

A MONSTER MAN MYSTERY ADVENTURE BY JAMES HOLLOWAY

The Magonium Mine Murders



DESIGNED FOR USE WITH

**OLD-SCHOOL
ESSENTIALS**



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The Magonium Mine Murders

Introduction

The Magonium Mine Murders is a location-based scenario with a heavy emphasis on crime and investigation. Although there are murders to solve, it doesn't have to be a murder-mystery scenario: the deaths at the mine are part of a general situation of simmering tension that could go in many different directions depending on what the players do.

System and levels

This scenario is designed for use with *Old-School Essentials*. Because the scenario focuses on investigation, character level is less important, but the ideal party will contain between 4–6 characters of levels 2–3. A 1st-level party can find extra muscle to hire; a higher-level party might require you to make the opposition a little tougher.

Content notice

The authorities in this scenario are not sympathetic. In particular, prisoners of war are being used for forced labour, enslaved in all but name. If you don't want to include this element, removing it eliminates one (innocent) suspect but shouldn't have much more impact. Also, “man” for “person” is an outdated usage but I couldn't resist the alliteration in “Mole Men.”

Default setting

This scenario presumes a relatively wealthy, magically-aware society in which corruption, bribery and incompetence are regrettably common. It ought to be grubby without necessarily being “realistic.” Most people are human, but non-humans such as halflings, elves and so on are welcomed.

The war

The Halbek Valley is part of a larger kingdom with a centralised but corrupt government. It is at war against a barbarian neighbour and has been for over a year. The war is at a stalemate and the kingdom has instituted an unpopular draft. Workers in essential industries – such as magonium mining – are exempt from the draft, and wear small magical tokens to prove this exemption. Prisoners of war captured from enemy ships also work in the mines.

Magonium

Magonium, a rare mineral with magical properties, is vital to the kingdom's war effort. Increased demand has turned a small magonium mining complex in the Halbek valley into a bustling boomtown.

What's Going On

Boomtown

The sudden increase in magonium production brought on by the war has poured money into the pockets of the miners, who are about as responsible with it as you might expect. The locals resent having their village turned into a constant drunken party, but the mine business is worth too much for them to do anything without serious provocation.

Magonium poisoning

The increased mine activity is also pouring toxic magonium runoff into the north branch of the Halbek itself. At normal levels, the ill effects are very hard to see, but the higher concentration of magonium in the water is causing illness and aggressive behaviour not only among the local wildlife but among humans like **Sirine** and her gang of bandits. **Orvant the Blind**, a hermit, is aware of this and might try to recruit the PCs to help him solve the problem.



Prisoner revolt

Prisoners of war from the barbarian kingdom have been brought to the mine camp to do the dangerous work of magonium processing. Unknown to the overworked camp guards, one of the prisoners is a powerful chief, **Ildico**. She plans revolt.

Deaths in the mine

As the mine went deeper and deeper in pursuit of fresh veins of magonium, it approached an outpost of the **Mole Men** which contains a shrine to the earth goddess. The priest of this shrine, **Galza**, used the **Voice of the Stone** to summon **elemental servants** to attack the mine, causing a number of apparently accidental deaths. Among the victims of these incidents was **Natan Pentic**. The miners are increasingly alarmed by these suspicious deaths.

Angry at her chief engineer **Simvesh Threen**'s inability to stop the "accidents," mine boss **Reith Alba** fired him.

Roka, a Mole Man guard officer, worries that Galza's confrontational tactics will endanger the settlement. He wants to keep the outpost secret from the surface-worlders, but could be open to an accommodation.

What's Going On

The counterfeit scheme

As workers in a vital war industry, magonium miners are exempt from conscription, much to the irritation of those not so exempt. The military issues them with **exemption tokens**, small magical talismans which confirm their status. Administrator Alba had a small supply of these to use in hiring new staff.

One of the miners, Natan Pentic, owned the **Duplication Engine**, a magical device capable of creating realistic copies of small objects. He joined forces with camp alchemist **Rogin Hyland** to create counterfeit exemption tokens. Hyland took the original tokens from Alba's office and used alchemical reagents stolen from camp supplies to power Pentic's device, producing a batch of false tokens. The pair then made contact with crooked fight promoter **Schenck**, who used his criminal contacts to sell this first batch. They received a substantial advance on their second batch from the gang known as the **Honourable Society**.

All was going well until Pentic was killed, quite coincidentally, by the Mole Men, who took the Engine to add to Galza's collection of magical trinkets. Without the engine, Hyland was unable to produce more counterfeit tokens for Schenck.

The knockout king

With nothing to show the mob and no money to repay them, Schenck needs a new strategy. He plans to use his prizefighting business to do this. His goal is to build up a new challenger's reputation by having his fighters throw their matches, thus increasing the odds against his own champion, **Luz**, and allowing him to make a fortune on the final fight when Luz inevitably cleans up. All he needs is an unknown fighter who looks convincingly tough ... a PC, for example.

Alba's murder

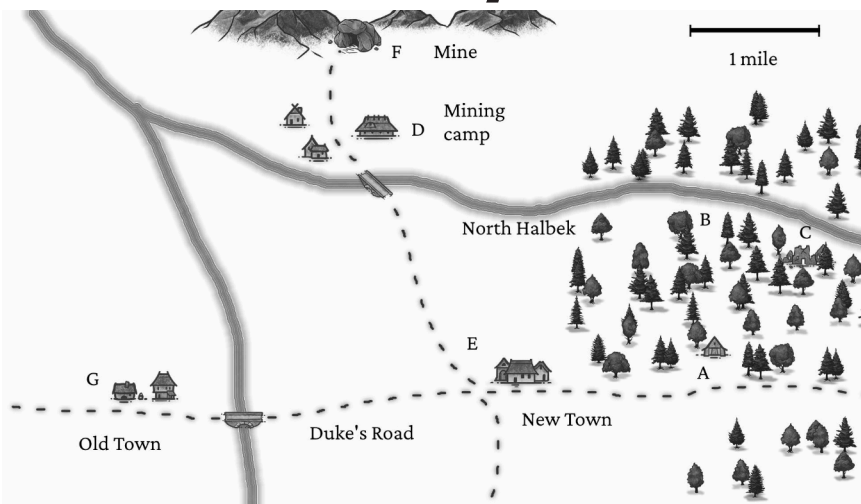
While Schenck and Hyland panicked, their situation grew even worse. Alba had noticed the stolen reagents in Hyland's records. Realising that she was getting close to his conspiracy, Hyland killed her and began looking for someone to frame. The PCs might make good candidates. Also, Alba's hapless assistant **Melson Bellows** needs someone to help him find the killer. Depending on how superficially rascally or respectable the PCs appear, Bellows or guard chief **Lumicent Pulver**, both chronically understaffed, might try to get them to help out with the investigation.

