

# The Thing About House winding...

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This adventure is set in the kingdom of Aerenwe. Any period can fit the storyline, as long as the appropriate regents are substituted, but here queen Tasaene swordswraith (daughter to Liliene) is the regent of Aerenwe, and House Winding is a minor house from the province of Halried.

## What everyone knows about House Winding...

"The queen had always wondered how it was that house winding should have a double-headed eagle as their coat of arms: 'wasn't that Roelle's device?' only winding's eagle was black. Of course, different court affairs had kept her busy from probing any further. All she knew was that their family hailed from an area of Halried close to the forest's shadow, and that elf's blood ran in their veins. Viscount Winding hadn't been at court for ages, and she couldn't even recall what he looked like. She did recall however a young half-elf from House Winding from her younger days as a ranger in the Erebanien: a quiet chap called Willem. 'I do wonder what's happened to dear Willem Winding, in all these years...'"

### Starting off

This adventure starts in Calrie, or rather just out of Calrie: if the PCs are not yet in the Queen's service they have been either forced out of town, or are waiting to be allowed in. If in the Queen's service their mission is to stalk a dwarf seen at an inn called "Shoen Berendor Tavern" otherwise have them be guests there where they meet the dwarf. In any case the said dwarf called Waelter Murthon will approach them in need of an escort to head to Halried, and is willing to pay a fortune to get there safely:

"It's stolen goods. It's got to be: the fellow I purchased these gems from a fellow who didn't know what he had and sold them to me for a tenth of what they're worth! Bring me to Halried, where I know a man who's interested: I'll split half the 20,000gp sale with you!"

Note: the gems look impressive: mix of diamonds, sapphires, and blue emeralds. Some earrings and pendants, two rings with huge sapphires. Khinasi style and make. No magic immediately detectable (it might be noticed though by a level 7 wizard/sorcerer), although the whole treasure detects as evil (as if their original owner was damned). Total appraisal value of 30,000gp, but considering the need to move the gems fast, 20,000gp sounds good.

Waelter Murthon: MD T2 AC9 MV12 HP8; THACO 0; #AT 1 (dagger) DMG 1d4 ML 6\* AL NE XP 0\*

Note: if the PCs try to rob or kill him he flees with astounding swiftness. His morale is so bad that even if slightly angry he will flee. If the PCs acquire the gems they fall under a geas spell that the dwarf himself was under: they will want to return the gems to Lady Winding in Halried. The gems are hers; she's been using them to make money: selling them off through an intermediary, then getting them back through the use of a slow curse that affects people's morale and haunts their nights with dreams of riches to be made for selling the gems to a lady winding in Halried.

## The Road to Halried

"Right from the onset you start to regret having taken up the dwarf's offer. An eerie feeling makes you feel like you've found way too good of a deal to be true. You leave the tavern and take the road to Halried. After a couple days of travel without any incident you start sleeping a bit more comfortably: the dwarf's attitude still feels odd though as he seems consumed by the need to look and touch the jewelry."

Note: give the PCs a couple wolves, or bears to worry about at night if they start to read too much into the dwarf's growing folly. He is the actual problem, not the gems, he is under a geas-like spell. Upon questioning he will admit to having fought orcs deep into the Iron Peaks and been hit on the head, and woke-up with the gems at his side (which does not agree with his previous story that he had purchased the gem), he will then switch the story around that the gems were from Arisa at the bottom of the boat which he stow-awayed onto to arrive in Calrie. When questioned about the buyer, he will again have a range of confusing answers, from "the gem's rightful owner" to a dwarf with a nobleman's ear, or a lady who collects Khinasi jewels. Of course the dwarf will only divulge these to one PC at a time, and never admit that version to

the others.

"By the fourth day, the PCs are starting to wonder if the dwarf is trying to pit them against each other — and doing a bad job. Or if he was hit on the head way to hard!"

### Bandits

"Not meeting bandits on this road would have been strange; so when on the fourth day a band of cut-purses stop you at a turn of the road, you know exactly what to do... or do you?"

Note: have a one-on-one number of bandits. Their tactic is to have a large man (leader) on top of felled-tree across the road, while others shoot arrows from nearby trees. Once the shooting starts, the dwarf runs for the bushes. The PCs can then either fight-off the bandits, or dismount and follow the dwarf (and the gems).

Large Thief Leader: MA T3 AC 9 MV 12 HP 10; THACO 0; #AT 2 (sword/axe) DMG 1d6 ML 12; AL NE; XP 240

Other Thieves: T1 AC 9 MV 12 HP: 6 THACO 0 #AT 1 DMG 1d6 (arrow or spear) ML 10 XP 60.

