

INTRODUCTION

MECCM1: The Mines of Valdhum is a stand-alone adventure set in a wild forest which can easily be placed into any campaign setting. It is written for Troll Lord Games' *Castles & Crusades*® RPG, but can be used with your OSR flavor of choice with minimal effort.

The adventure will begin with the party traveling on the road towards Der Nordwald (or whichever forest the Castle Keeper/Game Master has decided on), where they will come across a bustling inn and tavern, The Hearty Oak, situated at the very edge of the forest. Why they're traveling there is irrelevant, as the adventure herein is full self contained.

Synopsis

Nordriki, the northern kingdom of Mithgarthr, has been relatively free of dragons for hundreds of years but for the past few months the locals have been gossiping about sightings of red, white, and green dragons all throughout the Drekiberg mountains to the north.

Recently, a green dragon called **Yrven Leafstalker** has taken up residence in an abandoned mine which is close to the town of Valdhum as the surrounding forest, Der Nordwald, is rich with wildlife for the beast to feed on, and the lair it has found in the old Valdhum mines is well protected and relatively secluded.

This has disrupted the food supply of the local **beornverr**, savage bear-men of the woods, causing strain between the beornverr and the folk in the town of Valdhum. As the PCs travel through the town, they'll be hired to rid the woods of the dragon causing the problem.

Other Locations

This adventure can easily be placed in any large forest in whatever game world the Castle Keeper prefers. The adventure hook presented with the conflict between the Humans of Valdhum and the **Beornverr** may have to be changed or discarded (unless the CK wants to add this to their world), but the meat of the adventure – the mines themselves – are effortlessly plopped into literally any setting.

DER NORDWALD

Der Nordwald is a large forest in the center of the kingdom of Nordriki. It is famous for the giant oaks that grow there, with bases which are easily twenty feet in diameter, and that reach heights of close to 300'. It is home to a fairly large tribe of werebears, known to the locals as "**beornverr**."

Unlike traditional lycanthropes, the beornverr of Der Nordwald are not Humans who have been cursed with the disease of lycanthropy, but are an actual race of creatures who were born with their "gift." They have roamed this forest long before man came to settle Mithgarthr. Their community has a tribal structure, led by whichever beornverr is currently considered their alpha.

When Humans first started to settle the forest roughly 400 years ago, they suffered violent clashes with the beornverr and soon erected a massive log-wall that surrounds the town of Valdhum to this day. After time,

the beasts realized that the Humans meant them no harm, and the two races came to a delicate truce: The beornverr would give the Humans berth to log the forest, as long as the Humans would retreat to their homes at night, giving the beasts free run of the forest to hunt.

Traveling through the woods at night is dangerous business. In general, there is a 4 in 6 chance of being attacked by 1d4 beornverr and their summoned grizzly bears when traveling in Der Nordwald after sunset. The beasts will rarely take the time to communicate with outsiders, usually preferring to attack on sight, although they will flee from most battles if they are seriously out-matched.

Note that if the party manages to kill these beasts and then boasts about it in Valdhum, they will be shunned by the townsfolk as this may cause tension between the town and the beasts. In this case, the jarl will be informed, and he will personally come to where the party is at and sternly tell them that they have grievously erred. He will offer them the chance to slay the dragon as a penance, but will not offer them the reward discussed in the section on the Oakheart Greatkag.

If the party stayed at the Hearty Oak, they will arrive in Valdhum in the evening, just before the great gates are closed for the evening. If the party traveled through the forest overnight, they'll arrive late morning.

Beornverr

AC: 17 HD: 7 (d8) Size: L MV: 30'

Att: 2 claws, 1 bite Dmg: 1d3/1d3/2d4

Special: alternate form, bear empathy, cure disease, hug, immunity to disease, regeneration 3, twilight vision

Save: P Int: Average AL: N XP: 690+7

Brown Bear

AC: 15 HD: 6 (d8) Size: L MV: 40'

