

River of Blood*

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Abstract

The Achelos river takes on the color of blood — cinnabar dust is being dumped into the river. Nicolai Molescu, the old alchemist you rescued from the clutches of the Iron Ring, calls once more for your help in stopping the pollution before it poisons both the human and non-human population of the Achelos region.

1 Introduction

River of Blood is an adventure for 3 to 5 Player Characters of levels 3 to 5. It assumes a total of about 16 levels. Wilderness-oriented characters and dwarves are likely to find their skills useful in several encounters. If the party is too weak, Ongah (see Appendix B) can be used as a reinforcement. Overall, successfully completing the *River of Blood* adventure will get each PC about 1500 XP.

The adventure takes place along the river Achelos, starting from a village on the trail from Luln to Riverfork and upriver for about 15 miles.

River of Blood is divided in two main parts. The first, leading the PCs from the village of Gorica to the lair of the Broken Hammer tribe, is mostly focused on investigation. All of the encounters in this section can be solved either through negotiation or through the application of appropriate skills (although old style head-bashing can be sometimes used instead). The

*Based on the adventure hook “River of Blood” by Sean Meaney. The Horn of Alarm and the Rune-Ring of Loki are based on designs by John W. Biles.

second part is a three-levels dungeon crawl, featuring an Orc lair, a mine, and a Modrigswerg's laboratory. This second part is combat-heavy, though the PCs will face also a number of traps and some puzzles, and some of the combat encounters may be avoided through stealth or diplomacy.

1.1 Overview

A Modrigswerg artificer, *Fjalarr*, has settled in the hills of north-western Karamaikos to mine a large amount of cinnabar needed for one of his mad projects. He has stricken a deal with *Okhlag Three-fingers*, chief of the Broken Hammer orcish tribe, who now mines the hills overlooking the Achelos river, looking for the precious and magically powerful mineral.

However, the orc miners are sloppy, and have started dropping cinnabar-rich residues into an underground river that merges with the Achelos a few miles from their lair. This is leading to a change in colour of the waters, as well as to an increasing toxicity. If left unchecked, this may well kill the local settlers, as well as force the local goblinoid tribes to migrate south, towards the larger human settlements.

Nicolai Molescu, an hermit-like alchemist who lives in the Cruth hills, calls for the PCs' help to stop the miners from poisoning the river and causing a massive unrest among the local goblinoid population.

1.2 Meeting Nicolai

Wherever the PCs are in Karamaikos, they receive Nicolai's letter, asking to meet them in the village of Gorica, at the Old Halag tavern. Nicolai's letter mentions the cinnabar poisoning of the Achelos waters, and the need to quickly locate the source of the pollution and stop it.

Note that Nicolai is quite fearful of the Iron Ring, after his long imprisonment, so the PCs should be aware that, to contact them so openly, the matter should be really momentous.

Nicolai knows that the source of the pollution must be some mining settlement upriver, but is not aware of any such mine. Since he seldom goes to Gorica, he

hasn't discussed the matter with the villagers. Actually, he doesn't want to attract attention, so he won't do so even when he goes to the Old Halag tavern to meet the PCs: he will spy the road to Gorica from the woods, and, together with Ongah, intercept the party before they enter the village. He will then lead them to his hermit cave, where he will tell them what he knows — as well as explaining why he cannot investigate the matter on his own.

He will recommend that the party starts the investigation from Gorica, and will give them a sample of cinnabar ore. If asked, he will provide each PC with an alchemical potion of healing. These potions are able to heal 1d6 HP per dose, but are not as stable as magic potions, and will lose effectiveness in a week. Nicolai needs a couple of weeks to gather the materials for more potions.

2 The Achelos River

In this part of the adventure, the PCs track the source of the pollution to the orc's lair. Connecting the pollution with the Broken Hammer orcs and finding the location of their lair awards the PCs a bonus of 200 XP each, plus other bonuses for obtaining specific clues.

2.1 The Village of Gorica

Gorica is a tiny village (46 inhabitants in total) that rises where the route from Luln to Riverfork fords the Achelos river. The village is composed of a dozen buildings enclosed in a wooden palisade. All villagers, regardless of their trade, tend to small orchards and keep a few animals (usually a few chickens and a goat or sheep).

2.1.1 The Old Halag Tavern

This establishment is a simple two-story wooden building with a tatched roof. The first floor is occupied by the tavern itself and the kitchen. The second floor has four rooms where the tavern keeper and his family live. Guests can sleep on the tavern benches, though important guests (such as army officers) are

usually given one of the rooms (in that case, the family retreats to two rooms). There is also a large cellar – the tavern keeper also produces some beer and goat cheese.

The tavern is staffed by the owner, *Anton Marinescu* (NM, L), and his family – his wife, son, two daughters and a daughter of the owner’s sister-in-law. The Marinescu family fled Halag thirty years ago. They still have relatives there, but haven’t seen or heard from them in thirty years.

Anton Marinescu and his family collect a lot of information from travellers and locals alike. There’s a 20% possibility that any of them have heard of a merchant buying a precious red ore at a favorable price somewhere in the region.

2.1.2 The Water Mill

The local miller, *Boris Petrov* (NM, L), a man of about 30, moved to Gorica 10 years ago from Luln, when he married a local woman. He inherited the mill from his father-in-law, Ivan Bogdanovich six years ago, and lives there with his wife’s family (mother and sister-in-law) and their daughter and two sons. The mill is the only stone building in the village.

Boris is worried about the reddish tint of the water, but has no clue about it.

2.1.3 The Smithy

The smith, *Janos Tomescu* (F1, L), is the younger son of one of the first settlers of the area, the late Tibor Tomescu. He left Gorica for a while, and enrolled in the Karamaikan army, serving at Riverfork Keep for eight years. Having learned the trade of the blacksmith, he built the smithy with his brother Jozsef’s help.

Janos has a single apprentice, Pavel, one of his nephews. He is also courting Ecaterina Bogdanovich (the miller’s sister-in-law).

The blacksmith knows the merchant who has been buying cinnabar ore, one Titus Valerianus of Riverfork. Getting this information is worth 100 XP for the PCs, but the blacksmith won’t mention it spontaneously, since he doesn’t connect it with the red waters phenomenon.

