

KEEP ON THE SHADOWFELL

REVISION BY JUSTIN ALEXANDER

Thanks to: Smerg, EnigmaShock at the WotC forums

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

You are known as rune warriors. Each of you was born with a runic birthmark somewhere on your bodies. The runes are believed to be marks of the gods or the fates, and under ancient Imperial Law, it was required that the runeborn be given into the care of the Order of the Rune. The Empire is gone now, but the Order still seeks out the runeborn.

You are members of a *balatek*. You were raised together, trained together, and prepared against the day when you would journey forth into the world and use your unique gifts and talents to fulfill the Order's mission.

Historically, the Order's mission has been to "help the common people". But since the Empire's fall, the Order has been forced to find many different patrons throughout the world. (To a large extent, the Order has fragmented just like the remnants of the Empire have fragmented.)

Which is why, as a young *balatek*, you find yourselves seeking Winterhaven – a tiny village on the edge of civilization. The last heir of a minor noble family has died. The heir's great-uncle, Sir Caliban, was a knight banished for transgressions of the chivalric code. Mystic divinations indicate that the knight's son – the current heir of the noble house – lives in Winterhaven.

You traveled more than a thousand leagues, but your journey had only just begun: It took you many months of questioning, in city after city and village after village, before you finally found someone who knew of the village of Winterhaven. They described the village as "lying in the shadow of the Cairngorms". The ancient and (as you discovered) wildly inaccurate maps the Order had given you indicated that the Cairngorm Peaks lay even further to the west.

Now, at last, you are drawing near to your goal: You are on the King's Road (although there has been no king in these parts in living memory), traveling west towards Winterhaven.

SIGNS AND PORTENTS

- double rainbow at the waterfall that is swallowed by darkness
- Lord Padraig's face melting away
- Touching the statue of Tiamat
- Sleeping in the Keep
- First time coming up out of the Keep, they'll see visions of Keegan's murderous rampage before they fade away back into the ruins

ON THE ROAD: KOBOLD BRIGANDS

STARTING LOCATIONS

Minions: Put all the kobold minions and hide them behind the western boulders where they can't be seen before the ambush is sprung.

Slingers: Put the slinger in this patch of forest just to the west of the boulders (where he benefits from cover, but can shoot at the PCs freely).

Dragonshields: To the east of the boulders, there is a forest south of the road. Put both dragonshields inside this forest.

TRIGGER

Perception check (DC 19) to notice the dragonshields in the woods. (Active if they're specifically watching for an ambush; passive otherwise.)

Detect Dragonshields: Encounter starts when they get within 30 feet of where the dragonshields are hiding.

Ambushed: Encounter starts when they reach the easternmost boulders.

TACTICS

PCs Surprised: The minions will swarm out and engage them. The dragonshields emerge from the forest onto the road behind them, cutting off their escape. The slinger begins shooting them from the cover of the forest.

PCs Not Surprised: The minions will come to the dragonshields' defense. The slinger will emerge from cover, move close enough to attack, and begin firing.

ARRIVING AT WINTERHAVEN

You continue down the King's Road to Winterhaven. After another mile, you see smoke on the horizon. A little while later you round a corner in the road and look down into a clearing: A small farmhouse has been burnt to the ground, its ruins still sending a trail of smoke into the air.

Over the next few miles you see several more isolated farms like this one, all destroyed.

Abruptly you find yourself at the end of the King's Road: It crosses a north-south road and then runs up a broad hill that holds a walled village that must be Winterhaven. The village is nestled in the southern foothills of the Cairngorm Peaks. The walls are weathered stone topped by defensive palisades.

To the south and the west you can see rolling farmland with small, thatched homes fronting a small pasture or crop. Beyond the farms lie dark woods and, to the north, tall mountain peaks.

LOCAL GEOGRAPHY

FARMS: There are a couple dozens farms in the area immediately around Winterhaven (primarily to the south and west of the city). However, most of the local farmers are located about five miles southwest of the city.

TRADE: There is a large city (Fallcrest) about three dozen leagues distant along the King's Road to the east and a smaller city (Wintermist) on the road north out of Winterhaven. As a result, the village is something of a natural nexus for trade – despite being located in the shadow of the Cairngorm Peaks.



WINTERHAVEN – STREETWISE

STREETWISE – SITUATION IN WINTERHAVEN

DC	RESULT
10	The residents of Winterhaven area seem cautious, even suspicious. They don't seem particularly welcoming to outsiders.
15	The kobolds have been attacking travelers on the roads regularly. A few weeks ago livestock started being stolen. Just over the past few days, however, several isolated farms have been attacked and destroyed. Those lucky enough to survive such attacks have fled to the village. Eilian the Old, an elderly farmer and local prognosticator, happily tells anyone he warms up – by which I mean anyone who buys him a drink – that this type of raiding has happened before... but he also admits it's never been this bad before.
20	They aren't talking about it, but people are worried that things are about to get a lot worse. Farmers from the southern farms haven't been coming to market. Food is running out. Salvana Wrafton, the local innkeeper, denies that there are any problems... but there's a worried look in her eye and a nervous glance towards her pantry.

STREETWISE – KEEP ON THE SHADOWFELL

DC	RESULT
10	There's a ruined keep on the road to the north – halfway up the Cairngorms. It's an old Imperial outpost. It's been abandoned for years now.
15	Salvana Wrafton: "The keep? It's just northeast of the village, along the north road. But no one goes that way. Too dangerous! Monsters of all sorts! Ghosts and vampires, I hear. Nothing anyone who values their life would get anywhere near."
20	Bairwin Wildarson: "You need to be careful if you head over that way. I was traveling that road on my way back from Wintermist about a month ago, and I saw goblins crawling about in the ruins. I have no idea where they might have come from. We haven't had goblins in these parts in years."
25	Valthrun: "The keep was built during the height of the Empire of Nerath. Some sort of watchtower. Some say it was to guard against giant marauders out of the Stonemarch, but other sources seem to disagree. Whatever the case might be, the keep outlived its usefulness. It's been a ruin since before I was born. But you've whetted my appetite. I'll look through my library. Check back with me in a day or so."

VALTHRUN FOLLOW-UP: The Keep was built as an outpost of the Empire of Nerath, most likely to guard against the giant tribes living in the northern reaches of the Stonemarch. Many such outpost survived the fall of the empire, but not the Keep: Only two short decades after the empire withdrew its influence from this part of the world, the commander of the garrison – a man by the name of Sir Keegan – began to systematically slaughter every resident of the keep, starting with his own wife and daughter.

Some versions of the tale say that Sir Keegan succeeded – that everyone in the keep was slaughtered. Many such tales claim that this was a sacrifice to a dark god, and that Sir Keegan now lives in a sickly paradise within another world – a reward for his bloody gift of tribute.

But since there is, in fact, a story to be told, I suspect the other version of the tale is probably true: Sir Keegan was too skilled for any single soldier to defeat, but eventually the remaining garrison rallied an organized defense. Although many brave soldiers died, Sir Keegan was slain before his dark work could be completed.

Following Sir Keegan’s death, the keep became notorious and the tales grew in the telling. The surviving guards scattered, and with the empire gone there was no one to put the keep back into service. So it was abandoned, feared for a time, and – eventually – more or less forgotten. At some point during the last century, an earthquake reportedly collapsed the upper towers and walls.

Rumors persist of great treasures buried beneath the keep, yet there are few tales of anyone daring to explore the ruins. A popular tale in the area was that old Sir Keegan’s ghost still roamed the corridors beneath the keep, wailing his grief and rage. But even this tale has faded with time, and the story of the wailing ghost is used to frighten children. Although the keep is still considered bad luck by most people in these parts, it has largely been forgotten.

