

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

Bruce calls in to find that only *Patrick* is online. Worse yet, *Patrick* has been afflicted by the dreaded Plague of Silence... or just has his microphone muted. Either way, there is no cure. Though, against all expectation he does speak up when *Tim* comes online. By the time *Paul* joins, everyone is talking about strange religious shrines and organizations. *Paul* isn't going to be out-done, describing the Chinese Maoist Cult of the Mango in the 1960's... a group that has apparently resulted in some deaths when people insulted the blessed mangos originally sent to Chairman Mao as a gift.

Matt joins in after he has a chance to get lunch. He is just in time to hear *Tim* describe his and *April's* plan to install transom windows over some of the doors in their house to improve air circulation.

Ernest only shows up when everyone else has run out of depressing stories to tell. And that's really saying something.

Chris is out, recovering from complications from lithotripsy. Or something. We all hope that his complication doesn't have its own little tiny complication. Also, everyone hopes that he is consulting a reputable doctor, and not one who uses acid for everything.

South River Monastery

The characters pass over pleasant, flower-scattered hills to see the Findirean Monastery of the Sacred Stump. The place is artistically overgrown with vines; underneath that the stonework is carved in natural themes, and there is a massive, weathered stump visible in the center of the courtyard. Green-robed monks are visible working on small herb gardens and flower arrangements. A ranger would really appreciate this place.

The group mostly stands silent and stunned by the place. Then they approach, in hopes that the monks might be willing to provide food and lodging.

The monks are clearly somewhat surprised by the characters' appearance (both in the sense of presence and mien) but remain hospitable. They explain that they revere Findire of the Staff and the great stump, all that is left of his mighty tree after the wizard *Diranoar the Tree-Chopper* cut it down. Among the

monks, there is one who has the aura of someone who once wielded immense arcane power but who no longer does – whether he did so voluntarily or not.

Ned Wimbley asks about room and board, and whether there is a nearby way to cross the river. He does this in a strange voice that runs the gamut from high- to low-pitched, with reverberations that set the teeth on edge.

The abbot appears. His angular face is offset by a well-kept beard streaked with silver. He speaks with calming, charming words, introducing himself as *Abbot Kaelus*, and *Brother Althar* his assistant. *Gallfred Weasel*, who has a keen understanding of greed, observes with concern the way the abbot's gaze lingers over the characters' possessions.

Brother Althar has short, graying hair and sun-browned skin. He carries a bow (as do a number of the other monks) and seems extremely serene.



Podrick offers the abbot a gold piece for a night's lodging. Abbot Kaelus is more than willing to accept this donation. Ned is curious about whether he could visit the Stump – though in truth, the Stump is large enough that *not* visiting it would be easier. The monks are generally eager to provide the characters with a Findearean religious experience. They are also quite good at woodcrafts (there is a whole grove of coppiced trees out behind the monastery) and can sell arrows, bows, staves, and similar items.

Hemp the Weaver has recently been troubled by the path that *Aphiel* wants him to take and attempts to commune with Findire. He doesn't get much beyond the sense that the nature god is a waning presence in the world, pushed aside by the onrush of civilization.

Hemp engages in some haggling with the abbot over some religious paraphernalia taken from the Black Manse. He gets 25 gold, a fraction of the goods' nominal worth but enough to satisfy the characters. The abbot seems very pleased with the transaction. Dinner is heavy on vegetables and light on cooking elegance, though the monks do have a lot of salt (they're fairly close to Fythorp).

Over dinner, Brother Althar observes that many of the characters seem to be from Weebrook and mourns that the land has become quite dangerous because the Duke no longer sends his soldiers around to patrol. The abbot agrees with Althar's assessment.

Hemp (who knows that the Duke's forces amount to about seven men) asks if this is a recent problem.

Abbot Kaelus comments, “The powers of Law have never really protected this area all that well. But we have a Knight of Lushnia at our table tonight!” He gazes over at Podrick. “Surely you can put in a word with the Duke when you next visit him in Weebrook?”

