

# Heart of a Hero

Cullford's acclaimed ranger has gone missing. Villagers blame the hag that lives in Rooks Wood, but the two had had a steady truce for years. All that remains is the ranger's raven familiar, and it's prepared to guide those willing towards its master's last wish.

**A 3-hour adventure for 1st-4th level characters**

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Special thanks to all the playtesters who made this possible.



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## Introduction

Thanks for your interest in *Heart of a Hero*. This adventure is designed for **three to six 1st-4<sup>th</sup> level characters** but is optimized for **four 3<sup>rd</sup> level characters**.

Throughout the adventure, there will be suggestions on how to balance encounters for groups of different levels and sizes. Dungeon Masters are free to ignore this advice or improvise accordingly. The adventure can be modified to fit into an existing campaign and works best set close to woods.

## Adventure Background

Alexis Hardy, ranger and warden of Rooks Wood, has gone missing. Her friend, Credence Rudd, has sought the help of adventures to explore the dangerous forest and search for clues regarding her disappearance.

It's quickly learned Alexis met her end at the hands of dangerous cultists. Alexis is survived by her raven, Wake. The raven is desperate to find Alexis' heart to revive its master in the form of a Valravn—a knight of the Raven Queen. However, an old foe, the hag Mabel Moonfall, has stolen the heart of Alexis as a trophy.

Wake, frantically trying to fulfill its master's last wish, joins the characters. While Wake hopes to see its master's face once more, Wake is bent on protecting Rooks Wood from the cultists that seek a terrible artifact in the ruins of the Raven Queen temple. This discovery is what got Alexis killed, and with or without her, the forest and Cullford need protecting from the cultists and their malicious ambitions.

## Overview

Cullford is a small, peaceful village sitting just outside the boundary of Rooks Wood. Recently, its warden, Alexis Hardy, went missing. Alexis' raven, Wake, tries to guide the characters toward completing unfinished business: recovering the heart of Alexis and protecting Rooks Wood from the cultists who killed her.

## Adventure Hooks

Cullford's warden and ranger, Alexis Hardy, has vanished. The characters are hired by Credence Rudd to search Rooks Wood and find her. The characters stumble across Alexis' agitated familiar, Wake, and the raven desperately tries to get the characters to fulfill Alexis' last wish. Exploring Alexis' home unveils more areas of Rooks Wood to explore. The characters can head straight for the enemies Alexis tried to hunt or toward Wake's mission—the hag obscuring clues regarding Alexis' death.



## Part 1: Into the Woods

The adventure begins in Cullford, a tiny ranching village on the plains just beyond the reach of the Rooks Wood, far from the influence of larger cities. The characters have received a pleading letter from Credence Rudd, the owner of the Hunt and Harvest, Cullford's acclaimed trading post. His friend, Alexis Hardy, a legendary ranger and retired adventurer, has gone missing. Credence is offering 300 gp for seasoned adventurers to find her, fearing to put simple villagers in danger.

As the characters arrive in Cullford, a raven circles them once before perching on the antlers mounted above the entrance to Hunt and Harvest. It watches them enter with keen interest.

### The Hunt and Harvest

The Hunt and Harvest sits close to Rooks Wood, serving as a trading post and general store for the locals.

#### General Features

A long, log cabin with a steeple roof and awning, on which is mounted a huge rack of antlers.

Within the rustic store is an eclectic collection of wares on wide shelves. Furs and hides hang on the walls, while sacks of feed are piled to one side.

Away from the retail section is a recessed seating area. A large, stone fireplace dominates that space.

**Ceilings.** The ceiling is 15 ft. high with thick wooden beams across it. Several skylight windows are evenly placed there.

**Light.** Skylights allow light to filter in during the day, making the space brightly lit. At night, lanterns on the counter, along with the fireplace, provide a warm glow.

**Sound.** The fireplace crackles softly in the otherwise quiet room.

#### Credence Rudd

The Hunt and Harvest owner, Credence Rudd, is respected in Cullford, having journeyed leagues

along the Merchant Road, trading in countless cities to gather wares for his shop. He makes regular trips, if only for the interesting company, stories, and new wares to sell. His most cherished friend is the one closest to home—Alexis Hardy. Some villagers even suggest he fancies the half-elf ranger.

Lost in thought while staring at the crackling flames is a rugged man dressed in hides. His features wrinkled with worry, he appears to be in his late thirties. When the characters enter, he leaps to his feet, hands extended.

*"You came? Thank you! Can I get you anything? Tea perhaps?"*

Credence explains that Alexis Hardy, a beloved friend, has gone missing. Alexis is Cullford's resident hunter and scout. Threats like gnolls or wild beasts are quickly reined in by her bow, having once been an adventurer herself. It's thanks to her that trouble never touches Cullford. Every week Alexis makes the trip into town from her cottage. She was due four days ago, and she's never missed an exchange of goods (mostly game and useful flora) in the year they've known each other.

- Alexis has a cottage in Rooks Wood.
  - A trail leads there from nearby the store.
  - If asked for a description: half-elf, short black hair, dark hide armor.
- Credence made the trip there three days ago.
  - Something had broken down her door and ransacked the place. When heavy footfalls came in his direction, he fled in fear.
- Alexis' raven familiar, Wake, visits him constantly. *"I think it wants something, but I'm not sure what."*
  - Alexis was never without Wake.
- He is offering 300 gp for information on what happened to Alexis.
  - A successful **DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion)** check will increase the amount by 25 gp or add the characters'

choice of wares such as fine wine or mead.

