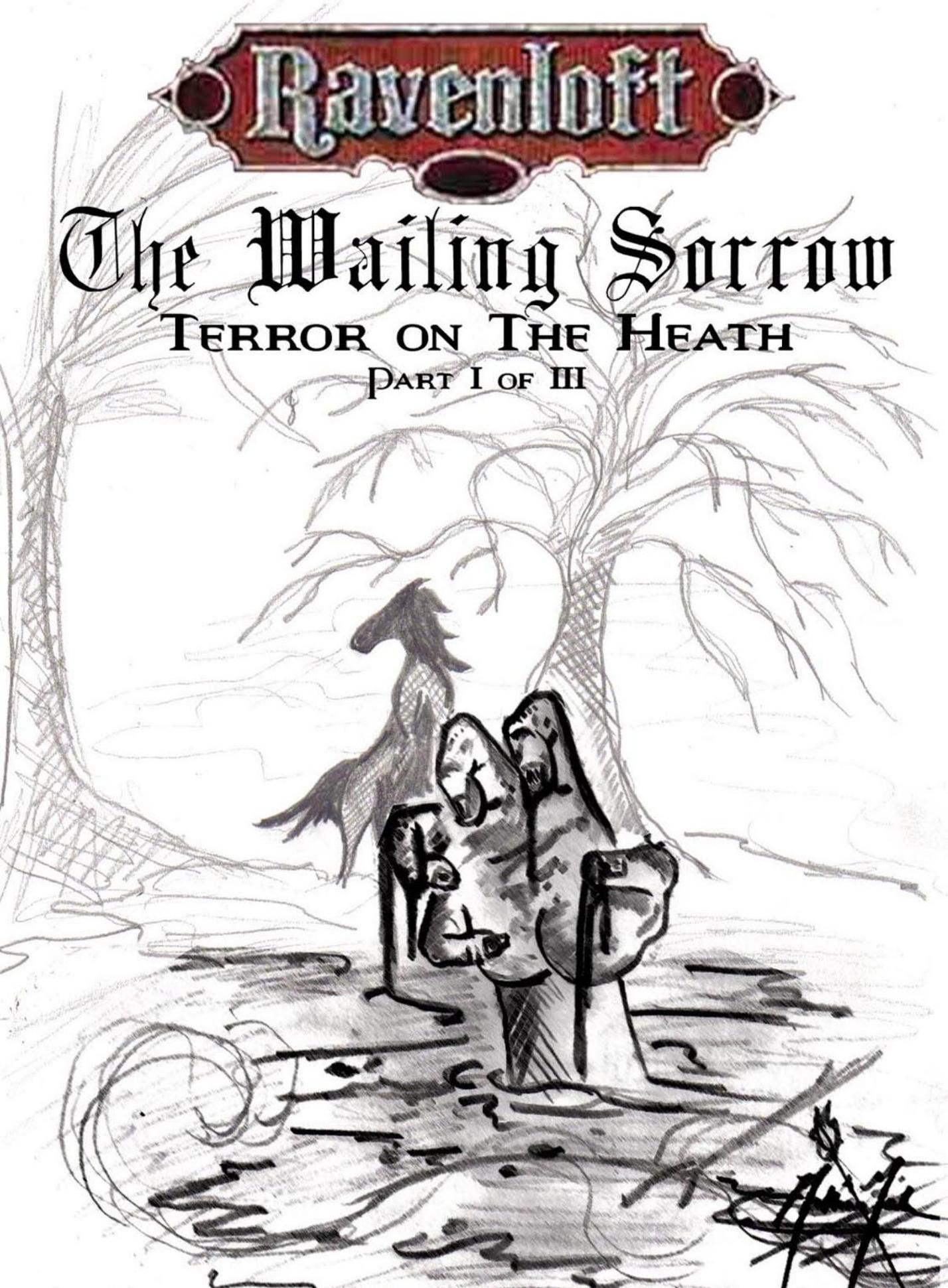


# Ravenloft

## The Wailing Sorrow

TERROR ON THE HEATH

PART I OF III



A Ravenloft Campaign Setting Supplement



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DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

# The Wailing Sorrow

## **Terror on the Heath**

**Part I of III**

*By*  
Nathan Reese Maher

# The Wailing Sorrow

## Terror on the Heath

Part I of III

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Many thanks to the Fraternity of Shadows for their generous feedback, hosting, and keeping the Ravenloft ® campaign setting alive

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# Introduction

This adventure is designed for four to six characters of least 3<sup>rd</sup>-level in experience. However, this adventure may be adjusted by the Dungeon Master in order to compensate for a higher-level party.

## Mechanics

Throughout this adventure you will notice gray-filled boxes labeled as a “Dread Possibility”, “Specifics”, or as a “Description”. Each category of box adds additional features to the adventure. A “Dread Possibility”, originating from White Wolf Publishing, Inc. *Gazetteers*, as a mini-quest or side-quest possibilities for players who are uncomfortable with a linear storyline. “Specifics” are boxes containing additional information pertaining to the subject in question. Most of these boxes will offer insights on game mechanics and statistics. “Description” boxes (usually in italics) on the other hand, give the DM a descriptor to read to the players of a particular scene, happening, even crucial prologue or cut scene.

## Gaming Structure

In order to fully experience the gothic thematic and the theatricality of this adventure I highly suggest reading the section entitled “Thirteen Tips for Tension” on pages 26-33 of the *Ravenloft Dungeon Master’s Guide* produced by Sword’s and Sorcery™. As lightly touched upon above, this adventure makes use of Cut Scenes in order to add an element of suspense.

Cut Scenes for the most part are introduced in the format of dreams, where as others may suggest psychic impression or simply an added necessity to enhance the storyline.

## How to Use this Book

*The Wailing Sorrow – Terror on the Heath* adventure module requires the use of the core Dungeons and Dragons 3.5 edition rule books along with the *Ravenloft Player’s Handbook* and *Denizens of Darkness*. The *Ravenloft Dungeon Master Guide* and the *Ravenloft Gazetteer III* are both highly suggested for reference material and background information, but not necessary.

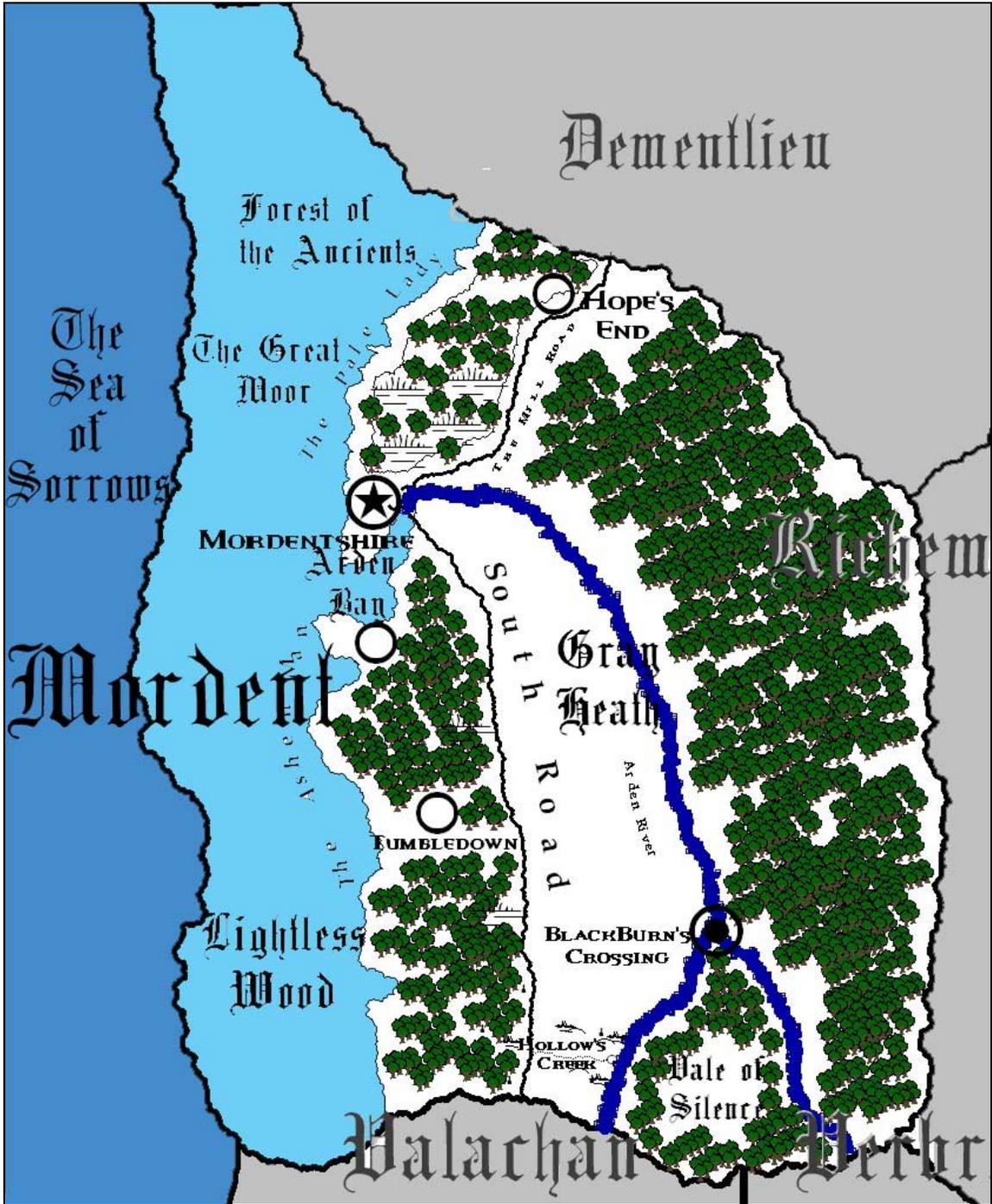
It is highly suggested that you skim through this adventure before playing in order to better game play. You should also familiarize yourself with those depicted in the “Appendix” in order to accurately depict the essential NPCs of the story.

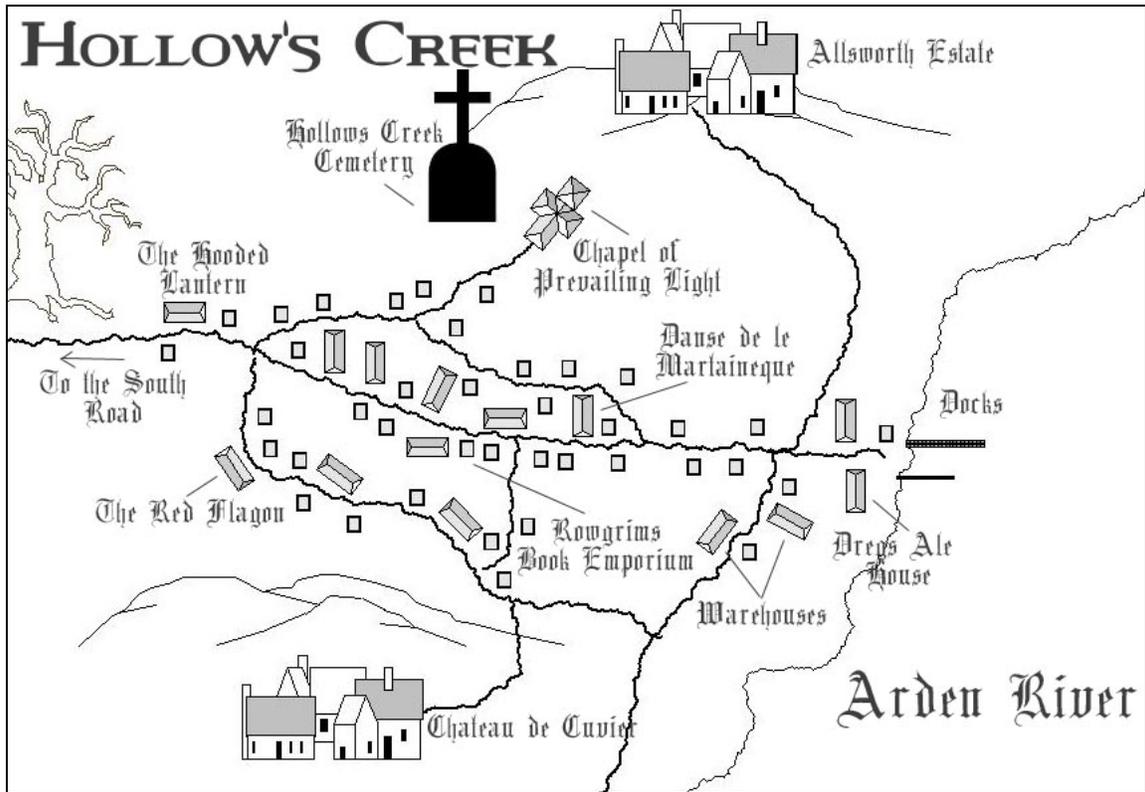
## Plot Synopsis

This adventure reveals to the players how a single crime can permanently haunt a village for an eternity. And how one man’s deed, and his desire to be freed of its permeating guilt, lay’s the foundation for a series of brutal murders stretching to encompass not just those involved with the initial crime, but all those he touches.

The party is reeled into the story by being subjugated to witness the scene of a ghastly crime at a neighboring ranch, where horses have been butchered and

their eyes removed; the family missing. The only clue to their disappearance is a human bone that is assumed to have been dropped during the initial struggle. Later, learning of tales of the restless dead that wander the South Road, will bring the party to uncover a connection between the earlier abduction and the previous evidence. The so-called “restless dead” are eventually revealed to be nothing more than a clever band of bandits using the local superstitions as a cover-up for their sinister deeds. Only after discovering the true nature of the bandits, and locating their hidden camp deep within one of Mordent’s remote cemeteries, will the party learn of an even greater plot involving a vistani’s curse and a caliban’s want for revenge.





## Hollow's Creek

*H*ollow's Creek was founded in 605 BC by the reputable Knox-Creed family. In an attempt to profit off of trade coming in from the Arden River and from the neighboring domains of Valachan and Richemulot, the Knox-Creeds invited only a few allied families to participate in the affair. The villiage originally was named after Arthur Creedence, a highly adored relative and war-veteran prior to the Creedence and Knox family union. The name changed a generation later by Isaac Knox-Creed who held a particular fondness for the local ghost tale of Old Man Hollow that originates from Old Hollow's Hill a mile east of the village. There has been multiple attempts at

restoring the village's name to "Creedence" by members of the Knox-Creed family, but all efforts have ended in failed campaigns and unheard petitions.

### Landscape

On the South Road there is a worn sign that points in a westward direction toward a muddy wagon trail. Taking the path for a mile, the weary traveler will meet by an ominous black home surrounded by a wooden fence, overlooking the road from atop a steep hill – a place the locals call Old Hollow's Hill. A small cobblestone trail

branches off from the current and winds its way up toward the dark structure, a “No Trespassing” sign “by order of the lord-mayor of Hollow’s Creek” greets all those curious to catch a closer look. Within eye-shot is a rickety wooden bridge that stretches across a twelve foot recess dug by a small creek that runs northward through a neighboring bog. The creek is a valuable source of water for the locals, especially for irrigation purposes. The creek is fresh water, despite its fen surroundings, and is drinkable until it reaches the boundaries of the northern moor.

Past the bridge, and not but a few stone throws away is the beginnings of a three foot wall that marks the front boundaries of the Longshadow estate – belonging to the Harnasse family. Their mansion can easily be observed from the road-side, and the family’s name can be found embroidered on a bronze plaque set next to the driveway. The Harnasse mansion is constructed of tiled roof, three levels and an iron balcony and bottom terrace. Like most other buildings of Mordent, the mansion is made of wood. Although white-washed frequently, the color starts to look soiled quickly due to the unhealthy rains and dirt carrying winds.

Continuing farther on the pothole laden road will bring the traveler to the first few buildings of Hollow’s Creek and for those in need of rest, an Inn is but a short distance further. The village itself is plagued by all sort of mal-weather: vicious drops in temperature, frequent rains, nightly fog and frigid winds that blow in from the north, sweeping up the stench of the bogs and depositing it into tight pockets throughout the streets. The inhabitants have long since become used to the smell, but strangers to Hollow’s Creek

have the tendencies to complain of is malodor.

The ground is more often damp, rarely dry, and best described as soggy when under-foot. The occasional grass grows in isolated patches and can sometimes reach a daggers length. Due to the water table being so high, most are buried in above ground tombs (those that can afford it), or in the village owned mausoleums.

Because the village is sandwiched between a bog to the north and south, along with the Arden River to the west, the village has the tendencies to pick up an assortment of diseases carried by plagued vermin attempting to escape the confines of the moors.

There is one main road that can be taken directly off the South Road and end at the Arden River. From this road are small hovels and occasional two-story dwellings that are huddled together around the village temple and inn. The village manages a dock that sends and receives shipments from the neighboring domains and also whatever business that floats upstream from Blackburn’s Crossing. The main road drops off into a small ravine that is accessible by a set of surprisingly well-maintained wooden stairs before reaching a cluster of warehouses near the shoreline. Off the main road are poorly traveled horse paths that lead to a few of the noble family estates.

## **Flora**

The edge of Hollow’s Creek and the Ardent River caters to a long line of willows, oftentimes creating thick groves. The locals seem nearly overprotective of the cutting down of these trees, as the willows roots keep the banks from disintegrating into the Arden

River, and are thought highly of during the flooding seasons.

One particular item of note is over-populated Wraithroot that grows in and around the village without hindrance. This along with an assortment of morning glories, bog-beans, star plants and other such flowers decorate the sills of local homes. Such flowers grow in an amazing abundance and are considered appropriate for wearing in ones hair during seasonal festivals.

## Fauna

A few creatures are seen on a relative consistent basis, such as foxes, rabbits, sparrows, birds of prey (such as ravens and crows), and then there is the occasional deer (be it solitary or in a small family) that has strayed from the forests of northern Mordent. At night wolves can be heard baying at the moon, and it isn't uncommon to see one of these grey pelted predators at the edge of a farmstead searching for any stray livestock. There are fairly little reported wolf attacks by the locals and for the most part stray clear of human (or demi-human) contact.

There are numerous ghost tales of the surrounding area, but two in particular seem to be hearth-side favorites. The first and foremost is the tale of Old Man Hollow that lives on Hollow's Hill. It is said that his spectre still haunts the old carpenter's cottage, and he sits in his demonic shop carving small wooden toys to leave at people's thresholds during the night. It is said that those who find a figurine at their door are marked to die by some horrible means. The second tale involves the young spirit of Old Man Hollow's child Timothy who haunts the "Weeping Child Bridge", which lies in the hill's

shadow. It is said that when the moon is in clear view, that one can hear the child crying. Strangers are told that should they hear the child's sobbing that they'd be best to shut their eyes, for those that stop to see his ghost are found face down in the creek the next morning.

### Dread Possibility – The Weeping Child

The bridge receives its name in part due to a Spirit Waif of Oliver Samson's six year old boy named Timothy. The young child can be heard late at night. Timothy does not appear to just anyone (as the locals believe) but only to those who he believes are good at heart. When the spectre appears he attempts to use his charm ability or pantomime to get his audience to follow him.

The \*Spirit Waif is the drowned victim of gang of \*Baobhan Sith or Black Sprites. These nefarious creatures murdered the child and then afterwards dragged the remains into a remote section of the northern swamp and have since been using them as a home, which is located beneath a gnarled old tree. The Spirit Waif has been leading people, unaware of the risk, to the black sprites lair. Victims found floating in the creek are intentionally placed there by the sprites in order to frightening the locals from their habitation. The Baobhan Sith are unaware of Timothy's Spirit Waif but are beginning to suspect that something has been leading adventurers and other misfortunates to their lair.

\* The Spirit Waif and Baobhan Sith statistics can be found in *Denizens of Darkness*. A segment dedicated to the Weeping Child Bridge can be found in the Appendix.

## Populous

There is a reporting of the general populous and their typical appearance detailed in the *Ravenloft Gazetteer III*, and for the most part

Hollow's Creek serves to be no different than the rest of the domain. Though one will note that the locals are more suspicious of strangers here than in the northern half of the domain. It is as if the natives toil beneath some unseen weight. One cannot help but feel that the locals are afraid of something lurking in the shadows, and that strangers could be in league with this invisible horror.

#### **A Suspicious Nature**

The locals are suspicious for a reason. It was not but nearly five years prior that a grotesque caliban came to Hollow's Creek and preyed upon the young Jacqueline Cuvier. When attempts were made to protect her, the caliban flew into a maniacal rage and murdered twenty-three people including the Harnasse's younger darling Philip. Though the beast was hunted down and slain, the murders are still fresh in the villager's minds.

All calibans are treated as if having an Outcast Rating 2 higher than usual; 4 if the caliban is one of Mordent's wailing children.

The law enforcement is quick to question any stranger that happens to make their way into Hollow's Creek in order to discern their true purpose. Regardless of their weariness of others, the people of Hollow's Creek still retain their sensibilities when dealing with foreigners and are generally pleasant in comparison to other villages of neighboring domains.

Hollow's Creek is governed over by the decaying Knox-Creed family, which consists of only the Lord-Mayor Thaddeus Knox-Creed, who lives in his family estate at Allworth. Hollow's Creek has attracted a few minor families over the past 150 years, some attempting to retire to a country life, while others with hope of extending their families

influence to the southern portion of Mordent. Families include the Cuvier family residing at Le Chateau de Cuvier, Harnasse residing at Longshadow and of course the most prestigious of the two the Coleridge family at Havenridge (each family is detailed in the "Appendix").

#### **Law Enforcement**

The watchmen of Hollow's Creek are much like those of Mordentshire, as they are quick to note anything out of the ordinary and prone to investigating anything suspicious. Supernatural activity will cause them to seek additional help immediately. Here especially the watchmen are wary of strangers and foreigners to the point of xenophobia; often times arresting them for minor charges with hopes of discerning their true intentions. Even in a position of authority the watchmen are always polite and never abusive, and neither are they ignorant. Those with a polite demeanor and a strong command of Mordentish will find the watchmen valuable allies, while those with neither may find themselves locked in a cell.

**Hollow's Creek Watchmen:** Human War 1; CR ½; Size M humanoid (human); HD 1d8+2; hp 6; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 11 (touch 11, flatfooted 10); Atk +4 melee (1d6+2, crit 18-20 /x2 rapier); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

*Skills and Feats:* Intimidate +1, Listen +4, Ride (horse) +2, Sense Motive +2, Spot +4; Alertness, Weapon Focus (rapier)

*Possessions:* Lantern, rapier, horn for sounding alarm.