Podrick mumbles, “My influence with the Duke is limited, as are his powers...”

Hemp presses the abbot on local problems. Abbot Kaelus answers, “There is a pack of goblins nearby, living upon a giant stone spire at the southern edge of the swamps around Canter Lake. They can range a long distance upon their bats.” Unfortunately, the abbot doesn’t know much else about the goblins or the nearby ruins.

Unseen by all, a shadowy presence at the end of the table takes sudden, bloodthirsty interest. Gallfred Weasel is always eager to slaughter the goblin races.

Then the abbot asks if any of the characters are familiar with ancient languages, for many of the writings of Findire were made in scripts that few understand today. Gallfred speaks up to say that he has made a study of such things. Everyone is surprised by his presence. After dinner, Abbot Kaelus shows Gallfred a variety of ancient writings, including rubbings from old carvings that have been transcribed into ink. The collection is diverse and drawn from a variety of sites. Gallfred is able to make a lot of progress in interpreting the documents – they mostly record historical natural events and occurrences. Gallfred tells the abbot everything he learns.

Ned and Mordecai learn that the monk with signs of arcane power is only an initiate, not particularly high-ranked within the temple. He isn’t eating near the characters – he eats with the other monks. Ned excuses himself to go find the fellow. He locates *Brother Orlin*. He is quite plump for a monk, appears to have not been at the monastery for long, and urges Ned to abandon his lusts for arcane knowledge and power. Brother Orlin hopes to free himself from the gluttony and urges to power that has ruled his mind. Perhaps he can gain some inner peace, and he hopes that Ned will follow a similar path. He tells Ned that he has heard of a creature in these lands that can eat a wizard whole and then excrete him out purged of his magical corruption.

Ned is unwilling to give up on magic, but he does ask after the *Temple of Carnifex*. Brother Orlin notes that the Carnifex is among those gods whose worship has been deliberately suppressed because his followers created great torture and hardship in these lands. It is pretty clear that Brother Orlin has the fervor of the convert and is willing to push a much harder line on seeking freedom from arcane corruption than the other monks.

Hemp gets into a long conversation with Brother Althar. He learns that while Althar is keenly in touch with nature, the abbot came from a faraway land. His talents are not so much archery (as is the case for Althar) but in administration. Meanwhile, Althar mentions that he has trained many of the other monks in archery and hunting, and that they regularly go out to hunt deer and water-rats – but never the giant beavers, because they are sacred to Camue, the Trickster goddess, and killing them can draw the ire of the gods of Chaos.

The next morning the monks give the characters a nice hearty breakfast and transport them across the South River in a little boat.

Look Out, It's Bat Country. Also, Lizard Country



The group makes good progress through the plains. Towards midday, Ned Wimbley spots a swarm of bats. He immediately recognizes them as *vampire bats*. Gallfred directs them to a hiding location and they take shelter until the bats pass by. They suffer no indignity, except for Podrick who finds that something small and rodent-like has eaten some of his food.

Later in the day, the group is beset by a group of savage lizards. Podrick knows how to deal with this kind of problem: he steps forward with his blade out. He slashes a lizard, wounding it badly and causing blood to spill into its eyes. Ned simply shreds a lizard into bits with magic bees. Mordecai hurts another with his own *magic missile*.

A lizard grabs hold of Podrick and shakes him back and forth like an au pair. Hemp shoots another, only to have it rush him. And in the background everyone hears Ned's screaming as a lizard chews pieces out of him.

Ned sees scenes from his life flash in front of his eyes. He reaches out for power and is more than rewarded. He casts five *magic missiles*, enough to destroy two of the remaining lizards in an explosion of magical bees.

There is one lizard left. Gallfred slips out of the darkness and severs its head with his garrote.

