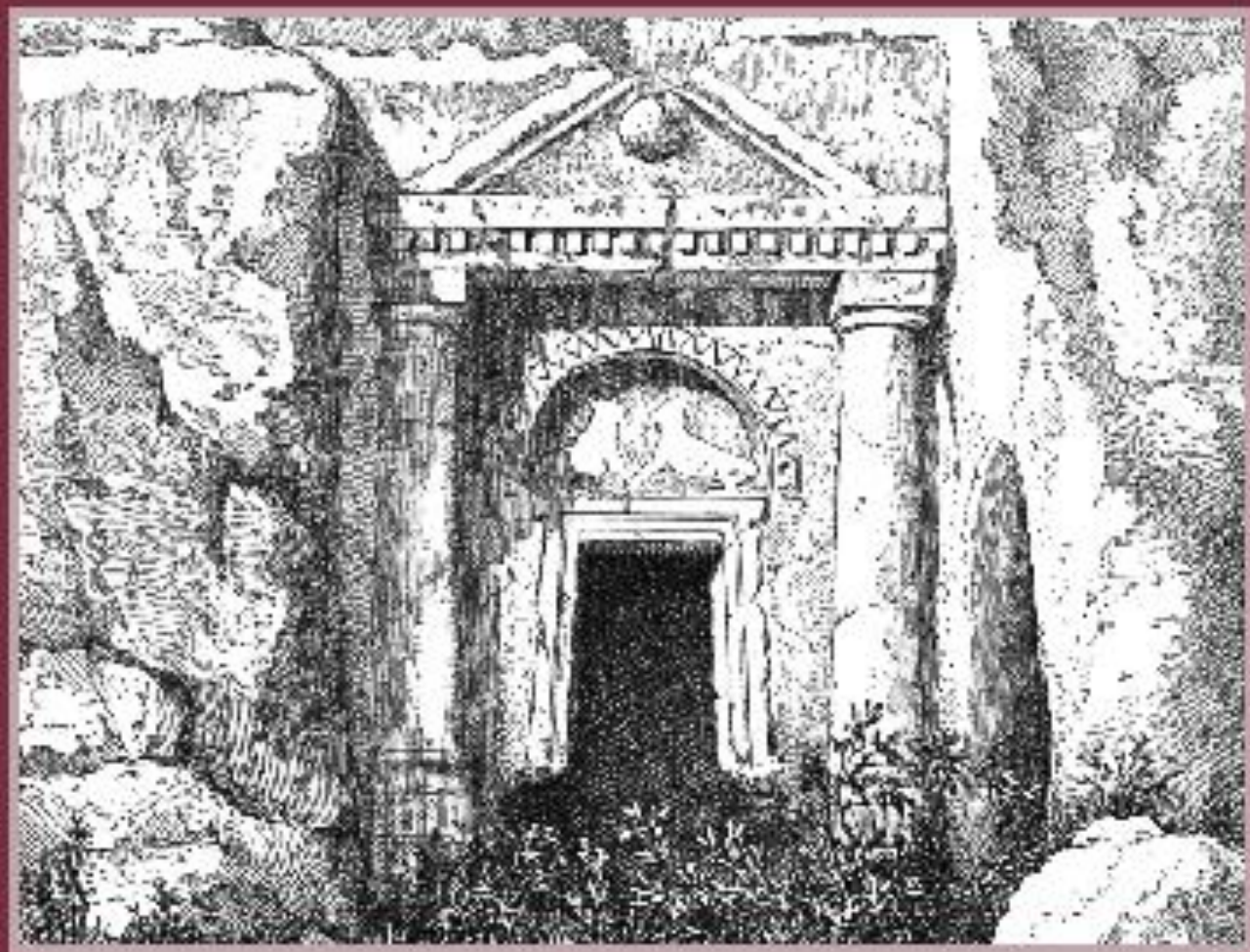


DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®]

Game Adventure

The Wanderer's Grave

by Geoff Gander



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Geoff Gander is a long-time member of the Mystaran fan community, and has been a frequent contributor to the community's information hub, the Vaults of Pandius (<http://pandius.com/>). Over a 15-year period he wrote many sourcebooks and adventures for that campaign setting. Many of his works appeared in Tome of Mystara (archived at <http://pandius.com/tome/index.html>) and OD&DITIES Magazine (archived at <http://www.dragonsfoot.org/cd/>), and more recently in Threshold Magazine (http://pandius.com/thrs_mag.html)

A number of Geoff's system-neutral adventure modules have been published by Expeditious Retreat Press, under its "Advanced Adventures" line. All of these titles are available for purchase from the company's website (<http://www.xrpshop.citymax.com/>), and can be adapted easily to any campaign setting.

Geoff is currently crafting games and stories as a member of the *Sessorium of Creatives*, the exclusive creative community of [The Ed Greenwood Group](#) (TEGG). Stay up to date on all of TEGG's creations and developments at [Onder Librum](#), or check out Geoff's blog at geoffgander.wordpress.com.



<http://OnderLibrum.com/>

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Cover art (a tomb at the Ayazeen necropolis) was taken from *History of Art in Phrygia, Lydia, Caria, and Lycia* (1892), by Georges Perrot and Charles Chipiez.

ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure was originally written in 1991 as an expansion to the adventure hook of the same name in *GAZ11: The Republic of Darokin*. It was also intended to be an optional prologue to the adventure entitled *The Peril of Lakeside* (available in issue #8 of OD&DITIES Magazine). Although the original text has been retained as much as possible, additional back-story has been added. This adventure is set in the nation of Darokin, on the campaign world of Mystara®, but it can be placed in any setting with minor changes. A party of 3-6 adventurers of levels 1-2 (for a total party level of 6) will find this scenario challenging, but not overly deadly. The party should have a cleric.

BACKGROUND

Many decades ago, after years of travel, a lone shadow elf Wanderer (please see boxed text, below) found himself on the surface. He recalled his people's stories about their ancient homeland, and found it to be both spectacular and terrifying. Over many weeks he grew accustomed to his new world, and, feeling released from his obligation to wander, began to explore. Although old, the Wanderer was highly proficient in the magical arts, and created a number of magic items to help him. The item he was most proud of, and which symbolised his attachment to (and understanding of) his new home, was a magical staff that gave and took life energy in the same way as nature does.

Over the years the Wanderer befriended many farmers and hunters in the Armstead region, and used his magic to

aid them in various ways. He became something of a local protector, and when he died of natural causes the villagers interred him in a place of honour in their own tomb, a few miles south of the village. Never having learned his real name, they called his resting place "The Wanderer's Grave". Within a few generations goblins moved into the hills, and the locals stopped using the tomb. Now, the Wanderer is considered to be a legend. But his grave remains...

