

Runekeep - A Haunted Adventure for D&D 4E

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The following is an adventure created for Dungeons and Dragons 4th edition. It's generic, and has no solid mention of outside lands, so is appropriate for just about every D&D setting, including Living Forgotten Realms. The cast, including profiles and monsters, has been separated out for easy conversion to other games and systems.

It should be very simple to get the characters into this adventure. Since it's an island, any travel by boat across a sufficiently large body of water could be used. The adventure is intentionally built like a normal side-adventure for the first portion, to allow you to lull players into thinking that this is a run-of-the-mill dungeon crawl, rather than a horror setting. For that reason, I suggest that there should be no adventure "hooks" other than pure happenstance.



Runekeep

This island was once the hold of a dwarven runesmith and his family. Given his skill and talent, the smith had his own forge and foundry, along with a small village of his clan that had come to join him. The smith chose this island both for its reclusive locale and its abundant natural resources. The island is the tip of a long-dormant volcano, and not far below the surface are ferrous ores rich in the minerals the runesmith needed for his crafts.

The smith lived and prospered here for over two hundred years. On the eve of their two hundredth year celebration, the runesmith's wife fell from the keeps parapets and died. Over the next weeks and months, the runesmith called in all of his favors with local lords and kings who had benefited from the dwarf's quality wares. Priests and arcanists were shipped in from lands as far away as the green coast (which, at the time, was the property of the black kings). Unfortunately, no form of resurrection seemed to work, and as time drew on, the runesmith became more and more obsessed and deranged. Many of his clan attempted to bring him to reason, but being dwarves, they had no choice but to trust in and honor their quickly degenerating lord. Then, exactly one year after the accident, the entire keep's contact with the outside world cut off. Not long after, when ships arrived to restock the dwarves' supplies, they found nothing but old bones, decrepit and brittle with extreme age.

The Lead In

Not long after the encounter with the goblin raiders, a strong southern breeze picks up. Captain Hrolfson, with what you've come to see as skilled ingenuity, informs you that they're going to ride the wind north and catch a strong stream running along what he calls the Beggars Channel.

He says that it would have taken an extra week to clip against the normal spring winds, thus wasting any time you could save by using the stream. With the help from the out-of-season gusts, however, you stand to cut almost a week off of your trip time.

After just two days, you've caught the stream, and are cruising towards the green coast. The winds don't break, though, and after just one more day, the captain is forced to pull in the spinnaker and drop the ship to half-sail. By that night, the winds whip into a proper storm, and the roiling seas quickly make for an unpleasant journey. The entire crew is on decks, trying to keep the ship on course, but with the winds increasing, the captain's worried for his ship.

Skill Challenge to keep the boat on course - Assist the crew with ropes and sails.

- Athletics 15: Keep a hold on the ropes even when they're wet and slick. Success +1, Fail -1 and -1 healing surge.
- Acrobatics 17: Stay on your feet in the rolling surge when other crewmembers fall. Success +1, Fail -1 and save vs death (third fail tosses unlucky character overboard.)
- Perception 18: See waves coming and help brace to stay upright and useful. Success +1, Fail -1 and -2 to next player's roll.
- Intimidate 16: Spur crew members on to their job. Success +2 to next player's roll, No detriment to fail.

+8 successes or -4 fails to end encounter. 4 successes or less: Boat is in shoddy shape when you make land, All characters take a -2 to initiative rolls until they've had an extended rest. 5-7 successes: 300 exp, ship is in moderate condition, no detriment to characters. 8 successes: 600 exp, characters weather the storm in fine shape, characters may "award" an action point to one player.

Appearing to finally come to a decision, the captain addresses his first mate and has the ship turn to port. After just a few hours, you see the waves start to chop, and not long after, you can make out the outline of a castle or a keep in the distance through the haze of the storm. Grim faced and silent, Captain Hrolfson pulls you into an otherwise deserted dock. Once you make dock, the captain arranges your party to set up a camp while he and the crew shore down the ship. He can spare 4 crewmembers to help find an appropriate place for the whole of the crew to rest, minus a few guards on board. Given that the island has buildings, he's not willing to break out the camp supplies unless absolutely necessary. He hopes that you can find a place with sturdy walls and a tight roof to last a few days until the storm breaks.

Stepping foot onto the island, it's tough to see much past the docks in the driving rain, but what you can see seems to be solid and sturdy-built stone buildings. The buildings crowd close to the road on either side, with the road leading straight up to the shadow of the keep on a hill above.

Places of interest around the docks

Warehouse: The warehouse is mostly empty, though a few badly eroded barrels and crates have spilled their long since lost cargoes to scavengers and moss. Just like most of the buildings, the walls are sturdy and in pristine shape, while the roof is only half-there. The building would take a significant amount of work to make inhabitable for any length of time. Perception: 18 will find a scroll case with an inventory written in dwarven. The inventory lists suits of armor and weapons, along with all manner of tools, seals, and keystones. None of the inventory remains.

