

## **Bound In Stone**

### **Adventure Summary**

The characters have been hired as guards and advisors to a merchant caravan traveling through Ferelden. Their journeys take them into the outer portions of the Celardo Freehold. As they make camp for the evening, their caravan is set upon by bandits who ambush the group in the dead of night. The attack however, is a diversion and the true meaning of this encounter becomes evident as a shadowy figure makes off with a valuable jewel. The characters attempt to follow, but the thick forest, the darkness and the traps of the bandits prove too difficult and the group is forced to return to camp.

As dawn breaks, the caravan leader insists the characters do what they can to recover the jewel and holds them responsible for its disappearance. The characters have little choice but to head into the depths of the woods in search of the bandits and the gem. The characters quickly discover a light game trail leading through the trees and follow it in search of their quarry. Navigating more traps, the characters are set upon by a small group of blight wolves, corrupted by some unknown force. Continuing along the game trail, the characters eventually reach the relative safety of a farmstead; here, they meet Koren Hugh, a Ferelden farmer. When the characters find Koren, he has been badly beaten and his home is in shambles. He is able to explain to the characters that his daughter has been taken by the same brigands the characters are hunting. Koren believes they have taken her to some strange ruins in the nearby forest. He offers to lead the characters there if they will rescue his daughter.

With Koren leading them, the characters make their way along a rough footpath further into the forest. The group emerges into a small clearing to find strange stone idols in a ring around the clearing. At the center of the clearing are the remaining bandits gathered around a central figure that appears in the midst of a ritual in the shadow of the largest idol in the ring. The stolen gem has been placed – an exact fit – into the idol and Koren's daughter appears to be an unwilling participant in the ceremony. If the characters can overcome the bandits and their mysterious leader, they may be able to discover the truth behind these events.

### *Getting the Characters Involved*

*Bound In Stone* is intended for a group of four to six starting *Dragon Age* characters with a decent mix of abilities to handle the various scenes – combat, exploration and roleplaying – in this adventure. It can work for larger or smaller groups, or different balances of abilities, with some modification.

A number of alternatives exist to making the characters work for the merchant caravan, which is the easiest way to get the characters involved. The characters could come across the caravan on the road and offered a reward for the recovery of the jewel. One of the characters could already possess the jewel and the bandits could steal it from the characters themselves. Finally, the characters could be hired by Koren to help recover his daughter.

### **Background**

Long ago, a group of apostate wizards living in the western Bannorn of Ferelden suffered a terrible tragedy. Known as the Druids of Dane, these hedge wizards began a

ritual designed to induct new members into their circle. Though this ritual had been performed countless times, it was not without risk and quickly it turned against them as one of the apprentice wizards became possessed by a demon of rage. The demon slew many of the circle and those that survived spent weeks attempting to stop the beast. The remaining druids did all they could to drive the demon back into the Fade, but were unable to defeat it. Instead, they called upon powerful magic to separate the demon's spirit and bind the two fragments; the bulk of the demon's essence was bound to an ancient stone idol while the other was imprisoned within a large gem. The druids withdrew from the region and vowed to return one day to banish the demon once and for all. Time, however worked against the druids and the gem was lost and the demon forgotten.

The stone idol and the demon bound within it remained hidden from the world, though the forest surrounding the ruins grew cursed and twisted by the demon's hate. A young man named Langer Hugh, a local from a nearby farm, stumbled across the idol and, though the demon was unable to leave its stone prison, it worked its influence over the man. Soon he brought others to the idol and they too fell under the demon's control. Consumed by rage, these followers were given one task: to find the gem that bound the demon's power. With the whole of its spirit, the demon will be able to break free and once more be unleashed upon the world.

A merchant named Mendonich Holze has inadvertently purchased the lost gem while on his travels and now makes his way through the Bannorn. The demon, sensing the jewel's presence, sends its minions to recover the gem as well as prepare a ritual that will release it.

## **Part One**

Mendonich Holze is leading a caravan through Ferelden, trading a variety of goods along the settlements of the Bannorn. Always in need of laborers and guards, Mendonich has hired the characters to aid him in his travels. After a long day of travel, the characters and the caravan have set up camp alongside a main highway in the Bannorn. The characters settle into an evening of guard duty and rest. In the dead of night, Langer Hugh and his companions set upon the caravan hoping to steal the gem for their demonic patron. Langer's thugs cause a distraction as he sneaks into Mendonich's wagon, directed by the demon, and steals the gem.

