



# IN SEARCH OF MYSTARA

A jumpstart kit for beginning a campaign in the Grand  
Duchy of Karamaikos

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## Contents

- Purpose and Approach –	5
- Setting, Date and What has Transpired –	5
- Assumptions –	6
- Plot Points –	6
0. The Campaign:	6
1. The Caravan and Ambush at the Crossing:	7
2. The Syndicate:	8
3. The Hobgoblin Triad:	9
4. Castellan Keep:	10
5. Threshold / Castle Mistamere:	10
5a. Threshold / Blacksmiths ore problem:	12
5b. Threshold / Religious strife:	12
5c. Threshold / The Timber Wars:	12
5d. Threshold / Nail in the Coffin:	12
6. The fate of Rogahn and Zelligar:	13
7. Revealing ‘The Master’:	13
- Encounters –	13
1. Caravan Ambush	13
Tactics	14
Monsters	15
Treasure	15
2. Rest in Verge, The Boars Head	16
3. Threshold and Castle Mistamere	18
Background:	18
Threshold Gazetteer:	19
Plot:	20
Aftermath:	21
- Appendix 1: Castle Mistamere Re-keyed –	22
- Appendix 2: Maps –	32
- Appendix 3: Player Handouts –	34
Handout 1 – Hobgoblin Map	34
Handout 2 – Muti’s “Ledger”	35

- Appendix 4: Adventure Flowchart and Syndicate Org Chart – ..... 35

- Appendix 5: NPC and Selected Enemy Statistics –..... 36

    Threshold / Mistamere ..... 36

    The Road to Castellan Keep and the Keep..... 37

    Other Characters..... 38

## - Purpose and Approach –

The *purpose* of this document is to provide an easy to use framework for bringing a new group of players together in Mystara. The framework should eschew a beginning without a strong hook, and also give a lattice for jumping into the many published adventures in the B-Series. TSR created “In Search of Adventure” or B1-9 as an attempt to do this but it lacked much in the way of “glue” between the adventures. It also lacked any reason to start or begin, a flowchart in B1-9 points you to page 4 which contains nothing related to a reason to be in Threshold. Page 3 says, “Ask your players if they want to spend a session learning about the town or whether they want to adventure immediately.”. As a DM this is rather cringeworthy, additionally for a novice DM this presents them with a tough challenge of developing any forward momentum to the story. “You meet in a tavern” just isn’t good enough. So, to reiterate, the purpose is first to provide a toolkit to launch a new campaign in Mystara (specifically Karameikos) usable by both novice DMs and veterans. Second to lean on the existing canon modules and provide logical, reasonable entry points into them.

The *approach* this guide has taken is to provide an *In Media Res* situation. It uses pre-generated backgrounds to launch the story and seed the player characters with clues to a grander plot. From this initial scene and the resulting clues, a DM should have some surviving characters and the strands of some kind of attack on the commercial heart of Karameikos. From this localized chaos, over time it will become clear that a puppet master is setting these events in motion from a far away land. This can then lead a party off to a higher-level campaign, potentially leading to X4 and X5.

## - Setting, Date and What has Transpired –

1,010 A.C. (“after crowning”), 18 Klarmont. This is roughly the ‘present’ timeline the Gazetteer series are set in. The events depicted in the red box / BECMI / Mentzer story, the death of Aleena and Rolf’s short adventuring career happened about 10 years ago. In this timeline Aleena’s body was sent to Specularum and raised by a 10<sup>th</sup> level Cleric. Her father, the baron of the small town of Threshold was furious that she left on her own to adventure and has ordered her to remain in Specularum. There she has remained, a zealous acolyte and member of the Order of the Griffon, thankful to the immortals for her resurrection. This act affirmed Baron Sherlane Halaran’s already strong loyalty to both the church and to Duke Stefan.

Additionally, this campaign guide takes place after the events in the Tales of Mystara podcast. An actual play solo adventure which details a small party attempting to bring Bargle to justice in the ruins of Castle Mistamere. I recommend listening to this not only for the amazing actual play but also because the artist/author/narrator does a wonderful with an oral history of Karameikos read partially from GAZ1. For a DM new to Mystara this is a great way to immerse yourself in what makes it special and interesting. Tales of

Mystara takes place shortly after Aleena's 1<sup>st</sup> death, with the Baron of Threshold still seeking justice. I recommend listening to this masterpiece of actual play. It is an audio history of the Duchy of Karameikos as well as an adventure.

<https://solodungeoncrawler.blogspot.com/>

**Spoilers:** It ends with Bargle's fate unknown, 2 dead PCs, 2 surviving PCs and 1 whose fate ... is unknown. The 2 survivors who appear here years later, mostly having given up the adventuring life.

The two survivors, Ilyana Petraos and Yolanda Vorloi have "retired" to the middling outpost of Verge. A way point on the road to Threshold. Two are confirmed dead, the 5<sup>th</sup> an aspiring cleric of the Church of Karameikos named Claudius Tagaras' fate is unknown.

### - Assumptions –

This guide assumes the DM has access to the B series of modules, as well as Frank Mentzer's red box. Any statistics or rules "crunch" here will be presented with the "BECMI" rules as a framework. An exception will be alignment, for which I adopt the Holmes approach of five alignments. Lawful Good, Chaotic Good, Neutral, Lawful Evil and Chaotic Evil may be referenced here. This document isn't a place for debate, but essentially the option of law and chaos in my evil gives me a lever to establish whether an otherwise evil being will keep its word and be reliable and organized in its activities. **Feel free to discard this approach** for what works for you.

### - Plot Points –

Plot points represent high level events or sites that are some key part of the overarching campaign. Plot zero is the overall highest-level plot, which won't necessarily be apparent to the PCs at first.

### 0. The Campaign:

Since this is a sandbox style guide there aren't necessarily any encounters (other than this first 'In Media Res' starting point and a couple of obvious next steps) that have to happen. Instead there are a number of 'Plot Points', which are the things that are happening in and around the characters that are *likely* to draw their attention. The idea behind this style of campaign is that inevitably at least **one** will draw them in and then begin the flow of events that will draw them into other 'Plot Points'. The challenge for the DM in this style of adventure is that they need a high-level idea and understanding of all the plot points since the characters may choose to jump to one or another at any time. In short, the campaign is off the rails by design.

The reason why all these events are loosely tied together is because of the machinations of a man known as The Master. The Master is an enigmatic leader in a far-off land called Hule. His motives aren't even necessary to flesh out here, but what is important to know is that he is fighting a war on the distant front and needs the Duke of Karameikos as distracted as possible. If Duke Stefan were to take an active interest in the Sind Desert and Hule area it would mean more pressure from the East. The Master is investing similar effort in other nations such as Darokin and Rockholme, and his machinations have borne fruit in those places as well. His modis operandi is of interest as it directly impacts the events unfolding in the Northern part of the Grand Duchy. The Master dispatches trusted agents with coin, and in some cases other treasures to seek out humanoid allies. Over time The Master has learned that orcs are unreliable, kobolds ineffective and goblins both. His network of agents and spies have found a number of adversarial hobgoblin leaders and he has handsomely paid all of them to expand their territory and treasuries. In doing so, he has both created an escalating rivalry between them and caused disruption in trade for the region. As the hobgoblins attack and loot caravans they are being aided by a spy network seeded in almost every town. This network of spies, scouts and thugs is informing on caravan and adventuring activity. The network is rarely directly in contact with the three major hobgoblin clans but uses a network of runners and go-betweens to further obfuscate the plan. Hobgoblins, while evil are lawful in their approach to life and have proven reliable thus far. The three hobgoblin leaders will be detailed in this guide, the DM must play these chess pieces and ensure they are always in motion as the PCs proceed through the sandbox of events, adventures and sites. In summary this highest-level plot point is ultimately what has started the gears of adventure grinding.

### 1. The Caravan and Ambush at the Crossing:

This plot point represents the initial starting point that has, for various reasons brought the player characters together. Let's begin!

The player characters are a scattered group of humans and demihumans who don't know each other. They are all converging on Threshold from points south for a variety of reasons. An ambush of a coach and carriage will bring them together (in media res) to begin a thread of events leading to exploration of the greater Threshold area and beyond.

The reasons and exploits of each PC are detailed in the character folios, in their own documents available wherever you found this document. Several NPCs in the coach caravan have nefarious motives, some don't.

The coach left from Specularum and routes up through Kelvin, crossing over and making a brief stop in Verge before the final ½ day journey to Threshold. It normally spends a day in Threshold resting, and then heads back to Specularum. It consists of 2 wagons, 4 horses and is crewed by 2 teamsters. This particular caravan is operated by the teamsters themselves rather than a larger merchant house. Typically, a road warden accompanies the caravan if

one is available and sometimes with a road warden's apprentice. In Karameikos the road wardens are appointed, and may take a fixed fee for accompanying a caravan. Most merchants see them as inferior to private bodyguards, but much cheaper. A given caravan can ask for a road warden if there are any available. The Duchy sees this service as fairly priced and it allows them to keep an eye and ear on trade on the Duke's roads. Fare is not cheap, 3GP one way, 5GP roundtrip, all the way from Specularum to Threshold. Rates are cheaper if you pick up at an intermediate stop, but the caravans are normally full of people and goods. This fare includes simple meals and water. Cargo room is extra, otherwise it is limited to what you can fit under your seat. Fare includes a seat in the wagon, which seats 4. The wagons have 2 seats up top as well and most aren't protected from the elements very well. Cargo is often stowed on top and covered with tarps if the packaging isn't weather proof. The roster of the caravan is detailed in the encounter section since this is the *only* required encounter.

The ambush point is a small bridge over the Salt Creek, just South of the hamlet of Verge. The road is just West of the Windrush river. To the West in the woods are a small team of loggers. Two dwarves and two men, they are friendly and know the teamsters, the teamsters insist on stopping and filling their waterskins and chatting.

The ambush should be portrayed as particularly brutal. Make an effort to target the soft targets first, this will also give the PCs a reasonable chance to survive. Right off the bat with no roll one of the teamsters is struck through the eye with a crossbow bolt and killed. Two of the loggers are killed running up from the grove towards the trail, a volley of spears cutting them down and pinning them to the Earth. Hobgoblins will tend to not kill horses or destroy wagons since they will use them to transport the goods away if possible. Hobgoblins are notorious slavers and will take prisoners if it makes sense. This encounter is detailed below.

These hobgoblins are using the Castle Mistamere as a home base. Clues include a crude map to the castle and to Castellan Keep as well as a list of targets for the hobgoblins to look for (Appendix 3, Player Handout 1). Particularly disturbing is a schedule of caravans leaving or headed to Threshold, Kelvin and Castellan Keep, one of which is the party's current one. The map includes some goblinoid language scrawled on it. It details how treasure is to be divided and harsh language about skimming. It's currently Klarmont 18 and there's an "up" arrow indicating North on the map. Clearly the ambush was planned, and likely as were the other 2, one in the past and one 10 days from now. Another clue can be found in the traveler's log in Verge.

## 2. The Syndicate:

Agents of evil are everywhere. A moneychanger in Castellan Keep, a barkeep in Kelvin and the dock foreman in Threshold.