KOBOLDS

DC

RESULT

- | | |
|----|---|
| 10 | Gives the same result as a DC 15 “Situation in Winterhaven” check, but also: “Lord Padraig might be interested in hearing from runeborn who have an interest in this problem.” |
| 20 | They meet Ninaran. The elven hunter seems suspicious at first. “Why are you so interested in these kobolds?” But eventually she’ll tell them about seeing a “half dozen kobolds or so” by a waterfall to the southeast of town. She can draw them a very detailed map. (See Ninaran’s character notes.) |

OTHER STREETWISE CHECKS

- **SEER** (DC 10): Valthrun the Prescient lives in the tower near the center of town.
- **ORCUS** (DC 15): Valthrun—“Orcus is the Demon Prince of the Undead. He is known as one of the most powerful demons in the Abyss—powerful enough, in fact, that he has threatened the gods. He is even known as the Godslayer. He commands legions of followers, living and dead, and cults dedicated to him are terrifyingly widespread throughout the world. If you’re in search of a true expert, however, you should seek out Douven Stahl. He’s visiting Winterhaven from Fallcrest, and he has gone to excavate a crater just south of the city which he believes to be the burial site of a dragon.”
- **TRAITOR** (DC 20): (This check is only effective after the graveyard interlude.) Bairwin Wildarson saw Ninaran leaving the city about an hour before the first undead attack. Perrien saw her slipping back into the city shortly before the first undead attack.
- **DRAGON BURIAL SITE** (DC 15): There’s a large crater to the southeast of the city. A scholar from Fallcrest by the name of Douven Stahl passed through the village about a month ago. He mentioned something about thinking that the crater might be a dragon burial site. He left the village two weeks ago and hasn’t been heard from since.

WINTERHAVEN - CHARACTERS

LORD PADRAIG

Quote: “Welcome to Winterhaven. I wish that you might have come at a more auspicious time.”

Background: The Lord of Winterhaven, descended from a noble family that ruled this area under edict of the old empire. Folks around Winterhaven were happy with Lord Padraig’s father’s authority, and they have found answering to the rules of the new lord no more arduous. On the other hand, Padraig doesn’t have absolute power. For instance, he has been unable to raise a force from among the villagers to deal with the kobold problem.

Appearance: Lord Padraig is a man of medium height and middling years. His brown hair is thinning, but he still cuts a trim and handsome figure in clothes of rural finery. His face is open and friendly.

Roleplaying Notes: Padraig is amenable to meeting with anyone, and if he knows the PCs are rune-marked he will greet them as heroes and potential allies. If he doesn’t know they are rune-marked, he will assume they are dignitaries from another village or possibly merchants scouting trade routes.

He remains friendly and open unless he believes the PCs to be mere treasure hunters or opportunistic mercenaries. In that case, his respect diminishes (although in his desperation he may still seek to secure their help).

Plot Points/Information:

- Ask them their business in Winterhaven (potentially leading to finding the heir). During the time that Sir Caliban would have arrived, Lord Padraig would have been in Fallcrest attending to his education.
- Will offer a bounty for hunting kobolds; 5 gp for each right hand.
- Pays a reward of 50 gp for the location of the kobold lair; would pay 200 gp if someone were to wipe out the kobold threat.

BAIRWIN WILDARSON

Quote: “You young ones ought to bear a wary eye. You may have many fine weapons and the like, but the roads have grown dangerous of late.”

Background: When he was a young man, Bairwin left Winterhaven and “traveled the world”. He didn’t get any farther than visiting the dwarves in Hammerfast a hundred miles to the east, but that does make him more widely traveled than anyone else in the village (including Lord Padraig).

When Sir Caliban died in the village, Bairwin took in his infant son (Perrien) and raised him as his own.

Appearance: This weather-worn man has a deep scar running down his left cheek. His brown hair and beard are giving way to salted white, but there’s still a lively twinkle in his blue eyes.

Roleplaying Notes: Bairwin has a rough exterior, but a heart of gold. He is slow to anger, but once that anger has been roused it burns as a quick rage.

Plot Points/Information:

- Bairwin took in Sir Caliban’s son, Perrien, after the knight died.

EILIAN THE OLD

Quote: “These troubles are not as bad as you might think. I remember back in ’72, when I was still just a wee lad and Padraig’s father was still lord here. We had an ettin come down out of the Stonemarch and go hiking up and down the length of the valley. We eventually managed to rouse the southern farms and we hunted that creature down to its cave.”

Background: This old farmer is a regular customer at Wrafton’s. Every night, Eilian takes a seat at a table in the corner. He has a farm just a half mile outside the city’s walls. Eilian has an interest in Winterhaven’s history.

Appearance: A crooked back, a wisp of white hair, and cheeks made rosy with age.

Roleplaying Notes: Eilian loves to talk.

NINARAN

Quote: “No offense, but I don’t trust outsiders. Particularly at a time like this. How are we supposed to know that you aren’t in league with the cultists?”

Background: An elf hunter. Ninaran arrived in town about six months ago. Now she serves as Kalarel’s agent in Winterhaven and reports back to him about happenings in the village.

Appearance: Gaunt-faced with chocolate-brown hair tied back in a long pony-tail down to her waist.

Roleplaying Notes: Ninaran drinks alone and has little interest in conversation. Stiff and bitter in demeanor.

Plot Points/Information

- Ninaran will tell them that she saw a “half dozen kobolds or so” by a waterfall to the southeast of town. She can draw them a very detailed map. (Her goal is to lure the PCs there and have Irontooth kill them.)

PERRIEN

Quote: “Rune-born, eh? I always wished that I’d been born with a rune!”

Background: Perrien is the son of Sir Caliban, but he was taken in and raised by Bairwin Wildarson after Sir Caliban died. Perrien doesn’t know his true heritage.

Perrien idolizes his adopted father and will often tell tales of Bairwin’s adventures (some of them true, some of them not). He has begun training with the Warrior Guild, thinking to either one day join the Winterhaven Regulars or perhaps go on the road like his father did.

Appearance: A young lad with strapping broad shoulders, pitch-black hair, and green eyes.

Roleplaying Notes: Effusive. Perrien is full of energy and enthusiasm, and he’s not afraid to share them with anyone nearby.

SALVANA WRAFTON

Quote: “Would you care for a cup of soup with that? Or a loaf of bread? Or perhaps a slice of mutton? There’s not nearly enough skin on those bones of yours. You’ll be looking like Eilian if you’re not careful.”

Background: Wrafton’s owner and proprietess. She employs a serving boy named Thom, who she treats like her own son.

Appearance: Salvana has a round face, rosy cheeks, and a maternal smile. She keeps her hair tied back in a scarf, but wisps of black poke out here and there.

Roleplaying Notes: Salvana is friendly and open, quick with a smile and a warm welcome. She speaks with a folksy charm. Her hands always moving, either wiping on her apron or patting people on the arm.

VALTHRUN THE SEER

Quote: “That’s quite an interesting question. I wonder if *Rodham’s Almanac* would have any information on that...”

Background: Valthrun is a sage and scholar who lives in the a tower within Winterhaven’s walls. Valthrun is knowledgable about the area, though his knowledge doesn’t run particularly deep and he knows nothing of the death cult’s activities.

Appearance: A man in his late forties, with pale brown hair and large brown eyes. He dresses in robes of red and black and wears a long cream-colored scarf. His fingers are thin and tapered; his hands delicate in both form and movement.

Roleplaying Notes: Valthrun is a good listener, asking just enough questions to keep whomever he speaks with talking. He peppers his own speech with frequent references to specific tomes – “I’m quite sure I read it in” or “I’m not sure, but let me check” or the like.

SAMPLE BOOK TITLES: *Rodham’s Almanac*, *Crowley’s Third Compendium*, *Collected Lore of the Dansuuns*, *Apocrypha of Tehmal*, *Yasuul’s Unnamed Tome*, *Othordian’s Handbook*

WINTERHAVEN - DEVELOPMENTS

RATIONING: Lord Padraig declares martial law and places the village under rationing in an effort to conserve supplies. The inn serves breakfasts of boiled oats; lunches of thin barley soup and a quarter crust of a small loaf of bread; and suppers of boiled potatoes with a small amount of fatty bacon.

Streetwise (DC 10): There's a fair amount of discontent over the rationing. There are rumors being spread that various farmers in the valley are hoarding food.

Streetwise (DC 15): There are rumors that Lord Padraig is still feasting in his manor while he leaves the villagers to starve. The Regulars won't do anything about it, because they're receiving extra food from Padraig, too. (TRUTH: The Regulars are getting extra rations; Padraig is not.)

THE GUARD'S FUNERAL: The PCs return to Winterhaven to see a procession of Regulars led by Sister Linora heading towards the graveyard. An elderly villager died the previous evening... but didn't stay dead. Shambling to life as a zombie, it attacked and killed one of the gate guards.

