

Greenbaum's Prison: *A Trip to Hell*

AN ADVENTURE FOR 4 - 6 CHARACTERS OF LEVELS 9 - 10

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INTRODUCTION

The subject matter of this adventure is intended for mature audiences only. Reader discretion is advised.

The quaint farming community of Burge's Burrow has a secret and sordid past. Three decades ago, soon after the new baron's estate devise, children and small animals were disappearing sporadically without a trace. A group of hired hands from the nearby city investigated and found that a quiet housewife, Elspeth Crane had been worshipping a dark power. In honor, Mrs. Crane was sacrificing children and animals by dropping them down her water well. Following an inquisitorial hearing, the villagers dropped her into the well, sealed it shut and left her to die. The new Baron Voncousen expressed his wishes of confidence and the Crane Farm was then boarded up.

After three recent seasons proved dismal at harvest, the baron of the land was forced last year to increase the yield, and so he sold the Crane land to a young family who, ignorant to the past, opened Frybur Farm. Under the advisement to leave the defunct well alone. When the baron heard recently of the sudden disappearance of eight-year-old Tolas Frybur and his five-year-old brother Tad, he quickly dispatched aids to find help straightaway. When the first batch of hired adventurers disappeared and his village then became the devils' hunting ground, the baron realized he must reach out for a powerful group of heroes.

Greenbaum's Prison: A Trip to Hell is an adventure for four to six characters of levels 9 - 10. An expert party should consist of at least 36 combined levels; parties consisting of players with less experience should consist of at least 45 combined levels. The module is designed within a generic setting and is implantable in any campaign world.

Adventure Summary

Mrs. Lea Frybur packed her cart and hurried a day's travel to the baron's land to plea for help in relocating the two boys. After a previously dispatched party

vanishes and devils begin to steal away the villagers, the baron taps into his vast network in search of an able group of heroes. The PCs are introduced to the opportunity by a mutual friend and, after speaking with the anxious baron, they venture to Burge's Burrow and find the entire thorpe empty of its villagers and overrun by the fiendish servants of hell. After battling their way to Frybur Farms, the PCs come upon the shattered stone seal and a portal at the bottom of the water well. Knowing that the children somehow pierced this extra-dimensional veil, the PCs continue the adventure by blindly jumping into a window to hell.

The PCs enter the prison of Greenbaum, a bone devil imprisoned long ago by a duke of the first layer of hell. The tower is comprised of seven levels and its domed top still houses the bone devil himself, although the lower levels have been transformed from a general prison into a Soul Bank, a vile facility used for the cultivation and storage of soul energy. The PCs must scour the tower, destroy the evil and save as many poor souls as possible. Then, they must find a way to close the portal. After all, there's now a window open to the lands of men that may soon find the attention of the powers that keep Greenbaum at bay. Will the PCs be forced to sacrifice innocent lives for the greater good?

Involving the PCs

There are three ways to involve your PCs in this adventure; two are safe bets and the other a sinister railroad that skips the pleasantries and proceeds directly to battle.

SAFE BET

The PCs begin the adventure with no knowledge of Baron Voncousen. You must pluck out any NPC the players previously dealt with to facilitate a meeting with the noble. In this case, the familiar NPC informs the band that he was recently contacted by a long-time friend that oversees land containing a small farming outpost named Burge's Burrow. Apparently, the baron was visited by a

mother who claimed her two children disappeared while playing “knights” on the farm. A community search revealed nothing of the children but the stone cover of an old abandoned well behind the Frybur Farm had been displaced. All the adventurers dispatched to investigate the well have vanished. The NPC was informed by the baron that although he cannot afford to pay more-powerful adventurers, he offers to provide the band with a tract of land and the necessary workers to construct a desired settlement if they are successful in saving the villagers from whatever evil has befallen the quiet thorpe. The NPC also states that the baron has solicited more people but the band should hurry to help.

If you are running this adventure as a stand-alone crawl and no familiar NPC is available, the band notices the arrival (in whatever location you'd like) of a dispatched delegate of the baron's keep (likely a page). The delegate begins distributing parchment sheets painted with the faces of the two lost boys below a ‘magically missing’ heading. The delegate explains the mysterious phenomenon in hush terms and reiterates the baron's call for a group of adventurers able to succeed “where all those who've come before have failed.” The delegate is also authorized to note the bounty of land and labor to the successful adventurers. A successful DC 10 Diplomacy check (or equivalent Intimidate check) forces the young messenger to reveal that “something has begun to stir in the night.”

In either case, the PCs travel to the baron's keep, which stands a days travel from the small farming community of Burge's Burrow.

SINISTER RAILROAD

Since the children have reopened the well and reactivated the portal between Burge's Burrow and Greenbaum's prison, the minions of the tower have begun siphoning villagers into the well. While traveling through your campaign world, the band suddenly comes upon Burge's Burrow after the raids. Proceed straight to the first part of the adventure.

