



IN THE DWARVEN KING'S COURT

BY WILLIE WALSH

The game is
afoot in the
royal palace

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This AD&D® game adventure is designed for a party of 3-6 characters of levels 3-5. The party should be largely composed of dwarves or beings friendly toward dwarves (stout halflings, humans, and gnomes in particular). Player characters should be predominantly good in alignment. Detective work is involved to a greater extent than is combat in this adventure.

For the Dungeon Master

This adventure is set in the relatively small dwarven kingdom of Fairgeld, which is ruled by a king and queen — Baradon the Wise and Isabella Ironfoot, respectively. These two dwarves govern a land whose people have felt the threat of war in recent times and which have striven to avoid this at almost any cost.

Its equally small neighbor, the dwarven kingdom of Jerad East (ruled by the dwarven lord Jeraldus Wormsbane), has grown more aggressive in its attempts to open markets for its iron ore. These moves have troubled the chambers of King Baradon and brought about a general air of uncertainty among his subjects. Fortunately, the wise Baradon has recently come up with a solution to the problem and has averted war with Jerad East by proposing a treaty: a pact of mutual nonaggression which promises trade and plenty for all in the near future.

The treaty, although a minuscule event in the world at large, presents a hopeful future for the two kingdoms, which have suffered in the past from their isolation and lack of an ally when the neighboring (and larger) states became belligerent, as happened only three years before. Each kingdom has promised to come to the other's aid if the need should arise. However, Fairgeld's populace, which is predominantly composed of hill dwarves, looks forward to the signing of the treaty with mixed feelings. Can Jerald East be trusted? Some human factions would prefer an alliance with a larger (human-governed) state, but most are satisfied with the current treaty.

As the day of the treaty signing draws nearer, Baradon and Jeraldus Worms-

bane have exchanged gifts, each honoring the other by his acceptance of his neighbor's token of good will. Baradon graciously accepted an expensive short sword, gilt-edged and jewel encrusted. In return, Jeraldus was pleased to receive a helm of great beauty and craftsmanship, set with tracery of silver and gold. (Neither king could afford to send magical items.) It was agreed that these honorable gifts should be displayed by the kings themselves in three weeks' time, on the occasion of the signing of the historic treaty.

It is understandable, then, that the theft of the ceremonial sword from Baradon's palace at Mount Diadem, in the very heart of the realm of Fairgeld, should be a matter for grave concern.

The fact is that the sword is not the first item to disappear from the palace in recent months, but it may well prove to be the most potentially disastrous. If King Baradon should arrive at the meeting without the sword, it means the end of any accord that the two kingdoms might have hoped to achieve. It is a matter of honor, of course, and explanations or excuses will not be accepted.

The Queen of Mount Diadem, Isobella Ironfoot, has managed to hush up the recent spate of thefts, preventing word from reaching those outside the confines of the palace and thus causing a scandal. Thanks to her, the more serious theft of the sword has gone unnoticed as well. A whiff of scandal now would certainly ruin the preparations for the treaty-day celebrations. In fact, the revelation of the identity of the thief who has wandered the palace for the last few months would have unimaginable repercussions. Isobella alone has discovered that the thief is none other than her husband — King Baradon!

Baradon's Ailment

The various skeletons in the collective cupboards of the Fairgeld royal family have made for some lively tales in the past, but none can rival the notoriety of the fourth Lord Under the Mountain, the infamous Sklabek the Grasping. (The present king is the eleventh in Fairgeld's dynasty.) This unpleasant king ruled for a period of 505 years, dying 1139 years ago.

Sklabek was miserly, bad mannered, and craved long life and happiness. Needless to say, he found little of the latter of his aspirations, but he did

manage to achieve a much longer life than any of his predecessors by a method which has remained a mystery among his family to the present day. Long hours of discussion among the dwarves in an effort to discover his secret have always proved fruitless, for though Sklabek eventually died, he refused to divulge the cause of his longevity. A popular jest was that Sklabek had elven blood in him.

What actually happened was this. During Sklabek's reign, there lived a famous gypsy alchemist named Flavis, who, for his own part, had earned some notoriety among his people through the creation of some questionable potions. In any event, he was eventually banished from the presence of his family and came to the court of the dwarven king, who had an interest in finding the secret of eternal youth. The unfortunate gypsy soon fell foul of the unscrupulous Sklabek. The king employed Flavis in the task of finding the ingredients of a powerful *potion of longevity*. The method of its manufacture was crude and contained some items which were of doubtful origin, but it worked. The king lived a longer life than was his due, inflicting his grasping reach on his unwilling subjects for more years than was natural. Flavis, though, met with an untimely end in the secret dungeons of the king and was forgotten.

The dungeon cell and its hapless occupant were totally lost from the knowledge of the dwarves following the reforms after the death of Sklabek. To this day, the dwarves are unaware that the occasional spates of ill luck which seem to follow members of the royal family are connected with the hostile will of the ancient gypsy Flavis — for Flavis still lurks in the secret cell of his imprisonment as a haunt (*Monster Manual II*, page 74), patiently awaiting his final release. He used a *ring of wishes* on the day of his arrest to place a powerful curse on the family of the dwarven king, for as many generations as possible, and to make himself incapable of undoing the curse's power. Then Flavis hid the *ring*, with one *wish* left on it, before he was taken away and slain. The curse has lasted to the present day and has caused the recent upsets.

While the royal family and the kingdom have prospered since Sklabek's eventual death, each of the male members of the clan have fallen prey to some form of mental illness within years

after coming to the throne of his ancestors. The dwarves know of no reason why this should be so; no cure has been found, but the peculiarities of certain members of the royal family have been discreetly hushed up. These peculiarities have usually been mild (as in the case of Khorzanzo II, who was deathly afraid of birds), and few outside the family circle were ever aware of them. Some, like Isobella, suspect a connection with the mysteriously long life of Sklabek, but no proof of this has yet been found. That the disabilities began after Sklabek's death is the only evidence Isobella has.

The curse has not been idle. Baradon has now developed a form of disorder that resembles a multiple personality — what is incorrectly referred to as schizophrenia in the *Dungeon Masters Guide* (page 83). In this condition, Baradon believes himself to be his imagined twin brother and rightful heir to the throne, Baradaar. (Baradon was actually an only child.) It is the secondary part of his personality, Baradaar, who steals items randomly from the palace, hiding both the items and himself in the dark recesses of the catacombs behind the throne room. These secret caves, hidden since the time of Sklabek, may be reached by a secret door in the rear of the very throne on which Baradon sits during the day. This door remained undetected by all but the king until now. Baradaar also uses a secret entrance to the caves from the king's private apartments, likewise dating from Sklabek's time. Those items which are not hidden by Baradaar are sold for eating money by the "poverty-stricken" pretender to the throne.

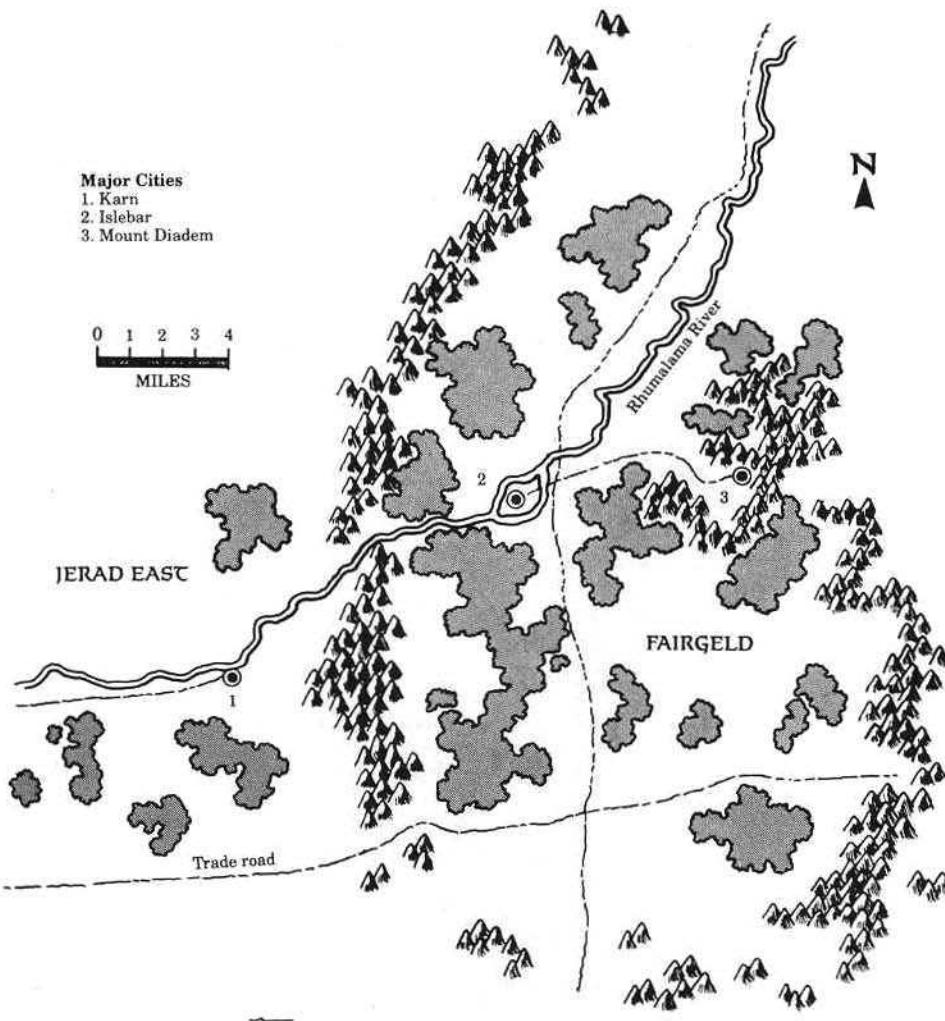
These are the facts behind the spate of thefts which have culminated in the disappearance of the ceremonial sword. But there are others at the court who are involved either directly or indirectly with the thefts. The list of suspects is given below.