- If asked about threats, Credence knows that a hag lives in the woods—Mabel Moonfall. The hag despises Alexis, but they have a peace accord.
  - Mabel keeps to her territory, but he's not sure where that is. Alexis might have a map.

As they exit the Hunt and Harvest, the raven from earlier caws at the party for attention. Credence introduces the raven as Wake, just as it flies off into the woods. Wake turns back to watch them, waiting for them to follow.

## Rooks Wood

A slender dirt road, almost imperceptibly traversed, leads toward Alexis' cottage in Rooks Wood. The forest is as vast as it is old. The outer boundary is sparsely lined with young, erect trees. After an hour of traveling, the trees are bunched closer together, their canopies thick and tangled, forbidding direct light. Ferns and underbrush litter the ground between twisted roots.

Cawing is heard in the distance, always ahead of the characters, but still along the trail. If the characters veer from the path, the agitated sound increases until they return.

## Big Bad

With a violent squawk, the raven's cry is cut short. A deep laugh resonates, which quickly turns into bickering. About 60 ft. away:

Two enormous ogres are wrestling over an object.

*"Vrog give birdie!"*  
*"No! Gark give birdie!"*  
*"Lady like Vrog best!"*  
*"Gark help more!"*

The first ogre punches the other and wrestles the object away.

The ogres don't yet notice the characters, and a successful **DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth)** check lets them approach for better details.

Wake is splayed in a small, rusted cage hanging from an ogre's belt. Both wear a tattered loincloth, and each bears a crudely barbed club at their side. One is slightly larger with a protruding gut. The other, though smaller, is heavily muscled with tiny eyes that gleam brightly. This one, Vrog, holds Wake's cage.

If the ogres are confronted, they're not initially hostile so they'll lightly tell the characters to flee. They claim this area belongs to "the Lady."

- If asked about the Lady:
  - *"Lady is friend. Lady want birdie."*
- If asked for the Lady's description:
  - *"Purty. Pointy ears. Night hair."*
- If asked why the Lady wants the raven, both will shrug.
  - *"Birdie try take Lady's..."* It doesn't know the word for "necklace" and points to the strung bones around its own neck.
- If asked where the Lady lives:
  - *"People home. Sometimes cave."*
- If asked if the Lady is present now:
  - *"No. Lady watch people."*
- If asked to be taken to the Lady, a **DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion or Deception)** check is required.
  - On a fail: *"You no friend."*
    - If the characters pursue, the ogres warn. If pressured again, they attack, otherwise, the ogres move on.
  - On a success: *"Okaaay. But we give birdie!"*

*Note: The ogres aren't particularly smart. The same **DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion or Deception)** can trick them into reasonably giving up the raven or fighting each other if properly provoked. The DM can flip a coin to decide which of the ogres wins.*

If the ogres are attacked, both fight until death. See **Appendix** for stats, but feel free to adjust HP and abilities as needed. If dealing with a weaker party, have one of the ogres turn on the other for the Lady's favor.

If the ogres are followed silently, using the **Stealth DC** listed earlier, they lead the characters toward Alexis' home (see later description).

When Wake is freed, it lingers on a branch nearby. Wake will cry out a single word: "*Heart?*" in a searching tone. A successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Animal Handling)** check can coax Wake onto the character's shoulder. Other means to communicate with Wake, such as **Speak with Animals**, will expand on the raven's thoughts.

- Wake will state: "*I need her heart. I promised.*"
- If asked whose heart, Wake will reply: "*Alexis.*"
- If asked why: "*To be Valraven.*"
- Wake doesn't understand what a Valraven is, only that it was Alexis' final desire.

If **Detect Magic** is used on Wake, the results are Conjunction with a strange trace of Divine influence.

## Development

The characters' primary objective is investigating Alexis' home as that's their best lead—especially with talk of this "Lady." Should they detour and stumble across Mabel's cave instead, the house and contents will be available later.

## Part 2: Last Wish

The adventurers continue to seek out possible locations or culprits that might have information regarding Alexis' disappearance.

## Hunter's Home

In a small clearing at the heart of the forest, a cabin sits against the tree line. The one-room,

wooden cottage has a slanted roof covered with moss. Tanning racks rest in pieces against the wall. The door appears to have been ripped off its hinges and then hastily jammed back in place. A pile of trinkets, like silverware and candleholders, are collected on the broken porch amidst animal bones.

A campfire's embers burn low on the front lawn, a pile of large, dirty blankets and hides scattered around it. The rotting carcass of a stag, half devoured, hangs from a nearby tree.

### Outside the cabin:

If the ogres survived meeting the characters, they proceed toward the campfire, pulling down the carcass and plopping down on the blankets to eat what remains. They're waiting for the Lady to come.

If the ogres are friendly, they don't care if the characters go into the cabin, as long as the characters don't touch their "shiny things" piled on the porch.

If the characters overcame the ogres, a successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Survival)** check suggests the ogres have made camp here for several days at least. It also finds traces of humanoid footsteps passing through. The footsteps lead from the woods into the cabin and back (towards Mabel's Cave).

