the standard 'last resort' if a dwarf is unable to live within clan society, due to personal needs or desires. Clans normally welcome immigrants, but with caution, often assigning them to lower level tasks and responsibilities until they are proven. Immigrants are usually trying to make a 'fresh start' in life, or achieve something they couldn't elsewhere, and so very often become outstanding members in their new clan. These 'good' immigrants frequently outweigh the 'bad' ones who are antisocial. Most of the antisocial types fail in their adopted new clan as well, and ultimately leave the clan strongholds entirely.

Antisocial acts are normally punished by assigned work of an unpleasant sort for varying periods of time (rarely more than a few months) if minor, escalating to the ultimate penalty of exile from the clan. Exile requires approval from the full high council. Extremely heinous crimes, such as deliberate murder, are punished by death. Deliberate murder of a gnome is not a crime per se, but is considered seriously antisocial, with any continued and obvious persecution of gnomes leading to exile. Some clans will brand hard cases when they inflict an exile — as a warning to other clans (to not take in this character). The brand is normally on the arm or leg, and is the rune for 'no.'

## Clan Politics

### Internal Politics

Internal political debate and power struggles mainly occur within the high clan, and revolve around voting support for the current spokesman. If a spokesman cannot get the council to support his/her decisions regularly, it is almost inevitable that a new majority group in council exists, and thus a new spokesman is elected. In most clans, a simple majority is needed; some have a tradition of requiring one or two additional votes beyond a simple majority. Various political devices, such as holding council meetings while the opposition is away from the stronghold (hunting, for example), packing the council with youngsters to vote the 'party line,' etc. have all been used from time to time. However, because the full clan is entirely confined to the stronghold for half a year (the winter), it is impossible to turn such ploys to permanent gain.

Traditionally, the masters of various functions and crafts select their own successors. The high council has been known to veto such a choice once or twice, but exercising this veto is extremely dangerous, and tends to cause deep problems between the high clan and the subclan that suffers from it. As a result, astute dwarven politicians recognize the masters' veto as the 'road to ruin' and advise against it (saying, instead, that if the master is a bad choice, he or she will soon make sufficient errors to demonstrate the insuitability to all, and that competent workers in the function can hold the clan together in the meantime). In fact, even without a veto, a master without the support of the high clan will probably have so many difficulties that proper performance is impossible.

High clansmen develop 'clout' in council by identifying themselves with successful events and policies. This includes actions they personally perform, but more often it means supporting the policies of some master. Council political power is built through such ties with masters, plus alliances within the high clan. The tradition of working together to get a majority is strong, and keeps the system functioning. Ideally, all work together and all agree on every policy. Actually, there are always differences in opinion, but the council and master system, intermeshed with high clan and subclan, forms a complex tapestry wherein problems can be solved in an acceptable and non-violent way.

## EXTERNAL POLITICS

Dwarves tend to be wary of outsiders (anyone who doesn't belong to a Valt Aszen dwarven clan), and very often try to ignore them. This isn't difficult, since outsiders appear rarely, and many that do are unfriendly orcs or goblins. Contact with other dwarven clans is a perpetual issue of political debate. Although contact with individual immigrants is normally okay, formal alliances between clans is a most complex matter. It is also possible for clans to develop a lasting hatred for another clan (sometimes a simple feud over hunting rights, with a

death or two, can spark a centuries-long hatred with skirmish warfare). The gamemaster must decide which clans, if any, have current alliances or hatreds. However, it is rare for one clan to mount an all-out attack on another's stronghold. This is because strongholds are far easier to defend than to attack. Normally, the champions of one clan, with a few dozen helpers, are capable of beating off an assault by everyone who can bear arms from another clan. Thus, clan warfare takes the form of skirmishes, raids and ambushes in the countryside, or at most, an attempt to 'invest' (surround and besiege without assault) a stronghold.

In the high council, dwarves will have different views toward outsiders in general, and other dwarves in particular, regardless of specific alliances and hatreds. These can be classified, and if necessary, a d100 roll is used to determine what opinion a specific dwarf may have. These same classifications can be used to determine the current 'policy' held by the majority in the high council. It is likely that the spokesman for the council also holds this view, or one very close to it.

### External Policy Options:

Each policy below lists the d100 die roll range appropriate to it, if the gamemaster wishes to roll for the policy of a clan or a specific dwarf.

**01-07 Reactionary:** The clan is very jealous and precise about its territorial boundaries, and only allows intruders by invitation. All others are asked to leave, and escorted out if necessary. Outsiders are anathema, representatives from other clans are met at the border (not invited to the stronghold), and while immigrants are accepted, they are greatly distrusted and have difficulty rising out of the unpleasant functions given to them. New alliances with other clans are avoided at all costs.

**08-23 Conservative:** The clan keeps outside contacts to the absolute minimum. It will deal with others only when absolutely necessary (for the clan, not for the outsider), and while passage over clan territory is permitted, close approach to the stronghold is not. Other clans are treated with the utmost caution and reserve, but some diplomatic exchanges are allowed (representatives are admitted to the great hall or noble court for brief periods). Immigrants are accepted, and after the initial period of distrust, are generally accepted into the clan if they prove worthy and honorable. New alliances are normally avoided, but in the case of heavy raiding or war, will be considered.

**24-50 Moderate-Conservative:** The clan is very cautious with outside contacts, keeps visits brief, and normally does not permit outsiders into the stronghold, and almost never beyond the outer courtyard. Contact with other clans is neither sought nor refused. Alliances are considered at length, but formal agreements take long periods of time to cement (although friendly, but informal, relations during that time are common). Immigrants from other clans are treated in a cautiously friendly manner, and usually have full opportunities within their new clan after a short period of time.

**51-77 Moderate-Liberal:** The clan is cautious with outsiders, but will talk to them. The most promising and prestigious (usually must be nobles) may be invited to make a brief statement at the noble court, but any overnight or extended stay is rare. Dwarves are outwardly polite, but make their distaste for outsiders known still. Contact with other clans is generally friendly and informal, alliances are considered, but still take forever to accomplish. Immigrants are treated cautiously, but well.

**78-93 Liberal:** The clan tolerates outsiders, and may permit nobles and others of obvious importance to stay a short period in the stronghold. Others are normally escorted out of the stronghold directly after a brief reception. Some effort is made to avoid offending outsiders, but they are still distrusted. Clans in the region are considered friends unless old hatreds exist, and immigrants are often welcomed. Alliances are sometimes sought with other clans, and debate in council often centers around how to conduct the diplomatic overtures properly.

**94-(100) Radical:** The clan actually welcomes outsiders, and permits almost anyone who looks respectable a short stay. However, the clan remains easily offended. The council is interested in news from the outside world, and may be considering contact of some sort (probably a trade treaty, military alliances would take decades, perhaps centuries to accomplish). Clans in the region are considered friends, and some effort is made to patch up old hatreds. Council policy favors alliances with other clans, with the eventual goal of uniting all clans in a grand alliance that allows them to function together (generally a hopeless goal). Immigrants are encouraged, and greeted in a friendly manner — the clan may be too trusting of recent immigrants, if anything.

## Dwarves & Magic

In general, dwarves are uninterested in magic. Their clan society

has no specific function for magicians, and no exalted status is accorded to those with magic skills. In fact, religion doesn't fully exist in a clan, although reverence for past traditions of the clan, or figures from dwarven history in general, is quite common. Clans are generally conservative and stable, and dwarves seem to have no psychological needs beyond this.

Dwarves are naturally advantaged with metal, and within certain subclans or through experts at specific jobs, magic knowledge may be passed from generation to generation. Usually this knowledge relates to the use of specific elements, rather than the whole spectrum of magic. This is because dwarves see magic as simply another tool, which they can use to make normal tasks easier, or which is used to improve their normal workmanship (by enchantments). The fabulous quality of superior dwarven metalwork often comes from Temper or Keeness passive enchantments.

Dwarven society frowns upon the active use of magic spells, especially when used to benefit one dwarf at the expense of another. Casting spells is something akin to 'cheating' nature, and implies that the dwarf was incapable of normally doing the task. Those who do use magic in everyday life have often earned the respect of their fellows, and use magic judiciously as an aid, rather than as a replacement for real effort. On the other hand, enchanting an object to give it superior qualities is considered good, even desirable, provided it is a passive enchantment. Active enchantments are an ethical 'grey' area, and much depends upon how the object is used, rather than the enchantment of it per se.

Spirit magic is largely absent from dwarven society. A few sages may learn spiritual understanding, but it often must be rediscovered, and no formal system for teaching it exists. The actual humors are virtually absent from dwarven knowledge, and most consider tales of spirit magic both exaggerated and partly mythical. However, most of the tales and myths convey negative values, so that if a dwarf did encounter spirit magic, he or she would probably be offended at the least, outraged or nauseated more likely. Of course, relatively innocuous 'friendly' forms of spirit magic might not be recognized as such (examples include Resurrection, Energy, Restore Spirit, Immunity, Magic Resistance, Charm in mild forms, Insight, and possibly Berserker).

### Dwarven Metalcraft

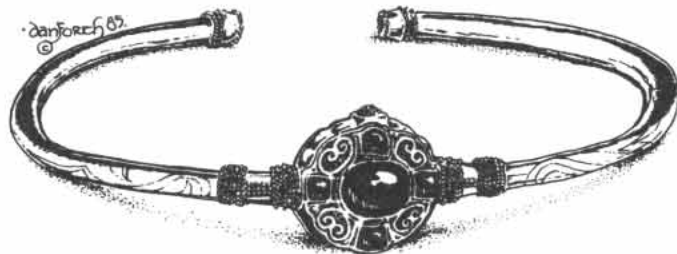
Dwarven workmanship in metal is justly famous. Their weapons are considered the finest, their armor the best, and the craftsmanship in all their work, from fine jewelry to metal sculpture, is renowned everywhere. Two factors explain this: traditions of high skill, and metal magic.

Dwarves are advantaged in metal magic. Whether this is worked in the usual way, with alignment and enchanting or nodes or whether the methods and traditions they are taught naturally have a similar effect, is actually irrelevant. Dwarven blades are often extra-keen (Keeness passive enchantment), seem nearly unbreakable (Temper passive enchantment), and may even break others easily (Shatter active contact enchantment). Dwarven armor also seems to add extra

protection (Shield active contact enchantment).

More important, however, is the tradition of high skill. Each time a dwarven smith begins a project, he or she seeks to equal or surpass previous efforts. Dwarven work is high quality and lasts long. They do not often sell their work, but instead hoard the best, while using the rest. There is no need to mass produce items. Instead, in each task the smith can concentrate strictly on quality. It is just this emphasis on quality, above all else, that insures quality. It also means that truly complex or massive metalworking jobs are rarely attempted — since to perform them at the requisite level of quality is a task that boggles the mind of many dwarves. Thus, dwarves make far more axes and hammers than swords, while a dwarven suit of plate is rare indeed. Of course, there are exceptions, where a smith is rushed, or simply learning his trade. Indeed, it is often these sorts of items that end up becoming parts of the everyday arsenal of the clan.

Dwarves traditionally incorporate art and jewelcraft into their metalworking. Most high-quality items will be studded with precious and semi-precious stones, which in some cases may form an integral part of the weapon, such as diamond shards studding a military flail.



### Social Aging in Clans

When a clan is young and new in a stronghold, it tends to have liberal, or even radical politics. The clan is often small, with subclans still forming (largely from immigrants). The stronghold itself may still be under repair from some natural disaster. This period in a clan's history is often brief (perhaps a century), but is also turbulent, since various unsavory or even antisocial types tend to get involved among the immigrants. In some cases these elements destroy the clan while it is still weak — usually by causing chaos and inadequate preparation for a winter, less often by causing too many hatreds with other clans.

A clan soon evolves into a stable entity with conservative to moderate-conservative politics, occasionally moving to more liberal views, and sometimes to reactionary ones. Population size remains roughly constant, governed by the food supply and rate of expansion possible within the stronghold (carving out new portions of the stronghold is far more difficult than repairing damaged areas!). This is the 'typical' clan, and it may survive for century after century, despite changing politics.

Eventually a clan will acquire a very reactionary influence in the high clan. If this continues for a couple of generations, decline begins. The first signs are the high clan spreading its influence over the various functions, and an increasing number of high clan members actually holding the master's position for a function. Sometimes the function of champions becomes the exclusive right of the high clan as well, sometimes stores. In any case, the net result is that the subclans become second class citizens. The best members of the subclans are driven to emigrate, while the mediocre or worse members slowly sink to the status of gnomes. This is a slow process, but is inexorable once the high clan dominates all positions of authority (unless an extremely altruistic influence takes over the high clan at some time). The final demise of the clan usually occurs when the high clan's domination becomes just that, and only that, with no real skill in their tasks. A few poor summers followed by bad winters, combined with bad management of hunting and/or stores, results in massive starvation. Maintenance of the stronghold may decline, leading to cave-ins (which can also be fatal during winter). Dwarf and/or gnome revolts, led by radical young members of the subclans are also a possibility. The end result is a stronghold deserted and in ruins, with wild raiders or scavengers picking over the remains. This vacuum gives dwarves the opportunity to found a new clan, which begins as soon as any population pressure occurs in any other clan stronghold.

The gamemaster is advised to let the current external policy of the clans determine the relative age of the clan. Clans with conservative and liberal politics have flexible ages, giving some additional discretion if needed. The gamemaster may also wish to determine if a stronghold is currently in ruins. One suggested method is to roll 2d6 for each stronghold in turn, an '11' or '12' result indicates it is vacant.



## 2. Clan Dendural

This is a representative clan of dwarves who might populate a stronghold. It includes unique persons for key professions, as well as typical character types. Typical types note characteristic rolls, or reference NPC skill guidelines (see *Swordbearer*). The average result is given in brackets [ ] — a gamemaster can simply select a number close to this average result, if in a hurry.

Note that all dwarves are advantaged in metal and disadvantaged in wind elements. This is not always noted for individuals.

Dendural is both the name of the clan as a whole, and for the high clan within it. There are four subclans also present: Draugf, Forgyn, Hrethel, and Vigsdula. This clan may be located in any of the six strongholds, or with new names, can be spread over a number of strongholds. The gamemaster should feel free to use the characters as needed. However, the characteristics and skills of the characters are based on their function/jobs in the clan. If a character had a different function, his or her description would need alteration.

### High Clan Leaders

Below are a representative sample of influential persons in the high clan. The gamemaster should select one as the spokesman for the high council, and increase his (or her) status to 18. Others with related political opinions should become 'influential' members of the council, while those with different political views become the 'out of office' party. Although ten characters are listed, the gamemaster should normally use only six or seven, and eliminate some of those with divergent political views (to insure that the party 'in power' has a solid majority). Naturally, the gamemaster can also change the political views of a character, to better accommodate his/her needs, without any changes in the characteristics or skills.

#### Dysir 'Goldeye' Dendural

Female, mass 7, strength 11, agility 12, intelligence 14, age 50, social status 17, specializes in Arts/Crafts and Magic. Specific skills include throwing axe 28/23, dagger 30/32, detect danger 33, conceal 86, detect concealment 83/51 (indoors/outdoors), disarm trap 74/48 (indoors/outdoors), diplomacy 44, haggling 49, bribery 52, cooking 34, wild food 29, scribe 73, jeweler 91, locksmith 60, armorer 42, artist 89, can identify and knows spells for fire, metal, crystal, and light/dark, politician 54, economist/administrator 39, personnel management 65, can read and write. Her possessions include nodes aligned to all fire, metal, crystal, and light/dark spells. She wears a diamond ring enchanted with both a passive and an active contact Reality Reflection spell, which she uses on herself, to conceal her knowledge and use of magic.

Dysir is a fabulous and respected jeweler who does 'finishing work' on the most important and valuable items from the metalworking area. This includes a modest enchantment or two on some of the more important items. She keeps her knowledge of magic a secret, and conceals its use. In council, Dysir is well-known for her reactionary politics. She advocates that the clan keep itself separate from all, including other clans, and that the best solution to most problems is simply locking the gates to sit out the issue. She does not advocate warfare or violent acts unless there is no other choice, and then only in self-defense. Dysir has spent virtually her entire life within the stronghold, and has a subconscious fear of the outside, and anyone (or any thing) from the outside (she is not entirely aware of this rationally, but her emotions are ruled by it).

Agni 'Silverbeard' is normally her mate (gamemaster's option), and if so, they will have collaborated on certain very valuable pieces of treasure.

#### Agni 'Silverbeard' Dendural

Male, mass 8, strength 13, agility 7, intelligence 9, age 41, social status 17, specializes in Country and Arts/Crafts. Specific skills include battle axe 38/23, throwing axe 36/30, dagger 29/37, detect danger 58, detect concealment 47/26 (indoors/outdoors), drinking 51, climbing 64, tracking 43, wild food 36, hunting 39, armorer 55, builder 42, miner 92, can identify metal, crystal and fire nodes, but does not know spells for them, warlord 19, politician 58, economist/administrator 37, personnel management 40, can read and write. Agni has contacted and contained (but not aligned) some weaker metal, crystal and fire nodes

— which he keeps in a safe place (somewhere in the lower mines, his living quarters, etc.).

Agni is a skillful miner with some experience among the hunters as well. He is a strong, hard worker and, thus, popular. Although gruff, he is considered fair and reasonable by most. Metalworkers like him especially, since in a few cases he has come across a node while mining, and given it to a metalworker (or jeweler) who knows enough magic to make use of it — usually to enchant an item. Agni has no real use for magic himself, but recognizes the value of nodes, and hordes most of those which he finds.

In council, Agni has conservative views. He understands the need to occasionally deal with other clans, or accept dwarven immigrants into the clan, but likes to minimize this. Other contact with the outside world he believes unnecessary at best, and dangerous all too often. He was never a good hunter, and sees hunting expeditions as unpleasant necessities, rather than fun.

Agni normally has Dysir 'Goldeye' as his mate (gamemaster's option). If so, Agni has probably provided Dysir with many of her fire, metal and crystal nodes over the years, as gifts of love. In return, he will have a diamond-studded silver wristlet that is enchanted with passive temper and reality reflection spells, and active contact shield, shatter, and keepwarm spells (her gift to him).

#### Raud 'Ironshield' Dendural

Male, mass 10, strength 15, agility 13, intelligence 10, age 48, social status 17, specializes in Fighting and Town. Specific skills include hand-and-a-half sword 76/52, throwing axe 67/38, dagger 54/46, heavy shield 59/55, battle axe 49/41, fist 60/73, evaluate opponent, ambush 71, detect danger 59, detect concealment 37/25 (indoors/outdoors), underworld 35, diplomacy 62, haggling 27, bribery 46, gambling 53, drinking 74, climbing 38, wild food 40, hunting 35, armorer 29, warlord 47, politician 53, personnel management 38, familiar with regions beyond Valt Aszen and other races (especially with humans), can speak common human tongue, can read and write.

Raud, as an impetuous youth, left the region and served as a mercenary for many years, but eventually became disgusted with human lands and returned to the clan stronghold. He is now one of the clan champions, respected for his skill in arms, and due to his military experiences, often asked to teach others about both weaponry and the art of war. Raud enjoys himself when not on the practice field, has a prodigious appetite for drink, and is sometimes overly loud in the common hall. However, he is good-natured, and uses his tact and background to soothe any ruffled feathers. Raud considers himself semi-retired, and enjoys it. He will fight and war for his clan, but no one else.

In council, Raud has conservative views. He likes to keep outside contacts to the minimum necessary to maintain proper relations (as they now stand) with other clans. He sees no reason why the clan should deal with the outside world, and generally reinforces his point with a story of some type of political double-dealing he witnessed earlier in life while a mercenary.

#### Skeggi 'Cat skin' Dendural

Male, mass 11, strength 14, agility 8, intelligence 12, age 65, social status 17, specializes in Stealth and Country. Specific skills include javelin 68/43, throwing axe 59/30, dagger 32/33, ambush 77, detect danger 65, conceal 82, stalk & slink 69, detect concealment 84, cooking 36, climbing 68, tracking 71, wild food 54, hunting 90, fishing 22, leatherworker 29, warlord 45, politician 38, economist/administrator 34, personnel management 47, can read and write.

