

 **DMDAVE**

TALES OF OMERIA CHORUS OF TOADS



FIFTH EDITION ADVENTURE

A village off-the-beaten-path harbors a dark secret.
Featuring art by Dyson Logos and Tithi Luadthong.



CHORUS OF TOADS

Estimated Duration: 4 hours

Suggested Music: "[Dead Marshes](#)" by Michael Ghelfi

A VILLAGE WITH A DARK SECRET

Eighty years ago, the village of Tenellón was founded ten miles north of Uqamarte. Tenellón is surrounded on all sides by thick salt marshes with few trees. The only way into the hamlet of thirty-some inhabitants is via a narrow path that is known to flood over during the wet season. Like many of the towns and villages in the Lost Dragon pass, Tenellón owes taxes to Arruquetta. In exchange, it is awarded a single Cord, one of Arruquetta's not-so-secret police force, who keeps watch over the area. Tenellón hunters trade frogs, alligator pelts and birds with other local villages. Most Weysevainers who happen upon the quiet village consider the Tenellónians to be quaint, pleasant folks, who would never harm a single hair on another creature's head.

WHERE TO ADD THIS ENCOUNTER

This side trek is designed for **two to three 5th- to 7th-level characters** and is optimized for **two characters with an average party level (APL) of 5**. It especially works well when half of your normal campaign group can't show up and there are two or three players who still want to play.

Chorus of Toads is a horror story that takes liberties with one or more absent players' characters. Before running the adventure, be sure to ask the players of the absent characters if you can "borrow" their characters for the adventure. Feel free to provide details described within the text. Unless the participating characters cause an absolute disaster, the absent characters should be fine by the end of this adventure.

OVERVIEW

The adventure is spread out over five parts: a Call to Action and four 30-minute segments. The entire adventure takes approximately 4 hours to play.

- **Call to Action: The Gargoyle's Smile.** The characters discover that their companions have gone missing.
- **Part 1. The Bald Swamp and Toad Chorus Way.** Tracking their allies, the characters arrive at a tourist destination in the middle of the swamp. There, they speak to a strange man named Hedoi. **This is Story Objective A.**
- **Part 2. Tenellón.** The characters learn that their companions went to the village of Tenellón. They must travel to Tenellón and speak with the villagers. **This is Story Objective B.**
- **Part 3. Guidon's Tower.** The characters travel outside of the village to Guidon's Tower. While there, they are attacked. Soon they discover that their friends were captured by dangerous creatures that live in the swamp. **This is Story Objective C.**
- **Part 4. Return to Tenellón.** Having saved their friends, the characters return to the village of Tenellón. They discover that the villagers all share a dark secret. **This is Story Objective D.**

ADVENTURE HOOK: GONE ADVENTURING! BACK LATER!

At some point between the last adventure and now, one or more of the party members have gone missing. They went to investigate a tourist attraction and were supposed to be return after a few hours. It's been a whole day and there's still no sign of them.

The remaining adventurers must follow a series of clues as to where their fellow party members vanished. Eventually, this leads them to the quiet hamlet of Tenellón.

CALL TO ACTION: THE GARGOYLE'S SMILE

The adventure assumes that the characters are in the northwestern part of Central Omeria, specifically on the well-traveled road, The Leash. The Leash connects the four major cities of the Weysevain Coast. While traveling along The Leash, the characters stay at The Gargoyle's Smile, a popular tavern and inn. The Smile is a two days ride from the town of Uqamarte. The characters have had a terrific time unwinding and enjoying themselves after finishing up an adventure in the area.

The next morning, one or more members of the party heard rumor of a strange blue rock a few miles north of the tavern. The tavernkeepers at The Smile claim it's a big tourist attraction that draws a lot of outsiders. "Looks like a big diamond stuck in the mud, I hear."

To reach the stone, visitors must turn west off The Leash onto a trail called Toad Chorus Way. A half-hour walk up the trail takes travelers to a shack where the guide can escort them to the diamond.

Eight hours pass and the other characters still haven't returned. It's now up to the remaining characters to find out what happened to their companions.

PART 1. THE BALD SWAMP AND TOAD CHORUS WAY

It only takes a half-hour to find Toad Chorus Way and another half-hour to find the shack that the tavernkeepers described.

AREA DESCRIPTION

The Bald Swamp has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The Bald Swamp is a 2,200 square mile stretch of soggy landscape with little to no trees. Instead, small shrubs, bushes, and tall grasses claim the area.

