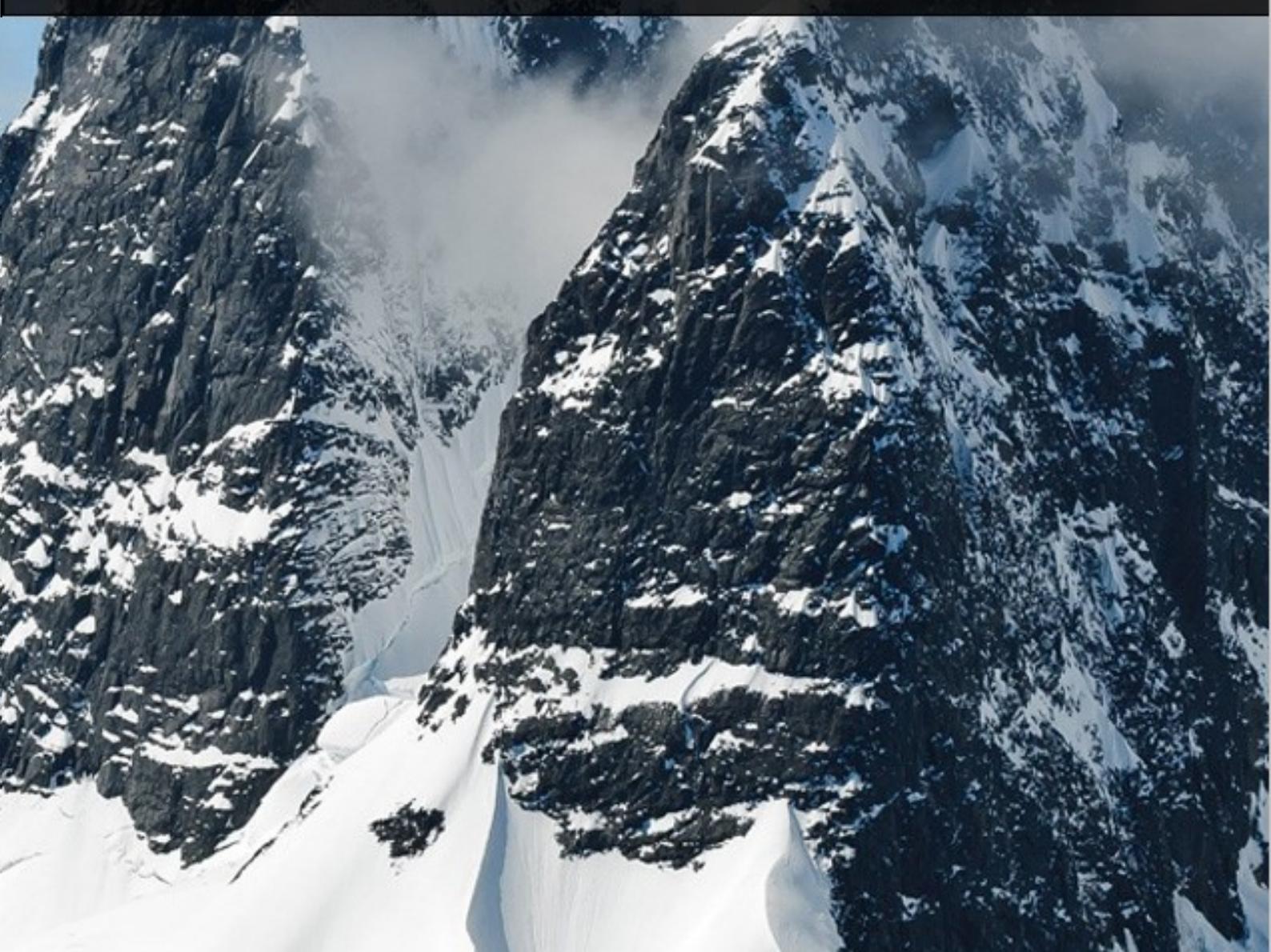


PLAQUE FAMINE & WAR II



OSRIC™ COMPATIBLE

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This adventure has been writing using the rules and specifically variations of the monsters in the OSRIC rules compendium.

It can be played with most varieties of 0D&D and B/X versions of the game.

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INTRODUCTION

If this adventure follows on from Plague, Famine & War I then you will be familiar with the Hivers and how their plan for invasion from last time.

If you have not played Plague, Famine & War I, here is a synopsis.

What the average person understands is this:

The country where the adventure is set is in the grip of a second year of famine. To alleviate the famine a convoy of merchant ships was chartered and as they approached the port they were attacked. Every ship was sunk bar one. This last merchant vessel, the "Die Magd der Königinnen" was locked together with the ship that had rammed it. The characters were employed by a town guard captain Mara Lindwurm plus a tug captain to go out to the stricken merchant and tow it back to port. Their investigation revealed a race of giant insects' intent on feeding off the human crew.

