

THE SUNLESS CITADEL

*All things roll here: horrors of midnights,
Campaigns of a lost year,
Dungeons disturbed, and groves of lights;
Echoing on these shores, still clear,
Dead ecstasies of questing knights—
Yet how the wind revives us here!*

—Arthur Rimbaud

THIS ADVENTURE CONCERNS A ONCE-PROUD fortress that fell into the earth in an age long past. Now known as the Sunless Citadel, its echoing, broken halls house malign creatures. Evil has taken root at the citadel's core, which is deep within a subterranean garden of blighted foliage. Here a terrible tree and its dark shepherd plot in darkness.

The tree, called the Gulthias Tree, is shepherded by a twisted druid, Belak the Outcast. He was drawn to the buried citadel twelve years ago, following stories of oddly enchanted fruit to their source. The druid found an old fortress that had been swallowed up by the earth in some sort of magically invoked devastation. With the previous inhabitants long dispersed, vile and opportunistic creatures common to lightless dungeons infested the subterranean ruins. At the core of the old fortress, Belak stumbled upon the Twilight Grove. He discovered at the grove's heart the Gulthias Tree, which sprouted from a wooden stake that was used to slay an ancient vampire.

A perfect, ruby-red apple ripens on the Gulthias Tree at the summer solstice, and the tree produces a single albino apple at the winter solstice. The midsummer fruit grants vigor, health, and life, while the midwinter fruit steals the same. In the years since Belak's arrival, the enchanted fruit has been widely dispersed through the surrounding lands, promoting good and ill. The seeds of either fruit, if allowed to sprout, grow into small plant monsters known as twig blights.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

During their trip through the Sunless Citadel, characters deal with monstrous threats and ancient traps, as well as warring tribes of kobolds and goblins. The adventure is designed for four 1st-level player characters. They should advance through 2nd level to 3rd level before the finale. The adventure has four basic parts:

1. Oakhurst. Although it isn't part of the adventure per se, the village of Oakhurst can provide the characters with valuable information about the citadel. They can also use Oakhurst as a place to recuperate and replenish supplies.

2. Kobold Den. The characters' foray into the citadel begins with an incursion into the most accessible areas of the fortress, where a tribe of kobolds has taken up residence. The characters can avoid strife with the kobolds by agreeing to retrieve a lost pet for the kobold leader, and they might be able to persuade the kobolds to join their side.

3. Goblin Lair. The goblins that live deeper inside the citadel consider themselves the owners of the place. They defend themselves aggressively against intrusion, making it difficult to avoid combat with them.

4. Hidden Grove. Eventually, the characters discover the lower level of the citadel and the Twilight Grove that lies within. There, they learn the truth about the enchanted fruit, and they must confront Belak the Outcast and the Gulthias Tree.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

To enhance the experience of the players and help you do your best job as Dungeon Master, take the following pieces of advice and information into consideration.

MAPPING

It can be difficult to keep track of all the corridors, turns, areas, and other features of a dungeon setting, and the player characters could soon get turned around without a map. Ask for a volunteer to be the party mapper. It's the mapper's job to listen carefully to your description of each area, noting its size and exits, and to record that information by sketching on a sheet of paper.

PLACING THE ADVENTURE

The Sunless Citadel is designed to be easily located in whatever setting the DM prefers. Here are some examples.

Dragonlance. On Krynn, the citadel was once part of Xak Tsaroth, and it harbored worshipers of Takhisis. When that city was destroyed during the cataclysm, it fell into a rift that opened in the earth. In this setting, consider replacing the kobolds in the adventure with gully dwarves.

Eberron. Located near the western edge of the Mournlund, the citadel was an ancient ruin even during the time of the Last War. Agents of Cyre used it as a way point for conducting espionage against neighboring realms. On the Day of Mourning, the earth opened up and swallowed the place. The Mournlund is within sight of the rift.

Forgotten Realms. On Faerûn, the Sunless Citadel was once a secret stronghold of the Cult of the Dragon, located in the foothills northwest of Thundertree. It plunged into the earth when Mount Hotenow erupted and threw Neverwinter into chaos.

Greyhawk. The Sunless Citadel is a ruined Baklunish stronghold that was cast into the bowels of the earth when the Suel Imperium unleashed the Invoked Devastation. It is located in northwestern Bissel, in the foothills west of Thornward.

TIME OF YEAR

If you would like the characters to have the opportunity to find a fruit, begin the adventure a few weeks before either the summer or winter solstice. Apart from making a piece of fruit available on the Gulthias Tree, choosing a season provides you with additional details to set the scene, which enhances the adventure.

If you choose summer, the hills are lush with growth, though the heat sometimes grows oppressive. If the characters embark in the winter, temperatures hover just above freezing during the day and plunge below it at night.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Adventurers can find the Sunless Citadel within a remote and lonely ravine. The characters can be drawn to the dungeon for any of the following reasons. Relate the information below to the players as necessary to get them interested in journeying to the dungeon site.

GOING FOR GLORY

You are eager to make a name for yourself. The legend of the Sunless Citadel is well known locally, and stories indicate it is a place that holds promise for those intent on discovery, glory, and treasure!

RESCUE MISSION

Another party of adventurers, locally based, delved into the Sunless Citadel a month past. They were never seen again. Two human members of that ill-fated party were brother and sister, Talgen Hucrele (a fighter) and Sharwyn Hucrele (a wizard). They were part of an important merchant family based in the nearby village of Oakhurst. Kerowyn Hucrele, the matriarch of the family, offers salvage rights to you and your team if you can find and return with the two lost members of her family—or at least return the gold signet rings worn by the missing brother and sister. She also offers a reward of 125 gp per signet ring, per character. If the characters bring back the Hucreles in good shape (of good mind and body), she offers to double the reward.

SOLVING A MYSTERY

The goblin tribe infesting the nearby ruins, called the Sunless Citadel, though no one knows why) sells a single piece of magical fruit to the highest bidder in Oakhurst once every midsummer. They've been doing this for the last twelve years. Usually, the fruit sells for around 50 gp, which is all the townsfolk can bring themselves to pay a goblin. The fruit, apparently an apple of perfect hue, heals those who suffer from any disease or other ailment. They sometimes plant the seeds at the center of each fruit, hoping to engender an enchanted apple tree. When the seeds germinate in their proper season, they produce a twiggy mass of twisted sapling stems. Not too long after the saplings reach 2 feet in height, they are stolen—every time. The townsfolk assume the goblins send out thieves to ensure their monopoly of enchanted fruit. You are interested in piercing the mystery associated with how wretched goblins could ever possess such a wonder, and how they steal every sprouting sapling grown from the enchanted fruit's seed. Moreover, you wish to find this rumored tree of healing, hoping to heal an ailing friend or relative.

OAKHURST

The community closest to the Sunless Citadel is a village called Oakhurst. Most of its 900 residents (including outlying farms) are human, with a sizable minority of halflings and a scattering of other races.

Significant locations in Oakhurst, and the people to be found within them, include the following:

Village Hall. The center of government in Oakhurst includes the office of Mayor Vurnor Leng, a male human noble.

General Store. The village's main source for supplies and merchandise is the general store, owned and operated by Kerowyn Hucrele, a female human noble.

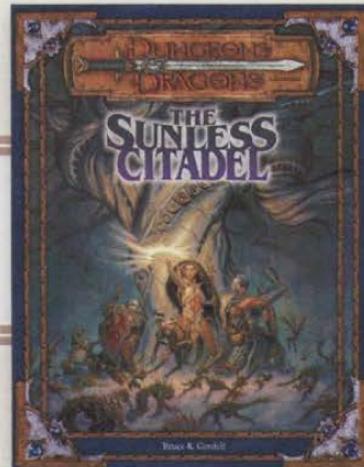
Shrine. Advice, information, and healing are among the services dispensed at the village's shrine. It is maintained by Dem "Corkie" Nackle, a female gnome priest of Pelor.

