

THE DREAD WYRM EGG HUNT

An introductory adventure for Talisman Adventures RPG

by James Fallows

(with special thanks to the many players who have endured versions of this Quest, continually challenging me with new and unexpected approaches to egg theft)



OUTLINE OF THE ADVENTURE:

This scenario has been designed to throw a new group of players playing first level heroes straight into a quest playable in a single 3-4 hour session, though there is scope to make it a much longer experience if desired.

The heroes are hunting for a Wyvern's egg. Initially, they only know that it is "The Dread Wurm's Egg" that they seek, and should not be discouraged from imagining that the Wurm in question is the most terrible of dragons, or indeed a lowly earth worm...

They start out approaching Perlew Crag, a lonely peak some distance from The City, where a Wyvern

has its nest at the peak, and a large band of Goblins have their den at the base.

En route, the players will have an opportunity to learn that the Goblins have been in the habit of stealing the Wurm's eggs, and will likely face the decision to risk stealing from the Wurm themselves, or the perhaps safer option of stealing from the Goblins.

There will be plenty of opportunities for the heroes to show off their combat skills, but the final challenges (whether stealing from the Wurm itself or the Goblins) are such that some kind of scheme, trickery or mad-cap dash will be required, and that simply charging in swinging swords and slinging spells could have a fatal outcome.

As an Epilogue, the heroes may face off (or simply claim their reward) from the Sorcerer who employed/ensorcelled them.

1. INTRODUCTION

Never trust a Sorcerer. Everyone knows that. They are devious and crafty, and usually quite Evil. But Melkor, well, an exception must be made for Dear Old Melkor.

Yes, he has mastered magics and incantations which inspire wonder and dread. And yes, the dark hooded cloak and glowing red eyes can be off-putting. But Melkor has a certain... charm you suppose. Why, ever since you first wandered into his Emporium, idly browsing his wares, wondering at the many strange artifacts, drowsily listening to the tinkle of silvery bells and breathing the gentle waft of a peculiar fragrance... And then, hm, something you can't quite remember. But everyone likes Melkor.

"I want you to do me a favour," he said, and how could you possibly refuse? Nothing is too much trouble if it's for your good friend Melkor.

"Bring me the Egg of the Dread Wurm," Melkor said. "You will find it at Perlew Crag."

Good Old Melkor: if he wants an Egg, you'll bring him an Egg. As for the Dread Wurm – pfft! You fear it not.

The next thing you know, you find yourself tramping across a blasted heath, miles from the City, in the company of quite the oddest collection of misfits to ever make your acquaintance. Find the Egg, bring it back to Melkor, and after that you'll doubtless share an ale together at the Six Fates Inn... which is where you were headed just before

you stepped into Melkor's Emporium, actually. Hm, strange.

You banish all thoughts of the comforts of the Six Fates, and questions about exactly how you ended up on this quest: these aren't important now, as you tramp across the desolate moorland. The sun hangs low in the sky, turning the ragged clouds a cold, golden red. Ahead is a dark, jagged peak: Perlew Crag. If you press on, you are certain you can reach it by nightfall.

The adventurers have each been placed under an enchantment by Melkor, the Sorcerer who runs the Emporium in The City. The effect of the enchantment is to compel them to do Melkor's bidding, and to cause them to view this as a request that they *want* to fulfil. Given what adventurers are like, you may or may not need to explain this to players, though like as not they will be cheerful to proceed on their quest.

Some players may decide at some point in the quest that they want to resist Melkor's enchantment. For example, later in the adventure, perhaps after a confrontation with the Goblins or the Wyrms. If it suits the story, you might want to allow this, perhaps by the heroes rolling some kind of Test, but it's best not to allow it too close to the start of the adventure. It should be enough for players to have it explained that they are compelled to travel to the crag and somehow acquire the Wyrms' egg.

Different players are likely to take a different approach, but as GM you might want to encourage the players to ask each other these questions and have a bit of fun with the situation, before concluding that whatever has led them here, they now need to head to the crag and Find The Egg.

2. APPROACHING PERLEW CRAG

After the heroes have introduced themselves to each other (if they are so inclined), and resigned themselves to proceed on their quest, they will initially face the decision whether to press on and reach the Crag at the earliest opportunity, or to make camp and continue in the daylight hours.

The players should be allowed to decide this freely, though you ought to let them know that they have a sense of urgency to fulfil Melkor's favour at the earliest opportunity.

In game terms, players will most likely be deciding whether to *Camp*, or if heading straight for the Crag, which of their number will take the roles of *Guide*, *Watcher*, and possibly *Hunter*, and which might *Assist* in these responsibilities. If this is so much gobbledegook to you, read the Exploration rules on pages 212-215.

As the Crag is in plain sight, the party shouldn't become hopelessly lost even after a failed Guide Test, but rather follow poor trails and go over difficult ground which will mean that would not be able to reach the Crag before nightfall. If you want to be time-specific, the distance will take them about 6 hours to cover rather than 3.

The Watcher Test will determine whether the heroes encounter Goblins (day time) or Wolves (night time), and whether those encounters are ambushes, or whether the heroes have an opportunity to avoid (or turn the tables).

You may well wish to play the Goblin Ambush as an encounter regardless of the outcome of any test, and for a team of players new to the game you might prefer to dispense with following Exploration rules and simply run the encounters of your choice.

The encounters can be used in accordance with the Guide Test outcomes as per p.213 of the Game Master's Guide, or again just included regardless of any test at the GM's discretion.

Finally, if your players are of the deeply wilful sort and absolutely insist on not following out Melkor's instructions, you can always have them teleported right back to the Sorcerer and face his wrath there and then (see 7. Epilogue below for details...)