Note: the PCs should be close to catching up to the dwarf; either in pursuit, or on his tracks and barely getting to his level:

### Shadow Green

"The dwarf doesn't stop, he runs through the forest undergrowth and into an even more densely wooded area. Now the forest starts to look menacing, and the dwarf slows as something altogether different grabs his attention: the shriek of a large bird of prey circling above. He freezes at the sound, and in his momentary stillness a stranglevine drops from a tree and grabs hold of his foot. Suddenly vines and rambles of all sorts fall from over-hanging branches."

Erebanien Strangle Vine with Poisoned Rambles: HD 1 AC 12 MV 12\* HP 3; THACO 0; #AT 1\*; DMG 1d4 (grapple) 1d6 (spikes) or 1d2\* (poison) ML 0\* AL N; XP 250\*



note: there should be two strangle vines appearing per pc. The vines are all around the pcs, and the pcs cannot out-run them. vines attack with one of three attacks. pcs must make a saving throw against successful poison attacks or else the poison damage affects their hit-points permanently. The plants have no morale and will not retreat. xp of 500 for each pc that survives the vines, regardless of how many they killed.

The dwarf waelter murchon, though, has to survive the encounter. He does so by hiding behind the pcs; if pcs are winning he hampers their efforts, by sticking too close to them, or getting in the way. If they get too wounded or one pc gets close to dying, then have Willem winding and a couple woodsmen pull them out of the vines (no xps). Otherwise, they come face-to-face with him after they slay the last vine.

“As you catch your breath, you finally get to take a look at the new comers. The men are a mix of lightly armed elven and human woodsmen. One elven-looking black-haired ranger seems to lead the group: he wistles and a large black eagle drops in and lands on his shoulder. He addresses you: ‘I’m Ranger Willem, and I suggest you head north, and stay on the road; you have entered the Erebanien and crossed into the province of Shadow Green — this is ancient forest which you have wandered-upon with many more dangers just as deadly as this strangle vine. You can continue in deeper if you wish, but know that you have been warned.’”

note: Willem winding and his rangers are not menacing. They don’t force the pcs back on the road and would allow them to go deeper into the forest if they so wished: ‘You’ve been warned.’ They set-up camp for the night, with two rangers on watch, but don’t light a fire. They offer pcs what looks like dried-meat, but don’t volunteer information, nor do they ask questions. If questioned they’ll say that they are patrolling the outer parts of the woods for poor souls like the pcs. They refuse to have anyone light a fire: so as not to ‘anger the forest’.

Willem winding: male 3/4 Elf: Aristocrat 1/ Ranger 5, Blooded scion of Basaia, minor 24. AC 5 MV 12, hp: 21 Thaco 15 #AT 2 (broad sword, and hand axe, or bow) DMG: 1d8+1 (strength)/ 1d6 xp 1,000  
Blood abilities: Animal affinity (major), enhanced sense (minor)

note: Willem will not engage in useless fighting, and his passive and quiet nature makes it hard to stir him to anger. He is in the queen’s service as are his rangers. If the pcs try to attack him, have him retreat with no offense taken. His affinity to eagles allow him to speak to his black eagle, and his heightened sense give him the vision of a hawk, so he will prefer ranged attacks, using his eagle to scout for enemy’s location. Willem has 6 woodsmen following him:

Queen’s woodsmen: male human: Ranger 1, AC 7 MV 12. hp: 7 Thaco 19 #AT 1 (broad sword, or hand axe, or bow) DMG: 1d8/ 1d6 xp 700ea

## The sounds of ancient forest

“Nights sound very different when surrounded by ancient trees: birds grow quiet as dusk falls, and finally you begin to hear the trees; wind whistling through their expansive branches, as well as swooshing and swaying of large branches... it grows so that you begin to wonder if the nearby trees could be alive! The woodsmen pay no attention, but that does not comfort the dwarf who seems ready to start running again.”

note: surely enough the dwarf starts to bolt. The rangers on watch wake Willem, who with the help of any pc fast enough help drag the dwarf back to camp. This should be played out as a series of skill checks for a combination of running/jumping with a series of negative modifiers — remember that it is extremely dark and the moon-lit sky is mostly blocked by tall branches, and plenty of wild things are about: boars, more vines; all of which the pcs should ignore in order to catch the dwarf. If none of the pcs manage to do so, Willem sends out his eagle to track him and brings him back himself. Award 50 xp for catching the dwarf, none if Willem has to do it.

