

# FABLES

CITADEL OF THE UNSEEN SUN



DEATH IS NOT THE END  
EPISODE 1 OF 6



GHOS*TFIRE*  
GAMING

5E  
COMPATIBLE



# FABLES



CITADEL OF THE UNSEEN SUN: EPISODE 1

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**DEATH IS NOT THE END**

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# WELCOME TO FABLES!

You hold in your hands an episode of *Citadel of the Unseen Sun*, the first of many Fables which span worlds, genres, and the planes of existence. Each episode of this Fable contains four sessions of thrilling fifth edition adventure—enough to entertain a group of weekly roleplaying game (RPG) players until the next episode arrives a month later.

## You Are a Game Master

As the Game Master (GM) of a Fable, you are given the power of a storyteller, telling tales of heroism and adventure to a rapt audience. Imagine yourself wrapped in the clothes of a traveling bard, your face cast in glowing firelight, as you weave a tapestry of words. Your words draw those who sit around the fire with you into another world, where they are not the mere audience of a tale, but actors, storytellers themselves.

The GM's role is to establish the setting of each scene in this Fable, introduce and roleplay its non-player characters (NPCs), and play monsters and villains that long to bring a swift end the heroes' adventures. The players at your table are storytellers in their own right. Though they only embody a single character each while you embody many, the players' actions have the power to change the world of Etharis forever. The best GMs are willing to improvise, even ignoring the text of a Fable when necessary, to ensure the characters' actions have consequences—for both good and ill.

**If you are not planning on running this Fable, stop reading now. What follows is for the Game Master's eyes only.**

## Running this Fable

Fables is an episodic adventure series using the fifth edition of the world's first roleplaying game. In order to play, you need the free fifth edition System Reference Document, or the books that make up the fifth edition core rules.

This Fable takes place in the world of Etharis, a realm of darkness described in *Grim Hollow: The Campaign Guide*. Access to this book makes running this Fable much easier. Players who want to lean into the darkness of Grim Hollow's dark fantasy setting benefit from a copy of *Grim Hollow: The Player's Guide*, as well.

Additionally, the following information will help you run this Fable as its GM:

## Episodes and Chapters

A Fable is a complete story, released in six monthly episodes. Each episode is an arc of this overall story that presents a mini-sandbox environment. An episode has a specific range of levels for which it's designed. As the Game Master, you are empowered to run an episode for characters of a higher or lower level than recommended for an episode—but be prepared for a more challenging or easier session unless you do work yourself to alter the challenges and monsters the characters face.

The characters can explore each episode's region at their leisure. An episode is further divided into three or four chapters. Each chapter describes a specific location within an episode's sandbox environment—or it could represent a linear series of encounters that drive the plot forward. An episode typically has three to four chapters, each of which contains enough game content to fill one or two game sessions.

## Monsters, Magic, and More

When you see text in **bold**, that's the Fable's way of telling you that a scene or location contains a monster or NPC ready to fight. New monsters and NPCs in Fables are usually found in appendix A: New Monsters of the episode in which they appear. If a monster's name appears in bold but isn't followed by "(see appendix A)" or a similar pointer, then that monster's game statistics are found in the fifth edition core rules.

When you see text in italics, that's the Fable's way of telling you that you're looking at the name of a spell (like *hideous laughter*) or a magic item (like *winged boots*). Most spells and magic items are found in the fifth edition core rules. New spells and magic items are described in an episode's appendices as well, as indicated by a "(see appendix B)" pointer.

When you see text in a box like this, the characters have likely entered a new area, or have triggered an event like an NPC entering the scene. This text is meant for the GM to read or paraphrase aloud to the players to set the scene.



## Running a Dark Fantasy Game

Grim Hollow is a setting of darkness, despair, and terrible evil. Heroes are rarely paragons of justice; they are mortals with their own foibles and flaws. In turn, villains are rarely avatars of pure evil hell-bent on destruction. The heroes and villains of this Fable are operating at cross purposes – they stand in direct opposition to one another's goals.

Because of this, dark fantasy stories rarely culminate in purely happy endings. Innocent and heroic lives are lost just as frequently as evil ones, and people must sacrifice things which they hold dear to achieve their ends. As a story involving death and the undead, there are also a great deal of gruesome scenarios in this story.

Before you run this adventure, talk with your players about their comfort level with dark fantasy, with dark themes, and with gore and gruesome events. This “session zero” check-in won’t water down your game or spoil any surprises – it’s an opportunity to get everyone to buy-in to your game. If everyone’s excited for darkness, death, and despair, you can safely indulge in all the dark fantasy you want. If people have some reservations, you can make the informed choice to either avoid this Fable or tailor

it to your group. Each Fable will be different, so it’s perfectly fine if one isn’t suited to your preferred play style.

## This Fable’s Story

This primer on Citadel of the Unseen Sun’s story and backstory will help you tell a compelling and cohesive story.

### Overview

In this Fable, a group of mercenary adventurers residing in the Ostoyan Empire are hired by a mysterious benefactor to recover an artifact from a long-lost civilization. Upon finding this artifact, they are slain by the lich Kasimir Sundrinker. A strange power within each adventurer saves them from death, but they awaken within a twisted, false afterlife.

The characters learn over the course of this Fable that this afterlife is the creation of Kasimir Sundrinker, and that they are actually deep in the bowels of an ancient Necropolis beneath the lands of the Ostoyan Empire. They must reach the surface – and once there, gain the power to defeat Kasimir and end his plot to use the sun stolen from the skies of Ostoya to ascend to godhood.

## Backstory

The Ostoyan Empire is a grim and gothic land ruled by vampires who prey upon their subjects. The sun itself vanished from the sky many years ago in an event called the Darkfall.

### Darkfall and the Vampires

A fearsome earthquake rocked the lands of Ostoya, tearing massive fissures in the ground. Necrotic energy surged from the fissures, darkening the realm and plucking the sun from the sky. These fissures also unearthed ancient, long-buried ruins. Countless Ostoyan explorers ventured into the chasms in search of answers—few returned. That is, until a horde of vampires and their undead minions emerged. These vampires conquered Ostoya and transformed it into their own dark empire, untouched by the light of the sun.

### Necropolis of the Holy Sun

Untold centuries before the Darkfall brought Ostoya to its knees, a civilization lost to history existed in the region. This mighty civilization venerated death and the dead. Great art was made from the bones of the departed, and a common idiom was “All are equal in death.” The bones of a commoner are no different from the bones of a highborn. Both can be used as art—and both can be turned toward the art of reanimation, or necromantic science.

None were more venerated in this civilization than necromancers, for they could reanimate the bones of the dead and turn them to the betterment of the living. And of these necromancers, none held a higher position than Kasimir, the Royal Necromancer. Kasimir was not king—the ruler of this land was a diplomat, not a mage—but he was the power behind the throne. This most powerful of necromancers was a stern man, but one beloved by the people for his self-sacrificing generosity. He raised armies of undead to protect the realm, made pilgrimages to small villages across the land, and even performed miracles to return life to the dead if they were vital the fate of the realm.

### Emerging from the Shadows

The lost civilization now known only as the Ostoyan Necropolis revered the sun. They saw it as the source of all life and power. Later civilizations on Etharis would agree, connecting it to the dead goddess Aurelia (see *Grim Hollow: The Campaign Guide*). Sigils of the sun adorned every surface in this ancient realm, often carved into stone or formed of magically preserved bone.

But this society dedicated to light became eclipsed by shadow. Vampires, accidents of overambitious necromancers, lurked places untouched by the sun’s grandeur. In time, their numbers grew so great that they swept through the Necropolis like a wave. The wave only grew, as the vampires turned unwitting people into their spawn. Kasimir and his fellow necromancers tried to halt the vampiric advance with their incorruptible reanimated warriors, but in time they too were overwhelmed. Their king was lost, and the realm fell into eternal darkness.

### Swallowed by the Earth

Kasimir survived the vampires’ coup and retreated into his citadel. Using his magic, he sealed the citadel with rays of sunlight that would annihilate any vampire that sought entrance. Grieving the loss of his realm, he invoked a terrible rite that caused the earth itself to open its great maw and devour the Necropolis whole. By his design, the vampires would never again see the sky.

Kasimir toiled in his citadel to discover magic which would allow him to destroy his foes and resurrect his realm once and for all. At the same time, he delved into profane secrets of necromancy to grant himself eternal life—as a lich. Then, after countless centuries of study, he found it—the sun itself, if he could harness its power in full, would give him magical might sufficient enough to annihilate his enemies, and perhaps even restore everything he had lost.

He enacted a second dread ritual. An earthquake rocked the lands above, which had since become populated by humanoid peoples calling themselves Ostoyans. Necrotic power surged from below, darkening the realm and plucking the very sun from the sky. The sun appeared within Kasimir’s citadel as a blazing inferno: his Unseen Sun.

### Light Hunters and the Sparks

Kasimir’s scheme was not without its flaws. He unleashed the vampires he sealed away into the world once more. Now unhindered by the light of the sun, they quickly conquered the surface-lands of Ostoya and became more powerful than ever before. Worse, Kasimir’s ritual to claim the sun was imperfect. The sun resisted command by a single will, containing still a fragment of the divine mind of the goddess Aurelia, and this consciousness fractured portions of the sun’s power and delivered them into the souls of mortal beings.

These fragments were dubbed “sparks of sunlight” by Kasimir. These sparks linger, usually dormant, within the hearts of mortal people. Sometimes, they permit a person whose life is in mortal danger to manifest magical powers – it is one of the vanishingly rare sources of divine magic in mortal hands on the face of Etharis.

Ever since realizing his error following the Darkfall, Kasimir has sought these sparks and their wielders. He has no idea how many there are, or how far across the lands of Etharis they have spread. Once he gained his first, through divination and personal effort, he used his magical power, amplified by the Unseen Sun, to infuse a human skeleton with the blazing might of the sun. This warrior arose, and he dubbed it his first Light Hunter – a tireless stalker who can sense other sparks of sunlight in the souls of others.

Kasimir now has six Light Hunters, and he has spread them across the world in search of sparks of sunlight, so that he might unify the full power of the Unseen Sun and fulfil his ambitions.

## Kasimir’s False Afterlife

While waiting for his hunters to recover the prodigal sparks, Kasimir needed to survive. His phylactery hungered for souls to prolong his undead life. He devised another plan – and this one would be without flaw.

Aurelia’s divine power once drew souls to their afterlife. Kasimir used the Unseen Sun to divert the souls of all who lived under the shadow of the Darkfall into a false afterlife. He fashioned this metaphysical realm within the ruins of his old homeland. It would be a place where he could prey upon the souls of the dead. Though he denies these souls their eternal rest, Kasimir feels no guilt – they serve a greater purpose now: the resurrection of his lost homeland. It is from this fertile ground that this Fable begins.

## Skade, the Nightseer Sage

This Fable begins *in medias res*. The characters have been given a task by an old man who calls himself the Nightseer Sage. This sage is the guise of an Arch Daemon of shadow, shapeshifting, and deception named Skade – one which has long been content to watch the unfolding drama of the Necropolis and Ostoya as an entertaining opera.

However, Kasimir’s recent success with the Light Hunters has worried Skade. It longs for chaos and conflict in the world, and it has enjoyed seeing Kasimir sow the seeds of chaos across Ostoya. However, it has begun to worry that if Kasimir is successful, the lawful rule of the Ostoyan Empire –

evil as it may be – will merely be replaced by another society of law and order.

In the hopes of preventing this, Skade has assembled a group of adventurers who, by the daemon’s design, possess within their souls a Spark of Sunlight. These adventurers are the player characters; unbeknownst to them, powers greater than them have conspired to plunge them into a world of death and despair.

## Citadel of the Unseen Sun

This is a brief summary of the six episodes of this Fable.

### Episode 1: Death is Not the End

In this episode, the characters are hired by the Nightseer Sage to recover a relic of a long-lost civilization. In doing so, they are found and killed by Kasimir Sundrinker, but the Spark of Sunlight within their souls allows them to remain in their mortal bodies, even as their spirits are whisked away into Kasimir’s false afterlife.

After waking in the deepest, darkest bowels of the Necropolis, they must ally themselves with fellow survivors if they are to escape from this realm of undeath and horror.

### Episode 2: Dreams of the World Beyond

In this episode, the characters discover a realm within the Necropolis where ghostly spirits are trapped in an eternal, placid existence of dreams. Here they are preserved as food for Kasimir’s phylactery. When they enter, the characters are stripped of their bodies and must find a way to return to their physical forms, if they are to continue their ascent.

### Episode 3: A Masque of Life

In this episode, the characters enter a realm of Deep Rivers, where souls flow from the world above into the Necropolis. A group of powerful, ostentatious undead who call themselves the Doges have formed a society of endless revelry. The characters must find a way to navigate the politics of this endless fete in order to reach the surface world once again.

### Episode 4: Land of Despair

In this episode, the characters breathe the fresh air of Ostoya once again. They must navigate the infamous Labyrinth to reach the surface, and once there, they are faced with a decision: travel to Nov Ostoya to learn the secrets of defeating Kasimir once and for all or abandon their quest and seek solace elsewhere in the world.

## Episode 5: City of Decadence

In this episode, the characters travel to Nov Ostoya in search of the Nightseer Sage, who apparently holds the key to destroying Kasimir Sundrinker. They must work arm-in-arm with the gangs of Nov Ostoya to reach the city's bloody heights and find their mysterious benefactor.

## Episode 6: Master of the Unseen Sun

In this episode, the characters are pursued by Kasimir's deadly minions: the Light Hunters. They must cross the lands of Ostoya to reach their final destination: the Citadel of the Unseen Sun. Once there, their task is laid bare before them: Kasimir must fall.

## Prelude

This story begins *in medias res* as the characters look upon the gothic walls of a stone mausoleum in the northern reaches of the Ostoyan Empire. They journeyed to this tomb to retrieve an item from within, promised a handsome reward for its recovery.

Unbeknownst to the characters, the quest is one from which the characters will soon be violently sidetracked. Fate has brought the characters together, for within their souls lies a minuscule fragment of

divine power, a spark of sunlight—a power sought by a lich who wishes to command the full might of the sun itself.

At the end of this chapter, the characters die—and are saved from death by this power. This cinematic opening chapter gives this episode a dramatic beginning, and then opens up to a more character-driven, exploration-focused adventure in later chapters.

## Character Advancement

In this episode, the characters must undergo a variety of dungeon-based challenges. This episode begins with a straightforward first chapter, and then provides a more open-ended and exploratory dungeon experience in the later chapters.

Characters gain a level each time they complete one of the following objectives. They can't rise to higher than 3rd level before the start of the next episode in this Fable.

- The characters are killed by Kasimir Sundrinker at the end of chapter 1 of this episode.
- Starting in chapter 2, the characters resolve the unmet needs of at least two of the Dredgers (see appendix B).
- The characters escape the Ditches through the Gates of the Sun (see area D13 in chapter 3).





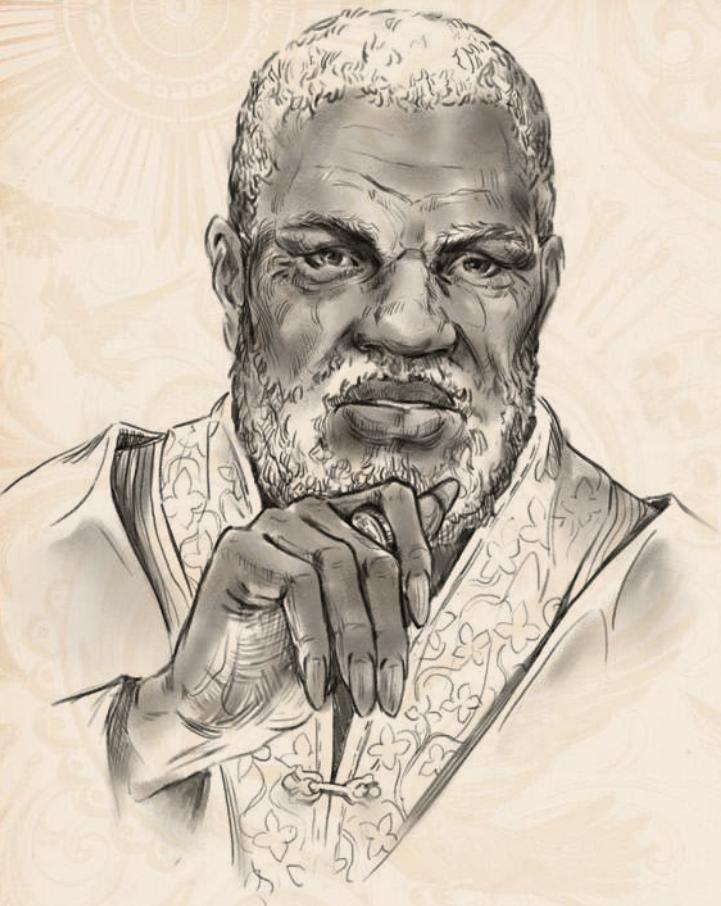


# CHAPTER 1: FALL FROM GRACE

**FOR 1ST-LEVEL CHARACTERS**

This story begins at the gates of the Penumbral Vestibule, upon a field of black glass in a petrified forest. The northern wilds of Soma are a treacherous place, prowled by beasts and haunted by shadows that slither through the night. Such are the dangers faced by adventurers in Etharis – but no mere woodland terrors can prepare them for the dangers that wait them within the vestibule.