The Court of the King

There are several important NPCs to meet at the court of the king. As one may see, things are a little more complicated than they are described above!

Much of the information below should not be given to the player-character investigators. Careful questioning and discrete listening will reveal the majority of it, save for the darkest secrets —

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such as Tafra's identity, Snagrat's real mission, Fingal's money-making ventures, and so on — which require actual exploration and (perhaps) magical investigation to reveal.

Finally, though several of these NPCs carry weapons, the open display of weaponry other than daggers (save by the king, the Chief Executioner, or the guards) is frowned upon. Adventurers are not permitted to wear weaponry in the palace without the express permission of the king himself. If necessary, however, additional weaponry may be had for all NPCs from the dwarven guards and armories.

King Baradon the Wise, also known as **Prince Baradaar**: (statistics in parentheses are for Baradaar) AC 6; MV 6"; F9 (T1); hp 64; #AT 3/2 (1); Dmg by weapon type; S 17, I 15, W 18 (10), D 15, C 16, Ch 16 (11); AL NG (NE); (Baradaar's skills: pick pockets 30%, open locks 35%, find traps 35%, move silently 15%, hide in shadows 10%, hear noise 10%, climb walls 75%, read languages nil); *ring of protection +3*

Baradon usually wears plate mail armor in combat, with a battle axe as his preferred weapon. In daily affairs, he does not wear armor; neither will he wear it while in the guise of Baradaar.

Generally well dressed, this virtue is reversed when his second personality comes to the fore and dresses in ragged clothing. Baradon wears two daggers under his robes, as does Baradaar.

With respect to personality, Baradon is kind and wise in dealing with his subjects, and he manages money with the care that made his family rich. It is not outside his experience to pay well for a service rendered, but it is certainly not his style to lavish gifts on a favorite.

This attitude changes when his Baradaar counterpart takes hold. This occurs infrequently, and it only happens at night. Baradaar is both petty and hateful, causing a dramatic drop in the king's charisma. Baradaar possesses the abilities of a 1st-level thief, brought on by the curse, and associates with but one other person, preferring to hide and plot his revenge on the king from the safety of the catacombs.

The person Baradaar deals with is Fingal Furfeet (see below), the halfling Court Jester, who has no reason to doubt that Baradaar is the person he claims to be (i.e., the usurped and rightful king).

Queen Isobella Ironfoot: AC 7; MV 6"; F5; hp 44; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16, I 17, W 15, D 17, C 15, Ch 14; AL LG; *dagger +1*

Concerned more with the welfare of the king's public image than any other interest, Isobella usually handles the wording of decrees and letters, being careful not to offend. This may, however, blind the unwary to the fact that she is a very stubborn and determined personality, and can resort to bribery or threats if the well-being of the king is being compromised. As such, she has managed to keep events at the palace under wraps until the present time, and she is convinced that she is the only person who knows that the king is the thief and is mentally ill. She learned of the king's condition when she was startled to see him stalk through the palace one night a month ago, whispering aloud and addressing himself as Baradaar. Repeated investigations have clarified the king's mental condition, but she has learned nothing else as yet.

Through her tireless work, Isobella has earned a good measure of respect for herself throughout Fairgeld. This can be a disadvantage, though, especially when strangers to Mount Diadem show less admiration for her than she is accustomed to receiving.

Given the choice, Isobella would prefer not to allow any outsiders to investigate the thefts, fearing their success in the venture and exposure of the king as being the culprit all along. With this in mind, the investigators will find the queen's attitude icy, to say the least. She does not hinder the characters in their search, but she has them watched continually by guards. Isobella knows nothing of Fingal's involvement with the king.

Fingal Furfeet (the Court Jester and secret thief): AC 8; MV 9"; T3; hp 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, I 13, W 10, D 16, C 15, Ch 16; AL N; pick pockets 45%, open locks 43%, find traps 35%, move silently 37%, hide in shadows 35%, hear noise 20%, climb walls 72%, read languages nil; dagger

Fingal seems to be a harmless character who serves only to make people laugh. As he was the only nondwarf at the palace, suspicion immediately fell on the halfling when items first began to disappear. However, it was soon pointed out that Fingal had not arrived at the court when the first of the thefts (see rumor #20, below) took place.

The truth is that the local Thieves' Guild heard news of strange events filtering out from the dwarf king's palace and sent Fingal along to investigate. Managing to be hired as the Court Jester six months ago, Fingal remained faithful to his guild at first. Then, one evening, he encountered the king's "twin brother" and was persuaded to help Baradaar sell off small items of value. In return, Fingal is to come into gold and power as soon as Baradaar takes his rightful place on the throne of his ancestors.

This deal allows Fingal to dispose of most of the smaller items already stolen by Baradaar, keeping the "deposed monarch" in food and clothing and making a tidy little profit as well. With this latter aim, Fingal has enlisted the help of the Royal Blacksmith to ship the stolen goods to a secret place in the woods from which they eventually come to the marketplace in the nearby city of Islebar.

Periodically, the jester/thief is obliged to send a note to his guildmaster, reporting on events and explaining the investigations he has carried out — which have been few indeed of late. To date, he has managed to keep his masters from asking too many questions,



although they are aware that goods of questionable origin appear from time to time in Islebar and that such goods come from Mount Diadem.

Understandably, if questioned about the thefts, Fingal denies all knowledge of them. He instead diverts attention from himself to the Royal Executioner, a strange and shadowy figure at Court, whom Fingal does not entirely trust.

Fingal does all he can to avoid direct combat, preferring to act silly (as everyone expects a jester to act) and keep his eyes open. He gets along well with most of the other dwarves in the palace and feels that his future is relatively secure — or at least it was until the investigators arrived. If he can harass the party in some suitable manner, he'll make the attempt.

Firesoot Ironfist (the Royal Blacksmith): AC 7; MV 6"; F3; hp 22; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 18(12), I 10, W 11, D 16, C 17, Ch 15; AL CN; usually unarmed

As a smith, Firesoot is well known and skillful enough to satisfy the needs of the miners and craftsmen of the king. Unfortunately, he has also become in-

volved in the thieving troubles and is in league with Fingal Furfeet.

Although Firesoot is aware that the items he fences are stolen, he believes that the halfling is the culprit, and he knows nothing of Baradaar, the catacombs, or the king's ailment. He has a certain hidden admiration for the jester's prowess as a burglar, based on Fingal's apparent feat of stealing the ceremonial sword at a time when he was seen playing cards with three of the palace guards. Firesoot, however, has refused to have anything to do with selling the ceremonial sword.

Firesoot is careful to keep the small stolen items hidden in a cubbyhole in the floor of his room until it is safe to ship them to Fingal's contact in the woods. For this, he receives one quarter of the cash that the goods fetch in the city. He thinks that Fingal gets the other three quarters, unaware that a further quarter of the money actually goes to the king (as Baradaar).

The smith is a rather gruff character, largely given to the dwarven ideals of hard work and skill at labor. If questioned about his whereabouts at the time of a theft, he can usually supply an



airtight alibi, with witnesses to prove it. If discovered as an accomplice, he will not give away the jester's involvement unless threatened with death.

Firesoot Ironfist has never met the king while the king was in his Baradaar phase, and he knows nothing of the king's ailment. He is careful not to cross Isobella and treats her with cautious respect.

Tafra the Assassin (the Court Executioner): AC 6; MV 6"; A8; hp 31; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA assassination; S 14, I 15, W 15, D 14, C 16, Ch 14; AL LE; pick pockets 55%, open locks 57%, find traps 60%, move silently 47%, hide in shadows 37%, hear noise 20%, climb walls 82%, read languages 25%; leather armor, *battle axe* +2 (also serves as executioner's axe), *ring of protection* +2

This character is perhaps the nastiest-looking being residing at Mount Diadem. He dresses in sable and wears a face-covering hood. The name he answers to, Tafra, is an assumed one. Tafra has a strange way about him which unnerves those meeting him. As a result, the brooding figure of the king's executioner is seldom seen in

conversation with any of the courtiers or staff. Tafra has never been particularly busy in his role as an executioner, but some say that's because he frightened away the criminals.

Being an executioner, it is hardly surprising that he is also an 8th-level assassin. In fact, he is currently taking a break from his career of carnage and has found temporary employment at Mount Diadem, where his true occupation has remained hidden from the dwarves. (Assassins are outlawed in Fairgeld.)

Tafra was recently given the honor of being entrusted with a ceremonial goblet by his guild, the Brotherhood of Butchers. Unfortunately, the goblet has secretly been added to the list of items which have mysteriously disappeared from the palace. It is now the task of the assassin to find this goblet with all due haste and to dispatch the miscreant. Tafra doesn't intend to fail in this task, since he will not be given the opportunity to fail at anything again should he return to the guild without the goblet. His Guildmaster was quite specific on that point.

The Court Executioner maintains a

brooding and sinister air, accentuated by concern over the loss of the goblet. If questioned, he speaks little and says even less if asked what he thinks of Fingal Furfeet, the halfling Court Jester. The jester played a practical joke on the executioner a few days after the latter arrived at Mount Diadem, hurting Tafra's pride. The executioner is careful to draw suspicions to the halfling and is not above a few lies to make the suspicions stick. He has no plans to attack anyone directly (save for the goblet's thief). He keeps a measured distance from all other dwarves at Mount Diadem.

