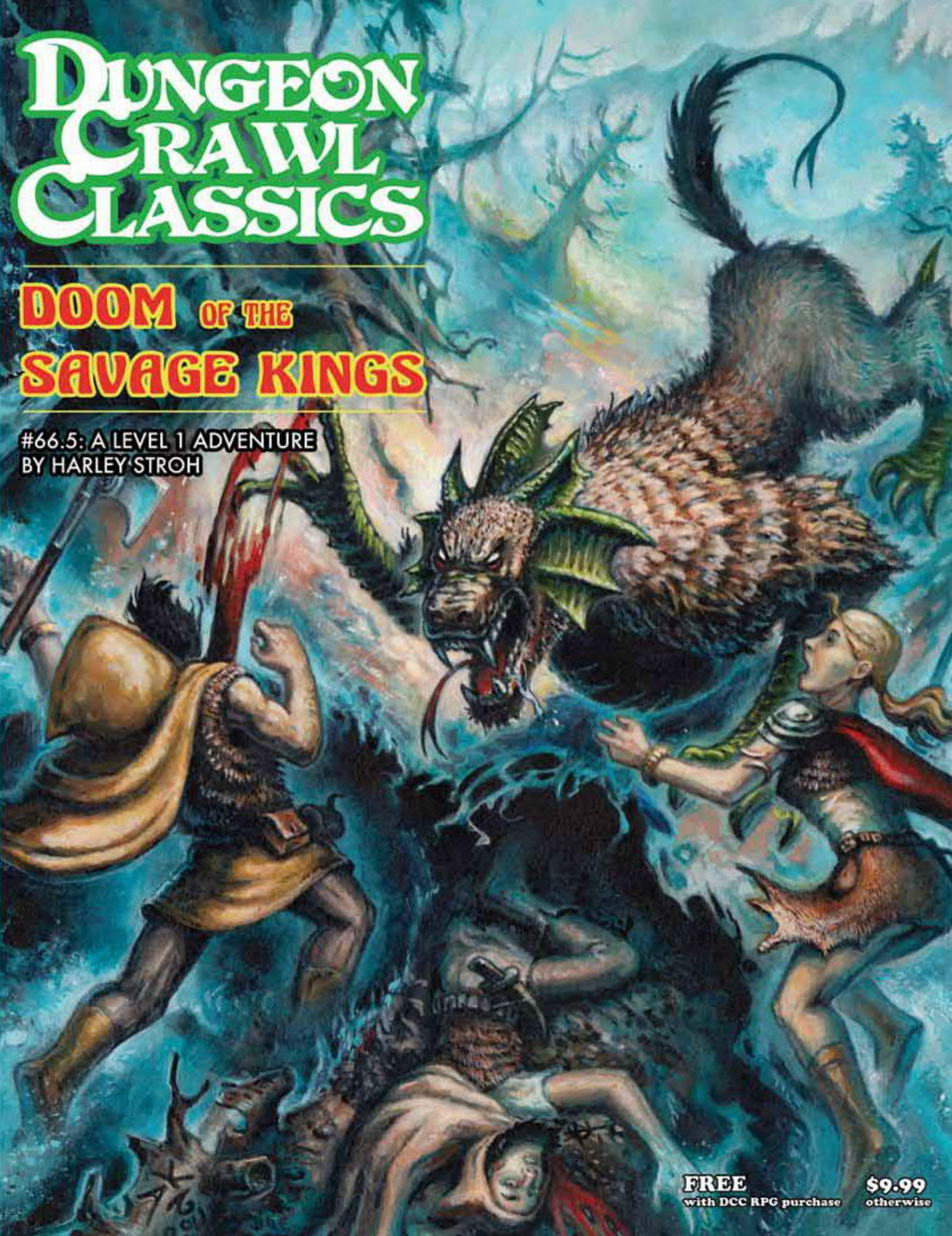


DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

DOOM OF THE SAVAGE KINGS

#66.5: A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE
BY HARLEY STROH



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DOOM OF THE SAVAGE KINGS

A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE

By Harley Stroh • Cover artist and cartographer: Doug Kovacs • Editor: Aeryn "Blackdirge" Rudel
Interior artists: Doug Kovacs, Stefan Poag • Art direction and graphic design: Joseph Goodman
Playtesters: William MacDougall, James D. Newton, JoAnne Newton, Stephen Newton;
Marv (Finarvyn) Breig, Anna Breig, Ryan Breig, Kaylina Breig, Alan Bean, Paul Luzbetak
Dedicated to Rusty Jones, the original Hound of Hiro.

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INTRODUCTION

Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics adventures don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you remember, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

This adventure is designed for 6 to 12 1st-level characters. The adventure presents a variety of environs and challenges, ensuring that each class has the opportunity to shine; however, this scenario should not be attempted without at least one of each of the four core human classes.

The adventure can also be attempted by 0-level characters, but players should anticipate a grim, lethal game, and judges should provide opportunities to introduce new 0-level characters as needed. PCs that survive key areas should advance to level 1.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

High above the windswept moors and darksome woods, the village of Hirot is under siege. Each night, as the sun sinks beneath the western mountains and the candles burn low, a devil-hound stalks the village streets, unleashing its savage fury on the living. From warlord to pauper, crone to child, no one is safe. Even the Jarl, master of Hirot, and his loyal warrior thegns are helpless to stop the beast.

On the advice of Sylle Ru, the Jarl's wicked seer, the people have taken to sacrificing one of their own every third-day. In a grim ritual, the entire community draws lots; the loser is marched to the ancient standing stones to await his doom. This grisly practice has slowed the hound's predations, but it is only a matter of time before Hirot meets its ruin—at the maw of the devil-hound or through the incompetence of its own leaders.

The adventure typically unfolds in three acts, though PCs are free to explore, revisiting old locales in search of new clues, questioning NPCs for leads, and tracking down rumors as they see fit.

Act I: The Village of Hirot, where the mystery begins. Here the PCs can learn rumors of the legendary hound over pots of ale, encounter key NPCs, and seek out clues to ancient relics that can be used to battle the beast.

Act II: The Tomb of the Ulfheonar, wherein, armed with knowledge gleaned from Hirot, the PCs delve into the catacombs beneath the haunted serpent mound, emerging with mythic weapons and armor of antiquity.

Act III: The Sunken Fens, wherein the PCs take the battle to the hound, challenging it in its lair and slaying it before the inky black pool that births the hound anew.

THE HOUND OF HIROT

The remnant of an ancient chaos spirit once worshipped by the savage tribes of the Trolltooth Mountains, the beast takes the form an enormous demonic hound. Until six months ago the hound was confined within the tomb of the Ulfheonar, the last of the savage kings. But when a trio of rogues broke into the tomb, they unwittingly set the spirit free. Craving the bloody sacrifices of its glorious past, the hound has set upon the village of Hirot. Now, each night, black mists issue from its well (area D-1), coalescing into the hound that stalks the high moors and lonely vales. Unlike predatory animals, the hound doesn't consume its prey. Rather, the hellish being delights in the slaughter, leaving horribly mutilated corpses in its wake.

The hound continues its attacks on Hirot throughout the adventure. At first it is every three days; if a sacrifice is left at the altar stones, the hound accepts the offering. However, if the PCs succeed in denying the hound its sacrifice, the predations increase in frequency to every night. (The cowardly Jarl uses this against the PCs, declaring they have brought doom to Hirot.)

Contrary to the beliefs of the Jarl and his thegns, the hound can be hurt (though not slain) by normal weapons. If the hound is reduced to 0 hp, it dissolves into oily black mists and returns to its lair, emerging the following night at full hp. In order to slay the hound, it must first be bound and then brought to 0 hp (or less). There are three principle ways of binding the hound, though PCs are sure to come up with others. Judges are free to adjudicate proposed solutions as they see fit, erring on the side of dramatic heroics.

- **The Wolf-Spear of the Ulfheonar:** Hidden in area C-10, the legendary wolf-spear can be used to pin the hound, before delivering the death blow.
- **Shackles of the Mad Widow:** Woven from the hair of seven corpses, the shackles of the Mad Widow Ymae can bind any supernatural beast. Acquiring the hair, though, and cinching the bonds is heroes' work.
- **Mortal Strength:** In the tradition of Beowulf, extraordinary PCs can wrestle the hound, making contested Strength checks against the hound to hold it in place. (The hound receives +4 to Strength checks.) Mundane restraints (ropes, manacles or the like) are insufficient to the task; a PC must physically restrain the hound.

The Hound of Hirot: Init +2; Atk bite +3 melee (1d8) or claw +3 melee (1d4); AC 15; HD 4d12; hp 20; MV 30' or fly 30'; Act 3d20 (claw, claw, bite); SP demon traits, gaseous form, immune to *charm* effects, immortal; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; AL C.



