

BROADSWORD

ADVENTURES FOR FIFTH EDITION

OCTOBER 2020 ISSUE NO. 10 \$25.00

FEATURING

10 NEW ADVENTURES IN OMERIA
NEW COSMIC HORROR MONSTERS

PART 2 OF *THE NEVER-ENDING DUNGEON*



BROADSWORD

ADVENTURES FOR FIFTH EDITION

OCTOBER '20 ISSUE 10 Monthly



COVER: A protean servant-tool of the Elder Things stumbles across more bothersome vermin during its assigned janitorial duties. Art by Eric Lofgren.



The Horror in the Magazine

Nervously grasped in your sweaty paws is the extra special cosmic horror issue of BroadSword Monthly! You should find it packed with fiendish adventures and squamous monsters, a ready resource to enhance your fifth edition games.

The roots of fantasy gaming lie in the swords and sorcery pulp tales of old; and the weird tales of Lovecraft, Derleth, Chambers, Smith, and others are their close cousins. The only difference between a Conan story and a Lovecraft Mythos story is that Conan's thews and barbarian reflexes can more often than not save him from a messy end at the claws/tentacles of horrific entities. And even then, he knows when to make a run for it!

So sit back, enjoy, and kiss your 1st level characters good-bye, it's time for some good old fashioned swift dismemberment and sanity-wrenching horror adventures!

-Scott Craig

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The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.

-Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928)

USING THIS BOOK

GETTING THE MOST FROM BROADSWORD MONTHLY

BY DAVE HAMRICK
ART BY TIM HARTIN

Must-have Tomes

To run these adventures, you will need access to the Fifth Edition rules and associated core rulebooks, abbreviated as *PHB*, *DMG*, and *MM*.

Understanding the Format

In addition to the monsters included in the *MM* core rulebook, you will also need to use the content found in the Appendices of this book.

When a creature's name appears in **bold** type, that's a visual cue pointing you to its stat block in the *MM*. If a stat block appears as part of this book, the adventure's text tells you where to find it.

Spells and equipment mentioned in the adventure are described in the core rulebooks. *Magic items* are also described in the core rulebooks unless the adventure's text directs you to an exclusive item that is described in this book.

Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their characters first arrive at a location or under a specific circumstance, as described in the text.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout these adventures:

hp = hit points
AC = Armor Class
DC = Difficulty Class
XP = experience points
pp = platinum piece(s)
gp = gold piece(s)
ep = electrum piece(s)
sp = silver piece(s)
cp = copper piece(s)
NPC = nonplayer character
PC = player character
APL = Average Party Level

Dungeon Key

1 square = 10 ft.

Door	Trap
Double door	Stairs
Secret door	Bars/gate
Secret trap door in floor	Wooden planks
Concealed door	Dais/raised platform
False doors	Fountain
Pillar	Pool
Statue	Chute Trap
Altar	Throne
Covered pit trap	Magic circles
Open pits	Thaumaturgic circle
Wells	Pentagram
Tapestry/curtain	Elevation lines
Downward slope arrow	Brazier
Turn-around trap	Teleporter
Illusionary wall	Teleporting pillars
Rubble	
Sarcophagus	
Falling block trap	
Mirror	

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LG = Lawful Good
NG = Neutral Good
CG = Chaotic Good
LN = Lawful Neutral
N = Neutral

CN = Chaotic Neutral
LE = Lawful Evil
NE = Neutral Evil
CE = Chaotic Evil

OMERIA ONLINE

YOUR GUIDE TO THE DMDAVE COMMUNITY

BY MELISSA PRESTI
ART BY WILLIAM MCAUSLAND

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Roll20 Adventures

DMDave adventures are constantly added to the Roll20 library where you can purchase the complete VTT setup. The adventures include all original artwork, professional maps, dynamic lighting, and endless customization options. Save time and enhance your favorite parts of RPG tabletop play!



ARTISTS SPOTLIGHT

SELECT ILLUSTRATORS OF BROADSWORD MONTHLY

BY SCOTT CRAIG

ART BY WILLIAM MCAUSLAND

BroadSword Monthly has been fortunate to have at its disposal some very talented illustrators and artists. Some pieces were specially commissioned, some purchased in collections for commercial use, while other works are readily available for free use thanks to generous patrons and artists.

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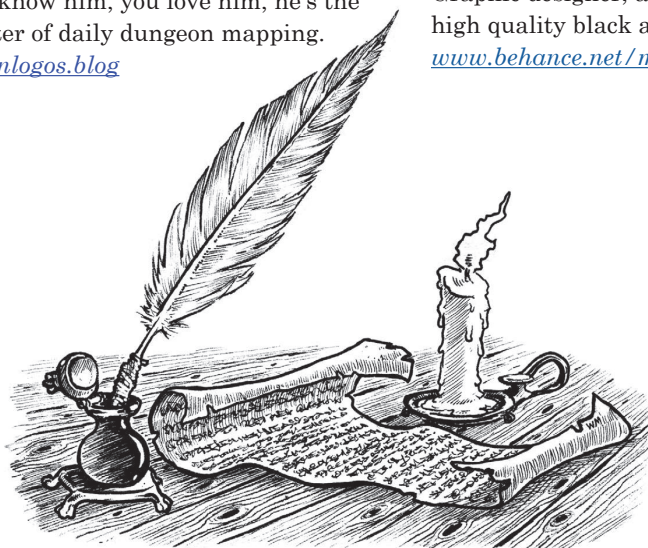
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THE NEVER - ENDING DUNGEON



NEVERENDING DUNGEON: PART 2

BY DAVE HAMRICK

Variable-level Adventure for Fifth Edition

Cartography by Tim Hartin

Art by Matias Lazaro, Nacho Lazaro, Gary Dupuis, Dean Spencer, and William McAusland

The Neverending Dungeon is a Fifth Edition adventure series built for parties of any size and any level. Each edition of this series adds a modular dungeon tile to what came before. These tiles fit together any way you like and are VTT-compatible. Because of the “endless” nature of the series, you can run games that start at 1st-level that complete at 20th and beyond, or even start a campaign with higher level players.

Adventure Background

The nefarious Uncle Skeleton is at it again! This time, he’s created one of his dangerous dungeons in a demi-plane of dreams. Fed by the stray anxieties of tormented children—whom Skeleton has dubbed his Nightmare Kinder—creatures who enter the dungeon find themselves trapped for all eternity (or so he would have them believe).

Most who enter the Neverending Dungeon have little recollection of how they arrived. Typically, a person enters the dungeon through one of the infinite staircases. These staircases allow access into the dungeon but deny escape. No matter how far someone climbs the staircase, they never arrive at another destination. The moment they turn around and walk back, they almost immediately find themselves back where they started.

The Neverending Dungeon Campaign

You are free to incorporate the various sections of the Neverending Dungeon into your campaigns and sessions anyway you like. If you prefer to run the Neverending Dungeon as a full campaign setting, it’s suggested that you use the rules detailed below.

Entering the Dungeon

At the start of your Neverending Dungeon campaign, the characters find themselves descending one of the infinite staircases. Where they arrive

depends on the tile you choose to start with. All Neverending Dungeon tiles place characters in rooms suited for 1st-level characters. At your discretion, characters who start at higher levels might find themselves in possession of one or more of the Dungeon's color-coded keys (see Dungeon Features below).

Amnesia

The characters have no recollection of how they arrived in the Neverending Dungeon. Every event that brought them to the dungeon is erased from their memory. They still have memory of their past lives prior to entering the dungeon and all of their features, but that's it.

Use What You Got!

All characters who enter the Neverending Dungeon start with a pair of simple trousers, a shirt, and simple, canvas shoes. Otherwise, they lack all supplies and gear. This includes, but is not limited to, weapons, armor, adventuring equipment, food and water, arcane foci, and spellbooks. At your discretion, you may allow a few of these items to be found in the first area of the tile through which the characters enter the dungeon as some classes may find themselves hamstrung without access to some of these materials. However, the fun of the Neverending Dungeon is starting with nothing, working with those you find yourself with, and building from there.

Experience

Many of the encounters in the Neverending Dungeon may be too dangerous for the characters to face, especially early on in the adventure when they lack proper supplies and gear. Therefore, you may want to award experience based on milestones versus encounters. First, calculate the party's average party level (APL). Do so by adding together all of their levels and dividing by 4 (even if there

are more or less than 4 characters in the party). Based on that number, reward the following experience for a single 2-4-hour-long session:

Experience Per Session.

APL	XP Reward
1st	300
2nd	600
3rd	600
4th	850
5th	1,750
6th	2,000
7th	2,500
8th	3,000
9th	3,750
10th	4,500

APL	XP Reward
11th	5,250
12th	5,750
13th	6,750
14th	7,500
15th	9,000
16th	10,000
17th	12,500
18th	13,500
19th	15,000
20th	20,000

Unravel the Mystery and Escape

Overall, the characters' goals should be to learn as much as they can about the Neverending Dungeon and its creator and how to escape. Doing so requires patience and discipline. When and how their escape happens is ultimately up to you. However, each tile offers a solution the characters may use to leave the dungeon. Whether or not you use these solutions is ultimately your choice.

Dungeon Features

For the sake of avoiding repetitive descriptions, common features of the Neverending Dungeon are summarized below.

Magical Protections

There are only two ways to enter or exit the Neverending Dungeon: through one of Uncle Skeleton's infinite staircases or via a *wish* spell. *Astral projection*, *teleport*, *plane shift*, *word of recall*, and similar spells cast for the purpose of entering or leaving the dungeon simply fail, as do effects that banish a creature to another plane of existence. These restrictions apply to magic items and artifacts that have properties that transport or banish creatures to other planes as well. Magic that allows transit to the Border Ethereal, such as the *ethereality* spell, is the exception to this rule. However, a creature that enters the Ethereal Plane from the Neverending Dungeon is pulled back into the dungeon upon leaving that plane.

Magic that summons creatures or objects from other planes functions normally in the Neverending Dungeon, as does magic that involves an extradimensional space. Any spells cast within such an extradimensional space are subject to the same restriction as magic cast in the Neverending Dungeon.

Spells can't destroy or alter the shape of the Neverending Dungeon's magically protected ceilings, pillars, columns, walls, or floors. Doors and furnishings however, are not protected in this way.

While they are in the Neverending Dungeon, characters who receive spells from deities or otherworldly patrons continue to do so. However, spells that allow contact with beings from other planes, such as the *sending* spell, do not function within the dungeon.

Architecture

The majority of the Neverending Dungeon's architecture consists of simple, undecorated worked stone with a few areas of rough-hewn stone, sometimes duplicating the effects of a natural cavern. A few of its sections

NEVERENDING DUNGEON

have exceptional architectural features which are described in the tile's accompanying text.

Ceilings. Unless stated otherwise, a room's ceiling is as high as the room is wide and sometimes higher. If a room's ceiling height isn't specified in the text, assume it's the minimum height. The same goes for tunnels, unless otherwise noted. The majority of the tunnels in the Neverending Dungeon are arched and have no visible structural support.

Doors and Secret Doors. Normal doors (which includes double doors) are made of thick, sturdy wood fitted with iron hinges and handles. Magic protects them from moisture and other environmental hazards (for example, doors on levels prone to extreme heat are protected against the heat and fire). Secret doors are created from the same material as the surface in which they are set (usually worked stone) and require successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) checks to locate, unless noted otherwise. When they are closed, most doors and secret doors create airtight seals, keeping gases and gaseous creatures from passing through them; exceptions are noted in the text.

Locked Doors. Some of the doors in the Neverending Dungeon are magically locked. On the map of each tile, there are color-coded padlocks on each of these locked doors: blue, green, or red. The characters must have a key of the appropriate matching color to access the color-coded locked door. The *blue key* opens all doors with blue padlocks, green opens green, and red opens red.

A magically locked door can be opened through unconventional means, but it's difficult. A character with proficiency in thieves' tools can open a locked door with a successful DC 25 Dexterity check, and a magically locked door can be broken open with a successful DC 30 Strength (Athletics) check. Magically locked doors are immune to all damage as



well as the *knock* spell. Only a *wish* spell can open a magically locked door, but only for 1 minute.

Various creatures throughout the dungeon own keys to the magically locked doors. Furthermore, some creatures have the ability to pass through magically locked doors with-

out using a key. Such creatures are noted in the text.

Illumination. Overall, most of the Neverending Dungeon lacks light except where the text states the presence of light. Many of the creatures who live in the Neverending Dungeon have darkvision, blindsight, or other

means of seeing in the dark.

Infinite Staircase. Infinite staircases are magical apparati that transport creatures into the Neverending Dungeon but do not allow creatures to return from whence they came. If a creature attempts to climb an infinite staircase—even if it is the one through which they originally entered the dungeon—they may continue to climb for as long as they like. However, they soon find that they never reach another destination. Upon turning around, the creature finds itself only a few feet from where it started.

Egresses. Thanks to the dungeon's modular nature, each section of the Neverending Dungeon comes with eight total egresses offering access to new areas of the dungeon. If the characters travel past one of these egresses, you have two choices for the egress's destination.

First, the egress can lead to another section of the Neverending Dungeon. Each Neverending Dungeon map lines up perfectly with each other. How you place the maps is up to you—there is no official pattern for how they are laid out. In fact, you can even change them from adventure to adventure to throw off the characters—Uncle Skeleton is tricky like that!

The other option is to have the egresses loop back to the same map through another of the map's egresses. For example, if the characters walk along the southernmost egress at the western edge of the map, they might reappear at the southernmost egress on the eastern side of the map. Or they could even appear at a totally random egress. It's totally up to you!

Dungeon Key

The dungeon key on page 13 applies not only to the map contained in this adventure, but to all sections of the Neverending Dungeon. Some of the features detailed in the key may not appear in this adventure.

Tile 002 - Cosmic

A chasm of unfathomable depth and darkness divides this section of The Neverending Dungeon. Unspeakable horrors rise, surround, and gather about the chasm, creating all new challenges for those who dare set foot into The Neverending Dungeon. Two powerful beings exert their control in this lair. First, the gynosphinx Watch, makes her lair in **area 21**. Opposing Watch is the serpent man sorcerer supreme Zhohli in **area 2**. Each of these villains will attempt to pit the characters against the opposite villain.

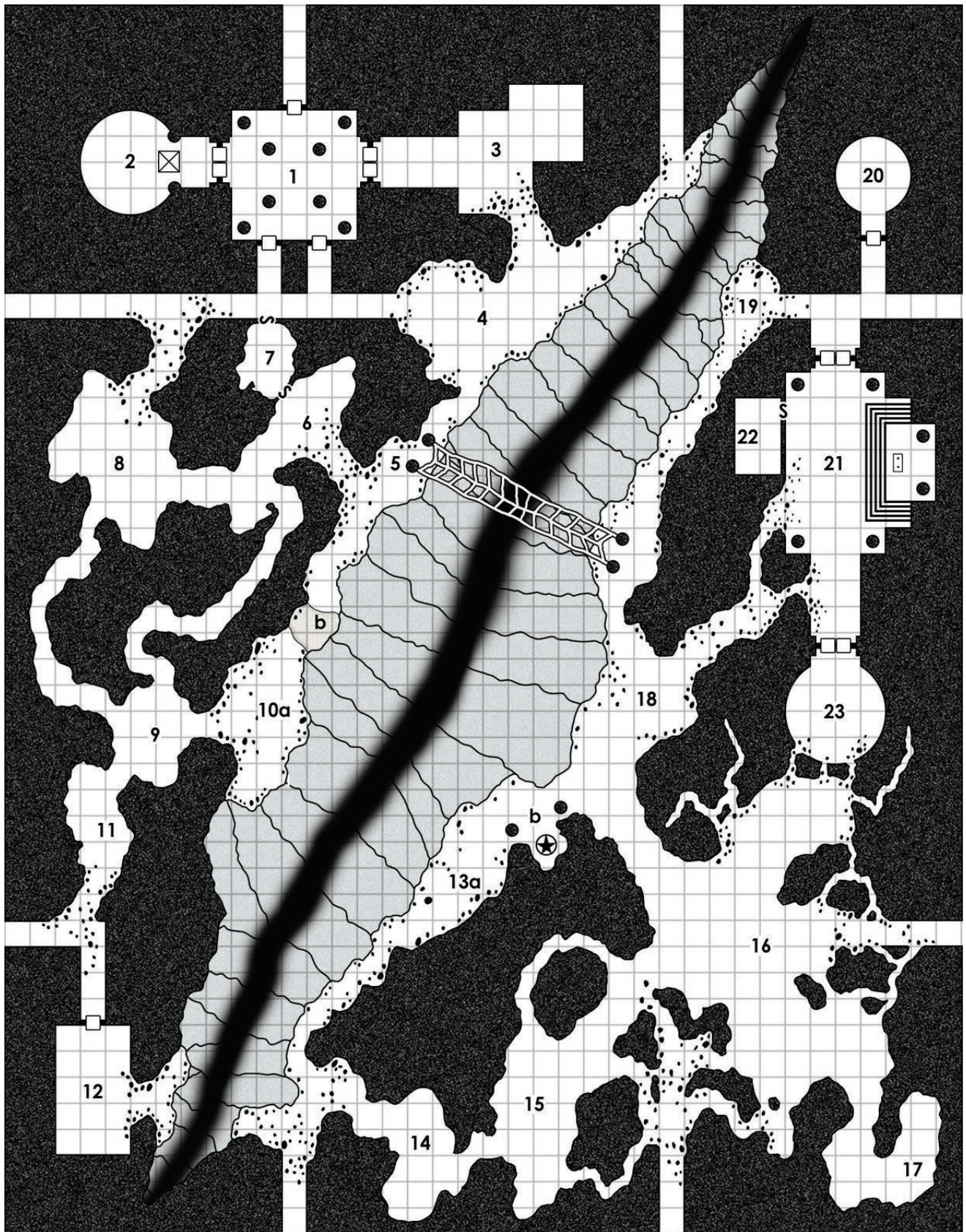
The Buzzing

As the characters move through this level, they hear a strange buzzing sound at the back of their minds. Although the buzzing has no real effect, you might periodically ask them to make Wisdom or Constitution saving throws to play with their heads.

The Chasm

The colossal chasm that cuts through most of the dungeon is truly and completely bottomless. With the exception of artifacts, creatures and objects that fall into this abyss vanish forever—characters are effectively





dead. Only a *wish* spell can return a creature or object that meets its fate this way. Artifacts that fall into the chasm appear in a random location on the Astral Plane.

Random Encounters

Depending on which section of the dungeon the characters are traveling through, they may encounter one of the following packs of creatures.

Byakhee. A gang of byakhee (see Appendix D) patrol the area over the chasm. Once every twenty minutes that the characters are in an area that touches the chasm, roll a d20. On a result of 15 or higher, 1d4 byakhee arrive. The byakhee attack without question; their favorite tactic is to grab intruders and drop them into the chasm. Once a byakhee is destroyed, remove that byakhee from the number of byakhee found in area 12. If all of the byakhee in area 12 are destroyed, the byakhee stop attacking.

Serpent People. In areas away from the chasm and **area 21**, the characters have an equal chance of encountering 1d4 serpent people (see Appendix D). The serpent people are not always aggressive; many will want to learn more about the characters before they react.

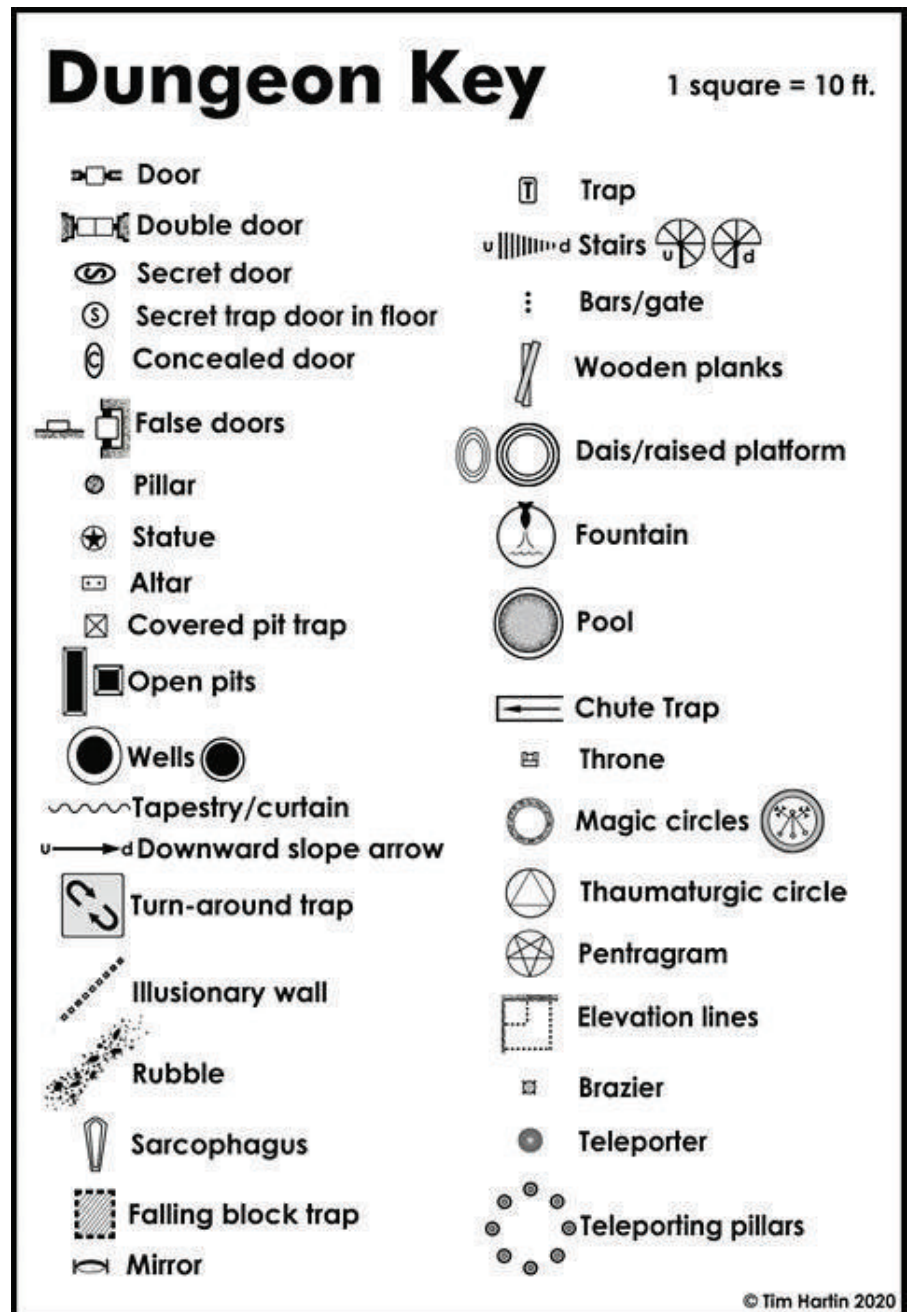
Shadows. The serpent man sorcerer supreme Zhohli employs shadows as his eyes and ears. He can hear and see through them as if they were his familiars. While the characters are traveling through the other areas of the dungeon, roll a d20 every 10 minutes. On a roll of 20, the characters can encounter 1d6 shadows. They do not fight unless attacked.

Keyed Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of The Neverending Dungeon Tile on the previous page.

1 - Terror

Blue locks prevent characters without a *blue key* from traveling into the northern and southern passages. The



door leading to **area 2** is protected by a green lock.

Characters who enter The Neverending Dungeon via this section, wake in this area. The walls of this dressed chamber are decorated with hieroglyphics depicting serpent humanoids worshipping great, tentacled gods. Eight 5-foot thick columns hoist this room's impressive, 20-foot high ceiling.

Encounter: Shadows. Two shadows watch from the areas of dim light at the northwesternmost and southwesternmost columns. The shadows serve Zhohli (see **area 2**), and report on new creatures entering the dungeon. They do not attack unless they are attacked first.

Treasure: Chipped Swords. Four old longswords lie in a pile at the center of the room. Their pommels

are decorated to look like serpents. Although they've seen better days, the swords still get the job done.

2 - Implant

The door leading into this area is protected by a green lock.

The first time the characters enter this chamber, they are stopped by two halberd-wielding, hunched-over serpent humanoids. Forty-five feet from the door, a pale, serpent-headed creature wearing a cowl and holding a flaming staff watches from a plush cushion. Its stomach is severely distended—it's currently digesting a halfling it ate roughly an hour before the characters arrived.

Two more serpent people flank the pale serpent, their slitted eyes focused on the characters.

Encounter: Zhohli. The **serpent man sorcerer supreme** (see Appendix D) Zhohli has claimed this rotunda as his chamber. Zhohli is joined by four **serpent people** (see Appendix D) who act as guards. Centuries old, Zhohli knows the value of patience. The old snake is content to let his spies gather information for him on subjects that draw his interest, such as the characters.

When the characters first meet Zhohli, how Zhohli reacts toward them depends on what they've done in the dungeon thus far.

- If Zhohli's shadows witnessed the characters arrive in **area 1** but they haven't done anything of note, he parleys with the adventurers, but only to gauge their strength. If he feels they are weak—or rude—he commands his guards to slay the characters.
- If Zhohli's shadows report that the characters are working with the gynosphinx Watch (see **area 21**), Zhohli lashes out violently. Zhohli's unbridled hatred for the sphinx overrides his wisdom.
- If Zhohli's shadows report that the characters have demonstrated great power (they are 11th lev-



el or greater) and they have not yet made allies with Watch, then Zhohli encourages peace with himself and the other serpentfolk who live in this section.

Zhohli values his life above all things. If he feels that his serpent people are not enough to handle the characters, he will use them to distract the characters while he flees to another part of the dungeon with his *teleport* spell.

Trap: Concealed Pit Trap. As an added layer of protection, there is a concealed pit between the door in this area and Zhohli's lounge. The trap measures 10-feet by 10-feet and is 20-feet deep. If a creature or object weighing 50 pounds or more moves onto the area of the trap, the doors break open and deposit the creature or object into the pit below. Creatures take 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall. A character who suc-

ceeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the trapdoor in the floor. Applying a piton, spike, dagger, or some other object to the door's hinges prevents it from opening, thus disabling the trap.

Treasure: Zhohli's Staff. Zhohli's staff is a *staff of fire*. It also acts as a *red key*. To use it as a key, the wielder simply needs to tap the staff on a door or object with a red lock.

3 - Wicked

A ramshackle home constructed from spare wood, stone, bones, and bits of torn fabric crowds the far east end of this unusually shaped room. A small fire burns at the center of the area, its smoke rising into a small hole in the ceiling.

A balding woman whose face is covered in thick, stony warts stirs a pot over the fire. One of her feet is bare, and the other is shoved into a comically oversized boot. If she notices the characters enter the area, she calls them over.

Encounter: Noora the Mage.

Although she could easily pass for a hag, Noora is actually a neutral evil human **mage** with a Charisma score of 5. Although Noora is inherently evil, she hates Uncle Skeleton and his dungeon, which she frequently refers to as "insipid" and "uninspired."

Noora claims that she is too weak and old to travel beyond her own domain. Thus, she offers the characters food, water, and supplies if they will perform reconnaissance on her behalf. See treasure below. Noora isn't interested in fighting, but she will fight if pressed—especially if she determines that the characters are no match for her and her spells.

Treasure: Noora's Magic Boot.

Noora's boot functions just like a *bag of holding*. If the characters agree to help Noora learn more about the Neverending Dungeon—and a way out—she demonstrates her value by offering each character one item out of her boot. Use the following rules for

Noora's boot of holding:

- Have a character name an item from the PHB's equipment section.
- Roll percentile dice.
- If the result of the percentile dice is less than or equal to 100 minus the gp cost for the item (round up to the nearest gp), there is at least one of those items stored in Noora's boot.
- If the item costs 100 gp or more, Noora does not have that item in her boot. Even if Noora's boot lacks an item, the character can try again.

If the characters defeat Noora, assume the boot has one of every item in the PHB's equipment section with a cost of 100 gp or less.

4 - Bottomless

The first time the characters enter this area, a small, unseen voice comes from within the chasm.

"Hello! Hello over there! I don't suppose you could help me by tossing a rope over the edge, could you?"

The voice implores, explaining that it was an adventurer who found himself trapped in the dungeon.

Trap: Come With Me. The voice is an illusion. If a character moves within 5 feet of the chasm's edge, they discover a desiccated corpse clinging to the edge of the chasm. Before they can act, the skeleton's claw reaches out to grab the character's foot or arm. The character must make a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failed check, the character is grabbed by the skeleton and pulled into the chasm. On a successful check, the skeleton misses and tumbles into the chasm alone. Either way, Uncle Skeleton's horrible laughter fills the characters' ears as it falls.

5 - Foetid

As the characters approach this area, they smell the nauseating gas pouring from the dretches.

A 75-foot-long, 10-foot wide rope bridge spans the chasm, held in place by four columns. A 10-foot by 10-foot section of rope bridge has AC 13, 10 hp, vulnerability to slashing damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. If a section of the bridge is destroyed, each creature still on the bridge must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to grab onto an intact piece of the bridge or tumble into the chasm.

The body of a dead mage, victim of the dretch's horrible, green gas, sits tangled in the middle of the rope bridge.

Encounter: Fart Demons. Four dretches crawl along the rope bridge. They attack any creatures they see.

Treasure: Dead Mage. The dead mage carries a wand that they used as an arcane focus along with a spellbook containing all the spells a mage knows. If the rope bridge breaks, the mage and its belongings tumble into the chasm below.

6 - Narcotic

A thick carpet of red and yellow mushrooms covers the floors of this damp cavern.

Encounter: Hypnotic Toad. A giant toad sits on top of a large toadstool. But this is no ordinary giant toad—it's a hypnotic toad!

When a creature starts its turn within 30 feet of the toad and is able to see the toad's eyes, the toad can magically force it to make a DC 11

Wisdom saving throw, unless the toad is incapacitated. On a failed save, the creature becomes charmed by the toad for 1 hour or until the toad or its companions do anything harmful to it. The charmed creature regards the toad as a friendly acquaintance. When the effect ends, the creature knows it was charmed by the toad.

Unless surprised, a creature can avert its eyes to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If the creature does so, it can't see the toad until the start of its next turn, when it can avert its eyes again. If the creature looks at the toad in the meantime, it must immediately make the save.

Once the toad has hypnotized a creature, it can use its action to target one or more creatures within 30 feet of it that are charmed by the toad. The toad telepathically suggests a course of activity to the charmed target. The target pursues the course of action to the best of its ability. The suggested course of action can continue for the entire time the creature remains charmed by the toad. The toad can also specify conditions that will trigger a special activity during the duration. For example, the toad might suggest that the target give all of its clothing to the first creature it meets in the dungeon. If the condition isn't met before the charm effect wears off, the activity isn't performed. The suggestion must be telegraphed in such a manner as to make the course of action sound reasonable. Asking the creature to stab itself, throw itself onto a spear, immolate itself, or do some other obviously harmful act immediately ends the charmed effect on it.

The hypnotoad suggests all creatures charmed by it to stay and eat the mushrooms in the area. Otherwise, the hypnotic toad only fights creatures if it is attacked.

Hazard: Narcotic Mushrooms. The mushrooms in this area have narcotic properties. A creature who



eats the mushrooms must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature is poisoned for 1 hour. While the creature is poisoned, its movement speed is reduced by half, its flesh turns green and its eyes bulge from its skull like a frog's. Also, it loses the ability to speak all languages, instead only croaking "ribbit." The hypnotic toad enjoys watching intelligent creatures become toad-like through the consumption of mushrooms.

Secret Door. A thick patch of mushrooms conceals a secret entrance to **area 7**. Noticing the shroom-covered-door requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

7 - Tentacle

This hidden area looks (and smells) like the inside of a festering internal organ.

Encounter: Tentacles. Four fleshy tentacles sprout from the walls of this area and attack anything that passes through it. Each tentacle uses the statistics of a **constrictor snake**, except its type is monstrosity and it has blindsight out to 30 feet (blind beyond this radius).

Secret Door. The northernmost exit of this strange room looks like a sphincter on either side. To push through it, a character must make a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, falling prone within 5 feet of the wall opposite of the one from which they started. A character who fails their check by 4 or less becomes stuck partway in the sphincter. Until they use their action to make another check—and ideally succeed—they are restrained by the room's sphincter.

The southernmost exit is obvious from this side. It's a wooden door (oddly enough).

8 - Twins

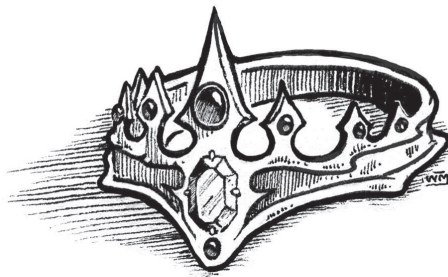
This chamber is pocked with craters, each one filled with water so clear that its surface is like a mirror.

Trap: Twins. A character who gazes into the water will see an image of themselves wearing a golden crown beset with jewels. If the character attempts to grab the crown from their mirror image's head using their own hand, they must perform the following steps:

- First, the character must use its action to make a Strength (Athletics) check.
- Then, the character must make a Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. The DC for this check is the result of their first check.
- If their second check succeeds, the character narrowly moves out of the way as their own watery reflection reaches out of the puddle to grapple the character. The reflection cackles and fades from the puddle—another one of Uncle Skeleton's tricks!
- But if their second check fails, the illusion grabs the character and drags them into the water. The character is grappled, restrained, and drowning.
- To escape their own grapple, the character must repeat the steps above until their second check beats their own first check.

No other characters can assist a grappled and drowning character, as a Help action assists not just the grappled character, but the illusion grappling them as well. If a *dispel magic* spell is cast on the puddle, the illusion disappears and the grapple ends.

Unfortunately, there is no treasure at the bottom of any of the puddles.



9 - Necrotic

The floors, walls, and ceilings of this area appear to be made from human flesh. It gets worse: the flesh seems to be alive. It takes in air, bleeds when cut, and even pulsates as if there were a heartbeat beneath it all.

At the center of this fleshy room, a golden sword has been shoved into the flesh. Blood oozes from the wound.

Once every 1d6 + 1 rounds, the flesh in the room begins to age rapidly. It turns gray, then black, then sloughs away, leaving behind only bloodied cavern surfaces. The rotten, curling flesh then turns to worms which writhe helplessly on the ground until they, too, vanish. All of this takes 3 rounds to happen. The following round, the cavern's surfaces regrow their fleshy coating and the entire cycle starts again.

Hazard: Necrotic. Any living creature in this area when the walls begin to rot is affected by the same unseen force affecting the flesh walls. The creature takes 11 (2d10) necrotic damage every round they remain in the area. If this damage reduces the creature's hit points to 0, the creature dissolves into nothing and cannot be revived except by a *wish* or *true resurrection* spell.

Treasure: Golden Sword. The sword at the center of the room can only be drawn by the one who is worthy enough to wield it. To remove the sword, a character must use their action to make a Charisma check to draw it from the ground. The DC is equal to 40 minus the character's current level. On a failed check, the sword budes ever so slightly but remains embedded in the cavern's flesh. On a successful check, the character draws the sword. Immediately, the flesh in the room withers and dies one last time, however, there is no further necrotic effect. The greatsword is a *holy avenger*.

10 - Crevasse

Other than the braying of the byakhee to the south, this is surprisingly one of the calmest sections of this section of The Neverending Dungeon.

10a - Sloping. The floors in this area slope at a relatively steep angle toward the chasm. Any creature that moves through the area must make a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check at the start of their move. On a failed check, the creature falls prone. If the creature fails its check by 5 or more, it slides 30 feet toward the chasm's edge and must repeat its ability check at the start of its next turn. If the second check fails, the creature slides again and so on. A creature that voluntarily moves at half its movement speed automatically passes its check.

10b - Separate. The floor dividing area 10a from area 5 looks crumbly, like dried mud. If a creature or object weighing 100 pounds or more enters this area, the ground breaks away. Any creature standing in this area when this happens must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid falling into the chasm. A creature that succeeds on its saving throw lands in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the crumbling area. Once this area collapses into the pit, it becomes impassable on foot.

11 - Proper

The first time the characters enter this area, they're greeted by a skeleton wearing noble livery and a top hat.

"Greetings, adventurers!" says the dapper skeleton. "I am Uncle Skeleton, the proprietor of this amazing dungeon through which you now travel! So far, you've done a remarkable job getting this far. As such, I am here to reward you. I will allow one of you to momentarily escape the dungeon to return to a town of your choice. There,



you can relax, purchase supplies, and breathe in fresh air once more. Then, after exactly 1 hour, I shall return you here."

The skeleton then extends its hand.

"Who among you will take my hand?"

Trap: Shocking Grasp. Any character who touches the skeleton's hand takes 4 (1d8) lightning damage and can't use reactions until the start of their next turn. The skeleton then laughs and yells, "Got you, sucker!" before it fades away. Doing anything other than touching the skeleton's hand causes it to vanish.

12 - Ambush

This door is protected by a red lock.

Encounter: Byakhee Roost.

Twelve **byakhee** (see Appendix D) linger in this chamber. When they grow bored, they fly out on patrols over the chasm. If the characters have previously encountered byakhee in the dungeon, subtract any that they destroyed from the total here. The byakhee are all summoned creatures and have no fear of death.

13 - South Ledge

The entirety of this area swarms with stinging bees. A creature who ends their turn in this area must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, taking 5 (2d4) piercing damage on a failed saving throw, or half as

much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails its saving throw by 5 or more becomes confused, as the *confusion* spell, until the end of their next turn. A creature wielding a source of fire such as a torch or the *produce flame* spell has advantage on their saving throw.

13a - Honey. The bees keep their hives along this stretch of ground.

Although it's dangerous to do so, a single beehive provides enough honey to feed one person for ten days.

13b - Aging. Nestled between two thick columns that hold a low part of the ceiling aloft stands a stone statue depicting a beautiful woman. She holds a baby that appears to be made from pure gold in her arms.

Encounter: Mother. The statue is haunted by the **ghost** of a serpent man, which attacks whenever someone tries to take the golden baby from the statue.

Treasure: Golden Baby. The golden baby is actually made of hollow wood with a golden outer shell. It's worth 300 gp should the characters ever find a way to sell it.

14 - Squamous

A pair of withered old serpent people mull about in this trash-filled cavern, bickering in their own tongue. Flaky, molting scales hang from their undercarriages and legs.

Encounter: Serpent People. The two **serpent people** aren't looking for a fight and aren't interested to get in one. In fact, both will offer information to the characters should the characters have something worth trading. They aren't interested in gold or jewels, but would like food, especially one of the eggs from area 17. If they are forced to fight, one of them carries a whistle that can summon 1d6 of the **byakhee** (see Appendix D) from area 12.

15 - Susurrating

The first thing the characters might notice when they enter this cave

is that it does strange things with sound.

Hazard: Strange Sounds. Treat this entire area as if it is under the effects of a *silence* spell. Then, if a creature, object, spell effect, etc. makes a loud sound—such as shouting, an explosion, *thunderclap*—the sound amplifies. When this happens, each creature in the area must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, a creature takes 9 (2d8) thunder damage and is deafened for 1 minute. On a successful saving throw, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't deafened.

16 - Stalactites

The ceilings of this cavern soar fifty feet overhead. Rows of jagged stalactites and stalagmites clutter the ceilings and floors.

Encounter: Darkmantles. Three **darkmantles** disguised as stalactites hide near the eastern egress corridor. The darkmantles wait until creatures are below them, then attack.

17 - Spawning

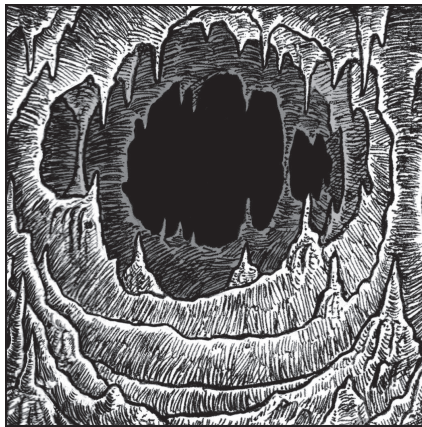
Two dozen eggs the size of watermelons rest atop broken bits of furniture, torn fabric, and other detritus. This is a spawning cave for the serpent folk that inhabit this section of the dungeon.

Encounter: Serpent People. Two **serpent people** (see Appendix D) guard the eggs in this cavern, protecting them not just from intruders, but from other serpent people as well.

18 - Illusion

A colossal snake, easily 100-feet long, lies coiled at the center of this chamber. When it sees the characters, it arches its head up and hisses.

Fortunately, the snake is an illusion put in place by Zhohli (see **area 2**). Recognizing that it's an illusion requires a DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Physical interaction with the image reveals it to be an illusion, because things can pass through it.



19 - Null

An orange-skinned tiefling wearing plate armor lies face down in the gravel. The tiefling died after his winged horse threw him from its saddle and tumbled into the chasm.

Treasure: Loot the Corpse. The tiefling is carrying a black longsword and a *javelin of lightning*. His plate mail is too dented to be salvaged.

20 - Reflective

The characters need a *red key* to open the door to this room.

A large, shimmering pool dominates this round chamber. The surface of the water perfectly reflects the room around it. However, the characters will notice that their own reflections are absent.

Hazard: Time to Reflect. Although the reflective water is interesting, the real hazard in the room is the effect it has on the physiology of creatures. When the characters first enter the room, they start to rapidly age at a rate of 1 year per minute. Because the rate is so slow, likely they won't notice right away. You might mention that they start to feel achy or one of the characters—likely a human—will notice that some of their hair is starting to turn gray. Staying a few minutes probably won't kill the characters, but if the characters complete a short rest or—Gods help them—a long rest in the room, most short-lived races will quickly meet their doom. A

greater restoration spell cast on a target that suffers from the room's aging effects within 24 hours of it happening removes the aging. Otherwise, the aging is permanent.

Optional: The Golden Child. If the characters recovered the golden baby statue from **area 13** and leave it in this room for 100 minutes or longer, the baby grows into a golden **shield guardian**. The shield guardian follows the commands of the character with the highest Charisma score as if that character was wearing its amulet. If two or more characters have the same Charisma score, have the two characters roll to determine who gains control of the shield guardian.

21 - Games

The room's northernmost doors require a *green key* to open, and the room's southernmost doors require a *blue key*. Thanks to a pair of hewn tunnels at the southeastern corner of the room, characters can still enter the room without owning either key.

This large chamber looks like it was once a temple. The snake person hieroglyphics seen in other parts of this section of The Neverending Dungeon are here, too, except this time they worship at the feet of a great lion-headed creature.

And it just so happens that this lion-headed creature is still here.

Encounter: Watch the Gynosphinx. The **gynosphinx** co-ruler of this section of The Neverending Dungeon, Watch, stands near a golden altar carved with images depicting her and the snake people who once worshipped her. How Watch reacts to the characters depends on their current level. If the characters are 11th-level or higher, Watch sees them as allies in her fight against Zhohli. The gynosphinx encourages the characters to defeat Zhohli. If they do, the gynosphinx will grant them one *wish*. The characters can even use this *wish* to escape the dungeon if they like.

If the characters are 10th level or lower, Watch sees them as interesting distractions, and asks the characters to entertain her by answering a few of her riddles. The characters have no choice in the matter. The rules to Watch's game are simple:

- Watch will ask the characters a simple riddle. The characters have five minutes to come up with an answer.
- If the characters answer the riddle correctly, they may leave Watch's chamber without any trouble.
- If the characters fail to answer the riddle correctly, Watch will eat one of the characters. The characters

can choose who gets eaten, or allow Watch to choose (Watch likes creatures who have low Dexterity scores but high Constitution scores).

Should the characters refuse to allow Watch to eat one of their own, Watch will fight them until her hit points are reduced by half or she beats the characters into submission. After Watch eats a character, the characters must attempt to answer another riddle, restarting the cycle.

Watch should ask common riddles which the characters' players should have no issue answering. Popular examples include:

- "The more you take, the more you leave behind. What am I?" Answer: Footsteps.
- "What comes once in a minute, twice in a moment, but never in a thousand years?" Answer: The Letter "M."
- "What has six faces, but does not wear makeup, has twenty-one eyes, but cannot see? Answer: A six-sided die.



- “Which creature has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed.” Answer: Man.

If the characters fight Watch, this area counts as her lair. Watch does not enjoy fighting. Thus, the old lion relies on her ability to quickly remove foes from the battlefield—such as her *plane shift* lair action or *banishment* spell—rather than fight (Watch is immune to the magical protections of the dungeon).

Secret Door. The western wall conceals the presence of a secret chamber. Watch knows of this secret door, but is unlikely to share it with the characters. Spotting the secret door requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check.

22 - Glorious

Six suits of armor stand in two neat rows in this hidden chamber. Based on the way they hunch and the shape of the helmets, these suits of armor were intended for use by serpent people. Each suit holds a halberd at its side.

Encounter: Animated Armor. If a character touches the armor or tries to take one of the suits' halberds, all six suits of **animated armor** spring to attack. The animated armors gain an additional attack option: **Halberd**. *Melee weapon attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage.

Treasure: Magic Halberd. One of the halberds exudes magic. It is a +1 *halberd* and it is cursed. Whenever a creature holding the halberd rolls a 1 on an attack roll to hit with it, the character's Intelligence score is reduced by 1d4. This reduction lasts until a *remove curse* spell is cast on the character. If this reduction reduces the character's Intelligence score to 0, they polymorph into a constrictor snake. Only a *wish* spell can return them to their true form.

23 - Teacup

Normally, a *green key* would be required to enter this room, but a series of small tunnels at the south end of the room circumvent this need.

A desiccated corpse kneels at the center of this room. Before it sits a tea set. When it sees the characters enter, it cocks its head up and asks, “Tea?”

Encounter: Friendly Mummy. The corpse's name is Bill. Bill is a **mummy**, except he is lawful good and has an Intelligence score of 10. If the characters are friendly to Bill—and join Bill for tea—Bill offers to join them on their journeys as a mummy sidekick.

Concluding the Tile

Should the characters join forces with

the serpent man sorcerer supreme Zhohli and defeat the gynosphinx Watch, the serpent people of this section see Zhohli as the true ruler of the chasm once and for all. Zhohli commands his minions to treat the characters as heroes and offers them free passage through this section without any issue—he might even offer one of the eggs from **area 17** as tribute.

On the other hand, if the characters slay Zhohli, Watch takes over as the leader of the serpent people of this layer. Under Watch's command, the serpent people become a force to be reckoned with. Within a few months, Watch's minions flood into adjacent sections of The Neverending Dungeon, expanding the ancient creature's domain. Ω



QUA-SOKO UNVEILED



DREAMS IN THE WITCH ROOM

BY DAVE HAMRICK WITH TOM CARTOS

1st-level Adventure for Fifth Edition

Cartography by Tom Cartos

Art by Matias Lazaro, Fat Goblin Games, Rick Hershey, and Shutterstock

Dreams in the Witch Room is a Fifth Edition adventure for a party of four or five 1st-to-2nd-level characters, and is optimized for four characters with an average party level (APL) of 1. Characters who successfully complete this adventure should earn enough experience to reach the 2nd level.

The adventure takes place at The Sanguine Dawn Inn, a small tavern found in the village of Ostenwold in Northern Omeria. You can read more about The Sanguine Dawn Inn in *BroadSword Monthly #8*. While this module assumes that the adventure is in the Legends of Omeria campaign setting, you can easily place it in any campaign setting of your choice. This is the first adventure in the cosmic horror adventure path, *Qua-Soko Unveiled*.

Adventure Background

Five years ago, the witch Carlita Keeling was murdered in a room at The Sanguine Dawn Inn by a party of Aspaethan Witchhunters. Not only did Keeling practice the banned magic schools of conjuration, enchantment, and transmutation, but she was also a serial kidnapper and murderer. After she died on Aspaethan spears, Keeling's body was burned on a pyre a few hundred feet from the inn. Curiously, Keeling's bones disappeared from the pyre's ashes. The witchhunters vigorously searched Ostenwold for the dead witch's bones, but never recovered them.

Recently, a Pexian scholar with interests in aberrant-geometry named Walabras stayed at The Sanguine Dawn Inn. Having read about the witch, Walabras hoped to study the witch's old room. To his surprise, Walabras immediately noticed something unusual in the dead witch's room: its angles and dimensions defied physics. And at night, as he slept, Walabras dreamt of strange cyclopean cities filled with bizarre, elder things. These

winged, barrel-shaped creatures worshipped colossal, great old ones whose shapeless forms boiled into iridescent, prolate spheroidal bubbles. Walabras woke each morning in a cold sweat. The inn's purveyors took notice of Walabras' growing anxiety.

Walabras' dreams escalated. In one horrific dream, a formless man composed of dark shadow forced Walabras to add his name to an ancient tome made of writhing worms. After signing, Walabras' dream form traveled to the throne of a great, chaotic mass whose name Walabras immediately recognized: Black Tezcatlipoca, the Night Wind. There, Carlita Keeling's ghost, her rat-thing familiar Drace Lobo, and The Shadow Man joined Walabras. Under Keeling's command, Walabras was forced to be an accomplice in the kidnapping of an infant. Waking from the nightmare, Walabras discovered his boots covered in mud. Shortly afterward, the Ostenwold town guard confronted Walabras at the inn and arrested him on suspicion of kidnapping the infant Bela Ungrist.

Immediately, the Ostenwolders demanded justice for the missing Ungrist child. Recognizing the unrest Walabras' presence caused the Ostenwolders, Regis Forlorne, the village's Captain of the Guard, tried and found Walabras guilty of kidnapping and murder. In three days time, Walabras will be hung by the neck until he is dead at the center of the Ostenwold market square.

The Dream

Parts of this adventure occur in a parallel dimension known as The Dream. In many ways, The Dream functions exactly like the Ethereal Plane. Creatures whose senses and abilities extend into the Ethereal Plane can affect The Dream (such as phase spiders and ghosts). See Appendix A for more details on traveling in The Dream.

Optional Rule: Sanity Scores

Because this adventure deals with unknown horrors and gruesome realizations, you might incorporate the optional Sanity score rules detailed in chapter 9 of the *DMG*. If you decide against using this rules variant, ignore instances where the story calls for Sanity ability checks or saving throws.

Part 1 - Introduction

At the start of the adventure, read the following:

You arrive in the town of Ostenwold, a humble smattering of homes and farms along the river Ost. A quiet peaceful hamlet with little connection to the outside world, Ostenwold boasts a comfortable population of 500 some souls who live in and around the town proper.

You've been sent by the Dinzer magic guild, Secrets of the Righteous, to investigate the kidnapping of an infant named Bela Ungrist. While kidnappings aren't a typical area of interest for the Secrets of the Righteous, the Secrets have high stakes in this crime. One of Odonburg's own, a Pexian scholar named Walabras, was recently tried and found guilty of kidnapping despite the absence of

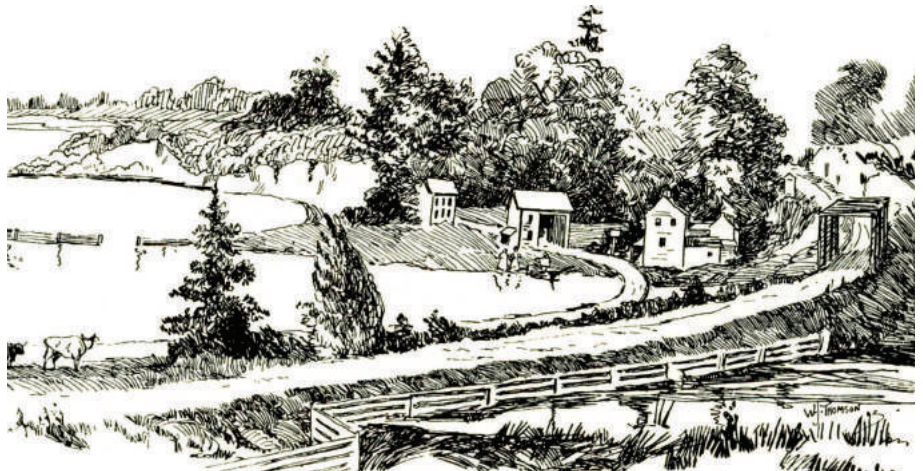
Ungrist's body. Still, not only was Walabras seen near the Ungrist home the night Bela vanished, but the mud found on his boots was the same black mud found in the Ungrist's fields. The town's Captain of the Guard, Regis Forlorne, will execute Walabras in Ostenwold's town square at noon on Autumn Harvest—that's in three days' time.

The Secrets suspect that Walabras is innocent of the crime. Walabras claims that he doesn't remember kidnapping the Ungrist child. He also suspects that he may have been mind controlled by demons. While these claims seem far-fetched, the guild trusts Walabras.

If you can prove Walabras' innocence, the Secrets of the Righteous has offered to pay 100 gp as a reward.

Currently, Walabras is being held at the Eastwatch Garrison. And before his arrest, he was staying at the town's only inn, The Sanguine Dawn. The Secrets of the Righteous have arranged for you to meet the inn's general manager Estra Bloodoak as well as the Captain of the Guard.