2.1.4 The Cobbler’s Shop

This workshop is always busy, as leather work is the primary source of income of the village besides farming. The cobbler, *Igor Mihailov* (NM, N), is a young, cheerful fellow, with dark blond hair and a thin beard. His wife, a woman of the Dobra clan, and his oldest daughter Olga help him in the shop, as do, on occasion, some of the younger Dobra.

If the PCs ask Igor about the layout of the region, he tells them Ivan Vasilios is the one who knows it best – though he isn’t keen on speaking with folks. He’ll also tell them that Ivan would open up to his youngest nephew, Florina.

Igor knows that there are other trapper outpost further upriver, but has never visited them — the river trail is dangerous due to goblinoids.

2.1.5 Livestock Pens

The livestock of the community is held in these common pens during the night. It is a meager group of sleepy cows, plus a larger herd of sheep.

2.1.6 Trapper’s Shacks

Three trappers live in these two small, smoky, smelly shacks.

Ivan Vasilios (T3, C) lives alone. An older man, Ivan is a loner, and spends whole days out in the woods, hunting. He is related to the Vasilios family of farmers, but shuns most contact with relatives and other villagers, except for the cobbler, who buys all of his leather, and one of his nephews, young Florina Vasilios. Ivan knows well the region, is an excellent tracker, a great shot with a bow (Skilled in the short bow), and knows where to find the Hidden Market. Getting this information from him earns the PCs 100 XP.

Piotr (F1, N) and *Cornel* (T2, C) live in the second shack. They are younger than Ivan — both seem to be in their late twenties — but they are just as silent. They tend to act oddly, muttering to themselves from time to time or refusing to speak with the PCs. If the PCs ask other people in the village about Piotr or Cornel, the local folk will say that they are fey-touched, but harmless. Grygori Dobra, the village

priest, will just say that Piotr and Cornel are “people of Zirchev”, and will ask the PCs to leave them to their own devices.

2.1.7 Farms

There are three farms in Gorica. Only a small part of their fields is enclosed in the village palisade, but the buildings themselves are. The Tomescu, Dobra and Vasilios families own each one farm.

None of the farmers is especially knowledgeable about orcs, cinnabar and other events related to the adventure. However, if metals are mentioned or a cinnabar sample is shown, *Joszeif Tomescu* (NM, L) will direct the PCs to his brother Janos, the blacksmith and the local authority on minerals (well, within the limited knowledge of the villagers).

Grygori Dobra (C3, L), the patriarch of the Dobra clan, is also the village priest (as well as the cobbler’s father-in-law). He knows the other villagers fairly well, but doesn’t know the true nature of the peddler.

2.1.8 Other Shacks

Two more shacks complete the village. One is near the livestock pens, and is inhabited by the shepherd *Anatoly Rodica* (NM, L) and his family – his wife Nicoleta, their son Anton, their daughter Natasa and her husband, Ioan.

In the other lives *Andrej Karlov* (C4, C), the peddler, with his wife Jana Bogdanovich and their daughter Irina. Andrej runs a monthly circuit of the villages on the Luln—Riverfork route. However, he also does a couple of stops not known to the other villagers — one at the Hidden Market, and the other at a meeting point that changes every month, where he meets with others who, like him, are secretly followers of the Dark Triad. Andrej knows the merchant who is buying cinnabar, a half-Thyatian, half-Karameikan fellow from Riverfork named Titus Valerianus. Getting this information from Andrej earns the PCs 100 XP.

2.2 The Hidden Market

This open area is used by goblinoid tribes, Iron Ring slavers, and unscrupulous merchants as a trading ground. By long tradition, any trade takes place during the three days of new moon (a protection against lycanthropes).

If the PCs reach this clearing at new moon, they’ll find here a group of oddly assorted merchants, including:

Titus Valerianus (T5/Fence 3, C) from Riverfork — he’s the one who has been buying cinnabar. This fellow will need some coercion or bribing to reveal his source, an Orc named Rogkar Blacknose. This information is worth 100 XP for the PCs. Titus has no idea about Rogkar’s tribes – he doesn’t know Orcish tribes well.

Andrej Karlov from Gorica (see his description in the village section). If the PCs meet and recognize Andrej, he will start plotting their demise, for he cannot allow the villagers to know that he meets with Orcs.

Gorbag (Ogre 2, N), an unusually intelligent Ogre who acts as a middleman between human merchants and Ogre tribes.

Mrrakr One-Eye (Orc 2/Wokan 1, N), an Orc trader — similar to a human peddler, he travels from one community to the other. His wizardly powers and his status as a trader protect traditionally keep him safe from harm, but Mrrakr always keep a Sleep spell ready for good measure. Mrrakr can identify all Orcish tribes of the area, but will request either a magic item (a potion will do), or a new spell (he currently knows Read Magic, Detect Magic and Sleep). The information he provides is worth 100 XP, though. He also knows where the Broken Hammer lair is, but will not reveal this information (that would make him really unpopular with the orcish tribes).

Hermann Rucker (F5, C), a Reaver of the Iron Ring, together with 4 Hounds of the Iron Ring. He is here to buy slaves from the goblinoid tribes. Hermann is the younger brother of another Reaver, whom the PCs may have met in B10 Night’s Dark Terror. If they have killed or thwarted that Rucker, Hermann will recognize them (unless they are really nondescript, or have gone to some length to disguise

themselves) and will ambush them at a later time.

Members of three different *Orcish tribes* (but not the Broken Hammers). These orcs (3d6 per tribe) are here to sell slaves and plundered goods. They let the chiefs do the talking, while eyeing threateningly members of the other tribes. They have a number of slaves (captured humans and a few hin, for a total of 2d4 slaves per tribe) with them. All orc chiefs are able to identify Rogkar Blacknose as a member of the unworthy Broken Hammer tribe. However, some diplomacy and bribing will be needed to obtain this information (worth 100 XP).

2.3 Ogre Ambush

Two Ogres have set an ambush along the Achelos river. They have chosen a place where the western bank is flanked by a steeply sloping hill, and have taken position on top of the hill, threatening any passersby with thrown rocks. They have also set a large boulder ready to roll down to block the passage.

