

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

Tim and *Chris* are talking about plates. Specifically, they are discussing the importance of having matching plates, and plates that are microwaveable. *Bruce* concludes that this is just another marker on the checky-box list proving that we are all deeply middle-aged.

Paul and *Patrick* want nothing to do with this. Except for decades-old stories about throwing old couches off third-floor balconies during moving day. They are all in on this plan, even at this relatively late date in their lives.

Finally, *Paul* points out that *Ernest* will be late – and that we should be gaming, rather than discussing Middle Eastern politics.

Why Do We Want to Go to the Kingspire?

Old Man Fish found some ancient documents that claim that if you swear allegiance to one of the Elder Kith you can gain the ability to see in the dark, and that these entities can be found outside of the town of Kingspire. Everyone knows that the actual town of Kingspire is overridden by cultists and is very much an unpromising place, so the smart money is on bypassing the town and looking for the Kingspire directly. And, blessed be, the characters have found it after being attacked by a group of zombies: it is a weird old ruined castle at the peak of a rocky island. They've also found plenty of evidence that the Kingspire cultists have been using the swamps to dispose of a lot of their victims. So, avoiding the town just continues to look like a good plan.

The Swamp Docks

A narrow dock extends from the muddy shore and into the brackish waters, supported on giant blocks of stone sunk into the swamp water. There are several skiffs tied up along the docks – presumably how the (smarter) villagers reached the island, rather than trying to march their horses through a swamp like the characters did. There are tracks going up from the dock to the ruined castle at the peak.

The characters de-leech themselves, their eight companions, and the horses. This takes an hour.

There are some engravings on the pillars leading up to the castle. *Podrick* interprets them as showing the history of the Elder Kith. Apparently, there was once an Elder Kith Empire – and some dissidents broke away from the Empire and founded this citadel beyond the farthest borders. There is a clear indication that these rebel Kith intended to bring civilization to the local population. The story is incomplete because there are a lot of missing stones.

Gallfred looks at the fallen stones, hoping to find something about money. He finds carvings showing a skeletal king surrounded by a skeletal court and served by an army made up of lumpen subhuman sorts. The dead king's throne is carved in the shape of a two-headed wyrm. *Gallfred* immediately concludes (but does not tell anyone) that the king must have hidden his treasures within his throne.

Gallfred is all in favor of pushing forward up the hill and into the castle, but *Old Man Fish* observes that it is now after sundown and the smart move is to camp. *Podrick* is still suffering from a wrenched back that makes both moving and fighting painful, so he is all in favor of camping. *Ned Wimbley* picks out a really excellent location ("I know this place, there are wyrms here."), and *Old Man Fish* is able to use *Tjaptar's* blessing to cure *Podrick's* back problems.

The characters let their eight companions keep watch overnight. Strange things happen to two of them. *Maynard* the Meth Manufacturer & Halfling *Dyer* slipped into the swamps at night, and greets the morning filthy and covered in a strange red ooze. And *Pierce McMann* the Space Valet and Gravedigger is traumatized because during the night he watched his own shadow detach from his body and murder a nearby toad. *Old Man Fish* is only concerned that the toad wasn't wearing a top hat and tails and wasn't singing (but only when nobody else was watching).

Ned Wimbley is modestly concerned by *Maynard's* misfortune, mostly because he's turning *Maynard* into his apprentice. The slime smells incredibly bad. The swamp water available to clean also smells bad, just less so.

A Ghostly Blue Company

The characters start up the slope. They leave their followers behind to watch the horses. They are quickly surrounded by towering ghostly blue figures that are also headed to the castle. They look primitive, fur-covered and slope-shouldered, decorated with tattoos and armed with huge, crude weapons. They march alongside the characters silently, a hundred strong or more.

Podrick decides to play his magic lute to encourage everyone. He plays well, giving each of the characters +1 Initiative for a time (maybe for one fight, possibly for longer).

The characters pass through a mist-shrouded field littered with rusting armor, broken weapons, and tattered banners. As the characters approach the gate house, a mist smelling of smoke and burning flesh covers everything and restricting vision to only 5'. Then out of the mist the characters see two armies assemble: one of savages, faced by a cruel-faced army of Kith that emerges from the gatehouse. The characters are between the two groups. *Gallfred* immediately hides. *Ned* also hides, taking cover behind rocks and rubble.