Divination Interference. The presence of *vizier's tourmaline* in the area distorts divination magic. When a creature casts a divination spell in The Bald Swamp, it must make an Intelligence (Arcana) check with a DC equal to 10 + the spell's level. On a failed check, the spell fails and has no effect just as if it had been the target of a *counterspell*. Also, creatures with truesight have their ranges reduced by half.

Insects. Mosquitoes are a plague in the swamp. At the end of each hour that a character spends in and around the swamp, they must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the character has disadvantage on ability checks until the end of the next hour. On a successful saving throw, a character is immune to the mosquitoes for 24 hours. Rangers and characters with the outlander background automatically pass their saving throws.

Smells. Thanks to the brown, stagnant water that drowns the floor of the swamp, The Bald Swamp reeks.

Sounds. The Bald Swamp is alive with insects, birds, and of course, frogs and toads. At night, the toads in The Bald Swamp reach near-deafening levels with their croaks.

THE BLUE DIAMOND SHACK

The Blue Diamond Shack is a lean-to on stilts sitting atop a marginally higher dry patch of ground. The front of the shack lacks a wall—there's only a five-foot-long counter topped with wicker baskets. A big sign painted in blue letters reads "Come See The Great Blue Diamond!" in the Common language. It then gives prices: 1 gp for a tour, 4 sp for a basket (or buy 3 for 10 sp).

When the shack's owner, Hedoi, isn't sitting up front weaving reed baskets, he's in the back of the shack sleeping, cooking dinner, or playing his flute.

CREATURE INFORMATION

Hedoi is a friendly, older human with balding hair and a sunburnt nose. As soon as he sees travelers coming down the path, he rings a bell that he keeps hanging above his counter with cries of "Welcome! Welcome!"

What Does Hedoi Want? Hedoi loves to regale folks with tales of the diamond as big as a horse in the mud north of his shack. If he can't sell you on a tour, he'll make sure you leave with a basket or two (or three).

What Does Hedoi Know? If the characters ask about their companions, Hedoi thinks for a moment explaining that his memory isn't what it used to be. Once he's given a complete description of them, however, he remembers immediately.

"Oh yes! Yes yes yes. I do remember! They done gone off with Ms Maria up to Tenellón. She told 'em she runned into a whole heap of trouble down there and needed their help."

Hedoi is telling the truth. Last he saw the other characters they were traveling with a woman named Maria to the village of Tenellón and Maria told them she was in trouble. Hedoi claims not to know much more than that but will try to be as helpful as he can. As far as directions go, it's only 2 miles (a half-hour walk) from his shack to Tenellón.

The Great Blue Diamond. If the characters take Hedoi up on his offer to see the diamond, he gladly leads them to its location through the swamp. The "diamond" in question is about 1,000 feet behind his shack. The diamond turns out to not be a diamond at all. Instead, it's just a large piece of glass stuck in the mud. Hedoi isn't sure where it came from, but a character who succeeds on a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check might recognize that it's the result of a *fireball* spell turning a sandbar into glass. Whoever did it likely did it 15-20 years ago. Either way, Hedoi is proud of it. The man claims that it's the reason some spells don't work as well as others in the swamp.

"Wheewww-wee! Sure is a beaut, ain't it?"

PART 2. TENELLÓN

The village of Tenellón is easy to find. And with very few trees to block views of the village, the characters can spot it when they're within a half-mile.

AREA DESCRIPTION

The village of Tenellón has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. Tenellón is a hamlet home to thirty-two swamp-dwelling people. There are only seven buildings in Tenellón. Six of the buildings are residential homes and the seventh is an old wizard's tower roughly 700-feet from the edge of the hamlet. Toad Chorus Way passes through the village and ends at the tower. The six residential homes are built on stilts to account for rising waters during the wet season.

Animals. The livestock that the Tenellónians trade for with other Weysevanian villages are kept in plain view, often tied to stakes on the ground. There are goats, chickens, and pigs. There are also dozens of stacked crates packed with croaking toads.

Light. The Tenellónians keep lanterns hung in front of each of their homes. At night, the lamplighter Philippe keeps the village illuminated. And in the morning, Phillippe wakes early to extinguish the flames and replenish the oil.

Mud. Mud is a way of life for Tenellónians, and it's everywhere, including inside houses. Most Tenellónians wear thigh-high leather boots to avoid getting their feet wet. Others choose to go the other route, forgoing shoes altogether and wearing little more than denim pants cut just below the groin.

