

Symbaroun



Adventure Locations

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Symbaroum



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Lord of the Bog

LORD OF THE BOG is an adventure location mainly designed to introduce the lindworms' reawakened ability to evolve into drakworms and, eventually, full-fledged dragons. In its original form, the story takes place at the Black Pitch Mire with the legendary Skaramagos as the main character. But both the setting and the central characters can easily be replaced, if the Game Master so desires. Either way, the player characters are invited to a place where the main conflict is between the Iron Pact and representatives of Queen Korinthia, and where they – like everyone else on site – are forced to choose sides.

Introduction

UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS really afoot at the Black Pitch Mire requires in-depth knowledge of the history of the Davokar region, and particularly about the Iron Pact's efforts to combat the effects of Symbaroum's collapse. Of course, one also needs some insight into more current power relations and conflicts.

This section recounts the relevant parts of the eras in question, before concluding with suggestions on how the characters can be drawn into the plot. However, depending on who the characters are and what goals they pursue, individually and as a group, the Game Master must be ready to adjust the information below – and also to improvise, should the players suddenly take unexpected, or even unwise, actions.

THE FATE OF THE LINDWORMS

After the fall of Symbaroum, Prince Eneáno and his army of warriors and mystics were forced to

battle many powerful monstrosities wreaking havoc among the ruins of the empire. But the ones that proved most difficult to defeat, and claimed more ironsworn lives than any other, were the beasts known as Fofar the Destroyer and Sakofal the Slaughterer.

In their unquenchable thirst for power, these dragons had made pacts with Symbarian priest-hoods and willingly been exalted into gods – or, in other words: let themselves be killed and resurrected as thoroughly corrupted abominations. Moreover, they surrounded themselves with hordes of drakworms and other beasts they had enslaved and corrupted, which is why the leaders of the Iron Pact soon reached a drastic decision: the dragon life-cycle had to be truncated!

Naturally, this was highly controversial and led to heated arguments between the Prince and his commanders; as a matter of principle, the elves in general, and the Iron Pact in particular, are firmly

opposed to all attempts to cultivate and violate the natural order. But exceptions have been made, and will be made, in situations where the end seems to justify the means. In this case, the combination of humans and dragons was considered dangerous in itself; two destructive forces which together threatened to destroy all of creation. By curtailing the dragon life-cycle, the threat could be handled without either race being completely annihilated, and furthermore, the decision could be repealed if it was later deemed unjustified or turned out to have undesirable consequences – a compromise on which the leaders could finally agree.

From that day forward, additional melodies were weaved into the hymns sung by the ironsworn as they wandered the ravaged land, lulling the darkness to rest and planting what is now the forest of Davokar. And ever since, all dragons in the region have been trapped in their larval stage, known to humans as Lindworms, which is also their reproductive phase. But roughly two decades ago, shortly after the Ambrians' arrival to the Promised Land, Prince Eneáno had a dream sight that fueled the Iron Pact's already considerable concern about the decreasing number of ironsworn and the already discernible darkening of the forest.

Whether it was an act of genius or lunacy remains to be seen, but the Prince had his singers compose new hymns that would restore the dragons' natural rhythm of life. The Iron Pact had already forged successful alliances with many of the older creatures of Davokar, including ten or so lindworms, and Eneáno was convinced that similar agreements could be reached with older serpents as well – serpents that could actually play a decisive role in the struggle to halt the human onslaught. But this could only be achieved if the ironsworn were there to watch over and safeguard the serpents during their transitional hibernation and, soon after the awakening, start fueling their mistrust of humans and gratitude toward the Iron pact.

As a side-effect of the old truncation, the life-cycle of today's lindworms have accelerated. Over the last twenty years, more than a hundred individuals have fallen into their first hibernation, and about thirty of them have survived the transitional phase – less than six months long, possibly as a result of the ironsworn's influence on the process. Eight individuals have also entered their second hibernation – two of these have died, another two have woken up as dragons, while four are still asleep.

With very few exceptions, the Iron Pact now believes that it has successfully recruited awakened drakworms as well as dragons to their cause, but

some of its more cynical members emphasize the need for caution. All beasts are capricious, prone to valuing their own urges and desires over any pact or alliance, which is why this apparent stroke of genius may very well lead to complete disaster...

SKARAMAGOS THE GREAT

Skaramagos has ruled the Black Pitch Mire for hundreds of years. His subjects have been beasts, goblin tribes, and trolls; he has managed to retain his power by playing different groups against each other in a game of terror, where they enjoyed his protection but lived in constant fear of losing it. When the woods started buzzing with rumors that the lindworm's disrupted life-cycle was being restored, Skaramagos expected that he would soon feel the imminent transformation burn in his body. But it never did, which he took as an insult and a sign that he was not yet powerful enough to deserve the exaltation.

When the first Ambrian expeditions set off along the river Malgomor, Skaramagos saw a chance to prove his greatness. The humans were regarded as intruders, and butchered to the last cabin boy. But even though they kept coming, better equipped and in greater numbers, and even though he slaughtered them all, the lindworm was denied the glorious blessing of exaltation. Increasingly beset by the humans, he decided to adopt a different strategy: to accept their invitation to negotiate.

This proved to be a wise move. Not only were the intruders willing to recognize him as lord of the Black Pitch Mire; they also promised to honor him with princely gifts, and offered to pay tribute for all discovered valuables and harvested resources. Skaramagos was so pleased with the arrangement that he even had his armies come to the humans' defense, for instance when the Iron Pact tried to put an end to Ordo Magica's damdra plantations, and when the warriors of the Sovereign's Oath were attacking Ambrian outposts in the area. And whether it was due to the humans' strategic submission or simply the course of nature, after a long and impatient wait, he could feel the glowing, tingling call telling him that the time had come.

As soon as the lindworm had burrowed into the ground on one of the central isles of the mire, the ironsworn arrived – ten late summer warriors along with six mystics of the same age, commanded by two autumn elves named Eliriel and Aláoan. Their mission was to protect and care for the hibernating serpent, and they immediately made it clear to visitors and inhabitants alike that they would not tolerate any disruptions. All who go near the area are first met by an unarmed late summer elf telling

them, in elvish (and with gestures), to turn back, after which she sinks into nature's embrace. If someone does not comply, a warning shot is fired, followed by genuine attacks.

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

When, for some reason (see below), the player characters arrive at the adventure location, we suggest that roughly five months have passed since Skaramagos fell into slumber. During that time, the tensions between local inhabitants have slowly deteriorated, and there is a great risk that the situation will soon erupt into bloodshed, which you can read more about under the Groups & Factions heading on page 5.

There are various reasons why the player characters might want to visit the Black Pitch Mire – some that make them directly involved in the main conflict, and others that make the presence of the Iron Pact a complication. The latter might be more interesting, as they would arrive unaware of the attritional war between the Ambrians and the Iron Pact. But as always, the Game Master knows what is best for the gaming group, and perhaps your players will appreciate the guidance that a clear, faction-based mission provides?

Reinforcements

If the Game Master wants the player characters to be thrown right into the action, they could be sent to the mire as reinforcements for the Iron Pact or some Ambrian faction. In the latter case, they could constitute a task force sent by the army or the Royal Sekretorium, depending on what contacts they have. Another possibility is that they have been sent by a senior representative of the Sun Church, who have heard of the conflict and wants to make sure that the champions of Prios play a decisive role in the unfolding drama.

Regardless of which side they end up on, a lot of things can happen once they arrive and begin to understand what is going on. Perhaps they have come to participate in attacking or defending Skaramagos' island, but learn that there is something else they would rather do. Meetings and conversations with representatives of various factions open up for a number of different goals and strategies.

Peacemakers

Another alternative is that the player characters have been sent there as peacemakers. Perhaps some clan witch, or even the Huldra herself, has deemed them a capable bunch, well-suited for the task of reducing tensions between Ambrians and elves? Or maybe it is Sarvola, Deseba, or some other

reformist within the Sun Church, who fears that the conflict at the Black Pitch Mire will lead to open war between the Queen's people and the woodland folk?

In this case, the player characters' first job will be to speak to everyone involved, in order to calm the waves. But here, too, their goals might change as they gain a deeper understanding of the situation.

Treasure hunt

Should the gaming group have a particular fondness for making unexpected discoveries, the location could very well be the final destination of a treasure hunt. If so, the Game Master should work out what kind of treasure (artifact, knowledge or gems) might entice the player characters to arrange such an arduous excursion; information about the treasure can be bought from a reliable source in Thistle Hold, or be found during a completely different adventure.

Of course, the treasure they seek turns out to be located in or near the ruin on Skaramagos' island; they could be aware of this from the outset, or figure it out after having searched the ruins on the surrounding islands. In any case, it soon becomes clear that they will not be able to reach the treasure until the conflict between the Iron Pact and the Ambrians has been resolved, one way or another.

Friends and family

Last, but certainly not least, it is possible that a friend or relative of the player characters has been reported missing, and that the evidence clearly points toward the Black Pitch Mire. Once on site, they might learn that the missing person has joined either side of the main conflict, or is determined to mediate between the warring parties.

With this entry point, the location could also become the scene of a murder mystery – the individual is found dead in the mire and the Ambrians blame the Iron Pact, who in turn claim that they have never seen the person in question. How the situation develops, and who is really to blame for the death of the friend/relative, is entirely for the Game Master to decide.

Scalding Damage

Falling into scalding water inflicts 1D6 damage per turn, ignoring armor. People who are heavily clothed or wearing thick leather armor do not sustain any damage for the first turn in the water, but keep taking damage after getting back on land, for four turns or until their clothes and armor have been removed.

The Black Pitch Mire

ASIDE FROM THE main stream, kept open by the river Magomor, the Black Pitch Mire is muddy, partially overgrown, and therefore not very traversable. It is possible to row or punt through the waters, but one should expect to spend a lot of time hacking, sawing, or burning one's way forward. In fact, some areas are so overgrown that predators and other antagonists can cross the quagmire on foot, to run between islands or reach boats that have gotten stuck. It should also be said that the water temperature varies due to the hot springs and gas pockets that are scattered across the mire; in some places, the temperature is so scalding hot that a person who falls in might be badly injured.

What still makes the mire a very attractive destination are three essential features – the ruins, the tar, and the damdra bushes. Ordo Magica has concluded that there was once a large city in the area, and though its buildings have been reduced to dust, one can still make amazing discoveries on the islands and the muddy bottom of the swamp.

As for the tar, it occurs in both crystalline and thick, liquid forms, the latter being concentrated near the hot springs. Much of the substance is harvested by the goblins of the Hurrularbbakk tribe and shipped to Ambria, to be used as joint and sealing compound in the construction of houses and fortifications. Finally, the damdra bush, which for the past years the Ambrians have not only harvested but also cultivated in the mire. Its seeds can be eaten just as they are, or pressed in order to extract a golden, energy-dense oil to be used as lamp fuel or for cooking.

This section provides an overview of the central parts of the mire, just east of the wide channel. It focuses on a number of notable locations, the groups currently operating in the area, and a handful of interesting individuals. The Game Master should of course feel free to add, subtract from, or adjust the environment according to his/her own, and the gaming group's, preferences.

GROUPS & FACTIONS

In addition to the elves stationed on Skaramagos' island, there are three important factions in the area – the Ambrians with their outpost, the goblin tribe of Hurrularbbakk, and the liege troll Golangarg who intends to conquer the Black Pitch Mire in Skaramagos' absence.

The following is a brief description of what the factions want, what forces they have at their disposal, and how they relate to one another.

The Iron Pact

Eliriel and Aláoan's orders are clear – to protect and nourish the hibernating Skaramagos, and once he awakens, gain his trust at the Ambrians' expense. They have sixteen late summer elves at their command; ten with stats like a Late Summer Elf on page 205 in the *Core Rulebook*, six with their abilities switched to Witchcraft (master), Storm Arrow (master), and Entangling Vines (master).

The autumn elves will never compromise Skaramagos' safety, but will gratefully accept any help that is offered, for example in exchange for free access to the ruin on Skaramagos' island. The latter is therefore a possibly way forward for those who wish to infiltrate the elves in order to assassinate the snake or spy on behalf of someone else.

The ironsworn feel beset on all sides. Diplomatic negotiations were held between them and the Ambrians until roughly one moon ago – negotiations which became increasingly heated and eventually broke down, turning into hostile silence. Golangarg has sent his minions on a couple of probing attacks which were easily fended off; they still do not know exactly what he is after, but have assessed that the trolls can be handled as long as they do not join forces with someone else. As for the goblins, Eliriel has negotiated both a peace agreement and a contract stipulating that the hurruls are to report on the other groups' activities in the swamp, in exchange for valuables for the goblins to trade with the Ambrians. However, none of the ironsworn trusts Chieftain Ilfolusk to honor the agreement if he ever feels threatened by someone else.

The Ambrians

South of the island lies the Ambrian outpost of Bogstead, which is usually inhabited by about twenty people, but has grown as a result of the conflict with the elves. The Ambrians have several interests in the area, one of which is directly threatened by the forbidden zone established by the Iron Pact – namely, the ongoing excavation of the ruin on Skaramagos' island.

The project is led by Odella, a Master of the Order from the Kurun Chapter, and she currently has two clear objectives: to resume the excavation before the elves can steal or destroy the wealth of knowledge stored in the lower levels of the ruin, and to slay the sleeping serpent before it wakes up and makes further exploration of the Black Pitch Mire impossible. Despite numerous letters to the Grand Master, and then directly to the Queen's council, she has not yet received permission to order the



Standing Stones

The Liege's Camp

Hurrularbbakk

Skaramagos'
island

The Little Dark

Damdra
Plantations

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The Great Dark

Dandra
Plantations

Bogstead



ranger and army troops on site to attack. Odella grows more desperate by the day; soon she will disregard the political discretion of her superiors and take matters into her own hands!