History

An abbreviated history of Greenbaum, his prison and Burge's Burrow follows.

GREENBAUM

Greenbaum served as a favored spy in the devil army under a general of the former archfiend of the first layer of hell. After insinuations from a greater devil charged Greenbaum with conspiring against the general, the general imprisoned the bone devil to investigate the matter. Greenbaum was sent to Gorgok's Row, a series of tower prisons containing minions of the archduke awaiting sentencing; the ring of towers forever orbits around the bronze fortress below. Greenbaum never received judgment and has remained for ages on the top floor of the tower, encapsulated in glass.

GORGOK'S ROW & THE INFAMOUS SHIFT OF POWER

The archfiend ruler of the first layer of hell was unseated by a powerful pit fiend concerned almost entirely with the advancement of the devil army. The archfiend recently (creative term) introduced his First Cabinet: a white-bleached pit fiend named Hexelset, a lawful-evil ancient red dragon named Filanthisets, and the Unknown Third. Hexelset focuses on aiding the army ranks with the eight generals, Filanthisets focuses on the citadel's order and the Unknown Third spearheads a soul-harvesting plan to increase the overall power of the archfiend in, and outside, hell. This Cabinet enjoys a similar level of power as the generals in the devil army.

The Unknown Third first examined the loyalties of the prisoners on Gorgok's Row, demoting those devils not suited for the regime while preserving a few of the prisoners for future investigation. Most of the towers in the row were then transformed into Soul Banks; the Unknown Third's impish minions were given freedom on the material plane to wrangle petitioners for the lower ranks of the archfiend's army and to shepherd the living to the Soul Banks, where they would remain until they volunteered their service or they would be tortured until their souls became divine power usable by the archfiend.

BURGE'S BURROW

Thirty years ago, Elspeth Crane was befriended by a disguised imp named Sigismund who later compelled the housewife to serve the imp's distant master. The housewife sent so many innocent lives to the bottom of her well, all in honor of her liege, that the Unknown

Third opened up a window straight to the tower (known still at that time as Greenbaum's prison).

This all came to a screeching halt when adventurers discovered the housewife's plans and the villagers combined to adjudge and later execute Elspeth. Neither the villagers nor the baron realized the existence of the window at the bottom of the well – the same window that Elspeth used to escape her sentence. From that point on, a fragile veil was all that separated the fiends' tower from the small village of Burge's Burrow.

The Unknown Third ordered Sigismund to seek out more fertile grounds and forbade any devils inside Greenbaum's prison to walk the material plane. The window veil separating the planes was hence inaccessible to those inside the tower.

THE VERY NEAR PAST ...

Tolis Frybur and his brother Tad indeed fell down the well after removing its stone seal. The two boys instantly shot through the portal's veil, landing in the base of Greenbaum's prison. Alarms sounded. Devils came to attention. The children were easily brought to a holding cell and the erinyes Grasst and her chain devil consort Prixile gave orders to breach the portal. The two consorts are attempting to fill the vaults with the souls of the villagers and earn the respect of the Unknown Third – potentially earning a promotion up the ranks of hell for their ambitious initiative.

Sample file

BURGE'S BURROW

The PCs begin the actual adventure at the baron's keep, which is one day's ride from the village of Burge's Burrow. After an introduction and fact-finding inquiry with Baron Voncousen, the PCs travel to the farming thorp of Burge's Burrow; once they arrive, they know immediately that they're too late.

The Baron's Secret

PRELUDE: MEETING THE BARON (EL 4)

It is recommended the GM roll ten or so Bluff checks for the baron before the role-play.

The baron lives in a slightly fortified, two-storied keep one day's ride from the farming community. Adjacent to his keep are stables, servant's quarters and a storehouse for the keep's supplies. Only one dirt path leads from the main trade route to this keep and only one dirt path leads from the keep to Burge's Burrow.

The PCs receive directions to the location of the baron's keep from the NPC source. A young female servant name Rivanna escorts the PCs to a second-floor office where they find the baron standing behind a neat desk. The baron appears as a tall thin human, sixty years old, wearing a high-buttoned gentleman's jacket and riding breeches. The top of his head is bald and the sides are short and gray. He appears weakened from a combination of age and sleep deprivation. A fine longsword leans on the side of his desk.

The baron introduces himself as Mr. Voncousen. He is genuinely happy the adventurers have agreed to meet with him and does attempt to win them over with a constant barrage of food, wine and praise. Any preliminary Sense Motive checks reveal the baron to be genuine, albeit overly careful in his chosen words and projected demeanor. Regardless of whether the PCs accept the baron's hospitality, the baron begins his story, asking the party to please hold questions until after he finishes:

- Ms. Lea Frybur, mother of Tolis and Tad Frybur, recently purchased with her husband the lot of land now known as Frybur Farms. The family recently completed renovations and were preparing to begin harvesting cereal. She came into his office three days ago exclaiming that her sons had disappeared a day earlier while playing in the yard.