“Ranger Willem is plainly irritated now and starts asking questions. Who you are, how you are related, where you are going and why. The dwarf starts off on another fairytale, but Willem quickly quiets him; as he senses he has the least amount of the answers.”

note: As the pcs answer Willem the dwarf keeps either confirming or discounting their story. In any event the dwarf blurts out that ‘Lady winding will be furious if I don’t get to Halried soon’. At this point Willem is all eyes on the dwarf, but keeps questioning the pcs: what do they know of Lady winding, why does the dwarf know her, why does he need to see the lady, and if they speak of the gems, he will not even want to see them. Lady Heliase winding is his mother, and he senses that the dwarf must be one of her underlings. Once Willem is satisfied he knows where the pcs fit and that they are not under her influence he has them tie-up the dwarf for the rest of the night.

## A visit from death

“The group re-settles for the night, and you finally get a bit of sleep, despite the dwarf’s initial wining. The same wisseling and howling continues for a couple hours, but at the night’s deepest hour the wind subsides, and a strange fog rolls in. The forest ceases to move, and the woodsmen wake you, to cue that time has come for battle: The sound of footsteps, a dozen, perhaps more, through the leaves of the forest floor indicate that some slow moving fiends are surrounding the camp... The rangers light a fire and Willem cries out: ‘Back to the fire! Hurry, form a circle: the undead are upon us!’”

skeleton warrior: AC 7, MV 12 hp: 8; Thaco 19 #AT: 1 (crude rusted weapon), DMG: 1d6 xp 65 ea

note: skeletons have some special defenses: They are immune to all fear, sleep, charm, and hold spells, cold based attacks causes no damage. Edged or piercing weapons only inflict half damage. Number appearing should be close to 3 skeletons per pc. The woodsmen are fighting their own 3 skeletons each: They seem to know how to handle them well however; using torches to light the old vestments worn by the undead.

“Remnants of the attacking skeletons are still all around you: severed limbs, and some shaking hand, still animated by the shadows seem to litter the ground around the camp-site; the rangers seem to be waiting for something else though. ‘They should be here by now, zombies usually follow the skeletons, what are they waiting for?’ Sure enough the smell of rotten flesh gives the new-comers away!”

zombies of the Erebanien: AC 7 MV 9 hp 14 #AT 1 (Grip) DMG 1d8 xp 120 ea

note: zombies have the same immunities. Number appearing should be 1 per pc. Additional zombies should come in waves, especially if the pcs and expeditions in

fighting-off the first wave. once the pcs get too tired, have dawn break and the zombies retreat.

“The shy glow of the morning sun starts to penetrate the heavy canopy and the zombies take cue to retreat. The woodsmen must have fought this fight many times over, and willem orders them to pack-up camp quickly: ‘The rotting flesh will attract carrion; we need to get moving.’ you untie the dwarf, and gather your belongings: the woodsmen are already clearing the way.”

## willem’s warning

“willem takes you aside as you follow the woodsmen’s trail: ‘we will take you to caer aquilien — that is where my dear mother, lady winding resides. i must warn you though: i know her too well not to sense that you are being duped. These stones are either cursed, or worthless — and knowing how needy she is of gold, i strongly doubt she will pay you for the gems... i am interested however in finding-out what she is up to. i cannot pay much, but would be in your debt if i could have you unravel this latest folly of hers.’”

note: if the pcs accept he gives them a sketch of the castles, points out the basic rooms, as well as an escape way out of the caer’s wine cellar below the keep — should she throw them into the dungeon. sketch this one by hand for them during play: willem is not a good at drawing, sizes don’t matter nor do proportions. do not give them the hand-out yet: they should do some reconnaissance to get that. in return for the information, willem asks that they promise to hurt his mother lady heliase only in self and to make sure not to kill her. (she’s his mother after all). if asked about her skills, he will volunteer that she is a powerful elven sorceress, with many tricks up her sleeve; and that direct confrontation might not be the best way to handle her, she also has command of his father, the viscount, who is sick and has been bed-ridden for years and the caer’s men at arms (close to 50 men, 20 servants). willem himself is not welcome home: an old quarrel with his father still lingers. he has no siblings, but has heard that a second-cousin timaeathu winding serves as sheriff or captain of house winding’s guards. he perhaps hopes to become the winding heir by gaining favor with lady winding. “if you manage to get some kind of evidence against my mother we can go to the queen and ask for help. some kind of documents, a couple bills of sale for the same gems, or bring out someone who knows her dealings.”