Jail. Next to the village hall is a stout building where miscreants serve their sentences. Oakhurst's con-

ABOUT THE ORIGINAL

The Sunless Citadel, by Bruce R. Cordell, was originally published in 2000 as a beginning adventure for the third edition of the D&D game.

The adventure is widely regarded as an excellent way to introduce players to D&D. It's also a great starting experience for a new DM.



stable is Felosial, a female half-elf veteran. She commands a force of sixteen guards and four scouts who keep the village safe.

Blacksmith. Repairing and forging arms and armor is the job of the village smithy, Rurik Lutgehr, a male dwarf commoner.

Ol' Boar Inn. Garon, a male human commoner, is the owner and barkeep of the Ol' Boar Inn. He serves food and drink, and the place has a few rooms that visitors can rent.

RUMORS HEARD IN OAKHURST

Player characters can discover the following additional information while spending time in the local tavern, or through asking the right questions of the locals.

- No one knows for sure what the Sunless Citadel once was, but legends hint that it served as the retreat of an ancient dragon cult.
- The Old Road skirts the Ashen Plain, a lifeless area. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (History) check knows that the desolation is attributed to the long-ago rampage of a dragon named Ashardalon. A few locals also know this fact.
- Cattle herders don't graze their stock too far afield these days. They're frightened by stories of new monsters that maraud by night. From time to time, cattle and people who have gone out alone at night have been found dead the next day, bearing dozens of needle-like wounds. No one has seen the creatures that cause this mayhem, nor do they leave a discernible trail.
- The missing adventurers include a fighter (Talgen Hucrele), a wizard (Sharwyn Hucrele), a paladin of Pelor (Sir Braford), and a ranger (Karakas). Sir Braford was not a local, and he had a magic sword called *Shatterspike*.
- Sometimes the goblins offer a different apple at mid-winter. This apple is corpse-white and poisonous, even to the touch. No samples of either apple are to be had.

SUNLESS CITADEL OVERVIEW

A dragon cult that valued privacy and defense built the Sunless Citadel on the surface long ago. All record of the cult's name has vanished, though various sources believe that it was associated with the dragon Ashardalon. The cataclysm that killed the cult members sank the fortress at the same time. Because of residual enchantments, much of the structure survived its descent into the earth. With the cultists dead, goblins and other creatures moved in, and they have survived here for hundreds of years.

The goblins, which belong to the Durbuluk tribe ("Dominator" in Goblin), once patrolled the area around the ravine to rob passersby. But now, with the Old Road having fallen out of use, the goblins rarely pay much attention to this entrance anymore. Also, a tribe of kobolds has recently moved in to challenge the goblins' ownership of the fortress. Both groups are skirmishing as they vie for control, and they're not overly concerned about the possibility of intruders. Thus, the cleft offers the characters a good opportunity to gain entry to the dungeon without attracting attention. (The missing party that came here before did much the same; the rope left tied to the pillar near the ravine is theirs.)

• Garon, the barkeep of the Ol' Boar Inn, remembers the last time anyone, aside from Talgen and Sharwyn, asked questions about the Sunless Citadel. About thirteen years ago, a grim human named Belak stopped by, and he had a very large pet frog.

WILDERNESS ENCOUNTERS

If the characters are anywhere between Oakhurst and the Sunless Citadel at night, four **twig blights** attack the party. The blights attack stealthily from out of nearby foliage.

THE CITADEL

See the old Dragon from his throne

Sink with enormous ruin down!

—Hymn

Once the characters are ready to leave Oakhurst, the adventure truly begins. The overgrown Old Road winds through rocky downs, near stands of old-growth oak, and past abandoned farms. It is 7 miles from Oakhurst to the Sunless Citadel.

RAVINE

The Old Road passes to the east of a narrow ravine. At the road's closest approach to the cleft, several broken pillars jut from the earth where the ravine widens. Two of the pillars stand straight, but most lean atop sloped earth. Others are broken, and several have apparently fallen into the dark depths. A few similar pillars are visible on the opposite side of the ravine.

A sturdy, knotted rope is tied to one of the leaning pillars on this side of the ravine.

Though the kobolds (areas 13–24) and the goblins (areas 31–41) claim the Sunless Citadel as their property, they've never visited all its chambers. They avoid entering the most secluded parts of the grove level. In the past, they feared that the hidden grove was haunted. With the arrival of Belak the Outcast twelve years ago, that belief is vindicated. He orders the goblins to distribute the midsummer fruit each year, and the goblins obey him out of fear.

Monsters on Alert. The kobolds and the goblins respond similarly if attacked. Intruders who fall back to take a long rest before dealing with the leaders of an attacked community allow the creatures time to make preparations. Alerted monsters reinforce cleared rooms with forces previously stationed in other rooms. For example, three kobolds from one area 16 could be stationed in area 15 with orders to set an ambush for returning invaders. Or, four goblins from one area 36 could be redeployed to area 32 to guard against another intrusion. Keep track of such changes, so that the characters don't encounter the same kobolds or goblins twice.

Random Treasure. Each regular kobold and goblin is likely to have 2d10 sp, perhaps in the form of various coins and crude jewelry.

GENERAL FEATURES

The following facts about the environment are true unless otherwise noted in a specific area description.

Doors. The doors are wooden or stone.

Light. Beyond area 2, many rooms in the underground dungeon are lightless. Descriptions assume that the characters have a suitable light source and are able to see their surroundings.

Ventilation. All keyed areas contain an adequate air supply. The air is renewed from countless cracks leading to the upper open cavern and the surface. These cracks are too small for any but creatures such as giant rats to navigate.

The ravine runs for several miles in either direction, with an average depth and width of 30 feet. At the point where it most closely intersects the Old Road, it widens to 40 feet.

Investigating. The pillars are worn and broken, and graffiti in the Dwarvish alphabet covers most of them. Characters who know Goblin (after translating the letters from Dwarvish) recognize the inscriptions as warnings and threats against potential trespassers.

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that the area in and around the pillars has hosted many small campfires, some of as recent as a month ago. Someone went to some effort to hide the evidence of the camps from casual scrutiny.

Descending. The rope tied to one of the leaning pillars hangs down into the darkness of the ravine. Judging by its good condition, the rope couldn't have been tied there any longer than two or three weeks ago. From the edge of the ravine, older and weathered handholds and footholds can be seen carved into the cliff face. These are goblin-carved.

Adventurers can easily climb down the knotted rope, using the wall to brace themselves. Using the carved indentations is slower but only slightly harder. The descent is 50 feet to the ledge (area 1).

LOCATIONS ON THE FORTRESS LEVEL

The following locations are identified on map 1.1.

1. LEDGE

A sandy ledge overlooks a subterranean gulf of darkness to the west. The ledge is wide but rough. Sand, rocky debris, and the bones of small animals cover it. A rough-hewn stairwell zigs and zags down the side of the ledge, descending into darkness.

The far wall of the chasm is 250 feet to the west, and the bottom of the subterranean vault is 80 feet below where the characters stand.

Creatures. Drawn by the occasional animal that accidentally falls into the ravine, three **giant rats** lurk in the rubble. They try to hide if they become aware of the characters, and they ambush the first character who arrives on the ledge without being quiet about it.

Investigating. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals humanoid footprints, as well as rat

tracks of unusually large size. The footprints lead down the stairs.

Among the rubble is an old ring of stones that contains (and is covered by) the accumulated ash of hundreds of fires, though no fire has been lit here for a few years. Inside the ash pile are a few rough-hewn spear tips of goblin manufacture and small animal bones.

2. SWITCHBACK STAIRS

The 5-foot-wide stairs that descend from area 1 are roughly carved. They aren't dangerous to traverse, however, except that combat while on the narrow path can be risky. Three small landings lie along the route, the first at 60 feet above the floor in area 3, the second at 40 feet, and the third at 20 feet.

The characters might be able to see area 3 as they descend.

A fortress emerges from the darkness. The subterranean citadel, though impressive, seems long forgotten, if the lightless windows, cracked crenellations, and leaning towers are any indication. All is quiet, though a cold breeze blows up from below, bringing with it the scent of dust and a faint trace of rot.

