



Background

The party is passing through open grasslands, the occasional tree here and there. At one point they pass a ruined structure nearby. It appears to be part of an old stone building protruding from a hillside, with a low tower at one corner. Suddenly at the top of the tower appears a young woman, waving frantically and calling to the party. She urges the players to the building. Just then strange creatures come pouring out from behind the building. If the party hurries they may be able to make it inside...

Those who make it inside will find the abandoned rooms of an old stone building. The turret tower is accessible from one corner. Much of the building is buried by earth, with dirt coming through the wall in places. This occurred long ago when part of the hill collapsed onto the building. There is one sturdy barrable door to the outside and wooden shutters that close over the window openings. There is a small group of people here. From the windows the players can get a better look at the two kinds of creatures surrounding the building.

The Creatures

The **Orobanc** are tall mobile plants. They walk on a ring of stubby root-legs beneath a skirting of long leaves. The legs surround the mouth on the bottom of the plant. The stalk coils up into a globular head with sensory organs. Around the middle of the stalk is a cluster of club-like tubes which can launch barbs. The barbs secrete a numbing toxin which causes loss of feeling in the affected area for up to an hour (-3 DX on arm hits, -2 MA on leg hits). Orobanc are light brown, with orange leaves dappled with yellow spots. Their attributes are ST 9, DX 10, IQ 4, MA 8. They can do 1d-1 club damage with their tube arms, and "throw" barbs for 1d damage. Roll a die to determine where a barb hits. 1, 2, or 3, is the body (chest, abdomen, or back). 4 is an arm. 5 is a leg. 6 is the head (face, neck, or back of head). When hitting a limb, roll again to determine which one. Due to their sensory node, all surrounding hexes are "front" hexes.

The **Thylanc** are thylacines, dog-like marsupials. They have long quills which they raise when angry or defensive. They are mauve with red-brown stripes across their haunches. They are fast, cunning, and ravenous. Their attributes are ST 7, DX 13, IQ 6, MA 12. Their powerful bite does 1d+1 damage. Their quills stop 1 point of damage and add 2 points of damage in HTH.

Thylanc often live in mutual partnership with Orobanc, each getting benefits from the other. Orobanc are more alert at night and hunt primarily by sound and movement, whereas Thylanc are active at daytime and rely mostly on sight and smell to find their prey. Each specie finds the other inedible and will not attack it. The creatures were all mobbed together behind the building when the players arrived because they were attacking a deer that had wandered close. There are at least 15 Orobanc and 10 Thylanc nearby. The GM can alter this to fit the party, but it should be too many initially for a simple battle. There will need to be strategy, cunning, and maybe even sacrifice for most to survive.

The Survivors

The group of people inside are comprised of the survivors from three different groups, each ambushed by the creatures outside. The survivors that have been there the longest are from the *Scholar* group, and they have been trapped here for six days. The next group of survivors are from the *Youth* group, who have been here three days. The last group of survivors are from the *Bandit* group, who've been trapped here since the previous day. Everyone in the gathering understands the human language, plus their native tongue.

Scholars: **Nadea** (human female, 54) is the only actual scholar left from her group. They had come to study the Orobanc, but were not prepared for the Thylanc. She can provide information and speculation about both kinds of creature. ST 9, DX 11, IQ 15, MA 10. **Scholar, Expert Naturalist, Chemist**, several languages, no weapon. **Dunelon** (dwarf male, 27) is a student and the self-appointed protector of his teacher Nadea. His cunning and efforts so far have kept both of them alive. He stands guard against the Bandit group. He finds the Youth group naive but admires their optimism. ST 13,

DX 11 (10), IQ 12, MA 10. Wears field work-clothes equivalent to cloth armor and carries a dwarven morningstar. **Ax/Mace, Architect, Literacy**. The other three in their party did not make it to safety.