2a The Prospector's Camp (Suggested as a Day time Interesting Location following a Great Success or rolling [6] on the Kismet die on a Guide test):

You see a small plume of smoke rising from a camp fire. Approaching cautiously, you see an old woman roasting a rodent on a stick, while a mule sits and watches her sceptically. The woman wears stout leather boots, a much-patched coat, and a broken down hat. The mule is burdened with bundles and blankets, ropes, picks and axes. The woman looks up, removes a briar pipe from her mouth and the charred rodent from above the flames, and eyes you appraisingly, before turning her head to one side and spitting.

The old woman is a **Prospector** (see p. 158 for details), heading for the City to trade some uncut gemstones, and if she takes to the heroes can give them some helpful information about the lie of the land and the caves and mining prospects here about. This will give them a benefit at your discretion of +2 or +4 on Lore, Notice and similar tests where the knowledge might be deemed to apply. She is familiar with the hills hereabouts, but keeps clear of Perlew Crag itself – she knows there are many troublesome goblin folk thereabouts, and that a terrible wyrm nests on the peak. She may offer the advice that travel in daylight hours thereabouts is particularly perilous, as the Wyrms hunt from on high, and the wise traveller will either avoid or make serious efforts not to be seen. If asked about the Egg she will shrug and spit (again) “Ain’t none of my knowin’, but wyrms lay eggs now, don’t they? Hehe – that’d make a fine scramble, yessir!”

2b The Tormented Soul (Suggested as a Night Hazard as a result of a Standard Success or Failure at a Guide Test):

The Moon lights the land almost as bright as day. Your watch is disturbed by an unearthly howling, and you witness a peculiar scene: the spectral figure of a headless man staggers from one side to another, arms waving in the air, as two laughing Hobgoblin’s throw the tormented soul’s head from one to the other.

If the heroes intervene and defeat or chase off the **Hobgoblins** (Threat 13, Armour 6, Life 15, Damage 1d6+5, Special: **Formidable Strength and Susceptible to Magic** – see p. 186 for full description), the ghost will be extremely grateful and gladly become a Spirit follower (see p. 172). If the party significantly outnumber them, you might want to bolster the Hobgoblins with a couple of wolves – or you may be happy to simply have the Hobgoblins chased-off by the heroes, without even putting up a fight (Not every creature fights to certain death at the first opportunity...). This would be a good encounter to throw in for a small group of heroes who don’t already have a Follower who possesses a Scouting ability. A poor encounter for players who are going to be pedantic about whether a Spirit’s head could be kicked like a football by a Hobgoblin, especially given their weakness to magic.

2c Wolf Pack! (Night time, as result of a Camping or Watcher):

There is a distant howl which you cannot mistake – wolves, without a doubt. You shiver and pull your cloak tight, glad that the howling is distant... And then it is answered, by a most blood-curdling cry that splits the air, scant metres from where you stand! As though freshly lit, a half dozen yellow, unblinking eyes appear in the darkness, fixed on you.

The party (camped or marching) are attacked by 3 **Wolves** (Threat 13, Armour 3, Life 12, Damage 1d6+3, Special: **Summon Wolf Pack, Pack Fight, Sprint**, see p. 183 for full details). Remember the Summon Wolf Pack ability means they can call up 1d6 more Wolves if you have a Dark Fate to spend. The Wolves are fierce, but will not fight to the death if things are going against them and reinforcements are not enough, but instead will flee back in the darkness, perhaps to attack again.

If the Watcher Test is successful, the heroes should hear the howling of wolves, and a successful Lore (Wits) or Survival (Wits/Insight) Test will enable them to best avoid or prepare to attack the beasts. Any attempt to Ambush the wolves without using extreme guile should not be successful.

2d Glimpse of the Wurm (Day or Night, Great success or better on a Watcher test):

You hear a terrible cry from the direction of Perlew Crag, a sound which chills your blood. Can it be the Dread Wurm?

An Extraordinary Success on the Watcher, or an appropriate Lore or Survival check (Difficulty 18) might identify this as a Wyvern’s call. You could let the heroes know (if you deem their character might have learned this and that the information is pertinent to the players’ style of play) that although a Wyvern might be the least of the Wyrms, it is still a fearsome creature – though you may prefer to keep the players in suspense about exactly what kind of enemy the Wurm is for the time being. If the cry is heard during the day, a hero might catch a glimpse of the Wurm flying around the peak of Perlew Crag (or if at night, see *something* flit in front of the moon).

As a later encounter, or if a greater sense of urgency is required, you might want to have the Wurm fly over head – feasibly even to attack the heroes or snatch away a Follower, if it suits the story, and particularly if they have come up with some novel scenario-breaking approach that needs to be checked.

See Part 5 below for more details of the Wyrms. This should not generally be considered an opportunity for the heroes to ambush.

2e Goblin Ambush (Day time, following failed Watcher test (as an Ambush) – or following a successful Watcher Test as an opportunity for the heroes to bushwhack the bushwhackers)

Your way passes through a narrow point between a rock-strewn shoulder of land. Suddenly, a black arrow whistles through the air, and you hear the high, triumphant crowing of Goblins, who come swarming over the rocks.

The party are ambushed by two more **Goblins** (**Threat 12, Armour 3, Life 12, Damage 1d3+3, Special: Small & Sneaky, Subtle Fingers, see p. 186 for more details**) than the number of players. At least one will stay up behind the rocks firing arrows. The Goblins will not wish to fight to the death, but rather to inflict some harm, and if possible to filch some small items (using their Kismet-triggered *Subtle Fingers* special ability), and escape with their lives. They are from the Perlew Crag Clan, and know all about Gantosh's tyranny and fondness for Scrambled Wyrms' Egg – one has even previously been involved in a daring Egg Raid (they are the sole survivor of that expedition...). If taken prisoner, or otherwise somehow befuddled, befriended or beguiled, this information might be forthcoming. They will not voluntarily give information about their home, but you should reward deviousness from the players by giving some information. Of course, if the heroes pursue any fleeing Goblins, they might follow them all the way back to Perlew Crag, and to their cave – you can probably skip the encounter with Grurt (see 3 below) if that happens – or maybe one of the fleeing Goblins will slip crossing the bridge and take a similar role.

