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THE BLIZZARD'S TEETH

An adventure for Jaws of the Six Serpents

The Blizzard's Teeth

AN ADVENTURE FOR JAWS OF THE SIX SERPENTS

Silver Branch Games

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INTRODUCTION

Scott Dorward contributed a memorable adventure called *The Curse of Karak-Azim* to my *Jaws* supplement *Serpents' Teeth*. If you're on the UK roleplaying conventions circuit you probably know Scott's reputation as a GM and writer specialising in the enjoyably unsettling. I was gratified that one of his convention games of choice was *Jaws*.

I actually played this adventure with Scott at a con – I forget which one. A little later, he dropped me a line with a write-up he'd found time to do. And then I sat on it for three years. With good intentions to do something with it, mind, but nevertheless depriving you of more Jawsy goodness. Finally, here it is.

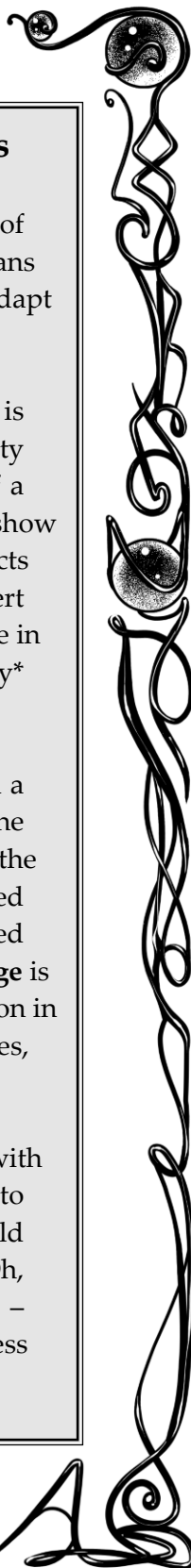
This is an unusual scenario: like *Karak-Azim*, it's designed to be self-contained using the characters provided, based on the interplay between them rather than common pursuit of a mission. You might be able to fit it into your campaign, but really it's for conventions or one-off interludes.

Tim Gray

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Understanding PDQ for use with other games

You don't have *Jaws of the Six Serpents*? You should get it, of course. But in case the well-known stubbornness of barbarians prevails, here are some notes to help you understand and adapt the content of this book.

In the **PDQ system** everything important about a character is measured by **Qualities**: innate 'attributes', skills, personality traits, possessions, relationships, etc. A Quality consists of a **descriptor** that tells you when it will apply, and a **Rank** to show how good it is, or (put another way) how powerfully it affects the story. Ranks go Poor [-2], Average [0], Good [+2], Expert [+4], Master [+6]. Characters are assumed to start at Average in everything normal people can do. (Special stuff like Sorcery* works slightly differently, hence the asterisk.)

Each Rank has a **modifier (MOD)** number in brackets, and a corresponding **target number (TN)**. When rolls are made the GM sets a Rank for difficulty: add any applicable MODs to the result of 2d6 to try to reach the TN. Conflicts are resolved through single rolls ('complicated situation') or an extended back-and-forth of opposed rolls ('conflict situation'). **Damage** is temporary loss of Quality Ranks, reflecting gradual reduction in story-affecting power rather than simulating cuts and bruises, eventually leading to 'zeroing out'.

Qualities are freeform, so to use the non-player characters with other systems you'll need an idea of how to map them to whatever set of abilities are available to you there. That could work fine from just a big-picture view of the character – 'Oh, they're just a Level 3 Rogue with a dual weapons schtick' – especially in rules that are quite specific and tactical, with less room for personality and history traits.





FRAMING THE ADVENTURE

This scenario is set in the foothills of the Artaire Mountains, in the north of Sartain. It is the middle of winter. The weather is cruel and unforgiving enough at this time of year, but recently an act of sorcery has summoned a horde of demons of ice and darkness to possess the blizzard and turn it into a living nightmare.

The player characters find themselves caught in the midst of this blizzard, fighting for their survival. Their situation is further complicated in that they all have secrets and reasons to distrust each other. Will they turn on each other, or will they find the truth before they are torn to pieces by the blizzard's teeth?

How to use this scenario

The Blizzard's Teeth was written as a convention game, with pre-generated characters, and is designed to run for three to four hours. There is no plot as such, and action will come about from the characters, their motivations and the horrifying situation in which they find themselves.

The scenario is presented as a background, an opening scene and a series of locations, NPCs and creatures. There are also some possible events that you can use to keep things moving if required. Finally, there are a few ideas about how to end the scenario in an action-packed way.

You could adapt some of the events, locations and characters to fit into an existing campaign, perhaps by having the player characters caught in the blizzard, seeking shelter in the Summer Keep. This



may produce a less paranoid game and make some of the moral choices easier, but it can still be effective survival horror.

Be generous when players suggest novel uses of qualities like Witch Finder and Sorcery. The group is faced with magical forces of immense power, and imaginative solutions should always be rewarded.

A note on sorcery

For the purposes of this scenario, any sorcerous ritual, no matter how minor, will require a human sacrifice. Of the provided characters, only Lucie has the Sorcery ability. (Her character info has a version of this note.) Lucie's sorcery is a function of her link to the Whisperers in the storm, and they can only be appeased by blood and death. If a character is killed in Lucie's presence, she can still gather their blood and life energy to perform an act of sorcery at the time; this will be obvious to any observers.

Danger Levels

As this is a one-shot scenario, you should set the Danger Levels higher than you would for a campaign. This is a grim situation, filled with peril, and there is no guarantee that anyone will come out of it alive.

When player characters are facing the Whisperers or the blizzard, set the danger level to Risk. A permanent wound or scar will demonstrate how dangerous the situation is. Increase the Danger Level to Doom for climactic conflicts, but try to ensure that any player character deaths are dramatic or heroic.





Background

For generations, the house of Rochelle has been living under a curse. 230 years ago, Arturio, then Count Rochelle, hired mercenaries to hunt down the witch Sussangra, whose acts of sorcery had brought misery to the city of Araquin. Arturio Rochelle had the witch burned alive in the market square, but not before she swore that all the demons of the darkness would torment the Rochelles until the end of days.

Since then, one member of each generation of House Rochelle has been afflicted by madness. They hear whispering voices in the darkness, telling them to do terrible things. Worse, the voices offer them very real power in exchange for blood and death.

The curse is not without its benefits. Enemies of the house have a tendency to die mysterious and bloody deaths. This has made each generation successively more secure and wealthy, although most Rochelles would trade this to rid themselves of the plague of madness.

Most recently, Lucien, the brother of the count, used his demons to strike down a priest who had made accusations of sorcery. He did this at the cost of murdering a serving girl he secretly loved, and threw himself from a tower in penance. This left the demons looking for their next victim.

Count Rochelle was dismayed when the madness took his infant daughter, Lucie. Being a loving father, the count kept her safe, providing education and amusement to her as best he could, but always ensuring that she was locked away where she could cause no harm. The girl is not evil, but the voices that harangue her most definitely are.



The count has also carried out what research he can into breaking the curse, but he knows this is dangerous. All the possible methods he has identified rely on some form of sorcery, and given the rumours that circulate about him and his family, he has tried to be as secretive as possible.

A little under a week ago, two thieves – Jalmain the Unhanged and Finn Redtooth – broke into the Rochelle estate in the city of Araquin, looking for valuables. They were interrupted by Lucie, who suggested a more lucrative plan. The thieves would kidnap her and free her from her imprisonment (although she did not reveal this part) and they would split the ransom her father would undoubtedly pay.

