

***“IN THE HALL OF THE OWLBEAR  
KING”***

AN ADVENTURE OF SORTS *by* JACOB MILNESTEIN



## INTRODUCTION:

*The Horizon Æternitatis stretches out for endless miles before you, a vast and endless desert plain upon which no snow has fallen in countless millennia. In the distance, dark clouds roil in the sky, unfolding in the distance with the empty promise of a storm that will spend itself in the empty air above the vast ocean before it ever reaches the forgotten continent through which you travel.*

*Ahead, there are but two signs of inhabitation; the megalithic dungeon for which you have searched for countless months and, seemingly abandoned a short distance from the rotting wooden entrance to that ancient ziggurat, is an old and weather-worn wooden caravan. There is no beast harnessed to its front, nor is there any sign of such an animal anywhere around the aged fortress, only the caravan, its side decorated in red paint with the words 'Cobham House apothecary & alchemical supplies for the modern adventurer'.*

*Before the vehicle, there is a small table, upon which stand numerous bottles of potions and liquors in addition to several rusted weapons of a sort.*

*Beneath you, your trusty vor, its tar black feathers caked with dirt and sand, remains resistant and reluctant to journey on.*

*With great effort you steer the reptilian bird forward, coaxing it on toward the wooden caravan and the mouth of the ancient stone dungeon and, as you approach, you catch your first glimpse of movement behind the cover of the wagon's stretched Borametz leaf...*

## COBHAM HOUSE APOTHECARY & ALCHEMICAL SUPPLIES FOR THE MODERN ADVENTURER:

Thief's Dagger (1d6, +1 STR)	15 crowns
Barbarian's Club (3d6, +3 STR)	20 crowns
Acrobat's Telescoping Staff (2d6, +2 STR)	20 crowns
Ranger's Spirit Bow (3d6, +2 WIS)	25 crowns
Cavalier's Shield (2d6, +1 WIS)	25 crowns
Wizard's Hat (N/A, +6 INT)	30 crowns
Bottle of Vril (1d6 cure wounds)	10 crowns
Bottle of Æther (1d6 restore Mana Points)	15 crowns
Bottle of Antidote (1d6 cures poison wounds)	15 crowns
SUNNY UP (N/A, refreshing soft drink)	5 crowns
Nitro Powder	35 crowns
vor feed	5 crowns
cat treats	5 crowns

## ROOM ONE (KETER):

*Forcing open the aged wooden door, you are greeted with the stench of bitter, stale air and dust. Dimly the light of the setting sun falls upon a bare room with walls of stained stone and three oak doors at the far end. In the corner of the room is a treasure chest, the wood now cobwebbed and rotting and the ornate gold design long since faded to rust and decay.*

*Surely centuries have passed since fresh air moved beyond this threshold!*

*Behind you, your vor, tethered to the merchant's caravan, lets out a snort of distaste, yet you pay it no heed. Ahead lies the greatest secret of the forgotten continent!*

- inside the chest is the key item, HROTHGAR REPORT PAGE 1.

## HROTHGAR REPORT PAGE 1:

*Once upon a time, in a land that you may remember, there was a vast forest that covered the face of a continent. In those days, there was no division between the kingdoms of men and that of beasts and regularly did the monarch of that nation dine with the King of the Owlbears, whose name was Hrothgar by some accounts and Hroðgar, by others.*

*Now it came to pass that the King of Men was desirous of Hrothgar's magical cauldron, the likes of which had not been seen amongst the tribes of men and so one day, as was the custom in winter, the King of Men invited the King of Owlbears to eat with him during the Wassailing Feast.*

*And thus a messenger, fleet of foot and by the name of Podarge was dispatched to the King of the Owlbears and charged with an invitation to dine with the King of Men...*

- beyond the doors:

*Above each door is a single carved word, etched by ancient hands into the worn stone as an indication of the path beyond each threshold.*

*The centre door bears the message 'Knowledge', the right claims 'Understanding', whilst the left declares 'Wisdom'.*

Door 1:

*With much protest, you pull the door open, tearing the wood away from the frame and watching aghast as it turns to splinters in your bare hands.*