As a GM what you need to know is that the convoy was attacked by an intelligent race. Having got to land they have secreted themselves to multiple and spread their kind in all directions.

These events happened eight days ago.

Guard Captain Lindwurm will be the key NPC contact for the characters again.

If this is a new group of characters then anything that brings the characters in contact with the authorities, anything from a fights and barroom brawls to arguments with locals will put the characters on the authorities radar and bring a visit from Mara Lindwurm.

Mara Lindwurm is your plot hook, mentor and enabler for these

adventures. She is a competent naval officer and former naval officer.

The PF&W series of adventures can be played out in any setting and country that you don't mind inflicting a famine and invasion upon. In that sense it is setting neutral.

SCENE I: ROOF OF THE WORLD

The team of characters are assembled, if they know Mara Lindwurm she will welcome them back and impress upon them that they are trying to keep the existence of insect monsters under wraps and that they need the characters help again.

If the characters are new, she will explain she can make whatever trouble they are in 'just go away' if the characters are willing to do some work for the city. She will then go on and explain that given the ongoing food crisis the city council does not want to cause any panic or anxiety. A previous group of sell swords brought a nest of monsters to the port and now they are trying to get the situation under control.

One of the measures used to help survive the famine was the importing of capra meat from the mountains. Capra are a hardy goat like creatures. There is a mountain tribe that exist almost exclusively by living alongside the capra. A deal has been done with the tribes and relays of traders have been going back and forth into the mountains to bring in shipments of meat. The city gets the meat and the traders get paid for their time and get to sell the leather for an added profit.

The tribes used to be rather insular and self-sufficient but this arrangement over the past two years has brought them more into contact

with modern ways and the traders have been taking goods from the port into the mountains. So far it seems like a win/win situation and has worked well for the town's folk. There isn't enough Capra meat to go around, but everyone gets something and mentally it is good for people to know that there is food being brought into the city.

Normally, traders arrive daily with shipments of meat and pelts. For the past six days none have come. Patrols have been sent out and Mara received a report that a destroyed camp had been found. The monsters from the ship have a distinct way of leaving their victims bled dry and desiccated. It looks like at least one of the beasts has made it to shore and out of the port. It is heading for the mountains and if it can interrupt the supply relays this is a major concern.

The guard are already stretched with keeping the peace. If word gets out that the capra meat has run out there could be riots.

Mara will ask the characters to head to the mountains, the way is clearly marked, hunt down this monster and restore the capra meat trade.

There are no horses available, they were one of the first things that the black marketeers butchered and sold, but anything the characters need and can carry will be made available. They have some capra fur cold weather gear. It is reputedly excessively cold in the mountains. The tribes have plenty of sayings like 'their mountain homes look down on the roof of the world'.

GM ONLY:

Although no one knows, capra is an extremely old tribal name for satyr or faun. The meat arriving in the city is

already butchered and no one is any the wiser.

At the end of Hivers I at least one Hiver made it to the mainland. A unique feature of the Hivers is that they can pupate and change their body form. There are four common forms, a worker is like a seven-foot bipedal ant, a drone is similar with waspish wings. Soldiers are slightly larger, and their upper limbs end in wicked claws. They can also become queens which are huge bloated worm like creatures. Each change of form requires bulking up on food and then six hours, under optimal conditions, in a cocoon. If they are cold or lacking in food, then the pupation can take longer. A lone Hiver can create a suitable nest or hive as a worker, pupate into a queen and fill the nest with eggs and pupate again back into a worker to fertilize and tend the eggs. In this way a single Hiver can rejuvenate an entire colony. There are never too many queens as unnecessary queens are simply not created. Hiver eggs take 14hrs to mature and hatch into soldiers under optima conditions. They then take an hour or so to pump blood into their wings and to fill out their bodies. A Hiver egg is two feet tall and just over eight inches diameter. The hiver that comes out is a nearly seven feet tall soldier.