3. A GOBLIN IN PERIL

Once the heroes get closer to the Crag, they will find a rough but clear track to follow, leading straight to the dark, towering rock.

The land rises, and is strewn with large boulders, which the path weaves between, climbing towards the peak. After half an hour of strenuous climbing, your way is crossed by a deep, rocky ravine. The path crosses the chasm on a narrow, arched bridge that appears to be a natural formation, where two long shafts of stone have fallen to settle against each other above the yawning deep. Beyond the chasm, a

track leads up the crag to the left, and down into the chasm to the right.

Suddenly, the air is broken by a cry of alarm! You see that a goblin is dangling above the chasm from the middle of the bridge, just barely holding on with the fingers of one hand, arm stretched to a socket-popping extreme. "Help!" it cries. Under the other arm it clutches some kind of bundle tightly, apparently unwilling to drop whatever it contains, even though death is now but a slipped-grasp away.

The unfortunate goblin is Grurt, a peaceable chap as goblins go, who was pushed off the bridge by the much nastier goblins of the Perlew Crag Clan.

The players will probably suspect that the precious bundle might be an egg, and will be inclined to either rescue the goblin, or possible capture or otherwise torment or aid it. Pulling the goblin up from the bridge shouldn't be a difficult task – you can make it a task that requires a Test roll (particularly if the players describe an elaborate scheme to effect the rescue) – or you can simply agree that yes, the Troll can confidently grab the Goblin and haul him up.

If the players have already been ambushed by goblins, they should note that this goblin wasn't one of the ones that attacked them. The bundle in fact contains a giant, rubber-leaved Jabbersnatch Cabbage which the goblin Grurt hopes to feed his family with (Tiny Yuggo is very sick and the cabbage broth will surely revive him).

Grurt is amiable, and will be grateful for being rescued if the players are anything less than openly hostile to him, though would be distressed if his parcel is taken – indeed, he will protect it with his life if necessary. If the players want to know what it is, he will say it is a great treasure – but clarify that he needs it to save Tiny Yuggo's life. Grurt and Tiny Yuggo live in a humble little hut a short distance away from Perlew Crag.

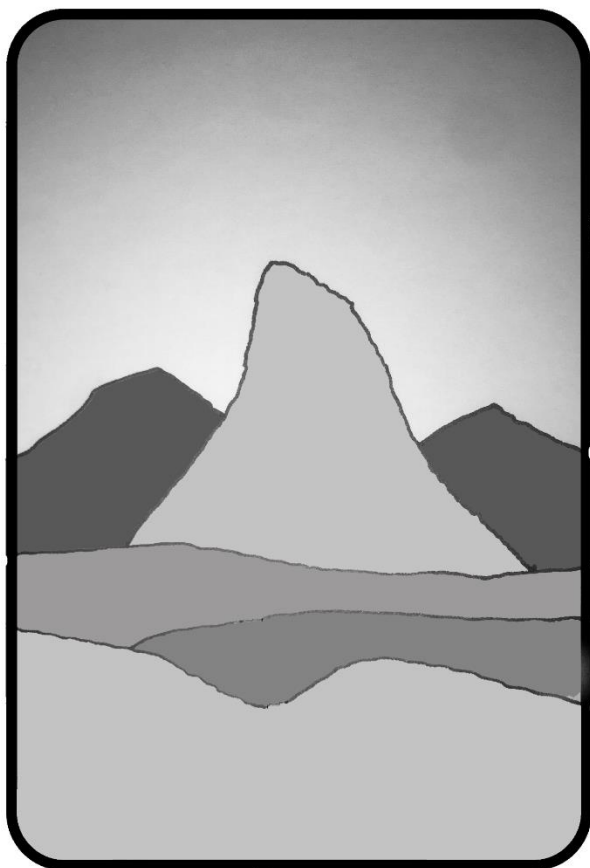
Grurt knows of the Wyrms – and knows that wicked goblins steal its eggs, making the Wyrms so angry. Grurt has nothing to do with those bad goblins, but does know that they live in a nearby cave down in the Chasm, that there are very many of them, and that a stinking ogre rules the clan.

The outcome of this encounter is expected to be that the heroes will now be considering whether to climb

the Crag and face the peril of the Wyrms (see 4 below), or descend into the Chasm (see 6) and seek out a ready-stolen-egg from the goblins. As either route could lead to success for the heroes (or a gruesome death...), the best thing to do at this stage is encourage the players in the development of any scheme or plan that might be beginning to take hold.

Kind-hearted heroes may wish to help Grurt, and might have the means to heal Tiny Yuggo, which would certainly win his gratitude. Or less moral types might threaten Tiny Yuggo in order to enforce assistance. It's possible Grurt could end up guiding the heroes to the goblin cave, or depending on circumstances, even guiding them to the Wyrms' nest.

Crossing the narrow stone bridge should not generally require a Test – unless the players are attempting some risky action at the time (such as fleeing from an angry Wyvern while clutching an Egg, for example). If there is any kind of risky activity on the bridge, a good outcome for a failed test or even a standard success is to have some unfortunate Follower plummet to their death - we don't want to finish off the heroes in this manner, but there has to be *some* degree of consequence to their folly.



4. CLIMBING PERLEW CRAG

From a distance, Perlew Crag is impressive and sheer. On its flanks, it is no less foreboding – indeed, it towers over you blackly, making you feel quite dizzy as you lift your head to spy out some route. There seems to be a route – winding, precipitous, sometimes with the rock cut almost in steps, other times smooth and steeply angled. Already, from where you are standing, you risk breaking bones if you slip. Further up, a stumble could result in plummeting to your death.

