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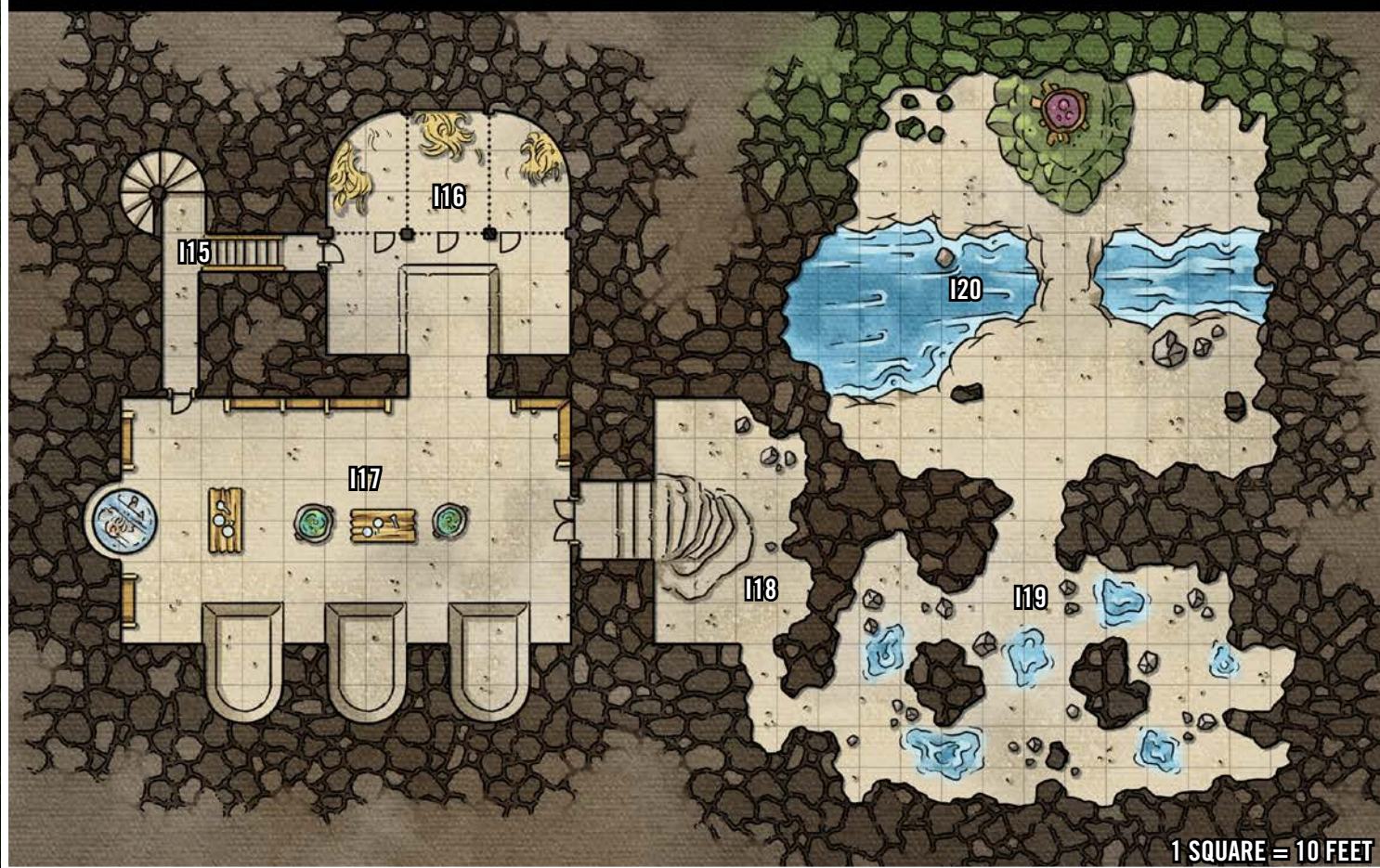
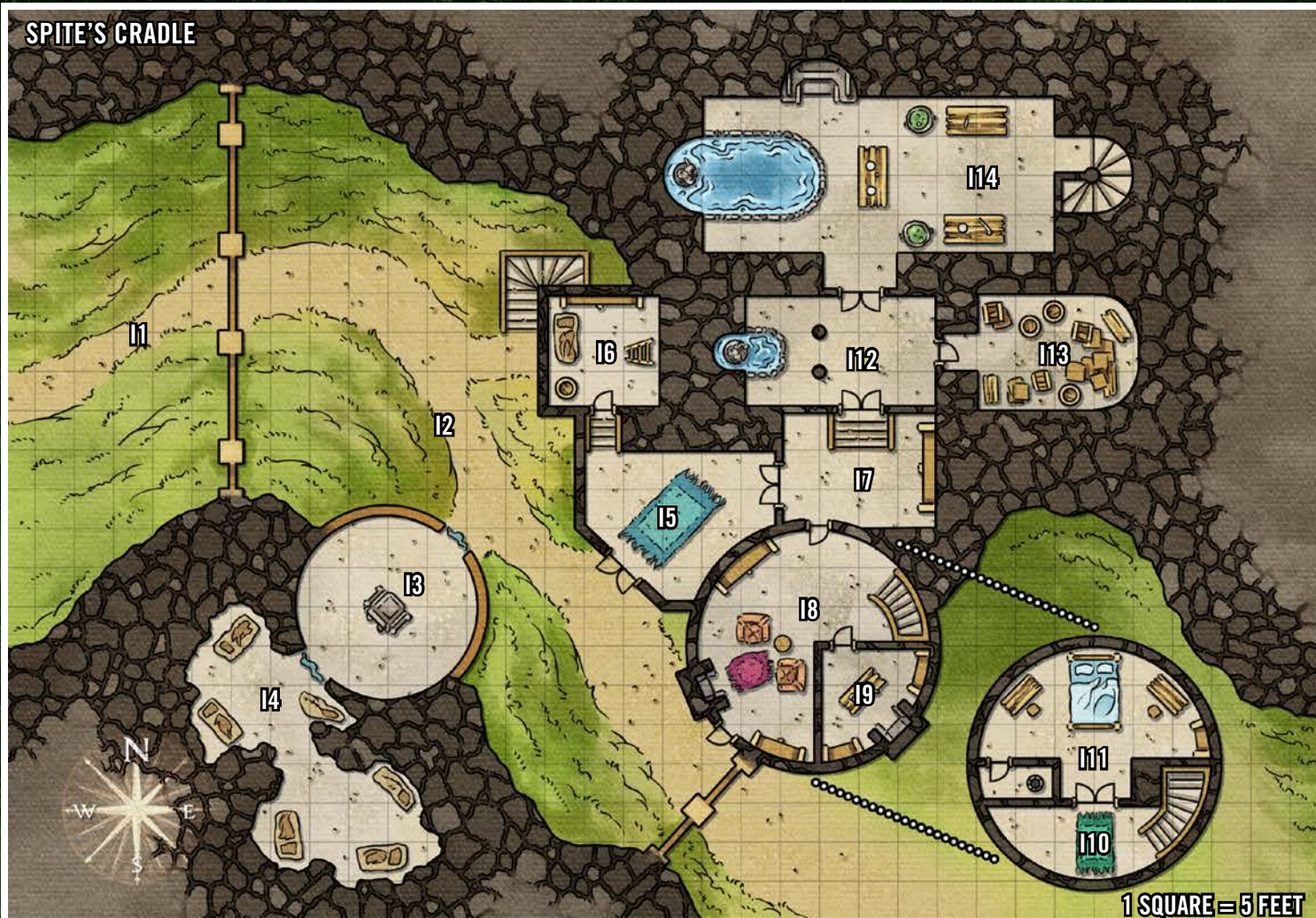
PATHFINDER[®]



The Fall of Plaguestone

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SPITE'S CRADLE



PATHFINDER

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by Jason Bulmahn

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ON THE COVER

A simple caravan encounters a pack of mangy and mutated wolves just outside of the town of Etran's Folly in this cover by Setiawan Lie.



THE FALL OF PLAGUESTONE

The town of Etran's Folly has never had it easy. Located far from popular trade routes, it has never been more than a stopover point for merchants making their way from Elidir to Almas. Worse still, after the Goblinblood Wars, the town suffered terribly from a plague outbreak that killed almost half the population. Etran's Folly never truly recovered. This fact led many to refer to the town as "Plaguestone"—a reference to a stone marker in town once used to safely give food to the sick and dying. Villagers left food at the stone and, in return, the sick placed coins in a hole in the stone, filling the hole with vinegar to cleanse the copper and silver of any trace of the plague. Now, many of the town's homes and businesses are empty, their residents long dead save for a few orphans taken in by neighbors or left to fend for themselves on the fringes of the community.

When the plague came to Etran's Folly, Silwyth Eldara did all she could with herbalism and alchemy to find a cure. Alas, the pox was too virulent, and in the panic, the townsfolk blamed Silwyth for not coming to their aid. When the aging elf caught the plague herself, the townsfolk refused her succor, leaving no food for her at the plaguestone. She died soon after, cursing survivors to a life of misery, leaving her daughter, Vilree, all alone. The young half-elf Vilree never forgave the people of Etran's folly for their treatment of her mother.

Over the years, Vilree lived in the shadow of Etran's Folly; stained by her mother's reputation, she never found acceptance in town. Seven years ago, she left and took up residence in a nearby ancient cave complex. Bitterness grew in her heart, motivating her to learn alchemical arts her mother had once used to heal. She gained even greater skill than Silwyth had, but she used her talents to harm animals, plants, and people around her. What began with simple concoctions quickly turned into experiments on animals and then hapless travelers. Now she is planning to get her revenge on the town, using the very stone where they denied her mother aid. It is the eve of her triumph, one that will kill every last person in Etran's Folly.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins with the PCs traveling to Etran's Folly in the caravan of Bort Bargith, a dwarf merchant who agreed to take them on as passengers. Just outside town, the caravan is attacked by a pack of wolves, the vicious leader of which spews acid. Arriving in town after helping to save the caravan,

the characters are invited to dinner by Bort, who wishes to reward them for their valor.

While enjoying dinner with the PCs, Bort is poisoned, dying within moments from a virulent toxin hidden in his food. The local sheriff, Rolth Garley, is out of his depth, and insists on holding the caravan in town until the scheduled arrival of a circuit judge a month in the future. But the heroes have a chance to investigate the murder and they explore the town, talking to everyone who was present for the poisoning. Eventually, it becomes clear that Phinick, the goblin kitchen assistant, poisoned the food. He quickly confesses once apprehended, but insists he thought he was only putting a special spice in the food, not poison. Further questioning reveals that Hallod, the town bully, coerced him.

Hallod's hideout reveals that he is more than he seems. The town bully is in fact an agent of Vilree, who pays him with gold and doses of an addictive mutagen. Defeating Hallod may help the town and clear the names of everyone involved with the merchant's death, but it leads the heroes no closer to Vilree, who ordered the murder. In fact, Hallod hasn't seen Vilree in over a year. The goods and supplies he acquired for her were always delivered to a prearranged drop spot in a hollow stump.

About this time, Noala Kesrir, an elven ranger that patrols the lands around town, contacts the characters. She found the wolves slain earlier by the PCs and noticed the taint affecting the corpses is similar to a number of blighted areas that have appeared in the woods near town. She seeks out the characters, hoping they might help her investigate these blighted areas. This leads them to the Pen, where Vilree had been experimenting on animals and plants. Shutting down this testing ground is dangerous, but in doing so the PCs find a map that leads to Vilree's lair, a place known only as Spite's Cradle. Only one of the landmarks on the map is familiar, though: the hollow stump where Hallod left supplies for Vilree.

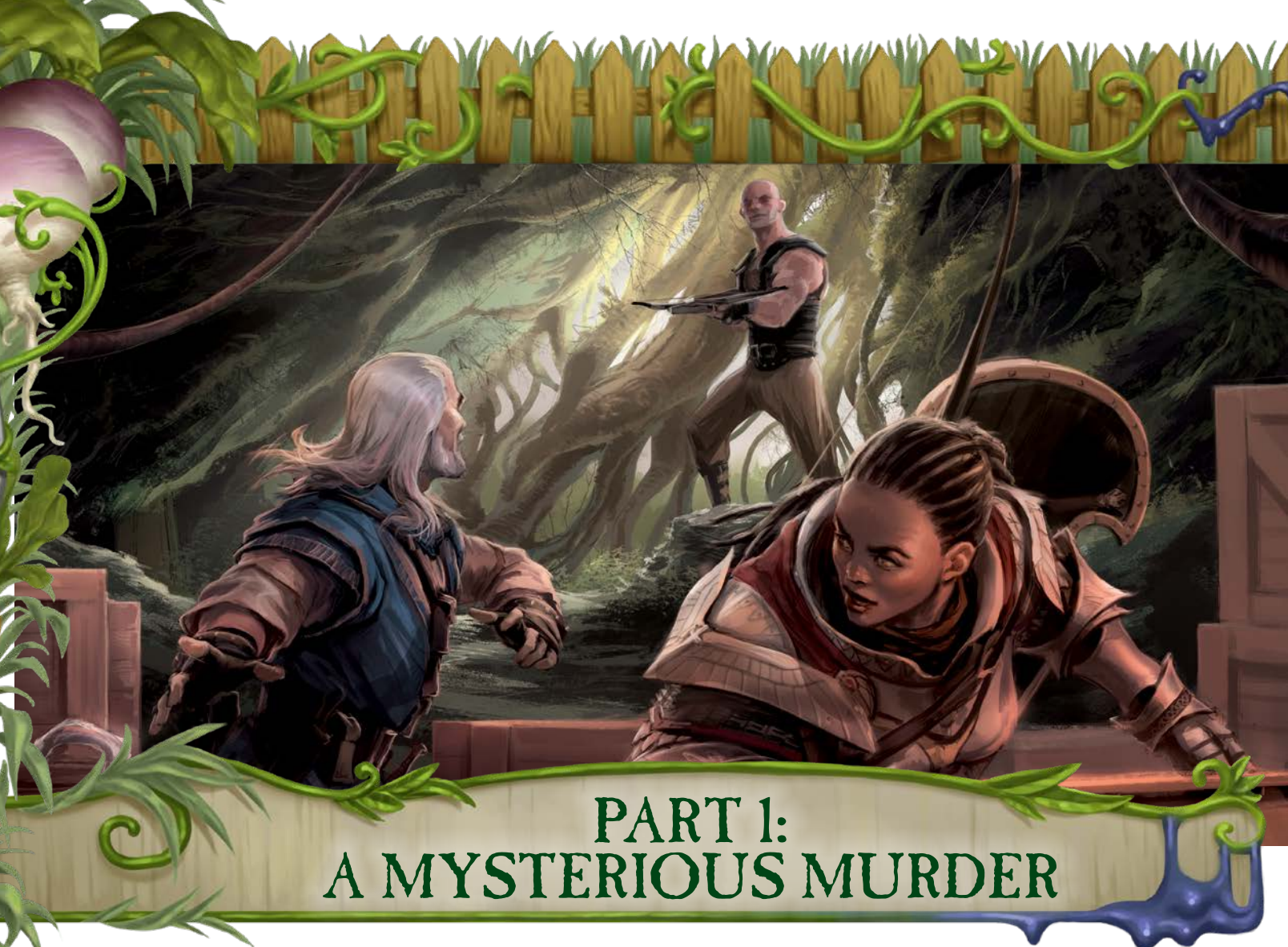
Using the map and information from Hallod, the group can make their way to Spite's Cradle in the hills nearby. There, they learn of Vilree's plot to infect the town with a terrifying plague. Worse still, the plague is already in town—hidden inside the plaguestone—and she has already sent a servant to trigger the explosion that will release the disease! After defeating the alchemist, the heroes must race back to town in time to save everyone from Vilree's final revenge.

Part 1:
A Mysterious
Murder

Part 2:
The Ranger's
Request

Part 3:
Into Vilree's
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PART 1: A MYSTERIOUS MURDER

The adventure begins as the caravan travels south by southeast from Elidir, the capital of Isger, to Almas, the capital of Andoran, on a road between the Apsodell Mountains and the Five Kings range. There are faster and easier routes south, but for those seeking to avoid Cheliox, this is the safest. Bort Bargith is a dwarf trader from the Five Kings Mountains, welcome in many settlements for his fair prices and gregarious spirit, and he has been using this route for years. The caravan consists of six covered wagons, four of which are laden with supplies, trade goods, and trinkets. Bort makes his home in the lead wagon and the cabin built onto its back, while the final wagon is for passengers and the cook.

The PCs are all passengers in this caravan, though if one of them has the teamster background (page 55), they might be working for it instead, driving the final wagon. They share the last wagon with the food, the camp chef Cooky, and a couple of other passengers.

The travelers do not necessarily know each other at the start of the adventure, although some of them could be acquainted. None of them are particularly familiar with Bort, the caravan master, or any of the other teamsters. The caravan is less than a day

away from the town of Etran's Folly and expects to arrive by nightfall so that the weary travelers can at least enjoy one night in town, sleeping in a real bed before pushing on to the next leg of the journey to Falcon's Hollow.

When you are ready to begin play, read or paraphrase the following.

It has been three days since you left Elidir, climbing into the back of one of Bort Bargith's wagons bound for the faraway Andoran capital of Almas. The smiling caravan master cut your travel cost to only a handful of coppers, so long as you promised to protect the wagons should any trouble arise. Fortunately, your journey through the hinterlands of Isger has been quiet, even if the ride itself has been far from comfortable.

As you broke camp this morning, Bort announced you should arrive at the town of Etran's Folly by nightfall, and he promised a comfortable bed for the night as a reward for a long day's travel. The caravan's teamsters shared a chuckle between them, trading knowing glances and subtle nods, but soon enough you are on the road again, the wagon bouncing and creaking along the uneven trail.

At this point, allow the characters to introduce themselves to one another and describe their appearances. This is also a good time to briefly describe the other members of the caravan and the countryside through which they travel. For more information on the members of Bort's caravan, see page 54.

This part of Isger is sparsely populated, consisting of small rural farms and isolated communities. It is a temperate land, with frequent light rains and the rich smell of damp earth wafting on the pleasant breeze. The trail winds its way through the lowlands, passing along streams and through small forests. The game in this area has only recently recovered after years of war drove it into hiding.

If pressed about their behavior after Bort's announcement, the teamsters quietly explain that the accommodations in Etran's Folly are hardly better than the ground outside, and the smell is even worse. Except for Glunda, they all refer to the town as "Plaguestone" due to the virulent plague that nearly wiped out the community 20 years ago, although none are so rude as to use that name in front of the locals.

Late in the afternoon, the caravan is attacked!

A. MANGY PACK

SEVERE 1

"Up ahead is Plaguestone," Keldaran shouts from the front of the wagon. No sooner does the call fade from his lips than it is overshadowed by a series of long, mournful howls emanating from the woods to either side of the caravan. Moments later, you hear cries of panic as a pack of mangy wolves descends from the forest with teeth bared!

This attack occurs while the caravan is still a half an hour from town and far from aid.

Creatures: Although there are over a dozen wolves attacking the caravan, only three approach the wagon containing the PCs. At the end of the first round in which a mangy wolf is killed, the caustic wolf emerges from the forest to join the fight (roll Perception for its initiative as normal and insert it in the next round); it howls the moment it is near the characters. Once the caustic wolf is slain, all other wolves (including any fighting the PCs) flee into the woods.

MANGY WOLVES (3)

CREATURE -1

N **MEDIUM** **ANIMAL**

Perception +5; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +4, Stealth +4

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

AC 15; **Fort** +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

HP 8

FIRST FIGHT

As the battle with the wolves is the first time the PCs have entered battle, it is important to take your time and ensure that the combat is fun and engaging. The mangy wolves do not present much of a threat, but the caustic wolf is a dangerous foe that can seriously hurt the player characters. Fortunately, the wolves do not use effective tactics. They do not intentionally move into flanking positions, nor do they single out weak characters. The caustic wolf uses his howl early in the fight and his acid breath only once he has been damaged. Should the fight turn against the players, Olf and Ulf might show up to draw the wolves off for a round or two, giving the PCs a chance to regroup.

Most importantly, emphasize the sights, sounds, and smells of the fight. The wolves snarl with hunger and smell like filthy hounds. The mud flies when characters charge across the damp trail. Fangs tear nasty wounds, and warhammers crunch bones. Play up any critical hits and exaggerate the failures. Make sure everyone's first fight is one they will vividly remember.

Speed 35 feet

Melee **✦** jaws +6 (finesse), **Damage** 1d6+1 piercing plus fleas

Fleas Anyone bitten by a mangy wolf is sickened 1 for 1 minute unless they succeed at a DC 14 Fortitude save, but they can spend an Interact action to scratch away the fleas and remove the condition.

CAUSTIC WOLF

CREATURE 2

UNIQUE **N** **MEDIUM** **ANIMAL**

Perception +8; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +8, Intimidation +8, Stealth +8, Survival +8

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

AC 18; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

HP 30; **Immunities** acid

Speed 35 feet

Melee **✦** jaws +11, **Damage** 1d6+2 piercing plus 1d4 acid plus Knockdown

Acid Breath **✦✦** The wolf unleashes a stream of bright green acid from its mouth, coating all creatures in a 30-foot line. All creatures in the line take 3d6 acid damage (DC 16 basic Reflex save). The caustic wolf cannot use this ability again for 1 minute.

Howl **✦✦** The wolf unleashes a terrifying howl, allowing it to Demoralize all enemies within 30 feet. Wolves within 100 feet can spend a reaction to join the howl, causing the effect to emanate from them

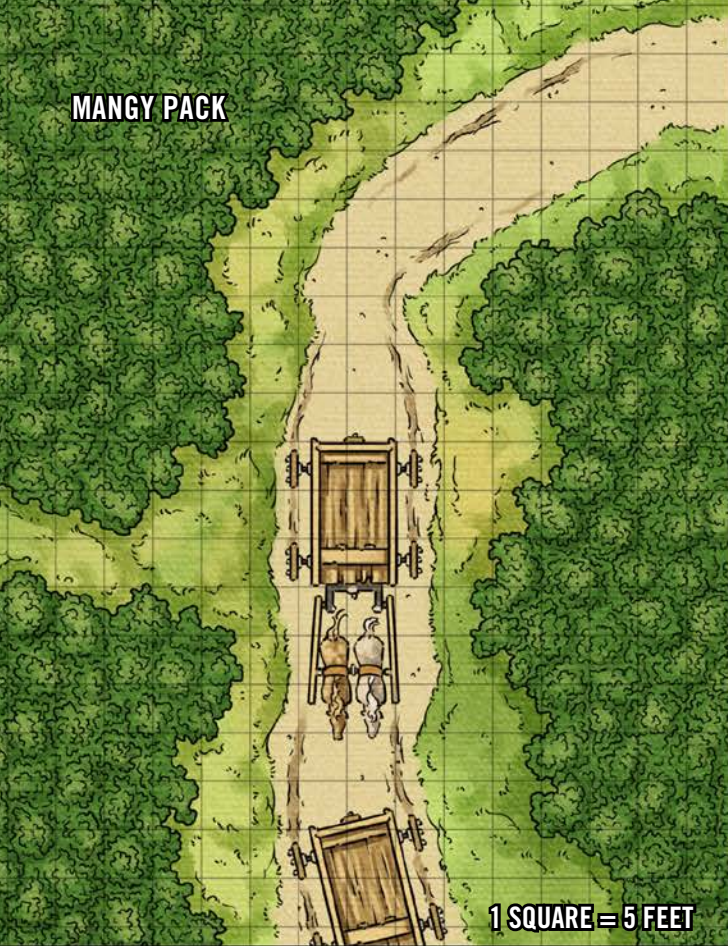
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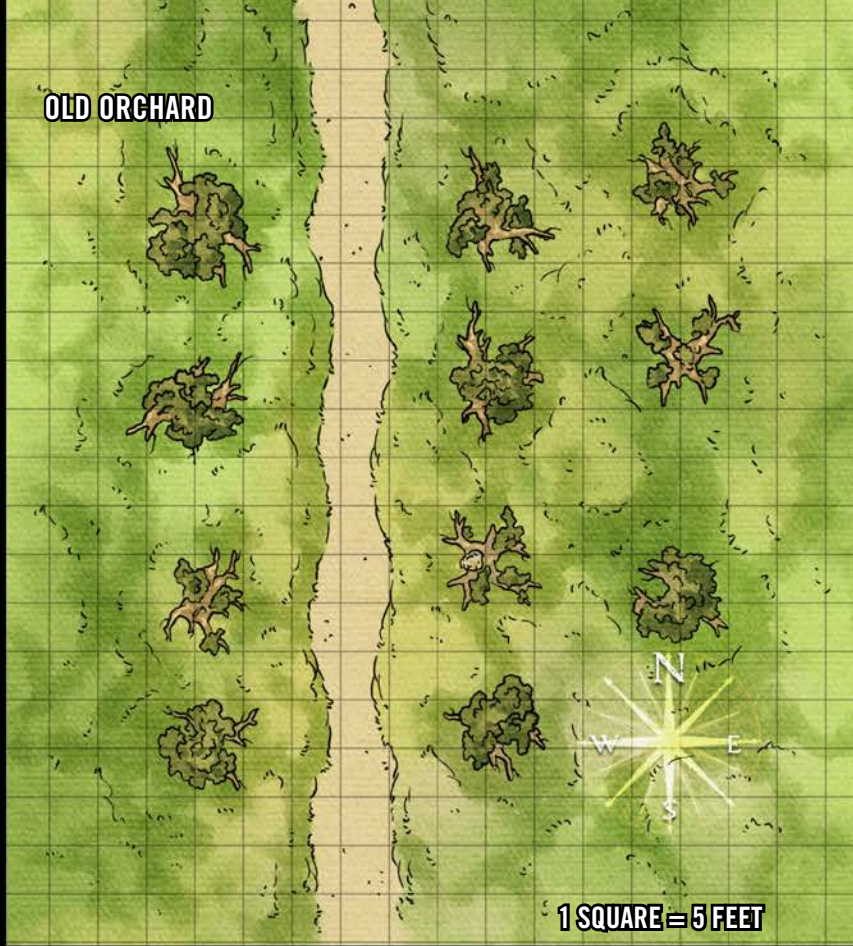
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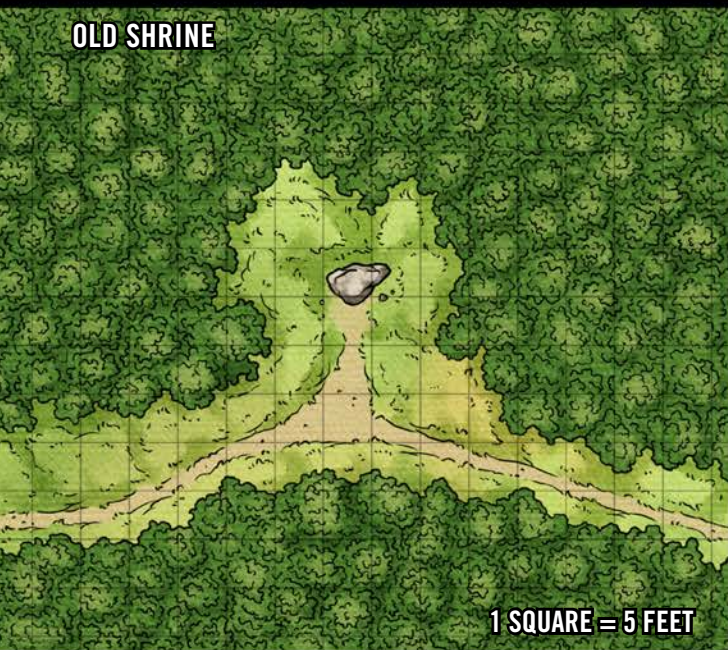
MANGY PACK



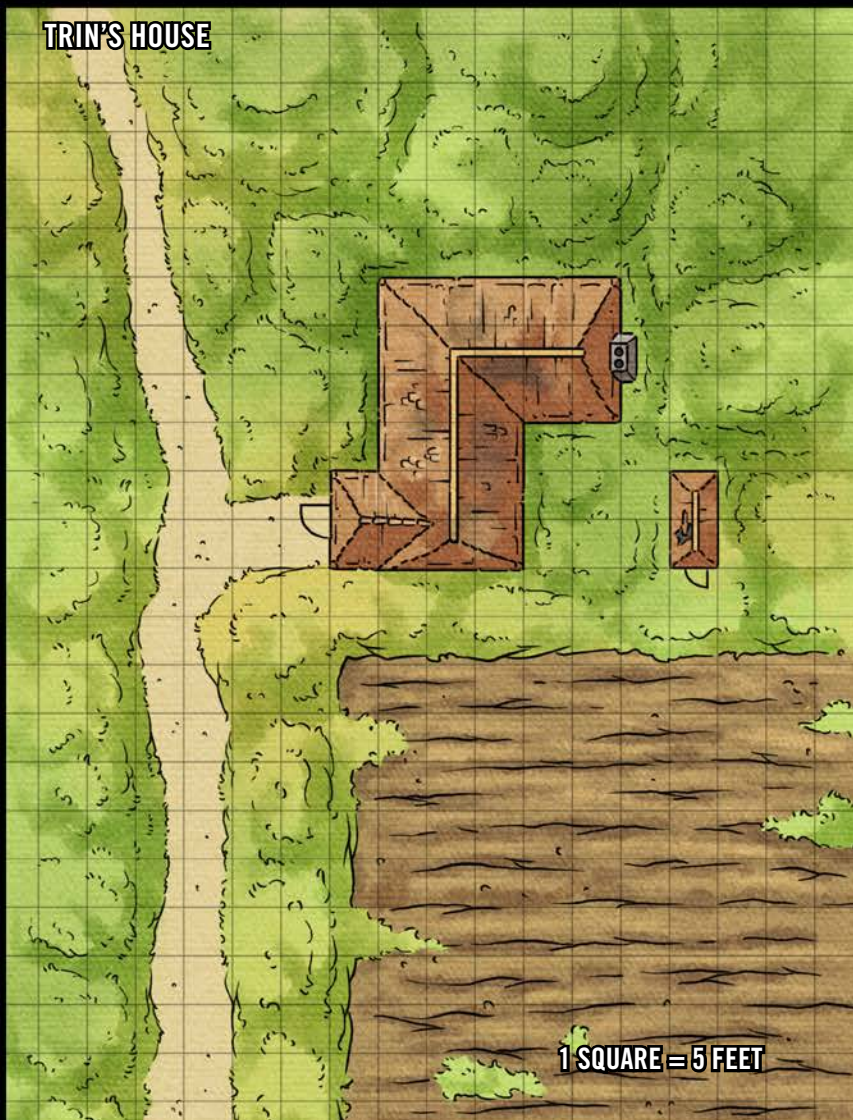
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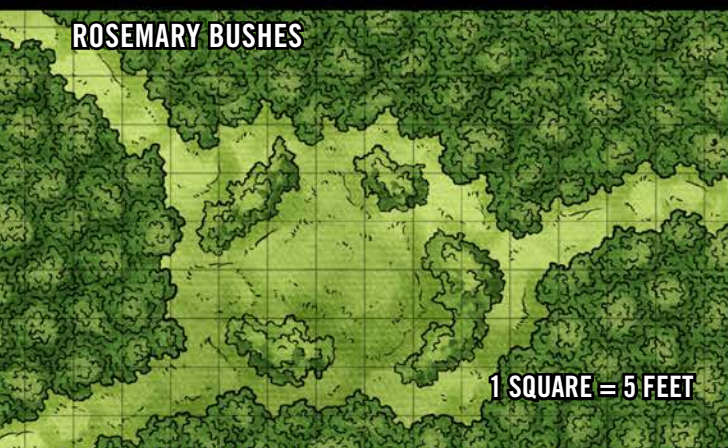
OLD SHRINE



TRIN'S HOUSE



ROSEMARY BUSHES



as well. This affects additional enemies within 30 feet of them and uses the caustic wolf's Intimidation check with a -4 circumstance penalty. Enemies cannot be affected by the howl more than once, even if they are near more than one howling wolf. All creatures targeted by this effect are temporarily immune for 24 hours.

After the Fight: Bort and Tamli inspect the caravan to make sure everyone is okay. When the wolves charged in, they spooked the horses pulling the wagons. While the teamsters kept them from bolting during the attack, the rear wagon was pulled several feet off the trail into the muck, making it nearly impossible to move. This had no effect on the fight itself, but it does prevent the wagon from moving on. Tamli discovers this problem and calls upon Olf, Ulf, and the PCs to find a solution. To get the wagon moving again, at least two PCs must help, although it will be easier if more assist.

