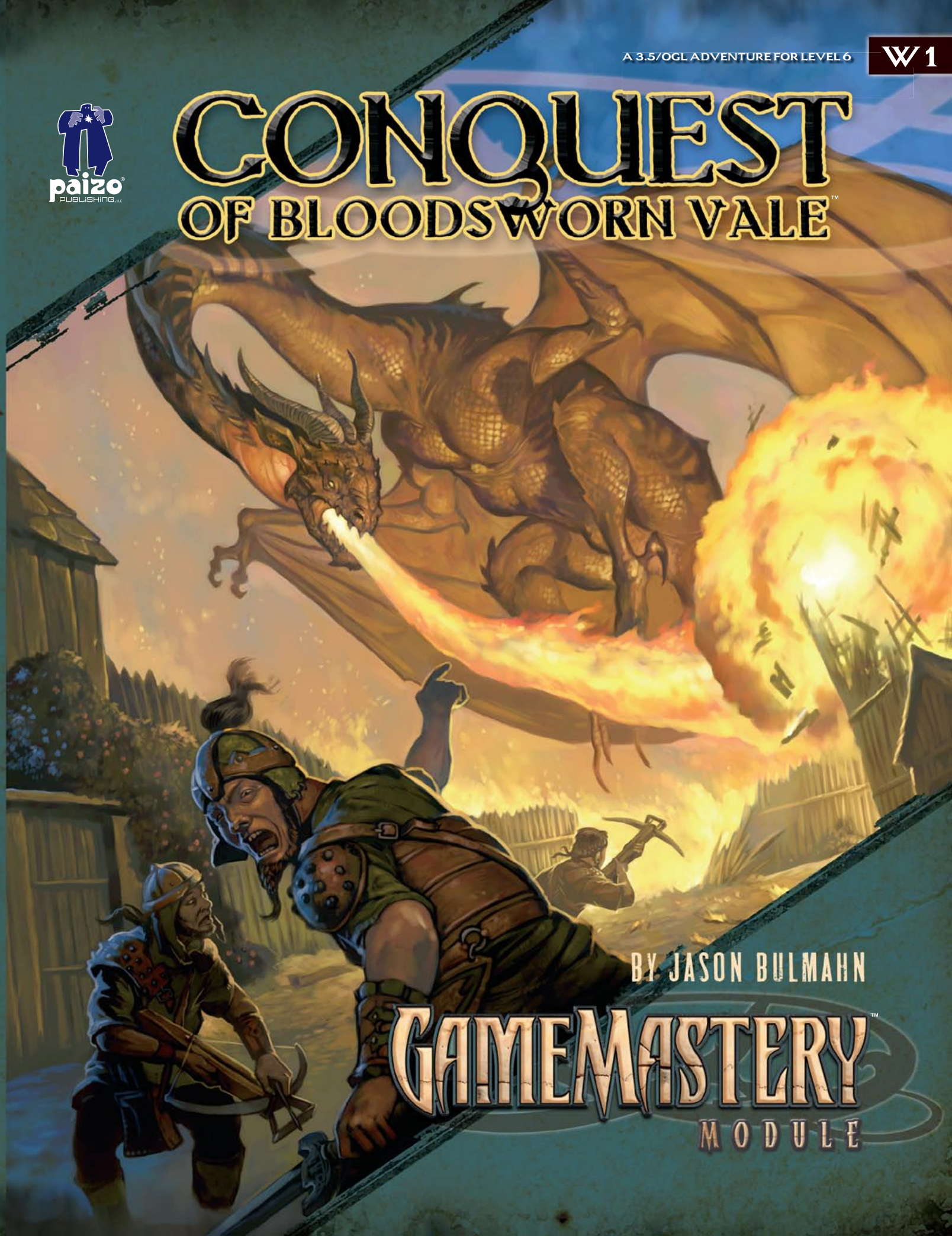


A 3.5/OGL ADVENTURE FOR LEVEL 6

W1



# CONQUEST OF BLOODSWORN VALE™



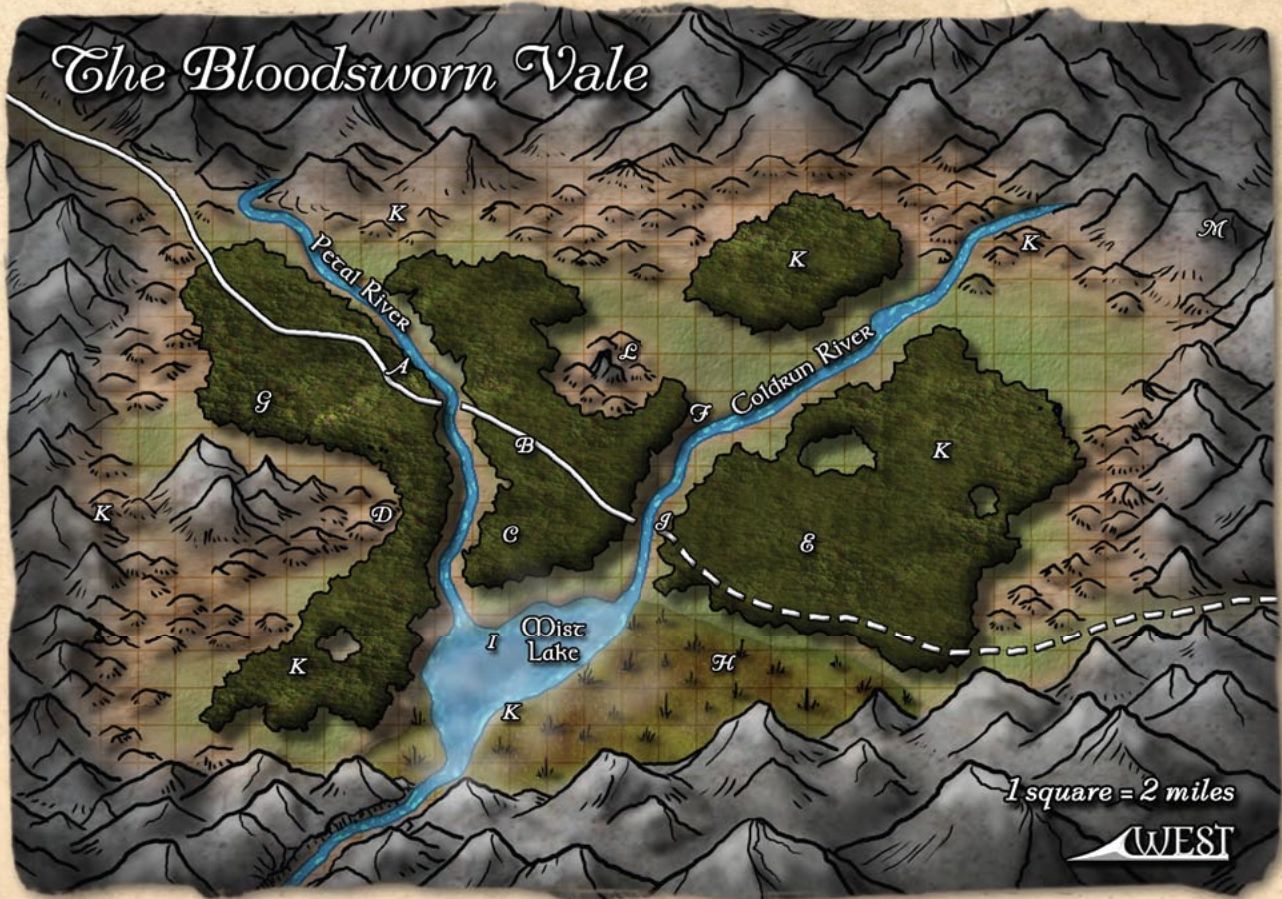
BY JASON BULMAHN

## GAMEMASTERY™

MODULE



# The Bloodsworn Vale



# Fort Thorn







# CONQUEST OF BLOODSWORN VALE

GAMEMASTERY MODULE W1  
WILDERNESS ADVENTURE

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*W1: Conquest of Bloodsworn Vale* is a GameMastery Module designed for four 6th-level characters. By the end of this module, characters should reach 8th level. This module is compliant with the Open Game License (OGL) and is suitable for use with the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game.

The OGL can be found on page 31 of this product.

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**D**uring the rise of the Empire of Cheliox a great battle was fought in the valley now known as the Bloodsworn Vale between the emperor's forces and the barbarian lords of the north. Although Cheliox won, countless soldiers were massacred in one of the bloodiest engagements of the Expansion Wars. Some say the fields of roses that dot the vale date to that time, and that for every soldier who fell, a blood-red rose grew to mark his grave.

Today, Cheliox is a shadow of its former glory, rent by civil war and ruled by devil worshippers. The vale, once a vital trade route, has been reclaimed by wilderness. Only the rose bushes remain to remind travelers of the former empire.



## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Nestled between lofty peaks of the Mindspin Mountains, the Bloodsworn Vale has been forgotten by civilization for decades. Once a well-worn path connecting the heartland of the empire with its more remote colonies, it now exists as an unclaimed and unspoiled woodland. The years have erased the road and various monsters, once held in check by the Empire's soldiers, have all but overrun the valley. Today, the vale is a dangerous place, thick with tenacious plants, cruel monsters, and hungry predators.

Four months ago, King Arabasti, the aging lord of Korvosa, decided to reclaim the vale for his crown, planning to tame it and reopen the important trade route with the south. He charged Sir Tolgrith, one of his more trusted vassals, with this task. Soon afterward, the loyal knight and his band of hearty soldiers set off into the vale, reopening the northern mountain pass and establishing Fort Thorn in the heart of the valley.

Over the past three months, Sir Tolgrith and his men have worked hard to reopen the old trade route. While they met with some success, the magnitude of the challenges that lie in their path have put them behind schedule. Monsters constantly attack workers and caravans bound for the fort, the water supply fouls once per month,

and the ever-present rose bushes make surveying and exploring the region painfully slow. In hopes of putting progress back on track, Sir Tolgrith sent out a call for adventurers, promising gold, land, and titles to those willing to help solve his problems.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs arrive at Fort Thorn and find it in disarray. Another work crew has been attacked and all of the men were found dead—filled with arrows and exquisitely butchered. After exploring the small community and speaking with Sir Tolgrith, the PCs head off on their first assignment. When they arrive at the scene of the massacre, the PCs learn the identity of the attackers: a tribe of feral fey that lives near the construction site. After dealing with the fey, the characters return to Fort Thorn to rest and learn more about the vale.

From here, the PCs have a number of options to explore, some with more urgency than others. Monsters continue to harass the workers clearing the trail, someone must find the source of the fouled water, and a local hermit must be reassured.

About a month after the PCs arrive in the vale, a group of angry flame drakes, degenerate cousins of true dragons, comes calling, looking to punish those who eradicated the fey. It seems the drakes received

tribute from the fey, and they want someone to pay up. This leads them to Fort Thorn and a deadly conflict with the defenders. The party must deal with the drakes before they burn the keep to the ground and then track them back to their roost.

After solving this problem, the PCs again have time to deal with other concerns. They also have time to explore the vale, search for valuable resources, and negotiate a truce with a local tribe of lizardfolk.

Just as the deadline to open the vale approaches, one final major threat appears. Vardak, a powerful sorcerer who lives in the nearby mountains, arrives and delivers a deadly ultimatum. Angry over the death of his flame drake servants, the sorcerer intends to destroy the fort and claim the vale as his own. In order to prevent the destruction of everything they have worked so hard to build, the PCs must travel to the sorcerer's mountain redoubt and confront him in a final showdown.

## INTRODUCTION

*"Land, Gold, and Title!" Those are the things promised for taming the great swath of wilderness known as the Bloodsworn Vale, but so far, the journey there has been little more than hardship and boredom. As the miles roll past and the Mindspin Mountains draw ever nearer, the company of merchants you travel with has grown steadily more subdued. Some even whisper that the vale is haunted or cursed.*

*After crossing through Icedeep Pass, the wagons pull up short to take in the view. Far in the distance, the ice-capped peaks of the Mindspin range are visible beyond a lush green wilderness. Below spreads a sea of leaves, broken only here and there by fields of blood-red roses. Perhaps twenty miles ahead, a wooden fort breaks through the forest canopy, with a thin wisp of smoke twisting into the air. Suddenly, the promises of "Land, Gold, and Title" don't seem so far-fetched after all.*

The player characters can enter this adventure in one of two basic ways. If the group knows each other, one of their number comes across the bills posted up throughout town calling for brave heroes to tame the unknown wilderness. If the characters do not know each other, they encounter these notes and instead meet



### *Land, Gold and Title!*

*The trade route through the Bloodsworn Vale must be opened. If you be of stout heart and able body, Captain Tolgrith needs your help. Rewards aplenty for those who help tame this wild land. Interested persons should report to Fort Thorn, inside the vale, immediately.*

#### Handout #1

on the road to the vale. In either case, give the players **Handout #1**. If you prefer a more direct link, Sir Tolgrith might be personally familiar with the heroics of the group and sends a letter to them asking for aid. Another option is to make one of the missing workers an old acquaintance of a PC. His disappearance sends the PCs to discover his fate at the behest of his worried family.

In any case, the adventure begins with the PCs traveling to Bloodsworn Vale together. Give the players a chance to look over the notice before beginning Part 1.

### **Accomplishment Points**

During this adventure, the PCs can change the tide of events in the Bloodsworn Vale, making it safe for settlers and merchants. Each obstacle they overcome and each task they complete earns the PCs a number of accomplishment points (AP). The king expects the trade route to be open and secure 60 days after the start of the adventure. At the end of this time, the amount of APs earned by the characters determines the level of their success and their reward. See the Conclusion for more information.

## **PART 1: MISSING WORKERS**

This adventure begins with the PCs arriving at Fort Thorn with a small caravan of merchants loaded with supplies and provisions

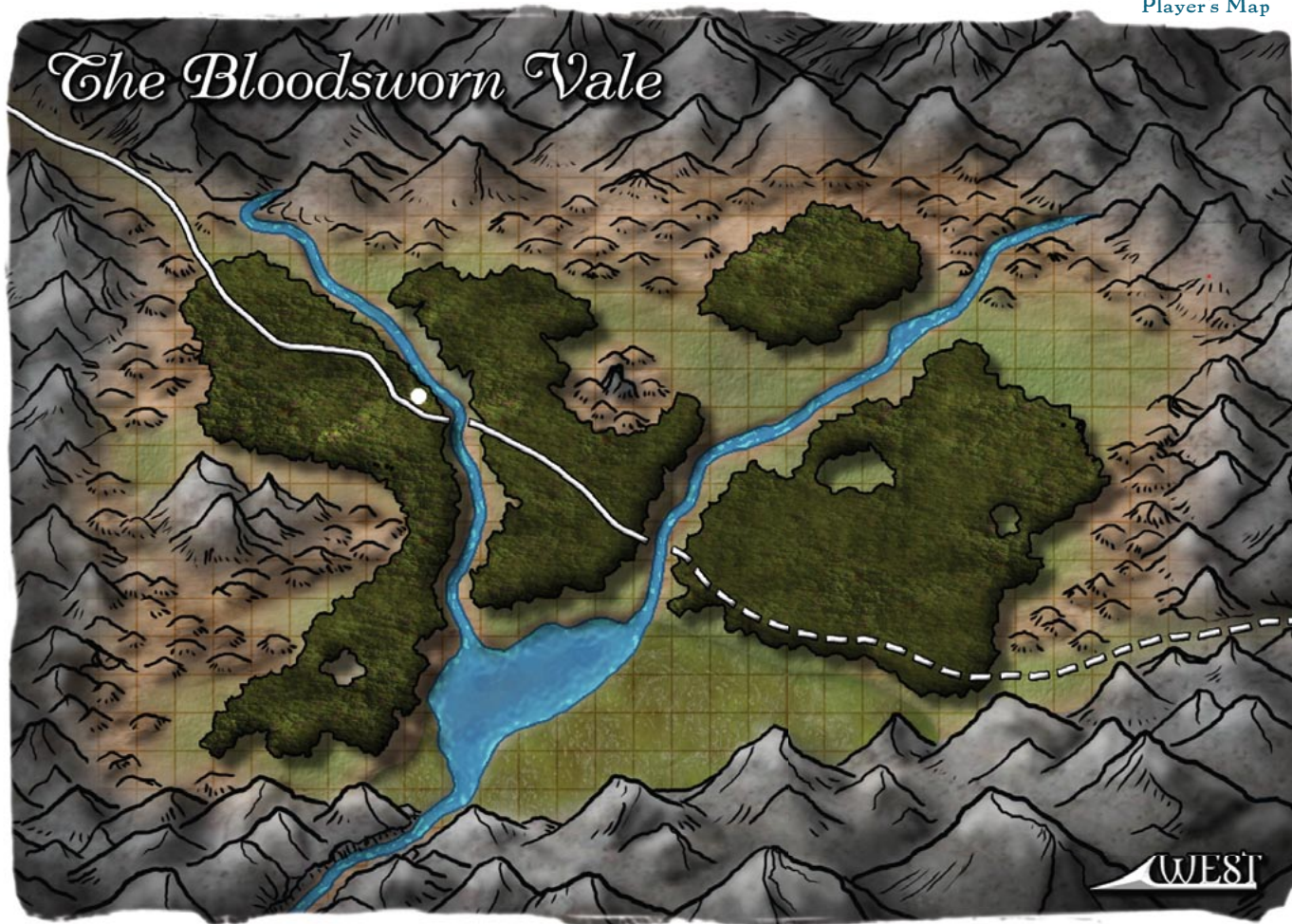
for the settlement. Give the players ample time to explore the fort and its various buildings. They might wish to get a room at the Boar's Bones or visit one of the few shops. While there is not much going on when the PCs arrive, most of the townsfolk are more than happy to talk to outsiders. At the moment, all of the news in town concerns a missing work crew that vanished two days ago. Theories about the reasons for their disappearances vary wildly, from angry spirits to rampaging monsters. Appendix A describes the entire fort in detail.

This adventure assumes the characters got to know one another on the trail to the fort (or before then). If this is not the case, they all meet one another when they go to speak with Sir Tolgrith about the job offer.

### **Meeting with Sir Tolgrith**

Eventually, the PCs need to speak with Sir Tolgrith about employment. When they approach the keep (area A3), read or paraphrase the following.

Player's Map





Sir Tolgrith

*Fort Thorn's keep is an imposing structure and one of the few stone buildings in the small outpost. Fully two stories tall, the building has only a few windows, most of which are little more than arrow slits. A pair of guards standing in front of the portcullis that protects the main entrance notices your approach. One of them calls out, "Hail newcomers! You must be the adventurers come to answer the lord's call. You're the first. Welcome."*

One guard takes the PCs inside to a first-floor planning chamber and asks them to wait while he informs the lord of their arrival. The small room has enough seats for everyone around a large table on which sits a map of the vale. This map shows the basic landforms, the fort, and the progress and projected course of the path. After only a few minutes, **Sir Gyrad Tolgrith** (NG male human fighter 4/ranger 2) walks into the room. A hale and rugged fighter, Gyrad has years of experience and is a seasoned campaigner. The lack of progress in the vale thus far has frustrated him, but he remains upbeat and cheerful despite the continued setbacks.

