

HERO QUEST™

The Chronicles of Sir Ragnar
The Beginning

Q U E S T



B O O K

A Message from Mentor

Mighty shadows dance throughout the dark corners of the room. A flame atop a heavily used candle struggles to burn. Whispers of light flicker across an old oak desk. Small bottles sit neatly in a row along the small upper shelf. Parchment clutters the surface and black ink creeps slowly along the edge of a long feathered quill. The pooling ink is from a small black bottle quickly knocked aside to make room for a heavily worn book. Although it appears ragged due to age, the book is free from dust. An old man studies its ancient text deeply and vigorously.

"Everything that ever was... everything that shall ever be... is recorded throughout these pages," whispers the old man to a small group of fellows peering over the tattered cloth on his shoulders, "Kingdoms, great battles, Heroes, Villains, the lives of each and every one of us echoes from page to page. It is the history of our world, from beginning to end. It is Loretome."

The old man, weathered from time, appears frustrated as he flips through numerous pages in clumps.

"But does that mean the future is already set in stone?" the man asks rhetorically "Or is destiny of our own choosing? As I study these pages, I am troubled. What is life, if we are unable to shape it to our own will? Are those who fall from grace, doomed by prophecy? Are those who are predetermined to be the Kings of Men, truly deserving of said honors?"

"My friends, we shall soon see for ourselves. As I've studied this great book, I've been drawn to a tale... A tale of a great man, a Hero to many who falls from grace and is drawn toward the very evil that he fights so valiantly against. Sit by my side, friends, as I tell you the tale of Sir Ragnar..."

Mentor

The following text is the beginning of the adventures of Sir Ragnar, setting the scene for his first Quest. You may read it aloud, or hand the players a copy to read.

The snow silenced not only the sounds of nature but also the usual noise of the city that normally assured the soldiers that the wide, empty court was not in some lonely outpost and that the fortress, being the enclosed, independent world of its own it certainly was, was still part of the swirling live of the empire and the colorful mixture of affairs of its inhabitants.

A company of a hundred men stood in the middle of the courtyard, waiting for the marshal to give them the orders for the expedition to come, seemingly more concerned with the wintry temperatures than with the dangers ahead. Many a slanting, reevaluating glance flew to the lonely figures in the corner, a young knight and his squire. Some of the soldiers had heard his name before, and a whisper spread through the unit: "Sir Ragnar".

Eventually, the Marshal and his adjutants stepped out of the headquarters.

"Attention!" bellowed the strong voice of the sergeant. The men halted their conversations, curious about the words of the marshal, which could well mean life or death in the near future.

"Soldiers! You know very well that this is not a routine call. Your fatherland needs you! Two day's journey to the north, there's a small town of the name of Birkenthal. It is besieged by a squad of Orcs, which our scouts describe as exceptionally well armored and organized. Be this as it be, those filthy greenskins won't stand against the army of the empire! You are to go there and relieve the town. I trust you won't have any problems doing so. Sir Ragnar, thou wilt lead this expedition. I await thee in my bureau for further instructions. Soldiers, now go and pack your equipment. You will set out in one hour. Dismissed."

"Don't try to play the Hero", the Marshal told Sir Ragnar in the privacy of his office, "this is a nice little adventure for a young knight to earn him a name for himself. Just stay out of the way of harm and let the soldiers do their job. Sargent Hoppy is an experienced leader. If thou really wantest to become a fighter, watch and learn! Moreover, thy father will have my head when I let thee be harmed". Ragnar's face had grown increasingly pale during this speech. "Do you doubt my chivalry?" he snapped, "do you call me a coward?"

"Easy, young man!" replied the marshal, "don't let thy pride get the better of thee. I won't have any of this from thou. Thou art a knight of the emperor and thou wilt follow my orders!"

Ragnar swallowed hard, but he managed to get an "Aye, Sir!" from himself and turned for the door.

