

DURZHAN

DURZHAN 1

Durzhan is the name of a Khuzdul and also identifies a patch of land between Nephu and Tomplar in the dwarven empire of Azadmere. A special feature of this land is a virtually sealed-off cave. This cave of Durzhan was abandoned approximately 350 years ago. It was built by a peculiar Khuzdul called Durzhan, who was then head of his clan, who could afford to build its own residence, remote from the city of Azadmere. Unfortunately the ground was too unstable for a larger complex that Durzhan planned on building. Therefore the project was cancelled shortly and since then silence has been cast on it. Only the name alludes to the things that occurred here. The Dwarfs were and are very reluctant to talk about this engineering blunder, which results in an almost total ignorance of this matter by anybody except some older dwarfs.

Last fall a small landslide occurred right above the cave yielding an irregular entrance into it. It is very hard to use since it is in the middle of the ravine which still has unstable, loose walls. Originally there were three regular entrances which were all sealed off by the dwarfs, so nobody could find and use the cavern. Of these entrances to the cavern two are still covered by earth and unusable while the third has also been uncovered by the landslide. This third entrance is still very hard to spot. However, a puma found it and is now the only creature who knows about this entrance. The cat has taken the cave as home. It knows about the entrance through the ravine but has never used it; it probably couldn't master the loose earthwalls. Actually the entrance is already covered with earth and can only be spotted indirectly.

THE CHARCOALER

For years a charcoaler named Hakot lived in the vicinity of the cave without knowing it. The point of the landslide and his hut are approximately 1000 feet apart. Of course the landslide didn't occur unnoticed by the charcoaler. He informed the forrester about the event but chose not to inform him about another discovery. During the following short inspection the forrester didn't spot what Hakot tried to hide from him. The opening in the ravine wasn't easy to spot at all. Later the charcoaler headed for the ravine to inspect his discovery, while the small landslide was soon forgotten by everybody else.

When Hakot started on his discovery tour, the inevitable happened. He slipped off of the soft walls and stumbled into the cave more than he stepped into it. As he found himself alone on the floor of a "hallway", he was getting nervous. He couldn't go back the way he came in. Not only were the walls too slippery to climb back up, but the opening was 3 feet above his head.

Maybe this wouldn't have posed a problem, if the charcoaler hadn't become nervous and entered the passage that was getting darker each step in search for another exit. As he was progressing he came across the mountain lion that would not allow trespassing into his home territory. (Fauchen) and other attempts to threaten did not persuade the charcoaler to back off; on the contrary, Hakot himself tried to scare the puma away. In almost utter darkness and without any weapons to defend himself against the carnivorous animal the charcoaler was no match. So Hakot ended his days serving as food for a mountain lion.

THE ALCHEMIST

Since this incident about a month has past. Nobody suspected anything of the death of the charcoaler as it was not unusual for him to not call in for several weeks. Generally he would collect food for the next month and deliver the coal when returning to the village. As most charcoalers, he was a hermit.

Now, 14 days ago, an alchemist sent his apprentice into the woods to get acquainted with the herbs and other utilities mother nature provides. He was also to get one thing or the other. Garbald of Habe, the alchemist, expected his apprentice Karudan to stay for a month in the woods in the west of the main road from Terhn to Habe.

Karudan had enough provisions but was otherwise ill prepared for survival in out in the wild. The winter had also been a cold one. He was happy when he finally found the abandoned hut of the charcoaler. He didn't hesitate and settled there. Moreover, he didn't know anything about a charcoaler since he was coming from a different holding. Even after the owner didn't appear after a couple of days, he didn't find this unusual. So he collected herbs or hunted small animals for several days. During the nights, he slept in that lonely hut.

DURZHAN 2

He has been to the depression in which Hakot has vanished. However, he had no interest in attempting the dangerous decent. Moreover, in the mean time the entry wasn't as easy to discern as previously. Thus he avoided that region as no herbs were growing there either. He knows nothing of the mountain lion; he isn't able to read the tracks that are otherwise prominent in certain areas. In particular, he didn't find the other entry to the cave.

Instead of a futile climb he rather mixed his own potions and powders as long as he had found the ingredients in abundance. The mixtures are not particularly efficient or usable, but they represent Karudans own experiments and he is proud of them. The experiments were conducted without consent of his master, so Karudan is trying to keep them secret. Meanwhile the hut looks quite ludicrous, since not only the equipment of the charcoaler can be found inside, but also the stuff collected for Garbald and the results of Karudans own experiments.

THE PLAYERS

The players are on their way on the road between Habe and Zerhun. Just today the lord of this realm has decided to send two of his men looking for the missing man. Of course, they found the hut to be empty but in use. They were in the middle of examining the blood of the animals that were killed here, when the alchemists apprentice showed up from one of his searches. First, he was approaching the hut, but he became unsure what these guards were doing at the hut. Still hesitating he was spotted by the Lords' men.