They came here to find a relic of a long-forgotten necropolis. Little do they know that they are about to meet that lost realm's most fearsome necromancer.



ONE GUISE OF THE NIGHTSEER SAGE

## Starting In Medias Res

A Latin phrase meaning “in the midst of things,” a story that begins *in medias res* starts with the action already underway. This adventure sees the characters begin outside a dungeon, leaving the gathering of a quest and the journey to this dungeon as backstory.

When starting a session in *medias res*, be prepared to answer questions about what happened before the “cameras started rolling.”

The introductory read-aloud text in the “Arrival at the Vestibule” section later in this chapter describes the minimum information necessary to get the adventure started. If the players are curious about this quest, use the following information to answer any questions.

### So, What Happened?

Use the following background information to fill-in players curious about how the characters arrived outside this mausoleum, as well as the nature of their quest.

**You Met in a Tavern.** About a week prior, each member of this adventuring party gathered in the Tithewater Tavern in a backwater Ostoyan town called Lunsk.

**An Old Man Gave You a Quest.** While drinking at the Tithewater, an old man with a well-trimmed white beard and an expensive-looking tunic beneath opulent robes approached and offered you a mercenary job. He called himself the Nightseer Sage, speaking with an unplaceable foreign accent. He offered a sum of 2,000 gold pieces to the party, contingent on their recovery of an ancient circlet. He revealed the circlet’s past life as a lich’s phylactery—now, though, it is apparently just a historical artifact the Nightseer Sage longs to possess.

**You Journeyed to the Mausoleum.** The Nightseer Sage said that the circlet lies in a long-forgotten mausoleum called the Penumbral Vestibule. Legend has it this mausoleum was once a part of the mysterious civilization sprawling beneath the Ostoyan Empire—and that it grants entrance to the subterranean Necropolis from the surface.

**Now, Find the Phylactery.** The Nightseer Sage had no idea where within the Penumbral Vestibule this valuable former phylactery lies, and he knew nothing of the mausoleum’s layout. He coolly quipped, “You’re the adventurers, after all. If I knew these things, I would get the circlet myself!”

**Who Are You?** The Nightseer Sage evaded questions about his background, simply supplying his identity as a wealthy socialite from a foreign land. He claimed to be operating under an assumed name, “like most people of interest in the Ostoyan Empire,” and that revealing his true identity would put him and his family at risk. The truth is that the Nightseer Sage is a shapeshifting Arch Daemon named Skade—a truth that might become known in episode 5 of this Fable.

## Arrival at the Vestibule

The characters’ quest brings them to the gates of the Penumbral Vestibule, an ancient mausoleum of unknown origin. It is sheltered by the eerie pines bordering the Black Mire in the northern Ostoyan Empire.

Begin this adventure by reading or paraphrasing the following boxed text. This text briefly explains what happened to the characters before arriving here, then describes the dungeon’s imposing entrance.

You find yourselves sweaty and covered in muck after enduring a week of grueling travel. The sky above you looms black, lit only with the silvery glow of the moon—a common sight in the Ostoyan Empire, where the sun has vanished forever from the sky.

A week ago, you accepted a quest from an old man in the backwater town of Lunsk: Recover a tarnished old circlet from a mausoleum somewhere in the eastern woods of the empire. All around you stand skeletal, petrified trees—and through a gap in the branches, you see your destination.

Pushing forward, you find a small clearing. Before you towers the gothic façade of the Penumbral Vestibule. A plain of black glass sprawls beyond, shrouding the floor of this petrified forest as far as the eye can see. The steeply pitched roof of the moss-covered stone mausoleum is festooned with eerily realistic skeletal grotesques. Its stone doors are closed shut, decorated with an intricate sigil of a sun.

## Penumbral Vestibule Features

The subterranean interior rooms of the mausoleum have the following general features:

**Ceilings.** The mausoleum's ornate vaulted ceilings are 10 feet high.

**Doors.** Crafted from the same stone as the walls and ceiling, the mausoleum's doors are unlocked unless otherwise noted. However, they are heavy, and can only be opened if characters with a combined Strength score of 20 or higher use their actions in the same round to push them open.

**Light.** Unless otherwise noted, the interior rooms of the mausoleum are unlit and pitch-black.

**Walls.** The walls of the mausoleum are made of the same stone as the rest of the structure. Artistically inlaid into the walls are murals of bleached, polished human bones and skulls. Any one of these bones can be easily pried from the wall as an action with a tool like a crowbar or a dagger.

## Areas of the Penumbral Vestibule

Like a stone iceberg, the surface-level mausoleum presents only a fraction of the Penumbral Vestibule's true size.

### V1. Plain of Black Glass

Read or paraphrase the following if the characters explore the black glass surrounding the mausoleum:

A flat plain of perfectly smooth black glass with an almost mirror-like reflectiveness extends out beyond the mausoleum. It stretches to the edges of your vision, faintly reflecting the dim light of the moon above.

Characters who try to crack this glass can make an attack roll against it. Each 5-foot-square area of black glass has an AC of 21, 100 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. A creature that reduces an area of black glass to 0 hit points must succeed on a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw or take 27 (5d10) radiant damage as sunlight explodes from the shards.

**Power of the Black Glass.** Unbeknownst to the characters, this field of black glass is a key component of the spell darkening the Ostoyan skies. The glassy plain sprawls a total area of nearly 150 square miles throughout the petrified forest between the plains of Soma and the Black Mire.

### V2. Stone Doors of Darkness

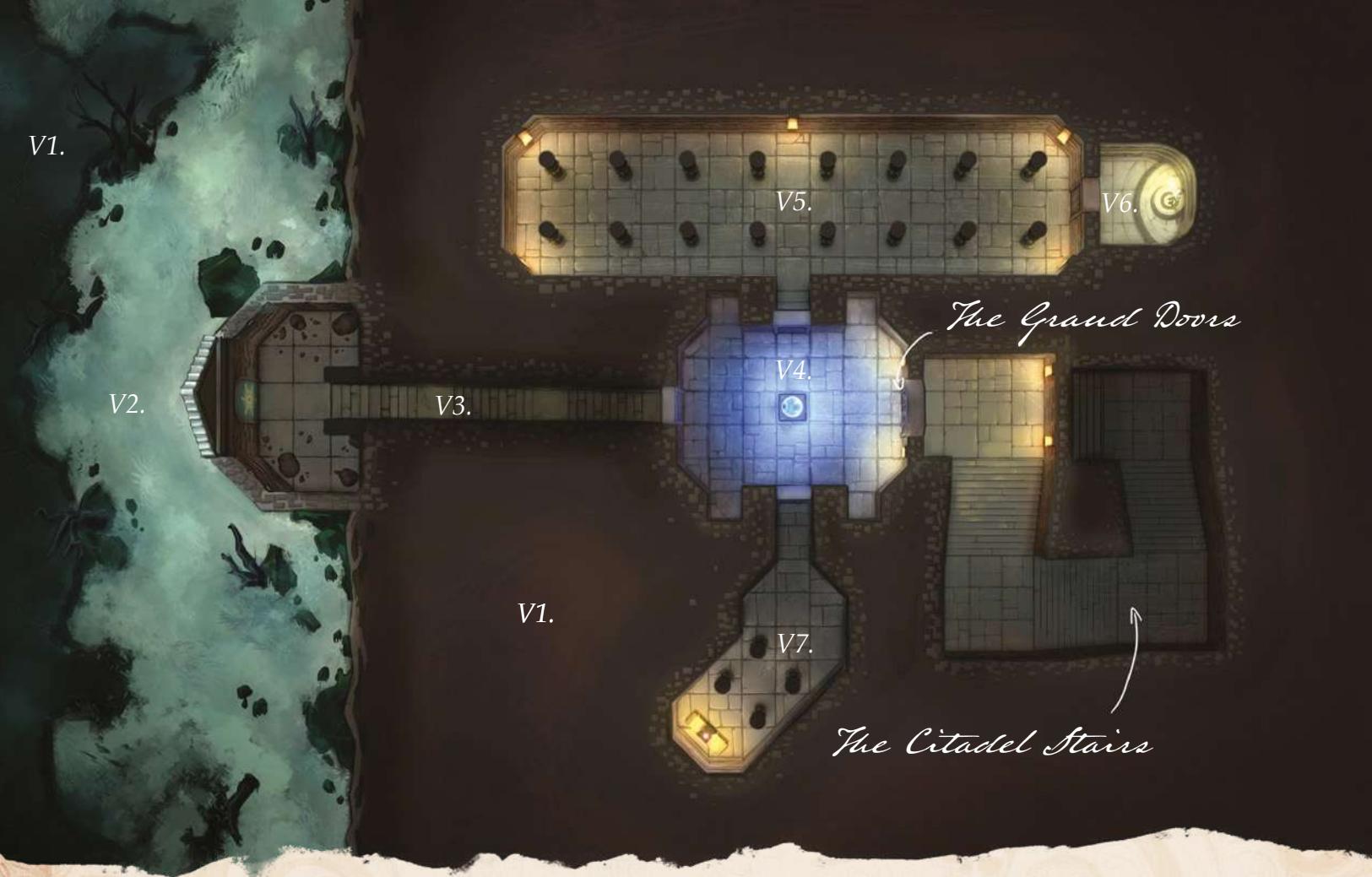
The sigil adorning this door is one encountered frequently throughout this Fable—heraldry of a realm so long-forgotten that only the most well-read scholars have heard of it. A character examining this symbol can make a DC 21 Intelligence (History) check to recognize it as a royal crest found on a few scattered artifacts of a nameless dominion predating the Ostoyan Empire.

**Opening the Doors.** The doors of this mausoleum are shut, but unlocked. They can only be opened if characters with a combined Strength score of 24 or higher use their actions in the same round to push them open.

**Mausoleum Interior.** The aboveground portion of the mausoleum stands empty, save for dusty floors, smashed funerary urns, and a stone staircase leading into darkness below.

### V3. Stair of Wrathful Sun Sigils

A stairway descends into the earth. At the far end of this hall of stairs is a single stone door. Pristine murals of humanoid bones adorn each wall, arranged into artistic images of the sun—similar to the sigil emblazoned upon the main door of the mausoleum. These sigils adorn the walls of each of the three landings in this hallway.



Each of the landings between staircases in this hallway displays symbols of the sun decorated on both walls. A character who casts *detect magic* in this room detects auras of evocation magic from the sun sigils on the walls.

**Activating the Sigils.** When a living creature enters a landing, the surrounding sun sigils activate. They glow a radiant gold, then emit a beam of magical energy at the creature. The creature must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) radiant damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. Once a landing's sigils have been activated, they can't do so again for 1 minute.

**Destroying the Sigils.** The sigils are made of ancient human bones, treated to withstand the ages. Nevertheless, they are brittle, and have an AC of 9, 5 hit points, and are immune to poison and psychic damage. If one sigil is destroyed, a landing's trap deals only 5 (1d10) radiant damage. If both sigils are destroyed, the trap no longer activates.

## V4. Nexus of the Watchful Crystal

Each character must roll initiative when entering this room. The crystalline eye floating over the plinth is an arcane sentry placed by Kasimir Sundrinker to watch for intruders.

If the eye spots a creature (see "Crystal Gaze" below), it sends a mental alert to Kasimir, who departs his citadel many thousands of feet below (described in episode 6 of this Fable) to intercept intruders. See the "Kasimir's Arrival" section at the end of this chapter for more information.

A crystal orb floats above a stone plinth in the center of this chamber. It rotates slowly, glowing a faint blue; its carved surface evokes the shape of a lidless eye. A secluded alcove stands at each corner of the room, with doors to the north and south. To the east stands a massive stone door inscribed with detailed carvings of humanoid figures, skeletons, and a radiant sun disc.

**Crystal Gaze.** A creature that succeeds on a DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) check can move through the room without attracting notice. On initiative count 20, a creature standing outside an alcove is automatically spotted by the crystal. A Medium or smaller creature can also avoid detection by lying prone within 5 feet of the crystal.

**Crystal Attack.** When the crystal spots a creature, it emits a beam of energy at the intruder. This beam has a +4 bonus to hit and deals 5 (1d10) radiant damage on a hit. The crystal can only fire one beam per turn.

**Tricking the Crystal.** A creature can cover the arcane sentry with a cloth or similar object to block the crystal's vision.

**Destroying the Crystal.** The crystal eye has an AC of 13, 20 hit points, vulnerability to bludgeoning damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. If it is destroyed, Kasimir senses its destruction and comes to investigate (see "Kasimir's Arrival," at the end of this chapter).

**Grand Doors.** A massive stone door dominates the chamber's eastern wall. It displays a grand mural with two spherical indentations; the orbs found in areas V6 and V7 are required to open it. See "Opening the Grand Doors," later in this chapter.

**Secret Doors.** The walls of the northern alcoves rotate on a central column. A character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13 or higher notices this if they are within 5 feet of the false wall. It takes no effort to push the wall open into area V5.

## V5. Ossuary of the Honored Dead

You enter a vast hall lined with pillars, each decorated with parallel lines of femurs. The spaces between these bones are filled with skulls, all leering emptily as you approach. A stone door stands at the east end of the room, and several funerary alcoves filled with glinting metal line the west wall.

When the characters enter, they hear a clattering sound from the west end of the room. Characters who succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check notice humanoid figures rising from the ground to the west. If they succeed on this check by 5 or more, they identify that the clattering noise was clearly the sound of falling bones.

Bones enough to craft five **skeletons** toppled out of the pillars to the west, and they quickly assemble themselves and rise. They gather bows and swords from alcoves in the west wall, and then attack intruders from afar. They fight until they are destroyed and pursue characters anywhere within the dungeon.

**Treasure.** The alcoves along the west wall contain heaps of silver coins emblazoned with the face of an unknown king on the obverse side and a sun sigil on the reverse. The coins total 529 sp.

## V6. Monument to the Noble Archer

A life-size, skeletal statue stands vigil over this small sanctuary. In one hand it holds a bow, in another, raised high, it holds a crystal orb gleaming with golden light. The statue appears as if made from an actual human skeleton. Its bones gleam like silver in the light of a crystal orb. The skeleton's bones are covered with magical runes.

This monument to a heroic royal archer has survived long after the name of the civilization they served has been forgotten. The glowing crystal orb it holds to the sky is one of the keys required to open the door in area V4 (see "Opening the Grand Doors," later in this chapter).

**Taking the Orb.** The skeletal statue is 6 feet tall. A humanoid creature at least that height can pluck the orb from the statue's hands without issue. A shorter creature must make a DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or use a tool (like a thrown knife or the *mage hand* spell) to remove the orb. A creature that fails this check or otherwise touches the skeleton must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

## V7. Altar to the Unseen Sun

This oddly shaped hall contains a humble stone altar against its back wall. The altar is heralded by stone pillars adorned with humanoid bones artistically arranged in spiraling patterns. Upon the altar gleams a tarnished gold circlet bearing a cracked peridot. Beside the circlet sits a sphere of black crystal, glowing with internal light.

The circlet upon the altar is the object of the characters' quest: the crown of the princess of a forgotten civilization. It was once the phylactery of a lich named Kasimir Sundrinker, but that lich survived the destruction of this phylactery and created a new one, which he keeps in his citadel far beneath this mausoleum (described in episode 6 of this Fable). This circlet is merely a keepsake for the lich now.

When the characters see the circlet, read or paraphrase the following boxed text. This is a flashback to their first meeting with the Nightseer Sage, who supplied the quest to recover this phylactery. Even though this adventure began *in medias res*, this flashback provides some clarity to their quest.



You recall huddling around a dimly candlelit table in the Tithewater Tavern in Lunsk, one week ago. A well-dressed old man with a well-trimmed white beard and a greedy glint in his eye spoke to you in a hushed tone. He called himself the Nightseer Sage. “It’s truly an item of tremendous importance,” the sage said. “Historical importance, that is. And to me, personally. It is a circlet. Gold, likely tarnished, and rumor has it, with a cracked peridot gemstone set into it from when it was briefly used as a lich’s phylactery. It’s from a civilization that predates our own empire. I am desperately fascinated in ancient civilizations. All a part of getting old, I suppose.”

The thing sitting on the altar before you is unmistakably the circlet of which the sage spoke, exactly as he described it: golden, tarnished, and set with a cracked peridot.

**Taking the Phylactery.** Once the characters take the circlet from the altar, the door separating areas V3 and V4 slams loudly shut. From this point on, that door courses with magical force. Any living creature that touches the door must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or take 22 (4d10) force damage and be hurled 20 feet backward.

**Taking the Orb.** Despite its sinister appearance, the orb of black crystal harbors no malevolent power.

It is one of the keys required to open the door in area V4 (see “Opening the Grand Doors,” below).

## Opening the Grand Doors

Read or paraphrase the following if characters examine the massive stone double doors in the Nexus of the Watchful Crystal (area V4):

Carved upon these doors sprawls a mighty scene of conquest. An army of the living dead—ghouls led by vampire generals—charge up a mountainside toward a somber citadel carved out of the rock. Before the gates of the citadel stands a smaller army—this one made of walking skeletons, some armored, some not—led by a skeleton in a flowing robe. The leader of the vampires and the robed skeleton both hold their hands into the air as if conjuring a spell, and two circular cavities about the size of a human’s fist rest in between their outstretched hands.