*"Greetings friends. I am glad to see that my call did not go unheeded. Welcome to the Bloodsworn Vale! I am Gyrad Tolgrith, the lord of this vale. I have been charged with clearing the way through these lands. I hope you can help me accomplish this."*

Assuming the PCs agree, Gyrad goes on to explain the current situation. The path itself has fallen behind schedule as the monsters dwelling in the forest constantly harry the workers. Fortunately, these marauding beasts have so far only killed a few workers, and progress on the road continues despite these losses. Recently, however, a new threat appeared. Two days ago, a work crew failed to return. After recalling all of the crews, Sir Tolgrith sent

out his scouts to investigate. They returned this morning.

The scouts reported finding the missing crew's camp in complete disarray. They found all eight men dead, pierced with dozens of small arrows. While none of the gear or equipment was missing, each body was found missing its ears. Since this mutilation is obviously not the work of a simple forest monster, Sir Tolgrith prefers to send professionals to investigate the disturbing turn of events. Gyrad asks the PCs to find the butchers responsible, put an end to them, then report back to him personally once they have completed their task.

After giving them this responsibility, Gyrad happily answers any questions the PCs might have. The following are some typical responses.

**Where did these attacks occur?** "About eight miles from here, just off one of the finished parts of the trail. I can give you a simple map."

**Weren't the men armed?** "Of the eight, six were workers and two were my soldiers. The scouts reported that it looked like they put up a fight, but there were no other bodies found."

**What should we do with the attackers?** "We do not have a jail or even a magistrate here in the vale. Nonetheless, I want these butchers brought to justice. If that means they must be put to the sword, so be it."

**How long do we have?** "I would like you to leave as soon as possible to solve this problem. The road must be open in two months' time and delays like this one make that deadline seem unlikely. Perhaps we can catch up, but only if you solve this problem quickly."

**What about payment?** "I am a man of my word. Any who help me tame this place will earn land, title, and gold. My liege, King Arabasti, has given me leave to knight those who help me and to give them land here in the vale. The gold will come from a tax

## Designer Notes



### SIR TOLGRITH

Gyrad Tolgrith is a vital NPC during this adventure and should be played with a distinct personality. Although

good-natured and relatively friendly, he is a man on a mission. That drive should take center stage above all other concerns. Most of the time, when the PCs meet him, he has a serious problem that he needs to deal with, leaving him grave and concerned. Be sure to include other scenes with Gyrad, including services at the shrine, participating in the archery contest, and having an ale at the Boar's Bones. With a few extra moments like these, Gyrad can become much more than the local leader: he can become a friend to the PCs.

## BLOODSWORN VALE MOVEMENT KEY

Terrain	—Speed—			
	15 feet	20 feet	30 feet	40 feet
Trail	1–1/2 miles	2 miles	3 miles	4 miles
Forest	1/2 mile	3/4 mile	1 mile	1–1/2 miles
Hills	3/4 mile	1 mile	1–1/2 miles	2 miles
Mountains	3/4 mile	1 mile	1–1/2 miles	2 miles
Plains	1 mile	1–1/2 miles	2–1/4 miles	3 miles
Swamp	3/4 mile	1 mile	1–1/2 miles	2 miles



## RANDOM ENCOUNTER

d%	Forest/Plains	—Terrain—	
		Hills/Mountains	Swamp
01–05	1 assassin vine (EL 3)	1 barghest (EL 4)	1 harpy (EL 4)
06–15	1d4+1 wolves (EL 4)	1d4+1 wolves (EL 4)	1 giant crocodile (EL 4)
16–25	1d6 Medium monstrous spiders (EL 4)	2d6 hobgoblins (EL 4)	1d3 constrictor snakes (EL 4)
26–40	1d3 black bears (EL 4)	1d3 ogres (EL 5)	1d6+1 lizardfolk (EL 5)
41–55	1d4+1 bugbears (EL 5)	1d3 howlers (EL 5)	1 troll (EL 5)
56–70	1d3 roseblood sprites (EL 5)	1d4+1 dire wolves (EL 6)	1 will-o'-wisp (EL 6)
71–80	1d3 owlbeats (EL 6)	1 ettin (EL 6)	1 seven-headed hydra (EL 6)
81–90	1d3 dire boars (EL 6)	1d3 minotaurs (EL 6)	1 annis hag (EL 6)
91–95	1 shambling mound (EL 6)	1d3 flame drakes (EL 7)	1d3 trolls (EL 7)
96–100	1 chimera (EL 7)	1 hill giant (EL 7)	1 medusa (EL 7)

levied on the merchants using this trail. To put it simply, the safer you make this vale, the more richly we'll all be rewarded. Your basic room and board will be provided while you are in my employ, and any spoils you recover during your adventures are yours to keep."

**Is there anything else we should know?**  
"Now that you mention it, there is one

other thing. The people of this community do not yet know the fate of the workers. I ask for your discretion in this matter until it is resolved."

### Travel through the Vale

Throughout this adventure, the PCs explore a number of locations within the vale. Several of these sites are given letter designations

and described in full. At the start of the adventure, the PCs know of only two: Fort Thorn (area A, described in Appendix A) and the ambush site (area B). Other locations might be revealed to them at various times or discovered while traveling.

Traveling through the Bloodsworn Vale is not easy. Only one path leads through the woods and it is not yet completed. Refer to



## ROSE BUSHES

Many of the locations in this adventure include dense swaths of rose bushes, one of the most common plants in the vale. These bushes are treated as difficult terrain. In addition, anyone moving into a square containing rose bushes takes 1 point of piercing damage. Those taking a 5-foot step into a rose bush square avoid taking this damage. Creatures can move out of a rose bush square without difficulty or damage (unless moving into another rose bush square).

the table on page 4 to determine the group's speed through the vale per hour traveled. For the number of miles per day, multiply these values by 8. Generally, only groups with horses can move at a speed of 40 feet. Note that traveling through the forest is actually slower than normal due to the frequent fields of thick rose bushes.

### Wandering Monsters

A great many creatures live in the Bloodsworn Vale and many of them are hostile to outsiders. When traveling through the vale, you should check for an encounter every 6 hours. During the day there is only a 10% chance of a wandering monster encounter. At night, this chance increases to 20%. If an encounter is indicated, roll on the chart on page 5.

### Area B: Ambush Site

The trail leading from Fort Thorn to the ambush site is only about 8 miles long. The journey takes the PCs across the Petal River via a recently built bridge. The ambush site itself is just a few hundred feet off the path. When the PCs arrive, read or paraphrase the following.

*A few torn tents and a long-cold fire pit are all that remain of the workers' camp. Although the bodies have been buried in a single large grave off to one side, dried bloodstains clearly mark the spots where they fell.*

There are a total of eight bloodstains in the camp. A successful DC 15 Heal check confirms the blood came from humans and the bloodstains were made about 3 days ago. The scouts took almost all

of the worker's gear of any value, but a few things remain. With a DC 10 Search check, the PCs can uncover a pair of torn but serviceable tents, two full waterskins, a pair of bone dice, and a silver dagger. A DC 20 Search check of the area uncovers all the above and a thorn arrow lying next to a nearby tree. This Small rosewood arrow has a wicked thorn at its tip and specially treated petals for fletching. A DC 20 Survival skill check made by a character with the Track feat reveals a faint trail heading south. This trail crosses the main path and heads straight toward the Fey Glade (area C). This check also reveals the footprint of a Small creature. This footprint is humanoid and unshod.

If the PCs miss the trail, there are other options available to them. Taking the thorn arrow back to Fort Thorn, the PCs can consult with the scouts about its origins. While none of them have seen anything like it before, they do note one interesting thing about it: The breed of roses used to make the fletching is specific to one area of the vale, south of the path. They can point out this area on a map, indicating the swath of land that roughly corresponds to area C. In addition, a DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check reveals that giant bee wax (as opposed to normal bee wax) coats the shaft of the arrow. Asking around at Fort Thorn reveals that giant bees are only known to live in the area of the forest that roughly corresponds to area C.

### Area C: Fey Glade

Once the PCs uncover the location of the fey glade, traveling to it is relatively simple. The glade is located in a swath of forest roughly 6 miles south of the main path. Once in the area, the party can discover the glade by searching for 1d6 hours. As soon as the PCs uncover the glade, read or paraphrase the following.

#### C1. Outer Ring (EL 6)

*The dense and wild forest suddenly gives way to reveal an organized plot of land dominated by a pair of concentric rings of rose bushes surrounding a small clearing. A narrow path leads through the rings toward the clearing and some strange stone monoliths.*

The rings of rose bushes mark the edge of the fey glade. Between the two rings stand ancient trees, each meticulously trimmed and cared for. If the PCs followed a trail to get here, it leads to this spot and then continues up the path toward the clearing in the center.

**Creatures:** A trio of roseblood sprites stationed here watches for intruders, hiding in rose bush form. Although they can see and hear the PCs, they can take no actions until they revert to sprite form to attack. Two of the sprites are positioned near the middle of the path, while the last one stands near the entrance to the clearing at the center. These fey have placed a *thorn snare* at the entrance to the path through the hedge. This snare covers the entire path and requires a DC 24 Search check to locate. Note that the snare is attached to a nearby tree in order to pull its unlucky victim up into the air. When the PCs trigger this snare, the sprites revert to their normal form and attack.

The arrows used by these sprites are identical to the one found at the worker's camp. Closer inspection of the fey reveals they are all missing one of their ears (although the wounds have since healed).

#### ROSEBLOOD SPRITES (3)

CR 3

hp 22; see Appendix B

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** A character who makes a DC

20 Spot check avoids surprise by noticing the bushes change into creatures just before they attack.

**During Combat** The two sprites nearest the party attack each round, attempting to flank whenever possible. The third sprite uses his thorn bow and spell-like abilities as often as possible, first firing his poison thorns and then using *suggestion* on the most capable melee combatant.

**Morale** The sprites attempt to flee through the rose bushes if reduced to 5 hp or less. One of them attempts to warn the sprites down below if possible.

#### C2. Inner Ring (EL 6)

*The rings of rose bushes give way to five towering stone monoliths, each rising from a pool of crimson. Nestled in the center of these monoliths is a spiraling staircase descending into the earth.*





The monoliths are actually part of an ancient druid circle the sprites corrupted to their foul purposes. What was once a shrine to nature's glory and bounty now acts as an altar devoted to nature's savagery and bloodlust. The stones rise 20 feet and rest in shallow pools of blood that weep from the symbols carved into their faces. A DC 25 Knowledge (nature) skill check identifies these symbols as ancient runes of sacrifice. Characters who understand Sylvan receive a +5 bonus on this check.

**Creatures:** A trio of Large trees stands around these monoliths. These trees attack anyone who approaches the stones without first calling out "All hail the King of Roses" in Sylvan. The trees are in fact animated objects, created by the king using ancient rituals. While not as strong as true

treants, they appear just like them. A DC 15 Knowledge (nature) or Knowledge (arcana) check reveals this deception.

**ANIMATED TREES (3)** CR 3  
hp 52; MM 14 (Large animated object)

#### TACTICS


**During Combat** The trees move to attack the nearest foe each round but do not leave the rings of roses. The trees have a movement of 20 feet and hardness 5.

**Morale** The animated trees fight to the death.

### C3. Entry Hall

*The natural stone steps lead down more than thirty feet before ending in a small chamber with a low ceiling. An elegant pair of oak double doors stands closed opposite the stairs, with a much plainer door off to the side.*

## Designer Notes



### FEY FEAST

This scene is meant to be a disturbing one, with the cruel and nasty fey enjoying a fine dinner that turns out to be a horrible feast of human flesh. The real goal here is to give the players a sense that these fey are far from the cute forest-dwelling pixies they are accustomed to. If flesh is not quite enough, feel free to add in a plate of "finger" food here and a goblet of blood there to get the point across.



This entry hall opens into the underground lair of the roseblood sprites. Each of these chambers has unworked stone walls and 7-foot-high ceilings. Phosphorescent fungus that grows in patches on the walls and ceiling lights all the rooms.

Intricate carvings cover the double doors to the north, showing a field of rose bushes being tended by a single regal roseblood sprite with a crown on his brow. A DC 10 Listen check at these doors reveals the sounds of laughter and merriment coming from beyond them. A DC 15 Listen check at the other door reveals only a faint buzzing noise. None of the doors leading out of this chamber are locked.

#### C4. The Hive (EL 5)

*An odd buzzing noise fills the room the moment the door opens, revealing a chamber covered in waxy hexagons. Moving through the chamber is a swarm of gigantic bees that looks up menacingly.*

The roseblood sprites use this room to keep their pet giant bees. The walls and ceiling of this chamber are covered in honeycomb large enough for a Small character to crawl inside. The bees enter and exit this chamber through a shaft in the ceiling that leads to a hollow tree outside the clearing.

**Creatures:** These bees tend to plants around the glade and are hostile toward any who invade their hive. They move to attack the moment either door opens. Note that while only 4 bees attack at any one time, there are a total of 12 bees in the hive and one joins the fight within 1d3 rounds after a bee is slain (or it successfully stings and dies).

**GIANT BEES (4)**  
hp 13; MM 284

CR 1

##### TACTICS

**During Combat** The bees swarm the nearest target each round. The bees pursue opponents into area C3 and the glade above but do not go into any other areas.

**Morale** The bees fight to the death in their hive but flee after taking any amount of damage outside it.

**Treasure:** While the bees keep no treasure, their especially sweet honey is quite valuable.



### King of Roses

Each pound of honey is worth 10 gp. There is a total of 50 pounds of honey here.

#### C5. Dining Hall (EL 7)

*Quiet laughter and the tinkle of glass echoes from this large chamber. Running down the middle of the room is a huge table, flanked on either side by ten toadstool chairs. A banquet of roasted meats, steamed turnips, and hearty breads rests on the table. Four small sprites sit on the toadstool chairs, enjoying the feast, oblivious to the interruption. Opposite the main entrance is a dense wall of roses.*

This chamber serves as the grand dining hall of the King of Roses, the sprite who rules this place. The feast is real and the food smells quite delicious. The truth, however, is that the meats are roasted human, carved from a lone traveler caught by the sprites two days ago. The sprites have laced the vegetables, breads, and wine with

a special seasoning that, while flavorful to them, is toxic to others. Anyone other than the sprites eating from the table ingests a virulent form of striped toadstool poison (ingested; DC 15; initial 1 Wis, secondary 2d6 Wis and 1d4 Int).

The wall of roses on the north side of the room blocks line of sight and is completely impassable. Anyone attempting to move through it takes 2d6 points of piercing damage. Those who attack the wall find that it regenerates all damage as quickly as they can deal it. Those adjacent to it can hear the clear laughter of the King of Roses on the other side but cannot otherwise interact with him (he does not respond if called). Those who try to speak with him are told, rather curtly, by the sprites: "The King of Roses does not receive those who do not bring him the gifts. We hear roots are in fashion this time of year." This refers to the roots in area C6. Those who return with roots, however, are still not



allowed entrance. If the PCs have roots, the sprites instead tell them: “The king does not see those who do not have the blessing of his mother.” This refers to the mighty rose bush brooding in area C8. If the PCs enter this room with both a gift and the blessing of the king’s mother (in the form of everlasting roses), the wall of roses parts, allowing the PCs to approach the King of Roses (area C9).

**Creatures:** The four sprites in this room do not attack unless assaulted or the King of Roses is threatened. If slain, new sprites replace them the next time the PCs enter the room. The sprites do not answer any questions, but close examination reveals that two of them are missing one ear each, while the other two have human ears seamlessly grafted to their heads.

#### ROSEBLOOD SPRITES (4)

CR 3

hp 22; see Appendix B

##### TACTICS

**During Combat** Two of the sprites move to engage the PCs in melee, while the other two try to remain outside it, using their poison thorns and spell-like abilities instead. If given the opportunity, they use *suggestion* to get the PCs to eat a hearty meal.

**Morale** If the king is threatened, these sprites fight to the death; otherwise, they flee if reduced to 5 hp or less.

**Treasure:** The plates and silverware on the table are made of gold and worth 1,000 gp as a set. In addition, the 8 bottles of wine on the table are a special fey wine worth 50 gp per bottle.

#### C6. Root Cellar

*Thick and gnarled roots dangle from the ceiling of this room, some of them reaching down to small puddles on the floor. The rich scent of upturned earth is heavy in this chamber.*

This room is used as a sort of root garden for the fey, who find them quite delicious. Hundreds of roots hang from the ceiling between huge pillars of stone. These roots are edible, but quite bitter, and are harsh on the stomachs of humanoids. Anyone who samples a root must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or become fatigued from stomach cramps for 1 hour. The DC increases by +1 for each mouthful eaten in

a 1-hour period. Failing additional saves does not cause exhaustion, but it does extend the duration of the fatigue.

If the PCs come here to find a gift for the king, they soon discover that not just any root will do. Bringing back a random root to the dining hall generally gets a response of “You call that a gift? No, I am afraid that will never do. Do you not think that the palate of a king deserves the biggest, most bitter root you can find?” While finding a large root requires only a DC 20 Search check, finding the most bitter is a bit more difficult. A DC 25 Knowledge (nature) check reveals the bitterest kind of root. This, combined with a DC 20 Search check, is sufficient to find the right root to satisfy the king. Without a Knowledge (nature) check, the PCs must taste each one of the 8 large roots they find to determine the bitterest of all. Those tasting the roots must make Fortitude saves (as outlined above) to avoid becoming fatigued.

#### C7. Nursery (EL 5)

*Planted in rich black soil around a glittering pool of water, twelve small rose bushes grow in this room, each a perfect specimen of beauty.*

This room is a nursery for the roseblood sprites, where new fey grow as rose bushes before the king awakens them using a secret ritual. The pool of water on the far side of the room is shallow and treated as difficult terrain for Medium or larger characters. Small characters must make DC 10 Swim checks to navigate it.

**Creatures:** Two of the rose bushes in this chamber are actually roseblood sprites, one on either side of the pool. These sprites revert to sprite form and attack the moment the PCs enter the room, screaming, “You are not allowed here!” The square directly in front of the door contains a 5-foot-diameter *thorn snare* trap (see page 28).

#### ROSEBLOOD SPRITES (2)


CR 3

hp 22; see Appendix B

##### TACTICS

**Before Combat** A character who makes a DC 20 Spot check avoids surprise by noticing the bushes changing into sprites. If unseen, they use *minor image* ability to make it appear

## Designer Notes



### KING OF ROSES

The King of Roses is the first real villain the PCs encounter in this adventure, but it should not start out as a combat. Make sure to give the PCs a taste of his arrogance and uncaring principles before launching into initiative. I like to think of his reactions in terms of what a human king might do if a mouse came to him making unreasonable demands. He does not recognize the PCs as equals, and the fact that they assert as much is whimsical and mildly insulting.

that two closer bushes have also changed into sprites.

