

The Palladium® RPG Book IV:

Adventures in the Northern Wilderness



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Six stunning adventures!



LARRY MAC DOUGALL 1984

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Adventures in the Northern Wilderness

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Palladium® Fantasy RPG supplement. Rest easy, this is the first of several.**

First Printing — October 1989

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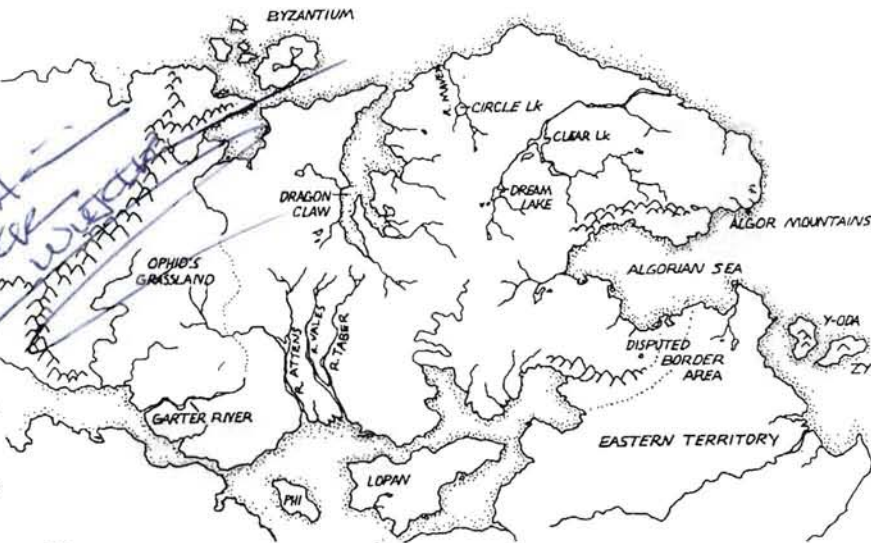
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To Me
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TO YOU
BEST REGARDS
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TO THE COMMANDER
FOR YOU I AM ALWAYS
BURNING!
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BEST REGARDS
YOUR FRIEND -
KEVIN LONG

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GEOGRAPHY OF THE NORTHERN WILDERNESS

By Erick Wujcik

Political Geography.

Unlike human geography, where the boundaries between one government and another are like an invisible line drawn on the land, Wolfen see the whole idea of *territory* in a much more flexible way. It is quite possible for the Wolfen to cede the same patch of land to several different groups. For example, the same patch of forest might be home to a group of faerie folk and also to a Coyle Horde. But in the winter, when the faeries have migrated south, and when the Coyles have joined their cousins in the west, the same land might be considered the *winter property* of a band of Kankoran.

Climatological (Weather) Geography.

With the exception of a few mountain peaks, there is nowhere in the Palladium World where the winters are so very brutal as in the Northern Wilderness.

Just looking at the map of the Palladium World, you might think that the coldest region would be Bizantium, the northernmost land. Bizantium does have severe winters, with heavy snow and dramatically low temperatures. It's just that compared to the interior of the Northern Wilderness, Bizantium is a tropical resort.

The reason has to do with a combination of the latitude, ocean currents, and the prevailing winds across the main continent. All the coastlines, even deep inside the Dragon's Claw, are constantly warmed by the ocean.

Latitude also plays a major role in the Palladium World's climate. In general, the farther north, the colder the climate.

Likewise, the prevailing winds, coming from the far west, generally warm the western half of the Palladium World, including the Western Empire.

The north is the coldest land, the wildest land, the cruelest land, and the largest wilderness in the Palladium World. It is also the true frontier of civilization. Virtually anywhere else, especially in all those southern lands, you'll find the remnants of lost civilizations, temples of forgotten religions, or the vast tumbled playthings of ancient wizards. True, some ancient relics are located in the Northern Wilderness, but they are the exception, and the vast untouched forest is the rule.

WINTER SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

Getting through the winter, for most *animals*, involves adopting one of the following strategies:

1. Hibernation. Basically, the idea is to hide out and avoid the winter altogether. Creatures in this category, like bears, build up a huge fat reserve and then find a comfy place to sleep. They awake only rarely during the winter, occasionally going out for water or a quick look around, and then return to their slumber.

2. Underground or Undersnow Shelter. Since snow is a natural insulator, staying below the snow, or better yet, below the ground, is a good strategy for survival. Most small animals, especially those weighing 10 pounds or less, rely on the snow to protect them. Of course, if there's not enough snow, then there's not enough insulation, so life is risky even for those who take shelter underground.

3. Bulk. Here the creature is capable of weathering the cold of winter by virtue of sheer size and weight. Of course, insulation, like fur and fat, helps a lot. And just about all winter creatures have natural protection, but any animal weighing less than about 100 pounds just doesn't have enough internal heat to survive an overnight exposure to the worst of the cold. Therefore, most animals that live above ground during the winter tend to a large size.

4. Migration. Most birds, and a number of *faerie folk*, simply leave winter behind. Flying far to the south every Fall, and back again every Spring, they manage to avoid the winter, yet take advantage of the lush forest greenery. A few other animals, such as the caribou and tuskers, migrate lesser distances, just far enough south to avoid the worst of the winter blasts, usually returning to some favored place of shelter every year.

KILLING WINTERS

Even the mildest of winters in the Northern Wilderness kill countless creatures, especially those not specifically equipped or those ill prepared (like the poor human settlers from the south). Yet there are winters whose severity is exceptional, winters capable of killing even the most perfectly adapted creatures of the snow.

1. Normal Winters. Even a normal winter in the Northern Wilderness is a killer. Heavy snows prevent travel, so creatures and communities without sufficient supplies of food or fuel are pretty much doomed. Food is scarce at best, with animals either living off their fat reserves (especially the hibernating bears and squirrels), or eating from their store of hoarded supplies. Those animals who depend on grazing must rely on the few tender sprouts and tree shoots that are available in winter. Finally, there is the cold itself. Without sufficient heat and insulation, any creature will die. Exertion is always risky, since it's important to conserve energy in winter. So the life-and-death decision that comes every day is whether to risk spending energy on hunting, or foraging for fuel or food, or conserving the energy you have to fight the cold.

Part of the reason why it is so difficult, and so deadly, for Southerners is that they only take the short view. They think, "Well, if I'm cold, I can warm myself up by running around in the woods, and while I'm warming myself up I might come across something to eat." That's the wrong attitude, since coping with winter isn't just a matter of keeping warm for one day. That energy you burn in one day of running around takes off vital body fat, fat that you might desperately need a week or a month later when it gets really cold.

2. False Killer Winters or Coyle Winters. Those winters which are not necessarily severe, with no more than normal cold temperatures, but in which the snow cover is inadequate. Either it's too dry and the snows don't come, or else there are too many unseasonably warm days and the snow cover melts away prematurely. Fairly rare, occurring about once every twenty years.

Wildlife suffers tremendously. First because smaller animals and plants lack the protection and insulation of the snow cover. Also because grazing animals, usually confined by the snow, range widely and destructively. Finally, because the winter carnivores go on a rampage. Wolves, and their canine cousins, plus the big cats, the Mountain Lions and Tigers, will find they can travel easily and track their game over long distances. Without snow to impede them, or to protect their prey, they eat very well.

False Killers are also called "Coyle Winters" because this is when the Coyles are at their bloodthirsty worst. The lack of snow means that the Coyles are unimpeded in their migration through the forest (or across the grasslands), which generally leads to huge groups of Coyles, enlarged beyond their normal band size of one or two hundred, to thousands, and sometimes, tens of thousands.

3. True Killer Winters. The most brutal weather that the Palladium World is capable of delivering. Completely unpredictable, coming in roughly one out of every nineteen years. The True Killer Winter has snow, gale-force winds, record-breaking low temperatures, and more snow. This kind of winter is hard on everybody. Large creatures exposed to the frigid night cold will simply be unable to cope and may end up dead of hypothermia by morning. If it gets cold enough, the lakes and rivers may freeze all the way to the bottom, wiping out those creatures who depend on the liquid of the depths to survive. Colder yet, and the blanket of snow may not be enough insulation to keep the small burrowing creatures warm. Proof of the True Killer Winter will come in the silent Spring when the bodies of the dead will finally be exposed.

4. Stock Killer Winters or Blood-Snow Winters. Extremely rare, this is a short-lived phenomenon that happens only infrequently, roughly once every twelve years, and even then it rarely covers more than a tenth of the Northern Wilderness. It starts when a thick snow cover, of at least two feet, is hit with a sudden, unseasonable warm spell, where the temperature suddenly raises dramatically above freezing. Then comes the rain, occasionally even in the classic summer thunderstorm pattern. Water pelts down from the skies, soaking the top layers of the snow for an inch or two. Then, before a real melt can take place, the freezing weather returns. The result is a hard, icy, crust on the surface of the snow. This crust, while capable of supporting the weight of lighter creatures, and even large humanoids with snowshoes, breaks under the weight of heavy, sharp-footed animals.

Moose, deer, buffalo, cattle, and caribou, even sheep and wild boar, all plunge through the crust, and then, pushing forward, they often bloody their legs on the sharp edges of the ice. Countless animals perish, because they are either left helpless for the hungry predators, trapped and left exposed with no way of getting to fresh food, or gradually bleed to death in a vain effort to free themselves.

While Blood-Snow Winters are good for predators, and allow most races to live through the winter, they are a sign of lean times. The diminished numbers of the prey animals will be further cut down by hungry predators until a general famine follows, which can affect a forest region for years to come.

G.M. Notes

Tracking in the Snow: +10% to track, +15% to identify tracks, +6% to trap animals. Minus -20% to prowl.

Snow and Speed Modifiers:

Light snow: No speed reduction, visibility — 600ft.

Medium Snow: 6 to 16 inches, reduce speed by 30%; visibility during the snowfall is about 200 feet.

Heavy Snow: 17 to 30 inches, reduce speed by 50%; visibility during the snowfall is about 100 feet.

Blizzard: 3ft to 6ft of snow falls (roll 1D4+2) in less than 24 hours. Speed is reduced by 90% during the storm and 60% after; visibility during the storm is a meager 8ft.

Frozen Snow ("Blood-Snow"): Reduce speed by 70%.

Note: All snow speed penalties consider the depth of the snow and the difficulty of trudging through it. Thus, the penalty applies even after the storm is over.

Snow shoes will minimize all snow speed penalties, except during a blizzard, to a penalty of -20%.

Additional Modifiers: Creatures smaller than four feet tall are minus an additional -20% on their speed. Animals suffer the same penalties. Giants, nine feet or taller, can subtract 10% from their penalty. **For Example:** Travel through heavy snow is 40%, not 50%, blizzard is 80%, not 90%. Speed penalties apply to flying creatures during the snowfall, as does visibility.



WOLFEN TRIBES

The Twelve Wolfen Tribes

These are the *twelve original tribes* of Wolfen who created the Constitution upon which the Wolfen state is based. Bitter enemies since the beginning of Wolfen history, there were traditionally thirteen tribes. However, the constant warfare and shifting alliances, always grim and bloody, eventually lead to an atrocity so great that even the most barbarous Wolfen were shocked.

The story began some sixty-eight years ago, during the worst "Killer Winter" in recent Northern Wilderness history. Famine, plague and pure killing freezes were cutting into the Wolfen numbers like a knife. All the tribes, fearful of losing even more of their numbers, concealed whatever provisions and cattle they had left, and warfare between the tribes accelerated. Meanwhile, the *Algor Range Huntsmen*, one of the most powerful Wolfen Tribes, decided that they had enough food to last the winter, with a surplus besides. They opened their larder to starving Wolfen strays, to Coyles, and to others who were on the verge of death.

Somewhere the word on the snow trails changed from "The Range Huntsmen are feeding the hungry" to "The Range Huntsmen are building their numbers" and then to "The Range Huntsmen plot to conquer all the Wolfen Tribes." Between rumors and hunger, and the heavy momentum of years of strife, the combined forces of Eight of the Thirteen Tribes fell upon the Range Huntsmen.

And when it was over they were no more.

Not only warriors, but women and children, and animals and stock, allies and more, all died in the wanton killing of that desperate winter.

It took two years before the Tribes started to confess to each other that they were not as destitute as they had pretended. With each new revelation, the horror of their act grew and grew. As among natural wolves, the Wolfen have a particular set of rules regarding conduct and behavior. There was no excuse for the slaughter of *innocents*; the killing of helpless Wolfen wives and offspring.

Nor was there anyone who could be counted as truly guiltless. Members of all tribes had participated in the grim deeds of that winter.

So the Wolfen, being basically an honest people, began a great dialogue among their numbers. They asked themselves those questions that all intelligent races must eventually ponder. Questions about morality and murder, and more importantly, about government and law.

Thus, was born the Constitution of the Twelve Tribes. The twelve Wolfen tribes include the Long Knife Tribe, Gold Ear Tribe, Seahawk Tribe, Eastern Arm Tribe, Two Axe Tribe, Dark Step Tribe, Sun Child Tribe, January Magic Tribe, Ice-Eye Tribe, Ursa Rex Tribe, Oak People Tribe, and Iron Claw Tribe.

Forged in an act of violence, but with the determination that it would never happen again, the Wolfen Empire was born.

I. Long Knife Tribe.

Called the "City Wolfen" by others, the wolfen of this tribe are most often the leaders and bureaucrats of the Wolfen Empire. Almost all Long Knives are grey furred, but are otherwise typical of Wolfen looks. Their capital, *Shadowfall*, has become the capital of all the Wolfen Empire and is by far their largest city. The Long Knives also have the closest relationship with the *Diamond Point Coyles* and the humans of the *Havea Kingdom*. They are considered the diplomats of the Wolfen, and are the most highly educated. Not only are all Long Knives literate, but most speak at least one other language. They are largely ambivalent about religion...

II. Seahawk Tribe.

Although they call themselves "The Civilized Tribe," other Wolfen often call them "The Soft Ones." They have a slightly different look than other Wolfen, tending toward a shorter height and a more massive body, with lighter fur and varying shades of green eyes. Occupying the southern coast, below the Algor Mountains, where the climate is mild, the rain plentiful, and the soil rich, the Seahawk Wolfen have always been considerably more timid than their wilderness cousins. Unlike most Wolfen, the Seahawks eat practically no meat, preferring fruit (they plant fruit trees throughout the forest), grains, fish and vegetables. What meat they do eat comes not from large stock animals, but mostly from rabbits and birds. Most Seahawks worship **The Northern Sea God (Algor)**, although the tribe itself has no official religion. Their capital, *Seaholm*, sits alongside the southern entrance to a major pass through the Algor Mountains.

III. Gold Ear or Golden Earring Tribe.

Their name comes from the gold earrings worn by virtually every member of the tribe. They are often called the "Rich Wolfen" or "Golden Wolfen" by others, because of the gold nuggets and occasional gold mines found in their territory. Coincidentally, they also tend toward a "tan" or "yellow" or "off-white" colored fur. This tribe has the closest relationship with the *Algor Mountain Kobolds*, from whom they have learned many of the secrets of mining and metal working. Their rugged land, although relatively barren, probably has the richest mineral wealth in the entire Palladium world. Among the several religions worshipped by the Gold Ears, there are still rumors of a *secret cult* that worships the **Algor Frost Giants**. There are two major cities in their territory,

their own capital, *Goldstar*, and the capital of the Algor Mountain Collective, *Oliana*.

IV. Eastern Arm or East Coast Tribe.

One of the few Wolfen Tribes with an official religion, the Eastern Arms are obsessed with the **Church of Taut** (*Set and Anubis*). Their capital is little more than a trading village set at the headwaters of Mother River. They are, in many ways, the most primitive of the Wolfen, and they are definitely the tribe with the least involvement in the Wolfen Empire.

V. Two Axe Tribe.

Called the "Pirate Wolfen" by humans and others, the Two Axe are the foremost users of Wolfen *Longboats*. Formerly used for their frequent raids upriver, new forms of their ships, called Dragonboats, are being used to experiment with long sea voyages. Another, more insulting, nickname for Two Axe Wolfen is "Split Lip," which comes from a genetic deformity that can appear in any infant wolfen. The defect shows up in roughly one out of every thirty Wolfen in this area. Infant wolfen born with this problem must have their upper lip sewn together, a procedure that leaves them with a perpetual snarl and a certain stiffness of expression. While they tend toward the worship of **The Northern Sea God (Algor)**, they are not a particularly religious people. Of their two great cities, the capital, *Oakhill*, is the site of their main religious and sacred relics. *Whitewater*, their commercial center, lies alongside a deep water section of Mother River (suitable for docking ocean-going ships), and is much larger and more active.

VI. Dark Step Tribe.

They literally are the darkest of the Wolfen peoples, often having fur that borders on pure black and rarely having a shade lighter than dark brown. Most of the Wolfen Druids either come from the Dark Step Tribe, or are sent to this region for training. The tribe is also called the "Kankoran Wolfen" by others because of their close relationship with the wilderness and wild animals. Their capital, *Darkcove*, is a quiet community situated alongside Clear Lake. The city, along with the entire Dark Step region, is a popular religious and vacation retreat for the whole Wolfen Empire.

VII. Sun Child Tribe.

The Sun Child Tribe is known as the Wolfen ranchers, for they produce most of the Empire's meat and leather from their vast herds of cattle, buffalo, and other grazing animals. Their city, *Tolosanya*, is usually just called "Cow City" by most Wolfen, and is mostly known for the stench of its cattle yards and slaughterhouses. Aside from cattle, the Sun Children are also known for their fascination with religion. Among the hundred or so churches, shrines and temples on their lands, they are major worshippers of **The Church of Taut, Fenry Devil Worship, Dragonwright, and The Northern Religion**. Although they have the same general physique and coloring of common Wolfen, they are instantly recognizable by their dress and decoration. They delight in covering their bodies with paint, tattoos, brands, and dyes, and complement their colorfully patterned "fur jobs" with outlandishly colored clothing and ornaments. Even in the coldest winter, they insist on wearing the latest "styles," which might consist only of bead strings or feathered vests.

VIII. January Magic Tribe.

Located throughout the January Magic territory are *six dwarven kingdoms*. Politically, none of the dwarvish communities have enough power

or position to qualify for any kind of statehood in the Wolfen Empire. However, the January Magic Tribe has opened its membership up to individual dwarves. At this point, over 800 dwarves are "official" Wolfen citizens, and there is the possibility that their numbers could triple. In addition to a solid relationship with the dwarves, the January Magic Tribe also has a good relationship with the *Havea Kingdom of humans*. Although they have an official capital, *Atwater*, it is really *Avramstown*, in Havea, which is the major city of the region. There are persistent rumors that **The Sect of the Spider God (Tark)** is worshipped secretly by some January Magic Wolfen. Other common religions of this region are the Northern Religion, and Church of Light and Dark (especially among the dwarves & humans).

IX. Ice-Eye Tribe.

Cold, barren, and cold, is the way to describe the lands of the Ice-Eyes. They are unusual among Wolfen in that a large number of them have blue eyes, and perhaps one out of every twenty has white fur. In fact, there are also legends that the leaders of the tribe were once all a line of blue-eyed, white-furred wolfen.

One of the smallest of the tribes in numbers, the Ice-Eyes control a vast region. All the larger groups tend to migrate south in the winter, with only few a small families staying behind in well-stocked strongholds to survive the winter. In winter, these hold-outs hunt seal and whale along the northern shores, taking advantage of the pack ice that accumulates there.

Their capital, *Motherhome*, is as much a center for the Two Axe Tribe as it is for the Ice-Eyes. It is here that all the major craftsmen and builders of the region dwell. Likewise, Motherhome is where most of the Ice-Eyes' Longboats and Dragonboats are constructed. It is also here that the largest temple of the Ice-Eye's church is based, a major branch of **The Northern Religion**.

X. Ursa Rex or King Bear Tribe.

Called the "King Bears," the members of this tribe tend to be larger and shaggier than any other wolfen. Aside from their looks, they may also have this name because of their close relationship with the Bearmen of the North. They are a large and powerful tribe, having dominated their heavily forested homeland for hundreds of years. Recently they have opened commerce with the Kingdom of Bizantium; more specifically, with the *Noble House of Lamrith*. The tribe officially worships the gods of **The Northern Religion**, but also relies heavily on *Druids* for spiritual guidance. Their capital, the city *Bataria* on Dream Lake, marks their southern border.

XI. Oak People Tribe.

Actually, the Oak People are just the most populous of the Wolfen who live in this vast area. There are dozens of other related tribes, ranging all the way north around the western edge of the Dragon's Claw, all the way west to Ophid's Grasslands, and all the way south to the Inland Sea. However, until these other Wolfen can organize themselves politically, and petition for membership in the Wolfen Empire, they will continue to be represented by the Oak People. Their capital is *Nasfert*, a large trading center located at the western headwaters of Mother River.

Traditionally the Oak People are merchants and traders. They have trade routes and paths leading throughout the Northern Wilderness, and they are renowned as the best guides and scouts available. They also are responsible for the treaties between the Wolfen and the Kingdom of Bizantium. Members of the Bizantium *Noble House of Yinxner* are trained by the Oak People in the Wolfen language, both spoken and written, and trade representatives annually.

There is no official religion for the Oak People, but a large number

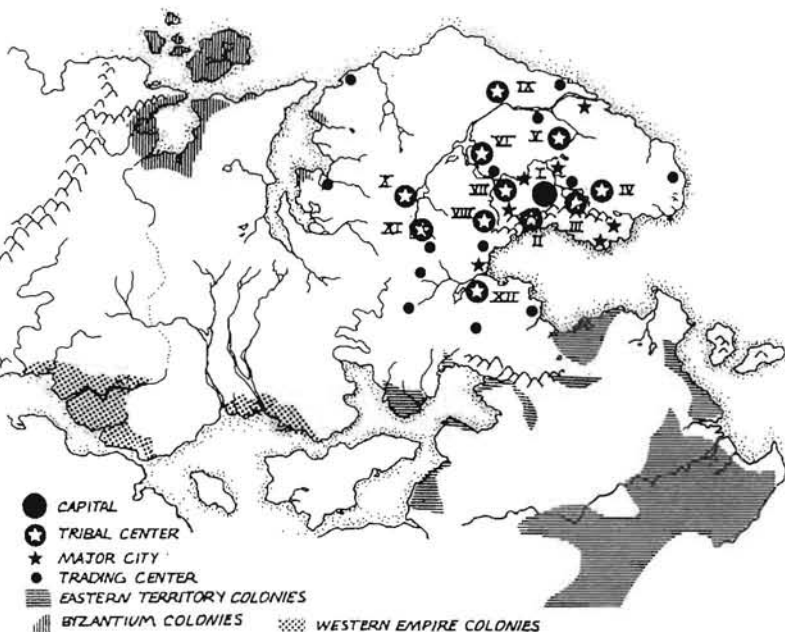
of them worship the various **Dragon-Gods of Dragonwright and The Northern Gods.**

XII. Iron Claw Tribe.

The most warlike of all wolfen are the Iron Claw. This is almost a geographical mandate, since the lands of the Iron Claw form the border between the Wolfen Empire and the human's Eastern Territory. The strip of land between the Algorian Sea and the Inland Sea are occupied not only by the Iron Claw, but also by the colonies of the *Eastern Territory*, and, as if this weren't conflict enough, by the *Silver Coin Horde of Coyles*. Worse yet, many of the traditional lands of the Iron Claw are actually now inside the Eastern Territory. Their capital, Ironhold, is actually a massive fortress surrounded by the war camps of the assembled Wolfen Empire army.

Iron Claw Wolfen prefer heavy armor and are trained in a variety of weapons, including siege engines. Where others among the Empire consider a war with the Eastern Territory as something remote, to the Iron Claws it is a daily battle for survival and liberty. For this reason, the Iron Claw also maintain a huge spy network, sending agents of Wolfen and other races into the Eastern Territory, and throughout the human world.

Religious worship among the Iron Claw is fierce and devout, with the majority of the tribe being loyal to **The Church of Taut**, and with a large minority involved in **Fenry Devil Worship**.



THE WOLFEN EMPIRE

GOVERNMENT

Although the Wolfen government is often called an empire, it is really anything but. It is a *republic*; that is, a government based upon elected representatives. And, unique among the nations of Palladium, it is a government representing *all* its people, not just a single dominant race.

Constitution of the Twelve Tribes

The most important document of the Wolfen Empire, it provides their guiding philosophy and direction. Shorter than most imagine it to be, it consists of but two sheets of parchment, and it starts with the phrase: "In forest assembled, we free people come to create a council..." Rather than a formula for government, it is instead a covenant of rights.

Although it was not originally intended for use by anyone other than Wolfen, it never refers to Wolfen by name, instead using the phrases: "all free people," "tribes," "nations" and "lands." It is administered by the Council of the Twelve, and all servants and elected officials of the Wolfen Empire must swear to uphold its provisions.

Council of the Twelve

Originally, the ultimate ruling body of the Wolfen Empire, and specified in the Constitution. It first consisted of the chiefs of the twelve united tribes, now expanded to hold the chiefs of each Member State. In practice it has become a secondary body, mostly because the chiefs of the tribes have too many other duties and are restricted by the Constitution from appointing any proxies. They continue to meet every three or four years, but usually only to rubber-stamp the constitutional changes requested by the Senate or the Imperia.

Senate

Another political body described in the Constitution, it consists of 12 members from each Member State, 6 Members from each Imperial Province or Client State, and 3 Members from each Province or Trial State. Each Senator is elected for life. It has evolved into an *advisory council*, with the right to veto laws made by the Assembly, to censor policy made by any states, to appoint and dismiss any of the various Imperia, Praetoria, and Bureaucracy of the government. Because it meets continuously, especially in the winter, it has become the most important legislative body in the Wolfen Empire.

Greater Assembly of the People

Also described in the Constitution is the Greater Assembly of the People. Meeting at least every other year, usually in autumn, there is a great assembly, where all the various peoples gather together. Unlike the Senate where membership is formal, virtually any convincing representatives of any peoples can present their credentials (sometimes no more than loud promises) and speak for their people. While it no longer creates laws, it has the power to veto existing laws. It is also powerful in that the Assembly, and only the Assembly, can admit Member States into the Wolfen Empire. One other power, that of creating and abolishing taxes, constitutionally belongs to the Assembly. This taxing power is now being contested by both the Senate and the Imperia, each of whom believe they should have the power to tax.

Imperia

Most of the "official" government bodies and positions are not specified in the Constitution. Instead, they are created by one of the three official bodies. The most important of these is the Imperia, a body of one to six leaders who are the real administrators of the Empire. Formerly, these Imperia were elected by the Council of the Twelve, but they are now appointed by the Senate. Some radicals have suggested that a more "Constitutional" interpretation would be to have the Imperia elected at large throughout the Wolfen Empire. Among other duties, the Imperia collects taxes, assigns money, raises and controls armies, and appoints most of the other agents and officials of the Empire.

Magistia

Effectively these officers serve as *Governors* in all but member states. In the case of Imperial States, the Magistia work rather subtly, more like ambassadors than rulers. In Client States the Magistia must wield a certain amount of power, working with the native government, but without appearing to be the actual ruler. In practice, and individual Magistia is an out-and-out governor whose power is absolute, and who has the power to call upon any local units of the army of the Wolfen Empire to support his rule.

Praetoria

These are the officials who administrate over civil conflicts and who are responsible for interpreting the law of the Wolfen Empire. Each

Praetoria is nominated by either the Imperia, the Magistia, or, in rare cases, the Quatoria, but must be actually appointed by the Senate. Any disagreements between individuals, companies, tribes, or governments, including units of the Wolfen Empire itself, are arbitrated by the Praetoria. This does not include criminal law (murder, theft, etc.), which is the sole responsibility of the Quatoria.

Quatoria

A Quatoria, or "Officer of the Law," is one of the combined police and law enforcement officers of the Empire. In remote areas a single Quatoria Wolfen might act as marshal, judge, jury, jailor, executioner and grave digger, capable of enforcing the law on his own, or swearing in whatever "deputies" he might find necessary to deal with local problems. In the cities, there are various ranks of Quatoria, ranging from "patrol-rank" to "judge." The ranks are used to define their jobs and powers. Most Quatoria are assigned by the Imperia, although Magistia have the power to appoint temporary Quatoria within their territory.

Bureaucria

These are the various scribes, bookkeepers, librarians, translators, postal workers, and general civil servants of the Wolfen Empire. All are employees or appointees of the Imperia, and all wages and budgets are assigned by the Imperia. Whether it comes to delivering mail, keeping records, or repairing roads, it is the Bureaucria that actually does the work within the Empire.

COMPONENTS OF THE WOLFEN EMPIRE

Here are the components of the Wolfen Empire. Each state and people, from Member States to Unsubdued People, as the Wolfen have evaluated them:

UNSUBDUED PEOPLES

Within the Wolfen state each people, are put into some kind of official category. Those who the Wolfen see as *hostile* are titled "Unsubdued Peoples." Here are the current members.

Renegade Coyle Hordes. Considered by the Wolfen state to be its greatest threat, these are the minority (or majority, depending on whose count you believe) of the Coyles who refuse to accept the new order. The renegade Coyle hordes are also a danger because they form a buffer between the Wolfen civilization and its neighbors to the south, southwest and northwest. As a buffer, the Coyles tend more towards trouble making than peace keeping, constantly raiding non-canine camps and strongholds, and easily passing themselves off as "officials" of the Wolfen Empire for purposes of extortion and terror.

Although the scores of Coyle hordes are small, there are four major exceptions. *The Silver Coin Horde* is dominant in the south, extending across the border into the Eastern Territory. *The Emerald Glint Horde* is found all along the northern edge of the Inland Sea, with their major strongholds along the River Vales, and is lead by a Coyle Dynasty known as the Drakaven Family. The largest of the Coyle hordes calls itself *the Opal Spear Horde*. Opals are rumored to number as many as 100,000 and their range is known to spread throughout the region west of Dragon's Claw, north to the sea, and west all the way to Ophid's Grasslands.

Most dangerous of all the Coyle Hordes are those that call themselves *The Ruby Circle Horde*. Based in Ophid's Grasslands, farther away from the Wolfen Empire than any other coyles, they are innovative in both their use of cavalry and their use of magic. These Coyles, expertly lead by one called "Circle," have also formed major alliances with both the Zadrak Orcs and the Humans of the Mystic Knot, both major

horse-using raiders in the Grasslands. In addition, they are rumored to have established a major gathering of Summoners deep in a mountain valley to the west.

Human Frontier Settlements. There are two kinds of human settlements in the Northern Wilderness (other than those that have already entered the Wolfen fold): colonies sponsored by human nations, and independent humans. Of the colonies, the most irritating to the Wolfen are those established by the Eastern Territories, well-armed, aggressive and bent on direct confrontation with the Wolfen. In contrast, the colonies of the North Shore of the Inland Sea, and the colonies of the Kingdom of Byzantium are quite peaceful. These are colonies who have no particular grudge against the Wolfen, and who are mainly intent on surviving or, in the case of Byzantium, making a profit in their new wilderness home.

The largest of the colonial efforts, and potentially the most dangerous, is that of the Western Empire. Mainly centered in Ophid's Grasslands, but stretching out to the east into the forest, these colonies house huge numbers of humans, often a hundred thousand or more in a single settlement. However, they rarely survive in their new homes. First, because they are totally unsuited for the effort. Most "colonists" are really condemned prisoners, politically displaced urbanites, or victims of "poverty prevention" programs. In other words, certain cities of the Western Empire use the colonization program as an excuse to get rid of the dregs of their urban slums. These humans rarely have any of the skills needed for survival. And if they have any ambition at all, it is usually directed toward getting back to "civilization" as quickly as possible.

Aside from the colonies, there are also humans who have made the Northern Wilderness into "home." Drawn from many sources, and many time periods, the human natives of the Northern Wilderness have turned into a hardy race of survivors, well equipped for the rigors of the northern winters, and resistant to the idea of subservience to any government, least of all that of the Wolfen. These *wilderness humans*, while numerous, especially in the central section of Ophid's Grasslands, are anything but organized. The groups range in size from a few hundred nomads to mountain strongholds of fifty or sixty, to family-sized log cabins in the far north, to solitary backwoods hermits.

Bug Bears, Feathered Death, and Kinnie Ger. Try as they might to treat all races equally, the Wolfen draw the line at this trio of baddies. They've been declared "dangerous enemies of the Wolfen State." Which is not to say that the Wolfen would never accept them (that would be illegal), just that it would take a major demonstration of good will, and possibly divine intervention, to make the Wolfen change their minds.

AFFILIATE RACES

There are a number of races who, for one reason or another, the Wolfen have no "official" treaty or arrangement, but who are viewed as friendly. In some cases, like that of the Wing Tips and the Northern Timber Wolves, it's because there is just no known way of communicating. In other cases, the offers of the Wolfen have been rebuffed, but the Wolfen attitude is still friendly and hopeful. Here are the three main categories of Affiliate Races.

Algor Frost Giants, Elves, and Ice Dragons. These three races are held in awe by most Wolfen. At one time or another all three were worshipped as gods, and their favor is still highly valued by most Wolfen. Always hopeful, the Wolfen continually seek out members of the Algor, Elves and Ice Dragons, always offering gifts and parley, and always offering important positions within the Wolfen state. Any gathering of any of these races is immediately eligible for the highest ranking within the Wolfen state, that of a Member State, fully equal to the Twelve Wolfen Tribes.

Bearmen of the North, Drakin, Dragon Wolves, Emirin, Faerie Folk, Unicorn, Waternix, and Wing Tips. In lieu of any formal



agreement, all of these races are considered to have at least provisional status as citizens of the Wolfen state. All of the creatures of these races are respected as intelligent and as fully deserving in a share of the future government of Wolfen.

Changelings, Dwarves, Ogres, Gigantes and Trolls all present some problems to the Wolfen. While they hesitate to label any of these creatures as "enemies," neither are they comfortable with them as allies. Changelings and dwarves are suspect because of the long-standing distrust that Wolfen have for these creatures. With their "new order," the Wolfen Empire is trying to find new ways of coming to terms with these obviously intelligent and organized people. On the other hand, Gigantes, Ogres and Trolls, traditionally valued allies of the Wolfen, have proven themselves woefully inept at self-government and murderously untrustworthy in dealing with the other, "weaker races." Until such time as these problems can be solved, all these races may be considered citizens of the other "official" states, but may have no recognized states of their own.

Wild Carnivorous Animals (Including Wolves, Bears, Mountain Lions, Tigers, Hawks, and Eagles). Although the Wolfen don't quite see wild animals as being deserving of citizenship, they do acknowledge that their government of the Northern Wilderness also obligates them toward protecting certain *noble* creatures. Somewhat in the way that humans think of chimpanzees as the most intelligent of all animals, so the Wolfen naturally think of wolves as being the most advanced social animals. Wolfen philosophy is also rather close to nature, so it would come as no surprise to the Wolfen if the so-called "wild" animals turned out to be another race of intelligent creatures. In general, the Wolfen regard wild animals as client races, deserving of protection and respect.

MEMBER STATES

The highest status in Wolfen society is that of a citizen of a Member State. These are the sub-units of the Wolfen State that are considered to have full rights and privileges, and a citizen of any Member State, regardless of race, is considered to have equal standing with Wolfen. Also, once a group or government becomes a Member State, that status becomes permanent.

Kingdom of Havea (Human).

After the consolidation of the twelve tribes, the next Member State of the Wolfen Empire turned out to be a human kingdom. King Avramson, age unknown, has presided over this small kingdom for at least two hundred years. Always cut off from other human civilization, and constantly besieged by the surrounding Wolfen and Coyles, the King jumped at the chance to join the new Wolfen Empire. This initially took the Wolfen by surprise. They had created their constitution with only other Wolfen in mind. Still, they saw nothing in their own rules to prohibit a human state from joining. So, in a sense, it was really a human, Avramson, who started the Wolfen Empire on its course of worldwide expansion.

Algor Mountain Collective (Kobold).

Long the allies and metal workers for the Wolfen in the Algor Mountain region, the Kobolds were broken into a dozen or more bickering fiefdoms. In their first act of deliberate diplomacy, the Wolfen decided that the time had come to unify the Kobolds. Allying themselves with the most reasonable of the Kobolds, the Wolfen entered the underground Kobold fiefs and swept through the subterranean battlegrounds. Within four years their conquest was complete and the defeated Kobolds quaked in fear at the slavery and vengeance that awaited them at the hands of the victors. Of course, revenge and plunder were not in the Wolfens'

plans. Instead, all the Kobolds were treated with an even hand, and each offered the same choice: full membership in the Algor Mountain Collective, or banishment. In the forty years since, the Algor Kobolds have learned to govern themselves fairly and have become a central force in all the councils of the Wolfen Empire. Currently, the *Algor Mountain Collective* is the largest known collection of Kobolds in the Palladium world, with tunnel complexes in the Algor Mountains overlapping natural caves and going on for hundreds of miles, and often descending several miles deep into the Earth.

The Diamond Point Horde (Coyle).

The first of the Coyles to join with the Twelve Wolfen Tribes. Their former chief, *Uhashnak*, was a brilliant leader who managed to set aside the traditional animosity between the Coyle and Wolfen long enough to see the long-term benefit of association. Since then, the Diamond Point Horde has been steadfastly loyal and has worked vigorously to bring other Coyles into the Wolfen state. *Uhashnak*, although aged, is currently hard at work in an attempt to bring the Emerald Glint Horde into the Wolfen Empire.

IMPERIAL STATES

Imperial States are considered to be areas or governments that may eventually qualify for Member State status, but are not yet ready. Specifically, any group must hold the status of Imperial State for a period of 10 years before it becomes a full-fledged Member State. Rebellion, treasonous activity, failure to participate in Wolfen wars or state affairs, or mistreatment of citizens, are all causes for a group to lose their Imperial State status, or (and this happens a lot with the Coyle Hordes) they have to start their 10 year waiting period all over again.

Imperial States are often new governments created by the Wolfen Empire, or states who have failed in their bid to become full members. Each Imperial State is ruled directly by one of the Wolfen governors (*Magistia*).

Gnome Central State.

Through a major diplomatic effort, over a hundred Gnomish tribes, covering several hundred square miles, have been united into the "Gnome Central State." It has been operating successfully for seven years, and is considered to be the most promising candidate for full statehood.

Broken Skull Tribe, Awesome Mess Tribe, Grand Order of Imperial Orcs Tribe and Mad Dogs of War Tribe.

One of the greatest successes of the Wolfen has been the creation of the various *orc tribes*. From dozens of bickering groups, the Wolfen have formed these orcs into four strong and well-organized tribes. Part of the reason for their success has been the brutal replacement of intractable orcish leaders. Simply, if an orc leader is not satisfactory, the Wolfen quickly put him to death and allow the orcs to appoint a new leader. It is only within the last year that the orc tribes were advanced from the status of Trial State, and many Wolfen still believe that they'd be better off just declaring the orc lands as Imperial Provinces.

Moonstone Horde and Silver Stream Horde.

Just as the Wolfen have been overwhelmingly successful in organizing the orcs, they've had disaster after disaster in attempting to do the same with the *Coyles*. The problem has something to do with Coyle society and group psychology. Whereas orcs naturally grow more cooperative in large groups, Coyles become increasingly more aggressive in direct proportion to the size of their horde. This behavior probably comes from their ancient winter hunting practices; when the leaner the winter, and the more scarce the food supply, the more savage the Coyle hordes

would become. In any case, these two Coyle hordes have been candidates for Member States for over thirty years, and neither has gone more than five years without some kind of major incident causing them to lose their "seniority."

IMPERIAL PROVINCES

These are lands that have been declared permanently under the protection of the Wolfen Empire, but whose inhabitants are not considered capable of participation in the Wolfen Empire, or who are simply not capable of organizing themselves into a formal government. There are actually several dozen Imperial Provinces, but only the following three have any substantial amount of territory.

Kankoran Trust Lands.

Kankoran are traditionally friendly toward Wolfen, and vice versa, but their natural alliance is blocked by the incredibly varied and diverse languages and tribes among the Kankoran. Basically a peaceful people, especially in their relationships with outsiders, the Kankoran are fiercely divided among themselves. Literally *thousands* of tiny Kankoran tribes, many with separate dialects, are scattered in a random pattern all across the Northern Wilderness.

The Faerie Kingdom.

Actually a series of land "reserves" or parks. Each is set aside so that the Faerie people can continue their way of life unmolested. And so that they will not interfere with the Wolfen Empire.

Northern Elfland.

There is a golden city in the forest, as out of place as a unicorn in a pigsty, that the Wolfen believe to have been built by elves. Certainly the scale of the doors and ceilings is elven, and elves who have visited the city are sure that it was originally built for them. On the other hand, it seems abandoned, yet at the same time there is an eerie sense of some shadowy inhabitants. Visitors often speak of hearing the sounds of a crowd or music from a block or two away, and tantalizing smells of cooking food or aromatic incense is often reported. Without inhabitants, the Wolfen have declared the city, and the surrounding valley, to be an Imperial Province. To be protected and preserved until the owners decide to return or reveal themselves.

TRIAL STATES

These are newly formed governments that have not yet petitioned the Assembly for statehood. They are considered too "immature" for self-government and are being "groomed" by their *Magistia*.

Yusbeg Allamak Tribe.

Something of an experiment, this is the first time that a major collection of *goblins* has been organized into a formal government. So far, the first three years have gone fairly smoothly, and if they can hold out without breaking into a massive civil war for another two years, then they'll be eligible for Imperial State status.

The Centaur Confederation.

The most highly organized of all Centaur groups. This kind of self-government is really unprecedented in Centaur history, and would never have come about if not for the pressure of human settlements in the traditional Centaur lands.

The Wolfen are excited about the idea of incorporating the Centaurs into the Empire. In addition to the obvious benefit of added territory and population, the Wolfen also see the Centaurs as a potential source of a badly needed military resource... a race tailor-made for countering the humans' superior cavalry forces!

Estimated Population Figures shown here represent the combined peoples of the Northern Wilderness and Ophid's Grasslands, including recent human settlers:

- 7,030,000 Wolfen (Combined)
- 5,330,000 Wolfen
- 1,400,000 Coyles
- 300,000 Kankoran
- 2,220,000 Humans
- 250,000 Interior Natives
- 160,000 Byzantium Colonies
- 280,000 Eastern Territory Colonies
- 230,000 North Shore Colonies (Inland Sea)
- 1,000,000 Western Empire Colonies
- 300,000 Ophid's Grasslands Natives
- 3,650,000 Other Races of Note
- 1,000,000 Orcs
- 800,000 Goblins
- 620,000 Centaurs
- 500,000 Gnomes
- 270,000 Kobolds
- 250,000 Giants (Algor, Jotan, Gigantes, Ogres, and Trolls)
- 130,000 Dwarves
- 80,000 Bearmen

To speak of the Northern Wilderness is to speak of the Wolfen Empire. This vast land is dominated by the Wolfen, and it is they who will determine its fate. Predicting the outcome, trying to see into the future as little as two years away, is hopeless. Only in the last 50 years have the Wolfen Tribes united, and their bright vision of a strong and united Northern Wilderness is still untested.

THE MILITARY

"Such direct combat...motivation. Not until the time of the Roman Republic were political and psychological conditions ripe for a warrior using a weapon essentially by himself; the Roman of the republic was a citizen rather than a subject."

Military History.

First, before we get on to the specific organization of the Wolfen Empire, let's review the general military situation in the overall Palladium World.

There are generally *seven* kinds of Palladium armies. They are usually one of the following:

1. Sub-Human Armies. Levies or tribes of Orcs and/or Goblins, often with other races, especially Ogres and Trolls, mixed in. Basically these armies depend on sheer ferocity for their impact. Here's how it works. The war chief or leader gathers together the forces, usually around a bonfire the morning before the battle, and exhorts the troops with rhetoric, lies, promises, and whatever else it takes to motivate them. Then they are marched as quickly as possible to the ranks of the enemy. If everything works out, the fighters go berserk and overrun their opponents. Otherwise, the usual result is that the sub-humans lose their nerve and panic.

Since they rarely receive decent training or equipment, sub-human armies must have a significant advantage in size or position to have a reasonable chance of winning a battle. Odds of three to one are considered necessary for an orc army to win against humans, elves, or dwarves, and odds of six to one are needed to give goblins a reasonable chance of victory. On the other hand, when used as the "shock troops" of a larger force, sub-humans can sometimes be quite effective.

2. Noble Armies. This is the most common model of what an army is in the human world and the one used everywhere the *feudal* system

applies. Basically, the nobles, from King on down to Knight, form the military class of the kingdom. They train for war throughout their lives and spend whatever resources are necessary to obtain the very best weapons, armor, and war horses. Most of the fighters are Knights and Palladins, although they usually have units of loyal Soldiers, Long Bowmen, and Rangers.

Man for man, the Noble Army is the most powerful military force on the planet. Barring magical interference, they are usually capable of defeating any equal size army of any other kind. Against Sub-Human Armies, or Peasant Levies, they can often win even against odds of ten to one.

The problem is that Noble Armies are, of necessity, fairly small. It takes hundreds of peasants and craftsmen to provide the economic resources for a single Knight-at-Arms. In other words, Noble Armies have devastating power, but are always severely limited in numbers. For example, a kingdom of 50,000 people might reasonably have a Noble Army of 250 Knights (of whom perhaps 25 are Palladins) and 1,000 other professional soldiers (750 Soldiers, 225 Long Bowmen and 25 Rangers).

3. Mercenary Armies. The *professional* armies of the Palladium World. They are the armies that fight for money. The backbone of all Mercenary Armies are the Mercenary Fighters, although they usually have their share of Soldiers, Long Bowmen, and sometimes even Knights and/or Rangers. A typical Mercenary Army might number as many as 500, with 250 Mercenary Fighters, 150 Soldiers, 75 Long Bowmen, 15 Knights, and 10 Rangers.

Mercenaries may not be as effective as Nobles, but they certainly come close. And, at certain specialized tasks, like besieging fortresses, or the use of artillery, they are unsurpassed. The problem with all Mercenary Armies is that they fight only so long as the money comes in, and so long as the odds remain reasonable. Remember, there is no percentage in "heroism" for mercenaries. A loss on the battlefield can be ruinous, so they'll often switch sides or retreat altogether, rather than risk a total defeat.

4. Peasant Levy Armies. When worst comes to worst, and when a land is facing a large army of some kind, then "soldiers" will be "recruited" from the general populace. Sometimes this involves recruiting with offers of pay and prestige, but more often, Peasant Levies are simply a nice way of describing enslavement.

The natural limitations of Peasant Armies are simple. While they are large, usually numbering in the thousands, they are very expensive. Even if you don't pay the troops, you've still got to feed them, arm them, and provide them with basic equipment. The longer you keep them around, the more you've got to feed them. So most Peasant Armies are raised just weeks before the anticipated battle. Thus, they almost never have enough time for proper training.

Training the troops to fight as individuals, the way a decent noble or mercenary fights, would take too much time. Peasants are trained the simple way, to fight as a group. Therefore, the emphasis in Peasant Armies is on the drill. The idea here is that the troops will learn to form solid lines, several men deep, either with spears or polearms extended; forming a *porcupine line*, or with shields linked, forming a *turtle line*, and using short swords or axes. Against enemy cavalry, the porcupine line can be devastating. Undisciplined shock attacks, like those used by Sub-Human Armies, are often completely broken by a turtle line.

These tactics can be quite effective in defensive situations when the exact method of attack is predicted. However, against the wrong kind of attack, the Peasant Army can quickly turn into a helpless mob.

The offensive tactics of the Peasant Army are also designed around simple drills. The most common is the *advancing phalanx*, where a solid block of troops moves forward, and where they are trained to rotate the front lines back and the back lines forward. This means that as soldiers in the front tier are wounded, they can easily be replaced.

Peasant Armies, when used well, can be just as good as mercenaries. On the other hand, when things don't go right, or when they're using the wrong tactics, Peasant Armies can become inferior even to Sub-Human Armies.

5. City Armies. Cities, especially prosperous merchant cities, often have their own armies of citizen soldiers. Unlike feudal systems where the nobles can devote their careers to war, city people are usually part-time soldiers.

Most City Armies are best at defense or at using technological advantages. For example, if a city produces, say, ballista, then it is likely that a large number of its soldiers, especially those that work in the ballista factories, are well trained and experienced in their use. As far as defense is concerned, this is where a City Army excels. They spend hours every week examining and strengthening their city fortifications, figure out all the possible approaches of invading armies, and plan for traps, ambushes, and the best locations for counterattacks.

It's also important to note that when a city is truly in danger, when an attack is obvious or imminent, the city army always improves in size and quality. For one thing, thieves and assassins, always common in cities, are highly trained killers, but are rarely volunteers in organized armies. On the other hand, members of those professions are noted for their clear-eyed understanding of their own self-interest. When faced with a real threat, they will emerge from their anonymity and lend a nasty punch to the defending army of their city.

To conquer a walled city or fortress defended by a City Army is a major undertaking. Often odds of a hundred to one aren't enough. Until their walls are breached, a City Army can usually hold off just about any kind of attacker.

On the other hand, removed from their home territory, City Armies are usually terrible. The troops are rarely experienced in long-distance marching or backpacking, they know little about field maneuvers, and are usually terrified of having to fight on open ground. In these situations they are, at best, something like poorly trained mercenaries, and, at worst, even more cowardly than Peasant Levy Armies.

6. Barbarian Hordes. First, let's define what we mean by "barbarians." Most dictionaries define barbarians as *uncivilized peoples*. But that's not quite right! Barbarians are civilized, with specialized technology, it's just not the kind of civilization that's associated with cities and feudal society. Instead, the barbarians have a civilization based upon some other economic resource. It could be hunting, or herding grazing animals, or fishing (sea barbarians), but it will always involve a society where a large part of the population are skilled fighters.

Although Coyles are among the most skilled barbarians, there are plenty of others. Horse barbarians, whether human, orc, or coyle, are a major threat in Ophid's Grasslands. Barbarians generally fight for pleasure, sport, or profit. Since a large percentage of the members of any barbarian culture are trained fighters, they can usually field armies of substantial size.

The quality of both the individual barbarian fighters, and of their leaders can vary enormously. Most barbarians fight only when easy opportunities present themselves. On the other hand, any time a barbarian army starts adding up a string of successes on the battlefield, it's time for everyone in the region to beware. At their worst, Barbarian Armies are only as good as Peasant Armies, but at their best, they may rival Mercenary Armies in quality.

7. National Armies. Take the specialized, professional training of a Mercenary Army and combine it with the size of a Peasant Levy or Barbarian Horde and you get an idea of how powerful a National Army can be. Unfortunately, National Armies are outrageously expensive. Not only do the troops have to be fed, equipped, and armed for *years*, but they also have to be trained and led by a large number of expensive professional soldiers. That means the nation of a National Army must be large, rich, and wise enough to invest in a very long-term investment.

There are only four lands in the Palladium World organized enough to have a true National Army: *the Western Empire, the Timiro Kingdom, the Eastern Territory, and the Wolfen Empire.*

The first, **the Western Empire**, has only recently regained some of its old power and professionalism. For many years, the various City Armies were the most powerful military forces in the Western Empire, and they were busy pitting themselves against one another in an endless series of local struggles. However, with the reforms of the *Young Lord Itomas*, the Western Army is being rebuilt. In time, it may become the most fearsome military force in the Palladium World.

Among the human nations, the army of the **Timiro Kingdom** is probably the most organized, but it is still close to its Noble roots. In other words, it still acts as if it were a Noble Army, even though it is ruled by a council of Generals. The three important branches of its army are the Sentinel Elite Cavalry, the Light Cavalry, and the Foot Soldiers. This excessive emphasis on cavalry has worked well in defending Timiro's borders from marauding tribes of sub-humans and ogres. Whether or not it will be capable of dealing with an invasion by a major force is another story.

The **Eastern Territory's** army is new, and it's still got a lot of problems to work out. Although its leaders are first rate, there is a major problem with the actual soldiers. They come from three sources: first, from the obligations of the various loyal kingdoms within the Territory; second, from levies and drafts within the cities and towns; and finally, from active recruiting. The problem is that most of the kingdoms and towns keep their best men for their own defense. After all, the Eastern Territory is still a wild and untamed land. Coyle Hordes, Orc Tribes, Wolfen Bands, and even neighboring human nations all threaten the independent provinces within the Eastern Territory. Everyone knows that the National Army is the only barrier against the Northern Wilderness, but they've still got too many local problems to give up their best troops. As a result, the Territory's army has tremendous problems with discipline, desertion, and simple incompetence. Even worse, the army is too new to have that all-important component, a solid core of old veteran troops.

Which brings us to the Wolfen Empire...

The Army of the Wolfen Empire.

The Imperial Army It's not just that they're big. Bigness, by itself, doesn't count for much on the battlefield. Ogres and Trolls, the largest of the Palladium races, are not noted for their battlefield successes. Nor is it because of their numbers. Masses of Sub-Humans or Peasants aren't particularly effective. Neither do the Wolfen have any particular technological advantage. In fact the weapons, armour, war machines, and tactics of the Eastern Territory, not to mention the Western Empire, are far superior to the Wolfen.

Do the Wolfen have an advantage in the quality of their military leaders? Certainly there have been enormously talented Wolfen officers, and some could even be considered geniuses. But the officers of their human opposition come either from families who have specialized in war and who have studied it for generations, or, in the case of most Eastern Territory officers, are graduates of military academies with a very high standard of competence. In fact, the level of training and experience among human officers is usually superior to the Wolfen.

So where does that leave us? What factor gives the Wolfen the advantage? What is so special about the Wolfen army that it consistently wins battles, campaigns, and wars?

The answer is the Wolfen soldier. Not his size or training, though both are significant advantages, rather it is the fact that the Wolfen army is made up of citizens, not levies. Citizen soldiers who don't fight for money, or freedom, or just to defend their city. Citizen soldiers

who *believe in* the Wolfen Empire, and who fight for "Constitution, Council and Assembly," are motivated beyond simple greed, or survival, or hatred. They are fighting for an ideal world.

Another advantage for the Wolfen soldier is a sense of tradition. Where most large nations need ten or twenty years to establish the training institutions and veteran core of the army, with the army continuing to improve with age, the Wolfen Empire had theirs provided ready made. That's because the Wolfen Imperial Army started out as the Wolfen Barbarian Army, and the transition was so rapid, less than ten years, that very few of the traditions, values, and training of the old system were lost when the troops became part of the Empire. All those old veterans who made the Barbarian Armies so effective just switched over and became the veterans of the new army.

All members of the **Imperial Army** must be full citizens of the Wolfen Empire. This means they must be citizens of one of the Member States or of an Imperial Province. That limits the Imperial Army to Wolfen from the Twelve Tribes, Humans from Havea, Kobolds from the Algor Mountain Collective, and Coyles from the Diamond Point Horde. Plus, Kankoran are also qualified because of they are considered *citizens* of the Kankoran Trust Lands.

There are 16 *Imperial Legions* (I through XVI), each with over 5,000 troops. Legions are divided into *Cohorts* of approximately 500 troops, and each Cohort has 20 *Maniples* of 25 soldiers each. Among the various Imperial Legions there are 60 Cohorts of Heavy Infantry, 25 Cohorts of Light Infantry, 10 Cohorts of Scouts, 12 Cohorts of Heavy Artillery (catapults and ballista), 24 Cohorts of Light Artillery (Bowmen), 9 Cohorts of Anti-Armor Infantry, 15 Cohorts of Engineers, and 5 Cohorts of Cavalry. Each Cavalry Cohort is made up of human Knights, Palladins, and Mounted Soldiers, all from the Kingdom of Havea. All Cohorts have unique numbers, so the Heavy Infantry Cohorts are numbered from I to LX, and the Light Infantry from I to XXV. Maniples are not numbered, and are identified either by their current Lanipia ("That's Rolling-Legs' Maniple."), or by an adopted symbol ("Move the White Eagle and Brass Ball Maniples to the west.").

Each Maniple is capable of completely independent action, forming either skirmish lines, or a phalanx with a front of 15 wolfen 3 deep, with the remaining 5 shoring up the sides or rear. Maniples are generally organized in a checkerboard fashion.

Of the 16 Imperial Legions, nine are arranged along the southern border with the Eastern Territory, three are located in the southwest, north of the Inland Sea, and the remainder are stationed in the Wolfen Empire itself.

Secondary Army.

In addition to the Imperial Army, there is a completely separate Army of Auxiliary Troops made up of citizens from States with less than full membership, and anyone who doesn't qualify for the Imperial Army is welcome to join the Secondaries.

Each Legion of the Secondary Army has a full complement of Imperial Army Officers, and is specifically assigned to one of the Imperial Legions. In practice this means that, for example, the First Imperial Legion, with its ten Imperial Cohorts, also commands ten Secondary Cohorts, including four Cohorts of Orcs, three Cohorts of Goblins, a "Heavy Secondary" Cohort with specialized Ogre and Troll Maniples, a Cohort of Coyles from the Moonstone Horde, and Labor Cohort made up of Military Convicts (from both Imperial and Secondary Armies).

Secondary Army units are usually much larger than Imperial ones. The Cohorts often have up to 2,000 troops, and even Maniples are enlarge to 50 or more. This means that the Secondary Army is actually larger than the Imperial Army, massing up to a quarter of a million troops.

Tribal Army.

Left over from pre-Empire days, but still strong, are the Armies of each of the Member States, including the Twelve Wolfen Tribes, the Kingdom of Havea, and the Diamond Point Coyle Horde (the Kobolds Algor Collective has no tribal army). These armies vary in size and quality, and are supported by the Tribes themselves. In an emergency, any or all of the Tribal Armies can be summoned to the defense of the Wolfen Empire. Here are a few notes on the most important of the Tribal Armies:

I. Long Knife Tribe. Although the tribe maintains a substantial Army, numbering around 50,000 Wolfen, they are more of a *City Army* than anything else. Their main purpose is defend the capital, or other main cities of the Wolfen Empire. It is unlikely that they would be mobilized to march to any distant front.

V. Two Axe Tribe. This "army" is actually the closest thing that the Wolfen Empire has to an official *navy*. The tribe maintains most of the Empire's Longboats and Dragonboats. The crews are usually members of either the Two Axe or Ice-Eye Tribes.

VI. Dark Step Tribe. One of the most active of the Wolfen Tribal Armies, their Maniples have a large proportion of Wolfen Rangers and Druids, making them useful as scouts and guides throughout the Northern Wilderness. Each of the Legions to the south and west is assigned a Dark Step Maniple. They operate separate from the standard military command, reporting only to the *Legatia Imperia* (as follows).