With a DC 16 Intelligence (History) check, a character identifies the vampires in this mural as the those now controlling the Ostoyan Empire. This mural is clearly a much more recent creation—though still easily centuries old.

## Inserting the Keys

The door has two hemispherical indentations, one above the vampire with arms raised aloft, and the other above the robed skeleton with hands likewise raised above its head. The two cavities are of slightly varied sizes; the golden orb found in area V6 fits perfectly into the indent above the robed skeleton, while the black orb found in area V7 fits into the cavity above the vampire's head.

## Opening the Doors

The door swings open on its own once both keys are inserted. If Kasimir was alerted to the characters' presence by the arcane sentry in area V4, proceed to the "Kasimir Appears" section. If the characters weren't spotted, proceed to the "Descending the Citadel Stairs" section.

### Kasimir's Arrival

If the characters alerted Kasimir earlier, the lich waits for them behind the grand doors. His flair for the dramatic is truly unimpeachable. Read or paraphrase the following:

The stone doors grind open, sliding laterally into the walls. Beyond the threshold stands a tall, thin figure draped in a white robe. Flanking the figure tower two skeletons with bones coated in glimmering silver.

The figure raises its head and pulls back its hood with gaunt, decrepit fingertips, revealing a grinning skull with graying, withered flesh. The empty eye sockets flare with pinpricks of golden light as the withered being opens its mouth, and a resonant, churlish male voice emerges.

"Tell me, how ought a king of the dead react to grave robbers? Bone masons—restrain them."

With a flick of his wrist, the smaller doors to this chamber slam shut.

The rest of this encounter is described in the "Cast into Darkness" section later in this chapter.

### Descending the Citadel Stairs

When the characters pass the threshold of this door, they set off a permanent *alarm* spell that likewise alerts Kasimir—but not before they catch a glimpse of the exterior of his citadel, far below.

Read or paraphrase the following:

You emerge into a vast underground cavern. It must be miles long, and you stand at its far end. A faint golden glow fills the space, emanating from a grand stone façade on its far side. The cavern evokes a palace carved into the side of a mountain—the same palace carved into the stone door so many flights of stairs above you.

Suddenly, you are beset—the ring of steel as swords leave scabbards, a flash of silver at the corner of your vision, and intense heat as if standing beneath the blazing sun. Two skeletal warriors with bones coated in gleaming silver appear behind you. Appearing just as suddenly before you stands a tall, slender figure in robes of pure white.

Necrotic flesh clings to the figure's skeletal visage. He chuckles resonantly as he laces his bony fingers, causing the golden pinpricks of light in his empty sockets to bounce with eerie mirth.

"My bone masons have you. Tell me—is it beautiful? My citadel, that is. You are the first living beings to set eyes on it in a long time."

The rest of this encounter is described in the "Cast into Darkness" section, below.

## Cast into Darkness

This lich, Kasimir Sundrinker, wields the full radiant power of the sun he stole from the skies of Ostoya. Or near enough to it. Kasimir grants the characters time to quip, struggle, or squirm before his might as he sends his loyal minions to restrain them.

The game statistics for both **Kasimir Sundrinker** are presented below, and stats for his two **bone mason sentinels** are presented in appendix A at the end of this episode. Needless to say, however, these foes are insurmountable at this point of the Fable. The characters have little hope of besting them in battle—not until episode 6, when they have the chance to face them again, more powerful and better prepared.

## A Villainous Monologue

Kasimir Sundrinker is delighted to have guests, after so many years alone with no one for company but his undead servitors. He is happy to listen to the characters speak or struggle, and chortles along with their feeble attempts at escape or derision—confident in his knowledge that he possesses ultimate power.

When the characters run out of things to say to the lich, he interjects with a monologue of his own. Read or paraphrase the following:



The lich's smile never falters as he speaks. "For all your bravado, little mortals, I am afraid that your time on this earth has come to an end. It pains me to send brave explorers to their doom in my little afterlife. But, such is the way of the world. To think that once, you would have gone to Aurelia's side in the heavens, and yet my Unseen Sun will draw your souls to its side instead."

He chuckles to himself, as if perverting the natural order of life and death is a casual diversion for him. "It truly is a rarity to come face-to-face with the living, these days. I think, to commemorate the specialness of your collective demise, I will feed your souls to my phylactery personally, as well. I have so many souls in stasis, ready to be fed to my own soul, yet—yes, you deserve a special end. Do you have any last squeaking words, my little mice?"

Kasimir grants them an opportunity to speak with overbearing mock politeness. Then, ignoring any pleas for mercy, he says:

"That was charming. I'm truly touched. Well, I suppose we have nothing more to say to each other. Farewell, little mice."

## Death is Not the End

Kasimir casts *sunburst*, which invariably reduces all characters to 0 hit points. Read or paraphrase the following:

Blinding light envelopes you, searing your skin. You feel your body unraveling at the seams as your flesh burns, bubbles, then peels away in ragged strips. The pain is beyond words, the heat so intense it boils your insides. The light grows hotter and brighter still, until suddenly, just as the agony reaches its apex—darkness. Nothing remains but blackness. There is no heat, no cold, just the gentle sensation of nothingness.

Time passes—you cannot fathom how long, whether seconds or centuries. There is a vague notion of falling. You drift in blackness, painlessness, and silence for time without measure. Then, something pierces the darkness. It emerges from your chest—or what would be your chest if you had physical form. A tiny mote of light, no larger than a marble. It is warm, comfortingly so. Where before there was a sensation of total numbness, the light has awakened a tingling in your fingertips, then your hands, and arms, through your chest and down your legs.

You exist. You plummet through darkness, and you exist. You hear the wind rushing past, and the tiny golden mote slowly drifts back into your chest. Then, just before you strike the invisible ground beneath you, you feel hands cradling your fall, and a gentle, sacred voice in your ear: "Death is not the end."

Your eyes flutter open. You are covered in mud, lying on your back in a dirty cavern. You ache, your head swims, but you are alive—and your fellow adventurers are all scattered about in the muck around you.

This story continues in chapter 2: Meet the Dredgers, as the characters awaken—preserved by the mysterious sparks of sunlight within their souls—in the Ditches, the lowest level of Kasimir Sundrinker's false afterlife.

## KASIMIR SUNDRINKER

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	22 (+6)	17 (+3)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +11, Int +13, Wis +9

Skills Arcana +20, History +13, Insight +9, Perception +9

Damage Resistances cold, lightning, necrotic

Damage Immunities fire, poison, radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages all

Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +7

**Legendary Resistance (3/Day).** If Kasimir fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

**Rejuvenation.** Unless his phylactery is destroyed, when Kasimir is destroyed he gains a new body in 1d10 days, regaining all his hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of his phylactery.

**Turn Resistance.** Kasimir has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

**Solar Absorption.** Whenever the Kasimir Sundrinker is subjected to fire or radiant damage, he takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to half the fire or radiant damage dealt.

**Radiant Scourge.** When Kasimir casts a spell or uses an ability which deals necrotic damage, he can change the damage type of that spell or ability to radiant damage.

**Spellcasting.** Kasimir Sundrinker is a 20th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 21, +13 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared.

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, mage hand, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *guiding bolt, magic missile, shield, sleep*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, invisibility, mirror image, scorching ray*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, dispel magic, fireball*

4th level (3 slots): *dimension door, resilient sphere, wall of fire*

5th level (3 slots): *arcane hand, scrying*

6th level (2 slots): *globe of invulnerability, sunbeam*

7th level (2 slots): *forcecage, teleport*

8th level (1 slot): *sunburst*

9th level (1 slot): *time stop*

### ACTIONS

**Searing Touch.** *Melee Spell Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) fire damage, and the target ignites in flame. Until the target or another creature spends an action to extinguish the flames, it takes 10 (3d6) fire damage at the start of each of its turns and has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until the start of its next turn.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Kasimir takes 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Kasimir regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

**Cantrip.** Kasimir casts a cantrip.

**Searing Touch.** Kasimir uses his Searing Touch.

**Frightening Gaze (Costs 2 Actions).** Kasimir gazes at a creature it can see within 10 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to Kasimir's gaze for 24 hours.

**Disrupt Life (Costs 3 Actions).** Each non-undead creature within 20 feet of Kasimir must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.





## CHAPTER 2: MEET THE DREDGERS

**FOR CHARACTERS OF 2ND TO 3RD LEVEL**

The characters are dead—or, would be if not for the spark of sunlight residing within their souls. This sliver of the dead goddess Aurelia's power allowed them to resist death at the hands of Kasimir Sundrinker. At the beginning of this chapter, they awaken in the Ditches, the deepest level of the Necropolis deep beneath the Ostoyan Empire. It is akin to nothing so much as a vast, muddy mass grave.

The Ditches is an unkindly and rotting place. It chews at the souls of all who struggle to survive here, and undeath is the only state of being it perpetuates. The true nature of the Ditches is unknown to its wretched inhabitants. These secrets are revealed to the Game Master in “Secrets of the Ditches,” later in this chapter.





# Denizens of the Ditches

A small band of desperate survivors sustain themselves on stunted roots and the flesh of scurrying rats. Every day, they struggle against an endless tide of mindless, undead flesh. These Dredgers, as they call themselves, come to rely on the characters as friends, allies, and saviors. The identities of the Dredgers are described briefly in the Dredger Camp (area D5 within this chapter), and in greater detail in appendix B at the end of this episode.

## Escape from the Ditches

There are only two ways out of the Ditches: death or through the Gates of the Sun—known colloquially to the Dredgers as the Ditch-Gate (see area D13 in chapter 3 of this episode).

Death is an attractive option to Dredgers after years of daily toil and endless suffering—in death, there is freedom from fear, pain, and hunger.

Yet survivors with wills of steel and hearts still flickering with hope know another way: escaping with your life through the Gates of the Sun. These gates are guarded by an undead beast of rotting flesh and insatiable hunger, but beyond, legends say the Necropolis awaits—a long, arduous path to freedom.

## The Ditches Hunger

The Ditches is a realm of preserved decay that feeds on the slow and persistent suffering of its inhabitants. Creatures resting here find little reprieve from injuries and ailments. The result of any Hit Die rolled during a short rest is reduced by 2 (minimum of 1). Also, creatures that complete a long rest within the Ditches only recover 5 hit points and only recover one expended Hit Die.

Additionally, undead continually spawn within the Ditches. An area cleared of hostile creatures and not occupied by the characters during a short or long rest contains 1d3 **mud zombies** (see appendix A) the next time the characters enter that area. The only exceptions to this are areas D1, D2, D6, and D8.

## Secrets of the Ditches

As the Game Master, there are two facts about the Ditches you must know, but of which its denizens are unaware. Dredgers speculate about the nature of these secrets—they might even guess correctly. But they have no way to confirm or debunk their speculations.

## Nature of the Necropolis

The Necropolis beneath Soma was created in a bygone age, long before the rise of the nations of Etharis, and certainly before the sun vanished from the skies of Ostoya and vampires claimed the land. The Necropolis has been transformed into a “false afterlife” by the lich Kasimir Sundrinker. Using the power of the Unseen Sun as a beacon, he draws souls here and uses them to feed his phylactery.

The Ditches wasn’t a part of Kasimir’s floorplan for the Necropolis, acting now as a sort of sewage system or landfill into which all mindless undead separated from their souls eventually wander.

## Here for a Reason

The Ditches is the bottom layer of the Necropolis. It should only be a mass grave for shambling undead. Yet, for some reason, utterly unbeknownst to Kasimir Sundrinker, creatures possessing both souls and living flesh survive in this realm of death and grave dirt.

The answer is the spark of sunlight. Souls are drawn to Kasimir’s false afterlife upon death like moths to a flame, separated from their mortal flesh.

## DEATH IN THE DITCHES AND BEYOND

The surviving Dredgers have seen sparks of sunlight several times before: the times when past Dredgers have died. When they keeled over dead, their spark rose from their chest and hovered in the air like a beacon for 1 minute, and then winked out of existence.

The truth is, surviving death by means of a spark of sunlight puts a terrible strain upon one’s soul. Aurelia’s magic is merciful enough not to try and protect a mortal being from death more than once—the death that landed them in the Ditches with their souls and bodies still tethered. A spark-bearing creature that dies again in the Ditches, in other parts of the Necropolis, or in Soma another time suffers the same fate as everyone else in Soma: their souls and body are separated, they tumble into the Necropolis, and become a part of Kasimir Sundrinker’s false afterlife.

The lost spark is born anew in another soul in an eternal cycle of renewal—unless Kasimir finds it and casts it into the Unseen Sun. If a character dies permanently without access to resurrection magic in this campaign, their new character could be one of the Dredgers, another person who died while holding a spark of sunlight, or a person not “blessed” with this dubious gift.

However, the fragment of Aurelia’s power lingering within one blessed by a spark of sunlight keeps their soul and flesh united as they tumble into the Necropolis.

## Dredgers and the Spark

Each of the Dredgers are likewise possessed of a spark of sunlight, just like the characters. They too all heard the voice of Aurelia—like a keening whisper through the maelstrom of their deaths—and awoke aching within the Ditches. None know what it means, but each Dredger has their speculations.

## Features of the Ditches

All areas of the Ditches have the following features, unless otherwise noted:

**Ceilings.** The natural ceilings in the Ditches typically rise 60 feet above the ground floor.

**Light.** Rooms are unlit and pitch-black unless otherwise noted.

**Mud.** A layer of thin mud covers the floors.

**Roots.** Tree roots puncture through walls and ceilings, thicker at the top and thinning at the bottom. They are inflammable, though removed pieces are not.

**Salvage.** Salvageable materials can be found in certain rooms throughout the Ditches, and can be brought back to the Abradus' Forge at the Dredger Camp (area D5).

**Walls.** The walls here are made of sturdy, packed dirt, and can be dug through with tools.

## Areas of the Ditches

The Ditches are vast, dirty, and filled with physical vestiges of death and despair. This chapter describes the early areas of the Ditches; the rest are described in chapter 3 of this episode. The areas are keyed to the map of the Ditches, which appears later in this chapter.

### D1. Bone Pile

The characters begin this chapter awakening in the Ditches after their deadly encounter with Kasimir Sundrinker. Read or paraphrase the following to set the scene for this chapter:

The hollow sounds of clacking bones pervade the room as you come to, each breath and motion producing a clattering beneath you. Gathering your bearings, you find the room lit from above by a pale light, which doesn't quite reach the stone walls. You find you and your companions resting atop a towering mound of bones, rising some thirty feet from the floor of the cavern.

The chamber smells strongly of mold and wet earth, and somewhere distant comes the dull thuds and rasps of something scraping along the ground. The bone pile provides no comfort—how could it?—and each movement threatens a sudden landslide of macabre material.

A single doorway stands below you and to the north.

Allow the characters a few moments to get their bearings, then read the following aloud:

As you rise and take in your macabre surroundings, bones clattering and tumbling, you see a gnome approaching slowly from the room's single entrance. His appearance is haggard, exhausted. Worn work clothes and a tattered leather apron hang like curtains upon gaunt limbs, with craven fingers wrapped firmly around the stock of a crossbow. The gnome approaches slowly, cautiously, taking care not to disturb any strewn bones, before peering up at your group, eyes wide. He shouts to you: "Have you lost your minds? Get down from there, before you wake the—"

The bones shift beneath you.

YEJIN FINN





This gnome is Yejin Finn, the oldest living member of the Dredgers. Yejin knows that every now and then a body comes to rest atop the bone pile. He checks the room occasionally for a fresh corpse from which to scavenge tools and supplies. However, he takes care to never to touch the bones themselves.

A necromantic spell is woven into the walls of this chamber, and as Yejin attempts to shout out a warning, the bones animate.

Each creature atop the bone pile must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw as skeletal hands burst from the pile, grabbing at the characters' limbs. A creature that fails this check takes 5 (1d10) slashing damage and is grappled (escape DC 12).

The bone pile is 30 feet tall and difficult terrain; a creature that ends its turn on the bone pile must repeat the saving throw as additional claws grab for them.

On initiative count 20, as long as a living creature is touching the bone pile, 1d3 **skeletons** emerge from the bottom of the pile and move to attack the nearest living creature. These skeletons pursue characters into area D2, but no farther, as if restrained by an unseen force.

Yejin immediately flees through the doorway, heading for area D2, and screams for the characters to follow him. Once the characters catch up and deal with any pursuing skeletons, Yejin is happy to take the characters to the Dredger Camp (see area D5).

## Salvage

Characters leaving this room can make a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice a hidden alcove in the room, blocked from casual observation. Inside this small side chamber, characters find two flasks of alchemist's fire (described in the Equipment chapter of the fifth edition core rules), several sets of moldering clothes, 17 arrows, and 6 pounds of iron in discarded and broken weapons.

## D2. Horned Chamber

Gouge marks mar the floor and walls of this chamber, accompanied by smears of blood leading to the bone pile. Two tunnels lead northwest and northeast, though the latter quickly ends in a cave-in.