Disappearing into the thick forest, Mendonich screams at the characters to follow the fleeing raiders. Rushing into the woods themselves, the characters attempt to pursue the attackers in the darkness and are quickly slowed after stumbling across a number of well-placed traps meant to help the raiders escape. Lost in the dark and injured, the characters can return to the caravan in order to wait for the light of day or continue to stumble through the dark forest.

## *Prologue*

The characters have all been hired as guards or laborers for Mendonich Holze and his caravan. Whether they have worked for their employer for some time or whether they have just been hired on, the characters believe Mendonich to be a trustworthy merchant who only seeks to earn a living traveling the roads of Ferelden. The roles the characters take in the caravan depend on their abilities and they can be employed as simple guards,

translators, laborers, guides, teamsters and the like. The characters have all been introduced to one another and their employer, as well as the other members of the caravan.

The caravan Mendonich Holze leads through Ferelden is made up of two large covered wagons, each drawn by two draft horses. Holze uses one wagon to live out of and keeps the most valuable goods transported by the caravan in locked chests within the locked wagon. Holze has hired three wagon-drivers and four teamsters since arriving in Ferelden. Holze owns two dogs that he uses as pets, scouts and lookouts. Holze's only companion from Orlais is a large man he calls Barrett the Mute. As Holze tells it, Barrett is a loyal man-at-arms for his family who had his tongue removed after speaking ill against an Orlesian lord. Barrett is Holze's chief bodyguard and is clearly a skilled warrior who does little apart from stand silently, watching for trouble.

The characters have no knowledge of the gem Mendonich carries, which is always kept in a locked chest within his wagon.

### Nighttime Raid – Combat Encounter (Average)

The raid by Langer and his men comes in the dead of night as the caravan sleeps. Mendonich and the characters will have established a watch, which should be determined before the encounter begins. The GM can randomly determine which watch the attack comes on or choose. Characters cannot sleep in armor heavier than light leather and must take minor actions to pick up/draw their weapons and stand up.

As the caravan sleeps, the raiders sneak up to the camp using the thick forest surrounding the road as cover. Any characters on watch at the time can make a Perception (Seeing *or* Hearing) test with a TN of 15. Success indicates that the character has noticed someone sneaking up to the camp and can sound the alarm. Even if characters on watch do not notice the raiders sneaking, the dogs Holze owns detect the intruders and begin barking.

Characters that are asleep when the raiders attack are considered *surprised* for the first round of combat. There is one raider for each party member as well as three more that attack Barrett the Mute and the teamsters. The raiders fight enraged, but use basic tactics during battle; they will team up against very strong foes and make optimal use of stunts. The raiders will continue to fight until Langer has stolen the gem, at which point they flee into the woods. If cornered, they will fight to the death and refuse to be taken prisoner.

As the battle takes place at night, all attacks (including those of the raiders) are at a -2 penalty. Raiders or characters taking cover in the woods receive a -3 penalty to attacks made against them due to cover and darkness.

Langer waits for Mendonich to leave the wagon and then sneaks in during the battle. Characters can attempt to make a Perception (Seeing) test with a TN of 15 to see Langer leaving the wagon with a large gem in his hands.

| Raider              |                                   |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Abilities (Focuses) |                                   |
| 1                   | Communication (Deception)         |
| 1                   | Constitution                      |
| 0                   | Cunning (Nature Lore)             |
| 2                   | Dexterity (Light Blades, Stealth) |

|   |                       |                |                     |
|---|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 0   | Magic                 |                |                     |
| 1   | Perception (Tracking) |                |                     |
| 2   | Strength (Climbing)   |                |                     |
| -1  | Willpower             |                |                     |
| <b>Combat Ratings</b>   |                       |                |                     |
| <b>Speed</b>  | <b>Health</b>         | <b>Defense</b> | <b>Armor Rating</b> |
| 12  | 16                    | 12             | 3                   |
| <b>Attacks</b>  |                       |                |                     |
| <b>Weapon</b>   | <b>Attack Roll</b>    | <b>Damage</b>  |                     |
| Dagger  | +4                    | 1d6+3          |                     |
| Short Bow   | +2                    | 1d6+2          |                     |
| Short Sword   | +4                    | 1d6+4          |                     |
| <b>Powers</b>   |                       |                |                     |
| <b>Berserk Strike:</b> <i>Their intense rage allows these raiders to perform the Mighty Blow stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2.</i> |                       |                |                     |
| <b>Favored Stunts:</b> <i>Mighty Blow, Pierce Armor</i>   |                       |                |                     |
| <b>Talents:</b> <i>Scouting (Novice), Single Weapon Style (Novice)</i>  |                       |                |                     |
| <b>Weapon Groups:</b> <i>Bows, Brawling, Light Blades</i>   |                       |                |                     |
| <b>Equipment</b>  |                       |                |                     |
| Dagger, Light Leather, Short Bow, Short Sword   |                       |                |                     |