Lucie suggested that the Summer Keep, the old fortress that her father keeps as a hunting lodge, would make an ideal place to lie low. It's remote, stocked with food and there are only a few servants and guards there in the winter. The thieves and their hired mercenaries arrived there the night before the opening scene.

The party took the keep quickly and bloodlessly. Believing the keep's guards and servants a threat, Jalmain asked Finn to tie them up and put them in the servants' quarters downstairs. Finn, being violent and paranoid, killed the servants instead and hid their bodies in the larder, as he knows that Jalmain would not approve of his initiative. This was all secretly witnessed by Alyssa, the young daughter of the cook. Alyssa is now hiding in a cupboard in the servants' quarters, fearing for her life.

One unexpected consequence of the murders is that the life energy of the dying servants provided the power for the demons in Lucie's mind to manifest. She is unaware that this happened, although she may soon realise that the whispers on the wind sound like those in her head.



The demons have possessed the snowstorm that was already building outside the keep. There are a thousand of them riding in the winds, taking the forms of eyes, darkness and whispers. The blizzard has become a deadly and unnatural force, and it will not dissipate of its own accord.

Meanwhile, another group is headed to the Summer Keep. They are led by a witch finder, named Absalom Grey, who has been trying to prove the rumours of Count Rochelle's sorcery. The count is a powerful Araquin, and asking questions can be dangerous, so Absalom has set out to the Summer Keep in hope of finding evidence there. Once he can prove that the count is a sorcerer, he will try to have him prosecuted and executed. He has no idea that the keep is already hosting visitors.





Summary of characters

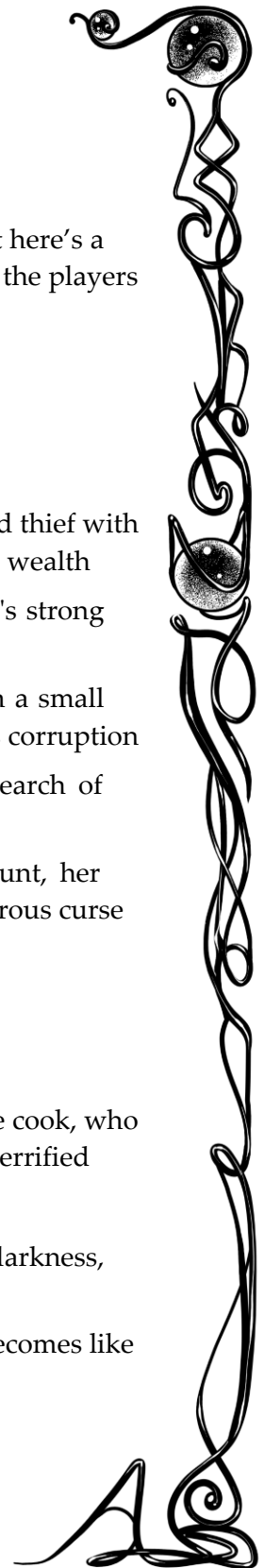
Full write-ups for the characters are provided later, but here's a snapshot to help orientate the GM. (Don't read these to the players verbatim!)

Player characters

- Jalmain the Unhanged – flamboyant, silver-tongued thief with a good heart, leading a gang to liberate the Count's wealth
- Finn Redtooth – tough mercenary fighter, Jalmain's strong right arm, with a violent and ruthless streak
- Absalom Grey – dour, fanatical witch finder, with a small group of followers, looking for signs of the Count's corruption
- Erin the Many-Fingered – acrobat and thief in search of adventure, working as bodyguard for Absalom
- Lucie Rochelle – 15-year-old daughter of the Count, her innocent appearance hides a sharp bite and a sorcerous curse

NPCs and creatures

- Alyssa – 12-year-old chambermaid, daughter of the cook, who has just seen the servants killed and is hiding and terrified
- Mercenaries – followers of Absalom and Jalmain
- The Whisperers – shadowy demons of cold and darkness, seeking fear and blood, tied to Lucie
- The Blizzard – possessed by the Whisperers so it becomes like a living thing





THE SUMMER KEEP

Count Rochelle's keep is a pleasant place during the summer months. It was built in the shadow of the mighty Godspire Peak and overlooks hundreds of acres of woodland, rich with game. In the winter it is cold, draughty and often surrounded by snowdrifts.

The keep itself is small, built from thick grey stone, and surrounded by fifteen-foot stone walls with crenellations. The main building has two storeys. Rising from it is a four-storey square tower aligned with one corner, topped with battlements. All the levels are joined by the same stairwell.

Here's an overview. Location write-ups follow.

- Tower 4: Count's quarters, privy.
- Tower 3: Lucie's quarters, Count's workshop, privy.
- Tower 2: guest quarters, privy.
- Tower 1: guest quarters, privy.
- Entry level: the great hall and the count's trophy room.
- Below: a basement hallway leading to the kitchens, larder and servants' quarters. There is a door to the small inner courtyard.

The Courtyard

The main courtyard is paved with flagstones, and largely covered with snow and ice. It contains stables, storage sheds, a privy and a half-empty hayrick.



The mercenaries have built a fire in the centre of the courtyard, using hay and some of the wooden tools and furniture they have found around the keep. They are using the fire to roast a haunch from a horse that they found in the stables.

Steps lead up to the walkway behind the crenellations. The walkway covers a U-shape around the courtyard, ending where it meets the main building.

The Great Hall

The hall is a large, open room with a vaulted ceiling. It is dominated by a long, stout oaken table, scarred and stained through generations of use. The chairs which surround it are plain wood, unvarnished, but built to last. There is a deck of cards, a pile of copper coins and four pewter tankards sitting on the table, left by the guards who were gambling there when Jalmain and Finn arrived.

A large hearth blazes alongside the table, flanked by stacks of firewood. Torches line the walls, illuminating banners decorated with the arms of House Rochelle. A number of animal heads, mostly deer, are mounted throughout the room, and the head of a stag with majestic antlers hangs over the fireplace.

Even with the hearth fire and torches lit, the hall feels dim and cold outside of the immediate radius of the fire. Shadows move suggestively as flames flicker, and at times the wind that blows through the cracks in the door sounds like voices whispering.



The Trophy Room

A doorway from the Great Hall leads to a smaller room filled with hunting trophies and weapons. A black bear skin lies on the ground, and a grey and white wolf skin hangs on the wall. There is a stuffed bear standing by the fireplace that is fully ten feet in height. Stuffed foxes, birds and rabbits sit on every surface, and some are piled on the ground carelessly. In the flickering light of the torches, the eyes of the stuffed animals seem to twinkle and watch.

A wardrobe-sized wooden cabinet contains a number of bows of various sizes, along with quivers and arrows. The mantelpiece has two ornamental knives and a dirk on it, and above it hangs a crossed pair of two-handed swords.

The Tower

The base of the square tower lines up with the corner of the Great Hall, and the stairwell which leads up and down is sealed on every level except the basement by a thick oaken door. The stairwell itself is a round protrusion from the corner of the tower, which holds a stone spiral staircase. There are narrow oblong windows throughout the length of the stairwell, but they have been shuttered to keep the snow out, making the stairs pitch black unless carrying a torch or lantern.

The Basement Hallway

The corridor at the base of the steps connects directly to the stairwell, and opens out onto a small hallway with three doors. The doors lead to the kitchen, the larder and the servants' quarters.



The gloomy light of this hallway makes it difficult to see the blood spatters around the walls, but a torch or lantern will make them obvious. There is also a pool of congealing blood oozing out from under the larder door.