3. CRUMBLING COURTYARD

The narrow stairs empty into a small courtyard, apparently the top of what was once a crenellated battlement. The buried citadel has sunk so far into the earth that the battlement is now level with the surrounding floor. That floor stretches away to the north and south, composed of a layer of treacherous, crumbled masonry, which reaches to an unknown depth. To the west looms the surviving structure of what must be the Sunless Citadel. A tower stands on the west side of the courtyard.

The stone courtyard, surrounded by crumbled masonry, contains a trap and a wooden door.

Masonry Debris. An expanse of crumbled masonry surrounds the entire citadel. Those attempting to cross it immediately note its unsteadiness. The rubble is difficult terrain. Anyone who moves across the debris must make a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check for each 10 feet traversed. On a failed check, the character is unable to move. If the check fails by 5 or more, a slab of masonry below the character shifts, dumping the character into a debris-lined cavity. Climbing back out requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check; on a failed check, the victim drops back into the cavity.

Creatures. Each time a creature falls into a cavity, the noise is 10 percent likely to draw 1d4 **giant rats** from the dozens that infest the rubble field. Attracted rats move carefully and stealthily through the rubble to attack.

Hidden Pit. The map shows the location of a concealed trapdoor that covers a 10-foot-square, 10-foot-deep pit. A 2-foot-wide catwalk on the west edge allows access to the door that leads to area 4. It takes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to note the trapdoor's unmortared edge. Then, a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check lets a character deduce the location of the catwalk and how the pit operates.

If a creature steps on the trapdoor, the lid flips open, dumping the creature into the pit. With a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, a creature can use thieves' tools to jam the lid shut. A mechanism resets the trap 1 minute after the door opens, pushing it back into the closed position. The mechanism is in the pit wall under the catwalk. A creature can jam it in the open position with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. If this check succeeds by 5 or more, the mechanism can be permanently disabled if desired.

Creature. The pit contains two goblin skeletons, one goblin that has been dead for about a day, and one live **giant rat**. The rat, which slipped into the pit to feed on the fresh goblin but was caught when the trap reset, attacks creatures inside the pit or climbs out to attack those nearby.

Treasure. The goblin corpse has a scimitar and a shield, as well as 23 sp and 4 gp in a belt pouch.

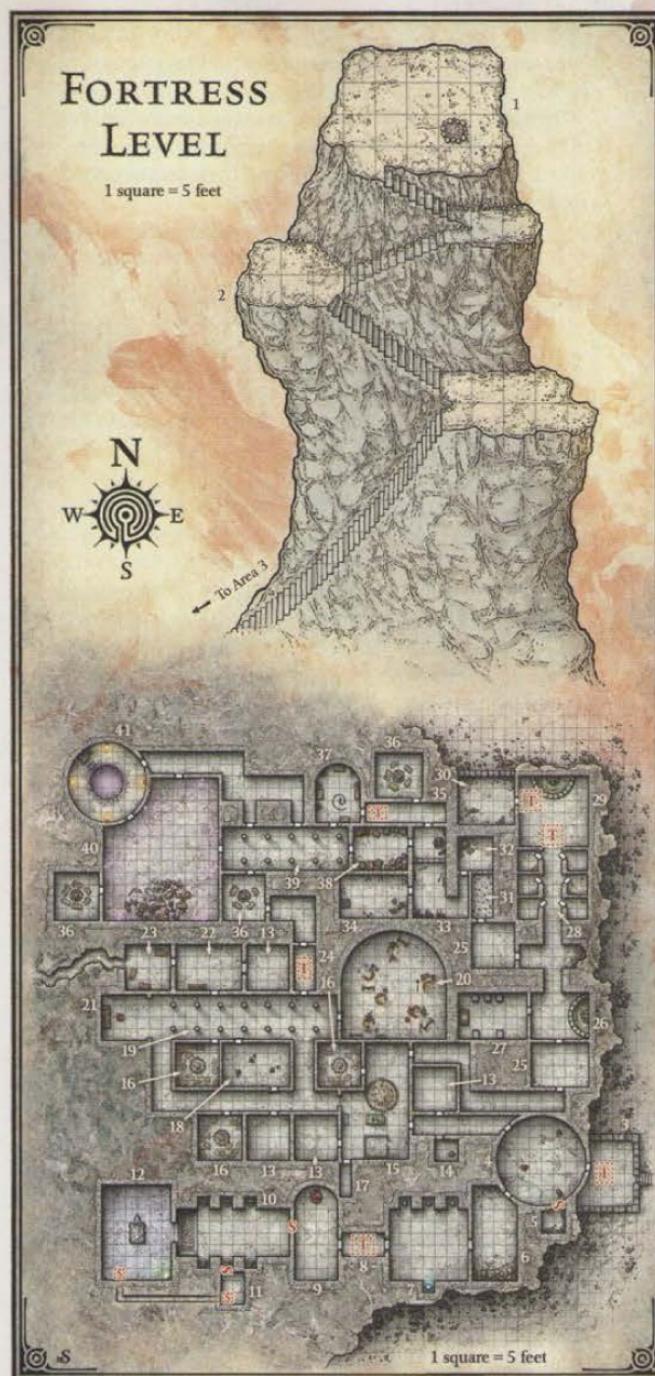
4. TOWER SHELL

This circular area is cobbled with cracked granite, upon which sprawl the bodies of four goblins, apparently slain in combat. One corpse stands with its back against the western wall, the spear that killed it still skewering it and holding it upright. Three wooden doors lead from this area. A hollow tower of loose masonry reaches thirty feet into the air, but the intervening floors and stairs are gone, except for a couple of crumbled ledges.

Bodies. Investigation reveals that the four goblins have been dead for quite a while, and rats have gnawed at them. The bodies have been looted. If someone removes the spear pinning the goblin to the wall, the body slumps to reveal Draconic runes on the wall behind it. Those who know the Draconic language can read the runes as "Ashardalon."

Secret Door. A trapped secret door leads to area 5. Finding the door requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. The door opens by way of a masonry block that also serves as a lever, which can be pushed in on the left side or pulled out from the right.

Needle Trap. If the lever is pulled out, that movement sets off a needle trap. The needle extends 3 inches out of the opening, dealing 1 piercing damage to whoever pulled the lever. Someone who carefully and slowly pulls the lever open can easily see the needle before it strikes. Disabling the needle requires thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. If the check fails by 5 or more, the trap goes off, stabbing the character unless the character succeeds on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw.



MAP 1.1: FORTRESS LEVEL

5. SECRET POCKET

This pocket chamber is damp and cold. The skeletons of three long-dead archers slump against rubble-filled arrow slits along the east and south wall.

The skeletons date back to the time before the citadel plunged into the earth. That calamity killed all three archers, at the same time instilling in them the curse of undeath. If anyone enters this chamber, the three **skele-**

tons animate, pinpoints of red fire sparkling in their eye sockets as they rise.

Treasure. Each skeleton has twenty arrows, 2d10 sp, 1d10 gp, and one *+1 arrow* in a special socket on the quiver. Because the skeletons are mindless, they don't use the magical arrows.

6. OLD APPROACH

The masonry walls of this twenty-foot-wide hall are in poor repair. The far end has collapsed, filling the southern section with rubble. The western wall is in much better shape than the other walls, and it holds a stone door with a rearing dragon carved in relief on it. The door has a single keyhole, situated in the rearing dragon's open mouth.

Dragon Door. The door that is carved to look like a dragon has a mechanical lock as well as an *arcane lock* spell cast on it. The Strength (Athletics) check to defeat the arcane lock is DC 30, and the Dexterity check to bypass the magical lock using thieves' tools is DC 25. Casting a *knock* spell on the door suppresses the magical lock for 10 minutes, lowering the DCs by 10 during that time. The mechanical lock remains intact if the magical lock is bypassed, requiring another *knock* spell or the use of the key. The key, which bypasses the magical lock as well as the mechanical one, is in area 21.

Creature. One **giant rat** hides in the rubble. The rat attacks anyone who moves to within 5 feet of the edge of the rubble or anyone left alone in this area.