note: The pcs have to understand that they will earn more xps based on the credibility of the evidence (cumulative — see below), note that the evidence should be brought to the queen at calrie:

- bills of sale paperwork: 300xp
- spell parchment for the curse: 50xp
- unwilling testimony by guard/servant: 50xp
- willing testimony by guard/servant: 100xp
- unwilling testimony by sheriff timaeathu winding: 200xp
- willing testimony by sheriff timaeathu winding: 400xp
- unwilling testimony by viscount wotoen winding: 300xp
- willing testimony by viscount wotoen winding: 600xp
- unwilling testimony by lady heliase herself: 300xp

## caer Aquilien

“Aquila non capit muscas” — eagles don’t catch flies

## The Dwarf’s History Lesson

“The viscount winding holds about one fifth of the law in halried: this represents about a dozen smaller villages in the southeast corner of halried; bordering the provinces of calrie, banien’s deep, and shadow green. now, this small realm has little changed since the days of roele. And because of the half-elf viscounts’ longevity, the people of this part of winding have only ever known four windings to rule over them. the dwarf waelter murthon who still wrestled with the curse of the gems tried to explain: ‘i’ve read-up on house winding — they are wealthy nobles: the first lord winding was an andu leader of the aeren tribe who settled close to the erebanien. his name has been forgotten to history, but he married an elven princess which helped to spare his people from the gheallie sidhe. she then raised their son wicken winding and tended to the realm. now wicken, you see, did not fight at deismar, but he was blessed with basaia’s bloodline to reward him for reasoning many of the erebanien’s people to help join in the fight. this wicken fellow became viscount and reigned through most of the empire. his son viscount walther winding fought with michael roele against the gorgon in the crown. his totem animal; the black eagle, in the fashion of roele, is on the winding shield with basaia’s golden colors behind it. now what do you think they’ve been up to for the last 500 years: these half-elves are smart! they’ve kept low key and accumulated a fortune!’”

“willem winding on hearing the dwarf’s tale laughed loudly: ‘surely you dreamt that story; or that curse may have suggested it, for the stories of old sound accurate, but my grandsire walther, the hero of the crown, married an elven commoner later in life, and our house fell into disgrace. The current viscount wotoen winding is walther’s own son, and my own my father: his marriage to heliase, my mother, was no surprise since she had the elven features of his own mother. but she was immediately unpopular with the populace; and my father, his health, and wealth has suffered for it! now my father wotoen has ruled of over 300 years, and this may seem long to humans, but it is brief for an elf: his failing health in the last half-century has made house windings quite secretive; where little of basaia’s glory shines through... and that is why i left, a little over 15 years ago.’”

note: bore the pcs with a little history. if one has knowledge (nobility or heraldry or history) he may impress willem a bit, converse, and gain a bit of his trust: in that case roll a skill check and award xp 10. that pc will be considered more highly by willem winding.

## into the caer

“The caer doesn’t look like much: a wooden wall surrounds a small settlement with thatch-roofed houses. The keep is the only stone structure, and sits in the center of the village. it’s old and weather-worn and probably dates back to the years of michael roele: and house winding’s hero in the crown. willem & the woodsmen make a camp just east of town; in a patch of forest right off the road from calrie. they’ll wait here two days. ‘if you need help have someone find us here’

note: The pcs have a choice of how to enter caer aquilien. they can wait for dusk, fake being cursed like the

dwarf, or march right in. In any even getting to the keep entrance is not hard: most of the guards are on duty only at night and sleep during the day: undead attack the caer from time to time and evidence of that should be littered around. “You stumble on a pile of dead corpses that remind you the zombies of the Erebaniens” or “strange claw marks on the wooden palisade and a skeleton hand gripped to the wall remind you of the skeletons you fought yesternight.” If they do decide to slip in at night, give them a surprise and have the same skeletons launch an attack right at the same time. Lawful and good pcs that help defend against the onslaught are awarded double xp, but their cover is blown, and they can only appear in front of Lady Heliase as escort to the dwarf. If they choose to combat the guards

## winding keep

“winding keep is an impressive stone mass. It looks like a solid two story fort in the shape of a cube: ninety feet high, ninety feet wide, with towers not attached, but actually fused into the main body of the building. The keep looks well guarded, with uniformed men at all stations.”

note: play winding keep in two parts: the first part should be played as a running-battle in the castle, where they can ‘kick-in’ doors and investigate. At one point Lady Heliase will lose faith, hope, or patience, and release a spell calling for the undead to come to squash the pcs: skeletons & zombies will come from below the dungeon and move-up the castle fighting both guards and pcs: that may help trigger a shift in alliance, or a three way fight, depending on how the pcs play the story.