The Kitchen

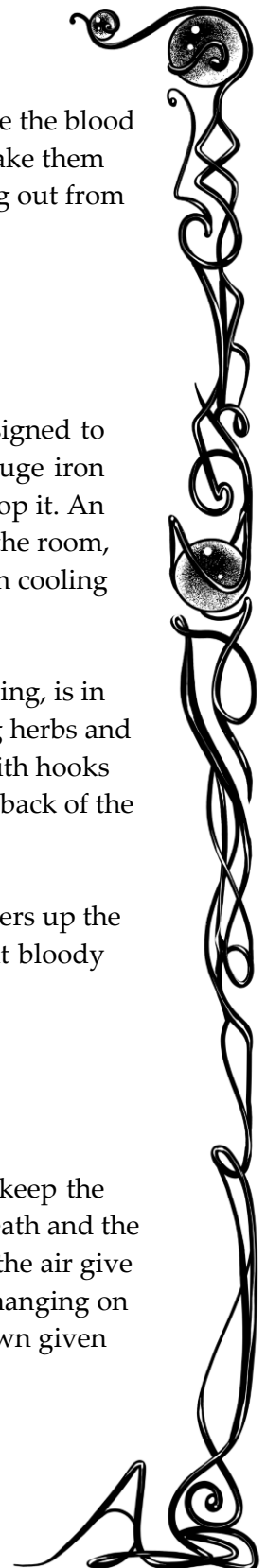
The keep's kitchen is spacious and well-equipped, designed to cook large game and to cater for hunting parties. A huge iron range dominates the room, and a number of pans sit atop it. An open fireplace is set in the wall on the opposite side of the room, with embers smoking in it, and a cooking pot filled with cooling stew hanging over them.

A long wooden table, scratched and scored from chopping, is in the centre of the room, and wooden cabinets containing herbs and expensive imported spices hang on the walls. A rack with hooks holding the various keys for the keep is attached to the back of the door.

There is a spray of blood on the ground and some spatters up the wall beside it, where Finn killed Marta, the cook. Faint bloody drag marks lead to the larder.

The Larder

The door to this pantry is locked, as Finn has tried to keep the bodies out of sight, but the blood leaking from underneath and the smells of blood, meat and ruptured bowels hanging in the air give their presence away. There is a spare key to the larder hanging on the rack in the kitchen. The door can also be broken down given time and effort.





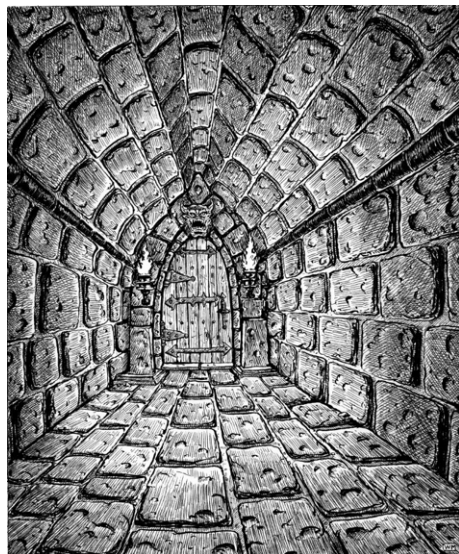
The larder is stocked with two large haunches of smoked venison, and dozens of rough sacks of flour, potatoes, onions, pulses and oats. The contents of most of the sacks have been ruined by the blood soaking into them.

The hacked remains of three women and four men lie piled on the ground in the centre of the larder. Some of them have looks of panic frozen on their faces, and all have grievous wounds, including dismemberment. Anyone with combat experience can identify these wounds as caused by a large sword. Only Finn's sword shows any sign of recent bloodstains.

The Servants' Quarters

The last door in the small hallway opens into a dark corridor, which connects to another hallway further down via a T-junction. There are a dozen doorways spread throughout the corridors, leading to the bedrooms used by servants and guards. Only six of the rooms show any sign of occupation, with a small number of personal effects, washing bowls and bed linen in use.

In one of the rooms, creaking and stifled sobs are coming from a small wardrobe. Inside is Alyssa, who is still in shock from what she has witnessed. She is hiding from the Bad Man. Calming Alyssa down enough to talk coherently is a complicated task with a





target of Expert [11]. Even then, she will not identify Finn as the murderer if he is present, as she believes he will kill her as well.

There is an external door at the end of one of the corridors which leads to the inner courtyard.

The Inner Courtyard

This walled courtyard sits on the same lower level as the servants' quarters and is much smaller than the main courtyard. It contains a well, a number of chicken coops, storage sheds for grain and two outdoor privies.

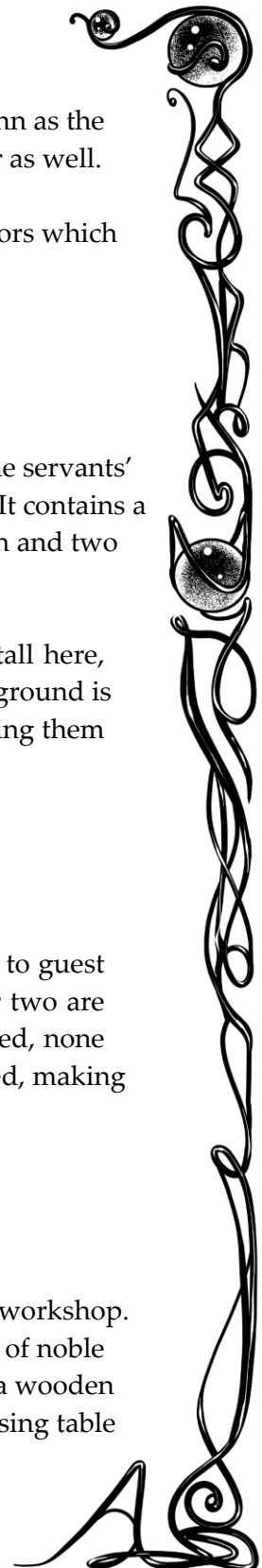
The walls, which are not crenellated, are twenty feet tall here, making the courtyard gloomy at the best of times. The ground is covered in flagstones, which are covered with ice, making them treacherous to fight on (-2 penalty).

The Guest Chambers

The first and second floors of the tower are given over to guest rooms. One has a number of bunk beds, and the other two are more luxurious, for noble guests. While all are furnished, none show any sign of occupancy. The windows are shuttered, making them utterly dark.

Lucie's Chambers

Lucie's room is on the third floor, opposite her father's workshop. The room appears to be that of a normal girl, albeit one of noble blood. There is a four-poster bed with rumpled linens, a wooden dresser on which sit a bowl and jug for washing, a dressing table





with a mirror and a mother-of-pearl hairbrush, and a wardrobe containing a number of fine dresses. A cloth doll that resembles Lucie sits on the unmade bed, and a candle and a book of fairy tales containing pressed flowers lie on the bedside table.

The only things that make the room unusual are the bars on the windows, which may not be obvious behind the closed wooden shutters, and the stout iron lock on the door. Close examination of the lock will reveal scratches that suggest it is usually locked from the outside. The key is hanging up in the kitchen, on a rack with the other keys.

The Count's Workshop

This is the room that the count uses to stuff and mount his hunting trophies. Count Rochelle is a keen taxidermist, and the workshop is equipped with all the materials he needs, including tools, sutures, bottles of preserving chemicals, stuffing and a large selection of glass eyes. There is a large wooden bench, with a stuffed owl sitting on it. The owl is not yet complete, lacking eyes. A few fox and deer heads are mounted on the walls. The reflected light from their glass eyes will be the first thing anyone sees when bringing a light into the room.