#### **Sites of Interest**

Being so close to the border of Valachan and Richemulot one may find all assortments of equipment and supplies waiting for them here in several of Hollow's Creeks shops.

For those seeking rest there is the *Hooded Lantern*, a small Inn with always a few vacancies at a decent rate of 2 silver pieces a night, including a decent breakfast of milk, cheese and eggs. The owner Fredrick Fallyn (male human Exp 3) ensures that his guests are comfortable and the food always hot. The meals are decent, but nothing in comparison to the gourmet dining in Dementlieu. There are two taverns of note: one being the *Red Flagon* which the locals spend most their hours unwinding before the nights out which is located just shy of the western edge of town, and then there is *Dreg's Ale House*, a place that has recently declined in reputation due to unsavory business that happens to float in from the Ardent River, located a few paces from the docks.

A dwarf by the name of Axle Rowgrim (male dwarf Ill 3/Exp 3) has established a respectable library and printing press with the aid of his niece Celeste (female dwarf Ill 1/Exp 1) called *Rowgrim's Book Emporium*. It is said that he is a fine collector of ancient tomes along with those being magical in origins. Though most would be somewhat suspicious, Axle has managed to dissuade local speculations with good deeds, a friendly smile, and his rumored friendship with none other than the Wethermay-Foxgrove children of the belated Rudolf Van Richten.

An oddity that has recently developed is the grand opening of the first ballet school in Hollow's Creek. Madam Sophia le'Martaineque (female human Exp 6), a retired dancer from the *Grand Opera Nationale* out of Port-a-Lucine in Dementlieu has converted an old schoolhouse (created from some other Dementlieu hopeful) into the *Danse de le'Martaineque*. Madam

le'Martaineque strives to bring some culture to the "backward, and misfortunate people" of Mordent.

The church of Ezra claims dominion over a small whitewashed temple called *The Chapel of Prevailing Light*. Presiding over the temple is the Harnasse family's 2<sup>nd</sup> eldest son Father Abril (male human Ari 2/Clr3) who is

#### **Side Quest – Dance de le'Martineque**

So far Sophia is having little success in winning over the people of Hollow's Creek. With the long tradition of home tutorage and the public opinion of ballet being a "frivolous" endeavor, Madam le'Martineque has all but adopted a few of the local impoverished children lured by the promise of food. She has only been able to secure two children with terrible frames and unmanageable dexterity. She fears that without additional "talented" students she will soon have to close the school.

Sophia is desperate. Once the party receives local repute or takes an interest in the school (such as from any PC bards) she will attempt to humble herself (a big task for a famous dancer) and ask the party for assistance. She plans to put on a performance, using the children as a means to sway public opinion, but feels they are not quite ready and overall "disastrous". Donations will help her stay open longer, but what she requires is for the party to use their newly found prestige and sway the locals toward her favor. How this is accomplished is a task best left to the creativity of the players. One solution may come from the introduction of Johnathan Coleridge's niece Annabell Laymonds who has been desirous to learn to dance since witnessing a performance at the *Grand Opera Nationale* last season.

a compassionate and wise youth regardless of his lack in years of experience. Abril replaced his predecessor Father Edgerton just a couple years ago who died of natural

causes. His death caused quite a stir and many believed the young Abril Harnasse (since it was not but a few years prior that his younger brother was murdered) was not up to the task. Abril Harnasse has persevered despite local opinion and has been accepted as a worthy replacement.

**Hollow's Creek (village):** Conventional; AL NG; 430 gp limit; Assets 49,760 gp; Population 432; Mixed (human 94%, half-elf 2%, dwarf 1%, elf 1%, other 2%).

*Authority Figures:* Lord-Major Thaddeus Knox-Creed, male human Ari7, Sheriff Laton Cuvier, male human Ftr4/Ari2

*Important Characters:* Johnathan Coleridge, male human Ftr1/Ari5, Mlle. Sophia le'Martineque, female human Exp6, Axle Rowgrim male dwarf Ill3/Exp3, Abril Harnasse, male human Clr3/Ari2, Cecil Harnesse, male human Ari4, Hanna Gibings, female human Adp3/Clr1, Jacqueline Cuvier, female human Ari1

Also, in a small cottage no more than a mile outside of town on the edge of the encroaching bog to the northeast, lies the aged mid-wife Hanna Gibings (female human Adp 3/Clr 1) who offers her knowledge in herbs, and magical potions to those who are in most need. Few know of her potions, and even fewer know of her devotions to Hala. Either way, it does not stop the occasional visitor from asking her for a special boon, or perhaps in purchasing a charm or two.

## Economics

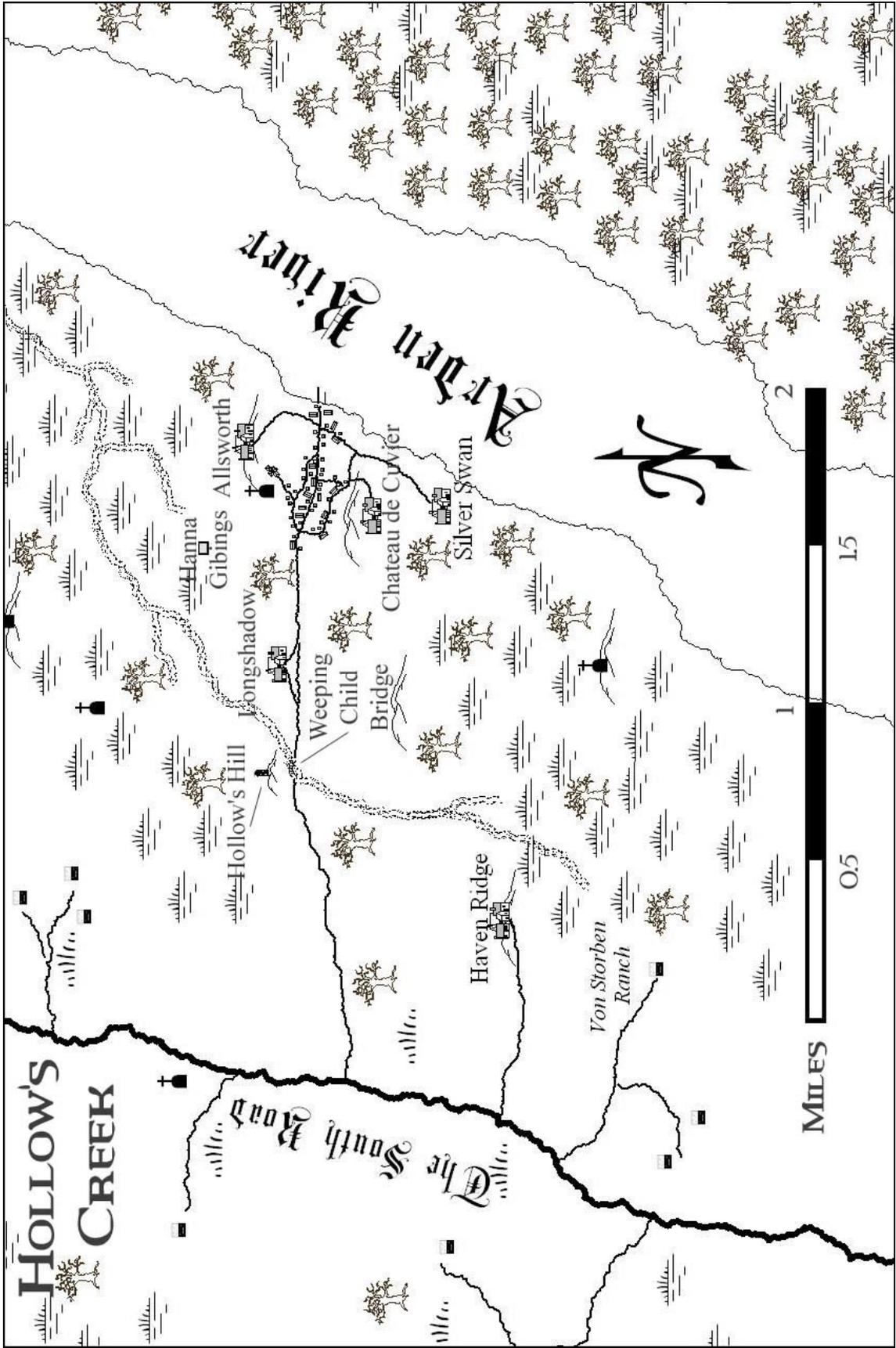
The local populous consist of hardened merchants, tillers, ranchers and shepherds. Main exports include barley, wheat, animals, pottery, hand-crafted furniture, quilts, and wool; while main imports are Richemulot wines, fruits, silver, flintlocks from Blackburn's Crossing, blackpowder, gems and the occasionally smuggled poison from Borca.

### Dread Possibility – Old Man Hollow

The house on Hollow's Hill is a rank 2 Sinkhole of Evil with the taint of hatred and despair. Characters with the Ethereal Empathy feat or those who are enticed by the locals tales of superstitions may find themselves wrapped in a story that began nearly 150 years ago during the initial founding of the village.

The story of Old Man Hollow isn't as the locals tell it. It has been altered and so over-embellished over the years, that the little known facts have long since been forgotten.

A segment on Oliver Samson and the cottage atop Old Hollow's Hill is detailed in the "Appendix".



## Abduction on the Heath

*The* adventure will begin with the player characters dreaming. Each character will receive the same dream, and upon waking will remember it vividly as if it were a prophetic omen, or perhaps a vision of events that have occurred or will occur. Though ambiguous as to when the dream has taken place, it foretells of future danger that the adventurers cannot ignore. Read the following to the players:

*You dream – Your vision takes you through a thick bank of fog that rolls across a deadly moor at night, with nothing more than the pale moon to light your way. You can smell the putrid stench of decay shambling through your nostrils, churning your stomach to some nauseating dirge. In the distance you hear the baying of hounds carried upon a frigid wind that tugs at your flesh. As the ravens caw above you from the nightmarish canopy of the occasional cypress, you note the nearly hidden swamp pits that gurgle from beneath the rolling wisps of gloom and lichen covered ground. Often times you see the pallid reflection of some forgotten traveler long since swallowed by the bog's murky waters, its lutescent orbs staring up at you hauntingly as you pass unmolested through the heath. Ahead two glowing will'o'wisps dance methodically above a bubbling pool, yet flee as you*

*draw near, vanishing in the mist. A ghostly moan sweeps across the dark landscape, drawing your attention to the unearthly pool in which was once haunted by the spectral lanterns.*

*A feeling of immutable dread overcomes your every sensation, while your body gives into horripilation, and a collection of something wells securely within your throat. A muck covered hand rises from the rippling pool; the decaying remains of the sinkholes earlier victims cling to its ghoulish flesh. The stench of decay and the taint of evil seep into your pores and you feel yourself choking.*

*You awake in an outpour of horror and sweat. The knot in your throat serving as a reminder of something ominous that clings to the air like a saltine breeze.*

### The Mists of Ravenloft

This adventure offers a few alternative methods in which to introduce the player characters into the adventure. Whether this adventure is meant as either a beginning or continuation of a Ravenloft Campaign, or as simply a weekend of horror, there are many ways in which the characters can find themselves at the mercy of the awesome mists. Below are a few suggestions in how to incorporate this adventure into your personal campaign:

### **The Nightmare That Never Ends**

After waking from the initial nightmare the characters find themselves lying along the south road only a few miles outside of the town of Hollow's Creek in the domain of Mordent. No matter which way the characters decide to go, they will eventually encounter a local tiller by the name of Nathaniel Beck. Nathaniel is driving his Clydesdale-drawn cart into town to purchase a few supplies and will offer to take them there out of kindness. Nathaniel is a good source for information, especially local knowledge and doesn't mind answering any questions the party may have.

The above example is meant for a single character, or group of characters either in another domain, or from another campaign setting. For those who are familiar with the Ravenloft setting would be perhaps drawn to Hollow's Creek by a previous task...

### **The Old Dwarven Collector**

A dwarf by the name of Axle Rowgrim, from the Mountains of Misery out of Darkon, has set up a printing-press in Hollow's Creek. The party has recently acquired a selection of rare tomes by either adventure, a financial deal gone bad, or from a particular patron. They are told by a reliable source that Axle Rowgrim is a fine collector of old books and would pay handsomely for them. Indeed, the old dwarf is so taken with the books that he insists that the party takes 50 gold pieces for the collection and an additional 10 for their troubles.

Of course there is always the simple method of being "engulfed by the mists" and deposited on the South Road next to the sign pointing toward Hollow's Creek.

### **First Impressions**

The strange atmosphere of Hollow's Creek is one that will reflect mindfully on the characters. Unless any of the adventurers have been to Mordent before, everything should come off as completely foreign to them. The locals for one will be sure to avoid contact with them as much as possible, preferring to go about their business without being drawn into someone else's. If any of the party members stray farther than the Hooded Lantern, they will be stopped by one of the watchmen, preferring to inquiry about the party's nature and intent of visit here in Hollow's Creek. Rarely will a watchman approach the party alone, but will have at least one other watchman to guard his rear in case of any problems. The watchmen on the other hand, will be kind and tolerant as possible, though characters with a high OR may find themselves immediately mistaken as creature of evil.

If ever anyone asks about a place to stay for the night, they will be directed toward the Hooded Lantern which is located on the border of the village to the east. They do however have an entire day to spend in the comforts of the village before the adventure truly begins. This can be a great time for any of the party members to search around town and get to know all the sites and perhaps gain a little insight into the towns past. Players may roll a Gather Information check to see what their character can find out from the locals.

## Gather Information Results:

### **DC 5 – Scandal of the Week**

Madam Sophia le’Martineque, a woman from Dementlieu, has just opened a ballet school here in Hollow’s Creek. The locals believe that dance and theater are frivolous endeavors and refuse to give her the time of day.

### **DC 8 – Old News**

Flint Ambrose, a merchant originating from Mordentshire has finally moved into his new home, after the recent renovation of Silver Swan, this past month. Rumor has it that he has no noble lineage but is a wealthy merchant attempting to expand his trade further inland.

### **DC 10 – Recent Past**

A family from Falkovia purchased the old Pendlefern ranch nearly 7 months ago. It is rumored that they fled their homeland in fear of their lives. Some believe that Drakov could one day send agents across the borders in order to recollect his “property” and that Hollow’s Creek may suffer for harboring the refugees.

### **DC 12 – Whispered Rumors**

The post-poned the wedding between Cecil Harnasse and the daughter of Laton Cuvier, Mlle. Jacquelin Cuvier, has finally been absolved. Already plans are being set in motion for the betrothed to finally wed.

### **DC 14 – Hushed Events**

Cecil Harnasse has lost a fortune in precious cloths, tea and spices imported from Sri Raji. Rumor has it that only one ship out of three have returned from the Sea of Sorrows. A few local lands have been leased out in order to make up for the financial crisis, and word has it that the union of Cecil and Jacquelin Cuvier is inspired by the financial mishap.

### **DC 16 – Muttered Paranoia**

The Coleridge family has been excessively reclusive the past few years, and having their estate far from the city borders doesn’t help much. Some suspect that they may be dabbling in the magical arts, possibly even alchemy.

### **DC 18 – Secreted Sympathies**

The Lord Mayor Thaddeus Knox-Creed, since his wife died twenty years ago, has remained distant and afflicted with an unrelenting melancholy. Thaddeus refuses most company, such to the extent that his family estate Allsworth stands empty of any servants or attendees.

### **DC 20 – Ghost Story “The Weeping Child Bridge”**

The party is warned about the dangers of the Weeping Child Bridge, and is told of the tale surrounding the haunt (See the “Appendix” for additional details)

### **DC 22 – Ghost Story “Old Man Hollow”**

The party learns of the story behind Hollow’s Hill and the locals superstitions regarding wooden toys (See the “Appendix” for additional details)

### **DC 30 – Tale of the Eye Thief**

Five years ago the village of Hollow’s Creek was plagued by a series of murders resulting in the taking of the victims’ eyes – even the beloved Philip Harnasse was killed by the fiend. With the help of an adventurer the local nobility managed to hunt him down in the northern fen and slew him. His body slipped beneath the waters of the swamp, never to be seen again.

## The Hooded Lantern

Sooner or later, as the night swallows the horizon, the party will find themselves entreating upon the hospitality of the local inn known as *The Hooded Lantern*. There they will find the welcome smiles of Fredrick Fallyn (Exp 2), who will insist that the characters warm themselves by the fire, enjoy a glass of ale, a warm dinner, and the humbled company of the locals. Conversation will cease upon their arrival, but it will not be long before the patrons will regain their desire to speak, with new topic concerning the newcomers. If the party has not yet met, now would be a good time for them to interact with each other. It would also be a fine time for the characters to speak with the locals, learn customs and even local legends. Some stories they may encounter would be about the \*Mournesworth, \*Scottmatter, or the \*Blackburn-Bruce family (\**Ravenloft Gazetteer III*) or even the tale of Old Man Hollow - a local favorite. Spending enough time around the people will allow the characters a sense motive check [DC 18] to notice that it seems the people are burdened by something; their faces lack a lively spunk, their manners are somber and everyone appears near-paranoid around strangers than most other cities in Mordent; [DC 24] for non-natives. They all suffer from a horrified past concerning the Pendlefern murders and the loss of many others by the sadistic tortures of one they call the Eye Thief.

The rate of stabling is 1 silver piece per day and to stay at the Hooded Lantern, it costs 2 silver pieces. There are five rooms available for rent, and unless otherwise negotiated, the two

silver pieces entitles the character to half of the queen sized bed. For an extra silver piece, one can have wine brought up to their room at any time during their stay. Breakfast is served free and between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. for all guests of the Hooded Lantern. If a character is not interested in sharing a room he/she may pay 5 silver pieces for the entire room (the extra silver piece is to compensate for the inconvenience of turning away potential customers).

## The Hollow's Creek Watch

An hour or so past midnight the Inn will be subject to a violent rapping by the local sheriff Laton Cuvier accompanied by an assignment of five local watchmen (virtually half of the town's volunteers). Laton Cuvier will announce that the player characters are all under arrest under the suspicion of slaughter, destruction of property, kidnapping, and possibly even murder. Laton Cuvier doesn't have any incriminating evidence pointing to them as the killers, but since the characters arrival and the crime in question coincidentally occurred within the same 24 hour period, he isn't willing to take any chances. Any rebuttals will be ignored and resisting arrest will be met with force. If a character happens to harm any member of the watch by means of weapon beyond unarmed it will issue the characters death warrant.

Sheriff Cuvier will demand that the characters surrender their weapons into the hands of the watch. He will assure them that if they are guiltless then they have nothing to fear. Once they confirm all the characters alibis their weapons will be returned to them in proper order.

Once all weapons are secured (with a thorough search check), instead

of directing them to the town prison, he will instead manacle them, load them into a jail-carriage drawn by four horses, and take them to the scene of the crime. He hopes that the scene can pull some form of reaction from the characters that can be later used in considering the characters' future release.

## Von Storben Ranch

The Cuvier wagon, will bring the party to the Steadfast Estate, recently purchased by the Von Storben family. The party will immediately be aware of the blaze from their windows, read the following:

*The flames roar into the sky like an inferno, tearing apart whatever majestic dwelling once stood. Even the neighboring barn has caught aflame and is now being drawn to ashes. The buildings' cinders fall like snowflakes, glittering like dieing fireflies against the darkness of the moor. The embers gather themselves in collective pockets atop the shoulders of the Hollow's Creek watchmen. Three of the five guarding watchmen are staring grimly from the ranch's fence line, their lanterns casting dark shadows across scattered mounds that lie about the pasture.*

*This place looks as if it was once a ranch of sorts, now nothing more than an echo of a twisted infernal.*

Under the watchful eye of Sheriff Cuvier, the manacled characters will be forced to exit the carriage and survey the ruin; in this they have little choice. Beyond observing the blaze from the

distance, Cuvier will bring them to the fence line where they can witness the carnage that befell the Von Storben's livestock.

*The shadowy mounds are not rises in earth, but the ghastly remains of the ranch's once beautiful mares. Each horse's neck is cut about mid-line, its precious blood ichors have long collected in dark stagnant pools, reflecting the light of the flames. But more disturbingly is the absence of the creatures' eyes, now nothing more than empty sockets that remind you of hollowed graves.*

There is one mare per character. This is to represent the player characters' strange arrival, a coincidence that Cuvier has already deduced but fails to mention; preferring to keep the information to himself.

At this point, anything the characters do or say will be met with questions and suspicion, however this is not to say that Cuvier or those apart of the watch will refrain from being polite or make crude assumptions. Cuvier is all about being objective and will ask the characters to establish their whereabouts for the entirety of the day, insisting that they leave nothing out and offer a trail of witnesses to confirm their alibis. If any character is uncooperative, Laton would be more than happy to commit to an all-night interrogation in a holding cell.

Whilst Cuvier is engaged in conversations with some of the characters, roll a spot check secretly for each character. Whoever achieves the highest roll notices something at her feet; pass this description secretly to that character:

*You notice something protruding from the ground, covered in loose dirt. At first you are unable to make it out, but nudging it with your toe you are able to identify it as a yellow-stained bone. It appears to have once served as a human arm, now nothing more than a crude mockery. Oddly there is a piece of twine tied at each of the bone's ends, with just enough slack to wrap itself twice over.*

Laton has not noticed the bone and neither have any of the watchmen. If the character brings it to the Sheriff's attention, then he will simply dismiss it as something possibly dragged there by a dog or fox. On the other hand, if he is also made aware that there is string attached to it, he would then ensure to bring it along as crucial evidence. A Sense Motive check DC 10 will show that he is greatly troubled over the object as now he will believe that this was not a random act of violence, but something involving ritual or even arcane. Any Spellcasters in the party will fall under even greater scrutiny.