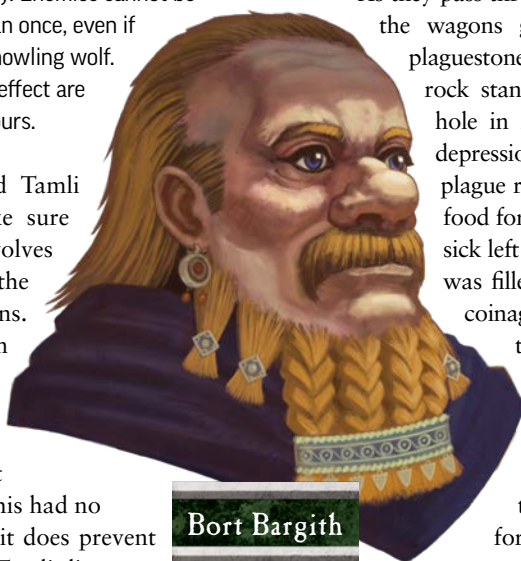
Everyone helping on this task must attempt a DC 15 Athletics check. As long as two PCs succeed, the wagon gets moving again without incident. If fewer than two succeed, the wagon still gets moving, but any PC that failed is fatigued by the effort. Anyone that critically fails the check is fatigued as well.

Meanwhile, Bort checks on everyone's health. Olf and Ulf sustained minor injuries which they play up as much more serious, but everyone seems to be alive and well. Bort sees what the PCs accomplished and thanks them profusely. He offers to buy them dinner in town later as a reward and promises to regale them with tales of his adventures.

ARRIVING IN ETRAN'S FOLLY

After dealing with the wolves and getting the wagon back on track, the caravan is free to continue to Etran's Folly. The journey takes only an hour, and the wagons roll into town a few hours before dusk. All of the wagons head for the Feedmill, the only inn and tavern in the small community.

Most of the simple wood-and-thatch homes in Etran's Folly look identical to one another and are in a similar state of disrepair. A number of the houses clearly look abandoned, their roofs collapsed. If the characters ask about this, anyone in the caravan can tell them the community suffered heavily from the plague 20 years ago and has never fully recovered.



Bort Bargith

For details on the town and its notable locations, see page 51.

As they pass through the middle of town, the wagons go around the ancient plaguestone, a large, flat, cylindrical rock standing 2 feet high, with a hole in its center and a bowl-shaped depression off to one side. When the plague ran rampant, the townsfolk left food for the sick in the bowl, while the sick left coins in the center hole (which was filled with vinegar to cleanse the coinage of contamination). Today, the stone is nothing more than a moss-covered relic, although the villain in this adventure has deadly plans for it.

Upon arrival, the teamsters secure the caravan for the night while Bort travels around town to conduct business with the crafters and families that call Etran's Folly home. This leaves the PCs to explore the Feedmill and get to know some of the more colorful members of the community. This would be a good time to introduce the NPCs described on page 52; become familiar with them so that you can represent the townsfolk if the PCs talk to them.

NOTABLE MEETINGS

The first character that the players are likely to meet is Edra Wythe, the stable hand at the Feedmill. She greets them when the caravan arrives and immediately worries about the condition of the horses. Soon after, the PCs meet Delma and the rest of the staff at the Feedmill. Notably, the goblin Phinick is particularly shy around newcomers, even if one of them is also a goblin.

The first time the characters enter the taproom of the Feedmill, they find it empty of customers save for Hallod—a gigantic, brutish human man. Phinick is serving him food and drink, squeaking whenever Hallod demands another round. PCs that try to talk to Hallod find he has little to say aside from offering curt, insulting replies. Shortly thereafter, he finishes his meal and leaves. If anyone asks the staff about him, they say that Hallod is a bit of a bully around town, but it is simple enough to stay out of his way.

EVENT 1. BAR BRAWL

In the early evening, Bort returns to the Feedmill and invites the characters to supper. He has reserved a table upon the dais next to Flonk, the town's bard, who is tuning his instrument just as the meal is served.

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SETTING UP THE MYSTERY

Bort's poisoning is a mystery central to this adventure, and for everything to go as planned, you should ensure a certain amount of chaos and confusion in the moments leading up to his death. The bar fight, no matter how short, is a distraction that ensures the PCs lose track of the various suspects. It's particularly important who is present and who goes missing during the fight and its aftermath.

Present for Dinner: Feedmill staff (Amora, Delma, Kolnral, Phinick, Trin), town locals (Farmer Eallom, Flonk the Bard, Sir Lawren, 14 local farmers), caravan members (Bort, Olf, Ulf), the player characters.

Leaves During the Fight: Delma, Sir Lawren, Phinick, Trin.

Arrives After the Fight: Rolth Garley, Tamli; Delma returns with Rolth.

The rest of the Feedmill is full of local farmers, as well as a few notable characters.

Kolnral and Trin are serving the guests tonight, while Delma tends bar and Amora is busy in the kitchen. Phinick can be seen doing odd jobs all over, but once dinner begins, he spends most of his time helping Amora in the kitchen. By the time dinner starts, Sir Lawren is deep into his cups, leaning back dangerously in his chair, while Farmer Eallom is busy gambling and getting drunk with Olf and Ulf.

As the first dishes come out (wild game and roasted turnips with a side of burnt seed cake, coupled with watery turnip ale), Bort is busy asking the PCs where they are from and where they are going, and telling some of his fabulous tales (see the Bort's Tales sidebar on page 54).

Creature: Toward the end of the meal, just as a dessert of warm turnip porridge is being served, Kolnral accidentally bumps into Farmer Eallom as he is sitting down with another ale, causing the farmer to spill all over himself. Eallom stands up and starts yelling at poor Kolnral. Seconds later, Eallom begins throwing punches and knocking over tables, and a bar fight erupts in the common area of the tavern. For this encounter, you might want to refresh yourself on the rules for nonlethal attacks on page 453 of the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*.

DRUNKEN FARMER

CREATURE -1

NG MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +2

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +5, Farming Lore +5

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

Items durable farm clothes (counts as padded armor)

AC 13; **Fort** +5, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

HP 16

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✎ fist +5 (agile, finesse, nonlethal, unarmed),

Damage 1d4+3 bludgeoning

Melee ✎ chair +3 (improvised), **Damage** 1d6+3 bludgeoning

Ranged ✎ mug +1 (improvised, range increment 10 feet), **Damage** 1d3+3 bludgeoning

During the fight, the entire common area of the Feedmill turns to chaos as a dozen drunken farmers wind up in a gigantic brawl. Treat the entire common room as difficult terrain, as it is filled with patrons, knocked over chairs, and other debris. How the players decide to get involved is up to them. The farmers mostly fight with fists, but the occasional chair or mug is thrown as well. If the characters can pacify at least three drunk farmers, the fight ends.

Several things happen during the fight, which will be important later. Sir Lawren slips out the front door while Phinick runs out the back through the stables. Delma leaves immediately to fetch the sheriff. Bort, meanwhile, tries to calm things down, but gets a chair thrown at him for his trouble. Trin gets hit with a mug in the first moments of the fight and flees through the stables to find her brother. Meanwhile, the taproom turns to chaos.

One minute later (10 combat rounds), or as soon as the PCs bring the fight to an end, Delma returns with Rolth Garley, the town's sheriff, who takes all the offending farmers to a table in the corner for a stern talking to (this is about all the offense warrants and, besides, the town has no jail). If anyone was dealt lethal wounds during the fight, they pull through thanks to Delma's skill at Medicine, although the sheriff has strong words for anyone who resorted to such tactics on mostly helpless farm folk. If the characters try to help after the fight is over, Rolth half-heartedly thanks them for their assistance, but dismissively tells them that their help is no longer needed.

A MEAL TO DIE FOR

After the brawl, Bort invites the characters back to the table to finish their meal and enjoy a round of drinks. Dessert was served before the fight began, and Bort proclaims to all that the turnip porridge here is his favorite, which explains the extra large bowl of it sitting before him. In fact, his bowl is unique in more ways than one—it's also poisoned.

Poisoned Dessert: Just a few minutes into his dessert, Bort begins to cough and choke. Playing this off as a bit of indigestion, he continues whatever tale he was in the middle of telling. A few moments later it is clear, as the coughing returns, that he is in distress. He begins to turn purple and his mouth begins frothing. Seconds after, his eyes roll into his head and a rumble can be heard in his guts. Mere moments thereafter, he collapses onto the table and dies. The characters might attempt to aid him using Medicine. A PC who succeeds at a DC 14 Medicine check determines that Bort is not choking on anything, but that his windpipe has swollen shut, indicating that he has been poisoned. Allow an extra Medicine check to use Treat Poison (against the virulent poison's DC of 24) to help Bort attempt his Fortitude save to resist, but the amount put in his porridge is just too great, and even if his throat is somehow opened so he can breathe, he still fails every save against the poison and dies (22 Hit Points, Fortitude Save +6).

Fortunately for the PCs, should any of them accidentally ingest some of the poison, only trace amounts remain in the bowl. Treat any trace ingestion as the poison outlined below, but the maximum duration is only 1 minute.

Violet Breath (Uncommon Virulent Poison 5) You can't reduce your sickened condition while affected by violet breath. **Saving Throw** DC 24 Fortitude; **Onset** 1d3 minutes; **Maximum Duration** 6 minutes; **Stage 1** 1d6 poison damage and sickened 1 (1 minute); **Stage 2** 2d6 poison damage and you cannot breathe (1 round); **Stage 3** 3d6 poison damage and you cannot breathe (1 round)

Bort's death happens so quickly that no one in the Feedmill has a chance to react. After Bort collapses, townsfolk gather round to see what all the commotion is about. A few rounds later, Delma and Rolth make their way to the table to see what is happening. As they witness the PCs trying to help, it's clear the PCs were not responsible, but at first, everyone is just concerned for the dwarf's well-being. Once it's clear he is dead, the tavern goes silent, and everyone begins eyeing one another (and their food).

ROLTH'S INVESTIGATION

As the town's only real member of law enforcement, Rolth Garley is incompetent. He is the mayor's nephew and rarely does anything other than settle disputes over livestock and break up the occasional drunken brawl. In fact, the town has not had a crime reported in years, so when Bort dies, Rolth realizes he's in over his head.

The sheriff's first inclination is to cover the body, take everyone at the table and all the members of the caravan out to the stables, and talk to each person in turn about what happened. Although he is privately hoping someone will give him a clue, he is honestly just hoping to gain a better idea of what happened.

Though he can't be certain, hearing that the PCs tried to help the Bort, combined with the fact that they hardly knew him, convinces the sheriff that they are unlikely to be responsible. The members of the caravan who would inherit the lucrative business are high on the list of suspects, but most were not in the bar, and those that were—Olf and Ulf—have solid alibis: they were drinking and gambling with Eallom before and after the fight.

Feel free to modify this interrogation according to the actions of the players. Rolth grants requests that are likely to further the investigation, but he will not start questioning other townsfolk until he has first interrogated the PCs and other caravan members. He is not willing to hold everyone in the bar; he's certain they won't be leaving town anytime soon.

In the meantime, Delma closes the kitchen and sends most of the other townsfolk home, including her staff (although Trin and Phinick are already gone).

Upon finishing his questioning, Rolth realizes that there is no clear suspect, and that no member of the caravan can be ruled out. As the town has no jail, he informs everyone he will need to turn this investigation over to a circuit judge who visits the town occasionally to deal with serious legal matters and crimes. Unfortunately, the judge, Lord Mubbage Cranberry, is not due back for another month, so everyone is stuck here until then.

If the PCs protest, Rolth insists that unless he knows who committed this heinous crime, he is bound to hold all possible suspects until the judge arrives. He does add that if the characters assist in the investigation, it might be resolved sooner.

TRACKING DOWN THE KILLER

After Rolth orders the caravan to remain in town, everyone heads home. Bort's body is taken down to the cellar to be kept cool, while Tamli and the rest of the caravan gathers to mourn. She invites the characters to join them out near the wagons. This is a somber occasion, and everyone in the company is at a loss. Bort was their leader, and without him, their future is uncertain. Tales of remembrance are told through teary eyes, and rare bottles of elven wine from Kyonin are passed around for all to share.

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Tamli remains mostly quiet through this, but speaks up at the end of the night, just as the sun begins to rise.

“Bort was more than just a merchant, more than just the boss. He was my friend. We won’t leave here until we’ve found out who did this. Rolth’s a fool, but I’d be an even greater fool if I thought I could get to the bottom of this. Fixing wagons and moving goods, that’s my job. But you,” she says, pointing at all of you, “you might be able to figure out who killed Bort and get justice for him.” She holds back tears as she says, “For all of us. Will you help uncover who did this?”

Assuming that the characters agree, they can investigate Bort’s murder in several ways. They can search the Feedmill for clues, they can go through Bort’s ledgers, and they can talk to various witnesses and suspects around town. Each of these approaches is described below. Although there is plenty of time before the circuit judge arrives, Tamli and the other caravan members instill a sense of urgency. No one wants to remain in this town an hour longer than they have to.

SEARCHING THE FEEDMILL

One of the obvious places to start the investigation is the Feedmill itself. After the events of the previous night, the common room was tidied up a bit, but the kitchen is in complete disarray.

Dining Room: There is little to be found here that relates to Bort’s death. The poisoned bowl was taken to the kitchen, and there is nothing remarkable about the table or chair where Bort perished.

Kitchen: The kitchen contains the cooking utensils needed to operate the Feedmill—kettles, skillets, knives, a mortar and pestle, roasting spits, a sieve, and a butter churner. Of particular note is the kettle of turnip porridge sitting on the counter, next to Bort’s large bowl. Although the remnants are starting to dry out, a PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Perception check notices an unusual, faintly floral, smell in the porridge remaining in Bort’s bowl. Checking all the herbs in the kitchen doesn’t uncover a match, nor is the smell similar to that of ground clove and anise in the mortar and pestle that was used to spice the dishes.

Cellar: Down in the cellar, alongside a number of large casks of ale and a few old, dusty bottles of wine, is the body of Bort Bargith. His flesh has turned an odd blue color in death, and anyone checking gets the faintest impression of a floral odor from the body. There is nothing else here to be learned that could not be uncovered when he was dying.

The Grounds: There is not much to be gained searching the grounds. There is no sign that anyone

unexpected was present. Searching the yard outside the barn does reveal one very important clue: a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check spots a glint in the grass just outside the stable doors, leading to a small glass vial with a simple cork. The vial is empty but contains traces of a floral-smelling liquid. This is the vial that Phinick used to season Bort’s porridge, and he dropped it here when he fled during the bar brawl. If the PCs do not uncover this, Edra finds it two days later and gives it to them, hoping to assist their investigation.

BORT’S BOOKS

The players might think to check through Bort’s belongings and papers for clues as to why someone might want to murder him. Tamli has the keys to Bort’s wagon and will let the PCs inside, but she will not tolerate them ransacking the place. She remains very protective of Bort’s memory and reputation.

Inside, Bort’s wagon is filled with knickknacks and keepsakes from his journeys. His belongings are truly a bewildering assortment of odds and ends, including a bottle with a tiny skull floating in oil, a taxidermic dragon whelp, a mummified owlbear paw, a shining crystal that holds the illusionary image of a mountain peak inside, and so on. There are a number of minor magic trinkets in here, but Tamli will not allow the players to take or examine these at all. The merchant’s ledgers are easily found in a rack above his bed.

The books are large and filled to the brim with details about his travels and transactions over many years. Acquiring any useful information from them takes at least 4 hours and requires a successful DC 18 Decipher Writing check (using Society or a related Lore skill). A PC who succeeds at this check uncovers that Bort visited Etran’s Folly at least 22 times in the past decade, and about five years ago the merchant started making deliveries labeled “reagents” to someone referred to only as “H,” receiving rather large sums of gold in exchange. These deliveries are numbered, starting with 1 and ending with delivery number 14, which occurred the day the caravan arrived in town. If the PCs fail to decipher the ledger, they can try again until they find what they are looking for. Each attempt takes 4 hours.

XP Award: If the PCs uncover the deliveries made to the mysterious “H,” award the party 30 XP.

QUESTIONING AMORA

After Bort’s death, Amora tells Delma that the kitchen should be closed immediately, just in case it was the food. Proud of her work, the cook insists Bort’s death must be foul play because, she explains, simple food poisoning doesn’t work that fast and isn’t as deadly.

TRIVIAL 1

Delma agrees, but insists that nothing in the kitchen be cleaned or removed, so that investigators can look for clues and clear Amora's good name. Removing her apron, Amora heads home and does not return for as long as the investigation continues.

B. THE OLD ORCHARD

If the characters go looking for Amora, townsfolk can tell them she lives in the Old Orchard, an area just outside town that was once a productive apple orchard. These days, it is foul and rotten, the trees having taken on a sickness. After the trees went bad a few years back, the grove's tender moved with his family to Almas, and Amora lives in the small shack they left behind.

Creatures: Unless care is taken to travel around the outside of the orchard, the PCs are likely to pass near a tree containing a gigantic beehive. The bees do not take well to intruders, and if anyone comes within 30 feet, the bees swarm and attack. Although they can be defeated conventionally, any player who asks can use an action to attempt a DC 12 Nature check; if successful, the PC knows that bees are pacified by smoke. If anyone uses a smokestick or similar item against the bee swarm, the swarm dissipates.



Amora Kasillan

BEE SWARM

CREATURE 1

N LARGE ANIMAL SWARM

Perception +5; darkvision

Skills Acrobatics +9, Stealth +7

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

AC 17; **Fort** +4, **Ref** +9, **Will** +4

HP 18; **Immunities** precision, swarm mind; **Resistances** bludgeoning 2, piercing 5, slashing 5; **Weaknesses** area damage 5, splash damage 5

Speed fly 20 feet

Swarming Stings ♦ Each enemy in the swarm's space takes 1d4 piercing damage (DC 16 basic Reflex save). The first time each round a creature fails the save and takes piercing damage, it also suffers the effect of beestings. Whenever the bee swarm uses this ability, the swarm takes 1 damage.

Beestings (poison) The creature must attempt a DC 16 Fortitude save. Those who fail take 1d4 poison damage and are clumsy 1 for 1 minute.

Amora Arrives: Shortly after the bees are defeated, Amora arrives in a head-to-toe suit of padded

armor—to protect her from the bees—armed with a smoke can to pacify any bees that remain. She invites the PCs to her home, offering up remedies for any stings they might have suffered. She also serves delicious biscuits with honey harvested from the beehive.

When talk turns to Bort's murder, Amora says that she prepared the dessert, Phinick plated it and Trin served it. She doesn't think anyone else was in the kitchen, even though she went out more than once to empty the slop bucket. Amora is terribly worried about her image, and she seems to care more about her reputation around town than about the dead dwarf. If taken back to the kitchen, she confirms that nothing there seems out of the ordinary, although she does notice that something smells off about the remnants in Bort's bowl.

QUESTIONING DELMA

As the owner of the Feedmill, Delma knows much about its operations and the staff that work there, but her knowledge of the evening of the poisoning is limited to what she saw in the taproom, which isn't much. She knows where every one of her staff lives, except for Phinick; she knows only that he sleeps in the barn sometimes. She is steadfast in her conviction that no one in her employ had any ill will toward Bort, and the thought of any of them randomly poisoning the dwarf is absurd.

The day after the murder, probably after they have finished up a day investigating, Delma seeks out the PCs to talk to them about their bill. She is happy for them to stay at the Feedmill, but they will have to pay for room and board. While this is not costly (only about 5 sp per day), she offers them a greatly reduced rate of only 2 sp per day if they assist her with a few chores around the shop and town. In particular, she would like some help with her aging father Targen, the mayor of Etran's Folly.

EVENT 2. TOUR OF ETRAN'S FOLLY

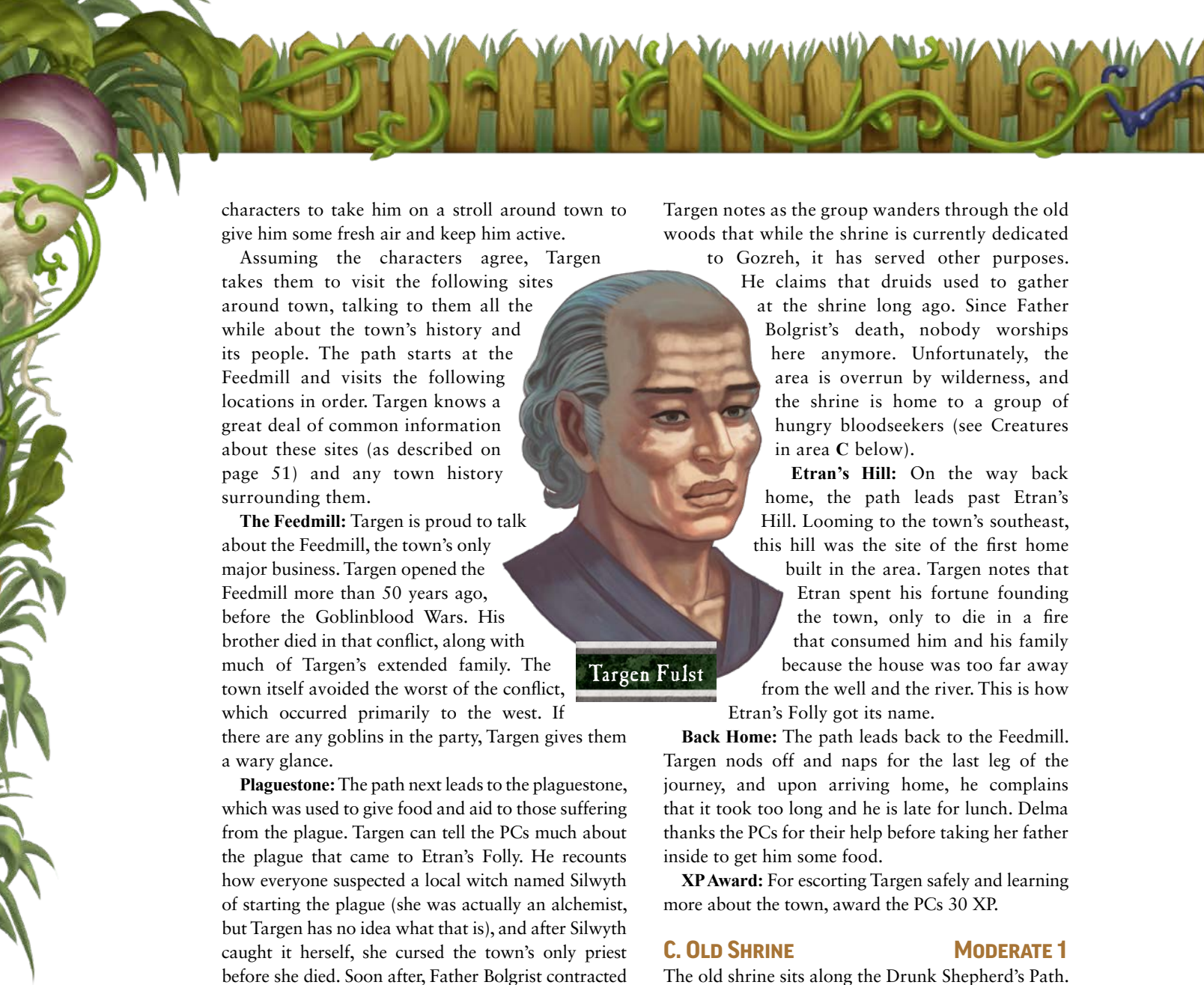
For years now, octogenarian Targen Fulst has been unable to walk for more than a few feet under his own power. His eyesight failing, he spends most of his days in a wooden wheelchair made from a modified pushcart. Delma lives next door and does what she can to care for her father, but with all that's happening at the Feedmill, she would like the

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characters to take him on a stroll around town to give him some fresh air and keep him active.

Assuming the characters agree, Targen takes them to visit the following sites around town, talking to them all the while about the town's history and its people. The path starts at the Feedmill and visits the following locations in order. Targen knows a great deal of common information about these sites (as described on page 51) and any town history surrounding them.

The Feedmill: Targen is proud to talk about the Feedmill, the town's only major business. Targen opened the Feedmill more than 50 years ago, before the Goblinblood Wars. His brother died in that conflict, along with much of Targen's extended family. The town itself avoided the worst of the conflict, which occurred primarily to the west. If there are any goblins in the party, Targen gives them a wary glance.

Plaguestone: The path next leads to the plaguestone, which was used to give food and aid to those suffering from the plague. Targen can tell the PCs much about the plague that came to Etran's Folly. He recounts how everyone suspected a local witch named Silwyth of starting the plague (she was actually an alchemist, but Targen has no idea what that is), and after Silwyth caught it herself, she cursed the town's only priest before she died. Soon after, Father Bolgrist contracted the plague and died. Targen tells the PCs that the witch had a daughter named Vilree who stuck around her mother's home for a few years, then probably died or ran off. Targen does not bother to recount the fact that Silwyth tried to stop the plague, or that Father Bolgrist was the first to accuse Silwyth of spreading it.

Dead Homes: After visiting the plaguestone, Targen guides the PCs through the north side of town where most of the plague victims lived. Most of their homes are empty and in a terrible state of disrepair. Only the very poor or desperate call this part of town home. Targen notes that anyone with coin lives on the south side of town.

Drunk Shepherd's Path: Leaving the north side of town, Targen wants to be walked along this old shepherd's path that wanders through the turnip farms around town. He mentions that they were once sheep pastures, but the last large flock left town years ago.

Old Shrine: The path leads to an old shrine in the middle of an ancient copse of oak trees.

Targen notes as the group wanders through the old woods that while the shrine is currently dedicated to Gozreh, it has served other purposes.

He claims that druids used to gather at the shrine long ago. Since Father Bolgrist's death, nobody worships here anymore. Unfortunately, the area is overrun by wilderness, and the shrine is home to a group of hungry bloodseekers (see *Creatures* in area C below).

Etran's Hill: On the way back home, the path leads past Etran's Hill. Looming to the town's southeast, this hill was the site of the first home built in the area. Targen notes that Etran spent his fortune founding the town, only to die in a fire that consumed him and his family because the house was too far away from the well and the river. This is how Etran's Folly got its name.

Back Home: The path leads back to the Feedmill. Targen nods off and naps for the last leg of the journey, and upon arriving home, he complains that it took too long and he is late for lunch. Delma thanks the PCs for their help before taking her father inside to get him some food.

XP Award: For escorting Targen safely and learning more about the town, award the PCs 30 XP.

C. OLD SHRINE

MODERATE 1

The old shrine sits along the Drunk Shepherd's Path.

Creatures: Four bloodseekers make their home here. The creatures attack as soon as they notice the PCs.

BLOODSEEKERS (4)

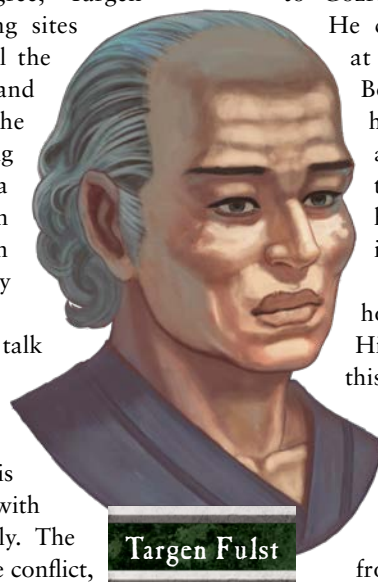
CREATURE -1

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Initiative Perception +6; darkvision, scent (imprecise)
30 feet

QUESTIONING EDRA

Edra is easy to find, as she lives at the Feedmill and is always around, taking care of the animals and making sure the stables are in good condition. On the night of the poisoning, Edra was busy in the stables with Glunda, tending to Bort's horses; Glunda can confirm this. When the fight broke out, she saw Phinick flee right away, and she saw Trin leave through the stable doors soon after, clutching a wound on her cheek. She was nowhere near the food or the poisoning. Edra knows that Phinick sometimes



Targen Fulst

sleeps in the barn, but he has other places too that she does not know about.

Two days after the murder, unless the PCs uncover it first, Edra finds the poison vial in the yard just outside the stable doors (as noted in Searching the Feedmill on page 10). She gives this to the PCs at her earliest convenience, hoping it will aid their investigation.

Helping the Horses: After the fight with the wolves, Bort's horses have all become infested with biting fleas. Edra is doing what she can to help them, but she needs an entire bushel of rosemary to brew up enough ointment to treat this many animals.

D. ROSEMARY BUSHES MODERATE 1

The day after the poisoning, Edra asks the PCs if they could bring her some rosemary to help her take care of the horses. She knows a spot in the woods nearby that is thick with the plants. Unfortunately, it is also the home of a rather ferocious old bear that tends to sleep among the bushes.

Creature: The bear can be overcome in a variety of ways. It spends most of the time sleeping, so if the PCs decide to attack it, they can easily surprise the animal. Alternatively, a character using Stealth could sneak in and gather the plants, but due to all of the crunchy leaves on the ground, Stealth checks are made with a -2 circumstance penalty. Finally, the bear is not too bright and can be lured away without too much trouble; simply making noise nearby or summoning a creature to distract it would be enough. In any case, retrieving the rosemary earns the XP award for defeating the bear, even if the creature was only lured away or tricked.

If the PCs do not help with this, the horses become sick and the PCs cannot borrow them when exploring the countryside later in the adventure.

GRIZZLY BEAR

CREATURE 3

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Initiative Perception +10; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet



Poison Vial



Farmer Eallom

QUESTIONING FARMER EALLOM

Farmer Eallom can be found in his fields most days and in the taproom of the Feedmill most nights. He is in a foul mood each morning as he recovers from the excess of the past evening. He is less hostile to visitors in the afternoons, but even on the best of days the farmer is not friendly. His farm is on the north side of town and is easily mistaken for being abandoned, as it isn't in good repair.

Eallom's memory of the night of the murder (as with most any night) is a bit hazy. He remembers getting into a fight with "that clumsy fool Kolnral," and he recalls talking to Rolth, but he has little to say about Bort. He was gambling and drinking with Olf and Ulf before and after the fight, and he is still quite bitter about the amount of coin they won from him that night.

QUESTIONING FLONK

Flonk can be found around town during the afternoon and in the tavern at night. In either case, he is busy performing—badly.

The bard has little to offer the characters. Before the brawl, he was both drinking and performing, and any information he offers is likely to conflict with other accounts.

QUESTIONING KOLNRL

Kolnral lives not far from the Feedmill with his wife and newborn daughter. After the poisoning, he can be found at home, recovering from the injuries suffered during the bar brawl. He is happy to talk to the PCs about the night of Bort's poisoning.

Kolnral confirms that he served drinks while Trin served the food. He also can confirm that Amora was busy in the kitchen while Phinick assisted around the bar and kitchen. Most of his interactions that night were with Delma, as she prepared drinks for him to serve to thirsty guests. The last thing he clearly recalls is accidentally bumping into Eallom, which caused

the farmer to spill his drink and start the brawl. When Kolnral was knocked to the floor, he saw Phinick fleeing the bar, but the rest is a blur. He regained his senses shortly after Bort's death.

