

# It Came from the Sewers!

By Tad Davis

*Over the past week a number of people have gone missing in Cliffside. Locals chalked this up to gang activity. But a couple of nights ago a man was attacked on the street by some creature and barely escaped with his life. Fear of this unknown threat has spread throughout the community.*

## Adventure Background

Cliffside is a blue-collar district located along the northwest cliffs of the city of Thild. Most of the locals work in the salt mines. Although poor for the most part Cliffside is a decent neighborhood. People here look out for one another and there is good camaraderie amongst the miners.

However the district has a dark underbelly. Addiction to Ash, an illicit narcotic similar to opium, is rampant, and a couple of local gangs are in the midst of a turf war over territorial distribution rights for the drug. Compounding this problem is the fact that the city's militia has been bought off by gang-lords and other fringe elements within Cliffside. The militia avoids setting foot in the district, and casts a blind eye to illicit and gang related activities. Crime goes largely unchecked. Murders and disappearances are not uncommon. Yet in the past few days there has been a notable increase in disappearances around the neighborhood of Avlen's Bluff. One miner named Vled Tarvik claims to have been attacked by a creature reeking of death.

## Adventure Synopsis

The recent disappearances are not at all gang related. Rather they are due to the unearthing of an ancient sewer system in a recent landslide along Avlen's Bluff. Among other unsavory creatures the sewer system is home to an opportunistic ghastr, who has made Avlen's Bluff his new hunting ground. Each night he ascends from the sewers to seek out fresh meat. The most recent of these was Vled Tarvik who narrowly escaped with his life, but has contracted ghastr fever. The adventurers must first piece together who is actually responsible for the disappearances and then descend into the sewers to confront the culprit before it causes an outbreak of ghastrs within Cliffside.

## Upping the Stakes

To impart a sense of urgency to this adventure consider having the ghastr claim a new victim in Avlen's Bluff each evening. If the adventurers are having difficulty finding the culprit this ought at least to provide a further clue as to where to look.

## The Drunken Ogre

Predictably enough the adventure begins with the adventurers seated around a table in a local tavern. The Drunken Ogre is a popular inexpensive tavern located in the heart of Cliffside. The menu is static (fish stew, barley bread & butter and ale) and patrons sit together on one of two long tables, with a central aisle leading to the kitchen and tap-room. Local legend has it that the tavern was named after an inebriated ogre that Galdon Bror licked in a dispute over game of dice.

**Proprietor** – Galdon Bror, a thickly built Nalmuren with long golden hair and a grey streaked beard. His face is covered in ritual blue tattoos. He dons an elk-skin cloak, and wears a necklace bearing several large humanoid molars. Bror doesn't have patience for gang disputes and has been known to bust skulls on those rare occasions when they bring their business into his establishment. Otherwise is quite jovial.

**Tavern Maid** – Griva, round rosy cheeked Veskaran. Affable and quick witted, she is well liked by the clientele.

Through engaging in conversations with other patrons of the tavern the adventurers are able to learn of recent events within the district. Note that the recent mudslide at Avlen's bluff is big news, everyone is talking about it. However no one knows that it unearthed an ancient sewer system. The entryway to the sewers remains hidden in a crevasse that opened up as the base of the cliffs during the landslide.

## The Isles of Mist

### Local Rumors

*“Been seeing more’n more folk pan-handling with that vacant expression in their eyes. Mark my words once soul gets a wif of Ash ain’t no coming back. They’re as good as zombies.”*

*“Well dem Blister Boys been running Ash in Cliffside for a lot o’years now. But now dat dose Blade Spinners is cutting in on their turf been a whole lot more violence on’a streets.”*

*“Well everyone knows dat dem Blister Boys likes to snatch up urchins and’da’like. But last year a few other Cliffside kids went missing as well. My coin says it’s the Blister Boys.”*

*“T’aint uncommon for folk to go missing round these parts, what with the gangs an’all. But in’a last few days heaps of folks from Avlen’s Bluff have gone missing. Mighty strange.”*

*“I heard tell that Vled Tarvik was attacked t’other night. Says some sort of monster bit’em in’da arm. Course he always was a lazy lout. Probably just look’n for a reason to stay home.”*

*“Dat storm sure was somet’n else! Rained so hard dat part of Avlen’s Bluff gave way in a mud-slide. It’s a wonder none’a dem houses up on’a bluff went slide’n down wit it!”*

### Enter Vled Tarvik

At some point during the evening Vled Tarvik will make his appearance at the Tavern. It might work best to time his arrival latter in the evening after the adventurers have gleaned some of the details of recent events. Tarvik looks pale and jittery. He has bags under his eyes is perspiring heavily. His forehead is also hot to the touch. It shouldn’t be too difficult to deduce that he is suffering from fever.