Youths: **Leshal** (human female, 19) is the more outgoing of the surviving Youth group. They were a group of villagers who had all come of age together and were headed to the nearby town to learn a trade. It was Leshal that hailed the party from atop the tower. ST 11, DX 11, IQ 10, MA 12. **Charisma, Poet, Running, Unarmed Combat I** (learned for self-defense), no weapon. **Sanal** (human female, 19) is less gregarious than her friend, but observant and sharp. She remains vigilant at night lest the Bandits try anything. ST 10, DX 12, IQ 11, MA 10. Carries a horse bow and has 29 arrows. **Bow, Alertness, Acrobatics, Swimming, Vet**. They lost four other party members.

Bandits: **Crassus** (human male, 34) is a bandit leader whose band was returning from looting a caravan. He is ingratiating and makes a pretense of being reasonable, but is in fact ruthless. ST 11, DX 12, IQ 12, MA 10. Carries a dagger on his belt and another concealed in his boot. **Knife, Detect Traps, Diplomacy, Assess Value**. **Gnuth** (orc male, 29) is a mercenary turned bandit. Wary and graceless, he is a textbook "surly orc". ST 13, DX 12 (10), IQ 9, MA 10. Carries a halberd and a dagger. **Pole Weapon, Knife, Climbing, Streetwise**. **Dolt** (hobgoblin male, 24) had his tongue torn out by his previous bandit chieftain. He fled and ended up attaching himself to Gnuth like a lost dog. He is a witless coward and kleptomaniac, and the other Bandits consider him expendable. ST 10, DX 14, IQ 8, MA 10. Carries three hatchets (small ax) for throwing. **Brawling, Ax, Thrown Weapon, Quick Draw**. They lost one of their party before reaching the ruins. There is a \$600 bounty on Crassus, dead or alive.

The Ruins

The map is at regular hex scale. North is at the top of the map. The road is to the East. Earth hexes should be treated as impassable. The stairs (**A**) lead up to the top of the turret tower, which is one megahex in size. You can see all around the building from up there. Most of the survivors stay and sleep in the main hall (**B**). The Bandits have taken shelter behind door (**C**). If attacked they will withdraw into room (**D**) and spike the door. They have arranged a 2d damage rock deadfall trap (**E**) before the door, 4/IQ to spot and 4/DX to disarm. There is a 4d locked door (**F**) leading into an unexplored room. Inside is a cabinet with 6 lantern oil flasks, 8 torches, 4 coils of rope, 1 coil of chain, a rope ladder, a labyrinth kit, 2 daggers, a quiver of 20 arrows, cloaks, blankets, writing paper and ink powder.








The Bandits have secluded themselves in the back rooms of the building. They were working on a plan to overpower the others and use the Scholars as sacrifices to draw away the creatures. Then they would escape with the Youths, whom they hoped to sell into slavery. The arrival of the players has complicated these plans. The Bandits have two waterskins, 18 rations, 1 lantern and 4 flasks of lantern oil. They also have their loot sacks, which the GM can fill as desired.

The remaining survivors have three waterskins, one of them half empty, and 24 rations. They have 5 torches, 1 lantern, and 2 oil flasks.

The creatures should be placed in Open hexes outside of the building and moved regularly. They will not voluntarily enter the building.

For each day that passes in the ruin, roll a die. On a 1 or 2, no one comes along the road. On a 3 a single traveler passes by, which the creatures have a 50% chance of detecting (3 or less on one die). On a 4 a pair of mercenaries are walking the road, which the creatures have a 66% chance of detecting (4 or less on one die). On a 5 a farmer in a horse-drawn cart comes down the road, which the creatures always detect. On a 6 three mounted, armed, and armored bounty-hunters come down the road, which the creatures always detect.

The Orobanc were being cultivated for their anesthetic properties by a nearby group of physickers. Something happened and the plants escaped. The Thylanc, their natural partners, sought them out and joined forces. Seeking the original garden of these Orobanc could lead to further adventures. There may also be rewards if the players recover the journals of the dead Scholars, or return the possessions of the dead Youths to their families, if they can find the bodies.

-  **STONE WALL**
-  **EARTH**
-  **OPEN**
-  **STAIRS**
-  **ROAD**
-  **DOOR**
-  **WINDOW**