Skeggi is a famous hunter, but he now spends most of his time in the stronghold, and only hunts occasionally. He is famous for his skill in hunting snowcats, and has a number of fine pelts, which he wears outdoors when hunting, as well as indoors. Skeggi is not gregarious, and generally keeps to himself — he gets along with the outdoors and nature better than with dwarves. His mate is normally Sigyn 'Icelover' (gamemaster's option), who has similar tastes.

In council, Skeggi has moderate to conservative views. He likes to consider himself enlightened, and normally suggests a moderate but cautious approach to any problem. He sees some value in developing ties with other clans, and will even consider talking to some outsiders,

but only if there is an obvious value to it, and then only if done most cautiously. Skeggi does not present his views forcefully, but instead relies on his dignity and respect to make his point. As a result, as an 'opponent' holding a minority view in council, he is largely silent, willing to sit back and see the results of an alternate policy, and will only speak against it if asked.

#### Sigyn 'Icelover' Dendural

Female, mass 9, strength 12, agility 15, intelligence 13, age 56, social status 17, specializes in Country only. Specific skills include hand axe 47/64, dagger 35/31, detect danger 76, cooking 58, climbing 94, tracking 52, wild food 69, hunting 55, fishing 30, doctor/druggist 23, miner 38, can identify and knows spells for crystal and light/darkness, knows the mountainsides and high peaks in the entire region in detail, can read and write. She has jewelry with active contact keep-warm, salve, and cure spells, plus nodes aligned to all other 1- and 2-power crystal and light/darkness spells. She uses her magic freely when climbing alone, and sometimes in the stronghold when she gets angry or does something without thinking first.

Sigyn is strong-willed and independent, and has always had trouble getting along with the clan in the stronghold. Her function has been in mining, but she never became skilled, and to avoid problems, simply dallies in side caverns and is generally ignored. She has no skill at diplomacy or politics, and is far too direct in her speech, as well as being easily insulted. Fortunately, she is not inclined to direct violence, and if threatened often uses her magic to defend herself — another trait that makes her disliked by the clan. However, she is most famous for her love of snow and ice mountaineering in the high peaks. In good weather she is often gone, enjoying herself alone in the mountains, where she is finally comfortable. Her skill and knowledge are legendary, and given grudging respect.

In politics, Sigyn is hopeless. She will never be a spokesman, and often stays away from council, since she always gets involved in arguments. Actually, her political beliefs are moderate to conservative, and therefore in the 'mainstream' of dwarven attitudes. Alas, she always ends up quarrelling over some minor point, or saying something that offends a potential ally in council.

Normally Sigyn is mated with Skeggi 'Catskin,' who shares her love for the wild countryside (they sometimes go out together on extended trips). Sigyn defers only to him, and to please him will sometimes support his political views or plans. Other times her perverse independence prevents her from giving such support, trying even Skeggi's patience.

#### Vola 'the Quiet' Dendural

Female, mass 5, strength 6, agility 4, intelligence 17, age 77, social status 17, specializes in Arts/Craft and Leadership/Administration. Specific skills include dagger 32/29, conceal 74, detect concealment 84/61 (indoors/outdoors), underworld 45, diplomacy 63, bribery 38, cooking 41, wild food 45, scribe 85, tailor 46, doctor/druggist 30, artist 39, musician 38, has spiritual knowledge, politician 71, economist/administrator 84, personnel management 65, can read and write, knows gnomes well.

Vola has never taken a mate, but for most of her life has served as the 'chief of staff' in the stores function. She is an institution there, and while formal leadership of the function is exercised by a sub-clansman, Vola quietly runs it, and is the real manager. She is never outspoken, and is both liked and respected by everyone. Her function has placed her in close contact with the gnomes of the stronghold, and she knows them all well — and is on good terms with most. As a result, Vola is one of the few dwarves universally loved by the gnomes, who see her as a fair mistress and defender of their interests. She tries to protect them from harm, and more than once has rearranged functions to prevent a gnome from being victimized. Aside from a few other astute 'old timers' in stores, this is generally unknown and unappreciated by the dwarves in the clan.

Vola is a very skillful politician, and uses a gradual, indirect approach to achieve her ends. At heart she has a moderate to liberal viewpoint, and is somewhat curious (as well as open-minded) about other clans and the outside world. However, she understands the deep suspicion and conservatism is dwarves, and believes that a gradual approach to contacts is the only possible method. In council she says very little, and instead, by subtle questions, or by pointing out facts, guides the thoughts and feelings of others. She would never be a spokesman, but might well be the actual power and skill (politically) that kept one 'in power' in council.

#### Starkad 'Diamondlayer' Dendural

Male, mass 6, strength 9, agility 10, intelligence 12, age 63, social status 17, specializes in Town and Arts/Crafts. Specific skills include hammer 68/30, knife 54/57, detect concealment 52/39 (indoors/outdoors), disarm trap 68/41 (indoors/outdoors), diplomacy 50, haggling 29, gambling 36, drinking 64, cooking 33, dancing 39, scribe 49, pottery & glassblowing 35, jeweler 80, locksmith 64, armorer 31, artist 56, can identify and knows crystal spells, politician 47, personnel



Hauksbok Gladhand

Frija Sharptongue

Starkad Diamondlayer

Vola the Quiet

Thrym Strongarm

management 48, can read and write. Starkad uses his magic in his jewelwork, generally for enchantments. He does not normally bother to keep aligned nodes or enchanted jewelry for his personal use.

Starkad is a very direct, honest, but engaging character who is very popular in the clan. He is always good natured, although a bit near-sighted. Although a very fine jeweler, he almost never keeps his work — he enjoys creating jewelry, but loses interest once the piece is finished. Although very knowledgeable in crystal magic, he uses it simply to enchant and enhance his jewelry, and believes magic should be used for such purposes always (and is mildly distressed when it is put to other uses, especially against people).

Starkad is a skillful politician, but mostly by accident. His personality encourages everyone to trust him, and his views are always stable, his support reliable. He extends his hearty friendship outside the clan to some degree, and therefore holds a moderate to liberal position — dealing with some other dwarven clans is reasonable (if done in a properly cautious manner), and some contact with outsiders desirable (again provided suitable precautions are taken). If the council policy is similar, he may be chosen as spokesman, or used by the spokesman as the diplomat of the council. In these roles he is less than perfect, as he is unable to fully understand subterfuge, and may be fooled into believing opponents are not truly dangerous, or thinking they are friends. However, within the clan, nobody wishes to think ill of Starkad — at the worst, he is seen as a victim of circumstances, and most problems with outsiders are blamed on the latter, rather than Starkad's simplistic approach to contact.

Starkad is normally mated with Frija 'Sharptongue' (gamemaster's option), whom he loves very much, despite being horrified by her deviousness and 'dishonesty' as a merchant (which he mentally excuses as a necessary evil in one who routinely lived among outsiders).

#### Frija 'Sharptongue' Dendural

Female, mass 8, strength 12, agility 11, intelligence 15, age 57, social status 17, specializes in Fighting and Town. Specific skills include longsword 58/51, throwing axe 60/33, heavy shield 39/54, evaluate opponent, detect danger 72, conceal 57, detect concealment 82/49 (indoors/outdoors), disarm trap 46/31 (indoors/outdoors), pickpocket 22, underworld 48, diplomacy 73, haggling 77, bribery 54, gambling 30, drinking 32, jeweler 45, locksmith 36, politician 57, economist/administrator 64, personnel management 61, knows many regions of

the world, knows humans, elves, halflings, and other common races of human lands, can speak various human dialects very well, can read and write.

Frija has spent over half her adult life as a merchant-trader in human lands, exchanging dwarven goods for other profitable items, and turning those into precious metals or jewels that she eventually returns to the clan treasury (while taking a large profit for herself as well). She is generally tolerant of other races, as a merchant must be to conduct business. She prefers honest business dealings, since she can reap fine profits just dealing in dwarven goods. However, she is not unaware of the shadier side of business, and knows what to look for, and how to protect herself. The clan regards her as peculiar, but since she brings them treasure, and is often gone for months or years at a time, she is not actively disliked. Although Frija avoids violence where possible, she is not afraid to stand her ground and fight, and when traveling as a merchant, normally has some loyal bodyguards with her.

Frija is actually far wealthier than her status 17 indicates (based on wealth, her true status is closer to 20 or 22, depending upon the current state of her business dealings). However, she keeps much of this wealth secret from the clan and others, knowing that serious problems would result if all were to know of it. She uses her wealth mainly as a business tool, to back various ventures or attempt journeys that only a well-financed individual or group could consider.

Frija is politically liberal, and supports contact with outsiders, as well as improved relations with other dwarven clans. This is both good for her business and a long-range benefit (in her opinion, based on her experiences elsewhere in the world). Her pet political project is improved travel and trade relations everywhere, including the Valt Aszen. However, she avoids radical stances, as she understands the conservatism of most dwarves, and sees some need for it, given the wealth of the clans (and herself). Frija could function as council spokesman (woman) if moderate-liberal or liberal policies were 'in fashion.' In such a case, she might use her personal wealth to help the clan in times of need — by hiring additional mercenaries, spending money for bribes and spies abroad, etc. Of course, Frija is a good businesswoman and wouldn't normally dip into her permanent fortune unless the situation was very serious indeed.

Frija normally has Starkad as her mate (gamemaster's option). Although she loves him, Starkad will never leave the stronghold while Frija gets wanderlust after too many years at home. Therefore, there



Sigyn Icelover

Skeggi Catskin

Raud Ironshield

Agni Silverbeard

Dysir Goldeye

are sometimes long separations in their lives, so they make the most of the time together. Most of the clan see their mating as peculiar, a marriage of unlikes, but in reality, their philosophy toward life and people is surprisingly similar. Fria envies Starkad's ability (and freedom) to trust everyone — a luxury she cannot afford.

#### Hauksbok 'Gladhand' Dendural

Male, mass 7, strength 12, agility 12, intelligence 10, age 31, social status 17, specializes in Fighting and Country. Specific skills include crossbow 69/34, battleaxe 44/48, dagger 42/45, detect danger 30, diplomacy 21, haggling 27, bribery 24, gambling 43, drinking 37, climbing 52, tracking 47, wild food 28, hunting 36, armorer 22, warlord 18, politician 35, personnel management 39, can read and write, knows humans and can speak the common human tongue.

Hauksbok is the youngest council member, and is a youthful radical, out to remake the clan and the world into something better (in his opinion). Although by function a hunter, his skill is greater than his interest (and his skill is only modest), and when possible, he spends time with the champions working on fighting skills instead. He is a great proponent of missile weapons, and yearns to learn more about them, including their making. His secret dream is to become leader of the clan and lead it in victorious military campaigns (usually fantasies where the clan is the chief ally of a human kingdom). He is very familiar with dwarven and human history, especially the Klenget Dynasty period (the last time dwarven clans were involved directly in human affairs). Hauksbok is tolerated as a youth with wild ideas — which he will grow out of in time. Those with more liberal positions are happy to have him in their 'camp' in council, but try to restrain him from saying too many wild things. It is unlikely that Hauksbok would be spokesman except in a very unusual situation (such as a massive discrediting of all conservative positions, or by an opposition ploy whereby he is made council spokesman only to demonstrate to all the wildness and bankruptcy of his schemes), and if spokesman, he would probably make a hash of it, alienating the entire clan rapidly, and causing his own exile.

Hauksbok would be most useful to the clan in times of war, as a subordinate leader in the fighting contingent, where his radical ideas and interest in military affairs could be put to good use. However, he does not have a lot of experience, and might be outmaneuvered by a skillful opponent. Hauksbok is popular with the younger and more radical elements of the clan, and might also be supported by gnomes who seek change (and who see Hauksbok's radicalism as a change for the better). Due to his youth, Hauksbok might not see that he was being 'used' by others for political ends other than his own.

#### Thrym 'Strongarm' Dendural

Male, mass 11, strength 18, agility 15, intelligence 5, age 39, social status 17, specializes in Fighting only. Specific skills include javelin 77/35, throwing axe 68/57, halberd 55/52, battle axe 82/61, greatsword 48/43, heavy shield 51/69, dagger 62/49, fist 65/58, evaluate opponent, detect danger 30, gambling 31, drinking 67, climbing 38, hunting 24, armorer 19, warlord 31, politician 17, personnel management 40, can speak the common human tongue, but is not that familiar with humans (has only known a few), can read and write (barely).

Thrym is the champion's champion of the clan, respected for his weapons skill, and greatly desired as a teacher in such. Unfortunately, Thrym is also rather slow of mind, and has difficulty grasping complex ideas. He is sensitive about this, and tries to act as if he understands (even if he does not). As a result, crafty persons can usually convince him of almost anything, but only until another crafty person convinces him of something new (poor Thrym can't tell the difference in many cases). He is also lonely, and looking for a mate, and thus is particularly vulnerable to females and their ideas (especially if young and unattached). Thrym is a council member, but has no particular political allegiance — he is simply the pawn of the last one to talk to him. He might even be a spokesman for a while, as figurehead for someone else. Unfortunately, the complexities of the job would be far beyond him, so sooner or later a new spokesman would be necessary. Thrym has no great ambitions — living life day to day is sufficient challenge for him.

#### Champions

##### Olaf Vigsdula, Champion of Champions

Male, mass 12, strength 19, agility 17, intelligence 10, age 47, social status 16, specializes in Fighting only. Specific skills include battle axe 92/64, javelins 84/47, greatsword 79/65, great hammer 74/66, giant mace 63/51, throwing axe 58/62, crossbow 46/23, heavy shield 71/88, dagger 63/69, fist 62/70, kick 51/44, evaluate opponent, ambush 51, detect danger 38, drinking 76, climbing 51, hunting 37, armorer 34, warlord 52, politician 14, personnel management 29, and can read

and write.

Olaf is the most skillful warrior of the clan, and looked to as its leader in battle (but only on the battlefield, strategy remains in the hands of the high council, who simply seek his technical advice if they feel they need it). In peaceful times he is responsible for the martial training program, and insuring that the clan has a small group of very skillful champions. He is expected to be familiar with a wide variety of weaponry because of this teaching role, although his own favorites are obviously the battleaxe, javelin, and heavy shield. Olaf is a hearty sort who learned his skills within the clan, and has never traveled far, although he wishes he could. Although he verbalizes a moderate-liberal political position, at heart he is considerably more liberal, and more understanding and interested in outsiders than most of the clan (or most dwarves, for that matter).



#### Typical Champion

Almost always male (95%), mass 1d6 + 7 [10½], strength 1d6 + 1 + mass [15], agility 1d10 [11], intelligence 2d10 [11], age (2d10 x 2) + 21 [43], social status 1d6 + 9 [12½], specializes in Fighting, sometimes alone, sometimes with a second sphere (typically Stealth, Town, Country, or Arts/Crafts). Important skills include one or more key weapons and a heavy shield, each at adequate [46½/42½] to superior [75½/71½] in use/speed, (key weapons are typically battleaxe or great hammer, if strength is insufficient, hammer or common mace, with javelins or throwing axe sometimes used, swords a rare choice), fists are minor [42/47] to good [73/58] in use/speed. Characters with a second specialty might have one or two unimportant skills here at minor [27] to good [58] (averages lower in Arts/Crafts). Useful skills include evaluating opponent [yes], ambush and detect danger at minor [27] to good [58], armorer at minor [16] to adequate [31½] (or better, if specialized in Arts/Crafts), various additional weapons among those common at minor [31/27] to good [62/58] in use/speed, and warlord and personnel management at none [11] to adequate [42½]. Those with a second specialization will have various skills at minor [27] to good [58] (averages lower in Arts/Crafts), and those of higher status (13 to 15) have a fair chance of knowing how to read and write. Those who specialize in Town sphere may have politician skill up to adequate [42½] levels.

The number of champions is very few (less than twenty, often a dozen or less), since they are 'non-productive' members who exist simply to fight. They are under the orders of the Champion of Champions, but actually serve mostly as teachers of martial arts to all other clansmen. As a result, some champions may specialize in uncommon weaponry, and at least one with crossbow and bowyer skills is likely. Each Champion hopes to eventually acquire the champion of champions position. Status depends upon skill in combat, so they are a quarrelsome lot, and frequently fight duels to the first or second wound (but never to death).

**Military Equipment of Champions:** All champions have their choice of weapons, and when dressed for combat, normally carry those in which they have the greatest skill. Weapons of champions are among the best (in workmanship) of the clan, and are commonly enchanted with temper and keenness (passive). A few have shield (active contact), and the best may also have shatter (active contact). The Greatsword of Dendural, used only by the Champion of Champions, has all of these plus chill (active contact) and reality reflection (passive). The Champion of Champions and senior champions (status 15-16) use plate armor, middle status champions (status 13-14) have half plate and closed helmets, the more junior champions have a flexible mail coat, and often a breastplate. This gear is supplied by the clan, and is considered clan property. Some champions do have their own equipment also.

**Notes about Champions:** Olaf alone, or typical champions in small groups, will probably have fighting skills quite superior to average adventurers. The gamemaster should therefore give proper 'warning' to adventurers, either by making their duties and reputation known, have Olaf laugh if an opponent draws a weapon on him, or perhaps arrange a short 'test of arms' to the first wound.

## The Hunters & Trailmen

### Bragi Forgyr, Huntsmaster

Male, mass 7, strength 12, agility 12, intelligence 14, age 52, social status 16, specializes in Fighting and Country. Specific skills include javelin 82/49, throwing axe 67/46, battle axe 53/34, dagger 58/44, heavy shield 62/70, ambush 94, detect danger 71, conceal 67, stalk & slink 55, detect concealment 44/29 (indoors/outdoors), disarm trap 39/22 (indoors/outdoors), climbing 72, tracking 68, wild food 41, hunting 89, armorer 24, warlord 50, politician 19, personnel management 28.

Bragi is the leader and teacher of all clan hunters, and also one of its key leaders in wartime. In fact, Bragi is a lover of a good fight, and he plans hunts much like military campaigns. Unlike some prior huntsmasters, he is not an expert woodsman, and instead views the wilderness as simply the area over which the 'battle' is fought, either between dwarf and beast, or some other suitable opponent. Bragi is respected as much for his martial skills as for his hunting abilities, and is an 'unofficial' champion. His political views are moderate-conservative.

### Typical Hunter

Usually male (85%), mass 2d6 + 1 [8], strength 1d6 + 1 + mass [12%], agility 2d10 [11], intelligence 2d10 [11], age (1d6 + 6) x 4 (+1d10) [47%], social status 1d10 + 5 [10%], normally specializes in Fighting and Country, some in Stealth and Country. Important skills include javelins and/or throwing axe at adequate [44/42%] to superior [73/71%], use/speed, ambush at good [58] to superior [71%], ambush at good [58] to superior [71%], detect danger at adequate [42%] to good [58], conceal at adequate [42%] to superior [71%], stalk & slink at adequate [42%] to superior [71%], and hunting at good [58] to super [86%]. Useful skills include another weapon of choice (usually hand axe, battle axe, or hammer), a dagger, and often (60%) a heavy shield, all at minor [28%/27] to good [59%/58] use/speed, detect concealment at minor [27] to good [58], climbing, tracking, and wild food, all at minor [27] to superior [71%], and one Arts/Crafts skill (leatherworker, armorer, builder, tailor, jeweler, miner are common) at minor [16] to adequate [31%].

Hunters are assigned tasks by the huntsmaster, and often are on extended hunting trips throughout the good seasons. During the bad seasons, they keep equipment in repair, and may work at some other function in their spare time.

### Typical Trailman

Usually male (80%), mass 2d6 + 1 [8], strength 1d6 + 1 + mass [12%], agility 2d10 [11], intelligence 1d10 [11], age (1d6 + 4) x 5 (+1d10) [41], social status 1d10 + 3 [8%], specializes in Country plus any other sphere except Leadership/Administration. Important skills include throwing axe or similar weapon (including javelins, battleaxe, hammer, dagger) at minor [28%/27] to good [59%/58] in use/speed, detect danger at adequate [42%] to superior [71%], climbing and wild food at good [58] to super [86%], building at good [47] to superior [60%], plus perhaps another Arts/Crafts skill at adequate [31%]. Useful skills include a second, and possibly third weapon (from above, and/or a suitable sword or crossbow) at minor [28%/27] to good [59%/58] use/speed, conceal and detect concealment at none [11] to good [58], tracking and hunting at minor [27] to good [58]. A character who specialized in magic will be able to both identify and know spells for 1d6 elements, including metal, but never including wind.