Vled is happy to share his story with anyone willing to buy him a drink. If asked about the attack he will roll up the sleeve of his right arm to reveal a festering bite wound. A successful check will reveal that the bite mark was is of humanoid origin, but not that of a human, elf or Dwarf. He will then proceed to tell the party the following:

*“It happened just’a other night as I’s walking home from my shift at’da mines. I live’n Avlen’s Bluff see and I’s just about ta climb da stairs to my hut when I smelled somet’n real foul. Kind’a like a corpse left out too long in’a sun, ya’know?”*

*At first I thought it was just some dead animal, killed in’da mudslide a few days ago. But just den the smell got worse, and outa’da corner of my eye I sees this “thing” leap’n at me!*

*I didn’a get too good a look at it, on account of it was dark and rainy, but whatever it was took dis here bite out my arm. Damn near would have taken the thing off too if it hadn’t’a been for the thick sweater I’s a wearing. As it was it managed to rip the sleeve clean off. Shame dat. It was my best green sweater. My wife knit it for me for she passed. Well I pushed that cuss off me and ran straight up’a stairs and into my hut.*

*Next day I woke up feel’n all manner’o strange. My daughter, she’a firebrand y’know? She made me stay home from work. But even she can’t a’keep from The Drunken Ogre.”*

The adventures now have in hand enough pieces of the puzzle to begin the adventure. Vled will succumb to ghoul fever in 1d4 days unless properly treated. If the adventurers discover the nature of his illness in time there is a chance to save him. If not they will have one more undead creature on their hands.

### The Gangs of Cliffside

Although posing a danger to the community of Cliffside, the gangs are a red herring as far as the disappearances are concerned. However depending on whether or not the PCs investigate the gangs there are hooks enough here to potentially lead to further developments and/or adventures within Cliffside. If the PCs ask around about the gangs they learn that the Blister Boys like to hang out at the Red Lady, a local brothel on the east side of Cliffside and the Blade Spinners frequent Seagull’s Landing, a seedy tavern on the west side of the district.

## The Blister Boys

Most of the members of this gang grew up in Cliffside. Quite a few of them began their career as street urchins. In addition to running Ash the Blister Boys employ the children to run a cut-purse racket. When they are old enough urchins become full fledged members of the gang. Despite the fact that the gang leeches off those living in Cliffside they see themselves as filling an important role within the community. They take in and care for the orphans cast off by society. The Blister Boys are identified by the sigil a flaming circle with a curved blade.

**Leader** – Boss Tyrek Firebrand (4<sup>th</sup> Rogue). Firebrand is a twenty year old kid with flaming red hair, eerie yellow eyes and burn marks over the left half of his body. The kid is an arsonist possessed of a good dose of crazy.

**Personnel** – One Eared Mik (2<sup>nd</sup> Barbarian); Blister Boys 10 (1<sup>st</sup> Rogue); Urchins 12.

**Equipment** – Tyrek owns a *Wand of Burning Hands* (18 charges); Potions *Cure Light Wounds* (12).

**Locales** – The gang's hideout is an abandoned warehouse just east of the mines; the gang frequents the Red Lady; Tyrek has a bolt hole in the form of his sister's apartment. The gang frequents the Red Lady.

**Motivation** – Tyrek wants to seize operation of The Red Lady and corner the market in prostitution. He also wants to oust his competition in the Ash trade, the Blade Spinners.

**Hook** – It is true that the Blister Boys have been nabbing local children. They are doing so to replenish their ranks since the Blade Spinners have been killing their urchins. However they would be willing to stop the kidnappings and return missing children to their parents were the threat posed by the Blade Spinners eliminated.

## The Red Lady

On the east side of town, on the border between Cliffside and the Docks sits a ramshackle stone warehouse. Just above the entryway of the building swinging on rusted-out hinges is a sign bearing the image of a rotund female halforc in red burlesque. This is none other than "Red", the eponymous owner of the establishment. The Red Lady is a lively brothel servicing male and female clientele from a range of species. All are welcome, provided they are respectful to her working girls and guys. The brothel serves cheep beer and food, some of which is edible.

**Proprietor** – Red, a grotesquely obese female halforc who saunters about her establishment wearing a red velvet teddy. Red is a gregarious host and a shrewd businesswoman. She considers her employees family and is very good to them.

