

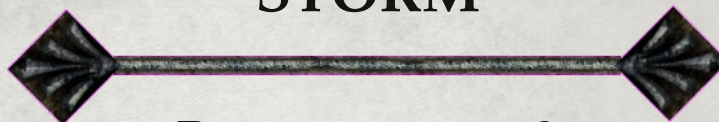


TEETH OF THE STORM

BY RON LUNDEEN



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PROLOGUE

The aristocratic Klaustad family suffers under a lingering curse that regularly brings tragedy and sorrow to descendants of this ancient line. The current Lord Klaustad, Harald, lost his eldest son Holst six years ago. Holst Klaustad, a strong lad in his early 20s, was making his way home on a dark and stormy night when he was attacked and slain by an undead creature. The Klaustads found Holst's body the next morning and laid him to rest in the family cemetery.

Holst did not rest easily in his mausoleum, awaking as a wight on the next stormy night. Since then, whenever a moonless stormy night lashes the Klaustad lands, Holst escapes the cemetery and kills

anyone he chances across. When morning comes, Holst returns to the family cemetery to rest until the next moonless stormy night. Tales of this undead killer have spread throughout the local communities, but in all these years none has been able to stop the powerful Holst Klaustad. The superstitious commoners who labor on the vast Klaustad lands have always bolted their doors and shuttered their windows at night, as dangerous monsters are not uncommon in the area, but they have learned that to venture out on moonless stormy nights is to invite death from a mysterious undead stalker.

Only recently, Lord Harald Klaustad learned of his son's terrible fate and connected the undead marauder to his own long-dead child. Lord Klaustad has descended from his high mountain home in order to put a final stop to his undead son's attacks along the High Road running through his lands. As this adventure begins, Lord Klaustad is traveling among the villages and inns of his lands, seeking clues to find his undead son and lay him to rest for good.

Lord Harald Klaustad is a stern-looking man in his late fifties. He uses few words and cuts a very imposing figure. The superstitious locals consider the entire Klaustad family to be cursed and suspect that Lord Klaustad is some supernatural creature. In truth the old man is a merely human, although he is distant, aristocratic, and carries the burden of a life of grief.

Setting and Scaling This Adventure

This adventure begins along a little-used road through dense forests and craggy mountains. It is best used as an interlude when the heroes are travelling to some distant location.

If this is your first adventure with these heroes, or a standalone adventure, just explain that the heroes are traveling along an old road that crosses isolated lands suspected to harbor monsters or bandits. The heroes have therefore banded together with a few other travelers (the other heroes) for safety.

This adventure is designed for four to six heroes of 1st level.

Running Teeth of the Storm: Horror and Ultra-Horror

This adventure should play out like a horror story. Two very scary (and very powerful) opponents confront the heroes in this adventure. The rain and darkness makes it hard to see or hear anything clearly. Feel free to add any elements to enhance the horror-story aspect of this scenario: monstrous cries from somewhere out in the darkness, heroes getting momentarily lost and separated from each other, and so on. Play with the heroes, but avoid arbitrarily killing them—it's much scarier to face a horror and live than have it kill you outright. If you have it, some creepy background music would be appropriate while you are running this adventure.

Another option to foreground the horror-story nature of this adventure is to aggressively and intentionally pile up the body count. In this "ultra-horror" variation, events are stacked more dramatically in favor of character deaths. You'll find several sidebars in this adventure titled "The Ultra-Horror Option." These sidebars describe how to change events in a way to make a hero's grisly death more likely.

If you intend to run "Teeth of the Storm" this way, you should discuss it with your players ahead of time, so they can also enjoy watching the body count rise, and have plenty of pre-generated 1st-level characters as replacements.

The Klaustad lands are expansive and primarily composed of imposing mountains and dense, trackless forests. There are only a few hamlets in the area and dozens of isolated tenant farmers. The High Road is the only thoroughfare of any

significant size across the Klaustad lands. Even this road is used only occasionally, as the Klaustad lands are generally more dangerous than the River Road many days to the east. Traders use the High Road only when speedy travel is worth the risk. Even then, traders typically travel under heavy guard.

Alayna Vedellic is the youngest daughter of the prosperous Vedellic merchant house. Her father allowed her to take sole command over her first commercial venture, and Alayna risked travel along the dangerous High Road. Her gamble paid off and she passed through the Klaustad lands without incident. Now, Alayna is returning home with her retainers (a half-dozen servants and guards) along the same route. Although Alayna travels by carriage, befitting her status, her retainers travel by foot.

Earlier on this moonless stormy night, Holst roamed the countryside in a murderous rage. As Alayna and her retinue crossed an old stone bridge, Holst attacked the group. All of the House Vedellic retainers were slain and Alayna herself, though still alive, was left for dead on the bridge. Unfortunately, this particular bridge is also home to a powerful troll. This bald, knobby-hided creature has laired under this particular bridge for as long as anyone can remember. Most of the time, this troll sleeps deeply in its old lair. This night, the carnage on the bridge above awoke it.

The troll has a supernatural connection to its bridge. Whenever the bridge troll awakens, it fixates upon an individual on the bridge above. This individual becomes the troll's quarry. Only this quarry can slake the troll's prodigious hunger. The bridge troll awakens slowly, but once

roused it is ravenous and relentless in pursuit of its quarry. The troll always possesses a rudimentary sense of the direction to its quarry, like a powerful scent trail. The troll will catch and eat other prey if convenient, but such morsels cannot satiate it. Only a bite of its quarry's flesh quells the troll's hunger, bringing on a sudden lethargy and compelling the troll to return to its home beneath the bridge to sleep again.

This night, the bridge troll has fixated upon Holst Klaustad as its quarry (although, by the time the troll is fully awake, Holst is long gone from the bridge). The troll senses something very unusual about its quarry this time, because it has never had an undead quarry before. The troll receives confused and conflicting directions, neither quite correct. The troll is drawn to both Holst and to Holst's father, Harald. Neither pull feels quite right to the troll: Holst, because his undead nature distorts his scent, and Harald, because Harald's scent is not quite the same as his son's. The confused and hungry troll thus roams the lands near its bridge, unsure where to begin its hunt.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins early on a dark and stormy night. The heroes discover Alayna Vedellic's entourage slain on the bridge along the High Road. When the heroes discover that Alayna is alive among the bodies, the skeletons of the slain retainers burst from their bodies and attack.

Once the heroes fight off the skeletons, Alayna recommends an inn off the road about an hour back the way the heroes have come. The dilapidated inn—the Gravedigger's Rest—is run by an elderly woman named Yrena. A few local tenant

farmers, caught away from home by the thunderstorm, linger in the Gravedigger's Rest when the party arrives.

While the heroes enjoy a hot meal and the inn's hearth, Lord Harald Klaustad arrives at the Gravedigger's Rest. His appearance and manners might lead the heroes to mistakenly assume that Lord Klaustad is a vampire. Lord Klaustad asks some pointed questions about Alayna's attackers, as he seeks information about his son's whereabouts.

The heroes' interaction with Lord Klaustad is interrupted by the horrible cries of an animal being killed just outside the inn. When the heroes investigate, they spot a warty, blue-skinned troll prowling around the Gravedigger's Rest in the rain. Although the troll is a fearsome foe, it is cautious. Any concerted attack against the troll causes it to retreat for a time.

Back inside the inn, the farmers and Yrena provide additional information about the troll. Impressed by the heroes' bravery, Lord Klaustad admits that he is seeking his undead son. Unsure that he is up to the task, Lord Klaustad asks the heroes to find Holst, defeat him, and sanctify Holst's body in the Klaustad family cemetery. If the heroes can accomplish the sanctification ritual before sunrise, Holst's spirit will be put to rest forever. Yrena provides a charm for the heroes to protect them in their fight against Holst.

The heroes must distract the troll long enough for them to race away from the inn and start their search back at the bridge. A harrowing chase ensues, with the heroes attempting to stay ahead of the fearsome troll. At the bridge, the heroes encounter Holst Klaustad, who has set a snare to catch more victims. Once the heroes defeat

Storm Rules

The heavy rain and dark night make detection difficult. Whenever the heroes are outdoors in this adventure, they suffer a -2 penalty to Perception checks. Uncovered light sources (like torches) are extinguished automatically. Covered light sources dance and flicker but are not extinguished. Visibility is only good to about 40 feet, even for heroes with low-light vision or darkvision. After that range, only vague shapes can be seen in the gloom. All creatures outside this visibility range are undetected.

The storm is also accompanied by frequent lightning. The lightning occasionally illuminates the countryside to standard visibility distances of two hundred feet or more. Lightning bolts do not strike any of the heroes or NPCs in this adventure directly (unless you have an appropriately dramatic reason, in which case a lightning bolt inflicts 8d8 electricity damage).

Holst, the troll returns, but after a single bite of Holst's body it throws down the corpse and retreats to its lair under the bridge.

The heroes take Holst's body to the Klaustad family cemetery. Once in the cemetery grounds, the heroes are accosted by giant maggots come to feed on the dead but drawn to the surface by the rain. The heroes also encounter the erratic groundskeeper who maintains the cemetery. At the entrance to Holst's mausoleum, the heroes face another of Holst's deadly traps.

Once the heroes return Holst's body to his sarcophagus, the vile spirit animating him as a monster oozes free from the corpse and makes a final attempt to kill

the heroes. They must complete the ritual to sanctify Holst's corpse while fending off the attacks of the spirit. Once the ritual is finally complete, Holst Klaustad is forever laid to rest.

INTRODUCTION

To begin this adventure, read or paraphrase the following:

None would call the High Road safe, as it cuts through the dangerous lands of the mysterious Klaustad noble family. Civilization along the High Road is clustered in small hamlets and tenant farms, separated by high mountains and trackless forests. Travelers along the High Road hurry to their destinations, coming together for protection, and are constantly alert for danger. Your group has been traversing the High Road for two days.