*Beyond lies a narrow corridor, hemmed in by stone and overhanging spider web. In the distance you see an intersection and, far beyond that, yet another door.*

Door 2 and 3:

*With much protest, you pull the door open, tearing the wood away from the frame and watching aghast as it turns to splinters in your bare hands.*

*Beyond lies a narrow corridor, hemmed in by stone and overhanging spider web. In the distance you see yet another door.*

### **RIGHT PATH ROOM TWO-A (BINA):**

*At last you reach the end of the corridor and, as you stretch out your hand towards the door, the wood suddenly shatters into a thousand shards as, from within, a huge hulking form rushes forward, its hooves hammering against the dirt covered flagstones and its black fur covered with dust.*

Monster Encounter #1 (Krampus x1, Zwarte Piet x1):

#### **KRAMPUS**

(Monstrous Humanoid)

*The Krampus, with its curling goat's horns and haunting face, is ever ready to beat ill behaved children with switches of bundled sticks or, should the occasion demand it, devour or dismember them.*

Hit Dice: 1d20+1d12 +2

Armour Class: 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +2

Attack: Bite +3 (1d8), horns +2 (1d6), two claws (2d6) +3

Special Attack: Breath +1 (1d8)

Special Qualities: Darkvision

Skills: Listen +6, Search +4, Intimidate +9

Feats: Alertness, Multiattack, Iron Will, Track, Power Attack, Awesome Blow

Saves: Fort +13, Ref +6, Will +14

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10

Alignment: Chaotic evil

*Yet behind the vast and monstrous goat-man there is another figure, human in appearance save for the shortness of his stature and the unrepentant wickedness of his features. His face is smeared with soot and dirt, his complexion almost that of mud and in his hand, he wields a wicked Thief's Dagger that he uses in vindictive spite against the monster's back.*

*Beneath his right arm is a heavy treasure chest.*

#### **ZWARTE PIET**

(Dwarf)

*Zwarte Piet's manner of dispensing justice to unruly children is much the same as his fellow companions – sometimes he beats them with sticks, sometimes he leaves them coal in disgust with their behaviour and sometimes he forces them into a bag and drowns them in a river – yet the most horrific punishment is, should the child have been significantly ill behaved, translation into Zwarte Pieten themselves.*

Hit Dice: 1d20 +2

Armour Class: 22

Base Attack/Grapple: +1  
Attack: Thief's Dagger +2 mêlée  
Special Attacks: Headbutt +3 (1d6), Slash +2 (1d6), Stab +3 (1d6)  
Special Qualities: Darkvision  
Skills: Search +5, Listen +5  
Feats: Cleave, Weapon Focus (Thief's Dagger), Power Attack  
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +15, Will +13  
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 9  
Alignment: Chaotic evil

- having defeated the Krampus, two doors are revealed in the room, one at the far end and one to the left. If Zwarte Piet is not defeated, he will run away with the treasure chest (he will attempt this after three rounds of fighting with the player). If he is defeated, then the second page of the HROTHGAR REPORT is revealed.

## **HROTHGAR REPORT PAGE 2:**

*And so Podarge did deliver his message and Hrothgar, with all his court and nobles and his magical cauldron did set out for the Kingdom of Men in order to dine with the king.*

*Yet little did they know that the King of Men had arranged an ambush for them! No sooner were Hrothgar and his knights upon the shores of the Kingdom of Men when they were beset upon by seven dastardly Blackguards in the service of the King!*

*In the blink of an eye, these soulless men set about battling Hrothgar and his court. Those who they could not slay, they cursed, transforming them into monsters, and those who they could not curse, they slew.*

*Hrothgar fought nobly but, in the end, he too fell to the power of the seven Blackguards and the ungodly alliance they had made...*

## **LEFT PATH ROOM TWO-B (CHOCHMA):**

*With some force, the door gives way and creaks open, revealing a room much like the first. The dust swirls before you yet there, in the right hand corner, something glinting catches your eye.*

*On closer inspection, you discover a golden dish, half subsumed by dust and dirt. Ahead of you are two doors, one directly before you and one to your right.*

## **CENTRAL PATH:**

*As you advance, you hear to your left the distant and welcoming chime of bells.*

- if the player investigates they encounter two new monsters in...

