

Sign of the Skull

Instant Adventure for 4–6 characters levels 5–7



Lord Thomist frowns through his beard at your questions.

“The villages in the area are independent at the moment, but I have initiated discussions with them about swearing fealty to my banner. That is why it is crucial that this threat—whatever it is—be eliminated immediately. I can’t afford to send troops away from my sworn lands, so I want you to go out under my banner as a visible symbol of my protection.

“All we know is what has been reported by travelers and verified by my men: Two villages have been attacked and everyone in them—men, women, children, and even livestock—have been killed. To the youngest child, they were decapitated, their heads flayed of all flesh and their skulls staked around the town.

“There are no surviving witnesses, but whatever killed them must have given very little warning. The bodies were found mostly in their beds. There seems to have been no sign of resistance or flight.

“If this is a mundane assault you have my command to slay all offenders. If it is some kind of vile sorcery you must root out the source and come to me for help if you cannot handle it yourselves.”

Thomist sighs suddenly and his shoulders slouch forward. “We have no true leads to aid you. We have no idea what could do this, or where it will strike next. But it is evil and it must be stopped.”

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LEGENDS & LAIRS

INSTANT ADVENTURE



Sign of the Skull

by Brian Wood

Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player’s Handbook, Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast®



Series II

Number 15

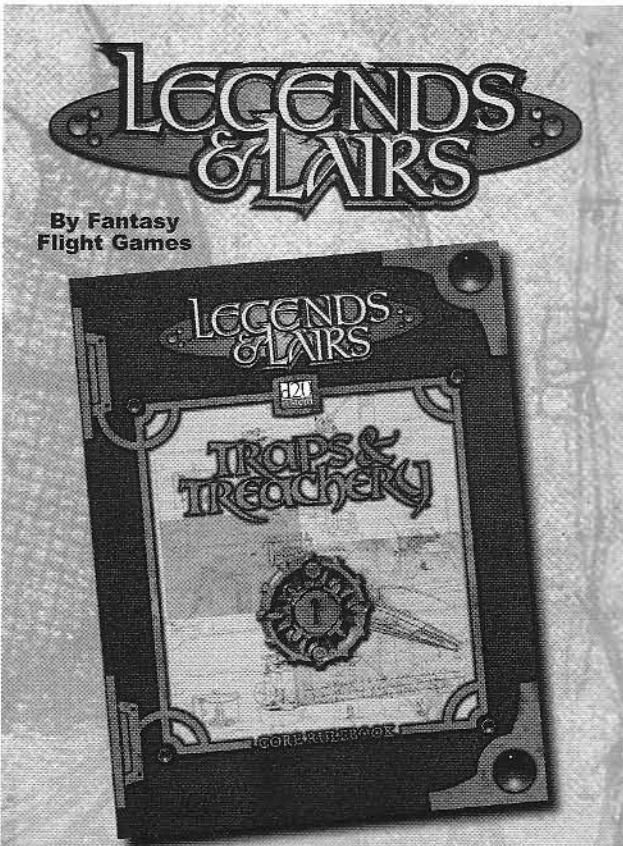
How to Use This Product

This adventure takes place in the world of Mennara, the setting of Fantasy Flight's bestselling *Diskwars* fantasy battle game. This provides a convenient frame of reference, but the adventure is specifically designed to be easily incorporated into any existing D&D campaign. Feel free to alter the names of places and characters and customize the details of the adventure to fit your own world.

You should be able to run this adventure in a single game session. You should read it through at least once and study those sections you will need to know well. In particular, you should familiarize yourself with the features and capabilities of new monsters and magic items introduced in the adventure. You may also wish to photocopy the map on pages 8 and 9, both for your own reference and to show to the players, if appropriate.

Dungeons & Dragons®

This adventure requires the use of the *Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook*, Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast.® You won't be able to run the adventure without it.