### Pursuit – Exploration Encounter (Easy)

Following the attack by the raiders, Mendonich will do a quick check of the caravan in order to make sure everyone is okay and nothing has been taken. If the characters did not notice Langer make off with the gem, Mendonich will immediately notice it is missing when he does a check of his wagon. The characters will have a few moments to gather themselves before Mendonich tells them to quickly pursue the attackers in the hopes of recovering the gem.

The characters will have only a few short moments before they are told to pursue the raiders. Any characters that are severely injured can remain behind without little argument, but should the characters wish to remain behind and pursue the raiders in the light of day, they must present a valid argument to Mendonich and succeed at a Communication (Persuasion) test with a TN of 13. Success means that Mendonich will allow them to rest following the battle and that the characters are to set out at first light in pursuit of the raiders. Failure means that Mendonich will not budge and the characters must immediately follow the raiders or risk being released from the merchant's employment.

Pursuing the raiders in the dead of night through the thick woods is a difficult task, to say the least. The raiders have a few moments head-start on the characters and are quite familiar with the area, thus they will have little difficulty escaping. In addition, the raiders have set up a number of well-placed traps designed to slow down anyone chasing them. Characters pursuing the raiders must make a Perception (Tracking) test with a TN of 15 in order to successfully follow the raiders (penalties for darkness and terrain have already been taken into account). Success leads the characters to a game trail where they

lose the trail of the raiders. Failure results in the characters getting lost in the wilderness and it takes them a few hours to get back to the caravan after giving up their pursuit.

During their sojourn into the wilderness, the characters will come across a number of traps laid by the raiders to slow down pursuers. The simplest of these traps are small, wooden caltrops laid along paths used by the raiders. The raiders know where these spikes are placed and will avoid them; however characters unfamiliar with their placement can easily stumble across them. Characters can attempt to notice the caltrops with a successful Perception (Seeing) test; the TN of the test is 13 for the lead character and 15 for all others. If a player specifically notes that his or her character is on the lookout for a trap, the TN drops by two. Any character succeeding in the test notices the spikes on the ground.

The caltrops can easily be picked up and kept. They are made from simple wood branches, sharpened with a knife. Though not very sturdy, they are quite sharp and designed to slow down anyone stepping on them. Anyone stepping on these wooden caltrops suffers 1d6 damage and has their movement reduced four; this penalty remains until the wound is healed. Generally, armor won't protect against this damage unless the character is wearing heavy boots. Most armor lighter than heavy mail won't include boots that will protect against this damage, though the GM has final word on which characters possess protecting against this damage. If a character does not suffer damage they do not suffer from the movement penalty.

A second trap placed along the path of the characters is a simple trip-line designed to knock characters down and stop them dead in their tracks. Like the caltrops, the raiders know where these trip-lines have been placed and will avoid them while attempting to lure the characters into them. Noticing these trip-lines requires the same test as the caltrops, above. If the trip-lines are noticed, characters can make a Dexterity (Traps) test with a TN of 9 to determine the nature of the trap; that it is no more than a trip-line without anything rigged to it. The trip-lines can be simply cut in order to be disabled.

Though they inflict no real damage themselves, the trip-lines work to knock characters down and slow them in their pursuit. A character hitting a trip-line must make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) test with a TN of 15 in order to avoid falling. Falling characters hit the ground hard and suffer 1d3 penetrating damage as well as being knocked prone.

### *Resolution of Part One*

As Part One draws to a close, the characters will either have returned to camp after unsuccessfully pursuing the raiders or be in the midst of the thick woods having located a simple game trail and losing track of the raiders. It is also possible that the characters managed to convince Mendonich to wait until daybreak before pursuing the raiders, in which case they must brave the woods for the first time in the morning.

