

# THE DEAD OF WINTER

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## Survival of the fittest

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“The Dead of Winter” is a 3rd Edition D&D® adventure for four 2nd-level characters. The adventure takes place in the northern foothills of the land of Corum, a largely untamed and rugged area. In addition to basic background information about Corum, this module includes a detailed sketch of the frontier town of Cador and its immediate surroundings. DMs can easily incorporate Cador into their own campaign world, using the town and its local geography as the focal point for future adventures, or they can simply genericize the entire adventure, replacing the names and geographical locations with ones consistent with their own campaign worlds.

Although this adventure includes traditional “dungeon” exploration, much of it occurs in the winter-blasted foothills of Corum. As such, adventuring parties geared toward wilderness exploration—especially those groups containing rangers or druids—might fare better in the challenging wilderness of Corum.

### About Corum

Corum is an ancient realm, both rugged and unforgiving. Its landscape, a wild sprawl of treacherous geographical features, has resisted centuries of civilization. Steep mountains and hills cover most of the countryside, broken up only by dark forests, dank, unforgiving bogs, and windswept plains. From the jagged heights of the Thorcrist Mountains to the mysterious depths of the Aelderthorn, Corum’s untamed sites belong to an elder age, when powers both beneficent and malign walked the earth.

However, humans, humanoids, and other creatures refuse to relinquish their hold upon the land, and Corum’s inhabitants struggle constantly to build communities for themselves. After centuries of taming, though, the land still resists the influx of civilization. Humans have spread across much of the southern and eastern portions of the continent, and within the last two centuries they have even entrenched themselves along the wildest area of Corum—the Tarn Foothills.

The humans have organized themselves in many small and mid-sized principalities ruled by Lords. In contrast to the leaders of other highly feudal kingdoms, Corum’s Lords are little more than robber barons who have managed to hold on to their lands for an extended period. This is not to say that the Lords of Corum are without honor. In fact, many of them rule their principalities with wisdom and nobility. However, force of arms brought these men and women to power, and the folk of the various principalities still remember old wounds. Thus, the crown of leadership sits uneasily upon the heads of Corum’s Lords. Because of this, the leaders of Corum find

themselves constantly engaged in a struggle for power—although they have recently agreed to meet in council every three years to decide matters of importance, including boundary disputes and trading issues.

Many humanoid also call the continent of Corum home—though gnolls, bugbears, goblins, and hobgoblins make up the majority of these creatures. In addition, the mountainous regions of Corum are home to several tribes of orc barbarians. Unlike their more barbaric cousins, these orcs possess a significant culture and a complex sense of honor. Several Lords currently have uneasy truces and trading agreements with these creatures. Nonetheless, the orcs represent the single most powerful threat to the humans of Corum. If the various barbarian tribes were ever to unite, they would drive the humans before them like cattle.

Dwarves, elves, halflings, and even gnomes have smaller communities in the wild regions of Corum. Though much traffic between the human and demihuman races occurs, most individual demihumans tend toward insularity and prefer to live within the bounds of their own communities.

## Adventure Background

Allayn, nephew to Lord Khulvan of Dhunraven, and his entire trade delegation have disappeared somewhere in the Tarn Foothills. Lord Khulvan sent his noble relative to negotiate additional trade agreements with the orc barbarian tribes to the north. Unfortunately, no one has heard from Allayn or the other members of the delegation since the group left the frontier town of Cador nearly two weeks ago. Fearing the worst, Lord Khulvan has sent out a call to any adventurer brave enough to help him; he hopes to assemble an expedition to track his nephew and discover what has happened to his kinsman.

Unbeknownst to Khulvan, Allayn has been kidnapped by a group of bandits hired by Lord Beoric, the leader of a coastal principality. Lord Beoric's men ambushed the trade delegation and killed every member save Allayn. They then proceeded to track and kill a small patrol of orc tribesmen, making it seem as if the barbarians and the trade delegation battled to the death. Lord Beoric hopes to distract Lord Khulvan with the disappearance of his dear nephew and disrupt trade negotiations with the orcs of the Tarn Foothills, freeing Beoric to secure more power in the Council of Lords while Khulvan deals with the immediate problems in his own principality.

As the PCs investigate, they discover that Beoric's men actually work directly for Cordwellyn, a powerful and corrupt merchant in Cador. Cordwellyn's bandits are

holding Allayn captive in an old cavern hideaway in the Tarn Foothills, waiting for Lord Beoric's representative to fetch the noble lad. Once this occurs, Beoric pays Cordwellyn a handsome fee and allow him to smuggle all of the inventory stolen from Allayn's trade delegation into the Western markets, turning an additional profit for the corrupt merchant.

Before the PCs can rescue the hapless Allayn from the bandits' clutches, they must survive the brutal winter of Corum's foothills, treacherous bandit attacks, and the anger of the orc tribesmen—eventually walking the dreaded Path of the Dead to prove their worthiness to the honor-bound barbarians.

## For the Dungeon Master

This adventure works best if at least one PC serves Lord Khulvan, perhaps as a result of a previous adventure. However, the DM can easily have the PCs answer Khulvan's general call for assistance. In any event, the adventure begins in Dhunraven, Lord Khulvan's ancestral home. The PCs must then undertake a ten-day journey through the foothills of Corum, eventually arriving at the frontier town of Cador. After gathering what information they can about Allayn's trade delegation, the PCs can hire a guide to follow the delegation's proposed path into the barbarian lands.

While in the orc's tribal lands, the PCs stumble upon the bloody remains of both humans and orcs (obviously the site of a great battle). The adventurers are soon apprehended by a patrol of (rather angry) orcs who desire vengeance for the humans' attack upon their tribe. In order to prove their innocence, as well as the innocence of Lord Khulvan and his generals, the PCs must walk the Path of the Dead, a mysterious system of caverns revered as the ancient dwelling place of the orc barbarians' ancestors.

If they survive such an ordeal, the PCs discover the location of Allayn's captors. The adventurers must then plan an assault against the bandits and free Allayn before they can complete the adventure.

The entire scenario might take several sessions of game play to finish. In addition, DMs of novice players might need to bump up the PCs' levels to balance out the dangers of this adventure.

## Beginning the Adventure

Regardless of whether the PCs start the scenario in Lord Khulvan's service or simply volunteer for the mission in response to the noble's open plea for help, the PCs receive a message instructing them to assemble at Castle Dhunraven, Lord Khulvan's ancestral estate. Once the PCs present themselves, Dhubhain, Khulvan's pug-nosed and offi-

cial castellan, escorts them to the lord's private audience chamber.

The Dungeon Master should read the following boxed text to the players as Lord Khulvan enters the room:

The solid wooden door to this sparsely decorated chamber opens slowly as Lord Khulvan and two of his aides enter the room. The noble looks troubled, his normally handsome face creased with worry and fatigue. Foregoing the usual protocol, he slumps into a thickly padded chair and motions for your party to do the same.

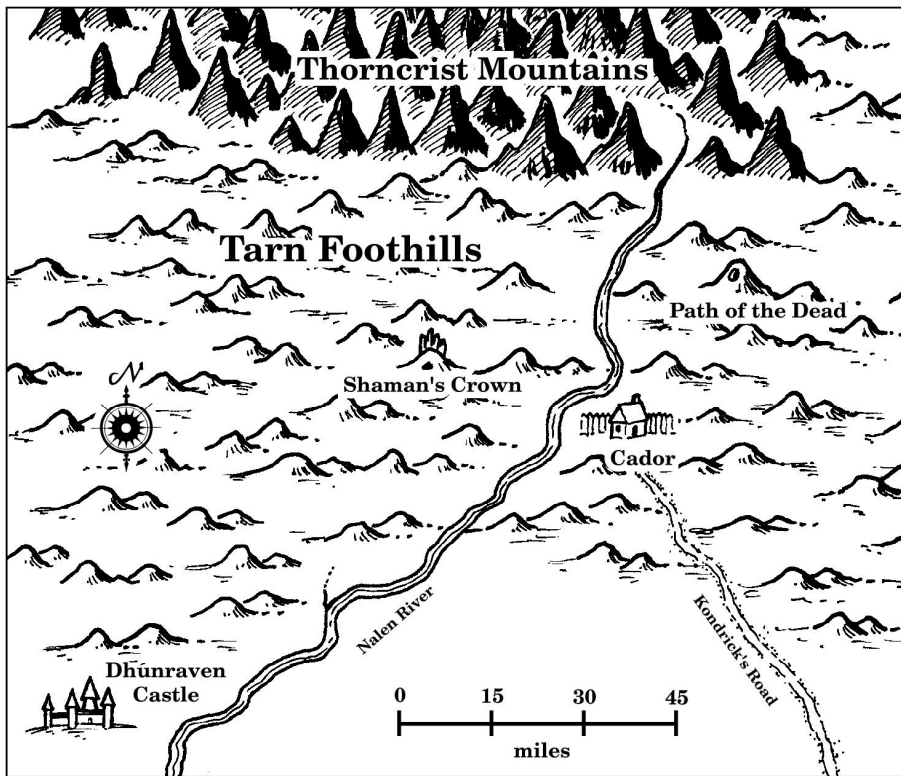
The noble sighs wearily and says, "I have need of your services. My nephew, Allayn, along with a trading delegation headed for the orc tribal lands, has disappeared somewhere in the foothills north of the town of Cador. The full force of winter soon closes what little passable terrain the foothills contain, and I fear for my nephew's life. So far, neither spell nor prayer has revealed Allayn's location—or condition. I require a small band of well-armed and courageous men to search for my nephew and the trade delegation. The journey will be fraught with peril, as the Tarn Foothills are wild and dangerous—especially in the winter—and I may be asking you to lay down your lives. What do you say? Can I count on your help?"

During the course of this encounter, the PCs can interact with Khulvan and ask him any questions. The lord offers the following information:

☛ Khulvan provides any additional non-magical gear the PCs might need for their journey. He also gives the party a map with guide marks on how to travel from the city of Dhunraven to the town of Cador. Once they arrive at the frontier town, the PCs must arrange for a guide to take them into the orc tribal lands—although the lord pens a formal writ that the PCs can take with them. This document should expedite the process of hiring a guide.

☛ Although the safety of his nephew remains a high priority, Khulvan believes that the trade delegation's mission is essential to the survival of the Principality of Dhunraven, as the raw materials that the barbarians possess (metal ore, gold, cloth, dyes, furs, hides, and a host of other goods) are necessary to produce the many items that allow the folk of the Principality to survive Corum's long, harsh winter.

☛ In gratitude for the PCs' aid, Lord Khulvan offers each PC a small parcel of land and a minor title (the exact nature of which is left up to the dictates of the DMs individual campaign—though it should not exceed the equivalent of "yeoman"). Khulvan acts sur-



prised if any PC is gauche enough to demand money for his service. However, the noble accedes to such a request and offers the individual 500 gp instead of the land and title.

If the DM feels that the PCs are underpowered for this mission, she should have Khulvan grant the party a minor magical item or two—such as a *potion of healing* or a *ring of warmth*. In no way should Khulvan simply hand the PCs his entire supply of magical equipment, as the addition of some minor magic is intended to balance the party against the dangers associated with winter travel in the wilds of Corum.

### To Cador

The Journey from Dhunraven to Cador is a physically demanding and dangerous trek that lasts at least ten days. The PCs can either head straight overland—a punishing hike over and around some of the roughest terrain in the foothills—or they can traverse the Nalen River by boat until its chill waters eventually yield to winter's kiss, freezing solid only two days' journey from Dhunraven.

Once the PCs set out on their journey, they must face the untamed might of the Tarn Foothills without the protection of civilization. Use the Random Encounter Table if the PCs decide not to travel via the Nalen River, rolling for encounters only after the party has traveled one day away from the city of

Dhunraven. The DM should also use this table for the PCs' journey from Cador into the orc tribal lands and any other time they wander the northern foothills of Corum.

### Up the River

If the party decides to travel by boat up the Nalen River, Lord Khulvan offers them the use of one of his own message boats, Rhiannon's Pride. The vessel is nothing more than a small riverboat, but its captain, Aidan McRann, is a loyal servant who has spent most of his life navigating the sometimes-treacherous waterways of northern Corum. Although the boat possesses sails, the surrounding foothills reduce the strength of any sustained wind, forcing Aidan to enlist the aid of at least two PCs to help row the boat.

Although the river journey shaves four days from the party's overall trek, the waterway meanders through sections of land claimed by the Irontooth Tribe, a vicious band of hobgoblins. During the less-intense seasons, Lord Khulvan sends out armed patrols to scour the areas around the Nalen River. This display of force usually keeps the Irontooth hobgoblins from harassing regular river traffic, but the advent of winter has forced Khulvan to discontinue the patrols until early Spring, and the hobgoblins have moved back into the area. Aidan has heard about the Irontooth Tribe and cautions the

PCs to keep a steady guard at all times—especially at night.

### Irontooth Attack

The DM need not roll for random encounters if the PCs choose to travel via the river. The journey itself is uneventful until the end of the second day, when the PCs reach a section of the river completely covered with ice. The DM should read the following boxed text to the players:

The sun begins to set, splashing the sky with vibrant purple and pink streaks, as Rhiannon's Pride glides over the still, dark waters of the Nalen River. Occasionally, dull thuds reverberate from the boat's hull as it strikes sections of free floating ice, piercing the surrounding silence of the Tarn Foothills. Suddenly, the vessel lurches to a stop with an earsplitting crash. Ahead of the ship lies a field of solid ice—the frozen body of the remaining river.

Before the sound of the ship's collision dies away completely, two arrows slam into the deck, followed by an unearthly ululation. Several fur-clad figures burst from the snow-covered undergrowth of the east bank, their reddish-brown faces still visible in the dying sunlight, while arrows continue to rain down from either shore.

The marauding creatures are Irontooth hobgoblins. The creatures tracked the party for the past several hours, scouting ahead for the best place to set an ambush, and waited patiently for their arrival. There are nine hobgoblins in all, led by Grath, their shaman.

