

DCC: World of Iriolis

Our Group

Player	Character	Description	Class
Bruce	Gallfred Weasel	Guild Beggar	Thief
Chris	Old Man Fish	Locksmith	Ranger
Ernest	Hemp	Weaver	Warrior
Matt	Mordecai	Gravedigger	Wizard
Patrick	Podrick	Squire	Warrior
Tim	Ned Wimbley	Beekeeper	Wizard

Chris admits that he and *Priscilla* watched *Saltburn* last night, but didn't pay so much attention to it that they didn't have to back up and research questions like, "Did they just say that girl committed suicide?" *Patrick* speculates upon whether the actor you'd think should be the villain actually is. He remains silent when the conversation turns to the accents of *Hell's Kitchen* contestants accurately reflect their nations of origin. *Bruce* mourns that one of his more promising technicians resigned on Friday. *Paul* offers that if he were to change his management style to concentrate upon making the folks in his group feel co-dependent that could really staunch his personnel losses. *Bruce* thinks, "You know, I may have been attending the wrong management seminars..."

By the time *Matt* calls in, everyone is bemoaning the shiftlessness and lack of problem-solving expertise of the new generation. Some things really never change.

Tim is out today, because he's visiting his Mom. She isn't doing well, unfortunately, and everyone hopes that *Tim* is able to spend some quality time with her.

Ernest is a touch late, which gives everyone plenty of opportunity to complain.

Four Ancient Statues Guarding Lost Eldros

The characters are on the North side of the Great Chasm. *Ned Wimberley* has gone off to develop a patron relationship with *Palymdibis* the giant tentacle, but everyone else is interested in visiting a giant cave where the Chaos her *Bran Corvidu* is rumored to be buried with the *Blaze Firebow*. *Hemp the Weaver*, who fancies himself an archer, is particularly interested in having this bow – even though he's Neutral and using a Chaotic artifact is likely to corrupt him. But then, what's a bit of corruption among friends?

The characters break camp on the morning of Nil 10 and head towards the cavern containing the Tomb of *Bran Corvidu*. *Gallfred Weasel* sees a series of statues half-buried in the earth, along with a strange structure that looks like a basket with an attached iron stove and a green sail. *Gallfred* is convinced that the statues might feature some ancient writings that he could interpret for profit. Nobody else disagrees, so the group heads towards them... carefully.

Mordecai notes that the statues are quite ancient, and not within his sphere of knowledge. There are four of them, arranged in a semicircle. They are larger than human, and clearly carved from stone (as opposed to being people transformed into stone). The basket is made of wicker. It and the furnace are not exactly at the center of the semicircle, but pretty close.

Gallfred Weasel sneaks up to take a closer look, while the others hang back and remain as inobvious as they can. He sneaks up to the back of the semicircle, because entering semicircles is often a very bad choice. From closer, he can see that the basket is large enough to hold a half-dozen people. The stove is modified – rather a cooktop, it is built to simply shoot fire straight out its top. The green sail is nearby, folded into a square.

Gallfred steps into the circle of statues. They begin to glow, and a rumble reverberates through the ground as the statues transform into living beings. One proclaims, “Hail Travelers, welcome to the Kingdom of Eldros, a great kingdom lost to the echos of time!” The second goes on to describe the wonders of the Helm of Chistu. The third and fourth offer cautionary comments upon the corruption and dark nature of the Helm. In specific:

- **Statue 1:** "Hail, travelers! Welcome to the realm of Eldros, a kingdom of splendor now lost to the annals of time. We are the guardians of this forgotten realm, imbued with the memories and wisdom of a bygone era."
- **Statue 2:** "Listen, mortals, and learn of the legacy of Chistu, the great protector. In the depths of these lands, the Helm of Chistu holds power both dark and divine. It is said to bind the realms of life and death, a key to unlocking untold secrets."
- **Statue 3:** "Eldros, once a beacon of light, now shrouded in darkness. The helm's corruption lingers, seeking those who would exploit its power. Only through understanding the past can the future be forged anew."
- **Statue 4:** "Beware, for the path to the helm is treacherous. Seek the Shrine of Reflection, a sacred place where the boundaries of the living and the dead converge. There, the truths of Chistu and the helm may be revealed."

