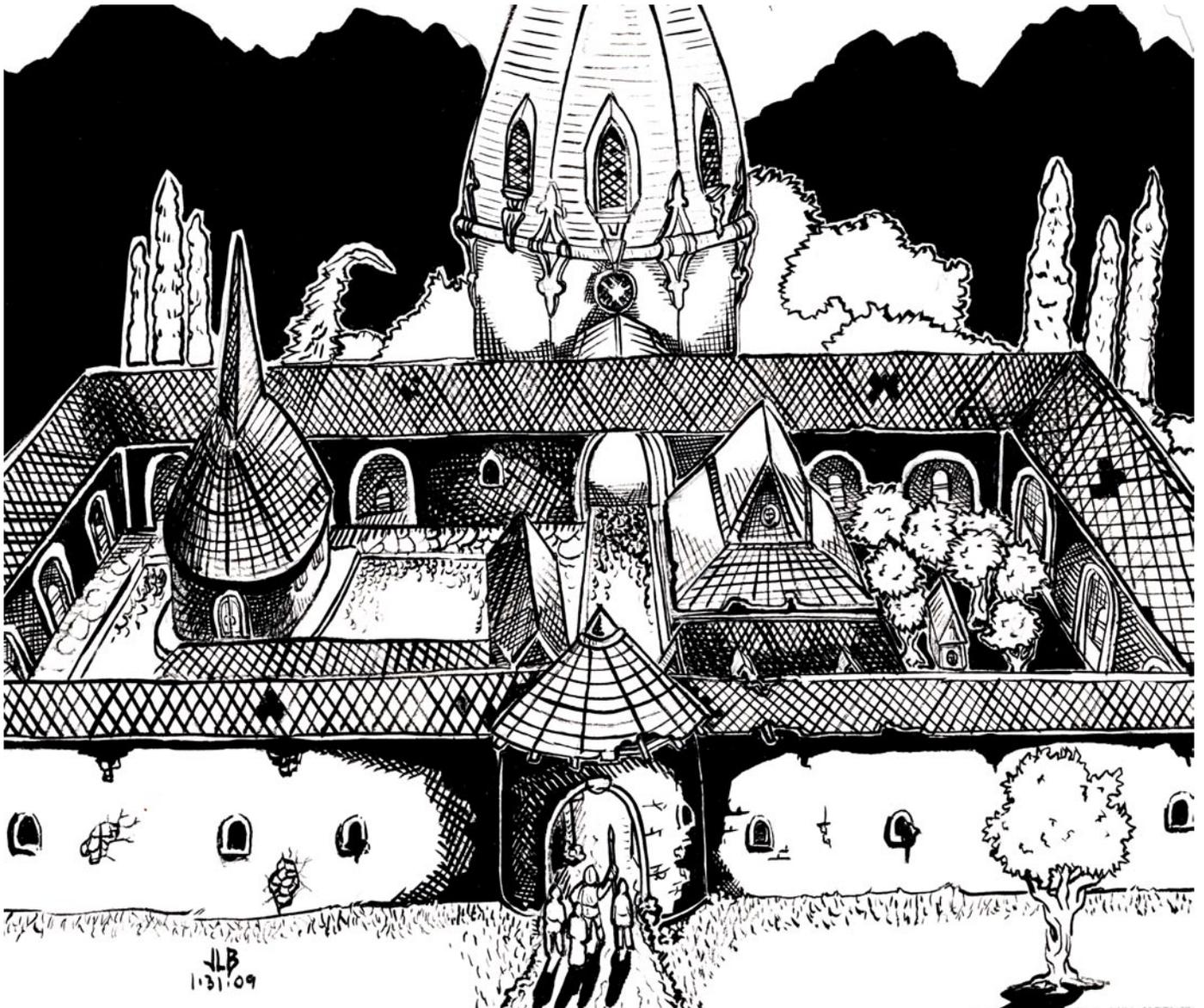


# ADVANCED ADVENTURES MODULE #10

## The Lost Keys of Solitude

by Joseph Browning & Suzi Yee

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 6-10



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# The Lost Keys of Solitude

**Introduction:** While traveling through the foothills of the Garvian Mountains, the party finds refuge for the night in a hermit's cave. In the morning, they wake to find the hermit and all his possessions gone, all except for two golden tiles: one embossed with the image of a bull with his horns down and ready to charge, the other of a tiger poised and ready to pounce. When the tiles are placed next to each other so that the bull and the tiger face one another, the embossed images move, fusing the two pieces into one. The newly created image is the bull and the tiger locked in combat. The fused piece is easily separated, and when separated, the images of the bull and tiger return to normal. Beside the two golden tiles lies a crudely-drawn map of the area with a path marked through valleys and passes ending at an "X" labeled "Solitude."

**STOP! If you plan to participate in this adventure as a player, then stop reading here. Prior knowledge of this module's contents will only spoil your enjoyment of the game.**

**Background:** Amongst the peaks of the rugged Garvian Mountains lie the remains of the lone monastery of the Keepers of Solitude. The Keepers of Solitude were a dedicated group of monastic men and women that took vows to protect the world from destructive and unnatural forces. They chose this remote site for their monastery as well as their prison, which they named "Solitude." Those unlearned in lore might attribute the group's naming with a yearning for austerity and stoicism, but in reality, they were the creators of a structural artifact and the jailors of things most terrible.