Podrick establishes a defensive position with Old Man Fish. A mob of savages presses the two of them, forcing them back 10 feet towards the gatehouse. Old Man Fish is stabbed by a spear, and it feels incredibly real. "Ow! That was a spear!" The two of them move up over the blood-soaked steps and into the gatehouse.

Gallfred recognizes that while he can sneak through the battle, that doesn't help Ned. Instead, he grabs a couple of fallen Kit helms and some rushes (with which to make elf ears). He disguises both of them as Elder Kith warriors so they can more easily make their way across the battlefield.

A savage standard-bearer collapses before Old Man Fish and Podrick. His wolf-skin standard clatters to the ground. Podrick picks up the banner to claim the gatehouse for the savages. This causes the savage army to roar and rally around them – allowing both Old Man Fish and Podrick to enter the gatehouse, riding upon a wave of savage support. As they enter the gatehouse the sounds of battle fade away into silence and even the field is empty of combatants. They see an iron-bound portal before them, broken and hanging open.

Ned casts *magic shield* with incredible potency. He and Gallfred both gain +4 AC, immunity to *magic missiles*, DR10 against mundane projectiles, and a *counterspell* effect, all for the next hour. Gallfred takes advantage of that to walk up to the steps of the gatehouse, utterly unmolested. Ned follows in his footsteps and is also unimpeded. Then they see a savage astride a giant war-bear riding them down, spear couched for a charge. Ned relies upon his magic to protect him, and he is not disappointed. Then the two of them walk into the gatehouse.

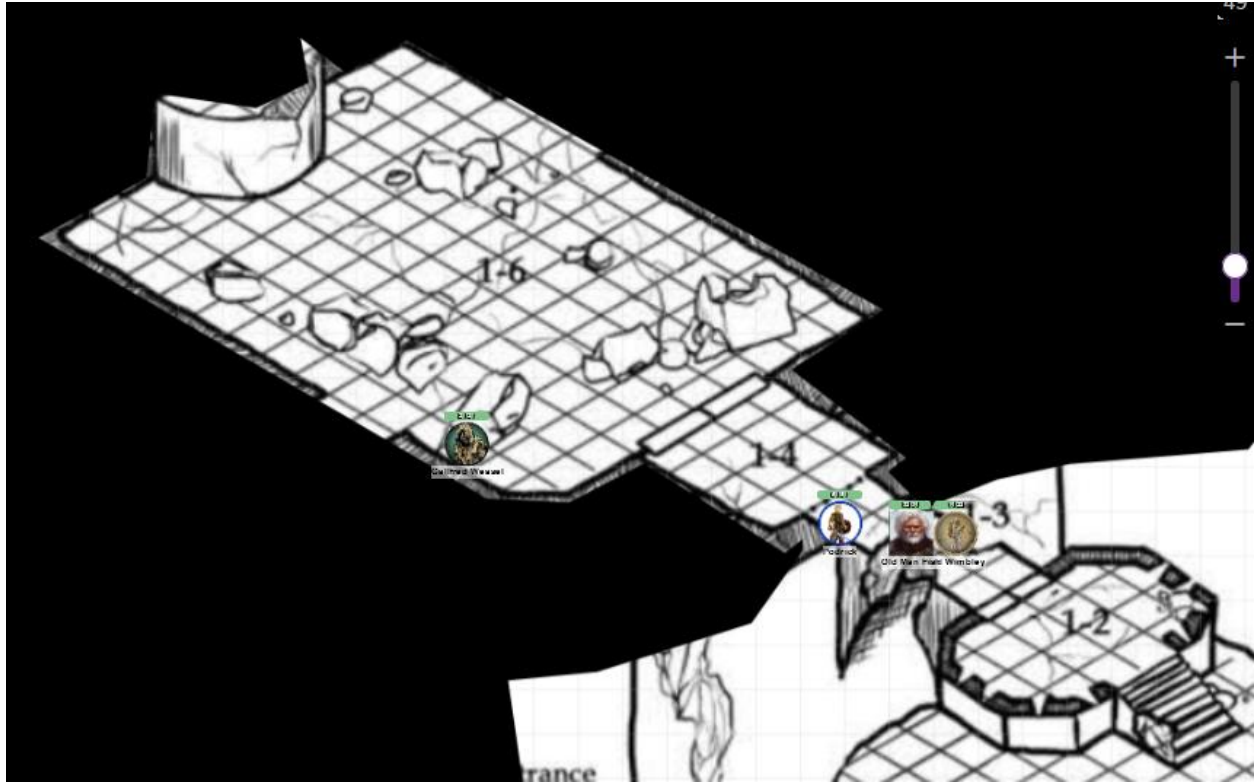
The Stone Bridge

The characters move beyond the gatehouse. Old Man Fish, as a Ranger, notices a large number of tracks that also pass through the doors. He warns the others, "The cultists went this way!"