QUESTIONING PHINICK

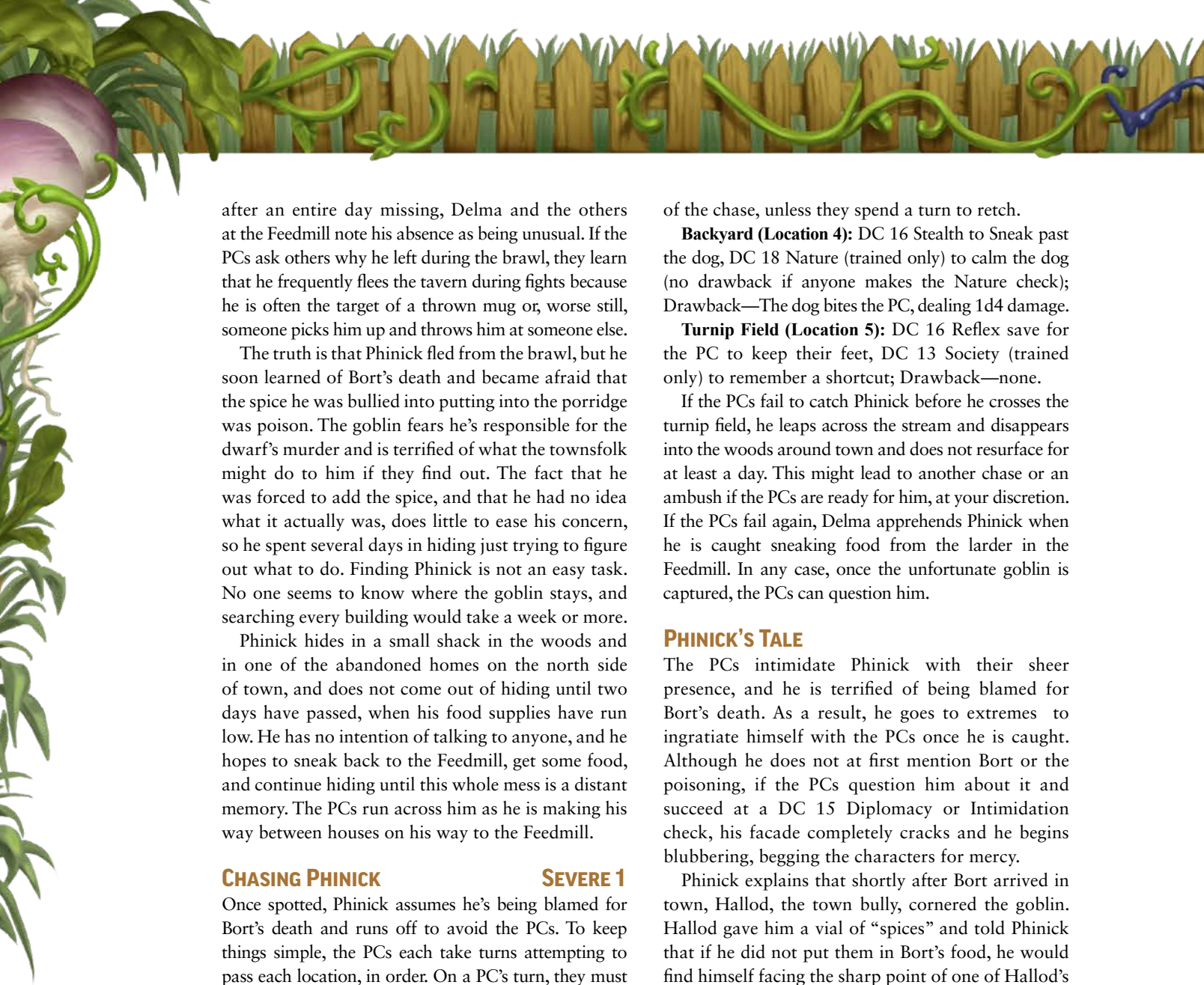
Phinick disappeared during the bar brawl, and

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after an entire day missing, Delma and the others at the Feedmill note his absence as being unusual. If the PCs ask others why he left during the brawl, they learn that he frequently flees the tavern during fights because he is often the target of a thrown mug or, worse still, someone picks him up and throws him at someone else.

The truth is that Phinick fled from the brawl, but he soon learned of Bort's death and became afraid that the spice he was bullied into putting into the porridge was poison. The goblin fears he's responsible for the dwarf's murder and is terrified of what the townsfolk might do to him if they find out. The fact that he was forced to add the spice, and that he had no idea what it actually was, does little to ease his concern, so he spent several days in hiding just trying to figure out what to do. Finding Phinick is not an easy task. No one seems to know where the goblin stays, and searching every building would take a week or more.

Phinick hides in a small shack in the woods and in one of the abandoned homes on the north side of town, and does not come out of hiding until two days have passed, when his food supplies have run low. He has no intention of talking to anyone, and he hopes to sneak back to the Feedmill, get some food, and continue hiding until this whole mess is a distant memory. The PCs run across him as he is making his way between houses on his way to the Feedmill.

CHASING PHINICK

Once spotted, Phinick assumes he's being blamed for Bort's death and runs off to avoid the PCs. To keep things simple, the PCs each take turns attempting to pass each location, in order. On a PC's turn, they must attempt one of the listed checks for each location or give up the chase. Each success earns the PC 1 point toward catching Phinick, while a critical success awards 2. If a PC fails a check, they suffer the listed drawback (if any). Either way, the PCs move on to the next location. A PC who accumulates 4 points catches Phinick at that location, and if no PC gains 4 points after attempting checks at all five locations, Phinick escapes. Turns don't correspond to time; a PC with more points reaches new locations before a PC with fewer points, but once the chase is over, the rest of the PCs catch up.

The Market (Location 1): DC 13 Athletics to push past carts, DC 15 Acrobatics to vault around them; Drawback—none.

The Road (Location 2): DC 14 Fortitude save to sprint; Drawback—winded (the PC takes a –1 circumstance penalty to checks at the next location).

The Alley (Location 3): DC 15 Reflex save to avoid falling in the mud, DC 13 Survival to pick a better path; Drawback—The PC is sickened 1 for the rest

of the chase, unless they spend a turn to retch.

Backyard (Location 4): DC 16 Stealth to Sneak past the dog, DC 18 Nature (trained only) to calm the dog (no drawback if anyone makes the Nature check); Drawback—The dog bites the PC, dealing 1d4 damage.

Turnip Field (Location 5): DC 16 Reflex save for the PC to keep their feet, DC 13 Society (trained only) to remember a shortcut; Drawback—none.

If the PCs fail to catch Phinick before he crosses the turnip field, he leaps across the stream and disappears into the woods around town and does not resurface for at least a day. This might lead to another chase or an ambush if the PCs are ready for him, at your discretion. If the PCs fail again, Delma apprehends Phinick when he is caught sneaking food from the larder in the Feedmill. In any case, once the unfortunate goblin is captured, the PCs can question him.

PHINICK'S TALE

The PCs intimidate Phinick with their sheer presence, and he is terrified of being blamed for Bort's death. As a result, he goes to extremes to ingratiate himself with the PCs once he is caught. Although he does not at first mention Bort or the poisoning, if the PCs question him about it and succeed at a DC 15 Diplomacy or Intimidation check, his facade completely cracks and he begins blubbling, begging the characters for mercy.

Phinick explains that shortly after Bort arrived in town, Hallod, the town bully, cornered the goblin. Hallod gave him a vial of "spices" and told Phinick that if he did not put them in Bort's food, he would find himself facing the sharp point of one of Hallod's many knives. The bully told Phinick that the spices would only make Bort sick: a little payback for a bad deal he made with the merchant the last time he was in town. Not wanting to face a severe beating, Phinick agreed and slipped the contents of the vial into Bort's porridge just before the fight broke out.

Shortly thereafter, Phinick fled the bar, only to learn the next morning that Bort had died from his poisoned dessert. Terrified, Phinick has been hiding ever since. He realizes he's involved, but he begs the characters for mercy, claiming honestly that he had no idea the vial was filled with deadly poison. If the players bring Rolth Garley into this, the sheriff takes the goblin into custody, locking him up in the cellar of his house until the circuit judge arrives. After hearing the goblin's story, Rolth says that it would go much easier for Phinick if Hallod were in custody as well. Rolth is afraid of the massive man, and refuses to take on the bully himself, asking the PCs to do it instead. Rolth is firm in his belief that Phinick should not go unpunished for this crime,

but he also is willing to listen to reason, suggesting the goblin could earn a lighter sentence if the PCs speak to the judge on his behalf.

Both Phinick and Rolth know that Halloed lives at Dead Willow, one of the seemingly abandoned buildings on the north side of town. If the PCs end up exploring Dead Willow, go to the Halloed's Hideout section of this adventure.

XP Award: When the PCs discover Halloed's involvement in Bort's death, award the party 30 XP.

QUESTIONING SIR LAWREN KRENT

Sir Lawren Krent can be found most days sleeping in an abandoned home or a drainage ditch. He smells quite bad by morning, but most days, he dumps a bucket of water or two over himself to preserve what shreds of dignity he has left.

Sir Lawren is not much help to the PCs' investigation. He fled the moment the bar brawl began, and he was very drunk before it had even started. The former knight is terrified of conflict, and he is constantly looking over his shoulder as if he is being followed. See the side quest section on page 59 for more information on what is haunting Sir Lawren.

QUESTIONING TRIN

Trin works four nights a week at the Feedmill while her brother Marny stays home to work the crops, despite the fact that the soil seems to have turned sour.

E. TRIN'S HOUSE

Trin and Marny live on a small turnip farm on the southwest side of town. Although the farm has been struggling this year, the siblings get by on their combined income.

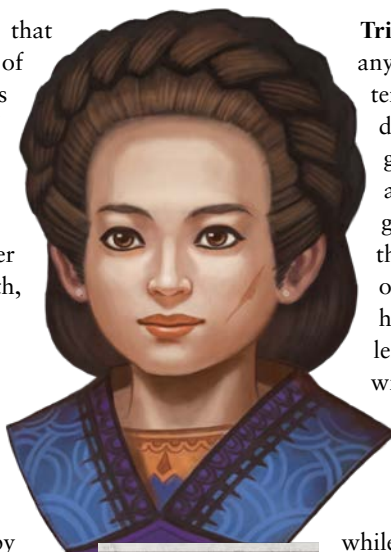
Creature: When the PCs arrive at the farm, a PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Perception check notices Marny running clockwise around the farmhouse. The PCs have enough time for a single action, such as drawing a weapon or moving. A moment later, a gigantic boar rounds the farmhouse, chasing the poor man. If the PCs jump into action, they can roll initiative as normal. If they stay back, the pig chases Marny for a minute, catches up to him, wounds him terribly, and flees into the woods.

BOAR

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CREATURE 2

Initiative Perception +8; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet



Trin Sathern

Trin's Testimony: Marny thanks any PCs that fought the boar or tended his wounds. If the PCs defeated the angry beast, the farmer gratefully offers to dress and cook the animal for them. Trin recognizes the group from the Feedmill and invites them inside for tea. A bruise is visible on her face. Until they inform her, Trin has no idea that Bort is dead, having left the bar after being hit in the face with a mug. She is shocked by the news of the merchant's death and gladly helps by relating everything she can remember.

Trin spent the evening serving food while Kolnral served drinks. As a result, she spent most of her night going back and forth between the kitchen and tables. She recalls serving all of the food at the PCs' table, including the turnip porridge right before the fight began. During the struggle, she stood near the table, having just dropped off the desserts, and that's when she was hit with the mug. Her memory after that is a blur until she got home, when her brother took care of her. She does not recall seeing anyone near the food who should not have been; she confirms that Amora prepared it and Phinick plated it.

table, including the turnip porridge right before the fight began. During the struggle, she stood near the table, having just dropped off the desserts, and that's when she was hit with the mug. Her memory after that is a blur until she got home, when her brother took care of her. She does not recall seeing anyone near the food who should not have been; she confirms that Amora prepared it and Phinick plated it.

HALLOED'S HIDEOUT

Eventually the characters should try to find Halloed at Dead Willow. Located on the north side of town, the building is easy to find—it earned its name from a large dying tree in the front yard—and it's in very poor condition. When the PCs approach, read or paraphrase the following.

A huge, dead willow stands in front of a house that appears to be in serious disrepair. It might have had a second story at one time, but that long ago collapsed into ruin, taking parts of the first floor with it. The windows are all boarded over, and the front door hangs open about a foot, kept from swinging wider by a frayed rope.

The yard is a complete mess of overgrown weeds. The house itself is constructed from thick wooden posts, slats, and plaster. It's barely standing, with the entire second floor having collapsed, filling much of the first floor with debris and dense thatch mats originally

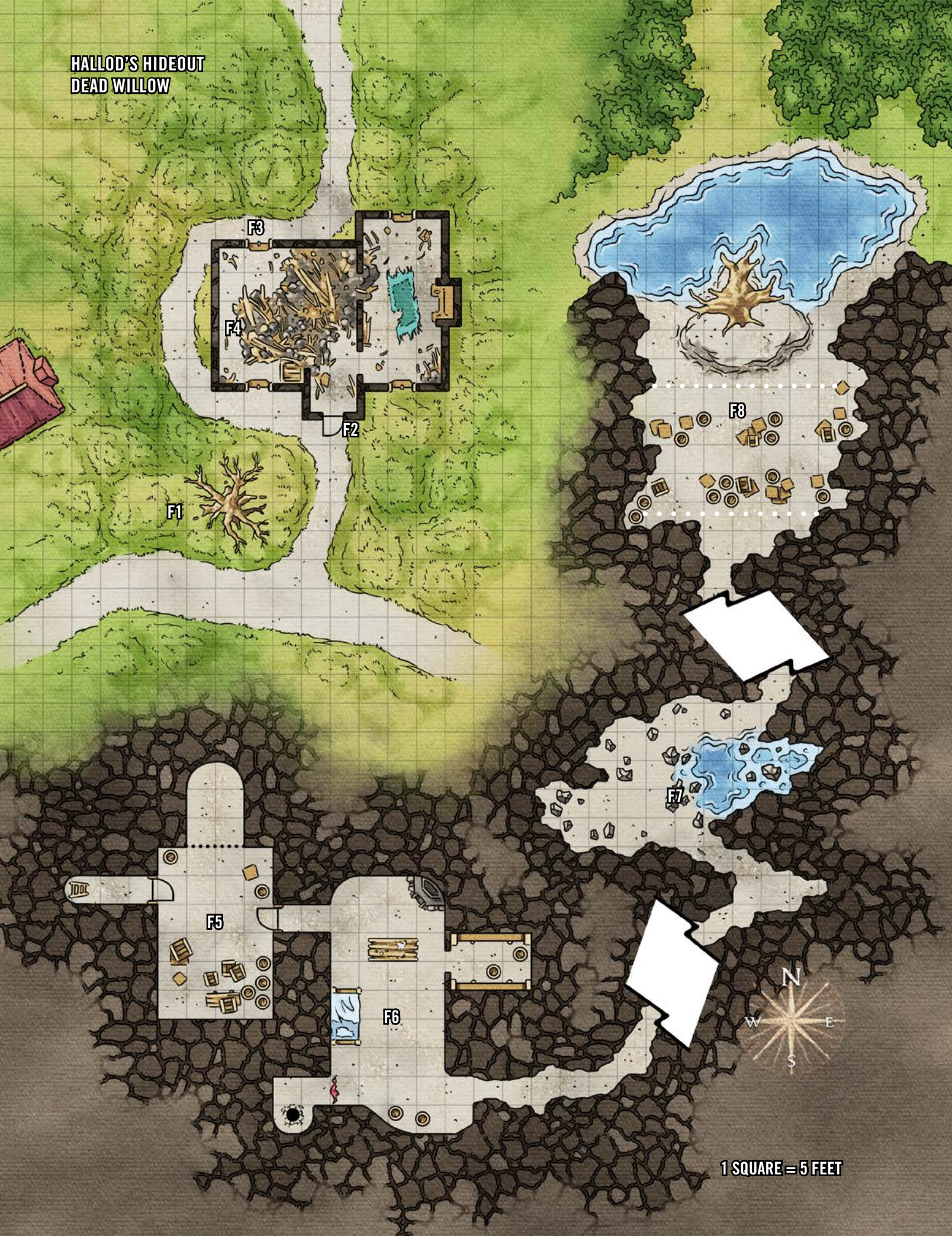
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HALLOD'S HIDEOUT
DEAD WILLOW



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

from the roof. There is danger here: Hallod has placed more than one trap to harm uninvited guests.

Deep beneath the crumbling house is a small basement area connected to a series of caves that eventually emerge under the roots of a giant old tree in the forest outside town. Hallod discovered this secret exit years ago when he first explored the house, and he now uses it as a hideout to serve Vilree's interests in Etran's Folly. He has also used it to smuggle alchemical reagents out of town, and to move more sinister cargo in. It is the existence of these caves that has made Hallod such a valuable minion to Vilree, and no one but Hallod and a few of Vilree's other subordinates know about them.

Hallod is here, laying low until the events surrounding Bort's death blow over.

F1. THE YARD

The yard around the house is choked with weeds and debris from the collapsed house. The area around the willow tree is all but impassible, as the dead branches and leaves have made a large heap around its trunk. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Survival check reveals that someone frequents the property; their trail leads up to the front door, circles the house, and leads down to the stream. A critical success on this check uncovers that the trail never actually goes in through the poorly latched front door.

F2. FRONT DOOR

The front door to the house no longer sits properly in its frame and is kept from swinging wide open by a simple rope attached to the inside latch. Even with this, it still hangs open about a foot. All of this is a ruse, as this entrance is trapped. (Hallod never goes in using the front door, instead using a window in the back.)

Hazard: The taut rope holding the door disappears into a pile of debris clogging the foyer beyond. Hidden inside the heaps of straw, broken wood, and chunks of plaster is an old heavy crossbow that Hallod has rigged to fire a spear through the doorway if the rope is cut or otherwise released from the door.

SPEAR LAUNCHER

HAZARD 2

MECHANICAL **TRAP**

Stealth DC 20 (trained)

Description An old heavy crossbow is hidden in a pile of trash, loaded with a wooden spear, and connected to the rope holding the door.

Disable Thievery DC 18 (trained) on the rope allows a PC to tie the rope off and open the door without setting off the trap.

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

Hardness 8; **HP** 32 (BT 16); **Immunities**

critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Spear  (attack); **Trigger** The rope is cut or otherwise untied from the door. **Effect** The trap makes an attack against the creature that manipulated the rope.

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

Beyond the door, the foyer empties into a clearly abandoned living space. The hearth is choked with branches and debris from above, the furniture is smashed and soiled, and a thick layer of dirt and grime covers every surface. It is obvious that no one has used this room in years. The only other exit leads to a room thoroughly filled with debris from the collapsed roof above. Digging through the debris would take several hours at least and would likely cause a further collapse of the ruined second story above. If the PCs do find a way through, they enter area **F4** without needing to use the hidden window entrance (**F3**).

F3. HIDDEN WINDOW ENTRANCE

The footpath that leads around the house passes under a boarded-over window at the back of the house, then down to the stream where Hallod gets water. The boarded-over window is fake; Hallod nailed the boards onto a hinged shutter, allowing it to be opened with ease. This ruse is not simple to detect, but careful inspection and a successful DC 16 Perception check uncovers it.

The shutter is latched from the inside, and there does not appear to be a keyhole of any sort, but due to its roughly constructed nature, the shutter can be opened with a successful DC 16 Thievery check (trained) or Forced Open with a successful DC 18 Athletics check.

F4. CRAWLWAY AND HATCH

The shuttered entrance leads to a room filled with debris from the collapsed roof. There's just enough room for two Medium creatures to stand in this space, and a cursory inspection from this spot uncovers a crawlway under the debris. Unlike everything else, this crawlway is mostly free from grime and dust. Characters can move through the crawlway only in single file. Medium creatures can crawl 5 feet per action; Small and smaller creatures can move at normal speed.

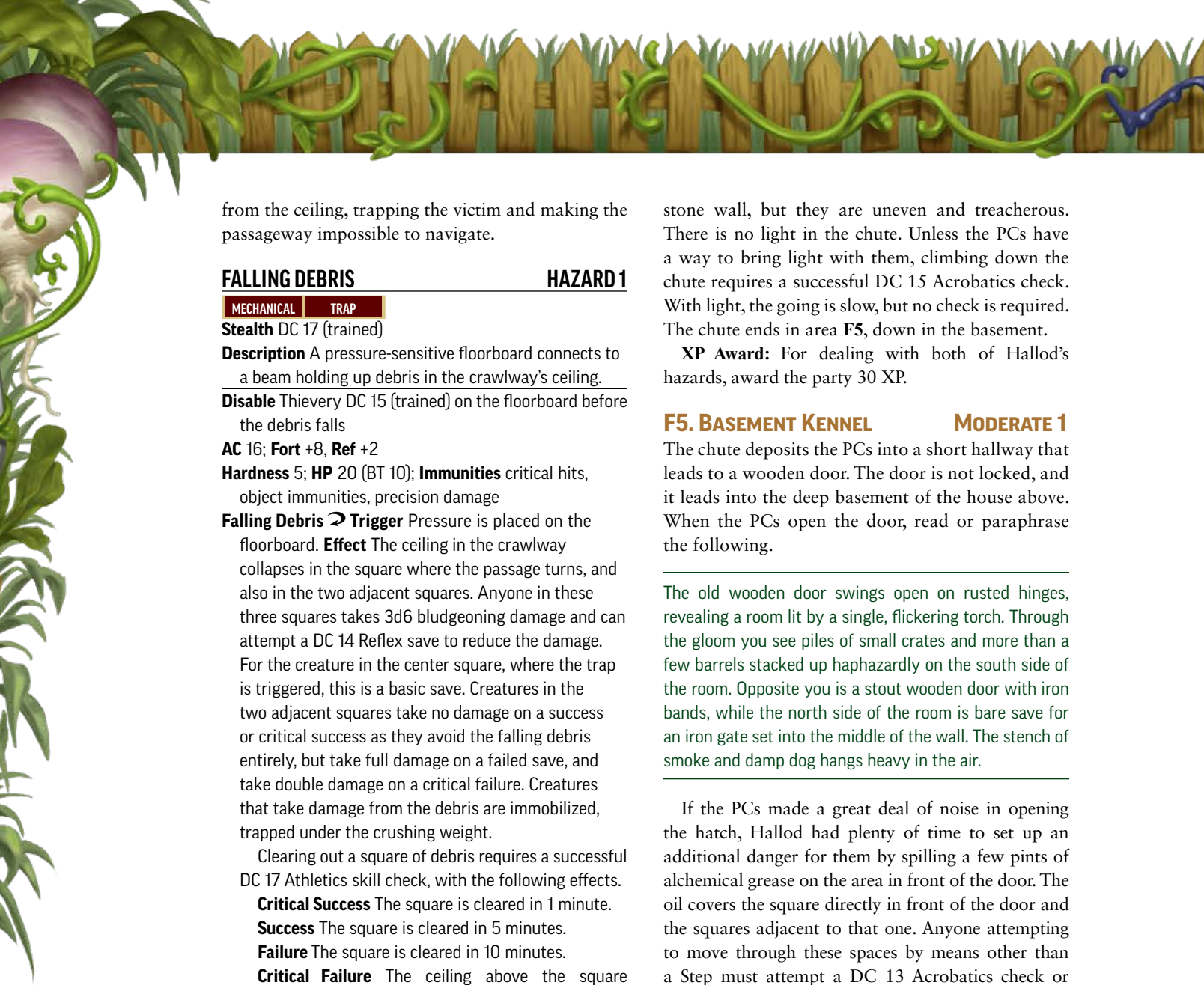
Hazard: After 15 feet, the crawlway takes a left turn. There is a trap located in the floor at this spot. Anyone putting pressure on the floor where the crawlway turns sets off the trap: debris rains down

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from the ceiling, trapping the victim and making the passageway impossible to navigate.

FALLING DEBRIS

HAZARD 1

MECHANICAL **TRAP**

Stealth DC 17 (trained)

Description A pressure-sensitive floorboard connects to a beam holding up debris in the crawlway's ceiling.

Disable Thievery DC 15 (trained) on the floorboard before the debris falls

AC 16; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +2

Hardness 5; **HP** 20 (BT 10); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Falling Debris **Trigger** Pressure is placed on the floorboard. **Effect** The ceiling in the crawlway collapses in the square where the passage turns, and also in the two adjacent squares. Anyone in these three squares takes 3d6 bludgeoning damage and can attempt a DC 14 Reflex save to reduce the damage. For the creature in the center square, where the trap is triggered, this is a basic save. Creatures in the two adjacent squares take no damage on a success or critical success as they avoid the falling debris entirely, but take full damage on a failed save, and take double damage on a critical failure. Creatures that take damage from the debris are immobilized, trapped under the crushing weight.

Clearing out a square of debris requires a successful DC 17 Athletics skill check, with the following effects.

Critical Success The square is cleared in 1 minute.

Success The square is cleared in 5 minutes.

Failure The square is cleared in 10 minutes.

Critical Failure The ceiling above the square collapses further, dealing an additional 2d6 to the character digging out the square and any character trapped in that square. This takes 1 minute and no progress is made.

Beyond the turn, the crawlway continues for another 10 feet before opening up into a small chamber that appears to have once been a closet. The door leaving the space is barred by debris on the other side and cannot be opened, but there is a hatch built into the floor. It is very old, but free from debris and dust. The hatch is not locked, but the hinge is terribly rusted. Opening it without making any noise requires a successful DC 18 Thievery check, although applying oil to the hinge reduces this to DC 12. If the PCs make noise lifting the hatch, Hallod has even more time to prepare for the PCs arrival, as noted in **F5**, below.

Under the hatch is a stone-lined chute that descends almost 30 feet. Handholds have been carved into the

stone wall, but they are uneven and treacherous. There is no light in the chute. Unless the PCs have a way to bring light with them, climbing down the chute requires a successful DC 15 Acrobatics check. With light, the going is slow, but no check is required. The chute ends in area **F5**, down in the basement.

XP Award: For dealing with both of Hallod's hazards, award the party 30 XP.

F5. BASEMENT KENNEL

MODERATE 1

The chute deposits the PCs into a short hallway that leads to a wooden door. The door is not locked, and it leads into the deep basement of the house above. When the PCs open the door, read or paraphrase the following.

The old wooden door swings open on rusted hinges, revealing a room lit by a single, flickering torch. Through the gloom you see piles of small crates and more than a few barrels stacked up haphazardly on the south side of the room. Opposite you is a stout wooden door with iron bands, while the north side of the room is bare save for an iron gate set into the middle of the wall. The stench of smoke and damp dog hangs heavy in the air.

If the PCs made a great deal of noise in opening the hatch, Hallod had plenty of time to set up an additional danger for them by spilling a few pints of alchemical grease on the area in front of the door. The oil covers the square directly in front of the door and the squares adjacent to that one. Anyone attempting to move through these spaces by means other than a Step must attempt a DC 13 Acrobatics check or Reflex saving throw or fall prone.

The door leading out of this room into area **F6** is locked, but it can be opened with two successful DC 15 Thievery skill checks. It can also be Forced Open with a successful DC 20 Athletics check or by dealing 40 points of damage to the door (Hardness 10).

Creatures: Even if the PCs did not make noise while opening the hatch, they cannot possibly make it down the chute without alerting Hallod, who then stations himself beyond the wooden door to area **F6**. Watching through a slit in the door, he begins turning a wheel that raises the iron gate as soon as the PCs enter the room. This releases four angry and starving guard dogs into the room. Their barks and growls flood the room the moment the grate begins to move.

Roll initiative for the dogs as normal, but they all lose one action on the first round as they wait for the grate to fully open before charging in to attack.

GUARD DOGS (4)

CREATURE -1

Pathfinder Bestiary 102

Initiative Perception +6; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Rewards: Anyone searching through the barrels and crates finds them to be empty save for packing straw and scraps of cloth, but a successful DC 16 Perception check while digging through them uncovers 2 vials of lesser alchemist's fire, forgotten underneath a pile of straw. A critical success at this check also reveals a small glass bottle filled with a murky, foul-smelling brown liquid. Identifying this liquid requires a DC 19 Crafting skill check. Success reveals that it is a foul alchemical reagent called corpse blood, used in a variety of alchemical items mostly related to disease, poison, or their antidotes. The box containing this bottle clearly once had 7 other bottles in it, all of which appear to be missing.

F6. HALLOD'S HOME

This chamber is entered via a short hallway remarkable only for a large steel wheel on the wall; this opens the iron gate in area **F5**, behind which Halloed keeps his dogs. A viewing slit in the door to area **F5** allows one to see into that room. Halloed flees immediately after releasing his guard dogs. He moves quickly through this area, exiting into the caves beyond where there are additional defenses and, more importantly, his stash of juggernaut mutagen. This leaves his living quarters unattended, but searching for clues here will take time.

The home is divided into three areas: the larder, the lavatory, and the living space. The larder is a simple storeroom filled with scraps of old meat, a third of a wheel of cheese, a sack of turnips, and a barrel of weak ale. There is also a crate of empty wine bottles in one corner. They are all of a good Chelish vintage and were probably quite valuable.

The lavatory sits just off the main living space, and it is little more than an open pit. This is also where Halloed disposes of his garbage, and there are scraps of moldy food and bits of junk in the corners of the room. Anyone who investigates can attempt a DC 15 Perception check to notice that there are a number of small, identical bottles scattered among the trash. Examining the bottles reveals they all have a silvery residue in the bottom that smells strongly of iron and something else terribly acrid. A successful DC 15 Crafting check reveals this to be remnants of a juggernaut mutagen. A critical success on this check uncovers that there is also something sweet-smelling in the mix. (This is an addictive oil that Vilree started

adding to the elixir a few years back to ensure that Halloed remained loyal to her, but the PCs have no way of learning this information just yet.)

The living area is a mess, with a cot in one corner and a crude firepit in the other. A simple chimney leads up from this room before connecting to another in the house above. Bits of trash and a few pieces of gear can be found with a simple search, including a whetstone, a dagger, 15 feet of rope, a hammer, 2 candles, and a coin purse with 2 gp, 8 sp, and 14 cp. This area connects to the larder, to the lavatory, to the short hallway leading back to the kennel, and to an open passageway that leads off into darkness.

Hazard: The real prize to be found here is a strongbox located underneath the cot. Although it is not hard to find, it is made from stout wood, banded in iron, closed with a simple lock, and trapped. The chest can be opened with three successful DC 20 Thievery skill checks, or with the key that Halloed has in his pocket. In either case, attempting to open the box triggers the trap if it is not disarmed first.

POISONED LOCK

HAZARD 1

MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 17 (trained)

Description A spring-loaded, poisoned spine is hidden near the keyhole of a lock.

Disable Thievery DC 17 (trained) on the spring mechanism
AC 15; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +4

Hardness 6; **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Spring Dart  (attack); **Trigger** A creature attempts to unlock or pick the lock. **Effect** A spine springs out and attacks the triggering creature.

Melee spine +13, **Damage** 1 piercing plus cladis poison

Cladis Poison (poison) **Saving Throw** DC 19 Fortitude;

Maximum Duration 4 hours; **Stage 1** 1d6 poison damage and drained 1 (1 hour); **Stage 2** 2d6 poison damage and drained 2 (1 hour); **Stage 3** 3d6 poison damage and drained 2 (1 hour)

Rewards: Inside the chest is a batch of 14 receipts that match the logs from Bort's ledgers (see Bort's Books on page 10), as well as a scrap of parchment that lists each transaction along with a value slightly higher than that listed on the corresponding receipt from Bort. The chest contains some of the gold that Halloed has skimmed from these transactions over the years (the reason for the difference in values). Although Halloed has spent much of the difference, the chest still contains 21 gp and 37 sp. Finally, on

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the back of the transaction list is a crude map. It depicts a cave helpfully labeled “HIDEOUT,” next to a shape that might be a pond; from there, a winding path passes through a strange V-shaped chamber before ending at what appears to be a clearing with a tree stump labeled “DROP POINT.” This is a map to the place where Hallod drops off the supplies he acquires, and where he received payments and drugs from Vilree.

The passageway leading from this chamber begins as worked stone, but as it goes further and further, it becomes more of a natural cavern passage, worked only here and there to make it more passable. It connects to area **F7**.

XP Award: If the PCs discover the map in the chest, award the party 30 XP.

F7. SNAKE POOL

Low 1

Beyond Hallod’s living quarters is a system of natural caves. Although the path is far from level, it has been worked to allow for easy travel; stalagmites have been cleared away in some spots and small wooden footbridges have been stretched over pools of stagnant water no more than 5 feet deep. After about 10 minutes of travel, the PCs arrive at a small cave with a larger, more ominous pool of water in the middle. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs enter this area.

The passageway opens up into a large natural chamber, the center of which is occupied by a pool of brackish water. Stalactites and stalagmites occupy much of the room, but a path between them leads around the pool and to another corridor on the opposite side of the cave.

Creature: The moment the PCs enter the room, a strange blue glow emanates up from the pool, sending a cascade of shimmering light to the ceiling above. Seconds later, the head of a giant blue snake rises from the pool with sparks of electricity dancing between its fangs, while a metal, rattle-tipped tail pokes out of the water behind it, audibly building up a charge with every flick of the rattle.

The giant lightning serpent was a gift from Vilree to Hallod to protect his lair. It is loyal to the brute, but it gives no quarter to the PCs.