She has her regular guard force of twelve hired warriors from clan Odaiova at her disposal, along with two Adepts of the Order (see the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, page 125) and ten or so workers (stats like a Fortune Hunter, page 215 in the *Core Rulebook*). In addition, she has been reinforced by a squad of Queen's Rangers, consisting of one captain and eight soldiers (page 212 in the *Core Rulebook*).

Bogstead has long been using the Hurrularbakk tribe as labor, and also expects the goblins to fight in the front line during the impending attack. Furthermore, the newly arrived liege troll is not entirely opposed to an alliance, though in return he demands to be recognized as Skaramagos' successor as lord of the bog, under the same conditions that previously applied to the serpent. In other words, it seems that the Ambrians have two options: either collaborating with an exalted lindworm, or having a liege troll to deal with later on – not exactly an easy choice ...

The Goblins

For a long time, the Hurruls have lived in Skaramagos shadow as his loyal subjects. It has not been a bad life, compared to what other goblin communities must sometimes endure in Davokar. The snake has protected them, made sure that the humans give them work in exchange for food, and left them whatever was left of his prey after his own hunger was satisfied.

With the snake in hibernation, the whole tribe feels lost. Chieftain Ilfolusk tries to keep up appearances, even though the humans are demanding much harder work for less and less compensation. The arrival of Golangarg and the Iron Pact did not improve their situation. The former is already demanding tribute as lord of the bog, making the already dire food shortages even worse. The elves are forcing them to spy on the others, which terrifies the Chieftain; should the liege troll or the Ambrians ever find out about it, it would most likely be the end of the tribe.

What Ilfolusk needs most is advice, and since he is not a skilled diplomat or strategist by any means, he tends to trust any outsiders who give the impression of being friendly. His forty able-bodied subjects all have stats like Robber on page 211 in the *Core Rulebook*, and could probably be very useful in battle, if they are provided a suitable strategy – such as splitting up into several smaller groups in order to ambush an (hopefully) unexpected enemy.

Regarding relations, Ilfolusk and his people are terrified of everything and everyone. They would rather not bite the hand that feeds them, but they are also afraid to flee the area and risk ending up in an even more precarious situation. No, for now they will try to stay on good terms with the bog's more powerful groups, and hope that Skaramagos, once awakened, will resume his place as their protector.

Golangarg

Golangarg has been banished from a troll kingdom in the Underworld, and is determined to establish his own realm on the surface. When he heard that Skaramagos had gone into hibernation, he saw a chance to seize the serpent's territory, but with the Iron Pact nearby, this seems very hard to achieve. He has not given up. He has already subdued the local goblin tribe and made his presence known to the human curs cowering behind their palisade. And he keeps luring in more subjects in the form of beasts and rage trolls, with the aim of soon having amassed a force large enough to attack.

For the time being, Golangarg can boast a force of 12 group-living rage trolls (page 207 in the *Core Rulebook*), five goblin outcasts from other tribes than Ilfolusk's (see the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, page 130), and three tame hunger wolves (see the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, page 146). They all obey his every command – unless the Game Master wishes otherwise, that is. Perhaps there is a potential defector among the rage trolls who might be willing to betray its liege, if the price is right...

In Golangarg's case, the only interesting relation is the one with the Ambrians. They have come to speak, and brought gifts that pleased him, but so far, it appears that they are not ready to offer him the same arrangement as they currently have with Skaramagos. Golangarg will not budge one inch from his demands!

LOCATIONS

The Lord of the Bog focuses on a limited part of the Black Pitch Mire, located just east of the more navigable channel of the Malgomor River. The Game Master is free to expand on the relatively superficial description of the mire's notable sites, depending on what best suits the gaming group and the player characters' incentives.

Bogstead

The Bogstead outpost is currently overcrowded, because of the nine rangers and the fact that the tense situation is scaring visitors from spending the night on their ships or camping outside the palisade.

The outpost consists of five houses and a tower overlooking the marshlands. One of the buildings serves as a dining hall and an infirmary, two as bunkhouses, and one as a chapel, managed by the young sun priestess Almertina. The central building is occupied by Odella and her adepts, Ranger Captain Mandarol, and the outpost's severely near-sighted liturg and Medicus, Kralga; it is also where administrative duties take place and meetings are held. The barbarian commander, an axe-wielding warrior named Husk, lives with his soldiers in one of the other houses.

Hurrularbbakk

Ilfolusk and his people are scattered across three islands in the northwestern part of the area. The tribe consists of almost one hundred and twenty individuals, many of them children or elderly. The chieftain resides in a somewhat larger, dome-shaped patchwork hut at the northern end, always surrounding himself with twenty or so capable hunters. Not far from Ilfolusk lives the tribe's shaman, Algulff, who has no mystical powers whatsoever and barely knows how to concoct an effective herbal cure.

The Liege's Camp

The liege troll Golangarg is currently based on a smaller island northwest of Skaramagos' resting place, but does of course have his eye on the relatively well-preserved ruin where the ironsworn have set up camp. He lives in a cave that his subjects were forced to build by gathering and stacking boulders, filling in the cracks with gravel, and covering their creation with soil. The other trolls sleep on the ground outside, unconcerned by weather.

Skaramagos' island

The island where the hibernating lindworm's mound is located, alongside Master Odella's former excavation object, is completely dominated by the Iron Pact. They take turns resting, keeping watch around Skaramagos, and patrolling the island in pairs, including its surrounding islets. They sleep inside what must once have been a Symbarian palace, but is now a decrepit ruin, partially swallowed by the swamp. The excavation focused on its lower levels, and the entrance hole, with its rope ladder and winch, is still there in the largest and best preserved of the main building's halls.

The Great Dark

In the northeastern parts of the swamp is a vast stretch of corrupted wilderness. In this case, the location in question is plagued by a thick,

corrupting mist (see the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, page 22), which oozes from the ground at irregular intervals, but always emerges whenever living creatures are moving through its waters and islands. Sometimes the mist drifts over to other islands as well, which seems to occur regardless of other weather conditions. The last time it swept across Bogstead, it brought with it abominations that killed a handful of people, and maimed just as many, before Husk and his warriors could finally restore calm at the outpost.

The Little Dark

The other severely corrupted area in the vicinity is generally referred to as the Little Dark, even though it is almost as vast as the Great one. Some unspeakable crime against Creation must have been committed on these islands, judging by its exceedingly vengeful wildlife (see the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, page 110). It mainly concerns Gobbling Gnomes and Choking Undines, but there have also been reports of the ground opening up, spewing enraged Hunger Furies – something that has repeatedly forced Ordo Magica to postpone their mapping of the islands' overgrown ruins.

The Standing Stones

In the north of the area are a handful of standing stones of the kind that can mainly be seen in the more northern parts of the Black Pitch Mire. They were being examined by one of Odella's adepts when the Iron Pact arrived, forcing her to abandon the project. And as Golangarg has now seized the island where she was working, it seems she will not be able to resume her studies any time soon. The main question – whether the standing stones are sculptures, or some form of giants turned to stone – remains unanswered, though persistent rumors suggest the latter.

The Damdra Plantations

Ordo Magica is running two damdra plantations in the area, one of them grown on the larger island where Bogstead Outpost is also located. They have no problem accessing their own plantation fields, which still produce good yields, but alas, the same cannot be said for the wild variety growing on one of the island in the Iron Pact's taboo area.

The adept Malkomo is deeply concerned that the bushes have not been grafted in a long time and that corrupted weed seeds might have blown in from the Great Dark. If only someone would come with him, Malkomo would gladly try to reach the island, preferably without being detected by the elves.

Other Ruins

There are plenty of ruins in the Black Pitch Mire, and due to the alliance between Skaramagos and the Ambrian Crown, visiting fortune hunters have had a hard time reaching them. However, the current situation offers an opportunity to sneak onto the outer islands, and maybe even reach more central ruins if arrangements can be made with the Iron Pact or the liege troll. In fact, a deal with Odella can also give the player characters access to areas which she considers less interesting.

There are ruins all over the islands, although some are hidden underground. Furthermore, much of the area's Underworld is flooded and difficult to reach. But there are exceptions where many interesting finds can be made. As Game Master, you are free to use the guidelines in

Adventure Pack I or the more in-depth rules featured in *Karvosti – the Witch Hammer*, unless you would rather lay the foundations for the player characters' treasure hunting yourself. Either way, table x.x can be used to randomly determine what they find, or serve as inspiration for the Game Master's own ideas.

THE BRAZIER OF ELDRED, ARTIFACT

There is a rarely told legend about the Symbarian city of Dakovak that features the mystic and interrogation leader Eldred, or possibly Eloderad. It is said that he could force the truth out of anyone, even truths which the respondent had repressed, forgotten, or been forced to forget. He who binds to this brazier gains access to the mystic's ancient secret.

Table 1: Treasure table

1d20	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	VALUE
1–5	Debris	Damaged object	1D10 thaler
6	Curiosity	Tray of blackened silver covered with cuneiform, with an engraving of a goblet.	1D10+10 thaler
7	Curiosity	Crimson gem the size of a fist, cracked, with black veining.	1D10+10 thaler
8	Curiosity	Iron-clad leather gauntlet with signet rings on all fingers.	1D10+10 thaler
9	Curiosity	Neck ring of pure gold, engraved with winding snakes.	1D10+10 thaler
10	Curiosity	Thin rod of blue-glazed stone with a silver cat's head on one end and a dog's head on the other.	1D10+10 thaler
11	Curiosity	Lantern of smoky glass, continuously shifting colors in the light of a flame.	1D10+10 thaler
12	Curiosity	Small jug of facial oil that gives the skin a youthful glow for one day, after which it becomes terribly flushed.	1D10+10 thaler
13	Curiosity	Tankard of troll horn which, when full, miraculously turns out to contain twice the amount of liquid that was poured into it, though with a vapid aftertaste.	1D10+10 thaler
14	Curiosity	Gelatinous, colorless, fist-sized lump that mirrors the appearance of its beholder, though viciously ugly and rugged.	1D10+10 thaler
15	Mystical treasure.	Palm-sized medallion of a snake, whose head seems to be alive. When held against bare skin, the head bites, but nine times out of ten it excretes a weak antidote; in the tenth case a moderate poison. Roll 1D10 every time it is used; an outcome of 1 means poisoning.	1D100+100 thaler
16	Mystical treasure.	Bronze belt buckle shaped like the grinning face of a bear with black opals for eyes. If worn visibly over the armor, it may have a confusing effect on beasts. Once per scene the wearer may attempt a <i>[10←Resolute]</i> test; if it succeeds, the beast cannot use active abilities/traits during the next turn.	1D100+100 thaler
17	Mystical treasure.	Silver headband with pearls painted like eyes, which gives its wearer a premonition of imminent danger – a second chance to avoid being <i>Surprised</i> by ambushes and stealthy foes.	1D100+100 thaler
18	Mystical treasure.	A pendant in the form of a golden owl with spread wings, which can distort the wearer's shadow. Whenever someone uses <i>Witchsight</i> to view the shadow, 1D10 is rolled. If the outcome is 1–2 the shadow makes it seem like the person has +5 total corruption, 3–4 reveals the true shadow, and at 6–10 the shadow makes it seem like the wearer has –5 total corruption.	1D100+100 thaler
19	Artifact	The Brazier of Eldred, see text box	1D1000+1000 thaler
20	Artifact	The Chain of Algsar-Mara, see text box	1D1000+1000 thaler

The brazier is the size of a soup bowl, made of cracked ceramic with iron threads weaved into it. When used, the oil must be ignited and the artifact held in the cupped hand of its master, who suffers corruption when the powers are activated.

The Liar's Penance: The master may ask someone a question (open or yes/no). When it has been answered, the person's hand is forced into the flame. If the respondent did not tell the truth, his/her hand is severely burned (1D4 damage); otherwise the fire feels cool and pleasant.

Action: A whole turn

Corruption: 1D4

Evoke memory: The master can light the brazier in order to evoke memories which the respondent has forgotten or repressed, in response to a question or a request to describe a certain situation or event. The person sticks his/her hand into the fire and takes 1D4 damage, but will then remember the event/answer with perfect clarity.

Action: A whole turn

Corruption: 1D4

THE CHAIN OF ALGSAR-MARA, ARTIFACT

As far as anyone knows, Algsar-Mara is only mentioned in a single verse, accredited to Aroaleta, which only refers to his craftiness, murderous disposition, and "biting chain". Who this person really was, and what made him worth mentioning, is as big a mystery as the question whether this chain really belonged to him. Or her.

With its thin but immensely strong links, the chain is almost two meters long, but as light as a rope of equal length, and it seems that a hungering – even ravenous – power has been instilled in its metal. In addition to the powers below, it can be swung as a Long Whip with the qualities Deep Impact, Ensnaring and Jointed.

Entwine: Having bound to the chain and while at an *Advantage*, the master can pass an attack test to throw the artifact at an enemy. No matter how it is thrown, the chain immediately wraps itself around the victim, completely restricting its movements during the next turn. A [10←Strong] test is then required each turn to maintain the effect; if the test fails, the enemy breaks free.

Action: Active

Corruption: 1D4

Creeping trap: The artifact's master can place it somewhere as a living trap, covering a larger area (a palace ruin, a clearing or a campsite). The chain will automatically seek out approaching creatures, except those who have already been in contact with it, and wrap itself around them as described above (up to two creatures within melee distance of each

other). The chain rattles loudly enough to alert the master even if he or she is asleep [*Vigilant*].