Gallfred sneaks away to tell the others. He specifically tells the others, “I think Eldros might have been a really good place to be a beggar at one time.”

Podrick suggests, “That helm sounds really awesome, if only it weren’t so corrupted.”

Helm notes, “The convenience store over on Old Settlers Blvd didn’t have real Mountain Dew at all! They had Baja Blast and other weird flavors, but not the original. Oh, and I saw someone fermenting Mountain Dew into wine the other day.”

Podrick has some relevant information: the *Knights of Lushnia* were looking for the Helm of Chistu, and he found a map that purports to show the location of the helm. He and *Mordecai* interrogate the statues. They learn:

- Chistu was a great protector of Eldros. His Helm was corrupted by his pride.

- Specifically, the Helm was corrupted by the Power of Death.
- The Helm is not for mortal power. It has sealed away the God of Death. It should be repaired, not broken.
- The Shrine of Reflection is to the South, but you must go through Four Trials before entering into the heart of the shrine – and there you must face yourself.
- The Five Trials are named and listed in a book. They do not appear in this adventure. They are Creation, Construction, Enlightenment, Sacrifice, and Judgment.

Podrick and Hemp look at the map. They suspect that the Shrine of Reflection is located in the Rusting Hills south of Weebrook. This doesn't exactly match what the statues say, but then their information may be slightly out of date. Even the statues admit, "Much time has passed!"



On a more helpful basis, the statues observe that those who do not follow the ways of Law and Justice will not be able to pass the trials.

Gallfred Weasel is convinced that the wicker basket is used to sacrifice people a half-dozen at a time. He looks for any valuables that previous sacrifices might have left behind. He is disappointed to find only evidence that a half-dozen people were living in the basket, and left behind the detritus you would expect from that.

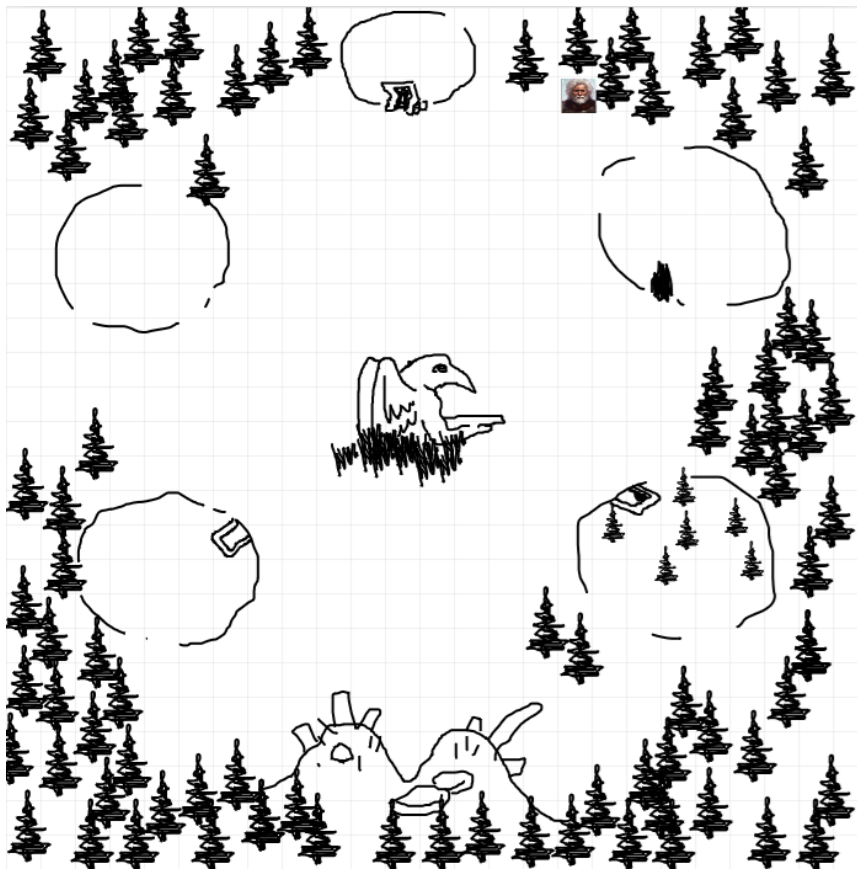
Gallfred Weasel starts to reconsider his opinion that the furnace is intended to roast everyone in the basket. Old Man Fish has by now figured out that basket, furnace, and sail are the components of a hot-air balloon. Gallfred Weasel has no idea what that might be.