X. King Bear Tribe. This army is large enough, and well organized enough, to be considered a National Army in its own right. With a complex mix of assignments, the King Bear Army has to be flexible enough to provide border protection, security in the vast tribal lands, and major support to the Imperial Army. Their military tradition stretches back over three hundred years and the King Bears operate their own military college in Bataria, which produces fine officers for the entire Wolfen Empire.

XI. Oak People Tribe. Although their army is huge, well over 70,000, it is barely sufficient for handling the frequent emergencies and tribal wars that break out in their huge domain. As a result, the Oak People Army is almost never called for Imperial service, and, indeed, it is rare when at least two Imperial Armies aren't assigned to peace-keeping duties in the Oak People's territory.

XII. Iron Claw Tribe. This is the largest and most heavily armored army in the Wolfen Empire. With over 100,000 Wolfen, it is even larger than the Imperial Army itself (though not larger than the Secondary Army), and is a strange mix of Barbarian and National Army. Faced with a land under attack from the human forces of the Eastern Territory, they have put their entire tribe on a war footing. Although not as well trained as the Imperial Army, they have the best armor and weapons of any Wolfen force. They also have decades of experience battling humans, and are eager to put an end to the invasion of their homeland.

Wolfen Army Ranks.

Each soldier in any of the Wolfen Armies has one of the following eight ranks:

- 1. Iagia.** A private soldier or "citizen soldier."
- 2. Xavia.** The equivalent of a *sergeant*. Xavia are generally either second in command of a Maniple, or assigned to lead specialty groups of from 5 to 10 technical experts.
- 3. Lanipia.** These *Lieutenants* are the backbone of the Wolfen officer corps. Each Maniple, whether Imperial or Secondary, has an Imperial Lanipia assigned to it. Generally, this assignment is given to young and promising Wolfen destined for a lifetime career in the Army. This first assignment usually joins a Lanipia with his or her Maniple for no less than ten years. The Lanipia are often called "Patria" or Father-Of-

ficers by their men, and most Lanipia maintain a close relationship with their old Maniple for the rest of their lives.

4. Centuria. Roughly equal to a *Captain*, the Centuria lead from four to six Maniples, and there are usually two Centuria for each Cohort. This is often a temporary or testing position, with the Centuria having four years to prove themselves. At the end of that time they are either promoted to Quingia, released from the service, or demoted back to Lanipia.

5. Quingia. These *Majors* are considered fully trained field officers, meaning that they are capable of taking their Cohort out into the field for up to a year, to form independent tactics and strategy, to manage all the supplies and equipment of their troops, and to fully understand the capabilities and limitations of their Cohort. Each Cohort is lead by a Quingia.

6. Militaria. This class, roughly *Colonels*, contains the staff officers of the Wolfen Army. Although they are capable of commanding Cohorts, and even Legions, they are usually assigned to *special jobs* involving the vast amount of paperwork and bureaucracy that keep the military in the field. They are also the army's *security and espionage* officers. Often regarded as supernumeraries, or "extra" officers, this officer pool has a large number of highly trained leaders, all hoping to make the promotion to Legatia. However, while there are hundreds of Militaria, there are less than sixty Legatia positions in the entire Empire, and often, promotion is a matter of waiting for the old Legatia to die.

7. Legatia. *Generals* assigned to lead Entire Legions. They are the cream of the Imperial Army. All Legatia start out as leading one of the 32 Legatia assigned to the various Legions. They can also be promoted out of the Legions into a variety of desk jobs, including positions in the Imperia or Senate.

8. Tribunia. Separate from the regular chain of command, the Tribunia are the commanding officers of the Tribal Armies. Sometimes they are retired Legatia, but in the smaller Tribal Armies, such as the Eastern Arm Tribe, or the Ice-Eye Tribe, they are sometimes hereditary leaders, members of the chief's family.

Wolfen Army Titles

There are twelve titles in the Wolfen Army, each indicating a particular function of a soldier or officer.

1. Promotia. Indicates a temporary or brevet rank. Usually used during active warfare when officers are lost and lower ranked soldier's are "field promoted."

2. Imperia. The official title for a commander from the Imperial Army. Most Imperial officers commanding Secondary Armies have the title Imperia, as do Legatia in charge of Legions and Quingia in charge of Cohorts.

3. Tormentia. A skilled Bowman (either Crossbow or Longbow), or an officer leading a specialized unit of Bowmen.

4. Ballistia. Soldiers who use artillery, or officers commanding units of artillery.

5. Scutaria. Soldiers of the Heavy Cavalry, almost always humans from the Kingdom of Havea, or their commanding officers.

6. Cataria. Heavy Armor or Heavy Infantry soldiers, or officers commanding Heavy Infantry units. Usually these are the *front-line troops* of the Wolfen Army, equipped with the Wolfen equivalent of a plate half-suit or Double Mail Armor and carrying both shield and either sword or axe, along with at least two Wolfen Pilum (spears).

7. Clibania. The Light Armor or Light Infantry soldiers, or their officers. These units are equipped for speed in cross-country or battleground movement. They are usually equipped with half suits of either Hard or Studded Leather Armour, with light shields, a sword or axe, and one Wolfen Pilum. In large scale battles they are usually reserve forces thrown in to support failing lines, or to take advantage of an enemy weakness.

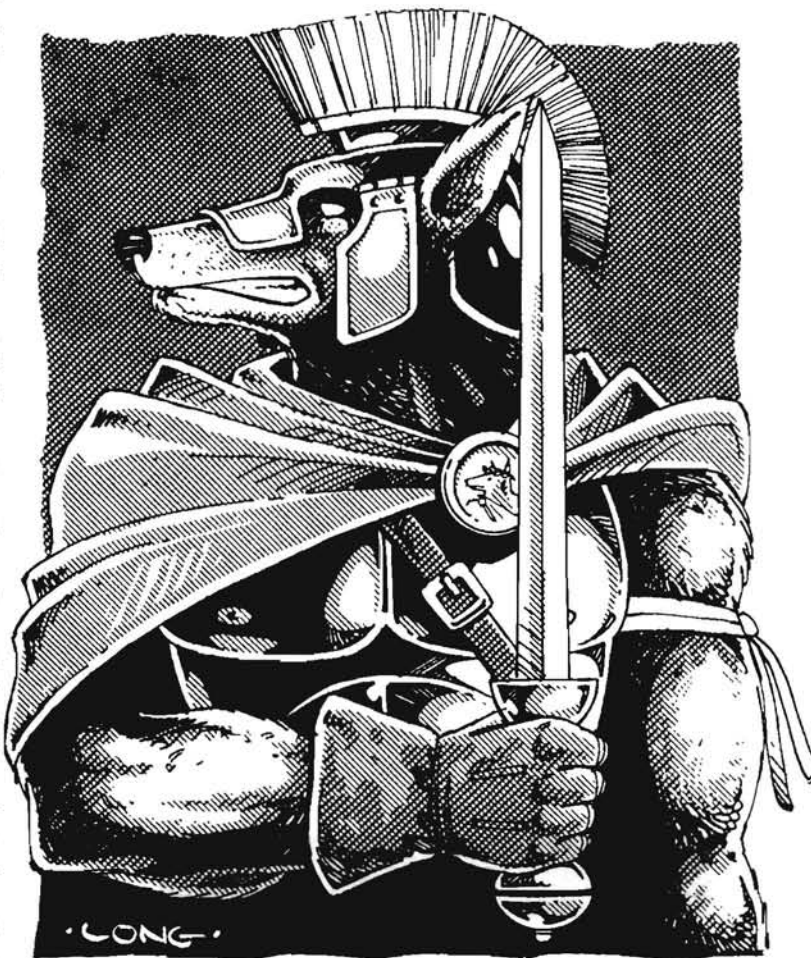
8. Comitia. Soldiers who act as Escorts or *Scouts*, or their leaders. Wear little or no armor, with Soft Leather and a light helmet being their maximum protection. A high percentage of Comitia are Kankoran, Wolfen Rangers, or Druids.

9. Hastaria. The Wolfen Polearm or *Anti-Amour* Infantrymen, or the officers that lead them. They wear the heaviest of Wolfen armor, Scale Mail, and carry Wolfen-sized Polearms. Their main function is to operate against human Noble Armies with tactics designed to blunt or destroy the advantages of human mounted Knights and Palladins. Users of magic may be a part of this force.

10. Dolabria. These are Imperial Engineers, or their officers. They are specialized troops trained in bridgework, siege operations, tunneling and other building tasks. A large number of the Dolabria come from the Kobold's Algor Mountain Collective, although most of their officers are Wolfen. Wizards and warlocks are often part of the team.

11. Auxilia. General term for all Secondary Troops, and for the officers that command them. Note that Imperial officers, even when assigned to the Secondary Army are *never* addressed as Auxilia. The Auxilia are usually garbed in some sort of leather armor and carry a spear or polearm, mace, and large shield.

12. Mulia. *Labor Troops* or commanders of the Convict units. Rather than constructing prisons, the Wolfen Empire has set up several Cohorts of Laborers. Convicted prisoners are sentenced to the Mulia for anywhere from a one year term to life, depending on their crime. The Cohorts continue to operate as working military units, but are also responsible for doing the dirty work of the army, often working under the direction of the Dolabria. Other than officers, few wear anything more than cloth coverings or padded armor, and have no weapons; only tools such as a bipennis axe, maul, mattock, shovel, hammer, or knife.



Wolfen Army Complete Titles

Each Wolfen officer has two titles, the first referring to his *rank*, and the second referring to his specialty. If there is a third title, it's always "Promotia," and it means that the rank is a "field" rank, a temporary promotion based on a training exercise, or to take the place of a missing officer. Numbers following the titles indicate the specific unit that the officer is assigned to. Therefore, a "Xavia Ballistia III-II" is a "Sergeant of the 3rd Bowman's Cohort of the 2nd Legion," and "Legatia Imperia IX" is the "General of the 9th Imperial Legion." Other examples:

"Lanipia Cataria XLIII-IX" means "Lieutenant of the 43rd Heavy Infantry Cohort of the 9th Legion."

"Quingia Hastaria Promotia IV-V" means "Major of the 4th Anti-Armor Infantry Cohort of the 5th Legion."

"Millitaria Imperia III-VIII" means "Colonel of the 3rd Cohort of the 8th Legion."

"Iagia Dolabria I-X" means "Private of the 1st Cohort of Engineers of the 10th Legion."

RELIGION

Unlike most governments in the Palladium World, there is no "official" religion in the Wolfen Empire. Instead, to quote their Constitution, *"As the calling of mortals to the voices of the immortals passes our understanding, we admit our profound ignorance. Let those who hear the voices of the gods be free to follow without interference from this Council, or any Tribe, or any Nation."*

The result has been an official "hands-off" policy towards religion by the Wolfen Empire. And the result has been surprisingly positive. By refusing to take sides in religious disputes, many of the most distressing conflicts among Wolfen and others have faded.

There is now no overriding religion among the Wolfen. While certain tribes (particularly IV, VII and XII) are notoriously devout, most other Wolfen Tribes have managed to make religion a fairly unimportant part of their lives.

Two other results of the Wolfen's religious policy are also important. **First**, the growth of Pragmatism has reduced the number of Wolfen who worship *any* religion or god. **Second**, while the total number of worshippers has gone down, the variety of gods, churches, and cults worshipped by the Wolfen is growing by leaps and bounds. Here are some of the major religions observed in the Northern Wilderness, both new and old:

Pragmatism.

Pragmatism is a relatively new approach to the problems of religion. It's not a religion, but instead the thinking Wolfen's response to religion. Nowhere is the Wolfen streak of practicality and simplicity so evident as in the attitude of the pragmatists.

Basically, the entire philosophy can be summed up in the words of Moldy-Shin Gerrath, the Wolfen philosopher, when he said, *"Whatever works, that you should believe. If something doesn't work, then don't believe it. If it can't be proved, ignore it."*

It's important to understand that the Pragmatists are neither atheists, nor agnostics, nor blasphemers, nor heretics. They readily admit to the existence and powers of the gods. They *never* mock gods, churches, or clerics. Their philosophy denies nothing of religion or the benefits that worshippers may receive.

No, pragmatists say only that the gods are beyond the understanding of mortals. That for the gods, mortals are only playthings and pawns to be used without passion in their cosmic games. For that reason the pragmatists will argue, it is better to stay away from the gods, to give

them nothing, and to take nothing from them, in the hope that they will not meddle in the affairs of mere mortals.

Where once pragmatism was a relatively obscure philosophical point of view, it has gradually become a sincere belief for Wolfen throughout the Empire. Much of the credit is due to the spread of literacy, along with a pair of printed pamphlets written in the Wolfen language: *Confessions of a Pragmatist*, by Yellow-Back Fangre, and *Can you hear the Gods Laughing?* by Moldy-Shin Gerrath.

The Cult of Set, The Church of Light and Dark, The Church of Taut, Death Cults of Set, Anubus, Utu, and Tomet.

Probably the most popular of all religions among the Wolfen is the worship of the god Set. Many Wolfen believe that they are the divine children of Set, and that they were created in his image. For them, their appearance proves that they should be allied to Set, and the appearance of Set proves that he is the natural god of the Wolfen.

However, while there is general agreement on the divinity of Set (and his ally Anubis), there is little agreement over which of the many Set religions should be worshipped. So all of the various major religions based on Set are observed somewhere in the Wolfen Empire.

Adding to the confusion is the profusion of new churches and cults dedicated to Set. It's almost as if, with the birth of the Wolfen Empire, each Tribal Church, and each Priest within the Church, decided it was time to form a new religion.

The two extremes of this behavior are found in the Eastern Arm Tribe and the Sun Child Tribe. Among the Eastern Arms, following the Church of Taut is more than encouraged, it is required. Any Wolfen preaching a doctrine not strictly in keeping with the Church of Taut is considered a heretic by the Eastern Arm.

On the other hand, among the Sun Child Tribe there are literally *dozens* of different sects of Set. Far from punishing Wolfen for proclaiming a new "vision" of Set, or describing a new "word" from Set, the Sun Children flock to these prophets. As a result, there is almost complete chaos, and several of the sects are bizarre in the extreme.

Druidism.

Druids, and the philosophy/religion of the Druids, are respected by the vast majority of Wolfen. Close to their homeland forests, most Wolfen are attracted to the quiet teachings of Druids, and many Wolfen travel to *Darkcove*, in the lands of the Dark Step Tribe, to study Druidism. Unfortunately, the Druids have never presented a very "flashy" version of their beliefs. This has resulted in a certain reduction in the numbers of Wolfen Druids and Druid followers. The more levelheaded Wolfen now heed the teachings of Pragmatism, while the more fanatical tend to be drawn to the more dramatic religions. That's left the Druids with only those relatively few Wolfen who are quiet, yet sincerely devout. If something doesn't happen soon, either to reform the religion, or to change the attitudes of a large number of Wolfen, Druidism will likely become an obsolete relic, revered, but dusty and ignored.

Fenry Devil Worship.

The Fenry, or Wolves of Hell (*see Palladium RPG, pg 184*), now form a major cult in the Wolfen Empire. This is due partly to the Wolfen vision of "angels," who they naturally see as looking something like themselves in an idealized form. The Fenry Devil Worshipers claim that the true angels sent by the gods to the Wolfen are *Fenry*, and that only by acknowledging their divinity can Wolfen find the true religion.

Once restrictive and secretive, Fenry worshippers have started openly soliciting members. They are now wide open, accepting believers from any race, tribe, or nation. They make extravagant claims for their

followers, promising victory in battle, wealth, love, or anything else that the potential worshipper may desire. What is mysterious is that many of these promises have come true! Now these lesser devils, who appear as giant black wolves, are a popular symbol of power among evil or ambitious Wolfen. And the Fenry themselves have encouraged the growth of the cult, often directly assisting its leaders.

Those who disapprove of the Cult of the Fenry say that the whole thing is really a front for *Rhada*, and behind her, *Mephisto*, both Devil Lords who see the potential power of the Wolfen and wish to establish a major church within it. It is unknown whether the high clergy of the Fenry Cult is aware of this theory of manipulation, and even if they do know of it, it is uncertain whether or not they would disapprove.

Dragonwright.

As the worship of Set has broken into a mass of cults and sects, so the Wolfen worship of Dragonwright has become a confusing mess. One of the major sources of confusion, and dissension, is the conflict between the worshippers of Kym-nark-mar (Frost Dragon) and the worshippers of Kormath (White Horned Dragon). The problem is that both sects claim that their god is the true icon of the Ice Dragon, a powerful symbol to most Wolfen. While it is a problem among several tribes, it's worst toward the west, among the various tribes and subtribes of the Oak People.

The Northern Religion and The Northern Sea God.

Don't be mistaken. The only thing that these two religions have in common is a particular god, *Algor*, and status of being the most "traditional" religions of the Northern Wilderness.

Unfortunately for the churches of The Northern Religion and The Northern Sea God, tradition has become a legacy of conservatism. Where the various religions of Set continue to grow, change, experiment, and expand, the *old religions* have become staid and lifeless. Nowadays, services are sparsely attended, and usually by only the older people. Worse yet, the clergy of these religions are aging, with relatively few youngsters coming into the faith. After being the main religions of the Wolfen for all of their history, this form of worship runs the risk of dying out altogether in a single generation. The Northern gods, especially *Algor*, are most popular among the less civilized tribes.

MAGIC

There used to be an undercurrent of suspicion and fear toward magic among Wolfen. Until the early years of the Wolfen Empire, magic users were objects of hatred, and Wolfen young were all brought up on countless stories of evil mages enslaving Wolfen as warrior slaves.

However, in recent years, this dread has turned into fascination. Like a teenager discovering that the forbidden might be fun, the Wolfen have embraced magic and the practitioners of magic.

This has lead to the current policy of welcoming any and all mages throughout most Wolfen lands.

There has also been a movement to encourage young Wolfen to enter into the magical arts. Until recently there were no schools of magic of any kind in the Northern Wilderness, and potential magic students either studied as apprentices or travelled to the great universities of the Western Empire or Lopan. Now there has been a college of wizardry established in the Wolfen capital city of *Shadowfall*, and there are plans to start up centers around the study of elemental magic (Warlocks), symbol magic (Diabolists), and psionic magic (Mind Mages).

Unfortunately, the Wolfen's new-found love of magic and mages holds the seed of tragedy. It is not without reason that people all over the Palladium World distrust those who traffic in dark and unknown forces. Countless times in their history, dabblers in magic, it matters

not whether they were well-meaning or greedy, have released uncontrollable forces and beings. Wolfen, with their bright new civilization, have yet to experience any of the really serious magical mishaps. It's only a matter of time before something goes wrong...

EDUCATION

One measure of the strength of the Wolfen Empire has been their willingness to recognize their problems and solve them. Education is one of the clearest examples. At the creation of the Wolfen Empire there was a serious scarcity of literate peoples in the Northern Wilderness. Suddenly, with the new emphasis on laws, treaties and bureaucracies, the Wolfen government found it impossible to keep up with the paperwork. There just weren't enough skilled scribes to do the job.

Members of the first Imperia and Bureaucra were assigned to investigate the problem. It was obvious that learning was difficult, mostly because young Wolfen had to learn to *speak* the elven tongue before they could learn to read and write (elven). They concluded that a drastic solution was needed: the creation of an entirely new form of writing would have to be invented. A language for Wolfen. A written tongue that conformed to the Wolfen way of thinking and the Wolfen way of speaking.

Wolfen Writing.

One of the great breakthroughs in Wolfen culture has been the development of their own system of writing. Unlike previous writing systems, usually based either on ancient runes or symbols, or on abstract alphabets, the Wolfen system is extremely phonetic. That is, each symbol represents a particular sound.

Part of the reason for this is that the Wolfen tongue (essentially identical to Kankoran, Coyle, and Bearmen), is much more "growly" or guttural than human speech. Sounds have a definite "up" or "down" tone, and can be categorized as ranging somewhere between the high pitch of a whine and the low pitch of a growl.

Down sounds are those that tend toward orders or statements of fact, whereas *up sounds* tend to be questions or uncertain statements. Combining the up and down with the particular pitch allows for all the possible Wolfen sounds. The phonetic writing system graphically shows the pitch and direction of the sounds. In addition, taking a breath, not usually important in human languages, is generally important in the Wolfen tongue. So backward *jogs* in the phonetic symbols indicate a "pant."

Another interesting facet of Wolfen writing is their system of punctuation. Rather than being based on sounds, the punctuation symbols are based on *common Wolfen hand gestures*. So their symbol for "stop" or "end" is roughly square, a symbol that they've adopted from the gesture of a closed fist. Written Wolfen sentences both begin and end with punctuation.

Take, for example, the typical sentence, "Assemble your squad and lead them to the south." In written Wolfen the sentence would start with an opening punctuation mark, the symbol for "listen" or "heed," which is a backwards "F." Then the actual sounds of the command would be depicted according to their pitch and direction (up or down), in three "letters"; the first for "you-joined-with-your-group," second for "amass-military-force," and the third for "leading-southward." Finally, the sentence would end with the closing punctuation, the symbol for "submit" or "accept dominance," which is an upside-down "U."

In standard Wolfen writing there are only eight "letters," each corresponding to a particular pitch. Any of these letters is formed differently according to the direction of the sound. However, there are over forty different standard punctuation marks.

There are also another couple of dozen "non-standard" punctuation symbols, but each of them is related to a particular insulting or obscene

gesture. Which goes a long way toward explaining why some humans call Wolfen writing “the perfect graffiti.”

Finally, there is a more advanced form of Wolfen writing. With several years of training, a Wolfen can learn the special *Scribe Wolfen*. After mastering an additional 180 phonetic symbols, it is possible for a Wolfen to transcribe virtually *any* spoken language, whether he understands it or not. This means a Wolfen scribe can listen to a speech in any foreign language, and record it *exactly*. It can then be shipped to another location, read back by a different scribe in the presence of a translator, just as if they were present at the original speech.

NOTE: Coyles, unlike Wolfen or Kankoran, are capable of “barking,” and have several dog-like barks in their speech. This means that they can easily speak Wolfen, but that Wolfen and Kankoran have trouble speaking the full Coyle language. Taking advantage of their linguistic superiority, each Coyle Tribe has developed a “code” or “secret” language consisting solely of barks and hand gestures. To represent the barks in a written form, the Coyles have modified standard Wolfen writing, adding in six special “crosses” or “slashes” to represent their own special dialect. Other spoken languages usually known to most wolfen are elf and orc.

Literacy.

Among Imperial Wolfen, roughly one out of every five Wolfen can read and write. In certain tribes, I, II, VII and VIII for example, just about all the Wolfen are literate, even the females. On the other hand, the “frontier” Wolfen have a much lower percentage of readers, with the worst being the IX and X, among whom barely one in fifty are educated. This is changing quickly, especially as written communiques are used more and more in Wolfen wars. All this is remarkable, since fifty years ago a Wolfen capable of reading was considered a “freak.”

Coyles have picked up the reading habit even more quickly than the Wolfen. Among most tribes all the officers, chiefs and leaders can read, and up to 75% of the rest of the Coyles as well. Interestingly, it’s the Coyle tribes that have NOT encouraged reading that are the most successful at becoming literate. Coyles, with their natural suspicion (some would say paranoia), seem to regard the Wolfen written language as some kind of secret plot, and are usually eager to learn *the code*.

Other races within the Northern Wilderness tend toward little or no literacy. Kankoran and Bearmen, for whom the Wolfen written language is natural, are only occasionally literate (4%). Kobolds, Humans, and Dwarves rarely learn the Wolfen written language (about 5%), but those who do find it easy to learn. Among other races, including orcs, goblins and centaurs, writing remains a rare skill practiced only by clerics, merchants and mages. The most literate wolfen will be fluent in both the spoken and written elven language (still the universal tongue of the literate world) and may be proficient in several of the human languages as well.

Books and Libraries.

In recent years, books have become revered by the Wolfen. Where once their contents were things of mystery, now they seem to hold the key to the mysteries of the universe! One of the major projects of the Wolfen Bureaucracy is the translation of all the *ancient Elven works* into Wolfen form. They are also hard at work transcribing the traditional legends, myths and stories, previously passed on by word of mouth, into book form.

They have become fanatic collectors of all kinds of books and manuscripts, and are constantly adding on to the main Library of *Shadowfall*. Smaller libraries, also under the control of the Wolfen Empire’s Bureaucracy, are located in the cities of *Seaholm*, *Goldstar* (where there is also a major collection of native and imported art), *Whitewater*, *Darkcove*, and *Bataria*.

WOLFEN SYMBOLS THAT MEAN WORDS

	PEACE		HELP
	THREAT		I HONOR YOU
	WHAT		YOU HONOR ME
	WHO		WE HONOR EACH OTHER
	WHERE		
	WHEN		
	WHY		
	EQUALS OR FRIENDS		

PUNCTUATION

	STOP
	HEED

PITCH: INDICATES SEVERITY OF TONE.

HIGHEST PITCH
“WINE”

LOWEST PITCH
“GROWL”

	YOU SUBMIT
	I SUBMIT
	GO

Trade.

Perhaps the weakest link in the chain of Wolfen society is the economy. Which is not to say that it is hopeless, or in any immediate danger, just that it is basically unstable. That’s because most of the Empire’s money comes not from taxes, but from conquest. True, they’ve been exceptionally fair with those who they have conquered, but they’ve also been practical enough to exact enough of a penalty out of their conquered subjects to make a bit of a profit.

The whole issue of trade is a difficult one for the Wolfen. While they have a rich country, most of its riches are *resources*, not skills or manufactured products. This means that selling their wealth is almost always connected with the destruction of their forest or the land in some way.

From the Great Northern Wilderness comes timber, furs, metals, and gemstones, all of which bring good prices throughout the Palladium World. Unfortunately, the Wolfen Empire needs more than it can buy with even those plentiful funds. For example, from the Western Empire they need spices, both for rare tastes, and those needed for preserving food, plus scents, silks, alcohol, books, manufactured goods of all kinds, ranging from glass to metal to ceramic, and finally, magical items of every sort.

Currency.

One strength of the Wolfen is their system of currency. Seeing the chaos of monies and exchanges in the human-dominated world, the first council created the Wolfen money system. Specifically designed to be different, all Wolfen money comes in rectangular slabs with holes in one corner. Part of the reason for this design comes from the old Wolfen habit of wearing long strings of teeth, pearls, and other jewelry. The new Wolfen coins can easily be worn as necklaces, bracelets, or belts.

Incidentally, the habit of wearing jewelry strings has long passed from fashion within the Empire. Now it is only the oldest members of Wolfen society or those of distant tribes who wear the old-fashioned jewelry.

Taxes.

The thorniest Wolfen economic problem is that of taxation. Their society is so new, they’ve yet to come up with a stable way of dealing with the problem. Up until now, in the first fifty years of their history, they’ve managed to solve most of their financial problems by the simple expedience of conquest and pillage. That won’t last forever, and the difficulty lies in that which gives the Wolfen Empire its true strength, the Constitution. According to that document, only the Peoples’ Assembly can authorize new taxes or increases in old taxes.

THE PIRATES OF DRAGON CLAW

By Thom Bartold & Kevin Siembieda

Thus it is written...

The battle raged for two thousand years, until the very powers of hell were summoned, destroying all of that which was being fought for. The fires of hell did burn across the land with the light of the setting sun, and the fire raged for uncounted days. And lo, a great darkness did descend upon the land, ending forever the reign of the elves.

Mother Earth slept now in the darkness that followed. Four thousand years she slept, waiting. And lo, she awakened to the light of a completely new sun. The birth of man.

Men multiplied quickly, with the smile of Mother Earth upon them, and spread in earnest to the four corners of the world. And yea, verily did they prosper, in the east, and the west, and the south. But woe to those who chose the north, for they were met by the hellish dogs that sprang from the hell-fires of the great war. Wolves who walked like men sprang up in the north to tear the life from man. The wolves snuffed out the light that shone so brightly in all the rest of the world.

The Northern Wilderness remained in darkness for ages to come."

The Tristine Chronicles

The Pirate Humans and the Druid Elves

Very little is known of the Northern Wilderness before the rise of the Wolfen societies. Legend has it that Elves were occasional inhabitants of the more pleasant regions of the forests. We recount here the opinions of one wolfen historian, known simply as "the Chronicler." The Chronicler's history is often at odds with the Tristine Chronicles, and as such, is little known in the human world. Interestingly, like the Tristine Chronicles, mysterious text is written in the elven language.

There still stands virgin Oaks hundreds of years old that were planted by Elven Druids that dared to settle this land. This was shortly after the end of the Elven-Dwarven wars, early in wolfen history. Many elves, lost in regret for the many wartime atrocities, established early druidic practices, and tried to reconcile themselves with the world by becoming one with it. Healing the land became one of their greatest concerns. The children of the wolf, another. The Devil's Mark in Ophid's Grassland stands as a reminder to the forces that came into play in a war that laid waste to the rest of the world. Only the Northern Wilderness was left unscathed by that devastation, save for the Devil's Mark.

Many refugees from the war found safe haven in the communities of the early druids. Those refugees had with them the relics of their past. But they were laid aside as grim reminders of their lost history. Modern historians cannot explain the lack of information or relics from that era. The great books which told of the legendary rune weapons, and magic of that time all strangely vanished when the dwarves and elves destroyed their races. No satisfactory explanation has ever been found for the almost total lack of such artifacts even in the most preserved ruins. But here it is said, that thousands upon thousands of runic weapons, books, idols, and gold were brought to the north. The meagerest fraction of a bygone age was stored in the library of the northern Druids. Never to be used again for war. There is no verification of the existence of any such community nor its treasure of legend. Others maintain that the war was so destructive that everything was simply destroyed. The Chronicler maintains that this is only

because no great effort has ever been made to prove this community ever existed.

Thus, the legendary Elven community eventually brought civilization to this part of the world. Not a civilization like in times before, with great weapons and great magic, but a civilization based on druidic beliefs. This was a civilization of great personal, perhaps more aptly put, emotional wealth, the like of which had never been seen before, or since. Its very presence was the force that helped bring the Wolf into the light of intelligence and society. This racial birthing is one reason for the Wolfen's current admiration of all things Elven.

Stories of this strange community that walked among wolves eventually spread to the early human communities to the south. The happiness and prosperity of this elven society were taken by the humans to indicate great material and monetary wealth. The humans were only beginning to travel the seas, and unscrupulous individuals saw this as an opportunity for raiding and quick wealth. Nowhere has it been proven that any such pirates existed, but in the coastal areas of the Northern Wilderness such stories are frequently recounted. Some insist that the Wolfen's hatred for Humans stems from the pirate attacks on their elven spiritual forebears. Many argue against this reasoning, but the Chronicler insists that this is so.

The humans came to the northern coast and found the elves unwilling to share their "riches" with them. the elves called them relics needing to be preserved for future generations. Relics of gold, magic, and runes. Instead, the elves offered the "riches" of peace and harmony; offering the secrets of union with nature and the art of Druidism. This was not the manner of riches the plunders had come in search for.

Some say that a sword is not inherently good or evil, and that only by the use to which it is put, does it become a thing of destruction. However, the druids would not wield the weapons of the prior age. It was the runeswords which helped wrought the destruction of two civilizations. They would be no part of destruction renewed. When the humans came to acquire the weapons, the elves did not stop them, and so more humans and even fellow elves came to claim possessions of the ancient elves. The peace and harmony that existed was shattered by the desires of the humans and other beings coming to take what they wanted. Artifacts of war, magic and gold plundered. Violence again claimed the elves. Some fled, many tried to retain the possessions that remained. Most were slaughtered. The wolfen rose up against this outrage on their spiritual brethren, and a great unrecorded war ensued. The civilization that was only beginning to shine was snuffed out. Buried under the weight of 100,000 wolfen dead, and the greed of man."

So writes the Chronicler.

The Pirates

The most renowned of the northern raiders were those pirates that braved the hazards of Dragon Claw. Foremost among them was Jason, a human so encrusted with scars from his many battles that even the wolfen came to respect him. Dragon Claw is perhaps the only inland sea in the Palladium world where the tides will rise or fall over 40 feet within six hours (the time between consecutive high tides is approximately twelve hours). The water progresses so rapidly into Dragon's



Claw as high tide approaches that no ship of modern construction can easily survive, except perhaps the fabled stone ships and wolfen Dragon Longboats. And yet one group of pirates was so foolhardy as to establish a base at the tip of first toe of Dragon Claw. The tides are at their worst here, so few ships can offer pursuit. The forest around that area is so wild and thick, with the wolfen, that any land journey there is unthinkable.

Somewhere at the tip of Dragon Claw, the ancient pirate, Jason, established his base, with an undersea entrance. The very base of the cliff would be exposed to the air for less than an hour at a time when the tide was at its lowest ebb. At that time only could the secret base be entered through some well-guarded natural passage at the base of the cliff. At the end of that passage the pirates had constructed a massive sea wall that kept the base completely protected from both man and sea. Legend has it that tons of the ancient elven druids' treasures were plundered by Jason and his crew and stored at this base. The same legend tells that Jason and his pirates were caught in a killer winter as they prepared to take their booty south. The winter storms prevented their departure. Most of his men perished in the horrid cold. Jason and the rest of his men died in an unexpected battle with coyotes. The treasure is said to lay hidden in the pirate's secret lair even after these many thousands of years. Nobody has ever found this mythical place.

The coastal colony of ME'ZFII ONH

Me'zfii onh's basically a nondescript wilderness port town. It is one of the smallest of Byzantium's mainland colonies, and there is clearly little adventure to be found here. It is merely a landing point for humans in this part of the Northern Wilderness.

The town is composed mostly of humans from Byzantium, and no one really claims Me'Zfii Onh as a home. Lumbering has not yet even started in earnest, but there are stands of ancient Oak and Cedar near this area, and the potential for profit is vast. A few Wolfen live in the colony, and act as official go-betweens for the humans and wolfen. If the characters stay in town long enough, they'll learn a little of the folklore of the area. The legend of the elf druid nation, the pirates, their leader Jason, and his fabulous lost treasure are popular yarns, as the outpost is supposedly near the old pirate stronghold.

The port of Me'zfii onh has a population of less than three hundred. Here are a few establishments of note.

- 1) **Cassandra's Leather Shop** — The proprietor is an elven female who is always looking to make a few gold. She can almost always be found at the shop, since she's unwilling to pay anyone a good enough wage to work for her. Typically outfitted in colorful silks and soft leather, she is also a babe (P.B. 24). On off hours she'll be lounging at the bathhouse or eating a light meal at Morning Star's Pub. She is also reputed to be a bit of a scholar and collector of ancient artifacts and oddities.
- 2) **Morning Star's Pub** — "Stays open until the morning star shines" (usually 5 a.m.). *Stweeb* is the elven proprietor and bartender. He is also Cassandra's current beau (that's the main thing keeping him in this backwater colony). *Stweeb* is also a hunk (P.B. 23, P.S. 22) and a semi-retired ranger (6th level). The food is extremely good and cheap, but mostly venison and other meats. *Stweeb* has a very good rapport with the wolfen in the area. *Jaremy*, a young wolfen, spends much of his time at the Morning Star, sweeping floors, and helping out whenever he can. This is the place the group is most likely to hear about the pirate legends. If anyone looks, they'll notice *Jaremy*'s ears perk up whenever pirates are mentioned. See *G.M.'s note for more about Jaremy*.
- 3) **Angelina's Boardinghouse** — A very inexpensive place to stay, Angelina makes most of her income off of her "maids," who not

only clean the rooms, but do their best to make the men in town feel loved. The food at Angelina's is horrible, so most boarders eat at the Morning Star. The boarders are usually visiting business people from Byzantium, foresters, and ships' crews who are helping to set up the lumber operation here. Their real homes are on the islands of Byzantium.

- 4) **Secarr's Furrer** — Secarr is a wolfen with limited intelligence and completely illiterate. However, Secarr is friendly, well liked, and knows furs (he could be classified as an autistic savant). He can tell you which part of the forest each of the pelts he sells comes from, and the name of the trapper that brought it to him. Furthermore, he can recognize the origin/locale of new pelts brought to him, and often wins bets (usually booze or sweets) by showing off; 90% chance to correctly name the area the animal was trapped. Secarr's younger brother, *Ssidd*, actually sets the prices, so Secarr isn't allowed to give anyone a cheaper price. However Secarr can not really deal with money, so it is easy to cheat him. But... *Ssidd* WILL find out, and come after the cheater. *Ssidd* has 29 hit points, two attacks per melee, +5 to damage, +3 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge; anarchist alignment.
- 5) **The Cutting Edge** — The only place to buy or sell weapons (and kitchen implements) in town. The proprietor is *Ssidd* again. He's actually a former soldier and a skilled tinker and weapon smith. For sale are all manner of traps, and bladed weapons. The prices are quite high for people that *Ssidd* doesn't know, but he is a friendly sort. If the group happens to buy *Ssidd* a few drinks, the prices will come down to *near* the standard price (what the book says). *Ssidd* can be found at the Morning Star late at night, or even when sales are a bit slow (almost always). *Ssidd* is prone to hitting people on the head for the sole purpose of getting into "friendly" fights.
- 6) **Forestry Service Offices** — Unless they actually want a job, the group will not be received well here. The service is looking for laborers, not mercenaries. If the characters want to cut down trees sixteen hours a day, 50 gold a day, this is the place to sign up. A tent to sleep in and a quilt are provided at no charge.
- 7) **Fred and Wilma's** — A bathhouse — The ultimate luxury for wolfen is a place to take a hot bath. This is very Roman in appearance, although built with stone (rather than marble). Two gold will buy a week's membership.
- 8) **Ralph's** — A complete grocery and outfitter. This is the busiest store in town. Prices are all about 50% above book prices. Ralph is a big, goodnatured human, and employs a number of young wolfen assistants. He receives new supplies by ship or mule-train once a month from Byzantium.

NOTE: There is NOWHERE to buy armor or magic supplies in town. This may be a "border" town, but it is not in a hostile area. Furthermore, there are no domestic animals other than a dozen or so work-horses and mules. Also, this is the northern coast, so expect cold winds, and very cold nights. Even in the summer, the night temperature can drop 20 degrees. Furs are the recommended garb.

G.M. Notes

The player characters should meet the wolfen pup, *Jaremy* before they leave ME'ZFII ONH. If they spend any time at all talking to this energetic youngster, he will gladly brag to the group that the old pirate story is wrong. He's been to the place where the secret base is! He's certain he knows the location. If the group uses magic or psionics to test his credibility, they will find that he's telling the truth! They will also discover that no one in town believes him, and that no one has ever bothered to test him on it. Everyone in town has far more important things to do than indulge a child's silly fantasies.

Jaremy will gladly lead the group to the place where he *knows* the pirate base is, a glen high among the cliffs. The journey is neither easy nor short requiring three days of travel through rough terrain.

Into the Forest, and Through the Woods

In the trek to the glen, the group will frequently encounter all manner of natural woodland animals. In addition to those, there will be frequent encounters with solitary Wolfen hunters and trappers, along with an occasional Kankoran. If the group is mainly human, the reception will be cold. If the group is mainly Wolfen or Elven, the reception will be guarded, although trade for food or skins might be arranged.

The adventurers will also see a pure white pegasus flying high overhead at some point. This creature inhabits the cliffs of Dragon Claw. It will never get close enough for the group to even consider capture. The Pegasus has a nest in the cliffs which the characters might consider trying to find. The graceful creature will do everything it can to avoid capture. Its freedom is most important and it can fly away faster than the group can follow. If the nest is found, there is a 01-60% chance that the pegasus will fly away to find a new home, never to return. This will not please local wolfen who enjoy the beauty of the rare animal.

One dangerous creature does haunt the forests of Dragon Claw, *Darksong the Syvan*. The group will definitely encounter Darksong before they reach the glen. Darksong also searches for the fabled cave, and has done so for nearly 200 years.

Syvans are hideous creatures of magic who resemble partially decayed human corpses. They are said to be immortal, although their true origin is unknown. They usually achieve positions of power and surround themselves with magic and wealth. Consequently, Darksong's self-imposed hermitage in this forest is most unnatural. This activity suggests that he may be in hiding or incredibly desperate to spend nearly two centuries in search of a treasure trove that may never have existed at all.

Darksong will confront the group, demanding to know their business. Diplomacy and politeness is their best tactic. If he learns that they are headed for the pirate cave, he will attempt to take Jeremy from them. If he suspects that the group is too powerful and might slay him in a

battle, Darksong will follow them at a discreet distance, waiting for the right moment to strike. Like most of his ilk, he hates the living and will not hesitate at hurting, torturing, or killing any or all members of the group. When the treasure is found, he will stake his claim and attempt to destroy anybody who stands in his way.

Darksong the Syvan

A Natural Mind Mage

Alignment: Miscreant

Hit Points: 58 **A.R.:** 13 (natural body armor)

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 20, P.B. 4, all others average.

Attacks Per Melee: One by hand or three by psionics.

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, a 3 vs psionics, and +2 vs all magic.

Natural Abilities: See the invisible, nightvision 90ft, fire and cold resistant (half damage), recognize illusions — 90%, sense magic — 70%, sense psionics — 78%, sense evil — 60%, sense/feel emotions — 80%.

Psionic Abilities: Mind Mage (deluxe) I.S.P.:160. Three psi-attacks per melee (one hand to hand attack may substitute for one psionic attack). Has all psionic abilities from levels 1-6; equal to an 8th level Mind Mage.

Skills of Note: Forgery — 68/30%, horsemanship (general), identify tracks — 60/40%, track — 66/17%; speaks fluent elf, wolfen, goblin, and troll/giant — 98%, swim — 90%, ventriloquism — 64%, imitate voices — 64%, and can read and write both wolfen and elven.

The Glen

Shelandra, an anarchist Waternix, is in the area specifically because she has heard the stories about the syvan's search for treasure and is looking to find a few spicy tidbits. She will hear the group approaching through the forest, and will decide to shadow them. She'll be planning to follow them to whatever they happen across. She and the syvan will remain far enough away so that Ripley, the glen's permanent resident doesn't sense her. (See *Monsters & Animals*, pg 91, for full details on a typical waternix).

The glen is a quiet, beautiful valley that interrupts the endless forest with wild flowers and tall grass. At its center is a towering oak that must be a 1000 years old. It is to the tree that Jeremy runs. He stops 30 yards before the tree, puzzled by his own excitement and the contradicting sight before him. The young wolfen mutters, "I... I don't understand it. This place...it... I mean ...I know it's here! I saw it! Felt it!! But..."

What lays before the adventurers is not a secret passage to the pirate's treasure horde, but instead, the withered body of a wolfen. The body is more corpse than alive, with vacant eye sockets and sagging flesh hanging from ancient bones. The roots of the great tree have snaked around the body like tendrils, and the body itself is partially sunken into the very tree trunk, indicating that it has been here for centuries! Resting in the wolfen's lap is a dirt- and moss- encrusted sword. Despite the corpse-like appearance, the body seems somehow alive. A dozen wing tips hover above the eerie visage and another two dozen dart through the branches of the oak.

Those who can sense such things will sense the presence of both magic and psionics far greater than that radiated by the wing tips. Telepathic communication with the flying little rascals will reveal little, only that they are here because of "the great sadness." They, themselves, are constantly projecting an empathic aura of happiness (and have been for centuries) to soothe the sorrow that radiates from the wolfen. However, since the wolfen isn't of a good alignment (nor is the sword), they will do nothing more on his behalf. Although they are able to, they will not act as interpreters for the unfortunate wolfen. This makes the wolfen corpse-thing hate them all the more. However, as long as he lives, they will stay to comfort him as much as they can.



The wolfen corpse-thing will instantly sense the use of telepathy or the presence of any psionic and attempt to communicate with them via telepathy and/or empathy. Young Jaremy was the unwitting subject of an empathic union with the thing, which explains his honest memories of the pirate hide-out; they were the implanted memories of the fallen wolfen. Oddly enough, Darksong has never stumbled upon this tragic creature and may step out of hiding to examine it (he can sense the magic and psionics that radiate from the corpse-thing). **G.M. note:** The syvan will definitely show himself if none of the player characters have the means to communicate with the creature. However, much to Darksong's dismay, the wolfen corpse-thing will use its own exceptional psi-powers to increase the syvan's telepathic union to broadcast its sad tale to everyone within 300 yards.

The Story of Ripley

The withered old wolfen is, indeed, alive. And his dilemma is that he longs to die but can not!

His name is Ripley and he cannot die. Nor can he lose consciousness. His body is a mere weathered, leathery hide stretched over a skeleton. He has no eyes in his sockets, no tongue in his mouth, no nerves, no muscles. He should not be alive. He has not eaten or breathed in hundreds of years. Thus P.E. and Hit Points are unknowable attributes. As long as he remains with his cursed rune sword, *Mindprancer*, he will go on living. No matter what damage might be done to the worthless husk that is his body, even if it is burnt to ash and scattered, his consciousness will remain tied to the sword, which can not be physically removed from beneath the tree unless he willingly gives it up. Even then, he can not be free to die until the person who is given the sword returns it to where he found it; one of the pirate, Jason's, treasure hordes.

Ripley is a wolfen who has lived for well over 1000 years, very likely a few thousand years, but no accurate accounting can be made.

He can only be reached psionically. Ripley's psionic sensing abilities are so acutely developed that he can see the world with an acuteness that no other being can approach. He "sees" everything around him at all times. He is totally sincere in everything he says, and the group should have no reason to doubt him. **Note:** For Ripley, line of sight, and eye contact do not truly apply. He can "see" everything around him for quite a distance with his extremely sensitized psionic abilities.

His mind is fully awake and aware of his environment (at least as much as his psionics allow him), not in the least feeble-minded, or insane. He is quite lucid, but unable to relate to current history.

He is a wealth of information about the time before the unification of the twelve tribes, and the battles fought in those days. He is happy to relate the incidents of his life, and will try as hard as he can to get the group to do him one small favor. If only the group would take his sword back to where he found it. If they will, he'll be forever grateful. If the group is good, he will work on that aspect of their alignment to get them to do this final service for a creature that needs to die. If the group is greedy, he will tell them of the riches to be found there. If the group envies power, he will work on that aspect. He is desperate, and will not take no for an answer, though there is little he can do about it. He believes that the only way he can be released from life is by the return of the sword to its original resting place.

Ripley, learned of the rune sword's powers early on in his relationship with the weapon and capitalized on those powers. Sadly, it was only much later that he learned that immortality could be a curse and not a blessing. Despite immortality, his body did not heal any faster than normal. Yes, every wound would heal, given enough time, but with time his body aged normally. By the time he was 70 years old, he was ancient by wolfen standards. In those days, wolfen just didn't live that long. By 200, he was beginning to get rather frail. But Ripley lived on, and began to look forward to death. However, *Mindprancer* would

not let him die. Furthermore, it led him to believe that he could never be released from life.

Worse yet, the evil thing would not let him sleep. Before Ripley reached the age of four hundred, he had endured 200 years of constant awareness. He lost the desire to do anything, even the desire to move. The rune sword's coaxing could not rouse him from his lethargy. As a result, *Mindprancer* desired to no longer remain with Ripley, something that had never happened to it before. So it offered Ripley a way out. If he could only return it to the place he found it, he would be released from life, and the sword would be free to find a new owner.

So Ripley began his final journey, to return to the pirate's cave where he found the sword so long ago. But Ripley was frail beyond belief, and it took him many years to return to the forest of Dragon's Claw, where he could retrace his steps to the pirate's cave. Unfortunately, centuries of life had dulled his memory and he could not relocate the cave. After years of searching, Ripley finally collapsed at the glen. His ancient body finally failed him. He has sat waiting, leaned up against the giant oak tree, for hundreds of years. Over the centuries, the wolfen's psionics have mutated into a Zen-like state of awareness, linked with his surroundings. The years of meditation have also restored his memory to crystal clarity, so he remembers exactly where the pirate's cave is located. Only the sword, *Mindprancer*, has prevented him from sinking into insanity.

G.M. Note: Once the existence of *Mindprancer* is made known, the waternix will attempt to retrieve it. *Mindprancer* would be very pleased to be wielded by Shelandra; she is a young ninety years old. Although she dislikes all humanoids, she may work with the group, as a scheme to get *Mindprancer*. After acquiring the sword, she will desert them. However, if they meet again (perhaps in the pirate cave), *Mindprancer* will encourage her to treat them well.

The syvan may covet the sword, but is far more interested in the rest of the pirate's treasure trove. Consequently, he will bide his time until it can be located. Ripley can easily instill the cave's location in the mind of those present via a telepathic boost. Note that the syvan will hunt down and kill the waternix if she should steal the sword from our heroes.

The sword doesn't care about what happens to Ripley, but it can *not* re-align itself to a new person unless it is returned to the treasure cave and the wolfen dies. Until this happens, it is powerless as a rune weapon.

Ripley

True name: Kchalkch (an ancient wolfen name)

Alignment: Aberrant

Age: Unknown; born sometime before the unification of the twelve tribes.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 15, M.A. 20, P.S. 0, P.P. 0, P.E. ?, P.B. 4, Speed 0

Psionics: All first level abilities plus empathy and commune with animals. Experience level is an unheard of 150; **I.S.P.:** 1000.

Note: Ripley has an intense monochrome aura, appearing not at all wolfen, but perhaps more like a being of pure energy. Even if using a presence sense, Ripley will shine out above all the other presences around.

Mindprancer the Rune Sword

Mindprancer is a rather small black sword with only a faint indication of the runes etched along the length of its blade.

Mindprancer is a *greater* rune sword with an I.Q. of 22. He can communicate with his wielder, as can any rune sword with a personality, but does not have any of the typical powers or curses associated with most known rune weapons.

Alter Alignment (Sword only)

Mindprancer will quickly take on the alignment of his wielder, but is still uncertain of the scope of his own powers. *Mindprancer* has only



had three owners in all the time he has existed: Lendor, the elf assassin; Jason, the human pirate; and Ripley, the wolfen. Mindprancer was able to bring about a dramatic rise to power for each of them.

Conceal Magic Aura (Sword only)

The sword radiates powerful magic, but might actually be missed when sense magic is done, because of special mystic shields that conceal its true aura. A first look should reveal "some magic"; 1-50% likelihood (52-00 means no magic is sensed). A second or third look will be necessary to see its true mystic nature.

An Assassin's Blade

Mindprancer is a short sword designed for the sole purpose of cutting throats. Intended as an assassin's weapon, it is indestructible, eternally sharp, and does 4D6 damage when used in battle. If used as its designers intended (this means a strike to the neck), it will inflict double damage. Such a strike must be a called shot.

Bonuses: Exceptionally light weight and well balanced; +2 to strike and parry. Also adds bonuses to certain covert skills. These include: +20% to scale walls, +10% concealment, +10% palming, +10% prowling, +10% sleight of hand, and adds the skill: W.P. Paired Weapons (see *Adventures on the High Seas* for new skills).

The Power of Immobilization

A unique feature of this assassin's sword is the power to render a victim completely incapable of movement (saving throw versus magic is 16 or higher). This power can only be used *once* per day, but can be maintained indefinitely, as long as the victim remains within 20 feet of the sword. Once immobilized, the assassin can simply walk up to the victim and slay him. The helpless person can not cry out physically, magically, or psionically! Wards and circles near the victim may fend off the assassin or help save vs mystic attack.

Psionics, the subtle art of manipulation

Mindprancer also possesses certain psionic powers that it can use to help the one who wields it, or to manipulate the actions of its wielder. When the sword's alignment is evil or anarchist, it will often manipulate the person it calls "master" for its own malevolent reasons. (Remember, the sword assumes the alignment of the person it links with. Thus, if evil, the sword will become and act evil.)

Its psionic powers include: aura of truth, detect psionics, hypnotic suggestion, see aura, sense magic, empathy, limited telepathy, mind block, see the invisible, turn invisible (sword only), sense traps, cure insanity, negate poison, heal others (limited to the person linked to it), and insert memory. **Total I.S.P.:** 140; all abilities are equal to an *eighth level Mind Mage*!

The Power of Awareness

Another unique power of the sword is that it instills its master with an immunity to sleep, fatigue, and charms of any nature. Even a blow to the head will not knock out the person linked to the sword. However, after 2D6 decades, not only does the blade make its master impervious to magic and psionic sleep and charms, but also to natural sleep.

The Curse of Continual Awareness

As desirable as it may seem at first, to never lose consciousness does have its drawbacks. When the blade was first formed, the powers that were placed into it exceeded its designers' expectations. Not needing to sleep seemed to make it easier to accomplish so much more in life. The body itself still experiences a certain amount of fatigue and physical wear and tear. However, periodic rest, not full sleep, is required. An unforeseen side effect is that, eventually, the senses become more acute. The sword owner becomes aware of every little sound and movement. But while this can be of great value, it is also a curse. Resting while

fully awake quickly becomes a bore. The sword owner can never quite relax and grows increasingly edgy and anxious, plagued by the constant stimulation of sight and sound. The awareness also makes the character much more attuned to the pains of his own body; a cut, bruise, illness, hunger, etc., are all gnawing sensations, like an itch that can't be scratched. Even if a limb is severed, he will remain fully conscious and aware.

Bonuses: +5 on initiative, +1 to parry, +2 to dodge; can not be knocked out, stunned, or charmed.

The Power and Curse of Immortality

The power of immortality means the wielder of the sword will never die as long as he is linked to the rune weapon. Even if his head is severed from his body, he will continue to live, and because of the curse of continual awareness, he will be conscious of it all. If his head is reattached to the body, it will eventually heal, but only after an extended recovery period. If the head is not reattached, he will continue to live anyway, but in a significant amount of discomfort. Physical damage and poison causes pain but not death.

Even if the body is completely destroyed, the poor creature's spirit will remain alive and trapped with the sword.

Breaking the Curse

To be free of the sword and of immortality, the weapon must be returned to the pirate's cave where it was found. This can only be done by its owner, or by an individual to whom the weapon has been freely given (but only for the purpose of returning it). The person chosen to return the weapon must agree to do so willingly. With all parties in agreement, the sword can be taken away from the owner. However, the rune weapon is nearly powerless when in the hands of somebody other than its owner. Only the immortal person with which it is linked can use the sword at its full mystic power. Mindprancer has the following abilities when used by someone other than its owner:

1. Radiates magic but has no magic powers.
2. Can communicate telepathically only with the person who carries it. Has no other psionic abilities.
3. Is basically a normal short sword inflicting 1D6 damage.
4. It can not link with anybody else nor utilize its magic until the previous owner is dead. The previous owner can die only when the rune sword is returned to the pirate's cave. This will instantly destroy the pre-existing link (the previous owner immediately falls over dead without the sword's magic) and enable Mindprancer to find a new owner.

The History of Mindprancer

If a character uses the object read psi-ability on the sword, he will learn certain things about its history.

The sword was first owned by an elf named Lendor, who acquired it shortly before final war between the elves and dwarves. Only the final maelstrom that burned much of the world was able to stop Lendor's evil plans. He lived for a short while as a disembodied spirit hovering near the sword after his body was atomized. Lendor was released from the sword because he possessed it for less than three months and the psi-link was not complete (takes 6 months). The sword was recovered and added to the relics of the legendary elven druids during their exodus to the Northern Wilderness.

Mindprancer lay without a wielder for an uncounted time, for the sword could not tell the passage of time without a wielder. When the pirates came, Mindprancer was once again brought to life in the hands of a scoundrel named Jason. The human pirate established his base in the Northern Wilderness and hundreds, perhaps thousands, died on his mystic blade. Thanks to the wiles of Jason and the powers of Mindprancer, the *Pirates of Dragon's Claw* reigned supreme for nearly 200 years. All Mindprancer knows is that one evening Jason left him on a table inside a secret cave and never returned. Linked as they were,

Mindprancer could feel Jason's death on the surface above. Its last impressions from the pirate, the feeling of stupidity and the image of wolven.

Since Jason was Mindprancer's first linked owner, it is bound by the memories and life of its master. Thus, the home of Jason is the home of Mindprancer. Ultimately, it is the pirate cave of Jason that the rune sword must always be returned to. The pirate base was left untouched and forgotten.

Mindprancer again laid alone for an unknown number of years, until Ripley found him. Ripley was a fisherman, constantly looking for a bigger fish and a better fishing spot. He often fished in and around Dragon's Claw. One day he was caught in a sudden storm that swept him and his boat along the coast and smashed it against a wall of rocks. When he awoke from unconsciousness, he found himself in a strange cavern. Fearful, Ripley reached for the first weapon he spied. As fate would have it, that weapon was Mindprancer.

The rest of Ripley's life is that of adventure. Some deeds good, others bad, all culminating into a life of apathy and pain.

If questioned, Ripley will explain all this with a bitter recollection, for he never remembered the pirate's cave until he was old and physically deteriorating. The sword had kept him from remembering. Mindprancer would not allow Ripley to remain in the cave for fear that he would find one of the other great rune swords more desirable than he. Mindprancer was happy to be alive again and would not risk losing that to another. Only now does Ripley realize how the sword had manipulated him with its psionics.

The Trek to a Dead Pirate's Treasure

If Ripley's plea for death does not touch the characters hearts, then the promise of fabulous wealth and ancient magic should appeal to their greed. Any elf in the group should feel compelled to investigate if only to restore part of elven history. The existence of Jason the Pirate, and his elven treasure horde could change the world's view of history and perhaps the wolven. Those without lofty, philanthropic motives should be salivating over the vast wealth that may await them.

Both the syvan and waternix will offer to take the rune sword (that is, if either has revealed themselves yet), but Ripley and Mindprancer will prefer one of the player characters to take charge of returning the sword. (**G.M. Note:** Ripley will desire a good character to take the sword, while Mindprancer will prefer an Anarchist or Aberrant one.) The choice is Ripley's. If the waternix and syvan are still secretly following the group, they will continue to do so until the treasure is found.

The Pirate Base

Once a courier is chosen, Mindprancer will direct him, step by step, to the location of the pirate base. The rune sword has only a fraction of its abilities until a new master can be found, so it desires to be free of Ripley as much as the wolven longs to be free of it.

The journey to the pirate coast is a good ten day trek on foot; four on horse back. The young wolven, Jeremy, will be ecstatic about this journey and recite the many stories (and he knows *many*) he's heard about the treasure, magic swords, sea serpents said to guard the treasure, the ghost of Jason the Pirate, and numerous other tall tales. Good characters may not want to take Jeremy on this potentially dangerous journey. However, they can not just leave him in the glen to return to town alone (its a three day trip to escort him back to town). Furthermore, the obstinant youngster insists that he'll only follow them if they try to leave him behind. "Besides," snorts Jeremy, "I'm the one who got you this far. This is as much my adventure as anybody elses, an' nobody's gonna cheat me outta my cut of the loot!" Ah, the foolishness of youth.