Against the far wall of this antechamber lies the skeleton of a long-dead minotaur. While typically dormant, the **minotaur skeleton** rises and attacks the characters if fighting breaks out here. If the characters flee from the undead minotaur, which Yejin suggests, it does not pursue them beyond this room.

A tunnel leads northwest to area D3, while a second tunnel leading to the northeast is blocked by a cave-in. Creatures with large claws or suitable tools can dig through it by spending a total of 4 hours of work.

### Salvage

In addition to being a weapon in its own right, the minotaur skeleton's greataxe provides 7 pounds of materials for Abradus in the Dredger Camp (see appendix B).

## D3. Dredger Pit

A trench separates this room from the adjacent chamber, steel glinting at its bottom, also littered with bones. Scaffolds made of decaying wood line the walls near the pit, and the farthest wall of the chamber is carved with words. They're difficult to read from a distance.

Much of the ground here near the entrance has been dug away with tools, leading to a 20-foot-wide, 20-foot-deep pit. The bottom is lined with swords, spears, and other discarded weaponry pointed upward, turning the short drop into a lethal mix of piercing weapons, gravity, and rust.

Ages ago, back when the Dredgers were many, the survivors took it upon themselves to dig this pit trap, deterring any undead attempting to infiltrate their camp from the bone pile. Crossing the gap requires a mighty leap, but the Dredgers use a makeshift bridge. The first time the characters come through here, Yejin drops the bridge for them, then lifts and places it against the far wall when the characters have all crossed.

The words scrawled on the wall are the names of fallen Dredgers. While dozens of names were once carved here, only a few remain legible, the muck and grime claiming their memory.

### EXAMPLE NAMES ON THE WALL

d8	NAMES
1	Bibrorn, Vat-Ketiz, Talmah, Vezo
2	Alne, Lelezri, Tekvug, Jurgen
3	Stodvum, Erlich, Craer, Hayden
4	Yola, Sophia, Ralman, Gim
5	Teoth, Anna, Henrich, Gedinrar
6	Bilal, Zeleim, Ruteil, Charles
7	Nog, Remmy, Leah, Thofrana
8	Wolgavey, Johahe, Fran, Romilda

If the characters ask Yejin about these names, he replies curtly that these are the names of previous Dredgers. With any luck, he remarks, he won't have to write the characters' names as well.

### Crossing the Pit

Wooden platforms are affixed to the muddy walls of this chamber, allowing deceptively simple passage across the pit for any creature intelligent enough to use them. However, these platforms are rotten, and heavy creatures are at risk of splintering the boards and falling through. Once while crossing the platforms, a creature that weighs 60 lbs. or more (including the weight of their equipment) must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or fall through the platform, into the pit.

### Salvage

If the characters suggest using the weapons in the pit or bringing back the discarded weaponry for Abradus to use, Yejin becomes incensed and irate, insulted that the characters would suggest desecrating the closest thing they have to a graveyard.

## D4. Dredger Prison

This room adjacent to the Dredger Camp is hewn stone. Metal bars rise from the floor to the ceiling, embedded through the stone, rooting them in place. The construction of the room, the exactness of the bars themselves, and the presence of a metal door looks comically out of place here in the Ditches.

The Dredgers themselves don't know who carved this room out, or where they acquired the metal to construct the bars and door. In times past, the Dredgers used this as confinement for those succumbed to the panic of being trapped in the Ditches.

This room has magical effects placed on it, unbeknownst to the characters. The cell doors, once shut, can only be opened from the outside. A character who succeeds on a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check can escape a closed cell. Additionally, anything said in this room is overheard by the person closest to it in the Dredger Camp. Some now-forgotten spell permits this to happen.

If the characters are brought to the camp as allies, they are offered either a bunk or a cell, with the explicit warning to not let the door shut under any circumstance, lest they become trapped.

## Doyenta's Studies

If a cell is dismantled, the holes in the floor reveal colorful tile underneath. The floor can be broken up and removed, revealing a large mosaic depicting people toiling and working fields in a bright and airy realm. A DC 12 Intelligence (History) check reveals this as early Ostoyan art, replete with two suns. This discovery is of great interest to Doyenta, the newest member of the Dredgers and an avid, wide-eyed scholar.

If this mosaic is shown to her, an awed Doyenta remarks upon as being the first instance she's seen of a proto-Ostoyan culture using mosaic art. If Doyenta hasn't yet had her Scholarly Interest need met (see appendix B), showing this mosaic to her sets her at ease and solidifies her friendship with the characters.

## D5. Dredger Camp

If the characters are brought to the Dredger Camp on friendly terms the first time they enter, read or paraphrase the following:

A low conversation comes to a stop as Yejin navigates you past a barricade, the creaking of rotted wood alerting those beyond to your presence. Stepping inside, you find a small, secluded blip of civilization.

Four dirty, ragged people sit huddled around a fire, and turn to you as you enter the cavern.

"Dredgers, meet our newest members," Yejin declares, indicating you with a sweeping gesture. The rest of the Dredgers smile weakly, and give you a weak hellos. A half-elf with a wrinkled complexion, silver whiskers, and a shaved head stands to greet you.

"My name is Abradus," he says. "You've had the unfortunate luck to wind up stuck here with the rest of us. But! You've found a good company here, beds softer than stone, and fire warmer than the grave, hah! I welcome you, and you should find places in beds and near our fire, so long as you contribute to the cause."

"I don't see Lemnor with us," Yejin says, a hint of panic in his voice. "Is she—?"

"Our fine hunter rests in her bunk," Abradus replies calmly. "You know how her need for exploration can take its toll. But not to worry, our fine apothecary has seen to her wounds, and she will be fine in a day or so." The half-elf turns to you again, and says, "A Dredger's life span is somewhat short in this hellish place. Please, feel free to join us and find what solace in company you can, as we try our best to endure."

Yejin, leaving you with the four other occupants of the campsite.



## What Abradus Knows

Abradus can answer the following questions. He speaks with a weary theatricality, as memories of his life as a performer are the only thing that gives him joy in this wretched place:

**What are the Dredgers?** "Why, the Dredgers are us. Those who have died and wound up in this place, not quite fully passed on, not truly living either."

**What is this place?** "We call this place the Ditches. A fitting name, I believe, what with things falling into it, or being only slightly cleaner than a street gutter. This, my friend, is one of the few places you could call truly safe, and even then, it is only made safe by our vigilance."

**What else lives here?** "Naught but foul undead. I don't know why folk like you and I tumbled into this place with our lives and wits, but let us simply say that most of our neighbors are not quite so canny. Nor do they have our compunctions against the consumption of humanoid flesh."

**How dangerous are the undead here?** "The undead here have strange and cruel magic about them. Keep your wits about you; even the slightest scratch from the mud zombies here can be fatal, if you are unprepared."

**What do the Dredgers do?** "Survive, primarily. We scavenge what food we can, purify what drink we can, try and find a way to escape and see the sky again."

**Is there a way out of here?** Abradus heaves a heavy sigh before speaking. "Every one of us here knows about the Ditch-Gate. Big, circular thing with runic carvings all over it. Our newest member—before you lot, of course!—is dying to see it. But...don't try. We've..." Abradus sighs again. "We've lost too many people trying to reach it. The thing that guards it, a mess of bodies and muck, is too powerful for any of us in our current state."

**What do you do here?** "Aside from raise your spirits with my presence? Hah! I am our humble smith. We managed to create a small forge and anvil some weeks past, and it has aided us greatly for me to don the trade of metal and soot. Should you need repairs, or a new blade, do not hesitate to call upon me."

**What do the others do?** "Coragnir is our resident arcanist, and should any of you practice the art of wizardry, she may soon become your fast friend. Doyenta is a historian, a practiced ruins delver, and one of our best defenders here at camp. Secher here is our wonderful doctor and apothecary, who sees to our pain in our most needed times of recovery, and grows our small herb garden."

ABRADUS



**What should we do?** "Rest, for now. You've had a busy day. After that...well, we're all a family here. We all contribute to the group to survive. I'll talk with the others and see if we can find a good use for you. Until then...stay safe, explore if you get restless, but never travel alone. We don't just wander off in the tunnels to die here. Not now, not ever."

**What's the wall of names in the pit?** "It's something Yejin started when he first began here, years ago. They're the names of all the people he has seen die in this gods-forgotten place. I think he's accepted we'll all have our names on that list eventually. Even him."

## Exploring the Dredger Camp

A stark contrast to the mud and bones of previous chambers, this small encampment provides a level of comfort and civility. A small forge with tools lying upon a makeshift anvil stands in one corner. A crate with gardening tools, small carved-out wall hollows, and a stretch of dug-up stone and dirt all make up a small herb garden. The entrances here are partially obscured by barricades, though they do not appear to be the strongest of materials or build. The two nonbarricaded entryways in this chamber lead to a small prison (area D4) and the Dredger bunks (area D5a).

## Meeting the Dredgers

Each of the Dredgers' game statistics, and more detailed information about their personalities and motivations, are presented in appendix B of this episode.

**Abradus Brelog.** This middle-aged actor (NG male half-elf) is the resident smith for the Dredgers. He has a small forge, which enables him to fabricate small metal items and maintain arms and armor.

**Coragnir Xarnaar.** This sorcerer (CN female blue dragonborn) is the Dredgers' arcane expert, overjoyed at the challenge to try and control the undead here with her necromantic abilities.

**Doyenta Vimt.** This delver of ruins (CG female human) is excited at the chance to learn more about the people of long ago, and is certain she'll find pieces of history in the Ditches that have long since faded from the world.

**Yejin Finn.** This tinkerer (NG male gnome) is the Dredgers' trapsmith and defense expert, always mindful of how to better reinforce their position, and how to better improve their defenses against the constant threats attempting to dwindle their numbers.

**Lemnor Tolt.** This hunter (N female laneshi) spends much of her time alone, scouring for food and stalking the giant rats that roam the Ditches.

**Secher.** This herbalist (LN agender wechselkind) is the Dredgers' gardener and medic, somehow growing a small stockpile of medicinal herbs in this lightless realm. They busy themselves by expanding their garden.

## Sustaining the Living

No force can fight on an empty stomach, and the Dredgers are no different. Each day, each member the Dredgers (except for Secher; see appendix B) must consume food and drink. They rely on hunting rats and consuming the necrotic flesh of the undead for survival. Undead flesh is only eaten as a last resort; any living humanoid that eats rotten food is filled, but takes 3 (1d6) poison damage and must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, they are poisoned for 1 hour. If the save fails by 5 or more, they are poisoned for the next 24 hours instead.

The Dredgers rely on Lemnor to do the bulk of their hunting. It's a solitary task, and she appreciates her solitude.

When the characters meet the Dredgers, they have only a few days' supply of food remaining. They begin with 15 days' worth of fresh food and 7 days of rotten food in their stores.

**Daily Living.** At the end of each day, each living creature consumes one day's worth of food. If all the Dredgers are alive, they consume five days' worth of food per day. The characters must also consume food each day. If they have no rations, the Dredgers invite them to share in their supplies, in the hopes that they will help them find food.

**Fresh Supplies.** At the start of each day, Lemnor the hunter brings back 8 days' worth of fresh food. If she is assisted, the additional hunter can make a Wisdom (Survival) check, and their result determines how much additional food they provide, as described on the Hunting in the Ditches table. Thankfully, the need for water is handled by Secher's ability to cast the *create or destroy water* spell.

## HUNTING IN THE DITCHES

DC	Food Supply
5	5 days of fresh food and 5 days of rotten food
10	9 days of fresh food and 4 days of rotten food
15	14 days of fresh food and 6 days of rotten food
20+	20 days of fresh food

## Morale and Unmet Needs

Surviving in the Ditches is difficult. Beyond lurking undead and lack of food, the Ditches imposes a wearying effect upon the soul, slowly bringing out the worst in a person. Many Dredgers have begun to succumb to their worst thoughts and fears, as is desired by the Ditches. Despite that, the Dredgers are integral to the characters' survival in the Ditches.

**Lowly States.** Each Dredger has unmet needs or desires, and each one will, whether explicitly or implicitly, make known something they desire. Whether it is Abradus' need for more materials, Secher's need for assistance, or Lemnor's lost companion Coral (see each Dredger's "Unmet Needs" section in appendix B).

While their personal needs are unmet, a Dredger's morale is low, as the pressure of the Ditches weighs constantly and relentlessly on them from day to day, potentially affecting how they treat Gustav (see area D8) or how they treat the characters (see area D13).

## Injury and Death

When a member of the Dredgers is injured, upon returning back to the camp, they stay on bedrest until fully healed. For every 5 points of damage sustained, they must spend one day in bed. That Dredger's tasks are paused while they recover.

Should a Dredger die, the remaining Dredgers insist on recovering the body in order to burn and bury it properly. Yejin writes the fallen Dredger's name on the wall in area D2, and Abradus carefully places their weapon, if any, in the pit, stating that they'll be able to continue to defend the Dredgers. For each Dredger death, including a character's, the next task each Dredger does takes twice as long.

## Dredgers as Companions

When the party ventures out into the Ditches, they can request help from the Dredgers themselves by asking one of their number to join them. Not all Dredgers are willing to leave the campsite, and some have conditions in order for them to be willing to leave the campsite with the party, or consequences for doing so. For easy reference, consult the Dredger Adventuring Companion table to know which of the Dredgers can be asked to adventure with the party.

## DREDGER ADVENTURING COMPANION

DREDGER	WILL THEY LEAVE CAMP?
Abradus	Yes, but all smithing duties or base improvements are halted (see appendix B).
Coragnir	Yes
Doyenta	Yes, but only once unmet needs are resolved.
Yejin	No
Lemnor	Yes, but all hunting duties are halted; camp must rely on characters or food stores to eat for the day.
Secher	No

Yejin and Secher never leave unless forced to, with the former focusing on defense and laying new traps, and the latter tending to the herb garden so pivotal to the Dredgers' survival. While away, a Dredger halts any other tasks.

**Conditional Aid.** Additionally, a Dredger only leaves camp as long as four other Dredgers are in good health. The only exception to this is Lemnor, who is always eager to hunt. If all Dredgers have had their unmet needs resolved, the characters can request the assistance of two Dredgers simultaneously.

**As Allies.** A Dredger accompanying the party uses their game statistics found in appendix B. They roll their own initiative and aid the characters to the best of their ability. As the GM, use your judgement to determine how the Dredgers act if the characters take actions that aren't in the best interest of the other Dredgers; generally, NPCs with chaotic alignments are more likely to support breaking their group's creed, and NPCs with good alignments are more likely to do things that benefit the group as a whole.

**Aid during Downtime.** During downtime, when characters cannot get the assistance of any Dredger, as well as times when characters must rest, encourage them to spend this time with the Dredgers, forming closer connections with them and even assisting with tasks. Find detailed backgrounds on each Dredger and their unmet needs in appendix B. Learning these needs and figuring out how to help meet them is essential to the character-driven story of this episode.





MUD ZOMBIE

## Dredgers at Rest

Whenever the characters return to camp to take a long rest, they can also ask the Dredgers for aid while at rest. The two that can provide the most aid are Abradus and Yejin. Abradus is a capable, if self-taught, blacksmith, and Yejin is a canny maker of traps and snares. More information about how the Dredgers can help the characters while at camp is found in appendix B.

## Dredger Defenses

The Dredgers' camp may seem like a safe haven, but no place in the Ditches is truly safe from the undead that rise from the muck. Each night presents the risk of the Dredgers' barricades coming under attack by invading undead. Once per day, when most of the Dredgers are asleep, roll on the Undead Invaders table to determine what occurs.

### UNDEAD INVADERS

#### d6 RESULT

1-2	The night is suspiciously quiet. The next night, reroll results of 1 or 2 on this table.
3	Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 12 or higher wake to the distant sounds of howling, screaming, or moaning
4	1d3 zombies attack from area D9
5	1d2 mud zombies (appendix A) emerge from the ground
6	1d2 shadows slip past the barricades

**Wooden Barricades.** To combat undead incursions, the Dredgers have set up three wooden barricades, which can be opened or closed using an action. These barricades occupy by a space that is 5 feet wide and 10 feet long. While a barricade is open, creatures moving through must move at half speed or take 2 (1d4) slashing damage from its spikes protruding from it. Each barricade has an AC of 15 and 20 hit points, and is immune to poison and psychic damage. A creature that attacks a barricade while within 5 feet of it takes 2 (1d4) slashing damage.

Abradus can reinforce all three barricades over a long rest by spending material that the characters have brought him (see the "Salvage" sections throughout this episode). The barricades can be upgraded in the following ways:

- Increase a barricade's total hit points by 5 for each pound of material used. This can be done multiple times with no limit.
- Increase a barricade's AC by 1 for every 2 pounds of material used. This can be done up to five times per barricade.
- Increase the damage a barricade deals from 2 (1d4) to 3 (1d6) using 5 pounds of material. This upgrade can be repeated, increasing the damage from 3 (1d6) to 4 (1d8) with an additional 5 pounds of material.