Action: Active

Corruption: 1D4

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

The four people below are of particular interest to the player characters, regardless of why they are visiting the location. If stats for additional creatures or individuals are needed, they can most likely be found in section two of the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*.

Odella

"Now! It must be done NOW!"

Master of the Order Odella is the same age as her chapter master, the famous Argoi, and has always lived in his shadow. With the excavation at the Black Pitch Mire, she expects this to change – that she will finally win the fame and recognition she thinks she deserves. Her entire future is at stake, which may be a mitigating factor for those who are forced to endure her anger, frustration and verbal abuse.

Manner	Irritable, flushed face
Race	Human (Ambrian)
Resistance	Challenging
Traits	Contacts (Ordo Magica)
Accurate 5 (+5), Cunning 13 (–3), Discreet 10 (0), Persuasive 9 (+1), Quick 10 (0), Resolute 15 (–5), Strong 7 (+3), Vigilant 11 (–1)	
Abilities	Anathema (adept), Brimstone Cascade (adept), Loremaster (master), Ritualist (master: Break Link, Clairvoyance, Magic Circle, Sanctum, Seven-league Stride, Tale of Ashes), Unnoticeable (adept), Wizardry (adept)
Weapons Accurate	Quarterstaff 3 (blunt, long)
Armor	Order cloak 2
Defense	0
Toughness 10	Pain Threshold 4
Equipment	Field library, Excavation tools, Pipe and tobacco
Shadow	Glossy reddish-yellow with thin, dark streaks, like a polished yet scratched plate of copper (corruption: 2)

Tactics: Odella does not fight. In a combat situation, she uses Unnoticeable to reach a safe distance, from which she will, at most, support her allies with Anathema.

Golangarg

"You are small, you are weak; I'm in charge!"

Golangarg challenged the ruler of a minor troll kingdom in the Underworld, and lost. The regeneration has healed the scars on his body, but the ones on his soul will not heal until he has established a realm of his own, strong enough to attack and crush the weaklings who banished him. He will succeed, or die trying. Golangarg only speaks troll tongue, so the player characters need *Loremaster* (adept) in order to speak with him.

Manner	Composed, suspicious
Race	Troll (liege troll)
Resistance	Strong
Traits	<i>Armored</i> (I), <i>Long-lived</i> , <i>Natural weapon</i> (I), <i>Regeneration</i> (III), <i>Robust</i> (II)
Accurate 13 (–3), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 11 (–1), Quick 9 (+1), Resolute 10 (0), Strong 18 (–8), Vigilant 7 (+3)	
Abilities	<i>Berserker</i> (master), <i>Exceptionally Strong</i> (master), <i>Feat of Strength</i> (novice), <i>Iron Fist</i> (master), <i>Two-handed Force</i> (master)
Weapons Strong	Warhammer 16 (blood-letting, massive, unwieldy)
Armor	Troll skin 7 (regenerates 4 Toughness/turn, except damage from fire or acid)
Defense	+4
Toughness	23 Pain Threshold 9
Equipment	Jewelry and trinkets (10 thaler)
Shadow	Mottled black and gray, like wet, dark granite (corruption: 0)

Tactics: Golangarg does not care much about tactics or strategies; he trusts that the massive stone hammer will get the job done, even if he is banged-up a little in the process. He enjoys a good beating!

Ilfolusk

"No, not! Or ... Maybe yes? No?"

The increasingly gaunt Chieftain Ilfolusk is beset on all sides, not least by his own self-image, which demands that he provides food and shelter for his people. He is terrified of entering agreements that might displease other factions, but at the same time, he realizes that he will soon have to pick a side – without a strong ally, the tribe will perish.

After many long years of collaborating with Bogstead, Ilfolusk speaks decent Ambrian

Manner	Drifting eyes
Race	Goblin
Resistance	Ordinary
Traits	<i>Pariah</i> , <i>Short-lived</i> , <i>Survival Instinct</i> (II)
Accurate 5 (+5), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 10 (0), Persuasive 13 (–3), Quick 11 (–1), Resolute 7 (+3), Strong 9 (+1), Vigilant 15 (–5)	
Abilities	<i>Leader</i> (adept)
Weapons Accurate	Spiked club 4
Armor	2 (<i>Survival Instinct</i>)
Defense	0 (shield)
Toughness	10 Pain Threshold 5
Equipment	Chieftain's cloak made of grey and black feathers, four almond biscuits which he strictly rations out.
Shadow	Maroon, like the wood of a rotten tree stump (corruption: 0)

Tactics: In battle, Ilfolusk fights at the forefront with his club and shield, ready to die for his people. He will not even consider surrendering until he stands alone in a sea of fallen subjects.

The Autumn Elves

"Contribute, or leave. Or die!"

Both Eliriel and Aláoan stand tall and proud, ready to do whatever it takes to defend Skaramagos and win his trust. They belong to the bellicose faction within the Iron Pact, but are ready to swallow their wrath until they know whether Prince Eneáno's plan to enlist the dragon's support will succeed. If they are attacked, they will not hesitate to slay anyone who endangers their mission.

Manner	Terse, uncompromising
Race	Elf (autumn elf)
Resistance	Strong
Traits	<i>Long-lived</i> , <i>Pariah</i>
Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 7 (+3), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 13 (–3), Resolute 11 (–1), Strong 9 (+1), Vigilant 15 (–5)	
Abilities	<i>Acrobatics</i> (adept), <i>Arrow Jab</i> (master), <i>Man-at-Arms</i> (adept), <i>Marksman</i> (master), <i>Rapid Fire</i> (master), <i>Sixth Sense</i> (master)
Weapons Vigilant	Mastercrafted longbow 6 (precise, deep impact), fires three arrows/combat action, ignores <i>Armor</i>

Armor	Lacquered silk cuirass 4 (flexible)		
Defense	-5		
Toughness	10	Pain Threshold	5
Equipment	20 arrows, 3 herbal cures, 2 doses Elixir of Life		
Shadow	Green, shifting between bright and dark, like a swaying leaf on the lower branches of a tree (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: The autumn elves prefer to keep their distance, but can also use their bows in melee combat if need be, fighting back to back to avoid being flanked.

Developments

THE IDEA WITH this setting is of course that the development should largely be governed by the player characters' strategies and interactions with other people involved – factors which, in turn, may vary considerably depending on who the characters are and what they hope to achieve. The Game Master simply has to build on what he or she knows about the gaming group's characters, and prepare as much as possible for situations that might emerge as they take on the Black Pitch Mire – combat, negotiations, treasure hunts, or visits on corrupted islands.

Should your players have difficulty taking their own initiatives, it may be wise to let them be guided by one of the area's authority figures – most likely Odella or the ironsworn autumn elves. In general, the Game Master should expect the other inhabitants of the mire to move between the islands, and that they can therefore be used to start scenes or complicate the characters' activities.

Below are some suggestions regarding the scenario's negotiations and resolution. Apart from that, the Game Master must be perceptive and try to present the gaming group with interesting challenges. The important thing is that everyone is having fun!

ALLIANCES ARE FORMED

Regardless of why the characters have come to the Black Pitch Mire, they will sooner or later become involved in the conflicts surrounding the hibernating lindworm. The moment they make themselves known, the groups involved will see them either as a threat or as potential allies.

If the gaming group has access to *Karvosti – the Witch Hammer*, the rules for Scheming (see page 58) can be very helpful in making the social game both interesting and challenging. That way, the characters' previous relations with for instance Ordo

Magica and the Iron Pact will also affect the outcome of the negotiations. But if the gaming group prefers the scheming to be handled in summary, it can easily be conducted with unmodified [*Persuasive*–*Resolute*] tests, or without any die rolls whatsoever.

As a general guideline, it can be said that Odella and the autumn elves want the player characters on their side, while Golangarg would rather see them dead or join the ironsworn – the latter because an alliance between the player characters and the Ambrians could later mean that Odella would not have to negotiate with him at all. Ilfolusk and his people will probably be mere pawns in the game between the others, even if (with the player characters' assistance) they could actually free themselves of the liege troll's oppression.

THE SERPENT AWAKENS

It probably goes without saying that, eventually, Skaramagos will wake up. There are two main ways in which the Game Master can handle this dramatic event.

If the gaming group is mostly focused on exploration and scheming (rather than combat), it could happen when the player characters are not even around; perhaps they are in the middle of a negotiation or busy digging in some ruin when a mighty roar is suddenly heard from the island guarded by the Iron Pact. In this case, the awakening of Skaramagos becomes a turning point in the story, when the factions stop focusing on each other and instead try to win the drakworm's favor. The social playing field is changed, and soon the player character will also have to kneel before the lord of the bog, or ally themselves with the trolls or the goblins in an attempt to slay the tyrant.

But for gaming groups who enjoy combat, the awakening should probably be used differently – in conjunction with some ongoing confrontation between the defenders of the island and their attackers, perhaps after a few turns of battle. Should the player characters find themselves on the attacking side, they must choose between focusing on the snake or the ironsworn, and if they have joined the defenders, the newly awakened snake might very well attack everyone within reach, at least initially.

Regardless of how you and your gaming group decide to introduce the awakening of Skaramagos, he has the stats of a Drakworm, page 37 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*. The Game Master is of course free to adjust the serpent's capacity based on the player characters' abilities, but if so, we recommend a pause for reflection: Skaramagos is the Lord of the Bog, and his abilities, traits and other stats should definitely reflect his awesome power.

The Chasm of Erdugald

THE GREATEST DANGERS and most treacherous secrets of Davokar come not from the dark and trackless undergrowth or the twisted spires of ancient ruins, but from the unexpected and ever-changing features that seem to materialize from nothing and vanish without trace or warning. Any treasure-seeker worth their salt will never venture out lightly nor ill-prepared, and none will fall foul of the tricksters and charlatans who claim to have reliable maps to untold riches. The few landmarks that persist with certainty have been cleaned out of their easily accessible wealth. Those relics of ages past that have wealth to plunder have yet to be discovered or have only become accessible and may not stay open long. And occasionally, something more dangerous still will well up from the depths, offering the rarest of opportunities to those willing to risk their lives.

Introduction

DAVOKAR CONSUMES; DAVOKAR provides. For the common traveler that can mean both danger and the promise of plenty. Of the ruins in the great forest, that can mean the difference between absence or access, as is the case with Erdugald, which has lain beneath the loam and moss for a decade, a part of the trolling Underworld. Davokar never rests and quakes send ripples through the ground that force the darkness into the light.

A few months ago, a part of what was Erdugald re-emerged from the abyss. This place might have been part of an outpost or some distant branch of the Underworld, but the quake carried it to the surface in the depths of Davokar. The rise from beneath carried other stray structures with it, including the nest of the Spite.

The survivors continued, aware from centuries of experience that these things happen. The trolls

continued to study, to live, to discover – but the Spite had other plans. The parasites stalked the halls, using the infestation of Tricklesting to cover their activities. They preyed upon the cocooned, seeking the strongest host – killing some, nesting in others. The poison turned once studious and mature trolls to fits of rage unbecoming of their stature, no better than the starved and desperate kin who often stalked the surface.

Those not affected tried to do something about it, but the fury of the infected burned bright and the trolls realised the source of the ‘disease’ could as easily infect them. They could sense that their friends and associates were sick, but not lost...

And then one of the Spite found Ahaxrys, the Arch Troll. Once infected, all hell broke loose.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

Scholars and travellers who have come across the name of Erdugald disagree absolutely over the origin and identity of the individual, or indeed if it is a person at all. Could it perhaps be the name of a place, a claim of possession, or even a cryptic warning. Below are some suggestions on how the player characters might become involved in finding and delving into the truth of Erdugald – though discovery may still only reveal part of the story.

Erdugald the Grey

One story claims Erdugald was an early colonist, one of the very first who crossed the Titans from Alberetor, even before the Great War had poisoned the land. She might have been a spy or a member of the King’s expeditionary forces; whatever, Erdugald is said to have compiled dozens of reports and drafted many maps of her travels before meeting an untimely end in the depths of a rift within the dark woods, taking her journals with her to the grave.

The master of Thistle Hold or one of the Dukes of the northern regions would pay a handsome sum for the discovery of those journals, and an inebriated treasure-seeker recently returned from expedition claims to have uncovered Erdugald’s resting place in a virgin site on the edge of Dark Davokar.

Erdugald the Blight

Another cautionary tale states the Erdugald was, and still is, an elvish curse set upon a store of treasures lost within the depths of what was once a key outpost of the Symbarian Empire. This fortress survived the first great purge that laid waste to the greater bulk of the empire. As a result, the site became the target of a coordinated and brutal strike from forces that sealed and warded it for all time with an artefact of unprecedented potency.

The theurgical scholar Tello has uncovered evidence that part of the lost treasures included artefacts sacked from the Sun Temple. Tello believes the Word of Prios, a flame-colored gem the size of a human fist that is manifest of the essence of the god himself, lies within the bounds of a recently discovered ruin, said to bear the marks of the sun. The scholar has every reason to believe that the Elves will protect such a location, with force and magic, but the reward should the Word be uncovered would be significant for all involved.

Erdugald the Wise

A further account, of questionable authority, says that Erdugald references a site of mystical significance that predates any history that Ambrian scholars have found access to. It refers to a gateway of sorts that drills deep into the nether realms, an ancient abandoned cache, or simply forgotten one, filled with untold lore.

Ordo Magica in Thistle Hold has an open remit to encourage expeditions into Davokar to confirm or strike out rumours that consistently surface around the wealth of lore in the forest depths. Amongst the many shreds of lore, Erdugald remains an unfulfilled hope, the promise of knowledge that recalls a time from before any of the known peoples of this age.

