

## **IT'S QUIET ...**

by Legion

An Adventure for Swords & Wizardry Core Rules.  
For four to six characters of 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> level.

### **Background**

For centuries the ascetics of the Saint Septimus hermitage chanted their prayers to the gods. Saint Septimus the warrior-monk, after decades of campaigning, had retired to a life of solitary chanting contemplation at the foot of the end of the Wall of Rust.

The Wall of Rust, so called because it is an eons-old basalt dike weathered red-brown, stretches – with only a handful of broken-down gaps – for scores of leagues across the land. Its width varies from 200 to 600 feet and the crest of its spine is in places 700 feet above its base. The Wall rises in the dry waste plain around the volcano city of Hexopolix and runs straight southwest by south to end at the cooler foothills and forests of Lorna.

The faith and fame of Saint Septimus attracted others of his sect to the site. Cracks in the rock face were widened and stairs chiselled in, giving access to more clefts and ledges.

In time the lower caves and galleries developed into a repository and conservatory, a monastery carved from the living rock. Throughout the centuries hymns were composed and recorded on reams of scrolls and in a library packed with books of sacred music.

Then the tone eaters arrived.

It was the day the music died; up through unseen cracks in the bedrock they came bringing their damnable silence. The monks, unable to hear their own chants and prayers, left. Questioning their belief, those of little faith were the first to depart. All whispered – often inaudibly – to their pantheon, begging forgiveness for the transgressions they must have unwittingly committed.

Despite believing their home cursed the devout remained to the last, tending their relics and keeping their secrets. They were bolstered in their faith with the knowledge that only their monastery was silenced, not themselves; when away from the place they discussed the unnatural quiet and considered how best to return to their gods' good graces.

Then the bugbears arrived.

The already quiet attackers – made perfect by the interlopers in the monastery's halls – ran roughshod over the last of the believers. They killed or drove off the monks, ransacked the hermitage and conservatory and took up residence in the caves and halls.

But the tone eaters grew hungry around this quiet-shuffling, low-talking tribe. All but one moved on to louder pastures. The sole remainder eked a modest living from the cracks and shadows of the stonework.

## **The Present**

In the year since they took over the hermitage the bugbears' raids and robberies have become intolerable to the humans living in and traveling through Lorna and around the tip of the Wall. The thugs must now be dealt with. And so the PCs have been hired or recruited. They should be offered a reward appropriate to the campaign.

But the bugbear leaders themselves are uncertain of their home and have been talking secretly about relocating the tribe. In recent weeks the shaman's concern over some miscast spells has grown. He now fears their caves might be burdened by a previously undetected curse, spell or creature. He and the chief have been whispering – while on raid, away from the caves – about the problem.

It is possible – if the adventurers risk diplomacy and are able to speak to the tribe's chief or shaman – to avoid a fight altogether and talk the bugbears into departing. But the tribe will bargain hard for advantage and a payoff, not letting on they've been thinking of leaving. And there is the matter of the tone eater's presence possibly making any negotiations difficult.

## **The Approach**

The hermitage is carved into the foot of the tip of the Wall of Rust. It is surrounded by gently rolling hills covered with light scrub and sparse trees.

The bugbears have one sentry watching from high up each of the two hermitage faces at all times (Niches 6 and 7 by day and Niches 3 and 4 by night). But there is a one-third chance each guard is bored and inattentive, asleep or bugged off. Unless the PCs specifically say they are making a stealthy approach, they **will** be seen by the bugbear watch (assuming of course the latter is in position and paying attention).

The PCs' safest path is to approach from the northwest. Only the **Latrine (22.** below) and **Piano Key Stairs (8.** below) face that direction.

## **The Hermitage of Saint Septimus**

### **The Bugbears**

The Grok-not tribe numbers 50 individuals, males (25), females (15) and young (10). At any given time as much as one half of the tribe might be out on raids (The GM should roll a d6 when the PCs arrive: 1-2: half away (including the chief and shaman), 3-4: one-quarter away (including the chief), 5-6: everybody's home.)

Not all of these creatures are assigned fixed locations. The GM should take into account any bugbears out raiding then place tribe members in rooms and halls as appropriate.