In game terms, climbing Perlew Crag can be effected using a modified version of the Exploration roles (see p. 212 – 214). One hero should act as *Watcher* as usual, but the *Guide* is in this case a *Climb Leader*. They should use Climbing, Athletics or Survival as the basis of their Test. The Test is Difficulty 16, and use of a rope, pitons or other climbing gear will give a modifier of between +2 to +4 to the roll depending on how well equipped the party is, or how creative their description of the care they take. You *could* apply a penalty for bringing along such encumbrances as a horse, but an alternative is just to make sure that such things are the first casualty of any risky part of the climb... Sprites and other flying beings need not fear falling, but might be carried away or dashed into rocks by a blast of wind.

Possible Hazards, Interesting Locations and Enemies are listed. A failed Climb Leader Test could, for example, result in the Hazard "Rockslide!", and a Great Success might be enough to discover the Interesting Location "Remains of Thief". The length of time spent on the climb may affect time of day (though if they have headed straight to the Crag and started the climb straight away it is likely to be night time regardless), and a longer climb should certainly mean that the "Ill Wind" Hazard is faced.

The Mountain Goat and Harpies can each be encountered either during the day or the night – time of day merely affects whether there should be penalties from poor vision or bonuses to attempts to sneak, and the likelihood of Surprise whether by the heroes or the Enemy. Generally, heroes' movement will be restricted on the climb, and there should be plenty of opportunities for a Follower to go plummeting to their demise as the result of a failure or standard success. A modifier of +2/-2 should be enough to account for lighting and footing, cumulative for each condition that applies.

Again, feel free to ignore the Exploration Test mechanism, and just use such encounters on the climb that you feel will best entertain and appropriately challenge the heroes. If, for the sake of simplicity, you didn't use the Exploration rules, you might want to take the opportunity to bring them in (in this modified form) now, assuming that everyone now has a firmer grasp of the rules.

Of course, players might just decide to head up the mountain regardless of any peril with no particular outcome in mind. In this case, you could require each of them to make a Difficulty 14 test (utilising Athletics or Survival if they have those skills) to pass a challenging part of the way. Failures or standard successes could result in a hero falling but luckily landing on a ledge not too far below (1d6 or 2d6 damage), or more entertainingly narrowly avoiding a fall while a hapless Follower plummets to their demise.

Regardless of success or failure in any test, you should include at least one encounter on the climb (Harpies are fun). Seeing the silhouette of The Wyrms could happen as the result of a test success, but also can be thrown in at an appropriate time for flavour.

4a Mountain Goat (Daytime, as a Hazard after Failure or Standard Success on Climb Leader Test, or following outcome of a Watcher test:

The way is steep and perilous. Sometimes you are only able to proceed by clinging to the rock, and your stomach lurches when you catch a glimpse of a dislodged stone tumbling down, down, down... With untold relief, you reach a point where the way widens slightly, and you are able to release the rock and stand, though your knees still shake and you avoid taking in the view. You hear a crunch, and see that ahead, barring your path, a splendidly-horned mountain goat is calmly munching from a tuft of hardy grass, regarding you with a firm, inscrutable gaze.

The bad-tempered **Mountain Goat (Threat 13, Armour 3, Life 14, Damage 1d6+4, Special: Knock-down Charge, Sure Footing, see p.180 for full details)** will attempt to buffet a hero (or Follower...) off the mountainside. You could resolve this situation as a combat, but it may well be more entertaining if the players try to befriend or otherwise distract or shoo the goat. The goat might make a useful Follower, helping the heroes to climb (or descend) more safely.

4b Glimpse of the Wyrms (Following a Watcher test, or simply included for colour and fore-shadowing):

Some instinct causes you to look up – and you freeze in alarm! A winged silhouette circles above, then is hidden as it wheels and passes to the other side of the peak. You can't be certain, but it surely was much larger than any eagle or bird.

As with the earlier glimpse of the Wyrms, this is an opportunity for a hero to identify that the beast in question is a Wyvern (see 2d above). Optionally, you can make this a much closer brush with the Wyrms, or even an outright attack. Some heroes might prefer to deliberately grab the Wyrms's attention, and face it head on in combat – they ought to face a significant penalty due to fighting on the side of a cliff, though there may also be ways in which they deviously put this to their advantage. See details of the Wyrms in Part 5 below.

For a failed Watcher Test, the encounter could result in a hero needing to make a test at Difficulty 14 (Agility or Survival) to avoid being startled and losing their grip. 1d6 damage might result from a fall to a ledge below, or perhaps they suffer a temporary -2 to rolls due to frayed nerves.

4c Remains of Thief (Extraordinary Success, or Great Success and [6] on Kismet Die on Guide test):

You notice something tangled in the branches of a tough little tree, just below the path and above the precipitous fall of the mountainside. Getting a bit closer, you can see it is the rusted remains of a suit of armour, containing the bleached bones of some hapless adventurer long-since deceased.

The heroes should be able to recover the body without tumbling to their own demise, though a fail will result in the armour and bones tumbling to inaccessible depths, while they are left with nothing but a bony foot. If they pull the armour up, they will find rust and scraps of leather, and an amethyst set in a fine gold pendant.

This is an *amulet of bird speech*. It should require a 15 on a Lore test to identify (Standard success merely identifying that it is a magical amulet which does not appear to be baneful - Great success needed to identify as an *amulet of bird speech*, extraordinary success will also value it at 100 gold) - you may wish to allow a character who wears it to gradually figure out its use (hearing a vulture commenting to another on how fat he looks, for example). Birds, for the most part, are foolish and singularly fixated on eating,

avoiding being eaten, reproduction, and how fine their feathers are. Certainly, if a player tries to find out about The Egg from any birds, they will assume the heroes are after *their* egg. But you may wish to impart some useful information.