**Creatures:** Although Grath leads this band of hobgoblins, Grath does not show himself during the battle. If the party kills most of the hobgoblins, Grath retreats, only to return at a later time with a hunting party of eight hobgoblins armed with short swords.

➤ **Hobgoblins (8):** CR ½; Medium Humanoid (6½ ft. tall); HD 1d8+1; hp 5 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 small shield); Atk +0 melee (1d8, longsword) or +1 ranged (1d6, javelin); AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

**Skills:** Hide +1, Listen +4, Spot +4. Hobgoblins receive a +4 racial bonus to Move Silently checks. **Feats:** Alertness.

➤ **Grath, male hobgoblin Adp4:** CR 4; Medium Humanoid (6½ ft. tall); HD 1d8+1 plus 4d6+4; hp 23; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +2 melee (1d8, heavy mace) or +3 ranged (1d6, javelin); AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10.

**Skills:** Concentration +5, Handle Animal +3, Heal +4, Hide +3, Listen +4, Spot +4,

## Random Encounters

The DM should roll for encounters three times during the day and twice at night. Day encounters occur on a roll of 1 on a d6, while night encounters occur on a roll of 1 or 2 on a d6.

The creatures that appear on this wandering monster table are exceptionally dangerous—especially to low-level PCs—in order to underscore the harsh and wild nature of the Tarn Foothills. Their innate deadliness also insures that DMs who wish to use this area as a backdrop for future adventures will have an arsenal of encounters sure to challenge PCs of many levels.

By no means should a DM simply allow random chance to decimate a party. Although the more common encounters on this table are somewhat easier for low-level adventurers to handle, the wrong dice roll could bring the adventure to a bitter (and unsatisfying) end. Therefore, DMs should always allow their PCs a chance of escaping from or bargaining with obviously superior foes. (What the PCs do with that chance is another matter entirely.)

If the DM uses this Encounter Table during warmer months, she should substitute spiders or bears for the snow and ice storms. Snakes, insects, and other such creatures would also crawl out of their winter lairs, ready to prey on unsuspecting victims during the warmer seasons.

### Tarn Foothills Random Encounter Table (1d12 + 1d8)

Day	Night
2. Hippogriff	2. Troll, snow
3–4. Ogre	3–4. Ogre
5–6. Owlbear	5–6. Owlbear
7–8. Wolverine	7–8. Ghouls
9–10. Boar	9–10. Gnolls
11–13. Snowstorm	11–13. Snowstorm
14–15. Hobgoblins	14–15. Hobgoblins
16. Ice storm	16. Ice storm
17–18. Wolves	17–18. Wolves
19–20. Orc barbarians	19–20. Orc barbarians

➤ **Boar:** CR 2; Medium Animal (4 ft. long); HD 3d8+9; hp 22 each; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (+6 natural); Atk +4 melee (1d8+3, bite); SA ferocity; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 4.

*Skills:* Listen +8, Spot +5.

*SA—Ferocity (Ex):* A boar is such a tenacious combatant that it continues to fight without penalty even while disabled or dying.

*SQ—Scent:* Boars can detect opponents within 30 feet by smell. If it is downwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if upwind, the range decreases to 15 feet. Scent does not allow the boar to pinpoint the location of an opponent, just the general area. Once it gets within 5 feet, however, it can determine a specific location. Strong scents (smoke) carry twice as far, and overpowering scents (skunk musk) carry three times as far. Boars can also follow a trail with a successful Wisdom check. Fresh trails are DC 10 for this purpose and increases by 2 for every hour the trail ages.

➤ **Ghouls (2d6):** CR 1; Medium Undead (6 ft. tall); HD 2d12; hp 13 each; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Atks

+3 melee (1d6+1, bite), +0 melee (1d3 [×2], claws); SA paralysis, create spawn; SQ undead; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 15, Con —, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16.

*Skills:* Climb +6, Escape Artist +7, Hide +7, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Search +6, Spot +7. *Feats:* Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (bite).

*SA—Paralysis (Ex):* Those hit by a ghoul's bite or claw attack must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 14) or be paralyzed for 1d6 + 2 minutes. Elves are immune to this paralysis.

*SA—Create Spawn (Su):* From time to time, the bodies of ghouls victims rise as ghouls themselves in 1d4 days. Casting *bless* on a body before the end of that time averts the transformation.

*SQ—Undead:* Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

These creatures are the remains of orogs, humans, and other humanoid races who died from the extreme cold of winter. As such, parts of their body are bluish-black from frostbite, and their once-thick hides have shredded from wind and ice.

➤ **Ogre:** CR 2; Large Giant (9 ft. tall); HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init –1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (–1 size, –1 Dex, +5 natural, +3 hide); Atk +8 melee (2d6+7, greatclub); Reach 10 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 21, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7.

*Skills:* Climb +5, Listen +3, Spot +3. *Feats:* Weapon Focus (greatclub).

➤ **Wolverine:** CR 2; Medium Animal (4 ft. long); HD 3d8+12; hp 25; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (+4 Dex, +2 natural); Atks +7 melee (1d4+5 [×2], claws), +2 melee (1d6+2, bite); SA rage; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 19, Con 19, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 10.

*Skills:* Climb +15, Listen +7, Spot +7.

*SA—Rage (Ex):* A wolverine that takes damage in combat goes into a berserk rage the next round. An enraged wolverine gains +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, and –2 AC. The wolverine cannot voluntarily end its rage.

*SQ—Scent:* Wolverines can detect opponents within 30 feet by smell. If it is downwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if upwind, the range decreases to 15 feet. Scent does not allow the wolverine to pinpoint the location of an opponent, just the general area. Once it gets within 5 feet, however, it can determine a specific location. Strong scents (smoke) carry twice as far, and overpowering scents (skunk musk) carry three times as far. Wolverines can also follow a trail with a successful Wisdom check. Fresh trails are DC 10 for this purpose and increases by 2 for every hour the trail ages.

➤ **Gnolls (2d6):** CR 1; Medium Humanoid (7½ ft. tall); HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (scale mail), base 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 natural, +4 scale, +2 large shield); Atks +3 melee (1d8+2, battleaxe) or +1 ranged (1d6, shortbow); SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 8.

*Skills:* Listen +3, Spot +3. *Feats:* Power Attack.

➤ **Hobgoblins (2d8):** CR ½; Medium Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 1d8+1; hp 5 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 stud-

ded leather, +1 small shield); Atks +0 melee (1d8, longsword) or +1 ranged (1d6, javelin); AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

**Skills:** Hide +1, Listen +4, Spot +4. Hobgoblins receive a +4 racial bonus to Move Silently checks. **Feats:** Alertness.

**Ice storm:** The unforgiving heavens send down needle-sharp drops of ice, imposing a –8 penalty to all Spot, Search, and Listen checks. Ranged attacks are impossible during the storm, automatically extinguish unprotected flames, and have a 50% chance of extinguishing covered lights. The wind is also severe (31–50 mph), requiring a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15). Small-size PCs who fail this saving throw are knocked down, and Medium-size PCs who fail can no longer move forward into the wind.

In addition, the storms bring all the penalties associated with severe cold. For every 10 minutes of unprotected exposure, a PC must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d6 points of subdual damage. (The Wilderness Lore skill grants a +2 competency bonus to this check.) A PC reduced to 0 hit points in this fashion falls unconscious and begins taking real damage with every failed Fortitude save thereafter. A character who fails one such saving throw is treated as though she had hypothermia or frostbite and becomes fatigued. Fatigued characters cannot run or charge and suffer an effective penalty of –2 to Strength and Dexterity.

➤ **Orc barbarians, male and female orc Bbn1 (2d8):** CR 1; Medium Humanoid (7 ft. tall); HD 1d8 plus 1d12; hp 11 each; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (scale mail), base 30 ft.; AC 14 (+4 scale mail); Atks +3 melee (1d8+2, onyx longsword) or +0 ranged (1d6+2, javelin); SA rage; SQ darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will –1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8.

**Skills:** Climb +3, Handle Animal +1, Intimidate +0, Intuit Direction +1, Listen +1, Ride +2, Swim +3, Wilderness Lore +3. **Feats:** Alertness.

**SA—Rage (Ex):** During a rage, the barbarians gain +4 Strength, +4 Constitution (plus 2 hp per level that go away right after the rage), +2 morale bonus on Will saves, and –2 penalty to AC. The rage lasts for 5 rounds, after which time the orcs are fatigued. The orc barbarians can rage once per day.

**SQ—Light Sensitivity (Ex):** Orcs suffer a –1 penalty to attacks rolls in bright sunlight.

➤ **Owlbear (1):** CR 4; Large Beast (8 ft. tall); HD 5d10+20; hp 47; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); Atks +7 melee (1d6+5 [×2], claws), +2 melee (1d8+2, bite); Face 5 ft. × 10 ft.; SA improved grab; SQ scent; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 21, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 10.

**Skills:** Listen +8, Spot +7.

**SA—Improved Grab (Ex):** If an owlbear hits with a claw attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. No touch attack is required to use this ability, and Tiny- and Small-size creatures suffer no size penalty. This ability works only against creatures at least one size category smaller than the owlbear.

**SQ—Scent:** Owlbears can detect opponents within 30 feet by smell. If it is downwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if upwind, the range decreases to 15 feet. Scent does not allow the owlbear to pinpoint the location of an opponent, just the general area. Once it

gets within 5 feet, however, it can determine a specific location. Strong scents (smoke) carry twice as far, and overpowering scents (skunk musk) carry three times as far. Owlbears can also follow a trail with a successful Wisdom check. Fresh trails are DC 10 for this purpose and increases by 2 for every hour the trail ages.

➤ **Hippogriffs (1d2):** CR 2; Large Beast (9 ft. long); HD 3d10+9; hp 25; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 50 ft., fly 100 ft. (average); AC 15 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural); Atks +5 melee (1d4+4 [×2], claws), +0 melee (1d8+2, bite); Face 5 ft. × 10 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 8.

**Skills:** Listen +4, Spot +7.

**Snow storm:** This result indicates that the normally snowy weather of the Tarn Foothills worsens. The effects are similar to the ice storm above, except this storm lasts for 4 hours and leaves behind 1d3 feet of snow, halving characters' movement.

➤ **Dire Bats (1d2):** CR 2; Large Animal (8–9 foot wingspan, 5 ft. long); HD 4d8+12; hp 30 each; Init +6 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 20 (–1 size, +6 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +5 melee (1d8+4, bite); Face 10 ft. × 5 ft.; SQ blindsight; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 22, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6.

**Skills:** Listen +12, Move Silently +12, Spot +12. Dire bats receive a +4 racial bonus to Spot and Listen checks, which are lost if Blindsight is negated.

**SQ—Blindsight (Ex):** Dire bats can “see” prey within 120 feet by emitting high-frequency sounds that are inaudible to most other creatures. A *silence* spell negates this ability and forces the bats to rely on their weak vision, which has a range of 10 feet.

➤ **Wolves (2d6):** CR 1; Medium Animal (6 ft. long); HD 2d8+4; hp 13; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 50 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, bite); SA trip; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

**Skills:** Hide +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4. Wolves receive a +4 racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent. **Feats:** Weapon Finesse (bite).

**SA—Trip (Ex):** A wolf that makes a successful bite attack can attempt to trip its opponent as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt is unsuccessful, the victim cannot react to trip the wolf.

**SQ—Scent:** Wolves can detect opponents within 30 feet by smell. If it is downwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if upwind, the range decreases to 15 feet. Scent does not allow the wolf to pinpoint the location of an opponent, just the general area. Once it gets within 5 feet, however, it can determine a specific location. Strong scents (smoke) carry twice as far, and overpowering scents (skunk musk) carry three times as far. Wolves can also follow a trail with a successful Wisdom check. Fresh trails are DC 10 for this purpose and increases by 2 for every hour the trail ages.

Wilderness Lore +4. Hobgoblins receive a +4 racial bonus to Move Silently checks. *Feats:* Alertness, Combat Casting.

*Spells* (3/3/1): 0—*detect magic, ghost sound, guidance*; 1st—*command, endure elements, light*; 2nd—*bull's strength*.

**Tactics:** Four hobgoblins hide in the trees on either side of the river (two to a side), firing their bows from a distance of 60 feet. Four others emerge from the east bank with primitive grappling hooks. These hobgoblins try to pull the stranded ship over to their side of the bank while the archers pepper the party with arrows. Meanwhile, Grath remains hidden in the undergrowth of the east bank, waiting to cast his spells on any magic-using PC.

The grapple-wielding hobgoblins manage to hook the boat on a successful attack roll (the ship's functional AC is 12). It takes one hobgoblin pulling on the grapple for 8 rounds to bring Rhiannon's Pride to the east bank; this time decreases by 1 round for every grappling hook the creatures manage to snag the vessel with (four grapples reduce the time to 4 rounds). PCs can easily cut the grappling lines, but the hobgoblin archers automatically target anyone who attempts such an action; these archers possess twelve arrows each.

The DM should note that the hobgoblin archers possess three-quarters concealment within the undergrowth, imposing a 30% miss chance on all ranged attacks (as described in Chapter 8 of the *PH*). Likewise, the PCs can use the ship's hull and rigging as one-quarter cover, granting them a +2 cover bonus to AC and a +1 cover bonus to Reflex saving throws (as described in Chapter 8 of the *PH*). Any PC cutting a grapple loses the benefits of cover.

Any character who falls into the water (or dives in the chill river) must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) or take 1d6 points of subdual damage from the freezing water each minute he is exposed. (The Wilderness Lore skill grants a +2 competence bonus to this save.) Characters in the water must also make regular Swim checks each round to stay afloat. Since either shore is about 20 feet from the boat, this shouldn't present too many problems—unless the PC is actually unconscious when he enters the water. Characters who take subdual damage from the cold contract frostbite and possibly hypothermia. Such characters cannot run or charge and suffer an effective penalty of –2 to Strength and Dexterity. This lasts until an affected character rests for several hours in a warm, dry environment for at least 8 hours or is provided with magical aid.