7. GALLERY OF FORLORN NOTES

As the door opens, a hissing noise and a puff of dust around the door indicate that the chamber beyond has been sealed for ages. Dust, long undisturbed, covers every surface in this large gallery. The air here is stale.

Three alcoves are on the north wall, and one is on the south wall. Each alcove contains a dust-covered stone pedestal with a fist-sized crystalline globe resting on it. The globes in the northern alcoves are cracked and dark, but the globe in the southern alcove glows with a soft blue light. Faint tinkling notes issue from it.

If a character moves within 5 feet of the lit globe, brooding music begins to play throughout the area, and the sound carries into areas 6, 8, and 9 if the doors to those areas are open. Any creature that can hear the music must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a successful save, a creature is immune to the music of the globe for 24 hours. On a failed save, a creature becomes charmed and, while charmed in this way, can take only the Dash action and move toward area 3.

The effect on a creature ends once that creature reaches the floor beyond the pit trap in area 3. If an affected creature is prevented from moving to area 3,

the creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a successful save. The effect ends on its own 1 minute after the creature can no longer hear the music. A creature can escape the music by being on the other side of a closed door that leads to the gallery, or by vacating the area (including adjacent rooms) where the music is audible.

The globe has AC 10 and 10 hit points. If it is attacked or handled, the music becomes louder, audible in areas 4 and 10 if the doors to those areas are open. The DC of the Wisdom saving throw then increases to 20. If the globe is reduced to 0 hit points or taken from the room, it cracks and goes dark and silent. It no longer functions.

8. PRESSURE PLATE

The air is stale in this twenty-foot-long corridor, which leads to another closed stone door.

Arrow Trap. Each time any weight is placed on any part of the center 10-foot-square section of the corridor, a mechanical pressure plate is activated, triggering a trap. An arrow fires from above the western door at the creature who triggered the trap: +5 to hit, 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, a character can deduce the presence of the pressure plate from variations in the mortar and stone around it, compared to the surrounding floor. Wedging an iron spike or some other similarly sized and sturdy object under the pressure plate prevents it from activating.

9. DRAGON RIDDLE

Dust fills this hall like a layer of gray snow. In the rounded northern end of the chamber stands a ten-foot-tall sculpture of a coiled dragon carved from red-veined white marble.

Dragon Sculpture. If a creature moves within 5 feet of the dragon statue, a *magic mouth* spell causes the dragon to utter a riddle in Common (to viewers, it seems as though the stone jaws are actually moving). The dragon's riddle is as follows:

*We come at night without being fetched;
we disappear by day without being stolen.
What are we?*
(Answer: stars)

Secret Door. A secret door in the western wall leads to area 10. Finding the door requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. Under the scrutiny of *detect magic*, the door radiates a faint aura of abjuration magic. The door comes open, pivoting into the room, only if someone speaks the answer to the riddle.

Once the door is opened, it closes on its own 1 minute later, although any obstruction placed in the doorway



prevents it from doing so. The door can be opened from the western side with a simple push.

10. HONOR GUARD

Dust cloaks the contents of this twenty-foot-wide hall. Six alcoves line the walls, three to the north and three to the south. Each alcove except the southwest one holds a humanoid figure carved of red-veined white marble. The figures resemble tall elves in plate armor. A stone archway at the west end of the hall opens into a wide room from which greenish light glows. A dark pit is situated before the archway.

Southwest Alcove. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the dust in the room is disturbed by tracks that start in the southwest alcove, though the tracks are filled in enough that the disturbance must have occurred dozens of years ago. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check enables a character to determine that the tracks were made by tiny humanoid feet with claw-like nails. They begin in the center of the alcove, move west toward the pit, and then disappear into the pit. A character who enters the pit to follow the tracks must make another successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check to pick up the trail again.

Spiked Pit. The pit is 10 feet deep, and its bottom is filled with spikes that deal 11 (2d10) piercing damage to a creature that falls in, as well as falling damage. The

walls of the pit are rough, and they offer handholds to climbers. Area 12 begins on its far side.

Creature. A quasit named Jot was bound in the southwestern alcove an age ago to guard the contents of the sarcophagus in area 12. It was in suspended animation until a few decades ago, and it now waits on the other side of the arch just out of sight in area 12. Jot is alerted by any light source the characters have, so it can prepare for them. (If the characters have no light source and are stealthy, Jot might not become aware of them.) The quasit darts out of its hiding place and attacks the first creature that climbs out of the pit on the western side.

Development. Jot doesn't fight to the death. If it takes any damage, or if more than one character attacks it, Jot laughs and says, "You broke the binding. My watch over the dragonpriest is over!" It uses its next action to become invisible. It then turns into a bat and flies along the 10-foot-high ceiling across the pit.

If Jot escapes, the characters might see it again. It knows that death on the Material Plane means a return to the Abyss, so it prefers to harass the characters while they are otherwise engaged, laughing and mocking as it does so.

Secret Door. Finding the door on the southern wall requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. The door opens with a simple push inward.

11. SECRET ROOM

Dust coats the contents of this tiny chamber, obscuring runes inscribed on the southern wall.

Inscription. If the southern wall is cleared of dust, the runes are revealed to be a message in Draconic. Someone who can read the language understands it as "A dragonpriest entombed alive for transgressions of the Law still retains the honor of his position."

Secret Door. A secret trapdoor in the floor requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check to find. The door opens by pulling it upward. It leads to a 3-foot-by-3-foot crawl space that connects to a similar trapdoor in area 12.

12. TOMB OF A FAILED DRAGONPRIEST

Violet marble tiles cover the floor and walls, though all are cracked or broken, revealing rough-hewn stone beneath. Sconces are attached to the walls at each corner. One holds a torch that burns with greenish fire. A marble sarcophagus, easily nine feet long, lies in the room's center. The coffin is carved with dragon imagery, and the head of the sarcophagus resembles a dragon's head. Rusting iron clasps firmly lock down the lid.

Torch. The greenish fire is a *continual flame* spell.

Sarcophagus. Six rusted iron latches hold down the sarcophagus lid. Opening a single latch requires a

successful DC 15 Strength check. If the six latches are opened, the lid can be removed with a successful DC 15 Strength check or by the effort of any combination of characters whose combined Strength is 30 or higher.

Inside, a dragonpriest lies imprisoned, kept alive by virtue of a *sequester* spell that is dispelled with a flash of green light when the sarcophagus is opened. If the characters look inside, read:

In the coffin is a troll! It's dressed in rotted finery, but its jewelry and rings adorned with tiny silver dragons still sparkle. The creature's body is shrunken and elongated, and its flesh is a rubbery, putrid green. Its black hair is long, thick, and ropy. Its beady black eyes flash open, and it snarls.

This dragonpriest delved into magic that the dragon cult deemed profane—he permanently transformed himself from an elf into a troll. For this crime, the cult entombed him alive, though the honor of his station remained. The dragonpriest attacks his rescuers, his mind all but transformed to that of a troll over the ages of his burial. He had a name, but he has forgotten it, although he has not forgotten how to speak Elvish and Draconic.

Creature. In his current state, the dragonpriest is slower and weaker than a normal troll. Use **troll** statistics, but the dragonpriest starts with 30 hit points, regenerates only 5 hit points per round (up to normal for a troll), and can't use Multiattack. If he is defeated in this state, the dragonpriest is worth 450 XP.

Development. The dragonpriest won't pursue fleeing characters. Instead, he continues to repose in his tomb until hunger finally draws him forth to hunt five days later. By that time, he uses the normal troll statistics, retaining his additional languages.

Treasure. The dragonpriest has an ornate ceremonial dagger (worth 125 gp), two silver rings (15 gp each), and a silver amulet (15 gp). Scattered across the bottom of the sarcophagus are 220 sp, 50 gp, and four *spell scrolls*: *command*, *cure wounds* (2nd level), *inflict wounds* (2nd level), and *guiding bolt* (2nd level).