Snagrat Slimtongue (the Royal Advisor and Jeraldus's spy): AC 10; MV 6"; HD 1 ("zero-level"); hp 6; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 10, I 11, W 9, D 11, C 14, Ch 12; AL N; usually unarmed

Snagrat thought he was clever to install himself at the side of Baradon in an attempt to procure useful information for his real master, Jeraldus Wormsbane, the dwarven king of Jerad East. In fact, he has bungled this mission so badly that Baradon manages to

find out more from Snagrat about Jeraldus's plans than the other way around. Baradon wisely keeps Snagrat around to keep tabs on his neighbor, feeding the would-be spy a river of false information concerning the situation at Mount Diadem and his own plans for the future.

Snagrat avoids fighting, preferring to run away if his life is threatened. Normally, he favors smooth talking in order to have others work according to his designs. He rarely gives a straight answer to a straight question, sometimes baffling the questioner with the evasiveness of the answer. He is rather pompous and likes his creature comforts; his only true achievement at Mount Diadem was to have a well-furnished and comfortable apartment set aside for his convenience. He knows nothing about Baradon's ailment or the loss of the sword.

"Slimtongue" is a nickname coined by the dwarves of Baradon's court, and Snagrat will not take kindly to being addressed as such by any unwitting player characters.

Bern Sureshank (the Royal Armorer): AC 8; MV 9"; F6; hp 38; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 17, I 13, W 9, D 14, C 16, Ch 13; AL LN; leather armor (working clothes)

Sureshank dislikes violence since attaining a suitable level of mastery in the king's services, and he now prefers to spend his time making articles of armor and seeing to his wine-bottle collection. Despite his known reluctance to fight, he will not hesitate to rush in on the side of the king and queen if he perceives that their lives are in danger.

In his position as Royal Armorer, Sureshank has access to parts of the palace that the staff and soldiers do not. He must regularly inspect the guard-rooms and the weapon stores — places which must be reached through various secret doors and locked portals. For these duties, Sureshank has been supplied with a set of keys by the king (see area 10). He is justifiably worried about the thefts — especially when some of them have included pieces of armor supposed to be in his safe-keeping.

Added to this is Sureshank's long but secret history of wine-glass and bottle collecting, these additional missing items only being noticed when an inventory of the palace was undertaken to see exactly what the mystery thief had

taken. As expected, Sureshank is now worried that the discovery of these trifling items in his possession will lead to the presumption that he is the one responsible for all the recent trouble.

The Royal Armorer knows nothing of the identity of the thief, but is concerned that Snagrat may dupe the king with bad advice. If questioned about the mystery thief, it is unlikely that Sureshank will miss an opportunity to divert attention from himself to the Royal Advisor.

When given an opportunity and if it seems that his collection of wine glasses is to be discovered, Sureshank will try to discreetly place them back where he found them.

Minor Palace NPCs

In the service of the king are several butlers, cooks, cleaners, guards, and the like who are employed to keep the palace running. Few of these know anything about the theft of the ceremonial sword, but a few may have heard rumors about the long history of thieving which has gone on in Mount Diadem. Information may be gleaned from staff in the usual way (bribery, coercion, etc.)

At least one of the rumors told to the player characters should concern one of the important NPCs and should allow the player characters a chance to investigate that NPC. The following are household staff members of Isobella and Baradon.

1. The Royal Butler, Edwin Grimpnoodle (hp 7; AL LG; see rumor #13 and areas 10, 13, 15, 19, and 20)
2. The Queen's Maid, Nimis Fairweather (hp 4; AL NG; see areas 14 and 32)
3. The Captain of the Guard, Gald Stockfellow (AC 5; MV 6"; F7; hp 64; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; S 17, I 12, W 12, D 13, C 18, Ch 14; AL LN; hand axe +2, chain mail armor, two daggers, small shield; see rumor #6 and area 6)
4. The Head Chef, Pirmadon Saltsinge (hp 3; AL N; see rumor #19 and areas 15, 20, 21, and 29)
5. Junior Chef, Gimble Spoonhandle (hp 2; AL CG; see areas 20 and 31)
6. Junior Chef, Bumble Tallhood (hp 3; AL LN; see areas 20 and 31)
7. Junior Chef, Simon Simplefellow (hp 2; AL N; see areas 20 and 31)
8. Scullery Maid, Silya Frump (hp 3;

AL LG; see rumor #16 and areas 8, 14, 19, 20, and 32)

9. General Servant, Marjory Bouldershoulder (hp 4; AL CN; see rumor #13 and areas 8, 10, 15, 19, and 32)

10. General Servant, Ladis Firmfist (hp 5; AL LN; see areas 10, 19, and 23)

11. General Servant, Bugmut Chiselman (hp 5, AL NG; see rumor #16 and areas 14, 19, and 23)

12. The Page (and part-time Herald), Norman Grizzleem (hp 3, AL CG; see areas 7 and 24)

Each of these NPCs, save for Gald Stockfellow, is a normal "zero-level" dwarf (AC 10; MV 6"; HD 1; hp see above; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; AL see above). Additional information on each may be gleaned from the area descriptions noted above.

Rumors of the Palace Staff

The following rumors may be acquired as noted above. Certain NPCs, as noted elsewhere below, are more prone to offer rumors than others. In any event, the DM should turn over only a few rumors to the PCs at a time. A d20 roll or purposeful selection may be used.

1. Sureshank wants to be pickled in spirits and preserved in a jar after his death. (True)

2. The moans of the king's dead ancestors can be heard in the dead of night sometimes. (False; the noise is caused by wind currents passing through the secret catacombs behind the throne room.)

3. The bad luck of late has been caused by a curse laid on a member of the family long ago. (True — but this is only a good guess)

4. Fingal cannot read or write, and says he prefers it that way. (It's true that the halfling said this, but it is untrue that he is not able to read and write.)

5. Bad luck follows those who enter Mount Diadem and take up a job in the king's service. (False)

6. Something important has been stolen from under the nose of the Captain of the Guard; he may soon be replaced and put into a position of less responsibility. (Partly true; no one knows what has been stolen, and the Captain's fate is not necessarily sealed. The ceremonial sword was under the protection of the Captain; his worried looks have brought this rumor about.)

7. Snagrat acts suspiciously from time to time. (True; all spies do)

8. The Royal Executioner is an elf and is rightly ashamed of the fact. This is why he covers his face all the time. (False)

9. The queen reads books of magic in order to predict the future and give advice to the king. (False)

10. Sureshank sometimes disappears for long periods. Prior to some of these disappearances, he can be seen to act suspiciously. (Partly true. Sureshank has to inspect parts of the palace into which the staff is not allowed; this is how he "disappears." However, sometimes he is partaking of the king's wine — explaining his nervousness.)

11. A phantom of some sort stalks the corridors at night to spirit away things for his own unknown purposes. (The king does stalk the corridors sometimes in the guise of Baradaar, but none of the minor staff members have seen him. This is just someone's fanciful rumor.)

12. The Royal Family has always been unusual, inasmuch as it has always had an interest in pills and potions. (True, but this applies more to Isobella than to the king)

13. The king's butler, Edwin Grimpnoodle, sees quite a bit of one of the staff, Marjory Bouldershoulder. He thinks the staff doesn't know about it, but everyone does! (True)

14. A stranger was recently seen in the woods outside the palace. He has always managed to run away when challenged. (This is true; it is usually either Snagrat's fellow spy and messenger to Jeraldus, or it is Furfeet's contact, neither of which has met the other.)

15. The local gypsies are afraid of dwarves and run away if they see any approach. (True; the two groups don't get along)

16. Bugmut Chiselman gave up his previous job in the smithy to sweep floors in the palace. (True, but it was due to his blossoming friendship with Silya Frump, the scullery maid, not because he is involved in the troubles)

17. The king of Jerad East is the cause of the trouble. He had a wizard put a spell on the palace to cause trouble for Baradon. (False)

18. Not all the king's ancestors were as nice as he is. (True)

19. The head chef goes to town very early each morning with a large linen bag on his shoulder. When he returns,

the bag is empty and his purse is fuller. (True; Pirmadon is a baker as well as the head chef, and he sells some of his bread to a stallholder in the city each morning.)

20. The first of the items to be noticed as missing was one of the wall hangings from the throne room. (True; it is currently being used as a rug — flipped upside-down — by Snagrat in front of his fireplace, simply because he had cold feet. The wall hanging disappeared seven months ago.)

Starting the Adventure

The player characters, who are on their way through Fairgeld on other business, are overtaken by night and forced to make camp. The characters on guard feel rather odd and disoriented as midnight approaches. Each character must make a saving throw vs. spells or fall into a deep and strangely troubled sleep; sleeping characters automatically fail the save. Sleeping characters cannot be awakened by their comrades unless wounded.

Each of the sleeping characters dreams of seeing Mount Diadem in the distance. A feeling of dread comes over them as the soft moaning of the wind changes to the sorrowful voice of an unseen presence.

The voice has three different messages to give the party. The DM should secretly inform each affected player character which of the three (determined at random) he has heard. If more than three (or less than three) characters are subject to the vision, adjust what each hears accordingly, so that all the messages are made known.

All characters hear the following:

"Seek out the Lord and Lady of the Land of Fairgeld, for with your help, much grief will be avoided."

The three additions to this first line (given only one per character) are:

1. *"Say that a dream has visited you and that a voice from the past has spoken. As a token of your trustworthiness, speak these words: The words on the ring are Fellowship, Loyalty, and Duty."*

(These are the words which are inscribed on the inside of the royal ring that Baradon wears. It is unlikely that many people know the inscription, and this will startle him.)

2. *"Say that a dream has visited you and that a voice from the present has*

spoken. Your token of truth is the following message: In the Inner Chamber stands one and twenty chests of gold. Each is bound with a seal of silver."

(The "Inner Chamber" referred to is the Royal Treasury at area 10. Only the king and queen know how many chests are in the room.)