DM Background: The Shadow Elves

While Mystara has a race of subterranean elves, the setting is notable in that they are not evil. Instead, the shadow elves are civilised folk who leave peacefully in their underground cities, pursuing their vocations and living very spiritual lives. Their remote ancestors had been driven underground by the global disaster known as the Great Rain of Fire, which had been caused by the destruction of Blackmoor. Vast swaths of the surface had been rendered inhospitable, and for centuries the shadow elves thought that they were the only survivors.

Eventually they discovered that not only had the planet recovered, other elves had survived on the surface and had established a new homeland, known as Alfheim. Although both peoples were at first overjoyed to be reunited, tensions arose when it became clear that the shadow elves were as numerous as their surface-dwelling cousins, and they demanded half of the kingdom, and its rulership, as reparations for what they saw as centuries of abandonment. The surface elves' refusal touched off centuries of conflict, which persists to this day.

Having learned to survive in a harsh environment, the shadow elves adopted a number of practices that may seem cruel to outsiders, but arose out of genuine need. One of these is the practice of forcing all shadow elves who reach the age of 800 to leave their communities forever and become Wanderers. This practice made sense in the years following the Great Rain of Fire, when there was not enough food for everyone, but since that time it has become ritualised. Once a shadow elf becomes a Wanderer, he or she bids farewell to their family and leaves, never to retrace their steps. Few survived for very long, but a number find their way to interesting places...such as the surface.

A PDF version of the complete Shadow Elves Gazetteer, which contains all the information necessary to

play shadow elf characters and run a campaign in their lands, can be downloaded legally from the following site:

<http://mystara.thorf.co.uk/files/gaz13-the-shadow-elves.pdf>

A DARING RESCUE

This adventure starts while the PCs passing through the region around the village of Armstead. It does not matter where they are headed, as the events they are about to experience will not divert them overmuch. As they pass through the hilly countryside the faint sounds of battle reach their ears. Several hundred feet further into the hills, a band of goblins has ambushed an adventuring party and has managed to kill all but one party member. Assuming the PCs investigate, a successful Tracking roll, or halved INT check, will lead them quickly towards the battle.

When they crest the last hill, they see the following (the DM can read or paraphrase):

In a narrow valley before you a lone man, bleeding from several wounds, stands with his back against a large boulder. Arranged before him is a small mob of goblins that are jabbing him with their spears, while other goblins loot half a dozen bodies scattered nearby.

The lone adventurer, a fighter from Selenica named Marcus Theodoros, is injured and will certainly die unless the PCs take action quickly. Six of the goblins are attacking him.

Marcus Theodoros: AC 6, hp 11 (4 remaining), D 1-6+2 (short sword + STR bonus), SV Fl, ML 7, AL N. Marcus carries a short sword and wears scale mail armour. His personal effects (as well as those of his now-deceased companions) are stashed at the Shepherd's Rest Inn.

Goblins (12): AC 6, HD 1-1, hp 4 each, MV 90' (30'), #AT 1 weapon, D 1-6, SV NM, ML 7, AL C. The goblins are armed with spears. Each has 3d4 gp, 4d6 sp, and 4d8 cp on their persons - all of which was looted from the bodies.

Although his party had not been adventuring long, Marcus had made some good friendships. He will insist that the bodies be brought back to Armstead for a proper burial before the cave is explored. If the PCs refuse, Marcus will acquiesce, but will not provide any further assistance. If they agree to recover the bodies, Marcus will use his party's pooled funds at the inn to cover the funerary costs, and give the party the one magic item that his companions had - a ring of fire resistance. Marcus will also

offer to accompany the party if they decide to explore the goblin lair once he recovers from his injuries; he wants revenge.

The goblins are intent on their work, and can be surprised. If the PCs manage to kill three or more goblins in one round, or relieve Marcus, the remainder must check for morale with a -3 penalty. If they fail, they will retreat deep into the hills (they will not risk leading the PCs to their clan's stronghold).

Marcus will be extremely grateful if rescued, and will offer the party all of his money (50 gp) if they escort him back to the inn in Armstead where he was staying- his money is being kept there. If asked what his party was doing, he will say that they had been looking for goblins to scalp, as the local magistrate is offering a bounty of 20 gp for each one brought to him. Marcus's party had heard a rumour that a lair lay close by, and their elven tracker had found signs of goblin activity. If the PCs search the valley they will find tracks leading further up in to the hills. If asked, Marcus will say that the tracks probably lead to the goblin lair.

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BACK TO ARMSTEAD

Please refer to the map of Armstead on page 9 for this section.

If the PCs return to Armstead with Marcus, they can talk to the locals to learn more about the region, and what might be in the hills. All of the villagers know the story of the Wanderer (the DM can paraphrase the information in the background). It should be clear that, despite his semi-mythical status, the Wanderer was probably a real person - perhaps a hero. The other useful detail the party can learn is that the goblins are a relatively recent threat; there are stories of a time before they arrived, when the hills were not as dangerous as they are now. Nobody knows that the goblins' lair used to be the village tomb, or that the Wanderer is buried there. The tomb was last used more than 100 years ago, and there are few written records from that time.



Armstead is a village of 600 people nestled in the northern foothills of the Cruth Mountains, (please see regional map, above) accessible from the Darokin Road (which connects the capital - Darokin City - to Selenica) by a well-used trail. Another 1400 people live in the surrounding countryside. Most of the villagers are descended from immigrants from northern Karamaikos, who moved here 50-70 years ago during a period of inter-clan rivalry. The countryfolk are largely of Doulakki descent (please see boxed text, below), and have called the region home for as long as they can remember. For the most part the two peoples coexist peacefully. Most people in this region raise sheep and cattle, but enough grow crops to meet local needs. Armstead is known for the quality of its wool and weaving.

DM Background: Who Were the Doulakki?

The Doulakki were created by the Mystaran online community to explain the presence of place names in the Known World (such as Akorros, Athenos, and Dolos in Darokin, and Trikelios on the Isle of Dawn) that sounded "Greek", but were in locations where the Traldar (who were modelled on the Dorian Greeks of the Classical Period, but were not known for being a maritime power) never voyaged.

The Doulakki and the Traldar shared a common ancestor. Like their better-known cousins, the Doulakki were organised into city-states, venerated heroes, and to a casual observer would seem indistinguishable. However, they differed from the Traldar in that they had advanced to the Iron Age, and their ships ranged farther than those of

the Traldar ever had (thus, they were modelled on the Hellenistic Greeks, who were prominent between 300 BC and 150 AD). To further flesh out this concept, the lost city of Cynidicea, which was introduced in module B4 - *The Lost City*, was given a back story as a Doulakki city-state.

The Darokinian city of Selenica was given a similar treatment, as the former city-state of "Salonikos". Although the Doulakki managed to outlast the Traldar (who collapsed in BC 1000), the dominance of Nithia and persistent humanoid incursions from the interior prevented them from achieving lasting influence over what would become the Known World. The internal squabbles of the city-states themselves also hastened their final decline. By BC 250 only the largest settlements, such as Athenos and Salonikos, remained independent, but even these had been overshadowed or swept aside by the time the Thyatian Empire (which absorbed a number of minor Doulakki city-states in what is now the Thyatian mainland) arose in AC 0.