**Hook** – Red mistrusts Tyrek Firebrand. The leader of the Blister Boys has been blacklisted from her establishment ever since he beat up one of her working guys. She suspects he holds a grudge and rightly sees him as a threat to her business. She will pay good coin to have him eliminated.

## The Blade Spinners

Are a recent upstart gang founded by Thecklo Tesh, an outlaw Ranger with a bounty on his head on the Veskaran mainland. Tesh's original outfit consisted only of himself, his wife Vora and a handful of rogues. However his reputation as one of the more notorious highway men in Veskar soon attracted more members to his gang. Seeing that there was good coin to be made in running Ash, and that the local guard was so easily bribed, Tesh and his gang have managed to carve out a sizeable chunk of the trade out from under the Blister Boys in Cliffside. The gang is notorious for fighting with dual blades. Each gang member has a tattoo of a curving blade on each wrist.

**Leader** – Boss Thecklo Tesh (4<sup>th</sup> Ranger). Tesh is a one-eyed halfelf with long flowing grey hair. He dons grey-green hide armor composed of the scales of a drake he and his original troupe once slew. He is vain and exceedingly cruel. His tactics, while effective, tend to be quite brutal.

**Personnel** – Vora Poison Blade (3<sup>rd</sup> Rogue); Brutes 4 (1<sup>st</sup> Barbarians); Blade Spinners 6 (1<sup>st</sup> Rogue).

**Equipment** – Vora's blades are laced with Spider Poison; Tesh has two pet giant spiders which he regularly milks.

**Locales** – The gang's hideout is a series of hidden tunnels in the cliff-face. The gang frequents The Seagull's Landing. Tesh and Vora own a small apartment in dockside that can be used as a bolt hole.

**Motivation** – Tesh wants to utterly destroy the Blister Boys and corner the market in Ash.

**Hook** – One of Tesh's crew has become fed up with his employer's methods. He didn't sign up for killing kids. He knows the location of the gang's hideout, as well as Tesh's day to day routines and he'd be willing to assist an able party in knocking off Tesh and Vora Poison Blade for a cut of the loot hidden in their base.

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### The Seagull's Landing

On the west side of Cliffside, sitting just below the cliffs is a sturdy wooden and stone building with a thatched roof. The sign at the door depicts a seagull landing on a rock. This is a combination inn and tavern that once serviced miners, day laborers and adventurers. However since the Blade Spinners took up residence nearby the clientele of the Seagull's Landing has become a lot more rough and tumble.

**Proprietor** – Dannik Groves, a former sailor aboard The Grey Marlin. Groves is tall and wiry with long spindly grey hair and a sour weather beaten face that appears to be permanently set in a scowl. His attitude tends to match his outward appearance.

**Hook** – Groves overheard the Blade Spinners discussing plans to ambush the Blister Boys on their next Ash pickup. He has no love for the gang responsible for scaring away his decent clientele and is more than willing to share this information.