He did not react to the first shout of one of the guards, on the second he turned instinctively and fled. The men took to chase the unknown man and in this manner the hunt approaches the main road. The players see Karudan break out the underbrush und run towards them. He stops shortly and panting asks the players for help from the lords' henchmen. He then decides it is better to keep fleeing onwards and crosses the road in direction of the lake.

Depending on the reaction of the players, Karudan will be caught sooner or later. Should not the players catch the running man, the guards will do so in a few seconds, when Karudan will trip. Only in case the players dare to stand in the way of the lords' men, will Karudan

stay free for a while. This case however will get the players in deep trouble and the gamemaster will have to decide what happens. Probably a hue and cry will start not only looking for Karudan but for the players as well. Whether the guards at hand will attack the players will depend on the arms they carry, social standing and number.

The players should listen to the story of Karudan. This can happen during apprehension, on the way to the lords' manor or there, when he is imprisoned. The interest in Karudan can be raised by several means. They could know Karudan for some reason, his youth may appeal to the more protective natures among the players, or Garbald may offer a small reward, once he finds out about his apprentice. (Garbald is also interested that the Apothecary-clan does not take advantage of his breach of their privileges.)

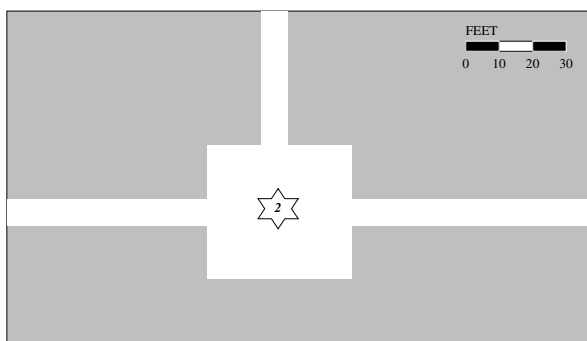
Anyway, the caught will be suspected of murdering the charcoaler and will be turned over to the Baron at Habe. Only the Baron could sentence the poor fellow to death. The legal proceedings will commence in a few days. If the players wish to aid the apprentice they should get busy. Officially nobody will prohibit them from moving about but neither will they get any aid. There is little interest in the actions of the players and one will rather hang the wrong man then let a capital crime go unsanctioned.

Karudan can not give the players anything for their help, except the ingredients that he has collected for his master and the mixtures he has made for practice. He is very hesitant to give away the ingredients, since he owes them to his master, he would rather part with his own potions. He will also tell them how the diverse (unlabeled) mixtures are supposed to work. Of course, if the players were to just take everything, nobody is there to stop them.

THE AREA

The entry to the cave is in the center of the depression/landslide (see local map), which can be found approximately 10m to the east of the interior map's east exit. The west exit is still sealed and covered by rocks, while the north exit is used by the mountain lion and leads out into the open after several underground turns. This exit is hidden quite well and can only be found by

DURZHAN 3



someone experienced in tracking and following the tracks of the mountain lion.

1. The hut of the charcoaler is a mess. Not only are the tools of his trade strewn about, but also various utilities of the alchemists' apprentice. Nothing can be sold if it can be identified as belonging to their trade. If it were tried, the seller could be considered guilty of fencing. Only the ingredients for Garbald can be sold. In sum, the materials for Garbald are worth 40d and the mixtures of the apprentice are worth 50d. If the usage of the potions and powders were known, they could fetch up to 50% more. In case the players keep the various materials the gamemaster will need to decide on some standard effects, probably in reduced form.
2. The cave of the lion has a surface area of about 1000sf and is 8f high almost throughout. The cat will not leave the cave and even if she senses humans or other beings around, she will not be driven out of her new home easily. Only if in dire straits will the cat leave her home, starving for about two days if necessary. If someone approaches, she will threaten and if the person persists, attack. She will even attack if outnumbered, but finally flee if the attacks are not successful and she is wounded. The pelt of the cat may fetch up to 20d. The gnawed off skeleton of the poor charcoaler can be found here. It bears easily discernible marks of a lion's bite. In one of the corners hidden under the debris collected throughout the last 350 years, there sits a chest which was overlooked after the dwarfs left. It is a good, almost air-tight, dwarfin chest with a lock (quality 2). There are

some valuables in it. Consider the prices to be for new ware. The materials inside the chest may get up to 80% less, where 30% off would be average. Noteworthy items are:

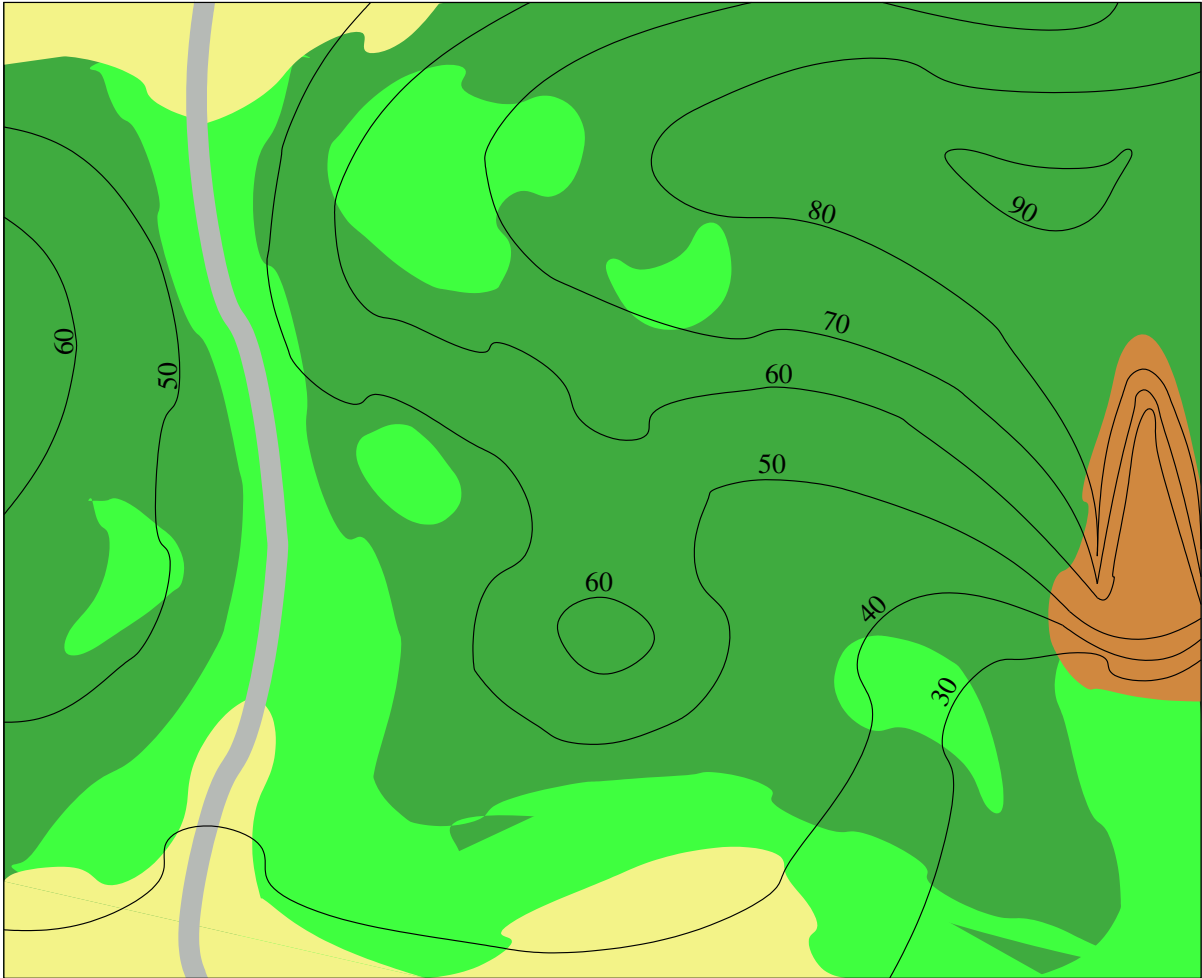
Chest, undamaged with lock	120d
2 Furs	30d
1 Pound waxen candles	24d
6 Earthen Cups	6d
2 Pounds of Incense	30d
1 Pan	12d
6 Brass plates	30d
1 Vase	4d
2 Doses of herbs	60d

The furs are from bears which have been almost extinct in this region. They are wrapped around the other things inside the chest, except the herbs. The herbs were used for repelling food and cloth pests. If the remainder of the cave is examined, one will find that 100cf of oak (160d) can be salvaged after several hours of hard work. Also 3 pounds of workable nails (4d) can be plied. There is much more in this debris, but most is unusable or only sellable as fire wood through a wood cutter.

CONCLUSION

Depending on the experience the players have and the gamemasters choices, this adventure can take several turns. Even if Karudan can be cleared of murder, he is still left with the charge of poaching. Moreover both he and his master may be subject to fines if it becomes known that guild/clan privileges were trespassed. But keep in mind, that the Jarin in Azadmere do not have a strict feudal law, but are still clan-oriented. The players may also have considerable problems carrying off their booty and getting a reasonable price for it. Even more, the lord of the land, the Baron or even the dwarfs might challenge them for their possession. Then there is the strange history of the cave, apparently the dwarfs don't know about it . . .

DURZHAN 4



LOCAL SCALE
FEET
0 50 100 200

DURZHAN 5