3. *"Say that a dream has visited you and that a voice from the future has spoken to you and say the following words: The Conqueror of the Worm wears a gift of worth, while the Lord of the Mountain carries none. When they meet, axes will be stained with dwarven blood."*

(This, of course, alludes to the possible future should Baradon be unable to retrieve the lost ceremonial sword. More than any other message, this will convince the king to accept the party's help.)

All characters hear the following conclusion:

"Speak these words as you have heard them and listen to those which follow. Great will be your reward!"

The voice that the player characters hear is that of the spirit of the dead gypsy, Flavis, who seeks desperately to be free of his lonely imprisonment in the hidden cell in the palace. The nature of his awful curse attracted the notice of an unnamed deity, who then cursed Flavis in return by making him a haunt until the day the curse was lifted — but ghostlike beings cannot lift and use magical items such as rings, so Flavis could not un-wish the curse. Trapped on this world, he has tried to attract someone to uncover the location of his prison, make his story known, and break the curse which has fallen on both him and the king's family. The deity that cursed Flavis has relented slightly, allowing such telepathic contact to be made.

Note that, from the moment the PCs arrive at the palace, a week will have gone by since the sword was stolen. Three weeks remain in which to recover it before the ceremony.

Palace Encounter Key

When the player characters arrive at the palace, they are met by a detachment of the palace guards (ten dwarves in all) who have noticed their approach from the battle towers by the gates of the underground palace. If they politely make their business known, the PCs are shown into the waiting room (area 1) to

await the king's pleasure. If they are discourteous to the guards, the PCs are asked to wait outside. Waiting time is from 1-4 hours due to the unusual nature of the party's arrival (uninvited, lack of basic protocol, etc.). At the end of this period, the PCs are invited to see the king (see area 7 for details).

A detachment of 12 palace guards ensures the Royal Family's safety from the strangers. Brief descriptions of the guards and the palace itself are given below. Note that certain areas such as the catacombs should not be described to the player characters until such time as the PCs have been given an opportunity to discover them. Areas such as the kitchens and the living quarters may require permission to explore if the king takes the PCs into his service.

The boxed text may be read aloud to the player characters or paraphrased to them in some manner fitting the current situation.

Palace Guards: AC 4; MV 6"; F3; hp 14-26 (4d4 + 10); #AT 1 each; Dmg by weapon type; AL variable, few evil; each has chain mail armor, a small shield, a short sword, a short-hafted spear, and a throwing axe. In all, there are forty members of the palace guard under the leadership of Gald Stockfellow, their captain, and under the supreme command of the king. Guardian dwarves are not often found in the palace itself, save in the towers and at the main gates to the palace.

1. Main Waiting Room.

As you become accustomed to the torchlight, you become aware of the fact that you are in a large waiting room. It is comfortably furnished and decorated with wall hangings and furs. The high ceiling is held up by four slender pillars. Close to the walls are thirteen small tables set with bread and wine. At one of these sits a small party of miners who are patiently waiting their turn to have an audience with the king.

This party numbers six in all. The miners have come from the southern mines to report on the progress of the excavation of a new vein of ore in which the king has a particular interest. The miners are cautious of the strangers and have little to say, unless the topic of mines and mining should come up in conversation.

The bread and wine are good, but the wine is a little strong. If a character consumes two or more glasses of the vintage, he may become quite drunk. Intoxication is at a moderate level, as described in the *DMG*, pages 82-83.

If the player characters prefer to look around instead of waiting to be summoned, they discover the other doors hidden behind the wall hangings. The doors to the north are locked. The room's ceiling height is 24'.

Anyone entering this area after the start of the adventure does not encounter the miners, as they have left. Other NPCs may be encountered here at various times, however, as the king and queen like to maintain contact with their subjects if matters warrant it.

2. Guard Posts.

The door to this chamber, hidden behind the wall hanging in the outer room, has an ornate handle which opens easily. Inside the room are four dwarven guards: two standing and two seated at a small table. All four wear silver necklaces with silver whistles on them.

These guards (four in each room) politely ask the player characters to return to the waiting room and refresh themselves. If the characters make any trouble, the guards in question blow on their whistles to summon help from the post opposite. If the player characters initiate further troubles, they are ejected from the mountain.

3. Basements of the Watchtowers.

Steps lead down the passageway to a slightly lower level filled with numerous barrels of water, wine, and salted meats. A spiral staircase leads upwards to a turret above. Two sentries watch the approach to the mountain from this high perch.

From the turret of each tower, a wide view of the southern approach to the mountain can be seen. On some occasions, a fog lies heavy in the hollows of the forest which looks like a sea of cloud with islands of leafy trees. It is on these days that the stolen goods are smuggled into the undergrowth and that Snagrat receives new instructions from an agent of Jeraldus.

The sentry towers are 55' high and

very solidly built. Because of their rocky appearance, the towers are not immediately seen as such if noted from a distance during dim light, storms, or heavy fog.

4. Inner Waiting Rooms.

This area seems to be a smaller version of the outer room, containing a number of tables, comfortable chairs, and rugs.

There is nothing of interest in either of these two rooms, save for chance meetings with other dwarves and men who have come to meet the king or queen. The DM may create such encounters as desired.

5. Billets of the Royal Guards.

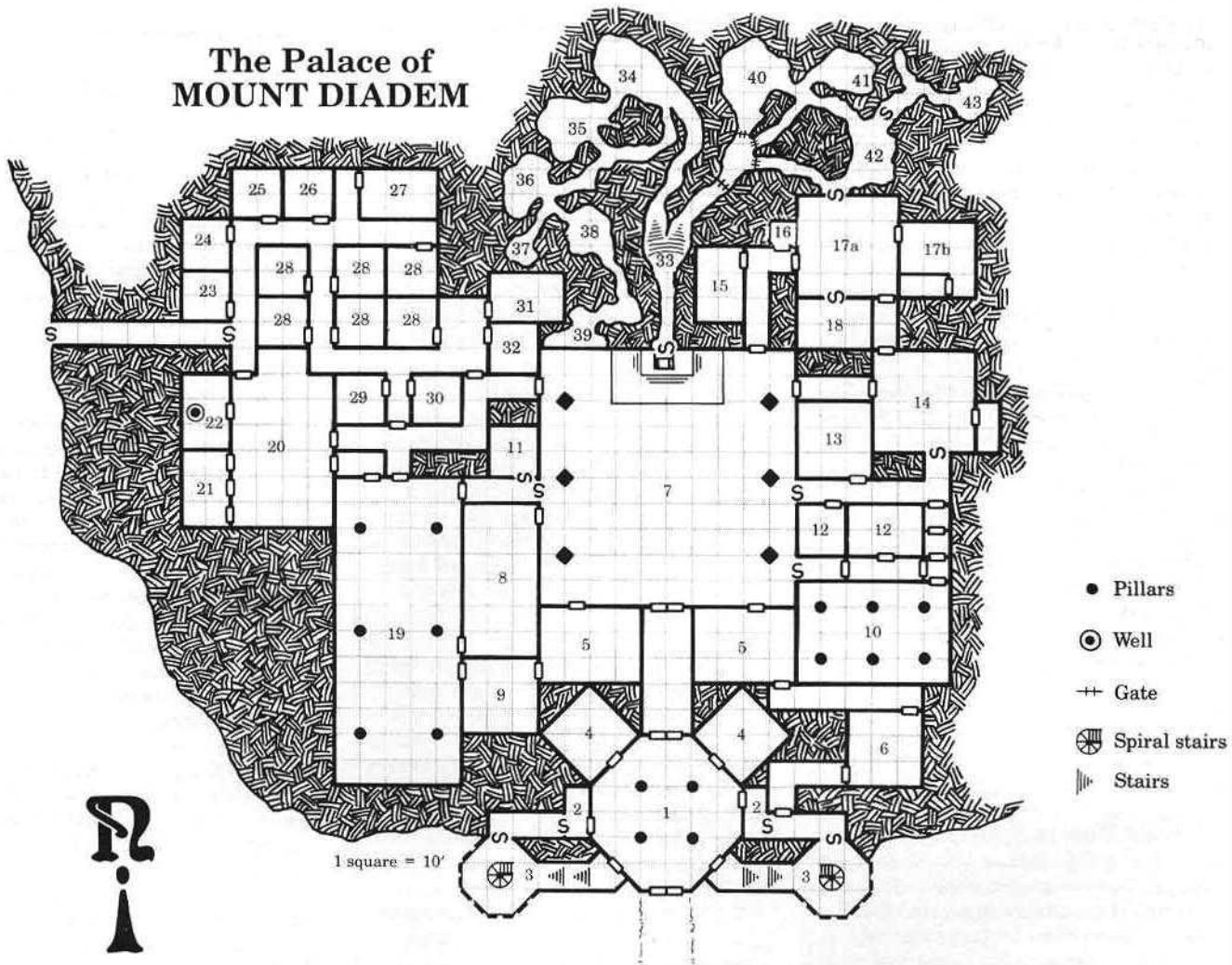
This room is spotlessly clean and tidied with military attention to detail. It sleeps 12 guards and also doubles as a mess hall.

The westernmost billet has a door leading to Bern Sureshank's room (area 9). He keeps this door locked, preferring to use the one leading into the banquet hall (area 19). In the eastern billet is a door leading to a private room occupied by Gald Stockfellow, the Captain of the Guard (area 6).

One of the guards in the western billet possesses a small bag of 20 gp and a silver cup (50 gp worth) — these he won in wrestling and shooting contests, respectively. He has them carefully hidden in a false bottom of his bedside locker. The player characters may think that these are part of the stolen goods from the palace, but they are not. With a bit of thought, Baradon eventually remembers the prize-giving ceremony and clear the guard's name. This particular guard is called Salvar.