### Inside the cabin:

**Ceiling.** The ceiling is 8 ft. high at the lowest point, and 10 ft. high at the slanted pinnacle.

**Lighting.** Two windows, one in the front and one in the back, allow sunlight to brighten the space. Otherwise, if lit, the hearth will dimly illuminate the room.

**Sounds.** Quiet. Most noises, like birds chirping, can be heard from as far as the forest line.

Inside the cabin is an unmade cot under an alcove, and off to one side is a rickety table and two broken chairs. A chest by the foot of the bed has been pillaged of valuables. Clothing has been taken but exploration gear remains.

Ashes are scattered around the hearth, and the cabinets beside it have been ransacked and cleared of food stores.

- Over the table hangs a map of the forest, indicating the cabin at the center. The entire top left corner has been torn off. In the rightmost corner, an outlined area is marked as “M.M.”
- A successful **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation)** check finds a loose floorboard under the cot. Within is a chest containing 50 gp and a black tourmaline raven worth about 5 gp.

Books are stacked neatly on the back windowsill, untouched. Wake will fly over and peck at the black book if no one blocks its entry. The collection is as follows:

- A thin, green book, a guide to local flora.
- A worn leather book filled with sketches, illustrating forest creatures and Cullford villagers alike. Several pages are ripped out. There’s more than one sketch of Credence.
- A simple black book with a white mask on the cover. It’s a primer on the Raven Queen, containing everything from history to principles of worship.
  - If the characters read through this, they’ll get a general understanding of the goddess of death.
  - A page stands out, as a folded paper with a sketch of Wake was placed there. The section is an excerpt about Valravns.
  - Valravns are the supposed knights of the Raven Queen.
  - Upon death, a follower literally gives their heart to a servant of the Queen—a raven. The goddess decides if they are allowed to “live” and for how long.
  - “When death takes us, our tasks unfinished, we offer our heart to the Queen, and only she decides if we rise again.”

*Note: Mabel will not show up if the ogres are killed. DMs should proceed accordingly.*

If the ogres are still alive after an hour or so, the sound of Wake’s raucous caws fill the clearing. If he’s still caged, the ogres will shake it until Wake silences.

A willowy half-elf with short, black hair enters through the trees. Bright green eyes scan the vicinity warily. She’s wearing dark hide armor but carries no weapons. There’s a large necklace dangling from around her neck, it resembles a container about the size of a fist with strange runes carved into it.

*Note: This is not the real Alexis Hardy, but the hag, Mabel Moonfall, in disguise.*

If Wake is in sight of the Lady (Mabel), the raven will caw: “Heart!” at her. The cries clearly make her uncomfortable and she yells: “Be quiet, creature!”

If the characters are hiding within the cabin or forest line, they’ll hear the Lady converse with the ogres. If Wake is with them, she takes the raven, stating she’ll return the next day. The ogres will then tell her about the characters, vaguely describing them.

The Lady calls out to the characters, carefully retreating toward the woods.

- If the characters remain hidden, she tells the ogres to find and kill them. The Lady then turns invisible and runs into the forest.
- If the characters reveal themselves, she’ll demand they state their business.

As for herself, she declares: “I’m Alexis. This is my home and you’re not welcome. Leave.” If further pressed about Credence’s concern, she says she no longer has a desire to see him. She’s clearly lying but refuses to admit more. If pressured, she tells the ogres to attack them.

As for the unusual necklace, based on the runes, a successful **DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana)** check will discern preservation magic of a necromantic origin. The same is revealed with **Detect Magic**.

If the Mabel is attacked or her necklace threatened, the ogres retaliate, giving her enough time to drop Wake (if held) and use **Invisible Passage** to get away. The map in the cabin will show the way to Mabel's cave, otherwise, a successful **DC 16 Wisdom (Survival)** check can track her down.

If the characters choose to explore the Raven Queen Ruins before Mabel, Wake will follow them begrudgingly and stop cawing "Heart." If Wake was taken, and they return to Mabel's Cave after the ruins, neither Mabel nor Wake will be present.

If the characters return to Credence, indicating that "Alexis" (unknown to them as Mabel) wanted nothing to do with him, Credence rebuffs the notion. He refuses to believe Alexis would consort with ogres and the like. Should they mention the necklace, Credence remarks that Alexis never wore jewelry and believes the hag, Mabel Moonfall has a hand in this.

## Mabel's Cave

Mabel's cave is found in the oldest part of Rooks Wood. Gnarled trees with low-hanging, moss-covered branches stretch for miles, blocking out most of the light and making other parts of the forest almost idyllic. It's quiet, devoid of animals or critters, and a low fog clings to the ground. The air reeks of fungi and damp earth.

The characters can hear sounds of the hag's hideout before it comes into view: hollow bone chimes clattering in the slight breeze. Between two dead trees sits the darkened entrance of the cave. Strung bones hang like a curtain over the mouth, animal and human alike.

Inside the chamber, a path on the right winds up toward a 10-foot-high ledge above. Along the left wall a cauldron bubbles near cabinets of assorted vials, jars, and containers of preserved creatures. On the back wall is a painted map of Cullford, and pages of sketched villagers are hung up according to location. On the drawings are hastily scribbled names and personal details about the villagers.