4d Rockslide! (After failing a Climb Leader Test):

Notice check at Difficulty 12 for all characters. Fail – struck by a rock, Success – able to dodge (Difficulty 14 Agility or Melee check), Great Success – able to step beneath the safety as an overhang (no further check), Extraordinary Success – able to pull another character to safety with them. GM can spend a Dark Fate to have a Follower carried away on a fail. A rock strike will do 2d6 crushing damage, with armour having no effect (although a helm or shield can be used for a save – will destroy if not magical).

4e Mountain Lion Attack! (Following Watcher test, or as a Hazard following failed Climb Leader Test):

A ferocious **Mountain Lion (Threat 14, Armour 3, Life 13, Damage 1d6+3, Special: Silent Stalker, Sprint p. 181)** leaps out at a character (unless spotted by the Watcher). As with the goat, this doesn't have to be resolved as a combat encounter – it can instead be a hazard requiring a Test, following which the lion nimbly sprints off on its way. It might also send a Follower plummeting to its doom...but you already figured that out by now. If to be treated as a combat encounter and you have Dark Fate to spare, use the Silent Stalker ability at the start of combat. Heroes should face a penalty of at least -2 to their rolls unless they can somehow mitigate fighting on a mountain-side, and you might wish to use the perils of falling for the outcome of failed/standard tests.

4f Chill Winds That Blow No Good (Climb Leader Test Failure, or simply an obstacle to face nearer the summit, particularly at night or after a long climb):

As you get higher, it gets colder, and as the path turns around the peak, you find yourself exposed to a bitter, howling wind.

Howling wind: Difficulty 14 Fortitude/survival check to avoid suffering a -2 penalty on checks until the character has a chance to warm up. A flying character should need to make an Agility Test (Difficulty 16) to avoid being blown away. They might get blown a long way off and separated from the party, unless their companions can think of a way to save them.

They could even be snatched by the Wyrm and deposited in its nest...

4g Harpies (Following Watcher Test):

You hear a sudden call of distress above, the desperate cry of some unfortunate climber?

"Mercy! Don't drop me!"

"Help, no, please! I can't stand heights - don't let me fall!"

"Gah! The claws, the claws!"

"Stop mocking me! No, foul beasts, no!"

"The Egg! I must retrieve the egg!"

Gradually, the players may notice that the voices are coming from above *and* around them. Then see the foul, flitting shapes of three hideous **Harpies (Threat 14, Armour 3, Life 16, Damage 1d6+4, Special: Voices of the Dead, Dive Bomb, Flight, see p. 190 for further details)**! They are mimicking the voices of previous victims, and once seen, the evil, mindless creatures will attack. They will repeat in mocking voices fresh phrases spoken by their latest victims too. Combat should involve some increased peril from the fact that the heroes are on a narrow trail up the side of a mountain. The Harpies won't fight to the death (not theirs, anyway...) and will fly away once things turn against them. Devious heroes might come up a plan to capture one and make use of it as some kind of flying mount. That'll be your call, GM.

5. THE WYVERN'S NEST

The view from the summit is eerie and awe-inspiring. You are above the clouds, which are lit silvery-grey by the bright full moon and shimmering stars, and are spread across the land like a torn, swirling blanket – here and there beneath the gaps is a small cluster of pinprick lights – some settlement or village – the rest submerged in blackness.

The peak is broken, with large boulders that provide some shelter from the wind. Between these boulders is a huge jumble of intertwined tree branches, from which a strong, foul odour carries: the Wyrm's nest, you are certain

If the heroes are trying to proceed stealthily, you ought to allow them an opportunity to approach the nest without being attacked by the Wyvern - but if they got here too easily, or proceed without caution,

or merely get a standard success on any attempt to proceed with a skill test, they will be attacked by the beast. Depending on circumstances, you may want them to be attacked by the Wyvern sooner on their climb, or indeed as they are making their way to or from the Crag:

The wind howls – and another howling shriek rises above it: Wings outstretched, a great flying lizard descends to attack! Clawing at you with two taloned feet, swinging its long spiked tail, and shrieking from its sharp-toothed maw.

Somebody may be able to identify (or already have identified) that this is a **Wyvern (Threat 15, Armour 12, Life 18, Damage 2d6+7, Special: Tail Barb, see p. 202 for full details)**. It is a fierce creature, but the degree of challenge will depend on the number of characters – a larger party ought to stand a strong chance of defeating it in combat – though even if strong in numbers it would be very likely that one or more heroes might be slain.

You should allow the players an opportunity to escape if they are out-matched – or possibly, the Wyvern will snatch one character and carry it to its nest. This would provide an opportunity (depending on how the players react) for a daring escape or rescue – encourage the players to describe their plan, and agree appropriate check or checks to be made to resolve. For example, a captured player might decide to try to sneak off after playing dead (resolved by a Stealth or Survival check), or a more elaborate scheme might involve somehow trying to win the Wyvern over (maybe deceiving it into treating the captured hero as a baby Wyvern?). Encourage creativity! But if the players are stuck on ideas, a basic rescue or escape should provide sufficient adventure.

If the players are successful in a stealthy approach, have them experience a close shave, and ensure that they are aware that at any moment blade-taloned death might descend on them from above!