Once everyone has given their alibi, Laton will order his men to put the characters back into the carriage. However, not before reading the following:

*As Cuvier and his watchmen begin to motion you back into the carriage a spectral whiney freezes your hair to stand on end. Your attention is drawn towards the opposite end of the fence-line where rearing from a bank of mist is a stallion forged from darkness itself. The phantom-like being exhales a cloud of steam from its nostrils before touching its hooves [continued]*

*...back upon the ground. The watchmen stand frozen in their places whilst the dark beast paws at the tainted soil, keens once more in the night air and flees into the disparity of the all-consuming mist. Its presence leaves an unnatural feeling akin only to the shroud of death.*

Laton will be unsettled by the sudden encounter with the uncanny creature. He will remind the now frightened watchmen of their duties and otherwise encourage the characters into the carriage. If asked why he will not pursue the stallion, Laton Cuvier will simply look the character in the eyes and say, *"That horse, if it can be called such thing, is not of this world. Only a madman would follow that beast into the mist, as only a madman would emerge, if at all."* He will not elaborate any further than that. Laton has seen his share of horrors and knows when to avoid them.

## **A Night Spent in Jail**

The characters will be returned to Hollow's Creek, but instead of spending their first night within the warmth and comfort of the Hooded Lantern, the party must brave the cold misery of a ten by ten cell. The cell is kind enough to offer two cots that are partially stained. One can only imagine the source of the blemishes. There is a small bucket in the corner that looks like it has been used as a waste depository in the past. Moonlight trickles into the stone prison from a window no larger than a human head. The walls are a chilling stone, whilst the window and southern wall is protected by a thick set of iron bars. The lock on the jail cell is

an amazing lock (DC 40), so even if a character managed to hide a set of thieves tools, or decided to create a makeshift one, will have a difficult time unlatching the lock. For the most part, once the characters are inside the cell, they are there until someone lets them out.

#### **Hollow's Creek Jail**

The jail is nothing to brag about. It is nothing more than a front lobby and desk, a central office fitted with prisoner archives and a vault for storing evidence, an interrogation room, and two ten by ten cells. This is one of the few buildings in Hollow's Creek made completely out of stone.

The idea is not to bore the players to death, but to allow them a chance to have their characters discuss the events of the night. Though miserable, misery loves company, and it will not be long before even complete strangers will start conversing with one another. This is a great time for you as a DM to sit back and relax and watch as character traits unfold.

After awhile the characters will need to gain some shut-eye. Due to the events surrounding the crime scene, the uncomfortable surroundings of the cell, and the following shared nightmare, the characters will wake fatigued. Those who attempt to wait the night out will find themselves influenced by some compulsion to sleep, and before they know it they will be dreaming; soon to awake at dawn. Read the following:

*You dream – The claw-like waves crash against the teetering bow of the ship, making it lurch to one side as a lone figure fights to keep her afloat. The wind assails your body with a frigid blast of numbing death, accompanied by tiny spears of water that sting by the touch. [continued]*

*A blackened storm churns above you, spewing out a few stray bolts of lightning on the horizon, followed by the ever present clap of thunder, that leaves a frightening pain within your gullet. You can hear the ship straining beneath you, as you look to your companions, whom along with yourself, are tied securely to the mast, shivering; be it from the bite of the sea, or from fear itself, you are uncertain.*

*Captain Abertson's ghastly face is lit up by an arm of lightning, followed by another deafening rumble. Its melodies summon forth additional tides to clash against the deck, causing you to grip tighter on the only lifeline that binds you to the ship. The Captain strains at the helm to keep the ship afloat. Once again you are swallowed in darkness, and can feel the vessel moaning from beneath the masterful waters. Your heart stops as another flash of light allows your eyes to settle upon a dark stranger, covered from head to toe in thick robes and cloth, hidden beneath the stairs which lead to the bridge. A face of dread possesses your own as you feel that he has been watching you for sometime. Once again in darkness, you feel his boots hammering against the deck a slight limp in his walk, the scent of fresh decay overwhelms your nostrils as he passes, you then feel him stop at the front of the bow, unhindered by the trashing of the ship.*

*A strike of lightning illuminates the creature – the thing's face finally revealed to you as some abhorrence, some abominable wretch, a creature of pure horror! You open your mouth, but nothing save the squall of the storm echoes from without. A bolt of [continued]*

*... lightning strikes the crow's nest and you feel the ship give way and the collapse of the rigging above. Terror-struck, you can do nothing to divert your eyes from the creature nor to prevent the tearing of the mast as it splinters and is then ripped from its holdings plummeting over the bulwark. It is not until, but a few short moments, when the hemp tightens about your waist that you and your companions are launched high into the air – screaming into the dismal abyss.*

*You wake up in yet another restless sweat. The creatures face lifting from your memory as all dreams tend; grateful that it had.*

The party will be woken in the morning by Laton Cuvier bringing them news that their alibis have held, and that they are free to go. He will apologize to them as he returns their gear, claiming that “In times like these, one cannot be too careful.” He is not fond of having to place innocent people behind bars, but his duty to protect always comes above his greater sensibilities. He believes that it is best for an innocent to suffer a night in prison, then to allow the possibility of a criminal to wander the streets.

Cuvier will apologize to them once again before they leave, telling them that they are good people, and if they happen across anything suspicious to please let him know. Once everything needing to be said is said, the party will find that the road to adventure is right around the corner.

## **A Pleading Proposition**

Waiting just outside the prison on horseback are the three prevailing families from the region: Cecil Harnasse, the magistrate Johnathan Coleridge, and Lord Major Thaddeus Knox-Creed. Flint Ambrose, a recent wealthy arrival, will also be accompanying the other three, appearing eager to offer anything to the general “well-being” of Hollow’s Creek. (Their statistics are listed in the Appendix).

Johnathan Coleridge will approach the party from his horse and introduce himself along with his title as magistrate. He will apologize to the party for their unfortunate stay in the town prison, as it was at his request. He wishes to make amends by honoring the party by purchasing them breakfast at the Hooded Lantern, and compensate them for a nights stay at the establishment. He will claim he has a proposition for the characters as they look of the adventuring sort and will assure them that they’ll make it worth their while.

Once in the comforts of the Inn Johnathan Coleridge will introduce the rest of his companions (if it hasn’t been done already). Coleridge will lay the foreground of the proposition, reminding the party of the horror that they saw just last night. Thaddeus will then explain to them about the Von Storben family, their flight from Falkovia and their decision to settle in Hollow’s Creek. Thaddeus will claim that they are good people and fears for their safety considering the condition of their ranch. He suggests that a few of Vlad Drakov’s Talons may have made it across Mordent in search for the missing family, and decided to lay waste to their home, but will say that he cannot be sure. A Sense Motive check DC 15 will notice that Thaddeus and the rest of the men are holding back a piece of

information. If asked they will say that if it is indeed the Talon's then the Von Storben's are presumably already dead. However, something else plagues the four men and another Sense Motive check [DC 15] will only confirm this. The characters will feel that these men are holding back something, but pressing the matter at this time is probably not within the characters best interests. Even so they will refuse to comment on it claiming that their minds are plagued by events of a completely different sort and in will try to divert the characters attentions on the Von Storben's disappearance.

#### **The Von Storben Family**

The Von Storben family consists of Drakeve age 33, his wife Elsa age 28, their daughter Eliza age 11, their son Ufree age 14, and their 6-month old daughter Yafee. Darkeve was a merchant born in Falkovia who was once of considerable repute. He managed to gain the attention and disfavor of Vlad Drakov's Talons by refusing to smuggle illegal goods into Darkon. Fearing the vengeance of the Talons, Drakeve arranged for his family, and what few possessions they could carry, to flee into Mordent. The Von Storben's however could not flee far due to financial difficulties and so Drakeve made a deal with Thaddeus Creede in the form of a loan for the purchase and funding of his ranch. For seven months the family has been living at Steadfast, and old estate that belonged to a previous family who met with horrible ends. Beyond simple compassion from Thaddeus, Drakeve has attributed the family's horrible demise to the relatively cheap cost of the land.

The Von Storben's all have dark blonde hair with brown eyes, except Yafee whose eyes are gray. All the Von Storbens, save for Yafee, have the hawk seal of Vlad Drakov branded onto their foreheads; which they try to hide with head bands or large hats. Yafee is the first to be born outside of Falkovia.

The offer is thus, the watchmen of Hollow's Creek are not fully prepared to deal with something like this, especially if the Falkovian military is indeed responsible. Laton Cuvier is conducting his own investigation, but needs more willing individuals, such as the party, to investigate the disappearance. They offer a total of 50 gold pieces to each character for getting to the bottom of the crime (a Diplomacy check [DC 15] can increase the gold by 10 each). Also, Flint Ambrose will, much to the surprise of his other companions, offer 500 gold pieces for bringing back the one responsible for the atrocities. Ambrose believes that by offering a greater sum of money that the characters will accept the proposition, and that it will gain him a large amount of prestige amongst the locals and the noblemen.

Another thing that they will mention is that a wheat farmer by the name of Gregory Longfellow accounted a strange encounter last night a few hours after the players were confined. He claims that he was returning from the Red Flagon to his farmstead atop his horse, when he was attacked by what he claims to be the walking dead. He was able to get away without any marks, even claimed to have ran over one. He raised the Coleridge family and when they went to investigate, found nothing to indicate that there was even a struggle. Normally they would have attributed it to excessive drinking but because of recent events, they are not about to dismiss anything without a proper investigation. If the party finds the time, they would appreciate them looking into Gregory Longfellow's account. If it leads into anything they would be more than willing to compensate them for their troubles.

Johnathan Coleridge will suggest that the party revisit the scene of the crime, that perhaps they can find something that the watchmen missed. Also, they will mention that Gregory Longfellow has not left the Red Flagon since the encounter.

## **Revisiting the Von Storben Ranch**

Once the party arrives read the following:

*The two buildings, from what you can tell to have been a barn and home, are now nothing more than skeletal remains and ash. A few boards are still alit and smoke slowly trickles from the remains. The only portion of the house still standing is the remnants of the chimney and hearth.*

*The fence line that marks the horses grazing field is disrupted on a few sides, but still intact. The mare corpses seem to not have been touched by the local watch, but have been victimized by local predators.*

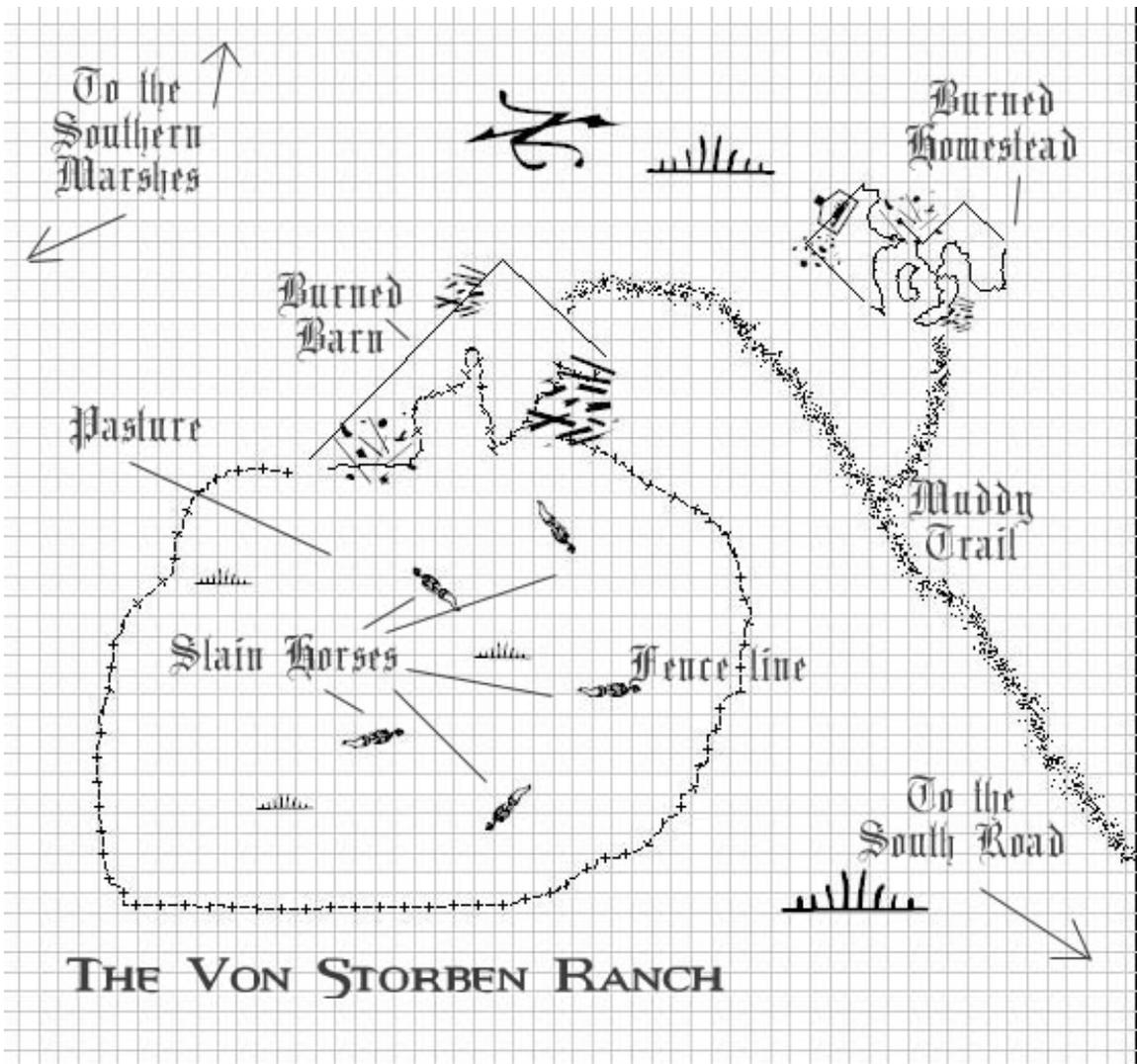
A search of the horses will reveal that the instrument used to remove the horses eyes must have been a dagger or another sharp object, perhaps even a rapier point. There are rope burns around the base of the creatures' neck, just a few inches below the point in which the creatures' neck was slashed. From the look of the disrupted earth, the horses gave a good fight. The ground is mixed with both boot prints and hoof prints, but due to the large assortment of tracks, its hard to tell exactly how many there were.

A Survival check DC 13 will reveal that there were at least 7 sets of

tracks, some that went between the house and others between the barn and the horses. It looks like the horses were brought into the field one by one. Those with the Track feat can roll a Survival check DC 20 (due to the constant fog of the moors and the tracked party taking pains to hide their trail) will reveal their tracks heading into a particularly thick section of the heath before vanishing entirely, no more than a mile out. The perpetrators used a few pinches of *Dust of Tracelessness* to cover their tracks. Unless the Tracker can meet a DC 40 survival check, it looks like they simply disappeared in the mist.

A Search check DC 15 in the burned home will locate a few pieces of chard human bone. A Survival Track check inside the home is nearly impossible DC 35 but will reveal that there was a struggle inside the house. However, if the party can somehow divine what happened to the Von Stroben's they will learn that a group of brigands wearing Leather Armor, with human bones sewn to the outside of it, dragged the Von Storben's from their home, slaughter their horses in front of them, and then dragged them into the mist bound by their hands in manacles. Depending upon the divination, the party might even get a glimpse of the bandit leader, Eldrynn Lorean.

There is nothing else of note save for the mysterious hoof prints of the phantom stallion heading off into one of the moor's thick bogs. Following the stallion's tracks is not a good idea, beyond the dangers of the swamps of Mordent, is the great distance the horse may have covered in the past few hours. The horse could be anywhere by now.



# Discovery of Bone

*F*or the most part the player characters will find very little in evidence at the Von Storben Ranch, as the brigands lead by Eldrynn Lorean are highly disciplined, especially since their leader has an acute sense of detail. After a long accumulation of dead ends, the party may either seek out Gregory Longfellow for something to cure boredom, or perhaps they may make a connection of human bones, with Gregory's tales of the wandering dead.

## Gregory Longfellow

Gregory Longfellow currently resides in the Red Flagon, attempting to drown the constant visions in his head; a repeat of last night's encounter. He failed a horror check and is now obsessed with the vile creatures to the point where he can't sleep nor speak about anything else. When the party arrives, Gregory Longfellow will be sitting at the bar finishing off another tankard of ale, muttering to himself about the living dead.

Gregory is in his mid thirties, brown hair, and grey eyes. He's average looking, adorn in the same fashionable trend as the rest of the population, with a three cornered hat, and wool vest. Gregory will be more than happy to relate his tale about his encounter with the walking dead. The following is his interpretation:

*"I was returning from the Red Flagon, having just finished a few cups of ale. I wasn't drunk mind ye, to the point of little cares aye, but not so [continued]"*

*much that I'd be seeing sprites or devils that tarn't there. Old Nitsy knew the way home, we've traveled the South Road plenty o' times in the past, especially in the dark coming home from the Red Flagon.*

*I just a few strides past the turn off to the o' Coleridge estate when out from the ground came the bones of me ancestors, each brandishing their rapiers, screaming like vengeful spirits that have come to enact their revenge. I've naught done anything to gain the woeful eye of me dead cousins, and yet there they were! They surrounded me on all sides, their eyeless sockets bearing into me like brazen fire. They started to claw for Nitsy, tried to get a hold on the reins, but I managed to turn her around, even managed to trample one of em, yet barely escaped with me life.*

*I managed to reach Haven Ridge and roused the Coleridge family in sounded alert. But once I pointed the place out, the spirits were gone and not trace could be found. I haven't been able to sleep since; their grinning faces are still fresh in me mind. Not even the ale seems to be helping, but at least the spirits here are kinder."*

If asked, Nitsy is the name of his horse, a brown mare that is hitched in the local stables not far from the Red Flagon. If the players ask, they can examine Gregory's horse. A Spot check DC 12 will reveal that his horse has a few spots of dried blood splattered at the tops of its hooves. It's not horse blood

and it doesn't belong to Gregory, as miraculously he emerged from the fright unscathed. If questioned, Gregory has no idea how it arrived there and a Sense Motive DC 12 will only confirm his story.

If the party decides to have him take them to the site where he was presumably attacked, he will be partially hesitant. If the party can convince him that they will protect him, only then will he reluctantly show them the way, as long as it's full daylight.

## Horror on the South Road

The south road is nothing to boast about, as it appears more as mud trail, blessed with deep wagon ruts and uneven terrain. Surprisingly however is the absolute lack of tracks where Gregory Longfellow's skeletal encounter took place. A survival check DC 20 with the Track feat will locate the tracks, having been purposefully covered up and then later disappear entirely in the same exact manner as those at the Von Storben ranch (See "Revisiting the Von Storben Ranch" section for track DC's). The skeletons that Gregory Longfellow saw were actually bandits dressed in black leather armor with bones secured by twine to appear as the walking dead.

All other attempts in searching the road DC 15, will locate a few more pieces of bone from the wrist of a human skeleton that is also yellow in coloration. Besides the few fragments, the party will be unable to find anything of note.

## Patrolling the South Road

Unless the party begins to patrol the south road, or to take measures to protect the outlining farmsteads outside

of Hollow's Creek the Bandits will continue to make raids, leaving behind the eyeless corpses of the farms' horses with the people no where to be found. Each disappearance will be done in the similar manner, with the occasional piece of bone that happened to fall off the armor and the tracks leading and disappearing into the mist; with a large concentration of disappearances along the south road.

If the party decides to patrol the south road, or if they are clever enough to create an ambush, the characters will eventually encounter a troop of skeleton adorn brigands.

**Bone Bandit:** Human War 2; CR 1; SizeM humanoid (human); HD 2d8+4; hp 15; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 14 (touch 11, flatfooted 13); Atk +5 melee (1d6+2, crit 18-20 /x2 rapier); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 11.

*Skills and Feats:* Intimidate +2, Hide -1, Listen +4, Move Silently -1, Ride (horse) +3, Sense Motive +2, Spot +4; Alertness, Weapon Focus (rapier)

*Possessions:* Rapier, black leather armor of skeletal disguise, dagger

The encounter should be set up to have 1 bone brigand per character to equal an EL = -2 the parties level. The party should easily be able to defeat the raiding party, and if any of the brigands are left alive, the party can attempt to interrogate them into revealing the location of their base and their sinister plot.

If all the bandits were slain, or the party is unable to properly intimidate them, then they can still attempt to follow the tracks back to their camp. Among the possessions of one the bandits is a small pouch filled with one application of *dust of tracelessness*.

### **Black Leather Armor of Skeletal Disguise**

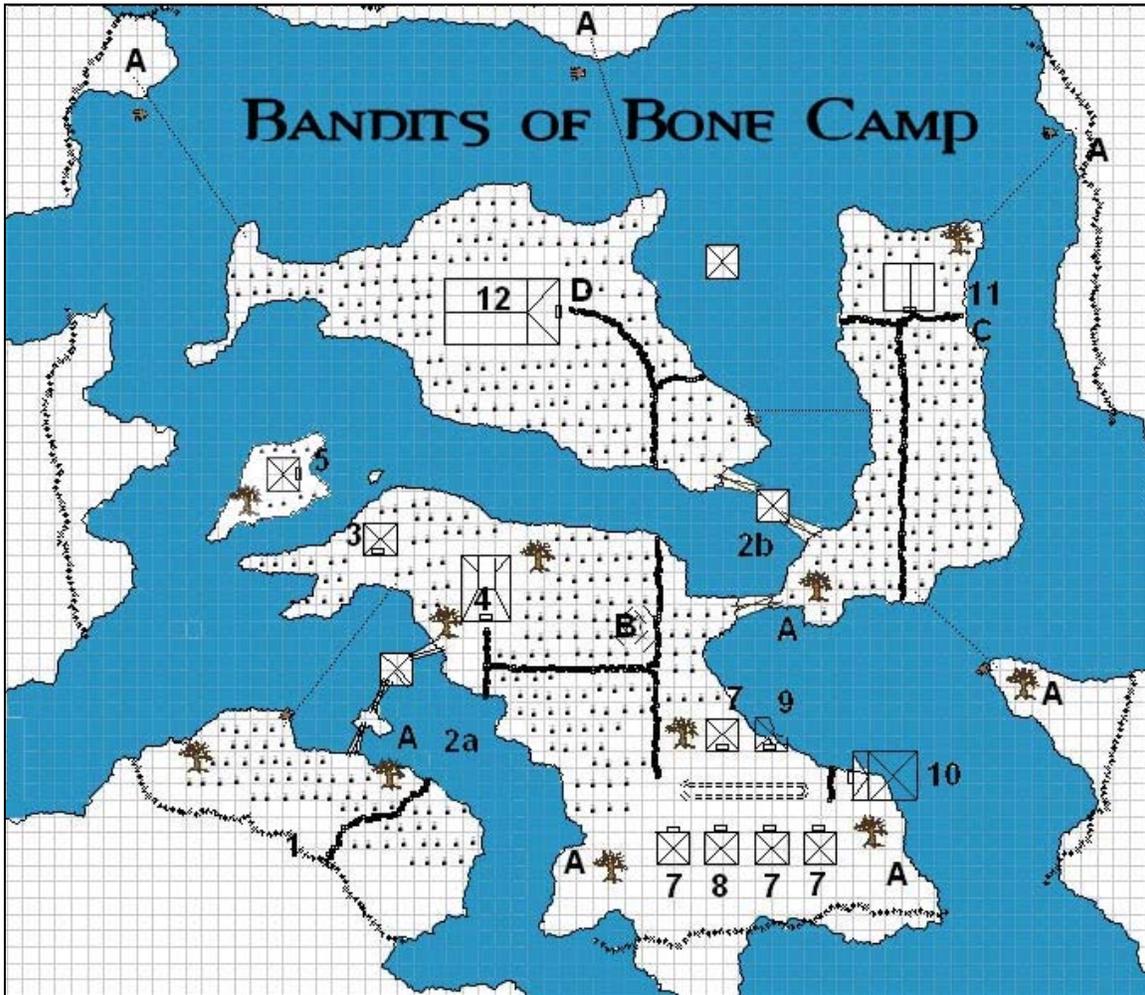
Armor Bonus +3, Maximum Dex Bonus +2, Armor Check Penalty -4, Arcane Spell Failure Chance 30%, Speed 20 ft., Weight 35 lbs. +2 Hide checks at night, -2 Move Silently Checks. Spot Check or Knowledge (undead) check [DC 12] or believe the wearer is a skeleton. If the wearer is believed to be among the undead the viewer must make a horror check [DC 12].