**Development:** Once the PCs deal with the hobgoblins, they will have to abandon the boat and continue on foot to Cador.

## Arriving at Cador

As mentioned previously, the PCs' journey to the frontier town of Cador takes 10 days of overland hiking or 6 days of boating and hiking. When the party reaches the middle of their last day of hiking, the DM should read the following boxed text to the players:

Nestled between the Nalen River and the shoulder of several large hills rests an area completely surrounded by a wooden wall. Other structures, some wooden and some stone, fill the interior of this protected space. Even from this distance, the smoke from collective hearthfires wafts visibly into the winter sky, and tiny figures scurry about the snow-covered earth on a thousand anonymous errands. The town of Cador awaits!

The PCs are only about two hours' distance from the frontier town—provided they head there without stopping. Once the party arrives at the gates (see area 1), several guards greet them, inquire about their business, and ask that they pay a 3-cp tax. If the PCs present Lord Khulvan's Writ, the guards forgo collecting the tax and lead the party (apologetically) to Warden Aelric's home; see the Cador section for more details.

## Cador

Originally a camp where only the most desperate traders and merchants would brave the dangers of the foothills to trade with the orc barbarians, Cador has developed into a fair-sized settlement—due mostly to the forward-thinking policies and trade agreements negotiated by Lord Khulvan's ancestors. Built on a relatively flat area between the Nalen river and several large hills, Cador currently functions as a walled encampment used by fur traders, trappers, and merchants who make their living buying and selling goods and materials with the orc tribes to the north. These merchants then ship their inventories toward the city of Dhunraven via the Nalen River, or they travel Kendrick's Road—a relatively well-traveled road connecting Lord Khulvan's northern principality with the other principalities of Corum—using overland caravans. Cador also receives a fair number of merchant trains willing to purchase material goods from local sellers.

Due to the high volume of caravans, Cador has become home to a large number of folk looking to sign on as caravan guards. Some of these hopeful young men and women want to build a reputation or seek adventure. However, most of the caravan guards are nothing more than down-on-their-luck soldiers, deserters, drunkards, brawlers,

and brigands. In addition, the constant threat of attack—whether from orcs, organized brigands, or other creatures from the Tarn Foothills—as well as the harsh nature of the surrounding countryside, breeds tough, very independent folk. As a result, Cador has a reputation for being a place where tempers run high and cheap ale runs freely. Only the bravest or most foolish folk spend more time than necessary in this rough-and-tumble town.

Despite its harsh nature, Cador occupies a central place in the economic structure of Khulvan's land. For all intents and purposes, it is the trading hub of the northernmost principality of Corum.

**👑 Cador (fortified hamlet):** Conventional; AL CG; 150-gp limit; Assets 2,250 gp; Population 160; Mixed (human 79%, dwarf 9%, half-orc 5%, elf 3%, half-elf 2%, halfling 1%, gnome 1%).

*Authority Figures:* Warden Aelric Volstan, male human Ftr6.

*Important Characters:* Cordwellyn (merchant), male human Ftr9; Siobhan (The Cat's Eye proprietor), female human Rog6; Brodan (priest), human male Clr4.

*Others:* See area descriptions below.

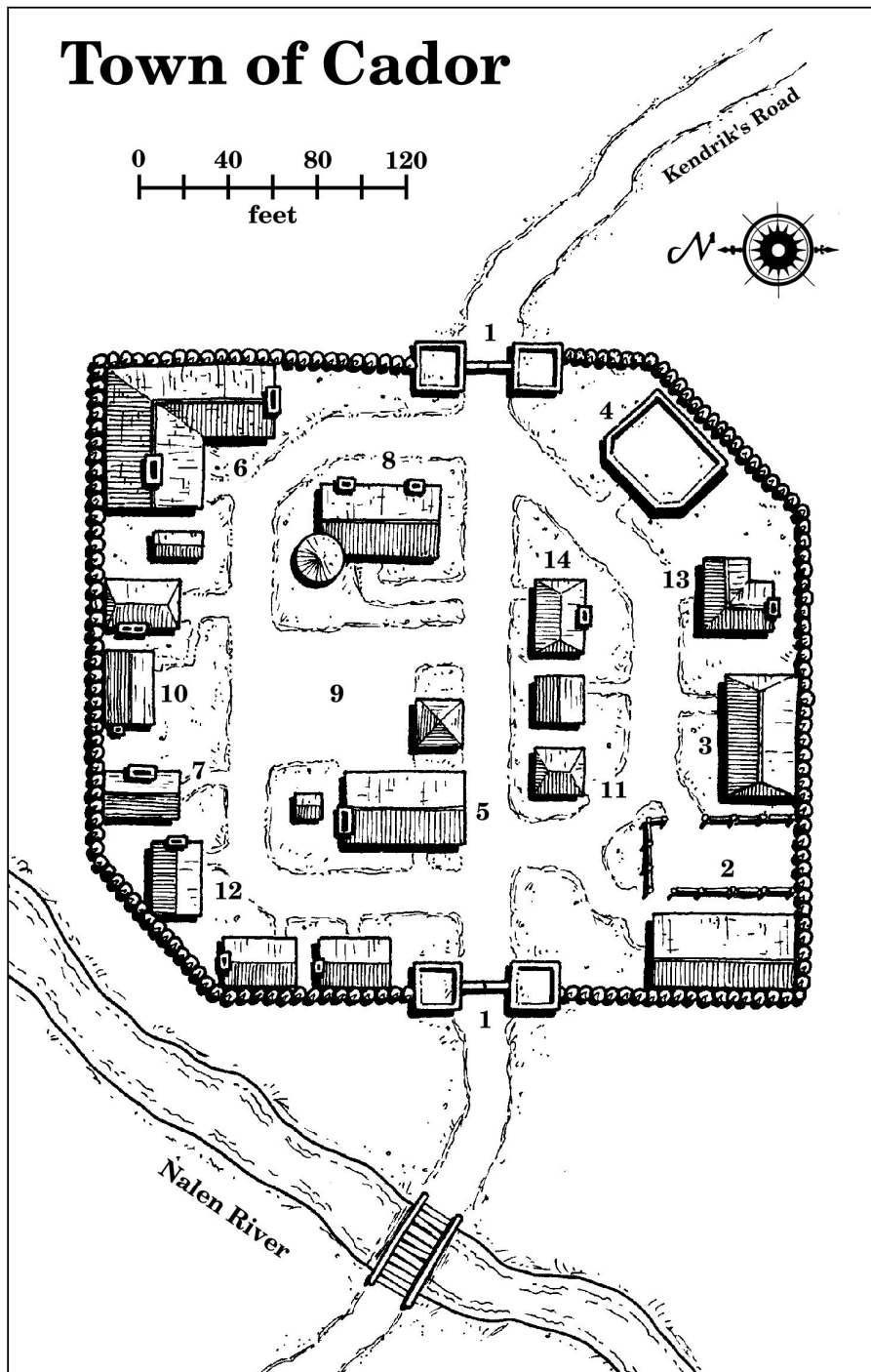
*Notes:* As Cador is a prominent trading post, its monetary assets are much greater than those of most hamlet-sized settlements.

## Government

Aelric Volstan, a tough but fair-minded warrior, acts as the town's Warden. Aelric commands the small, loosely organized militia of Cador, and he is responsible for upholding Lord Khulvan's laws. Most importantly, Aelric oversees the taxation on trade and directs the revenue to Khulvan. See the "Figures of Note" section for more information on Aelric.

Despite the fact that Aelric is a skilled warrior and rules fairly, another power bloc exists within the town, centered upon Cordwellyn, Cador's most successful (and influential) merchant. This merchant commands the resources of a highly organized and far-reaching network of informants, muscle, thieves, and assassins. Though not quite a "guild," Cordwellyn's network completely controls the underside of life in Cador, and its members demonstrate total loyalty to their leader. Despite his "dirty hands," Cordwellyn has managed to stay several steps ahead of the Warden and his militia—primarily through some incredible dissembling and well-placed bribes.

The roguish merchant recently struck a deal with Lord Beoric and ordered a band of brigands (to whom he usually provides supplies and information to facilitate their thievery in exchange for a share in the profits) to kidnap Khulvan's nephew. Cordwellyn does



not want anyone to investigate Allayn's disappearance too closely, and he discourages such attempts at every turn. See the "Running Cador" section for more information on the merchant's tactics and plans.

### Map Key

The following section details only some of the major areas of Cador, as fleshing out the entire town goes beyond the scope of this adventure. Therefore, only the areas with which the PCs are most likely to interact contain information; the rest are left blank. The DM is encouraged

to customize these areas in accord with the dictates of her own campaign, adding to the town of Cador as the PCs spend more time in the region. Otherwise, this adventure contains all of the town's information necessary to run the scenario.

**1. Defensive Wall and Gates.** A 20-foot wooden wall surrounds the town of Cador, with openings only from the east (by Kendrik's Road) and west (by the Nalen River) gates. This wall protects the town from the worst effects of strong winter winds, and it acts as a defensive element against attacks.

**NPCs:** Four guards sit at each gate, collecting the entry tax (3 cp per person) from merchants and visitors entering the town. These guards also act as a first line of defense against hostile forces and trade disputes that occur close to the town's perimeter.

♣ **Cador militia, male human War1 (4):** CR 1; Medium Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 1d8+2; hp 7 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 small shield); Atk +3 melee (1d6+2, short sword); AL LG; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

**Skills:** Climb +4, Handle Animal +2, Jump +4, Ride +4, Swim +5. **Feats:** Weapon Focus (short sword).

**Possessions:** Studded leather armor, small shield, short sword, pouch containing 1 gp.

**2. Stables.** This long building contains the stables for the town. Burr the Stablemaster oversees the care of all animals placed within the stable. Often, caravans and traders house their horses here while on extended stay. Basic care, including grooming and feed, costs 5 copper pieces a day. More advanced care, including exercise and gear repair, costs 1 silver piece a day. The stables can house up to twenty-four horses at a time—though an open-air corral can hold an additional ten horses. Currently, there are fifteen horses in the stable.

A small secret door hidden beneath the hay in a stall of the westernmost stable opens into a short, narrow tunnel leading to a series of small rooms beneath Cordwellyn's warehouse.

**NPCs:** Burr employs six stable hands to help him at his job. One of them, Kevyn, is actually an informer and cutpurse working for Cordwellyn. Kevyn is a young lad with shaggy brown hair and an unassuming face.

♣ **Kevyn, male human Com1:** CR 1; Medium Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30; AC 12 (Dex); Atk +0 melee (1d4, dagger); AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 9.

**Skills:** Climb +2, Handle Animal +3, Jump +1, Listen +6, Profession (stablehand) +2, Ride +3, Spot +6, Use Rope +3. **Feats:** Alertness.

**3. Cordwellyn's Warehouse.** This building houses most of Cordwellyn's backstock and other tradable materials. A trap, lock, and *arcane lock* spell guard the only door to the warehouse. A special command word, known only to Cordwellyn and his assistant Venya, deactivates the *arcane lock*.

If the PCs look within the warehouse, they see nothing but boxes and stacks of material goods. During the day, 1d4 workers are present within the warehouse. These workers are rough laborers, but they know nothing of Cordwellyn's shady deals. Venya, the merchant's assistant, has an office within the warehouse. There is a 65% chance that the PCs encounter the man here no matter what time of day. Venya's office is locked (but not trapped), but anyone rifling through the desk and cabinets in this office find only shipping manifestos, trade journals, and accounting ledgers. Nothing in this room can implicate either Cordwellyn or Venya, as all of the sensitive material is stored in the rooms below the warehouse.

**Trap:** The trap on the lock is a poison needle. Anyone pierced by the needle needs to make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 13) or take 1d4 points of Strength damage immediately. In addition, a character pricked by the needle must make another successful Fortitude saving throw 1 minute later or take an additional 1d6 points of Strength damage.

↗ **Poison needle trap:** CR 1; poison (1d4 Str/1d6 Str); Fortitude saving throw negates (DC 13); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

**NPC:** Venya is a short, wide-necked man with a pockmarked face. His eyes are cold and gray, and he often stares at his intended victims before killing them. The man is a tough, no-nonsense killer, but he is fiercely loyal to Cordwellyn, who saved him from death at the hands of an angry mob in another principality.

♣ **Venya, male human Rog5:** CR 5; Medium Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 5d6+10; hp 33 (includes +3 hp for Toughness); Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+4 Dex, +3 studded leather armor, +1 ring of protection); Atk +4 melee (1d6+1, short sword; or 1d4+1, dagger); SA sneak attack; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 8.

**Skills:** Appraise +4, Bluff +4, Climb +8, Disable Device +5, Escape Artist +8, Forgery +4, Gather Information +2, Hide +9, Intimidate +2, Intuit Direction +4, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Open Locks +9, Pick Pocket +9, Read Lips +3, Search +5, Sense Motive +5, Spot +7, Swim +3, Tumble +8, Use Rope +7, Wilderness Lore +2. **Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Toughness.

**SA—Sneak Attack (Ex):** Venya deals an extra 3d6 points of damage to a surprised or flanked foe.

**SQ—Evasion (Ex):** If Venya makes a successful Reflex save against an attack that normally deals half damage, he takes none.

**SQ—Uncanny Dodge (Ex):** Venya retains his Dexterity bonus to AC if caught flat-footed or if attacked by an invisible being.

**4. Shrine.** This obviously well-cared-for stone building contains many signs and symbols engraved on its oak door. Sounds of people softly singing usually echo from within this building, as Brodan the Stout leads the religious services for the community and sees to the spiritual well being of his rough-around-the-edges flock. The shrine is well kept on the inside and contains altars to each of Corum's most favored deities, offering believers of every faith a place to reflect.

**NPC:** Brodan himself is a tall, broad-shouldered man who spent his life trapping and trading in the Tarn Foothills until he received his calling to his present station. Although soft-spoken, Brodan can swear with the rest of them when roused, and he does not hesitate to use his stout oaken cudgel to pound "wisdom" into those who disagree with him too forcefully.