Att: 2 claws, 1 bite Dmg: 1d8/1d8/1d12

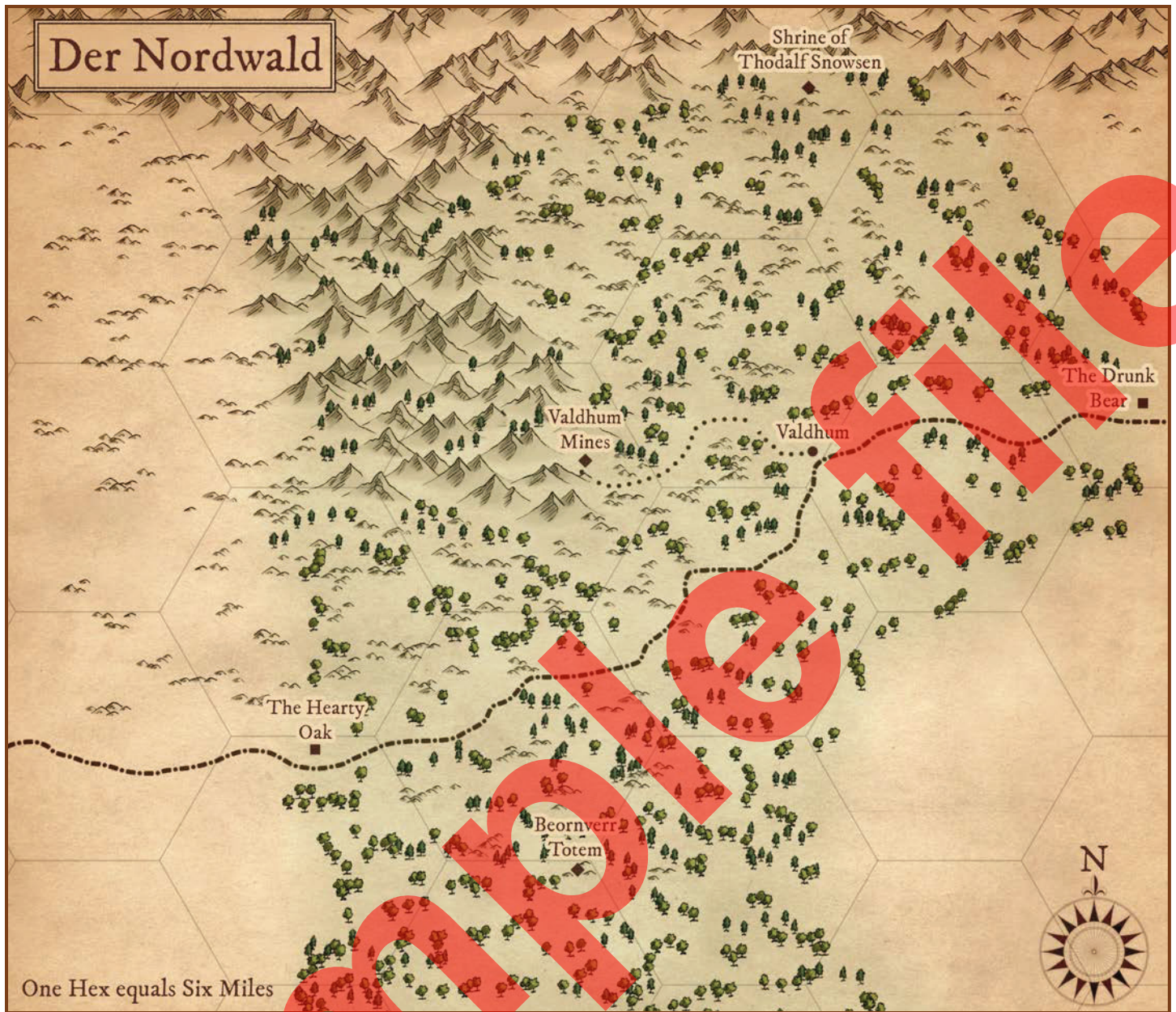
Special: hug

Save: P Int: Animal AL: N XP: 240+6

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

It's a pleasant evening as the party is traveling along the Nordvegr road. When the party nears the edge of Der Nordwald, they see a bustling public house, "The Hearty Oak." They will be approached by the owner, Saemund Sigurdsson, who introduces himself and tells them there are plenty of rooms available for the evening. If the party disregards him or attempts to continue into the forest, Saemund warns them that it is a bad idea.