The matter may surface through a contact in the Ordo Magica or as a job pulled from the pile by Mother Mehira that matches the talents the player characters have to offer. Reports of a recent quake in the depths of Davokar has raised interest in scouting of the virgin territory in pursuits of any artefacts or lost lore the site might offer. Return with something of value and standard contract rates apply.

Scholarly Survivor

When travelling through Davokar, the player characters come across Damaka – a troll that has collapsed, weak and delirious from lack of sustenance, looking like someone who has wandered aimlessly through the forest. While most would avoid a famished troll, Damaka wears an outfit of remarkable quality marked with strange glyphs and ornamentation.

With water and a morsel of food, he recovers his senses and a little of his strength. He pleads for help, explaining how he fears that a terrible fate has claimed his companions; a curse perhaps or some strange malady of the senses, something that warrants the involvement of someone with skills in mystical arts, herb lore, or medicine.

If all else fails, he needs help to rescue his companions and he can pay in gold. He wants to rescue them alive, as they are scholars not soldiers, their worth counted in their wealth of knowledge and expertise.

Qrdugald

IN THE DISTANT past, the part of the Underworld now exposed to the surface served as a foundry of rare arcane artifice. The trolls here sought to find a means to store their wealth of knowledge and lore, but not in a form recognizable to Ambrians. A great long-stepped tower dove deep into the earth with radial corridors leading off at regular and precise intervals. The exacting construction and location of the places created a perfect resonance within the foundry, that allowed the trolls to craft remarkable works of crystal. Within each, they stored a fragment of the catalogue of troll-song, each fork of exquisite crystal a personal record of ancient lore. Whatever talents of stone crafting built this place, they used materials and expertise that rendered the acoustics of the interior perfectly balanced. The artificers and scholars who worked within the foundry could create these records with absolute crystal clarity.

The trolls most recently residing here were seeking to revive access to the catalogue, each setting to a methodical record and cross-reference of all the material held therein. However, a great quake from below raised the entire structure, impaling it with and through others, both from above and below it. Many of the crystals have been lost; many of the learned trolls, too, lost their lives, or lost their way, in the great upheaval. And the careful crafting of the location itself became permanently disrupted.

What remains appears like a mess of styles and architecture, all surfaces riddled with cracks or skewered by shards of other structures, above or beneath. Vents and rifts in the walls reveal soft earth, searching roots, bottomless reaches, or gathering pools of blue-green water. No two surfaces appear at angles comfortable to the eye or the inner ear, such that movement through the passages and halls requires careful attention, whether to avoid rubbles or sudden drops, or simply to keep balance.

The massive disruption of the structure now also means the natural clarity of the place instead generates strange echoes and reverberations, every footstep setting off weird dissonance, each word a queer discord. Calls or cries for assistance or help do not necessarily carry the distance one would expect or end with an abrupt suddenness rather than echo.

STRANGLED GATEHOUSE

The natural flow and curve of the forest breaks suddenly with the appearance of a squared column of stone rising at an angle. The column consists of two complete levels, like a tower, the upper level narrower than the lower. The upper part sports a

Damaka, the Gatekeeper

"I would ask that you look past mere appearance and understand our plight..."

Under normal circumstances most would think twice before approaching Damaka, a Rage Troll of significant size, thick hide scored and criss-crossed with scars. However, Damaka has been into the Chasm beneath the Gatehouse, trying desperately to rescue those within and a mesh of faint scars to show for it. He suspects that the infection might be contained and controlled if the hive infection can be disrupted. Worse yet, he fears that he might have been responsible for the catastrophe that befell the outpost and that paranoia gnaws at him constantly.

Manner	Sad eyes, protective		
Race	Troll		
Resistance	Strong		
Traits	<i>Armored (I), Long-Lived, Natural Weapon (I), Night Perception, Regeneration (II), Robust (II)</i>		
Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 13 (−3), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 11 (−1), Quick 9 (+1), Resolute 10 (0), Strong 17 (−7), Vigilant 7 (+3)			
Abilities	<i>Artifact Crafting (adept), Berserker (adept), Blacksmith (novice), Exceptionally Strong (adept), Loremaster (adept), Natural Warrior (master), Ritualist (novice: False Shape)</i>		
Boons/ Burdens	<i>Archivist (I), Dark Secret, Nightmares</i>		
Weapons Accurate	Claws 10 (short), 2 attacks at the same target 10/7		
Armor	Troll skin 7 (regenerates 3 Toughness/turn, except damage from fire or acid)		
Defense	+8		
Toughness	17	Pain Threshold	9
Equipment	Writing materials, Meeting Stone, Spark Stone, weak antidote, heavy cloak, hand-crafted jewelry and trinkets (20 thaler)		
Shadow	Deep red with faint streaks of rust (corruption: 2)		

Tactics: In social interaction, Damaka will use a Meeting Stone, a trinket and a written note to attract interest with a proposal and a hint of wealth. In person, he will use False Shape initially to appear less threatening but will not hold off with the truth of his origins for too long, knowing that such trickery will not serve the needs of his people.

crown of flourishing trees bedded in layers of loose earth and undergrowth, from which hang copious roots that twist and bind around the lower level, almost drowning the pale stone surface in a web of green and brown. At the foot of the structure, a doorway, large enough to admit the largest of trolls, opens like a yawning maw, partially obstructed by hanging roots and chunks of splintered masonry, like giant's teeth.

A test of *Vigilant* (or experience with siege craft or castle defence) identifies points at the summit that suggest fortification, elements that might be used by archers. Anyone with at least Adept level in *Loremaster* or *Artifact Crafting*, identifies elements of more than one culture apparent in the stone work, utterly at odds with common sense. A test of *Cunning* by someone with *Bushcraft* or *Green Thumb* pinpoints the new growth of the twisted roots, as something like a reaction to the presence of the column. The tower has not been here long and may not remain long, either.

There are Elflings nearby, cautious of intruders, curious of the recently surfaced structure, but inexplicably and deeply afraid of what lies beneath. A late Summer Elf, Oranhai, leads the group. The gatehouse gives him strange feelings, setting his senses on edge like fingernails scraped down a blackboard.

The Elflings do not yet understand the true danger of the parasites that infest this part of the Underworld, particularly in relation to their species. Oranhai has set a watch on the Gatehouse awaiting the return of his companion, Thenak, and a small scouting team. They have been gone for a couple of hours.

The player characters have a 50-50 chance of finding an Early Summer Elf scout checking in at the Gatehouse. The Elf has orders to check the surroundings, make a brief survey of the interior, and then report back. Oranhai and a few others have spread out seeking alternate means of access into the Underworld, while others have gone to secure reinforcements. If the player characters draw attention to themselves, the scout will sound an alarm to draw the other Elflings back. When the player characters emerge from the depths, they may find Oranhai and the Elflings waiting for them, furious of the trespass.

WEeping STEPS

Inside the gatehouse, a hollow core reaches down into utter blackness. A stair curls both to the left and right from the door, one up, the other down. The left upward spiral rises into the second level of the structure, tree roots impaling the walls.

Moisture drips from these growths like a steady shower, coating the inner walls and cultivating a growth of fungus. Fine streams of light slice down from on high.

The location could provide a perfect point for an ambush, as the light offers illumination for the attacker but nothing like enough for those defending. Player characters engaged in these conditions attack and defend as if *Blind-fighting*, opening torches fizzing and sputtering in the steady shower of moisture. Magical light or a hooded lantern will help, though the lantern would need to be held high to cut through the gloom above.

An herbalist going up in the root skewered eaves of the building might find raw ingredients for an elixir or herbal concoction amongst the damp growth in here. Alchemists make any *Cunning* test here at +3.

The rightward spiral of the stairway sinks down; the steps run deep and wide, clearly crafted by and for creatures of trollish dimensions. A *Vigilant* test at -3 will pick out the queer lack of correct feedback as the structure gathers and stretches sounds in an odd way. Neither footsteps nor the patter of moisture echo and the effect, once perceived, sounds distinct and strange. Anyone rushing up or down the stair must make a *Quick* test at -1. And, yes, their strangled cry as they miss a step and fall will sound queer, too.

At the base of the stair, several dark passages lead away. Only one has a clear trail, presumably left by the Elfling scouting party. Any investigation of the other passages may lead to disappointment at a dead end, fruitless searching for a time, or a roll on the Trails of the Underworld table.

THE SUNDERED HALL

Between the Weeping Steps and here a fair distance of abandoned halls, musty passageways, and earth-caked chambers. The air smells like freshly dug dirt, heady and slightly sharp. The empty passages lead into a vast room with ruptured walls and shattered pillars, plant-life leaking through the cracks and floors leaning at odd angles.

Anyone determined to investigate these passageways should have an encounter, rolled on the Trails of the Underworld table.

The site's structural and audible oddities appear more noticeable here. The Sundered Hall gives the impression of a fractured mirror held up to an elegant vault, the floor and walls rippled and broken, with strange tides of marble and finely crafted stone. Moving through the corridors that surround the hall feels like navigating the twisting and broken shafts of a forgotten mine, with some

parts turned through 90 or 180 degrees, such that a treasure-seeker might find the wall beneath their feet or chequered and elaborate floors hanging above their heads.

The hall has elaborately crafted walls and majestic pillars rising into the gloom above. Roots and cobweb reach down from the darkness like rippling curtains, robbing the chamber of the true sense of scale. Thick cords of webbing may serve as makeshift bridges across the rifts in the floor, while in other parts thick roots dangle from out of the shadows like emaciated fingers. The Hall deadens sound, with shouts cut short and whispers all but lost.

Tiles of varying colour spill strange and scintillating patterns across the floor. Some ancient quake has ruptured the surface turning it into jagged and uneven waves interspersed with sinks and chasms in darkness.

Hundreds of stray cocoons scatter the chamber, around the walls and floor, like abandoned diaphanous statuary. A *Vigilant* test finds that while many of these cocoons lie torn and empty, some contain twisted and maltransformed corpses, with slashed flesh and throats ripped open. The damage looks intentional; some of the wounds look more like burns or bites, evidence of the many Tricklesting that have opted to make this ready larder their new underground home.

Travelling across the Hall demands some thought or consideration, as no surface sits quite right, and the weird baffling effect of the surroundings causes a natural imbalance of the senses. Whatever the plan, players roll tests at -3 and failure causes a fall that inflicts 1D6 damage.

Careful investigation halfway across the hall, with a *Vigilant* test, will find torn webbing and evidence of conflict, along with two Elfling corpses at the bottom of a hole in the floor.

Tricklesting make their nests in the hall, feeding upon the carrion that remains. Worse yet, the Sundered Hall provides the first opportunity to present the explorers with a Spite enraged troll. Skane will approach from behind them, emerging from amidst the cobwebs and roots, and requires a *Vigilant* test at +5 to notice. If unnoticed, the troll free attacks with *Advantage* before initiative kicks in.

Skane has blood smeared on his hands and face, as well as viscera spattered across his ragged clothing. Treat Skane as a Rage Troll, Famished (see the *Core Rulebook*, page 207).

The conflict with the troll demands a *Quick* test each turn just to remain upright on the uneven ground. Skane stumbles every even numbered

round. Anyone failing the test stumbles and fall to their knees or take a tumble, losing their Active Action for that turn.

A character taking the time to watching the troll and make a *Cunning* test can see evidence of sickness, a sheen of sweat, a discoloration of the flesh, and the distended sac beneath the chin. Only after killing or subduing the troll will the horrible truth become clear, the larvae sliding within the opaque sac between the oddly deformed wishbone of material driven through the neck. A character with *Beast Lore* of Adept or higher recognises the wishbone as the barb of a sting, though even a Master will struggle to associate the evidence to a known beast.

If left undisturbed, the larvae will continue to feed on the corpse. Use of fire or an antidote will eventually kill them.

THE SHEER

A passage set at an unnerving and steep angle, which once served as a vertical shaft driving deep into the trollish Underworld. Masses of fallen rock, masonry and loose earth fill gaps in the Sheer, which make it possible to traverse the angular route with pace, if not necessarily in absolute safety.

The whole shaft smells of damp earth, as if freshly dug, sweet and heavy in the lungs. Anyone close to the Sheer can always smell that tang of dirt getting stronger (removing any penalty on *Vigilant* tests to get back there).

At the upper entrance, beyond the Sundered Hall, the Sheer extends a short way upward, with an elaborate balcony rammed full of earth and roots. At this point, characters can see this was once an upright, circular shaft. Ten paces down shaft, fractures line the walls, the walls angling beneath that point. Every ten paces or so, the effect grows worse, the walls more skewed and the damage more obvious and dangerous. Beyond a hundred-and-fifty-meter mark, should anyone push on that far, the angle of the Sheer becomes vertical again, the balcony sections sheered off completely, dropping off into darkness.

Player characters entering the Sheer will notice the loose dirt shows signs of something dragged, with smears of blood spattered here and there. The trail impossibly leads down the ragged sides of the Sheer for more than a hundred paces, before disappearing into a rubble-strewn side passage. The descent seems to have been more like a controlled fall or bruising roll than a controlled descent. Player characters can use the roots and jutting masonry along with a standard length of rope to complete a controlled descent.