Trailmen come under the general direction of the huntsmaster, who uses them as scouts, and is also responsible for organizing their regular repair and maintenance activities on the trails, paths and bridges near the clan stronghold. If a large work party is needed for such a task, usually a mixed group of hunters and trailmen are assigned, and very often a hunter will lead it (due to higher social status) — which means large tasks may be done inefficiently, or take longer than normal periods of time (as hunters are less familiar than trailmen with the problems at hand).

Trailmen tend to be more independent, and politically more liberal than most of the clan. The group also includes many misfits who adjust poorly to clan life, and therefore seek happiness on their own in tasks that keep them away from the stronghold. It is this reputation that generally results in trailmen having inferior status and influence to hunters.

## Hunter & Trailmen Equipment

In addition to their best missile and striking weapons, plus a dagger and a shield for hunters, all carry gear for extended travel (food, tents, lantern), climbing gear, hunting traps and snares (for hunters) or builders' tools (for trailmen). Hunters often have gnome assistants carry extra materials, but don't fully trust them. Hunters are equipped by the clan with a flexible metal corselet at the very least, and all have cold weather clothing.

## Crafts

### Halfdana Draugr, Master Metalsmith

Female, mass 9, strength 12, agility 12, intelligence 17, age 59 social status 16, specializes in Town and Arts/Crafts. Specific skills include battle axe 35/38, heavy shield 29/37, dagger 40/44, diplomacy 57, haggling 29, bribery 64, jeweler 62, locksmith 39, armorer 89, can identify and knows spells for metal only, politician 26, personnel management 19, can read and write.

Halfdana is a female who has finally acquired a position traditionally held by males, through both skill in her craft and astute use of family and friends (c.f. diplomacy and bribery skills). Her own egotism is increased because she is one of the few members of the Draugr subclan to acquire relatively high status and a position of importance. She has lived her entire life in the stronghold and rarely ventures outside. Politically she is conservative to reactionary, but most of all wishes to protect her position and status. Due to her craft, she exhibits few 'feminine virtues' (i.e. does not look particularly beautiful or dress well most of the time, and tends to disdain most advances from males as simply the posturing of sycophants).



### Typical Metalsmith

Commonly male (70%), mass 2d6 + 1 [8], strength 1d6 + 1 + mass [12%], agility 2d10 [11], intelligence 2d10 [11], age +3d10 x 2 + 10 [43], social status 2d6 + 3 [10], specializes in Arts/Crafts plus any one other sphere. Important skills include two or more of the following: jeweler, locksmith, armorer, artist, each at adequate [31%] to superior [60%], or better if just two. A selection of two or three skills from the other specialization sphere, at adequate [31%] to good [58], are also very likely. Useful skills include the remaining arts/crafts skills mentioned above at minor [16] to good [47], plus many of the other skills in the second specialization sphere at minor [27] to adequate [42%]. A significant minority of metalsmiths (40%) can identify and/or know the spells for the metal element, and routinely use low-power nodes to enchant items. Those with average or higher social status have usually learned to read and write.

Metalsmiths work under the general direction of the master metalsmith, but are traditionally allowed considerable freedom in the items they create. The work has two primary goals: first to provide everyday items for the clan (some of which are of far superior workmanship — dwarves have high standards in such things), and second, to provide items for the clan horde (which are truly superior, often studded with gems, etc.). Much of the work is done in the foundry, armory, and various workshops, and more than a few of the metalsmiths have an area in their subclan living areas devoted to workroom space for metalwork. Most metalsmiths who use magic consider it to be simply another tool in their craft, using magic knowledge to actually cast spells (rather than to enchant things) is considered gauche.

### Yggir Hrethel, Master Miner

Male, mass 12, strength 16, agility 9, intelligence 13, age 62, social status 16, specializes in Country, Arts/Crafts. Specific skills include great hammer 67/89, javelins 70/32, detect danger 44, detect conceal-

ment 93/81 (indoors/outdoors), detect trap 48/29 (indoors/outdoors), climbing 71, tracking 39, wild food 21, hunting 48, miner 96, builder 82, can identify metal, crystal, fire and water nodes, but knows only spells for metal (due to advantage in metal, as for all dwarves), economist/administrator 52, politician 33, underworld 56, can read and write.

Yggr directs and often personally leads mining endeavors. He is good at his job, but half regrets his decision since he enjoys the outdoors and hunts alone for recreation. He regards mining as just a job, and is casual about his high status. He is popular among his miners, and politically is a voice for moderation and fairness (if he's around, rather than mining or hunting). He takes an exceptionally friendly interest in gnomes (note his high underworld skill) and they return the favor, viewing him as a friend. Yggr has an out-clan immigrant as a mate and tries to protect her. He is upset when jealousies of others cause her problems.

#### Typical Miner

Commonly male (75%), mass 2d6 + 1 [8], strength 1d6 + 1 + mass [12½], agility 2d10 [11], intelligence 2d10 [11], age (2d10 × 2) + 1d10 + 16 [43½], social status 2d6 + 2 [9], specializes in Arts/Crafts and any one other sphere. Important skills include hammer or great hammer with adequate [44] to good [59½] use and adequate [42½] to superior [71½] speed, climbing at adequate [42½] to good [58], and miner and builder each at adequate [31½] to superior [60½]. One or two additional skills from the other specialization may be important, at adequate [42½] to good [58]; if the other specialization is magic, identification skill for 1d6 elements (including metal, but never wind) is likely, but only 1d6 - 2 will have spells known (always including metal). Useful skills include detect danger at minor [27] to good [58], detect concealment and disarm trap at minor [27] to adequate [42½], and various skills related to the second specialization at minor [27] to adequate [42½].

Miners work in groups under the overall direction of the master miner, but individual teams working on veins or creating passages to new lodes will be under the direction of party leaders appointed by the master. To eliminate the dangers, considerable building is done in the mines. In addition, miners are responsible for heavy repair and improvement to the fortifications and living areas of the stronghold, so that the average miner only spends a quarter to half of his working time in the mines, and much of that time is spent maintaining and improving the mine system, rather than in actually removing ore. Mining teams routinely include persons able to identify elemental nodes (especially metal, crystal, fire and water, in that order), but the acquisition of nodes is considered the main goal — keeping them, or using them in the mines, is considered an unwise hazard. As a result, many can identify nodes, but don't know the spells for them.

#### Ull Hrethel, Clothmaster

Male, mass 6, strength 9, agility 10, intelligence 12, age 77, social status 16, specializes in Arts/Crafts, Magic. Specific skills include dagger and knife, each 82/81, conceal 69, detect concealment 92/73 (indoors/outdoors), pickpocket 55, underworld 58, haggling 67, bribery 74, tailor 68, leatherworker 73, artist 13, can identify and knows spells for all elements except Wind (Fire, Metal, Crystal, Water, Wood, Light/Dark), economist/administrator 15, personnel management 49, can read and write.

Ull has made good use of his magic knowledge to rise to power and still has virtually all spells (except wind) available to him in aligned nodes. However, he has difficulty in acquiring new nodes, and has great difficulty in getting enchanted items of real value. Therefore, he is now most careful about using spells, and hates to risk losing a node unless the situation is dire indeed. He will never use magic to help the clan or others — only to further his own ends.

#### Typical Clothworker

Mixed sexes (50% male and 50% are females), mass 2d6 + 1 [8], strength 1d6 + mass [11½], age (3d10 × 2) + 10 [43], social status 2d6 + 2 [9], specializes in Arts/Crafts and any one other sphere (often Town). Important skills include dagger and/or knife with adequate [43/41½] to superior [72/70½] use/speed, tailor and/or leatherworker at adequate [31½] to superior [60½], plus one to three skills associated with the other specialization sphere at adequate [42] to good [57½]. Useful skills include conceal at minor [27] to good [58], artist at minor [16] to good [47], and many of the other skills associated with the other sphere at minor [26½] to good [57½].

Clothworkers take the skins from the hunters and the natural fibers or old cloth from stores and create clothing, cloths, etc. for the clan. Although the numbers in the craft rarely exceed a couple of dozen, many 'part-time' workers can be found, all under the direction of the

clothmaster. With Ull in command, difficulties have arisen, and certain important items are starting to be in short supply — Ull blames it on his inept predecessors and greater ineptitude by his workers. The clothworkers, of course, distrust Ull and dislike things in the craft under his leadership. The gamemaster can decide whether to create one or two would-be competitors for Ull's job, or to have no one strong enough to give him immediate trouble. Clothworkers make considerable use of gnome helpers.

#### Stores

##### Gisla Forgyn, Master of Stores

Female, mass 7, strength 9, agility 9, intelligence 15, age 55, social status 16, specialized in Stealth, Town. Specific skills include knife 68/80, detect danger 37, conceal 95, stalk & slink 49, detect concealment 95/30 (indoors/outdoors), disarm trap 63/21 (indoors/outdoors), underworld 71, diplomacy 68, haggling 39, bribery 35, gambling 50, drinking 46, cooking 87, wild food 88, scribe 93, pottery/glassblowing 38, doctor/druggist 21, artist 22, can identify and knows spells for water element, politician 55, economist/administrator 90, personnel management 88, can read and write.

Gisla is a happy-go-lucky, fun-loving person. She tends to rush through administration of stores affairs, and takes little interest in the details of the living quarters and other minor aspects of her role. However, she has a sharp wit, gets laughs easily, and is universally liked. Gisla uses her magic knowledge on occasion to throw humorous spells. Most of the clan is accustomed to her hilarious use of slipslides, or to seeing particularly stubborn objects suddenly flow off a table and become a puddle. Gisla loves gossip, and is thus sometimes drawn into council politics, although she has no real political ambitions or desires. She is interested in the welfare of the gnomes, and is respected (even loved) by them for that. Gisla is successful in her job mainly because Vola Dendural, of the high clan, takes a close interest in stores affairs, and quietly, competently covers the details Gisla has missed. Gisla has never fully realized this, and Vola has never criticized Gisla's work. On the other hand, if Vola should (or already has) died of old age, within a few years problems may begin to occur in the Stores areas.

#### Typical Stores Worker

Mostly female (75%), mass 2d6 [7], strength 1d6 + mass [10½], agility 2d10 [11], age (3d10 × 2) + 10 [43], social status 2d6 + 2 [9] (if male, 2d6 + 1 [8]), specializes in Town and any one other sphere (often Stealth or Arts/Crafts, less often Country). Important skills include knife with minor [26½/27], to good [57½/58] use/speed, conceal, detect concealment and underworld at minor [27] to good [58], cooking adequate [42½] to superior [71½] for some, for those specialized in Country wild food is good [58] to super [86½]. Useful skills include diplomacy, haggling and bribery, all minor [27] to good [58], one (or more, if specialized in it) Arts/Crafts skill at adequate [31½] to superior [60½] — common one are scribe, pottery/glassblowing, doctor/druggist [if good or better in wild food], musician sometimes, and economist/administrator and personnel management at none [11] to adequate [42½]. Those of status 9 or more usually also add reading and writing.

Stores workers supervise and lead gnomes in cooking, clean-up, maintaining the living areas, organizing and controlling consumption of everything during the long winters (a task vital to the survival of the clan, and the most prestigious work in this area), and generally controlling and administering daily life within the stronghold. Residents in the stronghold normally defer to higher status stores personnel within the living areas, who in turn are given instructions and supervised by the master of stores. Despite this deference, the status of stores is slightly lower than other areas. Stores workers have the most contact with gnomes (hence the importance of underworld status to them).

#### Gnomes

These are the 'underclass' of servants to the dwarves. Typical gnomes found supporting the work of hunters, crafts, and stores are listed below. There are no leaders (officially) among the gnomes — they take their orders from dwarves. However, among themselves, the gnomes look up to a few individuals for various reasons. These are also listed below.

##### Zekla 'Greeneye'

Female, mass 5, strength 7, agility 11, intelligence 15, age 31, social status 1 (10 among gnomes), specializes in Stealth and Arts/Crafts. Specific skills include fists 19/24, detect danger 78, conceal 82, detect concealment 47, disarm trap 52, underworld 19, cooking 45, tailor 39, advantaged in wood, personnel management 33, has learned to read and write.



Zekla is an aide to the Forgyn clan in their area, and has some contact with Gisla Forgyn (Master of Stores). This makes her important to the gnomes. Zekla is an open-hearted and honest person who is still innocent, and much loved because of it. If exposed to truly evil situations, or direct witness to the worst that might befall a gnome, she could change her character. Until then, she remains a powerful influence on the gnomes to stay in their current role.

#### Aerg 'Onehand'

Male, mass 7, strength 9, agility 14, intelligence 10, age 34, social status 1 (7 among gnomes), specializes in Fighting and Stealth. Specific skills include fists 68/47, knife 45/80, kick 37/33, rock (hand missile) 52/29, evaluate opponent, ambush 67, detect danger 59, conceal 73, stalk & slink 44, detect concealment 60, disarm trap 75, underworld 70, advantaged in wind.

Aerg officially works for the cloth craft, but has never taken any interest in that, and, in fact, has ignored what little learning was provided him and is now simply considered incompetent by his dwarf overseer. Actually, he is an angry and radical young man who spends all of his time plotting the overthrow of the dwarves, learning skills to aid in this (including secretly training himself with a knife — he has stolen a number of them), etc. He has a small circle of friends (about a half dozen) with whom he plots. Most of the gnomes know he hates the dwarves, and not a few suspect him of plotting dark deeds, but very few realized his life is devoted to this task. Outsiders in the stronghold will probably not meet Aerg directly, but if they become involved in actions against the dwarves, eventually he will show up with aid.

#### Typical Gnome Hunting Assistant

Very often male (90%), mass 1d6 + 5 [8½], strength is mass + 2

[10½], agility 3d6 + 2 [12½], intelligence 2d10 [11], age (2d10 x 2) + 17 [39], social status 1 (1d10 + 1 among gnomes), specializes in Stealth and Country. Important skills include conceal, stalk & slink, climbing, tracking, and wild food, each at adequate [42½-44] to superior [71½-73]. Useful skills include ambush, detect danger, detect concealment, disarm trap, swimming, each at minor [27-28½] to good [58-59½].

These gnomes are often gone for long periods during the summer with the dwarf hunting groups, where they are used as scouts, beaters, bearers, trackers, etc. In the winter, they also help the hunters with their gear, etc. (a relatively easy job).

#### Typical Gnome Metalwork Assistant

Usually male (80%), mass 2d6 — 1 [6], strength is mass + 2 [8], agility 3d6 + 2 [12½], intelligence 12d10 [11], age (2d10 x 2) + 15 [37], social status 1 (1d10 + 1 among gnomes), specializes in Arts/Crafts and any one other sphere except Town. Important skills include climbing at minor [28½] to good [59½], jeweler, locksmith, and armorer each at minor [16] to superior [60½] (usually no more than one superior, the rest minor to adequate [31½]). Useful skills include conceal at minor [27] to superior [71½], pickpocket at minor [16] to good [47], artist at minor [16] to good [47], and read and write. Additionally, various skills related to the second specialty are useful, and generally at minor [27] to good [58] status. Note that gnomes are advantaged in wood.

These gnomes assist in the foundry and workshop areas, and the more light-fingered among them are not above stealing a few minor trinkets from time to time. A few even learn magic (especially metal) by observing knowledgeable dwarves.

### Typical Gnome Mining Assistant

Usually male (75%), mass 1d6 + 5 [8½], strength is mass + 2 [10½], agility 3d6 + 1 [11½], intelligence 1d10 [11], age (2d10 × 2) + 14 [36], social status 1 (1d10 among gnomes), specializes in Arts/Crafts and any one other sphere except Town. Important skills include detect concealment at adequate [42½] to good [58] or better, climbing at adequate [43] to superior [72], and building and mining at adequate [31½] to superior [60½]. Useful skills include detect danger at minor [27] to superior [71½], swimming at none [8] to adequate [39½], jeweler sometimes up to adequate [31½], identifying various types of nodes (except fire, in which gnomes are disadvantaged), plus a few skills in the other specialty sphere, usually at minor [27] to good [58]. Note that gnomes are advantaged in wood.

### Typical Gnome Clothwork Assistant

Usually female (60%), mass 2d6 — 1 [6], strength is mass + 2 [8], agility 3d6 + 2 [12½], intelligence 2d10 [11], age (3d10 × 2) + 7 [40], social status 1 (1d10 among gnomes), specializes in Arts/Crafts and any one other sphere except Town. Important skills include concealment at minor [27] to superior [71½], and tailor, leatherworker, and artist at minor [16] to good [47], possibly one at superior [60½]. Useful skills include most in the second specialty, at minor [17] to good [47], skills include most in the second specialty, at minor [27] to good [58]. Note that gnomes are advantaged in wood.

### Typical Gnome Stores Assistant

Usually female (60%), mass 2d6 — 1 [6], strength is mass + 2 [8], agility 3d6 + 2 [12½], intelligence 2d10 [11], age (3d10 × 2) + 7 [40], social status 1 (1d10 + 1 among gnomes), specializes in Stealth and/or Arts/Crafts, if not both, then may select another sphere as well (except Town). Important skills include concealment and detect concealment

at adequate [42½] to superior [71½], pickpocket at none [0] to good [47], wild food at none [11] to superior [71½] (the latter especially if the gnome is specialized in the Country sphere), and pottery/glass-blowing at none [0] to superior [60½] (the latter especially if the gnome is specialized in the Arts/Crafts sphere). Useful skills include haggling and bribery at none [11] to good [58], underworld at minor [27] to good [58], and skills related to the specialization sphere(s) at minor [27] to adequate [42½].

### Dwarven Names

The dwarven tongue used in the Valt Aszen has similarities to Scandinavian languages. Typical personal and family names for males and females are given below. Naturally, there are many alternate spellings possible.

#### Dwarven Male Names

Andvari, Aurvandil, Baldr, Baugi, Bergelmir, Borr, Byggvir, Egill, Eiriks, Fafnir, Floamanna, Freyr, Forseti, Garm, Grendel, Gunnar, Gylfi, Gymir, Hadding, Hagbard, Haki, Halfdan, Helgi, Hermod, Hoder, Hoenir, Hord, Hrafnkell, Hrethel, Hroif(r), Hrothgar, Hrougar, Kraki, Hrungrnir, Hugi, Hymir, Ingimund, Kormak, Lodur, Lytir, Magni, Mimr, Niohoggr, Njord, Od, Orvar, Otr, Ragnar, Ragnvald, Regin, Scyld, Sigmundur, Sigurd, Sigvat, Skirnir, Surt, Suttung, Svein, Thilafi, Thiazzi, Thioriks, Thorbiorn, Thorgrim, Thorhall, Thorolf, Tryggar, Tyr, Ulfr, Uggar, Vali, Vatasdoela, Ve, Vidar, Vigagulms, Vikar, Vili, Vol-sung, Widia, Wodan, Ymir, Yngling, Yggr.

#### Dwarven Female Names

Angrboda, Bobd, Idun, Bryhildr, Disir, Elli, Fjorgym, Freya, Frigg, Gefjun, Gerd, Menglad, Modgud, Nanna, Nehalennia, Nerthus, Ran, Roskva, Sif, Sigrun, Sigyn, Skadi, Skialf, Thokk, Thorgerda, Urd.

# Strongholds

Each of the six Valt Aszen clan strongholds is a unique fortress that includes living and working areas for the dwarves, their gnomes, etc. Mining shafts normally extend further into the interior of the mountain, cliff, or hillside, while exterior entrances are fortified. These fortifications normally include walls and towers around the doorway, although sometimes simple doors with plenty of interior traps, murder holes, etc. are used instead.

This section describes a typical stronghold originally built in the mouth of a shallow, but large cave. Two levels of living areas were hollowed into the cave, while a series of walls and towers grew up around the cave front. The whole structure is at the bottom of a very tall (2,000 feet or 200-story) mountain cliffside, making attacks from above virtually impossible. Approach from below is by a steep roadway that climbs to the entrance, making a number of switch-backs. The cliff extends to either side of the stronghold, making the only feasible approach that of the roadway.

Although the plans for this particular stronghold have the main entrance facing northward, it could, in fact, face east or west. Southerly exposure is uncommon, since that would face into the winter winds.

The gamemaster can use this stronghold for any one of the six in the region as he desires. It is very possible that a second stronghold in the region could be similar (its design was based on this, or vice versa). When adventures exhaust the possibilities of this stronghold, the gamemaster can use aspects of it (especially unused areas) for another.