Getting Started

A lot of different plots are underway in the Halbek Valley. A group of opportunists or soldiers of fortune can wander into town and wind up involved in any of them. If you want to make sure your party are motivated, here are some suggestions for hooks into the various mysteries:

- The mysterious deaths and resulting unrest have slowed magonium production at the mine; if the PCs have a noble or government patron, they send the party to investigate.
- **Orvant (p. 15)** wants to put a stop to magonium poisoning in the Halbek river and pleads with the PCs to help him. He scrapes together a reward of **400 gp**, but can help the party in other ways with his magic.
- The west branch of the Halbek divides the domains of two lords, each of whom has appointed a sheriff to enforce the law. **Gerrick** runs things in Old Town, while **Lovint Kroth** is the law in New Town. Each works hard to keep the other out of their domain, making it hard for them to solve cases. Gerrick puts out a **1,000 gp** bounty on Alba's killer, or Kroth hires outside help to infiltrate Schenck's gambling ring, paying a reward of **500 gp**.
- The miners are increasingly restive, owing to the series of deaths in the mine. If the PCs are used to danger underground, **Bellows (p. 17)** hires them to investigate and stop the accidents. He can pay **1,000 gp**, and goes up to **2,000 gp** if he also trusts the party to investigate Alba's murder. Alternatively, the miners, frustrated at management's failure to stop the killings, hire their own investigators. Purses full of overtime pay, they can offer **1,500 gp**.
- **Simvesh Threen (p. 18)** was chief engineer at the mine until he was fired following Pentic's death. Desperate to clear his name, he offers the characters a **500 gp** reward to prove that he wasn't responsible for the deaths.
- The Honoured Society (that is to say, the thieves' guild) needs some people to collect their money from Schenck. **Lurik (p. 19)** hires the characters as muscle to put the frighteners on Schenck, who proposes an alternative arrangement.

The Halbek Valley



The well-worn Duke's Road runs through deep woods toward New Town. Birdsong here is somehow discordant. Newly-felled trees show bright, raw stumps.

A Orvant's cottage. See below

B Sirine's camp. See p. 14

C Ruined temple. See p. 14

D Mining camp. See pp. 6–7, 16–17

E New Town. See p. 8

F Mine. See p. 9

G Old Town. See p. 8

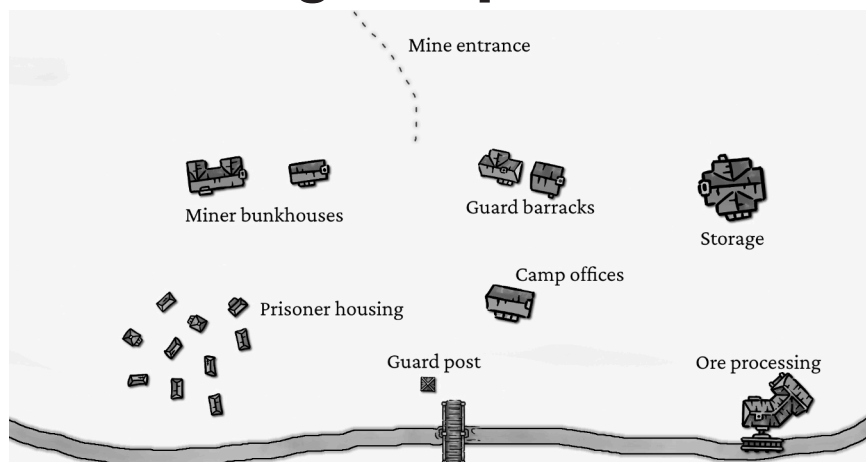
Orvant's Cottage

Trickle of cooking smoke visible from the road. **Orvant the Blind**, a hermit and healer, lives here. Lacks the unsettling quality found elsewhere in the woods.

Random Encounters (d6)

1. Recruiting party, led by **Jarek Tunkin (p. 15)**, herding a dozen new volunteers and draftees.
2. Local wildlife, unusually aggressive because of magonium poisoning.
3. Drunk miners, lost on the way back to the camp from the New Town.
4. A lone traveller, actually one of **Sirine's (p. 15)** bandits scouting the PCs to see if they can be robbed.
5. Old Town citizens taking food and other gifts to Orvant.
6. Sirine and her gang on the way home from a robbery.

The Mining Camp



Staff numbers are down, quotas are up, deadlines are short and everyone is working hard and partying hard, except the prisoners and guards, who are just working hard. People who talk to the PCs will be talking while doing something else.

Around 120 people work in the mining camp: 40 miners, 50 prisoners, about 20 guards and 10 various camp administrators.

Guard post: two guards at all times. They direct visitors to the camp offices.

Camp offices: Alba, Bellows, and Pulver have offices here. So do Hyland and Cherm, though they are seldom there. Alba is killed here (see **The Scene of the Crime, p. 12**).

Prisoner housing: Ramshackle collection of huts and tents houses “barbarian” prisoners of

war forced to work in the mines.

Ildico (p. 17) is here if not working. Many prisoners are ill with magonium poisoning. Three of them have weapon caches hidden under their sickbeds in preparation for the revolt.

Guard barracks: Housing for guards and a small armoury. Checking armoury records indicates that **several crossbows, swords, and other weapons are missing**.