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SIGN OF THE SKULL

By *Brian Wood*

DM BACKGROUND

Lord Thomist approached the village elders of the independent farms bordering his lands three months ago and offered them his protection for their oath and tithes. The villages all firmly declined the invitation. Seeing his greedy plans for expansion crushed, Thomist grew enraged at the impudence of the commoners. He sought out a way to punish them and force them to swear fealty to his banner.

His lands are close enough to the Broken Plain that it was little trouble to contact the orc chieftain Zhalla Bakhhal of the powerful Skull tribe. Thomist offered Zhalla a chest of gold for each independent village the tribe burned down. His plan has worked and already representatives of several farming villages have come to Thomist begging protection before the unknown evil destroys their villages as well. Thomist gave the orcs a first chest of gold as prepayment to seal their bargain, but he hopes to avoid paying the rest and appear a savior by hiring the characters to kill the orcish mercenaries. Thomist is well aware of the fearsome reputation of the Skull tribe and their Beastriders and has chosen not to send his own troops, risking the lives of the characters rather than take the chance of depleting his own men.

The Skull tribe is a fearsome band known for its brutality and military effectiveness. Zhalla Bakhhal runs his tribe intelligently and cunningly as a military unit. Discipline is harsh and strictly enforced and the tribe has yet to lose an engagement. As a result, his troops now obey him with worshipful eagerness. Zhalla's strategy usually involves ambushes that can take full advantage of the powers of his witch doctor and his Beastriders.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

Thomist will give the characters the location of the two villages attacked and fill in a few more details. After travelers reported seeing the villages burned Thomist sent two riders to confirm the report. Thomist then sent a work crew to bury the dead. The work crew just returned. The first report came in four days ago, and report of the second burned village came in three days ago. The nearest village is 10 miles west and the second village is 10 miles south of there. Mounted, the characters can reach the first village by road in a couple of hours; on foot, it would take about four hours of travel.

Lord Thomist promises the characters a reward of 1,000 gp each for their services.

FIRST VILLAGE

The road ahead of you runs straight through the center of what must be one of the destroyed villages. Charred timber and foundations are all that remain of the dozen buildings that once stood here. Fragments of metal glint in the ashes—pots and tools that survived the blaze. South of the village is a large mound of fresh earth.

It has been four days (plus the characters' traveling time) since this village was attacked and too many people have been on the site to leave any useful evidence. All the bodies and skulls were buried in a mass grave to the south of the village. A Search check (DC 15) will reveal a stack of wooden poles that the work crew pulled down. A character with the Tracking feat would have to succeed at a Wilderness Lore check (DC 30) to make anything useful out of the trampled ground. Even then, the only distinctive information are several abnormal tracks that seem to have been made by a heavy four-legged animal, but not a hoofed one. More than that cannot be discerned.

Directly beyond the village, the road continues west and splits to the south, leading to the second village. It begins to rain lightly as the characters travel.

SECOND VILLAGE

You reach the remains of another village just as the sun is setting that could be a twin to the last. The broken remains of the buildings seem to suggest that this village might have been slightly larger, but the mass grave in the back looks the same size.

This village is identical to the last in almost all respects. Though it was found later (and attacked later) the work crews buried the dead on the same day.

The characters should reach this village at the end of the day, forcing them to decide whether to camp in the ruins, or move outside of town. The rain stops during the night leaving it slightly cool and still overcast. The following morning a thick black smoke rises in the distance, leading the characters down the road. The smoke is from another village on Thomist's list about 12 miles further south.

MILITARY ENCAMPMENT

When the characters are about halfway to the next village, they encounter a heavily trampled path leading from the road into the woods. The path is wide enough for three men to walk abreast, and where it intersects the forest, the underbrush has been hacked clear. This path leads to where the Skull tribe made camp. Little can be made from the tracks on the path because the orcs marched in columns, effectively obliterating distinguishing marks and disguising their numbers. A Wilderness Lore check (DC 25) by a charac-



ter with the Tracking feat will reveal more of the strange tracks (DC 20 if the characters noticed them before).