**Ceiling.** The earthen ceiling is 20 ft. high, and a large hole near the entrance leads outside. Roots from the trees above dangle in.

**Lighting.** A low fire burns under the cauldron, providing dim light in a 15-foot radius. The ceiling hole allows daylight to filter in, helping to dimly illuminate the cave.

**Sounds.** Bubbles from the cauldron occasionally pop, while the fire crackles low beneath it.

*Note: Mabel is almost two and a half centuries old, so she has little interest in activities that might endanger her lifespan. She's cunning and manipulative, but her desires alienate her from other hags. Secretly, she seeks to be loved. Mabel despises Alexis because the half-elf has everything she doesn't: beauty, affection, and friends. With Alexis' death, Mabel hoped to take the ranger's place, stealing Alexis' heart and preserving it for her uses. She often spies on the villagers to learn their ways, as indicated by the stolen drawings and notes.*

As the characters enter the space, a soft cackle is heard from overhead.

A hunched woman with leathery green skin steps into view on the ledge above. She leans on a walking stick and clutches a large necklace carved with bizarre runes, blood dripping through her fingers. Her lips curl into a smile, revealing a row of sharp teeth.

*"Hello, dearies, what makes you think you're welcome here?"*

Mabel has no interest in fighting. She desires to one day control all of Rooks Wood and she's lived too long to die now. Her most precious resource is her cauldron brew which she has spent decades perfecting. It helps her craft any potion of her choosing. If the characters look into the cauldron, they are momentarily entranced by the otherworldly liquid swirling within.

If they encountered the Lady at the cabin, the characters can perceive that Mabel's necklace is the same as the Lady's.

If the Lady ran off with Wake, the raven is caged on one of the cabinets.

If asked, Mabel will openly share the following information:

- Alexis was killed by cultists in an old temple of the Raven Queen.
  - She has no idea what the cultists are searching for, only that Alexis tried and failed to stop them.
  - Mabel will toss them the missing part of Alexis' map, stating her body still rots there.

If **Detect Magic** is used, the cauldron brew is magical, but its school is unknown. The necklace is also magical, of a necromantic origin. A successful **DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana)** check can also determine that by the necklace's runes.

Wake will caw incessantly: "Heart!" The raven's attention is fixed firmly on the necklace. If Wake is free, Mabel warns the characters to keep the raven away from her or she'll kill it. If Wake is caged, she openly threatens its life.

If Mabel is asked about the necklace:

- *"Let's just say: finders, keepers."*
- A successful **DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion)** will get her to admit what it is: Alexis' heart. Then she laughs, *"Shame I wasn't the one who killed her."*

After learning the truth, if Mabel is allowed to have the necklace:

- She will try to bribe the characters to keep her secret and hide Alexis' death.
- She intends to use Alexis' form, expressing a wish to travel without villagers fearing her.
- She'll match Credence's offer, in addition to an Uncommon Potion of their choosing.

If the characters near the cauldron, Mabel gets visibly worried. If the characters want the

necklace and the brew is threatened, Mabel will concede the necklace.

**Combat:** If initiated, Mabel uses **Invisible Passage** to hide before attacking a target. She fights until death. DMs should feel free to adjust HP and abilities as needed.

On her person is the other half of Alexis' map; it reveals an old temple bearing the Raven Queen's symbol.

On the ledge beside Mabel's sleeping area is a pile of Alexis' clothing.

If opened, the necklace around Mabel's neck contains a humanoid heart—kept fresh by the hag's magic. Wake will cry out repeatedly: "Heart!" until the necklace is given to it.

Along the shelves, the characters will find a *potion of healing* and a *philter of love*. They'll also find a pouch containing 100 gp.

Wake's goal is to get the necklace and eat the contents. It's entirely possible for the necklace to be kept from Wake, and the characters will lose the ally that is the Valravn.

- If Wake feels threatened, the raven will try to fly off with the heart. If Wake successfully flees, it will return to greet the characters as the Valravn.
- If prevented, the characters can still learn what became of Alexis by heading to the temple indicated on the map. Wake will abandon the party.
- If Wake is allowed to have the heart, the raven devours it and transforms entirely.

Standing in Wake's place is a humanoid in black splint armor with a mantle of raven feathers. Beneath a helm like a raven's beak, green eyes intently watch back.

*"Thank you for bringing us the heart. We have unfinished business on behalf of the Raven Queen."*

*Note: Alexis and Wake are one—a Valravn in service to the Raven Queen. The Valravn refers to*



*themselves as “we” but responds to either name as they have both Alexis’ and Wake’s memories.*

If asked how Alexis died, the Valravn states Alexis was captured by Orcus cultists searching an old Raven Queen temple. The cultists planned to kill her, but since Wake was free, she killed herself and offered her heart to the Raven Queen, hoping she might yet thwart the cultists. Through Wake’s memory, the characters learn that Mabel killed the cultist guarding Alexis’ body and ripped out the heart for herself.

**Roleplaying Alexis:** The Valravn is stoic and quiet, but occasionally they regard the forest with affection, understanding, and confusion as if their previous life was a distant memory. The Valravn quickly reigns themselves in, focusing on the task at hand.

If asked about Alexis’ life and former adventures, with sadness they’ll decline to answer. *“That is no longer who we are.”*

The Valravn can change to the form of a raven at will.