Podrick unfolds the sail to look for any markings or symbols. He thinks it is the symbol of some aristocratic house, but he doesn't recognize which one. Either that, or it's the symbol of the French Cheesemaking Association.

Tracking the Locals

Old Man Fish hears that there might be clothes in the basket. He goes to check if there are any socks better (or cleaner) than what he currently has. Gallfred Weasel tells him, "You will be disappointed." Then Old Man Fish goes looking for signs of where the half-dozen people might have gone. He finds evidence that six men in boots and one tiny person left the basket and walked North. They left fairly recently.

The Circle of Crows



The characters move North. They spot a tall, fog-shrouded monolith, carved in the shape of a crow. Corvids fly around it and cry out. Six burial mounds are arranged in a circle around the monolith. The fog is thick enough that seeing anything more than thirty feet away is difficult, and only things within ten feet are really easily visible.

Old Man Fish tells the others, "The tracks head to the West."

The characters approach. They hear the sounds of argument between someone with a deep Northern accent and someone with a high-

pitched voice. "No, no! You have to leave this place! You can have all the corpses you want but the treasure is for us!" The argument has clearly been ongoing for a while, and shows no signs of escalating any time soon.

The characters approach. They see six men with short swords dressed like bandits, led by a (very rare) gnome dressed like a dandy who has fallen upon hard times. The gnome bears a sword and studded leather armor, and has a diamond earring. (Old Man Fish notes that gnomes are rare because they are tasty). This group faces a tall man in yellow robes. He stands straight and stiff, and doesn't seem to blink

much. He is escorted by three acolytes dressed in ancient clothing. The acolytes wear baskets upon their heads, hiding their features. They stand with their arms crossed in their sleeves, silent and ominous.

Mordecai murmurs, "He has minions! He's cool!" He assumes that the acolytes are undead. He stands out where he is visible.

The gnome turns to look at him. "Another one of you?"

The yellow-robed sorcerer intones, "I do not know this person. I am Duani, servant of the Deathbringer!"

The gnome offers, "I am Seldon Esh, and these are my companions Jacko, Dog, Raymond, Little Joe, Sunny, and Pip."

Mordecai and Podrick introduce themselves, with Mordecai adding that he is a servant of *Samhain* ("God of Pumpkins!"). He claims to be well-versed in the rites of life and death. Gallfred Weasel stays hidden.

Duani, Servant of the Deathbringer notes, "We have come here seeking an ancient artifact rumored to be in these barrows. My master heard whispers in a trance, and thus we have come here. We seek an artifact of the God of Victory."

Seldon Esh and his people explain that they heard the same, after they saved a merchant.

Mordecai notes that the characters had similar information, and points out that maybe the God of Victory is trying to foment conflict over his artifacts. Or perhaps the Trickster Goddess is sowing discord as usual.

Seldon Esh answers, "This is stupid. We'll end up fighting both of you, or they'll end up fighting you and us, or something." Duani recommends that the three groups each search separate barrows, but that if anyone finds the artifact of Victory then it belongs to him. Seldon Esh agrees, if he can have two specific barrows (the ones that already have open doors). The characters are good with that – open doors indicate that those are the barrows most likely to have been looted already.

After some negotiations, the characters, Seldon Esh, and Duani agree on which of three barrows the groups will explore first.

Sacrifices to the God of Victory

Before they venture inside, the characters look at the monolith. There is an altar for sacrifices in front of it, though it hasn't been used for a long time. The statue holds a rune-carved stone. Mordecai translates them as saying, "For Aphiel's Favor, his Children Must Be Fed." Hemp suggests sacrificing some wine, but Gallfred scoffs and notes that any sacrifice worth making to the God of Victory is going to have to involve blood sacrifice, ideally of an animal of quality (or perhaps a person). When Hemp moves on to the idea of trapping rabbits for sacrifice, Gallfred observes that the lowest-grade viable sacrifice is probably an unblemished sheep or goat.