Worker bunkhouses: Off-duty miners hanging out and shooting the breeze. **Natan Pentic** had a **hidey-hole** under his bunk below a loose floorboard. The empty space is large enough for a satchel, a large book, or something similar. Gossiping miners know about the **prizefights** and are very concerned about the deaths in the mine.

The Mining Camp

Ore processing: Refines magonite ore to extract magonium. **Rogin Hyland** works here. Toxic runoff pours into the stream. The reagents in use in processing the ore include the chemicals mentioned in the **book on Alba's desk in her office** (see p. 12).

Storage: not well-guarded. Contains mining equipment, alchemical reagents, etc. Examining the storage records reveals that **the records for several days are missing**. Storage clerks explain that **Alba requested the records a few days ago**.

Mine entrance: path leading toward the minehead.

Mining camp gossip (d6)

1. A good-luck charm was missing from the body of dead miner Lina Mors. (True.)
2. The prisoners murdered the miners to sabotage the war effort. (False; it was the Mole Men.)
3. The fights are getting boring these days – Luz is so strong no one can beat him. (Opinion.)
4. Rogin Hyland seems really upset about Pentic's death. Who knew they were so close? (True.)
5. Simvesh Threen is in trouble – without his job at the camp he could be drafted! (True.)
6. Lani says she heard some kind of deep ringing noise just before Ekim Hale was killed. (True.)

Mining camp encounters

1. Guards remonstrating with miners unwilling to go into the mine: “five people have died in there, and we're not going until you can say why!”
2. Prisoner behaving aggressively as a result of magonium exposure. Guards respond with force unless someone intervenes. “Of course they're violent. They're barbarians!”
3. Melson Bellows running to deal with a minor bureaucratic mix-up as if his life depends on it. “Oh no! Oh no, oh dear!”
4. Miner attempting to wheedle an advance on next payday out of Bellows or borrow money from a coworker, having blown it all at the fights. “I really think Gola can take it all the way!”
5. Prisoner lurking suspiciously around the armoury or storage buildings. “Just resting, boss.”
6. Lumicent Pulver standing a guard shift herself as a result of staff shortages. “I, uh ... I wouldn't ask my troops to do any duty I wouldn't do myself. Yeah, that's it.”
7. Miners ending work shift, talking excitedly about going to the Imperial Standard to tie one on.
8. Chatty miners eager to share their own theories. “It's the barbarians!” “Mine's haunted!”

The New Town

Once a small village, now a party spot for miners, filled to the brim with sutlers, gamblers, swindlers, pickpockets, palm-readers, prizefighters, quacksalvers and drunks. Everything is pricey (+d100% list prices). Highlights:

The Imperial Standard

Rowdy tavern where miners and hangers-on roister and brawl. Miners not in the mine or the bunkhouse are often here.

Schenck does business here, and **Simvesh Threen** drowns his sorrows here. Rooms are nice, but overpriced. Schenck stayed here until recently.

The Yard

Transformed into an impromptu prize ring. Schenck's fighters sleep in the stables. Pens near the ring allow Schenck to release animals into it for added hilarity.

Calvey's Shop

Nominally a hat shop but actually the premises of **Calvey**, the bookmaker. A lot of miners going into the hat shop; not many miners wearing hats. Schenck sleeps in the back room, having been kicked out of the Standard for unpaid rent.

The Enchanted Wood

Slightly nicer inn. **Lurik** and his goons will stay here when they're in town.

The Old Town

A quiet place, further from the mine and therefore not so full of rowdy miners. Some mine staff, including **Bellows** and **Hyland**, rent rooms here from local families. **Alba** did the same.

Alba's landlords will admit anyone who can claim to be investigating her death; Bellows' and Hyland's will need to be bribed or evaded.

Bellows' room

Bellows is seldom home. Searching the room reveals nothing unusual, although he does have **a letter from the ministry saying that forged exemption tokens based on tokens issued to the Halbek mine have been found.**

Hyland's room

A careful search reveals **scraps of burned letters** in the fireplace. Just enough has survived of one of them to reveal that it is a strongly-worded letter from a creditor.

Alba's room

Alba's desk contains notes on the project she was working on before her death: trying to account for **discrepancies in the ore processing and storage records.** In particular, valuable reagents are missing from storage. Having failed to find these notes in the office, Hyland tries to steal them from here when he can.

The Mine

Access by long stairs or prisoner-cranked elevator (2). The upper levels are completely mined out; all the active mineral seams are on the lower levels (4, 5). A large upper chamber (3) has been turned into a shrine to the earth goddess.

Lanterns hang from hooks in the mine props at intervals, shedding pools of dim light. Teams of miners work at the rock faces of the lower galleries.

The small building at the top (1) houses storage, a changing area, and Livia Cherm's workshop. Spare magger suits (p. 22) are available, as are mining tools.

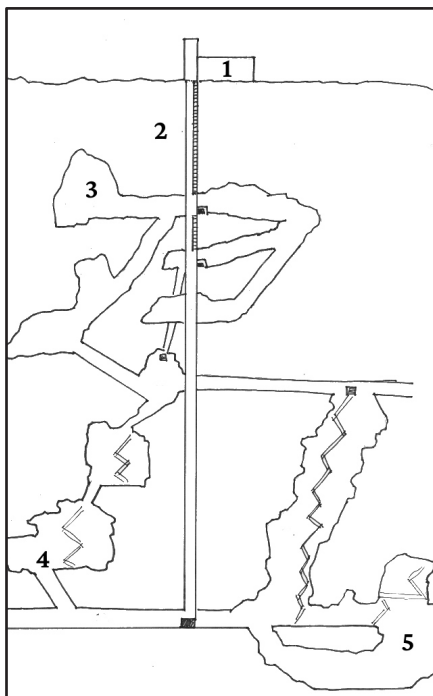
It is possible to tunnel from the lower levels (5) into the Caverns of the Mole Men (pp. 10-11).

Searching the mine

Any miner can tell the characters where the so-called "accidents" happened. All took place in the lowest galleries (4, 5), the most recently opened.

Investigating these areas reveals the **slightly disturbed areas of soil** created by the passage of the elemental servants summoned by the Voice of the Earth (see p. 22).