The characters see a narrow stone bridge leading to the castle. There are no longer any surviving railings, so the entire structure has Death Star levels of safety. Gallfred tells the others, "This bridge is safe!" Podrick isn't sure of that and feels quite exposed under the gaze of the stone gargoyles above. He keeps careful watch for archers or other defenders. He sees a light shining into the entry hall from side windows and hears sounds of chanting and drumming from within the citadel.

Podrick proposes, "I am a squire and a knight. We should just run directly into the killing hall!" Gallfred isn't as crazy about this plan as he might be and prefers to sneak inside. He advances within the shadows and verifies that the hall is peppered with arrow slits. They are manned, but the archers seem not too attentive. He moves in to peer through the doors. Beyond, there is a ruined courtyard overgrown with moss. There are three dead trees at the center. A huge, ragged mob of ill-clad villagers armed with vicious farming tools turned to weapons are dancing around the center of the cultists, maybe 27 of them. There is a high balcony beyond. Lights flicker from within it.

Gallfred determines that reaching the southern door is quite easy. He moves there and watches the ritual for a few minutes. He is totally unaware that Ned has sent his (often invisible) familiar *Vinjogugiladj* to keep an eye on him and watch the cultists.



Soon enough, a ragged man with a chalice flanked by two acolytes bearing earthen jugs, appears upon the balcony. He gives a rousing speech about the fall of the Kingspire and how the cultists have been chosen to give their lives so that the mealy master of the Kingspire can awaken. One of his acolytes fills his chalice with a foul potion, which he then drinks messily. His eyes alight, he grasps an earthenware jug and flings it down among the cultists. The courtyard falls to chaos as cultists fight over droplets of the foul potion. The earth starts to shake and thousands of worms surge through the earth.

Gallfred runs out of the courtyard, doing his best to avoid both cultists and worms. For their part the worms are eating everyone else. Two of the archers in the killing hall fire upon him, but Ned's *magic shield* protects him. He urges the others to exert caution in entering the hall.

Ernest shows up somewhat late, after his parish meeting is over. He isn't *Matt*, but he does manage to fool Bruce into thinking that he is.

After the Worms

The characters wait a couple of minutes. Then the screaming stops. Podrick tells Gallfred that he should just act as a human shield to absorb all the arrows coming at him so the others can get through safely. Strangely, Gallfred believes this. And is willing to go through with the plan. Even worse, he is flawlessly able to "disguise" himself as an arrow-riddled victim. Meanwhile, Ned just hams up his immunity to arrows as if he were doing a comedy routine.

The others easily get past the archers.

In the courtyard, the characters find 27 worm-eaten skeletons. Some still clutch flaming brands and bladed farming tools in their fleshless fingers. None of them move.

Old Man Fish proposes going through the southwards door and leaving this killing zone. Everyone agrees with his idea. Unfortunately, the six huntsmen who are now out of arrows close in on the characters and attack from both sides.

Fortunately, the characters are very good at violence. Podrick stabs one with *ulftheonar's wolf-spear* and ends him. Old Man Fish produces his stabbing dagger and gives another huntsman a lethal stabbing. The dead huntsman's friend produces a shortsword and attempts to reciprocate, but Old Man Fish is too quick for him.

Ned tries to down a huntsman with a *magic missile* but fails to muster up enough magical power to do more than annoy him. Three huntsmen press him closely. He casts again, produces six missiles, and executes a Death Blossom effect upon them. All three have a sudden encounter with death.

Also, Ned summons a pair of giant vipers (HP 17 & HP 21).

Podrick kills the last of them. He has regrets – he wanted at least one of them to live long enough to answer questions. Gallfred checks two of them, and find that both of them are truly dead and even worse were not carrying any cash. Old Man Fish finds that a third is alive (if somewhat crippled) and groggy. And then, rather than interrogating the man, he simply sacrifices him to Tjaptar. He uses the *useful dagger* to draw out his life force. It manifests in a glowing aura that screams as it is claimed by Old Man Fish's patron.