The characters may opt to travel to the village first and check out the path later. If they ignore the path, the goblin ambush will occur on the road later. The path itself is only a few hundred yards long and climbs a slight rise into the forest.

The trampled path leads you up a low hill to a large clearing in the wood. A ring of sharpened stakes leaning outward circles the hill, protecting about forty yards of cleared ground. The grass has been trampled and the earth is broken in several areas by holes suitable for tent stakes or the poles of temporary shelters. Several shallow pits across the clearing are filled with ash and partially burnt logs. On the downwind side of the clearing, a long trench has been dug and used as a latrine.

The hill is obviously the remains of a military encampment. Uneaten meat and bones have been thrown into the latrine, which, unlike a normal military camp, was not filled in. The stakes were clearly gathered from the surrounding forest floor and hastily sharpened to provide protection from a charge.

Lurking in the camp is a band of goblin marauders. Several bands of goblins serve the Skull tribe and Zhalla Bakhall makes

good use of them for any tasks he sees as beneath his orc soldiers. This band has been ordered to keep watch for armed groups following the tribe. They spotted the characters on the road and ran to hide in the deserted camp in hopes of ambushing them. All 15 goblins have hidden themselves in the latrine trench, lying so that only their faces are above the filth. When the characters approach they will leap out shrieking a war cry. Five will flee in different directions to warn their orcish masters, while the other 10 attack using the common marauder tactics and ganging up on the weakest-looking opponents.

Goblin Marauders (15): CR ¼; Small Humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +3 studded leather); Atk +1 melee (1d6, short sword); SQ darkvision 60 ft., double flank 2 or more; AL CE; SV Fort +2 Ref +1 Will +0; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness.

Double Flank (Ex): Marauders gain a double flank bonus when two or more marauders are attacking the same opponent.

After the attack has been dealt with and the characters have time to examine the clearing more closely, they will have no trouble identifying the strange tracks. Though the ground is hard packed there are indications of the tracks throughout the clearing and several well-preserved tracks near the latrines. The tracks were made by a quadrapedal creature with wolf-like pads but with long, curved claws. From the size and depth of the tracks, the creatures are probably four to five feet tall at the shoulder, six to eight feet long, and weigh more than a thousand pounds.

BURNED VILLAGE

The plume of smoke has steadily thinned until it is little more than airborne dust and ash when you finally reach yet another village. As soon as the blackened buildings come into view you see the skulls mounted on six-foot stakes throughout the ruins. The skulls have been hastily cleared of flesh; bits of muscle and tissue still cling to the bone. Smoke drifts across the ground as you approach and pass stake after stake. You see the skulls of dogs and cattle mixed with the human ones. Here and there are the exceptionally small skulls of children. You pass the bodies of several dogs and cows, but don't see a human corpse until you are nearly in the center of town. There, a few bodies lie partially charred within the boundaries of foundations or occasionally in the street. There are obviously far too few corpses for the number of skulls. Then a movement catches your eye and you see two silhouettes moving through the smoke.

The silhouettes are Isorn and Fahm, two brothers who survived the attack by hiding in a cellar. They have spent the morning at the grim chore of burying their family and friends. They're dragging the bodies to a burned house on the edge of town with a foundation

set about four feet into the ground. The brothers are depositing the bodies there and plan to cover them over. Thus far, neither has been able to bring himself to touch the skulls.

Isorn and Fahm are dragging a body out towards the edge of town when the characters see them and they will not notice the characters until they are approached. The brothers will be cautious but open to anyone who doesn't threaten them, and willingly tell their story.

Isorn, the taller of the brothers, looks down as he speaks.

"Well, we was both settin' up in the barn, havin' us a drink when the attack came. It was pretty late and everyone else was sleepin'. 'Twas a foggy night and we didn't see much through the doors—didn't hear nothing until they started screamin'. We hid in the loft at first, then when everything started burning we ran across the way to old lady Sterl's cellar and hid out the night there."