♣ **Brodan the Stout, male human Clr4:** CR 4; Medium Humanoid (6 ft. 3 in. tall); HD 4d8+12; hp 30; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft. (chainmail), base 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 Dex, +6 armor, +1 shield); Atk +6 melee (1d8+3, heavy mace); SQ turn undead; AL NG; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 14.

**Skills:** Concentration +4, Heal +8, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +6, Profession (trapper) +5, Spot +7, Wilderness Lore +2. **Feats:** Alertness, Combat Casting, Expertise.

**Spells (5/4/3):** 0—*cure minor wounds* (×2), *detect poison*, *light*, *resistance*; 1st—*bless*, *detect evil*, *endure elements*, *protection from evil*; 2nd—*find traps*, *hold person*, *know alignment*.

**Domain Spells:** 1st—*cure light wounds*; 2nd—*aid*. (Brodan's domains are Good and Healing.)

**SQ—Turn Undead (Su):** Brodan can turn undead 5 times per day.

**Possessions:** +1 chainmail, small wooden shield, heavy mace, *potion of cure serious wounds* (×2), holy symbol, pouch with 3 gp.

In addition to Brodan, two acolytes (1st-level clerics) help care for the shrine and its visitors. These clerics usually memorize healing to treat folk who come to the shrine after a night spent carousing in the Crossed Swords.

If it looks as if the party needs help completing this adventure, the DM can place Brodan at the PCs' service. He is a stout friend and undertakes Lord Khulvan's mission without hesitation.

**5. The Crossed Swords.** The Crossed Swords is the roughest inn and tavern within Cador. The establishment is often rowdy and caters

to trappers, foul-mouthed guardsmen, and the occasional adventurer. The food here is simple, hearty fare consisting mostly of breads, soups, and mutton. The bar serves three kinds of ale (a simple lager, a red bitter, and a rich stout), along with a small supply of Dragon's Breath (a dwarven ale). Simple rooms cost 4 cp per night. Though the inn's ambience sometimes deters possible guests, the Crossed Swords offers adequate shelter for a reasonable price.

**NPCs:** Brunhel Sim, a thin, wiry fellow with a shock of wild red hair, owns and operates the Crossed Swords. Brunhel tolerates a lot at his establishment, but sometimes things can get too rough even for him. In those cases, he is quick to signal his bouncers: three brothers rumored to have orcish blood in their veins. These bouncers (Maddog, Bryn, and Cuhorn) quickly wade in to any fight brandishing their clubs or short swords.

A number of cutpurses and other scalawags work the crowd. Brunhel knows that this happens, but he has offered his silence in exchange for a small percentage of the profit.

♣ **Maddog, Bryn, and Cuhorn, male half-orc War4:** CR 4; Medium Humanoid (6 ft. 7 in. tall each); HD 4d8+8; hp 33, 25, 38 (includes +3 hp for Toughness); Init +3; Spd 30; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather); Atk +8 melee (1d6+4/crit 19–20, short sword; or 1d6+4, club); AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will –1; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 7, Cha 8.

**Skills:** Climb +6, Jump +7, Swim +6. **Feats:** Dodge, Toughness.

**Possessions:** leather armor, club, short sword, 5 gp.

**6. Barracks.** This large building houses various caravan guards, rough individuals looking for work as guards, and those poor sods who cannot afford to stay at an inn. A bed and a simple chest to store goods cost 1 cp per night, but those who stay in the barracks must remain on their guard against their neighbors.

**7. The Cat's Eye.** This building is one of the most ostentatious and well-built structures in the town. A small sign above the door (picturing the silhouette of a shapely figure within a cat's eye) proclaims the nature of this establishment. The Cat's Eye is a posh inn and salon where weary travelers can shed the mud and dirt of the road for the creature comforts of civilization. Rooms in the Eye contain thick, feathered beds, fur rugs, small fireplaces, and the option to enjoy a hot bath. The price for such sumptuous shelter starts at 3 gp and can exceed 20 gp or more—depending upon the needs of the individual.

Siobhan, an older but still stunningly beautiful woman, runs the establishment, along with her staff of highly trained men and



women. In fact, her employees keep their ears close to the walls in this establishment, glean- ing as much information as they can from their upscale clientele and passing it on to Siobhan. She, in turn, reports the nuggets of information to Cordwellyn, who uses it for blackmail and as leverage for future dealings with those who frequent the establishment.

By some unspoken agreement, the Cat's Eye is considered off-limits for brawling and other unseemly activities. If anyone does start a ruckus, however, Siobhan deals with it her- self.

**NPC:** Siobhan is an adventurer who gave up scuttling through slimy dungeons and creature-filled caverns to found a highly prof- itable business selling information. The Cat's Eye is so successful that Siobhan has made more money living safe and comfortable here than she did as an adventurer.

♣ **Siobhan, female human Rog6:** CR 6; Medium Humanoid (5 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 6d6+6; hp 29; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +5 *bracers of armor*); Atk +5 melee (1d6+1/crit 19–20, +1 *short sword*); SA sneak attack; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +10, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 18.

**Skills:** Appraise +8, Balance +6, Bluff +13, Climb +2, Diplomacy +7, Disable Device +5, Disguise +9, Escape Artist +7, Forgery +9, Gather Information +13, Hide +9, Innuendo +6, Jump +2, Listen +9, Move Silently +9, Open Lock +7, Pick Pocket +6, Read Lips +6, Search +5, Spot +5, Tumble +6. **Feats:** Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Lightning Reflexes.

**SA—Sneak Attack (Ex):** Siobhan deals an extra 3d6 points of damage to a surprised or flanked foe.

**SQ—Evasion (Ex):** If Siobhan makes a suc- cessful Reflex save against an attack that nor- mally deals half damage, she takes none.

**SQ—Uncanny Dodge (Ex):** Siobhan retains her Dexterity bonus to AC if caught flat- footed or if attacked by an invisible being.

**Possessions:** +1 *short sword* (can cast *charm person* 2/day and *expeditious retreat* 1/day), +5 *bracers of armor*, pouch with 6 pp, 20 gp, 14 sp.

**8. Cordwellyn's House.** This large, ornate stone building stands as the most luxurious house in all of Cador. In addition to the well- kept roof and artistry of the overall design, this building is the only one in the entire town to have a surrounding stone wall. The interior of the house is just as ostentatious as the out- side, containing rare works of art, thick rugs, ornate mantles and even glass windows.

This is the home of Cordwellyn, the wealthiest merchant in Cador and the head of a very profitable criminal network. The mer- chant often entertains guests in his house and conducts all of his legitimate business here.

## Running Cador

The following section provides the DM information on the actions, reactions, and plans of the major NPCs involved with the PCs' quest. Of course, this information sim- ply presents a skeleton for the encounters that can occur in the town. The party might want or need to explore a bit, and the DM should feel free to build these encounters from the basic information on Cador pre- sented above. For example, the PCs might arrive in town wounded and in need of heal- ing. Thus, the PCs will probably make their way to the shrine (area 4) and interact with Brodan, possibly making an ally for this or future adventures.

### Gate Guards

If the PCs show their writ to the gate guards, the soldiers personally escort the party to the Constabulary (area 14) to speak with Aelric. If the PCs arrive near dark, the guards take them to Aelric's house (area 13). If the PCs choose not to show their writ, the guards charge them the normal entry tax and answer any general questions the PCs might have.

### Aelric

If the PCs do not use their Writ, Aelric hears about their presence in the town by the fol- lowing morning. Soon after breakfast, he sends out a few guards to escort the PCs to his house (area 13) to discuss their needs. In any event, speaking with Aelric reveals the following:

☞ Allayn and the trading caravan arrived in town just over a month ago. They hired a guide from Cordwellyn and left the next day.

☞ Although Allayn possessed a magical item that would allow him to communicate with Aelric, no one has heard from him since the day he left. The winter weather has blown very foul since then, and the few par-

ties sent out to search for him returned with- out any success; many of their members were severely injured by the blisteringly cold weather or by animal attacks.

☞ The orc tribes are powerful, often bel- licious neighbors, but recent treaties have solidified a peaceful relationship that has existed for almost 100 years. They are very protective of their lands and allow few non- orcs to enter.

Aelric is quite worried about Allayn and fears that the young lord has perished. He offers to equip the party with any mundane supplies they might require, as well as a rough map of the caravan's intended route. In addition, he has two *potions of cure serious wounds* and a *ring of warmth* that he gives to the PCs—if the DM determines that the PCs may have need of such help. Finally, Aelric can arrange a meeting with Cordwellyn, one of the few merchants in town who employ guides willing to travel deep into the Tarn Foothills during this season, if the PCs wish.

### Cordwellyn

Cordwellyn's agents know about the PCs' arrival almost immediately, and the clever merchant has them observe the PCs and bring him reports. Unless directly approached by the PCs (or asked by Aelric) Cordwellyn does not reveal himself to the party, preferring to remain in the shadows. If the PCs do meet with the merchant and ask for a guide, the cunning villain arranges for his assistant, Venya, to act as a guide for the party, charging the bull-necked villain to lead the PCs into an ambush.

If the PCs interrogate the merchant about Allayn and his hired guide, Cordwellyn expresses deep sadness over the situation but insists that he has heard nothing from either the young noble or the hired guide. Of course, the guide Allayn hired from Cordwellyn led the trade caravan into the ambush that brought about the noble's kid- napping. However, the merchant insists that he is innocent if accused of any wrongdoing.

Cordwellyn is a gracious host, often instruct- ing his body of servants to provide every pos- sible creature comfort for his guests. However, visitors who simply drop by might find it hard to see Cordwellyn, as Merwin, the mer- chant's butler and manservant, refuses to let anyone enter without an appointment. Despite this, the PCs can use Lord Khulvan's Writ to bypass Merwin—though just about nothing else will.

**NPC:** Cordwellyn is a cultured, urbane, well-mannered, meticulously groomed, almost foppish individual. In fact, he always seems to apologize to his guests and associates for the

roughness of his chosen town. In this way, he inspires trust and confidence. However, all of his mannerisms are a coldly constructed front. In truth, Cordwellyn is a cunning, ruthless individual who does not hesitate to eliminate any threats to his power.

♣ **Cordwellyn male human Ftr9:** CR 9; Medium Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 9d10+18; hp 75; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+1 Dex, +2 *amulet of natural armor*; +6 *bracers of armor*); Atk +9/+4 melee (1d8+6, +3 *longsword*); AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 16.

**Skills:** Bluff +9, Climb +5, Diplomacy +9, Innuendo +6, Intimidate +9, Jump +5, Listen +4, Ride +8, Sense Motive +6, Spot +4, Swim +8. **Feats:** Dodge, Endurance, Expertise, Mobility, Improved Critical (longsword), Iron Will, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword), Whirlwind Attack.

**Possessions:** +3 longsword, +2 amulet of natural armor, +6 bracers of armor, cloak of elvenkind, ring of mind shielding, pouch with 10 pp, 18 gp, and 13 sp.

**9. Marketplace.** This area serves as the central marketplace or bizarre for Cadon during the spring and summer months. Currently, all of the merchants do business privately until the temperature warms up in early spring.

**10. Blacksmith.** Ghuldar Hammerfeld, a dwarven blacksmith (Exp3; hp 16), owns this medium-sized shop. Although he makes mostly tools and metal parts for caravan wagons, Ghuldar has a small selection of weapons and armor in his back room. In fact, he is an accomplished weaponsmith and armorsmith, and PCs can purchase simple and martial melee weapons and any light or medium armor from Ghuldar.

**11. Apothecary.** Finnvar the Green (Wiz3; hp 7) runs this simple shop. Finnvar sells herbals, poultices, and other simple remedies from this store. He also has a small selection of potions, which the DM can make available for the PCs if it seems like they might need a little extra help.

**12. Ferryman/Boatmaker.** Cunla and his sons Jarreyd and Wyll (Com1; hp 4, 3, 3) run this business. PCs can purchase a barge or small fishing boat from here, or they can hire a boat to ferry them up or down river for 4 sp per day. Of course, winter has dampened business a bit, but Cunla's Ferrying turns a great profit once the trading season reaches full swing.

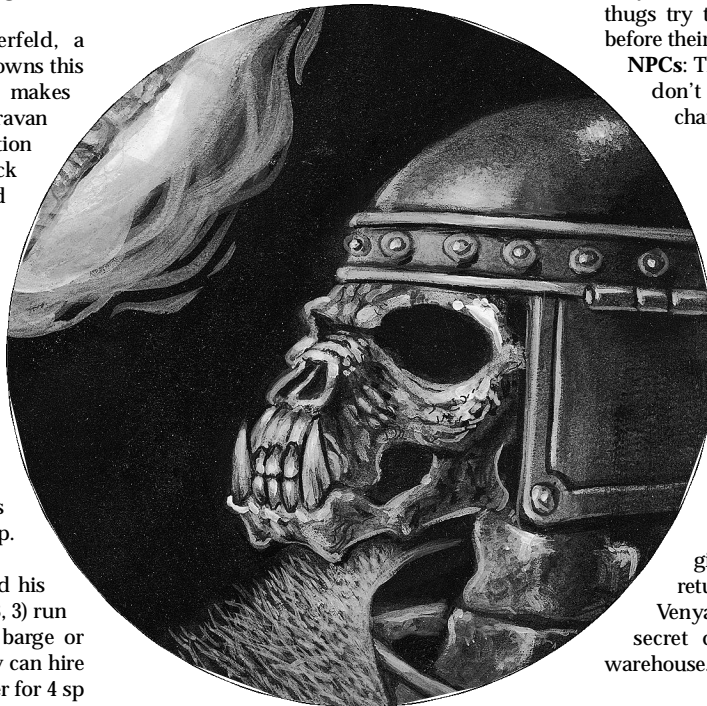
**13. Warden's Home.** Aelric, the Warden of Cadon, lives in this simple stone home. Although he wields much authority, he prefers to live simply, without much fanfare. In fact, Aelric's door is always open, and the PCs find him willing to entertain guests in his home after normal work hours.