The barkeep in Kelvin (named Marcus 3<sup>rd</sup> Level Thief) at the traveler's inn is an agent of evil. In fact, he is the one most directly responsible for leaking the PCs caravan schedule. He sometimes sabotages carts as well to encourage a breakdown. The evil moneychanger in Castellan Keep (named Baringham a 4<sup>th</sup> Level Thief) employs him to provide information to a half-orc woodsman (named Istok) who ferries the schedules to the humanoids in the Caves of Chaos. Baringham is a silver-tongued merchant who is in good favor with the military leaders at Castellan Keep, he is also running a legitimate and necessary business as a banker and money changer. Even a thorough audit of his business will reveal nothing but integrity, he repays all adventurers and even goes through great pains to see that balances are paid to the families of those who die out on the borderlands. He runs the information network very discreetly. The dock foreman in Threshold is named Curtis Cook (1<sup>st</sup> Level Fighter), he is also an agent of evil. His job is to report on ferries and caravans leaving Threshold for various points. He works for the moneychanger up at Castellan Keep and isn't aware of where the information is going from that point forward. He's also been tasked with spreading rumors of undead stalking Castle Mistamere, and evil spirits roaming the surrounding woods to discourage anybody from exploring it. These false rumors are backed up by dancing lights and other magics appearing over Mistamere. Instructions are delivered to him and information is picked up by Baringham's minions, usually Istok. He's a filthy drunk and enjoys beating on women and halflings. Besides collecting his fee he's mostly ignorant of the greater syndicate. He is probably the weakest link and easiest point for the PCs to start to uncover the larger network.

The statistics for these NPCs are detailed in this guide in their own section.

### 3. The Hobgoblin Triad:

The syndicate is the information and spy network. But the actual raiding and disruption is the province of a loosely affiliated group of hobgoblins. There are three main groups, a self-proclaimed king named Grozo operating out of an old monastery across the river from Guido's Fort. A sizable gang operating in the Caves of Chaos led by a fearsome warrior named Karthas. Karthas was Grozo's right hand hobgoblin and was promised riches and land if he could establish a foothold on the routes near Castellan Keep. The king on the hill (Grozo) fears the group in the caves may eventually grow too powerful and break off, but the competing demi-humans there and battle savvy veterans at the keep have thus far checked their numbers. Finally, a hobgoblin shaman named Muti runs a group of raiders out of old Castle Mistamere. Muti is feared for her magical abilities, undead minions and total disdain for the other two would be hobgoblin overlords. All three leaders of the triad received a boon from The Master in order to muster their initial forces. They were provided with good arms and armor, gold, and even selected magical items to entice warriors to follow them.



#### 4. Castellan Keep:

Instead of the priest in Castellan Keep being evil (as depicted in B2), it's the moneychanger (Baringham 4<sup>th</sup> Level Thief). He hires out several henchmen who are also evil. A dwarf (Karpenstone 2<sup>nd</sup> Level Dwarf) and a Fighter (Morrissey Female 1<sup>st</sup> Level Fighter). He employs a Half Orc scout named Istok who knows the hills and mountains as a courier. Baringham is in league with the denizens of the Caves of Chaos because he can profit from the exchange of cash with adventures who never return from the caves. Several parties (maybe some of you reading this documents parties) of adventurers have been lost to never return, he simply pockets their money pretending to send it off to families in far off lands. Perhaps a family in another city could mention their loved one being lost up at the keep, but never getting any money. Morrissey and Karpenstone make regular trips to Kelvin and Threshold exchanging orders, information and money. Baringham claims they are couriers sending money off to widows and children. If they are somehow shadowed, they'll end up in Fodor's Isle and be seen with Curtis Cook arguing and exchanging documents and coin.

The priest visiting the Keep (Brother Calathetes, C3) isn't evil, but he worships different immortals (Church of Traladara) than the leadership of the Keep (Church of Karameikos) which explains his secretive behavior. Players expecting the by the book Keep on the Borderlands will be strangely surprised to have an ally in the form of a lawful cleric and two acolytes (who are under a vow of silence).

The hobgoblins in the caves are uniquely well armed, with good quality chain mail, fine swords and crossbows. The funding from The Master has put them in the dominate position to all the other humanoids.

#### 5. Threshold / Castle Mistamere:

There is a strong chance the PCs will be in Threshold after the ambush and after a brief stop in Verge. The map and schedule should prompt them to chase down the information network causing the caravans to be attacked. Most in town are too busy earning a living to care about any great conspiracy, however, a few good folks might be concerned enough to help.

Nearly a decade ago Rolf (B31, F4) tried his hand at capturing Bargle and failed (red box solo adventure). A few weeks later a small party attempted to find Bargle in Castle Mistamere (Tales of Mystara), only two returned alive (they eventually retired and now reside in Verge). Once a year or so a group will go to explore the ruins and either never return or come back with tall tales.

Information gathering about Mistamere leads to mostly unfounded rumors of undead and ghosts (perpetuated by the complicit foreman). Mistamere is a short 2-3 hour walk up a downtrodden road past some friendly farmsteads. Here is a sample rumor table you can use.

1. Mistamere is haunted with ghosts and spectres. (**False**, but often seems true because of Muti's Dancing Lights spells)
2. A dragon lairs in the bowels of Mistamere. (**False**, one did but now a Manticore lairs there)
3. Mistamere was once home to a powerful wizard who ruled over the land named Gygar. (**True**)
4. Kobolds once claimed the castle as a base and worshiped dragons there. (**True**, but now there are no Kobolds there)
5. "I *seen* ugly humanoids, maybe orcs or hobgoblins skulkin' about on the Eastern and Western slopes." (**True**, Hobgoblins egress and ingress via the slopes instead of the road from Threshold).
6. A huge bird flies around Mistamere, you can see it in the moonlight! (**True** ... sort of, it's a Manticore).
7. Bargle died there years ago at the hands of a cleric named Claudius. (Could be **true** if you want it)
8. The dead walk on the hill near Mistamere, the corpses of adventurers who died there! (**True**, Skeletons and Zombies are prowling about)
9. Ole' Rolf knows a bit about Mistamere he about lost his leg up there. (**True**)
10. The castle has two floors below ground, and they're very unstable - many tunnels have collapsed over the long years. "That's why nobody wants to claim it. Might fall down on ya!" (**True**)

Threshold merchants are acutely aware of the raids but river transport Southbound has been fairly reliable so they aren't up in arms. Inbound goods are a bigger problem since those mostly come in Northbound via the Duke's road. Caravan safety affects smaller merchants and personal trips more since the largest caravans have solid security.

A trip to Castle Mistamere leads to more signs pointing to there being a broader plot, possibly further into the wilderness at the keep. Could involve planting information, a faux caravan and counter ambush. Or some proof that the dock foreman is involved, or at least working for the money changer ... it will be difficult though since he has cleverly placed a number of people between him and the Keep.

Mistamere has been re-keyed in Appendix 1, to represent its current status 10 years after red boxes events. This guide presents the new keying to reflect the new denizens. It also reflects a Mistamere with a partially collapsed 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> level underground.

Threshold is a big enough city with interesting NPCs. It can provide lodging, equipment and potentially employment. Threshold is further detailed in its site section below. Threshold is also extensively detailed at The Vaults of Pandius (articles like this <http://pandius.com/threshgd.html>). Four possible plot points besides Mistamere are sketched out below.

#### 5a. Threshold / Blacksmiths ore problem:

The blacksmith (Rolf) in Threshold can't keep up with production without good iron ore. He's got some local bronze which is inferior for weapons. Prices for iron brought up on barges from Specularum is too high. He'd like to have somebody reliable scout the hill and mountain areas East of Threshold (West of the Keep) near the Cave of the Unknown for iron veins or existing mines. This can lead to an exploration of Quasqueton. He's willing to finance an expedition and pay a bonus for identifying the mine sites and mapping their location.

Several enterprising Dwarves (Mert Sharpstone, Kass Stonecarver) from Rockholme intended to mine there but have gone missing. In fact, they have been captured, split up and put to work by the hobgoblins making weapons for the demi-humans in Mistamere and the Caves of Chaos.

#### 5b. Threshold / Religious strife:

Baron Halaran (also known as Patriarch Sherlane, a 5<sup>th</sup> Level Cleric), rules Threshold and worships in the Church of Karameikos. He is open to followers of other immortals and recognizes that restricting worship constrains Thresholds population. However, he would like these houses of worship to have their own plots of land. He'd like to recruit a cleric from each of the other religions to settle near Threshold and create a temple nearby. Church of Traladara (Zirchev, Petra and Halav), maybe the Cult of Halav, perhaps even a shrine to Kagyar to entice dwarven craftspeople to settle. This can introduce additional exploration, as well as quests to obtain materials or artifacts for these temples.

#### 5c. Threshold / The Timber Wars:

All the construction is using up timber, and there are those who oppose mass deforestation from Alfheim. The elves want something in return. They require an ancient text thought to be in the Quasqueton. Baron Halaran asks that the PCs complete the elven request in return for peaceful lumber operations. It's a McGuffin to get the PCs to Quasqueton and possibly re-engage events found in the PC backstories.

#### 5d. Threshold / Nail in the Coffin:

Several farm hands who were out drinking at night were found dead in a barn cellar with nails in their backs. The trail of blood leads out to a livestock pen where a cow is missing. The crude iron spikes are actually from a manticore's tail. The manticore lairs down in the 3<sup>rd</sup> level of Mistamere. It occasionally but discretely stalks livestock. However this night two young farm hands were drinking under the moonlight and were caught up, they managed to escape while the manticore dragged the bovine victim off and crawled into the barn and down the cellar where they bled out.

## 6. The fate of Rogahn and Zelligar:

After exploring the Cave of the Unknown (Quasqueton) the PCs may wonder where the 2 legends ventured off to. The rumor is they ventured into the Altan Tepe mountains to head off a group of marauding giants. Why leave the fortress they spent their lives constructing? They brought their most powerful weapons and artifacts with them. No giants ever came, so did they succeed? In fact, they didn't, and in *my* Mystara they died wandering the deserts of Alarum after finding *The Lost City*. Their treasure is secreted away in a *Lost City* under the desert. The can bridge your PCs into B4.

## 7. Revealing 'The Master':

If the money changer is revealed and his ledger, diary and exotic artifacts are found, then all signs point to Hule and the Sind Desert. The ledger reveals a network of information and money leaving about every couple of months via some spice traders who come to Threshold. Essentially the Master is fomenting discontent in the Duchy by financing the hobgoblins (or any other demi-humans likely to keep their word for gold). The skimming of the caravan loot is just a bonus for the syndicate. 1,000's of GP is spent to hire mercenaries, bandits and others to disrupt the commerce to these way points. The reason is simple, the Master is fighting a war on the Sind Desert front and needs the Duke as distracted as possible. If Duke Stefan were to take an active interest in the Sind area it would mean more pressure from the East. The Master is investing similar effort in other nations such as Darokin and Rockholme, his machinations have born fruit in those places as well.

This can be a spring board to move towards Sind, leading into X4 and X5, with a more plausible reason than the printed modules where the party is just in Pramayama and gets hit with a Quest spell.

## - Encounters –

### 1. Caravan Ambush

Two coaches slowly roll along the Duke's road. Having almost made it to Verge where they will likely stay the night, the Foamfire River is coming up, after crossing that the small caravan will be about 24 miles from Threshold.