In the modern era of Mystara only scholars are aware of the Doulakki, but their cultural influence lives on in western and southern Darokin, in the form of personal and place names, cuisine, and a well-established tradition of local governance.

More information can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide to Cynidicea*, a sourcebook that expands on *The Lost City*. It can be downloaded for free at:

<http://pandius.com/cynidgaz.html>

Most of Armstead's spun and dyed wool finds its way to markets in Selenica and Darokin City, and blankets and cloaks made here are considered to be among the best one can buy. Local artisans also work with leather, and the town is making a name for itself as a producer of exquisite hand-tooled leather goods. A small caravan of 2-3 wagons comes into Armstead from Selenica three mornings per week, returning to the city in the mid-afternoon laden with wool and finished goods. There is a 40% chance that the caravan will be present when the PCs are in town. Should the PCs wish to ride with the caravan they may do so, at a cost of 10 gp each (the merchant knows adventurers when he sees them), plus a promise to defend it if necessary.

The surrounding hills are also rich in tin, which has been mined by the locals for decades. Increased goblin activity has made working all but the closest mines a risky proposition - and yields from those have been falling in recent years. The magistrate of Armstead, Aeren Trest, is convinced that regaining access to the richer, more distant mines could really improve Armstead's fortunes, but he has yet to convince the government to send troops to make this possible.

The PCs may visit the following places of interest. The DM is free to add more locations, as appropriate. Unless otherwise noted, all of the people listed here are normal men and women.

1. Armstead Market

The country road connecting Armstead to the Darokin Road ends at a large clearing in the middle of the village, where local farmers ply their wares and the merchants from Selenica do their buying and selling. Village artisans are also present, but this is mainly for the benefit of the visiting Selenicans. On any given day there are 2d4 sellers here, but on Market Day (the first day of every month) just about everyone is here - including the farmers' families. On such days the market takes on a carnival aspect as musicians and storytellers make the rounds while everyone else goes about their business, or simply hangs around to socialise. The offices of the Merchants' Guild are located in a modest stone building that sits at one end of the market.

Tom Eskarden, who represents Hallonica House (please see the boxed text below for more information on the major trading houses of Darokin), lives in a small apartment on the second floor of the guild building. He is a quiet, polite man who is more than happy to talk about his home city of Selenica, but inside he chafes at being "exiled" to what he sees as a dirty village full of uneducated rabble. Should Tom make the PCs' acquaintance he will try to ingratiate himself with them, in the hopes that he might be able to use them in the future to get back to "civilisation". Tom's other mission in Armstead is to ensure that none of the other merchant houses make inroads into this part of Darokin. If he suspects that the PCs are working for one of Hallonica's rivals, he will send a report to his superiors in Selenica.

2. Armstead Watch Guard House

Armstead is a peaceful place for the most part, and as a result the four part-time constables who staff the lone guard house have little to do when they take their turns maintaining law and order. The constables (Julius Comnenius, Bogdan Petriu, Mikos Koranaidas, and Aristos Issatios - treat as 1st-level fighters) nevertheless take their duties (and the half-daro weekly salary) seriously, and will report any and all suspicious activity to the magistrate, Aeren Trest. The guard house contains two tiny, seldom-used jail cells, which have been used on occasion by travellers unable to find lodgings at the Shepherd's Rest, but who were unwilling to endure the mediocre service of the Silver Bucket. Whenever this happens, the constables quietly split the small change paid by grateful guests.

3. Candlemaker

A wall of sharp scents of herbs and spices awaits visitors to this cramped shop, and it is not unusual for some people to get dizzy after spending more than ten minutes in here. The proprietor, Magda Ionescu, seems not to notice. In truth, years of working amidst such intense scents have

dulled her sense of smell, but even so her candles are known for miles around for having the richest, most pleasantly-balanced scents. Magda frequently works with Galina Sulescu to prepare medicinal candles for people who have respiratory ailments, and she usually has a few for sale at her shop (these candles cost 2 sp each, treat as having cure disease properties against mundane, minor illnesses).

4. D. Petriu, Baker

Doran Petriu is well-known for the quality of his loaves and rolls, and for his generally foul temperament. He has little time for small talk, and rarely attends the Market Day festivities. If asked, older villagers can remember a time when Doran was sociable, but this reminiscing is quickly followed by mutterings about a girl by a pond up in the hills. Few people will discuss her. If asked about the girl, Doran will fly into a rage. Doran's specialty, a honey cake ring baked with walnuts (costing 2 sp), is known for miles around.

5. Galina's Pharmacopeia

Galina Sulescu provides herbal remedies for just about everyone in Armstead, as well as some of the nearby farms. Shelves laden with stoppered, meticulously labelled pots and jars line almost every wall of her house. On the rare occasion that Galina doesn't have what her patient needs she will send her son, Alexandru, out to collect the ingredients. Galina makes frequent house calls to her older clients, and as a result can often be found lugging her large, battered satchel full of jars all over town. Her husband, Emil, died while hunting wild boar four years ago. Some people, pointing to a distinct resemblance between the dark-haired Alexandru and Vlad Zavergiu (Galina is fair-haired, as was Emil), whisper that the death may not have been accidental. Galina is aware of these rumours, and has chosen to focus on her work.

6. Golden Thread

Anton Dulgheru's workshop is filled with bolts of cloth - from cotton, to linen, to even a few bolts of silk. He managed to apprentice for a year in Selenica before returning home to take over the shop from his father, and he brought with him knowledge of some of the more modish styles being worn in that city. He also gave his business a name, hoping to draw some business from the visiting merchants. Most of his clients are still locals, who tend to prefer the more traditional styles and fabrics, and privately think the name he gave his shop is pretentious. Anton is growing frustrated with what he sees as his neighbours' unwillingness to embrace change, and is beginning to ponder moving to Selenica for good.

7. Gregor's Quality Meats

Gregor Petriu (a distant cousin to Doran the baker) settled in Armstead four years ago, after having apprenticed in Karameikos. He finds Darokin much more to his liking, not least because his gambling debts have not followed him - yet. He sells a wide variety of cuts of meat - mainly sheep, lamb, chicken, and pork, but on occasion he has a side of beef, too. He will also butcher and prepare anything a hunter brings in, and people still talk about the time someone brought in an owlbear. Gregor says little about his old life in Karameikos, but is eager to learn of any news from there. In truth, he is worried that Zoran Alexandru, a thug in Kelvin who runs a profitable gambling operation, has not forgotten the 140 gp that is owed him. Zoran has not, but has bigger fish to fry closer to home. Someday, however, he will send a few men to track Gregor down and collect what he is owed, with interest.

