Game Notes 7/4 – The Borakki Crypt and the Book of Blood

##### Background

Years ago a large number of worshippers of Toron were exiled from the Borakki clans. These people fled east and finally settled in a cold, desolate, mountainous land they called Toron Belecare (Toron’s Kingdom), commonly called the Caigenhurst by Bostonians. Here they were free to openly practice their rites and customs, which included the use of spirits of the “wicked” dead as servants. (In truth, they were exiled because they were a little loose on what constituted a soul wicked enough to be raised. The leader of the nation of Bor’s Children would have put them to the sword, but he was afraid of offending Toron, so he spared and exiled them.)

This crypt is an example of what the Borakki call a soul cairn. More elaborate than the usual site devoted to Toron, a soul cairn is a place where the bodies and spirits of the dead are prepared for eternal servitude. A priest/necromancer works here along with his apprentices to create an army of undead servants and bring glory to Toron.

##### The Three Cursed Books

The Borakki believed that this region was the home to a very sacred place called The Path, a cave that led to Toron’s realm. The power and knowledge that could be gained by going there is enormous and so the location of the entrance was a secret known by only a few. To make sure their secret was guarded, and yet not lost to the generations, they wrote it in three books, one of bone, another of flesh, and finally a book of soul (which translates to blood in Bostonian since many Borakki feel that blood contains the soul). Each book contains directions to a gate and anyone who walks the three gates is granted access to The Path and ultimately, to Toron’s underworld realm.

Eventually, these Borakki necromancers disappeared. Some say that they were killed off by Talak. Others say their own undead rose up against them. Still others claim that Toron himself punished them for their indiscriminate use of his gifts. The books were found by native grunj who feared they would be found and used, so they split their tribe into three, each group taking a book, and fled deep into the wilderness.

##### Toron

Toron is the god of death, disease, necromancy, night and stealth. He is patron of thieves and necromancers as well as doctors and alchemists. He favors magic, sorcerers, cleverness, trickery, miners and thieves. He is god of fall and oversees the harvest. Toron favors stealth or magic over battle, but wields a poleax when needed. He appears as a Borakki man with bright red hair, or as a huge bat.

Borakki believe that the spirits of the dead travel underground until they find Toron's court where they reside. Toron guides and protects the spirits from the Shadows that still lurk deep underground. Toron also judges the spirits. Those that the gods find worthy are allowed to rest. The unworthy are made to toil at the beck and call of necromancers for all time.

Temples to Toron are found in caves, swamps, near mines or at the site of mass deaths. Temples are often little more than an ornate stone altar surrounded by many markers of bones and skulls.

##### Encounters in the Crypt

1. **Entrance** –

The entrance to the crypt is a simple brick archway that is overgrown with vines and trees. Hasty brickwork blocks the entrance and it will take some time and effort to break through to the crypt.

There are no markings or statues outside that indicate the purpose of this place, just an archway with a simple set of stairs that leads to a large stone door. Above the door are carved the words (in Borakki) “All are equal in the eyes of Toron.”

A grey-maned grunj appears here (from stealth) when the group begins to investigate the crypt. He is Fervygrin (FER vuh grin) and he is the last surviving grunj of the settlement destroyed by Rothchild. He knows some of the history of this place and of the three cursed books (though not their ultimate purpose). He is here to warn the PCs from entering the crypt. If they are adamant about exploring the crypt, he asks that PCs leave the bodies of Rothchild alone and turn the book over to him.

* Rothchild – (spits) He is the devil. He and his men killed all of my people to acquire that cursed magic book. I saw your holy man bring the bodies here and throw them into this place before he bricked it up. I hope Rothchild’s death was painful and lingering.
* Book – Three of them left here by the Borakki necromancers. My people found them generations ago and we resolved to hide them from the eyes of the world to save them from the curse. Surely, you must know that these books are cursed and that to use them is to call down the curse on you and your kin. I would beg you if you find the book, to return it to me so that I can continue my peoples’ mission to keep these books from men.
* What Do You Want With It? – I will take it far from here, and search for my people, those that have the other books. Hopefully, they will be able to keep it safe.
* Safe With Us – Hah! Though I am certain you have enough might to take it, I am just as certain you lack the willpower to stop yourselves from using it. I can smell the runes on you. To you, I am sure the book is just another trinket to add to your power. You would have a hard time convincing me of your noble intentions for the book that bleeds.
* Three of Them? – I have only seen the book that bleeds -- the one Rothchild took. The others are said to be bound in bone and flesh. I have never seen them. They were taken away by the other tribes never to be seen.
* Curse – I have always been taught that the books were evil and that even seeing them was dangerous. You tell me. How did your Rothchild die? That is the curse.
* Other Tribes – I do not know where the others are now. When we resolved to hide the books, the tribe split into three and scattered to get as far from each other as possible. This was all before I was born, so I have never seen anyone from those tribes.
* Come With Us – I was considering the wisdom of entering this crypt. I have no idea what depravities the worshippers of Toron have created here, and to be honest, I was afraid to find out. However, perhaps with your help, I will go. But I will expect you to turn over the book if we find it.