## part I. Investigating the keep

There should be enough guards for the pcs stay busy while they snoop around the keep: keep loosely track of rounds, and have the pcs understand they will get tired and at a certain point will have to flee. One possible way to play this is to add a -1 modifier to their Thaco for every 20 rounds they spend in the castle.

note: Award points for getting into the castle based on difficulty, and character play. Some guidelines as follow:

- entering the keep through an upper window: 100xp
- gaining access through main gate: 50xp
- going in through the dungeon “escape” route: 50xp

increase the xp earned by pcs by 50xp based on alignments and class: rogues prefer climbing/disguising, paladins may prefer the dungeons.

## 1. porticulis

“The keep’s gate consists of a wide wooden gate behind a heavy metal grill called a porticulis. The grill is closed, and although no guards stand outside — they can be heard inside half-towers fitted with arrow-slits on either sides of the gate.”

note: The guards will look at the pcs from the arrow slits, and then open the gate to investigate. They will not raise the metal grill, however unless they are sure about the docility of the party, and feel there is a valid reason to have them come in. (fleeing undead won’t work: they’ll expect the pcs to save their own skin!). Any mention of the gems, and they will ask to see them; once they recognize the gems they have 1 person — the dwarf — enter in with them: to be allowed in with the dwarf, the pcs will have to negotiate, requiring a successful skill check + bonus if they can come up with a good story add a negative modifier if they look

too tough for the guards to handle. There are 8 guards at the porticulis, and 6 of them will escort the pcs to Lady Heliase. Battling the guards either from outside, or once inside, is sure to rouse the rest of the guards of the caer (see 3. Guard rooms) and start the chase!

CAER Aquilien Guards: MA F2 AC 5 MV 9 THACO 14 HP 11 #AT 1 (spear, arrow, short sword, or hand-axe) DMG 1d6 ML 10 XP 150 EA

note: once inside past the gates, the guards will require the pcs disarm, and will want to put their weapons in the garde-robe (see 4. storage rooms)

## 2. The main hall

“This large room echoes of glory past. Huge vaulted ceilings 30’ high give a church-like atmosphere, and a large stained glass window on the western wall illuminates the dim room. The subjects on that window are hard to make out as dirt and webs have not been cleaned for ages. On either side large picture tapestries are hung on the walls, and large banquet tables have been pushed against those same walls; waiting for a day when they would be of use again. A large ugly goblin enters from the stair-tower”

note: This is Heliase’s man servant. If the pcs have the gems he welcomes them in and takes them to her room. If they are fighting their way through, he’ll try to hit, then run to get help in the guard’s room: he is both powerful smart, and the caer’s guard will take orders from him, though reluctantly; they prefer hearing things from Sheriff Winding instead.

Kmagun, Heliase’s goblin. AC 5 THACO 15 #AT 1 sword damage 1d8+2(strength) HD 4 HP 38 XP 350

## 3. Guard rooms

“This is the guard’s quarters; tables as well as bunk beds and a couple chests with the men’s belonging make-up these rooms.”

note: There are a total of 24 guards in the caer (see 1. porticulis for stats). You may want to spread them through the rooms, or have a whole group of them pour in on the pcs. The guards have about 100gp worth cash each in their trunks: all are locked. It would take quite some time to open the 20 or so trunks.

## 4. Storage rooms

“The south-east tower serves as a food-store and is full of fresh-cut meats, as well as salted, and dried pork, vegetables and dried fruits. The vestibule right next to it has a garde-robe of all sorts of vestments for the winding household: servants as well as master’s coats, trousers, sweaters, as well as hunting weapons: hunting bows and spears, a calling-horn, and a variety of boots of different sizes”

note: The pcs may take some dry provisions, will be useful later in the story, they may take some clothes if they wish: none of the items are magic, but the calling horn makes a sound that Willem Winding will immediately recognize. They can barricade themselves in any of the rooms: the doors should be treated as AC 11 and HP 50. So they won’t be barricaded very long; as the caer’s guards are sure to destroy the door to get to them.

## 5. stairs

“Two of the towers are wide staircases that the guards can use to man the defenses of the keep. A draft of cold air due to the arrow-slits runs down the tower stairs, and large

tapestries hang at each flight to keep-in the warmth. The south-west stair tower goes not only to the second level, the roof, but also a ground level where lies the caer's dungeon."

note: The roof might be a good way out: it's a flat-surface over the entire are of the keep; a central artillery piece is rotting, and may be lit on fire. Jumping from the roof to the ground 90 feet below would not be recommended, unless the pcs had that much rope to get down with...