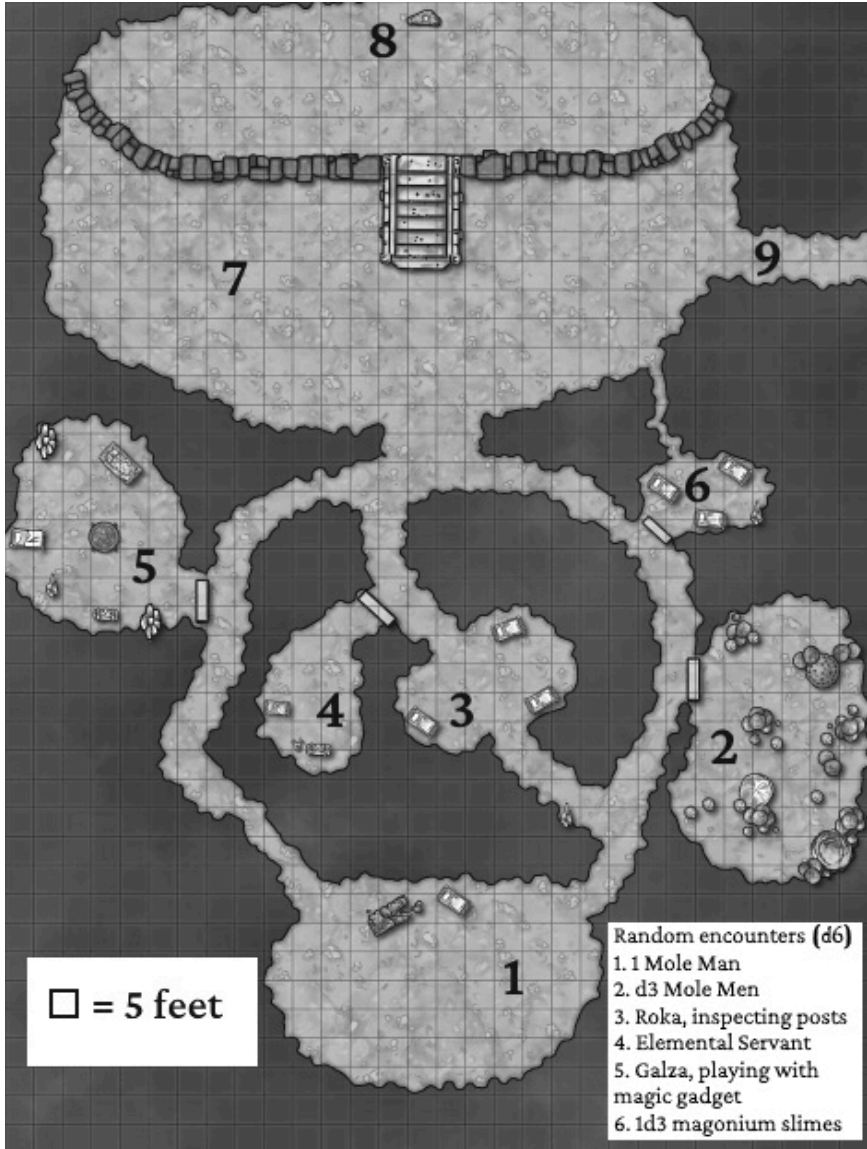
Miners here tell tales of mysterious shadows seen in the mine, of deep tolling sounds within the earth, and of small missing charms and talismans.



Mine random encounters (d4)

1. Jumpy miners mistake PCs for underground monsters in wake of attacks.
2. A deep, resonant sound far away within the earth as **Galza** rings the Voice of the Earth. A Mole Man attack may follow if characters seem vulnerable.
3. Prisoners furtively pilfering mining supplies or sabotaging magger suits in preparation for the coming revolt.
4. Anxious miners making offerings to the earth goddess in memory of their dead colleagues.

Caverns of the Mole Men



The caverns are unlit, save for the dim glow of veins of magonium ore and occasional outcrops of pure magonium. Save frequency is once per four hours. The stone walls, stairs and doors are simply but elegantly carved.

Caverns of the Mole Men

1. Tunnels from the mine will emerge in this area, a staging room used by guards, on a 1-5 (randomise on a 6). **1d3-1 mole men** are stationed here; a result of 0 means the guards are on their rounds.
2. Filled with overgrown, magonium-rich fungi, this chamber houses giant insects and other subterranean animals for food. Most are harmless, but **3 giant oil beetles** and **2 giant fire beetles** will react aggressively if disturbed. Galza has a good rapport with these creatures and can command them to protect him. A **trickle of fresh water** flows from the rock wall; it contains a high magonium concentration.
3. **On-duty guards** (1d3-1) sleep in this warm chamber. They have a **1-in-6 chance per round of hearing any commotion** in areas 1 or 7. **Wormhide knapsacks** contain personal items, including 3d4×10 gp worth of gems.
4. Roka's quarters. The **unlocked stone door** offers privacy but prevents him from hearing anything happening in the outpost unless the other guards wake him. An **armour rack** holds sturdy bronze plate (unless Roka is expecting trouble and therefore wearing his armour), while his **locked root-wood chest** holds 160 gp in gems and heavy, oblong gold coins.
5. Galza's quarters. Bathed in the eerie green light of **dozens of magonium crystals** (save once per turn). His ritual table and desk contain texts written on thin mica sheets in the ancient script of the mole men, as well as a **scroll of bless**. His **locked stone chest** contains magic items looted from the bodies of miners, mostly small protective amulets or lucky charms. It also holds the **Duplication Engine** (see p. 22).
6. Off-duty guard sleeping quarters. Unlocked stone door; warm, musty odour. Normally contains **d4-1 mole men**. A **narrow fissure in the rock** leads to area 7. Guards use this to get to their posts quickly or sneak back to this room for an unauthorised nap.
7. Grand chamber. **Usually empty** except at specified ritual times. Corners piled with food and other supplies in beetle-carapace containers.
8. Stone dais rises 10 feet above area 7. In the place of honour is **The Voice of the Stone** (see p. 22).
9. This underground road leads to the closest major city of the mole people. Supply caravans arrive about once a week, with guards rotating into and out of the outpost.