"One moment, young man!" said the marshal, now in a softer voice, "try to see it this way: thou wantest to proof thy braveness and swordsmanship, but is it that what makes thee a knight? The Orcs fight bravely, too. It's discipline that makes the difference. So put thy pride in thy duty and follow thy orders".

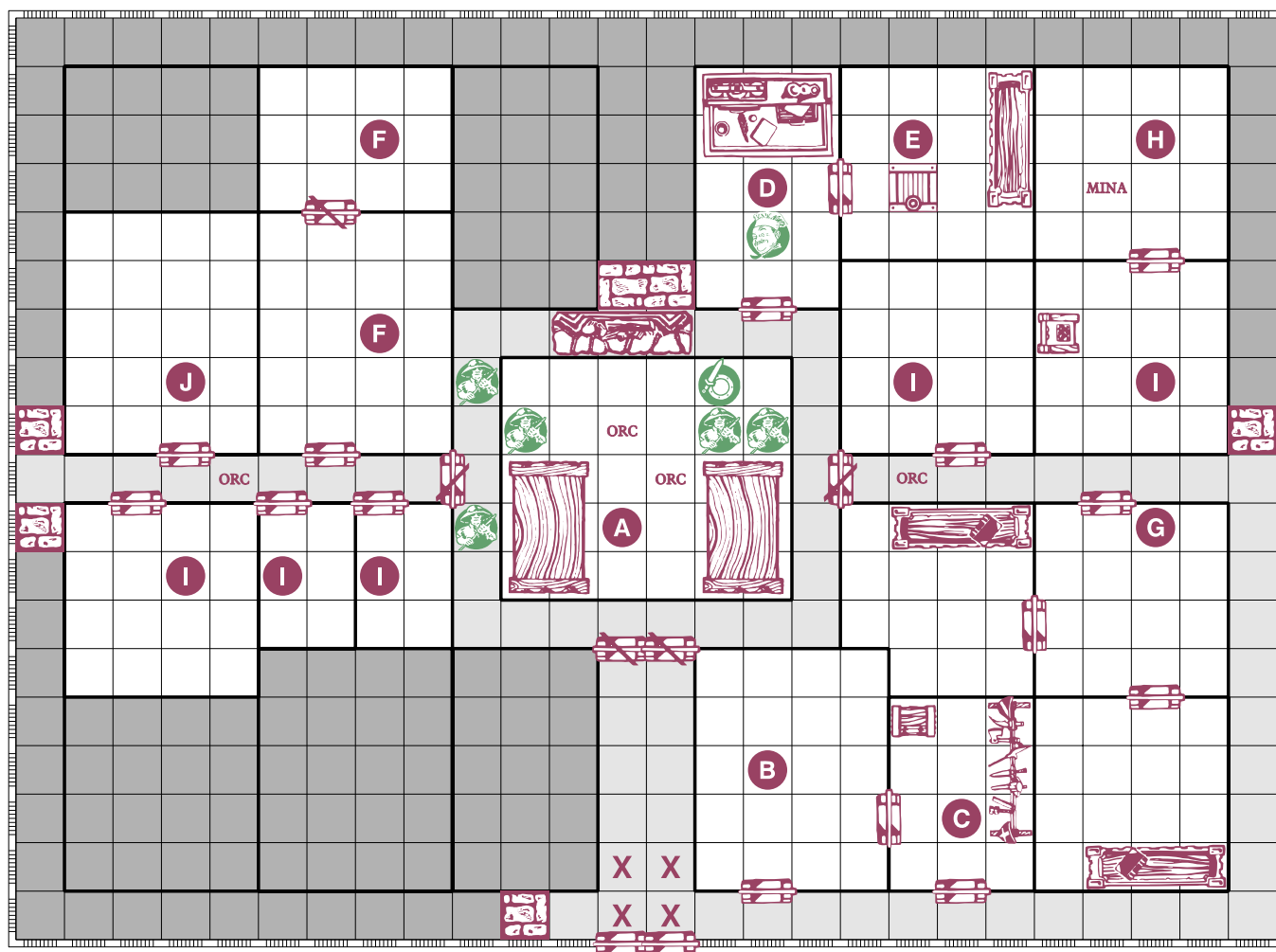
Not able to think of an answer that would not insult the marshal, Sir Ragnar rushed off. Well, he would let these commons do their job, after all, experience would have given them a certain level of combat skills, but he would not stand back like a boy. If there would be an opportunity to "proof his braveness", as the marshal had put it, he would certainly not let it pass.