This is *Hemp the Weaver's* cue to join the group.

The (Next) Ruined Hall

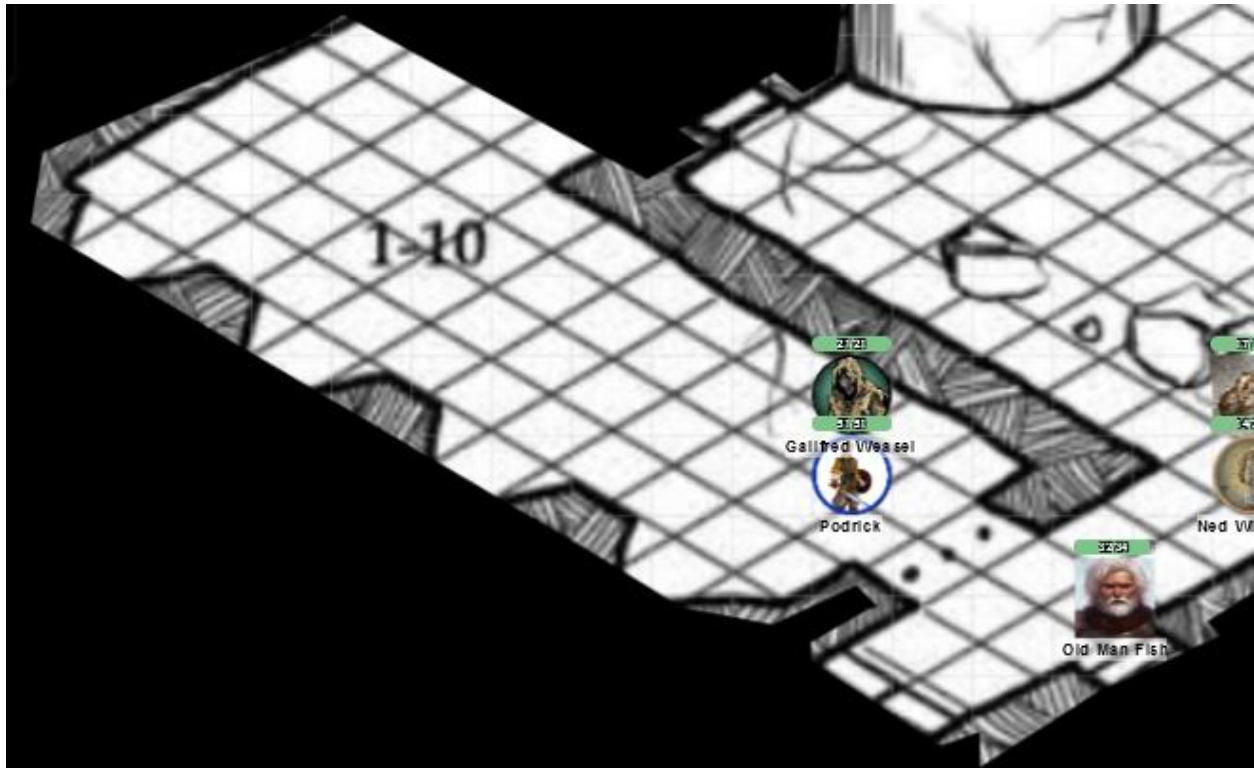
The characters look into a giant hall to the south of the courtyard. The ceiling is painted in scenes of angels and devils, and the floor is decorated with broken bits of stained glass arranged into the shape of a dragon. Most of the shards are decorated with old blood. Statue shrines line one wall. The skeletons of a dozen tall figures are scattered around the walls. Old Man Fish tells the others that nothing living has passed through this hall in years.

Gallfred is dismayed to find that none of the skeletons were carrying any ready coin. He does find four nooks in the wall opposite the windows. They might have been simple altars at one time. Sadly, nobody stacked any interesting antique coins in any of them. Ned thinks about leaving a stack of coins for Gallfred to find, just to keep his spirits up.

Hemp considers the hall and concludes that a dozen primitive warriors entered the hall many years ago and were killed, probably by an animated stained-glass dragon.

There is a stairway to the rear of the hall, probably up to the balcony where the priest and his acolytes appeared. The characters investigate and confirm that this is the case. Also, the area around the balcony

has seen some recent usage: there are braziers still filled with scented glowing embers, decorative vines and wood carvings, and so on.