Yesterday brought a steady drizzle, and the rain increased earlier this afternoon to a downpour. As evening descends, even the occasional breaks in the clouds bring no light or comfort, as the oncoming night is moonless and dark.

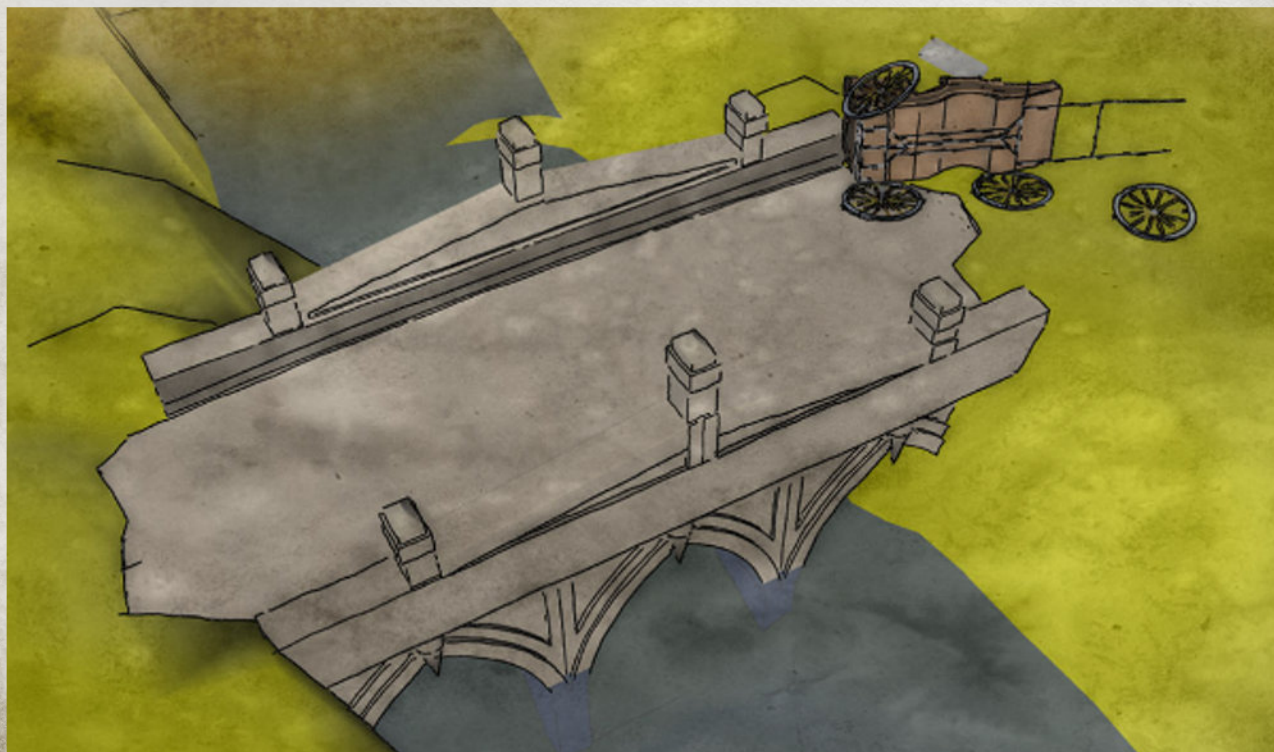
ACT 1: INCIDENT ON THE BRIDGE

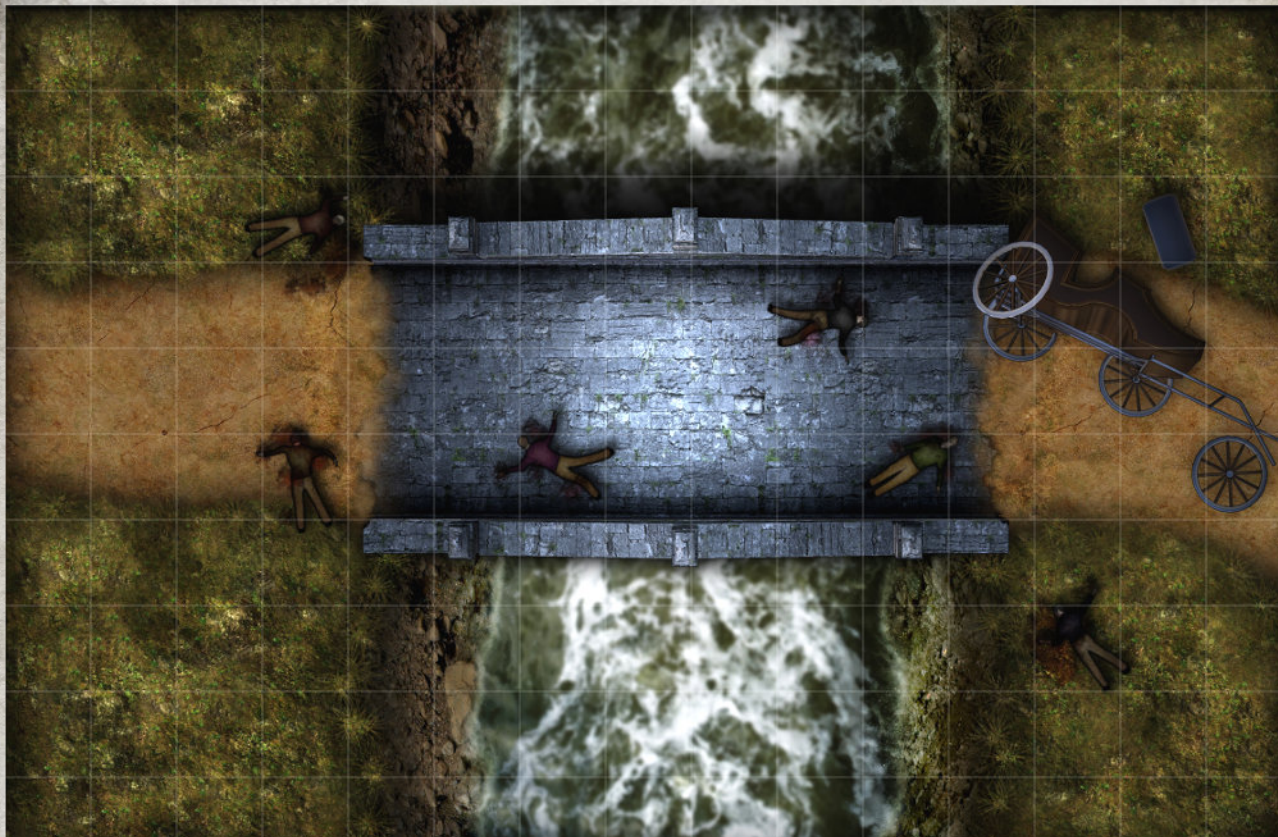
This Act begins as the heroes come upon a huge stone bridge along the High Road. Alayna Vedellic's group recently approached the bridge from the other side but met with a terrible fate at the hands of Holst Klaustad. The slain guards reanimate as skeletons while the heroes are investigating the carnage here. Read the following aloud:

A tremendous clap of thunder explodes across the evening sky. The lightning flash splits the evening's gloom and reveals an ancient stone bridge ahead. The bridge crosses a rushing stream swollen with the recent rains. Upon the bridge lie numerous

forms. As you peer through the falling rain, you see broken planks of wood, a smashed carriage, and the bodies of a half-dozen soldiers or guards. They litter the bridge and the area around it like carelessly discarded toys.

The heroes must move closer to obtain further information here. The carriage is tilted to one side and badly smashed. Its horses are nowhere to be seen. Six corpses lie sprawled on the wet bridge, each savaged as though by an animal. The bodies look like soldiers and had swords and shields at hand when they fell. Another body—that of a finely-dressed





young woman—lies under the carriage. She is breathing shallowly.

INVESTIGATING THE GUARDS

Heroes investigating the bodies of the guards may discover several clues. If the heroes touch or move the bodies, their skeletons rip free as described in *The Dead Rise*, below.

Medicine: A hero who succeeds at a DC 10 Medicine check learns that these guards were all quickly disemboweled by one or more creatures with sharp claws, and that the attack happened no more than ten or fifteen minutes ago. On a critical success, the hero realizes that there was a single attacker was the size of a man, though the attacker must have been very strong.

Religion: A hero who succeeds at a DC 10 Religion check identifies rapid necrosis

of the wounds, indicating that this attack came from an undead creature. On a critical success, the hero realizes that the attacks drained the guards' life force.

Society: A hero who succeeds at a DC 10 Society check realizes that these men were all guards of the prosperous Vedellic merchant house.

Tracks: Survival checks to locate the attacker's tracks prove fruitless, as the fierce rain has washed them away.

Treasure: Each of the six guards is equipped with a chain shirt, a steel shield, a longsword, and a heavy crossbow with 10 bolts.

INVESTIGATING THE CARRIAGE

Heroes investigating the carriage can determine that the carriage went out of control and crashed into the stone bridge, smashing the carriage and snapping the

horses' harnesses (the horses are now long gone). The carriage was driven by two of the guards, who are now among the corpses. The carriage's only occupant was the woman who now lies beneath it. A successful DC 10 Society check identifies the insignia on the smashed carriage as belonging to the prosperous Vedellic merchant house.

INVESTIGATING ALAYNA VEDELIC

Heroes investigating the woman beneath the carriage discover that she is still alive, but badly wounded and concussed from the crash. Her injuries come from the accident, not from the same creature that clawed at the guards. She is conscious but incoherent. Worse, she is pinned beneath the carriage, and a DC 18 Athletics check is required to lift the carriage and free her. The heroes can aid one another on this check as needed.