8. Isselden Mill

No one knows why Armstead's mill is named after the borderland region in which the village is located, but it has borne that name for well over 100 years. Through the vagaries of Darokinian law, mills in borderland regions are operated by magistrates on behalf of the Chancellor, and the position of miller is a political appointment. The current miller, Demetrios Arvanitidis, enjoys the small amount of prestige his position gives him and his family and takes his job seriously. Demetrios considers himself to be the magistrate's man, and will report any wrongdoing (real or perceived). Most of the villagers think Demetrios has let his position get to his head.

9. Magistrate's House

Unlike the more populated (and reasonably democratic) heartlands, borderland regions are governed by magistrates, who act in the Chancellor's name. The magistrate who oversees the borderland region that includes Armstead, Aeren Trest, is a career soldier from Favaro whose achievements landed him this post. Aeren takes his duties seriously, and makes a point of walking about the village several times per week, greeting everyone he meets. In doing so, he has gained the locals' trust. Aeren is something of an armchair historian, and knows that there are sites of interest in the hills. If the PCs tell him about the goblin lair he will become very interested. The DM can use Aeren to impart historical information to the PCs, if desired. Although retired from soldiering, Aeren is still a competent warrior. He is a 9th-level fighter, and has Expert-level weapon mastery of the normal sword.

The large dining room in the Magistrate's House serves as an informal town hall where locals can bring matters to Aeren's attention, and where meetings are held. It is not unusual, on any given day, to see one or two people sitting

quietly on the chairs lining the back wall, waiting for the magistrate to see them. This is also where Aeren meets with the village council, whose six members are elected annually by anyone living in the borderland who owns land worth more than 100 gp. Although the council has no executive power of its own because Armstead is in a borderland, Aeren does consult with them on major decisions.

The Magistrate's House is protected by a 10-foot-high stone wall, which is manned by four soldiers (treat as 1st-level fighters) overseen by one sergeant (3rd-level fighter). The soldiers are under Aeren's direct command, and rarely leave their posts.

Aeren Trest, Magistrate: STR 15, INT 13, WIS 13, DEX 12, CON 14, CHA 13. AC 6 (leather armour +1), hp 67, D 1-10+1 (normal sword + STR bonus), SV F9, AL L. Aeren is Skilled with the normal sword. He is a pleasant man, despite his military bearing, who takes an active interest in the wellbeing of his people.

10. Miorita's Supplies and Sundry

Miorita Pincu bought Armstead's lacklustre general store after she retired from adventuring five years ago, and since then has turned the place into a well-organised one-stop shop for just about everything a person could need or want. Using her connections (former adventuring colleagues) in Thyatis, Darokin City, Glantri, and Alfheim, Miorita buys the best-quality dry and exotic goods she can find. As a result, Armsteaders have access to products that people in neighbouring villages do not. All standard equipment is available and of good to excellent quality, at a slight mark-up (5%). The PCs may be able to persuade Miorita to buy any choice items they pick up while adventuring, but she is a hard bargainer. Her motto is "If I don't have it, I can get it. If I can't get it, you don't need it." Miorita has taken pains to conceal her past, but in an emergency she will step forward to defend the village.

Miorita Pincu, Shopkeeper: STR 15, INT 14, WIS 12, DEX 13, CON 9, CHA 14. AC 8, hp 36, D 1-8+5 (battle axe +2 + STR bonus), SV F5, AL N. Miorita is Skilled with her battle axe+2. She is polite, but business-like, towards people she does not know; however, those who know her well are familiar with her sarcastic sense of humour.

11. Potter

Ioanna Thanopoulos makes pots, jars, bowls, cups, and other vessels in a dazzling variety of colours and patterns - from traditional styles dating from Doulakki times to more experimental pieces that are sometimes more ornamental than practical. She dreams of seeing her works being sold in Selenica and larger markets, but in the meantime she can

always rely on Georgiu Lupan to stir up enough trouble at The Shepherd's Rest to generate more business.

12. Rat-Catcher

This tiny cottage is home to Georgiu Lupan, Armstead's resident rat-catcher. Unlike his chosen prey, Georgiu (treat as a 2nd-level fighter) is a burly, middle-aged, shaven-headed man with a loud voice who takes up more than his share of space wherever he happens to be. His home is filled with an assortment of lethal and ingenious traps, and several shelves bear a wide range of poisons and lures. He is rarely seen without his trademark club and hand-axe (his weapons of choice for dispatching trapped prey), and his heavily-patched sack is rarely empty. Although few people like him, no one has anything bad to say about Georgiu's methods; the rat population in the village has fallen considerably, and now farmers are requesting his services. When he is not working, Georgiu can be found drinking at The Shepherd's Rest - at least until Nicolai throws him out for drunkenly threatening the other customers over perceived slights. There are persistent rumours that Georgiu's increasingly erratic behaviour is a sign that he is slowly going crazy, possibly because he eats his often-poisoned prey, but older villagers say that madness runs in his family.

Georgiu Lupan, Rat-Catcher: STR 17, INT 10, WIS 7, DEX 14, CON 18, CHA 8. AC 8, hp 21, D 1-6+2 (club or hand-axe + STR bonus), SV F2, AL C. Georgiu is an ill-tempered brute who is convinced everyone looks down on him (he's not entirely off-base). He will fight anyone who challenges him, and would not be above thuggery if he thought he could get away with it.

13. The Shepherd's Rest

This inn, which has been run by the Ionescu family for three generations, is a local landmark. It is known throughout the region for its mutton stew and lamb pies, as well as the apple liqueur the family (and no one else) makes. A bed in the common room costs 5 sp per night, while a private room (there are four of these, each having two beds, a fireplace, and a table and chair) costs 1 gp per night. A hot bath costs 1sp. Typical meals include the aforementioned stews and pies, with fresh bread (for 3 sp each), as well as rosemary-encrusted roasts with mashed potatoes (2 gp). Apple liqueur costs 1 gp per bottle (enough to fill a wineskin). The current owner, Nicolai, is a friendly middle-aged man who knows a little bit about everyone's business, but doesn't gossip about it.

14. The Silver Bucket

Where the Shepherd's Rest has a deserved reputation for fine food and comfortable amenities, the Silver Bucket is

known as the place one stays when all other avenues have been exhausted. It is run by Ionos Tsarmarikos, who moved here from Selenica six years ago hoping to cash in on growing merchant traffic. The beds are reasonably clean and food is plentiful, if bland. Accommodation (a bed in a dormitory-like common room on the upper floor) costs 2 sp per night, and the typical meal (a bowl of porridge or potato stew with a strip or two of gristle, with watered-down ale or cider) costs 1 sp. Despite the mediocre service, there are almost always a few people staying here; although repeat customers are rare. Ionos himself is a generally fair man whose gruff exterior puts people off. The fact that he is not from the area does not help matters. He knows little of local affairs, but can tell the PCs a great deal about Selenica.