CREATURE INFORMATION

The Tenellónians are incredibly friendly and welcoming. Right away, they're interested in trade and any news that the characters might have. When asked questions, they're eager to answer as soon as they are able.

What Do The Tenellónians Know? If asked about the missing characters, the Tenellónians immediately remember. Most can share their account of the story: Maria was traveling to The Gargoyle's Smile to find an adventurer. Apparently, some sort of Toad-like creature was seen north of the town. While the Tenellónians are able hunters, they aren't cut out for fighting monsters. And the town's Cord, Guy, hasn't been seen in a few days. Maria led the characters to Guimond's Tower—the dilapidated tower 700-feet north of the hamlet.

IMPORTANT TENELLÓNIANS

The Tenellónians are divided into six families: Adunibar, Alonso, Enatarreaga, Harrizurieta, Marien, and Urquina.

- **Maria** comes from the Urquina family. She's one of eight children.
- Maria's father is the hamlet's mayor, **Laponte Urquina**. He often rubs those he meets the wrong way, but overall, he's cooperative.
- **Phillipe Harrizurieta** is the town's lamplighter and frog-catcher. Phillippe is in love with Maria and fears for her life. He laments that he is not as brave as most heroes, but will offer to accompany the characters if it means he can save his true love's life.

- **Old Man Lilo Enatarreaga** often barks that the entire village is doomed. "It's the old curse!" he claims. Enatarreaga believes that the village is cursed because of a murder that happened in the swamps 20 years ago.
- Enatarreaga's daughter, **Oketa**, stays by her father's side. She apologizes for his outbursts. "Sadly, he's just gotten more and more delirious as the years have gone by." She doesn't know anything about the curse of the murder.
- **Mañe Adunibar** is a teenage girl who tries to get the attention of the characters the moment they step in town. She warns, "You can't trust anyone." When out of earshot of her fellow villagers, she explains, "I don't know who's responsible for it, but 20 years ago someone got murdered here and some of the folks in this village are still trying to cover it up. I think your friends got close to finding out who it was. They went up to the tower and didn't come back."
- **Andrianos Perras** is a Pressonian biologist who has been camping in the village. He and his companion, **Yorgos**, came to The Bald Swamp two months ago to study the fabled "Toad Man" of The Bald Swamp. Although they keep hearing reports of the creature near Guimond Tower, they have yet to see it with their own eyes.

PART 3. GUIMOND TOWER

Eventually, the characters should go to investigate the old tower north of the village.

AREA DESCRIPTION

Guimond Tower has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The octagonal tower is made from the same thick stone upon which it stands. The villagers believe that a transmuter wizard named Guimond built the tower, pulling the stones up from the earth itself. Whether or not that is true, The Bald Swamp and the pounding rains of the Weysevain Coast haven't been kind to the building. Much of the building's east side is crumbling and the wooden dome roof has collapsed in multiple places.

Clues. When the characters approach the tower, right away they notice something unusual. Roughly 30 feet from the base of the tower, a torn piece of fabric, trinket, or some other identifying item of one of their companions lies in the grass by the tower. A DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the item was torn away.

Footprints. There are multiple sets of footprints in the mud that lead to the tower (area 1). A DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that it is the footprints of the character's companions plus one other set of small, humanoid footprints (likely Maria's).