**Yejin's Traps.** Yejin can craft one trap during a long rest, given the proper materials, and he takes the characters' input into account. Creating a trap requires 3 pounds of material from Abradus's stockpile. He can create the following types of traps:

- **Pike Hammer:** This trap affixes to a barricade and activates when it is hit with an attack, causing several pike heads to swing outward from the barricade. Each creature within 5 feet of the barricade must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage, or half as much damage on a successful save.
- **Barbed Snare:** This trap must be set in a 10-foot by 10-foot space adjacent to a barricade. As an action, a creature within 5 feet of the barricade can pull a lever to activate it. Each creature within the area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 (1d4) slashing damage and be grappled by a mesh of spikes and wire. A creature grappled this way can attempt to escape the mesh by making a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check as an action. On a failure, it takes 2 (1d4) points of slashing damage.
- **Crystal Sunspark:** This trap must be manually activated with a triggering mechanism that contains a luminescent crystal placed in a 5-foot space. When activated as an action, the crystal explodes in a blast of radiant light. All undead creatures in the camp within 30 feet of the blast must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or take 11 (2d10) radiant damage. The trap then sheds bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light in a 15-foot radius for 1d4 rounds.

## D5a. Dredger Bunks

This room appears newer than the previous chamber, with tool marks along the walls, floor, and ceiling. This room is smaller than the main camp, with twelve large alcoves and an equal number of smaller alcoves carved into the walls; each larger one is of



DOYENTA

a size suitable for a Medium or smaller creature to climb in and rest, with a smaller one beneath where sparse belongings can be stored. Each alcove contains straw and blankets, and each character can claim an unoccupied alcove for their own.

If this is the first time the characters enter this chamber, read the following:

Yejin kneels at an alcove where a laneshi woman lies. He holds her hand in two of his, whispering solemnly to her. They share a quiet laugh as the laneshi woman falls to slumber, and Yejin smiles as he climbs into his own alcove to rest.

The first day the characters come here, they find Lemnor Tolt, the Dredgers' hunter, resting here and recovering from a wound dealt to her by a mud zombie while tracking down food for the day.

Lemnor greets the characters with a wheezing hello, holding her hand tight to her side. She greets the characters and asks them if they're new arrivals, how they entered, and if they saw her faithful wolf companion, Coral, on the way in. Her character traits are described in appendix B.

To conclude their conversation, she discourages the characters from going out into the Ditches on their own. She and several other Dredgers are settling in to rest, while others are sitting watch. Since there's no day or night in the Ditches, they rest when they're tired, and stand watch while others are resting. If the characters insist on exploring, she scowls and grumbles, "Suit yourself." Deeper areas of the Ditches are described in chapter 3 of this episode.

## Enemy at the Gates

After the characters complete their first long rest in the Dredgers' camp, they are awakened by the scholar Doyenta. "New blood," she whispers, "We're gathering. Abradus wants us to talk."

## Meeting of the Minds

All of the Dredgers are gathered around the fire in the center of their camp. Abradus is leading some light discussion as he waits for all of their number—including the characters—to assemble. When at least one of the characters arrives, the aged half-elf greets them with a deep, theatrical bow. A character that succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check during this meeting can tell that all of the Dredgers, especially Abradus, have been reinvigorated by the characters' arrival.

Read or paraphrase the following:

"My new arrivals!" Abradus says. "We have much to talk about. You've doubled our number, give or take. Given we're all in this together, I have a proposal for you."

"First, though," interrupts a creature that can only be described as a human-sized wooden doll, "We'd like to learn a thing or two about you. Where you're from. How you got here. How skilled you are with a blade, or any other applicable skills to keeping us all alive. We must all pull our weight."

Abradus tries to keep Secher, the blunt and suspicious weschelkind, from offending anyone, but his attempts are half-hearted. He's just as curious as all the other Dredgers as to the nature of the characters. This is an opportunity for the characters to introduce themselves, and share something about their characters—not just to the NPC Dredgers, but to the other players, as well.

## Commotion Ensues

Once the characters have introduced themselves, Lemnor cuts in eagerly.

"Then you're all skilled warriors!" she exclaims. "The others don't like to talk about it, but we know that there's the only way out of here: the Ditch-Gate! You could help us reach it."

Abradus tries to cut in and dissuade Lemnor from saying any more, but the mere mention of the Gates of the Sun causes the entire group of Dredgers to start talking at once. The conversation dissolves into chaos. The last thing you can hear is Abradus saying, "People died the last time we tried; even if we have the people, we don't have enough skill or supplies for another attempt!"

It's up to the characters to decide how they want to proceed next as the Dredgers argue. A character that wants to tame the conversation and get everyone talking peacefully again must make a successful DC 17 Charisma (Intimidation) check to cut across the noise; otherwise, the commotion continues unabated, and the heated Dredgers ignore them. If the characters end the commotion, they can get a straight answer from Abradus and Doyenta about the way out of the Ditches (see "A Plan to Escape," later in this chapter).

## Identifying Quests

Each one of the Dredgers has an unmet need described fully in appendix B of this episode. Meeting this need will help steel each Dredger's resolve. Abradus will only permit a full attack on the Ditch-Gate once all of the Dredgers have had their unmet needs satisfied—only then does he deem the group to be at full fighting force. This is a challenging task to accomplish; in a dark fantasy adventure, the characters will find it simpler to use the resources at their disposal themselves than to make sure everyone is happy.

## Abradus's Need

If the characters approach Abradus amidst the commotion, read or paraphrase the following:

Abradus looks up at you with a weary smile and says, "Too much time down here wears upon anyone's spirit. Don't think poorly of them... they all want what's best for us. I want to get out of here as much as the rest of us, but the creature at the gates is far too dangerous. We all need to prepare before we make the attempt. Here, if you'll hear me out, I have a request for you. I'm sure the others have things that they'd like your help with, as well."

Abradus is an actor at heart, but a smith by necessity. He's abandoned his former life and fallen into his new role as the Dredgers' cautious, stockpiling leader. He has grand ambitions of crafting weapons great enough to destroy the monster that lurks before the Ditch-Gate. He asks that the characters scavenge scrap metal and other usable material from around the Ditches. Once he has a full thirty pounds of scrap metal in his stockpile, his need is met. (See appendix B for more information.)

## Coragnir's Need

Coragnir looks up at you sullenly, her blue scales glinting in the firelight. "This is so trivial," she growls. "We have the manpower to attack, so we oughtn't to be wasting time arguing when we could be doing field research and making preparations. Speaking of which, legend has it that the monster before the gates is a gigantic undead monster—I'd like to learn about it. A tissue sample should be enough."

Coragnir longs for knowledge, but knows that she is far too frail to do field research unprotected. She knows that the Ditches has many different types of undead, and that the monster that guards the Ditch-Gate is the mightiest of them all. She'd like the characters to provoke it, gather a tissue sample, and then escape with the sample before it annihilates them. (See appendix B for more information.)

## Doyenta's Need

If the characters approach Doyenta amidst the commotion, read or paraphrase the following:

Doyenta groans and steps away from the conversation. When faced with you, she blanches and looks down at her feet. "They don't understand," she mutters. "I want to escape, but...there's so much left to learn. If we leave, they'll never turn back."

Doyenta believes that a treasure trove of knowledge about a lost civilization of powerful necromancers that predated the Ostoyan Empire lies beyond the Ditch-Gate. She wants to learn about the Necropolis for herself more than anything in the world, but she is conflicted. The Ditches is a horrible place, but it's still filled with invaluable knowledge buried beneath the muck. She wants the characters to bring her as many relics of this old civilization as they can—anything they can find, be it a tool, rubbings of the etchings on an ancient edifice, particularly interesting art pieces. She isn't picky.

CORAGNIR





#### LEMNOR AND CORAL



Doyenta doesn't have a reward for the characters, but helping satisfy her need helps her open up, and she becomes willing to accompany them out into the Ditches to help explore. (See appendix B for more information.)

### Lemnor's Need

Lemnor sighs and folds her arms. "The attack needs to happen," she says to you as you approach. "Abradus might be right, though. There's a lot left to do, even with extra hands. And...I know my heart wouldn't be in it if I couldn't find Coral. Or whatever's left of her."

Coral is Lemnor's faithful wolf companion. When Lemnor and Coral died, the spark of sunlight within her brought her wolf with her through some mysterious aspect of Aurelia's grace. Early in their time in the Ditches, however, Lemnor and Coral were separated. Lemnor spends any free minute she's not hunting or recovering from the hunt searching for Coral, or at least making plans to find her. Even though the other Dredgers believe her wolf is long dead, they don't have the heart to ask her to abandon hope.

The truth is, however, that Coral is alive. If she's returned to Lemnor's side, the two of them become a powerful fighting team. (See appendix B for more information about how to find Coral.)

### Secher's Need

Secher looks at you and taps their wooden fingertips together. "This arguing wastes time. And while it is far from our most precious resource, we cannot grow complacent. Let us make better use of the time that has been allotted to us."

Secher feels no hope for the future, only driving urge to maintain what already exists. If doing so buys them enough time to escape, so be it. If not, they did their very best. In order to maintain their safety, Secher needs new herbs for their garden. The hardest part of maintaining it is the lack of sunlight down here; the blueish crystals that glow in the darkness provide natural light that lets plants grow, but only in stunted, wretched forms.

Secher longs to find a plant that will grow strong and hardy down here, and asks the characters to bring them one if they find one in their exploration of the Ditches. (See appendix B for more information.)

### Yejin's Need

Yejin glances sidelong at you and gives you a wry smile. "I can't tell what's going on in that head of yours, but I bet you're just as irritated at all this yelling as most everyone else. Tough shake. Hey, as long as we're talking, you wouldn't happen to be thinking of going out into the Ditches to do some recon, would you? I've got something to ask of you if you, if you are."

Yejin is an understated beacon of hope for the Dredgers, even when they are at their most despondent. Despite this, he's also the most tactical (some might say paranoid) of the lot, and has devoted his second lease on life to mastering traps to keep the undead at bay. He's left a variety of traps scattered about the Ditches, but he's worried about the new arrivals accidentally setting them off.

Yejin wants the characters to find his various traps, disarm them, and bring them back to him in the camp. Having these traps on hand will hopefully help them prepare for the final battle at the Ditch-Gate, as well. (See appendix B for more information).

## A Plan to Escape

Once the characters have spoken to all of the arguing Dredgers, or some other time after they've returned from exploring the Ditches, the argument cools off. They can talk with everyone about the nature of the nascent escape plan. The bottom line is this: Abradus won't allow the Dredgers to assault the Gates of the Sun as a group until he feels secure in their ability to emerge victorious.

## Knowledge of the Gate

If the characters manage to calm the arguing Dredgers, they may wish to ask them what they know about the way out of the Ditches. Abradus has the most practical information about the gate, Doyenta has a wealth of scholarly information about the fabled Gates of the Sun, and the other Dredgers know scattered bits of trivia and rumor that they've learned over the course of their time in the Ditches.

**What is the Ditch-Gate?** Abradus answers this question. "It's a massive stone aperture, closed tight by a rune-inscribed gate. It's the only way out of here, as far as we know."

**What's beyond the gate?** Doyenta mumbles this response. "Well, I believe the great City Below is beyond. A necropolis, filled with powerful necromancers. It's where the vampires came from...the ones in Nov Ostoya." Secher follows up by saying, "But we must remember that such a statement is only speculation. We have never seen beyond it."

**What's guarding the gate?** Coragnir's dour face lights up. "A horrific undead monstrosity. I've never seen it, but past Dredgers called it a crawling grave. So many bodies...all stuck together with mud and muck and roots. It sounds absolutely horrific."



**SECHER**

**Why hasn't the monster killed you?** Lemnor answers this question. "It's happy to sit by the gate. It never wanders. I've never seen it while hunting. It doesn't even pursue when you're running, unless you take pot shots. It just...goes back." Yejin adds, "All the barricades in the path leading up to it are honestly more for us than for it. Don't go that way if you want to live, and all that."

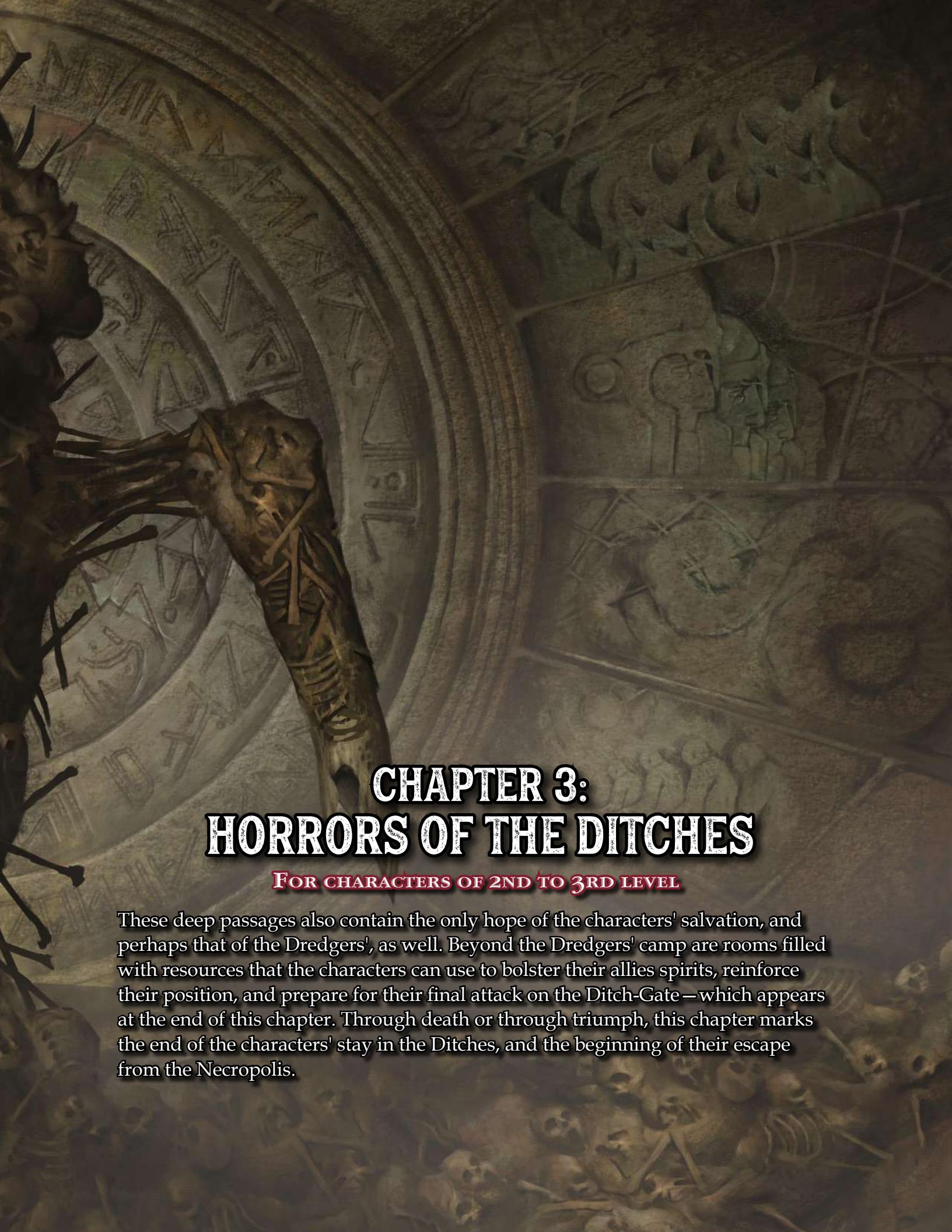
## Defying Abradus

If the characters rankle at Abradus's caution, they could try and convince individual Dredgers to go against Abradus's judgment and storm the Ditch-Gate with them. A character must make a successful DC 17 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check to convince them to defy Abradus. This check has advantage if the Dredger has a chaotic alignment, and disadvantage if they have a lawful alignment (see their game statistics in appendix B).

## Venturing Deeper

Once the characters have had their fill of talking with the Dredgers, the deeper passages of the Ditches call to them.





## **CHAPTER 3: HORRORS OF THE DITCHES**

**FOR CHARACTERS OF 2ND TO 3RD LEVEL**

These deep passages also contain the only hope of the characters' salvation, and perhaps that of the Dredgers', as well. Beyond the Dredgers' camp are rooms filled with resources that the characters can use to bolster their allies' spirits, reinforce their position, and prepare for their final attack on the Ditch-Gate—which appears at the end of this chapter. Through death or through triumph, this chapter marks the end of the characters' stay in the Ditches, and the beginning of their escape from the Necropolis.



## Deeper Areas of the Ditches

The areas in this part of the adventure are keyed to the map of the Ditches

### D6. Root Cavern

The Ditches is a macabre place of dirt, darkness, and undeath. This place, however, seems like it may have once been different. Massive roots wind their way through the floor and ceiling, looping in and out through the barriers of the chamber. The ground is shrouded with vegetation, though it grows barren and brown. Hatchet marks mar some of the roots where the Dredgers have hacked away firewood.

This room once served as a place for the Dredgers of old to gather seeds and vegetation to feed their number. But those seeds shriveled long ago, and new crops do not grow—just one more thing the

Ditches has taken from those who try and outlast their tenure here.

Characters who search through the dirt can make a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check to find a rock hammer and a trowel buried in the dirt, long discarded but useful.