If the heroes aid Alayna, see *The Dead Rise*, below.

THE DEAD RISE (SEVERE 1)

Alayna's fate soon becomes the least of the heroes' concerns. Once the heroes try to help Alayna or disturb the bodies of her guards, read aloud:

Three of the wet corpses on the bridge shudder for a moment, then split apart like overripe fruit. The skeletons of the dead men claw their way out and rise to a crouch. A cold orange light gleams in their eyes, and their jaws clench and unclench as though anticipating a meal.



All six of Alayna's guards are doomed to rise as spawn from Holst Klaustad's Skeleton Spawn ability, but the skeletons are spawned in two waves. Initially, skeletons rise from three of the guard corpses. The skeletons tear free of the flesh fully, and leave the guards' flesh and equipment lying on the ground. Randomly choose the first three corpses to spawn, but be sure to include any corpse currently being disturbed by a hero. Once two of these first three skeletons are destroyed, three more skeletons burst from the remaining guard corpses.

The skeletons are straightforward combatants. Each skeleton strikes out at the closest hero with its claws and fights until destroyed.

Skeleton Guards (6)**Creature –1***NE Medium Mindless Skeleton Undead***Perception** +2; darkvision**Skills** Acrobatics +6, Athletics +3**Str** +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +0, **Int** –5, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0**AC** 16; **Fort** +2, **Ref** +8, **Will** +2**HP** 4, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, mental, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5, piercing 5, slashing 5**Speed** 25 feet**Melee** ♦ claw +6 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 1d4+2 slashing**AFTERMATH**

Once the heroes have defeated the skeletons, Alayna thanks her rescuers and offers a suggestion for riding out the stormy night.

"I know of a nearby place that's safe and dry. We should be gone from here. About half an hour down the road, back the way I came, is a signpost for a local inn. Ten minutes down a path, little more than a meandering wagon track, is an inn. I stayed there the last time I traveled the High Road, and the woman that runs it is simple but honest."

As the heroes prepare to leave, they hear an enormous bellow echoing from under the bridge, and a large form squelching in the mud. This is, of course, the troll under the bridge. The troll is just awakening now, and it takes several minutes to rouse itself fully. The troll does not appear or attack the heroes as long as they leave the area fairly quickly.

Once the heroes leave this area, move on to Act 2.

ACT 2: THE GRAVEDIGGER'S REST

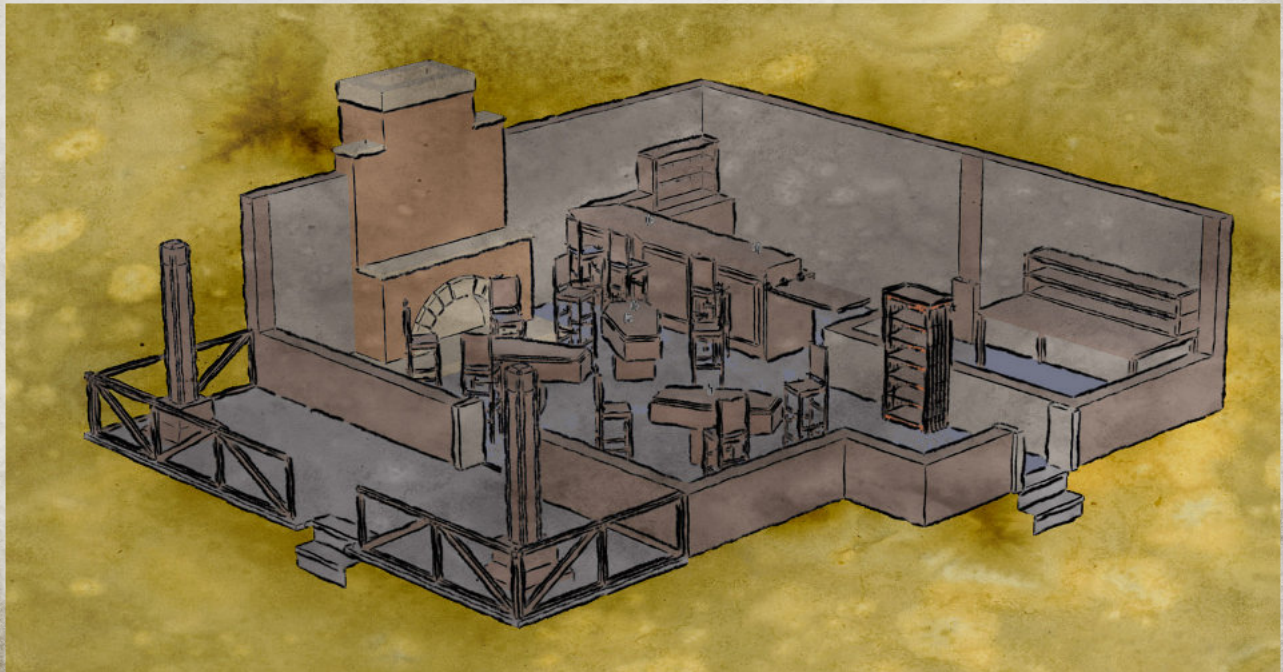
Alayna leads the heroes further up the High Road to the signpost indicating the path to an inn called the Gravedigger's Rest. If the heroes were not able to help Alayna, they come across the signpost anyway as they continue along the road. After ten minutes of travel along a winding, rutted wagon track up and down several low hills, the party comes across the inn.

The Gravedigger's Rest was once a funeral home operated by an undertaker and his wife, Yrena. Several decades ago, when her husband died, Yrena converted the building into a roadside inn and tavern. Her husband had left behind

several finely made but as yet unfilled coffins, which Yrena converted into tables for the common room. Yrena has been operating the Gravedigger's Rest for many years and is now quite elderly.

When the heroes arrive at the Gravedigger's Rest, read aloud:

In the growing darkness and rain, a blocky structure looms into view. It looks to be a tavern or common house, with lights shining warmly from its windows. The building is sagging and old, with a wide, low porch. A painted sign hangs above the entrance. The sign depicts a man sitting on the edge of a small square pit,



his face resting in his hands and a shovel across his lap. Under the picture, the sign reads, "Gravedigger's Rest."

Tied to a hitching post in front of the building is a surly-looking donkey, stoically ignoring the pounding rain.

There is little else to see from outside the building, other than a weather-beaten outhouse behind the building. There is plenty of space at the hitching post for the heroes to tie up their own animals, if they have any. When the heroes venture into the Gravedigger's Rest, read aloud:

Warmth and light wash over you inside the building. At the left side of the room is a cheery fireplace and at the back of the room is a long bar. An old human woman wrapped in a shawl looks up from a chair behind the bar as you enter, and traces some small sigil in the air with a gnarled finger.

Four men, farmers by the look of them, turn from their drinks as you enter. They seem suspicious, and you get the sense that they already don't like you.

There are three strangely-shaped tables in this room, each about three feet wide and six feet long. You realize that these "tables" are overturned coffins, raised off the ground on stout wooden legs.

The old woman is Yrena, the owner and operator of the Gravedigger's Rest. A hero who succeeds at a DC 12 Arcana check recognizes Yrena's hand gesture as a folk-magic ward against evil.



Yrena is a tough old woman with enough magical lore to be well-respected throughout this region. Yrena has a brusque and distrustful demeanor, but she's actually quite grandmotherly to anyone she gets to know.

These farmers are gruff, superstitious, and suspicious of strangers. The farmers claim to be trapped here because of the heavy rains, but in truth they are reluctant to venture out in the stormy darkness and use the rains an excuse to while away their time here, drinking. They intend to leave for their homes in the morning. Yrena is kindly letting them stay and isn't charging them for their night's lodging, although she's profiting well from their night of drinking.



LORD KLAUSTAD ARRIVES

After the heroes have settled in, Yrena bustles upstairs to get rooms ready. After she departs, Lord Harald Klaustad arrives. As described in the Prologue, Lord Klaustad knows that his son is out on this night and is gathering information about his son's whereabouts. When Lord Klaustad arrives, read aloud:

Thunder crashes outside and a flash of lightning illuminates the yard around the Gravedigger's Rest. The front doors swing wide, opening on their own. Framed in the doorway is a lean, pale, elderly man standing on the porch. His elegant long hair hangs down over his well-cut cloak, and the rest of his clothes are well tailored, though a little out-of-date.

If the heroes ask Yrena for a room, drinks, or anything of that kind, Yrena insists that they settle in and have some soup first to chase away the cold and the wet. The soup is a thick garlic stew. If any of the heroes act particularly averse to the garlic soup, the farmers eye them even more suspiciously and whisper among themselves. Yrena acts particularly caring towards Alayna, fetching a blanket for her and ladling out extra garlic stew. Alayna plainly appreciates the old woman's attentions to her well-being.

If the heroes mention any of their troubles this night, Yrena makes the same folk-magic gesture again and tells them not to speak freely of such things. If the farmers can overhear, they mutter darkly.

Despite the downpour outside, the man on the porch is completely dry. He waits for a moment, surveying the interior of the inn, but does not step inside. Yrena bustles down the stairs and sees that the door is open. "Come in, come in," she barks. With this invitation, the man steps across the threshold and strides over to your table. The farmers cower, and you hear them whisper "Klaustad" to each other. The man ignores them. He pulls a handkerchief from a pocket and holds it over his nose as he scents the stew on your table.

Alayna recognizes the man. "Lord Klaustad, what a surprise. My friends, this is Lord Harald Klaustad. These lands are all his, but he is widely regarded as a...reclusive...nobleman."

Harald Klaustad...Vampire?