The day had passed, and tension had given place to boredom. His only conversation with sergeant Hoppy had been a short discussion of the whereabouts of Birkenthal, the way to get there, and the number of the Orcs. It had hardly taken more than half an hour in the forenoon. Expect for himself and his squire, only five of the men had horses, and so he had to ride in a slow walk all day. These five were sergeant Hoppy, three sharpshooters by the names of Peek, Sarymor and William, and a scout named Sneeks who at least had the privilege of an interesting task. Most of the time he was out of eyesight, scouting the areal ahead.

Sir Ragnar was glad when by dusk the small army came by a tavern, a big building whose windows gave a warm, inviting orange shine in the darkness.

"Ye Four Fat Pigs Inn" read the tavern sign.

Ragnar ordered a halt and asked Hoppy to negotiate a meal and overnight stay for the troop.



Quest 1

The Four Fat Pigs Inn

Inside the inn, you find the four of yourselves, coincidentally, in a wide corridor leading to a double door, from behind which you hear the merry sounds of the guest eating, drinking,

chatting and gambling. The other soldiers are out of sight at the moment, some setting up camp outside, some already preparing their rooms for night.

NOTES:

X This is the main door. Heroes start at the four squares marked with X. Let the players decide who starts where.

A This is the main bar. Guests hang around at the tables. The whole middle section of the board (the center room and the corridors surrounding it) is one single room (ignore the walls). All doors are open, except for the one in the north wall.

The "scout" figure in the northeast corner is one of your soldiers. He has the stats as a standard scout mercenary. Take care to not confuse him with Sneeks.

B These are the stables. Three horses are relishing their hay.

C In this chamber riding equipment is stored, as well as the guests' more unhandy pieces of luggage.

Searching for treasure in this room will reveal a useable spear in the rack. The chest only contains personal items of little use for you (the guests probably carry their more valuable belongings with them).

D The kitchen is dominated by a big hearth – use the alchemist's table for that.

Put the scale and bottles on it, but no skull or rat. The innkeeper will salute the Heroes friendly, but tell them to leave the kitchen. If they insist in staying in the kitchen or pantry (E), he will complain and eventually attack. The players may try to convince him by good roleplaying.

E This is the pantry. In the cupboard and piled up along the walls are all sorts of food. Searching for treasure will reveal, hidden between spiced sauces, a healing potion. The trapdoor leads to a small cellar where the more perishable food is stored. Put the figure on a 4x4 overlay room beside the gameboard (e.g. from the Ogre Horde or the Frozen Horror). Searching for secret doors in the cellar will reveal a hidden tunnel leading outside the building (this is where the Orcs will come, or have come, in).

F These two rooms are the dormitory. The not-so-rich guests can sleep here on paillasse lined up along the walls. This is where your troupers will spend the night (though still many of them will have to camp outside).

G A sign on this door tells the Heroes that these are the private rooms of the innkeeper and his family.