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Gatehouse

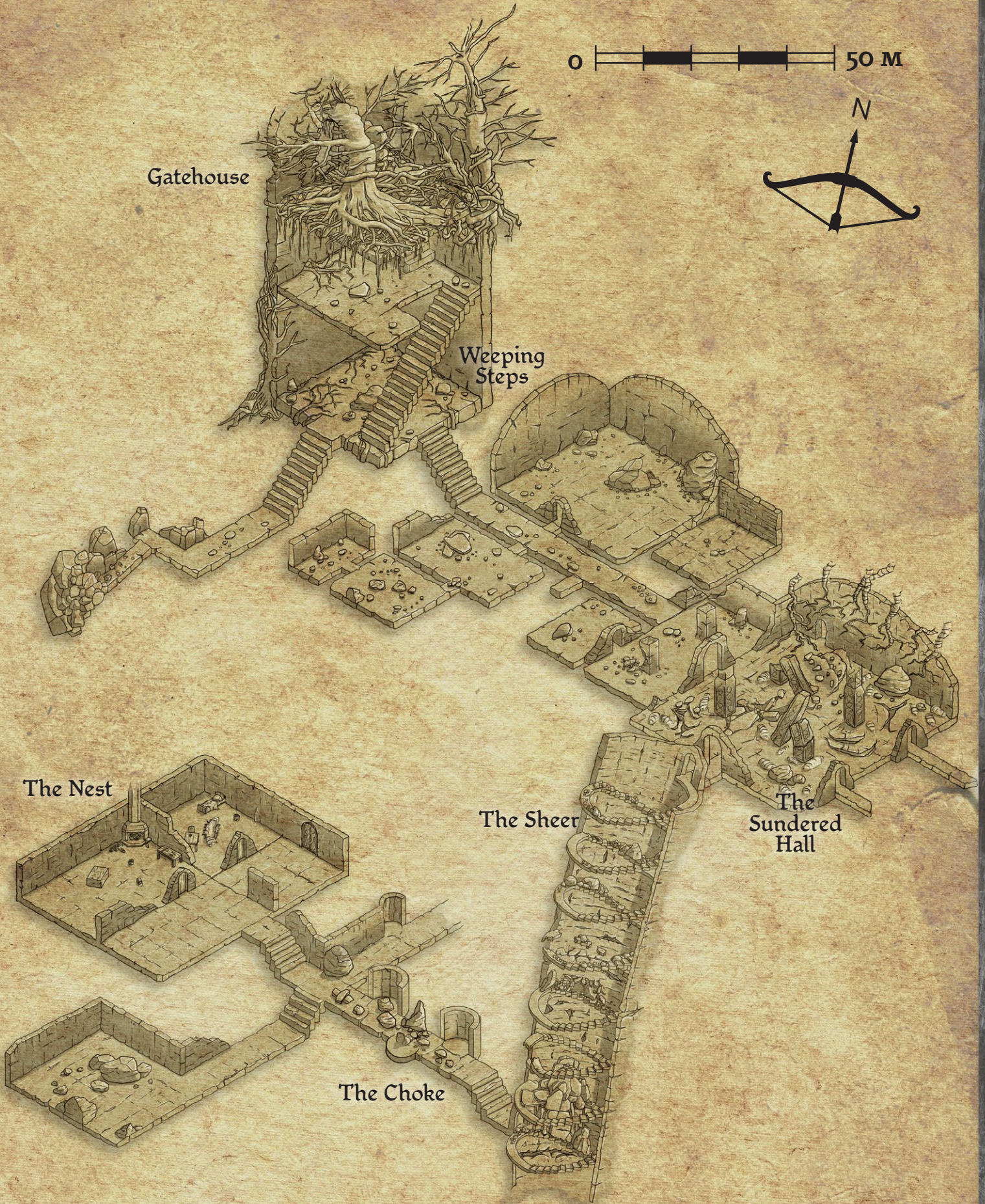
Weeping
Steps

The Nest

The Sheer

The
Sundered
Hall

The Choke



Trails in the Underworld

Here follow half a dozen suggestions regarding what the characters may encounter while investigating Erdugald. The Game Master can let chance decide (roll 1D6) or choose from the list depending on gaming style and preferences.

1. The Scout

A member of the Elfling scouting group, wounded but alive. She may react in self defense and panic, at first, firing off a warning shot; she had no expectation of rescue. She can tell the player characters that a massive and raging troll took Thenak and another Elfling prisoner. She can offer a herbal cure, should anyone need one; she has already used one upon her own wounds.

2. The Treasure Hunter

The corpse of an Ambrian treasure-seeker, perhaps a month old and chewed upon by vermin. The characters might find a curiosity, or perhaps a leading cryptic note, upon his person, as well as a serviceable one-handed sword.

3. The Spite Infected

An infected troll scholar trying desperately to shrug off the creeping psychosis caused by the Spite larvae inside him. He warns anyone approaching to stay away – in troll or broken sentences in a language they do understand – holding his hand out to ward them off. If administered with suitable medication – any antidote or some mystical power, perhaps – he will pass out from the pain, but ultimately survive. Otherwise, after two game minutes, he will attack with the same stats as the enraged troll in the Sundered Hall.

4. The Carcass

The carcass of a troll slumped face down in a pool of oily liquid and vomit, surrounded by several empty and broken bottles, flasks and phials. An *Alchemy* test (or simply a character with Master level in *Alchemy*) will identify the distinct odour of several familiar herbals and preparations used in the treatment of toxins, diseases and maladies of the gut. Likely, the frenzy to consume them all poisoned the troll. Any detailed investigation – turning the corpse over and inspecting closely, giving time for a quick ambush by some other creature of the Underworld – reveals the partially liquified and clearly dead larvae of the Spite parasite in the dead troll's neck.

5. Dragouls

A horde of Dragoul, recently emerged from the depths of the Sheer, feasting on a corpse – either a troll or an Elfling. The horde should number sufficient pestilential deadwalkers to challenge but not overwhelm the player characters.

6. The Chamber

A closed and secured door, which needs a *Strong* test at –3 to open – or some other suitable plan of approach to deal with the barricade set behind it. The sparse room beyond, which looks like the remains of a workshop, contains a lone troll corpse huddled in the corner, pale and cold to the touch. It would appear the troll died for lack of provisions. Its possessions contain a weak poison, a weak antidote, a ball of twine made from some form of hair, and a fork of clear crystal wrapped in a fold of cloth (worth 1D6 thaler, intact; at least twice that to a troll).

A *Vigilant* test or someone with *Pathfinder* notes a trail separate to the blooded one leading into one of the many side passages accessible, with difficulty, through the mess of rubble and debris choking the balcony. Should the player characters investigate, roll on the Trails in the Underworld table.

THE CHOKE

An elaborately decorated passage with troll-accessible alcoves a couple of meters deep. Each alcove has evenly spaced depressions that once contained the delicate crystal rods and forks. The quake shifted and splintered the hall and all the contents, scattering the floor with shards of knife-sharp crystal under loose rock, hunks of masonry and root-riddled earth. In places the passage narrows and twists, though never so tight that a troll (or ogre) couldn't squeeze through. In fact, a close inspection of the narrows finds fresh, wet blood in several places.

The quake undermined the structure of the passage here – and all the radiating corridors from the Sheer – such that player characters moving through the clutter risk the floor giving way beneath them or the weight of their passage dropping loose stone down from above. Have the players roll 1D10 for their characters – with any roll of one (1) indicating a drop and a two (2) indicating a collapse.

In either case, the character can make a *Quick* test to save themselves. If a drop, modify by –2 for each level in *Robust*; for a collapse, modify by +2 for each level in *Robust*. In either case, the character suffers five (5) damage on a failed test or two (2) damage on a success, minus *Armor*.

As the map suggests, narrow branch passages lead away from the Choke and if the Player Characters investigate them either roll or choose an option from the Trails in the Underworld table.

The nature of the passageway also makes this an ideal spot for an ambush by an enraged troll – or even an enraged Elfing from the missing scout party. If the party has already encountered the Dragoul and left some alive, they may also choose to use the Choke to their advantage.

THE NEST

A robust and mostly intact chamber furnished in the fashion of a home of sorts, with space to study, to rest and to prepare food. The smell suggests that whatever food might have been stored here went off some time ago. There are buckets of stale water, a couple of slender crystal ornaments on a desk, and the remains of a cocoon adhering to the wall. In the back wall, a great slab, with frame and elaborately carved lintel, suggest a door onward, but without any obvious means to open the way.

Just outside this door there is a long and narrow crack in the floor, through which the Spite has entered Erdugald. One way of stopping more of them from entering is to block this rift, with enough stones and gravel to make it impossible for the insects to get through. Of course, then they must clear out all intruders remaining inside the structure's many nooks and corners before Erdugald can be considered safe.

The task of closing the rift is made complicated by the fact that Ahaxrys calls the Nest his home. The characters will likely meet him here, unless they made enough noise in the Choke to draw attention to their approach, in which case he attacks them as they squeeze through one of the narrower sections of the passage.

Of all the trolls encountered so far Ahaxrys looks furthest along, his green-tinged black flesh distended horribly beneath the chin, like some abominable toad. Maggot-like larvae as thick as an ogre's finger squirm and wriggle between the stretched skin.

Ahaxrys, the Fury

"Raaaaaaaaaaaaaargh!"

Manner	Insane fury
Race	Troll
Resistance	Mighty
Traits	<i>Armored</i> (III), <i>Crushing Embrace</i> (III), <i>Long-Lived</i> , <i>Natural Weapon</i> (III), <i>Night Perception</i> , <i>Regeneration</i> (III), <i>Robust</i> (III)
Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 5 (+5), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 9 (+1), Quick 7 (+3), Resolute 13 (–3), Strong 18 (–8), Vigilant 10 (0)	
Abilities	<i>Alchemy</i> (master), <i>Berserker</i> (adept), <i>Exceptionally Strong</i> (master), <i>Exceptionally Resolute</i> (master), <i>Iron Fist</i> (master)
Burdens	<i>Bloodthirst</i> , <i>Nightmares</i>
Weapons Strong	Claws 16 (long)
Armor	Troll skin 10 (regenerates 4 per turn, except from fire or acid)
Defense	+9
Toughness	18 Pain Threshold 9
Equipment	None
Shadow	Bluish red, like the anoxic blood of the deepest veins (corruption: 0)

Tactics: Driven by rage and pain, Ahaxrys can only seek to feed, survive, and remain for as long as his parasitic offspring need him. A well-respected scholar once, somewhere deep inside Ahaxrys desperately seeks to wrestle back control.

The Cunning Value

Normally *Cunning* 13, the Spite have deprived Ahaxrys of his intellect, which will return once released of the influence with medical attention and a suitable antidote. Without help, he will dwindle to almost nothing before losing his life to the larvae inside him.

The Raven's Beak Massacre

THE HARSH DEMANDS OF TRAVEL through any stretch of wilderness mean that traders and caravan leaders alike constantly seek out new routes and opportunities to ease their passing. As much as the treasure-seeker might make their coin in the ruinous depths of dark Davokar, pathfinders furnish their existence through the mapping of practical and viable routes. Amid the mountains or the depths of the forest, the lead of a capable pathfinder can make all the difference; the prudence of securing a route while expensive at the outset can reap reward over the course of time. Alas, an inviolable route through any wilderness does not exist and rogue dangers persist. Despite the best guards, the swiftest transport, and the most thorough preparations, the curious current of events can quickly turn trade into tragedy. And worse still, there are dangers that even the greatest pathfinder cannot foretell or know how to avoid – especially where the facts fall silent.

Introduction

EAST OF MERGILE, in the territory of Mervidun, a rough but serviceable trail follows the northern shoreline of the Noora. Compared to the westward road, the trail appears like an afterthought – for who would care to travel away from Yndaros? Sparse trees across low hills to the north and the still waters to the south make travel a less stressed

and edgy process, though bandits make it their business to ravage caravans too complacent even to post a guard.

Hills quickly become low peaks, then snow-capped mountains as the trail cuts deeper into the Ravens. Occasional outposts, most little more than wooden dens or stone cabins, provide shelter along

the way – and rumor has it that dwarves crafted those stout structures that have weathered the passing years without failing. Compared to a night spent out in the open amidst the towering peaks, the chill wind cutting to the bone, a traveler welcomes any shelter, no matter how crude.

At the east end of the lake, before the trail divides – one continuing directly east toward the lands beyond the Ravens, the other angling south through the Fell Pass toward Küam Zamok, ancient fast of the dwarves – a scattering of ancient stones winds a breadcrumb trail, over considerable distance, to a ruin stood upon the water's edge. A tower rises a dozen paces tall, clad in stone with a green cast that glistens with dark seams and flecks.

The ground around the tower for many paces shows signs of other structures, long gone. The tower seems to have once sat at the center of a settlement or a fort. Or it might have been just a part of a larger structure, as sections of wall divide the land between mountain and lake. Odd stones show patches and blemishes that allude to fire or conflict.

A mountain peak looms to the south, the cap strangely twisted and bent, cracked and battered as if shattered by some ancient magic or struck by some impossible giant in a fit of rage. The odd shape has earned the landmark the moniker of the Beak. The eastern body of Lake Gile ripples cold and grey to the north, the surface twisting and distorting the peaks beyond the northern shore.

BACKGROUND

Something from the Yonderworld lingers in the fracture between realities beneath the shores of Lake Gile. Melok, a demon of great power, laid waste to the fortification and settlement that once stood guard over the pass before a cabal of Symbolists found a way to expel it. Now Melok has found a way to return. Like a loop of loose thread on a garment's hem, the entity kept picking and clawing, until the encounter when it finally got a hold of something. Melok could make a connection with strong negative emotions, the trauma of loss, defeat and similar. Desperate people seeking lost relatives, haunted veterans of the Great War, frightened travelers fleeing their shattered homesteads – each provided Melok with a little more strength and a firmer hold on the real world.

Beneath the surface of Lake Gile lies an ancient rock, once known as the Lock-stone. The stone lies at the heart of a maze of passages carved out in a time long forgotten. The presence of the Lock-stone has served as a barrier between worlds, established by practitioners of the Symbolist tradition in the

distant past; and, for the longest time, Melok has prodded and poked at this point seeking freedom.