Lord Klaustad's dramatic introduction is intended to make the heroes suspect that he is a vampire, when in fact he is nothing more than an excessively formal and reclusive aristocrat with some minor skill in arcane magic. Feel free to continue this misdirection for as long as you and your heroes enjoy an encounter with a stereotypical "vampire lord" (for example, you might have Lord Klaustad speak in a Transylvanian accent).

You should be sure that any "evidence" that Lord Klaustad is a vampire has some purely ordinary explanation. Each of the items in the read-aloud text can be explained away if the heroes press Lord Klaustad: he is dry thanks to a *prestidigitation* cantrip he cast just outside the inn; he prefers to be invited into any residence because he knows that many people find his family disturbing and unpopular; he genuinely dislikes the smell of garlic; and so on.

Of course, the heroes shouldn't come to blows with Lord Klaustad, as he is ultimately their patron in this adventure and he desperately needs their help. If you need Lord Klaustad's statistics for any reason, those of the dhampir wizard in the *Pathfinder Second Edition Bestiary* will do fine. In fact, you let the players see you with your book open to that page...

Lord Klaustad is aristocratic and polite, but he gets quickly to the point of his visit. He asks the heroes if they have noticed anything unusual this night. If the heroes are not forthcoming about the skeleton attack on the bridge, Alayna brings it up. Lord Klaustad nods knowingly when he

hears the details, but before he can provide any substantial information on why he has come out on this rainy night, move immediately to Act 3.

ACT 3: THE BRIDGE TROLL

Before Lord Klaustad can explain about his search for his undead son, the bridge troll arrives outside the Gravedigger's Rest. Read the following aloud:

Another bolt of lightning illuminates the night outside the inn, throwing into sharp relief a huge shadow passing one of the windows. An inhuman shriek from outdoors is suddenly cut off, and then followed by a peal of thunder.

If the heroes left mounts or other animals outside, the troll has killed one of them. If the heroes have no animals, then the troll has killed the farmer's donkey hitched outside. In any case, a successful DC 10 Nature or Survival check identifies the inhuman shriek as the panicked scream of a murdered animal.

If the heroes peer outside through the windows or an open door, describe the massive shadowy shape lurking near the porch. A successful DC 15 Perception check identifies the creature as a hunched giant, but the heroes can't get any more details without stepping outside.

The Ultra-Horror Option

If you are running this adventure in the "ultra-horror" style, the bridge troll aggressively attacks any heroes outside the Gravedigger's Rest. The troll still won't enter the Gravedigger's Rest, however, so the inn remains a place of safety from this monster.

AGAINST THE TROLL (EXTREME 1)

When the heroes leave the Gravedigger's Rest to investigate, another flash of lightning reveals the bridge troll. Read the following aloud:

Standing in the rain is a monstrous giant with warty, blue-black skin. The creature is nearly as tall as the inn, and as wide as a wagon. It stands on two legs, its clawed hands gripping the remains of the recently-slaughtered animal. It shovels fistfuls of raw meat into its toothy maw, past fangs as long as swords. The creature's nostrils flare as it scents you, and it drops its gruesome meal.

Heroes with sufficient foolishness or bravado may elect to attack the troll instead. This tactic is not necessarily certain death, because the bridge troll is exceedingly wary and somewhat confused. The troll has unknowingly followed the scent of Lord Harald Klaustad instead of that of Holst Klaustad. The troll thinks its prey might be somewhere within the inn, but it doesn't want to enter the inn—or even the inn's front porch—for fear of a trap (some clever villagers collapsed a mill on top of the troll several decades ago and it still remembers the pain).

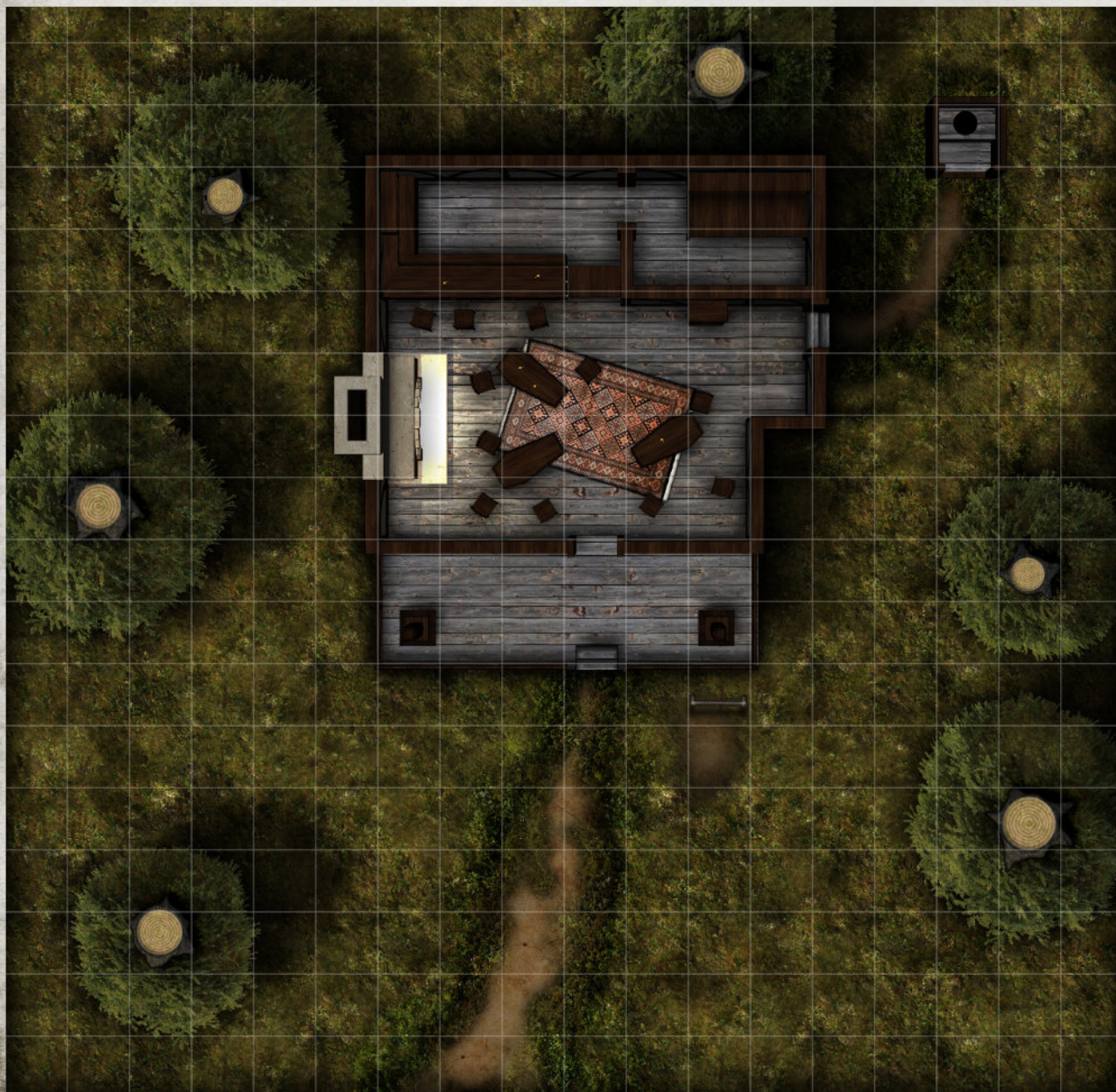
If the heroes attack the troll, it uses its Intimidation skill to Demoralize them for its first action each turn. It doesn't enter melee with anyone on the porch, simply

pacing around it and bellowing. If the troll is reduced to fewer than 60 Hit Points, or if the heroes attack it with ranged weapons from a position where the troll can't easily reach them (such as from the safety of the porch, or from inside the Gravedigger's Rest), the troll retreats into the rain and darkness until it can't be seen. It bellows occasionally from somewhere in the darkness, so the heroes know it's still there. Eventually, the heroes must either

Playing it Safe

The heroes might realize that the safest course is to just stay inside the Gravedigger's Rest. In this case, the troll finishes its meal, stalks around the inn for a few minutes, then retreats out of sight for the time being. Go to Act 4.

drive away the troll or retreat inside. When they do, go to Act 4.



Healing Up

After everything the heroes have been through so far, they may be quite injured. Unfortunately for the heroes, they still have much danger to face this night. If the heroes are low on Hit Points and out of healing, emphasize that the NPCs at the Gravedigger's Rest can provide aid. Alayna has discovered three minor elixirs of life among her possessions, and Lord Klaustad has three *minor healing potions* he shares only once the heroes agree to help him later in this adventure. Yrena is an expert in Medicine with a Medicine skill of +13.

If you are running this adventure in the "ultra-horror" style, these NPCs don't have any equipment for the heroes and Yrena only uses her own ancient healer's tools, which function only twice more before falling apart. After this, the heroes are on their own for healing.

The Bridge Troll

Creature 5

CE Large Giant Troll

Perception +11; darkvision, scent (imprecise)
30 feet

Languages Jotun

Skills Athletics +12, Intimidation +12

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +6, **Int** -2, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -2

AC 20; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

HP 115, regeneration 20 (deactivated by acid or fire); **Weaknesses** fire 10

Speed 30 feet

Melee ◇ jaws +14 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d10+5 piercing

Melee ◇ claw +14 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d8+5 slashing

Rend ◇ claw

Intruder Hunger The bridge troll can scent the quarry who awoke it at any distance. Its current scent is confused by Holst's undead nature.

ACT 4: LORD KLAUSTAD'S PLEA

Everyone in the Gravedigger's Rest is scared and curious about the beast outside. When the heroes describe the monster, one of the farmers sheds some light on what's going on.

"Ah, blue-black skin with warts and bumps? Sounds like the Bridge Troll ta me. That monster lairs under that old bridge on the High Road. It sleeps most all th' time, they say, but now and again it comes out ta feed. They say it chooses one victim when it wakes—someone on its bridge—and it'll hunt that poor soul until it catches him and eats him up. Or her, I suppose—there's no rhyme or reason in the Bridge Troll's choosin' a victim.