## 6. Lady Heliase's room

"By far the most practical and richly decorated room in the caer, this large room is well decorated and kept impeccably clean. Lady Heliase is here preparing spells calling on the shadows to bring forth evil to help battle against you. She is little surprised that you should come into her room. She looks young; far younger than Willem her son. Her long robes and blond hair contrasts with Willem's own darker features, but if anything, she is the darkest most sinful one; for her spells are wither witchcraft or necromancy, and she just finished the last admonition: clouds start to form outside, and distant thunder rumbles closer. 'My army of death is at hand.' From floors below you hear screams and growls; as some servants and guards realize that undead fiends are rising-up from the ground below them..."

note: with a quick glance the pcs may recognize necromantic runes in the room, identify spell components all of which should give them thought to run quickly. If it looks like she is out-numbered she will try one spell, and then drink a pass-wall potion to retreat into the Realm Council room (see 10. Realm room), in any event do not let her die here: capturing should be possible though incredibly hard, besides, now it looks like the keep is surrounded by undead.

Lady Heliase winding: female elf necromancer 7<sup>th</sup> level, scion of Azrai, tainted 18. AC 8 MV 12 THACO 14 HP 20 #AT 1 dagger or spell DMG 1d4+1+poison or spell ML 7 XP 1600  
blood ability: Alter appearance  
equipment: dagger+1 with poison-delivering blade, ring of undead control "the plague ring" (see part 11. for details)  
level 4: enervation  
level 3: ray of exhaustion, vampiric touch,  
level 2: false life, spectral hand, ghoul touch  
level 1: ray of enfeeblement, chill touch, prolong life\*, skeleton armor\*  
\* are new spells that Lady Heliase has researched herself

### prolong life

necromancy

level: sor/wiz 1

components: v, s

casting time: 1 standard action

range: touch

duration: 1 day + 1 day/level of caster

target: 1 per level

saving through: will negates

spell resistance: res

Heliase has researched this spell to extend viscount winding years beyond that of a human or even a half-elf's lifespan. This spell trades a day of her lifespan, for a day of his! The viscount is weak and feeble however, because the spell is imperfect (1<sup>st</sup> level) and cannot fully rejuvenate.

### skeleton armor

necromancy

level: sor/wiz 1

components: v s

casting time: 1 standard action

range: touch

duration: 10 turns + 5/level of caster

target: 1 per level

saving through: will negates

spell resistance: res

This spell turns the target's skin to stone, thereby creating a flexible exoskeleton armor, which bestows an AC 2 (plus any applicable dexterity/protection ring bonus, but not cumulative with regular armor), necromancers and wizards may use this armor-equivalent without penalty.

note that Heliase will alter her appearance to look like a servant maid, if she later crosses the pcs, or alternatively through her poisoned dagger. The poison is made from a mix of vampire dust and mummy rot; allow a saving through upon a successful hit, otherwise the target slowly turns into an undead over the course of a week.

## 6a. Lady Heliase's store room

"This door is locked and quickly arouses you suspicion: could this be some sort of safe? It definitely has an advanced mechanism and the door does seem to fancy to hold just another closet of clothes."

note: This is Heliase's personal storage room. The door is thick, and although not magically protected does have a complex lock mechanism. This translates into a -5 open lock skill check. Alternatively, the pcs could try to force the door or destroy it with an axe or mace, AC 11 HP 150

"Beyond the door is a large closet full of shelves stacked with strange spell components. As well as several tomes and spell books"

**stones and powders:** gold dust, black onyx, jade dust, diamond dust, incense, ivory strips, 2 small jages, 3 rubies, 2 blood-red diamonds, 1 bloodstone. (value 400gp)

**body parts:** goblin brain, child dwarf's heart, and porcupine quills, vampire dust, ogre-magi teeth, and one whole skeleton — not animated. (value 300gp, on black-magic market)

**books and parchment:** one book in three tomes called *elementary necrology*, then one tome called *of life and death mechanics*, one called *poisons for all occasions*, one called *working with curses*, also includes three hand-written tomes that look like notes and research scribble. (one page of the second tome has an earmark that goes directly to the spell used to curse the gems — un-cursing them is on the opposite page.)