Simple erosion of the stone has weakened the ward enough to allow Melok influence upon the world beyond. Now, Melok grazes upon the exquisite sustenance of people's nightmares and finds strength within the darkness, summoning creatures called Glimmers into the real world. Whenever travelers have passed, Melok has reached out for those plagued with negative emotions.

Most often, Melok uses the Glimmers to weaken the targets and once diminished it ensnares them. Lone travelers simply vanish, while those traveling in company walk away in the night or disappear in a midst of an ambush by the Glimmer. Melok feeds on the captured, building its strength, working toward the day it has harnessed enough power to pry open the rift between worlds and return.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

While the core problem at the eastern edge of Lake Giles lies with the machinations of the daemon Melok, the reason for venturing out this way is unlikely to center on it. Below are some suggestions on hooks and situations that may draw the players characters in to visit the Post – situations at a tangent within their own challenges and practical solutions. A further alternative to any of these would be for a player character to lose contact with a personal connection, colleague, mentor or loved one, someone with a strong tie who chose to head out across the Ravens.

Tainted Water

The door to the establishment frequented by the player characters swings open and a blood-drenched figure slops across the threshold, face streaked by gore and tears. Or at least that's how it seems in the first instant of the arrival. On closer inspection, the stain comes from discolored water, but the smell lingers somewhere between earth and blood, like wet rust.

She is Anora, a preacher of Prios (use the stats of a Black Cloak, page 214 in the *Core Rulebook*), and she went down to the Noora for her ablutions to find the river running red. She dived in to help someone, a local who lost their balance while stricken with fear. Now she feels certain that this is a bad omen and seeks aid and support – she plans to follow the Noora to the east and discover the truth of this sign.

The facts might well show that the source of the discoloration comes from a collapse in part of the clay mines along the southern shore of the Lake, east of the Noora; but, the evidence might suggest blood isn't far from the truth. Anora

wishes to uncover the source of the ill-omen and make certain to return to show that the Light of Prios prevails.

Glories of Old

The Guild of Engineers has been tasked by Duke Sesario with drawing up plans for a strengthening of the roads and martial support in Mervidun. Careless whispers would hint that the Duke seeks to make the domain not only the heart of commerce for Ambria but also a stronghold from which the whole nation might be governed, should anything ever happen to Yndaros. The Guild has tasked various engineers with the presentation of plans and projects, dividing the land into patches and slivers upon which each can focus.

The journeyman engineer Bergo found himself engaged along the southern shores of the Lake to the east of Mergile and set off in the company of section of soldiers departing for attachment in the east. He had found old maps, from the earliest scouting trips into Ambria, that hinted at ruins in the mountains and hoped to find something that might have the potential for reclamation. That was weeks ago, and nothing has been heard from him since; worse still, the local commander in Mergile can't account for the unit the engineer departed with. The Guild offers a reward for Bergo's return, while the commander offers a favor for anyone who can provide information on the unit he traveled with.

The section of soldiers fell to the Glimmers on the lake shore, all taken prisoners by Melok, and now amongst those in the cells or the channels. Bergo (use the stats of a Fortune Hunter, page 215 of the *Core Rulebook*) lost his mind during the attack and can be found wandering, babbling and incoherent. The experience itself might be enough for Melok to target the engineer himself, drawing him in to The Places Beneath.

Glimmer of Despair

Leria, the wife and business partner of an old merchant called Fortha, seeks willing parties to seek out her husband. He left Mergile a week ago and this morning a message arrived by homing pigeon. Leria fears for the wellbeing and sanity of her husband given the message, filled as it is with incoherent rambling, vague and oozing with dread.

*leria wife love hate
despair cage blood stone fear
dark ordeal loss*

Leria fears for the worst, not simply because of the nature of the message, but because while certainly his pigeon and signed in his name, this painful scrawl is not written in his hand. Something seems terribly wrong and Leria will pay for the safe return of her husband.

Raven's Beak

THE POST

The Post lies some 120 kilometers east of Mergile. A rectangular tower of stone, as tall as five Ambrians, with two levels inside and narrow windows that face north toward the lake on both floors. Arcing buttresses at the mid-level support stones that form the floor of the second level. A narrow slot in the floor and upper ceiling on the south side allows a small fire to be built and smoke channeled up and out without weakening the defenses.

A stone door, with an intricate hinge mechanism, swings inward with the means to wedge it closed – though never so thoroughly or completely as to make the inside inaccessible permanently. The crafters clearly intended the tower to serve as a shelter and a defense, but never to be permanently and irrevocably occupied.

A *Cunning* test notes that the external walls show evidence of points where the tower once adjoined to other structures. The grass around the base shows clear discoloration where passages and other walls

once stood – and a *Vigilant* test finds a stone stair littered with long grass and chunks of rubble, but showing clear sign of recent passage, whether from footprints in mud or broken grass stalks.

The composition and crafting of the rock within the structure of the Post works like a Banishing Seal against Abominations, as if cast at Master level with a *Resolute* 15. The effect radiates from the whole tower; broken elements will not retain the beneficial effect (i.e. a player character cannot take a stone from here and use the effect remotely). However, Symbolists can use a pouch of dust from the Post as the physical component to cast a *Banishing Seal* themselves.

STABLES

An open wooden lean-to that faces the back of the Post, intended to provide shelter to mounts and other animals. Animals will be safe here, from the elements and the Glimmer. The basic animal mind doesn't provide the same rich potential for

manipulation, unless they have suffered mistreatment or witnessed violent acts enacted upon others. If either case applies to the player character's animals, they will bolt at the earliest opportunity. Attempts to calm animals unnerved by the Glimmer should test as Hard (-3).

THE DISTANT TOWER

Stones and rubble lie scattered along the waterfront, occasionally presenting as a spine of crumbling rock or a shattered masonry pillar. About a half mile from the Post, at a bend in the trail, another tower remains, sturdy and intact. Physically, it matches the appearance of the Post, but the Distant Tower has a cellar and the interior has been fitted out for a degree of comfort and long-term use. On approach, player characters will smell fragrant firewood or the tantalizing odors of cooking meat around meal times. The ground around the tower has been cleared of any natural cover or debris to about fifty paces.

The robber leader Kenan and his band of followers have made this valley their own, tending to the track like a farmer tends to cattle. Not wanting to scare anyone away, Kenan often pretends to be a guard stationed here with a few others as an outpost of the Queen's territories. He wears the uniform and insignia of the Meravidun division of the Queen's Army.

A master of persuasion and a pillar of confidence amongst his followers, the strange presence around the shores of the lake both scares and excites him. In the past, Kenan and his band have preyed on travelers with sword and subterfuge, but in the past few months people have gone missing without explanation and left behind possessions for the taking. Unfortunately, the missing have included some of his own people, but that's a price Kenan willingly pays. It feels like the place has become haunted, but the potential presents too good an opportunity to pass up.

Kenan's allegiance has flexibility if the player characters can offer him enough to make it worth his while. As it stands, the robbers number three times the size of the player character group, with statistics per the Robbers and Robber Chief (*Core Rulebook*, page 211). The tower holds stores and gains from caravan raids in the cellar and sleeping arrangements on the upper floor. The Robbers have shillings instead of ortegs in their purses, while Kenan has thaler instead of shillings; the band have done well and often take the time to travel east, or back west to Mergile, to spend their ill-gotten gains.

As well as possessions and food, the cellar also has a post and manacles for holding prisoners and a barricaded iron-shod door that accesses the

tunnels beneath. This tower, like the Post, has a lean-to stable, but there's a 50-50 chance it's empty, with horses and robbers out on a patrol, as diligent members of the Queen's Army. They can provide convenient reinforcements if player characters start a fight or might not return if you feel the need to ramp up the tension and sense of danger.

MINE HEAD

Partially obscured by a collapse of rock and a growth of scrub, the entrance to the mine falls 50 paces east of the Post. Long disuse means many tunnels have collapsed, flooded or become unsafe. A *Cunning* test identifies the tunnels as part of a clay pit, the likely source the building materials of the ruined keep.

The lower flooded levels of the mine provide a means of access into the caves beneath Lake Gile, but while unprotected this route easily represents one of the most dangerous approaches. Anyone attempting to navigate the flooded tunnels would need to be no larger than average Human size, unarmored, and would need to make three successful *Strong* tests to hold their breath long enough to get through to open air unharmed – otherwise, they get in but suffer 3 points of *Toughness* damage per failed test, which armor will not prevent.

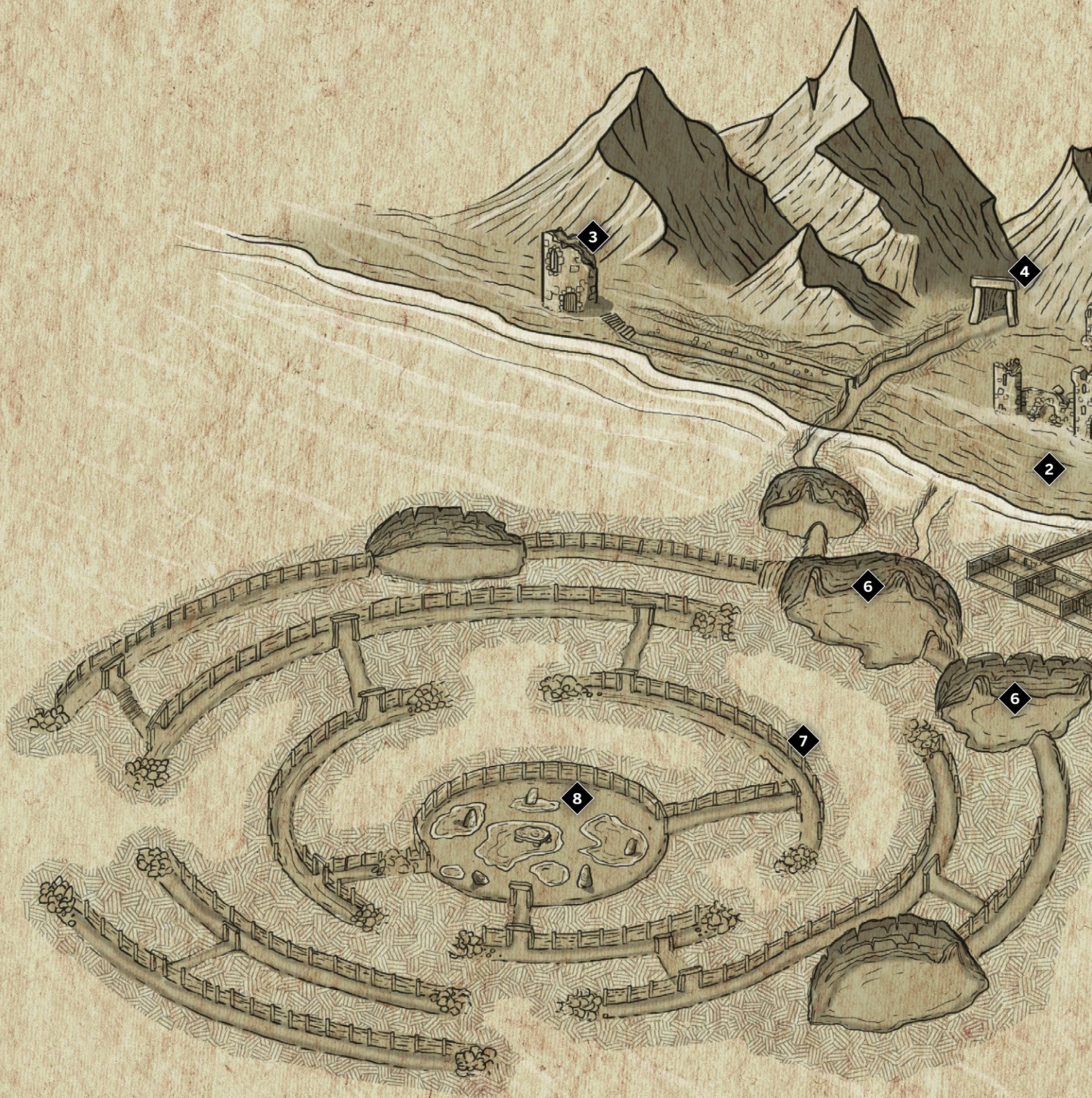
THE STAIR AND THE CELLS

Searching the ruins and rubble piles around the Post finds a stone stair, littered with tall grass, weeds and debris, leading down to a passage of restrictive dimensions, ribbed with slender stone supports and floored with packed earth. While ogres and trolls can fit down this way, all tests for activities requiring rapid movement suffer from the disadvantage of a second roll, always taking the worst result.

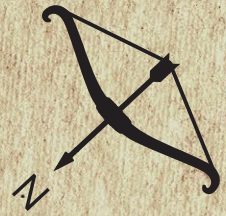
The floor of the passage becomes increasingly like slurry, water dripping down the walls. Strange echoes carry along the tunnels, sounds like the conversation or cries of distant voices raised in alarm or heated exchange.

The passage adjoins rooms, side tunnels, stairs and shafts, a labyrinth that requires focus and concentration to avoid injury. The player character with the lowest *Resolute* should make a test to avoid a 1D4 *Toughness* injury – armor protects at half the value rolled (round down), because the knocks and injuries are many and varied.

The passageways spread all the way along the shorefront across multiple levels, accessed via sloped tunnels, stairs and channels once serviced by ladders. If the player characters have visited the Distant Tower, the door in the basement also accesses this labyrinthine area.