The Scene of the Crime



1. Alba, shot in the back with a crossbow bolt. Her **back seems to have been turned to the door** when she was killed.

2. Papers on the desk have been **ransacked**, but Bellows says **nothing seems to be missing**.

3. Strongbox contains conscription exemption tokens.

Checking the log confirms **none are missing**.

4. Keyring holds **keys** to Alba's rented room in the Old Town.

5. Books on magonium ore processing. Bookmarked sections relate to **magonium poisoning** and **chemicals used in processing**.

Investigation Events

As the characters' investigation progresses, the situation in the valley doesn't remain static. These events can help to escalate tension, provide a sense of urgency, introduce a new character or liven up a dull moment.

In the Valley

- Sirine attacks a supply delivery.
- Sirine kidnaps Orvant to hold him for ransom.
- Orvant looks for someone to help him capture Sirine or another bandit and cure her.

In the Mining Camp and Mine

- The miners escalate from grumbling to refusing to enter the mine.
- The Mole Men kill another miner, stealing another small magic item from the body.
- Ildico's rebels begin sabotaging mining equipment.
- Pulver's guards discover one of Ildico's weapons caches and a fight breaks out.
- Hyland tries to plant incriminating evidence (e.g. the crossbow) on another suspect.

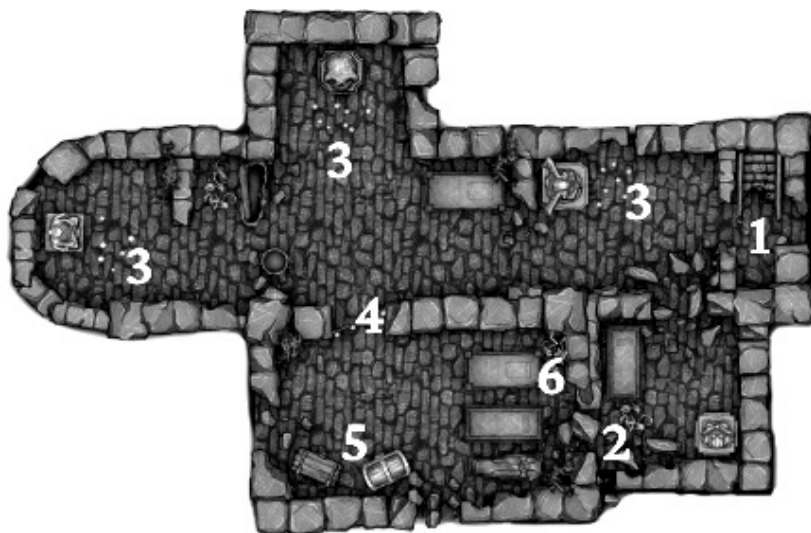
In the New Town

- Lurik and his boys arrive and begin putting the screws on Schenck.
- Iggsy and Big Billiken start throwing their weight around and antagonising people (PCs)?
- An angry miner gives a rousing speech in the Imperial Standard advocating for a strike.
- The sheriff reacts to a recent outrage by putting a bounty on Sirine.

In the Old Town

- Hyland tries to break into Alba's room to find her notes, having failed to find them in her office.

The Ruined Temple



Above ground, nothing but broken columns and collapsed walls.

1. A frequently-moved flagstone covers the **entrance to the stairs** into the crypt.

2. A crumbling wall in this abandoned burial chamber offers a potential **entry into the next area**, but entering the chamber without making an offering awakens the **ghost** of the ill-tempered monk.

3. Mortuary shrines with **offerings** (Sirine, though a criminal, is pious). Making similar offerings placates the unquiet spirit at **2**.

4. Iron gate with new chain and lock. Sirine carries the key. Squeaks and scrabbling audible from **6**.

5. Bandit loot: **809 gp**, *potion of clairvoyance*. Chest trapped (broken glass under lid; 1d4 damage).

6. Nest of Sirine's pet attack ferrets (see p. 23).

Bandit Camp

A crude collection of shacks, lean-tos and tents. Home to **Sirine** and her bandits. At night, the whole gang are here: during the day, 1d6 ordinary bandits are here, with a 25% chance that Sirine is.

The gang store only small amounts of loot here, periodically stashing their wealth at the ruined temple. Anything stolen in the last few days will be here, plus small amounts of personal property.

Who's Who: Halbek Valley

Orvant the Blind, hermit

A pious elder who is respected, but perhaps not liked, by locals. Cares for the valley and its creatures. Former temple priest. Gentle and hospitable on first meeting, but has a bit of a temper.

Knows: **magonium runoff is poisoning the North Halbek**. He also knows the **location of the ruined temple (p. 14)**. He has seen the **bandits in the area**.

Suspicious activity: he **had a loud argument with Alba two days before her murder**.



Sirine, poisoned bandit chieftain

Once a tough, pragmatic leader, now at the mercy of the mood swings and aggression caused by magonium poisoning.

Knows: **Lurik, a full member of the Honoured Society, visited New Town a month ago, carrying plenty of cash**. She has also seen the effects of **magonium poisoning** on herself and her gang.

Suspicious activity: I mean, she's the **chief of a gang of bandits**.



Jarek Tunkin, weary army officer

Annoyed to be leading a recruiting party, but grateful not to be at the front. Scornful of PCs who don't volunteer for the war but not willing to get into a fight with armed resisters. Will put them in his report instead.

Knows: **how exemption tokens work**, that the **prisoners are dangerous former fighters**, and that **past supply and pay convoys have been attacked by bandits** (this is **Sirine's** gang, although he doesn't know that).



Who's Who: Mining Camp

Lumicent Pulver, guard commander

Wounded veteran (**2nd-level fighter**) stagnating in a sinecure. Longs for action. Painfully aware that her guards are not adequate to police the camp.

Knows: The guards would have noticed an intruder, so the **killer is probably a staff member**. She has evidence of **missing weapons and armour from the armoury**.

Suspicious activity: Not much. She definitely **has access to weapons and is a good shot**.