15. Temple of Solarios

Although most of the inhabitants of Armstead are of Karameikan descent, the majority of worshippers at this temple are Doulakki - hence the name of Solarios, rather than Ixion. *Frater* Alexandros tends to the spiritual needs of his congregation. Alexandros is getting on in years, and walks with a pronounced limp. He has refused all efforts (even magical ones) to alleviate his symptoms, saying with a smile that his pain is a suitable atonement for his youthful misdeeds. Speculation is rife as to what exactly he did in his youth and how he received his injury, but the most popular rumour is that he fathered a child with a member of the Hallonica family - and the deed was discovered. Although devoted to his faith Alexandros is a pragmatist at heart, and has set aside space in the temple for people of other faiths to set up small shrines. He has won a few converts this way. Alexandros can provide healing to the PCs if necessary, but he will insist on a donation.

Frater Alexandros: STR 14, INT 12, WIS 16, DEX 13, CON 14, CHA 15. AC 8, hp 22, D 2-8+1 (mace + STR bonus), SV C4, AL L. Alexandros is Skilled in the mace. Despite his status, Alexandros's checkered past makes him more approachable in the eyes of his congregation, and as a result he enjoys very good relations with them.

16.V. Zavergiu's Smithy

Vlad Zavergiu is one of Armstead's busiest, and best, blacksmiths. He prides himself in his work, and boasts to anyone who will listen that there is no task he cannot do. His policy is that if he is unable to make or repair something for a customer, he will pay one of the other smiths he knows to get it done. He has not had to do this for more than 15 years. Vlad is a youthful-looking, dark-haired 40 year old who spends much of his spare time drinking at the Shepherd's Rest. The word on the street is that he is an inveterate womaniser.

DM Background: The Great Merchant Houses

The merchant houses wield considerable influence over government policy in Darokin - some would say (very quietly) that they run the government itself. The most prominent Houses are listed below:

Al-Azrad House: Founded by Ylari emigrés, Al-Azrad is based in Selenica and focuses on foreign trade - particularly with Ylaruam. They sell most of their imports to domestic traders, who ship it westwards.

Corun House: Among the richest of the Great Houses, Corun focuses almost entirely on domestic trade. This House is also deeply enmeshed in politics.

Franich House: This is the newest House, founded just over 60 years ago. Based in Darokin City, Franich dabbles in just about every kind of trade (including the illegal kind, some say).

Hallonica House: Based in Selenica, Hallonica dominated eastern Darokin until the arrival of Al-Azrad roughly 150 years ago. This House now focuses on domestic trade, and co-operates with Al-Azrad.

Linton House: Based in Athenos, Linton is unique among the Houses in that its trading interests are almost entirely maritime. Aided by partners in the island nations of Ierendi and Minrothad, Linton trading vessels ply the Sea of Dread.

Mauntea House: Based in Darokin City, Mauntea has been the dominant House for almost 200 years, and its thumb is in just about every political pie. It is worth noting that four of the first six Chancellors of the republic were Maunteas.

Pennydown House: Also based in Darokin City, Pennydown focuses on domestic trade. It runs more than 100 general merchandise shops bearing its name across the country and employs more than 200 travelling merchants.

Toney House: The smallest of the Great Houses, Toney is based in Akorros and derives its fortune from shipping on Lake Amsorak, and from trade with Glantri and Atruaghin.

Umbarth House: Based in Akesoli, Umbarth House trades extensively with Glantri, Sind and Ethengar, as well as Alfheim to a lesser degree.

OTHER THINGS OF INTEREST

Lake Amelia

This local lake (more of a large pond) lies roughly two miles west of Armstead, and gets its name from a young girl who supposedly drowned in it many years ago. The villagers claim that her image has been seen in its cold waters - proof that the lake is haunted. The truth behind the sightings is that the lake is home to a small community of nixies, who are increasingly uncomfortable with the growing merchant traffic in the area and fear that the lands around the lake will be settled. They invented the tale of Amelia in order to frighten people into believing the lake is haunted so that no one will want to move there.

Nixies (10): AC 7, HD 1*, hp 5 each, MV 120' (40'), #AT 1 + special, D 1-4 + charm, SV E1, ML 6; AL N.

If attacked, the nixies will use their charm ability against the strongest PC to help defend them, but if pressed they will summon up to three giant bass to aid them.

Giant Bass (3): AC 7, HD 2, hp 11 each, MV (swim) 120' (40'), #AT 1, D 1-6, SV F1, ML 8, AL N.

Lying at the bottom of the lake (about 30 feet down) is the nixies' treasure - a small pile of coins tossed by people making wishes over the years (the practice stopped once the nixies invented the tale of Amelia more than 100 years ago to drive curious people away). In total, there are 26 gp, 137 sp, and 231 cp. The money has no value to the nixies, and they have arranged the coins into interesting patterns on the lakebed. The nixies could probably be coerced into giving up their treasure if the PCs threaten to reveal the truth behind Amelia, but if they do so word of their deed will spread to nearby fey communities, who will act accordingly.

If approached peacefully, the nixies can provide the PCs with a fairly accurate account of local history, including their knowledge of the Wanderer. They met him once, and describe him as a very pale-skinned, older elf who was quite reclusive, but friendly. He seemed to know very little about nixies or other fey folk, and said little about where he was from. The nixies will be very grateful if the PCs offer to keep their secret, and at the DM's discretion if the party is true to its word they may receive unexpected aid from one of the fey folk sometime in the future. The nature of the aid should be determined by the DM, but it should take the form of unexpected healing overnight, retrieving an item that was lost, etc.

The Pigeon Man of Armstead

Overlooking the village from a row of hills to the south is a tumbledown stone cottage with a short, squat tower. This

is the home of Eldram Karethson, a reclusive, heavily-bearded man who raises pigeons for message-carrying and eating. Most people find Eldram stand-offish and leave him alone, but occasionally someone has need of his birds' services. A message of up to 20 words costs 2 sp, with an extra cp charged for every additional two words. The fee covers messages as far as Selenica; anyplace further costs more, usually one extra silver piece for every eight miles beyond Selenica, but Eldram has been known to charge more if he's been having a bad day.

In truth, Eldram has a shadowy past. Twenty years ago he was known as Harel Conwyn, a spy for Hallonica House. One day he discovered proof that a young priest of Solarios had fathered a child with one of the family's daughters. Although the birth was covered up, Harel was given instructions to make sure the priest remained silent. He injured the young Alexandros severely, managing not to be identified, but his masters felt he had not gone far enough in persuading the cleric. Hallonica House then tried to eliminate Harel to make sure no one would ever speak of the affair, which prompted him to flee to Armstead and assume a new identity. Although he has met *Frater* Alexandros a handful of times, the latter did not recognise him.