#### Participants

*Normal Man / 0-Level Dwarf has a THAC0 of 20*

#### Loggers:

Kelm (Normal Man, Hand Axe, 3HP) (RIP)  
Rufus (Normal Man, Hand Axe, 3HP) (RIP)  
Permius (Normal Man, Hand Axe, 3HP)  
Darl (Dwarf, Hand Axe, 4HP)

*Teamsters:*

Roadwarden Tift (F1, Spear, Shortsword, Leather Armor, 8HP, AC 7)  
(15,6,8,9,13,12)

Ignas (Normal Man, Teamster, Dagger, 3HP)

Berk (Normal Man, Teamster, Dagger, 3HP) (RIP)

*Passengers:*

Farrow (Normal Man, Merchant, 2HP) - If using the pre-gens Rowenda is a bodyguard for Farrow who is a rare spice merchant, who occasionally deals in rare art. He is a spendthrift, but at heart a good and loyal man.

William Longstring (Normal Man, Scribe, 2HP) - William is a scribe by day, but also a forger by night. In his case are a dozen or so seals of various barons, and leaders. He isn't evil necessarily but certainly lives a dangerous life. He is moving to Threshold as he is on the run from a nobleman in Specularum who caught him withdrawing money.

Julian Ironband (Normal Man, Blacksmith Apprentice, Shortsword, 3HP) (RIP) - We'll probably never know much since he gets cut down in a blaze of glory. But his death puts Rolf in a bad spot with no apprentice.

Tactics

Hobgoblins enter from 2 directions. 4 come in from the woods West of the loggers. 4 are hiding near the bridge to the North and in the brush on the stream banks.

4 x loggers (Kelm, his brother Rufus, Permius, and a dwarf Darl) are on the West side of the road with Gibstone.

The roadwarden, Tift (F1), rides up top on the rear coach with Ignas, a teamster.

Up front riding on top is Berk, a teamster and Baldingpot (H1).

The merchant (Farrow) rides in the front coach with Meeks (M1) and Rowenda (F1).

Bostok and McReady are in the rear coach with 2 passengers, a scribe named William and a blacksmiths apprentice named Julian. Both are headed to Threshold to begin new jobs. Any initial dialog between the PCs and Julian can be useful in establishing both information about Threshold, and his soon to be boss Rolf as well as an urge to avenge his untimely death.

Canticle is walking beside the coaches on the East side and has been foraging plants and berries to pass the time.

The hobgoblins have rigged the bridge's south end to collapse by tying rope to the planks and pulling them out. They had intended to rob coaches and didn't expect the logging crew to be there. But no matter, they'll kill them and take their stuff as well. If they are forced to retreat in that

direction, via failing morale for example they'll pull the bridge planks off to impede pursuit on horseback.

When the coaches get within about 20 feet the hobgoblins to the North rush up from the stream. Their sergeant is armed with a heavy crossbow and snipes from the backline while his raiders charge in with long swords.

Unfortunately, the blacksmith's apprentice Julian had been walking that way to fill his waterskin in the stream, he manages to pull his short sword but is eviscerated by the three long sword wielding goblinoids.

The hobgoblins to the West have been lurking in the trees and as the coaches stop, they surge from the forest and attack the loggers, running up and throwing their spears. The initial volley kills Kelm and Rufus in brutal fashion, Kelm gets one through the leg puncturing his femoral artery and pinning him to the ground. Rufus is hit in the middle of the back sending him to the dirt. The hobgoblins rush up and he is gorged with a short sword to finish him. Also, for dramatic effect I recommend the initial heavy crossbow shot from the sergeant goes right into Berk's eye killing him gruesomely.

Permius and Darl are next up and begin to run towards their makeshift camp where Gibstone has been sharpening some tools. Their saws are no good in a fight and they hope to take up a hand axe, or escape on their feet. They may or may not survive the marauding hobgoblins.

Gibstone has leather armor, a short bow, arrows and the rest of his items in his tent. It will take him 2 rounds to get it equipped. He is sharpening a hand axe and has that at the ready.

The DM should paint a picture of the horror and abject violence of the ambush. Precede the encounter with interesting banter with Julian and Berk who will soon be slaughtered. Your goal here is to light a fuse that will burn into the following sessions and motivate the PCs.

#### Monsters

4 x Hobgoblins (1+1HD, AC 7), armed with spears and short swords (4, 6, 7, 5hp)

3 x Hobgoblins (1+1HD, AC 7), armed with longswords (5, 6, 6hp)

1 x Hobgoblin Sergeant (AC 6), with a crossbow and long sword (8hp)

#### Treasure

The hobgoblins leather armor is filthy and unfit, the short swords are useless. The spears are usable. Their sergeant has usable chain mail that is actually retrofit human chain mail, and his weapons are also of good quality.

Spear x4, Longsword, Heavy Crossbow, 3d4 quarrels, Scale Mail, 15 gp, 20 sp, 230 cp.

## 2. Rest in Verge, The Boars Head

After the fight Threshold is still a ¼ day's journey away. Verge is a small hamlet over the river with a functional inn, a small keep and some farmers. If the party is intact and healthy, they may choose forced march or to camp on the road. But Verge is a pretty attractive option to rest and provides safety. It can also serve as an information hub for the party, a DM might use any surviving NPCs as an excuse to stop here. For example, one of the surviving loggers may call Verge his home and wish to be left there and offer the PCs shelter and a home cooked meal. If the loggers have died, Gibstone may insist the bodies be returned here for proper burial. If Darl or Permius lives they will also depart here. Darl, feeling guilt for his human friends will offer some years of service to their families, a small favor for a long-lived dwarf.

Verge's existence is mostly due to two adventurers (Sir Retameron and Lady Halia Antonic) who founded a small keep and tower there. They are sometimes (2 out of 10) in town but won't provide any overt assistance to lower level characters. Verge is a safe town but doesn't maintain much in the way of a militia or towns keep. If the PCs are wandering around after drinking hours at the two taverns there's a chance of a mugging. Often drifters, or other miscreants traveling by barge end up drunk and get in fights or formulate terrible plans to rob merchants. These incidents are almost exclusively theft or bruises and black eyes and rarely fatal.



(map and photo sources: <https://eyesoftralдар.obsidianportal.com/wikis/verge>, <http://pandius.com/verge3d.html>)

1 Antonic's Manor: Home to lord and lady Antonic and their priest of Halav Varis (C2). Well-guarded and unlikely to be needed.

2 Traladaran Temple: This building is a finely carved wooden hall in traditional Traldar design. Though small, it is well maintained and clearly a center of village life. Staffed by Varis (C2) when active and 3 acolytes. Harrison Relenko (C1), Fel Releknko (C1) and Barr Millken (Normal Man). Most of the traditional Traladaran immortals are represented here but primarily Halav.

3 Reeve's House: This stone-built house is the home of the reeve; the closest Verge has to a mayor. Trenton Tyros, a former brewer and businessman is the town reeve. He collects a modest tax from the various businesses in exchange for administering basic services like the roads, a city well, and most importantly the militia and meager town defenses.

4 The Boar's Head: A comfortable hostel. It is a full-service establishment, offering hearty meals and strong drink but does not offer anything extravagant. The rooms are somewhat utilitarian yet well maintained. Private rooms are pricey at 2gp and the common room is 5sp. The inn tends to be full during the winter months as the road between Verge & Threshold is often impassable due to snow. Yolanda Vorloi (T4) is a former (briefly) adventurer. She attempted to investigate the death of Aleena Halaran some 10 years ago and barely escaped with her life. Rumor is she was so quiet as a thief that she snuck past a dragon with a huge sack of treasure. She used these earnings to eventually leave the life and bought this hostel. She runs the front of house and employs two cooks and a few wait staff made of the young adult children of the local farmers. Yolanda has a near perfect memory, but is very coy, she can be a valuable source of information but is unlikely to give up anything without some benefit for her or her friends. She has a friendly rivalry with the Jug. If questioned about prior guests the log at the Boar's Head contains the following information of interest:

From the hobgoblin map, a group came through Klaremont 2 which would have made it potentially the target on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. The log records five people, Aribel, Felicia, Geoff, Furnok and Davis. A few of these folks are now captured in the bowels of Mistamere.

Also, obscure but of interest two men traveling light with thick Western or Sind accents stayed one night, then a day after departing had a lunch and went off the other way. If impressed Yolanda muses that they likely went to Threshold for business and stayed one night there. They listed their names as Cali and Halim, two humble spice traders. This was four months ago. If bribed, or otherwise impressed Yolanda has a good recollection of the men.

5 Elmo's Provisions and General Store: Most readily stocked items are available here for the standard price, though the bias is towards things required in a farming community. Out of stock goods can be ordered, and cost +10% list price, arriving in three to five days. Owned by Ilyana Petraos (F3), the local representative of the Merchant's Guild. Ilyana was an adventurer and is a friend of Yolanda. She also escaped Mistamere with her



life and some treasure, unlike Yolanda, her anger at the loss of her friends spurred her to continue to seek out Bargle. She recruited some new allies but the trail went cold and the life of an adventurer become too much. She retired to Verge with her small fortune and opened a provision store. Ilyana has a soft spot for adventurers and the temptation to return to the life often haunts her.

6 The Jug and Platter: This halfling run establishment is a bright and cheerful place. Jon tries to get entertainment here as often as possible, and will stand drinks to those willing to perform. Jon Alefast, (H2) owner of the Jug and Platter is also the unofficial head of the halflings in the small village. The Jug is a restaurant only, with no rooms for let. However, there are stables behind the Jug for housing horses and carriages. The stable behind the jug is popular with merchants and is a possible target of a robbery in the wee hours.

Verge can serve a few purposes, first the replenishment of party members who may have died. A new PC can be generated and placed in the Boar's Head as a guest or perhaps as a young person tired of village life. Second the various NPCs can be sources of information about the lay of the land. Rumors about the hijackings, a roster of passers by and other geographic facts. The lord and lady are not accessible. The local priest is the only one capable of casting spells, healing is available to those who showed courage (the PCs should qualify if any passengers remain alive). Yolanda and Ilyana know quite a bit about Mistamere, at least as it was 10 years ago. Neither will return to the adventuring life. But they won't bring it up unless the party has specific questions, the ordeal was horrifying. It's very likely the party will simply follow the caravan to Threshold since Verge is pretty banal.

### 3. Threshold and Castle Mistamere

#### Background:

Threshold is well enough documented in GAZ1 (p. 39), the Expert set (p. 38) and other sources. Sherlane Halaran is the local Baron and a ranking cleric patriarch of the church of Karameikos. The Expert set doesn't detail much in the way of taverns or business names. I recommend leaning on the Vaults of Pandius (<http://pandius.com/threshgd.html>) which provides some lore and color to Thresholds various districts and inns.

The differences between GAZ1 and the canon here are that Aleena is not present. Also, the GAZ1 supplement updates the ruins to be of Hutaaka origin. I choose to keep the red box story of a mysterious mage named Gygar, I think it's far easier to digest and explain than a race of jackal headed men. The allusion to Gary Gygar was also purposeful by Frank Mentzer and its original telling has a strong nostalgic place in my heart.

### Threshold Gazetteer:

There are six core 'districts' in Threshold. Docklands, Fogor Isle, Old Town, West, North and South. The link above provides some handy background and the list below embellishes the background and provides the locations of key NPCs.