"Well you see, friends, the forest was home to these beasts long before it was called Der Nordwald. When the town of Valdhum was first founded, they dealt with brutal attacks from the beasts often. But, I guess after a while the beornverr realized that the settlers weren't there to harm them, and they stopped attacking the town. Tales have it that the townsfolk and the beasts came to an agreement: The beornverr would allow the Humans to log in the forest during the day, as long as they returned to their settlement by night so the beasts could freely hunt. Now, the settlers were happy with



this, but since the memories of the brutal attacks were still fresh in their minds, they built a mighty barricade around the town. Just in case, of course.

Folks, with it being as close to a full moon as it is, I can almost guarantee that Valdhum will be locked tighter than the king of Karak's daughter's chastity belt!" He breaks out in a round of hearty laughter for a moment, before pulling himself back to a more serious demeanor. "I don't want to sound like I'm pestering you for business, but it is really in your best interests to stay here for the evening."

If the party takes Saemund's advice, they'll have a pleasant stay at the Hearty Oak that evening, with good food, good drink, and good conversation. Setting out on the 16 mile journey to Valdhum the next morning, the party will have a quiet journey amidst the giant oaks and local wildlife.

However, if the party decides to brave the forest at night, they will be attacked by three beornverr as they

are setting up camp for the night (or if they push forward, as they're traveling in the almost pitch blackness of the forest). The beornverr will summon four brown bears to fight with them, who will show up three rounds into the combat. Neither the beornverr nor the bears will fight to the death; if they reach 1/3 of their total hit points, they will flee into the woods and not bother the party again.

THE TOWN OF VALDHUM

Valdhum is a large town of roughly 7,000 people located in the heart of Der Nordwald. The entire town is surrounded by a massive wooden wall, at least 30' high, with guard towers placed roughly every hundred yards. There is a single gate that opens to the town; it is only opened from dawn until dusk with little to no exceptions.

Since the bulk of industry in Valdhum comes from logging and woodworking, most trade goods come from either Seedorf or Kleeberg to the west, or Ritharkr and

Krossvergr to the east. Some farming is conducted within the safety of the walls, and some livestock kept. Finding items other than basics is difficult, if not impossible, in Valdhum's commercial areas (4).

There are three NPCs of note that the party may interact with: **Falki Oaksson**, the proprietor of The Oakheart Greatkeg; **Rolf Othinsson**, head cleric of the town's temple; and **Grunvald Sigurdson**, the jarl of the town.

Falki Oaksson is a pleasant man in his early fifties. His family has owned and operated the Oakheart Greatkeg (1) for countless generations, and he takes much pride in his work. However, he has always dreamed of adventure and this will show when he talks to the party, especially if they make it known that they will be hunting the dragon. The Oakheart Greatkeg, Valdhum's oldest, largest, and only pub house, is known throughout Mithgarthr as having the finest stout in the land. This comes from the oak barrels used; the process to make these barrels is a closely guarded secret, and has been passed down over generations in the family that runs the place.

Rolf Othinsson is a pious man who has been in the service of Odin since he was a young boy. He heads the temple of Odin (3) in the center of town. He will task the party with bringing back some trinkets or relics from the ruined temple of Loki for him. He won't have gold to offer, but will give the party a key needed to enter an old Dwarven ruin that is located in the far northern outskirts of Der Nordwald, in which a great treasure is said to be hidden.

Finally there is **Grunvald Sigurdson**, the jarl of Valdhum. He is a young man in his mid-twenties who only recently got appointed the position. Grunvald is concerned that the dragon eating up all the deer will cause the beornverr to become hostile towards the town again. He is a kind man, with true concern for the well being of the people of Valdhum. The jarl's home (2) is in the center of town, near the temple.

When the party first arrives, an impressive sight meets their eyes as the forest path takes a corner and opens into a large clearing: A massive fortified wall of oak trees at least thirty feet high surrounds what must be the town of Valdhum. Guard towers rise from the wall every hundred yards or so, and a massive gate faces them. They are greeted by the guards, and pointed towards "The Oakheart Greatkeg."

The Oakheart Greatkeg

The Oakheart Greatkeg is easy enough to find, as it is only about 50 yards in from the gate, and is one of the larger buildings the party can see. Regardless of what time of day the party arrives, the place is busy with either lunch or dinner guests. If the party listens to the conversations going on around them, they'll notice that almost all of them focus heavily on recent dragon sightings. There's word in from Ritharkr to the east of both white and red dragons being seen soaring around the Drekiberg mountains to the north. Mostly though, the conversations center on the recent sighting of a green dragon that is roaming about in Der Nordwald. After the party has had a chance to role-play some conversation with the locals, they are approached by a grizzled, drunken man named Kalf Ironwood.