## Development

Whether they’re guided by the Valravn or not, there’s one area of the map left unexplored: the Raven Queen temple. Information gathered asserts cultists are involved, but their motives remain to be discovered.

## Part 3: Undying Devotion

Travel time to the ruins of the Raven Queen’s temple is about a half-day from Mabel’s Cave. If the Valravn is present, they rarely speak and prefer to stay in the form of a raven outdoors, unless an altercation is imminent. The Valravn stresses the importance of eliminating the cultists before they find whatever it is they seek.

## Raven Queen Ruins

The crypt-like entrance of the ruins is built into a mound of earth, beneath a dead tree, its roots framing the entrance. Ravens perch in the branches like black leaves, silently cocking their heads as the characters approach. Cracked

pillars line either side of the flagstone path, broken up by weeds and debris. The onyx stone doors to the temple, once resembling folded wings, now rest in pieces near the entrance.

*Note: If the Valravn is with the characters, the Valravn bows their head at the ravens. All the ravens bow their heads in unison.*

A derelict wagon is off to one side, and on the bed is the covered body of a cultist. Claw marks have slit open the cultist’s throat. The Valravn states this was the cultist guarding them, but the hag took the heart before Wake could. There’s nothing of value on the cultist body except a key.

## Inside the Ruins

**Ceiling.** All the ceilings are 20 ft. high, most giving way to the earth above. Dirt and pebbles occasionally tumble from overhead.

**Lighting.** Lanterns can be found at the entrances and exits of every room, placed by the cultists.

**Sounds.** In **Room 1**, the wind howls down from the long entry stairs. The other rooms are silent, broken only by the occasional sound of cultist footsteps echoing from ahead (see **Room 3** for specifics).

**Room 1.** The steps leading into the temple are treacherously old, portions worn into crumbling slopes. At the bottom, there’s an empty foyer with a small alcove to the right and stairs descending to the left. In the center, the shattered remains of a statue of a black-robed woman with a porcelain mask lay scattered about.

Within the alcove there’s a cage. Inside the cage the body of Alexis Hardy rots, a gaping hole in her chest and a stab wound in her stomach.

A successful **DC 12 Lockpick** check will open the lock; otherwise, a successful **DC 10 Strength** check can force the door open. Alternatively, the key on the cultist’s body opens the lock.

*Note: If the Valravn is with the characters, the Valravn remarks that the characters are free to*

*take what they please from the body. "We are here, not there."*

If the characters investigate Alexis' corpse, they discover *bracers of archery*, but no currency or weapons.

**Room 2.** Four pillars hold up a crumbling ceiling, though one pillar has partially fallen. The passage to the right is impassable, lost to a cave-in, but the passage straight ahead is open.

Most importantly, on the walls of this room are eight niches, a tomb resting within each. All tombs bear the symbol of the Raven Queen and all have been badly damaged and pillaged. Bones and black armor spill out at their bases and not a single skeleton remains whole, though one is missing.

The Valravn worries what use the cultists might make of the body of a deceased knight.

**Room 3.** On the floor of this circular space, a raven is etched on black stone. The doorway straight ahead is blocked by the rubble of a collapsed roof, but light seeps in through the cracks. Voices can be heard echoing from far below.

*"Your sacrifices will not be in vain...proceed."*

To the left of the rubble is a hallway. If the characters move quietly into the tunnel toward the next room, they can overhear a cultist mumbling furiously.

*"I found the wretched knight's body, but I can't help with the ritual. Tsk. They'll ask me to write the ritual runes though..."*

**Room 4.** Large bookshelves rest against the wall in the back. Books and scrolls have been pulled from its shelves and scattered all over the floor. A stack leans against the table where a cultist is reading over documents. A tunnel in the back of the room exits the space.

If alerted, the cultist will try to flee down the tunnel to comrades.

If the cultist is caught, a successful **DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation)** check will get the cultist to admit the following:

- They're searching for the location of the Wand of Orcus.
- A Raven Queen knight buried here died with the knowledge of the wand's location.
- They found the knight's body and plan to partially resurrect it, forcibly extracting the information.
- The characters will have to stop the cultists near the pool, killing them or knocking them out—they're the key to the ritual.

If the characters search through the books, they mostly pertain to the lives of Raven Queen followers. This temple was devoted to her and some of her most zealous warriors. The book the cultist was reading refers to an elf knight called Talisan, who discovered the Wand of Orcus and hid it. None of that information was recorded in order to keep it safe.

**Room 5.** The room is reminiscent of a worshipping chamber, with cracked pillars holding up what remains of the ceiling. At the far end of the room is a recess with a large pool of black liquid. At the back is the collapsed tunnel that would have led from circular space earlier.

Arms extended, the twin leaders of the Orcus Cult (Cult Fanatics) face the pool about 15 ft. away. In the pool are the bones of a knight loosely held together by black armor. Four Cultists (weaponless) stand around the pool, fists extended, squeezing blood from between their fingers. These cultists stand in a ring of bloody runes around the pool. As their blood falls into the black liquid, the runes slowly begin to glow.

A bodyguard (Berserker) leans against a pillar closest to the pool, watching the ritual keenly.