They have already used this trap several times, attacking wild animals and even a small orc party. PCs with the Tracking or Hunting skill can detect the ambush site with a skill check, while other characters will note traces of blood with a Wisdom check at 1/2 score.

Note that the Ogres are not very intelligent, but they are not madmen – they will not fight to the death, and if the ambush fails and the party looks strong, they would rather negotiate, extorting some food or gold, than fight.

Opponents: 2 Ogres (HP 20, 18); XP 250.

2.4 Trapper Outpost

The PCs may reach this outpost a few miles upriver from the Ogre ambush site. It is a small, fortified two-story house made of logs. A small area around the house has been cleared out, and a sharp-pointed wooden palisade prevents easy entrance to Orc raiders.

The outpost is manned by a group of five hardy Traladaran pioneers. Arkan Contra (F4, N), a gruff, middle-aged veteran from the Radlebb Keep garrison,

is their leader. He mustered out disgusted by the lack of action by the Karameikan government against the Black Eagle's depredation, and gathered a few like-minded individuals to establish an independent outpost outside of the Baron's reach.

The other four men are younger, between 20 and 35. One of them, Imre (F1, L) is a nephew of Arkan's. Mathias (F1, N) and Marek Vorodin (NM, N) are two brothers escaped from the Black Eagle Barony. They have lost their entire family to the Baron's men. Being the less experienced as trappers, but being both fishermen by trade, they tend to the house and provide fish from the Achelos river. The last of the men, Petr Andrios (T5), is a member of one of the old Traladaran families – he's a second cousin of Lady Magda Marilenev, though none of the others knows this (they don't know his surname, and none but Arkan would make the connection anyway). A dark, taciturn hunter, Petr is a member of a group of Traladaran outlaws who hide in the Cruth Lowlands. He has infiltrated Arkan's group to recruit the other four men to his cause.

The trappers will react friendly to Traladaran or Hin PCs, but quite badly to Thyatians — though they won't attack them. They know the layout of the area very well, and know that the location of the Broken Hammer lair. Getting this information is not easy, as the trappers don't want to provoke the Orcs without a reason. It is not crucial that the PCs get this information from Arkan and the other trappers, but they should receive a 300 XP bonus for befriending them and obtaining the information.

2.5 Orc Hunters

A small party of orc hunters is scouring the hills looking for game. They will automatically detect the PCs thanks to their wolf companions, unless the party is composed only of Elves, Halflings, Foresters and/or Druids (or similarly nature-oriented classes).

If the party has more than 5 characters, they will retreat without fighting. The PCs have the possibility to detect their presence with a Danger Sense or Awareness check, or with a Wisdom check at 1/2 score. In this case, they can use the Tracking skill to track down the orcs. A separate skill check is needed

to understand how many orcs and wolves are present.

If the party is smaller, the orcs will set an ambush, sending their wolves to circle around the PCs and attack them, while they will hurl javelins from an hidden position, and then join the melee if at least one PC has fallen. Otherwise, they will recall the wolves and flee.

These orcs are both skilled in Stealth (Hills), and will try to use their ability to escape or set an ambush.

Opponents: 2 Orcs (HP 5, 4) and 3 Wolves (HP 12, 11, 10); XP 95.

2.6 Broken Hammer Patrol

A group of five orcs is patrolling the area around the Broken Hammer lair. The orcs aren't especially attentive or stealthy, so the PCs have the opportunity to choose the course of action. They can prepare an ambush, giving the surprise, or they may try to follow the orcs back to the lair.

Opponents: 1 Orc Sergeant (Orc 1, HP 12) and 4 Orcs (HP 6, 5, 5, 4); XP 60.

3 The Orcish Lair

In this part of the adventure, the PCs infiltrate (or storm, depending on the type of party) the lair of the Broken Hammer orc tribe. This tribe is composed by about less than a hundred orcs, led by a strong chief, Okhlag Threefingers. These orcs are followers of Orcus, due to the influence of a nearby cell of cultists of the Dark Triad.

3.1 Caves of the Broken Hammer

The uppermost section of the orcish mines is occupied by the tribe's lair.

1 Entrance If the PCs have defeated, but not completely overcome, the orc patrols, any survivor will have retreated here. These orcs will be ready for combat, and will engage the PCs with missile weapons first. Otherwise, there will be a single, sleepy guard (Orc, 5 HP).

2 Common Room This room sees much of the life of the orcish community. A number (3d4) of non-combatants (female and young orcs) can be found here at any time. They will flee as soon as the PCs make their entrance, and if possible they will alert the Orc sergeants of the presence of intruders. If attacked, they fight as Normal Men. There is nothing truly valuable here, though PCs willing to adapt to orcish cuisine may find food and water.

Note that the orcs resting in area 3 will be automatically alerted if the PCs fight in this room.

3 Bunkroom Five orcs are resting in this bunkroom. Each straw bed doubles as hiding place for the orcs' treasures (standard individual treasure). If the orcs have been alerted, they have standard AC, and are ready to head out and face the PCs when they enter the room. Otherwise, the orcs have AC 9 and the PCs have automatic surprise.

Opponents: 5 Orcs (HP 6, 5, 5, 4, 3); XP 50.

4 Shaman's cave A brazier casts a sinister light across this large cavern adored with grisly trophies (humanoid and animal heads, bones, and blood-red wall paintings). An older, shaggy haired orc is dropping a red liquid from a bowl on the fire, while three younger orc warriors are sitting cross-legged around the brazier. They are focused on their ritual, and will not notice stealthy PCs.

If the Shaman and the three warriors are defeated, the PCs may find (with a Loot check or a Wisdom check at 1/2 score) the Shaman's gri-gri (his version of a holy symbol), a wood tablet embedded with animal teeth and decorated with a wolf fur bordure. A Religion check (at -6, unless the character is specialized in Entropic cults) will let the PCs recognize the gri-gri as a holy symbol of Orcus.