**During Combat** Both fey attack the PCs using poison thorns until engaged in melee.

**Morale** These sprites fight to the death.

**Treasure:** The pool of water glistens because of all of the silver coins and other shiny trinkets tossed inside. In total, there are 3,400 sp in the pond and another 200 gp worth of small silver trinkets such as silverware, lockets, goblets, bracelets, and necklaces. This treasure was found in a large cache by the sprites a few years ago and all of the coins bear the markings of the Empire of Cheliah (making them several hundred years old).

#### C8. Mother Bush

*A shaft of light descends through a narrow hole in the ceiling, illuminating a gigantic rose bush covered in large, beautiful blossoms.*

This titanic rose bush is known as the mother of the King of Roses. For all of its beauty, the bush is also quite dangerous. Huge thorns cover its stems, making it hazardous to retrieve the flowers. A non-roseblood sprite attempting to pick a flower must make a DC 18 Reflex save or be pricked, taking 1 point of damage. These thorns also carry a stronger version of the red rash poison (injury; DC 16; initial spend 1 round scratching, secondary



1d4 Str). Those who are pricked and fail the Fortitude save do not retrieve a flower. A druid with woodland stride ability can pick a rose without suffering any ill effects. Note that attacking the bush ruins the flowers, as does using any sort of tool. *Mage hand* does not have the strength to pick a rose.

If the PCs are here to garner the blessing of the king's mother, they must each have one of her beautiful flowers.

**Treasure:** The rose flowers of this bush are eternal and never wilt. There are 9 mature flowers in all and each one is worth 50 gp.

### C9. Throne of the Rose King (EL 6 or 8)

The wall of thorns leading into this area only parts if the PCs have found the right gift and garnered the blessing of the mother bush. Once they have both of these, read or paraphrase the following.

*The wall of roses slowly parts to reveal a towering throne of oak, decorated with twisting rose vines. A majestic figure, clad in the finest*

*silks with a crown of roses upon his brow, sits on the throne. The King of Roses looks up with cold contempt. "How dare you interrupt my revelry?"*

**Creature:** This is the throne room of the King of Roses. Unless immediately attacked, the king starts as unfriendly, not hostile. He instead demands to know why intruders have come to his home. Assuming the PCs answer truthfully, he shows no sign of regret over what his people have done and is indignant at any suggestion that they stop. He refuses to relent on this position, claiming that the harvesting of ears from the workers is vital to his people (see development). If the PCs can improve his initial attitude to friendly with a DC 25 Diplomacy check or a successful Intimidate check, he pretends to agree to stop the attacks, and then cheerfully resumes them as soon as the PCs' backs are turned. Otherwise, after several minutes of pointless banter the king cries out to his subjects in the dining hall to attack.

### KING OF THE ROSES

CR 6

NE Small fey

**Init** +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +10, Spot +10

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 15, flat-footed 14

(+3 armor, +4 Dex, +1 size)

**hp** 40 (9d6+9)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8

**DR** 5/cold iron; **Resist** fire 10

#### OFFENSE

**Spd** 30 ft.

**Melee** +1 rapier +10 (1d4+3/18–20)

**Special Attacks** sneak attack +2d6

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 9th, +9 melee touch):

At will—*death knell* (DC 15), *minor image*

(DC 15), *obscuring mist*, *sleep* (DC 14),

*suggestion* (DC 18), *thorn snare*

1/day—*poison* (DC 16), *wall of thorns*

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** After calling for his fellow sprites to attack, the King of Roses divides the room by casting *wall of thorns*, trying to cut off as many PCs as possible from reaching him, while leaving one or two on his side for him to fight. He then uses *poison* on the weakest-looking PC, followed by *suggestion* (to go have a meal) on the strongest. After this, he attacks with his rapier.

**Morale** The King of Roses does not know defeat and fights to the death.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 14, **Dex** 18, **Con** 12, **Int** 13, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 17

**Base Atk** +4; **Grp** +2

**Feats** Ability Focus (*suggestion*), Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Bluff +12, Climb +4, Concentration +11, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Escape Artist +12, Hide +16, Intimidate +5, Jump +6, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +10, Move Silently +12, Sense Motive +5, Spot +10, Survival +2 (+4 in aboveground natural environments), Tumble +12, Use Rope +4 (+6 bindings)

**Languages** Elven, Sylvan

**SQ** awaken sprites, rose form, woodland stride

**Combat Gear** 2 potions of cure moderate wounds; **Other Gear** gloves of dexterity +2, key, +1 rapier, +1 rosewood armor

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Rose Form** (Su) see Appendix B.

**Sneak Attack** (Ex) see Appendix B.

**Woodland Stride** (Su) see Appendix B.



**Development:** A band of terrifying fire drakes has blackmailed the King of Roses for months now, demanding the ears of his subjects in payment for not burning down their glade. As the sprites have little defense against the flying menaces, the king reluctantly agreed. Now, once per month, four sprites sacrifice one of their ears, which are left in a rosewood box atop a nearby tree for the drakes to pick up. If the PCs kill the King of Roses, the remaining sprites scatter throughout the vale and the payment to the drakes comes to an end. On day 30, the drakes come looking for their payment and burn down this glade when they don't find it. They then seek out those responsible for ruining their bargain. See Part 3 for further details.

## C10. Private Chambers

*A large carpet of roses dominates the center of this room. A gently bubbling cauldron sits in one corner, while a simple wooden table resides against the far wall, covered in alchemical gear. A small chest sits alone in one corner.*

This small chamber is the personal abode of the King of Roses. The carpet is not magical, but treat its thorns as caltrops. Bubbling poison, brewed by the King of Roses to make poison thorns, fills the cauldron. The incomplete brew is unusable unless the PCs spend 1 hour finishing it, which requires a DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check. Success creates 1d4 doses of the poison, plus 1 dose for every 5 points by which the skill check result exceeds 25. This poison is identical to the poison found on the thorn arrows. Each dose is worth 40 gp. If the characters think to use some of the masterwork alchemical gear on the far table, they receive a +2 bonus on their Craft (alchemy) checks.

**Treasure:** The sturdy hardwood chest is locked. The key hangs from the king's belt. Otherwise, a DC 30 Open Lock check picks the lock. Inside is a trio of velvet-lined boxes. One of them contains four fey ears, while the other two are empty. In addition, a bloody sack contains 10 human ears. Along with the human ears is a large tome written in Sylvan full of esoteric magic of dubious effectiveness. One of the pages is dog-eared. It describes a ritual by

## TIMELINE

Date	Problem or Event
Day 0	Adventure begins. Murdered workcrew found (area B).
Day 1	Sir Tolgrith asks the PCs to seek out valuable resources (area K). Owlbears are spotted (area D).
Day 6	Bridge over the Coldrun River completed (area J). Work on the second half of the path begins and proceeds at 1 mile per day through the forest. Add days stalled due to fey attacks.
Day 8	Petal River is polluted (area I). Owlbear attacks close down work on the trail if not stopped by this day.
Day 9	Old hermit sends a message to Fort Thorn (area G).
Day 14	Spider attacks begin (area E).
Day 19	Thallin, the missing worker, is killed by spiders if not rescued by this day.
Day 24	Approximate date that the forest path is completed. Add days stalled due to spider and fey attacks. Work continues on the mountain path and proceeds at a rate of 2 miles per day.
Day 30	Flame drakes burn down the fey glade (area C).
Day 32	Flame drakes attack Fort Thorn (Part 3) and roost at Pointer's Rock (area L).
Day 35	Lizardfolk of the swamp send a message (area H).
Day 38	Petal River is polluted (area I).
Day 39	Lizardfolk conclave occurs.
Day 40	Bugbear attacks begin (area F).
Day 44	Path through the Bloodsworn Vale opens. Add days stalled due to bugbears, fey, flame drakes, and spiders.
Day 50	Vardak sends his ultimatum and warning (Part 4) from his mountain fortress (area M).
Day 59	Vardak's seed of fire destroys Fort Thorn unless he is stopped.
Day 60	King Arabasti's emissary arrives to inspect the new trail. Adventure ends.

which a fey creature can regenerate part of its body, but it requires as a component a piece of flesh similar to the part to be regrown. The book is worth 200 gp to a sage interested in such things. Finally, 1,200 gp in loose coins and 6 diamonds worth 100 gp each litter the bottom of the chest. All of the coins bear the markings of the Empire of Cheliox.

## PART 2: OTHER VALE SITES

After the PCs deal with the fey, Sir Tolgrith congratulates them on their work. He then goes on to explain several other problems facing him. The first is a need for more natural resources. Sir Tolgrith asks the PCs to keep an eye out for any such commodities they come across while on their travels. Scouts reported finding darkwood in the forests and precious metals in the hills. While their finds have not been substantial, Gyrad hopes the PCs might have more luck. See area K for more details. Another pressing problem is owlbears. These hungry predators roam in the forests south of the fort and Sir Tolgrith is worried they might slow

down the workers' progress. See area D for more details. Finally, he mentions he has something of a mystery for the PCs to solve. Every month, the waters of the Petal River become foul and unfit to drink for one day. While he can easily plan for the corruption and stockpile water, Gyrad is worried that it might be only one symptom of a deeper problem. The next occurrence of the event happens in seven days, should the PCs wish to investigate. See area I for more details.

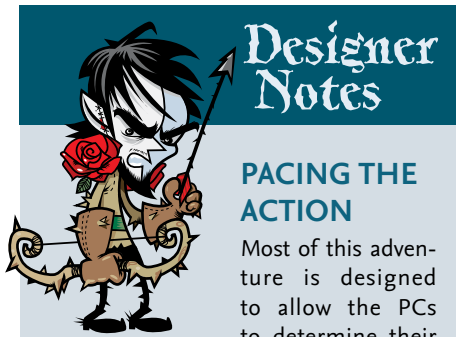
### Timeline

The problems faced by the people of the Bloodsworn Vale are most easily categorized in a simple timeline. While some of the concerns are constant, others only become a problem after a certain period of time. The timeline categorizes all of the threats and includes when specific events occur.

### Area D: Owlbears

Living just 7 miles south of Fort Thorn, a small pack of owlbears lairs in hills on the forest's edge. They have been spotted numerous times by the scouts, and their





## Designer Notes

### PACING THE ACTION

Most of this adventure is designed to allow the PCs to determine their own fate and take on challenges at their own rate. The key here is to keep up the pace. Sixty days can be a long time in game to go through, so make sure to give the PCs plenty to do. Feel free to add other events if time permits and the PCs are having too easy a time. Maybe one of the bridges is damaged and needs repair. Maybe a nasty storm settles on the region and a work crew is lost in it. Other monsters certainly lurk in the vale and could prove dangerous to the settlers if left unchecked. Aside from actual adventuring, make sure the group gets some downtime as well, but try not to dwell on this.

range, while concentrated south of the fort, seems to grow by the day. If they are not dealt with by day 8, progress on the trails must cease as they begin molesting the workers. Learning of the foul-tempered creatures, Sir Tolgrith tasks the PCs with tracking them down and eliminating them.

Those who wander the area south of Fort Thorn have a 25% chance per hour of encountering the owlbear lair if they are within 2 miles of it. A DC 20 Survival check also locates the lair, if made within 2 miles of its location. There is a 20% chance per hour of an encounter with owlbeats while within 1 mile of the lair (in addition to the normal wandering monster chances).

Alternatively, if the owlbeats are already harassing the workers, the PCs may attempt to defend the road. The owlbeats are somewhat crafty and avoid large, well-armed parties of travelers. A pair of owlbeats scouts along the road each day looking for easy pickings. If the PCs can kill 4 of these monsters the remaining

owlbeats retreat into the forest and pose no further threat for several years.

### D1. The Approach

*In the side of a small hill, a yawning cave entrance is visible. Numerous large brown feathers lay scattered on the ground and within the trees nearby.*

The area outside the cave is lightly wooded with scattered rose bushes.

### D2. Living Cave (EL 7)

*This broad cave is lit from above through a natural chimney. Off to one side stands a filthy pool of stagnant water. The scent of wet fur and bird droppings hangs heavily in the air, and feathers litter the ground.*

This is the primary living space for a parliament of owlbeats. Dozens of small bones, bits of fur, and rotting meat lay scattered about the place. The pool on the western side of the chamber is stagnant and primarily used for refuse.

**Creatures:** Three owlbeats stay in this chamber at all times, with two more wandering the wilderness nearby. Of the three, one rests quietly while the other two are awake, grooming themselves. They attack the moment they notice the PCs.

#### OWLBEATS (3)

CR 4

hp 52; MM 206

#### TACTICS

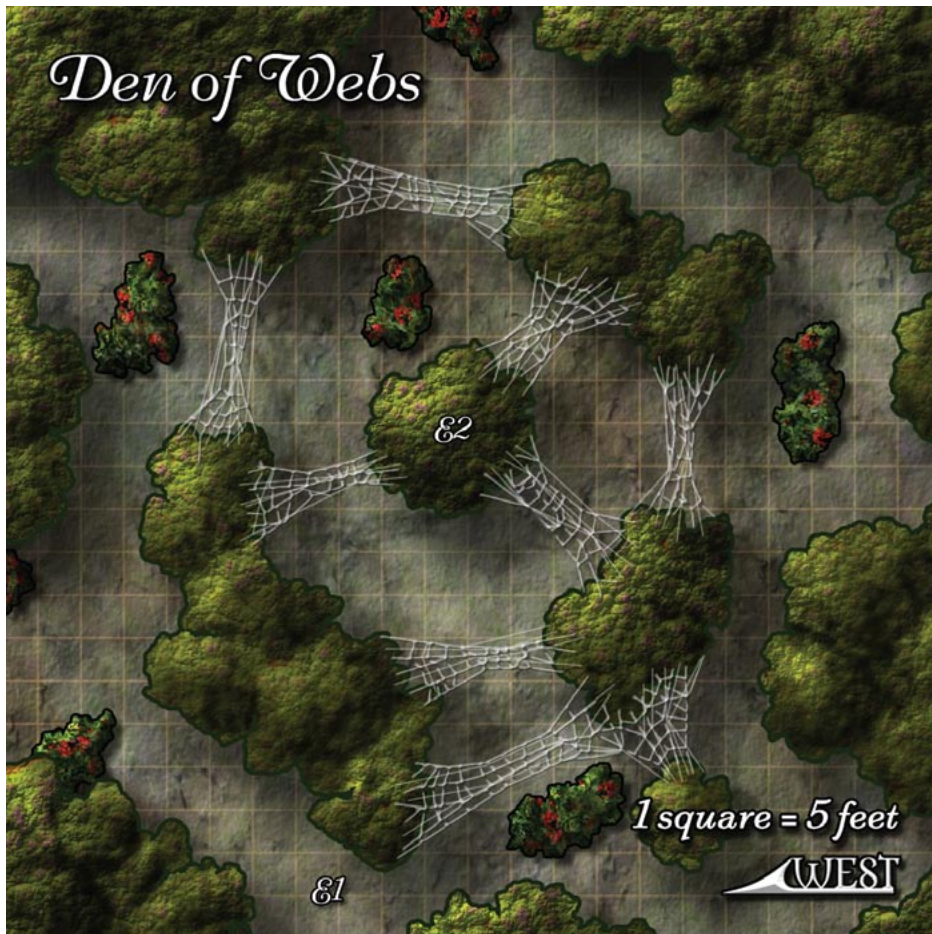
**During Combat** The owlbeats attack the nearest PCs each round, but change to attack any PC who heads toward area D3.

**Morale** These owlbeats fight to the death.

**Treasure:** The owlbeats devoured a lone scout two weeks ago and discarded his remains in the pool of water. The scout carried a *cloak of elvenkind*, a masterwork longsword, and a *potion of bear's endurance*. His body can be found with a DC 15 Search check.

### D3. Sleeping Cave

*Tiny "mep, mep" noises can be heard coming from the gigantic nest located in the corner of this room.*



A trio of owlbear cubs huddle in the nest contained in this chamber. They are only a few weeks old and can only nip as a defense (+1 melee attack, 1 point of damage).

**Treasure:** Owlbear cubs are quite valuable and can fetch as much as 3,000 gp in an open market. Unless the PCs are willing to travel to such a place, the merchants in Fort Thorn gladly arrange for 2,000 gp in trade for each cub that survives. Taking these cubs is a risk, and any remaining owlbeards attempt to hunt them down and kill whomever has them.

## Area E: Spiders

On day 14, large spiders attack a work crew building the path through the forest. One of the workers is killed and another, a man by the name of Thallin, goes missing. Sir Tolgrith is left with no choice but to halt construction until he deals with the threat. He assigns the PCs this task at the first chance he gets, sending out scouts to find them if necessary. The spiders approach from the forest north of the path (area E) and he suspects their lair is somewhere nearby.

The spider woods are easily discovered by anyone traveling north of the unfinished path. There is a 20% chance per hour of encountering a Large Monstrous Spider within 2 miles of the Den of Webs. Within 1 mile of the den, no rolls are needed to locate the heart of the problem.

### E1. Den of Webs

*Dense sheets of webbing, with strands as thick as your arm, blanket the trees and bushes of this haunted part of the woods. In some places, the webs form thick walls that block passage.*

To reach the interior of the nest, the PCs must either cut or burn a hole through the outer walls. While this does not summon spiders to the area, it does alert them to the presence of outsiders. The walls of webbing have 70 hit points per 5-foot section, but take double damage from fire. Anyone using a weapon to cut through the webbing must make a DC 15 Reflex save or have the weapon used become stuck (requiring a DC 15 Strength check to pull it free). Destroying any section of webbing destroys that entire wall. The trees are completely impassable, being a mix of dense tree branches and webs.

Anyone who comes in contact with the webbing must make a DC 15 Reflex save or become stuck. It takes either a DC 16 Escape Artist check or a DC 20 Strength check to break free.

### E2. Spider Nest (EL 7)

*Inside the ring of webs stands a tall oak tree covered in gigantic webs. The cocooned carcasses of numerous forest animals sway from its branches. One human-sized cocoon dances and spins of its own accord, high above the ground.*

**Creatures:** A host of monstrous spiders call this area home, overseen by one particularly large specimen. When the PCs approach the central oak, the spiders move out from nearby trees to attack, with their mother crawling over the central trunk.

**LARGE MONSTROUS SPIDERS (3)** CR 2  
hp 22; MM 289

**HUGE MONSTROUS SPIDER** CR 5  
hp 52; MM 289

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** If aware of the PCs' approach, the spiders hide before they arrive, using webs for added concealment. PCs who fail a Spot check against the lowest Hide check of the spiders are surprised.

**During Combat** The spiders attack the nearest foe each round, using their web attacks first to entangle the PCs.

**Morale** The spiders fight to the death.

**Treasure:** The spiders possess little of value, but they did manage to catch and consume a bugbear who wandered into their woods. This bugbear carried a +1 frost morningstar and wore a masterwork suit of chainmail. His body can be found by those climbing through the tree by making a DC 20 Search check.