0 100 M



- RAVEN'S BEAK**
1. Massacred Caravan
 2. The Post
 3. Robbers' Tower
 4. Mine Head
 5. Guard Tower
 6. Submerged Cave
 7. Lightless Channels
 8. Cave of the Lock-stone

Beneath the Keep

1. A nest of Tricklesting (see page 219 in the *Core Rulebook*) in a room containing a dozen small cocoons full of the decomposing remains of vermin, most sucked dry of their inner nutrients. Anyone searching the room will find (roll 1D6): 1 A silver belt buckle, 2 A battered flagon with a lindworm motif, 3 A clay figurine of a proud dwarf warrior, 4 A gold brooch depicting two elf-like figures grappling, 5 A Spore Bomb, 6 A purse containing 1D6 thin gold coins of questionable origin.

2. 1D4 robbers from Kenan's group patrolling the corridors. They attempt to escape and warn Kenan of the player characters presence, if not known already. They fight to take advantage of the narrow tunnels. They have sufficient natural cunning to not reveal where they come from, using the story that they're part of a mission from Mergile to restore and reclaim the fortification.

3. A Kanaran strikes from the darkness, out of a flooded side-tunnel, or from amongst the debris in a cluttered room.

4. A Glimmer blossoms from the shadows, claiming surprise if the most *Vigilant* member of the player character party fails a Hard (-3) test.

5. Old food store, now thick with mold and fungal growths. Anyone investigating must make a Hard (-3) *Quick* test to avoid the equivalent of a Spore Bomb attack.

6. Wine passage with a multitude of vinegary alcoves holding corked or shattered bottles, much of the glass in shards on the floor. Sticking around and making a thorough search finds a bottle of wine worth 10 thaler to a collector or connoisseur but demands to successful Hard (-3) *Discreet* test to

avoiding attracting attention. Roll 1D4 on this table to find out the type of attention attracted.

7. Twisting funnel of passages containing Moderate Mechanical Traps (1D10 damage) intended to catch unsuspecting trespassers and requiring a Demanding (-1) *Vigilant* test to avoid and a Hard (-3) *Cunning* test to disarm.

8. Collapsed passage or room, requiring that the player characters double-back on their route to find an alternative way. Inspecting the collapse requires a normal *Accurate* test to avoid accidentally bringing more of the walls or ceiling down on the character; failure inflicts 1D6 damage from falling stones (adjusted for armor), while success finds an interesting curiosity (roll on the Curiosities table in *Adventure Pack 1* or use the choices in the Tricklesting entry).

9. Cells (1D4 of them) containing prisoners of Melok. Once past the unlocked door of a cell, the player characters find the prisoners alive but malnourished and unresponsive. They stink of sweat and ordure, and blood trickles from between the lips. Inspection by a player character with *Medicus* identifies livid bruises and the suggestion of internal injury, which appears quite fresh. They also appear to have many old injuries and scars, suggesting they have all served time as soldiers, mercenaries or similar martial pursuits. They're kept unconscious by Melok's influence and in thrall to the dreams created by the Glimmers. If carried back to the Post or subject to a *Break Link* ritual, they recover consciousness long enough to recount they were traveling along the shoreline of the Lake when something overcame their senses. Since then, they have been trapped in a living nightmare, prisoners inside their own heads.

10. (or higher) Access to the Submerged Cave.

You can use the entries from Table 1 to engage the characters in encounters while they search the passages or roll randomly. If the latter, roll 1D8 and adjust by a cumulative +1 after every roll. If the player characters have a useful Boon, Ability or Mystical Power, adjust by an additional +1 after the first roll.

SUBMERGED CAVE

An air trap cavern, accessible from the lake (by swimming), the passages accessed from the Stair, or by diving through the flooded tunnels of the clay pit via the Mine head. Stalagmites pierce upward from thigh deep water that fills two-thirds of the floor, while stalactites hang from above like blood-soaked fangs. Characters wading in the pool cannot see anything beneath the surface, the water opaque from the crimson sediment. Singing Eels live in the pools subsisting on vermin that, like the player characters, cannot see their approach in the cold and cloudy pool.

THE LIGHTLESS CHANNELS

A shaft leads down a dozen yards and then slopes northward into a circular maze of interconnecting stone passages beneath the lake. Cool and dry, the channels curve gently and anyone with *Loremaster* or a heritage in the craft of a mason can tell that much time and effort went into creating these passages. Even lightless, the relatively smooth floor makes travel, at a reasonable pace, safe. With a light source, those walking the channel can see patterns of concentric circles, lines and other symbols carved into every single surface.

An Adept or Master *Loremaster* will not understand the patterns as a language but can confirm that these are not the signs of elves, trolls or the Symbaroum Empire. However, a Master *Loremaster* might discern certain commonality with runic works by Symbaroum's sorcerers on theories of other planes of existence. Equally, a practitioner of the Symbolist tradition will recognize forms and shapes.

As the player characters traverse the channels, the cool air becomes cold and all should make a *Resolute* test. Anyone who fails feels a pervasive presence poking at the outer edges of their mind and experiences flashes of violent personal memories.

This is Melok seeking out fresh anchors to establish a beachhead in the player character's world. It's possible that any of the player characters who have experienced events more traumatic than Fortha will be of interest to the daemon.

The twisting passages present a maze of curving passageways, open caverns, and occasional dead ends. Connecting tunnels and passages display the

same patterns and characters as the channels. Here and there, hunkered down and almost invisible in the shadows, the characters will find more prisoners of Melok, all in a desperate state. They all appear malnourished and catatonic, unresponsive even with medical attention. Some mutter half-intelligible oaths or brief mumbled words, their eyes darting back and forth behind closed lids.

LOCK AND QUAY

As the player characters reach the end of the channel they feel the temperature drop and hear the rhythmic dripping of water. The channel terminates in a cavern, roughly circular, with a shallow pool of opaque water on the ground fed by an irregular cascade of dripping water from above. A couple of hairline cracks, in the center of the ceiling, allow the slow passage of water from the lake above.

Several flat stones stand proud of the surface of the expanding pool, each elaborately carved with the same circle and line patterns. At the very center of the chamber, a larger stone, balanced like a table on a couple of smaller rocks, has a simple pattern of three whorls side-by-side, spanned by a line that expands beyond either side. It appears like a small fragment of a chain, the whorls the links.

The water dripping from above strikes this central stone and, on inspection, anyone can see that the steady stream has left the surface pitted, breaking a vertical line between the second and third whorl.

The chamber has an unnatural stillness about it and any character with an *Accurate* below 9 will experience a sensation of mild vertigo within the space. After entering the chamber, a character suffering this effect must make a *Resolute* test to perform any Active Action until the end of the Scene or they exit the Lightless Channels, whichever comes sooner.

The symbols on the stones match those seen in the Lightless Channels. The damage could be repaired easily if the player characters have clay with them or go back to fetch some. A combined *Strong* of 50 would suffice to slide the whole upper stone from its supports and out of the stream of water, an action that would not disrupt the ward generated by the symbols.

Any attempt to destroy the stone or deface it further will compound the current problem and the Game Master can freely take such acts as an opportunity to throw a few Intruder Daemons at the player characters (see page 173 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*). The group might escape the location, but they will have set in progress a far greater and immediate threat to Ambria.

Incidents

WHATEVER HOOK DRAWS the player characters in, they find themselves set with a trip to the east, along the Noora into the heart of the Raven Mountains. They will find that while several trade caravans head east, most take routes further north to cross the mountains, while others only visit local settlements on this side of the Ravens, supplying the workers in lumber and quarrying.

Beyond Mergile the weather turns, and the temperature drops noticeably (whatever the time of year). A day beyond Mergile, the state of the road deteriorates with a persistent fine rain. The trail becomes muddy and potholed, slowing progress as the peaks of the Ravens rise all around.

The player characters encounter local traffic in the first half of the journey, with the inhabitants of a small settlement in the foothills searching for wood or hunting for food, but nothing much once they enter the midst of the mountains proper. There are many other routes across the mountains, most further north, so the player characters will find few travelers approaching from the east.

THE LAST POST

Within a kilometer of the Post, the player characters see wreckage on the trail. What looks like the remains of several carts litter the ground, as well as several bodies, all Ambrian. The remains have already been picked over by carrion birds and predators making it tough to identify any of the dead. Predators might remain at the site when the player characters arrive and in numbers could be protective enough of their food to make a half-hearted fight before fleeing.

A simple test against *Vigilant*, or anyone with *Medicus*, can ascertain that all the bodies have been torn and blooded after death. None of the corpses show any signs of injury inflicted with a weapon, just the desecration of the predators that soon followed their demise.

A character with *Tactician*, experience as a Hunter, or a history of time spent on the battlefield can make a *Cunning* test to realize that the ground shows no signs of conflict, more of panic or flight. The footprints appear muddled and loop back upon themselves, as if the travelers had become gripped by confusion or hysteria (the attacker was a Glimmer, page 42 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*).

In the distance, the player characters can see the squat tower of the Post and a few clear trails fleeing the field of battle in that direction. Heading toward the Post, the going becomes muddier and a successful test against *Vigilant* reveals the mess of stones that suggest the remains of some ancient, abandoned structure.

SURPRISE AND SANCTUARY

About 50 meters from the Post, streams of sunlight dance off the surface of the lake, as if cutting through the cloud, catching the eyes of the characters – but there is no break in the cloud. The Glimmer has emerged, drawn by the presence of the travelers, frustrated by the inability to reach those hiding within the Post.

Fighting the Glimmer feels like striking out at many enemies while facing into the blinding light of the sun, things only half seen snatching and striking. The presence of the abomination invokes an inexplicable sense of dread.

If someone runs for the Post, the door will open at the last moment of approach and no sooner. Within the tower, the player characters will find a scene of squalor and despair, a dozen desperate and weakened survivors of the caravan, all suffering from dehydration for lack of water. Half of them are asleep, too tired to do anything else.

The most vital and vocal are Birtas, a barbarian warrior, and Aranja, a preacher. Birtas feels certain that their assailant is an abomination, a creature of corruption, and that there must be a source that can be stemmed or destroyed. Aranja fears that the avenging light has come as a manifestation of the ill-will of Prios toward the faithless. Both explain that members of the caravan they journeyed with have disappeared, vanished during the attack that assaulted their caravan or walked off during the night. Among the lost are, of course, any individual that the characters may have come looking for, for instance Bergo or Fortha.

Before exploring further, the travelers will welcome the sharing of supplies, the acquisition or offering of clean water, and any offer of healing assistance. With any attempt to revive the occupants of the Post, the player characters may get assistance from those travelers who have remained conscious, including the three named caravan members. Otherwise they will struggle, weak from their forced imprisonment. The players can make use of the named characters as assistance, but without supplies they make all tests with a second chance to fail.

DEVELOPMENTS

What happens at the location is solely up to the players and their characters, partly depending on why they are there. If they have come in search for someone missing, they will of course have good reasons to contact the robbers (the people hiding in the Post have seen them from afar and believe they have a camp site somewhere in the vicinity) and find their way to the places beneath. Should they arrive for some other reason, they must decide

for themselves if solving the situation is in their interest – helping those in need, battling corruption and/or making a name for themselves might be reason enough for some; others might be motivated by the information that Duke Sesario is willing to pay handsomely for securing and strengthening of the roads through the Ravens.

While moving around, the threat of the Glimmer is always present – even if they always show up one at a time, the number of Glimmers haunting the area are precisely as many as the Game Master needs them to be. However, the Game Master should be mindful not to overuse this threat. Keeping the characters on their toes by now and again having them notice the gleam of light from a piece of metal or glass is a good thing, but between the first encounter and the climax of the adventure further confrontations with the abomination should not be more than a couple – and always possible to retreat from. Our suggestion is that the Glimmer emerges if/when the characters find themselves in a heated discussion with Kenan and his band.

The robbers are meant to function as a complicating factor. The leader balances between being thankful and absolutely terrified of the Glimmer. If the characters admit that they aim to find a way to rid the area of the murderous blight beast, Kenan's first impulse will be to try and stop them, threatening to kill them if they don't leave the area at once. Very good arguments or promises of a hefty reward may change his mind, and possibly even convince him to lend a helping hand. But chances are that he is only pretending to help, hoping to lure the characters to an encounter which will leave them dead, and all their belongings for him to salvage.

Whatever the characters decide to do, make sure they feel haunted and unsafe while they are exploring the location – from the moment they discover the massacred caravan, until they reach the center of the Lightless Channels!

OLD WOUNDS, FRESH SCARS

When close to the Lock-stone, the player characters find themselves exposed to a place between worlds, fueled by their own nightmares. The slosh of water and the pitter-patter of droplets resolves into the clash of distant steel and the trudge of exhausted soldiers. No longer in the underground cavern, they are standing on a twilight battlefield.

The characters find themselves in the middle of the most savage encounter of their recent adventures, whatever experience tested them most, especially if that battle resulted in serious injury or the loss of a companion. The nightmare reruns the same battle, set against an eerie recreation of the same conditions,

but filled with the sense of foreboding and horror that comes from knowing the outcome. If a character has a tragic loss buried in the background, that too could be a prime target for Melok to exploit.

If the characters have not experienced any such defeats, they find themselves in nightmares of another, like Fortha – waging war on the battlefields of Alberetor against the Dark Lords – or Birtas – battling abominations in the shadows of Davokar. Whatever the nature of the encounter, the challenge should be increased by the presence of Melok itself – a fragment of the daemon's manifest power that pushes on the tattered fringes of the real world.

If the characters have convinced any of the non-player characters to join them in their search of the tunnels beneath the lake, they may assist them on the battlefield. The Game Master should play on the fears of the player characters, knowing that this battle went badly before. If the battle comes from the memories of a non-player character, play upon what knowledge the player characters have of The Great War or the horrors experienced in the face of rampaging abominations. The experience should be as much an opportunity for narrative conflicts as one for straight combat with a sword and shield.