### Basic Design

The main living areas and workrooms for the stronghold are on two floors, running back into the cave, which was expanded considerably to hold them. The mouth of the cave is sealed with the Great Wall made of metal and stone. There is a flat courtyard in front of the Great Wall, with towers and walls in and around the courtyard, forming the outer defenses.

Deep inside the mountain are the actual mines, some of which are in use, and some of which have been converted to living spaces for the gnomes. As a general rule, the closer to the Great Wall (and the outside) one lives, the higher the status. Gnomes, with the lowest status, would naturally live furthest inward — in the abandoned mine shaft areas.

Dwarves and gnomes are shorter than average. Interior buildings

and ceilings behind the Great Wall are lower than normal. Any character with a mass of 15 or more will have difficulty fitting through doors, and may have to stoop in many rooms. For each point of mass over 14, the character's agility is reduced by one while inside, and each agility-related skill is reduced by five. If a character had a mass of 17, his or her agility would be reduced by three (—3) and agility-related skills would be reduced by fifteen (—15).

### Exterior Fortifications

Overlooking the switchback road that rises to the Great Gate is a stone wall with an outer gate in it. The stone wall itself rises fifteen feet from the courtyard it surrounds, but if climbed from the outside, it is almost twice that height, as the ground slopes away rapidly, and in fact, some filling and smoothing was done to form the courtyard within. The wall has a walkway behind it, from which troops can fire and fight. Where the walkway is interrupted by a tower, there is no door — the towers can only be entered from the courtyard, not the walkways of the walls.

#### Outer Bailey

The east end of the wall, running from the Great Tower to the east side of the cave, is one story lower than normal, and at roughly the level of the roadway as it climbs to the outer gate. An average person could climb over the roadway to the bailey wall, or vice versa. The bailey was an afterthought to protect the guardhouse behind it, and can only be entered or exited (aside from over the wall, onto the road) by stairs into the Great Tower basement.

#### Skarg's Tower

This tower is the middle of the wall, and is an older, square design. Its main floor is slightly above courtyard level, with firing and fighting slits overlooking the road outside. Stairs lead up to a walled roof, which overlooks the walls to either side, the courtyard, and, of course, the road. The tower is designed to support and aid the wall defense, and is normally empty.

#### Harik's Tower

This is a small round tower of considerable strength at the outside corner of the wall. The roadway outside switchbacks around the tower,

which anchors the end of the wall. It is also just one story, with a ground floor slightly above courtyard level, and a ladder leading up to a walled roof that overlooks the wall. Entrance is gained from a tunnel beneath the walkway of the wall, which runs past the tower.

#### Gatehouse

On the ground level, this tower contains the mechanisms to open and shut the outer gate, which is a system of cables and gears, operated from a treadmill inside the building. A ladder leads to a second floor, which has fighting slits and a doorway to the covered way above the gates. The ladder leads to the gatehouse roof, which is walled, and can thus overlook the walls, the covered way, and the outer towers (Skarg's and Harik's). The gatehouse roof, and the length of wall from the gatehouse to Harik's tower, provide ideal positions to bombard any attackers coming up the road and attacking the gate itself.

#### Outer Gate

This gate has double metal doors opening outward. Each door is spelled with temper and reinforced with metal bands on the inside. Over the doors, which are six paces wide and three paces high, is a covered walkway. From here troops can fire onto the road leading up to the gate, or pour boiling oil, drop stones, etc. onto anyone at the gate itself. The walkway connects via doors to both the gatehouse and the Great Tower, and is in fact the only entrance to the Great Tower from the outside.

#### Foundry Area

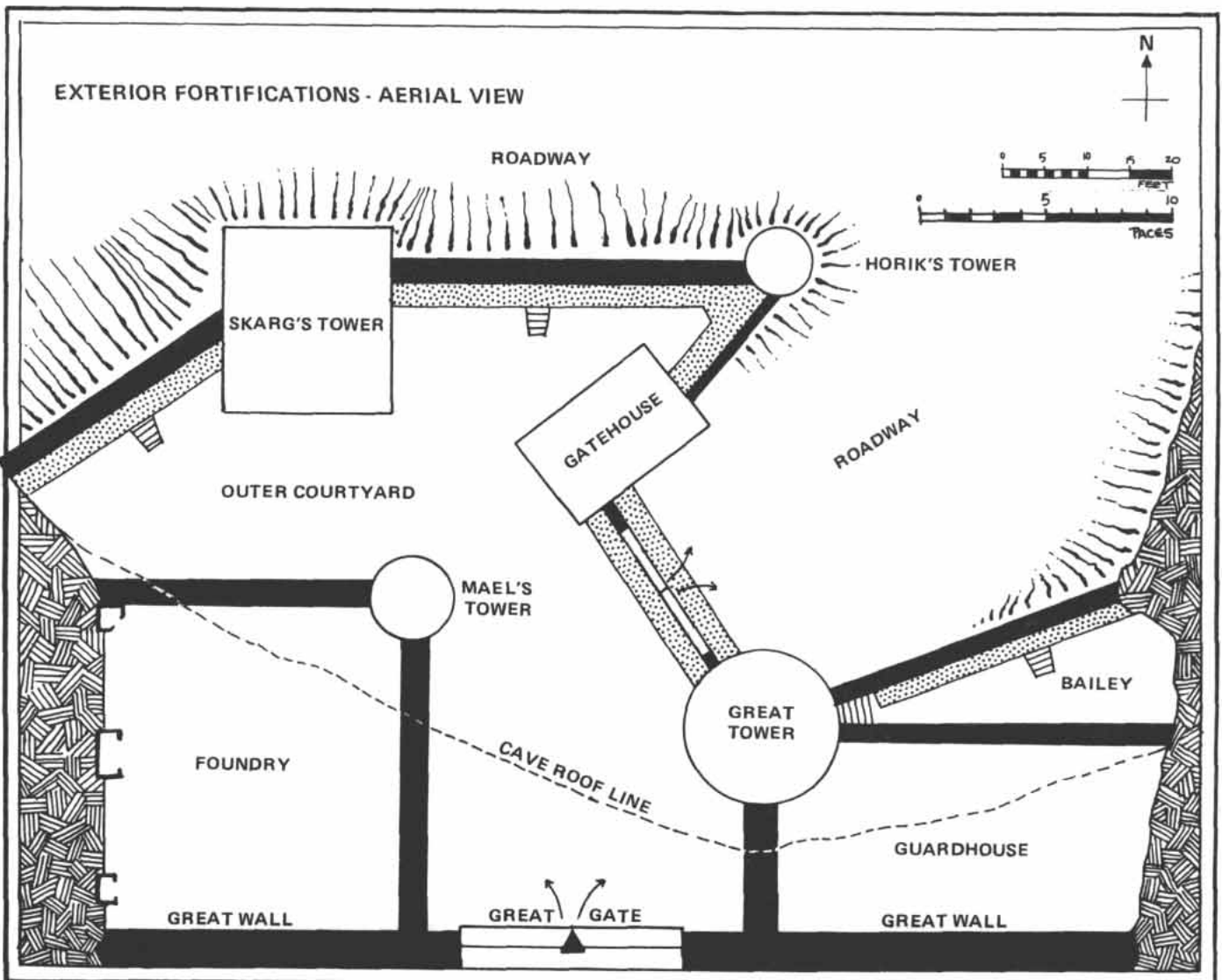
This includes the foundry itself, which is one story above ground (courtyard level) and one below ground, plus Mael's Tower at its corner. Although built outside the great wall, it has no entrances from the courtyard area. Instead, the foundry and its tower are

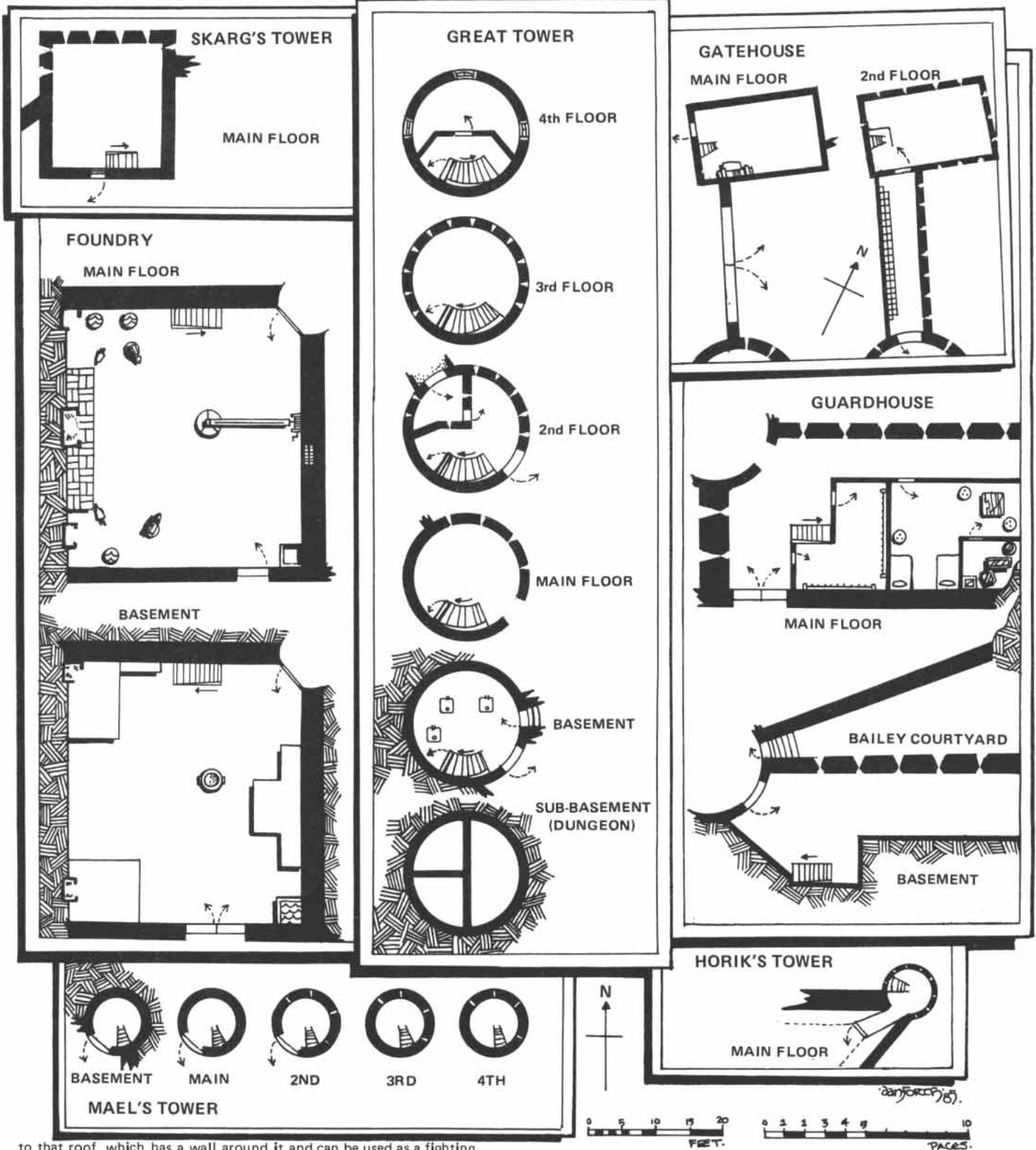
only entered by a tunnel in the great wall, or a deep tunnel from the mines, both inside the cave.

The foundry itself has a basement level with furnaces to smelt raw ore into melt, and metal forms for the cooled results. Thin and thick rods are the usual form for metal, sometimes sheets or blocks. The basement has double doors on the south side leading to a tunnel that connects to the mines far in the interior of the mountain. The twin doors, as a pair, have a passive Torch spell enchanted into them, but it only functions if the doors are shut (touching), since they break apart when opened and break the spell as well. In addition, there is a tripwire that can be rigged to a bucket of acid in this tunnel — a few paces further along in each direction the tunnel floor has run-off holes, and beneath the tunnel floor is a thick cast metal, to minimize acid damage. These defenses exist because the tunnel from the foundry to the mines is rarely guarded by dwarves. Naturally, during the work day, the tripwire is taken down and the basement doors to the foundry are left open.

The ground level (courtyard level) of the foundry includes a hearth and anvils for smithing metal and doing the basic work to form metal implements and artifacts. For simple casting and for convenience, there is a bucket hoist that runs through the floor to the basement, so that molten metal or piles of bars can be hoisted directly from the furnace area to the smithy, without carrying them up the stairs on the north wall. This smithy area connects to the main stronghold through a tunnel in the Great Wall.

Mael's Tower is built on the northeast corner of the foundry, with a basement that has a door to the foundry basement, a ground level door that also connects into the foundry, and three floors above that, plus a roof with a wall for additional fighting space. The upper floors of the tower have very low ceilings, and are designed purely for fighting, with small fighting slits. The second floor of the tower has a door that opens onto the foundry roof. This is the only access





to that roof, which has a wall around it and can be used as a fighting platform if necessary. Note that the inside of the foundry has no windows or fighting slits, and is designed purely as a work area, not for fighting. In battle, troops move through Mael's tower to the roof inside. The foundry roof is on about the same level as the roofs of Skarg's and Harik's towers, and below the roof of the gatehouse.

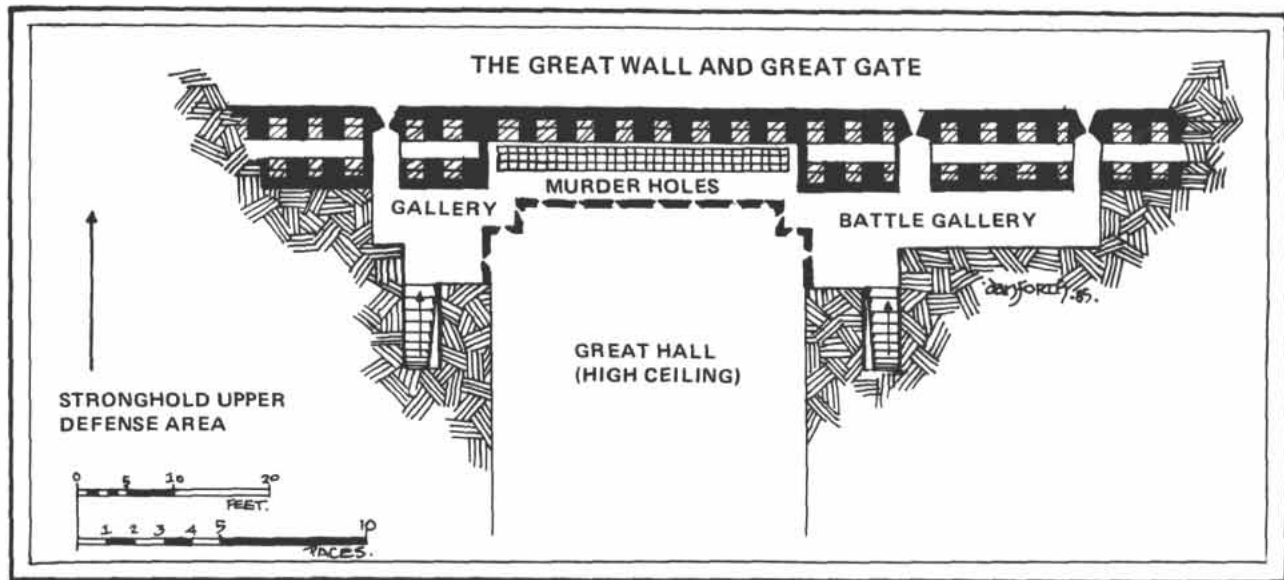
Vent, draft, and bellows devices within the foundry are all treadmill operated. The need for good drafts is the main reason why the foundry is virtually outside the stronghold, rather than deep within it.

#### Gatehouse Area

This includes the guardhouse, the Great Tower, and the entrance

to the outer bailey. The guardhouse is mainly on the courtyard level, but has a basement gallery that covers the outer bailey. The Great Tower is the tallest tower of the stronghold, and in addition to fighting slits, also has larger windows on the top floor, from which a lookout can observe the countryside while protected from the weather.

**The Guardhouse** has fighting slits facing over the bailey toward the roadway, and westward toward the area in front of the Great Gate. Open halls inside permit easy movement from slit to slit. The arms room inside includes a selection of arms, armor, and missiles, and is the location where an on-duty guard can rest briefly, while still keeping



an eye on the Great Gate and the main floor of the Great Tower. Beside it, the duty room is for wartime situations where soldiers need to rest 'at the ready,' and includes tables and bunks. The guardhouse also has a basement level with additional fighting slits overlooking the bailey.

**The Great Tower** is four floors above ground and two below. The basement (accessed from the tower main floor or guardhouse basement) has three trap doors in the floor, which lead down to dungeon-like pits. Especially undesirable prisoners are normally consigned to these pits. The tower basement also has a small door that opens to a narrow stairway, which lead into the bailey area in front of the guardhouse. The main floor of the tower has firing and fighting slits that cover the bailey and the area in front of the outer gate, while the second and third floors have fighting slits in all directions. The second floor is divided into two rooms. One has a door to the covered way over the outer gate, the other a door to the guardhouse roof, which is walled and can be used as a fighting platform. As on the foundry roof, the only entrance or exit from the roof is this tower door. The division of the tower's second floor into two rooms is to improve its defense internally, especially if the enemy attacks over the covered way before it can be destroyed. The top (fourth) floor of the tower has large shuttered windows that offer little protection in battle, but a superior view to fighting slits. Lookouts normally occupy this floor, which has comfortable furniture, and often a small stove or fire. The tower also has a walled roof, and normally a peaked roof over this, to provide in effect a fifth floor. However, some winters the peaked roof is knocked down, and in sieges it protects from aerial attacks, but is vulnerable to fire or magic. The Great Tower has stairways from floor to floor on its south wall, making movement up or down convenient, although the normal shield side going up is to the wall, so troops climbing upward are unshielded.

#### Posting of Guards

In peacetime, during good weather, a look out is posted in the Great Tower during daylight or bright nights, and a couple of additional guards patrol the perimeter wall and towers in a random fashion. These are normally supervised by one of the champions. The guards are expected to take a little weapons practice during this duty, to relieve boredom, but never all at once, and never for long periods. In wartime, the champions are split into three guard groups, and assisted by hunters and others, continually man the defenses. Each section of wall and each floor of a tower normally has one (sometimes two) guards, plus a few extra on each roof (foundry and guardhouse). Reserves are normally stationed in the guardhouse (where they can get into the outer defenses via the covered way from the Great Tower to the gatehouse), or in the ground floor of Skarg's Tower. The champions act as captains of these forces, and continually patrol and supervise their activities.

In bad weather a couple of look outs visit the top floor of the Great Tower a few times each day, but don't stay unless visibility is good or danger is sensed. Winter season bad weather usually covers the outer defenses with ice and snow, and very often the courtyard is buried in snow up to the top of the wall, and drifts on the roof of the foundry and guardhouse become huge. As a result, most activity on the defenses is limited to Mael's Tower, the Great Tower, and the gatehouse (via the covered way), which can all be accessed from the indoors.

Very little magic is invested in the outer defenses, which are mostly stone. The outer gate doors are strengthened by Temper to their metal, as are the doors from the outside courtyards, roofs, or bailey into the towers. However, most of the magical defenses are reserved for those in and around the Great Wall and its gate. The dwarves regard everything outside the Great Wall as expendable, and mainly a protection to the Great Wall. The only exception are the metalsmiths and metalworkers, who are reluctant to surrender the foundry, and might well block up Mael's Tower to prevent external access if a siege carried the outer walls.

#### The Great Wall and Great Gate

The Great Wall is the main defense and protection of the stronghold, and separates the living and working areas of the stronghold from the outside world.

**The Great Wall itself** is three paces thick, composed of an outside facing of tempered iron plates over solid metal blocks alternating with stone blocks (the stones have metal rods through them, thus the metal blocks are interlinked, and the stones held in place as well). The middle pace is simply a filler of crushed stone, sand, and smelting furnace tailings. The inner pace is again a series of metal and stone blocks. The metal blocks and facing plates individually are tempered (passive metal magic), and the connections are also tempered (and were originally welded using a powerful fire magic implement). As a result, the wall is extremely well protected against any magical attack.