MOVEMENT	ATTACK	DEFEND	BODY	MIND
2d6	0	1	1	5

Wandering Monster in this Quest: Peasant

NOTES continued:

- H** In this room the Heroes find a little girl with a sad face, playing with her toy bear. This is Mina. You may use a Goblin figure to represent her (it has the right height, and even wears a kind of dress). She has the following stats:

MOVEMENT	ATTACK	DEFEND	BODY	MIND
10	4	3	2	0

She will tell the Heroes her story:

"I was out to get some milk for supper for myself, mommy, dad and lil brother Ron. The byres are at the pasture, out of the town wall, you know. Then I heard a noise and these vile green men approached running from over the hill. They headed right for the town and began to attack the main gate. Four or five managed to get in, but then the gate was closed and locked up from inside. I was stranded alone. I hid in a pine tree and could do nothing but watch in terror how the green ones first beran the town walls, but quickly gave up and set up a siege instead. By night I silently left the tree and headed south to reach the big city. I walked all night but then I had to take a rest, when I fortunately reached the For Fat Pigs inn. Of course, I have no money with me, but the keeper allowed me to stay and search a corner for myself to sleep in. He even gave me some bread and milk. Well, now that you have come here, I don't have to go to the city. Together we will go and free mommy and dad! Ha! These green men should rather start numbering their bones, I will hit them so hard!"

She stays in the room for now, but at the end of the Quest, she will follow you. She draws a quick sketch of the map of Birkenthal for the Heroes (Handout 1).

- I** These are the guest rooms, some of them small and cheap, some bigger and luxurious. Everyone has at least a bed and a washbowl.
- J** This is the biggest guest room. If the Heroes choose to get to bed, this where Sir Ragnar will sleep (and start when the Orcs attack – see Special Rules, The Assault).

NOTES continued:

Of course, this rule does not apply to the fight with the Orcs!

The fight is over when all characters of one party are knocked out at the same time. The innkeeper will shout the winners a round, which, in the case of the soldiers, will spare Sir Ragnar some of the catering costs, resulting in 15 extra gold coins per Hero to spend in badly needed equipment in the next village. Regardless who wins, after the brawl the Heroes will have earned the Peasants' respect.

- **The Assault**
After the tavern brawl, give the Heroes time to explore the inn. Eventually, the players should get by themselves the idea that their Heroes want to sleep now. Else, when they have seen everything, the innkeeper will come and address them: "Let me show you to your rooms, good lords, your beds have been prepared!" Sir Ragnar will get the best room J, the others may sleep anywhere in rooms F or I.

When the whole inn is peacefully asleep, a horrified scream echoes through the building: "Oooooorcs!"

Place four Orcs on the squares marked with "Orc".

Everytime at the start of his turn, the gamemaster may place two more Orcs in the pantry (room E). The kitchen doors are open, so the Orcs can reach the bar.

If the Heroes reach the cellar (see room description E), they can block the entry to the secret tunnel, ending the assault. If there are still Orcs left in the inn, two Heroes must stay in the cellar, guarding the tunnel, while the others may cleanse the house of greenskins.

The Peasants will flee through the main door as soon as they see an Orc.

After the assault, the Innkeeper addresses the Heroes – see "End of Quest".

If the players ask if the other soldiers don't fight, just tell them that indeed heavy fighting takes place all around them, and that they should

Special Rules

These rules are for the gamemaster only, don't tell the players before they apply.

- Searching for treasure will never reveal a weapon stronger than a broadsword or more than 70 gold coins a time. Draw another card.
- The wandering monster is a Peasant. Although not generally hostile, he will attack if he sees someone "searching for treasure" in the inn, naturally thinking him to be a thief.
- As the players have probably already seen Sir Ragnar well and alive in the original Rescue Quest, which takes place after the events of this Questbook, for continuity's sake he has to survive. When Sir Ragnar's Body Point drops to zero, he's not dead. Read the box Ragnar Knocked Out on the next page. (When one of the other Heroes dies, Sir Ragnar will just pick another man from the army. Use the same character card and give him a new name).
- **The Tavern Brawl**
When a Hero enters the bar (room A) after the fourth turn, he will hear a loud argument between the two Peasants and the soldier in the northeast corner: "So you are the ones who occupy all rooms! Fine lords you think you are! Can do what you want cause you carry weapons! Won't dare to stand against me in a just fist-fight, willst thou?"