"That ain't so!" Fahm yells. "Beggin' your pardon m'lords, but my brother is leavin' things out. The barn doors was open wide and we saw it all happen. 'Twas an unnatural fog what rose out of nowhere."

"Wasn't nothing unnatural 'bout it." Isorn grumbles. "Gets foggy on cool nights, is all."

"But this weren't no natural fog." Fahm insists. "And just as soon as it set in *they* came. It was the spirits of the wicked risen up from Hell. They rose from the ground like ghosts and rode on terrible demon beasts but didn't make no sound the whole while. Quiet as the dead, they was. Their faces were twisted and deformed and the eyes of the beasts glowed with hellfire and we didn't hear nothing until people started screamin'."

"Weren't no such thing." Isorn says.

"What else could it a been?"

"Coulda been orcs... they's near here and you hear people talk about 'em..."

"Wasn't so. Orcs is living things and they'd make noise when they walked. And they don't ride no demons, neither."

"They was mighty quiet," Isorn agrees.

Isorn continues to insist that nothing unnatural happened, clinging to the idea that it was only orcs, though he's never seen one. He admits it was unnaturally quiet but he attributes that to the

fog. Isorn is subdued and grief-stricken over the loss of his friends. Fahm on the other hand is absolutely terrified of what he saw in the night. He clings to his story that it was the dead risen to wreak vengeance on the living. He describes the beasts as hideously deformed four-legged demons and their riders as men with twisted, rotted faces and hollow sockets where their eyes should be.

The brothers plan to finish burying the dead and then set out for Lord Thomist's lands. They will tell the characters of the meeting several months ago where the village stoutly insisted on refusing Thomist's offer. They don't know the exact terms of the offer, all they know is they would have had to tithe a percent of their crops to Thomist in exchange for his protection. At the time they believed they were in no danger—as close as they are to the Broken Plain there have never been orc attacks in any of the villages in the area, and other than orcs, what could possibly threaten them? The brothers now sorely regret their foolish stubbornness.

The attack site is very fresh and holds several clues that had been wiped out at the previous sites. Most of the bodies that remain look as though they were killed in their homes. A few were killed in the streets—of those, two were trampled to death. A careful search of the ruins is a grisly process as the characters are forced to investigate partially cooked bodies, all of them decapitated. Piles of flesh and hair litter the streets, usually near the stakes, where the skulls were cleaned.

The Ka'tal tracks are everywhere outside the houses and easy to distinguish. There were at least four of the beasts, though possibly as many as eight. A character with the Tracking feat may make a Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) to get an idea of how the attack happened. Other characters may obtain the same information with a Search check (DC 25).

The attack came from the north. A bit of backtracking reveals that the attacking force left the road about a half-mile from the village and moved parallel to the road. Their numbers are impossible to determine because they traveled in a column, but there had to have been at least eight marching two abreast. They split up when they entered the village, the beasts circling the outskirts and running up and down the streets while those on foot—wearing thick boots—entered house after house and systematically butchered the inhabitants. After the carnage, they left town via the road, heading further south. The beast tracks can be followed all along the road.

Isorn and Fahm can tell the characters that there's another village about 18 miles down the road.

ORC ENCAMPMENT

About 15 miles down the road the characters will again notice the obvious signs of a trampled path leading into the forest. This path leads to the orc's current camp where they are waiting until night to march against the next village. If the characters choose to ignore the path and head to the village first, they will find only a normal village of about 30 people. The villagers have heard of the attacks and have sent an appeal to the good Lord Thomist to help them, but have seen nothing threatening.

When the characters explore the path they will find again that men walking in columns have trampled the ground, and there are signs of the strange beast tracks. The path leads about 200 yards into the trees before the characters catch sight of another camp.