1 (North Town) The armorer, Rolf (our hero from the Basic set) sells weapons and armor at The Sturdy Shield. Rolf's adventuring career was ended when his right leg was severed below the knee by a vicious trap. He still has a strong sword arm and took over the armory from Baldwick a few years ago after he died of old age. Rolf has a soft spot for adventurers and will be fair with the normally higher prices of metal goods in Threshold if he's convinced you'll be expunging the area of evil creatures. Rolf was awaiting the arrival of Julian from the caravan to serve as an apprentice, upon hearing the news of his young mentee's death he'll be angered. Visibly frustrated at his impairment he'll be helpful to PCs who prioritize justice for Ironband.

2 (Old Town) The Golden Dragon Inn is owned by Anthemio Paphcaris and is very popular with adventuring types, those seeking henchmen or hirelings would likely find them here versus some of the more mercantile inns.

3 (Old Town) The Pearl of the North, a mercantile inn with expensive food. Normally booked solid with many long-term tenants. Typical patron is a merchant and their entourage. Run by Farioff Ment a retired merchant. The Pearl pays well for a security guard, Horvath Kurt (F5), his claim to fame is having slain a young green dragon (true), he now sports a colorful tattoo to go with the hacking cough and gravel voice from the chlorine he inhaled that day. Asking around here will reveal that Cali and Halim stayed here, with dates corresponding to the logs at the Boar's Head in Verge. The men paid and tipped well, and were polite. They claimed to be spice traders, though no general merchant or spice merchant can corroborate having consummated a trade with them.

4 (West Town) The Brown Shrew, an average inn with reasonable accommodations. Owned by a former adventurer named Parmioff (F4). He was one of the founding guards at Castellan Keep, making his modest fortune exploring some of the ruins around the Northeast part of the Duchy. He actually knows a bit about Castellan Keep, and if the PCs befriend him, he could send them there with a letter of writ.

5 (Fogor's Isle) Rusty Galleon, a seedy dump with cheap rooms, bad mutton but moderately good beer (that the staff waters down as patrons get more intoxicated). The dock foreman Curtis Cook (see 3. **The Syndicate**) spends most evenings here after a day of work and grifting. For a foreman Cook spends an awful lot of coin. Curtis works albeit indirectly for Baringham at Castellan Keep, ferrying information via Istok. His descriptions and intelligence reports are sometimes flawed or exaggerated from his inebriated state. For a foreman he knows a lot about ghosts and spirits. The owner is an ex-merchant named Mink, he employs a staff versed in thievery like Stella (T1) the barmaid, Peters (T3) the Bard and Minstrel. Any theft is kicked back at 20% to Mink. Mink also employs a pair of bouncer / bodyguards Krimm (D3) and

Merry (F2). As drunks leave, they are marked and ripe for robbery and pick pocketing from the many scoundrels that lurk on the Isle after dark.

#### Plot:

The venerable abandoned Castle Mistamere was once the home of a powerful wizard named Gygar. Rumors abound of his fate over 300 years ago, some say he was driven mad, others that he ascended to immortality. Regardless, over time the damaged and perilous backside of the castle which is set on a steep cliffside began to decay and the place was unsuitable for regular living. Additional rumors of monsters, hauntings and evil kept common folk away.

It eventually became home to a group of Kobolds around 998 A.C., and later in 1000 A.C. Bargle the Infamous used it to plot out many horrific deeds. Today it is used as a base of operations for a gang of hobgoblins. The gang here, led by the shaman Muti, acts as a way between for two other groups of (mostly) hobgoblins that form a triad. Access to the river, as well as the largest nearby human settlement mean this base is important to the flow of money and arms. The hobgoblin king (Grozos or "King Grozos") on the hill near Guido's fort and the hobgoblin chief (Karthas) in the Caves of Chaos are trying to control all of the raiding along the roads in the Duchy. They have more warriors for certain, but Muti has the advantage of having a good secure base, access to magic, and access to Thresholds resources. Muti's band of hobgoblin raiders operating out of here is using it as a base for any raids in and around Threshold. The locals fear the castle which keeps snooping to a minimum. The hobgoblins know the mountains and hills well and can head East through foot trails that lead to the Caves of Chaos without attracting attention.

Muti normally lairs on the 3<sup>rd</sup> level. She leads the band and skims loot off the top of their booty. Muti is clever and uses spells to create Dancing Lights, strange noises and other things to generate rumors that the castle is haunted. This keeps traffic to a minimum. There are also monsters wandering the courtyard at strange times to discourage exploration, such as a particularly nasty giant viper under the fallen outer doors. Zombies, giant rats and hobgoblin patrols on the first floor to keep interlopers out from the lower levels. Muti has a staff of roughly 15 hobgoblin warriors, a dozen or so disgruntled goblin minions with lower morale (7), some raised zombies from deceased human captives some of which she controls, others who have been left as traps or future "projects". She also has a number of living captives, Aribel, Furnok and Geoff who appear in the travel log in Verge, a Dwarf from a mining company, and a halfling. These prisoners are mostly destined for a painful death so their status could change if the PCs spend days and weeks gallivanting about. The hobgoblins have several secret hillside entrances that allows them ingress and egress. They largely operate out of the second level. The third level of Mistamere isn't much of a dungeon at all but mostly a system of caverns deep in the mountainside. What lurks there is largely

unknown to anyone in Karameikos. Muti makes her lair here and has been courting a manticore and performing diabolic rituals.

A decade ago the 3<sup>rd</sup> level was the lair of Bargle the Infamous. Bargle had allied with a young red dragon (Razimore who has long since left for a larger lair near Guido's fort) and had planned to raze Threshold to the ground with it. The dragon had agreed to help (maybe), once Bargle had met its large demand for treasure. Bargle employed several Kobolds and even a few Ogres to raid and steal from the many merchant caravans in the area. He had nearly met the dragons supposed price when his plans were disrupted by a group of adventurers led by a man named Claudius Tagaras. Claudius destroyed one of the rickety pillars holding up a section of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor causing a massive collapse. The 3<sup>rd</sup> level is now the home of another awful creature, a manticore. This manticore lairs there and flies in and out of the sheer cliff side, it has been killing livestock at random times as well picking off the occasional river traveler late at night. The keyed encounter table and map for the 3<sup>rd</sup> level can be found in Appendix 1. Specific character statistics can be found in Appendix 4.

Muti has a detailed ledger, detailed as a handout in Appendix 3. In summary the ledger shows about a dozen robberies, her cut of half and a name next to the entry.

#### Aftermath:

The party, should they kill or even better capture Muti will have overwhelming proof of a larger conspiracy. Additionally, if they are able to rescue one or more of the various prisoners in Mistamere they'll have corroborating evidence. Dwarves have been harmed, merchants and even common folk just looking to safely travel the duchy. This should put the group in a strong position to get sanction or even aid from the Baron of Threshold, who has the ability to convey the events to the Duke himself. Of course, this will take time and political currency, in the meanwhile Baron Halaran could treat the PCs as agents granting them certain privileges in his domain of Threshold. His seal can also make any forays to Castellan Keep or elsewhere in Karameikos far more legitimate than some random adventurers. Some ideas for benefits for the characters, without overloading them with gold.

- If you use the training concept for leveling, the Baron offers free training from his leaders.
- The PCs are permitted to retain their weapons in Threshold.
- Clerical services at a reduced or free cost (this is abusable).
- The Baron can spare a few (1d4) soldiers to act as men at arms for an excursion. They begin with good morale if the PCs have gained some renown, average if not.
- The names of contacts in Kelvin and Specularum.

#### 4. The Road to Castellan Keep

This encounter serves to distribute a number of clues about the Caves of Chaos, the Cave of the Unknown as well as the hobgoblin king on the hill at Guido's Fort. It's several humans and some hobgoblins meeting off the road and trading some goods. This, to any resident of the Duchy is a strange sight as generally hobgoblins and men are enemies.

If the party has gathered the map from the initial hobgoblin ambush, they may attempt to intercept ambush "III". This ambush features hobgoblins but if the PCs arrive a little earlier, they'll also encounter this meeting of hobgoblins and some Iron Ring agents. The Iron Ring is a Black Eagle sponsored band of slavers and bandits. They ferry humans back West and off to places like Hule. The Duke himself is only recently (1010 A.C.) becoming aware of a connection with the Baron Von Hendriks.

The man is Barrok Wynn (F3), he is a bandit, sometime mercenary and agent of the Iron Ring and has a small gang of bandits and a few goblins with him.

3 x Human Bandit (RC p. 158)

3 x Goblin Warriors (RC p. 180)

2 x Goblin Sharpshooters (same but with Light Crossbows)

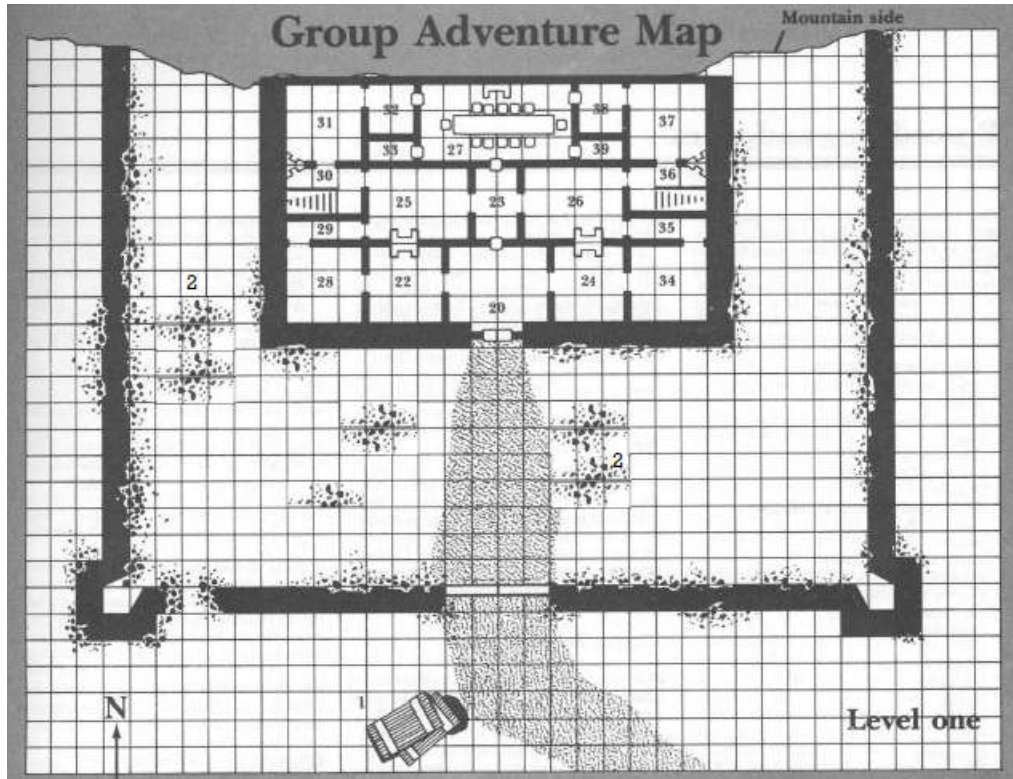
He is arranging information about caravans and collecting payment from the hobgoblins (6) on behalf of Grozos (the King on the Hill). The band of hobgoblins from the Caves of Chaos have brought a cut of the loot they've gathered from robbing and murdering caravans. They also intend to rob a caravan the following day. Barrok has brought a small cache of good quality weapons that he says is from their "King". If the PCs can sneak and listen in, they'll hear him yelling about the cut being low based on the number of ambushed caravans, the hobgoblins are claiming that two of the ones on the list were hit by others living in the nearby cave system. They say a pack of Gnolls as well as a pack of Orcs have begrudgingly formed a loose alliance, which is true.