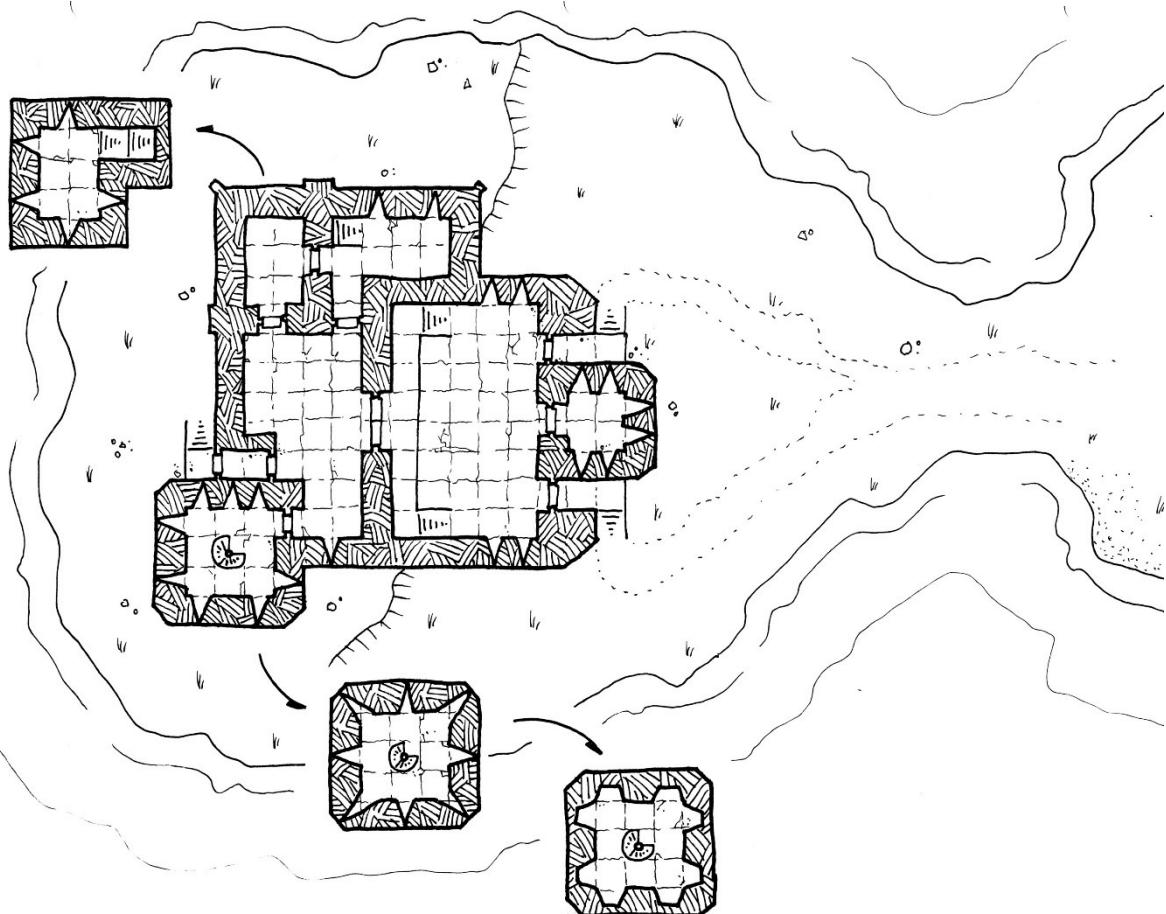
When Hivers are killed, they are cannibalized, this means that it is very unusual to find a Hiver body and reuses the nutrients.

Hivers primary building material is chitin. They created this by scrapping off shavings from their own exoskeleton. They then chew this up to soften it and when it is malleable, they shape to fit their needs. When it dries it hardens.

In this case the Hiver created a nest in an abandoned building and created a

colony. When they had sufficient numbers, they left the city at night as soldiers, the safest way of moving an entire colony. Their nest has yet to be discovered by the city guard. Abandoned buildings are not high on their agenda.

SCENE 2: TRADING CAMP



The trading camp is an old tower that is long abandoned by the military.

Over the past two years the traders have brought a few more comforts with them, starting with doors and shutters from a purely practical perspective.

Over time what happened is that some traders travelled back and forth between here and the port. They used hand carts once animals were too valuable to be used for manual work. The prices for the meat and pelts was good enough that these traders could add on a markup and still make a profit with none of the hardships of going into the mountains.

Other traders went the other way trading between here and another staging post two days from here into the mountains.

The result was that there was a near continuous coming and going from this tower. The mountain tribes sold more than just meat, they could make most things from capra skin and what could not be made from skins and leather could be fashioned from bone and stone.

The combination of tribal goods from the mountains and manufactured goods coming back from the town lends this place a kind of comfortable and yet exotic feel.

As the characters explore, they will see all kinds of musical instruments such as small drums, tambourines, shakers made of pots of small stones and flutes and whistles made from bone.

In the main hall of the tower is the skin of a huge white bear, and the first sign that things are not all right here. The

skin is pure white, almost glistening except for an ugly dried blood splatter right across the creatures back.

The trading camp is quite deserted. A shutter somewhere bangs in the wind. Nothing seems out of place, there is cold soup in a communal size pot a cold fire in the hall and dirty bowls left on a great table. There are just no people.

It is only when the characters explore the upper level of the north tower that they will find the missing people. They have been encased in a yellowish wax and stuck to the walls and ceiling of the upper room. They are all quite dead and drained of all fluids. This makes them appear quite emaciated and shrivelled.

What happened here is that a force of Hivers arrived by flying up to the top of the high southern tower. Others lay in wait just beyond all three exits.

When the Hivers came down the tower this caused a panic amongst the traders who fled out of the tower and into the jaws of the waiting hivers.

Not one trader survived.