Wandering bugbears do roam the halls on various errands. There is a 1 in 6 chance (check every second turn) the PCs will happen upon 1d4 of them (randomize between male and female, young and adult).

#### **Chief**

**Fights as ogre: HD: 4+1, HP: 25, AC: 4 [15], Atk: 1 bite (2d4) or 1 weapon (1d10), Save: 13, Move 9, XP: 240, Special: surprise on a 1-3. Carries 50 gp.**

#### **Shaman**

**Fights as 4<sup>th</sup> level cleric: HD: 4, HP: 20, AC: 5 [14], Atk: 1 bite (2d4) or 1 weapon (1d8), Save: 13, Move 9, XP: 400, Special: surprise on a 1-3,**

**spells:** *Cure Light Wounds, Detect Magic, Hold Person.* Carries 40 gp.

### **Males**

**HD: 3+1, AC: 5 [14], Atk: 1 bite (2d4) or 1 weapon (1d8), Save: 14, Move 9, XP: 120, Special: surprise on a 1-3.** Each carries 1d6 gp and 1d4 sp.

### **Females**

**Fight as gnolls: HD: 2, AC: 5 [14], Atk: 1 bite (2d4) or 1 weapon (1d8), Save: 14, Move 9, XP: 60, Special: surprise on a 1-3.** Each carries 1d4 gp and 1d6 sp.

### **Youngsters**

**Fight as goblins: HD: 1d6 hp, AC: 6 [13], Atk: 1 bite (1d6) or 1 weapon (1d6), Save: 15, Move 9, XP: 15, Special: surprise on a 1-3.** Each carries 1d6 cp.

## **The Tone Eater**

Only one of these creatures – a cagey old sneak – remains in the conservatory halls. It comes and goes through narrow cracks in corners and caves (marked by circled numbers on the map). These lead down into the bedrock and web all through the base of the Wall and beyond.

Its sound-consuming effect travels down halls, across rooms and up and down stairs but it does not pass through doors. It will approach neither the adventurers nor the bugbears, unless a fight ensues; in that case it will come close to gorge itself at the feast. It's so hungry.

The GM should roll a d6 at the start of every second turn (alternate between these and wandering monster checks) to determine the current location of the tone eater (refer to the circled numbers). The creature will react intelligently to noise; it has lived among the bugbears long enough to know it would die quickly if caught. It mediates its depth down the cracks to stay within "earshot" but not be caught. It is a constant tiring game.

Tone eater proximity can be helpful to a party wanting to move stealthily. The GM should improve the party's chance to surprise by 1 on a d6 and any Thief's chance to Move Silently by two Levels. Unfortunately the silence also hampers spell casting as described below in the monster's description.

This drifting silence also further quiets the bugbears. They surprise at least two-thirds of the time (d6 roll of 1-4) in the presence of a tone eater (treat ties in the bugbears' favour).

N.B.: It's easy to see the tone eater as a villain when in fact it's just a hungry beast akin to a dingo or racoon (though more intelligent than those). If the PCs can find a way to communicate with the creature it might be possible to make some kind of deal. The existence of sign language in a campaign might make or break these attempts.

### **Tone Eater**

**HD: 4, HP: 16, AC: 6 [13], Atk: 1 fist (1d6), Save: 13, Move 12, XP: 240, Special: silence (see entry below for more info).**

### **The Hermitage Niches**

The niches are 10 times higher (in feet) than their key number (i.e., the floor of niche **1.** is 10 feet above the base of the cliff face, niche **2.** is 20 feet up, etc.). All but the bottom-most are accessed through low-ceilinged, narrow, at times steep tunnels cut into the south and west corners of the Wall's end.

- 1.** The lowest and largest. It has a rough ladder leading up to its dirty floor.
- 2.** A rocky ledge, nondescript except for ragged angular graffiti.
- 3.** One of the bugbears night sentry positions. Unless he's skived off (see **The Approach** above) there will be one of the creatures on watch here after sundown.
- 4.** The other bugbear night watch post. See **3.** above for details.
- 5.** Another unremarkable graffitied ledge.
- 6.** One of the bugbears' daytime watch posts. See **3.** above for details.
- 7.** Seat of Saint Septimus. The first, the highest and the roughest. This is the niche the warrior-monk retired to so many centuries past. This is the other daylight sentry position. See **3.** above for details.