#### **Combat:**

- The **4 sacrificial cultists** around the pool will not participate in battle, as they are concentrating on completing the ritual.

- The characters have 3 rounds to remove all of them from the ritual circle, otherwise, the fallen knight will rise.
  - **Round 1:** The blood runes glow 1/3rd around the pool. The sacrificial cultists hunch over, breathing heavily.
  - **Round 2:** The blood runes glow 2/3rds around the pool. The bones begin to rattle.
  - **Round 3:** The blood runes glow nearly all the way around the pool. The sacrificial cultists drop to their knees, visibly drained. The bones repeatedly try to rise, twitching with effort.
- With every sacrificial cultist killed, the blood runes flicker weakly. After the first sacrificial cultist is killed, the others chant faster.
- *Suggestion: If the number of party members exceeds 4, another sacrificial cultist should be added around the pool for every additional character. For weaker parties, feel free to halve Cultists' HP totals and vice-versa for stronger parties.*
- The Cult Fanatics will try desperately to keep the ritual from failing.
- DMs can add or remove combatant Cultists to aid the Cult Fanatics as necessary.
- The Berserker should be added or removed to match whether the Valravv is or isn't present.

If all the sacrificial cultists aren't defeated after 3 rounds, the fallen knight in the pool rises to its feet. With an inhuman shriek, it grabs its head as if in pain. As suddenly as it rose, the undead knight collapses in a heap, any remaining cultists dropping dead beside the pool.

If a Cult Fanatic still lives, the fanatic laughs: *"You're too late! He knows!"* Battle continues until either party is dead.

If the ritual is interrupted and the cultists around the pool are removed, the blood runes fade out and the battle continues to the death.

On one of the Cult Fanatic's body is a journal. It names the twin leaders, Rhitrix and Edel, and

their orders to seek out the Wand of Orcus, the legendary weapon of the Demon Prince of Undeath, Orcus. With such an artifact the cult would be untouchable.

The cult discovered the artifact was hidden by a follower of the Raven Queen, but the information was taken to the grave. They narrowed down the location of the knight's body—the Raven Queen temple ruins. They devised a plan to unearth the body and force it to divulge its secrets. The head of the cult, referred to only as Lord Rot, demanded it.

Altogether the enemies carry about 45 gp.

If the cultists are defeated, the Valravv thanks the characters wholeheartedly. The Valravv explains that their time was borrowed, and now the Raven Queen calls them back. They hesitate, as if recalling a memory, then the Valravv asks the characters to send Credence their heartfelt regret and hopes he understands.

If the Cult of Orcus successfully completed the ritual, and the Valravv survives, they state their new life has only just begun.

Either way, once outside, the Valravv transforms into a raven and flies off. The tree full of other ravens follow. If it's just Wake, the same occurs.

## Development

With the cultists dead and the Valravv gone, the characters must return to Cullford to collect their reward. They'll bring news of everything that's transpired in Rooks Wood. Still, with Alexis departed, so, too, is Cullford's guardian.

## Conclusion

The characters can bring the body of Alexis Hardy back to Cullford, or just the news of what transpired. The town will mourn her passing, but none so much as Credence. Cullford will commend her bravery as well as that of the characters for stopping dark forces so close to home. In time, they'll even erect a Valravn monument.

As promised, Credence rewards the characters. If they brought back Alexis' body to be buried, or buried it in the forest, he gifts them with an item he had meant to give Alexis. It's a *ring of animal influence*.

## Rewards

### Treasure

Item Name	GP Value
Black Tourmaline Raven	5 gold
Alexis' Hidden Money	50 gold
<i>philter of love</i>	90 gold
<i>potion of healing</i>	50 gold
Mabel's Pouch	100 gold
<i>bracers of archery</i>	1500 gold
Orcus Cult	45 gold
Credence's Reward	300 gold
<i>ring of animal influence</i>	4000 gold

## Magic Items

### Bracers of Archery

*Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)*

While wearing these bracers, you have proficiency with the longbow and shortbow, and you gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls on ranged attacks made with such weapons.