Game Master Section

The trip through the forest can be fraught with danger. However, our band of champions luckily avoid trouble. Game Masters should skip ahead to their arrival at the pirate's cove. However, if you're dead set on encounters along the way, you can use the encounter tables found in the adventure entitled *Avaxa's Gate*, found elsewhere in this book. Or you can come up with your own ideas. This is a pretty wild area, with roving bands of orcs, goblins, coyotes, and even an occasional Algor giant; not to mention bears and *tigers*.

The Pirate's Cove

The path to the pirate base is down the side of a treacherous looking cliff. Actually, the climb is not nearly as steep and dangerous as it looks when standing 900 feet above crashing waves. The characters have enough time to reach the bottom, find and enter the cave, replace the sword, and climb back to safety to avoid the rapid rise of the water that comes with high tide. Or so Mindprancer assures them.

Notes:

- 1.) No boat could survive the treacherous waves or the rapid rise and fall of water in this area. The group should have no explanation for the ability of the pirates to maintain a base here, other than magic.
- 2.) The ability to travel underwater would certainly be a bonus in completing their mission.
- 3.) Low tide will last about an hour.

Since the region immediately outside the pirate base is under water half the time, it's only natural that certain water creatures will frequent the area. The group will have to get past a few of them to reach the pirate's secret cave.

Near the Entrance

There is a sizable tribe of Kappa living in the deep water off the cove, and they control the Snaggled Tooth Gobbler sea serpent that lives here. If the group is noisy or destructive, the Kappa will send the Snaggled Tooth Gobbler to attack them. The Kappa are intolerant of land dwellers and they send their sea serpent to chase off or devour troublemakers. They have only moved into this region a few centuries ago, so they don't know, nor care, anything about the pirate's cave or its treasure trove.

The Snaggled Tooth Gobbler does communicate by extended telepathy, but will not be turned aside from its task of eating or chasing away the group. If communication is established, it will be congenial, but it's not very bright (I.Q. 3), and must obey its tiny masters. It calls itself Fang.

Fang the Sea Serpent

Alignment: Anarchist

Hit Points: 160, **A.R.:** 10

Size: 60 ft long plus 20 feet of neck and head.

Attacks per Melee: 2; bite does 3D6+2 damage or by fire breath inflicting 4D6+6 damage.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +3 on all saving throws. Swimming speed is 30 mph.

Note: Fang will fight until it is down to its last 50 hit points and then swim away like a torpedo, whimpering and whining all the way.

If he is not killed, he will return to his Kappa masters to be healed. There is a 1-39% chance that a band of 4D4 Kappa warriors will come to investigate within the hour. If the land dwelling interlopers appear not to be a serious threat and leave soon (within 8 hours), the Kappa will not bother with them. If they believe the land dwellers are setting up a permanent camp, they will attack. The Kappa king is a sixth level water warlock.

Kappa are strange little crab people who live in the seas. Average hit points are 30, A.R. is 13, size: 3 ft tall. They attack with spears or claws (1D6 damage); two attacks per melee. See *Monsters & Animals*, pgs 45-46, for complete data.



Inside the Cave

Any warlock should realize immediately that the pirate's secret base could only have been built through the control of water elementals.

1) Inside the cave's mouth it is dark and wet. The natural entrance is a winding tunnel that runs for about three hundred feet, and it is extremely slippery. At first, the tunnel slopes down and then, near the end, upward. It is always tall enough and wide enough for two wolves to walk erect and side by side. At the end of the tunnel is the remains of the old sea wall constructed by the pirates. It has collapsed centuries ago, exposing the chambers beyond to the sea.

2) This is the chamber that the sword must be placed in. There is a stone table on either side, and the one that Ripley indicated is on the left. The floor is covered with sand and sea shells, but nothing of value is to be seen. There is an opening at the far end of the chamber. There are also a number of heavily corroded metal structures on the walls near the entrance that were once the mechanisms for opening and closing the sea wall.

Mindprancer instructs his courier that this is the right place and to lay him down. A moment later, he says, "You have done well. Ripley has at last found the eternal peace he so long desired. Now let's get out of here. Who wants me?"

The rune sword will coax the characters to have one of them pick him up and claim it for himself. Mindprancer does not wish to spend the next eon dormant at the bottom of the sea. If asked about the other

treasure, it will feign ignorance and speculate that it was found and plundered long ago. "Now let's get going. Not much time till high tide." Ignoring the sword and investigating further will reveal...

3) An opening worn smooth by the action of the water. However, a discerning eye may notice traces that this opening has been enlarged. Near the opening are the corroded remains of metal fittings that once held up the secondary sea wall. Steps have been cut into the passageway beyond the opening. The passage is extremely slippery, but its upward spiral may beckon to the curious. The characters should realize that if they wish to explore further, they may not have time to exit before the water begins to rise. This could will mean drowning unless there is another way out or the sea wall is rebuilt via magic.

4) OK, they've taken the risk and quickly ascend the stairs. The main entry chamber is a large, 30 by 30 foot, room with a small opening in the west wall from which the characters have just exited. The walls are damp all the way to the roof of this chamber, which is about twenty feet up. The ceiling also has a number of small fissures running across it that are dripping water. Wet sand covers the floor. Near the entrance, the sand is easily two feet deep, but thins out as you get further across the room (only 5 or 6 inches deep at the farthest point). There is also a rectangular, 10 foot wide 10 foot tall, opening in the far wall that may once have been a door. If the group returns to the surface now, they will still get out before the water starts rising. Other than some broken pottery and unidentifiable pieces of rusted metal, there is nothing to be found in this chamber.

5) This is another tunnel that runs about 90 feet to the east. Unlike the others, it does not appear to be a natural formation. Warlocks and summoners in the group will recognize it as the work of an earth elemental.

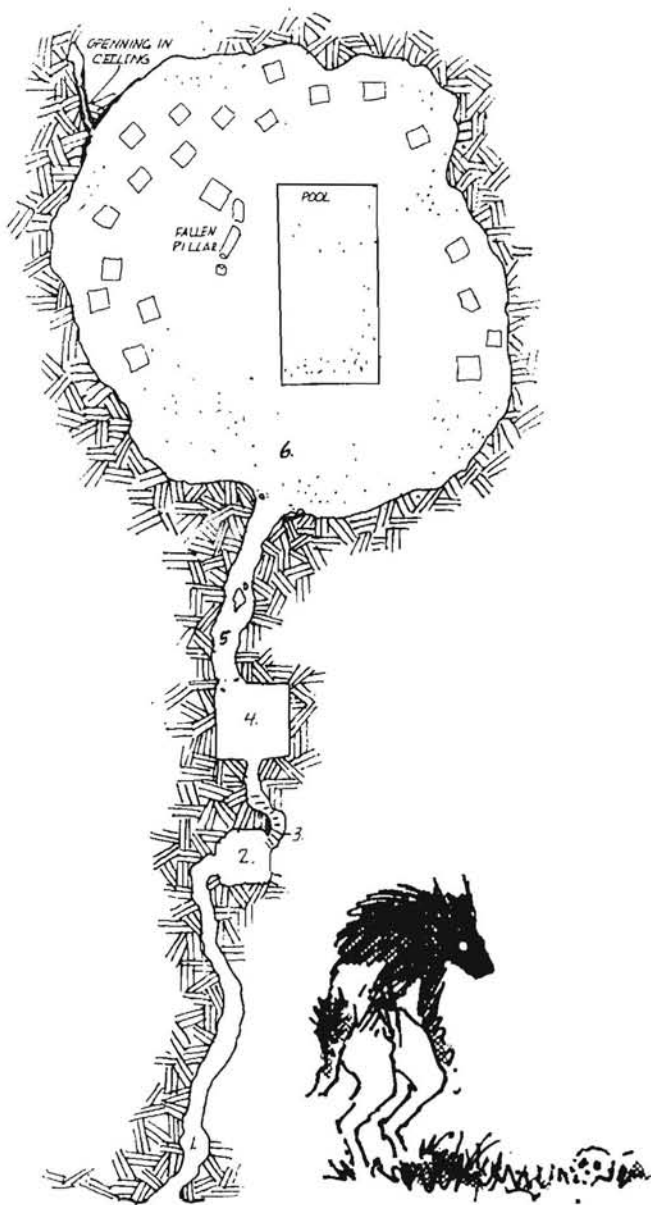
6) The tunnel opens into a huge natural cavern. In the center of the sand and seaweed covered floor is a large artificial pond, rather rectangular in shape. A number of small stone huts are scattered around the pond. The huts are all similar in construction, each being about ten feet square, with a single three foot wide, seven foot tall opening in the side furthest from the entry tunnel. A flat stone roof tops the water-beaten structures.

The pond is filled with relatively clean seawater. One end of the pond is twelve feet deep, the other end, closest to the entrance, is slightly over three feet deep. A layer of about a foot and a half of sand covers the bottom of the pond. Just as six inches to a foot of sand covers the entire floor of this chamber.

One of the player characters (G.M.'s choice) will stub his toe on a rock jutting from the sand. Glancing down at it, he or she will notice the rock has an odd shape. Bending over for a closer look, or nudging it loose with one's foot, will show it to be a marble statue of an elf in ancient regalia. Moving the statue will also reveal a glimmer of yellow and a crunching sound underfoot. Mucking around in the sand will produce an Old Kingdom Dragon coin with all its gems (value is 5000 gold). Digging around a little more will produce two more gem-laden, Dragon coins, and a dozen elven Kril coins. The crunching sound underfoot is the sound of coins being stepped on.

Rummaging through the sand sends young Jeremy hooting and hollering in excitement; the entire floor is covered in gold! Anybody with the right knowledge of history or precious metals will realize that the coins are from the *earliest* days of the Old Kingdom, and are worth far more than their weight in gold as artifacts. The booty in this chamber is worth millions!

G.M. Note: The chamber appears to have no other entrance/exit. Nor is there any apparent danger. However, sensing for magic and/or psionics will indicate an abundance of both. A presence sense will indicate many presences, although those who can see the invisible will see only the syvan and the watnix who have followed the group to this chamber (or joined the party earlier).



At this point, an eerie feeling will wash over the entire party. Nothing specific, but a sense of uneasiness, like the feeling that someone is looking over your shoulder, but when you turn to look, nobody is there.

Game Masters, pull two or three of your players aside one at a time and read them the following:

"You hear your name being called in a deep, husky whisper. Looking around, you see noone, and it's clear that noone else has heard the whisper. Again the whisper calls your name and says, 'Come and drink the power of the gods. Come to me, so that we may become one and, together, rule this world.' The whisper fades and you turn, without thinking, toward the toppled pillar near the pond. You stand for a moment as if dazed or lost in thought, simply staring at the pillar. Then, as if roused from a dream, your head clears. The voice is gone."

All other characters are oblivious to the voice. However, characters with any level of psionics will feel a swell of psychic energy and magic.

Any good characters who walk within 15 feet of the pillar will be knocked off their feet and hurled 10 feet away from the pillar by a telekinetic blast. Evil or anarchist characters who approach the pillar will hear the voice encouraging them to come closer, saying, "Yes, come, come and seize your destiny. Welcome the power of the gods and shape your world into your own image."

Before any player character can take any further action, Darksong or Jaremy shouts something like: "Oh no! We waited too long! The water! The water's coming in!!" Indeed, the excitement and mystery

of the moment has made the characters lose their sense of time. It is high tide. If the group has reached this chamber, and have not taken precautions to stop the rising water, they may drown here.

Within one melee, the water has risen above the ankle and increasing rapidly. Only sealing the tunnel with a magic wall of stone can stop the onslaught of the encroaching sea. The entire chamber will be filled within 3D4 minutes.

If the characters have erected a sea wall, they will hear the rush of water echoing in the chamber. They will have to spend the night or find another way out.

Suddenly, the syvan screams: "What is she doing? Nooooo! Stop her!" But before anybody can take action, the waternix has drawn a rune sword from behind the pillar.

Instantly, she grows to twenty feet tall, crackling with mystic energy. Her fur begins to drop off in clumps to reveal heaving muscles under a dark red skin. The feathers of her wings shrivel, only to be replaced by gnarled bone and leathery membrane.

Clutched in her hand is a wicked looking, black rune sword with a serrated blade. Huge, almost crude, rune symbols, etched in red, seem to radiate from the sword. Diabolists and summoners will recognize the runic symbols of *death*, *darkness*, *eternity*, and *magic forces*, as well as the mystic symbol for *the Old Ones*. The sword hilt is made of gold and shaped in the image of a fanged demon wrapped in its own tentacles.

The monstrous waternix will seem oblivious to any attacks made against it by panic driven characters. Although the weapons may strike the creature and appear to do damage, the metamorphing beast will react only to magical attacks. Such an unprovoked attack will elicit the following response: "You dare?!" rasps a husky, masculine voice (same as the whisper). With this the creature waves its sword and the water instantly recedes (or the energy around her cracks and sparks with increased intensity). "This is the power I wield. The power of the gods. The power of those who sleep, but whose presence is felt (yep, this means Old Ones). Now I make you suffer!"

G.M.'s Note: Keep track of any damage the characters may inflict upon this monster, as every blow does hurts it.

A Dangerous Choice

Despite the number of blows the characters may have already hammered into this thing, it is definitely very much alive and angry. There is no other apparent exit, and the way they came in is filled with the rushing waters of the sea (contained by the monster's incredible magic or their own flimsy sea wall). The thing will listen to no discussions, deals, or compromises; it craves their deaths.

Just as things may look impossible to our adventurers, they are suddenly aware of several glowing weapon handles scattered throughout the chamber. Each is a glow with magic and calling out to each one of them saying things like: "Take me, I will serve you well." "I am your only hope." "Quickly, grab me or you will die." "Brave warrior, together we will smite this evil." "Do not hesitate. Without my help you...your friends will perish. But with me..."

If Mindprancer is present, he will identify the sword as "one of the great dwarven *demon blades*," also known as "god slayers." This particular blade is *Necrom, the Bringer of War*. The dwarven demon blades are things of legend and reputed to be the most powerful of all rune weapons. No demon blade has been seen since the last days of the Elf-Dwarf Wars over 5,000 years ago. Mindprancer is at a loss as to advising the group about the other rune weapons that continue to call out to them, saying only, "I am great, but I alone have no chance of defeating Necrom."

The characters can select one of the other rune weapons or rely on their own resources. The choice is left to each individual player as to

how his character will react. There should be enough rune weapons for all, or most, player characters who may want one. Of course, there is no telling what affect any of these mystic weapons will have on the characters. Heck, this could all be an evil plot to turn them all into monsters. Nobody knows. Darksong, the syvan, reaches for a rune sword only inches away, but stops, turns, and draws his own weapon. He is apparently not willing to take the chance, at least not at this time (he'd prefer to use Mindprancer if possible).

The Death Duel

The fight with the monster controlled by Necrom will be to the death. Our heroes have no recourse but to fight or die!

Game Master Notes

1.) The characters do not, necessarily, have to use the other rune weapons to fight the Necrom monster. Although hideously powerful, Necrom is vulnerable to all types of attacks, and the adventurers may have the power to defeat him on their own. However, Necrom is mean and merciless, making this battle a bloody one.

2.) Although the characters fear otherwise, only Necrom instantly links with and transforms any who touches it. Consequently, the characters can use the other rune weapons in this combat and discard them afterward with comparatively little ill effect. Major curses and problems will manifest themselves only if a character keeps the weapon (the link is complete within 1D6 months).

3.) Unfortunately, there is no way to save the watermix. Necrom must be killed to end his terror; but to kill him means the watermix will also perish. If he is left to live, Necrom will escape the cave at next low tide and plague the countryside.

4.) Anybody who touches the demon blade after the battle will be instantly transformed. Necrom remembers all of his lives and will crave revenge for his recent defeat at their hands. Necrom starts at full power at the beginning of each incarnation.

The following are the descriptions for Necrom and the other rune weapons. Let the battle begin.

Necrom, the Undying

Note: Any one who touches this rune sword is instantly transformed into Necrom. There is NO saving throw! The demonic blade will always first address its potential new owner, beckoning him or her with promises of power. A feeling of evil and dread will accompany this little telepathic conversation, alluding to the evil nature of the weapon. This will usually limit the sword's victims to fellow evil beings, the greedy, and the foolish.

The transformation leaves no aspect of the original person. Necrom is as follows:

Alignment: Diabolic!

Attributes: I.Q. 8, M.A. 16, M.E. 16, P.S. 21, P.P. 22, P.E. 16, P.B. 4, Spd. 16

Hit Points: 924 **A.R.** 4

Size and Appearance: 20 ft tall giant. It resembles the person it takes over, but it has red skin, no hair, and huge muscles.

Attacks Per Melee: Six; inflicts 1D8 by punch, 2D8 by kick, or by rune sword (5D6 damage)! Because Necrom is a creature of magic, even a punch or kick is considered to be an attack by a magic weapon.

Bonuses: +6 to damage, +4 to strike, parry, and dodge. Also +4 on initiative and is +1 to save vs magic, psionics, and poison.

Abilities of Note: Nightvision 120 ft, see the invisible, bio-regenerate (1D4x10 hit points as often as every 10 minutes/melees), climb/scale walls 98%, swim 98%, track 40%, and speaks all languages 98%.

Magic Powers: Impervious to spells, wards, and circles of imprisonment, including: immobilize (no affect whatsoever, just walks right out), carpet of adhesion, magic net, and even petrification. He can

also dispel magic barriers 4 × daily, and perform each of the following two times a day: negate magic, levitate self, part waters, walk the waves, calm storms, extinguish fires, and close fissures. All magic is at 10th level proficiency.

Psionics: Sense good or evil, mind block, empathy, extended telepathy, and mind bond. **I.S.P.** 100. All psionics are at 5th level.

Purpose: To destroy all elves. Consequently, any elves in the group will be his first targets.

Necrom, The Rune Sword

The transformed victim is the flesh and blood extension of the rune sword itself. Thus, Necrom, who is both sword and giant, will only strike using its fists and blade. If Necrom drops the sword (almost an impossibility), he still remains Necrom, but will make every effort to regain it to become whole again. Anyone who touches the sword while the embodiment of Necrom exists will suffer burning pain and 4D6 damage, and the giant will feel itself being violated. The sword can not be read by psionics.

Alignment: Diabolic

Special properties: Indestructible, eternally sharp, inflicts 5D6 damage, transforms wielder into the giant, Necrom (see the giant's powers).

History: The famous dwarven demon swords were created toward the end of the Elf-Dwarf wars when the dwarves began to use demonic forces to help them win the war. Ultimately, this horrible alliance with the demonic would result in the end of dwarven civilization and deal the elves a blow from which they could never recover.

Like all of the greater rune weapons, the demon blades possessed powers and abilities not intended by their creators, and were often beyond the control of those who used them. The demon swords were the most powerful, evil, and uncontrollable of them all.

Necrom is one such weapon. The sword was designed to transform its wielder into an unstoppable juggernaut; a super warrior. Little did the ancient dwarven runesmith realize that he was tapping into the evil of the Old One known as *Tarm-kin-toe*, symbol of hatred, treachery, vengeance, and pain.

Elven history that chronicles the great war speaks often of the atrocities of the dwarven "demon" warrior, Necrom, the Undying. Legend says that though Necrom died a hundred deaths, he would rise again, like the Phoenix, to extract his vengeance against elves and all things living. There are several passages that describe atrocities that made his dwarven masters weep and beg for mercy on the behalf of their elven enemies. There are even accounts of three separate occasions when dwarven warriors, allegedly, battled against Necrom to stop him from extracting vengeance too terrible for even the most hardened warrior to allow.

Then, one day, Necrom died and did not return. The elves assumed that they had at last destroyed the fiend. A few decades later, the war ended. How the hell-spawned sword fell into the possession of the druids is a mystery. The fact that the pirates did not ever use it is a miracle. But now, Necrom is back, ready to fulfil the mission he was created for, to destroy elvenkind and all who stand in his way.

G.M. Note: Necrom could be yet another vehicle that could hasten a war between wolfen and humans. In order to destroy the elves, he would gladly join the wolfen to crush the beings that call elves friend!

Other Rune Weapons Calling to the Adventurers

All are greater rune weapons, many with properties unlike any ever found before.

Wyndstrom, The Soul Drinker

Type: Bastard sword

Alignment: Aberrant

Powers: In addition to the standard seven abilities common to all rune weapons, Wyndstrom has the following:

- 1.) Damage 6D6
- 2.) Drink the soul of its enemies. This can be done as often as six times per 24 hour period. Whenever an attempt to drink a soul is made, the victim of the attack endures *double damage*. If the attack kills the opponent, his soul is drunk by the sword.
- 3.) Four Fire elemental spells can be cast per day: Fire ball(6D6 damage), cloud of steam, cloud of ash, and blue flame. All are at 6th level strength.
- 4.) **The curse:** The sword is honorable, but evil. As such, it will try to corrupt its master into thinking its way: aberrant evil. Furthermore, it has the curse of vulnerability (−2 on all saving throws) and of reduced healing (normal medical restores only one hit point per day and magic or psionic healing are at half). See page 47 in *Adventures on the High Seas* for details regarding curses.

Lytson, The Redeemer

Type: Broadsword

Alignment: Unprincipled (good)

Powers: Other than those common to all rune weapons, Lytson has the following:

- 1.) Damage 4D6 plus bonuses of +1 to strike, parry, and dodge when using the sword.
- 2.) Adds 20 hit points to its master.
- 3.) Clerical abilities: Healing touch (2D6 hit points) six times a day, chance to turn 4D6 dead 68% four times a day, double damage to devils and demons.
- 4.) Four Air Elemental spells can be cast per day: Call lightning (6D6 damage), dissipate gases, breath of life, invisible wall. All are at 6th level strength.
- 5.) **The curse:** The sword has the curse of rags (a worse version than normal) to keep the owner humble. Rags causes clothing and armor (including magical) to deteriorate. Armor falls apart at a rate of 10 S.D.C. a day. Clothes will be tattered rags within a week. Note: The curse applies to the person's *possessions* regardless of where they may be kept, even if miles away.

Go-Mezz, The Schemer

Type: War Hammer

Alignment: Scrupulous

Powers: Other than those common to all rune weapons, Go-Mezz has the following:

- 1.) Damage 4D6
- 2.) The rune hammer can turn itself invisible, but can still be seen by its master (+2 to strike and parry when invisible).
- 3.) Six Magic Spells can be cast per day: Invisibility (self), mesmerism, see the invisible, tongues, mask of deceit, and detect poison. All are at 6th level strength.
- 4.) **The curse:** Insanity befalls the wielder of this rune weapon. Within a few short weeks, the victim of the curse becomes paranoid; always suspecting that people are *scheming* against him and situations are not what they appear. Actually, this adds a +2 on initiative rolls, but also makes sleep and peace of mind difficult (reduce P.E./hit points and P.B. attributes by 2 from lack of rest and anxiety). He also has a phobia about dragons for reasons unknown.

Al-Mar-Syzzn, the Defender

Type: Battle Axe

Alignment: Principled

Powers: Other than those common to all rune weapons, Al-Mar-Syzzn has the following:

- 1.) Damage 4D6, but does double damage against the undead and

creatures of magic (like Necrom).

- 2.) Enables its master to understand, read, and write all languages at 56% efficiency (does not include magic symbols or runes).
- 3.) Four Earth Elemental spells can be cast per day: Rock to mud, encase object in stone, wall of stone, and travel through stone.
- 4.) **The curse:** Spoilage will rot the food and spoil the drinks owned by the master of this axe. Consequently, the character can never own any food items, and must always beg provisions from another or buy them fresh and eat them within the hour. This individual is also obsessed with collecting rare elven toys.

Mindbender, the Tormentor

Type: Short Sword

Alignment: Miscreant, loves to torture and abuse others.

Powers: Other than those common to all rune weapons, Mindbender has the following:

- 1.) Damage 4D6
- 2.) The master of the sword saves vs psionics the same as a Mind Mage, 10 or higher.
- 3.) Psionic Powers include all first and second level abilities, all evil eyes, cause insanity, cure insanity, generate personal aura, and induce nightmares. Total I.S.P. is 90.
- 4.) **The curse:** The owner of this malicious sword is plague by the curses of hallucinatory noises and phantom odors (these are somewhat different than the curses found in *Adventures on the High Seas*). The sword owner will become jumpy and skittish, because he often experiences strange sounds and smells. If the sword is in a mean mood, or if its "master" didn't follow one of its suggestions, then his dreams may be haunted by nightmares as well. The result of this is a phobia (fear) of the invisible, and a distrust and dislike of magic. Sleepless nights and a nervous condition create the following penalties: −1 on initiative, −1 from P.B. attribute, and a skill penalty of −20% when trying to perform a skill under stressful circumstances.

Game Master's Notes on ending the Adventure

This adventure pretty much ends with the destruction or incapacitation of the giant, Necrom. All that remains is escaping the cave and dividing up the loot. Or is it?

Things to keep in mind

- 1.) If the seawater is being kept at bay by Necrom's magic (part waters), then it will come flooding in the moment he is killed. The tidal wave will fling everybody against the far wall, inflicting a mere 1D6 damage, but with a 1−48% chance of knocking the person out! Unconscious characters will drown within six melees.

A Way Out! As the group is swirling around, rising toward the ceiling, one of them should spot a hole in the ceiling, like a crevice or narrow tunnel. The tunnel is only three feet wide and very steep, about a 90 degree ascent. A human-size person can squeeze through fairly easily, although slowly (half normal speed). Wolfen and other large creatures can struggle through this tiny tunnel only if they abandon their armor, and even then there is a 1-67% chance that they will get stuck and can *not* go any further (roll percentile dice for every 10 feet travelled). Fortunately, the water will stop about 10 feet up the tunnel.

The narrow passage continues upward about 120 feet and ends in a small cave, 20×10×8 feet in size. The walls seem to indicate that the chamber may have connected with another cavern or passage, but these have been buried by numerous cave-ins over the centuries. No amount of digging will get our band of adventurers to the surface (they're still about 500 feet underground). Now they'll have to wait until the water subsides, about 11 hours from now.

- 2.) The next problem will be healing the wounded. Even if the characters erected a sea wall, they'll have to wait till the water subsides to get out. Reaching the surface may be emotionally rewarding, but remember, the group is days from civilization. Medical aid will have to come from them.



3.) Dividing the treasure. The amount of gold inside this cavern is incredible and also weighs *tons*! A typical gold coin weighs one ounce, the 500 gold piece weighs four ounces, as does the Old Kingdom Dragon coin. Remember, the only way out is down slippery tunnels and up a 900 foot cliff wall, and has to be done in one hour's time between low and high tides. Generally, a character can carry his P.S. $\times 10$ in pounds. This means a character with a P.S. of 10 can normally carry 100 pounds with minimal difficulty. Characters with a P.S. 22 or higher can carry their P.S. $\times 20$ in pounds. However, in both cases, this will reduce speed by half. Furthermore, the treacherous conditions means the characters can only carry about *half* that amount. Stripping off armor and leaving it behind will help, enabling the person to carry about 75%.

The group's best bet is to try to find the most expensive coins, like Dragon coins, and leave the rest for later. **Note:** To get everything out of the cave will take at least 1D6 + 3 months of work, every day.

One of the problems the characters face is digging the gold out of the sand. This will add to the amount of work involved. Also, unless a sea wall is built, each high tide will dump a new layer of sand over everything.

4.) A big problem is that many of the treasure items are magic and/or cursed. (G.M.s should exploit this heavily, especially if the characters are too greedy.) Many dangers still exist, hidden under a layer of sand and gold. The most immediate and obvious danger is the sword of Necrom and the other rune weapons that relentlessly plead to be adopted. What happens if someone else touches the Necrom, even by accident? What other horror lay silently waiting for its first victim in 5000 years?

Even some of the coins may be cursed.

5.) Darksong, the syvan, will want first choice of two of the rune weapons, and a lion's share of the gold (at least 65% of it all)! If he doesn't get what he wants, there will be big trouble. Darksong could add an entire new chapter to this adventure by bringing monsters to kill the group or luring in wolfen bandits. Whatever the trouble, Darksong will be in the shadows, orchestrating it all.

6.) Sheesh, the problems never end. The kappa will frown upon this constant activity by land dwellers in *their* domain, and will take action to eliminate them, immediately. The first assault will be a scare tactic. All other assaults will use deadly force. **Note:** If the kappa figure out that the land dwellers want the stuff in the cave, they will either cave-in the entrance or go in and **remove** the things that are attracting them. As an army of underwater beings, they could remove half the treasure in a single day/night. Of course, a Kappa version of Necrom is likely to climb out of the pirate's cave at the next low tide.

7.) Hey, Game Masters, is there any significance to the rectangular pool in the treasure chamber? It's up to you.

The Treasure

The following is the total treasure in the entire cavern. Don't be too Monty Hall-like and let them get it all (yipes!), but a cool couple million ain't out of the question considering what they should have had to go through to get it. Besides, transporting that kind of loot in a hostile wilderness can lead into adventure all on its own. G.M.s, always consider cause and affect.

- 150,000 one ounce gold coins: worth about 4 million.
- 20,000 four ounce, Elven Kril coins: worth 500 gold each, or 2 million gold.
- 12,000 rare old coins: worth 250,000 in gold, but worth 10 times as much on the collectors' market.
- 50,000 three ounce silver coins: worth 250,000 in gold.
- 4,000 Old Kingdom Dragon coins: worth 5000 gold each (all have gems intact), total value: 20 million at face value, double to a collector of rare elven coins. However, a full week's excavation is likely to uncover no more than 5% (that's 200 coins). A full day's scrounging will produce about 20 of these babies for the *group*.
- Hundreds of other broken or decayed items litter the area. Some are clearly ancient arms and armor that have rotted over the centuries, others are the shattered remains of statues, pottery, and dozen of things decayed beyond recognition.
- One magic cutlass: 1D6 + 1 damage, and can do a blinding flash three times a day. Value 13,000 gold as a magic item.
- One eternally sharp long sword: 1D8 + 3 damage. Value: 25,000 gold.
- One white dagger: Even the rust is white. Returns to wielder when thrown, but does no damage as a blade; only 1D4 as a small club. Seems to be indestructible, can not be sharpened, and turns anything it touches for more than six hours, white! Value as an artifact and curiosity item: 10,000 – 30,000 gold, maybe more to the right person.

G.M. Note: Feel free to add items, magic or otherwise, just don't get too carried away. And don't forget that there are still the five other rune weapons waiting to be adopted. Of course, only the foolish or evil will take all of them.

The End?



Journey To Darkwood

By Alex Marciniszyn and Kevin Siembieda

The following can be a complete adventure in itself or integrated into an ongoing campaign.

PROLOGUE

Under the shadows of the tall trees near the heart of the Great Northern Wilderness, Fraktar sets his traps. Signs are the winter will be severe, but that is good. The animals he hunts will have thick coats and bring a better price.

Simmis, his brother, watches nearby for strangers and wolven patrols. Although the wolven have kept their peace agreements, they are becoming increasingly wary of the growing number of humans in this area. The human towns and villages grow larger with each passing season. Those that make their living in the fur trade have been slowly increasing their forays into this largely unexplored land. The wolven can not be pleased with this. Perhaps that is why no new settlements have been allowed to be established.

The two brothers are the deepest they have ever ventured. Suddenly, Fraktar grabs his brother and points to the sky (there would be a debate, later, about who sighted it first). A sailing ship with unfurled sail and moving oars passes over head in the sky before them. It circles for a moment and then descends into the woods, scarcely 400 yards away. Afraid they might be seen, but even more afraid that this may be a threat to their people, they sneak closer to get a better look.

To their astonishment, the flying longboat has not landed, but hovers four feet above the ground, its anchor stuck in the trunk of a fallen tree. The ship is manned by skeletons who stare at the dark figure presiding at her stern. This captain is a creature of flesh and blood, clad in black leather. That he is a man of magic, they have no doubt.

It is Simmis who first notices that the forest behind the ship's bow is strangely misshapened, mostly leafless, and cast in an unusual brown hue. Even the few remaining leaves are brown. Not a dry autumn brown, but the soft brown of decay. It is Fraktar who realizes that the sickly brown of the leaves and bark is the same color as the wood of the flying longboat.

Then, the black clad sorcerer captain turns toward a cluster of fine young saplings. A sneer-like smile stretches across his lips as he extends his staff. A shaft of pale red light flows from the staff, bathing the trees in its glow. Although there is no wind, the trees shudder. Moments later, the bark and leaves turn a familiar sickly brown. The staff is retracted, the light stopped, and brown leaves begin to fall. Fraktar and Simmis have seen enough, and slink into the woods. Behind them the trees sigh as the pale red light sweeps upon another cluster.

Player Background

The player characters are passing through a small settlement of Byzantium humans nestled between the Dragon Claw Sea and Dream Lake. The outpost is abuzz with a story of evil wizardry just outside their borders. The story of Fraktar and Simmis is on everybody's tongue. However, although the two trappers are well liked and respected, their story meets with some skepticism. More than a few of the townsfolk mentions the brothers' love for ale. And others shake their heads and speak of their experiences with faerie pranks.

The brothers are out leading a small expedition of townsmen to the location to prove their wild claims. A messenger has been sent to one of the larger towns to make a report just in case there is real trouble. The expedition is not expected back for several weeks.

The town, if it can be called that, holds 193 people. Most reside in log cabins or indian-style huts. Although a few small farms of corn and wheat can be seen, 70% of the population is involved in the fur trade in one way or another. This is a community of hard-working people, there are no taverns, brothels, or stores. Places of note include the Temple of Light and Dark (Byzantium): Has one 4th level priest and his two assistants. The Trapper's Den: A dance hall where the drinks are strong and the entertainment is bad but enthusiastic. A heaping meal of venison, buffalo, or rabbit will cost 8 gold. Mrs. Broton's: A large home owned by a married couple who often put up travelers for 6 gold a person. Mrs. Broton is famous for her fruit pies and jams. Furrier and Official Office of the Byzantium Liaison: This is the guy accountable to his bosses back in Byzantium. He can be thought of as a combination Mayor and work supervisor. Note that he puts little substance in the "wild yarn about flying boats" "Nobody else has seen any flying boats; faerie games, is all."

Far Hunter

As the player characters continue their journeys in the wilderness, whether toward the site of the boat or not, they will be accosted by a strange vision. G.M.s, read to the players:

"Suddenly, before you is a mist-like image of a humanoid figure, floating five feet above the ground. He is enveloped in a grey mist and clutches a gaping wound in his chest. He says, 'A great evil has attacked the spirit of the land. All those noble warriors among you, hear my request. Go three days journey, southwest, and join my servants, Fraktar and Simmis, (the mist swirls and the wounded figure is replaced with the image of the two trappers) they have great need of your aid, as does the forest. (The mist swirls again and the mysterious figure is back.) Shortly thereafter, you will be joined by my champion, the Far Hunter. Please, go like the wind. The spirit of the forest will guide thy travel.' With that the image is gone. **Note:** Every character will have heard the plea in his native tongue and seen the figure as a member of his own race. All will trust his words and feel his urgency. Characters of a selfish and good alignment will sense that to obey his request is the right thing to do.

The trip is not likely to be an easy one. Although only about six days travel (three by horse), the group may have to contend with wild animals, wolven patrols, bandits, and foul weather.

Random Encounters

Roll at least once for each day of travel:

- 01-10** A tiger on the prowl. It will attack only if it is hurt by the group, otherwise it will back away after a staring contest that'll last 2D6 minutes.
- 11-20** Two ogres and an orc on a poor day's hunt. If they think they can defeat the group, they'll attack. If they suspect the group is too powerful, they'll simply try to con them out of some gold, food, and booze; especially booze. They know nothing about the flying boat.
- 21-25** A wounded brown bear has just torn itself free of a trap and the pain has driven it mad. The poor beast will attack and fight to the death. Hit points: 46. Attacks per Melee: 2; claws 2D6 damage or bite doing 1D8.
- 26-30** A wild boar comes charging out of the brush and attacks. These animals are just plain mean. Fights to the death. Hit points: 28. Attacks per Melee: 2; by tusks doing 1D8 damage.
- 31-40** 2D4 + 1 coyote warriors, from the Moonstone Horde, leap out

of the woods shrieking, "Death to those who kill our forest!" These wild men have decided that the group is responsible for the strange brown forest, and seek revenge. They will fight like men possessed and to the death. Any restrained prisoners will confirm the story about the "dead brown forest," although none have seen a flying longboat. Each coyle has two attacks per melee, averages about 20 hit points, and wields a battle axe and short sword.

- 41-50** 1D6 giant timber spiders drop out of the trees to attack their humanoid prey. Each has about 20 hit points. Attacks per Melee: One; bite does 1D6 damage plus poison unless a save is made. The poison causes fever and nausea for 24 hours; victims are -1 to strike and parry, -2 to dodge.
- 51-60** Herd of deer. Characters must wait 2D4 minutes to allow the animals, panicked by their presence, to flee.
- 61-70** Goblin bandits foolishly attack. There is one for each group character, plus there is the goblin leader. Each has about 16 hit points, one attack per melee, garbed in studded leather (A.R. 12, S.D.C. 38), and are armed with spears and short swords. They will flee if the battle does not immediately go their way. None of them know anything about brown trees or the flying boat.
- 71-80** A mated pair of scorpion devils charge out from under a fallen tree. Each has 18 + 2D4 hit points; A.R. 6. Attacks per Melee: 2; bite does 1D6 damage or by poisonous stinger. The poison does 3D6 damage unless the character saves vs poison (14 or higher on 20-sided die).
- 81-90** A horrible abomination of nature lumbers out of the forest. It was once an animal that has been transformed into some kind of crazed humanoid monster, the size of a bearman! Roll to determine the type of animal: 01-25 Tiger, 26-50 Badger, 51-75 Bear, 76-00 Wild Boar. Hit Points: 30 + 2D6. Attacks per Melee: 2; claws inflict 2D6 damage or bite 3D6 damage. Fights to the death. No one has ever seen anything like this before.
- 91-00** A herd of 4D4 wild boar. If the group gives them a wide berth, they can avoid trouble. If they come within 400 feet, six of the boars will rush to attack.

As our heroes near their destination, they'll see trees with marks cut into them. Rangers will know that this is the way trappers (and coyles) often mark a trail. Some of the largest markings indicate tribal hunting boundaries. Trespassers are not welcome, and depending on the composition of the group, possibly very unwelcome. However, all will feel that they are on the right path.

Near the end of their journey, Fraktar and Simmis will meet them. They too have seen the mist shrouded form, who they identify as "The Spirit of the Land," who told them that they would be "joined by heroes come to save the land." Thus, they see the party as friends, not outsiders.

Fraktar, the eldest, addresses the group, saying, "The Spirit of the Land has shown us your faces. We do not know why he has chosen outsiders to help us, but we trust his reasons. Come, we will talk as we travel. Soon you will meet his greatest warrior and our greatest friend, the Far Hunter."

As the adventurers continue on, the brothers will retell their first encounter with the sorcerer and his flying longboat, and how they led four fellows from their town to verify the existence of the brown forest. When they arrived, the expanse of brown trees was twice as large. Despite the brothers' protests, the men insisted on exploring the twisted landscape. "The place has a feeling of death," grumbles Fraktar. "You can smell it," adds Simmis. "The birds and animals have all fled into the green, but if the brown keeps growing, soon we'll all choke on the dust of death. That is why the Spirit of the Land has called us forth." Fraktar continues to explain how they suddenly found themselves surrounded by skeletons. Only he and his brother escaped unharmed with a third member of the party who was later mauled to death by a "demon tiger that walked like a man." Simmis wipes the sweat from his brow and mumbles, "The forest is being twisted to the image of evil."



The rest of the journey will be a little less grim as Simmis relates the legends about the Far Hunter. "He has been seen running with the wild animals since the days of our first settlements. Some say he is an immortal, but none know for certain. His home is said to be a land of ice many month's journey north of this land. It is written: 'He defends the land when great evil comes, When men cannot prevail alone, He will prevail, The Far Hunter never fears, or, He is one with the Spirit of the Land.' Our customs say that if a man should see him, he should not be approached unless he beckons you to do so. To do otherwise shows great disrespect." Simmis pauses for a moment, only to be prodded by Fraktar, "Tell them of Far Hunter and the Black Beast," he suggests. Simmis nods and continues.

"During a winter of 100 years ago, a strange four-legged beast came to the Wilderness. It had no hair, just coal black skin, and bright yellow eyes. Some said it resembled a monstrous dog, others called it a giant cat, but all agreed its head and long neck moved and struck like a snake. It killed anything it could catch, but it only mutilated its kills, leaving them uneaten. Spears nor arrows could pierce its hide, and the beast could bite sword blades in half.

"The Far Hunter soon appeared to face it, dressed in silver splint armor and riding a snow leopard. Those who saw the battle say that he could disappear from one place and reappear in another. That a blinding light came from his sword, and that his blade only cut into the creature four times to kill it!"

It is clear that the brothers feel greatly honored to be chosen by the Spirit of the Land to fight at the side of the Far Hunter. The short trek with Fraktar and Simmis is without danger.

Arrival at Darkwood

The forest is everything that Fraktar and Simmis described. Twisted limbs from sick brown trees claw at the sky. There is an eerie stillness about the brown woodlands, and even those who are the most accustomed to city life can smell the scent of death and decay. The brothers speculate between themselves that the "dark wood" has grown larger yet. They also wonder why the Far Hunter has not yet joined the party.

Game Master's Section

Encounter One: The group, guided by the Spirit of the Land, will sense that they must enter the Darkwood. Action will be quick in coming as 1D4 + 3 skeletons erupt from their hiding places under dead leaves and from high in the trees. One skeleton is that of a bear, another is a coyle, the others are human. All attack!

Animated Dead

Hit Points: 32 each

Attacks per Melee: One; the bear does 2D6 damage with claws, the others all do 1D6 damage with hands, short swords, or spears.

Note: These zombie-like automatons are the new creatures of the forest, brought to life by the sorcerer in the boat. Like all animated dead, they are slow (speed 6), dimwitted (I.Q. equal to a 3), and unskilled fighters. They can be destroyed by being smashed with normal weapons, burnt with fire, and magic. A priest may also be able to "turn" them. *See the Animate/Control Dead spell on pg 66, of the Palladium RPG for details.*

Encounter Two: Immediately after the encounter with the skeletons, Fraktar will point directly above the group and exclaim: "Look, the longboat!"

Overhead is the flying longboat, silently dropping down toward the adventurers. It stops to hover about 20 feet above the ground. Fraktar and Simmis turn pale and jockey for cover behind a boulder.

A figure in black leather, staff in hand, leans over a railing to peer at the characters. A wicked grin is etched across his face as he addresses those on the ground.

"I am Omicron, keeper of this place." He gestures at the dark woods around him. "Why do you attack my servants?"

Before the group has time to react, a warrior clad in silver splint armor appears and proclaims, "The spirit of the land has been taken from this land. You have turned this place an to evil purpose. Your very presence causes the animals to flee and the trees to change their nature. The smell of death is all about you, evil one."



In response to these accusations, Omicron laughs and sneers, "Evil? I am just a lost traveler who wishes to establish a home in this land. Like any other, I simply mold my surroundings into something more to my liking."

Just then, characters of an evil or selfish alignment will hear a voice in their heads, saying, "Join me and help me establish my kingdom. Your reward will be power and wealth as you rule at my side."

To Omicron's surprise and dismay, the Far Hunter has also heard his voice and roars, "Coward! You can not turn these men so easily. The spirit of life is too strong in their hearts. You can not conceal your true nature from me or them, harbinger of death!"

With this out-cry, Simmis hurls his throwing axe at the sorcerer (it just misses). The Far Hunter draws his blade, only to be blasted by a lightning bolt that fires from Omicron's staff. The battle begins...

The Minions of Omicron

1.) Another 2D6 skeletons join the battle on the ground. With luck, a priest can turn most of them. Same stats as the previous skeletons.

2.) Omicron's staff can also transform animals into hideous mutants. Two such mutant bears are attacking the Far Hunter.

The Bear Monsters

Hit Points: 40 + 4D6. Attacks per Melee: 2; claws inflict 2D6 damage, or bite, 3D6 damage. Fight till the death.

3.) Omicron looks at the player characters and says, with his ever present grin, "Go home you fools, before you all die." Omicron is there for the group to tackle. **Note:** His ship is manned by a dozen skeletons.

Omicron's Lair

The sorcerer will fight until he loses most of his hit points (10 or so). When this happens, he will flee, in the boat or by flying under his own power, to a clearing a half mile away.

The clearing is a fire blackened circle 150 feet in diameter. At its center is a 60 foot tall, rectangular, stone building ringed by 4D6 skeletons. The building has an obvious front door, but airbourne characters will see an opening on the roof (this is where the air boat usually docks).

The skeletons are slow enough that most characters can run by them with little trouble. The huge, 10 foot, double doors are unlocked. Inside is a single large room. The 30 foot tall ceiling is supported by six pillars. Furthest from the door is an elaborate bed, a marble table with four carved wood chairs, and a wood closet. Inside the closet is an extra suit of leather armor, 3 black robes, a set of clothing, and a long sword.

Near the bed, there is a five foot wide hole in the ceiling. This is the entrance to the next floor. An eerie pale red light can be seen glowing inside.

The second floor is another single large room. In the corner to the east is a pile of souvenirs: some rocks, bloody human clothes, a couple helmets, and dozens of skulls; human, wolfen, coyle, goblin, orc, and animal. Near this disgusting pile is a pile of brown wood tools, a score of 10 foot long, 2 foot wide planks (made of the same enchanted wood as the boat), an extra magic sail, and some magic thread (to repair the sail).

On the opposite side of the room is a plain stone pedestal, about five feet tall, with four different colored stones (red, blue, green, and orange). Above it is the opening in the ceiling. The wall directly behind the pedestal is completely black, with no trace of brickwork. If touched, the person's hand will pass through it. Characters can stick their heads through or even step through the wall. They will see a long brown corridor that ends in a brilliant orange light. Behind them is the black

wall. To get back, they simply walk through the wall. The wall will remain until somebody moves the rocks on the other side. Beyond the light is an alien world full of Omicrons. It's easy to guess that this is a dimensional portal to Omicron's homeworld.

Observant characters will notice that the rocks glow in sequence every time the black wall is touched. Removing one or more of the rocks will cause the black wall to disappear, replaced by a normal stone wall. Switching the rock pattern on the pedestal will cause the wall to change color. Each color is a different dimension. (Game Masters, feel free to ablive and have something horrible step out.) The rocks and the pedestal are all magic. To destroy one (the stones each have 40 S.D.C.), or to remove the stones, is to close the portal. Omicron will have to create a new portal to return. A very expensive and time consuming project.

So, where is our villain? Did he go home or is he hiding near by. If hiding, how will he react if the characters trap him in this dimension? If trapped in his own world, will he bother to return? The end, Mr. G.M., is in your hands.

Omicron, the Master of Darkwood

Alignment: Diabolic

Hit Points: 72, **Armor:** Magic leather; **A.R.** 14, **S.D.C.:** 80

Attributes of Note: I.Q. 14, M.E. 19, P.S. 15, all others average for a human (Omicron looks human, although he is far from it).

Natural Abilities: See the invisible, float/hover, fly 20 mph, sense the sick and dying (4 mile range), wither plants by touch, and emits an aura of death and decay that all living beings can sense and smell.

Magic Powers: An 8th level necromancer (wizard/summoner), he can cast 12 spells a day. Saves vs Omicron's magic must be 14 or higher.

Mystic knowledge includes: Dust storm, darkness, commune with dead, animate/control dead, death trance, control the beasts, mask of deceit, turn self to mist, wither plants, wall of thorns, fire ball and swords to snakes. Also knows the circles of summon insects, summon undead, animate dead (power), protection from undead, protection from angels, and protection from magic (simple).

Psionics: Psi-powers are limited to presence sense, sense good and evil, death trance, resist fire, and extended telepathy. **I.S.P.:** 40, equal to a 4th level mind mage.

Attacks per Melee: Three hand to hand (will always use magic staff), or two by magic.

Note: Omicron is not from our world. He recently had a friend, experimenting with dimensional portals, open a portal to the Palladium world. He was attracted by all the *life* this world had, and came to feed. Omicron feeds on life essences drawn through his magic staff. If the staff is destroyed, Omicron is destroyed with it. If Omicron is killed, but his staff is not destroyed, it will corrupt others to the ways of death. The staff could be considered the equivalent to a Palladium rune weapon.

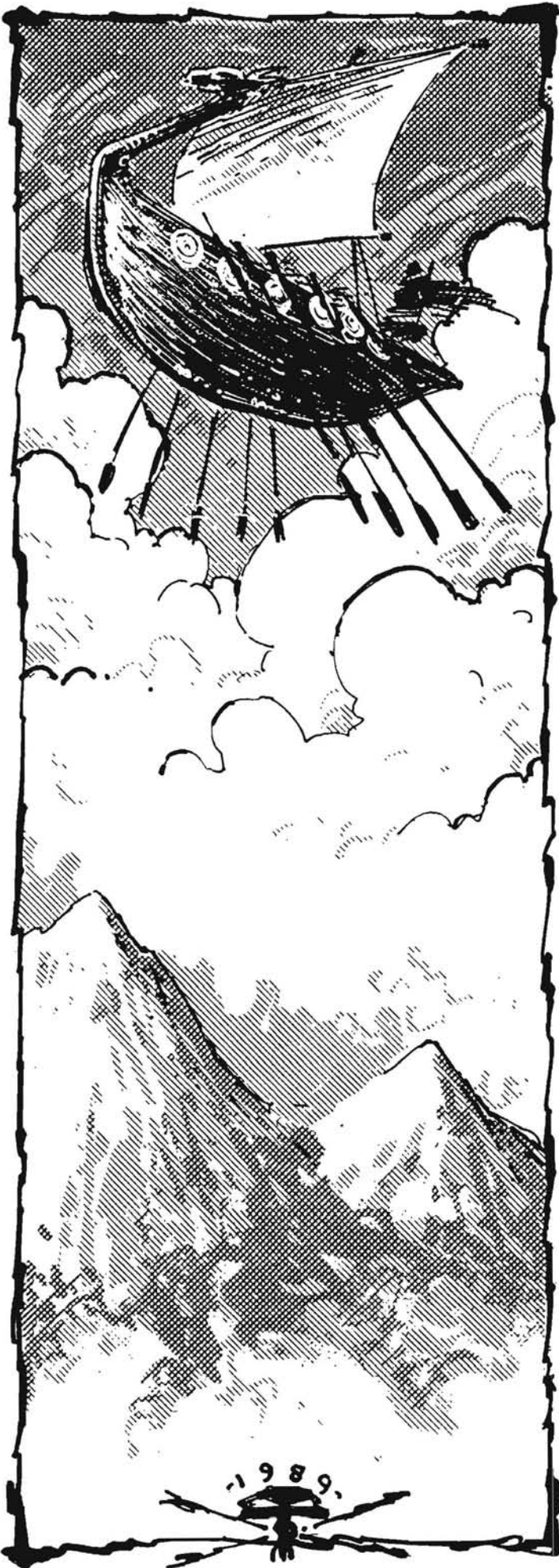
Death Bringer, Omicron's Staff

Alignment: Diabolic; I.Q. is 12.

Damage: 3D6, +1 to strike and parry.

Powers: 1.) Feed on life essences. This can be done to plant life with the pale red light. Area affected is 20 feet, and turns everything a strange brown color. This can be done three times a day. To feed on animals or humanoids, the staff must deliver the killing blow in order to feed on the life essence (this is different than **drinking souls**). Victims slain by the staff are -20% to save vs coma/death. If the person recovers, his life essence is taken back from Death Bringer.

2.) Once every 24 hours, the staff can be used to transform a normal mammal into an insane humanoid monster. The monster is



racked with pain and attacks anything it encounters. Attacks by claws do 2D6 damage, bite 3D6; two attacks per melee. Hit points: 2D4x10.

3.) Can cast four elemental spells a day: Call lightning, protection from lightning, change wind direction, and create wind (mild).

4.) Is impervious to lightning, but not fire or other attacks. It can be destroyed by fire or from deliberate attacks to destroy it; S.D.C. is 50.

5.) Communicates with its wielder telepathically.

6.) Can animate and control as many as 200 dead! Can also turn 1D6x10 dead with a 82% success ratio.

Omicron's Longboat

A.R.: 15, **S.D.C.:** 600 front, 400 mid, 500 rear sections, 100 mast and 50 sail.

This magical vessel can only be piloted by Omicron or by an air warlock. The captain of the vessel *must* have a feeling for the forces of nature in general, and air specifically. The strange craft functions much like a normal boat except that the captain can control its speed and response with his thoughts, and that it rides air currents instead of the waves. The oars can be manned by anybody. Omicron had skeletons as a matter of personal preference. The *air oars* add to the speed of the otherwise slow flying vessel. Eight men are needed to row the oars to get maximum speed. Each pair of oars adds 5 mph; all eight means an additional 20 mph to the normal sailing speed.

Sailing speed depends on the force of the wind. Sailing against the wind is impossible. No wind means the ship simply drifts along in the desired direction at one mile an hour, a good time to use oars. Light breezes of 2-6 mph will send the longboat flying along at 8-10 mph. A medium breeze blowing 8-16 mph will send the ship cruising up to 20 mph. Heavy winds of 17-28 mph will send the ship speeding at maximum speed: 30 mph. Winds heavier than 32 mph will tear the sails and break the mast. When these winds whip up, the captain or crew must bring the sails down and must land. *The ship can not fly without its sails, even with the use of oars.* Ironically, the flying boat is lousy in the water, with a maximum speed of 8 mph.

Note: The vessel will always carry an aura of death about it, and animals will not want to ride it. Can carry a crew of about 30 humans; 35 feet long.

Notes about the other NPCs

The Far Hunter is a mythic hero of unknown origin. He will fight Omicron's minions while the characters go after the sorcerer themselves. After the battle, he will thank the heroes for their help, telling them that, "This day you have saved your world from a horrible evil, and have taken one more step toward union with the Spirit of the Land." With these words he vanishes.

Known abilities: Teleport at will, heal self, and ranger abilities of at least 10th level proficiency; a superb fighter. Telepathic probes are mostly ineffectual, however, he will radiate good, magic, and human. There is also a random thought or memory about elf druids from a time long ago.

The Spirit of the Land is an archaic mother earth type entity spoken of by some druids, rangers, and huntsmen of the Northern Wilderness. There is no formal religion nor any evidence that this being really exists.

Fraktar and Simmis are trappers equal to 8th and 6th level rangers, respectively. Both believe in the Spirit of the Land and will never forget the day they were chosen to fight in his name! The two will go on to become folk heroes in this territory, this adventure just being the first of many heroics.

TO SERVE THE PIXIE CROWN

By Kevin Davies

This is an adventure for 6-8 players, averaging 6th level in the Palladium RPG system. It is primarily an action adventure, with a slant toward negotiation and skulking skills. In addition to the Player characters, this module features three other races: wolfen, pixies, and the *Grackyn*, a supernatural creature that appears here for the first time. All of the stats and information necessary to play the scenario will be presented in this text.

This module is written so that it may be used and enjoyed by both beginner and advanced players. Many of the encounters detailed in the adventure will be accompanied by one or more 'Plot Options,' which may be employed by the G.M. if he feels comfortable in managing the extra data the option will interject. Use as many of the options as you like, or none. The more options you employ, the more complicated and multilayered your plot will become. It will require more effort, but it will contribute to a more exciting and realistic adventure.

Background Information for the GAMEMASTER

The area where this adventure scenario takes place is about 100 miles southwest of the westernmost tip of the Algorian Sea (which separates the Dominion of Man from the territories of the Wolfen Domain) in the Great Northern Wilderness. Wolfen military commanders, recently united through internal tribal conquests, have been instructed by the Emperor to conduct exploratory and mapmaking operations in the 'uninhabited' territories. One of these operations has recently borne fruit: a large cave containing a sizeable silver deposit was discovered, and mining operations were established. A rough dirt road quickly hewn through the forest is all that links this mining camp, at the furthest reaches of Wolfen territory, to wolfen civilization.

The wolfen commander in charge of the region decided to use slave and indentured labor (political prisoners and civil lawbreakers) to work the mine. The centurion in charge of the operation is given a percentage of the silver safely transported back to Skatti, the nearest fortified outpost. The centurion's profits are kept in a safe until the end of his tour of command. This has encouraged the greedy commander of the mine, and his legionaries, to whom *he* has offered a small percentage to each, to press the mineworkers hard, often to the point of exhaustion or death. More prisoners are always available.

What the wolfen explorers were unaware of was that the mine they discovered is located within the territorial boundaries of a local *pixie* clan. The activities of the wolfen are especially disturbing to the faerie folk because their ancestors had impressed upon them the importance of never entering this cave, and especially to never remove any of the shiny rocks. Yet this is precisely what the large 'hairy ones' are engaged in doing.

Pixies are not especially good at thinking out elaborate plans, nor executing them with great coordinated precision. Thus, when it was determined that the hairy ones would have to go, the pixies embarked on a strategy of harassment and sabotage. That was, until some were caught.

While the wolfen have a general reputation among the peoples they've subjected to their rule of being fair and just, they tend to respond harshly to those who oppose their operations. So it was that when the *Pixies* of *Dewwood* declared a *war* on the wolfen, many pixies were killed.

Those captured were put to work in the mines, where they remain to this day. The few that escaped, desperate with concern for their comrades, plotted and argued in the nearby woods. Any wolfen caught out alone or unarmored was pierced with poison arrows from hidden archers posted around the wolfen camp. All agreed that any opportunity to assault the wolfen mine would be taken; but none came. Until now, when the party of adventure characters have been observed in the vicinity.

An emergency pixie council meeting has determined the fate of these *new* interlopers. Either they are made to help the pixies or they will die! This is an extreme decision, unusual for these tiny pranksters, illustrating just how desperate they've become. For days the adventure party has been tracked by silent, invisible pixie scouts. They now prepare for an encounter with the humanoid trespassers, after sunset.

Background Information The following may be read aloud.

For weeks now your adventure party has been exploring the Great Northern Wilderness beyond any known human settlement. This vast forested area is reputed to be the domain of all sorts of undiscovered species; it is also considered to be *disputed* territory between the dominion of the human and the wolfen races. Humans and elves will tend to feel it is part of the Eastern Territory.

For the first few weeks, your travels through the forest have filled you with a sense of wonder and exhilaration. Daily, the colors and sounds of the forest has brought innumerable curiosities to your attention. As the distance back to civilization increased, the forest seemed to alter its character; less light filters down through the intertwined branches of the towering conifers; sounds of unknown origin become less welcoming; and the feeling that the forest is alive and watching can not be shaken. It is little wonder why man and elf has stayed away from this strange, chilled land. It is now well over a month back to the nearest human encampment. The adventures and treasures so frequently boasted of, have not materialized. You're tired, dirty, homesick, and just a little afraid. An evening camp has been established; choose an order for the watch and get some rest.