SIEGE SUPPLIES: A crowd gathers outside the inner gate leading to the manor house. The villagers demand that Lord Padraig open the siege supplies and distribute them. But Lord Padraig is hesitant to do so until the situation is truly dire. He suspects that a true siege may be coming soon.

FEAR OF CULTISTS: If the PCs begin spreading around the knowledge of the cult of Orcus, the village will slowly descend into paranoia: Villagers will begin accusing each other of being cultists.

CULTISTS IN OUR MIDST: Ninaran and several cultists hold Lord Padraig hostage (see Interlude: Cultists in Our Midst).

THE HEIR

When Sir Caliban came to Winterhaven, he was carrying an infant son. He left his son in the village and went to the Keep of the Shadowfell, pursuing an unknown mission. Few remember the wandering knight or the fact that his son, Perrien, was taken in by Bairwin Wildarson and raised as his own.

Now a seventeen year old boy, Perrien is a member of the Warrior Guild and hopes to join Lord Padraig's Regulars when he reaches the age of his majority.

STREETWISE – THE HEIR

DC	RESULT
-----------	---------------

- | | |
|----|---|
| 15 | A knight? When would he have been here? I don't know. Maybe Eilian might remember. He remembers a lot and he's been around longer than most. (Eilian does and can tell them that the knight's son was taken in by Bairwin.) |
| 20 | Bairwin Wildarson: "Yes, I remember Sir Caliban. I took in his son, Perrien." |

LORD PADRAIG

Lord Padraig will ask them their business in Winterhaven (see above); if they tell him, he will make inquiries himself and find out Perrien's identity.

THE GRAVEYARD

If they find Caliban's gravestone in the graveyard, it says: "Survived by his son Perrien". This makes it relatively easy to find the boy.

MANOR HOUSE – ENTRANCES

DOORS: The outer doors are barred from the inside (Break DC 20). The interior doors are not initially locked, although they can be if the cultists decide they need to barricade themselves (Break DC 16, Thievery DC 20).

ARROW SLITS: The arrow slits on the south wall of area 1 are not large enough to serve as entrances. However, they do allow anyone inside to shoot through without impediment.

WINDOWS – FIRST FLOOR: The windows on the first floor are, in fact, 20 feet above the ground. They are not designed to be opened and lined with lead, but are easily broken (Break DC 5).

WINDOWS – UPPER FLOORS: The windows on the upper floors are locked. (Break DC 5, Thievery DC 15).

CHIMNEYS: There are three chimneys.

- **EAST CHIMNEY (KITCHEN):** This chimney is too small to climb down.
- **WEST CHIMNEY (BEDROOM):** This chimney is cramped and difficult to climb down (Athletics DC 20). Stealth checks suffer a -2 circumstance penalty while climbing in this chimney.
- **NORTH CHIMNEY (RECEPTION HALL):** This is a very large chimney and relatively easy to climb down. (Athletics DC 15).

MANOR HOUSE – FIRST FLOOR

1. RECEPTION HALL: This is the hall in which Lord Padraig greets petitioners and sits in judgment.

The walls of this formal reception hall are paneled with dark mahogany polished to a gleaming shine. A high-backed wooden chair, its arms carved to look like bear claws and its back in sprigs of mistletoe, sits in a place of honor before a massive fire place.

The statues are of Lord Padraig's father and grandfather.

2. KITCHEN:

An massive iron stove – an unmistakable remnant of the old Empire – fills the eastern wall of the kitchen. A spiral staircase of wrought iron stands in the corner, leading up to the second floor.

3. STAIRS:

Broad stairs of worn stone curve up to a landing on the second floor.

MANOR HOUSE – SECOND FLOOR

4. LANDING: There is a railing along the edge of this landing. It's a 20 foot drop to the stone floor below.

5. GUEST BEDROOM: Lord Padraig offers this bedroom to visiting dignitaries. It is currently unoccupied. The bed is large and comfortable. There is an empty chest under the bed (where long-term guests can store their clothes and personal items).

6. SERVANT QUARTERS: Lord Padraig's five servants sleep here.

Five narrow beds fill almost the entirety of this room. Although cramped, everything here appears to be kept in very neat order. There are footlockers beneath each of the beds.

The footlockers contain the possessions of the servants – mostly clothing and a few keepsake items. The footlockers are secured with very simple locks (Thievery DC 10). If the PCs choose to ransack them, there are a few items of value – a ring worth 15 gp; a golden locket with a portrait of a young woman worth 10 gp; a silver necklace worth 5 gp.

7. STAIRS: There is a portrait of Lord Padraig's father hanging on the wall here.

MANOR HOUSE – THIRD FLOOR

8. STORAGE CLOSET: This closet contains a variety of common household goods – linens, lamp oil, mothballed clothing, a ladder, blank paper and ink, lanterns and lamps, and the like.

Tall shelves are crammed together in this narrow space, packed full with a wide effluvium of common household goods. There is a trapdoor in the ceiling, although it is partially blocked by one of the shelves.

The trapdoor leads up to the unused attic.

9. HALL: This grand hall leads to the library and lord’s bedchamber.

A thick, luxurious carpet runs the length of this hall. A chandelier of silver and glass hangs from the ceiling. Heavy doors of oak, carved with an Imperial signet of the old Empire, stand to one side with a smaller door to the other.

10. LIBRARY: This modest library offers a +2 bonus to History and Nature checks. Characters searching on particular topics of interest for the adventure may discover:

The True Historie of the Empire’s Keep, which describes the Keep on the Shadowfell (it gives the same information as a DC 25 Streetwise check and the first two paragraphs of Valthrun’s Follow-Up on the same topic).

Observations of Botany, a journal written by Lord Silvius (Lord Padraig’s great-grandfather). Silvius’ name is signed “Lord Silvius, Vassal of the Verdant Lord” and the text makes it clear that Silvius was a member of that druidic order. Near the end of the journal, Silvius mentions finding a cave which “led into what appear to be the ruins of the ancient keep”. He appeared to be fascinated by the unique cave ecology emerging there, but does not precisely give the location of the cave.

Four bookcases of blackoak stand along the walls of this library, their shelves covered in a wide variety of tomes and parchments.

11. LORD’S BEDCHAMBER: This is Lord Padraig’s bedchamber.

Upon the polished stone floor of this bedchamber sits an enormous bearskin rug at least twenty feet in length. A four-poster bed piled high with mattresses stands along one wall, an elegant fireplace is nestled along another. On one of the tables next to the bed there is a silver bust of a

maiden's head. A large chest of oak banded with steel sits in one corner.

CHEST: The chest is locked (Thievery DC 20). It mostly contains Lord Padraig's clothing, but there is also a leather purse containing 100 gp in a random assortment of coin.

BEARSKIN RUG: Lord Padraig could tell the story of how his grandfather, Lord Patronus, led a hunting party to slay a dire bear that had been plaguing Winterhaven's farms. The rug is worth 100 gp (although probably not in Winterhaven, where almost everyone would recognize it as belonging to Lord Padraig).

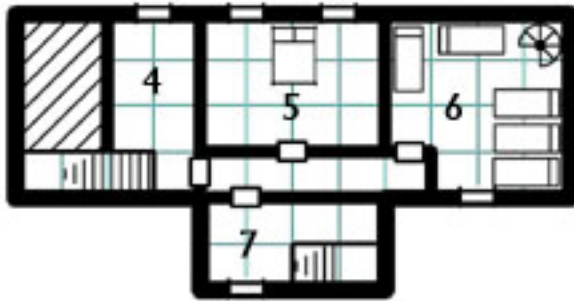
SILVER BUST: This bust is in the image of Padraig's mother when she was a young woman. It is solid silver and would fetch a price of 225 gp (although probably not in Winterhaven, where almost everyone would recognize it as belonging to Lord Padraig).

MANOR HOUSE – ATTIC

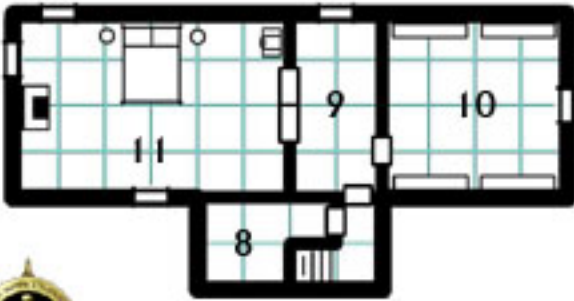
Trap door in area 8 leads up to the fourth floor. The fourth floor was gutted decades ago by a fire and was later changed into an attic, which is now empty. There are, however, two windows in the south side.