THE VILLAGE OF HIROT



he village was once home to some three hundred souls, but since the depredations of the hound the population has shrunk to nearly two hundred. The remaining village folk live in constant fear, cowering in their homes through the night, emerging only at dawn to discover the night's slaughter.

The majority of the buildings in Hirot are timber framed, wattle-and-daub constructions. Many of the smaller homes are mere hovels, with families and livestock sharing the hard-packed, earthen floor. In contrast, the homes of prominent merchants are two or even three stories in height, with commerce taking place on the first floor, the family living on the second floor, and the servants and apprentices sleeping in the loft. Extended families commonly live together, with 10 or more family members living in the same home.

Many buildings are abandoned, their former inhabitants slain by the Hound of Hirot. These structures are succumbing to disrepair: their thatched roofs have fallen in, and their furnishings have been ruined by the elements. Some of the abandoned buildings still bear marks of the hound's violence: shattered doors, bloodstains, and walls scarred by massive talons.

Key to Hirot's character is its isolation. For most of its folk, knowledge of the world ends twenty miles from the village gates. Fleeing the village and its curse is unthinkable. Where would one go? Seasonal traders are exotic marvels, and the PCs—emerging from the wilderness girded for war—seem the stuff of legend.

Contrary to usual tales of heroes and outposts in dire need of aid, the Jarl refuses to lower himself to asking the aid of strangers. Fearing the loss of reputation in the eyes of his people, the Jarl disdainfully regards the PCs as interlopers. If the PCs insist on lending their aid, the Jarl suggests that if they really want to help the people of Hirot, the PCs should stand in the villagers' stead at the altar stones, offering themselves up to the hound.

The PCs receive a far different reception from Hirot's thegns and commoners. The thegns respect fellow warriors committed to battling Chaos, and the commoners regard the PCs with admiration verging on worship. If the PCs comport themselves with kindness, honor and generosity, they quickly find themselves rewarded with the love and admiration of Hirot, to the Jarl's endless frustration.

RUMORS, LEGENDS & SUPERSTITIONS



Hirot is rife with rumors about the hound that plagues its folk. On any given night the PCs are sure to overhear a rumor or two while sharing pints at the Wolf-Spear. Note that many citizens speak about the hound only in hushed, furtive whispers, fearing that speaking openly about the beast draws its attention. When the need arises, roll on the following table or choose an appropriate rumor.

Finally, only fools believe everything they overhear. False rumors abound and are indicated by an (F).

d24 Rumor

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 The hound fears wolf's bane. (F) | 10 The Jarl's sorcerer is secretly in control of the hound. Slay the sorcerer and you slay the beast! (F) | 17 The hound takes beautiful women to be its brides in a kingdom beneath the moors. (F) |
| 2 The Mad Widow Ymae is a witch and knows how to trap the hound. | 11 The brothers Kej, Stein, and Ilham discovered a king's ransom hidden in the hills north of Hirot and left for the south lands. (F) | 18 The hound will not attack a person of true faith. (F) |
| 3 The hound is immune to weapons. (Both false and true.) | 12 The hound cannot be turned or dismissed by people of faith. | 19 In order to slay the hound, it must be bound before delivering the killing blow! |
| 4 Silver weapons, blessed by a man of faith, sear the hound like flaming brands. (F) | 13 In ages past, the savage tribes of this land once worshipped an evil wolf-spirit by casting sacrifices into a pit in the Sunken Fens. | 20 Fresh blood distracts the hound. Carry a wineskin of lamb's blood with you and maybe you will escape with your life! (F) |
| 5 The Jarl and his thegns have no idea how to defeat the hound. | 14 The hound can walk through walls. (F) | 21 The hound makes its lair somewhere in the Sunken Fens. |
| 6 The hound cannot be slain by weapons alone. | 15 An ancient warlord possessed a magical spear that could slay the hound and a magical shield that could turn away the beast's attacks. Bards call him Ulfheonar and say his tomb lies to the north. | 22 Unless cremated, corpses of the hound's victims rise as un-dead horrors on the next full moon. (F) |
| 7 The hound only slays sinners. (F) | 16 The hound heals its wounds during the day, returning at full strength the following night. | 23 The hound will not rest until every last citizen of Hirot is slain. |
| 8 The Jarl is working on a plan to defeat the hound; we need only give him the time to accomplish his task! (F) | | 24 The hound's bite confers a fell disease that transforms its victim into a wolf. (F) |
| 9 An ancient chieftain's tomb is hidden in the hills north of town. The savage king was known as the wolf-slayer. | | |

ROLEPLAYING THE NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS



good portion of the adventure can take place within the village of Hirot, and neophyte judges may find themselves vexed with juggling so many personalities. To aid judges, Hirot's most prominent NPCs are listed below, with summaries of their motivations and goals.

The Jarl and Sylle Ru (area A-10; condescending, insecure): The Jarl strives to conceal the insecurity of his rule by bullying newcomers, gruffly dismissing their offers of aid, and assuring all within earshot that matters are under control, even when it is evident to all that this is clearly not the case.

The bearded giant of a man is always accompanied by Sylle Ru, his pet seer. A thin, weaseling wretch of a man, Ru can often be seen whispering slyly into the Jarl's ear. For all his bravado, the Jarl loathes to make decisions without first consulting his seer.

Broegan "Bull" Haverson (area A-3; friendly, concerned): The owner and master of the Wolf-Spear, Broegan is welcoming to strangers and likely the PCs' first ally. Broegan's foremost concern is the safety of his fellow villagers. He hasn't the means to defend them against the hound, yet is unwilling to forsake them for his own safety.

Father Beacom (area A-4; suspicious, fatalistic): The spiritual leader of Hirot has embraced his own doom and longs for his prophecy to come to fruition. Constantly haranguing his fellow villagers to repent before the end, he fiercely believes that Hirot's sin is responsible for the hound. Irrational to the end, the Father aims to save the souls of Hirot by punishing the flesh.

Master Jenks & the Three Rats Mob (area A-5; friendly, deceitful): The Three Rats Mob seeks to take advantage of the PCs unless befriended by a fellow rogue (and perhaps even then, using their newfound ally as an inside man). Quick to ally with the PCs, the lazy rogues reward trust with treachery, aiming for the risk-free con.

The Mad Widow Ymae (area A-6; neutral, helpful): The weird widow of Hirot is slow to befriend PCs. But once the adventurers earn her trust, the widow can prove a great boon to the heroes. Though helpful, the widow's chief concerns are otherworldly, making dealings with her strange and unsettling.

The Hound of Hirot: Though not an NPC *per se*, the threat of the hound should overshadow every interaction in doomed Hirot, with every dusk heralding the possibility of death. The oppressive presence can manifest in any number of ways, from ceaseless, chill rain, lurking crows, and howling wolves outside the village walls, to muted, fearful whimpers in the night. Judges are encouraged to use these atmospheric threats to enforce the brooding, melancholic setting. If the PCs befriend an NPC, have the hound attack that NPC during the night. If the PCs set off into the wilderness, murders of crows erupt from the trees. Nature itself should seem set against the heroes, with the sunshine and warmth returning only when the hound has finally been defeated.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

Area	Type	Encounter
B	C	Hound of Hirot
C-1	C/P	Serpent Spirit
C-4	T	Spike-Pit Trap
C-5	C	2 tomb ghouls
C-8	C	1 tomb ghoul
C-9	T	Tomb trap
Interlude	C	Iraco the Huntmaster 5 huntsmen
D-1	C	Hound of Hirot



PLAYER START

For days you have traveled through the dark, brooding forests and across the desolate, windswept moors. All about you is the endless gray, either the cold mists hanging on the valley floors or the dark clouds piling atop the bare, craggy peaks. Your destination is Hirot, a lonely village set at the foot of the Trolltooth Mountains, with its promise of a warm hearth and good company. Until then, your only companions are the ravens that circle overhead and the howl of distant wolves in the night.

Your reverie is broken by muffled screams and the sight of shuffling forms ahead in the mists!

Allow players to declare actions, readying weapons, spells, and the like. At first the PCs cannot make out the creatures, but then:

Grim peasants, their dirt-lined faces drawn with fear, emerge from the gloom. All bear crude weapons—wood axes, staffs, pitchforks and long knives. The mob drives a raven-haired woman before them; gagged and bound with thick rope, she squirms and fights them with every step. Trailing the mob are solemn figures astride warhorses, the telltale glint of armor flashing beneath their wolf-skin cloaks.

ENCOUNTER AREAS

The peasants are bearing one of their own, Morgan Haverson, to the altar stones (area B) where she is to be left as an offering to the Hound of Hirot. Upon sighting the PCs, Jarl and his seven thegns spur their mounts forward. They have no quarrel with the heroes, but treat strangers with cold caution.

The Jarl is a bear of a man, hardened and scarred by nearly fifty years of life on the high moors. He is also insecure and condescending, immediately perceiving the PCs as potential rivals. His thegns are similarly hardened warriors, sworn to their chieftain and fierce in battle.