"They also say that the Bridge Troll is cunnin', but that it fears places where men gather in large groups, or where men travel. It'll attack anyone on its own bridge, of course, but it won't cross the High Road except at its own bridge, an' it avoids large buildin's. Why it should get so close to th' Gravedigger's Rest, I hain't a clue. Somethin' here must hold a powerful interest for it tonight."

These local legends are true, but the heroes have no way of knowing that the bridge troll's current quarry is Holst Klaustad. The heroes may think the troll is chasing Alayna or one of them. Simple experimentation—such as to see which of inn's occupants agitates the troll the most when presented at a window or the porch—reveals that the troll is actually

pursing Lord Harald Klaustad. This seems inconsistent with the local legend, as Lord Klaustad insists he hasn't been on the High Road bridge in weeks.

If asked about the creature that attacked her entourage, Alayna insists that the killer was man-sized, not troll-sized.

Whether or not the heroes determine the purpose of the troll's presence, Lord Klaustad decides to trust the heroes with a critical task. Read the following:

Lord Klaustad drums his fingers nervously on the coffin table, and begins speaking. "You may ask, with good reason, why the Lord of House Klaustad would be out on such a terrible night. I will now tell you. Mistress Alayna, it wasn't that beast that attacked your men. It was my son.

"My son, Holst Klaustad, was killed six years ago on a stormy night like this one by a vile undead creature. We buried him without realizing his terrible future. On stormy nights, Holst claws his way free of his mausoleum in our family cemetery and kills whomever he can find. By morning, his rage abates and he returns to his mausoleum. I only recently heard about this undead monster prowling my lands, and mere weeks ago I realized that it was my own son. Such shame and horror must not stand.

That day, three weeks ago, I went to my family cemetery and opened my son's mausoleum. There lay his body, just as we had left it six years ago. I...beheaded my

son, and anointed the body in holy water, and considered my task done. But this night, rumors again fly about a murderous stalker. My horror is not yet over.

"They say that those Holst kills rise again. Their bones tear their way free of their skin and they wander as skeletons until destroyed. This is how I know that Holst was responsible for the attack on the bridge.

"I do not know if I can bring myself to attack my own son, even in his undead state. I need your help to put my son to rest this night. Will you accept this task?"

Lord Klaustad outlines his plan to the heroes. It is clear that waiting until Holst is at rest in his mausoleum is not an option (as Lord Klaustad's anointing did not work). Holst must be found and destroyed this night. Once the heroes have defeated Holst, they must take his body back to his mausoleum and permanently sanctify it. Lord Klaustad has researched this sanctification ritual in detail, and it requires four steps: first, the corpse must be returned to its resting place. Second, the corpse must be beheaded with a silver axe. Third, the headless corpse must be sprinkled with *holy water*. Finally, to make the sanctification permanent, the corpse must be adorned with a family symbol.

Lord Klaustad has the three necessary items: a low-grade silver hatchet, three vials of *holy water* (although only a few droplets needed for the ritual), and an amulet bearing the symbol of House Klaustad: a silver boar rampant. This is the *Erymanthian Sigil*, which the heroes might determine provides them with unexpected aid in Act 7 and Act 8. Lord Klaustad gives these to the heroes and provides directions to his family's cemetery, two hours away on the other side of the High Road.

Lord Klaustad asks the heroes to return to the High Road bridge and begin their search for Holst there. Holst has been known to circle back to his murder sites in the past and may have left fresh tracks in the mud around the bridge. At the very least, he might have left some clues for the heroes to find.

If the heroes ask for a reward, Lord Klaustad offers the group 20 gp once the night's task is done, but he can be talked up to 20 gp per hero if pressed further.

YRENA'S GIFT

As you prepare to leave, the old innkeeper raises a bony hand to stop you. "Ah, ye'll not be travelin' after the walkin' dead without all the protection old Yrena can give ye. It's blood kin ye're after, and blood kin will protect ye. You, sir," she bows to Lord Klaustad, "I need a few hairs from yer head. One hair for each of these brave heroes steppin' into the teeth of the storm."

Lord Klaustad does as Yrena requests, although it's clear from his expression that he thinks this hedge-wizardry is frivolous. Yrena ties a hair in a knot around each hero's wrist while muttering garbled words. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Arcana check realizes that Yrena is crafting some sort of protective charm, but cannot ascertain further details (these hair-charms protect against Holst's Drain Life attack, as described in Act 6). Yrena doesn't give a hair to heroes who refuse.

DEALING WITH THE TROLL

Before the heroes can return to the High Road bridge, they likely still need to deal with the troll lurking outside the Gravedigger's Rest. Evading the troll is described in Act 5.

ACT 5: RACING THE TROLL

The bridge troll prowls around the Gravedigger's Rest, waiting for anyone, but particularly Lord Klaustad, to leave the inn. For the heroes to pursue their task for Lord Klaustad, they must first evade the troll and reach the High Road, where legend holds—correctly—that the troll dares not follow.

The heroes are not powerful enough to fight the bridge troll directly, as they may have already ascertained, so they must find a way to trick the troll. No trick dissuades the troll for long, and the heroes soon have the troll on their heels as they run for the High Road.

RUNNING THE CHASE (MODERATE 1)

The rutted wagon track the heroes took to the Gravedigger's Rest is far too exposed to be safe; the troll simply catches any hero it can run after in a straight line. Therefore, the heroes must strike out through the woods to evade the troll. This Act uses the following rules to simulate the chase in an abstract way.

The participants all work to acquire Chase Points; the bridge troll starts with 0 Chase Points, while the heroes each start with 1, 2, or 3 Chase Points, as explained in the sidebar. The heroes thereafter track their Chase Points separately.

Roll initiative using Athletics, or some other relevant skill such as Stealth.

On the troll's turn, if it has the same number of Chase Points as a hero, it makes a single claw attack against that hero (or

Establishing Starting Points

There are many ways the heroes might try to trick the bridge troll for a greater lead in the ensuing chase. Determine whether the heroes start with one, two, or three Chase Points with the following guidelines:

- If the heroes have no plan whatsoever other than sprinting away from the troll, they start with only 1 Chase Point.
- If the heroes have some plan to momentarily trick the troll (such as leave food at one door to the inn while they exit another end, or trying to sneak away from the troll), then ask for an appropriate skill check from one hero (who can be Aided by the other heroes). Deception, Stealth, or applicable Lore skills are reasonable, but creative players might use other skills instead. If the heroes do not succeed at a DC 10 on this check, they have only 1 Chase Point. If the check result is at least 10, they have 2 Chase Points. If the result is 20 or higher, they have 3 Chase Points.
- If the heroes have discovered that the troll is after Lord Klaustad, they might think to use him as bait. Lord Klaustad is willing to help. Unless the heroes have another plan, Lord Klaustad intends to lure the troll away from the heroes and circle back to the safety of the Gravedigger's Rest. But any plan exploiting the troll's fixation on Lord Klaustad starts the heroes with 3 Chase Points.

against its choice of heroes, if it has the same number of Chase Points as multiple heroes). If the troll has fewer Chase Points than any hero, it makes a DC 15 Athletics check. If it succeeds, it gains a Chase Point. If it critically succeeds, it also attempts an Intimidation check to Demoralize a hero. If it critically fails it loses 1 Chase Point.

On a hero's turn, that hero must attempt a DC 15 skill check. On a success, the hero gains a Chase Point. The hero gains 2 Chase Points on a critical success, and on a critical failure the hero stumbles and has a -2 circumstance penalty on the next check to gain a Chase Point.

A hero can always use Acrobatics or Athletics for this skill check. But since the terrain is varied between the Gravedigger's Rest and the road, a hero also rolls 1d10 to determine another skill check that hero has an option to use (sometimes, with a bonus) instead of Acrobatics or Athletics. The rolled option is available only for that hero, and only for that round; even if the heroes are sticking together, each must seize their own opportunities to elude the troll. Use of a relevant spell or ability instead of a skill check might also gain Chase Points, at the GM's discretion.

The Ultra-Horror Option

Monsters in horror movies seem to be always just behind the heroes, no matter how fast the heroes run or how slowly the monster shambles. If you are running this adventure in the "ultra-horror" style, when the bridge troll succeeds or critically succeeds on its Athletics check, it automatically gains the same number of Chase Points as the hero with the fewest number of Chase Points.

D10 Roll Skill

- 1: Crafting.** The hero can rig a quick tripwire to try to delay the troll. A hero with the Quick Crafter or Snare Crafting feat has a +4 circumstance bonus on this Crafting check.
- 2: Deception.** The hero creates a distraction to gain a lead. A hero who has the same number of Chase Points as another hero has a +4 circumstance bonus on this Deception check.
- 3: Intimidation.** The hero can scare a flock of birds sheltering under an overhanging branch to provide a distraction. A hero with the Intimidating Glare feat has a +4 circumstance bonus on this Intimidation check.
- 4: Nature.** The hero seeks out a narrow gap in a stand of trees where the hero will fit but the troll won't. A Small hero has a +4 circumstance bonus on this Nature check.
- 5 or 6: Perception.** The hero can see several options ahead! A hero that uses Perception this round to earn at least 1 Chase Point can roll twice on this table in the next round and choose either result.
- 7: Stealth.** The hero uses a loud peal of thunder to sneak away. A hero who isn't wearing armor with a check penalty has a +4 circumstance bonus on this Stealth check.
- 8: Survival.** The hero spots a darkened animal trail. Low-light vision or darkvision grants a +4 circumstance bonus on this Survival check.
- 9: Thievery.** The hero quickly palms a few jagged rocks or sharp branches that can be used as impromptu caltrops to slow the troll. A hero who has (and uses) actual caltrops has a +4 circumstance bonus on this Thievery check.
- 10: Opportunity to Strike.** Instead of a skill check, the hero can make a Strike against the troll (in melee only if the troll has the same number of Chase Points as the hero;

otherwise, any ranged Strike is permitted in the chaos of the chase). A hero that hits the troll gains 2 Chase Points. On a critical hit, the hero gains 2 Chase Points and the troll loses 1 Chase Point.