Lurking here in the cavern are two **shadows** who have taken this cavern as their abode. They make use of the shadows and darkness to ambush the characters, intent on creating a third shadow to join their duo. If a Dredger accompanies the characters, they squint when looking at the shadows, and mutter to themselves: “Irvi?”

**Irvi?** If asked about the name they muttered, the Dredger sheepishly looks away and mumbles, “It looked like Irvi’s face. He was...one of us. It doesn’t matter.” The Dredger remains sullen for the next hour, not speaking unless spoken to first.

**Yejin’s Tinkerings.** A character can make a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check to find the wooden latticework Yejin seeks (see his unmet need in appendix B), partially hidden in the dirt, as well as the razor blades and wire for the trap. A character who fails this check by 5 or more takes 3 (1d6) slashing damage from the razors.

### D7. Root Lair

Dampness seeps into the earth and walls here, each step like walking across a forest floor. The roots grow thick as they intertwine through the ceiling and walls. The room is illuminated by a twisted knot of roots near the western wall, which sheds entrancing blue light, pulsing at intervals. At the center of this room lies a small planting of root vegetables.

In this area, four **violet fungi** loom over a **mud zombie** (see appendix A). The violet fungi have attached themselves to the root-covered ceiling, becoming indistinguishable from their perches. The vegetables were Secher’s attempt at a garden, but the Dredger fled after the fungi made their home there. If a character approaches the vegetables, the mud zombie rises slowly and the violet fungi drop from above. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or higher notice the violet fungi as they fall and move out of the way in time.

On initiative count 20 of each turn of combat, the root gnarl on the western wall pulses, emitting soft waves of light. Each time it does so, the fungi and the mud zombie regain 1d4 hit points each, and the vegetables in the ground grow slightly larger.



D8.

D7.

The root gnarl has an AC of 12 and 15 hit points, and is immune to poison and psychic damage. If the root gnarl is destroyed, the violet fungi instantly die. If a violet fungus dies while the root gnarl is active, the fungus rises at the end of its next turn with 1 hit point. If all the violet fungi are dead at the same time, the root gnarl fades in light and is destroyed.

**Secher's Grove.** Bringing back the vegetables, pleases Secher. They mention that they planted these themselves, but couldn't get to them after the fungi claimed the garden. Unfortunately, this isn't an unknown plant to satisfy Secher's unmet need (see appendix B), but they do count as 12 days of fresh food and, with Secher's magic, the seeds will sprout rapidly, providing 3 days' worth of fresh food every day.

**Abradus' Forge.** If the root gnarl is reduced to 0 hit points, it unfurls and releases an 8-pound lump of twisted iron. A DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check determines it was meant as some sort of grand holy icon, but the roots of the plant have crushed and warped it beyond recognition.

## D8. Ancient Edifice

The pathway of earth and stone leads to an unholy and unnerving sight. Through a broken section of wall, you can easily step down into a long chamber with walls of jet-black stone. Not a square inch is not intricately carved with seemingly endless numbers of patterns and inscriptions, giving the shadows of the room more places to dwell. There stand four pillars in this room, clean faced and impossibly smooth, rising up 10 feet high. Atop each rests a ball of teal flame, illuminating the chamber, causing resting shadows to dance. The floor itself is carved as well, providing ample and easy footing, though your steps fall silently upon it.

The far wall holds a massive window with metal patterns across it. A clever observer deduces that it was once a stained-glass window, but without extensive study, it is impossible to tell what it was supposed to depict. Beneath that broken window, however, is an altar, upon which lies a gold knife and a skull.



The skull itself has its canine teeth replaced with rubies, and there is gold lacework all around its exterior, poured or placed into carved grooves. If picked up and inspected, its eyes alight with flame, and it looks sternly at its holder. Its jaw creaks open, and speaks in a feminine voice: "Oh, wow! Skin! That's new! Are you here for the challenge?"

Provided the character neither throws or drops the skull, it is overjoyed to talk to the group, and it can answer the following questions:

**Who are you?** "I'm Gustav! That's what they called me, anyway! Listen, between you and me? And you, and you, and you ... I don't know! But someone came here a few years ago and asked if my name was Gustav, and well, I didn't remember my name, so now I'm Gustav."

**Who's they?** "Oh, the other people. In the camp!"

They found me and...well, left me alone. Not that I blame them, I'm a pretty sorry sight."

**What are you doing here?** "Lying around. What are you doing here?"

**Why is your skull here?** "Pretty sure I was murdered. Whoops! Can't remember much about it, that was ages and ages ago."

**You mentioned a challenge?** "The challenge! It was made to test people, to see if they were worthy of the prize inside the altar. I think it's a sword! Some folks ages ago made me the key to starting it, so if you want to try and get whatever is in there, just let me know. Just fair warning, I think it'll kill you. Or they will. I'm not certain what all happens, but I do know it involves violence."

**What kind of folks?** "Oh, they were real doom and gloom. Black robes, skull facepaint, big shiny gold sun symbols. Ages ago, though. Don't remember much else about them. Or that time all those years ago, for that matter."

**What kind of violence? How big of a threat is this challenge?** "Somewhere between stubbing your toe and getting beheaded. Ha! Damned if I know!"

Should the characters give Gustav the confirmation to start the challenge of the room, the skull pipes in: "Hey, when you're done, and if you're alive, can you take me out of here? This challenge thing is the only reason I'm here, so when it's done...well, I just want to leave! I don't want to be bored if I'm going to live forever."

If asked about her living forever, Gustav replies, "I don't recall saying that."

## Beginning the Ritual

As Gustav initiates the ritual, her eye-sockets turn a sickly pale green for a moment, causing the fire upon the pillars to turn that same color.

The pillars themselves melt away, and as the sickly green fire descends, it gains bulbous mass, and lands on the ground. With a squelch, a single skull pushes out of each newly formed ectoplasmic blobs, and with it the blob turns its mass to purpose, and six ectoplasmic limbs form. Instead of pillars now stand four **hermit skulls** (see appendix A).

While the hermit skulls pose their own threat, it is the room itself that amplifies their danger. Its carvings and symbols are conductive to necrotic energy, and as such, the attacks and presence of the hermit skulls become dire threats. Whenever a creature takes necrotic damage, it takes 1 extra damage. A creature adjacent to another creature who takes necrotic damage also takes 1 necrotic damage.

When the last hermit skull is slain, the altar's lid cracks, allowing access to what lies inside: a +1 longsword adorned with a golden sun sigil that matches the one seen on the door of the Penumbral Vestibule, as well as 50 gp. These gold coins bear the same symbol on their tails side, and the head of an unknown monarch on the other.

## The Dredger Known as Gustav

Bringing Gustav back to the Dredger Camp is met with split and argumentative reactions, as many of the Dredgers are already familiar with the skull, and the common conception is that Gustav is working with the rampant undead throughout the Ditches. Convincing them that Gustav is harmless requires a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. This DC is lowered by 1 for each Dredger that has had their unmet needs resolved.

If the Dredgers are not convinced of Gustav's harmlessness, they bar her continued presence in the camp, as well as the characters if they do not agree. But should the skull be permitted entry, she proves to be a boon to the work of the Dredgers, namely that of Doyenta and Coragnir—sharing details of the Ancient Edifice to Doyenta, and detailed descriptions of the monster that guards the Ditch-Gate to Coragnir ("I was there when they made the nasty thing!" Gustav explains cheerily.). For Coragnir, this satisfies her need instead of requiring a flesh sample (see appendix B).

For Abradus, Gustav knows a surprising amount about blacksmithing, and assists them in their work with praise and easy chatter. If Gustav works with Abradus for the entirety of the creation of an item, its overall crafting time is reduced by one day.

When Gustav is not actively assisting someone, she prefers to spend time with Coragnir, discussing undeath and the nature of necromancy. If Coragnir's unmet need is resolved, she refers to Gustav as her friend.

**Doyenta's Studies.** Both a drawing of the glassless window's iron frames and an etching of the patterns on either the wall or the floor count toward Doyenta's Studies. The longsword counts as a unique tool, as does Gustav herself.

**Abradus' Forge.** The sword has some heft to it, while the enchantments in the blade make it particularly resilient. It can be given to Abradus to melt down and contributes the equivalent of 10 pounds of materials, despite its light construction.

**Yejin's Tinkerings.** Easily spotted, just below the opening in the wall to enter the room, lies the plate, spring, and levers of a bear trap. It's already been disarmed, and the characters may have walked right over it without noticing it. (See appendix B for more information on solving Yejin's unmet needs.)

## D9. Twisting Tunnels

As you descend these tunnels, you find the air growing thicker, cloying against your skin. It doesn't provide heat or warmth, or the promise of water, but still clings to your skin and garments all the same. The smell cannot decide whether it is stale with decay or sweet with rot, cannot choose between the dryness of stone or the familiarity of graven earth.

The anxiety of the tunnel attempts to find purchase in you as you descend deeper into the grabbing, choking earth of the Ditches. After what seems like hours, you find yourselves in a chamber no bigger than the Dredgers' camp, illuminated from above by a bright yellow light. Two passages lead deeper into the Ditches.

The light here is actually two **will-o'-wisps**, waiting for any living creature to pass by. They have sated themselves for decades with rats, but with the arrival of such large individuals all at once, with such heavy repositories of life, neither can resist. Both activate their invisibility in hopes of catching their prey unaware, and initiate combat with a surprise shock. Should these will-o'-wisps die, the cavern returns to dim light.

If the characters return here again after defeating the will-o'-wisps, it is filled with 2d4 **giant rats**. More rats appear every 24 hours.



D11.

D11a.

D10a.

D10.

D9.

D5a.

## D10. Great Chasm

The tunnel finally releases its grip on you as you step onto a cliff's edge. The ceiling overhead is somewhere far and above and out of sight, the walls chasing it up to an unknown height.

The dim light continues downward into a chasm, and here and there gleam spots of illumination from glowing fungus that provide brief spots of vision into the depths below, but does nothing to help grasp the grand depths of this chasm.

Tangles of massive roots form haphazard, disconnected bridges, starting 20 feet below the cliff's edge, forming connecting and overlapping networks. Upon many, you see lumbering figures of skeletons, zombies, and worse.

Most concerningly, something shifts far, far below—a roiling red and slowly pulsing light, moving across the floor of the chamber. Distant, guttural laughter echoes throughout the cavern from an untraceable source.

The chasm is 40 feet deep. The walls on either side of it, however, are mercifully sloped, and a character who falls from the edge takes only 7 (2d6) points of bludgeoning damage from the fall.

### Crossing the Gap

Figuring a way across the chasm presents its own unique challenge, but if a Dredger accompanies the party, they point out two possible paths: the handholds and footpath to the north, or the stone bridge to the south.

If the characters decide to use the handholds and footpath, each character attempting to move across must make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to do so successfully. If a character fails their check, they make no progress; if they fail by 5 or more, they lose their grip and fall. A creature within 5 feet of them can attempt to grab them, but must make the same ability check with disadvantage. On a failure, both characters fall into the chasm.

If the characters decide to use the bridge of roots, they are ambushed by 4 **violet fungi** and 2 **skeletons** that emerge from within the tangle of roots.

## Lurker in the Chasm

The soft, earthen floor of the chasm is littered with debris, innumerable bones, and piles of discarded equipment. Swords, armor, and other gear lie strewn about, some clearly decades old. A Dredger that winds up down here is sure to remark on the sheer amount of equipment, but if Abradus falls, he mentions specific names, as he recognizes some of the weapons and gear he once worked on. A character who makes a DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check realizes many corpses have crushed bones or equipment, and that the fall wouldn't have been enough to kill them.

The characters' arrival soon attracts the attention of the chasm's guardian: an **ogre zombie**, wearing a large cloak that partially obscures a sword embedded in its chest that sheds light as a torch. The light appears in the darkness, bobbing closer as if from a lantern carried aloft. But the hulking silhouette of the rotting brute soon materializes out of the darkness.

The ogre zombie wears a cloak of protection, and the blade embedded in its chest is a +1 *shortsword* that sheds light identical to that of a torch. The sword's pommel bears a sun sigil identical to that on the door of the Penumbral Vestibule.

If time is taken to recover the equipment and corpses of previous Dredgers down here from the chasm, it counts as one point toward meeting the needs of Yejin and Doyenta, as seeing people once part of the history of their small group finally put to rest gives them some measure of closure and peace.

## Secher's Grove

The bioluminescent fungus that grows within the root bridge is a splendid sample of a plant that flourishes here in the Ditches, and satisfies Secher's unmet need (see appendix B).

## Salvage

Between armor and weapons, there are 18 pounds of workable metal here for Abradus.

## Doyenta's Studies

The armor and weapons here are older than anything resembling modern designs, their aesthetics and patterns long since made obsolete. Among all equipment, there are two distinct pattern styles Doyenta can study.

## D10a. Other Side of the Chasm

The opposite side of the cavern has much of the same view, but none of the cloying feeling that chases the

cliff the characters had just come from. Here, instead, is a feeling of emptiness. A cold air wafts, sweeping across the cliff face. Almost like breathing, there are only brief respites in the breeze before it blows once more.

## D11. Forgotten Camp

A large scorch mark blisters the threshold into this circular room, where you are afforded a glimpse into the life of Dredgers long-gone: a table where meals were once served; a cooking pit, central in the room; alcoves for sleeping, a sturdy weapon rack, and a true blacksmith's forge

A preserving bin even rests against one wall, perhaps still holding salted and smoked food from when times were a spark easier, and more people lived to share a meal and drinks with.

Investigation into the room creates no small amount of noise, and thus brings the attention of the **crawling grave** (see appendix A) in the Imbuing Workshop (see area D11a, below). A tangled mess of mud and bones, its movement scratches against the stone floor. It makes no attempt at subterfuge or stealth as it launches itself at the nearest character, with the tactic of swallowing someone and running away with the creature inside them.

Investigations in the room, once uninterrupted, bring a levy of recovered objects to the Dredgers and characters: clothing of different styles and sizes, bags and backpacks, even supplies for arts and crafts ("We had time for those, then," Abradus might remark wistfully).

While worthless here, 890 gp and 340 sp can be found strewn about the room. More importantly, characters find nails and hammers, saws, and cloth for bandages. These supplies are always important to the Dredgers for their continued survival, but having them stockpiled like this is a great boon for them all.

## Yejin's Tinkerings

Careful investigation of the blast mark on the ground at the threshold of the room reveals a piece of mechanical ingenuity a few feet away, thoroughly covered in soot and mud. In searching through the belongings of old Dredgers, characters embroidered with an owl, which he gladly accepts as a memento of better times. This counts towards resolving his unmet need instead of a disarmed trap (see Yejin's unmet need in appendix B).



## D11a. Imbuing Workshop

Glass vials carefully arranged upon stands and risers; measuring instruments for powders and liquids; scales for weight and scales from reptiles; goggles used for seeing fine details in a work; carving instruments for leather, metal and, stone—all these, and more, now lie strewn across the ground, shattered and bent and broken. What was once a workshop for improving weapons and armor with magical reinforcements is now a shiny, glass-ridden monument to better times.

A comfortable armchair sits in the corner, intact but covered in glass and mud. Carved alcoves hold a few books, some for learning, some for pleasure. And all is covered in a layer of dust or mud.

**Creature.** A **crawling grave** (see appendix A) lurks here, but is easily drawn to area D11 by the sound of any investigation going on in that area.

**Treasure.** Investigating this once magical workshop gives little in the way of reward. Characters can make a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a success, characters find a metal tin, labeled with glyphs in a language you've never witnessed before with careful metal engraving. The powder inside allows someone to enchant a single weapon or suit of armor, making it either a +1 weapon or +1 armor, respectively.

Additionally, they discover beneath a broken stewpot a *handy haversack*.

## D12. Barricaded Hallway

Massive tree roots, hacked free and covered in spikes, fill this downhill slope. Ten massive posts of these in diagonal arrangements litter the slope, a painful deterrent for intruders. Off to the left, a small path continues on a level floor, rather than continuing down the slope. It seems that if a creature approached from the bottom of the slope, this side passage would be obscured.

### D12a. Watch Post

At the base of the sloped ramp is the Ditch-Gate, in all its otherworldly arcane glory. Standing in front of the door is a single, humanoid figure. From this chamber, one has a clear view of both the gate and the humanoid figure. A blanket lies on the floor, and a small footlocker carries a canteen full of stale water and a healthy supply of jerky. On the stone wall, however, are dried, brown splatter marks, almost serving as a warning to those who would come here.

**Creature.** Lurking in this room is a **mud zombie** (see appendix A) who slew the Dredger occupying this watch post long ago. When it splits, it focuses on keeping its bodies between the characters and the exit.



## D13. The Ditch-Gate

Thirty feet high and massive in depth, this circular stone gateway is magnificent to behold. The walls flanking it are carved with glyphs and images of stories of long-dead civilizations, and the gate itself is inscribed with magical writing not only not in use, but long deactivated. The seal the doors form curves as it goes from the top to the bottom. A soft breeze comes from the monolithic gate, carrying particles of golden light with it, which warms those nearby. Its surface is made of swirling markings, all of which coalesce to an empty circular slot that spans both halves of the door.