A large wooden bookcase dominates one wall. It contains a number of texts on wildlife, hunting and taxidermy. There are two books on sorcery hidden amongst the more mundane texts. Count Rochelle knows that their presence would be seen as evidence of witchcraft and that his enemies would use them against him, so he has had them rebound, with fake titles and front pieces.

One book is disguised as 'Game Birds of Sartain', but the text is that of 'Witchcraft of Ages Lost'. The book outlines the history of



the practice of witchcraft, giving many practical examples of spells used to curse and cure alike.

The second is titled 'A Treasury of Traps and Snares', hiding a text named 'Demons of the Ebon Gate'. Written by a mad sorcerer of unknown identity, it contains detailed descriptions of the terrible creatures that live in the infernal realms. Many passages are underlined, and there are notes in the margins relating to the summoning, binding and dismissal of some of the entities mentioned.

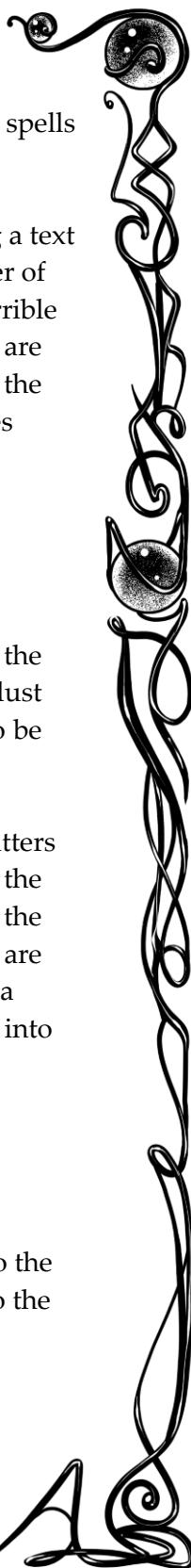
The Count's Chambers

Count Rochelle's personal chambers take up the top floor of the tower. The grand four-poster bed is unmade and there are dust sheets over all the furniture. There are no personal effects to be found.

The room is dark and cold, with wind whistling past the shutters and through cracks in the masonry. Icicles hang down from the windowsill. The wind is especially fierce up here, and as the shutters on the windows rattle, it sounds almost like there are claws scraping them from outside. If anyone opens one, a Whisperer will snatch at them and attempt to drag them out into the blizzard to be devoured.

The Trapdoor to the Battlements

There is a trapdoor in the roof of the tower which leads up to the battlements on top. It is accessed by wooden rungs affixed to the wall. The trapdoor is held in place by a heavy sliding bolt.





Anyone investigating this will hear the sound of a woman crying on the other side. She will plead for help if addressed, asking for someone to save her from the monsters. Opening the trapdoor will immediately let gusts of wind and swirling snow into the tower. The visibility outside is only a few feet, and the woman cannot be seen, but she continues to cry for help.

This is another trick of the Whisperers, and they will wait for the trapdoor to be fully open before one rushes down into the tower in search of prey. Closing the trapdoor in the heavy wind is a complicated task with an Expert [11] difficulty.



HOW EVENTS UNFOLD

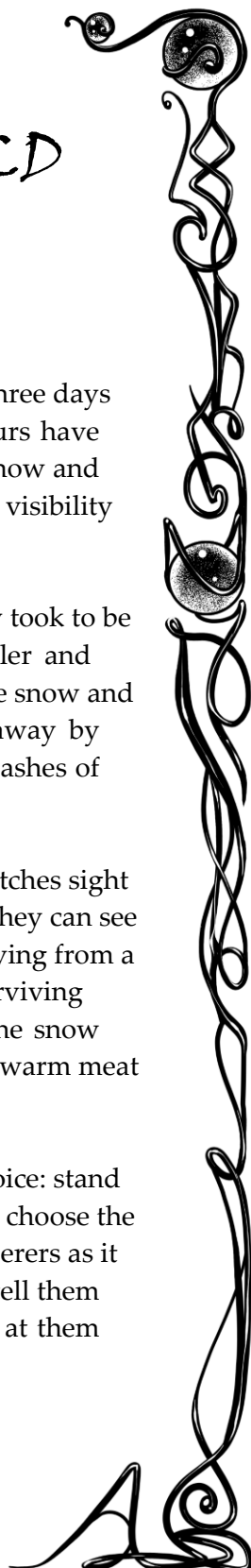
Starting scene

Absalom, Erin and their mercenaries have trekked for three days from Araquin, and over the course of the last few hours have found themselves caught in a terrifying blizzard. The snow and wind are swirling around them madly, robbing them of visibility and all sense of direction.

Worse, there are things moving in the snow, which they took to be wolves at first, but now appear to be something fouler and sorcerous. Flashes of eyes and teeth are formed from the snow and then dissipate again. Their men are being snatched away by something in the winds, leaving nothing more than splashes of blood and despairing screams.

At a time when all seems lost, one of the mercenaries catches sight of a shape looming in the darkness. As they get closer, they can see battlements and finally the banner of House Rochelle flying from a tower. Before they can get any closer, one of the surviving mercenaries screams as he is snatched up by one of the snow demons. There is a rending, snarling sound, and bits of warm meat and organs start raining down.

At this point, Absalom and his followers will have a choice: stand and fight the unseen menace or run for the keep. If they choose the former option, play out a conflict with one of the Whisperers as it tries to take another victim. When the group succeeds, tell them that they can see dozens of other pairs of eyes glaring at them through the whirling snow.





If the group bang on the main gates to the keep or call for assistance, a voice shouts from the battlements, “They’ve returned! Open the gates.” One of the huge wooden doors opens slowly, revealing a courtyard and a very puzzled mercenary.

Finn Redtooth had sent out of group of men a few hours earlier to investigate the strange noises and shapes in the snow. These men are all dead now, and the mercenaries on the gate have mistaken Absalom’s group for their comrades. As soon as they realise their mistake, they will raise the alarm and call for Finn and Jalmain.

All the player characters can now meet. Let them play off the information and motivations in their character details.

Events escalate

The conflicting agendas and secrets of the player characters, mixed with the horrific situation in which they find themselves, should provide enough tension to keep the game moving until its grim conclusion. If the pace flags, here are some events you can use to get it moving again.

A scream from the courtyard

As night begins to fall, the Whisperers grow bolder. One of the mercenaries, Jaco, steps away from the bonfire in the courtyard to relieve himself and is snatched away by one of the Whisperers. It begins to tear him apart as his comrades look on in horror. His screams can be heard throughout the keep.



Anyone investigating will see another Whisperer prowling in the shadows by the stables, waiting for someone to break from the protection of the fire.

Even if the Whisperers are despatched with no further loss of life, both Jalmain's and Absalom's mercenaries will have had their morale damaged by the realisation that they aren't even safe in the keep. Jalmain's mercenaries will demand a higher cut of the ransom (they will use this word in front of Absalom and Erin without thought). Both sets of men will now be reluctant to follow any orders that they believe will place them in danger.