Mendonich is very upset at losing the gem, which was worth a great deal of money. He believes that he has hired the characters to protect against just this sort of theft and holds them responsible for the gem's recovery. He has no more information about the gem that he can offer the characters and is uncertain why the raiders would have stolen that item and nothing else. It is painfully clear that the raiders knew Mendonich was carrying the gem and were only after it, which raises a number of questions as to the gem's true value.

If the characters are at camp at the end of Part One, they can get a few more hours rest before the sun rises and Mendonich insists they return to the forest and find those responsible and recover his property.

## **Part Two**

The characters have been tasked with tracking down a band of raiders that have made off with a valuable gem stolen from their employer, caravan leader Mendonich Holze. After a daring nighttime raid, the bandit leader stole the gem and fled into the thick wilderness, eluding the characters who attempted a pursuit. The characters must now brave the dark woods in search of the gem.

As the characters enter the forest, they must attempt to track the raiders, picking up the trail left the previous evening. Navigating the woods proves challenging and the characters run the risk of getting lost. In addition, the raiders have planted traps along the way to ensure anyone following them will be delayed or killed. Continued exploration of the woods leads the characters to a game trail, which in turn will lead them to the relative safety of a small farmstead.

Before reaching the farmstead, the characters are set upon by a number of wolves, corrupted and twisted by a malevolent force. The curse of the bound demon's wrath has changed the land around it, including some of the local wildlife. A small pack of blight wolves falls upon the characters, giving the party evidence that something horrible is taking place in the woods.

Reaching the farmstead, the characters find that it belongs to Koren Hugh, a simple farmer caught up in the midst of these terrible events. The characters meet Hugh, who has lost his daughter to the raiders. A native of the region, Koren Hugh offers to aid the characters in their search for the kidnappers so long as they aid him in recovering his daughter. The characters have a chance to question Hugh regarding recent events and it seems the farmer knows more than he is initially willing to tell. With Hugh's help, the characters set out to find the raiders.

### Tracking the Prey – Exploration Encounter (Routine)

Whether the characters returned to the caravan after their pursuit, continued tracking into the night or remained at the caravan following the attack, they have been tasked with tracking the raiders through the woods as soon as the sun rises. At first light, Mendonich Holze sends the characters into the woods after his gem. The caravan will remain in place for 24 hours before assuming the characters have been killed and departing for the nearest village.

The characters can pick up the trail they left the previous night (if they did) with relative ease, but must make their way further into the dense forest in search of their quarry. Tracking the raiders during the light of day is a little easier but very time consuming. Characters must make a Perception (Tracking) advanced test with a TN of 13 and a threshold of 15. Each roll takes one hour of time. Once the threshold has been met, the characters have reached the outskirts of the Hugh farm. Continued failure can result in the characters becoming hopelessly lost or additional combat or trap encounters.

Along their way, the characters will befall more traps laid by the bandits designed to slow or stop the party's progress. In addition to the two traps listed above (caltrops and trip-lines), the raiders have also left a few pit traps. These pits have been dug to

nearly ten feet deep and sharp wooden spikes have been placed at the bottom. The pits have been concealed with leaves and branches to make them blend in with the forest floor. Characters can make a Perception (Seeing) test with a TN of 11 to detect something odd about the ground before stepping into the pit. Failure means they spring the trap and fall ten feet, suffering 2d6 penetrating damage; a TN 11 Dexterity (Acrobatics) test reduces the damage to 1d6.

The traps are generally spaced out at irregular intervals. GM's should throw one trap at the characters for every two hours traveled, though more or less traps can be used if the characters are having an easy or more difficult time, respectively.

Evidence of Corruption – Combat Encounter (Average)

During their journey, the characters are also discovered by a pack of blight wolves that roam the area in search of prey. These wolves were corrupted by the curse emanating from the bound demon and now plague the area. Through their corruption, the wolves give the raiders a wide berth, seeing in them the same corruption they suffer from but the characters are quickly viewed as a potential source of food.

As the characters are making their way through the woods, they hear a loud commotion coming through the brush as if a number of creatures are moving quickly towards them. The blight wolves burst from the undergrowth and attack the characters with reckless abandon. The wolves use no strategy apart from trying to bring down the characters as quickly as possible; they do not coordinate their efforts or target specific characters.