In no time, a massive tavern brawl has emerged. Peasants and Innkeeper are considered monsters until one party has been defeated (the innkeeper may stay out of fight, as long as nobody enters the kitchen).

It is assumed that nobody will fight to kill, but attack with bare fists, furniture and dishes, or with the blunt side of weapons. When body reaches zero, the person in question is just knocked out and will awake next turn with one Body Point. Resting a round in one of the beds or paillasses (rooms F to J) will bring back all Body Points (Heroes only).

concentrate on the Orcs they are fighting with.

- **End of Quest**
When the Orcs are defeated, the innkeeper comes to the Heroes, desperately ringing his nads:

"They got her! They took my beautiful Lucilla! Please! Help! Hurry to her rescue! It's your duty as chevaliers!"

He will tell the Heroes that Lucilla is his 16 year old daughter, who was in the private rooms of the inn before the attack of the Orc and is now gone. When asking further, the Heroes will learn that her mother, Hilda, was robbed by Orcs in a very similar way twelve years ago.

The Heroes now must decide if they act chivalrous and hurry to help a damsel in distress (the tracks of the Orcs are easy to follow), or if they stay true to their duty and go to Birkenthal first. Sgt. Hoppy and Mina of course strongly opt for the latter.

When you go to Birkenthal, read right ahead on the next page. When you follow the Orcs, go to Quest A Damsel in Distress, page XXX.

Ragnar Knocked Out

Exhausted and bleeding from just too many wounds you fall to the ground, waiting for the great darkness to embrace you, when a towering shadow appears at your side, seemingly out of nowhere.

You recognize the tallest of your soldiers, a real big guy, whose name you never bothered to remember. He effortlessly puts you on his shoulder and carries you to a bed. After having laid you down and blocked the door with a heavy wardrobe, he gives you a healing potion. You immediately feel better, but your attempt to spring on your feet and rejoin the battle is halted by his strong arms. His simple face betrays his inner turmoil, giving orders to a nobleman, but his voice is firm: "Please, good sir, the sarge has been very explicit about this. Direct order from high up. I'm responsible for thy safety with my head. Please don't hold it against me".

Eventually, when they arrive at Birkenthal, they learn that the town is already occupied by the Orcs. The Orc boss holds the villagers hostage, so an open siege would be disastrous.

Suddenly, Sir Ragnar felt a twitch at his gambeson. "Perhaps I can help thee", Mina said, "I know a way into the town. With some luck, the Orcs won't notice you". Intrigued, Ragnar asked her to about a hidden entrance in the town she and her friends had used in their games.

Ragnar decides to secretly go in with some carefully picked men (the four Heroes), leaving the main troop camping in a far but visible distance so not to raise suspicions by the Orcs.

Playing in the town

This Quest does not take place in a dungeon, but on earth's surface in a city. "Corridors" on the gameboard represent streets and alleys, "rooms" represent houses. Tell this to the players. The central "room" represents an open place. Birkenthal is a walled town. Not as high or elaborated as a city wall, its fortifications are still capable of protecting it from most infantry attacks. For the Heroes, the wall forms a clear cut between inside and outside. They cannot leave the town except for the hidden entrance they came in.

Special rules:

- The Heroes cannot search for treasure in the open (i.e. the streets and the central square). They can search for treasure in the houses and search for traps or secret doors everywhere.
- Stealth is of the essence in the Orc-occupied town. The gamemaster must keep track of which monsters are aware of the Heroes and which are not.

When one or more Heroes enter a new section of the streets (including the town square), the monsters are put on the game-board, but are assumed to look the other direction. These monsters are still not aware of the Heroes and may not move.

A monster notices the Heroes in the same section whenever one of the following events occurs:

- A Hero steps on a tile adjacent to this monster
- Any kind of combat takes place in the same section
- A Hero searches for traps / hidden doors in the section
- Another monster in the same section notices a Hero (it will call his comrades)
- A Hero runs (moves more than 8 squares)

This is not a "trap"! Warn the players that an action will make noise and attract the Orcs' attention before they try to do it.