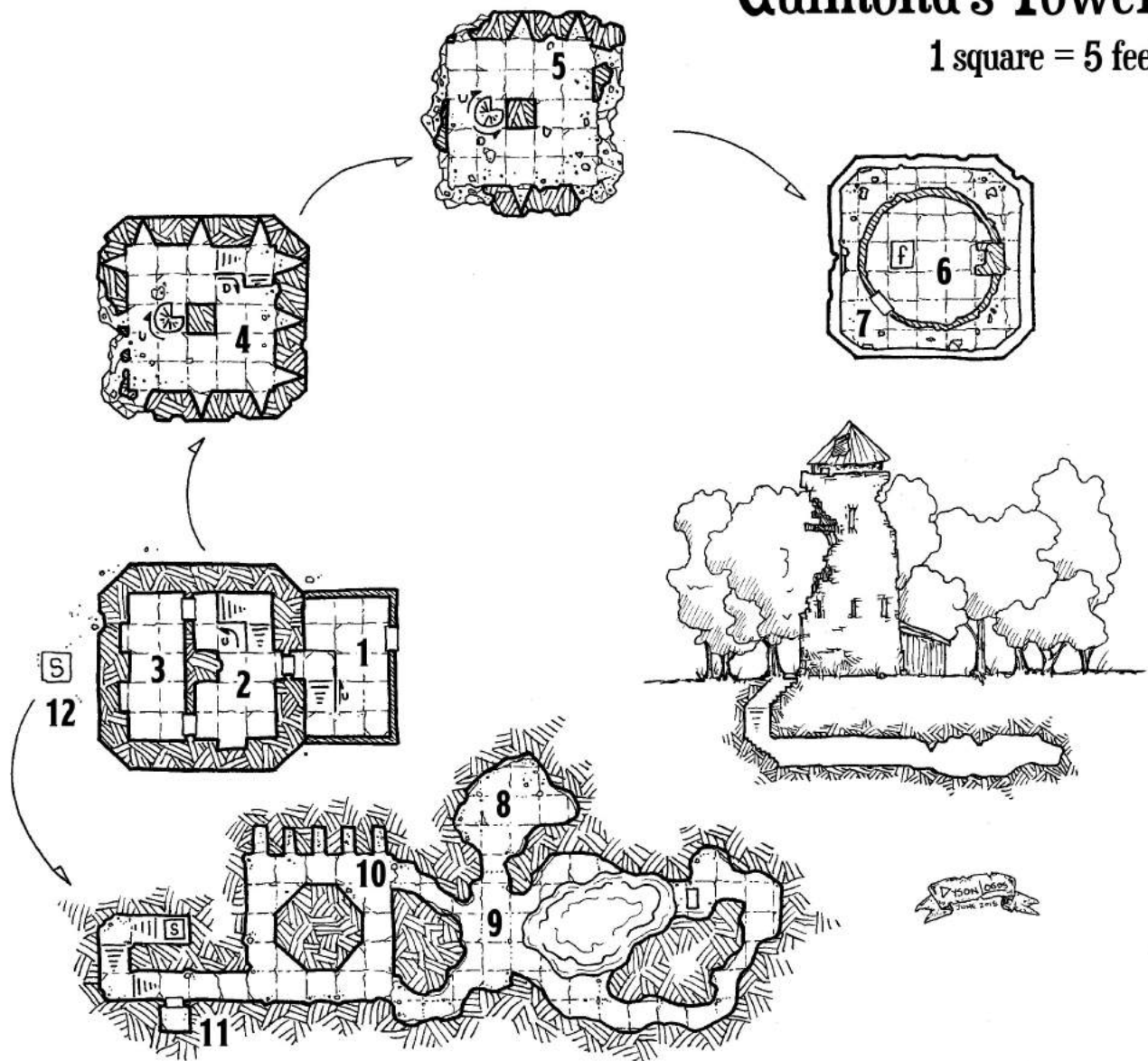
Toads. Hundreds of toads litter the grounds around the tower. The toads are harmless. It just takes a little effort to walk around the tower and not step on them.

1 - ENTRANCE

The eastern end of the tower is a lean-to shack built against the stone base. The old, wooden front door is so warped it won't even latch anymore. The muddy footprints enter the area and head straight toward area 2.

Guimond's Tower

1 square = 5 feet



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2 - STAIRS

An old, mildew-covered couch sits against the southern wall. The muddy footprints continue up the stairs to area 4.

3 - DINING ROOM

An old dining table takes up the majority of this room. The chairs that once surrounded it are either broken and rotting or long-since stolen. The room reeks of rot.

4 - LIBRARY

Dozens of empty, crumbling shelves line the walls. There is a massive hole in the western wall exposing this area to the elements. If there were ever books in this area, they're long gone. The muddy footprints continue up the stairs to area 5.

5 - RUINED AREA

It's impossible to tell what this room once was. Most of the walls have been torn away by years of neglect. The muddy footprints continue up the stairs to area 6.

6 - ROOM

Finally, the footprints reach the top of the tower. The walls of this circular room are made of wood. There is an old bed covered in mildew and insects against the northern wall. An old, crumbling fireplace clings to the eastern wall. The footprints continue out the door to area 7.

7 - VIEW

The top of the tower gives a breathtaking view of The Bald Swamp. The footprints move around the edge of the tower to its northeastern side then suddenly end.