**Development:** The struggling bundle of webs in the tree 30 feet above the ground is in fact the missing worker, Thallin. This half-elf is very grateful for his rescue, but very weak from poison. Should the PCs have need of a cohort or perhaps a replacement PC, Thallin would make a fine choice. If the PCs take more than 5 days to find and free Thallin, the spiders kill him and feast on his innards.

## Area F: Bugbears

On day 40 a small clan of bugbears that recently moved into the area and set up camp begins raiding travelers, merchants, and workers in the vale. Over the next 3 days, two work crews and one merchant caravan are ambushed. The bugbears kill a total of four people and Sir Tolgrith must once again suspend work until the threat is removed. The bugbears are ruthless in their attacks but careful to cover their trail. Tracking them back to their camp requires a DC 30 Survival skill check by a PC with the Track feat. If this does not work, the PCs have another option. The bugbears light a cooking fire each night just before dusk that can be spotted from Fort Thorn. If the PCs do not notice this (a DC 20 Spot check), one of the watchtower guards spots it and informs Gyrad.

The bugbear camp is located on the north bank of the Coldrun River about 16 miles due east from Fort Thorn. Note that this encounter is not as easy as some of the others, since the bugbears are numerous and well prepared. The PCs must thin the bugbears' numbers before the characters can engage them in a direct assault, either by using hit-and-run tactics or by ambushing the patrols as they leave camp to scout the road for targets.

### F1. Wall of Roses (EL 5)

*A wall of rose bushes surrounds a trio of crude circular huts. Even from a distance, large humanoid guards are visible, patrolling the perimeter just inside the hedge.*

There are only two ways into the camp that avoid the hedge of rose bushes and their painful thorns: a narrow gap on the north side and the southern edge that abuts the river. The northern gap is blocked at all times by a pile of logs.

The rose bushes are at least 10 feet thick all around the camp. Grovask, a powerful bugbear ranger, fortified these bushes using a scroll of plant growth. As such, anyone wishing to pass through the bushes must spend 4 squares of movement for each square entered and take 1d6 points of piercing damage each square. A druid's woodland stride ability allows movement through the



hedge at full speed but does not prevent the damage.

**Creatures:** The perimeter of the camp is guarded at all times by a trio of bugbear guards who patrol the hedge and keep a lookout. These guards are lazy and disorganized and sometimes do not return to a spot for 10 minutes or more. If they notice anyone, they sound the general alarm, bringing all of the bugbears present out for a fight.

### BUGBEARS (3)

CR 2

hp 16; MM 29

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** The bugbears sound the alarm and draw javelins before the fight, if possible.

**During Combat** The bugbears hurl javelins every round while taking cover behind the rose bushes. If engaged in melee, they use their morningstars, ganging up on foes whenever possible.

**Morale** The bugbears fight to the death.

## F2. Bugbear Camp (EL 11)

*Three crude huts, made from deadwood, stones, and mud, dominate the center of this camp. One is clearly larger than the others and it has numerous animal trophies nailed above the door.*

Each of the two smaller huts is home to six of the vicious goblinoids, while the larger hut is home to Grovask and his squad of hunters (four in all). The interiors of the huts are crude affairs, with simple sleeping mats surrounding small fire pits. Each hut is littered with animal bones and broken bits of armor and weapons. Each night, at dusk, a bugbear hunting party of four leaves the camp and an entirely separate group returns in the morning (meaning there are at least four bugbears outside the camp at any given point, with eight missing at night).

**Creatures:** Rousing the entire camp draws a total of 12 bugbears, 4 hunters (each with maximum hit points and masterwork

weapons), and Grovask to its defense (not counting the three guards). At night, when two hunting parties are out, this number drops to 8 ordinary bugbears. These bugbears defend their camp at all costs, and do not pursue anyone who retreats (for fear of a trap). If the PCs flee the location, Grovask and his hunters follow them if it is night but otherwise let them escape.

### BUGBEARS (12 OR 8)

CR 2

hp 16 or 27 (hunters); MM 29

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The bugbears hurl javelins if the PCs are outside the camp, but they quickly switch to morningstars and swarm any who enter the protective ring.

**Morale** The bugbears fight to the death.

### GROVASK

CR 7

Male bugbear ranger 6

CE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

**Init** +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; **Listen** +9, **Spot** +9

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15

(+2 armor, +3 Dex, +3 natural)

**hp** 67 (9d8+27)

**Fort** +9, **Ref** +11, **Will** +4

#### OFFENSE

**Spd** 30 ft.

**Melee** +1 vicious morningstar +14 (1d8+6 plus vicious/19–20)

**Melee** +1 vicious morningstar +12/+7 (1d8+6 plus vicious/19–20) and  
mwk kukri +12/+7 (1d4+2/18–20)

**Ranged** mwk javelin +12 (1d6+5)

**Special Attacks** favored enemy +2 (humanoid [elf]), +4 (humanoid [human])

**Spells Prepared** (CL 3rd):

1st—*entangle* (DC 12), *resist energy*

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Grovask casts *resist energy* before combat, giving himself resist fire 10.

**During Combat** If the clan is being attacked, Grovask and his hunters engage the PCs directly as quickly as possible once they enter the perimeter. Grovask singles out humans and elves above all other targets and casts *entangle* only if he can catch a number of enemies in the rose hedge. He has the Diehard feat and fights into negative hit points.

**Morale** Grovask never flees from a fight with humans or elves. If reduced to fewer than 5 hit points and such creatures are not present, he flees.



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#### STATISTICS

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**Str** 20, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 7

**Base Atk** +8; **Grp** +13

**Feats** Diehard, Endurance, Improved Critical (morningstar), Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (morningstar)

**Skills** Climb +10, Hide +10, Listen +9, Move Silently +12, Spot +9, Survival +11, Swim +11

**Languages** Common, Goblin

**SQ** animal companion (currently none), wild empathy +4

**Combat Gear** wand of cure light wounds (47 charges); **Other Gear** +1 vicious morningstar, masterwork javelin, masterwork kukri, leather armor

**Treasure:** Grovask's hut contains most of the riches stolen by the tribe. These treasures include 1,300 gp in assorted coins (mostly silver), 50 yards of fine Osirion linen worth 250 gp, a silver serving set worth 100 gp, a worn tapestry depicting a fight from the Goblinblood Wars worth 500 gp, and a small chest containing four matching blue garnets worth 200 gp each.

### Area G: Hermit

On day 9, Sir Tolgrith receives an odd note delivered to him by a rather mangy wolf. This predator stalks up to the gate and drops the rolled paper in front of the guards before running away.

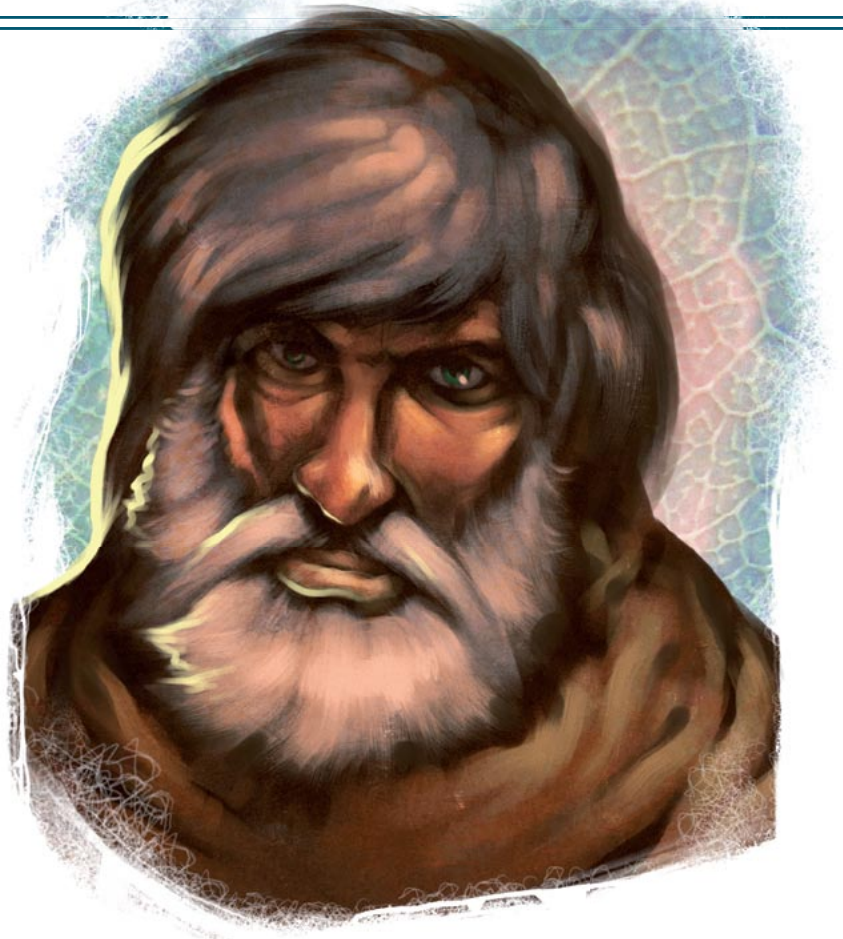
The parchment contains an invitation to meet with "Oakbrow, humble servant of the vale." Aside from this simple invitation, and a crude map to a spot due west of the fort, there is no mention for the reason behind the meeting. Tolgrith is far too busy to attend to such an odd request himself, but he is willing to allow the characters to speak on his behalf (so long as they do not make any binding deals). If they accept, he asks that they set off at once. When the PCs arrive at the site, read or paraphrase the following.

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*Standing in the center of a small clearing is a house made from deadwood, antlers, leaves, and mud. A small stone chimney off to the side lets off a thin ribbon of smoke and a warm light radiates from inbetween shuttered windows. An old voice croaks out from within. "Well, don't stand there gawkin' all day, come on in."*

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The ramshackle house is the dwelling of **Oakbrow** (NG male human expert 3/druid



Oakbrow

6), a hermit who has lived in the Bloodsworn Vale for the past 20 years. Oakbrow is a kindly old man who considers himself an expert on the vale. He cares deeply for it and its untamed beauty. He invited the master of Fort Thorn (or his representatives) to his home to discuss the future of the vale. A reserved man, Oakbrow is fond of morality fables telling the lessons of nature.

When the PCs arrive, he invites them inside and introduces himself. After asking who sent them and why, Oakbrow gets down to business. He explains that the recent settlement in the vale worries him and he wants assurances that the plan is for a path only, not to turn the vale into a logging and mining site. He understands that some development must occur, but he is quite satisfied if assurances are made that the majority of the woods remain untouched. In return for this promise, he offers his sage advice on the vale, answering questions about its inhabitants and locations. The PCs may wish to consult with Sir Tolgrith before making any deals, which



## Designer Notes

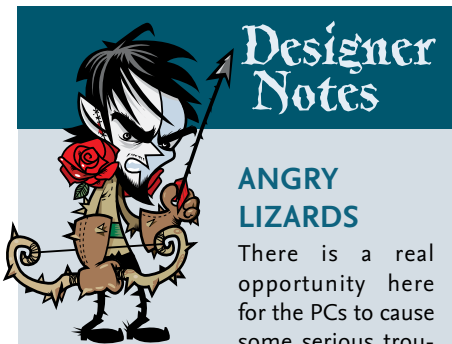
### OAKBROW

Aside from offering a roleplaying opportunity, Oakbrow is an important part of this adventure because he serves to help clue in the PCs to any details they might have missed. If they cannot find any resources, Oakbrow provides some guidance. If no one in the group knows much about nature, Oakbrow can help. Oakbrow can serve as a voice of wisdom for the group as well, warning them against any truly reckless course.



## LIZARDFOLK DIPLOMACY

Roll	Result
0 or less	Kassmak is furious with the PCs and their offer. He orders his warriors to kill them and declares war on Fort Thorn.
1–5	Kassmak is angered by the PCs and orders them out of his land. The lizardfolk begin to raid and attack the workers within a week.
6–10	Kassmak finds the PCs weak and demands that the people of Fort Thorn pay a tribute of 500 gp in goods each week or risk the wrath of his tribe.
11–15	Kassmak thinks the PCs are vulnerable and demands a tribute of 100 gp in goods each week or risk the wrath of his tribe.
16–20	Kassmak is not worried about Fort Thorn and agrees to let them live in the vale but forbids them from entering the swamp.
21–25	Kassmak respects the PCs and the people of Fort Thorn. He agrees to let them live in the vale and they may enter the swamp with permission. He points out the valuable resource in the swamp (area K) as a sign of good will.
26 and higher	Kassmak holds the PCs in high regard. He agrees to let the people of Fort Thorn live in the vale and enter his swamp. He points out the resource and agrees to help them in times of need.



## ANGRY LIZARDS

There is a real opportunity here for the PCs to cause some serious trouble. Should they start a conflict with the lizardfolk, there are a number of ways to resolve it. You can run the lizardfolk as a full-scale attack, giving the PCs a chance to participate in a mass battle, or they could be skirmish fighters, requiring the characters to track them down and deal with the frequent menace. If you are looking for a noncombat solution, have Kassmak call upon one of the PCs for a challenge of skill to settle the dispute. This might include a swimming contest, arm wrestling, or even a great hunt in the swamp for the head of the famed medusa who lives there.

Oakbrow more than understands. Gyrad is happy to make the deal, so long as any truly valuable resources might be harvested for the good of the people trying to live in the vale. This is acceptable to Oakbrow if they limit their exploitation to no more than four sites.

A successfully brokered deal has two immediate effects: First, Oakbrow can answer questions about the vale and its

inhabitants (Knowledge [geography] +10, Knowledge [nature] +11) and points out any two resource locations (area K) unknown to the PCs. Oakbrow can also sell the group *potions of barkskin* (+3), *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *cat's grace*, *owl's wisdom*, and *water breathing* for the standard price.

Second, if a deal with Oakbrow is bartered, he comes to the fort's aid when the fire drakes attack (Part 3). Oakbrow also knows of Vardak's fortress in the mountains and can point it out if asked. He does not volunteer this information, as he knows the sorcerer is not a man to be trifled with.

Note that all of these resources and benefits vanish if the group wantonly burns down swaths of the forest, opens a lumber mill, or commits some other gross affront to nature.

## Area H: Lizardfolk Tribe

On day 35, a lizardfolk comes out of the forest and throws a spear into the fort. The lizardfolk is gone before any of the guards can respond, although they spend some time futilely searching for him. Wrapped around the crude spear are a number of bone trinkets and a crude message written on the bark of its shaft. The message, written in Draconic, calls for a "conclave of the mighty" in 4 days in the "Sacred Swamp of the Turessk Tribe." Not surprisingly, Sir Tolgrith wants to send the PCs on his behalf, with instructions to reach a peaceful settlement with the lizardfolk. His scouts have informed him that the lizardfolk number in the hundreds, making them a force

that should not be angered. By this time, the path should pass close to the swamp, making the journey quite easy.

When the PCs arrive at the swamp, they find a band of lizardfolk waiting for them. The lizardfolk are all dressed in ceremonial necklaces and have small bones piercing their snouts. If none of the PCs speak Draconic, the lizardfolk motion to follow them into the swamp. Otherwise, they are formally invited on behalf of Kassmak, Chief of the Turessk Tribe. After 2 hours of travel, the group reaches the meeting place. Read or paraphrase the following.

*A great mound of mud and stone comes into view up ahead, bedecked with the skeletons of numerous swamp predators. A hole, covered by a leather flap, reveals it to be some sort of great dome.*

Inside the mound is a great pool of still, dark water on which burns a bright flame. Opposite the entrance stands a tall throne made of animal bones. Chief **Kassmak** (CN male lizardfolk barbarian 8) sits in the throne, striking an impressive figure clad in ceremonial bones and trinkets. The chief motions for the PCs to sit on large mounds of swamp reeds.

After the characters are seated, the chief greets them in broken Common, with prolonged "s" sounds. The chief then asks who among them is the chief who speaks for the "soft skins." He then asks them why they have come to his valley. In reality, Kassmak has invited them here for two purposes: to determine if the newly arrived humans are a threat to his people and, if not, how far they are willing to go to avoid the wrath of the lizardfolk. Kassmak makes it clear his people have claimed this area and they should be compensated for the right of passage. The results of these negotiations should be resolved with an impassioned argument followed by a Diplomacy check. Feel free to apply a hefty circumstance modifier on the roll based on the quality of the speech. Refer to the Lizardfolk Diplomacy table to determine Kassmak's reaction.

If angered, the Turessk Tribe becomes a serious problem. The tribe has 75 warriors (N male lizardfolk warrior 2) and a group of elite guards, known as "rock scales" (N male lizardfolk warrior 5). The chief

shaman of the tribe, **Ulpesk** (LN male lizardfolk adept 7), is also sent to harm and hinder the work on the road. Once hostilities break out, the only way to end them is with the death of Kassmak. If the PCs get the help of Kassmak and his people (DC 26 or higher), the lizardfolk come to their aid in dealing with the bugbears (reduce the number of bugbears by half, due to lizardfolk hunters).

### Area I: Pollution Lake (EL 7 or 8)

Once per month—on day 8 and day 38 of the adventure—the Petal River runs foul with a strange metallic scent and those who drink from it become nauseated for 1d4 days (DC 20 Fortitude save negates). Sir Tolgrith is aware of this problem and stockpiles water in anticipation of the event, but he has been unable to determine the source of the pollution. He asks the PCs to track it down and eliminate it if possible. This problem can only be solved on days 8 and 38, as it is impossible to track at any other time. If they follow the course of the pollution on either of these days, the PCs are led to this location. Read or paraphrase the following.

*The foul and murky water runs on for miles, eventually ending at the shore of the Mist Lake, a body of water perpetually shrouded in steam. There, near to the bank, is an odd sight. Spectral forms rise out of the lake to do battle with an unseen foe. As the minutes pass, more and more of the ghostly soldiers fall into the lake, their blood creating a great stain in the water.*

This site played host to one of the more grisly battles between the forces of Cheliox and the barbarian lords. A small squad of troops were cut off from their reinforcements and backed to the lake, where the barbarians slew them to the last. Their angry spirits linger on here still, reappearing once a month on the day of the slaughter. The taint of these spirits makes the Petal River run foul. A DC 15 Knowledge (history) check identifies these forms for what they are. This particular battle can be identified with a DC 25 Knowledge (history) check.

**Creatures:** The PCs have a few ways to deal with this threat. They can attack the shadows themselves. While destroying

them ends the cycle of pollution, a character who makes a DC 18 Knowledge (religion) skill check realizes the best way to put them at peace is to stop their unseen foes. If the PCs approach the invisible foes with the intent of battling them or otherwise move to help the shadows, they vanish and a trio of wraiths appears in the form of vicious barbarians.