Monsters that are aware of the Heroes may move and act in the gamemaster's

turn as by the normal rules.

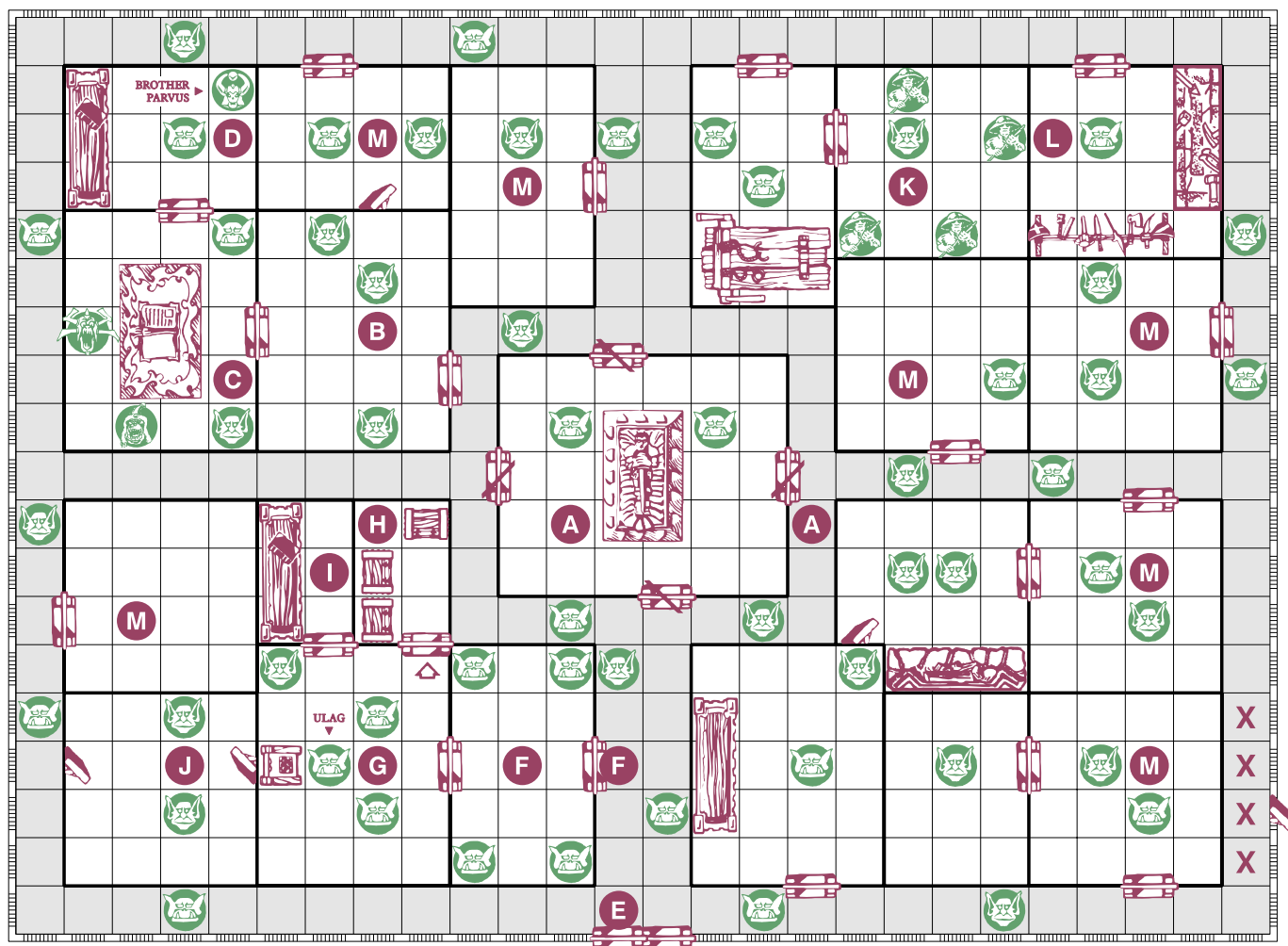
A monster aware of the Heroes may try to reach Ulag to set up an alarm. For this purpose, a monster may open the doors at F and G. If it succeeds, all monsters in the open (streets and town square) and in the city hall (rooms G and F) become aware of the Heroes and may move freely. This is no longer possible after Ulag has been defeated (as described at room G).