The hobgoblins in the caves would like help in wiping out the cult that prevents these demi-humans from warring. The cult is led by a very powerful evil human cleric. Any infighting in or near the cave is met with horrific magic, torture and unending pain. The hobgoblin king refuses to leave an old monastery (The Hill) down river where he has gathered a band of demi-humans and regularly raids boats and has offered a number of adventuring parties. This king has refused to send much help at all North, yet still requires tribute. In reality Grozos is attempting to sway the affections of the dragon detailed in the Horror on the Hill. Who is asking for a fortune to become his ally. Grozo is convinced with a red dragon as an ally that he can raze Guido's Fort and carve out a real kingdom for himself.

## - Appendix 1: Castle Mistamere Re-keyed –

Ground Floor: the ground floor remains physically unchanged from its status

in 1000 A.C. in the iconic red box. The only other note is that the rooftop of the 1<sup>st</sup> level is intact. If players wish to scale the wall, they'll find a hole and a crude ladder down into Area 23. The artificial plot armor in the former harpy room is also gone. Replaced with an encounter appropriate for 1<sup>st</sup> level parties. Much of the published treasure (the precious platinum hat pin is now for sale in a small jewelry shop in Threshold after being pawned a decade ago by a precocious thief).



1. The infamous Carrion Crawler, slayer of countless 1<sup>st</sup> level parties worldwide is replaced by an equally ornery snake. A Pit Viper (RC 204) lairs here, it will attack if the party enters within 5' of the fallen doors. If reduced to ½ hit points it will retreat back into the hole and not check morale. Pit Vipers are dangerous, they always win initiative and poison is a quick death. All this danger yields 3 rotted hobgoblin corpses, victims of the viper and their boss who instructed them to clean out the hole or die. Their worldly possessions are 27 SP, 102 CP.

2. The kobolds are long gone, having abandoned Mistamere for the mountains of the north. Muti has instead scattered some Skeletons (RC 204) among the piles of rubble and bones that now adorn the courtyard. They've been instructed to attack non-goblinoids. There are 3 near each rubble pile marked with a 2, when a PC comes within 10' they rise and surprise on a 1-4. They are armed with rusty short swords (1d6, break on a 1-2, then the Skeleton attacks with fingers 1-2 damage). If turned they'll flee towards the North edges of the courtyard.

20. Empty. The South double doors are barred, but a dagger or knife can be used to slip through and lift the bar. This will make a clanging noise if it just drops. The North door is closed and locked from the South side.

22. A trash filled room with a fire place in the North wall. 3 Giant Centipedes (RD 163) reside in the chimney. If it is searched, they drop and attack the party until killed. Among the trash are a silver embossed tinder box, the initials B.D. are engraved. It's worth 20sp and still works.

23. A small room with a hole in the ceiling to the sky. The floor is rank from the weather exposure. A makeshift ladder allows egress to the ceiling. The door to the North is damaged and unlocked.

24. If the party made noise in opening the double doors in 20 then 4 Hobgoblins wait in ambush from room 34. Otherwise these 4 Hobgoblins will reside in 26.

25. This room is a makeshift dumpster and filled with the guards trash and occasional excrement. At any given time 1d4+1 Giant Rats (RC 201) are here milling about in the refuse. There is only botulism here.

26. 4 Hobgoblin guards pass the time here playing dice on a makeshift table. They are armed with Short Swords. A fireplace in the South wall contains a small sack with 8 GP, 34 SP, and 182 CP. The dice are actually fair weighted.

27. The dining hall is still here, the doors to 32 and 38 are locked. The 6 Skeletons are indeed seated; however, these are actually undead. When a non-hobgoblin enters, they animate and attack. The Northern fireplace contains a hidden removable panel and a Halfling size portal leading to the cliffside. Removing the panel will cause a strong wind gust to pull the refuse out of the room. The original Harpy treasure is hidden in a loose floorboard.

28. The magic boxes remain, never changing, never aging.

29. This hallway contains a string trap tied across the hall, very low. The trap does no damage but pulls a chain of glasses off a shelf and creates a shattering noise.

30. Stairs downward. There is a 1 in 6 chance that 1d4 Hobgoblins are walking up.

31. Two zombies (RC 213) are chained here and have full reign to the edges of the room. They are armed with rusty short swords. They are early attempts by Muti to create undead. The spell worked but they couldn't be controlled.

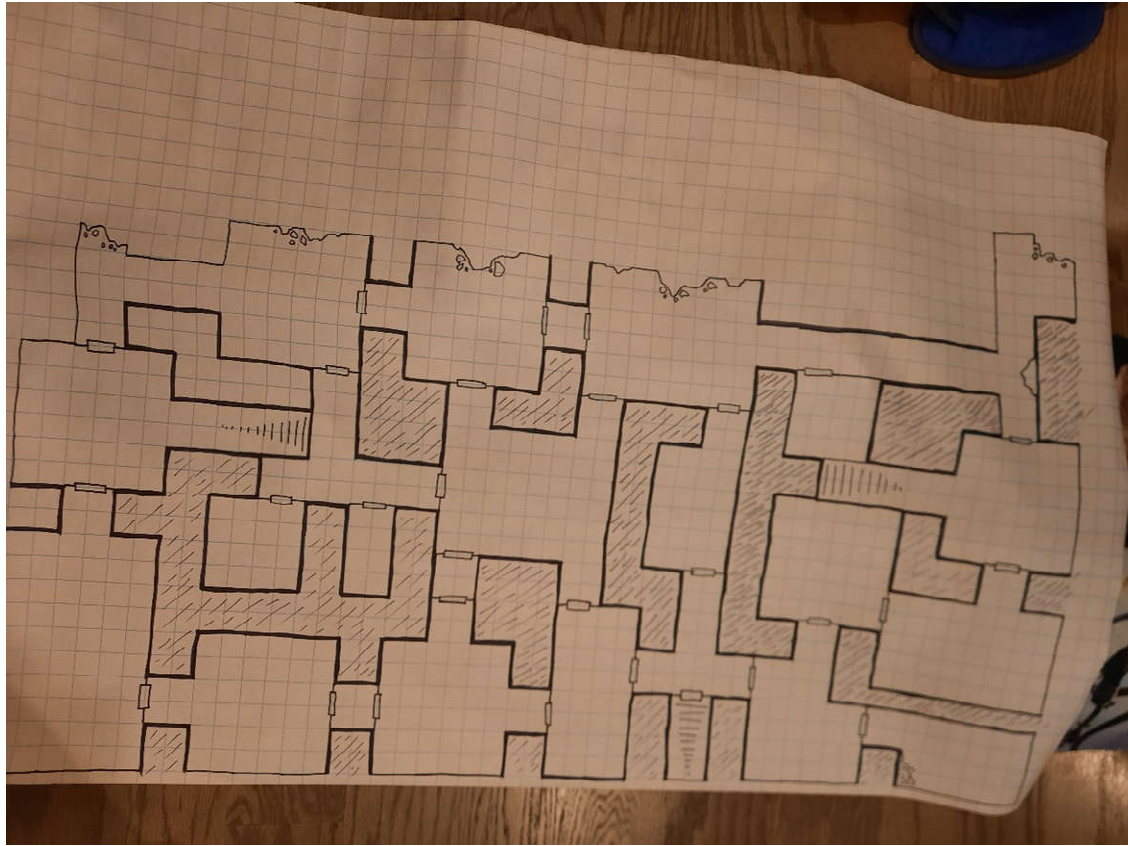
32. The kobold statue remains.

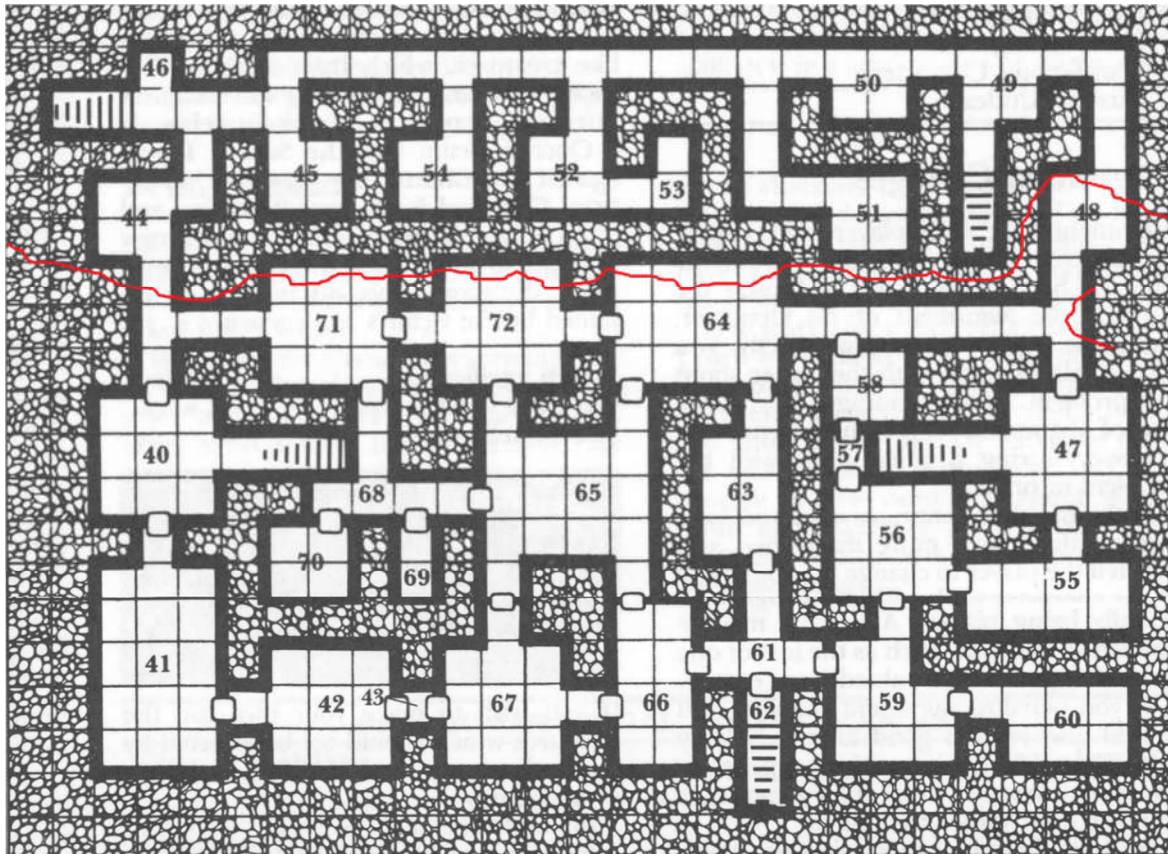
33. A closet contains two Harpy remains. They have been covered in fetishes, and various plants. They have been dead a long time. The door is unlocked.