Once the characters have had an opportunity to settle into Ostenwold, they should start their investigation in one of two places: The Sanguine Dawn Inn or the Eastwatch Garrison.



Part 2 - The Sanguine Dawn

The town of Ostenwold was founded thirty years ago by Horst Blackfoot and Déularas Tauranis who spent their hard-earned gold to build The Sanguine Dawn Inn. At the time, the Dawn was the only safe resting place for travellers on the long march between civilised areas, and soon became a regular stopover for merchant caravans and travelling nobility.

Under the stewardship of Horst and Déularas, Ostenwold quickly grew. Horst set up the Eastwatch Garrison to keep the area free from bandits and predatory monsters, before handing over the reins to Forlorne and starting his own smithy. Déularas took on much of the work of government, until Knotside noticed the growing importance of the town and sent their own representative. Déularas returned to her day-to-day work at the Sanguine Dawn, but many of the townsfolk still look to her as the rightful leader and seek her counsel behind the back of the new mayor.

In the day time, the Dawn is a quiet place for townsfolk, travelers, and adventurers to unwind. At night, the Dawn explodes with music and vitality as the Ostenwolders come together to drink away their daily woes.

Encounters in The Sanguine Dawn Inn are keyed to the maps of The Sanguine Dawn Inn found on pages 25, 27, and 28. Some of the location descriptions include a section on “Dreams in the Witch Room.” Ignoring those sections, you can use The Sanguine Dawn Inn’s details outside of this adventure and insert it into any campaign you like.

Investigations at the Inn

The employees at The Dawn gladly grant the characters access to Walabras’ room (see The Sanguine Dawn Inn below). Estra Bloodoak, a stern, half-elf woman, acts as the inn’s manager. Despite her gruff look, she’s kind and assists the characters any



The Sanguine Dawn Rumors.

d8	Rumor
1	Five years ago, a murder happened in one of the rooms upstairs. Supposedly, the woman was a witch. They say she still haunts those who stay in the “witch room.”
2	Patrons claim they’ve seen a large rat crawling around the inn. It has the face and hands of a human.
3	The town of Ostenwold was set up by the retired adventurers Déularas Tauranis and Horst Blackfoot. Neither one is still involved in day-to-day politics anymore, but Déularas still manages the inn while Horst runs a smithy to the east.
4	The Dinzer scholar they imprisoned supposedly kidnapped the Ungrist’s baby. I’m not surprised—he was acting very peculiar during his stay in the old “witch room.”
5	Regis Forlorne runs the Eastwatch Garrison. He’s a mean spirit who’s been known to have prisoners “go missing” under his watch.
6	Anyone who goes down into the inn’s cellar claims that they feel electricity in the air. One of the inn’s former employees swears they saw a spider made of lightning floating around down there.
7	The inn’s owner, Déularas Tauranis works out of the private dining room in the room south of the tap room. That’s where she meets with the citizens of the town who still look to her as the de facto leader.
8	The whole town has been on edge for months. Lots of strange things going on here. Many of Ostenwold’s citizens are excited to see an execution, too, which is probably the reason why Captain Forlorne fast-tracked Walabras’ trial.

way she can. She openly admits that she is not the owner of The Sanguine Dawn. Instead, a woman named Déularas Tauranis acts as the owner. Déularas will meet with the characters if asked, but prefers to stay out of the way, working from the inn’s private dining room (area 5).

The characters can also interview employees and regular patrons at the inn. A character who spends at

least 1 hour speaking with patrons and employees can make a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check. On a success, choose or roll randomly for one of the rumors that they learn on The Sanguine Dawn Inn rumors table above. If they succeed on a roll by 5 or better, they can learn two rumors, and if they succeed on a roll by 10 or better, they can learn three rumors.



General Features

The Sanguine Dawn Inn is a two-story half-timbered building that rests in the shadow of Mount Camor. The ceilings on the ground floor are twelve feet high and braced with massive timbers rumored to have been laid in place by friendly hill giants (not true). The upper floor's ceilings are ten feet high. Nearly every room has windows which allow natural light to illuminate the inn during the day. Candles and torches keep the inn well lit in the evening.

Doors. Doors are seven feet high and made of thick, sturdy wood with metal hinges and locks. All of the

doors upstairs and the door to the private dining room (area 5) are kept locked during most hours. As the Inn never truly closes, the outside doors are left unlocked.

A locked door requires a character with proficiency in thieves' tools to succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity check to pick. Alternatively, a door can be broken down with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. The Dawn's doors have AC 15, 18 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Staff. During the day, the inn is staffed by five employees, not counting Déularas who spends her time in

the private dining room meeting with locals. Two servers work the bar and floor of the tap room while the inn's chef, Hahvuk Donkhem, puts together plates in the kitchen. The fourth employee is the Inn's housekeeper who tends to the upstairs rooms. The fifth employee is the inn's general manager, Estra Bloodoak.

At night, the staff doubles: four servers/bartenders in the tap room, two housekeepers upstairs, and two cooks in the kitchen. Estra usually works the early part of the shift but takes off just at midnight. Hahvuk works through the dinner rush then starts drinking at the bar shortly thereafter.

Hahvuk and Estra are both lawful neutral human **nobles**. The servers and housekeeper are neutral human **commoners**. Déularas is a neutral elf **veteran**.

Patrons. In the daytime, there are 2d8 patrons present in the tap room, enjoying breakfast, lunch, or an early drink. Most of the patrons are **commoners**, but it's not unusual for **bandits, thugs, scouts, spies, nobles** (passing merchants), or **guards** (members of the local militia) to be found here. The upstairs rooms are usually empty by noon.

At night, the inn explodes. On any given night, there are 6d8 patrons in the bar, eating, drinking, and making merry. Most are still **commoners**, but the number of **bandits, thugs, scouts,** and **spies** increases significantly. As such, the Inn hires a **guard** to work the night shift to help out when things get bad. Fortunately, the Ostenwolders are good about self-regulating and handling "problem folks."

Room and Board. The Sanguine Dawn Inn qualifies as a modest inn. It costs 5 sp per night to stay in one of the inn's rooms (regardless of the number of beds in the room). A single meal at the Dawn costs 1 sp (3 sp for the day). Stabling a horse costs 5 sp.

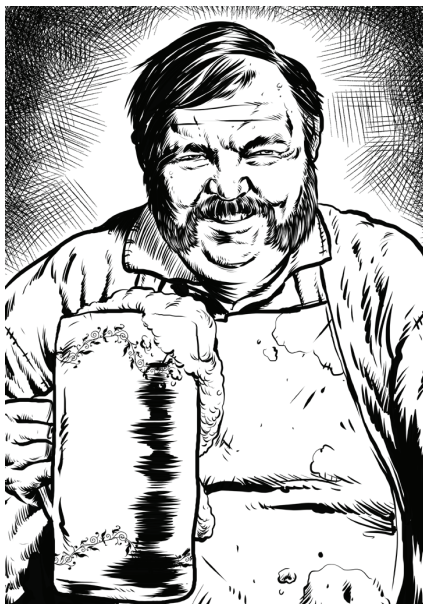
Upstairs, nearly all of the rooms are booked by the late afternoon. The Inn only has two spots for horses in its stables, both of which fill up fast.

1 - Front Porch

A wooden porch wraps the northwestern-facing front of The Sanguine Dawn Inn. Non-perishable supplies too heavy to run off with are stored here.

2 - Tap Room

The tap room is split into two distinct sections: the eastern tap room (2a) and western tap room (2b). Unless the tavern is unusually busy, the tap room's surfaces are kept relatively



clean, even at night.

2a - Eastern Tap Room. The eastern tap room always fills first as it's the one with direct access to the bar and privy.

2b - Western Tap Room. Live music graces the western tap room six nights per week. There is no live music on Suruk. The only time there is music in the day time is during major celebrations.

2c - Storage. A small closet to the left of the bar holds the bar's cleaning supplies, extra tables, and non-perishable spirits.

2d - Stairs Down. This landing divides the tap room and the kitchen. A flight of stairs leads down to the inn's basement, **area 12**.

2e - Stairs Up. Stairs that lead upstairs to **area 8** divide the bathroom and tap room. Linens, chairs, and other items too heavy to run off with are kept tucked under the stairs.

3 - Kitchen

Stone plates and bowls full of comfort food fly out of this kitchen most hours of the day. Two hours before midnight, the staff shuts down, cleans up, and sets up stock for when the kitchen reopens at dawn.

Key to the Cellar. The key that

opens the padlock to the cellar (see **7b**) is kept hanging on a hook by the back door.

4 - Bath and Privy

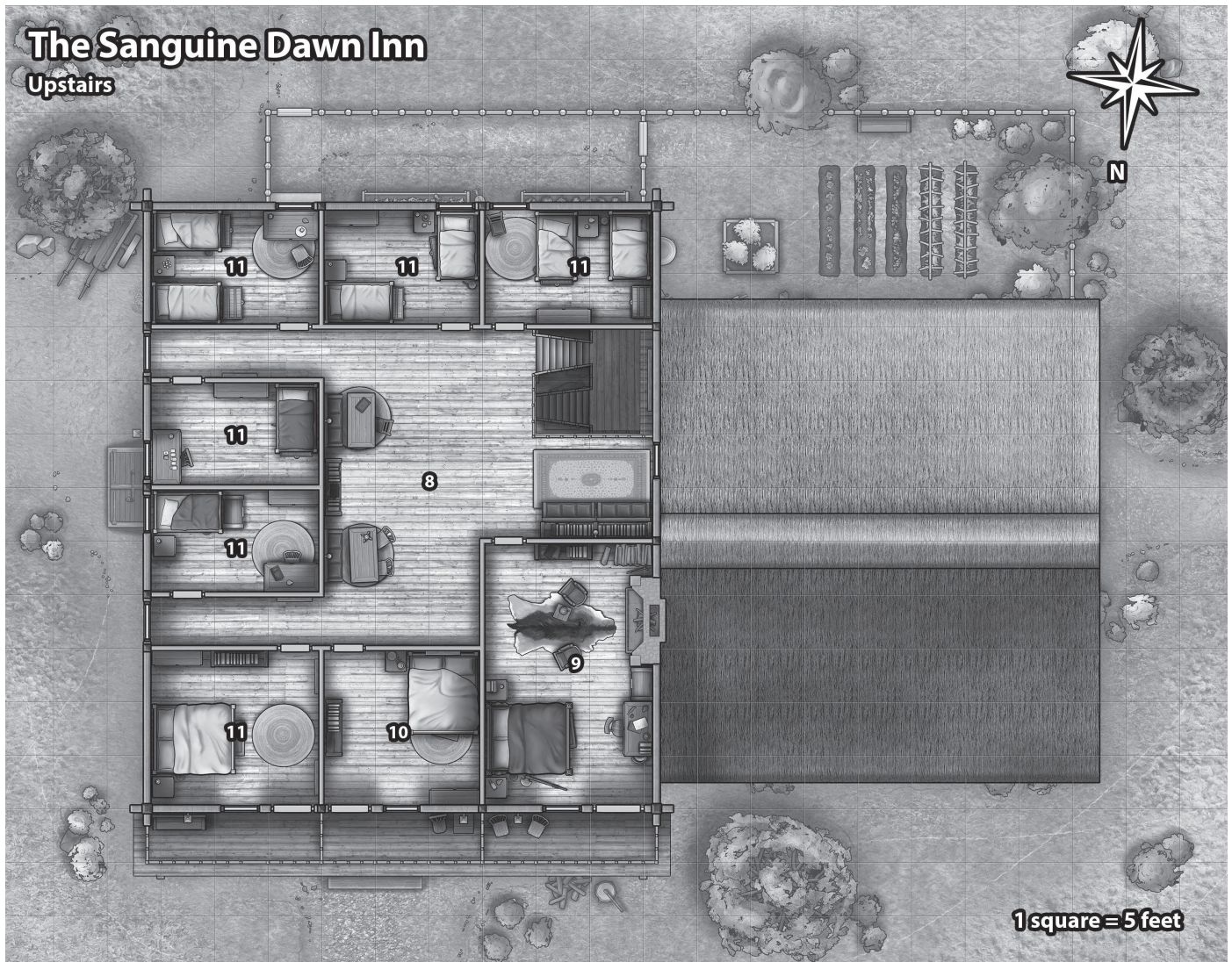
Tenants and patrons alike share this two stall bathroom. At night, one can expect a 10-person-deep line to the toilets that stretches out into the stairwell (**area 2e**). Experienced lodgers know to use the facilities before the inn gets crowded for dinner.

5 - Private Dining Room

Originally, this room was supposed to be used to host important nobles and merchants passing through Ostenwold. In the last decade or so, Déularas has converted the area into her office. As the de facto leader, Déularas spends her days meeting with townsfolk and addressing their concerns.

Secret Door. The bookcase on the eastern wall disguises the presence of a secret door. A character who succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check notices that the door is there. Then, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the door can be opened by removing a book titled *Rare Birds of Northern Omeria* by Duda Weysevain. The secret door hides a small compartment with a trapdoor. The trapdoor leads down to the inn's strong room (**area 13**).

Dreams in the Witch Room. Unbeknownst to most of the people who live in Ostenwold, Déularas Tauranis is a secret worshipper of Karakal, the god of fire. When the Witchhunters of Aspaeth killed Carlita Keeling, Déularas stole the witch's bones and hid them in the inn. Those bones are still in a magical lockbox on the western wall. The lock box is *sequestered* against divination magic and it is *arcane locked*. Attempting to open the box without a key requires a successful DC 25 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools. Similarly,



a DC 30 Strength check using a tool like a crowbar is needed to break the box open. The box is immune to damage. Removing Keeling's bones and destroying them is the only way to permanently destroy Keeling. See Part 5 for details.

6 - Southern Gardens

The inn's chef Hahvuk Donkhem tends to the gardens on the southern-facing side of the building.

6a - Herbs and Succulents. Smaller plants are kept in easily accessible window boxes near the kitchen's rear door.

6b - Vegetable Garden. Hahvuk's

vegetables, the stars of his dishes, are grown in this garden. A hen named Bangle waddles around the garden, keeping it free of harmful insects.

7 - East Side

The eastern side of the building has two main points of interest.

7a - Stables. The inn boasts two covered stalls for horses. The horses are tended to by Estra Bloodoak.

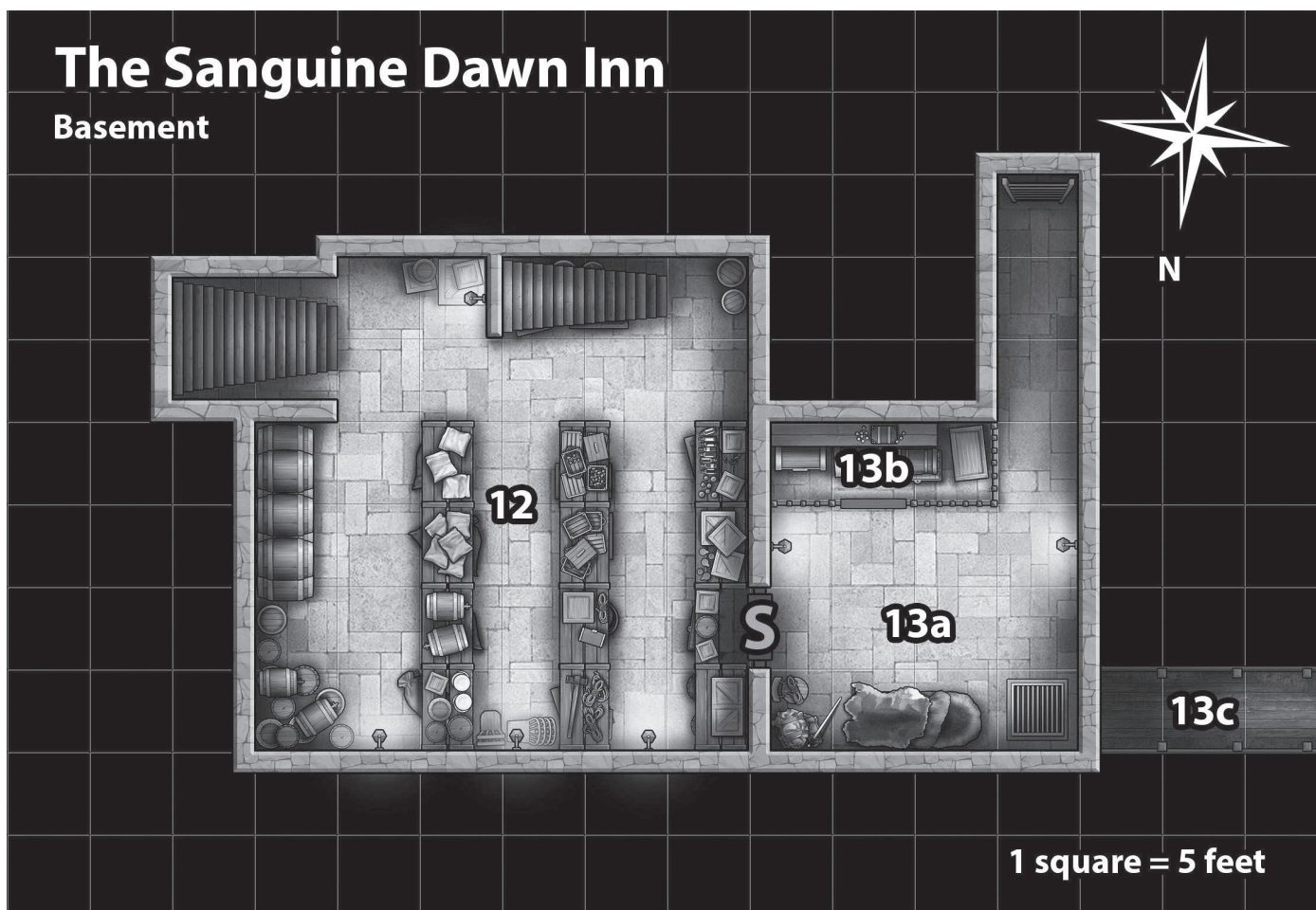
7b - Cellar Door. Deliveries enter the inn through its cellar door. The door is kept chained and padlocked most of the day. The only key to the padlock is kept hanging on a hook in the kitchen (area 3).

8 - Upstairs

At night, it's not uncommon for customers who want to escape the noise downstairs to flee to the booths and quiet sitting places of the upstairs hallway. Estra prefers that only customers paying for rooms at the inn use this area.

9 - Déularas' Chambers

The inn's owner Déularas claims this room as her own. The room offers a large, Queen-sized bed, writing desk, and bookshelf. Additionally, it's the only room with its own fireplace. Both doors into this room are kept locked even if Déularas is in the room.



It's rare to find Déularas here in the daytime, as she prefers to work out of the private dining room (area 5). If anyone tries to break into this room, Déularas responds aggressively.

Treasure. Déularas keeps Sunderer, her trusty *+1 greataxe* beside her bed. A locked chest on the wall (it has the same stats as the doors) contains 200 gp, Déularas' *+1 splint*, a heavy crossbow, a steel case containing 30 crossbow bolts, and a backpack that contains the contents of an explorer's pack as well as two *potions of healing*.

10 - Room of the Dead Witch

If you aren't running the Room of the Dead Witch adventure, this room is a normal room at The Sanguine Dawn, no different than those detailed in area 11.

Dreams in the Witch Room. At first glance, this room doesn't appear to be much different than the rest of the rooms at The Sanguine Dawn Inn (see area 11). However, a character who succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check notices that the room's dimensions and angles seem to defy natural geometry. Upon this bizarre realization, have the character make a DC 10 Sanity saving throw. If the character fails, they are afflicted by a form of short-term madness (see Chapter 8 of the DMG for details).

Five years ago, the witch Carlita Keeling rented this room at The Sanguine Dawn Inn. During her month-long stay, Keeling posed as an entomologist, claiming to study the butterflies in the area. In reality, Keeling was a worshipper of the

ancient evil god Black Tezcatlipoca. Secretly, she started to cast conjuration spells which bent and altered the dimensions of the room. These transmutations granted her access to a dimension parallel to The Real called The Dream. There, Keeling could make direct contact with her dark god. Keeling kidnapped Ostentwolders, dragged them to The Dream, and sacrificed them to Black Tezcatlipoca.

The witchhunters who tracked and killed Keeling never discovered the changes she made to the room. She protected her incantations with the *arcantist's magic aura* spell. Over time, the masking illusions faded. A character who performs a *detect magic* spell in the room detects the faint presence of conjuration, illusion, and transmutation magic. An *iden-*

tify spell cast on the walls or floor of the room reveals that the *arcanist's magic aura* spell is still present, but fading. The spell masks the presence of an invisible portal that connects any creature that sleeps in this room to The Dream.

At some point while the characters are investigating this room, one of the characters (your choice, or the one with the highest passive Perception score) feels as if something is watching them. Carlita Keeling's **rat-thing** (see Appendix D) familiar, Drace Lobo watches the characters from The Dream version of this room. Lobo reports the presence of the characters back to her mistress.

If and when the characters decide to sleep in this room, refer to Part 5 for details on what transpires.

11 - Inn Rooms

The inn has seven rooms available for tenants. At night, it's rare that the rooms are vacant, and even more rare when a single tenant rents a room for longer than a single night. Most lodgers at The Sanguine Dawn Inn are transients.

Each room contains one or more beds, a footlocker, and usually a desk or wardrobe.



12 - Cellar

The cellar is loaded with supplies used by all parts of The Sanguine Dawn Inn's business. Unlike the building above, the cellar's floors

and walls are made of dressed stone blocks. The only way into the cellar is through the narrow stairway that leads up to **area 2d** or by the wider staircase that leads outside, to **area 7b**. The latter exit is kept locked from outside.

Dried goods, casks of ale and wine, building supplies, linens, tools, and more can be found here.

Secret Door. The westernmost shelf masks the presence of a secret door that leads to Déularas' strong room. Finding the door requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. Then, a character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers that twisting the lid of a small barrel kept on the shelf unlocks the door.

13 - Strong Room

All of the inn's earnings are stored here in Déularas' strong room. Only Estra, Hahvuk, and Déularas know about this room, although some of the inn's employees suspect it exists.

Dreams in the Witch Room. The strongroom is guarded by a **minion of Karakal** summoned by Déularas' to protect the inn's treasure. The minion remains in The Dream and is invisible to creatures who can't see into The Dream or the ethereal plane. If anyone other than Estra or Déularas attempts to enter the strongroom without one of them present, the creature attacks.

The minion uses the **will-o'-wisp** stat block, except that it is a Medium elemental, it has 5d8 hit dice (its hit points are unchanged), and it can use its action on each of its turns to enter The Dream (Ethereal Plane) from the Material Plane, or vice versa. If the minion is destroyed in The Real, it is also destroyed in The Dream and vice versa.

The first time a character sees the minion, they must make a DC 10 Sanity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the character is fright-

ened for 1 minute. The character can repeat its saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on themselves with a success. A character who succeeds on their saving throw or the effect ends for it, does not have to make Sanity saving throws when confronted by minions of Karakal ever again.

13a - Go Bags. In case Déularas and her staff need to flee and Déularas can't reach her chambers upstairs, she keeps a second go-bag here. The bag contains the contents of an explorer's pack with two *potions of healing*. There is also a suit of non-magical splint mail, a longsword, and a shortsword kept here, too.

A narrow corridor at the south side of the strongroom connects the storeroom to the hidden compartment in the inn's private dining room (**area 5**).

13b - Cage. After each shift, Estra counts the till, bags the profits, and places the deposit in this cage. The cage is made of iron bars. The door is kept locked and only Estra and Déularas have the key to get in. Picking the door's lock requires a successful DC 18 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools, or can be broken open with a successful DC 23 Strength (Athletics) check. The cage has AC 18, 25 hp, resistance to piercing damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Treasure. Currently, the cage holds 1,050 cp, 2,500 sp, 1,000 gp, and 30 pp in various chests and bags. It goes without saying that stealing this treasure will make a bitter enemy out of Déularas and her allies.

13c - Escape Route. There is a grate in the northwestern corner of the room that hides the presence of an escape route. The escape route is a 5-foot-high, 5-foot-wide earthen tunnel braced by wooden timbers. The tunnel's west end emerges in a grassy knoll 60-feet west of the inn; the exit is hidden by a camouflaged trapdoor.

Part 3 - The Eastwatch Garrison

A short walk from the inn, Eastwatch Garrison houses the local guard barracks and jailhouse. The half-elf Captain of the Guard and Justice Keeper, Regis Forlorne, is a by-the-books militant type who demands perfection from his recruits. Forlorne is a lawful evil half-elf **veteran**; as a half-elf, Regis has darkvision out to 60 ft. At any given time, the garrison is operated by 10 **guards**, all under Forlorne's command.

Hardly a man of values, Forlorne accepted a bribe from the Secrets of the Righteous to allow the characters to meet Walabras. He only allows the characters thirty minutes to speak with Walabras and not a minute longer.

Interviewing Walabras

Walabras (NG male human **noble**) is a Pexian scholar who specializes in aberrant geometry. When the characters first meet him, it's clear that his stay in the garrison has not been an easy one. Forlorne and his men have been working him over to uncover the location of the missing Ungrist child. His left eye is swollen shut, he has multiple abrasions and cuts on his nose and cheeks, and he's even missing a few teeth. Furthermore, Forlorne has been intentionally starving Walabras, only feeding him a few moldy scraps of bread each day. When the characters meet Walabras, he has only 1 hp and two levels of exhaustion.

Walabras tells the characters all he knows. Unfortunately, his trips to The Dream and meetings with Carlita Keeling are hazy (learn why in Part 5). Here is what he remembers:

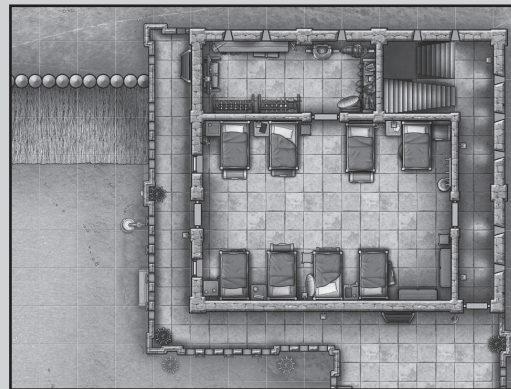
- The room where he stayed at The Sanguine Dawn Inn is unnatural. Anyone who sleeps in the room will find themselves instantly transported to a parallel dimension Walabras calls The Dream.

More Eastwatch

For a full map and more information on the Eastwatch Garrison, check out Tom Cartos' Patreon at www.patreon.com/posts/eastwatch-28520883



SCAN ME



- Walabras suspects that the spirit of a dead witch named Carlita Keeling is trapped in The Dream.
- With the help of her familiar, a horrific human-faced rat named Drace, and a man composed of pure shadow, Keeling used enchantments to force Walabras to capture the Ungrist child and bring it to The Dream.
- Keeling will sacrifice the child to her dark god, Black Tezcatlipoca, on the night of Autumn Harvest.

Although Walabras fears for his life, he fears more for the Ungrist babe's wellbeing. Unless the characters travel to The Dream and save the child, Keeling will kill the baby on the night of the Autumn Harvest, the day before Walabras' scheduled execution.

Part 4 - Getting Too Close

At some point during the characters' investigation, they are accosted by a group of six masked strangers. Where this happens is up to you, but likely, the encounter occurs on a side street, the woods, or anywhere away from prying eyes.

The group consists of six **bandits**. The bandits were given orders to confront the characters and attack them, but not kill them—their employer wants only to scare the characters away from the investigation. If any

of the bandits are killed, the group's morale breaks and they take off in multiple directions. They aren't getting paid enough to put their lives on the line.

If the characters capture one or more bandits, an interrogation reveals that the bandits know very little. They truthfully claim that they were paid 10 gp each by someone named "Mister Morose." Mister Morose only gave the bandits a description of the characters and where they could be found. From there, he told them to "scare them away, but don't kill them. Tell them that if they don't stop investigating the Ungrist kidnapping, bad things will happen."

Should the characters report the bandits to the local authorities, Forlorne jails the bandits, but lets them free after 24 hours, claiming that all the evidence the characters have against the bandits is hearsay and not worthy of a just trial.

Plus, Forlorne is secretly the one who paid the bandits to attack—wearing a disguise, of course. Forlorne has nothing to do with the Ungrist crime. He simply wants an "easy win" with Walabras' execution, which has made him quite popular with his fellow Ostenwolders. He recognizes that the more the characters search for the truth, the more complicated the case gets.

Part 5 - Dreams in the Witch Room

Eventually, the characters should recognize that the room where Walabras stayed at The Sanguine Dawn Inn holds the answers that they seek. Estra gladly allows the characters to stay the night in the room for free—she hasn't been able to rent it since Walabras' arrest.

As soon as a character falls asleep, they enter The Dream. Characters who do not require sleep (such as elves) cannot enter The Dream this way and must find a way to fall unconscious before they can travel to the alternate dimension.

See Appendix A for rules governing adventuring in The Dream.

The Sanguine Dawn Inn (The Dream)

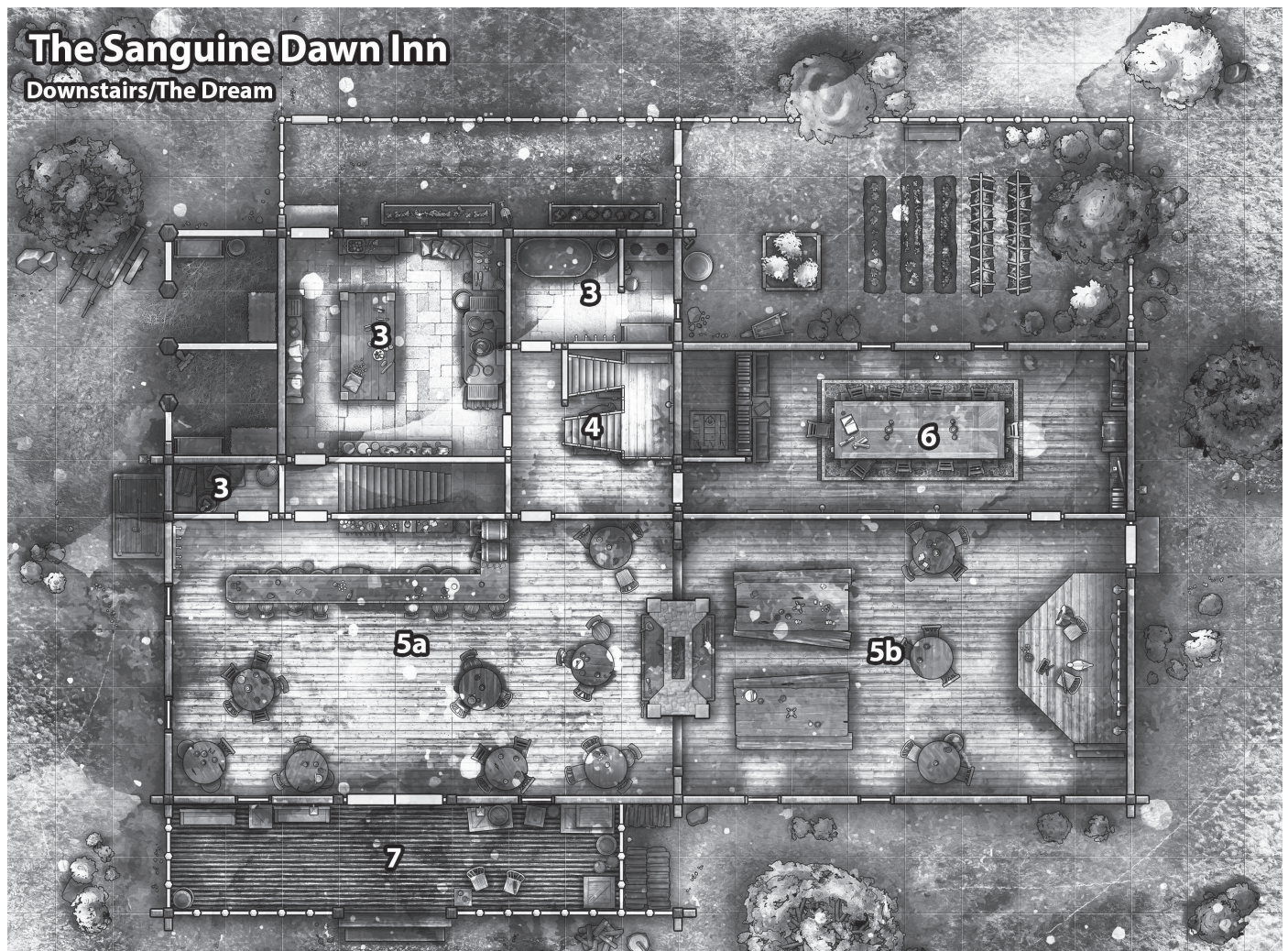
The characters awake in the The Dream version of The Sanguine Dawn Inn. Immediately, they should recognize that they are in an alternate dimension. If this is a character's first time traveling to The Dream, they must make a DC 10 Sanity saving throw or enter a daze. The daze lasts for 1 hour of The Dream time. While dazed, the character can't take reactions and they have disadvantage on all of their ability checks.

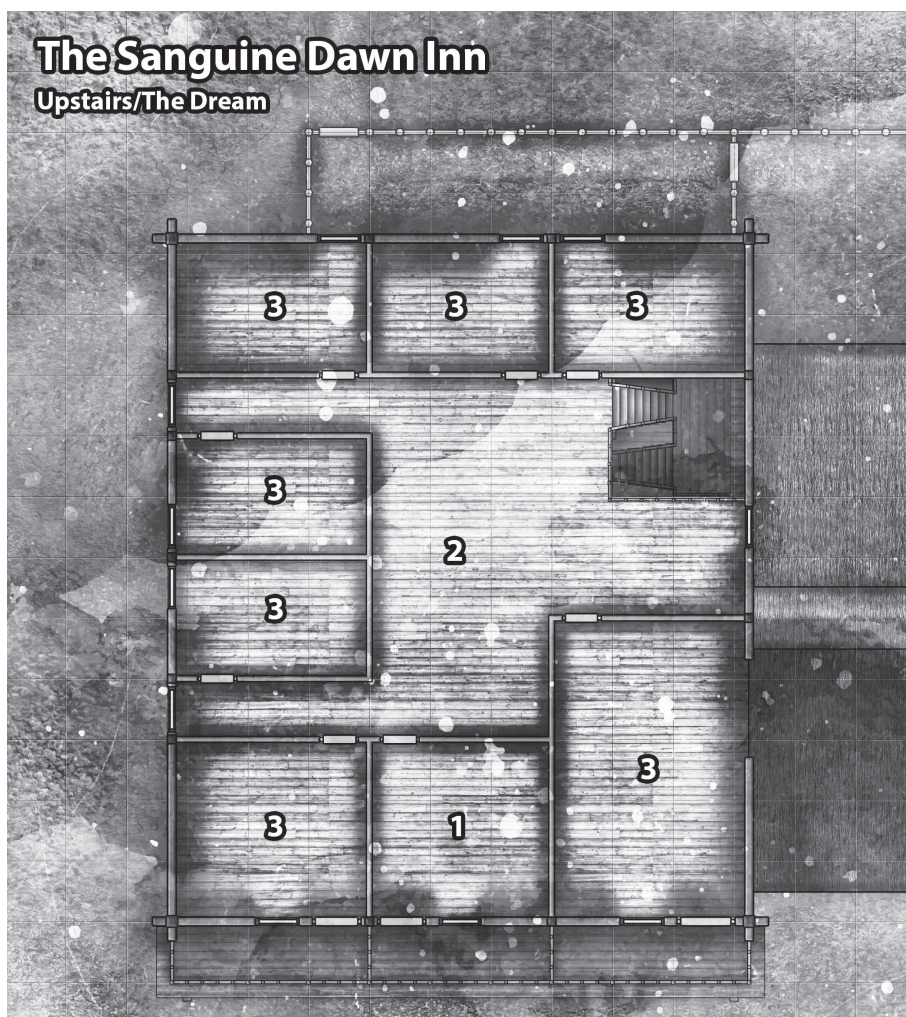
More or less, The Dream version of The Sanguine Dawn Inn has the same general features as The Real's Sanguine Dawn Inn, albeit all of its furniture is missing. There are also

no patrons present, although creatures with truesight can see the patrons and missing furniture as if they were there. None of the doors in the inn are locked, and the secret doors are clearly visible in this realm. Note that this may betray the locations of the inn's secrets which the players may wish to address during their return to The Real.

Characters who gaze out a window or open one of the inn's doors discover that the inn is stranded on a floating moat over a great, luminescent canyon of dream stuff thousands of feet below. Unusual creatures of all types drift through the air, most of which aren't interested in the characters.

The following encounters are keyed





to the The Dream version of The Sanguine Dawn on pages 31, 32, and 33.

1 - Room of the Dead Witch

The characters first appear in the dead witch's old room. If they listen at the door, they will hear the sounds of the spawn of the outer gods in the hallway outside.

2 - Larvae of the Outer Gods

Three **larvae of the outer gods** (see Appendix D) drift sleepily through the room. The three creatures immediately take an interest in the characters and approach with intent to alter their forms.

3 - Empty Room

There is nothing of interest in this room.

4 - Stairwell

The first time the characters enter this area, they can hear Carlita Keeling's proselytizing in **area 5b**. Once they travel beyond this area, if they aren't careful, the characters will alert Keeling to their presence.

5 - Tap Room

The tap room is empty. Not even the bar remains. In **area 5b**, the permanent dream form of Clarita Keeling stands on an empty stage. At her feet lies Bela Ungrist in her physical form. The child wails in fear as Keeling draws a curved dagger from her robes.

A hunched-over figure composed of dark shadows watches from the corner of the room. The luminescence prevalent throughout The Dream los-

es its majesty near the shadow man as his very presence seems to alter The Dream's substance.

As soon as Keeling sees the characters, she snarls in defiance and turns her magic against them. Keeling is a neutral evil **cult fanatic**. Like the characters, she exists only in dream form in The Dream. She has a flying speed of 30 feet and gains a +2 bonus to her AC, saving throws, and attack rolls. Keep her hit points the same—however, if her hit points are reduced to 0, Keeling does not return to The Real. Instead, her dream form returns in 24 hours with all of its hit points. Only by destroying Keeling's bones (see **area 5** of The Sanguine Dawn) will the characters permanently end Keeling's reign. Her CR is 3 (700 XP).

Joining Keeling is her **rat-thing** familiar (see Appendix D), Drace Lobo, in its physical form. Drace stays hidden at the start of combat, but then looks for opportune moments to rush in and attack. If Drace takes damage, the rat-thing flees into a hole in the wall and doesn't return.

The shadow man watches the encounter but does not engage. Whatever it is, it is immune to all damage and conditions. It almost seems as if the creature is nothing more than an illusion. Still, a creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the shadow man and can see the shadow man must make a DC 15 Sanity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature is afflicted by a form of long-term madness. When the battle ends, the shadow man vanishes.

6 - The Darkness

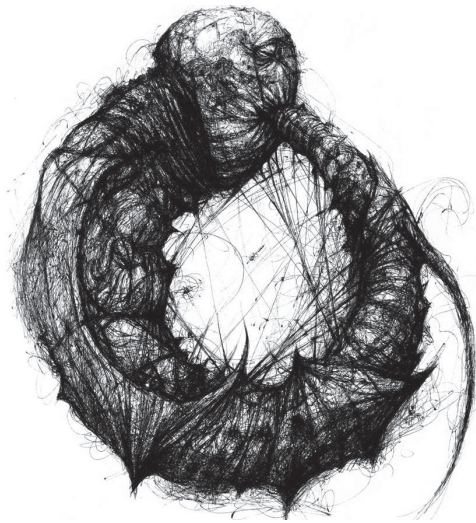
A blob of dark, writhing energy hovers over the floor right near the door. If a character looks closely enough, they can see Carlita Keeling's screaming face within the blob. Witnessing this requires a DC 10 Sanity saving throw. On a failure, the character is afflicted with a form of short-term madness. The energy is emitted by the presence of Carlita Keeling's bones.

The Sanguine Dawn Inn

Basement/Dream



If Keeling's bones are removed from its location in The Real or destroyed, the blob is not present. Destroying Keeling's bones is the only way to permanently destroy the witch.



7 - The Night Wind

Characters who step out onto The Sanguine Dawn's porch in The Dream get their best look at the maddening landscape of The Dream. Somewhere beyond a distance immeasurable, an unholy abomination bellows.

Its writhing, black tentacles twitch among the pink and amber clouds. It stares back with a solitary, burning eye—Black Tezcatlipoca, the Night Wind stirs!

Any character who witnesses Black Tezcatlipoca from this vantage point must make a DC 20 Sanity saving throw. On a successful saving throw, the character is frightened for 1 minute. The character suffers the effects of the frightened condition even if they cannot see Black Tezcatlipoca. On a failed saving throw, the character is afflicted by a form of indefinite madness.

8 - Cellar. Like much of The Sanguine Dawn, the cellar is empty. However, the presence of Déularas' bones is obvious now that the shelves are missing. Déularas' **minion of Karakal** (see **area 12** of The Sanguine Dawn Inn for details) still haunts this area. Unable to tell the difference between The Real and The Dream, it attacks creatures who attempt to pass the threshold to the "strongroom" side of the cellar. Destroying the minion in The Dream destroys it in The Real, too.

Concluding the Adventure

The only true way to defeat Carlita Keeling is to recover her bones from the lockbox in the inn's dining room and destroy them. Once destroyed, Carlita's dream form becomes vulnerable. Even if her dream form isn't destroyed, she withdraws, knowing that she must come up with a new plan.

If the characters return the Ungrist babe to her family, the family is grateful. The Ungrist's elder, Brandon, awards the characters 50 gp for their efforts and promises them a favor. Should the characters fail to locate the Ungrist babe, the town continues mourning.

Only by finding the child and returning her to her family will Captain Forlorne release Walabras from the Eastwatch Garrison, thereby liberating him from his fate at the Ostenwold gallows. If this happens, Forlorne asks the characters to join them for the occasion, all the while warning them that he'll be "keeping both his eyes on Walabras and the characters at every turn."

When Forlorne and the characters arrive at Walabras' cell, they discover something horrible: Walabras is dead. Not only that, but there is something punching its way out of Walabras' chest. After a few seconds, the half-human half-rodent head of Drace Lobos peers out of Walabras' ribcage, covered in blood, snarling—it shrieks in its tiny voice "Black Tez! Black Tez! The Night Wind stirs!" Any character who witnesses this terrifying event must succeed on a DC 12 Sanity saving throw or become afflicted with a form of short-term madness.

Disgusted, Forlorne pushes past whoever stands nearby and throttles the vile creature with his bare hands.

The adventure path continues in Chapter 2 of *Qua-Soko Unveiled: The Atrophy of Flesh*. Ω



THE ATROPHY OF FLESH

BY DAVE HAMRICK WITH TOM CARTOS

2nd-level Adventure for Fifth Edition

Cartography by Tom Cartos

Art by Matias Lazaro, Rick Hershey, Maciej Zagorski, and William McAusland

The Atrophy of Flesh is a Fifth Edition adventure for four to five characters of 2nd to 3rd level, and is optimized for a party of four characters with an average party level (APL) of 2. Characters who complete the adventure should earn enough experience to reach the 3rd level.

The adventure takes place in the hamlet of Ostenwold in northern Omeria. Although the adventure text assumes placement in the Legends of Omeria campaign setting, you can easily place this adventure in any campaign setting of your choice. This adventure is the second chapter of the ***Qua-Soko Unveiled*** adventure path.

Adventure Background

Thirty years ago, two retired adventurers, the human Horst Blackfoot and the elf Déularas Tauranis, chose to settle down and start the town of Ostenwold. Under the stewardship of Horst and Déularas, Ostenwold quickly grew. Horst set up the Eastwatch Garrison to keep the area free from bandits and predatory monsters, before he handed over the reins in order to start his own smithy, The Clenched Fist. There he lived with his wife Sasha and son Eran.

Ten years after Ostenwold was founded, many of its young men were called to arms in the war known as The Attack of Regrets. This included Eran Blackfoot. While most of the Ostenwold boys returned home from the war, Eran was killed in combat. Eran's death split the Blackfoot family. Sasha left Horst to return to her family in the east while Horst turned to the bottle. Horst's friends watched the man fall apart. His business fell to shambles and he rarely emerged. But then, one day something changed. Horst stopped drinking and the business turned around. The Ostenwolders, glad to have their smith back, never questioned the sudden change. Instead, they welcomed the giant-of-a-man back with open arms.

Interestingly, the same day Horst changed his ways was the first time a conservative anti-conjuration group known as The Sons of Aspaeth started gathering at Ostenwold's Sanguine Dawn Inn for their annual conference. Also, young adventurers traveling in the area started to vanish, never heard from again.

Could this all be connected?

Adventure Hook

The characters are either in the town of Ostenwold (following the last adventure set here) or traveling through the area. A cry for help draws their attention—a young, would-be hero named Abol Stig needs help.



Part 1 - Save Abol

While traveling through the forest near the town of Ostenwold, the characters hear a cry in the forest. "Help! Someone! Anyone!" If the characters investigate, they find a young man cornered by a pair of horse-sized boars.

Read the following:

A young man lies with his back on the ground. A fresh wound at his side spills blood onto the rocks and sand. Two horse-sized hogs with razor-sharp tusks squeal and snort nearby. Although the man is able to fight off their advances with kicks and swings of his broken mace, he won't be able to fight them off much longer unless someone intervenes.

The young man's name is Abol Stig (N male human **thug**). Abol fancies himself as an adventurer. Unfortunately, his stubbornness often gets him into more trouble than he can handle—case in point, he's drawn

Optional Rule: Sanity Scores

Because this adventure deals with unknown horrors and gruesome realizations, you might incorporate the optional Sanity score rules detailed in chapter 9 of the *DMG*. If you decide against using this rules variant, ignore instances where the story calls for Sanity ability checks or saving throws.

the ire of a pair of **giant boars**. The boars are protecting their two shoats who linger by the treeline (treat the shoats as normal **boars**). The shoats don't enter combat.

Seeing the adventurers, the giant boars turn their attention to the better equipped heroes. Both boars fight until one or both of their hit points are reduced by half or fewer. They then run, ensuring that their shoats are ahead of them. However, if the characters attack the young pigs, the parents fight until the death.

Once Abol is safe, he thanks the adventurers for their assistance. Poor, Abol laments that his mace is broken. The mace was his father's, who was also an adventurer. Abol asks the characters if they will accompany him to the local blacksmith, Horst Blackfoot, and help him pay for the damaged weapon. Even if the characters don't agree, he asks if they will accompany him. If the characters agree, the next scene takes place at The Clenched Fist blacksmithy, home of Horst Blackfoot.

Roleplaying Abol

Much of this adventure revolves around Abol and his misadventures as a hero. Although Abol is stubborn and determined to be a hero, he is friendly, kind, and thoughtful. The players should like the kid—and potentially even pity him. Playing him as a sap or as a rude jerk may turn the players off from helping him which could potentially derail much of the adventure path.

Part 2 - The Clenched Fist

If the characters saved Abol from the boars and agreed to help him get his mace repaired, Abol leads them to The Clenched Fist blacksmithy. The Clenched Fist is run by a giant of a human, Horst Blackfoot. Some say he has frost giant's blood in him, but his thick black beard suggests otherwise. His wares are well renowned for their quality, but even so his home is luxuriously decorated for a humble blacksmith. This is largely thanks to the secret pit fighting arena in his basement.

When Abol and the characters arrive at the Fist, they discover Blackfoot (N male human **gladiator**) speaking with a well-to-do human **noble** in his early 40s named Ikher Rhodon. Rhodon has just rented Blackfoot's cabin north of Ostenwold and Blackfoot is handing him the keys.

Read:

The two-story smithy building clings to the southside of the River Ost. A large, shaggy dog with a friendly face greets you with curious barks. The southside of the smithy building is roofed but open-air, giving you a clear view of the smith's workplace. A massive coal forge dominates the southwall and a four-foot tall steel anvil stands just a few feet away. Horseshoes, sword blades, and armor plates crowd every surface.

A giant of a man covered in soot—likely the smith himself—notices you approaching and waves. He's currently locked in a conversation with a man whose silk attire screams privilege and wealth. The blacksmith hands the noble a key and a folded piece of paper, the two shake hands, the noble departs passing you and Abol as he goes. Although the man has an air of snootiness around him, he seems friendly enough.



Blackfoot welcomes the adventurers and Abol to his shop. Thanks to his keen smith's eye, he immediately points out Abol's cracked mace. "Looks like that mace has been doing what it's supposed to!" he jokes. Blackfoot notes the craftsmanship, complimenting it, "Fine work, son." Abol informs Blackfoot that it was his father's.

If the characters ask who the noble was, Blackfoot shares that it's a man named Rhodon. Rhodon and his wife have rented Blackfoot's cabin while they are in town for a conference on arcane law being held at The Sanguine Dawn Inn.

Blackfoot tells Abol that he can have the mace repaired in twenty-four hours. The smith waves away any payments, stating, "Keep your coins, lad. Working on a beautiful mace like this one is payment itself. You're better off spending the coins at the inn."

Abol, recognizing that he will have to stay the night in Ostenwold, agrees. If the characters don't know where The Sanguine Dawn Inn is located, Blackfoot offers directions.

The Clenched Fist smithy is detailed further in part 5 of this adventure.

Part 3 - No Vacancies

When the characters arrive at The Sanguine Dawn Inn, they discover that the place is stuffed with visitors, all with purses fat with coin. Unless the characters already had a room booked, the inn's general manager Estra Bloodoak informs the characters and Abol that the inn is completely booked for the night. Furthermore, the town's residents have been renting their rooms to other travelers.

According to Bloodoak, the group is here for a conference on arcane law and are members of a guild called "The Sons of Aspaeth." The Sons of Aspaeth believe conjuration of all types should be permanently banned throughout all of Omeria, including simple spells such as *mage hand*, *fog cloud*, and *unseen servant*.

The Sanguine Dawn Inn

The Sanguine Dawn Inn is Ostenwold's famous stopover point for travelers and merchants and is heavily featured in the adventure *Dreams in the Witch Room* in this issue of *BroadSword Monthly*. Maps of the inn can be found earlier in this issue.

The Sons of Aspaeth have rented out the private dining room south of the tap room. Normally, the doors to this room are kept locked, but the inn's owner Déularas Tauranis has given over access to the conference's organizer, a charming man named Peonthy Altar.

For their troubles, Bloodoak offers a free ale at the bar. Abol gladly takes Bloodoak up on her offer and grabs a seat next to one of the bar's servants, Alice, who just ended her shift. Right away the two hit it off.

Mingling at The Sanguine Dawn

While Abol and Alice flirt, the characters have an opportunity to get to know The Sanguine Dawn Inn's tenants. All seven of The Dawn's rooms are booked by nobles and their servants. Assume that each room has at least one noble per room. Rooms with more than one bed also have a thug bodyguard or commoner servant present. Most of the nobles are men, but there are a handful of women present as well.

Before evening falls, the majority of the nobles are downstairs in the tavern. There are eight **nobles**, six **thug** bodyguards, and four servant **commoners**. The tavern also boasts its normal crowd of **commoners**, **bandits**, and **thugs**. The handful of servants (**commoners**) who manage the crowd are all extremely busy and have barely a minute to speak.

Chatting with The Sons of Aspaeth. The Sons of Aspaeth all claim to come from different parts of Omeria. There are a fair number who hail from the ultra-conservative nation of The Summer Land, as well as those who actually come from Aspaeth far to the south. The Sons explain that the Kingdoms of Man—particularly the Knotside Region where Ostenwold is located—have rejected the continental ban on the three "evil" magics, enchantment, conjuration, and transmutation.

Most of the nobles seem friendly—even if a little extreme in their world views. This should present a strong opportunity for the players to roleplay. Those who try to argue with the Sons may even find themselves in heated debates. Moreover, the Sons despise casters who specialize in the forbidden schools such as wizards who specialize in enchantment, conjuration, or transmutation. Naturally, sorcerers and warlocks are also loathed. To avoid being rude—and thereby drawing attention to their true nature (see Part 5)—The Sons quietly excuse themselves whenever they discover that they are in the presence of someone who disagrees with their opinions.

Chatting with the Staff. If the characters manage to get a word in with the inn’s busy staff, the staff can share a few revelations.

First, this isn’t the first time The Sons of Aspaeth have met in Ostenswold. The group travels here each year, stays for 3-5 days, then leaves.

Overall, The Sons of Aspaeth have been friendly to the staff, even if they do come off as “right-wing nutjobs.” They tip well, always say “please and thank you” and if it seems like they’re about to enter an argument, they politely excuse themselves from the debate. A few of the staff members don’t trust The Sons, particularly the housekeepers. They feel that The Sons “aren’t who they say they are and can’t be trusted.” Abol’s friend, Alice, shares a similar sentiment.