### **Rallying Hollow's Creek**

If the player characters decide to inform Laton Cuvier, or any of the other prominent families of the area about the cause of the disappearances, they will be quick to rally. Laton Cuvier will insist the noble families take charge of protecting Hollow's Creek, along with four of the watch, whilst he and the remaining six watchmen will come to the party's aid in destroying the Bandit camp. The number of Bandits should be upped accordingly to the effective party level.

Another means of playing the force from Hollow's Creek is to place them in a completely separate party and either roll their combats separately from the adventuring party, or simply estimate their losses off to the side – keeping the dice rolls to a minimum.

# Cutting the Binds



## The Bandits of Bone Camp

The bandit's camp lies within an old cemetery that has long since been swallowed by the encroaching moor. The Mournsworth family had once planned to relocate the graves to their family estate, but since their disappearance, the graveyard has gone untouched. Once the party reaches the northeastern moor, tracking the bandits' previous route becomes much easier. Without the brigands' tracks, the party will have to worry about sinkholes and

other such hazards. Read the following once they reach the bog:

*The bog assaults your nose with a debilitating nausea that creeps from your bowels and into your throat. From beneath the canopy of half-dead trees and the choking stench of the undergrowth you are unsure of how anyone could fathom living in a place such as this. You can hear the distant calls of wood owls and a few other birds of prey. The muck clings to your boots with each and every step as you try to trudge through the moss covered ground. [continued]*

*The incessant mist swirls around you, simulating the very hairs of your arms to combat the constant chill of the bog. If you didn't know any better, you'd feel as if you are following a path to your own grave.*

About a mile into the bog the party will soon come across the hidden cemetery housing the Bandit's of Bone. Read the following once they arrive:

*The mist soon parts, revealing the black iron gate which leads into a dismal cemetery. In the distance you can make out the headstones and tombs that jet from the moistened earth. The swamp has long since buried the majority of the grounds, allowing both grave and tomb to slowly sink beneath the loose soil and caliginous waters. A few fires can be seen, casting skeleton-like silhouettes against the bank of fog. You can hear the sounds of men conversing and laughing, which acts as a warning that you have indeed found the bandits' hidden lair.*

The cemetery is covered in a thick layer of fog that reduces visibility to about forty feet. There are many areas that are inaccessible due to high waters and must be navigated by the bridges that the bandits created or by using the flat bottom boats. If the players wish to have their characters swim through the water, they will have to make swim checks [DC 10]. Those who swim in the water are bound to pick up at least 1d4 leeches per 10 feet of water. Though the leeches by themselves are harmless, they all carry a disease called Bog Fever [DC 12]. For every 10 leeches the characters

accumulate the saving throw difficulty increases by 1.

### **Area 1 – Past the Gruesome Gates**

Beyond the gate, the once paved road leads directly into a lake of water. The party can choose to either cross the lake by either using the bridge, the flat bottom boat, or attempting to swim across. The characters should be able to make out area 3 and 4 while looking across shore. If the characters move a bit to the north they should be able to see area 5 slightly poking out of the dismal fog.

### **Area 2 – The Makeshift Bridge**

When the bandits first arrived they attempted to create a bridge that consisted of wooden planks that would span across the half submerged headstones and tombs. Later, as the boards were quick to become waterlogged and somewhat slippery, they added extension ropes to help aid balance. Read the following:

*The bandits have fashioned a makeshift bridge using crude wooden planks and extension ropes. The boards look incredibly slippery, where as near the center of the construction lays a tomb that must be climbed over before reaching the other side of the shore. Even from here it looks extremely dangerous, but if one were careful, it might save more time than taking the flat bottom boats, that is of course if you don't end up in the water.*

In order to cross the bridge safely the characters have to make a Balance Check [DC 10, or 12] without the use of

### BOG FEVER – DISEASE

Bog Fever is a disease carried by leeches, rats, and other swamp inhabiting denizens throughout Mordent's Bogs. The symptoms include high fevers which lead to hallucinations, coughing, and constant fatigue. The incubation period is 1-3 days, DC 12 (Injury) and causes a temporary 1d2 Con and 1d2 Str drain.

What many are not aware of is that the hallucinations that the victim suffers are not hallucinations at all, but are the spirits of the dead. Bog Fever temporarily grants the victim the Ghostsight feat from the Ravenloft Player's Handbook. Once the disease is cured, the sufferer loses the ability to see into the Near-Ethereal.

the ropes, in order to cross the first set of planks. Then the partially submerged tomb's roof must be climbed across [DC 10], and then lowered onto the next set of planks to reach the shore. If a character falls into the water, it may attract the attention of the nearest guard, [DC 12] Listen check, who will be quick to investigate its cause.

#### FLAT BOTTOM BOATS

The only way to navigate the swamp is through using the flat bottom boats. These boats have no oars, but can be piloted by using the ropes that are strung across the opposite shores, or by using a quarterstaff or other such item. Each boat cannot hold more than two passengers, or a total of 400 lbs, anymore than that could cause the vessel to take on water.

### Area 3 – Tomb Storage

This small ten by ten foot tomb is made of stone with 1 foot thick walls, an iron door held shut by thick chains and an average lock (DC 25). Any attempts at forcing the tomb open will arouse the attention of the local bandits. The key is held by Eldrynn Lorean who keeps it, along with the keys to the prisoners' cell door and manacles, on a key ring. Inside the tomb are the bandits' supplies and food storage, the old casket was removed and placed in Area 9. Below is a detailed inventory of the storage room: 4 (30lbs) barrels of rain water, 1 (30lbs) barrel of ale, 2 empty buckets, 50 candles (1 crate), 30 ft of chain, 2

*crowbars, 8 days worth of firewood, 5 flint and steel, 2 grappling hooks, 1 ladder (10 ft), 4 lamps, 3 very simple locks, 15 manacles, 1 (30lbs) barrel of lamp oil, 2 iron cooking pots, 100 days worth of trail rations, 200 ft of hemp rope, 20 sewing needles, 10 spools of twain, 1 sledge hammer, 3 shovels, 10 torches, 2 machetes, and a scythe.*

#### BANDITS AT THEIR POSTS

Eldrynn Lorean posted guards in strategic locations that he believed were vulnerable. Though he believes that this isolated cemetery offers a remote enough location to conduct his raids, he still fears the possibility of being discovered. Nevertheless he prefers not to be caught unaware should someone stumble upon his haven. The areas marked either A,B,C or D are different guard posts. Each guard is equipped with a sounding horn to alert the camp of any troubles.

Post A (Watch Post) – 1 Bone Bandits  
Post B (Camp) – 2-4 Bone Bandits  
Post C (Slave Guards) – 2 Bone Bandits  
Post D (Personal Guard) 2 Bone Bandits\*  
\* Personal Guard stats are detailed under area 11.

### Area 4 – The Old Church

*Darkly looming over the sunken graveyard is a foreboding church. Its wooden walls have long since taken a blackened stain, and sections of the roof have all but collapsed. The temple doors are covered in mold, with one off-hinge. The steeple, oddly enough, still appears untouched by the passage of time and within a bronze bell [continued]*

*can be seen beneath the shadows.  
You can hear the sound of wind  
chimes with each gust of wind that  
filters through the buildings cracks.  
The markings above the door signify  
it as a temple devoted to Ezra.*

The church, for the most part, has been left alone by the bandits. Eldrynn Lorean first considered the temple for his private chambers, but decided against possibly angering any lingering spirits or gods. Though his crimes are numerous, blasphemy is not one of them. The bandits on the other hand, have crafted a ghost tale about the ruined church. They believe a cleric of Ezra still haunts the building, that one of their numbers entered the church with vile intent and later emerged heavy in fever. In fact, those who happen to catch Bog Fever, claim they see the spectre of ghostly figures watching them maliciously. Their visions, along with the source of the disease, are all attributed to a single non-existent ghost.

#### **THE DISTURBED GRAVES**

The bandits have unearthed graves, raided the local tombs, and worn the bones for a disguise. Their disrespectful treatment of the dead has caused many of them to rise as spirits from their rest. The ghosts are rank 1, but have no powers. They simply wander about the graveyard confused and sorrowful. Those with the Ghostsight feat will see ghostly shades wondering about the gravestones looking for their graves. The ghosts cannot affect the physical world, but within time may grow malicious due to their inability to locate their resting place. If the corpses are returned to their proper grave (or at least buried or interred into an empty tomb) the ghost will rest peacefully. If the characters decide to bury the corpses, they should gain 200 experience points. Otherwise, leaving the bodies unburied may eventually create a sinkhole of evil.

The church itself is devoid of anything incredibly useful as most of the furniture and items within are rotted or completely rusted through. The wind chimes, located about ten feet above the altar, bestow to those of good alignment a sense of inner peace. The item radiates a faint magical aura (divination) that grants a +1 save bonus recovering from both horror and madness checks. In order to gain its benefits the participant must spend eight hours listening to its melodies. During these eight hours the character can be doing other activities such as prayer, meditation, or even sleeping. This item is considered a relic of Ezra, and if returned to the temple in Hollow's Creek, the party's outcast rating will be reduced by 1, along with receiving 1000 gold total and a *cure light wounds* potion a piece.

#### **Area 5 – Radcliffe's Tomb**

This small ten by ten foot tomb is the source of a rank 2 sink hole of evil. Though not all that large in size (roughly the size of the island), the place is tainted by fits of agony and horrendous torture. A ghoul by the name of Hagget Radcliffe is cursed to forever stalk the cemetery.

Hagget was a merchant of no repute who had an obsession with money. He was so possessed by the gleam of gold that he ensured that all his wealth would be buried with him upon his death. Much to his dismay, his family was not about to allow his small fortune to rot with him in his coffin. So after he was buried, his family came in the night and robbed him of all his acquired treasure. Driven by hate for his family and all those who would rob him, along with the desire for gold, Hagget raised from his grave as a money-hungry

ghoul. Much to Hagget's distress, he found he could not travel beyond the iron gates of the cemetery and for years has been subsiding on the buried dead and whatever happens across the cemetery.

Since the arrival of the bandits, Hagget has been slowly stealing meals from their number. He paralyzes them while they are sleeping and then drags them to his tomb and waits for them to wake. Once awake he paralyzes them yet again, only to have them watch as he slowly devours them. The silent plea's of the bandits along with the intense pain and suffering they experienced has created the sink hole that now shrouds the tomb and surrounding vegetation. The disappearances have not gone unnoticed by the bandit leader Eldrynn Lorean. He however attributes their disappearance to desertion, which only causes him to make quick examples of those who even mention it.

Inside the tomb are the bones of Hagget's victims. The bones are completely white, having been picked clean by the undead creature, and covered by multiple teeth marks and other indentures. Hagget's coffin lies at the far end of the tomb, opposite the door. This is where he keeps all the trinkets that he has accumulated of the many years he has been imprisoned here. Hagget's Treasure: *32 gold pieces, 14 silver, 42 copper pieces, 2 gold rings each worth 10 gold, 5 gold fillings worth 1 gold each, a silver locket worth 12 gold, and a copper bracelet with an amethyst inlay worth 35 gold pieces.*

Hagget constantly admires his trinkets when he isn't out snatching one of Eldrynn's men. If he hears the party, he will immediately climb onto the ceiling using his spider climb ability and will hide there. Once someone enters

the tomb, he will ambush them from atop, hoping to use his surprise round to paralyze them.

**Hagget Radcliffe:** Human Ghoul; CR 1; Size M  
Undead (ghoul); HD 2d12; hp 13; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (touch 12, flatfooted 12); Atk Bite +2 melee (1d6+1 plus paralysis); Full Atk Bite +2 melee (1d6+1 plus paralysis), 2 Claws +0 melee (1d3 plus paralysis); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., undead traits, spider climb, +2 turn resistance; Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 15, Con --, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 12.  
*Skills and Feats:* Balance +6, Climb +5, Hide +6, Jump +5, Move Silently +6, Spot +7; Multiattack  
Special Qualities: *Paralysis* (Ex) – those hit by a bite or claw attack must make a Fortitude save DC 12 or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. Elves have immunity to this paralysis.  
*Spider Climb* (Ex) – The dark powers have granted Hagget the ability to spider climb as per the arcane spell at will.

Encountering Hagget calls for a Horror Check [DC 15]. Due to the circumstances surrounding the Hagget encounter, the party should gain a 25% experience bonus for his defeat.

## Area 6 – Widow's Promenade

Outside the two rows of tombs, situated between them like a stone fence, is a small garden that may have once flourished with lilies and hedge vine. Now only two statues of sorrowful winged humans droop sullenly over a gray patch of dried vegetation where the garden had once been. A small bronze sign encrusted with layers of swamp filth denotes this area as "Widow's Promenade" that rests at the feet of both statues.

The bandits have claimed this area for their sleeping quarters, essentially emptying out areas 7 and 8, so they have a roof over their head if the rains come.

## Area 7 – Tombs of the Bone Bandits

Each tomb is protected by a metal door, though the lock has been busted in by some blunt object and now swings freely by the touch. The tombs are now the homes of the Bone Bandits. Each ten by ten tomb is fitted with 4 bed rolls, at which point at least 1 bandit is sleeping in each tomb. Eldrynn Lorean ensures that his men are on a constant rotating shift. If the sounding horns are blown, the men will don their armor hastily (1 minute due to the leather's reinforcement of bone) and rush out to meet the trespassers.

### GOOD HELP IS HARD TO FIND

There are a grand total of 26 bandits, minus those the party has already taken out on the South Road. Make sure that as the DM you subtract a bandit each time one is defeated. Eventually Eldrynn will find his numbers dwindling, not to mention loosing about 1 bandit per day to Hagget and about 1 per two weeks to disease.

If the party is accompanied by a force from Hollow's Creek, you may consider boosting the Bandits' level by 1, his personal guard by 2 and Eldrynn Lorean by 2.

The bandits each have about 2d4 gold, 2d10 silver, and about 3d20 copper on their person at anytime. Those that go out on raids keep their gold stashed away due to the noise that coins tend to make. Plus "skeletons" that carry gold aren't very convincing.

## Area 8 – The Crazy Bandit

One bandit named Arty Windweed has shut himself up in his tomb huddled in a far corner. He keeps his armor on and weapons ready at all

times. He is currently suffering from fatigue for he hasn't slept in the past 24 hours. Just the night before, he woke to the sight of Hagget dragging one of his bedmates out into the night. He might not have been able to see the thing for which stole his comrade, had the moon not been as radiant as it was. He failed his horror check enough that warranted a madness check, and now he is suffering from extreme delusions. Now every creature, be it friend or foe alike, he sees as being a ghoul that has come to drag him off into the night just like all the others. If the party gets within five feet of the bandit, he will attack them. Otherwise he will constantly babble about the "creature" coming to get him which can be heard from outside of the tomb.

*"Those eyes! Big, cold, they were looking at me you know. He was looking AT ME! He dragged him off into the night, but he won't get me! HE WON'T GET ME! Green, his skin green, dead. I could smell him, dead like the swamp. His teeth, jagged, like knives, a lance like tongue. He'll be back... I know he'll be back. He'll soon be back for me."*

Any attempts to reason with Arty will result in him screaming, "You'll not have me! The dead will not have me!" and then proceed to attack the nearest person.

## Area 9 – Tomb of Refuse

The scent of human refuse can be smelled from the outside of this tomb. Entering from the metal door, the characters will find that the majority of the tomb floor has collapsed into the swamp and has taken on swamp water.

The bandits have cleverly cut a circular hole in the lid of a coffin and have set it up to be used as a makeshift waste depository. If the smell is not enough to dissuade the adventurers from poking around, they will be greatly disappointed as there is nothing of use nor note in here beyond the obvious.

### Area 10 – Pool of Corpses

This somewhat large mausoleum's back end has been swallowed by the encroaching waters of the swamp, and throughout the years, it has slowly been dragged further into its depths. A few segments of the walls have crumbled and disappeared into the muck. Though as sad as the building looks on the outside, the true horror lies within.

*This once majestic tomb catered to perhaps a wealthy family now sits in ruin. The swamp waters have flooded the down angled floor, and collected the now waterlogged caskets in a seemingly eternal drift. The bones of many once peaceful graves now appear strewn about the insides, as if in a carelessly tossed fashion. Their yellow jaws are cast open as if in a position of agony, and the feeling of having been ripped from the earth permeates their skulls.*

The bandits have cleared out the majority of the tombs and tossed the bodies here for storage. The bodies within were the lucky ones not used for reinforcing their armor. Bandits occasionally return here to find “replacement parts” for their armor. Those bandits that died from Bog Fever are tied with rocks or chains and are thrown into the swamp.

### Area 11 – Entombed within a Tomb

The bone bandits have made use of the northern mausoleum as a place to house the people they have kidnapped. Eldrynn Lorean has been hired by a “cloaked figure” to murder the locals. Eldrynn on the other hand doesn't like things to go to waste, especially people. He plans that once he kidnaps about twenty or so locals, he will then proceed to Sithicus and sell them as slaves to any potential buyers. Among these kidnapped individuals is the Von Storben family.

The tomb itself is locked by heavy chains and is protected by average lock (DC 25). The slaves are also manacled which only Eldrynn holds the keys. Once the party frees the slaves Drakeve will be relieved that the party has rescued them and will be quick to inform them of all the atrocities that they had to witness. For the most part, the Von Storben family is unharmed, though hungry and extremely tired. Thankful for being rescued, the Von Storben family will likely have to seek shelter at the local temple of Ezra due mostly in part to having everything they owned destroyed. Unless the party helps them financially, the only way the Von Storbens will be able to survive is to take out another hefty loan from one of the prominent families before they can rebuild their lives. Giving money to the Von Storben's should equal about 1 experience point per 5 gold given and is a one time thing. Giving money to the Von Storbens will reduce that character's OR by 1 point.

**Experience:** Rescuing the Von Storben family grant each character 150 experience points.

## Area 12 – Eldrynn’s Mausoleum

Eldrynn chose the largest Mausoleum as his own living quarters. Inside he has managed to create a comfortable bed out of a coffin and his bed roll, along with using other coffins

### STYGIAN – THE PHANTOM STALLION

If the party mentions the black stallion that they saw at the Von Storben ranch, Drakeve will say that the horse’s name is Stygian. They had purchased the horse from a stranger. They didn’t know much about the man, save that he was kind in demeanor and spoke Falkovian fluently. He sold them the horse, saying that it no longer needed it, and since they were in the market for a stud, they were more than willing to cut a deal. They too felt that there was something strange about that horse, but hadn’t noticed anything particular that would denote it as supernatural. They will ask that if the party happens across it, if they could please return it, as the horse is the last of their belongings.

for things such as tables and stools. Inside he has a wooden chest with an average lock (DC 25) where he keeps all the loot he has acquired through raiding and the money given to him by his employer to aid in harassing the outlying farms of Hollow’s Creek: *Chest 626 gold, 52 silver, 83 copper, x2 silver rings 2 gold each, Elsa Von Storben’s engagement ring 50 gp, x2 pair of copper earrings 1 gold each, x7 dust of tracelessness.* Also hidden in a secret compartment in the chest [Search DC 12], the party will find a crumpled parchment from Eldrynn Lorean’s mysterious employer [see Player’s Handout 1, in the Appendix]

Only Eldrynn has ever spoken with his employer, a man constantly

hiding his face from beneath a heavy black cowl, matching robes, and an iron mask. The bandits have been all too careful in avoiding him, as for some reason they fear him even greater than they do their tyrannical leader. They believe that it was this mysterious man who came up with the idea of using the local’s fears against them. They were told to dress up as the undead, in order to scare the locals, but the strangest part was that they were instructed to remove the eyes of everything they kill. They do not know the story behind it, but they just know that the removal of eyes has something to do with the dark past of Hollow’s Creek; that the deed itself is so horrifying to the locals, that it would give even the Lord-Major nightmares.

**Eldrynn’s Personal Guard:** Human War 2; CR 2; SizeM humanoid (human); HD 2d8+4; hp 15; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 14 (touch 11, flatfooted 13); Atk +5 melee (1d6+2, crit 18-20/x2 rapier); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 11.

*Skills and Feats:* Intimidate +2, Hide -1, Listen +4, Move Silently -1, Ride (horse) +3, Sense Motive +2, Spot +4; Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms); *Possessions:* Rapier, black leather armor of skeletal disguise, dagger, flintlock pistol, 10 shots.

**Eldrynn Lorean:** Male Ftr 5; CR 5; medium humanoid (Elf); HD 5d10+5; hp 37; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 14, flatfooted 14; Base Atk +5; Grp +7; Atk +9 (1d6+4/18-20 x2 Masterwork cold iron rapier) or +9 (1d8+2/x3, masterwork composite longbow [+2 Str bonus]); SQ Low-light vision, elf traits; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 14, Chr 13.