If the PCs don't interfere, the mob marches past them to the standing stones and binds the girl to the altar to await the hound. Their grim task completed, the villagers hastily return to Hirot before nightfall.

If the PCs attempt to stop the villagers, the Jarl intercedes forcefully, demanding that the girl be sacrificed for the safety of all. Neither the Jarl, his thegns, nor any of the villagers want to sacrifice the girl, but all are too terrified to take a stand against the hound. The PCs can convince the mob to halt the sacrifice, but only if they offer to take the girl's place (or devise another solution that guarantees Hirot's safety for a night).

If the PCs threaten violence, the mob quickly scatters. The Jarl and his thegns put on a show of force, but retreat after 1d5+2 rounds, "covering" the retreat of their charges.

Finally, clever PCs may permit the mob to leave the girl at the altar stones, only to free her before the hound arrives to claim its sacrifice.

This is a pivotal encounter in the adventure and can determine whether the PCs are seen as friends of Hirot or foes. Bloodthirsty "heroes" have the opportunity to derail the entire adventure before it even begins; slaying the Jarl or any of his wards is a sure way to earn the enmity of the entire village. Judges need not intercede on the PCs' behalf — brutish, violent choices earn their own rewards.

If the PCs succeed in saving the girl, they earn the gratitude and friendship of her father, Broegan Haverson, master of the Wolf-Spear (see Area A-3) and rumormonger of the first order.

Jarl: Init +2; Atk longsword +4 melee (1d8) or bow +4 missile fire (1d6); AC 18; HD 2d8; hp 16; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; AL L.

Thegn (7): Init +1; Atk longsword +3 melee (1d8) or bow +3 missile fire (1d6); AC 16; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL L.

Commoners (35): Init -2; Atk makeshift weapon -1 melee (1d4-1); AC 9; HD 1d4; hp 2; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort -1, Ref -2, Will -1; AL N.

Area A – Village of Hirot: *The wooded moors give way to mist-laden fields. Ahead, up the narrow track, stands the village of Hirot. The village is defended by a low earthen rampart topped with a wooden palisade. Behind the village, a causeway rises to a great hall resting atop a craggy ridge. Black hearth-smoke hangs forlornly over the village, as if even the smoke were too frightened to venture beyond the village walls.*

Solitary figures give out a cry, and a long mournful horn is sounded, echoing down the vale, declaring your approach to all.

The 15-foot palisade deters beasts and most raiders, but is easily surmounted by skilled climbers (climbing check, DC 15).

A catwalk runs the circumference of the palisade and — since the incursion of the hound — town militia light braziers at dusk and walk the wall throughout the night. The night watch has done little to deter attacks. Indeed, the watch has lost four of its own volunteers to the claws of the hound.

The night watch is led by **Nothan the Younger**, a stern, hawkish man, sporting a long mustache and fierce eyes. Nearly fifty winters in age, Nothan harbors deep suspicions of the Jarl and his pet sorcerer, but keeps his opinions to himself. He has fought the hound, and witnessed it turning to black mist.

The night watch raises a cry at the first hint of danger. There is a 1-in-5 chance of the night watch passing near the PCs any time they attempt to cross the wall.

Nothan the Younger, Master of the Watch: Init +1; Atk longsword +1 melee (1d8); AC 15; HD 2d8; hp 10; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL L.

Night Watch (6): Init +0; Atk spear +1 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 1d8; hp 4; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L.

Area A-1 – South Gates: The stout gates are opened at first light and sealed at dusk. During the night the gates are only opened on direct order of the Jarl himself. A simple watch platform rises above the wall, some 25' in height.

A pair of militia men, **Mocle** and **Naven**, sits atop the platform during the day, warming themselves before a small iron brazier. Armed with spears and wooden shields, the vigilant pair sounds a horn at the first sight of strangers. Eager for news of the outside world, they descend the platform to welcome newcomers to Hirot.

Mocle and Naven: Init +0; Atk spear +1 melee (1d6) or crossbow +0 missile fire (1d6); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 4; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L.

Area A-2 – Village Square: *The village square is largely deserted, save for few scruffy mongrels that pick their way through the abandoned stalls. A locked strongbox rests atop a short wooden post in the center of the square. A tattered banner displaying a sable wolf rampant hangs forlornly above the strongbox.*

Most days, Father Beacom and his two silent acolytes (see area A-4) can be found here, proclaiming to all who will listen (as well as to those who refuse to listen) that the Hound of Hirot heralds the end of days and that doom is upon them.

Every three days the people of Hirot gather in the square and



draw lots to determine which of their own will be sacrificed to the hound. The town scribe records each citizen's name on a strip of vellum, which is dropped through the slot into the strongbox. Blindfolded, the Jarl unlocks the strongbox and draws a slip, which is read by the town scribe and confirmed by the priest Father Beacom.

The strongbox is secured with only a simple lock (DC 10 to pick), but a cry goes up if the citizens witness anyone disturbing the coffer. Opening the strongbox reveals the lottery to be a sham: a second box is concealed within the first. The night before the lottery, the Jarl and Sylle Ru choose who is to be sacrificed and place a false slip within the smaller box to be drawn in the lottery.

If the PCs remain in Hirot for more than two days, they are expected to take part in the lottery. The Jarl takes this opportunity to do away with his rivals, ensuring that a PC's name is drawn. If astute rogues examine the slips (forge document check, DC 10), they suspect that—due to discrepancies in the quality of vellum and ink—the script on the slip was written by someone other than the town scribe. Ink and vellum matching the forged slip can be found in the possession of Sylle Ru.

Area A-3 – Sign of the Wolf-Spear (Inn): Set just off the town square, Hirot's sole inn welcomes weary travelers day and night. A lonely caravansary long before Hirot grew into a village, the inn still retains hints of its rough origins: arrow slits are set into the shutters, a heavy iron bar stands ready to bar the door, and crenellations are set along the roof's edge.

The ground floor is host to common room where food and drink are served. A great wolf-spear rests above the bar—a replica of Ulfheonar's legendary spear. Though the spear appears real, casual inspection reveals that the blade is merely wood, painted blue-silver. The bar is usually tended by **Broegan "Bull" Haverson** and his daughter Morgan—the town's latest offering to the hound. If the PCs managed to stop Morgan's sacrifice, they receive the undying gratitude of Broegan and need not pay for room or board for as long as they stay. However, if the PCs were unable or unwilling to save the girl, the once-cordial giant is lost in his grief.

The second floor of the inn is reserved for private guest rooms, and a small, third floor, for Broegan's family. However, since the start of the attacks, Broegan has taken to sleeping on the ground floor to better defend his guests should the hound attack.

The defensibility of the Wolf-Spear is not lost on the people of Hirot, and many have taken to spending their evenings at the inn, sleeping in the common room. On any given night there are 2d12 locals passing the night with modest dice games and drink, doing their best to forget about the beast prowling outside their doors.

Most nights **Lloré**, Hirot's sole bard and storyteller, can be found entertaining the crowd. The young, charismatic bard aspires to become an adventurer, but his secret love for Morgan keeps him returning to the Wolf-Spear night after night. Lloré knows nearly every rumor and legend surrounding the hound and is delighted to share them with a fresh audience.

Area A-4 – Chapel of Justicia: The simple chapel is the sole structure in Hirot built entirely from stone. Designed to serve as both a place of worship and defense, the holy sanctum is among the safest places in Hirot, second only to the Jarl's great hall. Despite this, the chapel stands empty most days.

The cause for this desolation is the chapel's head priest, **Father Beacom**. A thin man, with the cruel face of a hawk, the Father believes that the hound is retribution for the village's sins. He stands in the village square, dawn to dusk, shouting that the world is ending and that the villagers have only themselves to blame. A sinner's sole salvation, the Father declares, is to forsake the material world for Justicia.

Father Beacom is served by two acolytes, **Brother Aker** and **Brother Haams**. Both have taken vows of silence, and follow the Father as he marches through the streets, whipping themselves as penance for their sins.

The Father has little tolerance of priests of other faiths, but he eagerly welcomes devotees of Justicia, offering them and their allies sanctuary.

Though Father Beacom is loath to admit it, the chapel holds a secret that can aid the PCs in their battle against the Hound of Hirot. The stained glass rose window overlooking the nave of the chapel depicts Justicia battling a demon-hound with a great warhammer. The head to that same spiked warhammer rests atop the chapel's altar, hidden by a velvet curtain.

Father Beacom refuses to permit the holy relic to leave the sanctity of the chapel and only the faithful may gaze upon the warhammer. But if the head is hung on a stout shaft and rededicated to the service of Law, it regains its +1 *vs. demons/devils* enchantment. When wielded by a cleric of Justicia, it performs as a +2 *warhammer*. Additionally, the hammer grants the cleric a +1 bonus to saving throws made against evil effects, evil creatures, un-dead, and demons, and inflicts an extra 3 points of damage against the same.