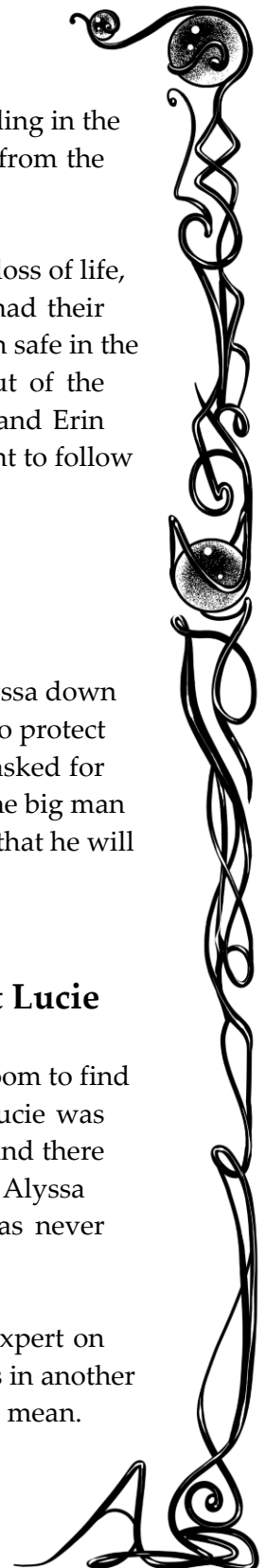
Alyssa identifies Finn

If any of the player characters take the time to calm Alyssa down and get them to trust her, she will hesitantly ask them to protect her from the scary man once Finn is out of earshot. If asked for more details, she will eventually tell the story of how the big man with the red hair killed everyone and that she is afraid that he will kill her too.

Alyssa tells Absalom her suspicions about Lucie

One summer a few years ago, Alyssa entered Lucie's room to find Lucie in a trance, her eyes rolled up into her head. Lucie was speaking in a language that Alyssa did not recognise, and there seemed to be eyes watching her from the shadows. Alyssa dropped the linens she was carrying and ran. She has never spoken of what she saw.

If Absalom identifies himself as a witch-finder or an expert on sorcery in Alyssa's presence, she will wait until Lucie is in another room and tell her story to Absalom, asking what it may mean.





Alyssa also knows that the count keeps Lucie locked in her room unless he is supervising her personally.

The Whisperers invade the keep

While the Whisperers will avoid the light and warmth of the Great Hall unless Lucie is threatened, they are more than happy to invade the dark, cold corners of the keep. Throughout the game, they will try to break open shutters or smash down the door from the inner courtyard. This will cause a great deal of noise and be obvious to the player characters.

Once inside the keep, the Whisperers will scatter anywhere they can hide. It will usually be obvious when one is around, even when they are not whispering, as the air will be colder in their presence, surfaces will ice over and torches will sputter and go out. Once a Whisperer has a lone victim somewhere dark and quiet, it will pounce.

The Whisperers impersonate the living and the dead

Once inside the keep, the Whisperers will want to divide and confuse their potential victims as much as possible. They will do this by staying out of sight, blending with the shadows in dark corners, and calling to their prey. These whispers go directly to their target's mind and will not be heard by anyone else. The Whisperers can also read enough of their target's thoughts to get an idea of who to impersonate.

If a character wishes to actively disbelieve what they hear, have a contested roll against the Whisperer, using its Qualities of





Whispers from the Shadows – Good [+2] and Mimic Voices – Expert [+4].

The most obvious way a Whisperer can isolate a target is to impersonate one of his or her allies and ask for help. This impersonation is not limited to the living, though, and they may also take on the voices of those whose deaths have hurt a character.

Possible tricks for the Whisperers to use include:

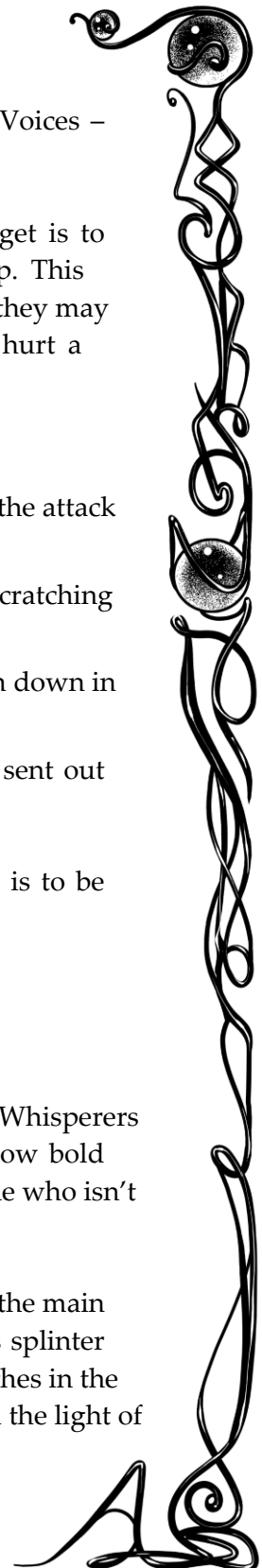
- Jalmain or Finn hears Jaco outside, sometime after the attack on him, whimpering and obviously still alive.
- Absalom or Erin hears someone whimpering and scratching downstairs – obviously another survivor.
- Alyssa hears her mother's voice crying for her from down in the larder.
- The Whisperers impersonate the group that Finn sent out earlier, calling from the courtyard for help.

The Whisperers will not target Lucie. They know she is to be protected at all costs.

The blizzard attacks

If the player characters take no actions to deal with the Whisperers or banish the blizzard, the demons will eventually grow bold enough to try to take the keep by force and kill everyone who isn't Lucie.

The attack starts with two Whisperers smashing down the main doors from the courtyard to the Great Hall. The doors splinter inwards in a gust of freezing air and snow, and the torches in the hall start to sputter out. The hall grows dark apart from the light of





the fire, and the air is filled with the snarling, rending noises of the demons in the wind.

A round later, the blizzard itself will blow into the hall, ready to suck the life and heat out of all those present. If anyone attempts to harm Lucie, a Whisperer will interpose itself and try to give her a chance to get to safety.

This will be a fight to the death, and either the player characters will be left as icy corpses or the blizzard will be banished.

Don't rush into this option if the players are discussing ways to deal with the problem. The outcome will be a lot more exciting for them if they take the fight to the enemy instead.

Wrapping it all up

There are many ways this scenario can end, depending on the actions of the player characters. Here are a few ideas based on common outcomes, but they are not exhaustive. Find a climactic moment, either action-packed or poignant, and end the game there. Ask the players of any surviving characters to describe what happens to their character in the aftermath.

Banishing the blizzard

If the blizzard itself is dispelled, it will no longer serve as home to the thousand demons within it and they will be banished or scattered across the world. They will still continue to torment Lucie for as long as she is alive (or Alyssa, should Lucie die) and they will always be looking for a way to return.



Accomplishing this is far from easy. The two main paths will be either a sorcerous ritual led by Lucie, which will require at least one human sacrifice to power it, or an exorcism led by Absalom. Both of these rituals will have to be performed in the open, directly exposed to the blizzard.