34. A room filled with smashed boxes.

35. A dirty hallway. A hear noise will reveal goblinoid voices to the west.
36. Stairs downward. There is a 1 in 6 chance that 1d4 Hobgoblins are walking up.
37. 5 Goblins armed with poor quality kitchen knives (daggers) are here skinning and cleaning various rodents for food. The fireplace in the Southeast has been turned into a makeshift cookfire. These goblins are defacto slaves for the hobgoblins and won't attack at first. If the hobgoblins in 26 have been killed they will provide rough counts on the denizens below for their freedom. They will keep their word and run off into the hills.
38. The kobold statue remains though it has been defaced and decorated with animal parts and other idiocy.
39. This closet is locked. A thief named Horace (T1, Neutral, Male) hides here, having encountered the skeletons and darted in here before the party arrived. He has only one day's rations and the last of his waterskin. He overheard the party, where ever the party was turned onto visiting Mistamere. He is armed with a short sword, wears leather armor and has average statistics. If the party dispatches the undead and speak the common tongue, he'll emerge hands up. He knows little about Mistamere, but does believe that Curtis Cook is up to something. He'd been shadowing him and has seen him hike off into the woods and to Mistamere and return after a few hours. He was planning to rob his apartment. But after hearing him refute the rumors of ghosts Horace figured he'd see if there was anything worth pawning up here.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Floor: the 1<sup>st</sup> floor underground has endured some damage from its status in 1000 A.C. in the iconic red box. Here is my hand drawn battlemap and the original. Basically, the Northern section has collapsed for the most part there's a red line indicating where the collapsed edge is. This is a sloping rubble consisting of mortar, crude bricks and chunks of granite.







40. Several broken shovels and picks litter this floor.

41. A hobgoblin sergeant (use the opening ambush leader stats) is here training 4 hobgoblins in spear fighting. It's very loud as they are arguing in between being poked with blunt sticks. When encountered they'll drop their training weapons and draw short swords, except the sergeant, he'll simply flip his spear around to the pointy end. He wields a good quality silver spear engraved with elven words. "May this defend me from the moon". There are two good Light Crossbows and 40 quarrels.

47. The center 10' square of this square room has a trap. A green slime is wedged above and will drop on anything passing below. The residents know to avoid it, occasionally an unfortunate goblin is placed on a stone slab and sacrificed and the slime is lifted back up. If for some reason a PC looks up, I recommend a dexterity check or save vs. dragon's breath to dive out of the way. There are burning torches on the walls in the sconces.

48. The tunnel North is totally blocked but it looks like it's being slowly excavated.

59. 2 hobgoblins here serve as jailers. If the trap in 62 was sprung they'll surprise the party on all but a 6 on 1d6.

60. Makeshift filthy jail cell. Here lie Aribel, Furnok and Geoff who were ambushed a couple of weeks earlier. They are all at 1d2 hit points and

suffering the effects of hunger. Furnok is a T1, Geoff a caravan guard and F1. They'll suffer a -2 to any rolls if armed and forced to fight from the hunger and beatings. Aribel is a daughter of a merchant from Specularum, she's also gifted with a fine memory and serves as a jeweler and actuary for her family (Boros). Muti at one point called her in to look at her ledger, Aribel made some entries and memorized the ledger (at least the entries in common). She also memorized the layout of the 2<sup>nd</sup> level and can sketch it out. She will not under any circumstances follow the party down there. Their ambush was identical to the parties. They also know about the green slime in 47 and have been threatened with it repeatedly. Aribel witnessed the booty from their caravan being divided up as well. She also saw the half orc woodsman and courier Istok bringing messages to Muti and leaving with a large sack. If the party manages to get the prisoners to Threshold the Boros family will see a 500gp reward gets to the party by way of the jeweler in Threshold.

61. Three buckets of suspicious smelling water.

62. Pressure plate trap on the upper end of the stairs down. The trap will trigger when a person of larger than halfling size steps here, some hints are spattering of blood on the stone floor. Spikes come up from the floor and deal 1d6 damage.

63. Two chests of good food stuffs that the hobgoblins are too lazy to use or eat. A pile of bloodied clothing from various humanoids they've kidnapped.

64. 4 goblin diggers, 2 hobgoblin warriors bicker endlessly here. The goblins are tasked with digging out the corridor and area near 48. The hobgoblins are tasked with beating them into working harder. The goblins have shovels (1d4 damage), however they will avoid a fight and see if the party can slay the hobgoblins. They have 4 good torches, a lantern and 3 flasks of oil. If the hobgoblins are killed, goblin morale will sink to 4 and they'll offer surrender and betrayal for a chance to run for it.

65. This is the hobgoblins main armory. There are some racks, 3d4 usable spears, 2d4 shields, 1d4 usable short swords, 1 silver battle axe (belonging to Kass). A beaten dwarf is chained here. He is almost naked and covered in soot. He is exhausted and asleep. His name is Kass Stonecarver (D1, 2 of 8 HPs, +1 Strength bonus), he was kidnapped from a scouting party looking for ore East of Threshold. All but one of his companions were brutally tortured and killed by the hobgoblins. The other surviving dwarf Mert Sharpstone was actually brought off to the Caves of Chaos to serve a similar role. He witnessed their leader, a shaman he claims, try to raise his kin with magic. She cursed the dwarves for their resistance to magic even in the afterlife and proceeded to torture the rest. Removing their fingers, then hands, then allowing rats to eat their faces from cages. Kass' battle axe remains out of reach on the rack, it is thirsty for blood. The hobgoblins use him as their resident armorer and blacksmith and he is reasonably well fed with things the

goblins and hobgoblins don't want to eat, like vegetables, mushrooms and fish.

66. 4 zombies lay here in wait as a trap. Residents know to avoid them without Muti.

67. A makeshift barracks with 8 bunks. The smell is quite bad. 50% of the time 1d4 hobgoblins are dozing off here.

68. A storage room with various loot. In a wooden crate is dwarven sized chain mail, a shield with a Kagyr emblem, a war hammer and a dwarven helm all belonging to Kass. The helm will glow in the presence of orcs, trolls, giants and half-orcs within 50 feet if worn by a dwarf.

69. The horrific stench of a hobgoblin latrine. Anyone entering must make a constitution check or be nauseated for 2 full turns.

70. A carrion crawler (RC163) is here, kept alive to remove trash. The door is locked. It is well fed but still very aggressive.

71. 2d6 goblins are loafing here eating the remains of half of a horse. They are diggers with low morale and shovels.

72. 3 hobgoblins are here, having recently killed a goblin for trying to escape. They are playing a game roughly equal to soccer with its head.

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor: the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor underground was left up to the aspiring dungeon master to design. Here is my hand drawn battlemap.



73. The air here is very cool and dry. The door to the left is locked. The door to the right isn't. There is a chest in the Northwest corner, it's trapped with a poison needle. It gains the skulls of several (4) dwarves, they've been polished and the eyes fitted with garnets (8) with a value of 25gp each.

74. An ogre (RC198) lairs here. Muti has managed to keep this bodyguard content for now but it often gets restless and wanders. 1 in 6 chance it isn't here and that it is wandering the countryside. It carries its treasure in a burlap sack. 38gp, 138sp, and 3 dried human heads. Each round of combat here creates a cumulative 1 in 6 chance the group in 76 hears and comes from behind. In other words, after round 1, 1 in 6. After round 2, 2 in 6. It will take them 2 rounds to arrive. Muti will stay towards the back if this happens.

75. Failed experiments room. A few undead that Muti created but couldn't control have been stuffed here, along with a few undiscernible hobgoblin corpses who died shoving the creatures in. 3 zombies, 5 skeletons and a ghoul (RC178) are here. If the door is unlocked and the PC doesn't make a dexterity check it's assumed enough noise has been made that the undead are alert and ready to pounce. If turned in such cramped quarters, the undead will try to rush past and out on 1-3 on a 1d6.

76. Audience Room. Muti uses this room to take audiences, manage her minions and perform rituals. The floor features a symbol to some depraved immortal. If Muti is here she'll be flanked by 2 hobgoblin sergeants (same as initial ambush) and 2d4 additional hobgoblins. There's a 1 in 10 chance she's in the middle of some horrific ritual, 2 in 10 at night. If so, the party can surprise easier (1-4 on 1d6), but there will be an additional 1d4 hobgoblins (3d4 total).

77. 3 halfling bodies are stuffed in here. They have been partially mummified and are covered with strange plants and herbs. The smell is certainly rank, but somehow, they are in a state of partial decomposition. They are all that remains from a group (6 originally) of traders from the Five Shires. They spit roasted the other 2 while the 4 future victims watched. Muti then sacrificed 3 to an insane immortal and patron of fear, and chained the last halfling to the kitchen stove where he is forced to cook for these evil beings. Some of their ill-fitting gear is in here as well, a Sling and 15 stones and some clothing. Muti is contemplating raising them.

78. A living crystal statue (Mentzer B32, RC208) is in this closet. It attacks any non-hobgoblin present unless Muti commands it otherwise. If a battle breaks out in here, Muti may try to open this door mid-fight. This statue is a remnant of the time when Bargle laired here.

79. The air here is even cooler and a slight wind blows away from the masonry section into these natural caves.

80. Muti's chamber. Here is a well kept (for a hobgoblin) bed. Some mismatched furniture with a variety of robes and shawls. A large fur rug covers the center of the room. 3 chests, all locked are here. The keys are under the rug. Her treasure is detailed in section 3, distribute it as you see fit among the chests. In the top drawer of the dresser is a large parchment book, this is her ledger.

81. This is a makeshift kitchen. There is an airshaft where two stoves vent (somewhat) the smoke from their fires. Typically, 1d4 hobgoblins are here eating or abusing a halfling who is chained to the heavy iron stove. His name is Harris Burrenfoot (H1, +1 Con Bonus). He is currently debased (2 HP out of 5), violated and utterly despondent the goblins have maimed his left ear and burned the wound closed. His job is to tend the fires and skin rats and other food with a poor kitchen knife. His sling is being used to wear a makeshift apron. His boss is a detestable goblin named Snak who wears Harris' chain mail armor and shield (AC 4, otherwise a normal Goblin) and gloats from across the room. Snak wields a cleaver (1d6) that also belonged to Harris. He has considered ending his own life if he can't figure out a way out of this living hell. If freed he will be morose and answer questions about how he got here, having watched his friends cooked then murdered he is primarily interested in hacking the hobgoblins to death with his cleaver (treat as a hand axe).

82. 3 sets of shackles have been haphazardly pitoned into the stone in the floor of this section. If Kass Stonecarver is with the party he'll confirm he made these shackles a while back. The floor in here is rank with brown clotted blood and bits of meat. The hobgoblins often chain offerings to the manticore here. Muti dreams of convincing it to become her ally and mount.

83. Manticore (E52, RC192) lair. The ceiling here is almost 20' high. See 5d and 3 for more information on the antics of this vile creature. The entire cavern has an awful stench. There is a rotting ½ eaten carcass of a horse the hobgoblins offered to the manticore. In the daytime the manticore is likely (8 out of 10) to be here. At night it is half likely (5 out of 10) to be out hunting livestock in the country side. If this is the case it will return in 1d4 hours. If it is here it will attack without provocation. If it fails morale it may attempt to flee to the West out of the cave exit in the cliff wall. Its flight is of limited value in the cavern but it is still a very dangerous opponent. It will have 24 - 3d6 tail spikes remaining at a given time. It has actively been using its tail spikes in flight to kill cows, horses and farmers. Manticores are no joke as 6 hit die monsters. If it is out hunting an ambush could be set. A returning manticore will always be surprised if the party hides on the cavern edges in the dark.