Area A-5 – Sign of Three Rats (Flophouse): Those that cannot afford the Wolf-Spear are forced to settle for the Three Rats, a flophouse of the worst order. Run down and filthy, the rats, lice and other vermin vastly outnumber the paying guests.

The two-story building is also home to an informal gang of thieves

and ne'er-do-wells. Led by **Master Jenks**, the band once numbered eight, but the loss of Kej, Stein, and Ilham to the tomb of the Ultheonar has curtailed both the gang's number and their audacity. The remaining members, **Oleen the Imp**, **Catkins**, **Wee Tocs**, and **Wolf** pass their days drinking cheap wine and dreaming of heists.

If befriended by a fellow rogue, the thieves can offer directions to the serpent mound, but they know nothing of the plight of their former comrades. Between them, the thieves know every *false* rumor surrounding the hound. Otherwise the rogues are all too eager to take advantage of wealthy strangers. Though too cowardly to commit outright thievery, the informal mob is not above conning the PCs or trading false rumors for the PCs' hard-won coin.

Area A-6 – Hovel of the Mad Widow: Huddled in the shadow of the Jarl's great hall, the home of the Mad Widow Ymae seems a world apart from the rest of Hirot. No one visits the lowly hovel, save young boys testing their courage on moonlit nights. It is regarded as common knowledge that Widow Ymae is a witch, and that she will place a curse upon anyone that dares to cross her.

The truth is that the Widow is indeed a witch, or rather a sorceress. Content with her solitude, the Widow disdains the company of her fellow villagers, preferring to wile away her nights in conversation with *things* beyond the veil. In all of Hirot, the Widow Ymae alone doesn't live in fear of the hound.

Though she has no patience for fools, the Widow welcomes the PCs into her home, recognizing they are cut from a different cloth than the folk of Hirot. But should they betray boorish habits, she is quick to send them on their way.

The interior of the hovel seems oddly larger than its exterior would indicate. A lively fire burns in a fire pit in the center of the floor, and a mottled cat sleeps atop a shelf laden with unrecognizable bits of dried animals. The Widow sits with a spindle and distaff, spinning flames from the fire into golden threads.

If queried about the hound, the Widow shares her secret: hundreds of slender threads pressed into the thatched mud of her hovel. Spun from the hair of the dead, the enchanted threads form a barrier impassable to the hound. The same threads, the Widow shares, can be used to bind the hound so that it may be slain.

The Widow is willing to lend her aid to the PCs on the condition that one PC marries her once the hound is slain. If the PCs acquire the hair of a corpse, she weaves the hair into shackles capable of binding the hound.

If a PC breaks his promise to the crone, the would-be spouse is stricken by the Black Death. Oozing pustules spread across the PC's body, reducing his Strength, Stamina, and Agility by 1 every day. Once any of the character's stats reach 0 the PC dies. Once inflicted, the curse can only be lifted by a divine power—even the sorceress is unable to reverse the curse.

However, if the PC makes good on his promise, he is treated to a surprise. The widow, now young, lovely, and bedecked with flowers waits at the door of her hovel, her dead husband at her side. A devilish form composed of flame and darkness, he jealously bids the PC to be gone. The Widow wistfully kisses the PC goodbye and presents him with a parting wedding pres-



ent: a shirt of golden mail, woven from the threads of flame. Fine enough to be worn beneath common clothes (though not armor), the shirt serves as +1 *chainmail* and grants the PC a +2 bonus to saving throws against cold-based effects.

Area A-7 – Farmer: This humble hovel is home to one of the many families that farm the lands surrounding Hirot. There is a 30% chance of the family sharing their home with 1d4 chickens or 1d2 hogs. Apart from the livestock and simple farm tools, there is nothing of value in the home.

Area A-8 – Craftsman: This building is home and shop to one of the craftsmen families making their home in Hirot. Craftsmen include:

- Mareras the Glassworker
- Gil the Bald, Brewmaster
- Niel the Miller
- Will-O-Scein, Apprentice Leatherworker
- Hael the Crane, Master Smith
- Ansich, Baker
- Chatham the Quiet, Bone and Antler worker
- Oyd Tallson, Carpenter
- Moeroj the Tanner

Area A-9 – Byre: The bulk of the village's livestock are kept in simple stables built against the village wall. Each is home to over a dozen cattle, oxen, or sheep, as well as housing the thegns' warhorses. Filled with straw, the byres are highly flammable; any fire causes the animals to stampede.

The byres are watched over by young boys and girls of the village. The children are instructed to sound their whistles at the first sign of danger, bringing the watch in 1d5+1 rounds.

Area A-10 – Great Hall: Standing high atop the rocky crag overlooking Hirot, the great hall known as Meadhold is the seat of the Jarl's power. The great hall is built from enormous timbers, thatched with golden straw and hung with the trophies celebrating the Jarl's victories. The rampant wolf, the Jarl's symbol, adorns the hall.

The Jarl, his thegns, and Sylle Ru make their home in the hall, sleeping in the common room, weapons close at hand. The Jarl



knows that it is only a matter of time before the hound comes for him. Therefore he personally sees that regular sacrifices are offered up to the hound, buying himself time. Though the Jarl places his hopes in the occult studies of Sylle Ru, he secretly fears that in the end nothing will protect him from the hound's wrath.

The Jarl's seven thegns are **Ofenloch, Kreig, Orioc, Utherl, Haedrick, Clohn the Bald, and Haelf Halfson**. All are battle tested and loyal to the death. But while the Jarl disdains the PCs, the thegns are happy to meet fellow comrades in arms.

Treasure: In the isolated village, there is little of value, even in the great hall of the Jarl. A search of the hall (impossible while the Jarl still lives) reveals the following:

- A two-handed sword, set with jewels (worth 50 gp)
- The hides of several bears (worth 15 gp altogether)
- A drinking horn, chased with silver and platinum (worth 30 gp)
- Several casks of fine mead (worth a total of 30 gp)
- Two dozen large gold hoops (worth 5 gp each)
- A hammered silver toque (worth 10 gp)
- 3d100 gp, 5d100 sp, and 2d20 pp

Jarl: Init +2; Atk longsword +4 melee (1d8) or bow +4 missile fire (1d6); AC 18; HD 2d8; hp 16; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; AL L.

Thegn (7): Init +1; Atk longsword +3 melee (1d8) or bow +3 missile fire (1d6); AC 16; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL L.

Sylle Ru, Seer: Init +0; Atk dagger -1 melee (1d4-1) or harmful spell (2d4, range 50', no save, up to 3 times per day); AC 10; HD 3d4; hp 6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP prestidigitation (DC 12 Will save or target sees his weapon disappear for 1d6+1 rounds), harmful spell 3/day; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; AL C.

Area A-11 – Sky Biers: With the long, harsh winters leaving the ground frozen solid much of the year, the people of Hirot have taken to cremating their dead atop the ridge overlooking the village. Now few days pass without a plume of black smoke billowing from atop the ridge, marking the passage of another citizen of Hirot.

Day or night, bodies are watched over by a trio of guards. Easily frightened, the guards must attempt a morale check at the start of battle or cede the biers. The guards rouse the Jarl and his thegns, returning with reinforcements in 1d5+4 rounds.

Bier Guards (3): Init +0; Atk spear +1 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 1d8; hp 4; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L.

Area B – Altar Stones: *The standing stones rest atop a low, craggy bluff. At the center of the stones is a squat stone block. A trio of ravens stands atop the mossy stone, pecking at trails of gore. Four holes are bored into the stone, and thick coils of rope are looped through the stone to make crude shackles.*

The altar stones are the remnants of the druidic tradition once practiced on the high moors. At the behest of the sorcerer Sylle Ru, the people of Hirot have sacrificed one of their own every three nights, in hopes of staving off the hound.

If a sacrifice is not made at least once every three nights, the hound descends into Hirot, slaying 1d6+1 citizens before its rage is sated.

The hound appears shortly after dusk. Expecting a nearly defenseless peasant, the beast is easily surprised. However, once ambushed at the stones, the hound cannot be surprised here again. If, after being defeated at the stones, the hound discovers a second ambush, it bypasses the standing stones altogether and unleashes its full fury on the people of Hirot.

The Hound of Hirot: Init +2; Atk bite +3 melee (1d8) or claw +3 melee (1d4); AC 15; hp 4d12; hp 20; MV 30' or fly 30'; Act 3d20; SP demon traits, gaseous form, immune to *charm* effects, immortal; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; AL C.

TOMB OF THE ULFHEONAR



he tomb of the savage warlord known as the Ulfheonar is buried beneath an enormous earthen mound cast in the shape of a serpent. Found north of Hirot, the mysterious mound is given a wide berth by most hunters and woodsmen, who regard it either as haunted or home to the King of Elfland. PCs attempting to recruit hirelings to aid in the exploration of the tomb will need to pay wages in gold, not silver.