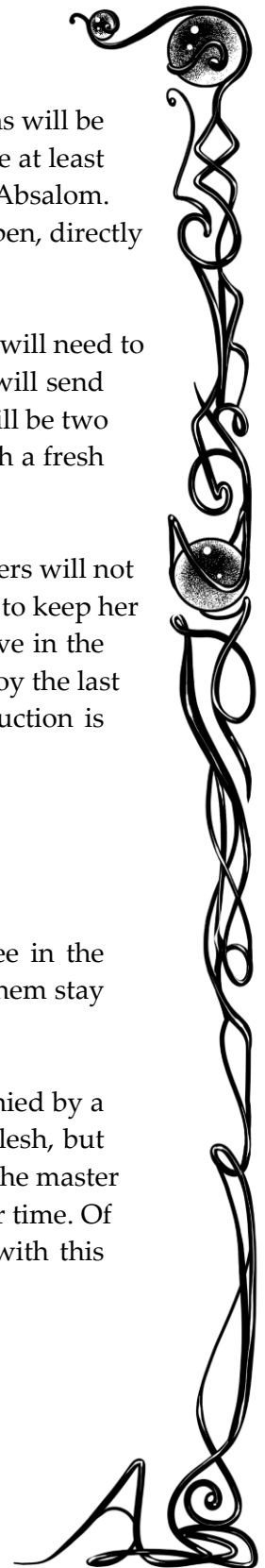
The main conflict will be with the blizzard itself, and it will need to be zeroed out before it can be dispelled. The blizzard will send Whisperers to defend it throughout this fight – there will be two Whisperers harrowing those performing the ritual, with a fresh demon diving in each time one of its brothers falls.

If Lucie is leading the rituals, the blizzard and Whisperers will not try to kill her, but simply snatch her away in the winds to keep her alive as their puppet. They will try to drag her to a cave in the foothills, to tend to her there in the darkness, and destroy the last of her sanity. The blizzard will follow her if the abduction is successful, leaving the keep in peace.

Making peace with the demons

Ultimately, the Whisperers want to live and roam free in the world. If Lucie negotiates with them and agrees to let them stay manifest, they will offer to spare her companions.

The price for this is that Lucie will always be accompanied by a horde of whispering shadows, hungry for blood and flesh, but they will serve her to a degree. The question of who is the master in this relationship is something that can be settled over time. Of course, the other player characters may be unhappy with this outcome.





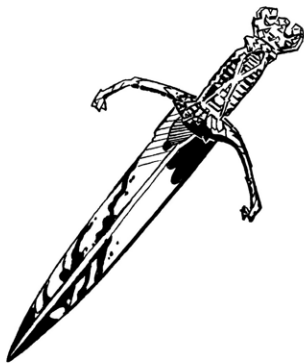
Killing Lucie

This is by far the simplest method of resolving the situation. The Whisperers have been made manifest by Lucie's sorcery – even if she is unaware of this – and it is what binds them to the material world. If Lucie dies then the demons will be banished.

There are a couple of complications. First, this relies on the murder of an innocent girl. While some of the player characters may have no qualms about this, others may want to defend her.

Secondly, the Whisperers will want to prevent Lucie's death, and will put aside their fear of the light and fire to storm the keep in her defence. At the first sign of a threat to Lucie's life, two Whisperers will come to burst through doors or windows and pounce upon her attackers. They will engage her attacker one round after the initial assault.

If Alyssa is still alive, the Whisperers will eventually come to her, as she is the illegitimate child of Count Rochelle. That is a problem for another scenario, though.





NPCs AND CREATURES

Mercenaries

After the losses to the blizzard and its inhabitants, Jalmain and Absalom each only have three hired mercenaries left alive.

The men are frightened and demoralised, but will look to their respective masters to get them out of this situation alive.

Use the following names if any are required: Jaco, Raquen, Berith, Starrin, Jeter, Coll.

People: various

Strengths: Mercenary Fighter – Good [+2]

Alyssa

She is a small, frail girl with large frightened eyes and lank blonde hair. She wears a plain linen shift.

Alyssa has lived at the Summer Keep for all of her twelve years. For the last four years, she has taken on progressively more duties as a chambermaid. Her mother, Marta, was the cook and her father is unknown, but rumours (founded in truth) circulate among the staff that it is Count Rochelle. There is certainly a family resemblance between Alyssa and Lucie, even if neither of them acknowledges it.



When Finn Redtooth killed the servants and guards, Alyssa hid in a cabinet in the kitchen and saw everything. She is now terrified of Finn, believing he will kill her too, and hates him for murdering her mother and her friends. Alyssa is also frightened of Lucie, believing her to be a witch.

People: Citizen of Sartain

Strengths: Chambermaid – Good [+2]

The Whisperers

These are the demons of Lucie's mind, made manifest. They have no fixed physical form, but take the appearance of swirling masses of darkness, ice shards, teeth and eyes. Their movements are accompanied by the sound of wind and thousands of whispering voices. When this whispering can first be heard, mention to Lucie's player that it sounds horribly familiar.

A Whisperer can blend with the shadows and call from them, taking on voices of people it or its brothers have killed or observed. Given time, they can also take voices from the minds of a target and mimic those. They will use these voices to trick, torment or confuse opponents, keeping them off-guard or baiting them to go to a place where they will be vulnerable. The voices of the Whisperers appear directly in the mind of a target and cannot be heard by others.

Being creatures of cold and darkness, Whisperers fear light and heat, especially in the form of fire. They will overcome this fear in dire situations, but otherwise they will stick to shadows and cold places.



Strengths: Made of cold and death – Expert [+4], Intangible – Expert [+4], Teeth that shred – Expert [+4], Whispers from the shadows – Good [+2], Mimic voices* – Expert [+4]

Weaknesses: Fear of fire and light – Poor [-2]

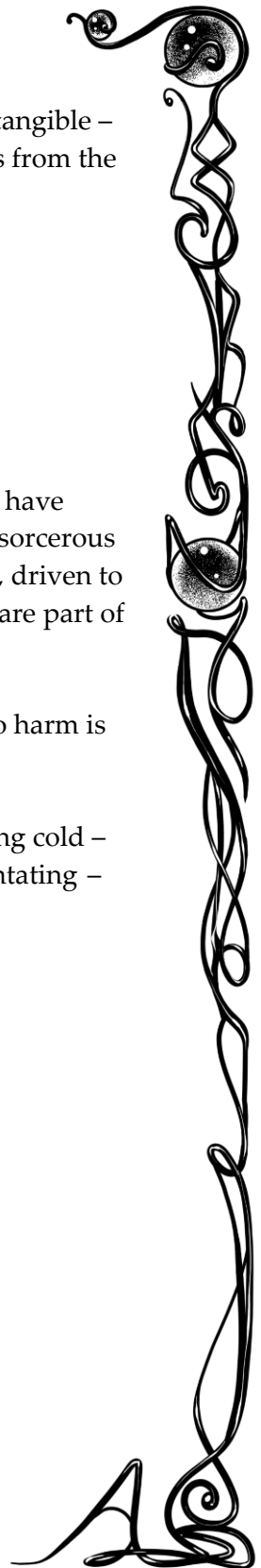
The Blizzard

The thousand Whisperers that Lucie has summoned have possessed the snowstorm and turned it into something sorcerous and sentient. It is a living mass of cold winds and snow, driven to suck the life out of those it encounters. The Whisperers are part of its fabric, filling it with eyes and voices.

The blizzard has no form of its own, and its ability to do harm is limited to freezing and confusing its foes.

Strengths: Blinding snow – Expert [+4], Bone-freezing cold – Expert [+4], Howling winds – Expert [+4], Disorientating – Good [+2], Unnatural – Good [+2]

Weaknesses: Insubstantial – Poor [-2]







PLAYER CHARACTERS

The following characters are presented for use with this scenario. They are explicitly tied into the situation and the game will be very different if you use other characters.

If your group is smaller than five players, make Erin and/or Finn into NPCs. If your group is larger, the additional players could take on the roles of mercenaries, ideally keeping the number equal in both factions. Alternatively, if a player wants to take on a different type of role, they may want to play Alyssa. In each of these cases, get the players to generate Qualities for these characters as per the rules instead of using the Qualities listed here.