Nearly all of The Sons of Aspaeth carry the same green leather bag. If The Sons are asked what’s in the bag, they explain that it’s the learning tools needed for the conference. The Sons have also shared that only a few of their meetings are in the inn itself. In fact, they have an off-site meeting soon at a cabin that they’ve rented for a few days. The characters might remember that the blacksmith Horst Blackfoot rented his cabin to one such noble.

If the characters prod enough, they learn a few odd things about The Sons. For example, one of the housekeepers claims she saw a strange, brass mask in one of The Sons’ green bags. The inside of the mask was laced with herbs and had a pleasant floral smell to it. One of the servers overheard a pair of The Sons describing something called “Atrophy of Flesh.” When the pair noticed that the server was listening, they quieted themselves and separated.

“We Meet Again...”. At some point, Ikher Rhodon joins the crowd along with his wife, Hashara. The pair are flanked by two bodyguards (LE human **thugs**). If the characters saw Ikher at Horst Blackfoot’s smithy, Ikher immediately recognizes them and introduces himself and his wife. Like the other members of The Sons of Aspaeth, Ikher plays the role of an anti-conjuration noble with aplomb. He corroborates the other Sons’ story of having a cabin wherein The Sons



can meet in peace. Both Rhodons are NE human nobles.

Meeting Peonthy Altar. The conference's organizer, Peonthy Altar, moves through the crowd, shaking hands, buying drinks, and glad-handing. Overall, Altar is likable, charming, and kind. Of course, this is all a ruse—Altar is actually a disguised **incubus** named Ginororin. Right away, Altar tries to learn all he can about the adventurers and Abol. He prods with a few questions to fact-find, specifically looking for “loners.” Examples include:

- “How long have you been in town?” and “How long are you staying?”
- “How are you liking the town so far? Made any friends?”
- “What made you come to Ostenwold?”

Altar and the other nobles want to find strong contenders for the fights that transpire below Blackfoot's smithy. He prefers that they are not in any way connected to the citizens of the village, nor part of a large group. Thus, while some of the characters might be enticing, Abol is a much better target as the young man travels alone and has no formal ties to Ostenwold or its people.

To ease over any suspicions that might arise from his questions, Altar offers a round of drinks. He apologizes if he comes off as nose-y. “The Sons of Aspaeth are always on the lookout for new recruits. Conjuraton has long plagued Omeria, and we, The Sons of Aspaeth, hope to find similarly minded folks to join our cause.” He then excuses himself and leaves the inn, explaining he needs to prepare for this evening's lecture, which he claims is titled “*Mage hand*—a helpful ally, or a seductive tool of the *danaavrakti*?”

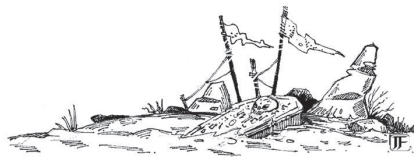
Abol Goes Missing. After the characters have had a chance to mingle around the bar, chat with The Sons, and meet Peonthy Altar, the barmaid, Alice, comes up to one or more of the characters and asks if they've seen

Abol. The last she saw Abol, he was speaking with one of The Sons (your choice, but ideally one or both of the Rhodons). Alice excused herself to use the restroom, and when she returned, both he and The Sons that he was talking to were gone.

Like many of the staff at The Sanguine Dawn Inn, she suspects that some of The Sons are up to no good and worries about Abol.

If the characters ask anyone other than The Sons if they saw where Abol went, someone shares that they saw Abol depart with a few of The Sons. Abol seemed drunk as he left and The Sons seems to have him “wrapped around their finger.” As far as where they went, they don't know. This information makes Alice even more nervous. She's heard that The Sons have rented a cabin that belongs to the blacksmith Horst Blackfoot. Although she's never been there, she has a rough idea where it is and can provide directions.

The characters may not want to draw too much attention to themselves as they depart the tavern and head for Blackfoot's Cabin.



Part 4 - Where's Abol?

Blackfoot's cabin is a small, three-room building roughly half a mile north of Ostenwold. Blackfoot's adult son Eran used to live there before he was killed during The Attack of Regrets. Since then, Horst Blackfoot has rented out to travelers who need a space away from the village proper.

Currently, the cabin is being rented by Ikher and Hashara Rhodon. If the Rhodons convinced Abol to leave with them, they are currently here. If there was no way for the Rhodons to escape, you can replace them with another pair of nobles of your own creation.

Horst Blackfoot's Cabin

Blackfoot's cabin is made from titanic logs laid atop each other. Moss was inserted between the logs to prevent nature from creeping in. Inside, the beamed ceilings are 10 feet high at the highest point. Two sets of strong wooden doors offer entry into the living area, and a single door plus a pair of wooden double doors grant access to the adjoining workshop. These doors are always kept locked. A locked door requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools to pick, or a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to break down. Doors have AC 15, 18 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. The Rhodons have a key for all the cabin's doors.

To the rear stands a simple, lean-to outhouse. During the day, the various windows around the structure allow plenty of natural light. At night, the stone fireplace illuminates the front room while candles and lanterns bring light to the rest of the building.

The encounters below are keyed to the map of the cabin on page 39.

1 - Approach

A narrow creek winds past the north side of the property where a narrow trail connects the cabin to the main road. Although the creek is hardly a hazard, a pair of narrow planks bridge the gap for those who don't feel like hopping over it.

While traveling to the cabin, a character who succeeds on a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check notices five pairs of boot tracks that lead to the cabin.

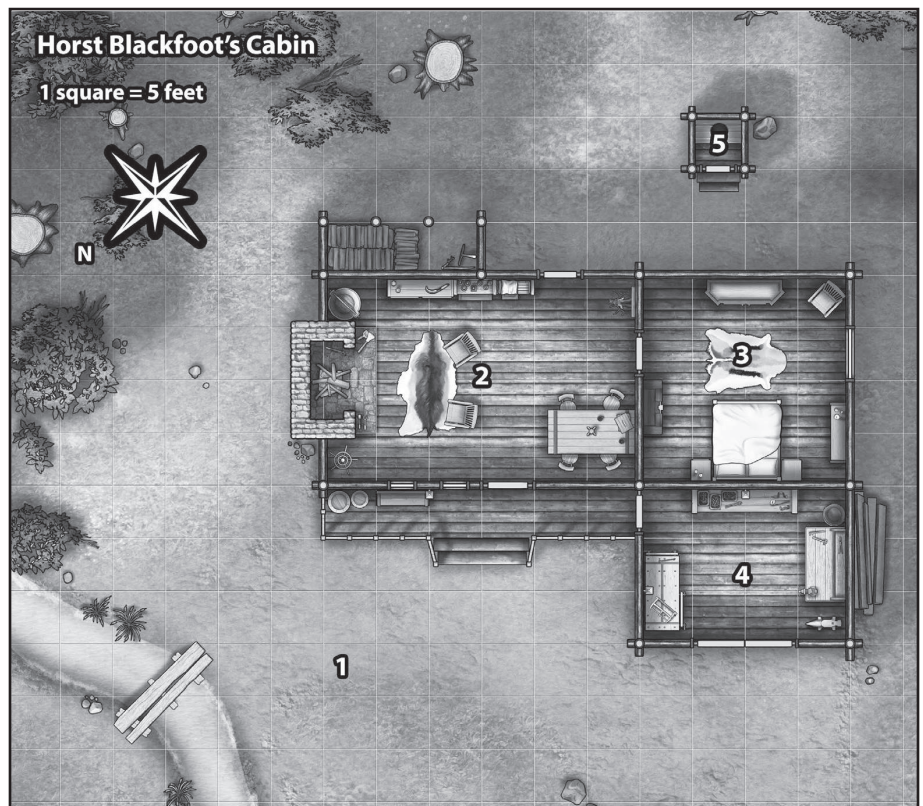
Lookout. Regardless of the time of day that the characters arrive, one of the Rhodon's **thug** bodyguards keeps watch from the cabin's front porch. The thug keeps their heavy crossbow loaded but out of sight. Unless the characters are careful, the thug calls out to the characters, questioning their reason for coming to the cabin.

The thug asks loud enough to alert the Rhodons inside (**area 2**) as well as the other thug currently relieving himself in the outhouse (**area 5**).

After one round, Ikher Rhodon steps onto the porch to see what the commotion is all about. Ikher first tries diplomacy to dissuade the characters from investigating Abol's disappearance. If pressed, Rhodon may even share that the young man was with them, but left after he and the Rhodons shared a few drinks in the cabin (the tracks around the cabin tell a different story—Abol's footprints enter the cabin but don't exit).

“Join Me For a Drink?” Rhodon wants the characters to join him and his wife for a glass of wine inside. If the characters agree, he invites them into the cabin (**area 2**) and pours each a drink. Have Rhodon make a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check contested by the characters' passive Perception checks. If the characters succeed in the contest, they notice Rhodon slipping poison into their drinks. Characters who drink Rhodon's poisoned wine must make DC 13 Constitution saving throws or be poisoned for 1 hour. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target is also unconscious while poisoned in this way. The target wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake. Once poisoned, the Rhodons command the thugs to knock the characters out with their maces (using non-lethal damage). The characters then wake bound and gagged in the workshop (see **area 4**).

“Take Them Out!” In the likely event the characters see through Rhodon's invitation for drinks, Rhodon wastes no time commanding his bodyguards to attack. The thug on the porch draws his crossbow and opens fire, using the porch as half-cover. Meanwhile, the second **thug** sneaks around the rear of the house, sniping with his own crossbow. Rhodon rushes inside and locks the doors. He



and Hashara both grab light crossbows and fire from the living room's windows. They move, fire, then move again, granting themselves full cover when they do—even while exposed, they gain three-quarters cover from the window.

Surrender. The two thugs are loyal and fight until killed. The Rhodons (both NE human **nobles** armed with light crossbows), however, aren't as fanatical and surrender as soon as one or both of them take enough damage to reduce their hit points to half or less.

Fearing for their lives, the Rhodons share that the young man, Abol, did in fact come to the cabin where they poisoned him. Once poisoned, two other members of The Sons of Aspaeth drug him away through the back door (the tracks confirm this).

The Rhodons explain that The Sons of Aspaeth is just a cover. They are actually a cult dedicated to the Demon Qua-Soko, an avatar

of pestilence and decay. Each year, “The Sons” travel to Ostenwold to pay tribute to the vile demon by offering a sacrifice in the form of a young, able-bodied warrior. This event is called “The Atrophy of Flesh.” Abol was selected by The Sons' leader, Penonthy Altar, to represent the flesh.

The Rhodons can't say for sure where Abol is located, but know where he will be later that evening—in the basement of The Clenched Fist blacksmithy. That is where Abol will be sacrificed to Qua-Soko. The pair warn that the smithy will be well-guarded, and not just by the cultists. Qua-Soko's pestilent servants will be there as well.

“The best way to get past the guards,” Ikher says, “is by wearing one of the masks.” Ikher shares that he and his wife have brass masks that they wear while participating in the Atrophy of Flesh event. The masks are kept in the bedroom (see **area 3**).

2 - Living Room

The cabin's living area boasts an impressive stone fireplace, comfortable furniture, and other embellishments similar to those found at The Clenched Fist. If a fight breaks out, the Rhodons use this room to stage their defense (see **area 1**).

Treasure: Coin Purses. Both of the Rhodons each carry a coin purse with 10 pp inside. They will use these coins to "buy their freedom" if necessary.

3 - Bedroom

This simple bedroom is dominated by a plush-looking queen-sized bed, 6-foot tall wardrobe, and wooden vanity.

Treasure: Masks and Robes. The Rhodons' green leather bag is stowed under the bed. The bag holds four brass masks and four robes for the Rhodons and their bodyguards. The masks have small compartments for storing sweet-smelling potpourri. While wearing a mask with fresh potpourri, a humanoid is immune to the effects of the Stench trait (such as those caused by dretches and ghosts). If playing with more than four characters, you might include extra masks and robes for their benefit.

4 - Workshop

The workshop is kept locked. Inside, Blackfoot stores extra tools and wares that he doesn't keep at his shop.

If the Rhodons get the jump on the characters and knock them unconscious (either by poisoning them or bludgeoning them with maces) the characters awake in this area after one hour. All of the weapons and gear will have been stripped away and stored in the living area.

Outside, they hear the Rhodons speaking with their bodyguards (if they're still alive).

We're headed for the smithy. Once we're there, we'll ask Altar what he thinks we should do with them. Likely, he'll want to extend The

Atrophy of Flesh. Keep an eye on them until we get back.

The Rhodons then leave with one of the bodyguard thugs. The second bodyguard stays to guard the characters in the workshop. If the characters escape and defeat the thug, they should recognize that they need to head for The Clenched Fist smithy where they will find the Rhodons and the other cultists.

5 - Outhouse

A simple outhouse stands on the southside of the cabin. There's nothing of interest here, but if the characters filled themselves on drinks at the tavern before coming here, they might be happy to find a quick spot to relieve themselves.



Part 5 - The Atrophy of Flesh

Regardless of what happens at Horst Blackfoot's cabin with the characters and the Rhodons, the characters should eventually return to The Clenched Fist smithy. Once night falls, "The Sons of Aspaeth" arrive wearing their masks and robes. The cultists enter through the living room and cross it, descend the stairs, and take seats around the secret arena downstairs.

The Clenched Fist

The Clenched Fist is a two-story wooden building. Inside, its ceilings are 10-foot high. Sturdy wooden doors are placed throughout in 7-foot-high frames. A locked door requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools to pick, or a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to break down. Doors have

AC 15, 18 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Horst has keys to all the doors.

During the day, natural light floods the structure's rooms from its many windows. At night, candles and hung lanterns illuminate most areas.

The encounters described below are keyed to the maps of The Clenched Fist on pages 41, 42, and 43.

The Atrophy of Flesh. This location can be used in any adventure of your choice as a typical blacksmith (albeit one with a secret pit-fighting ring below its floorboards). Sections dedicated specifically to the *The Atrophy of Flesh* adventure are separated from the rest of the text to make cutting those events from the location easier for you.

1 - Approach

During the day, Horst Blackfoot's mastiff Shane greets visitors with friendly barks. Unless the weather is poor or Blackfoot is taking a rare day off, he can be seen in his outdoor workshop.

The Atrophy of Flesh. At night, Horst Blackfoot and his dog are nowhere to be seen. Instead, a pair of thugs guard the front door to the smith's shop and living quarters. If the characters are wearing the masks and robes of the cultists, the thugs allow them past without so much as a word. However, if the characters approach without disguising themselves, the thugs prepare their weapons for an encounter. No amount of deception, intimidation, or persuasion will convince the thugs to let anyone not wearing the masks and robes of the cult into the smithy.

A noisy fight may draw the attention of the spectators downstairs.

2 - Workshop

During the day, Horst Blackfoot stays busy in his outdoor workshop. At night, all valuable goods are removed from this area and stored inside.

3 - Shop

Horst Blackfoot puts his heart into everything he makes. He then sells his wares here, in this shop, during daylight hours. All of the weapons and armor listed in the *PHB* can be purchased here at their normal rates along with any other iron or steel items from the Adventuring Gear section (crowbars, pitons, spikes, etc.)

Most nights, the shop's doors are kept locked.

The Atrophy of Flesh. In this adventure, the front doors are unlocked to allow the masked cultists access to the event.

4 - Storage

Wares not displayed out front are stored here, including items for which Horst is currently making repairs.

Most nights, the door that leads to the basement stairs (4b) is kept locked.

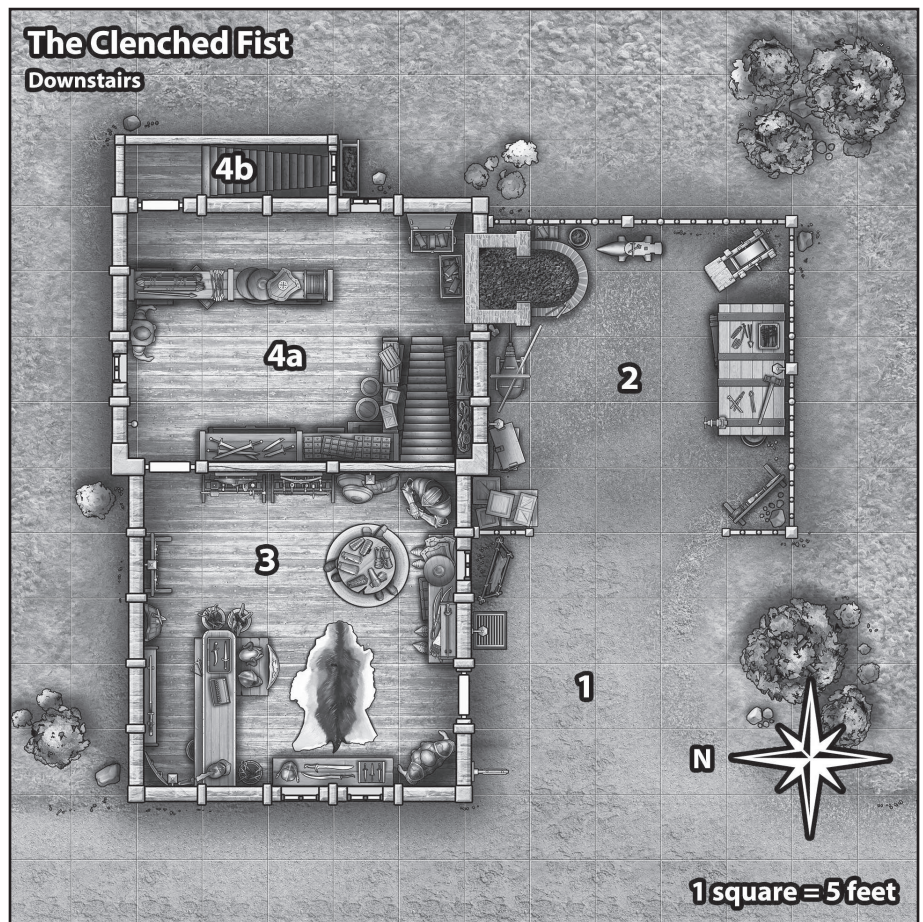
The Atrophy of Flesh. The door that leads to the basement's stairs is open during the night of *The Atrophy of Flesh*. Characters who set foot in this area can hear the chants and prayers of the cultists coming from **area 8**.

5 - Kitchen and Dining

When he's not working, Horst Blackfoot lives a humble life. By no means a great cook, Horst still knows his way around the kitchen. Friends that Blackfoot invites into his home sometimes join him for meals in this room.

The Atrophy of Flesh. As the cultists gather in his basement, Horst Blackfoot enjoys a drink with a strange guest—the **ghost** of his dead son, Eran. If the characters enter this area, Eran returns to *The Dream* (Ethereal Plane) and Blackfoot sighs.

Blackfoot's face betrays an expression of guilt and exhaustion. It doesn't take much for him to explain the events happening below the Smithy. After his son Eran died in *The Attack of Regrets* twenty years ago, Horst's wife left him to return to her family



in Steel Church. Horst's life fell into shambles. Soon, his business started to fall apart as he drank away his losses. Eventually, a man named Peonthy Altar approached Horst with a proposition. If Blackfoot allowed Altar to use the basement of the smithy to host an event for his friends one night per year, Altar would conjure the spirit of Eran that same night. Blackfoot agreed and Altar delivered on his promise.

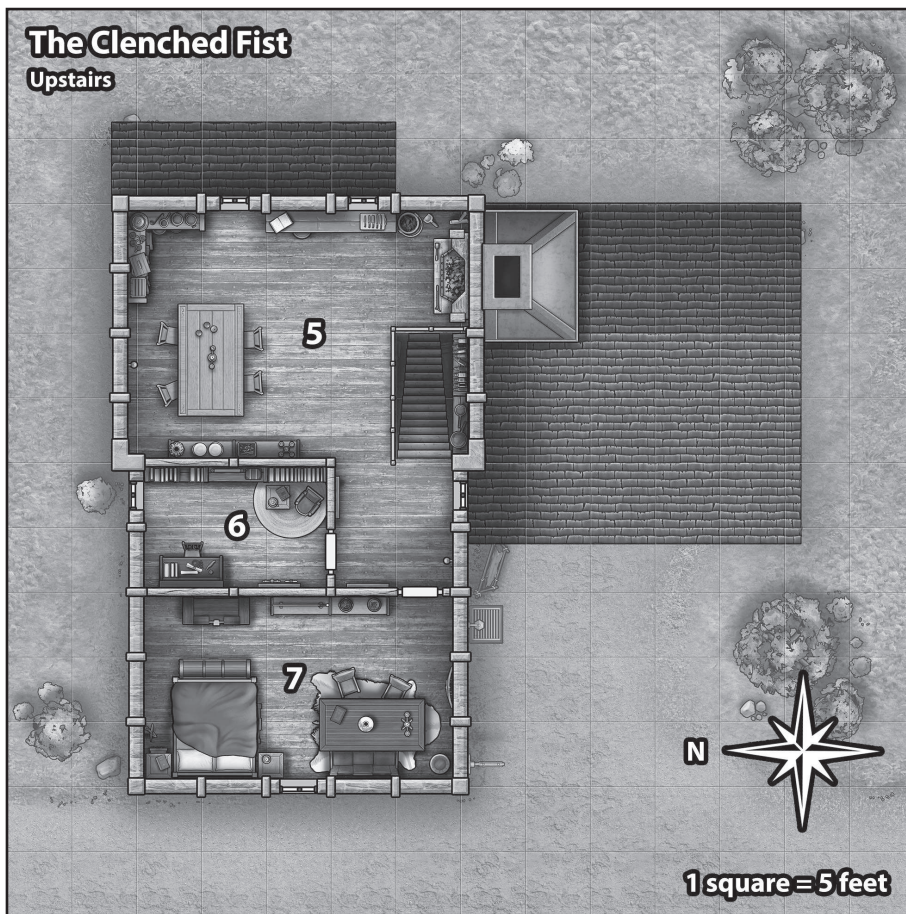
In the ten years since Blackfoot agreed to Altar's arrangement, he's willfully ignored the horrors that transpire while Altar and the cultists gather in his basement. However, Blackfoot knows that Altar is evil. Blackfoot's seen masked and robed cultists descend the stairs. He's seen young men and women enter the basement never to return. He's heard

their screams. Blackfoot continues to tell himself that he's doing it all for his son. But he knows that he's made a horrible mistake—he's selfishly traded away the lives of other sons and daughters just to have a few moments with his own.

Blackfoot does not want to fight the characters. If they attack, he accepts his fate (although, the **mastiff** Shane might not). He does ask that the characters do what he could not—stop Peonthy Altar and *The Atrophy of Flesh*.

6 - Study

Blackfoot is a blacksmith, but that doesn't mean he's dimwitted. Having acquired a formal education in Knotside, Blackfoot enjoys history and nature. This small library contains all his favorite selections as well as a few popular fiction novels.



Treasure: Hidden Stash. A character who searches the bookshelf and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a small box containing a small stash of coins. In all, there are 50 gp and 10 pp.

7 - Bedroom

Horst Blackfoot and his ex-wife Sasha shared this room for a decade before she left. Now, Horst sleeps here alone. The room boasts a large, four-post bed with a wide chest at its foot. A six-foot-tall wardrobe stands against the eastern wall. Next to the wardrobe is a display case that holds Horst’s old adventuring sword, *Silencer*.

Treasure: *Silencer*. *Silencer* is a +1 greatsword. Although the sword isn’t sentient, it only responds to those it deems “strong enough to wield it.” A creature whose Strength score is less than 15 cannot lift *Silencer* from

its perch (as if it were an *immovable rod*). Taking this item from Blackfoot may invoke his wrath depending on how friendly and understanding the characters have been with him up to this point.

8 - The Ring

Unbeknownst to anyone in Ostenwold, Horst Blackfoot hides a pit-fighting ring in his basement. The ring itself is made of canvas and wood. The entire ring is illuminated by a large lantern that hangs from a chain above it. Ten tables with chairs surround the ring (8d), offering plenty of room for spectators. Visitors enjoy drinks and snacks from a bar tucked into the northeastern corner (8b).

During the day, this room is usually devoid of people. During the night fights, however, it thrives. A lone bodyguard (**thug**) stands by the door

that leads upstairs (8a) to prevent uninvited riff-raff from joining the fray. A small table against the southern wall allows a bookie (**bandit**) to take bets and check invitations. Finally, a bartender and server work the room together (**commoners**).

The Atrophy of Flesh. So long as the characters are disguised, the thug that stands guard by the door allows them entry without any trouble. Instead of a bookie, the person working the table against the south-wall checks invitations. The characters will all find invitations in their robes—the invitations are for the Rhodons and their two bodyguards, who the host assumes they are. The host shows the adventurers to their table just southwest of the ring.

The tables and bar are crowded with dozens of masked spectators. Eight masked **nobles** joined by six masked bodyguards (**thugs**). In the north-western corner of the room, there are six masked **ghouls**—servants of Qua-Soko. While the other spectators cheer from behind their masks, these undead remain suspiciously quiet.

Of course, the characters’ attention should be on the stage. Abol Stig sits on a wooden stool in the northeastern corner of the ring. Abol wears only a pair of trousers. His hands have been taped like a bare-knuckle boxer. Despite the unusual situation in which he finds himself, he appears to accept it (he is currently being charmed by the incubus Peonthy Altar/Ginororin).

In the opposite corner stands a foul-looking hunchbacked creature with mold-green flesh—a **ghast**. The ghast’s tongue swings from its mouth, dripping foul-smelling yellow saliva into a small pool on the ring’s canvas. Its rotten smell would normally torment the senses, but the spectator’s potpourri-filled masks spare them the stench.

Peonthy Altar stands between Abol and the ghast. Once the characters settle in at the Rhodon’s table, he begins.

Read:

The dashing human at the center of the stage raises his arms.

“Welcome! Welcome!” the man shouts to a chorus of cheers from the masked spectators. “Welcome all of you wonderful people to the tenth annual Atrophy of Flesh. In the name of the lord of pestilence, Qua-Soko, we offer another fight to pit the strength of flesh against the atrophy of undeath. So far, we have witnessed nine young souls—strong! And proud!—stand vigilant against Qua-Soko’s gracious servant Chourzuq!”

The green-skinned creature in the corner raises its claws and snarls. The crowd goes wild.

“And each time, we have witnessed the flesh fail. But perhaps tonight will be different?”

The crowd boos.

“No, no, friends. Tonight we have our greatest challenger yet.” The announcer walks over to Abol. Abol sheepishly stands as the ring announcer places his hand on his shoulder.

“Say, friend,” says the announcer.

“What is your name?”

“Abol Stig, sir.”

“Abol... do you think you have enough strength—nay!—enough courage to defeat the ghost Chourzuq in a test of might?”

Abol nods vigorously. The crowd boos. The announcer waves them quiet.

“Yes, my son. We are all anxious to see how you fare against Chourzuq. We’ve watched this ghost defeat nearly a dozen men just as strong and brave as you. And each time we watched them fall.”

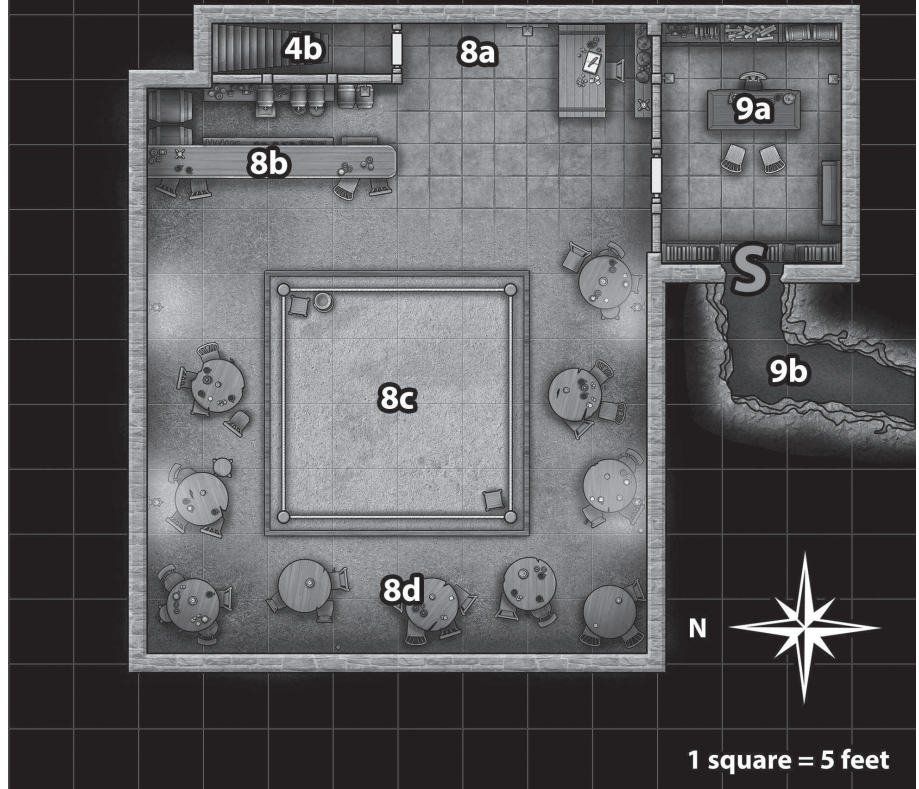
“I’m not afraid,” replies Abol.

“Of course not. And remember—if you defeat Chourzuq, not only will you leave with your life intact... but we will award you 500 gp for your efforts.”

Abol nods, pounding his right fist

The Clenched Fist

Basement



into his left palm.

“Very exciting!” says the announcer smiling. “So without any further ado, ladies and gentlemen, let’s get this fight started!”

The ring announcer steps away from the ring. He grabs a steel triangle and wand from the edge of the stage and rings it, signalling the start of the bout.

Play the battle out as normal except Abol has nothing but his fists as weapons and bare flesh to protect him. His AC is 10. In place of his normal weapon attacks, he can make an **unarmed strike** (+4 to hit, 3 bludgeoning damage). Abol is already accustomed to the ghost’s smell, so he won’t need to make saving throws to avoid the Stench.

Abol is clearly no match for the ghost. If the characters don’t get

involved, the ghost first tries to paralyze Abol with its claws. Succeeding at that, it then proceeds to ravage the young man while he is incapacitated. If Abol’s hit points are reduced to 0, the humans in the crowd cheer while the masked ghouls reveal themselves and roll onto the stage. The ghost and ghouls then dine on Abol’s flesh while the spectators chant “Qua-Soko!” over and over again. Characters witnessing this event must make a DC 12 Sanity saving throw. A character who fails becomes poisoned for 1 minute as they start to wretch at the sight. A poisoned target can repeat its saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a success.

If the characters interfere or enter the room without disguising themselves, the human spectators react fearfully and try to flee. The ghouls

join the fray and fight alongside the ghastr. Peonthy Altar retreats to **area 9** with the intention of fleeing through the underground tunnel. At your discretion, Horst Blackfoot might join in the fight, brandishing *Silencer* (see **area 7**). Although he can never undo the murders he let transpire in his basement, he can try to help. Naturally, Shane joins him.

Not wanting to be exposed as cultists of a dangerous demon, the nobles and their servants rush from the smithy.

9 - Bookie's Office

This small office is wrapped with shelves containing ledgers detailing bets placed on the pit fights.

Secret Door. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the presence of a hidden door behind the western bookshelf. Cold air rushes out of the door once it's opened. Beyond the office lies a narrow, damp tunnel that descends into the dark. The tunnel leads to a series of caverns below Ostenwold.

Treasure: Earnings. There is a large chest tucked under one of the shelves on the eastern wall. The chest is locked (same checks as a locked door) and trapped with a poison needle. When a creature tries to break

into the chest, make a +5 attack roll against that creature. If the attack hits, the needle deals 1 piercing damage and the target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the target takes 10 (3d6) poison damage and becomes poisoned. On a successful saving throw, the target takes half as much damage and isn't poisoned. Noticing the trap requires a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check. It can then be disarmed with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools.

The Atrophy of Flesh. If the characters corner Peonthy Altar here, Peonthy reveals his true form as an **incubus**. As an Omerian incubus, Peonthy's true form is not attractive at all, but, in fact, quite horrible to behold. The incubus looks not unlike a lamprey with six arms, two pairs of waxy, hornet-like wings, and two bulging red eyes. Any creature that is not undead or a fiend that starts its turn within 30 feet of the incubus in its true form and can see it must make a DC 15 Sanity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature is frightened for 1 minute or until it starts its turn at least 30 feet

away from the incubus. If a creature fails its saving throw by 5 or more, it also becomes afflicted with a form of short-term madness. A creature that succeeds on its saving throw or the effect ends for it does not need to make a Sanity saving throw in the presence of an incubus in its true form for 24 hours.

Ginororin does not wish to engage in combat. The incubus will use its turn as soon as it is able to turn ethereal and flee through the secret door that leads to the underground tunnels. If the characters pursue Ginororin, Ginororin triggers a trap that collapses the tunnel preventing further pursuit.

Concluding the Adventure

So long as the characters break up The Atrophy of Flesh event, the masked nobles and their servants immediately recover their goods from The Sanguine Dawn Inn and evacuate the town. If Peonthy Altar/Ginororin escaped, the incubus makes sure that there is no way to follow him down. Where he went is detailed in a later chapter in this adventure path.

The nobles know very little about Altar's origin or even that he's a fiend in disguise. They all assumed that he was just an overly charismatic human. None of them know anything about the tunnels below The Clenched Fist. In fact, not even Horst Blackfoot knew about the tunnel.

If the characters allow Horst to live, he turns himself into Regis Forlorne and the Eastwatch Garrison as an accomplice in the murder of at least nine people in his basement. Before turning himself in, he gives Abol the repaired mace. Abol decides that the adventuring life isn't for him and decides to settle down in Ostenwold with the barmaid Alice. Horst then leaves his smithy to his old friend Déularas Tauranis.

The *Qua-Soko Unveiled* adventure path continues in **Chapter 3: The Lurkers**. Ω



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THE LURKERS

BY DAVE HAMRICK WITH TOM CARTOS

3rd-level Adventure for Fifth Edition

Cartography by Tom Cartos

Art by Matias Lazaro, Joyce Maureira, Fat Goblin Games, and William McAusland

The Lurkers is a Fifth Edition adventure for three to seven characters of 2nd to 4th level, and is optimized for a party of four characters with an average party level (APL) of 3. Characters who complete the adventure and defeat the eight-legged horror should earn enough experience to reach the 4th level.

The adventure takes place in the town of Ostenwold found in the Knotside Region of Northern Omeria in the Legends of Omeria campaign setting. However, you can easily place it into any campaign setting of your choice. This adventure is the third chapter in the *Qua-Soko Unveiled* series.

Adventure Background

A decade after the town of Ostenwold was founded by Déularas Tauranis and Horst Blackfoot, war broke out in the central part of the continent. The Kingdoms of Man put out the call for the young men and women of the region to take up arms against the Dinzer forces invading the Weysevain Coast. Dozens of Ostenwolders left for war.

While most of Ostenwold's youth returned intact, quite a few lost their lives, including the son of Horst Blackfoot, Eran. Temerion, a cleric of Tholona, and one of Blackfoot's oldest and closest friends, worked with him to build a series of crypts below Tholona's temple to commemorate the dead. Then, Temerion cast spells on the crypts and temple grounds to protect it from intrusion by dark forces such as fiends and undead.

Of course, the crypts were more than just a place to remember the dead. The town's resident archmage, Dresden, saw the crypt's magical wards as a way to harness the evil of one of his greatest enemies, The Dreamwalker Dolores Waxcradle. Dresden stored Waxcradle's soul into a statue of Yrena, the Goddess of Destruction. The statue was then hidden away in

a vault within the crypts, its exact location only known by Dresden.

But evil is persistent. A year ago, Dresden mysteriously vanished from Ostenwold. Without his watchful eye over the town, the bonds on Wax-cradle's prison started to atrophy. Her evil seeped into the ground and structure of the crypts, drawing the attention of other horrors that lived at the precipice of nightmares.

A lonely old man named Garr Martense helped the priestesses of the church with odd jobs here and there. One day, while cutting the grass in the church grounds, he heard a woman's voice calling from the old crypt. "Please help," she begged. "It's dark down here. And I'm all alone." Garr put aside his scythe and ventured into the crypt.

Three days later Garr Martense reemerged as a changed man. Some of the townsfolk thought he might be crazy. After all, Martense—a loner his entire life—now claimed that his wife and sons were buried in the crypts. Each day he would visit the crypt to see them. Naturally, Temerion and her priestesses explained away his claims as dementia.

Little did they know that there were darker forces at work.

Adventure Hooks

If the characters are already in Ostenwold following the first two chapters of *Qua-Soko Unveiled*, then they should be somewhat familiar with the people and places in town. In the first chapter, the characters were working for the Dinzer guild, *Secrets of the Righteous*. Since then, they've started to work closely with Déularas Tauranis, the proprietor of Ostenwold's Sanguine Dawn Inn. While the characters are unwinding or even preparing for a long rest at the inn, a woman named Tayler (LG female human **acolyte**) enters the bar shouting for Déularas' help. The characters are in earshot when this happens.

Optional Rule: Sanity Scores

Because this adventure deals with unknown horrors and gruesome realizations, you might incorporate the optional Sanity score rules detailed in chapter 9 of the *DMG*. If you decide against using this rules variant, ignore instances where the story calls for Sanity ability checks or saving throws.

Read:

A young woman wearing the white and gold robes of The Church of the Everlight rushes into the tavern. "Déularas!" she exclaims. "Someone's broken into the crypts! Old Man Martense is hurt!" Déularas Tauranis, the elven owner of The Sanguine Dawn Inn turns to you. "Do you mind seeing what all the commotion is about? The people who run the church are good folks."

If the characters balk, Déularas (N female elf **veteran**) might offer a reward for their efforts—10 gp each. She's currently backed up at the bar, and frankly, she feels that her "rushing into danger" days are behind her. If the characters completed the first two chapters of this adventure path, then she knows they're worthy.

Even if the characters didn't participate in the first parts of this adventure path, Déularas should be able to easily identify them as a group capable of taking care of themselves.

Part 1 - Graverobbers Be Damned!

A place of sanctity and tranquility, the Church of the Everlight is open to the devout of all faiths, as well as those who follow none. The abbess Temerion and her priestesses, Tayler and Antonette, offer kind words, support, and when the need arises, healing of both the spirit and the body.

When the characters arrive at The Church of the Everlight at Déularas'

behest, they find Temerion (LG female human **priest**) and Antonette (LG female human **acolyte**) standing over an unconscious old man sprawled onto one of the pews. The old man, Mister Martense (**commoner**), has a gash on his head.

Temerion informs the characters that she treated his wounds; he's unconscious but stable. Unfortunately, neither she nor the priestesses have any of their healing magic available. An accident in the market square exhausted all of their resources. If the characters have some magic to spare, she thanks them repeatedly.

Once Old Mister Martense is taken care of, Temerion (or Martense) explains what they know about the situation.

"Earlier this evening, Mister Martense was visiting the entrance to the crypts to visit his wife, when he was attacked by a man rushing out of the crypts. When Mister Martense cried out, the man attacked him, and then ran east along the road leading up to Dresden's Tower. "Mister Martense is a kind soul who wouldn't hurt a fly. If you could track down the culprit and bring him to justice, the church will be in your debt. "We take up a collection plate during morning service. Gladly, we will share some of the earnings."

Even if the characters refuse, Temerion insists. She directs the heroes to follow the graverobber's tracks to Mount Camor, arrest them, and turn them in at the Eastwatch Garrison. Once they accomplish this, she asks that they return during morning service for their reward, or, at the very least come back so that she and the other priestesses might thank them before the congregation.

As the characters depart, a small **spider** crosses their path.

The church is described in detail in Part 3 of this adventure.

Part 2 - "What's Wrong with Jeth?"

The tracks along the road heading east up Mount Camor are relatively easy to follow. It doesn't take long to see where the graverobber might be camped out.

Read the following:

The amber light of a campfire breaks through the long shadows cast by Mount Camor and the titanic tower that rises from its side. Tucked into a natural alcove, you see a few tents circling the fire. Three figures in dark, blue cloaks whisper loudly.

"What's wrong with Jeth?" asks one of the men.

"I don't know. He's sick or something," says the woman.

"Well, we can't take him to the church obviously," says the other man. "And what in The Eight happened to Samel and Lara? Why didn't they get out of there, too?"

A fit of coughs disrupts the conversation. The three turn to one of the tents.

"My chest," croaks a voice from within the tent, "it hurts bad. I need a healer."

The four graverobbers are a gang that calls itself the Blue Blossom Posse. Their members include three men, Aubin, Hein, and Jeth; and one woman, Nicoline. Aubin, Hein, and Nicoline are all chaotic neutral human **spies** and Jeth is a neutral human **bandit**. Jeth currently has 1 hit point and is very sick (see below).

If the characters approach, Aubin, Hein, and Nicoline immediately spring into action. All three are excellent fighters and use the surrounding trees and campsite as cover.

Jeth's Surprise. Midway through the battle (after the characters and gang have traded a few blows), Jeth stands from the tent clutching his chest.



The fourth man stands holding his chest. Blood runs from his eyes, ears, and mouth as he convulses. His allies look at him and gasp, "Jeth? By the elements, are you all right—"

Just then, Jeth's chest explodes open. Thousands of small, black, hairy spiders crawl from his exposed rib cage, evacuating the mess of Jeth's half-eaten internal organs. More spiders crawl from his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

"By the Eight!" Jeth's friends scream, turning their weapons toward the approaching swarm of spiders.

Characters witnessing this must succeed on a DC 12 Sanity saving throw or become frightened until the end of their next turn.

The **swarm of spiders** attacks the closest target. Once it is destroyed, the Blue Blossoms surrender. After watching their friend die, they no longer want any part of the operation.

The characters may do with the posse as they like. If they take the gang in, they can hand them over to the Eastwatch Garrison's Captain of the Guard, Regis Forlorne.

Returning to the Temple. If the characters return to the temple, they find the doors locked for the night.

The crypt entrance has also been shut and chained. Should the characters persistently try to get Temerion's attention, she answers the door in her sleeping robes. While troubled by stories of exploding chests and spiders, she asks that the characters return in the morning during service so she can better assist them.

Part 3 - Up Came The Sun

Church service starts at sunrise and lasts until noon. Temerion, Tayler, and Antonette take the stage while twelve of Ostenwold's faithful gather around (all **commoners**).

Chatting with Temerion

Before Temerion begins her sermon, she speaks with the characters about everything they witnessed the night before. She encourages that once service is over and the faithful depart, she and the characters investigate the crypts to discover the source of Jeth's illness.

Temerion also asks if the characters have seen Old Mister Martense. She shares that he is usually at service, so his absence is strange.

Shadows and Spiders

Temerion's sermon addresses the topic of shining light against shadow.

"None of us are immune to it—the shadow. Ostenwold itself lies in the shadow of a great mountain that hides Naeyer's Eye each morning. The Winds of Vapul push the great shadow of the north closer to our continent each day. And even in our dreams we see shadows—like a hunched figure who stares at us from dark corners.

"We must not fret, friends. For we are children of the Everlight. Whomever casts that light for you—whether it be Asnas or Ilwyn, Tholona, or even grim Naeyer—does so with love. We must embrace that—"

Temerion stops mid-sentence.



“What’s that sound?”

At first, the sound is hardly a murmur. Likely, some of the folks in the crowd think it’s nothing more than the sound of their own heartbeats in their chests. Then the sound grows. The murmur becomes a thump. And each thump rattles the church’s windows.

One of the priestesses, Tayler, the same woman who called you to the inn, carefully walks over to one of the windows in the eastern wall. She stares out the window toward the crypts.

“That’s odd,” says Tayler.

“What is it Tayler?” asks Temerion.

“The crypt door is open.”

First, the window explodes. Then Tayler’s entire body vanishes through its jagged opening. The

woman can’t even scream before a thick, red-eyed spider the size of a horse tears into her face and neck, killing her instantly. The thing then retreats back up the wall with its fresh kill.

Panic sweeps over the parishioners as they stumble over their pews desperate to flee from the visceral sight. But it’s already too late—on the balconies overlooking the chapel two more giant spiders slither into view. The front door bursts open—a third. Shadows at the windows betray the presence of more.

“By the light!” Temerion gasps. Then, without missing a beat, she grabs a candlestick off the altar, shakes off the wax, and brandishes it as a crude mace. “Not in MY church!”

In all, there are nine **giant spiders** that attack the church. Free of the crypts, they are ravenous for the flesh of humanoids and fight to the death. Temerion and Antonette help the characters during the fight, but spend most of their time trying to protect the parishioners. Most of the parishioners (**commoners**) hide or flee, although one particularly feisty older lady joins the fray by hitting spiders on the head with her handbag—BOP!

After the characters and priestesses defeat the spiders, Temerion directs them to head into the crypts to investigate the source of the creatures. Meanwhile, she and Antonette stay behind to apply healing where it’s needed. They also mourn the loss of their sister Tayler.



The Church of the Everlight

The Church has two levels and a bell tower. The church is made from sturdy hewn limestone blocks braced with strong timbers from the surrounding forests. Like The Sanguine Dawn Inn and Eastwatch Garrison, it is one of the oldest buildings in Ostenwold.

The ground floor has fifteen-foot-high ceilings and the chapel is open to the first floor's mezzanine. The two residential wings have lower ceilings, only ten feet high. The first floor adds another fifteen feet to the church's overall height. Meanwhile, the bell tower stands another ten-feet above the church's roof.

At night, the church keeps its doors locked; otherwise they're open during all hours of service. A typical door is made of sturdy wood hung on iron hinges with iron hardware. Locked, a door requires a DC 15 Dexterity check using proficiency with thieves' tools to unlock or a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to break down. The doors have AC 15, 18 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Natural light keeps the church illuminated during the day, and torches and lanterns cast it aglow at night.

The descriptions below are keyed to the map of The Church of the Everlight on page 50.

The Lurkers. You are free to use this church, its NPCs, and the setting outside of this adventure path. However, if you are playing *The Lurkers* adventure (or even just *Qua-Soko Unveiled*) details specific to the story are called out in the text like this section.

Characters who cast *detect magic* will note the presence of evocation magic cast all throughout the church, its grounds, and even the crypt. If *identify* is cast anywhere on the premises, including the crypts, strange star-like or branch-like arcane symbols appear on the surfaces. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Sanity (Religion) check recognizes that the symbols are The Elder Sign,



a powerful ward used to repel deadly aberrations, fiends, and undead (the signs function similarly to the *hallow* spell). As such, celestials, elementals, fey, fiends, and undead cannot enter the church, its grounds, or the crypt.

1 - Grounds. The church shares its property with the town cemetery (1b). Nearly every soul who lived and died in Ostenwold in its thirty years of existence is buried either in the actual grounds or down in the crypts. Overall, the crypts are reserved for veterans of The Attack of Regrets.

The double doors (1a) offering entry into the church proper are kept open during the day, weather permitting. One or both of Temerion's priestesses greet parishioners as they enter for service.

2 - Chapel. The chapel is broken into three sections: the foyer (2a), main chapel (2b), and temple of Tholona (2c).

The southern part of the ground floor (2b) is where most of the church's services take place. Eight wooden pews comfortably sit forty parishioners and offer leatherbound hymnals for all. Stained glass windows depicting Omeria's gods of light flank both sides.

North of the main chapel stands a grand statue of the goddess Tholona the Dawn, the Northern Omerian Goddess of Light and Life. Despite the church's non-denominational claims, Temerion is very much a priestess of The Dawn, having served in her name during The Attack of Regrets twenty years prior.

3 - Temerion's Chambers. The high priestess Temerion lives in this simple room east of the chapel.

Treasure: Armaments. Like many of the town's other founders, Temerion was once an adventurer who hung up her mace and armor to settle down. Hints at her past lie hidden below the floorboards near her bed. A character can find the secret compartment with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. Within she keeps her +1 mace named Alabaster, her *barricade shield* (see Appendix C), and her chain shirt. There's also a rainy day fund of 50 gp in a small leather pouch here, too.

4 - Priestesses' Chambers. Tayler and Antonette share this room. Beyond a few books, extra warm blankets, and trinkets, there's nothing else of value here.

5 - Mezzanine. A pair of balconies overlook the chapel below. Like the ground floor, the walls are beset with stained glass windows depicting Omeria's gods of light.

6 - Office. Temerion and the priestesses spend their time outside of service counseling and hosting guests in this large office. The office also provides ladder access to the bell tower. Usually, Antonette or Tayler are the ones tasked to ring the bell.

Treasure: Collections. After service each morning, the priestesses pass around a collection plate to gather offerings for the church. The typical offer is made in the amount of one or two copper pieces, although some extra generous folks—such as Mayor Ungrist—throw a few gold onto the plate. Collections are then stored in a lockbox on the largest table. The lockbox has the same statistics as a locked door. At any given time, the church has 8d8 gp worth of coins in the box.

7 - Bell Tower. From dawn to dusk, the bell tower lets the citizens of Ostenwold know the hour of the day. Tayler and Antonette are usually the church's bell ringers.

Part 4 - The Nest

The crypt doors (**area 8** on the map of the Everlight Church) are wide open. The chains that held the doors in place lie in pieces on the ground along with a pair of steel cutting tools—someone cut away the lock.

Hundreds of small, circular tracks in the sand around the crypt entrance make it clear that it was the crypt from which the spiders emerged.

Right inside the door, statues of the God Generals Thinir and Tuteus flank the entrance. Ten feet away a staircase descends into darkness.

The Crypts

The crypts were cut into the sturdy limestone ground at the foot of Mount Camor. The corridors and chambers were then dressed with shaped stones, all decorated with bas-reliefs depicting the fallen heroes of The Attack of Regrets. The corridor's 10-foot-high ceilings are arched and don't require any sort of support. Chambers have 15-foot-high ceilings and are similarly arched with a few buttresses offering additional support.

The temple's doors are made from solid stone set onto pivotable stone hinges. Although they are heavy, the majority of the doors do not have locks. Secret doors hide many of the crypt's secrets. A secret door has the same features as the stone doors, except they are masked to look like the wall into which they are set. Noticing a secret door requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. All of the crypt's doors have AC 17, 40 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Continual flames cast throughout the complex keep the chambers and halls illuminated at all hours.

The encounters below are keyed to the map of the crypts on page 53.

Concealed Pit Traps. To prevent graverobbers, Blackfoot and Temerion built pit traps into the corridors (marked on the map). The pits are

concealed by trap doors dressed to look like the flagstone tiles surrounding each one, which break open when a creature or object weighing 50 lbs or more places its weight upon it. Each pit has a 5-foot by 5-foot opening and is twenty feet deep. A creature that falls into the pit takes 7 (2d6) damage from the fall. The pits' sides are smooth, requiring DC 10 Strength (Athletics) checks to climb out of without a rope or ladder. Noticing the presence of a trap requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. Once the trap is spotted, a creature can avoid the trap by walking along the narrow ledges at either side of the trap, or by placing an iron spike or piton in place to keep the trapdoor from breaking open.

Webs. The spider creatures that live in the crypt have covered many of the crypt's corridors and rooms with thick webs. A creature who enters an area covered in webs the first time on

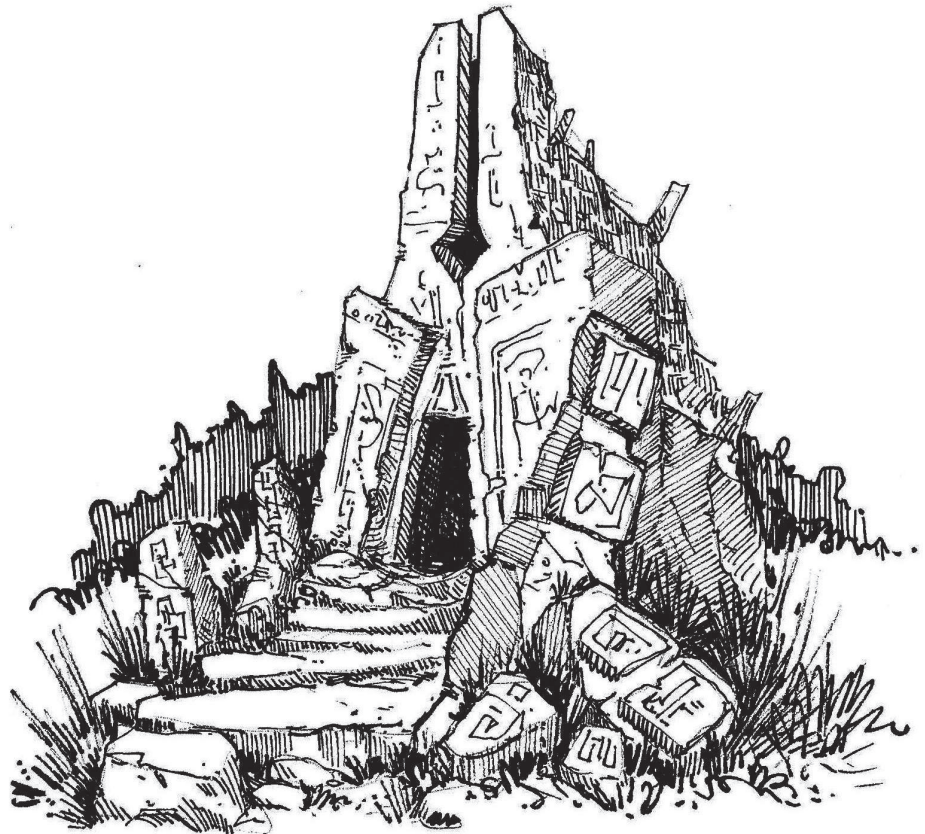
its turn or starts its turn there must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or become restrained by the webs. A restrained creature can use its action to try to escape, doing so with a successful DC 10 Strength or Dexterity check.