The ground is oozing muck and mud, lumpy and oozing with a macabre cornucopia of bones and dismembered flesh. Upon the characters' first time entering this room, read the following:

Warmth pervades this room, giving the first natural comfort in this realm that didn't have to be fought for or created by hand. The floor is a grotesque morass of mud and dismembered flesh. The rough stone walls here have markings carved into them, ranging from old glyptic writing to knife-etched graffiti.

It appears as though everyone who has come through here has attempted to leave some mark behind. The golden glow illuminates the entire room, with the only shadows produced by you and the crumbling stone of two pillars.

Once the party and all their allies are completely within the room, the guardian of the Ditch-Gate reveals itself. It is the room itself; living muck and limbs arising from the floor, mindlessly animated by profane magic. This guardian takes the form of three **crawling graves** (see appendix A). All three graves act on the same initiative.

These creatures have an additional action. Any grave that uses this action requires it to be recharged before any other grave can use it. However, roll to see if the action recharges on each grave's turn.

**Profane Transportation (Recharge 4-6; shared between all crawling graves).** A crawling grave sinks into the ground and reappears anywhere within area D13. Once it appears, it can make a single Bash attack.

The graves only reveal themselves if there are creatures in area D13 and no creatures in area D12. One forms in front of the gate, one at the exit to area D12, and one in the middle. They immediately attack, making stomach-turning wet noises as they move their immense bulk.

## Last Ditch Effort

The guardian of the gate is a mindless killing machine. The three separate crawling graves that make up its bulk never attack the same creature on the same turn. It is as if a wave of flesh and muck is trying to devour all of its attackers at once. If the graves have attacked all of the creatures in the room and still have actions remaining, they take the Dodge action instead.

It does not retreat, and it does not pursue fleeing characters out of area D13, unless they take pot shots at it from outside area D13. In this case, it rushes through the passages of the Ditches like a wave of gore, mutilating everything until it destroys its attacker. It then retreats to area D13.

**Multiple Offensives.** If the characters decide to retreat and heal their wounds, the guardian of the gate does so as well. It gains the same benefits of short and long rests as other characters, with one exception: it regains all hit points on a long rest, suffers no penalties to healing performed with its Hit Dice, and recovers all of its Hit Dice whenever it completes a long rest.

## Opening the Ditch-Gate

Read or paraphrase the following once all three crawling graves are destroyed.

A horrendous shrieking fills the room, and the mud at your feet turns warm as it starts to bubble and hiss. All of the dismembered flesh that filled this room begins to burn as if upon a funeral pyre, and the mud bubbles and steams away, until nothing is left but dry, cracked clay. In the center of the room, like a calcified heart, is a circular stone disc about a foot in diameter. It perfectly matches the shape and inscriptions of the Ditch-Gate.

This disc is the key to opening the Ditch-Gate. When placed in the door's empty circular slot, it spins, unleashing a torrent of light that spans the gate. The



door's rings spin until they click into position, then it parts in the middle and grinds open into the walls.

Beyond is a stone hallway filled with stairs that wind upward. With this gate opened, the horrors of the Ditches are finally behind the characters and the Dredgers alike. See the Conclusion section, below.

## D13a. Ditch-Gate Overlook

An overlook connected to the old Dredger base, the Dredgers of old would come here to look upon the gate, which fueled hope that they would someday return to the lands above. Rising 20 feet above the main room's floor, it is a nearly impossible climb, requiring characters to make a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to scale it due to the sheerness and toughness of its wall. It can also be reached via a passage from area D10a.

The guardian of the gate can't reach this area, since the muddy floor doesn't extend to this overhang.

**Yejin's Turret.** If Yejin's unmet need is satisfied (see appendix B), he can set up a stationary crossbow here for use against the guardian of the gate.

## Conclusion

The opening of the Ditch-Gate reveals a passage out of the Ditches, and into a place that the people of Soma call the "City Below." For the characters and the Dredgers, leaving the Ditches is only the beginning. Many more trials await them before they can leave the hellish false afterlife crafted by Kasimir Sundrinker.

## Fate of the Dredgers

The fate of the Dredgers was ultimately in the characters' hands. Without their arrival and their cunning, the Dredgers would have diminished into nothingness, eaten away by the despair of the Ditches. However, there was never a guarantee that all of the characters allies would survive this ordeal.

The characters had several options of how they would deal with the guardian of the Ditch-Gate. They could have aided all of the Dredgers, and gained a small army of allies to help them fight together. They might have also taken an easier way out and tried to convince a small number of allies to turn from Abradus's guidance and help them break out themselves.

There's also the matter of whether or not the characters leave through the gate immediately, or if they return to the Dredger camp to rest before leaving. The Ditches are still dangerous, even though the guardian has been destroyed. All of these choices determine who leaves the Ditches with the characters.

## Dredgers in Future Episodes

Future episodes in *Citadel of the Unseen Sun* don't take the party's Dredger companions into account for their encounter balancing, or story progression. If one or more of the Dredgers accompany the characters, it's up to you as the GM to integrate them into your story. This may take a bit of extra preparation before your game sessions, but this is ultimately for the best—only you know about the relationship that your version of the Dredgers formed with your party of adventurers.

**Or, Leave them Behind.** Alternatively, you could have the Dredgers part ways with the party. One natural way of letting this happen is to have the path out of the Ditches split into two different paths. The Dredgers say they'll split off and take one path, and the characters can explore another. This gives you some freedom if you want to reintroduce the Dredgers again later. You get to decide where and when the Dredgers meet the characters again. You get to make up what wild adventures they went on while exploring their tunnel. And, you get to decide which of them survived the journey when next the meet.

## Departing the Ditches

This is one way of ending this episode and teasing the beginning of episode 2: Dreams of a World Beyond. Read the following, or create new narration that fits the ending of your episode:

The Ditch-Gate looms before you, gaping like the maw of great beast, beckoning you toward the darkness beyond. The air is cold beyond, and mist billows out of the aperture. Through the mist, you can see the outline of stairs carved into the natural stone, rising slowly upward.

After the characters have entered the gate and traveled for a while, continue:

It feels like at least two hours have passed since you left the Ditches. The tunnel is just as cold and dark as it was before, but as you walk, you feel something change. It's hard to place at first, but eventually your mind settles on it. The light has changed. And, the slope of the stairs has begun to flatten off. After a few more steps, you see it: light.

Beyond the next curve of the passage is brilliant light, not like torchlight, or candlelight, or the bioluminescence of the fungus in the ditches, but something else. Purer, and cleaner. To turn the curve, and the cavern rises out of the ground onto a field of vibrant green grass. And the sky—the sun is in the sky. Beyond, across this picture-perfect field is a quaint little town. But most of all, beyond all reason or doubt, the sun is in the sky.

# APPENDIX A: NEW MONSTERS

This appendix details the new creatures that appear within this adventure.



## BONE MASON SENTINEL

Large undead, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	13 (+1)	5 (-3)

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +4

Damage Resistances necrotic, radiant

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) Proficiency Bonus +2

## Bone Masons

Kasimir Sundrinker created the bone masons to maintain the daily operations of his underground citadel. These undead are skeletons whose bones have been coated in an alchemical metal. These reinforcements make them hard to damage, and Kasimir's magic has warded them against the radiant powers of his ultimate creation—the Unseen Sun.

**Servitors of a Lost Empire.** The bone masons are perfectly loyal servants. When Kasimir created them, he made his servitors out of skeletal corpses from his lost civilization, and instilled them with animating spirits created from the souls of those very same people. Most bone masons lack a complete soul, making them ideal laborers. However, fragmented memories from their old lives occasionally surface. They all remember enough to see Kasimir Sundrinker as their true leader, and to obey his every order with unquestioning patriotism.

**Vestiges of an Honorable Burial.** The ribcage of each bone mason contains glass canopic jars holding the preserved heart, brain, and liver that correspond to the soul bound to the metal skeleton's body.

**Fire Absorption.** Whenever the bone mason is subjected to fire damage, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to half the fire damage dealt.

**Reactive.** The sentinel can take one reaction on every turn in a combat.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The bone mason makes four melee attacks.

**Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit., reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

**Ballista.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 120/480 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d10 + 3) piercing damage.

### REACTIONS

**Parry.** The sentinel adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the sentinel must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

# Crawling Grave

Unspeakable violence leads to the creation of mass graves, where the dead lie lost and forgotten. The energy from this cruelty can coalesce into tangles of bones that rise to seek out and add new skeletons to the hideous mass.

**Undead Nature.** A crawling grave doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.



## CRAWLING GRAVE

*Large undead, neutral evil*

**Armor Class 14 (natural armor)**

**Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)**

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

**Saving Throws** Con +5, Wis +2

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Damage Resistances** piercing, slashing

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak

**Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)** **Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Lethal Overrun.** Whenever the crawling grave enters a creature's space, if the target is incapacitated or dead, the crawling grave picks up that creature. The creature moves with the crawling grave and has disadvantage on death saving throws. A creature that ceases being incapacitated or dead can stop moving with the crawling grave.

A corpse breaks apart in the crawling grave at the end of the crawling grave's second turn carrying that corpse.

When the corpse breaks apart, the crawling grave regains hit points equal to half that corpse's normal hit point maximum, up to 20 hit points, and expels anything the corpse was carrying or wearing. Another creature can pull a corpse free of the crawling grave before it breaks apart by using an action and succeeding on a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check. The attempt provokes an opportunity attack from the crawling grave.

**Swarmlike.** The crawling grave can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the crawling grave can move through any opening large enough for a Small creature. The crawling grave can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

**Undead Fortitude.** If damage reduces the crawling grave to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the crawling grave drops to 1 hit point instead.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The crawling grave makes two slam attacks.

**Slam.** **Melee Weapon Attack:** +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 14 (2d10 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (target's choice) or fall prone. If the crawling grave has half of its hit points or fewer, it deals 8 (1d10 + 3) bludgeoning damage and can't knock creatures prone.



## Hermit Skull

A hermit skull belonged to a person so hateful that the hate reanimated the spirit after death. Lacking the power to animate a whole body, this monster's six oozing, ectoplasmic limbs extend from the skull as it scuttles around in search of life to destroy. In this task, the hermit skull is cunning enough to burrow into soil and wait for prey to pass nearby. Then, the skull attacks.

**Undead Nature.** A hermit skull doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### HERMIT SKULL

Tiny undead, any evil alignment

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 14 (4d4 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Skills Perception +2

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) Proficiency Bonus +2

**Ambusher.** The hermit skull has advantage on attack rolls against any creature it has surprised.

### ACTIONS

**Ectoplasmic Tendril.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) necrotic damage.

## Mud Zombie

Any muddy or swampy area could hide a grotesque surprise. Mud zombies form from piles of gore. At rest, they look like mounds of remains, but when roused, each becomes a writhing mass of muck-covered limbs. These limbs can split from the mass and continue fighting.

**Undead Nature.** A mud zombie doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### MUD ZOMBIE

Large undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d10 + 20)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)

Saving Throws Wis +1

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP) Proficiency Bonus +2

**False Appearance.** While the mud zombie remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an oozing pile of corpse parts.

**Formless.** Without squeezing, the mud zombie can move through an opening a creature up to two sizes smaller can move through.

### ACTIONS

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. A mud zombie can grapple up to two creatures at a time.

### REACTIONS

**Split.** When a mud zombie that is Medium or larger takes 10 damage or more, it splits into two new zombies if it has at least 10 hit points. Each new zombie has hit points equal to half the original zombie's, rounded down. New zombies are one size smaller than the original zombie.

# APPENDIX B: THE DREDGERS

This section contains background info on each Dredger, providing details for roleplay with these important non-player characters, as well as guidelines for meeting their needs. It also contains their game statistics.

## Abradus Brelog

This middle-aged male half-elf dresses in piecemeal armor, beneath it the clothing indicative of royalty, though faded, torn, and stained in many areas. Beaming and collected, this man appears the most calm out of all the Dredgers, and his confident and low timber bely that of someone born to strategize and plan, rather than fight among the rank and file. Despite the upbringing, his smile and demeanor hints at, he attends a small forge in camp, where he can often be found honing rusty weaponry upon his whetstone.

### From Stage to Stitch

In truth, Abradus wishes to return to the life of a stage performer. Before his imprisonment in the Ditches, Abradus performed for small theaters and stages, never quite living up to the skill he spent his lifetime honing. In time, he slowly began to move from active performer to mentor, and eventually costumer, pulling on the blacksmithing and tailoring skills he gathered from his mother and father in his early years. That is, of course, until his death.

### Right to the Ditches

When first met, Abradus is kind and welcoming to the characters, though it's clear that the Ditches has had its effect on him, and long conversation brings a shakiness to his voice. His clothing looks like it was, at some point long ago, finery fit for a king, and the armor he wears over it is in an equal state of disarray. The truth is that he's still wearing the stage costume he died in, and he's yet to admit to the others that he isn't some form of nobility, though thankfully no one has asked. While Abradus is desperate to leave, the Ditches has enacted a heavy toll on him, and he is beginning to doubt whether or not he will ever be able to escape or be of use with his age. It is thanks to his years of performance that he hasn't let the others on to his doubts, but each day puts more and more stress upon the aging actor.



### ABRADUS BRELOG

Medium humanoid (half-elf), neutral good

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +4, Wis +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP) Proficiency Bonus +2

### ACTIONS

**Greatsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 2) slashing damage.

**Light Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) piercing damage.

### BONUS ACTIONS

**Words of Encouragement (Recharge 6).** As a bonus action, Abradus calls out to an ally within 10 ft. of himself that can hear him and grants them 1d6 temporary hit points.

## ABRADUS AT THE FORGE

Abradus can create one simple weapon in two days, one martial weapon in four days, one suit of light armor in a week, a single shield or medium suit of armor in nine days, or one suit of heavy armor in two weeks. He needs a number of pounds of raw material equal to the poundage of the item he's creating (as described in the Equipment chapter of the fifth edition core rules). He is quick to remind characters he needs a steady supply to improve the defenses of the camp.

With his forge, Abradus is able to produce a small number of weapons for the characters, using a stockpile of roughshod iron that the Dredgers find during their forays into the rest of the Ditches. Items such as arrows, daggers, or shortswords are easier to produce than, say, a greataxe. Things such as armor are impossible for him to produce with his current resources, but as the characters advance throughout the Ditches, they uncover armor scraps and pieces that Abradus can use to create or repair armor for characters to use, as well as improve the barricade defenses of the Dredgers.

## Unmet Needs: Smithy's Boy

Abradus asks the characters to bring back any raw metals they find along the way, with a preference on any unworked iron, but any discarded weapon will do. Any weapons the characters don't wish to keep can be sharpened and made usable, but any metal given to Abradus eases his stress as he builds a small stockpile of usable materials.

If at any point he is in possession of at least 30 pounds of usable metal, his unmet need is resolved. No longer pressured, he removes many of the unnecessary pieces of his own armor: this allows him to bolster his small forge to something substantial, allowing him to better barricade and reinforce the camp. With his needs resolved, he offers the characters to make use of a special set of materials he managed to stow away before the Dredgers were run out from their last base, which gives him the capability to enchant one piece of armor or one shield, turning it into either a suit of +1 armor or a +1 shield, respectively.

## Coragnir Xarnaar

Coragnir is a blue dragonborn wearing trousers tied at the knee and a loose tunic tied at the elbows. Written on the scales of her calves and forearms are micro-inscriptions of some of her spells, in an effort to conserve her paper. Her attire is reminiscent of her conservatory outfit, with the base of her clothing dyed rich reds and golds, now slowly fading inside this undead realm. She wears a sash full of components, and has belt pouches to hold several journaling books. Her current clothing is built for mobility, and to allow her the freedom to run swiftly should anything come close to her.

### In Life, a Student

Coragnir is a dragonborn who wishes for power. Before her entrapment in the Ditches, Coragnir studied the ways of bending necrotic energy to her will. Diligent, dedicated, and devoted, she has spent long hours in her pursuit of arcane mastery at her conservatory, only to have her impatience and drive cause her to leave before she had gathered the kind of power she thought herself to wield. Her overconfidence, arrogance, and dedication to her own necromantic knowledge eventually led to her death.

### In Death, a Scholar

Coragnir's death has brought to her, in her opinion, an excellent opportunity. Many undead here were never covered in her studies, never recorded in the travelogues she sloughed through, and if she can manage to escape, she'd be the first to include it in her tome of studies. But she's come here ill-prepared, in her opinion, and while she's taking notes on what she's found here, she's also working on a case to find a way back once she's found a way out. Despite present danger and company, her eyes and thoughts are set squarely on the future, where she envisions herself coming back to the Ditches and claiming control over all undeath that resides here.

Her own fastidious pride and mastery of the prestidigitation spell makes her the cleanest member of the Dredgers by a large margin. Not a dribble of mud is found upon her scales or vestments, nor even a single bloodstain. The hems of her trousers are becoming torn and tattered, and her sleeves appear to have been ripped and shortened to her elbows, but her and her personal bunk are otherwise impeccable. This comes at the price of repeated uses of prestidigitation, and she refuses to go long without removing some of the filth from her in worried and increasingly frequent castings.

## Unmet Needs: Know Thy Enemy

When the characters talk with Coragnir, she quizzes them incessantly as to the nature of their death, and what creatures they encountered, and if they are suffering any lingering effects. If any party members are unconscious while she's around, Coragnir inquires about their injuries, and hovers over any attempts to heal them to make notes about any visible wounds. As the characters increase their knowledge, fight off more creatures, and investigate around the Ditches, Coragnir continues to ask questions about what they've fought.