LEVEL 1



LEVEL 2



LEVEL 3



KOBOLDS – CLAN OF THE WITHERED ARM

The Clan of the Withered Arm lives in what is known as a *bassabal* by the kobolds: The nest-mates of the clan live more than a hundred miles to the south in the clan's "maternal nests". Once per year, during the *bassasurnal* ("the season of egg-laying"), a large portion of the clan will make the journey south to meet with their nest-mates.

The kobold young are raised in the maternal nests until their year of ascension, at which time the clan males will test them through the rites of manhood and then bring them back to the hunter nests.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ISSITIK?

Issitik was taken to Area 2 of the keep and thrown in a cell. He's being held as a hostage to help keep the kobolds in line.

If Issitik is freed, he will attempt to enlist the aid of the PCs in freeing his people. If he is brought to the kobold lair, all of the kobolds -- except for the two dragonshields -- will turn against Irontooth. Issitik will thank the PCs and gift them with the fire glowgem from the throne and the +1 dwarven chain mail from the chest. He will also tell them this: "While I lay in pain and captivity, I saw great visions of darkness. The thing beyond the veil brings death with its grip, and Kalarel hopes to open all these lands to its grasp. He must be stopped before his power grows too great."

If Issitik discovers that his clan has been wiped out (or largely wiped out), he will lay a curse upon the valley and the village of Winterhaven. If he knows the PCs were responsible, he will give them a cold epithet in kobold and say: "May the grasp of the veil-thing find your soul!" Later, if the PCs investigate the kobold lair again, they will find a message written in blood on the wall behind the throne. The runes require an Arcana check (DC 15) to decipher and read: "THIS VALLEY SHALL BE CURSED FOR THE BLOOD IT HAS SPILT"

(The consequences of that curse, if any, could, of course, lead to other adventures.)

Either way, Issitik seeks to lead as many of his followers as possible back to the maternal nests. He has become convinced that the lands of this valley have become cursed for his people. However, if the PCs helped the kobolds, two kobold slingers -- named Dassesek and Trigassas -- volunteer to join the PCs in fighting Kalarel.

KOBOLD BARRICADES

SETUP: Use the kobolds from A1. They're manning barricades blocking the road leading to the keep (one group to the north and the other to the south).

BARRICADE: The wooden barricade is 15 feet high (requiring characters to make an Athletics check to climb over it). There is a 10-foot wide platform at the top of the barricade and a ladder leading down the other side.

TACTICS: The wympriest stands atop the barricade, using his *energy orb* to attack those drawing near the barricade. The dragonshields and skirmishers ready actions to attack anyone attempting to climb the barricade.

If the PCs reach the top of the barricade, the wympriest will blast them with his *dragon breath* and then jump down on the other side of the barricade. From there the wympriest will continue using his *energy orb*, while the dragonshields and skirmishers engage the PCs atop the barricade.

SECOND GUARD: If the PCs wipe out either barricade, the kobolds at the other barricade are pulled back 1d2 days later and lay an ambush in the ruins of the keep. If the PCs completely bypass both barricades by circling through the woods, at some point Kalarel will pull back *both* patrols to lay the ambush.

KOBOLD LAIR – OUTSIDE

SACRED CIRCLE: A circle of worn stone monoliths stands on the ground in this location. When a creature steps within the circle, blue runes glow softly on the surface of the stones and the creature gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls. A Nature check (DC 10) recognizes the circle as a druidic friendship circle. A DC 20 check allows a character to decipher enough of the runs to identify the circle as having once belonged to the Vassals of the Verdant Lord.

TRACKS: A successful Perception check (DC 10) allows a character to notice the large number of kobold tracks in the soft mud along the river bank leading to and from the waterfall. A DC 22 check reveals a few goblin tracks mixed in with the kobold tracks.

WATERFALL: In addition to acting as difficult terrain, the roaring noise of the waterfall imposes a -5 penalty to Perception checks on characters within 4 squares. It imposes a -20 penalty to Perception checks made to hear anything happening on the other side of the waterfall.

KOBOLD LAIR

TACTICS - SURPRISED: If the kobolds are surprised in their lair, the kobolds attack in two waves as described in the module. The initial locations of the first wave are indicated on the map in green and the initial locations of the second wave are indicated in red.

The dragonshields and Irontooth are sleeping when the PCs arrive. It takes them 1 round to wake up; 1 round to realize what's happening; and then 1 round to grab their weapons. (If the PCs reach them before the second wave is triggered, they probably won't be armed.)

The wyrm priest's delay is merely due to hesitation. If the PCs burst in on him, he is fully prepared to defend himself.

TACTICS - FOREWARNED: If any of the kobolds outside the lair manage to flee into the lair, this encounter becomes much more difficult. The minions and skirmishers will have all gathered in area 1. The wyrm priest will have moved to the archway leading from area 1 to area 2, positioning himself so that he can use both his *energy orb* and *incite faith* abilities to aid the other kobolds. Irontooth, flanked by the dragonshields, will be sitting in the throne in area 2 wearing the withered arm about his neck. ("You fools. Orcus will not tolerate your meddling. Kill them all.") The dragonshields and Irontooth will hold back, but if it looks like the PCs are getting the upper hand (or if the PCs try to attack Irontooth) they'll move to engage.

AREA 1 - THE UNNATURAL CAVE: The pool behind the waterfall is relatively calm and shallow, allowing characters to pass through it normally (although the squares of the waterfall itself are difficult terrain, see Outside the Lair). The kobolds will immediately move to attack intruders (see Tactics, above).

The rough, moisture-slicked walls of the cavern behind the waterfall give way to walls of ancient, worked stone. Here and there can be seen what appear to have once been bas relief statues -- but years of moisture have worn them away to unrecognizable lumps. Through the archway to the east can be seen another large chamber, in the center of which stands a great throne of stone. Set into the back of the throne is a giant fire glowgem, casting an eery red light throughout the chambers.

A few of the more favored kobolds roost in the antechambers here. (The rest of the kobolds make their nests in treetops throughout the area.)

AREA 2 - THE THRONE ROOM: The fire glowgem on the back of the throne casts a bright light to a distance of 20 squares. It can be pried loose and is worth 500 gp. A Nature check (DC 18) reveals that such thrones are often used as part of druidic initiation rituals.

AREA 3 - DRAGONSHIELD LAIR: The two dragonshields here betrayed Issitik when Irontooth and the goblins came. As a result, they were given a place of honor.

Two thick mats of straw are laid out on the floor in this otherwise nondescript room of plain stone.

AREA 4 - IRONTOOTH'S LAIR: This was once a library maintained by the Vassals of the Verdant Lord. The books here were protected by powerful magicks before the kobolds arrived and broke the seals.

A great, mounded nest of shredded paper has been built up in one corner of the room. It looks surprisingly comfortable. A variety of braziers, each burning a different scented incense, are lit here and there and around the room. The walls are lined with empty stone shelves. A large iron chest has been shoved into a corner.

The nest here is made from the shredded remains of the books. The chest can be opened with the key Irontooth keeps in his pouch or a Thievery check (DC 20). It contains 420 gp and a suit of +1 *dwarven chain mail* (see module).

AREA 5 - THE WYRMPRIEST'S CHAMBER: This chamber was once a shrine dedicated to the goddess Tiamat (who is held sacred by the Clan of the Withered Arm). Once Irontooth took control of the clan, he forced a conversion of the shrine to the worship of Orcus.

This walls of this crooked chamber appear to have once been covered in colorful mosaics, but these have recently been defaced beyond recognition. In one corner of the room there is a shallow depression in the floor before a plain altar of stone. Atop the altar a golden skull with ram's horns sits in honor.

The far side of the chamber gives way once more to the natural walls of the cavern, in a series of tiered steps leading down into the darkness.



The golden skull is worth 150 gp.

A character making a successful Perception check (DC 15) will notice the following symbol carved into the wall behind the altar:



A Religion check (DC 15) will recognize this as a holy symbol of Tiamat. Characters taking a closer look at the symbol can make an additional Perception check (DC 15) to realize that the hole in the center of the symbol is actually a depressed button. Pushing the button causes a section of the wall to slide back, revealing a stone idol:



This holy idol is dedicated to Tiamat.