### Ring of Animal Influence

*Ring, rare*

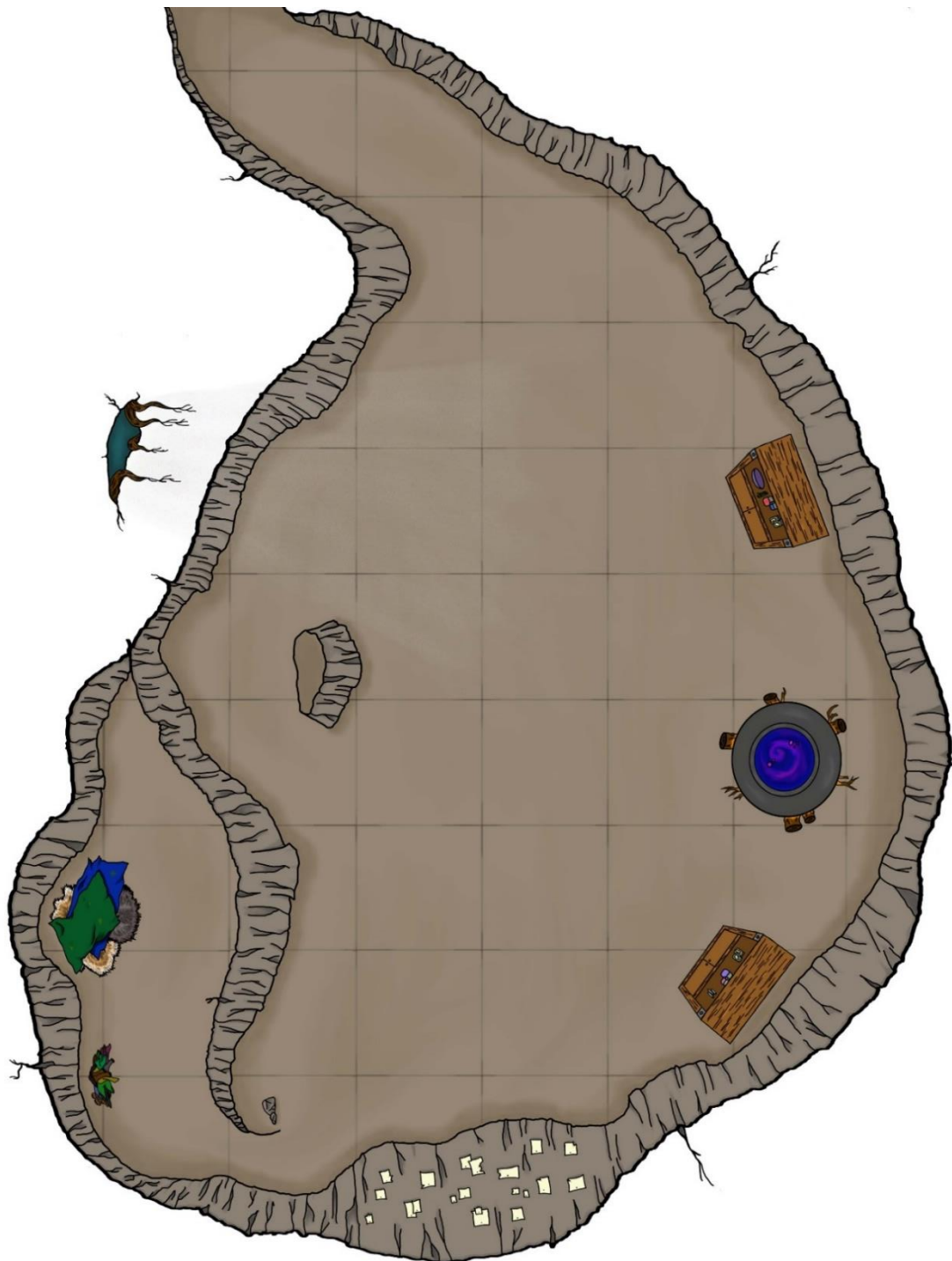
This ring has 3 charges, and it regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn. While wearing the ring, you can use an action to expend 1 of its charges to cast one of the following spells:

- *animal friendship* (save DC 13)
- *fear* (save DC 13), targeting only beasts that have an Intelligence of 3 or lower
- *speak with animals*

## Experience

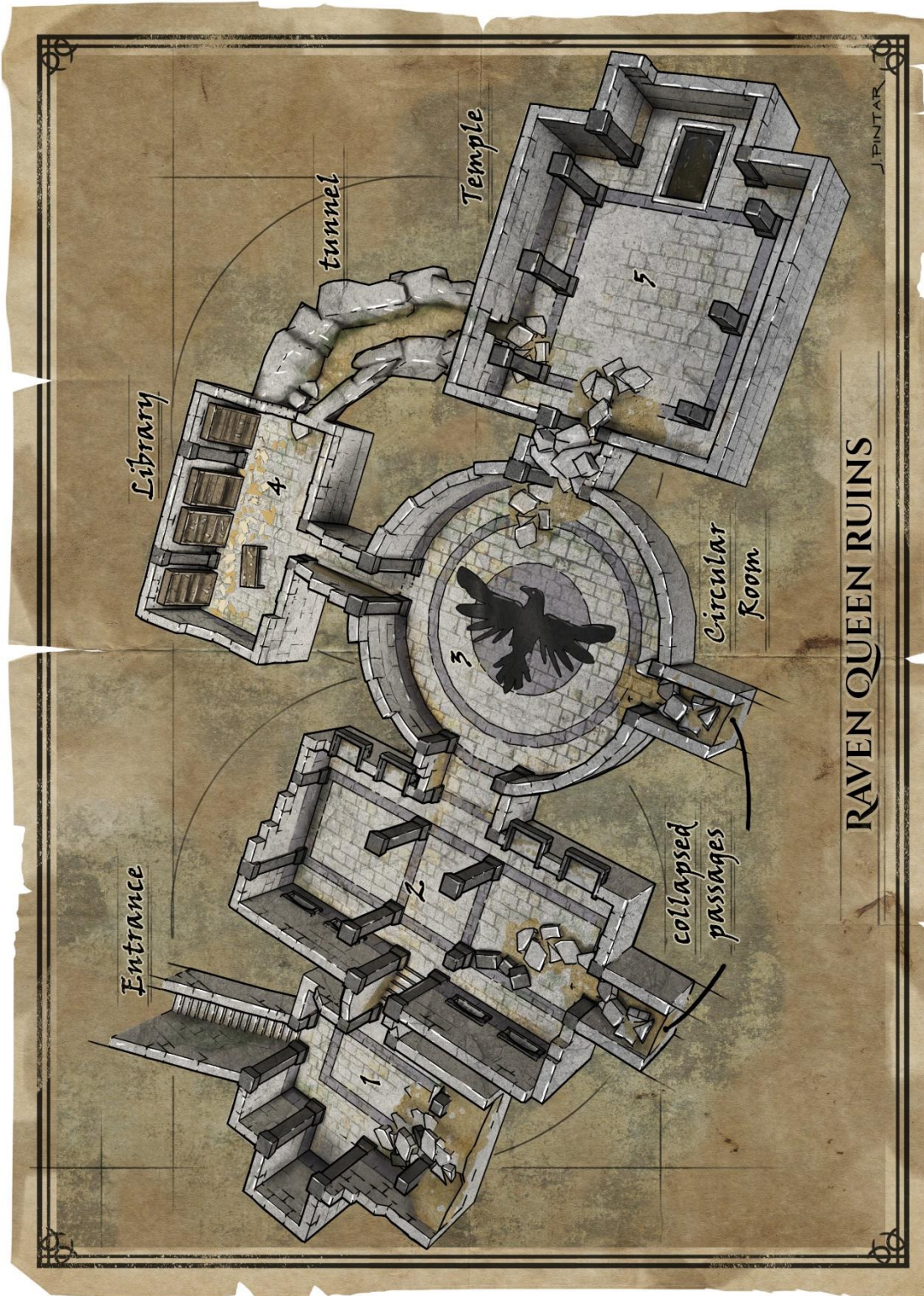
Foe	XP per Foe
Ogre	450
Green Hag (Mabel)	700
Cultist	25
Cult Fanatic	450
Berserker	450