13. EMPTY ROOM

Several empty rooms in the fortress have the same characteristics. Nothing of note can be found in any of them.

This ruined chamber stands empty of all but a litter of rocky debris.

14. ENCHANTED WATER CACHE

The stone relief-carved door sealing this chamber portrays a dragon-like fish swimming.

The door is locked but can be opened with thieves' tools and a successful DC 20 Dexterity check.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

In areas 13 and beyond, monsters move through the halls of the Sunless Citadel. For every 12 hours the characters spend in the dungeon, roll a d20 and refer to the following table if the characters are in an accessible hallway or room at that time.

d20	Encounter
1	1d6 kobolds
2	1d6 giant rats
3	1d4 goblins
4	1d2 hobgoblins
5	1d4 skeletons
6	1d6 twig blights
7–20	No encounter

If the door is opened, read:

This ten-foot-square chamber is hewn from stone. It contains an upright keg fashioned of rusted iron. Rusted pipes lead from the keg into the floor.

If anyone shakes or strikes the keg, the sound of sloshing liquid comes from inside it. The connecting pipes hold the keg in place, preventing it from being detached. The characters can remove a wide metallic bung on the keg's top with a successful DC 15 Strength check, or someone can easily stave in the side of the keg.

Creatures. If the keg is breached, the **ice mephit** and the **steam mephit** confined within it are released. The creatures attack anyone who has disturbed the keg.

Treasure. Within the keg are five tiny sapphires (worth 10 gp each) used to bring about the magic that bound the mephits.

15. DRAGON CELL

Crudely executed symbols and glyphs, scribed in bright green dye, decorate this large and irregularly shaped crumbling chamber. A large pit in the center shows evidence of a recent fire. A metallic cage in the middle of the southern wall contains a gaping hole and stands empty. A small wooden bench draped with green cloth is next to the cage, and several small objects rest on it. A bedroll lies near the wooden bench, and the sound of whimpering comes from inside it.

Until recently, the kobolds confined a white dragon wyrmling in the cage and placed it under heavy guard. Those guards were not strong enough to stand against a sortie by goblins that stole the wyrmling a week ago.

Creature. Meepo, the **kobold** who was his tribe's Keeper of Dragons, is now the sole occupant of the chamber. He is heartsick at the loss of the wyrmling and spends much of his time nowadays in nightmare-ridden sleep in his bedroll. With the loss of his charge, Meepo's status is in the gutter. He doesn't react to anything short of loud noise or direct prodding.



If he is disturbed, Meepo is frightened but willing to talk. He is weepy. His numerous obvious scars are souvenirs of his job as Keeper of Dragons. If he is asked about the cage or queried in any way that mentions a dragon, he says, "The clan's dragon ... we lost it. The wretched goblins stole Calcrux, our dragon!"

To all other questions, Meepo responds by saying, "Meepo don't know, but Yusdrayl does. Meepo take you to meet Yusdrayl, our leader, if you make nice. You get safe passage, if you promise to make nice. Maybe if you promise to rescue dragon, Yusdrayl make nice to you, answer questions."

Meepo perks up as he senses the possibility of getting the dragon back. True to his word, he guides the characters to area 21. Along the way, he shouts out "Tickle-corn!" (in Draconic) from time to time, explaining that it's a password that tells other kobolds the characters are friendly. If the characters leave Meepo behind, or if they are antagonistic toward him, the characters don't learn the password, and all other kobolds are hostile toward the party.

Development. If combat occurs in this chamber, the kobolds in the nearby area 16 are alerted, and they rush out to meet enemies.

Investigating. The symbols on the walls are crudely formed in Draconic and read, "Here There Be Dragons." The metallic cage is all but destroyed and can't be used to restrain captives. A search of the cage reveals white scales that someone who has proficiency in Nature or Survival can determine to be from no natural animal. A successful DC 15 check using either skill identifies the scales as those of a white dragon wyrm. The firepit, if its ashes are sifted, is found to hold charred bits of kobold bones and armor.

Treasure. The bench serves as a sort of tiny altar. Resting on it are containers of green dye, a paintbrush made of goblin-hair bristles, and four tiny jade figurines of dragons (worth 15 gp each). A thorough search of the firepit and a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals another jade figurine.

16. KOBOLD GUARDROOM

Three rooms in the fortress serve as kobold guard stations. All have the same characteristics.

Door Trap. The door leading to the room is trapped with a tripwire that the kobolds connect after shutting the door. Hitting this tripwire, 2 inches off the ground stretched between opposite door frames and running up the frame, causes the trap to trigger. A character who succeeds on a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the wire. If a character then succeeds on a DC 10 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, the tripwire is cut without triggering the trap. A character can attempt this check using any edged weapon or edged tool in place of thieves' tools, but does so with disadvantage.

On a failed Dexterity check, the trap triggers, tipping over a clay pot of offal, garbage, and dragon droppings that falls on any creature in the doorway and splatters in a 5-foot radius. A creature hit by the stuff must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. An affected creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a successful save.

The kobolds release the tension on the tripwire when they exit, meaning that any guardroom that has been vacated can be entered safely.

A small pit of embers, built of broken masonry and portions of shattered stone sculptures, smolders in the center of this chamber. Arrayed around the pit are several small rugs woven of matted hair and dead fungi.

Creatures. The room serves as a barracks and guard post for the kobold tribe's warriors. Three **kobolds** stand guard inside, unless they have already come forth to reinforce other kobolds.

If the characters try to talk and the interaction is successful, the kobolds direct the characters to head toward "Yusdrayl on her dragon throne," giving them simple directions to area 21 and warning them to avoid rousing the ire of Yusdrayl's elite guards.

17. DRAGON CHOW

A character who approaches the door can smell the stench of what lies beyond. If the door is opened, read:

Rats fill the room, trapped among their own waste. A small half-barrier prevents the rats from easily escaping when the door is open.

Creatures. The rats are used as food for the dragon wyrm that was once stabled in area 15. Since the abduction of the dragon, the kobolds have neglected the rats, and in the meantime the rodents have chewed away the fastenings of the barrier. One round after someone opens the door, the rats knock the barrier over and rush out, attacking as a **swarm of rats** for 1 round, after which they disperse into the dungeon.

18. PRISON

Each door that lead to the prison chamber is locked, requiring a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to unlock, and also barred on the outside with an iron rod. If a character attempts to open either door while any kobolds are present, the kobolds warn against doing so. Opening a door in spite of this warning turns the kobolds hostile.

Four small humanoids are shackled by thick, rusted chains attached to a large iron spike set in the floor. Several broken weapons and sundered shields lie in one corner.

Creatures. Four **goblins** are chained here, taken prisoner during the course of several skirmishes. Every so often, the kobolds remove a goblin from the room and ransom it back to the goblins (for a price of 2d10 sp). Those who can't be ransomed are bound for the kobold cook pot. The goblins whine and cower pathetically if any characters enter the room. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools can open the lock on the chains, or the chains can be broken (Strength DC 20) or sundered (AC 15, 60 hit points).

The goblins promise anything and everything in exchange for their release, including safe passage for the characters to their chief. The creatures have no power to guarantee their promises, however. In addition, if the goblins are released, any understanding the characters have with the kobolds is voided. Freed goblins flee at the first hint of trouble, and they double-cross their rescuers if threatened by other goblins.

19. HALL OF DRAGONS

A double row of relief-carved marble columns march the length of this long, large hall. The worn carvings depict entwining dragons.

Creatures. An elite squad of three **kobolds** (each with 7 hit points) patrols the hall, considering the duty an honor. The guards pay particular attention to the door that leads to area 24, which is along the route traditionally used by goblin raiders. These kobolds react to the character's presence in the same way as the ordinary ones described in area 16. If the characters head for area 21 without causing hostilities, these guards follow the characters into Yusdrayl's presence.

Development. If combat erupts here, the result is likely to be deadly for the party. Any kobolds remaining in the areas nearby enter the room as reinforcements. Yusdrayl and her two guards arrive from area 21 at the start of the second round of combat. At the start of the fifth round, the kobolds in the area 16 to the southwest of this room come on the scene. At the start of the eighth round, the kobolds from area 23 enter the fray. (Kobolds that leave their original area and are slain here should be noted for possible future reference.)