Abodes: There are some thirty or forty abodes littering the lower shelf of the island. All of the houses are decrepit and mostly decayed. A few still have intact rooves, but none are large enough to store the entire crew. **Perception:** 15 rolls when searching will find the following items, rolled randomly per ten minutes spent searching. Each item may only be found once. Roll again if a further item would be found. Each time a roll is made, every further roll gets a cumulative -1 as the characters become more and more wet and frustrated from the rain, and become more and more convinced that there's nothing more to find. This will max out at -10.

1. Signet ring (Dwarven runed, worth 100gp, or 500gp to the right dwarven clan.)
2. Journal, appears to be a child's. Most of the handwriting is too difficult to decipher given its age, and it's in dwarven. Anyone who can decipher it will read mostly about childhood interests, lessons, intrigues amongst friends, and such, but there's one important sections about "Lord Karabak" who used to teach the children about runes, but hasn't recently.
3. 5 dwarven funeral urns, all of which are empty. They're well ornamented, and given their age and antiquity, would sell for 100gp each.
4. Arcane anomaly around a dwarven rune (Arcane: 18 to investigate) the rune shows signs of corruption, though it's impossible to tell when the corruption happened. The rune is a standard rune of luck and longevity, but seems to be detrimental, where it's normally meant to be beneficial. This will have no actual effect on characters, since these runes are meant to be inscribed for an abode, and only have minor effects over extended periods of time.
5. Gloves of Piercing (Dwarven runed)
6. Bloodcut Leather (Dwarven runed), buried under rubble. Takes 5 minutes to excavate. Once excavated, the person will find the remnants of a dwarven skeleton, obviously many hundreds of years old.

The Keep

Here is a listing of meaningful rooms on the first floor.

Entryway: The keep's doors have rotted away and can be opened easily enough. Though a little drafty, the keep is expertly made, and doesn't appear to be leaking in any significant way. The entryway would be an ideal place to harbor the crew through the storm. There's old dwarven heraldry, and with a history (15) roll, they can be identified as the ironhammer clan, a dwindling and small clan without a current lord. Beyond the expert stonework and general decay of any organic items, the only meaningful feature is a large and ornate dwarven rune set into the floor adjacent to the keep's doors. Laying on the floor in a corner is a small book (no search needed) that radiates magic. It appears to be a journal, but all the pages are blank, save for the first eight pages, which have been torn out. Once the night starts, if the characters are inside or enter after nightfall, any character attempting to exit is immediately inflicted with timelost sickness and takes 3d6+3 damage every turn they start beyond the gate rune.

Dining hall: As could be expected, the dining hall is lush and has a homely, inviting feel. The room is dominated by a marble table on rather ornate metal legs. There are the remains of benches and chairs surrounding the table, and no other loose items left around. There are stairs here to the top level. Searching here (18) will uncover a silverware set (worth 180gp or thereabouts.) In addition, they will find page 1 of the journal crumpled in the otherwise empty hearth.

Kitchens: The kitchen is massive, and with a little imagination, the characters could easily imagine this kitchen being used for means for hundreds of people at once. There's a massive fireplace with four spits spanning it. One of the spits has pinned a piece of paper, which turns out to be page 3 of Lord Karabak's journal. With Arcane (18) the players can identify the rune below the spits as a Rune of Incendiary Force. When the right power word is spoken, (in this case, Argamen, dwarven for flame) the rune will spark and ignite anything above it. The rune has been cast into a flagstone, and with a thievery (22) it can be pried from its casing. It can be used while inside the keep similar to a wand of fireball(?). Leaving the keep causes the rune to deactivate, though it can still be reduced to its component parts during disenchantment.

Larder: The larder is chilly, though nothing worthwhile remains inside. There are stone shelves lining the walls, and with a perception passive (20) the characters will notice the faint outline of a door. This door is only four feet tall, and requires a thievery of (20) to open. Behind is a staircase that leads down to the forge, though the stairs themselves have rotted away, and only a slick slide remains. Traveling down it requires acrobatics (20) or causes 3d8+8 damage as the character falls. A rope will reduce the difficulty to (15) and will allow an athletics of (15) to climb back up. Timelost children will use this exit if they are chased into the larder.

Study: The study is small and warm compared to the other rooms of the keep. The room is dominated by a great marble desk, complete with drawers. All of the drawers are unlocked, except for the middle one on the right side, which requires thievery (18) to unlock, and a further perception (20) or dungeoneering (17) (whichever is higher) to avoid the poison needle trap attached to the lock. If the thievery check to open the drawer is (23) or higher, the needle will not trigger. The needle will inject one person with a toxin that reduces strength and con by 5 immediately. After five minutes, the character may make an endurance (20) check, success cures the person, failure reduces the character's statistics by a further 5. Healing effects or effects that allow a saving throw will allow extra endurance rolls with no penalty for failure, and provide bonuses to that roll equal to whatever bonuses they would have provided, or 1/4 of the hps gained by the healing. Inside the drawer is a dwarven runed Symbol of Life (Magic Item), and a page from the diary.