GETTING AWAY

A hero who accumulates 8 Chase Points has reached the High Road where the troll dares not follow and is safe. Once all of the heroes have reached the High Road, the troll's roars fade into the distance. Move on to Act 6.

XP Award: When the heroes make it to the High Road, award them 80 XP.

ACT 6: WIGHT NIGHT

Use this Act once the heroes return to the bridge to seek clues about Holst Klaustad's location. In fact, Holst is surveying the damage done to his skeletal minions when the heroes arrive. Unfortunately for the heroes, Holst is a shrewd adversary. He has already determined that someone came by and destroyed the skeletons, so he has set a trap in the event that the meddlers return during his more careful investigation of the scene.

When the heroes return to the bridge, read the following:

The heavy rain has turned the road into a swarm of rivulets, but the old stone bridge remains strewn with shattered bones, burst corpses, and broken pieces of Alayna's carriage.

A bolt of lightning illuminates the scene like a flash of daylight. Amid the carnage at the far end of the bridge stands a man. He wears torn finery and has long, straight hair. This young man was probably once handsome, but his features are feral and the skin around his mouth is ragged. He resembles Lord Harald Klaustad, although he is shorter and veins on his face pulse with dark blood. His

black eyes now burn with a hateful orange light. He advances slowly towards you, bare feet slapping in the puddles of rain and blood on the bridge. He flexes fingers ending in long, twisted claws.

Holst Klaustad rushes toward the heroes, but he doesn't leave the bridge, as he hopes to lure a hero into a trap he placed across the end of the bridge to slow them down.

Grisly Trap **Hazard 2**

Mechanical Trap

Stealth DC 22

Description A twisted loop of sinew and tendons lashes around a creature walks onto the bridge.

Disable Survival (trained) or Thievery (expert) DC 18 to slip the sinew loop

AC 18; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +5

Sinew Noose (reaction); **Trigger** A creature steps into one of the first three squares across the bridge. **Effect** The trap makes a noose Strike against the triggering creature.

Melee noose +13 (deadly d10), **Damage** 3d6 bludgeoning and the target is grabbed and pulled over the edge of the bridge and hangs there (Escape DC 22). The target takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage at the end of each of its turns as long as it's caught in the noose.

HOLST ATTACKS (MODERATE 1)

Holst lunges at the heroes once his snare is triggered, intending to slaughter them all. Holst does not speak or negotiate, and he fights until destroyed.

The Ultra-Horror Option

If you are running this adventure in the "ultra-horror" style, Yrena's hair-charm is mere superstitious folk magic; it doesn't provide any protection against Holst's Drain Life ability at all.

Holst Klaustad **Creature 3**

Unique LE Medium Undead Wight

Perception +10; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Athletics +11, Intimidation +9,
Stealth +6

Str +4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +4, **Int** +0, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +2

Items a blood-stained *mesmerizing opal* taken from a previous victim. jewelry worth 22 gp

AC 18; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +10

HP 50, negative healing;
Immunities death effects,
disease, paralyze, poison,
unconscious

Final Spite (reaction) **Trigger** The wight is reduced to 0 Hit Points.

Effect The wight makes a Strike before being destroyed. It doesn't gain any temporary HP from Drain Life on this Strike.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ claw +12, **Damage** 1d6+4
slashing plus drain life

Charm Defense Any creature wearing a hair-charm provided by Yrena is immune to Horst's Drain Life ability.

Drain Life (divine, necromancy) When the wight damages a living creature with its claw Strike, the wight gains 3 temporary Hit Points and the creature must succeed at a DC 17 Fortitude save or become drained 1. Further damage dealt by the wight increases the amount of drain by 1 on a failed save to a maximum of drained 4.

Skeleton Spawn (divine, necromancy) A living humanoid slain by a Horst's claw Strike rises as a skeleton after 3d10 minutes, ripping free from the body. This skeleton isn't under Horst's control, but it doesn't attack him.



THE TROLL'S LAST MEAL

As soon as the heroes defeat Holst, the bridge troll finally catches its quarry. Read the following:

Again, you hear the bellow of the bridge troll in the rainy night. The creature lumbers into view, its nostrils flaring and its eyes fixed upon the limp form of Holst Klaustad.

The heroes can attack, retreat, or otherwise interact with the troll as they see fit. They

might try to prevent the troll from getting at the body—for fear that the troll will eat it—but the heroes cannot dissuade the troll now that it has its quarry in sight. The troll ignores the heroes entirely, and moves to the body of Holst Klaustad, scooping it up like a doll to take a bite. When the troll bites Holst's body, read:

The troll turns the body around, looking curiously at it, before lifting it to its mouth and taking a large bite out of the body's left leg. A look of unpleasant surprise crosses the troll's features. It flings the body to the ground and spits out the bitten piece. Shaking its warty head, the troll lumbers down into the squelching mud, and retreats beneath the bridge, spitting all the way.

The troll has returned to its lair to slumber for months. If the heroes seek out the troll, the troll has plastered over the entrance to its lair with river mud; excavating it will take more time than the heroes can spare. The troll's fate is hinted at in the Epilogue at the end of this adventure.

The heroes can recover Holst's body, with or without the bitten piece, and take it to the Klaustad family cemetery. The heroes can travel directly to the cemetery, or can return to the Gravedigger's Rest to report their victory to Lord Klaustad.

When the heroes strike out for the Klaustad family cemetery, go to Act 7.

ACT 7: IN THE GRAVEYARD

Defeating Holst is only the first of the heroes' tasks from Lord Klaustad. With Holst's corpse in their possession, the heroes must travel to the Klaustad family cemetery in order to put Holst to rest for good. The only way the curse can be lifted is to return the body on this very night, so the heroes should not tarry.

The heroes have good directions from the Klaustad family cemetery from Lord Harald Klaustad. Even in the pouring rain, the trip to the cemetery only takes two hours down overgrown, little-used paths. When the heroes arrive, read:

The muddy path suddenly deposits you on the edge of a large, overgrown cemetery. An iron fence bars access to the field of worn, irregularly placed headstones. The fence is sturdy wrought iron topped with sharp spikes angled inward. A few larger mausoleums loom above the scattered headstones. A dilapidated gate hangs

open, allowing easy access. To your left, a large obelisk has toppled outward onto the fence, providing another means to enter the graveyard.

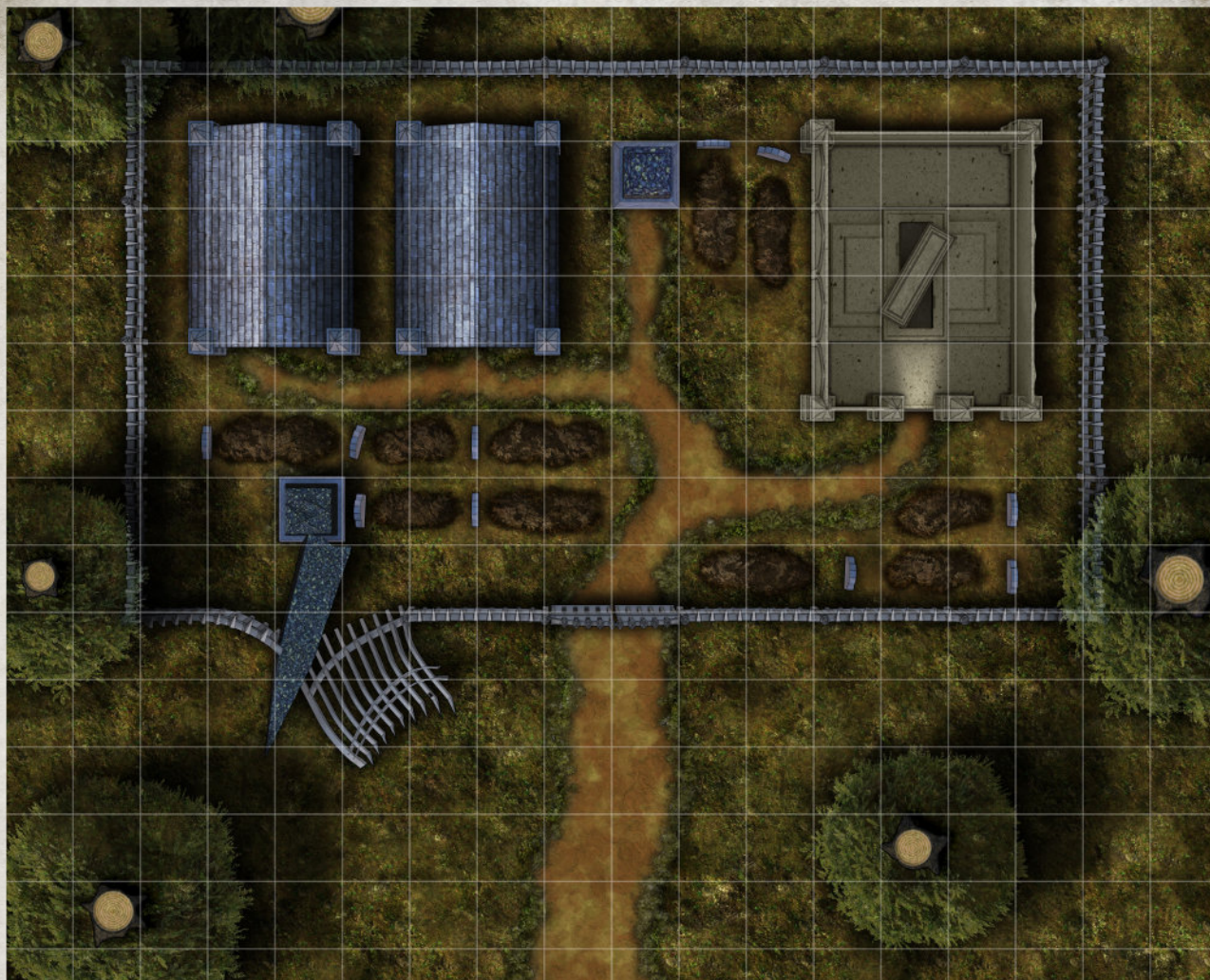
The first Klaustads built this cemetery centuries ago. Mindful of the dangers of the undead, the Klaustads built the fence to keep any restless dead trapped within. The fence is made of thick wrought iron and stands fifteen feet tall. The fence is topped with wicked spikes angled inward to deter escape. The fence has only one gate, which is enchanted with a ward to deter the unliving. An undead creature must succeed on a DC 15 Will save to cross through the gate, either in or out. Living creatures must also make this Will save, but can cross easily through the gate with no effect other than a slight chill on a failed saving throw. The ward detects as faint necromancy magic to spells such as *detect magic*.

