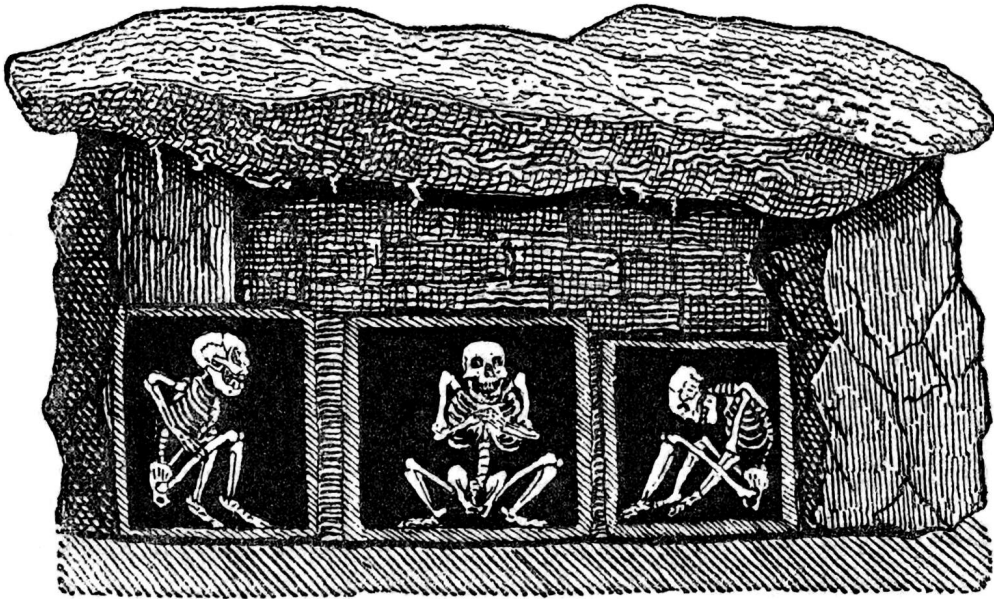


The Everbarrow



THE EVERBARROW

A Trophy Gold incursion by Alex Wiltshire

THEME: TIME

GM's notes

The Everbarrow exists outside of time. To escape, players must break the spell that holds it there. They then face a terrible threat that's defined by what might unfold if, in the future, they manage to satisfy their Drive.

This is a linear incursion: Sets are experienced sequentially, starting in an ancient place and ending up in a strange future. Players can go back in Sets 1 and 2, but cannot in Sets 3 and 4.

To help the players follow the flow, try to emphasise time. Describe the strangeness of new things in old places; old things in new places; the incomprehensible nature of things from the future; aging and youth. Encourage them to consider and discuss their Drives during the adventure, so they can engage with the thing they will face at the end of the journey.

This is version 1.1. I'd love to hear about your experiences: alex@rotational.co.uk.

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THE EVERBARROW

Introduction

There is a barrow not far from Fort Duhrin. It's long been explored and every treasure has surely been looted from it. But the other night in the pub, you overheard an elderly antiquarian talking about how legends say that an ancient queen lies there, yet her burial chamber has never been found.

Her gold, jewels — treasures that wait to be discovered. This is what you've been looking for.

- *What do you need the treasure for? How will you spend it?*

Later, the antiquarian revealed to you that he had a theory for how to find the queen's hidden chamber.

- *How did you extract this information from him?*

So now you stand at the entrance to the barrow in the middle of midsummer night, watching for the sun to reach its lowest point, when its circumference kisses the horizon. In this instant, the solstice's power will flood into the earth and awaken all that is old. And at that moment, you all duck inside.

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SET 1: THE BARROW

Goal: Discover a way deeper

Earth-floored and dank, the barrow has been intruded upon by generations of grave-robbers. Various stone-lined chambers lead left and right off a central corridor, apparently picked clean. It is unnaturally quiet, as if the world outside has paused.

MOMENTS

- A shower of soil from a fissure in ceiling slabs.
- A scurrying of rats.
- A carving in relief on the wet stone wall, picked out by touch.

PROPS	TRAPS	TREASURES
Altar. At the end of the central corridor stands an altar. A carving on its surface shows a single figure bowed before a large sun.	A crude trap has been left here by grave-robbers, who presumably thought they should deter others.	A grave-robber's pack contains a silver whistle with a moon inscribed on it. When blown, on a successful Risk roll, it heals 1 Ruin for all who hear it. If the roll fails, the whistle breaks.
Shallow-dug grave. A ransacked skeleton lies half-buried. Its exposed bones are scattered, tossed aside in search of treasure.	The skeleton stirs.	A gold tooth, plucked from the skeleton's jaw.