Lounge: The lounge is a large room with an expansive hearth, but after many years, all of its furniture has rotted and crumbled to dirt. All that remains are the metal supports, springs, and trappings of the furniture. There are a few distinct piles of debris, and behind one can be found a page from the diary. On one side of the room is a staircase leading up to the top floor of the keep. The staircase is blocked by rubble, which takes at least an hour of clearing before the stair case can be scaled. If the players choose, the lounge can be used to quarter the crew as well.

Entry to Forge: The wall in one corridor has a large and obtrusive circular door. Surrounding the door are runes, now obscured with age and mostly incomprehensible. An arcane check (20) will identify the runes as a seigelock, and without knowing the correct sequence, the door will not open. Guessing the sequence of anywhere from 4 to 8 characters from an alphabet of over 20 runes is statistically impossible, and the characters will not succeed until the door is opened by the shades during the night.

Top level: The top level of the keep has walls that are mostly intact, but the roof of the keep seems to have been mostly made of wood and other organic materials. The roof has collapsed in most places, and where still navigable, the top level has nothing of value.

Stairs to forge: The stairs to the forge are cluttered by brittle skeletons of all sizes, obviously a mix of adults and children. Many of them are piled up against the seige doors, and careful examination of nature (20) or healing (20) shows that their fingerbones had been blunted, as if they'd clawed at the door until they'd worn down to bone. All of the skeletons appear to be many thousands of years old, much much older than the keep itself. If timelost children remain, they will run here. Their singing will stop, and instead they will scream, cry, or huddle on the ground next to child skeletons. If Karlie remains, she will also stop here, attempting to console or comfort the children. Once here, the shades will stop responding to characters. They may still be attacked, and will be defenseless. One of the skeletons, a medium sized female one, has a piece of the journal clasped in her hands.

The Forge: The forge is still warm, and unlike the rest of the keep, all of the organic material here seems to have survived the ages. All of the tools are in decent shape, as is the forge itself. A few of the tools contain rune magic, and may be disenchanting. If they're removed from the forge, they will lose their power, and are only useful in disenchantment (Two hammers, as +1 weapons), and are otherwise non-magical. There are skeletons scattered around the room, though most seem to be at what would be considered work stations, either at anvils, at the bellows, or at work benches. The workmen are all here, and will not leave the forge. In searching the room with perception (15) the players will find another page of the journal in a metal scraps bin. The shade of the taskmaster has the rune that fits the lock for the foundry. One side of the room is dominated by another door, the foundry entrance. Without the rune from the taskmaster's shade, the door requires an arcane check (25) followed by a thievery (25) to fool the spell and contraption, thus opening the door.

The Foundry: The foundry is scorching hot, the fires are still burning even after all this time. Characters in the room must make an endurance (18) or be weakened until they retreat to the forge, drink cold liquid, or are exposed to a cold effect of any kind. There is a large vat above the fire, and the whole room has taken a reddish glow from the color of the flame. There are runes glowing around the entire perimeter of the fire pit, an arcane check (18) will identify them as minor runes of ignition, fueling the fire magically from some unknown source. There are molds and tools stacked against every wall, while the only mold horizontal and ready to be poured in the room is just below the vat. The mold looks like an incredibly complex rune, more than three feet in width and length, with permutations and minor runes covering every inch of it. Just to one side, it appears a platinum casting of the rune has been inlaid into a marble circle, and is glowing brightly. At the start of every character's turn, the rune will deal 5 necrotic damage to them if they remain within the foundry. If the character is bloodied, this aura will also cause them to be slowed until the end of their next turn. Lord Karabak is standing here, ghostly and deranged, and will attack the players if they attempt to harm the rune. In the foundry, in the fire itself, is the last page of the journal. Characters must either use tongs to grab it, or if forced to, take 3d8+5 damage if they reach into the forge to pick it up by hand. If the players have collected all 8 pages of the journal and reattached them, Lady Aranor will appear in ghostly form as soon as the journal is held out in the open near Lord Karabak. Her presence will protect characters from the rune, and will make their attacks hit Lord Karabak as if he were not incorporeal. Lord Karabak and Lady Aranor will have a heated argument while both exist, as listed in events below. If the rune and its supporting stone is destroyed, all shades in the keep will immediately disappear, all except Lady Aranor. If the journal has been assembled and Lady Aranor has manifested before the rune is destroyed, she will appear alive and well (if old) after its destruction. She will be inconsolable, but Captain Hrolfson will be able to convince her to board the ship and join his crew until he's able to return her to dwarven

lands. Lady Aranor is a skilled rune-wizard, and will assist the party with creating magical items while at the Green Coast if she's rescued.

Events During the Nights

Sundown: Starting just after sundown (though the sun can't be seen through the storm clouds) the sentries will start hearing soft singing from somewhere in the keep. It sounds like children's voices, and is very faint. A history (15) will identify the song as an ancient dwarven children's rhyme set to a simple song. The words, in dwarven, mean "Where is my father, down in the mine, will he come home, yes tonight. Will he bring riches, jewels to match my eyes, when my father, he returns tonight." Looking around the keep won't find any source of the singing, though. It sounds the loudest in the lounge and near the siege locked door. Just ten minutes or so after it starts, it will stop again.