To this day he lives in fear that Hallonica assassins will one day track him down (he suspects that this is Tom Eskarden's real reason for being in Armstead), as well as in frustration that the man who indirectly destroyed his career lives a comfortable life. As a precaution against the day that assassins do finally come for him, Eldram has prepared ten copies of a message explaining the truth behind the affair, including names of those implicated, which he will attach to his most trusted carrier pigeons, which will fly to Selenica, Darokin City, Elstrich, and Athenos at the first sign of danger. The recipients of these messages are former contacts—the few people whom Eldram trusts at all.

Harel Conwyn/Eldram Karethson, former spy: STR 11, INT 14, WIS 15, DEX 16, CON 13, CHA 10. AC 6, hp 16, D 1-6+2 (*dagger* +2), SV T5, AL N. Eldram is Skilled in the dagger, which will inflict double damage on a natural “20” in combat. Eldram wears a *ring of protection +1*, which has the additional power to confer *invisibility* (as per the spell) twice per day. Should he find himself threatened, Eldram's tactic is to backstab or otherwise injure the nearest opponent quickly in a surprise attack, and while he has the element of surprise turn invisible, loose his pigeons,

and then flee to a hideout (a tiny cave in the hills roughly four miles to the east). Once there, he will collect the supplies he has hidden there (including 150 gp stashed for such an occasion), shave his beard, and head to Threshold, by which time he will have concocted a new identity and back-story.



D8 Roll	Result
1-2	Nothing happens.
3	The party is surprised by a minor avalanche. Each party member must save vs. Dragon's Breath or take 1d6 damage from falling snow and ice. Dwarves and Halflings may be buried as a result (25% and 50% chance, respectively). Roll again (ignoring all future results of "3") to determine if anyone—or anything—comes to investigate.
4	1d3 Snow Apes (AC 6, HD 3+1, hp 20 each, MV 90' (30'), #AT 1 club/1 hug, D 1d6/2d6, SV F3, ML 7, AL C). The snow apes are foraging, and have already eaten a few goblins. They are looking for tastier prey. If the party searches for tracks, they can find a path leading to a single-room cave home to another four snow apes (use the same stats above). Buried under a pile of gnawed goblin and human bones is a filthy, but well-made, pair of boots (elven boots), 45 gp, 27 sp, and 78 cp.
5	1d4 Goblin Sentries (AC 6, HD 1-1, hp 4 each, MV 90' (30'), #AT 1 weapon, D 1-6, SV NM, ML 7, AL C). The goblins are stationed on an outcropping 20' above the trail being used by the party, and will shoot at the PCs with their bows (+1 to hit due to their height advantage). They will flee to their stronghold (see next section) if the PCs climb up the slope to attack - if this happens the DM should place them in one of the rooms. Each goblin has 2d4 gp, 3d6 sp, and 4d8 cp.
6	1d4 Mountain Goats (AC 7, HD 1, hp 4 each, MV 150' (50'), #AT 1 butt, D 1d4, SV Fl, ML 7, AL N). These mountain goats will try to avoid the PCs, but if cornered will fight.
7	1d6 Giant Bees (AC 7, HD ½*, hp 3 each, MV 150' (50'), #AT 1 sting, D 1d3 + poison, SV Fl, ML 9, AL N). These bees are searching for flowers, but may (50% chance) attack the party because they are approaching their hive. If the PCs search the area, they will find a narrow trail leading up 120' to a small mountain meadow, in the centre of which rises a hive. The hive is occupied by another 18 bees (four of which will have 1 HD) and the queen (2 HD).
8	Mountain Lion (AC 6, HD 3+2, hp 25, MV 150' (50'), #AT 2 claws/1 bite, D 1d3/1d3/1d6, SV F2, ML 8, AL N). This hungry lion is hunting mountain goats, but if given an opportunity will pounce on a PC from above (victim rolls for surprise at -2)

INTO THE HILLS

The party should have little difficulty finding the trail to the goblins' stronghold. The way is steep, with numerous switchbacks (penalise travel rates by 50%), and the party is frequently buffeted by strong winds. A moderately-encumbered party can undertake the journey in roughly six hours, during which temperatures will fall noticeably; although the snow-capped peaks are still thousands of feet higher. Use the table provided above to determine what encounters are experienced along the way, rolling every three hours.

Eventually the party will reach the goblin stronghold—the tombs once used by the people of Armstead, and also the final resting place of the Wanderer. Please refer to the map on page 13 as the party explores this location.

THE OLD ARMSTEAD TOMBS

If the PCs examine the cave entrance, they will notice that someone carved it to resemble the entrance of a building. The rockface has been chiselled smooth and flat, and the columned doorway shows signs of once having had double doors. Niches on either side contain halfling-sized statues of farmers, smiths, and other village folk. A successful halved INT check will allow the PCs to identify a very faint inscription over the entrance that reads, "They Labour'd Long, Now They Repose Evermore".

These tombs were first excavated roughly 170 years ago, and were used by wealthier families in the region for about 50 years before goblin activity made the region too dangerous. Sections visited by the public were finished with dressed stone and other ornamentation, but the rest was rough-hewn.

1. MAIN TUNNEL

This tunnel runs east-west into the hill. Many varieties of moss and fungi grow here. The air is damp and musty.

The moss is harmless. Each turn the PCs remain here, there is a 50% chance that the goblins in (2) will hear noises, and send a patrol of six warriors to investigate. They will attack the PCs on sight (please use stats from (2), below). If two of the goblins are killed, one will run back to (2) for reinforcements - these arrive in 1d4 rounds.

2. GUARD ROOM

This chamber was recently hewn out of the living rock, as evidenced by the still-sharp gouge marks. A rickety table and chairs occupy the middle of the room.

Four goblins sit around the table, rolling dice on a large, ratty piece of parchment, on which they occasionally move small figurines. Six more goblins lounge about on piles of sleeping furs and straw pallets.

If the PCs make enough noise in (1), the six idle goblins will go investigate.

Goblins (10): AC 6, FID 1-1, hp 4 each, MV 90' (30'), #AT 1 weapon, D 1d6, SV NM, ML 7, AL C. The goblins are armed with short swords (50%) or spears (50%), and each has 2d4 cp on their persons.

The dice are made from bone, and have been carved into a number of shapes. The pewter figurines (representing goblins in heroic poses, common animals, and caricatures of dwarves, elves, and humans) are crudely made, and some show signs of having been painted at some point. A simple map, depicting forests, rivers, and lakes, has been drawn on the parchment. A collector might pay 10 gp for the complete set.

3. AMBUSH AREA

The east-west tunnel continues; although at a slight bend at this point faint light can be discerned.

If the PCs walk past this area without checking, the goblins hidden in a secret alcove will emerge to attack from behind. Their morale is high, as they realise that any intruders who have made it this far have probably cleared out the guard room (2), and they are the last line of defence. If the battle goes against the goblins, one of them will dash into the alcove and ring a bell, which will signal the guards at (4) to close and bar the doors.

Goblins (4): AC 6, HD 1-1, hp 4 each, MV 90' (30'), #AT 1 weapon, D 1d6, SV NM, ML 10, AL C. The goblins are armed with short swords, and each has 2d4 cp on their persons.