More important, there are also quite a few people present: cult champions clad in ancient, rusted armor and bearing equally ancient blades, acolytes with their earthenware vessels, and to back them all up the cult leader *Arkos*.

Cult Showdown

Hemp the Weaver shoots at *Arkos* with the *blazefire bow*, but his shot goes wide. *Arkos* and his allies watch the arrow go past, and turn their attentions directly towards the characters, just in time for Ned Wimbley to take down three of the initiates with *magic missiles*.

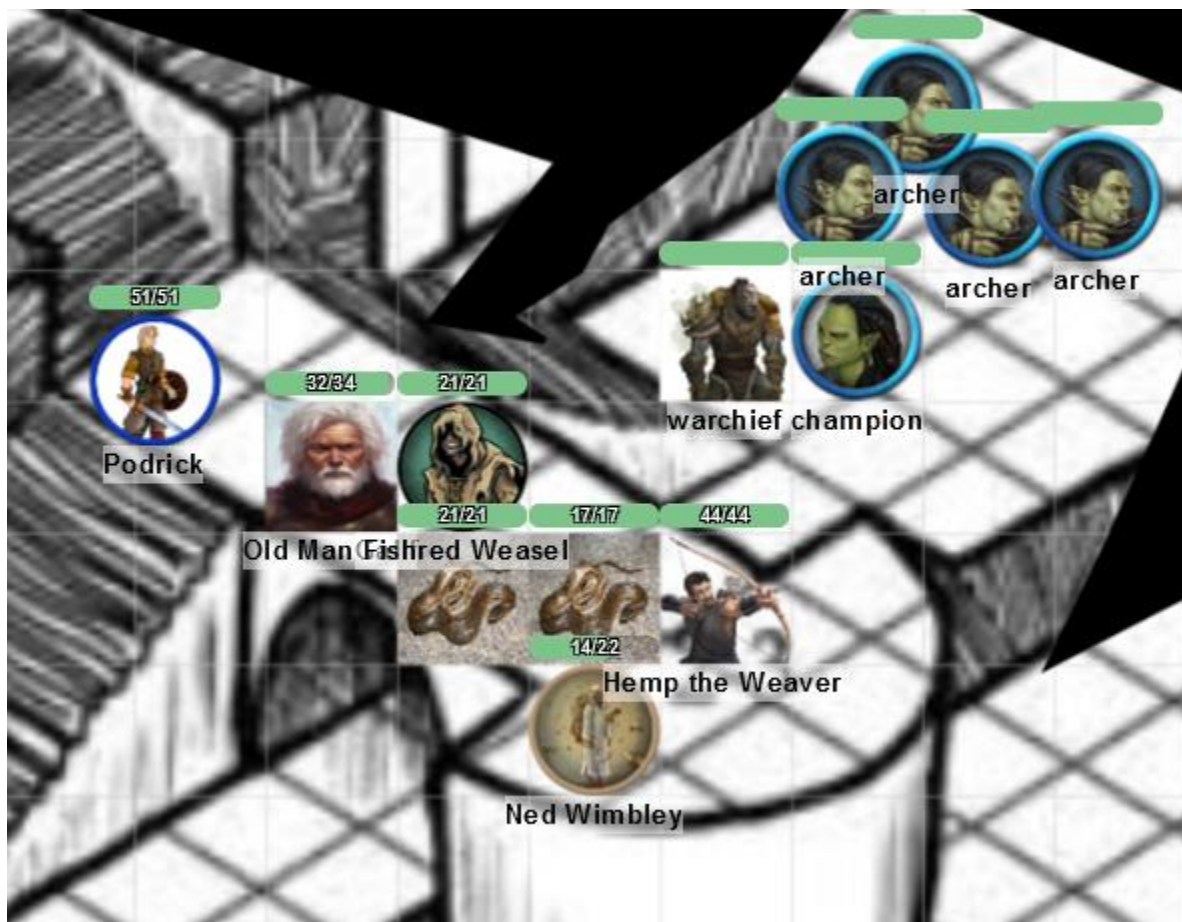
Podrick steps up onto the platform, cutting down a cult champion as he does. Their rusted armor is surprisingly protective, but not enough to turn Podrick's spear point. *Arkos* brandishes his holy symbol, of a dragon swallowing its tail. Podrick feels *Arkos'* will crushing him down but is able to fight off the cult leader's influence. *Arkos* turns to escape, but Podrick spears him before he goes. Hemp the Weaver runs after him, bow in hand. He finds that *Arkos* has run to the top of a ruined chapel, one covered in dust and suffused with an unnatural gloom. The sensation of excessive magic about to burst free like a storm is inescapable. At the top of the chamber, *Arkos* holds up a magical black globe and invokes the power of the Crow King. Hemp needs hear no more: he shoots *Arkos* with a burning arrow.