6. Gald Stockfellow's Room.

This is the room of the Captain of the Guard, Gald Stockfellow. It is sparsely furnished with a simple bed and a small writing desk. A rather inadequate bookcase leans against one wall. It is piled with books and stacks of paper which contain information concerning military rules and regulations. The only decoration to be seen is a couple of crossed spears on the wall over the bookcase.



On the writing desk is a sheet of paper which appears to be some form of a letter. In fact, it is one of many variations of a letter of resignation that the unfortunate captain has been trying to write over the last few days since the loss of Baradon's ceremonial sword exactly a week ago. An examination of the floor shows several crumpled sheets of paper which are some of the rejected versions.

The two spears on the wall are a set of magical weapons which Gald acquired several years ago. He prizes them highly. If the player characters have

occasion to use them, they find them to be a pair of *spears +1*.

If Gald Stockfellow is at home when the player characters investigate his room, they find him downhearted but maintaining a "stiff upper lip." He only discusses the missing sword if under orders from the king.

7. Throne Room.

When the king has finished his audience with the party of miners (taking 1d4 hours, as stated earlier), he sends for the player characters. They should

now deliver the messages heard in their dreams.

The party is then asked to leave for the time being and is called back to the palace on the following day to hear the king's decision. At this second meeting, the court contains the Royal Executioner, the Royal Advisor, the Court Jester, the Royal Armorer, and the Royal Smith, in addition to the king and queen. The royal couple are the only ones present on the first day.

The first and second days activities are outlined on the next page.

Day One

The party of dwarves leave after a considerable time in the company of the king and you are summoned to the throne. A short passageway leads directly from the outer waiting room to the throne room (areas 1 to 7). It seems that there is a lull in the business of the Court for the time being; the king and queen are the only ones currently present. The page leads you to the king and introduces you. The Lord of Fairgeld sits on his throne and awaits the explanation of your business.

If the player characters relate their experiences faithfully to the royal couple, the king shows an immediate interest in the tale. When the message concerning the missing gift is delivered, the royal couple shows no emotion, except perhaps for a barely discernable intake of breath on the part of Isobella. Baradon asks a few questions, then asks for time to consider these strange tidings. The player characters are then dismissed and told to come back in a day's time. However, they are warned not to discuss the missing gift with anyone, until they can speak with the king privately later.

Day Two

Having no one waiting before you in the waiting room, you are quickly ushered into the throne room by the same page who dealt with you yesterday. He seems quite friendly, but not talkative. He calls himself Norman Grizzleem, and he seems to be quite a young dwarf, no more than 50 years old. Since the king and queen haven't arrived yet, you are given a chance to observe the throne room and the people in it.

The main features are the wall hangings, which depict past rulers of Fairgeld. Some of the wall hangings are very old and faded. An empty space on the wall appears to indicate one tapestry is missing. A wide, red carpet covers the floor on the approach to the thrones, which are placed on a raised dais with steps leading to front and sides.

About these spacious areas stand a group of dwarves and a halfling who is dressed in the clothes of a jester. The dwarves look at you curiously,

but the halfling grins mischievously, as if contemplating something. At that moment, a door opens and the Lord and Lady of Fairgeld approach the throne.

With all due formality, Baradon and Isobella take their places on the dais. Baradon announces that the meeting is of grave concern to all present and to the kingdom, so it would be only fair that they should be present.

He now introduces the main NPCs to the visitors in order of precedence: Snagrath, the Royal Advisor; the Royal Armorer, Bern Sureshank; Firesoot Ironfist, the Royal Smith; the Executioner, Tafra; and the Jester, Fingal Furfeet. (The DM should describe each of these characters with reference to the earlier text.)

Baradon speaks about the recent series of thefts, ignoring, for the moment, the matter of the ceremonial sword (he doesn't want Snagrath to know about this). The player characters are introduced as professional adventurers whom the king trusts to solve the crimes. The king's followers are then asked to voice their opinions on the prospect of hiring the player characters to discover the identity of the thief. All but the executioner and Sureshank wholeheartedly agree with the suggestion and offer "whatever cooperation we can give."

The other two agree with reluctance, saying the player characters are strangers prying into affairs which don't concern them.

Baradon has made up his mind already; he offers the player characters the task of finding the thief, regardless of what anyone may say. Isobella remains silent through all this, eyeing the adventurers with an unpleasant gaze.

After dismissing the others, Baradon takes the investigators into his confidence concerning the ceremonial sword, stressing the importance of keeping Snagrath in the dark about its disappearance. The investigators are then invited to the Royal Banquet, where they may get to know some of the NPCs already mentioned above. They are housed in the guest quarters (see area 28).

8. Palace Library.

This large chamber houses the books of the Royal Library. Long rows of shelves take up both wall and floor-space. Usually, the room is empty;

the majority of the people living in the palace are too busy to take time off for reading. As a consequence, the library has grown rather dreary, although it is cleaned regularly by Marjory Bouldershoulder, the maid.

Marjory has a "stooped over" appearance and rarely dusts the taller shelves, which she is unable to reach without the aid of the library's step ladder. The first encounters with Marjory are made in the library as she goes about her daily business. She may be the person who imparts a rumor to the investigators (check the rumors table), as she loves to talk. Marjory rooms with Nimis Fairweather and Silya Frump, but is rather jealous of Silya and her relationship with Bugnut Chiselman (their room is area 32).

Items of interest in the library include a history of the kingdom in a four-book series, tracing the line of Baradon from Sklabek the Grasping to the present day. It is one of the books which the maid can actually reach, and so it gets its regular dusting. In general, it tells of battles, family relationships, finances, and the like. Sklabek is referred to as "that scurilous creature, grasping in gold and goods, famed only for his unnaturally long life." There is little else about him, the writer obviously not relishing the topic.

Some of the oldest books make for interesting reading, too. Titles include *On Building and Mining*, *Life Under Stone*, *Pills and Potions and their Usefulness in Lengthening Life*, and *Turning the Basest of Metals into the Purest of Gold*. All but the second to the last of these discursive essays on the theories of their titles are of little use to the player characters. *Pills and Potions* is the oldest of the books (400+ years) and has been neglected to the point that it is nearly rotten and most of its handwritten pages are faded. Nevertheless, a player character who wishes to try and decipher the script may do so with difficulty, expressed as a roll on 1d20 lower than his intelligence.

Interesting surviving passages include one describing a tale from over 1100 years past: "...the gypsy population at the time was troubled by strange dreams, which they ascribed to the dabbling of one of their number in blackest arts not meant for mortal use." The author then talks about the significance of the dreams, concluding that the

Gypsies were somehow aware of the presence of a will with the power to generate great evil. The future of the Gypsies themselves was being questioned. Indeed, notes the author, under the reign of Sklabek, Gypsies were driven from the country and slain in droves, under the king's orders — though little reason for this was given.

The next surviving chapter speaks of the dangers involved when one meddles with the "Law of the Natural Order," particularly in the area of extending the mortal life span. The researches of one gypsy of old, the same one causing the other Gypsies to suffer from night-mares, are alluded to: "Only the gravest evil can come from this man Flavinus's work." This man (despite the misspelling) was Flavius, prior to being hired by Sklabek.

9. Sureshank's Room.

Adjoining the banqueting hall (area 19) is a large and comfortable room belonging to Bern Sureshank, the Royal Armorer. Weapons and trophies hang on the walls, and a corner holds some small items of armor which are awaiting repair. Near the bed is a work table with many curiously shaped tools and a nearly completed helm.

Sureshank keeps a bottle of wine and some crystal goblets which he has pilfered from the banquet hall in a false bottom in his bedside chest. Also in the compartment is the armorer's personal treasure of 3,875 sp and 675 gp. As mentioned elsewhere, Sureshank may try to remove the stolen items from hiding and return them to their proper place if he feels that he is being investigated by the player characters.

Sureshank keeps the door to the Royal Billet (area 5) tightly locked, unless he uses it to deliver an item of armor or to take a shortcut to one of the armories.

10. Royal Treasury.

This room is protected by a heavy lock, several other locked doors, and a number of guards. Nevertheless, a thief has managed to enter and make off with the ceremonial sword vital to the smooth signing of the treaty between Fairgeld and Jerad East.

Because the Royal Treasury is opened less than three times a year, it has grown very dusty and dirty, the cleaners not being allowed to work here because of the vast quantity of gold and precious objects stored in the trunks. These trunks, as mentioned in the dream messenger's words, number 21 in all, and each contains a measure of gold and other precious metals worth 4,500 gp. There was also the addition of the gilt box containing the ceremonial sword, but this was discovered missing a week before the arrival of the player characters.

The copious amount of dust has provided the dwarves with their first major clue to the identity of the thief. A number of bare footprints have been preserved untouched since the theft of the sword. Player characters may try to find the owner of these dusty clues by measuring suspects Cinderella-style. If they get away with this, they find that all but the following characters are either the proud possessors of larger or smaller feet: the Royal Blacksmith, the Royal Armorer, the Head Chef, the King, the Advisor, Marjory Bouldershoulder, Edwin Grimpnoodle, and Ladis Firmfist. A ranger or barbarian character can tell, in addition, that the footprints are those of a male dwarf.

Key holders to this area include the king (who has keys to every door in the palace), Edwin Grimpnoodle (who also has a key to area 13, the queen (who has a key to areas 12, 13, and 14), and the Royal Armorer (who has a set of keys to the secret door from the throne room, area 12, and area 13).

A careful examination of the lock, however, shows that there are some tiny scratches around the keyhole. A thief can see that the lock was picked by someone who is not very experienced at the art.

11. Minor Armory.

This chamber is a small storeroom of weapons for the use of the palace guards. It contains swords, shields, and other weapons commonly used by the guards.

The DM may create the exact contents of this room as desired. Sufficient arms for 40 dwarves may be found here.

12. Treasury Guards.

These two rooms each contain five guards who are employed to watch over the treasury and its hoard of gold. None of them have reported anything unusual over the last week, though the mystery thief slipped by them and stole something from the treasury.