20. KOBOLD COLONY

The strong wooden door that leads to the kobolds' living quarters is barred from the inside. Characters who give the proper password ("Ticklecorn!" spoken in Draconic; see area 15) or who make a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check can convince the kobolds within to unbar the door. Otherwise, the kobolds open the door only when guards return to the room for a shift change.

Several small but smoky fires light this wide and high chamber. Spits, tanning racks, and other implements of a primitive culture are visible through the haze. Several small figures busily work and play within the chamber.

Twenty-four kobolds occupy the room, but only three **kobolds** are capable warriors that challenge unescorted intruders. Seven other kobolds are **commoners**, but with 3 hit points each, and a -1 reduction to hit and damage compared to the *Monster Manual* statistics. The other tribe members here are too young, too old, or too cowardly to defend themselves; they flee if combat breaks out and are worth no XP. Even the kobolds capable of fighting run away if they are outmatched.

The kobolds here answer all questions with a quick "Yusdrayl knows."

An attack on these kobolds brings reinforcements, as described in area 19, though each group arrives 1 round later because of the extra distance it must traverse.

21. DRAGON THRONE

A short throne stands near the west wall, constructed of fallen bits of masonry stacked against an old altar. On the top of the altar sit a variety of small items. The portion of the altar that serves as the throne's back features a carving of a rearing dragon. A metallic key is held firmly in the dragon's open jaws.

Creatures. Normally sitting on the throne is the kobolds' leader, **Yusdrayl** (see appendix B). Two elite **kobolds** (7 hit points each) guard her. Those who come to Yusdrayl's chamber can talk to her; she is hostile only if she knows that the characters have slain other kobolds. Characters who antagonize her while talking earn the leader's ire and a savage attack.

Yusdrayl can speak to the following questions:

Why are kobolds in this place? "Kobolds are heir to dragons. As the mightiest among my people, I have led a brave few to this ancient holy site, where dragons were worshiped long ago." Yusdrayl knows nothing else about the history of the fortress, except the name of the dragon that was once revered here, which is Ashardalon.

What about the goblins/fruit/Belak? "The Outcast, he lives below. He grows the fruit, which he gives to the goblins. The dragon-thieving goblins are his servants!"

What about the twig monsters? “The twig blights are pets of the Outcast. They are more numerous below, in the Twilight Grove.”

What about the lost human adventurers? “They went to fight the goblins and never returned.”

What about the stolen wyrmling dragon? “The goblins stole our dragon! If you return Calcryx to us, I shall grant you a reward. Meepo can accompany you if you desire.”

If the characters decide to go looking for the dragon, the kobolds direct them toward the passage that connects area 15 and area 25, which is the “back way” into goblin territory. Yusdrayl and her followers know nothing useful about the goblin lair. If the characters take Meepo with them, he can serve as their guide to that location. If Meepo goes along and is slain, the kobolds count it as a small loss as long as the dragon is rescued.

Possible rewards include the key in the carved dragon’s mouth, or any two of the items on the altar. Yusdrayl is also willing to sell the key for 50 gp.

Development. If hostilities break out, reinforcements arrive in the manner described in area 19.

If the characters return Calcryx, Yusdrayl can be convinced to aid them in an assault on the remaining goblins. You determine the nature of the aid.

Treasure. The key clenched in the mouth of the carved dragon opens the door to area 7. Yusdrayl has keys to area 18 and the chains there, a key to the doors in area 24, and a key that once fit the cage in area 15. She also has 35 gp.

The items assembled on the altar include a *Quaal’s feather token* (tree), three *spell scrolls* (*mage armor*, *spider climb*, and *knock*), and a small flask that contains three doses of *elixir of health*.

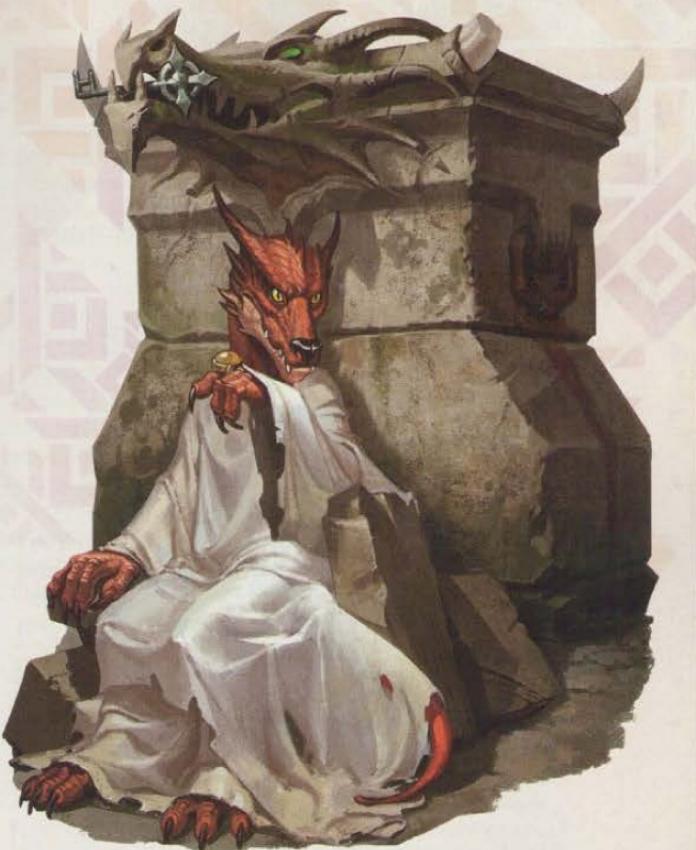
22. LARDER

The odor of rotting meat permeates this chamber. Most of the rusty iron hooks in the ceiling are empty, but a few hold the skinned carcasses of large vermin, huge fungoid stalks, and several massive insect carapaces. On a small, battered bench along the south wall are pieces of nearly useless cutlery and rusting skinning knives.

The kobolds bring food for their tribe up from the Underdark and store it in a nearby chamber. The rotting flesh is that of rats, bats, overlarge cave crickets, beetles, goblin parts, and spiders. The room also has a selection of fungi and mushrooms.

23. UNDERDARK ACCESS

The floor is partially collapsed on the east side of this room, revealing a tunnel. The passage is unworked, and it fluctuates widely in width, height, and direction as natural tunnels do. Within the room, hunting gear is racked on the wall, and several pallets lie nearby.



The kobolds used the natural passage to first enter the Sunless Citadel, and they continue to travel through it for hunting and gathering forays into the Underdark.

The tunnel leads beyond the scope of this adventure, but it could be a route to a site you have designed.

Creatures. If they have not come forth as reinforcements, three **kobolds** camp here, serving as hunters and guardians of the tunnel. They react as described in area 16.

24. TRAPPED ACCESS

The doors on both ends of the corridor are locked and can be opened by a character who succeeds on a DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves’ tools.

At the other end of a twenty-foot-long corridor is another closed door.

Hidden Pit. The map shows the location of a concealed trapdoor. A 2-foot-wide catwalk along the pit’s center allows safe passage over the pit. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character notices the door’s unmortared rim. After that, a character who makes a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check deduces the location of the catwalk, as well as how the pit operates.

If a creature steps on the pit cover, the lid flips open, dumping the creature 10 feet into the pit. With a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, a creature can use

thieves' tools and an object, such as an iron spike, to wedge the lid shut.

Kobolds regularly check the trap and manually reset it when necessary.

25. EMPTY CHAMBER

Two empty chambers in the eastern end of the fortress have the same characteristics.

This empty chamber is home only to rat droppings, crumbled flagstone, and stains.

Investigating. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices tracks in the dust. Some tracks were made by rats and some by humanoids. A character who then succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check ascertains that the rat tracks are very recent, maybe a day old, and that the humanoid tracks are almost a month old and were made by three or four human-sized humanoids moving across the area to the north.