## The Conservatory

**8. Piano Key Stairs.** Both of these staircases are actually sets of pedals. The monks would ascend and descend the treads in sequences of steps up and down; this two steps forward-one step back motion played bars of hymns, so with all their comings and goings the monks walked out music as long as the sun was in the sky.

Now though, the stairs are covered in dirt and blown leaves. Some of the treads are broken but a few in each flight still ring, though out of tune. An alert dwarf or thief might notice the floating nature of the treads.

If the PCs aren't paying attention there is a 50% chance per character per flight of steps that a loud off-key twang will ring out as they ascend.

**9. Welcoming Committee.** There will always be two bugbears on guard on this five-foot high ledge. One carries the key to the door to the **Lower Storage Cavern** (room **14.** below).

**10. Guardroom.** There will always be two bugbears on guard here. One carries the key to the locked southwest door off the landing at the top of the **Piano Key Stairs.**

They keep the door to the stairs ajar to hear if a note tones. If the stairs ring one of the guards will sidle out to the landing to investigate. If a fight ensues the second will run to the **Tribe Quarters** (room **16.** below) for help.

**11. Storeroom.** Stacked along both corners and crowding out into the middle of this room are barrels, crates and boxes of looted goods. A rough path crosses the clutter to the door on the southwest wall. There is wine, fine cloth, wood panelling, tools and other trade goods worth 2,000 gp total.

**12. Observance Test Chamber.** This chamber is piled to the ceiling along both walls with loot and stores of all kinds. These finer items – sculptures, paintings, tapestries, brandies, incense and objets d'art – are worth 3,000 gp. Through this hoard, across a scuffed and chipped mosaic, runs a crooked narrow path to a door opposite.

When opened the false door on the southwest wall triggers the teleport trap marked on the map. The person opening the door (no save) and everyone standing on the mosaic (save to avoid) is teleported to the **Tonality Test Chamber** (room **24.** below).

This room was a test for junior monks. None were told what the room was for but they were often sent to the **Storeroom** (room **11.** above) to fetch chapel supplies. Eventually some of the more rambunctious would be overwhelmed by their curiosity and come into this room, which is bare but for the door opposite and the floor mosaic depicting Saint Septimus. Continuing across and through the other door placed them in confinement and under examination.

The bugbears discovered the effect of this room early by mistake (see the skeletons in the **Tonality Test Chamber** below) and decided to use it as a store room and trap.

**13. Choir.** This two-level room has a rough-walled cavern lower part and a dressed-stone upper floor with platforms arching over the former on a pillared bridge. The polished ceiling vaults 100' above the span.

This was the ceremonial heart of the conservatory. Holy days saw and heard every monk in pressed frock and sash present to sing praises to their gods and witness the parade of Saint Septimus' armour, The Choir within the Choir.

It's now merely a through-way on both levels, the corners of the lower floor accumulating tossed-aside trash.

**14. Lower Storage Cavern.** This bare rock cave is strewn with smashed and broken crates, barrels, furniture, tools, weapons and bones. There is a spiral staircase in the east corner leading up. The jumble of debris is densest around the base of the stairs though there is a rough narrow path through the bric-a-brac.

The door to this cave from **9.**, outside and down the stairs, is locked.

**15. Hymnal Repository.** This large natural cave contains a labyrinthine arrangement of racks and shelves full of scrolls and tomes. All are inscribed and illuminated with music composed by the monks of old. A number of shelves near the west door are tumbled and empty.

If searched for one week two blessed sacred books can be found in the stacks. The first, *The Wisdom of Saint Septimus*, is a Manual of Wisdom. The second, *Flame of the Saints*, is a Libram of Level Gain (Cleric).

Also among the documents are up to seven scrolls of up to seven levels of Cleric spells (e.g., seven scrolls of one first level spell each, or one scroll of one seventh level spell, or any combination in between).

**16. Tribe Quarters.** This wide open room is the living area for most of the bugbears. Spread out around the walls of the chamber are thirty mats of furs, grass, unravelled scrolls, feathers and fabric.