MARIA

If a character looks over the edge of the tower's balcony (area 7), they see a body lying in the grass 30 feet from the north side of the tower. The body appears to be a young woman in her early twenties with long, blonde hair. She matches the description of Maria. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check can see that she is still breathing.

Maria is not actually Maria—she's a silent image illusion cast on the grass patch. Noticing that Maria is an illusion requires a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Unfortunately, a character must get close enough to observe her. Maria's illusion is cast over a 5-foot-by-5-foot hidden trapdoor in the ground. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check is necessary to confirm that the trapped section of the ground is actually the cover of a pit trap.

When a character steps onto the cover, it swings open like a trapdoor, causing the character to spill into a chute. After 20-feet, the chute buckles at a 45-degree angle and spits out the character into area 8. The character takes no damage from the fall, but lands prone.

CREATURE INFORMATION

If the characters see through the trap, then the creatures who set the trap reveals itself. Two toad-humanoid hybrids attack rise from the murky water a few feet from where the characters stand. The creatures are **bufonems**.

What Do They Want? The bufonems hoped to capture the characters in their trap so they could deal with them later. When Maria is revealed as an illusion, they react quickly to cover their tracks by attacking the characters. Their goal is to still get the characters into the cell in area 8. Failing that, they try to murder the characters.

What Do They Know? The bufonems captured the characters' friends and stowed them in the jail cell in area 8. Only their master knows what has happened to them since they were captured. The creatures will try their best to avoid any other questions asked by the characters, but do know enough about the tower, the characters, and the village to reveal the heart of Tenellón's mystery.

8 - CELL

The "Maria Trap" deposits intruders into this damp cavern.

AREA DESCRIPTION

The cell has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The cell is roughly 15-feet by 15-feet. The walls, floor, and ceiling are made from slick, hewn stone. The only exit is a locked cage door in the southern part of the cell. The chute's portal is in the ceiling of the cell.

Body. The bloated, rotting corpse of a dead doppelganger sits in the mud of the cell floor. It is wearing a black, dark blue, and fuschia uniform. A character who makes a successful DC 10 Intelligence (History) check recognizes it as the body of a Cord, one of Arruquetta's secret police. The doppelganger has a knife wound in its ribcage and lacerations around its neck from a bufonem's tongue.

Cage Door. The cage door is made out of crisscrossing iron bars. Only the master bufonem has the key. The door can be broken down with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check or its lock can be picked with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check by a character who has proficiency in thieves' tools. There are marks around the door's hinges that

suggest that the door has recently been replaced.

Light. Like the rest of the caverns under the tower, the cell is dark.

Chute. The chute which deposits creatures into the cell is often slick with mud. It requires a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check for a character to climb up. Then, they must get the trapdoor open, which requires an additional DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. Failing either check forces a character to fall back into the cell.

9 - THE DEN

The bufonem gather in this chamber to tend to their young and eat the captured prisoners that they don't sacrifice to Dhucabra.

AREA DESCRIPTION

The den has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The ceilings of this dark stone cavern are low, generally no higher than 10-feet. Everything is wet to the touch. The ground, while flat, is just hewn stone.

Altar. Just beyond the pool, a crud altar made of blood-stained humanoid bones has been erected. Atop the altar sits a hunk of dimly glowing red rock. The rock is **ruby blutvegzelnite**.

Pool. A murky, green pool covers the floor of the majority of this cavern. Hundreds of translucent bufonem eggs float on the surface of the water.

Tunnels. Multiple tunnels lead in and out of the den. The bufonems use these tunnels to stage surprise attacks on their prey.

CREATURE INFORMATION

The characters quickly learn they aren't alone. Using the tunnels and their knowledge of the layout to their advantage, four **bufonem** seek to subdue the characters.

10 - THE BLEEDING CHAMBER

This area is directly below the tower above.

AREA DESCRIPTION

The Bleeding Chamber has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. At the center of the room is a solid, stone octagon that supports the weight of Guidon's Tower. The ceilings are low here, too, only 10-feet.

Alcoves. There are five narrow cubbies dug into the northern wall. The alcoves contain:

- The missing characters; each character is unconscious and his/her hit points are reduced to 1.
- A dead human.

Each of the captive's arms are bound above his or her head. All of their belongings have been removed, and if any of them are a spellcaster, their mouth has been sewn shut as well. Finally, dozens of small cuts have been made all over their bodies.

Blood. Blood drains from the alcoves' victims to the octagon at the center of the room.