Monster Encounter #2 (Christmas Carol x1, Tannen-BOMB x2):

## **CHRISTMAS CAROL** (Tsukumogami)

*Floating in the air, yellow eyes peeking out from beneath the brim of a red hat with white fur, this golden bell-like creature moves swiftly to bring other monsters to the battle. Whilst it may not pose any physical threat itself, if left to its own devices, it will attempt to summon allies to attack the player at every opportunity. The Christmas Carol may summon any of the following monsters: **Tannen-BOMB**, **Tannen-Grenade**, **Christmas Pudding**, **Dark Christmas Pudding**.*

Hit Dice: N/A  
Armour Class: 10  
Base Attack/Grapple: 0  
Attack: N/A  
Special Attacks: N/A  
Special Qualities: Darkvision  
Skills: N/A  
Feats: Summon Monsters  
Saves: Fort +9, Ref +12, Will +7  
Abilities: Str 4, Dex 5, Con 7, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 11

Alignment: Neutral



**TANNEN-BOMB**  
(Fire Elemental)

*A swollen Christmas tree decoration, a sentient bauble of red ceramic with a malignant, molten fire elemental core. This creature has no physical attack but can swell to three times its original size and then explode outwards in an eruption of ceramic fragments and embers.*

Hit Dice: 1d20 +5 or +10 or +15  
Armour Class: 13  
Base Attack/Grapple: 0  
Attack: N/A  
Special Attacks: Explode +5, Explode +10, Explode +15  
Special Qualities: Darkvision  
Skills: Search +5  
Feats: Grow 1, Grow 2, Grow 3  
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +12  
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 4, Cha 8  
Alignment: Chaotic evil

- if the player ignores the bells:

**CENTRAL PATH ROOM TWO-C (DA'AT):**

*The door caves in at your touch, falling in a cloud of dust at your feet. Inside, an empty room is revealed. Where once the door at the far wall stood is now nothing but ruin and rubble. There are no other exits or entrances into the room.*

- if the player has purchased Nitro Powder, the rubble can be blown up. If not, luring a Tannen-BOMB into the room and defeating it will also clear the wreckage.

**RIGHT PATH ROOM THREE-A (GEVURAH):**

*Following the defeat of the hideous goat monster, you venture on down a narrow corridor and find yourself confronted by a fresh door.*

*The aged wood soon crumbles as you strike out against it and an empty room is revealed, a single treasure chest gathering dust near a door at the far end whilst a door in the left wall and an archway leading in a north-westerly direction reveal new paths into the heart of the dungeon.*

*In the far wall above the door, there are several bricks missing, displaying empty gaps into the darkness of the*

*building's structure.*

- as the player enters the room, they discover a trap! Reaching the centre of the room triggers the firing of three arrows from concealed machines above the door.

### **LEFT PATH, NORTH CORRIDOR:**

*As you throw open the door, you are confronted with the image of an armoured Christmas tree bauble, its glowering features and swollen, red ceramic body encased in iron armour with a stove pipe cannon atop its head. Accompanying the fearsome decoration, is an anxious looking household spirit, uncertain of whether to fight you or fall back.*

Monster Encounter #3 (Tannen-Grenade x1, Tomte x1):

#### **TANNEN-GRENADE**

(Fire Elemental)

*An armoured Christmas tree decoration, wrapped in iron armour and armed with a heavy cannon. Like its counterpart, Tannen-BOMB, this creature can swell to three times its original size and then explode outwards in an eruption of ceramic fragments and embers.*

Hit Dice: 1d20 +5 or +10 or +15 or +20

Armour Class: 25

Base Attack/Grapple: +1

Attack: Cannon +2

Special Attacks: Explode +10, Explode +15, Explode +20

Special Qualities: Darkvision

Skills: Search +5

Feats: Grow 1, Grow 2, Grow 3

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +12, Will +8

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 6, Cha 4

Alignment: Chaotic evil

#### **TOMTE**

(Gnome)