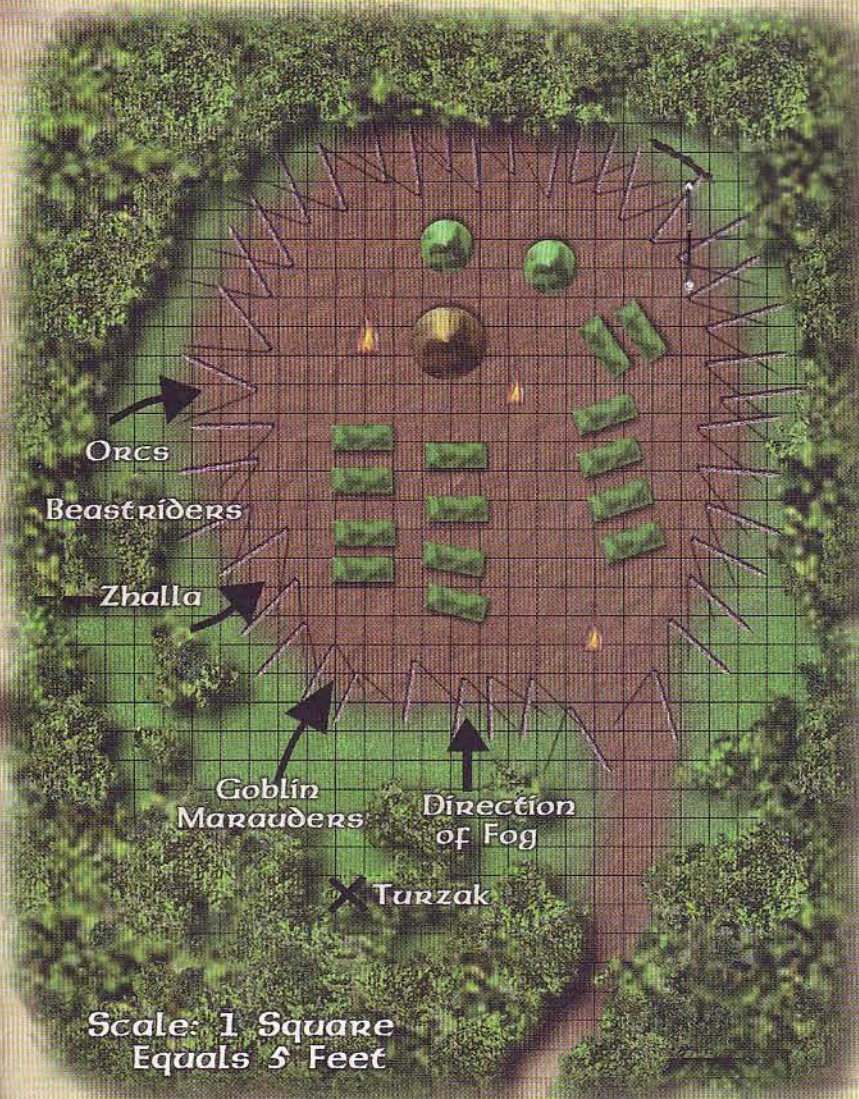
Through the trees you can make out the flickering of flame. Approaching silently you see that it is another camp. A similar ring of stakes circles the camp, protecting over a dozen tents. Open fires blaze in pits throughout the camp and packs of leather and canvas lay in front of the tents. Dotting the perimeter of the camp are seven-foot tall stakes topped by wrought-iron cages holding piles of dried skulls. The camp is completely deserted.

Zhalla Bakhal posted watches, and they spotted the characters' approach as soon as they left the road. Zhalla thinks Lord Thomist has sent the characters—not to kill his tribe, but to pay him his reward and give further orders. Zhalla has received the reports from the goblin marauders of the characters poking around though, and isn't completely positive that the characters are to be trusted. With the instinctive paranoia of his race, Zhalla ordered his troops to hide about 100 yards in the forest, using the Staff of Skulls (see New Magic Item section) to make the entire band completely silent. The many fires of their camp will hinder the characters' ability to see into the dark of the forest and make it easier for Zhalla's troops to see them.