G.M. SECTION

1. The Camp Visitors

Throughout the evening, a small party of pixies has been secretly assembling around the characters' camp. They have all used their faerie magic to turn themselves invisible and their 'prowl' skill to get into position silently.

Once the players' adventure characters have relaxed and settled in for the evening, five small figures will appear (ceasing their invisibility), standing near the campfire. They will immediately make a throat clearing sound to get the attention of the person standing guard. The pixies will take some delight in having surprised the larger humanoids. The pixies are dressed in green with gold trim, and floppy hats, and carry small swords hung from a belt.

What happens next will depend on the players' initial and continued reaction to the pixies' presence and their eventual request. Each comment made by a pixie, although innocent enough when read, should employ a somewhat sarcastic tone; the pixies don't really respect anyone other than their own kin, and perhaps the elves. Still, they need help, so they will avoid any serious mischief, like faerie food.

Plot Option 1.a.; A Friendly Reception

If the humans respond with surprise, but not immediate hostility (waking everyone up and some reaching for weapons is okay), the pixie group's leader will introduce his party as follows (this may be read aloud to the players):

"Greetings, tall ones. Welcome to our forest. I am known as *Kerrin*; these are my clan-kin: Berrett, Ardob, Koubi, and Paven. Have you brought gifts?"

See what the players answer. Polite responses, even if no, will be noted and appreciated. Gifts of sweet wine, honey, candy, or magic items are preferred items. They don't want gold or gems. If no gifts are offered, say, "Too bad, we like gifts." and continue (actually, Kerrin is just having a little fun, and testing the character's sense of fun and friendliness).

"Our clan-lord requests your presence at a feast he would hold in your honor. Will you follow? It is of *great* importance!"

Pixies are direct, and bad at voluntarily providing details. If the players press Kerrin, he will mention that, "It is not a far walk to the feast, especially for beings as grand as yourselves." He will admit that he is of the race that humans call pixies. He will not say why the feast is being held for the players nor how the pixies knew of their presence. "All will be revealed by the clan-lord. Now, please come along," he will continue to say, "you're keeping everyone waiting."

Plot Option 1.b.; A Hostile Reception or Refusal!

If the adventurers initially react with violence or extreme hostility, or after Plot Option 1.a., *still refuse* to attend the feast described by the pixies, Plot Option 1.b. may be employed.

The more skeptical pixies of the clan made sure that the nearby woods are swarming with invisible pixie warriors: many of whom are archers. If things turn ugly, Kerrin will shout the command: "Fade and fire!" Immediately, the five pixies in the adventurers' camp will turn invisible and scatter for the trees, while a hail of 5 inch arrows will be launched at the party from every direction. The arrows inflict 1D4 damage each. Additionally, the arrows carry a magical effect, and the slightest penetration of the skin will cause the adventurer to immediately become disoriented and confused for 1D6 melees unless he saves vs magic; 12 or higher. Those who failed their saving throw will then fall asleep for 3D6 minutes. All adventurers should be affected and incapacitated before the end of the combat; those who are merely confused will be given a second dose with the prick of a fresh arrow. A few bold pixies may cast magic as well, such as cloud of slumber, charm, or circle of rain to help capture their prey.

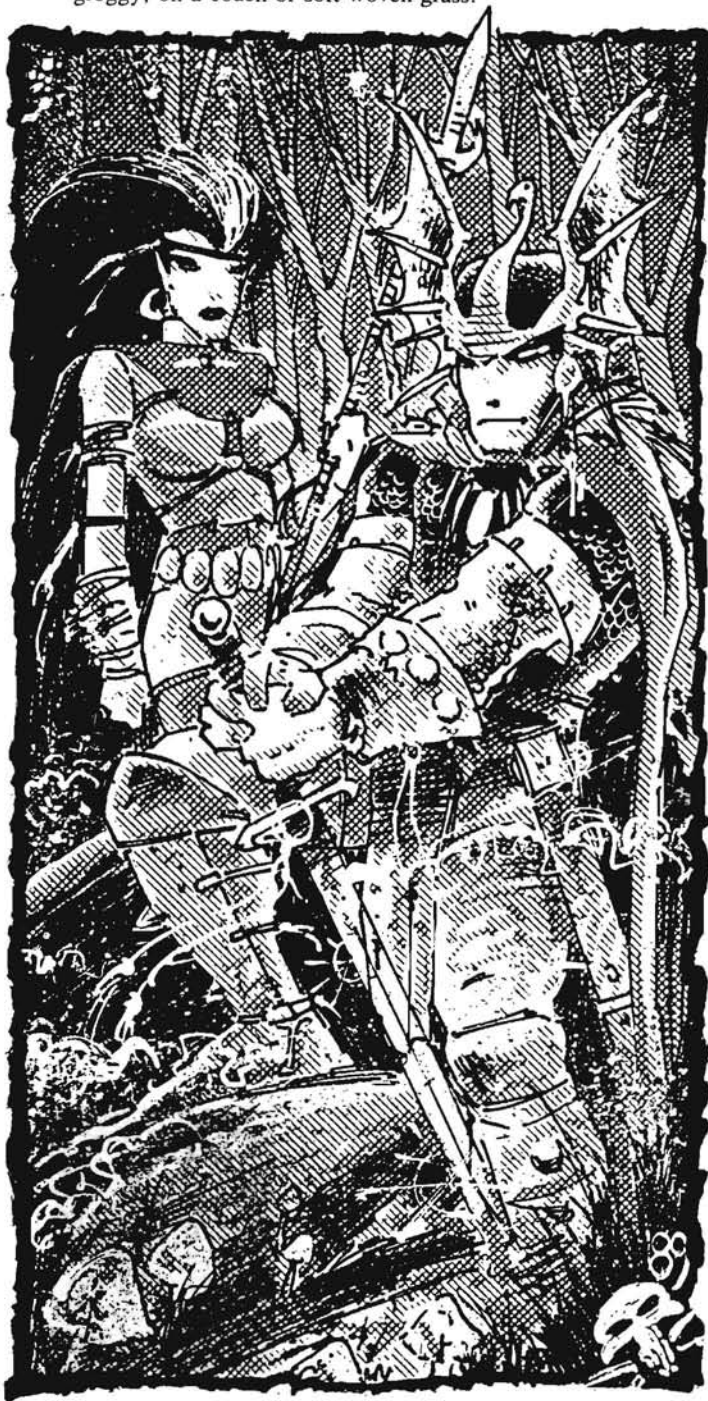
2. The Trip to the Feast

The trip to the pixies' camp may be experienced by the players in one of three ways (the appropriate description may be revealed to the players):

- A. **If the adventurers accept the pixies' invitation voluntarily** (Option 1.a.), they will be escorted through the forest at a rapid pace, yet they will not have any trouble travelling the path or dodging branches. The forest will appear to glow as moonlight illuminates everything with a clarity not previously noticed. Time and distance will seem to blur, and it will occur to the adventurers that they have been traveling for some time and yet their bodies in no way feel fatigued. Suddenly, they will be bathed in the light, sights and sounds of the pixie camp engaged in the chaos of wild dance and celebration. Each adventurer will be lead to a couch of soft woven grass.
- B. **Those characters who remain conscious** but captured/charmed will be disoriented during the trip. The experience will be dream-like, blurred colors and out of focus. Occasionally the characters will register a clear image, but it will be such a focused close-up (e.g., the expression on the face of one of their pixie bearers, a snail crawling along a branch, the pattern of moss on a log, etc.) that it will be useless in determining their direction or distance traveled. Eventually, the bright light, motion and sounds of the pixies' camp will overwhelm them, and they will realize they've

been placed on the ground until the effect of the magic wears off. When their heads clear, they will realize that they are on a couch of soft woven grass.

- C. **Any characters who are put to sleep** for the duration of the trip to the pixie camp will be carried while unconscious, and awaken groggy, on a couch of soft woven grass.



The Feast

Once all the player characters are seated (and fully awake), a pixie with an aristocratic air about him will ask the adventurers if they are comfortable. Upon hearing their reply (whatever it is), he will announce loudly:

"Our honored guests have now joined us, let the feasting begin!"

What follows will probably be the most elaborate feast that any of the adventurers have partaken. Any reasonable item of food or drink desired by the players should be made available. Pixie delicacies include cooked beetles and grubs, herbs, berries, nuts, and homemade wine

and ale. Quail, fish and rabbit have also been prepared for their guests. During the feast (whether the player characters are eating or not), have a beautiful pixie maiden approach one of the male party members and say: "The clan-lord asks if you are enjoying the feast, and if there is any special dish which you might like prepared?" They will try to comply.

The pixie camp will be situated in a meadow surrounded by tall pines and illuminated by soft moonlight and thousands of fireflies. All who attended the feast will now be reclining on grass couches: At the southern end of the clearing (100-200 feet across), a bonfire will blaze, and several tables will hold the cooked and uncooked food. Young attendants with wine will offer to refill any empty glass. Most of the children will be feasting together under the supervision of an elder. In the central open area entertainments will take place during the meal: juggling, tumbling, dancing, etc.

Once everyone has had a chance to sample at least one of every dish they would like, the clan-lord will be announced:

"And now our clan-lord would speak."

The clan-lord is a stern, middle-aged pixie with a strong, intelligent face and (for a pixie) a powerful build. He is dressed much like the others, in green and gold, but has a long feather in his cap, and wears a long cape and high boots. When he speaks, he speaks in a booming baritone to impress his guests.

"Greetings fellow clans-folk. Let us all join in officially welcoming our honored guests to our feast."

He pauses for cheers and clapping (some laughter should also be noted). Then he continues, talking specifically to the adventurers. If they interrupt with questions and accusations at any time during his speech, he will ignore them and continue to promote the great feast (sticking with his preplanned speech). If angered, he will bring up the fact that the adventurers were trespassing on the pixies' territory (ignorance is no defense), and that some races *execute* trespassers on sight. Then he'll compose himself and continue, with a smile.

"We, the people of Yenli welcome you to our land. It is hoped that a bond of friendship might be forged between our races, and that hospitality and aid will always be afforded to one another at need."

Another cheer from the crowd. Toasts are made in the name of friendship. He then devotes his total attention to the adventurers, becoming obviously intense and serious.

"But enough merriment, (All merrymaking ceases). This is a time of great crisis for the Yenli clan. For many spans of life the Yenli have lived peacefully in this forest, with no enemies, but the gods of ice, frost, and the north wind. This is no longer so. For within the last eight passings of the moon a new enemy plagues us; the 'children of the wolf'! These creatures entered the sacred caves that our ancestors taught us to guard. They disturbed the soil and stole the shiny rocks that were not to be removed. And when we tried to stop them, they attacked and killed our clans-folk. Others were captured and enslaved. The hairy ones are large, they are many, and they are cruel. You are large, strong, and well equipped. With our help, you could sneak into the caverns and rescue the captured Yenli. You could destroy the work of the wolves. Will you come to the aid of your new friends? Will you help to free our clans-folk?"

The adventure characters will be expected to respond to the request. If the party reacts favorably, the feasting will continue while plans are made with the clan-lord. If the party is reluctant to engage in the rescue, the pixies will at first try to make them feel guilty. Finally, if all negotiations seem sure to fail (and remember, a creature with the intellect of a 6 year old doesn't have much patience), the pixies will threaten death.

Keep in mind that the party is always being watched by invisible guards, and should the characters attempt an escape at any time, they will be attacked and put to sleep until they can be goaded or threatened into rescuing the captive pixie slaves at the mine.

If the question is raised regarding the spoils of combat, the pixies will tell the group that they can take all that they want, *except* that which was taken from the sacred earth. (Sorry, *no* silver). Anyone caught with silver nuggets will suffer pixie mischief via faerie food and/or magic attack, like being turned purple and being rained on. G.M.s take a look at *faerie foods* in **Adventures on the High Seas**.

Regardless of the actual desires of the party, eventually, it should be made clear that they must accept the task the pixies have asked of them. Plans, negotiations, and descriptions of the mine by surviving pixie 'warriors' will continue 'til dawn. The pixies will want to play down the fact that they tried to 'terrorize' the 'children of the wolf' and failed. If the player characters pick up on the comment about the shiny rocks, the pixies will venture no knowledge other than the rocks are 'like the color of moonlight' and that they must not, by ancestral decree, be removed from the caves. During the course of the meeting, the party will be given a map drawn by a pixie warrior.

Plot Option 2.a.; Magical Gifts From The Pixies of Dewwood

If the adventure party is *not* a very powerful one, or if the adventurers were willing participants in the pixies' request from the beginning, the G.M. may have the pixies provide one or all of the following magical items to the party. This may be done formally by the clan-chief, or on an individual basis. **The pixie magic items available are:**

- a. **One pouch of Dust of Invisibility:** Sprinkle on, lasts 1D6 minutes unless washed off. Enough powder for 2 human-size creatures.
- b. **One Light Pebble:** Light brightens if rubbed, dims if squeezed. Will continue to work if immersed in liquid.
- c. **One flask of Darksight Liquid:** Eye drops, enough for 10 uses, granting the ability to see with minimal light for 2D6 minutes; equivalent to nightvision, 120ft range.
- d. **One pouch of 10 Healing Chestnuts:** Each nut, when chewed, will restore 10 hit points, but tastes like a rotten nut.

Finally, a great feast will be promised, and gifts of magic, when the adventurers return *victorious* with the Yenli captives. And, if possible, a report that the hairy ones have all been killed or driven away.

Plot Option 2.b.: A Pixie Named Kerrin

The pixie named Kerrin will be accompanying the adventurers on their mission as a 'guide' into the cave system. Kerrin is the bravest and most skilled warrior of the pixie clan. The reason he claims to want to accompany the characters is to exact revenge. This is not entirely true. His real goal is to see that the princess Royanna, whom he wishes to wed, is saved. He is in love with Royanna, and, if necessary, will sacrifice his life for hers. Regardless of how friendly Kerrin may become with any member of the group, he will never reveal his personal mission. He trusts no big one.

Non-Player Characters

Kerrin, the Pixie Guide

6th level Ranger

Height: 15 inches tall **Hit Points:** 52

Attributes: I.Q. 9, P.S. 10, P.E. 13, M.A. 16

Alignment: Anarchist

Armor: Dark, leather-like (S.D.C.: 10/A.R.: 8), over a green tunic.

Weapons: Sword, small bow with arrows, and needle-like daggers.

Standard pixie magic abilities.

O.C.C. Skills: (Ranger) Hand to Hand, Identify Tracks, Track.

Elective Skills: Weapons (as above), Disguise, Dowsing, Identify Plants/Fruits, Medical, Prowl, Scale Walls, Trap (small), Use Poison.

Secondary Skills: All ranger skills; Sense of Direction, Sing, Imitate Voices, Play String Instrument (lute), Recognize Precious Metals/Stones, Recognize Weapon Quality, Speak Additional Language.

The Common Pixie is found in the N.P.C. section at the end of this adventure.

3. The Gate to the Wolfen Mine

A handful of pixie warriors will accompany the adventure party to lead them to the mine of the hairy ones (Wolfen). The front of the mine will be guarded by a wooden palisade and gate, with a watchtower standing above it. Red ribbons are tied in a bow and attached to the legs of the tower; and salt covers the floor of the entrance; all methods to protect oneself from faerie folk (pixies included). The actual entrance may not be seen from the woods. The pixies will inform the characters that when they entered the mine, no structure barred the way. Outside the palisade, the wolfen will have erected several rectangular log buildings in the manner of a frontier settlement. Beyond the long houses will be several tents, serving as temporary shelters for new laborers and visitors to the site. A fair amount of activity will be evident, as will the smell of a smith's furnace, and the hammering of carpenters. As the group watches, the gates (2) will open outward, and four wagons will emerge, pulled by stout ponies. It will be obvious by the *many* burly wolfen guards that these wagons are full of raw silver, and bound for the nearest wolfen town. The pixies will not be able to make these conclusions; it will be left up to the players to do so. Since a frontal assault will be deemed impossible, the pixies will motion their large allies, to another entrance to the cavern system discovered by the pixies when they originally made their escape. The pixies will stress silence now that they are so close to the hairy ones' lair.

Plot Option 3.a.; A Wolfen Encounter

If the player characters are especially tough, you may wish to introduce an encounter with two or three patrolling wolfen soldiers. The description provided may be used for any encounter with a wolfen legionary or craftsman at any point throughout the adventure.

A Typical Wolfen Legionary (Soldier O.C.C.)

Attributes: I.Q.: 6+1D6, M.E.: 8+1D6, M.A.: 6+1D6, P.S.: 12+2D6, P.P.: 8+1D6, P.E.: 8+1D6, P.B.: 8+1D6, Spd.: 8+2D6

Alignment: Miscreant

Height: 7 to 9 feet tall, **Weight:** 190 to 300 pounds

Nightvision: 40 feet, superior senses.

Hit Points: 4D6 (or more)

Damage: Claws cause 1D6 damage, bite does 1D8 damage.

Armor: Splint (S.D.C.: 85/A.R.: 16) over a cloth tunic.

Weapons: Pole arms, sword (or axe), knife; all giant size.

Possessions: Small leather pouch containing 2D6×10 silver coins.

O.C.C. Skills: (Soldier) Hand to Hand, Scale Walls, Small Shield.

Elective Skills: Weapons (as above), Horsemanship, Identify Tracks, Identify Plants/Fruits, Medical, Prowl, Read/Write, Track, Use Poison, Trap Small Animals.

Secondary Skills: All ranger type skills; Sense of Direction, Sing, Swim, Play String Instrument (lute), Recognize Precious Metals/Stones, Recognize Weapon Quality, Speak Additional Language.

Note: These soldiers are part of the 51st Legion and total to 72 warriors under the command of Captain Agnar (see N.P.C. Section).

4. The Pixie Passageway

The pixies will lead the adventurers back into the forest, skirting around the wolfen encampment. (There is a 1-40% chance of encountering a wolfen guard or two.) They stop at a dark opening in a hillside. The pixie guides indicate that this was the tunnel that they escaped through many moon-passages (months) earlier, a sort of back door

unknown to the wolfen. The pixies fade into the woods, promising to guard the opening until the group returns, and only Kerrin will accompany our heroes.

The tunnel is a narrow hole, a tight fit for human-size beings. It is a natural opening in the earth which leads deep into the cave system the wolfen are currently mining. An especially observant character or ranger might notice that the passage appears to have been widened and the walls smoothed somewhat by the burrowing action of some animal; this took place some time ago. While a pixie might find the passage comfortably large, human-size creatures will find it cramped, with a ceiling of no more than four feet tall at any time and walls will vary from two to three feet wide.

The passage will continue straight for about 20 feet, then descend at varying rates for another 150 feet. If the group is without appropriate climbing equipment (G.M. discretion), have each attempt to roll 1D20 equal or below their P.P. value to determine whether they keep their footing. A failed roll will mean a slip. Have a slipping character roll a twenty-sided die again to determine if the fall is serious. A failed roll here means the character slides/tumbles 4D6 feet and suffers 2D4 damage.

5. Entering the Cave System

The narrow passage will eventually open into a irregular limestone cave about 25×25 feet. They are now approximately 60 feet below the surface. The floor and ceiling will be covered in stalagmites and stalactites with several columns of rock rising from floor to ceiling. The floor of this cave is damp, and will have a few inches of cool rain water collected in it. Again, you may want to have the players make P.P. rolls to pass without slipping and making an embarrassing splash (no damage).

An opening at the far end of the cave will lead to a passage averaging 6 feet tall and 3 feet wide. It slopes gradually downward for about 15 feet, then drops off. This opening in the floor will reveal a cavern whose floor lies 20 feet below. The passage will continue past this opening for another 40 feet (if there, Kerrin will indicate that their original escape route continues that way), but ends in a substantial cave in. The only possible access may be found by exploring the cavern below the opening in the floor of the passage.

Through the opening, the characters may hear the sound of trickling water, and with sufficient light, may see what looks like a pool of water filling most of the cavern floor. Only those characters with exceptional climbing skills will be able to descend without the aid of rope or other climbing equipment. Any character who attempts to jump down will be required to make a successful P.P. roll (1D20) or suffer 1D4 damage. A character who falls down, completely unintentionally, will suffer 2D6 damage.

Plot Option 5.a.; Random Cave Encounters

Most Cave 'encounters' should be with insects, crustaceans, small amphibians and mammals. Many cave-dwelling species spend their entire lives below ground in the cool waters and chambers in complete darkness. Many such creatures have evolved into a colorless (white), blind, temperature and pressure sensitive state and would no longer survive if exposed to the sun's heat. Adjacent to some creature descriptions are page references for stats pertaining to the Palladium Role Playing Game (PRPG) manual. No stats have been provided for creatures deemed nonhostile to humanoids and those with 1 hit point or less.

Random Encounters in the Caves

G.M.s, use as needed. Roll at least 2 encounters.

01-20 6D6 Bats are disturbed from their usually quiet sleeping place.

They frantically fly around, screeching, and dive bombing the characters who disturbed them for 1D6 melees before flying off to parts unknown. Although not dangerous themselves, the commotion

may cause a wolven guard to come down to investigate; 01-20% chance (the wolven tend to ignore noisy bats).

21-30 **Oops**, this is the home of a *Northern Grizzly Bear* and it doesn't appreciate visitors. 1500 pounds of muscles and claw attacks. If wounded, it will fight to the death. Hit Points: 60, A.R. 6, three attacks per melee, +2 to strike, +6 to damage; claws inflict 2D6 damage, bite does 1D8. Abilities of Note: Speed 16, swim — 60%, nightvision — 20ft, track by smell — 68%. See *Palladium RPG*, pg. 239.

31-50 **A Giant Spider's Web** covers a sixteen foot area of the cave. If the character(s) stay clear of it, there is no problem. If they touch the web, 1D4 giant timber spiders attack. See *Palladium RPG*, pg. 243.

51-60 **A Swarm of Tiny Flying Insects** fill the passage for ten feet. They are harmless, but annoying, and impair visibility while walking through them. Temporary penalties while in the swarm are: -4 on initiative, -2 to strike, parry and dodge, and talking is impossible without swallowing a score of bugs.

61-70 **Cottonmouth Snake** in search of rodents, hisses a warning to anyone who gets too close. Any sudden movement will cause it to strike. Hit Points: 8, A.R. 5, One attack per melee; bite does 1D4 damage plus 1D6 additional damage for 1D6 melees from poisonous venom (a save vs poison means there is no additional damage, lucky).

71-80 **1D6 × 10 Rats** gnaw on the remains of a human corpse. The victim of his wolven enslavers. The body is mostly eaten, but can not be more than a week old. The rats offer no threat and can be easily avoided.

81-90 **Two Lazy Wolven Guards** have snuck off for a friendly game of dice. A quiet group will have the element of surprise and first attack from behind.

The two wolven are only first level grunts with 20 hit points each, garbed in studded leather (A.R. 12, S.D.C. 38), and armed with a whip and giant short sword (2D6 damage) each. The small, 7 foot, guy is a scrawny coward with average attributes. The scruffy 9 footer is a tough brawler with a P.S. of 22.

91-00 **Scorpion Devil**; a hideous two-limbed mammal with a huge maw and poisonous stinger. It will attack and fight to the death, bellowing throughout combat. Hit Points: 21, A.R. 6, two attacks per melee; bite does 1D6, poison stinger does 3D6 each sting (no damage from stinger if a save vs poison is successful).

The creature's loud screeching is likely to bring two wolven legionaries to investigate; 01-60% chance.

6. The Underground Pool

The cavern into which the characters descend is about 60 × 40 feet, with a 20 foot ceiling. As was observed from above, an underground pool divides the cavern in two. The one to two foot deep waters cover the length of the cavern (60ft) and vary from 12ft to 22ft wide. If a character is very perceptive, or makes use of a special talent, he might discover that the water does possess a slight current, which dies out in a series of uneven ripples at one end of the cavern, a few feet from the shore.

The characters will notice a small tunnel extending into darkness on the far shore. This is apparently the only exit from this cavern.

7. The Dead End

If the characters choose to cross the pool and investigate the tunnel on the far shore, they will immediately notice that it is much smaller than the one by which they descended. To check out this 3 × 3 × 3 foot passage, a human-size adventurer will have to crawl, perhaps even pulling themselves along by their arms alone. The passage will continue relatively flat for about 5ft and then begin an abrupt descent for about 12ft, opening out into a small chamber about 10 × 10 × 6 feet. Should

any intrepid character be unfortunate enough to descend to the end of the passage and into the chamber, he will find himself landing on a soft, sticky, substance, strung from wall to wall, which will give slightly, but support his weight. If it is possible for the character to gaze between the weave of the fabric, he will see that it is all that is preventing him from plunging into an abyss (a 300ft drop). A slightly sulfuric smell and the warmth of geothermal gases rises from the darkness below. Hanging from support lines are several whitish forms, like balls of twine. A longer look, squinting in the darkness, will reveal that they are the egg casings of giant spiders.

The next round following a character's landing on the sticky mesh will see a Giant Northern Spider launch itself at the intruder. The spider will give chase along the passage, but will not venture beyond the mouth of the small opening into the larger area of the cavern. **Note:** If a character falls through the web, there is a 01-50% chance that he will land on a ledge 15 feet below. As fate would have it, this ledge will access a passage which will lead into the mine. If the character misses the ledge he will plummet 300ft into a toxic pool of water. The fall will cause 6D6 points of damage. Plus, the poor soul must roll to save vs poison every melee that he is within 40 feet of the noxious fumes or suffer another 2D6 points per melee.

Giant Northern Spider

Size: 4 ft, **A.R.:** 6

Hit Points: 25

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +2 to dodge

Abilities of Note: Speed: 9, Nightvision: 60ft

Skills of Note: Prowl — 60%, Track — 20%, Climb — 90%

Attacks Per Melee: One; inflicts 2D6 hit point damage, plus poison effects. Standard saving throw. Poison takes effect in 5 minutes, causing fever and nausea. Bitten area becomes swollen and sensitive and victims are -2 to dodge, strike or parry for 24 hours. Multiple bites cause cumulative effect; 5% chance of paralysis with each bite.

8. The Underwater Tunnel

There is only one other way to advance further into the cave system; an underwater tunnel which connects the cavern the characters now occupy to another cave. As previously mentioned, an astute adventurer would have noted the odd ripples on the surface of the pond a few feet from the shore at the southern end of the pool. This marks the location of the tunnel opening. Since it is not currently raining, there is very little water flowing through the tunnel. The cave to which it leads is only slightly lower in depth.

To get through the 40 foot long, 4 foot diameter tunnel, the adventurers will be required to swim or pull themselves along the tunnel. A typical character is capable of holding their breath underwater for 4 seconds per P.E. point they possess. Rangers and characters with the swim skill can hold their breath for 6 seconds per P.E. point. It will take a *good* swimmer about 20 seconds, and an average swimmer 40 seconds, to pass through the tunnel, if everything goes okay. A lot can happen in 40 seconds.

Keep in mind that the tunnel will be *pitch dark* unless somehow illuminated (eg., magic). You may wish to have the players roll for a chance that they snag themselves on an outcropping rock (a P.P. roll), or that they panic after 30 seconds (a M.E. roll), or accidentally bump their head. If someone on the 'other side' has already reached the shore, and realizes that a swimmer following them has taken too long, they may wish to reenter the tunnel and search for their comrade. If pulled through by a rope, consider the possibility that the rope gets snagged.

If the adventurer is wearing metal armor or is carrying a bulky pack, these things may have to be taken off and pulled through by rope from the other side. For every 20lbs of non-buoyant matter attached to a person's body, reduce their movement/breath time by 6 seconds.

Plot Option 8.a.; a Pixie Named Cailynn

If it looks like your players are not going to discover the underwater tunnel on their own, or if you merely want to make the game more dramatic, have a pixie suddenly burst to the surface of the water. She will take a few gasping breaths, and then exclaim (in a rather chilled voice — the water is cold), "There you are! I've been waiting for you all on the other side." She will introduce herself as *Cailynn* and say that she is eager to assist with the *revenge*! She will reveal that she has found an underwater passage which leads to the tunnels into the mine.

Cailynn

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q. 9, P.S. 10, P.E. 13, M.A. 16, P.P. 9, Spd. 14

Hit Points: 40

Armor: Dark, leather-like (S.D.C. 10/A.R. 8), over an amber tunic.

Weapons: Sword and needle-like dagger.

Standard pixie magic abilities

Level of Experience: 5th level thief

O.C.C. Skills: Thief: Hand to Hand, Scale Walls — 65%

Elective Skills: Weapons (as above), Disguise, Medical — 40%, Prowl — 60%, Read/Write, Pick Pockets, Short Bow, Use Poison, Forgery, Locate Secret Compartments, Pick Locks.

Secondary Skills: Sense of Direction, Sing, Play Sting Instrument (lute), Recognize Weapon Quality, Speak Additional Language, Cook, Dance, Swim, Tailor.

There are a few details the GM may wish to incorporate with the inclusion of Cailynn into the adventure. First, none of the other pixies know she is here. Her family and friends think she has gone on a trek to look for *sunberries*. It turns out that her brother, Clayed, was one of the many pixies who did not escape during the pixie assault of several months ago. As GM, you are welcome to include Clayed (standard pixie stats) as one of the few living pixie slave mine workers, or that he died or was executed in armed conflict with the wolfen. Regardless, Cailynn is determined to learn the truth about her only brother, and if possible, rescue him.

Additionally, if your adventure has included *Kerrin* with the adventure party, you may wish to add the complication that Cailynn is in *love* with Kerrin, and is jealous of his affection for the pixie *princess* (and *heir*), *Royanna*. Kerrin has only responded to Cailynn's affectionate attentions as one would a close friend's. She is convinced that under the right circumstances (especially if the wolfen have killed the princess), Kerrin will acknowledge his love for her. Thus, she will stick close by him; partly to insure his protection (she would die for him), and partly to be near should the circumstance provide the opportunity to awaken passion in him.

9. The Illuminated Cave Two Tunnels into the Mine

Upon breaking the surface of the water, the first thing the character(s) see is that this cave is naturally illuminated, due to a phosphorescence, a yellow glow emitted from the moss which circles the pool and clings to the walls of the cave. Apart from the eerie glow, the appearance of the cave will be much the same as the others previously encountered. The dimensions of this cave are: 24ft from floor to ceiling, with a maximum width of 30ft and length of 80ft.

Upon rising from the pool, the characters will notice that the water has a slight current which winds through the cave and around its many columns until it dwindles to a trickle. This water will collect in a smaller pool at the souther most end of the cave. If one follows the flow of the water to this point, they will be able to hear the sound of mining activity occurring somewhere beyond the southern wall of the cave. The smaller pool (and its underwater tunnel) will appear to be the way in.

Closer investigation of the cave will reveal a passage into the mine from a ledge situated about 18 feet up on the western wall. Anyone attempting to climb this wall without any special skills or abilities will be required to roll 1D20 equal or below half their P.P. value; failure will result in falling and the loss of 1D4 hit points. If the character(s) successfully reach the passage and begin exploring, see section #17.

If Cailynn is with the party, she will exclaim that she has not as yet ventured beyond this cave. But you might have her direct the characters to the sounds of mining activity perceptible near the small pool at the southern wall of the cave.

The Mines

10. Underwater Entry to 3rd level; Miner's Water Source

Should anyone choose to use the tunnel in the bottom of the small pool, the G.M. should have him make similar panic or snag rolls as mentioned in section #8. This underwater tunnel is only 30ft long, but it is also only 3ft in diameter. But unlike the previous passage, this one is dimly illuminated by occasional growths of the phosphorescent vegetation along the walls.

Successful passage through the narrow underwater tunnel will lead the adventurer to one of the *lower* chambers in the wolfen mine. The character will emerge in a 9ft deep pool about 2 feet below a 10 foot wide by 18 foot long wooden walkway. If the character waits there, treading water, more than a minute, the loud rolling thunder of a cart filled with ore will be heard passing overhead. From this vantage point, the character will be able to see that the pool continues straight for about 25 feet, then curves to the right, where it is obscured by rock. This area of the mine is dimly lit by oil lamps placed in iron brackets fastened to the rock walls. On the right-hand (south) side there is a rough-hewn, wolfen-size wooden table and four chairs; several clay pots and cups sit on the table. Beyond the table, and just before the water makes its turn, a low walkway, 3 feet wide, 8 feet long, bridges the pool at its narrowest point; an archway, carved out of the rock, provides an exit. In addition to the sounds of the wooden mining carts (being pulled along their gutter-like tracks by stout ponies, passing every 30 minutes or so), the sounds of miners excavating new ore can also be heard. The sounds are coming from somewhere to the right, not too far away.

A few moments later, one of the miners is sent to the pool to fetch a pail of water. This miner will not be on his guard or looking for anyone, so there is a 01-70% chance that the characters will go unnoticed, unless they attract attention to themselves.

Should a miner encounter a player character at any time during this adventure, he will first attempt to ascertain who the person is and where he came from. Then they will attempt to talk the individuals into helping him to escape by the same route in which they gained entry. If the characters are unaccommodating, the miner will threaten to yell for the guards. If attacked, the miner will attempt to flee, but will fight for his life if necessary. If guards show up, the miner will act as if he's loyal to the wolfen.

Details of a Typical Miner

Race: The 50 or so *laborers* in the mine are mostly prisoners of war, or criminals guilty of some civil offense, or some political crime against the wolfen state. There are approximately 20 wolfen, 18 pixies, 2 dwarves, 3 goblin, one spriggan, one kobold, and five orcs.

Appearance: Miners wear filthy, tattered wool shirts, and baggy, patched pants and hard leather work boots. Their bodies are covered in dirt and stink of sweat. **Note:** Remember, the wolfen miners are slaves as much as anyone else and are eager to escape.



Tools and Equipment: Gear will vary with each individual, but will usually include a shovel, a one-handed pick, a two-handed pick axe, spikes, chisels and an oil lamp.

Once on dry ground, the characters will notice three large barrels cut in half (baths) in the shadows just beyond the table and chairs. In addition to the exit via the walkway across the pond, there are two other ways out of this area: southwest to a small storage room (11.) with its door wedged open, and southeast into a large supply room (12).

Plot Option 10.a.; Wolfen Guard Patrol

After the group enters the mine tunnels, there is a chance that they will encounter a wolfen guard patrol. Five such patrols, consisting of two legionaries, wander the three levels of the mine constantly, on the lookout for both geological and civil disturbances. The G.M. may divide up the patrols as he chooses, but might consider that a guard patrol is likely to appear in mine tunnels every 10 minutes. For the stats on the guards, see *Plot Option 3.a.*

11. Small Storage (Map) Room

The north door to this room is propped open by a wooden spike wedged under it; the same is true for the south door. There is an oil lamp resting on a small shelf on the north wall of this approximately ten foot square room. Against the west wall are more shelves, below which is a workbench with cupboards built into it below. There is a 10% chance that a *wolfen miner* will be standing in front of the bench and leaning over it, concentrating on writing notes.

On the shelves and surface of the bench are numerous scrolls, scroll cases, and drafting utensils. Some of the scrolls are displayed openly on the surface of the bench. A character who can read/write wolfen will be able to comprehend that they are maps of the mines and surrounding forest (5 mile area). Notes, written in wolfen, list ore samples,

troublemakers, and diagrams of the work under way. A character who attempts to comprehend the tunnel routes shown on the maps, but can **not** read them because he can not read wolfen, has only a 01-30% chance of correctly following the map. **Note:** One scroll is magic: Tongues spell equal to 6th level.

In the cupboards below the workbench is another oil lamp without the glass cover, 3 pint bottles of oil, a dozen candles, and fire making materials, along with three small wooden buckets, and a first-aid kit.

12. Equipment Supply Room

This is a large area, partly natural and partly excavated, measuring approximately 30ft x 40ft. The walls and center of the room are lined with storage cupboards, shelves and compartments for standard mine equipment such as rope, picks, and shovels. Although some equipment is missing (presumably in use), there is still quite a lot here. However, all the cupboards with sharp implements and oil are padlocked (the wolfen miner foreman on this level has the key).

A wooden door (closed) leads to the same corridor as that of room 11. From here the miners' sounds are just around the corner, to the south. The 8ft wide excavation will travel 15ft to the passage where the ore carts are pushed by miners along 3ft wide wooden gutters.

All excavated areas of the mine are *shored up* with thick wooden logs every 10ft (ceiling braces).

Trickling water can be faintly heard from the southeast corner of the room, where a door (closed) leads to a small chamber 10ft x 15ft where a wooden bench with spaced holes over buckets are located (toilets). The place smells of urine and defecation. Water is flowing out of a small hole in the east wall. Above it is a sign written in wolfen that reads: "Remember to wash out the bucket when you're done!"

13. The Miners at Work

Following the cart gutters southward will lead the characters to the area currently being worked by 12 miners; eight wolfen, a pixie named Defar, Drakk the goblin, Wyndan the dwarf, and a hob-goblin named Skoat. The dwarf, pixie and four wolfen are working the main vein of silver directly south, while the other six are laboring in a side passage to the east.

One of the wolfen miners, *Gragann*, has been promoted to foreman of this level, and has the keys to the cupboards in room 12. Since being given status over the others, Gragann's ego has been bloated out of all proportion and he has lost the friendship of the other slaves. However, this does not concern him, for he is convinced that he is on the way up, literally; the next available promotion will let him work the second level of the mine.

The mines in both tunnels are working with varying degrees of efficiency, chipping away and clearing rock, loading it into the cart, and every thirty minutes or so, taking a full cart to the *lift*, so the debris can be hoisted to the surface.

The pixie, Defar, knows about Cailynn's brother, *Clayed*. He is working as a servant in the blacksmith's shop somewhere on the surface level of the mine. Defar will gladly volunteer all his knowledge and assistance to free the others. The other eleven laborers will also volunteer to fight. The only problem will be the wolfen foreman, Gragann. Fortunately, Gragann is a self-serving coward who will meekly bow down to superior numbers. He won't join the rescue attempt and *will* betray them if he gets the chance (big brownie points with the authorities). However, he will allow himself to be tied up if the characters insist.

14. A Long Straight Tunnel

This tunnel is currently used for mining carts. This dank and barren place ends in a cave-in.

15. Elevator Shaft and Cart Lift

About 75ft away from the actual dig is the personnel elevator and the diagonal shaft through which the carts are pulled up to the next level. **The elevator** is essentially an 8ft × 8ft × 10ft wooden box with a cable attached. On the surface, stout ponies are used to pull the platform up with the use of pulleys. A similar technology is employed for the ore. Due to its great weight, it is pulled up a diagonal tunnel to the level above. From there it is pulled up a similar grade until it reaches the surface. Empty carts are lowered back down and stored on each level. **The carts** are 3ft wide by 4ft long and 4ft tall.

16. Storage Room

A small, 8ft × 10ft, room within which is stored candles, hard hats, hand tools, etc. This room is kept locked and the level foreman has the key. This room is very untidy, with many items precariously balanced on the limited shelf and hook space. Any character investigating the contents has a 1-40% chance of causing the contents of a shelf to come tumbling down. The crash will send a guard rushing to investigate within 1D6 melees.

MINE LEVEL 2

17. Upper Passage to 2nd Level the Ancient Pixie Tunnels

Remember the Illuminated Cave (#9)? Well, if anyone chooses to take the passage leading from the ledge 18ft above the floor of the cave, they will enter a labyrinth of tunnels used by the pixies of old.

Exploration of these cramped (as small as 3ft tall by 2ft wide) tunnels will lead to three places of note: **18.** A ledge overlooking a natural cave which the miners have breached and run cart-track through to section **19.** A sinkhole (vertical ascent) through which a character may reach the surface level of the mine. **And 17.a.** A dead-end passage at the end of which a *slab* of silver 15 inches tall by 24 inches wide is imbedded in the wall.

Plot Option 17.a.; the Tomb of the Grackyn

The silver slab is inscribed in ancient elven script. If successfully read, the plaque states:

"On the eve of the equinox, in the time when the *dead walk* the land, the warriors of the clans united as one and turned death. Great was the sacrifice to bring peace to this land. Moonstone and glamour-light is the key. Woe to the fool who enters this portal and awakens the beast within."

If the plaque is removed (requiring a total of P.S. 40), blinding light will spill forth from the small chamber beyond. Anyone looking directly at the light will be blinded for 1D6 minutes. All others caught by the light will take one minute for their eyes to grow accustomed to it, due to their time spent underground. While the opening will be fine for a 12 inch tall pixie, a larger creature will have to spend 2D4 × 10 minutes enlarging the hole.

Inside is a perfectly circular chamber, ten feet in diameter. Its ceiling is a 15ft high dome. In the center lies a circular dais, 5ft in diameter, of smooth, polished silver. The walls, floor and ceiling of the chamber are all also covered in silver, polished to a mirror-like finish. No ornamentation or markings mark the smooth finish of the silverwork. On the dais is a sarcophagus, also of silver, but shaped in the form of a massive *ape-like* being. The sarcophagus emits its own glow; a bright, white, magical light. An inscription on the base of the sarcophagus in the same archaic script reads: "Grackyn" — literally, *enemy of the people*. A closer inspection of the sarcophagus will indicate that it too is pure silver. Four clasps hold down the lid. The sliding of a peg out of a ring will open them. Anyone foolish enough to open the lid will see a *living* creature whose appearance matches that of the carved sarcophagus. It will appear to be sleeping and within 1D4 minutes after the lid is opened (the first time in centuries) the ape-thing will awaken! See the NPC section at the end of the adventure for the scary details.

18. Ledge Overlooking Cart Tracks

Following the narrow tunnels from section 17, north will lead to a cave where 20ft below, miners have excavated and laid cart tracks. A natural passage is located in the wall opposite the ledge.

19. Sinkhole to Surface Level

Following the winding tunnels from #17 southwest will lead to a sinkhole (a natural vertical shaft) which varies from 3 to 4ft in diameter and goes 60ft up to level one!

20. 2nd Level Mine Tunnels

These dark tunnels snake out like the roots of a tree. Each is no more than 8ft wide and are equipped with 3ft wide cart track guttering and shored up by wooden logs every 10ft.

Fifteen miners work on this level: 3 wolfen, a kobold, and an orc in the north tunnel; 4 pixies and a spriggan in the east tunnel; and 5 wolfen prisoners in the south tunnel. Additionally, 4 wolfen legionaries supervise this area at all times. About every 40 minutes, one miner from each of the mining crews pushes a cart full of ore or debris to area 21. Here it can be attached to a rope and pulled up to the surface level. An empty cart will be picked up here and brought back to the ore vein where the others are working.

Plot Option 20.a.; The Miners Discovery of the Grackyn Tomb
(G.M.s are encouraged to use this option.)

Shortly after the player characters left section 17, five wolven miners crack into a hollow chamber: *the tomb of the Grackyn* (see 17.a.). They enter the tomb and open the sarcophagus. The creature awakens to feast on its five redeemers. Horrible screams and the sound of combat send the other slaves, in the neighboring chamber, fleeing in terror. If the characters are near by, they will hear the blood curdling shrieks and see and hear panic stricken slaves running for their lives. If they go to investigate, they will encounter the Grackyn. See the Grackyn description at the end of this adventure.

21. Pony Lift to Surface Level

Here, carts of ore are attached to cords and pulled by stout ponies up to the surface level for processing.

22. Pony Lift from Level 3

Here, ponies walk westward, pulling carts of ore fastened to cables from the third level of the mine to the second. Once the carts have reached the second level, they are unhooked from the ponies, wheeled around the corner and hooked to another group of ropes to be pulled upward, by ponies to the surface. The second level ponies, meanwhile, walk around, through the stable and back, to where they wait for a new cart.

23. Empty Carts

This tunnel is where empty carts are stored for the miners.

24. Second Level Mine Gate

This heavy, wooden set of double doors is barred at the end of the day to insure that the miners (prisoners) who work on the second and third levels don't get away. If the Grackyn is loose, characters will hear the gut wrenching cries of another victim echoing from somewhere in the mine.

25. Prisoners' Quarters

This 30ft × 20ft room consists of twenty bunkbeds (to sleep forty) and wooden (unlocked) footlockers. The typical contents of each locker will be as follows:

One change of clothing; cloth shirt and pants.

An extra pair of sandals.

A bag with a small amount of food.

A wooden bowl, mug and spoon.

A bar of soap and a cloth for washing, rough cloth for drying.

And, one luxury (roll 1D6 once for each footlocker):

Die Roll Description:

- 1 Half drunk pint of whisky
- 2 Cloth wrapped around 1D6 nuggets of silver; 1D6 ounces each.
- 3 Cloth wrapped around an emerald weighing 1D6 ounces.
- 4 Cloth wrapped around a stolen dagger.
- 5 Folded up cloth and charcoal map of mine tunnels.
- 6 A pet: 6in. spider (non-poisonous); 1D6 H.P., Bite does 1D6 points of damage.

At the time the player characters enter the room, they see eight snoozing miners, 6 wolven and 2 pixies, each having a 10% chance of being awake. Loud noise will awaken them all. These miners are too frightened to join the group in rebellion and will plead for the characters to leave before they are discovered in their room. However, one or two *may* offer whatever information they know about the mines and guard activity. **Note:** If they have heard the screams of the Grackyn's victims, they will be awake, but too numbed with fear to be of help.

26. Prisoner's Toilet and Refuse Dump

15ft × 10ft, room. The far wall opens out into a deep, 100ft, pit. All refuse is dumped here. One miner, a kobold, will be using the toilet at the time the group enters room 25. He will listen to what occurs and depending on the outcome, may join the other miners in their rush to freedom.

27. Second Level Supervisor's Office

Since the person in charge of the second level is not a prisoner, he is given an office. On the west wall of this 10ft × 15ft room is a map detailing the entire layout of levels 2 and 3 of the mine. All notations are in wolven script. Against the south wall is a locked cabinet which contains three bottles of whisky, a bottle of brandy, and some clay goblets. Also inside is a small wooden box which contains 300 silver coins; all worth 5 gold each, for a total value of 1500 gold. There will be a wolven legionnaire (supervisor) in this office 90% of the time. The door to the corridor will always be shut, while the door to the supply room (28.) will remain open. When vacant, the door to the corridor is locked. See #28 for guard wolf.

Remus — The Supervisor

6th Level Soldier

Alignment: Miscreant

Height: 8ft, **Weight:** 380lbs

A.R.: 12, **S.D.C.:** 38 (studded leather)

Hit Points: 42 **Number of Attacks:** 3

Weapons: Battle axe — 3D6 damage, ball & chain — 2D8, and a normal dagger — 1D6. Also has a magic ring of *multiple images* (2 times daily), and a potion of healing (1D8 hit points).

Bonuses: +3 to parry/dodge, +6 to damage

Attributes of Note: I.Q. 13, P.S. 19, P.P. 14, all others average.

Description: Remus is a broad powerful veteran with a hatred toward humans. He is a foe not to be taken lightly. If the Grackyn has been on the prowl, Remus will assume the groups is responsible for the deaths and comotion. He will meet these "butchers" with anger and contempt in his heart and axe in hand.

28. Main Supply Room

A 20ft × 15ft locked room. Inside stored most of the tools and lamp oil that the miners could use as weapons. Most are locked inside well kept cupboards. A table and six chairs sits in the middle of this room which doubles as a meeting room/lounge for the foremen.

The reason why the door between rooms #27 and #28 is kept open is to provide the guard wolf with some room to wander. The wolf will instantly attack any stranger entering either room without the company of its wolven legionary master(s).

Guard Wolf

Size: 4ft long, 100lbs; **A.R.:** 6, **Hit Points:** 40

Number of Attacks: 2 bites doing 2D6 points of damage each

Bonuses: +8 to damage, +2 to strike, +4 to parry and dodge.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision — 30ft, Speed: 22, Prowl — 50%, Track — 85%.

29. Elevator to Surface Level

This is the same wooden elevator (8ft × 8ft × 10ft) as the one found operating on the third level. On the surface, stout ponies are used to pull the platform up with pulleys. If the Grackyn is on the lose, there is a 1-56% chance that he will be encountered here, as he climbs the wall of the shaft toward the surface.

LEVEL ONE

4. PIXIE PASSAGEWAY

5. CAVE

CAVE-IN

CAVE-IN PASSAGE OPENING

OPENING TO AREA 6 LEVEL TWO

31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53.

WELL

CAVE OPENING TO HILLSIDE

TO LEVEL

SCALE

0 5 10 15 20 25 FEET

N E S W

LEVEL ONE SURFACE



MINE LEVEL 1; SURFACE

30. Elevator Exit/Entry into Lower Mine Levels

Similar in description to areas #29 and #15. This is where the wooden platform begins vertical descent through the mine. Behind the elevator itself is a large pulley and rope arrangement, attached to a couple of ponies. When given the appropriate signal from below (a password changed with each 8 hour shift in the mine and given only to wolven legionaries), a legionary will command the ponies to operate the elevators. There are always 1D6+1 wolven guards. All are garbed in splint armor and carry swords and polearms. They are all spooked by the screams and confusion below. They will regard the player characters as enemies. Thus, they'll attack first and ask questions later. The Grackyn will easily defeat them. *See 3.a. for details about legionnaires.*

31. First Level Supervisor's Office

This 10ft × 15ft office is similar to its counterpart on the second level (#27). On the west wall behind the desk will be posted a map detailing the entire layout of all levels of the mine. Shelves on the south and north walls will hold scrolls with wolven notations about proposed tunnels and rock samples. A locked closet in the southeast corner contains a dozen spare cotton tunics, iron breastplates and short swords. A bucket of clean water, a sponge and a bar of soap (for washing up) set on a small table next to the closet, against the south wall.

The supervisor and his two assistants are present 90% of the time. None wear armor but are formidable opponents. The two aides have 22 hit points each and are +2 to parry, dodge, and damage. Each has a wolven short sword (2D6 damage). *Grint*, the supervisor is a one-eyed veteran whose cunning and quick reflexes make up for his 52 years of age. *Grint* is aberrant, has an I.Q. of 13, Spd. 4, has 4 attacks per melee, +3 to strike, +5 to damage, +5 to parry, and +3 to dodge. His favorite weapons are a pair of wolven-size nunchakus (2D8 damage, +4 to strike from W.P.) carried in a leather holster strapped to each hip. A little toy he picked up during his youthful days in the gladiatorial arena.

Skills of Note: As a 10th level Gladiator he can *disarm* an opponent on a "natural" roll of 18, 19 or 20, and *stun* on a natural roll of 17-20. Other skills include: Paired weapons, W.P. Net, W.P. Large Sword, W.P. Polearm (+4 to strike), W.P. Ball & Chain (+4 to strike); Speaks elf, goblin, northern, and eastern, all at about 80% efficiency, in addition to his own wolven tongue.

Note: *Grint* will try to subdue his foes for questioning and as new additions to the mine's slave force. He is a smooth, cool-headed, thinking warrior. If he is clearly outmatched, he will surrender to buy himself some time and strike when the moment is right. G.M.s can have a lot of fun with this sly old wolf. **Hit Points:** 61.

32. Legionnaire Guards' Quarters

This 30ft × 20ft room contains twenty-six staggered bunk beds and a fireplace in the southeast corner, with four chairs and a table nearby. There will be 2D6 wolven legionnaires sleeping in the room at any given time. A door in the south wall leads to the guard captain's quarters, 33. At the foot of each bunk bed are two padlocked wooden chests. Inside the chests are a legionary's helmet, spare bracers and greaves.

One dress cape and helmet.

2 changes of clothing; cloth tunics and pants.

An extra pair of sandals.

An extra short sword and dagger.

An iron breastplate and greaves.

And, one luxury item (roll percentile dice):

01-10 Cloth pouch with 6D6 hard candies.

11-20 Small wooden box with 1D6 × 10 in gold coins.

21-30 Leather pouch with 2D4 × 10 in silver coins.

31-40 Cloth wrapped around 1D20 nuggets of silver; worth 10 gold each.

41-50 Cloth wrapped around a piece of jewelry worth 1D4 × 100 gold.

51-60 Cloth wrapped around a gemstone worth 2D4 × 100 gold.

61-70 A fine bottle of wine or rum.

71-80 A skeleton key for all the mine's gates/doors.

81-90 A suit of studded leather armor; sorry wolven size.

91-00 Pouch of fine Timiro chewing tobacco.

33. Legionary Guard Captain's Quarters

A tidy 10ft × 20ft room containing a wooden bed against the east wall, above which is fastened two shelves containing scrolls in leather cases. The scrolls are written in wolven and will be romanticized military histories of the captain's exploits. At the foot of the bed is a padlocked chest with contents similar to those described in #32, but roll 3 times for luxury items. Likewise, there's a padlocked locker beside the bed. Inside is a bottle of Eastern brandy, a jar of jam, gold wreath of honor (worth 300 gold). A bucket of clean water, a sponge and a bar of soap, are sitting on a small table with a chair against the north wall. Both doors into this room will be locked. There is a 32% chance the captain will be present. He is a 7th level soldier with an I.Q. of 15 and average attributes, loyal and capable. The polearm is his weapon of choice. **Hit Points:** 38.

34. First Level Supply Room

A 15ft × 20ft storeroom filled with soap, rags, slave clothes, ten 50ft lengths of rope, six dozen wooden spikes and hammers, three empty trunks, and an empty five gallon kettle (weighs about 50lbs).

35. Mine Supervisor's Quarters and Office

The door to this room is locked. 50 S.D.C. of damage to the lock, or a pick lock skill will open it. A comfortable 10ft × 20ft bedroom with lounge chair, a footstool, and a bookshelf. Two handwritten (in wolven) leather bound books rest on the shelf. One is a book on how to identify precious metals and stones; the other, on military formations.

Also in the bedroom is a 4ft × 2ft and 2ft tall tent made of bed sheets. Inside this tent a cushion, made up like a bed, and a few flat stones, covered with cloth, for furniture. **G.M. Note:** This is where the *pixie princess Royanna* is being kept as the head mine supervisor's, *Lord Agnar* personal servant. She is free to roam the supervisor's suite, but is locked inside his apartments. Since all his chests and lockers are padlocked, she cannot acquire a weapon to kill him. She is required to keep the place clean, and occasionally, when *Agnar* invites the other wolven supervisors and guard captain in for an evening of drinking, she is forced to humiliate herself by dancing on the meeting room table for their pleasure. In her free time she has been memorizing the passageways on the wall maps, and has been attempting to teach herself the wolven language (she is now 10% proficient). She is **NOT** presently in the room.

There is a door to an adjoining meeting room. Maps of the mine and proposed excavations are posted on every wall. A large wooden table and eight chairs are in the center of the room. On the west wall are two four foot shelves with several scrolls of mine and rock data in wolven script. Below these shelves is a locked cabinet which contains

six bottles of brandy and twelve glasses. Cutlery, plates, mugs, candles-ticks and table linen are also kept here.



36. Legionnaire Entry Corridor into the Mine

This corridor is 6ft wide and 10ft high, and free of cart tracks. Doors to rooms 32, (2), 33, 34, and 35 (one for each of bedroom and meeting room) face into it.

37. Pony Lift from Level Two

Similar in description and function to area #22.

38. Empty Carts

Identical to area #23.

39. Surface Level Mine Tunnels

There has been a cave-in at the southern end of the excavation. As a safety precaution, this area has been closed off behind locked gates, barring the two access tunnels. Should any character venture down these tunnels, they will have a 01-20% chance of causing a cave-in for every 10ft travelled. If a cave-in occurs, a 2D6ft area will collapse. Characters caught in the falling rubble will suffer 2D6 points of damage and will suffocate unless they are dug out within 6 melees. **G.M. Note:** The cave-in is not likely to be fatal and victims can usually be dug out in 4 melees. However, there is a 01-40% chance that 1D4 Wolfen legionaries will come to investigate within 2D6 melees.

Should someone reach the end of the south tunnel, he will notice a large crack of daylight. If a few rocks are removed, he will find himself outside the mine and near the wolfen palisade.

40. Sealed Off Tunnel

This tunnel has been sealed behind a locked wooden gate due to a cave-in. However, the cave-in provided an opening to a passage which, if followed, will lead to the cave-in mentioned in area #6. Some of the pixies originally used this passage to escape the mine. Anyone taking this passage will risk a 01-30% chance of causing a cave-in (see cave in effects described in area #39).

41. Natural Tunnel to Aboveground Hillside

This tunnel is reached by climbing up the *sinkhole* described in #19. Venturing 25ft into the tunnel will bring the characters to a cave. The cave floor slopes downward into a deep dark pool. The only way around the pool, if one wishes to remain dry, is to attempt to walk along a 6 inch wide ledge circling the north end of the cave; P.P. rolls will be required for each character. Any character falling into the dark water will be immediately attacked by 1D6 Giant White Leeches!

Giant White Leeches

Length: 8 to 10 inches, **Diameter:** 3-4 inches

A.R.: 4, **Hit Points:** 2D6

Attack Description: Sucker-like mouth attaches itself to any exposed area of skin, then thousands of tiny teeth sink in to hold onto prey.

Attacks Per Melee: One; initial bite does 1D6 damage. Plus, the leech does an additional 1 point of damage each melee it is attached. Unfortunately, the only way to get the leech to let go of its victim is to sprinkle it with salt, or touch it with a hot brand, or flaming end of a torch.

Should one attempt to remove a leech by force, or kill it by striking it with a blunt or sharp weapon, it will release a poison into its victims wound, causing 2D6 hit points of damage. Roll to save vs poison.

Having successfully passed through the leech cave, the adventurers will find themselves in a cave opening out onto the hillside, west of the wolfen encampment. Bats, spiders and insects of all kinds occupy the mouth of this cave.

SURFACE ENCAMPMENT

42. Main Gate to Wolfen Mine Encampment

This gate is built into the 18ft spiked, wooden palisade walls which encircle the main camp and the mine entrance. The gate is made of

reinforced steel and opens inward. A large wooden beam holds the gate shut in case of an attack by hostile forces, and is only opened if the all-clear is announced by the lookout stationed above. Two long bowmen are stationed in the tower at all times. The gate station is 8ft wide and stretches the full 16ft span of the gate, supported on thick wooden legs. Wooden stairs lead down each side of the platform.

43. Courtyard

A large open area measuring 40ft wide and 70ft long at its greatest points. In the northern section is a well, beyond which are found the two tracked and one clear entrances into the mine. 1D6 wolfen soldiers can be found in this area at all times.

44. Grain Storehouse

This 20ft × 25ft room, entered from the courtyard, is the place where the camp's grains and other foodstuffs are stored. In the northwest corner is a door leading to an office where the on-duty officer in charge of the food supplies is stationed.