*Skills and Feats:* Intimidate +7, Hide +5, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Ride (horses) +5, Sense Motive +3, Spot +3; Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier)

*Possessions:* Masterwork cold iron rapier, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus), masterwork silver dagger, ring of keys, flintlock

pistol, 10 shots, 20 arrows, studded leather armor +1, helm of the horses skull

#### HELM OF THE HORSES SKULL

The helmet is fashioned from a horses skull with a black plume made of a horse's tail jetting from its back cranium. The helms grotesque appearance increases the outcast rating of any who wears it by +2. The helm grants its wearer a +1 dodge bonus to armor class and a +1 bonus to reflex saving throws.

If the alarm is sounded, Eldrynn will immediately find out from one of his personal guard why the camp is on alert. Once he finds out that they are under attack, he will immediately head for the Von Storben babe Yafee, and hold it hostage beneath the barrel of his pistol. He will use the child as leverage in order to get the player characters to drop their weapons and surrender to him. He will give them only once chance, and if they refuse he will kill the child on a held action and then quick draw his rapier. He will try to organize his men to first take out any magic casters, then rogues, and finally the remaining fighters. If there are any elves in the party he will prefer to render unconscious. Whether he keeps the other elf as a captive prisoner for personal company, or sells them into slavery is up to the DM.

Eldrynn will prefer to fight to the death, scoffing at any chances of surrendering. He refuses to give the party any information regarding his contact, fearing his employer more than being handed to a frenzying Mordent mob. If captured, Eldrynn will try and find the quickest means to end his life, knowing full well that death is a better place than having waiting in the dark for

his mysterious employer to come for him. Regardless, Eldrynn knows very little about his employer, as he refused to give out a name, nor show his face. All Eldrynn knows is that he pays extremely well, that he has a slight limp in his walk, and that he smells of the swamp. Beyond being told to murder the townsfolk and all horses that he came across, Eldrynn is as clueless as the players. Eldrynn claims he is a native from Sithicus, but had met his mysterious employer at the Mutinied Sailor in Port-a-Lucine in Dementlieu. Eldrynn is an arrogant man who despises humans among all things. He prefers hiring humans above all other races, so that he can vent his hatreds on his men, and encourage them to harm others of their race. The only race he truly trusts is other elves. If there is an elf in the adventuring party, then all interrogations done by that elf is granted a +2 circumstance bonus on finding out information from Eldrynn.

# Accolades and Reprisals

*W*hen the characters return, after having defeated the bandits, Laton Cuvier congratulates them for a job well done; relieved to see the Von Storbens still alive. Laton will tell the party that they will be in need of rest, and it may take him some time to ensure that the threat has been completely eliminated. He and a collection of guards will investigate the old graveyard themselves (if the party hadn't asked for their help originally) to confirm their story. Once that has been accomplished, Laton Cuvier will notify the noble families and arrange for the party to receive their reward.

The Von Storbens are a different matter entirely. With no home to return to, and little money left, they are forced to take refuge in the *Temple of Prevailing Light* until they are able to secure a loan. If the party gave them money to help them by, they will use this as a down payment on supplies and begin to rebuild their home. They are grateful that they still have their health and are lucky to have not been sold into slavery. The Von Storbens claim that they owe the party an unpayable debt, but to let them know that if they ever need anything, all they have to do is ask.

## Heroes of Hollow's Creek

After the sheriff returns, he will bring the party good news concerning their reward. Instead of simply handing them the gold for their deeds, the Lord-Mayor Thaddeus Knox-Creed wishes to hold a town-wide celebration to be held

in their honor. It is at this celebration where the party will be presented their hard earnings in front of the entire town, by the respective nobles. Laton is instructed not to take "no" for an answer, and until all the preparations are finished the so-called heroes of Hollow's Creek will have their room and board provided for at the Lord-Mayor's expense.

The jubilation will take a couple of days to prepare for. The event will include a feasting, drinking, and a bit of foolery – a reprieve from the recent horrors.

**Experience:** Completing this section of the adventure gifts the player characters 250 experience points each.

## Dire Prophecies of Warning

Before the celebration is had, the party has plenty of time to restock their supplies and will find that the shop owners are more than happy to extend the party a line of credit until they are rewarded for their services to the town. However, just as everything seems save the old mid-wife, Hanna Gibings, will approach them with a prophecy spawned from her personal nightmares. Read the following to the party:

*An old woman calls out to you from beneath a tattered shawl, her face covered in heavy wrinkles, and a red scarf covers her right eye. Her hair is like spider silk that drapes about her face like a sable and in her hand she carries a warped cane. She points a gnarled finger [...continued]*

*in your direction and bellows “A plague descends across Hollow’s Creek! A past infection has come to afflict old wounds. Be wary travelers, as none are safe from his damning touch! All shall be as dust and the eyes of his victims shall bring about the end of all that is innocent!”*

Questioning her about her meaning will only end with her claiming that she has told them too much, and that there are eyes everywhere. If they wish to speak with her privately, she is more than willing to give them the directions to her cottage located in the northern portions of the swamp.

If the party decides to entreat her request, Hanna Gibings will tell them that they’d best leave Hollow’s Creek as quickly as they are able. She will claim that Hollow’s Creek suffers beneath a horrible curse, whose very nature acts like a plague, spreading to all those it touches. And that if they know what is good for them, they’d best flee from this town and never return. If asked about the nature of the curse, she will proceed to relate a tale:

*“Everyone who comes here is touched by it in one particular way or another. Some tend to escape without as much as witnessing the horror of its work, but others have suffered much more. I dream terrible things, things that I wish would be forgotten as easily as the rest of the village actively pursues. I speak of the one the villagers call the Eye Thief. Five years ago, this very village toiled beneath [continued]*

*the fear of his knife, as entire families were butchered in their own homes, their bodies deformed, and their eyes removed. Something far sinister than simple malice, greed, or sadism motivated him... had spurred him into committing such atrocities.*

*The higher families had to call upon an outsider, like yourselves, to help them in the murderers capture. Unfortunately my memory of him waned immediately after his departure, and I have tried many times to inquire about his nature. But with his aid, the Eye-Thief was wounded, and chased into this very swamp. Here it was defeated, but the putrid waters swallowed up its corpse. Some say it uttered a curse before it disappeared beneath the muck, claiming it would return to finish its work, and enact revenge upon all those who harmed it. Since then I have been plagued with nightmares of ghoulish things... a rising hand from beneath the waters, rivers of blood, torture, and a horrible necklace of eyes dangling from a rotting corpse. I do not know what it all means, but I can feel my nightmares presence gripping others by the throat, lurking behind buildings, laying in wait to inflict others with some terrible affliction I know not what.*

*The higher families feel this as well, but refuse to acknowledge the possibility that the Eye-Thief may still be alive. All I know, is that there are dark powers at work here, powers beyond [continued]*

*...my comprehension.*

*If you do not wish to be counted amidst its victims, I suggest leaving as fast as you can and take refuge in what good you have brought this community. Else you may find yourselves pulled into whatever fate is in store for this village and all its inhabitants.”*

Any additional questions will be answered with little information on the exact nature of the Eye-Thief, its origins, or what revenge/work does it intend to pursue. Hanna will not openly lie to the player characters, but will not go into any more specifics. She will on-the-other-hand, tell them that they must use what information she has given them to either leave Hollow’s Creek or experience what comes for themselves. Already they are beginning to be pulled into the wolf’s maw, it’s ultimately their decision what occurs afterwards. A Sense Motive check [DC 14] will sense that she is sincere, but afraid. Hanna Gibings has already played her hand in the affair, and secretly wishes to have little else to do with it – as she feels that it partially her doing, by aiding in the birth of Sorgen, that lead to this mess in the first place. She believes that everyone has their role to fulfill, but it’s up to the player characters how they fill theirs.

## **The Phantom Maid**

The rest of this adventure will be continued in part II of “The Wailing Sorrow” called *The Phantom Maid*. It details the coming announcement of a family union between Cecil Harnasse and of course his betrothed Jacquelin Cuvier, desecration of the Harnasse

family tomb, and the investigation of one of Cecil’s merchant ships claimed to have sailed into the harbors of Port-a-Lucine in Dementlieu without crew – the only survivor being the prestigious Captain Abertson, currently held at a neighboring insane asylum.

## **Letter to the Reader**

As time permits, I will work diligently on producing the 2<sup>nd</sup> portion of this adventure. I look forward to all sorts of feedback on this adventure as it is my first publication. I am also very grateful that the Fraternity of Shadows is keeping the Ravenloft spirit alive. Ravenloft is my favorite campaign setting. I loved it in AD&D, under the sway of former TSR, and enjoyed the products owned by WOTC license to and produced by White Wolf.

I do hope that this will inspire others to try their hand at writing additional Ravenloft material, as well as keeping the interest in the Fraternity of Shadows.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathan Aspinwall". The signature is stylized with long, sweeping lines and a flourish at the end.

P.S. Forgive my shrewd drawings, I’ve rarely boasted artistic talent.

# Appendix

This section provides information on the notable figures of Hollow's Creek including a portion dedicated to Old Man Hollow and an adventure dedicated to him exclusively.

Sorgen, Stygian or Cereo Ryder will not be included in this appendix due to their importance later on in the next adventures. They will be printed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final part of this adventure set.

The NPC's follow the following format in congruence with the *Ravenloft Gazetteers*:

**Statistics:** Contains detailed information on game statistics for the character. For all tense and purposes the character's native language is marked with an asterisk. If the NPC can cast spells, those they usually prepare are marked accordingly.

**Background:** History of the character.

**Current Sketch:** Regards the particular mannerisms of the said character.

**Combat:** Strategies in combat that the NPC tends to rely on when push comes to shove. Special attacks or abilities not listed in the *PHB*, *Ravenloft* sourcebook, or *Denizens of Darkness*, these will be listed also.

**Lair:** The characters dwelling or other most-frequented home.

## Flint Ambrose

**Male Human Exp3/Ftr3:** CR 4; Size M humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD

3d6+3d10+18; hp 41; Int +4 (*Improved Initiative*); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (touch 12, flat-footed 12); Atk +6 melee (1d6+3, *MW scimitar*), or +7 ranged (1d10, *MW flintlock pistol*); SA -none-; SQ -none-; AL CG; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 13.

**Skills and Feats:** Appraise +5, Balance +4, Bluff +10, Climb +7, Diplomacy +7, Forgery +4, Gather Information +5, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +4, Jump +4, Knowledge (sailing) +5, Listen +4, Profession (merchant) +8, Ride +1, Sense Motive +2, Spot +4, Swim +7; Alertness, Exotic Weapon Prof. (firearms), Improved Initiative, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Bluff), Weapon Focus (scimitar).

**Languages:** \*Lamordian, Falkovnian, Mordentish, Rajian

**Signature Possessions:** Masterwork scimitar, x2 masterwork flintlock pistols, *bracers of armor* +2, *scabbard of keen edges*.

Flint has hair as red as a Forfarian and cheeks that blush with similar color when he's drunk. His Mordentish is flavored with a Lamordian accent, and his language is colored by the sea. He is a paunchy fellow, that is kept dressed in the Mordentish garb, but appears at-odds with his choice in clothing. His eyes are a deep brown set, whilst his skin as paler than white-washed church. Flint looks to be somewhere in his mid-thirties, but his beard and mustache tends to add a few years to his features.

## Background

Flint Ambrose came to Hollow's Creek 8 months ago having bought the old Gaulstaff estate called *Silver Swan*. He has lead the locals to believe that his purpose in Hollow's Creek is to expand his trading opportunities from the coast, and move his goods a bit further inland for a decent profit.

Flint was born in Lamordia as a merchant's son in 737, and took over the business when his father grew too old for the sea. Since then he has been an aspiring merchant, and has made many friends in his career.

Flint learned about Hollow's Creek from an old friend of his named Captain Fredrick Albertson, who was allegedly partnered with a nobleman named Cecil Harnasse during the shipping incident. Flint cannot stand the rural life of Hollow's Creek and longs to return to the Sea of Sorrows, however his loyalty to his incarcerated friend keeps his presence close to Cecil. Cecil is not aware of Flint's purpose here, and neither does he know about Flint's prior affiliations with Captain Albertson. He is trying to find out as much information as he can without giving himself away, and without arousing suspicion. Flint does not know whether or not Cecil Harnasse had anything to do with the shipping incident, but he does know that Cecil is at least making some attempts in discovering the cause. Whether this is Cecil's means of covering up a guilty conscious or if he is sincere about his concerns, is a matter still left undiscovered.

## Current Sketch

Flint is a cheerful man. He gives little head to proper etiquette, and feels

that propriety is overrated. However, he does his best not to disrespect those he wishes to impress. And occasionally he's been known to be extremely generous when things go his way.

Despite his social flaws he is slow to trust, but quick to reward those he does with unquestionable loyalty. Whenever a friend is in trouble, he will go to any extent to get them out. For this, he has many connections and is not afraid to use them when times get rough.



## Combat

Though rarely faced with it, Flint adores a good fight. He doesn't take kindly to people who push others around and due to his brutish nature has been in several bar fights.

When threatened with dire odds Flint will open up with his flintlock pistols and only switch to his scimitar if melee is the only option. Flint absolutely despises Spellcasters and prefers take them out first before turning on fighters.

If outnumbered Flint will retreat until he can find a tactical advantage. And if defeat rears its head, Ambrose will find the best means of escape – if not only to cause his enemies more grief later on.

## Lair

Ambrose currently lives at the old *Silver Swan* estate south of the docks. The Arden River gives him some solace, but the river is nothing in comparison to the lure of the sea. For the most of it *Silver Swan* is still decrepit since the Gaulstaff mysterious leave over thirty years ago.

The locals claim that the previous family had internal conflicts and incestuous affairs that lead to their eventual flight. Though great contributors to the community, the problems they incurred, especially with their association with illegal goods and smugglers, does not afford them to be missed.

Flint rarely stays at *Silver Swan* as he occasionally finds himself upriver at Blackburn's Crossing in the arms of some pretty maid. But the time he has spent in *Silver Swan* has been filled with nightmarish dreams, feelings of being watched, and the occasional bump in the night.

## Johnathan Coleridge

**Male Human Ari5/Ftr1:** CR 4; Size M humanoid (5 ft. 11 in. tall); HD 4d8+1d10+5; hp 31; Int +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (touch 13, flat-footed 11); Atk +6 melee (1d6+1, *MW rapier*), or +6 ranged (1d10, *flintlock pistol*); SA -none-; SQ -none-; AL NG; SV Fort +4,

Ref +3, Will +9; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 16.

**Skills and Feats:** Appraise +7, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +5, Forgery +5, Gather Information +6, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (domains) +4, Knowledge (alchemy) +10, Knowledge (noble families) +4, Listen +7, Ride +7, Sense Motive +11, Spot +7, Survival +5; Exotic Weapon Prof. (firearms), Iron Will, Negotiator, Skill Focus (Kmw:Alchemy), Weapon Focus (rapier).

**Languages:** Balok, Lamordian, Mordentish.

**Signature Possessions:** Masterwork rapier, flintlock pistol, *ring of protection* +1.



Johnathan holds a kind face to any who encounter him. Appearing roughly in his early forties, a few wrinkles and grey strands of hair have already begun to show. His hair is strawberry blonde and his skin is slightly tan from days out supervising the fields.

His eyes are grey, that oftentimes have been noted to reflect a kind of misty haze now and again, especially during high amounts of fog.

## **Background**

The 41 year old Johnathan Coleridge is married to Elizabeth Coleridge and has a single daughter named Alice a paladin of Ezra currently adventuring in Darkon last he heard. A horrible carriage accident killed both his sister and her husband leaving he and his family in the care of his sisters' only daughter Annabell Laymond. The Coleridge family came to Hollow's Creek in 621 with hope of establishing a firm trading relationship with the southern domains. Since his parents death, Johnathan Coleridge has acted in accordance with his parents wishes and continues to inhabit his residence at Haven Ridge.

After hearing the mysterious events surrounding the disappearance of the Mournsworth family and dear friends of his family, Jonathan became obsessed with finding the cause to their "abduction". This obsession has manifested in his interest in all things alchemical. The Coleridge family has spared no expense in the past few years on acquiring ancient books on alchemy, occasionally employing Axle Rowgrim in locating the very same items. Currently he suspects that the Blackburn-Bruce family has not entirely vanished as officials have claimed, and believes that by locating a remaining relative, that he might just be able to solve the mysterious surrounding the Mournsworth.

In regards to his role in the running of Hollow's Creek, Johnathan has always been quick to offer his

services as an acting magistrate whenever the Lord-Mayor was preoccupied to be bothered with minor affairs. Johnathan has also been responsible for many generous donations of money to the *Church of Prevailing Light* as well as offer loans to local businesses in times of need.

During the year of 753, when the Eye-Thief (Sorgen) started on his murdering streak, he along with the other noble families of Hollow's Creek rallied together to hunt him down. Unfortunately their combined skills were no match for Sorgen and had to hire a man by the name of Cereo Ryder (though his name is elusive to Johnathan for some unknown reason). With his help, the noble families devised a plan in which to capture Sorgen. During this ambush, Johnathan was the man who volunteered to lay waiting in Philip Harnasse's coffin armed with only a set of pistols and his rapier. It was when Sorgen pried open the tomb that Johnathan managed to wound him. When Sorgen fled, Johnathan along with the rest of the nobles followed him into the swamp, but became lost enough to be separated from the Lord-Mayor Thaddeus Knox-Creed. It was not until he heard the sound of battle, that he was able to follow the noise and witness the final moments of the struggle between Sorgen and Thaddeus, as Sorgen disappeared completely within a sinkhole. Since then Johnathan has had his reservations about whether or not Sorgen was gone for good, as after trudging the swamp they were unable to find his body. Something additional has been bothering him about that night, as he does not remember Thaddeus following them directly into the swamp and somehow managed to cut Sorgen off before they did. Being how difficult the

swamp is to navigate, he is unsure to leave it alone as happenstance, or if something else had occurred that night that he had missed.

## Current Sketch

Johnathan is a gentleman through and through. Propriety and honor is what dictates his every action, and is always willing to add to his knowledge base on any topic. Though kind and compassionate, Johnathan likes his privacy and tends to keep away from the eyes of others for weeks at a time. His pursuit of knowledge, especially concerning information on either the Blackburn-Bruce or Mournesworth family is 2<sup>nd</sup> only to his family. He has a tolerance for people that supersedes most Mordent inhabitants, and believes in the general good of others.

## Combat

Johnathan prefers to avoid combat at all costs. Instead he tries to rely mostly on his diplomacy skills, and the occasional bluff to dissuade his enemies. However, if put in a situation where combat is inevitable, he opens up combat with a shot from his pistol and then engages in melee with his rapier. If alone, he will try every opportunity he can get to flee (as he is aware that he is no skilled fighter). If protecting someone, he will strive at every moment to secure their escape before disengaging himself.

There has been a few times in his life where he has been forced to violence, and when given a choice he will volunteer himself if it means sparing someone else the burden of combat.

## Lair

The majority of the time Johnathan prefers the isolation of his family estate called Haven Ridge. It is a decent mansion made of a grey wood, and a ceramic-tiled roof built on the top of a hill. Due to the location of his home to the South Road, Haven Ridge is the first line of defense against any western invasion. A strong wooden palisade has been built around the proximity of the mansion and is guarded by a few hired guardsmen to be on the look-out for any threat to neighboring farmsteads, Haven Ridge, or Hollow's Creek itself.

## Jacqueline Cuvier

**Female Human Ari1:** CR 1/2; Size M humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1d8; hp 5; Int +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (touch 11, flat-footed 10); Atk +0 melee (1d2, *unarmed*); SA - none-; SQ -none-; AL LG; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 18.

**Skills and Feats:** Bluff +6, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +5, Handle Animal +5, Knowledge (local) +5, Knowledge (domains) +4, Knowledge (religion) +6, Knowledge (noble families) +4, Listen +5, Ride +2, Sense Motive +6, Spot +5; Alertness, Skill Focus (Kmw: Religion).

**Languages:** Balok, Darkonese, Lamordian, \*Mordentish, Vaasi,

**Signature Possessions:** A silver locket with Cecil Harnasse's engraving inside.

Jacqueline has just recently turned 17 years of age and carries the cloak of youth about her wherever she goes. Her skin is soft, as smooth as rich

buttermilk and her exceptionally long blonde hair has been admired in most gossip circles. Her features are angular, a distinctive characteristic of the Cuvier line, which goes to suggest that the Cuvier's may have a bit of fey blood added to them sometime in the distant family history.

The young daughter of Cuvier's walks with an unnatural grace, and her presence always tend to captivate the attentions of whatever room she happens to inhabit. Her blue eyes is enough to melt even the most harden of hearts.

## Background

Jacqueline Cuvier was born in 741 to Laton and Merianna Cuvier. As part of a proposed family alliance between the Harnasse family and their own, Jacqueline was betrothed out to the eldest Harnasse son Cecil when she was six years old. Since then she has been raised knowing she would be married to Cecil and has grown used to the whole idea. In fact, over the years her and Cecil have become fairly well acquainted with each other (while always in the presence of a chaperone) and she has fallen in love with her future husband – despite the arranged marriage.

As a young child Jacqueline was eagerly rebellious, preferring to slip away from her life at *Chateau de Cuvier* and explore the south road and outlying farmsteads alone. When she was twelve years of age, she came upon the shy caliban during one of his secret-outings away from the Pendlefern Ranch. She saw no malice in the horribly deformed and quite alien Sorgen, and befriended him rightfully. Fearful that she might be discovered away from home, she always met with Sorgen in secret, away from the prying eyes of others. Slowly Jacqueline

grew attached to her new playmate and even made excuses to spirit off from the boring world of politics and schooling to meet with her exotic friend. However, on a day that they were scheduled to meet, Sorgen didn't show up, and neither did he on all the other days afterward. She gave up hope of ever seeing her friend again once her household caught news of the Pendlefern murders, and for her safety she was sent away with her mother to live in Dementlieu with relatives until Hollow's Creek was safer.

Jacqueline's marriage with Cecil has been postponed for many years, mostly due in fact to Cecil's mourning for his youngest brother Philip's death. Just recently, Cecil has proposed a marriage date and she is overly excited for the upcoming day.