Except where noted, there is no natural light within the tomb. The walls and ceilings are composed of tall stone slabs set in place before the mound was built; the floor is hard-packed earth. The air tends to be cool with beads of condensation forming on the walls.

Any human that dies within the tomb is cursed to rise as a tomb ghoul within in 2d14 rounds. Tomb ghouls are unable to leave the confines of area C and are compelled to defend the Ulfheonar against any tomb robbers. Three of the sons of Hirot, **Ilham**, **Kej**, and **Stein**, common pinchthieves and pickpockets, presently serve as ghouls within the tomb.

Area C – The Serpent Mound: *The forest breaks at the edge of a steep slope, revealing a narrow vale below. Set in the center of the valley is a large earthen mound topped with tall grasses and shaped like a long serpent.*

The savage tribes of the North laid their chieftains to rest in a tomb set in the head of the serpent. The last and greatest of these was the mighty warlord known as the Ulfheonar.

PCs descending into the vale discover slender, silvery streams running along either side of the serpent mound. Careful inspection of the eastern streambed reveals where the current has undercut the bank, exposing a narrow cleft in the stones; this is the entrance used by the thieves Ilham, Kej, and Stein. Those carefully inspecting the cleft discover a shred of homespun cloth caught in the cleft. Climbing into the cleft brings PCs to area C-6.

The twin streams meet at the head of the serpent mound, area C-1.

Area C-1 – The Pool and the Serpent: *Two silvery streams cascade down either side of the serpentine hillock, joining to form a shallow, glittering pool at the head of the enormous mound. Across the pool, set into the earthen mound, is a large circular stone, decorated with serpentine spirals worn by time.*

The pool is a mere 1 foot in depth, with a white sand bed flecked with mica that causes the pool to glitter and sparkle. Crossing the shallow pool is an easy task, but PCs disturbing the pool floor discover hide-wrapped bundles hidden just beneath the sand. The hide bundles are secured with rotting leather straps; each waterlogged bundle contains a nicked and pitted bronze sword, a handful of tin and bronze coins, and a cracked, humanoid skull. There are four bundles in all, offerings to the serpent spirit that inhabits the pool.

To gain entrance to the tomb, the PCs must roll the stone aside—a Herculean task requiring a DC 25 Strength check (up to 5 PCs can add their Strength modifiers to the total).

However, if the PCs succeed in rolling aside the stone with-

out first casting an offering worth 10 gp or more into the pool, the pool's guardian spirit awakens. The silvery waters rush together to form the head and neck of an enormous snake. The snake spirit bears down on the offending PCs, attempting to "swallow" them in its watery grasp. PCs struck by the snake-spirit must attempt a DC 20 Fort save or be drawn into the plume of water, where they immediately begin to drown. PCs can pull their comrades from the watery plume with a successful unarmed attack roll against the snake's AC, followed by a DC 14 Strength check. Otherwise, trapped PCs can only try to swim free of the serpent (Strength check, DC 18).

If the PCs retreat into the tomb, the serpent washes in after them. Trapped within the tight, closed corridor, the PCs must either outrun the wave or succeed on a DC 15 Fort save; those that fail the save are washed into the pit in area C-3.

Serpent Spirit: Init +3; Atk slam +3 melee (1d5); AC 14; HD 4d8; hp 24; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP engulf and drown, vulnerable to fire and heat, elemental traits; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; AL N.

Area C-2 – Stone Passage: *The dark, narrow passage is supported by walls of stone slabs. The low ceiling is made of similar slabs, each inscribed with dense spirals. The air is still and cool, and puddles of water have pooled on the hard-packed earthen floor.*

Judges should note that descriptions of the area should differ radically if the PCs are being swept down the passage at the head of an animated wave.

Close inspection of the floor reveals faint tracks. Strangely, the tracks originate from inside the tomb. If the PCs are careful not to disturb the site, trackers easily determine that whatever was trapped inside the tomb was trying to claw its way out.

Area C-3 – Pit Chamber: *The corridor opens to a wider, low-ceilinged chamber. The stone slab floor slopes down steeply from all four walls, falling away into a dark pit in the center of the chamber. The air is cool and the walls glimmer with condensation.*

This chamber presents little danger to cautious PCs. To those exercising less care (or attempting to outrun an animated wave), the encounter area can take a far more dangerous turn.

The steeply angled floor of the chamber is slick with slime fed by the condensation dripping along the walls. PCs attempting to stand on the slanted floor must succeed on a DC 18 Ref save or fall, sliding down to the mouth of the pit. Heroes have but a single chance (Ref save, DC 15) to catch themselves at the mouth of the pit; those failing the saving throw plummet into darkness, falling into area C-4. Even if a PC manages to arrest his fall, the walls of the pit are very difficult to climb (DC 23).

Area C-4 – Bronze Fangs: *The floor of the circular chamber is concave, forming a shallow depression. The ceiling, walls, and floor of the chamber are all covered in slick, black algae and slime. Above, a hole is bored into the arched ceiling. Directly beneath the hole a score of hammered bronze longspears are set into the floor.*

PCs falling from area C-3 crash into the upright spears, taking 1d12 damage. The second PC falling through the pit is permitted a DC 18 Ref save to land on his companion's body and roll to the floor—avoiding damage but inflicting 1d6 additional damage on his impaled companion. The Ref save DC is reduced by 3 for every additional PC impaled on the spears.

The spears are made entirely of bronze, limiting their utility in battle. Desperate PCs can snap free a spear (Strength check, DC 15), but the heavy weapon imposes a -2 penalty to initiative checks and takes a -1 penalty to damage due to its bluntness.

A close inspection of the floor reveals a pool of dried blood, bloody tracks leading to area C-5, and a pair of bloody daggers. Hirof's three would-be tomb robbers—Ilham, Stein, and Kej—had a falling out over how to divide their yet-undiscovered treasure. In the argument that followed, all three sustained mortal wounds and crawled off to die. Each rose again as a tomb ghoul, forced to defend the tomb of the Ulfheonar for all time.

If any PC sustains damage in this chamber, the smell of his blood draws the ghouls from area C-5 in 1d5+3 rounds.

Area C-5 – Catacomb of the Cave Bear: *The worn stone steps descend into a circular cave walled by tall stone slabs inscribed with dark runes. In the center of the chamber is a collection of stones topped by a slab resembling a table or altar. Atop the slab is the skull of an enormous bear.*

This chamber was used to inter the remains of Warriors of the Cave Bear, fierce berserkers sworn to the defense of their clans. Now two tomb ghouls lurk here.

The runes on the wall slabs are carved in the likeness of massive cave bears and of warriors donning the skulls and pelts of the bears. The bears and the bear-warriors are shown triumphantly battling dozens of foes.

The altar-table in the center of the chamber is actually a stone chest. Removing the top slab (Strength check, DC 15) reveals a dozen human skulls placed atop the hide and the skull of an enormous cave bear. Leather thongs are sewn into the hide permitting it to be worn as a hide cloak, with the fanged skull serving as a crude helm.

Tomb ghouls: Two ghouls (once would-be tomb robbers, Stein and Kej) lurk in the very back of the chamber, clinging to the ceiling. The gray-skinned ghouls garbed in dull rags are only spotted if the entire chamber is searched or if PCs intentionally search the back of the chamber. Left undiscovered, the ghouls bide their time and attack the rear of the party or strike only when one or two PCs are left alone.

The tomb ghouls are animated by the spirit of the serpent mound and cannot leave the mound. They can be turned but will not flee the mound under any circumstances. If, in some bizarre turn of events, a ghoul is forcibly dragged from the serpent mound, it immediately collapses and rapidly decomposes.

The ghouls seem to shift about in their gray, lifeless skins. Indeed, the once-human form is merely a husk. Each ghoul is in process of molting into its true form. Damaging the ghoul speeds this process along, shearing away the ghoul's skin, arms, legs, and head, revealing a large humanoid-headed snake hidden within the ghoul's belly.

"Slaying" the ghoul frees the molting serpent. The snake-thing erupts from the corpse's belly, striking out with long fangs. The foul bite of a serpent inflicts necrosis; a victim must succeed on a DC 5 Fort save or take an additional 1 hp per hour

as the dying flesh rapidly rots. The necrosis continues until the original wound is magically healed or the target dies (rising as a tomb ghoul upon the following dusk).

Hide of the Cave Bear: When donned by a warrior or dwarf, the hide permits the wearer to fly into a berserker rage 1/day per level. In a rage, the wearer temporarily gains a +2 to attack and damage rolls, +2 hp per level, and a +2 bonus to Fort saves, but takes a -2 penalty to AC. The rage lasts for a number of rounds equal to 1d5 + the character's level, though the warrior may prematurely end the rage. At the end of the rage, the warrior loses all modifiers and becomes fatigued (temporarily reduced to half current hp, cannot run or charge) for a number of rounds equal to the length of the rage.