- Before she ventured to the baron, the villagers engaged in a community-wide search for the boys. They were never found, although the once-sealed water well behind Frybur Farms was disturbed.

[BLUFF: *The baron attempts to conceal his anxiety about the events surrounding the Crane Farm and the well. A Sense Motive check that defeats the baron's Bluff check reveals that the baron is withholding information.*]

- The baron hired a group of young adventurers from a nearby village to investigate the disappearance. The adventurers have disappeared as well. He fears there may be some evil residing at Frybur Farms.

[BLUFF: *The baron attempts to conceal the fact that he believes the adventurers fell victim to an evil that was likely created thirty years ago and not disclosed to the Fryburs. Again, a sufficient Sense Motive check reveals he is withholding information. He does not know the truth: the adventurers fled the area and have been regrouping for a second foray.*]

- The baron wishes the band to investigate and dispatch of whatever evil is claiming the lives of the villagers. He offers to reward the band with a tract of land and requisite labor to build. He does not have monetary holdings sufficient to entice the heroes.

The baron is considered friendly toward the PCs at the onset of the conversation. A successful DC 20 Diplomacy check motivates the baron to buckle and serve up the entire true history of Frybur Farms and Elspeth Crane. If this should happen, the baron becomes extremely nervous, stuttering a thousand meshed justifi-

cations for his voluntary withholding of information. The baron also pleads guilty to ordering his villagers silent on the matter, claiming the safety of the Fryburs and the financial welfare of the thorpe were his primary goals. The baron immediately offers the PCs 2,000 gold pieces each, in addition to the tract of land and labor, to assure the PCs involvement and forgiveness. He does not know the village has been sacked and that the devils have stowed away the villagers to Greenbaum's prison.

The baron then reveals the one road leading straight to Burge's Burrow.

NOTE: A DC 25 Bardic Knowledge check reveals a similar history.

BARON VONCOUSEN

CR 4

Neutral Medium male human Ari5

Init -1; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Dwarven, Terran

AC 13, **touch** 9, **flat-footed** 13

(-1 Dex, +4 armor)

hp 17 (5 HD)

Fort +0, **Ref** +0, **Will** +5

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +2 longsword +4 (1d8)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3

Abilities Str 8, Dex 9, Con 9, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 15

Feats Persuasive, Skill Focus (ride), Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Appraise +6, Bluff +12, Diplomacy +11, Disguise +2 (aware) Gather Information +11, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (local) +9, Ride +6, Sense Motive +8, Sleight of Hand +2

Possessions +1 longsword, mwk chain shirt.



Trouble at Burge's Burrow

The thorpe of Burge's Burrow serves as a small supply outpost for the nearby farming families and as a waystation for traders purchasing the harvest yield. As such, it is only comprised of a handful of establishments. A fire recently ravaged the town hall and the community has begun to fortify the timber structures with stone and replace the thatch-roofing for timber shingles.

The thorpe is 18 miles from the baron's keep.

Read or paraphrase when the PCs reach the hill crest overlooking the village:

The dirt road you're traveling dips away from the hill and leads into a small clutch of thatch- and shingle-roofed buildings. Two dirt roads branch off from the clutch and a central square rests amidst the largest few buildings. No smoke emits from the chimneys but much smoke emits from a makeshift bonfire of sorts in the center of the square.

There are two fiendish goblin troops watching over the road coming into the thorpe, each focused on opposite sides of the thorpe. Upon noticing the PCs, the respective goblin rings a bell from its hiding place. This bell alerts all the troops to take position behind the buildings surrounding the square. Use the centre map to choose the location of the hiding spots and to see the location of the bonfire. The goblins move silently in shadows to take up the positions, and with the distance between the PCs and the troops, it is not possible to spot the troops without the assistance of magic or animal companions. Regardless, the troops take up positions as you indicate on the map prior to the PC's arrival.

THE VILLAGE CENTRE

Please note that this area is partitioned into two separate events.

PART ONE: GOBLIN SLAUGHTER (EL 5-)

The doors to all the buildings, including the tavern, Renker's Common Store, and the smithy have been ripped off the hinges. PCs exploring the immediate

exterior of any building find obvious signs of struggle, such as blood droplets, damaged furniture and broken weaponry strewn about. (The module includes below a general description of each of the major attractions).

The bonfire contains ten villagers the goblin troops killed in the process of raiding the thorpe. The furniture from most of the smaller dwellings on the map, as well as from the keyed locations, feeds the fire. This bonfire serves as a sacrificial rite to the goblins' deity Xussum and the sidebar on the next page contains more information on both the deity and the troops.