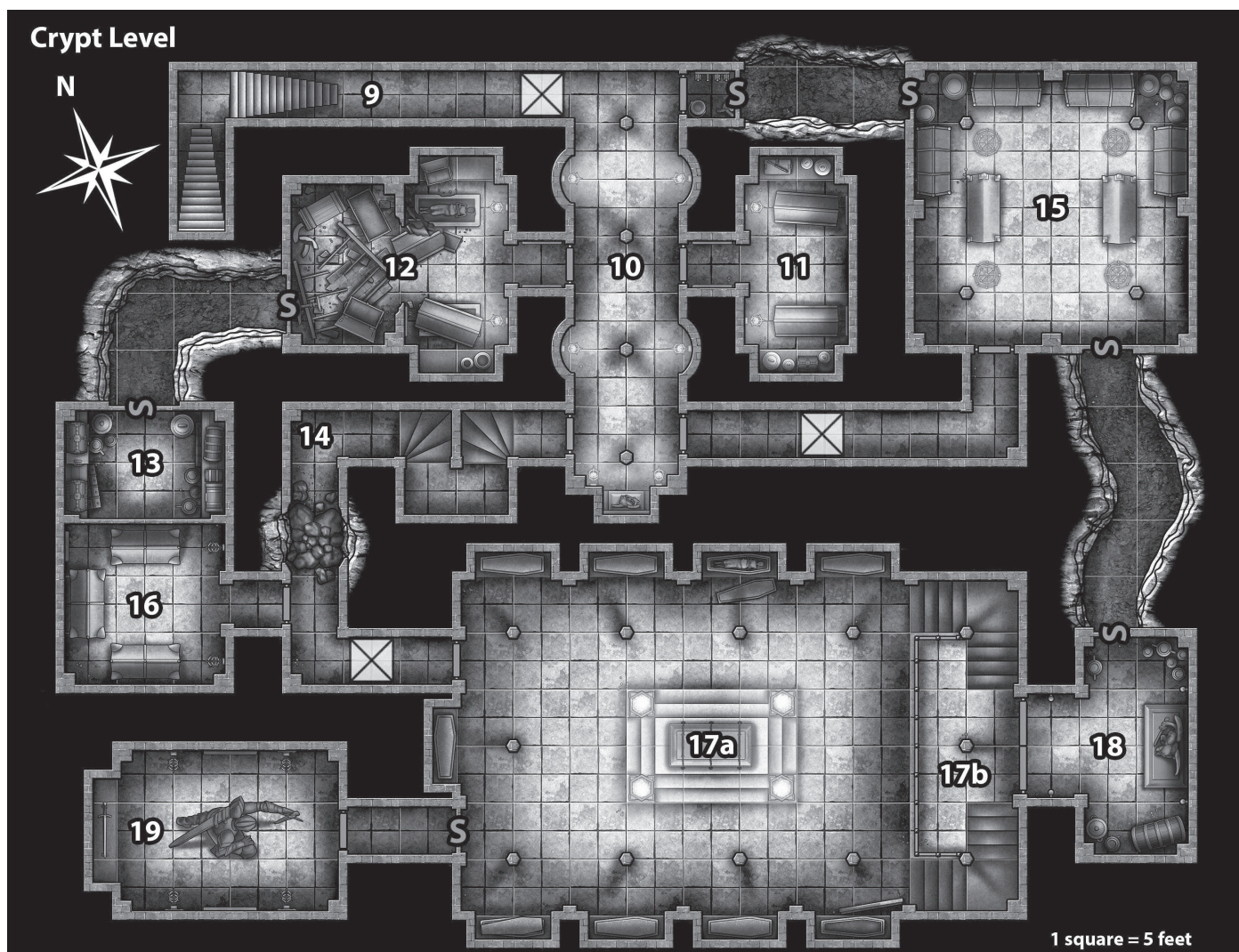
Each 10-foot cube of webs has AC 10, 15 hit points, vulnerability to fire, and immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and psychic damage.

The Lurkers. Like the church and its grounds, the crypt is *hallowed* by the presence of Elder Signs.

9 - Entry. Acrid saliva and drops of blood leave a tell-tale trail through this narrow hallway. At the end of the corridor, light from torches in **area 10** draws the eye.

Concealed Pit Trap. One of the crypt's concealed pit traps is in this hallway. When the graverobbers entered the tomb, they quickly noticed the pit and avoided it by jumping over it.





10 - Parasites. This long ante-chamber's 15-foot-high ceilings are held aloft by four hexagonal columns at the center of the room. There are five stone doors: two on the western wall and three on the eastern wall. The northeasternmost door reveals a small closet filled with urns of the dead.

Thick webs cover the ceiling.

Encounter: Goblin Spiders. Three goblin spiders hide in this corridor. Like their “big brothers,” these horrid things are ravenous for the taste of humanoid flesh. A goblin spider uses the **giant wolf spider** stat block with the following changes:

- It is a Small monstrosity and its

alignment is neutral evil.

- Its Constitution score is 15 (+2) and its Intelligence score is 7 (-2). This makes its Bite's poison DC 12, but does not affect its hit points (it has 2d6 + 4 hit points).
- The goblin spider has the Nimble Escape feature, which allows it to use its bonus action to take the Disengage or Hide action on each of its turns.
- **New Action: Multiattack.** It makes one attack with its claw (see below), and if it is grappling a creature, it can make one attack with its bite.
- **New Action: Claw. Melee Weapon Attack:** +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one

creature. **Hit:** 3 (1d4 + 1) slashing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 11). While the target is grappled, the goblin spider has advantage on attacks made against the grappled target and the goblin spider can't use this attack on another creature.

The spider goblins might take a moment to watch the characters from within their webs, especially if the characters enter one of the rooms covered in webs. If the characters notice the spiders, they leap to attack.

Treasure: Statue of General Tuteus. A statue of the God of Winter, General Tuteus, stands at the south side of this chamber. The statue is

made of lead and plated in gold. It's worth 100 gp.

Secret Door. One of the crypt's secret doors is hidden in the wall of the small closet with urns.

11 - Webbed Tomb. Thick webs blanket this room. Under the webs, a pair of sarcophagi hide in this room. They belong to a pair of lovers who fought and died in The Attack of Regrets.

There is nothing else of value here.

12 - Ravenous. This room is a wreck. The graverobbers tore apart the sarcophagi and boxes that once crowded this room. During the act of vandalism, the goblin spiders from **area 3** got the jump on them, killing one. Her mostly-eaten corpse lies amid the detritus. Much like the graverobbers who came before them, the characters will find little of value in this room.

Secret Door. A secret door connects this chamber to **area 13** via an undressed passage.

13 - Decrepit. Long hidden from the eyes of the living, this chamber boasts an impressive collection of keepsakes and valuables stored by the loved ones of the fallen. While most lack value, there are a few items of note.

Encounter: Gricks. A pair of hungry gricks have found a comfortable home in this hidden chamber. The gricks blend in well enough with the cracked stonework to gain their Stone Camouflage benefits. They attack any creature that enters the room.

Treasure: Stored Valuables. If one or more characters spend 10 minutes or longer searching through the goods, they'll find the following objects worth pocketing: a *companion's band*; a +1 *shortsword* etched with the name "Eran Blackfoot"; an *orb of remembrance* primed with an image taken from the top of Mount Camor; six silver necklaces, each one worth 25 gp; two jade statues carved to look like brothers, each one worth 50 gp; and an ornamental box carved with the name "Zara Ungrist", worth

250 gp. The *orb of remembrance* and *companion's band* are detailed in Appendix C.

14 - Hive. Two short flights of steps lead to a dead end of rubble. There, the characters discover a swollen, misbegotten, spider-like humanoid quietly moving rocks aside. If it senses the characters coming, it turns its head, revealing eight, bulbous eyes and mandibles from behind which a row of pointed, rotten teeth grimace. "Father?" it sniffs. "Is that you?"

Once the thing realizes that the characters aren't its "father," it snarls and attacks.

The first time a character sees one of these spider-like monstrosities, they must succeed on a

DC 9 Sanity saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A character can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on themselves with a success. A character who succeeds on their saving throw or the effect ends for it does not need to make a Sanity saving throw when viewing one of these creatures for the next 24 hours.

Encounter: Ettercap. This spider-humanoid uses the *ettercap's* stat block except that it can speak Common and Deep Speech.

Collapsed Corridor. A tremor collapsed part of this corridor. If the characters spend an hour removing the rubble, they can clear a path large enough for them to squeeze through.



15 - Tomb of the Six. Four *continual flame* braziers illuminate this large chamber. Eran Blackfoot and his five squad members who died during the Siege of Qola were laid to rest in this private crypt. Their sarcophagi lie untouched.

A man lies against the southern wall. As the characters approach, he starts to twitch. Closer inspection reveals that the man is dead—it's actually the spider in his chest causing him to stir.

Encounter: Swarms of Spiders.

As one **swarm of spiders** crawls from out of the dead bandit's chest—he was one of the ill-fated graverobbers—two more join the fray, crawling down from the ceiling and from out of the dark corners of the room.

Treasure: Ill-Gotten Gains. A bag of swiped goods lies next to the graverobber's corpse. Inside, the characters find two jade chalices, both worth 50 gp, a jeweled dagger worth 150 gp, and 18 copper pieces pulled from the eyes of the dead.

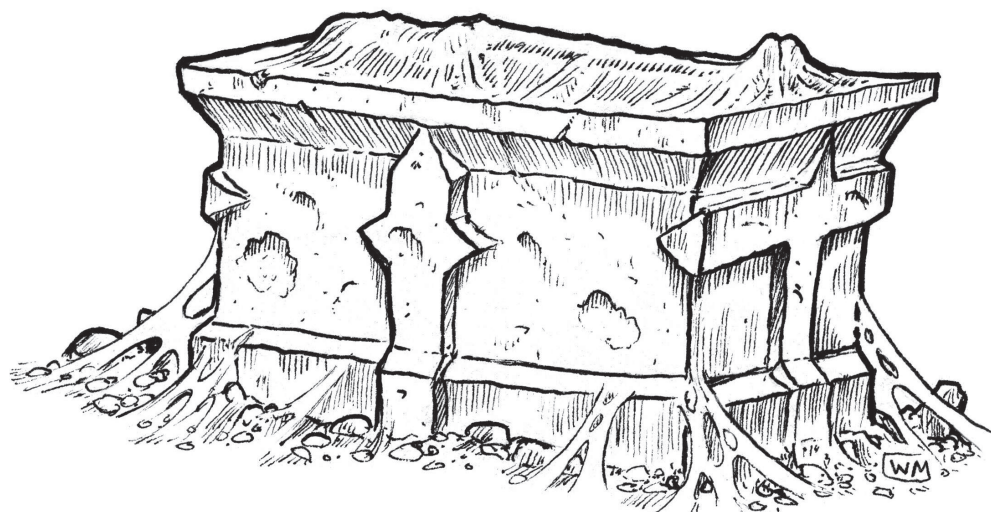
Secret Door. There are two secret doors in the room. The first leads to the natural corridor connecting **area 10** to this one. The second connects to **area 18**.

16 - Rotten. As the characters approach this area, they hear the sound of something gnawing from beyond the door. Inside, one of the spider-humanoid creatures (**ettercap**, see **area 14**) gnaws on the bones of an ancient corpse. Joining the creature in its feast are two **swarms of spiders**.

Encounter: Ettercap and Swarms. The creatures mentioned above attack the characters the moment they sense them.

17 - Mother. The walls and ceiling of this colossal chamber are blanketed in thick webs. Only the center of the area where a large, chained sarcophagus sits on a stone dais is clear enough for a character to walk through without having to make a saving throw against the webs.

Nearly impossible to see through all



the webs, Old Mister Martense has been cocooned and adhered to the railing on the eastern side of the room (**17b**). He's conscious, but delirious. Small spiders crawl over his chest, neck, and face.

"She's beautiful, isn't she?" says Old Mister Martense, a faint smile on his webbed face. "She called to me, you know. Told me to find her. Then she told me that she would be mine forever and always. There she is—my beautiful, beautiful butterfly. My beautiful, beautiful wife."

Martense grins as an enormous, black creature—not altogether a spider, nor lizard, nor ogre, nor decomposing human, but something that you cannot and must not recall. Green light sludges out of the thing's eyes and mouth. It emits an unearthly howl as its multiple mandibles clack together.

"Look at her," Martense echoes, his eyes bulging from his skull as hundreds of spiders crawl from out of the sockets, "Look at her... look at her..."

Martense dies as a swarm of spiders bursts out of his chest and head. Each character who witnesses this scene must make a DC 12 Sanity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, a

character is frightened for 1 minute and becomes afflicted by a form of short-term madness. A character can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on themselves with a success. On a successful saving throw, the character is frightened until the end of their next turn. A character who succeeds on their saving throw or the effect ends for it does not need to make a Sanity saving throw when viewing the eight-legged horror for the next 24 hours.

Encounter: Eight-Legged Horror. Martense's "wife"—and mother to all the horrors within the crypts—is an **eight-legged horror** (see Appendix D). Joining her are two **swarms of spiders**, her children.

The Sarcophagus. At the center of this chamber stands a chained sarcophagus. The chains are magical—each chain has AC 20, 50 hp, and immunity to all non magical damage. *Dispel magic* cast against a 5th-level spell automatically removes the chains. Inside lies the perfectly preserved corpse of a young, beautiful woman with smooth, ivory skin and glossy, dark hair. She clutches a green crystal shard over her chest. If the shard is removed, her body rapidly wilts and decays until nothing's left but dust and bone. A character

who witnesses this must succeed on a DC 12 Sanity saving throw or become afflicted a form of short-term madness. The shard is *emerald odonburgite* (see *BroadSword Monthly #9*). A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check immediately recognizes its value. However, removing it from the crypts removes the *hallow* effect created by The Elder Signs, which inevitably allows The Dreamwalker Dolores Waxcradle to escape her prison.

Secret Door. A hidden door hides the corridor that leads to Dolores Waxcradle's prison (**area 19**).

18 - String. A large statue depicting the Goddess Tholona stands against the eastern wall. She is surrounded by the urns of her followers. A large chest against the southern wall holds additional urns.

A green, spider-like humanoid lies curled in a ball on the floor, gently rocking itself. It moans and weeps, repeating over and over, "Mama gonna kill daddy. Mama gonna kill daddy."

Encounter: Spider-Humanoid. The spider-humanoid (**ettercap**) is similar to the ones found in **areas 14 and 16**, however, this one is not outwardly belligerent. If the characters speak with it, it introduces itself in broken Common as "String." String explains that his "mother" is the eight-legged horror in **area 17**. Mother has captured "father"—Old Mister Martense—and plans to impregnate him with her spawn. Characters with Wisdom scores of 12 or higher immediately recognize String's implications—Martense and the eight-legged horror are literally the parents of all the spider-humanoids that live in the crypts. This realization requires a character to make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, or become physically ill for one minute (poisoned). A character can repeat their saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect with a success. String will only fight if he is attacked. Otherwise, the creature wishes to be left alone.

19 - Dolores Waxcradle's Prison. The door leading into this room is *arcane locked*. Unless *dispelled*, the lock requires a DC 25 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools to unlock or a DC 30 Strength (Athletics) check to break down. If the *emerald odonburgite* is removed from the chained sarcophagus in **area 17**, the *arcane lock* vanishes after 1 day.

Yrena, the Eight-Eyed, Eight-Armed Goddess of Destruction, stands at the center of this chamber, her arms spread at her sides. Her eight, human-like eyes seem to stare at any creature who stares at her. A character who spends 1 or more rounds looking at the statue must make a DC 10 Sanity saving throw or gain a form of long-term madness.

Waxcradle's Prison. With Yrena's statue, the wizard Dresden trapped the soul of The Dreamwalker Dolores Waxcradle (a **night hag**). The statue has AC 17, 50 hit points (threshold 5) and immunity to nonmagical damage. Destroying the statue releases Dolores, who appears in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the statue. Before the characters can react, she smirks and slips into The Dream (the Ethereal Plane) and escapes the crypt.

If the characters remove the shard of *emerald odonburgite* found in **area 17** from the temple, the *imprisonment* spell cast on the statue decays after 1 day and Waxcradle breaks free regardless.

Waxcradle returns later in another chapter of this adventure path.

Treasure: Edge. At the rear of this chamber sits a slightly translucent longsword. The sword's name is *Edge* (see Appendix C).

Concluding the Adventure

Waxcradle's escape is inevitable. Even if the characters fail to remove the *emerald odonburgite* from the chained coffin or destroy the statue of Yrena, someone else breaks into the crypt and frees her.

With the spiders gone, Temerion reseals the crypt and forbids anyone to enter. Incorrectly believing that the *hallow* effect caused by The Elder Signs are enough to prevent horrible creatures from getting in or escaping, she does not imbue the area with any further spells.

Over the next few days, the Ostenwolders mourn the loss of the parishioners and Tayler, Temerion's priestess. If there is a cleric in the party, Temerion offers the cleric the vacant role at the church.

If the characters (rightfully) decide to leave Ostenwold, before they go, they're approached by Déularas Tauranis once more.

The red-haired elven woman stares at you, her brow wrinkled with worry.

"I need your help. Ostenwold needs your help."

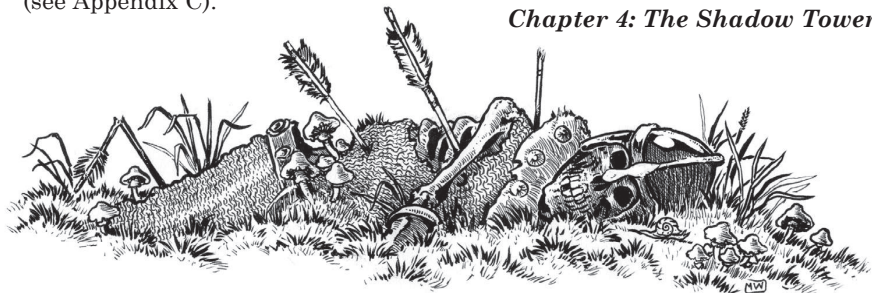
She turns to face the tall, shadowy tower jutting from the side of the mountain at the east end of town.

"You must find Dresden. Before it's too late."

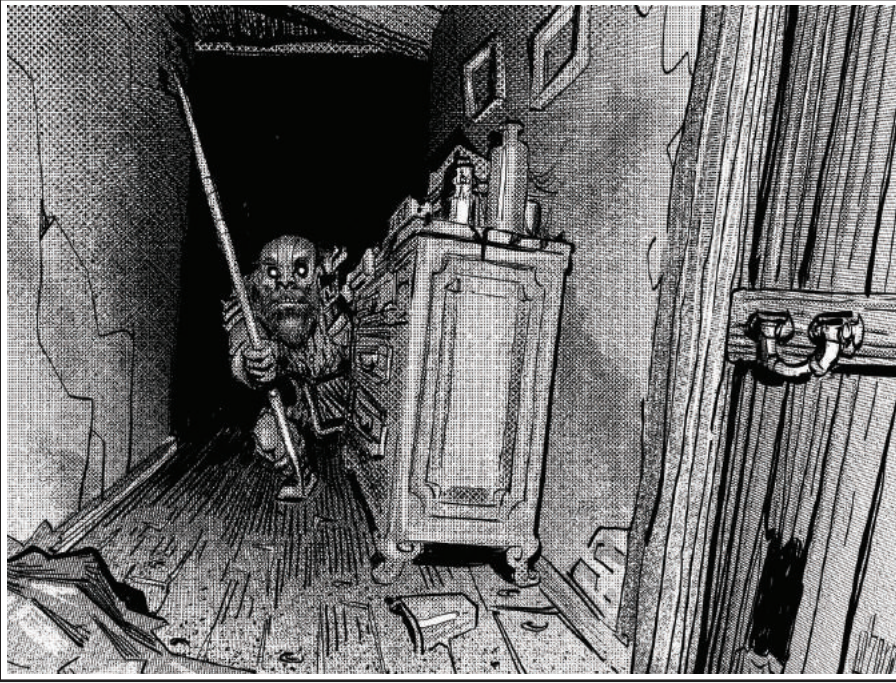
She explains who Dresden is. Then, if the characters ask why they must find him, she tells them with a frown:

"He's back. Qua-Soko is back."

The *Qua-Soko Unveiled* adventure path continues in the upcoming **Chapter 4: The Shadow Tower.** Ω



ADVENTURES IN OMERIA



DUERGAR AT THE SNOWED INN

BY DAVE HAMRICK

A 2nd-level adventure for Fifth Edition

Cartography by Dyson Logos

Art by Matias Lazaro and Nacho Lazaro

Duergar at the Snowed Inn is a Fifth Edition adventure for four to five characters of 1st to 3rd level, and is optimized for a party of four characters with an average party level (APL) of 2.

This adventure takes place in a small arctic hamlet beset by polar nights, where the sun shines for only four hours each day—and even then, it casts only dim light before setting below the mountains. Its formal location is left intentionally blank so you can easily insert it into any campaign of your choice.

Adventure Background

Volqer, a grumpy duergar if there ever was one, and his squad of Ironheads were sent to the small hamlet of Borgstrand by their supreme commander. Their mission? Lay low and wait for the “event.” Of course, the supreme commander was purposely vague about what this “event” is and when it might actually happen.

At first, Volqer and the Ironheads were glad to take the assignment. The six rushed to Borgstrand, became squatters at an abandoned inn, and made the best of it. But as the cold months dragged on, Volqer and the rest grew tired and anxious. Recently, two of Volqer’s soldiers decided to go on a “walkabout.” The pair broke into a tavern, stole the owner’s supply of clam chowder and wheat mash liquor, and huffed it back to their hideout.

Adventure Hook

The owner of the local drinking establishment is furious. Someone broke into his tavern and stole two buckets of his famous clam chowder and the entire supply of wheat mash liquor. Already business has been lousy thanks to the polar nights, and this might be the final nail in his business’ coffin.

“Twenty-five gold pieces and all the chowder you can eat and liquor you can drink to someone who finds out

who stole my supply!” he cries to anyone who can hear him. Of course, most of the Borgstranders are too tired, busy, or grumpy to take up the task. Once he sees the characters, though, he knows he’s found a squad for the job.

The tavern owner has no idea who stole the goods. The break-in happened in the morning. When he came downstairs to see what was going on, all he saw were two pairs of small footprints in the ice and snow. Following the tracks is easy—a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check is all that’s needed to track the duergar back to The Snowed Inn.

The Snowed Inn

The people of Borgstrand always told old Dagfinn Bendixen that opening an inn as large as The Snowed Inn this far north was a bad idea. Sure, there were sailors and traders making their way through the tundra to trade during the warmer months. But once the polar nights descended on the Syhros Peninsula, not even wild hares would dare head that far north. A year ago, Dagfinn quietly shuttered The Snowed Inn. No one heard what happened to Dagfinn after the spot closed. Most Borgstranders assumed the old man went back south to join his family in the warmer climates.

General Features

The Snowed Inn is a two story wooden structure with a stone foundation. The floors, walls, and ceilings are made from sturdy shiplap timbers. Doors inside and out are made from sturdy wood hung on rusted iron hinges. Most of the doors have heavy barrel locks for the sake of privacy.

Unless otherwise stated, a door locked in this way requires a DC 10 Dexterity check using thieves’ tools to open, or a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to break down. All doors have AC 15, 18 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Although stained glass windows once allowed in what little light the Absent Sun has to offer, they’ve since been boarded up. Not only does this make viewing inside difficult, but it keeps the interior bathed in darkness. A creature armed with a crowbar can easily pry the boards from their place. Otherwise, the boards have AC 15, 18 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Sound travels far in the creaky old inn. Break-in attempts will alert all of the duergar within to the presence of pesky adventurers.

Keyed Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of The Snowed Inn on the following page.

1 - Front Entrance

Heavy chains bound by a padlock bar entry to the old inn. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves’ tools picks the lock. Alternatively, a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check breaks open the doors. The lock itself has AC 18, 10 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

The entrance is curiously devoid of tracks—the duergar use the rear exit to avoid notice.

2 - Old Stables

Adjacent to the inn’s old entrance are its defunct stables. Built from lesser materials, the whole thing is pretty close to falling over. Other than a few rusted tools and some garbage left by derelicts, the place is empty.

3 - Taproom

The inn’s old tap room has certainly seen better days. Despite the windows being boarded up for the last twelve months, it’s still a mess. Cobweb-covered tables and knocked over benches crowd its old floor. The fireplace has started to crumble and cave in on itself. And even the staircase leading up to the mezzanine surrounding it is dangerously near collapse.

Encounter: Duergar. Unless the characters have already encountered them, the two **duergar** thieves were busy bringing in their ill-gotten gains through the kitchen’s back door (see **area 4**). If the characters weren’t quiet breaking into the inn, the two duergar take to the shadows and turn invisible. They wait patiently for one or more heroes to come within reach, then get the drop on them using their Enlarge ability. Highly trained combatants, the duergar are tactical masterminds. One duergar plays the role of “tank”, dodging and taking blows from melee combatants, while the second uses the old bar for cover all the while chucking enlarged javelins at characters taking up the rear.

Treasure: Stolen Goods. Both duergar carry 2d6 gp on them. In addition, the characters will discover 10 bottles of wheat mash liquor and 4 buckets of clam chowder, the duergar’s bounty. Returning these stolen goods to the inn-keeper intact earns the characters their reward.

4 - Kitchen

The few hot meals The Snowed Inn served came from this unnecessarily large kitchen, which now sits mostly in ruins.

The duergar use the backdoor as their entrypoint to avoid notice. As such, the door remains unlocked.

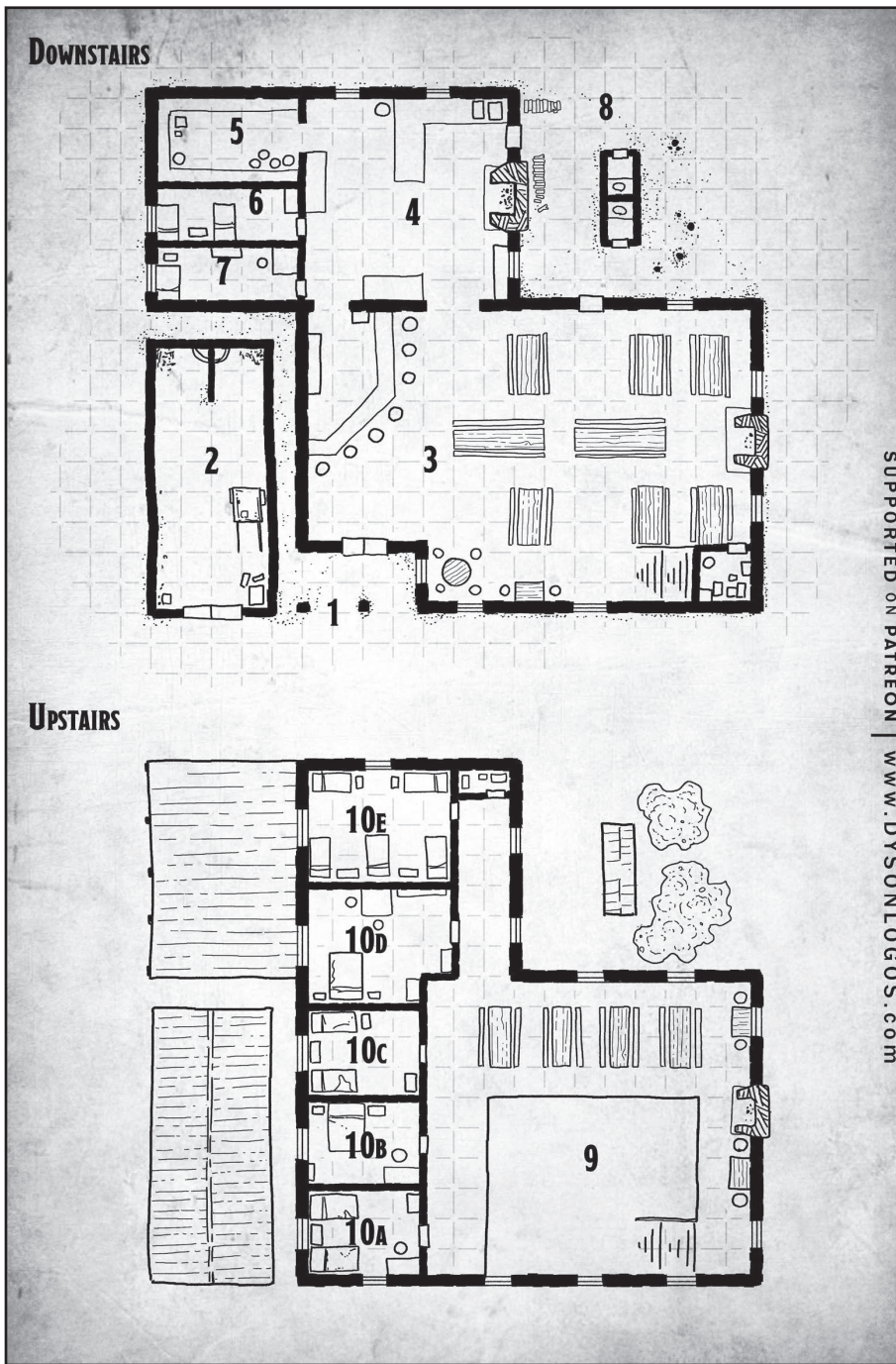
Encounter: Duergar. Unless the characters encountered them earlier, the two **duergar** thieves are here unloading their stolen goods. Refer to **area 3** for their tactics. A fight in this part of the tavern alerts the sleeping duergar in **area 6**.

5 - Pantry

This large room is wrapped with empty, dusty shelves. Although the entire inn is cold, the pantry seems to be a full 10 to 20 degrees colder than the rest of the abandoned building.

The duergar avoid this room.

Hazard: Frost Mold. A thin layer of ruddy mold covers the surfaces of



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this old pantry. The mold feeds on warmth and sucks the heat out of anything that comes near it. When a creature moves to within 5 feet of the pantry’s westernmost wall for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, it must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) cold damage on a failed save, or half

as much damage on a successful one. The frost mold is immune to fire, and any source of fire brought within 5 feet of a patch of it causes it to instantly expand outward in the direction of the fire, covering a 10-foot square area (with the source of the fire at the center of that area). Ironically, effects that deal cold dam-

age instantly destroy the frost mold.

6 - Guard Post

This old room once served as a room for the inn’s workers to rest between shifts. It offers two moldy beds, a nightstand, and an empty wardrobe.

Encounter: Sleeping Duergar. One of the **duergar** is supposed to keep watch in this room at all times. The current guard, Luole, is fast asleep on the far bed. If a fight breaks out in **areas 3 or 4**, Luole stirs awake and joins the fray after 2 rounds.

7 - Dagfinn’s Chambers

The inn’s old owner, Dagfinn, claimed this room as his own. In the year since the inn closed its doors, mold, cobwebs, and a few critters have taken up residence here.

Encounter: Swarm of Rats. A **swarm of rats** hollowed out Dagfinn’s old mattress. Characters who tamper with the mattress or search under Dagfinn’s old bed cause the rats to leap out and defend their hive.

8 - Rear Entrance

The back of the inn is well-tread by the duergar within. Unlike the front door, the back door is open. The chain that once held the door closed has been cut away with a war pick and discarded in the snow.

The back of the inn also served as the spot for the patrons to relieve themselves. A pair of outhouses half-buried by snow drifts still stand.

Encounter: Ice Mephit. One of the outhouse stalls is home to an **ice mephit** named Bork. Should a character open the door to Bork’s home, Bork looks up from reading his romance novel and asks in Aquan, “Do you mind?”

9 - Mezzanine

An impressive mezzanine overlooks the inn’s taproom. Although the floor is creaky and many of the warped boards have begun to pry themselves free of their nails, the structure is still sound.

10 - Inn Rooms

The Snowed Inn once boasted five comfortable rooms. Each room had a minimum of one bed, a desk, a wardrobe, and a footlocker for patrons to use. Now, most of the rooms are destroyed by time and the harsh never-ending winter.

Encounter: Wolf. Volqer's wolf, Zuuk, stands guard by her master's door (area 10e). The moment Zuuk senses the presence of the characters, she starts to snarl and bark, alerting Volqer and the other two duergar in that area. Zuuk won't enter combat unless her master commands her to.

10a - Room A. After Dagfinn Bendixen shuttered the Snowed Inn, he didn't leave. Saddened by his failed experiment, the old man climbed to the top of the stairs, entered Room A, and fell asleep on the bed. He never woke. Dagfin's desiccated corpse still lies on the bed.

Encounter: Blood Hawks. Four months ago, the boards covering the eastern window were blown free by blizzard winds. This allowed a family of four **blood hawks** to slip inside and build a nest. Additionally, the birds picked apart Dagfin's dried, cold corpse, adding posthumous insult to injury for the failed business owner. The blood hawks are vicious and attack anything that comes near this room.

Treasure: Dagfinn's Coin. Dagfinn's corpse still clutches a single gold coin in its fist. This was the first coin The Snowed Inn ever earned.

10b - Room B. Only cobwebs and dust here.

10c - Room C. A leak in the roof has completely ruined this room with two beds.

Hazard: Collapsing Floor. Any character who inspects the floor and makes a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check recognizes that the waterlogged boards that make up this room's floors could collapse at

any moment. If creatures or objects weighing 200 pounds or more set foot in this room, the entire floor breaks. Each creature in the area when this happens falls down to the inn below, lands prone in the bar area, and takes 9 (2d10) bludgeoning damage from the fall.

10d - Room D. Like area 10a, the western window of this room is free of its boards, exposing the interior to the elements.

Encounter: Nature Spirit. A small nature spirit (noncombatant) uses the frozen floors of this room as an ice rink, "skating" around the frozen surface, performing jumps and spins that would make even professionals "ooo" and "ahhh." When it sees the

characters, it turns and leaps out the window.

Hazard: Icy Floors. The floors of this room are frozen over, subjecting the entire area to slippery ice, as described in Chapter 5 of the DMG.

10e - Room E. Being the largest of the inn's rooms, Volqer and the Ironheads claimed this area for themselves.

Encounter: Volqer and the Ironheads. The three duergar are likely alerted the moment Zuuk starts to snarl and bark. All three are excellent fighters. Before they enter a combat, the three swell to Large size with their Enlarge/Reduce ability. Then, Volqer sends Zuuk forward to pin down ranged fighters while one of the duergar dodges and protects the back two. Those two throw javelins until they run out (they have three each). Once out of javelins, the three take turns stepping forward, attacking, then backing away so that their front-line can cover them.

Fanatical to the greater duergar cause, Volqer and the Ironheads fight 'til the death.

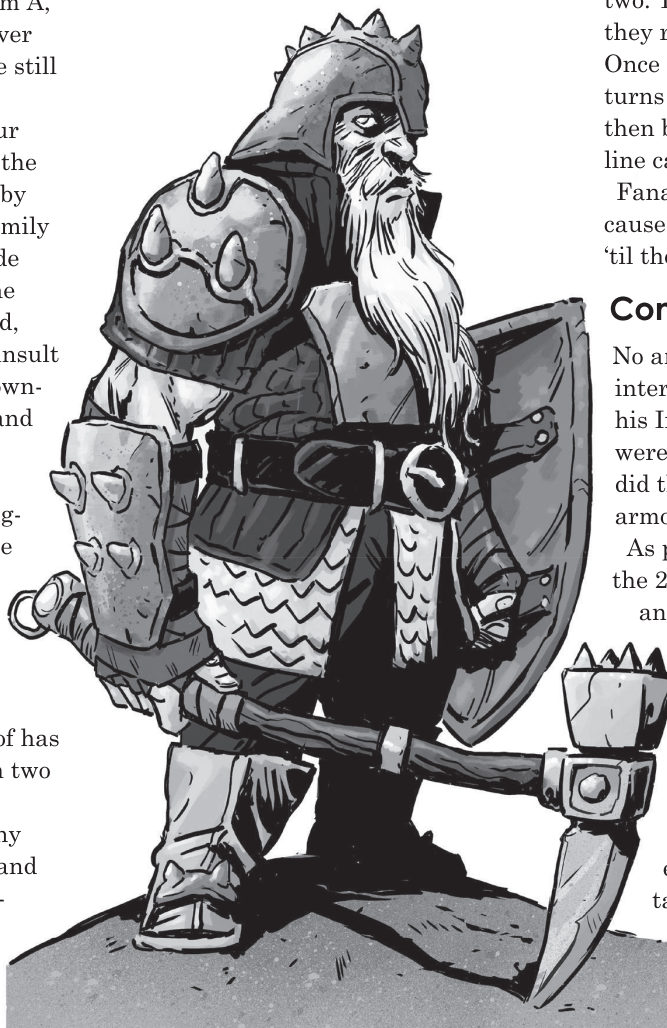
Concluding the Adventure

No amount of threats or nonmagical interrogation will cause Volqer or his Ironheads to reveal why they were hiding out in the old inn. Nor did they leave any clues. Even their armor is devoid of heraldry.

As promised, the tavern owner pays the 25 gp and offers all-you-can-eat-and-drink chowder and liquor to the characters for their victory.

When the townsfolk discover that old Dagfinn died, they grant the man a proper burial and once again board up the old inn. Later, another southerner with big dreams might take up the reins of the old inn.

Until that time it will continue to decay until the northern winds finally drag it to an icy grave. Ω





HAUNTS OF THE ICE CAVERN

BY DAVE HAMRICK

A 1st or 3rd-level adventure for Fifth Edition

Cartography by Tom Cartos

Art by Matias Lazaro, Maciej Zagorski, and William McAusland

Haunts of the Ice Cavern is a Fifth Edition adventure optimized for four to five characters with an average party level of 1 or 3. Characters who successfully clear the cavern should earn enough experience to reach the 2nd level, or enough experience to make it halfway to the 4th level.

The adventure is set in an icy part of any campaign world of your choice, especially those that suffer from endless nights. In the Legends of Omeria campaign setting, this cavern could be placed in the Syhros Peninsula near the town of Borgstrand.

Adventure Background

The citizens of a small, snow-blanketed hamlet have a problem. While the characters are staying in a small, icy hamlet, the town's representative approaches them requesting help with the problem:

1st-Level Version: Grusa, the White Dragon Wyrmling. Grusa, an orphaned white dragon wyrmling has bullied a group of goblins into doing her dirty work for her. Although Grusa is small, she recognizes that the humanoid of the ice realms rarely have the strength to combat threats such as she. Thus, she employs the goblins to raid and rob the local settlements so she can amass her burgeoning dragon's hoard.

3rd-Level Version: Makwa, the Were-Polar-Bear. Makwa, a rather ornery were-polar-bear, has bullied a group of orcs into doing his dirty work for him. Makwa once lived among the humans. As such, the lycanthrope knows that the humanoid of the ice realms rarely have the strength to combat threats such as he. Thus, he employs the orcs to raid and rob the local settlements so he can amass a small fortune of ill-gotten gains. The townsfolk are not aware that Makwa is actually a humanoid that can change into a polar bear.

Brazen, the raiders have done little to cover their tracks. As such, the

hamlet's residents know that they are hiding in a cavern tucked behind a frozen waterfall a few miles along the lake shore.

If the characters can clear out the boss and return with what has been stolen from the hamlet, the citizens are willing to split any ill-gotten gains with the characters.

The Icy Cavern

The Icy Cavern is a small, icy cavern hiding behind a frozen waterfall. The characters will have no trouble following the raiders' tracks to the cavern. The raiders dug the entrance to the cavern out of the thick snow descending from the cliff above the lake. As the characters approach, they hear the echoes of wolf growls and laughing raiders within.

The cavern's walls, floors, and ceilings are made from natural stone. The ceilings in any given room or corridor are approximately as high as the area is wide. Slick ice covers the entire complex. Characters who lack crampons will be subjected to the slippery ice feature detailed in Chapter 3 of the *DMG*. The goblins, orcs, wolves, Grusa, and Makwa can move on the ice without any issue.

Other than the raiders' campfires, the cavern is dark.

Keyed Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Icy Cavern on the following page.

1 - Entrance

The raiders' footprints turn north and vanish into a dark cavern. Their laughter echoes throughout the chamber.

Encounter: Wolves. The raiders' pet wolves are chained to a spike that's been hammered into the southern wall. The wolves cannot move more than 15 feet from the wall. However, if they are riled up enough, they might try to break the chain. A riled-up wolf can use its action to break



Trap Details.

Level	Dmg	Wisdom (Perception) Check	Strength Check
1	3 (1d6) bludgeoning	DC 13	DC 10
3	7 (2d6) bludgeoning	DC 15	DC 12

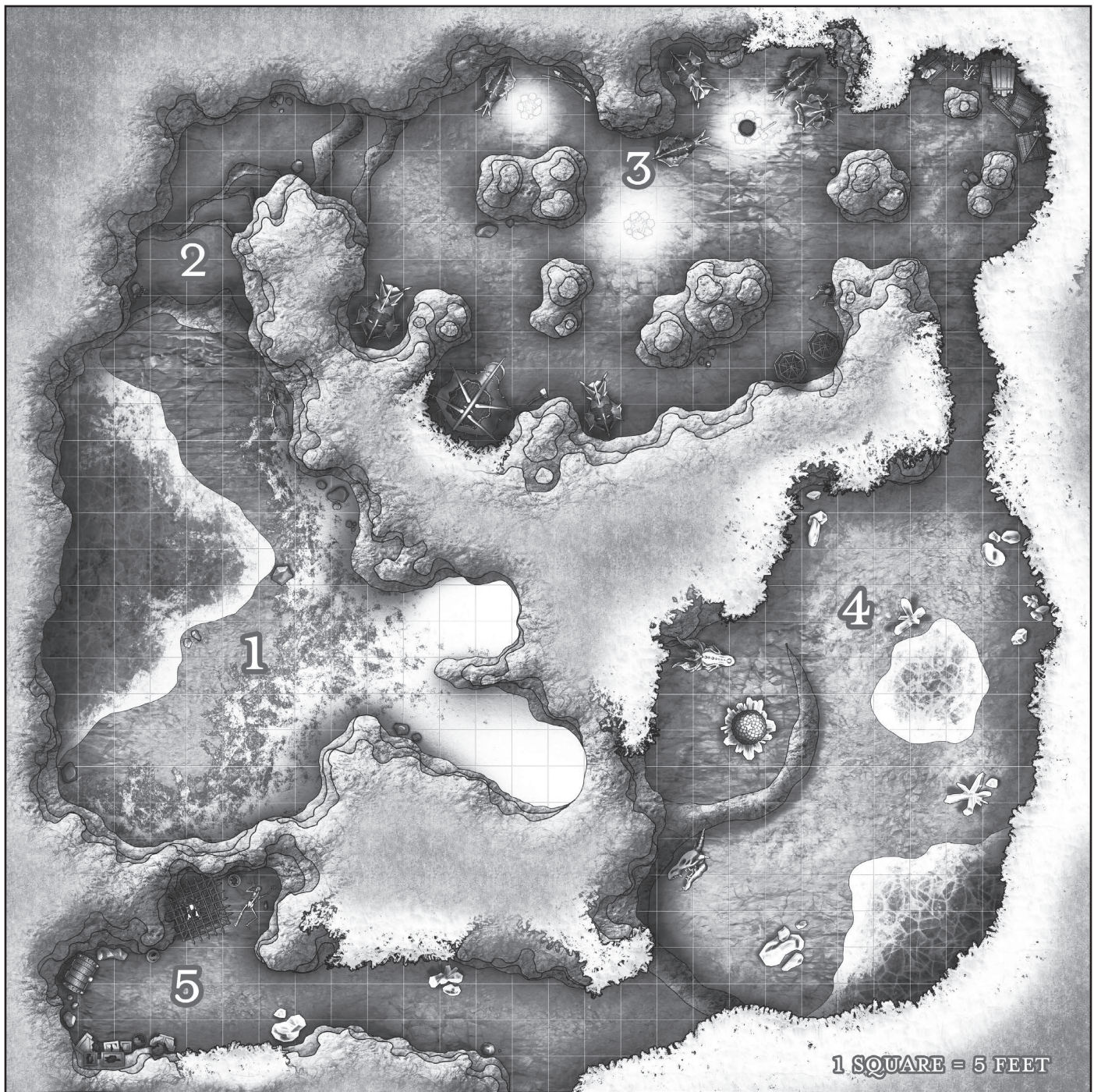
the chain with a successful Strength check. Even if the wolves don't break free of their chains, their barks alert the raiders in **area 3** to the presence of intruders. See the table below for the wolves' details.

Wolves Details.

Level	Creatures	Str Check
1	3 wolves	DC 10
3	2 dire wolves	DC 15

Trap: Concealed Pit Trap. There is a natural pit near the front of the cavern. The hole is 10-feet by 10-feet

and the pit itself is 10 feet deep. A creature that falls in takes damage from the fall. Because of the walls' slippery surfaces, the character must succeed on a Strength (Athletics) check to successfully climb out. The raiders concealed the pit with a blanket and topped it with snow. They even went so far as to place fake footprints into the snow to make it look like they've been walking through it. A character who succeeds on a Wisdom (Perception) check notices the trap. See the table above for damage and check difficulties.



2 - Descent

This corridor drops dramatically, descending a full 15 feet down to the chamber below. Checks aren't needed to descend so long as the characters are careful. If they were alerted by the wolves' barking, some of the raiders from **area 3** might use the

difficult descent as the perfect spot to pin down the characters with their bows.

3 - Raider Cavern

Three campfires illuminate this large cavern. Columns of natural stone offer long shadows, perfect for the raiders here to hide behind.

Encounter: Raiders. The boss's raiders camp in this cavern. Likely, the wolves in **area 1** will alert the raiders to the characters' presence. If so, the raiders use the cavern to hide. Since they had time to prepare, only characters whose passive Wisdom (Perception) scores are 15 or better



will notice the raiders. If the characters circumvent the wolves without making them bark, the raiders are gathered around the campfire, telling bad jokes to each other in their own language. See the table below for the details on the raiders

Raider Details.

Level	Creatures
1	6 goblins
3	5 orcs

Treasure: Raider Coins. The raiders' bosses don't share, but some of the raiders have managed to snatch and hide a few coins from their raids. Each goblin carries 2d4 sp. Each orc carries 1d8 gp.

4 - The Boss's Cavern

Grusa or Makwa sleeps in this large cavern.

1st-Level Encounter: Grusa the White Wyrmling. Like the goblins before her, she probably heard the

characters making their entrance.

If this is the case, Grusa, a **white dragon wyrmling**, waits near the northern entrance to this cavern to surprise characters with a blast of her cold breath. Grusa is a stubborn bully and extremely jealous of her hoard. She fights to the death.

3rd-Level Encounter: Makwa the Were-Polar-Bear. Like the orcs before him, Makwa probably heard the characters making their entrance. If this is the case, he waits at the center of the cavern with a torch in hand.

He is in his hybrid form. Makwa is a stubborn bully and extremely jealous of his treasure. He fights to the death. Makwa uses the **werebear** stat block, except his alignment is neutral evil and he is immune to cold damage.

Treasure: Headband of Intellect. The boss owes some of their success to this magic item, a *headband of intellect*, which they stole from a fighter who tried to slay them on the tundra.

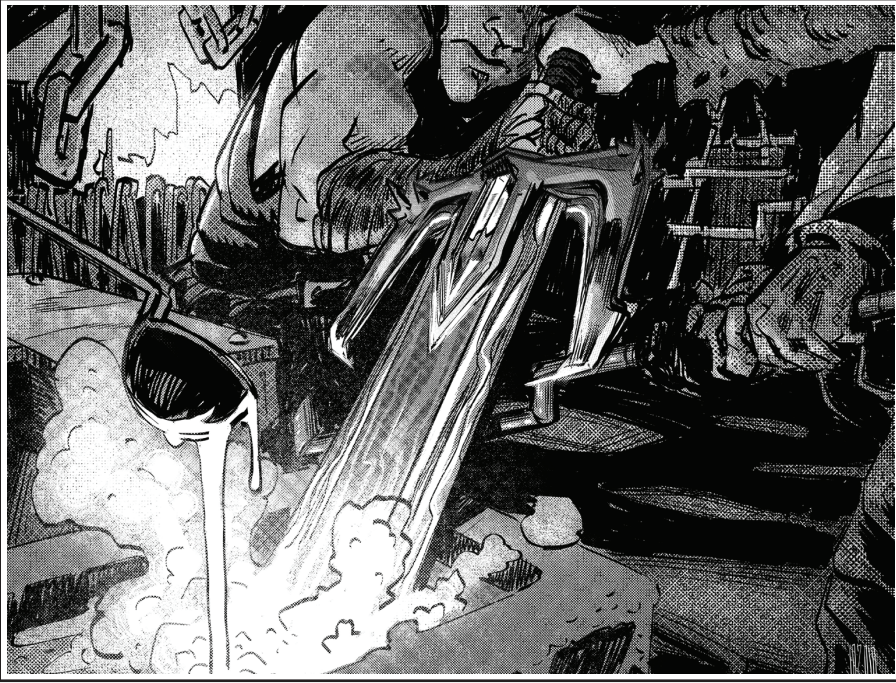
5 - The Boss's Hoard

The boss's hoard is tucked into a chilly chamber at the southernmost point of the ice cavern.

Treasure: The Boss's Hoard. The hoard contains a chest with 1,000 cp, 500 sp, 50 gp, and two chalcidony gems, each worth 50 gp. There is also a *broom of flying* hidden among the treasure. Finally, there is 250 gp worth of trade goods kept here.

Concluding the Adventure

Once the characters defeat the raiders and their boss, the hamlet's leader offers to split the coins and gems with the characters. They will also pay 125 gp for the recovered trade goods. The *broom of flying* is a valued possession with which they do not wish to part, but will offer an additional 200 gp as compensation. The hamlet is not aware of the *headband of intellect*. So long as the characters don't mention it, it's theirs to keep. Ω



THE MINES OF KHAZAKAHN

BY BENJAMIN PALMER

A 7th-level adventure for Fifth Edition

Cartography by Benjamin Palmer

Art by Matias Lazaro, Fat Goblin Games, David L. Johnson, Maciej Zagorski, and William McAusland

The Mines of Khazakhan is a Fifth Edition adventure optimized for four characters with an average party level of 7. Characters who successfully clear the mines should earn enough experience to make it halfway to the 8th level.

In the Legends of Omeria campaign setting, this adventure can be placed in Northern Omeria near Knotside, but it can be set in any mountainous location adjacent to a town or city.

Adventure Background

These mountains have always been rich with jewels and ore. Over the centuries, many Dwarven clans have laid claim to various peaks and caverns in search of profits. While some have prospered, others have vanished beneath the earth, never to be heard from again.

Khazakahn was one such outpost. Lost to a Duergar warband over a century ago, the veins of precious metals have all but run dry under their harsh mining efforts. As such, few soldiers and workers remain. In fact, being stationed at Khazakhan has become a form of punishment among the Duergar as it's close to the surface and of little importance to their people. Tired of his position, the leader of the Khazakhan Duergar has been raising a young red dragon in secret with the hopes of using it to usurp control of the faction from the elders who banished him to Khazakhan.

As it grew, however, it began needing more food than the Duergar could find within the caves and caverns. So, they've been raiding local farms for livestock. This has attracted the attention of the mayor of Arcanfeld whose people have been hurt the most by the raids. Now, he's offered a reward for anyone who can put an end to the raids once and for all.

Adventure Synopsis

The characters find themselves in Arcanfeld where they'll begin track-

ing down the source of the raids. The adventure consists of the following sections:

Market Day. The characters find themselves in Arcanfeld on market day as they begin their investigation to see what the locals know.

To the Scene of the Crime. With a solid lead established, the characters head out to the outskirts of town to investigate.

A Thief in the Night. While searching for the culprits, night falls and the characters find themselves face to face with four Duergar thieves and their Earth Elemental.

The Plot Thickens. Using a map found on one of the thieves' corpses, the characters make their way to Khazakahn. Entering through a hidden side door, they find themselves in an old Dwarven mine.

Into the Deep. As the characters explore the ruins, they have to contend with traps, patrols, and finally confront the leader of the Duergar and his warband. Once the Duergar are all dead, the truth is revealed as the characters enter the final chamber and come face to face with a young red dragon, carcasses and skeletons of livestock surrounding it.

Adventure Hooks

Choose one of the reasons below for why the party finds itself in Arcanfeld or make up your own.

