

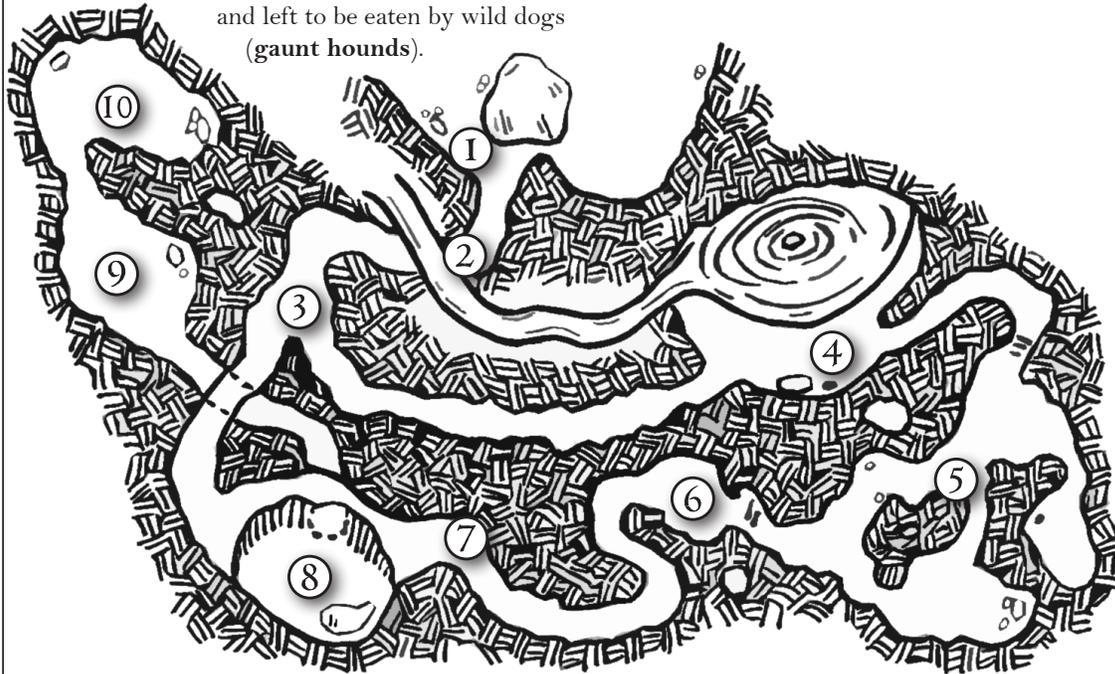
THE FIRST CASUALTY

A campaign starting adventure
for 1st level characters by
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Two rival dark powers – a Sorceress Queen and a Necromancer – are both secretly encroaching on the same realm and have learned of the others' plot. Minions of the Sorceress Queen convinced Harlan, a local, to serve as their spy. When **Ottvar**, a minion of the Necromancer, discovered this, he set out to assassinate Harlan. As Harlan was returning from sharing secrets with his mistress, he was killed by **Ottvar** and his pets (the **fendark**), and left to be eaten by wild dogs (**gaunt hounds**).

HOOK: While traveling a known-dangerous footpath in the woods, the PCs discover **Harlan's** body being eaten by 6 **gaunt hounds**. The PCs likely recognize the body as that of a local teen. If they kill/scare off the hounds, they see wounds obviously inflicted by a blade (**Ottvar's** dagger). A fresh trail leads into the woods to a cave complex.

Gaunt hounds: evil wild dogs. Their bite inflicts 1d4 damage and a gaunt curse (victims ignore the first 5 points of magical healing per day and must make a (relatively easy) save daily to heal naturally). The gaunt curse is lifted once the victim is fully healed.



Cave notes: These are natural caves with uneven floors, 10' ceilings, and no natural light.

1 - Entrance. Dense trees and a large boulder conceals (but doesn't block) the entrance.

2 - Stream. A 6' wide, 1' deep stream cuts across the pathway flowing southeast. Many small puddles of water (3 sets of tracks) lead deeper into the cave, shrinking slightly as they progress.

3 - Fork. The path splits. The puddles go down the right side and shrink to nothing after another 10 feet.

4 - Pool. The stream collects here in a 5' deep pool that is home to 3 **giant crabs**. They attack anyone who enters the pool but will not venture out of the water. Underwater, a calcified skeletal human grasps a **magical longsword**. This "+0" longsword can be wielded by anyone as if he were proficient and sheds an icy blue-white light.

5 - Lower Caves. 4 **dire rats** cover here after the fendark ate most of their pack.

6 - Webs. The path is obstructed by dense webs, the home of 5 **giant spiders**. If the web is disturbed, 2 spiders will crawl along the ceiling and drop down behind the PCs while the others attack from the front.

7 - Nest. During the day, 6 **stirges** huddle asleep near the ceiling. At night, they hunt in the woods. They will sleep through walking and talking but awaken to investigate loud noises, including combat. The stirges ignore the fendark because of their putrid taste.

8 - Pit. The passage is obstructed by a 20' deep hole. A narrow ledge (1' wide) runs around the north side. The sides of pit are steep but offer numerous handholds. At the bottom of the pit is a 6' high passageway that cannot be seen from any angle at the top.

9 - Lair. The 2 **fendark** live here and are happily munching on bones unless noise at the pit attracts their attention. Bones litter the floor, along with a forgotten purse of 44 sp.

10 - Home. (Lantern light.) **Ottvar** resides here and is studying, eating or sleeping. The room contains a lit lantern, hammock, provisions, dagger, spellbook, Ottvar's purse (35 gp, 3 black onyx gems (25 gp each)) and a **map of the region** with this and two other cave complexes noted.

Ottvar: 2nd level human wizard; minion of the Necromancer. Ottvar is a coward but clever and if trapped when the PCs get to room 9, he will bind his own wrists and pretend to be a prisoner of someone from the Sorceress Queen's camp ("Severen") to trick the PCs into hunting his enemy and releasing him.

Fendark: undead humanoids; hairless with bone spurs on arms and legs; strong, athletic, and feral. Sits squatting and runs on all fours. Treat as ghouls except stronger and less intelligent, able to charge and knock opponents down, followed by a bite attack.