*The tomte (also known as nisse or, in Finland, as the tonttu) are a race of fairies or elves originally derived from ancient Nordic beliefs in the supernatural, many of whom were placated with sacrifices during ritual ceremonies such as the alfablót and Disablót. If the tomte is badly wounded or if its companion is killed, it will automatically flee.*

Hit Dice: 1d8 +2

Armour Class: 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +1

Attack: Fairy Dagger +1 mêlée

Special Attacks: Slash +1 (1d6), Stab +2 (1d6)

Special Qualities: Gnome traits

Skills: Hide +2, Listen +1, Spot +1

Feats: Weapon Focus (Fairy Dagger)

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +0, Will -1

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8

Alignment: Neutral

- once the player has finished with all monsters, a door at the end of the corridor is revealed.

### **LEFT PATH ROOM THREE-B (CHESED):**

*Upon approaching, you find the door open and light blazing within the room. In its centre, beneath the low ceiling and before two exits, a door in the far wall continuing ahead and an arch to a north-east corridor, is a make-shift market stall.*

*Again, you spy the words 'Cobham House apothecary & alchemical supplies for the modern adventurer'.*



- if the player travels back up to Room Two-B, they find themselves involved in..

Monster Encounter #4 (Christmas Pudding x2, Dark Christmas Pudding x1):

### **CHRISTMAS PUDDING**

(Huge Ooze)

*A hideous creature forged from pudding and dried fruit boiled over a hundred years and left in the oven of an infernal volcano. If no human eye looks upon the pudding for a hundred years then it will evolve into a Christmas Pudding. Yet if that Christmas Pudding is then left alone for another hundred years and no human eye looks upon it...*

Hit Dice: 2d6 +6

Armour Class: 3

Base Attack/Grapple: Head Attack +4 mêlée

Attack: Head Attack +4 mêlée

Special Attacks: Improved grab, Hard Sauce +2 (1d6), Brandy Butter +3 (1d6), Rum Butter +4 (2d6), Cream +1 (1d6),

Lemon Cream +2 (2d6), Custard +3 (2d6)

Special Qualities: Blindsight, ooze traits

Skills: Climb

Feats: N/A

Saves: Fort +10, Ref -2, Will -2

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 1, Con 14, Int 0, Wis 1, Cha 1

Alignment: Neutral



### **DARK CHRISTMAS PUDDING**

(Huge Ooze)

*... it becomes a Dark Christmas Pudding, a monstrous ooze capable of casting the blackest magic!*

Hit Dice: 3d6 +6

Armour Class: 3

Base Attack/Grapple: Head Attack +2 mêlée

Attack: Head Attack +2 mêlée

Special Attacks: Improved grab, Demi +2 (1d6), Bio +3 (1d6), Drain +4 (2d6), Osmose +1 (1d6), Flare +3 (2d6)

Special Qualities: Blindsight, ooze traits

Skills: Climb

Feats: N/A

Saves: Fort +12, Ref -1, Will -1

Abilities: Str 9, Dex 1, Con 16, Int 0, Wis 1, Cha 1

Alignment: Neutral

- if the player chooses to travel north-west, they will find themselves confronted by a Tannen-BOMB and Tannen-Grenade in Monster Encounter #5.

### **RIGHT PATH, CORRIDOR TO LEFT PATH ROOM THREE-B :**

*Leaving the room through the left door, you find yourself confronted by movement along the narrow corridor and a far distant door.*

*There are creatures along this path, you realise. Perhaps they are more of the same monstrosities you have already encountered, perhaps they are new and more terrible threats...*

- if the player continues along this path, they will find themselves involved in...

Monster Encounter #6 (Snapdragon x2, Tomte x2):

#### **SNAPDRAGON** (Dragon)

*A small combustible dragon, flaming at the mouth and smelling strongly of liquor.*

Hit Dice: 1d6 +4

Armour Class: 3

Base Attack: Bite +1

Attack: Bite +1 (1d6), two claws (2d6) +2

Special Attack: Breath +1 (1d6)

Special Qualities: low-light vision

Skills: Move Silently +4

Feats: Hover, Improved Initiative, Flyby attack

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4

Abilities: Str 6, Dex 10, Con 6, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10

Alignment: Neutral

- if the player travels down the north-west corridor, they will find themselves in Central Path Room Three-C. If however, they continue straight on...