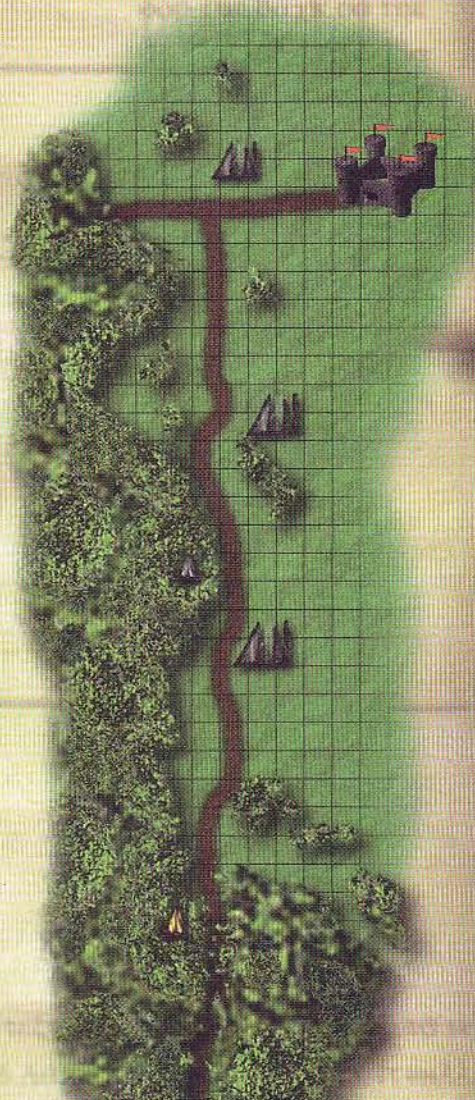
The characters may spend as much time as they'd like examining the surrounding forest before entering the camp. There are



Orc Encampment



Scale: 1 Square Equals 5 Feet



Scale: 1 Square Equals 2 Miles

Key

	Thomist's Castle		Forest
	Ruined Village		Tents
	Abandoned Orc Encampment		Latrine
	Orc Encampment		Stakes

fresh tracks nearly everywhere from the orcs' scavenging for firewood and stakes, including Ka'tal tracks. Nothing in the area detects as magic, and there are no traps to be found. The orcs are far enough in the forest that the trees cut them off completely from sight. Eventually the characters will have no choice but to explore the camp. If the characters absolutely refuse to enter the camp, the following encounter will occur exactly the same in whatever area they're in.

You step warily past the perimeter spikes and enter the camp. Most of the tents are constructed from a dark green or tan canvas slung over a central pole, pup-tent style, but three larger ones are circular. Glancing inside one you see several rough blankets rolled out and more hiking packs. Old logs have been dragged to the firepits to provide seats, dry kindling and firewood sit stacked a safe distance from the fires, and canteens hang from tent posts. There are no weapons to be seen anywhere. In the center of the camp is a much larger tent capable of housing about a dozen people. Two iron baskets filled with skulls sit in front of the entrance and a sickly light flickers from within.

Just as you are considering what action to take, a thick fog rolls in from the forest, virtually materializing out of nowhere. It only rises about four feet above the ground with wisps drifting upward like tendrils of smoke. It envelops the entire camp within seconds.

Then the shadows of the forest move, forming themselves into the silhouettes of warriors mounted on great shadowy beasts whose eyes shade the mist in their baleful red glow. They move forward without sound. You can hear the fire crack and yourself breathe in the silence. Between the mounted warriors stand foot soldiers, armored and wielding loaded crossbows. They stop just beyond the stake perimeter, on all sides.

A harsh, heavily accented voice calls out of the silence, "Did Thomist send you?"