A large alcove in the eastern wall serves as a bedroom for the orc shaman. Under the bed, the shaman has dug an hole, where he keeps his treasure (a necklace of Traladaran workmanship worth 50 gp, 10 royals and 20 cronas). The hole is covered with a wooden plank, and is protected by a crude trap (a poisoned wooden splinter mounted on a bone spring. The trap is easy to notice and remove (+30% to both rolls),

but can be dangerous if ignored (inflicts 1 HP per round until a successful ST vs Poison is rolled).

Opponents: Orc Shaman (Orc 2/Shaman 2; HP 12) and 3 Orcs (HP 5, 4, 3); XP 80.

5 Wolf cave From this dark cave comes a strong, animal odor, as well as occasional growls and howls. Inside, six wolves are locked in a pen. They cannot attack the PCs, but will start howling furiously, alerting any orc in the nearest caverns of the presence of intruders. The PCs can avoid this by either retreating quickly, or by using animal lore or handling skills, though the task is difficult (-4 penalty).

6 Altar cave A crude altar to a dark power dominates this smaller cave. A stuffed goat's head is suspended over the altar, which is stained with blood. A brazier is placed in front of the altar, but it does not shed much light, as the embers have been covered with ash. A number of skulls is piled against the left side of the altar. The internal surface of the skulls has been crudely inscribed with messages in the Thyatian script, used to represent Cruth Orcish. If time is spent to read the messages, it is apparent that the skulls are used in some way as divinatory instruments, providing advice on raids and hunting.

A successful Religion check makes it clear that the cult which this altar belongs to is Entropic, and probably devoted to Orcus. If the check succeeds by 4 points or more, the cult is successfully identified as the Dark Triad, and the goat symbols correctly attributed to Orcus.

Inside one of the skulls at the base of the pile is a tiny mummified gecko lizard. The lizard's skin has been painted in bright colours. It radiates a weak magic aura, and is enchanted to function as a potion of climbing when the lizard is eaten. However, the tinctures used are mildly toxic, requiring a ST vs Poison at +2. If failed, the affected character loses 1 point of Constitution. He can recover the lost point with a Constitution check (which can be attempted once per day), or through a successful cure (which requires successful Herbalism and Healing skill checks).

7 Common Room This common room is similar to the one in area 2, full of cooking, skinning, and tanning implements, a common fireplace, and many straw pallets. Several (3d4) non-combatant females and young orcs are found here, as well as five warriors. The warriors move to intercept the PCs while the non-combatants move out of the way, and escape if things look bad.

Opponents: 2 Orc Sergeants (Orc 1; HP 8, 9) and 3 Orcs (HP 5, 4, 4); XP 70.

8 Larder This area is clearly used to store provisions, mostly cured or salted meats. The preservation, however, has been performed shabbily, and most of the provisions are quite moldy. If consumed, they may cause temporary illness to characters with less than hardy Constitution (12 or less). On a failed ST vs Poison, the character is affected by violent stomach ache, causing a -2 to all action until cured (this last 1 day, plus Constitution penalty, if any). A simple herbalist's potion can lessen the effects to a -1 penalty, and reduce the duration to six hours (this requires an Herbalism check only if the potion is brewed in difficult conditions – such as in an orcish lair instead of a laboratory).

9 Mine shaft This cave provides an entrance to the lower levels of the mines. A deep shaft has been dug in the middle of the cave. A large, brutish humanoid guards the shaft. This Ogre mercenary has been contracted to help the orcs move large amount of ore or provisions to and from the lower level. He can be bribed with food or gold, since he has no real interest in risking his life for the orcs.

Descending into the pit is an easy task for any character if the Ogre or two PCs are lowering him. Otherwise, a PC with the Climb Walls thieving skill or the Climbing general skill can descend without any problem, while anyone else needs to pass a Dexterity check (at -4 if wearing metal armor or a shield). Failure means that the character has fallen down the shaft, taking 1d6 damage.

Opponent: 1 Ogre (HP 18), XP 125.

3.2 Cinnabar Mines

The second level of the orcs' hideout is the mining complex where cinnabar is extracted. The tunnels of this level are mostly artificial. The workmanship is poor, and the passages often take odd turns, as if the work had not been planned out.

1 Mine shaft A large opening in the ceiling of this cave allows the orcs to transfer equipment from the upper level of the cave to the mines. A number of discarded items have been piled in the corners of the room, including broken or used up mining tools, buckets, rope cuttings, wooden planks, mugs, and barrels.

2 Mining tunnels The orcs have dug a maze of tunnels searching for cinnabar veins. These tunnels share most common traits: they are all roughly hewn, and the ceiling is quite low (Large weapons are at -3 to hit).

a Trap This tunnel has been purposefully digged to be extremely unstable. The ceiling will collapse over the first character who steps into this section of the tunnel. A Dwarf or Thief can detect the trap with their usual skills, while a character with the Profession (Miner) can also detect it with a skill roll at 1/2 score. This trap cannot be disarmed or removed, though it can be easily triggered from outside its area of effect (the collapsed ceiling will still block the tunnel). If a character is caught in the trap, it inflicts 2d6 HP of damage (which can be halved with a successful ST versus Paralysis).

b Abandoned tunnel This tunnel has been abandoned, as the orcs didn't think it would lead to good veins. A Dwarf or anyone with the Profession (Miner) skill can tell as much with a Detect New Construction or skill check.

c Working area This part of the tunnels is being currently worked on by a team of orc miners. However, the overseer has left the team unattended, and the four miners are slacking off, taking turns looking

out for the overseer's return. The lookout will detect the PCs, unless they are successfully using Move Silently or Stealth (Underground). However, he is expecting the overseer, and will start hammering the wall with his pick, waking his comrades.

Opponents: 4 Orcs (HP 6, 5, 4, 3), XP 40.

d Working area This section of the tunnels shows clear signs of recent work. However, there is no one working here.

3 Depot This area is used to store mining tools. Picks, ropes, hammers and buckets are all dumped in large barrels. One barrel is closed, and contains cheap beer.

4 Primary veins Veins of reddish ore crisscross the walls of this cave, which opens on the fast flow of an underground river. Five orc grunts are working hard with picks, extracting chunks of cinnabar ore, roughly separating the richer ore from the rest, which gets dumped into the river. A musclebound orc with a large maul is watching them, occasionally dipping a mug into a nearby barrel and guzzling the content.