45. Kitchen and Legionnaires' Mess

Three main courses are prepared here each day; one for each eight hour shift. Five cooks are permanently at work preparing, cleaning and serving meals to the hungry soldiers. There are also pots of stew, bread, and watered ale for the slaves. The cooks will try to alert the camp if they spy an intruder.

46. Woodworking Shop and Lumber Storehouse

Here wooden supports are fashioned from timber cut from the surrounding hillsides. Tool handles, benches, carts and additional gutter track are also constructed here. A small office exists in the northwest corner for the on-duty carpenters to relax between assignments. Inside the office are two couches, four chairs, a long table, a small end table, and shelves on the west wall. The shelves hold various scrolls with plans and notes about various objects to be constructed. Other plans are nailed up on the wall. 2D6 wolfen carpenters (each equal to a second level soldier) are present at any given time.

47. New Tool Storage Shed

A 10ft × 15ft shed, entered from the courtyard or the wood shop, contains newly finished tools. There are four dozen axe/pick handles, a dozen picks, and a dozen shovels. The carpenters, smiths and supervisors have the keys to this locked shed.

48. Pony Stables

This is where the extra ponies are stabled, fed and cared for. There is room for 16 ponies in this 40ft × 30ft area. It may be entered from the courtyard or the blacksmith's workshop to the north. 1D6 laborers will be present at any time. The ponies are all wild eyed and, stomping, breying, and kick, because they can sense the presence of the Grackyn and are instinctively terrified.

49. Blacksmith's Workshop

A 20ft × 25ft area where four smiths toil night and day, making the metal products necessary to continue the mine's operation. This includes nails, tools, picks, axes, wheel rims, keys, locks, horseshoes, and numerous other products. Two of the smiths are wolfen, the other two are orcs. They will all join in any battle with renegade slaves.

Plot Option 49.a.; Cailynn's Brother, Clayed

G.M.s: If you have incorporated plot *Option 8.a.* into the adventure, you may wish to have Cailynn's brother, *Clayed*, alive and working as an assistant in the blacksmith's workshop. He is well liked by the wolfen smiths, although treated like a slave. The orcs see him as a snack. He is permitted to sleep in a corner (not underground like the other prisoners) and eat with them in the mess.

During his imprisonment, Clayed has not been idle. He's been learning all he can about smithing, and has acquired several nails which he's sharpened to needle-like points and buried near his bed. He has been trying to learn where princess Royanna is being kept so he might try to rescue her. For this reason he does what he is told and is friendly to his wolfen masters. Clayed has the same stats as a common pixie; see #1.

The wolfen are equal to 2nd level legionnaires, are of aberrant alignment and have 20 hit points each. The orcs are 3rd level mercs with 26 hit points each. Both wield axes, are +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to damage, and are *mean* (miscreant).

50. Silver Ingot Storehouse

The only entry into this 20ft × 20ft *treasure room* is through a locked reinforced door (200 S.D.C.). Six legionaries are posted at all times. A seventh legionary acts as a clerk, recording each item which enters or leaves the storehouse. Stacked on wooden platforms within are smelted bricks of silver, awaiting the arrival of the next wagon train back to wolfen civilization. Also stored here are ingots of imported iron — used by the smith to fashion tools and other metal products for the mine. Captain Agnar is the only individual with a key to this room. Presently, there is about a ton of silver in 5lb bricks (that's 400 bricks). Each brick is worth about 200 gold. **Note:** Salt covers the floor to keep out faerie folk.

The Seven Legionaries

(Applies to all unless otherwise noted.)

Alignment: Aberrant or Unprincipled

Attributes: Average

Level of Experience: 4th

Hit Points: 1.) 29, 2.) 27, 3.) 40, 4.) 36, 5.) 38, 6.) 32, 7.) the clerk: 22

Armor: Splint; A.R. 16, S.D.C. 85

Weapons: Giant-size halberds doing 4D6 damage, wolfen short sword doing 2D6 damage and conventional dagger doing 1D6.

Note: #6 is the squad leader and he possesses an invisible morning star (giant) that does 2D8 damage and is +2 to strike and parry. He also wears a medallion of protection from magic, +1 to save, and has two yellow smoke bombs to signal for help.

Attacks Per Melee: Two

Bonuses: +4 to damage, +3 to parry and dodge.

G.M. Note: The seven wolfen will make a great commotion, howling and shouting, to alert the camp if they are attacked. 2D6 follow legionaries will join the battle within two melees (all have similar stats). These guards and reinforcements are too isolated to know about the Grackyn. The Grackyn will shun the storehouse because it contains "moonstones".

Six additional soldiers and Fal, the wolfen wizard, will arrive in 2D4 melees. See NPCs that follow shortly.

51. Ore Refining Area

This 40ft × 40ft area is where the raw metal ore of the mine is brought to be smelted into pure ingots of silver. 10 prisoners (3 pixies, 7 wolfen) take the ore from the area where it is dumped, crush it on granite mortars to the consistency of gravel, and wash it in wooden troughs fed by a diverted mountain stream. It is then placed in bowl shaped furnaces, built of stones and lined with clay, set on the edge of a

depression carved out of the ground. Twenty wolven craftsmen man the ovens. Once the slag has been drained from an opening at the front of the furnace, the ingots are lifted from the furnace with a long rod and allowed to cool. Once cool, they are taken to the ingot storehouse (#50). Five wolven legionaries stand guard in this area.

52. Tavern Tent

Operated by an entrepreneurial wolven merchant, this watering hole is the favorite recreation spot for most off-duty legionaries. The ale is not watered, and the food is better cooked and of a wider variety than that available within the encampment, although priced accordingly. Wolven serving wenches provide entertainment as exotic dancers, and bunks are available in another tent in the rear. 3D4 wolven warriors will be present at any time. **Note:** The merchant will avoid combat and flee with his wenches at the first sign of serious trouble.

53. Merchant Tents and Stalls

Recognizing that the well paid soldiers operating the mine are a lucrative source of revenue, an increasing number of wolven merchants have been setting up their tents outside and to the east of the palisade.

54. Graveyard

CONCLUSION

As indicated in the introduction, this adventure is one which, if all the options are fully employed, may take off in *many* directions, providing hours of fun and action for the players.

Ideally, the characters will free the captured pixies, especially the princess, and do what they can to discourage the wolven miners from continuing their activities. Should the Grackyn get loose, it will help to discourage further mine activities (at least for the short term), but eventually, if the beast is not killed, it will begin a nightly terror campaign throughout the nearby woodlands. If the characters get away with the pixies, leaving the Grackyn wreaking havoc in the tunnels of the mine, a later adventure (after a pixie celebration feast to thank them) might have the adventurers reenter the tunnels to destroy the great fanged ape.

Non-Player Characters of Significance

The Mining Supervisor

Lord Agnar, Captain of the 51st Legion

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 14, M.A. 8, P.S. 21, P.P. 12, P.E. 10, P.B. 8, Spd. 18

Level of Experience: 7th Level Knight

Hit Points: 45

Attacks Per Melee: Three

Bonuses: +9 to damage, +3 to parry and dodge, critical strike on a "natural" 18, 19 or 20, +4 to save vs magic.

Skills of Note: W.P. polearm (+3 to strike, +3 to parry), W.P. large sword (+3 to strike, +4 to parry), W.P. blunt (+3 to strike, +2 to parry), W.P. small shield, W.P. lance, medical 80/84%; speaks elven and goblin — 98%, northern — 80%, and wolven, of course, faerie lore — 80%.

Armor: Plate; A.R.: 17, S.D.C.: 160; magical, so it is weightless and impervious to fire.

Weapons: *Locknaramar*, a lesser rune sword (cursed) with the following

mystic properties: I.Q. 18, alignment: anarchist, telepathic communication with Agnar, indestructible, dark grey in color, adds a saving throw of +4 vs all magic, impervious to charm magic, does 5D6 damage.

The Curses: 1) Glow: The sword user glows white; it reduces the person's P.B. by 2 points, attracts insects, and makes him the target of any melee attack. 2) Heat: The victim is always hot, even in cold weather. 3) The curse of cravings causes the sword user to hunger for beetles and/or grubs 1D4 times a day (*See High Seas*, pg 48, for details).

Description: Agnar is a frightening sight, standing 7ft 10 in tall, powerfully built and aglow with an eerie white light. Even his own troops fear Agnar and believe him to be under a mystical curse. This is a correct assumption, for the wolven lord is the victim of his cursed rune sword. A curse that makes him the subject of suspicion, plagued by flies, and compelled to eat grubs. However, the weapon's added might and resistance to magic offsets the curses, or at least to Agnar they do.

The captain of the 51st legion is a tough, aggressive warrior, with a keen head for strategy and a powerful sword arm. What experience and knowledge he may lack is provided by the mystic intelligence of his rune sword. Together, they are a dangerous force. Agnar's ambition to become a wolven general has made him ruthless. The success of this mining operation will send him up the ladder of success. There is already talk of a promotion. Thus, he will fight at whatever cost to keep the mine operating.

However, he is nobody's fool, and will not throw his life away out of revenge. If he is beset by the player characters, a slave revolt, and the undead monkey thing, he will ultimately release the pixies, slay the other slaves, cave-in the mine and claim supernatural intervention (certainly his men will confirm the presence of magic and the demon monkey). Agnar's reputation and the prestige of having already providing the wolven empire with 4.5 million in silver will make the story wash.

If Agnar survives this adventure he will long for revenge against all those who were party to his defeat at the mine. Game Masters take advantage of this character as a returning villain.

The Princess Royanna

The pixie princess is the plaything of *Lord Agnar*. Although he has never physically tortured her, he delights in tormenting her with her captivity. Agnar forces her to wait on him like a slave and degrade herself by performing like a puppet on a string. Royanna must comply or see her fellow pixie captives endure slow torture and death. The price of life for her people is slavery, but it affords them time to plan an escape.

Royanna is *always* at Captain Agnar's side. When outside the confines of his quarters, he attaches a silver collar around her neck and chain leash and leads her around as one would a dog. Or he makes her sit on his massive left shoulder with the chain attached to his breastplate; a living ornament.

To free Royanna, the adventurers *will* have to confront Agnar. Again, depending on circumstance, the wolven lord may release her to insure his own survival. **Note:** Captain Agnar's twisted code of honor and knightly chivalry will prevent him from hurting the princess. Likewise, his word of honor will not be broken although he may seek vengeance later.

The Wizard Fal

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 14, P.E. 20, P.S. 15, Spd. 22, all others average.

Level of Experience: 3rd level

Hit Points: 27

Hand to Hand Attacks Per Melee: One

Spell Attacks Per Melee: One; can cast 5 spells per day.

Bonuses: +2 vs magic and poison

Spell Knowledge: Charismatic aura, charm, sense magic, blinding flash, water to wine, carpet of adhesion, magic net, wisps of confusion, dowsing, rock to mud, identify minerals, extinguish fires, sphere of daylight, tongues and cloud of slumber.

Skills of Note: Read and write wolven and elven — 90%; speak wolven, elven, goblin, each at 98%; northern and western at 90%, medical — 64/66%, W.P. blunt.

Armor: Cloak of armor; A.R.: 14, S.D.C.: 60

Weapons: Giant Mace — 2D8 damage, and 2 silver daggers — 2D6 damage.

Magic Weapons and Items: Blackjack that does 2D4 damage and can create a blinding flash three times daily. Ring of chameleon, last 20 melees, twice daily. Scroll (1) Strength of Utgard Loki and Boots of Fleetness which double the wearer's speed (in this case, to a speed of 44 or about 30mph).

Description: Fal is 100% loyal to Lord Agnar and will obey his every command without question. Both Fal and Agnar see each other as loyal allies and as a means to attain personal glory and power.

A Typical Wolven Soldier

See Section 3.a.

The Common Pixie

A short (average 12 inch tall), handsome and slender people, with fair complexion and flaming red hair. They are by nature merry and carefree, with a tendency to mischief when frustrated or in need of attention. Their behavior has been compared to that of a young child (age 6). They are not adept with social skills; their efforts to communicate often sound rude, arrogant, or indifferent, and occasionally, taunting or malicious. In negotiations, a tendency exists to be vague, and they tend to interpret any agreement as desired, within the literal understanding of the words used to define it. Pixies have some trouble thinking in the long term, and since they recognize this to some extent, they try to avoid making extended commitments. Their opinions and emotions also tend to change quickly and often without consideration of a previous long-standing relationship.

Pixie Natural Abilities Include: Flight, nightvision (60ft), dayvision, willful invisibility, prowl — 60%, pick pockets — 50%, pick locks — 40%, locate secret compartments — 48%, +2 to dodge, see invisible, identify plants/fruit — 50%, locate water — 40%. Pixies possess no psionics.

Pixie Magic Spells Include: Charm, cloud of slumber, tongues, wind rush, sphere of light, mend wood/clay, circle of rain. Resistance requires a saving throw of 14 or higher. Spell strength (duration) is equivalent to that of a 10th level wizard. The same spell may not be cast on the same person within a 24 hour period. They have *three magic attacks per melee*. See Pixies in the Palladium RPG, pg 225, for more details.

Pixie Attributes (roll the designated number of dice): I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 2D6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 1D6, P.P. 4D6, P.E. 2D6, P.B. 4D6, Spd. 4D6 land, × 10 for flight.

Hit Points: P.E. × 4

Grackyn

"Enemy of the People"

Size: 5ft tall, **Weight:** 400lbs

Alignment: Diabolic

Attributes: I.Q. 7, M.E. 20, M.A. 10, P.S. 20, P.P. 20, P.E. 30, Spd. 20

Experience Level: Not applicable

Hit Points: 82

Natural A.R.: 8 **Horror Factor:** 13

Natural Abilities: Nightvision — 120ft, climb — 88%, prowl — 60%, track by smell — 50%, magic and psionic resistant: +8 to save. Impervious to cold and fire, impervious to poison and *normal* weapons! Can also bioregenerate 41 hit points instantly, four times a day. A night predator, it rarely hunts in daylight (sensitive eyes). Speaks ancient elven and broken goblin (62%).

Weaknesses: Completely vulnerable to weapons made of "moonstone or glamour light" (silver or magic weapons do full damage). Also hates bodies of water because it can not swim and could be drowned. Poor day vision, limited to about 30ft range.

Attacks Per Melee: Four; retractable claws do 2D6 damage, bites do 3D6 damage, or it can use a weapon (usually sword or blunt).

Bonuses: +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to strike and +5 to damage (P.S. bonus that applies only to claw or weapon attacks, not bite). Remember, +8 to save vs magic and psionics.

Armor: None

Psionic Abilities: Sense psionics with 360ft range, presence sense, and sense/feel fear (which it relishes) are its only psi-abilities. All are automatic, no expenditure is needed.

Life Span: Immortal?

Description: *The Enemy of the People* is an evil undead creature from another dimension. Its appearance is that of a snow white, tiny (5ft tall), but demonic version of a Grimbor or gorilla. Four 6 inch fangs and rows of serrated teeth, like a shark's, protrude from its curled lips. The mouth is huge, like that of a baboon, and capable of biting a man's throat in half.

Its long, powerful ape-like arms end in an ape's hand, but a huge hand, twice the size of a human's, with retractable claws. The feet too, are equipped with retractable claws, adding to the Grackyn's prowess as both a hunter and a predator.

Grackyns are ancient being that have not stalked the world in over 10,000 years. Only the oldest elven histories write of these dread vampiric cannibals that feed on the flesh and blood of humanoids. One of the most famous passages regarding the Grackyn is presented in the **Tristine Chronicles**.

"Chaos reigns this day in Trindalgar, City of the Eastern Sea, for the enemy of the people stalks anew. (G.M. Note: This city no longer exists, but was located at the northeasternmost tip of the Old Kingdom, across from Lopan. The mine Grackyn could be the same one). No single darkness, save the Dreaded Old Ones, has plagued the immortals and manlings alike. Each time that it is believed that light has, at last, smitten the enemy of the people, does the darkness resurface. Damned be the fool who opened the portal, so many eons past, to let these monsters into the world of elves and light."

The Chronicles recount this letter from an emissary in Trindalgar at the time.

"For the 20th night the Grackyn has feasted. The half eaten body of a maiden was discovered shortly past the witching hour. But it was near dawn that I was party to the most ghastly discovery. Captain Imneel, renowned vampire hunter, warrior and mage, was found murdered outside the regent's manor. The spine was broken at the neck and protruding from an ugly bite. His stomach and internal organs were torn away and presumably eaten. But there is more. Words were formed out of the good captain's entrails. They said, 'I am the hunter.' Three of the five men accompanying me, each a veteran of war, lost their stomachs. I could barely do more than glimpse at the abomination that lay before me, and fear that its memory shall haunt me for the rest of my days."



The Grackyn is last mentioned in this passage of the Tristine Chronicles believed to have been written 200 years later:

"...and 'lo the last enemy of the people has been expelled into the wilderness fit for no man nor beast. It flees before the anger of man and the light of magic. For vulnerable to the weapons of the rune and metal of silver, man hath pledged to slay the demons who dare to suck the marrow from his bones."

Is it possible that this is the same grackyn who would later meet defeat at the hands of the pixies?

G.M.s Playing the Grackyn

Like its vampire cousin, the Grackyn is difficult to kill. Even when destroyed by magic or decapitated by a silver blade, there is still a 01-28% chance that the creature will rematerialize to stalk again. If the corpse is left intact, the nightmare thing will rise again in 1D4 days. The only sure way to stop it, is to place its remains in a coffin or other human-size container made of pure silver and lock it. This will keep the beast in a coma-like state of suspended animation until some fool opens the container. This is exactly what the pixies of old did, then sealing it deep inside a forgotten silver lined cave.

When the "enemy of the people" awakens, it will be ravenous and immediately search for prey. Humanoid prey! However, the Grackyn is not stupid or foolish, it will flee from any foe(s) who seem to possess enough "glamour light and/or moonstone" to kill it. Unfortunately, for our heroes, Grackyn are notoriously vicious, cruel, and vindictive. It will resent any being that was able to thwart it and will secretly stalk him (them), waiting for the moment to exact its murderous revenge.

The monster will get cocky and take unreasonable chances if it meets with little fight from its initial kills. The wolfen soldiers and slaves are all helpless quarry as their weapons can not hurt the Grackyn. Its eons of captivity and blood lust are likely to send the creature into a killing frenzy, killing and torturing for the mere enjoyment.

If it is the player characters who set it free the thing will suddenly leap out of the coffin and stop to survey its rescuers and potential meals. It will lick its chops hungrily and say in a guttural, rasping voice (speaks ancient elven or broken goblin): "Ahhh. Krryl walks again among the man things. I will repay your kindness with a swift death." Its lips curl into a grotesque smile, revealing all of its teeth. However, it pauses and stretches as I might do to enjoy a cool breeze on a hot summer day. "Ooowew, do you feel it?" the Grackyn will ask. "The portal. Somebody is opening the portal. He, Hee, Hee, so it is fate then, that I be here to welcome my undead brethren." The Grackyn will not mention the portal again and will attack. The presence of powerful "glamour light" (if the Grackyn loses 70 or more hit points) will send the creature running into the tunnels, shouting behind it: "You shall die, but first I must feed."

If the Grackyn *flees* from the player characters or if it is **set free by NON-player characters**, the rest of the adventure will be punctuated with blood curdling screams off in the distance and people stumbling across mutilated and/or half eaten corpses of wolfen and pixies. This, of course, could change the complexion of the adventure, sending wolfen soldiers scurrying to find the demon responsible for these atrocities. A nice terrifying scene might be the Grackyn standing atop the fallen bodies of a dozen wolfen soldiers, while fighting (toying) with another half dozen wolfen who are clearly on the losing end of this battle.

If the players are responsible for the Grackyn's release, they should be made to feel that it is their duty to stop it *now*, before it gets out of the caves and kills even more innocent people. Characters of a good alignment will have no other recourse. **Note:** At some point the player characters must hear the Grackyn comment about the "portal" being opened to release more of his "undead brethren." This foreshadows the horror of the next adventure.

AVAXA'S GATE

By Grant S. Boucher & Jeffrey Gomez

Written One Week Past,
Found in the Great Chest of Avaxa;
To The High Order of Warlocks, Byzantium:

I am not one who takes to writing down my experiments. In fact, I have never done so before, and despise doing so now. However, the new world begins today and I shall take the credit that is my due. To that end I now begin the summary.

I, Avaxa, Master of Warlocks and traveler of all the known planes, have succeeded in binding four Major Elementals to do my bidding. This in itself is a magnificent accomplishment, worthy of high praise from the Order. But these immortals have a higher purpose to fulfill.

They have all agreed, through the most skillful of negotiations, to aid me in the completion of my greatest magic. I have spent nearly a century fine-tuning the apparatus at the top of my frost-encrusted tower among the trees. My assistant and familiar, Migway, has recovered the final component this very morning.

My youth is lost, my vast fortunes pawned to amoral immortals, but the Gate shall be opened. When this new and unique spell has been finally cast, I will cross over into the Realm of the Dead, and the dead shall enter the Realm of the Living. I shall gain ultimate power as I join the undead, and the fools that barred my ascension to the High Order will pay the greatest of prices.

They may learn the cause of their world's demise, or they may die in complete, stupefied ignorance. I hope they learn who it was that let the dead run free across their precious world. Avaxa, Lord of Gates, shall go down in what little history the living have left to write.

I begin the final incantation at midnight. No one can stop what I have wrought. No one.

— The Elven Summoner-Warlock, Lord Avaxa

FROM A DEAD LORD'S POINT OF VIEW

Word has swept south with an alarming swiftness. Warlocks and Summoners from the Eastern Territory, to Timiro, to the Old Kingdom have been abuzz with the news of a strange occurrence deep within the Great Northern Wilderness. News that a spectacular detonation preceded the fall of a towering warlock's keep nearly 75 miles due west of the Algor Mountains drifts into bars and taverns, reaching bands of adventurers across the southern civilizations. Several expeditions were launched to investigate in the days that have followed. Towns along the southern shore of the Algorian Sea have been especially nervous with regard to unusual activities in the wilderness of late, and may go so far as to sponsor such research. This adventure will detail the bizarre discoveries of one of those expeditions . . .

G.M. Notes on Bringing in the Party

What happened to Avaxa? Did his spell succeed? Are the dead arriving to plague the living by the thousands? Suffice to say, something did go terribly wrong, and the answers will come to the Player Characters, one by one.

The party is assumed to be between adventures at this time. Perhaps they are travelling the roads of Palladium on their way to some mysterious destination. They might be camping outside of a nearby town, dividing treasure and arguing over the spoils. Wherever they are, the call for hardy investigators will have reached them within days after an explosion shook the Northern Wilderness. Their curiosity will take them to any of several port villages on the northern coast of the Eastern

Territory. These townships were afforded a clear view of the forest vista that evening, and there are several eyewitnesses who will each, more or less, describe the following:

"The night was cloudy, but the clouds were high and the air was like crystal for hundreds of miles. Suddenly, a sheen of light, like a crown or a dome, rose from the trees 70 or 75 miles west of Bartok, the westernmost mountain in the Algor chain. The light, a burnt orange in hue, rose like a great beam into the sky. Where it touched the clouds, they simply rolled back — as if the hand of a god were sweeping them aside! Then there was a burst, a tiny glint from deep within the forest, followed a moment later by the sound of thunder. Something went wrong and a bad 'feeling' seemed to rush across the sea, to spread over the sleeping villages. There were many nightmares that night. Nightmares of the dead, of corpses pushing out of the ground to shamble through the lands.... On the horizon, the great sheens of light had gone white, then brown, then a brilliant red, and finally an incandescent blue which faded into darkness. Since that eve, the forest seems to have returned to peace. But the nightmares have continued!"

Although sparse, this should be enough information for the adventurers to plot out their next move. While they will get no help from frightened constables or rival parties, they will be offered a fisherman's passage across the Algorian Sea and the chance of keeping whatever treasures or artifacts they may find — so long as any menace unleashed by this sorcery has been duly dealt with.

What all townsfolk and officials will have avoided mentioning is the fact that this so-called "Warlock's Keep" is situated in the very heart of Wolfen territory. If the notion of tangling with wolfen puts the party off, word of the warlock's grand treasure trove should prove to be an adequate counterweight!

THE PORTAL

Journeys either by land (at five days) or by sea (one and a half days) will be uneventful. It is unseasonably cool, even for this far north, but the waters will be calm, the woods quiet. Either path will land the party on the edge of northwesternmost bay of the Algorian Sea. This should leave a 150 mile journey through the Great Northern Wilderness to the last leg of the party's trek. But the very first twilight thereafter will take the adventurers on a much stranger course. **The following should be described to the party as they approach a clearing in the forest from a couple of hundred yards to the south:**

The air tingles with strange energies, causing everybody's hair to stand on end. Minor prickling shocks and flashes dance across your bodies. A low pulsing sound surrounds you as the sun suddenly seems engulfed in unnatural darkness. The air itself seems to run an inky black, enveloping and blinding all of you. An icy chill cuts through your armor and robes, and weird tendrils of power caress you like a living serpent. Those with psionics can literally feel the presence of evil clawing around them. But, before you can act, that evil is gone. The darkness fades, and the wisps of energy and the throbbing noise trails off to the north. Suddenly, it is freezing out.

As the party, weapons drawn and spells ready, stalks north, the terrain will tell a tale of its own. Within 40 yards of the aforementioned clearing, the trees have grown dull and lifeless, their leaves browning, their bark hanging loosely from their boughs. Icicles hang from their branches, layers of frost over their limbs — they are frozen solid! Astute players take note of the direction the leaves of the trees are frozen into place (i.e., away from the direction of the clearing). The ground is now slick with ice, and someone may even notice the eerie sight of a large black squirrel, eyes wide, tail pointing straight up behind it, frozen solid, locked in mid-scamper; the victim of some horribly instantaneous wave of cold. Frosted bluejays are frozen like tiny ice statues on the branches of a fallen birch!



The final yards will bring the party to a destination which is more crater than clearing. The fresh snow will indicate that they are the first to arrive at this place, the site of what must have been a smaller, more recent explosion than the one closer to the mountains.

The crater itself is ten yards in diameter. The trees and foliage around its perimeter have been blown to dust or knocked over; bent away at odd angles from the blast zone. To the west stands a set of large, frosted boulders. Stuck fast to them, fifteen feet off the ground, is an enormous flash-frozen moose! Antlers skewed, hooves sticking straight out into the air, legs parallel to the earth, the poor beast must have been grazing in the area when it all began.

Hanging some 30 feet above the bottom of the crater is a softly glowing silver door. Turning slowly, counterclockwise, the door seems to thrum and pulse, the source of the sounds and energies holding the area in thrall.

G.M. Notes: It will take a bit of creativity on the part of the Player Characters to investigate this doorway any further. Keep in mind that the crater is half filled with ice, and it should be hard to move around in it. Adventurers may stand on each other's shoulders, tie their ten foot poles together, or what have you, to reach the air bound door. Once the door itself is touched, it will lower to a more manageable level, and wait to be touched again (inanimate objects will fall harmlessly away from it).

Anyone who touches the door with any part of their body at this point, however, will be instantly seized by unseen forces and plunged through the doorway!

There will be no pain. The door itself is not an evil thing, though it does radiate magic. If only one party member happens to have gone through the door, the rest must quickly decide what to do. Help is

hundreds of miles away at least. There is really no way of magically pulling their companion back. Men of magic will recognize the door as an unusual *dimensional portal*, but a portal to where? In the end, party loyalty, alignment, and friendship should press the adventurers to, at the very least, attempt a rescue.

If, on the other hand, no one touches the door, and the area is soon vacated, then the door will vanish in a couple of days. The party's caution will cost them a few more days travel in getting to the site of the warlock's destroyed tower.

THE REALM OF ICE AND SNOW

A fleeting shock of vertigo, followed by a tumbling sensation, will overwhelm each adventurer as he passes through the silver door. After the last member steps through, read them this description:

You have fallen about 15 feet into a crater easily three times the size of the one you just left. (**G.M. Note:** Have players roll under their Physical Prowess to avoid being harmed by the fall, or take 1D6 hit points of damage. Also, it is bitterly cold here, and appropriate measures should be taken for protection from it.) You find yourselves in the cleared center of a sea of pulverized debris. Shredded tapestries and shattered glass are strewn among once mighty stones and crushed candelabra. The skulls of wolves are imbedded haphazardly in half fallen trees on the perimeter of the great hole, and everything is both cold and scorched.

Only five or ten feet away, a blackened humanoid skeleton, wet and fresh, lies next to a massive metal chest. The chest itself appears to be unharmed by whatever caused this destruction, as does the large winged gargoyle shivering upon it! The gargoyle makes no threatening moves as you unceremoniously arrive. In fact, it appears rather glad that you have come.

G.M. Note: The humanoid remains are those of Avaxa himself (what cartilage is left on either side of the skull indicates that the being was an aged elf). He died in the magical explosion that engulfed his tower and brought the silver doorway into existence. Avaxa is still wearing the slightly melted remains of a Grand Warlock's ring. The ring bears the four elemental signs, air, earth, fire and water, and may be found only in the possession of powerful warlocks. The ring was worn upside down, a sure sign, to any man of magic, that Avaxa was not a nice guy (read: diabolical evil).

The gargoyle will grin a toothy smile, but his shivers and tone reveal his nervousness. He needs the group's help as much as they will need his:

"Thank you for coming! I'm so glad you could drop in. Master over there hasn't been much of a conversationalist since the blast, and it's awful cold out here. Darn glad he sent me out to watch the fireworks, or there would have been nothing left of me! Oh, allow me to introduce myself. I am Migway, former Mage Apprentice to Lord Avaxa!"

G.M. Note: Migway was sent from the Tower of Avaxa shortly before his spell was fully cast on the night of the explosion. When the colors began to fly, the gargoyle was watching from afar, taking note of atmospheric conditions from miles away. Having nowhere else to go after the tower was destroyed, Migway noticed a silvery glint in the air, which he took to be the receiving end of a teleportal. He figured he would wait for some heroes, or the end of the world — whichever came first!

If the Player Characters attack Migway, he will flee into the forest, cursing the party's stupidity and warning them that "You'll never succeed without me." While this is not entirely true, the party would have had a much easier time figuring this whole mess out if they'd just held their weapons for a moment.

Assuming the party doesn't kill or drive off Migway, the Gargoyle Mage will be more than happy to give them the rundown of recent

events, at least as much as he can. Read the following or paraphrase as necessary:

"Well, maybe now somebody can do something about this blasted portal. It's out of control you know. No more beasties to hold it steady, and certainly no way to stop it once it reaches the Dimension of Death.

"You know, the place where all undead draw their power. I mean, the whole dimension is crawling with the nastiest monsters, and I think they're all coming here...eventually.

"My master, Avaxa, summoned me to be his apprentice, and this was his little experiment. Summoned four of the most powerful elementals you ever saw, he did. Asserted his control with the grandest of skill.

"They were supposed to hold this gate in place I think, guide it straight to the Dimension of Death and bring hordes of them nasties here. He had some kind of score to settle with some other warlocks or something.

"Mind you, I didn't like the idea of bringing the undead here, but he guaranteed me we'd both be safe in another dimension he'd picked out. He said this world wouldn't be much fun anymore once the undead had their way with it.

"Then, something went wrong with some little crystal-thingy I got for him. Okay, maybe it wasn't taken from the heart of a crystal dragon. You wouldn't think that have made THAT much of a difference, would you?

"He's going to have his last laugh though, 'cause this dimensional portal's going to lock onto that plane one of these days soon. It shifts once a month, so who knows how much time we might have left. I mean it IS designed to zone in on the Realm of the Undead.

"We have got to get the Major Elementals back here, I think. If all four of them return and enter the portal together, taking their elemental energy with 'em, it'll close down forever. I will join you, in exchange for a share of my master's treasure, and for your assurance of safety. Now, don't get any smart ideas, friends. Only I know which way the elementals went, and where my master's treasure is hidden. Save humanity and get rich too. Good deal, eh? Hell, we got nothin' to lose, hmm?"

G.M. Notes: Of course, the treasure Migway is referring to is what's left of Avaxa's horde, and that's inside the huge metal chest. It's locked and trapped with a death poison needle, and Migway knows it.

Also, anyone with tracking skills can search the area and will find the following strange tracks scattered about the clearing.

- 1) A fifteen foot wide path of scorched earth and trees, leading straight east of the crater.
- 2) A pair of very large, dirty boot-like footprints heading due south.
- 3) A slick trail of black ice coating the ground, trailing off to the west.

Of course, these are the tracks of three of the four unique Major Elementals that Avaxa had managed to summon before his doom: Fire, Earth, and Water Elementals respectively. The Major Air Elemental is *flying* due north, but leaves no visible trail.

The elementals are heading for the nearest of Avaxa's circles, which will allow them to safely and naturally return to their home dimensions. Avaxa had spent nearly a century formulating a unique spell which, once cast, would continue to feed on elemental energy. It will be impossible for the Major Elementals to use their natural teleporting abilities to leave this plane. The elementals are also weakened, losing the equivalent of one level of magic abilities per day that they walk the Great Northern Wilderness. Migway knows most of this (more or less) and will divulge it if hard pressed. Otherwise, the party will have to make do on what they themselves can discern.

The lock on the chest holds a spring-triggered needle coated with a nasty poison. Those with lock picking skills must roll to successfully locate and disarm the trap. If the lock is simply tampered with or

hammered upon, the needle will fire, requiring a Saving Throw from its hapless victim. A failure to save versus poison (14 or higher on a 20-sided die), will inflict 2D6 hit points of damage upon the character, and will inflict penalties of -3 to strike and a -5 to parry, dodge or gain initiative for 1D8 hours. Making the save will still inflict 1D6 hours of nausea, blurred vision and dizziness; -1 on initiative and dodge.

The chest itself holds a *log book of Avaxa's*, which includes a page of introduction (the preamble to this adventure) and another page with some last minute details. The log book bears the upside-down Warlock's crest found on Avaxa's signet ring (noted previously). Both pages can be read to the party at this time. (**G.M. Note:** You may wish to photocopy these documents and hand them to your players to better simulate the investigative experience. The players be referring to this log book many times during the adventure, so the GM can save himself lots of trouble by letting the Player Characters do most of the research work here.)

The chest also contains an extraordinary quantity of jewels, precious stones and coins, broken down as such:

- 10,000 gold pieces, worth of diamonds.
- 10,000 gold pieces, worth of sapphires.
- 5,000 gold pieces, worth of onyx (both black and white stones).
- 15,000 gold pieces, worth of rubies.
- 10,000 gold pieces, worth of topaz.
- 10,000 gold pieces, worth of emeralds.
- 5,000 gold pieces, worth of pearls.
- 20,000 gold pieces, in coins of various denominations.

Migway, of course, knows what's in the chest and will claim that its contents are his personal belongings. Party member alignments will play a big role here in deciding whether or not he gets to keep any of the booty.

The log book also contains four strange words, engraved in runes. Only another summoner or diabolist can read them to a point where their meaning is understood. The runes spell: GRUNDAVA, KAXAZAS, BLOPONO, and VISASSER. These are the true names of the four major elementals, EARTH, FIRE, WATER, and AIR, respectively.

The final page of the log book, written moments before the final incantation, includes some very important clues and warnings. (**G.M. Note:** Read the players the following text only after they've gotten the book out of the chest, and after you've read them the preamble to this adventure.):

"I am prepared to begin the final incantation. Once I begin, there will be no stopping. I am taking this time to record some final information.

"I have sent Migway outside of my tower. He is to observe the opening of the great portal and report any abnormalities to me. I'm not certain what the portal's arrival will look like from afar, but I must miss this pleasure in order to finish the last circle. I can always remove the image from his mind and place it in my own after the deed is done.

"I do not fully trust the crystal he brought to me. It seems like the heart of a crystal dragon found only in some other dread dimension, and he has assured me on pain of death that it is genuine. However, I do not have the time to test it now, as a break in the clouds tells me the heavenly bodies are coming into conjunction as I write.

"Once these Major Elementals are unleashed, it will be all but impossible to track them down and take them back here alive. I have little fear of being robbed of my revenge. The odds of the four of them meeting at some other time and simultaneously touching one another are beyond computation.

"My dream will soon be a reality, and when the undead arrive, they will pour out across this plane like a black flood of decaying flesh. First, those miserable, little, howling dog-men will die, then all of

Palladium itself. There will be unholy chaos as hundreds of thousands of peasants vie for ships laden with the rich, the powerful, and the privileged. I might risk the spells necessary just to watch from our little retreat, just for the sport of it all.

"Enough writing! My crusty arms grow tired and my eagerness is building with every passing moment. Goodbye dear Palladium. I shall miss you not."

G.M. Notes: There are no other treasures or items of note within the crater area, and the next little while should be spent letting the players debate amongst themselves over their next course of action. Ideally, they decide to befriend Migway, hunt down the elementals and return the monsters to the portal source (the ruins of Tower Avaxa). However, adjust future events according to the way things really happen in such adventures.

Note that the dimensional portal source will move to a *different* locale on the Palladium world once a month. When it reappears, similar devastating results will occur, and the chance of something large and terrible emerging will increase every time. With each reappearance, however, there will be a 01-20% chance (roll percentile dice) that the Dimension of the Dead will be struck, and legions of horrors will come parading onto the land. (This percentage may be cumulative, if the G.M. chooses!) Migway's magical prowess would be a great help in locating any lost portals, and this would prove to make him somewhat invaluable to the party in the long run. He will say so if it seems his money is leaving him . . .

The party must bring all four elementals back here, alive, and make them all touch each other simultaneously. As soon as they do, the portal closes and the elementals are sucked into it to be shipped back to their native planes. The same magic that brought them here sends them home again. For results of the party's success or failure, see **The Elemental Party and Possible Problems** sections at the end of the adventure.

Gargoyle Mage

True Name: Migway

Alignment: Miscreant

Size: 14 feet tall

A.R.: 14 **Hit Points:** 80

Number of Attacks: 3; claws do 2D6 each, bite 2D8, tail 2D6, or by magic.

Psionics: None

Magic Abilities: All levels 1-3, earth elemental magic as a fourth level warlock.

Natural Abilities: Speed 10 on the ground, fly (40 mph), I.Q. 12, P.S. 23, P.P. 15, P.E. 20, nightvision 220 feet, bio-regeneration — 1D8.

Special: Turn invisible at will, turn to stone 3 times per day, teleport (96%), dimensional teleport (53%), see the invisible.

WHICH WAY DO WE GO?

Interestingly enough, it truly makes no real difference which trail the party chooses to follow at this time. Obviously the air elemental is travelling the fastest, while the fire elemental is close behind. The earth elemental is the slowest, by design, while the water elemental starts out fast, but slows to a stop.

The following sections are laid out in order of North, East, South, and West. Jump between sections as necessary.

The odds are that the characters will make several trips through each section of forest, so plan as many Northern Wilderness encounters as you desire to embellish the adventure.

Random Encounters Within the Dense Forest

Take time to acclimate your players to this (possibly) new, unfamiliar environment. Tell them how cold their characters are and describe the native flora and fauna. To help them get the feel for their new home, here are a few frosty encounter tables.

New territory to be explored is always rolled for normally. Any monsters who may have fled from previous encounters may have gathered new forces, laid an ambush, or otherwise made a return trip an even nastier affair. The G.M. is encouraged to make this deadly forest come alive, as the players may become bored quickly if their travels seem too "generic."

Encounters (roll 01-00 on percentile dice or choose)

01-15 Drakin. One young "luck bird" lands calmly on a party member's shoulder, and will remain with him for two days before it flies away. The bird has no treasure, and the GM should play up the "luck myth" associated with these creatures (and watch the player's reaction).

16-27 1D6 + 1 Orcs or Goblins looking for trouble. They are a rag tag group of second level mercs. They'll fight only if they think they can beat the characters and flee when things get rough.

28-36 Grizzly Bear! This monster just stands there, snarling. If the group slowly backs away and around the bear, there will be no problems. Any sudden movement or attack will send it charging into the nearest antagonist. **Hit Points:** 2D4 × 10, Speed — 16, A.R. 6, **Attacks Per Melee:** 3; claws — 2D6 or bite — 1D8; + 2 to strike, + 2 to parry, + 8 to damage. Once wounded, it will fight to the death.

37-44 A Peryton swoops down to capture some human prey. This horrible winged deer is a carnivorous blight in the wilderness. Only *magic and poison* can harm it. **Hit Points:** 40, A.R. 10, Speed Flying 44. **Attacks Per Melee:** 3; leg kick — 2D6 damage, head butt — 1D8, bite — 1D6; + 4 to damage, + 4 parry and dodge. See *Monsters and Animals*, pg 64.

45-50 A Bearman (01-40%), or Kankoran (41-60%) or Ogre (61-00%) will challenge one (or two, if small) characters to combat if they wish to pass. The fight is *not* to the death. The non-human opponent is a 4th level ranger and has 46 hit points. A good fight will prompt the beastman to laugh, give his praise to his opponent, and wander off into the woods.

51-60 Scorpion Devils. An abandoned mine shaft or cave comes dangerously close to the surface here. So close in fact, that the party causes the roof to collapse when they walk over it. Inhabiting the tunnel are 2D6 scorpion devils, all very angry at the intrusion. The nearest exit is a mile to the south, so going up, back up out of the collapsed ceiling, might be the best way out. There is nothing of value in the mine. Scorpion Devils have two attacks per melee; bite — 1D6, sting — 3D6 unless save vs poison. Average hit points: 22; track by smell — 90%. See *Monsters & Animals*, pg 71.

61-70 Tuskers. A wandering pack of five tuskers, all very hungry. The adventurers encounter them in a small clearing, with a pool of water nearby. If the characters are quiet (and downwind, hint, hint), they might just escape with their lives. The monsters will attack only if they feel threatened. Average hit points: 50, A.R. 6, Attacks per melee 3; bite — 2D6, claws — 1D8 + 3 damage, + 2 to strike. Speed: 20. See *Monsters & Animals*, pg 88.

71-83 Coyles. This is a routine patrol of 2D4 + 2 coyle warriors. While most are only average fighters (merc's of 1st or 2nd level experience), a few may be as powerful as the Player Characters themselves. Since the forest is very dense here, and the coyles are in their natural surroundings, the encounter should occur at very close range. These beasts prefer the use of swords and nets in combat. Average hit points: 15; one attack per melee.

84-91 Kinnie Ger. A pride of four adults and three young attack the party. The players are ambushed and surrounded. Surprise should



be determined individually. The young won't engage in combat unless they are backed into a corner. These humanoid felines average 30 hit points each (young only 15). Attacks per melee: 3; bite — 1D8 or claws — 1D8; +2 to damage, +1 to strike and parry.

92-00 Pegasus. One lone pegasus is looking for food. He is flying a thousand feet up and out of range of the party. Any attempt to contact him will cause him to flee. There is little chance of the party catching him, but if the party is wise and powerful enough, a creature with the capabilities of a pegasus would prove a strong asset!

HIGH HO, HIGH HO, IN THE AIR WE GO!

The northern route ends at a magnificent floating Arabian-style palace, hovering magically above the chasm's river lined bottom. This same gorge winds westward and eventually leads to the Algor Fortress to the west.

The palace cannot be reached by land as it floats some 500 feet above the valley, and 100 feet above ground level on either side. There are many paths down both faces of the gorge, but there are no bridges across.

If the group is having trouble figuring out that this is their first destination, have *Visasser*, the air elemental, attack them for a round before flying off to the castle. In any case, it should take all of the Player Characters' wit and magic to reach the Floating Palace.

The adventurers are most vulnerable when crossing the half-mile of air between the cliff face and the palace. This is where the air elemental attacks. It seeks only to frighten and drive the party away, and retreats

immediately upon suffering only 20% damage. It flies much faster than any party member can, and is much more capable of maneuvering itself. It should have no trouble escaping. **Note:** The elemental has lost one level by now or may be without magic at all. If the adventurers possess the magic necessary to capture the air elemental, they have no need to start of this adventure. This means the elemental is probably down 4-6 levels by now or even without magic at all. If the adventurers possess the magic necessary to capture the air elemental, they have no need to visit the palace, but might wish to do so anyway.

The Floating Palace is a rather simple structure, filled with great cushions, ornate tapestries and brass antiquities. The goal of the party here is to bargain, not raid and pillage. (**G.M. Note:** But, if raiding and pillaging is what the party has in mind, the entire Floating Palace will begin to fade from this plane of existence, leaving our hapless heroes five hundred of feet off the ground, with little recourse. Migway, or the palace's master himself, will inform the party of this little fact should they not notice the walls fading around them!)

The master of the palace is the guardian of the Elemental Air Dimensional Gate. He is a *Green Jinn* by the name of Al-Kazin, an ancient, temperamental immortal, fond of sculptures with an "elemental" quality about them.

Al-Kazin is a spiteful cuss. He does not like the Air Elemental at all, and refuses to let the creature enter the dimensional portal. Of course, the elemental becomes more and more belligerent every day, and is furious at the Jinn's stubbornness. The Jinn is enjoying himself immensely at the elemental's plight.

Al-Kazin possesses the Prison Flask, which he was formerly incarcerated in. He keeps it locked away at the top of his tower to remind him of the treachery of mortal men and their sorcerers. This is the

simplest, most straightforward way of capturing the elemental, and only Al-Kazin knows the command words that activate the bottle.

Al-Kazin never reveals the capturing words to the Player Characters, as this might be used against him. However, adventurers are notoriously inventive and might learn the words through other means. Or bargain with the Jinn to get him to do it. Another possibility is any party member who might have read the notes from Avaxa's treasure chest all the way through, may recall (roll a D20 under the Player Character's I.Q. stat) reading about such a magical flask in the warlock's notes. The words, according to the notes, are "Rozann Crobaar!" They will work if the Prison Flask is held in the adventurer's hand with its mouth pointed toward the target entity. The air elemental is harmlessly and magically sucked into the flask, where it will remain until the flask is uncorked.

Only one creature may be contained at a time, and party members may have to decide if capturing Al-Kazin and attaining his Three Wishes will be worth losing the Greater Air Elemental. (The elemental will certainly take advantage of this sudden lull to escape through the portal. If the characters foolishly opt to capture the Jinn in the bottle, the elemental is likely to escape and fade away; along with him, the palace. It begins to fade 2D6 melees after the Jinn is captured and is completely gone within another 2D6 melees.

Bargaining with Al-Kazin, rather than fighting or capturing him, will reveal that there is only one thing that the party will have access to that he might be interested in: if the adventurers have recovered Blopono, the Major Water Elemental, from the Algor Fortress (or when they do; see the adventure that follows), Al-Kazin would like to create a likeness of it. Ideally, he'd like to keep the Greater Water Elemental itself in its frozen state, but the group should be able to convince him that they need the actual article to complete their mission. Al-Kazin would agree to capture the air elemental, and give the Prison Flask to the party, in exchange for the presence of a frozen water elemental for a short stint as a "model."

G.M. Notes: Al-Kazin refuses to do business until the party "returns with something suitable to trade." Frustrated Player Characters who have no desire to drag Blopono back to the Jinn's palace may wish to bring him some other kind of water elemental. However, there is only a 01-50% chance that Al-Kazin will be satisfied with a lesser water elemental.

By the way, the only creature strong enough to carry a frozen water elemental through miles of dense forest, and likely to go along with the idea, is an incredibly strong, never-tiring monster, like...well, a Major Earth Elemental perhaps. Beginning to get the picture?

GMs can flesh out the encounter with Al-Kazin as much as desired, depending on the actions and intents of the party. They are in no danger as long as they sleep within the palace walls, but the air elemental could become quite a menace otherwise.

Visasser, the Major Air Elemental

Alignment: Anarchist

Size: 30 feet

A.R.: 14 **Hit Points:** 75

Number of Attacks: 2 doing 1D8 each, or by magic

Bonuses: +3 to strike, +6 to damage, +3 on all saving throws

Psionics: Limited telepathy I.S.P. 200

Magic: All air elemental magic at tenth level proficiency, but due to Avaxa's magic, may be powerless by this point (no magic). However, the being still possesses its formidable natural abilities.

Natural Abilities: Impervious to poison, fire and cold resistant (half damage), impervious to normal weapons, turn invisible, see the invisible, fly 45 mph, nightvision 90 feet, bio-regeneration (1D8 points every four melees), prowl 94%, locate secret compartments/doors 75%, can pass through small openings like keyholes, door-jambs, cracks, etc.

Description: Appears as a white, light blue, or yellow vaporous cloud.

Jinn

True Name: Al-Kazin, the Green

Alignment: Unprincipled

Size: 8 to 24 feet tall (can change size at will)

A.R.: 14 **Hit Points:** 70

Number of Attacks: 3; hand-to-hand doing 2D6 each, scimitar doing 2D6, or by magic.

Bonuses: +10 to damage, +4 to strike, parry or dodge; +6 on all saving throws. **Note:** Bonuses are halved when in combat during daylight hours.

Magic Abilities: All air elemental magic from levels 1-7.

Natural Abilities: I.Q. 12, cunning, natural state is invisible, can turn invisible at will, turn into mist, metamorphosis into an insect, fire and cold resistant (half damage), knows all languages, dimensional teleport 53%, bio-regeneration (1D8).

Description: Al-Kazin is an unusually jovial and wily jinn (for details about the Jinn, see pg 178 of the *Palladium Role-playing Game*). When he materializes, he can often be perceived as wearing tight-fitting silks under flowing robes. A turban is affixed to his shaggy head, just above his glistening, beady eyes, and he wears a mustache and a goatee. He has a great love of things artistic, and he has an expansive collection of statues.

OFF TO FIREBIRD LAKE

About 35 miles to the east of Avaxa's destroyed tower lies a small lake surrounding a magma-filled crater. A decade or two ago, this was just a field of hot springs and geysers, but recently, the very same powerful forces which gave rise to the Algor Mountain chain from the heart of the world, surged upwards yet again. The water has pooled, continually bubbling and steaming around the island-crater.

Even a party that has strayed a few miles off course will be able to locate this place (Migway calls it "Firebird Lake"). The thrum of beating drums mixed with undulating howls can be heard through the stillness of the day. Anyone steeped in Wolfen lore will know that a celebration is at hand, but none like any written in the annals of human-kind.

A closer inspection will reveal a clan of wolfen engaged in some kind of bizarre ritual. To the primal beat of pommels on stretched animal skins, a dozen wolfen in garish headdresses are busying themselves by extending a floating bridge from the southern shore of the lake out toward the rumbling island. As this task is completed, another half dozen wolfen dance wildly on the beach, heaving their chests skyward, chanting and howling, while the crater begins to glow with activity. Fifteen minutes of surveillance will finally disclose the source of everyone's fervor — held upon a wheeled pedestal is the weakened, barely flickering, Major Fire Elemental!

If the party does not fly immediately into action, they will be granted the cockeyed wisdom of their resident Gargoyle Mage, Migway:

"Loopy wolfen! Followers of the Firebird, they are. I caught their last dance flying one of Avaxa's research projects over here a few weeks ago. They're really nuts! Their leader's this renegade lieutenant who found this place a couple of years ago. He says he saw Bennu the Phoenix dancing around on the rim of that crater, beckoning his worship. Guess he figured it was the right thing to do, 'cause he got a coupl'a dozen of his pals to toss their treasure, their weapons, everything worth anything, right into that lava pit over yonder. Nuts!

"Well, it looks like ol' *Kaxazas* is gonna be next up to take the plunge. And, gentlemen, I think I'd hurry to it, if I were you. That innocent little volcano also happens to be a portal. The closer the fire elemental gets to it, the bigger that thing's gonna pop. The bigger that

thing pops, the more powerful the fire elemental gets. And somehow I doubt it's gonna be a happy elemental . . ."

Migway will opt to hang back on this one ("I won't be much use to you with my wings singed!"), and will not be forced to participate in any kind of raid upon (even unarmed) wolven.

G.M. Notes: The wolven Followers of the Firebird are whipped up into an almost hallucinatory frenzy. They are convinced that the sacrifice of this fire elemental will bring the goddess Bennu's favor upon them, causing her to reappear and cast her sparks of immortality upon them. They mean to wheel Kaxazas across the flimsy log bridge onto the unstable island, and cast it into the volatile crater.

The presence of outsiders will go largely ignored, that is, unless the outsiders are trying to take their fire elemental away from them! In tackling this problem, the party will have to grapple with the following factors:

- They will have to somehow overcome a total of 18 half-crazed wolven. They are unarmed, but will fight fiercely for their prize.
- They will have to overcome many of these wolven upon a flimsy log bridge (speed is halved on it, giving adventurers capable of flight the advantage), which will rock upon the water and break rather easily.
- They will have to keep the elemental from dropping into the lake. In its weakened state it will not last long in water, and may be vaporized, leaving the party in deep trouble at the end of the adventure.
- They will have to acknowledge the fact that a miniature volcano is about to explode, sending showers of sparks and molten lava all over the place.
- Finally, they will have to escape while keeping any other Major Elementals away from Kaxazas for the time being. (Elementals do not usually mix well, and will not touch without attempting to destroy each other. Until united at the ruins of Avaxa's Tower, keeping them close enough to be moveable, yet far enough apart to keep them from slugging it out is a task best left to good role-playing.) Migway, perhaps, can be coerced into using his strength to carry one of the captured beings.

Wolven Followers of the Firebird

Alignment: Aberrant

Hit Points: Average at 28

Natural Abilities: Nightvision for 40 feet, normal day vision, superior sense of smell and hearing, +8% to track.

Attacks per Melee: 2; bite does 1D8 points of damage, claws do 1D6; they are currently unarmed, but may use debris as weapons.

Kaxazas, the Major Fire Elemental

Alignment: Anarchist

Size: Currently 10 feet tall, at full power can be 30 feet tall

A.R.: 14

Hit Points: Currently 25, at full power it has 75 hit points.

Number of Attacks: 2; burning touches doing 4D6 each, or by magic

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +8 to damage, +3 to parry or dodge, +3 on all saving throws.

Psionics: Limited telepathy, I.S.P. 200

Natural Abilities: Impervious to poison, impervious to fire (no damage), impervious to normal weapons. Only magic or magic weapons do damage. One gallon of ordinary water does 1D8 damage. Note: Water does double damage; cold does normal damage. Other abilities include nightvision 90 feet, speed 16, bio-regeneration (1D8 every four melees).

Description: Walking pillar or wall of flame with blazing yellow eyes.

NO, NO, YOU ROCK-HEAD, I SAID SILVER!

If the party follows the big footprints to the south, they will eventually reach a low range of mountains forking down from the Algor to the northeast. A path heading up into the range is an obvious direction to proceed.

After only one day's travel they should be read the following passage:

"You hear the distinct sounds of mining ahead. Peeking over a boulder in the path, you see a small clan of dwarves, numbering no more than a hundred, camped out around the rim of a huge stone quarry. They seem to be wanderers who live in campsites rather than the typical cave complexes frequented by normal dwarves.

"Down at the very bottom of the great pit stands a huge humanoid-shaped creature made of earth and stone. The creature has a strange metal chain wrapped around his ankle, which is held firmly by a small dwarf.

"At that moment, the Major Earth Elemental reaches down, yanks the chain quickly, and sends the dwarf sprawling. As the creature begins to dig feverishly into the open stone, he is stopped cold as soon as the chain is touched by the now furrowed and sober looking dwarf. A group of five more dwarves run forward and start chiselling into the stone behemoth, with obviously painful results.

"Humbled, the great giant falls to his knees and starts digging again, this time under the control of his diminutive masters."

G.M. Notes: These dwarves are a wandering tribe that search through old abandoned dwarven ruins in search of silver. They've been searching this massive quarry for years now with no success, and now they believe their salvation has arrived.

Dwarves of long ago knew the process of binding earth elementals to do their bidding, but have lost that knowledge in recent generations. Unable to summon elementals to do their work, they discarded the *Binding Chains* as useless. These dwarves scavenged these rune chains from a mine to the east, and had the good fortune to meet the lone Major Elemental, Grundava.

Of course, they know the elemental can find a silver shaft at will if it wants to, but have been unable to converse with the beast well enough to make such a specific and difficult request. Trapping the beast against its will and not possessing any silver as an example hasn't helped their predicament any either.

The dwarves can be killed for their captive, but unless the party is grossly evil, Migway should be stowed, and these ordinarily benevolent miners should be *bargained* with. The only thing the dwarves want is a silver ore shaft. If the adventurers possess skills advanced enough to find such a difficult treasure, they can trade off easily. Otherwise, either loads of treasure from Avaxa's chest or the magical stone found in the dragon's lair (*see Algor Keep, as follows*) is the party's only hope. They may have to come back of course, but the dwarves will still be searching upon their return.

The elemental is very, very strong, and actually quite friendly. He is the least affected by the environment and is very curious about the ways of mortals. Unlike most elementals, he suffers from the human emotions of kindness and compassion. However, he would squash his enemies and those of his friends like grapes in a tub. For some unknown reason, he always eats the remains of his victims.

While the party can only use him until the gate is closed, the G.M. should have as much fun with this "gentle giant" as he wants, possibly developing even more personality traits and quirks about him.

Since he might get caught in combat, the G.M. should realize that earth elementals regain lost hit points by eating earth and minerals.



Pure metals, like iron chains, return one point per every ten pounds consumed. Raw earth requires ten times that amount, or 100 pounds per every point of damage restored. Of course, on his own plane this is no problem, but might pose some interesting dilemmas for the party in this world.

Anyone holding the rune Binding Chains can charm the elemental. The chains do not cause complete obedience, only begrudged compliance, and prevent the behemoth from using its magic. While the elemental is super strong, he cannot harm the chain in any way. If it is broken by force or magic, or by someone else, he is set free and immediately continues south for the mystic portal to his elemental plane. Warlocks, especially earth warlocks, may be able to speak with and control it for at least a few days.

Dwarven Miners

Alignment: Unprincipled & Anarchist

Hit Points: Average at 20

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 90 feet, normal day vision, +6 to recognize weapon quality, and +4 to recognize precious metals/stones.

Attacks Per Melee: 2; battle axe — 2D6, pick — 1D8 or ball and chain — 1D8

Total Number of Dwarves: about 90.

Grundava, Major Earth Elemental

Alignment: Anarchist

Size: 20 feet tall

A.R.: 15 **Hit Points:** 88

Number of Attacks: 2, doing 3D6 points each, by weapon, or by magic.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +12 to damage (P.S. 27), +4 to parry and dodge, +3 on all saving throws.

Psionics: Limited telepathy, I.S.P. 200

Magic: All earth elemental magic at tenth level of proficiency, but at this point only has its natural abilities.