There are three Eggs in the nest, immediately visible to any hero who climbs in. The eggs are large (about 1/2 metre high), yellow mottled with red. One might hatch a baby wyvern, either now or at a suitable moment. There are also the half eaten remains of various cattle, sheep, horses, goblins, and at least one hapless adventurer – it is a foul mess and searching it will require a strong stomach (no problem for a Ghoul, others must make a Difficulty 12 Fortitude check or be

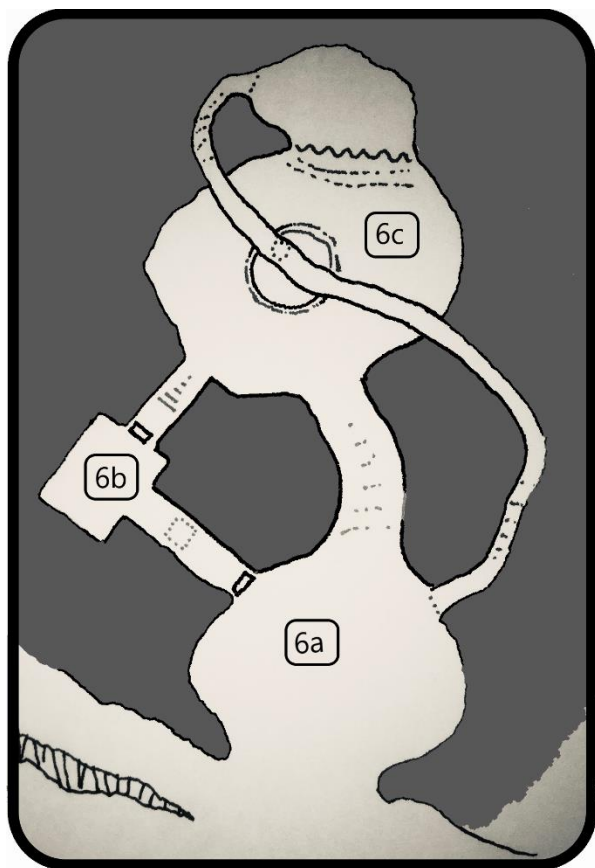
sick. Notice checks at 12 to each find 2d6 Gold worth in coinage and small jewels, Great Success finding an enchanted Rapier (will not break like a regular, and +2 to hit, +1 to damage), Extraordinary Success a Ring of Protection (p.235).

The Wyvern's eggs have a very particular magical quality – the eggs have an evolutionary resistance to magic, and nullify (2 times in 6) or even reflect (1 time in 6) spells cast against anyone holding it (or within 2m).

If they have reached the nest without being spotted by the Wyvern, ensure that the players have the sense that they might face death-from-above at any moment. If the Wyvern is slain, you might want to hint that perhaps it has a larger mate...

Having acquired an egg (or three), now what? If you're playing the adventure as a one-off, the adventure may end here (depending on how short you are on time), but especially if the Wyrms is still about somewhere, the heroes will now need to effect a dramatic escape. This may simply involve descending as quickly as they can, fending off or hiding from Wyvern attacks, or one of the perils from the climb not yet encountered - though if the heroes have a clever or outrageous descent planned (riding Mountain Goats or captured Harpies...) this should be strongly encouraged.

If the heroes escape or otherwise overcome the Wyvern (hopefully bearing an Egg), a scene-fade should be followed by a return to Melkor's Emporium in the City. For the fast ending, especially if anything risks being anti-climactic for the players, you can have them magically teleported by Melkor as soon as an egg is retrieved (or, for mean-spirited tournament play, even just any egg-seizing hero, leaving the rest to face peril on the peak of Perlew Crag). See the Epilogue (7) below.



6. BENEATH PERLEW CRAG

If the heroes descend into the Chasm to seek out the Goblin Lair, they will face a more traditional dungeon setting. You may wish to have an encounter with either a mountain lion or goblin scouts on the way back to or from the cave, depending on how easily the heroes have had things so far, but as they have perils enough to face in the caves, this could be a time to give them a break. Regardless of whether it is day or night, it will be dark down in the chasm, and the heroes will probably have to use some form of light or else stumble blindly...

The path descends into the Chasm, curls round beneath an enormous overhang, which funnels into a wide cave entrance. There are bones and refuse scattered around this entrance, and a sign outside the cave that reads "Keep Owt. Danger ov Deff. G'wan, git!" There is no guard.

A Standard Success in searching the refuse will identify the unsurprising information that a great number of goblins live hereabouts, Great Success will identify the spoor of ogres and cave trolls, Extraordinary Success will turn up a blue gemstone worth 20 gold (best not to say where it was found).

6a Entrance Cave:

Inside, the Cave is large, and largely empty. There is a fire burning low in the centre, and various belongings scattered around it. Opposite the entrance to the cave is a large opening which leads into a wide, natural tunnel, which descends on a moderate slope and curves slightly to the left so that the end cannot be seen. Firelight flickers and reflects from farther down this tunnel, and there is an echoing hubbub you cautiously identify as the sound of many goblins. To the left of the opening, a large wooden door with a brass ring in its centre is set into the cave wall.

The furnishings of this cave are two low stools, a pack of dog-eared, grease marked playing cards, two loaded dice, chicken bones, three tin mugs and an empty jug. The playing cards show suits with pictures of goblin Kings and Queens; there are four suits (Clubs, Spiked Clubs, Brains and Rats) but notably 5 Aces and a number of other cards missing - the aces are quite clearly marked on the back. These belongings have been left here casually, rather than abandoned at some emergency, and are an indication of just how lax and undisciplined these goblins are. There are no signs of any kind of struggle taking place here. The goblin guards have either been out on patrol and run into the heroes, or are just goofing off in the Main Cave.

If an earlier encounter resulted in goblins fleeing from the heroes, there should still be no one on guard: these goblins are slackers. This ought to allow even only half-cautious heroes a final opportunity for a stealthy approach. However, careless (or deliberate) actions from the heroes might still bring any number of goblins to investigate.