Twilight: Once the first sentry is placed and the crew begins to sleep, if the players are attentive, they'll see a crew member head off to relieve himself. There'll be a cry of shock, then when people go to investigate, they'll find a human skeleton, brittle with age. There'll be any items the crew member had that were inorganic surrounding the skeleton (sword, studs from his studded leather, an earring, belt buckle, etc.) There will be no other indication of what had happened, except for a puddle in the corner showing that the crew member was in the middle of relieving himself when it happened.

First Watch: Halfway through first watch, the singing will start again. The crew will be too spooked to leave the room where the group has gathered. After a few moments, everyone will start to see flickering lights from the direction of the lounge, or if they're in the lounge, from the kitchen. If the players go to investigate, they will encounter 12 timelost children. They have passive perception (20) and will scatter as soon as any of them notice a character approaching. They will avoid whatever room the group has gathered in. If cornered, the timelost children will attack. If the characters observe rather than attack, then they will see that the children appear to be playing some sort of tag game. The children will gather around one child, and when one child gets separated from the rest, the others will converge and tag that child, who then becomes the center of a new group. The children are roughly in groups of 4, but individuals will break off and join other groups if they become lost. Lastly, if a character becomes isolated by line of sight from the rest of the characters, the time lost children will run in and "tag" the character, causing the timelost sickness and dealing necrotic damage as their tag attack. The children will play for fifteen minutes uninterrupted, or if the characters investigate, the children will play their game for upwards of an hour. If killed, the first timelost child will drop a page of the journal. If the characters observe, but don't attack the children, one of the children will approach in a rather frightened manner and give the character holding the journal the page before they all disappear.

Second Watch: Midway through the second watch, the children will reappear in a similar fashion, but this time, they will be accompanied by the shade of Karlie. All of the same children will appear again, even if they were "killed" last time they appeared. As soon as the singing starts again, one crew member will snap. He'll state that he'd rather stay in the brig than this cursed keep and break for the front door. Characters may attempt to restrain him, but if they do so, the rest of the crew will become more and more rebellious with obvious results. Captain Hrolfson will not physically restrain the crew member, though he will flatly order him to remain, and threaten flogging if the crew member leaves. If they let him go, as soon as he passes the gate rune, he will fall to his knees, scream, and then age and disintegrate until he's just like the previous crew member. This puts the fear of leaving the group into the rest of the

crew, and the captain will keep them under control. At this point, if the players haven't already started to look for answers, the captain will ask them to help find a way to escape in hushed and forcedly calm tones. At this point, if the characters explore, they'll find the children in the kitchen with Karlie. As soon as the characters approach, the children will hide behind Karlie, while a few of them will rush into the larder (through closed doors if necessary) and down the secret passage. Karlie will attack if the characters get within ten feet, and will respond if spoken to. She doesn't know most of what happened, but will share what little information she remembers of Lord Karabak. She's been a servant of the lord her whole life, a member of the clan, and a personal friend of the family. Her purpose is care of the children, and since most of the dwarves in town send their children up to the keep during the days for tutoring, she runs a makeshift daycare and nursery. She's incapable of thinking of herself as dead, doesn't remember the last night when the rune was activated, and is only mildly aware that Lord Karabak has become deranged. The characters may ask for an audience to Lord Karabak with a skill challenge:

Skill Challenge to convince Karlie to open the door

- Diplomacy 17: Use smooth and calming words to convince her that it's important that the characters speak to Lord Karabak. Success: +1, Failure -1
- Intimidate 20: Threaten Karlie of dire results if she doesn't let the characters speak to the Lord. Success +1 and +2 to next character's attempt, Failure -1 and -2 to next character's attempt.
- Bluff 15: Convince Karlie that they're here to see the dwarven Lord about Aranor's death. Success +1, Failure -1
- Insight 16: Sweet talk Karlie with compliments about her handling of the children. Success +4 to next roll, no disadvantage for failure.

Challenge ends after +6 successes or -3 failures. If the characters fail, Karlie will refuse to talk to them further. If the characters attempt to get into the Larder, Karlie will tell them to leave, and if they refuse, she will attack.

Karlie's ghost will remain in the kitchen with the children until sunrise. If the characters don't find a way down to the forge by sunrise, all characters will be inflicted with timelost sickness. The storm will last for three days, after which the wind will pick back up.

Forge: The inhabitants of the forge are the runesmiths and apprentices that make armor, weapons, tools, and other goods upon which the runes will be inscribed, carved, or inlaid. They will only be manifested after the second watch starts. There will be a number of runesmiths here appropriate to the number of characters, plus the taskmaster. If the characters enter by the siegeloaked door, the runesmiths will disregard their presence, and the taskmaster will demand to know their business. He will be outwardly hostile, and will under no conditions willingly let the characters in to meet the Lord. The characters may inspect the door to the foundry while the taskmaster gloats. He will even flaunt the fact that he holds the key rune, but will not release it to the characters unless killed. If the characters insult the taskmaster's honor in any way, he will attack, along with the runesmiths. If the characters enter by the secret door, the taskmaster and runesmiths will attack immediately. Since the taskmaster's shade holds the key, not his remains, the characters will not have access to the foundry even if they find a way down to the forge until after the nights events have started.