There are a number of wolves equal to half the number of characters (round down), plus one. When half of the blight wolves have been killed, the remaining wolves must pass a Willpower (Morale) test with a TN of 11 or flee. If the characters get lost in the woods or take too long tracking the bandits, any surviving wolves may return later.

| <b>Blight Wolf</b>   |                                |                |                     |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| <b>Abilities (Focuses)</b>   |                                |                |                     |
| 0  | Communication                  |                |                     |
| 3  | Constitution (Running)         |                |                     |
| -2   | Cunning                        |                |                     |
| 2  | Dexterity (Bite, Stealth)      |                |                     |
| 0  | Magic                          |                |                     |
| 3  | Perception (Hearing, Smelling) |                |                     |
| 2  | Strength (Jumping)             |                |                     |
| 1  | Willpower                      |                |                     |
| <b>Combat Ratings</b>  |                                |                |                     |
| <b>Speed</b>   | <b>Health</b>                  | <b>Defense</b> | <b>Armor Rating</b> |
| 14   | 25                             | 12             | 3                   |
| <b>Attacks</b>   |                                |                |                     |
| <b>Weapon</b>  | <b>Attack Roll</b>             | <b>Damage</b>  |                     |
| Bite   | +4                             | 1d6+4          |                     |
| <b>Powers</b>  |                                |                |                     |
| <b>Favored Stunts:</b> <i>Knock Prone, Lighting Attack</i>                               |                                |                |                     |
| <b>Tough Hide:</b> <i>The bony spines of a blight wolf give the creature an AR of 3.</i> |                                |                |                     |

### Farmstead – Roleplaying Encounter (Easy)

Emerging from the thick forest, the characters reach the outskirts of a small farmstead. Two simple buildings surrounded by fields make up the Hugh farm, with wood fences and a few grazing animals. The farm has the potential to be a momentary respite from their search and, from the characters' perspective could hold information regarding the raiders. Should the characters choose not to investigate the farmstead, they must search on their own for the raiders, spending more hours in the dangerous forest.

If the characters approach the farm, it quickly becomes clear that all is not well. The body of a dog rests just outside the fences of the farm, shot with a half a dozen arrows. As the characters reach the door of the home, they find the door in splinters and an older man sobbing, bloody on the floor. The man is Koren Hugh, farmer and father to Langer Hugh, the leader of the bandits.

Upon seeing the characters Koren momentarily believes them to be the bandits, but quickly realizes that they have not returned. The home is in shambles and the farmer is quite injured and shaken up. If the characters offer their help, he will welcome it and relax enough to speak to the party. Should the characters be aggressive or hostile, Koren yells at them to leave, threatening violence if the characters persist.

Characters can make a Communication (Investigation) test with a TN of 11 to question Koren regarding the events taking place. Failure means that Koren tells the characters about the attack on his daughter, that she was taken by bandits into the woods. Success results in Koren explaining all he knows to the characters.

Langer Hugh was always an inquisitive child and would often explore the woods surrounding the farm despite his father's warning. When his younger sister Gedre was born and his mother died in childbirth, Langer quickly became withdrawn and distant. His father would coddle and fawn over Gedre, often to the exclusion of Langer who was expected to help his father take care of the farm and the family. By the time he reached his teens, Langer spent hours each day wandering the woods, sullen and resentful of his younger sister. It was during this time that he discovered the ancient idols deep in the forest. Koren quickly began to notice a change in his son; though he was often quiet and distant, he was now angry and outspoken. He would spend more and more time in the forest before he finally disappeared a few weeks ago.

When the characters arrive at the farm, Langer and his cronies had returned in the early morning and kidnapped his sister, nearly killing his father. Koren once followed Langer on his journeys into the woods and believes he knows the location where these bandits dwell. He is willing to help the characters if they promise to bring back his daughter safely. Characters must make a Communication (Bargaining) test with a TN of 11 in order to learn the location of the raiders. Success means that Koren will guide the characters to the ruins; the farmer knows the woods as well as his son and certainly better than the characters and will be an excellent guide, ensuring they get to their destination quickly. Failure will result in Koren telling the characters the general direction to travel, but choosing to remain at the farm, fearing his daughter is already dead.