Natural Abilities: Impervious to poison, fire, and cold resistant (half damage), nightvision 90 feet, speed 10, bio-regeneration (1D8 every four melees). Note: Is vulnerable to normal weapons.

Description: A large walking mound of earth and rock.

THE BIG GUYS AND THE LITTLE GUYS

The trek to the west ends at another bend at a mighty unnamed river in the Great Northern Wilderness. At this point a small village of *Bearmen*, numbering no more than 50, only 20 of them males, has been founded on the beaches below the cliffs. Bearmen are normally rather rugged, rough, and remarkably unfriendly. These creatures are no exception, and in fact, have more than a few chips on their furry shoulders.

Not only have these warriors been the occasional prey of an ice dragon (see area G11) for as long as they can remember, but every so often, a boulder or two hurls down from above, smashing homes, campfires, pets, and the occasional citizen of the clan. Of course, the boulders don't throw themselves. The small *Algor Giant* keep in the cliffs above is filled with malicious giants who enjoy spicing up their monotonous guard duties by "Bear Bombing," as they call it.

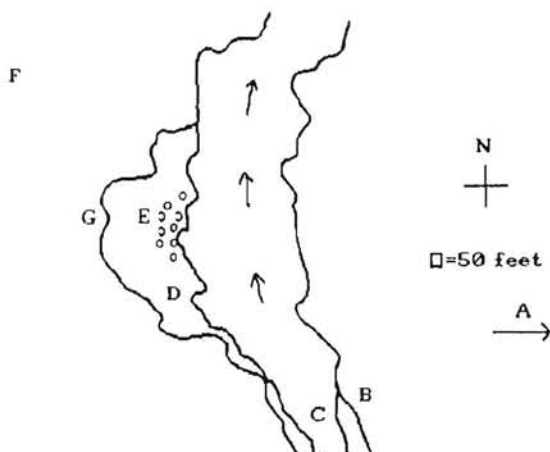
This feud has been going on for a very long time, and while the Bearmen breed prodigiously when compared with the *Algor*, their numbers have been dwindling with the passing seasons. The Bearmen are too stubborn to leave the place they founded "long before those giants got here," and have often staged very successful vengeance raids upon the keep. More than a few *Algor* heads line the walls of the Bearmen's Great Hut.

The giants, on the other hand, enjoy the sport and moderate challenge the Bearmen provide, as this region is relatively free of wolven interference. The Algor have made it a point to let enough Bearmen survive to keep the campfires burning.

G.M. Notes: Added to all of this is the aforementioned ice dragon, or more correctly, ice dragons. The Algor long ago captured and mated a pair of ice dragons. Every once in a while, the Algor leader, or *Jarl*, lets one of his pets loose on the village below, often with the express task of recovering recently lost treasures following a successful Bearmen raid. The Bearmen mistakenly believe that there is only one ice dragon, a male they guess, and that this great beast roams the forest for miles around. They surmise its infrequent attacks are due to the fact that the dragon's lair is many, many miles away. Of course, all of this is untrue, but the party will get to find this all out the hard way.

In the middle of this interesting, private little war, arrives the party, on a quest for one very large, very heavy, sentient ice cube.

ALGOR KEEP AND ENVIRONS



A. The Capture

When the adventurers are about five miles east of the Bearmen village, read them the following description:

"The slick ice trail has been relatively easy to follow and very, very straight, until now. The trail comes to an abrupt end in a somewhat larger circle of slick ice. The ground is packed down like some heavy weight was placed here for a while.

"All around the slick are giant-sized humanoid footprints. Scraps of thick rope lie discarded in the brush. A new trail leads westward, this time something huge and heavy was dragged off by a half-dozen giant men. (Rangers or Wolfen may recognize the tracks as Algor).

"This will be enough for the Gargoyle Mage, Migway. Once again, he wants to sit this one out, citing the fact that gargoyles tend to make giants nervous! Migway will doubly reassure the party that he will never be far away (he wants his healthy portion of Avaxa's treasure, after all), and will fly a reconnaissance over the area every several hours. (**Note:** Either the party will not accept this idea, complicating matters with regard to gargoyles, bearmen, and giants, or they will let Migway hang back, leaving room for a possible rescue operation should the trouble ahead become overwhelming. Migway wants that treasure and will even feel entitled to a share of any booty gained during this quest. He will do what he can to preserve his own hide and swipe as much of the plunder as possible!)

G.M. Note: The Major Water Elemental, Blopono, made it this far before the frigid temperatures caught up with it. In its weakened state, it was frozen solid, and fell still on this very spot. Here it remained in a state of suspended animation until a week ago. A patrol of Algor giants found the strange block of ice and wisely brought it to the

attention of the Jarl. The elemental is now a featured attraction in the main throne room of the Algor, and is the Jarl's favorite statue.

B. Lover's Leap

This outcropping of stone juts forth from the dense forest and looks over the entire region. Any party member who bothers to take a gander will learn the following tidbits; read:

"Some 300 feet below you is the river, flowing slowly northward. On the far beach is a small village of fearsome, huge, furry humanoids. They seem hearty but primitive.

"Across from you, nestled in the far cliff face, is a wide cave-like recess. The cave is manned by four huge giants wielding axes and wearing furs. To their left is a platform which can only be accessed from their cave, or via a massive wooden winch mechanism at the very top of the cliff, some 50 feet above the platform. It appears to be the only entrance to the giants' lair.

A narrow pathway leads down to a beach on your side. A few hundred yards to the south, the river looks narrow enough to ford."

G.M. Notes: The party can watch the two regions very nicely from here. The G.M. should refer to those specific encounter areas for more details on the movements of the inhabitants. The only other place to cross the gorge is six miles to the north of the Bearmen village. Since the cliffs are sheer and unscalable otherwise, only these two places are reasonable ways to get across the river without using magic.

When the adventurers do decide to descend the cliff face, whether it be on the path, or in the air, they are attacked by *Fostengar*, or "Blue Tongue" in Algor, a huge male ice dragon.

Fostengar prefers to remain out of melee range, and attempts to train his breath weapon upon his potential victims while they are relatively immobile on the pathway. **Note:** Since Player Characters must travel down the path in single file, the G.M. must judge carefully how many characters can be affected by the onslaught. Since Fostengar prefers to maintain a discreet distance, he does not use his razor sharp claws or frosty bite in melee, only breath and perhaps magic.

If the characters are obviously very, very dangerous to him (i.e., he drops a quarter of his hit points or more in a few rounds), Fostengar veers off, goes down the gorge, and is out of sight after one round's flying. Any long distance spells or bow attacks by the party might still bring him down of course, but are -4 to strike.

Killing or driving away the great dragon goes a long way to making friends with the otherwise antisocial Bearmen below. In fact, that night, the adventurers are invited to become *Bear Brothers* with the clan. This involves scratching one's claws into your "brother's" hide until blood is drawn. The upper right shoulder is the preferred location for this mark. A great honor that is rarely offered to other humanoids.

Party members are allowed to use their "steel claws" (i.e., weapons) or teeth if their own nails aren't up to snuff. Adventurers who refuse the honor will be declared enemies and dealt with as such, and either driven away from the village, or attacked in a battle to the death.

G.M. Notes: There is no treasure on Fostengar's body. If the dragon does escape, the G.M. should keep track of his rate of healing and current status should the party encounter him again soon. The Jarl would be most displeased at the death or wounding of his dragon and the G.M. should prepare the giants for a major assault on the Bearmen village in one week's time. Of course, the party might beat the giants at their own game, if they hurry.

Ice Dragon Fostengar

Alignment: Unprincipled

Size: 25 feet tall, 60 feet long, 90 foot wing span

A.R.: 14, **Hit Points:** 200

Number of Attacks: 3; claws do 3-18 points each, bite 3-18, or breath weapon.

Breath Weapon: Frost breath, ranging 40 feet, 6 feet wide, does 5D6+6 damage.

Bonuses: +3 to strike, +10 to damage, +3 to parry and dodge, +5 on all saving throws.

Psionics: All level one and two abilities, I.S.P. 90, fifth level proficiency.

Magic knowledge: All spell magic levels 1 to 6 at tenth level proficiency.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 90 feet, see invisible, impervious to cold/ice (no damage), metamorphosis, fly (70 mph), I.Q. high

Description: A majestic, sky blue, winged reptile.

Village Bearmen

Alignment: Anarchist & Unprincipled

Hit Points: Average at 32, A.R.: 11

Natural Abilities: Nightvision — 10 feet, poor day vision (about 120 feet), superior sense of smell and hearing, prowl — 28%, track — 68% (by smell), swim — 70%, climb — 60%, recognize poison — 90%.

Attacks Per Melee: 2; claws do 2D6, bite does 1D8, or by weapon.



C. The Crossing

South of this stretch of beach is a safe crossing point for the adventurers. On the other side of the river, the Bearmen await. A hostile reaction means immediate war against the "little giants," while a favorable rating is cause for a party.

D. The Big Beach

This large beach is home to the Bearmen. All along this stretch of gravelly sand, Bearmen and Bearwomen fish for salmon and other

delicacies. Clothes are washed farther north, just before the crude latrine area - two trees next to a big rock on the edge of the river.

Bearcubs wrestle and test their warrior and hunting skills day after day, until they are big and strong enough to join the war parties.

The western portion of this beach is filled with piles of boulders, many stained with Bearman blood. If any party members venture near this area their chances of being struck by a boulder from above triples!

Note: See next encounter for more on the aerial assault.

E. The Village

For space reasons, a full and detailed map of the Bearmen village and its inhabitants is not provided herein. A summary follows:

There are only two dozen huts as families of many generations live together in these large wood and stone structures. Campfires are only used for cooking food, which is done only occasionally. The combination of their thick hides, fatty skin layers, and well insulated huts makes the freezing cold almost insignificant. Being cold, or even looking like you are cold, is a sign of weakness to a Bearman.

G.M. Note: They have no treasure the party would be interested in, but they do know about the secret entrance (*see map area G14*) to the Algor Keep and have a rough idea of the giants' strengths and weaknesses. The G.M. can tell the Player Characters as much as he feels is necessary, given the type of players and emphasis of the adventure in the campaign.

If the party has become *Bear Brothers*, then a group of a dozen hearty Bearmen are offered to join the great assault on the giants. The death or defeat of the dragon is clearly a good omen to the somewhat superstitious Bearmen. They believe their fortunes are changing for the better every day.

The adventurers might regard these stout fellows as mere cannon-fodder, but note that the warriors are not stupid, and while they will die to defend the village and kill a few giants, they do not walk blindly into danger just to save the party some honest work. They would become quickly disenchanted with their obviously "not as trustworthy as we were led to believe" comrades.

The Algor "Bear Bomb" the village only about once a week now, so there is only a 1 in 6 chance of an attack each day. Once an attack has occurred, there won't be another one for a full week. The only exception for this rule is if the party delays long enough to let the giants arm themselves for their final raid. The night before the raid, the bombardment from above is particularly heavy, as the giants wish to weaken their adversaries and demoralize them further before the battle.

Two boulders are thrown by each of the four Algor guards. They have normal chances to hit their targets as they have been doing this for many, many years. (**Note:** The G.M. can choose to crush a hut, bearman, Player Character, or whatever, depending on what looks the most fun to bomb. Damage per strike is 5D6. Remember, you are obligated to play the giants like they would really be, so enjoy yourself!) The Bearmen take the attacks in stride now, and these days they see the battle drawing to a quick, decisive close, with many omens and boast words in their favor.

If the adventurers think to ask, the Bearmen did watch the Algor lower a huge frozen block of ice into their keep some days ago, but thought nothing of it at the time. They haven't seen any "large, intelligent bodies of water walking around" and might question the sanity of anyone who poses such a ridiculous question.

F. The Algor Forest

This dense forest is relatively free of monsters for many miles around, but crawling with Algor patrols. (**G.M. Note:** There is a 01-46% chance for encounters, with 1D4+1 Algor giants in various states of sleeping, hunting, drinking, or preparing for an ambush.) Normal game animals

are still found in abundance as the giants only hunt really big game for food and sport, such as moose, caribou, deer and buffalo.

Algor Giants

Alignment: Miscreant

Hit Points: 34-40 average

Attacks Per Melee: 2, +6 to damage, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 60 feet, impervious to cold (no damage), frost breath (range 30 feet, 6 foot wide; gust of icy breath that does 4D6 points of damage, counts as an additional attack in combat).

Description: Giant, pale white, silver haired men (averaging 14 feet tall) dressed in animal furs and bearing pole arms.

G.M. Note on the Algor Keep

This is the giants' keep in the cliff side. It is simply a series of natural caverns which have been linked together by giant-hewn tunnels. The tunnels are very sturdy and most have been iced-over to cut down on the amount of loose earth in the complex. Normal doorways, where indicated, are actually made of huge animal furs sewn together and then softened. The fur doors are iced into the ceiling and young Algor are required to keep the doorways soft and usable.

The keep is exceedingly cold since no heat sources of any kind can be found within. The air, while not stale, is only freshened occasionally by opening all the doorways and then marching many giants through the caves to cause an artificial draft throughout.

The keep is constantly in motion. Six foot tall children run through the halls, softening hides, beating each other up, and otherwise annoying their parents. They can be found torturing small animals and pets or spying on their parents. Guards move to and fro, ever vigilant lest the Bearmen launch a surprise assault. The party must be on their toes at all times or they will have to face the entire force of giants at once.

The population of the keep is about 70, with fully three quarters being women and children. Therefore, only 20 male warriors remain to defend the keep. However, while this force may seem small to a party of this caliber, the G.M. should remember that the children fight as ogres (at least!), while the female giants are just as strong and dangerous as their male counterparts. While the women and children are not armed with swords or polearms like the men, pans, clubs, boulders, frozen legs of beasts, all make excellent weapons in the hands of creatures of such strength.

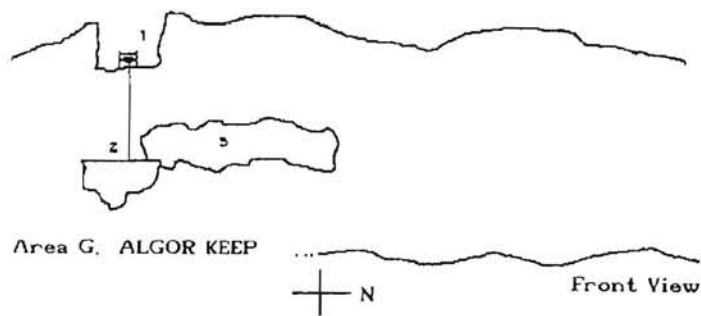
Algor Keep Interior

1. The Winch

Originally, the secret entrance at area 14 was the only way in to the keep, but rather than enlarge the tunnel, the Jarl decided to make a more defensible entrance way out of the open cliff face at area 3. A huge wooden winch mechanism was built atop the cliff, in order to transport large items (like that frozen water elemental) from the keep to the top of the cliff and vice versa. The Jarl then concealed the entrance at area 14, slyly believing his enemies would now find his lair virtually impenetrable.

However, as astute party members might soon guess, it is impossible to operate the winch from below, at area 2, so unless the giants never come out, there must surely be an alternate entrance. The Bearmen figured this out long ago, as they always watch the winch area for signs of activity, yet often encountered giants that were not seen departing by that route.

Two creatures of Algor strength or greater would be required to raise the frozen water elemental with this winch.



2. The Outer Platform

This huge platform was built out of many trees that were tied together and then frozen solid in sheet after sheet of rock hard ice. The platform was then polished and squared off for appearance's sake.

Only the western portion of the platform is visible from the secret view hole in area 3, while the rest of the platform is visible from the open, guarded recess in the cliffs. This is area 3 proper.

The platform offers a fantastic view of the Bearmen village (area E down below) and has been the site of many classic games of Bear Bombing.

3. The Open Cave

Four Algor warriors from area 4 are always on guard here. There is only a 10% chance that any one of them is watching area 2 through the secret hole to the south. The giants never sleep on the job, but they do chat, horse around, and arm wrestle a lot, so even a reasonably quiet party might gain the upper hand here.

If the party does not surprise the giants, all four of them begin yelling the alarm quite loudly. The remaining giants from area 4 split up, some advancing towards area 3, while the remainder run further into the keep, calling all to arms.

Otherwise, the watch is changed once every six hours.

The double layer of furs which form the doors to the west are concealed in packed snow and ice and look exactly like the rest of that wall. Only knocking on the wall, or use of magical devices, can locate the secret entrance way.

All along the eastern edge of the cave, just overlooking the village below, are fifteen piles of boulders with five boulders stacked in each pile. Giants forced to the rear of combat and unable to engage in melee attempt to throw boulders at the invaders. Also, the giants would enjoy throwing grabbed or captured party members and Bearmen over the edge of the cliff. Hitting a Bearman (or adventurer) on the ground with another Bearman (or adventurer) from above gets the lucky tosser a night with his choice of one of the Jarl's concubines. Of course, the shot must be witnessed by another giant or two.

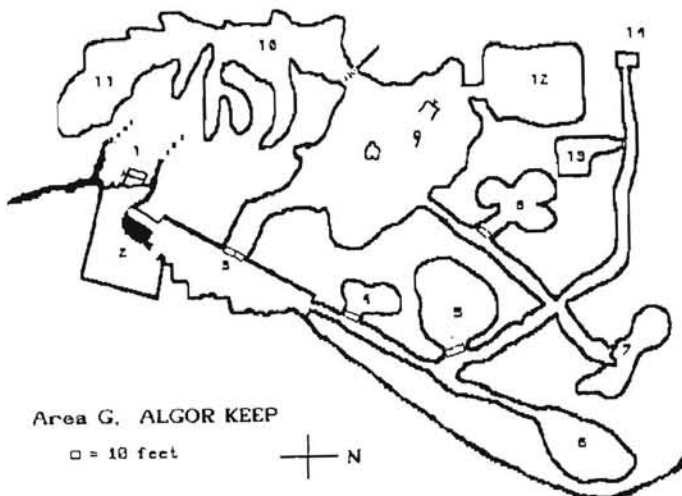
Note: There are no current rules for "Giant Bombing" should the Player Characters be so lucky. The fall is 250 feet down, by the way.

4. Eastern Guard Station

There are eight giant warriors stationed here. Four of them are always on duty in area 3, while the others wait for the next tour of duty. If the party surprises these giants, they are found playing cards around a giant-sized table. They have no treasure and their weapons all lie stacked in the northwestern portion of the room. Depending upon what condition the adventurers are in by this time, and whether the giants feel outnumbered or outpowered, they will fight until subdued. A handy closet ought to keep them out of trouble for the time being.

5. Main Sleeping Chamber

These are the lesser giants' quarters. Dozens of fur beds lie cramped together. Each large fur patch represents one family, as all family



members are expected to sleep together. The keep is always active, so only one-third of the total population is found here. These should be mostly women and young children.

There is no treasure here other than furs (each fur is worth about $2D4 \times 10$ gold).

6. Main Storeroom

This large chamber contains captured supplies from the Bearmen below, as well as spare weapons, armor, household equipment, and food stores for the lean times. There is nothing of major value within and the chamber is unguarded at this time. 90% of the weapons and armor are giant size.

It is suggested that a few women arrive just as the adventurers are searching through the stores. Whether the party tries to hide from, subdue, or slay these creatures quickly is up to them. **Note:** The G.M. should make them squirm as much as possible if the party has yet to be discovered.

7. The Bottomless Pit

A small ledge overlooks this very deep pit. This area serves as a lavatory and garbage dump for the denizens of the keep. The bottom of the pit is some 600 feet down from here, and is a vile, smelly place filled with a nasty assortment of rats, centipedes, worms, and water bugs.

8. The Jarl's Quarters

Nothnarg the Powerful is the Jarl (chieftain/leader) of this little band of giants. While not the brightest of the Algor, he is rather strong and a fine warrior. Since these traits and skills are prized more highly than brains or compassion, Nothnarg has the pleasant job of running the whole show.

It is good to be the Jarl, as Nothnarg has three fine concubines to chose from every evening. In fact, if the party has not been detected as of yet, then these three rather spoiled courtesans are arguing about who gets to be Nothnarg's chosen one for this evening. Nothnarg, of course, is sitting back on his own bed (to the west), and is enjoying the show immensely.

To the north and the south are two fine fur beds, padded with the softest of grasses and lesser quality pelts (10 worth $1D6 \times 10$ gold each). Scattered about them are various forms of giant jewelry, nose rings, ear skulls, fang files, and other feminine knickknacks. The walls are lined with crude tapestries depicting giant mating rituals in uncomfortable detail. The pictures are lewd in the extreme, and worthless to all but the most tasteless of people. (**G.M. Note:** Watch carefully to see which Player Characters fight over them.)

The Jarl's bed is the finest in the keep of course, and is layered in white rabbit fur (worth 250 gold). Over the bed is a life-size tapestry of Nothnarg himself, clothed in his white dragon scale armor and wielding his axe fiercely. Above the tapestry is the head of a white dragon killed many years ago by Nothnarg in his youth. (The dragon skull is worth approx. $4D6 \times 10,000$ gold. Note that it has no teeth remaining).

Underneath the two concubine beds are four pieces of wrought gold jewelry worth 1000 gold each. The Jarl's ruby ring is worth 5,000 gp, while the 10 gems in his diamond-studded arm bands would fetch almost 1500 gp each once the diamonds are reset into something more practical.

Should the party attack now, the concubines charge forward, gouging and kicking the "little invaders." Nothnarg arms himself and calls his guards. He hopes that his warriors arrive in time to sandwich the invaders so that the adventurers have no chance of getting away.

If Nothnarg is killed, the strongest giants will fight (not to the death) to determine a new leader. However, anarchy will exist until a new leader is found. This should give the group the opportunity to escape.



A powerful group, especially powerful in magic, may be able to bluff the giants into a temporary truce and allow them to take the frozen Major Water Elemental. Captured party members are stripped of all possessions and thrown in the dragon's treasure horde in area 11.

Jarl Nothnarg, the Powerful

Alignment: Miscreant

Size: 15ft, 8 inches tall **Weight:** 1100lbs

Age: 183 **Hit Points:** 76

Level of Experience: 9th level merc. **Armor:** Dragon Scale Mail*, A.R. 15, S.D.C. 120 **Attributes:** I.Q. 11, M.E. 7, M.A. 10, P.S. 25, P.P. 14, P.E. 20, P.B. 9, Spd. 5

Attacks Per Melee: 3; plus frost breath (4), punch — 2D4, kick — 2D6, or by weapon. All Algor have frost breath that does 4D6 damage, 30ft range and counts as one extra attack per melee (can be breathed only once per melee).

Bonuses: +13 to damage, +3 to parry and dodge, +3 to save vs magic and poison; critical strike on natural 19-20.

Psionics: None

Natural Abilities: Impervious to cold, nightvision — 60ft.

Skills of Note: W.P. polearm: +4 to strike and +3 to parry, W.P. battle axe: +4 strike and +3 to parry and thrown, W.P. sling: +4 to strike, with a rate of fire of 6 per melee (giant sling rocks do 2D6 damage each), Prowl — 65%, Track — 72/20%, Speaks Troll/Giant, Goblin and Elf, all at 98%, and Wolfen at 60%.

Weapons: Jotan (high quality) battle axe, +2 to strike and parry (3D6 damage), saber halberd polearm (4D6 damage), special *magic* battle axe (3D6 damage), that makes holder fire resistant (half damage) four times a day and the axe itself is impervious to fire, sling (2D6 damage). All items are giant size.

Magic Items: Potions of impervious to fire (2), fly (1), invisibility (1), and red smoke bombs (6) used with his sling.

***Note:** The "Dragon Scale Mail" armor is a high quality *Jotan* scale armor. It is not actually made of dragon scales. The armor has a high S.D.C. but weighs 100lbs (giant size).

The Three Algor Concubines

Alignments: All Miscreant

Size: Each is about 14ft tall

Hit Points: Leegora — 43, Alganian — 50, Neenal — 30

Number of Attacks: One plus frost breath (4D6 damage, 30ft range). Punch does 1D6, kick — 1D8, bite — 1D4, or by weapon.

Psionics: Only *Leegora* has psionics and she can be a toughy. Major Psionic, I.S.P. 59. One psi-attack per melee (counts as an extra attack). Only knows the following psionic powers: resist fatigue, see aura, sense magic, bio-regeneration, death trance, mind block, spontaneous combustion, see the invisible, mental bolt of force, and Evil Eyes: paralysis, fear, blind, and death.

Skills of Note: Speak troll/giant and goblin — 98%, elf — 40%.

Description: *Neenal* is the youngest and prettiest. She is also the most frightened, but will fight to the death for the Jarl Nothnarg (*Neenal* is the chieftain's newest favorite). She will fight barehanded and with frost breath. *For more data on Algor, see the Palladium RPG, pg 236.*

Alganian is the oldest and meanest. She'll grab an extra saber-halberd polearm (4D6 damage) and fight ferociously to the death. She loathes elves and men of magic so they will be her first target. **Note:** *alganian* is +2 to strike and parry with polearms.

Leegora is the psionic, but she will also wield a vicious battle axe (3D6 damage). She is the most cunning and resourceful (I.Q. 14, M.E. 9, M.A. 15) and will use her abilities to their fullest. Unlike the others, she will consider tactical retreats and may bargain with the player characters.

9. The Great Hall

This huge hall has two main points of interest. The first is a huge ice statue in the middle of the room that is some 15 feet high and 20 feet in diameter. Of course, this is the frozen water elemental the party is looking for. What the adventurers are going to do with it is their next dilemma.

The water elemental is not friendly and will attack the players if unfrozen. When freed, it races away to the east, and down to the river as fast as possible. In fact, it is this river that the elemental has been seeking. From here, it can flow downstream for a short time until a roaming elemental dimensional whirlpool sends it home. The party would be wise to leave the beast frozen for easier handling. The creature weighs tons and it requires four giants or one major earth elemental (or even a hapless gargoyle) to *drag* it any significant distance (like through the wilderness).

The other interesting object is the Jarl's throne, to the west. It is made of perfectly clear ice and is surrounded by Bearmen heads that are frozen to the floor. On the back of the throne is a *wheel*. If the wheel is turned, the secret wall directly to the south slides westward, revealing a passageway to areas 10 and 11.

There is no additional treasure here and no one occupies the chamber under normal circumstances.

Major Water Elemental Blopono

Alignment: Unprincipled

Size: 12 feet tall (frozen), can be as tall as 25 feet.

A.R.: 14, **Hit Points:** 82

Number of Attacks: 2; pounds opponent, doing 2D6 damage, or by magic, or by weapon.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +6 to damage, +3 to parry or dodge, +3 on all saving throws.

Psionics: Limited telepathy, I.S.P. 200

Magic: All water elemental magic at tenth level proficiency

Natural Abilities: Impervious to poison, impervious to cold (if frozen and active, A.R. 18, +4 to damage), impervious to normal weapons. All non-magic weapons just slosh right through it, doing no damage (A torch will do 1D6 points of damage to it. Fire does double damage.). Other abilities include nightvision 90 feet, speed 16, bio-regeneration (1D8 every four melees).

Description: A giant (frozen) flowing mound of water.

10. Ice Caves

These caves are covered in layer upon layer of ice. The ice is clear and appears black due to the earth and stone it covers. If the adventurers are fleeing the giants, the giant in charge orders the sliding wall shut behind the party. There is no opening mechanism on the inside, and the giants make every effort to wake the resident(s) of area 11 by banging on the wall after it has closed.

G.M. Note: There is no treasure here. The G.M. should take very careful notice of the Player Characters' actions in this area, as their future in area 11 is greatly dependent on their current level of discretion.

11. Dragons' Lair

Two dragons nest here, just around the eastern bend of these caverns. Their names are Fostengar, or "Blue Tongue," and Vistethan, or "Big Mama." They have no young, but are currently working on hatching three eggs in the rear of the cave. The eggs are worth 1D6 × 10,000 gold in some civilized places. But inhumane wizards and alchemists use them for potions, killing the babies. The two dragons are huge, nasty, and dangerous. They have grown used to this locale, and have no wish to be disturbed. The lives of their unborn young are of primary concern, and the pair will avoid battle within their lair. Only the Algor can tell the two apart at a distance.

Any noise by the party, or its pursuers subsequent to the party's arrival here, gives the dragon(s) all the warning they need. Assuming Fostengar survived the attack at area B, he will remain close to his sitting mate, Vistethan, during the upcoming confrontation.

Vistethan remains in the back, only forging forth upon the defeat of her mate. If the dragons are prepared, dual bolts of magic will raise a doubly reinforced wall of ice, sealing themselves within the main chamber of the lair. Though Fostengar might be hungry for vengeance, he will *not* risk his mate's or his hatchlings' lives.

If, for whatever reason, the party decides to breach the ice wall, they will receive a final warning from the angry pair. The dragons are very intelligent, and may barter with the adventurers if the party's got something they find desirable. If there's nothing to negotiate and/or the party persists in attacking, the dragons will fight. While they know the giants are immune to their breath weapons, they use them without hesitation against humans or new enemies. If the cold appears ineffective, Fostengar is most likely to be provoked into physical melee, while Vistethan remains at a discrete distance, providing covering fire in the form of spells. They will use killing force so long as the party is within the lair. No pursuit will be given, however, should the party manage to flee. The two dragons will fight to the death to save the egg. Players should not underestimate these two. They serve the Algor giants only because it serves them. The giants' tribe unknowingly protects their nest. The dragons are equal to 10th level wizards, have a natural A.R. of 14, Fostengar has 200 hit points, Vistethan has 220. *See the Palladium RPG, pg 213, for psionics and other abilities.*

The majority of the treasure for the entire keep is stored beneath Vistethan's nest, as this is obviously the safest place in the keep for such valuables, which include: 50,000 gold pieces worth of coins in various denominations, various used weapons (including an eternally sharp sword, a quiver of magic arrows +3 to strike and a flask of exceptional healing for 2D8 points), 3 potions of flying and hundreds of wolf, deer, bear, and even walrus furs worth about 90,000 total. The party will earn their booty here for sure, or die trying.

No matter what the outcome of the battle, the roars of the dragons echo so loudly that the keep comes to alert status immediately. If the party is not careful, they might be trapped between two very deadly forces. Teleportation is a fine spell for times such as these. So is a good sword.

12. Trophy Room

Lining the walls and floor of this chamber are the Jarl's most prized possessions, his trophies. Heads of almost every type of Northern Wilderness monster can be found here, from the routine to the rare. Only two types of creatures cannot be found here; dragons (found in his private quarters), and Bearmen (found around his throne).

There is no treasure here, but the G.M. is encouraged to give the party some new information about some monsters they have yet to meet.

13. Western Guardroom

This room conforms to the statistics provided in area 4, except that these guards rotate with those found in area 14. These giants engage in frequent arm wrestling matches, with high stakes betting and all the machismo you could ever dream of.

There is a total of 200 gp being wagered within this room. There is no other useful or valuable treasure.

14. Secret Entrance

This stairway is covered by a huge mound of earth, snow, and leaves. Concealed doorways to the north and south of the upper mound allow entrance to the keep here. Two giants remain concealed within the mound under piles of leaves, while the other two giants stand on the top of the stairwell, out of sight of anyone who enters the mound

through the surface archways.

Should the alarm be sounded, these giants forget their orders and proceed quickly to the sound of the disturbance.

THE ELEMENTAL PARTY

When the four Major Elementals are gathered back together at the site of the dimensional portal, in the ruins of Avaxa's Tower, all they need do is touch each other at the same time. If they are all within a hundred yards of the portal, the silver door begins to spin violently, until it becomes a shining blur. Suddenly, there is a bright flash of harmless energy, the elementals disappear, returned safely to their dimensions of origin. The door is gone and the dimensional portal is closed. The world is safe.

G.M. Notes: The game master may decide to send the Player Characters back "home" as well, but that would be kind of boring. Sending them with the elementals is too predictable, so use this chance to send them somewhere in your world, or universe, where you can turn things upside down on them again. Maybe they can begin new adventures in the Land of the Damned, or far to the south, amidst a myriad of tropical islands. Yeah, cold to hot, that's the ticket. Or just leave 'em where they are.

At this point, Migway will look extremely pleased with himself and the party. He lustily extends his clawed hands forward to take his share of the quest's treasures, and will not like it if they come back empty. If the party is still battered and worn from their task, they will find a full powered Gargoyle Mage ready to pound them into hamburger! The party can part with Migway as grudging allies, or as mortal enemies. Actually, Migway will try to *take* his share of treasure from the group, especially if they are physically and magically weak, and he still has most of his spells. It is possible that the greedy Migway could be the last monster of the adventure to fight. One final battle on the grounds where they met.

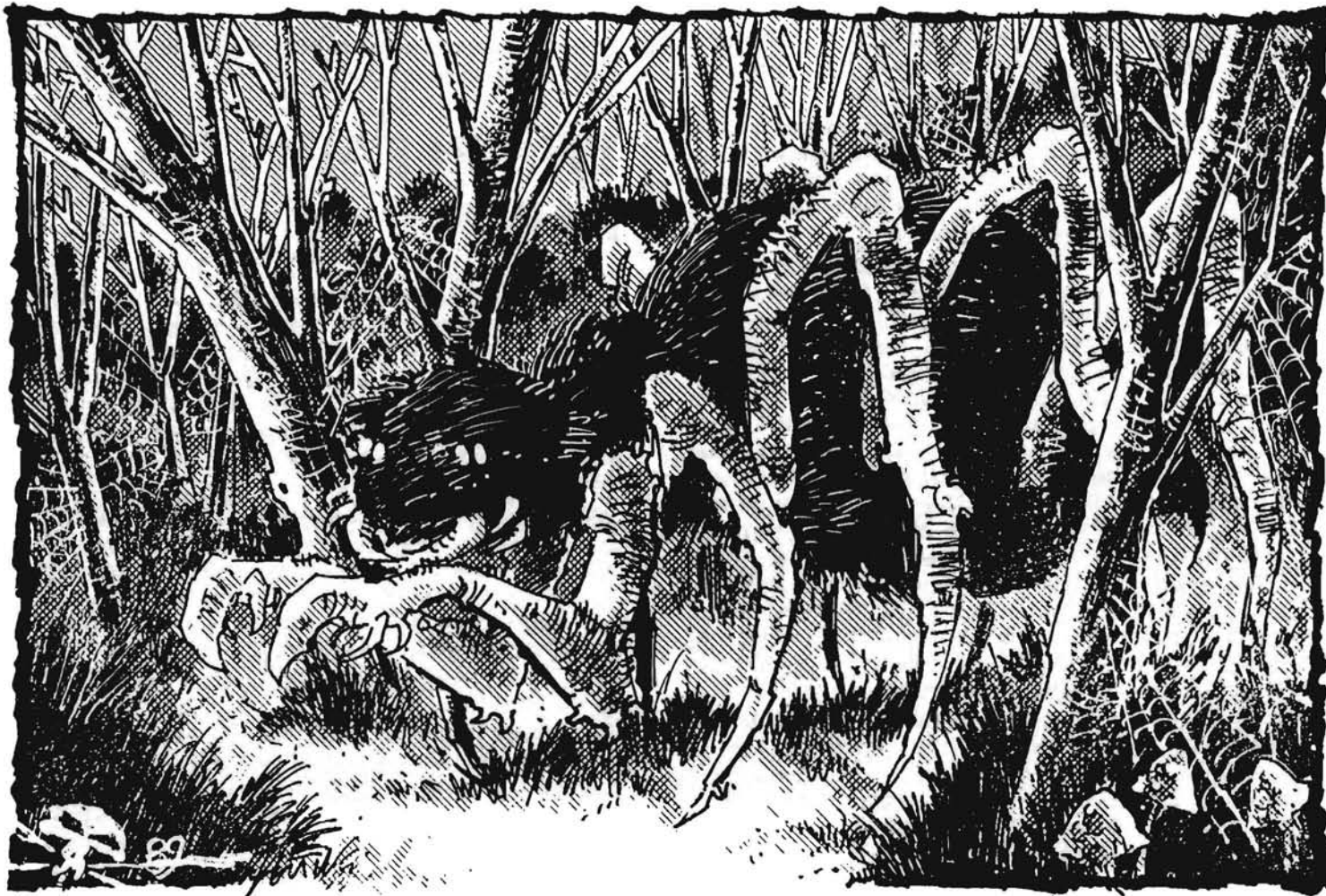
POSSIBLE PROBLEMS AND HOW TO FIX THEM

There is a very good chance that the Player Characters will kill an elemental, or one or more elementals manage to escape to its home dimension. Don't trash the game or the characters just because of a minor problem. Be inventive. Right off the bat you have at least two options:

A) Okay, they blew it. The undead are coming pretty soon now, and the party might just want to high-tail it out of this part of the forest. They might be safe for now, but someday their actions are going to catch up with them. Begin a "Halt the March of the Undead" campaign and let your fledgling men of magic come up with a new, even more dangerous way to close the dimensional gateway. Now they have to fight their way through the undead that they let into the world, and then clean up the mess afterwards. What fun!

B) Well, maybe they could track the elementals to their own dimension by leaping into the same portal. The G.M. gets to develop a whole new dimension of strange creatures with certainly non-human beliefs and no tolerance for strangers. A new quest through lands of fire, earth, air, or water, ensues. Tallyho!

And what was that about the heart of a crystal dragon from another dimension? Hmmm, sounds very dangerous...very dangerous indeed. Finis.



THE FOREST OF BROKEN WINGS

By Jeffrey Gomez

"Begone, young fools! To take one step further would truly be folly. Do you see how the sky glows with unearthly light? How the lightning comes alive to dance in the gnarled branches of trees like great spider webs? You think yourselves heroes? Champions for a fallen people? Forget it! For what is deep within this misbegotten forest is bigger than you . . . or the Burning! The Abomination is bigger than the petty gods who have turned their backs on this horror. It is bigger than us all!"

Rad the Tamer

INTRODUCTION

In the great expanse that is the land of Palladium, there can be recounted thousands of tales of grand deeds and derring-do. From the Great Rift and the Land of the Damned, to the Eastern Territory and the Old Kingdom, legends which tell of those bands of hardy adventurers have been born and retold time and again. The Diewulfen, the White Gaters, the Thunderbolts of Timiro and perhaps most famous of all, *the Defilers*, have each championed causes to bring change and progress to this tumultuous world. Now there comes a time for a new group, a different one. The band of young adventurers that embarks upon this dark journey may never be the same whence it is done!

The Forest of Broken Wings holds a quest for the sharpest of minds and stoutest of hearts. It is a grim journey which pits a party of four to seven players of moderate to high level against an insanely evil

menace. The prize may hold the key to the future of the Palladium world. The arena will be the forests deep within the Northern Wilderness, a secret place where tales of heroism may be swallowed in darkness forever, never to be told. This will be a lonely little war, where true peace may lie only in death! Winning may well mean deep scars along with the riches. Players who wish to preserve their characters as they are should be advised to look elsewhere. This is stuff for heroes only!

G.M. Note: *The Forest of Broken Wings* is a tightly woven adventure which should run much like an action-adventure motion picture. In order to achieve all the effects which will make this a truly atmospheric and memorable scenario for your players, please study this adventure carefully from start to finish. It is recommended that you review the material from other Palladium® rulebooks wherever cited in this adventure (such as backgrounds on faeries and woflen). Also, you should understand parts of the story that may never come into play (such as the various histories of the Non-Player Characters). You will note that the pacing of the story leaves plenty of room for character development, as well as decision-making and combat. Remember that the point of this or any good adventure is that your heroes should learn who the true enemy is, fight with honor, and make the necessary sacrifices to change their world for the better.

Feel free to make adjustments or customize this adventure to better suit your style, your players or your campaign. All of the new creatures and settings in this scenario are official parts of the Palladium® world and rule system.

Players who wish to run in this adventure should read no further.

SETTING

It has been a lush summertime across the vast green of the Great Northern Wilderness. The weather has been unusually warm this far north, and thunderstorms have caused their fair share of wildfires and flooding. The brilliant midnight flash which sparks this adventure happened over a patch of forest measuring nearly 100 square miles in area. The sylvan and human refugees to be discovered by the adventurers will lay in waiting on the southern border of this patch, which in turn is located in the heart of wolfen territory 400 miles due northwest of the Eastern Territory and 600 miles east of Ophid's Grasslands. In the days since the flash, in the area immediately surrounding the hundred mile patch, the woods have seemed strangely unsettled and dry. Aurora borealis, shimmering pastel lights which streak across the northern skies, has been observed almost nightly, and the trees themselves seem to be crackling with a strange energy.

ASSEMBLING THE PARTY

Word of a spectacular occurrence in the deep Northern Wilderness has spread rapidly, even as far south as the border on the Eastern Territory. Descriptions of what exactly happened have been vague, ranging from the possibility that a bolt of lightning has caused an immense forest fire, to whimsy in the belief that a brilliant orange star has crashed from the sky somewhere deep within the woods. Generally, it is said that at midnight a few evenings ago, the sky over a patch of forest hundreds of miles away became as bright as day, remaining that way for several incredible minutes. No sound was reported, but then again, there seems to be no trustworthy eyewitnesses available. One thing is for certain, nothing quite like this has ever been reported before.

In the days since, several rumors have crept their way toward civilization, prodding shamans and wizards to whisper of bad omens and dark portents:

1. Forest animals further north have gone feral, and are running wild closer to the northernmost communities.
2. Strange lights and luminous objects have been sighted in the woods, even dozens of miles south of the area where the flash was reported.
3. Wolfen are on the move, restless and dangerous.

Reasons for a party to assemble and investigate should be obvious. Although the source of these rumors and omens seems far away, there has been no real word from some of the smaller pilgrim communities which have recently moved deeper into the wild. While a pittance in fees may be offered to adventurers by town councils to unite for an expedition, curiosity and a neighborly sense of responsibility might prove better reasoning and justification for making such a journey. If the party has already established itself as powerful or notorious, they may be turned to by townsfolk who fear the worst. Also, word of some great treasure uncovered there could draw their attention. This may not be true, but such is the stuff of rumors.

Alternately, the party may have been on vacation, camping or exploring some of the adjacent wilderness areas, witnessing for themselves the feral animals and strange lights. Adventurers who are way off course may find themselves guided by will-o'-the-wisps and faerie folk, but definitely no further than to the encampment at the southern border. A place now known as the *Forest of Broken Wings*.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

A PRAYER FOR THE DYING

After a couple of days' trek through a forestland deep, thick, and teeming with natural life, the party will come upon one of the strangest encampments they will ever encounter. Though it may be high noon, the wilderness will have fallen hush and still. Shadows will grow longer and darker, and birds will have stopped their songs. A clearing ahead leaves room enough for three campfires to smolder, and for some two dozen well-camouflaged tents to stand full.

As their eyes adjust to the dim light, the party will be shocked to discover that the area around the clearing is littered with the bodies of dozens of human beings! Several lay still and corpse-like, others still live, clutching at the air or writhing from time to time. Men, women, and children, many of them near death, lay drenched in sweat, gibbering at empty air and covering their eyes from lights which do not shine. Their skin is blistered and charred, and most of them have clearly been injured by crude swords and spears. A few are blind.

Moving slowly and deliberately among the humans are the wondrous Faeries of the Green Wood trying their best to tend to the stricken humans. Black-haired, green-skinned and butterfly-winged, the tiny folk try to comfort the wounded, feeding them porridge and keeping them cool with wet compresses. They play with the smaller children, distracting them from dying parents. A rare sight it is, to see faeries come to the aid of humans with such vigor! It is almost as if a bond of some kind exists between the two groups.

Party members who have encountered such creatures before, however, will notice that the faeries themselves are no longer lustrous and spritely. Once beautiful, autumnal wings are now frayed and mottled. Some of them stagger, wiping their brows. Few, if any, are taking to the air. The faeries are sick and dying too!

Attempts by the party to communicate with the humans will be all but futile. Most are barely conscious, and the faerie folk will urge adventurers away from the people as well as the campsite. "This is no sideshow attraction to be gawked at by thieves and marauders," they will say, "this illness can befall you, spare yourselves and go away!"

Any unduly nasty attempt to defy the faeries will result in mischievous wood faerie attacks on rude party members. If a true and *earnest appeal* is made by the party, however, and some attempts are made to help the faeries with the people, the faeries may become a little more open. The group will find out that these human pilgrims are the citizens from the tiny village of Epimall. They have been struck down and *diseased* after the "aster fell," the midnight flash which occurred only last week.

If the party indeed performs impressively (priests deliver last rites, healers comfort the incurable, warriors set bones, etc.), permission will be granted for a council to be made with Klisfurnim, Leader of the "Faeries of Epimall."

G.M. Notes: Player Characters may attempt to use special abilities to heal the fallen pilgrims. The disease is the result of a type of radiation poisoning, and, while easing some of their pain and symptoms, neither healing potions nor a priest's healing touch will cure them. The stricken do not radiate magic, and remove curse or mystic incantations will not work either. Only a full Restoration spell can possibly banish this malady from an individual.

Epim is an earth goddess revered widely in the north. Her worshippers are often peaceful folk, in touch with emotion and nature. These humans have beggun a colony deep in the woods. Presumably to maintain their innocence, and hold closely to their religious heritage. Epimall, literally means "Forest Hail to the Earth Goddess."

THE NIGHT OF THE ASTER FALL

Klisfurnim is a proud and noble green wood faerie who will emerge from a hospice tent, rise to his full seven inches, and adjust the tiny

sword at his side. His small voice is solemn and wistful, and he will ask the party to name itself and its members. He will address each member by his proper name, and ask how he can be of help.

He will only reveal his people's sad story and the tragedy of the humans if treated with respect and compassion. If such is not the case, he will ask that the party grant him the simple boon of *leaving* his people to die with dignity and peace.

The Faerie Leader, Klisfurnim, will stand bravely, even if moved to recount his people's tale, his eyes will mist as he surveys the eerie sight about them (**GM Note:** You may read this and all speeches to follow as written, or customize them to suit your needs.):

"My people had grown to love these big ones. They came to our woods less than a year gone by, and they built without destroying, worshipped without preaching. Yes, we teased and taunted their simple efforts to survive in such a wild. We warned them, too, that the wolfen were not far and on the move all the time. Wolfen are not to be trifled with, if you're only human!

"But they stayed. They resisted the wolfen and won our hearts. We came to help them, made merry with them, and looked on with wonder when Epim granted them the gift of the *Tree of Wooden Clogs*. A little paradise had come to our part of the wild, and we would come to defend it with our lives. When the aster fell we tried to do just that. We tried . . . and we failed."

Klisfurnim will pause, listening for questions. His green eyes will sparkle with tears as he answers many of them with the following story:

"Seven nights past fell the aster. Stars shoot 'cross the night sky all the time, but this was no true star. It was a flash in the night, like a terrible orange sun setting upon our forest. Falling into it as if to burn it alive. But though it burnt, there was no fire, and though it destroyed, there was no device. Only dark enchantment.

"Its menace and intellect reached quickly into the woods, gathering power to set against us. Epimall stood vigilant, and though we were attacked by its orc minions, the houses wrecked, the steeds stolen, we succeeded in fending off the first wave. We would not be so lucky a second time. For when the orcs did return, they were astride our own arbolites, riding down upon us, backed by the one whose arrival started this all: *the Abomination!*

"Forty-four men, women and children fell under the onslaught that eve. Worse still, half a dozen have fallen since, dying of an illness wrought by this evil being. My people work upon curative potions and spells, but time runs out. So long as the Abomination lays in waiting we will be imprisoned here. To return home for our herbs and cultures would be to suffer the Burning, and to turn to your civilization for help would be to lead the Abomination to man!

"Alas! That Epim should warrant such dark times to her worthy followers!"

Klisfurnim will be distraught and no longer able to speak. Questions will either have to wait or go unanswered, with such names as "the Abomination" or "the Burning" inspiring only fear and stubborn silence. (Mind mages may find that their psychic powers are mysteriously of little use in this area!) The faerie leader's aides and consorts will urge the party to rest the night before leaving or attempting to find out more tomorrow.

Klisfurnim, The Faerie Leader in Stats

Note: See *Faeries*, pp 221-224 *Palladium Role-playing Game* for general descriptions and abilities of faeries.

Alignment: Unprincipled **Hit Points:** 50

Attacks per melee: Four by sword (one point of damage per hit), or one by magic (with a spell strength equal to that of a 12th level wizard).

Attributes: I.Q. 16, M.E. 12, M.A. 17, P.S. 5, P.P. 22, P.E. 10, P.B. 28, Spd. 176 flying

Faeries of Epimall

Alignment: Unprincipled

Hit Points: Average at 39

Attacks per melee: three by sword (one point of damage per hit, all are armed at this time), or one by magic (with a spell strength equal to that of a 10th level wizard).

Attributes: average at I.Q. 14, M.E. 9, M.A. 15, P.S. 2, P.P. 12, P.E. 5, P.B. 24, Spd. 155 flying

THE TRIO, THE TREASURES, AND THE TREESWIFTS

Both faeries and humans alike will generally resist answering further questions without knowing what the party intends to do, responding to queries with such comments as "What's it to you?" or "You make my heart heavy with your cold curiosity!"

GM Note: In fact, the party is going to have to decide for itself what course of action to take. It has been made clear that time is running out for these people, but the threat of somehow catching this "sickness" should be carefully considered by the adventurers. The evil perpetrated upon these people must be clearly shown as heinous, but GMs should have the party make a conscious decision on whether to tackle it on their own.

On the other hand, it should be made clear that these pilgrims were not warriors, and a well handled sword can sometimes resolve what faerie magic cannot! The GM may use Non-Player Characters such as sickly humans or world-weary faeries to act as a conscience, raising questions of realism, faith and morality toward the party's final decision. Either way, the party should not be allowed to dawdle with their answer at the campsite for more than one day's time.

Any announcement that the adventurers will be forging on toward Epimall will be met with shock and discouragement. Klisfurnim's people will beg the party to reconsider. Challenging *the Abomination* will be likened to suicide. Worse, the chances of catching the sickness will grow as they journey north, the faeries will say, and too many lives have been sacrificed already. Klisfurnim himself will demand a speech to be made by the party leader giving good reason for the group to continue.

If a stirring speech is made by one of the party members, then the following additional facts will be made clear by various refugees, faerie and human alike:

1. **There have been two attempts** made by mixed parties of faeries and able humans to return to Epimall (a three day, 60 mile journey on foot, or one day by horse) to rescue victims who may still be alive there and get precious herbs and cultures which grow near the village. Both parties encountered something called "**the Burning**," a mysterious group of creatures which has thus far been unstoppable. All that can be told about the Burning is that it is not human and is capable of tremendous, lethal force. No one has died in combat with the Burning. But, no one who has encountered them is conscious at this time (and, again, psionics and magic cannot be used to find the answers emblazoned within their unconscious minds)! The Burning also seem to be victims of the illness.

2. **Three humans** were regrettably left behind in Epimall: the Wayward Lady, an outcast woman who is "with child" and hidden in one of the cottages. Her champion, a man who remained in town to protect the life of the unborn baby, if not the lady herself. And the Treeguard, the wizard who would guard the fabulous Tree of Wooden Clogs with his last breath. Lost faeries may still be there in hiding, doing what they can to aid the doomed trio.

3. **The Tree of Wooden Clogs** is the most sacred and beloved aspect of Epimall. Apparently a sign from the goddess Epim, the tree

has been deemed a genuine living artifact, priceless, and potent with natural magic. Only vague responses will meet specific questions as to the tree's full potential, and no one will say anything more about it, save for the fact that "it is alive with the spirit of Epim."

4. The animals that were well enough to make it this far south have spoken to the faeries. They whisper with great dread of "spider lightning," and of the Abomination who seems to be waiting for something not far from Epimall.

5. There are those few among both the faeries and humans who will spread a rumor that the *wolfen*, spearheaded by a tribe less than 15 miles north of Epimall, are behind all of this.

G.M. Note: On the morning of their departure, the adventurers who have shown compassion, helped around the campsite, and shown respect for Klisfumim and the refugees, will be amply rewarded. A selfish or unfeeling party may wind up continuing the adventure without the benefit of Klisfumim's gifts, making for a much more difficult task.

Klisfumim and *Steed Wrangler Ben* (an old human) will lead the party to a deep thicket adjacent to the refugee camp. There they behold the fantastic sight of several faeries tethering and saddling up half a dozen arbolytes, the *mythical* treeswifts of the Great Northern Wilderness. The reptilian steeds seem serene and curious about their new visitors (*their description follows*), and Klisfumim will speak of them with pride:

"In tandem, my people worked with the human folk to liberate six of these remarkable creatures from the orcs who stole them. It has taken old Ben here a dozen years to tame them, and a dozen more to breed a loyal stable of them. They are called *arbolytes*, or treeswifts, and can run through the thickest forest the way eagles soar across cloudless sky. They are yours for the duration of your quest, my friends, yours to halve your journey and grant you godspeed. This privilege we grant because there is a sincerity in you, for all your foolhardiness, and because you would make a stand where so many brave men have fallen."

The party will be granted (and instructed how to ride) the arbolytes, as well as given the following supplies:

- A week's supply of Epimall wheybread, said to slow the poisoning effects of the illness.
- Five flasks of "goodwater" (1D8 hit point healing potions).
- And a single 3 foot by 5 foot battle shield lined with the brown, leathery cloven leaves of the Tree of Wooden Clogs (A.R.: 15, S.D.C.: 100), and said to stand some defense against the might of the Abomination.

Within the hour, after grim salutations and prayers of hope, the party should bolt from the encampment, northbound to Epimall. As they rush, headlong into the thick of a forest, the more perceptive may notice the tiny crackling of spider lightning and the low humming of strange, eldritch energies. . .

THE LEGENDARY TREESWIFTS

Arbolytes: Stats and Background

Description: Somehow related to the desert dwelling *silonar* (see *Palladium Monsters & Animals*, p 77), these reptilian mounts (also known as treeswifts) are extremely rare bipedal lizards. Forest speedsters, they are capable of running at top speed for up to eight hours without tiring. Arbolytes are somewhat more clever than their sandrunning cousins (which is not to say much). Once tamed, however, they can become rather loyal to a gentle rider.

Like *silonars*, however, arbolytes must be steered carefully, especially at high speeds, to ensure that the creature runs in the desired direction. A tame adult arbolyte's back will be carefully saddled, capable of carrying up to 250 lbs. Its head will be wrapped in a simple leather harness, which, when tightly controlled, will steer the creature.

Elegant, hump-backed, sturdy and somewhat sleeker than a *silonar's*, arbolyte flesh is natural camouflage in the deep forest. Their physical dexterity is absolutely amazing, rendering them able to hurl through dense wood by dodging overhanging branches and skipping wildly over the underbrush. Untamed arbolytes tend to be aloof, wary and nocturnal. They are the *rarest* beasts in the Northern Wilderness.

Hit Points: 5D6 + 14 A.R.: 10

Horror Factor: 9 P.P.E.: 2D6

Natural Abilities: Maximum speed of 30 mph (Spd. factor 44) in dense wood, can leap up to 16ft long and 10ft high.

Attacks Per Melee: One by bite doing 2D6 points of damage (arbolytes rarely do this), or by clawed feet doing 3D6 points of damage.

Bonuses: +4 to dodge, +4 to damage with clawed feet only (not bite).

Value: Up to 5,500 to 10,000 gold untrained, 20,000 to 30,000 gold pieces trained. The meat is edible. Whole, relatively intact skins are valued at 600 gold each.

Habitat: The deepest woods in the Great Northern Wilderness. Arbolytes cannot survive under direct sunlight for long, and will perish if placed in an urban setting for more than a few days. They need to run and cavort in the cool shade of the forest. They tend to hibernate during winter months.

Physical Appearance: Large, graceful, smooth featured reptiles with massive hind legs, and smaller forearms which are often used to push aside foliage, in a swimming motion, as it moves. Their tails are used for balance. They are covered in small, deep green and gold speckled scales and have green eyes.

Size: 4-7ft, **Weight:** 200-350 pounds

Average Life Span: 40 years

EYES IN THE TREES

Riding the arbolytes for several miles through thick forest should be described as thrilling, if arduous, work. The treeswifts constantly swoop and dodge to avoid low hanging branches. They will often skip and leap to avoid logs and brambles. Riding the creatures for any great length of time is not for the full or weak of stomach, and frequent rests are required for party members unused to riding on bipeds. (**Note:** Characters without any level of horsemanship have a 1-50% chance of falling off their treeswift twice an hour, or when attempting a leap.) After a few hours, however, the excitement of riding so quickly through such dense vegetation should give way to dread. The forest no longer looks well at all.

Overcast skies have thrown a blanket of somberness over the area. Flowers have closed and leaves have withered. Shadows have grown long and wiry, reaching out threateningly to the party. Perceptive adventurers will notice that while animals still lurk in bush and branch, they are strangely mute, bedraggled and watchful. An occasional fox or deer will have matted fur and wild eyes, fleeing the party when possible, attacking with great ferocity if cornered.

Travelling another hour into the dying forest will reveal birds stumbling helplessly on the ground, unable to fly; a lack of insects, and an unnatural silence.

In the mid-afternoon of the first day's travel, the much rumored lights will begin their show. The air will carry a new taint; a coppery, mildly unpleasant, burnt-metal odor. The breeze will seem charged, as if a thunderstorm is brewing, and party members will notice that the hairs on their arms and at the napes of their necks is standing on end. To touch a canteen or a blade is to send a spark flying, delivering a mild shock to the unwary adventurers.

As twilight dims the forest, bright blue-white streaks of luminescence can be seen slipping across branches, and jumping from outcroppings to the metal ringlets in armor. By nightfall, any movement will set off

a glimmer of spider lightning, a type of Saint Elmo's fire never before encountered on this world.

G.M. Notes on the Spider Lightning

The spider lightning is a direct atmospheric effect of the "aster fall," and may be considered supernatural in origin. There are a number of concepts to consider in the running of such a special effect throughout the adventure. From this point on, spider lightning should be an ever-present element in the doings of the party. It surrounds them, making stealth extremely difficult for any creature (and, later on, painful). But note that it also surrounds every living, moving being in the forest! Player characters smart enough to pick up on this will be more difficult to surprise. As the adventure builds to a climax, the spider lightning will itself become both a major menace and a spectacular accent, literally highlighting scenes which require combat or "stunt-work."