AREA 6 - THE DESECRATED TOMB: The stairs leading down to area 6 are uneven and slick with condensation. Characters must make a Balance check (DC 10) while moving down the stairs.

The stairs bottom out into a large, square chamber. In each corner a thick ionic column stands between roof and ceiling. The walls here are covered in small niches. In a few of these niches there are ceramic urns, but it appears that most of these urns have been destroyed: The floor is covered in ash and broken shards of pottery.

In the center of the room, the floor sinks into a circular depression. In the center of this depression a 15-foot wide mass of thick roots run between the floor and the ceiling.

This area was once a tomb for the Vassals of the Verdant Lord. When the kobolds moved in, they desecrated the burial chamber. Their thoughtless and spiteful destruction created a vengeful druidic spirit which still lurks here. The kobolds avoid this entire area now.

If a PC moves more than 15 feet into the room, the druidic spirit will manifest itself:

A howling wind suddenly whips through the chamber. Shards of light burst forth from somewhere within the tangled mass of roots in the center of the chamber, and then the roots begin to move of their own accord -- drawing apart and forming a cage-like sphere in the center of the room. Looking through the gaps between the roots you can see a translucent spirit in the form of a human figure floating in the center of the sphere.

"LEAVE US TO OUR ETERNAL REST."

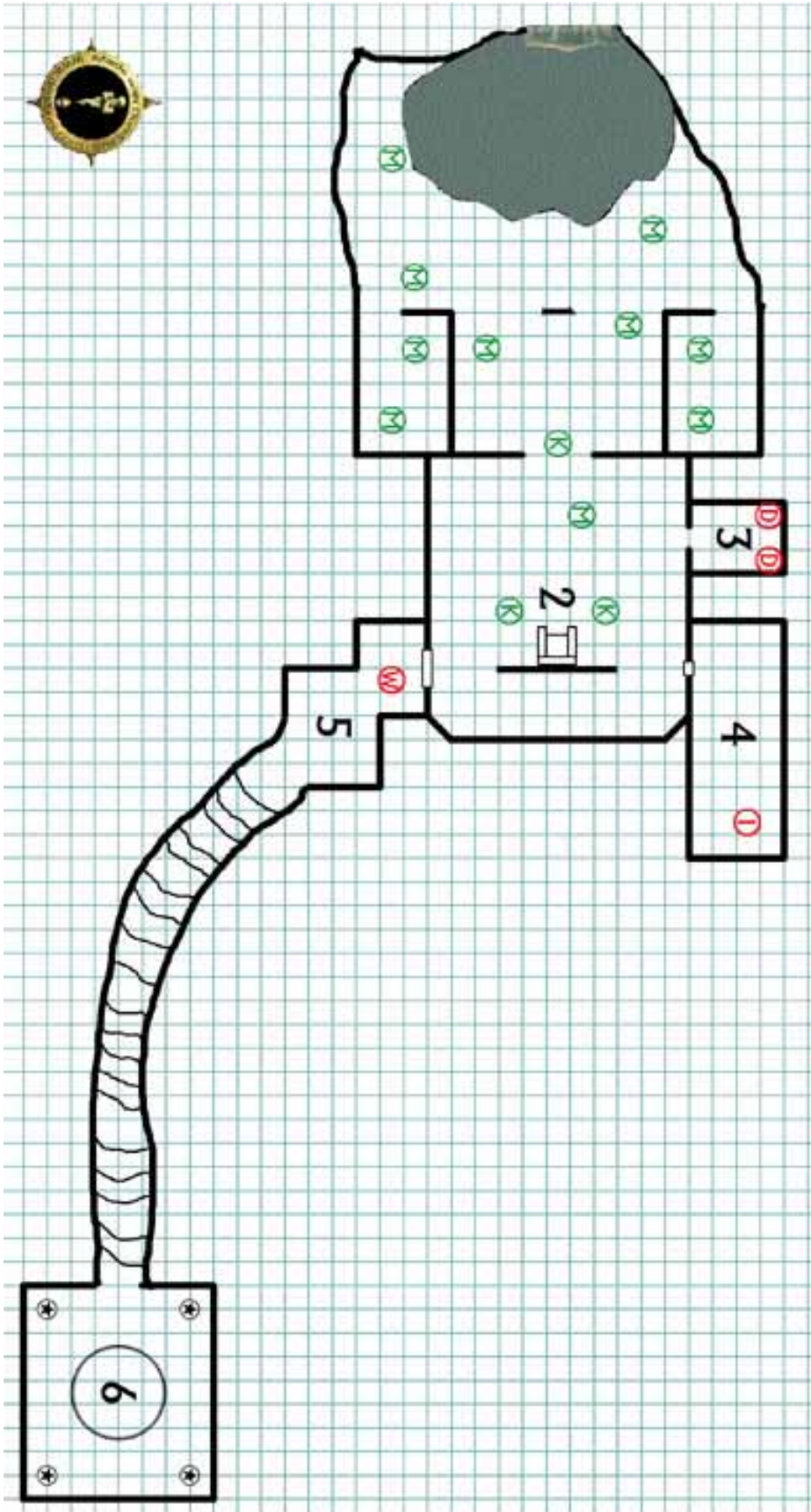
PCs can attempt a skill challenge (4/2, with Diplomacy and Nature as primary skills) to convince the spirit that they are friendly. Knowing of the Vassals of the Verdant Lord counts as an automatic success in this skill challenge. Swearing fealty or otherwise pledging themselves to the druidic cause also counts as an automatic success.

If the PCs fail, the light in the center of the chamber grows and the spirit begins lashing out with lightning bolts (Range 20, 1d6+2 damage). There is no way for the PCs to exorcise this spirit at this time. (Alternatively, if you have the 4th Edition MM, use the stats for a phantom warrior but add the lightning bolt attack. The roots will move to defend the spirit from attacks, granting it -- but not its targets -- cover.)

If the PCs succeed, the spirit can give them the history of the kobold lair. In addition, the druids have found a greater connection to the spirit of the land through their death. They

are aware of Kalarel's ritual, which they describe as "a gaping wound in the natural world". They are also aware that there is a powerful artifact at the dragon burial site which is somehow tied to this ritual and can tell the PCs where to find it. The artifact is "resonating" with Kalarel's ritual and they know that he seeks it.

TREASURE: The dragonshields and Irontooth each wear necklaces from which dangle dragon figurines carved of obsidian. On the bottom of the figure is etched the outline of a skull with ram's horns. Anyone who succeeds on a Religion check (DC 15) recognizes the etching as an abstract representation of the demon lord of the undead, Orcus. PCs can sell the necklaces for 40 gp each in Winterhaven. The rest of the kobolds, in addition to their meager equipment, have 7 gp in loose coin on them.



DRAGON BURIAL SITE

ARTIFACT: The artifact they've dug up is a small stone idol of Orcus. It can be recognized on a successful Religion check (DC 15).

DOUVEN STAHL

Douven Stahl can tell them everything on pg. 210 of the *Monster Manual* regarding the cults of Orcus. Then he will continue with a description of local cult activity:

“Two hundred years ago, this entire region south of the Cairngorms was a stronghold of the cult. The cult deliberately created a gap between this world and another realm – the Shadowfell. Although not inherently evil, the Shadowfell is fraught with dangers, and through the gap between worlds the cult brought forth skeletons, zombies, and even fouler creatures.

In those days, fortunately, the Empire of Nerath was still strong. A legion was dispatched to quell the threat. They destroyed the undead, sealed the rift, and built a keep to keep watch over the location and contain the threat. Today, however, that keep lies in ruins.

I came here merely to study history. But now I fear that the cult has returned, and seeks to open that gap between worlds once again. If that were to happen... without the Empire to respond...” He shudders.

THE RITUAL: “The worship of Orcus revolves around the practice of human sacrifice. But these sacrifices are not merely about death, they are about the collection and distribution of a victim's blood. Cult rituals often revolve around filling a skull with blood, drinking it, and then filling it again for Orcus and pouring it over his idol.

If these cultists are trying to reopen a portal to the Shadowfell, then they must be attempting to tap into the ancient magic that first created the gap between worlds. There will be a sacrifice of blood and an idol of Orcus.”