## Current Sketch

Jacquelin has had proper upbringing and knows what people expect out of a woman of her social

class. She is quite, reserved, good-natured and tends to appreciate the simple parts of life.

She now realizes how foolish she was as a child, but has made up for it with absolute dedication to her family and innocent counsel she bestows on those who ask for it. Though young by social standards, Jacquelin is not naïve and understands more than she lets on. She hasn't quite put together that the infamous Eye-Thief was none other than her childhood friend Sorgen, but has pieced together his ghoulish deeds from the bits and pieces she hears from the manor staff.

She is also one of Hollow's Creek's most pious worshippers of Ezra. She believes that by setting a fine example, that many others will flock to Ezra's guidance. Occasionally she can be found (with escort) at the *Temple of Prevailing Light* going reading from the book of Ezra or seeking the aid of soon-to-be brother-in-law Abril Harnasse in prayer.

## Combat

Jacqueline does not know how to fight, nor has she ever been subjected to like-activities such as hunting or weapons-practice like the noble gentlemen. If threatened with harm she will scream for help, and flee if given the chance.

## Lair

For the majority of her lifetime Jacqueline has lived with her mother and father at their estate *Chateau de Cuvier* in Hollow's Creek. It is a finely constructed mansion fit with a stable house, servants quarters and a lovely apple orchid near the gardens. A five-

foot stone wall encircles the front grounds, and the perimeter is watched over by a couple groundskeepers and hired guardsmen, in case of robbers.

*Chateau de Cuvier* is shielded from the sights of the village by a set of steep hills, but is only a short horse ride away in case of emergencies.

## Sheriff, Laton Cuvier

**Male Human Ari1/Ftr4:** CR 4; Size M humanoid (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 1d8+4d10+10; hp 43; Int +7 (+3 Dex, +4 *Improved Initiative*); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (touch 13, flat-footed 14); Atk +9 melee (1d6+2, *rapier +1*), or +8 ranged (1d10, *MW flintlock pistols*); SA -none-; SQ -none-; AL LG; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 15.

**Skills and Feats:** Appraise +5, Bluff +7, Climb +3, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +9, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +4, Jump +2, Knowledge (local) +5, Knowledge (domains) +5, Knowledge (noble families) +4, Listen +6, Ride +5, Search +5, Sense Motive +8, Spot +7, Survival +4; Exotic Weapon Prof. (firearms), Improved Initiative, Investigator, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (rapier).

**Languages:** Balok, Elven, Folkovnian, Lamordian, \*Mordentish

**Signature Possessions:** *Rapier +1*, mithril chain shirt, x2 masterwork flintlock pistols, hooded-lantern.

Laton keeps his stature appearing formidable and domineering. He constantly stands with his back straight, his eyes narrow, and a consistent gentleman appeal radiating from his person. He shares similar characteristics to his daughter: blonde hair, blue eyes. But his facial features aren't as

prominently angular as the rest of his family line. His ears, on-the-other-hand are slightly pointed, betraying an elven heritage.



## Background

The Cuvier family settled in Hollow's Creek in 614. During this time they held a strong relationship with the Creedence family (now Knox-Creed) and were enticed to move to the untamed south away from the harsh politics of Dementlieu and with promising opportunities of trade with Richemulot, Valachan and Verbrek.

It was Laton's father who was the previous sheriff of Hollow's Creek until his natural death in 747. Afterwards Laton eagerly took up the family tradition and became the official sheriff of Hollow's Creek and for those 11 years of service he has proved to be as dedicated as his father was.

Laton is married to Merianna and they together have a daughter named Jacqueline. Eager to expand his families

influence over Hollow's Creek (especially due to the degradation of the Lord-Mayor) has decided to give up his daughter in marriage to the Harnasse family's eldest son Cecil. He believes that the betrothal was made in haste due to financial and political desperation at the time, but after seeing how well the two fated interact with one another, he would now have it no other way.

Laton headed the investigation in 753 against the case of the Eye-Thief. He learned that the murderer was named Sorgen, a caliban child (one of Mordent's wailing children) under the care of the Pendleferns. He believes what sparked the caliban's initial decision to murder his adopted family was due to the father's tendencies toward abuse. But is unsure of why he decided to kill a large number of other families and the reason behind the taking of his victims' eyes. Laton witnessed the death of Cecil Harnasse's brother Philip during a failed surprise ambush by he, Laton and several members of the watch. Laton has been feeling guilty ever since, but has been reassured by the Harnasse family that it wasn't his fault – especially since Philip volunteered. It was this very same guilt that lead him to employ the mysterious Cureo Ryder (though Laton suffers from being unable to remember his name). He even was part of the trap construed by Ryder, waiting in the shadows for the caliban to open Philips coffin – occupied by Johnathan Coleridge.

Since the abduction of the Von Storbens and the mutilation of their horses, Laton has unofficially reopened the case on the Eye-Thief. He believed that the creature had been destroyed, his body forever lost in an unmarked sinkhole, but with recent events he is thrown in doubt.

## Current Sketch

Laton is thorough in every investigation, preferring to never take any chances especially when there are innocents at stake. His biggest fear is in losing someone he is close to, and tries his hardest to ensure the safety of those he considers close friends and family.

Laton takes his job seriously, is suspicious, stern, but kind and forthright. He commands respect, and demands it from everyone he deals with – especially adventurers. He is a gentleman who is honorable, patient, but has no time for foolery.

## Combat

Laton is a formidable foe in combat, he anticipates his enemies with a keen precision that oftentimes lures them into pre-lain traps. He is very intelligent, and prefers to use his surroundings to his benefit whenever possible.

He keeps two pistols on him at all times, preferring to fire the first shot at notable adversaries and saving the second for unexpected developments.

When innocence are threatened, he does his best to protect them as best as possible, even if that means surrendering himself to ensure their immediate escape. Laton is no fool, and does not give up when circumstances point to a gruesome end.

## Lair

Laton lives with his wife, daughter, and hired servants/guardsmen at his family's estate at *Chateau de Cuvier* just south of Hollow's Creek. Though the majority of the time he can

be found at the city jail, or wandering the streets of Hollow's Creek ensuring that all is in order.

## Father Abril Harnasse

**Male Human Ari2/Cleric3:** CR 4; Size M humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 3d8+2d8+5; hp 37; Int +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (touch 11, flat-footed 10); Atk +5 melee (1d8+1, *longsword +1*), or +5 ranged (1d4, sling); SA *spells*, turn undead; SQ *shield of Ezra*; AL LG; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 17.

**Skills and Feats:** Bluff +3, Concentration +5, Diplomacy +7, Gather Information +5, Handle Animal +5, Heal +8, Knowledge (arcane) +5, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (domains) +5, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (noble families) +4, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +5, Ride +3 Search +6, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +6, Spot +5; Brew Potion, Martial Weapon Prof. (*longsword*), Scribe Scroll.

**Languages:** Balok, Darkonese, \*Mordentish.

**Cleric Spells Per Day:** 4|3+1/2+1. Base DC = 13 + spell level, 14 + spell level for spells of the Healing Domain. *Domains:* Mist, Healing

**Memorized Spells:** 0-*Cure minor wounds, Detect Magic, Light, Read Magic*; 1-*Obscuring Mist, Bless Water, Remove Fear, Shield of Faith*; 2-*Fog Cloud, Lesser Restoration, \*Reflect Pain*.

\* Spells found in Chapter 2 of **Van Richten's Arsenal**

**Signature Possessions:** x2 *cure light wounds scrolls*, x2 *cure moderate wounds potions*, holy-symbol, x2 vials of holy water, *longsword +1*



Abril is a young man, 25 years of age with jet black hair and brown eyes. His youthful ambition has been replaced with faith-filled conviction. Despite his age, Abril has absorbed much of his predecessor's resolve and has added it to his personal charisma in hopes of raising the religious devotee's in Hollow's Creek.

## **Background**

Abril is the 2<sup>nd</sup> brother of the Harnasse family line and since birth he has been trained beneath Father Abrasius Edgerton a devote priest of Ezra. Since his eldest brother would inherit the majority of his families wealth, he graciously accepted his annual stipend and consigned himself to the church. After his mentors early death, instead of fumbling about due to inexperience, Abril immediately took to his role as spiritual provider for the community. Since, his advice and leadership has

been compared to the Lord-Mayor himself during his glory days.

Abril had little to do with the events surrounding the Eye-Thief until his younger brother Philip was murdered. It was directly after saying the last rights that sparked an overly zealousness in him to root out the evil that plagued Hollow's Creek and ensure that the creature was destroyed. During the ambush against Sorgen in the Harnasse family tomb, Abril was responsible for tending to the wounded, despite his desire for vengeance.

After the initial struggle, Abril was separated from his comrades in arms and tried desperately to add his powers to the cause. It was then that he stumbled across a necklace of eyes that Sorgen was trying to complete. The artifact reeked of evil magics, and no matter how hard he tried he could not dismiss or destroy it. Believing the object to be outside his power, he began to feel dark compulsions reaching out toward him and has battled fiercely against its tainted influence. In desperation, Abril buried the accursed item in a vault beneath the church. In the years to come, Abril spends every resource in protective wards to keep the artifacts powers from growing and researching a means for its destruction.

Though a part of the church of Ezra father Edgerton died before he had the chance of introducing the young Abril Harnasse to any contacts in the church hierarchy. Though desperate to destroy the object, Abril is at odds with whom he can trust. He believes the thing to be beyond the scope and will of his fellows and has kept the artifact secret from anyone who may try and use the artifact for evil purposes.

## Current Sketch

Abril has been increasingly tired of late, Sorgen's necklace of eyes has become ever more dangerous over the past few months. He feels that the object is calling out to its master or anyone foolish enough to claim it as their own and has put all his efforts into reinforcing the wards protecting the lower vaults.

His eyes are red with stress and his moods have been more on edge than usual. He insists on having the weekly services and continues to give counsel as best as he can. Beyond the normal scope of duty, Abril cannot function – and refuses to leave the confines of the church. If asked about his condition he shrugs it off as simply the stress of his occupation and similarly claims that he is just too preoccupied to assist in any other endeavor.

## Combat

When threatened with mortal danger Abril will open the round with the *shield of Ezra* ability and proceed in casting a *reflect pain* spell. If he has a round to prepare, he will also cast *shield of faith* to increase his armor class. If ever outnumbered he will prefer to cast *obscuring mist* or *fog cloud* to ensure a quick escape. If faced with a supernatural threat he will attempt to face it head-on—using his magical longsword to bypass any damage reduction—or if out matched he will attempt to flee and rally the locals to his aid.

**Special Qualities – *Shield of Ezra*:** 1/day may call a film of luminous mist to envelop the cleric's body for 1 round per level of the cleric. The shield

grants a 25/magic damage reduction against metal weapons.

## Lair

Abril Harnasse owns a quaint home in the village, but rarely does he spend any of his time there. Recently he has moved some of his things into Father Edgerton's old room and has taken residency in the *Temple of Prevailing Light*.

Due to the growing strength of the *necklace of eyes* Abril has been keeping himself readily available in case any of the wards start to wane.

## Cecil Harnasse

**Male Human Ari4:** CR 3; Size M humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 4d8+8; hp 32; Int +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (touch 12, flat-footed 10); Atk +4 melee (1d6+1, MW rapier), or +7 ranged (1d10, MW pistols); SA -none-; SQ -none-; AL LN; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 16.

**Skills and Feats:** Appraise +7, Bluff +5, Diplomacy +8, Forgery +4, Gather Information +6, Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcane) +5, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (domains) +5, Knowledge (noble families) +5, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +3, Ride +7, Search +1, Sense Motive +7, Spot +3, Survival +3

**Languages:** Balok, Elven, Falkovnian, Darkonese, \*Mordentish.

**Signature Possessions:** Masterwork Rapier, Masterwork Pistol, Locket with Jacqueline Cuvier's engraving.



Cecil Harnasse is a tall man that tends toward dark-slimming colors. His hair is a jet black, which is usually kept back in a pony-tail. His sideburns are kept long and his eyes are a dark brown. He is 28 years of age, though he left behind his age a long time ago due to his parents demanding expectations.

## Background

Cecil Harnasse grew up under the scrutiny and strict governance of his parents. Since he is the eldest brother, he is considered first in-line for the inheritance after his parents pass. Cecil's childhood was filled with harsh schooling, strict rules, and hard tradition. Cecil's only reprieve from his demanding life, was the young Jacqueline Cuvier – daughter of Laton Cuvier and his intended. The children got along exceptionally well, and when it came time for courtship there was very little that the parents of either family had

to encourage, as everything came along naturally.

The year of 753 bought nothing but pain for the eldest Harnasse. As one day after noticing his betrothed sneaking off from her home at *Chateau de Cuvier*, he followed her to an isolated area where he discovered her rendezvous with the young Sorgen. Outraged that Jacqueline would have anything to do with such a creature, partially fearful of its unnatural nature, and partially jealous of her newly acquired friend, Cecil plotted a means to scare off the treacherous caliban from ever seeing her again. Partnered with his youngest brother Philip, Cecil intercepted the young caliban before his next rendezvous. Cecil roped and dragged the young caliban from his horse, swearing that if he'd ever catch him near Jacqueline again that he'd hang him from his throat. To further his point he reared his horse mere inches from Sorgen—a trick he had taught his horse, and practiced many times before. Something went wrong, and for some reason he lost control of his horse and nearly trampled the poor caliban to death. Fearful of repercussions from supernatural sources – as those who harm one of mordent's wailing children are prone to the evil forces that created them – Cecil and his brother Philip withdraw and leave the (thought dead) caliban to rot.

It isn't until a few months later when after the Pendlefern murders that he learns the horror of his deeds. When the Eye-Thief escapes from murdering his younger brother Philip, he identifies the killer as the creature his horse accidentally trampled. Cecil later joins with the rest of the nobles along with the mysterious Cureo Ryder (who's name eludes Cecil to this day) and helps to set ambush for the evil beast.

Even with Sorgen's eventual defeat, Cecil still wakes from nightmares involving the trampled caliban, his horse and his brothers murder. To this day he feels that he played a hand in his brother's demise and has been trying to find a means to bring his brother back to life. Some say that Cecil has been taking far too many risks with his business ventures of late. Every attempt at a resurrection has failed, as little does he know that the knife that slew him must be present to return his soul to his body. Cecil has spent nearly a fortune in locating books and magical items that offer life to the dead, but so far his work has been all for nothing.

### **Current Sketch**

As always Cecil's only reprieve from his guilty conscience and hardships of managing the family estate (without going into bankruptcy due to his research) is the beautiful Jacqueline Cuvier. He believes that his time of mourning should no longer delay their marriage and with the Cuvier dowry can expand his research even further.

Cecil is a hard man driven by his ambitions to succeed and to continue his family legacy. His only weakness comes from his guilt for Philip. When conversing his face remains monotonous, but not due to a flaw in personality. Cecil is a hard man to read and he prefers to keep it that way. The only one he ever reveals his feelings to is his beloved childhood playmate Jacqueline.

Though stern like his parents, Cecil is not evil, nor does he harbor maliciousness towards others for his strict upbringing. He believes in necessary evils that must be done in order to

sustain family tradition, wealth, prestige, and respect.

### **Combat**

Cecil is not a fighter in any shape or form. It was his younger brother Philip that was trained to be a soldier, and to eventually take up the responsibilities of Laton Cuvier once he retired. Therefore his own training has been overlooked. His only abilities in combat are attributed to the occasional fox hunt, and of course an occasional bout of swordplay for recreation.

If threatened Cecil will not hesitate to return the favor at the end of his pistol, and if things get dire enough he can be roused to his rapier. He would prefer to make use of his household guards and his influence with the Cuviers for protection.

### **Lair**

Cecil Harnasse lives at his family estate in Hollow's Creek, just south beneath Old Hollow's Hill called *Longshadow*. It is a three-story mansion with a stone foundation, with the rest of the house built of strong wood with a ceramic-tile roof. The entire estate is protected by a three foot stone wall (imported from the inner core) and an elaborate iron gate filters traffic to the estate itself.

The estate is comprised of the Harnasse mansion, stable house, pasture, kennels, servants quarters, guards quarters, and a few owned fields.

## Midwife, Hanna Gibings

**Female Human Adp3/Clr1:** CR 3; Size M humanoid (4 ft. 11 in. tall); HD 3d6+1d8; hp 17; Int +0 (+0 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 10 (touch 10, flat-footed 10); Atk +0 melee (1d6-1, gnarled cane); SA *spells*; SQ *familiar*; AL TN; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +9; Str 9, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 17, Wis 18, Cha 13.

**Skills and Feats:** Bluff +1, Concentration +2, Craft (medicine) +7, Diplomacy +3, Handle Animal +4, Heal +8, Listen +6, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (local) +5, Knowledge (nature) +7, Knowledge (religion) +5, Profession (herbalist) +8, Profession (midwife) +8, Search +4, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +6, Spot +4, Survival +6; *Alertness*, Brew Potion, Scribe Scroll, Craft Wonderous Item.

**Languages:** Balok, Draconic, Elven, Falcovnian, \*Mordentish,

**Adept Spells Per Day:** 3|3. Base DC = 14 + spell level

**Memorized Spells:** *0-light, mending, touch of fatigue; 1-burning hands, protection from evil, sleep.*

**Cleric Spells Per Day:** 4|2+1. Base DC = 14 + spell level. *Domains:* Magic, Plant.

**Memorized Spells:** *0-Cure minor wounds x2, Detect Magic, Read Magic; 1-Entangle, Command, Cause Fear*

**Signature Possessions:** *x2 cure light wounds scrolls, x2 cure light wounds potions, gnarled cane, holy-symbol of hala, \*ring of fearlessness +2, \*shawl of death's blindness, \*talismans of the competent man.*

Hanna Gibings is just sigh of 5 feet and walks with a gnarled cane. Her face is covered in wrinkles, whilst her right eye is covered with a red scarf –

protecting her empty socket from the harsh winds. Her hair is like spider-silk, grey and flutters about her in the smallest of breezes. Her lone eye is as grey as the mist, which is known to drift off toward something invisible over the shoulders of those she speaks with.



### Background

Hanna Gibings has served as Hollow's Creeks midwife for over fifty years. So long in fact that it was her who aided in the Harnasse brothers, Thaddeus Knox-Creed, and Jacqueline Cuvier's birth. She was born in Blackburn's Crossing and moved to the rural setting to get away from the city life. It was here that she discovered her unique abilities to heal and eventually became a servant to her goddess Hala. Very few know about Hanna's dedications to Hala, amidst the noble families only Thaddeus Knox-Creed knows of her religious affiliations. The

Knox-Creed family has turned to Hanna Gibings in cases of birth, prophetic financial advice, and in times of plague. Every time Hanna has been more than happy to extend them her services and wisdom. It is through these services that Hanna has assured her privacy and safety from persecution from those who mistrust witchcraft.

On a fateful October night in 738 Hanna was summoned to a remote portion of the northern swamp by a whispering wind. After trudging through the muck, nearly blind from the lack of moonlight, Hanna found herself at the mouth of an abandoned wolf's den. Inside laid a woman about to give birth. Inspired by pleas for help, Hanna was quick to aid the mother with her delivery, but was shocked when the babe turned out to be one of Mordents "howling ones"- a caliban. The mother named the child Sorgen. After the naming, Hanna was rewarded by the woman, claiming that she would be free from his influence – and would have no need to fear him in the future. It was then that Hanna realized that the wolf's den wasn't as abandoned as she thought, as she realized an abundance of eyes staring at them from the darkness of the fen. Soon Hanna was told to return to her cottage, and that her journey would be unimpeded.

It wouldn't be until later that night, that Hanna would truly realize the circumstances surrounding Sorgen's birth. Thaddeus Knox-Creed came to her that same night with the child in hand, pleading with her to care for it as it would be the ruin of his social-standings. After prying all the events surrounding the mysterious woman and the child with especial care in detail encompassing Thaddeus role and his associations, Hanna counseled him to reconsider and

care for the child. Despite her warnings, Thaddeus wished to be rid of all responsibilities regarding the child – and though hesitant, Hanna took the child as her own.

However, the night in the swamp rendered her incapable of caring for the caliban as she grew sick with the plague. Fearful that her fever would bring about her end, and quite possibly spread to the young babe, she advised that child be given to one of the tillers who owed Thaddeus a substantial debt – that by caring for the child, they will be forgiven of that debt as long as his origins are kept secret. Reluctantly Thaddeus agreed and the child was given into the care of a family of ranchers by the name of Pendlefern.

Hanna Gibings struggled for the next 2 years against the terrible disease that she contracted from the night of Sorgen's birth. She survived the affliction, but not without a horrible cost. Hanna lost her right eye to the disease and her muscles and health have fallen into decline. Hanna has only been able to keep herself alive through her extensive knowledge in herbs and medicines.

Something happened in the year of 753. Sorgen was but a distant memory to Hanna, but suddenly she began to have horrible nightmares involving the caliban child and a whispering void that threatened to swallow him whole. On the night of the Pendlefern murders, Hanna fell into a fit of convulsions on the cottage floor and saw all the horror that took place. Every night afterward she was haunted by additional visions of torture and blood, seeing exactly what Sorgen, the Eye-Thief saw as he brutally murdered his victims and harvested their eyes for a necklace to bear around his neck. It was

with her aid that Cureo Ryder (who's name is also lost in Hanna's memory) was able to know exactly when and where Sorgen would strike. After his defeat in the swamp, for one night in months she was free of the horrible visions. But the night of his demise, Hanna dreamt of his pale hand emerging from the waters of the sinkhole – since then she has only received tiny glimmers of his activities. It wasn't until the party's arrival in Hollow's Creek that marked the return of her nightmares. Every night she watches in horror to the events Sorgen is striving to set in motion. What is worse, is that she can hear a voice in the void of her nightmares speaking to her – warning her of things to come, but also threatening with a fate worse than death if she interferes.

## **Current Sketch**

Hanna Gibings is a wise woman that sees little joy in frivolous endeavors. Years of pain and anguish have taught her patience, and that in her existence every moment counts. She is not one to waste her time on fools, but is not one to insult or lecture.

These nights midwife Gibings is afraid. She fears the voice in the void, calling out to her the terrors of Sorgen's plan. Deep in her conscience she believes this voice to be the voice of death, and his threats only accompany her with thoughts of nothingness and a fate of eternal torment. Her very nature compels her not to act, and to allow things to move on their own accord, but dreads that if she doesn't do something – that everything will be swallowed by the darkness of the void.