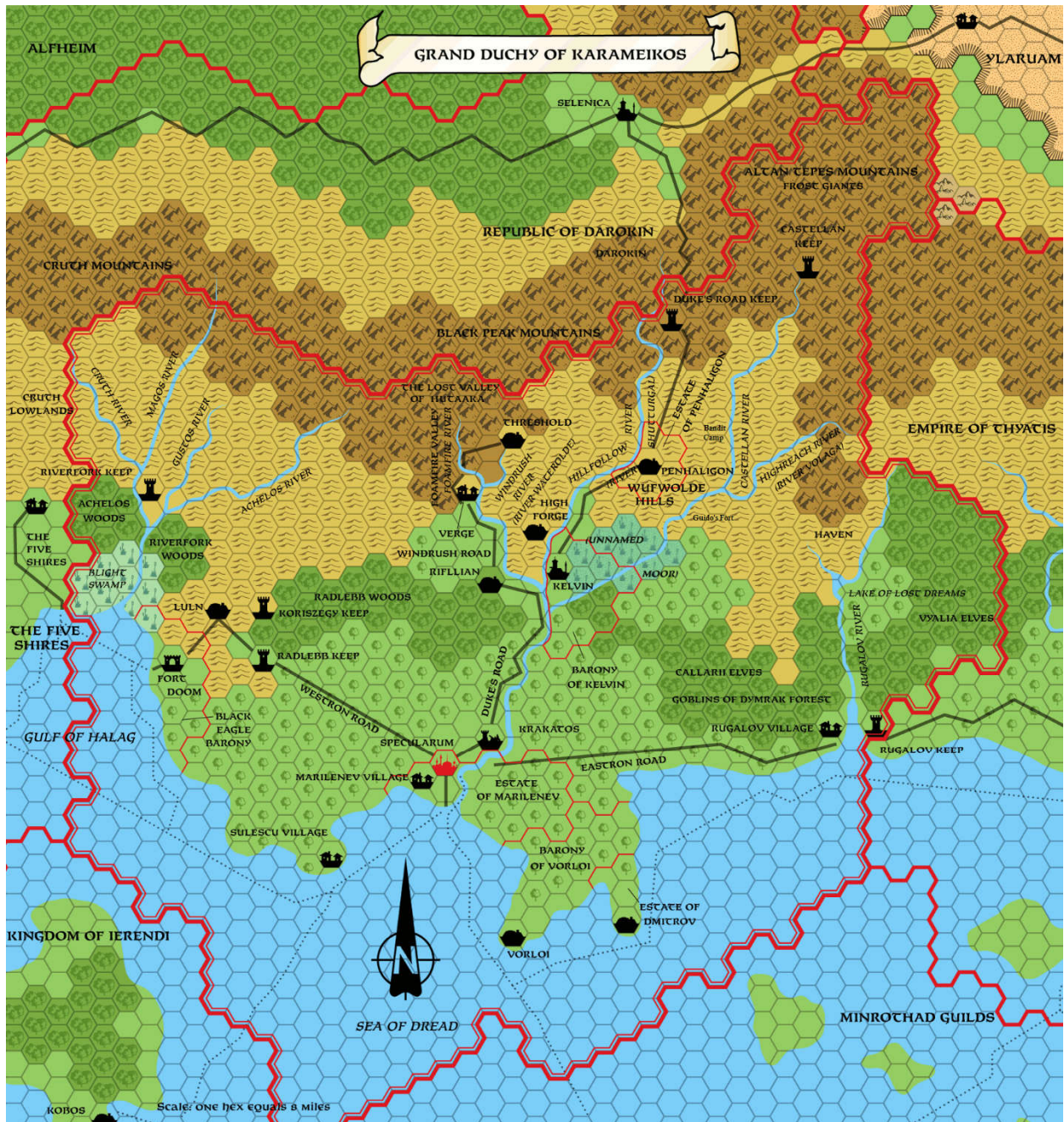


84. A shallow (3') pool of cool water is here. The pool bottom is a natural spring. The denizens use this for drinking and cooking.

85. This is the lair of 2 crab spiders (RC206). The hobgoblins avoid this area, but occasionally a goblin or other poor soul gathering water gets nabbed. A thorough search reveals 23 GP, 112 SP, 234 CP and an assortment of skeletons coated in webbing. A silver short sword +1 is here with an inscription in elvish, 'The sun is your guide, the moon is your comfort'. The former owner died here before even Bargle took this castle as a lair.

## - Appendix 2: Maps –

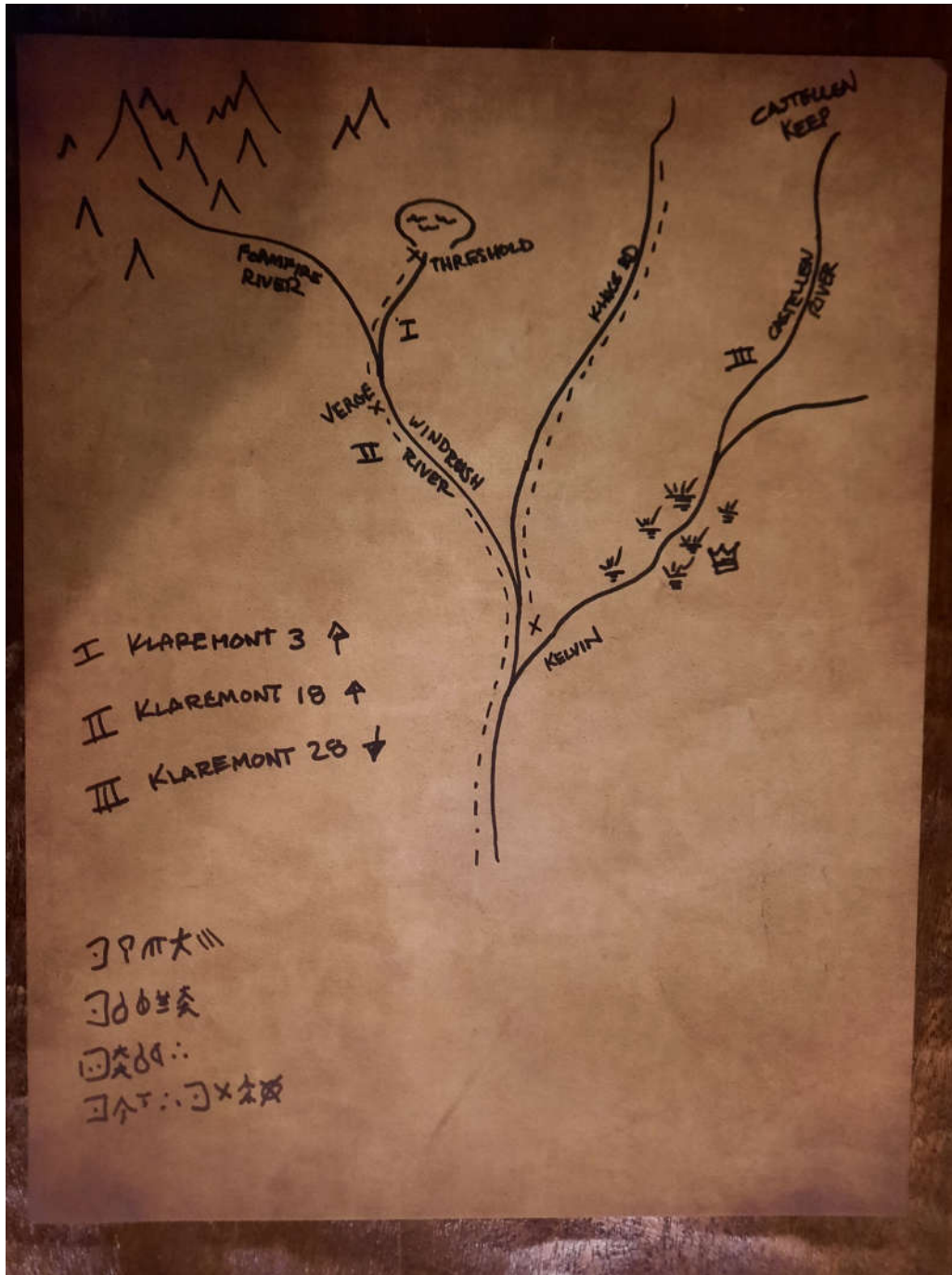
This document assumes Thorfin's Karamaikos is the default map. This places B2 a reasonable ways away from Threshold. I have made 1 very small alteration, and placed Guido's Fort near the edge of the unnamed moor Northeast from Kelvin on the river Volaga.



<https://mystara.thorfmeps.com/gaz1-karameikos-8/>



- Appendix 3: Player Handouts –  
Handout 1 – Hobgoblin Map



Rough translation: You keep all horses and people to sell, You give coin and goods to your chief, Your chief gives half to the triad, You steal from the triad or your chief you die.

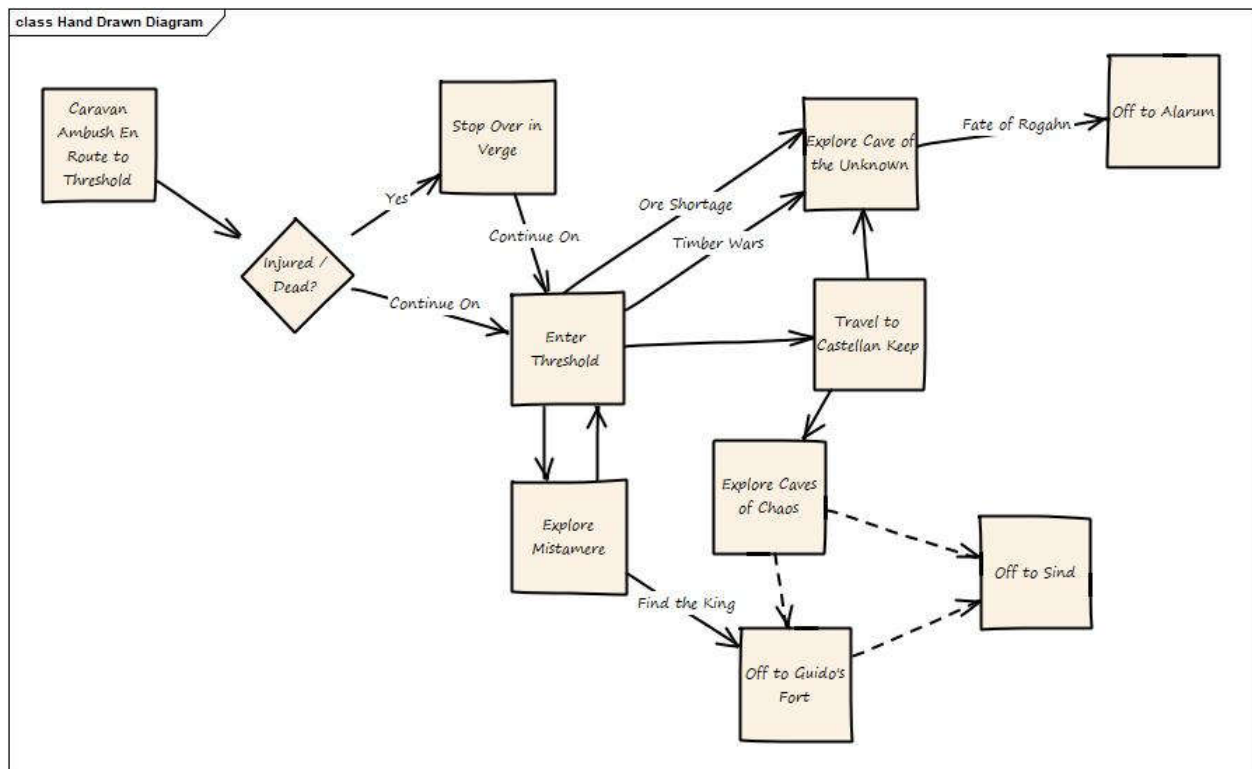
## Handout 2 – Muti’s “Ledger”

Muti has a ledger which details in some detail her goods in and out. She takes in coin from her gang of hobgoblins and pays out “half” to a courier which takes it to Castellan Keep. It’s written in a mix of hobgoblin and Thayatian. There is a place for the courier (or somebody) to sign that they took the money, it’s a seal with a triangle and a skull.