IF SHOWN THE ORCUS IDOL: “This is an ancient idol, but you can see by the markings along its base that it is merely part of a larger set. When brought together, these multiple idols intensify each other's power. By capturing this idol, you will have delayed whatever ritual they're preparing for... but not prevented it.”

FOLLOW-UP: Douven Stahl will return to Winterhaven and lodge up with Valthrun. He can be found in Valthrun's tower if the PCs need to ask him further questions.

THE KEEP

CAVE ENTRANCE

About half a mile to the west of the keep, up in the foothills of the Cairngorms, there is a natural cave that leads, more or less directly, to area 10 of the Keep. (This is how the kruthiks and rats got into areas 10 and 9.)

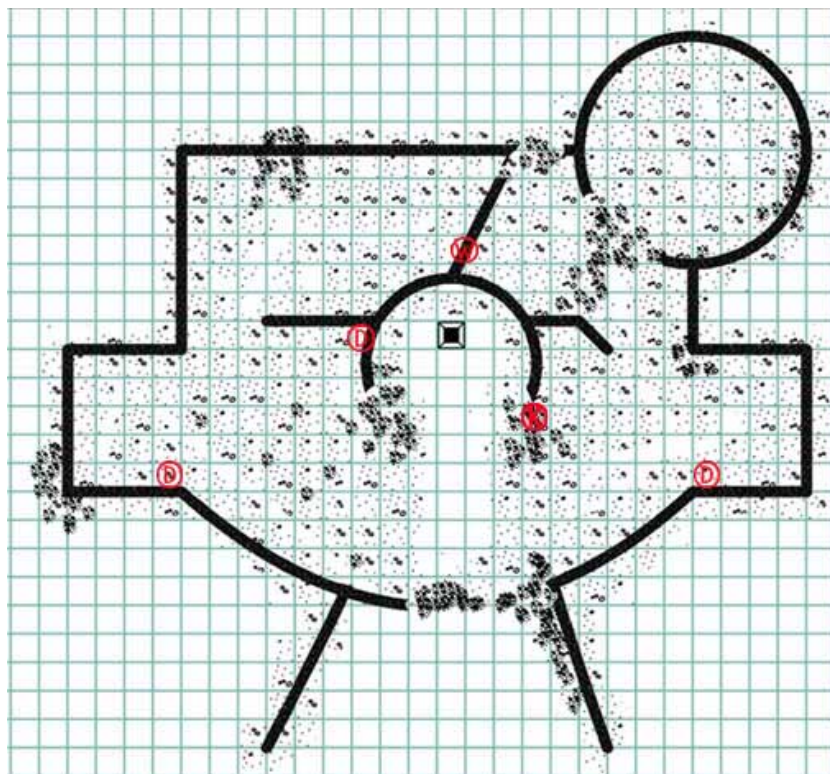
SCOUTING: If PCs scout around trying to find another entrance to the Keep, they can engage in a 4/2 skill challenge (with Dungeoneering, Nature, and Perception as primary skills).

Dungeoneering/Nature (DC 15): Dungeoneering or Nature checks allow them to realize that there are many natural caves beneath the surface and to follow natural fault lines to find the cave entrance.

Perception (DC 15): Perception checks while scouting the area will notice an area of the wilderness which shares the same mysterious stillness as the keep itself and eventually lead to the cave entrance itself.

History (DC 20): As a secondary skill, History might be used to research the keep in Valthrun's library and discover a reference to the cave entrance.

THE KEEP - RUINS



FEATURES OF THE AREA:

- *Rubble:* With the exception of the cleared path leading to the trapdoor, the ruins are filled with rubble. These squares are difficult terrain.
- *Rubble Piles:* Where indicated there are larger piles of rubble. These require Athletics checks (DC 15) to climb at one-half speed.

AMBUSH: This ambush is set 1d2 days after the PCs wipe one (but not both) of the kobold barricades. (If they wipe out both barricades, there are no kobolds to perform the ambush with.) The kobolds here are drawn from encounter A1 in *Keep on the Shadowfell*.

- 1 kobold skirmisher (K)
- 3 kobold dragonshields (D)
- 1 kobold wyrm priest (W)

TACTICS:

- *Dragonshields:* The dragonshields simply move out from their hiding places, converging on the PCs.
- *Skirmisher:* The skirmisher is hiding just behind the peak of a pile of rubble. He has taken the time to soak the pile with oil, making it slippery and more difficult to climb (Athletics, DC 20).
- *Wyrmpriest:* The wyrmpriest is actually perched on the thick wall behind the central tower. He can move along the top of the wall to the wall of the tower itself. While perched up there he grants combat advantage. The walls is 20 feet high at that point.

THE KEEP - DUNGEONS

AREA 2

- Issitik is being held prisoner here.

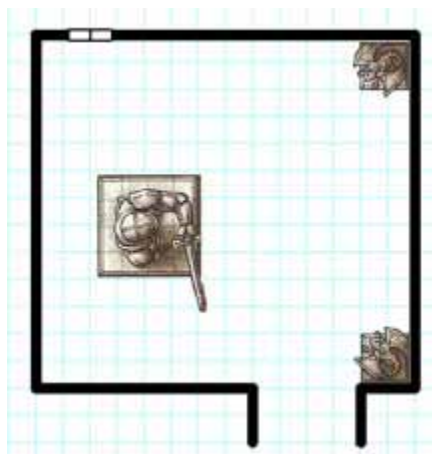
AREA 4

- Kalarel's Letter to Balgron

AREA 8

- Sir Keegan can tell them of the Fane of Orcus which lay beneath the keep. He knows that the cultists have gathered there.

AREA 16 – TITAN/DAGON STATUES



DRAGON STATUES

DEFENSIVE FORCE SHOT (immediate reaction, when a creature makes an attack against any statue in this encounter or when they can't use their *force blow* ability on their turn; at will) (will not shoot at creatures on a statue)

Range 15; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d6+6 force damage, and the target is pushed 1 square

DISARMING – TITAN STATUE

Thievery/Arcana: Eight successful DC 20 checks before four failures to disable the titan statue.

Mechanical Ruin: If the statue is bloodied, it counts as 2 successes towards disabling the statue.

DISARMING -- DRAGON STATUE

Thievery/Arcana: Four successful DC 20 checks before two failures to disable the dragon statues.

Mechanical Ruin: If the statue is bloodied, it counts as 2 successes towards disabling the statue.

AREA 16 – CHERUB STATUES

FORCE CAGE: The cherub statues actually create four wall effects (so that the trap can actually function as written), with each wall extending between two statues as shown.



When any statue is destroyed, the walls extending from it disappear. Once one statue has been destroyed, the water drains away and the *whirlpool* power can no longer be used. (PCs will need to destroy at least two statues, however, to move through the southern doors.)

AREA 18

- Hanging above the altar in this area is an angel of protection (MM, pg. 14). It has been pinioned to the wall with multiple adamantite spears. A wall of arcane magic surrounds the angel and can only be penetrated if the ritual in area 19 is disrupted.
- Blood flows from the angels wounds, over the Orcus-pledged altar, through the wall of arcane magic, and down into the pit below. Corrupted by the mystic energies of the altar, it is serving as a crucial material component in Kalarel's Ritual.

AREA 19

- The pit in the center of this room is, in fact, 60 feet deep. Standing in this pit is a 60' tall statue of Orcus the Demon Prince. This is the Fane of Orcus. Through the fane, Orcus is able to manifest some portion of his will upon this world. It is an important part of Kalarel's Ritual.
- The four grates are, in fact, sunken depressions in the floor. In two of them, the Idols of Orcus have been placed. If the PCs failed to disrupt the activities at the Burial Site, three of them will be occupied. Blood flows up out of the pit and towards these depressions. (See Kalarel's Ritual.)

KALAREL'S RITUAL

Level: 25

Category: Travel

Time: 120 days

Duration: Permanent

Component Cost: Special

Market Price: n/a

Key Skill: Religion

Kalarel's ritual will open a permanent connection between this world and the Shadowfell. Once the ritual is one-quarter completed, the Thing in the Portal manifests (see module).

Special: Kalarel is able to perform a ritual so far above his normal level because this specific ritual is bound to the Fane of Orcus.

The smaller Idols of Orcus are also being used to help focus the ritual, reducing the amount of time necessary. Each idol added to the ritual reduces the remaining time of the ritual by half.