ADDITIONAL TRAPS

A mass of worms spills from a crack in the stone walls and rapidly grows. They writhe, consuming each other and defecating and birthing yet more.

A gust of wind extinguishes the party's light source.

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SKELETON: 7

Dry bones clatter. Brittle bones swipe and tear. Solstice-warmed bones will not cease.

AWAKENING

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heaving itself from the packed earth | <input type="checkbox"/> Scattered bones gather and rise |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A sudden unearthly scream | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Finger bones twitch, then grasp into a fist |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A dull flicker in dark eye sockets | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laboured pants, a parody of breathing |

Weakness — blunt force

- **Many others lie here** — If not destroyed in the first Combat roll, a second skeleton pulls itself from the earth (add 2 to Endurance).

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SET 2: GOING DEEPER

Goal: Find the Queen's Tomb

A way opens to a deeper part of the barrow. In the blackness, your feet find hard, smooth flooring. It is colder down here, drier, and the air is utterly still.

MOMENTS

- Muffled ululating: sounds of mourning.
- The thud of massed footsteps circle the grounds above the barrow three times.
- A brief flash of illumination reveals dark granite walls that look much older than those of the barrow above.

PROPS	TRAPS	TREASURES
Hoard. Chests spill with coins, goblets, jewelled torques, fat interleaved bangles. Incredibly, it looks as if it's only just been placed there. But it is all fixed in place, utterly immovable. No damage can be done to it. And, bizarrely, the characters' reflections are not visible in the shining metal.		Part of the hoard shimmers strangely, and from it drops a golden torque and a jewelled reliquary containing a fragment of bone.
Resting hounds. Two puppies lie sleeping in a chamber.	The hounds awaken.	Two golden dog tags; one says Ajino, the other Terroir.
Bloody carved stone. Decorated with a repeating pattern of a rising and setting sun and moon. Congealed blood drips from its surface.	A horrifying trench filled with bodies covered in deep gouges.	A wonderful piece of armour is propped behind the stone.

Turn page for final Prop

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PROPS	TRAPS	TREASURES
<p>Warrior's tomb. A warrior sits on the stone top of the tomb, holding an ancient burnished shield decorated with a swollen sun and a golden sword. They speak in a strange dialect. They are patient and want to know what the characters seek. They laugh if the characters talk about treasure and repeat their question. If the characters ask about the Queen's Tomb, then the champion becomes grave and asks, "Is that really what you are seeking?" If they talk about their drives, the champion's eyes light up and they ask for more detail. If the characters give it, the champion says, "She has been expecting you. The way is open." (Party gets 3 Hunt Tokens.)</p>	<p>Not taking the champion seriously, searching the tomb, or provoking them, causes the Queen's champion to attack.</p>	
ADDITIONAL TRAPS		
<p>The air turns foul and the party struggles to breathe.</p>		

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HOUNDS: 8

The two puppies wake, yawn, stretch, and playfully bound towards you. On the way, though, they begin to grow. They become young dogs as they near; they stop and begin to growl, and still they age. Now they're full-grown and snarling.

Weakness — whistle

- **Withering bite** — A wound caused by a hound's bite causes the *Aging* condition — the flesh around the wound rapidly ages: skin sags, muscle weakens, bones ache.
- **Short life** — In the second round, the hounds reach maturity: add 1 to Endurance. From the third round, the hounds become increasingly infirm: minus 1 to Endurance each round.

QUEEN'S CHAMPION: 10

With the merest whisper, the champion attacks with elegance and efficiency.

Weakness — Moon

- **Dueller's precision** — With each round, the champion points their sword at one of the characters (choose at random or decide according to the flow of the fight). They must add a second *light* die to their Combat roll.

WHEN THE CHAMPION PICKS, THEY...

...are silent.

...declare, "You have no future."

...spit and scream.

...laugh lightly.

...weep inconsolably.

...say coldly, "She will not know of you".

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SET 3: THE PALACE

Goal: Perform a ritual to break the curse

A blink of darkest dark. A flash of brightest light. And now, shockingly, you are somewhere else. It is no longer dark or confined. Quite the opposite. You are standing in a magnificent hallway. This place is opulent, red and gold. Light from a setting sun slants through splendid windows that line both sides, beneath a soaring vaulted ceiling. A palace, surely, and yet there is no sound of palatial business. Your steps and voices echo in the silence, but you somehow don't feel alone.