It's suggested that you print two pages on one sheet of paper in landscape format for each character.



Jalmain the unchanged

First impressions

A spry, cheerful man with a neatly oiled beard and a mass of dreadlocks. He wears leather armour with colourful bandanas tied around it.

Qualities

People: Citizen of Sartain

Roguish thief – Expert [+4]

Kind-hearted – Good [+2]

Anything can be used as a weapon – Expert [+4]

Silver-tongued liar – Good [+2]

Fast as lightning – Good [+2]

Small group of followers – Good [+2]

Easily blinded by greed – Poor [-2]

Background

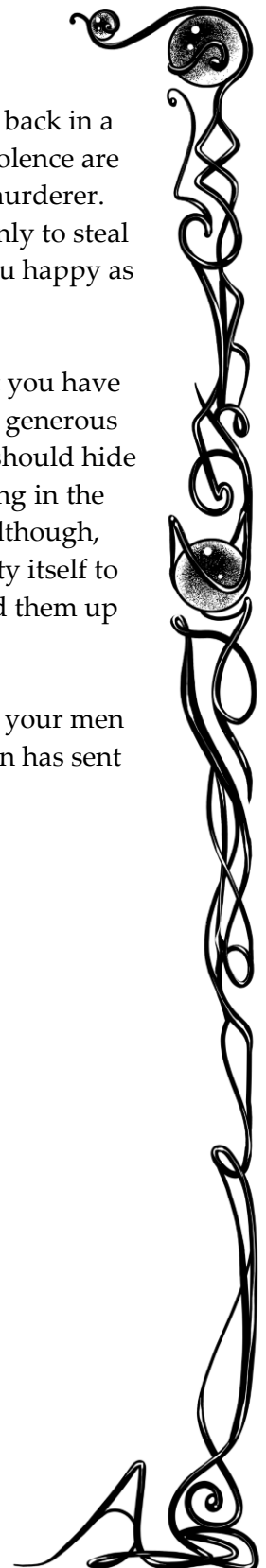
This wasn't the plan. You were supposed to loot Count Rochelle's gold and jewels, not kidnap his daughter. The information you had was bad, though, and not only did you not find the Count's strongroom, but the Count's young daughter, Lucie, interrupted you. The girl convinced you to take her 'hostage', saying that this would be easy money. She will take a third of any ransom and use it to build a life for herself outside the clutches of her controlling father. While the girl is scarcely more than a child, you are certain that there is more to her than meets the eye. She might even make a better travelling companion than Finn.



You can think of no one you would rather have at your back in a fight than Finn, but his rashness, temper and lust for violence are going to get you killed one day. You're a thief, not a murderer. You steal to survive, and you are honourable enough only to steal from those who can afford it. Robbing nobles makes you happy as well as rich.

You've sent word to the count via one of your men that you have his daughter and will return her unharmed if he pays a generous ransom. It appealed to your sense of humour that you should hide out in the count's own keep in the hills, used for hunting in the summer and left almost abandoned in the winter (although, thinking about it, this was Lucie's idea). It was simplicity itself to overpower the skeleton crew of guards. Finn has locked them up in the cellar.

Now the most frightful blizzard has started, and one of your men swears he saw hideous shapes moving in the snow. Finn has sent some men to investigate. Better be on your guard.





Finn Redtooth

First impressions

A large, muscular man with long flaming red hair and a beard to match. His eyes are green and fierce. He is dressed in wolf furs draped over iron mail.

Qualities

People: Earth Tribes of Kalet

Mercenary fighter – Expert [+4]

Opportunist – Good [+2]

Sneaky and stealthy – Good [+2]

Tough and resilient – Good [+2]

Singer of epic verse – Good [+2]

Dangerous allure – Good [+2]

Fearless – Good [+2]

Unable to trust others – Poor [-2]

Background

Only the strong survive. This is the first lesson you learn growing up in the frozen wastes of Kalet. The strong take what they want and make no apologies. Mercy is a luxury that will get you killed. When the ground is littered with the bodies of the weak, Finn Redtooth will still be standing.

You have been working with Jalmain since you travelled to Sartain, and while he would be too weak-stomached to last more than a week in your world, his skills as a thief have kept you both

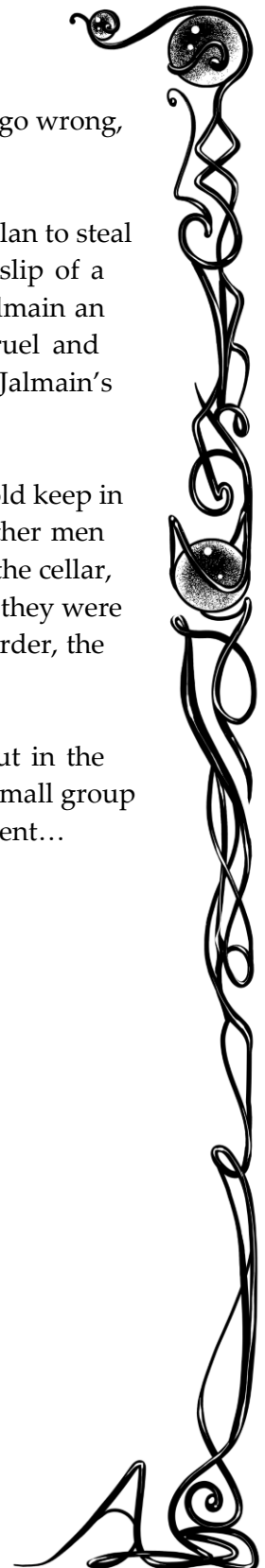


in wine and women for little risk. And when things do go wrong, you are strong enough to do what must be done.

This last job went wrong in an unexpected way. Your plan to steal the jewels of Count Rochelle was interrupted by his slip of a daughter. Jalmain was set to flee, but the girl made Jalmain an offer to take her hostage and help her escape her cruel and controlling father. Now you are lying low while one of Jalmain's men negotiates a ransom.

The place Jalmain found for you to hide is a draughty old keep in the hills. There were guards, but you and Jalmain's other men overpowered them. Jalmain asked you to lock them in the cellar, but you decided to play it safe and kill them as soon as they were out of Jalmain's sight. Their bodies are hidden in the larder, the first lockable room you could find.

Some of Jalmain's other men have reported shapes out in the blizzard that started a few hours ago. You have sent a small group of men to investigate. They should be back at any moment...





Absalom Grey

First impressions

A dour-looking man, whose sunken eyes and grey beard belie his physical strength and stamina. He wears a plain grey habit and layers of heavy cloth to block out the cold.