GIANT LIGHTNING SERPENT CREATURE 2

UNIQUE N MEDIUM ANIMAL

Perception +7; low-light vision, scent (imprecise)
30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +8, Stealth +8, Survival +6

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

AC 19; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +7

HP 27

Coiled Opportunity ➤ As Attack of Opportunity, but the serpent can use this reaction only if it’s coiled.

Speed 20 feet, climb 20 feet, swim 20 feet

Melee ⚔ fangs +11 (finesse), **Damage** 1d8+2 piercing plus 1d4 electricity

Coil ⚔ The serpent uses an action to coil itself; increasing its reach with its fangs from 5 feet to 10 feet. After the serpent strikes with its fangs, it becomes uncoiled.

Lightning Rattle ⚡⚡ The serpent rattles its strange metal tail and unleashes a bolt of lightning in a 60-foot line. The bolt deals 2d10 electricity damage (DC 17 basic Reflex save).



Giant Lightning Serpent

Once the giant lightning serpent uses this ability, it must wait 1d4 rounds before doing so again.

Reward: At the bottom of the shallow pool is the body of an explorer who died here many years ago. Nothing more than bones now, the body has slowly been consumed by limestone that has calcified around its skeleton. A successful DC 15 Perception check spots the body. Anyone who investigates finds the pommel of a weapon sticking out of the stone. Breaking it out will take a hammer and at least 20 minutes of work, but doing so recovers a low-grade silver rapier.

F8. HALLOD'S AMBUSH SEVERE 1

The tunnel beyond the snake's lair twists and turns for a great distance; it takes the PCs 10 minutes to traverse it before they can detect a faint natural light up ahead, and the air becomes notably cleaner, smelling vaguely of grass. After another 5 minutes of travel, the tunnel opens up into a cave mouth. Read or paraphrase the following to the players.

The tunnel you have been traversing opens into a cave, and you can see a forest beyond the cave's mouth. The roots of a large tree block the middle of this entrance, as if the tree had grown into a hillside that has since eroded away. Beyond the tree is a large pond; a path around the water begins to one side beneath a curtain of moss hanging from the tree. The cave itself is piled high with two rows of neatly stacked crates and boxes.

This cave is where Hallod stored the reagents before delivering them to Vilree at the prearranged drop spot. The thug waits here for the players to arrive, and he has a few traps prepared for them.

Creature: Hallod is a rough-looking man. He is bald and has a prominent scar running down his face from an axe wound he took years ago. He is wearing filthy leather armor and wields a nasty kukri with deadly efficiency. When the PCs enter the room, he hops up on a berm formed by the tree roots, aims his crossbow at them, and taunts them by saying, "I wondered when Bort's lackeys would arrive. Let's do this!"

Years ago, Hallod began making use of mutagens supplied to him by Vilree, but unbeknownst to him, they were laced with a drug that made them addictive. Today, Hallod is totally hooked on mutagen and will do whatever the alchemist demands so long as he can get his fix. At the start of the fight, he drinks his lesser juggernaut mutagen, then fires his crossbow and waits for the PCs to come to him. This also forces them to deal with his traps.

HALLOD

CREATURE 3

UNIQUE LE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +9

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +11, Nature +7, Stealth +8, Survival +7

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

Items heavy crossbow (10 bolts), +1 kukri, leather armor, lesser healing potion, lesser juggernaut mutagen (2), strongbox key

AC 19; Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +7



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Hallod,

The final shipment of corpse blood is due in just over a week, and it is the last thing I need from that greedy bastard, Bort. I've enclosed a parting gift for him that should ensure he never tells anyone of our dealings. Be sure that he gets it, my darling.

Drop off the reagents as soon as they arrive. My work is almost done. You will find your usual reward in the stump.

-V

HP 44

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ kukri +12 (agile, trip), **Damage** 1d6+6 slashing

Melee ♦ fist +11 (agile, nonlethal, unarmed), **Damage** 1d4+6 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ heavy crossbow +10 (range increment 120 ft., reload 2), **Damage** 1d10+2 piercing

Attack of Opportunity ↻

Dirty Trick ♦ **Trigger** Hallod scores a critical hit with a melee attack. **Effect** Hallod can attempt an Athletics check to Shove or Trip the target of his attack. This uses the same multiple attack penalty as the attack, but it does not count as an additional attack for that penalty.

One-Two Move ♦♦ Hallod makes two Strikes, one with each hand; he usually attacks first with his kukri. If this first attack hits, the target is flat-footed to the second attack (which for Hallod is usually a fist Strike). The multiple attack penalty applies to these attacks as normal.

Sneak Attack Hallod deals 1d6 extra precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Hazards: Hallod has set up a pair of spear launcher traps in this room, with rather obvious trip lines stretching from wall to wall between the rows of barrels and crates (these ropes are marked on the map with dotted lines). Due to this obvious nature, anyone about to enter a space occupied by a trip line can attempt a DC 15 Perception check to notice the trigger. Those that fail trigger the trap. Once seen, the ropes are obviously avoided, but characters cannot end their move in a space occupied by a rope without setting off the trap. Even if the PCs do not trigger the traps, Hallod

uses his Dirty Trick to push characters into them, making them trigger the traps.

In addition, if a character is pushed into a crate or box, the container collapses into a pile of broken wood and debris. The character must succeed at a DC 13 Reflex save or fall prone and take 1d4 piercing damage.

SPEAR LAUNCHERS (2)

HAZARD 2

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Rewards: Hallod has the key that opens the strongbox in area F6, and the crates here are not all empty. They contain 50 gp worth of alchemical reagents that can be used in Crafting alchemical items, a *runestone* containing the *shadow rune*, and 2 *everburning torches*.

XP Award: Bringing Hallod to justice is a significant milestone, worth an 80 XP story award (in addition to the normal XP for defeating the brute).

Last Missive: Folded up in Hallod's pocket is a note written on a scrap of parchment. It is in Vilree's handwriting, which is distinctly unlike any of the other writing the PCs have encountered in the adventure to this point. The style is plain and very severe, as if self-taught. See the handout above for details of Vilree's last missive to Hallod.

THE DROP POINT

Located about 3 miles outside Etran's Folly, the drop point on Hallod's map is little more than a large hollow tree stump in a small clearing. Inside are a few empty crates, but nothing of value. Knowing this location, however, is vital to learning the location of Vilree's true lair.

UNSOLVED MURDER

In tracking down Hallod and exploring his hideout, the players have made significant progress in determining who caused the untimely demise of Bort the dwarf merchant. Unfortunately, the villain who ordered the murder is still at large. Even worse, there's no way to learn where this mysterious "V" might be found.

Taking this information to Rolth only adds to the inept sheriff's worry. Worse than a simple murder, the PC's investigation has uncovered a nefarious plot involving secret agents and clandestine deliveries, with roots stretching back many years. These events do clear the name of the PCs and of the members of the caravan, but the sheriff pleads with the PCs to help him uncover the true culprit. There are two other factors at play here: Tamli's desire for closure, and the appearance of a mysterious ranger.

Tamli is keen to hear what happened in the caves underneath Hallod's home. She listens with rapt attention, the knuckles on her clenched hands white with tension, as the story unfolds. Although she is relieved that the man directly responsible for Bort's death has been caught, she grows quiet at the revelation that there was someone else involved. After a moment of silence, she asks how the PCs plan to find the mastermind behind all this, expecting the group to continue the search. Should they balk, a pained look crosses her face, and she retrieves her coin purse to offer them 43 gp in assorted coins to continue the investigation. It is her entire savings, but finding the killer means that much to her and the others.

Around this time (or perhaps just before the heroes go to Hallod's home), a mysterious ranger comes to town dragging a sledge and burdened by the carcasses of several wolves. The body of the caustic wolf from the beginning of this adventure is among the corpses (if the PCs did not bury it). The ranger is looking for whoever is responsible (see the Ranger's Request on page 24 for more information).

HALLOD LIVES?

It is possible that the PCs took Hallod alive, subduing him rather than killing him. If so, Sheriff Rolth has the thug bound to a post in a locked barn just outside town. Hallod is under constant watch, being held until the circuit judge arrives to mete out justice. The PCs are free to question him, but he refuses to say much of anything until the withdrawal from his mutagen addiction begins to take hold, which takes 3 or 4 days. At that point, Hallod will say just about anything to get another dose. Alternatively, the PCs might be able to coerce information out of Hallod or

THE SECRET OF VILREE

Vilree's identity and history are not meant to be a great secret, but the PCs should have to invest some effort in uncovering her backstory. There are many people around town who are old enough to remember the plague and the dark years that followed it, most notably Edra Wythe, Delma and Targen Fulst, and Flonk, who picked up the tale shortly after he arrived (although his details might be suspect). Most have some recollection of the events concerning Silwyth the alchemist and her feud with Father Bolgrist, the town priest; if pressed, they remember that Silwyth had a daughter named Vilree who survived the plague but disappeared a few years after. The most likely source of this tale is Targen Fulst, who tells part of it when the PCs take him on a tour of the town (page 12).

talk him into revealing a few details by using skills (mostly likely Diplomacy and Intimidation), subject to your discretion.

In any case, Hallod is not too bright and actually knows very little about his employer's plans. He knows her name is Vilree, and that she once lived in Etran's Folly, but he does not know when or why she left. He met her about six years ago, when he chanced upon her in the woods. He found her roasting beetles from nearby trees and collecting the ashes, and she invited him to share her fire and her wine. He was enchanted by her strange countenance—she has big eyes and pointed ears, but not so pointed as an elf's. They met several times over the next few months, and while Hallod was smitten, Vilree never returned the affection. Hoping to prove himself, Hallod began to do small tasks for her, and she began to use him to smuggle goods back and forth from Etran's Folly via the cave network underneath his home. He never learned where she lived, and as time went on, they met in person less and less. Vilree is busy, he says; she has important work to do (not that Hallod has any idea what that is). He has not seen her in person for over a year now, and they communicate only by notes left at their prearranged drop point. He gets her whatever she asks for; in return, she pays him and makes sure he has an ample supply of his addictive mutagen.

Halloid has no further role to play in this adventure. If left in Rolth's custody, he is taken away by the circuit judge in a month's time to serve in a labor mine for the rest of his life.

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PART 2: THE RANGER'S REQUEST

This part of the adventure can occur anytime after the PCs arrive in town, but preferably after a few days have passed—perhaps during the investigation into Bort's death. It begins when Noala Kessir, an elven ranger, comes to Etran's Folly looking for the people who killed several wolves just outside of town. She had been tracking the beasts, including their mutated leader, and is relieved to see them put down. She hopes to find those responsible, as they might be hardy enough to help her root out the cause of these corrupted animals. She asks around town until she is directed to the PCs. Once this occurs, read or paraphrase the following.

A woman shrouded in a heavy brown cloak trimmed with leaves marches up to you, pulling a simple wooden sledge behind her. As she approaches, she brings the sledge to one side and uncovers her cargo, a pile of wolf carcasses. She turns to you, and despite having her cloak's hood pulled low, you can make out weathered lips and a slender chin. In a pointed tone, she asks, "Is this your work?"

Noala has been serving these woods for many years, having retired here after fighting in the Goblinblood wars.

It was a conflict that left her broken, but not defeated. Hoping to find purpose after all the violence, she found these people in need and decided to stay. No one in town has any particular reason to trust her, but she does not need their trust to keep the folk and the wilds from abusing one another. The only person who has any regular dealings with Noala is Delma, who sells her supplies and reassures her that the community values her work. Delma has also made it clear that she hopes to make the ranger's role one that is officially supported by the town, once her father finally retires.

Noala is suspicious of others, but the aging ranger recognizes that things have slowly been getting worse and, as she's nursing an arm injury, the crisis is beyond her ability to solve alone. She hopes that the PCs will help her get to the bottom of the blight that has taken hold of the wilderness around Etran's Folly.

THE BLIGHT

For the past several years, there has been an ever-growing blight in the region. What started a few years ago with a single group of sickly trees has become a series of seemingly unconnected pockets of dead and dying plants. Worse still, some of the animals

living near these areas have strange mutations and have turned hostile to travelers and locals alike. There is no obvious cause. The only common element is that in each afflicted area, the blight seems to start in a grove of very large, old trees. What Noala does not realize is that below the surface, the deep taproots of these older trees are absorbing groundwater polluted by alchemical runoff and discarded reagents from Vilree's secret lair.

The people of Etran's Folly are only vaguely aware of this growing problem, and they always seem to have a mundane explanation for what's happening: it's just a bad summer, or maybe a pig died in the stream a few months back. Noala knows it is something more, and while she has done all she can to keep the people safe and put down any blighted creatures, she simply cannot solve this problem on her own. Several months ago, after cataloging the locations of the largest blights, she went to Sheriff Rolth with Delma's blessing, hoping that he might request aid from the local baron. Unfortunately, the lazy sheriff has no time for "tree problems," and he pointedly refused to help her or even inform anyone else of the danger.

Now things are worse than ever, and some of the blights are showing signs that the plants themselves are changing, becoming something else.

A SIMPLE TASK

Noala fears that if she does not get to the bottom of this problem soon, it may spread to the farms and fields, affecting the town and even spreading further than this small community. In this desperate hour, she sees the PCs as her best chance at success.

After introducing herself, she asks if they might accompany her out into the woods where she can burn the wolves' bodies and talk in private. If the PCs would rather discuss things in town, the disposal of the wolf corpses can wait. Assuming they find a quiet place to talk, read or paraphrase the following.

The mysterious woman leads you to a clearing in the woods, not far from the town itself, where a small fire is already burning in a carefully kept fire pit. She tosses back her hood to reveal long, elven ears and deep, emerald eyes. With one hand, she begins to drag the wolf

corpses to the flame. She avoids the use of her right hand, which is entirely covered in an oddly shaped leather gauntlet.

"These wolves aren't the first, and I am afraid they won't be the last. Worse still," she grunts, as she begins to drag the body of the caustic wolf to the fire, "the forest itself is turning sour. Plants and trees are withering, bearing bitter fruit that sickens and kills those who eat it. If you've been out to the old orchard, you've seen it. The blight is growing, and I need your help to stop it."

Noala's proposition is simple. She explains what she knows about the blight and asks the PCs to accompany her to these dying parts of the woods and get to the bottom of it. While the characters might not want to take on this mission merely out of generosity,

Noala offers to train them in wilderness survival skills and ranged combat techniques if they agree to help her (see Noala's Training in the Rules and Rewards section on page 56).

Any offer to help her burn the corpses is gladly accepted, but Noala refuses to talk about her hand, saying only that it is an old wound. If pressed, she offers up that maybe it is a tale worth telling, but only after the blight is dealt with. See Noala's entry in the NPCs Around Town appendix on page 53 for more information.

If the PCs have already defeated Hallod, they might suspect that these blights and the mysterious "V" are in some way related. Noala knows nothing of Vilree, but the fact that there is someone working with vile reagents strikes her as unlikely to be a coincidence. She suggests that finding the cause of the blight might help track down the person behind Bort's death.

If the PCs agree, Noala offers to take them to a nearby blight in the morning, perhaps moving on to a larger one deeper in the forest if necessary. She tells the PCs to pack for a lengthy journey, as the largest blight is located deep in the woods and is hard to reach on foot. If the PCs have not yet caught Hallod, they may have to do so before being able to leave town without provoking Rolth's ire. Noala is willing to wait for the PCs, but she stresses the urgency of the situation.

THE BLIGHTED DEN

When the PCs are ready to go exploring with Noala, she arranges to meet them just outside of town at the site of the wolf ambush. Noala arrives at first light.



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THE BLIGHTED DEN

A detailed D&D 5e map titled "THE BLIGHTED DEN" showing a forest clearing with a grid overlay. The map includes a compass rose, a scale bar (1 square = 5 feet), and various terrain features like a stream, a large tree, and a pile of bones. Two locations are marked with labels G1 and G2.

Map Features:

- Compass Rose:** Located in the bottom left corner, showing North (N), South (S), East (E), and West (W).
- Scale:** 1 SQUARE = 5 FEET, located in the bottom right corner.
- Location G1:** A pile of bones or a small structure in the center-right area.
- Location G2:** A small stream or pool of water in the bottom left area.
- Terrain:** The map is divided into a grid of squares. The central area is a light green clearing, while the surrounding areas are dark green forest. A large, gnarled tree trunk is visible in the center.

Traveling to the first blight takes about 3 hours on foot. Mounts do nothing to hasten this pace, as the trail is little more than a winding game path.

SEVERE 2

The presence of rot increases with every step you take, and Noala slows to a stop, turns to look at you, saying,

From here, the players need only follow the trail into the heart of this small blight. As they travel, the ground softens and squelches underfoot due to the sticky runoff from all the dying plants. Soon after, the trail opens into an area with tall trees but little underbrush. The path continues toward the rotting remains of a truly titanic tree and, under its roots, there appears to be a small cave. Unfortunately, there is danger here, blocking the PCs' path.

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BLOODLASH BUSHES (3)

CREATURE 2

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Initiative Perception +6; tremorsense (imprecise) 30 feet

G2. FOUL DEN

SEVERE 2

After dealing with the bushes, the characters are free to explore the den underneath the old, rotting tree. Anyone approaching the opening picks up the overpowering smell of wet and rotten fur coming from the hole. Unfortunately, the hole is not quite big enough for the PCs to enter without getting on their hands and knees. Should the PCs climb inside, read or paraphrase the following.

The narrow tunnel is slick with foul-smelling mud. It leads down into a cramped den lit by a shimmering pool of oily water. The chamber stinks of wet fur and sickness. Next to the pool, between the gnarled and dying tree roots, is the rotting carcass of what must have once been a truly gigantic wolf. Nosing around it is a pair of hairless mutant wolves, their bodies deformed by large pustules and tumors. Although they have no eyes, they clearly detect your presence, for they turn their heads at you and snarl.

The glowing pool provides the chamber with dim light. Without additional light, creatures lacking darkvision or low-light vision treat all creatures as concealed. Due to the low ceiling in this chamber, Medium or larger creatures treat the entire area as difficult terrain. The roots and moss hanging from the ceiling make it so that any creature more than 5 feet away is screened from ranged attacks.

Creatures: The mutant wolves are the last survivors of the pack that attacked the PCs, living here in the den with the corpse of their mother. They are hairless, eyeless, and their blood is an alchemical soup. They do not respond until two characters are in the room, but then they snarl and attack.

MUTANT WOLVES (2)

CREATURE 3

RARE N MEDIUM ANIMAL

Perception +9; motion sense (precise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +11, Stealth +9

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

AC 19; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

HP 45; **Immunities** acid, visual effects

Speed 35 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +11, **Damage** 1d8+4 piercing plus 1d6 acid

Gore Spray ☞ (acid); **Trigger** A creature critically hits a mutant wolf while adjacent to it. **Effect** The wound causes gore to spray from a ruptured pustule. The triggering creature takes 3d6 acid damage (DC 19 basic Reflex save). This occurs even if the attack kills the wolf.

Tear ♦ **Trigger** The wolf dealt damage to a creature with its jaws during the previous action. **Effect** The wolf tears at the creature's flesh, dealing 1d6+2 slashing damage and 1 persistent acid damage.

Polluted Pool: Once the wolves are dealt with, the characters can freely investigate the glowing, oily pool in the center of the den. It is not particularly deep and is fed by a natural spring that wells up from deep below the ground. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Crafting, or a DC 20 Nature or Occult check, recognizes that this water is tainted by something unnatural. A critical success on this check reveals that the chemicals are mutagenic in nature, causing those who drink it to change, often at a terrible price.

The water gives off an acrid smell, and anyone who touches it notices it has an odd, oily texture. Although it is not dangerous to touch once or twice, the water leaves the skin feeling prickly, and prolonged exposure quickly provokes a mild rash. Anyone foolish enough to drink the water must attempt a DC 18 Fortitude save against the ingested toxin. A character that fails this save is sickened 1 for 1 hour. A character that critically fails also takes 1d6 acid damage.

XP Award: Discovering the polluted pool is an important step toward uncovering what is going on in the forest; award the party 30 XP for its discovery.

NOALA'S NEXT MOVE

When the PCs are done in the Blighted Den, they find Noala burning a pair of mangy wolf bodies—stragglers that she caught trying to sneak out of the den after the PCs went in. She is eager to hear what the PCs discovered.

She agrees that the water must be the source of the pollution, but how the water is being contaminated is still a mystery. Noala knows of no caves nearby that contain access to any significant source of water. Without an obvious lead, Noala suggests they travel to the oldest, largest blight in these woods. This will require a one-day journey through unforgiving wilderness. She suggests they set off at once, but she will wait until morning if the PCs would rather return to Etran's Folly to rest.

THE PEN

Deep in the forest to the north of town is a blight larger and older than any other. Noala became aware of it only once the blight had spread. She has monitored the blight's growth, but she has never fully explored this area, as it is home to ferocious predators.

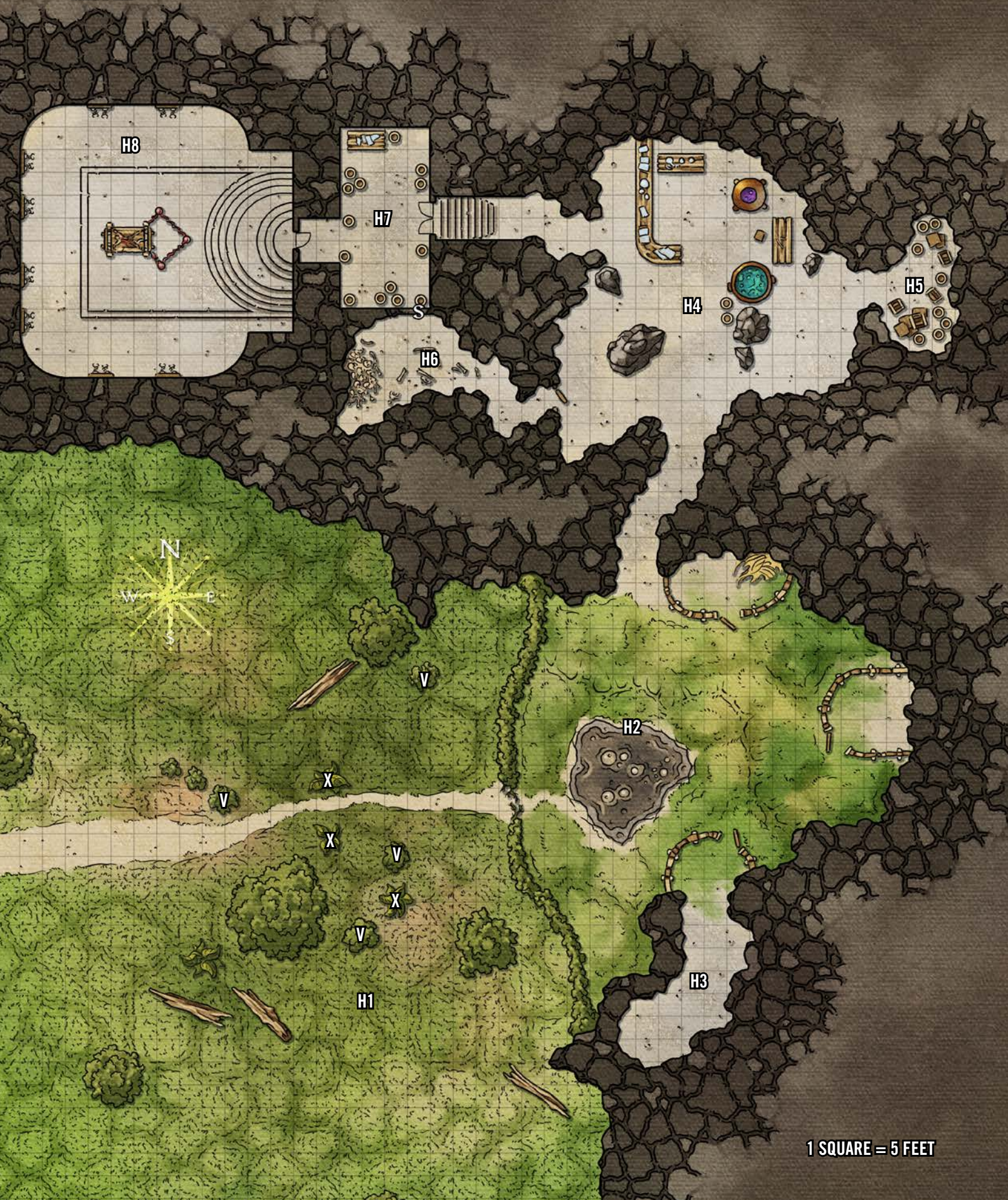
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THE PEN



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

What Noala does not know is that this place was Vilree's first home after leaving Etran's Folly all those years ago. It was here that Vilree first experimented with her mother's books and learned the basics of alchemy. Once her experiments outgrew these facilities, she looked for a new home and discovered a cavern complex in the foothills to the east she would later call "Spite's Cradle." Today she uses her old home here, now called the Pen, to test her concoctions on plants, animals and, more recently, humans, leaving much of the work to a small group of orcs that she enslaved three years ago. The brightest among the orcs has even begun experimenting with reagents, calling himself the Sculptor.

JOURNEY TO THE PEN

The journey to the Pen is long and challenging. If the group hopes to arrive before nightfall, they must take no exploration tactic other than movement, covering ground as quickly as possible. Even then, they arrive with only an hour of daylight remaining, and they may opt to wait until morning.

When the PCs finally do reach the area, they discover it resembles the blight surrounding the wolf den. The plants on the perimeter are sickly and dying. It is at this point that Noala again departs to patrol the perimeter. Before the PCs venture inside, Noala offers them 2 *lesser healing potions* and 2 *barkskin potions*. After that, she heads off into the woods to begin her preparations. The PCs can take whatever time they need before pushing onward into the corruption.

This blight is much stranger than the blight the PCs visited before. Here, the corruption manifests in distinct bands. The outer band is much like the area around the wolf den, with rotting trees and dying plants. Deeper in, all the plants have died; they are limp and rotten, and the air stinks with sweet decay. There are no birds or insects here, only the remains of creatures desperate enough to eat the poisonous plants. It takes just over 20 minutes to pass through each of these two bands.

Finally, the PCs enter the third area, where smaller trees and plants seem to have returned to twisted life. Their leaves drip with an oily sap, their branches are gnarled yet strangely pliable, and their bark looks like scales. Many of these plants are covered in odd pustules that emit a faintly glowing light, and biting gnats swarm around them. Swatting these gnats causes them to burst into tiny flames that do no damage but emit a terrible smell. Once the PCs reach this area, it takes 1 hour to locate the heart of the blight, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 17 Survival check uncovers faint boot tracks that reduce this time to 30 minutes.

H1. FOREST GUARDIANS

MODERATE 2

The Pen is built into the side of a hill in the middle of a field of twisted, poisonous brambles. There is only one way in, passing through Vilree's plant guardians. When the PCs approach, read or paraphrase the following.

Deeper into this massive blight, the plants take on unnatural shades, and their branches seem to shudder and quake at the sensation of something passing. Up ahead is a wall of thick brambles with some sort of thorny iris in the center.

The thorny iris is the doorway into the Pen itself, but before the PCs can reach it, they must pass by a number of forest guardians that have been cultivated here to keep intruders away.

Creatures: Clustered near the gate are four vine lashers (each indicated on the map with a V), small creeping plants each with one large fibrous tendril that can reach out and grab creatures. These plants wait to attack until the PCs are close, holding them near the poison blooms (see Hazards below) as long as possible.

VINE LASHER (4)

CREATURE 0

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Initiative Perception +4; **tremorsense** (imprecise) 30 feet

Hazards: There are three large, colorful plants called poison blooms here (each indicated on the map with an X). If a non-plant creature approaches within 10 feet of any of these poison blooms, all three of them each unleash a cloud of mindfuddle gas that spreads out to a range of 20 feet. The poisonous gas remains in the area for 1 minute, and the poison blooms need 10 minutes to recharge before they can expel this gas again.

Mindfuddle Gas (poison, inhaled); **Saving Throw** DC 15

Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** stupefied 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** stupefied 2 (1 round);

Stage 3 1d4 mental damage, stupefied 2, and confused (1 round)

Thorn Iris: The players are left with one final obstacle before they can enter the Pen: the thorn iris. This doorway, made up of thorny branches winding clockwise in a broad circle, does not have a handle or keyhole. It instead opens when one particular branch in the pattern is twisted. The branch is the only one in the entire iris pattern that winds counter-clockwise, making finding it something of a puzzle. Locating this branch requires a successful DC 18 Nature check or DC 23 Perception check. Characters can get a

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+2 circumstance bonus to their checks by using their hands to move branches aside, but the jagged thorns on these limbs deal 1 point of damage per attempt.

Alternatively, the players can simply hack down the door or burn it. The thorn iris has Hardness 5 and 50 Hit Points. Fire damage ignores the door's Hardness.

XP Award: If the PCs open the thorn iris without destroying it, award the party 10 XP.

H2. THE YARD

SEVERE 2

On the other side of the wall of brambles is a yard dominated by three large, wooden cages and a pool of bubbling sludge. A wretched-looking horse stands in one

of the cages, while another cage is filled with a swarm of gigantic rats covered in white blisters. The third pen looks empty, but it appears to be built around a small cave located in the hillside. There is another cave entrance on the north side, near one of the pens.

This yard is used by the orcs to house some of their more successful experiments, and while these creatures are not exactly loyal, they are quite dangerous when allowed to run free. This is especially true if the PCs gave the orcs here ample warning of their approach by destroying the thorn iris instead of finding a way to open it.

Creatures: There are two orcs in this area as well as the caged experiments. If the PCs catch the orcs unaware, one of them is dumping a bucket of sludge into the pool when the PCs open the iris, while the other is in front of the horse's cage (the northernmost cage on the map). When combat starts, the first orc flings his bucket at the nearest PC, a ranged attack with a +4 bonus that deals 1d6 acid damage plus 1 persistent acid damage. He then charges up to attack. Meanwhile, the second orc opens the horse's cage.

If the PCs alert the orcs to their approach, both are positioned at a cage door—one at the door with the horse, the other perched atop the cage with the rats. The moment the door is breached, the orcs open their respective cages, making this an especially deadly battle.

Opening a cage requires 2 actions (one to unlock the cage, and a second to open the door).

ORC BRUTES (2)

CREATURE 0

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Initiative Perception +5; darkvision

North Cage: This cage contains a warhorse that the orcs have been experimenting on for some time now. Despite their ministrations and the creature's half-starved condition, the beast is loyal to them. Its flesh has a stony appearance, and its hooves appear to be made of metal. The moment the horse's cage is open, it dashes forward to attack. If for some reason the door is not opened, the horse grows very agitated as the orcs are slain. When the last of them falls, it rears up to shatter the door of its pen and attack.

STONE HORSE

CREATURE 2

UNIQUE N LARGE ANIMAL

Perception +6; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet
Skills Acrobatics +5, Athletics +10

Stone Horse

Str +4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +5, **Int** -4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -1

AC 16; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

HP 30; **Resistances** physical 5 (except bludgeoning)

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ hoof +10, **Damage** 1d8+4 bludgeoning

Shattering Hooves The hooves of the stone horse are as hard as iron; if the horse makes a Hoof Strike and gets a critical hit, the target's armor is damaged as well, the attack dealing as much damage to the armor as it dealt to the target (Hardness applies as normal). If the target uses shield block against the stone horse's critical hit with a hoof attack, treat the shield's Hardness as 5 points lower (minimum 0).

East Cage: The bars of this cage support sheets of wire mesh to contain the massive rats inside. These rats have been experimented on to make them dangerous weapons that could be unleashed on a town or city.

ICY RATS (2)

CREATURE 0

RARE N SMALL ANIMAL

Perception +5; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +5, Athletics +3 (+5 to Climb or Swim), Stealth +7

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

AC 16; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

HP 15; **Immunities** cold; **Weaknesses** fire 5

Speed 30 feet, climb 10 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +7 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 1d6+1 piercing plus 1 cold damage

Icy Death When an icy rat is slain, its body explodes in a burst of frozen fur and bone, dealing 2d4 cold damage to all adjacent creatures (DC 14 basic Reflex save).

South Cage: This cage appears to be empty, but the floor is littered with the bones of previous inhabitants and scraps from the meals that fed them. There is an opening in the back wall of the cage that leads to area H3.

Hazard: The large pool of toxic sludge in the center of this area is a hazard to any who draw near. Randomly determine the direction of the wind at the start of the fight by rolling 1d8; a result of 1 indicates the wind is blowing north, a 2 is northeast, and so on, moving clockwise to an 8, which indicates the wind is blowing northwest. The fumes are especially strong in the direction indicated, creating a draft that stretches 20 feet from the pool. Any creature that starts its turn in this draft takes 1d4 acid damage and must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save or become sickened 1 (falling into or entering the pool deals an extra 1d4 acid damage in addition to the normal effect).