There are three exits from the cave. The main tunnel leads to the Goblin Central (6c). The door leads through to Gantosh the Ogre's quarters (6b). The third exit is low down and not immediately visible (and should only be found if the heroes carefully search). It leads through to a low tunnel which climbs over above Goblin Central, and also carries on over into the Cave Troll's lair.

6b Ogre's Lair: The door from the Entrance Cave is locked, the lock can be picked using the Tinker skill (Difficulty 12), there are no traps. It is difficult to break down though as it is pretty sturdy - Difficulty

16, failure or normal success will result in injury (or damage to any weapon used).

Beyond is a rough-hewn corridor. There are some mouldy heads mounted to the wall of the corridor - either warnings or gruesome trophies. They represent an eclectic mix of kindred - human, elf, dwarf, goblin.

Half way along the corridor, there is a Deadfall Pit Trap. The trap is disabled by pulling down on the head of a dwarf set in the wall just before the trap (and the head of an elf coming from the other direction), which will prevent the trap from springing. If this is not done, the paving stone covering the trap swings away once a hero steps onto it.

Deadfall Pit Trap: (see p 218-220 of the GM's Guide) **Concealment: 0, Threat 14, Damage: 2d6 Avoidance: Moderate** (pressing levers to disable or spotting and leaping over the covering swing-stone) **Notes:** The trap is 1.5m square at the top, and 5m deep.

At the bottom of the pit are some bones, a broken lyre (containing a gemstone worth 10 gold), and a surprisingly well-preserved old journal titled *My Adventures by Lem the Minstrel*: Largely an account of wooing various maidens, the journal does include some notes which will give a +2 to Guide checks in the locale of The Tavern at Innsview, and there are 3 Nature Spells in the form of Ballads: "The Winds of Lameroon" - Gust of Wind, "They Call Me Lusty Legs Lem" (Speed) and "Stop! In the Name of Love" (Immobility). These can be learned by a Nature Spell-caster or cast as scrolls, but the learning or scroll-casting process will involve singing the singularly annoying melodies. (For the curious: the bones are the bones of a goblin, who stole Lem's journal and lute; Lem met his end elsewhere.)

At the far end of the corridor is a similar door, unlocked this time. Listening at the door will not require a roll: the hero will hear the loud, brutish tones of Gantosh the Ogre berating a whimpering Goblin servant:

"Yer lazy stinkin' gerblins. Get out there and tell that chef she better get a move on scrambling that egg," "Oh yis, very lazy that chef is, she so lazy, not like I" "Worr! You is all such lazy swine. Anyone would fink you woz trying to get et by that Wyrms. Next time you better bring us more than one."

After opening the door:

The chamber beyond has a kind of rough luxury - the walls are hung with various furs, there's an iron stove in one corner, and a pile of furs in one corner presumably makes for a bed. A second door stands open, and dominating the room is a powerful, gruesome She-Ogre, wielding a hefty spiked club in one hand, and shaking a cringing goblin in the other.

The heroes have found the ruler of this rabble: Gantosh, an ill-tempered **Ogre (Threat 15, Armour 6, Life 24, Damage 2d6+6, Special: Unstoppable Fury, Discipline in the Ranks, see p.187-188 for full details).**

It is worth being aware that an Ogre together with a cavern full of goblins and an unenthusiastic Cave Troll on call could present a significantly greater threat in combat to the heroes than the Wyvern would. Be sure to encourage any guile or strategy the players concoct to face this situation!

If the players fast talk the Ogre, or defeat her and spare her life, they may be able to use her as a hostage to effect an egg exchange with the goblins. Another approach might involve working on exploiting resentment from the Goblins towards their bullying overlord.

If the heroes attack Gantosh (and if the GM has a Dark Fate to spend) she will hurl the cringing goblin servant to one side and raise the alarm:

She places two meaty fingers between her lips, and lets out a loud, piercing whistle.

1d6 goblins will arrive in 1d3 rounds, though the open door which leads to Goblin Central (this of course assuming that the heroes haven't somehow already eliminated or otherwise neutralized the goblins).

Beneath the fur bed rugs (searching may require a check against throwing up) are various ogrimish treasures amounting to 120 gold worth of coins, gemstones and trinkets.

6c Goblin Central:

You find a large cavern, part natural it seems, with stalactites and stalagmites, and part hewn from the rock. Several torches burn in brackets around the chamber, causing shadows to move across its walls, and the whole place echoes with the hubbub of dozens of unruly goblins. In the

centre of the cavern, surrounded by the throng, one particularly fat goblin in a dirty white cotton apron and hat clouts a smaller goblin in the back of the head with a spatula, while the unfortunate wretch holds an oversized iron pan over a cooking fire. Next to both, prominent on a wooden rack, is a huge yellow and red mottled egg.

There could be as many as 30 - 50 Goblins – less as many as reinforced the Ogre. The actual number is not particularly important – it should be enough to clearly discourage the players from simply charging in and attacking. In a side chamber, not immediately noticeable, there is a sleeping **Cave Troll (Threat 16, Armour 9, Life 25, 2 Attacks, Damage 2d6+8, Special: Sundering Blow, Bone Hardened Skin)**. If the goblins are desperate they (or a surviving ogre) may wake the troll who will lazily join them.

The Goblins will only be disturbed from their various squabbles if the players mount an open assault on them, or if the alarm has otherwise been fully raised (even if the ogre has summoned some, you should allow some time for the whole lot of the goblins to be made aware that anything is going on).

This means that the heroes should have an opportunity to come up with an ingenious (or indeed hare-brained) plan to snatch the egg. Here you should definitely allow players time if they need it to propose and execute such a plan, giving scope to inventive use of skills, abilities, and general inspiration. Such planning may well naturally arise if the heroes have sneaked into the caves, or used a Pixie or other Follower to scout out the situation.