#### SHADOWS (4)

hp 19; MM 221

##### TACTICS

**During Combat** The shadows attack the nearest foe each round. They also take 1d4 points of damage per round from spectral foes.

**Morale** The shadows fight until destroyed.

#### WRAITHS (3)

hp 32; MM 257

##### TACTICS

**During Combat** The wraiths appear like barbarians but have no unusual abilities. They attack the nearest foe each round.

**Morale** The wraiths fight until destroyed.

**Treasure:** A DC 20 Search check of the mulch around the battle site reveals the bones of the soldiers along with some of their rusted and ancient gear. This search also uncovers a +1 light

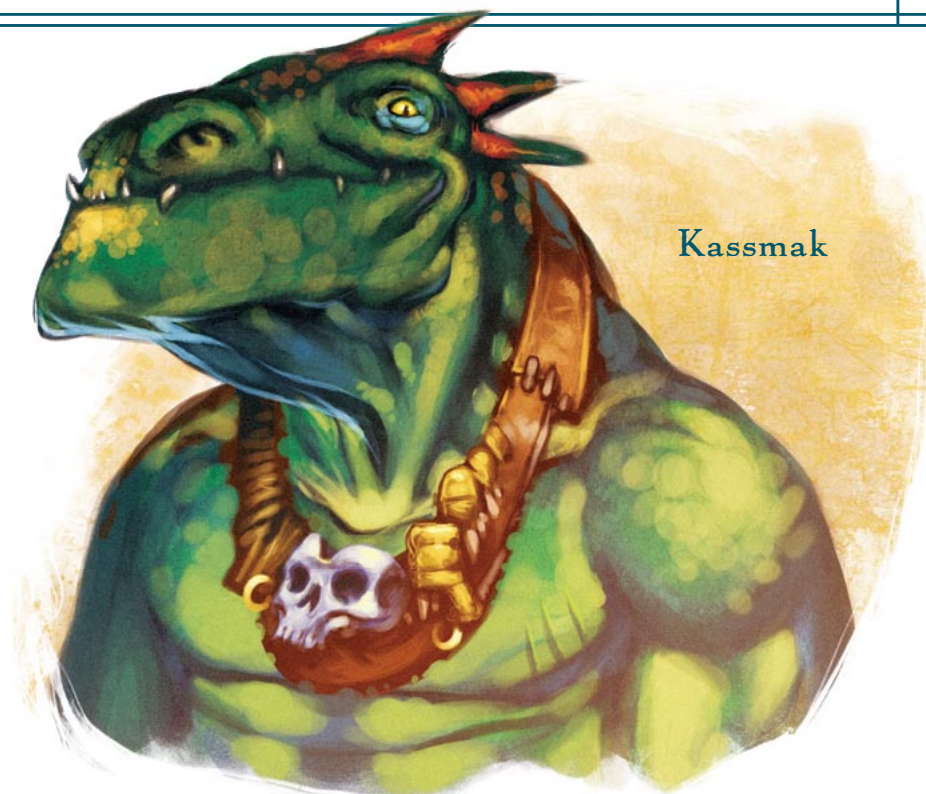
fortification heavy steel shield. If the PCs defeated the wraiths instead of the shadows, a tall shadow emerges from the gloom, salutes and disappears, leaving behind a flame tongue.

### Area J: Bridge

This is the location where the workers construct a massive stone bridge over the Coldrun river (completed on day 6). Construction on this bridge takes a total of 20 days, should it be destroyed or damaged. If the PCs anger the lizardfolk or leave the bugbears unchecked, this bridge becomes a likely target. Destroying it takes multiple attacks, giving the PCs time to respond and guard it.

### Area K: Resources

Numerous valuable resources lay scattered throughout the Bloodsworn Vale. There are seven such locations marked on the map. Before the adventure begins, you should determine which location contains which valuable resource (or roll randomly when one is found). Refer to the chart for the possible resources. Note that the values are added to the community assets of Fort Thorn and are too massive for the PCs to mine (at least, not without drawing Sir Tolgrith's attention). Also, add 20% of the



Kassmak



gp value to the community's gp limit for purchasing magic items and other gear. The discounts for the sacred herbs and black ash tree go into effect within 1 week of locating the appropriate resource.

#### d8 Resource

1	Darkwood (3d10x100 lb.)
2	Copper (6d6x1,000 cp)
3	Silver (4d6x1,000 sp)
4	Gold (2d6x1,000 gp)
5	Cold Iron (3d6x1,000 gp)
6	Adamantine (4d6x1,000 gp)
7	Sacred Herbs (half-price healing kits, 25% discount on gp and XP for brewing cure potions)
8	Black Ash Tree (ink gives a 25% discount on gp and XP for scribing scrolls)

## PART 3: FIRE PLAGUE

Unbeknownst to the people of Fort Thorn, a great threat lurks in the vale. Vardak, a cruel and aged sorcerer, dwells in a mountain fortress on the vale's eastern end. In order to prolong his wicked life, Vardak imbibes a vile potion once per month. This potion contains a host of foul ingredients, including the ears of fey. To procure this rare ingredient, Vardak sent his flame drake servants into the vale to demand flesh from the roseblood sprites. On day 30, the drakes arrive at the fey court only to find it empty. In their rage, they promptly burn down the glade, creating a plume of smoke visible from anywhere in the vale. After consulting with their master, the flame drakes turn their wrath on the people of Fort Thorn. On day 32, the drakes arrive at the community and attack.

### Flame Drake Attacks

Starting on day 32 and continuing once each day from that point onward (until defeated), a group of four flame drakes attacks Fort Thorn. These attacks come without warning and at random times of the day. The drakes' primary goal with these attacks is to burn down the fort and force the people to flee the vale. As such, they do not land under any circumstance. Instead, they fly overhead at the limit of their range and breathe fireballs onto the community. These attacks continue for 3d6 rounds or until one of the drakes is dropped to below 40 hit points, at which point the drakes fly back to their roost, waiting until the next day to attack again.

To keep things simple, assume each one of these attacks kills 1d6 townsfolk and sets ablaze two buildings (determined at random). Unless the PCs assist, the buildings are extinguished within 1d6 minutes, but any building burned in this way more than twice is effectively destroyed (except for the stone buildings, which must be burned four times). Any building extinguished in 1 minute or less does not suffer any meaningful damage. If the PCs are present to deal with the attacks, they must deal with smoke obscuring the sight of the drakes above (giving them concealment) and causing smoke hazards. In addition, the PCs suffer a 20% chance of being caught in a blast of flame each round (4d6 points of fire damage, DC 15 Reflex for half). Note any damage dealt to the drakes during these attacks, as it remains for later encounters (although the drakes heal 7 hit points each night).

If the PCs have made a deal with Oakbrow the hermit (area G), he comes to their aid during these attacks. Although he cannot drive off the beasts, he does lessen their damage by dousing fires with *quench* and distracting the drakes with summoned animals. Reduce the number of townsfolk killed to 1d3 and only one building is lit on fire each day. He does this each day until the third day, when one of the drakes targets him with a fireball, causing him to flee the scene.

Sir Tolgrith is, of course, very concerned about these attacks and the inability of his soldiers to abate them. If the PCs don't volunteer to do so, he orders them to find the drakes' lair and to eliminate it as soon as possible. The lookouts report seeing the drakes arrive from and return to the east. If the PCs do not locate the lair on Pointer's Rock by day 34, the town's scouts find it instead and relay this information to them. Until this problem is solved, all work on the path comes to a halt.

### Area L: Pointer's Rock

Pointer's Rock is a tall spire of stone approximately 10 miles east of Fort Thorn. The main section of stone tops out in a flat plateau at a height of 80 feet, but a smaller pillar rises another 40 feet above the plateau. This gives the stone the appearance of a giant fist with the index finger extended into the sky—hence its

name. The stone formation is completely uninhabited until day 32, when it becomes the temporary roost for four flame drakes bent on destroying Fort Thorn.

### L1. Approaching the Spire

*As the woods thin, and rough, rocky hills begin to dot the landscape, a tall stone monolith rises into the air, shaped like a gigantic stone fist with its index finger extended to the sky above. Known as Pointer's Rock, there is a natural stone ramp winding up its surface.*

Although the area around Pointer's Rock is relatively rough, small stands of trees and the ever-present rose bushes surround it. Once per year, the lizardfolk of the swamp make a pilgrimage to this stone and perform sacrificial rituals and rites honoring the earth and the sky. As a result, numerous bleached animal bones lay scattered all about this place. Once the drakes take up residence, however, there are signs of fresh kills everywhere, including charred bits of meat and broken bones. A simple DC 10 Search check uncovers these signs.

The ramp leading up Pointer's Rock is relatively steep but stable and free of debris. Ascending this path does not require any checks, but its slope increases the DC of Tumble and Balance checks by +2. Alternatively, characters could attempt to scale the surface of the rock with a DC 15 Climb check.

### L2. Pointer's Rock (EL 9)

*Rising above the level of most of the nearby trees, the ramp ends in a large flat plane of rock with a commanding view of the nearby wilderness.*

There are two level surfaces on the rock. The largest is reachable by the path and is 80 feet above the ground below. The second, only reachable by flight or climbing, is 120 feet above the ground (or 40 feet above the first level surface).

**Creatures:** After day 32, this place serves as the home to four flame drakes. Once per day, the drakes fly off for 4 hours to assault Fort Thorn and gather food. The time of this absence is random but its duration is always roughly the same. The rest of the time, the flame drakes are here, resting and enjoying

their meals. Three of the flame drakes rest on the lower level, while a fourth roosts up above on the higher plateau.

#### FLAME DRAKES (4)

CR 5

hp 59; see Appendix B

#### TACTICS

##### Before Combat

While resting, the Flame Drakes keep one of their number alert at all times. This sentry prowls the surface of the rock, keeping a lookout. If this drake notices enemies, it quickly calls out to its fellows.

**During Combat** Of the three drakes roosting on the lower level, the most wounded one flies off the moment the PCs reach the top and uses its breath weapon as often as possible while avoiding melee. The other two breathe before engaging in melee. The drake up above remains on its perch and uses its breath weapon as often as possible. That drake attacks any who attempt to reach its position.

**Morale** If three of the flame drakes are defeated, the fourth attempts to flee when reduced to fewer than 20 hit points.

**Treasure:** One of the flame drakes wears a golden collar studded with rubies, worth 2,500 gp. “To my loyal servant” is inscribed on the inside of the collar in Draconic.

**Development:** Given the time, the flame drakes can destroy the small community of Fort Thorn. Instead of fighting them on their roost, the PCs may attempt to slay them as they attack the fort. While possible, this is an extremely difficult task, as the drakes vary the time and duration of their attack each day.

Once slain, the drakes’ master, Vardak, becomes truly enraged and plots the final destruction of the squatters who have invaded his vale. By day 50, Vardak is ready for his vengeance.

## PART 4: MASTER OF THE VALE

After the death of the fey, who contributed a key ingredient to his immortality brew, and the demise of a number of his powerful flame drake servants, Vardak is very angry. Before the arrival of Sir Tolgrith and his men, Vardak was the master of the vale. Now his dominion is challenged, his servants slaughtered, and his plots spoiled. This problem has finally drawn his full

attention and he intends to destroy the small community and anyone who dares stand against him.

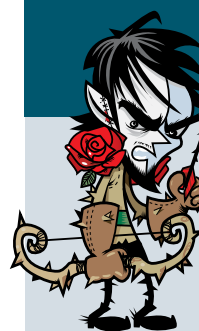
Although Vardak is a cruel and evil man, he sees no need to cause a war with his neighbors. To this end, he intends to use his precious *seed of fire*, which will rain destruction on Fort Thorn, but not before giving the people time to flee. Those who remain when the seed finally activates will be burned to ashes along with everything else in town. Vardak underestimates the people’s resolve though, and his mercy gives the PCs a chance to travel to his mountain fortress and stop him before his seed can bear fruit.

#### Vardak’s Warning

On day 50, Vardak mounts one of his remaining flame drakes and flies to Fort Thorn. Landing outside the community, he uses a *scroll of major image* to create an illusion of himself hovering over the center of town. If the PCs are present at this time, read or paraphrase the following.

*Quite suddenly, the people of Fort Thorn seem to be in a panic. Folk run from their*

## Designer Notes



### DRAKE ATTACK

Up to this point, nothing has threatened the people of the fort directly. The

flame drakes give you a chance to make the dangers of the vale all the more real by bringing them home. One of the best buildings to burn down is the visitors’ barracks, forcing the PCs to move into the Boar’s Bones (if they have not already). These attack scenes should be cinematic, with the terrible drakes flying fast overhead, raining death upon the village. Since any lone character who flies up to challenge the drakes is seriously outmatched, be sure to focus the action on the ground and give the characters plenty of chances to save townsfolk and extinguish buildings.





**SEED OF FIRE**

Aura Strong evocation; CL 18th

Slot —; Price 14,400 gp

**DESCRIPTION**

Created by the Empire of Chelias as a weapon capable of scouring the battlefield in cleansing flame, this magic item consists of a pair of red gemstones. When the command word and a period of time is spoken into one of the gems, the other becomes permanently stationary and begins to glow with flame. When the period of time expires, the gemstone explodes, raining fire on a 60-foot square area directly below it. This fire deals 18d6 points of fire damage to all creatures and structures in the area. A DC 22 Reflex save halves this damage. Once activated, the seed can only be deactivated by destroying its partner gem (which destroys the item) or by speaking a special command word into the partner gem, which allows the *seed of fire* to be reused.

**CONSTRUCTION**Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *firestorm*;

Cost 7,200 gp, 576 XP

*businesses toward the keep, pointing at the sky. Floating above the keep's stone roof is a bald man dressed in red robes trimmed in black. He points an accusing finger down at the townsfolk and shouts, "Trespassers, your time is at an end! Leave my valley now and tell the fools of Varisia that the Bloodsworn Vale belongs to Lord Vardak. You have slain my servants and pillaged my lands, yet I am not without mercy. You have five days to leave the vale, at which point my seed will rain death upon this place. This is your only warning." With that last proclamation, the mage vanishes and a tiny seed of flame appears in his place, floating above the fort, pulsing faintly.*

After giving this message, Vardak activates the *seed of fire*, mounts his flame drake and flies east toward his mountain retreat. One of the guards atop the eastern watchtower notes his departure and direction and reports it to Sir Tolgrith.

If the PCs are not present for this ultimatum, they are recalled immediately. Sir Tolgrith has heard of *seeds of fire* before, as a fable concerning

the might of the empire of Chelias, and has a basic understanding of what they can do. Although shocked that such an item still exists, he does not doubt its power. He also knows that the only way to stop it is to find the magical gem that controls the *seed of fire* and destroy it. After all the work the people of Fort Thorn have put into claiming this vale, he has no intention of retreating and orders the PCs to find Lord Vardak and stop his maniacal plan. It is vital that PCs do this within five days of the *seed of fire*'s activation, or the fort will be destroyed. In any case, he intends to evacuate the community on the fourth day just to be safe. If the PCs do not have horses, he gives them his fastest mounts for this mission (allowing them to move with a speed of 40 feet).

Oakbrow also arrives in town a few hours after the ultimatum if the PCs are on good terms with him. The hermit can identify the man as the sorcerer who lives in the mountains and can give a rough location of his fortress. Due to the severity of this threat, he is also willing to give each PC one of his potions to aid in their mission (see area G).

If the PCs are not on good terms with Oakbrow he does not arrive at the fort. In this case, one of the fort's scouts has seen the fortress high upon a mountain cliff, although he says it was such an intimidating structure that he dared not approach it alone. He doesn't remember exactly where it is, but he can give the PCs a map of its general location.

**Area M. Vardak's Fortress**

Using horses, the PCs can reach Vardak's Fortress in 3 days' time. Be sure to check for random encounters during this journey, as any delay could cost the PCs dearly. The trek up the mountain is steep but not particularly treacherous. As they approach, the PCs see a flame drake circle overhead a few times before flying further up the mountain. This drake goes to warn its master that intruders approach.

Unless otherwise noted, *continual flame* spells light all the rooms in the fortress, which have 20-foot-tall ceilings. The walls

are all made of stone masonry and the doors are all strong wooden doors.

**M1. The Approach (EL 7)**

*The mountain path has been steady and steep for much of its run, but it finally begins to level off. Just beyond the end of the path is an impressive stone fortress built into the side of the mountain. Stone spikes and barbs stud the structure and a tall tower stands on one corner, its crenellated roof looking out over the vale below.*

This is Vardak's Fortress, hewn from the rock of the mountain by magic and the muscle of enslaved humanoids. The fortress itself has sloped roofs of shale that rise to a height of 30 feet, while the tower reaches a height of 50 feet. The building has few windows, and all of them are too narrow for even a Small creature to squeeze through (with the exception of the throne room, but those windows are over the cliff). The building is relatively smooth and offers few handholds for those hoping to climb it. It can be scaled with a DC 25 Climb check.

Aside from the main doors, which are locked, the only other way into the fortress is through a trap door atop the tower. Both doors can be opened with a DC 30 Open Lock check.

**Creature:** Vardak's two remaining flame drakes patrol the area outside the fortress to keep an eye out for enemies. When the PCs approach, these two drakes attack.

**FLAME DRAKES (2)****CR 5**

hp 59; see Appendix B

**TACTICS**

**Before Combat** The drakes warn Vardak of the PCs' approach.

**During Combat** One of the drakes remains perched atop the tower for the duration of the fight, breathing fireballs as often as possible. The other drake breathes before closing in for melee. The drakes pursue fleeing PCs but do not enter the fortress.

**Morale** Both flame drakes fight to the death.

**M2. Entry Hall (EL 5)**

*The doors open to reveal a grand entry chamber decorated with dark gray marble.*

A carpet, woven to look like burning roses, runs along the ground, ending just before a huge tapestry. The figure of Lord Vardak appears on the tapestry, looming like a towering god above Bloodsworn Vale with a look of supreme confidence on his face.

This is the grand entry hall. Although Vardak has few guests, he created this chamber to impress those who did come calling. This room is protected by a dangerous trap.

**Trap:** A nearly invisible trip wire runs between the two columns closest to the tapestry. Anyone who trips this wire causes the tapestry to fall from the wall, revealing the *symbol of pain* hidden underneath.

#### SYMBOL OF PAIN

CR 5

Type mechanical and magical; Search DC 25 (tripwire), DC 30 (symbol); Disable Device DC 20 (tripwire), DC 30 (symbol)

#### EFFECTS

**Trigger** location; **Reset** none

**Effect** spell effect (symbol of pain, –4 penalty on attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks for 1 hour, Fort DC 17 negates), affects all targets within 60 feet. Once triggered, the symbol remains active for 90 minutes.

**Treasure:** The rug is finely made and worth 200 gp. The tapestry is exquisite in its detail and make. Although the subject matter is unusual, the tapestry is worth 800 gp.