In mechanical terms, the specifics of the conflict depend on the experience level of the player characters, but to use the terms laid down in the *Balanced Combat Resistance* guide, this should be a Hard Combat. A fair assumption should make the fragment of Melok at least a *Strong* opponent, with the other antagonists of the nightmare filling out the numbers to make up the challenge accordingly. If Melok were truly present, it would be a *Legendary* opponent; this manifestation within the nightmare world is simply a reflection or echo of that greater power. Use the stats of a Lindworm (page 223 of the *Core Rulebook*) or the Scornor (page 90 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*).

Defeating the nightmare – and most importantly Melok – drives its reach back into the Yonderworld. In the shared dream-like experience this should manifest as Melok's form being sucked through a dark gash floating in the air. The gash oozes and bubbles with black corruption, then knits shut – preceded by a scream of despair from Melok. The Lock-stone manifests this closure as an uneven black scab filling the hole in the surface. The Glimmers will vanish; the prisoners will regain their senses, but require assistance, support and sustenance in short order to recover.

CLOSING THE DOOR

While the actions of the characters in the nightmare confrontation drive Melok back, the daemon continues

to persist on the periphery of the Yonderworld. Melok pokes and prods at the schism between the worlds and starts over, infecting the nightmares of passing travelers to restore the bridge across the divide.

The only way the characters can stop Melok from exploiting the weakness in the reality is in repair of the eroded Lock-stone in the chamber beneath the lake. This act represents no simple deed, as the powers that created the Lock-stone have long since passed. The nearest equivalent would be for a master artisan to prepare clay from the nearby mine with *Artifact Crafting*. The casting of a master level *Anathema* within a *Spell Trap* ritual will

prepare the rarefied clay as raw material to repair the pattern. Working the clay into the Lock-stone as part of a *Sealing Rite* would sever the link and close the way for Melok through this path.

Of course, seeking to bar Melok permanently may draw the attention of Demonologists who seek to harness the daemon's might or worship it as a root to eternal life and power. These schemes will find their root within inexplicable dreams, sent by the daemon itself and fulfilled only for so long as needs must to complete an escape from the Yonderworld. How such a chain of events develops is up for the Game Master to decide.

Non-Player Characters

Birtas, Vajvod pathfinder

"Every dawn brings both sadness and celebration."

The sole survivor from amongst his siblings, after an abomination laid waste to his tribe, Birtas of Clan Vajvod vowed to cleanse the land of all corruption. His skill with his father's double-axe and keen senses have made him invaluable as a guide and a sellsword, most recently engaged on retainer by Fortha.

Despite his stern exterior, Birtas has a confused and troubled mind, haunted by the loss of his family. He believes that he can still speak with his father through the double-axe that he carries, and his father carried for many long years before. When asleep, he argues with unheard voices, pleading forgiveness for his failure to save his family and his tribe – something not hard to understand given that Birtas must have been a child at the time, but he cannot forgive himself.

Birtas finds matters of the spirit world fascinating and would give up everything to reach out to his family. If he could find some way to fight that battle again, he would pursue it doggedly. It's possible that the Lock-stone would be something that might give him such power, though whether that means protecting or destroying it likely won't be clear to the barbarian.

Long-limbed and athletic, Birtas has a short mop of orange hair and features bunched up in a constant scowl. Birtas survival bothers his sense of worth and honor, feeling that, somehow, he let his tribe down; now, he acts as if each new gathering of travelers he guards were his family to keep.

Note that Birtas's *Nightmares* and *Soulmate* are linked, as the troubled barbarian continues to hear the words of his father, Gand.

Manner	Scowling, keen to assist
Race	Human (barbarian)
Resistance	Challenging
Traits	Bushcraft
Accurate 7 (+3), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 11 (–1), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 10 (0), Resolute 9 (+1), Strong 15 (–5), Vigilant 13 (–3)	
Abilities	<i>Cheap Shot</i> (novice), <i>Iron Fist</i> (novice), <i>Man-at-arms</i> (novice), <i>Steel Throw</i> (novice), <i>Two-handed Force</i> (adept)
Boons/Burdens	<i>Code of Honor</i> , <i>Nightmares</i> , <i>Pathfinder</i> , <i>Soulmate</i>
Weapons Strong	Double-axe 7 (deep impact), throwing spear 4, cheap shot 3
Armor	Laminated Armor 5 (reinforced)
Defense	0
Toughness	15
Pain Threshold	8
Equipment	Hunting traps, 2 Precise throwing spears, father's double-axe Rib Cleaver, 5 thaler
Shadow	Green as sun-dappled underbrush (corruption: 0)
Tactics: Birtas will let loose a throwing spear first and then barrel in to skirmish, relying on the savage bite of Rib Cleaver. He mutters words that sound like prayers during battle. He keeps an intense and intimidating eye contact with his enemy, something prone to unnerve any but the most robust of civilized opponents.	

Fortha, aging merchant

Fortha has been a trader since the time of King Ynedar and the life on the road has always suited his temperament. He loves his wife and extended family dearly, trusting his three daughters to handle his business while he travels, but he rarely

stays home for long and rejoices in the open air and fresh trails. Perhaps, thirty years younger, Fortha would have been a daring treasure-seeker; here and now, he clings vigorously to the trailing threads of his youth, though some mornings treat him better than others. Melok found the old warrior an easy target and his body now lies insensate in the chamber of the Lock and Quay.

White-haired and well-tanned, Fortha sports a waxed mustache and a braided beard. Sinewy to a point where he seems to have no excess fat to burn, Fortha nevertheless seems a wellspring of energy. An elderly man, he has good days and bad, but if backed against a wall or faced with a certain end, he will always take up his blade.

Use the stats of a Cult Follower (page 211 in the *Core Rulebook*), with the addition that Fortha has the Burden of *Elderly*. If he fails in his first test, he suffers a -1 on all tests for the remainder of that scene.

Aranja, gloomy missionary

"All I ask of you is to believe!"

Aranja appears to be one of the faithful of the Lawgiver, zealous in her belief and focused on spreading the Light. Once a potter, eking out a meagre existence on the north-eastern edge of the Southern Artisans' Quarter in Yndaros, Aranja had an epiphany. She struck her head while moving stock from storage and didn't wake for a week. Upon recovery, Aranja explained, in confidence, that she had been lost in darkness until she spied a distant light. She felt certain of what that light meant and that understanding transformed her.

Or so she says. In fact, while she recites the story with ease and accuracy, it isn't remotely true. Aranja has good reason to be part of this caravan and her eyes on a prize greater than the rescue of a few misbegotten souls. Aranja has been hired to investigate accusations by the Queen's Army that Fortha is a deserter and collaborator with "the enemy", smuggling contraband and information across the Ravens to a contact of the beleaguered power to the east. His association with the likes of Birtas simply compounds these suspicions, given the chaotic beliefs of the Vajvod clan influenced by those who dwell beyond the mountains.

Manner	Soft spoken, constant frown
Race	Human (Ambrian)
Resistance	Challenging
Traits	Contacts (Ambrian Army)

Accurate 5 (+5), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Discreet** 10 (0), **Persuasive** 13 (-3), **Quick** 15 (-5), **Resolute** 10 (0), **Strong** 7 (+3), **Vigilant** 11 (-1)

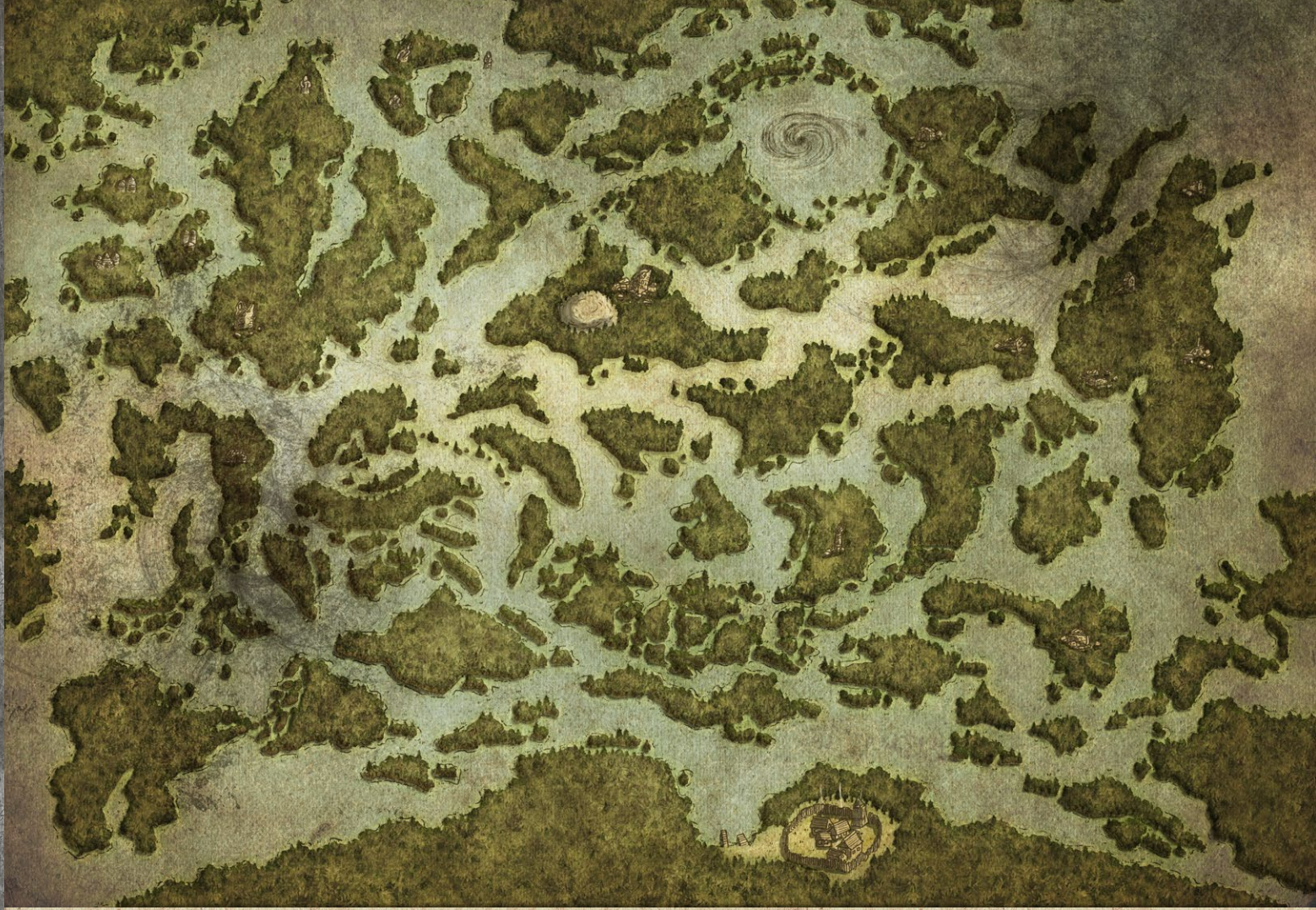
Abilities	<i>Acrobatics</i> (novice), <i>Knife Play</i> (master), <i>Man-at-arms</i> (novice), <i>Steadfast</i> (novice)		
Boons/ Burdens	<i>Con Artist</i> (I), <i>Manipulator</i> (I)		
Weapons Quick	Butcher's Bite 3 (blood-letting, concealed, short)		
Armor	Supple leather vest 3 (flexible)		
Defense	−5		
Toughness	10	Pain Threshold	4
Equipment	Poison Candle, Strong Antidote		
Shadow	Bruised copper (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: Aranja will always seek the best position and strike unexpectedly, bypassing the efforts of her enemy to do the same to her with a quick sidestep or sudden dive. Once fully engaged in combat, the whole appearance of Aranja the missionary seems to melt away and it becomes clear that she probably spent her time fighting in the alleyways of Yndaros rather than hawking pottery from them.

SINGING EEL

Race	Amphibian (beast)		
Resistance	Challenging		
Traits	<i>Amphibian, Armored (I), Blood-lust (I), Natural Weapon (II), Night Perception, Sturdy (I)</i>		
Accurate 11 (−1), Cunning 5 (+5), Discreet 15 (−5), Persuasive 7 (+3), Quick 9 (+1), Resolute 13 (−3), Strong 10 (0), Vigilant 10 (0)			
Abilities	<i>Opportunist (novice)</i>		
Weapons Accurate	Snapping bite 4		
Armor	Rubbery hide 2		
Defense	+1		
Toughness	15	Pain Threshold	5
Shadow	Pale green like pond slime (corruption: 0)		

Tactics: Singing Eels make best use of darkness and the element of surprise to catch their prey off guard. Most vermin have comparable vision in darkness to the Eels, but player characters likely won't, so the beasts will make those carrying torches early targets. Once darkness returns, they continue to strike while their prey panics; the only evidence of their presence is a warbling, airy 'song' they make as they circle the waters and which reverberates around the chamber.









HIS SCENARIO COLLECTION consists of three limited adventure landscapes involving creatures from the Symbaroum Monster Codex. They are sites located in the wilderness, plagued by conflicts between two or more factions which are closing in on the decisive moment. The player

characters may arrive at these areas for various reasons, or even by chance, but no matter how and why they get there it will not be long before they are involved in the conflicts.

The first two locations can be found in the depths of Davokar while the third is in one of the southern vales of the Ravens. Of course, the Game Master is welcome to place the scenarios at some other locations in the Davokar region; nothing is ever more important than the gaming group making the necessary adjustments to make the experience of playing as thrilling, entertaining and memorable as possible!