"You folks... yer th' adventurin' type, ain't ya? Name's Kalf Ironwood. I know where it'll be, this dragon. Aye, I do, I do..."

Ya see, when Valdh'm was first founded, they needed a goodly amount o' stones ta make some of our buildin's more strong. Not a lot of stones in tha trees, ya know? So they dug a mine not far from 'ere. Up 'n' left it where it was when they were done with it, too. Damn fools should've sealed it, but o' course they didn't!

A handful o' years after they were done with th' mine, some damned Loki worshipers made their home there. Took th' town damned near twenty-five years b'fore they realized the cult was even there! Wiped 'em the hell out once we knew though, yer damn right we did.

The place has sat there ever since, and I'll tell ya what, if'n I was a dragon lookin' ta make a home fer meself, I'd hole up in that mine. They say there's some natural caves 'n' holes 'n' such that the mines butted up against. I'll betcha a copper that's where the beast is. Hell, make it two and a beer!"

Kalf has little to no additional information to give the party about the mines. If they inquire about them from other, more sober locals, they get essentially the same story and everyone nods in agreement that it'd be a good hiding place for a dragon. If the party shows interest in the dragon, Kalf will beckon his grandson over and tell him to run and go get the mayor. About half an hour later, the boy returns with Grunvald Sigurdson in tow.

Grunvald introduces himself as mayor of Valdhum, and explains to the party that the dragon eating up all of the deer in the forest is irritating the beornverr and putting a strain on the truce between the beasts and the townsfolk. With Valdhum being full of laborers, tradesmen, and farmers they don't have the muscle or resources to deal with the dragon themselves. An offer is made at 1,500gp for the head of the dragon. Grunvald can be haggled up to 2,500gp.



Assuming they accept, the party will be sent off in the morning by a group of cheering townsfolk along with Jarl Grunvald and the priest of the temple, Rolf Othinson. Rolf pulls the party aside as they're leaving to speak with them.

"Heroes... I pray that Odin gives you his blessing on this dangerous, yet noble, quest; and if you fall, I pray your souls find their way into Valhalla! I have a small favor to ask of you... you will possibly be entering an old temple that was dedicated to the vile, liar of a god Loki. If you come across any trinkets or relics left behind by his followers, please bring them back to me so that I may cleanse them and wash away any residual evil."

The temple cannot afford to pay for this service, at least not with gold. However, if the PCs are successful at bringing back something Rolf will reward them with a key that will open an old Dwarven ruin that lies to the north of Der Nordwald. It is said that a great treasure is buried there, and it is offered as payment.

Traveling to the Mines

The entrance to the mine is about fourteen miles west of town along a trail, however faint, which leads the party there. About a mile before the trail ends at the mine, they will be attacked by a **valdranc (killer tree)** which they pass.

These creatures look identical to large trees, and indeed are almost impossible to tell apart from any normal trees around it. They come in many varieties; **killer trees** can be found which match almost every large tree species. Elves and druids have a slight chance to notice them from a distance (CL 15 wisdom check), all others have no chance until it's too late.

Four of the trees' limbs act as tentacles, and can reach out to 20' to attack. On a **successful hit**, the limb wraps around the victim, and on the next round will pull the victim to the tree's mouth. Attacks against the limb which cause 10 or more points of damage will sever it. One attack can only sever one limb, regardless of damage done (a hit for 50 points of damage would still only sever one limb, not all of them).

Once dragged into the tree's mouth, victims take an automatic 3d6 points of damage per round from the gnashing, crushing action of the tree's mouth and the digestive sap therein.

If the party thinks to dig the tree out, it takes the rest of the day. However, they find a chest buried in the ground, unlocked and not trapped, that contains a diadem worth 3,000gp and a **Ring of Water Walking** (1,160xp).