Foundry: Once the characters find a way to enter the foundry, they will immediately be aware of the presence of the Rune of Time Returned and Lord Karabak. Lord Karabak will be caught unaware if the characters immediately attack, but will prepare himself and attack the characters if they attempt to parley or speak before combat. If the diary has all the pages except for the last one, the character holding it will feel inexplicably drawn towards the foundry's fires. Any other character will require a perception (20) to notice the page from the journal, but the character with the nearly complete journal will immediately notice it. If the character can collect the last page and attach it to the journal (standard action to pull it from the flames as mentioned in the room's description, minor action to reattach it if the character holds both) Lady Aranor will materialize. While the characters fight, she and Lord Karabak will have the following Argument, each one saying a line as their turn occurs.

"My sweet Aranor, you've returned to me!"

"How could I not, you beast! You've tied me to this blasted journal, and kept me on this realm!"

"But the rune succeeded, you're alive!"

"You fool, I'm not alive; you're dead! You and every member of our clan. And our children."

"I'm dead? I can't be!"

"Believe it! You killed yourself, just as you killed everyone we loved."

"No, my love! All I've done, I did for you!"

"All you've done you did for your pride and your shame. I repudiate you. You're not the Lord Karabak I loved."

"Don't you dare say those words. I've sacrificed everything for you."

"The nerve. We had two hundred years of happiness. Wasn't that enough for you?"

"But we could have had so many more!"

"At the cost of what, our children? Our friends? Our family? Our CLAN? No. Speak no more to me, I will not hear your words."

"Aranor? Aranor!"

Both will refuse to speak after this exchange, until the rune of Time Returned is destroyed.

Journal of Lord Karabak

In the dining hall, crumpled in the fireplace:

Dear my beloved Aranor,

Earlier this evening, as our two hundredth year revel began, you gifted to me this journal, in hopes that I would record our happy lives and successes for our lorekeepers to add to their library. I was dubious, as I had never been a skilled writer, but I promised to try, out of my love for you. Now, on the eve of our celebration and the dawn of my greatest loss and grief, we laid your broken body upon our Runehold for vigil. I've been told it's folly to blame myself for your death, but I can't help but think that if I hadn't requested your presence on the parapets for Master Zyphon's fire display, you'd never have fallen.

Rest well, my love, the priest of Kord arrives in a week's time, and god's willing, you will be back in my arms soon.

- Year of the Buck, Harvest 16

In the Lounge, on the floor behind metal pieces of what used to be the comforter:

Dear my sweet Aranor,

The priest arrived this morning, and I promptly led him to you, awaiting your resurrection. Instead, as his ritual completed, nothing happened. I plied him with jewels and gold, and convinced him to try again, with the blessings of the Ironhammer clan, but to no avail. Your sleeping form would not wake.

I have disposed of the charlatan, and requested the presence of our own clerics to attend to you. Even though they are across the sea in the red mountains, they have agreed to travel here on my need. Forgive my delays, my love. I yearn to see you alive and vibrant again.

- Year of the Buck, Harvest 23

In the study, in a drawer of the marble desk:

Dear my lovely Aranor,

We received a guest from the Eladrin lands this morning, but he refused to pass through our gate. I am loathe to say, but his behavior worries me, especially in light of the priest's failure. He would not speak of his reasons, but he kept glancing at our rune of longevity, as if it were a pox upon our keep.

I dread to write, my love, that perhaps this situation is truly my fault? Unintentional as it may be, I dread to find that this rune, my greatest accomplishment, is also the source of my greatest misery.

- Year of the Buck, Redleaf 1

In the kitchens, beneath the spit:

Dear my departed Aranor,

It has been three months, and I've neglected to write in this journal because I simply had nothing to say. I'm sorry for my lax attitude, and I promise I will write more frequently. The clerics should arrive any day now, and I both anticipate your return, and dread what might happen should the ritual fail again.

I must admit, my craft has suffered in your absence. I feel as if I cannot focus, and even simple runes have recently escaped my grasp. Surrounded by this sea, you were my stone and solid harbour, and I miss you with every day that passes.

- Year of the Hawk, Snow-On-Hills 8

Dropped by a time-lost child:

Dear my beautiful Aranor,

Just as the fraud before them, the so-called clerics have failed. Their ritual took hours, and they exerted and sweat, but their efforts were for naught. You still lay there, beautiful as the day you died, upon the vigil stone. Karlie has tried suggesting to me that we send you off in the pyres, that your time had come. I don't hold it against Karlie, she's been a good friend and confidant since your passing, but she can't understand. She's never loved as we loved, and she cannot feel us reaching out beyond the void to each other. I will find a way to bring you back, my love. This I promise.