TIMELINE

When the PCs first arrive in the valley, 30 days have passed since Kalarel started his ritual. Kalarel had also already recovered two of the Idols of Orcus, reducing the remaining time for the ritual to be completed to 45 days.

If the PCs don't interfere with Kalarel retrieving the Idol of Orcus from the Dragon Burial Site, it will be installed and whatever time remains will be further reduced by half.

REVERSING THE RITUAL

(<http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/4dnd/20080522b>)

Kalarel is working from a reconstructed and partially translated text known as the *Scrolls of Hamasatra*.

Level: 6th

Complexity: 3 (8 successes before 4 failures)

Primary Skills:

Arcana (DC 22): As a standard action, you can call upon your knowledge of magical effects and rituals to study the ritual book and determine the next step in unbinding the ritual. The first successful Arcana check also allows the character to figure out how a Heal check can contribute to undoing the ritual. A failed check indicates that the energy of the ritual attacks you: +10 vs. Will; 1d6 + 4 necrotic damage.

Endurance (DC 18): As an opportunity action, triggered when an adjacent ally has just failed an Arcana or Religion check to reverse the ritual, you can allow the necrotic energy

Keep on the Shadowfell

flowing through the ritual to damage you instead of your ally. Success at this skill use aids the party, but does not count as a success toward completion of the challenge.

Heal (DC 18): As a standard action, you can make a Heal check and spend a healing surge to send positive life energy into the necrotic ritual in order to help disrupt it. In doing so, you automatically expose yourself to the energy of the ritual, which attacks you: +10 vs. Will; 1d6 + 4 necrotic damage. This approach to undoing the ritual can be determined on any successful Arcana, Religion, or Insight check.

Insight (DC 18): A character succeeding at an Insight check as a free action, triggered by observing the ritual, can figure out how a Heal check can contribute to undoing the ritual. Success at this skill use aids the party, but does not count as a success toward completion of the challenge.

Religion (DC 22): As per the Arcana check.

Success: The ritual is undone. The angel in area 18 is freed, but collapses into unconsciousness. (However, nothing stops Kalarel from starting the ritual afresh. If the *Scrolls of Hamasatra* are destroyed or the angel escapes or Kalarel is killed, however, the threat has passed. In that case, reward the adventurers a major quest reward of 750 XP.)

Failure: If the skill challenge is failed, the magical energy of the Shadow Rift stabilizes. Necrotic energy surges through the ritual book and the altar, striking all of the characters attempting this skill challenge. Each of these characters loses a healing surge and is attacked by the necrotic energy: +10 vs. Will; 1d6 + 4 necrotic energy.

The ritual isn't complete, but the partially opened rift remains as such until either Kalarel is killed or the ritual is completed.

INTERLUDE: THE SLYBLADE HUNTER

- 1 kobold slyblade
- 2 kobold dragonshields
- 6 kobold minions

This is a kobold *cansatak* -- a "war party which hunts vengeance". They could be dispatched to kill the PCs by Kalarel, Irontooth, or even Issitek (if he finds out the PCs are responsible for wiping out the clan).

Use this encounter when the PCs are resting or traveling. It's a good way to jack up the energy levels at the table if things are starting to lag. The *cansatak* could even attack them in the ruins of the keep if you feel that the PCs are getting too complacent in the sections they've already cleared out.

TRIGGER: The kobold slyblade tracks the PCs, moving two hundred feet ahead of the rest of the *cansatak*. When the encounter is triggered, the PCs can make a Perception check (DC 23) to notice the slyblade watching them from 50 feet away. A few moments later, the slyblade slips away and heads back to the rest of the *cansatak*. (If the PCs attack, the slyblade will turn and run with harsh reptilian cries which are quickly answered by the rest of the *cansatak*.)

If the PCs don't notice the slyblade, a few minutes later the entire *cansatak* attacks: The dragonshields and minions charge in and surround the PCs, engaging them in melee. Once the PCs are fully engaged, the slyblade follows (allowing it to use its *sly dodge* ability to maximum effectiveness).

INTERLUDE: FARMER'S JEOPARDY

This encounter is designed to build on the crisis facing the village of Winterhaven (which I'll be discussing at greater length: The farmers southwest of Winterhaven have been cut off from the village by the kobolds. A dwarven farmer named Terrik Sabanar, however, has attempted to break the blockade and reach Winterhaven with a wagon full of supplies.

FARMERS: Terrik Sabanar is a good-hearted dwarf. While he plans to sell the food he's hauling for a fair price (he can't afford not to), his primary motivation for trying to break the blockade is because he knows the people of Winterhaven must be in fairly dire straits. Terrik was once a member of the Iridescent Guard, a powerful order of dwarven knights. He became disenchanted with the order, however, when his superior officer seduced his wife. Taking his infant son, Alric, Terrik left the dwarven kingdoms and came to Winterhaven. He has adopted the simple lifestyle of a farmer and left his past behind him.

For this dangerous mission, however, Terrik pried up the floorboards of his cottage and took out the +2 *resounding warhammer* he had once wielded as a knight. Those making a History check (DC 15) can recognize the hilt-marks on the warhammer as belonging to the Iridescent Guard -- a strange sight to see in these lands.

Terrik is accompanied by his son, Alric. Alric knows nothing of his father's history with the Iridescent Guard. Terrik didn't want to bring Alric along, but the boy begged him until he finally relented (fearing, in fact, that if he refused Alric would merely follow him and be in even greater danger).

STATS: For Terrik, use the stats for the pregenerated fighter PC. However, Terrik wields the +2 *resounding warhammer* (dealing base damage of 1d10+5 and +2d6 thunder damage on a critical hit). For Alric use the stats for the pregenerated fighter PC, but treat him as a minion.

SITUATION: Terrik and Alric are ambushed by kobolds along the road. Their wagon is disabled.

KOBOLDS: Use the kobolds from the *On the Road: Kobold Brigands* encounter, but add two more slingers.

TRIGGER: This encounter can be triggered in several ways:

(1) The PCs are traveling along the road when they hear shouts and the sounds of combat. When they reach the scene, they see the kobold minions and dragonshields clustered around the wagon. Terrik stands atop the wagon, swinging his warhammer.

(2) The PCs in Winterhaven when Alric rides up to the gate begging for help. (As the ambush broke, Terrik dumped Alric onto one of the horses and sent him riding for safety.) The city guard seems confused... perhaps somebody runs to ask permission from

Lord Padraig before leaving their posts. (Padraig will be furious that none of his men seized the initiative, but meanwhile...)

If the PCs think of it, let them make an Intimidate check (DC 20) to convince two of the guards to go with them to help Terrik. If the guards do accompany them, you'll need to figure out stats for them. (Easy to do if you've got the core rulebooks. Otherwise, just use the same stats as Alric.)

If the PCs return with Alric, they see two dead kobolds lying near the wagon. The minions and dragonshields have pulled back, and the kobold slingers are pelting the wagon with their slingstones. Terrik is hiding in the wagon, trying to stay behind cover. (This trigger can be used particularly effectively if Alric rides up to Winterhaven just as the PCs are leaving or entering the village.)

(3) While traveling along the road away from Winterhaven, the PCs pass Terrik and Alric heading in the opposite direction. If they choose to accompany the dwarves, they'll be there when the ambush breaks out a few minutes later. If they continue on their way, just a couple minutes later they hear shouts and the sounds of combat coming from behind them. (If they need further prompting, have Alric ride after them.)

REWARD: If the PCs rescue them, Terrik will gift them with this +2 *resounding warhammer*. The weapon deals 1d10 damage, +2d6 thunder damage on critical hits, and has a daily power that can be used as a free action when a target is hit with the warhammer, rendering the target dazed.

FOLLOW-UP: Once the ambush has been dealt with, it takes Terrik about 5 minutes to fix the wagon wheel. (If it was 3rd Edition, we could let the PCs help. But, hey, there's no Craft skill in 4th Edition. Who would ever need such a thing? It's not like we could ever be in a situation where you might want to fix a wagon wheel before more kobolds show up. Feel free to throw an ability check in there to compensate for the dumbed down rules.)

The villagers in Winterhaven are thrilled when the supplies, meager as they are, arrive. Terrik, Alric, and the PCs are greeted as heroes.

INTERLUDE: THE DEAD WALK

(Interlude Three from KOTS)

Ninaran invokes the ritual, but doesn't stick around. After performing the ritual she simply crumples up the note and tosses it into one of the crypts.