If the PCs are actively searching this corridor, they have a 1 in 6 chance of finding the secret entrance to the alcove.

4. LAIR ENTRANCE

This chamber measures roughly 15 feet squared, and its walls are dressed stone. Empty sconces line the walls to the right and left. Straight ahead is a set of sturdy-looking wooden doors, framed by narrow slits in the rock.

When this complex was the tomb for the village of Armstead, this chamber served as an anteroom for the tomb proper, where family members could burn candles or perform other acts of remembrance. The goblins have stripped the room of anything useful, and installed a pair of reinforced doors (AC 4, 80 hp), which they can bar should their lair be invaded. They have also chiselled small niches (marked "n" on the map), with arrow slits, on either side of the doors.

Goblin archers (2): AC 6, HD 1-1, hp 4 each, D 1d6, MV 90' (30'), #AT 1 weapon, SV NM, ML 10, AL C. The goblins are armed with shortbows, and each has a quiver with 30 arrows, plus 2d4 cp on their persons.

As long as they are shielded by the arrow slits, the archers should be treated as having an Armour Class of 0. If the goblins in (3) managed to sound the alarm the archers will be waiting for the PCs, and will start shooting at them immediately. Otherwise, roll for surprise. If the doors are reduced to 10 hit points or less, the archers will retreat to the main part of the lair (6), and warn the rest of the tribe.

5. TOMB

Rows of alcoves, most of them containing skeletons, have been carved into the walls of this chamber. A dusty stone altar stands at the east wall, surrounded by mouldering covered baskets. Bones lie scattered on the floor.

When the locals were interring their dead here, this was the first chamber to be excavated; the larger tomb (6 - now the goblin lair) was dug afterwards, but never completed. After the goblins claimed these tunnels they tried to loot this chamber, but ran afoul of the skeletons. They have learned that the undead will only attack intruders, and now leave this room alone.

At first glance, the baskets contain dried flowers, withered fruit, and other simple gifts one might leave the departed. If the PCs search the baskets they will find 56 gp, 78 ep, 112 sp, and 237 cp. Disturbing the baskets, or the

remains, will cause the skeletons to animate and attack, at a rate of five per round.

Skeletons (20): AC 6, HD 1, hp 6 each, MV 60' (20'), #AT 1, D 1d6, SV Fl, ML 12, AL C. The skeletons will not leave the chamber.

One skeleton, however, does not animate. This one, smaller than the others and resting closest to the altar, is wrapped in a mouldering burial shroud. Clasped in its hands is a strange-looking staff (the Staff of the Wanderer - a new magic item that is described at the end of this module).

6. GOBLIN LAIR

The stench of unwashed bodies, burnt meat, and smoke fill this large chamber. Illumination is provided by a handful of sputtering cooking fires, which reveals clusters of goblins feasting, squabbling, and lounging about.

The goblins will almost certainly have been alerted by the time the party reaches this chamber, and will leap into battle. The goblin chief holds court at the largest fire, and will lead the defence.

Goblin Chief: AC 6, HD 3, hp 15, MV 90' (30'), #AT 1 weapon, D 1d8, SV F3, ML 9, AL C. The chief wields a battle axe and wears a pair of gold bracelets worth 80 gp each. He also wears the key to his treasure chest (hidden in his chamber) on a string around his neck.

The chief is crafty, and if the battle turns against his warriors he will offer to surrender his clan's loot in exchange for free passage for any survivors. If the PCs agree to this the chief will order his warriors to drop their weapons and leave peacefully - only to return once they are sure the party has left. They will resume their attacks within a week.

Goblins (13): AC 6, HD 1-1, hp 4 each, MV 90' (30'), #AT 1 weapon, D 1d6, SV NM, ML 7, AL C. The goblins are armed with short swords (50%) or spears (50%), and each has 2d4 cp on their persons.

Also present are nine females (use stats above), armed with daggers (30%) or thrown rocks (70%), who will fight to protect their 20 children (AC 9, hp 1 each), who will not fight.

7. CHIEF'S CHAMBER

A faint, grey light and a draft of cool, fresh air greets the party when they enter this room. This 12 foot square chamber has a finished floor, ceiling, and walls.

Built into one wall is a fireplace, which vents outdoors via a 10 foot shaft (which also lets in light). In one corner

stands a cracked stone wash basin, which is now being used as a small mushroom garden (the mushrooms are edible, but tasteless). The opposite corner contains a pile of furs (the chief's bed). Empty torch sconces line the walls.

This room was once the bedchamber of the priest who tended this tomb. He died in its defence when the goblins moved into the region, and his gnawed and blackened bones lay buried in the ashes of the fireplace. The modest furniture that was once here has long since been consumed by the goblins' cooking fires. The priest's dying curse animated the skeletons in (5).

The goblin chief's pile of sleeping furs conceals a small, locked wooden chest, which contains 152 gp, 355 sp and three small diamonds (worth 70, 130, and 190 gp).

CONCLUSION & OTHER ADVENTURES

If the PCs manage to destroy the goblin lair, and bring back proof of their deed, the people of Armstead will hail them as heroes. If the party describes the bones of the Wanderer, or presents his staff, a few locals will draw the connections and realise that their ancient benefactor was real after all. The people of Armstead will consider the staff fair payment for the party's work.

If Marcus survived the adventure, and if the party treated him fairly, he may offer his services as a man-at-arms in exchange for a portion of any future treasure obtained. If the party accepts his offer, the DM will need to play him as an NPC. To aid this, a more detailed character sketch is provided in the next section.

Other adventure hooks are included for the DM's consideration:

1. Secrets of the Depths

Any elves in the party will instantly identify the Wanderer's skeleton as being elven, but the remnants of his clothing, and other items he may still have in his possession, will be unlike any worn by clans known to them. An elven scholar will recognise them as having been made by the shadow elves, and the DM can use this discovery as a hook to send the party underground, to discover the lands of the shadow elves.

2. Whose Staff Is It, Anyway?

Although the people of Armstead will recognise the PCs as the legitimate owners of the Staff of the Wanderer, others may disagree. Despite the fact that it was crafted by a shadow elf, the staff would be very attractive to many elvish clans, and while some may offer to buy or trade for it, others would not be above stealing it. Clerics of Ordana, and druids, would also become very interested in the staff if they learned of its existence.