On the main floor (courtyard or 'ground' level) the wall is pierced by an opening for the Great Gate, and two tunnels beside it; otherwise it is solid. On the second floor it is pierced by the Great Gate opening (which is two stories tall) and three fighting slits on each side. Small one-person cubbyholes in the inner part of the wall exist to provide access to the slits. On the third floor there are three more fighting slits (two east, one west of the gate area), and two pour spouts that drop over the gate area, to permit defenders to pour boiling oil, lead, etc. onto anyone in front of the gate. In addition, the wall over the gate itself is just one pace thick, the interior two paces replaced by a gallery area with a walkway, and a grated 'murder hole' area that allows defenders to pour and drop items onto anyone between the outer and inner doors of the Great Gate.

**The Great Gate** is actually a twin gate, with inner and outer doors. There is just one pace of space between the gates. Each door is actually a series of overlapping metal plates and blocks, individually tempered, and then linked with tempered jointed and reinforcing bars on the inside. The craftsmanship on the facing plates is so fine that they appear to be one solid piece of burnished silver-grey metal (a polished and alloyed iron).

Each pair of doors opens outward. There is a triangular central strut between the doors, on which they seat when closed. This strut also means the doors cannot be forced inward without the breaking the strut, which adds considerable additional strength. The strut is not necessary to the strength of the arch over the gates, and if so broken, the wall above will remain intact. The gate doors are two stories tall at the central strut. Due to the narrow space between the gates, the inner doors cannot be more than cracked open until the outer doors are opened. As a result, in peacetime during good weather the inner doors are cracked this far, and the outer doors cracked a bit further.

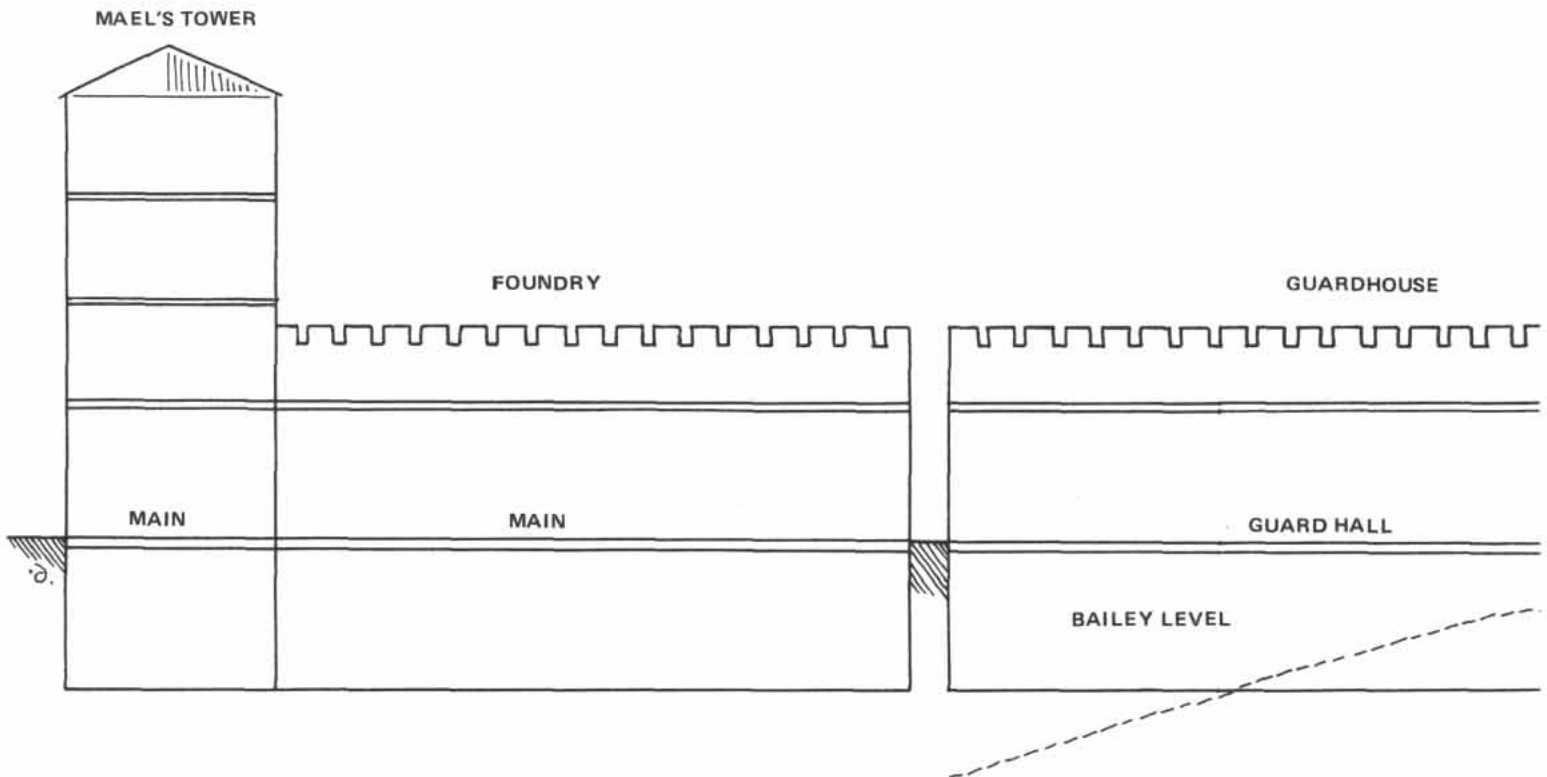
This allows one person per door (two overall) to squeeze past the gates, and minimal effort to close them (which is done every night, or on days when few are entering or exiting). In wartime, or during bad weather, the doors remain closed.

The gate doors are much too heavy for any ordinary person to push open or closed. Furthermore, they are operated by a complex system of gears, powered by treadmills in small rooms (in the northwest and northeast corners of the Great Hall, ground level). Unless the treadmills are running and the gears moving, the doors are virtually

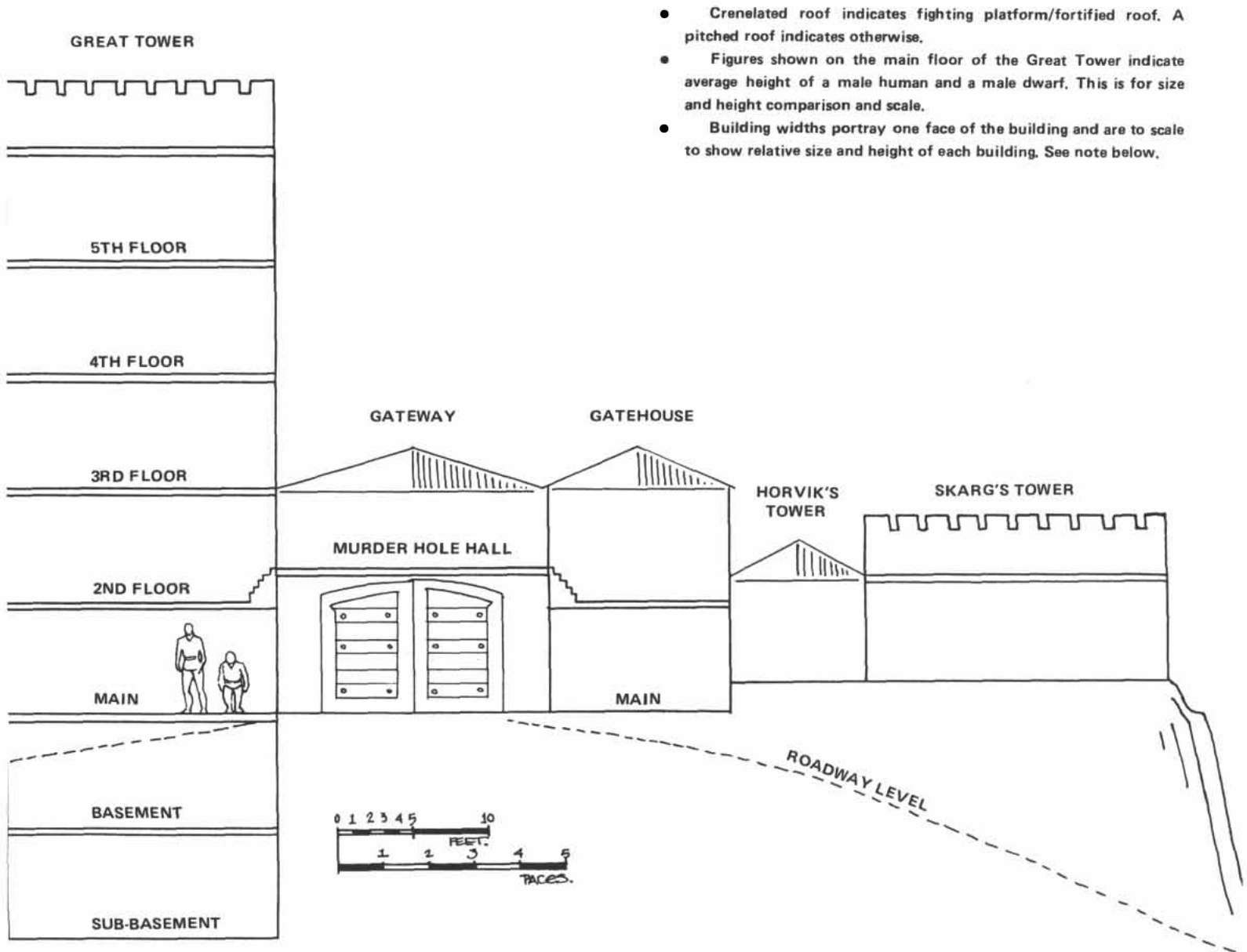
impossible to budge open or shut. The powerful gear system also insures that the closing doors can crush anything in their path, if necessary. The door edges are spelled with Keenness to enhance this ability.

The ground level tunnels to either side of the gate simply lead to the foundry or guardhouse structures, dead ends that have no outside entrance or exit (except over the roofs via the corner towers of those buildings). As a result, the Great Gate is virtually the only entrance or exit into the stronghold (a few secret alternatives exist, see below).

#### SIDE VIEW SCHEMATIC OF EXTERIOR FORTIFICATIONS



RELATIVE POSITIONS OF ONE BUILDING TO ANOTHER ARE NOT NECESSARILY TO SCALE, COMPARE TO THE AERIAL VIEW; THIS SCHEMATIC IS FOR SIZE AND RELATIVE HEIGHT. BUILDING WIDTHS AND HEIGHTS ARE TO SCALE IN THIS SCHEMATIC.



## Main Stronghold: Ground Level

This level contains the main working areas of the clan. Normally, one enters via the Great Gate into the Great Hall, which has thick one-pace walls of stone to left and right, with various metal statuary to left and right for decoration. At the head of the hall (south end) is a wide staircase that ascends to the court areas. On ground left to left and right of the staircase are doors to the common hall, where the dwarves gather for their evening meal (the main meal, or dinner, of the clan), where special entertainments may be held, troops muster in wartime, etc. At the southeast corner of the Great Hall is another doorway used by hunters and stores workers to quickly enter or exit without going through the great hall.

### Hunters' Area

The northeastern part of this level is taken up with rooms for the hunters to meet and work on equipment, store various materials and, in fact, for all dwarves who work outdoors to routinely store their gear (such as cold weather furs, climbing equipment, etc.). The amount of gear the clan has accumulated is rather large, and a special hidden room in the back of the storage area exists, known only to the hunter-master and his (or her) chosen successors.

### Water Cavern

An underground river (an internal mountain runoff from a small glacier far above) provides water for the clan. This area is the 'water cavern,' not actually shown on the maps. However, a narrow one-pace wide passage leads downward from this level to the east, and a few hundred paces later comes out in the cavern. This passage is very dimly lit by odd bits of metal enchanted to have perpetual heat or flash.

### Stores Area

The east and southeastern part of this level is completely consumed by storage space. These rooms are full of salt blocks, salted meat, barrels of drink, pickled foods and dried foods of all types, etc. The floors are a half pace or more below the normal level, to gain additional storage space from floor to ceiling. The hidden storage room is locked and the special stores there are only known to the master of stores (who alone has the appropriate keys) and his/her chosen successors.

### Gnome Access

To the southeast a tunnel one to two paces wide runs downward to the disused mine areas where the gnomes live. A few rooms in this area of the stronghold are given over to the gnomes, where they can store additional clothes, equipment, etc. they need. One of the rooms has a few pallets in it, so that gnomes busy for long periods can catch a quick bit of sleep here.

### Kitchens

These are located directly behind the common hall, with doors to both the common hall and the hallway which separates the kitchens from the stores area. A large bank of ovens with open hearths above runs along the south wall of the kitchen. Various small metal tables or blocks for preparing food are scattered about, and various implements, pots, pans, and knives hang on the walls.

### Water Room

This room has a large, low metal tank that holds fresh water. It is used as a ready supply of water for the kitchens, and for the residents above to draw upon. It is replenished daily by gnomes making trips to the water cavern. The supply of water here is simply a convenience.

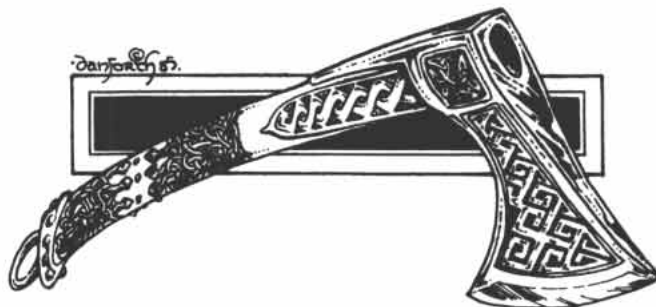
### Workrooms

The entire western part of this level is devoted to workrooms of all sorts. At the northern end are metalworking areas, placed to be convenient to the smithy and furnaces of the foundry. The most valuable items among the 'work in progress' are locked in the storage room off the metalworkshop — a concealed room known to all of the metalworkers. The jewelcraft room has a similar concealed storage area. Individual dwarves normally keep the raw or finished jewels in their personal residence areas until they are set. As a result, the jewel storage area is only known to the top jewelry craftsmen and the master metal-smith.

This area also includes rooms for tanning and working leather (including vats of various powerful acids and dyes), rooms for miners to store equipment and meet before they enter the main access to the mine tunnels (to the southwest of this level).

### Subclan Storage

South of the kitchens are a series of rooms devoted to special storage space for each subclan. A slightly larger room to the southwest is for storage of highclan items. Usually bulky but less valuable items are stored here, including old rugs, tapestries, furniture, and other furnishings. Periodically dwarves sort through the junk and throw out the least valuable of all, to make room for new, disused items. Although a rare item of value, concealed within something worthless, or covered by a crude gilt or paint job, might be found, it would take weeks or months to sort and examine just one storage room for hidden items of this sort!



### Tunnels

At the north end of this level is the Great Wall, and beside the Great Gate are two tunnels, one to the west leading to the foundry, and one on the east leading to the guardhouse. Each tunnel has a trap mechanism above it, operated from a lookout room station beside the tunnel, and accessed from the inside of the stronghold. These stations have peepholes into the tunnel, a fighting slit, and the trap controls. The traps can be set on 'automatic' with an instant's delay after a door is opened before they activate.

The tunnel traps are a huge, solid block of stone that drops from the ceiling, effectively sealing the entire tunnel, and crushing anything beneath. The block fits snugly from side to side, but there is a one pace gap between the north face of the block and the north door of each tunnel. Thus, a character who jumps back to the north door (even if it is closed) will escaped death. The blocks can be hoisted out of the tunnel by operating a block and pulley mechanism on the level above.

These block traps are activated each night for safety, and are constantly activated during wartime. They are not activated during daytime, so that dwarves can safely pass in their everyday work. Normally the traps are on automatic when activated — the clan is too small to spare a permanent guard at the tunnels (except in wartime, when the enemy has captured everything beyond the Great Wall). In wartime, once the enemy reaches the Great Wall, these trap blocks are normally dropped in place, and then additional traps are rigged from above to prevent the enemy from approaching them to drill through the stone, etc.

### The Dungeon

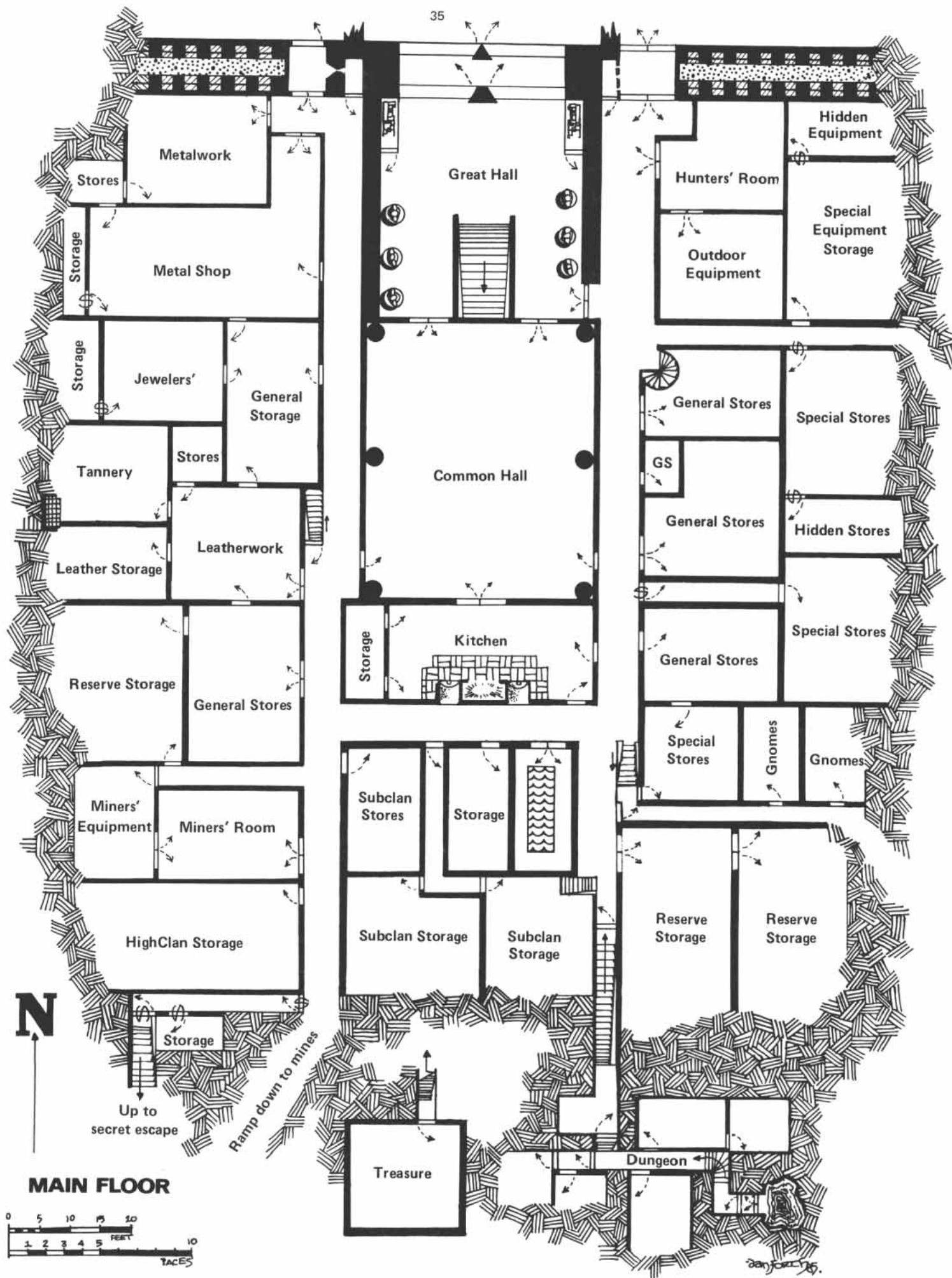
South of this entire area, a stairway leads downward to the dungeon cells, where prisoners are kept. This entire set of rooms and hallway is carved out of living rock, thus no exits save those shown exist. The dungeon has two cells with excellent locks and well-tempered walls and doors, a torture room, and a larger, well-furnished two-room cell where 'special guests' are housed, including dignitaries the dwarves do not trust, but must entertain, etc. The dungeon area includes a bottomless pit into which corpses or living undesirables are tossed (this is presumably fatal). No one can enter or exit the dungeon without passing the guard area, on the hallway out, and the door between the dungeon area and the guard area is quite good, with superior locks.