The heroes can climb the fence from the outside (DC 15 Athletics check to Climb), but it's much more difficult to climb from the inside (DC 22 Athletics check to Climb). To escape the cemetery, Holst toppled a heavy obelisk onto the fence. The obelisk crushed part of the fence, allowing easier passage in either direction (DC 12 Athletics check to Climb).

The heroes might be suspicious of the open gate into the cemetery and might instead decide to enter the cemetery by climbing over the fence or the obelisk.

The Ultra-Horror Option

If you are running this adventure in the "ultra-horror" style, the first hero to touch the iron fence or gate is in for a shocking surprise. At that moment, the gate is struck by a sudden bolt of lightning that channels through the hero. The hero takes 8d8 electricity damage (Reflex DC 15 basic save). The heroes might avoid this effect by entering the open gate without expressly touching it, or by climbing over the obelisk.



THE WORMS CRAWL OUT (LOW 1)

Before the heroes can get far in the cemetery, a trio of giant maggots erupts from the ground. These scavengers have been feasting on the interred dead for several days. The recent rains have softened the earth and drawn them to the surface. Although these creatures burst from the ground relatively randomly (as they do not possess the intellect to set up an ambush), place the maggots as necessary to instill the most dread and disgust in the heroes.

The hungry maggots pursue any heroes that flee and fight until slain.

Giant Maggots (3)

Creature –1

N Small Animal

Perception +6; darkvision

Skills Acrobatics +6, Athletics +2, Stealth +6

Str –1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** –5, **Wis** +1, **Cha** –4

AC 15; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

HP 8

Speed 30 feet, burrow 20 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +6 (finesse), **Damage** 1d4–1 piercing plus maggot bile

Maggot Bile (poison); **Saving Throw** DC 14 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 1d6 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 2** 1d8 poison damage and flat-footed (1 round) **Stage 3** 1d12 poison damage, clumsy 1, and flat-footed (1 round)

THE GROUNDSKEEPER

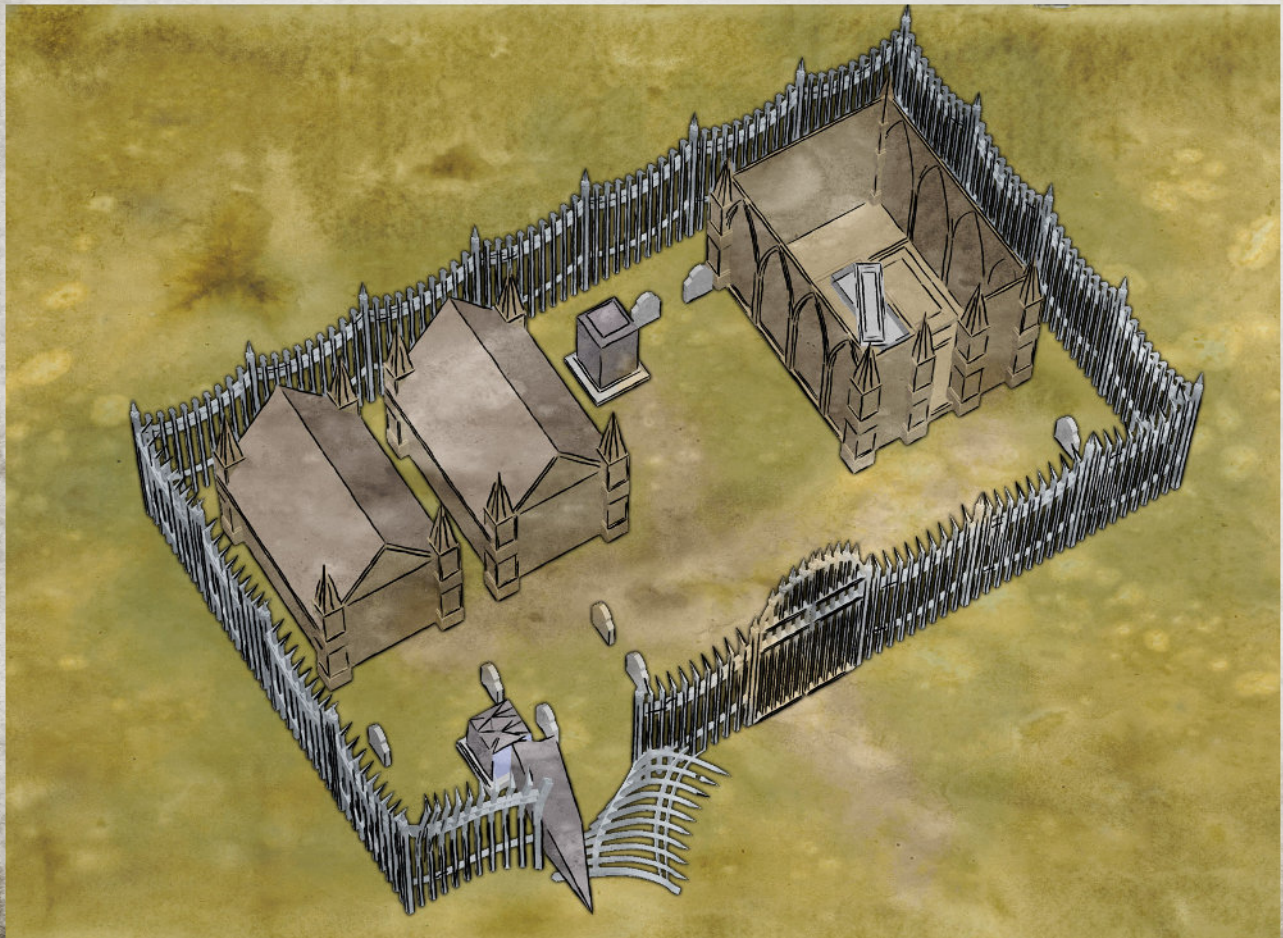
Just as the heroes finish the fight with the giant maggots, an unstable groundskeeper named Krebb challenges the heroes, thinking them to be grave robbers or necromancers. Read:

From the back of the cemetery rushes a hunchbacked man in a broad hat, holding a sickle high. Under his hat, his hooded eyes shine with fury. "Intruders!" he cries, "Violating sacred Klaustad grounds! Off with ye, or I'll cut ye down where ye stand in yer trespassin' boots!"

This is Krebb, a loyal servant of the Klaustad family for most of his 50 years of life. Krebb serves as groundskeeper for many of the Klaustad's far-flung plots of

land, including this family cemetery. Lord Harald Klaustad is aware of Krebb, of course, but neglected to mention the groundskeeper to the heroes as he seemed unlikely to be out on such a terrible night. Krebb is more diligent than his master suspects, however, and happened to be near the family cemetery when he noticed the heroes and assumed they were intruders.

The heroes might react violently to Krebb's challenge (he's merely a Level 0 human commoner), but a simple explanation or presenting the *Erymanthian Sigil* suffices to calm the angry groundskeeper. The groundskeeper immediately abandons his fiery indignation for groveling obsequiousness,



Using Krebb

Krebb should be played as more than a little bit unhinged: his sudden shift from zealot to sycophant is typical of his volatile nature but probably startling to the heroes. The heroes' attitude toward Krebb should shift quickly from shock at his sudden appearance to outrage at his accusations to embarrassment at his servility. Some heroes may like the quirky Krebb right away. This is all the better, because the most effective use of Krebb is to kill him messily in front of the heroes.

Horror stories often increase tension by having minor characters killed in sudden or gruesome ways. Krebb is a fine candidate for this treatment. Krebb can be killed by:

- Being the one to open the door to Holst's mausoleum and triggering the trap there. This is particularly effective if none of the heroes suspect that the mausoleum's door is trapped.

- Being the blood shadow's first target.

Krebb's death by the trap or the blood shadow means one less attack into the heroes, but the decrease in danger to the heroes is mitigated by the narrative impact of Krebb's shocking death.

fawning over the heroes as "agents of the Master" and offering to help them however they need.

Holst's mausoleum is easy to find, particularly with Krebb's help, as the lintel reads "HOLST KLAUSTAD – BELOVED SON – HIS REAPING CAME TOO SOON." Once the heroes discover Holst's mausoleum, move on to Act 8.