Stealth rules do not apply in houses.

- End of Quest
When the Heroes defeat Ulag (as described at room G), there's an increasing chance that the other Orcs will surrender. For every monster that is killed after this, roll 2D6. On a 7, the Orcs cease fighting and can be taken prisoner by Sir Ragnar's troops. Then (or when all monsters have been killed), Birkenthal is liberated and the Quest is won.

If the Heroes decide to leave the town secretly (by the stealth rules), or otherwise survive the Quest without having liberated the town, the Quest only counts as victory, if they have both defeated Ulag and freed the townsfolk (room K) before.

In any case, the Heroes return to the fortress (page X). They can take a detour and now go to the rescue of Lucilla (if they did not already do so before) – go to Quest XXX A Damsel in Distress, page XXX.



Quest 2

The Liberation of Birkenthial

Avoiding every sound, you slip through the winter night. You don't carry a light, so not to give away your presence to the Orcs on the wall, which doesn't make your task any easier. Then Mina stops, pointing at a shrubbery at the foot of the wall. You carefully bend it aside and find a narrow hole where

old mortar has let go. It may be a comfortable way for children, but you have difficulties to pass. The far end is disguised by loosely piled up stones. You take out one first to stick your head through and have a look. No Orc.

NOTES:

- X** This is the hidden entrance through which the Heroes enter the town. Place the figures on the squares marked with X (let the players decide which one starts where).
- A** In the middle of the town lies the main square, equaling the central room of the gameboard. It is not enclosed by solid walls, but only by an ornamental fence. As soon as a Hero enters the main square or one of the surrounding streets (i. e. the corridors around the central room of the gameboard) everything in the whole middle section on the board becomes visible. The fence also doesn't block the line of sight for shooting or magic (but it does block melee attacks). The four gates in the fence are open from the beginning. The Orc right of the cenotaph carries a crossbow. On the sarcophagus, an inscription reads: "In memoriam Olaf Swiftblade, hunter of Orcs".
- B** After defeating the Goblins, a short look around the room clearly reveals that this is the local temple.

Paintings of the gods and Heroes of old adore the walls, and comfortable benches invite the faithful to service. A great portal with gold inlays on the

distant wall obviously leads to the inner sanctum.

- C** This has been the inner sanctum of the temple, containing the altar and the idol of the god. The latter has been crudely changed by the use of old rags and red paint to the image of some chaos demon.

The "Gargoyle" is really a statue and wouldn't come to life (but don't let the players know...)

For the Orc Shaman you may use the figure of Grawshak of the Wizards of Morcar if you have it, else use just any Orc, but tell the players that he is clad in robes and holds a staff. His name is Boo-Arggh and he has the spells Shield of Protection, Summon Goblins and Orc Berserker, and the following stats:

MOVEMENT	ATTACK	DEFEND	BODY	MIND
5	3	3	3	5

If a Hero restores the statue (which is of course only possible if there are no monster left in the room), the god rewards him with his blessings. Tell the

Wandering Monster in this Quest: None

NOTES continued:

player that he may reroll a single dice roll, or redraw a single card sometime in this or a later quest. Let him mark this on his character sheet. If more than one Hero participates, the one that first came up with the idea receives the blessing.