## **Combat**

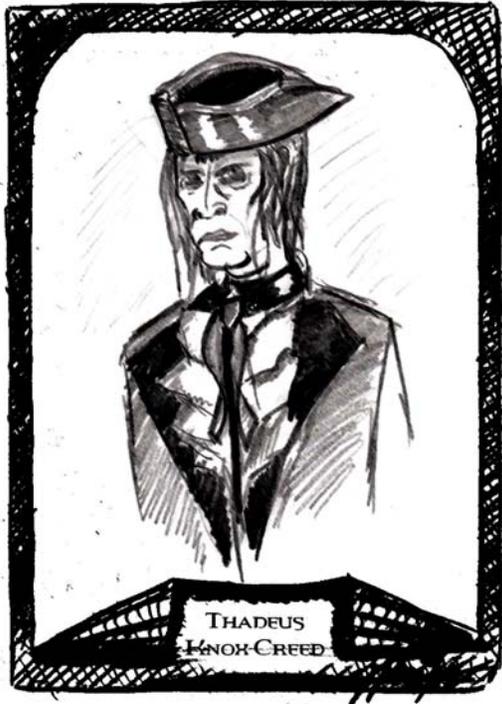
Hanna Gibings may seem like she is weak, but her magics have provided her with enough protections to life in the northern fen without fear of the creatures of the night. If threatened she will use every spell at her disposal to incapacitate her pursuers, and if given the chance, will slay them in their helplessness.

Hanna also has an array of magical items at her disposal (detailed in the magical items section of the Appendix). With these items, she has been able to overcome instances of danger and escape to the comforts of her home.

## **Lair**

Hanna lives in a cottage in the swamp just north of Hollow's Creek, and northwest of *Allworth* estate. The cottage is a grey wood that is partially rotting due to the dampness of the swamp; were it not for Hanna's mending spells the place would surely collapse. The roof is made of a green moss that happens to grow in abundance throughout the heath.

Inside a visitor is greeted with drying herbs hanging from the ceilings, wire cages, shelves filled with bottles of unknown concoctions. A cauldron is constantly boiling a strange collection of ingredients for one of many potions Hanna creates for the villagers and paying strangers.



## Lord-Mayor, Thaddeus Knox-Creed

**Male Human Ari7:** CR 5; Size M humanoid (5 ft. 11 in. tall); HD 7d8+14; hp 56; Int +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (touch 11, flat-footed 10); Atk +9 melee (1d6+1, *MW rapier*), or +6 ranged (1d10, *MW flintlock pistol*); SA - none-; SQ -none-; AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 13.

**Skills and Feats:** Appraise +8, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +12, Forgery +7, Gather Information +6, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (domains) +8, Knowledge (noble families) +10, Listen +7, Ride +6, Sense Motive +8, Spot +7, Survival +8; Alertness, Exotic Weapon Prof. (firearms), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier)

**Languages:** Balok, Falkovnian, Lamordian, \*Mordentish.

### Signature Possessions:

Masterwork rapier, masterwork flintlock pistol, \**amulet of evil wardings*

Thaddeus is a man in his early forties but appears as if he is nearing sixty. His face has taken to wrinkles, his eyes sunken deep within his skull, and his once brown hair is now a powder white.

His eyes are hazel in coloration but tend to turn towards a darker brown during the colder seasons. His looks and general attire appear worn and tiresome. But when his gaze is fixed on an object of his displeasure, one is filled with a vile condemnation that sinks to the bone.

### Background

Thaddeus was born in 717 here in Hollow's Creek. His parents, though strict, were overly proud of his gall and bravado when dealing with his equals. They encouraged this portion of his character which only aided in succeeding in most scholarly and politic pursuits. Though perhaps a failing by his upbringing or a flaw in human character, Thaddeus became over arrogant – especially in his knowing that some day he would inherit the title of Lord-Mayor of Hollow's Creek.

As a young man, whenever his parents would take him to Blackburn's Crossing or Mordentshire he, along with his following at the time, would take liberties with the local women and flaunt his family's success. To the people of Mordent, he was a prodigal son, but the reputation of his family's name overshadowed his wrong doings and his actions were generally looked upon as the follies of youth.

In 737 a week before he was to wed Camellia Farmsworth, the daughter

of a reputable family out of Blackburn's Crossing (an attempt to quash his lecherous activities, and put an end to his mal-adventures) Thaddeus met a beautiful Vistani woman by the name of Lylari Bonova. She and her caravan entered Hollow's Creek with the intent of trade and providing entertainment – for a slight fee.

With the aid of his friends as they distracted her Vistani escorts with offers of coin, Thaddeus was able to sneak off with the Lylari to an isolated portion of the heath. The two were infatuated with each other, she with his power and confidence, and he with her exotic charms and wiles. However, when things became too intimate she refused him. Not used to rejection, Thaddeus took his liberties despite her protests – the result a forced rapine.

When all was over, Thaddeus returned with his friends. It is presumed that Lylari told her companions of his deeds, as two of her people attempted to assault Thaddeus in the street. For the transgression, the two Vistani were hanged for the trespass, by order of the Lord-Mayor, Thaddeus' father. That night, fearful of additional retribution, Lylari Bonova and her caravan disappeared in the mists.

The next week Thaddeus married Camellia. Their marriage was filled with trial and tribulation, but eventually she was able to dissipate his lustful yearnings and acquire his love and dedication. Camellia became the talk of Hollow's Creek, a woman of piety and strength of character. She was beloved by all, and her success only captivated Thaddeus' attentions even more.

Nine months later, in October of 738. Thaddeus was visited by Lylari Bonova in his own parlor, despite that every door and window was locked and

the guards regularly patrolled his estate. She held in her arms a caliban child, his child, and told him of his ownership. In spite of his denials, Thaddeus saw something familiar in the child's features. Lylari spoke that she would have her revenge upon him for her rape and the murder of her two brothers with the following curse, "*Bound to your crimes, this child shall bring woe to your house if usurped from its rightful inheritance. Know you shall have no other heirs that may claim your family name. Heed this warning, for I curse the house of Knox-Creed to forever bear the mark of your unpunished crime.*" As the last word was uttered, Thaddeus felt a large weight pressing down on his shoulders – a weight he would have to bear for the rest of his life – and all the windows and doors to *Allworth* opened as a putrid wind pushed into the house, snuffing all the firelight. When the light was restored, Thaddeus found that Lylari had vanished and the caliban child cradled on his sofa.

In a fit of desperation, Thaddeus grabbed the child and fled to his most trusted advisor, the Midwife Hanna Gibings. He pleaded for her to hide the child, as harboring such a creature in his own home would destroy his family name, and destroy his relationship with Camellia. Hanna warned Thaddeus that doing so may bring about Lylari's curse, but his family's reputation came more important, and in the end Hanna agreed to the child's care.

But her care would end too soon, as she shortly after took ill with the plague and the responsibility was transferred to a local rancher by the name of Pendlefern who owed the Knox-Creed family a sizable debt. In exchange for Sorgen's care, Thaddeus promised to waive the usual monthly

debt and promised to accrue it directly to the principle owed. In short, the Pendlefern's were free of their financial responsibilities as long as they would harbor the child. Once the agreement was struck, Thaddeus turned his back on Sorgen and returned to the comfort of his family's estate just in time to learn that his beloved Camellia is with child.

The next nine months Thaddeus treated the night Lylari spoke her curse as a horrible dream, dedicating his every devotion to his family's prosperity and happiness. Dire times were soon approaching. In 739 his wife, Camellia Farmsworth Knox-Creed died giving birth to their new born son Terrance, who also died shortly after. Sorrow swept through *Allworth* estate, as her death was felt by all who knew her. In his grieving Thaddeus still swears he smelled the same noxious odors that swept in his home the night of Lylari's curse. For the coming years Thaddeus falls into a bout of melancholy that leaves *Allworth* in disrepair and empty.

In 753 Thaddeus is torn from his dreams of Camellia by a vision of Sorgen being trampled by the hooves of some nightmarish beast, and feels death-hand slowly creeping upon him. Driven by a partial fear of additional reprisals from the curse, and desperate for a chance at salvation, Thaddeus finds the battered body of his son at the Pendlefern farm. Sorgen is spirited away to *Allworth* by carriage and is placed directly in Thaddeus' care. Applying a few potions to Sorgen's wounds – potions he had acquired from Hanna Gibings – Sorgen was brought from the edge of demise and made a near recovery. The potions healed as much as possible, but Sorgen was left with injuries far beyond the range of the restorative magic.

Thaddeus recants his involvement with Sorgen's mother and describes his reluctance to take him as his son due to social consequences. He apologizes to him, claiming to have seen the error of his ways. Thaddeus promises to spare no expense at the healing of the caliban's "condition". Sorgen, denies him, claiming that no mere apology and feelings of reconciliation will make up for the years of abuse suffered beneath the hands of others (especially his adopted family – the Pendleferns). Sorgen flees *Allworth* claiming that he'll, "...bring a new truth to the family name, one that will be remembered for generations to come!" The next night is marked by the Pendlefern murders, their blood soaked under the Knox-Creed name.

Fearful to reveal his previous crimes Thaddeus remains silent, praying that Laton Cuvier and fellow members of the watch combined intuition and skill will bring Sorgen to justice. Though as more people fall beneath Sorgen's knife, Thaddeus is forced to hire Cureo Ryder (who's name is now a mystery to him), to hunt down Sorgen and kill him. Thaddeus joins in the final ambush against his son, but when Sorgen attempts to escape in the northern swamps – Thaddeus is at an advantage. Due to his family's tendencies to use the swamps to cover their secret visitations to Hanna Gibings, Thaddeus knows safe passageways and how to cut off the fleeing murderer.

Catching him by surprise Thaddeus wounds the already injured caliban and they struggle against each other in an exchange of blades and fists. Their battle eventually leads them into a sinkhole that quickly begins to pull their struggling bodies into the depths. It is there that Thaddeus consigns his life to

the destruction of his very own creation, and fights to hold down his escaping son. However, just before he is pulled completely under, he is saved by Cureo Ryder and the rest of his companions. Thaddeus watches as his son is slowly pulled into the muck. The last anyone sees is Sorgen's hand disappearing beneath the waters.

The portion of the tale that Thaddeus refuses to relate in his struggle against Sorgen in the swamp, is that when he cosigned himself to die it is then that Cureo Ryder grabbed him. Things happened so very quickly at that moment, but he swore that Sorgen helped push him out of the sinkhole, regardless that it only served to push him in deeper. Perhaps it was his mean of redemption, a sliver of forgiveness... or was it?

## **Current Sketch**

Thaddeus has come a long way since his youthful days of arrogance and cruelty. He is now kind, compassionate, and eager to do good with what little time he believes he has left in this world. His life is not yet over with, and he may still have a chance at starting over. There is hope in his eyes, but the ghosts of the past oftentimes smudge his optimism and for weeks he falls ill.

With the events surrounding the Von Storben's disappearance, Thaddeus has grown ever more sickly and pale. He fears that his son may not have perished in that swamp and that he's been biding his time – to lure everyone in a sense of false-security. Thaddeus is distant from all those around him. He wakes from terrifying nightmares with his own hands clenched around his throat. He wears a scarf to hide the bruises that he inflicts upon himself –

when he dreams of Sorgen rising from his watery prison and choking him while all of Hollow's Creek bleeds before his eyes.

## **Combat**

Thaddeus is a skilled fencer, and will not hesitate to defend himself if presented with danger. He carries a pistol on the inside of his coat and will use it when the situation turns grim.

He also wears an amulet beneath his clothing that Hanna Gibings gave him for protection. If facing a denizen of darkness, or any being he believes evil, Thaddeus will activate a charge to shield him from the coming danger.

## **Lair**

Thaddeus Knox-Creed resides at his family estate *Allworth* atop a hill north of Hollow's Creek. It was once a thriving three-story mansion, occupied with servants, guards, and an assortment of other houseguests and friends. Now it has dwindled down to a few loyal servants.

The house is a dull grey color, having not been whitewashed in years, and dust has coated the windows enough that no light passes through them and the insides are blocked in obscurity. The stables and the servants quarters are the only two buildings kept in relative repair. Were it not for the occasional passing of candlelight at night, one would suspect the place to be abandoned.

# New Magical Items

## Amulet of Evil Wardings

The amulet is usually a precious stone wrapped in wire to support a chain to wear over ones neck. When worn this amulet adds little benefit to the wearer until properly activated. By rubbing the stone, the necklace glows a pale blue and effectively protects the wielder as if a *protection from evil* spell had been cast by a cleric of 3<sup>rd</sup>-level. Each time the amulet is activated, it loses one of its charges. Once all the charges have been used the stone loses its magic and becomes inert.

Due to the way in which they were created, a majority of these amulets carry only 2d4 charges. Each time a charge is used there is a 20% chance that the amulet works, but the benefits are not bestowed properly – the magics being dismissed, and gravely unbeknownst to the wielder. During these times the stone will continue to glow until the spell's duration would normally end.

*Faint Abjuration*; CL 3<sup>rd</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item, *protection from evil*; Price 750gp; Weight ½ lbs.

## Chimes of the Inner Sanctum

These brass chimes grant a +1 competence bonus when attempting a save from recovering from their next horror and madness check. In order to gain its benefits the participant must spend eight hours listening to its melodies. During these eight hours the character can be doing other activities such as prayer, meditation, or even sleeping – just as long as they are not

hindered from listening to it for more than a combined period of 30 minutes. If interrupted the character must start over at 8 hours of listening in order to gain its benefits.

The bonuses last until the character rolls a horror and/or madness recovery roll regardless of the outcome, or after 30 days have passed.

*Faint Divination*; CL 3<sup>rd</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item, *guidance*; Price 4,500gp; Weight 2 lbs.

## Helm of the Horse's Skull

This morbid item is a horse's skull hollowed out and fitted onto a helmet, with a black plume jutting out the back made of horse hair. The item is absolutely frightening and hinders the wearer in social situations outside of intimidation. Due to its horrific nature, the helmet adds 2 to the character's outcast rating. Wearing the helmet grants the wearer a +1 dodge bonus to his armor class and a +1 to her reflex saves.

*Faint Abjuration*; CL 3<sup>rd</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item, *guidance* and *resistance*; Price 2,800gp; Weight 6 lbs.

## Ring of Fearlessness

The rings of fearlessness are usually small copper or silver bands engraved with pictures of common fears – snakes, spiders, rats, etc. When worn they bestow a heightened sense of will when faced with instances that call for a fear check, granting a bonus to the character's saves depending upon the strength of the ring.

*Faint abjuration*; CL 3<sup>rd</sup>, and must be two levels higher than the bonus on the ring; Craft Wondrous Item, *remove fear*; Price (+1) 350gp, (+2)

1400gp, (+3) 3,150gp, (+4) 5,600 gp,  
(+5) 8,750; Weight *nil*.

### **Shaw of Death's Blindness**

This magical wool shawl protects the wearer from being seen by the undead as per the *hide from undead* spell as cast by a 3<sup>rd</sup>-level cleric. The save difficulty for willful undead to locate the wearer is a DC 11.

It is not uncommon for the same magical item to be created as a necklace or a cloak.

*Faint Abjuration*; CL 3<sup>rd</sup>; Create Wondrous Item, *hide from undead*; Price 2,000gp; Weight 1/2 lbs.

### **Talismans of the Competent Man**

The talismans come in pairs that two people, while wearing them around their neck, can understand each others languages as if it were their native tongue. The nature of the magical items only allows those who are wearing the talismans to understand one another, but not understand the spoken language of an otherwise incomprehensible language. The talisman does not allow the ability to read other languages that the wearer would normally not be able to read as per the *comprehend language* spell.

Multiple talismans work with one another and despite the items name, the talismans can be worn and used by the female gender.

*Faint Abjuration*; CL 3<sup>rd</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item, *comprehend languages*; Price 2,000gp per pair; Weight *nil*.

## Player's Handout I

 Eldrenn Lorean,

*I take this opportunity to write you about your purpose here in Hollow's Creek. The money I have provided shall aid you in the completion of my wishes to the word: harass the locals, disrupt trade, pillage outlying farmsteads and murder the inhabitants. When you kill be sure to leave no witnesses. This next part may seem unorthodox, but is necessary for my point to be made – remove their eyes! Dispose of them how you wish, just be sure they are not to be found. I want the Lord-Mayor's dogs' paler than corpses you leave behind. Under no circumstance are you to rob these people, I will not have my plan foiled by mere greed. If it is money you're after, my rewards are far greater than what you can find off simple peasants. Tell your men that if I find that anyone has stolen anything they will answer to me!*

*Start with the family that occupies the old Pendlefern land, just a few miles south of the Coleridge Estate, just off the South Road. On that note, if you find any horses during your ventures – remove their eyes as well. One last thing... raid one of the local cemeteries and bind the skeletons to your armor. It will give the impression of the walking dead if you are spotted. Perform all activities at night – rest during the day – No Mistakes!*



## Dread Possibility - Old Man Hollow

his adventure requires an average of four characters of 3<sup>rd</sup> level. However, the DM is encouraged to increase the ECL of the adventure's encounters appropriate for lower or higher level characters.

This adventure is intended to be played after the party has acquired some notoriety with the inhabitants.

### **Plot Synopsis**

For generations the city of Hollow's Creek has terrified their children with stories of Old Man Hollow. After hearing the tales of Old Man Hollow, the players are brought into the story themselves by either their own curiosity or perhaps by being lead by Timothy spirit to its remains for proper burial.

If the party ventures to Hollow's Hill their investigations will only be met by the sharp axe of Old Man Hollow, who believes them to be nothing more than the polymorphed black sprites. On the other hand if the party follows Timothy, they will be ambushed by the Baobhan Sith who use his remains as a home in the northern swamp. There they will also find a wooden figurine carved by Oliver Samson, to tie him into the rest of the story.

By defeating the Baobhan Sith, giving Timothy a proper burial, and giving peace to Oliver Samson, will things finally be set right and the sinkhole surrounding Old Hollow's Hill be lifted.

## THE STORY OF OLD MAN HOLLOW

*“Gather round so I may tell the story of Old Man Hollow. Before this village was called Hollow’s Creek it was named Creedence. The village of Creedence was still in its early developments and the people then relied heavily on a Carpenter by the name of Oliver Samson. Oliver Samson lived up on Hollow’s Hill, where he worked in his workshop to provide the village with all her general needs. Whenever anyone would need a table, a door, a window, or cart they would immediately seek the help of Oliver Samson. Well, Oliver did not live alone, but he lived with his wife and son Timothy.*

*All was well for the village of Creedence until one day Oliver’s wife mysteriously died. Know one knows for sure how she died or why, but most suspect that it was the stress of his job that finally got to Mr. Samson. Some say that she died to the plague, while others whispered that it was Oliver himself who did her in. The truth was never uncovered. It was then that Mr. Samson withdrew himself from the eyes of others, shutting himself in his own home. He boarded up the windows and locked his doors from all who would come to visit him. However, late at night one could see light filtering through his workshop windows – the sound of hammering and chiseling could be heard as far as the creek. Then one morning the villagers woke to find tiny little wooden figurines left at their doorsteps, figures of people in the village. Naturally the villagers thought it to be a gift, a kind gesture of appreciation by Mr. Samson but the truth is usually more horrifying than what one would anticipate.*

*A couple farmers from the heath witnessed the young Timothy Samson’s murder at the hands of his father; the child drowned at the edge of the creek. The farmers chased Oliver Samson to his home, but dared not to venture in for fear of the stench of evil that hangs about the place to this very day. Instead the men returned to the village and roused the great families and the watchmen to deal with the foul murderer. But – when the officials arrived at Oliver’s home, they found Samson’s dead body – having committed suicide with the same tools that he murdered his own son with. Besides the body, they found but a single word carved into the front door, and do you know what it was? ... “Hollow”.*

*When the villagers returned to give poor Timothy a proper burial his remains were missing, but in its place was one of the wooden figures his father had carved. Fearful that Samson would rise from the grave to seek others harm, the villagers flung the wooden toys into his home and burned the place to the ground. The next morning, the villagers woke to find that the house on Old Hollow’s Hill returned from the ashes of its ruins, the wood as black as night. Now, none dare to venture close to Old Hollow’s Hill, as they may attract the attention of Oliver Samson. It is said that those who receive a carved figurine at their doorsteps are marked to die by having their throats cut by his spirit – by Old Man Hollow.*

*As for Samson’s poor son Timothy? His ghost now inhabits the bridge that crosses the creek. Some say, late at night they can hear sobbing from beneath the Weeping Child Bridge. Over the years the spirit has become vengeful, seeking to drown those who pause long enough to look for it. Heed this warning – if ever you hear young Timothy’s cries, cover your eyes so that evil shall not tarry your journey and hasten your step lest you be drowned by the maddened spirit yourself.”*

## The Weeping Child Bridge

The bridge is beneath the shadow of Hollow's Hill, where the blackened walls of the Oliver Samson's home can be seen beneath a full moon – or otherwise the light of day. If ever the party is caught crossing the bridge at night read the following:

*You all hear a sound; quite enough at first that you dismiss it as a trick of the night, but slowly grows louder the farther you tread. Beneath the cobblestone bridge, pouring across the waters of the creek like a fog comes the sound of a child's sobs. The cries echo like stones skipping across a pond, rippling out across the surrounding heath in waves of discordant melody only belonging to the supernatural. The hairs on your necks erect themselves in alert, and there is a coldness – like numb fingers scratching down your spine. The once comforting sounds of the heath and neighboring fen have dwindled away, leaving nothing but the unearthly cries of the bridge bellowing into the night.*

The party has many choices, but if they choose to cover their eyes as instructed by the locals and to quicken their pace, they will go unhindered to their original destinations. But if anyone keeps their eyes open, they'll meet with the spirit waif of Timothy Samson. Read the following:

*A touch of the ground fog swirls before your eyes and from out of it appears the phantom of a small six-year old boy. His (continued)*

*...parlor paler than the grave and his eyes are swollen with tears. It beckons, clasping and unclasping its hands in front of it, trying to draw you towards him. His face is devoid of mal-intent but riddled with sorrow and the dire feeling of being lost.*

If attacked, Timothy will quickly vanish and refuse to ever reappear to the party again. Those that see him must make a Will save [DC 11] or be charmed as per the *charm person* spell. If charmed, the character will be compelled to follow Timothy into the northern swamp, avoiding all sinkholes and mud pits, eventually arriving at the *Lair of the Baobhan Sith*.