- Year of the Hawk, Snow-On-Hills 13

On the stairs leading down to the forge:

Dear my sweetest Aranor,

The latest ship in our port held wares more valuable to me than all of the crackpots calling themselves priests. Ordered from the eladrin fey lands, I've acquired a collection of books about the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. My research has led me to one conclusion, a dreadful, terrible conclusion.

You must remember many years ago, on our seventieth anniversary, when I inscribed the rune of longevity into the keystone of our keep. I had just created the rune, and it was heralded as the discovery of a generation. Every lord and king wanted one, and for a price, I supplied. With it, ourselves and our clan could live in health well past our allotted time, safe on our island for decades where before we'd have only years. To tell the truth, lived we have done, and well, like it would never end. Fate is not so forgiving, though, for since you had lived long past what you would have had without the rune, regular rituals to resuscitate you will inevitably fail.

My research continues, my love. I will find a way, if it brings me to the end of my own days. We will be together again, my Aranor.

- Year of the Hawk, Planting 12

In the Forge, in the scraps bin:

To my love,

I have found the answer I seek, though I know not if I have the strength to use that knowledge. Since it was time that saw to your demise, it's time that I must give back to you to bring you back. The rituals I've found are old; very old. Older even than the oldest of our greatest histories, so old that only the dragons knew its secrets. They are complex, and turning my runecraft to these oldest and most powerful of rituals makes my head hurt with its vagaries. Even one misplaced mark can have catastrophic results, so all my will must be trained to my task.

Karlie has started to bring the children up to the keep daily, I'm sure in hopes of distracting me from my obsession. I used to revel in their lessons, young minds eager to be taught the craft of runesmithing, but I can't let even my old passions distract me now. I'm on the eve of a great creation, one that will bring you soaring back to my arms.

- Year of the Hawk, Sun-High 1

In the illusory fires of the foundry:

My Aranor,

Tonight, one single year from the night of your fall, I find myself on the eve of my greatest creation, and my greatest shame. Would be that no one reads this journal while I still draw breath, so I scatter its pages, even if I have not the power to destroy them. In my zeal to raise you from the dead, I have created a work so profound that even I hesitate to use it. I dare not write down what it does, for fear of incriminating myself, but I fear that its effects will be dangerous.

Danger or no, though, it is my only hope of bringing you back. I have come too far to go back, and within just moments, I may feel your heart beating again. Forgive me, Aranor, for what I have done, and more so, for what I may do this night. I lay down my pen, close these pages, and spread them to the wind. Then as the clock strikes nine, when just this time last year we huddled atop the parapets to watch Master Zyphon's display, I activate the Rune of Time Returned.

I will hold you in my arms again tonight, my sweet Aranor.

Cast

Hrolfson and Crew: Hrolfson is the captain of the vessel on which the characters are traveling. He's a dwarven fighter of some repute, though is not particularly experienced off of his ship. He will bow to the character's experience inside the keep, and as a stern leader, will keep the crew as under control as possible. He's seen them through tough times (though never as tough as this) and they, except for a few new faces, trust him.

His crew are, in general, a sturdy lot, but they are sailors, not soldiers. If cornered, they'll fight, but they'd prefer to let the party handle the problems rather than face it themselves. The quartermaster Ajiss and first mate Kirny will remain aboard the vessel with a few of the crew, and don't play a major part in this story.

Hrolfson

Initiative +0

Senses Perception +2; Low Light Vision

HP: 30 □□□□ Bloodied: 15

AC: 17 □□ Fort: 16 □ Will: 12 □ Ref: 10

Saving Throws: 10+

Speed: 5

Cleave (Standard; at-will)

+5 vs AC, d10+3 damage to primary target, second adjacent target takes 3 damage.

Steel Serpent Strike (Standard; Encounter):

+5 vs AC, 2d10+3, target is slowed and cannot shift until end of next turn.

Comeback Strike (Standard; Daily):

+5 vs AC, 2d10+3, spend a healing surge.

Alignment: Unaligned

Languages: Common, Dwarf

Str: 16(+3) □□ Dex: 10(0) □□ Wis: 14(+2) □□

Con: 18(+4) □□ Int: 10(0) □□ Cha: 10(0) □□

Equipment: Chainmail, Axe, Shield

Crew Member

Initiative +3

Senses Perception +1, Low Light Vision

HP: 1

AC: 15 □□ Fort: 13 □ Will: 14 □ Ref: 15

Saving Throws: 10+

Speed: 6

Short Sword (Standard; at-will) : +5 vs AC, 4 damage

Clever Crew (Immediate Reaction, when missed by a melee attack; at-will): Shift 1 square.