Although they have not been told that the sword has been taken, the guards suspect the worst. Their training, however, forbids them from discussing their business with anyone outside their working area. So far, this has helped to prevent the theft from becoming common knowledge. Their leader and captain, Gald Stockfellow, has taken the theft to heart and is preparing his letter of resignation for the guard (see area 6).

13. Minor Armory.

This minor armory contains only the arms of the king and the queen. They are maintained by Bern Sureshank, the Royal Armorer, and are always in good condition.

As mentioned previously, Edwin Grimpnoodle, the Royal Butler, also has a key to this room. Apart from the splendid arms of Baradon and Isobella, there is nothing else of interest to be found here. Both dwarves have full suits of plate mail and small shields, with a wide assortment of decorative (but perfectly functional) weaponry.

14. Queen's Boudoir.

This room is decorated with wall hangings much like those found in the throne room. A large, four-poster bed is the centerpiece of the room. A vanity stands to one side, near a large wardrobe on casters placed against the south wall of the room. The door in the east wall leads to a small bathroom.

The wardrobe hides the secret door in the south wall, which is part of the corridor leading to either the treasury (area 10) or the minor armory (area 13). Presuming that the queen is "talking shop" with the king and is not in her chamber, it is possible that the player characters may encounter Nimis Fairweather if they investigate Isobella's

room. If the player characters are here without the queen's permission, Nimis does not hesitate to inform her when she gets the chance. The DM should check or choose from the rumors' table to see if Nimis has any information to give concerning either the thefts or her fellow staff members.

The maid tries to divert the investigators' attention from the connecting corridor between the king's and queen's bedrooms, thinking the existence of this convenience rather indiscreet and not for the attentions of strangers to the palace. Nimis is a very intelligent and pleasant dwarf who is admired by her fellow servants (even Marjory) for her modesty and good sense, as well as her dedication to her job. Although not outspoken, she is known to be a giver of good advice and is particularly involved in arranging the matchmaking between Bugmut and Silya — a task which has almost been brought to fruition.

15. Royal Butler's Bedroom.

This small but comfortable room belongs to Edwin Grimpnoodle, the king's butler. The furnishings are simple, but slightly more elaborate than those of the common servants. The main impression one gets upon entering is the meticulous tidiness of the room. Everything is always in its proper place.

Edwin cooks, eats, and sleeps here — much to the annoyance of the head chef, Pirmadon Saltsinge. The two find that their working arrangements suit them perfectly. As a matter of fact, they seldom see each other, which is as it should be, considering Pirmadon thinks Edwin is a snob, while Edwin privately refers to the chef as a lout.

In all matters, Edwin professes that there is a right way and a wrong way of progression. He sees to it that Baradon wears the right suit for the right occasion, that everyone sits in exactly the right place at the table, and that everyone does exactly what is deemed proper when dealing with his business. Not surprisingly, he has made things a little difficult for Pirmadon, who delivers bread to a friend each morning — bread which Edwin claims belongs solely to the king. Several other little issues have been raised, with other members of the staff lending a little friction at times.

It is not difficult to understand how gleefully Pirmadon and the others were when they found out about Edwin's relationship with Marjory Bouldershoulder (see rumor #13), and they smugly grin as he passes by, not knowing that they are aware of the affair.

Edwin can be found in his room after sunset, when he sees to the correct attire for his master. A bell connected to Baradon's chamber can summon Edwin at any time.

16. King's Bodyguard.

This small cubicle houses a permanent guard in the hallway leading to the king's private apartments. No one may pass him without permission from the king.

The guard is a typical palace guard, wearing a whistle to summon help or advice as the need arises.

17. King's Private Apartments.

The ornate door handle turns silently as the door opens into the king's private apartments. The walls are decorated with wonderfully colored velvets and a deep-piled, red carpet covers the floor from wall to wall. A small curtained-off area conceals the royal bed, beneath which are the ornate royal carpet slippers and the royal chamberpot. Another door leads to the king's workplace — the office where he contemplates policies and plans strategems. This is less furnished than the bigger room, but seems quite comfortable still. A door from here leads to a small, tiled washroom.

Other furnishings include a dressing table and a small hand-held mirror. A wardrobe holds some expensive clothing, as well as the specially commissioned suit for the treaty day. Characters who inspect the room carefully discover a locked trunk under the bed which contains some unusually ragged clothes. These are the remnants of the clothes worn by Baradon in his adventuring days long before he was called to do his duty for Fairgeld. They are also the rags that Baradaar wears on his sojourns through the palace. None of the stolen objects are here.

Careful investigators may see that the

north wall of the bedroom is quite damp and cold to the touch. Also to be noticed is a strange discoloration on the carpet in a corner of the office, which astute characters see is a footprint stained by minerals found commonly in caves. Little of the print remains, too little to make it of any other use.

In the office are a number of books (magically preserved) dating from the early days of the kingdom. One of these, the Royal Accounts' Book, has been in the family since the days of Sklabek the Grasping, 4th ruler of Mount Diadem. The section of the book from his reign is written in gold and red ink (all others are written in the cheaper black ink).

Among Sklabek's neat writing is a scribbled note saying: "Potion paid for with life of Flavis the gypsy. No expense spared." There is not much else to be found in the book unless the player characters have a particular interest in money management. All of the dwarven kings — even Sklabek — were very scrupulous on financial matters.

18. Minor Treasury.

This hidden room was made to contain the private fortunes of Baradon and Isabella. Gold, platinum, silver, silk, and gemstones come to a combined value of about 30,000 gp.

So far, nothing has been missed from this treasury.

19. Royal Banqueting Hall.

On special occasions, a lavish meal is prepared for the king and a list of guests is invited. The feast is served in this magnificent banqueting hall. The centerpiece is a long polished table stretching the length of the hall and headed with a carved chair and footstool for each of the royal couple. These two thronelike chairs fit comfortably at the head of the table, which is 12' wide and 70' long. A number of gold candlesticks usually provide light for the guests (as any palace staff member will tell), but lately these have been replaced with torches held in wall sconces.

A door leading to the kitchens lets in the aroma of many exotic foods. The door swings open and closed repeatedly during meals, as the servants hustle in and out with the various courses.

The player characters are entertained here on the first evening of their stay, but it will not be used again during their visit. The Banquet Hall has suffered at the hands of various thieves of late, due to the fact that it is seldom used and is often empty at night. Among the various items which have disappeared from here are eight gold candlesticks (worth 600 gp each), 43 silver knives, forks, and spoons (20 gp each), six crystal goblets (250 gp each), and a bottle of wine (75 gp). The two latter items are in the possession of Bern Sureshank (see area 9).

During the day, player characters should become acquainted with the banquet staff who have a direct responsibility for the upkeep of the banqueting hall. These are Ladis Firmfist and Bugmut Chiselman, two male dwarves who do the dusting and cleaning of this large hall. It is the responsibility of the scullery maid, Silya Frump, to polish the silver, and the task of Edwin Grimpnoodle, the butler, to polish the gold. Some of their tasks have been made easier of late with the loss of a lot of the items they usually clean.

Except for Edwin, who may only pop in from time to time to supervise, the NPCs mentioned above can be encountered in the banqueting hall during working hours. After hours, the two servants house in area 23, while Silya shares a room with Marjory Bouldershoulder and Nimis Fairweather in area 32. Check or choose from the rumors' table to see if any of these dwarves can shed any light on the mysteries of life in Mount Diadem.

Under the table (and so far missed by the sweepers) is a small rivet from a piece of armor which is a common accoutrement of the palace guards. In actuality, the rivet has been lost from a small section of armor worn by Sureshank. Player characters may notice this on careful examination of some of the armor in his room (area 9). Sureshank is seldom in the banqueting hall unless he is passing through from his room; he never sits at the place where the rivet is found. This spot is where the butler usually keeps the wine glasses before offering them to the king.

Confronted with this evidence, Sureshank initially seems cool and denies any knowledge of theft. Later, though, he may try to return the missing glasses and half of the wine (he has drunk the rest).

20. Kitchens.

This area and its adjoining rooms are where the staff cook the meals for Baradon, Isobella, and the rest of the Court. Three junior chefs and a scullery maid work under the careful scrutiny of the head chef Pirmadon Saltsinge.

The steamy kitchen is home to a large number of carefully scrubbed copper pots, a large stove with an oven, shelves laden with jars of herbs and spices, and a rack holding an assortment of cooking utensils, cups, and mugs.

If the player characters enter the kitchens early in the morning, they find that Pirmadon has left breakfast preparations in the capable hands of Gimble Spoonhandle, Bumble Tallhood, and Simon Simplefellow in order to personally deliver his pack to his friend in the city (see rumor #19). Silya is engaged in chopping vegetables for the main meal of the day — a task which she doesn't relish and which Bumble maintains she is unable to do without constant prompting. Check or choose from the rumors' table to see if any of these characters know anything useful.

Edwin Grimpnoodle (knowing that the head chef is absent) pokes his head around the door to see that everything is going smoothly — an intrusion which the junior chefs do not like. In fact, they prefer being left alone in their kitchen and they resent even the king entering without invitation. Player characters should be made to feel unwanted upon entering these premises. If they arrive later in the day, the player characters may discover that Pirmadon has returned and that Silya is about her other duties in the banqueting hall (area 19). The head chef has little good to say about the butler and may try to incriminate him, taking pleasure in spreading gossip about him and Marjory.

An interesting fact for the player characters to learn is that so far, nothing has been reported missing from the kitchen. (This is a red herring and has no significance to the plot as a whole.)

21. Kitchen Stores.

Most of the nonperishable and dry foodstuffs are stored herein for later use in the kitchen. Barrels of salted meats, flour, and oatmeal are stacked

neatly to Pirmadon's requirements. Strings of onions hang in nets from the ceiling, but there are few other foods stored here. The head chef prefers buying in by the week and prides himself in the freshness of the ingredients he uses.