THE SOUTH TOWER

The south tower is three stories tall. The ground floor is just the same as the rest of the trading post, fairly comfortable, eclectic and obviously abandoned in a panic. The first floor has wax hanging from the ceiling and the hatch and the stairs are blocked with a grey ridged chitinous mass. If the characters can get to the first floor, they will find two more drained bodies.

The top floor contains a small nest of Hivers. There are three soldiers here, but the cells and shards of spent cocoon suggest ten times that number come and go. (see the Soldier stats at the back of the book).

RUNNING THE TRADING POST

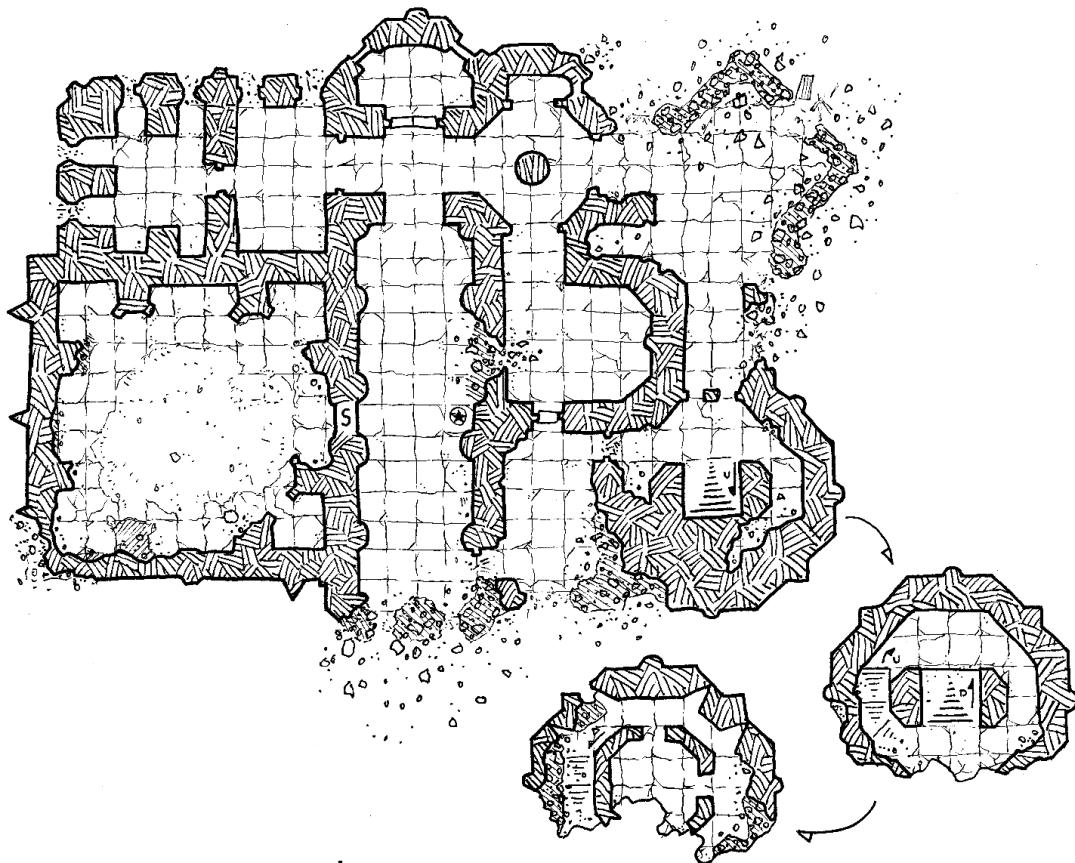
The trading post should be run as a suspenseful horror scenario. The characters can explore the deserted building, use eerie sound effects like the shutter banging, you can have a cup roll off a table and smash on the floor, the result of the characters movements rather than anything supernatural.

This can cumulate in the gruesome discovery of bodies or the obviously incongruous chitinous mass.

From some point the Hivers will become aware of the characters and they will then attempt to hunt the characters down. Ideally trapping them one at a time. Hunter turned hunted.

If you need more Hivers to make up the challenge there are patrols of Hivers, numbering in groups of 3s, 5s and 8s which could return at any time.

SCENE 3: THE HIGH PASS



The High Pass is the name of a pass that leads up into the mountains. It is two days hard hike up from the trading camp. There were groups of traders that simply shuttled back and forth between the high pass and the trading camp. Not bothering to suffer the privations of going up into the mountains or the added troubles of having to trek to the city to sell the meat and pelts. It was the easy option to take a smaller profit just buying from the traders coming down the mountain and selling it on to the others at the trading post.

The tower guarding the high pass was never in good condition. The threat it was built to defend against is so distant a memory that few can remember what it was. Troops were withdrawn more than a dozen generations ago. Since that time the fortress has slowly degraded.

It was only in the past two years that it has been re-inhabited, and it was mainly being used for shelter rather than defense, until the Hivers came.