Rogin Hyland, alchemist

From a good family, fallen on hard times. Charming, friendly, almost too respectful. Did it.

Knows: **Reagents are missing** (must be the prisoners!). **Natan Pentic's device is missing** (not that he's ever heard of it!).

Suspicious activity: He's guilty, but wants to save himself by blaming someone else (like **Orvant, Sirine, Simvesh, Ildico** or the PCs).

See p. 24 for complete character sheet.



Reith Alba (Deceased), mine administrator

Overworked. Doing a pretty good job under difficult circumstances. Even Hyland respected her and regrets having killed her.

Knows: Obviously, Alba herself knows nothing, being dead, but the **notes in her bedroom in New Town** show that she was investigating the missing reagents.



Who's Who: Mining Camp



Livia Cherm, new chief engineer

Newly-appointed. Awkward, studious, prickly. Concerned about the safety of the mine but under pressure to keep it open.

Knows: **Natan Pentic was an inventor**, the miners are spending a lot of money at **illegal prizefights in the New Town**, the **deaths in the mine are definitely not accidents** (but no idea what *did* cause them).

Suspicious activity: Nothing, unless you consider being a **sweaty, excitable loner** suspicious.

Melson Bellows, new mine administrator

Alba's assistant, now promoted. In way over his head. Flustered, sleepless, eager to please.

Knows: **Alba was investigating missing reagents** as well as **reports of secret nighttime meetings among the prisoners**. No one unauthorised entered the office building, but **all staff members have keys**. The war ministry are concerned about **forged exemption tokens**.

Suspicious activity: He **got Alba's job when she died**, although he doesn't seem to enjoy it.



Ildico, prisoner

A chief (**4th-level fighter**) of the barbarian peoples, now slowly dying of magonium poisoning. Plans a rebellion if she can pull it off.

Knows: Prisoners have heard the **noises in the mine** and seen **strange figures in the tunnels**.

Suspicious activity: Has been **stockpiling weapons and studying guard patrol schedules**, but because she's planning a breakout, not because she's the murderer.



Who's Who: New Town

Simvesh Threen, disgraced engineer

Fired from the camp for failing to stop the mine deaths. Now drowning his sorrows in the Imperial Standard tavern. Offers 500 gp as a reward for clearing his name.

Knows: Alba was asking about missing supplies, small magical items were missing from the mine victims.

Suspicious activity: He was furious at being fired and is well-known for his drunken tirades about how much he hates Alba.



Schenck, crooked fight promoter

Veneer of joviality over deep worry. In debt to the mob, so he's running a rigged prizefighting racket. Eager to hire fighters.

Knows: Natan Pentic had a source of very realistic phony exemption tokens. Pentic had a partner in the mining camp who helped get the tokens.

Suspicious activity: He's a crook, with ties to organised crime, and running his illegal business makes him secretive.

Calvey, crooked bookie

Large, ruffly clothes, gold rings, spectacular hats. Short. In cahoots with Schenck in the crooked fight game, but otherwise just informed, not involved.

Knows: Threen is a bitter drunk but not a violent man, Schenck had a partnership with Pentic and another person to sell exemption tokens, Schenck's supply of fake tokens suddenly dried up.

Suspicious activity: They're a bookie.



Who's Who: New Town

Lurik, legitimate businessman



Sent by the Honoured Society to get either the 10,000 gp they advanced Schenck or the exemption tokens promised in exchange. Will make a deal with anyone who can supply the tokens, but is cautious after being burned.

Knows: **Schenck supplied counterfeit exemption tokens, but probably didn't make them** – they were very realistic. **Sirine is not in the Honoured Society.**

Suspicious activity: **A professional criminal.**

Lurik's guys

Iggsy, a sneaky little bastard.

Big Billiken, a great big bastard.

Know: **Schenck owes the boss money.** To them, that's all they need to know, but they also know that **to harm Lurik would invite terrible retribution** (he is a *full member* of the Society, a "made guy") and that **Lurik is extra mad because he previously believed that Schenck's scheme would make them all rich.**



Prizefighters

Burly roughnecks who fight in Schenck's bloody entertainments. Once enjoyed drinking with the regulars in the Standard, but times are tough at the moment. See p. 24 for statistics.

Gola, Karud, Pakrish, Crazy Legs, and Luz

Know: **Schenck is hurting for money, Rogin Hyland visited the tavern a few times**, and of course the **fight**s are sometimes rigged.

Suspicious activity: **a bunch of violent toughs.**



Magonium Poisoning

Becoming poisoned

Although magonium's magical properties make it very valuable, it has dangerous side effects. Prolonged exposure to magonium can lead to poisoning, which can result in erratic behaviour and eventually death.

In order to prevent magonium poisoning, a character must make a successful **Save vs Poison**. The length of exposure that calls for a save varies depending on the type of exposure.

If a character is *in proximity to magonium* (e.g. within the magonium mine), they must save once for every 24 hours of exposure.

If a character is *in regular physical contact with magonium* they must save for every four hours of exposure to unprocessed ore or one hour of contact with concentrated magonium.

If a character *ingests magonium*, they must save immediately every time they do so.

In order to protect themselves from the effects of magonium radiation, miners wear **magger suits** (p. 24), which reduce the risks. However, the prisoners working in the mine do not.

Effects of poisoning

Each time a character fails a saving throw, they gain one level of magonium poisoning. These levels have the following effects:

Mild 1-3: headaches, dry mouth, occasional irritability.

Moderate 4-6: severe headaches, nervous tremors. Becomes short-tempered and aggressive, lashing out, sometimes violently, at the slightest provocation. Suffers a -1 penalty to to-hit rolls and loses one point of CON per failed save.

Severe 7+: Continues to suffer -1 penalty and lose one point of CON per failed save. Constantly aggressive, even if they are too weak to leave their sickbed.

Curing magonium poisoning

The most effective way to treat magonium poisoning is simply to limit the patient's exposure to magonium. The amount of time the character must go without magonium exposure of any kind to remove a level of poisoning varies depending on the severity of the poisoning:

Mild: 1 day

Moderate: 1 week

Severe: 1 month

The Fight Game

The prize ring is a simple place: two fighters enter, without weapons or armour, and the last one standing is the winner.