Regardless of how many bugbears are out raiding, there will always be at least one male, two females and three young bugbears in this room.

**17. Upper Store Room.** This room smells musty and sour. Spread around the walls are sacks and barrels full of food, mostly vegetables and meats, in assorted states of decay.

**18. Abbot's Office.** Now empty but for dirt and some broken furniture.

**19. Chief's Room.** The bugbear chief sleeps here with his mate and their son. The parents are aware of the secret doors both in this room and in the **Upper Store Room (17.)**. If the chief is at home he will be in this room unless an alarm has been raised.

The chief and his mate keep their treasure under a loose flagstone in the south corner. They have 200 gp, 200 sp, and five 100 gp rubies. The female also wears two bracelets and a necklace, each worth 100 gp.

**20. Shaman's Room.** This room originally served as the shrine for Septimus' blessed armour known as *The Choir*. It is now the cluttered chamber of the tribe's shaman. If the shaman is at home he will be in this room unless an alarm has been raised.

The shaman is fascinated by the mirrored surface of *The Choir* though he doesn't like to touch it. He uses the breastplate – cradled in a tripod of axes – as a scrying bowl. The rest of the harness is piled against the southern wall of the chamber under a heap of crumpled hymnal scrolls and broken furniture used to heat potions and salves in the breastplate.



A search will turn up four random potions. A thorough search will also discover the shaman's personal treasure: 100 gp and two gold and sapphire rings worth 200 gp each.

**21. Chapel.** This room is lined with pews facing an altar in the western corner. The walls are frescoed with scenes from the life of Saint Septimus. These have been defaced in a number of places with crude drawings and jagged writing. Other than the scrawls this room is actually quite tidy with only a few benches near the double doors thrown over.

A secret (found as a secret door) compartment in the altar contains seven vials of holy water.

**22. Latrine.** A rough hole is smashed in the floor of this overhanging chamber. A whiff of outhouse is in the air. The walls are covered with graffiti in a rough angular script. The floor is strewn with scrolls illuminated and written by various hands in numerous styles, scales and languages. The bugbears have been wiping their asses with hymns for years.

There is a 50% chance a bugbear is currently "having a read."

Among the scrolls is one containing the Cleric spell **Silence, 15 ft Radius.**

**23. Observer's Alcove.** This was the office and archive for the superior monks responsible for overseeing the tone tests (see **24.** below) of their over-curious juniors. The bugbears don't like to come in here; their desicated cohorts (see **24.** below) gives them the creeps.

**24. Tonality Test Chamber.** Two tight-skinned bugbear skeletons lay in the middle of the otherwise spotless room beyond the bars. A small (1' dia.) circular hole is set into the floor of the western corner.

Nothing but air, sound and light can penetrate the 77 adamantine tubular bell-bars across the doorway and the 7 slats of the same material across each window of this chamber. The corner hole in the floor allows matter to pass through as well as air, sound and light.

This room was the price inquisitive monks paid for their curiosity when they opened the **Observance Test Chamber's** (room **12.** above) false inner door. An

arrival was given one week to solve the tone puzzle of the tubular bell-bars. If successful the monk continued in his previous position; the unsuccessful were released, reproached, reduced one rank in the order and assigned remedial studies. The tone puzzle was changed after every test.

The tone puzzle can be solved by any character who taps out on the bell-bars the correct tune or part of a tune. The GM should feel free to choose a solution tune based on knowledge of their players. Make it a challenge, even unlikely, but not impossible. Of course the room can also be escaped through the hole with enough magic and planning.

When the puzzle is solved the middle seven foot section of bell-bars sink into the floor. There they stay for seven minutes then rise back into place.

## **Aftermath**

If the PCs manage to fight or talk the bugbears out of the hermitage they will be praised throughout Lorna and the lands along both sides of the Wall of Rust. Monks might return to the conservatory; at the very least they will send missions to retrieve what can be saved from the archives. And the sect of Saint Septimus will be favourably inclined toward the adventurers in the future.

## **New Material**

### **The Choir**

The Choir is a suit of iridescent +1 plate mail armour. It is magically lightweight, adding nothing to its wearer's encumbrance. It is never dirty; it never rusts or tarnishes.