Each round, check to see if the wind shifts slightly by rolling 1d8; on a result of 1–2, the wind shifts one direction clockwise (from south to southwest, for example), on a result of 3–6 it stays the same, and on a result of 7–8 it shifts one direction counterclockwise.

Regardless of the wind direction and the acid fumes, anyone adjacent to the toxic pool at the start of their turn takes 1d4 acid damage.

H3. THE BLACK CAVE

This cage appears empty, but at the back of it, a crevasse opens up into a small cave that contains another experimental creature: a fiery leopard. As the result of a more recent experiment, it has not been trained and is not loyal, so the orcs do not release it against the PCs.

Opening the cage door does not anger the leopard or cause it to attack. Instead, it waits inside the cave, in agony from experiments performed upon it by the orcs. When the PCs enter the cave, read or paraphrase the following.

Stepping inside the cave, a cloud of smoke hovering around the ceiling becomes visible. Curled up in the back of the cave is a cat that looks to be on fire. It glares at the sight of another creature entering, letting out a weak snarl that fades into a plaintive yowl.

Creature: The fiery leopard is in far too much pain to fight the PCs unless they provoke it. Even if attacked, it looks for any opportunity to flee the situation. A character trained in Nature can approach the leopard and calm it with a successful DC 14 Diplomacy skill check (if the character has Wild Empathy) or a DC 19 Nature skill check. A critical failure on this check causes it to attack.

FIERY LEOPARD

CREATURE 1

UNIQUE N MEDIUM ANIMAL

Perception +6; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +6, Stealth +8

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

AC 17; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +4

HP 20 (currently 17); **Immunities** fire; **Weaknesses** cold 5

Speed 30 feet, climb 20 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +8 (finesse), **Damage** 1d8+1 piercing plus 1 fire plus grab

Melee ♦ claw +8 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 1d4+1 slashing plus 1 fire

Fiery Pelt Creatures that start their turn grappled by a fiery leopard take 1d4 fire damage. Anyone attempting to grapple a fiery leopard takes 1d4 fire damage for each attempt.

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Although the fiery leopard will not allow itself to be handled, and anyone attempting to touch it takes 1 point of fire damage, the PCs can alleviate the animal's suffering if they can first calm it. Most obviously, the poor creature is in need of water, but any it tries to drink is quickly boiled off by the leopard's intense heat. Chilling the water first with a *ray of frost* or similar effect allows the leopard to hydrate before its fire evaporates the water. A successful DC 15 Medicine check reveals that the leopard has also been wounded, probably by the orcs when they were handling it. Healing the fiery leopard for 3 Hit Points restores it to full health.

If the PCs hydrate the leopard and heal its wounds, it perks up noticeably. At this point, it just wants to escape this place; if the PCs allow it, the leopard bolts out of the cage, into the yard, up a wall, and out of the Pen. Alternatively, the PCs might try to transfer the leopard to a new cage and move it, but that is difficult even after it has been healed. It does not fully trust the characters, and touching it still results in fire damage. The chance of success here is up to you to decide, but it should at least involve a few skill checks.

If the characters help and release the leopard, they might see it again; if a character has the right feats, they might acquire the unique creature as an animal companion (see the Rules and Rewards section on page 57 for details).

XP Award: If the PCs calm the fiery leopard and release it, award the party 30 XP.

H4. FOREST LABORATORY

MODERATE 2

The bright light from outside is replaced by flickering torchlight in a narrow passageway cut deeply into the hillside. Suddenly, the passage opens into a broad natural cavern containing a series of large tables on the far side of the room. A series of alchemical experiments, most bubbling and frothing as they cook, are arranged atop the work spaces.

This chamber is the primary alchemical workshop for the Pen, and it is where the orcs administer the concoctions sent to them by Vilree. The Sculptor has recently begun using the tools and reagents here to work on experiments of his own; Vilree is unaware of this.

Creatures: There are a pair of orcs here, brothers who assist the Sculptor, watching over the cauldrons and reactions as they slowly simmer and bubble. They are near the workbenches when the PCs enter, but they promptly howl in rage and attack. In addition to using the alchemical weapons they have on them, the orcs favor grabbing random vials off the tables and throwing them at the PCs (see Hazards below).

ORC ALCHEMISTS (2)

CREATURE 2

CE MEDIUM HUMANOID ORC

Perception +6; darkvision

Languages Orcish

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +6, Crafting +9, Stealth +7

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

Items lesser acid flask (2), lesser alchemist's fire (2), lesser bottled lightning (2), minor elixir of life (2), orc knuckle dagger

AC 17; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +9, **Will** +4

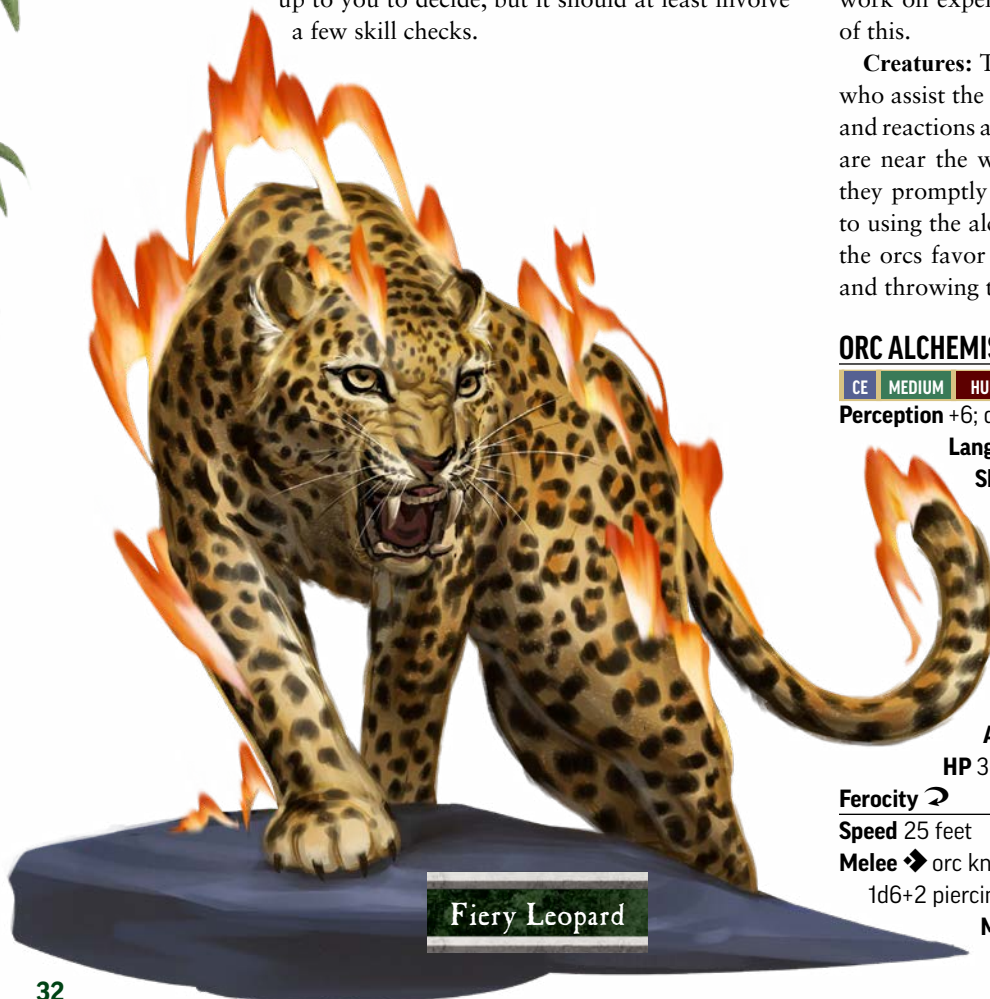
HP 30

Ferocity ⤵

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ orc knuckle dagger +8 (agile, disarm), **Damage** 1d6+2 piercing

Melee ♦ fist +7 (agile, finesse, nonlethal, unarmed), **Damage** 1d4+2 bludgeoning



Fiery Leopard

Ranged ♦ alchemical bomb +9 (range increment 20 feet, splash), **Damage** varies by bomb

Hazards: The tables are covered with actively cooking reagents, half-finished alchemical items, and other dangerous equipment. If left unattended for ten minutes, the cooking reagents can start a fire in the laboratory; the orc alchemists also know how to intentionally use this equipment for dangerous ends.

A creature adjacent to a table can grab an item from it as an action and use a second action to throw or otherwise use it. Roll on the Random Alchemy table to determine what was grabbed. If a character first takes the Seek action and succeeds at a DC 15 Crafting check, they can roughly identify the items before grabbing one, allowing them to roll twice on the Random Alchemy table and choose the preferred result. The orc alchemists always roll twice, taking whatever result you prefer.

Random Alchemy	
d20	Result
1-4	Unfinished concoction (no effect)
5-9	Lesser alchemist's fire
10-11	Lesser acid flask
12-13	Lesser bottled lightning
14-15	Lesser frost vial
16-18	Lesser tanglefoot bag
19-20	Minor elixir of life

A character can Shove over a table or cauldron, requiring a successful DC 15 Athletics check. This causes everything on the table or in that cauldron to be ruined, posing a risk to anyone who might be hit by an explosive concoction. If a table is pushed over toward a creature, all creatures adjacent to that edge of the table are hit by a number of alchemical experiments, with a DC 18 Reflex saving throw determining the number: a critical success avoids them all, a success indicates the character is hit by one experiment, a failure indicates the character is hit by two, and a character who gets a critical failure is hit by three. Roll each experiment on the Random Alchemy table. Once a table has been knocked over, no one can grab a random experiment from it.

If a cauldron is overturned, roll on the Random Alchemy table to determine what was in the cauldron, and any creature in the square the cauldron was emptied into takes triple the effects of the alchemical item that was rolled (the effect can't be tripled in the case of a tanglefoot bag). The character may attempt a DC 18 basic Reflex save, but this save should be

rolled before the contents of the cauldron are revealed and, if the cauldron contained elixir of life, the Hit Points it heals are reduced by the saving throw.

Rewards: In addition to any gear the PCs might salvage from the alchemists, there are a few other things here they might recover. For each table that was not knocked over, roll twice on the Random Alchemy table. Those items can be taken as long as someone succeeds at a DC 15 Crafting check to finish them (roll for each item). There is also 20 gp worth of alchemical reagents here that an alchemist can use to craft additional items.

H5. STORAGE CAVE

This area is used primarily for storage of alchemical gear and reagents. Anyone can tell that most of the barrels and crates are quite old, but the gear and equipment in the laboratory is of the same style and make and looks as if it may have once been stored here.

In fact, Vilree left all this behind when she moved to Spite's Cradle years ago. The Sculptor and his assistants began to experiment with the gear six months ago and set up the laboratory to make elixirs, bombs, and other alchemical tools.

The equipment here is old but quite valuable to the right buyer. If the PCs returned with a wagon, they could load it all up and sell it. The ultimate value is up to you, but it should be no more than about 100 gp, and the PCs would have to travel to Almas or another large city to find such a wealthy buyer. Alternatively, they could sell it all to Delma or Tamli for one quarter its value.

H6. REFUSE PIT

The door from the laboratory into this area is secured with a simple wooden bar on the laboratory side. There is also a secret door leading into the chamber from the lair of the Sculptor (area H7). That door is hidden from both sides and can be found only by searching that square and succeeding at a DC 22 Perception check. The cavern is strewn with refuse such as bones and broken equipment.

Rewards: Scattered among the bones are a few trinkets, including a low-grade cold iron dagger, a *wolf fang* talisman, and 8 gp in miscellaneous coins.

H7. LAIR OF THE SCULPTOR

HIGH 2

The northernmost passageway that exits the laboratory ends in a set of stairs that leads up to a massive double door to the west. Made from stout wood and bound with iron, the pair of doors is

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crudely decorated with a carving of a small rural village that has been set ablaze. Anyone examining the carving can tell it must have been made many years ago and, despite its poor overall artistry, the village bears an unmistakable resemblance to Etran's Folly. The doors are not locked.

This chamber is the lair of the Sculptor, the orc who runs the Pen. When he and the other orcs were asked to hold this place by Vilree several years ago, they initially resented the duty and preferred to stay with the war band. Over time, however, the orcs have come to appreciate their freedom here and enjoy the experiments they are asked to perform. The leader, in particular, became interested in alchemy and took on the nickname "the Sculptor" in the hope he might one day impress Vilree with his talents.

Creature: There is a very good chance the Sculptor heard the fight through the door and knows the PCs are coming. If this is the case, he is standing by the door to area **H8** when the PCs enter, prepared to open it the moment they arrive and flee to the blood ooze, hoping to use his final experiment to stop them. In any case, he tries not to fight in this room, using alchemy and whatever minions he has available to slow the PCs down while he escapes.

THE SCULPTOR CREATURE 4

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM HUMANOID ORC

Perception +9; darkvision

Languages Common, Orcish

Skills Acrobatics +9, Crafting +13, Diplomacy +8, Medicine +9, Stealth +9
Str +1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +3, **Int** +4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

Items crafter's eyepiece, lesser bomber's eye elixir, orc knuckle dagger, studded leather armor

AC 21; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

HP 54

Ferocity 2

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ orc knuckle dagger +7 (agile, disarm), **Damage** 1d6+1 piercing

Melee ♦ fist +9 (agile, finesse, nonlethal, unarmed), **Damage** 1d4+1 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ alchemical bomb +12 (range increment 20 feet, splash), **Damage** varies by bomb

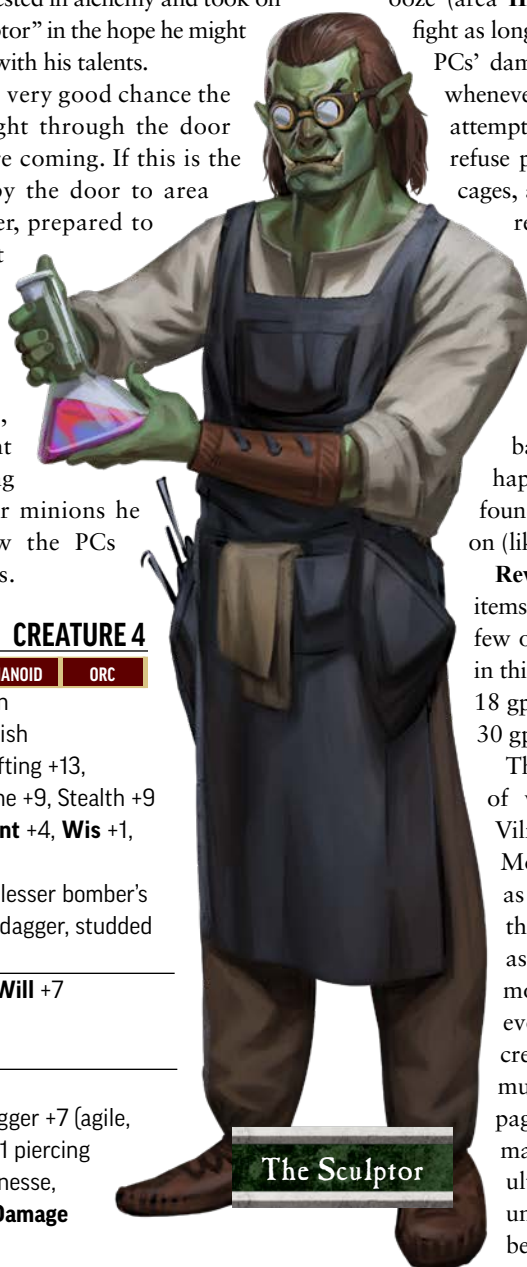
Alchemy The Sculptor has used his alchemy ability to create 4 moderate alchemist's fire, 2 lesser elixirs of life, and 4 moderate frost vials. These are infusions. He can spend an action to create an additional vial of any one of those, lesser bottled lightning, or a lesser acid flask.

Quick Bomber ♦ The Sculptor can use Interact to draw a bomb and then Strike with it.

The Sculptor is a canny foe who will stay in the fight so long as it goes his way, but he will attempt to flee when he thinks he's losing. If he unleashes the blood ooze (area **H8**) against the PCs, he stays in the fight as long as his minions take the brunt of the PCs' damage; harrying the PCs with bombs whenever he can. When out of options, he attempts to flee the Pen, leaving through the refuse pit, through the laboratory, past the cages, and out into the wilderness. If he is reduced to half Hit Points or fewer, he does not escape; Noala spots him as he flees and hunts him down. If the Sculptor has more than half his Hit Points remaining, he wounds Noala with alchemist's fire and traps her with a tanglefoot bag to allow his escape. Should this happen, he flees to Vilree and can be found somewhere in Spite's Cradle later on (likely in a laboratory).

Rewards: In addition to the gear and items carried by the Sculptor, there are a few other critical things to be discovered in this room. A small stash of coins worth 18 gp and a fine set of silver scales worth 30 gp sit atop the desk.

This room also contains a trove of valuable information about what Vilree was hoping to accomplish here. Most of the texts are written in Orc, as they are the Sculptor's notes on the various experiments he has been asked to perform over the past few months. Almost all of these involve evolving permanent mutations in creatures by exposing them to energy mutagens (see Rules and Rewards on page 56 for more information). While many of these experiments were ultimately successful, they had an unintended side effect: the creatures became far too bestial and unreliable



The Sculptor

to use as minions. About 2 months ago, something changed, and Vilree stopped asking him to perform experiments without offering an explanation. The Sculptor took it upon himself to continue the work, with varied and unpredictable results, and a number of creatures escaped. One of the most recent notes says, “The coagulant thing is finally taking shape. It might not be what she asked for, but she is sure to be impressed! When it is ready, I will take it to Spite’s Cradle and show it to the mistress myself.”

All of this can be uncovered by spending a few hours going through the Sculptor’s notes, although a broad outline of it can be uncovered in an hour or so with a successful DC 15 Crafting check. Any character that examines the notes should be allowed a DC 18 Perception check to notice an unusual entry: about 3 years ago, Vilree commanded the orcs to capture a human. This person was placed in a covered pit in the woods and exposed to something that the Sculptor refers to as the viridian vapor. The last note on this experiment reads, “The human died in agony in less than a day. We burned his body and filled in the pit as instructed.”

XP Award: After the PCs defeating the Sculptor and examine his notes, award the party 30 XP.

H8. THE TRUE EXPERIMENT MODERATE 2

From the moment the door to this area is opened, whimpering moans can be heard from the center of the chamber, where a human man is strapped to a large rack. His flesh is missing in places, replaced with large glass and metal cauldrons that seem to be extracting blood from him, mixing that blood with reagents to transform it, then pumping the blood back into the poor man. Around the room, the PCs can see shackles mounted to the wall where previous prisoners must have spent their final moments.

Creature: The danger here is a newly created blood ooze that the Sculptor made by extracting the blood from several humanoids and mixing it with a soup of alchemical reagents. The ooze is currently inside the human prisoner, where it is being fed by blood that is drained from the human’s body, transformed, then pumped back in. While the Sculptor knows how to keep the ooze docile using a spray of caustic agents he keeps on a table just inside the room, anyone else that approaches the body causes the ooze to burst from its human enclosure and attack, desperately hungry for more blood. If the Sculptor has fled here, he unleashes the blood ooze, using a powdered blood coagulant in his pouch to drive the ooze toward the PCs (he can try three times before running out). To herd

the ooze in this way, the Sculptor must succeed at a DC 19 Crafting check, with results analogous to the Command an Animal task of the Nature skill.

BLOOD OOZE

Page 63

Initiative Perception +8

CREATURE 4

The victim in this chamber is far too gone to be saved, especially since the blood ooze takes the last of his blood as it departs his body. He was a farmer named Pindro from the outskirts of Etran’s Folly.

There is little to be learned in this chamber, with one vital exception: an old set of delivery instructions is pinned to the north wall of the room, placed there to help the orcs find their way back to Vilree’s lair in the hills to the west. They have not needed it in some time, but to the PCs it is invaluable, as it includes directions to Spite’s Cradle from “Hallod’s drop-off stump.” Combined with the map to the stump from Hallod’s hideout, the PCs now have enough information to track down Vilree, the villain behind everything.

XP Award: Completing the Pen is a major accomplishment, and the PCs should be awarded an 80 XP story award for bringing the terrible experiments here to an end.

NOALA’S REQUEST

After dealing with the creatures in the Pen, the PCs can meet up with Noala outside. She prevented a few corrupted animals from escaping, but she says they were nothing too serious (unless the Sculptor escaped, as noted in area H7). In any event, she is far more interested in learning what happened to the PCs inside the blight.

The PCs’ tale greatly disturbs Noala, but she is relieved to hear the orcs will be conducting no more experiments in her woods. Unfortunately, Noala does not believe that this one laboratory could possibly be responsible for all of the blights she has located. She suspects that Vilree must be ultimately responsible, and she implores the PCs to bring the alchemist to justice “for Bort’s sake, if not for the sake of the woods.”

If the PCs ask Noala to accompany them to Spite’s Cradle, she is humbled but ultimately declines, citing that her place is in the woods. Until this threat has been removed, keeping the forest safe is a full-time job. She wishes the PCs well and promises to share some of the secrets of the forest with them through training upon their return (see Noala’s Training in the Rules and Rewards section on page 56).

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PART 3: INTO VILREE'S LAIR

Once the PCs have learned the information from the Pen, they likely know that Vilree is the person responsible for not only ordering Bort's poisoning, but also for the blights near Etran's Folly and the mutated monsters that have spawned there. The PCs must find Vilree's lair in the wilderness and bring her to justice.

SPITE'S CRADLE

Some twenty miles west of Etran's Folly are the foothills at the edge of the Five Kings Mountains. A few years ago, it was here that Vilree found a small war band of orcs living in a complex cave system situated in a narrow limestone valley left behind when a creek dried up long ago. In the depths of these caves, Vilree found crystals and other reagents that would prove invaluable to her research. She used her alchemy to enslave the orcs, killing their chief and installing a more suitable replacement.

In the years that followed, she turned the caves into a small fortress where she could practice her alchemy and plan the ruin of Etran's Folly. She named the fortress Spite's Cradle, as it was here that she would nurture her hatred for the people

who caused the death of her mother, treated her as an outcast, and left her to die.

Now, on the eve of her revenge, the PCs have discovered her lair.

The inside of Vilree's fortress (areas **I5–I17**) is lit by sputtering torches. The walls are stone and the ceilings are about 9 feet high. The orc lair (areas **I3** and **I4**) is not lit, and neither are the natural caves down in the depths (areas **I18** and **I19**). Vilree's innermost sanctum (area **I20**) is lit by the glowing crystal formations that line the cave walls.

I1. THE GATE

Using the map to the drop point from Halloed's Hideout and the directions from the Pen, the PCs can easily find Spite's Cradle. On foot, it takes 7 or 8 hours to reach the place, although if the PCs manage to borrow or buy some horses, they can reduce that time to about 5 hours.

The directions from the orc laboratory lead to the foothills far west of Etran's Folly. Here, nestled in the shadow of the Five Kings Mountains, there are countless small valleys and crevasses, but the directions lead to one particular valley: a place called "Spite's Cradle."

Up ahead, a wooden palisade spans the valley; a gigantic double door set into its center. Beyond this wall, a guard tower is barely visible, although it's difficult to tell whether it is occupied.

The PCs can get past the palisade walls in a variety of ways, but if the orcs spot them and sound an alarm, things will get much more difficult inside. The wooden palisade walls are 15 feet high, and the tops are carved to points. It's easy to get a grappling hook onto these walls, but the guards will quickly spot that. The gate is barred from the inside using three heavy wooden beams, each of which can be moved with a successful DC 15 Athletics check. The cliffs that make up the sides of the valley are steep and 30 feet high, but not impossible to scale. Climbing the limestone face requires at least two successful DC 18 Athletics checks (one to climb up and another to climb down) and a successful DC 15 Acrobatics check to move across the crumbling stone without causing a cascade of debris the guards are likely to notice.

The guards in the tower do not have a particularly good view outside the wall, giving the player characters an easy approach, but their view of the ground between the wooden palisades is favorable. The guards generally look around once every few minutes, and they only attempt Perception checks against disturbances in the yard (like a grappling hook or the sudden appearance of falling rocks). They know they are in a remote location and don't expect invasion. PCs that approach from above have to beat Graytusk's Perception DC 19 to approach unnoticed. See area **16** for more information on what happens if the guards raise the alarm.

12. GUARDED YARD

TRIVIAL/LOW 3

Beyond the palisade is a well-trodden yard. A small wooden hut is built against the southern rock wall, facing a squat stone fortress. A guard tower stands at the north end of the edifice while a two-story dome anchors the south. The fortress has a brooding look about it, with narrow windows set between heavy pillars of rock.

This area is home to the orcs that serve Vilree.

Creatures: During the day there are usually two orcs out in the yard relaxing or preparing a meal. This number rises to four at night, when the orcs are most active. In any case, they are not expecting a fight.

If the alarm has been raised, nine of the 10 orcs are here, including Lord Nar but excluding Graytusk, who remains in the guard tower. All nine have their weapons drawn and are ready for battle,

expecting intruders to come from the gates unless the scouts from area **16** told them otherwise.

ORC BRUTES (2 OR 4)

CREATURE 0

Pathfinder Bestiary 256

Initiative Perception +5; darkvision

13. LORD NAR'S THRONE

LOW 3

A crude leather tarp covers the entrance to this simple wooden hut built against the side of the valley. When the PCs enter, read or paraphrase the following.

In the center of this wooden hut is a massive stone throne. Crudely carved with howling orc faces, the chair is clearly intended to intimidate. Flanking it on the walls of the hut are two massive leather canvases featuring simplistic paintings. On the left is an image of a mountain peak with an orc head howling up at it from a great cavern at the mountain's heart. On the right is the image of a tall, slender woman with black hair. Her ears suggest she is elven or half-elven. In one hand, she holds a large beaker overflowing with green liquid; in the other, she holds naked fire. At the back wall, you can make out a curtain partly concealing an opening into the cliff face.

This hut and the caves behind it are the lair of the orcs serving under Vilree's command; their leader is Lord Nar, a large, brutish orc. If the alarm has not been raised, Nar will be seated here on his throne. He sleeps on it in the mornings and into the early afternoon, but he is awake all night, venturing outside only for food or to relieve himself.

Lord Nar was made the ruler of the orcs shortly after Vilree took command of the war band. The ceremony is still talked about in hushed whispers by the surviving orcs. The previous chief was asked if he would submit and, when he refused, Vilree burned him alive using her powerful alchemy. When the question was posed again, this time to Nar, he readily agreed. In the years since, Vilree has addicted all of the orcs to a mild sedative that makes them easier to manipulate; if the PCs drink from any of the water sources here or in the caves, they will taste something odd, but it takes weeks of constant exposure for this sedative to have any lasting effect.

Creature: Nar is a corpulent orc, having grown fat off the luxury of being Vilree's chosen. While the other orcs resent him, they are too afraid of Vilree's power to test her decisions. Nar, for his part, plays up the importance of his role in the war band. He visits Vilree once a week to update her, and while these meetings are usually dull except for the occasional order, Nar likes

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to pretend that she is taking his counsel. If threatened by the heroes, Nar explains that harming him will incur the lady's wrath and that the PCs had best just surrender to him if they know what is good for them.

In any event, Nar is not above attacking the PCs and calling on all his orcs to do the same. The memory of his predecessor's screams spurs him to take almost any risk to avoid failure.

LORD NAR

CREATURE 4

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM HUMANOID ORC

Perception +9; darkvision

Languages Common, Orc

Skills Athletics +13, Diplomacy +8, Intimidation +8

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** -1, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

Items bronze key, +1 *greatclub*, hatchet (2), hide armor



AC 21; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9

HP 68 (+8 temporary HP when raging)

Ferocity 2

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ +1 *greatclub* +14 (backswing, shove), **Damage** 1d10+5 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ fist +11 (agile, nonlethal, unarmed), **Damage** 1d4+5 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ hatchet +10 (agile, sweep, thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d6+5 slashing

No Escape 2 **Trigger** An adjacent foe moves away. **Effect** Lord Nar may move up to his speed but must end his move as close to the triggering creature as possible without entering the triggering creature's square.

Rage ♦ Lord Nar flies into a rage that lasts 1 minute and grants him 8 temporary Hit Points, 4 additional damage with his listed attacks, and a -1 penalty to AC. He cannot use actions that have the concentrate trait while raging, unless they also have the rage trait. Once his rage ends, Nar cannot Rage again for 1 minute.

Rewards: A bronze key hangs from a leather cord around Nar's neck; this unlocks the doors to Spite's Cradle in area 15. Set into the seat of Nar's throne is a hidden compartment containing the war band's riches. It can be opened by simultaneously pressing a pair of buttons disguised as orc eyes in the throne's decorative carving. Inside the compartment is a bag containing 28 gp in silver and copper pieces, a flawed sapphire worth 20 gp, a *scroll of heal* (2nd level), a *scroll of sound burst*, and a *scroll of restoration*. The scrolls belonged to the war band's shaman, who tried to leave soon after Vilree arrived but, unbeknownst to Nar, Vilree captured her and used her to create the Amalgam (see area 116). Finally, the compartment contains a tiny straw doll made to look like Vilree that Nar keeps here to practice talking to his mistress. It even has hairs collected from her comb that he has lovingly placed on its head.

14. SLEEPING CAVES

LOW/MODERATE 3

The cave opening reveals a connected pair of cramped chambers that stink of sweat and campfire smoke. The floor is covered in debris and piles of filth. Almost a dozen sleeping mats are nestled in nooks and built into the walls throughout this space.

The orcs use these two caves as their home; unless the alarm has been raised, this chamber usually has a few orcs in it at all times.

Creatures: A total of eight orcs sleep in these chambers, although there is space for almost a dozen. Most of the bedrolls on the map actually indicate two nooks, one above and one below, both with sleeping mats and personal effects. During the day, there are usually five orcs here, with two in the yard and one more up in the tower with Graytusk. At night the number drops to just three, with four in the yard and a different orc up in the tower with Graytusk. If a fight breaks out in area **14**, the orcs here will come to investigate during the second round of combat, using the first round to gather their weapons, entering the throne room singly or in pairs.

ORC BRUTES (5 OR 3)

CREATURE 0

Pathfinder Bestiary 256

Initiative Perception +5; darkvision

Rewards: The orcs do not have much of value, but there are a few things of interest to be found here. Scattered among the nooks is 37 sp, 52 cp, and a lot of damaged or shoddy common items (such as ropes, whetstones, backpacks, and candles). If the PCs are looking for something in particular, there is a 50% chance they can find it so long as the item is not magical and has a value of 5 sp or less. Anyone searching the caves can attempt a DC 20 Perception check to find a small cache located under a rock beneath a bedroll. This cache contains an *invisibility potion* and a silver key (worth 1 gp) that unlocks the door to area **18**.

15. RECEPTION HALL

MODERATE 3

The large double door leading into Spite's Cradle are made from heavy wooden planks reinforced with iron bands. They are locked from the inside with an average quality lock, but can be opened with four successful DC 25 Thievery checks or by using the bronze key that Lord Nar wears around his neck. The doors are emblazoned with the image of a small village in flames. This is clearly based on the image on the doors leading to the Sculptor's chambers in the Pen, but it is more refined and was made by a more practiced hand.

Once the PCs find a way inside, read or paraphrase the following.

The doors swing wide to reveal a small reception hall. A worn carpet stretches from the doors to another double door across the way. To the right is a curved wall with a map of the nearby area painted on it. Spite's Cradle is in the center, with lines drawn to all of the nearby major settlements and noting travel times by horse. Where Etran's Folly should be, there is only a simple legend that reads "Ruins of Plaguestone."

The map gives only the broadest implication of Vilree's plans. After destroying Etran's Folly, she plans to slowly build a web of domination over the region using alchemical drugs and coercion to establish a hidden empire.

Creatures: Two years ago, when Vilree was first experimenting with energy mutagens, she paid a hedge mage to bind a pair of minor air elementals to her service so that she could learn more about the elemental forces. After her research took her elsewhere, she placed the elementals here to serve as guardians, ordering them to attack anyone who enters the room who does not belong. Once the PCs enter, the wind suddenly picks up as the elemental takes shape and attacks.

