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## The Effigy at Arkendale

### 1st Level Characters

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#### *Introduction*

The Effigy at Arkendale is an adventure designed for four characters with 1 level in a skill (weapon or magic) in the Forge: Out of Chaos role-playing game.

The locals talk about an abandoned village, a clan of higmoni raiders scouring the ruins, and a bizarre wooden effigy they worship. Is anyone brave enough to explore the ruins of Arkendale and uncover its sinister secret?

The game master should feel free to alter NPC names, region names, monsters, treasures, and the like based on their individual campaign.

#### *Possible Adventure Starts -*

**River Trade is Losing Money** - An elven merchant named Oloni is finding it hard to hire barge crews as higmoni have occupied a ruined town along his river route. This difficulty is affecting his profits. He is willing to pay the characters 150 gold coins to explore the ruins of Arkendale and exterminate the higmoni threat.

**What Are They Building?** - The characters overhear a merchant named Arlik complaining in a tavern. It seems the merchant and his crew are terrified. Their trade route along the river brings them near the ruins of Arkendale. The ruins had been vacant for a long time, but the last few times he passed there, he witnessed higmoni digging in the debris and paying homage to a wooden statue. He suggests he might have to alter his route to avoid the ruins.

**A Portent of Evil** - The local magistrate of a river town, a woman named Indaria, summons the characters to her office. She explains the situation with the ruined hamlet and the higmoni spotted there. She will pay the characters 150 gold coins to scatter the higmoni and squash the rumors of them summoning a great evil with their rituals.

#### *Background*

Arkendale was a hamlet built upon the banks of a fast-moving river. When goblin raiders destroyed the local armies, the village was left unprotected. Arkendale was soon targeted and destroyed. The people living there were chased away, enslaved, or killed. All that remained of the hamlet was a few standing structures, some exposed basements, and the remnants of a dock.

The goblin raiders did not stay long. As years passed, trade along the river grew, and river barges began to pass by the ruined hamlet. Stories spread about the ruins, the goblin raiders, and lost treasures. Looters and adventurers searched the ruins, but they did not find any treasure.

The rumors of Arkendale slowly died away but were not forgotten. In fact, an evil enchantress, intent on finding the lost treasures, focused her attention on the ruins of Arkendale. With her influence, she sent higmoni raiders to the ruins with instructions to search and dig for treasure. She fashioned a leather minion, which appears to be a scarecrow, to serve as her enforcer and to ensure the higmoni did as she commanded.

For several weeks, the higmoni have been searching the ruins; however, they are lazy and unorganized. Many higmoni want to raid a hamlet to gather slaves to handle the digging, and others want to leave, but all of them are terrified of the enchantress and her enforcer.

When the characters arrive the higmoni will have already searched many and most of the main temple rooms.

**Higmoni (17)** - All the higmoni wear padded armor and carry spears. They each have a 1 AR, a 1 AV, inflict 2d4 damage, and have 12 hit points. They speak only their racial language and are violent and aggressive. The Higmoni are only skilled at spear (1 WSL).



## *Arriving at Arkendale*

The characters can travel by land or river to reach the ruined hamlet. It should only take 2-3 days of travel time, and the game master should allow them to arrive without encounter or detriment. When the characters reach Arkendale it will be mid-afternoon. The game master can read the following:

You have reached the ruins of Arkendale. The hamlet is nothing more than a collection of buildings, collapsed rubble, and an odd stone wall standing erect. The main structure is an old temple with a bell tower that rises above its rooftop. Near the riverbank are the remnants of an old dock and a wooden effigy constructed from twigs and tattered cloth.

There are **17 higmoni** in Arkendale. The higmoni sleep during the day and have minimal guards stationed as watchers. They are out in force at night, digging and exploring the rubble.

## *During the Day*

During the day, there are five higmoni awake. Three higmoni will be in room 2, and the other two will be in room 17. The guards are alert and watch for any signs of trouble while the remainder of the higmoni are asleep in room 3. If the guards spot the characters, they immediately awaken their sleeping comrades by shouting and barking in their guttural language. After two combat rounds, the higmoni in room 3 will awake and join the fray.

## *During the Night*

At night, the 17 higmoni are divided into groups as they dig and scour the area for the hidden treasure. They are currently working in areas 9, 10, and 13.

The higmoni will pay homage to the statue by kneeling before it and whimpering, barking, and yapping in their guttural language. If any higmoni spot the characters, they will alert the entire group and cause large-scale combat.