Trap. The door that connects the northernmost empty chamber with area 31 contains a trap. See area 31 for more details.

26. DRY FOUNTAIN

Dust and odd bits of stony debris and rubble lie scattered on the floor. An ornate fountain is built into the eastern wall. Though cracked and stained, the fountain's overarching carving of a diving dragon retains its beauty. A relief-carved stone door stands on the western wall.

Investigating. The debris and dust covering the floor display the same tracks described in area 25.

Fountain. A thin layer of scum coats the fountain's basin, but it is otherwise dry. Under the scrutiny of a *detect magic* spell, the fountain emits an aura of conjuration. A character who makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a mostly worn-away inscription in Draconic on the basin's front. It reads, "Let there be fire."

If a character speaks the phrase aloud, the magic of the fountain functions one last time. Reddish liquid begins to well from the diving dragon's mouth, slowly accumulating in the basin. If the liquid is collected, it can be used as a *potion of fire breath*. After it is used in this way, the fountain loses its magic.

Western Door. Carvings on the western door show skeletal dragons. A Draconic inscription on the door reads, "Rebuke the dead, open the way." Within 5 feet of the door, the air is noticeably cooler, and the door itself is cold to the touch.

The locked door opens only when someone targets it with a *knock* spell or an effect that turns undead. If someone does so, the door glows ghostly blue and swings open silently.

Scythe Trap. If someone tries to open the door without first deactivating the lock, a scythe blade springs forth, targeting the area immediately in front of the door; +5 to hit, 4 (1d8) slashing damage.

The blade is concealed in a slot in the ceiling, 10 feet up. A character who succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check can find the slot before the trap is sprung.

The opening, once discovered, can be blocked with an iron spike or a similar object. A character who does so must make a DC 15 Dexterity check or Strength check. On a failed check, the blockage falls out when the trap is sprung. Alternatively, a character can use thieves' tools and a successful DC 20 Dexterity check to pull the trap mechanism out of the slot and dismantle it. Either task takes about a minute.

27. SANCTUARY

Five dusty sarcophagi, three to the north and two to the south, stand on end in this silent chamber. Each of the carved stone coffins resembles a noble, elf-like humanoid in ceremonial robes. An altar, with images of dragons carved into its black obsidian, is set in the center of the west wall. A single candle burns brightly on the altar. Next to the candle are a small whistle and a crystal flask.

Creatures. Five **skeletons** emerge en masse from the sarcophagi to attack those who disturb the altar or open any sarcophagus. These creatures pursue characters who flee.

Treasure. The candle has a *continual flame* spell cast on it. In the flask is a *potion of resistance* (fire). The whistle, made of crystal, has the name *Night Caller* inscribed on it in Dwarvish. See appendix A for a description of this item. A secret compartment in the shrine, requiring a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check to find, holds a coffer containing six peridot jewels carved in a likeness of a dragon (worth 10 gp each).

28. INFESTED CELLS

This section of hallway contains six doors, all slightly ajar. The area smells musky.

The doors lead to small cells. Each door is open just wide enough to enable Small and smaller creatures to slip through without having to open it farther.

Creatures. The two southernmost cells and the one to the northeast contain abandoned giant rat nests. One **giant rat** lives in each of the other cells. Any noise or light in the area attracts all three creatures.

Investigating. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices tracks in the dust here. Some tracks were made by rats and some by humanoids. A character who then succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check ascertains that the rat tracks are recent, perhaps a few minutes old, and the humanoid tracks are almost a month old and were

made by four human-sized individuals moving across the area to the north. Only three of those individuals returned south.

Treasure. The occupied rat nests contain shiny bits collected by their current owners. Poking through each nest turns up 2d6 – 2 sp, 1d6 – 1 gp, and 1d4 – 1 gems (worth 5 gp each).

29. DISABLED TRAPS

The cobblestone floor contains two trapdoors blocked open by iron spikes. The north wall holds a dry fountain carved with an overarching diving dragon. A faint rotten stench pervades the room.

Investigating. The two marked areas on the map are traps that were jammed open by the lost adventuring party. Examining each one reveals a 20-foot-deep pit containing only rat bones, rusted metal bits, and filth.

Chances to find or follow the trail noted in area 28 are similar here. The trail of the missing adventuring party skirts around the traps and leads to the western wooden door.

Development. Those who spend more than 3 rounds in the chamber conversing in normal tones, or otherwise making noise, draw the attention of the inhabitants of area 30, who hide to ready an ambush.

Trapped Fountain. The dry fountain on the northern wall looks remarkably like the one described in area 26. Under the scrutiny of a *detect magic* spell, the fountain emits a faint aura of evocation. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals suspicious metallic tubes in the carved dragon's mouth, as well as a small, rusted iron canister. A character who makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a mostly worn-away inscription in Draconic on the front of the basin. It reads, "Let there be death."

Anyone who speaks this phrase aloud in Draconic triggers the trap. A poison mist sprays forth from the dragon's mouth, filling a 20-foot cube and expending the canister's last charge. Those in the area must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 5 (1d10) poison damage and becomes poisoned for 10 minutes. On a successful save, the creature takes only half the poison damage and is poisoned for 1 minute.

Western Door. A character who approaches the western door can smell the stench of rotten meat coming from the other side.

30. MAMA RAT

An oppressive smell suffuses the air, rising from chewed carcasses of cave rats, smaller vermin, and a few humanoid-looking creatures. The bodies lie upon a floor of filth, old bones, hair, and fur that combine to make a particularly large and vile nest.

Investigating. The humanoid corpses in the chamber include two goblins, a kobold, and one human male—a member of the lost adventuring party (Karakas the ranger).

Creatures. Three **giant rats** occupy the area, along with a monstrously swollen female **diseased giant rat** (Medium [6 feet long], 16 hit points, +5 to hit, challenge rating 1/4 [50 XP]) that the goblins call Guthash (Bloated One). The giant rats that hunt in the Sunless Citadel all descend from her. These creatures attack and attempt to eat all trespassers.

Treasure. Poking through the refuse over a period of 10 minutes uncovers 312 sp, 68 gp, and 3 gems (worth 25 gp each). On and around the ranger's corpse are several items: studded leather armor, five daggers, a longbow, a backpack (containing a water skin, one day's rations, a bedroll, a tinderbox, and three torches), a quiver with six arrows, a *potion of healing*, and a pouch that holds 17 gp. A gold ring (worth 10 gp) on Karakas's finger is engraved (in Common) with his name.

31. CALTROP HALL

The door that leads north into this hallway is closed and fitted with a bell that clangs if someone opens the door without doing so very slowly.

With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, someone who carefully opens the door might spot the bell attached to the door about 3 feet off the ground. A character who examines the space around the door before opening it and succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the damage done to the door when the goblins fastened the bell to it.

If the bell rings, the noise alerts the goblins in area 32. They duck behind the low wall and wait to ambush intruders that enter the corridor.

The ten-foot-wide hall is liberally strewn with sharp caltrops. On the northern wall, passage to the room beyond is partially blocked by a roughly mortared, three-foot-high wall, complete with crenellations.

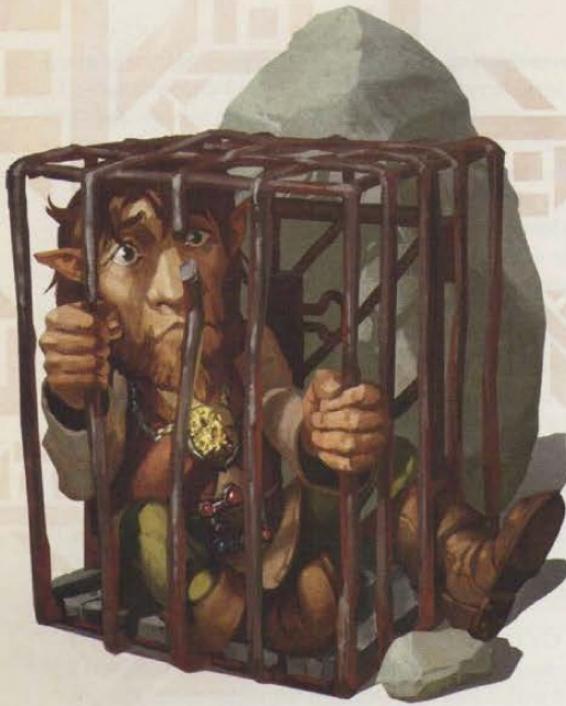
Caltrops. The floor in the hallway is strewn with caltrops; see "Adventuring Gear" in chapter 5 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Creatures. Two **goblins** in area 32 pop up over the wall if they are alerted to the characters' presence. The creatures use ranged attacks as the characters move through the hall.