The two wizards collect lizard body parts for summoning resources – teeth, feet, whatever. They are 3 HD creatures with vicious attacks and pretty good AC, which makes them desirable things to summon. Hemp takes time to skin one, taking enough material to make himself a pair of lizard-hide boots. The characters make camp shortly afterwards, giving him time to prepare and tan the skin. He is able to produce some lizard leather with Podrick's help (in thanks, he mends Podrick's backpack).

Mordecai isn't willing to let Gallfred make camp: he still has painful memories about being burned the last time Gallfred set up the camp.

The next morning the characters find that giant water rats attacked the group's supplies. Both Gallfred and Ned lose some rations.

The Goblin Spires

The group reaches the edges of the swamps. The giant stone spire is easily obvious. And at the top of the spire there is a crazy-quilt arrangement of huts, plank bridges, platforms, and netting all tied to each other and the stone with a maze of ropes clearly put together by people with no real understanding of civil engineering, or even basic architectural organization.

The characters find a cave at the base of the spire. Gallfred sneaks forward to find a moldy chamber that smells of rot. Dead leaves cover the ground. Trickle of water flow from far above. A stone staircase leads upwards. Gallfred finds an incredibly obvious shallow pit with spikes at the bottom cut into the stairway. The trap is so obvious that it offends Gallfred's sense of professionalism – but it is also an obstacle that prevents forward movement. Gallfred climbs along the walls. As he gets to the other side, there is a tortured wailing and an ogre wreathed in blue flames storms down at him. Gallfred is knocked back into the pit and onto a spike. He responds by hiding in the shadows of the pit as the ogre looms above him.

Faced with a giant burning ogre, Ned casts *magic bees* at the thing. The creature's body jerks lifelessly as the missile strikes it, but it doesn't fall. Undeterred, Ned casts *enlarge* on Podrick and doubles his size.

Hemp finally recognizes that the "ogre" is a corpse suspended from the ceiling by a crude block and tackle. He shoots through the rope. This has the fortunate effect that the ogre's body covers over most of the stakes.

Two goblins come screeching down the stairs, hurling javelins. One of them dies instantly when Gallfred (hiding below) flings *shadeslayer* through his head. The magical blade returns to Gallfred's hands. Ned shoots the other one with an arrow. Sadly, the characters' sense of victory is limited because there are obviously more goblins further up the tunnel.

Podrick is curious about just how many goblins are in the room above. He climbs across the pit and glances into the chamber beyond. There are a *lot* of goblins up there.

Podrick stomps up into their midst, yelling really loudly. He murders a goblin, but he doesn't manage to intimidate the others into running away.

The goblin's chamber is miserable, with low ceilings, filthy sleeping pads scattered across the floor, and soot across ceiling and walls. Podrick steps into the middle of the chamber, his blade dripping gore. Mordecai and Hemp enter afterwards, flinging spells and arrows and leaving dead goblins in their wake.

Gallfred ignores the fight in favor of wrestling free the gold punji stake (transformed by Ned's magic). The stake is only worth 1 gp, but it's still made of gold. Meanwhile, Ned casts his spell again and one of the dead goblins gains a golden tooth.