## *Tactics*

It might prove prudent for the characters to perform raids on the higmoni camp, as engaging with all the higmoni could prove overwhelming. If the characters attack and leave, the higmoni will be on alert. It will be impossible to

surprise them. If the number of living higmoni drops below 5, the higmoni will take their food and treasure from room 3, if possible, and flee the area. When this happens, the leather minion (room 20) becomes active.

## *The Lost Treasure*

The evil enchantress heard stories of a lost treasure, as did many looters and adventurers. Although most people believe the rumors are false, there is, in fact, a hidden treasure in Arkendale. It is not money, gems, or jewels. The hidden treasure is the iron bell in the bell tower. Because it seems like an ordinary bell and because its magical nature only affects undead creatures, no one ever made the connection to its value. However, the bell cannot leave the town without ruining its magic.

## *Room 1*

*You are standing in the ruins of a building. Only a few segments of stone walls remain standing, while the remainder of the structure has collapsed. Although much of the debris is overgrown with weeds and thickets, several piles of visible rubble stand in the area.*

There is a **giant snake** here. It will attack anyone who moves through the area but avoids large groups of five or more. This area contains nothing of interest or value.

## *Room 2*

*You gaze into the remains of an old shop. Although much of the roof has collapsed, there are still sections that remain intact. Some broken kegs and an old wooden chest stand in the room.*

This room has been searched now and again by looters. There is nothing of interest or value here.

## *Room 3*

*You have found an old temple. The structure remains almost perfectly intact, with very little damage to its walls and rooftops. Peering inside, you see several wooden pews in the central area and a stone altar in the eastern alcove. A dozen pouches and leather bags lay along the northern wall.*



One of the double doors is locked. The key is missing. The other door is open. If a character wishes to unlock or lock the doors, the action requires a successful open locks skill attempt.

The altar, if inspected, is etched with the images of the sun goddess. The goddess is of good alignment and controls the powers of the sun. She is the enemy of all evil creatures that hate the sun and its blessings (e.g., undead).

Lastly, the higmoni keep a cache of food in leather satchels near the northern wall. This food is edible but not tasty. Along with the food are several leather bags containing their treasure of 1,023 silver coins. There is also a parchment that has information.

**Parchment (higmoni)** - Dig up every basement. Scour the rooms. Find that hidden treasure. When you do, send word to me. I will come to collect it. If you fail or steal from me, you will suffer my wrath.

#### **Room 4**

**Adjoining the temple is a chamber containing a copper font and basin, which stands in the center of the western wall. The room is very dusty.**

A cleric of the sun goddess can use the font to create holy water for religious ceremonies. There is nothing of value here.

#### **Room 5**

**You have found a bedchamber with a wooden bed, dresser, and a footlocker. One wall has painted images of the sun shining brightly over a shadowy landscape. You also see a human skeleton lying on the floor.**

This room belonged to one of the old clerics. The goblins killed him when they invaded the hamlet. The skeleton wears old ceremonial robes and a wooden holy symbol (a sun emblem). A mace lies upon the floor nearby.

The mace is a magical weapon. When used against undead creatures, the mace inflicts double damage.

#### **Room 6**

**You discover a storeroom filled with the remnants of empty wooden kegs and barrels.**

The room is the lair of a swarm of **rust bugs**. They will attack anyone who searches the barrels in the room.

#### **Room 7**

**You have found a communal bedchamber. Four wooden cots stand within the room, as does a wooden cabinet.**

This room was where the clerics tended to sick or wounded villagers. The wooden cabinet once contained healing supplies, but nothing of use or value remains.

#### **Room 8**

**You have climbed into the bell tower. Windows provide a view of the land to the north and east. An old, rusted iron chain hangs from the bell loft 15 feet overhead. The large bell still rests within its framework, but the joists and wooden supports appear rotted and unsafe.**

This bell tower contains an old iron bell that weighs 15,000 gold in encumbrance. The bell radiates a slight magical aura. Its enchantment causes 1d8 actual damage to undead creatures. This power affects a one-quarter-mile radius and affects undead whenever the bell rings; if the bell rings continuously, its damaging power occurs every other round. Removing the bell from the tower and transporting it to a town will be difficult. The bell has a value of 450 gold coins.

#### **Room 9**

**The building that had once stood here is nothing but rubble. Only a few segments of stone walls remain standing.**

If the characters thoroughly search this area, they will discover the skeletal remains of more than seven humans buried beneath the rubble. These were the victims of humanoid invaders. There is nothing of value on the bodies.