### Treasure Room

See description of second floor for details.

### Secret Escape Stairs

In the southwest corner, a secret hallway leads to this secret stair, only known to the high clan. There is a secret storage area without a concealed door before the stairway, to distract those who find the secret hall.



## Main Stronghold: Second Floor

This level includes the noble court and council room, as well as living areas for the entire clan.

### Great Hall & Court

The Great Hall, behind the Great Gate, is two stories tall. The diagram of the second floor shows the grand stairs coming from the ground level to the ante hall. The huge double doors at the top of the stairs are normally left open and folded back against the north walls, as shown — they are only closed in times of war. Dignitaries are normally shown to the ante hall, and then received in the court room one by one.

The court room itself has a dais where the spokesman sits, raised space for other high clan members to sit and stand nearby, and easy access to the guardroom. Normally one or two champions are on duty, with another in reserve with huntsmen (or others with high weapons skill) on reserve in the guardroom whenever the noble court is in session and greeting outsiders.

The high clan council room has a semi-circle of chairs. This room is normally reserved for private debates of the high clan, but in rare cases, an important embassy could be invited into the room for private discussion. More often, the high clan may temporarily retire from the court to the council room to discuss privately a complex issue. Official sessions of the high clan in council require special dress, kept in the closet at the south end of the room. This includes a special gorget (neck covering) with a Trow spell (active contact) enchanted into it, normally worn by the spokesman. This is used to enforce pledges to the council as a whole.

To the east and west of the great hall are battle halls. These have fighting slits that face down into the great hall, a short stair to the gallery along the Great Wall, and longer stairs leading up to the third floor gallery along the Great Wall. Racks of missile ammunition and various other weapons are kept along the battle halls and galleries, including javelins, throwing axes, and some crossbow bolts and darts. A few lances and pikes are also in evidence, plus plenty of knives and daggers balanced for throwing.

### Spokesman's Quarters

These are the living and working areas for the spokesman, normally entered from the hall to the east. The public quarters area (eastern half) are for receiving guests and holding private meetings, with a concealed door leading to the dais. The private quarters area (western half) are the personal living and sleeping area of the spokesman, and also has a concealed door to the noble court dais. The quarters also have a small private storage area and additional room (for a family, mate, special servant, etc.).

All rooms in the quarters are extensively decorated with tapestries and metalwork on the walls. Various trinkets and minor items comprise a status 18 treasure by themselves. However, only status 12 of this is easily carried, the rest is bulky and requires time to remove it from the walls, furniture, etc.

### Living Areas

There are only a few main hallways in the living areas. These open into large 'public' rooms where a group of subclan members perform their everyday tasks, including light meals, personal work, tending for children, etc. Often public areas interconnect, so that by going from room to room one can avoid hallway travel entirely.

Smaller 'private' rooms are accessed only from public rooms. Here individual couples or small families (in the poorer subclans) can live with some privacy. Private rooms are normally kept locked, and it is considered improper to enter any but your own, unless invited. Visiting another's private room during the night implies a secret love affair, or some sort of plotting.

The map diagram identifies public rooms with a number, and private rooms with a letter suffix. For example, '2' is a public room, with '2a' and '2b' being private rooms off of it. Many rooms have small stoves and fireplaces, with the chimney shown. Rooms of higher status have lower numbers. For example, room 2 with 2a and 2b is a very high status location, while 31 with 31a and 31b is very low status.

### Dendural Clan Divisions

Although the gamemaster can arrange the rooms as he or she desires, with the clan Dendural the following subclan ownership is suggested: high clan has 1-5, 11, 12, 20 and the spokesman's quarters; subclan Forgyn has 6-10, 13, 14, 18, 19; subclan Hrethel has 15-17, 22, 24, 29, 30; subclan Vigsdula has 20, 21, 23, 25, 26-28; subclan Draugr has 31-36.

### Secret Rooms

Secret rooms are concealed and locked doors exist off of 3b and 25a, each known only to that subclan. A secret hallway joins 13 and 16, known only to the Forgyn and Hrethel subclans. These are used mainly to store special goods of a particular person or subclan, special meetings, etc. One or more private rooms can be 'converted' to a secret room at the discretion of the gamemaster, simply by concealing and locking the door.

### Treasure Room Access

The treasure room of the clan is a powerfully locked vault on the ground level. However, it can only be accessed by a stairway going down from the second floor. This stairway is entered by a concealed and locked hallway between 22a and 33. Room 24b is where the guardian of the vault lives, with mirror devices to watch over the hall through peepholes, and control of various traps that overhang the stairs. These include simple tripwire block traps and acid baths (similar to those in the tunnels), plus a blind shadow magic trap. This exists in the short stretch of hall just before the stair. A darkness node passively enchanted to shadow exists here, so that the first person who enters is blinded, and thus likely to trigger tripwires, etc. further along. Additional containers along this hall with extra enchanted darkness nodes for more blindeye spells can be released by the guard. Note that the entire darkened hallway acts as a container for this node, so that use of light in the hall will destroy the container and thus the enchantment.

The final protection is the wooden handle on the treasure room door. The lock mechanism is set into this doorhandle, and the wood itself is enchanted with active contact breakbone spells, so that a person who touches it suffers 1d6 bonebreak spell effects (which often kill). A second concealed lock mechanism is found in the wall to the right, and this is the real lock that triggers counterweights that automatically open the door, as well as opening another hidden panel that contains a rewind mechanism for closing it. Dwarves never touch the treasure room door itself, since aside from the dangerous handle, the door has multiple burnthrus enchanted into it, so that anyone who touches it is immediately engulfed in flame (2d6 burns, and set afire).

### Secret Escape Stairs

Rooms 16 and 24 have locked and concealed doors that lead to a secret stairway that rises up through the tunnels in the mountain to an exit far overhead. The last quarter pace of rock at this exit is untouched, so those wishing to escape must bash through this barrier. The advantage of this arrangement is that the exterior appearance of the mountain is undisturbed (since the tunnel's final 'punch through' high above was never done). As a result, there is no way to enter the secret escape route from outside and above. These escape stairs are intended for use if and only if the stronghold is destroyed by invaders or a natural disaster.

### Gnome Caverns

A tunnel-like hallway, one to two paces wide, leads from the southeast corner of the ground level of the stronghold downward to the gnome caverns. These are disused mine tunnels and shafts, the nearest and driest of which are used as living quarters.

The gnomes have simply erected walls and partitions of metal and stone in the larger areas to provide private rooms. Two or more families usually share one room (gnomes are small). The system shown is typical of gnome living arrangements, and hallways deeper into the unused mines (to east, southeast, and south) could have additional quarters.

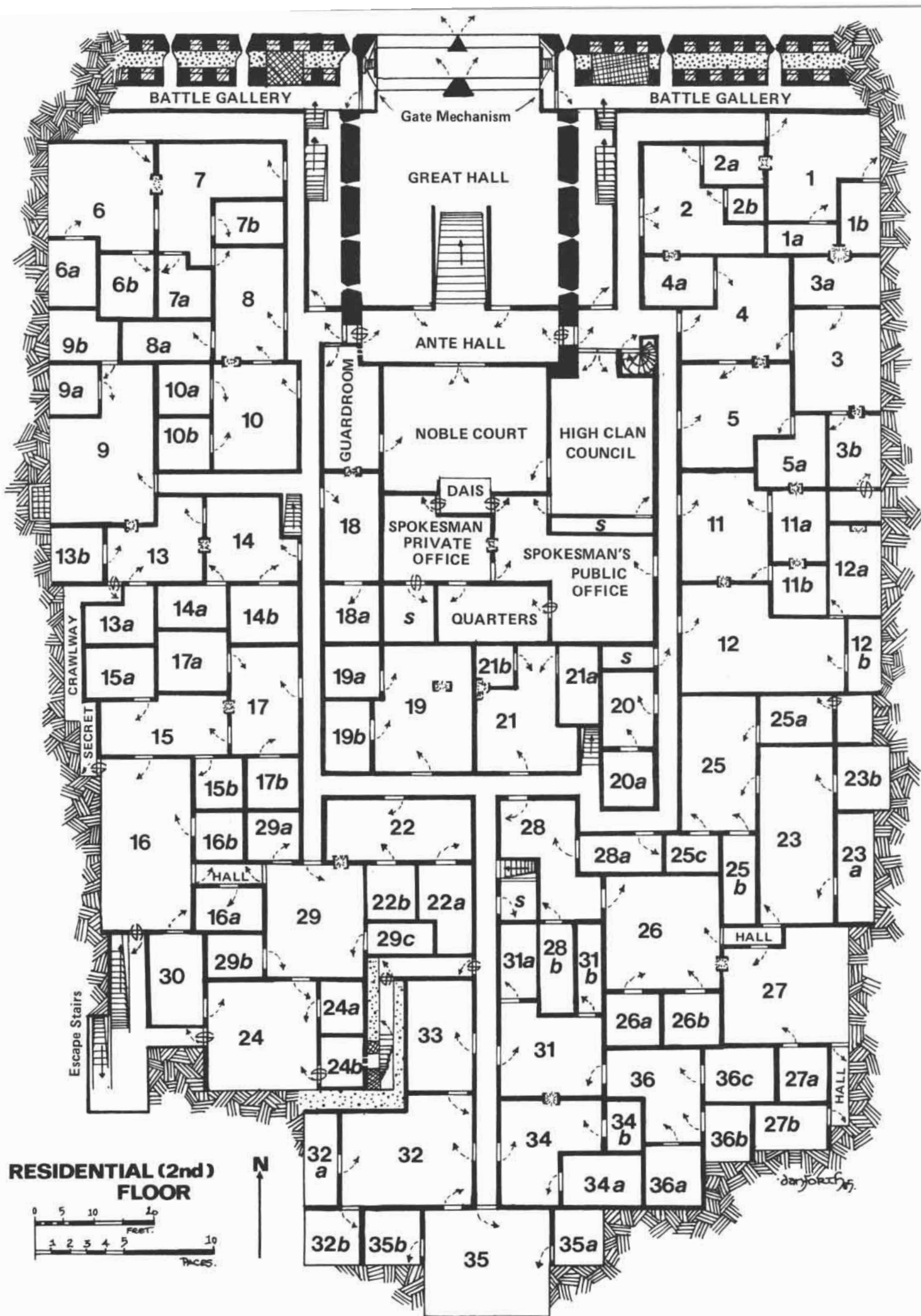
Note that one hallway to the southwest leads deep to a partly flooded area whose further passages are blocked by chock-stones. The gamemaster could 'open' one or more of these, and perhaps after a brief section of totally water-filled passage, allow it to rise and re-emerge into a cavern or similar.

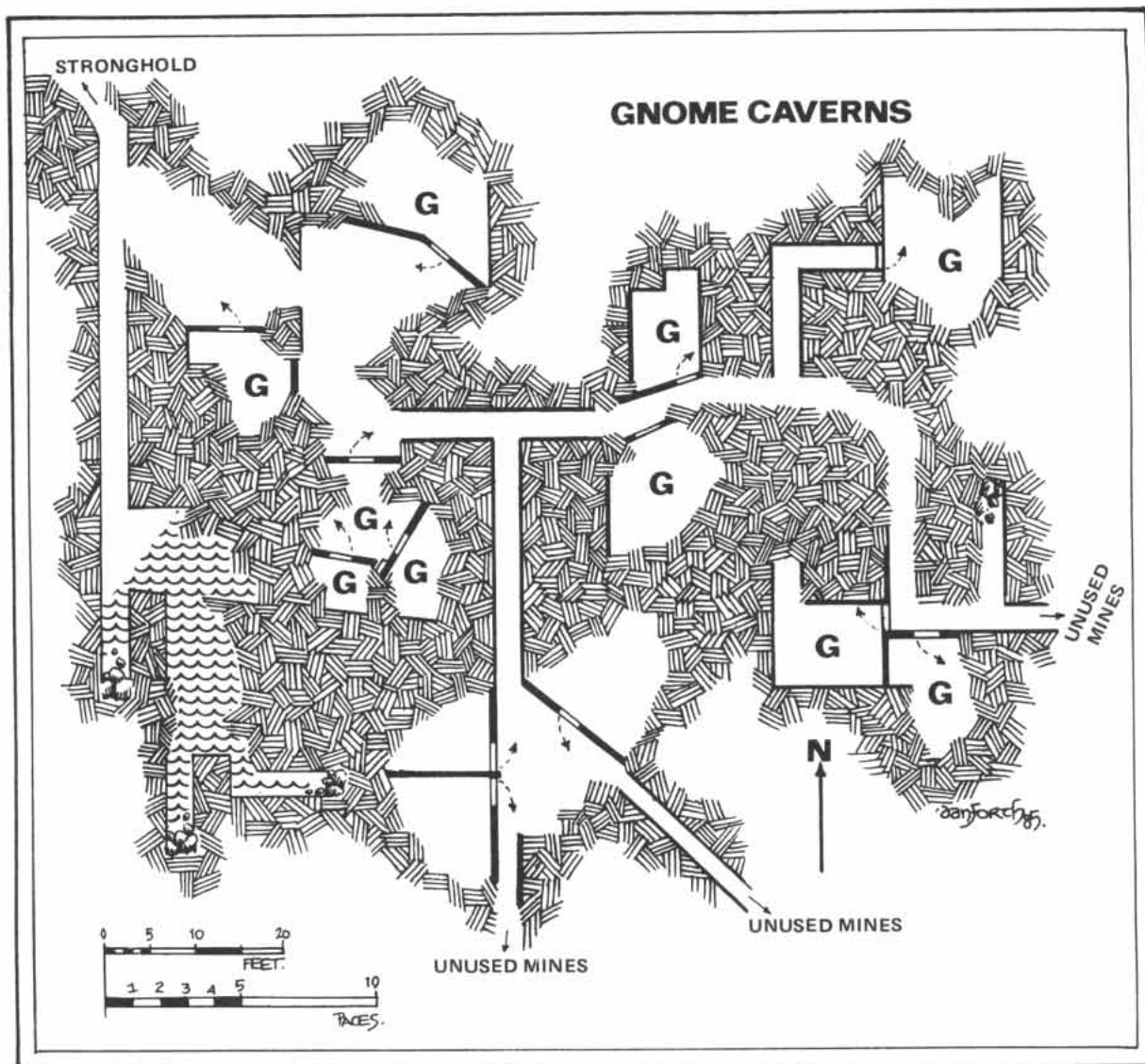
The gnomes are extremely poor, and have little if anything of value in their quarters. A few ambitious ones might be continuing to mine deeper in the old tunnels, looking for new veins, gems or nodes.

### Furnishings

A human wandering within a stronghold would find the light very dim, coming from glowing bits of metal (flash in passive enchantments), and an odd torch that seems to burn forever and smokelessly (metal enchanted with a passive burnthru). Walls and furniture seem to glow in the darkness, since both include considerable metal, and sometimes semi-precious gems. Stoves and fireplaces normally have roaring fires, since the chimney and vent systems produce powerful forced drafts.

Artifacts, such as beautiful table tops, decorations, and minor trinkets are often made from quartz, mica, or even lapis lazuli (a blue





semi-precious gemstone), which reflects light in interesting patterns. Tapestries decorate the walls in some areas, in other areas complex metal mosaics are found. Stone walls are often burnished and finished so they seem to resemble metal. Chairs and clothing are largely of soft leather, often with metal or gemstone studs.

Overall, dwarven halls have a feeling of half-light, but in a living stronghold it is nearly a fairy-like beauty, with gleams and random glows that divert and distract the eye. In a dead and abandoned stronghold, these same artifacts acquire a surreal appearance, and often seem like glowing eyes or weird creatures if the light is poor.

### Frost Diamond

This unique gem is a common anti-theft device in any dwarven horde of gems. The diamond is enchanted with a passive Chill and active contact Frostbite spell. The result is that anyone who touches it freezes, and remains frozen (due to the Chill). If the diamond is removed, the spell ends, and the frozen person takes the appropriate damage (see *Swordbearer*). Unfortunately, since the diamond freezes to the hand (or whatever part of the body touches it), simply removing it may inflict additional damage (typically 1d6/2 to that limb).

The Frost Diamond is also enchanted with a Reality Reflection (passive) spell, which means that even one trained to identify elements of magic will not recognize the gem as enchanted.

### Deathstone

This is a gem so powerfully enchanted that holding it is death for most people. It is used as an execution device, and is also handy if a terrible enemy penetrates the stronghold (the gem is shoved toward it, and the results are usually fatal to the enemy, when it pauses to examine the find).

The deathstone inflicts a double Lightweight spell on the holder, quartering his or her mass, and thus making them more vulnerable

to wounds. It has a passive Burnthru that inflicts 1d6/2 burn damage and sets combustibles afire, plus numerous sharp facets from a Keenness spell that inflict 1d6 cuts to the part of the body touching it, and finally a Frostbite spell that freezes the character for two minutes (damage halved during that time) after which another 1d6 points of damage (smash) is done. Since the double Lightweight lasts a full hour, the combined damage is usually enough to kill anyone, and in the meantime, the dwarves have two minutes (while the victim is frozen) to inflict additional damage.

The gem also has Reality Reflection, so its magic cannot be identified or detected. Anyone with any acquaintance with magic, however, will recognize the effects on the victim (though few will immediately connect these effects to the gem itself).

The gamemaster may wish to have this gem installed at the end of a staff carried by the spokesman of the clan. As such, it makes a potent weapon. Of course, the staff is only used on very special occasions.

### Dwarven Doortrap

Since many dwarven doors have metal decorations on their surfaces, this particular door is not too exceptional, but the decorations all have pointed top surfaces, and in fact form a subtle bed of spikes. The door is enchanted with an active contact Bendback spell, with the result that one who touches it is immediately slammed by the door itself, with 1d6 spikes hitting the character, and each causing 1d6 points of thrust damage. The force and mass of the door itself inflicts an additional 1d6 points of smash damage. Smash damage is to the torso, other damage must be located individually.

Dwarves typically use these doors on false entrances, or along a blank wall, to tempt the unwary. Popular locations are near dungeons, the tunnels through the Great Wall, and either in the Great Hall, or very near it.

This door is never functional, since anyone (even a dwarf) who touches it will become its victim. As a result, it is not used on actual

passages. Dwarves favor acid and falling block traps there, activated by a tripwire.

## 3. Plots for GMs

Each 'plot' in this section outlines how an adventure can be created from the material in this book. Naturally, the gamemaster is free to adjust, add or subtract events to suit personal taste. If any players have read this section, the gamemaster is obliged to create his own plot. As a result, players should not read further unless invited to do so by their gamemaster.

**Starting Point:** All plots assume the adventurers have met their patron, are in Suthri, and are deciding whether to stay in town (to hire a guide and/or porters, for example) or leave for the Valt Aszen and the strongholds. Any riding or draft animals with the party are assumed exhausted, sickly, and unable to carry a load or person anywhere.

In a single adventure, players' characters are assumed to have been in Suthri a while, know its features, and learned to avoid problems with local thugs. Naturally, as residents in such a fleabitten place, they are probably short of money and food, and thus in need of employment, before they starve.

In a campaign, the players' characters are assumed to have just arrived in Suthri, and may be unfamiliar with it. In this case, the gamemaster is advised to develop specific characteristics, skill levels, arms and armor for one or two bands of thugs. Suthri is a violent place, and swashbuckling adventurers are sure to get into a fight sooner or later.

### THE AMBASSADOR

Here the players' characters are bodyguards to Sir Ralls Leofren, and under the command of his half-brother Dayan Turham. Jak Morselt will be engaged to nurse the party's mounts back to health while they are away, and Dayan will hire Varaka Silverfinger as a guide. One porter is also engaged to help carry general goods of the party, knight's tent, spare food, etc. The party then leaves Suthri on the western trail, to Thrasir, the nearest stronghold. Periodic winds and cloud cover cast a sense of foreboding over all — summer is past now, fall is in the air. There is a dusting of snow on the ground, from the previous night.

#### The Western Trail

Shortly, the party arrives outside the gate of Thrasir stronghold, where Varaka announces Sir Ralls. The dwarves refuse to talk directly, instruct the guide to go away, and finally stop talking altogether and just look fierce. Sir Ralls can take a hint, and goes away irked but undismayed, assuming Thrasir is just a 'border fort' not prepared to discuss high politics with an envoy, and encouraged somewhat because the dwarves don't mind him going further into the 'dwarven kingdom.'