**Aelric, male human Ftr6:** CR 6; Medium Humanoid (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 6d10+18; hp 65; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft. (chainmail), base 30 ft.; AC 21 (+2 Dex, +7 armor, +2 shield); Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+5/crit 19–20, longsword); AL LG; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14.

**Skills:** Climb +5, Diplomacy +6, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +5, Jump +4, Listen +2, Ride +7, Sense Motive +2, Swim +4. **Feats:** Cleave, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

**Possessions:** +2 chainmail, large steel shield, +2 longsword, pouch with 2 pp and 7 gp.

**14. Constabulary.** This sturdy stone building houses the town's jails as well as those militia members who serve as Cadon's constables. There are six constables here at any given time, as well as 10 more on patrol (in pairs) throughout the walled hamlet. A pair of con-



stables responds to any altercation within 5 rounds, with additional patrols arriving on scene every 2 rounds after the first until the situation resolves itself. See area 1 for the combat statistics of Cadon's militia.

## Journey to the Orc Lands

The PCs can spend as much time as they need to rest and heal up from their previous travels before setting out with Venya. However, Aelric is quite concerned about the whole situation and inquires every day as to when the party feels ready to begin their trek.

When the PCs are ready, Venya meets them early in the morning. He is tight-lipped and somewhat gruff, but he exudes a quiet

competence. Though the PCs might act suspicious, the treacherous guide does nothing overt to alarm them. However, he is prepared to follow Cordwellyn's orders to the fullest.

The DM should use the Tarn Foothills Encounter Table during this journey.

## Ambush

The journey proceeds normally for two days, as the PCs fight against the bitter cold and icy wind in search of Allayn. However, Venya's cohorts have planned an ambush for the unsuspecting party during the middle of the night. At the appointed time, eight rough-and-tumble hired thugs pour out of the woods, while Venya quaffs his *potion of invisibility* and heads back to town. If possible, the thugs try to silently overpower any guards before their main attack.

**NPCs:** The thugs were hired by Venya and don't know that he works for the merchant Cordwellyn.

**Thugs, male human War1 (8):** CR 1; Medium Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 1d8+2; hp 10 each (includes +3 hp for Toughness); Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +3 armor, +1 small shield); Atk +3 melee (1d6+2, short sword); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 9. **Skills:** Climb +4, Jump +4, Ride +4, Swim +4. **Feats:** Dodge, Toughness.

**Development:** If the PCs survive the battle, they can return to town or press on using the map given to them by Aelric. If the PCs return to town, they do not encounter Venya, as he remains hidden in the secret chambers beneath Cordwellyn's warehouse.

## Battle Site

Once the party travels two full days past the site of the ambush, they enter orc tribal territory. Characters who possess the Track feat and make a successful Wilderness Lore skill check (DC 15) can spot evidence of fairly heavy orc activity (abandoned camps, prints in the snow, and so on) in the area.

After an additional full day of travel, the party arrives at the scene of a grisly battle. The DM should read or paraphrase the following boxed text to the players:

The snow falls in a flurry, swirling around cloaks and stinging faces with its cold kiss. The path you follow winds around the bulge of a large, snow-covered hill. Despite the ground cover, the small track is easy to

follow, leading into a small copse of trees.

As you move into the thick growth of fir trees, the wind suddenly dies, bathing everything in a preternatural silence. The steam of your party's breath rises as you gaze upon a horrifying sight. Several bodies lay strewn about the area, their blue-tinged flesh half buried in swirling snow drifts, their arms and legs pitched as if frozen in the midst of battle. Blood stains much of the snow-covered ground a deep pink, while several broken weapons dot the ground.

A closer examination of this scene reveals the corpses of ten humans and several large, muscular figures with gray skin, lupine ears, and prominent lower canines that resemble tusks. One of the human corpses clutches a bloodstained yellow flag with the picture of a black raven in its center. Anyone in Lord Khulvan's employ, or any character who makes a successful Knowledge (history) check (DC 15), recognizes the flag as the ancestral symbol of the Lords of Dhunraven. A successful Search skill check (DC 10) unearths several scroll cases filled with documents and treaties among the humans' belongings. These humans are obviously members of Allayn's trading delegation. The gray humanoids are orcs of the local barbarian tribes, and any PC familiar with the Tarn Foothills can easily identify them. The orcs each carry somewhat curved longswords made from an ebony-colored metal. These swords are rare weapons, fashioned by the orc's finest weaponsmiths from a sacred ore. In battle, the swords' razor sharp edges inflict an additional point of damage per successful attack, and their great durability grants them a +1 resistance bonus to saving throws.

If the PCs take a closer look at the debris surrounding the site, they can make out the splintered remains of several circular strips of wood (wagon wheels), broken crate tops, and shattered spears and swords. Otherwise, the PCs do not find anything else of value. In addition, the snow has covered up any noticeable tracks.

Although both the human and orc forces obviously died in battle, they did not actually fight each other—despite what the scene depicts. Rather, both of these forces were attacked and destroyed by Cordwellyn's bandits, and their corpses dragged to this site and posed to make it seem as if humans and orcs killed each other. In this way, Cordwellyn and his ally Lord Beoric hope to disrupt Lord Khulvan's relationship with the orcs and distract the noble while his enemies work against him in the Council of Lords.

After about 10 minutes of searching, a group of patrolling orcs approaches the site of battle from the north. Any PC who makes a

successful Listen check can hear the sound of the orcs' mounts as they draw nearer, giving the party about 2 minutes to prepare before the barbarians arrive. Once the patrol reaches the battle site, the DM should read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The wind blows sharply as a group of mounted, gray-skinned humanoids, each covered in thick furs and hides, enters the clearing. At first sight these creatures resemble giants, their thick, corded muscles visible at neck, arm, and leg, but much of this impression stems from the fact that their mounts are far larger than most horses. In fact, a closer look reveals that their mounts are not truly horses but rather some horrifying amalgam of mountain stallion and scaled lizard. Even as the mounted creatures stop and look at the carnage around them, faces glaring at the destruction, their mounts stamp impatiently at the bloodied snow, revealing thick, wicked claws at the end of each "hoof."

One of the largest humanoids spits out something in a harsh, grating tongue, and another one, whose face you can now see contains a number of patterned scars, instantly draws closer while the remaining creatures draw their curved ebony swords.

If the party hears the orcs approaching and takes the time to hide, the humanoids arrive on the scene and prepare to retrieve their fallen comrades, all the while cursing the humans in their guttural tongue. However, after a few rounds the orcs' strange mounts begin to toss their heads wildly and keen in a high-pitched tone; they have smelled the hiding PCs (or have picked up their trail). The barbarians immediately let their mounts track the party; nothing short of magical aid can prevent the orcs and their mounts from discovering the PCs. Once they discover the party, the orcs react as described below.

If the PCs chose not to hide after hearing the barbarians' approach, the creatures move quickly to surround the party, while the leader glares at the PCs. This is Krag, the orc T'achmal. (See the "Orc Tribes" section for more details.) He continues to stare coldly at the characters and demands to know their business, speaking in surprisingly fluent—though guttural—Common.

The orcs are upset at what they perceive as a grave breach of the long-standing treaty between the humans of Dhunraven and the orc barbarian tribes. It is clear, at least to the orcs' point of view, that Lord Dhunraven has broken his word, and the barbarians must begin to defend themselves against the future advances of such a treacherous serpent.

This is a tenuous moment for the party (and the Principality of Dhunraven). It should

be clear to the PCs that the orcs feel threatened and will most likely mobilize their considerable force against the humans of the Tarn Foothills, after executing the trespassing humans. One word or action could tip the scales toward salvation or destruction for the PCs and Lord Khulvan's lands.

If at any time the PCs attack the barbarians or threaten them, they are in for a difficult fight, as the humanoids are fierce warriors who refuse to back down. If a battle does occur, the orcs do not kill the PCs. Rather, they subdue them, carry them close to the border of Dhunraven, and leave them there as a message to Lord Khulvan. See the "Orc Tribes" section for the combat statistics of these creatures, if it becomes necessary.

If the PCs react nonthreateningly and explain what they can of the situation and their mission, Krag listens attentively and then consult with Dreth, the scarred orc V'achmal (or shaman). After a few moments, the orc leader turns back to the PCs and says:

"Your words have the ring of truth, but the People have long felt the bitter sting of treachery from the honeyed tongues of humans. I offer you a choice: Travel as Oathfriends with me to the site of my ancestors' resting place and walk the K'oon Ut Khali or return to that viper's nest at Dhunraven and tell your leader that the People will come, singing the ancient war chants. We shall fall like an avalanche upon his hearth and tribe."

The K'oon Ut Khali, or Path of the Dead, is a series of caverns held sacred by the orc tribes. As individual members of the tribe die, their bones are brought to the caverns and interred within by specially chosen V'achmal. Chieftains, heroes, and other brave orcs sometimes journey to the sacred tunnels in search of guidance, as the Path of the Dead contains the essence of the barbarian tribe's ancestors. Though many orcs have ventured within in the course of centuries, stories tell of only a few who have returned.

By asking the PCs to walk the Path, Krag offers them a way to prove their story. If indeed the PCs speak the truth, then the orcs' ancestors will guide them through the caverns, allowing them to survive the ordeal. If, on the other hand, the party speaks falsely, the vengeance of the orc forerunners will fall upon the PCs, and they will never leave the caverns alive.

If the PCs agree to walk the K'oon Ut Khali, the orcs treat them as honored members of the tribe rather than prisoners, offering them food and companionship until they reach their destination. If the PCs try and escape, the barbarians hunt them down and kill them.

## Orc Tribes

The orcs of the Tarn Foothills possess a complex sense of honor and a rather established nomadic culture. Each of the barbarian tribes consist of several K'mal, or Swords, made up of at least ten orcs. These Swords travel about the tribe's lands, hunting for food and patrolling the sacred areas. One orc takes up the mantle of leadership for the patrol, becoming the T'achmal, or Voice of the Sword. These T'achmal serve the needs of the Sword and carry out the orders of the U'Tekhum, or Great Wise Ones. These chieftains hold the power of life and death over all the members of a particular tribe and act as the earthly representatives of the orcs' ancestors. Finally, certain Swords have a shaman or V'achmal (Eye of the Sword) who travels with them. The shaman guides the Swords' members in rituals of purification, healing, and protection, offering the orcs another link with their Ancestors.

In general, the barbarian tribes are protective of their holy lands and distrustful of strangers. From an early age, young orcs are taught that no life exists outside the tribe, and they carry that teaching with them into adulthood. The barbarians' sense of honor is complex, and they are quick to register an affront to their person (and even quicker in dealing with it). However, once an Outsider earns their respect, he keeps it forever.

No one is sure exactly how many barbarian tribes live within the harsh countryside of the Tarn Foothills, but their ferocity in battle and legendary strength make them formidable enemies. Thankfully, several of Corum's Lords—including Khulvan—have signed peace accords with the orc tribes, facilitating trade and a certain amount of cultural exchange. Currently, the orcs export thick furs, crafted goods, and raw materials such as minerals, furs, and precious metal ores.

Despite their nomadic culture, the orcs possess a certain amount of technology, and they can craft exceptional weapons. In fact, every orc warrior receives a curved longsword and dagger crafted from a mysterious black metal when they become full-fledged members of a K'mal. These wicked-looking "onyx" blades inflict 1 additional point of damage in combat and receive a +1 resistance bonus to all saving throws. Unfortunately, the barbarians do not share this metal, which they call the Bone of the Great Dragon, with Outsiders, and an orc warrior will kill any non-orc who dares to carry a weapon made from this metal.

The barbarians also breed and train the k'argach, fierce mounts that resemble a cross between a horse and a giant lizard. The k'argach are powerful in battle but totally devoted to the orcs. In fact, the creatures only respond to commands made in the orc tongue. Often,

the warriors of a Sword ride these mounts into the fiercest battles, relying on the k'argachs' wicked claws and razor-sharp teeth to rend their opponents.

➤ **Orc barbarians, male and female**  
**Bbn1 (2d8):** CR 1; Medium Humanoid (7 ft. tall); HD 1d12+3; hp 12 each; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (scale mail), base 30 ft.; AC 14 (+4 scale mail); Atk +4 melee (1d8+3/crit 19–20, orcish longsword) or +0 ranged (1d6+3, javelin); SA rage; SQ darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8.

**Skills:** Climb +3, Handle Animal +1, Intimidate +0, Intuit Direction +1, Listen +1, Ride +2, Swim +3, Wilderness Lore +3. **Feats:** Alertness.

**SA—Rage (Ex):** During a rage, the barbarians gain +4 Strength, +4 Constitution (plus 2 hp per level that go away right after the rage), +2 morale bonus on Will saves, and -2 penalty to AC. The rage lasts for 5 rounds, after which time the orcs are fatigued. The orc barbarians can rage once per day.

**SQ—Light Sensitivity (Ex):** Orcs suffer a -1 penalty to attacks rolls in bright sunlight.

T'achmals, the orc subchiefs, are always 3rd- or 4th-level barbarians with all the abilities, skills, and feats associated with 3rd- or 4th-level barbarian characters. V'achmals (shamans) have standard statistics, but they are typically 3rd- or 4th-level adepts instead of barbarians.

➤ **K'argach:** CR 3; Large Beast (7 ft. high); HD 4d10+12; hp 34; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural); Face 5 ft. × 10 ft.; SQ scent; Atk +6 melee (1d6+4 [×2], claws), +1 melee (1d8+4, bite); AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will, +2; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 6.

**Skills:** Listen +7, Spot +7.

**SQ—Scent (Ex):** K'argach can detect opponents within 30 feet by smell. If the creature is downwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if upwind, the range decreases to 15 feet. Scent does not allow the k'argach to pinpoint the location of an opponent, just the general area. Once it gets within 5 feet, however, it can determine a specific location. Strong scents (smoke) carry twice as far, and overpowering scents (skunk musk) carry three times as far. K'argach can also follow a trail with a successful Wisdom check. Fresh trails are DC 10 for this purpose and increases by 2 for every hour the trail ages.