Turzak the Blinding, who is not wearing a Skull Charm from the Staff of Skulls, cast the *fog cloud*. As soon as Zhalla spoke, he broke the silence of the Staff and the characters will be able to hear the snorting of the Ka'tal Beasts and the creaking of armor. The figures surrounding the characters are unrecognizable as orcs due to the fog and dim lighting. Any character less than four feet tall is unable to see more than two feet in any direction.

If the characters deny being sent by Thomist, Zhalla will demand to know why they've trespassed on his camp, while having Turzak cast *charm person* on whichever character is doing the speaking. The troops surrounding the characters are ready to fire at

a moment's notice. Fortunately, the stakes will prevent the Beastriders from entering for two rounds as they clear the obstacles from their path. If the *charm person* succeeds, Turzak will direct the charmed character to make his friends leave the area and keep others away. If the charm fails, Zhalla will demand the characters' immediate surrender—after which they will be executed.

If the characters admit to being sent by Thomist, Zhalla will bark an order to the orcs and they will all lower their weapons. He will then immediately demand to know where his gold is. Zhalla will believe that Thomist sent the characters, but they clearly do not have chests of gold with them. Any questioning by the characters, such as asking "What gold?" will cause Zhalla to stomp up to the characters and begin yelling and ranting, which will also eventually lead to their execution.

It is possible, though unlikely, for the characters to talk their way out of combat entirely—either by paying Zhalla with money or magic items out of their own pockets, or by vowing to help Zhalla get revenge on Thomist. If the characters fail to peaceably leave the camp, a fight should be much easier once the orcs have been put off guard; the crossbows will be unloaded, though the Beastriders will have had time to enter the camp.

Zhalla Bakhai, Male Orc War4: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 15 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 chainmail); Atk +8 melee (1d8+3, greataxe); AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 12.

Skills: Intimidate +6, Ride +4, Climb +4, Listen +2, Spot +2.

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Focus (Greataxe), Mounted Combat, Power Attack.

Possessions: Greataxe, chainmail armor, large sack with 340 gp, gold bracers (worth 120 gp).

Turzak the Blinding, Male Orc Wiz3: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 4d8+3; hp 16; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +1 melee (1d6, staff); AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Skills: Alchemy +4, Climb +2, Craft +2, Heal +3, Search +4, Spellcraft +2.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Craft Wondrous Item.

Spells (4/3/1): 0—*light*, *ghost sound*, *mending* (x2); 1st—*charm person* (x2), *mage armor*; 2nd—*fog cloud*.

Possessions: Staff of Skulls, furs (worth 10 gp), stone knife, belt pouch with four gems (worth 50 gp, 25 gp, 25 gp, and 15 gp).

Orcs (30): CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 4 (x30); Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 15 (+5 chainmail); Atk +2 melee (1d8, battleaxe); AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +0; Will -1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2.

Feats: Alertness.

Beastriders: (5) CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d8+2; hp 7 (x5); Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 15 (+5 chainmail); Atk +2 melee (1d8, battleaxe); AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +0; Will -1; Str 15,

Dex 10, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2, Ride +4.

Feats: Alertness, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack.

Ka'tal Beasts (5): hp 60, 72, 65, 54, 81. See New Monster section for details.

Goblin Marauders (10): CR ¼; Small Humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 4 (x15); Init: +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +3 studded leather); Atk +1 melee (1d6, short sword); SQ darkvision 60 ft, double flank; AL CE; SV Fort +2 Ref +1 Will +0; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness.

Double Flank (Ex): Marauders gain a double flank bonus when two or more Marauders are attacking the same opponent.

After any fighting, the only things of interest left in the camp are the chest of 1,000 gp paid to Zhalla by Thomist, and the Staff of Skulls. Inside the chest is a finely crafted map of the area with all the independent villages circled; the ones that have been attacked have been crudely crossed out. Investigating characters may note that all of the orcs are wearing a skull charm, either around their necks or as earrings or noserings. The charms do not detect as magic.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The characters should end the adventure with the knowledge of Thomist's foul deeds. They must decide what to do with this knowledge. Thomist will praise them as heroes on their return and gladly pay them their promised reward; however, if they suggest that the orcs attacked at his command he'll banish them from his lands for slander, refuse to pay them anything, and tell them they're lucky to leave with their lives.