Add a human mage (MM pg. 163) and describe it as an undead lich.

INTERLUDE: CULTISTS IN OUR MIDST

There are, in fact, several cultists in Winterhaven.

CULTISTS:

- Ninaran (KOTS pg. 61) (N)
- Human Rabble (x12) (KOTS pg. 30) (R)
- Human Berserker (x2) (MM pg. 163) (B)

HOSTAGE

- Padraig (P)
- Servants (x5) (S)

SITUATION: Ninaran and the cultists break into Padraig's manor house and take him hostage. In the process, they kill four of the Winterhaven Regulars. Ninaran's primary goal is to prevent the village from organizing any kind of resistance to Kalarel's plans.

Padraig and his servants are kept securely bound with rope at the locations indicated on the encounter map.

TRIGGER: This encounter can be triggered any time after "The Dead Walk". If the PCs discover that Ninaran is a cultist and confront her, she fights to the death. Shortly thereafter, the other cultists set-up this encounter (which will be much easier without Ninaran present).

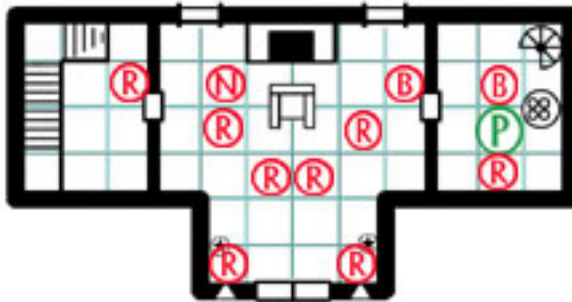
ESCALATION: Ninaran starts by making an outrageous demand for ransom (25,000 gp). Then she'll kill one of the servants and throw the body out the window. Next she'll demand that 10 ritual sacrifices are performed in the courtyard before the manor house.

Ninaran doesn't actually expect any of these demands to be met.

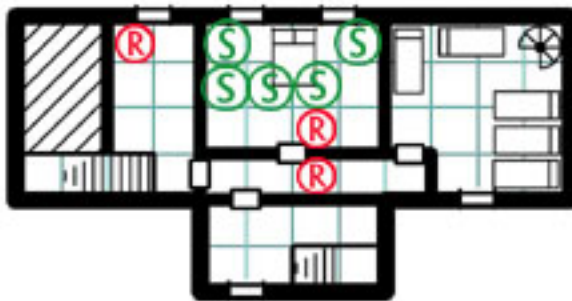
APPROACHING THE MANOR HOUSE: The only cultists actively keeping a lookout are the human rabble at the arrow slits on the first floor and at the northern window on the second floor. Approaching the manor house without being spotted requires a Stealth check (DC 10).

However, there are blind spots to the east and west. If PCs climb over the outer wall of Winterhaven and approach the manor house from due west or east, there is no chance they will be spotted.

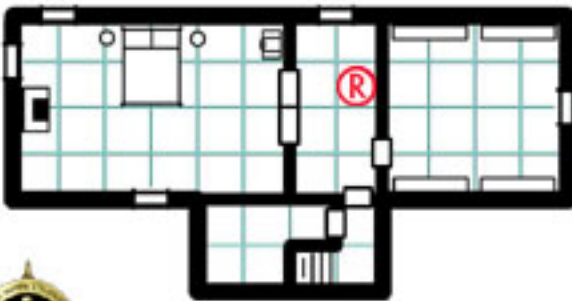
TACTICS: The cultists on the upper levels are specifically there as lookouts. If they detect the presence of PCs, they will run downstairs and alert Ninaran. At that point, the cultists will take all the hostages down to area 1 and fortify themselves there.



LEVEL 1



LEVEL 2



LEVEL 3



THREE CLUE RULE -- REVELATIONS

LOCATION OF THE KOBOLD LAIR

(1) **TRACKING:** Requires a 6/3 skill challenge (Nature and Perception as primary skills).

(2) **NINARAN'S FALSE CLUE** (see Winterhaven)

(3) **INTERROGATION:** Intimidate check vs. Will defense. Kobold receives a +10 bonus because it's hostile and a +2 bonus because giving up the location of the lair is essentially a betrayal of the entire clan.

CULT OF ORCUS -- BACKGROUND

For information on Orcus, see pg. 206 and 210 of the MM.

(1) **RELIGION CHECK:** See MM, pg. 206.

(2) **VALTHRUN:** "ORCUS, DEMON PRINCE OF THE UNDEAD, is one of the most powerful demons in the Abyss—powerful enough to threaten gods. He commands legions of followers, living and dead, and cults dedicated to him are terrifyingly widespread in the natural world." (See, also, Dragon Burial Site.)

(3) **DOUVEN STAHL:** Can tell them everything on pg. 210. (See, also, Keep on the Shadowfell.)

DRAGON BURIAL SITE

(1) **DRUIDIC SPIRIT:** See area 6 of the kobold lair.

(2) **VALTHRUN:** If asked about the Cult of Orcus, Valthrun will have some basic information (see above). But he'll also say, "The true expert on the cult, though, would be Douven Stahl." Valthrun knows that Stahl was researching a dragon burial site and can point the PCs in that direction.

(3) **KALAREL'S LETTER TO BALGRON:** Place in area 4 of the keep.

KEEP ON THE SHADOWFELL

Pretty much anyone can tell them where the ruined keep is, but the following clues will make them realize its important.

(1) **PERRIEN:** His father, the banished knight, journeyed to the Keep and was killed there. (Bairwin Wildarson can tell them this.)

(2) **DOUVEN STAHL:** "Two hundred years ago, this entire region south of the Cairngorms was a stronghold of the cult. The cult deliberately created a gap between this

world and another realm – the Shadowfell. Although not inherently evil, the Shadowfell is fraught with dangers, and through the gap between worlds the cult brought forth skeletons, zombies, and even fouler creatures.

In those days, fortunately, the Empire of Nerath was still strong. A legion was dispatched to quell the threat. They destroyed the undead, sealed the rift, and built a keep to keep watch over the location and contain the threat. Today, however, that keep lies in ruins.

I came here merely to study history. But now I fear that the cult has returned, and seeks to open that gap between worlds once again. If that were to happen... without the Empire to respond..." He shudders.

(3) KALAREL'S NOTE TO NINARAN: Which can be retrieved from her after the graveyard encounter. (It mentions the keep.)

KALAREL'S RITUAL

This particular revelation is not plot-crucial: Even if the PCs don't work out the details of the ritual, they'll still be able to succeed by just knocking heads together.

(1) KALAREL'S RITUAL LETTER (rewritten to reference the ritual)

(2) DOUVEN STAHL: "The worship of Orcus revolves around the practice of human sacrifice. But these sacrifices are not merely about death, they about the collection and distribution of a victim's blood. Cult rituals often revolve around filling a skull with blood, drinking it, and then filling it again for Orcus and pouring it over his idol.

If these cultists are trying to reopen a portal to the Shadowfell, then they must be attempting to tap into the ancient magic that first created the gap between worlds. There will be a sacrifice of blood and an idol of Orcus."

IF HE'S SHOWN THE ORCUS IDOL FROM THE BURIAL SITE: "This is an ancient idol, but you can see by the markings along its base that it is merely part of a larger set. When brought together, these multiple idols intensify each other's power. By capturing this idol, you will have delayed whatever ritual they're preparing for... but not prevented it."

(3) SIR KEEGAN: Sir Keegan can tell them of the Fane of Orcus which lay beneath the keep. He knows that the cultists have gathered there.



Area Map





KALAREL'S LETTER TO BALGRON

Balgron—

One of the villagers has stumbled onto the digsite south of the village. I've ordered Datok and his men to reinforce Agrid. You should send some of your goblins to the surface and keep an eye on the ruins. It is important that our work not be disturbed.

Kalarel

KALAREL'S RITUAL LETTER

I received your report on the runebearers. Next time you see them, but an end to their meddling. Mix the blood of ten people with the elixir my messenger brings. Then trace the following pattern on the ground of the graveyard and pour the liquid into the lines:



With the thinning of the veil here at the keep, this circle will create a sympathetic connection to the Shadowfell.

My work here is very near completion. It will not be long now. If you come to the keep, the pass phrase for the second level is “from the ground, some magic was found”.

- Kalarel