## The Path of the Dead

The actual cavern complex consists of a series of naturally formed chambers leading off of a single large cave opening high on a cliff face. Though initially above the surface, the caverns and tunnels slope sharply down beneath the earth, eventually connecting with a small,

mineral-rich underground lake heated by several vents.

The sacred Path of the Dead lies only two days' northeast of the PCs' initial encounter with the orcs. As mentioned earlier, the barbarians treat the PCs as honored members of the tribe as they travel. Although the Tarn Foothills hold danger even for the native orcs, the creatures possess Wilderness Lore and use this skill to bypass most threats. Thus, the DM need not roll on the encounter table; the journey passes uneventfully.

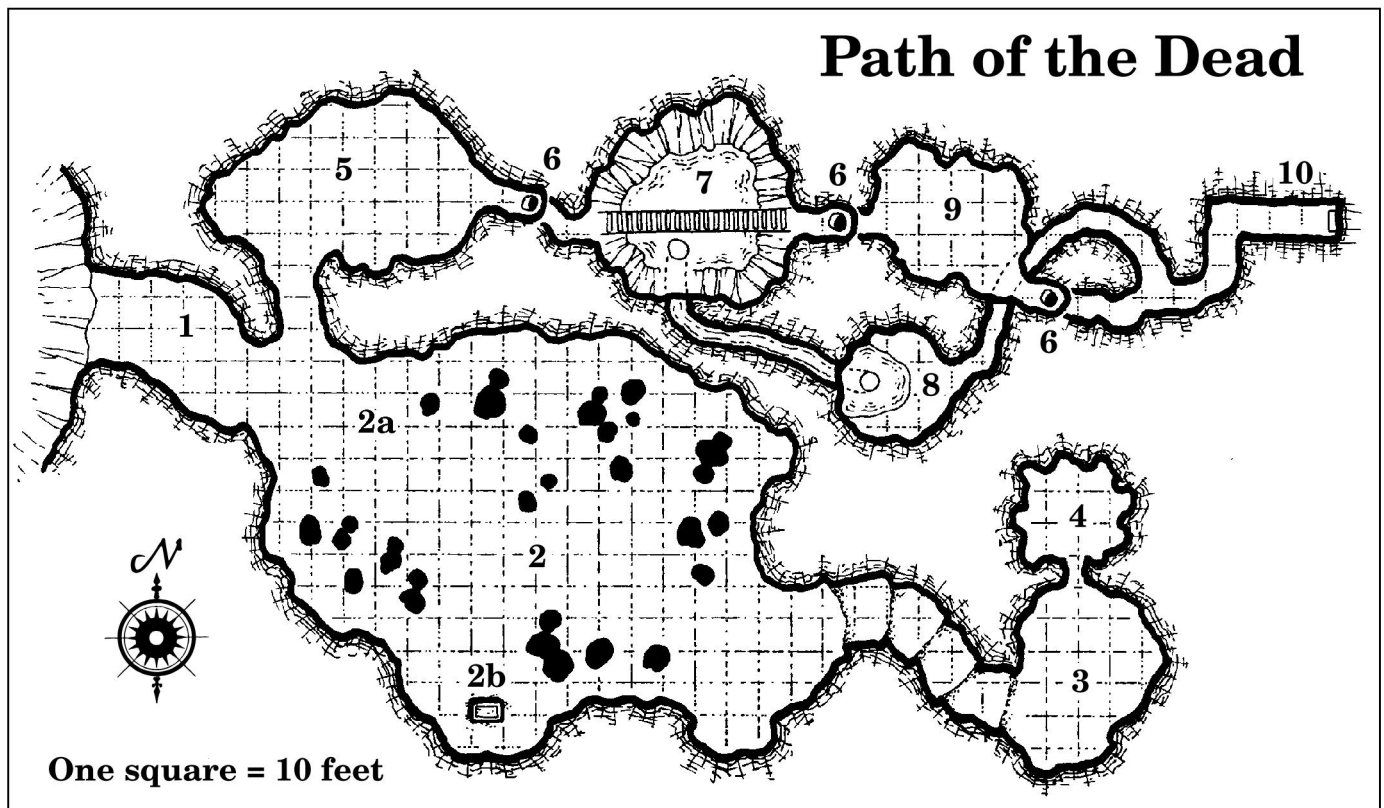
As the PCs reach the cliff opening that leads into the Path of the Dead, Krag explains to them that they must enter the sacred caverns and walk the ancient path without any help from the tribes. However, the orcs stand watch for three days and wait for the PCs' return. If they do not emerge from the cave within that time, the orcs believe that the ancestors rejected the adventurers because they were lying. Krag then assembles a warband and falls upon the Principality of Dhunraven.

Once the PCs are ready to enter the caverns, the barbarians withdraw to the shelter of some nearby trees and begin their vigil. Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The snow-covered trail leads up a steep hill to a cliff face. A jagged hole in the rocky wall, nearly 20 feet above the trail, peers down the hill like a giant's baleful eye. A collection of old vines, their thick, brown stems long-since dead, hang down from the hole. A gust of wind rushes into the gap with a deep-throated moan, swirling powdery snow in a thick cloud.

Finding a way up to the cavern is the PCs' first test. The adventurers can scale the cliff face using grappling hooks and rope, or they can climb the brown vines still prevalent along the rocky outcropping. Although dead, these thick, ropy vines can support any character not wearing medium or heavy metal armor. If such an armored character climbs the vines, there is a 1-in-4 chance for every 10 feet traveled that the vines snap, plunging the unlucky adventurer to the ground; such a fall inflicts normal falling damage (1d6 points per 10 feet fallen). Two successful Climb checks (DC 20) are sufficient to get most characters to the cavern.

**1. Entry.** Once the adventurers reach the cave opening, they discover a lip that leads deeper into the main cavern (described below). The walls, ceiling, and floor of this entry are covered with sandstone draperies, uneven natural shelves, and other dripstone formations. A thick sheet of ice covers all of the surrounding stone, and the PCs can clearly make out thick bones, skulls, and other orc remains



fused into the stone formation by centuries of erosion and calcite buildup.

Although outside light streams into the entryway, the sun's reassuring illumination only reaches about 35 feet into the main cavern. After this, the PCs might require the use of other light sources.

**2. Main Cavern.** The following boxed text describes the general appearance of the main chamber. Since it is unlikely that the PCs can generate enough light to view the entire area all at once, the DM can paraphrase this description to convey the appearance of specific areas of the cavern.

Like the entry cavern, a great deal of sandstone and limestone formations disrupt the regularity of this ancient stone chamber. Stalactites and stalagmites jut up from the floor, while shelving, draperies, boxwork and other flowstone deposits create macabre shadows in the flickering torchlight. Amid the twisting formations, you clearly discern bones and skulls of various shapes and sizes.

A close examination of these remains reveals that they have actually fused with the surrounding rock deposits like the ones in the entry cavern. These bones represent genera-

tions of orcs interred here. Although it is possible for the PCs to chip away stone and free an orc bone or skull, disturbing the barbarians' ancestral remains in this way angers the spirits of these ancient creatures, imposing a -1 luck penalty to all die rolls of the offending PC. Such a penalty remains until removed by a *remove curse* or similar spell.

The floor of the cavern slopes sharply to the east and south, descending farther into the earth. PCs who follow this slope notice a temperature increase. In fact, this cavern system travels close to several underground vents that circulate heat through the lower tunnels. Although ice does not coat these warm areas, moisture does. The walls, ceiling, and floors of these sections are covered with cool water, and several drip pools dot the uneven floor.

**2a. Ice.** This section of the cave is completely coated with ice. In fact, long streams of ice hang down from the stalactites and cover the base of the stalagmites. This icy sheath makes moving through this area dangerous. Because of the ice, PCs must make a Balance check (DC 15) each round they walk on the slippery surface. A failed check indicates that the character in question tumbles to the ground and suffers 1d2 points of damage from the budding stalagmites and uneven rocks of the floor. In addition, the ice makes combat difficult, forc-

ing anyone within the area to make successful Balance checks before each attempted attack. If the check fails, that character falls and is unable to attack that round. Prone characters suffer a -4 penalty to melee attack rolls and are unable to make ranged attacks.

**2b. Shrine.**

A simple stone slab rests on a relatively even section of stone in a large, southern niche. Two large candles sit on the east and west sections of the slab, and a crudely carved statue rests in between them. Behind the altar, fused into the rippled stone wall of the cavern, are three large, glaring orc skulls.

The statue depicts a large, muscular orc with snaky hair and one eye. This figure is the orc god Gruumsh, who watches over the bones of the People's ancestors. The stone slab itself is unremarkable save for a few symbols lightly carved into it. A secret door in the center of the slab's front section contains the **Treasure**; the compartment is neither locked nor trapped, and finding it requires a successful Search skill check (DC 15).

Defacing the altar or statue in any way imposes a -1 luck penalty on all die rolls to the vandalizing character.

**Treasure:** The secret compartment in the stone slab contains two stoppered gourds. If a PC unseals one or both of the gourds, he releases a noxious smell in a 20-foot radius. The gourds contain a thick, viscous substance similar to tar. This tar is actually stirge repellent used by the barbarian shamans when they need to travel past area 5. If the PCs carry an open gourd with them through area 5, they do not suffer any stirge attacks.

**3. Unhappily Ever After.** This chamber contains the remains of all of the barbarian heroes and chieftains who did not survive their quest in these caverns. Because the ancestors found these orcs wanting, they are not buried with the rest of the tribe. Unfortunately, the spirits of these failed heroes sometimes become restless, an event that transforms their corpses into the walking dead. To counteract this, the shamans have carved two glyphs into either side of this chamber's entrance; these wards prevent any undead creature from leaving the chamber. Searching PCs can easily discover the two wards. PCs who search the cave itself find the **Treasure**.

A roughly circular-shaped 3-foot-diameter-hole, located about 8 feet high on the northern wall of this chamber, leads to area 4.

**Creatures:** There are currently four zombies in this area, lying dormant in the northern section of the chamber. They lumber forward as soon as the first PC crosses the boundary of the magical ward and attack.

➤ **Zombies (4):** CR ½; Medium Undead (7 ft. tall); HD 2d12+3; hp 16; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, slam); SQ partial actions only, undead; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 3.

**Feats:** Toughness.

**SQ—Partial Actions Only (Ex):** Zombies have poor reflexes and can perform only partial actions. Thus they can move or attack, but not both in the same round.

**SQ—Undead:** Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

**Treasure:** Searching among the orc remains reveals an onyx dagger (+1 damage bonus/+1 resistance bonus to saving throws) and 120 gp.

**4. Come Into My Parlor.** The hole in the north wall of area 3 is actually the entrance to an angled squeeze. Due to its size, Medium-size PCs must crawl to move within this tight tunnel. The squeeze itself possesses a steep downward slope (about 45 degrees) and extends for nearly 30 feet; its interior is covered with a layer of lukewarm moisture. PCs not anchored to a rope or other stable plat-

form begin to slide shortly after heading down this tunnel, tumbling out into area 4 and suffering 1d4 points of damage. Traveling back up the squeeze presents another problem altogether, as the size of the tunnel and its slope reduce movement to 5 feet per round.

The squeeze opens out into a 90-foot-tall cavern. Although the temperature is considerably warmer in this chamber than anywhere else in the complex, the PCs can hear the high-pitched whip of the winter wind from somewhere above.

The chamber itself is ringed with small ledges and sandstone draperies, making it very easy for an enterprising adventurer to scale its heights (+2 bonus to Climb checks). About 30 feet up are several niches that serve as home to the Creatures below.

If the PCs climb to the top of the cave, they discover a small, 1½-foot hole opening to the surface. A frigid blast of wind whips through the hole.

**Creatures:** Five large spiders lair in this chamber, waiting for winter to release its grip on the Tarn Foothills. The spiders are sensitive to sound and vibration and are easily alerted to the party's presence. Three of these spiders have crawled to a position over the southern tunnel and drop on characters emerging from the southern tunnel, while the other two hang back near their lairs. Note that the spiders are hungry enough to follow fleeing PCs; the spiders do not suffer any movement or attack penalties while within the squeeze.

➤ **Monstrous spiders, small (5):** CR ½; Small Vermin (3-ft. diameter); HD 1d8, hp 7, 5, 8, 4, 6; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 14 (+1 size, +3 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1d4-2, bite); SA poison; SQ web; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 7, Dex 17, Con 10, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 2.

**Skills:** Climb +10, Hide +14\*, Spot +7\*. **Feats:** Weapon Finesse (bite). Monstrous spiders gain a +8 competence bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks when using their webs.

**SA—Poison (Ex):** This spider venom requires the victim to make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 11) one minute after being bitten. If the save fails, the target takes 1d2 points of Strength damage.

**SQ—Web (Ex):** A single strand of a monstrous spider's web is strong enough to support the spider and one creature of the same size.

**Trap:** The spiders have filled the upper portions of this cavern with webs. Anyone moving through them becomes trapped. Trapped characters are considered helpless, and regular melee attacks against held PCs receive a +4 competence bonus. An entangled creature can slip free with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 18) or tear free with a Strength check (DC 24). The webs can also be cut or burned and are considered to have 4 hp.

**Treasure:** Suspended in the northernmost niches 30 feet above the cavern floor are two cocoons and eight egg sacs. Tearing open the cocoons reveals the desiccated corpses of four orcs and two deer. If the PCs search the orc corpses, discover 40 gp, a gourd containing a *potion of cure serious wounds*, an onyx dagger (+1 damage bonus/+1 resistance bonus to saving throws), and a bone scroll case with a divine scroll containing the following spells: 1st—*command*, *divine favor*; 2nd—*delay poison*.