## Map: Mabel's Cave





# Map: Raven Queen Ruins



# Appendix: Monster/NPC Statistics

## Berserker

*Medium humanoid (any race), any chaotic alignment*

**Armor Class** 13 (hide armor)

**Hit Points** 67 (9d8 + 27)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Reckless.** At the start of its turn, the berserker can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls during that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

## Actions

**Greataxe.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12 + 3) slashing damage.

**Hailing** from uncivilized lands, unpredictable berserkers come together in war parties and seek conflict wherever they can find it.

## Cultist

*Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment*

**Armor Class** 12 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 9 (2d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Deception +2, Religion +2

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

**Dark Devotion.** The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

## Actions

**Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

**Cultists** swear allegiance to dark powers such as elemental princes, demon lords, or archdevils. Most conceal their loyalties to avoid being ostracized, imprisoned, or executed for their beliefs. Unlike evil acolytes, cultists often show signs of insanity in their beliefs and practices.

## Cult Fanatic

*Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment*

**Armor Class** 13 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 33 (6d8+6)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

**Skills** Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Dark Devotion.** The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

**Spellcasting.** The fanatic is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spell casting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). The fanatic has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*  
 1st level (4 slots): *command, inflict wounds, shield of faith*  
 2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, spiritual weapon*

## Actions

**Multiattack.** The fanatic makes two melee attacks.

**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

**Fanatics** are often part of a cult's leadership, using their charisma and dogma to influence and prey on those of weak will. Most are interested in personal power above all else.

## Mabel Moonfall

*Medium fey, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 82 (11d8 + 33)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

**Skills** Arcana +3, Deception +4, Perception +4, Stealth +3

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Sylvan

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Amphibious.** The hag can breathe air and water.



**Innate Spellcasting.** The hag's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights, minor illusion, vicious mockery*

**Mimicry.** The hag can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check.

## Actions

**Claws.** Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

**Illusory Appearance.** The hag covers herself and anything she is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes her look like another creature of her general size and humanoid shape. The illusion ends if the hag takes a bonus action to end it or if she dies. The changes wrought by this effect fail to hold up to physical inspection. For example, the hag could appear to have smooth skin, but someone touching her would feel her rough flesh. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern that the hag is disguised.

**Invisible Passage.** The hag magically turns invisible until she attacks or casts a spell, or until her concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). While invisible, she leaves no physical evidence of her passage, so she can be tracked only by magic. Any equipment she wears or carries is invisible with her.

## Ogre

*Large giant, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 11 (hide armor)

**Hit Points** 59 (7d10 + 21)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** Common, Giant

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

## Actions

**Greatclub.** Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

**Javelin.** Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

## Valravn, Alexis-Wake

*Medium humanoid (half-elf), neutral*

**Armor Class** 17 (splint)

**Hit Points** 58 (9d8 + 18)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

**Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +2

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Common, Elvish

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Fey Ancestry:** The Valravn has advantage on Saving Throws against being Charmed, and magic can't put the Valravn to sleep.

**Brave.** The Valravn has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

## Actions

**Multiattack.** The Valravn makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

**Shortsword.** Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

**Longbow.** Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

## Raven, Wake

*Tiny beast, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 3 (1d4 - 1)

**Speed** 10 ft., fly 50ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

**Skills** Perception +3

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** Understands Common, but can't speak it

**Challenge** 0 (10 XP)

**Mimicry.** The raven can mimic simple sounds it has heard, such as a person whispering, a baby crying, or an animal chittering. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check.

## Actions

**Beak.** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 1 piercing damage.