Behind stand vast doors. Ahead stretches a grand concourse, with rooms opening off them.

MOMENTS

- A painting of a cruel-looking ruler. Their clothes are of a strange and unrecognised style.
- The sudden sound of pursuers, from impossible directions.
- The heavy smell of blood.
- Decorations are perfect and new and resist all damage.

RITUAL: BREAK THE CURSE

Players should use their Hunt tokens and interpret the Props they've encountered to conduct a Ritual that will bring about the final Set. It's up to the players to decide what the curse is, and how they should proceed.

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PROPS	TREASURES
<p>Palace doors. Locked and utterly immovable. It is as if they have never opened. Icy cold to the touch. No sound from the other side.</p>	
<p>View from the windows. A dense city sprawls into the hazy distance, and it is still. No people are visible, just buildings. It is not recognisable — in fact, it is studded with buildings of remarkable designs you have never seen before. The windows will not open and their glass resists all damage.</p>	
<p>A chained man. His body is in perpetual shadow and you can't make out his features. This is a god, <i>Yilos, The Black Moon</i>. He speaks in a silvered tone and will give his name and explain himself as the dark side of all luminous things. He knows of the nature of human sin and absolves those who appeal to him. He will talk about his capture and confinement, during which his blood is repeatedly taken. He is weak but can't be harmed and won't be goaded into violence. His chains cannot be broken.</p>	<p>If requested, he will remove 1 Ruin from any character.</p>
<p>The Queen's tomb. Coldly beautiful white stone, unmarked and carved to perfect smoothness.</p>	<p>In the place of a body lies the Queen's Sceptre (3GP). Gold, with a jewelled sun on its end. The character who holds, or held it last, has the <i>Queen's Calling</i> condition.</p>
<p>A large and perfectly shaped bowl, filled with blood. The blood does not look normal — it is marbled with silver shining in oily blackness. Drinking the blood removes 1 Ruin.</p>	
<p>A young man with honey-coloured skin. This is a god, <i>He Who Walks Among Stones</i>. He holds a blood-spattered maul which looks like the opposite of the Queen's Sceptre. He is beautiful and smiling, and yet somehow deeply discomfiting. Must take a Risk roll to talk to him. He will discuss the time-voiding power of sacrifice. He can't be harmed and won't retaliate, but on being attacked he will transform into a grim figure of death, and refuse to talk further (add 1 Ruin to each character).</p>	
<p>Bloody altar. Rough-hewn lichen-covered stone, bizarre in these surroundings. If the players found the altar in the first Set, it looks the same, except the carving on its surface shows a single figure triumphant before a crescent moon.</p>	<p>Blood-spattered silver bangle.</p>

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TRAPS

The **Queensguards** are pursuing the characters. They are corrupted and reeling from the dark rituals that have taken place here.

Weakness (for all) — Speak the name of Yilos, The Black Moon.

or A *staggering man-at-arms* (**Endurance 9**). Drool drips from their visor; they stumble and sway yet robustly absorb your blows.

or A *moon-struck knight* (**Endurance 10**). Wields a spear and shield. Seems panicked; speaks a strange dialect in which repeated uses of the word “moon” can be discerned.

or A *mutilated mystic* (**Endurance 8**). Fingers and limbs are missing; cuts bleed into their white robes. **Bloody sundering** — Blood-magic chants cause the *Bleeding* condition — blood begins to leak from your skin.

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SET 4: THE QUEEN'S COMING

Goal: Escape the Everbarrow

The Queen arrives, wrathful. In retribution? Maddened by freedom? Or is it simply what she is? That's for the players to decide.

She comes from the future, and she is shaped by the player character who has the *Queen's Calling* condition. That player must imagine a powerful being that has risen as a terrible consequence of them succeeding at their Drive.

For inspiration, follow a thread of causality that might emerge from the nature of their drive. For inspiration, consider the drive in terms of these archetypes:

- **Take/find.** Who will come to reclaim the thing you seek?
- **Join/attend.** Whom will you empower?
- **Defend/free.** What will you protect?
- **Open/dispel.** What will you release?
- **Escape/avoid.** What will you do with freedom?
- **Vengeance/vanity.** Where will catharsis lead you?
- **Build/establish.** Who will come to the place you will make?

Then, without consulting the players, decide her Weakness. The Queen has **Endurance 11**, but she doesn't necessarily need to be defeated.

Escaping the Queen leads to the players finding themselves outside the Everbarrow as the sun lifts from the horizon, their pockets still filled with the treasure they managed to score inside.