However, from a purely mechanical perspective, fist-fighting in *Old School Essentials* is a little simple. There isn't anywhere to retreat to, and ganging up or using magic are frowned on.

When Schenck is running his Knockout King scam, this hardly matters. Run a few rounds of the fight, declaring the opposing fighter knocked out as soon as they've taken any real damage. If players get suspicious – “wait, a bare-knuckle boxer has *three hit points?*” – that's good. After all, they *are* being lied to.

In addition, Schenck's fights are pretty unorthodox, more like pro wrestling than boxing. He has an audience of rowdy drunks to please.

Betting

Betting on a fight is easy enough; either take Calvey's odds or find someone to make a side bet with.

Fights between established prizefighters have odds anywhere between evens and 3:1. Roll 1d3 or pick a value.

As the Knockout King scam progresses, the fighter will fight five bouts, with the odds shifting more in their favour each time.

1. PC vs Karud (5:1)
2. PC vs Pakrish (3:1)
3. PC vs Crazy Legs (1:1)
4. PC vs Gola (1:2)
5. PC vs Luz (1:3)

Complications (d6)

Outside of the Knockout King scam (or even within it if the crowd looks bored), Schenck sometimes adds extra factors to liven things up or stimulate betting. Schenck:

1. releases 2d4 giant centipedes into the ring. They run around panicking and only attack fighters on 1-in-6, but spectators make side bets on who can kill more. Schenck has vials of poison antidote.
2. allows fans to pay to join in on one side or the other. Roll 2d4 for number of “helpful” fans and assign the higher value to whoever you feel is more popular.
3. puts tables and chairs in the ring, shouts that the floor is lava.
4. dangles weapons (clubs, nets, lassos) over the ring on fishing poles for fighters to grab.
5. soaks the ring floor in dirty water, creating a muddy morass.
6. ties the fighters together with a long rope, allowing them to try to choke or trip one another.

Items

The Duplication Engine

Created by Natan Pentic, this device creates duplicates of small objects. It is a wooden, leather-bound device the size of a large book. It has a central hinge, allowing it to open like a book, revealing two shallow trays. The edges of the trays are carved with magical sigils.

The user places an item or items in the left-hand tray and the correct mixture of magical reagents in the right-hand one, then closes the device and locks the catch. The Duplication Engine begins to glow softly, lasting for 1d3 hours. When the process is complete, opening the box reveals a perfect duplicate of the item.

Magical items duplicated by the Engine have a faint magical radiance but do not have any of the properties of the original. Non-magical items are exact duplicates and can only be told apart magically (for instance, by the use of a *Locate Object* spell).

The precise combination of needed reagents is known only to Hyland, but could be determined by experiment. The necessary reagents cost 50 gp per coin weight duplicated.

The engine can duplicate up to 10 coins' weight of items at once, either a single item or a group of items.

The Voice of the Earth

This massive stone-framed bronze gong emits a vibration that attracts earth elementals. Ringing the gong attracts 1d4-1 elemental servants, who arrive within 1d6 turns (it also attracts other types of earth elemental, but the elemental servants are the most common in this region). The elemental servants are wary of most creatures but friendly toward Galza, the Mole Man priest. Once used, the gong must recharge for 2d20 hours.

Exemption Token

A small tin token about the size of a copper piece, stamped with an arcane sigil. Sparkles with a faint but noticeable magical lustre. *Read Magic* reveals the token's unique code, which can then be compared to a register, but few inspectors take the time to consult the records. Most people just eyeball or use *Detect Magic* to weed out nonmagical fakes.

Magger Suit (heavy armour)

AC 6[13], weight 400 coins.

This suit of leather, canvas, brass and crystal, marked with warding runes and hung with amulets, grants the wearer a +5 bonus to saving throws against magonium radiation. However, the bulky suit imposes a -1 penalty on to-hit rolls. Cannot be combined with other armour except for shields.

Bestiary

Attack Ferret

AC 7 [12], HD 1 (4hp), Att 1 × bite (1d3), THACO 19 [+0], MV 120' (40'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1), ML 8, AL Neutral, XP 13, NA 1d4 (1d4x10), TT U

- **Bite and hold:** after successful bite attack, clings to target, automatically hitting with bite on subsequent attacks. Any damage to the ferret causes it to release its hold.

Elemental Servant

AC 4 [15], HD 5 (25hp), Att 1 × fist (1d6) or release a magonium slime, THACO 15 [+4], MV 90' (30'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (3), ML 9, AL Neutral, XP , NA 1 or special, TT U

- **Spirits of earth:** Elemental Servants can flow through loose soil at their normal movement rate or solid rock at half their normal rate.
- **Magonium-rich ore:** Elemental Servants can extrude raw magonium to create a magonium slime in lieu of an attack. Each time the Elemental Servant does this, roll d6: on a 1-3 it has exhausted its available magonium and cannot create any more slimes.

Magonium Slime

AC 8 [11], HD 1 (4hp), Att 1 × pseudopod (1d4), THACO 19 [+0], MV 20' (6'), D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1), ML 9, AL Neutral, XP 13, NA 1 or 1d3, TT U

- **Magonium radiation:** If a magonium slime hits with its pseudopod, the target must save against magonium radiation (see p. 20). A character within 10 feet of a magonium slime must save every three rounds.

Mole Man

AC 6 [13], HD 1 (4hp), Att 1 × weapon (by weapon) or 1 x claw (1d4), THACO 19 [+0], MV 120' (40'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1), ML 7 (9 with leader), AL Neutral, XP 13, NA 1d4 (1d4x10), TT D

- **Creatures of darkness:** Mole Men don't see well by flame or torch (-1 to hit, never gain surprise in lit areas) and are almost blind in sunlight.
- **Burrowing paws:** Mole Men can tunnel through loose soil at their normal movement rate or through dense soil at half speed.
- **Complex hierarchy:** A squad of 4 mole men will be led by a veteran sergeant (8 hp; +1 to hit), distinguished by a heavy silver sash.