Ned pulverizes the remaining cult champion with a powerful *magic missile*. Then one of his giant vipers swallows the remaining initiate whole. Podrick and the other giant viper both clamber up the stairs towards Arkos.

Arkos hurls the black orb down from aloft. Hemp catches it! Sadly, this helps very little – it has the strength of an eggshell and shatters anywhere. A wave of silence and magic floods the area, then there is a roar and the characters are all rendered unconscious.

Awakening into Battle

The characters wake to the cacophony of pitched battle. It sounds like someone is attacking the castle. The characters open their eyes to find themselves on the balcony, faced by a horde of barbarians rushing up the stairway



The warchief steps up and attacks Gallfred Weasel, inflicting a remarkable wound. Gallfred is pleased to recognize that Ned's *magic shield* is still working – which didn't help him against the warchief, but which will ward away any arrows that come his way.

Hemp isn't immune to arrows, he takes one in the shoulder.

Podrick takes a strike from a tribal champion's great sword, then retaliates with a spear strike that forces the champion down the stairs. The man falls, breaking his neck and dying. He follows up by shoving the warchief down the stairs as well. The warchief clambers up and fights back Ned's two giant vipers. He is furious about being pushed down the stairs, ignores a bite from a viper (in spite of the damage it inflicts), and delivers a punishing strike to Podrick.

For his part, Podrick isn't willing to give up the high ground. He pierces the warchief through the lungs and forces him to stumble back down the stairs.

Down below, Ned's giant vipers swallow two archers whole. And his volley of *magic missiles* leaves the warchief dead and the last archer desperately wounded. Old Man Fish and Hemp each shoot the man, dropping him. Hemp utters a cry of victory to *Aphiel*.

Now that they are no longer pressed by immediate attackers, the characters are able to see that the courtyard is choked with a black smoke. A fierce battle rages all around. Troops of disciplined Elder Kith fight against a horde of savage subhumans, struggling to send them out through the gate. Ned Wimbley realizes that the dagger *pestis* can cast a *choking cloud* daily. He dumps one into the battlefield, helping the Elder Kith push the savages back.

The War Room

The characters move forward deeper into the castle. They find that the next room is a planning room – there is a table covered with maps and notes in the center, and racks of bronze weapons around the walls.

Once the savages are driven back, eight Kith knights approach the characters. They are bloody and exhausted. One of them notes, "You have the blood of the subhumans upon you. Why are you here? Who are you?"

Old Man Fish puts on his ten-gallon hat and explains, "We are proper humans, here to help you against the primitives."

"I don't understand what that means, but through all the cycles we have never seen you before. Every day, we are here to drive them back out of the courtyard. You should talk to the Crow King, the lord and master of this keep. Come with us!"

The Chamber of the Crow King

The knights lead the characters into a throne room. An imperious Elder Kith sits upon a throne carved from an ancient tree. He is armored in mithril and clad in a cloak of raven feathers, flanked by four guards who watch the characters with razor eyes. The chamber is lined with trophies: the head of a dwarven king, several human skulls, and tapestries showing the victories of the Elder Kith over the primitives.