If the characters make their saving throw, then Timothy will try to use pantomime to show his good intent, and have the party follow him to his skeletal remains. But if the party refuses to follow him, the spirit waif will return to its sobbing and vanish.

### The Lair of the Baobhan Sith

Timothy will lead the party to a remote section of the northern swamp where located in a center pool of muck-colored waters is a high-rise of land graced with a single ancient willow. Beneath the willow are the skeletal remains of a young child, approximately the same size as the spirit waif.

Scattered about the island are swords, armor, pistols, urns, small pouches, and precious jewelry as well. \* A list of the goods can be found at the end of this segment.

Little do the player characters know that they are being spied upon by 3 Boabhan Sith, who are already listening

in on the characters thoughts by their *detect thoughts* ability. Only when they get into close proximity of the tree will they initiate combat, preferring to use a combination of their *Infectious Laughter (Su)* ability, *confusion* and *entangle* spells. Only after they have subdued a majority of them will the black sprites throw their javelins and attack viciously with their daggers while invisible against the helpless characters.

**Experience:** If the party manages to defeat the black sprites, and recover Timothy's remains they will gain an additional 150 experience points each.

**Lair Loot:** x3 flintlock pistols, x1 flintlock musket, x4 rapiers, x1 masterwork rapier, x2 daggers, x1 chainmail shirt, copper bracelet with amethysts 35gp, a silver necklace set with amber and citrines 120gp, x2 gold wedding bands 50gp each, silver brooch encrusted with moonstones 300gp, a pouch filled with 35 gold, 14 silver, 9 copper, a pouch filled with 14 gold, 18 silver, 25 copper, a gold hair pin 100gp, a masterwork short sword.

\*\* The statistics for the **Baobhan Sith** and **Spirit Waif** can be found in **Ravenloft Denizens of Darkness**.

### **Putting a Soul to Rest**

Next to Timothy's remains the party will find a wooden toy figurine of a dog. It was the toy given by Oliver Samson to his son, before the black sprites murdered Timothy. If this toy is presented to Old Man Hollow, he will no longer attack and instead try to communicate with them through pantomime.

Timothy will need his remains buried up on Hollow's Hill along side his mother and father in order to rest peacefully.

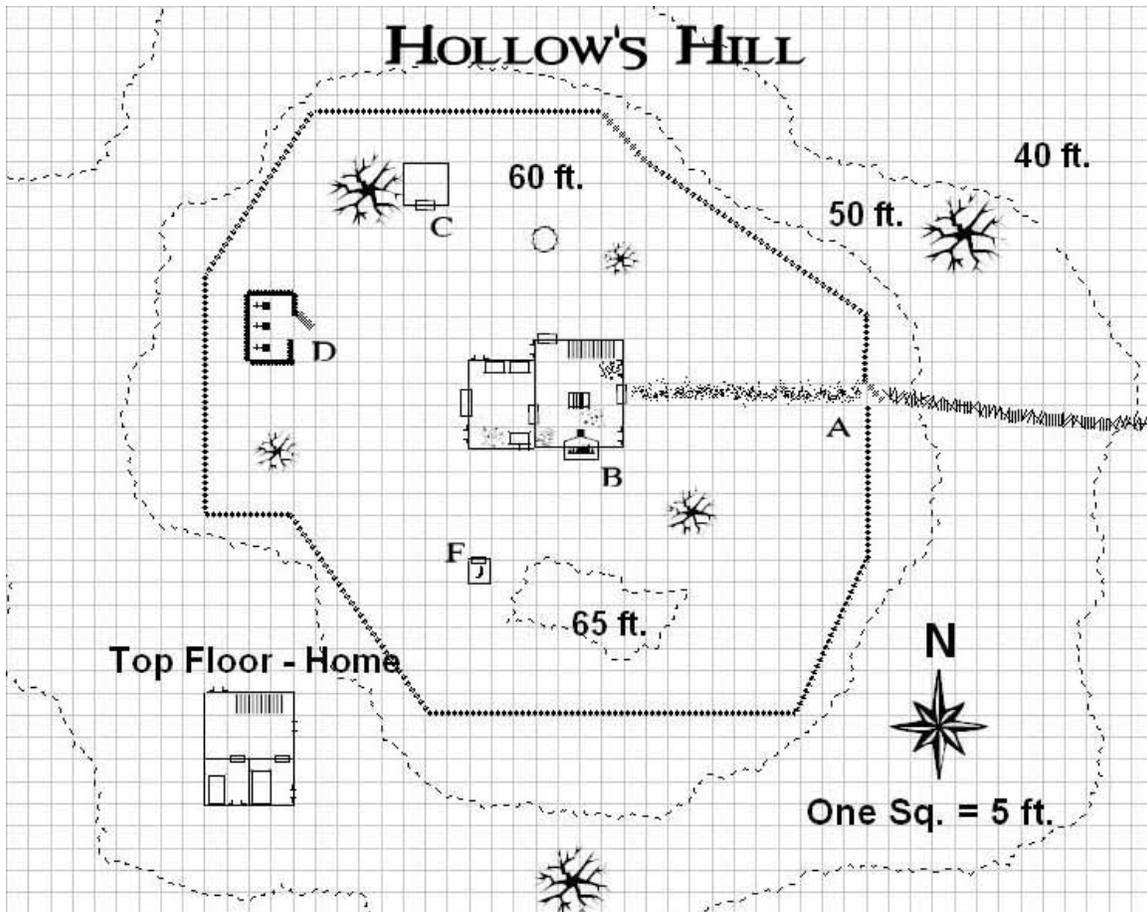
**Experience:** Giving Timothy's remains their proper burial and thus giving Timothy eternal peace, will grant the characters an additional 250 experience point award each.

## **Hollow's Hill**

The player characters cannot travel to Hollow's Creek without noticing the black cottage that rests atop of Hollow's Hill nor can many resist the feelings of gloom and anger emanating from the place. The point of which becomes stronger the closer one gets to the house.

### **SINKHOLE OF EVIL**

A rank 2 sinkhole of evil encompasses Hollow's Hill, marked by the fence that surrounds the charred cottage. Those who get near are subject to feelings of despair and strong projections of hatred – which in turn are the very taints of the place. For generations Oliver Samson has been brooding over a guilty conscience involving the death of his wife – believing himself to be the cause for bringing her to this disease ridden area in the first place - and also for feelings of sorrowful for abandoning his son. But the strongest taint spawns from his hatred for the Baobhan Sith and everyone they have masqueraded as over the years.



Either motivated by curiosity or through the encouragement of Timothy, the party will seek to trespass on Hollow's Hill. Below are areas of interest that the adventurers can visit on Hollow's Hill:

#### A) The Front Gate

*The top of the hill is surrounded by a three-foot tall picket fence with the only entrance guarded by a wooden gate capable of swinging on a hinge. From there you can see the crumbling two-story home of Old Man Hollow. The home's exterior is the color of charcoal; the wood is still blistered, as if the fire had been but a few hours before.*

The gate is not locked and can be unlatched easily from the handle on the other side. When opened, the rusted hinges will moan with age.

#### B) Hollow's Home/Shop

*The charred home is worn with age, as there are a few broken cracks in the paneling allowing one to view inside. The windows are all boarded up and the glass has long since shattered. A single word dominates the front door, "Hollow".*

The house appears as if the outside had caught fire. If the stories the villagers tell are true, they had burned

the cottage down only to find it standing the next morning as black as coal.

Besides removing the planks from the windows, the only means of entry is the front door, which is unlocked, the northern side door, and the massive sliding door to the carpenter shop in the back.

Standing next to the home gives off the feeling of being watched.

### **C) Woodshed**

The woodshed is secured shut by a latch and rusted padlock. The mechanisms on the lock have ceased functioning long ago and must be broken in order to get inside.

Inside the woodshed is a cutting block for the wood, and a pile of chopped firewood. The axe is missing.

To the west a ways is a well that taps directly into the Creek.

### **D) Family Graveyard**

Instead of tainting their cemetery with Oliver Samson's remains, the villagers decided to inter him next to his wife's. There are three stones and each read the following:

*Giselle Samson, 611-638 "Beloved wife and mother – taken from us by the plague of 38'."*

*Oliver Samson, 603-639 "Labored as a Carpenter – remembered as a murderer."*

*Timothy Samson, 633-639 "Innocent beau – taken from this world by his father's own hand."*

Timothy's grave is empty, as his body was never found.

### **E) Outhouse**

This is where the family disposed of their waste – no need to say more.

## **Hollow's Home**

Entering Hollow's Home will only incur the wrath of Old Man Hollow inside. Believing the player characters to be the polymorphed Boabhan Sith or constructed illusions, he intends to lay in waiting for his chance to gain his long awaited revenge.

\* See the attached notes on Oliver Samson for his statistics and preferred strategies in combat.

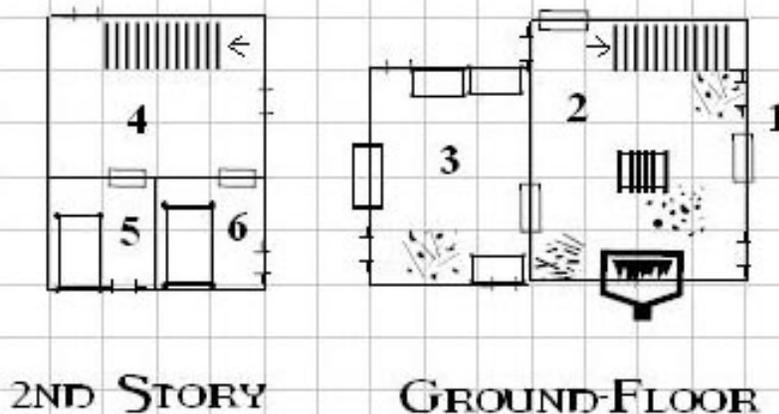
### **1) Front Door**

The front door is marked by the single word "Hollow" etched long ago into its surface by Oliver Samson before his suicide to describe his emotional state previous to the deed. The door is not locked, but the rusted hinges will make the fools known.

### **2) Living Room**

*The room is filled with fallen boards from the higher story along with a few piles of rubble, but does not cater to the same charcoal exterior. Hanging from the ceiling and propped in a sitting position on the center table of the room are child-size wooden figures. A fireplace rests against the southern wall, where piles of sawdust and wood-shavings have been swept into a neat pile.*

# OLD MAN HOLLOW'S HOME



Oliver has been using his spare time to create full-size replicas of himself to further promote his obsession, prior to his death, and as a means of special camouflage. Oliver uses his *freeze* ability to hide amidst the dolls in order to secure a surprise round on those who trespass in his home.

With a close examination the party will be able to discover the large bloodstain on the center floor, the place where Oliver committed suicide with his own carpenter tools.

There is a door that leads outside to the north, the front door that leads outside to the east, a door that leads into his workshop – which is locked [DC 15], the key is hidden in the ashes of the fireplace – and a staircase that leads onto the higher floors to the north.

### 3) Workshop

The workshop is where Oliver Samson spent the majority of his time. There are a couple half-finished wooden

replicas left standing on the two workbenches against the north-wall. Next to these figures are metal brackets and hinges to allow the figures eventual movement. Also on the workbench is Oliver Samson's craftsman tools which are masterwork.

The bench to the south contains 4 finished replicas that are propped against the wall in a sitting position. All manner of other carpenter tools and a couple saw horses can also be found in the workshop.

The door to the west is a massive wooden sliding door, it is not locked but is hard to move due to the rollers haven rusted shut. Forcing the door is a Strength check [DC 18].

### 4) Upstairs Hallway

This is the hallway that allows access to the upstairs bedrooms. There are a couple wooden figurine replicas of Old Man Hollow sitting in the northwest

corner. One of many places he can ambush the adventurers.

### 5) Timothy's Room

Timothy's room is comprised of a child-size bed and beneath it a porcelain dish and vase that are covered in a solid ashy layer.

### 6) Master Bedroom

This is the room where Oliver Samson and his wife used to sleep. Two of the wooden leg posts have been cut off with an axe. Both of which have been used recently in the construction of additional doll replicas.

Atop the bed lies a worn leather journal dated back to 634. The journal details Samson's commission by the Knox-Creed family to aid in the construction of Creedence in the southern portion of Mordent. The journal gives relative insight into Hollow's Creek past. The journal contains Oliver Samson's background as presented at the end of this adventure as well as additional information in regards to the many different guises the Baobhan Sith have taken in order to further torment him.

## Defeating Old Man Hollow

If the party shows Old Man Hollow his son's remains or the toy figurine that is located at his body Oliver Samson will stop his attack and see the party for what they really are. Through pantomime, crude drawings, or even writing messages, Oliver will tell the party that in order for him to rest they need to destroy the black sprites that caused him to commit suicide in the first

place – and bury his son's remains next to his own.

Then he must be released from inhabiting his puppet shell by being consumed by fire. Only then will he no longer return to haunt his place on Hollow's Hill.

**Experience:** Bringing peace to Oliver Samson so that he may join with his wife and son will grant the party an additional 500 experience points each.

### DREAD POSSIBILITY – THE TOOLS OF A CRAFTSMAN

This dread possibility is up to the DM on how far she wishes to stretch the story out further.

The carpenter tools belonging to Oliver Samson have been the objects of fear and despair. Having tasted blood, the tools have been warped over the years by the sinkholes growing powers. They have been used as an instrument of hate, carving the wooden replicas of Old Man Hollow for his ultimate revenge upon the black sprites who lead him to commit his own suicide.

Having warped over the years the masterwork carpenter tools have begun to crave the taste for blood and now call out to whoever wields them to sate its thirst. The tools have become a sentient magical item that provides a +10 to all craft (carpentry) or related wood-working skills. For every week the tools aren't allowed to kill (treat them as a +2 dagger, that deals 1d3 points of damage) it diminishes by a -1 in skill bonus.

If the tools are unable to convince its owner to kill in its behalf, it will attempt to possess them to carry out the deed itself.

*Intelligent Item; AL CE; Int 14, Wis 14, Chr 12; Communication: Speech, \*Mordentish, Lamordian, Balok; Ego 13*

## Oliver Samson, Old Man Hollow

**Male Construct:** CR 4; SZ S  
Construct (3 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 5d10+10; hp 42; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 15 (touch 13, flatfooted 12); Atk +7 melee (1d4+3/x2 *slam*), or +7 melee (1d8+4/x3 *hatchet*); SA spell-like abilities; SQ construct Traits, freeze, immunity to magic; DR 2/-; AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 17, Con --, Int 12, Wis 14, Chr 15.

**Skills and Feats:** Balance +6, Climb +5, Concentration +5, Craft (toys) +12, Hide +6, Intimidate +4, Listen +7, Move Silently +8, Profession (Carpenter) +16, Spellcraft +5 (+10 against fire spells), Spot +7; Alertness, Improved Initiative.

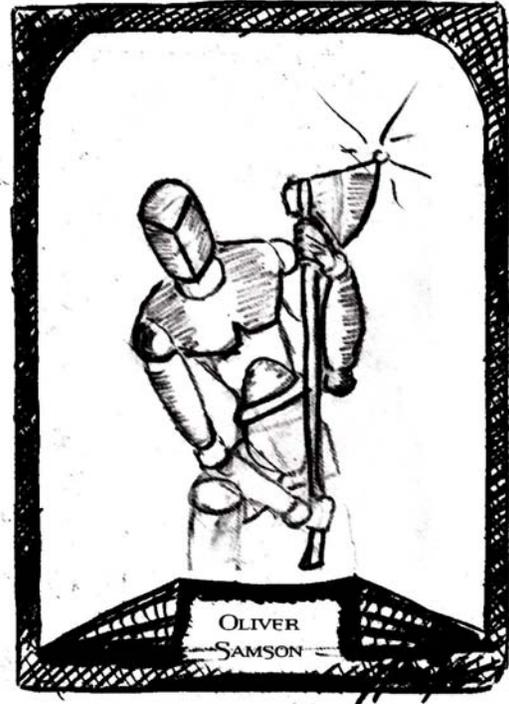
**Languages:** \*Mordentish

**Signature Possessions:** Masterwork carpenter tools (+2 Craft), Hatchet

Old Man Hollow appears as a wooden toy about the size of a small child or halfling. He is made out of unstained cedar with a featureless block of wood for a head, and simple peg-joints for limbs.

### Background

Oliver Samson was a skilled carpenter who once lived to the north in Mordentshire. He lived with his wife Giselle and his 2 year old son Timothy. In 635 he was commissioned by Gage and Earnestine Knox-Creed as the lead carpenter in the construction of a hamlet to the south, to create border ties with the recently found lands of Valachan. Oliver and his family took a nearby hill as a place to build their home, with hopes of expanding their estate and family wealth. However, Oliver's wife Giselle caught disease and sullenly died



in the arms of her beloved husband four years after the initial construction of the city to be labeled "Creedence".

Upset by the death of his wife, Oliver became reclusive, eventually forfeiting his position as lead carpenter and instead focused all his time on the creation of small wooden toys. These toys were said to be beautiful replicas of the same animals that Oliver observed in the area, along with certain figures of authority. Oliver meant for this new acquired hobby to be a means in which he could occupy his mind away from his recently departed love. And as such, he would dote heavily upon his son, being the only living relative that Oliver had left. His toys became very popular with the children of the area.

Tragedy struck as Oliver was searching the local woods for suitable resource materials that would aid in the completion of his latest work; a child-sized doll. He ran into a gang of Baobhan Sith and the creatures chased him through the woods, stabbing at him with their tiny spears, and laughing at his

flight. Oliver believed that he managed to lose the horrible creatures in his flight, but in truth they simply turned themselves invisible and followed him home.

For the next few weeks, Oliver was slowly tormented with the illusions of his accusing wife who blamed him for her untimely death. The dark sprites also would masquerade as his six year old son Timothy while the child was away at play, dropping subtle hints that Oliver was the reason for his mother's end – along with a haunting sensation that the child wished his father's demise. Compelled by grief he carved the word "Hollow" over the door to his cabin and commits suicide with the very tools he used in his trade.

Angered that their favorite "toy" had sought his own demise, the Baobhan Sith drowned his son in the nearby creek, polymorphed to resemble the child's father. A few farmers witnessed the horrendous deed and chased the polymorphed sprite back into Oliver's home. They called on the Knox-Creed family to bring Samson to justice, but as they came to raid his home, they found him lying in a pool of his own blood with the carving tool in his hand.

His home was boarded up; Oliver's body was buried next to his wife Giselle; and though oddly the people of Creedence couldn't find the remains of poor Timothy they made a grave for him beside his parents.

Stories have since circulated that Timothy haunts the old bridge where he was last seen playing with one of the recent toys his father had finished. And for years now, the people of Creedence have fallen under the watchful gaze of the spirit of Oliver Samson or otherwise known as Old Man Hollow who haunts the ruined home up on Hollow's hill. It

is said by the town's folk that those who receive a wooden toy on their doorsteps are marked for death by the callous spirit. A reason for why wooden toys are strictly prohibited.

Later, due to the story of Old Man Hollow's ghastly influence with the town, the locals changed the hamlet's name from "Creedence" to "Hollow's Creek" despite efforts from the Knox-Creed family.

## **Current Sketch**

After his suicide, Oliver Samson awoke in horror that his spirit now inhabits the body of his latest creation; the child-size doll. Oliver Samson learned that he cannot move beyond the small wooden fence that marks his property. He constantly is searching about his estate, trying to locate a means of escape and any clue to the whereabouts of his son.

Oliver has been visited frequently by the same Baobhan Sith that originally caused him to commit suicide, but now recognizes them for what they truly are and is obsessed with their destruction. So used to their polymorph and illusionary tricks, Oliver automatically assumes that anyone who invades his haunt, is none other than the dark sprites returned to torment him. If presented with news of his son, especially if shown one of the toys that are located with Timothy's remains, he will not attack the intruders, but attempt to communicate to them through shadow puppets, or pantomime.

The only way in which Oliver Samson can fully rest is if the Baobhan Sith are destroyed and his son's remains are buried next to his own. Oliver's wooden body must also be destroyed by means of fire. Only after all this has

been completed will Oliver not return to his haunt, and rest peacefully.

## Combat

Old Man Hollow tends to lay in ambush through the use of his ability to freeze and appear lifeless. He especially enjoys springing from a pile of old parts, or broken toys from which he gains a bonus to hide in. Oliver will first attack anyone that carries a torch or other source of fire, and prefers to take down wizards who can cast fire spells. He also employs his spell-like abilities to create distractions in order for him to gain the advantage of surprise.

**Special Attacks- Spell-like Abilities (Su):** *Mend* 3/day, *Ghost Sound* 2/day (DC 12), *Tasha's Hideous Laughter* 2/day (DC 14)

**Special Qualities- Camouflage (Ex):** When hiding in a pile of broken parts, or toys Old Man Hollow gains a +8 circumstance bonus to his Hide rolls.

**Freeze (Ex):** The construct can hold itself absolutely still to appear as if it were a simple toy. A Spot DC 20 check must be made in order to recognize the creature as animate.

**Immunity to Magic (Ex):** Any spell that's subject to a creature's spell resistance doesn't work against Old Man Hollow. However a warp wood spell temporarily slows him for 1d4+1 rounds, while spells with the fire descriptor deal full damage. A *Mend* spell cures 1 hit point worth of damage to the construct.

**Ressurrection (Su):** Oliver Samson cannot be destroyed by conventional means. Even if his body is completely turned to ash, he will return in 2d4 days

at full hit points. Only by destroying him by the means listed under *Current Sketch* will he be prevented from rising again.

## Lair

Oliver Samson still inhabits his two story home atop Hollow's Hill to the north of the Weeping Child Bridge near Hollow's Creek. The house is a decent sized home, with an attached workshop that Oliver used to use while creating toys and other such items appropriate to a skilled carpenter. The land on which the house was built is surrounded by a grey wooden fence no more than about four feet in height, with a wooden gate that leads to the front door by means of a stone walkway. To the northeast there is a small woodshed, and slightly to the east there is an old well. Not far to the west there is the tiny fenced in graveyard that has three tombstones with the names: Oliver Samson 603-39 and Giselle Samson 611-638, though one stone with the name Timothy Samson 633-39.

If anything on Hollow's Hill is destroyed and Oliver Samson's spirit hasn't properly been laid to rest, then the house and everything else will return to its decrepit state the very next day; even if it was burned to the ground.