Exploring the ruins will reveal that no one survived the Hiver attack. Unlike the bodies at the trading post these were killed and drained where they fell. Each drained husk of a body has several puncture wounds that were obviously made by the Hivers, the characters should have fought at least one by now.

There is one larder or food store set up here and no cocoons were left behind either.

There is plenty of butchered meat here as well as locally made trade goods. Robbery was obviously not the motivation for the attack.

WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

The Hivers came down the mountain and attacked the fortress. The crumbling walls offered little or no defense against their superior numbers and their ability to fly. Being surrounded, the traders were cut down as they tried to flee.

The fortress didn't offer the Hivers any advantage, so they just fed and moved on.

RUNNING THE HIGH PASS

Although the fortress did not offer the Hivers anything, it is attractive to other mountain dwellers. This much raw meat has been scented there are numerous predators homing in on the fortress.

You can run encounters with a pack of wolves prowling around in the darkness if the characters stay here.

When they leave and head up the pass, they should encounter what is essentially a polar bear. These huge bears live above the snow line but this one has been driven down the mountain by hunters above and the scene of meat drawing him down.

On the second day of climbing the characters will face an ambush by Capra. These creatures know enough to realize that the more traders come up the mountain the more of them are hunted and killed. Now they are fighting back. You should set the challenge so that the encounter is dangerous, but the point of the encounter is that the characters learn that the capra are an intelligent race and not really a kind of mountain goat.

The mountain tribes hunt the capra as they are extremely dangerous and hostile. It is just the balance of numbers that allow the mountain tribes to survive. Culturally the tribes would fend off the capra not actively

hint them. The Capra would hunt and pick of tribe members that they catch on their own. Now the tables have turned and the capra have gone from relatively solitary creatures to being forced into herds for protection.

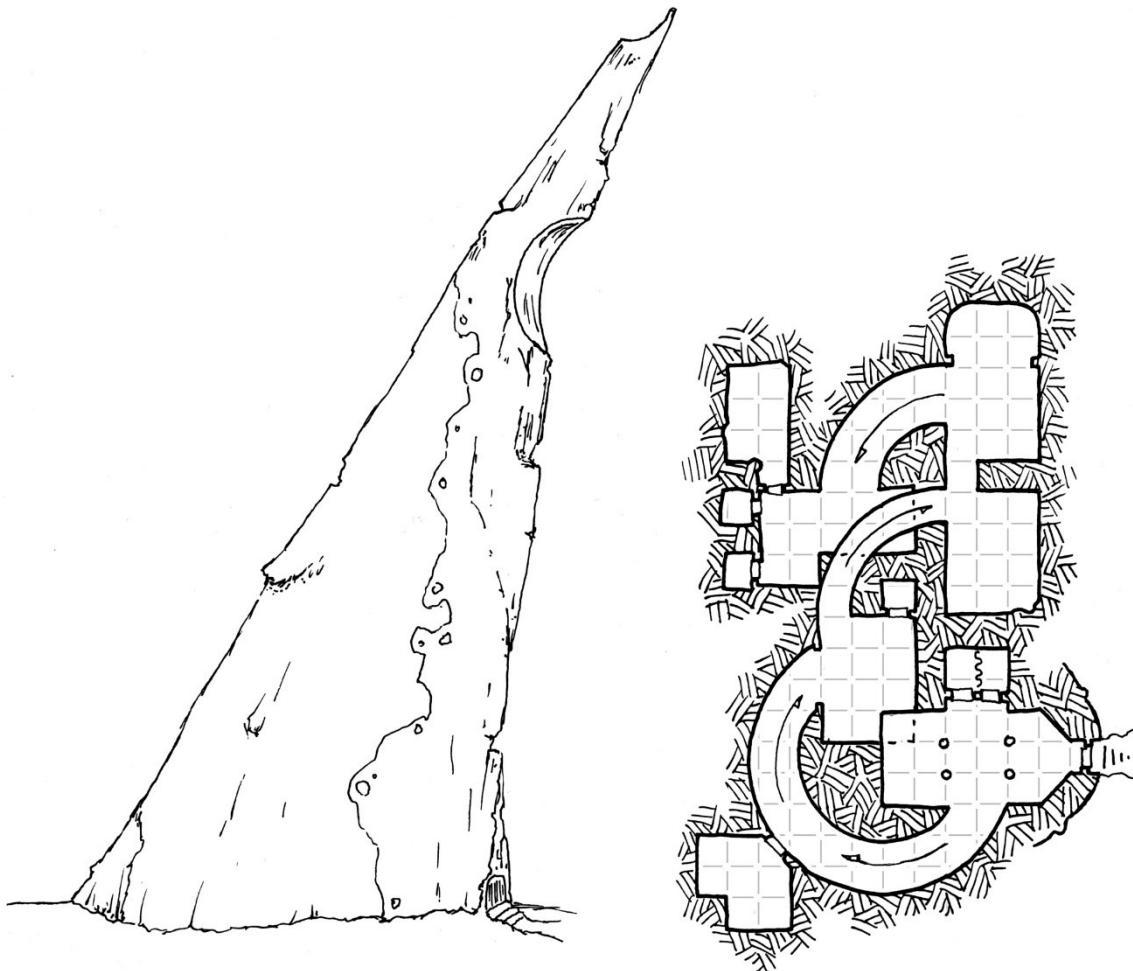
Some characters may have ethical issues with eating an intelligent species. If the characters make the connection between the creatures that launch the attack and the prepared meat that they have almost certainly been eating. If the connection is not made it will be when the characters reach the tribes tower at the top of the pass.