ZEPHYR HAWK (2)

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 144

Initiative Perception +13

16. GUARD TOWER

LOW 3

This tower actually consists of two locations: the tower's interior and its covered rooftop. The area shown on the map is the interior. The rooftop area's only noteworthy features are a hatch granting access to the tower interior via a ladder and a bucket with 100 arrows.

Creatures: There are always two orcs in this location. One is an ordinary guard, from among those who dwell with Lord Nar. The other is Graytusk, the only capable hunter and tracker among the orcs. Unless she is out on the hunt, Graytusk spends all her time in the tower, either watching from the rooftop or getting a few hours of sleep in the interior room.

As noted in area **11**, the primary job of the orcs here is to watch the yard. The orcs attempt Perception checks against anyone in the yard every few minutes, increasing to every round if there is a disturbance (such as falling rocks or a grappling hook thrown over the wall). If the orcs spot anything, their first action is to sound an alarm, alerting Nar and the other orcs that there's trouble. Within a few rounds, all of the orcs are roused and in the yard. They remain this way for at least 30 minutes while they try to figure out what's going on.

In combat, the orc brute descends to area **12** using the stairs on the side of the tower. Graytusk stays here on the rooftop area, raining down arrows upon any intruder she sees. With 40 arrows in her quiver and 100 arrows in the bucket, she'll be able to sustain that routine for quite a while.

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ORC BRUTE

Pathfinder Bestiary 256

Initiative Perception +5; darkvision

CREATURE 0

GRAYTUSK

CREATURE 3

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM HUMANOID ORC

Perception +9; darkvision

Languages Common, Orc

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +8, Nature +7, Survival +7

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

Items composite longbow (40 arrows), shortsword, +1 studded leather

AC 21; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

HP 47

Ferocity 2



Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ shortsword +11 (agile, finesse, versatile S),

Damage 1d6+5 piercing

Melee ♦ fist +11 (agile, finesse, nonlethal, unarmed),

Damage 1d4+5 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ composite longbow +11 (deadly 1d10, propulsive, range increment 100 ft., reload 0, volley 30 ft), **Damage** 1d8+3 piercing

Double Shot ♦♦ Graytusk can make two ranged Strikes against two different targets, each at a -2 penalty, Graytusk's multiple attack penalty increases only after both attacks are made.

17. THE STUDY

This chamber is a small study. To the north, a staircase ascends to a double door; to the south, a stone door is set into the curved wall of the fortresses' structure.

Opposite the entrance is a bookshelf filled with alchemical lore. Over the years, Vilree has acquired quite the library of esoteric alchemical knowledge. Anyone seeking information on alchemy can spend an hour searching the library to gain a +2 item bonus

to the Crafting check. The collection is worth 200 gp to the right person, but it amounts to 30 Bulk, so transporting all of the books poses quite a challenge.

18. LOUNGE

The door leading into this area is locked with a simple lock, but it can be opened with three successful DC 20 Thievery checks. Alternatively, it can be opened with the silver key from area 14 or the key that Vilree herself is carrying. When the PCs enter the room, read or paraphrase the following.

The door swings open to reveal a well-appointed lounge. Off to one side, a pair of padded chairs sits in front of a fireplace lit with faintly glowing embers. Two bookcases flank the fireplace along the curved wall; they are filled with tomes, scrolls, and an assortment of odd and esoteric objects. Nearby, a staircase goes up to a second level, and a door stands partly open, leading into a kitchen.

Vilree uses this chamber to relax after a long day spent planning and implementing the destruction of Etran's Folly. Although comfortable, the furnishings are clearly old and show signs of wear. Most of the things in this room were taken from Etran's Folly over the years, stolen by Hallod from abandoned homes and left for Vilree at their drop-off spot.

There is not much of value in this chamber, but if they search it, the PCs might learn a bit about their foe. One of the bookcases contains a ledger

that includes all of Vilree's business dealings over the years, including all of the deals with Bort. While most of these dealings were ordinary in nature, she did place orders for large amounts of certain reagents. In the past year in particular, her orders got larger and larger, including a number of vile-sounding reagents such as corpse blood, essence of bile, and fester root. Anyone who succeeds at a DC 18 Crafting check can identify these as reagents used in poisons and diseases.

There are a handful of diaries here from when Vilree was young; they detail the years after her mother, Silwyth's, death, when she tried to survive in a town that shunned her. The diaries end on the five-year anniversary of Silwyth's death, when Vilree decided to leave the town. She mentions that she found a new place to live and learn about her mother's work: a series of caves deep in the forest north of town.

If the characters spend any time going through the personal belongings, they undoubtedly hear a racket coming from the kitchen (area 19); the noise is made by Vilree's homunculus as it attempts to cook.

Rewards: Among the curios and mementos on the shelves is a silver locket that contains a small painting of young Vilree. The locket is worth 5 gp. In addition, there is a *hand of the mage* on one of the shelves, grasping a vial of lesser bravo's brew.

19. KITCHEN

Dirty pots and pans are piled high on the table in the center of this room, obscuring the view of the fireplace that sits beyond. Something in this kitchen is making a terrible racket; it sounds like a wooden spoon clattering against an iron pot.

This kitchen is where Vilree prepares meals, but when she is busy, she allows her homunculus servant to attempt to cook. Unfortunately, the homunculus is a terrible cook, rarely making anything remotely edible. There is not much of value, but the PCs can get food and a wide variety of exotic spices worth a total of 2 gp.

Creature: Pergy is a rotund alchemical homunculus

that was one of Vilree's first experimental servants. While successful, the experiment proved too costly and time consuming to be replicated on a large scale, which led Vilree to instead focus on subjugating the orcs and mutating other creatures.

Pergy is busy cooking when the PCs enter and is not likely to notice them until they step around the table and see the small, bloated thing flapping about on clumsy wings. At this point, it shrieks, tosses a pan of hot soup at the nearest PC (+3 to attack, deals 1 bludgeoning and 1d4 fire damage). Pergy then tries to flee the room, intending to find Vilree and alert her to the presence of intruders. Pergy does not have a dose of poison inside of it.



HOMUNCULUS

Pathfinder Bestiary 208

Initiative Perception +3; darkvision

CREATURE 0

110. THE LADY'S HALL

The stairs ascend to a small hall that leads to Vilree's personal chambers. The curved wall of the fortress here is covered in paintings of Vilree's mother, Silwyth, painted by Vilree to remind herself of all that she has lost. The paintings depict an elven woman of unnatural beauty, with raven hair, fully green eyes, and a mischievous smile dancing across her lips.

The door leading into Vilree's chambers is both trapped and locked. It can be opened with the key Vilree keeps on her person or with three successful DC 20 Thievery skill checks. Opening the door without using the key triggers the trap (see Hazard below).

Hazard: Vilree has created a dangerous trap in this area to punish anyone foolish enough to violate her private sanctum. If anyone tries to open the door without first using the key, small compartments open in the ceiling, drenching the room with a freezing alchemical solution.

ICE FALL TRAP

HAZARD 4

MECHANICAL **TRAP**
Stealth DC 22 (trained)

Description Compartments in the ceiling are rigged to drop a freezing alchemical liquid into the entire room if the door is opened without using the key.

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Disable Thievery DC 20 (trained) on the door allows it to be opened without springing the trap.

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

Hardness 8; **HP** 44 (BT 22); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Ice Fall ➔ **Trigger** The door is attacked or opened without using the key. **Effect** A freezing alchemical slurry is dumped into the room, dealing 4d6 cold damage to everyone in the area (DC 20 basic Reflex save).

I11. VILREE'S CHAMBERS

The doors open to reveal a bedchamber with a large bed opposite the door, flanked by a desk and a dresser. The heady scent of lilac hangs heavy in the air, emanating from a cone of incense that is still smoking faintly.

Vilree uses this chamber as her sleeping quarters, but she hasn't used it much over the past few weeks. It contains her bed, a dresser filled with robes and work aprons, a desk filled with personal effects and correspondence, and a chest (detailed in Rewards below). A door in the corner leads to the privy.

If the PCs spend at least 10 minutes looking through the correspondence, they find Hallod's letters confirming the delivery of various shipments of alchemical reagents. Another piece of parchment contains a timeline of dates and notable occurrences; near the bottom, it shows the date that Bort's caravan arrived in town with the note "Tied up loose end: merchant." There are two entries beneath that line: one is dated yesterday, and reads, "The last reaction is in place." The final entry does not have a date listed—that spot is blank—but it reads, "Mother avenged."

Rewards: While the clothes in the dresser are of good make, they are not particularly valuable. One of the drawers contains a mistform elixir and two lesser elixirs of life. The chest in the corner is closed but not locked. Inside are three sacks containing a large amount of coin (53 gp, 86 sp, 416 cp) Vilree earned selling alchemical elixirs to merchants over the years. There are also four moderate alchemist's fire, two lesser tanglefoot bags, and a moderate fire energy mutagen (page 56).

I12. SILWYTH'S SHRINE

MODERATE 3

Standing at one end of this long chamber is a marble statue of an elven woman holding a flask. She is dressed in a flowing gown, and liquid tears streak down her cheeks into a small pool surrounding the statue's base. Other than the faint burbling of water, this chamber is peaceful and still.

Years after building a home here, Vilree hired an artisan in Almas to sculpt a statue of her mother. She had it shipped in secret and installed in this room so Vilree would have a place where she could go and remember the woman who tried to save the folk of Etran's Folly, was branded a witch, and cast out. The statue serves as both a reminder and a warning: never count on others for aid.

At the bottom of the pool is a sealed stone box that bears the alchemical symbol for life alongside Silwyth's name. The box contains her remains, which Vilree brought here shortly after the shrine was completed.

Creatures: The pool and fountain in this room are powered by a pair of brine sharks that Vilree bound years ago. These elementals live in the pool and come out only if someone other than Vilree tries to approach the statue, whereupon the pool suddenly surges onto the ground as the elementals take form and attack.

BRINE SHARKS (2)

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 152

Initiative Perception +8; darkvision

I13. STORAGE

This chamber is piled high with boxes, barrels, and crates. While most are partially empty, they do contain a wide variety of alchemical tools, reagents, and supplies that could be used to create a vast array of alchemical items. If the PCs could find a way to transport all of this, the reagents alone would allow for the creation of 50 gp worth of alchemical items.

I14. MAIN LABORATORY

SEVERE 3

The doors open into a long chamber packed full of alchemical gear and experiments. Cauldrons stand next to tables where even now volatile mixtures are brewing and bubbling. A large furnace is opposite the door, just behind a long pool of water with a statue of a woman standing at its head. To the east, a passageway reveals a set of descending spiral stairs.

This is the laboratory where Vilree does most of the work that funds her nefarious plans. It is here that she makes all sorts of elixirs, tools, and bombs to be sold in Andoran, Cheliax, Isger, and beyond. After all, her ambitions far outpace those of an ordinary practitioner of alchemy. Vilree plans to make a name for herself, to create the legend that her mother never had—and legends cost gold.

The tables to the north and south are covered in alchemical equipment. The creatures working here were in the middle of making flasks of acid when the

PCs arrive, but the flasks are still carefully filtering reagents and are far from ready. The furnace is lit and is being used to melt copper, burning away impurities for a future experiment. Finally, the pool is used as a fresh water supply and is drawn from a well upstream from the spot where Vilree dumps waste into the depths.

The statue standing over the pool is of Vilree; she stands in the same pose as her mother in area **I12**, only she does not have tears streaming down her cheeks. Instead, her expression is hard, cold, and calculating. The stairs to the east descend to area **I15**.

Creatures: Vilree long ago realized that she couldn't trust anyone with her most delicate work. Orcs might be good for testing mutagens and holding prisoners, but they lack the common sense and caution necessary to work in a laboratory. To this end, she experimented to create larger, smarter, and more capable alchemical servants. After a year of research, the first alchemical drudge was created. Appearing like large, wingless homonculi, four such creatures occupy this laboratory, overseeing basic tasks like tending an ongoing experiment or keeping the place tidy. They have strict orders to attack anyone who enters unaccompanied by Vilree. Each is loaded with a different bomb type for its alchemical strike, dealing acid, cold, fire, and electricity respectively.

ALCHEMICAL DRUDGES (4)

CREATURE 2

RARE N SMALL CONSTRUCT

Perception +6; darkvision

Languages Common (can't speak), empathy link

Skills Athletics +8, Crafting +8, Stealth +7

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

Empathy Link (arcane, divination, mental) An alchemical drudge can't speak, but its mind is linked to its creator. It can share basic emotional information with its creator, such as fear, happiness, or anger. If the drudge is destroyed, its master automatically knows this. The range of this link is 1,500 feet.

AC 18; **Fort** +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

HP 30; **Immunities** acid, bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious

Speed 20 feet, climb 10 feet

Melee ♦ fist +10 (finesse), **Damage** 1d8+2 bludgeoning plus alchemical strike

Alchemical Strike An alchemical drudge contains a special reservoir that can be loaded with the contents of one alchemical bomb that deals acid, cold, electricity, or fire damage, allowing the drudge to imbue its fist attacks with this damage. Each hit deals

1d6 points of damage of the same type as that of the bomb loaded into it. Each bomb has enough fluid in it for 10 successful strikes.

Vomit Alchemy ♦♦ An alchemical drudge can vomit forth a pool of caustic alchemical reagents, filling the ground in one square adjacent to the drudge. Creatures in that square when the pool is created take 2d6 acid damage (DC 17 basic Reflex save). Any creature that ends its turn in a square containing a pool takes 2d6 acid damage. The pool remains for 1 minute before becoming inert.

Rewards: The central table contains common alchemical items ready to be shipped. Chief among them is a small crate containing 6 vials of lesser alchemist's fire and another with 4 lesser acid flasks. There is also a small, velvet-lined box containing a single dose of lesser stone body mutagen (page 56). A note on the table indicates these items are intended for an address in the Chelish capital of Egorian.

I15. GALLERY

The spiral stairs from the laboratory descend fifty feet before ending in a narrow hallway. To one side, more stairs descend further to an iron door, while the hallway continues south to a simple wooden door. Along the wall is a carving of a small farming village surrounded by an immense graveyard.

The stairs descend to Vilree's holding pen (area **I16**), where she brings prisoners and test subjects for delicate experiments. The door to the pen is barred from this side. The door to the south leads to Vilree's primary laboratory (area **I17**), where all of her new formulas were invented.

I16. PRISON PIT

Low 3

Screeching open on rusted hinges, the door opens to a room that is quite large, with a ceiling twenty feet above. The north side of the room is divided into three cells by iron bars. To the south is a high platform overlooking the cells. Two of the cells are empty, while the third contains a pitiful mass, huddled in the corner even though its cell door is open.

This chamber is used by Vilree to hold subjects for her experiments. The platform is for observing prisoners from above, and it connects to area **I17** via a passageway. The cells contain piles of sweat-soaked straw, scraps of fur, a few scales, and other signs that creatures have been held here.

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Creature: Successful experiments are sent out to be used by other minions, but failures are fused into a horrible, pitiful thing known only as the Amalgam and which functions as the jailor here. Vilree captured the orc war band's shaman as she tried to escape, and then used a powerful mutagenic extract to fuse the poor orc with a hobgoblin. Today, the Amalgam is made up of over a dozen creatures and is recognizable only as a mass of flesh and limbs. In nightmarish pain, the Amalgam's only release is to obey Vilree, who occasionally gives the thing a painkilling elixir.

The Amalgam does not notice the PCs until they approach its cell, when it flies into a rage against the intruders, hoping that Vilree will let it rest.

If the PCs get in a loud fight with the elementals in area I17, the Amalgam comes to investigate one round after it hears the disturbance.

THE AMALGAM

CREATURE 4

UNIQUE CE LARGE ABERRATION

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

Languages Common, Elven, Goblin, Orc

Skills Athletics +15, Intimidation +10

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

AC 20; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +10, **Will** +9; many minds

HP 65

Many Minds The Amalgam has many consciousnesses floating inside its mind, and they are not equally affected by mental magic. The Amalgam always treats its saving throws against mental effects as one degree better.

Speed 20 feet, climb 10 feet, swim 10 feet

Melee ♦ fist +14 (agile), **Damage** 1d6+5 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ claw +14, **Damage** 1d8+5 slashing

Melee ♦ jaws +12, **Damage** 1d10+5 piercing

Melee ♦ tail +12, **Damage** 1d8+5 bludgeoning plus Trip

Too Many Limbs ♦♦ The amalgam can make up to four Strikes, one with each of its listed melee attacks, but no more than two at any one target. It takes a -2 penalty to each attack, but the multiple attack penalty does not increase until all the attacks are made.

I17. EXPERIMENTAL LABORATORY SEVERE 3

This large chamber contains an alchemical laboratory, but unlike the one upstairs, it is clear that this is a laboratory for only one alchemist. Everything is meticulously cleaned and well organized. Two cauldrons bubble alongside a central table covered in alchemical equipment. The walls are lined with shelves that hold old books and orderly rows of glass bottles, each containing reagents and ingredients. Three pits, their contents hidden from view, fill one side of the room; nearby, a tall glass cylinder contains the blackened corpse of a dwarf surrounded by a swirling green mist.

This is Vilree's personal laboratory, where she researched all of her dreadful mutagens. It's here that she stumbled upon the formula for the viridian vapor, and where she created all the alchemical servants that live in her fortress. There is a lot here the PCs might uncover, but all that is only a fragment of Vilree's plan.



The Amalgam

Vilree left the room while creating two doses of energy mutagen (page 56). Her formula book is open on the central table next to the bubbling concoction (see Rewards below). This project takes up only a small corner of the large table, which is otherwise empty. The alchemy tools here are all tainted with an oily green residue. By consulting the formula book and inspecting the available ingredients, a PC can attempt a DC 22 Crafting check to identify this residue as a side effect of the viridian vapor. The book describes an absolutely lethal disease contracted by inhaling the vapor. The disease causes a horrific fungus to grow in the lungs within hours, leading to death. The books do not describe a cure.

Clever PCs might compare the ingredients and reagents that Bort supplied with the formulas in the book. It takes 10 minutes to find the right information, but one thing becomes abundantly clear: Vilree had enough ingredients to create 500 batches of viridian vapor. Worse, none of those ingredients can be found here in the laboratory in any quantity, although there are a number of empty containers.

A parchment tucked inside the formula book bears a simple diagram of a round, flat-topped rock with a depression on top. The diagram depicts a procedure for using acid to create a reservoir inside the stone. There is only one note on the illustration, reading “Mother’s ring will be the key.” The PCs may not realize it at first, but this diagram depicts the plaguestone in the center of Etran’s Folly. Over the past few months, Vilree has hollowed out the stone and secretly filled it with viridian vapor. Her plan is to destroy the stone using her mother’s ring, which she has had enchanted to explosively shatter the stone when it comes into contact with the ring.

The tall glass cylinder at the west end of the room contains the remains of a dwarf, Vilree’s most recent test subject. To ensure the viridian vapor was suitably lethal, she had her orcs venture deep into the mountains and capture the first humanoid they encountered. The unfortunate dwarf was on his way home from visiting relatives when the orcs set upon him. He died in this chamber a few days later, and his skin split open as the fungus inside him consumed his flesh. Worse still, the vapor is still swirling around his body and his rotting flesh can now transmit the disease. A successful DC 20 Medicine check by a PC who has read Vilree’s formula book confirms that these are effects of the viridian vapor.

Creatures: Vilree has a number of servants in this chamber. A cinder rat is heating the cauldron; it was bound to Vilree some time ago and it attacks if anyone

disturbs the alchemical setup or takes anything from the table. Two alchemical drudges are cleaning the specimen pits on the south side of the room; they climb out and attack if discovered. If combat breaks out with the cinder rat, the drudges join the fight during the second round.

CINDER RAT

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 148

Initiative Perception +9; darkvision, smoke vision

ALCHEMICAL DRUDGES (2)

CREATURE 2

Page 43

Initiative Perception +6; darkvision

Rewards: There are a number of valuable alchemical items in this room. Vilree’s gear could easily be plundered to create a set of alchemist’s tools, and the reagents present are enough to craft 80 gp worth of alchemical items. There are also a number of finished items here: 3 minor elixirs of life, 2 lesser elixirs of life, 2 lesser alchemist’s fire, 4 lesser acid flasks, 2 lesser tanglefoot bags, 2 lesser frost vials, a lesser cognitive mutagen, a lesser stone body mutagen, and a moderate electricity energy mutagen.

But the real treasure here is the formula book on the table. It contains a wide variety of formulas, including all of the items found in this adventure (acid flask, alchemist’s fire, bomber’s eye elixir, bottled lightning, bravo’s brew, cat’s eye elixir, elixirs of life, liquid ice, mistform elixir, tanglefoot bags, and of course, the viridian vapor). It also includes formulas for energy and stone body mutagens (page 56).

118. THE DESCENT

The stairs descend into a rough-hewn chamber, the far side of which looks like a natural cave. In the southeast corner, a passageway winds off into darkness. A sputtering torch is mounted next to the door. In the distance, you can hear the sound of rushing water.

These caves are the reason Vilree moved her laboratory here. As the PCs get closer to the cave walls, the character with the highest Perception notices veins of green in the rock. This ore is a key ingredient in the creation of the viridian vapor, and part of the reason it is so deadly. When ground up, the green rock deals serious damage to the lungs, allowing an infection to take hold and grow within hours. If the characters have studied Vilree’s formula book, they know this green rock is called flaystone.

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119. BAT ROOST

LOW 3

The twisting corridor opens into a large cavern filled with large, glistening stalactites and stalagmites. Puddles of brackish water dot the floor, and while the sound of rushing water seems to be close by, the source is not in this room.

This cavern was too cramped for Vilree's use, but a number of paths have been opened through the chamber, allowing characters to easily move through it.

Creatures: Vilree is careful not to make too much noise when passing through this chamber, but the PCs have no idea that the room is inhabited by a large number of bats that swarm at the slightest provocation. The swarm tends to move, use Blood Feast, and then move again, while the giant bat picks a target and attacks until slain.

GIANT BAT

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 39

Initiative Perception +11; echolocation (precise) 40 feet, low-light vision

VAMPIRE BAT SWARM

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 39

Initiative Perception +10; echolocation (precise) 20 feet, low-light vision

120. THE EMERALD DEPTHS

SEVERE 3

The winding passage ends in a large cavernous chamber. Running through the middle is an underground river rushing from east to west. A narrow bridge crosses the water; it looks slick with moisture and mold. On the far side of the chamber are immense formations of cloudy, green rock, and in front of them is a large black cauldron with a fire burning at its base. Light filters into this chamber from above through a twisting crevasse in the ceiling; the far side of the cavern is lit by glowing green orbs suspended by chains from stalactites.

It was here that Vilree did much of the work to make the viridian vapor, starting with a thick solution of powdered flaystone. And it is here that Vilree waits for intruders. She likely received warning from the alchemical drudges that the PCs were drawing closer, and she is ready for them. When the PCs are all in the room, read or paraphrase the following.

Stepping out from behind the massive cauldron is a thin woman, gently pointed ears rising up from her oily, raven-black hair. She is wearing stitched leathers bearing countless pouches and pockets filled with glass vials. She looks at you with a sneer.

"So, you must be the fools that arrived with Bort. Sorry about your *friend*," she says, her tone dripping with sarcasm. "I couldn't let anyone piece together what had happened here, and he knew too much. I am sure you think you can stop me and save the town. You shouldn't have bothered. They are a wicked, worthless lot and don't deserve compassion. How could they, when they let their own suffer and die in agony? Scorning a child out of spite?" As she says the words, she looks at each of you in turn. "Leave now and never look back. No one need ever know you were here."

It's unlikely the characters will take Vilree up on her offer, but if they leave, she lets them. Assuming they don't, she says only "Pity," which is the command word for her greatest alchemical servant, the Behemoth, to rise up out of the water and hold the bridge between Vilree and the PCs.

Creatures: Vilree and the Behemoth should make for a very dangerous encounter. The Behemoth's sole job is to prevent anyone from getting across the bridge, while Vilree remains on the far side, lobbing bombs and firing her alchemical crossbow at the PCs.

Depending on how the fight goes with the Behemoth, someone could get knocked into the water. This water flows quickly from east to west



and, should anyone be swept out of the room, they have almost no chance of surviving (the river enters another underground cave about a half a mile from here, and finding a way back to surface is another adventure entirely). Swimming against the current requires a successful DC 18 Athletics check, but the DC drops to 16 if the character swims with the current or swims directly to the nearest edge.

If the PCs take down the Behemoth and engage her in melee, Vilree drinks her moderate acid energy mutagen and draws her blade. She otherwise fights cautiously, using her crossbow and bombs, as well as elixirs of life to heal serious wounds.

THE BEHEMOTH

CREATURE 3

UNIQUE N LARGE CONSTRUCT

Perception +7; darkvision

Languages Common (can't speak); empathy link

Skills Athletics +12, Intimidation +7

Str +5, **Dex** +1, **Con** +4, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -2

Empathy Link (arcane, divination, mental) The behemoth can't speak, but its mind is linked to its creator. It can share basic emotional information with its creator, such as fear, happiness, or anger. If the behemoth is destroyed, its master automatically knows this. The range of this link is 1,500 feet.

AC 17; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7

HP 60; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ fist +12 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d6+5 bludgeoning

Attack of Opportunity ☞

Massive Strike ♦♦ The behemoth makes a melee Strike and, if the attack hits, it can push the creature back 10 feet (20 feet on a critical hit). The target must succeed at a DC 19 Fortitude save or be knocked prone by this attack.

Stomp ♦♦ The behemoth can stomp on the ground, causing all creatures within 10 feet to fall prone (DC 19 Reflex save negates).

4 sp), bracers of missile deflection, daggers (2), key, leather armor, lesser potion of fire resistance, lesser juggernaut mutagen, lesser stone body mutagen, +1 striking dagger, moderate acid energy mutagen

AC 22; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +13, **Will** +8

HP 68

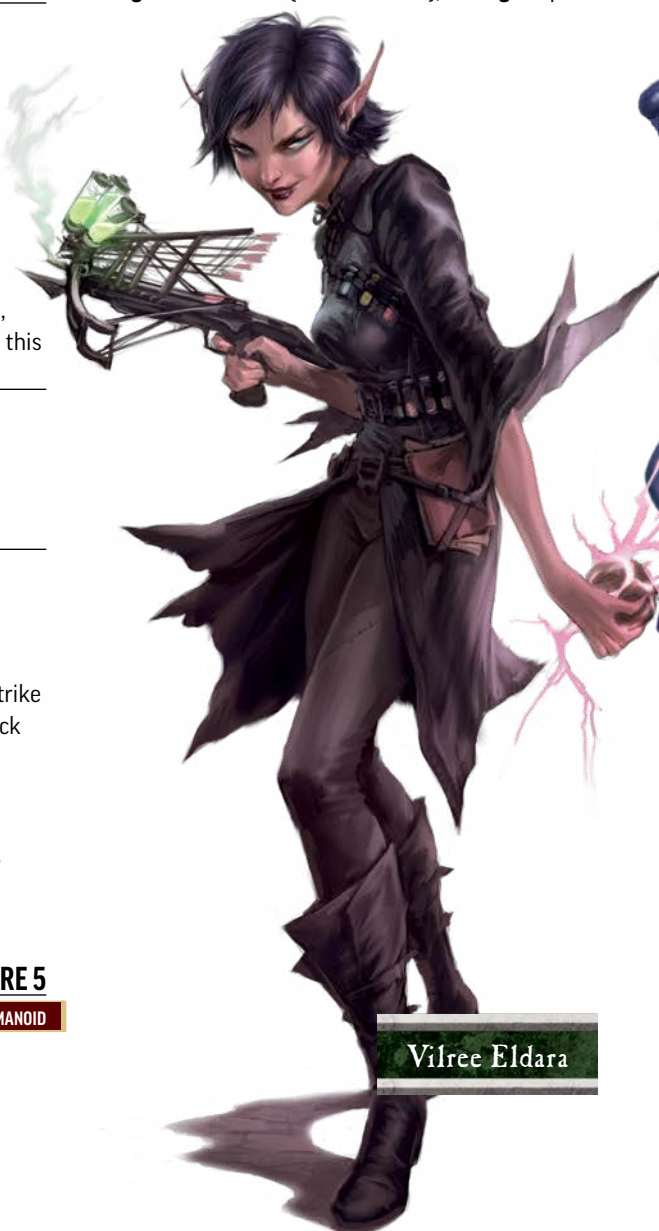
Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +14 (agile, finesse, thrown 10 feet, versatile), **Damage** 2d4+1 piercing

Melee ♦ fist +13 (agile, finesse, nonlethal, unarmed), **Damage** 1d4+1 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ alchemical crossbow +13 (range increment 30 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d8 piercing plus alchemy

Ranged ♦ bomb +13 (thrown 30 feet), **Damage** as per bomb



Vilree Eldara

VILREE

CREATURE 5

UNIQUE LE MEDIUM ELF HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +10

Languages Common, Elven

Skills Acrobatics +11, Arcana +11, Crafting +13, Diplomacy +7, Intimidation +7, Stealth +11

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

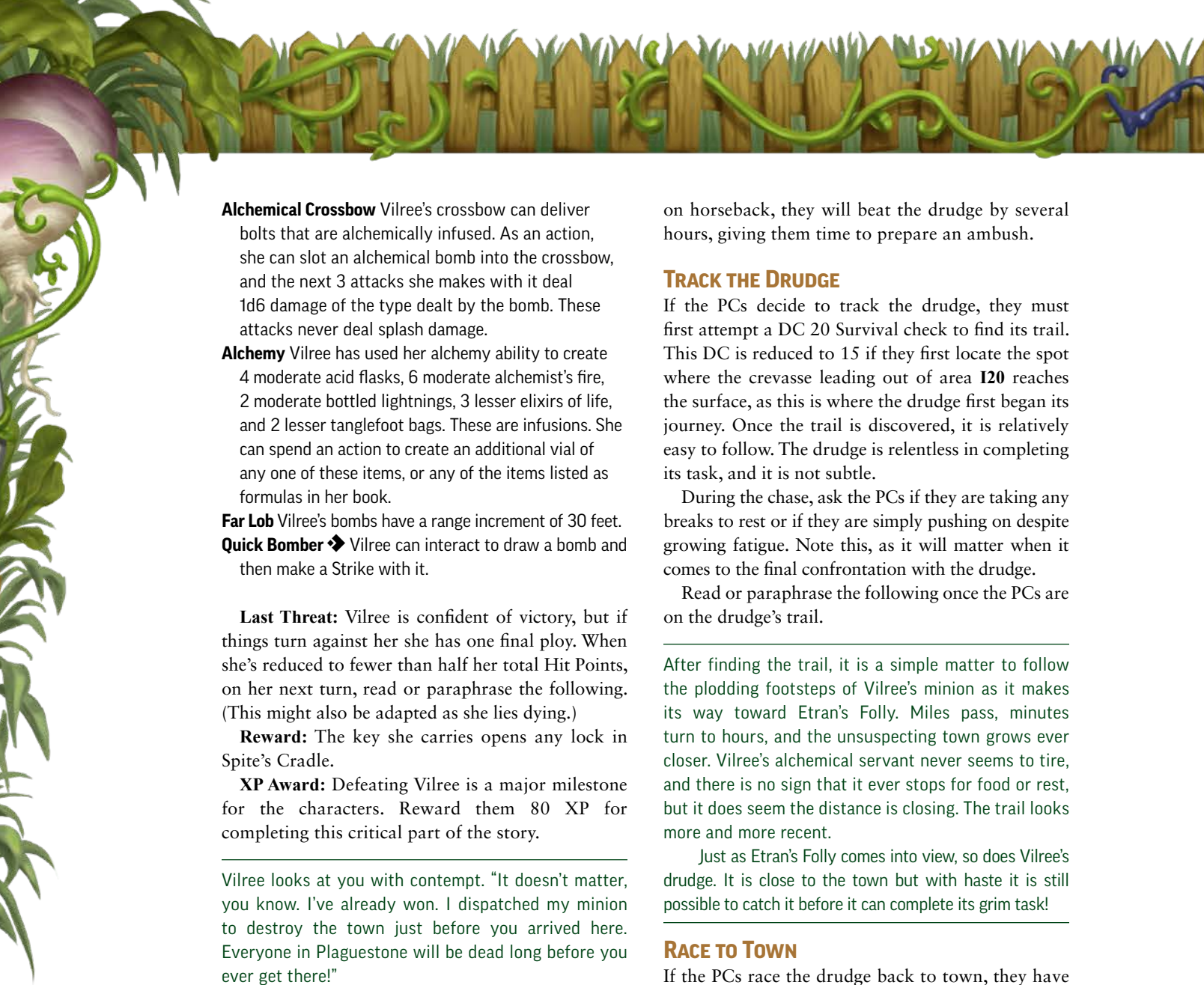
Items alchemical crossbow, belt pouch (2 pp, 38 gp,

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Alchemical Crossbow Vilree's crossbow can deliver bolts that are alchemically infused. As an action, she can slot an alchemical bomb into the crossbow, and the next 3 attacks she makes with it deal 1d6 damage of the type dealt by the bomb. These attacks never deal splash damage.