Call to Arms. The characters heard that the mayor of Arcanfeld had put out a reward for the head of whoever has been stealing the local livestock from surrounding farms. Thinking it would be a quick payday, they arranged to meet with him.

A Favor to an Old Friend. An old acquaintance of the characters has retired to a farm just outside Arcanfeld. Recently, his livestock have been going missing. It's gotten so bad that the mayor of the local town has offered a reward to whoever can solve the mystery.



All that Glitters is Gold. The characters acquired an old map of the area. It wasn't precise enough to lead them to anything of value, but it indicates there might be an old Dwarven stronghold nearby. Thinking the missing livestock might be related, they sought out the mayor to get more information.

Market Day

It's Market Day in the town of Arcanfeld near the border of the Greenwood. Townsfolk mill around going about their daily routines. The market square is packed and a merchant caravan has set-up shop for the day. Despite this,

there is an air of unease about the folks around. Recently, the outlying farms have had issues with livestock going missing. It's caused an untimely hardship for Arcanfeld and its people, so much so that the mayor offered a reward for anyone who can rectify the situation.

Let the party know that most of townsfolk and local farmers have come to town for market day. If they want to investigate the locals, the following people can be found among the market goers.

Once the party is done speaking with the townsfolk, they have a few options as to where they can begin their investigation. Where they go determines how the next phase of the adventure proceeds.

Tommy Tall Tales

The local drunken halfling, Tommy spends his days begging for coin to spend on drinks. He's wearing raggedy clothes and his right shoe has a hole that his big toe sticks out of. If the party engages him in conversation, he offers what he knows in exchange for a few coins.

What He knows: Tommy was out drinking a few nights ago and somehow managed to wander out of town to Hershel Felspar's farm. Before he passed out in the old man's hay loft, he saw four little men and a giant rock man make off with a sheep. Imagine that?

Hershel Felspar

A local gnomish farmer, he raises sheep on his farm just outside town. He's elderly, with bad eyesight and very thick glasses.

What He knows: One of his sheep disappeared a few nights ago. He found Tommy Tall Tales asleep in his hay loft drunk as a skunk the next morning, but there's no way he was responsible.

Mayor Reginald Valmark

The town mayor, Reginald is a large man with a full white beard and a penchant for elaborate suits. He's currently wandering about chatting with everyone in the square.

What He Knows: If the town keeps losing livestock like it has been, they won't be able to feed everyone once winter comes. Not to mention the hit

to the local economy. He's willing to offer 500 gold pieces as a reward to whoever can deal with the problem once and for all. He mentions that the latest victim, Hershel Felspar, has a farm just outside of town.

Petra Tannis

Petra is the local herbalist. She spends her days in the forests and hills outside of town collecting different plants and herbs to treat the illnesses of the local populace. She's a halfling woman with a bright smile and cheery disposition.

What She Knows: She came across some mushrooms the other day while foraging for a rare herb that grows out near the mountains. Mushrooms themselves aren't unusual in the area, but the ones she found normally only grow in the underdark. It looked as if someone dropped them while they were passing through. Judging by the tracks in that area, two people and something much larger came through recently.

Vazzic Torson

Vazzic is the leader of the merchant caravan in town today. He's originally from the Empty Lands but has expanded his business to the Greenwood. He dresses in flowy robes and bright colors.

What He Knows: His caravan was robbed a couple nights ago while camped in the mountain pass between the Empty Lands and the Greenwood. The thieves managed to make off with a couple of pigs he was transporting for sale. He's not sure how they got away carrying them. It's almost as if they just vanished into thin air. Fearing more might be coming, he packed up quickly and fled. It was only when he reached town that he realized he left some valuable cargo behind. If the characters would be willing to retrieve it for him, Vazzic could pay them 100 gold pieces. The cargo itself is a box of rare books chronicling the region.



To the Scene of the Crime

Below are the two possible locations the party can investigate.

The Felspar Farm

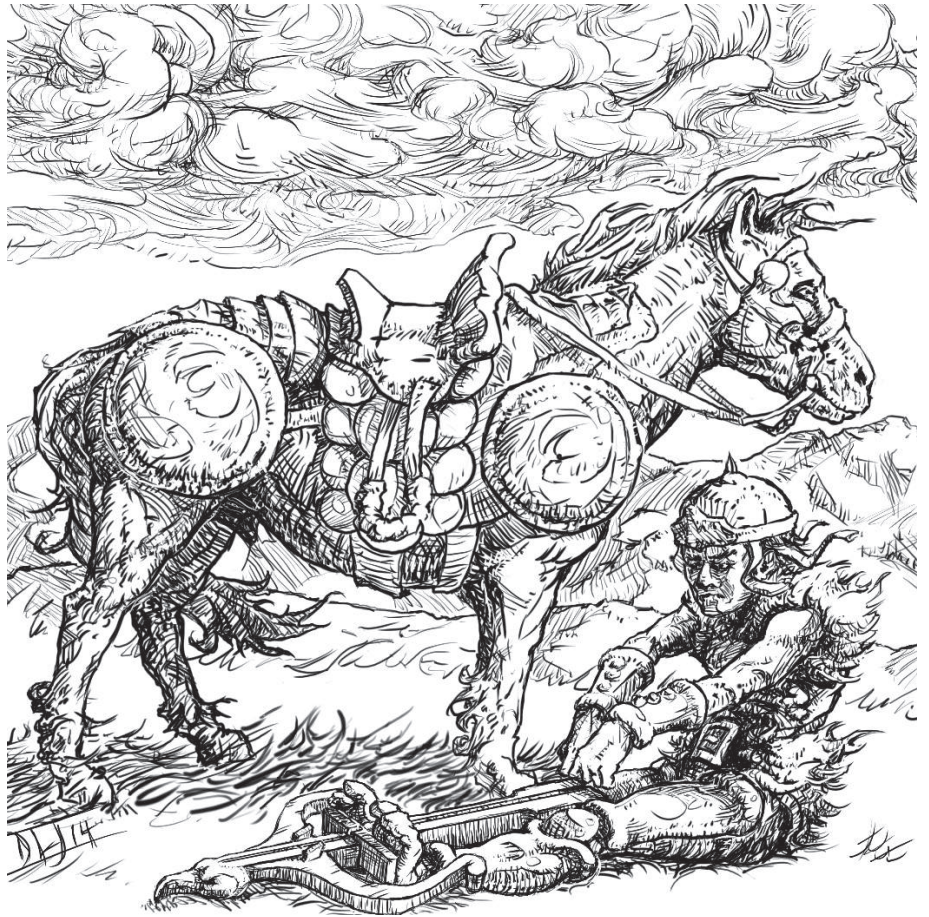
The Felspar farm is located on the outskirts of town. Hershel Felspar raises sheep and supplies the town with both wool and meat throughout the year. Investigating the premises reveals the following with appropriate skill checks:

- **DC 14 Wisdom (Animal Handling):** The sheep are docile and likely didn't wander off.
- **DC 14 Wisdom (Survival):** There are tracks at the edge of the property. Four sets of humanoid footprints and a set of larger more misshapen ones lead off into the wilderness towards the mountains.
- **DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation):** Remnants of some kind of gem can be found embedded in the mud a few hundred yards out. The gem appears to be the kind used in a ritual summoning spell.

The tracks belong to four **duergar** and an **earth elemental**. They summoned it using an *elemental gem* (a yellow diamond to be precise) and used its vast strength to carry off the sheep. The tracks are easily followed into the foothills, but then they become harder to follow until they vanish altogether. Hershel is one of the only farmers left with livestock anymore so he begs the characters to stay the night and watch over his flock of sheep. If they do, they'll witness a Duergar raiding party returning the following night.

The Caravan Campsite

The merchant caravan camped here two nights ago on their way to Arcanfeld from the Empty Lands. They chose this location as it was heavily fortified on three sides and there was only one way to approach it from the road. When they were robbed, they quickly packed up and fled the area,



fearful that another raid could occur at any time.

Encounter: Bandits. When the party arrives, they encounter a roving band of thieves and cutthroats. Three **bandits**, one **bandit captain**, and two **veterans** are picking at the cargo the caravan was forced to leave behind. The group will try to intimidate the characters for coin and, if their demands are not met, will attack. The bandits don't want to die, however, and if the fight doesn't go their way, they'll surrender. They'll truthfully explain that they're not the ones behind the livestock thefts or the raid on the caravan. In fact, they were going to hit the caravan, but then they saw four heavily armored dwarves and a rock creature heading that way and figured it was more trouble than it was worth.

If the party spares them, the bandits

claim they'll give up the cutthroat life for good, which is of course a lie. They'll attack the next caravan to pass through the area.

Treasure. In addition to their gear, the cutthroats have 20d6 gp, two *potions of healing*, and a sketchbook with a variety of drawings in it. It appears one of the bandits was an amateur artist. They range from flora and fauna to landscapes and architecture. The last page has a rough sketch of four Dwarf-like creatures and what appears to be a large humanoid made of rock.

Once the campsite has been cleared out, the party can easily locate Vazzik's books as well as attempt the following skill checks:

- **DC 14 Wisdom (Survival):** There are tracks at the edge of the campsite. Four sets of humanoid footprints and a set of larger more

misshapen ones lead off further into the mountains.

- **DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation):** Remnants of some kind of gem can be found embedded in the ground in a clearing higher up into the mountains. The gem appears to be the kind used in a ritual summoning spell.

The tracks can be followed deeper into the mountains. Eventually, night falls and the characters come across a Duergar raiding party.

A Thief in the Night

If the characters were staying at the Felspar farm, the following occurs:

Time passes, night begins to fall. After a few hours, there's some movement in the distance. As the shapes get closer, there's a flash of light followed by a massive form rising from the earth. Together the five approach the animal pen.

If the characters were tracking the Duergar from the caravan campsite, the following occurs:

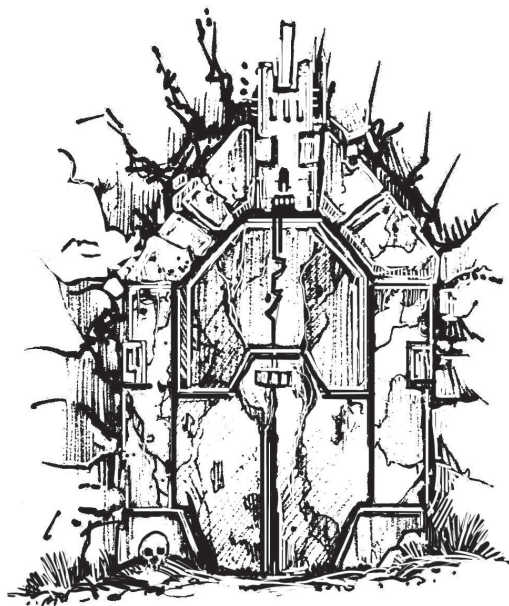
Following the tracks, day slowly turns to night. As it does the characters find themselves going deeper and deeper into the mountains. Rounding a corner, they see four figures standing in the shadows. As they notice them, one of them smashes something into the ground releasing a bright flash. When the light clears, a massive rock-like creature stands before them and all five begin to advance.

Encounter: Raiding Party. The raiding party consists of four **duergar** and one **earth elemental**. If confronted, they immediately attack. They speak Undercommon and shout to each other not to let any survivors get away or the boss will have their heads. They fight to the death knowing that failure means death anyway.

Treasure. Once the raiding party has been dealt with, the characters can search them and find 2d10 duergar mushrooms, 3d10 gp, and a map. The map shows a location in the mountains northeast of Arcanfeld.

Numerous paths are marked from it, each leading to one of the many farms outside of town. There are labels written over each in Undercommon specifying what was found there. There is also a word written in Dwarvish on the back: "Deepstone".

Hazard: Duergar Mushrooms. A non-duergar creature that consumes one of these mushrooms must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for an hour.



The Mines of Khazakahn

Following the map leads them to a large smooth stone door hidden from sight behind a natural curve in the mountainside. There are no obvious ways to open it. A *detect magic* spell reveals that door is magical.

There is an inscription in Dwarvish along the edge that can be made out with a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. It reads "Speak what stone is best and find that which you speak". The answer is "Deepstone," the word written on the back of the map. The duergar had to jot it down to remember how to get back in after their raids.

If someone speaks the word, the door splits open and the entrance is revealed. Otherwise, it cannot be opened.

The following locations are keyed to the map on page 71.

1 - Side Entrance

A long winding stone staircase descends into the mountainside. After a few minutes they reach the end, where they find a dimly lit room containing numerous racks of antique weapons and armor. Read:

This room is full of antique Dwarven weapons, arrows, armors, etc. It was originally a simple escape tunnel, however, the Duergar have repurposed it as a staging area for their nightly raids.

2 - Barracks

These connected rooms are lit by two fireplaces. Comfortable chairs sit in front of them. Numerous doors lead off to smaller rooms.

This is where the Duergar that have been involved in the raids have been sleeping.

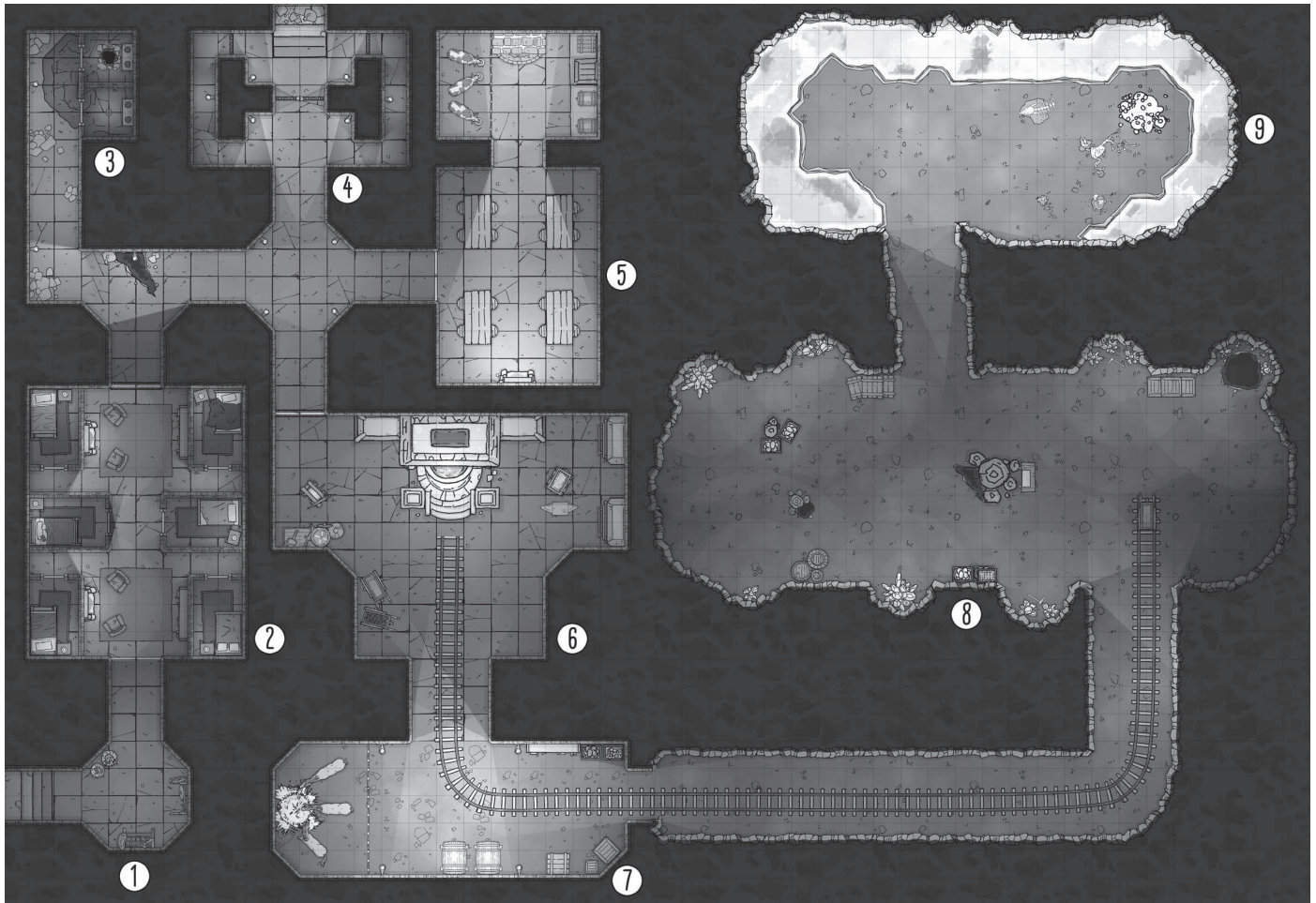
Encounter: Duergar. There are currently six sleeping **Duergar**, and two awake sitting in the chairs closest to the staging area. If alerted to the presence of the characters, they'll try to rouse their sleeping allies. If the fight begins to go badly for them, they will try to flee to **area 6** to gather reinforcements. If the characters search their corpses, they find an assortment of weapons and armor along with 2d6 gold pieces each.

3 - Flooded Facilities

Ahead, a filthy green, brackish liquid pools on the floor outside two doors. The stench is overwhelming.

These were the bathrooms, but they've since fallen into disrepair.

Encounter: Oozes. The northern room contains an **ochre jelly** that has since made its home in the hole in the floor. Meanwhile, a **black**



pudding has made its home in the southern room. If either is disturbed, both will attack. If the characters defeat both oozes, they can make a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check to locate a suit of *adamantine half plate* at the bottom of the hole in the northern room.

4 - Main Entrance

This appears to have been the main entrance to the complex many years ago when it was first built. The stairs leading upwards, however, have long since been sealed off.

This was the old entrance, but the Duergar collapsed it when they invaded to keep surface dwellers from gaining entry.

5 - Mess Hall

The front portion of this room contains four large wooden tables, each with four stools next to them. To the right, a large fireplace blankets the room in a soft glow. To the left, you can make out another room adjacent to this one.

This is where the Duergar eat. There are scraps of food on the tables, including poisonous Underdark Mushrooms. The fireplace is lit, but it's burned down to embers.

The room to the north is the kitchen. There, the characters will find some of the missing livestock (including two of Vazzik's pigs).

6 - Forge

Heat washes over anyone who enters this room. A large and imposing forge stands against the north wall, its fires burning bright.

Encounter: Duergar. If the characters managed to deal with the duergar in **area 2** without them being able to alert their allies here, then the Duergar are hard at work forging a weapon, otherwise, they're ready for a fight. There are three **duergar** working in this room. When they see the characters, they crush an elemental gem and summon a **fire elemental** to assist them in battle.

If the Duergar from **area 2** made it here, they also fight.

THE MINES OF KHAZAKAHN

Treasure. Once the elemental and the Duergar have been dealt with, the characters can search their corpses to find an assortment of weapons and armor along with 2d6 gold pieces each. A DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a sword in the last stages of being crafted.

Forge the Sword. If the party can complete the following skill checks and saves without amassing three failures, they can finish forging a *dragon slayer longsword*. The Duergar leader was making it as a failsafe in case he lost control of the dragon in the chamber ahead. A character with proficiency in smith's tools can apply its proficiency bonus to any of these checks.

- **DC 18 Constitution saving throw:** Withstand the heat of the forge while heating the blade.
- **DC 18 Strength check:** Hammer out the blade's final shape.
- **DC 18 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check:** Quickly douse the blade in the cooling vat.

- **DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check:** Inlay the proper magical glyphs into the metal.

7 - Storeroom

Metal tracks lead from the forge into this medium sized room and down a long cavern to the east. To the west, horses can be seen in a makeshift pen. Ahead, numerous barrels and crates line the walls. It appears this is where the Duergar kept their supplies.

The horses belong to one of the Arcanfeld farmers. They were stolen a few nights ago. The shelves and crates contain a variety of foodstuffs including the poisonous duergar mushrooms. Stale ale fills the barrels and any creature who drinks it must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or else be poisoned for one hour.

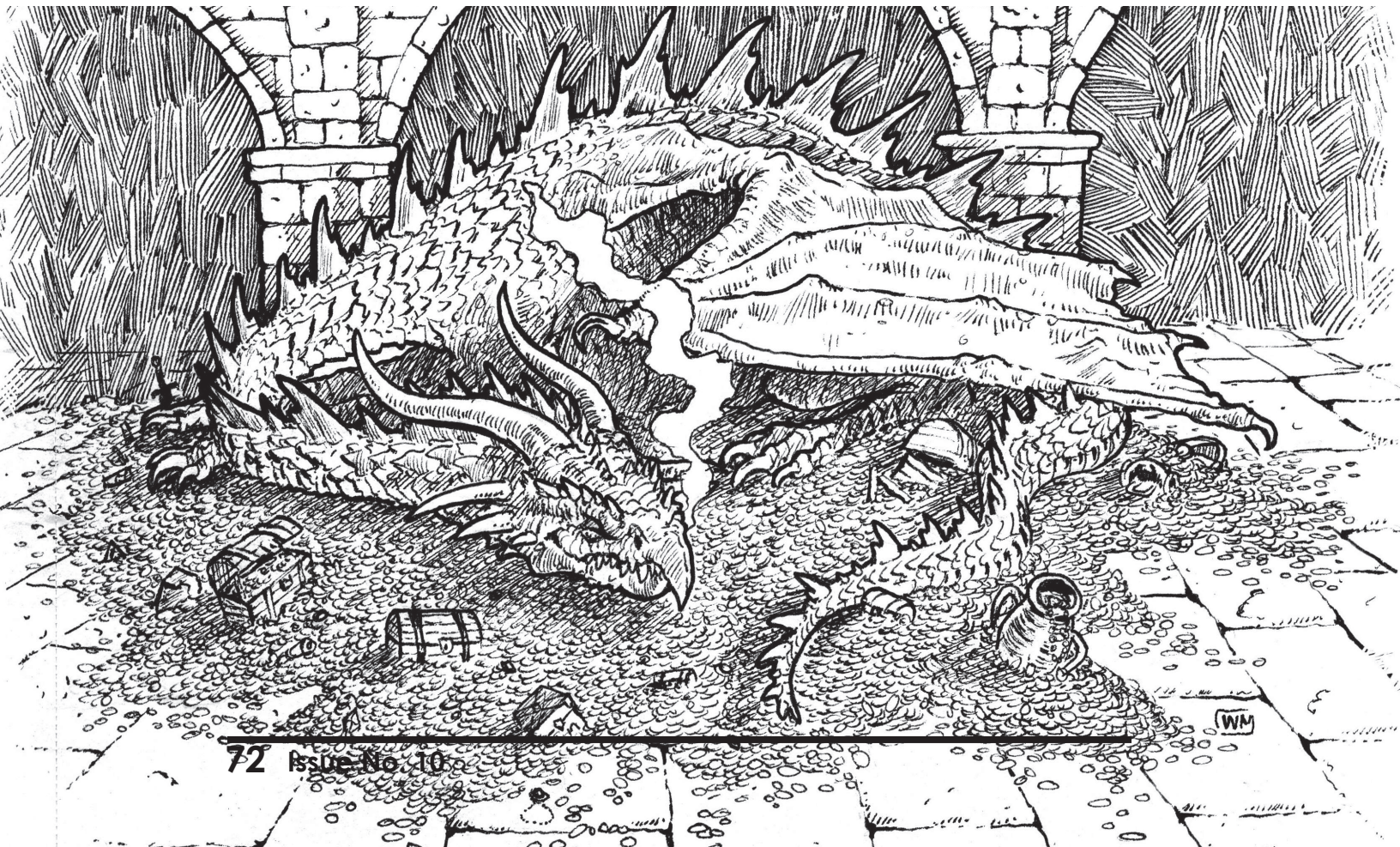
The long cavern is about 120 feet long and curves around a bend before emptying into the main mining site.

8 - Crystal Chamber

This massive room is lit by the glow of blue crystals lining the walls. Numerous rock formations cover the floor and ceiling and a large hole can be seen in the northeast corner of the room. Around it, the corpses of smallish humanoids lay in piles.

Encounter: Khazoc Fellhand. The leader of the Duergar, Khazoc Fellhand, a **duergar warmaster** (see Appendix D) wielding a +2 *warhammer* is currently hunched over a table planning the next raids with his men. He has four **duergar** with him. As soon as they notice the characters, they crush an elemental gem and summon an **earth elemental** to their side.

If the fight starts to go badly for him, Khazoc will retreat to room 9 to get his **young red dragon** to assist him. It's currently in a deep sleep and it takes him 1d4+1 rounds to shake it awake.



Treasure. Khazoc has a +2 *warhammer* on him along with 12d6 gold pieces and a gem worth 250 gold pieces. His men have an assortment of weapons and armor along with 2d6 gold pieces each.

If the characters take the time to investigate the chamber, they can discern with a DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check that the giant hole in the north-east corner of the room is likely where the Duergar invaded from. The bodies around it belong to the Dwarves who lost their lives trying to fight off the incursion.

9 - Dragon's Lair

A powerful heat emanates from this room. A large pile of gold sits surrounded by the carcasses of half-eaten livestock. The stone platform that makes up the majority of this room is surrounded on three sides by bubbling magma.

Encounter: Thraxzix. This is where Thraxzix, the **young red dragon** Khazoc was raising to use as a weapon, sleeps. It's spent its life in this chamber gorging itself on livestock brought to it by the Duergar and as such has grown rather complacent. It's not as intelligent as its kin (it has an Intelligence of 8) and it's rather lazy, content to sleep away its day until it comes time to eat.

If Khazoc wakes it, it rises and fights half-heartedly for the first 1d4+1 rounds (it has disadvantage on its attacks and saving throws it causes the characters to make are at advantage). After that, it fights in earnest as it finally feels threatened.

If the party defeats Khazoc, they find it sleeping on its small treasure hoard. If they wake it peacefully, they can try to reason with it. A creature that makes a successful DC 25 Charisma check using any Charisma skills can convince it that there's no

more food and it should seek sustenance elsewhere. If they fail, it says they look tasty and attacks.

Treasure: Thraxzix's Hoard. Once the party deals with Thraxzix, they can loot the treasure hoard. It contains 2,608 gold pieces, 8 gemstones worth 100 gp each, a +2 *heavy crossbow*, a *chain shirt of fire resistance*, and a *staff of healing*.



Concluding the Adventure

With the dragon and the Duergar dealt with, the characters can return to town with the missing animals in tow. The mayor will reward them as promised and the farmers will forever open their homes to the characters if they ever need a place to rest. They'll forever be known as the Heroes of Arcanfeld. Ω



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DREAD IN WHITCHURCH

BY ALEX OF TAVERNTALES

An 8th-level adventure for Fifth Edition

Art by Matias Lazaro, Maciej Zagorski, Shutterstock, Earl Geier, and William McAusland

Dread in Whitchurch is a Fifth Edition adventure for three to five characters of 7th to 9th level. It is optimized for four characters with an average party level (APL) of 8.

This adventure takes place in the town of Whitchurch in Omeria, but can be placed in another setting in any town that is small to medium-sized and has a granary.

Adventure Background

Townfolk in the town of Whitchurch have been going missing at a rate of two per week. Others still are growing sick and dying as the village graveyard is being quickly expanded. Two priests of the Faith of Grey Adherence have inhabited the village for the past three months, roughly two weeks after the sickness started. The priests, Khafra and Sabaf, are responsible for the sickness—having poisoned the village grain supply so that they may lend their healing magics to the town in order to build trust. They have used the goodwill they have fostered with the people of Whitchurch to acquire new converts to their faith.

Each week, more and more villagers attend the masses held by the priests and succumb to the mind control magics bestowed upon them by the Old Ones. Each week, more villagers are brainwashed into willingly offering themselves to Khafra and Sabaf, having their sanity sucked from their skulls and their lifeless husks discarded. Half the town's populace is defensive and scared, but the other half, new members of the Faith of Grey Adherence, knows exactly what is going on. If they are not stopped, the Faith of Grey Adherence will consume Whitchurch entirely and threaten the region beyond.

Coming of the Worms

About two months ago, two priests of the Faith of Grey Adherence named Khafra and Sabaf arrived in the

village of Whitchurch, snuck into the Whitchurch town granary under the cover of night, and poisoned the supply by planting sludgedrill larvae amidst the grain.

Khafra and Sabaf then left the village unseen. As the larvae grew, feeding on the ambient anxiety of the village, its residue leaked into the grain and infected it with Blight Rot, a deadly wasting disease affecting both mind and body. Over the coming days as the grain was consumed, villagers became sick with Blight Rot. Three weeks after they planted the larvae, Khafra and Sabaf returned to the village, this time appearing as missionaries willing to do whatever they could to assist those in need. Despite continuing deaths, the healing efforts of the priests were appreciated, as the people of Whitchurch recognized that without their help, many more would perish.

Slowly, Khafra and Sadaf explained that the Faith of Grey Adherence was where their powers came from, and that through faith in That Which Comes Eternal more be saved. With the help of the inhabitants, they repaired the derelict church on the outskirts of the village and dedicated it to the Faith, holding mass multiple times weekly for any who wished to attend. Over time, each person who attended the mass was mind controlled by the old, ancient magic gifted to the priests by their god, referred to only as That Which Comes Eternal. Eventually, as many as half of all the villagers in Whitchurch had been converted to the Faith of Grey Adherence. That is when the disappearances started. Confident that they had enough of the village in their clutches and that their new servants would work to keep their dark secret, Khafra and Sabaf began the sacrifices to That Which Comes Eternal—devout converts willingly offered themselves to the priests and had what little sanity they had remaining sucked from their skulls in an unholy ritual that

left only a lifeless husk behind, which was disposed in the church basement. The characters arrive in Whitchurch as half of its population frantically seeks a cure to the disease and eliminate its source, while the other half works against them to keep the truth buried and to grow the Faith of Grey Adherence.

The Faith of Grey Adherence

The Faith of Grey Adherence is one of many names for the followers of an ancient, unknowable god commonly referred to as That Which Comes Eternal. Led by Priests of Consuming, the Faith springs up around the world every few hundred years as directed by the Old One; brainwashing adherents and consuming their sanity in foul rituals of unspeakable evil. A cult so appreciably vile and destructive, the Faith of the Grey Adherence is often stamped out before its influence is able to spread significantly. The plans of That Which Comes Eternal are unknowable to mortals, and despite successful efforts to eliminate outbreaks of its spread, the flame of the Faith can never be entirely extinguished. In Whitchurch, Khafra and Sabaf, Priests of Consuming, have arrived to feed the flame once again.

Adventure Synopsis

The adventure begins just before the adventurers arrive in Whitchurch, when they are attacked by a group of **sludgedrills** (see Appendix D) that have recently hatched from within the nearby granary. Shortly after their arrival, they are met by the burgomeister and are paid to investigate and ideally solve the mystery of the deadly disease afflicting the village, which its inhabitants suspect may have magical origins. The burgomeister points them initially in the direction of the village apothecary, Chenna, who he suspects of scheming, but this is a red herring.

Through further investigation of the village and by talking to its inhabitants, the adventurers will learn that Kafra and Sabaf, despite their efforts to help the village against the disease, started the affliction in the first place in order to establish and build support for their thinly-disguised cult: The Faith of Grey Adherence. Adventurers may slowly learn that half of the village is brainwashed and works against them. They may find the sludgedrill larvae growing in the granary. They may learn of Sabaf and Khafra's treachery early and confront them when they are vulnerable. They may also be invited to attend mass and have a trap sprung upon them. Most likely, the adventure will reach its climax in a direct confrontation with the **Priests of Consuming** (see Appendix D), where the adventurers must defeat the priests before the might of the cult overwhelms them. Once the priests are defeated, their enthralling effect over the villagers will end and the recovery process may commence. As a mystery adventure, there are many different ways that this adventure could play out. Before you run it, make sure you understand all of the events, characters, and clues involved.

Timeline

Whether the characters attend or not, the mass held by the Faith of Grey Adherence is a key component of this adventure. Even if they do not enter the church during mass themselves, they may wish to somehow surveil the mass from relative safety to confirm their suspicions. For a satisfying build-up and adventure climax, a loose ordering of events is suggested to the GM. Consider that the adventure should ideally take place over 2 in-game days.

- Have the characters arrive in Whitchurch around **mid-afternoon during Day 1**.
- The first half of investigation,

including visiting Chenna, speaking with the Khafra and Sabaf, and speaking with general townsfolk, should take them to **the end of Day 1**.

- Make sure it is communicated that a mass is being held the next evening.
- The second half of investigation, which may include investigating the granary, breaking into homes, or being accosted by members of the faith, should occur **early in Day 2**.
- Confronting the Priests of Consuming, be it at mass or elsewhere, should occur **later in Day 2**.

If the players take actions that interfere with this suggested timeline, don't worry! It can't be exact for every course of action the players may take, and that's ok. As the GM, do your best to allow the players to unravel the mystery in a satisfying way and don't be hesitant to break from this timeline or alter it appropriately to suit the needs of your game.

Adventure Hooks

As a 7th level adventure, there are a handful of reasons why the adventurers would be in Whitchurch as a party. Here are a few hooks that you could use to get the party involved in the storyline:

A Summons to Action. The local baron, duke, or even king has a familiarity with the adventurers and their previous heroics. Having heard that one of the villages in his demesne requires aid, he sends the adventurers to Whitchurch to address the problem, suspecting that something beyond a natural pathogen is afoot. He offers to handsomely reward each character with 500 gp, or is willing to provide the party with a plot of land on which they could construct a headquarters.

Traveller on the Road. The adventurers come across an overturned wagon in the middle of the road, beside which stands a bloodied man in torn clothing. He informs the characters that he and his group were attacked by goblins as they attempted to leave Whitchurch due to the plague that afflicts it. He was the only survivor. He further explains that though there are new priests in town that work against the disease, it continues to threaten the entire village. He asks the characters if they can offer him healing or take him back into the village, for he is afraid to travel alone. He cannot offer much except for a few measly gold pieces, instead hoping that the adventurers' good nature will be enough for the task.

A Question of Faith. A cleric familiar with the adventurers, perhaps affiliated with a party member or one who worships the same god, tells the party he has heard of a new faith that has sprung up in the village of Whitchurch amidst the plague that afflicts the village. Wanting to learn more about the god in question and the intricacies of its worship, the cleric asks the adventurers if they would be willing to head to Whitchurch to learn as much as they can about the situation. He offers 100 gp per character and a future favor on behalf of their temple.

A Hostile Welcome

No matter which hook is used to pull the adventurers to Whitchurch, they should know that burgomeister Henry Klaver is the man they should speak to, both to introduce themselves and to get an overview of the current situation. Whether they approach Whitchurch from the north, south, or west roads is dependent on the circumstances of the campaign and the

GM's discretion. To begin the adventure, read the following aloud:

Golden crops in the distance are ruffled by the wind as the many farmsteads surrounding the town of Whitchurch appear in view. After another few moments of travel, buildings sprout up along the horizon, and it is clear that your journey soon comes to an end. Suddenly, the sounds of pleasant chirping of birds and rustling of leaves is overpowered by a loud and relentless buzzing that causes sharp pain in the eardrums. Three creatures, looking like mosquitos the size of dogs, approach from the distant treeline. Jagged mandibles emerge from eye-covered heads, dripping with a black ooze that sizzles the ground when it lands

The creatures are three **sludgedrills** (see Appendix D) that developed from the larvae planted by Khafra and Sabaf in the village granary. Foul creatures of unknown horror, the sludgedrills feed and develop on the ambient fear and anxiety in humanoid populations. Mindless, they fight relentlessly until they are destroyed, after which their corpses quickly curl up into themselves and begin to burn away into a bubbling ooze that stains the ground a dark black and then disappears within a matter of minutes.

Characters who act quickly to examine the bodies before they disintegrate entirely can determine with a successful DC 15 Intelligence or Wisdom (Arcana or Nature) check that their internal organs look entirely alien and unfamiliar, or are in some cases missing entirely — suggesting that the creatures have magical or otherwise esoteric origins.





Arrival in Whitchurch

For a complete description of Whitchurch, including map, please turn to Appendix A.

The characters may arrive in Whitchurch at any point in time according to GM discretion, though for the purposes of the adventure, it is suggested that they arrive sometime around midday so that they can speak to Henry Klaver (LN human **veteran**) as soon as possible, who can be found either at Gazebo Square or the Burgomeister's Residence. Should they arrive at night, they may spend an evening at the Featherpurse Inn before meeting with Henry early the next morning. Should the characters instead elect to investigate Whitchurch before speaking to Henry, he soon approaches them after hearing about their arrival in town, eager to get a set of fresh eyes on the issue. When the adventurers first meet Henry, he greets them warmly and can provide the following information:

- Whitchurch is a town known for its Shorstead Brewery as well as its

grain exports. They supply themselves and other nearby localities with grain and ale.

- Many townsfolk in Whitchurch have been becoming increasingly sick for about seven weeks. A handful have recently begun to die.
- In addition to the dead, other people have been going missing at a rate of two per week for about three weeks.
- Khafra and Sabaf showed up about three months ago. Marcus is happy to have them, as they have been healing the sick and building community in the village. They have shared their Faith of Grey Adherence, which many villagers have turned to for comfort in this difficult time. They often hold ceremonies in the village church, which they helped to reconstruct.
- Marcus suspects that the local herbalist in town, Chenna Lightwind, is behind the disappearances. Many who have disappeared have been known to enter her shop on the day before or the day of

their disappearance. He suggests talking to her for information, or even breaking or sneaking into her apothecary to search for evidence.

If the adventurers tell Henry about the monsters that attacked them on the road, he expresses genuine shock and explains that he has never seen or heard of such creatures before. For his part, he offers each adventurer 50 gp if they can uncover any information that helps with the current crisis. After meeting with Henry, the adventurers are likely to investigate Chenna. If, however, they pursue other avenues of investigation, consult the following Secrets and Clues section to help determine next steps.

Secrets and Clues

As the adventurers investigate the town of Whitchurch, either by questioning townsfolk, searching the area, or through other means, they will learn clues that point them in the direction of an explanation. Some of these clues below are referenced explicitly in the adventure text in

particular encounters (these references will be made clear with bracketed text beside the clue). Others are not, and may be uncovered elsewhere.

These secrets are loosely listed in the order of how likely they are to immediately advance the investigation and push the plot forward. As the GM, feel free to have the players uncover clues where you see fit to keep the adventure moving forward, but try your best to build tension and build up to an eventual climax. If the players elect to search someone's house or question a townsfolk, consider providing them with a secret or clue from this list:

- Many villagers who have disappeared visited Chenna's apothecary within 48 hours of their disappearance. (Henry Klaver)
- Khafra and Sabaf share a residence near Gazebo Square.
- Something or someone has tampered with the grain: it radiates a faint magical aura. (Chenna)
- A number of townsfolk, despite appearing perfectly healthy, have been acting unlike themselves — friendlier, more placid.
- Karl Ruttenhouse, the man who often distributed grain from the granary, was one of the first victims of Blight Rot. He was replaced by Hampus Giles, his adult son.
- Hampus Giles was one of the earliest converts to the Faith of Grey Adherence.
- Violetta Worthington was seen leaving Chenna's apothecary earlier today, carrying Hadros.
- Khafra and Sabaf were seen getting mildly frustrated at Cainon, the owner of Whitchurch General, because he refuses to participate in their worship services.
- People who have tried to ask questions or place suspicion on the Faith of Grey Adherence have been intimidated into silence by Faith members.
- A large, grotesque mosquito-like

Important NPCs of Whitchurch

Henry Klaver - Whitchurch Burgomeister. As a retired Abjurer from Presson's Enclave, Henry (LN human veteran) has a capable head on his shoulders and is no stranger to physical labor or fighting, though a serious back injury he suffered years ago prevents him from strenuous labor at this point in his life.

Appearance. Henry is a physically imposing but friendly-looking man in his mid-sixties, with a red face and a crooked smile.

Mannerisms. Henry makes direct and prolonged eye contact when he speaks to people.

Goals. As its honorable burgomeister, Henry will do everything in his power to keep the peace and prosperity in Whitchurch.

Chenna Lightwind - Whitchurch Apothecary. After making a deal with a hag decades ago, Chenna (N halfling druid) acquired minor druidic powers, which she puts to use in maintaining her apothecary business. Never having had an affinity for other people, Chenna is apathetic towards their outcomes and while she would not go out of her way to hurt others, she has no problems taking advantage of their plights if it suits her.

Appearance. Chenna is an elder female halfling with long grey hair tied back into a single braid and a creased face.

Mannerisms. Chenna often busies herself or fidgets incessantly when talking to others, appearing disinterested or distracted as a result.

Goals. Chenna wants to make enough money to retire within the next year or so, ideally somewhere in a town similar to Whitchurch. She secretly is paying

off a debt to the same hag that gave her druidic powers.

Khafra and Sabaf. Khafra and Sabaf are **Priests of Consuming** (see Appendix D) in disguise. Not entirely human, they have been twisted by the old god, That Which Comes Eternal, to carry out its dark bidding. Bonded to each other, Khafra and Sabaf are never further from each other than the separate rooms in which they sleep.

Appearance. They present themselves as brothers, looking almost identical to each other — both have incredibly fair skin, dark hair, and commanding height. They are easily told apart by a key facial feature: Sabaf has no nose. He claims that it was cut off by his father in a fit of rage when he was very young. He does not elaborate if asked, claiming the memory is a painful one for him. The priests wear ivory-colored robes that are embroidered along the seams with the text of an ancient, forgotten language.

Mannerisms. The priests are relentlessly charismatic. They can smile often, speak with warmth, and laugh easily. They also possess an acute insight that allows them to adjust their conversational approach to that which would best suit their acquaintance — appealing to strength in the presence of the strong, or trading quips with the charming bard. They stick together, and while Khafra usually takes the lead in conversation, Sabaf is never hesitant to chime in freely.

Goals. As Priests of Consuming, Khafra and Sabaf seek to carry out the will of That Which Comes Eternal, spreading the Faith of Grey Adherence and slowly consuming the sanity of its followers.

creature was seen flying out from the granary window late one night. Everyone who has disappeared was a member of the Faith of Grey Adherence.

Talking with the townsfolk

Any person in Whitchurch whose relationship to the Faith of Grey Ad-

herence has not been made explicitly clear by the text of this adventure has a 50% chance of being a member of the cult. If players seek to question additional townsfolk, the GM can either roll a percentile die or determine themselves whether an individual may be willing to help the players with information, or will instead de-

liberately confuse and mislead them with red herrings.

Townfolk not affiliated with the cult may not be aware of anything suspicious, and if they are, may be hesitant to provide information for fear of retaliation on behalf of the cult. To successfully learn of a secret or clue from a townsfolk, a character must succeed on a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check.

Investigating the Apothecary

Chenna's apothecary is a single-story wooden building on the southern outskirts of town. When the adventurers approach, read aloud the following:

A quaint, single-story wooden building with a sloped roof and covered porch stands on the southern outskirts of the village, not far from the surrounding treeline of the woods. Through a front-facing window, a low-lying countertop stands in front of a closed door leading to a back room. The walls are covered in roots, plants, and other medicinal ingredients that hang from rusted nails and wire that runs across the ceiling. A number of crates litter the floor, some sealed shut, others half-filled with supplies.

Speaking with Chenna: During the day, Chenna Lightwind (N halfling **druid**) is in the main area of the apothecary, packing up her shop in preparation to leave Whitchurch, though ready to assist potential customers. At night, she is either in the back room, which serves as her quarters, or foraging in the woods for ingredients. If the characters choose to engage Chenna directly, she can share any of the following information:

- She is currently planning to leave Whitchurch, as the burgomeister has been giving her a hard time and is clearly looking to hang the mystery of the disease and the disappearances on her.

- Chenna has been selling a powdered flower called "Hadros" to many villagers. Hadros, when powdered and mixed with water, can serve as a powerful painkiller and sedative.
- Chenna tells the players that she sells so much Hadros due to the sickness that has taken over the town recently that she has not noticed any connection between visits to her shop and the disappearances.
- Chenna has contempt for Khafra and Sabaf, as their healing efforts have cut into her business.
- She believes that the reason people are getting sick is because there is something wrong with the grain harvest - it radiates a faint magical aura. She hasn't warned anybody because Marcus has been very unkind to her and people being sick makes her a tidy profit.

Everything that Chenna says is true. Characters can determine that this is likely the case with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check. Despite her willingness to profit from suffering, she has nothing to do with the reason for the sickness or the disappearances.

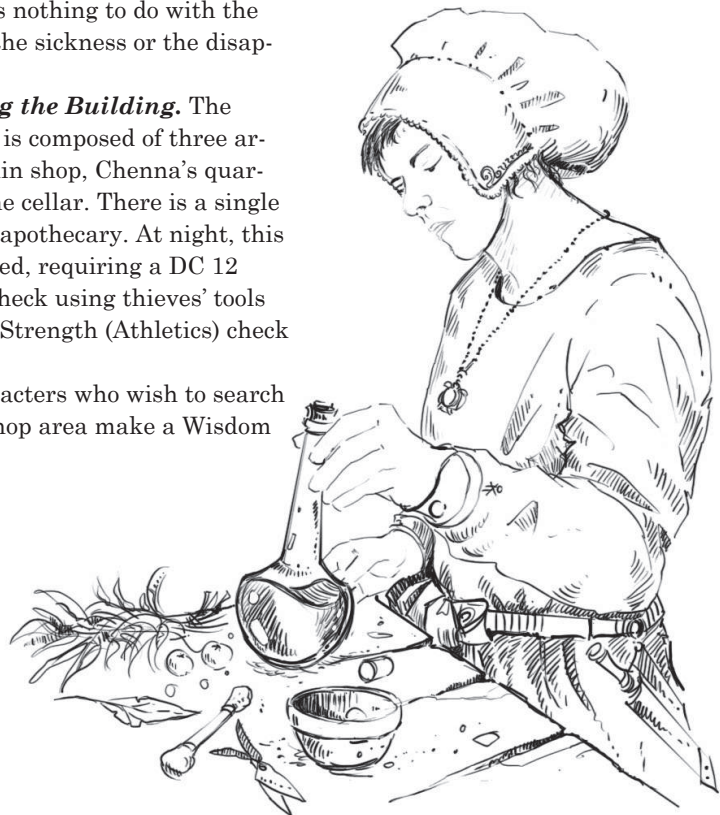
Searching the Building. The apothecary is composed of three areas: the main shop, Chenna's quarters, and the cellar. There is a single door to the apothecary. At night, this door is locked, requiring a DC 12 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to open.

Have characters who wish to search the main shop area make a Wisdom

(Perception) check. Characters find the following dependant on the number of the roll:

- 12 or higher: the character finds a small wooden idol depicting a naked woman, her form rotted on one side of her body. A DC 12 Wisdom (Religion) check can identify this as an idol to Zolloos, a minor deity of growth and decay.
- 15 or higher: the character finds two vials of poison, assassin's blood and midnight tears, in a false drawer built into the countertop.

Chenna's quarters are simple, containing nothing except a bed, a strongbox, and a wardrobe. On the floor, a trapdoor leads to the cellar below. Neither the bed nor the wardrobe contain anything of value. Characters who open the strongbox with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check find a series of old letters between Chenna and her family members, suggesting she left home decades ago after a falling-out over the death of one of her siblings.



The cellar door in Chenna's quarters is unlocked. A ladder descends into a dark, dusty room stacked with crates and shelves. There is a cumulative 500 gp worth of alchemical and apothecary material in Chenna's cellar, though the total value is distributed across dozens and dozens of items — carrying everything out from the cellar would require time and coordination.

Meeting Khafra and Sabaf

Sooner or later, the adventurers are likely to meet with Khafra and Sabaf, the priests, in order to scope them out or to get their interpretation of events. During the day, the priests usually travel from household to household, doing what they can to heal those who are afflicted by the Blight Rot. Adventurers searching Whitchurch for them will soon find them, though it may take a few hours. At night, the priests return to their home near Gazebo Square.

When initially confronted (assuming the adventurers have not yet gathered significant evidence suggesting that they are behind recent events, in which case, refer to “Confronting the Priests of Consuming”), Khafra and Sabaf are exceedingly friendly and willing to answer questions. They can provide the following information to the players:

- They arrived in Whitchurch just over a month ago. They are wanderers, originating from “a distant land, you would not have heard of it”.
- The affliction, which they have named Blight Rot, gradually weakens the body and drives the mind delirious. At its most serious, patients spend their last days confined to their bed, unaware of their surroundings, as their flesh blackens and blisters.
- Their healing magics (*cure wounds*) seem to cure patients only 30% of the time.

- They are clerics to an obscure minor deity, referred to as That Which Comes Eternal. The deity is known for love, life, and happiness.
- They have been holding mass for all who wish to attend every few days at the church they helped to rebuild on the northern outskirts of town.
- Their next service is tomorrow evening. The adventurers are more than welcome to attend.
- They plan to stay for as long as is necessary to fight against the disease, their goals are to help others and to spread the good word of the Faith of Grey Adherence.

Khafra and Sabaf are exceptional liars. A character who makes a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check may pick up on subtle clues that they may not be being truthful, such as the tone of their voices in responding to certain lines of questioning or hesitation for a slight moment too long.

Priests' Homestead. Khafra and Sabaf share a residence near Gazebo Square—a modest, single-story three-room building that was made available to them by Henry Klaver, the burgomeister. The single door to their residence is kept locked, requiring a DC 12 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to open.

The door opens into the common area, which is mostly bare save for a wooden table, two chairs, and an empty cooking pot that rests near a stone hearth in the west wall. A wooden countertop and some cabinetry fill out the space. Closed doors lead to the north (Sabaf's quarters) and east (Khafra's quarters).

Sabaf's Quarters. A bed, desk, and a strongbox are found in this bedroom. A robe hangs on a hook in the wall. The strongbox is locked, and can be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. Inside is a spell scroll of *hallow*, two diamonds worth 300 gp each, and a leather-bound journal.

The journal contains mostly esoteric prayers to the god of the Faith of Grey Adherence, That Which Comes Eternal. Scattered throughout are personal notes and feelings left by Sabaf, including:

- “The sickness continues at an acceptable pace. It will soon come time for us to gather the larvae and end the charade.”
- “The Worthington woman is willing tomorrow. Only a few more and the ritual will be prepared.”
- “Their minds are fragile. Easier to dominate than most. Our progress has been delicious.”
- “We have built a flock here, though the time comes soon to move onward. The sheep are soon ready for slaughter.”

Khafra's Quarters. A bed, desk, and a strongbox are found in this bedroom. A robe hangs on a hook in the wall. The strongbox is protected by an *arcane lock* spell, in addition to a traditional lock requiring a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to open. Inside is a spell scroll of *revivify*, a silk pouch of precious gems worth 500 gp in total, and another, somewhat damp leather pouch that shifts and squirms slightly.

Encounter: Sludgedrill. Inside the pouch are **sludgedrill** (see Appendix D) larvae — grey, thumb-sized larvae that smell like advanced decay and ooze a clear, viscous goo. Anyone within 10 feet of the larvae pouch when it is opened must make a DC 16 Wisdom save when it is opened or suffer 7 (2d6) psychic damage as the larvae attempt to feed off any ambient fear, anxiety, or stress in the vicinity.

The Granary

Either by talking to Chenna, Karl Rutenhouse, or other townsfolk, the adventurers will soon investigate the granary and its possible connection to the Blight Rot afflicting the town. The

granary is a single-room, 30-foot by 30-foot building on the eastern edge of town near most of the surrounding farmland, with a single rickety wooden door and a loft-level window.

Inside, crates and barrels are stacked along each wall. A wooden ladder leads upwards to a second-story loft, where more crates and barrels are stored. The use of *detect magic* will reveal the glow of transmutation magic coming from a row of three crates along the east wall. Characters investigating containers in the granary for at least 15 minutes will learn that three crates along the east wall are contaminated—sludgedrill larvae writhe and squirm at the bottom of each container.

Encounter: Crates. These larvae are close to maturity. When a character first opens crate containing sludgedrill larvae, each creature within 30 feet must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw, “taking 10 (3d6) psychic damage on a failed save. Each failed save also immediately spawns a sludgedrill (see Appendix D) that rapidly develops to full size due to the number of feeding sources in its immediate vicinity.

Eliminating the larvae. The larvae in each crate have a cumulative 5 hit points and an AC of 0. They sizzle and dissolve into a rapidly evaporating goo when destroyed.

Accosted!

As the Faith of Grey Adherence becomes increasingly aware of the adventurers’ investigation into their activities, a small group of mind-controlled villagers will attempt to take matters into their own hands and intimidate the adventurers into abandoning their investigation. When or where exactly this encounter occurs is flexible and left to GM discretion, though it is best triggered either late during the first day of investigation or early into the second day, after the adventurers have investigated enough to have strong suspicions

against the Faith but before a climactic confrontation with the priests.

Encounter: Mob. As the adventurers are travelling from one location to another within Whitchurch, they are accosted by a small group of six **commoners** on a quiet street or alley, who begin to approach with solemn faces and hands clenched around pitchforks and small daggers.

