

I've been planning my *Ashford Valley* Labyrinth Lord Chat game for nearly 10 issues and here's the latest installment of the *Deep Forest Road* adventures.

ROADS AND RUMORS

Several rumors of heavily-armed orcs roaming the *Deep Forest Road* have come to *Ashford*. In fact, a relative of a friend gives the PCs some very good information. Too bad it's not the truth.

WHAT THE DWARF SAW

Minder, a dwarf tinker (and cousin to Linder from issue #14), approaches the PCs and tells them a tale. He was wandering in the forest near the *Deep Forest Road* and came across some mounted bandits attacking a merchant wagon. As he watched, unable to assist (he's no coward but he's just one dwarf, after all), a group of orcs came out of the forest, dressed in full plate armor ("Looked old fashioned, it did," he says). They attacked the bandits and killed several. They captured three of the brigands and about a half-dozen horses.

Then the strangest thing happened. Ignoring the merchant and his terrified servants, three of the orcs took off their helmets and the other orcs killed them. "Decapitated each one of the three," Minder tells the PCs, "without even a word!" The merchant, fearing more for his life than with the bandits, abandoned the wagon and ran with his servants down the road, but the orcs weren't concerned. They piled the bodies and the brigand prisoners into the wagon, took the horses and rode off into the woods. Minder figured that this was a dangerous group of orcs and has told this tale several times but no one is interested. They figure if the orcs kill each other, then the better off everyone will be.

THE WHOLE TRUTH

The truth of the matter is more complex. Several hundred years ago, six knights of the Realm, from an order known as the Poor Knights of Acre, retired to the *Ashford Valley*. In fact, the current lord, Sir Raphel, is a descendant from one of them (Sir Gaheris). As they entered the valley, they met a druid who asked for them to protect the valley and its people, even onto death and beyond. The knights, loyal and honorable all, agreed, and so the druid cast a mighty spell so that after the knights died, their spirits would return to help the valley in its time of greatest need. The knights each died and were buried under the same mound in the *Deep Forest*. A few weeks ago, a tribe of orcs found the burial mound and sacked it. When the orc chieftain touched one of the knight's plate armor, he was possessed by the spirit of the knight. It was a short bit for the other five knights to possess five of the strongest orcs and together, they slaughtered the remaining orcs, even going so far as wiping out the whole tribe.

What Minder really witnessed was the knights aiding the merchant and using the opportunity to "upgrade" to human bodies. After Minder left the scene, the knights forced the bandits into

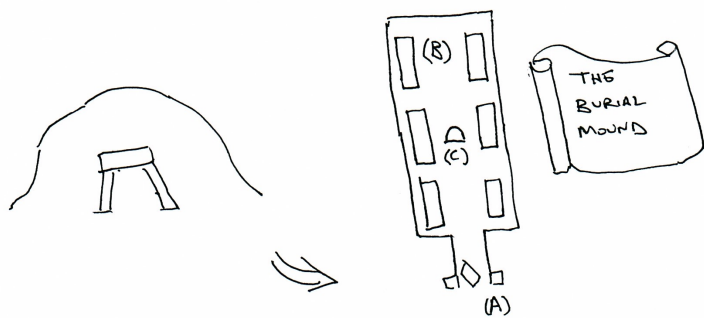
the blood-stained armor and they became possessed. The spirit of the knight is “stored” in the armor, at least at first. After a week in a new body, the old spirit is “erased” and the knight is “reborn.” But in the event the knight’s possessed body dies, the spirit returns to the armor again.

Now, the purpose of this adventure is not to fight the knights. If the PCs do, then they’ll probably all get killed. However, on the assumption that the PCs are Lawful (or at least Neutral with better tendencies) the knights will try to capture them instead of killing them, however, as they can tell spiritually if someone is Lawful or not. The real reason I’ve included these powerhouses is that I’ve foreshadowed in previous issues that forces are at work to do something *VERY BAD* to the valley. The knights are a little bit early to help out the valley dwellers, so hopefully, the mystery can be solved that allows the PCs to be allies, if not firm friends, with the knights.

The six knights are Sir Caradoc, Sir Gaheris, Sir Griflet, Sir Ector, Sir Caius, and Sir Owain. They have three hell hounds (originally owned by the orcs) that are possessed by the spirits of three loyal dogs (bound within the jeweled collars of the beasts).

Knights (3 Normal Men, 3 orcs); No. Encountered: 1d4+2; Alignment: Lawful; Armor Class: 2 (plate & shield); Hit Dice: 3d8, Hit Points: 24 each; Attacks: longsword (1d8), lance (1d6); Save: F2; morale: 12.

Hell Hounds; No. Encountered: 1d3; Alignment: Lawful; Armor Class: 4; Hit Dice: 3d8, Hit Points: 16; Attacks: bite (1d6, 70% of time) or fire breath (3d6, 30% of time); Save: F3; morale: 12; Special ability: detect invisible 75%.



THE BURIAL MOUND

Location A: The entryway. The remains of a thick stone door, smashed by the invading orcs, lies here. The footing is treacherous (-1 to attacks and -1 to AC as a result for all who fight here except for the knights, who fight here with no penalty).

Location B: The burial chamber. There are six sarcophagi here, each with the name and deeds of the knight engraved upon it.

Location C: The Siege Perilous. Whomever sits in this chair must be of the purest heart or he will be struck dead. If one of the PCs has shown exemplary behavior towards the knights, they will offer this chair for him to sit in. If he passes the test, they will knight him and be staunch allies from that point onward.