Alignment: Unaligned

Languages: Common

Str: 14(+2) □□ Dex: 17(+3) □□ Wis: 12(+1) □□

Con: 13(+1) □□ Int: 8(-1) □□ Cha: 8(-1) □□

Equipment: Chainmail, Hammer

Lord Karabak, Lady Aranor, and the Rune of Time Returned

Lord Karabak, a legendary Runesmith, became deranged by his wife's death on the two hundredth anniversary of their wedding and claiming of their island keep. Over the next year, it became apparent that the rune he had created, the rune of longevity, would prevent the resurrection of his wife because she had already outlived her allotted lifespan. He became obsessed with the creation of a rune that would restore that time to her, and thus become able to be resuscitated. Even though he was a master runesmith, a rune of such power would have required almost divine power, and the result was both incapable of performing what he wished it to do, and was devastating for his clan and for the keep. Instead of funneling "time" into his dead wife, the rune corrupted the natural flow of time within the keep and on the island, causing Lord Karabak and his clan to age centuries in just seconds. By the time the next ship arrived, full of supplies for the island dwelling dwarves, all that remained were brittle skeletons and a mystery.

The rune he'd created has only so much power, though, and requires time to recharge. The remaining members of Lord Karabak's clan (those who didn't live on the island) came, took what corpses they could retrieve, and left the island in peace. This is how the island has stood for centuries. It's on every dwarven map (including Hrolfson's) but over the ages, the warnings about its curse have faded, until it's just marked as an unused and abandoned port.

Lady Aranor will be just an immaterial shade until the rune is destroyed. She recognizes and notices the presence of the party, but will not otherwise respond to them. If the journal is completed before the rune is destroyed, she will be fully returned to life, as hale as she was when she died.

Lord Karabak

Medium shadow Humanoid (undead)

Level 3 Solo Soldier xp 750

Initiative +4

Senses Perception +4; Low Light Vision

HP: 96 Bloodied: 48

AC: 21 Fort: 18 Will: 17 Ref: 15

Saving Throws: 5+

Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotics; Insubstantial

Speed: 5

Action Points: 2

Rune Hammer (standard; at-will) + Weapon

+10 vs AC; 1d10+5 damage.

Hammer Slam (minor; recharge 5-6) + Weapon

+8 vs Fort; 2d6+5 in a close blast 2, and all targets are knocked prone. Lord Karabak slams the floor with his rune hammer, and all items in the room shake, including even the anvils and heavy molds.

Throw Hammer (standard; at will) + Weapon

Ranged 5/10; +9 vs AC; 1d6+5 damage.

Time Lost

All attacks made by Lord Karabak will inflict timelost sickness, and are so potent because of the presence of the rune that they will deal an extra 5 damage to any target who is already timelost.

Stubborn(Immediate interrupt, when an enemy triest to push or knock prone; at-will)
Lord Karabak makes a melee basic attack against the enemy.

Stand Your Ground

When an effect forces a dwarf to move-through a pull, a push, or a slide, the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an effect would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

Alignment: Evil

Languages: Common, Dwarf

Str: 17(+4) ☐☐ Dex: 10(+1) ☐☐ Wis: 17(+4) ☐☐
Con: 16(+4) ☐☐ Int: 18(+5) ☐☐ Cha: 12(+2) ☐☐

Equipment: Forge Leathers, Rune Hammer

Rune of Time Returned

Inanimate Object

Initiative NA ☐☐ Senses Perception NA

HP: 100 ☐☐☐☐ Bloodied: 50

AC: 21 ☐☐ Fort: 18 ☐ Will: NA ☐ Ref: 10

Time Funnel

The rune emits an aura around itself, affecting all characters in line of sight. It deals necrotic 5 damage at the start of each affected player's turn. In addition, each character will experience effects of time quickly advancing, such as hair and nails growing, wrinkles forming, etc. If the rune is destroyed, Lord Karabak and all timelost creatures are destroyed, and everyone suffering timelost sickness is instantaneously cured, though they don't immediately regain lost healing surges.

Alignment: Evil

Taskmaster and Runesmiths

The taskmaster and his runesmiths were loyal clansmen of Lord Karabak, and are protective even in death of their leader. They were the first affected by the rune when it was first activated, and died as they stood at their forge, troughs, and anvils. Their shades are bound to their mortal remains, which were never taken from the keep because of the siege door.

Taskmaster

Medium shadow humanoid (undead)

Level 3 Leader Soldier xp 150

Initiative +3 ☐☐ Senses Perception +2, Low Light Vision

HP: 27 Bloodied: 13

AC: 19 ☐☐ Fort: 20 ☐ Will: 19 ☐ Ref: 16

Saving Throws: 10+

Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotics; Insubstantial

Speed: 5

Forge Hammer (standard; at-will) + Weapon

+10 vs AC; 1d10+3 damage, see Timelost and Lead from the Front

Mighty Blow (standard; recharge 6)

+9 vs Fort; 2d6+8 damage, and push target up to 4 squares. Target is knocked prone in the last space. This push may send the target into the square of another creature, which becomes the secondary target.

secondary target

+7 vs Ref; 1d6 damage, and both targets end up prone in the secondary target's square.

Miss secondary target: The first target ends the push one square before the secondary target.

Lead from the Front

When the Taskmaster's melee attack hits an enemy, allies gain +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls against that enemy until the end of the Taskmaster's next turn.

Timelost

The Taskmaster is timelost, and all attacks with his forge hammer will infect the target with timelost sickness.