### **RIGHT PATH ROOM FOUR-A (HOD):**

*Along the darkened corridor, your hands flat against the wall, you find yourself moving on toward another door... yet barring your way is a stout figure, the sound of bells ringing in the narrow corridor!*

Monster Encounter #7 (Zwarte Pieten x1, Christmas Carol x1)

- if Zwarte Piet escaped earlier with the second page of the HROTHGAR REPORT, then the player now has a chance to regain the missing treasure chest. If the earlier dwarf was defeated, then this character will be entirely different. You may even wish to consider rolling different stats to so emphasise this fact.

*Having silenced the ringing bell and defeated the dire dwarf, you find yourself confronted by a door, much the same as any other that you have encountered thus far... and yet try as you might you cannot open the door with strength alone.*

*Perhaps there is some other method to opening it?*

- if the player has brought the skeleton key from the merchant, they will be able to try opening this door, however, if this is attempted, they will find the merchant rushing down the corridor toward them, warning them of the dire consequences within.

*"I wouldn't do that, if I were you! That's really not a door you want to open!"*

- if pressed, the merchant will not reveal what lies behind the door however if the player persists in opening, he will certainly make a swift exit.

*The key turns in the lock and the door opens slowly... almost at once, the stench of defecation assails your senses.*

*Shambling carelessly forward is the form of a man, head bowed and feet scuffed with dirt and dust. Your hand is still upon the door, there is yet still the chance that you can draw it closed and look no more upon the ragged figure as it*

approaches...

- if the player investigates further and/or crosses the threshold of the room, they will discover...

Monster Encounter #8 (Nzbeth):

### **NZBETH**

(Medium Aberration)

*“It was a shambling figure. The limbs that he had at first mistaken for arms, were knots of some seething brood of pseudopodia, like entwined vines sprouting from the shoulders and trailing in the snow. Stumbling forward on human legs, he noticed with horror that the frost had burnt away what vestiges of hair it had once had on its body. Its face was devoid of all features, save for a hideous gaping maw, lined with countless needle teeth.”*

Hit Dice: 2d20 +10

Armour Class: 14

Base Attack: Bite +1

Attack: Mêlée Bite +4 mêlée (1d6+3), 2 tentacle slaps +2 mêlée (1d4+3)

Special Attack: N/A

Special Qualities: Tentacle Slaps, Trail of Excrement (DC 13, 10'), Unknowable Servant

Skills: Intimidate +5, Linguistics +2, Perception -4

Feats: Multiattack

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +2, Will -1

Abilities: Str 17, Dex 15, Con 15 Int 6, Wis 3, Cha 13

Alignment: Undetectable

### **LEFT PATH ROOM FOUR-B (NECACH):**

*As you travel down an empty corridor, you become increasingly uncomfortable. Why has the assault of fiends relented? Why do no monsters prowl this empty space?*

*Reaching the door before you, you hesitate. Is this truly the direction you should be travelling in?*

- if the player continues on, they find themselves in yet another circular room, one exit to their right leading along another corridor to Monster Encounter #9 (Christmas Pudding x2) and a second entrance into the room where the Nzbeth waits.

*Yet there is another door, a door at a curious angle leading down into a corridor lined with books... but before you can investigate further, you hear again that accursed chiming of bells!*

Monster Encounter #10 (Christmas Carol x1)

### **FINAL PATH ROOM ONE (YESOD):**

*Travelling down a corridor empty of life, yet crowded by books, you find yourself unnerved by the silence of the area.*

*As you reach toward the door, a small black cat suddenly appears out of nowhere, its large, yellow eyes gleaming in the darkness as it mews pitifully at you.*

- if the player has purchased the Cat Treats from either of the merchants, you will be able to bribe Ziggy Cat and send her happily on her way. If ignored, she will naturally run away, however if attacked she will then instantly counter with MAGIC MISSILE and promptly run away.