Ultimately the characters have some evidence, but no real way to prove Thomist's guilt. The only evidence is the list (which could easily have been forged, or created for another purpose), and even if a truth spell is cast on the characters it only proves that an evil orc known to have slaughtered several villages blamed it on Thomist. It isn't even his word against the characters'—it's his word against an orc's.

Lord Thomist does get the oaths from all of the surrounding villages and his property and income expand significantly because of it. Whether Thomist becomes a recurring villain or fades to insignificance it up to the DM.

NEW MONSTER

KA'TAL BEAST



Large Beast

Hit Dice: 5d10+25 (60 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 50 ft.

AC: 17 (+7 natural)

Attacks: 2 claws +7 melee, bite +2 melee, horns +2 melee

Damage: Claw 2d6+5, bite 1d10+7, horns 2d4+2

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +0

Abilities: Str 20, Dex 15, Con 20, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 5

Skills: Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Spot +6

Feats: Trample

Climate/Terrain: Broken Plains


Organization: Found only in orc warbands; usually no more than 12

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always Neutral

Advancement: 6–12 HD



Ka'tal Beasts are massive quadrapedal animals standing five to six feet tall at the shoulder and sometimes weighing over 4,000 pounds. Their thick, leathery hide is sparsely covered with long coarse hair. Two ram-like horns curl over their heads, and they have clawed feet and the long, razor teeth of a predator.

Ka'tal once roamed wild on the Broken Plain in small packs, hunting prey ranging from rabbits to bison to humanoids. Orcish warbands have domesticated the Ka'tal for centuries and raised them as elite mounts. Several hundred years ago, the Ka'tal were nearly wiped out by a massive campaign in which human soldiers poisoned several large water supplies throughout the plains, with the intent of robbing the orcs of one of their fiercest weapons. The Ka'tal nearly died out and are now bred in captivity by only a few orc tribes.

COMBAT

Ka'tal Beasts are trained to serve as mounts for their orcish masters. The orc rider typically wields a battleaxe to protect against flankers, but allows the Ka'tal to do most of the fighting. Small groups of beastriders either skim along the flanks of enemy positions or charge to create an opening in the center, then withdraw. The Ka'tal's primary attack is its massive clawed feet. While they can be used to slash, Ka'tal usually just trample anything in their path, using their mass to best advantage. Ka'tal only receive their full claw damage when trampling creatures of a smaller size than themselves, otherwise they must slash for only 1d6+5 points of damage.

A Ka'tal Beast's horn attack can only be used after a movement action in which the Ka'tal moved at least 30 ft. On a successful strike, the victim is knocked back two feet for every five points of damage. If a Beast completed a successful horn attack in the previous round, it may make a second horn attack the following round without moving the full 30 ft., in effect continuing the charge.

NEW MAGIC ITEM

THE STAFF OF SKULLS

This unique item was created long ago by a witch doctor of the Skull tribe. The long staff is inscribed with crude Orc runes and topped with the skull of a Ka'tal Beast. Once per week, the staff can be activated to enchant a humanoid skull. Shards and chips can then be taken from the enchanted skull and crafted into Skull Charms. These charms do not detect as magic and can be of any size. The number of charms that can be made is limited only by the size of the skull, though only one skull may be imbued per week. The staff may also be activated once per day to place an aura of silence on anyone wearing a Skull Charm within 30 yards. The silence aura silences all incidental noise from walking, dropping things, banging pots, or attacking. However, the moment any one with a Skull Charm speaks, the silence aura is broken. Otherwise, there is no limit to its duration.

Caster Level: 5th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Staff, *silence*; *Market Price:* 8,000 gp.

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