Stubborn(Immediate interrupt, when an enemy triest to push or knock prone; at-will)

Taskmaster makes a melee basic attack against the enemy.

Stand Your Ground

When an effect forces a dwarf to move-through a pull, a push, or a slide, the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an effect would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone

Alignment: Unaligned

Languages: Common, dwarf

Str: 20(+6) ☐☐ Dex: 10(+1) ☐☐ Wis: 12(+2) ☐☐

Con: 16(+4) ☐☐ Int: 12(+2) ☐☐ Cha: 8(-1) ☐☐

Equipment: Chainmail, Hammer

Runesmith

Medium shadow humanoid (undead)

Level 3 Soldier XP 150

Initiative +3

Senses Perception +2, Low Light Vision

HP: 24 Bloodied: 12

AC: 19 ☐☐ Fort: 18 ☐ Will: 17 ☐ Ref: 15

Saving Throws: 10+

Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotics; Insubstantial

Speed: 5

Forge Hammer (standard; at-will) + Weapon

+10 vs AC; 1d10+3 damage, see Timelost and Rune Powered Blow

Rune Powered Blow

Runes on the forge hammer carry power over timelost foes. Any creature suffering from timelost sickness hit by the Runesmith's Forge Hammer is slowed and weakened (save ends.)

Timelost

The Runesmith is timelost, and all attacks with his forge hammer will infect the target with timelost sickness if the target fails an immediate saving throw.

Stubborn (Immediate interrupt, when an enemy tries to push or knock prone; at-will)

Runesmith makes a melee basic attack against the enemy.

Stand Your Ground

When an effect forces a dwarf to move-through a pull, a push, or a slide, the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an effect would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone

Alignment: Unaligned

Languages: Common, dwarf

Str: 18(+5) ☐☐ Dex: 10(+1) ☐☐ Wis: 12(+2) ☐☐

Con: 14(+3) ☐☐ Int: 12(+2) ☐☐ Cha: 8(-1) ☐☐

Equipment: Chainmail, Hammer

Karlie and Timelost Children

Karabak and the children she was tutoring had been down in the forge when the rune was activated. The children, having more time than the adults, felt the effects more keenly. They ran, attempting to escape, but the siege lock had already been sprung by Lord Karabak's own demise. Karlie died before she could remove the siege lock, and their remains were left huddled before the door. Their shades are less bound to these remains than the runesmiths and taskmaster, and are free to roam the keep.

Karlie

Medium shadow humanoid (undead)

Level 2 Controller XP 125

Initiative +3

Senses Perception +10, Low Light Vision

HP: 23 Bloodied: 11

AC: 17 ☐☐ Fort: 14 ☐ Will: 16 ☐ Ref: 15

Saving Throws: 10+

Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotics; Insubstantial
Speed: 5

Slap (standard; at-will)

+7 vs Ref; 1d6+1 damage.

Timelost Cry (standard; recharge 4-6)

Close blast 3; +7 vs will; 1d6 damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares. The target must make an immediate saving throw or suffer timelost sickness.

Protect the Children(Immediate interrupt, when an attack hits any adjacent timelost child)
The attack hits Karlie instead.

Stubborn(Immediate interrupt, when an enemy triest to push or knock prone; at-will)
Runesmith makes a melee basic attack against the enemy.

Stand Your Ground

When an effect forces a dwarf to move-through a pull, a push, or a slide, the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an effect would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone

Alignment: Unaligned

Languages: Common, dwarf

Str: 12(+2) ☐☐ Dex: 14(+3) ☐☐ Wis: 18(+5) ☐☐

Con: 14(+3) ☐☐ Int: 12(+2) ☐☐ Cha: 17(+4) ☐☐

Equipment: Chainmail, Hammer

Timelost Child

Small shadow humanoid (undead)

Level 2 minion XP 31

Initiative +3

Senses Perception +10, Low Light Vision

HP: 1

AC: 15 ☐☐ Fort: 13 ☐ Will: 14 ☐ Ref: 17

Saving Throws: 10+

Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotics; Insubstantial

Speed: 6

Tag (standard; at-will)

+8 vs Ref; 5 necrotic damage, and the target must make an immediate saving throw or suffer timelost sickness.

Devious Child (Immediate Reaction, when missed by a melee attack; at-will) : Shift 1 square.

Alignment: Unaligned

Languages: Common

Str 14 (+3) ☐☐ Dex 17 (+4) ☐☐ Wis 12 (+2) ☐☐

Con 13 (+2) ☐☐ Int 8 (0) ☐☐ Cha 15 (+3) ☐☐

Equipment: Chainmail, Hammer

Timelost Sickness

Level 3 Disease

Spread by timelost inhabitants of the Runekeep. Endurance improve DC22, maintain DC18, worsen DC17 or lower.

The target is cured

Initial Effect: The target loses one healing surge from their total that it cannot regain until cured each time they take an extended rest.

The target ages extremely quickly, and gains a cumulative -2 to constitution and strength each time they rest. This aging is reversed when cured.

Final State: The target dies from premature old age.