NPC Stats

Galza, Mole Man priest

AC 5 [14] (insect carapace armour), **HP** 10, **Att** 1 × staff (1d4) or 1 × spell, **THACO** 19 [0], **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D11 W12 P14 B16 S15, **AL** Chaotic, **STR** 12 **INT** 14 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 10 **CON** 11 **CHA** 13, **Spells** cure light wounds (cause light wounds), detect magic (c), speak with animals

Luz, the champ

AC 8 [11] (unarmoured), **HP** 12, **Att** 1 × punch (1d2+1), **THACO** 19 [0], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **AL** Neutral, **STR** 15 **INT** 11 **WIS** 8 **DEX** 13 **CON** 12 **CHA** 14

Orvant, wise hermit

AC 9 [10] (unarmoured), **HP** 6, **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACO** 19 [0], **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D13 W14 P13 B16 S15, **AL** Lawful, **STR** 6 **INT** 11 **WIS** 16 **DEX** 9 **CON** 9 **CHA** 11, **Spells** cure light wounds (cause light wounds), purify food and water, speak with animals

Rogin Hyland, Level 3 Magic-User

AC 9 [10] (unarmoured), **HP** 6, **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4) or 1 × spell, **THACO** 19 [0], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D13 W14 P13 B16 S15, **AL** Neutral, **STR** 10 **INT** 16 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 9 **CON** 10 **CHA** 14, **Spells** read magic, light (darkness), ESP

Roka, Mole Man officer

AC 3 [16] (plate mail), **HP** 15, **Att** 1 × polearm (1d10), **THACO** 19 [0], **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **AL** Neutral, **STR** 13 **INT** 7 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 11 **CON** 15 **CHA** 15

Typical prizefighter

AC 9 [10] (unarmoured), **HP** 8, **Att** 1 × punch (1d2+1), **THACO** 19 [0], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **AL** Lawful, **STR** 13 **INT** 12 **WIS** 6 **DEX** 12 **CON** 14 **CHA** 7



Running a Cluebox

The Magonium Mine Murders differs from many other fantasy scenarios in that it's mainly about investigation, rather than exploration. Most of its locations are ordinary, and although combat is a possibility, the characters will not be in danger most of the time. However, unlike most scenarios in mystery or mystery-horror games, it lacks an obvious structure. There is no "trail" of clues leading to a solution. There are just clues in the environment, together with NPCs who have information and agendas.

Based on my past experience running this scenario, you will probably find that the players decide early on to focus on one of the mysteries as their main focus, typically "who killed Alba?" or "what's going on in the mine?" They may even think of this as *the* mystery and assume that it is what the adventure is "supposed" to be about. If that's what they think, they're right! The valley offers plenty of opportunities to learn more; let the players take them.

Many investigative games rely on skill rolls or other mechanics to let characters find clues. *Old-School Essentials* doesn't really have these kinds of abilities outside of a few specific ones relating to secret doors and suchlike. In general, rather than having players make rolls against Wisdom to spot clues, it's better to ask what their characters are doing and simply reveal the clues that you think they'd find. When in doubt about whether you should give players a clue, *be generous*. Information is the building block of an enjoyable mystery game, and finding the puzzle pieces is not the same as putting them together.

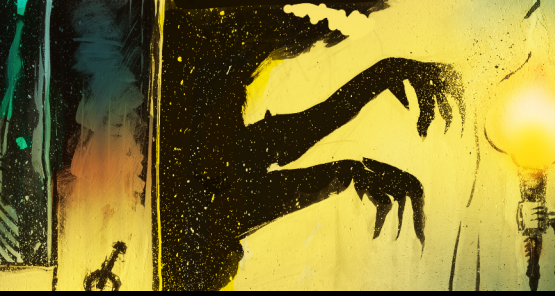
The same goes for solutions to the mystery. Even once the characters have a clear idea of what happened, they must decide what to do with that information. Previous runs of the scenario have seen characters catch Hyland, identify Hyland as the murderer but fail to apprehend him, defeat the Mole Men, broker peace with the Mole Men, help Schenck run his scam, ruin Schenck's scam by beating Luz fair and square, completely ignore Schenck, destroy the tavern in a huge battle with Lurik, steal the Duplication Engine for themselves, and more.

That said, it can be fun to lean in to the trappings of the mystery genre. My players enjoy it when someone points out that the murderer *must be someone inside the camp*, and they like getting the opportunity to tell the assembled suspects *I suppose you're wondering why we've called you all here*. If your players are enjoying playing detective, play that aspect up.

Just remember: there's a right answer to the question, but no single right thing to do with it once you've answered it.

THE MAGONIUM MINE MURDERS

A murder mystery sandbox for characters up to 4th Level (ish)



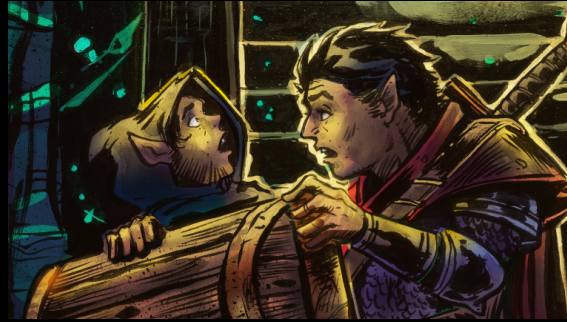
Trouble down the mine!

Mysterious “accidents,” strange sightings, worker unrest ... the magonium mine is a fire waiting for the spark – and that’s **before** the murder!

We’re on the case!

Counterfeiters, press gangs, bandits on the roads, corrupt sheriffs and a crooked prizefighting racket ... this town needs heroes!

But it’s probably getting scoundrels.



Gather the clues!

The Magonium Mine Murders presents the plots, clues, suspects and locations that make up an intrigue-filled setting. Solve the crime, catch the killer, or just pull off the caper of a lifetime!



The Magonium Mine Murders is a scenario for *Old-School Essentials* and requires *Old-School Essentials* to play.

For additional resources for this scenario as well as other zines and adventures by James Holloway, visit james-holloway.itch.io.