Tomb Ghoul (2): Init +1; Atk claw +1 melee (1d5); AC 8; HD 3d6; hp 10, 13; MV 25', climb 25'; Act 2d20; SP un-dead traits, darkvision 100'; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C.

Ghoul Serpent (1/ghoul): Init +3; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6 + necrosis); AC 14; HD 3d6; hp 10; MV 45'; Act 2d20; SP un-dead traits, darkvision 100'; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C.

Area C-6 – Catacomb of the Cave Lion: *This chamber has partially collapsed: tall stone slabs that once supported the ceiling are now canted inward by the weight of the earth above and fallen debris is piled in the center of the room. The floor has fallen away in the far corner, and it seems as if the entire chamber could collapse with the slightest disturbance.*

Judges should adjust the point of view accordingly if the PCs enter through the cleft, from area C.

This chamber houses the remains of the warrior cult of the Cave Lion, but the relics are buried under several hundred pounds of rock. If determined PCs exhume the rubble, they uncover a chest composed of four stone slabs, topped by a fifth.

Within the chest, a dozen human skulls rest atop a hammered bronze shield. The shield is embossed with the stylized image of a lion's head. The +2 *lion shield* grants the bearer +2 to Will saves, while imposing a -2 penalty to morale checks made by foes of 5 HD or less. If the bearer is struck by a critical hit, he can opt to sacrifice the shield in order to take no damage from the attack. Finally, the Hound of Hirof must succeed on a DC 15 Will check in order to attack the shield's bearer.

Area C-7 – Antechamber of the Savage King: *Tall slabs of stone support the high ceiling here. Three long steps descend to the floor of the antechamber. Two hammered bronze braziers rest before a towering stone door at the end of the chamber. The door is carved with hundreds of spiraling runes, spinning into infinity. Inscribed above the portal is the image of an enormous wolf being crushed to death by a giant snake.*

The floor is covered by what appears to be thousands of thin, translucent strips of vellum. To your horror, you realize the crackling dried strips are the discarded skins of an untold number of serpents!

Though perhaps disconcerting, the snakeskins covering the floor pose no threat to the PCs. Similarly, the portal poses no danger, save for the most bull-headed and violent of explorers.

Dwarves, stonemasons, and sages knowledgeable in the ways of ancient builders rightly suspect that the portal was set in

the ground and then weighted from above, effectively sealing the passage for all of eternity. The slab cannot be moved by mere mortal strength, but if it is somehow destroyed, the ceiling rains down several tons of stone and earth (Ref save, DC 20, or 5d20 damage).

A casual inspection of the chamber floor reveals a handful of twigs and short branches along the seam where the south wall meets the floor. All are ancient and crumble at a touch. PCs studying the southern wall discover small holes bored into the wall (anchors for a ladder) that were filled in by the original builders with clay mortar. A narrow 2-foot seam can be seen above the entrance to the chamber.

The rough stone wall is readily scaled (climbing, DC 5). There, PCs discover a narrow crawlspace hidden above the stone lintel above the entrance. Should the adventurers light oil or charcoal in the braziers (perhaps in hopes of moving the stone portal by some ancient ritual) make a secret Luck check (DC 15) for each PC in the chamber. On a successful throw, a PC notices that smoke from the fire doesn't build up in the chamber but escapes through the hidden crawlspace above the entrance to the chamber.

Area C-8 – Crawlspace: *The narrow crawlspace wends into darkness. The small passage is only 2 feet in height and width, with a rough stone floor and a ceiling built of branches and roots.*

The hidden passage provides scarcely enough room for PCs to crawl. Indeed, large humans will need to remove any bulky metal armor before proceeding down the passage. Backpacks and large sacks will need to be pushed ahead of PCs or dragged behind, all in all making the traverse of the crawlspace an onerous one.

Thus distracted, PCs are unlikely to notice a second passage *above* the crawlspace, crudely disguised behind the same loose weave of sticks and roots that make up the passage's ceiling. The passage—a chimney extending 6 feet up to area C-10—is easily detected if the PCs probe the woven mats above them. The third ghoul, Ilham, waits in the chimney above, dropping down on PCs if they discover the secret passage. Weapons longer than a shortsword are useless in the crawlspace, but the snarling ghoul, armed with dirt-caked fangs and claws, suffers no such penalties.

Otherwise, the ghoul waits for the PCs to pass, then parts the branches and silently crawls after the PCs to attack from behind.

Unlike the ghouls in area C-5, this ghoul has nearly completed its molting. The serpent's fanged maw bursts from the ghoul's belly at the start of combat. The serpent remains in the ghoul's rotting husk until the ghoul is slain, receiving a +3 bonus to AC thanks to its ghoulish "armor."

Tomb Ghoul: Init +1; Atk claw +1 melee (1d5); AC 8; HD 3d6; hp 13; MV 25'; climb 25'; Act 2d20; SP un-dead traits, darkvision 100'; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C.

Ghoul Serpent: Init +3; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6 + necrosis); AC 14; HD 3d6; hp 15; MV 45'; Act 2d20; SP un-dead traits, darkvision 100'; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C.



Area C-9 – False Tomb: *The narrow crawlspace opens into a high vaulted chamber, resembling the interior of a great hall. In the center of the chamber is a column, rising to the ceiling. The column is decorated with dozens of stylized carvings depicting the deaths of wolves. The column itself seems to be made of alternating sections of stone and wood. Hung from the column like trophies, some 20 feet above the floor, is a long wolf-spear and a bronze shield.*

This chamber was designed to foil any would-be tomb robbers. Ilham, Stein, and Kej fell to infighting and the tomb's curse long before they discovered the false tomb; thus, the chamber remains largely undisturbed.

The column is the trigger to a trap of horrific proportions. A casual inspection of the column reveals that the sections of wood and stone are arranged like an elaborate puzzle, each resting upon the next. The constant pressure from above has slowed but not halted, the wood's rot.

Disturbing the column or the spear and shield causes the column to collapse, stone and wood puzzle pieces splitting apart and crashing to the ground, triggering a cascading series of effects. Call for an initiative roll, applying the following effects on the corresponding descending initiative count until all the PCs are dead or have escaped the chamber.

Initiative Count: Trap Action

20: Stone and wood column pieces rain down from above; DC 10 Ref save or 1d6 damage.

15: A massive slab crashes down from above; DC 5 Ref save or 2d6 damage.

10: Rubble falls from above, striking all in the chamber for 1d4 damage. PCs must attempt a DC 10 Fort save or lose 1d7 from their initiative count.

5: A stone slab falls from the ceiling, sealing the chamber. (Characters with remaining actions can attempt to temporarily hoist the massive slab with a DC 20 Strength check.)

1: Several tons of stone and earth collapse into the chamber, filling the false tomb with rubble and killing anyone remaining.

The spear and sword, though not magical, are masterworks of antiquity. They can either be sold in a major city for 150 gp or laid with enchantments by a sufficiently powerful sorcerer.

Area C-10 – Tomb of the Ulfheonar: *Braced by your companions, you ascend through the chimney, and into the small vaulted chamber. A skeleton, garbed in crumbling hides and a rusted ring-mail hauberk sits atop a throne of stone. A long wolf-spear lays atop a hide on the skeleton's lap, glimmering faintly in the darkness, and a polished drinking horn hangs from the throne's stone arm.*

This humble chamber is the final resting place of the savage warlord known to legend as the Ulfheonar. Adventurers that have made it this far have nothing to fear – the tomb is neither trapped nor cursed, the spirit of the warlord having long since gone to its reward.

Ulfheonar's wolf-spear, better known simply by its master's name, is a magical weapon with a +1 bonus to hit and damage. The weapon also grants its bearer a +1 to initiative rolls. On a successful hit the wielder can use the cross bars mounted below the spearhead to pin a creature, reducing the target's AC by the wielder's Strength bonus. By sacrificing his actions in a given round, the wielder can maintain the pin on the target with a successful contested Strength check. With the spear, heroes can even pin magical creatures, preventing them from assuming gaseous form, teleporting, stepping to another plane, and so on. This last ability is crucial in defeating the Hound of Hirot (see the hound's description in the introduction, above).

The wolf-spear rests atop the pelt of an enormous silver wolf. Worthy of a king, the pelt has somehow resisted rot despite the passage of centuries and will fetch up to 250 gp if sold in a large city.

Anyone drinking from the *Horn of Kings* immediately apprehends its powers. The horn glows faintly in the presence of poisoned meat or drink. Thrice per week, drinking from the horn grants +4 to a Fort save against poisons; thrice per month, drinking from the horn heals the drinker 1d12 hp/level; once, and only once, drinking from the horn grants the imbiber a DC 10 Fort save to return from death. When this final power is used, the horn shatters, losing all its powers forever.