## 7. viscount winding's bedroom

"passing in front of the doors you hear the travails of an old man, trying to ready to defend himself. hearing the commotion the viscount calls out to you: 'come thither if you dare and see how an old man can die with honor!'"

note: The viscount is in no shape to fight: he is holding himself up by leaning on his sword and could definitely not wield it, even to try a blow. He looks as though he just managed to get out of bed; and was too weak to dress into armor. If the pcs have time to mention his son Willem winding, he may become attentive and may agree to give testimony against his wife: proving they come at Willem's bidding will give the pcs a +5 bonus to a persuasion skill check (a sketch of the caer, in Willem's hand for example). otherwise there is a -5 to the check as he will not likely

betray his wife. He is now on life-support through his wife's use of "prolong life" spells and will die within a week without them.

## 8. The study room

"This room is a mess, and shows just how poorly the house winding has been handling things as of late. A large table at the center is piled with books, and loose parchment, most of it covered by a thick layer of dust — it would take weeks to find any particular piece of importance here!"

note: either the viscount, or sheriff winding could find the bills of sale relating to the purchases of the gems. The pcs may try, but only 1 chance in 10 of finding the bill of sales... if the notice that only few papers have no dust over them this increases their chance to 2 in 10.

## 9. Captain winding's room

"The captain is not about, but must have gotten out of the room in a hurry: his door is still open. Inside this north-eastern tower is a military-man's room. Weapons, maps, sketches of wanted offenders. A small table in the middle of the room still has a warm cup of tea on it: the captain can not be far..."

note: indeed, he does arrive, and with several guards to back him up, he pushes the pcs into the room, and tries to lock the door with them inside. The sheriff is a law-officer; his job is to catch and imprison criminals. If the pcs are stuck too long move to part 2: As the undead come-in, sheriff winding will want the pcs to help fight them off.

## 9a. The dressing room

"This room sticks of urine: the keep's lavatory consists of a seat with a hole that drops feces and excrements into the street below — overall the room is still military-clean; and looks like a good place to take a bath: a fireplace on the south wall has a large kettle of water boiling just for that exact purpose..."

note: The pcs might use that kettle for their purposes. otherwise the lavatory might be a possible way out; it is large enough for someone to pass through, but a pile of feces will have to do for braking the 40 feet fall...

## 10. The realm council room

"This room is where the viscounts have held councils for centuries. commoners can see the room's windows and usually wait for decisions to be pronounced from the balcony; speeches and proclamation for matters of law, or announcements of good or bad news: all is done from this very same balcony and then sent-forth to the villages that constitute the viscounts' realm. Inside, at it's center, is a large oval table surrounded by nine finely carved seats where. on the table is a book-holder with a large book, entitled *viscounty of winding*. All the pages are hand-written, and several book-marks open to main edits that have been promulgated. Also on the table next to the book is a set of keys: large keys. The western wall bears an old tapestry-map of Aerenwe from Michael Boele's days, and the southern wall is entirely occupied by shelves of books. A small ladder in the middle allows access to tomes placed on higher shelves."

note: none of the books on the shelves are particularly interesting; titles on hunting, military warfare, training horses, as well as tomes and tomes of imperial Anuiran law. No secret passage to heliases' room exists. The balcony is a

good possible exit, as for the keys, they are the dungeon's keys.

## 11. The wine cellars

"The two unlocked doors lead to small cavernous rooms where barrels of salt-meat, pickled cabbage, ale, and wine are stored."

note: The exit is blocked by a couple barrels but should not be hard to find given Willem's directions. Note as well that these rooms use to serve as dungeons, and many signs point to that: chains on the wall, old human bones on the floor, the way the door looks like a cell door... once Lady Heliase has released her spell, skeletons of old prisoners will rise from below these very rooms.

## 12. The dungeons

"The caer's two dungeon cells were meant to allow for individual questioning of suspects, and no sound can be heard between the two, save some loud mumbled cries, perhaps. Both cells are furnished with vicious instruments of torture: an iron cage, a rack, and a water basin."

note: The dungeon door are reinforced, (80hp) and the locking mechanism uses a complex key. (-2 modifier to pick the lock)

## part II. Death comes to winding keep

"Your visit through the keep now takes an un-expected turn: dark clouds from across the horizon now converge on the caer, and rolls of thunder grow nearer. You suddenly notice the shriek of a young woman outside the keep: 'zombies, zombies are coming-up from the well' — it is now obvious that a powerful realm-spell cast by Lady Heliase has called an army of undead to her rescue."

note: Lady Heliase possesses a ring of undead control which she will use to fight the pcs; the ring is particularly powerful and may direct 20 HD of undead. A major side-effect, however is that it somehow 'attracts' undead: un-controlled undead will gravitate towards the wearer, and 1d12 HD of undead will appear per day, with goal or retrieving the ring. All of the undead summoned by the realm spell are considered to be 'controlled', for the purpose of play, but will also act beyond Heliase's wishes.