The orcs attack the intruders as soon as they see them. However, the clanging noise of their work (not to mention the river) covers any sound, so that a Stealth or Move Silently check gains a +25% bonus. The orcs also have no chance to surprise the PCs, since the noise of picks makes their presence obvious.

Beyond raw cinnabar ore and a barrel of beer, there is little treasure in the room.

Opponents: 1 Orc Sergeant (Orc 1, HP 11) and 5 Orcs (HP 6, 5, 5, 4, 4); XP 70.

5 Throne Room Okhlag Threefingers resides in this large cave, the better to guard his precious treasure. His throne is a simple armchair (plundered from some human outpost) raised on a wooden platform. A wide-bladed battleaxe of dwarven workmanship dangles from the throne's shoulder, and a crude but wicked-looking spear leans against the wall to the right of the throne.

An orc shaman is conferring with the chief when the PCs arrive. Both orcs will attack the PCs as

soon as they enter, targeting obvious spellcasters first (elves and characters without armor) and shouting a savage battle cry. The two guards in room 6 will immediately join the king, attacking the intruders from behind.

A chest in the southern corner of the room holds 200 Royals and 100 gp in cinnabar ore. It is locked with a simple lock (+30% to the Open Lock skill). The key is hidden under the dirty pillow on Okhlag's throne.

A secret door is located right behind the throne. The door was clearly not made by the orcs – a successful Profession (Miner) or similar skill check will detect it as dwarven work. A dwarf successfully rolling on Detect New Constructions will correctly identify it as a Modrigswerg design. The door leads to a winding corridor that takes both up to a hidden exit to the surface and down to the hideout of Fjalarr, the Modrigswerg.

Opponents: Okhlag Threefingers (HP 24), 1 Orc shaman (Orc 2/Shaman 2, HP 13) and 2 Orcs (HP 6, 6); XP 145.

Once Okhlag is defeated, the Broken Hammer tribe will lose morale and abandon the mining enterprise unless Fjalarr manages to manipulate the next chief. The PCs obtain 250 XP for reaching this goal.

6 Guard room This room is full of barrels, sacks and chests, and looks like a storage area. Two orc guards are stationed here. Unless the PCs have been extremely cautious, these orcs are expecting intruders, and will spot any PC not using Hide in Shadows, Stealth, or an Invisibility spell or power. They will flee to the throne room (5) to alert Okhlag. See room 5 for the encounter details.

Provisions are also stored in this room. These are better preserved than the food used by the orc commoners. The PCs can gather the equivalent of four *iron rations*.

7 River access This cave opens on a turbulent subterranean river. The sound of water gurgling and crashing can be heard from room 6. The orcs use this room to collect drinking water (there's a bucket with a rope in a corner). The river is clearly not nav-

igable, and PCs trying to escape swimming will need to pass a Swimming check at -4 or take 1d6 damage from being hurled against the rocks until successful.

4 Fjalarr's Forge

The passage downward from Okhlag's throne room leads to an underground complex built by expanding a series of natural caves. The area has seen a lot of work, and the walls, while rough, are much smoother than those excavated by the Orcs. A difficult check (-4) on Profession (Miner) will show similarities to Dwarven minework. A Dwarf will recognize this with a standard check, but success at -4 will in this case give the character the idea that the stonework looks Moulder Dwarf.

1 Entrance Hall This large octagonal hall seems empty, but for a human-sized, grotesque statue of a horned, winged humanoid sitting in the middle of the stone floor. As the characters enter the room, the statue takes life and moves to attack them.

Two orcs are lurking in the shadows, waiting for the PCs to be weakened by the Gargoyle to join the melee. The PCs will not notice their presence unless they are carrying a powerful light source, such as a *continual light* spell or a lamp. A simple torch will not give the orcs away unless the PCs explore the northwest corner of the room.

Opponents: 1 Gargoyle (HP 15), 2 Orcs (HP 6, 7); XP 195.

2 Doors of the Modrigswerg This corridor is blocked by a pair of massive, ornate metallic doors. There is no keyhole, but the entire frame and doors are covered in Dwarven runes. If one can read the Moulder Dwarven language, the writing on the doors and frame makes little sense: the words on the door seem almost random, while those on the frame compose three obscure verses.

This door is activated by Moulder Dwarf magic. It can only be opened by touching the correct sequence of runes, or by demolishing it (a task that will take hours). A *knock* spell will also open it. The runes on the door frame, on the other hand, form a kenning

that hints at the correct sequence of runes to touch on the door: “The [kenning for sword] opens the door. The oak of the sea of spears follows its way. The cold reaper is the end of all.”

The sequence is then: Sword, Fighter and Death (Karr, Thanatos’ name in Dwarven).

Solving this puzzle awards 100 XP to the PCs.

3 Temple of Thanatos This room is shaped as a tetrahedron. An orb of dark stone is suspended in the center of the room, and continual darkness spell has been cast on it. A square slab of granite, which looks vaguely like a coffin, is set on the floor right under the orb of darkness. It is engraved with Moulder Dwarven runes and depicts a scene of death. A Religion check at -4 (or without penalty if the character is specialized in the Entropic cults) will tell clearly that it is an altar to Thanatos.

Two skeletons are standing at the sides of the door, and four more skeletons are aligned along each of the other two walls. The Evil Spirit floats over the altar, well hidden by the continual darkness bubble.

While the Evil Spirit is in the room, the Skeletons are turned as Wights. The Evil Spirit will let the Skeletons fight, casting a Blight spell at the beginning of the fight, but fleeing if detected.

Opponents: Evil Spirit (HP 24), 10 Skeletons (HP 5 each); XP 200.

4 Forge This room is almost perfectly circular in shape. A massive forge, covered by a semi-spheric dome on stout pillars dominates the room. On the walls runs, more or less at waist height, an iron bar, from which smith’s tools, aprons, thongs, and hammers of various sizes and shapes are suspended. A small, heavy jar filled with a shining liquid and a set of metal ingots of various types complete the furnishing of the room (there are a 100 gp gold ingot and a 100 sp silver ingot as well as less valuable metals; the mercury jar is also worth 100 gp).