Even a full-on assault might succeed if that is the players' preferred approach, though you should definitely make this an opportunity to fight only as many goblins as necessary to reach the egg, after which the heroes would need to flee before being overwhelmed. Not all the Goblins will be able to reach and attack the heroes immediately, but there are clearly enough for reinforcements regardless of how many get killed, so it is very unlikely to be a matter of killing all the Goblins, the Ogre and Cave Troll – at least not in a straight fight: some deviously murderous plan somehow involving poison gas, flood or fire might achieve success by overkill. Setting the Ogre, Goblins and Cave Troll against each other would also be a clever move.

The Wyvern's Eggs have a very particular magical quality – the Eggs have an evolutionary resistance to magic, and nullify (4 times in 6) or even reflect (1 time in 6) spells cast against anyone holding it (or within 2m). This may well interfere with any plan involving spell-casting! If you are feeling generous, rather than nullifying the spell, the effect may be an unanticipated outcome from the spell casting (for example, finding themselves transported to the peak of the Crag after casting Blink...)

If necessary, directly encourage the players to outline a plan to get the egg, explaining that you will use the basis of their plan as a test (or likely series of a couple of tests) to determine success. You can ask them what they think is likely to happen if they fail, or merely succeed (without Great Success). You as the GM have the absolute final word on how the outcome is resolved, but your players may well surprise you with what they suggest. They may have options depending on if they have defeated (or captured) the Ogre, or taken Goblin prisoners and gotten inside information, or if they have found the secret way into the top of the cavern (the entrance is directly above the Egg).

It is possible some players may be absolutely stuck or choose a plan which you think is not really feasible. You can help out with suggestions, perhaps from the opinion of a lowly Servant Follower, or a Goblin prisoner.

Once the heroes have the Egg, they will then need to escape. As outlined in part 5, if you are pressed for time, you may want to have the heroes teleported back to Melkor once they have the egg – but it will likely be more fun to see exactly how they escape from a horde of goblins before drawing matters to a close. Again, allow the players leeway to indulge their creativity here, but rolling a couple of key Tests for elements of an escape is an acceptable back-up to resolve the situation. There are plenty of options – if the heroes haven't completely fuddled things up, there ought to be an escape route that they can block (at least temporarily) as they flee. However, try to follow the players' lead if possible, to provide a satisfactory but suitably close escape.

Returning to The City is best dealt with as a scene fade, to avoid anti-climax – i.e. once the heroes have the Egg and have escaped the immediate peril of pursuing Goblins or Wyvern, the next part of the

story should find them back at the City. If there is time for a final chapter, or if there may be future adventures for this band of heroes, you may wish to proceed and resolve the Epilogue below.

7. EPILOGUE

Whether the heroes return to the City after a trek back across the land, or are summoned there by a teleportation spell, they should eventually reach Melkor, hopefully with an intact Wyrms Egg. A return to Melkor's Emporium will have them sent through to the sorcerer's inner sanctum.

You stand in a large chamber, dimly lit by light filtering from a source on high. In the dim darkness surrounding you are shelves filled with books and all kinds of difficult to recognise items - but your attention is immediately drawn to a tall and imposing figure who steps from the shadows, throws back the hood of his cloak, and glowers at you with eyes lit with glowing red flame. Dressed in a long robe brocaded with arcane shapes and symbols, he looks down his sharp nose at you, one eyebrow raised, his expression otherwise hidden by a long and flowing white beard. "Well," he intones, "where is it? Give Me The Egg."

If the heroes are in any way reluctant to hand the Egg straight over, or if they wish to secure a reward first, Melkor will be effusive, and tempt them with great riches.

"Of course, of course, you should be mightily rewarded for your endeavours. Please, look about, name anything that you would wish to have."

Melkor will happily let players take anything (though he might put up a show of reluctance). If players ask for specifics, ask them what kind of thing they are looking for, and tell them they find exactly that. Grimoires of magic, crystal orbs, flying carpets, talking swords, pocket harems – whatever their hearts desire.

As soon as they hand over the Egg, however...

Melkor laughs gleefully and raises the Egg. "At last, it is mine! The Egg of the Dread Wyrms of Perlew Crag!" His laughter echoes around you, and your vision blurs, and spins. Suddenly, you find yourself standing out in the street – and Melkor's Emporium is gone, an empty space where once it stood, the Six Fates Inn now visible in the distance beyond. You look about you, and see citizens

cheerfully carrying on about their business as usual. And in your hands, the bounteous treasures you were given are mere junk and worthless dross. Melkor's laughter still echoes in your ears. Never trust a Sorcerer...

Suspicious heroes might insist on a simpler and more modest reward, and ask for no greater than 50 gold each and or a minor magical item of maximum 100 gold value:

Melkor nods approvingly. "Very well, you have served me well – and I apologise if in my desire to secure this Egg I was more... persuasive than is quite ethical. See my assistant for your reward." He takes the Egg gratefully, and sternly indicate that you must leave. Leaving the presence of a mighty Sorcerer without being turned into a Toad is generally considered to be a favourable outcome, so you count yourselves lucky and hasten to do as he has requested.

Of course, devious and wilful players will come up with all kinds of other ways to try and get one up on Melkor or to otherwise test their GM's spontaneity and forbearance. Likewise, they may have returned with an egg-shaped rock or some other dud. Perhaps they decide to throw him in a sack and give him a beating or smash the egg right in front of his face. It's up to you how to resolve such outcomes, though as a Failsafe, the GM can always rely on the following:

Melkor is unimpressed by your defiant folly, and merely shakes his head. "Adventurers!" he mutters in contempt and turns away - growing steadily larger as he does. In fact, the whole room is growing larger. And so are your belongings and armour. "Ribbet!" you protest, "Ribbet! Ribbet!"

Hm, that fly looks tasty.