## saving the living

"As moans and screams grow louder, it becomes evident that the dead are killing every life they see: A guard's shout before being hacked-down reveals that the dead have no allegiance to winding, nor does winding have any allegiance to the dead. suddenly you spot a couple skeletons coming from the next room, and several servants from the winding household pursued by the shadow's minions."

skeleton warriors: AL: Neutral, AC 7, MV 12 hp: 8; Thaco 19 #AT: 1 (crude rusted weapon), DMG: 1d6 xp 65

note: Hae 2 skeletons appearing: not too hard... if the pcs don't take a hint to join in with the winding guards, give them a second chance then move on to see how they play the story out.

## death vs. life in the main hall

"sounds from the main hall indicate a major struggle between winding and the shadows. clashes of weapons, moans, and smell of rot rise up to the highest levels of the keep. In a distance the call of the woodsmen's horns alert you that they too have come to join the fight."

skeleton warriors: AL: Neutral, AC 7, MV 12 hp: 8; Thaco 19 #AT: 1 (crude rusted weapon), DMG: 1d6 xp 65

zombies of the erebanien: AC 7 MV 9 hp 14 #AT 1 (grip) DMG 1d8 xp 120 ea

note: have plenty of foes appearing on both sides: zombies are coming up from the stair-tower on the south-western side. Lady Heliase will appear to join the fight, as will Willem Winding and his woodsmen, Sheriff Winding (if still alive) and Kragun, Heliase's goblin: he will feel like he should fight on the side of the living and it may be interesting to have PCs play-out convincing him, otherwise have Sheriff Winding, or Willem sway him.

### Leaving Winding

note: if the PCs haven't left the caer already, have Lady Heliase leave (or die) as well as all of her undead minions. The PCs should be in a mind to leave as well, to present their proof to the queen. If they have no proof at all, give them another 20 rounds in the keep, and then have Willem Winding ride in, and ask them to follow-him to bid for the queen's justice.

## The Queen's Justice

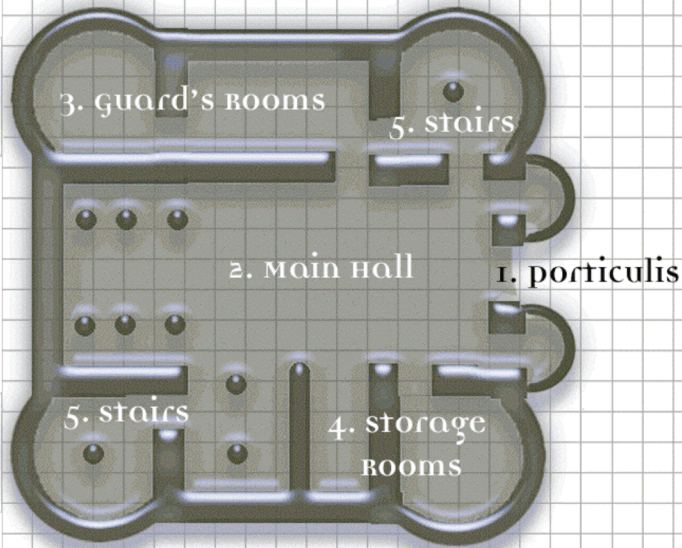
"The queen had been out hunting boar and her council met upon her return to hear the request of Willem Winding, several allegations against his family by House Faste, and House Dhon, regarding the sale and subsequent theft of gems were put forward. And he presented proof to substantiate their claim. As reparation for House Winding's transgressions, the gems were made returned to House Faste un-cursed, and 1GB given to House Dhon in compensation. To recompense Willem in his bid to uncover the truth the queen, in her grace, bid for him to swear vassalage to her, as the new viscount of Winding."

note: award XP and compensate with XP for queen's favor if they feel too little was given along the way.



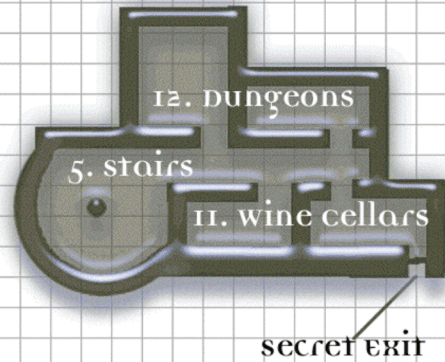
# caer Aquilien

## Level 1



1 square = 5 feet x 5 feet

## below ground



## Level 2