### 5. Stirge Lair.

The ceiling of this cavern is lost in the gloom, while torch and lantern light casts swirling patterns against the uneven walls of this chamber. A persistent sound, like the swishing of a leather cloak, echoes through the chamber. Stretching along the northern half of the cave are the bones of a monstrous, serpentine creature with dozens of chitinous legs. A thick coating of ice covers the creature's remains.

The bones are the remains of a remorhaz that died here ages ago. (The remains suggest that the creature was about 40 feet long.) PCs searching the bones find nothing of value.

Except for the presence of the remorhaz remains and the **Creatures** below, this cavern is unremarkable.

**Creatures:** The strange rustling sound is in fact the movement of stirges as they flit about their cavern lair. These creatures are hungry for blood and attack any living creatures in the cavern. Once a PC enters the area, four stirges fly down and attack, and two more arrive each round (to a maximum of twelve). This could be a potentially deadly encounter for the party unless they have found the stirge repellent in area 2b and open the gourds. The stirges do not attack if the PCs travel through the area with the opened gourds.

If the PCs possess the gourds but do not use them during this battle, the DM can throw a hint their way. The stirges do not attack a character carrying a sealed gourd, as they can smell the foul stuff even through the seal. Allow one of the PCs to notice this fact during the battle.

➤ **Stirges (12):** CR ½; Tiny Beast (2 foot wingspan); HD 1d10; hp 5 each; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft.; AC 16 (+2 size, +4 Dex); Atk +6 touch (1d3, touch); Face 2½ ft × 2½ ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SA attach, blood drain; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 3, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 6.

**Skills:** Hide +14. **Feats:** Weapon Finesse (touch).

**SA—Attach (Ex):** If a stirge hits with a touch attack, it uses its eight pincers to latch onto the opponent's body. An attached stirge loses its Dexterity bonus to AC.

**SA—Blood Drain (Ex):** A stirge drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage each round it remains attached. Once it has drained 4 points of Constitution, it detaches and flies off to digest the meal.

**6. Tight Squeeze.** These areas represent small, 3-foot-diameter tubes that drop almost vertically down to the next cavern level. Like the squeeze in area 4, these tubes present movement obstacles to the PCs. The size of the tubes forces any Medium-sized PC to crawl in order to move down its surface. Furthermore, PCs must rope themselves to a stable object to avoid sliding down the shaft (landing for 1d4 points of damage). Unless pulled by an outside force, PCs traveling up the tubes move only 5 feet per round.

**7. Bridge Over Troubled Waters.**

The small shaft leads right down onto a small ledge overlooking a steep chasm. Below lies the slowly churning waters of an underground lake, their every ripple sending out a deep blue glow. A 10-foot-wide wooden bridge spans the chasm, connecting to another ledge about 40 feet away.

The bridge is made of wood planks, and it has strong rope “handrails” on either side. The shamans use this bridge to traverse the chasm to reach area 9 and commune with the Eldest. Unfortunately, three darkmantles (see **Creatures** below) have moved into this cavern and have positioned themselves directly above the center of the bridge. They drop on any PCs who cross the bridge.

The lake water itself is quite warm, as several underground vents feed it; PCs need not worry about hypothermia or other cold-related ailments while in the water. However, adventurers must still make successful Swim checks (DC 10) each round to remain afloat.

The blue glow within the lake comes from phosphorescent algae that has grown due to the warm temperature and mineral-rich nature of the water. Although the glow is fairly bright, it is nonetheless harmless. In addition, a great number of small fish dart about the small underwater lake; despite their numbers, they show no interest in attacking or harming any swimming PCs.

A hidden tunnel lies within a rocky outcropping on the lake floor near the south wall of the chasm. The phosphorescent glow seems stronger near this area, and PCs within 10 feet can spot the tunnel if they make a successful Spot check (DC 10). The tunnel itself is about 5 feet in diameter and completely filled with water; it twists and turns for about 80 feet, eventually wending its way straight up and opening into area 8.

**Creatures:** Anyone struck by a darkmantle must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 15). Failure indicates that the force of the attack knocks the unfortunate PC off the bridge and into the lake below. Although the water cushions the 30-foot fall, PCs who tumble off the bridge suffer 1d3 points of subdual damage. The one bright side to falling into the water is that any darkmantles that fall with the grabbed PC release their hold in the water.

➔ **Darkmantles (3):** CR 1; Small Magical Beast (4 ft. diameter); HD 1d10+1; hp 6 each; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft., fly 30 ft. (poor); AC 17 (+1 size, +6 natural); Atk +4 melee (1d4+4, slam); SA improved grab, *darkness*, constrict 1d4+4; SQ blindsight; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 16, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 10.

**Skills:** Hide +11, Listen +5. **Feats:** Improved Initiative. Darkmantles receive a +4 racial bonus to Listen checks. This bonus is lost if Blindsight is negated.

**SA—Improved Grab (Ex):** The darkmantle must hit with its slam attack. If it gets a hold, it can constrict.

**SA—Darkness (Su):** Once a day, a darkmantle can cause *darkness* as the spell cast by a 5th-level sorcerer. It often uses this ability just before attacking.

**SA—Constrict (Ex):** A darkmantle deals 1d4+4 damage with a successful grapple check.

**SQ—Blindsight (Ex):** Darkmantles can “see” prey within 90 feet by emitting high-frequency sounds that are inaudible to most other creatures. A *silence* spell negates this ability and effectively blinds the darkmantle.

**8. Hidden Cavern.**

The tunnel opens into a cavern roughly 40 feet in diameter. The walls, floor, and ceiling of this area are covered with phosphorescent blue algae. Water drips from stalactites and collects in small drip basins dotting the floor. In the center of the chamber lies a skeleton, completely limed over, and the ragged remains of a leather sack. An opening in the floor, similar to the one you used to enter this chamber, leads off somewhere to the northeast.

This chamber is usually filled with water; thus the existence of the blue algae. However, underwater tides pull the water back for about 4 hours each day. The skeleton in the center of the chamber is all that remains of an orc hero who pursued his own dreams in the Path of the Dead. A close examination of the orc reveals that its ribs have been smashed. PCs who search the skeleton also find the **Treasure** (described below).

The PCs have about 3 hours before the water begins to fill this cavern. Once the tidal

process begins, it takes only 2 more hours for water to fill this cave completely. Once this area is submerged in water, the tunnel leading northeast also fills with water. PCs submerged in this water take normal damage from the extreme cold. (See the “Ice Storm” description in the “Random Encounter Table” for the effects of extreme cold.)

The tunnel opening to the north is set into the floor of the cave, and it leads into a roughly 4-foot-diameter tunnel that twists and turns, gradually wending upward and opening into the passage near area 10.

**Treasure:** The skeleton wears a simple silver ring (actually a *+1 ring of deflection*) that the PCs can chip free from its limed finger. The skeleton also grasps an onyx longsword (+1 damage bonus/+1 resistance bonus to saving throws). The rotted bag contains 300 gp, a rotted 50-foot rope, rusty spikes, and a necklace of hobgoblin teeth.

**9. Trapped Cavern.** The floor of this cavern is unstable. Any PC who drops directly into this cave from area 7 finds himself in the midst of a series of natural pit traps. For every foot a character travels, there is a 1-in-3 chance that the cavern floor gives way in a 5-foot radius, plunging the character 20 feet down into a small (but deep) water-filled pit. Falling characters suffer 1d6 points of damage and must make a successful Swim check (DC 10) each round to stay afloat. In addition, after 1 round of exposure to the icy waters, PCs become affected by the extreme cold. (See the “Ice Storm” in the “Random Encounters” sidebar for the effects.)

The shamans know about this cavern and use the folded stone draperies and other formations within this cavern to climb around the outskirts of the chamber, avoiding any contact with the floor. If the PCs take the time to examine this room and make successful Search checks (DC 20), they can clearly make out a number of formations that would allow them to climb the walls of the chamber. Crossing the cavern by hopping across these formations requires a successful Climb skill check (DC 10).

**10. Mysterious Door.**

The tunnel ends before a massive stone door. Spidery lettering sweeps across the face of the door, seeming to twist and turn even as your eye fixes upon it!

This door represents the final challenge for the characters. Once they unearth its secrets, they will have finished their journey on the Path of the Dead! If anyone looks closely at the writing, the spidery script actually transforms into a riddle penned in the reader’s native language:

*I AM THE BEGINNING OF EVERY END  
AND THE END OF EVERY LIFE.*

The answer to this riddle is the letter “e” (the first letter in “end” and the last letter in “life”). The door does not open regardless of what magic the PCs use until someone speaks the answer to the riddle. If anyone answers the riddle, the spidery script disappears and the door swings open.

When the PCs walk through the door, they find themselves entering a strange hut. A fire burns in a stone hearth, and all around the simple mud-and-wattle structure hang herbs and other plants in varying states of drying. An ancient orc, withered and obviously blind, sits near the hearth and turns toward the PCs when they enter, saying:

“Hail heroes of Dhunraven. I have waited a long time. You have done what few of the People have ever accomplished. I am the Eldest, first among the People, and you have my blessing.

“You have come seeking something precious. I am allowed to answer one question. Speak your need.”

By walking through the door, the PCs have actually traveled to a small demiplane on the Ethereal Plane. This demiplane, the home of the Eldest, spans only the size of the crone’s simple hut. If any PC deliberately walks out of the door, he finds himself floating in the Deep Ethereal.

The Eldest is a demigod of the orc barbarian people and a servant to their ancestors. If the PCs speak with the Eldest at length, they discover that she can answer any one question the party puts to her. If the PCs ask about the location of Allayn, the crone frowns and says that the fledgling is trapped near the Shaman’s Crown. If the party asks a different question, the Eldest answers it truthfully. After answering the question, she smiles benignly and instructs the PCs that it is time for them to return. When the PCs walk through the door this time, they find themselves in area 1. If the PCs are foolhardy enough to attack the crone, she simply smiles and *teleports* the party out into the Deep Ethereal.

If the DM uses prophecy as a key focus for her campaign, she can easily use the Eldest as a mouthpiece for prophetic instruction. The PCs can carry this prophecy back to the orc tribes, thereby finding themselves involved in an ancient struggle against evil (or another such destiny).

### Path of the Dead Conclusions

Once the PCs leave the cavern after speaking with the Eldest, the waiting orcs greet them



with much rejoicing. Krag, the leader of the patrol, acknowledges the truthfulness of the PCs’ story and recognizes each of them as a member of the barbarian tribe during a night of celebration. If the PCs relate the information given them by the Eldest, Krag nods and offers to send a guide to lead the party to the Shaman’s Crown. Unfortunately, he explains that the Crown lies in the territory of another orc tribe, and thus he cannot send any warriors with the PCs, as that could be seen as an act of war.

If for some reason the PCs did not ask the Eldest about Allayn’s location, Krag offers the information to the PCs as fellow members of the tribe (unless the DM wishes to demonstrate the consequences of their actions).

The end section of this adventure contains encounters that might be too difficult for under-powered parties. If the DM believes that the PCs might need a bit of help surviving the assault on Allayn’s kidnappers, she should award experience at this point in the adventure, allowing any eligible PCs to gain a level. In addition to normal XP awards, the

DM can give PCs who completed this section of the adventure 750 XP each as a story award (1,000 XP if none of the PCs kept any orc treasure found in the caves).

### The Shaman’s Crown

The journey to the Shaman’s Crown takes two days on foot and occurs without any encounters, as the orc guide leading the party possesses an intimate familiarity with the land and its dangers. The Shaman’s Crown is a large hill nestled up against a rock face with several natural formations atop it that resemble a crown. An ancient culture once hollowed out a good section of the hill and used it as a barrow for a great chieftain. Over the centuries, many mundane creatures have used the ancient tomb as a lair.

Currently, a group of bandits secretly supported by the merchant Cordwellyn use the simple system of dirt and stone tunnels as a base of operation whenever Lord Khulvan’s wardens begin to take too much of an interest in their activities.





The bandits marched the kidnapped Allayn and the trade delegation's goods into this hidden base to wait for Morgrissa, an evil priestess and Lord Beoric's agent. Morgrissa has recently arrived and plans to take Allayn back to her order's fortified temple on Corum's east coast, so the PCs must make their move quickly.

### The Brigands

The brigands inhabiting the Shaman's Crown are a motley bunch of outcast gnolls and humans; the brigands take their orders from Barrath, an orc exiled from one of the local tribes. Barrath rules with an iron fist, quick to draw his sword against any who challenge his authority. However, Morgrissa's arrival has forced the orc leader to reevaluate his position, for the menacing priestess has quickly taken charge of this unorganized lot and imposed a certain level of fear and discipline on the band. Now, Barrath finds himself taking orders from the evil cleric—at least until she leaves with Allayn.

**Creatures:** To simplify this section of the adventure, the statistics for every creature within the Shaman's Crown appear below. The DM should refer to these statistics if the PCs encounter the brigands in combat.

➔ **Gnolls (3):** CR 1; Medium-Size Humanoid (7½ feet tall); HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (scale mail), base 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 natural, +4 armor, +2 shield); Atk: +3 melee (1d8+2/ crit ×3, battleaxe) or +1 ranged (1d8/crit 19–20, light crossbow); SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 8.

**Skills:** Listen +3, Spot +3. **Feats:** Power Attack.

**Possessions:** Scale mail, large wooden shield, battleaxe, light crossbow with 6 bolts, pouch containing 3 gp.

♠ **Bandits, male human War1 (7):** CR 1; Medium Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 1d8+2; hp 7 each; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft. (scale mail), base 30 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +4 armor, +1 shield); Atk +3 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20, longsword) or +3 ranged (1d8/crit 19–20, light crossbow); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9.

**Skills:** Climb +4, Handle Animal +1, Intimidate +1, Jump +4, Ride +3, Swim +3. **Feats:** Dodge.

**Possessions:** Scale mail, small wooden shield, longsword, light crossbow with six bolts, pouch containing 1 gp and 10 sp.