Spider lightning has the following properties:

1. It is vivid by day and brilliant at night, dancing over everything that moves, whether touched by a breeze or punched by a fist. Careful listeners will hear an accompanying buzz or crackling noise.
2. It rarely lasts much longer than the movement which caused it. The tiny jagged bolts will run pell-mell along the outlines of branches, tree trunks, stones and objects which have even the slightest mineral content.
3. Direct physical contact with stones, iron, steel and other metal by any living creature in this area will result in a tiny, snapping electrostatic shock. Players should be reminded of this each time it happens, and the shocks will intensify as noted for the rest of the adventure.
4. Swords, steel-tipped arrowheads, javelins, and all manner of metal weaponry will immediately catch spider lightning, making it somewhat uncomfortable to handle the objects.
5. The atmosphere which has created the spider lightning will have an immediate *adverse effect on psionics and magic*. Any use of psionics will be met with a general fuzziness; for the most part, it will feel as if the psionics have been jammed or interfered with by the lightning. Only biological manipulations performed on one's *self* are still effective, such as resist cold, bio-regeneration, resist fire, etc. Object read, presence sense, evil eyes, etc., have no effect! *Clerical spells* will not work, except for prayers and healing touch (reduced to 1D4). *Druids* will be filled with dread and be afraid to perform an animal metamorphosis (+10% penalty to temporarily revert to animal form). *Healers* will feel death all around them; their powers will be unaffected. Strangest of all, *magical spells, circles and wards* and their effects will be cut in half 1-75% of the time, or be doubled in power and force at 76-00%. Roll percentile dice each time magic is performed.

PERIL FROM ABOVE

Just after dark, whether the party has chosen to forge on into the night or has picked out a place to pitch camp, blind violence will erupt for the first time. A **Devil Digger** will attack an unsuspecting party member by dropping itself from an overhanging tree limb, 20 feet above the ground. The creature is vicious, sickly and crazed. Devil Diggers have never been known to scale trees and yet this monster somehow drove itself up there with the intention of attacking the first thing that moved below. This is uncharacteristic of the beast and should be frightening to party members who know anything about the Diggers. The monster will fight blindly until dead or somehow contained.

Note: G.M.s may wish to make a victim of the party member who has had the least to do thus far. Remember that it may be all but impossible for the Digger to surprise its victim, as it will be sketched in spider lightning when it drops from the tree. This will get their juices flowing and prime them for the encounters to follow.

Devil Digger

Note: See Devil Digger, p 24 Palladium Monsters & Animals for general description and abilities.

Alignment: Animal, extremely hostile

Hit Points: 42, **A.R.:** 8

Attacks Per Melee: Four by bite doing 1D8 points of damage or by claws doing 1D8 points of damage each.



AN ENCOUNTER WITH RAD

As the arbolytes have been pushed to move quickly in such a changed environment all day, it will be impossible to keep them going late into the evening. This part of the forest is dense and dry; fires must be handled with great care and watches posted with wariness. Thick clouds in the skies above have all but dissipated, to be replaced by the rolling shimmer of aurora borealis. Soft, luminous blues, violets and pinks keep the treetops alight.

When the party has begun to clean up and settle down for the night, *Rad the Tamer* will appear to them, stepping out of the gnarled forest.

The figure's movement, punctuated by spider lightning, should give the old man's position away to wary party members. The glow of the aurora combined with the dying fire shows him to be a withered human in a rumpled cloak and rags. His hood is pointed, making him seem wizardly, and he bares a long, thin reed-like staff which he is using to balance himself. He will be silent until addressed by the party (if he is immediately attacked, he will simply fall back and get caught up in the deadfall — as he will after his opening speech anyway — helpless and

at the mercy of the adventurers). The old man will then raise his hand and speak in a wild-eyed, throaty warble:

"I . . . am called Rad . . . the Tamer! I bid you begone, young fools! To take one further step is truly . . . folly. See how the sky glows with unearthly . . . light? See how the lightning comes alive to dance in the gnarled branches of trees like the webs of great . . . spiders? You think yourselves . . . heroes? Champions for a fallen people? Forget it! For what is deep within this misbegotten forest is bigger than you, or . . . the Burning! It is bigger than the petty gods who have turned their backs on this horror. It is bigger . . . than us all!"

Rad will hear the party's questions or counter-remarks, and may even look as though he is considering a response. Before he can speak, however, his knees give out from under him, dropping him into the tangled mass of leaves and branches that make up the pile of fallen oak. Rad will just lay there with his feet sticking straight out of the bush, mumbling nonsense rhymes, or perhaps asking for a hand. He is impossible to read psionically and will not elaborate on any of the things that he said, save for the fact that to continue this quest would be ridiculously dangerous. He will strongly urge the party to turn around and "go home, where it's safe".

The old man is definitely stricken by the illness of the aster fell. His wrinkled face is scorched as if struck by fire. His gray hair has fallen out in patches and his cloak is singed. He is thirsty and trembling, and will gladly accept the party's hospitality. Rad will continue to warn the party away from the area (implying that they, too, will become sick if they stay much longer), and shirk off questions by murmuring nonsense or taking an obsessive admiration toward leatherwork, clothing or other party possessions.

Rad will sleep, in time (worriedly mumbling the words "ceratus dominus, ceratus the king. . ." over and over in his restlessness), but by daybreak he will have vanished without a trace. Once again, the party must decide whether to heed the advice of the natives, or to press on toward the source of all this strife.

G.M. Note: If Rad is tortured or physically coerced to the point where he is really harmed, then the Burning will move in to rescue him (see "The Burning: Stats and Story" as follows). The Burning will strike like a thunderbolt, with the sole intent of taking their master away from the group. They will use whatever force is necessary, but will avoid harming the party at all costs, at this point in time.

Rad the Tamer

Experience: 8th Level Scholar in the specific area of Animal Husbandry, 4th Level Summoner (Note: Though Rad will never pronounce himself a summoner, and is not scheduled to utilize his abilities as summoner for this adventure, G.M.'s may research his powers by consulting pp. 113-122 of the Palladium RPG.)

Alignment: Anarchist

Hit Points: 51 (at this point, the sickness has reduced his H.P. to 12)

Armor: Animal skins, A.R. 9 S.D.C. 20

Bonuses: Saves at +2 against charm, sleep and like spells

Weapon Proficiencies: Reed staff, +3 to strike, +2 to damage; knife, +1 to strike, +1 to throw

Weapons: Reed staff (1D4); the staff has a false bottom, secreting a needle-sharp point capable of delivering 1D6 damage (Game Masters may want to remember this should things run badly at the climax of the adventure). Dagger (1D6)

Attributes: I.Q. 16, M.E. 12, M.A. 14, P.S. 9, P.P. 12, P.E. 15, P.B. 5, Spd. 8

Skills of Note: Horsemanship, identify tracks (70/50%), identify plants (79/81%), medical (88/92%), use poison (74%), demon and devil lore (88%), plant lore (78%), prowling (35%), (he is also an animal tamer, studies and tames monsters, keeps animals and monsters).

History: Always known only as "the Tamer" or the Zookeeper, the old man kept a small menagerie of unusual creatures in a cove 10 miles northeast of the site which would become Epimall. The Tamer

was granted run of his area of the forest by neighboring wolfen tribes in return for his breaking live wolves, horses and the rare arbolyte for wolfen nobles. The name "Rad" is some kind of twisted pet moniker given the Tamer by *Ceratus Dominus*, the Abomination.

THE LIGHTNING BATTLE

Thin beams of weakened sunlight dapple the leaf strewn ground of the forest. This is the party's only hint that a new day has broken and haste must be made if Epimall is to be reached by nightfall. The arbolytes should be perky, if a bit agitated, and will burst into an early run at the party's command.

In the hours before noon, everyone will feel that the spider lightning has strengthened its hold on the woods; the very wind is alive with crackling energy. Hair stands on end, making for humorous asides, and anything metallic has grown more uncomfortable to handle. Even the least perceptive adventurer will notice his arbolyte has taken a jerkier stance, flinching at the sparks, and hopping stupidly from jolting puddles of muddy water. The creatures will remain loyal and responsive to the party, so long as they are treated with gentleness and care.

A high I.Q. will pick up the fact that by mid-morning the party will no longer be riding alone! Having picked up a strong, steady pace (close to 20 mph), the riders will slowly realize that they are being flanked by strangers on arbolytes within 20 yards to the east and west. Orcs! *Orcs riding treeswifts!* Three on either side are closing in quickly. Strategy should be developed on the double!

These orcs mean business. They handle their arbolytes with a cruel mastery, and they intend to use their skill against the party. They are well armed (see Orcs on Arbolytes as follows), and have come to stop the adventurers at all costs. The orcs are large and frightening to the group's arbolytes, who will bolt away from them at any opportunity. The orcs' faces are screwed up with battle fury and their noses run freely with syrupy, bloodsoaked mucous. They will drool gleefully with each successful strike upon a party member.

Terrified, the party's arbolytes may just keep on running (65% chance of a panicked run) north, no matter what!

A chase is on! Orcs and adventurers will hurtle through the woods at incredible speeds, engaging in combat as thickets and branches whiz by, leaving a dazzling trail of spider lightning as they run. The orcs are more experienced, but cruel to their beasts. The party, on the other hand, is still awkward on arbolyte-back, but they possess caring animals.

G.M. Notes on Arbolyte Combat

It is important for the G.M. to convey speed, excitement and immediacy in this sequence. Players might be asked to roll to dodge low hanging limbs or to match their Physical Strength (3D6 under P.S. equals success) against simply holding on to an arbolyte running through dense woods at top speed. Rapid-fire descriptions of what rises just up ahead, and questioning the players about what they are doing about maneuvering their creatures (3D6 under Physical Prowess equals success) should generate plenty of suspense. Be sure to describe the physical motion of the treeswifts, and how all of these actions seem to be blazing trails of sizzling, coruscating spider lightning all about them.

Battling the orcs on arbolyte-back should double the fun. The orcs are strong, mean, and want blood, but they are not incredibly bright and can be lead into all kinds of disaster. Steep hills and babbling streams, thorny nestles and poison ivy, rocky ledges and stone cairns — quite a gauntlet can be created. Cut back and forth amongst the character's actions, keeping everyone in time with everyone else (in movie terms, this is called parallel editing). This can make for a grand time, with players splitting off to deal with their own problems, then reuniting in the nick of time to clobber an unlucky orc. Try to arrange for a series of spectacular crashes, nasty fumbles and daring hand-to-hand confrontations—all while in forward motion!



The following rules apply to combat on arbolyte-back:

1. Adventurers who are inexperienced with riding any creatures will suffer a penalty of -2 to strike with any hand-held weapon, and a -3 to strike with any missile weapon. Those with horsemanship are -1 to strike. Only those with experience riding two-legged animals have no penalty.

2. Adventurers, and their arbolytes will take 1D6 points of damage for every 10 mph of speed should they crash squarely into a solid object such as a tree trunk or rock face; e.g., a rider running at 20 mph gets swatted by a sword and sent crashing into a hardy birch; sword damage is added to 2D6 points of damage taken by the collision. The G.M. should roll the same 2D6 for the adventurer's arbolyte. Arbolytes will not run if below half their hit points.

3. Solid crashes will require a roll of a 20-sided die under Physical Endurance (P.E.) to see whether the victim retains consciousness. A failed roll means the character is knocked out for 1D4 melees. Crash victims may either attempt to remount their steeds and try another attack or hold fast to fight on foot. Crash rules apply to the orcs as well.

4. Arbolytes do not like orcs and will take advantage of any opportunity to run away from them. Separating an orc from his arbolyte for more than a round will likely see the treeswift burning a glittering trail into the woods bareback.

Orcs on Arbolytes

Stats and Story

Note: See *Orcs*, p. 199 *Palladium RPG* for general description and abilities.

Alignment: Miscreant

Hit Points: 40, 27, 34, 32, 29, 38, 44

A.R.: 12, **S.D.C.:** 38; studded leather

Attacks Per Melee: Two by sword (1D8+2), one by axe (2D6), or two by claw (1D6) or bite (1D6); +2 to damage, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge.

Skills of Note: Horsemanship: Although excellent riders, the orcs tend to be cruel, forcing the arbolytes as if they were silonars. The mounts will heed the orcs only as long as they are forced to do so. Hand-to-Hand: Mercenary (3rd Level), Prowl 35%.

History: These orcs won't say much either. They are nasty and sickly, and obviously see any failure as a forfeit of their lives. Adventurers familiar with wolven lore may recognize the badly weathered orcan leather armor as being wolven in origin, but this can't mean much. The most that can be gotten out of these miserable creatures is that "Ceratus the King has been angered . . . now he will burn you all . . ."

TWILIGHT OF PAIN

Assuming the adventurers defeat the orcs, they should rest and recuperate. What lies ahead of them, however, will be no easy trek. What was at first a beautiful, if disconcerting effect, has now become a constant source of discomfort. With flora and fauna more and more shorn of leaf and feather, flower and fur, the forest has assumed an air of dark and crackling menace. Moss and lichens have turned brown, and smaller birds and mammals will be found dead on the ground with an increasing frequency.

Spider lightning is now a painful phenomenon (causing an actual point of damage for each time an iron or steel object is grasped with a bare hand), and efforts to keep from being shocked should be made. The arbolytes will find it more and more difficult to continue at high speeds. A claw which strikes the odd stone, shell or puddle will throw sparks, causing the poor creatures to wince and recoil. (Note: Treeswifts will be able to run no more than 15 miles per hour at this time.) By sunset, with Epimall only a few short miles to the north, the party may be forced to dismount and carefully walk their steeds the final way.

G.M. Note: Efforts to insulate bare skin from the effects of the spider lightning by clever adventurers should be rewarded by dampening the pain received by the energy. However, a simple layer of cloth or vegetation will not do the trick. Hands, feet, claws, torsos and faces may have to be layered to the point of encumbrance to provide full protection against shocks, with appropriate negatives to movement, strike or parry to be considered by the referee (about -1 or -2).

THE BURNING ATTACK!

As darkness falls, with Epimall less than a mile to the north, the party will be attacked by perhaps the strangest band of opponents they — or anyone — will ever face. Five bizarre monsters, each a distinct species disturbed and malformed by the burning energies of the Abomination, attack the party from all sides.

Launching their ambush, the quintet will charge individual party members, brandishing their trademark weapons with unnerving confidence. The Burning have arrived!

G.M. Note: the referee's task here is to somehow make it clear that the Burning are *not* using deadly force! The G.M. may have the monsters attack by pummeling, using the flat or blunt sides of their weapons, or using agility in dueling in a non-lethal manner! Their purpose at this point in the story is simply to do their best to draw out the adventurer's various abilities, team skills and powers for study. Also, they aim to soften the party's edge enough to make them think hard about stalking down the *Abomination* into the morning hours.

The Burning will withdraw when the G.M. judges that the party has displayed its best fighting prowess, or if more than one of them (party member or monster!) is critically injured. This is not to be a battle to the death! Referees should also make an effort to describe the sorry state that the Burning is in, for they too are obviously stricken by the aster fall sickness.

THE BURNING

Stats and Story

The **Burning** are five monsters joined as a single unit, operating as a team to perform a given task. Despite their questionable pasts, each member of the Burning has had his life tragically altered in a single encounter with the "Abomination." Whether this is permanent, and how they came to be in this place, at this time, at this point, must remain a mystery to the party. Suffice it to say that these creatures are the survivors of *Rad the Tamer's* personal menagerie . . .

Slythus, the Gromek

Note: See *Palladium Monsters & Animals*, p 40, for description and natural abilities.

Alignment: Anarchist

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 11, M.A. 13, P.S. 24, P.P. 17, P.E. 24, P.B. 6, Spd. 11 (33 in flight, however, at this time Slythus is incapable of flight)

Hit Points: 44 A.R.: 12

Attacks Per Melee: 2; bastard sword does 1D8+2 points of damage; bare hands (1D6), bite (1D6); or by clawed feet (1D8).

Bonuses: +9 to damage, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge (add another +2 to S/P/D when using the sword), +5 to save vs. magic and poison.

Physical Appearance: Though still powerfully majestic in appearance, Slythus looks as if he has recently withstood a powerful explosive blast. He will keep his wings closed and folded in for as long as he can will it (they are in shreds!), and the grooves and cuts around his bony skull are black with a sooty substance.

Skills of Note: W.P. largesword; W.P. small shield; hand-to-hand combat, medical and tracking skills are all at 4th Level.

Size: 9ft tall, **Weight:** 700 pounds

History: Slythus was an outcast, a loner who wandered far from his home in the southwest. Not much for talking, he still seemed to carry a certain poise and charisma unusual for his race. He was captured by the Tamer only a few months before the aster fall, and despite his incarceration, became charmed by Rad's crotchety wackiness. Perhaps Slythus' fatal mistake was in not intervening in his new master's business. When the Abomination struck, Slythus was gravely injured and decided it best to forge the Tamer's menagerie into a team that would preserve themselves and the life of their Tamer. Slythus now stands as the leader of what *the Abomination* twistedly calls "the Burning."

Torin, the Bearman

Note: See *Palladium Monsters & Animals*, p 12, for description and natural abilities.

Alignment: Anarchist

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 9, M.A. 8, P.S. 25, P.P. 22, P.E. 30, P.B. 5, Spd. 17

Hit Points: 72, A.R.: 11

Attacks Per Melee: 3; magic battle axe does 3D6 points of damage (returns when thrown), daggers (1D6), gladiator net, claws (2D6), or by bite (1D8). Disarms foe on natural 18, 19, 20; stuns on 17-20.

Bonuses: Damage +10, +6 to strike, +9 to parry, and +6 to dodge, +8 to save vs. damage and poison, +30% vs. coma.

Physical Appearance: Huge, hulking and bear-like, Torin wears little in the way of garments. His black fur seems entirely singed and smells bad, he looks matted, burnt and almost sorrowful.

Skills of Note: 8th Level Gladiator, includes horsemanship, trap/skin small animals, recognize weapon quality, W.P. battle axe, W.P. axe, W.P. net, W.P. knife, W.P. blunt, W.P. spear.

Size: 10ft tall, **Weight:** 1400 pounds

History: Torin is the brute physical power behind the Burning. A denizen of the mountain regions north of the Old Kingdom, Torin seems to have fought one gladiatorial battle too many. He went feral and was found wandering through the woods by the Tamer late last year. Food and shelter was more than enough to park the bearman, and his mood and taste for violence has softened in the months since. Now, hurt, deprived of his master and yearning for the peace he had so recently found, Torin will follow Slythus loyally and bravely.

Drang, the Kelpie

Note: See *Palladium Monsters & Animals*, p 46, for description and natural abilities.

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q. 8, M.E. 8, M.A. 4, P.S. 23, P.P. 16, P.E. 18, P.B. 3, Spd. 9 (60 as a horse, however, at this time Drang cannot metamorph at will.)

Hit Points: 48, A.R.: 6

Attacks Per Melee: 2; horseman's hammer (1D8), bite (1D6), or by claws (1D8).

Bonuses: +3 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge underwater; +2 to strike, parry and dodge on dry land; +8 to damage; +2 to save vs. poison and magic.

Physical Appearance: Drang's half horse, half man visage is a mixture of pain, disgust and hatred. His flesh seems flayed and mottled, his mane singed and burred.

Size: 7ft tall, **Weight:** 275 pounds

History: Drang was one of the few quarries the Tamer deliberately sought out and captured. A battle between the Kelpie and a pair of dark spirits summoned up by Rad resulted in Drang's capture in the swamps south of the Eastern Territories. Drang has been caged and studied for two years now, and is none too happy about this. He hates everyone and everything, but what he hates most of all is the Abomination, and he schemes for revenge against him. Drang sees the Burning as a potential vehicle for that vengeance, and while he

is the most rebellious member of the group, he bears a grudging respect for Slythus' ability to keep them alive.

Angus, the Minotaur

Note: See *Palladium Monsters & Animals*, p 60, for description and natural abilities.

Alignment: Anarchist

Attributes: I.Q. 6, M.E. 13, M.A. 8, P.S. 21, P.P. 22, P.E. 27, P.B. 10, Spd. 13

Hit Points: 44, **A.R.:** 12

Attacks Per Melee: 2; bullwhip (1D8), short sword (1D6); by claws (2D6), or by horns in a charge (4D6), charge count as one attack.

Bonuses: +6 to damage, +4 to strike, parry and dodge; +6 to save vs. magic and poison.

Physical Appearance: Almost more bull than man, Angus stays wide and low to the ground. His eyes and snout seem red and irritated, and he is strangely silent and still. His horns are warped, but still quite deadly.

Size: 8ft tall, **Weight:** 600 pounds

History: Another of the Tamer's living trophies, Angus is an idiot savant among minotaurs. Regarded as slothful and stupid in his native Baalgor Wastelands, he was exiled into Rad's hands as a youth nearly three decades ago. While barely able to master his own language, Angus was quick to develop a mind for tricks, traps and strategies. When technical subterfuge is called for, the Burning turns to Angus. Angus is loyal to Rad, but is in grave need of leadership. He can barely comprehend what is going on around him at any time and functions on the most rudimentary emotional level; e.g., "friend hurt . . . kill his attacker," or "friends run and scream, so Angus run and scream."

Kibbul, the Tusker

Note: See *Palladium Monsters & Animals*, p 88, for description and natural abilities.

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: Animal; speed is 20, high animal I.Q., male.

Hit Points: 86, **A.R.:** 6

Attacks Per Melee: 3; bite doing 2D6 points of damage or by claws doing 1D8 points of damage.

Bonuses: +3 to damage (claw and bite), +2 to strike, parry and dodge.

Physical Appearance: Its hide a mass of blisters and hardened boils, this walking juggernaut looks an horrific mess.

Size: 6ft. long (solid muscle), **Weight:** 425 pounds

History: This hungry tusker was a challenging new catch for the Tamer. It had been marauding through the wilderness to the north until it became a nuisance to the wolfen who wished to hunt there. The Tamer was hired by the Wolfen Chieftain *Lord Rutger*, himself, to locate and apprehend the monster. Being that tuskers and devil diggers were Rad's next area of interest, the Tamer wasted no time in accepting. Rad's philosophy was that "Kibbul" was merely hungry, and would be kept in check with a strong cage and a lot of food. Now Kibbul is simply an explosion waiting to be set off.

G.M. Notes on the Burning's Strategy

Good referees will consider the Burning a team of Non-Party Adventurers with motivations and goals as legitimate as the party's themselves. They are doing what must be done to preserve their lives long enough to take vengeance upon a common foe, *the Abomination*, and have no real interest in randomly killing humans who happen to wander by. In fact, their affinity with Rad the Tamer has somewhat eased their attitude toward humans and violence in general. They will fight, however, and fight well, they will!

Though together only a week now, the Burning functions like an experienced combat team. They should be played with an awareness

toward each other's strong points, powers and weaknesses. They are protective of each other's lives because they have no one else.

Can this initial confrontation turn deadly? Yes! When satisfied that the party has given them enough visual information to content the Abomination, the Burning will withdraw. If the party does not let up with the monsters on the run, they will use all the abilities and team work at their command to shake whatever pursuit is given them. Persistent adventurers should feel the brunt of a "gang-up" by the Burning. If one of the monsters is killed, Kibbul the Tusker will spin himself into a frenzy and attack the killer with murderous intent. Likewise, Angus and possibly Drang will join in the deadly attack, but both may be reasoned with and somewhat controlled by Slythus and Torin.

THE TREE OF WOODEN CLOGS

It should be after dark when the party straggles into the abandoned forest village of Epimall. From afar it is beautiful even in this sorry state. Every tainted breeze coruscates up the sides of small log cottages, peg-pitched pavillions and stone waterwells that still stand. On closer inspection, signs of battle will become evident, and smoke still wafts from some of the burnt out hovels and desecrated chapels. The bodies of both humans and green wood faeries litter the grounds. Everywhere, vegetation is dead or dying, and each move kicks up nervous spider lightning.

The inner perimeter of the town is marked by a great circle of redwood trees, seven and 25 feet in diameter. Several cottages have actually been built against and into the trees. One of the smaller redwoods has been snapped in two, as if some great weight slammed into its spire, forcing it to buckle. Its towering bulk has collapsed onto the home built at its base. The power, the effort and violence it would take to do such a thing is startling!

Ash and soot lay thickly on the grounds of the battle site. The odor of death and decay is mixed with the smell of smoke and charcoal.

Some of the two-storey cottages are partially shattered, as if something gigantic pounded them into rubble. All of them are ransacked. Any good ranger or tracker would know this is the work of orcs. Perceptive adventurers will note that a lantern rope had been strung carefully from the central grove, down to the surrounding cottages, and then all the way on up to the redwoods themselves. The pilgrims had created a marvelous spiral of lights which, on holiday eves, could have lit Epimall as bright as dawn on an open field! But in a clearing at the center of the grove stands the most marvelous tree of all . . .

At a height of merely nine feet tall, *the Tree of Wooden Clogs* is dwarfed by the living spires around it. At first glance it will seem quaint and charming, but even a casual observer will notice that it has gone mysteriously untouched by the recent carnage. The spider lightning stops at 40 feet around it. The tree smells fresh and clean and alive, and its color is a rich, smooth leathery tan. While its leaves are sparse, they are thick and green and cloven, connected to sturdy branches by stems which will not be easily cut or broken. Its branches begin to reach skyward only three feet above the ground, and they bear a fruit as blessed as any of the world's religious icons: hollowed, wooden, boat-shaped and pointy-tipped, they are clogs! This Tree of Epim bears tiny wooden clogs!

The party's arbolites will become calm and serene for the first time since they left Klisfurnim two days ago. A few may even flex their back muscles, indicating their desire to be unsaddled. This moment of peace, however will quickly be shattered if party members draw closer than a few yards. The Treeguard still stands and he is a fearsome cur!

The one who guards the Tree of Wooden Clogs is a human bearing a silver helm, his hair sticking out wildly from under its sides. He twitches to and fro, his eyes bright, his gnarled fingers raised in magical defense. Wounds are still fresh beneath his torn robes. Called Penmark,

the Treeguard will only sheathe his long sword when he is convinced that the party will not harm the tree in any way. If an attempt is made to pick leaves or clogs from the tree, the Treeguard will launch his final spell and attack the offender physically. He will only disengage when the offender has pulled back at least nine yards from the tree, and he will be hard to console at that. Rather excitable and more than a bit paranoid, if Penmark can be calmed down, he can be a wealth of knowledge about both what has happened, and about the tree itself.

Treeguard Stats and Story

Experience: 7th level wizard (Note: Through the Treeguard is a powerful magic user, he is battered, weakened and down to his final spell, which he will only use in dire emergency).

Alignment: Principled

Hit Points: 49 (at this point in the adventure he has only 22 left)

Armor: Magic leather, A.R. 15 S.D.C. 35 (down from 200)

Bonuses: Saves at +2 against charm, sleep and like spells

Attacks Per Melee: 2; by hand (1D4 each), foot (1D6 each), long sword (magic: eternally sharp, +3 to damage; 1D8+5), or dagger (1D6), or by magic.

Weapons & Proficiencies: Long sword, +2 to strike, +1 to damage; knife, +1 to strike, +1 to throw.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 14, M.A. 11, P.S. 10, P.P. 12, P.E. 16, P.B. 12, Spd. 16

Spells of Note: (He has only one of his 11 daily spells left at this time.) Sense traps, fog of fear, mask of deceit, speed of the snail, words of truth, fireball, grow plants, extinguish fires, wall of thorns, animate plants, and diminish others.

Description: Penmark stands a relatively short 5'4", but is solidly put together and can certainly fend for himself. He is middle-aged, wears a short black beard threaded with silver hairs, and tends to crouch in a ready stance at all times. He is a proud man, a worshipper of Epim who studies both martial and magical arts in order to best defend the Tree of Wooden Clogs. Penmark is *not* afflicted with the burning sickness.

History and Knowledge: One of the founders of Epimall, Penmark moved with his tribe of Epim worshippers from the Eastern Territories deep into the Northern Wilderness only a couple of years ago. Despite many hardships, Penmark deeply believed that this tiny town was meant to be, and was thus rewarded by the appearance of the *Tree of Wooden Clogs* last Winter Equinox. Penmark fancies himself the town's authority in tree lore, and created the position of Treeguard for himself that he may remain as close to it as possible.

Penmark will report that a large contingent of orcs attacked Epimall repeatedly several days ago, but it was Ceratus Dominus, the Abomination, who drove out or killed most of the people. However, as he would not leave his central post, Penmark never saw him and cannot be sure exactly what the Abomination was. It is his opinion that Ceratus Dominus is a high wolfen wizard-lord recruited from the Far North to exterminate Epimall. The weary mage will not know much about any other survivors in town, since he has not left his post as Treeguard since the disaster.

The Tree of Wooden Clogs is immune to all types of commonly practiced magic. Psionically, it is unreadable, and it has withstood powerful winds, hailstorms and wildfires. Its bark may be chipped and its stems clipped by cold iron so it is *vulnerable* to physical attack. Penmark believes that the tree has taken this particular form because of Epimall's newly arrived generation of children. The clogs, he theorizes, are meant to protect the youngsters' delicate feet from the thousands of sharp needles and thorny burrs which carpet the town with each change of season. Incredibly, as each child has reached his second year, a pair of "clog fruits" has fallen from the tree to be worn by the babe until he is old enough to earn his own pair of ranger-tooled boots.

Penmark believes that there is more to the tree than just this. The young wearers of the clogs have easily survived the most inclement of times: few have caught colds or been ill at all. One girl was lost for several days in a blinding snowstorm, only to be found worn and hungry but glowingly alive! The Treeguard has long ago concluded that the Tree of Wooden Clogs has been placed here for a deeper destiny, and he will defend it until that day comes.

G.M. Notes on Using the Tree of Wooden Clogs

It is possible that the Player Characters may make a decision to cannibalize the Tree of Wooden Clogs to further their own goals and win their upcoming battle more easily. They may deduce that if the shield Klisfurnim gave them is lined with the leaves that grow on the tree, then parts of the tree can be somehow used as weaponry, armor or shielding. The clogs themselves will only fit the small feet of human children. It must be emphasized that, while this is a possibility, it is also blasphemy! Epim has always had the tree give of its own accord (it is not giving at this time), and her wrath can surely be terrible. It should be made clear that the town and its people are not worth saving if the tree is mutilated or destroyed. Retribution against adventurers who use parts of the tree sacrilegiously must, in the end, be up to the referee. Penmark will not allow anybody near the tree, even if they have the best of intentions. To get to the tree, the player characters will have to kill or incapacitate Penmark.

CABIN OF THE WAYWARD LADY

The Cabin housing the Wayward Lady and her Champion stands intact, just outside the southwestern perimeter of Epimall. No special effort has been made to hide it, and adventurers should stumble upon it eventually. The cabin is really just a wooden hovel, its ragged curtains drawn, but not hiding the dim candlelight inside. Any attempt to burst in will cause an immediate and violent confrontation with the Champion. A more polite knock will bring him, sword drawn, to the door, and a stealthy picking of the lock will find him knelt at the bedside of a woman large with pregnancy. Like the Treeguard, the Champion is desperate to protect what is precious to him. It will take careful diplomacy on the part of the adventurers to gain his trust.

On closer inspection, clerics and healers will notice that the Champion, who calls himself Kelvin, is suffering the final stages of the aster fall sickness. Patches of thick dark hair have fallen from his mane, and he is bruised, hollow-eyed, pallid and gaunt. His voice is nervous and weak, and he is not always coherent. Kelvin will flash his sword threateningly, spider lightning flickering about it, at every move the group makes toward the Lady. He cannot hold his sword for any period of length. Despite this fact, he will fight to the death.

But the Champion is not the only one who watches over the half-conscious woman. At the head and foot of the tiny bed, and perched upon the shelves and windowsill above it, half a dozen *Wing Tips* stir restlessly. More dead than alive, the winged sylvan balls of fur got into the cabin through a gaping hole in its roof and have grown strangely attached to the Lady (whom Kelvin calls "Morningstar"). Again, for some as yet unknown reason, these creatures will devote their last ounces of strength to protecting their charge.

Morningstar is not in labor. While she is somewhat less sick than Kelvin, she is in great pain and cannot be moved without crying out. (Note: Party members with any medical knowledge would know that to evacuate her from the town at this time would complicate her illness and recklessly endanger the life of her unborn child.) At this time, she is at peace and will even respond to strangers with a faint smile or the squeezing of a palm. Healing will ease her pain, but as with all others tainted by the sickness, no conventional magic, skill or prayer will lift the fever of the aster fall. Both Kelvin, and to a lesser extent, Morningstar, will express quiet fears for the safety of the baby.

The adventurers may wish to spend the evening healing themselves, speaking with Kelvin (see his history, as follows), the Treeguard, or amongst each other. The town will not be disturbed for the rest of the night, providing plenty of free time to scrounge up whatever supplies may be needed. Klisfurnim's herbs and cultures may be found at various spots throughout the village, and should be no problem for adventurers such as rangers or naturalists to collect. More than enough time remains to prepare some kind of plan for tomorrow.

G.M. Note: Rash adventurers may have become so angry with this *Abomination* that they will want to strike out tonight for vengeance. This is not a good idea, as they should be quite exhausted by now and should not be of a mind to think things through. While none of the Player Characters should be showing signs of the illness, a sense of dread about who will get sick first should somehow be put across to the players. If the party insists upon avenging Epimall in the middle of the night, have the players roll progressively (3 six-sided dice, then 4 moments later, then 5 a short while after that, etc.) under their Physical Endurance versus total exhaustion and unconsciousness.

Morningstar,

the Wayward Lady Stats and Story

True Name: Sara Cestrella

Alignment: Principled

Hit Points: 21 **S.D.C.:** 6, **A.R.:** 5, cloth

Attacks Per Melee: 4; barehanded 1D4 + 2 points of damage each.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 15, M.A. 16, P.S. 9, P.P. 12, P.E. 13, P.B. 16, Spd. 7

Description: A pretty 5ft 6in, she is light-haired and smooth-featured. She has dark, almond-shaped eyes which sparkle despite her condition.

Personality: Morningstar is even tempered and shy. She has been described as a loner, which is unusual for the communal pilgrims of Epimall. She can be stubborn and compassionate all at once.

History: Morningstar is a mysterious orphan found near Epimall two years ago. Though she was accepted, she never truly fit in. No one knows her land of origin, though she believes herself to be a child of natives of the island of Lopan. Always the outsider, she chose to live alone in a cabin on the outskirts of town, and spent much of her time wandering through the forest, foraging for her keep. Popular rumor had it that Morningstar consorted with members of the Wolfen tribe to the north, and thereby got her nickname, "Wayward Lady." The truth is that Morningstar saw the Wolfen as beautiful creatures, and her visits to their tribe were actually made out of friendly, innocent curiosity. Morningstar became pregnant over nine months ago, under circumstances she will not discuss. Nor will she name the unborn child's father. She has kept almost entirely to herself since.

When the Abomination attacked Epimall, debris crashed through the roof of the cabin, driving Morningstar under her bed and leaving entrance for the Wing Tips. The creatures fended the orcs from the cabin, and the villager Kelvin, remembering the lady with child, defeated their reinforcements. As her champion, Kelvin has remained with her to this day.

The Lady's Champion

Stats and Story

True Name: Kelvin of Epimall

Alignment: Principled

Hit Points: 65, **S.D.C.** 30, **A.R.:** 10, hard leather

Attacks Per Melee: 3; longsword (1D8 + 2), hand axe (1D6), or barehanded (1D4)

Proficiency Bonuses: Long sword, +3 to strike and parry, +4 to damage; +1 to strike, parry, and dodge; +2 to save vs. magic and poison.

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 14, M.A. 12, P.S. 16, P.P. 15, P.E. 18, P.B. 14, Spd. 12

Skills of Note: 6th level ranger; w.p. long sword, w.p. long bow, w.p. throwing axe, trap animals, medical 70/74%. Speaks Northern Wolfen and elven 98%, orc 70%.

Description: Dressed in heavy leather armor bearing an etching of the Tree of Wooden Clogs, Kelvin is 6'2", dark eyed, and was once handsome and brawny.

History: Kelvin's great strength, swordsmanship and bearish demeanor made him a natural as one of Epimall's few ranger guards. While he was slow to understand why these people needed to live so deep in the forest (and so close to the Wolfen), he found their desire for peace and solitude honorable and (come the Tree of Wooden Clogs) certainly worth defending with his life. His loneliness has always drawn a gentle eye toward Morningstar (he is not the father of her unborn child), but his own shyness and fear of what others might think kept him away from her. Her pregnancy worries him, but he ran to protect her the night the *Abomination* attacked.

Kelvin saw Ceratus Dominus, the Abomination. First he was struck with horror, then he was struck by powerful energies which caused him to immediately fall ill. He retreated from Ceratus, and found his way to the Wayward Lady's cabin where he fought off nearly a dozen orcs. The Champion will only describe Ceratus Dominus as "huge — not human" or "hideous. . . a travesty of life, a monstrosity!" He will become so upset at the thought of this thing, that he will say nothing more about it.

Unlike the Treeguard, Penmark, Kelvin is much less inclined to place the blame for all this on the Wolfen.

Wing Tips

Stats and Story

Note: See *Wing Tips*, p 94, *Palladium Monsters & Animals* for general description and abilities.

Alignment: Scrupulous

Hit Points: 19, 21, 18, 15, 20, 22, **A.R.:** 4

Defense: At this point the Wing Tips have been devastated by the poisonous ambient energies of the aster fall. Barely capable of flight, their psionics neutralized, their sole defenses are their own bodies and their magic.

Magic: For some reason, the Wing Tips are radiating their magical defenses more strongly than ever before. Those within a 30 foot area of these creatures may take a +5 to saving throws vs. all magic (Hint: Including most types of breath weapons!). Their magic, however, will not protect humans from the long term exposure to the radiation sickness.

THE SUNLESS DAWN

What sky can be seen through the trees of Epimall the following morning will be dark and oppressive. A certain sense that the poison of the aster fall hangs more heavily in the air will occur to all but the most dense of characters. While faces may seem drawn and nerves jangled, however, there should be little or no sign that the illness has taken a toll on the party. Much more immediate are the signs of movement just outside of town.

At first it may seem that only shadows are flickering at the corners of the adventurer's eyes, or movement among the trees. (**G.M. Note:** If the player character chooses to investigate himself, there will most certainly be an ambush, bringing him up against any number of orcs, kobolds, or both!) It will become clear that a large faction of orcs and kobolds are gathering around the town.

Planning and further healing will be interrupted almost every other hour by the insane orcs' attempts to attack the Tree of Wooden Clogs.

G.M. Note: There is method to these monsters' madness. Usually six to a dozen of these non-human warriors will enter the town looking for survivors and booty, while another group of marauders attacks the Tree of Wooden Clogs. For some reason, the Abomination wants the party to stay in Epimall until at least nightfall. *Thirty orcs and fifteen kobolds* have been dispatched to surround the village and threaten the tree and to exhaust its protectors. Neither orcs or kobolds will act in concert to deliberately destroy the party by force of number. Their orders are to contain and weaken the enemy. They will fight to the death, if necessary, rather than face the wrath of the Abomination.

Typical Kobolds Stats

Note: See *Kobolds*, p. 195 *Palladium RPG* for general description and abilities.

Alignment: Miscreant

Hit Points: Average at 22 No armor, cloth.

Attacks Per Melee: 1; using either pick (1D8 + 1) or hammer (1D8 + 1)

History: Their minds instantly rotted by the aster fall, these creatures are completely enslaved to the Abomination's will.

Orcs Stats

Alignment: Miscreant and Diabolic

Hit Points: Average at 18, S.D.C. 20, A.R.: 9, soft leather

Attributes of Note: Low I.Q. (about 6), High P.S. (15-17)

Attacks Per Melee: 2; using large swords (2D6), and short swords (1D6).

Bonuses: +1 to strike and parry with sword, +2 damage.

History: This ornery crew has joined up with the Abomination out of fear more than anything else. Kill him and they will scatter.

If, by some chance, members of the party do succeed in venturing north out of Epimall, they are certain to meet with some grisly sights. Good trackers will note signs of struggle across the area, footprints revealing all of the various factions involved with the fall of the village: human, orc, kobold . . . and Wolfen!

Any weaponry, armor or item of value has long been ransacked from the crushed and singed bodies of the fallen. The still forms of at least five eviscerated greenwood faeries can be accounted for in plain sight. Adventurers who may be poking through the underbrush will find the enormous corpses of fallen Wolfen as well (a mortally wounded Wolfen warrior will sometimes use his last moments to find a sheltered place in which to die). From their garb, these are the tribal Wolfen said to live a few miles north of the village. Perceptive characters will be able to deduce that the fatal wounds on orc and kobold bodies indicate weaponry of faerie, human, and Wolfen make.

Further venturing will only yield a less tangible horror. Spider lightning will crackle viciously, and at a point less than a mile north of Epimall, a mist will start to rise. Tainted yellow and noxious with the poison of the aster fall, this mist will dim an already darkened afternoon.

G.M. Note: The Abomination has no wish to encounter the party during the day. They are to stop and return to the village. Any persistent adventurers may be turned using more than one strategy.

Players may be frightened into thinking that the illness is impending by being called to roll progressively against Physical Endurance while in the mist. Epimall may yet again be attacked by decrepit humanoids, with the party being alerted to the emergency via the Treeguard's cries and magic. Referees may even be forced to "burn" stubborn heroes, finally showing them signs of the illness: blistering skin, parched throat, the falling out of hair (at this point, a Saving Throw of 10 or higher on a 20-sided die will hold off any permanent effect of the aster fall sickness), but does cause 1D4 points of damage directly to hit points. Finally, for Game Masters who are running absolutely indomitable adventurers, skip down to where Rad appears in the next section, and deliver his speech ahead of time.

THE SCREAM OF CERATUS

The attacks upon Epimall will halt at twilight, and everything will grow silent and calm. The sky should have begun to clear, and the last shafts of sunlight will filter through the leaves. The Treeguard and the Champion will fall hush, observing the end of the day. Anyone tending to the Wayward Lady at this moment will observe in her face the slightest twinge of pain . . .

Suddenly, an indescribably horrible cry pierces the forest to envelop the village. It is a wrenching, bloody-murder cry which casts fear into the soul, and will make the most daring adventurer consider fleeing for his life. It starts with a deafening boom and climbs the register to reach the screeching high of a bloodcurdling shriek. Full of pain, anger and hatred, it feels as if it has come from deep within some impossibly enormous beast, never to end. Under it, the Champion winces, draws his sword and crouches low. Penmark grabs the Tree of Wooden Clogs and hugs it tightly. Closing his eyes he kisses the bark and murmurs a prayer. Morningstar covers her ears, the Wing Tips huddling and trembling about her. Finally, as the screaming becomes earsplitting and unbearable, it simply stops.

"Such is the anguish of Ceratus Dominus," announces Rad the Tamer as he steps out of the evening mist.

Leaning heavily on his staff, the grim, withered and sickly old man moves forward to face the leader of the adventurers. Rad will offer truce, and has no intent to do battle with the heroes. Though his speech may sound funny, his words will be quite ominous. He has a message to deliver, and must do so at all costs:

"You . . . crazy people! Lunatics one and all, you've consigned your lives to this . . . weedpatch. I am Rad the . . . Tamer. I have returned to you with a message most important. It would seem that your foolish activities have attracted the worst kind of attention . . . and yet I do not know, hmmm. Instead of destroying you he wishes to hold council with you! Strange . . . indeed! Yes . . . yes! Ceratus Dominus has seen fit to speak with you on this . . . eve. I, Rad the . . . Tamer, am to escort you to his clearing a league or so . . . yon."

With those words, Rad will wait five minutes for the party to pull itself together to begin the final leg of their journey. He will respond to all immediate questions by indicating that "the answer. . . will come." Coercion will only show everyone that Rad is truly unwell. He is now prone to brief but periodic fainting spells, and his hands and knees tremble. He is wild-eyed and jumpy, and the blisters on his cheeks and arms have spread. He will take any kind of medication the party can offer, and this may help a bit. Rad is determined to bring the party back to the Abomination personally. His actions will indicate that his being with the party may somehow help them in their encounter with Ceratus. If they refuse, Rad will wheeze, "I have my. . . orders. With or without you I must return. . . though you condemn me to. . . death, if you come not now."

The Treeguard and the Champion will have no desire to go along. They both have immobile charges, and can only offer their best homages and prayers. If spoken with before departure, Morningstar will be able to deliver a soft kiss and, indicating her swollen abdomen, this whisper:

"His hope lay in your heart."

Within fifteen minutes of nighttime travel, Rad will collapse and have to be carried. His rags are no protection against the spider lightning, which will have kicked up into a frenzy around the party. Layers of fabrics, leathers or furs are needed to begin to insulate oneself from the constant flickering shocks. Arbolytes that have come this far will step no further. To continue would bring the treeswifts actual harm, and forcing them will cause them to moan, stagger and collapse into semiconsciousness. The touch of bare skin on stone or metal will now cause bodily (Note: 1D4 points) damage, and unbound hair will actually begin to stand on end! The forest would be pitch dark by this time, save for the incessant flash of the spider lightning.

Guided by the prone Tamer, the party should continue due north at an even pace for another half-hour. Persistent questioners will be rewarded by the following random comments made by Rad in the moments when his head is somewhat clear:

1. "The Abomination is the holder of the sickness. It . . . oozes from his pores, it leaks . . . from his maw . . ."
2. "He wants something . . . we all do! He will stop at nothing, but what could it . . . be?"
3. "Ceratus is . . . heaven's warning that hell is preparing for . . . a comeback!"
4. "To battle, to be near Ceratus for but a moment, is to . . . die. Go within two yards of him and your buddies will dig a yard or two down . . . to make you an early grave!"
5. "My babies . . . he hurt my babies! He's my master, he's the . . . boss."
6. "He said to Rad that his screams were for the pain . . . to be suffered 'tween man and wolfen . . . he sorrows for you!"

THE HORROR OF CERATUS DOMINUS

The golden-reddish glow of the clearing ahead will be sign enough for Rad to right himself and begin to pull away from the party. If they do not let him lead them into the open, Rad will find his own way in, and present them to his master. Attempts to surround the clearing should prove futile, as tons of debris have been piled high around its southern borders. There is really only one way into the area, unless hours of scouting, climbing and engineering are invested. If they insist upon fabricating some sort of sneak attack, the party will find that Ceratus Dominus truly lives up to the title, *Abomination*.

Upon entering the clearing, the party will bear witness to the following panorama:

The area has been recently cleared. Where were once trees, bushes and streams only a week ago, the ground is blackened, singed and buzzing with eldritch energy. The sky is cloudless and alive with angry stars, flashing with color, like tiny flares set in the deepest black. The clearing is oval, stretching 110 feet from the party's entry point, and 80 yards at its widest. Dense forest, heavy with debris, lines its perimeter.

Suddenly, two powerful beams of golden light rise from the ground, cutting through the darkness, gliding gracefully toward the entrance. A purring growl, so loud that it can be felt under foot, greets the party. Ceratus Dominus, the *Abomination*, awaits them.

Rad the Tamer will enter the clearing first, using his staff to pick his way across the pocked and charred earth. He heads toward the source of the lights. Sharp-eyed adventurers will notice that an arbolyte, still saddled (perhaps one of the party's, perhaps one of the orcs' battled yesterday) and nervous, has somehow found its way onto the site. It desperately searches for a way out about 70 yards to the northeast. The Abomination's visage will become fully discernible once the party has moved full into the area.

The serpentine body of Ceratus Dominus rises from the mist and light like a small glowing hill come to life. The Abomination is a dragon, a 70 foot long nightmare. His raspy breathing can be heard from 30 yards. His scaly hide glows a fiery orange and flickers with spider lightning. His eyes are so huge and bright that they magnify and reflect the incandescence of his own body in the form of ever searching beams of light. His reptile face is misshapened into a permanent snarl, etched with a knowing slyness. Set low on all fours as if ready to spring, shoulders hunched beneath a great pair of enfolded wings, he

waits for Rad (or for any party member) to formally announce their presence.

G.M. Note: At first the monster will converse politely with the adventurers, complementing them on their bravery and fortitude. Any attempt to attack Ceratus on sight, however, will result in swift and angry counterattack. He wants to talk, not fight, and will use his strength and demeanor to easily repel initial assaults and deliver warnings. Ceratus will kill without hesitation if angered.

The Abomination will focus the rays of his eyes on each member of the party. He recites each of their names in his guttural Common Tongue, finally hissing the name of their leader through the rows of seven inch daggers set between his lips:

"It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance. You have travelled far and fought hard. You honor me. And rest assured, if it's a fight you want, I will give one to you. A battle to the death. May the best team win. But first, I ask that you hear and answer my questions.

"You have me curious, good people . . . Why is it that you do this? Nothing has come to you but harm since you chose to quest for me. The pilgrims of that fly speck town will grow old and die with nary a mark to leave behind. What do you care? So what if I destroy an acre or two of timber for a week or so? Employ an orc or two to do my bidding? There is no one to pay you for all this bothersome work, they'll all be dead in the next day or so. Their gods don't care, they've done nothing but turn their backs. Even the mighty she-god Epim holds nothing but a flimsy old man to protect her precious sprout! Ha!

"So why? Why do you do this when you know you will die for nothing?"

Each of the adventurers should answer in turn. Ceratus will eye them carefully, considering their words. Obviously, the monster would take glee should the party actually see some kind of logic in his words. In any event, Ceratus will play along with their answers, nodding, grunting, and smirking.

Somewhere along the last adventurer's answer, the arbolyte, who had been last seen trying to escape from the clearing, bounds too close to the Abomination. Rad, who will have been standing several yards to the left of Ceratus, lifts his staff in an attempt to shoo the treeswift away, but it is too late. Ceratus' head darts downward and the arbolyte screams in agony. It has been impaled upon a tremendous horn which has instantly jutted from the crest of bone set into the center of the dragon's skull. The horn plunged, lance-like through the treeswift's torso, is now pulled back, dragging the poor twitching creature from the ground and into the monster's great, wet maw.

It's gone in seconds. Party members not numb with horror will notice that Ceratus is able to lick the blood from his own horn by having it bend low enough to touch his lips. Connected by a thick wrist-like band of muscles, the four foot horn is fully prehensile and retractable!

The Abomination will eagerly await any reaction to this grotesque act, and will certainly be disappointed if there is none. The hideous dragon glares at the party and begins to speak again, but this time, his demeanor is far less gracious:

"So you think I'm a bad little beast. That I've burned up a few trees and mangled a village of humans. I should even hazard a guess that you brave fellows actually intend to do battle with me. . . ." the Abomination chortles, the rumbling sound of it reverberating against the adventurers' hearts. "Forget it! I have no intention of fighting you. I am Ceratus Dominus! King of Dragons!"

The monster will come to a stand as he speaks, raising his head a full 30 feet into the air, spreading the majestic 120 foot length of his wings. They have been shredded to tatters! Trees and stars can be seen through gaping holes, and much of the empowered flesh which kept the monster aloft dangles from scalloped bone.

"I . . . negotiate!"



With that, the Crown Horn set inside Ceratus' skull emerges to its full length, pointing to the sky. His nostrils smolder, and the fan of armored plates around his neck flare, forming a proud and dazzling collar. Adventurers who are able to tear their eyes from this sight may notice that Rad the Tamer is studying the Crown Horn intensely, craning his body to watch the thick, heavily veined muscle within the crest push the horn forward, then pull it back. Rad will even absently rub his own wrist, flexing his fingers in an imitation of the action.

G.M. Note: If the Player Characters can contain themselves no longer and simply must attack the dragon at this point, it would best suit referees to study the contents of *Burning Vengeance* and *The War Against Ceratus* (both to follow) before staging the melee. While things will certainly speed up if there is a fight here, valuable information will be lost to the party.

THE ABOMINATION BARGAINS

Eye beams focused upon the party, Ceratus suddenly realizes that his wings are out, and, with the hint of an annoyed snarl, draws them in. If asked about what happened to them, the dragon will reply, "I crashed." If the matter is pushed, he will become agitated. His tail will curl around in front of him, his head tilted to the side. Then his grimace will pull up to form a menacing grin:

"Look. As far as I'm concerned, you've won. If you follow my advice you'll all get to live at least another year or so. You've proven yourselves. Go home! I'll even let you have a scale or two as a souvenir of your epic adventure.

"Pathetic faeries, stupid pilgrims, misbegotten wolven, you don't want to end up like them. Why, I shall even leave this rancid little mudball if you like. How's that for a bargain?"

The adventurers will be given a chance to respond. Questions regarding the subjects of Ceratus' origins, the wolven's participation in all of this, and the aster fall sickness will either be ignored or answered with mischievous smirks. The one with questions such as "what's in it for you?" or "why leave now?" or "will you really leave this place in peace?" will get the following response:

"Oh you tender young heroes are too wily for me! Certainly it would take a tiny, insignificant something special to keep me happy for a bit. It would be nothing really, compared to the fame and glory you will all receive for banishing the Great Dragon King, Ceratus, from your world. In fact, now that I think about it, I'm almost being too kind!

"You see, I want something that can be seen as merely, twig in the scheme of things, a sprout, a sapling; something that hasn't even come into bloom. Come to think of it, it will probably still be soft and spindly. Won't even taste very good, I'd guess . . ."

Ceratus will hesitate here, allowing for each adventurer to make up his own mind about what he is talking about. He will pause, taking his eyes from the party, sniffing the buzzing night air. Then, after a thought, he will nod and say:

"Yes. The fruit is coming. The Wayward Lady labors! Her child will appease my hunger!

"I vow that I shall take it and leave this world alone forever. Hold your swords and think about it for a moment. Thousands of lives might be saved if you accept my bargain! If you do not, then everything burns! I want that baby!"

G.M. Note: If, for some reason, the Player Characters truthfully feel that giving Morningstar's child up to the monster will resolve this situation, then refer to *When Heroes Lose*, a section listed later in this adventure, for possible outcomes.

Ceratus can barely contain himself waiting for some kind of answer. He will not wait more than a few minutes before he demands one. At this point Rad the Tamer will leap up and down, waving his arms in an effort to stop an impending attack from the heroes, with a brave warning:

"Do not go near him! He is filled with the sickness! If you do not have it yet, a touch from him will poison you forever! Touch him with your flesh and cast away your life!"

Almost surprised by Rad's boldness, Ceratus speaks:

"This is Rad, the Summoner. He invited me to this little wilderness in the first place. That, over yonder, is what is left of Rad's zoo. Disgusting creatures. I claimed some and called them the Burning. They've served me well this past week. Now they will substitute for me in this battle to the death you seem insistent upon. Call them forth, Summoner! Go to it. I'm off to Epimall . . . for some baby . . ."

A powerful wind and a blinding orange heat flash will signify Ceratus' leap directly over the party's heads. The monster will land like thunder on the southern side of the clearing, his eye beams shining over the Burning as they descend from a huge throne of boulders set against the debris in the southwest quadrant. Weapons brilliant with spider lightning are drawn, and Rad cautiously begins to step away. There is confusion in his eyes.

G.M. Note: This moment is absolutely critical. The Burning, and not Ceratus, must now be the focus of the party's concern. It will take astute role-play and teamwork to defeat the Burning and then go on to save Epimall from the dragon's onslaught. Grabbing Rad will, at least temporarily, slow the Burning's attack. They will not want him harmed. Rad will answer all questions pertaining to the Burning truthfully. Attempts at negotiation and any effort to pool resources between the teams, while meeting with some resistance, will be preferable to blood-letting.

The Burning hates Ceratus for many reasons, and craves his blood. Although they could not care less about the baby or the Tree of Wooden Clogs, they long for the head of the Abomination. If the Player Characters can deliver a convincing presentation, the Burning will join them in making a final assault on the dragon. Rad, himself, may first make the suggestion if no one else does. Rad may also be instrumental to the union of the two unlikely groups. However, if he is deliberately harmed by the party, the Burning will attack and fight to the death. Likewise, if the party attacks blindly, there will be no time for speeches, only combat to the end.

Tense interplay between Player Characters and Rad's Burning should prove a highlight, and Game Masters should review *The Burning: Stats and Story* (previously noted) for each monster's personality and motivation.

A caution, however: if a team-up seems imminent, Drang, the evil Kelpie, will attempt an attack anyway! "The Burning solves its own problems!" he will bray, while pushing past his comrades to strike an adventurer. If the player group tries to contain or only defend against the Kelpie, it will prove that they are trustworthy, and the Burning will join them to destroy the dragon. Of course, they must first calm the Kelpie.

Whatever the situation, quick action must be taken. The Abomination is now charging madly through the woods, destroying everything in its path. Unless they hurry, there will be nobody to save at Epimall.

THE WAR AGAINST CERATUS DOMINUS

The Abomination's trail will be marked by a wanton destruction. Oaks and willow trees will have been pushed violently aside, as if blown by hurricane force winds. Birch and cedar trees will have been shoved down, dragged by his broken wings until pulled out by their roots. The musky night air is punctuated by the sound of erupting flames and exploding foliage. Ceratus Dominus is having difficulty making his way through the denseness of the wild, and is using raw muscle and his breath weapon to blast his way to Epimall. This has set the



forest ablaze all around the dragon. The adventurers and the Burning can choose to fight it out here, or sneak around him to set up an ambush in the village. They can reach the battered little town at least 10 minutes before the Abomination does.

The party may be forced to cooperate with the Burning to overcome a multitude of obstacles as they rush southward: the Tusker would be the perfect juggernaut for penetrating a firewall; the strength of a warrior, when enhanced by that of a Gromek and a Minotaur, is a formidable counterweight to a falling tree. During such incidents, the party should be privy to the way the Burning operates: smoothly, efficiently, through gestures more than speech. Slythus and Torin are the only two who would carry Rad, and they do so with a strange tenderness.

G.M. Notes on the Elements of Battle

As the stage is set for battle at the northern border of Epimall, a number of elements will come into play which the G.M. may wish to consider. Any or all of the following can happen in the course of the night, but it is essential to remember that Non-Player Characters and special effects must not steal the thunder of your Player Characters. The heroics and sacrifice of the party are essential in completing this adventure:

No more than 10 minutes of time should be given to the party to prepare themselves for the arrival of Ceratus Dominus. The crackle of flames and the snap of breaking timber signifying the monster's approach. Strangely, it is accented by what seems to be the baying of wolves and the clanking of steel. The dim orange glow of the forest gone aflame is growing brighter by the moment.

Penmark remains stoutly at the site of the Tree of Wooden Clogs. He will inform the party that Morningstar and Kelvin are still in her

ruined cabin, where she has started to go into labor. He will also tell them that a towering Wolfen, dressed in Chieftain's leathers, had arrived in town an hour earlier, vowing truce. The great beast asked for Morningstar by name, and went to tend to her when his ears picked out the sound of her birthing cries.

Note: Adventurers who investigate this will find the Wolfen Lord Rutger in the midst of delivering Morningstar's baby! There will be no time to argue, and Kelvin seems to think this is all right. Kelvin will stay in the cabin to guard the laboring pair. "Fear not, humans," Lord Rutger will growl. "My wolfen army should be done with the Abomination by now . . ."