Built to exact specifications and rituals, the artifact prison Solitude is magically protected and powered by the very force of the elements. After the prison was built and powered, the Keepers designed a series of locks that revolve around six keys forged from solid gold. Resistant to all but the greatest forces, these keys are virtually impossible to destroy as they are a part of the artifact called Solitude. Each key is 1 inch thick and 4 inches square with unique embossing: bear, bull, eagle, fox, owl and tiger. When the keys are paired and fitted together, the embossing from each key writhes and fuses to make a solid piece. This solid piece can easily be separated, making a number of combinations possible. While some locks only require two keys, others require four. At the creation of Solitude, the Keepers closed two large chambers whose doors need all six keys, which form a solid piece of a dragon. After sealing the smaller chambers that require four keys, the Keepers sent the bull and the tiger keys away, scattering them among the kingdoms of the land where they were handed down in royal booty and dowries for many generations. The bear and the eagle were kept in the church of the monastery, while the fox and the owl were hidden below ground.

After generations of service, the Keepers became decadent in their ways, selling off empty cells to be filled by the highest bidder and emptying filled cells to those nefarious enough to desire their contents. Situated in a remote valley surrounded by sheer cliffs, a fierce river, and forbidding peaks, the monastery enjoyed relative peace until a band of marauding hill giants attacked the monastery and took the bear and eagle keys from the church. The theft triggered the guardians of Solitude, three amalgam golems which ward the entrances to the underground city. Made of tar and stone, the amalgam golems no longer differentiate friend from foe — and their task is to keep the surface and underground separate.

Cut off from the monastery on the surface, the underground Keepers continued their work. All was fine until an underground water source cracked through the stone walls of the fungal orchard, flowing through the fields of magical plants and finally into the lake. The ambient magic leached from the soil and into the Keepers' water supply, changing the Keepers in ways most unexpected. It was too late to reverse the transformation, and the Keepers abandoned humanity for the primitive and feral. They now call themselves the "teo-selerai," meaning the tainted ones in the ancient tongue. But the underground Keepers were not the only ones to be changed by the magic. The spiders and mushrooms they raised for food soon underwent their own transformation.

On the surface, centuries have passed, and four spriggan brothers have recently gained possession of the bear and eagle keys. With a troop of gnolls, the brothers made their way to the ruined monastery in hopes of finding treasure. They were clever enough to piece the keys together and open a large 20 foot wide door, only to find a grumpy, hungry tyrannosaurus rex coming out of stasis. The brothers and their gnoll horde battled fiercely, and eventually the giant fell, but only after the death of the eldest brother and a good portion of their gnoll troops. The remaining gnolls and three spriggan brothers divided into two factions, fighting and blaming the other for opening the door. Occupying different parts of the monastery ruins, they are regrouping in their prospective camps, and tensions are running high. When the brothers parted, each faction grabbed a piece of the key, separating the bear and the eagle.

Einion, now the eldest brother, is a charismatic leader who has convinced his simple-minded youngest brother, Pendew, that it was all Gethin's fault. Einion keeps the bear key close to his person at all times, knowing the devious ways of his younger, smarter brother Gethin. Einion discovered the stairways that lead underground, but after running into the amalgam golems, he has chosen a different path. Disappointed by the items found in the chest behind the tyrannosaurus rex, Einion has decided to make his own treasure by melting down the copper reinforcements in the wooden doors leading into Solitude, ironically bearing in an ancient script, a warning of the dangers that lie within. Meanwhile his youngest brother Pendew is happy to play with the newly minted coins.

Gethin is the third spriggan brother who controls the other half of the gnolls. He holds the eagle key, but knows that there must be more to these ruins than meets the eye. Occupying the other half of the monastery ruins, Gethin went underground via the church. Rather than cross the silver glyphs and fight the amalgam golem, Gethin and his gnolls are tunneling around the room, and he thinks they are close to a breakthrough. Meanwhile, the bodies in front of the monastery are piled high: sixty gnolls, one spriggan, and one tyrannosaurus rex.

**Notes for the Game Master:** The Lost Keys of Solitude is an adventure designed for 6-8 adventurers of level 6-10. It is recommended that the party contain at least 50 levels. There are several very tough encounters that may be problematic for parties favoring combat over more creative problem solving. More than one cleric will prove useful.

**Wandering Monsters:** A check for wandering monsters should be made 2 times a day while the party moves through the wilderness. There is a 20% chance that the party will have one of the following encounters.

- 1 –**Brown Bear** (No. 2; HD: 3+3; HP: 23, 17)
- 2 –**Wild Dogs** (No. 4-16; HD 1+1; HP: 3 (x5), 4, 5 (x4), 6 (x2), 7 (x2), 9 (x2))
- 3 –**Giant Skunk** (No. 1; HD 5; HP: 21)
- 4 –**Ogres** (No. 3; HD 4+1; HP: 19, 21, 14)
- 5 –**Goats** (No. 5-20; HD 1+2; HP: 3 (x5), 4 (x3), 5 (x4), 6, 7 (x3), 8 (x2), 10)
- 6 –**Wild Cat** (No. 2-5; HD 1, HP: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8)

## The Path to Solitude

The path towards Solitude begins in the rolling hills of Kadour, the extended valley at the foothills of the Garvian Mountains containing a large lake that bears the same name. Feeding Lake Kadour is a gushing river that has cut a ravine through the mountains. Traveling upstream on the rapids to the monastery is obviously suicidal. There is one path that leads to the ruined monastery through a series of traversable mountain passes and high-altitude valleys, each with their own challenges and dangers.