3. Reclamation

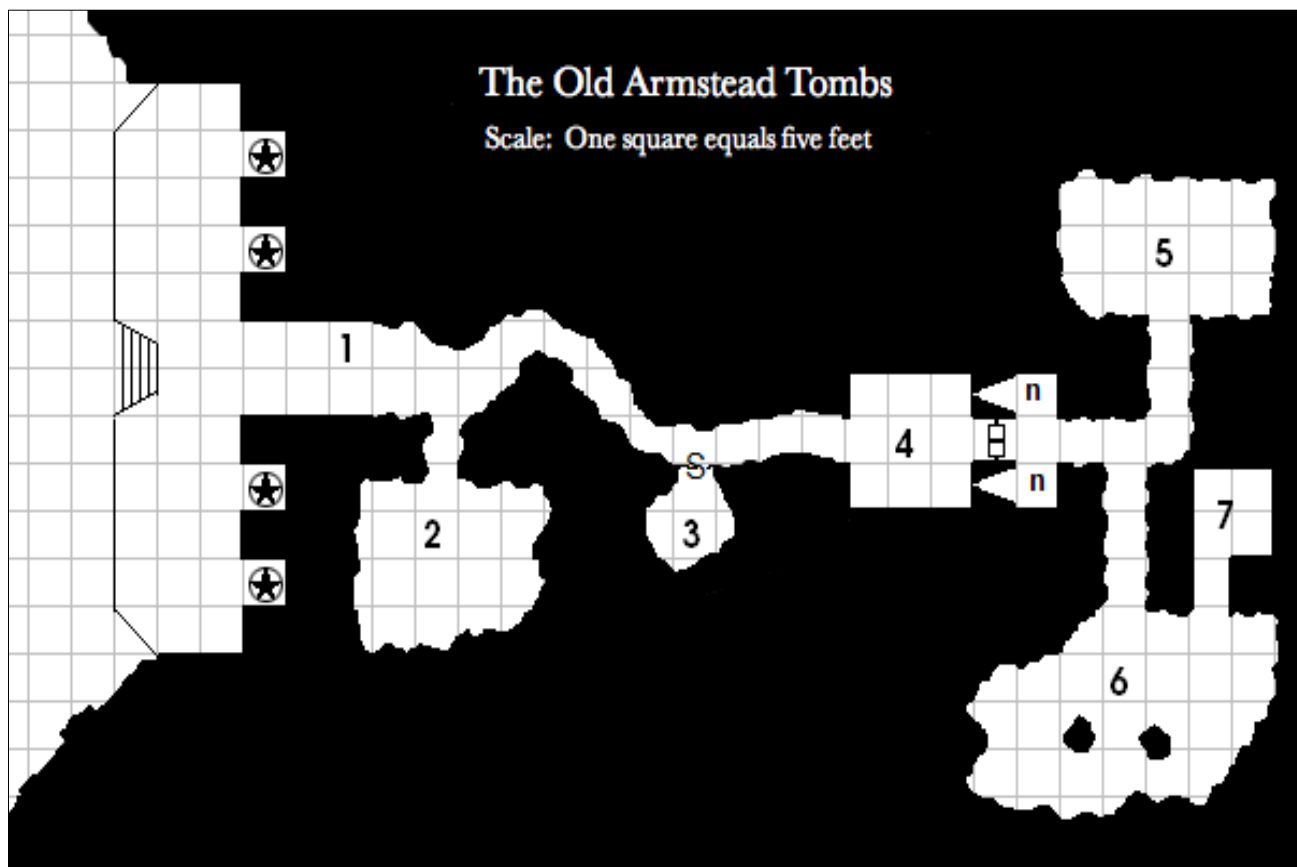
The villagers may become interested in reclaiming the complex if they learn of its original purpose, in which case the party could be hired to secure it. The DM will need to set up challenges for the party to handle while workers from Armstead conduct repairs.

4. There Goes The Neighbourhood

The former tomb is prime real estate, and once the goblins have been cleared out anything could try to take it over. The party could find themselves called back to handle a new menace.

5. What Lurks in the Mountains...

The goblins originally lived in a massive stronghold deep in the mountains, but were driven out long ago by a something terrible that they remember only in the vaguest terms. If the PCs interrogate the goblins they might obtain a few hints about where the old lair is located. The DM will need to develop and stock the dungeon, and decide what kind of monster lives there now.



APPENDICES

Should Marcus join the party as an NPC, the DM can use the following stats. If the *Rules Cyclopedia*, or the Companion/Master-level boxed sets, are used, Weapon Mastery and skills information is also provided.

Marcus Theodoros, 1st level fighter

Strength (STR)	16
Intelligence (INT)	13
Wisdom (WIS)	11
Dexterity (DEX)	12
Constitution (CON)	18
Charisma (CHA)	13
Languages:	Thyatian, Elvish (Alfheim dialect)
Hit Points:	11
Alignment:	Neutral
Skills:	
Brawling	(STR - 16)
Cooking	(INT - 13)
Craft - Blacksmithing	(INT - 13)
Drinking	(CON - 18)
Intimidation	(STR - 16)
Weapon Mastery:	
Dagger	(Basic)
Light Crossbow	(Basic)
Normal Sword	(Basic)
Short Sword	(Basic)

Background:

Marcus trained as a blacksmith under his father, but he long dreamed of becoming a hero and seeing the world beyond his home city of Selenica. Marcus's uncle, Demetrios (who had served at Fort Hobart for a number of years with the Darokinian Legion), was impressed by the boy's spirit. He taught Marcus the basics of swordsmanship - as well as a few bar-fighting tricks should things ever get really nasty. Marcus left home once he turned 17; he does not know if he would ever be welcomed back.

Marcus was a hot-headed young man with something to prove, but the death of his entire party has shaken him up. Time will tell whether he will learn to think before acting.

He is short (5'4"), but solidly-built, with hazel eyes and short, light brown hair.

New Magic Item - the Staff of the Wanderer:

The Staff of the Wanderer is a natural wooden staff measuring six feet long and two inches in diameter. One end of the staff has a tangle of young branches ending with buds and bright green leaves (oak, maple, and birch), while the other end is cracked and withered. When found, the staff has 20 charges.

If the wielder touches an opponent with the withered end (treat as an attack roll), it drains part of the victim's life force, inflicting 2d6 damage and adding one charge to the staff. The Staff of the Wanderer can hold a maximum of 48 charges; the withered end inflicts no damage if the staff is fully charged. If the living end of the staff touches an injured person, 2d6 hit points are restored (up to their maximum hit point total) and one charge is drained. If the staff is fully depleted, it loses its enchantment.

Due to its inherent neutrality, and its symbolic relationship to the natural cycle of death and rebirth, the Staff of the Wanderer would be an ideal quest item for a druid or nature-oriented cleric.



Game Adventure

The Wanderer's Grave

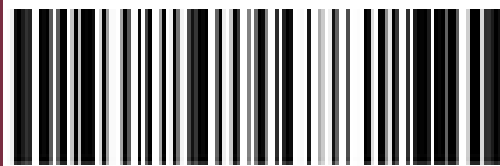
Geoff Gander

A chance encounter on the road leads to a remote village deep in the borderlands of Darokin, which was once protected by the enigmatic Wanderer but is now threatened by goblins!

Will you meet the dangerous inhabitants of the mountains and live to tell the tale?

Will you learn the truth about the Wanderer?

Will you end the goblin menace?



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