Valdranc (Killer Tree)

AC: 15 HD: 6 (d10) Size: L MV: 0'
Att: 4 limbs/1 mouth Dmg: 0/0/0/0/3d6
Special: grab, digest
Save: P Int: Nil AL: N XP: 258
HP: 43



The party will be able to finish digging and make it to the entrance of the mines without another encounter, but if they dig and then try to head all the way back to town, they'll have an encounter with one **beornverr** and two **brown bears**.

Beornverr

AC: 17 HD: 7 (d8) Size: L MV: 30'
Att: 2 claws, 1 bite Dmg: 1d3/1d3/2d4
Special: alternate form, bear empathy, cure disease, hug, immunity to disease, regeneration 3, twilight vision
Save: P Int: Average AL: N XP: 956
HP: 38

Brown Bears

AC: 15 HD: 6 (d8) Size: L MV: 40'
Att: 2 claws, 1 bite Dmg: 1d8/1d8/1d12
Special: hug
Save: P Int: Animal AL: N XP: 240+6
HP: 37, 27

LEVEL 1 – THE QUARRY

This first level of the dungeon was built over 300 years ago, when Valdhum was still a relatively young town. Once the peace with the beornverr was established, the townsfolk were looking to add more permanence to their settlement and building stone structures was one such way to do so. The town cut enough rock from the nearby mountains to build what they needed, and then abandoned the mine.

Although it has sat unused for many years, the wooden structures bracing the walls and ceiling of this level are still in exceptional condition, thanks to the stout wood from the giant oaks of Der Nordwald.

The entrance is large and open, but the interior is poorly lit, as the surrounding forest offers little light. Most ceilings are ten to fifteen feet in height, but they vary throughout.

The wandering monsters for this level are **giant wolf spiders**. On a positive check for wandering monsters (a 1 or 2 on 1d6), 1d6+1 of these creatures will be encountered. Their poison causes an additional 2d4 points of damage, with a CL 5 constitution save halving that.

Giant Wolf Spider

AC: 15 HD: 3 (d10) Size: M

MV: 30' (20' climb)

Att: bite Dmg: 1d10

Special: poison, web, twilight vision

Save: P Int: Animal AL: N XP: 40+3

1 – Entrance

The walls in this place are mostly earth, with large wooden support beams throughout. Old, empty boxes and crates are stacked along the walls. Broken mine carts rest on rusted tracks that lead off into the mines. Aged and broken masonry tools, and bits of rock litter the floors.



2 – A Wooden Wall

A wooden structure has been built in this room, essentially a wall with a door that partitions off a section into an office. Pegs run along the northern wall, with mining gear hung on them. All of the gear is old, rusted, and completely worthless. The walls of the partitioned office are about ten feet high. PCs could attempt to scale it, but they must succeed on a CL 7 Dexterity check or they will collapse the wall onto themselves for 2d4+1 points of damage.

3 – The Office

This room functioned as the foreman's office. There is an old rotted desk and chair here, with a few papers strewn across the desktop. They are old accounting papers, and are now worthless. Searching the desk thoroughly, a small metal box can be found. It is locked (CL 3) and trapped (CL 4) with a needle covered in old, weak poison. It causes 2d6 points of damage, with a CL 3 Constitution save for halving this. Inside the box is a chunk of gold ore worth 1,500gp.

4 – Barracks

This was the miners' barracks. Old, rotten cots are scattered about the place. After ten minutes of searching, the party turns up 5cp. They are then attacked by **giant wolf spiders** that gain automatic surprise which that were clinging to the ceiling. Of course, if the party stated they check the ceiling when first entering (as most good, paranoid players do), they will notice them and the spiders won't get surprise on the party.

Giant Wolf Spiders

AC: 15 HD: 3 (d10) Size: M

MV: 30' (20' climb)

Att: bite Dmg: 1d10

Special: poison, web, twilight vision

Save: P Int: Animal AL: N XP: 40+3

HP: 23, 20, 18

5 – Kitchen

This was obviously the kitchen. There is a large vented fireplace in the south wall. A table with stacked pots and pans runs along the east wall. Poking around in the chimney will disturb a group of bats who fly around the room for one round, and then fly back into the chimney and out of the cave.

As the bats are flying around, they will knock over a pot that has a colony of **yellow mold** growing in it, causing it to release its spores. Anyone standing within 10' must make a CL 5 Constitution save or choke to death within the day. If the bats aren't disturbed and the party searches, they'll spot the mold before disturbing it.