1. **Descent** – Steps lead down into a small entry chamber. The walls here are block, but there are many places where the brick has crumbled away, exposing dirt and rock behind them. The occassional skull is set into the wall – the eyes or jaw holds candles.

Chanting can be heard throughout the halls, as can sounds of bone scraping on stone. (This is from the chanting wall.)

* “All that lives must die.”
* “All that is flesh must rot.”
* “All that thinks lies unthinking.”
* “All that dreams lies undreaming.”

1. **Changing Room** – There are three posts that hold candles in this room and a set of small chests and a single larger wardrobe.

The chests contain the clothing and personal effects of the people who worked here – four sets of old, but serviceable Borakki clothes and boots. The personal effects aren’t much, but there are two valuable pieces, a ring made of silver (50p) and a necklace made of copper, the locket has a bone carving of a skull wearing a crown (250p).

The wardrobe contains a white, rough cloth robe, stained with old blood. The robe is odd in that it covers not only the body and the head, but also has an attached blindfold that ties over the eyes. The shroud has the minor magical properties of blinding the user, but making him invisible to the undead and giving a +1 to skills that deal with necromancy (including alchemy and physician). However, the item is enchanted in such a way that it is only useful in this place, or another like it.

1. **Chanting Wall** – This wall is set with skulls from floor to ceiling. These skulls are animated and are the source of the chanting that can be heard through the crypt.
2. **Hall of the Mortal** – The walls of this hallway are painted with a crude depiction of a baby being born, growing into a man and watching his parents die, then growing old and dying and finding himself in front of Toron for judgement. The last scene is the man being raised in eternal servitude as an undead.
3. **Prep Room** – The bodies are prepped here. There is a fairly nice (if old) set of physician tools here, as well as a decent alchemy set up. The bodies are cut open and their internals are removed and stored in clay pots. Then they are filled with embalming fluids and then enchanted and wrapped in tight bandages.

A large skeleton is here, wearing a white robe over his body, head and eyes. He wanders here, cutting and sewing as he has done for years. The problem is that he is out of bodies with enough flesh to use. He grumbles and moans about the state of his workshop and not being able to make his quota. Small, child-like (grunj actually) skeletons skitter about to his commands. When he sees the PCs, he’ll delightedly say, “Oh wonderful, you’ll do just fine!”

1. **Hanging Room** – This room has a dirt floor and mushrooms grow on the walls and floor. About a dozen man-sized cocoons are hanging from the ceiling, covered in mold and fungus.

The fungus is Corpse Cap and on a successful herbalism roll, 2d6 doses can be harvested here. A failed roll means only 1d3 doses are gained. If eaten raw, it is a mild poison (TOU 15 or be sickened for 1d4 days). However, it can be processed into the following recipies:

* Corpsebane (DL 13; 30p) – Poisons a weapon against the undead. A weapon treated with this paste does +1 damage to undead creatures for 1 day, or 6 hits, whichever comes first.
* Numbing Powder (DL 14; 10p) –You can ignore the effects of a wound, but you take 1d4 additional hit points.
* Mushroom Tea (DL 8; 5p) – A mild narcotic that produces feelings of goodwill, all social skills used on this person get a +1 bonus.
* Deep Draught (DL 12; 15p) – A liquid that puts a user into a deep sleep (TOU 12 to resist if unwilling) for 1d6 days. Natural healing is doubled during this period.

1. **Defiled Grunj Burial** – When digging a new chamber, the builders of this crypt came upon an existing grunj burial ground. They dug into it and started collecting the bodies. A gaggle of grunj skeletons are here digging out the remains of their ancestors.
2. **Body Storage** – Lots and lots of coffins, but they are all empty it seems.
3. **Chemical Storage** – This small room is filled with barrels and casks that hold the fluids and acids that are used in the preparation process.
4. **Path of the Dead** – The door to this room has the words “Ultimately, all walk Toron’s path.”

Several skeletons with bows sit atop platforms above a room strewn with bodies. The skeletons shoot arrows at anyone not shrouded. Also, anyone that strays from the path between the bodies becomes poisoned and starts losing hit points pretty quickly (TOU 20 each round or lose 1d10).

1. **Hall of the Guardians** – Two very large skeletons with nasty swords stop all but those in a blinded robe from going into the chambers beyond.
2. **Toron Statue** –Three archways, one red, one ivory, and the last one flesh colored lead into a dark pool with a single column rising out of the middle. The column is carved into a likeness of the Borakki god, Toron, lording over mountains of pleading undead. The statue is notable for the beautiful, glinting gems in the eyes.

Two huge bats dwell here, but they are sleeping when the PCs arrive. They will not wake unless disturbed, or the PCs make a loud noise. If the bats are roused, they will defend their home.

1. **Dead Priest** – Here the dead priest waits for new victims with his guards and his apprentices. He has the Blood Book and he can use it to cast a few spells.
2. **Final Chamber** – Here are the bodies of Rothchild, his wife and Ombras.