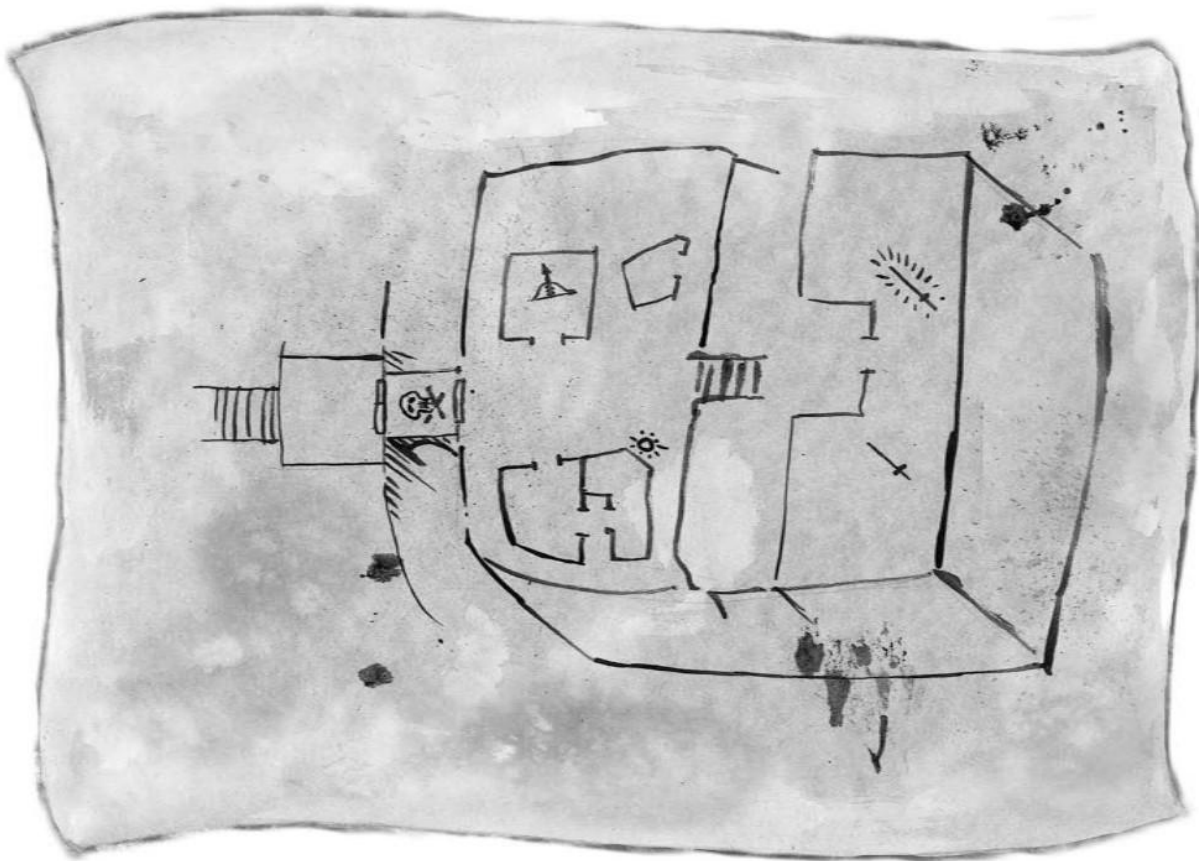
Old Man Fish speaks first, describing how the characters came to arrive in the citadel.

The King answers him, "You have not been thrown back in time, but into a magical spell. It has been going on since the time when the Kith ruled the land. I cannot release you from the curse of the Kingspire, but perhaps if you aid me in my endless battle against my brother, the dread lord Rynth. And once Rynth is dead, then I may be able to help you leave this place. Rynth stole a portion of my eldritch power when he fled into the caverns below the citadel. Once he is slain, that power will return to me. However, those who die within this cycle come back at the beginning of the cycle. To ensure that he stays dead you must also find the Runeblade. If you slay him with that blade, he will remain dead. I believe my brother possesses this artifact and can free us from this curse."

Meanwhile, Gallfred is stymied in his efforts to subtly approach the throne and search it for a hidden chamber. He examines it as quickly as he can from afar and is able to conclude only that the King's mithril armor and sword are worth a literal fortune.

Old Man Fish brings up his desire to see in the dark and asks if the Crow King could make that happen. The Crow King instructs that some of the servants of the Elder Kith have that power – he could grant that power if Old Man Fish was willing to swear fealty. Old Man Fish is willing so the Crow King grants him the power of darksight on the spot. This power changes the color of his eyes to a dark amber.

A Map to the Rebellious Brother



The characters return from the throne room down to the planning room. The *Vizier* and his knights are there, working through the next iteration of their war. The *Vizier* is a gaunt, skeletal elf clad in dark robes. He carries his magical rod close and glares at the characters with his dark eyes. He appears startled by Old Man Fish's amber eyes.

Old Man Fish asks, "We need a map to the rebellious brother Rynth!"

Hemp follows up, "Oh yes, what does a runeblade look like?"

"I have this sketch from a scout long ago, but I am not sure how to read it."