This is one area under Primadon's control which he seldom inspects — a rare thing for the usually fastidious head chef. He hasn't noticed, then, that one of the barrels of oatmeal has been tampered with. Some meal lies scattered on the floor; inside is a silver ceremonial goblet of strange design. This goblet belongs to the Brotherhood of Butchers, outlawed assassins' guild of Fairgeld, and it has been placed here by Baradaar without the knowledge of Fingal or anyone else (see also the section dealing with the Court Executioner). Of course, no one in the palace will recognize it except the Executioner, and he won't say anything. Assassin characters may recognize it as a ceremonial cup used before an important assassination.

The goblet is shaped like two larger-than-life hands cupped together. It holds about a pint of liquid and is 40 gp in weight. It is worth 450 gp.

22. Well Room.

This room is built around a natural well spring, enlarged and enclosed by the dwarven builders. A number of copper buckets are placed near the well for the convenience of the kitchen staff who draw water with the aid of a windlass.

The old rope on the windlass is not strong enough to support the weight of anyone over 50 lbs., and will certainly break if anyone bigger tries to use it to climb into the well shaft. The shaft itself goes down 60' until it reaches the surface of the water. The water is 20' deep and icy cold.

For purposes of climbing, treat the walls of the shaft as smooth (but cracked) and slippery (see the *DMG*, page 19). In the bottom of the well are a few pieces of junk, including three hoops from an old barrel, two old and rusted keys on a ring which once locked the kitchen stores (area 21), a half dozen assorted broken bottles, and 6 gp in an old leather purse. None of the items in the well are included in the list of stolen property from the palace.

23. First Servants' Quarters.

This simple room is shared by the two servants, Ladis Firmfirst and Bugmut Chisleman. Some functional furniture and two small beds are all that it contains. A draft comes through a crack in the wall between their room and the corridor leading to the back door of the palace, which is used only in emergencies.

This crack can easily be enlarged if player characters wish to keep a watch on those using the back door. This might result in catching either Fingal, Baradon (as Baradaar), Tafra, Snagrat, or Firesoot on one of their secret missions.

24. Norman's Room.

The page (and part-time herald), Norman Grizzleem, sleeps here in a room next to Ladis and Bugmut's room. There appears to have been a connecting door here at one time, but this has been walled up.

Norman is easily the youngest and most talkative dwarf in the Mountain. He collects butterflies and is eager to show them to visitors, of whom he has few. The connecting door was walled up years before anyone presently working in the palace came into service, and no one remembers when it was done or for what reason. This information has no bearing on the investigation, unless it encourages player characters to question the structure of the palace.

25. Fingal Furfeet's Room.

The jester's room is rather untidy, with items of clothing draped at random over chairs and an unmade bed. Even his writing desk is covered with a pile of loose papers and a very old ink blotter. In general, the room could do with a good cleaning.

Fingal, of course, has said more than once that he doesn't know (or want to know) how to read and write, so the presence of a writing desk and blotter should give him away to player characters who are paying attention. The blotter is a jumble of doodles and caricatures of members of the household. "Tricks of the trade!" is scribbled on one corner, and "Chief Advisor Fingal

"Furfeet" can be barely deciphered on another.

Fingal always uses two sheets of paper when writing a note to his guild. This can betray him if a player character holds a seemingly blank sheet up to the light, since the impression of what was written on the sheet above it can be seen. The only sheet with anything useful to be found is one which was under the jester/thief's last letter. It reads as follows:

Dear Sirs,

In accordance with your last instructions, I have continued my investigations into this unfortunate matter. As yet, I have been unable to come up with any new information, but I will keep you informed of my progress.

F.F.

Of course, Fingal is not bothered to carry out any investigations recently on behalf of the guild, having other plans for the future. (See Fingal's character description for more information on this matter.)

26. Court Executioner's Room.

This room has a heavy lock fixed to the door, which denies entry to all but the executioner (who has a key).

Tafra (as he is called by the king) designed this lock himself, and it is complicated enough to defy the attempts of thieves from levels 1-3 of ability to pick it. Fourth-level thieves and those of higher level may attempt to pick this lock at a three-level disadvantage: i.e., a 4th-level thief operates as a 1st-level thief with respect to this lock, a 5th-level thief as a 2nd-level thief, and so on.

The room contains a bed and some items of furniture, but none of the missing items. Certain potions found in a chest stuck to the bottom of the bed will certainly be enough to convince investigators that the Court Executioner is an assassin; all but one of the five potions is some form of poison. The fifth vial contains a *potion of invisibility* which is trapped with an *explosive rune* written on the label. Dangerous as this rune is, Tafra prefers to have this safeguard against intrusion to guard against the possibility of the lock being bypassed. The vial is of a different color to prevent Tafra from mistaking it for one of his

poisons. Also present are daggers and short swords which have been fitted with poison wells for use in assassinations (though the weapons are currently empty of poisonous material).

There is little else of interest in the room unless it is the strange collection of easily concealed weapons that the executioner/assassin possesses. If Tafra thinks that someone has been in his room (or if he hears an explosion), he dons a disguise and leaves the palace at once for parts unknown. (See the section on the Court Executioner for more details about this character.)

27. Snagrat's Room.

This room is very well furnished. In addition to an elegant and obviously comfortable bed, the occupant enjoys the comforts of a large fireplace and a chaise lounge. The floor is covered with a colorful rug, and the walls are brightly painted. Under the bed is a coffer secured with a small padlock. A wardrobe stands near the doorway.

The chimney of the fireplace is large enough for anyone up to the size of an elf to climb through, but all there is to be found here is soot. A loose brick in the fireplace, though, hides a little box marked "Secret: Emergency Use Only!" In the box is a *potion of speed*, which Snagrat will use in the event that he is discovered as a spy.

The colorful rug which Snagrat has on his floor was taken from the throne room. It is actually the missing tapestry (see Rumors Table, item 20) that depicts the fourth ruler of Fairgeld, Sklabek the Grasping, in the act of imbibing a potion from a very large bottle. Also evident is an hourglass on a table behind him, the sands of time held motionless in the upper portion. In other areas of the tapestry are representations of the daily life of the king, who is shown counting his money in the treasury and pronouncing judgments in the throne room. The throne, however, seems to be in a different place than it is in the present day; herein, it is shown to be further south of where the dais is now. Other dwarves are shown building the dais in the background and blocking up a doorway. (This is the secret door behind the throne in area 7.) Snagrat knows nothing of the importance of the "rug" and took it only as a footwarmer.

The coffer under the bed contains the advisor's personal treasure of 1,000 gp and instructions (which he should have destroyed) from Jeraldus Wormsbane. The instructions are more than sufficient to convict him of spying: "*Carry forth our Royal Orders and learn what may be discovered about the policies of our neighbor, Fairgeld. Use the potion enclosed only as a desperate measure, for it will cause time to affect you more than others. Report regularly to the contact-in-the-woods, and be brave! The day will come when you can declare your true allegiance and return to your home.*" The letter is signed, "Jeraldus Rex." (See the section on Snagrat Slimtongue for further details on this character.)

28. The Guest Rooms.

These are the rooms where guests are accommodated whenever the need arises for people to stay over at the palace. Each contains basic comforts, including a clean bed, washing facilities, and a fireplace.

These rooms are where the investigators will be housed during their stay at the Mountain.

29. Pirmadon Saltsinge's Room.

This simply furnished room contains a table, chairs, and a bed, as well as some recipe books on shelves by the door. The wardrobe contains some clean white shirts and a number of pressed aprons.

The head chef is seldom away from his duties in the kitchen (area 20) and uses the room only at night after work. It is only at this time that he may be found here, possibly going through one of his books in preparation for the following day's menu or trying to think up some biting remark for his next encounter with "that snob Grimpnoodle."

30. Firesoot Ironfist's Room.

This is where the smith sleeps. He is obviously not too concerned with creature comforts; the bed is adequate but not too comfortable, and there are few clothes in the box under it. Most of the floor is covered with odd pieces of what appear to be scrap metal. The chamber is dusty but not filthy.

Some of the metal pieces are unrecognizable except as scrap. Other pieces seem to be objects in the making; Fingal has commissioned several small bells to replace ones lost from his jester suit.

A secret panel in the floor may be detected on a *detect hidden doors* roll by a player character. Characters may notice that the general untidiness of the scrap heap is broken at this spot, as if items had been arranged to look as if they had been thrown here. The panel opens to reveal a compartment roughly 2' x 2' in size. It contains two gold cups, which were stolen from the palace a week before the arrival of the investigators. Each is worth 150 gp.

Ironfist keeps small items here until he has a good enough excuse to leave for the woods by the back door. His smithy is removed from the palace (like all the work areas and mines), and it does not seem suspicious if he leaves at certain times. An accomplice of Fingal picks up the goods from a prearranged point and brings them to the city, paying for the previous haul before leaving. If challenged over the find, Ironfist attempts to escape. He won't hesitate to do whatever is necessary if this proves difficult, though he does not wish to kill anyone.

There is a 20% chance that Firesoot Ironfist leaves for the pickup point each day at midmorning if he has not yet been discovered. Player characters may observe him from area 23 or from other areas as they see fit.

31. Junior Chefs' Lodgings.

Here, Bumble Tallhood, Gimble Spoonhandle, and Simon Simplefellow have lodgings together. On the few occasions that they may be found here, they are usually resting from their day's work in the kitchens. Simon often likes to talk to Norman Grizzeleem, the page, about his butterfly collection. The other dwarves think both Simon and Norman are sometimes daft.

32. Maids' Room.

Here, Nimis Fairweather, Marjory Bouldershoulder, and Silya Frump spend their evenings together. It is a pleasant room, but suffers from a damp spot in the center of the east wall.