Alchemy Vilree has used her alchemy ability to create 4 moderate acid flasks, 6 moderate alchemist's fire, 2 moderate bottled lightnings, 3 lesser elixirs of life, and 2 lesser tanglefoot bags. These are infusions. She can spend an action to create an additional vial of any one of these items, or any of the items listed as formulas in her book.

Far Lob Vilree's bombs have a range increment of 30 feet.

Quick Bomber ♦ Vilree can interact to draw a bomb and then make a Strike with it.

Last Threat: Vilree is confident of victory, but if things turn against her she has one final ploy. When she's reduced to fewer than half her total Hit Points, on her next turn, read or paraphrase the following. (This might also be adapted as she lies dying.)

Reward: The key she carries opens any lock in Spite's Cradle.

XP Award: Defeating Vilree is a major milestone for the characters. Reward them 80 XP for completing this critical part of the story.

Vilree looks at you with contempt. "It doesn't matter, you know. I've already won. I dispatched my minion to destroy the town just before you arrived here. Everyone in Plaguestone will be dead long before you ever get there!"

Vilree sent an alchemical drudge to the town shortly after the PCs arrived at her laboratory (or about an hour ago, if the PCs took their time). The drudge exited the chamber by climbing up and out through the crevasse in the ceiling that provides light to this chamber. The drudge is carrying Silwyth's ring, which has been enchanted so that, if it touches the plaguestone, rock and ring will both explode, covering the town in a growing cloud of viridian vapor.

RACE TO SAVE ETRAN'S FOLLY

By the time the PCs defeat Vilree, her alchemical drudge has a significant head start in the race back to Etran's Folly. The PCs have a choice if they want to save the town: they can attempt to track the drudge, or they can race back to town and wait for it at the plaguestone. If the PCs have horses, they won't have to stop and rest and won't be fatigued for the final confrontation. If the PCs race back to Etran's Folly

on horseback, they will beat the drudge by several hours, giving them time to prepare an ambush.

TRACK THE DRUDGE

If the PCs decide to track the drudge, they must first attempt a DC 20 Survival check to find its trail. This DC is reduced to 15 if they first locate the spot where the crevasse leading out of area **120** reaches the surface, as this is where the drudge first began its journey. Once the trail is discovered, it is relatively easy to follow. The drudge is relentless in completing its task, and it is not subtle.

During the chase, ask the PCs if they are taking any breaks to rest or if they are simply pushing on despite growing fatigue. Note this, as it will matter when it comes to the final confrontation with the drudge.

Read or paraphrase the following once the PCs are on the drudge's trail.

After finding the trail, it is a simple matter to follow the plodding footsteps of Vilree's minion as it makes its way toward Etran's Folly. Miles pass, minutes turn to hours, and the unsuspecting town grows ever closer. Vilree's alchemical servant never seems to tire, and there is no sign that it ever stops for food or rest, but it does seem the distance is closing. The trail looks more and more recent.

Just as Etran's Folly comes into view, so does Vilree's drudge. It is close to the town but with haste it is still possible to catch it before it can complete its grim task!

RACE TO TOWN

If the PCs race the drudge back to town, they have no idea how fast their competition is traveling to the plaguestone. Although the journey is to the same place, the two divergent paths make it hard to guess who might be in the lead. Ask the PCs if they are taking breaks to rest or are simply pushing on despite growing fatigue. Note this for the confrontation with the drudge.

Once the PCs have made their choices, read or paraphrase the following.

There is still a grim possibility that the town of Etran's Folly is now a town filled with the dead and dying. Miles pass, minutes turn to hours, and finally the unsuspecting village grows ever closer. There is no sign of Vilree's minion, but that only adds to a growing sense of dread.

Etran's Folly comes into view at the crest of a hill. The alchemical drudge is now approaching its final destination—the plaguestone—where it will carry out its final gruesome command from Vilree!

STOPPING THE DRUDGE

Once the scene is set, all that remains is to defeat the drudge before it can touch the ring to the plaguestone. If the PCs succeed, they will be hailed as heroes, but should they fail, a miasma will spread over the town, spelling the end of Etran's Folly.

Creature: The alchemical drudge relentlessly carries out its final command. Its starting position and distance to the stone depends upon choices the PCs made. If they didn't stop for breaks, the PCs are all fatigued (unless they have horses, in which case the horses are fatigued instead), but they can square off against the drudge while it is still at the edge of town, 120 feet away from the stone. If the PCs rested, the drudge starts only 60 feet from the stone, near the middle of town.

If the PCs chased the drudge, they are just 30 feet behind it. If they raced to town on foot, they start at the stone, but the drudge is 30 feet closer to its destination.

Finally, if the PCs raced back to town on horses, they arrive 2 hours before the drudge, but they must stay alert because they don't know when to expect the drudge to arrive. They do, however, have the chance to put up barriers or set an ambush, at your discretion. At the very least, they start at the stone and the drudge is 120 feet away, giving them ample time to stop it.

Once combat has begun, the drudge only fights back if its path is blocked; otherwise, it moves toward the stone with all its actions, heedless of danger. Once adjacent to the stone, it must spend one action to retrieve the ring and three more to activate it. If it does, the plaguestone explodes, killing the drudge instantly and dealing 6d6 slashing damage to everyone within 30 feet (DC 22 basic Reflex save). In addition, this explosion spreads the viridian vapor all around town, infecting everyone as noted in Hazard below.

ALCHEMICAL DRUDGE

Page 43

Initiative Perception +6; darkvision

MODERATE 3



Tamli Grent

of the viridian vapor, a deadly disease contracted by inhaling a glowing green gas. The disease has the following statistics.

Viridian Vapor (Virulent Disease 5)

You can't reduce the sickened condition or heal from damage while affected by viridian vapor. **Saving Throw** DC 23 Fortitude; **Onset** 10 minutes; **Stage 1** 1d6 slashing damage and sickened 1 (1 hour); **Stage 2** 2d6 slashing damage and sickened 2 (1 hour); **Stage 3** dead

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Defeating Vilree and saving the town of Etran's Folly completely clears the PCs and the members of Bort's caravan of Bort's murder. Even Sheriff Rolth is impressed that the strangers

did so much to help the tiny community. Delma lets them stay at the Feedmill, free of charge, for as long as they like, and any tab they might have acquired is wiped away. The PCs are free to leave and continue their journey to Almas if they like, but they will have to wait at least a day if they want to continue traveling with what is now Tamli's caravan, as the caravan members want to give Bort a proper burial. If the PCs decide to train for a few days with Noala, Tamli and crew are happy to wait as well, enjoying a little rest before getting back on the road.

Rewards: Tamli invites the PCs to the funeral and gives them all a chance to say a few words, a fond farewell to the caravan master that treated them all amicably. In spite of any shady deals he might have made over the years with questionable characters, he was genuinely kind and fair to his staff and those who rode with him. Tamli sheds more than a few tears as she says goodbye and attempts to make peace with the situation.

After the ceremony, she approaches the PCs to give them a gift. Bort was fond of rings, collecting a variety of them throughout his travels. She wishes to give one ring to each character, and states that many of them are magical. Describe the rings and their powers to the PCs (as noted in Rules and Rewards on pages 57–58) and allow them each to choose one.

XP Award: The PCs also get an 80 XP story award for saving the town and completing the adventure.

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Hazard: The real danger here is the release



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Not even mentioned on most maps, the town of Etran's Folly has seen better days. The town's population has never fully recovered from a plague that struck almost 20 years ago, and many of the homes on the north side of town stand empty and abandoned. In spite of such hardships, the townsfolk carry on and are friendly to outsiders and travelers. Those who approach are sure to marvel at huge turnip fields surrounding the village, but should be wary of the turnip ale favored by the locals—it's quite strong and it's definitely an acquired taste.

This section of this book includes useful tools for running “The Fall of Plaguestone.” In the following pages you’ll find a gazetteer of the town, including brief descriptions of the town’s significant inhabitants. There is also a quick review of the NPC caravan members, new character backgrounds tied to this adventure, rules and rewards found only here, a selection of side quests that link with the new backgrounds, and a few new monsters.

ETRAN’S FOLLY GAZETTEER

Etran’s Folly is a tiny community of about 300 people, but many of them live on farms or in small homes on the outskirts. It once sported a population nearly double that number, but a plague wiped out a number of families 20 years ago and the community has never fully recovered. Aside from the Feedmill and the ruins up on Etran’s Hill, the buildings in town are of typical wattle-and-daub construction, with thick thatch roofs.

LOCATIONS AROUND ETRAN’S FOLLY

What follows are some of the major sites in the small town.

Dead Homes: The homes on the north side of Etran’s Folly are mostly empty these days, and most are in a state of severe disrepair. When the plague hit the town a little less than 20 years ago, this neighborhood saw many casualties and as a result, almost no one lives here today. Those who do call this part of town home are either desperate or are squatters with no official claim to the property.

Dead Willow: On the northwest edge of town, near the river, stands an old dead willow tree in front of a dilapidated home. Though not unlike other nearby homes with overgrown plants and poorly maintained structures, this one is significant because it is the home of Hallod, the town bully and servant of Vilree. This home and the dungeon beneath it are both fully described in the Hallod’s Hideout portion of the adventure, starting on page 15.

Drunk Shepherd’s Path: Wandering through the outskirts of town, the Drunk Shepherd’s Path is little more than a meandering foot trail that leads through the nearby turnip farms, many of which

used to be sheep pastures. The path leads from the north side of town, out through the fields, to the old shrine, and back around to the south side of town, passing by Etran’s Hill.

Etran’s Hill: To the southeast of town is a small hill covered in old stones and bits of burned debris. This site was once the home of the town’s founder, Etran Bolmere, and his family. They moved to this area from Taldor, hoping to found a small community as a stopover for the overland travel through the region. Rumor has it he built up on the hill so that all would see it, despite it being far away from the nearest source of fresh water. Just 5 years after founding the town, the house burned down, killing Etran and his family, while also giving the town its current name (it was originally called Etranton).

Feedmill: Located in the center of town, the Feedmill is the town’s only inn, tavern, and general store, all crammed into one overcrowded business. Since it happens to be the only place in town with rooms to rent (albeit in the loft above the stables), it is the place where Bort and his caravan stay every time they visit. While the accommodations are far from great, the old straw mattresses are still better than sleeping on the hard earth outside. The food here is passing at best, with much of it focused on the town’s primary crop: turnips. A typical meal here consists of roasted wild game, turnip stew, a slice of dry seedcake, and a sweet turnip porridge for desert. Few desire seconds.

The Feedmill is owned by Targen Fulst, the aging mayor of the town who opened the business over 50 years ago. Targen is far too old and senile to take part in the day-to-day activities, instead leaving those to his daughter, Delma Fulst, who also tends the bar and the till for the general store. The other employees are Amora Kasillan (cook), Edra Wythe (stablehand), Kolnral Brannak (server), Phinick Padley (helper), and Trin Sathern (server).

Most common items (level 1) can be found in the general store, but unless they’re items that might be useful to a farming community, the store has only one or two in stock. The only magic items they have on hand are three *minor healing potions* and a *potency crystal*. No alchemical items are in stock, and if anyone asks Delma, she simply replies that the



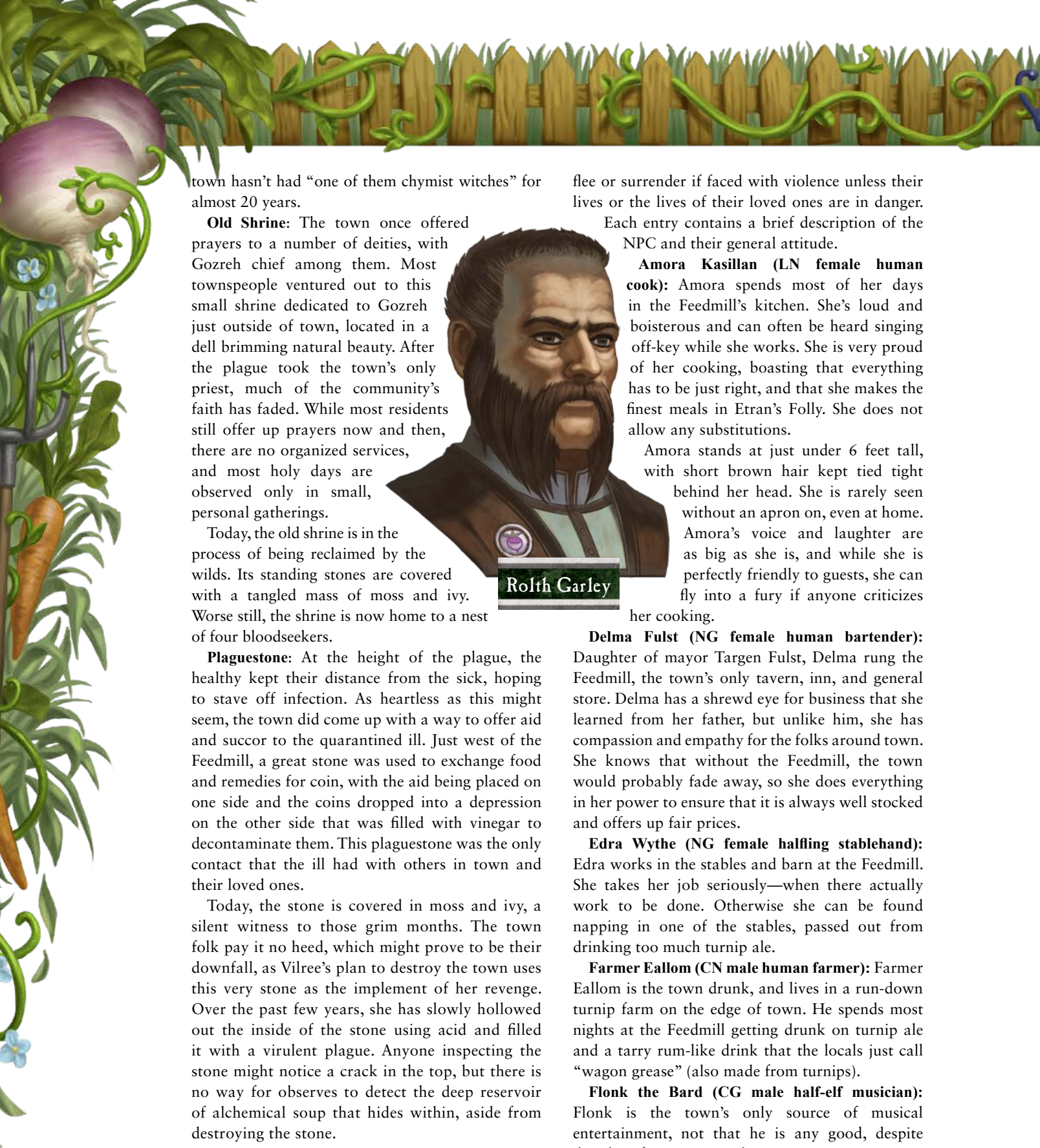
Delma Fulst

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town hasn't had "one of them chymist witches" for almost 20 years.

Old Shrine: The town once offered prayers to a number of deities, with Gozreh chief among them. Most townspeople ventured out to this small shrine dedicated to Gozreh just outside of town, located in a dell brimming natural beauty. After the plague took the town's only priest, much of the community's faith has faded. While most residents still offer up prayers now and then, there are no organized services, and most holy days are observed only in small, personal gatherings.

Today, the old shrine is in the process of being reclaimed by the wilds. Its standing stones are covered with a tangled mass of moss and ivy. Worse still, the shrine is now home to a nest of four bloodseekers.

Plaguestone: At the height of the plague, the healthy kept their distance from the sick, hoping to stave off infection. As heartless as this might seem, the town did come up with a way to offer aid and succor to the quarantined ill. Just west of the Feedmill, a great stone was used to exchange food and remedies for coin, with the aid being placed on one side and the coins dropped into a depression on the other side that was filled with vinegar to decontaminate them. This plaguestone was the only contact that the ill had with others in town and their loved ones.

Today, the stone is covered in moss and ivy, a silent witness to those grim months. The town folk pay it no heed, which might prove to be their downfall, as Vilree's plan to destroy the town uses this very stone as the implement of her revenge. Over the past few years, she has slowly hollowed out the inside of the stone using acid and filled it with a virulent plague. Anyone inspecting the stone might notice a crack in the top, but there is no way for observers to detect the deep reservoir of alchemical soup that hides within, aside from destroying the stone.

NPCS AROUND TOWN

The following NPCs can be found in and around the town of Etran's Folly. Unless otherwise noted, they are 0-level characters with a +5 bonus to skills applicable to their profession. In most cases, they

flee or surrender if faced with violence unless their lives or the lives of their loved ones are in danger.

Each entry contains a brief description of the NPC and their general attitude.



Rolth Garley

Amora Kasillan (LN female human cook): Amora spends most of her days in the Feedmill's kitchen. She's loud and boisterous and can often be heard singing off-key while she works. She is very proud of her cooking, boasting that everything has to be just right, and that she makes the finest meals in Etran's Folly. She does not allow any substitutions.

Amora stands at just under 6 feet tall, with short brown hair kept tied tight behind her head. She is rarely seen without an apron on, even at home. Amora's voice and laughter are as big as she is, and while she is perfectly friendly to guests, she can fly into a fury if anyone criticizes her cooking.

Delma Fulst (NG female human bartender): Daughter of mayor Targen Fulst, Delma runs the Feedmill, the town's only tavern, inn, and general store. Delma has a shrewd eye for business that she learned from her father, but unlike him, she has compassion and empathy for the folks around town. She knows that without the Feedmill, the town would probably fade away, so she does everything in her power to ensure that it is always well stocked and offers up fair prices.

Edra Wythe (NG female halfling stablehand): Edra works in the stables and barn at the Feedmill. She takes her job seriously—when there actually work to be done. Otherwise she can be found napping in one of the stables, passed out from drinking too much turnip ale.

Farmer Eallom (CN male human farmer): Farmer Eallom is the town drunk, and lives in a run-down turnip farm on the edge of town. He spends most nights at the Feedmill getting drunk on turnip ale and a tarry rum-like drink that the locals just call "wagon grease" (also made from turnips).

Flonk the Bard (CG male half-elf musician): Flonk is the town's only source of musical entertainment, not that he is any good, despite decades of practice. His lute is missing two strings, and the self-proclaimed "bard" knows only about a half-dozen songs. He can be found at the Feedmill every night, singing and strumming away—badly.

Hallod (LE male human bully): Hallod is a large, imposing man, bearing a number of scars

crisscrossing his face from years of bar fights. He is one of Vilree's servants in town, and he is the one who accepts the shipment from Bort when the caravan first arrives. Hallod is also the one who bullies Phinick into poisoning the merchant. PCs can find Hallod in the Feedmill at night or in his shack at the northern edge of town. Hallod appears in area F of the adventure, which starts on page 15.

Kolnral Brannak (NG male human server): Kolnral is one of two servers at the Feedmill, along with Trin Sathern, and is quite skilled at his job. His wife and child also tend to a small plot on the eastern side of town to bolster the family's income. Kolnral is friendly but not too interested in talking to strangers.

Noala Kesrir (NG Female Elf Ranger): Noala came to the region of Etran's Folly about 10 years ago, settling here after serving as a mercenary in the Goblinblood Wars. Toward the end of that struggle, she was caught inside a burning building during a raid. Her right arm was terribly burned in the fire, making that hand all but useless. As a result, she wears a custom leather gauntlet over her right hand that allows her to fire her bow, but it reduces her accuracy.

Noala thinks of herself as a steward of these lands, even though no one else seems to recognize her as such. She is rarely found in town unless needed, instead preferring to work in the wild, preserving the delicate balance in the woodlands around the community. Only Delma seems to recognize and appreciate Noala for all she does for the town.

Phinick Padley (CN male goblin helper): Performing all sorts of odd jobs around the Feedmill, Phinick can most often be found helping with inventory in the morning, then transitioning over to help Amora in the kitchen in the afternoon. Phinick is tolerated by the townsfolk, but only barely—a fact that keeps him on edge. The twitchy goblin is rather timid and shy around big folk, trying too hard to fit in. Phinick is bullied into adding a special "spice" to Bort's food in Part 1 of the adventure, and he quickly goes into hiding after the merchant's death. For more on Phinick, see Chasing Phinick on page 14.

Rolth Garley (LN male human sheriff): Rolth is the only law in town, but he does relatively

little, as most justice in Etran's Folly is metered out with crude blades or farm tools long before he arrives. Rolth's only real job is to handle disputes between farmers over crops and livestock. Rolth is lazy and not too bright, and he is so out of shape that most who want to avoid his justice need only to run away. When Bort is murdered, Rolth's only decisive action is to hold the caravan to determine who among the crew killed their boss. When the PCs step up and offer to help, he reluctantly agrees, knowing that he is entirely out of his depth.

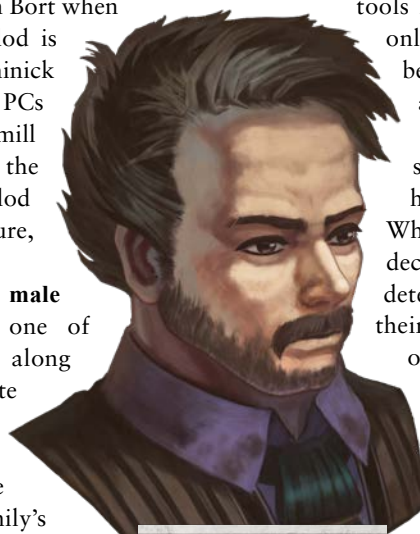
Sir Lawren Krent (LG male human ex-paladin): Poor Sir Lawren arrived here a few months ago when the caravan he was traveling with left without him. Disgraced and drunken, Sir Lawren

saw things during the fall of Lastwall that he cannot unsee without the aid of strong drink. He can most often be found drinking in the tavern of the Feedmill or passed out in a lean-to shelter nearby.

Targen Fulst (CG male human mayor): Targen was known around town as being a bit forgetful 20 years ago, but at age 80, he is mostly infirm, with poor eyesight and trouble walking more than a few steps at a time. His memory is now badly failing him, and he has trouble remembering the name of his daughter Delma, sometimes referring to her as Reganna, his long-passed wife. The entire Fulst family is related to Etran Bolmere, who founded the town a few hundred years ago.

Although Targen has long abdicated any mayoral responsibilities, the town has yet to name a new mayor, seeing no need with so few inhabitants. Targen lost most of his family to goblins in the Goblinblood war, and as a result, he is very distrusting of any goblin characters he might meet, keeping an eye on them and clutching at valuables. However, he has grown to tolerate Phinick.

Trin Sathern (NG female human server): Working every night at the Feedmill, Trin dreams of escaping Etran's Folly. She desperately wants to leave this place and make a new life for herself in Almas or some other city. If the players show any sign of helping her leave town, she becomes especially friendly, as the thought of getting out of the place is almost intoxicating to her. She is excited to hear any tale about faraway lands or unfamiliar places.



Sir Lawren Krent

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BORT'S TALES

The following are just a sample of the outlandish stories told by the traveling merchant Bort Bargith. These tales are so practiced that Bort receives a +2 circumstance bonus to Perform checks to impress when he uses one of them and to any Deception check he attempts to defend the tales' more outlandish claims.

Bort and the Chilled Giant: In this tale, Bort was traveling through one of the high mountain roads in the Five Kings Mountains when his caravan was captured by a fire giant. As Bort was being lowered into a kettle, he managed to trick the giant into using a rare plant called "frostbloom" in his soup, claiming it was quite spicy. When the giant tasted the broth, it froze his mouth shut, and Bort was able to escape with his entire crew during the confusion.

Pharasma's Comb: One day, while crossing the waters of Lake Encarthan, Bort's boat was set upon by a mighty storm and the ship capsized. As the sea took him, the crafty merchant grabbed hold of one of his treasured lock boxes as he slid beneath the waves, only to awake in front of Pharasma, about to be judged. Alas, the lady of death could not decide his fate because her hair was being tussled by the storm winds that brought Bort before her. Not wanting to be inconsiderate, the merchant dug through his lockbox and found a silver comb that he gave to the lady to tame her hair. So impressed was she by the gift, she returned the dwarf and his entire crew to the shores of the lake, alive and well.

BORT'S CARAVAN AND CREW

Traveling all around the Five King's Mountains and into the lands beyond, Bort's Merchant Caravan is well known and regarded as a fair and honest purveyor of goods, raw materials, and supplies.

Bort Bargith (NG male dwarf merchant): Bort keeps his prodigious beard immaculately trimmed and well maintained. Bort is a friendly, honest merchant, who prides himself on having whatever a small community might need. He's warm and caring toward the members of his crew and polite and courteous to his paying passengers. He can often be found with a mug of ale in one hand and savory food in the other, telling some outlandish story about his travels, which generally involves him getting out of danger in the most ridiculous of ways (see the Bort's Tales sidebar). He is slow to anger, quick to laugh, and more than capable of verbally dancing out of any danger.

Cooky (LN old male elf cook): Aged even for an elf, Cooky's real name is Talair Starlight, although only Bort knows that. To everyone else he is Cooky, the merchant caravan's resident cook—although some call him "cocky" behind his back, owing to the fact that he only has one ear and is constantly tilting his head to one side to compensate. Attached to the back of Cooky's wagon is a large iron pan that can hold hot coals and even burning logs, allowing him to slow cook stew in a pot above the flames, even while travelling. Cooky has a hard time hearing most folk, although many of the others in the caravan think he can hear just fine and chooses to ignore others when they irritate him.

Glunda Grapeleaf (N female gnome teamster): Born in heart of the Fangwood, Glunda has always had a strong tie to the beasts and plants of the world. When she was taken in by the druids in Crystalhurst, she developed her skills, even learning to speak with animals. Her time with the druids was not to last, for soon after the desire to wander called to her, and she left Nirmathas, joining up with Bort's caravan to travel and see the world. Glunda regularly uses her rudimentary skills to speak to the pack animals and tend to their needs. She almost never talks to anyone other than Tamli and Bort unless absolutely necessary, preferring to sleep near the animals rather than gather round the fire.

Olf and Ulf Redfren (CG male human teamsters): Hailing from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, the twin Ulfen brothers used to be part of a merchant vessel that plied the waters of Lake Encarthan, but when war came the region, the boat was sunk and the two barely made it to shore alive. They signed up with Bort soon after. These gregarious brothers like to play pranks on the other members of the caravan and their traveling companions and frequently dress alike and try to confuse people as to who is Olf and who is Ulf.

Tamli Grent (LN female half-orc chief): If Bort is the smiling face behind the caravan, Tamli is its overseer. As Bort's second in command, Tamli oversees the other staff and wagons in the train, making sure that all are in good spirits and good working order respectively. She is skilled at handling beasts of burden, but stern with the other members of the caravan. Her personal manner with outsiders and passengers are a bit brusque and awkward. She carries a lock of hair on a leather cord around her neck that's from her son, who she lost years ago when she fled from Belkzen. She doesn't like to talk about it with those she doesn't trust. The only person she regularly confides in is Bort, although she can often be heard barking orders at the other members of the caravan.

CHARACTER CREATION AND BACKGROUNDS

This adventure is designed for 1st-level characters, built using the rules found in the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*. In addition to the backgrounds presented in that book, the following are additional background options available to PCs at the start of the game to represent their ties to the world and the story that is unfolding in Isgar and its neighboring countries. Some of these backgrounds might be referenced later on in this adventure connected to additional encounters or interactions with NPCs in the village, but the GM should feel free to tailor these to apply to other backgrounds where appropriate. These backgrounds are also referenced in the Concluding the Adventure section on page 49, which gives GMs ideas for including these backgrounds as part of the campaign.

LESSER SCION

You are the youngest child in a noble house (in Cheliaz, Isgar, or Andoran) and stand to inherit nothing from your family. Although you have a minor title, it affords you no lands or wealth, but it has garnered you a small amount of respect and deference in your travels. When play begins, you are riding in a caravan bound for Almas, where a cousin has promised to allow you to stay with them for a month.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Dexterity or Intelligence, and one is a free ability boost.

You are trained in the Diplomacy skill and the Heraldry Lore skill. You gain the Hobnobber skill feat.

LOST AND ALONE

You were training to become a knight in Lastwall when the Whispering Tyrant escaped his imprisonment and destroyed the nation. It was only by dumb luck that you are alive at all, but the memories of that fateful day haunt your dreams. When play begins, you have boarded a caravan heading toward a new town, having worn out your welcome at the taverns and inns of Elidir.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Strength or Charisma, and one is a free ability boost.

You are trained in the Intimidate skill and the Warfare Lore skill. You gain the Intimidating Glare skill feat.

MISSIONARY

You received training from clergy in a faraway temple, who sent you out into the world to spread the faith. Although you are relatively new at this, you are always on the lookout for new places in need of your deity's teachings and guidance. When play begins, you are riding along in a caravan making your way

GM NOTES: BACKGROUNDS

Although the characters can be of any background, you should encourage the players to consider the ones presented in this adventure, as characters with these backgrounds will find it easier to integrate themselves into the story. These backgrounds also help contextualize the characters in the events of the world around them.

GMs should take particular note if any of the PCs are interested in selecting the teamster background. The group should contain no more than one character with this background. The adventure assumes that any such character just joined the caravan and hence has no special knowledge about the other teamsters or the town of Etran's Folly.

through sparsely populated regions of Isgar, spreading the news of your faith to those who will listen.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Constitution or Wisdom, and one is a free ability boost.

You are trained in the Diplomacy and Scribing Lore skills. You gain the Group Impression skill feat.

REFUGEE

The fighting around the Lake Encarthan region has forced many of the people residing there to flee from the violence. Although your home is gone, you have managed to survive and are making your way south in search of a better life. When play begins, you are riding along in a caravan taking you to what might be either a new home in Andoran or simply another waypoint in your journey.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Constitution or Intelligence, and one is a free ability boost.

You are trained in the Survival skill and the Hunting Lore skill. You gain the Forager skill feat.

TEAMSTER

You left your home a few months back for a life on the road, working for one caravan company and then another, always on the lookout for a new job and a better life. Last week, you were hired by the Bort Bargith's company in Elidir. You don't know anyone from the company just yet, but most of its members seem to be honest merchants and traders.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Strength or Wisdom, and one is a free ability boost.

You are trained in the Nature skill and the Mercantile Lore skill. You gain the Train Animal skill feat.

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RULES AND REWARDS

Throughout this adventure, there are a variety of new monsters, feats, and treasures that the characters might encounter or acquire during their quest to save Etran's Folly. These rules and rewards are grouped based on their locations in the adventure, with the exception of monsters, which are all grouped together.

VILREE'S ALCHEMICAL CREATIONS

Vilree has invented a number of alchemical items that the PCs might find. In addition to alchemical items from the *Core Rulebook*, the PCs are sure to encounter the following.

ALCHEMICAL CROSSBOW

UNCOMMON **ALCHEMICAL**
This crossbow can deliver alchemically infused bolts. The strange weapon has a metal bracket mounted on the side of the stock near the lath. As an action, you can load a single lesser alchemical bomb into the bracket; this bomb must be one that deals energy damage (such as an *acid flask*, *alchemist's fire*, *bottled lightning*, *frost vial*, or *thunderstone*). The next three attacks made with the crossbow deal 1d6 damage of the bomb's damage type in addition to the crossbow's normal damage. If the second and third attacks are not all made within 1 minute of the first attack, the bomb's energy is wasted. These attacks never deal splash damage or other special effects of the bomb and are not modified by any abilities that add to or modify a bomb's effect. The addition of the bracket serves to unbalance the weapon, reducing its range to 30 feet. It otherwise functions as a crossbow (when determining damage, reload, and so on). Creatures use their crossbow proficiency when using the alchemical crossbow. The alchemical crossbow costs 25 gp.