“*Best you begin lookin’ to leave town*”, one of the men says. The townsfolk do not immediately attack, and will engage in tense conversation with the characters for a few moments if given the opportunity. They can provide the following information:

- The priests and the Faith of Grey Adherence have saved the village of Whitchurch.
- That Which Comes Eternal will help everyone through suffering.
- The adventurers cannot be allowed to tear down what they have built.
- The adventurers need to either leave town immediately or join with the Faith at the next worship service.

Due to their mind-controlled state, the commoners cannot be reasoned with. If the adventurers do not agree to immediately leave town or attend the next worship service at the church, the commoners attack. They flee when a third of their number have fallen, realizing they are greatly outmatched.

Victims of mind control. If the adventurers incapacitate rather than kill the townsfolk, they will awaken after 1d4 hours with the effects of the priests’ mind control having been removed. Freed from the influence of the Faith, they will have no memory at all of their time as a member or their confrontation with the adventurers.

Violetta Worthington

Violetta is the next townsfolk to be sacrificed at the church of the Faith of Grey Adherence. Either through finding Sabaf’s journal or by gather-

ing information from townsfolk, the adventurers may be led to Violetta Worthington, who was seen leaving Chenna’s apothecary with Hadros in hand, like those who had disappeared before her. She can be found either at her residence near the Shorstead Brewery, or at Shorstead itself, where she works as an assistant brewer. If confronted, Violetta claims that she plans to use the Hadros to ease the pain in her knee. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check can determine that this is likely a lie. She may share the following additional information with the characters:

- She is a member of the Faith of Grey Adherence.
- She is eagerly attending the upcoming worship service at the church.
- Khafra and Sabaf have personally promised her “infinite peace and salvation”.

Violetta is mind-controlled, and will not reveal any other information that would incriminate the Faith or the priests unless the effect is broken (she is reduced to 0 hp and incapacitated). If pressured, Violetta may lash out angrily, screaming at the adventurers about “harassing a woman who has done nothing wrong” and for “disrespecting people who just want to do good”.

Violetta’s Residence. Widowed long ago and with no children, Violetta resides in a single-room domicile not far from the Shorstead Brewery. The single door to her residence is kept locked, requiring a DC 12 Dexterity check using thieves’ tools or a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to open. Inside, a bed, hearth, kitchen area, and wardrobe fill the space.

Evidence. Resting on a table by the kitchen is a mortar and pestle as well as a brief note. The note contains precise instructions on how to grind the Hadros and how much of it to consume, as well as a brief prayer to That Which Comes Eternal. It ends with the words “*this is a tremendous*

Sequence of Events

- Everyone takes their seats.
- Khafra and Sabaf greet the parishioners and make opening friendly chit-chat.
- Mass formally begins with a prayer in Common to That Which Comes Eternal.
- Sabaf recites a parable about a farm boy lost in the woods who is guided to safety by the lantern of a friendly stranger.
- Khafra and Sabaf call for “the offering.”
 - If Violetta has not been otherwise dealt with, she begins to step forward towards the pulpit.
 - If Violetta is not available for sacrifice, Khafra and Sabaf call for “Mathus, instead.”
- A man, named Mathus, begins to walk to the pulpit.
- The crowd chants “thanks be to the blessed” three times.
- The offering kneels and places their head atop the altar.
- Khafra and Sabaf take their true forms:
 - Khafra uses his Drink Sanity ability on the offering victim
 - Sabaf uses his Infinite Gaze ability on the parishioners
- The two **Priests of Consuming** (see Appendix D) order the **mind-controlled horde** (see Appendix D) to kill the adventurers, joining combat themselves.

opportunity for you. Soon you leave the mortal coil behind and become one with something greater; something ancient. Rejoice, and give thanks.” The note is signed, “Your new friend and teacher.” If the adventurers have read or acquired Sabaf’s journal, a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check determines beyond a shadow of a doubt that the note was written by Sabaf.

Confronting the Priests

The adventurers may decide to confront the priests before or outside of mass in order to give themselves an advantage in combat. Where exactly this happens is, of course, determined

by the actions the party takes. Regardless of when and where they are confronted, the actions of the priests are the same. When one priest is confronted, the other is never far from his side and will quickly join the fray. If the priests are given the opportunity to speak during a confrontation, they may say any of the following:

- “Did you believe that we are alone? You miscalculate. You err. We have built devoted servants who would sooner flay the flesh from their own bones than see us harmed.”
- “Your minds will wither in the presence of That Which Comes Eternal.”

- “Come willingly or not. The end is the same. Madness. Nothingness. Consuming.”

When confronted, Khafra and Sabaf immediately take the shape of their true forms, and send a call to action to the **mind-controlled horde** (see Appendix D) of townsfolk they have enthralled. They then use their defensive capabilities such as *greater invisibility* and *wall of force* to stall until they have been reinforced by their adherents. Once their backup arrives, which may take 7 to 8 rounds, the two **Priests of Consuming** (see Appendix D) attack relentlessly, focusing on the most vulnerable characters first.

Attending Mass

Khafra and Sabaf, as well as a number of townsfolk, will have encouraged the adventurers to attend mass over the course of their investigation, explaining that they have nothing to hide and that the adventurers can see for themselves what the Faith of Grey Adherence is all about. Of course, this is a trap, and attending mass without a strong plan of action is highly deadly for the adventurers. When the adventurers approach the church of Grey Adherence, read aloud the following:

A modest, freshly-panelled wooden church building lies at the end of a road in this eastern borough of Whitchurch. Scaffolding climbs up its windowless façade and towards its spire, which remains in construction. Carved into a set of mahogany double doors is the image of a half-melted candle.

When the characters enter the church, read aloud the following:

The interior is a functional single room, filled with twelve pews arranged in two rows that face an elevated pulpit. An altar draped with red silk lies against the north wall. Mounted torches fill the space with a flickering glow. At the edge of the pulpit, facing the pews, a prayer book rests open on a wooden pedestal. Near the east wall below the pulpit, a cellar door is flush with the floor.

Roughly 40 townsfolk pile into the single-room church for mass. Conversation is sparse; many of the attendees appear focused in their own silent prayers. Khafra and Sabaf take their places at the pulpit and begin preparations while townsfolk find their seats in the pews. On page 82 is a sequence of events that take place during the mass if it is not interrupted by the adventurers. As the GM,

feel free to describe each sequence in as much or as little detail as suits your game, but ensure that the players are given ample opportunity to act whenever they see fit.

It is important to note that any character attempting to leave the church during the worship service will be forcibly prevented by the **mind-controlled horde** (see Appendix D) of townsfolk within.

Fight or Flight: As written, this is an exceedingly deadly encounter — consider communicating some of that feeling to the characters so that they can make informed decisions. Khafra, Sabaf, and the mind-controlled townsfolk fight to the death for the glory of That Which Comes Eternal. If they are victorious in defeating the party, the GM can have the Priests take the party captive in the church basement as they are prepared for sacrifice and give them a chance to escape.

Should the characters decide to flee the church, the Priests and the horde immediately give chase, turning the entire town into a warzone if they have to and killing everyone in their path who opposes them.

The Cellar: The door to the cellar within the church is locked, requiring a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or a DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check to open. A ladder descends downwards into darkness. Once the door is opened, characters with a passive Perception of 14 or higher can hear the faint sounds of wheezing breaths coming from below. Characters who enter the cellar and either light a torch or have darkvision can see the following:

This cellar smells damp and moldy. A number of crates and barrels are organized neatly along the west wall. In the center of the room, a 10-foot-by-10-foot iron cage holds a number of grey-skinned, human-looking creatures that stare back at you with eyes that glow a bright red.

The iron cage holds the husks of those who have disappeared in Whitchurch after having the sanity sucked from their skulls by the Priests of Consuming. They have become permanently monstrous and cannot be saved by anything other than a *greater restoration* spell or similar magic. They do not attack unless provoked (use **zombie** statistics).



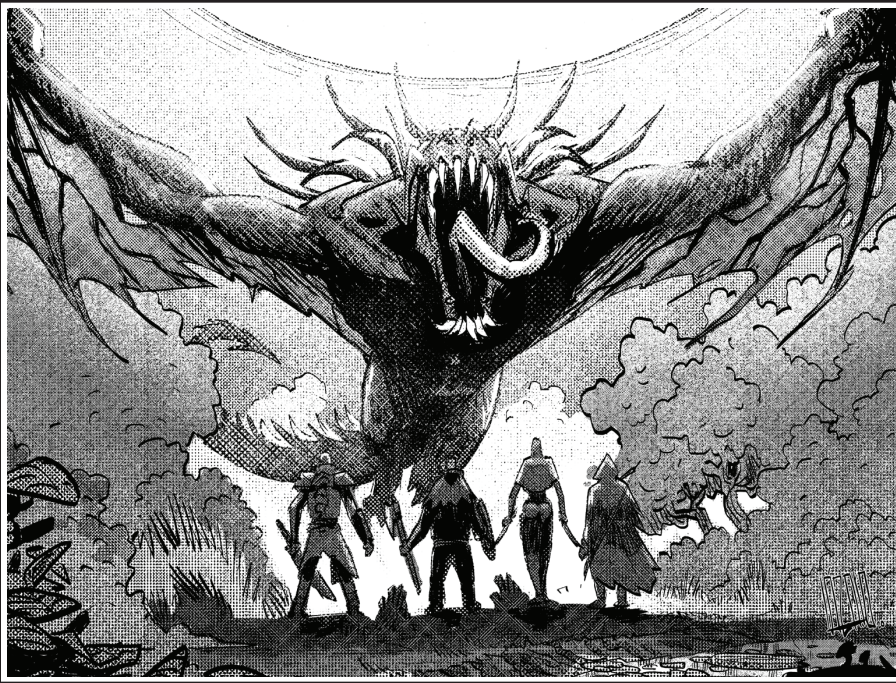
Concluding the Adventure

After the Priests of Consuming are slain, any mind-controlling effects on townsfolk end immediately. Previously mind-controlled villagers have little to no memory of the entire time they were enthralled. Though the Faith of Grey Adherence has been defeated, the town of Whitchurch has much work to do to begin the healing process. The remaining husks must be disposed of, and trust must be rebuilt between the previous members of the Faith and skeptical bystanders. If any townsfolk were slain by the adventurers during the confrontation, their families will mourn.

Henry Klaver will be horrified to learn of the truth, but dedicated in doing everything he can to help Whitchurch move past this tragedy. Word of the event will spread to nearby settlements quickly, and the adventurers may soon become well-known for their efforts in putting a stop to the foul cult.

Identifying the source of the Blight Rot—the poisoned grain—means that Whitchurch can ration for a time or receive aid from other settlements while they build back up their grain stores. Those currently afflicted with Blight Rot do not miraculously recover, but no new cases develop.

Depending on the hook used to entice the characters to adventure, rewards are doled out appropriately.Ω



THE BLACK DRAGON LAIR

BY DAVE HAMRICK

A 4/9/16th-level adventure for Fifth Edition

Art by Matias Lazaro, Maciej Zagorski, and William McAusland

The Black Dragon Lair is a Fifth Edition encounter for four characters of 4th, 9th, or 16th level.

This encounter is setting and adventure independent. It can easily be inserted into any story that you like, or even run as a one-shot. The document includes rules for running the featured dragons independently or as part of a multi-wave battle.

General Features

This adventure location is set at the center of a dismal swamp. No map is provided for this encounter; feel free to draw your own. Regardless of level, the lair has the following features:

Thick Mud. Knee-deep, reeking, brown mud permeates the majority of the lair. The mud heavily obscures creatures underneath it, which is valuable for the black dragon's allies that can breathe underwater. Treat all areas in the mud as difficult terrain. Remember that legendary black dragons (adult and ancient) can use pools of water to surge outward and grab foes. Many of the black dragons' minions have swim speeds which they can use to navigate the mud without issue.

Day or Night. As black dragons have both blindsight and darkvision, they can fight creatures at any time, and will likely prefer the cover of darkness to daylight. If you run the encounter at night, be sure to review the rules in the *DMG* for low light levels. Also, some of the black dragons' minions do not have darkvision, specifically lizardfolk (4th level encounter).

Regional Effects. Legendary black dragons (adult and ancient) possess regional effects detailed in the *MM*. As such, fog lightly obscures the lairs of adult and ancient black dragons. In these areas, creatures have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight. Moreover, this subjects passive Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight to a -5 penal-

ty—in other words, it’s easier to hide in a black dragon’s lair.

Optional: Foul Water. The water surrounding a black dragon’s lair is supernaturally fouled. A creature that falls prone in the water or ends its turn underwater must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature is poisoned until the end of its next turn and starts to drown. Creatures that can breathe underwater as well as all of the black dragon’s minions are immune to this effect.

Optional: Quicksand. You might include one or two quicksand pits in the black dragon’s lair, hidden in areas of thick mud. A quicksand pit covers the ground in roughly a 10-foot square area and is usually 10 feet deep. Reference Chapter 5 of the *DMG* for details on how quicksand works. All of the black dragon’s minions know where the quicksand pits are located and avoid the areas.

Optional: Kobold Spike Traps. Those pesky kobolds that work for the young black dragon may have hidden spike traps in the mud surrounding the black dragon’s lair. Patches of spikes cover the ground in roughly a 10-foot square area. When a creature moves into or within the area, it takes 1d4 piercing damage for every 5 feet it travels. For the level 9 encounter, increase the damage by 1d4 (2d4), and again for the level 16 encounter (3d4). The area adds an additional layer of difficult terrain, requiring

3 feet of movement for every 1 foot moved. Noticing the spikes requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. All of the black dragon’s minions know where the spike traps are located and avoid the areas.

Fighting in Waves

The encounters presented here can be run either as a single encounter with each dragon, or a multi-wave encounter with the dragon as the boss. Waves represent single encounters with one or more creatures. After the characters defeat one wave, the next wave appears in 1d4 rounds.

Young Black Dragon (4th-Level)

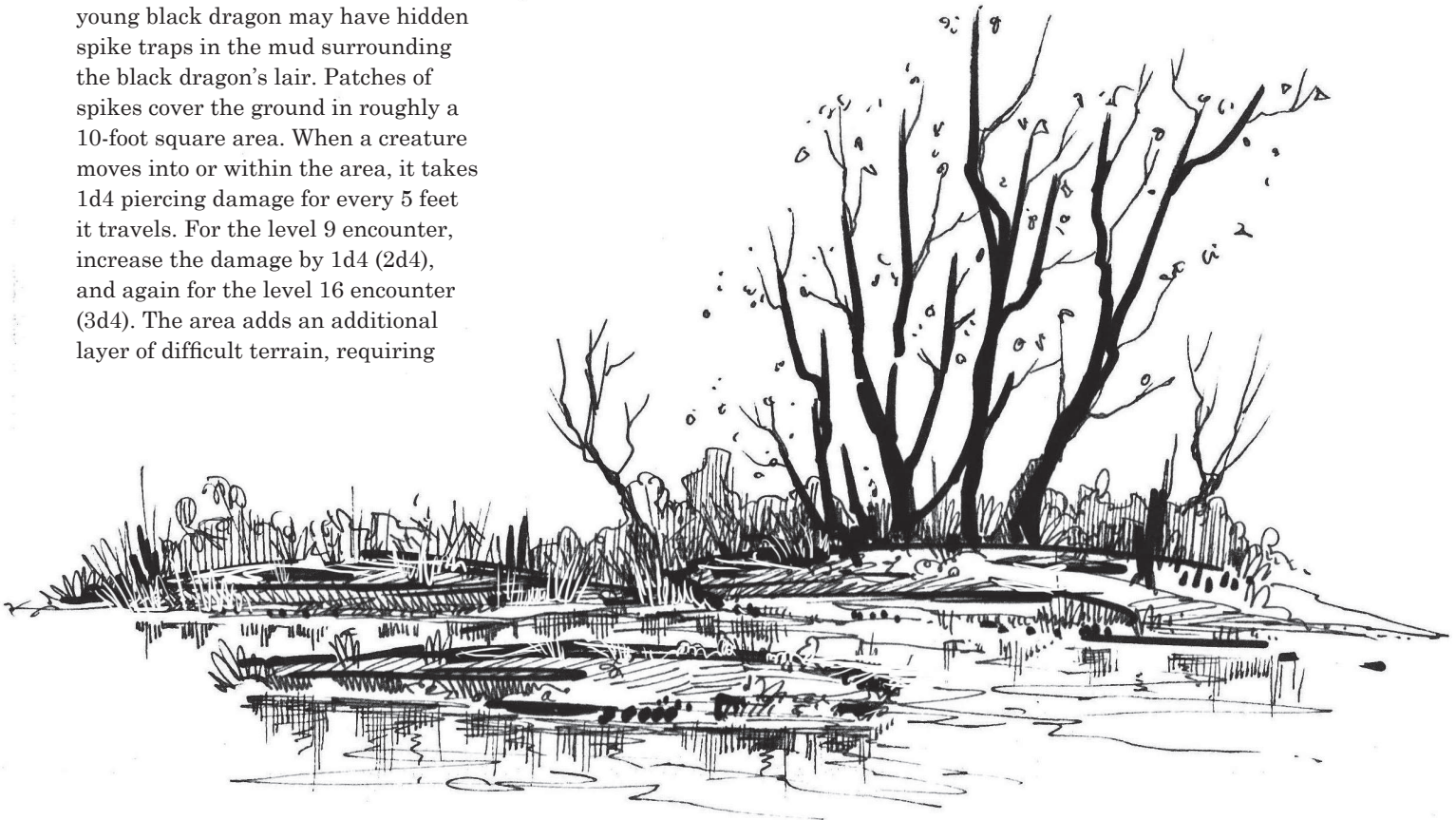
An encounter with a young black dragon is considered a deadly encounter for a party of four 4th-level characters. Note that the dragon itself will only pose a moderate threat to the party if it is fully rested. A party of four 3rd-level characters might be

able to take on the dragon fully rested, but the probability of casualties is much higher. Inversely, a higher level party will see a young black dragon as only a hard encounter, and if they are fully rested, they will have no trouble at all battling the creature.

If you wish to use the young black dragon as the final encounter for a 4th-level multi-wave battle, use the following creatures for the first three waves. At the end of each wave, roll 1d4. This is the number of rounds the characters have to prepare for the next wave.

First Wave: Kobolds and Ogres

Six **kobolds** and one **ogre** meet the characters first. Use the ogre as a “meat shield” while the kobolds keep their distance on dry shores and pick off characters with their slings or thrown daggers. Remember that kobolds have advantage on attack rolls against creatures if at least one of its



allies is within 5 feet of it—namely the ogre. It's also important to remember that kobolds do not function well in the daylight thanks to their Sunlight Sensitivity, so you might want to set up such an encounter during the night where both the kobolds and ogres can benefit from their darkvision. For added amusement, place the ogre in sturdier armor such as chain mail or splint.

Second Wave: Lizardfolk or Orcs

After the ogre and kobolds, five **lizardfolk** arrive (or **orcs** at night, if you don't want the lizardfolk to fight blind). Rely heavily on the lizardfolk's ability to swim, as diving in the water allows them to move unnoticed, and hide from incoming attacks. Orcs, on the other hand, go straight for their targets, charging when they can and tossing javelins when they're out of reach.

Third Wave: Minotaurs

The penultimate wave consists of two **minotaurs**. Ideally, the characters have been softened up by the previous waves. Thus, two sturdy minotaurs should burn even more valuable resources the characters will need in their final fight with the young black dragon.

Boss: Young Black Dragon

The **young black dragon** has plenty of useful powers in its arsenal. Remember that the mud conceals creatures who move below the surface, therefore, it's likely that the young black dragon will stay there as often as it is able, popping out only when its breath weapon is recharged or it can single out a weaker character. It will suffer no penalty from the heavily obscured water thanks to its blindsight. If it finds itself trapped, it may turn to the skies instead, keeping plenty of distance between itself and the characters who likely don't have their own means of flight.

Adult Black Dragon (9th-Level)

An encounter with an adult black dragon is considered a deadly encounter for a party of four 9th-level or 10th-level characters. Note that the dragon itself will only pose a moderate threat to the party if it is fully rested. Characters with an average party level (APL) of 8 or less might have difficulty fighting an adult black dragon unless they are fully rested. Parties with APLs of 11 or higher should have no problem fighting an adult black dragon.

If you wish to use the adult black dragon as the final encounter for a 9th-level multi-wave battle, use the following creatures for the first three waves.

First Wave: Bugbears and Worgs

Start the encounter off with six **bugbears** and four **worgs**. If possible, have the bugbears hide underwater (they're breathing through hollowed-out reeds). While the worgs draw the party's attention, the bugbears leap out and surprise the characters which grants them 2d6 extra damage on their damage rolls. Use the worgs to knock the characters prone and have the bugbears slide in for punishing brute blows with their morningstars while the characters are down.

Second Wave: Medusa and Shambling Mound

Next up, throw a **shambling mound** and **medusa** at the party. Like the

bugbears before, the mound uses the water to its advantage to move stealthily through the dragon's lair—plus it's got blindsight. Meanwhile, the medusa stays 30 feet or less away on dry land. Because the characters will be too busy averting their eyes to avoid turning to stone thanks to the medusa's gaze, the shambling mound will have advantage on its attacks. Plus, the medusa will get to use its longbow with advantage for the same reason—and likely because the creature is being grappled by its shambling companion.

Third Wave: Hydras

Two last challengers: a pair of **hydras**. Hydras can breathe underwater and fire is their greatest weakness, so it stands to reason that they'll spend the majority of their time submerged. With 172 hit points each, these beasts will drain many of the character's resources before the big fight.

Boss: Adult Black Dragon

The **adult black dragon** is a legendary creature, so it gets an improved action economy from legendary actions as well as lair actions. Like the young black dragon, the adult will use the water to its advantage. When it can't hide in water, it instead turns to darkness. Meanwhile, it keeps its insect cloud on top of spellcasters employing concentration-based spells. The adult black dragon's tactics are simple: hide, wait for its breath weapon to recharge, blast the characters with its breath weapon, hide again. If cornered, it takes to the skies.





Ancient Black Dragon (16th-Level)

An encounter with an ancient black dragon is considered a deadly encounter for a party of four 16th-level or 17th-level characters. Note that the dragon itself will only pose a moderate threat to the party if it is fully rested. Characters with an average party level (APL) of 15 or less might have difficulty fighting an ancient black dragon unless they are fully rested. Parties with APLs of 18 or higher should have no problem fighting an ancient black dragon.

If you wish to use the ancient black dragon as the final encounter for a 16th-level multi-wave battle, use the following creatures for the first three waves.

First Wave: A Big Ol' Swampy Mess

The first batch of creatures aims to tire as many resources as they're able to. This wave consists of two **basilisks**, two **harpies**, two **manticores**, and eight **zombies**. Keep the zombies hidden around the mud. Because of its undead nature, a zombie doesn't need to breathe underwater, so they can act as a "trap" for melee chargers.

Flank the battlefield with the two basilisks, but be sure to keep them within 30 feet of the characters so the characters have to constantly remember to avert their eyes—this will give every creature on the battlefield making attacks against the characters advantage. The manticores hang in the skies raining down three spike attacks each per turn. Finally, the harpies hide at the rear of the battle map, catching off guard characters with their luring song. Try not to clump too many of these monsters as a well-placed area of effect spell such as cone of cold will knock out this first wave in a single round.

Second Wave: Young Black Dragons and Will-o'-Wisps

Next up, two **young black dragons** enter the fray. As amphibious creatures, they use the mud to stay out of sight. Ideally, at least one dragon will be able to use its breath weapon each turn. The dragons try to target the weakest characters with their breath weapons, especially those who have low Constitution scores. When a character hits zero or is near zero, that's when the four invisible **will-o'-wisps** reveal themselves. The hungry will-

o'-wisps use their 50 feet of movement to swoop in, zap a character (if it's not quite dead yet!), and then consume its life. Most 16th-level characters will be able to make one DC 10 Constitution saving throw, but having to make four in a row is a big ask.

Third Wave: Adult Black Dragons

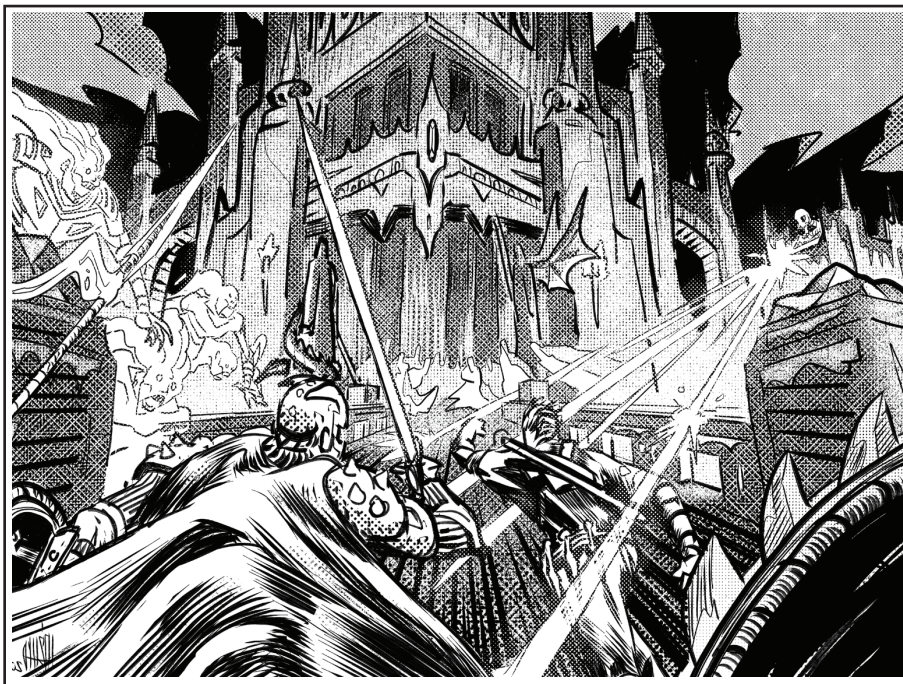
Just before the big fight comes two **adult black dragon** bruisers. There's nothing in the rules that says more than one creature can't claim a location as its lair, therefore, both adult black dragons (and the ancient baddy that follows) will have a full repertoire of legendary actions to toss at the characters. Just as before, the dragons use the mud to hide, recharge, and breathe. Always bullies, these dragons will lay into the weakest characters with their breath weapons.

Boss: Ancient Black Dragon

Before the characters have a chance to catch their breath, out pops the big, mean momma **ancient black dragon**. Like the adult and young black dragons, the momma uses the water and terrain to her advantage, content to beat down the weakest, high-damage-dealing foes first, all the while ignoring melee combatants—with AC 22 and 367 hit points, she can spare a few hit points to take out that pesky mage hiding in the back.

Concluding the Adventure

Once the dust settles and the characters defeat the black dragon, they can claim the dragon's hoard as their own. Use the treasure tables found in Chapter 7 of the *DMG* to determine what the characters find. The young black dragon has a 0-4 Treasure Hoard, the adult black dragon has a 5-10 Treasure Hoard, and the ancient black dragon keeps a 11-16 Treasure Hoard. For multi-wave combats, double the value of each treasure hoard. Ω



ASSAULT ON THE INFERNAL FORTRESS

BY DAVE HAMRICK

17th-level adventure for Fifth Edition

Cartography by Cze/Peku

Art by William McAusland, Rick Hershey, David L. Johnson, and Maciej Zagorski

This side trek is designed for three to seven 17th- to 20th-level characters and is optimized for five characters with an average party level (APL) of 17.

*The **Infernal Fortress** design works best when it is placed at the front of a dungeon. Because it requires the characters to charge headfirst into multiple waves of creatures, the characters will need to have access to rest following the siege or, at the very least, plenty of healing supplies.*

The Infernal Fortress

Hell is no place for the living. And the devils that inhabit the everburning planes cherish this fact. So it's no surprise that devils create grand fortresses such as the one featured in this adventure to conspire, pool resources, and launch their schemes.

How to Run Battles in Waves

While it's possible for the characters to "pull" all of the monsters at once, doing so will lead to a quick TPK. Instead, keep the later waves behind so that the characters can fight the waves one at a time.

The waves are as follows:

- **Wave 1.** The **bone devils** and **barbed devils** positioned at the front gate.
- **Wave 2.** The **bearded devils** on the bridge.
- **Wave 3.** The **salamanders** on the intermediate landing with support from the **pit fiend** and the **spined devils** with the hell cannon.
- **Wave 4.** The **pit fiend** before the fortress's main entrance.
- **Wave 5.** The **iron golem** at the side door.

The Assault

Whether they traveled (the hard way) there or teleported to the spot, the characters arrive at the front of the fortress, just before the gate. Right away, they are thrust into combat.

General Features

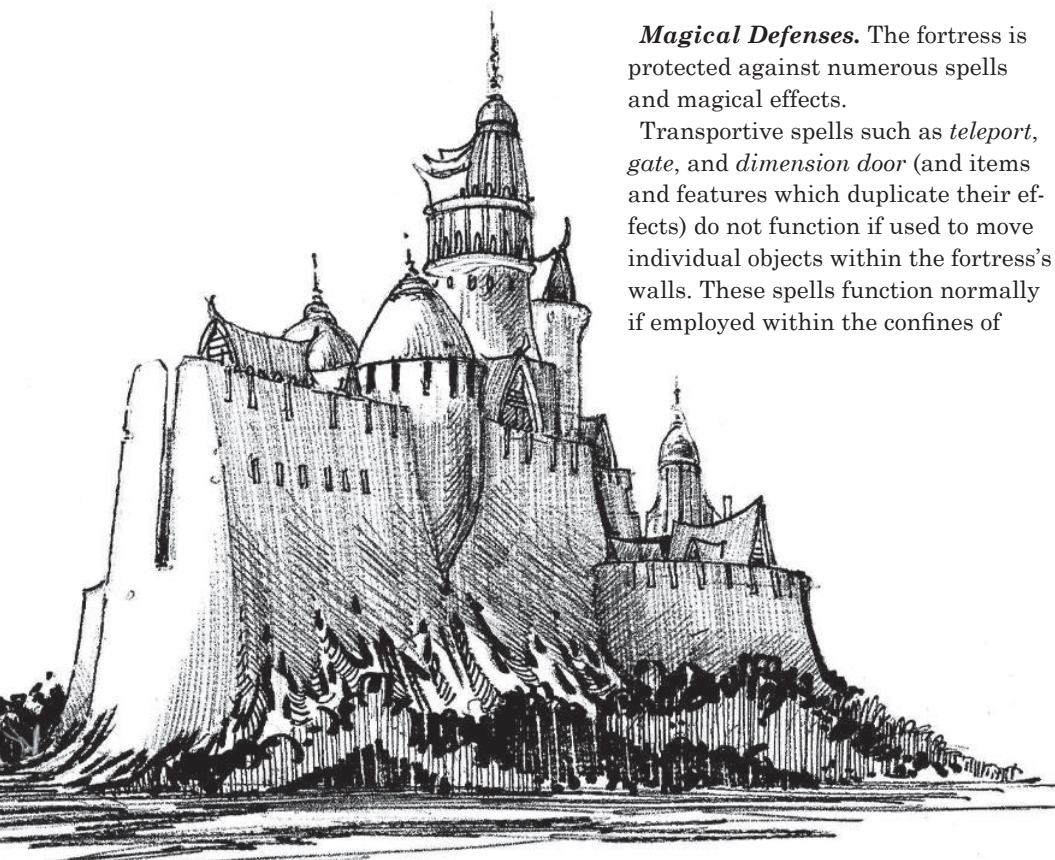
Unless stated otherwise, the fortress has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. It is approximately 335 feet from the front gate to the main entrance to the fortress. The monsters that protect the front entrance protect the entire length of the area. The fortress itself, its gates, and turrets are built directly into a colossal boulder made of solid shadowstuff. Similarly, the stones used to build the fortress are crafted from the raw necrotic energy of the plane.

Hell radiates with intense heat at all times. Refer to the rules for Extreme Heat in Chapter 5 of the *DMG*.

Infernal Fortress Complications.

d20	Complication
1-12	No complication.
13-14	The moans of Hell's petitioners reverberate throughout the entire complex. Each character in the fortress grounds must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the character becomes frightened of the front of the fortress (area G) and cannot advance. The frightened effect lasts for 1 minute. The character can repeat its saving throw at the end of its turn, ending the effect on itself with a success.
16	2d4 shadows join the fight.
17	1 wraith joins the fight.
18	A wave of intense heat washes over the entire fortress grounds. Each character must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, a character takes one level of exhaustion. Creatures immune to fire damage automatically succeed on their saving throws.
19	The character is targeted by a stray fire bolt. Make a +8 attack roll against the character. If the fire bolt hits, the character takes 13 (3d8) fire damage.
20+	A fireball lands in the same space as the character. The character and each creature within 20 feet of the character must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. A target takes 27 (6d8) fire damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one.



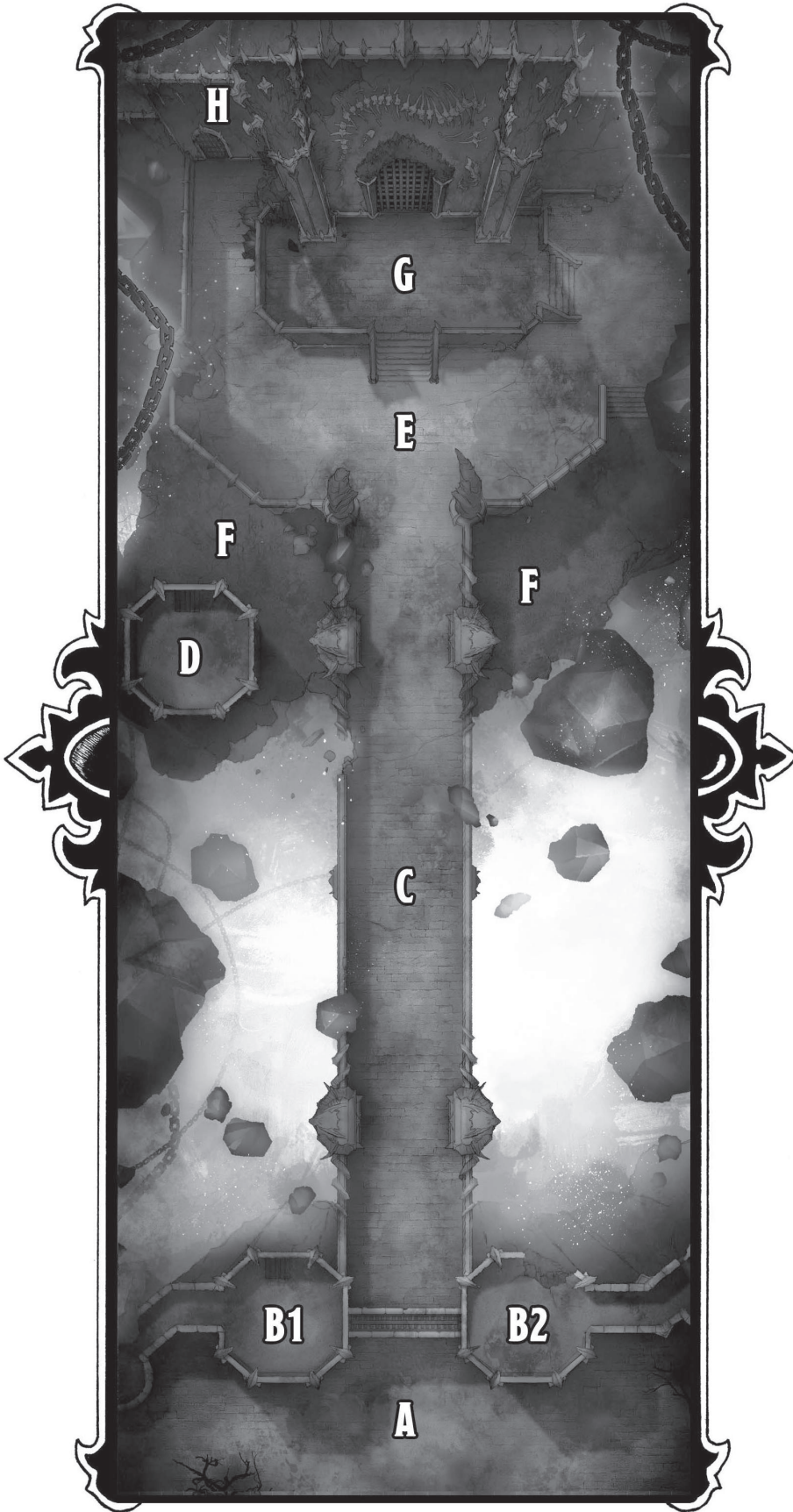
Magical Defenses. The fortress is protected against numerous spells and magical effects.

Transportive spells such as *teleport*, *gate*, and *dimension door* (and items and features which duplicate their effects) do not function if used to move individual objects within the fortress's walls. These spells function normally if employed within the confines of

the fortress. For instance, a creature could teleport itself from the bridge to the intermediate landing, but a creature could not teleport itself from outside of the gate to the intermediate landing or vice versa. The fortress and its grounds are also closed to the Astral and Ethereal planes.

Most importantly, clerics, paladins, and warlocks of good or chaotic alignment cannot recover any spells above 2nd-level while they are inside the fortress. This is due to the fortress' extra-planar construction (cutting good and chaotic divine spellcasters and warlocks off from their respective patrons). All other spellcasters can recover their spells normally.

Complications. Although the characters are fighting against the hordes that protect the gate, there are other forces at work in the realm beyond. The Infernal Fortress Complications table provides several examples. Complications occur randomly. Each character in the combat rolls a d20 at



the end of his or her turn. Consult the Infernal Fortress Complications table to determine whether a complication occurs. If it does, it takes effect directly after the character's turn, either affecting the environment of the battle itself or the next character in turn order. The monsters and NPCs are not directly affected by the complications. The participant who rolled the die or a participant affected by the complication can spend inspiration to negate the complication.

A - Front Gate

The front gate of the fortress is guarded by a pair of turrets and a large portcullis.

Area Description. The front gate has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The walls are 30 feet high and the two front turrets are 10 feet higher than the walls. A creature can scale the wall with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) checks.

Portcullis. The passage to the fortress is protected by a massive, iron portcullis. The portcullis has AC 19, 100 hit points (damage threshold 5), and immunity to fire, poison, and psychic damage. A creature can use its action to make a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to lift the gate until the end of its turn. The barbed devils in the western turret (**area B1**) have access to controls that can raise or lower the gate.

Creature Information. The front gate is protected by two **bone devils**. Providing support to the bone devils, are the four **barbed devils** at the top of the turrets flanking the gate.

B - Front Turrets

The gate is flanked by two 40-foot-high turrets.

Creature Information. Both turrets are manned by two **barbed devils** each. The barbed devils in the western turret have access to controls that can raise or lower the gate. Known for their alertness in their



Adventure Variants

Looking for similar adventures but at different levels with different challenges? The following variants may be found in other issues of *BroadSword Monthly*:

BroadSword #8 - Assault on the Umbral Fortress (5th-Level). Take the fight to the realm of shadow—battle vicious monsters hell-bent on destroying all life.

BroadSword #9 Assault on the Haunted Fortress (11th-Level). This time it's undead guarding the front of the fortress! Defeat them or join their ranks.

role as sentry, the barbed devils duck behind cover after using Hurl Flame twice at the creatures below, granting them three-quarters cover (+5 bonus to AC and Dexterity saving throws).

C - The Bridge

This 185-foot-long bridge carved from stone connects the front gate to the actual fortress grounds.

Area Description. The bridge has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The bridge overlooks an endless chasm of fire and lava in which horrible monstrosities writhe and float below. A creature that falls into the lava takes 36 (8d8) fire damage each round they remain in the lava.

Exposed. While on the bridge, add +10 to all checks made to determine complications.

Strong Wind. All ranged weapon attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception)

checks made on the bridge are made with disadvantage. Furthermore, the wind disperses fog, and makes flying by nonmagical means nearly impossible. A flying creature must land at the end of its turn or fall.

Creature Information. The bridge is protected by eight **bearded devils**. These fiends are supported by the **spined devils** with the hell cannon in the rear turret (D).

D - Rear Turret

The rear turret uses a siege weapon to protect the bridge from invaders. The turret is built directly into the

boulder that supports the fortress. It stands 20 feet high and is carved from stone.

Creature Information. The rear turret is protected by three **spined devils** with a hell cannon. The devils are too busy manning the hell cannon to duck behind cover; even still, the turret's merlons offer half cover (+2 bonus to AC and Dexterity saving throws).

Hell Cannon. *Large object*

Armor Class: 19 **Hit Points:** 100 (damage threshold 10) **Damage Immunities:** fire, poison, psychic

A hell cannon propels balls of hellfire at destructive speeds. The cannon itself is made of solid iron supported by steel wheels. Before it can be fired, the cannon must be loaded and aimed. It takes one action to load the weapon, one action to aim it, and one action to fire it.

Hellfire. The cannon targets a point within 600 feet of it. Each creature in a 10-foot radius sphere centered on that point must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 55 (10d10) fire damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one.

E - Intermediate Landing

The intermediate landing is the last line of defense of the fortress's main entrance.

Creature Information. The intermediate landing is protected by four **salamanders**. The salamanders are supported by the three **spined devils** with the hell cannon as well as the **pit fiend**.

F - Lower Courtyard

The lower courtyard is exposed to the intense heat of the lava below. A creature that starts its turn in the lower courtyard, takes 5 (1d10) fire damage from the heat.

G - Main Landing

The main landing is 10 feet higher than the intermediate landing.

Main Gate. The portcullis blocking entry into the fortress has AC 19, 100 hit points (damage threshold 5), and immunity to fire, poison, and psychic damage. A creature can use its action to make a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to lift the gate until the end of its turn.

Creature Information. A **pit fiend** protects the front gate to the castle. While acting as support for the salamanders, its attacks from a distance with its *fireballs*. If assaulted directly, it goes on the offense, attacking whichever creature poses the largest threat to it and the fortress.

H - Side Entrance

A secondary entrance to the fortress hides at the side.

Locked Door. The side entrance is protected by a 10-foot-tall door carved from solid stone. The door has

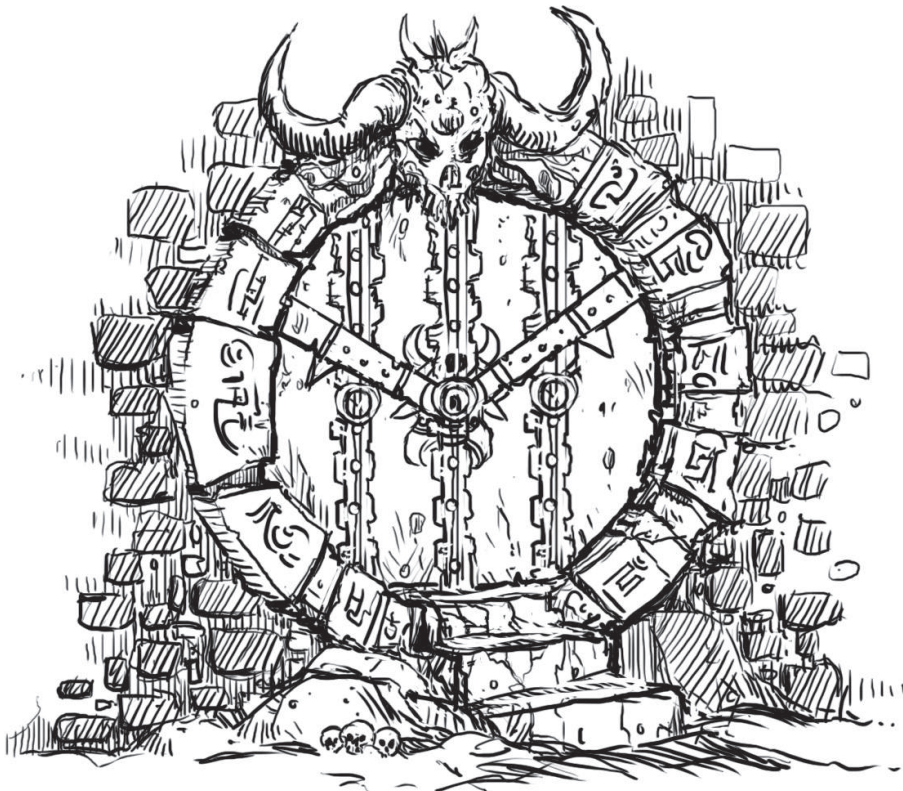
AC 17, 25 hit points, and immunity to fire, poison, and psychic damage. Under normal circumstances, a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check or a DC 15 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools would be enough to break down or open the door respectively. However, the door has been *arcane locked*—the DCs increase by 10 for both checks.

Creature Information. The side entrance is protected by an **iron golem**. The iron golem's only purpose is to protect the door. Therefore, it will not assist in any other combat. Because of the extreme heat of the realm, and the iron golem's Fire Absorption feature, the iron golem regains 5 (1d10) hit points at the start of each of its turns. If the iron golem takes cold damage or is removed from the plane, this trait doesn't function at the start of the iron golem's next turn.

Rules Option: The Eternal Slayer. As an option, a character can make a successful DC 20 Strength check using smith's tools to remove the iron golem's sword. If they do, they can later craft *The Eternal Slayer* (see Appendix C) from the blade. To forge the sword, the character must spend 38 man-years and 100,000 gp to craft the item. Divide the time spent by the number of assistants (other characters or NPCs) with proficiency in smith's tools or Arcana that assist the character. For example, if 20 assistants help the character, it will only take the character 99 workweeks to craft *The Eternal Slayer*. Each assistant must receive pay as a skilled worker (10 gp per workweek).

Concluding the Adventure: Into the Fortress

Once the characters get past the fortress's front defenses, they will likely enter the fortress. What that looks like is up to you. Map suggestions are listed on page 93. Fortunately, the battle is done... for now. Ω





Map Suggestions

Need a map for the inside of the fortress itself? Try using any of the larger, interior dungeon maps by Dyson Logos or Tim Hartin. Both are experts at sprawling dungeon

designs. If you'd prefer something random and unique, you can also try donjon.bin.sh's Random Dungeon Generator or watabou.itch.io's One Page Dungeon.

Dyson Logos



SCAN ME

donjon.bin.sh



SCAN ME

Tim Hartin

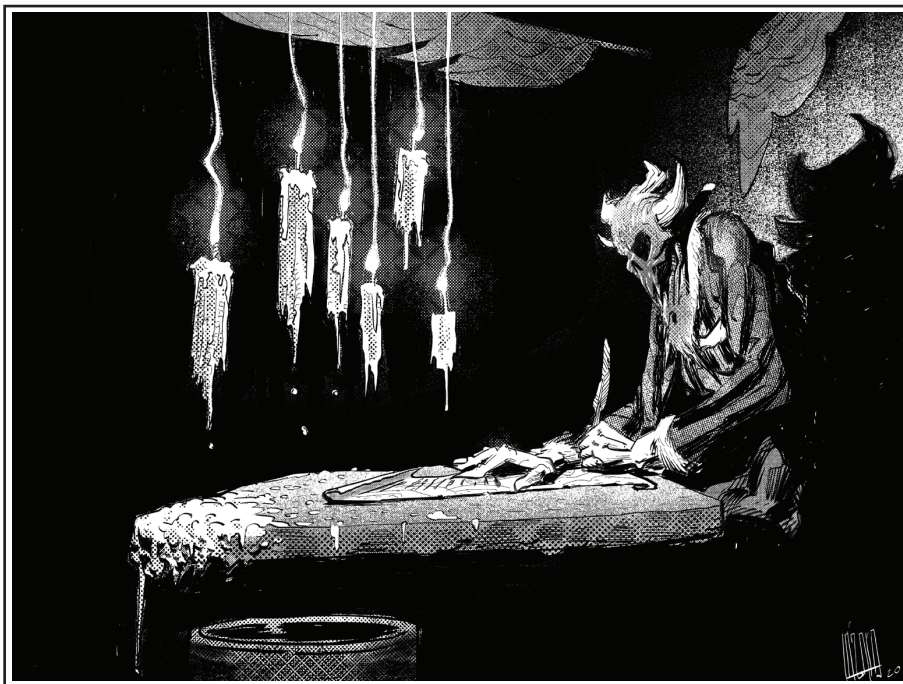


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watabou.itch.io



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GROTTO OF NIGHTMARES

BY DAVE HAMRICK

A 20th-level adventure for Fifth Edition

Cartography by Dyson Logos

Art by Matias Lazaro, Maciej Zagorski, and William McAusland

Grotto of Nightmares is a Fifth Edition adventure for four characters with an average party level (APL) of 20.

The adventure takes place at the edge of an enchanted forest where strange, ancient eldritch dangers lurk, then moves to the Deep Ethereal Plane. In the Legends of Omeria campaign setting, you can place this adventure somewhere in the Wallingmiotta and then in *The Dream*. **Fair warning:** the adventure is built to be deadly, even for high-level characters.

Adventure Background

Crimson Crazuk is thousands of years old. In fact, Crazuk is so old, it hardly remembers a time before it was a lich. Crazuk is genderless and free of ethnicity. Even its moniker—Crimson Crazuk—was adopted at some point in its storied history, with no memory (or care) for its previous name.

Thousands of years ago, Crazuk created the ultimate weapon—the Grotto of Nightmares. This displaced cavern travels through the Deep Ethereal, occasionally touching the borders of other planes of existence. When it arrives, it attracts the attention of the planes' greatest challengers—typically creatures close to “ascension”, such as demigods and high-level heroes.

So far, over 990 visitors to the grotto have perished within its indestructible dream walls. The souls of these visitors are then locked into pink-glowing candles Crimson calls its soul candles. Not even the nigh-immortal creatures who work in the grotto know why Crimson Crazuk is collecting soul candles. However, the serpent person sorcerer supreme Zsoasku, Crazuk's closest ally, theorizes that the ancient lich hopes to collect 1,000 candles as an offer to its goddess, The Black Goat.

And it just so happens that the souls of the characters will bring the candle count to exactly 1,000.

Adventure Hooks

The characters are traveling through a mysterious forest when they are met by the **ghost** of a young girl. She introduces herself as Marie, and invites the characters to dinner at her grandfather's home in the middle of "the Dream Grotto."

If the characters agree, immediately the entrance to a cavern appears in the middle of the forest through which they were traveling. Torches burn alongside the caverns walls, lighting the way into the mysterious grotto's depths.

Should curiosity not be enough to pique the characters' interest, high-level characters who possess strong relationships with nature or religion—clerics, druids, paladins, etc.—sense that Marie's soul is in torment. The girl won't share why with the characters, no matter how hard they pry.

Failing that, have the group make an Intelligence (History or Nature) check. Regardless of the outcomes, the character with the highest result remembers learning something about

a mysterious grotto rumored to be the home of an ancient lich. The grotto moves through the Dreamscape searching for souls to claim. Despite being an obvious trap, it's believed that the grotto hides immeasurable wealth—the ill-gotten gains of thousands of dead adventurers, many of whom were near demi-gods.

The Grotto

The Grotto of Nightmares exists in the Deep Ethereal (or The Dream in Omeria), straddling the borders between the Feywild and Shadowfell. It is ruled by an ancient **lich** named Crimson Crazuk who uses the grotto to bewilder, trap, and kill powerful beings. Crazuk is a worshipper of the ancient goddess, The Black Goat (formally, "The Black Goat of The Woods with a Thousand Young" or Shub-Nigurath) and leads a cult dedicated to her.

Existing within the Deep Ethereal, the grotto is bathed in perpetual darkness. Roiling mists slide through its dark passages, lightly obscuring its insides to even those who can see

past the Ethereal's black curtain.

Unlike the majority of The Ethereal Plane, the grotto has its own gravity, subjective to the grotto's floors. However, a character who somehow escapes the grotto while it is still in the Deep Ethereal gains the ability to fly as normal.

Since it is in the Deep Ethereal, the grotto does not overlap the Material (or The Real in Omeria). As such, all creatures exist on the same plane and can affect each other as normal. Creatures that can see into the Ethereal cannot see beyond what is in front of them.

Magic in the Grotto

Because the grotto moves through the Deep Ethereal, certain spells and magical effects do not function properly. The spells *blink*, *etherealness*, *forbiddance*, and *secret chest* all fail in the grotto, as do magic items, creature features, and other effects that would duplicate those spells' effects.

No spell other than *wish* can be used to enter the grotto or leave it. Magic that summons creatures or



objects from other planes function normally in the grotto, as does magic that involves an extradimensional space (except *secret chest*, as noted above). Any spells cast within such an extradimensional space are subjected to the same restrictions as magic cast within the grotto.

Spells can't destroy or alter the shape of the grotto, and its walls, floors, and ceilings are immune to all damage.

While in the grotto, characters who receive spells from deities or otherworldly patrons continue to do so. And spells that allow contact with being from other planes function normally.

Sleep in the Grotto

Crazuk does not allow creatures to rest easily while in its domain. If a character attempts a long rest, the character must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature sleeps for the normal period of time but does not gain any of the normal benefits for completing a long rest. As such, the character also gains one level of exhaustion. The character can attempt to long rest again in 24 hours.