From this point on the environment becomes a significant threat. The characters can stock up on all the food and emergency equipment that they like. You can throw all sorts of challenges at them depending on the kind of game your players enjoy. Suggestions are massive hungry bears that track the party. Either solitary or bears that hunt in packs. An attack by the capra and by wolves.

The terrain is roof of the world mountains and there should be sheer cliffs to climb and crevasses to cross. The route the Hivers took was, no pun intended, a bee line from the top of the mountain to the fortress. The advantage the Hivers had is that they can fly for short distances allowing them to get over cracks and crevasses and up and down sheer drops. The characters have to do it the hard way.

You should play the mountains and cold as a pair of forces out to kill the characters because in its own way it is. Force your players to be ingenious and brave to survive but bear in mind that they may have to walk back afterwards!

SCENE 4 TRIBAL TOWER



The tribal tower is an impressive spike of stone. Over successive generations it has been mined out to provide shelter from the elements.

This location was the scene of great slaughter. Outside the tower the snow and ice is stained red and brown with spilled blood. Inside the tower, the doors hang open, there are dozens of bloody trails that come from all over the tower to the front doors. Every tribe member was slaughtered and dragged out the front before being carried away.

The entrance hall is particularly bloody as this was used for butchering the capra. There are dead capra tied to the pillars in the hall and tables, complete with meat cleavers, where they are

jointed and salted using rock salt. Beside the tables are baskets with the parts that they could not sell as meat.

NOTE: IF YOU ARE PLAYING WITH A NEW GROUP OF PLAYERS YOU SHOULD BE A LITTLE SENSITIVE AS TO HOW FAR YOU TAKE THE DESCRIPTIONS OF BASKETS FULL OF HEADS AND HANDS ETC.

Exploring the deserted tower will reveal a culture that is interdependent with the capra, wolves and the great snow bears. Their pelts are used for warmth and comfort, most personal utensils are made from their bone and there are musical instruments and toys of the same material. There is plenty of wall painting with some very sophisticated art on the upper sections of wall

depicting the tribes' people and their prey. The lower sections have much more simple and naive paintings suggesting that children are allowed or encouraged to paint in the walls.

The colors used suggest that the pigments are being made from different rock types from chalks to some rough textured pigments that could be a mix of stone dust and dried blood.

LIGHTING IN THE SPIRE

There is but one entrance and exit from the spire and that is on the ground floor, at the front door.

Within the spire light was provided by small stone lamps. A lamp is a natural stone with a dish shape that held some animal fat and a wick made of platted bear fur. These would burn constantly and so where they stand the walls have tall black soot smears running up and across the ceiling. All of the lamps have long since burnt out as there was no one to tend them and some were spilt in the chaos of the hiver attack. Each room has leather buckets of animal fat and balls, like a ball of wool, of wick. Unless the characters have a light source with them, they could be in a situation of it being too dark to figure out how to put the lights on.

ENCOUNTERS

There are no encounters planned for the spire. What it does do is provide the characters with a base where they can rest if they have to, get shelter from the elements and from wild animals.

The front door can be repaired and secured to some extent, enough to keep out inquisitive animals but it would not stand up to an angry bear or hiver attack.

It is relatively easy to follow the Hivers track back to where they came from.

SCENE 5: THE HIVE

The Hivers have built a towering hive not more than 1000' from the tribal spire. If it was not for a massive slab of stone between the two, they would be in clear sight of each other.

The path between the two is still easily discernable. All the bodies of the tribe's people were dragged through the snow and ice from the spire back to the hive and there has been no fresh snowfall since then.

The entire structure is grey, almost black and covered with coarse ribs cause by the weight of the structure pressing down on the chitinous material.

Luckily for the characters most of the Hiver soldiers are away.

The topmost chambers are filled with a large chitinous mass from which protrude faun pipes. These black masses with occasionally heave, as if taking a big inward breath and then the pipes with emit a thin, whining whistle. There is a slight tune to it, but it is neither charming nor pleasant to listen to.

This thin whistling will haunt the entire hive as it travels down the central ventilation and transport shaft.

The 3rd floor is the Queen and egg level.