The cabin will stand as one of the heroes's vulnerabilities. Through some sixth sense or by fateful coincidence, Ceratus Dominus will inexorably start making his way to it.

The tenth minute will ring with the deafening sound of wholesale destruction. A patch of forestland north of Epimall bursts into an instant inferno, and Ceratus Dominus comes crashing through! Wolfen are all around him, fighting him desperately in the flames. They are being crushed under foot, smashed by his tail, and assailed by the dragon's minions. They have done what little damage they could to the Abomination, and, soundly beaten, the survivors are beginning to pull away.

Note: Ceratus Dominus will meet the Player Characters in combat with 310 hit points, 50 short of his full potential.

As the adventurers and the Burning prepare for final battle, Slythus, the Gromek, will take the party leader by the arm. He will not argue. He will simply declare the following with all the grimness, determination, and sincerity he can muster:

"You have proven yourself. The Burning are yours to command as you will. You may yet live. We are already dead."

The Tree of Wooden Clogs will begin to grow as Ceratus is engaged. To Penmark's wonderment, it will slowly rear to twice its height, faster if the dragon comes within 10 yards of it.

Note: If the tree itself is besieged by the Abomination, Penmark will let loose with a spell or two of his own (roll vs. their success). If his life is endangered, or when the baby is born (whichever comes first), the tree will magically burst from within its old, tightly stretched coat of bark, sending satiny golden-brown shavings everywhere. This phenomenon will serve both to distract the dragon momentarily, and to purify Epim's tainted air when the battle is over.

Should a member of the Burning manage to draw blood from Ceratus Dominus, he will focus his fury upon the source of his latest affliction:

"You dare lay steel to my hide? Well! First a Burning, now a cinder!" And, after the slightest gasp of breath is drawn, a solid column of red-orange flame will plummet from the dragon's jaws to hammer downward. The Abomination's Crown Horn will stand high and tall, trembling on its muscle over his brow as if thrilled with this terrible feat.

"NO!" Rad will have covered his weeping eyes in response to the terrible sight. "The Horn. Lock. . .stab into his horn. . .the muscle at the base of the horn. . ."

Ceratus Dominus will then turn to face the cabin of the Wayward Lady. It will take Ceratus another two minutes to generate enough power to use his breath weapon again, so he must settle on hand-to-hand combat as he makes his way south. He will fight savagely.

Note: Player Characters should be reminded about the setting in which they're fighting. Cottages in various states of disrepair, some nearly as tall as the dragon himself, are close by, to provide shelter, cover, or be climbed. Some of the lantern-rope is still up, decorating the inner and outer circles of the village, ready to be swung upon, or be used to entangle. Spider lightning is everywhere and continues to be an annoying, if spectacular, accent to all of the action. Ceratus is willfully destructive and any chance to wreck life, limb, and property will be taken with glee.

A war with Ceratus will be foul and grievous. The dragon has control over every muscle in his body, and his rear legs and tail can be as deadly as his forelimbs and jaws. He can use his Crown Horn to duel with armed foes, even as he swipes at others with his wings. His blows can lift men from the ground and fling them yards away, to collide with others or be smashed against debris. Even his growls and shrieks can be useful weapons, shaking morale and inspiring fear. Fortunately, he has expended all of his spells, and his tattered wings render him incapable of flight.

It may occur to individuals, or to the party as a whole, that Rad may have been on to something. An expert in the field of monsters, the Tamer has hinted that a vulnerability may lay at the base of the Abomination's Crown Horn. (**Note:** If the Player Characters are really in trouble, Rad's hint may be turned into a clear statement!) This base is no easy target, as the horn rarely rises to its full height. Observant adventurers will have noticed a pattern in when it does, instinctively, appear.

The wrist-like muscle which controls the Crown Horn is one of the dragon's only *weaknesses* (**Note:** For more information, read the Abomination's description at the end of this section.), and while he can be physically defeated after lengthy and costly combat, attempts at piercing the nerve bundle within it may prove to be some of the most dramatic moments of this conflict.

If this base is indeed run through with the full length of a sword, the dragon will stop cold to shriek in pain. Spider lightning will envelope the penetrating weapon, making it unbearable to hold. Ceratus will tremble and shudder, losing control of his mind and muscles. Jaws gaping, he will hiss the following to all those around him:

"I am crossed. But so shall be the babe. That boy's life will be fraught with terror and strife. The prophets say he will change the world, bring hope to the decrepit, bring love to the warriors. Ha! He will do nothing but fail! Your races will clash! The war twixt wolven and human will lay waste to this entire planet. So dreams Al-Vil! So deems Ceratus Dominus! There is nothing you or that whore's child can do to stop it! NOTHING!"

If the dragon is brought close to death (either the Crown Horn muscle has been pierced, or he has been brought below 15 hit points), he will use the last vestiges of self-control to get to Morningstar's cabin. He will blindly attack it, given the chance, and this may be where the party makes their final stand.

Note: The closer Ceratus gets to the cabin, the more desperate the battle will become. Good referees will play these scenes for all they are worth, perhaps even wafting the sounds of the baby's cries through the din.

Though he may be in the throws of being hacked to pieces (brought down to 1 hit point or less, or having a weapon stuck into the base of his horn for more than a few minutes), a strange calm will fall over Ceratus Dominus. A slanted grin will crack its way up his jaws, and he will begin to chuckle as the spider lightning flares brighter and brighter upon his Crown Horn. On his hind legs, his wings lifting majestically into the air, the Abomination simply. . .explodes!

A flash, followed by a strong concussive force, will temporarily blind the combatants and fling them from the melee (they will be stunned for 1D4 melee rounds). Party members who may not have been looking directly at the dragon will actually be able to see the Abomination sizzle, drawing all of the spider lightning in the surrounding forest into himself. Screaming in agony, Ceratus Dominus disintegrates, his end signified by a stroke of orange lightning across the clear night sky, and the distant sound of thunder.

The Abomination

True Name: Ceratus Dominus, the Star Dragon of Insanity

Alignment: Diabolic

Size: 30 feet tall, 70 feet long, 120 foot wingspan

A.R.: 15, **Hit Points:** 360

Attacks Per Melee: 4; claw attacks do 2D6 damage each, bite does 3D6, or flame breath weapon (counts as two attacks), or uses the Crown Horn (counts as two attacks).

Crown Horn: Functions as either a *charging* lance for 4D6 points of damage, or great sword for 3D6 points of damage.

Fire Breath: Ceratus' breath weapon is devastating. Its range is 60 feet, projected in a cone which is 6 feet wide on the receiving end, doing 6D6 points of damage on contact. To be struck by the strange fire is to be hit with the force of a sledgehammer blow. Any potentially incendiary item within that 6 foot diameter will violently burst into flame, causing additional damage. Ceratus' flame is also *poisoned* with energies the likes of which have rarely been encountered on Palladium. It possesses an orange-blue tint, and does an additional 1D4 points of damage, per round, to any *bare* flesh it strikes until the victim is either carefully scrubbed down, or falls dead.

Bonuses: On all physical attacks: +3 to strike, +10 to damage, and +3 to parry or dodge; Ceratus gets +5 on all saving throws.

Magic, Psionics and Clerical Abilities: At this point in the adventure, Ceratus is unable to utilize any more of his magical or psionic ability. For a full description of this monster's magical, psionic, and clerical capabilities under optimal conditions, refer to the *Great Horned Dragon*, p 213, *Palladium RPG*.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 100 feet; see the invisible; see onto other planes; fire, lightning, and cold resistant (one quarter damage); fly up to 90 mph (Ceratus' wings are too shredded to attempt to fly), I.Q. is High, and, due to his unique affliction (see Radiation,

as follows), Ceratus is capable of feats of physical prowess beyond even a beast of his size.

Life Span: 6000 years

Description: An immense red-orange scaled, winged reptile whose movements are accented by crackling energies known as spider lightning (this phenomenon has no ill effect upon Ceratus himself). This unique creature is most noted for the single prehensile horn which can suddenly jut from a bony casing in his forehead at will. It is a deadly weapon, but also a weak spot. The muscle which controls the movement of the horn contains a *nerve bundle* which connects directly with the dragon's brain. Essentially it is a relay between his spine, his horn, and his mind. If that bundle is disrupted, Ceratus Dominus will lose control of his actions, and seek to withdraw from combat. It will take 1D4 years for damaged Crown Horn muscle nerves to heal properly.

Radiation: Ceratus Dominus is radioactive, and all living things are endangered by his presence. Player Characters who choose to grapple in combat with this dragon must be reminded that they are taking a big risk in catching "the aster fall illness."

- For each time that a hero comes within 3 feet of the dragon, he must make a Saving Roll of 12 or higher on a 20-sided die to save vs poison. *Failure* meaning that combat damage will be taken straight from hit points, and that he will die of the sickness within 2D6 years unless immediately cured by Klisfurnim's herbs, cultures, and greenwood faerie enchantments.
- Each time a hero's skin touches the scales of the dragon he must make a Save of 14 or higher on a D20. *Failure* meaning that he has 1D4 months to live — and, perhaps, find an alternate cure — unless treated by the faeries.
- And each time a hero is struck by Ceratus' *breath weapon* (aside from dealing with the normal damage listed previously) he must make a Save of 16 or higher on a D20. *Failure* meaning that he has 1D4 days to live unless cured by the faeries' potions only. Such powerful enchantments as Klisfurnim's Shield or those of Morningstar's Wing Tips will protect the shielded character against the dragon's unusual flame.

Game Masters should note that Klisfurnim's Cure (*detailed in Honorable Partings, as follows*) is not a sure thing, and that a direct strike at full damage from Ceratus' flame contains a dose so *lethal* that anything, even the faerie cure, will do nothing but slow its effects. Only a restoration spell can completely heal the victim of the radiation breath. Without restoration, the person will get cancer within 4D4 years and die 2D6 years later.

History: Hatched on a world orbiting a distant star, this horned dragon had the misfortune of encountering an, as yet unidentified, extraterrestrial force. The alien energies emitted by this alien assailant has slowly driven Ceratus insane. He began to maraud, corrupting and destroying areas where a truce between man and dragon had been held for nearly a hundred years. At great cost, a band of adventurers succeeded in banishing Ceratus from their world. The monster has been wandering the stars, subject to the whims of those powerful enough to manipulate him. Now he has come to the Palladium world.

Wolfen Warriors

Note: See *Wolfen*, p 18, *Palladium Monsters and Animals* for general description and abilities.

Alignment: Aberrant; though at this point in the adventure, the revelation of the true enemy has made great change possible for these warriors.

Hit Points: Average at 35

Attacks Per Melee: two; sword (1D8 + 2), dagger (1D4), spear (1D6); or by claw (1-8), or bite (1-6).

Physical Appearance: These humanoid wolves look somewhat shabbier and more mottled than their nobler cousins further to the north. They look rather beaten and exhausted, but still exude an intense

ferocity. Their spiky brown fur glistens with snapping, uncomfortable energies.

History: These soldiers have been sent by tribe chieftain Lord Rutger, to redeem their people and break Ceratus Dominus' hold over the forest.



WHEN HEROES LOSE

As with any adventure worth the taking, the *chances for failure* in the Forest of Broken Wings are many. The tragedy of a loss, once Ceratus is engaged, is one which will have great repercussions for both the party and their world. If Ceratus has been beaten, the baby has been saved, and peace is made with Rutger's tribe, this section may be skipped. **The following is a list of possible contingencies in losing:**

1. **All of the party members die fighting the dragon.** The G.M. has two options. The first, and most likely, outcome is that Ceratus Dominus has triumphed and will proceed to devour the baby. This will satiate the dragon for one year before he starts his evil anew, and this breach of prophecy will speed the world closer to the very disaster Ceratus Dominus predicted: titanic war between humans and wolfen!

2. **The second option, should all party members die,** is for a Non-Party Character (such as Rutger or Kelvin) to snatch the baby and flee from Epimall as the battle ends. This is a temporary out, as the dream of the Diabolic Old One, Al-Vil, will compel Ceratus to continue his search for the son of Morningstar. The Abomination is both heinous and crafty. He will heal himself over the months, perhaps taking another shape. More than likely, he will infiltrate the ranks of the High Wolfen Lords in the far north, using his fantastic abilities to manipulate them closer toward full-scale war with the humans with each passing week.

(Remember that the “Red Wolfen, Lord Dominus,” will need new advisors every few months, as his old ones will regularly get sick and die of radiation poisoning!)

3. A daring rescue of the child is made by the party, and they escape the dragon in all the confusion. This act will only delay the inevitable. Ceratus will leave Epimall, and stalk the forest until the party and Morningstar’s son are found by him or one of his agents. If the adventurers manage to get the child to civilization, they will only be endangering hundreds of people in exposing them to the dragon’s wrath. Ceratus is stealthy. He will strike out of the darkness, killing scores, and retreating. He’ll plague man and wolfen until the boy is given up to him. This could make for an interesting continuing conflict.

4. The baby is slaughtered by the dragon while the adventurers yet live. Once Morningstar’s son is killed, Ceratus will swiftly leave the area. While he will never bother with Epimall again, however, he will remain on Palladium to cause strife and destruction time and again. He will become an arch-villain to plague the party forever. They will be branded as losers by a civilization under siege, and the child’s destiny may have to be fulfilled by another (perhaps even surviving party members).

A TURNING OF KINGS

The war with Ceratus Dominus will have taken the better part of the night. Heroes who still stand are free to make sure Morningstar and her baby boy are safe among the ruins. In a darkness no longer highlighted by spider lightning, Lord Rutger takes command of his surviving forces, securing the village from orcs and kobolds, putting out fires, and tending to the wounded. There is much work to be done, and the party will be welcomed to join the busy wolfen. It is dawn before the tasks get any easier, and a deep sleep will overcome any who want it.

The smell of smoking hickory and pine, and the sight of late-morning sunlight filtering through wind blown leaves, will meet the heroes as they awaken. The Wolfen Chieftain, Lord Rutger, will be standing over the first one to open his eyes, offering him a tremendous clawed hand up from the smoldering ground. The wolfen’s voice is a low, guttural, whisper:

“You did well last night. I am Lord Rutger. Awaken your friends and join me in the Pavilion.”

A great tent has been pitched 50 yards due west of the Tree of Wooden Clogs. In walking there, the party will notice that wolfen now completely occupy Epimall. They have put out the fires and are now in the process of burying the dead. The Lady Morningstar lay upon a large feathered mattress within Lord Rutger’s heavily guarded Pavilion, her child held in her weakened arms. Wing Tips still surrounding her, she smiles wanly at the party as they are brought to her bedside. She will ask whether any of the adventurers were killed in combat with Ceratus Dominus. If so, she will hear their names and consider them carefully. Then, eyes shining, she will name her son after those who have fallen defending him.

G.M. Note: Morningstar will combine the name of any dead party member with the name “Kelvin” to create a two or three name appellation for the boy (such as Wendal Kelvin Fafnir, etc.). If no party member died fighting the dragon, then the party leader or an outstanding heroes’s name will be combined with “Kelvin” and the boy will be given it.

Soon after this, she will sleep, her child taken from her by Lord Rutger. Perceptive party members may notice that the baby’s head is marked with a halo of newly healed scars. These were caused by Rutger’s nails on the night of the birthing. It was Rutger himself who delivered the child from his mother! Tensions may rise, as the sight of

this huge Wolfen holding the tiny babe can trigger primal fears among party members. While answering some of the party’s questions in as diplomatic a way as possible, Lord Rutger will not have his honor questioned. In all his life he has never been moved to say words like the ones which follow:

“Call in the Summoner, Rrrad!” commands Lord Rutger. Then he will turn to address the party. “Do not blame the Tamer for what has happened. The aster fall was an accident. It was never meant to be. The Abomination was not born of this world. He was the tool of some dark Elder God, a god who wished to stop this birth from happening. For our part in this tragedy, I am forced . . . to apologize . . .”

The Chieftain will hand the baby over to the shortest party member, and bid them follow. Cloak billowing in the morning breeze, Lord Rutger will place a supportive arm around Rad’s shoulders and lead the party to the Tree of Wooden Clogs.

The spider lightning is gone. Crickets can now be heard in the bush, and the first soft chirps of birds whistle in the distance. They will all come to a stop at the foot of the shimmering Tree, Penmark falling in to join them, and Rutger will continue his speech:

“Morningstar will die. There is nothing anyone can do. Her son must live. He is special. Look at him.” The Chieftain will take the boy from the hero and hold him high in the air. “He is hirsute! He bares the mark of wolfen and the favor of heroes.”

“And now he will bear Epim’s Wooden Clogs!” cries Penmark (if he has survived last night’s ordeal), as he points at the small boat-shaped fruits, glowing with a natural luster, dangling from a nearby branch. “They are ready to be picked. The boy will have their blessing forever.”

The Wolfen Lord, assisted by the Treeguard, takes the clogs down from the tree. They will fit the infant boy perfectly. Then the Chieftain will spy something in the tree, and reach up, fourteen feet, to pick some more. Silently, to Penmark’s wonder, Rutger will give each party member a tiny pair of blessed clogs:

“These will protect you, as the babe’s will protect him, from Nature’s strife. The earth herself shall be on your side, so long as you bear this boy.

“He cannot stay with us. He has no place among the pilgrims of this village. He must be brought to civilization. Taught the ways of man and beast. Prepared for the storm to come. Will you deliver this child to his destiny.”

Lord Rutger will eye each member of the party. His last sentence was a statement, not a question. He will speak no further, and he will not accept the baby back. Neither will Penmark, and if the party refuses the responsibility of caring for the child, then he will have to be left on the ground at the foot of the tree. In any event, Lord Rutger calls out the command for his troops to break camp and pull out of Epimall. He will shake the hand of each hero (a highly unusual act of bonding between wolfen and man), and turn, cloak swirling, to stride away into the forest.

Wolfen Chieftain

True Name: Lord Rutger

Experience: 9th Level Soldier

Alignment: Aberrant; though at this point in the adventure, the party’s triumph or failure may be cause enough for great change in the Chieftain.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 13, M.A. 17, P.S. 22, P.P. 17, P.E. 18, P.B. 15, Spd. 21

Hit Points: 62, **Armor:** studded leather, **A.R.:** 12

Attacks Per Melee: three; sword (1D8 + 2), dagger (1D4), staff (1D6), claw (1D8) or bite (1D6).

Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword: +3 to strike/ +2 to damage; knife: +2 to strike/ +2 to damage/ +2 to throw; staff: +3 to strike/ +2 to damage.

Size: 10 feet tall, **Weight:** 795 pounds

Description: A towering wolfen with a regal air. His fur is well tended, forming a bristling crown of grizzled black between the heights of his ears.

History: Lord Rutger has long been the leader of his feral wolfen tribe, mastering thousands of acres of unexplored Northern Wilderness. His warriors' raids upon a new colony of humans and faeries were thwarted time and again over the past two years. When he consulted with his mountain cousins, Rutger was told to "take care of the matter yourself." Rutger's lieutenants then turned to "the Tamer," a known Summoner who collected, caged, and studied unusual animals. The Tamer, being frightened (and of questionable sanity in the first place), agreed. He proceeded to summon a new creature to drive away the pilgrims of Epimall.

A tragic error was committed, however, and the Tamer tapped the eldritch power of some forgotten god. Ceratus Dominus was drawn from the stars and pulled, crashing into the woods. The dragon annihilated many of the witnessing wolfen and most of the Tamer's zoo. The wolfen were forced to retreat and regroup. Lord Rutger, after monitoring the beast's activities, declared him an "abomination," and decreed his tribes' redemption in destroying him. He sent two dozen soldiers to Epimall's aid. They were easily beaten. He had no choice but to intervene himself.

HONORABLE PARTINGS

The wolfen will have agreed to relinquish Epimall to the human pilgrims who founded the tiny village. Indeed, they will even vow, in Morningstar's memory, to assist in the great reconstruction. The party, however, must turn its attention to their arbolytes, and getting the greenwood faerie herbs and cultures back to Klisfurnim's encampment. They are much needed to aid the victims of the aster fall. Whether as friends or foes, Rad and the surviving members of the Burning will join the party on their trip. Both teams have equal need of whatever cure the faeries can come up with.

After several days, a unique "aster fall sickness relief" is developed by human and faerie priests, shamans, and magicians. Symptoms of the illness, including hair loss, sores, the loosening of teeth, and nausea, may be assuaged by the elixir. It can slow the Abomination's poison to a point where years (4D6, to be more precise) of life may be added to the seriously stricken. Party members directly struck by the Abomination's flames, however, will be advised to make peace with their makers. Adventurers who grappled with the dragon for more than a moment or two at a time can be guaranteed nothing. (**Note:** See the entry on *The Abomination*, previously listed).

G.M. Note: What the cure does, in fact, is it grants the Player Character a second saving throw vs. poison at a roll of 8 or better on a D20. Each character will be given no more than two draughts of the cure, which is all the faeries can afford. Whether the Burning, including Rad, can be cured should be left a secret, pending the referee's decision on whether the Burning should return to plague or aid the party some time in the future.

Their surviving arbolytes seen safely back to the stables of Steed Wrangler Ben, the party will be invited to a dinner of celebration thrown by the faeries in their honor. During these festivities, each adventurer will be gifted a thread of solid silver, upon which their tiny Epim Clogs may hang around their necks. When it is done, Klisfurnim, the Faerie Leader will make his final speech to the party:

"There is no adequate thanks we can offer you, our Champions. We may never learn the cost of your sacrifice for us, the nobility in your secret battle with Ceratus. Now you hold a child who has been blessed by the Goddess Epim, yet bares the mark of Wolfen on his crown. This is most curious, but we must abide the wise and agree that the child does not belong with us. You will each be given a bag of money coins,

to ensure that he is seen safely back to your world. You are protected from the natural elements, you have our best wishes, and the fortune we were able to raise while you were gone. Now you must leave this forest of broken wings. Go with our hope. Go with our love."

A careful inspection of the bags given each adventurer will yield about a hundred gold pieces in small coins each. This was all the pocket money the faeries could safely loot from the poor pilgrims of Epimall. . . .

G.M. Notes on Some Heroes and a Baby

The dark notion that one day a terrible war between man and wolfen will tear Palladium asunder is not a new one. But more and more of late, prophets have whispered that the might and power of the tribes in the Great Northern Wilderness has grown as dramatically as the tension between the races. Foul "killer" winters have been forcing many tribes south, while the burgeoning human populace presses still north. Could there be truth in the possibility of one man, born in the fires of a secret conflict which placed man and wolfen on the same side, who will one day unite the two races? Could this man be the gurgling babe only now being grudgingly carried to town by battle-weary adventurers? What is to happen next?

Campaign ideas for some heroes and a baby should be endless. How unfortunate it would be for the party to simply ditch the boy at the closest nursery, walking away from their role in the grand scheme of things! It has been implied that Al-Vil, the Diabolic Old One (see the *Palladium RPG Book II: The Old Ones*) who lay enchained and sleeping on some nether realm, dream-guided Ceratus to Rad's summoning. Al-Vil will not stop dreaming! There are villains who would desire nothing but chaos and destruction, and still others who wish to see a distinct outcome at the end of such a war. This boy-king will be nothing but a thorn in their sides. As allies and enemies are established and battle lines drawn, a campaign that will change the face of the Palladium world will soon develop. Future releases from Palladium Books will help you along.

Ceratus Dominus will return in **Darklings™**, where the last people on Earth face an apocalyptic evil. Darklings is an adventure campaign supplement to be released in 1990 for *Beyond the Supernatural™* from Palladium Books®.





A Most Royal Conspiracy

By Kevin Long & Kevin Siembieda

Player Background

After a savage raid by wolfen troops, the inhabitants of Sith, a small human village on the border of the Wolfen Empire send out a call for help. The adventurers just happen to be passing through at the time. A craggy, bearded man in his late 50's approaches the player characters with this tale of woe.

"I am Jedima, village elder and mayor of Sith. My fellow villagers and I beg you to help us avenge our dead and save our people taken as slaves by the wolfen dogs!"

Any wolfen, or wolfen-like characters, in the party will terrify the villagers. Many will brandish pitchforks and clubs at the canine, others will spit at his feet. An uproar will fill the air as word spreads that a wolfen(s) is in town. The frightened people hoot, "Don't trust 'em, Jedima, they consort with the enemy!" "How do we know they were not among our attackers?!" "No, no, don't let them take my baby!" "Death to all wolves!" The rest of the party will have to choose their

words well to calm this crowd, and they'll have a hard time convincing the villagers that any wolfen character can be trustworthy. However, Jedima is willing to trust anyone who seems willing to help. After quieting the crowd, he continues to speak.

"As you can see, the mere presence of a wolfen sends my people into madness. This is because we have been plagued by these monsters time and time again!" He casts an embarrassed look at any wolfen in the group and continues, "For nearly a year we have been the target of their unholy raids. They burn our homes and crops, kidnap our loved ones for slaves, and eat our children!" This last comment is an exaggeration that draws angry shouts and curses from the crowd.

The player characters are all too familiar with the rumors and tall tales about the wolfen's inhumane treatment of prisoners, death camps, and the eating of human babies. If they have any firsthand knowledge about this part of the world, or have casorted in the company of wolfen, then they know the stories to be truthless yarns passed on by generation after generation of frightened and hate filled humans. Undoubtedly, any wolfen in the group has proven himself in battle and friendship on countless occasions. However, if the party is naive, then they may believe these stories and only serve to fuel these people's fears. These tales of atrocities are equally likely to convince an inexperienced group to try to rescue the captured townspeople.

Less naive characters will not be so easy to convince, but Jedima is a convincing fellow, and these people's pain is very real. Good characters will feel duty bound to at least investigate the situation and see if there really is somebody to rescue from wrongdoers. Another adventure begins to unfold.

Death At River's Edge

Jedima and a ragtag group of ten poorly armed villagers lead the player characters on their journey into the wilderness. The men can not be dissuaded from coming along, insisting that the heroes will need all the help they can get. The going is slow since the villagers are on foot, except Jedima, who rides a donkey. However, the villager in the lead assures them that the wolfen's trail is fresh, they can not be far. Any ranger characters in the group can confirm this.

After tracking the wolfen raiders for several miles through dense forest and brush, the group comes upon a slow-moving river. Several of the village men rush ahead to quench thirsty throats in its refreshing waters. As they drink at the river's edge, a clawed hand reaches up from the depth's and hauls one of the villagers into the river. Swirls of mud makes it impossible to see.

Before anyone can react, the unlucky villager bursts to the surface, with half his face missing! He screams to the others for help, but again disappears under the waves. The frothing water where he last went down slowly turns crimson.

Game Master Section

The man's cousin screams and tries to jump in after him. Fortunately, the other villagers struggle to restrain him from this foolishness. The water begins to churn, followed by a gargantuan splash, as something leaps from the water to land on the river bank. A seven foot tall creature with the head of a horse, a human trunk, long-clawed hands, and horse legs, gurgles a snarl as it decides who its next victim will be. Dripping water and blood, the seaweed covered monster takes a step toward the villagers, who cluster together in terror. Only old Jedima sits upon his donkey without flinching. "Kelpie," he mutters.

Game Master's Note: Unless the player characters do something quickly, the Kelpie will charge the townsmen. It will easily knock away their crude weapons and drag two more into the river. Even if the player characters and the remaining seven townsmen retreat, there's a problem. The wolfen crossed the river here, at its narrowest and most shallow point. To pursue the raiders, the group will also have to cross here. To go around and cross elsewhere means losing a lot of time, and there's



nothing to assure them that the kelpie won't follow. The group does have one thing in their favor; the kelpie is overconfident from his easy kills and continues to stalk them on land, where it is the most vulnerable. If they strike fast and hard, and keep it on land, they can defeat it with comparative ease.

As if on cue, the thing leaps out of the water and races toward Jedima, some 30 feet from the river's edge. (**G.M. Note:** If the group is slow to save Jedima, he will successfully dodge the attack by slipping off the donkey. The poor animal will not be so lucky, the kelpie will pound on it in frustration.)

The Kelpie

Alignment: Diabolic

Hit Points: 41, **A.R.:** 6

Attacks per Melee: 2; bite does 1D6 damage or by claws doing 1D8.

Bonuses on dry land: +7 to damage, +1 to strike, parry, and dodge (+2 strike, +4 parry & dodge underwater).

Note: Will fight to the death.

If the group succeeds in killing the beast, they can cross the river with ease and take up the wolfen's trail on the other side. Finding an alternative route will add 1D4 hours to the wolfen's escape. The trail leads to a dirt path that runs north and south. Tracks indicate that the wolfen raiders met with another group with wagons and turn northward down the path. This means two things: One, that the raiders were able to double or triple their speed, putting them hours ahead. Two, the group is no longer straddling the disputed human border of the Eastern Territory, but is definitely in wolfen territory.

Ambush

Mile after mile passes, until a small fortified city is spotted in the valley below. It's safe to assume that this is not a human city. Before the characters can formulate their next move, wolfen soldiers step out of their hiding places among the trees. At least 50 wolfen longbow archers stand ready with bows drawn. The brush on all sides rustles as another 100 mounted wolfen troops, weapons at the ready, emerge from the thick forest. (**Note:** Canine characters in the group, or characters with the racial history skill, may notice that the composition of this force is actually half wolfen and half coyle.)

A tough looking Centurion rides forward, the sun glimmering off his golden plate armor and his white teeth. At his side is his lieutenant and a strangely quiet wolfen in robes. "I see we have returned just in time. Throw down your weapons and surrender!" he barks, "or you spies will die where you stand!"

This large grey wolfen is obviously in command, yet he keeps glancing nervously at the slender, cowed figure on his right. The black robes conceal the person's features. Presumably he(?) is a wolfen or coyle, or perhaps an ogre mage, judging from the giant size of the rider. The soldier on the left is the coyle lieutenant, an evil looking fellow distinguished by a prominent scar across the left side of his face and eye.

The cowed figure slowly raises its head, though no features are visible within the darkened hood, save a pair of glowing red eyes. In a sultry female voice, she says, "I highly recommend you listen to the Centurion or suffer a fate far worse than arrows or steel."

G.M. Note: Any character who performs an aura check will register an aura of magic and intense evil. It's clear that she is a mid-level magic user.

The characters should *surrender* or have a really good plan of escape, otherwise they'll be riddled with arrows. These are seasoned veterans with the strength of giants, and outnumber the characters about 20 to one. Any rebuttal about being spies can be addressed in the city.

"Go to hell, you mangy dogs!" bellows one of the village men as he and a few of his fellows charge. Before the archers can react by

releasing a fusillade of deadly arrows, the cowed figure whirls and points a bony finger in the villagers direction. Instantly, they stop in their tracks, grab their heads, scream, and fall over dead, blood running from their ears and mouth. Of all the villagers, only Jedima and the scout still live. "You ... old man, you live only because I may find you useful. And you, youngster, I let live so that you may return to your tribe and tell your people what you've seen this day. Give them this message: 'If they continue to live on wolfen soil, they shall die on wolfen soil.' Now, go and do not look back!" (The human scout is allowed to leave.) Turning to the wolfen Centurion, she commands, "Regius, have your prisoners shackled and gather their weapons. Let them meet their fate in Prime."

"As you order, Cassandrix," whispers the Centurion nervously.

G.M. Note: Obviously, the characters are outgunned; however, those who are more brave than intelligent may decide that it is better to die in battle than as a wolfen slave, and attack. If this happens, the person that makes the first threatening move will be cut down by a dozen arrows; 2D4×10 damage is inflicted to both armor and *hit points* (If he still lives, he will be knocked out, restrained, and healed, for torture, later.)

Six wolfen armed with pole arms will charge each of the other attackers, if any. Although menacing, they will be looking to subdue rather than kill. Another dozen soldiers will run to place themselves between Cassandrix and her wouldbe attackers. If she is killed at this point, the soldiers will attack with deadly force and take no prisoners (this adventure is over, roll new characters)! No further chances will be taken with these unpredictable humans, and a cloud of slumber will engulf them. The cloud is cast by one of the accompanying clergy or Cassandrix herself. All the captives will be bound, gagged, and dragged to the city under heavy wolfen guard.

The City of Prime

The city of Prime is fairly new, being barely a decade old. The countryside around it is fertile farmland, while the city itself is enclosed on all sides by a 30 foot tall wall. Four aqueducts jut out of the wall and lead into the mountains. Towers overlook each of the four main gates, guarded by eight wolfen archers and four coyle infantrymen. On either side of the towering gatehouses are two catapults and another 24 infantrymen. A 4th level warlock, one for each of the elements, resides near each of the gates so that he may lend his *special* talents to the defense of the city. A total of 1600 troops are found here. This city is prepared for war.

The city is composed of wide avenues, narrow streets, and one and twostory stone buildings. Wolfen and their coyle kin, along with an occasional goblin, hob-goblin, or orc, browse at the numerous shops, stores, and taverns. Considering the number of people who live here, Prime is surprisingly clean and well maintained (14,000 live in the city, with another 4,000 living in the surrounding area).

Prime is laid out in a circular pattern, with four main roadways leading to the government buildings in the center of the city. A paved roadway just inside the city walls runs completely around the city, with smaller streets branching off from it and connecting with the four main thoroughfares.

The center of the city is also surrounded by a 30 foot wall and four gate houses, 30 troops are stationed at each. Inside the second wall are the main places of government, the Magistia's palace, the House of Law, and other halls of bureaucracy, all surrounded by paved courtyards and gardens. Behind a park are the residences for the heads of government and beyond them, grain warehouses.

Situated to the left of the government complex are stables, blacksmith facilities, and weapons warehouses. Across the way is the Great Circus an arena used for chariot races, pageants, and festivals. Next to it is the Gladiatorial Arena where combatants pit their skills in battles, often

to the death, for the enjoyment of the spectators. Captured *spies*, military prisoners, and criminals are often the fodder for the gladiatorial games. Consequently, the lower levels of the arena are prison cells and dungeon. Both the Great Circus and the Gladiatorial Arena seat 7500 persons and are usually filled to capacity at all performances.

Surrounding the arenas are the library, a couple theatres for the performing arts, bathhouses, and some more opulent residences for the city's wealthy.

The Audience Before the Governor

Game Masters, read the following to the players:

Shortly after your arrival to the city, the party is taken before the governor of Prime. Each one is chained and yanked along by his or her personal escort, a coyle soldier (2nd level each). The guards will stay at their sides the entire time.

Sitting before you, in his elevated throne, is Governor Maximus. At his right hand is the she-devil in black, Cassandrix. A dozen guards and two robed figures (the air and earth warlocks; 4th level) stand on either side behind the throne. The governor stares vacantly into the distance, his head resting in hand. He appears to be more coyle than wolfen, perhaps a halfbreed, middleaged, garbed in the traditional robes of the office, and wears the large, golden, seal ring of authority on his right hand. Cassandrix leans down and whispers something in his ear, awakening him from his daydream.

"What?...Oh,yes...yes." He surveys the group of adventurers with a discerning eye, leans forward and addresses them with contempt in his guttural voice. He speaks in elven or goblin, whichever language the most characters can understand. "I am Maximus, regional governor of this territory, and you are the spies sent by our enemies to reconnoiter our numbers and our city's defenses!"

Any reply by the characters will result in being struck on the head or in the stomach by their guards. "Silence!!" growls Maximus, angrily. "I did not give you permission to speak!" Further comments or protests on the part of the characters will put them on the receiving end of an even more vicious hit with a sword hilt. Maximus continues...

"I know that you all come with this lowly human scum from the village of Sith", points to Jedima, "to spy for your larger invasion force waiting beyond the border. You are hot to extract your pitiful revenge, eh?"

This last statement is rhetorical and not meant to solicit a response, but Jedima can not hold his tongue; "A vengeance that will make you suffer like the hundreds you have killed and taken into slavery, you filthy son of a ..." two wolfen guards pummel Jedima into silence.

"Revenge," snarls the governor, "for what we have done? Hah! You make me laugh, old man! Yourrr kind," he slurs, "have been bothering my brethren like animals for centuries. I have personally seen the bodies of a hundred wolfen warriors, their hands bound and throats cut after they had surrendered. Women and children, gutted and left for the carrion to feast upon. And you speak to me of vengeance. It is we who shall be avenged! In time, I... I will ride down and...I shall..." Maximus is brought back to the moment by Cassandrix grabbing his arm tightly.

"As for slaves," says Maximus more calmly as he inspects his manicured fingernails, "we wolfen do not take slaves. We are a fair and civilized people. Unfortunately for you, we must have participants in our gladiatorial games. And it's so difficult to find volunteers. You must understand, that the games, though barbaric, quench the burning in the peoples hearts from a less civilized time when the bloodlust was all consuming. And you, my spies, shall be consumed by the games, and... and know...true..." Maximus slowly fades off, his eyes glazed, as he stares blankly at the ceiling. Then a smile spreads across his face as he says in a lilting tone, "Do you hear them? Do you? The voices...the beautiful voices...calling me to my destiny. I shall lead. Yes, yes, it has been foretold in the stars!...Ohhh...Listen!"

Maximus is quite insane.

G.M. Note: Should the characters lash out or kill Maximus, battle will ensue. Surprisingly, they will be subdued, not killed. This dreadful full action will only set the wheels of political intrigue in motion so much earlier.

Prisoners

There is nothing more to be said. Cassandrix dismisses the prisoners and they are dragged back to their cells at the arena. All of their possessions are in a pile within the main guard chamber that leads to the prison. Only a thief or prestidigitator may have been able to palm and conceal something small, like a knife or lock pick.

This dungeon is circular, windowless, and has only one door; a solid wood door, 6 or 8 inches thick and having no window. Two torches are lit and placed in iron holders near the door. Each member of the group is shackled to the wall. The chains are around their wrists, waists, and ankles, suspending them two to four feet above the floor. On the stone floor are several circles drawn in what looks like blood. The guards are extremely careful not to step near them.

Escape is a slim possibility. The characters have only a few hours to brood before the interrogation begins. If they escape their chains (100 S.D.C. each, locks are 30), they have to get through the oak door which is barred by two large slide bolts on the outside (remember, everything is giant size). The bolts have a combined S.D.C. of 100, the door itself has a S.D.C. of 400. Loud noises or fire will send eightsecond level coyle soldiers to investigate. Each wears a full suit of studded leather armor (A.R. 12, S.D.C. 38), carries a wicked pole arm (4D6 damage) and has a short sword (2D6) on a belt. Average hit points is 18.

Should they successfully defeat the eight coyles, they have to get through another barred door (same stats as before) and defeat the dozen third level wolfen who are the main guard. They too wear studded leather and are armed with pole arms and short swords (same stats). Average hit points is 26.

If these are defeated, the group can get their belongings, but where do they go? Back into the dungeon is a dead end although they may be able to hide for hours in the maze of empty cells. Up and out will be blocked with 1D4 + 1 encounters with additional guards (2D6 guards each time). If they make it to the surface, they are in a city of *wolfen*! Humans and non-monster races will stick out like a sore thumb. Inevitably, they will be chased by soldiers and citizens alike, until captured or killed (the wolfen people will react the same as would a human town with escaped wolfen criminals). Eventually, Cassandrix and one of the warlocks (probably air) will join in the manhunt. The characters' only hope for escape is magic or getting to one of the aqueducts and crawling out through it. Of course, the wolfen army will send out 600 troops to hunt them down in the woods. **Note:** Jedima is too old and knows that he will only slow the group down, thus he insists that he be left behind, saying, "I'm too old and feisty. They ain't gonna kill me. But you boys save yourselves. I should never have gotten you involved in this. I'm sorry. Now, get moving. I'll never be able to live with myself if I got you all killed. And...thanks, for what you tried to do."

Cassandrix Interrogates

If the characters do escape, that's great. However, they'll miss the rest of Cassandrix's fun. If the group escapes and is recaptured, they'll end up back in the dungeon (Cassandrix will comment, with a touch of sarcasm, about their resourcefulness.) Regardless, they will be visited by Cassandrix for interrogation. She enters the room accompanied by four burly wolfen guards (each is 4th level). Although the guards step gingerly around the circles, she strolls right through them as if they weren't there.

Game Masters, read the following to the players:

"Now tell me," she says in a soft, almost seductive voice, "what is the size and dispersion of the invading human forces?"

She'll select one of the player characters and pet his face softly, saying, "Come, come children, we know you to be a small patrol scouting ahead for an even larger force. Don't deny it." This character is being psionically probed. He must roll vs psionic attack or Cassandrix will peer into his mind. If this first probe fails, she will try hypnotic suggestion. If this too fails, she'll move on to another. She will remain frighteningly calm and confident, ignoring snide remarks, curses, and spit.

If her psi-probes do not work, or she receives an unsatisfactory reply, she will turn to Jedima. Pointing to his shackles, she unlocks them telekinetically (a trick that took her years to master), dropping the old man to the floor.

"Perhaps these fools really don't know anything. Are they your pawns, old one?" She pauses a moment and frowns, "Your defenses are strong, but there are many ways in the art of persuasion." She motions for two of the guards to grab Jedima and drag him to her. "Don't make this hard on yourself," she purrs. "Tell me what I wish to know, little man, tell me now!"



Jedima spits right in Cassandrix's eye and hisses, "Go to hell, you devil."

"Very well," she snarls, "but I'll send you there ahead of me...but, oh so very slowly."

With this the guards drag him to the base of a circle. Cassandrix is strong enough to easily handle him from this point on, chains him inside the circle, and steps back with a lock of Jedima's hair. She affixes the hair to a rag doll that she had under her cloak and shapes the figure so that it somewhat resembles an old man. Then, she kneels at his feet and begins to write. She stops and rises, saying, "We wolven have been slow to adopt the ways of magic, Jedima Andro Walkin (his true name)." The she-wolf smiles and nods, "Oh, I was able to learn a little about you, sweetheart." Cassandrix draws a small, thin dagger from her belt and dangles it above the rag doll effigy and says, "But while we are latecomers to magic, we are fast learners."

With these last words she plunges the knife into the doll, Jedima winces. She does it again and again, each time evoking tormented screams from the old man. She will continue until he falls unconscious. At that time, he is revived and given healing potions. When strength is back, she begins anew. The characters will never forget his tormented screams.

Game Master's Note: The circle is a summoner's circle of pain! For now, Jedima is Cassandrix's only victim, although it will be days before she intends to let him die. She is convinced that the other members of the group are just stupid pawns of an old man's revenge. She's also fairly convinced that there is no human army advancing on the city.

If somebody in the group tries to stop Cassandrix by lashing out with magic or psionics, she will back away, saying, "Save your powers for the arena where they will do you some good." In anger and wave of her hand, she will send a lightning bolt, blasting Jedima apart, and whisk out the door. Her parting words, through the closed door, are: "I will enjoy your death in the arena."

Within a day or two, the characters will be made to fight in the arena.

The Arena of Death

The day they are to fight in the arena, the group will be led, shackled, to a rectangular waiting room. The room is dimly lit by one tiny slit of a window, 4 inches wide and 12 inches tall. The floor is covered with straw stained crimson from blood. Holding cells, currently empty, make up the right side of the room. The smells of blood and decay can be smelled from the neighboring chamber down the hall, where healers work to save the fortunate gladiators who have survived today's trials so that they may fight again.

Two guards stop in front of the group's cell door. They argue loudly about the party's chances in the arena. The one thinks they may have a chance, the other is willing to bet his month's salary that "Savagius and Tyranicus" slay them in record time. Moments later, the door opens and the characters' belongings are thrown on the floor. The only items missing are coins, gems, jewelry, books, scrolls, potions, and magic items recognized to have long-range attacks (Cassandrix can object read them in advance if necessary).

Full armor, shields, weapons (including magical), and magic items applicable to hand to hand combat, are all returned. The characters have 30 minutes to suit up. If somebody refuses to dress and/or refuses to fight, he will be tossed into the arena whether he likes it or not. Wizards and warlocks are gagged, given a weapon, and instructed that this battle is by weapon, no spell casting is allowed (yes, the person can remove his gag, but the obvious use of magic will instigate the addition of a spell casting opponent, like an earth elemental).

The group is sent out into the arena. As their eyes adjust to the light, they can hear Maximus addressing the capacity crowd.

"Citizens! Today is indeed a special day. For today you will witness the small band of spies, captured by Commander Regius, fight for their lives in the Arena of Death!" A cascade of cheers erupts from the crowd and continues until Maximus gestures for silence.

"These enemies of the Empire will match their might against our two undefeated champions, Savagius and Tyranicus! How can two of our fearless gladiators defeat so many? Because they fight with justice on their side. May the Wolfen Empire forever endure! Let the game begin!"

The field of combat is soft sand with large blotches of discoloration from the blood of previous battles. (**G.M. Note:** The sand will impair the player characters' movement: reduce speed by 30%, and -1 to dodge. The two seasoned gladiators do not suffer from these penalties.) Two huge, 20 foot, doors swing open to reveal the two giant gladiators. Battle begins....

Game Masters Note: Conduct the combat just as you would normal combat. The two giants will fight till the death, or until Maximus or Cassandrix stops the battle. Remember, that the wanton, *unfair*, use of spell magic will cause the earth warlock to send his earth elemental in to even the odds (it can be a minor or major elemental, depending on the judgement of the G.M.; just be fair, the characters should have a fair chance of winning).

THE GLADIATORS

Savagius

16 foot tall, four armed gigante

Alignment: Miscreant

Hit Points: 59

Armor: Double chain mail; A.R. 14, S.D.C. 55

Weapons: Spiked club (3D6 damage), magic battle axe (3D6 damage and returns when thrown), magic cutlass (2D6 damage and can cast the spell 'fly' twice a day), small metal shield (does 1D6 damage when used to hit).

Attacks per Melee: 7(!); by weapon or poisonous bite which does 3D6 damage unless the victim saves vs poison (14 or higher). If a successful save is made the person suffers only 1D6 damage from the fangs. Note: Savagius will try to bite whenever possible.

Bonuses: +4 to strike, +8 to parry, +3 to dodge, +4 on initiative, +2 to save vs magic and poison, and +10 to damage and speed 14. These bonuses include weapon proficiencies, attributes, and gladiator hand to hand combat.

Notes: Savagius is a blue-grey behemoth with huge yellowed fangs and a mane of black hair. He is an eighth level gladiator and has never lost a battle as a team with Tyranicus.

Tyranicus

14 foot tall, reptilian gigantes

Alignment: Miscreant

Hit Points: 71

Armor: None, but has a natural body armor from his scales, A.R. 12 (no damage is inflicted if the roll to strike is 12 or less).

Weapons: Spiked mace (3D6 damage, magically made to be indestructible), and a ball and chain (2D8 damage).

Attacks per Melee: 4; three hand to hand/tail plus one by fire breath (3D6 damage). Tail lash does 2D8 damage and has a 20 foot reach. The tail can be used against frontal and rear attacks, the latter directed by Tyranicus' third eye in the back of his head.

Bonuses: +4 to strike, +6 to parry, +4 to dodge, +2 initiative, +6 to save vs magic and poison, and +8 to damage; speed is 22. Tyranicus is impervious to attacks from behind unless his *third eye* is blinded. He is also a minor psionic (all level one abilities) so he saves vs psionics at 12 (+1 to save due to magic tooth on necklace). All bonuses have been considered. Both giants stun an opponent on a roll of a natural 17,18,19, or 20.



Notes: Tyranicus is an exceptional 9th level gladiator and a favorite of the fans. He uses his tail and great speed (22) to his advantage, usually leaving his fire breath as a surprise attack.

At the Battles End: G.M. Notes...

If the characters are defeated, Maximus will spare them so that... "they may experience the agony of defeat again and again, and knowing that it is I, Maximus, who holds their lives in his hand. When I allow it, only then will they know peace in death." They will be stripped of their weapons, returned to their cell, and made to fight another day, soon. G.M.'s choice if they fight the same pair or somebody new.

If the characters win, Maximus will leap from his seat, give the thumb's up signal that the giants should be spared, and shriek, "Throw them in the dungeon! You'll pay dearly for this outrage." The group will be stripped and taken back to their cell.

Of course, they could try an escape, but flying would appear to be the only way out. If they did get out, the previously discussed scenario of manhunt would unravel. Attacking Maximus or Cassandrix would create a fight right in the stands. Successful assassins, later captured, will be beheaded the next morning.

The Visitor

Late the next evening, the adventurers will be visited by *Commander Regius*. He is alone and carries two sacks.

If the characters were defeated in the arena, he will say: "I offer your freedom from certain death in the arena, but there is a price."

If the characters have been victorious in the arena, he will say: "You are great warriors. You deserve more than an honorless death in an arena or dungeon. I can free you, but I must ask of you a great favor, for I am as good as dead if Maximus or Cassandrix still live by morning."

This is the deal: Regius will let them out of their chains, give them their belongings from the previous fight, as well as, food and four healing potions (all other possessions are long gone unless you, the G.M., put them in Cassandrix or Maximus' room), and arrange to have guards not at their posts, if they agree to kill Cassandrix and Maximus *tonight*. The deed must be done tonight or he must leave them to their fate. Regius will further explain that if they fail, he and the many loyal soldiers who have helped to arrange their escape will be killed. He explains his motives as follows:

"Life in Prime was good. Governor Maximus was a bit extreme and sometimes unreasoning, but no worse than others I have seen who let power corrupt them. Then that witch Cassandrix arrived. She has slowly taken Maximus' mind from him. Turning him into an insane puppet that dances on her invisible strings. In the past few months, my best men have mysteriously vanished. Cassandrix attributes it to desertion, but I know this is not true. They were my best, and were like brothers to me. Maximus accepts her answer of desertion and replaces my lost

men with Cassandrix's loyal coyles. It seems that any who opposes her views disappears or has an accident.

"Then there is the games. You saw it. The horror, the bloodlust. At one time the games were used to keep our troops in tip-top condition. To test new weapons and the troops' mettle, not to commit murder. I am surprised that I haven't ended up in the games myself. I guess her coyle lackeys are still too inexperienced to lead the troops.

"I fear the witch is simply biding her time. She craves power and revels in others' pain. I think she hastens the day when humans and real men (meaning wolfen) will clash. The arena has been a useful tool in whetting the appetite of the people for war. All I hear is how the humans burn our farms, butcher our children, and use us as slaves like domesticated animals. Revenge is next, and that means war.

"I have no desire to see my people die in a war that neither side is yet prepared to fight. When that day comes, it will be because the Emperor has decreed it. Not because some bitch in a border town manipulated it."

Regius will further explain that it has been Cassandrix's coyles, dressed in soldiers' garb, that have been raiding Sith and a dozen other villages like it. He also suspects coyles are gathering some 50 miles north of Prime. One scout reported unusual numbers of coyles in the area before he disappeared. Cassandrix's scouts report that all is normal. He would send word to the Emperor, but knows that he would never reach him alive. Cassandrix has secluded herself far from his reach and surrounds herself and Maximus with her coyle minions, or Regius would gladly kill her himself. If asked about Cassandrix's multi-evil eye death that she used on the villagers, he will comfort them in that she can only perform that magic once a month, or so he thinks.

G.M. Notes: Any truth detection done to Regius will show that he does not lie. Looking at his aura will show a good alignment and a troubled soul.

If the group agrees, he will free them, but only after he has made them swear on their honor that they will try to do as he has asked. Regius will leave them, saying: "Good, my friends, good! You are wise and brave warriors. You will be rewarded, if not in this life, in the next. Rest assured, if you are successful tonight, the Emperor will hear of the non-wolfen heroes who offered their lives in the name of peace... and... friendship."

Of course, an unscrupulous group can use this opportunity to flee the city and be too far away to hear the death screams of Regius and his loyal soldiers that will surely come with the dawn.

If the group keeps their word, they will find easy passage out of the dungeon, out of the arena, and into the residence of Governor Maximus (Cassandrix is here too). This is the end of Regius' influence. Once the group steps inside that door, they are in the domain of Cassandrix.

Both Maximus and Cassandrix live on the third floor of the building. The coyle guards on the first two floor are already dead, the handywork of Regius and his men. The third floor is accessible from the main, wide stairs (Regius has suggested these, because they are poorly guarded; no one expects an assault in peace time), the back stairs (these are guarded by 10 coyles and near the kitchen, so others may be present), or by flying to a window (but Regius suspects the roof is guarded by a pair of gargoyles, summoned by Cassandrix, who would spot them).

At the top of the main stairs are two coyles in standard gear. Stealth or magic could knock out these guys without rattling the doorknobs of the grand double doors that lead to the bed chambers. Inside is one of the slumbering giants from the arena, magically healed (G.M.s can pick whichever one they want. If the giants were killed, then substitute a big, mean wolfen, or maybe an Algor giant. Cassandrix loves giants). The group will have first shot at this bozo, because he's asleep, but wakes up swinging.

The noise of combat will certainly alert Maximus, who is in the huge chamber to the right. There is no response from Cassandrix's room on the left.

Maximus is guarded by six coyle soldiers who will fight to the death to protect him. They do this because they do not wish to face Cassandrix if they fail. The coyles are all dressed in chain mail (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 44), wield a battle axe (3D6 damage) in one hand and a saber (2D6 damage) in the other. All are second level soldiers with approximately 20 hit points each, have two attacks per melee and are +3 to strike, parry, and dodge.

The sound of battle will send another 2D6 coyles charging in from other rooms. Same basic stats as the previous.

There is also a 1-50% chance that one of the gargoyles will fly to the window to see what's going on and join in the fray. *See Palladium RPG page 173 for gargoyle stats.*



Maximus will be dangerous, since he is insane and firmly believes that he is destined to rule. He will be completely calm as he walks forward, dressed in his white, silk nightgown and armed with a shield in one hand and a broadsword in the other. Before he strikes he will say, "this is madness. Don't you realize that I can not die." Then he'll charge forward, fighting like a...madman. **G.M.s Note:** Maximus is totally insane. He believe all the lies that Cassandrix has psionically put in his head. Consequently, he'll do and say things in the heat of battle, that a sane person would never do. He will ignore pain and death as if he really doesn't feel it. This will keep him moving until 40 points below zero hit points. When he hits 30 or so below zero, he'll suddenly stop fighting, drop his sword, and walk toward the balcony. Dreamily, he'll say, "Hear them? They call my name. Come lead us, Maximus. Yes, I come..." and with that, he steps off the balcony falling to his death.

Maximus

Alignment: Miscreant

Hit Points: 43

Attack per Melee: 2; sword does 2D8 damage, claws 1D6, bite 1D8.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +3 to damage.

Cassandrix is not in her room. The door is locked, but its flimsy lock is easily forced (20 S.D.C.). At the threshold of the door is a circle drawn in blood. It is a harmless nonsense thing put there to scare away intruders. The characters will have no reason to suspect that it is harmless unless one of them is a summoner. Risking life and limb by running or flying over it should net the *first person* to do so a bonus of 100 experience points.

Her bed chamber is divided into three areas: her bedroom, study, and a room filled with five interconnecting circles. She is present in none. There are all kinds of odd items in here, a mini-chemist's shop for a summoner. The most valuable items are: Two pairs of faerie wings, jewelry worth about 30,000 gold, a bottle of 20 lotus petals (worth 100 gold each from an alchemist, the group might get 20 each), and a box of gold coins worth 5000. There's lots of other stuff from perfume and silks to tongues and toe nails.

Suddenly, the circle room glows and Cassandrix appears with coyle lieutenant Pylon (via teleportation circle. She'll need the faerie wings to use it again.) If the characters are hiding or out in the hall fighting, Cassandrix will step out of the circle matrix, and the room, to investigate (probably turning psionically invisible). She is overconfident and fat with the dream of power. This will get her to foolishly join in the combat. Pylon will fight to the death for the woman he calls Queen.

What happens next will depend on the Game Master, the players, and the roll of the dice. Does she die? Will she defeat the group (she is a powerhouse and vicious)? Will she flee into the night? Or teleport away (not if the characters bar her path or have the faerie wings)?

If Cassandrix escapes, she will flee when she realizes that Maximus is dead and Regius is on to her. She will not risk returning to Prime. However, she will continue her quest for power, which may lead her to another city, and another adventure in the group's future. Perhaps she will even venture to the imperial city and visit the Emperor himself? The latter is not likely, or is Cassandrix arrogant enough to try it? More to her liking would be to journey to the Eastern Territory to see how easily humans are manipulated.

If she is killed, her evil will stop here and the world will be a safer place, but Cassandrix does not die easily.

Cassandrix

Alignment: Diabolic

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 22, M.A. 11, P.S. 13, P.P. 21, P.E. 14, P.B. 12, Spd. 10.

Hit Points: 61, **Size:** 7 feet tall, 210 pounds.

Armor: None

Attacks per Melee: 2 by hand to hand combat; bite does 1D6 damage, claws 1D6, or by weapon, or psionics (2 psionic attacks).

Magic: All symbols, all power words, recognize wards 90%, all protection circles, all summoning circles, and the following power circles: animate dead, healing, knowledge, pain, teleport, and power matrix.

Psionics: Two attacks per melee (takes the place of physical attacks), **I.S.P.** 88, and has all psionics levels 1-5.

Notes: Cassandrix is a fifth level Mind Mage and a third level Summoner. Unlike many of her lazy coyle kin, she is ambitious in the extreme. She has studied long and hard to master her psionics and the mystic art of circle making. Cassandrix has used that knowledge to quench her desire for power. However, she has found that the more power she attains simply increases her appetite to acquire ever more. In recent months her appetite has grown insatiable. Her goal: To rule an Empire...and perhaps the world.

The she-wolfen is ruthless and cruel. Life has little meaning to her. People merely represent pawns that she can use in her schemes and are seen as sheep waiting to be led.

Cassandrix wears a strange magical artifact (necklace) that makes her impervious to psionics, and can magnify one psionic power by five times, once per month. This is how she killed five villagers at once with a potent Evil Eye: Death (it affected five instead of one).



Lieutenant Pylon, Cassandrix's faithful servant: Is a 6th level soldier in the Wolfen infantry. He has recently been appointed second in command under 9th level Regius. Pylon is an ugly, evil cuss who lives for Cassandrix's attention. He has 39 hit points, 3 attacks per melee, is +5 to strike, +7 to parry and dodge (high P.P. plus combat skills), and +3 to damage. He wears magical, lightweight plate armor (A.R. 17, S.D.C. 160), and is armed with a runka pole arm (3D6 damage) and a magic saber (2D6, plus shoots fire ball 3 times per day; 3D6 damage each).

The Wrap Up

After the characters fight with Cassandrix, Regius will have them whisked away in a covered wagon that will drop them off near the border of the Eastern Territory. He will provide a month's worth of food, wilderness supplies such as rope and a tent, a horse for each (even if they didn't have one to begin with) and 500 gold (that's all he had).



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