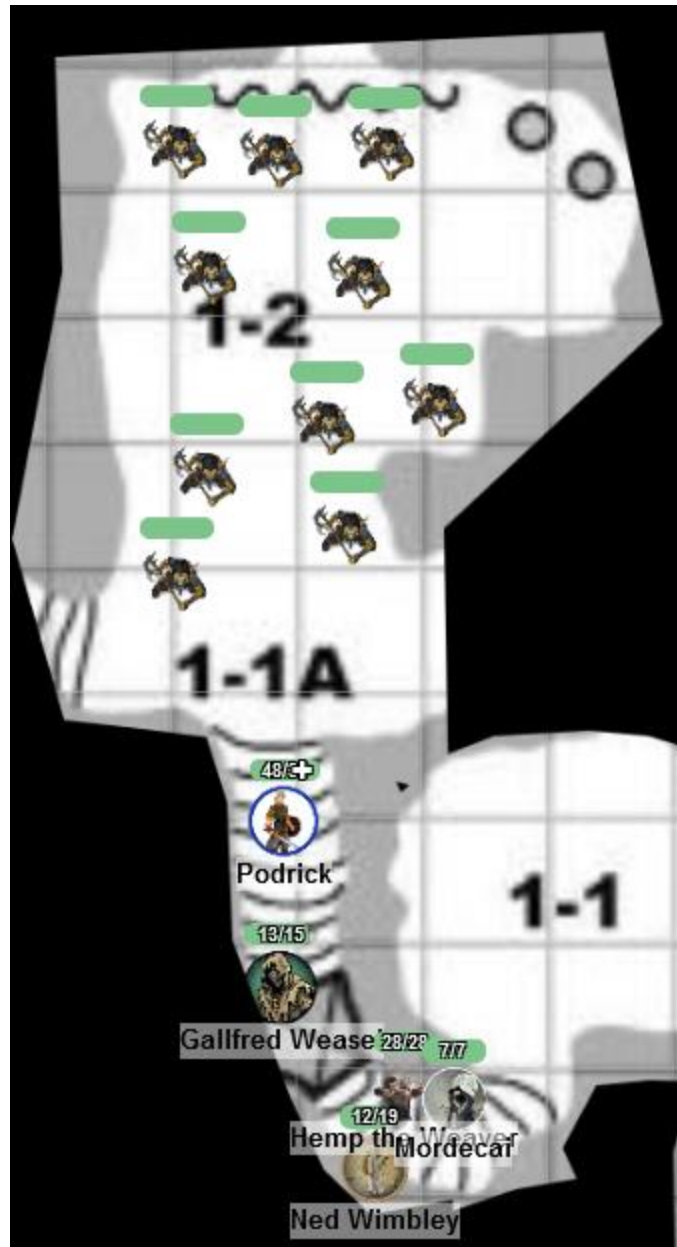
A lucky goblin manages to grab hold of Podrick's armor and climbs up his chest to strike him on the nose. Podrick loses his sense of smell for the next four hours. Blood drips down his breastplate.

Ned summons up a giant lizard. The giant lizard eats a goblin. From the look on the lizard's face, goblins taste bad.

Hemp powerslides across the floor, loosing an arrow from the *blazefire bow* to kill the last goblin.

Gallfred finally spots the gold tooth. He extracts it.

Something quietly whimpers inside a crate. Hemp opens the crate and finds a deeply emaciated *shocker lizard*. Hemp provides the creature with food and water. It is grateful for the care. When Hemp moves away from the crate, the lizard follows him (slowly, because it's still emaciated). He names the lizard *Zipzap*.



Once he has the gold tooth carefully concealed, Gallfred searches through the goblin nests and finds 3 silver. He hands that to Hemp as party treasure.

Mordecai examines the moldering hanging the goblins were using as a room partition. He determines that it was once a banner. It depicts a battlefield littered with the dead; an emaciated woman stands in the background. Hemp tears down the banner and finds a tunnel beyond.

The Gambler

There is a goblin seated in the room beyond the banner. He cackles and says something in the goblin tongue. Ned speaks some of his language and recognizes that he is saying something about “blood-thralls sent by the masters!” The goblin rolls two ruby dice and studies the result, then invokes a spell. Ned realizes that he is casting *sleep* and tries kicking him in the teeth to stop him. This hurts the goblin but doesn’t stop his spell.

Ned alerts the others, “He’s going to put the whammy on us!” Hemp and Ned both fall asleep (for three hours).

Gallfred hides so effectively he almost vanishes from reality. Meanwhile, Mordecai sends his summoned bat to latch on to the goblin magician. The magician survives. Then Mordecai levels a *death ray* at him and sucks the life right out of him. The goblin’s withered body collapses. The characters examine the body carefully and determine that the goblin magician was quite old, at least for a goblin – maybe 12 years old. His dice are four-sided, marked with goblin runes. Ned is the only one who can read them, so he takes them. They *might* be able to work like an *augury* spell.