Every time it is struck by an opponent's natural — or adjusted — to-hit roll of exactly 20 the armour sings a sublime chorus of organs, trumpets and Heavenly voices that soothes and fortifies its wearer and all allies within a 7' radius with one of the following spell-like effects:

- 1) Cure Light Wounds;
- 2) Bless;
- 3) Cure Disease;
- 4) Neutralize Poison;

- 5) Dispel Evil;
- 6) Word of Recall; and
- 7) Restoration.

Each of these powers is useable once per day. Word of Recall returns the characters to the last place the wearer was at full Hit Points, healthy, safe and secure.

The divine song of succour also cancels any critical effects that the wearer's enemy would have gained from rolling a natural 20.

## **Tone Eater**

**Armor Class:** 6 [13]

**Hit Dice:** 4

**Attacks:** 1 fist (1d6)

**Saving Throw:** 13

**Special:** Silence

**Move:** 12

**Challenge Level/XP:** 5/240

Tone Eaters are approximately man-sized vaguely humanoid creatures. They are hairless and have neither digits nor orifices. Their skin — if such it can be called — has the black oil-slick iridescence of a mallard's head. Their limbs are slightly elastic allowing them to slink and skulk through the underworld environment hiding in cracks, niches and alcoves seemingly too small for their apparent bulk. They are utterly inaudible.

Tone Eaters live by consuming sound. They don't hunt sound-creating things or creatures to devour the beings themselves; they feed off the noise generated by their targets. Because of this, they are not often malicious but they are sometimes deadly.

Those Tone Eaters surreptitious in their approach always surprise any sound-making prey. Likewise, they are never surprised by any thing or being that makes any kind of sound at all. A cautious Tone Eater will skulk along behind a party, eking sustenance from the adventurers' progress without betraying its own presence. But the louder the party is the closer a rash Tone Eater will come, as it relishes a rich feast.

Spoken communications will begin to break up at the approach of one of these creatures. Less and less ambient sound will be heard by others the closer the creature advances. This is usually the first sign to a keen-witted party it is being trailed by a Tone Eater.

Tone Eaters are frequently on the move hunting for sound to consume. They avoid — or move rapidly through — areas of stillness and quiet. They notice at once any soundless region; an approaching area of noiselessness causes Tone Eaters to move away at an equal or greater speed. Silence magic starves them; Silent Knights are deadly to them. A *Silence, 15' Radius* spell (or similar effect) cast directly upon a Tone Eater will cause it to clutch the sides of its head and flee, screaming inaudibly.

The best way to defeat a lone Tone Eater is to stand perfectly still and do absolutely nothing; it will be forced to either move on or instigate a fight to get a meal. They are generally averse to physical confrontation, not being especially well suited to combat.

They do sometimes hunt in a pack (called a Scale), lairing around a large cavern inhabited by a ferocious monster. Whenever a party of delvers happens upon the local beast and a fight ensues, the Tone Eaters sate themselves while the interlopers are torn to pieces, hampered as they are by these lurking eavesdroppers.

Being eaters of words, they adversely affect Reaction Rolls by disrupting verbal communication; misunderstandings can quickly lead to confrontation. Adjust monster encounter reaction rolls toward the party by -1 if the Tone Eater is from 200 to 150 feet away, increasing the penalty by -1 for each 50 feet closer the creature stands, to a maximum of -4 if it is within 50 feet. The same penalties should be applied to Clerics Turning the Undead.

Spells cannot be spoken properly within 200 feet of a Tone Eater. The closer the creature approaches, the worse attempted verbal magic will go awry. If the creature is from 200 to 100 feet away from a spell caster, the GM should make an odd-even die roll and compare it to the spell list, with odd indicating the spell above, and even denoting the spell below the attempted spell. The resulting spell is cast instead of the intended one. No casting of spells is possible if a Tone Eater is within 100 feet.

They devour the tones — as they happen — of all sound-generating magic and monsters; Tone Eaters negate the effects of and are immune to all sonic monster attacks like the shrieks of banshees, the songs of harpies and the gibbering of moutthers; the notes of chimes, horns and pipes are absorbed as they sound and command words for wands and staves are consumed as they are uttered, preventing those instruments and items from having their desired effects.