INTERLUDE: EXITING THE SERPENT MOUND



he PCs' interest in the legend of the Ulfheonar hasn't been lost on the Jarl and his spies. The Jarl's finest tracker, Iraco the Hunt Master, and five of his huntsmen have followed the PCs from Hirot.

If the PCs left hirelings with their mounts outside the mouth of the tomb, Iraco has already slaughtered the rearguard before the PCs emerge. (At the judge's discretion, beloved henchmen are merely bound and unconscious in a nearby clearing, though PCs won't discover this until after the encounter.)

Iraco and his men keep watch over the mouth of the tomb day and night (but are ignorant of the entrance on eastern side of the serpent mound). Iraco and his men ambush the PCs as they emerge from the darkened tomb, launching a flight of arrows before closing to melee range. Two of the huntsmen hang back, firing their bows. If Iraco falls, the pair leaps onto their

horses and flees back to Hirot to warn the Jarl of the Hunt Master's failure.

If captured, Iraco and his men readily betray the Jarl in return for promises of freedom.

Iraco, the Hunt Master: Init +4; Atk longsword +4 melee (1d8+2) or shortbow +5 missile fire (1d6); AC 16; HD 2d8; hp 15; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; AL C.

Huntsmen (5): Init +2; Atk shortsword +2 melee (1d6+1) or shortbow +3 missile fire (1d6); AC 15; HD 1d8; hp 5; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

Area D – The Sunken Fens: *The high marshy moors give way to a strange, sunken land. Tangles of brown briars and withered oaks take the place of the marsh grasses and tall pines. Foul black mud sucks at your boots with every step. The formerly chill air is warmer here, like the breath of a great beast exhaling rot upon the land.*

The spirit of the hound hangs heavy on the fens. The only noise is the burble of sulfurous hot springs and the clatter of dead branches in the baleful wind.

The fens are dangerous to travelers. There are no established paths or game trails, and a heavy mist hangs over the land, day and night, making route-finding difficult at best.

Few creatures make their home in the fens, but all present a threat to the PCs. For every hour spent traveling the fens, the characters risk a random encounter. Roll 1d5; on a 4 or better the PCs suffer an encounter.

If an encounter is indicated, choose or roll 1d7 on the table below. Judges should use the random encounters to reinforce the alien nature of the fens, a constant reminder that the PCs have no place here. If encounters threaten to bog down the tempo of the game, judges should ignore the rolls and get to the meat of the adventure.

- 1 **Lost!** The PCs realize to their horror that they have lost all sense of direction in the gray mists. Fortunately for the PCs, they need only seek out the heart of the sunken land: the oily slicks of water run downhill to the heart of the swamp, the lair of the Hound. Returning, though, at the judge's discretion can prove far more difficult.
- 2 **Choking Miasma.** The oozing ground belches forth a cloud of stinking gas that washes over the PCs. All characters caught within the cloud must attempt a DC 5 Fort save or sink to their knees, asphyxiating within the cloud. PCs take 1d6 points of Stamina damage per round and fall unconscious when Stamina reaches 0; unconscious characters take 1d3 damage per round. All lost Stamina is restored immediately when the victim is removed from the cloud. The cloud passes in 1d5 rounds.
- 3 **Sinkhole.** The ground opens up beneath the party! Each character must attempt a DC 5 Ref save or slip into the slimy darkness some 15 feet below. Characters have only 1d5+2 rounds to rescue those caught by the sinkhole before the muddy earth closes in around the victims, burying them forever.
- 4 **Tindalos Vines.** 1d3 semi-sentient vines lash out at random PCs, attempting to haul their victims beneath the murky swamp waters. A PC can escape a vine's grip with

a DC 15 Strength check or by severing the vine (by inflicting 6 or more points of damage with a single strike).

Tindalos Vine: Init +4; Atk slam +3 melee (1d4 + constrict); AC 10; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 5'; Act 1d20; SP constriction for 1d3 and drag 5'; SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will +4; AL N.

5 **Mud Springs.** Hissing springs erupt, splattering the PCs with scalding mud. Affected PCs must attempt a DC 10 Ref save or take 1d3 damage.

6 **Skull Totems.** The PCs encounter a strange collection of humanoid skulls, pierced with sharpened wooden spikes. The spikes are driven into the swampy ground in strange formations reminiscent of the runes employed to bind demons.

7 **Swamp Jackals.** A pack of swamp jackals stalks the PC at a distance, their dark eyes watching through the mists. Motley, filthy creatures, the jackals possess a cruelty towards their prey that hints at a malefic intelligence. Cowardly, the jackals stalk the PCs for days, only attacking once their prey shows signs of weakness.

Swamp Jackals (3d7): Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d8; hp 4; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +1; AL C.

Area D-1 – Lair of the Hound: *At last you have reached the heart of the foul fens. Any hint of the sun is lost in the boundless gray mists, and a heavy oppression hangs in the air with the stench of burbling sulfur springs. All the swamp seems to drain to this point, an ominous sinkhole obscured by billowing clouds of black miasma.*

Surely this foul place is the lair of the beast terrorizing Hirot!

The mouth of the sinkhole is some 20 feet across, but like a bottleneck, opens into a larger cavern below. The swamp water trickles in streams over the lip of the sinkhole, falling 75 feet into the black pool below.

Rappelling into the sinkhole is easily accomplished assuming the PCs have sufficient rope. Those descending from the lip of the sinkhole are showered with foul swamp water during the entire descent. Climbing the inverted face of the sinkhole is far more challenging, even for trained climbers (DC 15). The billowing black clouds obscure all forms of sight into the pit below; the clouds leave a slick, oily residue on everything they touch.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs descend into the pit:

You spy the floor of the cave through the thick, noxious clouds. The slick, rocky floor slopes towards an inky black pool in the center of the cavern. The shore surrounding the pool is littered with shattered bones, bits of rusted metal, and broken weapons. Cascading swamp water courses down on you from above, while the hot, stinking fumes rise from below.

Though constantly fed by the swamp waters, the pool in the center of the cavern is something not of this world. The burbling, boiling liquid reflects no light and is visible only when it obscures the line of sight to something else. The liquid is extremely viscous and searing to touch; those immersed in the pool must succeed on a DC 10 Fort save or take 1d3 points of damage per round of contact.

Every night at dusk, the boiling ceases, and the hound emerges from the pool, dripping absolute blackness. When reduced to 0 hp or less, the hound transforms into mist and returns to this pool, emerging—fully healed—the following night.

Even in its lair, the hound must be restrained in order for a killing blow to be successful. If restrained, the hound tries to drag its captor bodily into the black pool. In lieu of an action, the hound may attempt a contested Strength check against the restraining PC (consider the hound's Strength bonus to be +4). The blood-soaked weapon that deals the killing blow becomes permanently enchanted as a +1 / +2 *vs. Chaos* weapon. (An already magical weapon does not receive further enchantments.)

The Hound of Hirot: Init +2; Atk bite +3 melee (1d8) or claw +3 melee (1d4); AC 15; hp 4d12; hp 20; MV 30' or fly 30'; Act 3d20; SP demon traits, gaseous form, immune to *charm* effects; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; AL C.