Short rests taken in the grotto are done as normal, however, a character can only have one short rest per 24 hour period. Attempting to rest longer than one hour requires the character to make the same checks as if they were trying to complete a long rest.

Death in the Grotto

The souls of all humanoids who die within the grotto become trapped in one of Crimson Crazuk's soul candles (see **area 6b**). Only the destruction of Crimson Crazuk and the soul candles will free a trapped soul.

Any spell that returns a humanoid from the dead (including *revivify*, *raise dead*, *resurrection*, and *true resurrection*) automatically fails if cast on a humanoid whose soul is trapped in one of Crazuk's soul candles.



Keyed Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of The Grotto included on page 98.

1 - Entrance

The ghost, Marie, leads the characters down a long, twisting ramp (1a) that encircles a huge, open-air area exposing the interior of the grotto to the endless night of the Deep Ethereal (The Dream). Torches lacking warmth provide light along the way.

At the center of the pit (1b) stands a colossal gourd, easily 30-feet tall. At one side of the gourd, right where the descending ramp deposits travelers into the bottom of the pit, there is a

small wooden door set into its wall.

There are multiple exits from this chamber. As the characters traipse down the ramp, they hear odd things happening beyond the doors or passages.

Creatures whisper from within **area 9**. Dark things lurk in **area 8**. Someone weeps from **area 7**. Chill wind escapes from the passages leading to **areas 5 and 6**. Candle light slips under the door to **area 3**.

Once the characters reach the bottom of the ramp, they lose all magical methods they have to return to the Material (The Real) from where they are. Only by defeating Crimson Crazuk will they be able to escape.

2 - The Marquis' Gourd-Shaped Home

As the characters approach the 30-foot tall gourd at the center of the entrance cavern, they hear happy humming coming from behind the door to the gourd. If the ghost Marie is still with the characters, she knocks gently on the door.

The Marquis Bittencourt.

"Well, hello!" greets a man wearing a powdered wig, blue waist coat with gold-trimmed tail, and pressed pantaloons. "Dinner will be served shortly. Sorry it took so long—of course, the servants are out for the weekend, it being the holiday and all."

If asked 'what holiday', the wigged man smiles, "Arrival Day, of course!"

The wigged man is a **ghost** named Marquis Bittencourt. Marie claims to be his granddaughter.

Bittencourt's gourd-home boasts two beds—a normal sized one for him and a small one for his granddaughter, Marie—a dining table, and a burning hearth surrounded by surfaces for meal preparation.

The Marquis' job is to explain to the characters where they are and what is happening. Although he seems fixated on serving a meal to all of them—he promises it's not cursed or poisoned or anything but understands if they're reluctant—the Marquis does

his best to answer their questions.

- The Marquis shares that the grotto exists in the Deep Ethereal. And now that they are inside the grotto proper, only a *wish* spell can remove them from the grotto.
- The grotto is the creation of a god-like being named Crimson Crazuk. Crazuk collects the souls of mortals who are "near Ascension." In other words, *high-level adventurers*. Crazuk worships a goddess that is older than the Cosmos itself. The Marquis only knows her name as "The Black Goat." The Black Goat's young loiter the grotto, devouring the weak.
- Joining the young are strange humanoids which the Marquis refers to as skullbound. They all wear masks and carry candles that emit pinkish flames. The skullbound are led by an ancient serpent person named Zsoasku.
- The grotto moves through time and space, searching for adventurers that the Crazuk deems "worthy for his collection."
- Marquis knows all of the magical restrictions placed on the grotto as noted above.
- The Marquis and his granddaughter are both ghosts. They have been trapped in the grotto for as long as they can remember. No amount of magic—not even a *wish* spell—will free them from the grotto so long as it exists.

- The grotto is a trap. So far, no one has escaped it, and all who've fought against Crimson Crazuk have died.

Dinner's End. Once the characters have asked all the questions they want of the Marquis and eaten what they will, the Marquis sighs. "Well, I wish you luck. If it's any consolation, you seem more promising than the last group that came through here."

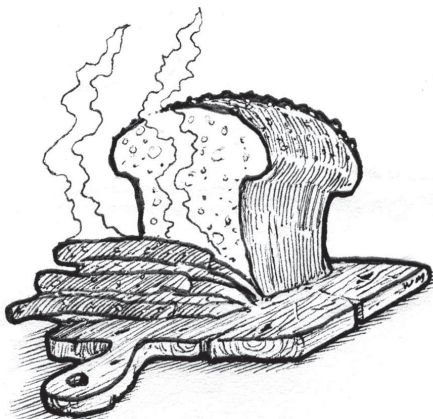
Just then, the fire in the hearth goes out. When the characters turn back to the Marquis, a withered skeleton wearing tattered noble livery sits in his place. Similarly, where the ghost Marie sat now lies a child's skeleton. The food lies in ruin, molded and covered in insects. Regardless, characters who ate the meal before it vanished gain the same benefits had they eaten a heroes' feast.

Unless the characters have already encountered the skullbound from **area 2**, their candlelight is visible through the cracks in the gourd's door.

Skullbound. Leaving the gourd, the characters come face to face with the skullbound, who've exited **area 3** to confront the characters. The six mask-wearing humanoids stand along the ramp (**area 1b**), each with its purplish candle held in front of it.

Encounter: Skullbound. A skullbound uses the **druid** stat block except it gains the following feature:

The skullbound fight until destroyed.



The Grotto of Nightmares

1 Square = 10 feet



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3 - Skullbounds' Meditation Chamber

If the characters have not yet encountered the skullbound (see **area 2**), then they find the six in this room (**3a**), sitting in a circle meditating with their purple-flamed candles in their laps.

They will not break from the meditation unless the characters attack them (or they are called to another area).

3b - Scar. The door to this small room is made from charred oak planks bound together with criss-cross sinew. Words in an indecipherable language are carved onto the door. Only a *comprehend languages* spell can read what the words say: "There is only death here." *Detect magic* reveals a strong presence of necromantic magic on the door.

If the skullbound are still alive, they halt their prayers as the characters move close to the door and watch intently.

Trap: The Scarred Corpse. Should the characters open the door to **area 3b**, they discover a small, empty room that smells strongly of ash. At the center of the floor lies an immolated corpse curled into the fetal position. Thin, red scars cover the totality of its form.

Each character who stands within 10 feet of the open door that can see the corpse must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the character becomes frightened. A frightened character must then repeat their saving throw at the end of their next turn. On a success, the frightened effect ends. On a failure, the character dies of fear.

While creatures are frightened of the creature on the floor, it twitches and appears to breathe.

If a character steps into the room (following all required saving throws), the corpse collapses into dust and blows away with a sudden breeze.

After the encounter with the scarred corpse, the skullbound continue their prayers.

4 - The Dead Pile

This large room is home to one of Crazuk's **dark young** allies (see Appendix D). It guards a pile of treasure, goods collected from dead adventurers over the years.

Encounter: Dark Young and Skullbound. The **dark young** (see Appendix D) howls and snorts, dribbling saliva from its yawning maw. The creature doesn't hesitate to attack the characters once they enter the room. Standing off to the side

are two skullbound **druids** holding purple candles. They casually join the fray. See **area 2** for details on skullbound.

Treasure: The Dead Pile. Literally hundreds of adventurers have died within the grotto. Their weapons and magic items lie in a pile at the base of a headless marble statue situated at the room's apex. Because the value of the treasure is so great, instead of listing each individual item, roll on the DMG's treasure hoard tables for its contents using the rules below:

- Roll once on the Treasure Hoard: Challenge 17+ table to determine the gold and platinum in the pile.
- Roll once on the Treasure Hoard: Challenge 17+ table for both gems and art objects.
- Roll six times on the Treasure Hoard: Challenge 17+ table for magic items.
- The treasure hoard also contains 1d4 artifacts, chosen from Chapter 7 of the DMG.

Curse. All of the treasure is cursed, gained when a character removes any piece of the treasure from this room. While cursed, the character has disadvantage on all Wisdom, Intelligence, and Charisma saving throws.

The curse ends when the character exits the grotto or a *remove curse* spell is cast.



5 - Crazuk's Cavern

Like **area 1**, a 20-foot-high ledge (5a) surrounds the lower cavern, at the center of which stands a small house (5b), not unlike a peasant farmer's home. Smoke sleepily drifts from a stone chimney at the center of the house, rising 50 feet into a natural chimney in the ceiling above it.

Encounter: Dark Young and Invisible Stalkers. One of Crazuk's **dark young** companions (see Appendix D) slinks around the edge of the pit, looking for intruders. If the dark young isn't defense enough, two **invisible stalkers** stand guard at the front door to Crimson Crazuk's house.

6 - Crazuk's Home

The ancient lich Crimson Crazuk lives in this small house at the center of the cavern.

6a - Crimson Crazuk. There is nothing in this austere room save for a desk, chair, and two-foot-tall barrel next to the desk. The lich Crimson Crazuk sits at the desk scribing scrolls. When a particular scroll is finished, the lich lifts it into the air and it vanishes—off to some unknown location. Occasionally, the lich crumbles the paper in its hands and tosses the ball into the small barrel.

Encounter: Crimson Crazuk. Crazuk is a dangerous combatant. First, the **lich** is in its lair and has access to lair actions. Crazuk also wears *wings of flying*, which grants it a fly speed of 60 ft.

Each day, the lich prepares *contingency* on itself. If the lich is attacked, it immediately *dimension doors* to **area 9a** before it takes damage.

Because Crazuk is in its lair, its spell slots automatically regenerate. Crazuk then telepathically commands its **simulacra ooze** (see 6c) to fight on its behalf while recasting *contingency* on itself.

The only way to permanently destroy Crazuk is to extinguish its six soul candles protected in **area 8**.

Room of Rest. This is the only area in the dungeon in which characters can complete a long rest without having to make a saving throw.

6b - Soul Candles. The door to this room is enchanted; *detect magic* picks up an aura of illusion magic. When a character opens the door, the door appears to open, but briefly. Beyond the open door is another door that looks exactly like the one just opened. Once the character sees this, they notice that the door they just thought they opened is no longer there. If they open the new door, the effect happens again. And again and again. In fact, this continues to occur until the characters open the door a total of 1,000 times, at which point the door actually opens. This effect does not happen on the other side of the door, nor does this effect occur when Crimson Crazuk opens the door.

It's unlikely that your players will want to roleplay opening the door one

thousand times. If they specifically request to open the door 1,000 times, it will take the character roughly one hour and forty-five minutes to do so. During this time, have the character make a DC 15 Constitution check plus a DC 15 Wisdom check. If both checks succeed, the character continues the task until it is complete. If one check fails, the character loses interest in his or her pursuit. If another creature touches the door or the character trying to open the door spends 10 minutes or longer away from the door before the door opens, the count resets to zero.

The magic on the door can only be dispelled by a *wish* spell or Crazuk's command.

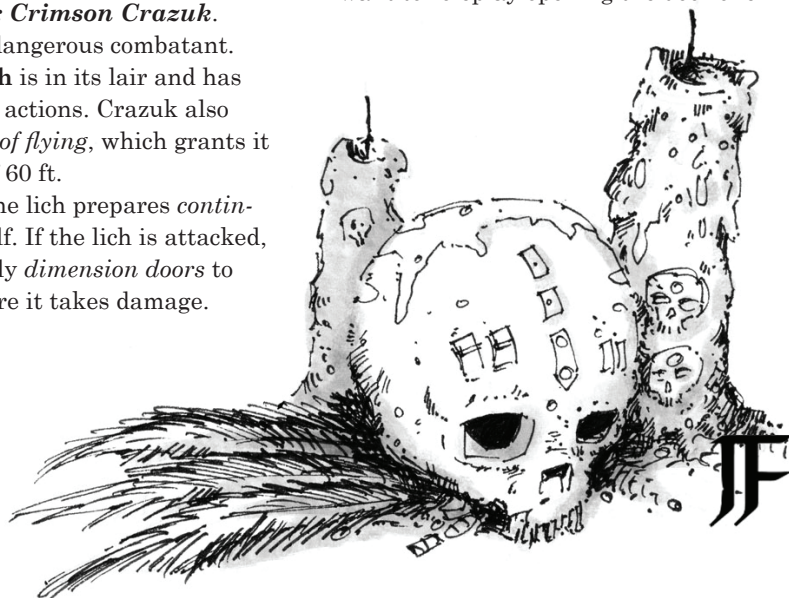
The Candles. Multiple tables crowd this small room, upon which hundreds of lit candles glow with pinkish flame. A character who spends a turn investigating a candle might see the face of a lost soul within the candle's flame.

Each candle here houses the soul of an adventurer that Crazuk used the grotto to capture. Destroying a candle releases the soul. The soul is then free to leave the grotto. Note that not all of the adventurers captured were good humanoids, and by freeing these souls the character may create problems for themselves at a later time.

6c - Simulacrum Ooze. This vestibule is guarded by a strange, ruby-colored ooze that lies in a puddle on the floor. The ooze uses the stat block of a **black pudding**, and it adds the following feature:

Crazuk Simulacrum. The simulacrum ooze can use its action to polymorph into a precise replica of Crimson Crazuk. The simulacrum has all of Crimson Crazuk's (**lich**) statistics, including all of Crazuk's spell slots, except with a few changes as noted below, which makes it CR 21:

- The simulacrum's hit points are the same as the original pudding's.
- The simulacrum's type is still ooze, and its alignment is unaligned.



However, its size changes to Medium.

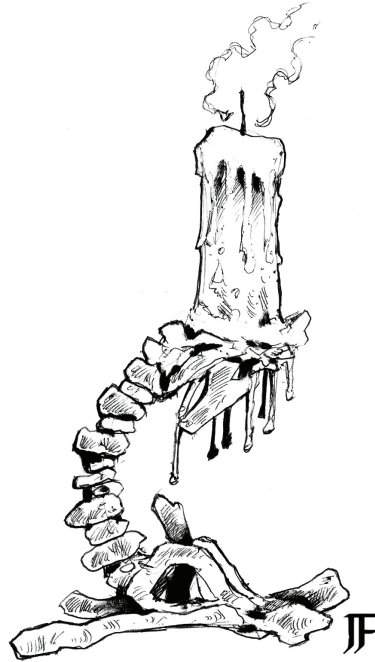
- The simulacrum keeps its Split in its lich form. However, instead of splitting into two new puddings, it splits into two new Medium lichs, each with half the simulacrum's original hit points. Both lichs have the same spell slots remaining as the original lich.
- **New Trait: Rejuvenation.** When the ooze is destroyed, it becomes a puddle of indestructible, ruby-speckled liquid. After 24 hours, the puddle thickens and becomes a new simulacrum ooze and regains all its hit points. While the ooze is in its liquid state, a *wish* spell can be used to remove the ooze from existence.

7 - Archibald and Stella

This dark, cobweb covered, oblong room is home to a pair of crumbling sarcophagi. From within one of the sarcophagi comes the sound of gentle weeping. The sarcophagi belong to Archibald (a **vampire**) and Stella (a **vampire spawn**). Although the four-thousand year old vampire lacks eyes, Archibald cries regardless. Stella, whose head lacks a lower jaw and tongue with which to speak, comforts Archibald.

Like the adventurers, the pair are interminably trapped in the grotto. Having been without a meal for some time, their thirst has left them delirious. They attack at the first sign of food. However, they both fear sources of radiant damage, recoiling. From there, they try to bargain for their endless non-lives by offering useful information about the grotto.

In the four-thousand years they've been prisoners in the grotto, they've searched every room and learned every trick. Interestingly, Crimson Crazuk has made little changes to the layout of its lair. "It considers it the 'perfect dungeon'," laments Archibald, the blind vampire.



The vampires offer the characters one free tidbit of information about any trap, trick, or creature in the grotto. From there, they won't offer any further details unless they are brought close to death or the characters allow the vampires to drink at least 10 hit points worth of blood from one of them.

The vampires honor their agreement without fail. The only thing that the vampires don't know is how to extinguish the candles in **area 8**. Archibald theorizes, however, that the six candles are somehow connected to the lich's lifeforce.

8 - The Kill Room

The ceilings of this cavern are 50-feet high. Six 20-foot-high poles stand at the center of the room, each with a candle at the top of the pole burning with pinkish flame. The candles look identical to the candles carried by the skullbound as well as those found in Crimson Crazuk's candle room.

Encounter: Dark Young. Three **dark young** (see Appendix D) surround the poles. Each one has been commanded to guard the candles. They will use their long tentacles to pull any character away who at-

tempts to extinguish one of the flames at the top of any of the poles.

If a dark young is reduced to 0 hit points, the dark young collapses into a pile of black sludge. While in this form, the sludge has the statistics of a **black pudding** except that it is immune to all damage. At the end of each of the sludge's turns, roll a d6. On a result of 1 - 4 nothing happens. On a result of 5 - 6, the sludge transforms into a new **dark young**. This continues until the six candles at the top of the poles in this area are extinguished.

Antimagic Zone. The entire area is affected by an area of anti-magic (as the spell *antimagic field*) that is 70-foot-wide, 60-foot-long, and 20-foot-high. The very tops of the poles exist outside of the area of anti-magic, as does the cave's ceiling. Characters above the anti-magic field can still cast spells.

Crimson Crazuk's Candles. The six candles all hold an equal part of the lich Crimson Crazuk's soul, effectively acting as Crazuk's phylactery. If the characters can extinguish the candles, they can destroy Crimson Crazuk and escape from the lich's grotto.

A character can use their action to extinguish a single candle. When they do, have them make a DC 18 Charisma check. On a successful check, the candle goes out. Otherwise, it continues to burn. A character can use their action as many times as they like to extinguish a candle.

A *dispel magic* spell cast against a 6th-level spell extinguishes a candle. A *wish* spell only extinguishes one candle at a time.

Once one of the candles burns out, it cannot be relit.

The candles are nearly immovable, and the columns on which they sit are immune to all forms of damage. A character who attempts to move a candle must use its action to make a DC 30 Strength check, moving the candle up to 10 feet on a success.

Once removed from its perch, the candle remains magically fixed in place and doesn't move, even if it is defying gravity. However, if the candle is pulled into the antimagic field it falls to the floor and goes out.

After three of the candles burn out, Crimson Crazuk dimension doors into the area to join the dark young in their fight against the characters, using its *wings of flying* to stay above the antimagic field. If the characters manage to burn out five of the six candles with Crazuk present, the lich halts combat and offers the characters all of the treasure in The Dead Pile plus a trip to any place of their choice in the cosmos that borders The Deep Ethereal.

If the characters persist, Crazuk attempts to *plane shift* them from its grotto. Crazuk's target location is your choice. The characters are free to make saves against the lich's spell.

9 - Zsoasku's Chambers

The serpent person Zsoasku is among Crimson Crazuk's oldest allies. Despite its shapechanging abilities, Zsoasku prefers to remain in its true form. Joining Zsoasku are two skullbound druids (see **area 2** for details).

False Ally. When the characters first encounter Zsoasku, the serpent person is organizing a stack of papers covered in arcane scribbles. Every few moments, a new paper appears out of thin air and drifts to the floor (they're

sent here by Crimson Crazuk from **area 6**).

When Zsoasku sees the characters, it welcomes them to the grotto. It then asks that the characters free it from its immortal slavery at the hands of Crazuk. Zsoasku offers plenty of true information in which to hide its deceit: Crazuk lives in a small house protected by invisible guardians and clones of itself and the only way to destroy Crazuk is by extinguishing the six candles in **area 8**. However, Zsoasku fails to mention the grotto's other magical defenses such as the regenerating dark young in **area 8** or the transformative abilities of the skullbound druids.

Zsoasku will go so far as to travel with the characters, looking for opportunities to exacerbate dire situations with its own repertoire of spells.

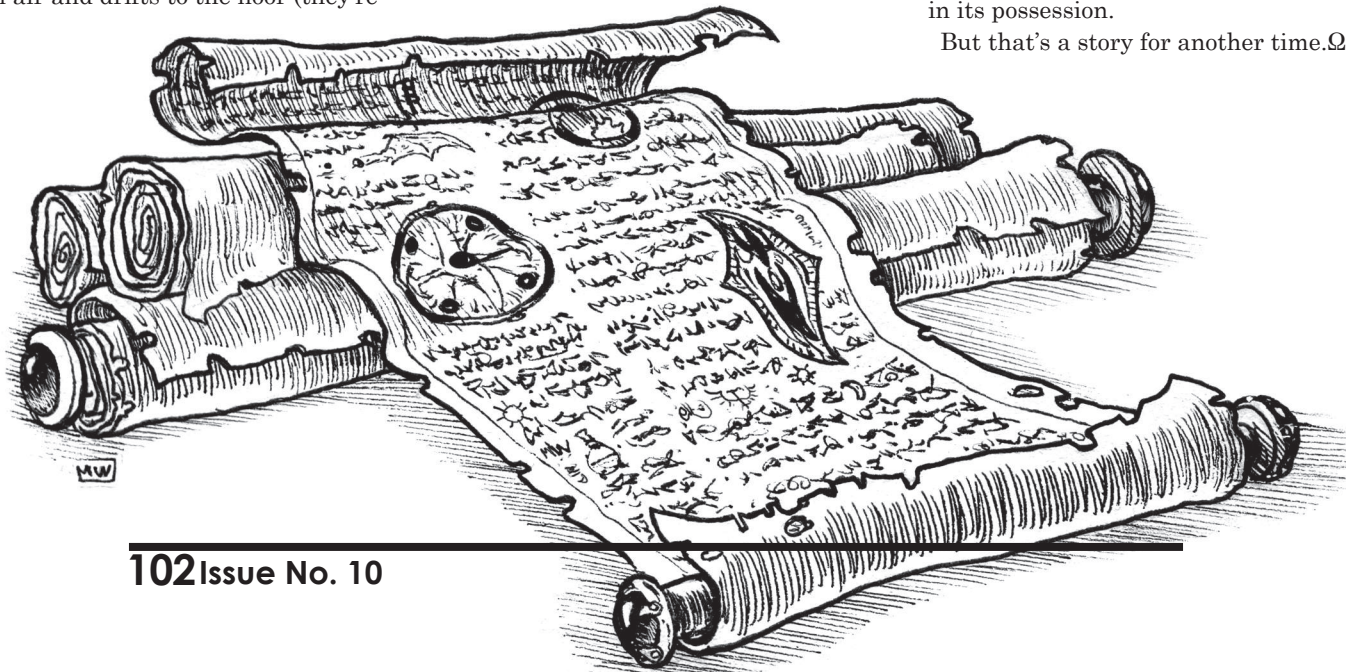
Zsoasku uses the **archmage** stat block, except its type is a monstrosity (shapechanger), it has the same Shapechanger feature as a **doppelganger**, and it has darkvision out to 60 ft. Like Crazuk, Zsoasku has no interest in ending its long life at the hands of a band of adventurers. It will offer the characters whatever they wish—such as information on permanently destroying Crimson Crazuk—if they spare its life. Even if Zsoasku makes an arrangement, the serpent person is sure to betray the characters as it fears Crimson Crazuk far more.

Concluding the Adventure

There are three ways the characters can escape the Grotto of Nightmares. First, if the characters extinguish Crimson Crazuk's candles and destroy the lich, the grotto implodes. The characters find themselves exactly where they started with all evidence they were ever in the grotto erased from existence. Second, the characters can force Crazuk's hand. The easiest way to do this is by threatening to destroy Crazuk's soul candles. Crazuk knows when it's beat, and won't let its long life end so easily. Third, if the characters survive within the Grotto of Nightmares for 1,000 years or longer, Crimson Crazuk eventually calls a stalemate and lets them leave. It's possible, however, that Crazuk will also see value in the demigod-like adventurers and offer them a role in its greater plans.

If the characters all die in the Grotto of Nightmares, their souls become trapped in the candles. While trapped in a candle, time moves at a frightful slog. Sometime later—probably two or three centuries or so—a more capable group of heroes enters the lich's grotto and frees the characters from their prisons. At this point, of course, the characters may have gone mad from their stay. Plus, there's no telling what harm Crimson Crazuk caused once it had 1,000 soul candles in its possession.

But that's a story for another time.Ω



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CYCLOPÆDIA OMERIA

BY ALEX OF TAVERNTALES, TOM CARTOS, AND DAVE HAMRICK

ART BY JASON GLOVER

CARTOGRAPHY BY WATABOU.ITCH.U AND TOM CARTOS

The Village of Whitchurch

Whitchurch is a small village of about 600 people in Northern Omeria and a western satellite settlement of Presson's Enclave, built to take advantage of the fertile agricultural lands throughout the area. Known regionally for its grain and ale production, its surrounding farms supply many of the nearby settlements with a consistent food source and steady drink.

Though Whitchurch is majority human, about 10% of the population are halfings who have settled here permanently from nearby hamlets. The halfings are well-integrated within the village, serving as capable farmhands. They are also respected for their intimate knowledge of the woodlands, which is put to use during hunting expeditions.

The village is managed by Henry Klaver, its burgomeister and long-retired Abjurer of Presson's Enclave. The village is not large enough to justify a council or extended ruling body, so Klaver makes any major decisions on the village's behalf. It also has no formal town guard, instead rotating a guard militia from willing volunteers. Active militia members are rarely busy, as crime in Whitchurch is extremely rare due to its size. Its only major landmark is the Shorstead Brewery, where any villager who is not a farmer is likely to work.

Locations in Whitchurch

Whitchurch General. Folk can find any manner of every-day item at Whitchurch General. As the most trafficked business in town, the general store is understood as a place where townsfolk gather and gossip is exchanged. Whitchurch General is owned and operated by Cainon Esmonda, a friendly and boisterous man

with a fascination for bird feathers, which he uses to decorate his store in colorful arrangements that hang on the walls. Cainon will happily trade a discount or a rumor he's heard for the feather of a rare or colorful species.

The Farmskirts. Farms surround Whitchurch, and most of the population makes their living on them. It is not uncommon for the locals to require aid fending off hungry pests that threaten their livestock or the occasional curious owlbear. A mean looking scarecrow in a polka-dot sundress fends off the crows and overlooks the northern road into town.

Gazebo Square. Gazebo Square is host to any farmer's markets or small festivals in Whitchurch. A spacious gazebo of latticed wood with room for plenty of seating was built over the water well in the middle of town by Colin Cornwallis, a skilled carpenter now retired. Colin spends most of his days sitting under the gazebo, playing dice games with anyone who will indulge him. Like Whitchurch General, Gazebo Square is a hub of activity in the town as its primary source of drinking water.

Shorstead Brewery. Whitchurch has developed around the Shorstead Brewery. One of the oldest buildings in town and owned and operated by the Shorstead family, the brewery provides employment for many in town who do not already work on the surrounding farms. Its current head of operations is Emilia Shorstead, who recently took over for her late father. On brewing days, the air near the brewery is filled with a pungent, fruity aroma. Shorstead Brewery's primary product is a dark and hoppy brew called Brownstout, though they occasionally host tastings for new brews as they are developed.

Chenna's Apothecary. Townsfolk seeking particular root plants, specific tinctures, or perhaps even a potion know that Chenna's Apothecary is the place to go. Established by the female halfling Chenna Lightwind only a few years ago, the apothecary is a humble but serviceable little building on the southern outskirts of the town, jam-packed with all manner of useful ingredients. Roots hang to dry on the walls, vials are stacked neatly on low shelves, and the interior overpowers the nose with a dizzying mix of scents. Chenna is a capable forager and knows how to defend herself, and so often sources her supplies herself. Despite this, she is always happy to purchase stock from interested sellers or to procure adventurers for specific ingredients she is looking for in the woods or hills nearby.

Featherpurse Inn. The Featherpurse Inn is a homely place. There are no single tables or booths, just two long dining tables that occupy the middle of the service room with enough seating for up to 40 people. Two stone hearths on opposite ends of the room provide a cozy warmth, and the bar is well-stocked by the Shorstead Brewery. A small music club has been organized by the townsfolk, which means that on any given night, one amateur musician from a rotating cast will be performing on an improvised stage in the inn. The innkeeper, Brom Hollystead, is a tall, burly man with a thick moustache. He is curt but friendly. He's also a member of the Faith of Grey Adherence, and works hard to keep its dark secrets. Food and lodging can be procured from the Featherpurse Inn for 4 sp per night.

Burgomeister's Residence. The burgomeister's residence acts as the

local townhall, where folk can gather in its spacious, decorated living room or fenced garden when necessary. Its current occupant is Henry Klaver, burgomeister and popular leader of Whitchurch. Henry Klaver is usually only home in the evenings, as he prefers to spend his days out and about in town, building relations with the townsfolk and keeping an eye out for any dispute that needs resolving. As a retired Abjurer from Presson's Enclave, Henry has a capable head

on his shoulders and is no stranger to physical labor or fighting, though a serious back injury he suffered years ago prevents him from strenuous labor at this point in his life.

Grey Adherence Church. Originally, the Grey Adherence church was a dilapidated skeleton of a building after the original church was mostly destroyed years ago in a rare hill giant attack. It sat neglected for years, as villagers used other small shrines throughout the village for worship.

Khafra and Sabaf took an interest in rebuilding the church so that it could be used for their new faith, and the villagers, grateful for their assistance in combatting the Blight Rot that has afflicted the town, were happy to help. Little more than a single room for mass and a small basement for storage, the Grey Adherence church is small but does exactly what it needs to do - serve as the grounds for enthralling those who tread too close to the Priests.



Ostenwold Town

For generations, Ostenwold was a humble smattering of homes and farms along the river Ost, a quiet peaceful hamlet with little connection to the outside world. 30 years ago two retired adventurers, the human Horst Blackfoot and the elf Déulara Tauranis, chose to settle down and spend their hard-earned gold on building The Sanguine Dawn Inn. At the time, this was the only safe resting place for travelers on the long march between civilised areas, and soon became a regular stopover for merchant caravans and traveling nobility.

Under Horst and Déularas stewardship, Ostenwold quickly grew. Horst set up the Eastwatch Garrison to keep the area free from bandits and predatory monsters, before handing over the reins and starting his own smithy. Déulara took on much of the work of government until the Capital noticed the growing importance of the town and sent their own representative. Déulara returned to her day-to-day work at the Sanguine Dawn, but many of the townsfolk still look to her as the rightful leader and seek her council behind the back of the new mayor.

In the decades that have passed since Horst and Déulara's arrival, Ostenwold has seen explosive growth, great prosperity, and peace, but in the last couple of years, tensions between the original inhabitants and the newcomers have grown. Trust in the new garrison commander is low, monsters have been reported roaming the woods to the north-west, thefts have been reported in Dockside, and rumours of a smuggler's den intermingle with talk of grave robbers at the Church of the Everlight. Even the Ungrimsts, one of Ostenwold's oldest families, have stopped talking to each other and no one has heard from the wizard Dresden for quite some time.



Locations in Ostenwold

The following locations are keyed to the Map of Ostenwold on page 108.

1 - The Sanguine Dawn Inn

Like all good adventures, this one starts with a chance meeting at an Inn. This seemed a fitting theme for my first ever map. Whether it's the starting point of your new campaign, the party's favourite drinking spot, a local gangster's hideout, or all of the above, every great D&D adventure needs an Inn.

The Sanguine Dawn features everything you need for a restful stay. A roaring fireplace, a warm bath, a stage for travelling bards, comfy bedrooms upstairs with a view, a fully stocked kitchen, a secret trapdoor behind a bookcase leading to an underground chamber and the sewers beyond.... wait what?

2 - The Clenched Fist Blacksmith

The Clenched Fist is run by a giant of a human, Horst Blackfoot. Some say he has giant blood in him, but his thick black beard suggests otherwise. His wares are well renowned for their quality, but even so, his home is luxuriously decorated for a humble blacksmith. Upon further investigation, or maybe just by asking nicely, the party might discover the underground bare-knuckle fight club being run in his cellar. Will they choose to enter the tournament and try their shot at

the prize pool and a potential chance at meeting the mysterious organiser, will they shut down this illegal operation, or perhaps even attempt to take it over for themselves?

3 - The Church of the Everlight

A place of sanctity and tranquility, the Church of the Everlight is open to the devout of all faiths, as well as those who follow none. The abbess Temerion and her priestesses offer kind words, support, and, when the need arises, healing of both the spirit and the body. Unfortunately, the peace and quiet has been broken of late, and the women have been unable to give their sermons or perform their healing magic, so disturbed are they.

A few days ago, grave robbers broke into the crypts below the church, desecrating one of the tombs. Ever since, a low groaning and an incessant 'thump.....thump.....thump' has been heard in the graveyard. The crypts used to be far more expansive, but a collapse has rendered parts of the tunnels inaccessible, and it seems the noise is coming from beyond. Can the party find a way through and discover the source of the nightmarish sounds? Will they be able to stop it, or will they join the dead? Be wary of where you tread, it is said some of the tombs are trapped, and walls have been known to collapse.

4 - Dresden's Tower

Atop a mountain overlooking the nearby town sits the imposing tower of the Wizard Dresden. Although generally cold and unwelcoming, Dresden is well-liked by the locals as he has been known to help them out on occasion when other avenues have failed. If the party really needs assistance, he may be open to hearing them out.

Nearing the top of the steep climb, a signpost stands by a bench and brazier. The message reads 'Please do not disturb. I am very busy.' Once the party has disregarded this message they will be greeted at the door by

Dresden's assistant, a young female gnome by the name of Folxi. She looks terrified but is very pleased to see the guests, ushering them in before they have a chance to introduce themselves. The wizard himself is slumped in a nearby armchair, clearly focusing on something intently, and does not immediately notice the newcomers.

It transpires that Dresden has been attempting to open a permanent gateway between the material realm and the other neighbouring planes, but his attempts have gone awry and he has lost control of the portal. Beasts, creatures, and possibly demons have started finding their way in and Folxi pleads with the PCs to clear them out, floor by floor, and find a way to close the planar doorway. All of Dresden's energy is being spent on keeping the otherworldly beings from escaping the tower's magical barriers, so for the time being they are on their own.

Will the party help the beleaguered pair? Will they discover how Dresden has opened the portal, and more importantly how to close it? And if they are successful, will they wonder exactly why Dresden would court such danger in order to create the gateway? There may be more answers below than above.

5 - Jodak's Mill

The local mill has been run by the gregarious halfling Jodak and his family for as long as anyone can remember. However, in recent times, he has become very insular, rarely leaving the mill and only coming out to talk business. His old friends are worried about him, and in particular the scar he seems to have gained across his right eye. If the party goes to investigate, will they uncover the hidden smuggler's den below the mill, and will they determine that Jodak and his family were held hostage by the smuggler's or that Jodak was in fact the mastermind all along?



6 - Ungrimst Family Farm

The longstanding feud between the Ungrimst brothers is well known by all in the town. Brandon, the elder, claims his younger brother abandoned the family farm when their parents died, instead of seeking vain, shallow wealth in the richer parts of town. Gerome, the younger, claims he was kicked out of the family home by his older brother after their parents' death, sent out penniless, but made his fortune on his wits.

The resentment lies deeper still, however. Both brothers claim the other has withheld certain artifacts, items from their parents' adventuring days that were promised in the will. They will both try to persuade the party to 'liberate' these items and return them to their rightful owner. Who will the party choose to help? Will they try to reconcile the estranged pair, or perhaps double-cross them both and take the loot for themselves? What will they do when they discover the heirlooms are fakes, the real ones being held by a solicitor until the brothers overcome their differences?

7 - Gerome Ungrimst's House

See location 6 - Ungrimst Family Farm for further information.

8 - Market Square

Every town has a nucleus, a center point around which the settlement grows. The Market Square is a place where the community gathers once a month to trade goods, gossip, and learn of news from the outside world. Fisher-folk from Dockside, Horst the local smith, the Beard and Barrel dwarf sisters, even Renée and her Ravishing Raiments. All the town-folk come together on the day of the full moon to celebrate their shared home.

Somehow none of them saw the murder until it was too late. The body of the mayor's aide, a young half-elf woman named Brynne, lying in a pool of her own blood under the fountain. Killed in broad daylight with the entire populace nearby, and not a single witness. The killer must have been a professional, and a ballsy one at that, with the nearby guard station fully manned for Market Day.

Will the party choose to help uncover the mysterious assassin? Will they find the note hidden among Brynne's effects, claiming the mayor himself is next? Or will they be accused as the only out-of-towners, a professional group of mercenaries with weapons at their hips and magic at their fingers? How will they prove their own innocence?

9 - Renée's Ravishing Raiments

For those looking to impress, there is only one store in town. Renée, a glamorous, seemingly ageless half-elf tailor, makes all of her pieces from the finest elven silks and fabrics. For those she deems worthy (or at least wealthy) she also runs a VIP store stocked with hand-selected magic items, spell scrolls, and enchantments for the discerning adventurer.

Anyone foolish enough to cross her, or try to steal from her, will quickly discover that the verdant greenery and plants around the house will sometimes bare their teeth!



The Township of

Ostenwold

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. The Sanguine Dawn Inn | 8. Market Square |
| 2. The Clenched Fist | 9. Renée's Ravishing Raiments |
| 3. Church of the Everlight | 10. Beard & Barrels Brewhouse |
| 4. Dresden's Tower | 11. Apothecary's Hut |
| 5. Jodak's Mill | 12. Dockside |
| 6. Ungrimst Family Farm | 13. The Broken Compass |
| 7. Gerome Ungrimst's House | 14. Eastwatch Garrison |



PATREON | TOM CARTOS

0 30 60 100 200ft

10 - Beard & Barrels Brewhouse

The Beard & Barrels Brewhouse is run by four Dwarf sisters, Helga, Bolga, Frieda, and Carmine. The quality of their ale is matched only by the luxuriousness of their beards (the secret is washing them with beer!). Whether your poison of choice is Ale, Mead or hard liquor, all are welcome to stop by for a pint. Just don't try to keep up with the proprietors, they have been known to drink Giants under the table, especially Carmine, the petite (for a dwarf) youngest sister.

If you're looking to make coin instead of spending it, the four women could use some help clearing out the rat problem in the basement. Of course, they have no problem squashing the odd rodent themselves, but these rats seem to be surprisingly well organised....

Will the party choose to aid the dwarf sisters before or after they sample their wares? Will they discover the disgruntled Druid summoning Fey rats to disrupt the Brewhouse's business? And just why did the sisters draw his ire in the first place?

11 - Apothecary's Hut

While searching for a potion store in town, the party hears about an apothecary who lives out in the woods. They are warned, however, that she doesn't take kindly to visitors, and they absolutely shouldn't travel there at night as there have been monster attacks in the forest recently. "What's that you say? You're not scared of monsters, well maybe you can take care of the problem for us, might be a reward in it."

If the PCs choose to seek her out, they will make their way through the trees to a log cabin. Inside resides a gruff, middle-aged woman with silvering hair, who may or may not introduce herself as Altria. Unfortunately, she is very low on potions right now, due to er... unforeseen shortages in ingredients. Begrudgingly, she might explain that the particular mush-



rooms she needs grow in a cavern below the house, but she has been unable to get to them as a 'beast' has taken residence, and what supplies she had left have been stolen, along with some other important items.

12 - Dockside Fishing Village

A short walk from town on the shores of the nearby lake is the area known as dockside. Home to humble fisherfolk, it is rarely visited by adventurers, but if you need to get across the lake it would be quicker to take a boat across than to walk around.

Unfortunately, it seems no one is offering passage at the moment. Alberun, the gnomish Dockmaster, explains that a series of odd thefts have happened lately, and in such a small community this has quickly led to mistrust of strangers. There are few valuables in the hamlet worth stealing, instead, the thief or thieves have been taking fishing supplies, and a few worthless, shiny objects have vanished as well.

No one has any idea who the culprit is, or where the stolen goods are, but Hemun over at the Smokery swears he saw a creature emerge from the seas in the dead of night. "T'was a man, but not a man. It stood on legs and walked like us, but had fishy scales and the stench of the sea about it."

Will the party choose to aid the locals? Is the thief a hidden outsider, a treacherous member of the community, or a group of fish-people who recently moved into the hidden underwater caverns below the village in order to worship a rock that looks like a giant shark?

13 - The Broken Compass Trading Post

As you cross the bridge, heading towards the quiet town beyond, the first building you see is The Broken Compass Trading Post. Whether you are passing through and need a place to restock and freshen up, or are planning on sticking around a while to look for work, The Broken Compass offers everything you need! Cheap dorms rooms or tent pitches for the weary (and at a much fairer price than the snooty Sanguine Dawn!), stables for the horses, a Cartwright to mend your busted wagon (or build you a new one), and all the general goods you need for a journey on the road.

14 - Eastwatch Garrison

Eastwatch Garrison houses the local guard barracks and jailhouse. The half-elf Captain of the Guard and Justice Keeper, Regis Forlorne, is a by-the-books militant type who demands perfection from his recruits. Unbeknownst to them, however, he leads a double life in the cells below the garrison. Some have remarked how prisoners occasionally disappear, their records seemingly expunged, and the moans heard in the night? Probably just the wind.

Maybe the party will follow the clues to discover his necromantic experiments, perhaps they themselves have been imprisoned and will need to escape, or maybe they too have been hoodwinked by the forthright Regis and will aid him and his men in defending the garrison from attack. Ω

The Dream

Dream appears as a luminous, hazy dimension that overlaps The Real.

The Dream Effects

Much of The Dream appears to be a reflection of The Real, however, it's imperfect. Walls, doors, and floors might be in the same place that they are in The Real, but furniture, people, and other small, easily-moved items are largely absent.

Creatures in The Dream. Most creatures enter The Real from their dreams. While traveling this way, only the creature's consciousness is there.

While in this form, a character gains temporary hit points equal to 10 times their Charisma modifier (minimum of 10). While in The Dream, the character also gains a bonus to their AC, ability checks, saving throws, and attack rolls equal to their Charisma modifier (minimum of +0). Although movement functions the same way in The Dream as it does in The Real, creatures with positive Charisma modifiers gain a flying speed (hover) equal to their normal movement speed.

These benefits last until the character wakes and exits The Dream. Creatures who travel to The Dream via a *plane shift* spell or a rare physical portal that allows access do not gain the aforementioned benefits. While their dream form travels through The Dream, a character can wake by one of the following methods:

- The character loses all of the temporary hit points. If this happens, the character must make a DC 10 Sanity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the character gains one level of exhaustion.
- A *banishment* spell is cast on the character's dream form, at which point the character returns to their body in The Real.
- The character's dream form uses its action to make a DC 10 Wisdom check. On a successful check, the character wakes. Eight hours pass in The Real.

All damage that a creature's dream form takes in The Dream is psychic damage, regardless of the source. Furthermore, spells and other effects

that deal actual psychic damage deal double damage to the dream forms of living creatures.

A creature's dream form does not require air, food, water, or sleep, regardless of the time they spend in The Dream. However, their physical forms may still require these necessities while the creature's dream form travels through The Dream.

Time in The Dream. Time moves much slower in The Dream. Each hour that passes in The Real feels like a day in The Dream. A comatose character traveling in The Dream who remains asleep for three months might feel as if they were trapped in The Dream for nearly six years.

Objects in The Dream. Weapons, gear, and other items close to the characters travel with their consciousness into The Dream and appear as part of that character—sometimes literally. For example, a fighter who often wields a long sword might find the sword's blade has replaced their hand. A paladin who rarely removes her armor might appear only as the armor with nothing inside. Wizards who favor fire-based magics might appear in flames in The Dream. The changes are only visual and have no effect on game mechanics.

Items taken from The Dream by a creature's dream form do not materialize in The Real unless the creature uses their action to imbue the object with part of their consciousness. To do so, the creature makes a DC 15 Charisma check. The DC increases by 2 for each size category above Tiny the object is. On a success, the object becomes imbued with part of the creature's consciousness for as long as they maintain concentration (as if concentrating on a spell). When the creature wakes, the object appears in their hands in The Real.

Distance in The Dream. The Dream somewhat mirrors The Real, but distances are affected by the amount of dream energy present in a given location. Areas where dreamers are usually found have similar dimensions and distances that they would in The Real. Thus, The Sanguine Dawn Inn looks similar to the way it does in The Real, albeit free

of much of its furniture. However, an empty field or forest where dreams are rare might be distorted beyond recognition. Even a 100 square-foot field might stretch for miles in all directions in The Dream.

Light in The Dream. Despite the absence of a sun and other heavenly bodies, most of The Dream is illuminated by some unknown source. The unusual terrain glows with ambient pink, purple, and blue light. Unless stated otherwise, creatures can see normally in The Dream as if they were in bright light.

Creatures with truesight can see into the Material Plane from The Dream and vice versa.

Magic in The Dream. Most spells function the same way in The Dream as they do in The Real, but with a few notable changes.

- Spells that deal damage cast by creatures in their dream form deal psychic damage instead of the damage typical for the spell, and dream form creatures take psychic damage from spells that deal damage cast in The Dream, regardless of the spell's normal damage type.
- Spells that heal or regain hit points cast in The Dream have no effect on creatures in their dream forms, but do affect creatures that are physically present in The Dream. Similarly, spells like *lesser restoration*, *greater restoration*, and *regenerate* have no effect on creatures in their dream forms.
- If the *banishment* spell is cast on a creature's dream form in The Dream, the target's dream form is dismissed and the creature's consciousness immediately returns to its body.
- Spells that conjure and summon creatures have no effect when cast by a creature's dream form. Creatures physically present in The Dream can cast these spells as normal.
- When a creature in The Dream casts *dream*, all Wisdom saving throws made against the spell are made with disadvantage.
- Thanks to The Dream's ever-changing nature, subtract 10 from all mishap checks made when casting *teleport*, regardless of the caster's familiarity.

NEW PLAYER OPTIONS

BY DAVE HAMRICK

ART BY RICK HERSHEY, WILLIAM MCAUSLAND, AND MACIEJ ZAGORSKI

Cosmic Horror Magic

The rules presented in this document offer new ways for characters in Fifth Edition campaigns to learn and cast spells, regardless of their level and class features. Note that the spellcasting rules variant described here best suits low-magic settings where casters are exceedingly rare, and magic has an aura of mystery and strangeness over it. Even a mundane spell such as *thaumaturgy* or *mage hand* may cause great fear to the uninitiated.

The Basics

Here is a quick rundown of all the changes to magic this ruleset suggests. Unless stated otherwise in this article, the rules for spells follow the same rules outlined in Chapter 10 of the *PHB*.

- The core game mechanics for casting a spell, such as casting time, range, components, duration, targets, areas of effect, saving throws, and attack rolls, are the same.
- There are no spell slots. A character can cast a spell as many times as they like so long as they pay the cost for the spell.
- Almost all spells have a cost, often in the form of temporary—or even permanent—damage to the character’s ability scores or mental well-being.
- All characters can learn spells if they take enough time to study the spell and learn how to cast it.
- All classes and subclasses that can automatically cast spells are removed from the game. This includes bards, clerics, druids, paladins, rangers, sorcerers, warlocks, and wizards.
- Unless stated otherwise, Intelligence is the spellcasting ability for all spellcasters.

Learning Spells

Similar to wizards in typical Fifth Edition settings, the most common means for learning a spell is from a book. Of course, just reading the instructions for a spell isn’t enough. Practice makes perfect. A character who hopes to learn a spell must spend a minimum of six workweeks to learn a spell plus two workweeks for every level of the spell (cantrips require six workweeks). The number of workweeks is reduced by a number of workweeks equal to the character’s Intelligence modifier (an Intelligence penalty doesn’t increase the time needed). After the time is spent, the character knows the spell and can cast it whenever they wish, suffering whatever harmful effects it may have on the character each time.

Cost

When using the Cosmic Horror Magic variant, all spells come with physical

or mental cost—the rigors of spellcasting. After a spellcaster casts a spell, they must make a saving throw with a DC equal to 10 + the spell level cast. The type of saving throw that they make is determined by the spell’s school, as shown on the Saving Throws by School of Magic table below.

Saving Throws by School of Magic.

School	Saving Throw
Abjuration	Wisdom
Conjuration	Charisma
Divination	Intelligence
Enchantment	Charisma
Evocation	Strength
Illusion	Intelligence
Necromancy	Constitution
Transmutation	Constitution

After the spellcaster makes their saving throw, refer to the Spell Damage by Spell Level table below to determine the effects of casting the spell.

Spell Damage by Spell Level.

Spell Level	Failed Save	Passed Save
1st	1d10 psychic damage	Half damage
2nd	2d10 psychic damage	Half damage
3rd	3d10 psychic damage and 1 form of short-term madness	Half damage and no madness
4th	4d10 psychic damage and 1 form of long-term madness	Half damage and no madness
5th	5d10 psychic damage and 1 form of indefinite madness	Half damage and no madness
6th	Death	1d4 ability score reduction and 1 form of short-term madness
7th	Death	2d4 ability score reduction and 1 form of long-term madness
8th	Death	3d6 ability score reduction and 1 form of indefinite madness
9th	Death	4d6 ability score reduction and 1 form of indefinite madness

Psychic Damage. Pass or fail, spells of 1st-level through 5th deal psychic damage to the caster. This damage ignores resistance and immunity.

Madness. Spells of 3rd-level and higher have the potential to afflict the caster with madness. Madness is detailed in chapter 8 of the *DMG*.

Death. When a caster attempts to cast a spell of 6th level or higher and fails their saving throw, the result is always death.

Ability Score Drain. When a spellcaster casts a spell of 6th level or higher and succeeds their saving throw, they live. However, they must still take ability score damage. The type of damage they take depends on the school from which they cast the spell as shown on the Saving Throws by School of Magic table. The reduction lasts until the spellcaster completes a long rest. If this reduction would reduce the spellcaster's ability score to 0, the spellcaster dies.

Other Costs. While losing one's sanity or suffering ability score damage might sound unpleasant, in a Cosmic Horror setting, these are hardly the worst things that can happen to a spellcaster. After all, magic breaks physics and reshapes the world. There are going to be consequences.

Here are a few more terrible things that could possibly happen to a spellcaster:

- The spellcaster attracts the attention of a ravenous extra-dimensional being.
- One of the spellcaster's eyes permanently turns black.
- The spellcaster starts to see strange creatures floating in the air around them. No one else can see them. The creatures are (mostly) harmless, but terribly distracting.
- The spellcaster starts to lose their long term memories. Or worse, people the spellcaster knows starts to lose memories of the spellcaster.
- No matter how hot it is, the spell-

caster always feels cold, as if they were in a sub-zero climate.

- The spellcaster ages 1d4 years for every level of spell they cast. Or they become younger.
- The spellcaster starts to devolve, slowly taking on more and more simian (or even lizard-like) features.
- The spellcaster's hair, teeth, and fingernails start to fall out.
- The spellcaster is unable to sleep without magical aid.
- The spellcaster is subject to debilitating seizures. The frequency of the seizures increases each time they cast a spell.
- Objects (and sometimes people) spontaneously combust when the spellcaster is stressed.

New Feats

Some brave souls train their minds and bodies to withstand the dark arts. They are often referred to as sorcerers, warlocks, or wizards. Below are optional feats that you may allow characters to take to improve their chances of casting spells using the rules variant presented above.

Abjurer

Prerequisite: Wisdom 13 or higher; the ability to cast at least one abjuration spell

You are a master of defensive magic, which grants you the following benefits:

- Increase your Intelligence or Wisdom score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on spellcasting saving throws when you cast abjuration spells.
- Whenever you cast an abjuration spell, you gain a +2 bonus to your AC which lasts until you complete a long rest.

Conjurer

Prerequisite: Charisma 13 or higher; the ability to cast at least one conjuration spell

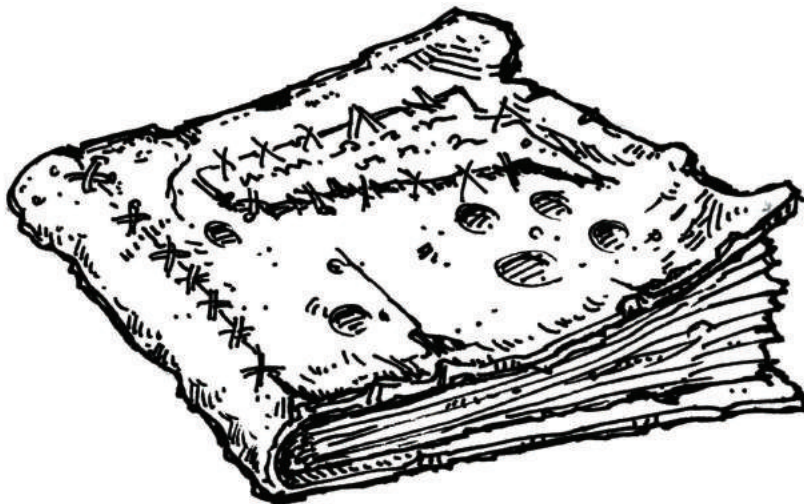
You have a knack for summoning forces beyond The Real, which grants you the following benefits:

- Increase your Intelligence or Charisma score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on spellcasting saving throws when you cast conjuration spells.
- Any creature that you summon or create with a conjuration spell has a number of temporary hit points equal to 3 times your Charisma modifier.