You can roll randomly to decide which chamber she is in, or better still make it the last chamber searched. The reason being that the other chambers have eggs in perfectly neat rows completely covering the floors, walls and ceiling. Each looks like an oversized grain of rice two feet tall and eight inches in diameter. With each chamber searched the eggs will be nearer to completing their maturing. Normally, Hiver eggs take 14hrs to mature but in these cold temperatures

it is nearer to 32hrs-48hrs. There are approximately a thousand eggs per chamber.

The Queen will be in the last chamber and will both scream for assistance and attack the characters once she is aware of them.

The Soldiers 'barracks' (2nd) level. The soldier Hivers all have wings so use this entrance to the hive. The back walls of this level are used as a larder and all the missing people from the spire and the fortress at the high pass are molded into the wall with wax and being used as a food source for the soldiers. Hivers have no concept of personal space, so although this level does not seem particularly large it can house hundreds of soldiers. Luckily for the characters most of them are away hunting.

The ground (1st) level is the worker entrance and although it is above the snow level, it can be reached by a ridged ramp. Workers are coming and going constantly bringing blocks of ice, used to cool the hive and as drinking water.

The basement (-1st) is full of pupating Hivers. It is simply normal for Hivers to reconfigure their population to suit their needs. The cold conditions and thin air here mean that raids need to be carried out on foot, they lack the energy to fly long distances.

It takes 6 hours for a Hiver to pupate normally but here the time is doubled as their metabolic processes are working more slowly.

There are more bodies stuck to the walls with wax here.

DEFATING THE HIVERS

This final location is intended to be a difficult challenge and one not best confronted by a frontal assault.

Hivers call to each other using clicks and vibrations through the fabric of the hive. If any hiver discovers invaders it will click and stamp to attract soldiers to deal with the threat. These should arrive one per round, using the central shaft, every round. The characters can soon become swamped, by the constant stream of new Hivers.

There should be no more than 20 Soldiers in and around the hive at the time the characters arrive.

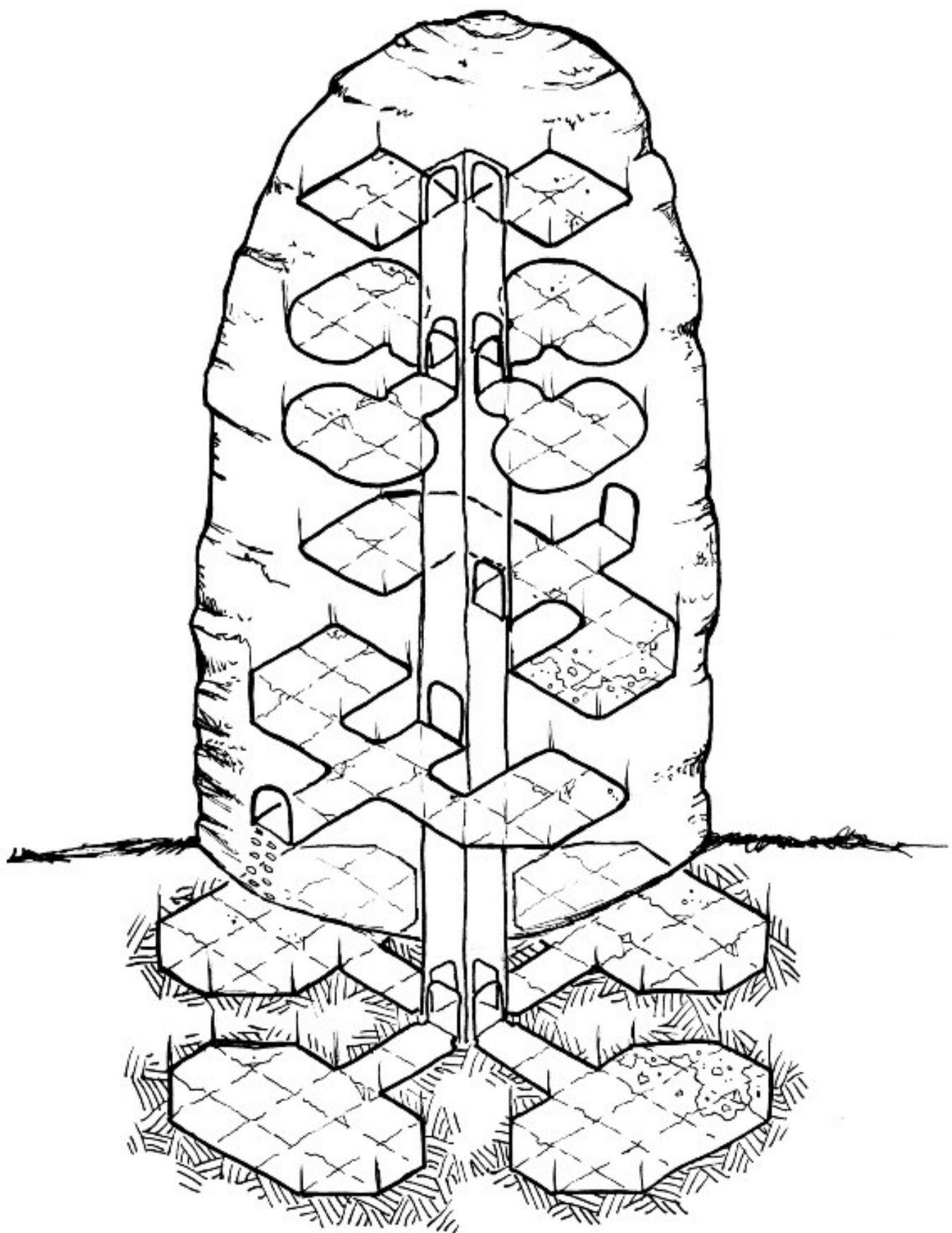
This battle should be treated as the climactic final battle of the adventure. Once the soldiers and the queen are defeated there is little to threaten the characters.