#### M3. Museum

*Two large statues dominate the center of this odd museum. The one on the left depicts a flame drake, carved from black marble, rearing up on its hind legs with its mouth open as if to breathe flame. The other is of Lord Vardak, carved from white marble, with his staff raised high. The statues face one another in silent*

*battle. The walls of this room are decorated with dozens of framed paintings depicting faraway lands in exacting detail.*

This chamber is a museum of places visited by Vardak in his travels before settling here. Each one of the paintings depicts a different city in such exacting detail that anyone using them as a reference when *teleporting* counts as having studied the area carefully. This was Vardak's intent when commissioning the pieces. Paintings of Absalom, Gallospire, Korvosa, Magnimar, and Sothis hang here, as well as many others, including some that cannot be easily identified.

The statues in this room are expertly carved and radiate a faint aura of evocation and transmutation magic. A DC 20 Search check of the flame drake statue reveals a tiny inscription written in draconic on one of its wings. It reads "Cast the living flame into me." Anyone who targets the statue with a





spell with the fire descriptor causes a gout of flame to issue forth from the flame drake's mouth, immolating the statue of Vardak. Anyone between the statues at this time takes 6d6 points of fire damage. A DC 15 Reflex save halves this damage. When the flames subside, the statue of Vardak is unharmed and its staff glows with a crimson light. One round later, the secret door in the side wall opens. Although the door can be located with a DC 25 Search check, this is the only way to open it without destroying the wall.

**Treasure:** There are a total of 27 paintings in this room, each worth 100 gp.

#### M4. Hallway

*A pair of double doors flanks this short hallway. At the far end stands a statue of Lord Vardak, glaring menacingly.*

The statue is a good reproduction of the sorcerer, carved from a pale red marble. An inscription on the statue's base reads "To my apprentice. May our conquests both bear the fruit we seek. —Ilkanir."

The doors leading into the museum (area M4) are locked and can be opened with a DC 30 Open Lock skill check.

#### M5. Dining Room (EL 7)

*A long oak table dominates the center of this dining room. Three plain chairs stand on either side, while an ornately carved wooden chair with red cushions sits at the far end.*

This is Lord Vardak's dining room. Vardak usually stations a pair of guards here to watch for any intruders. A portion of the western wall of this room is actually an *illusionary wall*, used by Vardak to spy on those dining in the room.

**Creatures:** Not long ago, Vardak encountered a group of barghests in the mountains close to his abode. He made a pact with the fiends, offering them all the bodies they might need to grow, in exchange for their service. Two such barghests guard this room.

#### GREATER BARGHESTS (2)

CR 5

hp 67; MM 23

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** These barghests prefer to hide in this room while under the cover of *invisibility sphere* and *blink*, both of which they can cast at will. If given time to prepare for the PCs, they also cast *mass bull's strength*.

**During Combat** The barghests both wield masterwork greatswords in combat instead of claws, approaching the nearest foe before revealing themselves as part of a full attack. Given the chance, they cast *crushing despair*, followed by *charm monster* on the most heavily armored character.

**Morale** Both barghests fight to the death.

#### M6. Kitchen

*This small chamber appears to be a kitchen, complete with a worktable covered in cookware and a fireplace.*

**Lopo** (NE male goblin expert 1), a lone goblin who stumbled upon this place a few years ago, staffs this unsavory kitchen. Lopo is not a threat to the PCs and promptly hides under the table the moment they enter. If the PCs can speak Goblin and make a DC 25 Diplomacy check, Lopo gladly helps them in return for his freedom. Unfortunately, he knows little about the fortress aside from the kitchen, the dining hall (where the man-hungry goblins live), and the throne



room (where his Lordfulness ponders cruelty all day and night). If left alone, Lopo runs to tell Vardak everything he knows about the PCs at the first opportunity, being far more afraid of his master than of them. Lopo is a sniveling coward who plays to the egos of the PCs, only to betray them at the first sign of trouble.

### M7. Storage

This small pantry contains various sacks, crates, and bottles containing food and various dried goods. Most of these were pillaged from caravans traveling through the area or purchased from towns in Arlan.

**Treasure:** Aside from the pounds of salt, pepper, flour, and other ingredients, this room also contains all of the silver used in the dining hall. While not especially fine, the entire set is worth 200 gp.

### M8. Storage

Two large barrels dominate one wall of this room—one contains fresh water, while the other holds thin ale. The table along one wall has a large meat cleaver stuck into it and is stained with blood. A careful examination uncovers a human's finger fallen behind the table (a remnant of a barghest meal).

### M9. Planning Room (EL 5)

*A huge map of the Bloodsworn Vale sits on a table in the center of this room. In the corner, a spiraling staircase appears to ascend into the tower of the fortress.*

This is Lord Vardak's planning room, where he has sketched out his plans for the vale and the neighboring kingdoms. Overlaying a very detailed representation of the vale are a number of notes in different-colored inks. All of the blue notes on the map detail roads, walls, and a city labeled as "capital." These appear to make the vale, and some of the lands from surrounding kingdoms, into one unified nation. There are also notes in red scrawled across the map that note the location of Fort Thorn and the path through the vale. A single note in the corner reads "They must be destroyed."

**Creatures:** One of Vardak's barghests resides in this room, poring over the map

and helping Vardak formulate his plans for conquest. If the barghest hears any noise from the hallway outside, he goes out to investigate.

Also note that anyone who climbs to the top of the 50-foot tower reaches a trap door. If either of the flame drakes still live, they wait atop the tower to ambush unsuspecting explorers (see area M1).

### GREATER BARGHEST

hp 67; MM 23

### TACTICS

See area M5.

### CR 5

**Treasure:** The map of the vale is quite accurate and worth 100 gp to Sir Tolgrith. Giving this map to him also earns APs for the PCs.

### M10. Audience Chamber (EL 10)

Note that the two of the doors leading into this chamber (from the hallway and area M6) are kept locked at all times but can be bashed down or opened with DC 30 Open Lock checks.

*In the far corner of this room stands a throne sitting upon a raised dais. Made from black stone, the solid throne is padded with plush red fabric and bejeweled with tiny rubies. Behind it is a tall window that looks out into the mountains.*

This is Vardak's audience chamber, where he waits to receive any intruders. The dais is 5 feet above the floor of the room and is protected by a pair of pit traps that dump those unfortunate enough to fall victim to them out of the fortress and down the mountainside.





## STAFF OF THE MASTER (NECROMANCY)

Aura Faint necromancy; CL 5th

Slot —; Price 15,200 gp

## DESCRIPTION

Often given as gifts to apprentices upon reaching the rank of master, these staves come in eight different varieties, one each for every school of magic. This particular staff is for the school of necromancy. Aside from acting as a +1/+1 quarterstaff, this staff allows use of the following spells:

- ray of enfeeblement (1 charge)
- spectral hand (1 charge)
- vampiric touch (2 charges)

In addition, this staff can be used to cast spells using any metamagic feats known by the wielder, without increasing the spell's level. This consumes a number of charges equal to the number of spell levels increased by the feat. No more than one feat can be applied to a spell cast by the wielder in this way. Using the staff for this purpose does not increase the casting time of the spell.

## CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Staff, ray of enfeeblement, spectral hand, vampiric touch; **Cost** 7,900 gp, 584 XP

**Creature:** Vardak is more than likely aware of the PCs' approach and waits for them here. When the characters enter, he stands up from his throne and addresses them. Read or paraphrase the following.

*Sitting in the throne is a chiseled man with slightly elven features. He wears red robes, trimmed in black. He has no hair on his head except for a black goatee streaked with gray. He stands, carrying a grim staff in hand, and calls out. "I was wondering if the fools would send someone to try and challenge my dominion. Unfortunately, the penalty for challenging the Lord of the Bloodsworn Vale is death. Come, and let me usher you into the afterlife."*

Vardak has no interest in parlaying with the PCs and refuses to deactivate the seed of fire threatening Fort Thorn. As an aged half-elf, he has come to the realization that his years are limited and he hopes to craft an enduring kingdom before his demise. Using foul rites and life-extending potions, he has managed to extend his life and hopes to attain lichdom eventually. His plans are now in doubt due to the PCs' meddling. His supreme confidence in his own abilities and arrogance should be apparent. Note that Vardak does not carry the control gem for the seed of fire that hovers over Fort Thorn. That gemstone is hidden in his vault (area M14).

If they have not already been dealt with, the barghests in area M12 come to join the fight on the second round of combat after first quaffing potions of resist energy (fire 20).

## LORD VARDAK

CR 10

Male half-elf sorcerer 10

LE medium humanoid (elf)

**Init** +6; **Senses** Low-Light Vision; Listen +4, Spot +1

## DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 14, flat-footed 16

(+4 armor, +2 deflection, +2 Dex)

**hp** 70 (84 with empowered false life; 10d4+20)**Fort** +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +11 (+13 vs. enchantment)**Immune** sleep; **Resist** fire 20, electricity 20

## OFFENSE

**Spd** 30 ft.**Melee** staff of the master +5 (1d6)**Spells Known** (CL 10th, +7 ranged touch):

5th (4/day)—hold monster (DC 20)

4th (6/day, 5 left)—fear (DC 20), fire shield

3rd (7/day)—displacement, fireball (DC 18), vampiric touch

2nd (7/day, 5 left)—acid arrow, false life, invisibility, resist energy

1st (8/day, 6 left)—charm person (DC 16), feather fall, mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement

0 (6/day)—acid splash, detect magic, detect poison, light, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic

## TACTICS

**Before Combat** Vardak casts resist energy twice (fire and electricity), as well as mage armor and an empowered false life the moment he becomes aware that the PCs are inside his fortress (factored in above). If given a few rounds' warning (such as PCs attempting to unlock his door), he casts fire shield (cold) and displacement.

**During Combat** Vardak casts fear immediately before the combat is joined by his barghest guards. Beyond this, he uses his most powerful spells, preferring fireball and vampiric touch above all others. He uses his staff of the master whenever casting necromantic spells, empowering them when appropriate. He reserves the use of hold monster until his guards are in the fray, so as to make easy kills for them.

**Morale** Vardak is supremely confident in his abilities and fights to the death.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 8, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 20**Base Atk** +5; **Grp** +4

**Feats** Brew Potion, Empower Spell, Improved Initiative, Iron Will

**Skills** Bluff +11, Concentration +15, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +5 (+7 acting), Gather Information +7, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Listen +4, Search +2, Speak Languages 3, Spellcraft +10, Spot +1

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Infernal

**SQ** summon familiar (bat named Earful)

**Combat Gear** potion of cure serious wounds (2), scroll of see invisibility, staff of the master (necromancy, 37 charges); **Other Gear** cloak of resistance +2, ring of counterspells (dispel magic), ring of protection +2, key ring

**Traps:** This room contains a pair of cunning pit traps built into the floor. Vardak and his barghest guards know the location of these traps and avoid them.



## Designer Notes

## VARDAK

Vardak is a man with great ambition. He dreams of immortality and of forging a kingdom that he can rule

forever. Like most delusional tyrants, he is also extremely overconfident. While this should not be played up to the point of foolishness, Vardak does make mistakes on account of his ego. If the PCs flee, he does not pursue as he assumes they would not dare to rise up and challenge him again. If he appears to be winning, he orders his barghests to stand down so that he can finish off the intruders himself. Should he begin to lose the fight, his calm, collective facade disintegrates, and he seethes with anger and desperation.

Those who fall into these pits tumble 100 feet down the mountain before landing. Any surviving flame drakes are sure to notice this falling morsel and go to investigate.

**MOUNTAINSIDE PIT TRAP** CR 5  
Type mechanical; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20

---

**EFFECTS**

**Trigger** location; **Reset** automatic

**Effect** Pit Trap, DC 20 Reflex avoids, 100 ft. deep (10d6, fall).

**Treasure:** Aside from Vardak's gear, his throne is also quite valuable, containing a dozen small rubies worth 50 gp each.

---

### M11. Master's Chamber

*An opulent four-poster bed rests against the far wall of the room, made with red silk sheets and a blanket made from flame drake hide. An oak wardrobe stands in one corner.*

This is Vardak's private bedroom. He spends little time here resting as his plans keep him up until strange hours.

**Treasure:** The silk sheets and drake-hide blanket are worth 400 gp as a pair. The wardrobe is relatively sparse, containing various outfits and more than a few work aprons for when Vardak is busy in his workshop. Some of these are stained with odd chemicals and blood. One of the outfits is a well-made nobles outfit worth 200 gp.

---

### M12. Guard's Quarters (EL 7)

*A pair of ragged bunk beds are pushed against one wall of this narrow chamber. The stink of wet fur is overpowering.*

This is the quarters for the barghest guards employed by Vardak. At any given time two barghests rest in here.

**Creatures:** The barghests in this room have orders to enter the audience chamber at the first sign of trouble after drinking a *potion of resist energy* (fire 20).

---

**GREATER BARGHESTS (2)** CR 5  
hp 67; MM 23

---

**TACTICS**

See area M5.

**Treasure:** A sack underneath one of the beds holds the bloody remains of one of the barghest's recent meals, including a severed hand still bearing a *ring of the ram* (18 charges). The sack also contains 27 pp. A shelf next to the door has a rack on it containing four *potions of resist energy* (fire 20).

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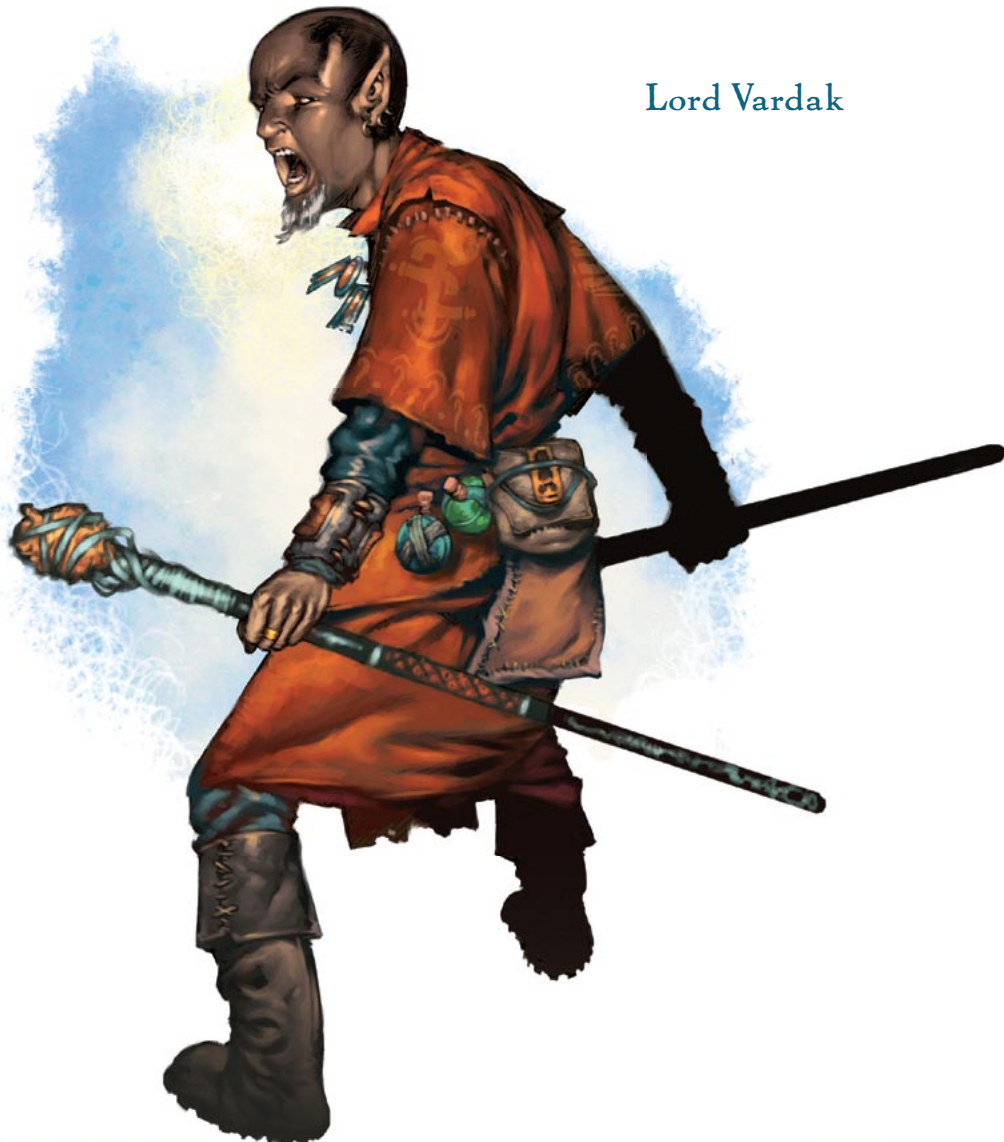
### M13. Secret Workshop (EL 7)

*The sound of dripping water echoes off the crudely carved stone walls of this vile workshop. A table on one side is covered in filthy tools, blood, and grime, along with a maze of glass tubes, flasks, and boilers. Standing next to the table is a towering monstrosity of mismatched flesh, crudely sewn together.*

This secret chamber is Vardak's workshop, where he brews potions and—all too recently—completed a flesh golem made from human, bugbear, and ogre parts. The golem was built using one of two *golem manuals* that Vardak recently purchased from an old acquaintance who just happens to be a vampire. A cold cauldron stands in the southeast corner, where Vardak brewed his last batch of life-extending potion. A DC 10 Search check of the cauldron uncovers the severed ear of a roseblood sprite at the bottom.

**Creature:** The flesh golem's first (and only) order was to attack anyone other than Vardak who enters this chamber. With a growl, the beast animates and attacks when the PCs enter.

Lord Vardak





## FLESH GOLEM

hp 79; MM 135

## TACTICS

**During Combat** The flesh golem follows its only order and attacks anyone who enters the room. It does not pursue foes or attack those who step into the hallway.

**Morale** The flesh golem fights to the death.

**Treasure:** The alchemical gear here is worth 500 gp but it weighs 200 pounds and is very fragile. A DC 20 Search check of the table uncovers a large flask containing four doses of a *potion of invisibility*.

## M14. Vault

The heavy iron door leading into this chamber can only be opened with a DC 40 Open Lock skill check or by using Vardak's keys. The chamber beyond is a simple stone room with a shelf on the far wall and an iron chest in the corner. Vardak's keys or a DC 30 Open Lock check open the chest.

**Treasure:** Twelve bags, each containing 500 gp in assorted coins, sit within the chest. In addition, the chest also contains a scroll tube with four *scrolls of identify*.

The shelf holds an assortment of items—mostly plunder from Vardak's recent raids. This includes a *golem manual (flesh)*, a +2

CR 7

*buckler, a candle of invocation, and a wand of cure moderate wounds* (48 charges). A small crystal case containing the gemstone keyed to the *seed of fire* floating above Fort Thorn sits in the center of the shelf. If the gem is destroyed, the mote of flame floating above Fort Thorn winks out of existence.