There is a chest in the back of the chamber. It is coated in poison, but Gallfred realizes this before touching it. He unlocks it (safely) and finds:

- 75 silver pieces
- 15 gold pieces
- Silvered head of a battleax

It all goes into party treasure.

The Cloaca

The tunnel beyond the Gambling Sorcerer’s turns into a sort of pipe, which then leads to a chasm. Another pipe spews an ongoing stream of swamp water down into the chasm. The characters are able to see a stone platform and a door made from a stone slab carved in the shape of a skull about twenty feet away from the end of their pipe.

Ned casts a *feather fall* strong enough to cover the entire group. Mordecai’s summoned bat takes a rope and grappling hook over to the platform, well enough to secure it. And Podrick takes the lead in clambering over. He misjudges his path and starts to fall. A string of sticky silken thread shoots down from the ceiling and latches on to him. Straight up above the characters there is a huge, mutated spider thing attached to the ceiling about 30 feet up.

The characters are dubious that the spider creature is performing a public service. Their suspicions are confirmed when it starts to reel Podrick in, all the while drooling poisonous fluids down the webbing.

Gallfred starts the arduous climb around to reach the creature. He hides with supernatural skill, practically vanishing from reality. The others have trouble remembering that he was part of the group. Hemp takes the direct route and simply shoots it with the *blazefire bow*, setting the thing on fire.

Podrick tries to swing back and forth on the thread, then cut it at an appropriate time so he ends up on the platform. Unfortunately, his armor joints freeze up and leave him immobile. He watches helplessly as Mordecai clambers across the rope over to the platform. Hemp manages to snap the thread with an incredible bow shot, sending Podrick to crash onto the platform.

Then the mutated spider monster shoots webbing at Hemp and starts the process of drawing him up.

Mordecai tags the spider monster with two *death rays*. He kills it. Even dead, it doesn't fall from the ceiling – it is far too attached, and just hangs down from its thorax.

Robbed of the opportunity to backstab a spider monster, Gallfred just climbs over to the platform. Hemp and Ned follow along.

Mordecai examines the door. It isn't locked. It is circumscribed with hundreds of tiny runes filled with lead. Gallfred determines that the runes create a magical seal that prevents the door from being opened from outside. Gallfred starts picking lead out of the runes, breaking the seal. Mordecai demonstrates that he can do a very impressive deadlift – he pushes the heavy door aside to reveal the room beyond.

The Ossuary

The chamber beyond is an ossuary, a circular chamber. Alcoves along the wall are stacked high with bleached skulls and bones. A circular stairway leads upward in the center of the room, a curving stair across the room leads down. And the entire room is circumscribed with tiny runes.

Podrick walks right across the line of runes. There is no effect. He walks back out. Again, no effect.

Ned suggests, "Hey, Podrick! This would be an excellent time for you to practice your mime work!"

Podrick ignores him. He looks at the spiral staircase and sees a trickle of water coming down it from above. Gallfred doesn't think there is a water trap on the stairs.

Neither Ned nor Mordecai are able to interpret the runes. But Gallfred can, which makes him wonder, "Why are the two wizards relying upon the former guild beggar for this kind of work?" Gallfred translates:

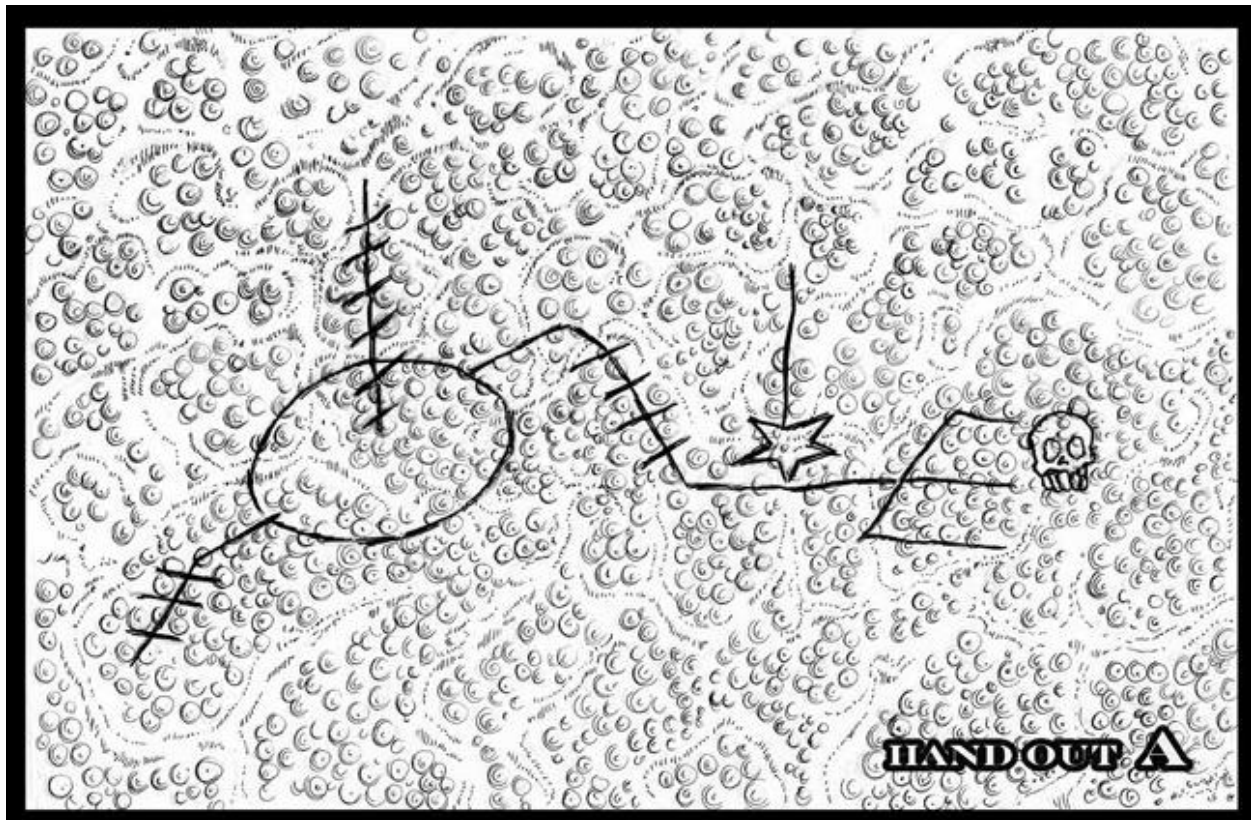
You Are What We Once Were

We Are What You Will Be

Each skull is stamped with the sigil of an animal, circumscribed by runes – and the runes aren't the same on each skull. Even Gallfred cannot interpret these runes, but Ned (amazingly) can! He thinks the runes record the year and season the person died, while the animal refers to the year the person died. The dates are all 200 to 500 years ago.

Everyone would prefer to go up, to find out where the water is coming from. The stairs go up, but then end at a ceiling of collapsed rubble. A steady stream of water comes from the rubble. And there is a statue visible among the wreckage. Mordecai investigates closer and finds that it isn't a statue at all, but a human skeleton coated in a thick coat of minerals from the water.

Gallfred examines the skeleton and finds that it has a golden chain around its neck. He manages to free the chain. At the end is a holy symbol depicting a radiant starburst of platinum set around a large ruby. It is worth about 100 gold pieces. And removing it makes a scroll case accessible. Gallfred takes that as well. The case is ruined, but inside there is a scroll of hammered copper, now green with age. There is a map inscribed upon the scroll. Amazingly, the rubble on the ceiling does not collapse.