➔ **Barrath, male orc Bbn3:** CR 3; Medium Humanoid (7 ft. tall); HD 3d12+6; hp 32; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft. (chainmail), base 30 ft.; AC

18 (+1 Dex, +5 armor, +2 shield); Atks +7 melee (1d8+4/crit ×3, +1 battleaxe) or +4 ranged (1d8/crit 19–20, light crossbow); SA rage; SQ darkvision 60 ft., uncanny dodge; light sensitivity; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

**Skills:** Climb +5, Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +6, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +5, Listen +3, Ride +4, Swim +5, Wilderness Lore +5. **Feats:** Cleave, Power Attack.

**SA—Rage (Ex):** During a rage, Barrath gains +4 Strength, +4 Constitution (plus 2 hp per level that go away right after the rage), +2 morale bonus on Will saves, and –2 penalty to AC. The rage lasts for 7 rounds, after which time Barrath is fatigued. Barrath can rage once per day.

**SQ—Light Sensitivity (Ex):** Orcs suffer a –1 penalty to attacks rolls in bright sunlight.

**SQ—Uncanny Dodge (Ex):** Barrath retains his Dexterity bonus to AC if caught flat-footed or if attacked by an invisible being.

**Possessions:** Chainmail, large shield, +1 battleaxe, light crossbow with twenty bolts, pouch with 2 gp, 8 sp, and 9 cp.

Barrath is a mean-tempered, bloodthirsty orc outcast who viciously defends his authority. In fact, the only thing he hates worse than snooping PCs is Morgrissa. It is possible for the PCs to exploit his hatred for the evil cleric. In fact, Barrath might strike a deal if it guaranteed his survival and Morgrissa's death.

♠ **Morghissa, female human Clr5:** CR 5; Medium Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 5d8+15; hp 37; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft. (banded mail), base 30 ft.; AC 19 (+1 Dex, +6 armor, +2 shield); Atk +4 melee (1d8+2, +1 heavy mace); SQ command undead; ALLE; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 14.

**Skills:** Concentration +10, Diplomacy +5, Heal +6, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +5, Spellcraft +4, Spot +5. **Feats:** Combat Casting, Expertise, Improved Trip.

**Spells (5/4/3/2):** 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, inflict minor wounds, light, resistance*; 1st—*cure light wounds, darkness, sanctuary, shield of faith*; 2nd—*aid, charm person, hold person*; 3rd—*blindness, prayer*.

**Domain Spells:** 1st—*protection from good*; 2nd—*shatter*; 3rd—*contagion*. (Morgrissa's domains are Destruction and Evil.)

**SQ Command Undead (Su):** Morgrissa can command undead five times per day.

**Possessions:** Banded mail, large shield, +1 heavy mace, ring of warmth.

Morghissa is a coldly beautiful priestess with long, flaming-red hair. Morgrissa despises her current assignment, believing that it is beneath a cleric of her station. Thus, she takes out her frustration and anger on Barrath, the brigands, and Allayn. Morgrissa worships the god of destruction, Hextor.

## The Rescue

Although the brigands are usually lax in keeping watch, Morgrissa's arrival has precipitated a strong interest in guard duty—after all, none of the brigands want to run afoul of the icy priestess. Thus, the guards in area 1 are difficult to surprise. PCs approaching area 1 must make a Hide skill check opposed by the bandits' Spot skill checks and a Move Silently skill check opposed by the bandits' Listen skill checks. At night, the PCs can add a +5 circumstance bonus to their Hide rolls.

**1. Guarded Room.** This large, irregular dirt chamber serves as the bandits' initial sentry point. In fact, the bandits have punched out a small section of the hillside on either side of the entrance so that they can gain a clear view of anyone or anything approaching from below. Because the gnolls and humans spend a lot of time in this area, the chamber contains a good deal of half-finished meals, musty furs, and several small firepits.

**Creatures:** Two humans stand watch during the day, while two gnolls keep watch at night. If the bandits detect the approach of strangers, one of them heads to area 3 to gather reinforcements (which arrive the following round). The gnolls, if present, fire their light crossbows through the small "arrow slits" on each side of the entrance. Any remaining defenders stand on either side of the entrance, ready to attack any creature that walks through the natural opening.

**Treasure:** Strewn throughout the area is a small collection of coins worth a total of 35 cp.

**2. Storage Chamber.** This uneven chamber serves as the bandits' makeshift treasury. Inside this chamber, the thieves have stacked crates of valuables lifted from various caravans—including the one Allayn traveled with. A close inspection of the crates reveals many with Cordwellyn's symbol upon them. The crates contain dried, non-perishable food (some of these already pried open by the bandits), wool, non-metal armor (leather, hide, and so on), and a variety of other "textiles."

**Creatures:** If the bandits are aware of the party's presence, two human brigands take cover behind a wall of crates (three-quarters cover, providing them with a +7 cover bonus to AC and a +3 cover bonus to Reflex saving throws) and fire their light crossbows at the invaders. The brigands close with their short swords once they run out of crossbow bolts.

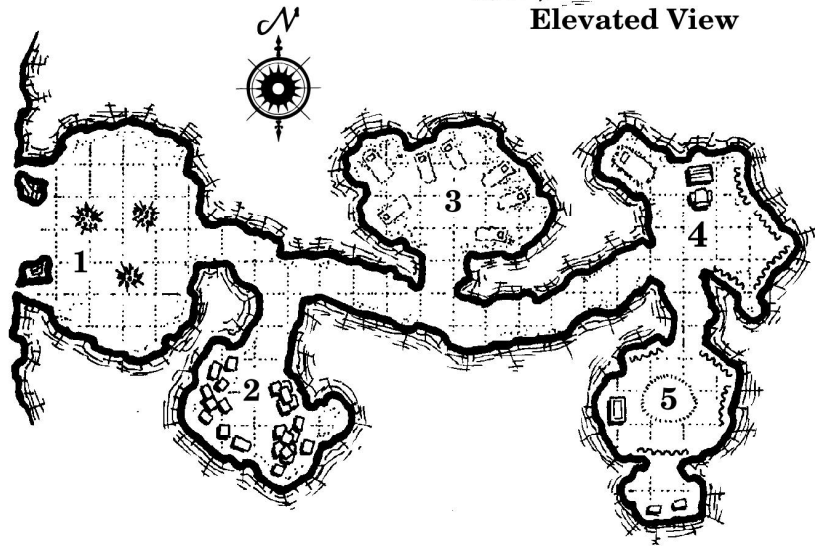
**Treasure:** One of the bandits has quietly skimmed some booty "off the top" and has hidden it in a large sack behind one of the crates. A successful Search check (DC 20) reveals this hidden cache. The leather sack contains 45 pp, 20 gp, 50 sp, a +1 dagger, and a *potion of clairvoyance*.

## Shaman's Crown

One square = 10 feet



Elevated View



**3. Sleeping Quarters.** This rough chamber contains a number of small firepits and crude bedding. Musty furs, filth-covered straw, and other detritus fill the area. However, one area in the northwest section of the chamber stands out because of its tidy aspect. A thick rug covers the hard dirt floor, and several rich furs lie neatly piled around a medium-sized firepit. This area is Barrath's sleeping area. Although he previously slept apart from the other brigands, Morgrissa displaced him when she arrived; see area 4 for more details.

**Creatures:** Any human and gnoll bandits not encountered elsewhere are found here.

**4. Priestess's Chamber.** Morgrissa kicked Barrath out of this room and currently uses it as her sleeping quarters and planning area. Dirt floors, walls, and ceilings give way to solid stone. Thick tapestries cover most of the walls, while several candles burn throughout. This area also contains several thick furs piled in the northwest section and a small, crudely fashioned table and chair. Several rolled pieces of parchment rest upon the table.

Most of the parchments contain details on caravan movement, and some contain actual caravan inventories. One of the papers, however, contains a note from Lord Beoric to Cordwellyn. Barrath plans to send one of the human bandits to Cadon to deliver the message. It reads:

C,

*We've secured Lord Khulvan's trade goods, and I'm told we've even captured his nephew, Allayn. That and the massacre should disrupt Khulvan's negotiations with the orc barbarians. While Khulvan contends with the incensed orcs, I will tighten my hold over the Council of Lords and use my newfound influence to fatten your coffers. I have dispatched a competent emissary, Morgrissa, to insure safe delivery of the trade goods. I'm placing the fate of Khulvan's whelp in her ruthless hands.*

B

If the PCs give this note to Aelric or Lord Khulvan, they might have evidence that implicates both Lord Beoric and Cordwellyn in Allayn's kidnapping. (See the "Concluding the Adventure" section for more details.)

If the PCs move the pile of furs in the northwest alcove, they discover a small, natural hole in the floor. The hole contains a small sack holding Morgrissa's personal **Treasure**. The sack has a **Trap** placed on it.

**Creatures:** If alerted to the presence of intruders, Morgrissa and Barrath retreat to area 5. Otherwise, the PCs find Morgrissa in this room (without her armor), arguing with Barrath about the feasibility of transporting Allayn in his current state.

**Trap:** The sack has a *glyph of warding* inscribed upon it. Anyone who opens the bag

without uttering speaking the name “Hextor” suffers 3d8 points of cold damage.

↖ **Glyph of warding:** CR 2; 5-ft. cold blast (2d8); Reflex save halves damage (DC 16); Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

**Treasure:** The sack contains three gems (worth 100 gp each), a scroll with *cure serious wounds* and *desecrate* inscribed upon it, and a *potion of alter self*.

**5. Shrine.** Morgrissa has converted this stone chamber into a primitive shrine, painting several glyphs and sigils on the floor and using a natural stone rise near the west wall as a makeshift altar dedicated to her dark god. In addition, several large candles burn in this room and a thick fur rug sits in the center of the chamber, surrounded by several sticks of foul-smelling incense. (Anyone who burns this incense must make a successful Fortitude saving throw or suffer a –2 luck penalty to all dice rolls for 1 hour.) Several dark tapestries cover the crude walls of this chamber.

If Morgrissa is aware of the party, she and Barrath move into this shrine, where she dons her armor while Barrath guards the doorway. Once ready, the cleric casts *aid* on Barrath, followed by *prayer* and *shield of faith* on herself. She then braces for a fight.

A concealed entrance behind one of the tapestries leads into a small, foul-smelling chamber. This is Allayn’s prison room. The poor young noble lies bound, gagged, and bloody in a pile of rotten food and other waste. Behind him rest two locked chests. Morgrissa carries the keys to the chests.

**Trap:** Both chests are trapped with poison needles. A character pricked by a needle must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) or take 1 point of Constitution damage immediately. After one minute, a second Fortitude saving throw is required or the character falls unconscious.

↖ **Poisoned needle:** CR 1; poison (1 Con/unconsciousness); Fortitude saving throw negates (DC 14); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

**Treasure:** The chests hold the gold and other valuables intended for the orc tribes (worth 3,000 gp total). These chests belong to Lord Khulvan.

Allayn is quite damaged (0 hit points), but curative spells or other measures soon bring him around. He is quite frightened but thankful that the party has come to rescue him. Although Morgrissa spent much time tormenting him, the young noble does not know the motives behind his kidnapping. Once the bandits brought him here, Barrath (and then Morgrissa) made sure that no one else spoke to him.

## Concluding the Adventure

Once the PCs rescue Allayn, the PCs can meet up with their barbarian guide and travel back to Krag’s tribal lands. With Allayn overcome by his trying ordeal, enterprising PCs can use their status as members of the tribe to secure the trade agreements that Lord Khulvan desires for his principality.

When the PCs return to Cador with Allayn, Warden Aelric greets them with much joy and orders a celebration in their honor. While outwardly glad of the young noble’s rescue, Cordwellyn fumes and plots in secret. The PCs have just ruined a very profitable business arrangement, and the thieving merchant wants his revenge. Between Cordwellyn and Lord Beoric, the PCs have made some very powerful enemies.

## Further Adventures

If the DM wishes, she can set several more adventures in and around Cador. The following list presents a few possibilities for such adventures:

↖ If the PCs discovered the letter from Lord Beoric to Cordwellyn, they might view the merchant with much-deserved suspicion. However, the letter presents only circumstantial evidence. PCs digging around for more hard evidence might find Cordwellyn’s secret

chambers beneath the warehouse (area 3 on the Cador map). The PCs could explore those chambers, uncovering a few of Cordwellyn’s deepest secrets and encountering Venya, the traitorous guide.

↖ Angered by the PCs’ intervention into his plan, Cordwellyn hires assassins to kill the PCs. If the PCs travel with Allayn back to Dhunraven, the assassins attack on the road. Otherwise, they trail the party and attack at an unlikely moment.

↖ Several months after this adventure, the hobgoblin tribes of the Tarn Foothills mass for an impending attack on Cador. Worried that these humanoids might have ultimate designs on other towns in the principality, Lord Khulvan sends the PCs into the foothills to determine the hobgoblins’ strength and possible tactics. While there, the PCs can reconnoiter the hobgoblins’ main lair. During their infiltration, they discover that an agent of Lord Beoric leads the humanoids. (Perhaps this agent is a member of the same dark priesthood as Morgrissa.) After the PCs foiled Beoric’s original plan, the cunning noble chose a more direct route to disrupt Lord Khulvan’s principality. In any event, the PCs must discover the invaders’ plans and try and neutralize the hobgoblins’ leader.

↖ If the PCs defeated the hobgoblins from the “Irontooth Ambush” section, but they did not destroy Grath, the enraged shaman prepares a larger attack force to overrun the town of Cador, enlisting the aid of a few ogres and perhaps a hill giant or two, if the PCs are particularly powerful.

↖ As members of an orc barbarian tribe, the PCs are called upon by Krag to investigate an old, abandoned temple somewhere near the tribe’s sacred lands. Apparently, several patrolling Swords have reported strange activity in the long-silent ruins. If the PCs investigate, they discover that a small band of lycanthropes have moved in to the temple, and their prying has awakened an ancient evil—though the details of this are left up to the dictates of the DM’s campaign.