ACT 8: THE CRYPT THING



The undead monster that was once Holst Klaustad is crafty. Although the heroes have defeated it, the monster still has two tricks remaining. The first is a deadly trap on the door to the mausoleum designed to slay any intruders. The second is a bloody spirit lurking within Holst's corpse. When the heroes identify which mausoleum is Holst's burial place, read the following:

Holst's mausoleum is a solid stone structure rising out of the mist pervading the cemetery despite the persistent rain. The heavy stone door has no handle or latch, but stands ajar a fraction of an inch.

HOLST'S LAST TRAP

The heavy stone door can be pushed easily inward on well-made hinges, but the person opening the door triggers a trap Holst set to stop anyone from disturbing him in his rest.

Spear Laucher

Hazard 2

Mechanical Trap

Stealth DC 20 (trained)

Description A wall socket loaded with a spear connects to a floor tile in one 5-foot square.

Disable Thievery DC 18 (trained) on the floor tile or wall socket

AC 18; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +3

Hardness 8, **HP** 32 (**BT** 16); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Spear (reaction); **Trigger** Pressure is applied to the floor tile. **Effect** The trap shoots a

spear, making an attack against the creature or object on the floor tile.

Ranged spear +14, **Damage** 2d6+6 piercing

SPIRIT OF THE DEAD (SEVERE 1)

Once the heroes enter the mausoleum, read the following:

The mausoleum's interior is cold and moist. The room is surprisingly spacious, but much of the interior is taken up by a massive stone coffin raised three feet off of the floor. The lid of the coffin has been pushed aside and lies broken on the floor, its graven image of Holst Klaustad shattered into several pieces. The interior of the coffin may have once been fine cloth, but only shredded rags remain.

There is no immediate danger here, nor anything else of interest to inquisitive heroes. To put Holst to rest permanently, the heroes perform the following steps, in the following order, before sunrise:

- Holst's corpse (or at least the part containing the head) must be returned to the coffin. Once the heroes do so, the evil spirit inhabiting Holst's body rises out of the corpse, pulling what little blood remains into a sickening cloud of rancid blood droplets. Holst's corpse pales considerably, but does not otherwise move. The blood shadow attacks as described below, but the heroes may continue with the ritual even while fighting the blood shadow.

- The corpse must be beheaded with

a silver slashing weapon, such as the low-grade silver hatchet provided by Lord Klaustad. The corpse's neck is supernaturally resilient; it possesses a hardness of 3 and 10 Hit Points.

- The headless corpse must be sprinkled with *holy water*, which requires a hero to succeed at a DC 10 Religion check. The hero performing this sprinkling is aware whether this step was successfully completed, and this step may be retried until completed (or until the heroes run out of *holy water*).

- The *Erymanthian Sigil* must be placed carefully on Holst's corpse, which requires two Interact actions. Once this is performed, the blood shadow (if still active) explodes in a shower of blood droplets. At the conclusion of this ritual, Holst's spirit is permanently laid to rest.

The blood shadow takes the rough form of Holst Klaustad with elongated claws, but it is composed entirely of rancid blood in a semisolid red mist. In the presence of the *Erymanthian Sigil*, the blood shadow hisses in anger, plainly disturbed by the symbol. The blood shadow fights until destroyed.

Blood Shadow **Creature 4**

Uncommon NE Medium Incorporeal Undead

Perception +10; darkvision

Languages Necril

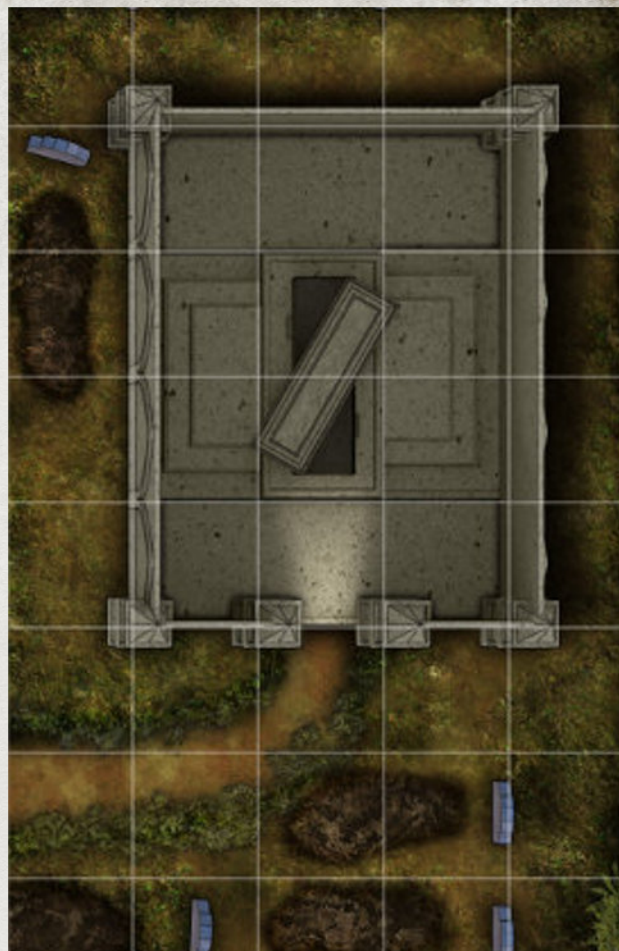
Skills Acrobatics +10, Stealth +14

Str -5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +0, **Int** -2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3

AC 20; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +14, **Will** +12

HP 40; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Weaknesses** light vulnerability; **Resistances** all 5 (except force, *ghost touch*, or positive; double resistance against non-magical)

Light Vulnerability An object shedding magical light (such as from the *light* spell) is treated



as magical when used to attack the shadow.

Sigil Defense The blood shadow cannot damage any creature carrying the *Erymanthian Sigil*. Furthermore, a creature carrying the *Erymanthian Sigil* bypasses the blood shadow's resistance to damage.

Speed fly 30 feet

Melee ◇ shadow hand +15 (finesse, magical), **Damage** 2d6+3 negative

Shadow Spawn When a creature's shadow is pulled free by *Steal Shadow*, it becomes a shadow spawn under the command of the shadow that created it. This shadow spawn doesn't have *Steal Shadow* and is perpetually and incurably clumsy 2. If the creature the shadow spawn was pulled from dies, the shadow spawn becomes a

full-fledged, autonomous shadow. If the creature recovers from its enfeeblement, its shadow returns to it and the shadow spawn is extinguished.

Slink in Shadows The shadow can Hide or end its Sneak in a creature's or object's shadow.

Steal Shadow (divine, necromancy) **Requirement** The shadow hit a living creature with a shadow hand Strike on its previous action. **Effect** The shadow pulls at the target's shadow, making the creature enfeebled 1. This is cumulative with other enfeebled conditions from shadows, to a maximum of enfeebled 4. If this increases a creature's enfeebled value to 3 or more, the target's shadow is separated from its body (see shadow spawn). Enfeebled from Steal Shadow decreases by 1 every hour.

CONCLUSION

When the heroes finish the ritual to sanctify Holst's corpse, their task is done and they are free to return to the Gravedigger's Rest. The night's storm clears up and the heavy clouds roll away. Before the heroes can reach the inn, Lord Klaustad meets them on the High Road. Read or paraphrase the following:

Lord Harald Klaustad appears on the road before you out of the pre-dawn gloom. He gives a slow, formal bow. "Well done, brave heroes. Your service and sacrifice this night will be remembered. I must now return home, but I have left a generous reward for you at the inn. You have earned it, and earned the respect of the Klaustads." With a twirl of his cloak, Lord Klaustad strides away.

At the Gravedigger's Rest, the heroes find that Lord Klaustad has left 25 gp for each of them, regardless of any previously offered reward. Alayna Vedellic asks the

Thoughts on Time Pressure

The heroes must complete all of these tasks before sunrise, but this limitation is only in place to keep the tension high and discourage dawdling. The actual timing of the heroes' exploits throughout this adventure is left intentionally vague. You will note that there isn't any specific "race the sunrise" pressure to complete the ritual in a certain number of rounds in this Act. This is for two reasons. First, there isn't any way to reasonably measure how fast the heroes hurried in earlier Acts to get here: if the heroes hustled the entire way, it cheats them to have it always be "one minute until dawn" regardless of their efforts. Second, a "race the sunrise" structure risks a strong anticlimax. If the heroes pull out all the stops, defeat the blood shadow, lop off Holst's head, but then blow the Religion rolls for a few rounds, all you can do is say, "Too bad, the sun comes up, and you all lose." That's not a very satisfying conclusion and the players will feel cheated.

All this said, however, no one knows your players like you do: if you feel some time pressure would be appropriate in this Act, you can have the heroes make a DC 10 Nature or Survival check when outside the mausoleum to note the approximate amount of time until sunrise. Two minutes (20 rounds) probably works, but you should be vague so that you can give the heroes a few extra (or fewer) rounds as needed for dramatic effect.

heroes to escort her to her home and offers 10 gp to each hero willing to accompany her. If any hero lost an animal to the troll, Alayna also arranges for its replacement at her cost.

EPILOGUE

Once the adventure is over, read this epilogue to your players:

Deep in the mud under the bridge, the troll slept fitfully. Its lair was protected, sealed up with river-mud, and it had taken a bite from its quarry. It should have been dropping back into the deep hibernation in which it spent most of its time. But the troll could not rest easily.

The troll coughed and spat again. Its last bite—the bite that was cold and dead—had left a malignant taste in its mouth and a heavy feeling in its stomach. It retched again, but the heavy weight would not leave the pit of its belly.

Slowly, the heavy weight spread. The troll grunted in pain and flailed its mighty limbs. Its whole torso felt thick and heavy, then its arms and legs as well. At last, the troll lay still. The blue-black hide of the creature slowly paled to the gray color of death. Deep in its dead black eyes a spark kindled, a hateful orange color.

And the troll began to move again.

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