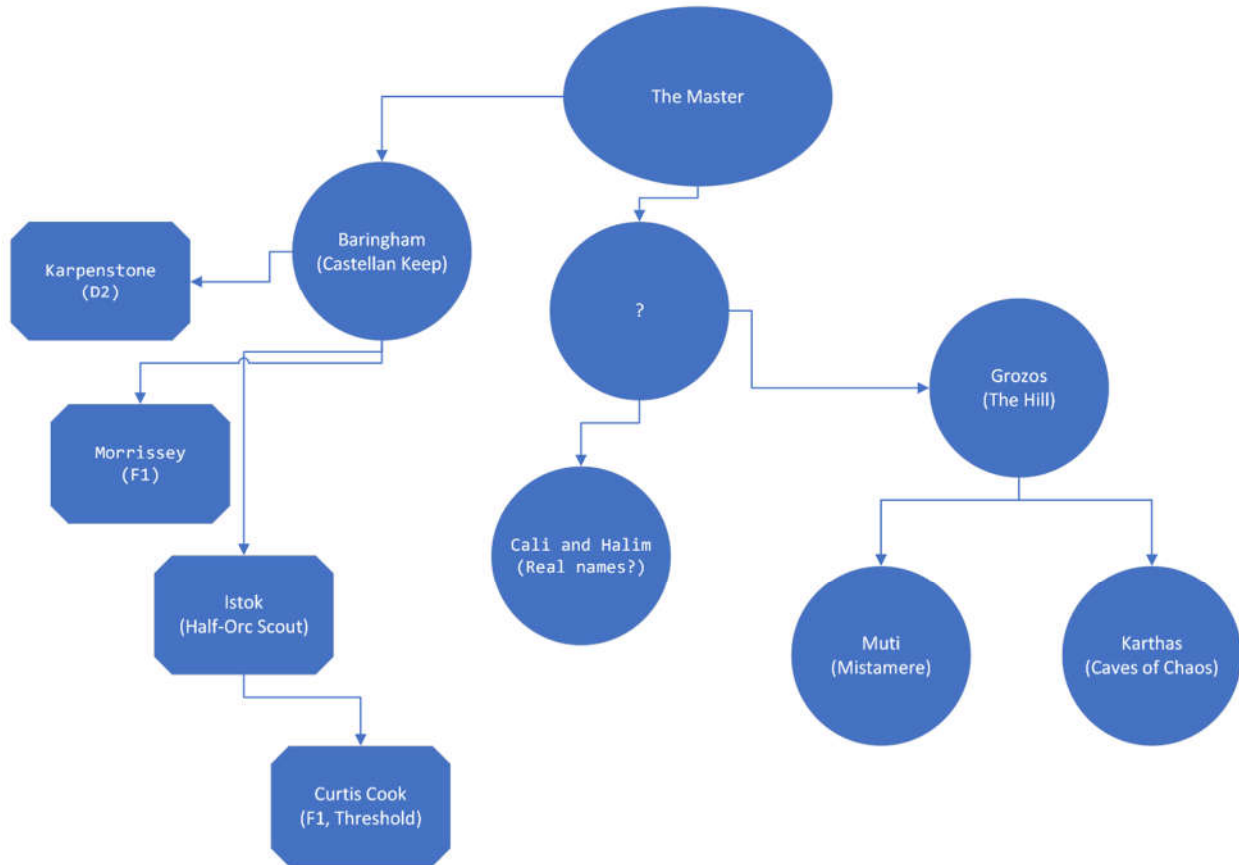
Swiftmont 27, 1280gp  
Ambyrmont 13, 398gp  
Ambyrmont 22, 404gp  
Fyrmont 8, 982gp  
Felmont 12, 265gp  
Klaremout 4, 2308gp

Of course these are rigged and she skims about 15% off the top. This represents her treasure as well as money she has spent on her necromantic studies.

## - Appendix 4: Adventure Flowchart and Syndicate Org Chart –



This flowchart can serve as a quick check on what players are doing in your sandbox. It is an example of what I typically do in preparation for a campaign in the sandbox style. This way it’s difficult to get completely caught off guard and you can have a rough idea of what to prep given the possible choices from where the PCs currently are in the campaign.



This diagram is a simple representation of the evil syndicate in the campaign. I recommend putting a few more layers in between the events in the Duchy and The Master. Suggestions include some caliph or leader who operates West in the Black Eagle Barony, or on the frontier near Pramayama. Baringham will be difficult to catch, perhaps he can have a more direct link.

## - Appendix 5: NPC and Selected Enemy Statistics –

### Threshold / Mistamere

**Muti:** Lawful Evil, MV 90' (30'), AC 3 (Banded Mail +1), HD 4 (23 HP), #Att 1, DMG 1d10+1 (Two-Handed Sword), Save C5 (9/10/12/14/13), Morale 9.

Spells Typically Memorized (homebrew Shaman class): (3/2)

1<sup>st</sup> Cause Light Wounds, Cause Fear, Fairie Lights (GAZ Elves of Alfheim page 65)

2<sup>nd</sup> Silence 15', Bless

Treasure: Banded mail +1 (worn), Jeweled Necklace (200 GP) (worn), Potion of Healing x 1 (carried, may use in battle), PP 50, GP 200, EP 80, SP 500, CP 2,300. Plate mail with silver engravings of the Order of the Griffon (+25%

price), Silver Mace, 20 Silver Quarrels, Silver Headband with a wolf engraved on it (30gp), Silver Dagger.

**Curtis Cook:** Male Chaotic Evil Fighter 1, STR 14 DEX 10 CON 10 INT 8 WIS 8 CHA 13, AC 7 (6 with his shield), HP 7, THAC0 19, Save As F1 (12/13/14/15/16). Dagger (1d4+1, THAC0 18), Cudgel (club) (1d4+1, THAC0 18). Shield, leather armor. GP 13, SP 28, CP 453.

**Harris Burrenfoot (w/ equipment):** Male Neutral Halfling 1, STR 10 DEX 16 CON 13 INT 9 WIS 10 CHA 9, AC 3, HP 5, THAC0 19, Save As H1 (8/9/10/13/12). Hand Axe (1d6, THAC0 19), Sling (1d4, THAC0 17, range 40/80/160). Chainmail armor, shield.

**Kass Stonecarver (w/equipment):** Male Lawful Good Dwarf 1, STR 14 DEX 9 CON 15 INT 12 WIS 9 CHA 8, AC 5, HP 8, THAC0 19, Save As D1 (8/9/10/13/12). Silver Battle Axe (1d8+1, THAC0 18), War Hammer (1d6+1, THAC0 18). Chainmail armor.

**Furnok (w/equipment):** Male Neutral Thief 1, STR 10 DEX 13 CON 12 INT 10 WIS 8 CHA 10, AC 6, HP 3, THAC0 19, Save As T1 (13/14/13/16/15). Dagger (1d4, THAC0 19), short bow (1d6, THAC0 18, range 50/100/150). Leather armor.

**Geoff (w/equipment):** Male Lawful Good Fighter 1, STR 14 DEX 8 CON 14 INT 10 WIS 8 CHA 10, AC 5, HP 6, THAC0 19, Save As F1 (12/13/14/15/16). Longsword (1d8+1, THAC0 18), Spear (1d6+1, THAC0 18). Chainmail armor, shield.

**Horace:** Male Neutral Thief 1, STR 10 DEX 14 CON 9 INT 9 WIS 10 CHA 14, AC 6, HP 3, THAC0 19, Save As T1 (13/14/13/16/15). S (1d4, THAC0 19), short bow (1d6, THAC0 18, range 50/100/150). Leather armor.

## The Road to Castellan Keep and the Keep

**Barrok Wynn:** Male Chaotic Evil Fighter 3, STR 15 DEX 6 CON 7 INT 13 WIS 11 CHA 13, AC 3, HP 15, THAC0 19, Save As F3 (12/13/14/15/16). Longsword (1d8+1, THAC0 18), short bow (1d6, THAC0 20, range 50/100/150). Shield, plate mail. 10 Silver Arrows. GP 87, SP 34, CP 123.

**Baringham:** Male Lawful Evil Thief 4, STR 8 DEX 14 CON 12 INT 16 WIS 10 CHA 13, AC 5, HP 7, THAC0 19, Save As T4 (13/14/13/16/15). Dagger (1d4, THAC0 20), short bow (1d6-1, THAC0 18, range 50/100/150). Leather armor. Ring of Protection +1. GP 1398, SP 288, CP 453. Roll 2d4 times on the Gem table and 1d4 times on the Jewelry table on B41.

**Karpenstone:** Male Lawful Evil Dwarf 2, STR 16 DEX 10 CON 13 INT 8 WIS 10 CHA 8, AC 4, HP 15, THAC0 19, Save As D2 (8/9/10/13/12). Hand Axe (1d6+1, THAC0 18), short bow (1d6+1, THAC0 19, range 50/100/150). Chainmail armor, shield. GP 43, SP 108, CP 321.

**Morrissey:** Female Lawful Evil Fighter 1, STR 14 DEX 16 CON 10 INT 8 WIS 8 CHA 8, AC 2, HP 7, THAC0 19, Save As F1 (12/13/14/15/16). Battle Axe (1d8+1, THAC0 18), Javelin (6) (1d6+1, THAC0 17). Chainmail armor. GP 8, SP 11, CP 234.

**Karthas:** Lawful Evil, MV 90' (30'), AC 1 (Plate Mail, Shield), HD 4 (30 HP), #Att 1, DMG 1d8+2 (Silver Longsword), Save F4 (10/11/12/13/14), Morale 10.

Treasure: Plate mail, Shield (worn), Silver Longsword, Golden Belt buckle with an engraving of a merchant clan (100 GP) (worn), PP 50, GP 200, EP 80, SP 500, CP 2,300.

### Other Characters

**'King' Grozos:** Lawful Evil, MV 90' (30'), AC 0 (Plate Mail, Shield +1), HD 5 (36 HP), #Att 1, DMG 1d6+2 (Mace +1), Save F5 (10/11/12/13/14), Morale 11.

Treasure: Plate mail, Shield +1 (worn), Mace +1, Platinum Crown (500 GP) (worn), Ring of Fire Resistance (worn), other treasure detailed in B5.