#### **Room 10**

**You are looking down into a cellar about eight feet below the ground. Rubble and debris cover the area.**



If a character successfully makes a searching skill roll while searching the cellar, they will find a small leather-bound journal.

**Journal (Juravian tongue)** - The journal contains information concerning the fall of the lord's keep and the goblin raiders. The writer suggests that the sun goddess will protect them.

### **Room 11**

***The cellar below you contains dark, muddy water. Rubble and wooden debris are abundant here.***

This cellar is the lair of **4 giant rats**. The animals will attack anyone who climbs down into the cellar. They are excellent swimmers. The muddy water in the basement is only a foot deep, and several holes near the waterline lead into a warren of rat tunnels. There is nothing of interest or value here.

### **Room 12**

***You have found another cellar area that contains wooden timbers and broken stones. In the debris at the bottom of the cellar, you can see the skeletal remains of several humanoids.***

There are six total bodies: four humans and two goblins. It will take the characters nearly an hour to dig them all out. A total of 2 gold coins and 97 silver coins are on the goblins.

### **Room 13**

***This area is a cellar that descends roughly eight feet. Stone debris and broken timbers lay about the area.***

There is nothing of interest or value here.

### **Room 14**

***This building has collapsed. Only a few pieces of standing stone remain. The area is overgrown with weeds and thickets.***

There is nothing of interest or value here.

### **Room 15**

***You have found a collapsed building. As you poke around the debris, you see only a few standing walls and a pile of rubble and debris.***

If a character successfully makes a searching roll while searching the rubble, they uncover a silver bracelet (100 gold).

### **Room 16**

***This area is the ruin of another building.***

There is nothing of value here.

### **Room 17**

***You have entered a building that is on the verge of collapse. The area appears to have been a storefront of some sort. Broken stones, splintered timber, dried leaves, and other debris cover the floor.***

This room contains nothing of interest or value.

### **Room 18**

***This room was once a bedroom. Debris covers several pieces of broken furniture.***

There is nothing of interest or value here.

### **Room 19**

***You descend the steps and find yourself in a large room. The ceiling above has remained intact. The bare stone floor is damp and mildewed. The remnants of wooden barrels and kegs stand in the southern portion of the room. There is a foul odor in the air.***

This room was a supply area for the store above. There is nothing of interest or value here. Searching the kegs and barrels will reveal that they are empty. Looters have been here before.



## Room 20

*You are looking at the remains of a stone and wooden pier. Most of the stone supports are intact, though grime covers them. Many wooden slats are missing or broken, making the dock unusable. An 8-foot tall wooden effigy made from bundled twigs and sticks with a cross piece about six feet off the ground stands near the river. On the cross is a scarecrow made from moldy hay, tattered cloth, and old leather sacks. The scarecrow appears quite grisly and menacing.*

The docks are no longer usable; however, repairing them would not be hard as the stone supports are intact and serviceable. The characters will notice the frames of two long boats submerged in the muddy riverbank. One long boat contains a plain copper necklace (3 gold).

The effigy is actually a **leather minion**, a monster fashioned by the evil enchantress as an enforcer and overseer. It will remain motionless until the higmoni are slain or flee. Once the higmoni are gone, the leather minion will kill the characters. It has a short sword hidden within its stuffing and will use this weapon to attack.

These minions follow short, simple instructions from their creators. These instructions cannot be more than 12 one or two-syllable words.

Leather minions have an AR of 3 and 30 armor points. When a leather minion is damaged, the damage is distributed among its hit points and armor points according to typical combat rules. In combat, a leather minion sustains half damage from non-magical attacks.

They can employ any weapon and have a constant 3 AV. The weapon type they use determines the amount of damage they inflict. When a leather minion suffers sufficient wounds to reduce its hit points to 0, the creature ceases to exist; otherwise, it remains for as long as the enchanter maintains the spell.

Leather minions are immune to disease, fear, mind, and poison-based attacks. They do not require sleep or sustenance. Their hit points are fully regenerated each day. Their armor points, however, can only be repaired with the field repair skill, a field repair case, and leather repair kits.

## LEATHER MINION

Hit Points	20 +1d10
Armor Rating	3
Attack Value	3
# Attacks	1
Weapon Type	weapon type
Damage	weapon type
Saving Throws	8+
Speed	3

A leather minion is a golem-like creature created by third level enchanted magic. The minion consists of a suit of leather armor stuffed with materials (hay, cloth, leather, etc.) and enchanted with magic that makes it ambulatory. The creature stands roughly five feet tall and weighs about eighty pounds. It possesses night vision with a range of 60 feet.