The party continues up the trail, in the valley between the Midgard and Vestri ranges, crosses a basket bridge (see that event), and just past the fork to the Midgard pass, when they encounter an exhausted female dwarf. She begs food and shelter for the night, and from her the party learns that she is escaping from virtual slave labor at Dolgdís. Even if they fail to help her, and thus lack this omen, on the next day they are surprised by her pursuers, who attack on sight. Dolgdís is ruled by a reactionary clique, and its champions have orders to kill outsiders on sight. However, the party has a dense, wooded ravine to its rear, and can escape from the ambush in this direction — but not before the porter and his goods go down, with a javelin through his neck. The female dwarf fugitive dies or disappears in the ambush, as well.

Regardless of the retreat route selected, the party will be prevented from northward travel by the ambushing dwarves, from westward movement by the river gorge, and about the time they return to the Midgard pass fork area, they spot another group of dwarves coming up from the south. This second group is also too large to fight, and blocks escape toward Suthri. The only exit is now to the east, up to the Midgard pass, which Varaka says leads to another stronghold (where they might receive a warmer welcome). If none of the players' characters suggest this route, Varaka or Dayan will. Sir Ralls is upset by his welcome, and sulking.

**Note:** In some adventure plots, the gamemaster may wish to permit escape back to Suthri, in which case the second group of dwarves to the south should be ignored. This gives the party the choice of returning down the trail, or taking the pass anyway.



### The Midgard Pass

This is a journey over the high pass between Nornl and Kilforn peaks. In a single-session adventure, it will probably form the climax. The path upward to the pass is partly hidden by old avalanches, and includes a number of vertical pitches that can only be surmounted by climbing skills. See the description of mountaineering for details. The path leads up over rocky, snow-dusted cliffs to steeper and more imposing walls of ice and hardpacked snow. On the cliffs, the party could accidentally stumble upon an alphas nest (see *Wild Animals*). The leader will have some trouble fighting off the enraged bird while trying to cling to the cliff face! Once onto the ice and snow, a sudden storm can swirl westward over the pass, with high winds and driving snow. Visibility rapidly drops to zero, and the party must immediately take shelter before being blown off the cliffs. The storm can last a day or more, and the winds may tear up some of the tents, which results in the items inside being blown about and probably lost.

The storm clears with an unseasonable onset of warm weather. The characters ascend to the snowfields at the top of the pass, but the warmth here causes a swirling ground fog, blowing in their faces. Visibility gradually drops, and they stumble into a family of Yeti (see *Wild Animals*) or an Iceworm (if the gamemaster feels they need a larger challenge). If the monster(s) prove too powerful for the party, Dayan will face them off alone and order the characters to escape with Sir Ralls. Thus they continue their journey over and down the pass, and must descend rock and ice cliffs on the opposite side, with the same dangers faced coming up. In this, Dayan might be killed saving Sir Ralls, if not dead already. Varaka, the guide, and Lufkin, the squire, can also be 'safely' lost without destroying the adventure.

It is possible that a combination of casualties, exposure, altitude sickness, lack of food and shelter, and battle wounds can make this final descent impossible or suicidal. In this situation, the stranded party can be rescued by Sigyn Icelover of the high clan from Vilrylis, who with a few friends is making a last pleasure climb in the pass before winter.

One way or another, the party finally arrives in Vilrylis. The clan here has a moderate-liberal policy, with Vola the Quiet as major influence. If no survivors in the party speak dwarvish, Raud Ironshield acts as interpreter. The gamemaster can virtually end the adventure here if desired. Sir Ralls can come to understand that there is no dwarven king in the Valt Aszen, and instead negotiates a treaty of friendship (not alliance) and trade agreement with the Vilrylis stronghold clan. After feasting in the common hall, the party is given gifts of dwarven workmanship and craft (a weapon, armor, set of climbing gear, or snowcat fur cloak), and with an escort is sent down the trail, past Frar'sagnir, to a ridge overlooking Suthri. Here the Vilrylis dwarves bid the adventurers good bye and the party continues home with Sir Ralls.

### Vilrylis Politics

Alternately, the gamemaster can extend the adventure by introducing political intrigue within the Vilrylis stronghold, using the various clan Dendural characters. Players who lost their character can create a new one — a dwarf from the clan, seeking a new adventure, and who joins the party. The information brought by such new members can lead to plots by the players to steal items of value from the stronghold.

At Vilrylis, the party is lodged in Skarg's Tower, and has freedom of the outer courtyard only. Sir Ralls and a few of his highest status retainers are invited almost daily for an audience in the Noble Court Room (for public affairs) or the High Council Room (for more private discussions). Active council members include Vola the Quiet, Hauksbok Gladhand, Starkad Diamondlayer, Skeggi Catskin, Raud Ironshield, and Dysir Goldeye. Sigyn Icelover is officially a member, but has little interest in it, and does not always attend. Sir Ralls has a fair bit of success in the council, but ultimately the degree of success depends upon how the higher status members of his party impress the council members.

Each day, higher status party members have a chance to meet the council, champions who provide a 'guard of honor,' and various hunters and stores personnel who pass through the outer courtyard. Lower status party members, remaining in the outer courtyard, have similar opportunities, and more time for casual (unwatched) conversation, but no access to the high clan. Some of the dwarves are curious, but some have conservative or reactionary attitudes, and will disdain, insult, or otherwise try to humiliate party members. Direct attacks by dwarves will not occur, but various 'accidents' may be rigged from time to time. The gamemaster must decide the overall effect of all these interactions, and the impression the party will make on each of the high council members. A statement of friendship is the minimum diplomatic gift Sir Ralls can gain, the next step toward success is a trade agree-

ment, and the ultimate step is a full treaty of alliance, which is not possible unless the party manages to discredit the conservative and reactionary members of the high council.

On the other hand, members of the party are not permitted within the stronghold (inside the Great Wall) except by invitation and under escort. Any party member caught there, unauthorized, will be put under arrest. Party members caught carrying clan goods other than official gifts will be immediately arrested as thieves, and any violence done to dwarves will be considered a most serious crime. In the last situation, violence and subsequent arrest will lead to conviction unless a large number of dwarves witnessed the event, and some significant proportion were not reactionary or conservative. For the results of any arrests and trials, see *The Merchant*, Arrest & Trials, below. Penalties at Vilrylis will be a little lighter than normal unless the crime is obviously very serious (i.e., clubbings become whippings, cutting of a hand becomes removal of a few fingers if the theft was minor, etc.).

Generally, the diplomatic activities of Sir Ralls give the players a chance to perform non-violent role-playing, and through their own use of diplomacy skills and related activities, affect the success or failure of the entire mission. The gamemaster can add detail by having characters join the dwarves on hunting expeditions, a mountain climb with Sigyn Icelover, etc. On the other hand, a less honest and more self-interested group of characters may take this opportunity to attempt theft of dwarven artifacts.

### Gamemaster Preparations

To run this adventure smoothly, the gamemaster should generate data for the porter, for a pair of alphas, some yeti, an Iceworm, and two or three climbing companions for Sigyn Icelover. If the gamemaster extends the adventure through the 'Vilrylis Politics' stage, creating a handful of hunter and stores characters, and a couple for each of the other duties in the clan, as well as a half dozen champions, will be necessary. Decisions about political allegiance for each are necessary, excepting some of the champions, who are simply used as guards of the stronghold.

### THE MERCHANT

In this adventure, the players' characters are a trow-pledged bodyguard for Tekla Beylard, a merchant, and her wizard husband Nogrr. They are on a trading expedition to the dwarves, and carry their treasure (social status 15) in gems, on their persons and in the linings of their saddlebags. In Suthri, the party reorganizes, selling its horses (now in poor condition) and hiring a pair of porters to carry the camp gear, food, and of course the saddlebags (which Tekla and Nogrr treat casually, to divert suspicion from the treasure). Tekla and Nogrr will not think to hire a guide, but will agree to the idea if any member of the party suggests it; any of the guide characters listed for Suthri are acceptable in this adventure.

If the party stays more than one night in Suthri, it is almost inevitable that local thugs will attempt to stage a robbery, usually at night. The gamemaster can put himself in the place of the thugs, and decide what sort of attack they would attempt, bearing in mind that their goal is to carry off anything of value, without getting killed or hurt in the process.

On the plus side, if the party stays in Suthri, or gets on the good side of their guide, they will discover various rumors about the dwarves, and the two trails, one northwest, and one northeast. Gossip indicates that almost nobody takes the west trail any more, and virtually nobody comes down it. There is a 15% chance that somebody might remember some dirty, bedraggled types appearing on the west trail in the last year or two. The east trail, on the other hand, has been used in the past by merchants, and some travel occurs along it. Some merchants have gone up the east trail and never returned, as well. It is well known by all that the closest clan strongholds, Thrasir (on the west trail), and Frar'sagnir (on the east trail) disdain any contact with anyone coming from Suthri, regardless of race, creed or station. There is a 20% chance that a hunter in the marketplace, if asked, will remember a friendly encounter with dwarven hunters up the east trail, and if a dwarf himself (or herself), the hunter will remember the dwarves came from Vilrylis or uz'Rhom — strongholds further up the east trail.

The actual situation is that Dolgdis is in the grip of a reactionary tyranny that is ruining the clan (or maybe already ruined it, see *The Bard*, below). Thrasir and Frar'sagnir ignore travelers, but keep an eye on Suthri as a whole, to prevent truly serious problems there (see Suthri village description). Vilrylis and uz'Rhom are open to travelers, if they are polite, while distant Kranttigz is currently surrounded by dangerous raiding bands of goblins.

Sooner or later, the continued danger from thugs will inspire Tekla



and Nogrr to leave Suthri. They will hold a conference with the players' characters, and between them attempt to select the east or west trail. If the characters cannot decide, Tekla will break any impasse in favor of the eastern trail.

#### Detour to the West

If, by chance, the party selects the western trail, they should run into the same general problems as those outlined in *The Ambassador*, the Western Trail. However, in the ambush, the gamemaster might wish to kill one of the porters, or perhaps actually work up data on a dwarven hunting party with a couple of champions for reinforcement, and fight out the battle itself. The gamemaster should not trap the party with a second group of dwarves to the south — a retreat route to Suthri should be left open.

When the party does retreat to Suthri, a wergild (monetary compensation for death of a family member) is necessary for each dead porter. Although this doesn't affect the social status of the merchant, visible use of wealth does reawaken the lust of local thugs, who will attack that night. This group might be a bit more desperate than the last, and take larger risks.

Tekla will not be overly dismayed by these events, and will urge to party to take the east trail as soon as possible.

#### The East Trail

When the party leaves Suthri on the east trail, Frar'sagnir is the first stronghold, but true to rumor, it will refuse to meet with the party or

talk trade of any sort — Frar'sagnir dwarves do not deal with anyone from Suthri, regardless of race, creed, or status. The party continues northward up the trail, gaining altitude, and running the risk of altitude sickness (especially if they have not detoured west, and did not spend at least a few days in Suthri). Potential additional travel events include the hobgoblin scavenger, a dwarf emigre (on his way to Suthri), or the griffin hermit. During this journey, the party will come to the fork, where they either turn west toward Vilrylis, or continue northward to uz'Rhom. The guide cannot offer any specific advice or suggestions. If nobody in the party makes a logical suggestion, Tekla will select by a random omen (direction of the wind, shape of the clouds, Nogrr casting 'fate sticks,' or some similar device represented by a die roll).

Regardless of the route selected, the party should encounter a dwarven trailman soon after, clearing away a windfall of trees that block the trail. The trailman will attempt to escape upon spotting the party, and their reaction will have important implications for the future. If they let him go, they will receive a normal reception at the stronghold. If they detain him, but ultimately release him, he will carry bad tidings to the stronghold unless given gifts and similar goodwill gestures when he leaves. If his bad tidings reach the stronghold, the clan will refuse to talk with the party (much like Thrasir or Frar'sagnir), forcing Tekla to try the other stronghold. If the trailman is detained and ultimately killed, their initial reception will be okay at the stronghold, but the clan will become concerned if the trailman fails to return, and after sending a party to investigate, will ultimately arrest Tekla and her entire party.

#### Trading

At either Vilrylis or uz'Rhom, the party will be assigned to an area to camp, and where Tekla can trade and barter with any dwarves who wish to offer items for sale. Halfdana Draugr, the master metalsmith, will offer a wide variety of work from the metalshops, while individual hunters, miners, stores personnel, or others with trinkets to sell will also approach her. Tekla and Nogrr both will be almost constantly talking with someone, admiring a bit of handiwork, etc. This is especially true at Vilrylis, but even at more conservative uz'Rhom, some social contact occurs during the barter process.

The remainder of the party can relax. A few conversations with curious dwarves can occur, and if any player's character has been killed, he or she can return to the game as a subdan dwarf who wishes to join the party and have a life of adventure. However, at both strongholds, there exist dwarves of a reactionary nature, who have a hate for outsiders, and try to cause trouble. Some will just make snide remarks or insults, others might attempt to poison food or drink given to some of the party. 'Accidents' may occur, in which a 'loose' stone falls from a wall or tower on someone. A particularly crafty reactionary might make a private sale to Tekla, then later accuse the party of stealing the object instead, which can lead to arrests and a trial.

Members of the party can cause additional trouble by attempting to pickpocket dwarves, murder night guards and strip them of their weapons and armor, or sneak into the stronghold itself with thievery on their mind. The gamemaster should be prepared for dishonest ventures against the clan by party members. Tekla is an honest merchant, and used to harassment. She will not be a party to thievery, and if invited will refuse. If the thieves attempt something anyway, and are caught, Tekla will not attempt to defend them, and will immediately discharge them from her service if convicted.

Vilrylis is ruled by a moderate-liberal faction led by Voia the Quiet, and the party will be invited to camp in the outer courtyard. In bad weather, Skarg's Tower will be opened for their use, but it has no appointments, and is simply a temporary shelter. uz'Rhom has a moderate-conservative faction in power, with Skeggi Catskin as spokesman. Here the party is given the outer bailey courtyard for their camp, and the amount of trading and contact with the dwarves will be somewhat reduced. Reactionaries are more common here, and incidents against the party should occur at least once a day.

If the entire trading week goes smoothly for Tekla, despite the efforts of the reactionaries, Tekla will finance a small feast on the last night of their stay. She buys her materials from the dwarves' stores, and gets only mediocre food as a result, but still puts on a gracious and brave front while the reactionaries snicker. At least some of the food will be poisoned, but Nogrr will find it, and quietly dispose of it. Dwarven brew is rather crude in taste, but extremely potent — drinking skill of all non-dwarves at the feast is reduced by ten (—10).

#### Arrest & Trial

As mentioned previously, there are many possibilities that lead to the dwarves arresting one, some or all of the party. Any person within the main stronghold (inside the Great Wall) is arrested. Any act of

physical violence to a clan dwarf results in arrest. Suspicion of theft or murder leads to arrest. Prisoners at Vilrylis are held in the 'dungeon' area deep within the stronghold, but those at uz'Rhom are held in the basement pits of the Great Tower. Guard is continuous, but in the dead of night only amounts to two or three champions — other members of the party still free may contemplate a rescue attempt.

Arrested persons are brought to trial as soon as possible, normally on the next day, in the Noble Court before the entire high clan, and representatives of the subclans, as well as Tekla and her entire party. Proceedings are reasonably just at Vilrylis with positive proof needed before punishment is given. At uz'Rhom the arrested character(s) are presumed guilty unless able to prove their innocence. Punishment follows the eye-for-an-eye policy. Unauthorized presence within the stronghold (behind the Great Wall uninvited) leads to a whipping, as does a minor physical attack on a dwarf. More serious physical injury to a dwarf, but with no permanent effects, leads to a clubbing. Theft is punished by cutting off one hand. Murder is punished by beheading. Sentence is normally carried out the next day, in the outer courtyard, with a large number of dwarves watching from the Great Tower and the roofs of the foundry and guardhouse. Once the culprit is convicted, guard against escape is considerably increased and includes at least two champions and two hunters at all times. Guard over the outer courtyard area is also increased.

### The Return

After one successful trade session (of about one week), Tekla will return the party to Suthri. If the session ends badly, or no trade can be conducted, she will try the other stronghold. If she fails at both, she will try for Kranttigz unless the rest of the party rebels and wishes to return home. If she tries for Kranttigz, serious difficulties can result, see *The Scholar* below for details on the situation there.

On the trail back to Suthri, everyone is loaded with the bulky goods Tekla purchased. Any surviving porters, and any new additions to the party (dwarves from the stronghold, who will join if a player's character is killed and needs a replacement), will get the majority of the burden. Delayed effects from bad foods or poisons would cause collapse and serious sickness to some in the party. The gamemaster may have dwarven hunters from Frar'sagnir surprise the party. This group will attack if the leader is reactionary or believes them thieves if conservative or moderate. If thievery is suspected, the party will be arrested and locked in an outer tower or cave of Frar'sagnir, until their story can be verified with another stronghold. If the party really did steal something, the encounter with hunters should be modified to an outright attack, unless the gamemaster feels the party has sufficient intrinsic skills to stage a jail escape!

Finally, when the party reaches Suthri itself, an attack by thugs and petty pilferage is a constant danger, since Tekla's wealth is now in the far more visible form of bulky goods. If the gamemaster wishes to spin out this section of the adventure, Jak could be temporarily low on mounts, since the only ones in his stable are those left by an ambassador (none other than Sir Ralls). Jak says he can sell these horses — but not until the current owner returns and gives his permission. Jak is obviously hoping that Sir Ralls will be willing to sell (not much chance of this, but Jak is an optimist), or that some other horses will turn up in the meantime. Tekla will wait for horses until thug attacks get so dangerous that departure on foot is the only logical solution.

### Gamemaster Preparations

To run this adventure smoothly, the gamemaster should generate data for three or four porters, a dwarven trailman, a full dwarven hunting party, plus a selection of individual hunters, metalworkers, and representatives of other areas, including mining and stores. A few gnome servants in stores should be created as well, as should gnome porters for the hunting party. Standard guard positions for champions should be arranged, and a sampling of champions created. In short, the daily life of the stronghold, as visible from outside the Great Gate, should be already at hand. A few subclan 'characters' of note should also be created, including one or two friendly sorts, and two or three reactionary haters.

Finally, this adventure requires a wide selection of Suthri thugs, including a few leaders, and enough followers to man at least two full bands, plus several extras. More than any other party, Tekla and her guards will have trouble with Suthri thugs — the gamemaster should be sure to have a large supply on hand!

### THE BARD

Here the adventurers are treasure-hunters, seeking to plunder a ruined stronghold. The halfling bard is their source of information,

and Jylo may or may not accompany them. In Suthri they will normally disdain porters or guides, but the adventurers may decide to hire one anyway. The guide should be Varaka Silverfinger, who will want a cut of the treasure as soon as he discovers their true purpose. The adventurers arrive in Suthri in the early spring, while snow is still thick on the ground, and avalanche danger is great. Naturally, most Suthri residents are amazed and curious about their departure, and a few very enterprising thugs might follow them a short way.

### Early Spring Trail

Jylo guides them, or has given them directions to use the western trail, to Dolgdis at its end. Once past Thrasir, the trail is blocked with windfalls, the trailings of avalanches, and many drifts of deep snow. Trail travel is no faster than cross-country, but cross-country is half speed, due to deep snow and similar windfall and avalanche conditions. There is a 5% risk of crevasse per league whenever the party is off the trail, and tracking skill must be used twice per day to stay on the trail. Storms are frequent, and the party may be snowbound more than once before they reach Dolgdis. All bridges over stream and river gorges are gone (including the basket bridge, which was dismantled and packed away for safe-keeping this winter). Climbing skill must be used to sling ropes over the gorge of the river at the bottom, or the streams at the top. The party is not likely to encounter many animals on the trail, except perhaps a Snowcat prowling about their camp one or more nights.

Finally, the party approaches Dolgdis, and begins climbing the steep switchback road up the side of the ravine, which is still coated with ice and snow. As the leading character rounds a blind corner, a running hobgoblin runs smack into him from the opposite direction. This is the hobgoblin scavenger, who will fall down on the ice, scream once, drop a silver box, and slide off over the cliff edge of the road, in a cloud of snow. When the characters peer over the edge after him, they will see him bounce off the road a couple of times below, and continue sliding into the bottom of the ravine, hidden by trees and a plume of snow. If they spend an hour climbing down to find him, they will find him dead, with a broken neck, at the bottom. The silver box he left behind has a fancy and delicate lock, and is unopened. If the characters unlock, or break it open, inside they will find the frost diamond (see Stronghold description). Note that the frost diamond is not a very helpful gem to own *per se*, but is a rather imposing jewel, and constitutes a status 14 treasure in itself.