- D** In this room, originally the library of the temple, Brother Parvus, the town's priest, is held captive. Use the Chaos Sorcerer figure. Brother Parvus has the following stats:

MOVEMENT	ATTACK	DEFEND	BODY	MIND
3	1	1	2	7

He is weakened by days of starvation and will only fight if pressed, but he can give some useful advices. He has overheard that the name of the Orc chieftain is Ulag, that he is looking for some artifact inside the town (he himself doesn't know of any such thing), and that the Orcs had come from a mountain hideout. He knows that Ulag resides in the town hall, and also the location of the imprisoned townsfolk.

- E** This is the main gate of the town's fortifications. The Orcs have blocked it by heavy beams and piled up rubbish.
- F** An inscription above the door tells you that this representative building is the city hall. In the entrance hall there are benches lined up around the walls, where citizens could wait their turn when applying the authorities. Now four brutish Orc watchmen were using them to take a rest. Being surprised by the Heroes does not slow their reaction, however, but seems to rather make them angry.

- G** The major's office, now occupied by Ulag. He has the following stats:

MOVEMENT	ATTACK	DEFEND	BODY	MIND
10	4	5	2	3

His two bodyguards are equipped with longswords and can therefore attack diagonally.

The Goblin in the corner is Mimpf, Ulag's scribe. He carries a scroll and quill, but will draw a fragile dagger if attacked. He therefore only has one attack die. Mimpf carries a map leading to the mountain stronghold of the Orcs (Handout 2), as well as the only key to the treasury (room H).

If Ulag is "defeated" in combat, don't tell the players. He is not dead, but flees through a secret door behind his throne in the gamemaster's next turn, swearing wildly and with the classic antagonist's farewell: "We'll meet again!"

- H** This is the town's treasury. The door is locked. Moreover, it is made of steel and not breakable by any means the Heroes may muster (use the "iron entrance door if you have it). The only way to open the door is using the key that Mimpf the scribe carries with him. The chests contain 500 gold coins each, but taking any of it would be theft – this gold doesn't belong to the Orcs, but is the property of the town's citizens. If a Hero takes from this gold, it will be removed from him as soon as he comes back to the fortress. Moreover, his reward will be halved.

The chest at the far end also contains three potions of healing and a longsword. Taking from this equipment is OK, as it serves the liberation of the town.

- I** This is the town's archive (as stated by a copper sign at the door). If a Hero states he wants to search for treasure in this room, tell him: "you may also search the shelves for helpful information". If the Heroes search the books, they find the Story of Orcbane (Handout 3). Searching the books is an action by its own and may be done in addition to searching for treasure or traps/secret doors.

- J** The secret doors in this room can only be found from the inside, except when Ulag opens the one behind his throne. If the Heroes enter the room chasing Ulag, they will just see him escape through the other door. Following him further will only show that he has escaped for good.

- K** This house is used as a made-up prison for the townsfolk. Use four peasant figures (Zombies) to represent the citizens in game (in fact, there are far more).

NOTES continued:

The door to the second room is locked, the key is hidden under the torture rack and can be found by searching for treasure or if a player explicitly searches the rack. If the Heroes want to break down the door, treat it as a "monster" of zero attack, three defense and two body. The townsfolk will thank the Heroes cheerfully, but of course they are frightened and weakened and rather reluctant to go out and take an active part in the fighting. Ultimately, they will follow the Heroes – keeping them back is not an option for the gamemaster. But don't tell the players – give them a hard time trying to convince the citizens to fight for their freedom. After this, they may be controlled by Sir Ragnar's player. They will never split up, but always try to keep together in a single room or street.

Regardless if the citizens follow the Heroes, they can tell that the name of the Orc chieftain is Ulag, that he is looking for something inside the town, and that the Orcs had come from a mountain hideout.

- L** This is the town's smithery and hardware store. If the Heroes search for treasure, they find a usable helmet, broadsword and a toolkit.
- M** This is just an ordinary townhouse. Good people may have lived here, but now the filthy greenskin dig in these rooms.

Conclusion

Some final words by Mentor...

or every other text you want to print in representative form. This more elaborated parchment background stems from The Frozen Horror.

Mentor