Diviner

Prerequisite: Intelligence 13 or higher; the ability to cast at least one divination spell

You possess a powerful third, which grants you clear visions of things others cannot perceive. You gain the following benefits:



- Increase your Intelligence or Wisdom score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on spellcasting saving throws when you cast divination spells.
- You can replace any attack roll, saving throw, or ability check made by you or a creature that you can see with a 19 or a 2. You must choose to do so before the roll, and you can replace a roll in this way only once per turn. Once you use this benefit, you can't use it again until you complete a long rest.

Enchanter

Prerequisite: Charisma 13 or higher; the ability to cast at least one enchantment spell

You have a natural way with words or an attractive quality that others have difficulty ignoring. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Intelligence or Charisma score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on spellcasting saving throws when you cast enchantment spells.
- Whenever you make a Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion) check to interact with another creature, you can choose to make the check with advantage. Once you use this benefit, you can't use it again until you complete a long rest.

Evoker

Prerequisite: Strength 13 or higher; the ability to cast at least one evocation spell

You are a magical conduit and capable of astonishing magic. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Strength or Intelligence score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on spellcasting saving throws when you cast evocation spells.
- When a creature succeeds on a

saving throw against one of your cantrips, the creature takes half the cantrip's damage (if any) but suffers no additional effect from the cantrip.

Illusionist

Prerequisite: Intelligence 13 or higher; the ability to cast at least one illusion spell

For you, nothing and everything is real all at once. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Intelligence or Wisdom score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on spellcasting saving throws when you cast illusion spells.
- When a creature succeeds on a saving throw against one of your cantrips, the creature takes half the cantrip's damage (if any) but suffers no additional effect from the cantrip.



Necromancer

Prerequisite: Constitution 13 or higher; the ability to cast at least one necromancy spell

The way you see it, death and life are two sides of the same coin. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Constitution or Intelligence score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on spellcasting saving throws when you cast necromancy spells.

- You gain resistance to necrotic damage.

Transmuter

Prerequisite: Constitution 13 or higher; the ability to cast at least one transmutation spell

You are a catalyst for change; all things must evolve or perish. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Constitution or Intelligence score by 1, to a max of 20.
- You have advantage on spellcasting

saving throws when you cast transmutation spells.

- After you complete a long rest, you gain one of the following benefits of your choice: darkvision out to a range of 60 feet; an increase to speed of 10 feet; proficiency in Constitution saving throws; resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage (your choice whenever you choose this benefit). Each time you complete a long rest, you can choose a different benefit.



Druid Circles

At 2nd level, a druid gains the Druid Circle feature. The following Circle of Aberranterra option is available to a druid, in addition to those normally offered.

Circle of Aberranterra

Druids who are members of the Circle of Aberranterra focus on one goal: change. The world in its natural state cannot effectively defend itself from the rigors of man. Thus, it is the mission of you and your compatriots to alter the landscape itself so that it might fight back.

Circle of Aberranterra Features.

Druid Level	Feature
2nd	Alter Reality
6th	Aberrant Ground
10th	Augmented Features
14th	Catalyst of Change

Alter Reality. Starting at 2nd level, you learn the *eldritch blast* cantrip, which counts as a druid spell for you and does not count toward the number of cantrips that you know. Also, when you hit a creature with *eldritch blast*, you can magically teleport the creature from its current position to an unoccupied space that you can see 10 feet from it.

Aberrant Ground. Starting at 6th level, your mere presence changes the terrain around you. As a bonus action, you can cause the ground in a 10-foot radius around you to become doughlike difficult terrain. Each creature of your choice that starts its turn in that area must succeed on a Strength saving throw against your spell save DC or have its speed reduced to 0 until the start of its next turn. This effect lasts as long as you concentrate on it (as if concentrating on a spell), or until the start of your next turn.

Augmented Features. Starting at 10th level, when you wild shape into

a creature of CR 1/2 or lower that doesn't have a flight speed, you gain a flight speed of 30 feet.

Catalyst of Change. At 14th level, few creatures can avoid your alterations. All saving throws made against your transmutation spells are made with disadvantage.

Additionally, you learn one transmutation spell of 5th level or lower that does not appear on the druid spell list. You can cast this spell without expending a spell slot or requiring material components. Once you use this benefit, you can't use it again until you finish a short rest. Ω



APPENDIX C

OMERIAN GRIMOIRE

BY DAVE HAMRICK AND GRIFFONS SADDLEBAG

ART BY GRIFFONS SADDLEBAG, DAVID L. JOHNSON, AND WILLIAM MCAUSLAND

New Magic Items

Barricade Shield

Armor (shield), uncommon

While holding this heavy iron shield, you can use an action to plant it in the ground and expand its height and width to stretch up to 15 feet in either direction, potentially becoming a flat defensive wall or similar platform. The edges of the shield magically conform to fit the shape of an enclosed space, such as the walls of a tunnel or hallway. While holding the expanded shield in place, your speed becomes 0 and you have disadvantage on Dexterity checks and Dexterity saving throws. Regardless of the shield's size, its weight remains the same.

The expanded shield is considered a nonmagical structure that has AC 14 and 40 hit points. The shield can remain expanded for up to 1 minute before it reverts back to its normal size. The expanded shield reverts early (but is not destroyed) if it reaches 0 hit points or moves. If you're holding the expanded shield, you can choose to revert it early as a bonus action.

Once this property of the shield has been used, it can't be used again until the following dawn.



Companion's Band

Wondrous item, common (requires attunement)

This woven band can be worn as a necklace or bracelet by resizing the strap. While attuned to and wearing the band, you can use an action to summon a spectral companion that appears in a space within 5 feet of you. The companion can be a dog, cat, bird, or similar Small or smaller beast. The form is translucent and immaterial, but feels warm to the touch. It emits dim light in a 5 foot radius. The companion remains until dismissed (no action required) or until you remove the band. It is not considered to be a creature, does not occupy a space, and does not require food, water, or air. It is friendly towards you and other creatures of your choice and stays within 30 feet of you at all times, moving through objects as necessary in order to do so. The companion wears a spectral copy of the band on its neck or leg when you summon it (your choice).

The companion understands the emotion and intent of your commands, but cannot speak. Attempting to target the companion with a *detect thoughts* spell only reveals an overwhelming sense of love and affection towards you.

Once the same spectral companion has remained or has been summoned at least once a day for 7 consecutive days, the band becomes attuned to you instead. When it does, the band no longer requires you to attune to it in order to use the item, and no creature other than you can use its magic without first attuning to it themselves. When another creature attunes to the band in this way, its connection to you is broken. Once the band is attuned to you in this way, you can summon the companion using a bonus action instead of an action, but can no longer change its form when summoning it. In addition, once the band is attuned to you, the companion becomes partially physical, allowing you and creatures of your choice to gently pet and hold its otherwise spectral form.



Edge

Weapon (longsword), rare (requires attunement)

You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

Additionally, while wielding Edge, you have truesight out to 10 feet, which allows you to see ethereal creatures. Attacks made against creatures with the incorporeal trait are made with advantage.

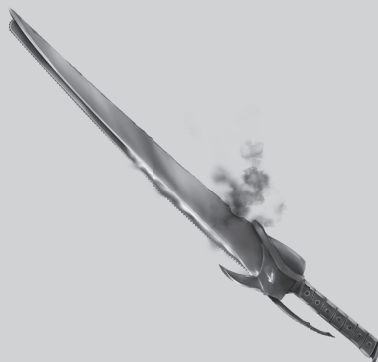
Curse. While attuned to the weapon, you start to lose all sense of joy. Over the course of the next 1d6 days, your skin becomes increasingly paler and your hair turns white. After the curse is removed, your sense of joy returns in 30 days, but your pale complexion and white hair can only be restored via a *greater restoration* spell.

**Eternal Slayer**

Weapon (any sword), legendary (requires attunement)

This fiery blade was fashioned from the remains of a cursed iron golem and burns with a relentless thirst for vengeance. While holding this sword, flames billow forth and lick up the edge of the blade, casting bright light in a 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional 20 feet. While you're in combat, the light's range is doubled.

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. When you make an attack with this sword, the toothed chain stretching along its lower edge begins to whirl and spin, spewing flame and ripping apart any target it hits. Any target hit by this sword takes an extra 1d6 fire damage and 1d6 slashing damage. If the target is an aberration or fiend, this extra damage is doubled. This fire damage ignores resistance and immunity. A wooden creature or structure hit by this weapon takes the maximum amount of damage from the attack.

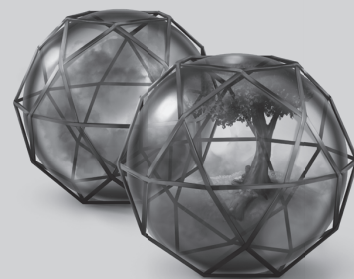
**Orb of Remembrance**

Wondrous item, common

This glassy orb is 3 inches in diameter, weighs 1/2 pound, and is wrapped in a golden wire cage. Strange, wispy smoke drifts around inside the orb, creating cloud-like shapes that are almost recognizable as real-life objects.

While holding the orb, you can use an action to speak its command word, priming the orb and causing the smoke inside to restlessly billow and swirl. While holding the primed orb, you can gently squeeze it (no action required) to cause it to record that moment in time around you. When you do, the glassy sphere becomes perfectly clear over the course of 1 minute and reveals an exact duplicate of the area around you in up to a 30-foot radius as a miniature, illusory diorama inside it. While holding the orb, the scene inside soundlessly replays the next 6 seconds following the diorama's capture.

An orb remains primed for 1 minute or until used to capture a diorama. Touching a primed orb of remembrance to one that already has a diorama creates a duplicate of the diorama in the primed orb. Speaking the command word again while shaking the orb causes the diorama inside to disappear into smoke, allowing it to be primed once more.



APPENDIX D

THE BESTIARY

BY DAVE HAMRICK WITH HOWARD LOVECRAFT ET AL.

ART BY FAT GOBLIN GAMES, NACHO LAZARO, LUIGI CASTELLANI, ERIC LOFGREN, AND BODIE HARTLEY

Byakhee

Byakhee are strange creatures that appear to be a mixture of rotting humanoids, crows, and ants. Although they make their home in interstellar space and other lonely voids, byakhee are frequently encountered as agents of some malign agenda.

Spacefaring Nature. The byakhee does not require air and is immune to the natural perils of vacuum (extreme heat and cold, zero pressure).

BYAKHEE <i>Medium monstrosity, lawful evil</i>					
Armor Class 15 (natural armor) Hit Points 36 (8d8) Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft.					
STR	17 (+3)	INT	10 (+0)	DEX	14 (+2)
DEX	14 (+2)	WIS	11 (+0)	CON	11 (+0)
CON	11 (+0)	CHA	12 (+1)		
Skills Perception +2, Stealth +4 Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12 Languages Deep Speech Challenge 2 (450 XP)					
Beast of Burden. The byakhee is considered to be a Large animal for the purpose of determining its carrying capacity.					
ACTIONS					
Multiattack. The byakhee makes one bite attack and two claw attacks. If both claw attacks hit a Medium or smaller target, the target is grappled (escape DC 13), and the byakhee uses its Rend on it. The byakhee can have only one creature grappled at a time.					
Bite. <i>Melee Weapon Attack:</i> +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. <i>Hit:</i> 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.					
Claw. <i>Melee Weapon Attack:</i> +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. <i>Hit:</i> 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage.					
Rend. The byakhee targets one creature it is grappling. The target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) slashing damage on a failed saving throw or half as much damage on a successful one.					

Colour Out of Space

A colour out of space is a shapeless, formless mass of unplaceable color. These incorporeal creatures travel through space searching for verdant soil and shallow waters to lay their embryos. Colour embryos gestate for 1d6 days, then emerge as “larva”, which appears jellylike, eventually growing into its familiar insubstantial nature.

Lair. Colours out of space prefer dark, secluded places with plenty of

water, such as underground pools of water, wells, and even under the sea.

Regional Effects. The region containing a colour’s lair is warped by the creature’s unnatural presence, creating any of the following effects:

- Vegetation within 1 mile of the colour grows at an alarming and unhealthy rate. Fruit tastes bitter.
- Insects and animals within 1 mile of the colour are born deformed.
- Plants, animals, and even humanoids within 500 miles of the colour glow at night.

COLOUR OUT OF SPACE <i>Medium elemental, neutral</i>					
Armor Class 14 Hit Points 153 (18d8 + 72) Speed 0 ft., fly 75 ft. (hover)					
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)
Saving Throws Dex +8 Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, slashing from nonmagical weapons Condition Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, slashing from nonmagical wpns Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10 Languages — Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)					
Incorporeal Movement. The colour out of space can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. Unless it is using its disintegration attack, it takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.					
Lightning Weakness. If the colour takes lightning damage, it must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the colour out of space is restrained until the end of its next turn.					
Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the colour has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.					
Unusual Nature. The colour does not require air or sleep.					
ACTIONS					
Life Drain. <i>Melee Spell Attack:</i> +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. <i>Hit:</i> 10 (3d6) necrotic damage and the target’s hit points maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.					
Disintegration (Recharge 6). The colour moves up to half its speed. While doing so, if the colour enters a creature’s space, the creature must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the creature can choose to be pushed 5 feet back or to the side of the colour. A creature that chooses not to be pushed suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw. On a failed save, the colour enter the creature’s pace, and the creature takes 45 (8d10) force damage. If this damage reduces the target to 0 Hit Points, it is disintegrated. A disintegrated creature and everything it is wearing and carrying, except magic items, are reduced to a pile of fine gray dust. The creature can be restored to life only by means of a true resurrection or a wish spell. The colour automatically disintegrates a Medium or smaller nonmagical object or a creation of magical force. If the target is a Large or larger object or creation of force, this attack disintegrates a 5-foot-cube portion of it. A magic item is unaffected by this attack.					

Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath

In dim light or at first glance, the dark young appear as low trees with ropey branches, not unlike a willow. Should one dare get a closer look at these aberrations, the truth is revealed. Dark young are enormous, writhing masses of tentacles punctuated here or there with great suckerlike mouths. Its entire form rests atop three stout legs that end in great hooves. Emerging from the mass of writhing tentacles are its main tentacles, each one thicker than an elephant's trunk.

These horrors lurk in dark groves where those who worship their mother, The Black Goat, can pay respects via rituals of unabashed fecundity.



DARK YOUNG

Huge aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 152 (16d12 + 48)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 25 (+7) **INT** 14 (+2)

DEX 16 (+3) **WIS** 18 (+4)

CON 17 (+3) **CHA** 15 (+2)

Skills Perception +8

Damage Immunities acid, fire, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages understands Deep Speech but does not speak

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Trampling Charge. If the dark young moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a gore attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 19 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the dark young can make one stomp attack against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dark young makes four attacks with its tentacles.

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d8 + 7) piercing damage.

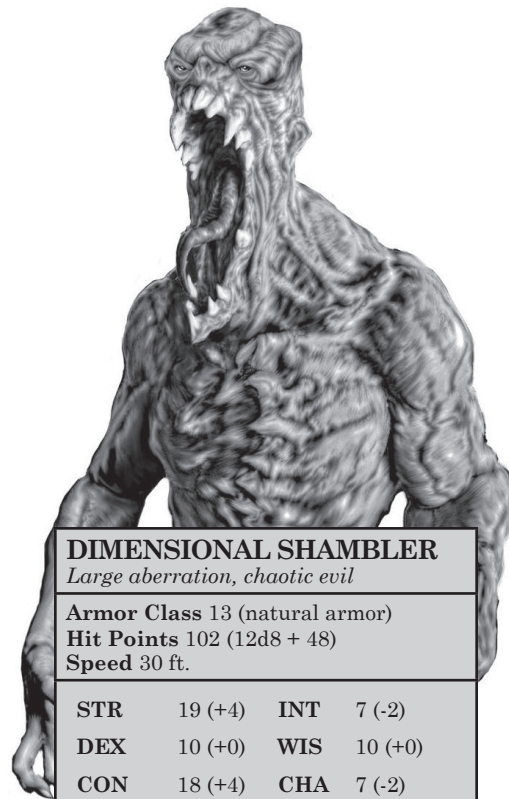
Stomp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one prone target. *Hit:* 23 (3d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 20 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 11 (1d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 19). The dark young has four tentacles, each of which can grapple only one target.

Strength Drain. Each creature the dark young is grappling must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the target takes 10 (2d6 + 3) necrotic damage, and the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. On a successful saving throw, the target takes half as much necrotic damage and its Strength score is unaffected.

Dimensional Shambler

Dimensional shamblers are monstrous entities that haunt the cracks between dimensions. Standing over 8-feet tall, these creatures resemble hairless simians, however, their lolling heads and spindly legs seem to borrow from insects.



DIMENSIONAL SHAMBLER

Large aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 102 (12d8 + 48)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 19 (+4) **INT** 7 (-2)

DEX 10 (+0) **WIS** 10 (+0)

CON 18 (+4) **CHA** 7 (-2)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Deep Speech

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Innate Spellcasting (2/Day). The dimensional shambler can innately cast *plane shift*, requiring no components when it does. It can only target itself and up to one creature it is grappling. Its innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 10).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dimensional shambler makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, the dimensional shambler can grapple the target (escape DC 14).

Duergar Warmaster

This highly-trained duergar leads other duergar in battle with a powerful magic warhammer.



DUERGAR WARMASTER <i>Medium humanoid (dwarf), lawful evil</i>			
Armor Class 20 (plate, shield) Hit Points 90 (12d8 + 36) Speed 25 ft.			
STR	18 (+4)	INT	12 (+1)
DEX	11 (+0)	WIS	12 (+1)
CON	17 (+3)	CHA	14 (+2)
Damage Resistances poison Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11 Languages Dwarvish, Undercommon Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)			
Duergar Resilience. The duergar has advantage on saving throws against poison, spells, and illusions, as well as to resist being charmed or paralyzed. Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the duergar has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.			
ACTIONS			
Multiattack. The duergar warmaster makes two melee or ranged attacks. +2 Warhammer. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (1d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage, or 15 (2d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage while enlarged. Javelin. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage while enlarged. Enlarge (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). For 1 minute, the duergar magically increases in size, along with anything it is wearing or carrying. While enlarged, the duergar is Large, doubles its damage dice on Strength-based weapon attacks (included in the attacks), and makes Strength checks and Strength saving throws with advantage. If the duergar lacks the room to become Large, it attains the maximum size possible in the space available. Invisibility (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The duergar magically turns invisible until it attacks, casts a spell, or uses its Enlarge, or until its concentration is broken, up to 1 hour (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment the duergar wears or carries is invisible with it.			

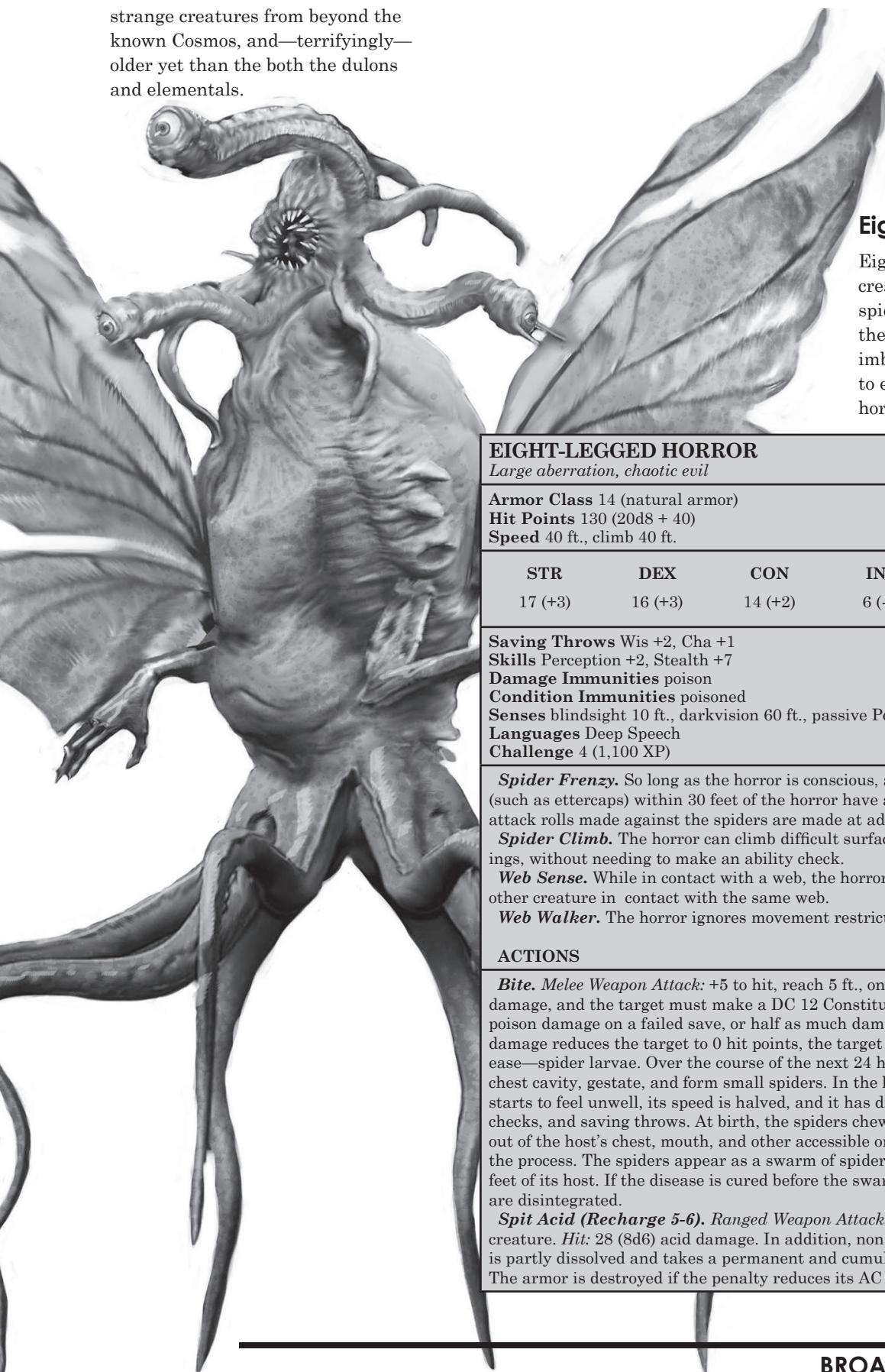
ELDER THING <i>Large aberration, any lawful alignment</i>			
Armor Class 14 (natural armor) Hit Points 59 (7d10 + 21) Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft., swim 20 ft.			
STR	18 (+4)	INT	16 (+3)
DEX	13 (+1)	WIS	12 (+1)
CON	17 (+3)	CHA	13 (+1)
Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +3 Skills Arcana +5, Insight +3 Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 11 Languages any four languages (usually Deep Speech) Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)			
Amphibiousness. The elder thing can breathe both air and water. Echolocation. The elder thing can't use blindsight while deafened. Spellcasting. The elder thing is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The elder thing has the following wizard spells prepared: <i>Cantrips (at will):</i> chill touch, mage hand, mending <i>1st Level (4 slots):</i> detect magic, protection from evil and good, shield <i>2nd Level (2 slots):</i> darkness, invisibility			
ACTIONS			
Multiattack. The elder thing makes four attacks with its tentacles. Tentacle. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. Hit: 6 (1d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). While the target is grappled, it is restrained. The elder thing has four tentacles, each of which can grapple only one target.			

Elder Thing

Elder things appear as ridged, barrel-shaped creatures with thin horizontal arms that radiate spoke-like from a central ring and with vertical knobs or bulbs projecting from the head and base of the barrel. Each of the knobs act as a hub for a system of five long, flat, triangularly tapering arms arranged around it like the arm of a starfish. They are winged.

The elder things of Casar are

strange creatures from beyond the known Cosmos, and—terrifyingly—older yet than the both the dulons and elementals.



Eight-Legged Horror

Eight-legged horrors are fearsome creatures that resemble demonic spiders. These aberrations haunt the darkest corners of the world, imbuing those unfortunate enough to encounter them with unshakeable horror.

EIGHT-LEGGED HORROR

Large aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 130 (20d8 + 40)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Wis +2, Cha +1

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +7

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Deep Speech

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Spider Frenzy. So long as the horror is conscious, all spiders and spider-like creatures (such as ettercaps) within 30 feet of the horror have advantage on melee attack rolls, but attack rolls made against the spiders are made at disadvantage.

Spider Climb. The horror can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the horror knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The horror ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but infected with a disease—spider larvae. Over the course of the next 24 hours, the eggs move to the creature's chest cavity, gestate, and form small spiders. In the hour before giving birth, the host starts to feel unwell, its speed is halved, and it has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws. At birth, the spiders chew their way through vital organs and out of the host's chest, mouth, and other accessible orifices in 1 round, killing the host in the process. The spiders appear as a swarm of spiders in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of its host. If the disease is cured before the swarm of spiders emerges, the spiders are disintegrated.

Spit Acid (Recharge 5-6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 15/30 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 28 (8d6) acid damage. In addition, nonmagical armor worn by the target is partly dissolved and takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

Larva of the Outer Gods

Spawns of the strange, formless gods that hover at the center of the Cosmos, larvae of the outer gods can take any of an infinite number of weird shapes and conformations. The form detailed here represents the most common type of larva. Larvae approach humanoids with unbridled curiosity and are rarely dangerous.

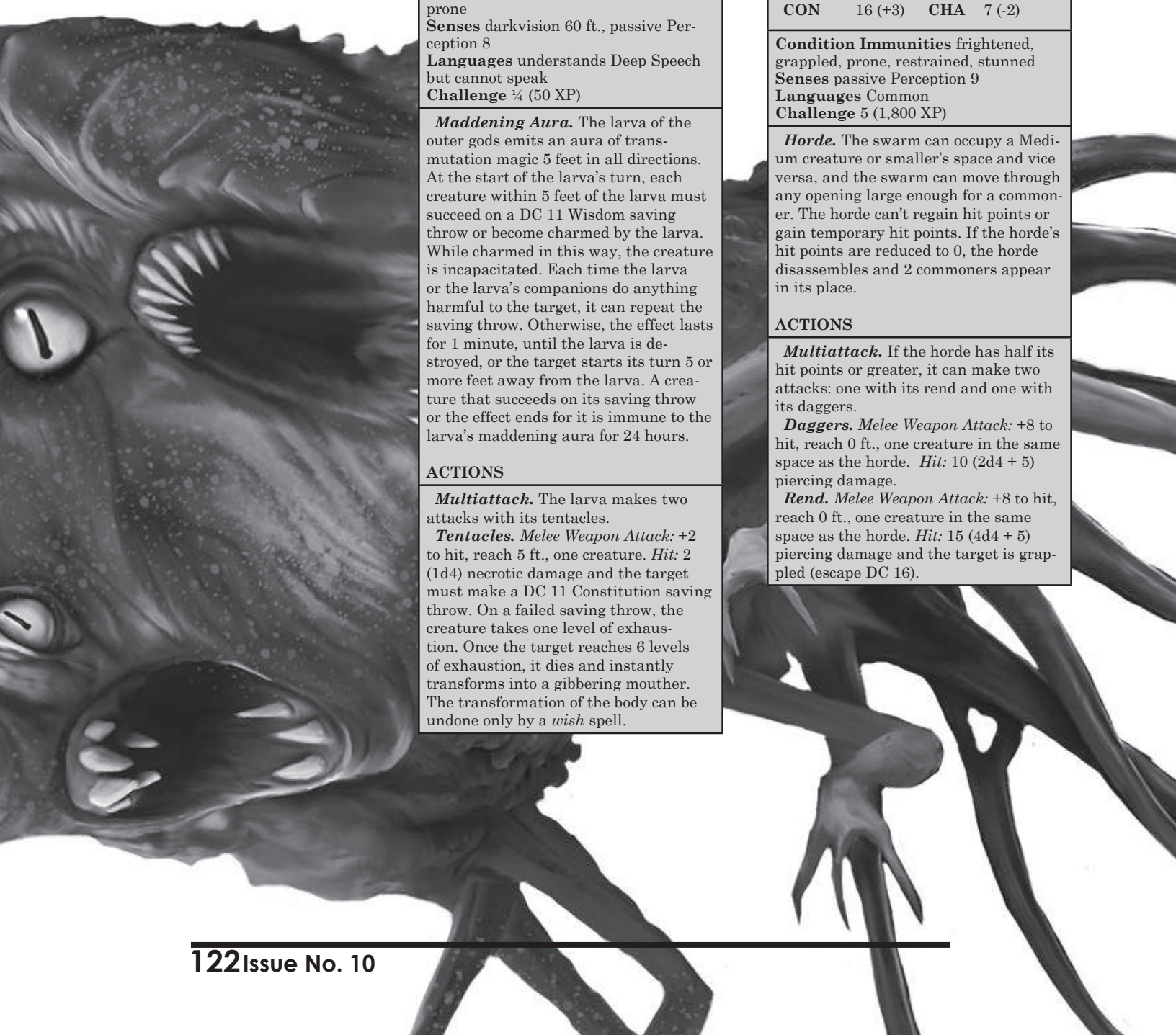
Immortal Nature. The larva does not require air, food, drink, or sleep.

LARVA OF THE OUTER GODS <i>Small aberration, chaotic neutral</i>			
Armor Class 10 Hit Points 13 (3d6 + 3) Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)			
STR	7 (-2)	INT	5 (-3)
DEX	10 (+0)	WIS	7 (-2)
CON	12 (+1)	CHA	3 (-4)
Saving Throws Wis +0 Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks Condition Immunities petrified, prone Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8 Languages understands Deep Speech but cannot speak Challenge ¼ (50 XP)			
Maddening Aura. The larva of the outer gods emits an aura of transmutation magic 5 feet in all directions. At the start of the larva's turn, each creature within 5 feet of the larva must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed by the larva. While charmed in this way, the creature is incapacitated. Each time the larva or the larva's companions do anything harmful to the target, it can repeat the saving throw. Otherwise, the effect lasts for 1 minute, until the larva is destroyed, or the target starts its turn 5 or more feet away from the larva. A creature that succeeds on its saving throw or the effect ends for it is immune to the larva's maddening aura for 24 hours.			
ACTIONS			
Multiattack. The larva makes two attacks with its tentacles.			
Tentacles. <i>Melee Weapon Attack:</i> +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. <i>Hit:</i> 2 (1d4) necrotic damage and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature takes one level of exhaustion. Once the target reaches 6 levels of exhaustion, it dies and instantly transforms into a gibbering moulder. The transformation of the body can be undone only by a <i>wish</i> spell.			

Mind-Controlled Horde

A huge crowd of mind-controlled commoners following the orders of Priests of Consuming.

MIND-CONTROLLED HORDE <i>Huge swarm of Medium humanoids, unaligned</i>			
Armor Class 8 (natural armor) Hit Points 145 (17d10 + 51) Speed 20 ft.			
STR	21 (+5)	INT	10 (+0)
DEX	6 (-2)	WIS	8 (-1)
CON	16 (+3)	CHA	7 (-2)
Condition Immunities frightened, grappled, prone, restrained, stunned Senses passive Perception 9 Languages Common Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)			
Horde. The swarm can occupy a Medium creature or smaller's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a commoner. The horde can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points. If the horde's hit points are reduced to 0, the horde disassembles and 2 commoners appear in its place.			
ACTIONS			
Multiattack. If the horde has half its hit points or greater, it can make two attacks: one with its rend and one with its daggers.			
Daggers. <i>Melee Weapon Attack:</i> +8 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the same space as the horde. <i>Hit:</i> 10 (2d4 + 5) piercing damage.			
Rend. <i>Melee Weapon Attack:</i> +8 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the same space as the horde. <i>Hit:</i> 15 (4d4 + 5) piercing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 16).			



Priests of Consuming

The Priests of Consuming are the foot soldiers for an ancient and secret religion dedicated to an old god—That Which Comes Eternal. Their origins are unclear. Though they often conceal themselves in human form to manipulate their targets, it is unknown if they were ever human in the first place or were instead spawned by a primordial and terrible magic. The ways of That Which Comes Eternal are a mystery to the mortal races; its Priests reveal themselves intermittently at various points in history across the world. Masters of deceit and fearsome in combat, the Priests work quickly to establish mind-controlled servants in the areas which they inhabit before they move to

increase their territory, while keeping their true forms hidden to those who would betray them.

Amalgamations of terror. A horrifying sight to behold, the true forms of the Priests defy physiological convention and invoke madness in those who gaze upon them. Two sets of toothed mandibles, each longer than a man's arm, sprout from a gaping maw that leaks a viscous, acidic substance. These mandibles are so long and large that they touch the ground, giving the Priests a hunched forward and predatory appearance. Though the Priests also have a pair of human arms, these tend to hang unused from the torso as they prefer their mandibles when needed. Much of the torso is occupied by a single,

bloodshot eye that rotates around wildly, furious and unblinking. The head is a swirling mass of tentacles, said to arrange themselves in the patterns of their thoughts.

Fueled by insanity. Those who gaze upon the Priests' central eye are driven to madness. The Priests feed on minds, mind-controlling those who would gaze upon them, and then, when the time is right, drilling their mandibles through the skull of the willing victim to drink what remains of their sanity, growing their own power and leaving nothing but a lobotomized husk behind. It is said that these husks, given enough time, can develop into eldritch monstrosities themselves as they marinate in the magics of the Priests.

PRIESTS OF CONSUMING

Medium aberration (shapechanger), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 91 (14d8 + 28)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +4, Cha +7

Skills Arcana +6, Deception +10, Persuasion +7

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attack

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Deep Speech

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Shapechanger. The priest can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid it has seen, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Innate Spellcasting. The priest's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. It can innately cast the following spells (spell save DC 15), requiring no material components:

At Will: *alter self*, *levitate (self only)*, *mage armor (self only)*, *silent image*

3/day each: *black tentacles*, *hellish rebuke*, *misty step*, *stinking cloud*

1/day each: *plane shift*, *teleport*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The priest makes two mandible attacks.

Mandible. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (4d8 + 5) piercing damage. If this damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the priest bores into its skull and drinks all sanity from the target, rendering them a mindless husk. This effect can only be ended by a greater restoration spell or similar magic.

Wretched Gaze (Recharge 5-6). The priest's central eye gazes upon creatures within a 60-foot cone. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed by the priest. The charmed target obeys the priest's commands and can't take reactions, and the priest and the target can communicate telepathically with each other at a distance of up to 1 mile. At the start of its turn and whenever it takes damage, the charmed creature can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.



Rat-Thing

From afar or in poor lighting, rat-things look more or less like large, dark rats. Upon closer inspection, however, their small, humanoid hands and distorted human heads betray their horrible nature.

Rat-things are crafted by hags, sorcerers, and other spellcasters of the dark arts from the remains of dead cultists. Effectively immortal, rat-things will live forever so long as they are not killed.

RAT-THING

Tiny monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 10
Hit Points 22 (9d4)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	2 (-4)	INT	12 (+1)
DEX	11 (+0)	WIS	13 (+1)
CON	10 (+0)	CHA	5 (-3)

Skills Arcana +3, Stealth +4
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages
Challenge ½ (100 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The rat-thing's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material or somatic components when it does:

At Will: vampiric touch
1 day/each: contagion, dream, fear, stonewalk

ACTIONS

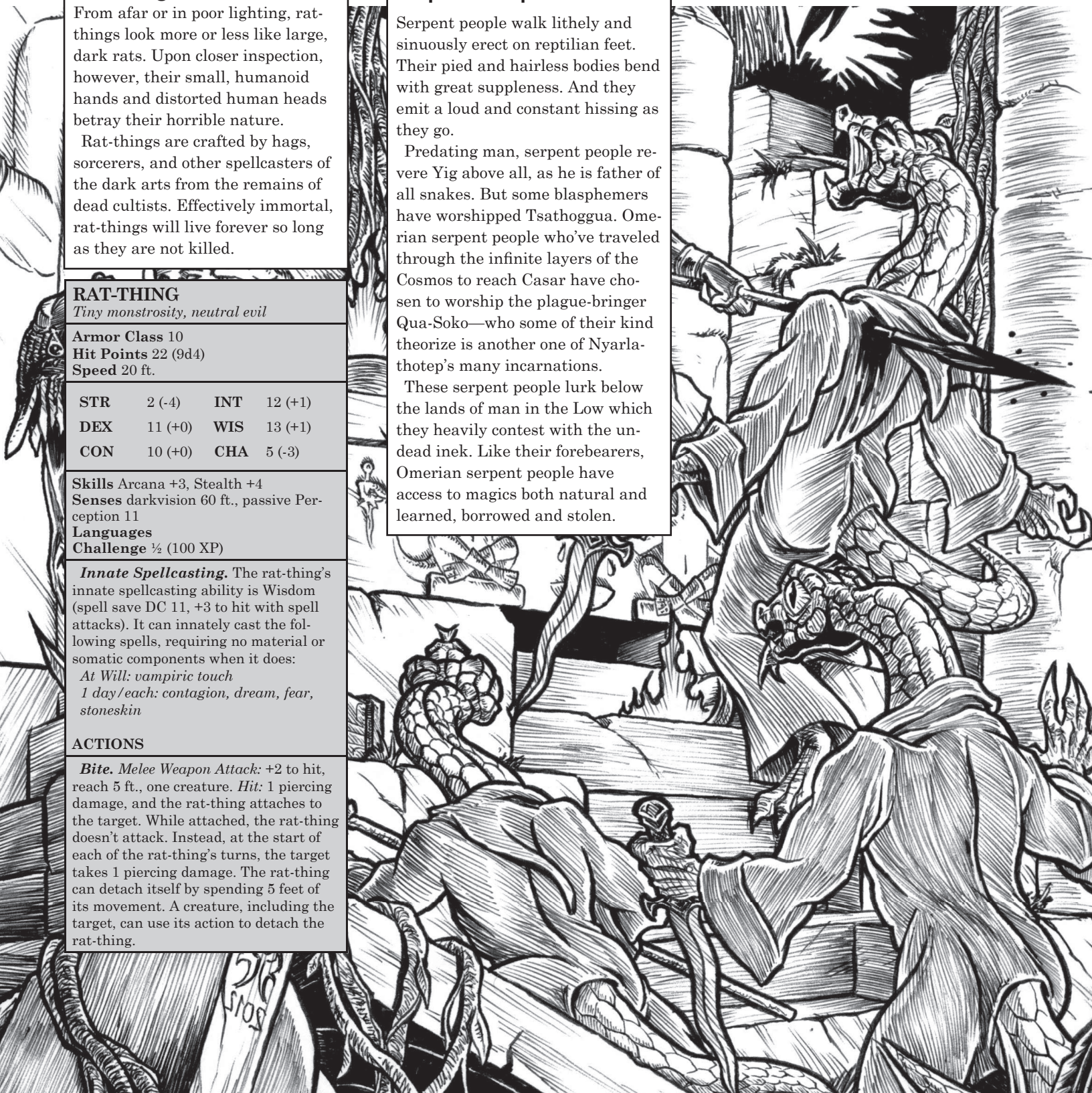
Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage, and the rat-thing attaches to the target. While attached, the rat-thing doesn't attack. Instead, at the start of each of the rat-thing's turns, the target takes 1 piercing damage. The rat-thing can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement. A creature, including the target, can use its action to detach the rat-thing.

Serpent People

Serpent people walk lithely and sinuously erect on reptilian feet. Their pried and hairless bodies bend with great suppleness. And they emit a loud and constant hissing as they go.

Predating man, serpent people revere Yig above all, as he is father of all snakes. But some blasphemers have worshipped Tsathoggua. Omerian serpent people who've traveled through the infinite layers of the Cosmos to reach Casar have chosen to worship the plague-bringer Qua-Soko—who some of their kind theorize is another one of Nyarlathotep's many incarnations.

These serpent people lurk below the lands of man in the Low which they heavily contest with the undead inek. Like their forebearers, Omerian serpent people have access to magics both natural and learned, borrowed and stolen.



SERPENT MAN <i>Medium monstrosity (shapechanger), neutral evil</i>					
Armor Class 13 (natural armor) Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2) Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.					
STR	10 (+0)	INT	17 (+3)		
DEX	10 (+0)	WIS	14 (+2)		
CON	12 (+1)	CHA	13 (+1)		
Skills Arcana +5, Deception +5 Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12 Languages Common, Deep Speech, Primordial, Undercommon Challenge ½ (100 XP)					
Shapechanger. The serpent man can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid it has seen, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Spellcasting. The serpent man is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Intelligence is the serpent man's spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The serpent man has the following wizard spells prepared: <i>Cantrips (at will): chill touch, dancing lights, prestidigitation</i> <i>1st Level (4 slots): burning hands, detect magic, false life, shield</i> <i>2nd Level (2 slots): blindness/deafness, ray of enfeeblement</i>					
ACTIONS					
Bite. <i>Melee Weapon Attack:</i> +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. <i>Hit:</i> 2 (1d4) piercing damage plus the target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the target is poisoned for 1 hour. While poisoned in this way, the target has disadvantage on Constitution ability checks and saving throws, and death saving throws. Chill Touch. <i>Ranged Spell Attack:</i> +5 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. <i>Hit:</i> 4 (1d8) necrotic damage, and the target can't regain hit points until the start of its next turn. If the serpent man hits an undead target with this attack, the target also has disadvantage on attack rolls against the serpent man until the end of its next turn. Quartermuff. <i>Melee Weapon Attack:</i> +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. <i>Hit:</i> 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage when wielded with two hands.					

Serpent Man Sorcerer-Supreme

The most powerful of the serpent people casters are their sorcerers-supreme. A sorcerer-supreme uses the archmage stat block, but with the following changes:

- The serpent man is a monstrosity (shapechanger) and neutral evil.
- The serpent man has darkvision out to 60 ft.

- The serpent man retains its Shapechanger feature and Bite attack.



SERPENT MAN SORCERER-SUPREME <i>Medium monstrosity (shapechanger), neutral evil</i>					
Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor) Hit Points 99 (18d8 + 18) Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.					
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)
Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +6 Skills Arcana +13, History +13 Damage Resistances damage from spells; nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing (from stonewood) Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12 Languages Any two languages plus Common, Deep Speech, Primordial, Undercommon Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)					
Shapechanger. The serpent man can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid it has seen, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Magic Resistance. The serpent man has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects. Spellcasting. The serpent man is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The serpent man can cast <i>disguise self</i> and <i>invisibility</i> at will and has the following wizard spells prepared: <i>Cantrips (at will): fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation, shocking grasp</i> <i>1st Level (4 slots): detect magic, identify, mage armor*, magic missile</i> <i>2nd Level (3 slots): detect thoughts, mirror image, misty step</i> <i>3rd Level (3 slots): counterspell, fly, lightning bolt</i> <i>4th Level (3 slots): banishment, fire shield, stonewood*</i> <i>5th Level (3 slots): cone of cold, scrying, wall of force</i> <i>6th Level (1 slot): globe of invulnerability</i> <i>7th Level (1 slot): teleport</i> <i>8th Level (1 slot): mind blank*</i> <i>9th Level (1 slot): time stop</i> * The serpent man casts these spells on itself before combat.					
ACTIONS					
Bite. <i>Melee Weapon Attack:</i> +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. <i>Hit:</i> 2 (1d4) piercing damage plus the target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the target is poisoned for 1 hour. While poisoned in this way, the target has disadvantage on Constitution ability checks and saving throws, and death saving throws. Dagger. <i>Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:</i> +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. <i>Hit:</i> 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage. Fire Bolt. <i>Ranged Spell Attack:</i> +9 to hit, reach 120 ft., one target. <i>Hit:</i> (4d10) fire damage. A flammable object hit by this spell ignites if it isn't being worn or carried Shocking Grasp. <i>Melee Spell Attack:</i> +9 to hit, reach touch, one target. <i>Hit:</i> (4d8) lightning damage. The archmage has advantage on the attack roll if the target is wearing armor made of metal. On a hit, the target can't take reactions until the start of its next turn					

SHOGGOTH*Huge aberration, neutral evil***Armor Class** 7**Hit Points** 270 (20d12 + 140)**Speed** 40 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	5 (-3)	25 (+7)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)

Skills Perception +10**Damage Resistances** cold, fire, lightning**Damage Immunities** acid, poison, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks**Condition Immunities** prone**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20**Languages** Deep Speech**Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)**Self-Luminous.** The shoggoth emits dim light in a 5-foot radius.

Maddening Appearance. The first time a creature that can see the shoggoth starts its turn within 60 feet of the shoggoth, the creature must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature becomes frightened for 1 minute and gains a random form of long-term madness (see Chapter 8 of the DMG). The creature can repeat its saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the frightened effect on itself with a success. On a successful saving throw, the creature is frightened until the end of its next turn. A creature that succeeds on its initial saving throw or the effect ends for it is immune to the maddening appearance of all shoggoths for 24 hours.

ACTIONS**Multiattack.** The shoggoth makes 1d6 spontaneous appendage attacks.**Spontaneous Appendage.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature.**Hit:** Roll a d6 to determine the type of damage dealt.

Roll 1-2: 19 (3d6 + 9) bludgeoning damage

Roll 3-4: 19 (4d4 + 9) piercing damage

Roll 5-6: 20 (2d10 + 9) slashing damage

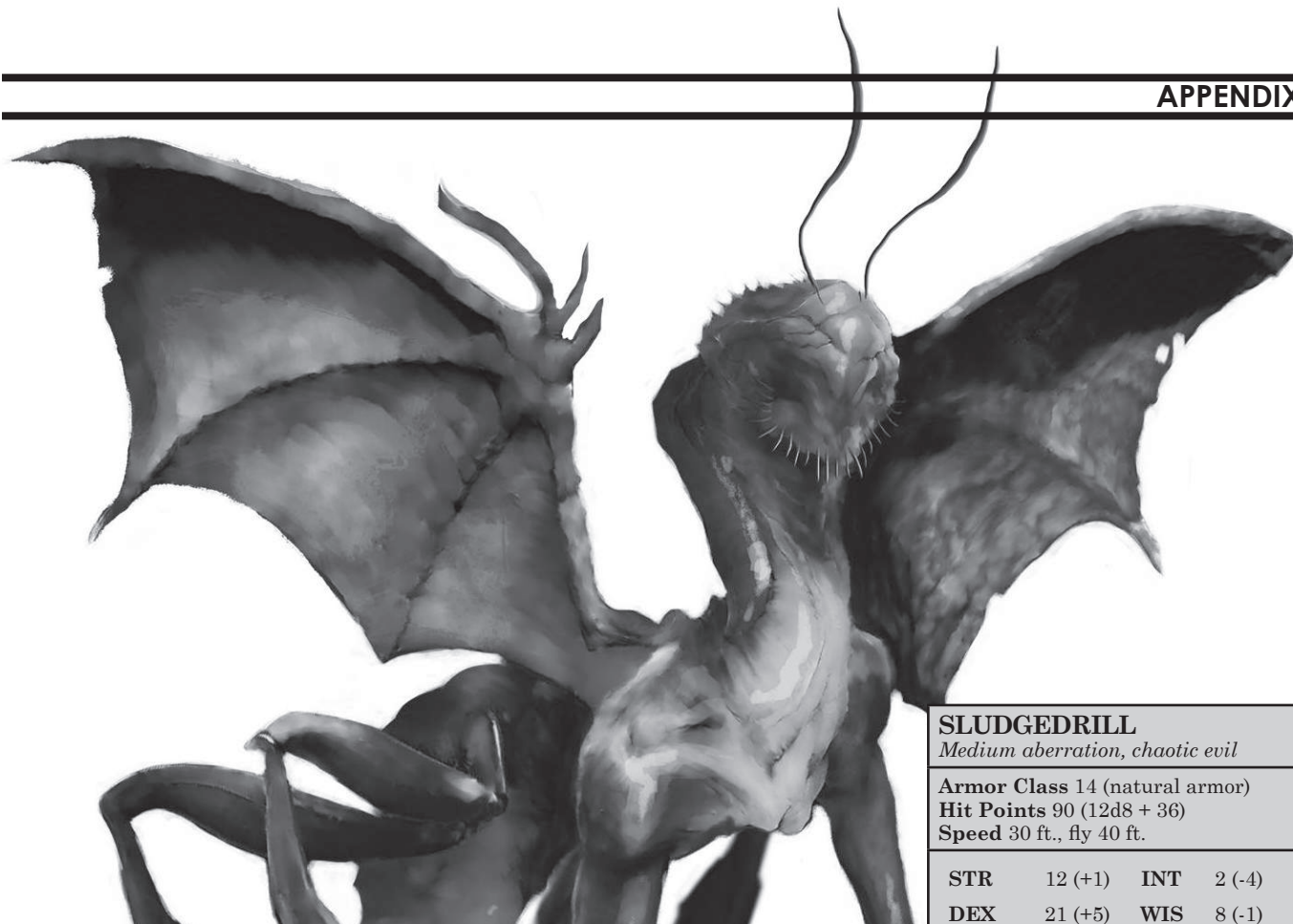
Engulf. The shoggoth moves up to its speed. While doing so, it can enter Large or smaller creatures' spaces. Whenever the shoggoth enters a creature's space, the creature must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the creature can choose to be pushed 5 feet back or to the side of the shoggoth. A creature that chooses not to be pushed suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw. On a failed save, the shoggoth enters the creature's space, and the creature takes 21 (6d6) piercing damage plus 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage plus 21 (6d6) slashing damage and is engulfed. The engulfed creature can't breathe, is restrained, and takes 21 (6d6) piercing damage plus 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage plus 21 (6d6) slashing damage at the start of each of the shoggoth's turns. When the shoggoth moves, the engulfed creature moves with it. An engulfed creature can try to escape by taking an action to make a DC 19 Strength check. On a success, the creature escapes and enters a space of its choice within 5 feet of the shoggoth. Also, a creature within 5 feet of the shoggoth that is not currently engulfed by the shoggoth can take an action to pull a creature or object out of the shoggoth. Doing so requires a successful DC 19 Strength check, and the creature making the attempt automatically takes damage from one of the shoggoth's spontaneous appendages (see above).

Shoggoth

The nightmare, plastic column of fetid, black iridescence oozed tightly onward—a shapeless congerie of protoplasmic bubbles, faintly self-luminous, and with myriads of temporary eyes forming and unforming as pustules of greenish light all over the tunnel-filling front that bore down upon us, crushing the frantic penguins and slithering over the glistening floor that it and its kind swept so evilly free of all litter. Still came that eldritch mocking cry—“Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!”

At the Mountains of Madness

HP Lovecraft



Sludgedrill

Sludgedrills are not native to the Material Plane—their origin, like that of the Priests, is unknown. Some theorize that they grow from the husks of those consumed by the Priests. Others suggest they are a direct, divine creation from an ancient, unholy power. Mosquito-like in appearance, sludgedrills are winged insectoid creatures the size of dogs. Their mandibles are razor sharp and the ooze that drips from their forms is potentially deadly to the largest of creatures even in the smallest amounts. They emanate a buzzing sound that can rupture the eardrums of nearby creatures if suffered for too long.

Feeding on emotion. Sludgedrills do not consume material sustenance, instead feeding off of the ambient negative emotions of humanoid in their vicinity—specifically the emotions of anxiety and fear. The intensity and amount of

emotion in the area will determine the rate of growth for a sludgedrill. In certain cases, a sludgedrill may mature into adulthood in as little as three hours if the conditions are suitable. Sludgedrills are exceedingly rare on the Material Plane, though are more commonly found in areas experiencing intense hardship. Though the disease created from sludgedrill ooze is non-contagious, sludgedrill breeding grounds in food or water sources can create a vicious feedback loop, where the disease spread by the sludgedrills causes fear and anxiety in a population, which further contributes to increased rates of sludgedrill reproduction and development, thus potentially intensifying further disease and negative emotion. Some scholars recall the tale of a an entire city that millennia ago was entirely consumed by a sludgedrill outbreak, leaving nothing but empty homesteads and the relentless buzzing.

SLUDGEDRILL

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 90 (12d8 + 36)

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	12 (+1)	INT	2 (-4)
DEX	21 (+5)	WIS	8 (-1)
CON	17 (+3)	CHA	7 (-2)

Skills Acrobatics +8

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Maddening Buzz. Each creature that starts its turn within 60 feet of the sludgedrill must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, unless the creature is a construct or undead. On a failed save, the creature takes 11 (2d6 + 4) psychic damage, or half as much damage on a failed save. On a successful save, the creature is immune to the buzzing of all sludgedrills for 24 hours.

Death Burst. When the sludgedrill is reduced to 0 hit points, it expels a spray of acidic ooze from its pores. Creatures within 10 feet of the sludgedrill must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) damage on a failed save.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The sludgedrill makes two stinger attacks.

Stinger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage. The target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Ω





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It sits at the desk, scribbling by the sickly light of dripping tapers hovering nearby. Occasionally, seemingly satisfied with the results, the creature makes an arcane sign and the completed scroll vanishes with a sighing pop.

A fresh piece of parchment crawls across the desk to the waiting quill. The scribbling begins anew.

One of the candles begins to whimper, to beg and sob. With a dismissive gesture, the creature snuffs out the candle. A new candle floats from the darkness to take its place.

The silence returns, interrupted only by the scribbling of the pen.

- *Grotto of Nightmares*