### Dolgdis in Ruins

When the characters reach the top of the road, they will find the outer gate to Dolgdis frozen open, with drifts of snow and ice around it, throughout the inner courtyard, and on the roofs of the guardhouse and foundry. Snow has drifted up against the Great Gate too, which is tightly shut. Aside from a deserted look, and the whistling of the wind blowing snow about, Dolgdis appears intact but vacant, with no sign of life.

Inside, the situation at Dolgdis is quite different. The reactionary government neglected to keep making the proper tests and inspections of the stronghold roof over the years. Improper venting of fires resulted in a gradual weakening of the rock, and in the middle of the winter, a deep freeze finally broke enough supporting layers to cause the entire roof to fall in. This huge weight of falling stone crushed the second floor, and caused it, along with the roof, to collapse onto the main floor. The net effect is that the second floor largely ceased to exist, and the first floor is now choked with rubble of all sorts, including bits of floor, wall, furniture, etc. among the larger boulders from the roof.

There are a few exceptional areas. First, the Great Hall is only partly blocked, and the galleries near the Great Wall are largely intact. This is because the Great Wall itself was stronger than the roof, and is still holding up the roof in that area. This is what makes the stronghold appear intact from the outside. However, the collapse did jar both the Great Gate mechanism, which works poorly, and the tunnel blocks, which fell and sealed off the tunnels to the guardhouse and foundry. The second exceptional area is the northeastern second floor. Here the rooms next to the east wall of the cave are partly intact, since the rock wall reduced the amount and degree of collapse. However, the western walls of these rooms are gone, and a blockage of rubble is present instead. Third, the southernmost rooms on the second floor are also largely intact, especially those with no ground floor rooms underneath. These rooms have various boulders and rubble within, but are still slightly liveable. Unfortunately, in the northwestern part of the stronghold, the second floor is not intact, since the large open areas of the workshops were beneath. Here the second floor collapsed upon the first, but the blockage with boulders and other rocky rubble is not quite as great.

The shifting roof of the stronghold also triggered other shifts in

the rock below, especially in the mines and gnome caverns. Many of the mine shafts are now blocked, and the rest, along with all the gnome caverns, were flooded when the underground river was redirected.

### Exploring the Ruins

The first problem is getting into the stronghold, since the Great Gate is closed, and both tunnels are blocked. One method is to force an entrance through a firing slit, using building skills to pry apart the construction there (takes 1d6 turns if skill used successfully) or magic skills to shatter the metal facings around them. A second, faster method is to have a halfling or someone smaller use climbing skills and climb up through the boiling oil gutter shutters, into the third floor gallery over the Great Gate. This character can then climb down into the Great Hall and operate the mechanism for the Great Gate. If the character successfully uses building skill to examine the gate mechanism, he or she can spend a day repairing minor damage so that the gate will become fully functional. If not, the gate will jam after opening one pace, and 2d6 days of repair using building skill will be necessary before it functions again.

In the rubble-blocked ruin of the stronghold, it is sometimes possible to peer between boulders and wreckage to make out bits of wall, doorway, etc. still standing. The narrower hallways tended to deflect the larger boulders into rooms, and are somewhat less difficult to clear than rooms. Rubble can be cleared in two ways. First, it can simply be shifted and shored to provide a crawlway tunnel. Second, it can be fully cleared and shored, so that any items of value can be disentangled from the wreckage.

It takes one hour to clear one pace of crawlway. The strength of the character clearing the tunnel determines its size. Only characters with mass equal to, or less than, the clearer's strength can pass through the crawlway. A character can spend extra time, which increases the size of the crawlway proportionally. For example, a character with strength 10 spends five hours to clear a five pace crawlway. If a crawlway to fit a mass of 15, instead of 10, is needed, then the character must spend 50% longer, or seven and a half hours instead of five hours. Rebuilding takes much longer.

It takes one hour to clear and shore one square pace of floor area, in which all items from first and second floors in that area are recovered, and most of the rock removed (the largest boulders are left, to assist the shoring).

Hallways and similar tiny rooms, storage areas, etc. with walls a few paces apart take half as long to clear.

Successful use of building skill also halves the normal time period. Individual characters can use building skills, or a group can work together to build a single crawlway, or clear a single area, under the direction of someone who successfully uses building skill. Mining skill may be used at half its normal value as building skill in this particular situation.

The job of shoring the rubble as it is cleared may not be perfect. For each square foot of floor area cleared, there is a 1% chance per day the shoring will fail. This percentage is additive for a larger area. For example, if twelve square paces are cleared, there is a 12% chance the shoring will fail in that area. Actual failure only occurs while additional clearing and shoring is taking place — if the area is left undisturbed, collapse will not occur. Crawlways may also shift and collapse. There is a 0.2% chance of collapse per pace of crawlway used during the day. The gamemaster may simply roll d100, multiply by five, and when the characters have crawled that distance in paces through cleared tunnels, a collapse occurs.

When shoring fails and a collapse occurs, each character in the area may be caught by falling debris (including any in any part of the crawlway system, if a tunnel collapses). Each such character can make either a very hard agility test, or a very hard strength test (choice, but cannot make both), with success meaning the character escapes local falling rubble, or manages to hold up the shoring and rework it to hold again. If a character fails the test, roll 1d6 for each part of the body for the smash wounds to that body part from falling debris. A character could be killed. Collapses require one hour to clear and repair in an area or tunnel. Shoring and failures do not apply in major rebuilding efforts.

### Finding Treasures & Artifacts

In this adventure, the gamemaster must prepare a variety of 'every day' dwarven items that might be useful to characters, and which can be found among the rubble. Generally, a 5-10% chance of finding an interesting and generally intact item, per square pace of cleared area, should be allowed. This chance is reduced in the common hall and in the kitchens, and increased in the workshops, subclan storage areas, and beneath the highclan areas (northeastern section). The jewelfcraft workroom, and its storage room, will prove especially valuable finds,

and constitute a status 17 treasure in their own right. The clan treasure room is choked with rubble also, and has a status 21 treasure (actual status is 1d6 higher, but the difference represents large objects, such as statues, that cannot be gotten out through the wreckage).

### Survivors

The only survivors of the disaster are Hauksbok Gladhand, two champions, a hunter, a woman from stores, and a teenaged girl. They are living in the intact second floor rooms in the northeast, and have built crawlway tunnels downward into the special stores and general stores areas, and to the water caverns to get food and water. Hauksbok has gone insane from shock and fear, and as leader, his insanity proved contagious. They are now entirely paranoid, will attack anyone from ambush, and communicate only by gestures and grunts — speech has become alien to them, and always provokes anger. If the players' characters work their way toward survivors' area, they will hear peculiar sounds while resting, including moans, shifting rocks, etc. When they break through to the living area or tunnel crawlways of the survivors, they will be ambushed. Hauksbok will be able to fire crossbow bolts a few paces through gaps in the rubble.

### Monsters

The gamemaster may wish to add a few scavenger-type monsters, who have been picking through the ruins, feasting on the dead. Slow-moving monsters will fight if attacked, fast-moving monsters will try to run 50% of the time. Possible monsters include, in order of likelihood, Blob, Rats, Poisonous Lizard, Dwarf Basilisk (use half normal Basilisk mass and strength), Giant Spider (this is a hunting spider that does not trap its prey in webs, but instead seeks it out). A metal or darkness elemental might also be encountered — the result of magic experiments by some dwarf, now let free.

### The Return

It is inevitable that others will learn of the disaster in Dolgdis, like the hobgoblin who arrived before the party. The number of days the party spends in the stronghold equals the percentage chance of others arriving to investigate. This chance is halved if the Great Gate remains closed, and visible signs of entry are concealed. If nobody does show up during the exploration of the ruin, that same chance is applied again toward a group appearing on the way back to Suthri. The gamemaster may select any likely group or groups for these encounters, but some suggested possibilities include a bugbear clan, dwarven hunters from another stronghold, and, in the late spring, some goblin raiders. There is also the chance of other plunderers coming from Suthri (thug statistics, or more formidable 'adventurer' class characters could appear).

If the characters return to Suthri laden with treasure, they will immediately become marks for every pickpocket, shyster, and thug group in town. Attacks and robbery attempts will become commonplace.

### Gamemaster Preparations

The gamemaster should photocopy the ground floor interior diagram of the stronghold, in this booklet, and get some tracing paper. The route of crawlways and cleared areas can be marked on the tracing paper and to make special notes about obstacles, treasures, and other items as desired. The gamemaster must develop a 'treasure list' of everyday items the party might find, including dead dwarves in armor, with valuable weapons, jewelry, various artifacts and pieces of art, as well as the furnishings mentioned as standard for the stronghold. An enterprising gamemaster can even 'letter code' each treasure and mark it on the photocopy map, in some likely or logical location.

In addition, the gamemaster must develop character data for the group of survivors; any monsters to be found within the ruin, and the one or two groups that characters might meet on the return. Data on such a group of thugs at Suthri is also a good idea.

## THE SCHOLAR

This adventure is likely to be the longest, most complex, and most dangerous of all. In this one, the adventurers have joined the cause of Lyndia, royal concubine to King Yaruth of Corbel (one of the Old Kingdoms in the ancient lands). She has intimated that the King will reward them all with money and titles if they can bring back the scholar Havamel Ynglarm to his court. Any males in the party who are below average intelligence will be under Lyndia's spell and willing to follow her, since she is beautiful, sexy, and most intelligent — and uses all of these attributes to her best advantage.

Havamel is now living at Kranttigz. If a guide is procured at Suthri, or the party gets into a conversation with one, he or she will advise using the east trail, past Frar'sagnir and uz'Rhom. Lyndia will have selected the best traveling season for her journey, and it should now be mid-summer. As a result, once on the trail, encounter one or more groups of dwarven hunters and at least one dwarf trailman. The gamemaster may wish to roll for the political attitudes of each hunting group leader or trailman, to determine their reactions to the party, and that interrelationship can, in turn, affect the overall attitude of Frar'sagnir or Uz'Rhom to travelers. Normally, both strongholds would simply ignore them. The gamemaster should also introduce the Griffin Hermit at some point, since if the party makes friends with her, the gamemaster can later use the Griffin to rescue them from a tight spot.

If the party takes the west trail, the gamemaster has two options. First, the same problems as presented in *The Ambassador*, Western Trail, can occur, forcing them over the Midgard pass. However, this is generally unwise unless the party includes excellent climbers, since it causes serious difficulties early in the adventure. Instead, the second party of Dolgdis dwarves can be omitted, leaving a southerly retreat route to Suthri for the party, at which point they can try again on the east trail.

### Approach to Kranttigz

When the party passes uz'Rhom and turns westerly toward the stronghold of Kranttigz, they should encounter or spot one goblin raider band. Finally, on the last third of this stage of the journey, the party will spy a large goblin encampment astride the trail, and must detour cross-country around it. If they encountered goblin raiders earlier, this is reduced to a 40% chance. Unless the characters can fight past and quickly escape from patrolling goblins, the sound of battle and goblin warhorns will rapidly bring down on them hordes of goblins, who will take them prisoner. However, captivity will not last long, since the gamemaster should then arrange a dwarven night raid on the goblin encampment, during which the prisoners can escape (or be rescued by the dwarves — who, although surprised to find them, help on the principle that 'an enemy of my enemy is a friend'). If the adventurers avoid the goblin encampment, they will approach Kranttigz normally, and meet a dwarven patrol before they actually reach the stronghold.

The dwarves will welcome any party of non-goblin characters as potential allies in their campaigns against the goblins. They will be escorted back to the stronghold, and allowed to pitch tents in the outer courtyard.

### Campaigning at Kranttigz

Here the party learns that clan after clan of goblins has come across the Far Aszen plateau, and is now raiding in and about the stronghold's lands. Hunting is very difficult, and both sides periodically stage raids, ambushes, etc. Although no leadership of the goblins is evident as yet, they seem to be forming a large camp near the stronghold, and the dwarves are afraid that a serious siege may begin if the goblins acquire strong unifying leadership. In point of fact, an orc warlord in the northwest is behind these movements, and will be showing up very soon to do just as the dwarves fear.

The clan at Kranttigz has a liberal majority in the high council, with Frija Sharptongue and Hauksbok Gladhand the most prominent members of this faction. However, for the duration of the goblin emergency, Raud Ironshield has been appointed spokesman, due to his military background. The clan has been trying to recruit mercenaries and other warriors to help it in its campaign against the goblins, and offers a combination of pay and free weaponry (both arms and armor of superior workmanship). Raud makes it clear that the party is expected to help the clan against the goblins, and if they do so, an audience with Havamel can be arranged in good time. If the party decides against this offer and leaves, the gamemaster should have them run into a couple of powerful goblin bands, to chase them back to the stronghold and force an alliance with the dwarves.

When the party makes an alliance, all adult males, plus any female warriors who volunteer, will accompany dwarven raiding and hunting groups outside the stronghold. Meanwhile, the rest of the party remains within the stronghold, helps the dwarves improve the defenses of the outer walls, towers, gates, etc. This will lead to possible improvements of country skills for those on missions outside the walls, and an apprenticeship in building for those who remain at the stronghold. The party is not normally allowed within the Great Gate, into the stronghold proper, but has an opportunity to meet a wide variety of dwarves in and about the outer courtyard, since it is being improved defensively, and has large numbers of champions and hunters manning its defenses at all times, as well as parties constantly coming and going. The willing-

ness to help evidenced by the party determines the friendliness of the dwarves — the more helpful the characters prove, and the more willing they are to support the dwarves (if only in words and thoughts), the friendlier the dwarves will be. If the players' characters are mean-spirited and perform their tasks grudgingly, the dwarves will stop talking to them, make snide remarks, give them the dirtiest jobs, etc.

Havamel will be introduced to the group formally after the first outside mission by party members, and within another week, will meet them again at a formal dinner in the common hall, to which the party is invited. The scholar develops an interest in the most beautiful woman in the party, which will normally be Lyndia. He will begin visiting her in the courtyard, and within another couple of weeks can be talked around to returning to Corbel. After all, life with the clan is hard, dangerous, with little time for reflection or research. Besides, new books are impossible to come by in Kranttigz. However, Havamel will not leave unless the party can propose a plan to avoid the goblins infesting the countryside.

### Night Battle

Between the time the party meets Havamel, and make final plans for leaving Kranttigz, the gamemaster should stage a goblin night attack on the stronghold itself. In this, the goblins sneak over the outer walls, killing some of the guards. The party is awakened by goblins ripping into their tents, or if a party member is doing a turn of guard duty, by a surprise attack by a goblin along the walls. Within seconds, other party members find goblins materializing out of the night to attack them in their tents as well. Each character has separate enemies to fight, but 3d6 instants after the alarm is raised, the main body of dwarves from the stronghold turns out and, with torches blazing, rips into the goblin attackers. This will relieve some of the pressure on the characters, and 1d6 + 2 instants later, goblin morale will begin to falter and the attackers will begin a retreat.

If any player's character is killed in the goblin attack, the player can create a new character as a dwarven clan member who decides to befriend the adventurers, join their party, and leave Kranttigz with them.

### Leaving Kranttigz

Eventually, the party must decide how to leave Kranttigz. Havamel will refuse to leave by the trail, through the valley full of goblins, for very rational reasons (it is suicidal). Havamel will also refuse to wait until the late fall, when weather drives off the goblin threat — weather that bad will probably kill him too! The final solution is to either use magic to sneak past the goblins (if the players' characters can demonstrate sufficient skill in such — perhaps by sneaking into the goblin camp and returning with the head of the orc warlord there), or to climb up the cliffs on the lower slopes of Mount Thjoft and travel along these, high above both the dwarves and the goblins. This last option will be suggested by Havamel or Lyndia, if nobody else can think of anything better.

If the cliffside traverse is used, the party must decide whether to travel westward to pick up the trail to the Vestri pass, or to proceed eastward to the northern Midgard Pass (between Dwalinnri and Gloginnar). The Vestri pass is considered the easier route, but unknown to the Kranttigz dwarves; it leads to Dolgdis stronghold, where the party is unlikely to receive a pleasant welcome.

Whichever route the party takes, use of mountaineering techniques and climbing skills are required for the long, cliffside traverse. If the party did make friends with the Griffin, she may rescue a falling character in the nick of time, or perhaps advise them about routes across the cliffs at some point to speed their journey. If the party goes westward to the Vestri pass, the climb to the pass itself, and the descent on the opposite side bring no additional dangers, beyond the normal mountaineering problems. If the party goes eastward, to the north Midgard Pass, the descent on the opposite side is very steep and the top half is amid the icefall of the Gloginnar glacier, which can be extremely dangerous terrain, with the extra hazard of iceworm. This descent should be the high point of the adventure, with crevasses, falling iceblocks, exceptionally difficult cliffs, etc.

If the party crosses the Vestri Pass, they will have to sneak past Dolgdis dwarves, or fight off their attacks. After the first contact with these dwarves, if any escape, from that point onward the party will be continually dodging dwarven groups, crossing and recrossing rivers and streams, etc. The gamemaster should allow the party to spot these groups of dwarves at various ranges, perhaps helped by the Griffin Hermit, and allow them to set up a dangerous game of 'hide and seek' in the wooded valley. A copy of the regional map, on which movements of the Dolgdis dwarves can be plotted, is advised.

If the party crosses the northern Midgard Pass, the difficulties of the descent should provide more than enough problems. The Vilrylis



dwarves are moderate-liberal, and will help travelers in distress. Sigyn Icelover can even be out on a pleasure climb with a couple of friends, and they can 'rescue' the party if they get hopelessly stuck during the descent. After a recovery at Vilrylis, if necessary, the party can continue on the normal trail to Suthri, without further difficulties.

#### Assassins

As a final touch, the gamemaster may wish to have an expert assassin, or a group of hired assassins, on the trail of Lyndia. About the time the party is returning to Suthri, these will have trailed her as far as the village, and thus be waiting when the party returns. The assassin(s) will only try to kill Lyndia, and will ignore Havamel and the players' characters, unless they interfere. However, Havamel will probably be present (by this time, he and Lyndia will probably frequently spend the night together), and will attempt to stop the attack, sacrificing himself to save Lyndia if necessary.

#### Fate of Havamel and Lyndia

If Havamel is killed, the purpose of Lyndia's quest is lost. Although she will play up to the adventurers, ask for their escort home, and reassure them of rewards, this is all a sham. At the first opportunity some dark night, she will escape from camp, taking whatever money and animals she can gather up, and disappear. Lyndia is very cunning, and sooner or later any pursuit will fail, leaving the adventurers empty-handed.

If Lyndia is killed, Havamel will continue to Corbel with the adventurers only if they have treated him graciously, and continue to do so.

If the adventurers have said anything unkind, complained openly about him, or threatened him with physical harm, he will demand to return to Kranttigz, if necessary alone. If the party forces him to travel south, unwilling and unhappy to Corbel, then he will be no great gift to King Yaruth. In fact, learning of Lyndia's death and their maltreatment of Havamel, the King will toss the adventurers in a dungeon to rot (Havamel, miffed, will join the court). Escaping from the dungeon will be the task of another adventure.

If both Havamel and Lyndia die, the adventurers are totally out of luck, and can gain nothing from the adventure save the experience. The party must decide for themselves how to extricate themselves from whatever mess is caused by the deaths.

#### Gamemaster Preparations

This adventure requires a fair bit of advance planning. The gamemaster will probably need a photocopy of the regional map, and the map of the stronghold's outer courtyard. The movement, camps, current position, etc. of the adventurers is then marked on tracing paper overlays. Two or three goblin raiding parties must be created, one (preferably two) hunter-champion war parties from Dolgdis, two or three such parties for Kranttigz, plus a selection of builders, stores personnel, champions on guard, etc. for the outer courtyard area of Kranttigz, as well as duty stations for the Kranttigz guards in day and night. Finally, the assassin(s) in Suthri should be arranged, if the gamemaster suspects they will be needed. It is possible that these assassins may have even hired Suthri thugs to help them, in which case some thugs will become involved as well.