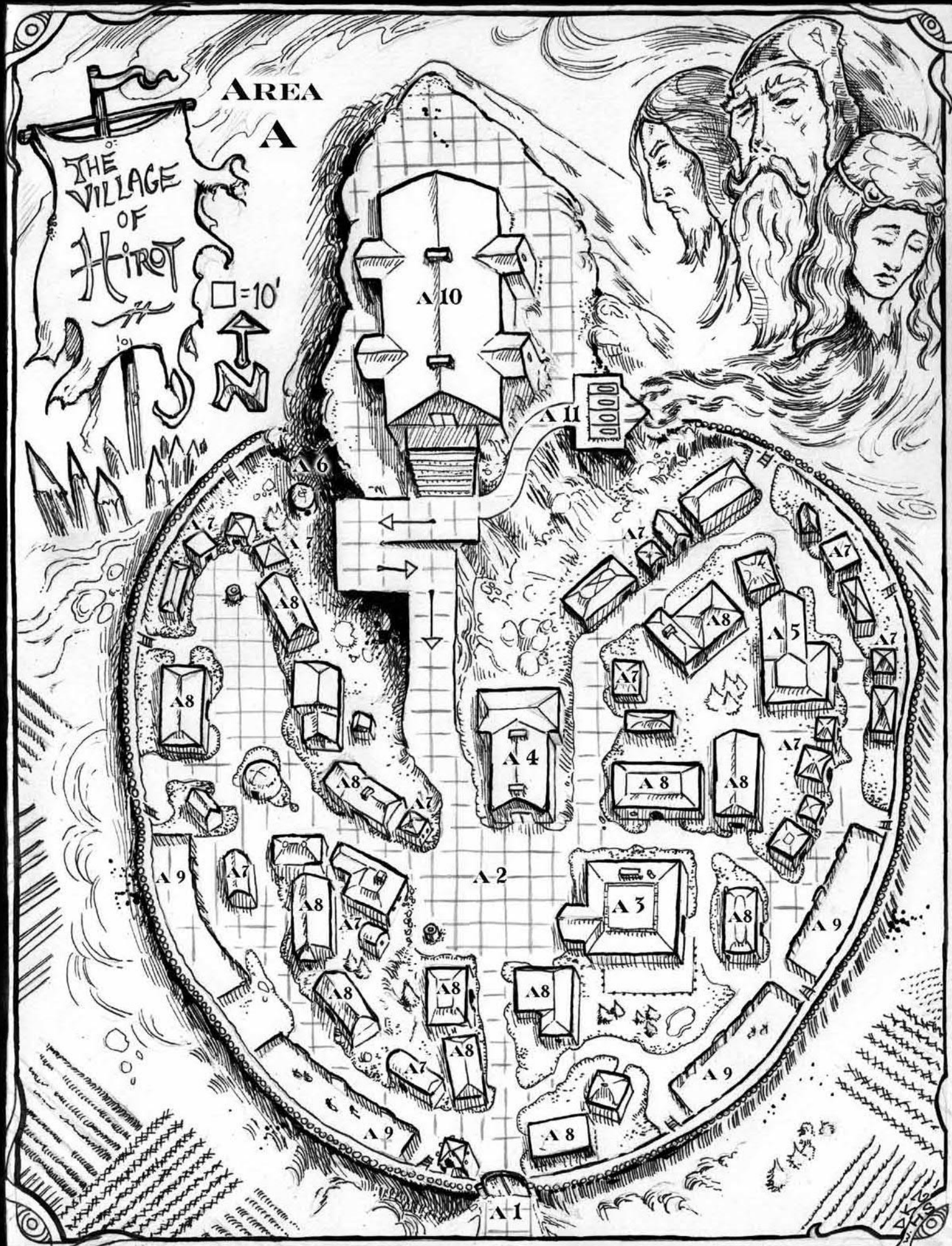
Treasure: For centuries, savage tribes sought to appease the hound by casting offerings into the sinkhole. The remnants of their sacrifices still litter the shore, and while broken, rusted weapons are always within reach of desperate PCs. An exhaustive inspection of the shore reveals:

- 1d100 bits of gold and silver jewelry (worth 1-5 gp each).
- A small bronze buckler; if polished it regains its status as a +1 *shield*, and its small size permits the wielder to dual-wield.
- A serpentine ceremonial blade inlaid with silver (worth 15 gp, dmg 1d5).
- A great helm sculpted in the shape of a dragon; once the helm of a savage warlord, the helm imposes a -1 penalty on the morale check of foes of 3 HD or less.
- A great bronze torque decorated with gold wire (worth 35 gp).

The Black Pool: Priests of all faiths are repulsed by the pool's weird, otherworldly nature. Clerics meditating on the pool are mentally assaulted by a profound crisis of faith, and must attempt a DC 10 Will save or be stripped of all clerical abilities for 1d20 days, or until they can make offerings of 100 gp or more to their deities.

Elves and wizards contemplating the pool recognize it as a potential conduit of great power. After contemplating the pool for 1 hour, an arcane caster is permitted a DC 20 Will save. On a successful check, the caster harnesses a mere fraction of the pool's power for himself, as noted below, but on a failed save the caster goes temporarily insane for 1d5 rounds, seeking to drown himself the searing black pool.

On a successful check, a glistening *black orb* emerges from within the pool. At the caster's command, the orb shrinks to the size of a marble or grows as large as a crystal ball. Only one *black orb* can exist at any given time. Employing the *black orb* during spellcasting grants the caster +1 to all spell checks. However, the next time the caster rolls a natural 1 on any spell check, in addition to normal effects the caster must also attempt a Will save at DC 10 + spell level. On a failed check, the caster dissolves into an oily black mist, only to emerge from the black pool on the following eve, to become the next Hound of Hirot.



WILDERNESS MAP



□ = 100
YARDS

AREA C
TOMB
OF THE
ULFHEONAR

AREA D
SUNKEN
FENS

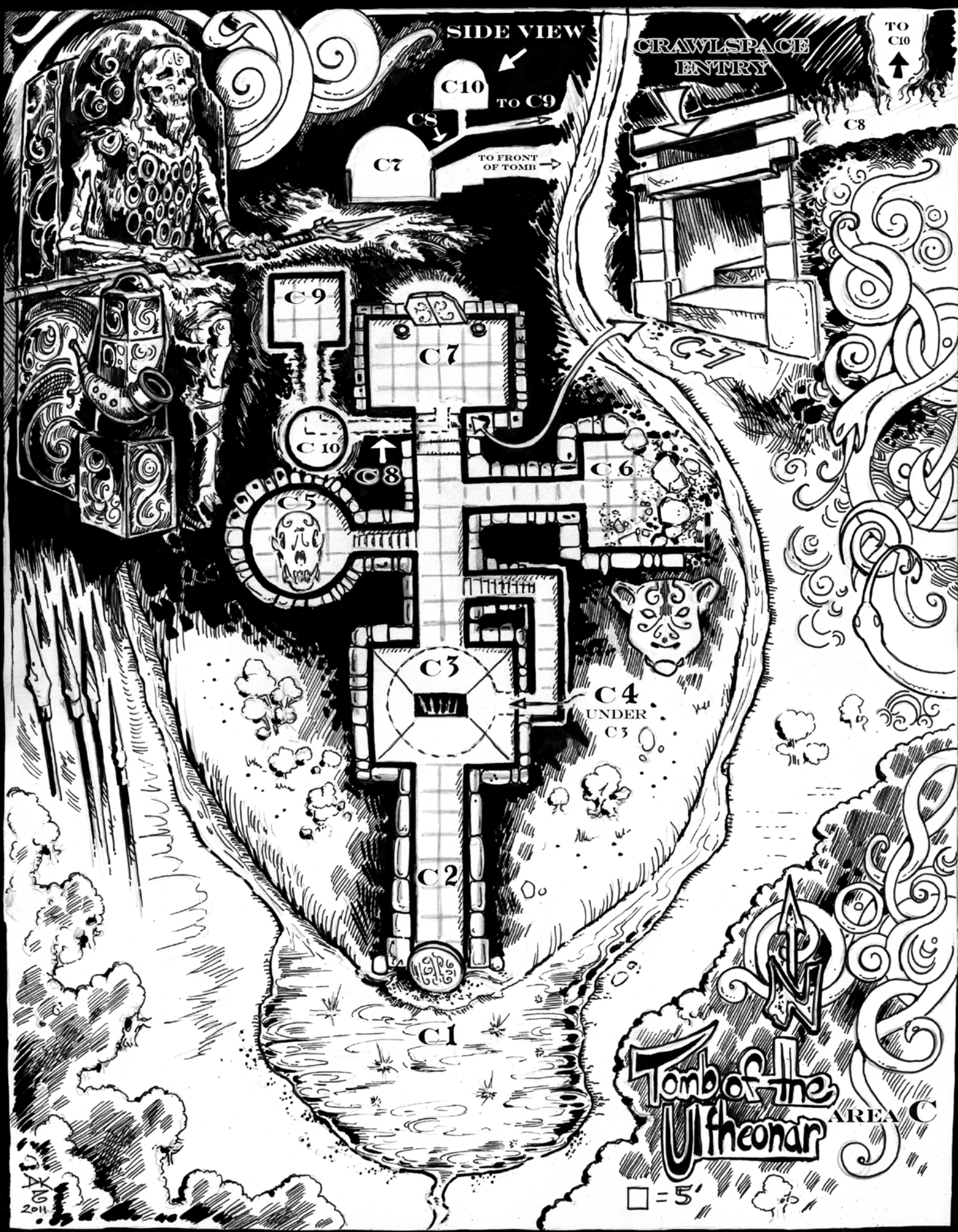
D-1



AREA A
HIROT

STANDING
STONES
AREA B

THE KING'S WAY



SIDE VIEW

CRAWLSPACE
ENTRY

TO
C10
↑

C10

TO C9

C8

C7

TO FRONT
OF TOMB →

C9

C7

C10

C8

C5

C6

C3

C4
UNDER
C3

C2

C1

Tomb of the
Ultheonar

AREA C

□ = 5'

AD
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High above the windswept moors and darksome woods, the village of Hirot is under siege. Each night, as the sun sinks beneath the western mountains and the candles burn low, a devil-beast stalks the village streets, unleashing its savage fury on the living. From warlord to pauper, crone to child, no one is safe.

Defeating the immortal hound will require more than mere blades or even spells. To slay the beast, the characters must delve into the mysteries of the land and its Savage Kings. Only then, armed with relics forged from a bloody past, can the most cunning and courageous of adventurers challenge the hound of Hirot!



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