*Following the unnerving encounter, you at last reach the door and find yourself in a library of sorts, shelves of ancient leather bound volumes reaching from the ground to the ceiling.*

*Dust covers everything; dust and sand. In the right hand corner of the room is a treasure chest and, beyond that, a sealed door.*

*Surely these books must be worth a fortune! Hastily, you make your way across the room to investigate...*

- the treasure chest of course contains the last part of the HROTHGAR REPORT:

### **HROTHGAR REPORT PAGE 3:**

*Now in those days there happened to be a statue in that forest of she who is sometimes called Sophia by those who have*

gnosis, yet also is named Achamōth and Prunikos.

*Upon seeing Hrothgar's blood spilt upon the field, the spirit of Sophia went down into the statue and he cried out to her, demanding that he be given the justice he deserved. Yet Sophia shook her head sadly and told Hrothgar that there would be no justice, for the world was like unto a broken clock and the clockmaker was blind. Instead, she would build for him a fortress in the forest and all his servants, though irredeemably altered, might continue to serve him in their new guise.*

*Yet Hrothgar was still wroth with the King of Men and he commanded his monsters, who once had been the proudest knights, to seal the doors and open them not to any, not even to Sophia.*

*Saddened, the spirit of Sophia left the statue and there Hrothgar remained, resentful and alone.*

*The King of Men soon conquered those lands where once the Owlbears had reigned and gave a feast in his own honour. He proclaimed the world was now the province of Men and all beasts were to henceforth be trodden beneath the heel.*

*The seven Blackguards toasted his health and all about joined in.*

*I should know, for I was there, and whilst I drank of the mead, it ran down my moustache but did not touch my lips.*

- the player will again need the skeleton key to open the door where beyond they see...

### **FINAL PATH ROOM TWO (MALCHUT):**

*A room filled with blazing light!*

*Multifarious candles fill the room, the stench of burning wax heavy amidst wisps of black smoke. Yet your eyes do not dwell upon the sight of them for long, for there, at the heart of the room, on a throne of gold and skulls, resides the King of Owlbears, Hrothgar the Mighty, his yellow eyes blinking with slow disbelief as he lifts his head to gaze upon you.*

*A crown weighs heavily upon his brow, yet his claws remained concealed within the folds of his paws. He shows no sign of malice toward you... yet the ways of owlbears are not those of men, perhaps he waits only for a chance to strike?*

*Without warning, the mighty king rises from his throne with a tremendous roar!*

- the player does not need to fight Hrothgar. He is a noble king imprisoned by duplicity and, whilst displaying great antipathy toward the player, he will not attack unless provoked.
- If the player is convincing in his arguments and accounts of his adventures, then Hrothgar can be persuaded to join the player's party. If not...

Final Monster Encounter (King Hrothgar):

### **HROTHGAR, KING OF OWLBEARS**

(Large Magical Beast)

*The King of All Owlbears, a beast that walks on two feet like a man, reasons like a man and wields a dreadful Buster Sword!*

Hit Dice: 1d20 +10

Armour Class: 20

Base Attack: Bite +3

Attack: Bite +3 (2d6), Slash +2 (1d6), Stab +3 (1d6), two claws (4d6) +5

Special Attack: Improved grab

Special Qualities: Darkvision, Scent

Skills: Intimidate +10

Feats: Multiattack, Weapon Focus (Buster Sword), Alertness, Track

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +11, Will +10

Abilities: Str 22, Dex 15, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 11

Alignment: Chaotic Good

- with Hrothgar defeated or as a companion, the player then turns about and reflects on what has come to pass... and what the future holds.

*Standing before the abandoned throne, you cannot help but dwell on what has taken place. The dungeon has fallen silent now, no monsters roam its corridors and the throne of skulls and gold now stands empty.*

*Outside of the temple, the sun sets slowly upon the plains and, for the first time in millennia, those pregnant clouds on the horizon at last bring rain to the forgotten continent again.*

FINIS