It is because of this damp spot (Nimis

says) that the maids have tried to have themselves moved to another room. In fact, the consideration that their room is next door to the junior chefs' has prompted this idea. The damp spot is caused by water in the cave on the other side of the wall. A hollow sound may be heard if characters searching for a secret door knock on this spot.

33. Caves and Catacombs.

Steps go down to the left and to the right. They are covered with sticky growths and unknown algaes that cling to the rough hewn stairs. The passageway forks and leads on into darkness.

All of these growths are harmless, but the DM should do all he can to convince any adventurers otherwise. There's nothing wrong with placing a few dangerous-looking (but harmless) fungi here.

34. Cave of the Green Slime.

This area is covered with some green growths and various dripping slimes and oozes.

If they are careful, player characters may notice the growth of green slime (AC 9; MV nil; HD 2; hp 12; #AT 0; Dmg special; SA turns flesh to green slime in 1-4 melee rounds, eats wood and metal; SD harmed only by fire, cold, or *cure disease*; AL N). Careless characters have a 20% chance of having some of the slime drop on them; careful ones who search the ceiling can avoid this event. The slime hangs over the northern half of the cave. An examination of the rest of the cave shows evidence of burning. Obviously, someone had reason to come this way quite recently.

35. Cave of the Great Bear.

From the entrance, this cave appears empty.

In the little nook to the south lurks a half-starved and ragged-looking cave bear (AC 6; MV 12"; HD 6 + 6; hp 29; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-12; SA hug for 2-16 hp damage; AL N). It has been placed here by Baradaar, who has been unable to maintain it or to get it back out through the hole in the roof of area 38. Unless infravision is used, the bear

will attack with surprise on a roll of 1-4 on a d6. It is on a chain long enough to allow it to move about in area 35, but it cannot leave. Once it has a character in its power, it breaks off combat to eat its first decent meal in weeks.

36. Empty Cavern.

From the entrance, this cavern appears to be empty.

This one really is empty this time.

37. Wet Cave.

This cave is very wet, and water drips down from a hole in the roof above. A current of air comes down this hole, which would seem to be a shaft to the outside world.

The entrance from the outside world was recently formed when the rocks in the ceiling collapsed due to the action of tree roots above it. No one noticed the event until Baradaar first explored the caves.

The shaft is quite big, and it is through this that the rust monster in area 38 wandered through several months ago. Baradaar encountered it one day and trapped it in a wooden cage where he now keeps it as a pet. It has since grown to adult size and it will no longer fit through the hole. The capture of the rust monster caused Baradaar to hunt for other "guardians," and with much effort he captured the bear in area 35 to guard his tunnels. Fingal now knows of this area as well.

Astute characters notice that the wetness in this cave has dissolved parts of the rock into a substance like that found on the floor of the king's bedroom (area 17).

In the event that characters explore the mountainside over the palace, the DM may allow for a 5% cumulative chance per hour that the PCs find the cave entrance. This course of action should not be encouraged, as none of the NPC dwarves present could imagine why searching the mountain would be of use (unless the PCs can offer a good reason for it).

38. Rust Monster.

In this cave is a large wooden cage containing a trapped (but obviously healthy) rust monster. Its antennae



wave excitedly as it smells metal coming closer.

Player characters who get too close may suffer an attack by the rust monster (AC 2; MV 18"; HD 5; hp 23; #AT 2; Dmg nil; SA corrodes metal; AL N) which attempts to touch any items of metal it can reach. Walking close to the cave wall is enough to stay out of its immediate reach. A trip wire at the entrance to the next cave opens the cage and releases the monster.

39. Spy Hole.

The passageway ends with a blank wall, in which is a small spyhole which looks out into the throneroom.

Water drips slowly from the walls and ceiling of this cave, giving rise to the damp spot found in the Maids' Room (area 32). A tripwire at the entrance to this cave releases the rust monster from his cage. Without a *find traps* roll, the chances of finding the trap are only 1% per character level; check once for each character passing over the wire.

40-42. Stolen Goods Storage

These three caves are where Baradaar keeps items which Fingal is unable or unwilling to dispose of. Each of the approaches to the caves are locked by a portcullis, but these gates may be broken down by three successful *open doors* rolls on each gate. The rust monster in area 38 may also go through the gates after a few rounds if he can be lured here. Among the loot is a small bell, the type found on the hat and shoes of a jester. Fingal has lost one from his left shoe, and this may prove his connection with the thefts. Fingal usually enters the caves through the collapsed ceiling in area 37 or by following Baradaar through a secret door.

A secret door leads into the king's private apartments from area 42. This is why the north wall of his chamber is cold to the touch (see area 17).

Among the items currently present are the lost ceremonial sword (in excellent condition), numerous cups, glasses, mugs, dishes, candleholders, and items of silverware, and 1,258 gp. An assortment of small weapons, such as knives, daggers, and hand axes, is also present, as are additional packages of food and drink.

43. Secret Dungeon Cell: Player characters may notice in cleaning up the treasure found in area 42 that some of the rubbish left over from Baradaar's stay covers a door which was long ago sealed with stone. This is the door to the secret cell containing the bones of Flavis the gypsy — and his haunt (AC 0; MV 6"; HD 5; hp 23; #AT 1; Dmg special; SA drain two points of dexterity per touch, possession, strangulation; SD struck only by (and takes reduced damage from) silvered or magical weapons and fire, can reform self in one week; AL CN). It was Flavis who caused the player characters to come to the palace; he wants his bones buried and his spirit laid to rest at last.

An eerie light shines down this passageway, which winds its way for a short distance to an ancient cell covered in pale mold. The air is very dry and heavy. A chain hangs limply from its bracket in the wall, and a skeletal hand is manacled to it. The body and arm covered in mold. A light shines dully from the skull.



The mold is, of course, yellow mold (AC 9; MV nil; HD nil; hp nil; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA poison spores; SD only affected by fire and *continual light*; AL N). It has remained dormant for years in this cave (and will remain so as if a *continual light* had been cast on it). The prisoner from the past is the gypsy. His remains are covered in mold, but his spirit can animate in the form of a strange yellow light or ghostly image. In 1-4 rounds, it chooses a victim and attacks, but with a ghastly cry of joy and excitement.

Unless destroyed by the actions of the player characters, the haunt uses its victim's body to remove the bones (having destroyed the mold by burning) and bury them in the woods. Once this task is done, the spirit of the gypsy (housed in its new body) climbs up the mountain to a shallow cave 500' above the entrance to the palace. There, Flavis digs at the ground, uncovers a small box, and opens it to reveal a ring. Putting on the *ring of wishes*, Flavis lifts the curse on the dwarven kings.

This done, his spirit leaves the character he has possessed and speaks these words: "Now at last, Flavis the gypsy

can go to his final rest. Sklabek slew me, and I cursed his family. For seven generations my wrath plagued the royal house, but the gods above cursed me for my wickedness by binding me to this form. You have set me free. Your reward awaits. Seek out the king and his wife. If any questions remain, they can be answered now."

With these words, the spirit fades away.

Concluding the Quest

Baradon remembers all that has happened to him while he has suffered under the curse as Baradaar — a memory that torments him at times, but one that also brings a wry smile as well.

If Fingal was found out, he is pardoned by the King, but banished from the kingdom and never allowed to return. Ironfist is punished in the same manner if he has remained at Mount Diadem. Snagrat is thrown into prison on the day of the treaty signing, much to the delight of Sureshank, who has been forgiven for his part in the wine-glass affair (if discovered). Gald Stockfellow is kept on as Captain of the Guard; his first task is to clean the catacombs of any trace of the recent troubles. The rust monster and bear, if alive, are released into the wild.

A warrant is put out for the head of the Court Executioner, if he has escaped, but it seems unlikely that he will be found. Perhaps the PCs will meet him another time....

Despite the recent upsets, Fairgeld and Jerad East eventually make peace and commence a modest trade between them. The PC investigators become heroes in the kingdom of Fairgeld for as long as Baradon remains king. Each receives a measure of 500 gp, as well as the freedom of the land. They are also set free from any obligations they may have had to the king and may continue on their way if they wish.

Improvisations and Variations

The adventuring notes above describe the places and characters involved in the intrigues of the dwarven king's court, but they lack certain devices which the individual DMs must provide. For instance, no mention of the appearance of Baradaar during the characters' stay at Mount Diadem is made. It is for the DM to decide how to create the

proper atmosphere of mystery by staging close encounters with the unknown thief. Many secret doors exist through which Baradaar may escape, including the one into the catacombs from the throne room.

The comings and goings of the various NPCs should be planned out beforehand by the DM, using random encounter tables or timed placement lists. The DM should also feel free to ad lib the conversations with NPCs as desired. As one can easily tell, the palace is full of colorful characters who easily come to life in the hands of a skilled referee.

The inclusion of the catacombs is recommended as a final step open to the player characters after all clues have been given and the PCs are near their goal. Therefore, it is also recommended that the two entrances to the caves remain undiscovered until late in the game. If necessary, you may have the player characters corner Baradaar and Fingal in the caves if they have had a particularly hard time trying to figure out who is doing what in the palace. Remember not to rush things. The recovery of the sword can come anytime within the three weeks before the signing of the treaty.

Items should continue to disappear (acquired by Baradaar, Fingal, Bern, or others) while the player characters are trying to figure out the mystery. If possible, the missing items should include party possessions — a result, perhaps, of the PCs being housed singly in the guest rooms. Put a little pressure on the players (in a reasonable manner), and the atmosphere improves.

One final point is that the Brotherhood of Butchers will go to great lengths to recover its goblet. If the player characters have it in their possession, they may become the target of either Tafra or other assassins. Feel free to improvise. Most of all, have fun!