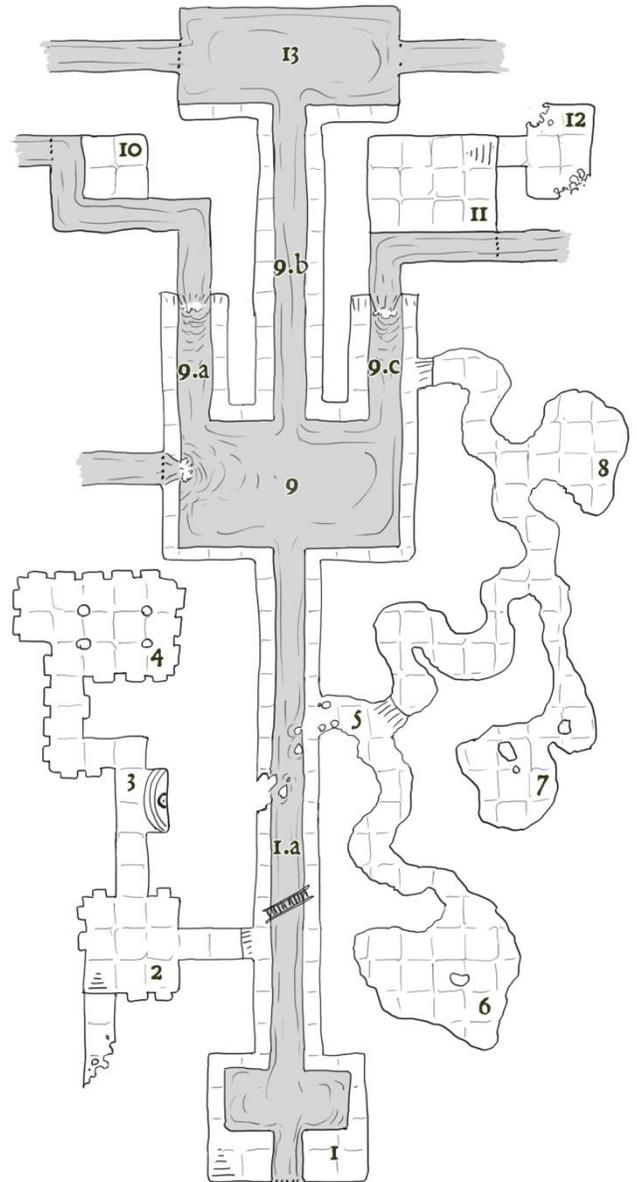
### Avlen's Bluff

Several ramshackle tenements huddle together along the sheer face of this bluff abutting the cliffs in the heart of Cliffside. A narrow stairway ascends the steep incline of the cliff face, allowing access to the dwellings. Unknown to the residents the bluff rests upon a section of ancient sewers left over from the former Taldic city on whose ruins Thild is built. The sewer system had been buried in rubble at the base of the bluff until the recent storm uncovered it. A careful search of the perimeter of the bluff will reveal the tattered sleeve of a green woolen sweater lying next to a large boulder. On the other side of the boulder, facing the side of the cliff is a crevasse leading down to the sewers below. A musty odor wafts up from below.

### Into the Sewers!

#### 1. Sewer Entry

*Slick stairs descend into darkness. Below the surface the air is damp and cool, and bears the foul odor of decay. The concrete brick walls of this chamber show signs of wear. The ceiling is arched. The room is divided by a 5ft wide canal of flowing grey water which extends north beyond this chamber. The squeal and scurry of rats can just be heard in the distance over the sound of flowing water.*



Unless otherwise stated the sewer canal is 4ft deep at its center and is surrounded on each side by a 2.5ft wide ledge. The ledge is slick. A skill check is needed to retain ones balance while running or battling on it.

#### 1.a Sewer Canal

To the west a passageway set 4ft off the ground leads to area 2. An eastern passageway leads to area 5. A rusted iron ladder lies across the canal. Walking or crawling across this ladder requires a skill check. The sound of rushing water grows stronger the closer one gets to area 9.

**Creatures** – several rats feed upon a decaying corpse.

**Treasure** – (Corpse) 12cp, 1sp

## 2. Catacombs Entry

*The walls are roughly hewn in this chamber. Several narrow niches have been carved into the walls. Hundreds of tiny black beetles scurry along the walls.*

This area was once used as the catacombs of an ancient cult of the demon-god Nevark. The niches contain fragments of cloth and skeletons along with 2gp per niche (these had been placed in the eye cavities of the corpses). A careful search of the room reveals that one wall appears to be missing a niche. Actually there is a niche, it's just hidden.

**Treasure** – (niches) 24gp; (hidden.) sunstone necklace

**Trap** – (above hidden niche.) Poison Arrow Trap.

## 3. Shrine to Nevark

*Atop a dais recessed within an alcove is a small statue of what appears to be a massive bull with six horns and bat like wings. An inscription below in Old Taldic reads:*

*“Angel of Beasts and Blood,  
Guide your children to exultation,  
And give us meat to eat,  
That we might become as you.”*

A successful knowledge check will reveal that devotees Nevark believed that by eating the flesh of beasts and humanoids alike they would inherit the powers of those creatures and some day ascend to a god-like status.

## 4. Catacombs

*Four Corinthian Pillars brace the ceiling. The walls of this chamber are filled with dozens of niches.*

Among the remains in these niches are 1d6 animated skeletons. Reanimate and attack any intruders on the round following any disturbance to any of the niches.

**Creatures** – (niches) 1d6 skeletons

**Treasure** – (niches) 120gp, 1 Topaz, Ivory Comb (5gp)

## 5. Centipede Tunnels

*This windy tunnel is roundish and irregularly carved. Lots of tiny scrapes and gouges mar its surface.*

These tunnels were hollowed out by another subterranean insect now long dead. Since its unearthing giant centipedes have laid claim to these tunnels. The passage continues south to area 6. A raised passage leads to areas 7 and 8.

## 6. Centipede Den

*Straw, bones and little black pellets lay scattered all about.*

At any time there is a 50% chance that 1d4 giant centipedes will be present. A few pieces of loot from their previous victims lie scattered about, including a map (see Appendix).