## M15. Spying Room

This small chamber looks in on the dining hall (area M5) through an *illusionary wall*. It is used by Vardak to spy on his allies. A lone chair sits in the hall. The iron door leading into the lab is locked from inside this room. The door can only be opened with a DC 40 Open Lock skill check or by using Vardak's keys.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of 60 days, King Arabasti's emissary arrives to inspect the new trail and evaluate Sir Tolgrith's progress. If all has gone well, Fort Thorn survived and the path was completed on time. The overall success of the PCs depends upon their actions throughout this adventure.

## Accomplishments

The chart on this page details what accomplishment points the PCs can earn

throughout the adventure. Note that failing to take care of some tasks in a timely manner can earn negative points.

## Rewards

At the conclusion of the adventure, Sir Tolgrith invites the PCs to his office to discuss their work. During this meeting, he goes over all of the good (and bad) things they accomplished and gives them their rewards for helping the people of Korvosa open this vital trade route. Assuming things went well, he would like for them to stay in the Bloodsworn Vale to help maintain it and keep it safe from further threats. Their promised reward depends on how well they performed during the adventure, according to this chart.

## APPENDIX A : FORT THORN

Fort Thorn is a small community near the edge of a vast untamed wilderness. Although its commander, Sir Tolgrith, hopes one day to make it self-sufficient, it currently depends upon a steady stream of caravans for provisions and other basic supplies.

The fort is a walled community surrounded by a 20-foot-tall palisade of tree trunks, upended and carved to a point. Beyond this security there is nothing but wilderness. Tall trees and endless thickets of wild rose bushes cover much of the surrounding terrain. There are no farms or outlying buildings affiliated with the fort. Any who dwell outside its walls are hermits, monsters, or worse.

## FORT THORN

**Hamlet** conventional (ruling lord); **AL** NG

**GP Limit** 100 gp; **Assets** 500 gp

## DEMOGRAPHICS

**Population** 100

**Type** isolated (human 95%, halfling 3%, elf 1%, half-elf 1%)

## AUTHORITY FIGURES

**Sir Gyrod Tolgrith**, NG male human fighter 4/ranger 2 (appointed Lord of the Fort);

**Father Apar**, LG male human cleric 5

(cleric of Erastil); **Bellar Graysalk**, LN male human expert 2 (proprietor of Wilderness Wares);

**Orrend**, CG male halfling expert 3 (owner of the Boar's Bones);

**Partik**

**Kinbond**, CG male human expert 4 (owner of Partik's Forge).

## REWARDS

## APs

## Earned Reward

<0 **Utter Disaster:** The PCs are scorned for not doing enough to protect and help the people of Fort Thorn. Sir Tolgrith promises to bring them up on charges and to spread word of their failure throughout the land.

1–6 **Failure:** Things did not go well for the people of Fort Thorn and most blame the PCs. Nonetheless, Sir Tolgrith recognizes that they at least tried to help. He awards each PC 200 gp for their trouble and sends them on their way.

7–12 **Mild Success:** Sir Tolgrith thanks them for their help in securing the vale, and while things could have gone better, they probably could have been a lot worse. He offers to give them the title of Squire and a 1-square-mile plot of land in the vale. The party as a whole can draw 100 gp per month in pay from taxes collected from merchants traveling through the vale.

13–20 **Success:** Gyrod is very pleased with their work and the advances made in the vale. He offers to knight each one of the PCs and gives them a 2-square-mile plot of land in the vale. The party as a whole can draw 500 gp per month in pay from taxes collected from merchants traveling through the vale.

21+ **Great Success:** The PCs exceeded Sir Tolgrith's expectations in every way. He invites them back to Korvosa to meet the king and recommends they all be knighted and given charge over Fort Thorn and all the vale. While there are limits to what they can do if they accept, they have free reign to make improvements to the fort and promote its growth. The party as a whole can draw 1,000 gp per month in pay from a stipend and taxes.

## A1. Gatehouse

Just outside the walls of Fort Thorn is a small building manned by a pair of guards. These guards question anyone arriving at the fort and wave to the guards atop the gatehouse to open the gate. **Gyres Politan** (NG male human fighter 3), an old soldier missing one of his hands, generally runs this post. If allowed to chat, he gladly tells the tale of the vicious troll that took his missing appendage in one gruesome bite. At night, this small building is empty.

Four soldiers operate the gatehouse itself during the day, while two keep watch at night after the doors have closed. The guards only allow entry after dark if the visitors are expected or are known members of the community.

## A2. The Lord's Stables

These large stables house all of the horses owned by the fort, including 1 heavy warhorse, 2 light warhorses, 3 heavy horses, and 4 light horses. The stables are occupied by a pair of soldiers during the day and watched over by the guards in the gatehouse at night. At any given point, guards ride 3 or 4 of these horses out in the valley as part of a survey or work group. Sir Tolgrith might be convinced to loan out some of these horses if the need is great (such as in the defense of the fort).

## A3. Keep

Aside from the shrine, Fort Thorn's keep is the only other stone building in town. This massive two-story structure is home to **Sir Gyrad Tolgrith** (NG male human fighter 4/ranger 2) and all of his men. The first floor of the structure contains the meeting hall, armory, mess hall, kitchen, and storage rooms. The second floor contains a smaller, private meeting hall; the barracks; the planning room; and Sir Tolgrith's private quarters.

Fort Thorn's current staff includes 40 soldiers (LG male human warrior 2), 4 scouts (NG male human ranger 2), 2 sergeants (LG male human fighter 4), and Sir Tolgrith.

In addition to the military staff, the fort also employs a number of work groups busy clearing—and in some cases—reconstructing the old trade route. There are three groups of 6 workers (NG male human commoner 1) accompanied by

### Accomplishment

Defeated the King of Roses (area C)	+2 AP	_____
Eliminated the owlbears (area D)	+1 AP	_____
Stopped the pollution of the Petal River (area I)	+1 AP	_____
Established good relations with Oakbrow (area G)	+1 AP	_____
Defeated the spiders (area E)	+1 AP	_____
Saved Thallin from the spiders (area E)	+1 AP	_____
Defeated the flame drakes (area L)	+2 AP	_____
Each building in Fort Thorn destroyed (part 3)	−1 AP	_____
Established good relations with the lizardfolk (area H)	+2 AP	_____
Defeated the bugbears (area F)	+1 AP	_____
Delivered Vardak's Map to Sir Tolgrith (area M9)	+1 AP	_____
Defeated Vardak (area M)	+3 AP	_____
Fort Thorn destroyed by the seed of fire (part 4)	−10 AP	_____
Every 2 days before 60 the path is completed	+1 AP	_____
Every day after 60 the path is not completed	−1 AP	_____
Every resource located and reported (area K)	+1 AP	_____
Defeated the chimera, hill giant, or medusa random encounter	+1 AP	_____

### AP Value

### Earned?

### TOTAL

2 soldiers out working the trails at any given time during the day, with a fourth group back here in town resting. As the route gets longer, Sir Tolgrith anticipates having to hire a fifth and possibly even sixth group to get the job done.


## A4. Visitors' Barracks

This small building is set aside for visiting soldiers and adventurers. Once the PCs take up Sir Tolgrith's offer, this building is made available to them as a residence. The entire building consists of one large space with four bunk beds, a fireplace for cooking, a pair of tables, and seven chairs.

Although the door leading into the place has a sturdy lock, visitors staying in this barracks have reported small thefts in the recent weeks. The guards have kept an increased watch on the structure, but as of yet they have seen no sign of burglary. In reality, Uris, one of the halfling cooks at the Boar's Bones, learned the trick to picking the lock and has been pilfering from the guests under the guise of delivering supplies. It is only a matter of time before he is uncovered and severely punished.

## A5. Watchtowers

These three watchtowers stand a little more than 30 feet tall and are occupied by a



## Designer Notes

### CONCLUSION

The ending of this adventure can vary wildly depending upon how well the PCs perform during the adventure. While a measure of approval certainly colors Sir Tolgrith's reaction toward them, the townsfolk share much of the same attitudes. If the PCs have great success, the people of Fort Thorn greet them as heroes, giving them hearty handshakes and free drinks at the Boar's Bones (to say the least). Should they fail, any number of the folk of Fort Thorn might become bitter enemies who go out of their way to cause the PCs harm.

pair of soldiers per tower at all times. The soldiers in these towers are armed with longbows and have standing orders to fire on those who do not identify themselves when called. At night, the soldiers have torches and arrows tipped with pitch to illuminate an area below if necessary.



## THORN SNARE

Transmutation

**Level:** Rgr 3, Drd 4

**Components:** V, S, M, DF

This spell functions just like the spell *snare* but those caught in it take 1 point of damage per round, as the thorn-covered vine slowly cuts into them. In addition, any attempt to escape or destroy the snare deals 1d6 points of damage to the trapped creature.

A *thorn snare* can only be found with a DC 24 Search check. A trapped creature can escape by making a DC 24 Escape Artist check or a DC 24 Strength check as a full-round action.

**Material Component:** A length of blood-thorn rose vine.

## A6. The Boar's Bones

Shortly after settling the fort, the soldiers faced their first crisis. The next food caravan was late and their supplies ran low. Sir Tolgrith sent out his scouts to forage and hunt, but after 3 days they had not found much. On the 4th day they came up big, dragging the carcass of a large dire boar back into camp at the same time the food caravan finally arrived. During the evening's festivities, the boar was picked clean and the fort's cook, **Orrend** (CG male halfling expert 3), kept the bones.

A month later, Orrend opened up the Boar's Bones, a small inn and tavern to serve the off-duty soldiers, workers, and visitors who happened to stop by. The bones were carefully reconstructed with wire and wood, and the now-intact dire boar skeleton sits in the middle of the tavern with a pouch hanging from its tusks. Orrend insists that any tips given to the boar are sent to its grieving kin.

The food at the Boar's Bones is of good quality (4 sp per meal), combining local ingredients with caravan supplies. Orrend has yet to perfect his rose petal ale, so whenever he has a new batch ready, all tankards of it are half price (2 cp). Rooms at the Boar's Bones are simple, with only a single cot, washbasin, and cupboard apiece, but they are clean and free of vermin (1 gp per night).

Orrend is attended by two of his cousins who cook and clean. **Uris** (CN male halfling

expert 1/rogue 1) does most of the cooking but has a nasty pilfering habit that might one day get him exiled or worse. **Pily** (CG female halfling commoner 2) does most of the cleaning and waits on guests in the common room.

## A7. Wilderness Wares

The consortium of merchants helping finance this venture established this shop in hopes that as the community grows, so might their business. Sir Tolgrith and the soldiers of the fort have an unlimited line of credit for the time being, so long as their needs are within reason.

The shop is run by **Bellar Graysalk** (LN male human expert 2), a shrewd and rather curt man with a nagging cough. He does not care much for this assignment and would much rather have a more lucrative post in Korvosa or some other larger community.

Wilderness Wares carries a wide variety of ordinary goods and provisions, including most alchemical items and a few 1st-level scrolls. Note that goods valued at more than 100 gp are not generally available, but Bellar can put in a request with his consortium and most items valued at 10,000 gp or less can be obtained in 1 to 2 weeks. These special orders come with a 5% delivery fee on top of the item's cost.

## A8. Shrine to Erastil

Every morning, the lone bell of this stone shrine tolls twice to start the prayer service. The shrine is dedicated to Erastil (LG god of hunting, trade, farming, and family) who is also known as "Old Deadeye." The shrine's lone cleric, **Father Apar** (LG male human cleric 5), tends to the spiritual needs of the community, including healing and other minor spellcasting. Father Apar offers these services for free to the soldiers, but all others must pay the usual price. Father Apar also has a number of divine potions and scrolls for sale, but none worth more than 300 gp.

Father Apar's morning sermons are usually quite calm affairs, with the elderly cleric reading from holy scriptures and addressing current concerns. Sir Tolgrith makes sure to attend twice per week, but never on a regular schedule. After the morning prayers, father Apar walks around town, talking to

the locals about their problems or tending to the sick. Once per week, after the day's labor is over, father Apar invites all to an archery challenge in front of the fort. To the winner he gifts a potion of his own creation (usually *cure light wounds*). At the start of this adventure, no one individual has won the competition twice.

## A9. Partik's Forge

Owned and operated by **Partik Kinbond** (CG male human expert 4) and his two sons, Tan and Kan, Partik's Forge is the only blacksmith in town. The tall and muscular Partik can often be seen sitting outside his forge taking a bit of a respite. While most of his work comes in the form of horseshoes, nails, arrowheads, swords, and shields, he occasionally makes something a little more exotic. He can fashion any simple or martial weapon in about a week's time so long as it is primarily made of metal. He even has a few masterwork weapons for sale, including a masterwork longsword, shortsword, battleaxe, and a matched pair of daggers.

After the forge dies down for the night and Tan and Kan are put to bed, Partik can often be found at the Boar's Bones, drinking himself into a stupor. He often does this alone and rarely is he in good spirits. Orrend has heard rumors that Partik's wife died recently under mysterious circumstances and that he moved here to avoid any uncomfortable questions. Only Partik knows if such tales are true and he is not talking.

## A10. Four Wheels Hall

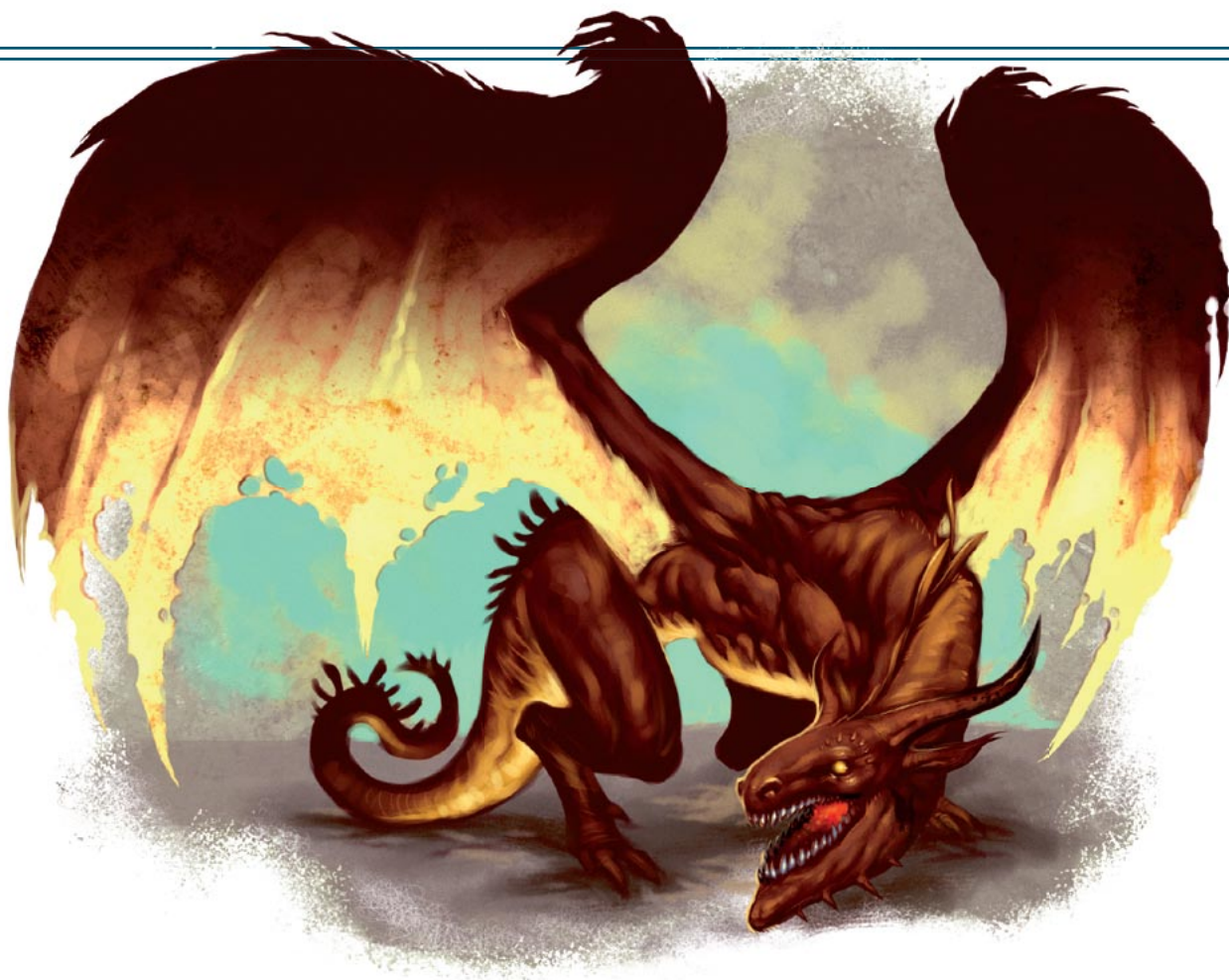
This large two-story building is the hall and residence used by all of the caravan drivers when they are in town. The building also serves as a warehouse for all of the goods brought into the city prior to distribution.

## APPENDIX B: NEW RULES

The following appendix includes all of the new rules, including monsters, gear, and spells, needed to run this adventure.

### Flame Drake

*The beast flies on leathery wings, trailing a long and wicked tail. Clad in iron-hard scales of red and yellow, the creature is not unlike a dragon, save for its lack of arms. Curls of flame bellow from its nostrils as it breathes.*



## FLAME DRAKE

CE Large dragon (fire)

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +13, **Spot** +13

### DEFENSE

**AC** 20, touch 10, flat-footed 19  
(+1 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 59 (7d12+14)

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6

**Immune** fire, sleep, paralysis

**Vulnerable** cold

### OFFENSE

**Spd** 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)

**Melee** bite +11 (2d6+7 plus 1d6 fire) and tail +6 (1d8+5)

**Special Attacks** fireball breath, speed surge

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Flame drakes prefer to breathe on their opponents multiple times before landing to engage in melee. They use their speed surge ability liberally, usually taking an extra action to move up before engaging in a full attack action.

**Morale** Flame drakes are stubborn combatants and frequently fight to the death.

CR 5

### STATISTICS

**Str** 21, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 9, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

**Base Atk** +7; **Grp** +16

**Feats** Alertness, Flyby Attack, Improved

Initiative, Power Attack

**Skills** Hide +7, Intimidate +5, Listen +13, Move Silently +11, Spot +13, Survival +6

**Languages** Draconic

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Fireball Breath (Su)** A flame drake can, as a standard action, breathe a ball of flame that explodes like a fireball upon impact. This attack has a range of 180 feet and deals 4d6 points of fire damage to all creatures within a 20-foot burst. A successful DC 15 Reflex save halves this damage. Once a flame drake has used its fireball breath, it cannot do so again for 1d6 rounds. The Reflex save is Constitution-based.

**Speed Surge (Ex)** Three times per day, a flame drake may draw on its draconic heritage for a boost of strength and speed, allowing it to take an additional move action. Using this ability is a free action that can only be used once per round.