The fire in the forge is alight, but there is no smoke coming from it, and no chimney is apparent. If a character approaches to the forge, the fire bursts as if to attack him, but no attack really happens: the fire doesn’t exceed the limits of the dome.

The fire is actually a fire elemental, imprisoned by Fjalarr to power is forge without need of coal and without giving away the location of his hideout with smoke. There are two ways of freeing the elemental.

One is simple, but dangerous: removing the dome. With appropriate tools (picks), this is easily done by breaking any of the pillars – without their support, the dome will collapse, freeing the elemental. However, the burst of heat from the forge will cause anyone in the room 2d6 HPs of damage (1d6 with a successful ST vs Dragon Breath). Moreover, Fjalarr will be instantly aware of the event, and will cast Protection from Good, summon the Evil Spirit and the Skeletons (if they have not yet been destroyed) and move to attack the PC in the third round.

The second is very complicate, and requires instructions found in Fjalarr’s journal, as well as a spellcaster to perform the ritual. This requires a successful check on Intelligence (a -4 penalty applies if the journal was read using the Read Languages Thief skill). If the check succeeds, the elemental is dismissed harmlessly. If the check fails by 4 points at most, nothing happens. Otherwise, the dome explodes, causing the same fire damage as above, plus 1d6 damage from the rock shards (no ST allowed).

If the characters manage to free the elemental, they obtain an experience bonus of 200 XP, and can search the remains of the forge once the heat subsides. The Rune-Ring of Loki is found at the heart of the furnace.

5 Laboratory This square room is a real mess: several tables crowded with scrolls, food scraps (often rotting), mechanical contraptions and tools take the upper half, while a short bed and a bookcase sit in the opposite corner.

A bald, long bearded dwarf with a sickly complexion stands at the center of the room. He wears an ornate bronze breastplate, and wields a flanged mace. A large hunting horn hangs from the dwarf’s belt. Behind the dwarf, a dark, ghostly shape coalesces into sight.

Opponents: Fjalarr (Dwarf Cleric 4, HP 22), Evil Spirit (HP 24); XP 300.

If Fjalarr is defeated, the PCs obtain 250 XP for

reaching the goal of stopping the exploitation of the cinnabar mine.

The Rune-Ring in room 3 has been forged for a Makistani Magian Fire Worshipper, Kurmanbek Bakiyev¹. When Fjalarr is defeated, he will sound his Horn of Alarm, alerting Bakiyev, who will come to recover his ring. Since he is currently in the Emirate of Nithia, it will take him months to reach Fjalarr's cave, raise the moulder dwarf from the dead, and start tracking the PCs.

A small chest under Fjalarr's bed contains 100 gp and 200 sp in Vestlander currency. Fjalarr's breastplate is worth 60 gp, and his two red gold arm rings are worth 50 gp each. There are magical components in the room worth 150 gp in total – any spellcaster can recognize them with a successful Intelligence check; failure means 20 gp are missed for every point above the required roll. Finally, there is a small circular box on one of the tables. It contains an ointment that gives off a nauseating odor, and acts as a potion of healing if rubbed on wounds (this cannot be done in combat). There is enough ointment for two doses.

Fjalarr's library contains the following volumes:

- Elena Hassenberg, “*Traladara*” (in Thyatian), value 50 gp;
- Guillaume Lefevre, “*Fundamenta Artis Magicae*” (IX century Thyatian translation of Basics of Magic), value 150 gp;
- Alexander and Lorn Penhaligon, “*Dark Worship in Thyatis*”, volume I, (in Thyatian), value 200 gp;
- Fjalarr, untitled journal (in moulder dwarven), value 100 gp.

Fjalarr's journal is composed of many entries, most of them very exoteric. Early entries describe a number of the great treasures of the Moulder Dwarves, like the Giantkiller Spear and the Golden Sword of Frey. Fjalarr mentions pure cinnabar as a component

¹An NPC from Alarico Ariani's development of the “On the Road to Ylaruam” adventure hook from GAZ1. Replace him with any villain that the PCs will have to face in the mid-Expert levels if you aren't going to play that adventure

of the fabled Sword of Loki and the Ship of Frey, and his need to travel to the Cruth Lowlands to secure an especially powerful source indicated to him by one of his clients, one K.B. (the full name is not given, but this is Kurmabek Bakiyev). A more recent entry describes the Rune Ring of Loki – Fjalarr's gloats about his replicating the craft of the ancients and frabricating a Rune Ring for K.B. Other entries describe Fjalarr's research on ancient Traldar and Traladaran artifacts: the Sun Diadem of Ixion, an artifact of the Traldar Age, the arms of King Halav (though Fjalarr seems to discount them as mere legends), the Eyes of Traldar, and particularly the Black Opal Eye. The last entry says:

“The work on the Rune Ring for K.B. is finally over. Okhlag has sent Dorg to the Vileraider tribe – I hope they will be able to provide one of the offsprings of the Beast of Radlebb: I need to test the tusks – I fear only the tusk of the real Beast will suffice as hilt for the Sword of Loki. K.B. will not like the delay, but I will not risk angering the priests of the Dark Prince without being certain of what I need – they could turn these idiotic orcs against me at any time. Meanwhile, I will research the league for the blade.”

5 Concluding the Adventure

After the PCs have slain Fjalarr and Okhlag, the Broken Hammer tribe will be left in disarray. Award each PC a bonus of 300 XP for concluding the adventure.

If more than 15 warriors have been killed (which is quite likely), the surviving Orcs will flee the area. In this case, Petr Andros' outlaw friends will claim the cave as their new hideout.

Otherwise, the strongest surviving warrior will become the new chief, but will be unable to control the area without dealing with a stronger tribe for help. The Broken Hammer tribe will become an horde of one of the stronger orcish tribes of the area, increasing the orcish threat to the region.

6 Further Adventures

There are several opportunities for further adventure in the area.

6.1 Temple of the Dark Triad

The death of the Broken Hammer shaman has not gone unnoticed. Cultists of Orcus, both humans and orcs, in the area will try to exact vengeance on the PCs. The safest course for the characters may be to eradicate the cult by locating the hidden Temple of the Dark Triad and destroying it.