CREATURES: Twenty-four fiendish goblin troops hide behind the buildings in Burge's Burrow's square. The goblins maintain their position until the intruders examine the bonfire. Of course, if any of the troops lose cover and engage the PCs, all the troops rush to aid their fellow goblin.

Running the fight is ad-hoc. The battle with the goblins likely begins in the square when the PCs examine the fire. In that situation, the goblin troops at once charge at the band from all sides. The battle may occur in another part of the thorpe, though. You, as the GM, have been supplied with the monsters and the map. The rest is up to you.

Fiendish Goblin Troops

CR 1

Neutral Evil Small male fiendish-goblin War2
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Goblin, Infernal

AC 16, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 15;
(+1 size, +1 Dex, +3 armor, +1 shield)

hp 10 (2 HD)
Resist Cold 5 and fire 5; **SR** 7
Fort +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** -1

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee Scimitar +3 (1d4/18-20) or
Ranged Javelin +4 (1d4)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +2; **Grp** -2
Atk Options Smite good

Abilities Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 6
Feats Alertness
Skills Balance +0, Climb -1, Escape Artist +0, Hide

+5, Jump -1, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Ride +7, Spot +3, Swim -2

Possessions scimitar, studded leather, light wooden shield

Smite Good (Su): Once per day, the fiendish goblin troop can make a normal melee attack to deal +2 damage to good foe.

TREASURE: In addition to the items and currency noted in the descriptions of each of the keyed locations in the burrow, a total of 10 gp can be scrounged up from the various dwellings.

AD-HOC EXPERIENCE: The goblin troops are likely too weak to provide an ample challenge for the PCs. Nevertheless, various unforeseen circumstances may increase the challenge and the GM may award PCs experience points *up to* a CR 5 encounter.

DEVELOPMENT: The fiendish goblins swore eternal service to the demigod Xussum and through countless ceremonies the goblins bound their own spirits to the god. Unbeknownst to the goblins, Xussum only maintains a worship of 200, one-quarter of which comprise of the fiendish goblin contingent. Therefore, the demigod keeps a vigilant watch over the troops and upon the death of the last goblin standing, the demigod visits the sacrificial bonfire and unleashes a terrible vengeance. See Part Two below for more details.

PART TWO: THE ARRIVAL OF XUSSUM (ELIO)

THE DEMIGOD XUSSUM

Xussum, once a powerful fire elemental, is a relatively new and undiscovered demigod. The deity often served as a divine proxy for those gods whose worshipers employed flame rites as sacrificial ceremonies. The evil deities vested in Xussum a small portion of divine might to visit large flame rites and reward those servants with dark gifts. Once the assignment was completed, Xussum would retreat to his palace on the Plane of Fire to await his next charge.

The evil denizens of the world recognized Xussum's service and often paid tribute to the elemental by burning crossed logs or sacrificing a special victim on a large, burning 'X'. Small groups of pyromaniac sycophants began worshipping the elemental as a god. In time, the number of cells dedicating worship to Xussum grew and the dark powers of the cosmos imbued in Xussum a rank of divine might, immortalizing the elemental forever as the Lord of All Those Consumed by Flame. The appendix contains an entry describing the powers of Xussum.

Within the context of this module, a contingent of fifty fiendish goblins worshipping Xussum recently contracted with the Unknown Third to serve in the duke's cause. The duke agreed solely out of the motivation to forge an alliance with Xussum; however, the demigod remains disinterested in the duke's soul harvest. The demigod does, however, remain watchful of his goblin worshippers. Xussum appears in the presence of the PCs after they destroy the goblins in the square, as indicated in the keyed encounter.

Upon the death of the twenty-fourth goblin troop, Xussum peers into the square from his divine palace on the Plane of Fire. The demigod's face bursts forth from the flames, surveys the area and animates both the sacrificial corpses and the newly-fallen goblins (see illustration on page 10). Regardless of the location of the goblin slaughter, the adventurers hear the booming voice of Xussum calling the PCs to arms.

Xussum must remain within the flames unless he physically travels to the material plane, which he will not do. The demigod commands his skelus (see appendix) to either attack the PCs or set the village aflame.

CREATURES: Although the souls of all those sacrificed to Xussum freely travel to the home planes of their respective gods, the charred corpses remain the property of Xussum. The demigod often visits his most loyal subjects and blesses them with powerful corpse-like minions that are borne from the fiery rite. (These corpses are called skelus and appear in full detail in the appendix.) Skelus appear as the burning skeletons of the sacrifice victims. A black flame burns where the victim's heart once beat.

Although forced to remain in the bonfire, Xussum has the ability to exert a small amount of divine might. Firstly, as long as Xussum remains in the bonfire, the god may command any number of skelus. Secondly, Xussum may control the actual bonfire to grow appendages that set aflame to the natural surroundings and any additional corpses (such as the goblin troops or any