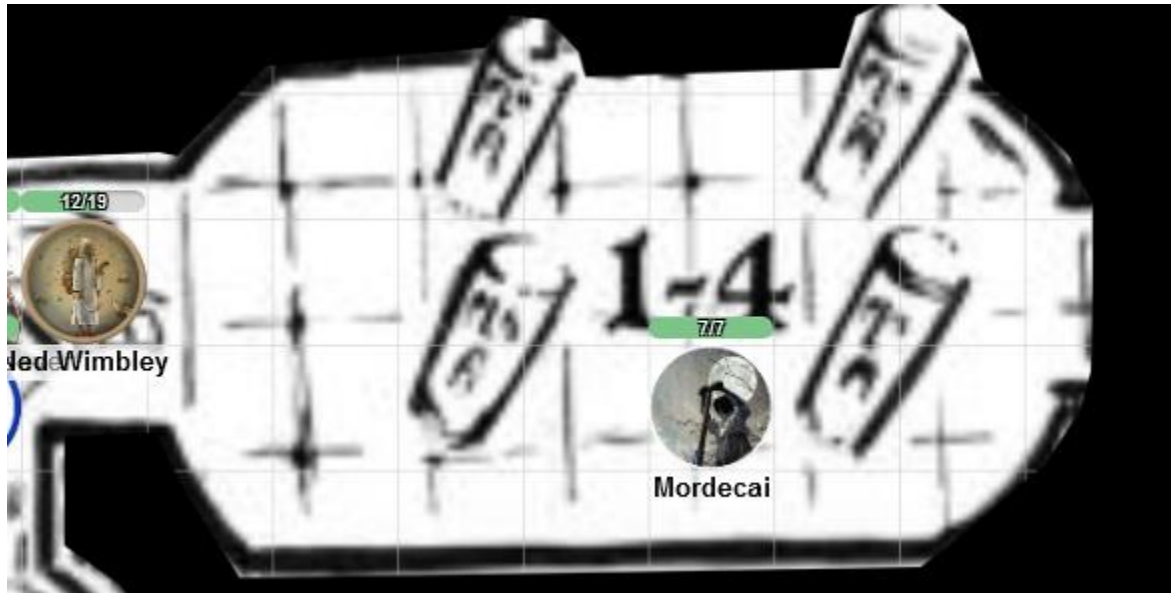


Gallfred comes back down the stair bearing the map. He doesn't tell anyone about the holy symbol.

The Chamber of Tortured Pillars

Mordecai interprets the map and immediately heads down into the next room. He finds a room with four pillars, each carved in the shape of tortured youths being drawn downwards by demonic entities.

There is an altar to one side with a copper bowl upon it. There are a dozen wafers within the bowl. And across the room a carved archway filled with thick mist leads onward.



Mordecai enters the chamber. Ned Wimbley follows him. They both don't evaluate risk and reward in sensible ways (at least according to Gallfred).

A hissing voice rasps, "We shall usher the faithless to their reward." Six dark shapes drift from the shadows around the edges.

Mordecai suggests, "I am one of the faithful of Carnifex, here to receive her blessings."

This does not impress the dark shapes.

Ned backs off and hits a shadow creature with a weak *bee missile*. Podrick does the reverse: he steps forward, slashing and cutting. Hemp brings out the *blazefire bow* and shoots one of the creatures. His bow sheds a bright light!

Mordecai grabs a wafer and runs for it. He notes that the wafers are fresh as if they were baked just yesterday, and that they are stamped with the image of a three-headed raven. He draws life from his summoned bat and exterminates five of the shadows in a blazing volley of *magic missiles*. The one surviving shadow swings at Podrick, to no effect. Ned destroys the last with his own *bee missile*.

Everyone eats the "death wafers", for all that they appear to have no real effect.