Qualities

People: Freemen of the River Towns

Witch finder – Expert [+4]

Skilled swordsman – Good [+2]

Unshakeable faith – Good [+2]

Small group of fighting men – Good [+2]

Relentless tracker – Good [+2]

Well-versed in the black arts – Good [+2]

Passionate orator – Good [+2]

Unlikable and rude – Poor [-2]

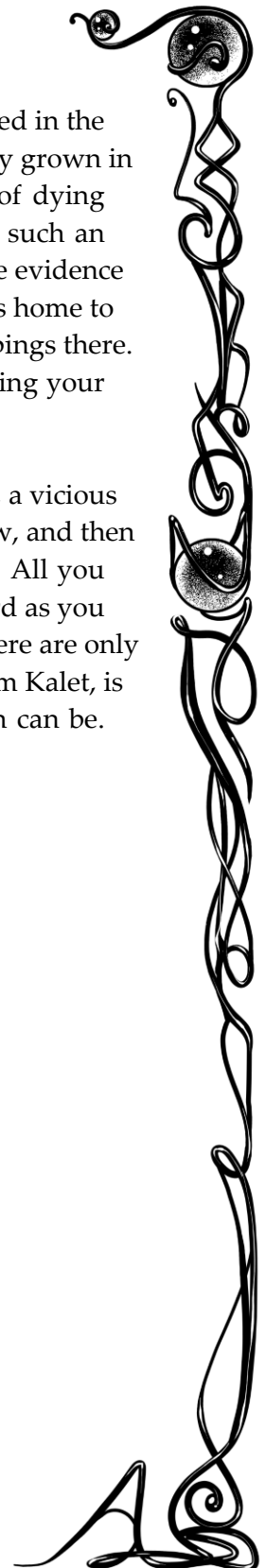
Background

Sorcery is the black pestilence that is rotting the body of Sartain. Since you travelled north to this land, you have been shocked at their decadence, ignorance and blindness to the dangers within. Happily not everyone here is blind, and you have managed to gather a group of men and women to your cause. Some are true believers, while others are mercenaries; you will convert them all in time.



Rumours have abounded that Count Rochelle is involved in the practice of sorcery. His wealth and power have certainly grown in a short period of time, and his enemies have a way of dying strange and violent deaths. It is dangerous to take on such an enemy directly, so you have set out to gather irrefutable evidence first. You believe the count's summer keep in the hills is home to his abhorrent rituals, and there must be sorcerous trappings there. You have set forth with a small group of fighters, making your way through the winter snows.

When you came within a few miles of your destination, a vicious blizzard started up. You saw strange shapes in the snow, and then one of your men was dragged away by unseen forces. All you found was blood and meat. You drove your men as hard as you could, trying to make it to the safety of the keep, but there are only a handful of you left now. Erin, the warrior woman from Kalet, is at your side, as at home in the blizzard as any human can be. Maybe she will get the last of you to safety.





Erin the Many-Fingered

First impressions

A tall, lithe woman with short-cropped red hair and the tattoos of her tribe adorning her face. She is dressed lightly for the cold weather, in colourful tights and a leather jerkin, but wears the skin of a polar bear for warmth when she is outdoors. She killed the bear herself.

Qualities

People: Earth People of Kalet

Unarmed fighting techniques – Expert [+4]

Acrobat and juggler – Good [+2]

Sleight of hand – Good [+2]

Quick on her feet – Good [+2]

Good-humoured and likable – Good [+2]

Well-travelled – Good [+2]

Quietly perceptive – Good [+2]

No respect for authority – Poor [-2]

Background

You are a long way from home, and all the happier for it. Kalet is a miserable, bleak land, full of dour men and women who see life as an imposition. You have a hunger for travel, experience and excitement that they could never understand.

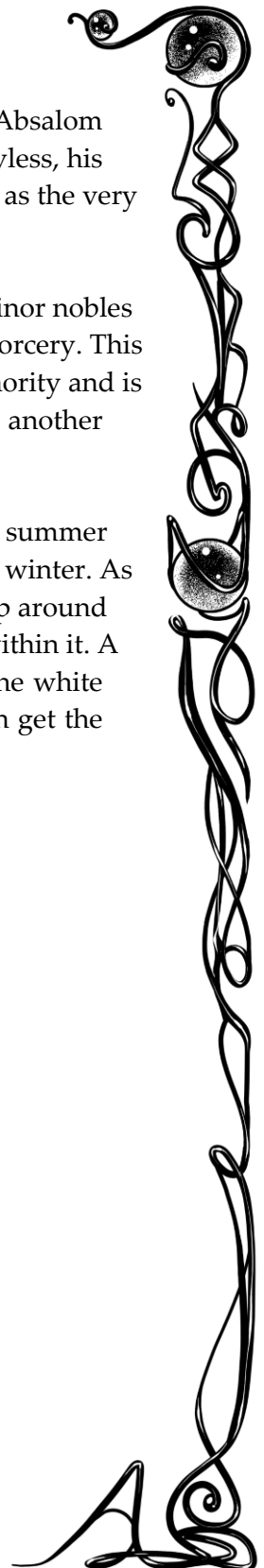
You have worked as a juggler, acrobat, thief and dancing girl in many, many lands. Now you have found work as a mercenary and



bodyguard for a strange and humourless man named Absalom Grey. While you find Grey himself to be grating and joyless, his profession of hunting sorcerers and witches strikes you as the very essence of adventure.

Grey has been trying to find evidence that one of the minor nobles of Sartain, Count Rochelle, has gained power through sorcery. This is going to be dangerous work, as Grey has no real authority and is making a powerful enemy. It could be time to consider another change of career.

You and Grey are currently headed toward the Count's summer retreat, which should be empty in the current depths of winter. As you have drawn near, a fearsome blizzard has blown up around you, and there are strange, misshapen things moving within it. A number of your party have been snatched away into the white maelstrom, only to be ripped to shreds. Unless you can get the survivors to shelter quickly, you are all doomed.





Lucie Rochelle

First impressions

A delicate young woman of maybe fifteen years of age. Her hair is long and golden, and her clothing expensive if somewhat soiled. There is a constant look of curiosity about her face, as if everything is new and exciting to her.

Qualities

People: Citizen of Sartain

Noble lady – Expert [+4]

Sorcery* – Good [+2]

Sweet and innocent appearance – Good [+2]

Knowledge of drugs and poisons – Good [+2]

Graceful dancer – Good [+2]

Small knives and daggers – Good [+2]

Maddened by demonic voices – Poor [-2]

Background

You were barely more than an infant when you first heard the voices whispering to you. You understand their words, even if you don't know what language they are in. They speak of death and cold and secrets to freeze the blood. Sometimes their words still horrify you, even if they seem as much a part of you as your own thoughts now.

It has been hard to hide your invisible tormentors from your family and servants. Your father, Count Rochelle, believes you to



be mad. He has kept you a virtual prisoner, and has brought in wise women, alchemists, herbalists and priests to try to make you into a normal girl. You have learned much from them, but the voices still whisper to you. They teach you things as well. You can channel their power, but the cost always has to be paid in blood. In between the bouts of madness and terror, you have learned the basics of being a lady. You can pass yourself off as a good girl for a while, but sooner or later the whispers start and someone always ends up dead. Are you becoming a monster too? Is there any hope for you?

A couple of bumbling thieves tried robbing your father's home, but ended up finding you instead. Thinking quickly, you convinced one of them, named Jalmain, to take you as a hostage in exchange for freeing you from the prison your father has made for you. He will even give you a third of the ransom, which you can use to start a new life for yourself. You are out in the world for the first time, away from your father and his hirelings. The possibilities are endless.

You convinced the thieves to hide out in your father's summer keep, currently empty for the winter except for some servants. There is the smell of blood in the air, and you can feel the power of dying souls running through you. The whispers have grown loud in your ears, and you know that the Whisperers are close now. Maybe they want their freedom too.

A note on sorcery. It's freeform magic that can be powerful and dangerous. You can try to do pretty much anything with it: big effects are harder and riskier. For this adventure any sorcerous ritual, no matter how minor, will require a human sacrifice. Lucie's sorcery is a function of her link to the Whisperers, and they can only be appeased by blood and death. If a character is killed in Lucie's presence, she can gather their blood and life energy to perform an act of sorcery right then. This will be obvious to any observers.