Gallfred pipes up, "I am quite good at archaic languages! Which, in this context, means contemporary languages!" The *Vizier* shows him the sketch, which sadly doesn't contain any languages. Gallfred doesn't let that stop him. He offers some interpretations of the various diagrams and symbols. On a more useful level, he memorizes the sketch.

With the preparations complete, the *Vizier* leads the characters to the barracks tower where Kith archers continue to shoot at the subhumans outside. He unlocks a gate in the floor and gestures the characters to proceed down the spiral staircase beneath. The *Vizier* accompanies the characters downstairs, so he can unlock the gates in the catacombs.

The Catacombs

The *Vizier* leads the characters through two locked gates and into the torture chambers. The chambers are well-equipped with instruments of pain, including an iron maiden made from bronze (so, a bronze maiden?) Blood dripping from the device indicates that someone is inside – the *Vizier* explains that it is *Sephra* inside, not the King's brother. "Our torturer needs someone to practice his craft upon..."

The torturer is a Fomorian with purplish skin and knobbled joints. He carries a giant iron club.

Old Man Fish gets the idea that the *Vizier* and his torturer are not on the same page as the King regarding ending the timeloop.

The *Vizier* cements this impression by pointing out, "*Sephra* is being tortured because she was too much of a distraction to our king." Then he opens a secret door and tells the characters, "Just keep on going down and you will find the catacombs."

Ending the Torturer

Hemp decides that the Torturer needs to be slain. Podrick agrees. And the others (because they are that kind of people) just go along with it. Podrick strikes first with *ulftheonar's wolf-spear*, pinning his arm to his side and impeding his ability to use his giant club.

Old Man Fish goes bear-berserk (which seems just kind of repetitive) and stabs the Torturer with his magic dagger. Hemp shoots the Torturer with the *blazefire bow*, blinding him. This keeps the Torturer from doing much of use. So then he tries going into *gaseous form*, only to find that a special property of *ulftheonar's wolf-spear* is to prevent those trapped by it from going into *gaseous form*. He stays pinned.

The collage features a large, stylized swastika in the background. Overlaid on this is a grid of small images. The top row contains three green rectangular labels with the text "21/21", "44/44", and "21/21". Below these are several small images: a snake, a man with a bow, a hooded figure, and a portrait of an older man. The text "Hemp the Gallfred Weasel" is written across the middle. Below this, there are more small images: a snake, a man with a bow, a hooded figure, and a portrait of an older man. The text "Ned Wimbley" is written at the bottom.

Hemp the Weaver opens the bronze iron maiden, with Old Man Fish standing by with healing magic. When they see her, it is clear that she is on the verge of death, with only moments to live. Even Old Man Fish's magic is insufficient to save her. However, the characters do find that she is carrying the King's signet ring.

The Secret Chamber

Gallfred finds some cash in the coffer: a large emerald, a medium ruby, and 120 silver coins.

He tells the others about the silver coins. He keeps the gemstone for himself.

Meanwhile, Old Man Fish uses magic to wake up Hemp.

The Stairway Down

The characters move to descend a seemingly endless stairway. After they feel they have been walking for hours they reach the bottom: a short way and a stairway leading to a pair of giant portals flanked by braziers burning with a smoky flame. The characters are about halfway down the stairs when a vaporized cloud of oil descends from the ceiling. Gallfred notices the cloud, estimates that the cloud will take 1d4 rounds to reach the flames, and suggests that everyone should back up and put a cloth over their faces.

Three rounds later, the cloud ignites. Anyone who was still on the stairs would have been incinerated. But more to the point, the blast also set the ceiling supports on fire. It won't be that long before the ceiling collapses.

The giant portals are faced with brass and depict an Elder Kith funerary procession. A warrior upon a bier is being carried to a tomb atop a forested hill. They are closed by a bar weighted down with stones. Gallfred unstacks the rocks and opens the door.

The door leads to a crumbling bridge leading to a cyclopean stalagmite with what looks like a small village surrounded by a wooden palisade on its top. There is a flanking tower, and Podrick observes (as he steps out onto the bridge) that a group of friendly Elder Kith natives have emerged upon the top of the tower. They appear to be eager to welcome the characters with their javelins.

The End of the Session

Each character gains 8 xp. Both Old Man Fish and Ned Wimbley go up to 4th level. Ned gains 5 hit points! Also, he learns the spell *mirror image* with no strange side effects. Old Man Fish just gains the level title of Wanderer, and he's plenty pleased with that.