The Gallery

Mordecai leads the group through the mists. Beyond, there is a vaulted gallery with flaking murals depicting people suffering terrible torments. There are three doors, made from:

- Wood – showing death by starvation.

- Bronze – depicting death by violence.
- Clay – depicting death by ennui, or maybe old age.

Podrick observes, “Well, they’re all death.”

The map shows a skull next to one, or maybe two, of the paths. It’s not entirely certain what that means. Mordecai thinks on what he knows about the ancient Carnifex cult (recruited from the lower classes, worshipped underground, rites included mortification of the flesh, and so on). He eventually decides on the first door, that showing death by starvation. The door is stuck, he cannot pull it open. Working with Podrick, the two of them are able to pull the door open... only to see it rot away in the span of a breath. The two of them see a spectral starving urchin with a begging bowl in its hands. It looks at them with pleading eyes. Mordecai strikes out to kill the urchin. The phantom hurls itself at him, its mouth cracking open impossibly wide. He drives the spirit back, causing it to vanish. And past the door there is a small chamber. A tiny skeleton is half-buried in soil and debris. Huge roots hang from the ceiling, and rays of pale light shine from above casting disturbing shadows on the floor. Mordecai investigates and finds that the light comes from a shaft upwards, and that it is possible to escape by climbing up the roots.

The second door is bronze, stuck with age and hung to swing away from the vaulted chamber. Mordecai pushes on the door. With Ned’s help, he opens the door. Suddenly the door gives way and pushes open. There is a steep staircase down on the other side. Ned casts *feather fall* so neither of them falls down the stair. They land on the fifth stair down. Thirteen steps down, the stairs end in a pit. Mordecai flings a rock down and guesses that it might be 50’ down. Mordecai persuades the others to set up a rope arrangement so he can explore. He determines that it is a 50’ shaft that people were probably flung down to die. He moves up the stairs, and at the eleventh stair the traps start to activate. Stone blocks smash out from the sides of the stairway, but Mordecai leaps to safety.

Gallfred comes into the scene, looking for traps. He determines that the steps are all interlocked – all of them are connected to pressure plates, but the traps are only activated when steps *lower* than the potential victim are free of weight. So, going down the stairs is safe but coming back up is dangerous. Gallfred hands Podrick a large sack and tells him to go into the first alcove and fill it with dirt and child bones. The characters put the sack on the step *below* Mordecai. Then Mordecai and Ned escape to safety. And finally, Gallfred pulls the sack up and watches as it gets crushed, stabbed, burned, and so on.

The Door of Clay

Mordecai examines the door. He sees that it is a clay door, with bits of lead and adamantite embedded in the clay. The man upon the door is sad, with toad-like eyes. The green mist in the room comes from his mouth. The door appears to have been slowly crumbling for hundreds of years.

Gallfred and Hemp both think that this is a door primed to explode. The others don’t disagree. The plan is for Hemp to determine where the door is, then step back through the mist (at which point the door is no longer visible) and shoot the door with the *blazefire bow*, trying to trigger it with Aphiael’s power.

The arrow flies. Nothing happens.

Mordecai looks through the mist. He finds that the mists coming from the door have coalesced into three long tentacles. One of them lashes out and grabs him. It seizes him in an iron grip and drags.

Podrick runs out and stabs the door. Smashing the door... releases the three-tongued frog demon. Awesome.

The frog demon captures Podrick with a second tongue.

Hemp uses the *blazefire bow* to shoot the frog demon, delivering an incredible wound and leaving it stunned. The tongue holding Mordecai goes limp, allowing him to go free. Hemp notes, "Well, that took a lot of starch out of it."

Mordecai turns, taps the frog demon for life force, and uses the power to hit it with a *magic missile* that tears through it and reduces it to a goopy, awful shell. When it emerged, Mordecai got a glimpse of the hellish frog-realm it came from – but after it dies there is nothing but stone wall beyond the door.

The End of the Session

Each character gains 12 XP.