6.2 The Achelos Outlaws

Not anymore concerned with the Orc threat (or, if a larger tribes moves in, pushed out by the Orcs), the Achelos outlaws begin raiding “Thyatian” (i.e., Karamaikan) convoys between Radlebb and Riverfork Keep.

6.3 Fjalarr’s Return

Kurmanbek Bakiyev (or whoever else ordered the creation of the Rune-Ring of Loki), alerted by the Horn of Alarm, reaches the Broken Hammer cave and raises the dead Modrigswerg – perhaps as an undead, perhaps with a Raise Dead spell. Fjalarr immediately relocates to a new lair, and plots the downfall of the foolish humans (and/or demihumans) who killed him — and he has powerful friends.

A New Magic Items

Kurful Hjarta A black iron, spiralled rod capped with a three-faced demonic head, “Heart of Darkness” is a *mace +1, darkness on command (1/day)*. The weapon has several additional powers, that may be invoked/awakened under conditions. It is geared towards Chaotic users. Additional Powers:

- +3 vs Lawful (Chaotic users of level 4 at least);
- +1d6 Negative Energy damage on a 20 (19-20 if the user is a Master in the mace; the powers awakens for a Chaotic user of level 6 at least).

Herblastr Horn This horn, also known as the Horn of Alarm, is a large curved instrument, covered in runic carvings. Specifically, there are six runes meaning “friend” arranged in a band some three inches from the mouth of the horn. It seems a normal horn, until blood is smeared over the “friend” runes. The blood used to fill one rune must come from a single individual. The Horn’s magic traps a portion of the life energy of that individual, who loses 1 HP until the Horn is blown. Up to six people may contribute blood, and must do so willingly. If the Horn is activated in the above way, blowing it will let the people whose blood stains the “friend” runes know where the Horn’s owner is, and why he called them. The Horn does not produce any sound when used in this manner.

Rune-Ring of Loki This bronze ring is flat, with a large surface engraved with runes. The ring holds a powerful Charm spell (inflicting a -2 penalty to the ST). To work the spell, the wearer must hold something belonging to the victim in the same hand that wears the ring. The ring has 9 charges; when the last charge is used, the ring disappears, consumed by its magic. The Rune-Ring’s power can be used by any character able to use arcane or fairy magic.

B Character Cast

This section describes the most important NPCs, friends and foes, that appear in the adventure.

B.1 Friends

Nicolai Molescu and his cohort, the Ogre Ongah, are the primary hook and information providers for this adventure. Ongah can also be used to provide additional strength to the party if only two or three PCs are available.

B.1.1 Ongah

Cruth Ogre (Homo Monstrum Brutalis) NM, Chaotic, Age 15

Str	17	Int	6	Wis	8
Dex	12	Con	14	Cha	10 (6)

Weapon Masteries: Club (Basic), Battleaxe (Basic), Mace (Basic)
 Skills: Muscle 17, Survival (Hills) 6, Brawling (17)
 Languages: Cruth Goblinoid (Native), Traladaran 6
 Affliction: Phobia (large bodies of water)
 AC 8 (hides), HP 23.
 Damage: 1d6+4 (large mace)

Ongah is a young Ogre from the Cruth Lowlands. Several months ago, he was captured by Iron Ring slavers and imprisoned in the Fort Doom dungeons. A group of adventurers helped him and the Traladaran alchemist Nicolai Molescu to escape the fort. Since Nicolai needed a place to hid for a while, he went up to the Cruth Lowlands with Ongah. The Ogre proved a strong, if less than brilliant, companion, so the two remained together – Ongah provides muscle to keep Nicolai away from dangers, and Nicolai provides brains and magic to keep Ongah from getting attacked by the small Ogre tribes of the area.

B.1.2 Nicolai Molescu

Hermit Alchemist

Traladaran MU4, Neutral, Age 52

Str	8	Int	14	Wis	13
Dex	11	Con	10	Cha	12

Weapon Masteries: Dagger (Basic), Staff (Basic)

Skills: Alchemy 14, Herbalism 13, Survival (Hills) 14

Languages: Traladaran (Native), Thyatian 14, Cruth Goblinoid 14

AC 9, HP 9

Damage: 1d6-1 (Staff) or by spell.

Spells known:

1st level Read Magic, Analyze, Sleep, Shield, Detect Magic

2nd level Web, Detect Object, Illusory Images

Unlike Ongah, Nicolai Molescu has been a prisoner of the Iron Ring for years. He still fears them, and prefers to keep out of sight in the Cruth Lowlands. Nicolai is a good alchemist and a passable wizard, though old age prevents him to be effective as an adventurer.

Nicolai is tall for a Traladaran, but his curved posture makes him look shorter than he is. His formerly

pale complexion is getting darker as he spends more time outdoors, but he still is rather out of shape.

Nicolai is generally a good person, but after spending so many years in the clutches of the Iron Ring, he will never risk his just restored freedom in any way.

B.2 Enemies

This section describes the three main villains in *River of Blood*: the chief of the Broken Hammer tribe, Okhlag Threefingers; the Modrigswerg Fjalarr; and the Evil Spirit that serves Fjalarr.

B.2.1 Okhlag Threefingers

Cruth Orc Chief, Orc4

Str	15	Int	10	Wis	7
Dex	11	Con	12	Cha	15/4

Weapon Masteries: Mace (Basic), Battleaxe (Basic), Spear (Basic).

Skills: Brawling (15), Bawling (15), Singing Marches (15), Stone Engineering (10), Endurance(12).

Languages: Cruth Orcish (Native).

AC 5 (Iron bracers, full helm, chain skirt, studded leather breastplate), HP 24.

Damage: 1d8+1 (battleaxe) or 1d6+1 (spear).

XP Value 75

Okhlag Threefingers is the current chief of the Broken Hammer orcish tribe. He rules thanks to his strong arm, not his brains or skills. When the Modrigswerg, Fjalarr offered him gold for his help, and showed him how to mine and smelt the red mineral, Okhlag saw it as a way to consolidate his power against the tribal shaman.

Now, Okhlag has moved from the upper caves to a new cavern found by Fjalarr. By controlling the entrance to Fjalarr's lair, he hope to prevent any other Orc from making separate deals with the Moulder Dwarf.