### *Resolution of Part Two*

The characters now have the information they need to find the raiders and recover the gem. Depending on their conversation with Koren, they could have discovered some of the truth behind these events. The characters must now rush through the forest, not

only to find their gem, but rescue a young girl from an unknown fate. The characters can choose to remain at the farm for a few hours, but Koren urges them to leave quickly and rescue his daughter. Koren can also provide the characters with a few basic supplies, such as food, water and bandages if they so require.

### **Part Three**

With a destination clearly in mind, the characters depart the Hugh farm in search of the missing girl and the stolen gem. Langer Hugh and his followers intend to use the gem to release the bound demon and offer his younger sister as a sacrifice for the creature. Should this happen, the demon will be freed and returned to full power – a power even the druids of the past could not defeat.

The characters must once more track the raiders through the forest. Should they have Koren Hugh leading them, their journey will be far faster. If Koren merely provided them with directions, they will have to track the bandits themselves. In either case, a few final traps lay in their path before reaching the ancient ruins where the bound demon resides.

Upon reaching the ancient idols, the characters discover the raiders in the midst of a strange ritual. The gem is being placed by Langer Hugh into the face of one of the idols, his sister bound to the earth, an apparent sacrifice. Depending on their timing, the characters will most likely arrive in the middle of the ritual, though if they took too long tracking the raiders they may arrive too late. When the characters arrive, the raiders do not immediately attack, more concerned with finishing the ritual. The characters have an opportunity to parley with Langer, who may yet be redeemed.

What happens next depends a great deal on the characters. If they manage to redeem Langer one of his companions kills himself, giving the demon a chance to manifest, though without all of its power. The characters and Langer must defeat the remaining raiders and the demon together. If Langer remains in the thrall of the demon, he offers the characters the option of taking his sister and leaving; should they take him up on his offer and leave with the girl, they complete the ritual using one of the raiders as the vessel and the demon is unleashed. Should the characters refuse, or if combat ensues, Langer quickly places the gem in the idol and attempts to kill Gedre, which releases the demon.

### Into the Dark Forest – Exploration Encounter (Routine)

Based on their conversation with Koren Hugh, the characters either possess the general location of the ruins or are being led through the forest by Hugh himself. In either event, the characters must track the raiders through the forest, taking precious time that young Gedre may not have.

The characters must once more make a Perception (Tracking) advanced test; this time the threshold is 10 and the TN is 11. Should the characters have Koren Hugh leading them, the threshold is reduced to 5 and the characters can use Koren's tracking ability (a +4 bonus to the test). Each roll takes one hour of time. Success leads the characters to the ruins and the raider camp. Continued failure can result in additional combat or trap encounters and may mean the characters arrive too late to save Gedre.

As with all their travels through this area of forest, the region is riddled with traps designed to stop intruders. Any of the traps mentioned above can be used, be they pit

traps, caltrops or simple trip-lines. The number of these traps encountered depends on the amount of time it takes to reach the ruins and the discretion of the GM, though the raiders have trapped the area around the ruins significantly and the characters will encounter at least one trap before they reach their destination.

#### Confronting the Bandits – Roleplaying Encounter (Average)

When the characters reach the ruins, they discover the ancient remains of a small stone building, most likely an open-air temple. The ruins are all but indistinguishable save for a ring of five small idols that were most likely once ornate statues. The idols appear primitive in design, but still hold the remnants of intricate runes and mystic symbols. The center idol has a small opening, just large enough to fit the stolen gem.

Scattered around the idol are the trappings of a simple camp, obviously used by the raiders and an indication that they live here. Small bone totems can be seen dangling from nearby trees, most likely animals. The entire area sends a chill down the spine of people first entering it and evidence of the corruption the demon spreads is everywhere; nearby plants seem sharp and angled with thorns covering their surfaces. A weight hangs in the air and the characters instantly feel a rush of anger when coming into sight of the idols. It should be very clear that something is wrong with this place.

Gedre has been bound, gagged and tied to stakes planted firmly in the ground lying just before the idols. Langer stands over her, facing the center idol, the gem and a dagger in his hands. In addition to Langer and Gedre, one raider is present for each character in the party; they have gathered around Gedre in preparation for the ritual.

Langer is not immediately hostile to the characters, his focus instead on maintaining the sanctity of the ritual. He is willing to speak to the characters rather than resorting to violence, hoping that the ritual can be saved and his patron freed from his prison with full strength. If Koren is present with the characters, he initiates conversation, begging his son to stop what he's doing and release his sister.