Coragnir's most pressing question, however, is about the creature which guards the Ditch-Gate. Legend tells that it is a monster made of countless humanoid corpses, and it rises out of the earth itself to devour any who oppose it. Its formless body must contain the corpses of dozens of brave Dredgers who died trying to slay it.

She wants to have a sample of the mud and flesh that makes up its form, so that she can study it and devise a way to defeat it. She suggests the characters acquire a sample by grappling the monster and slicing a bit off. Any character that grapples a crawling grave and hits it with a weapon attack gains enough of a sample to bring back to Coragnir.

Once Coragnir has spent 24 hours studying the sample, she returns with results. She gains the following action, which can only be used to target the crawling graves (see appendix A) which guard the Ditch-Gate in area D13. Unbeknownst to her, and likely the characters, the singular crawling grave in area D11 can also provide a suitable sample for her—with significantly less danger.

If Coragnir accompanies the characters beyond the Ditches, she can use this action on other creatures as long as they are undead, and she has studied a sample of that creature, or observed the creature itself, for a total of 24 hours:

**Reveal Weakness (Recharges after a Long Rest).** Coragnir points out a weakness in her enemy's form. All creatures within 60 feet that can hear her gain advantage on attacks rolls against a creature of her choice that she can see for 1 minute.



### CORAGNIR XARNAAR

Medium humanoid (blue dragonborn), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 18 (4d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Arcana +4, Religion +4

Damage Resistances lightning

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 1 (200 XP) Proficiency Bonus +2

**Spellcasting.** Coragnir is a 2nd-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, fire bolt, prestidigitation*  
1st level (3 slots): *burning hands, false life, mage armor*

### ACTIONS

**Quarterstaff.** *Melee Weapon Attack.* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage.

**Fire Bolt.** *Ranged Spell Attack.* +4 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) fire damage.

**Lightning Breath (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).** Coragnir exhales lightning in a 30foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

# Doyenta Vimt

Doyenta is a young human woman with a talent for archaeology. She has worked tirelessly in time as an explorer, student of history, and sharer of myths and legends, to dutifully document and excavate the different histories of people who have come and gone. Sellers of broadsheets in Nov Ostoya know her name well, and have frequently printed her findings on lost civilizations and people into easily digestible knowledge for the huddled masses of that corrupt city. She has always come out on top of threats to teaching the world and the competition. That is, of course, until her death.

## One Foot Forward

Doyenta is tall for a human, but currently this is only seen by those with a careful eye, as her time here in the Ditches has her reflexively crouched in some way in order to present a smaller target to the nightmares she's had to fend off or flee from. Her clothing, while made for traversal and rough exploration, have long since seen their limits. Stitching, patches, piecemeal armor, and fresh scars now compliment her durable outfit. Her hair is uneven and falls at her shoulders, having had to recently cut off the bulk of its length to escape the grasp of a crawling grave that grabbed hold of it. Despite what the Ditches has tried to do in order to claim her life, Doyenta remains optimistic and opportunistic about her odds here.

## One Foot in the Grave

When she first arrived here, it was in the pursuit of learning more about the vanishing of Ostoya's sun, though not the exact way she intended, expected, or wanted. Exploring some of the ruins that were unearthed during the Darkfall, Doyenta carefully, silently, and fearfully explored the ancient underground structures that she had already heard so much about, determined to learn all she could about the buildings, and potentially the culture, that lay hidden for so long. On her second night there, deep below the earth, settled in a carefully selected alcove where she knew wouldn't be seen, she fell asleep—and woke up in the bone pile.

She hasn't been in the Ditches long; only a few weeks, but she's dedicated to learning as much as she can about this place—and then getting the hell out. Ideally, into the ruins of the Necropolis she long wished to explore above.

While she responds while being directly spoken to, she is otherwise lost in thought, revisiting past experiences for any clues of escape. In her current state, between the growing focus and exhaustion, and the lack of more insight and clues, she cannot think of any.

## Unmet Needs: Scholarly Interest

Doyenta won't initiate conversation with the characters herself, but should the characters talk to other NPCs at the encampment about the areas they clear, Doyenta asks about these areas. She prioritizes not the characters themselves nor the monsters they fight in her inquisition, but rather structures or carvings, or even any older pieces of art or symbol work.

If the characters initiate conversation with Doyenta, she is reticent and terse, and with most answers attempts to disengage from active conversation. Should the characters return with any imagery, historical gleanings or insights, or even pieces of art from around the Ditches, Doyenta is more open to talk, though much of what she says is historical accounts or her own adventures.

If the characters share five unique findings, she is willing to talk about what led to her being here, though the exact details of her death escape her. Having the chance to engage in storytelling or academic discourse, as well as become closer to those she is trapped with, brings a measure of peace to Doyenta. It is at this point she offers to assist the characters through the Ditches, her unmet need of learning all there is to know about this corner of the Necropolis resolved.

Doyenta considers the following sort of items worthy archaeological findings:

- Rubbings of inscriptions on ancient structures
- Tools or other items that date back to the ancient necropolis
- Any item made of an unusual material
- The talking skull Gustav (see area D8 in chapter 3 of this Fable)



## DOYENTA VIMT

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic good

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Skills Perception +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven

Challenge 2 (200 XP) Proficiency Bonus +2

**Observant Personality.** Doyenta uses Charisma in place of Wisdom on Perception checks.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Doyenta makes two melee attacks.

**Rapier.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

### REACTIONS

**Parry.** Doyenta adds 2 to her AC against one melee attack that would hit her. To do so, she must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

## Lemnor Tolt

Lemnor is a laneshi (see the new races in *Grim Hollow: The Player's Guide*) who lived her life away from the sea in service to her people, though what that service entailed is something she has never told a soul. But years spent on land and in travels have given her a demand for travel and exploration, causing the confinement of the Ditches to hit her particularly hard, with each closed and constrained chamber wearing her down as she dreams of the open sky and forests again and again. Just her, the open road, and her faithful wolf, Coral. That is, of course, until her death.

### Lone Wolf

Lemnor still wears the clothing she wore in her travels, having only been slain five months ago, and while the veritable layer of wear and tear that the Ditches instill on everything inside of it has touched root in her attire, it still holds strong. Sturdy chainmail, proper hiking boots, and studded vambraces fit for fighting. Both a set of shortswords and a shortbow accompany Lemnor as well, though she hangs near Abradus' forge and anvil for what seems to be perpetual sharpening, as much of her time is spent fighting out in the Ditches, her need for freedom not yet impeded by the Ditches, and her look of determination is one of planning.

The loss of Coral, her faithful companion of close to seven years, weighs heavily on her. She has no doubts that Coral is gone, but she can't allow herself to believe it. Each day she spends here makes her think about the possibility that perhaps Coral got away, as there's been no signs of her old friend. But going from that line of thought, to the idea that perhaps her companion is simply gone, ebbs slowly at her.

### On The Hunt

Lemnor is the first to offer to work with the characters to search through the Ditches for materials, resources, or even a way out. Even when out with characters, Lemnor is insistent to keep going, no matter how injured or weary the group may be getting, and sounds spiteful and disappointed when the party heads back to the campsite. If asked about her constant need to search the Ditches, she admits her desire to know for certain her companion isn't here in this realm with her.

## Unmet Needs: Pack Tactics

Coral remains here in the Ditches, unable to find Lemnor, having arrived in the bone pile after Lemnor and fending off the skeletons of the bone pile, and escaping into Ditches to survive. She has spent the past few months trapped, running, or fighting with little time to sleep. After the characters leave the Dredger camp for the first time, there is 5 percent chance that they find Coral in the next area they enter. There is an additional, cumulative 5% of finding the wolf for every additional area they explore. This percentage doesn't reset each day; it continues to grow until the characters find Coral. If they find her and don't manage to retrieve her, the percentage resets to 50 percent and then begins to grow again.

After finding her, a character must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to calm the panicked wolf. On a failure, she flees into a hole too

small to follow through, and the hunt begins anew. Coral is unusually canny for a beast, and mentioning Lemnor's name while calming her grants advantage on the check.

Lemnor is overjoyed to be reunited with her companion, and becomes more cooperative with both the other Dredgers, and with the party. If she stays with the camp on a specific day, she can work with someone at their station to speed up one task. If she accompanies the party, she takes Coral with her, who, with the scent of undeath lingering so heavily on her, will never be a primary target of the undead monstrosities within.

Reunited with Coral, her unmet need is resolved.

## LEMNOR TOLT

Medium humanoid (laneshi), neutral

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

Skills Stealth +4, Nature +4, Perception +5, Survival +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Laneshi

Challenge 1 (200 XP) Proficiency Bonus +2

**Terrain Familiarity.** Lemnor has advantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks.

**Pack Tactics.** Doyenta has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if Coral is within 5 ft. of the creature and Coral isn't incapacitated.

## ACTIONS

**Shortsword.** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Shortbow.** Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, ranged 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

## CORAL

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 13

Challenge 1 (200 XP) Proficiency Bonus +2

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** Coral has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Pack Tactics.** Coral has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the Coral's allies is within 5 ft. of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

**Coordinated Rend.** If both Coral and Lemnor make successful melee attacks on the same creature in a single round, that creature takes an additional 4 (1d8) slashing damage.

## ACTIONS

**Bite.** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2d4 + 2 piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

# Secher

Secher is a wechselkind (see the new races in *Grim Hollow: The Player's Guide*) who has lost all patience to keep up their glamour, forgoing the reactivation of their faerie magic out of a deep, accepting fatalism. There is no chance for salvation, so there is no sense in keeping up appearances. Such things are meaningless – and whatever will be, will be.

Secher grew up as part of an apothecary shop, raised first as the owner's child and, once it was discovered what Secher really was, raised as a child, even if there was no blood relation. Eventually Secher took to the family business and, despite the quiet hope that their parents held to see their biological child one day, was a part of the family. Secher studied alchemical means later in their life, turning their apothecary knowledge into a greater understanding of alchemy, and used that to push the family business even further. Then came the day that Secher's younger siblings came of age and, wanting to not impede their progress, made plans with their parents to open up a second shop in a nearby city, to much celebration by all. And thus, Secher began the trek to begin life anew as a business owner and alchemist extraordinaire. That is, of course, until their death.

## Evergreen

Secher has taken much effort to ensure the wood of their body hasn't become harmed by the eroding nature of this plane, fending off mold or rot, keeping themselves waxed and sealed away from general, passive elements of harm. Slippers of knotted cord, silk and wood, rough wool robe over trousers and vest, and a long drawn hood. There are numerous pouches and belts strapped across their arms and legs, and what looks like fresh dirt covers their feet, legs, and the hem of their robes.

## Briar Demeanor

Secher's demeanor is gruff and unbothered, focused almost entirely on the small garden that they've made here in the Ditches. A small set of grooves in the rough cavern wall, as well as a small dug-up amount of stone floor, are filled with mud and blossoming plants. It is here that Secher stays, refusing to leave for any reason so as to keep their watchful eye on their growing garden, and the small amount of functional glass work that allows them to brew small tonics to aid the Dredgers. Much of what they make is for the express purpose of healing and tending to whoever is harmed from excursions, but due to their limited supply, he can only aid fellow Dredgers at this time.

## Unmet Needs: Green Thumb

Secher can expand their small garden to be able to help more than just Dredgers if they're aided and equipped. Should the characters ask Secher about aiding their own party with recovery, Secher asks for help on expanding their garden by bringing back at least one plant they find growing in this place. Finding a plant resilient enough to survive in this dark place places a strange feeling in the weschselkind's chest – hope, and fulfills their unmet need.

It also gives Secher the ability to assist two characters during a long rest, allowing all characters to recover an additional 4 hit points per rest, but also to recover an additional hit die per long rest while in the Ditches.

### SECHER

*Small humanoid (wechselkind), lawful neutral*

**Armor Class 12**

**Hit Points 18 (3d8 + 5)**

**Speed 25 ft.**

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Nature +3, Medicine +4, Perception +4

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** Common, Druidic, Sylvan

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

**Spellcasting.** Secher is a 2nd-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). They have the following druid spells prepared:

**Cantrips (at will):** *druidcraft, guidance, produce flame*  
**1st level (3 slots):** *create or destroy water, entangle, healing word*

### ACTIONS

**Club. Melee Weapon Attack:** +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 1 (1d4-1) bludgeoning damage.

**Sling. Ranged Weapon Attack:** +4 to hit, range 20/60, one target. **Hit:** 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.



## Yejin Finn

The first character whom the characters meet in the Ditches, as well as their first introduction to the Dredgers, is Captain Yejin Finn, a rock gnome of chipper demeanor but dour appearance. In his younger years, he served as a soldier and a smith, repairing the equipment of soldiers, be it swords, armor, or even crossbows. He continued on this way, leading an often troubled and stressed life, and in his retirement, he sought to open a toy store, using some of the know-how he learned in equipment repair to bring joy. His time as a toymaker continued on until his town was ravaged and destroyed, causing him to flee to the woods, where his know-how came in use as he began to build a home and trap his dinners. That is, of course, until his death.

## Adapt, Survive, Overseer

To call Yejin's clothing filthy and patchwork is to insult a quilt in the mud. What started off as a set of forester's clothing of hard leather and wool has been modified and augmented in myriad ways. A leather apron that is clipped down and near bursting with slots and pockets, boots that have been wrapped in an additional leather of some unidentified creature, stains of sweat and blood that adorn thick leather gloves and helmet, and a layer of dried muck across the feet and legs. The only thing resembling clean on Yejin's person is a modified and hefty crossbow that holds his attention in what little free time he obtains. All of this hangs off of a ragged and sunken-eyed gnome, whose hair is nearly gone, with only the threadbare trace of a mustache and beard remaining.

Yejin arrived here alone nearly three years ago, and has seen plenty of people come and go in that time, and while at first the situation constantly ate at his peace of mind and wellbeing, it came to pass that he found a certain peace with knowing he would die here, but he wouldn't go out being a useless old man. As people arrived, many would begin to dream of escape, and he would help them as best as he could. But time and time again, these strangers who would often become his friends and family would perish to the dangers of the Ditches. While he never stops someone from dreaming of freedom from this pit, his focus is on salvaging what he can in this realm to create as safe a home as possible for those who come. Barricades, hunting, protecting, building. All the things necessary in order to save what little peace of mind that can be found in this foul place of death.

## Unmet Needs: A Constant Light

Yejin is, of course, the first person that the characters meet. He is a single ray of light after a violent and sudden demise, and is typically the first person that any newcomers to the Ditches see. Without a hint of irony or malice or pity, he is happy to greet a new face, despite all that their presence here may imply. It is he that has created the pit between the campsite and the bone pile, as well as the traps elsewhere found in the Ditches, though some have proven to be ineffectual. Yejin asks the characters, before their first expedition into the rest of the Ditches, to keep an eye out for the traps he had set up around the caves that he couldn't retrieve after their failure. Their components are a great boon for the gnome, enabling him to craft better and stronger defenses for the camp's safety.

To that end, he provides a description for each of his four traps, and where they should look:

- "We meant to create a sort of garden underneath some roots. Plenty of seeds, plenty of growth, but too many rats! And too many undead. So I made some wall lattices, and placed them on the wall, and each night I'd reset the wires on it so if anyone got too close, it would fling forward and cut anyone with razors."
- "We found this place, all black stone and evil. Never trusted it, not once. But I had to deter anything entering or escaping. So I put a bear trap's spring portion on the ground where you land if you don't look, and hooked it up to cause falling rocks."
- "This camp we have right now is our second one. Our first one was too much for us, too many undead who moved too fast and overwhelmed us. I set off one of my trip mines there. I'm sure the mechanism is still intact, even if the charge isn't."
- "At that same camp are my old supplies, including all the pieces I need to make our doors a stronger deterrent. They're in a leather satchel—has a little owl stitchwork on it from my daughter. Please bring the whole bag."

Unlike many other Dredgers here, Yejin's attitude isn't changed by assisting him with his wants and desires: he is genuinely and unabashedly a friendly person. But he has always believed that to help one another deserves a reward, and should the characters find enough components from around the Ditches. Once his need is resolved, he awakens after his next rest with a sudden recollection: there is an advantageous cliff facing the Ditch-Gate. He offers to install a crossbow there, to aid in the battle to come. He needs to be escorted, but installs the crossbow with ease. It functions like a heavy crossbow, with three differences:

- It cannot move from where it is installed without needing to be set up again, which requires one whole minute.
- It cannot fire unless it is mounted.
- It deals 2d10 piercing damage, instead of 1d10 piercing damage.

## YEJIN FINN

*Small humanoid (gnome), neutral good*

**Armor Class 14 (leather armor)**

**Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 16)**

**Speed 30 ft.**

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

**Saving Throws Dex +4**

**Languages Common, Gnome**

**Challenge 1 (200 XP) Proficiency Bonus +2**

**Tinkerer's Readiness.** Yejin ignores the loading weapon property.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Yejin Finn makes two attacks with his crossbow.

**Mace. Melee Weapon Attack:** +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

**Heavy Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack:** +4 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. **Hit:** 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage

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