**Creatures** – 1d4 giant centipedes (50% in den)

**Treasure** – (straw) 3sp, MW short sword, dice, map\*

## 7. Centipede Den

*Tiny bones and little black pellets lay scattered about.*

At any time there is a 50% chance that 1d4 giant centipedes will be present

**Creatures** – 1d4 giant centipedes (50% in den)

## 8. Centipede Spawning Lair

*The skeletal remains of several small creatures form a sort of nest in the center of the room. Within this macabre nest sit a handful of undulating translucent sacks.*

These sacks are of course centipedes about to hatch. The eggs are possessed of but a single hit point. Yet if they hatch hungry miniature centipedes emerge ready to feed!

**Creatures** – (nest) 1d6 centipede eggs

## 9. Central Drain Chamber

*The sounds of rushing water fills this chamber. A wide pool of water rests in the center of the chamber. Along the west wall water pours forth into the pool from another canal set 4ft off the ground. Three separate canals lead northward and a single canal leads southward.*

1d2 giant leeches lurk in the dark pool below. They will immediately attack any creature falling into the pool.

**Creatures** – (water) 1d2 giant leeches

### 9.a Western Canal

*Water flows from a 5ft wide canal located 10ft off the ground. Several hand and footholds in the wall lead upward to a ledge gaining access to the canal.*

**Hazard** – The walls are slick. Creatures attempting to climb the wall must make a skill check or fall, taking 1d6 damage.

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### 9.b Central Canal

*The corpse of a dead rat the size of dog lies on the western ledge. It is covered in some sort of slimy green substance.*

**Hazard** – The rat is covered in green slime. The slime deals 1d6 point of Constitution damage to any creature coming into contact with it.

### 9.c Eastern Canal

*Water flows from a 5ft wide canal located 10ft off the ground. Several hand and footholds in the wall lead upward to a ledge gaining access to the canal.*

**Hazard** – The walls are slick. Creatures attempting to climb must make a skill check or fall, taking 1d6 damage.

### 10. Rat Nest

*The southern floor of this cavern is covered in a thick layer of reeds, sticks and hay.*

Like the centipedes these rats are recent additions to the sewers. The two rats in this lair are pregnant and will fight to the death. Their mates are currently out hunting for food.

**Creatures** – 1d2 giant rats

**Treasure** – (wadded up in the nest) scroll of *shield*

### 11. Ghast Lair

*An overwhelming sickly stench of death and decay assaults your nostrils. A hideous gaunt purple creature feeds upon the flesh of two corpses lying in a bloody heap upon the chamber floor.*

The ghast in this room is behind the recent disappearances. It was spawned ages ago from a corpse in area 4.

**Creatures** – 1 Ghast

**Treasure** – (belt pouch of corpse) 25gp, 60sp, 19cp

### 12. Cave-In

*The northeastern and northwestern corners of this chamber are covered in a thick pile of debris. The skeleton of a humanoid is trapped beneath the rubble to the southwest.*

**Treasure** – (skeleton) 3 small rubies, wand of *Magic Weapon*

### 13. Ghoul Lair

*A long pool sits in this room with two barred canals leading to the east and west. The putrid stench of decay fills the room. A grey creature out a nightmare stands panting in the eastern corner of the room, its yellow eyes filled with immense hunger.*

The ghoul in this room was a resident of Avlen's Bluff just a few short days ago, until succumbing to ghoul fever. The adventurers may, understandably, mistake it for the culprit behind the disappearances. However unless the ghast in area 11 is dealt with the nightly attacks continue as before.

**Creatures** – 1 Ghoul

## Wandering Monsters

The giant centipedes and rats dwelling in this sewer wander in search of food. Once per 10 minutes make a wandering monster check to determine if the adventurers run into any of them. There is a 1 in 6 chance of an encounter. Roll a 1d4 to determine which creatures are encountered. On a roll of 1-2 it's the giant centipedes. On a 3-4 it's the rats.

## Appendix

The map in area 6 is of the Felknor Woods. On the back of the map the following verses have been written in elven:

*Oh Anoan, Anoan brave prince of Tenri,  
Why hast thou doomed us to woe and mys'ri?*

*How took thee a wife despite being warned?  
Now cursed is our land by she that was scorned.*

*Fair was the forest in springtimes of yore,  
Till eight legged terrors consumed all Felknor.*

*Oh Anoan, Anoan, now where is thy crown?  
And whither hath gone all Tenri's renown?*

*The Diadem of Darnin, the gem of Felknor,  
Hath vanished forever, and passed into lore,*

*Now Tenri's gates have been battered and barred,  
And her ivory halls hath become a graveyard.*

This is a hook to another adventure which I'll publish at my site [arsphantasia.wordpress.com](http://arsphantasia.wordpress.com) at a later date.