The characters can speak with Langer, using Communication and the Bargaining, Deception or Persuasion specializations. In all instances the TN is 15 as Langer is fully in the thrall of the demon. If Koren is present, the TN drops to 13 as his father's presence and proclamations of love help bring Langer back from the brink of madness. Should the characters successfully talk Langer down from his actions, he snaps out of the demon's influence and suddenly grasps the reality of his actions. If the attempts by the characters to reach Langer fail, he is beyond the characters' reach but instead offers them the option of taking Gedre and leaving. The characters can bargain with him, requiring another TN 15 Communication (Bargaining) check; if successful, they negotiate for the release of Gedre and the gem, if they fail they are only allowed to take the girl.

Regardless of the outcome of their conversation with Langer, the demon and the other raiders present have other plans. Combat quickly breaks out as the demon attempts to break free.

#### Demonic Possession – Combat Encounter (Hard)

The time for conversation over, the characters must now face the fury of a demon bound for countless years. The raiders will attack the characters; as mentioned above, there is one raider per character present (see the raider statistics above). The raiders are fighting to defend their patron, completely giving in to the creature's control and never

backing down. They fight with bloodlust, using little in the way of tactics or strategy. The demon, upon taking control of a body, unleashes an unearthly scream as the body takes on a horrific appearance, the skin melting from it in spots and the fingers becoming vicious claws. The demon seeks to kill the intruders and will not stop until every character is killed or it has been destroyed.

If Langer has been redeemed and fails to complete the ritual, one of the raiders will slit his throat, allowing the demon to take possession of his body. As the gem remains in Langer's hands, the demon lacks its full power and rushes to take the gem from Langer and absorb its remaining essence. The remaining raiders attack the characters, working to stop them from preventing the demon from completing its ritual. Langer will be in a daze, suffering from surprise for the first round of combat; following that he will work with the characters to save his sister. If Koren is present, he will rush to save Gedre, cutting her loose and fleeing from the ruins. If the demon is successful in taking the gem, increase its statistics as listed.

Should the characters fail to redeem Langer, he places the gem into the idol as the other raiders attack the characters. Langer then hopes to kill his sister, providing the demon with a vessel to possess. If the characters prevent Langer from killing his sister, the demon will possess the first body that falls. Koren, if present, will attempt to free Gedre and then flee into the woods with his daughter. In this encounter, the demon uses the increased as listed.

If the characters arrive too late, the ritual has been complete, Gedre has been killed and the demon possesses her body. The entire group attacks the characters, fighting to the death. Koren, if present, will flee in terror at the sight of his daughter a vessel for the demon.

| <b>Langer Hugh</b>  |                                   |         |              |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------|--------------|
| <b>Abilities (Focuses)</b>  |                                   |         |              |
| 1   | Communication (Deception)         |         |              |
| 1   | Constitution                      |         |              |
| 0   | Cunning (Nature Lore)             |         |              |
| 3   | Dexterity (Light Blades, Stealth) |         |              |
| 0   | Magic                             |         |              |
| 1   | Perception (Tracking)             |         |              |
| 2   | Strength (Climbing)               |         |              |
| -1  | Willpower                         |         |              |
| <b>Combat Ratings</b>   |                                   |         |              |
| Speed   | Health                            | Defense | Armor Rating |
| 12  | 25                                | 13      | 3            |
| <b>Attacks</b>  |                                   |         |              |
| Weapon  | Attack Roll                       | Damage  |              |
| Dagger  | +5                                | 1d6+3   |              |
| Short Bow   | +2                                | 1d6+2   |              |
| Short Sword   | +5                                | 1d6+4   |              |
| <b>Powers</b>   |                                   |         |              |
| <b>Berserk Strike:</b> <i>Their intense rage allows these raiders to perform the Mighty Blow stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2.</i> |                                   |         |              |
| <b>Favored Stunts:</b> <i>Mighty Blow, Pierce Armor</i>   |                                   |         |              |

|  |
|--|
| <b>Talents:</b> <i>Scouting (Novice), Single Weapon Style (Novice)</i> |
| <b>Weapon Groups:</b> <i>Bows, Brawling, Light Blades</i>              |
| <b>Equipment</b>   |
| Dagger, Light Leather, Short Bow, Short Sword                          |