B.2.2 Fjalarr

Modrigswerg Artificer

Moulder Dwarf Cleric 4 of Thanatos

Str	12	Int	14	Wis	13
Dex	11	Con	15	Cha	8

Weapon Masteries: all at Basic.

Skills: Life Binding (13), Artificers' Craft (14), Bargain (8), Craft: Weaponsmith (12).

Languages: Dwarven (Modrigswerg), Antalian 14, Thyatian 14, Cruth Orcish 14.

AC 5 (Bronze breastplate and studded leather), HP 22.

Damage: 1d6+1 (Heart of Darkness) or 1d6 (light crossbow) or by spell.

Spells memorized:

1st level Protection from Good, Fear

2nd level Hold Person

Special Equipment: Heart of Darkness (Mace +1, darkness 1/day), Horn of Alarm.

XP Value 125 (175 with Heart of Darkness).

A dark-hearted, evil character even by Moulder Dwarf standards, Fjalarr is truly in league with the Father of Demons – he actually is a Dwarf Cleric of Karr, or Thanatos.

Fjalarr is obsessed by the idea of replicating and surpassing the works of the ancient Modrigswerg. His current task is to construct a replica of the Rune-Ring of Loki, after which he plans to create a new Sword with the same powers as the one once forged by his ancestors for Loki, and a replica of the fabulous folding drakkar of Frey.

Fjalarr is not really interested in keeping his works — actually, he prefers to see them put to use in destroying human or demihuman nations, especially the Northmen nations, the Rockhome Dwarves, and the Emirates of Ylaruam (he sees the Ylari as unworthy of the legacy of Nithia). He has already sold the Rune-Ring to a Magian Fire Worshipper to procure the materials and knowledge for his next projects.

B.2.3 Evil Spirit

Evil Spirit

HD 4, Clerical Spells

AC 4, HP 24.

Damage: 1d8.

Spells known:

1st level Blight, Darkness

2nd level Silence, 15' radius

XP Value 125.

This unnamed Evil Spirit² is a lesser minion of Thanatos, bound to serve the evil moulder dwarf Fjalarr. It has a strong control over lesser undead: all mindless undead appearing in the same encounter as this Evil Spirit are turned as Wights. The Evil Spirit cannot truly die unless Fjalarr is killed. Otherwise, it just dissolves, to reform at Fjalarr's command one turn later.

C Adapting the Adventure

This section proposes conversion notes for running River of Blood under different D&D rules variants, and in different Known World nations

C.1 Adapting to Other Nations

Given the presence of a Modrigswerg, Rockhome, Vestland and Soderfjord are all prime candidates for hosting this adventure. Few changes are needed: Orcs may not be very common in the area, but this is a small tribe. You could use Kobolds or Gnolls instead (this would likely move the target PC level up or down by a couple of levels, though). The Traladaran outpost becomes a Northman homestead, probably housing outcasts from some local jarldom, and the village of Gorica a Northman village, part of the nearest jarldom. Andrej Karlov is now a priest of Loki or Hel rather than a priest of Orcus. The treasure needs some adjustment: the book by Elena Hassenberg is inappropriate if Fjalarr's mining operation is not within Traladara, and should be replaced with a different book with similar value.

Glantri is another good location. Any mountain area could be used, with the Traladaran outpost replaced by a Free Fundamentalist Farmers outlaws stronghold, or by a Lupin trapper outpost in the Glantrian Alps, or even by a group of Boldavian exiles. You'll need to change the village of Gorica and its inhabitants to match the local culture, though no changes are needed if the adventure is located in Boldavia. In any case, the village priest is now a vil-

²See GAZ12 The Golden Khan of Ethengar, page 41–42 for more details

lage elder (and a Fighter rather than a Cleric). No other changes are needed, except for the Hassenberg book which should be replaced with a geographical description of the area of Glantri the adventure is placed into. Also, Basics of Magic is quite common in Glantri, so its value should be reduced accordingly.

C.2 D&D 4e Conversion

Converting River of Blood to D&D 4e is not especially difficult. In 4e, the adventure targets a party of five 4th level PCs.

The following conversion could be applied to the Orc tribe (all 4e monster mentioned come from the 4e Monster Manual): all Orcs of Normal Monster level should be translated as Orc Raiders, while non-combatant Orcs translate as Orc Drudges; Orc Sergeants become Orc Berserkers; the Shamans become Eye of Gruumsh (but they still worship Orcus), while Okhlag Threefingers should be adequately represented by an Orc Bloodrager.

The Ogres could be generally replaced by Ogre Savage Berserkers. In the Ogre ambush encounter, one of the two Ogre should be an Ogre Skirmisher, though, while the Ogre mercenary could be scaled up to an elite monster by applying a template (either an appropriate functional template for a Brute, or the Fighter class template), since it appears alone.

Grey Wolves and the Gargoyle are replaced by their direct 4e equivalents, and Skeletons are replaced by Decrepit Skeletons (the encounter in Fjalarr's Entrance Hall would become too hard with any other type of Skeleton, and minion-based encounters would be too limited otherwise).

The Evil Spirit and Fjalarr are the most difficult opponents to translate (not surprisingly, since they are custom creatures in OD&D too). The first should be a 4th level elite monster; it can be translated using the Deathpriest of Orcus, applying the Death Master template, and the insubstantial quality. For the latter, start from the Dwarf Hammerer from the Monster Manual, and make it a solo monster by applying the Battle Champion and Paladin (or Cleric) templates. Alternately, you can design Fjalarr from scratches as a level 5 solo monster with a primarily Soldier role, and a single encounter power with area

effect.

This way, you'll get a number of easy encounters, but these can be easily toughened by adding hazards or traps, or slightly changing the number of monsters. Specifically, you might want to replace Orc Raiders with Orc Berserkers in the Entrance Hall to Fjalarr's Forge (alternately, you may toughen up the Gargoyle by making it one level higher); to give terrain advantage to the Orc Hunters (or else you can add one wolf and one orc); and to add a level 2 trap to the Shaman's cave (alternately, replacing Orc Raiders with Orc Berserkers should work as well).