ENERGY MUTAGEN

ITEM 1+

UNCOMMON **ALCHEMICAL** **CONSUMABLE** **ELIXIR** **MUTAGEN** **POLYMORPH**

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ♦ Interact

When created, this mutagen is attuned to your choice of one of four energy types: acid, cold, electricity, or fire. When consumed, the mutagen suffuses your body with energy that spills out of you whenever you attack. At higher levels, it can even grant you the ability to unleash the energy in controlled bursts.

Benefit You gain resistance to the attuned energy type. Whenever you score a hit with a melee weapon, add the listed amount of damage of the attuned energy type.

Drawback You gain weakness 5 to the other three energy types.



Type lesser; **Level** 1; **Price** 4 gp

You gain resistance 5, add 1 point of damage on a hit with a melee weapon, and the duration is 1 minute.

Type moderate; **Level** 3; **Price** 12 gp

You gain resistance 10, add 1d4 damage on a hit with a melee weapon, and the duration is 10 minutes.

Type greater; **Level** 11; **Price** 300 gp

You gain resistance 15, add 1d6 damage on a hit with a melee weapon, and the duration is 1 hour. In addition, you can end the benefits of this mutagen to unleash a 30-foot cone of energy that deals 2d6 damage of the attuned type for every full 10 minutes of duration remaining (DC 25 basic Reflex save).

Type major; **Level** 17; **Price** 3,000 gp

You gain resistance 20, add 2d6 damage on a hit with a melee weapon, and the duration is 1 hour. In addition, you can end the benefits of this mutagen to unleash a 30-foot cone of energy that deals 3d6 damage of the attuned type for every full 10 minutes of duration remaining (DC 32 basic Reflex save).

STONE BODY MUTAGEN

ITEM 5+

UNCOMMON **ALCHEMICAL** **CONSUMABLE** **ELIXIR** **MUTAGEN** **POLYMORPH**

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ♦ Interact

This mutagen calcifies your body making it as hard as stone.

Benefit You gain resistance to physical damage (except bludgeoning) equal to the listed amount.

Drawback Your Speeds are reduced by 10 feet (minimum 5 feet) and you take a -2 penalty to Reflex saves.

Type lesser; **Level** 5; **Price** 22 gp

You gain resistance 5 to physical damage (except bludgeoning) and the duration is 10 minutes.

Type moderate; **Level** 12; **Price** 300 gp

You gain resistance 5 to physical damage (except bludgeoning) and the duration is 1 hour.

Type greater; **Level** 15; **Price** 920 gp

You gain resistance 10 to physical damage (except bludgeoning) and the duration is 1 hour.



NOALA'S TRAINING

After the PCs assist Noala in finding the source of the blight and investigating the Pen, she agrees to teach them some of her special woodland survival techniques. Her knowledge can be disseminated in several of the following ways.

Ranger Archetype: Noala can assist any character that is looking into selecting the ranger multiclass archetype. Furthermore, if a character has the ranger archetype, Noala's Wilderness Spotter feat counts as a ranger archetype feat for that character (if the character selects the feat multiple times, it is a ranger archetype feat only the first time).

Retraining: Noala can serve as a teacher who can retrain ranger feats and skill feats as long as the new skill feat is linked to Nature or Survival. As long as the feat being trained is level 5 or lower, Noala reduces the training time to the minimum allowed.

Special Feats: Noala can teach the characters a special ranger feat as well as a special skill feat that can be taken by anyone trained in Survival. Note that Noala's training does not grant characters these feats, but merely unlocks them for later selection. This training takes about 2 days per feat but can take place at the same time as any retraining performed with Noala.

RELENTLESS STALKER FEAT 2

UNCOMMON MOVE RANGER

Trigger An adjacent creature you are hunting attempts to move away from you using an action that has the move trait.

Your hunted prey cannot escape your relentless pursuit. Stride up to your Speed in tandem with the triggering creature, remaining adjacent to the foe throughout its movement until it stops moving or you run out of movement. You can ignore difficult terrain during this movement unless the difficult terrain is caused by a magical effect.

WILDERNESS SPOTTER FEAT 2

UNCOMMON GENERAL SKILL

Prerequisite Expert in Survival

Select one type of terrain from the following list: aquatic, arctic, desert, forest, mountain, plains, sky, swamp, or underground. You can use Survival in place of Perception to roll initiative when in the selected terrain in a natural location (not a structure) even if you weren't tracking or otherwise using Survival before the encounter. You can also use Survival instead of Perception to notice traps in natural locations in the chosen terrain; if you find a snare in this way, you can also use Survival instead of Thievery to Disable the Device.

Special You can select this feat more than once. Each time you select it, the feat applies to a new type of terrain.

FIERY LEOPARD

Through their actions at the Pen, the PCs might have befriended the fiery leopard found in area H3.

Once released, the leopard bolts from the Pen, but, at the GM's discretion, it might appear again to help with the fight against the alchemical dredge at the very end of this adventure.

After this point, the leopard continues to shadow the group and anyone with Nature can slowly attempt to befriend the wild beast. This process should take at least 10 downtime days, during which time the character attempting to befriend the leopard must succeed on at least three DC 18 Nature checks. No more than one check may be attempted per day. If the character fails to succeed at three Nature checks within this time, the leopard loses interest and wanders off.

If successful, and if the character has the ability to take on an animal companion, then that character gains the fiery leopard as an animal companion at the end of the 10 days. Treat the fiery leopard as a cat (see page 215 of the *Core Rulebook*) with the following modifications. If no one takes the fiery leopard as an animal companion, it will never truly be part of the group, but it may still follow them on adventures and help out at random times, subject to the GM's discretion.

FIERY LEOPARD

UNIQUE

Base Animal Companion Cat

Immunities fire; **Weaknesses** cold 5

Flaming Attacks (fire) The fiery leopard's natural attacks deal 1 fire damage (in addition to the bonus damage dealt to flat-footed targets). This damage increases to 1d4 when the fiery leopard becomes a nimble or savage animal companion.

Fiery Pelt (fire) Creatures that start their turn grappled by the fiery leopard take 1d4 fire damage. Anyone attempting to grapple the fiery leopard takes 1d4 fire damage for each attempt.

Burning Glow The fiery leopard sheds dim light in a 10-foot radius which gives it a -2 circumstance penalty on Stealth checks made at night or in a dark environment.

BORT'S INHERITANCE

Being a well-groomed merchant with a penchant for finery, Bort is fond of jewelry, particularly rings. He has a number of fine magical rings in his collection that he keeps among the rest of his possessions in his wagon when he's not wearing them. Bort has collected these rings from his travels, and aside from being valuable magic items in their own right, Bort has an associated story and memory from each of them.

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Tamli is incredibly grateful to the characters for helping to solve Bort's death and bringing the villains responsible to justice. After the merchant is laid to rest, she approaches the PCs to give them one of his rings as a token to remember the kindly dwarf. Tamli shows the PCs the following rings and provides information about each, before allowing each PC to choose one.

BORT'S BLESSING **ITEM 5**

RARE **DIVINATION** **INVESTED**

Price 160 gp

Usage worn; **Bulk** –

This ornate copper band has a small ruby set in the center, flanked by a pair of dwarven runes. The wearer of this ring gains the ability to understand, read, and speak one common language of their choice, selected each morning as part of their daily preparations. In addition, the wearer receives a +1 item bonus to Diplomacy checks to Make an Impression.

MERCHANT'S GUIDE **ITEM 5**

UNCOMMON **ENCHANTMENT** **INVESTED**

Price 160 gp

Usage worn; **Bulk** –

The band of this ring is made from blue-colored iron and has two sharp, decorative protrusions on each side of the red-stone inlay. It feels quite heavy and reliable. Wearing this ring grants you a +2 item bonus to Deception and Diplomacy checks, but only if the associated checks involve haggling or bargaining over a purchase or trade.

Activate **◆◆◆** (envision, interact); **Effect** You can determine if an item is magical simply by handling it. You detect no other indication of its power, only whether or not it is magical, granting the effects of a 1st-level *detect magic* spell that affects only the object.

RING OF MINOR ARCANA **ITEM 5**

UNCOMMON **ARCANE** **EVOCATION** **INVESTED**

Price 160 gp

Usage worn; **Bulk** –

This rose-gold ring is adorned in the center by a somewhat ominous-looking horned skull. This ring gives you the power to cast the following innate arcane cantrips any number of times each day: *detect magic*, *mage hand*, and *prestidigitation*. Each is cast as a 1st-level spell.

If you are an arcane spellcaster, these can instead be heightened to the level of your cantrips.



RING OF THE WEARY TRAVELER **ITEM 5**

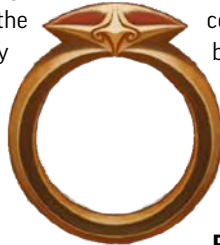
UNCOMMON **TRANSMUTATION** **INVESTED**

Price 160 gp

Usage worn; **Bulk** –

This fanciful golden ring has an ornate band cast with delicate, swirling decorations and is inlaid with three bright-green emeralds. While wearing this ring, you gain a +10-foot item bonus to your Speed, but only when determining your overland movement per hour.

Activate **◆◆◆** (envision, interact); **Effect** You refresh yourself from fatigue. For 10 minutes, you can ignore the penalties from the fatigued condition. This does not remove the condition, it merely suppresses the penalties and drawbacks of having the condition. If something would cause you to become fatigued again while the ring's power is in effect, the suppression ends, and you immediately take the penalties again.



STALWART'S RING **ITEM 5**

UNCOMMON **NECROMANCY** **INVESTED**

Price 160 gp

Usage worn; **Bulk** –

This fairly simple ring has no gemstone inlaid, but the band is cast to resemble a fanged wolf's head. Once per day, during your daily preparations, you can meditate on this ring to grant yourself 5 temporary Hit Points. These last until your next daily preparation, as long as you are wearing the ring.



WARRIOR'S TRAINING RING **ITEM 5**

UNCOMMON **DIVINATION** **INVESTED**

Price 160 gp

Usage worn; **Bulk** –

This ring is utilitarian in design—indicating its martial use. Its band is decorated only with a simple, sharp-edged sculpture on the band's center. While wearing this ring, you add your level to your attack rolls with all weapons with which you are untrained.

Activate **◆** (envision); **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** You make an attack with a weapon in which you're untrained; **Effect** You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to the attack roll. If you are an expert in any weapon, you instead gain a +4 circumstance bonus to the attack roll.



BACKGROUND SIDE QUESTS

Depending on the backgrounds of the player characters, one or more small side quests might occur during this adventure. While all are focused on backgrounds presented in this adventure, most are also suitable for characters with certain backgrounds from the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook* (noted where relevant in parentheses in the Background entry). These side quests can occur at any point during the adventure.

Finally, the refugee background doesn't have a specific side quest presented here, but you are free to add if you wish. Use the side quests presented here as examples when building your own.

DERELICTION AND REDEMPTION

Background: lost and alone (Warrior)

Sir Lawren Krent is running from far more than just the nightmares he saw during the fall of Lastwall: he is also hiding from a terrible shame. Unfortunately, the result of his cowardice followed him here to Etran's Folly, and it wants revenge. Just after sunset, Sir Lawren approaches the characters with a look of worry and panic on his face. Speaking directly to the character with the appropriate background, read or paraphrase the following.

Krent looks at you with his eyes wide and bloodshot. "Talmore, my old friend. You have to help me. I think *his* minions have followed us here. I seen 'em. They're coming!"

Krent is clearly deep into his drink, and in his altered state, he sees one of the PCs as his former comrade Talmore. Though he's clearly mistaken, what is real is his apparent terror that minions of the Whispering Tyrant have followed him to Etran's Folly. In truth, Krent is partly correct. Talmore was a fellow crusader in Lastwall and Krent's close friend, but when Lastwall fell, Krent left Talmore's side during a fight to hide from the undead horde. When it was over, he searched the battlefield only to find his friend's mangled body. Distraught, Krent took Talmore's holy symbol and fled. The incident weighs heavily on poor Krent, and he's been running ever since. Now, the knight is seeing things, but while most of his visions are simply manifestations of his shame and guilt, one is not. The ghost of Talmore is indeed haunting him.

From this point onward, Krent sees the PC as his long-lost friend, recounting old tales, apologizing for the time he left a scar on his face after accidentally cutting him during sparring practice, and asking how he managed to escape Lastwall. If the PC

acts confused, Krent merely plays it off as a joke and continues treating the PC as Talmore. Clever characters might easily get Krent to reveal parts of his history by pretending to be Talmore. Throughout, Krent insists that the enemy is here, begging his friend for help in defeating the vile undead agents. If the character agrees, Krent says that they are hiding in an old ruined farmhouse that Krent occupied when he first came to town.

CONFRONTING THE GHOST MODERATE 1

The creature that dwells here is the ghost of Talmore, bound to the holy symbol that Krent took from his dead body. If the PCs enter the dilapidated house, read or paraphrase the following.

A sagging straw roof barely protects this abandoned house from the elements. Piles of debris litter the common room, which shows signs of occupation, although not too recently. A backpack sits in one corner with a glint of silver inside its open flap, resting next to a shattered chair and a moldy old blanket. Quite suddenly the air seems to grow cold, and the sound of moaning fills the house.

The ghost of Talmore appears and attacks any who are inside the home (using the statistics of a ghost commoner with the weak adjustment), but he will not pursue them or attack downed foes. He looks like the gaunt form of a soldier whose raiment is quite similar to Sir Lawren's. The ghost appears to have a nasty-looking scar running down one side of his face. If the ghost is defeated, he rematerializes after only a few days to continue haunting the holy symbol of Iomedae. The only way to put him to rest is by giving the holy symbol a proper burial, something the PCs can learn if they know the holy symbol's origin and succeed at a DC 16 Religion check.

The characters can avoid fighting the ghost if they can convince Krent to enter the home and apologize to the ghost of his friend. If he does so, the ghost fades away for the evening, allowing the PCs to bury the holy symbol in peace.

WEAK GHOST COMMONER CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 6, 167

Initiative: Perception +8, darkvision

Upon putting the spirit to rest, Sir Lawren Krent looks like he has been freed from a heavy burden. In a moment of clarity he profusely thanks the heroes, especially the PC who he confused for Talmore.

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He also offers a few small tokens of his gratitude. To the group he offers two *minor healing potions* and a *potency crystal* talisman. To the PC who he thought was Talmore, he offers his blade, a +1 *longsword*.

HEIR TO FOLLY

Background: Lesser Scion (Noble)

Mayor Targen Fulst is a very old man, but despite his failing health and spotty memory, he has a knack for remembering bits of history, especially when they relate to his family. When he hears the last name of the character with the appropriate background, he

has a revelation. This PC is a distant relative of both Targen and the town's founder, Etran Bolmere.

When Targen hears the name of the PCs, read or paraphrase the following.

"Well, isn't that peculiar." The aging mayor stares at you intently. "I thought something about you looked familiar. I think we might be kin. Distantly, but I remember my father telling tales of the family history, and your family was mentioned at least once." As he continues, he seems almost disappointed. "Such a shame that the family history went up in flames with the rest of the Bolmere estate."

Targen knows nothing else about the relationship, stating that any proof would reside in the ruins of the Bolmere estate, atop Etran's Hill. In any case, after he lets Delma know that the PC is kin, that PC receives free room and board at the Feedmill.

The ruins of the Bolmere estate are just south of town. The place is entirely overgrown, but much of the scorched and crumbling stonework can still be seen under a layer of moss and ivy. Thoroughly searching the ruins takes at least an hour. At the end of that time, roll a secret DC 18 Perception check for each character taking a look around. If anyone succeeds, they spot a loose piece of stone masonry in the crumbling chimney set into the estate's north wall.

Reward: Behind the stone is a copper lockbox covered in a green patina. Inside is an old, leather-bound book and a tarnished silver amulet. The book is a piece of the Bolmere family history, listing births and deaths going back several hundred years. Looking through these names does confirm a distant relationship between the PC, the Bolmere family, and Targen and his daughter. There might very well be other revelations in here, but those are left for you to decide based on the character's backstory.

The silver amulet is an old family treasure. While it bears a faint aura of conjuration, it does not seem to have any powers, but the word "Karvasalon" is carved into the back. If someone wearing the amulet casts a *planar ally* ritual while speaking that name, instead of what they were intending to call, the amulet calls a mysterious creature cloaked in shadows. This thing has served the family for centuries, and although no one has called it in many years, it still answers the summons. The creature refuses to say why, but when asked about the arrangement, it merely states that it owes "an eternal debt." The exact statistics and abilities of Karvasalon are up to you to decide, as is the creature's



Ghost of Talmore

true nature, but it should in some way speak to the character's backstory and history.

LAST DELIVERY

Background: Teamster

Bort's death has repercussions for the members of the caravan, including for any PC who works for the caravan, even if they are relatively new to the team. The most pressing challenges are being handled by Tamli and the others, but in going through Bort's ledgers, she discovers that he still has one last delivery to make here in town. This side quest can occur at any time after Bort's death, starting when Tamli comes to find them.

Emerging from the yard, you can see Tamli carrying something long and awkward wrapped in burlap. She catches your eye and makes her way straight to you. "I have a little chore that needs to be seen to. Bort's final delivery is here in town, and it needs to be done delicately."

Tamli unwraps the burlap bundle to reveal a pair of sparring swords that were ordered by Pari Hemsoth, a young woman who lives with her mother on a farm about a mile from town. Bort's records for the delivery included a rather cryptic note that reads, "Make sure the mother doesn't find out." While Tamli does not quite know what this means, she trusts that the PCs will deliver the goods discreetly.

In truth, Pari wants the swords so that she can advance her training. She hopes to leave this town sometime soon, hopefully as an adventurer. This has been her dream since she was little, when her older brother died in the Goblinblood Wars, but the loss of her brother has made her mother paranoid and extremely overprotective of her only remaining child.

Getting out to the Hemsoth farm is not difficult, but approaching it to make the delivery without being spotted by Pari's mother takes a bit of ingenuity. The PCs could simply use Stealth, but making it up to the farm without being seen requires succeeding at at least two consecutive DC 18 Stealth checks. Failure results in Elmora, the mother, storming out and demanding that the "vagrants" get off her farm at once. She does not want any adventurers talking to her daughter. Another option is for the PCs to try distracting the mother with a Bluff, Diplomacy, or even Thievery check, making it much easier for someone else to sneak up. Ultimately, any reasonable plan should have a good chance of success.

Once the PCs have found a way to deliver the swords, Pari is very grateful. While she is happy that she can continue her training regardless, she

asks if any of the PCs might be willing to help her learn how to use a sword. If a PC agrees, she will happily pay for the service. This allows a character to spend downtime to earn gold, using their attack bonus in place of a Lore or Crafting skill modifier as long as they are trained in martial weapons.

NEW FAITH

Background: Missionary (Acolyte)

The town of Etran's Folly has not had a proper church since Father Bolgrist died of the plague nearly 20 years ago. When the plague hit and the fiery priest of Gozreh blamed Silwyth, calling her a witch, most in town believed him. When the priest himself succumbed to the plague, most considered the matter closed. Since then, the town has been without a priest and his shrine has fallen into ruin, being used as a barn on the edge of town.

If the characters poke around the old church, an aging dwarven farmer ambles up and asks what they want with his barn. Introducing himself as Metmon, he explains that he has been using the old church as a barn for almost 10 years now, but he doesn't have too much use for it these days.

If the PC show signs of faith, Metmon says that they can have the old building if they plan on bringing "godly ways" back to the town. Metmon is a worshipper of Abadar, but he will be just as happy to see the church of any good or lawful neutral deity established in town. He even offers the help of his son, Edfur, in cleaning out the place. If the PCs agree, this can become a downtime activity for one or more characters.

Clearing out the church and repairing the roof take at least 20 days to complete, but this can be reduced to 15 with Edfur's help. During this time, if one of the PCs helping Edfur is trained in Religion, the young dwarf becomes very curious about that PC's faith, asking all sorts of questions and showing a genuine interest in the PC's beliefs. If the PC engages with Edfur, he asks what he has to do to become a priest of the faith. He explains that if he can learn enough, he hopes to one day become the town's priest, leading the people of Etran's Folly in spiritual matters.

How this side quest comes to a conclusion is really up to the PC. They can spend time with Edfur, teaching him about the faith, or they can send him to nearby Elidir for more formal training. The PC might decide to stay in Etran's Folly for a time, tending to the locals until Edfur is ready, or they might even retire from adventuring to live here.

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TREASURE

While most forms of deadly flora do not value treasure in any way, their victims' wealth can usually be found strewn about their location, sometimes even buried in their roots. Due to the outdoors, the only things of value that are typically found are made from metal or stone, like weapons, armor, and some talismans.



LOCATIONS

These deadly organisms can be found in any hot or temperate environment, but like most plants, they need light and moisture to thrive.

DEADLY FLORA

What first appears to be a simple shrub suddenly stirs to life.

BLOODLASH BUSH

CREATURE 2

N **SMALL** **PLANT**

Perception +6, tremorsense (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Athletics +8, Stealth +6

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

AC 16; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

HP 35, **Resistances** bludgeoning 5, piercing 5 **Weaknesses** fire 5

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ vine +11 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 1d8+4 slashing plus weeping wounds

Blood Siphon ♦♦ The tendrils of the bush reach out to siphon the blood from a victim up to 20 feet away with persistent bleed damage, causing the victim to immediately take that amount of bleed damage (basic Reflex DC 17). The bush regains an amount of Hit Points equal to double the damage dealt.

Spinning Strike ♦♦♦ The bush spins in a circle, lashing out in all directions at once. It makes one attack roll and compares the result to the AC of each creature within its melee reach, rolling damage only once and applying it to each creature hit.

Weeping Wounds A bloodlash bush's vines cause terrible lacerations that continue to bleed. A creature hit with a vine attack takes 1 persistent bleed damage (2 on a critical hit). Unlike other forms of persistent damage, this damage is cumulative, to a maximum of 5 persistent bleed damage but it can be stopped like any other persistent bleed damage.

VINE LASHER

CREATURE 0

N **SMALL** **PLANT**

Perception +4, tremorsense (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Athletics +6, Stealth +5

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

AC 16; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4

HP 15

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ vine +7 (agile, finesse, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 1d8+2 plus Grab

Light Hold A creature grabbed by a vine lasher is not immobilized, but the grabbed creature's space and every adjacent square use the rules for difficult terrain. If the creature moves, the vine lasher moves with it, always keeping the grabbed creature within 10 feet of itself. If two or more vine lashers have a creature grabbed in this way, then the target's space and adjacent square instead use the rules for greater difficult terrain.

Often overlooked in light of more obvious threats, some plants can be just as deadly and dangerous as wild beasts.

The bloodlash bush attempts to lacerate its foes, using its weeping wounds to irrigate the ground around itself. The seeds of a bloodlash bush can take root only in soil that has been soaked in blood.

The vine lasher attacks in groups, attempting to immobilize prey and slowly tear a creature to pieces.

OOZE, BLOOD

Swelling like a bubble about to burst, this oozing thing looks like it is made entirely from blood. Its slick, crimson skin is marred only by spots that look like clots formed on the surface.

BLOOD OOZE

CREATURE 4

N **LARGE** **MINDLESS** **OOZE**

Perception +8, motion sense 60 feet, no vision

Skills Athletics +13, Stealth +4 (+12 if hiding inside a dead body)

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

Infuse Corpse ♦ A blood ooze can seep into a corpse's wounds, displacing its natural blood. It can burst out of the corpse as a free action.

AC 12; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6

HP 90; **Immunities** critical hits, mental, precision, unconscious, visual

Clot ♣; **Trigger** The blood ooze is damaged by piercing or slashing attack.

Effect The blood ooze forms a clot around the wound, reducing the damage taken by 5 (to a minimum of 0).

Blood Pool Whenever a creature adjacent to a blood ooze takes bleed damage, the blood ooze regains an amount of Hit Points equal to the damage dealt.

Speed 10 feet, climb 10 feet

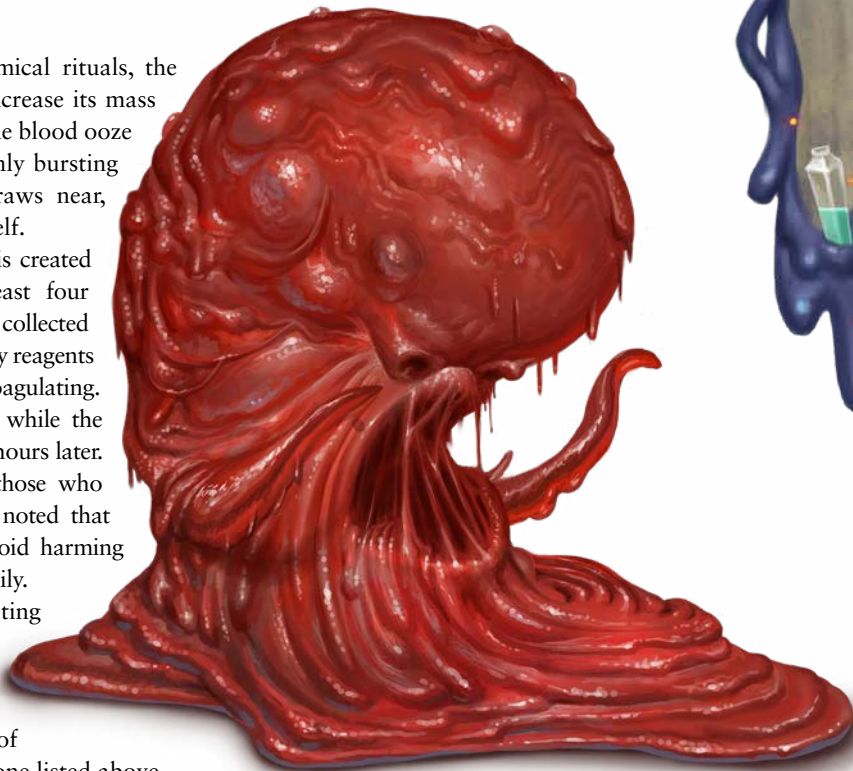
Melee ♦ pseudopod +15 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 1d12+8 bludgeoning plus 1d6 persistent bleed

Siphon Vitality ♦♦ The blood ooze draws forth blood from nearby creatures, causing their flesh to break open and blood to spill out which replenishes the blood ooze. Each living creature within 15 feet takes 3d6 slashing damage (DC 21 basic Fortitude save). The blood ooze regains an amount of Hit Points equal to half the damage Siphon Vitality dealt to the single creature that took the most damage.

Created through the foulest of alchemical rituals, the blood ooze seeks only one thing: to increase its mass by consuming blood from the living. The blood ooze hides within the body of its victims, only bursting out to attack when another meal draws near, leaving the body a husk of its former self.

The process by which such an ooze is created involves draining the blood of at least four Medium creatures and feeding all of the collected blood to a fifth creature, along with deadly reagents designed to prevent the blood from coagulating. During this time, the host slowly dies while the blood ooze takes form, emerging 2 to 6 hours later. Blood oozes have no loyalty toward those who created them, but some creators have noted that newly formed blood oozes seem to avoid harming other members of the host creature's family.

It is not widely known that an existing blood ooze can reproduce by splitting itself in half. It undergoes this division only if it has grown so large that splitting in half would create a pair of normal-sized blood oozes, such as the one listed above.



VARIANTS

Blood oozes are sometimes made from creatures with very different types of blood that can occasionally impart other powers and abilities to the resulting blood ooze. Blood oozes made from dragon blood often gain some small amount of energy resistance based on the dragon's type (fire resistance 5 for an ooze crafted from a red dragon, for example). Those made from trolls gain a limited form of regeneration. Finally, a blood ooze made from the blood of fiends might gain a cruel and vindictive intelligence drawn from the thoughts and minds of its parent creatures. Such an ooze might even work with others, tricking lesser creatures into thinking it is some sort of deity or engaging in whatever ruse it can contrive to secure a constant source of fresh blood.

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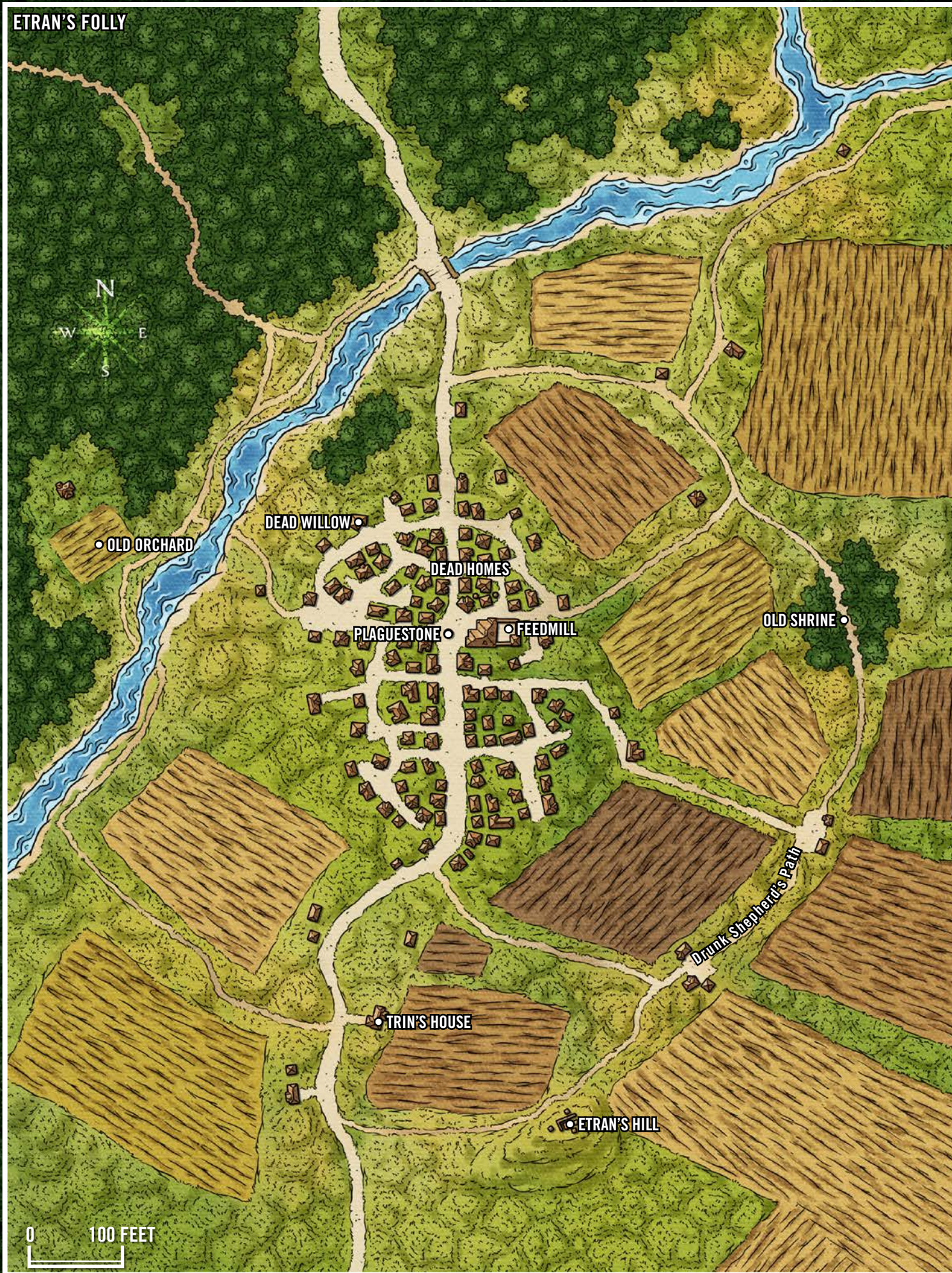
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ETRAN'S FOLLY



A TROUBLED TOWN

A group of new adventurers traveling through the village of Etran's Folly—also known as Plaguestone—must come together to solve the murder of a friend. What starts as a simple investigation quickly turns sinister with the discovery of forbidden alchemy, mutant animals, and a nearby forest rotting away due to a mysterious blight. It becomes clear that if these heroes don't intervene to stop whatever evil is brewing, the fall of Plaguestone is all but certain! *The Fall of Plaguestone* is the first standalone adventure for Pathfinder Second Edition, designed for 1st-level characters. It tells the story of how a group of strangers band together to form a group of adventurers while saving the town of Etran's Folly from a terrifying fate, serving as a perfect introduction to a new Pathfinder campaign!



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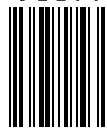
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