| <b>Demon-Possessed Corpse (Full Power)</b>   |  |               |              |
|--|--|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Abilities (Focuses)</b>   |  |               |              |
| -2   | Communication                          |               |              |
| 4 (6)  | Constitution (Stamina)                 |               |              |
| 1 (2)  | Cunning                                |               |              |
| 0 (1)  | Dexterity                              |               |              |
| 2  | Magic                                  |               |              |
| 0  | Perception                             |               |              |
| 4 (6)  | Strength (Claws, Intimidation) (Might) |               |              |
| 2 (3)  | Willpower                              |               |              |
| <b>Combat Ratings</b>  |  |               |              |
| Speed  | Health                                 | Defense       | Armor Rating |
| 8 (9)  | 40 (55)                                | 10 (11)       | 0*           |
| <b>Attacks</b>   |  |               |              |
| Weapon   | Attack Roll                            | Damage        |              |
| Claws  | +6 (+8)                                | 1d6+6 (1d6+8) |              |
| <b>Powers</b>  |  |               |              |
| <b>Favored Stunts:</b> <i>Disarm, Strangle</i>   |  |               |              |
| <b>Howling Madness:</b> <i>Automatically passes any Willpower (Morale) tests.</i>  |  |               |              |
| <b>Strangle:</b> <i>Can make a strangle stunt for 3SP. The victim suffers 1d6 penetrating damage. The victim must break free on its turn with an opposed Strength (Might) test or continued to be strangled on the demon's turn as a major action.</i> |  |               |              |
| <b>Equipment</b>   |  |               |              |
| *If the demon possesses a body that wore armor, it gains that AR.  |  |               |              |

### *Resolution of Part Three*

If the characters were successful, the demon has been destroyed along with its followers, the gem recovered and Gedre rescued. Depending on the actions of the characters, however, things can turn out quite differently. The characters can easily return to Mendonich's caravan with the recovered gem, perhaps stopping by the Hugh farm on their way.

### *Epilogue*

The outcome of the adventure relies heavily on the actions of the characters. If Langer was redeemed and his sister rescued, the characters will have most likely defeated the demon and its minions and recovered the gem. Langer can tell the characters how he discovered the idol and the influence the demon had over him, how it guided his actions and steered him along the path it had chosen. His insight can reveal some of the

background behind how the demon came to occupy the idol and how it desperately sought to be released and regain its full power. Koren will be quite relieved at the safe return of his two children, but can only offer his thanks as a reward; his son's absence has cost his farm dearly in the past weeks.

If the characters were too late in arriving at the ruins and were forced to kill Langer as well as finding Gedre dead, Koren will be distraught. He remains at his farm before sinking into a deep despair that will eventually see the end of him.

Should the characters take Langer up on his offer to rescue Gedre and leave, Koren will mourn the loss of his son but be thankful for the return of his daughter. He offers the characters his heartfelt thanks before they depart. Unfortunately, the demon will be released, using one of the raiders as a sacrifice. If the characters took the gem and left, the demon and its minions will continue to plague the caravan in the future. Had the characters left the gem with the demon, it begins a rampage across the countryside, first stopping at the Hugh farm to finish what was started at the ritual.

If Langer remained in the thrall of the demon, the characters would be forced to destroy the demon and kill its followers, including Langer. As above, Koren mourns his son but is thankful for the return of his daughter. When the demon is destroyed, life will slowly return to normal around the ruins, the demon's curse fading with time.

At the ruins, the characters can find a number of valuables collected by the raiders as tribute for the demon. In addition to the gear carried by the raiders, the characters also find supplies such as food, arrows, torches and other sundries. Each raider possessed 1d6 silver pieces worth of personal valuables. A small cache of offerings can be found at the base of the idol, worth 2d6x10 silver pieces.

When the characters return to Mendonich with the gem, he is obviously quite curious as to what happened. Should the characters explain the events of the past day he seems quite surprised that this 'simple' gem he purchased held such a dark secret. If the characters failed to return with the gem, Mendonich is quite upset and will take the value of the gem out of the character's pay, which will take some time. If the gem was returned, whether it was used by the demon or not, Mendonich is relieved and very thankful to the characters; though he considers its recovery part of their job, he offers to buy the characters a drink at the next stop.