AFTERMATH

All of this adventure started with a single hiver creating a nest and reproducing itself. If even a single hiver survives their brush with the characters, then this can all start again. Only the second time the hivers are better informed, not everyone will be a pushover like your average fur trader or capra hunter.

WHAT ABOUT THE CAPRA?

Normally fauns and satyrs are portrayed as fun-loving nature fey. Something has driven the fauns away from their forest glades and up into the mountains. What that is and what needs doing about it is an adventure for another day.



NPC ROSTER

Mara Lindwurm

2nd Level Fighter, AC5 (Chain), HP 15,
Attacks by weapon.

Hivers

The hivers are a unique species of intelligent insectoids. One of their unique features is that they can create a cocoon and pupate at will and move back and forth through different forms. These forms are not life stage related but are dependent on the needs of the community.

WORKERS & DRONES

The only difference between a worker and a drone is that drones have wings.

	Worker	Drone
frequency:	Rare	Rare
no. enc.:	1d100	1d100
Size:	Man-size	Man-size
move:	120 ft	180 ft fly
armour class:	3	3
hit dice:	2	2
attacks:	1	1
damage:	1d6	1d6
Special att:	None	None
Special def:		
MR:	Standard	standard
lair %:	10%	10%
Intelligence:	Average	Average
alignment:	Lawful Evil	
Level/xp:	2/30+1/hp	

SOLDERS

Soldiers are more formidable. They have the wings of the drones but with sharp claws capable of rending a foe.

frequency:	Rare
no. enc.:	1d100
Size:	Man-size
move:	120ft/180ft fly
armour class:	3
hit dice:	2
attacks:	1
damage:	2d4
Special att:	None
Special def:	
MR:	standard
lair %:	10%
Intelligence:	Average
alignment:	Lawful Evil
Level/xp:	2/30+2/hp

QUEEN

frequency:	Rare
no. enc.:	1
Size:	Large (10 ft+)
move:	120 ft, 60 ft climbing
armour class:	2
hit dice:	3 to 8
attacks:	1
damage:	3d6
Special att:	Squirt acid
Special def:	None
MR:	Standard
lair %:	100%
Intelligence:	Average
alignment:	Lawful Evil
level/xp:	Variable

A colony queen lays eggs at a rate of one per 10 minutes and these eggs take 14hrs to mature and hatch.

If the queen is killed another Hiver will pupate as soon as it is safe to do so and become the new queen. If the queen is kept fed then they will gain 1 hit die per day until fully grown.

A queen can spit acid that does 3d6 on a successful hit and 1d4 each round afterwards until washed off.

SNOW BEAR

Snow Bears are like a polar bear in every way except they live above the tree line of high mountains. They are adept at climbing and stealth. Their attack, either as a bite or swiping with their claws is a 2d6 heavy slashing attack. Treat Snow Bears as having a melee weapon skill of +2 and a Combat skill of +3.

frequency: Rare
no. enc: 1d6
Size: Large (14 ft)
move: 120 ft, 90ft swim
armour class:6
hit dice: 8+8
attacks: 3
damage: 1d10/1d10/2d6
Special att: Hug: 3d6
Special def: None
MR: Standard
lair %: Nil
Intelligence: Semi-
alignment: Neutral
level/xp: 6/600+12/hp

The snow bear is omnivorous, possesses good hearing and smell, but has weak vision. If reduced to zero hit points, the bear will continue to fight until either 1d4+1 rounds have elapsed or it is reduced to -13 hit points.

CAPRA

Capra are your typical satyr/faun they have a magic skill of +2 but are limited to charms and suggestion type "spells" that are tied to their music and pipes. The pipes themselves are not magical.

Capra can fight with any hand to hand weapon but prefer clubs and staves, 1d6 or 2d6 respectively.

frequency: Uncommon
no. enc: 2d4
Size: Man-sized
move: 180 ft
armour class:5
hit dice: 5
attacks: 1
damage: 2d4
Special att: See below
Special def: See below
MR: 50%
lair %: Nil
Intelligence: Very
alignment: Neutral
level/xp: 5/110 + 4/hp



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