Help offers, "Yeah, you can say what you want about your girlfriend."

Podrick tries cutting himself and letting the blood drip upon the altar. That has no effect.

Then it develops that Mordecai is carrying some body parts. He tries putting a human arm, some eyeballs, and a tontu arm upon the altar.

The ravens circling around the monolith descend in great numbers to feed upon the carrion. Mordecai gains +1 temporary Luck.

Hemp notices that the statue is facing directly towards the Northeastern barrow, which Duani and his acolytes are exploring. Hemp grumbles, "We may have handed the prize to those guys."

The Green Barrow

The characters approach their barrow. It is a grass-covered mound. The entrance is blocked with a stone door. The characters are equipped with shovels, hammers, and whatnot, and after some effort are able to open the seal. They see a short stairway, and Gallfred Weasel proclaims it free of traps. He tells the others, "Let's send Podrick in!"

Inside is a 30-foot diameter space. There are three skeletons lying upon stone biers. One of them is wearing a golden necklace carved with the symbols of Aphiel. There are also two chests.

Podrick looks at one of the (non-necklace) skeletons. It wasn't mummified, it simply corroded where it was placed. Hemp decides to unclasp the necklace. He retrieves:

- Gold necklace with an Aphiel symbol carved into jet stone (25 gp)

He puts the necklace on.

Predictably, Gallfred Weasel is looking at one of the chests. He opens it to find a massive heap of triangular bronze coins (each worth about $\frac{1}{2}$ copper). There are 40 pounds of them. He fails to find anything more valuable hidden underneath them. Old Man Fish wrestles the chest out of the barrow while Gallfred examines the second, and finds another hoard of bronze coins. Everyone keeps one coin as a keepsake. Old Man Fish drags out the second chest. The total is about:

- 4000 bronze coins (20 gp total)

The characters hear the yells of a bunch of thugs fighting something from the distance.

Selden Esh's Barrow Is Live!

Hemp, Podrick, and Mordecai (in the back) head over to see what is happening to Selden Esh and his allies. Gallfred follows them. Old Man Fish brings up the rear, because he doesn't see the percentage in intervening to save Selden Esh and company.

Three of Selden Esh's thugs are already down, but they have managed to kill two of their attackers. They are facing a group of large (child-sized) beetles. Two beetles are down, leaving four more still active and dangerous. The characters arrive in time to see Selden Esh cut down one *corpse-eater* with his sword – demonstrating that he's a lot more buff than Gallfred Weasel had given him credit for.



Old Man Fish sneaks behind a corpse-eater and shoots it twice, killing it instantly. The characters move in and make quick work of the corpse-eaters. Gallfred just sneaks around. Mordecai stands in the distance being mysterious (and not losing his spells).

Against expectations, Gallfred Weasel doesn't kill Selden Esh from surprise. Selden Esh and his three remaining allies, unaware of the threat represented by Gallfred, check their three downed companions. They find that Jacko is alive! Sadly, Raymond and Sunny were killed by the corpse-eater beetles.

Seldon Esh offers his thanks, and points out that there was some treasure down in the barrow. He suggests a split, and that Duani doesn't need to know. Hemp shakes on the deal with Seldon Esh (for the group).

- 15 golden rings worth 5 gp each,
- 12 short swords made of bronze (reduce the damage die by –1d on the dice chain each time a natural “1” or “20” is rolled) with begemmed scabbards worth 30 gp each,
- 354 scattered silver coins,

- 215 gold coins, and
- a serviceable suit of chain mail (nominally 150 gp, maybe less due to age)

The characters take 7 rings, 6 short swords (with scabbards), 177 silver coins, and 145 of the gold coins. Seldon Esh takes the rest, plus the chainmail.

How About the Servant of the Deathbringer?

The characters and Seldon Esh's group go back to the Northeast barrow where Duani and his minions were exploring. They find that there is no sign of the magician or his acolytes. This prompts some discussion with Seldon, who turns out to come from the jeweled city of *Sewich*. He knew there was a great chasm that blocked access to the barrows – so he used his miraculous flying device to get across it. He claims to be a renowned inventor and scholar in Sewich, and that his companions are the assistants to help “fundraise” so he can afford to construct his miraculous devices. He claims that the trip across the mountains was quite easy, no trouble at all. As he says this, a couple of his hoodlums look they might have been a bit airsick. But none of this stops Seldon and Gallfred from getting on like thieves as they reminisce about the wonders and delights of the jeweled city. Gallfred suggests that Seldon should introduce him to some of his wealthy acquaintances upon their return to the city, to their mutual profit.