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** Any forest

**Organization** Solitary, pair, or rampage (3–12)

**Treasure** Standard

**Alignment** Usually chaotic evil

**Advancement** 8–13 HD (Large); 14–21 HD (Huge)

**Level Adjustment** —

The degenerate cousins of red dragons, flame drakes possess all of the rage and foul temper of their greater kin but lack cunning and reason. These brutes terrorize the lands they inhabit, demanding ever-increasing tribute from those they can frighten and viciously assaulting those they cannot.

While countless centuries of inbreeding and experimentation have led to a number of varied draconic creatures, the drakes are the most numerous. Flame drakes, due to their physical prowess and fecundity, are particularly common in many mountainous regions. Most true dragons see them as little more than nuisances and scoff at the notion of any relation to true dragonkind (despite obvious similarities).



Exotic Weapons	Cost	Dmg (S)	DMG (M)	Range Critical	Increment	Weight	Type
<i>Light Melee Weapons</i>							
Thorn Bracer	30 gp	1d4	1d6	x2	—	3 lb.	Piercing
<i>Ranged Weapons</i>							
Thorn Bow	50 gp	1d4	1d6	x3	40 ft.	2 lb.	Piercing
Thorn (20)	1 gp	—	—	—	—	2 lb.	—

Flame drakes organize themselves in small hunting packs. These groups work together in raids but often fall to infighting when the time comes to split up the spoils. As such, a powerful male usually leads packs that stay together for any length of time, with his decisions settling disputes. Larger packs require a truly powerful individual, such as a red dragon or spellcaster, to keep the unruly flame drakes cooperative.

Flame drakes mate for one season only, with the female laying a clutch of two or three eggs. Young flame drakes are raised by their mother for only two years before being left to fend for themselves. They reach maturity in 5 years and can live to well over 150 years.

## Roseblood Sprite

*Standing just over three feet tall, this small humanoid creature has pale, ivory skin, long spindly fingers, and tall pointed ears. Wrapped in what appears to be thorny vines, the lithe fey has a shock of blood red hair bound behind her head. She stares out with equally red eyes with a look of cruelty and malice.*

### ROSEBLOOD SPRITE CR 3

NE Small fey  
**Init** +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +6, Spot +6

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13  
(+2 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size)  
**hp** 22 (5d6+5)  
**Fort** +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +6

#### OFFENSE

**Spd** 30 ft.  
**Melee** thorn bracer +4 (1d4+1)  
**Ranged** mwk thorn bow +7 (1d4+1/x3)  
**Ranged** mwk thorn bow +5/+5 (1d4+1/x3)  
**Special Attacks** poison thorns, sneak attack (1d6)  
**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 5th):

1/day—death knell (DC 15), *minor image* (DC 15), *obscuring mist*, *sleep* (DC 14), *suggestion* (DC 16), *thorn snare*

#### TACTICS

**Before Combat** If given time to prepare, roseblood sprites often cast *thorn snare* on an area and then use *minor image* to lure foes into a trap.

**During Combat** During combat, roseblood sprites use *sleep* and *suggestion* in combination with their poison thorns to hamper foes. They generally avoid melee combat, but once engaged they try to flank foes whenever possible.

**Morale** If forced to flee, roseblood sprites dash out of sight before assuming rosebush form.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 13, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 13, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 17  
**Base Atk** +2; **Grp** –1  
**Feats** Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot  
**Skills** Climb +5, Concentration +8, Escape Artist +8, Hide +15, Jump +7, Knowledge

(nature) +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Spot +6, Survival +2 (+4 in aboveground natural environments), Tumble +11, Use Rope +3 (+5 bindings)

**Languages** Elven, Sylvan

**SQ** rose form, woodland stride

**Combat Gear** 2 poison thorns; **Other Gear** mwk composite (+1 Str) thorn bow with 20 thorns, rosewood armor, thorn bracers

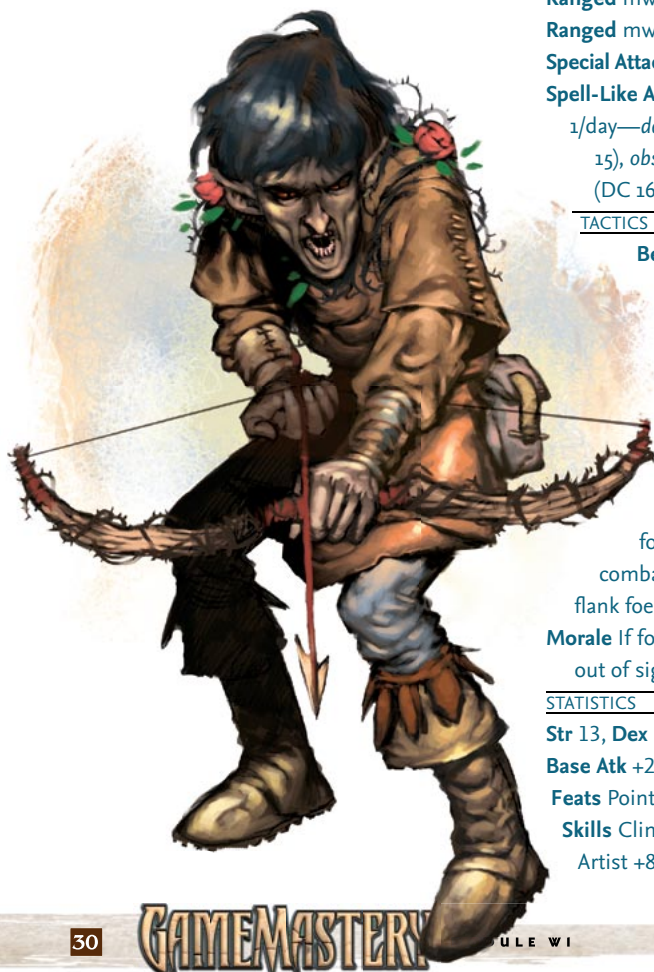
#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Poison Thorns (Ex)** Roseblood sprites typically carry a number of poison thorns with them, usable in their thorn bows. These thorns carry an irritating toxin known as the red rash. This poison has an initial effect of forcing the target to spend 1 round itching and scratching the wound, incapable of taking any other action (treat as dazed). The secondary effect of the poison is 1d2 points of Strength damage. A DC 14 Fortitude save negates these effects.

**Rose Form (Su)** A roseblood sprite can, as a standard action, take the form of a Small rose bush. While in this form, the roseblood sprite is immobile but it can perceive its surroundings. It can take no actions other than to revert to sprite form (a free action). Any damage dealt to the bush is applied to the sprite while in this form (AC 6). A roseblood sprite is susceptible to any spell or effect that targets plants while in this form, but it is immune to critical hits and sneak attack damage. A roseblood sprite in rose form automatically fails all Reflex saves. A roseblood sprite can assume the form of a rose bush any number of times per day and can maintain the form indefinitely.

**Sneak Attack (Ex)** This ability functions just like the rogue ability of the same name, allowing the sprite to deal an additional 1d6 points of damage when attacking a flat-footed or flanked foe. If a roseblood sprite takes levels in a class that grants sneak attack damage (such as a rogue) it stacks with this ability.

**Woodland Stride (Su)** This ability functions just like the druid ability of the same name, allowing the sprite to move through any sort of undergrowth (such as rose bushes) at



normal speed and without taking damage or suffering any other impairment.

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** Any forest

**Organization** Solitary, bushel (2–5), or court (6–16)

**Treasure** Standard

**Alignment** Usually neutral evil

**Advancement** 6–9 (Small) or by character class

**Level Adjustment** +2

Known for their cruelty and disdain for humanoid creatures, roseblood sprites are the embodiment of nature's uncaring and vengeful aspects. Roseblood sprites act out against those who would despoil nature's beauty, often with excessive force. All too often, even the presence of such an outsider is enough to provoke their ire, be it human, orc, or even elf (although they seem to forgive the presence of fey-allied gnomes).

The origins of the roseblood sprites are lost to time, but their legends hold that they formed from the petals of the world's first rose, whose wicked thorns protected its beauty. The legend goes on to say that these first roseblood sprites were all crowned king by Gozreh and taught the secrets of awakening more of their kin. Whether or not this limits the total number of roseblood kings is not known, but sages speculate that when one dies, another is crowned.

Roseblood sprites tend to organize themselves into courtly strata, with dukes, barons, and earls all vying for their king's attention. These titles seem to mean little to the king, but individual sprites often attack those who misuse or disregard their rank.

Roseblood sprites reproduce through an odd ritual involving their king, by which a pair of sprites both assume their bush form side by side for one full year. At the end of that time, a third smaller rose bush has grown up between them. This bush is tended by the king and its parents and once it reaches maturity, it is transformed by the king. This last step is a closely guarded secret that involves the king whispering ancient words into the flowering bush.

### Roseblood King

Although rare, a large group of roseblood sprites is often led by a king. The king

makes all the major decisions for the group and is rarely encountered without an entourage of at least 2 roseblood sprites. The roseblood king always has 9 Hit Dice and deals an extra 2d6 points of damage on a sneak attack (instead of 1d6). He has DR 5/cold iron and resist fire 10. He can use all the spell-like abilities of roseblood sprites at will and can also cast *poison* and *wall of thorns* once per day. Finally, the roseblood king can create new sprites from living rose bushes. He can only do this to a fully grown bush he has tended since it was planted. The ceremony to create a new sprite in this manner requires 8 hours of uninterrupted work. A roseblood king is CR 6.

### New Gear

Roseblood sprites are all proficient in the use of two new exotic weapons and a new type of light armor. Unless otherwise noted, all of these items are sized for Small characters.

**Rosewood Armor:** This suit of leather armor is wrapped in special rose vines. Anyone grappling with a creature wearing rosewood armor takes 1d4 points of piercing damage per round. This damage can be prevented by taking a –10 penalty on the grapple check. The rose vines must be watered with at least 1 gallon of water each day or they wither and die, turning the armor into normal leather armor. This armor acts like leather armor in every other way and costs 50 gp.

**Thorn:** These small arrows are tipped with a wicked rose thorn and fletched with lacquered rose petals.

**Thorn Bracer:** These sturdy leather bracers are studded with lacquered rose thorns that can be used to pierce foes. You can attack with these bracers even while holding objects in your hands. When attacking with thorn bracers, you lose any shield bonus to AC gained from a readied shield until your next action.

**Thorn Bow:** This polished rosewood bow is studded with thorns and tiny rose flowers. You need at least two hands to use a thorn bow, regardless of its size. You can use a thorn bow while mounted. Penalties for low Strength apply on damage rolls made with a thorn bow. Thorn bows cannot be made into composite thorn bows.

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## Valeros

MALE HUMAN FIGHTER 6

ALIGN NG INIT +7 SPEED 20 ft.

### ABILITIES

15	STR
17	DEX
12	CON
13	INT
8	WIS
10	CHA

### DEFENSE

HP 43
AC 20
touch 13, flat-footed 17
Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +1

### OFFENSE

Melee +1 longsword +10 (1d8+5/19–20)  
 Melee +1 longsword +8/+3 (1d8+5/19–20)  
 +1 shortsword +7/+2 (1d6+1/19–20)  
 Ranged mwk shortbow +10/+5 (1d6/×3)

### SKILLS

Climb	+8
Intimidate	+9
Ride	+12
Swim	+5

### FEATS

Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)



Combat Gear alchemist's fire (2), elixir of fire breath, potion of bear's endurance, potion of cure moderate wounds (3); Other Gear backpack, +1 breastplate, gauntlets of ogre power, +1 longsword, mwk shortbow with 20 arrows, rations (6), silk rope, silver dagger, +1 shortsword, 317 gp



## Seoni

FEMALE HUMAN SORCERER 6

ALIGN LN INIT +2 SPEED 30 ft.

### ABILITIES

8	STR
14	DEX
12	CON
10	INT
13	WIS
18	CHA

### DEFENSE

HP 22
AC 15
touch 13, flat-footed 13
Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +6

### OFFENSE

Melee quarterstaff +2 (1d6–1)  
 Ranged mwk dagger +6 (1d4–1/19–20)  
 Spells Known (CL 6th):  
 3rd (4/day)—lightning bolt (DC 18)  
 2nd (6/day)—invisibility, scorching ray  
 1st (7/day)—burning hands (DC 16),  
 enlarge person, magic missile, shield  
 0 (6/day)—acid splash, detect magic,  
 flare (DC 15), light, mage hand,  
 prestidigitation, read magic

### SKILLS

Bluff	+13
Concentration	+13
Spellcraft	+9

### FEATS

Dodge, Extend Spell, Skill Focus (Concentration), Spell Focus (evocation)



Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds, scroll of fireball, scroll of fly, tanglefoot bag, wand of magic missile (CL 3rd, 25 charges); Other Gear backpack, bracers of armor +2, cloak of charisma +2, everburning torch, mwk dagger, quarterstaff, rations (4), ring of protection +1, 359 gp



## Kyra

FEMALE HUMAN CLERIC 6

ALIGN NG INIT –1 SPEED 20 ft.

### ABILITIES

13	STR
8	DEX
14	CON
10	INT
16	WIS
12	CHA

### DEFENSE

HP 42
AC 20
touch 10, flat-footed 20
Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +11

### OFFENSE

Melee +1 scimitar +7 (1d6+2/18–20)  
 Ranged mwk lt crossbow +4 (1d8/19–20)  
 Special Attacks greater turning 1/day, turn undead 4/day (+3, 2d6+7)  
 Spells Prepared (CL 6th):  
 3rd—prayer (2), pro. energy, searing light\*  
 2nd—bull's strength, heat metal\* (DC 15),  
 lesser restoration, spiritual weapon (2)  
 1st—bless, command (DC 13), cure light wounds\*, remove fear, shield of faith  
 0—detect magic (2), light (2), read magic  
 \* domain spell (healing, sun)

### SKILLS

Concentration	+11
Heal	+12
Knowledge (religion)	+9

### FEATS

Combat Casting, Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scimitar), Weapon Focus (scimitar)



Combat Gear holy water (3), wand of cure moderate wounds (15 charges); Other Gear backpack, +2 chainmail, cloak of resistance +1, healer's kit, +1 heavy steel shield, mwk lt crossbow with 10 bolts, ring of protection +1, +1 scimitar, silver holy symbol (everburning torch), 267 gp



## Meriel

FEMALE ELF ROGUE 6

ALIGN CN INIT +5 SPEED 30 ft.

### ABILITIES

12	STR
20	DEX
12	CON
8	INT
13	WIS
10	CHA

### DEFENSE

HP 29
AC 20
touch 15, flat-footed 15
Fort +4, Ref +11, Will +4 (+2 vs enchantment)
Defensive Abilities evasion, uncanny dodge; immune sleep

### OFFENSE

Melee +1 rapier +10 (1d6+2/18–20)  
 Ranged dagger +9 (1d4+1/19–20)  
 Special Attacks sneak attack +3d6

### SKILLS

Climb	+6
Disable Device	+8
Hide	+12
Jump	+8
Listen	+8
Move Silently	+12
Open Lock	+9
Search	+8
Spot	+8
Tumble	+16

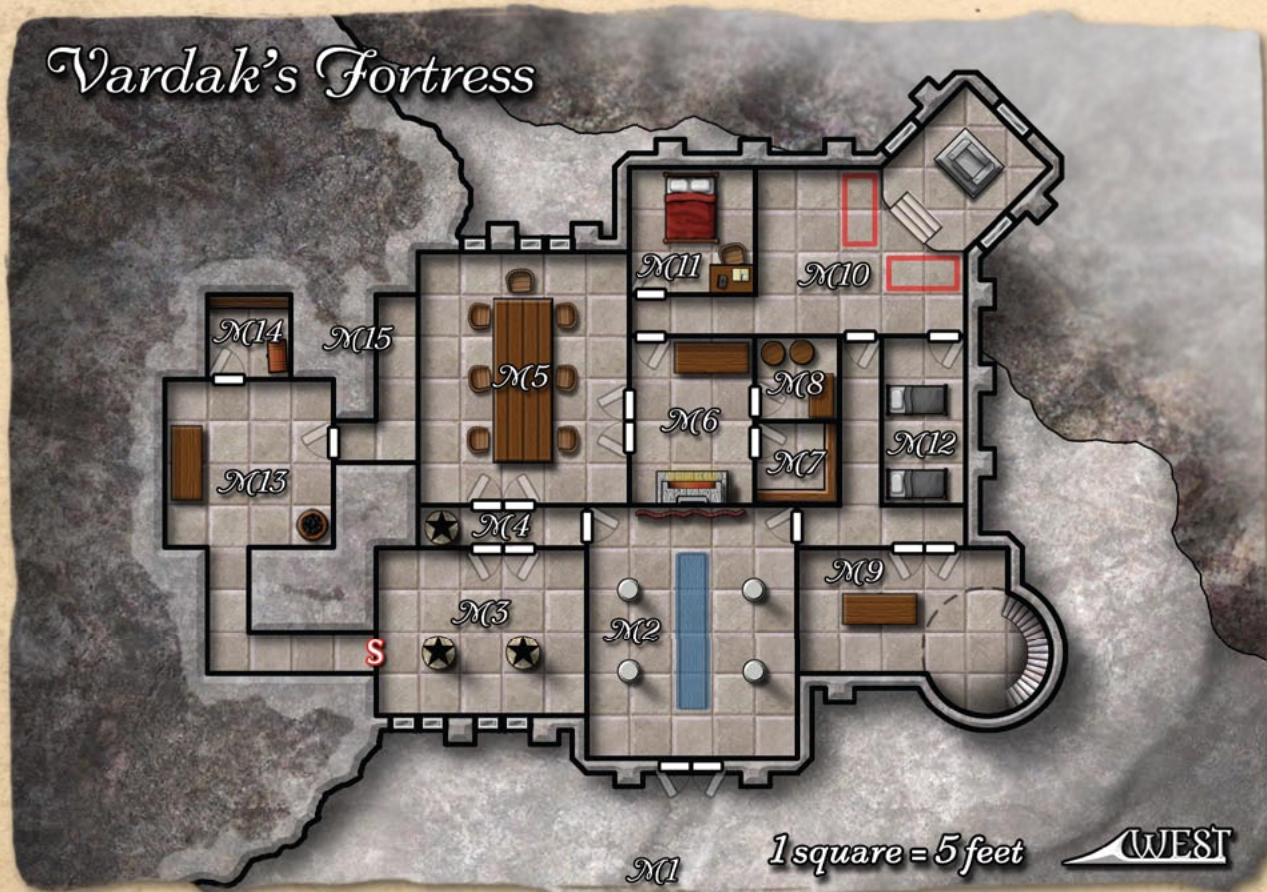
### FEATS

Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Finesse



Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds (2), potion of invisibility (2), thunderstone; Other Gear amulet of natural armor +1, backpack, cloak of resistance +1, daggers (6), gloves of dexterity +2, grappling hook, +1 rapier, silk rope, +1 studded leather armor, thieves tools, 163 gp







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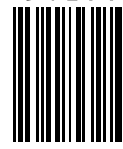
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