Blue Gems. At regular intervals, small, blue gems have been placed into alcoves dug into the octagon. The gems are small pieces of **vizier's tourmaline**. The ambient energy of the gems have kept the Tenellón hidden from those who would persecute them.

The identities of the other dead humans are up to you, but likely, they were travelers who wandered into Tenellón and were attacked by the toadfolk.

11 - STORAGE

All of the missing characters' possessions are stored in this 5-foot by 5-foot chamber.

12 - EXIT

A flight of steps leads out of the tower's secret basement to the rear of the tower. From the outside, the trapdoor is hidden. It requires a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discover it.

PART 4. BACK TO TENELLÓN

When the characters return to Tenellón it appears that there is no one around. No children playing, no hunters chatting. There is only the sound of the swamp and the animals. But slowly as the characters move along the Toad Chorus Path they start to notice creatures moving out of the corner of their eyes.

Eventually, they realize that every single living soul in Tenellón is a **bufonem**. The mayor, the children, even the crazy old man—all of them are horrible toadfolk.

There are thirty-two of the toad-folk minus one for each one the characters killed or otherwise incapacitated at the tower.

"For eighty years," croaks one of the townsfolk, their features distorting and changing before your very eyes. They transform into a seven-foot-tall toad-humanoid with three, bulbous yellow eyes. Their wide mouths reveal sharp, red teeth "We have hidden. And we have lived. But with the blood of the dulon's final creation we will find a path to the lost titan."

All of the toad-creatures—formerly the villagers—chant in unison, "Dhucabra... Dhucabra... Dhucabra..."

They start to close in on you.

If the characters are wise, they will run from the village. This may involve a chase (see the rules for Wilderness Chases in Chapter 8 of the *DMG*). However, if they lack the common sense to flee from such a difficult encounter, the toadfolk have no interest in killing them. Instead, they plan to knock the characters unconscious. If all of the characters are knocked unconscious, they awaken to the sound of battle.

Read:

You wake to the smell of smoke and the warmth of fire on your skin. All around you, stand soldiers in black, navy blue, and fuschia uniforms. The village of Tenellón is in flames. Among the soldiers is a Southern Omerian warrior wearing a lion's pelt over her shoulders. Four of the soldiers hold one of the toadfolk by its arms and allow the Southern Omerian to run the beast through with her spear. The creature shrieks and dies.

Little did the characters know, the Arruquettans had been watching Tenellón for some time. Their Southern Omerian comrade, a witchhunter from the land of Aspaeth named Noma, believed the village might be a hideout for the fiendish toads of Aspaeth. Turns out her premonition was correct. Shortly after the characters left Hedoi's shack, the Arruquettans captured Hedoi and discovered that he, too, was a **bufonem**. Although Hedoi wouldn't reveal the true nature of Tenellón to the Cords, Noma put two and two together. She killed Hedoi then immediately marched to the village with an elite unit of Cords.

"We killed seven of them. The rest vanished into the swamp. They won't get far."

The Southern Omerian warrior holds up a blue gem.

"Smart. They were using *vizier's tourmaline* to hide their presence. But they could have lived here in peace forever had they just kept to themselves. Why risk it all?"

WRAP UP: DHUCABRA

The captured characters remember very little of the encounter. Maria escorted the characters back to the village and then to the tower to handle the "toad creature" she'd seen in the forest. From there, the characters were jumped by multiple **bufonem**'s and interred in the cell. Later, they were strung up and bled.

All they remember is that the **bufonem**'s master—Maria—told them that their blood would lead the toadfolk to the lost titan, Dhucabra. And Dhucabra would eventually guide all aberrations back into the light.

When the Cords appeared, Maria escaped into the swamp.

REWARDS

The **ruby blutvekeznite** is extremely valuable, even in its weakened state. A buyer who knows what it is may be willing to pay up to 2,000 gp for it. Of course, **ruby blutvekeznite** turns a lot of heads in Omeria.

There are 20 bits of **vizier's tourmaline** in all. Each bit is worth 50 gp. Like the **blutvekeznite**, the characters will need to find the right buyer to unload them, as the gems are believed to be exceptionally dangerous in the wrong hands.

THEY WERE TOADS!

Astute readers may have noticed that the stat references for the villagers were largely absent during the adventure. This was intentional. The story is designed to surprise GMs reading it for the first time so they can share the shock with their players.

Yes, all of the villagers in Tenellón were **bufonems** disguised as humans. ♪

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