The barrow Duani was exploring doesn't even have a proper door, just a ragged hole in the side of the mound. Roots and brush mean that the entry requires anyone taller than a gnome to crawl. It also appears that there was a trap – a shortened bec-de-corbin was set to fall upon anyone who entered. It's not obvious if the trap actually hit Duani or his acolytes.

After Hemp makes a perfunctory effort to call in to check if Duani and his followers are okay, the characters climb in and down a passage into a thirty-foot chamber. The floor is scattered with rubble and old bones, and three tunnels lead out of it. Hemp grumbles, “Great, more bugs.”

There is no sign of Duani or his acolytes.

Devil Take the Deathbringer's Lackey

Mordecai is carrying a torch (lit) and Selden Esh lights a torch. The characters go North, Selden Esh and company head South. The characters move into a dank stone chamber. Water trickles from the walls. There are eight bodies present, trussed hand and foot. They had filed teeth, and there is a tattoo of Aphiel the Holy Sword on each corpse's back. They were all mummified, but have since succumbed to mildew and fungus. Also, they appear to have been simply flung inside.

Gallfred pokes through the bodies with his extravagant dagger and a torch, but finds nothing of real value. He is disappointed.

The group moves on to another chamber, a rounded room with a high ceiling. There is an ancient door, once barred with a thick oaken door. Someone recently moved the bar, tripping a trap that dropped a stone onto whoever moved the bar. The characters see a mashed zombie finger caught underneath it – confirming who Duani's servants are, and that he is willing to sacrifice them to traps.

Interestingly, the door also has a lock – and it has been locked. There are sounds coming from behind the door. Gallfred fails to pick the lock, but does listen carefully. He hears the sizzle of magic and something roaring in a weird, horrible bird-like voice. And chanting. Magical chanting.

Gallfred opens the lock on the second try, after Mordecai animates a torso puppet from among the mummified Aphiel worshippers. The door opens to reveal a round room filled with swirling, luminescent purple gas. There is a broken glass globe on the floor, apparently toppled from a short stone pillar in the center of the room. There are also perhaps two dozen gold coins scattered on the floor, sprayed from where a leather satchel hit the ground.

More important, there is a fight going on. A humanoid jackal with a raven's head is fighting against Duani and his one remaining acolyte. Two more acolytes lie sprawled upon the floor, clawed down by the monster.

Gallfred Weasel has awesome initiative, but he uses it to wedge the door open with a shortened bec-de-corbin. Podrick holds his breath and rushes into the room. The anesthetizing gas takes effect on him, numbing him and slowing his movements, but not enough to keep him from striking the *raven horror*. He trips it. The creature falls, right into the path of Mordecai's *gourd puppet*. The raven horror doesn't have a chance. As it dies, its body fades out of reality leaving behind a key on a chain and a greasy stain.

Mordecai picks up the key.

Hemp asks, "Are you okay, man?"

Duani answers, "That horrible beast must have been inside, invisible. As we entered, it closed the door on us and smashed the globe to release the gas. This barrow has been full of traps and inconveniences."

"Oh, we also teamed up with the gnome to look for you. They went to the South."

"Then they are probably dead. That was a false path, littered with traps."

Gallfred picks up 40 gold from the floor – the satchel was filled with stones to bulk it out. Old Man Fish and Hemp watch this process carefully. Gallfred palms two gold pieces anyway.

- 19 gold pieces (plus 2 more that Gallfred took). Another 19 gold went to Selden Esh.

The South Passage is Bad News

Everyone goes back to the central chamber. After a while, Selden Esh returns with none of his followers. He is badly bloodied. He tells the characters, "It was a false tomb! We were set upon by a mob of flying skulls! All of my companions have fallen!"

The characters decide to go there anyway, looking for the entrance to the real tomb. Hemp leads the way. The next room contains the bodies of Selden Esh's companions (one of whom survived: Pip is alive!). They are surrounded by eight smashed skulls. A skeleton in a blue cape and chainmail stands at the far end of the chamber. The skeleton carries a black bow. There are several smashed jars around,

with the glint of gold and silver among the shards. Selden reports that when they entered the skulls and the jars were arrayed around the feet of the skeleton. Touching the treasure triggered the magic.

Gallfred picks up some gold coins. Nothing seems to happen. Gallfred picks up the rest of the coins. The others watch. Some of them with arrows nocked. This takes a while, because there are some twenty broken urns. But then, after a bit Gallfred concludes that the coins are just painted lead slugs. Gallfred collects four pounds (200 coins) of fake gold coins, enough to buy him a nice house in the country if he can find a suitable sucker.

At this point, Selden Esh tells the others that he's done with this adventure. He indicates that he's going to leave the barrow and wait with his two wounded companions. He offers to give the characters a ride out if they help him bring along the treasure he's already recovered. The group agrees to this bargain.

Tunnel-Crawling

Mordecai sends his gourd puppet into one of the insect tunnels beyond the false tomb. He finds a path that goes between the main chamber and the false tomb, and a way to connect the two insect tunnels in the main chamber. Then he sends it north, where he finds a larger chamber occupied by a giant mole. The gourd puppet flings itself at the mole and slaughters it, then expires because it has reached the end of its unlife.

Duani observes Mordecai's activity, then tries to win his loyalty by offering that he has the means to transport himself and his selected allies out of this cursed valley once the artifact is located. And by "selected allies", he really only means Mordecai. He suggests that he can show Mordecai how to raise his favorites among his current compatriots and give them unlife, if he's not willing to leave them behind. Mordecai suggests that he needs to seek Samhain's wisdom first.

Gallfred Weasel uses his dagger to poke into the crevices between the stones. He finds that (unlike the rest of the tomb) there is mortar between the stones near the back wall of the tomb. Then he finds a hidden catch. He triggers it (at the same time he finds it). The wall opens up. He takes his torch back from Hemp and peers into the darkness beyond the door.

The Secret Chamber of Bran Corvidu

There is a large space beyond the door. A skeleton lies upon a stone slab. A bow carved with feather designs, set around a ruby gemstone that seems like it contains a flame. The floor around is covered with bones and body parts – perhaps sacrifices to Aphiel, or defenders, or both.

Hemp displays the Aphiel holy symbol and steps forward. The others get into position. Duani and his acolyte also step forward. He intones, "The bow belongs to me!"

Hemp picks up the bow. His mind is filled with visions of war, of glory, of victory, and of eating human flesh! The body parts on the floor animate and attack... everyone.

Mordecai realizes that he is in his element. He animates a *gourd puppet*. He is very successful, and gets himself an upgraded whole-body puppet, which he then turns to attacking the swarm of body parts.

Old Man Fish accidentally kills Duani's last undead acolyte with an arrow, then blames Gallfred Weasel for it. Gallfred Weasel hides behind the stone slab in the false crypt. Duani yells out, "We have been betrayed!" He casts *chill touch* and charges himself up with negative energy, then heads for the door.

Hemp the Weaver decides that it is the Will of Aphiel is to shoot Duani. He kills him instantly. He finds that the Blaze Firebow acts as a +2 weapon – though because he's neither Lawful or Chaotic, he doesn't activate any of its other effects. It promises that if he were to drink some human blood that would unlock a lot of additional excellent powers.

Then the swarm attacks almost everyone. Podrick responds with broad sweeps of his blade. He is ludicrously effective. Gallfred Weasel demonstrates that it is (surprisingly) possible to execute a surprise attack against a swarm of body parts, though it isn't possible to daze it. Hemp turns the Blaze Firebow against the swarm, filling piece after body piece with arrows. And finally, Podrick finishes it off.

The End of the Session

The session ends with both Duani and the defender creature of Bran Corvidu's tomb defeated. Hemp the Weaver has the Blaze Firebow in hand. Each character gains 4 EXP. Mordecai gains +1 EXP thanks to his creative use of a gourd puppet to destroy a giant mole. Hemp the Weaver takes a -1 LUCK penalty for the Ire of the Gods (because he has a +2 weapon).

Mordecai goes up to 2nd level!