Treasure. About two hundred caltrops are strewn on the floor.

32. GOBLIN GATE

The filth on the floor, stains on the walls, shabby hides, and firepit attest to the years of use this room has seen at the hands of creatures unconcerned with hygiene. On the eastern side of the southern wall is a crudely mortared half-wall, complete with crenellations.



Creatures. Two **goblins** are stationed behind the rough, 3-foot-high wall. They are hostile to intruders, but unwilling to die facing a superior force. If captured, these goblins know the same information that Erky Timbers in area 34 does.

Development. If one of the goblins gets away, it warns the goblins in area 33. The alerted goblins prepare an ambush for intruders in that area.

Investigating. A search of the room turns up putrid jerky, vinegary wine in poorly preserved water skins, and other worthless bits of clutter.

33. PRACTICE RANGE

The sound of goblins engaged in target practice might be heard from outside any of the doors to the practice range.

Dozens of blunted and broken arrows lie on the cracked cobblestone floor, and a few protrude from three crudely sewn, human-sized targets hung along the center of the south wall. The northern third of the room is separated from the south by a crudely mortared and crenellated half-wall. A permanent camp of sorts lies north of the wall, complete with a fire ring and several small iron cook pots.

Creatures. The three **goblins** assigned to watch the room spend some of their time shooting at the hair-and-fur-filled burlap dummies that look vaguely like humans and elves. The rest of the time they drink too much goblin wine.

When fighting, the goblins try to use the 3-foot-high wall for cover while shooting their foes.

Treasure. One goblin has a silver flask of dwarven make (worth 50 gp) filled with vile goblin wine. Another goblin has a key to open the locked door to area 34.

Development. If things go badly for the goblins, one of them attempts to warn the goblin warriors in area 39.

34. GOBLIN STOCKADE

The wooden door is closed and locked. It can be opened by a character who succeeds on a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

Squalor reigns in this low-ceilinged room. A large iron spike is driven into the floor near the door, and a small iron cage is set farther back. Several sets of corroded manacles are connected to the walls, and some still bind a few crumbling skeletons.

Creatures. Three **kobolds** are bound with crude rope to the iron spike. A battered gnome lies in the cage, which is almost too small for him. It's easy to untie the kobolds. Freeing the caged gnome requires either a successful DC 15 Strength check to bend the bars or a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to open the cage lock.

The kobolds are aware that the goblins might try to ransom them back to the other kobolds. Uncertain of their chances with the characters, the kobolds are unhelpful and reluctant to be set free. If they are released and shown a clear line of retreat, the kobolds flee. They know very little, but they react positively to Meepo's presence or if they are told that the characters intend to free Calcryx.

The gnome is named Erky Timbers, an **acolyte** with 17 (5d6) hit points who knows Common, Draconic, Gnomish, and Goblin. He has the cleric's Channel Divinity: Turn Undead feature, which he can use once after each short or long rest.

If he is released, he helpfully answers questions. He knows the following information:

Why are you here? "Months past, I was on my way to seek my fortune and took the Old Road. My bad luck that the goblin bandits caught me; I've been here ever since. My deity's blessings have kept me healthy; otherwise I'm sure I'd be dead from starvation and abuse."

What about the goblins/Belak? "I've heard the goblins talk about the Twilight Grove down below. A wicked old human called Belak—a spellcaster, I suspect—tends an enchanted garden and harvests fruit from something the goblins call the Gulthias Tree, but they speak of it only in the most terrified of whispers. The enchanted fruit grows on the Gulthias Tree."

What's the deal with the fruit? "The midsummer fruit restores spirit and vigor to those who eat it; the pale midwinter fruit steals the same. Belak allows the goblins to sell the fruit on the surface, but I don't know why."

What about the twig blights? "Twig blights live in the level below, with the Gulthias Tree."

What about the lost human adventurers? "The goblins caught three of them over a month ago, and they were captives with me in here for a while. They said their names were Talgen, Sharwyn, and Sir Braford. The goblins kept them in here only about a week before they removed them. Belak wanted them, and that's the last I've heard about that."

Development. If the characters fail to suggest it, Erky Timbers asks to join the party as a temporary member. The gnome serves as a loyal friend. Currently, though, he has no gear. Those who free Erky gain XP as if they defeated him in combat.

Manacles. The rusted iron restraints can bind a Small or Medium creature. If the characters are taken prisoner (see area 36) and bound here, escaping from the manacles requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity check. A set of manacles can be broken with a successful DC 20 Strength check, or a character proficient with thieves' tools can pick the lock on a set of manacles with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. Manacles have AC 15 and 15 hit points.

35. TRAPPED CORRIDOR

Hidden Pit. The map shows the location of a concealed trapdoor. A 2-foot-wide catwalk along the pit's center allows safe passage over the pit. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character notices the door's unmortared rim. After that, a character who makes a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check deduces the location of the catwalk, as well as how the pit operates.

If a creature steps on the pit cover, the lid flips open, dumping the creature 10 feet into the pit. With a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, a creature can use thieves' tools and an object, such as an iron spike, to wedge the lid shut.

Development. If characters fall into the pit or otherwise make excessive noise, the goblins in the area 36 to the north are alerted. Alerted goblins respond in 2 rounds. These goblins also check the trap and manually reset it.

Treasure. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check made while searching around the pit uncovers a long-lost gold ring with an inset sapphire (worth 25 gp).

36. GOBLIN BANDITS

Three rooms in the northern part of the fortress serve as living quarters for goblin bandits. All have the same characteristics.

The stench, garbage, and carrion here are evidence of years of use by unsanitary tenants. Tattered hides stretched on frames form six unstable hammocks around a much-used firepit. Battered cooking equipment is mixed indiscriminately with broken or worn arms and armor.

Creatures. Three **goblins**, who proudly call themselves bandits, are in the room when the characters enter. In better times, two or more bandit groups would

hunt the Old Road together, preying on travelers. Now, the bandits content themselves with an occasional hunt in the wilds of the Underdark (see area 43), as well as preying on the kobolds.

Development. The goblins might try to knock the characters unconscious and imprison them in area 34, locking victims into manacles. They take captured equipment to the goblin chief in area 41. The bandits are likely to try to ransom the prisoners to someone in Oakhurst. Kerowyn Hucrele is prepared to pay such a ransom, taking it out of the characters' prospective reward.

If things go badly for the goblins, one of them attempts to warn the goblin warriors in area 39.

Investigating. A search of the room turns up putrid jerky, vinegary wine in poorly preserved water skins, and worthless bits of clutter.

37. TROPHY ROOM

Both of the wooden doors that offer access to the trophy room are closed and locked. Either door can be opened by a character who succeeds on a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

Mounted and stuffed animal heads adorn the walls. The mounting job is sloppy, and the assortment of heads includes cattle, rats, and other not particularly impressive specimens. A few grisly trophies share the wall with the animals, including a couple of kobold heads. Smashed and broken cabinets and small tables litter the periphery of the room, mute victims of some sort of rampage. A rusted iron spike stands in the center of the room, trailing a broken chain. Thin patches of frost coat sections of the walls, floor, and debris.

Creature. Calcryx, the **white dragon wyrmling**, is initially out of view, resting behind a broken table. The goblins used the iron chain to bind her, but she broke free and rampaged through the room, destroying the floor displays. Balsag, the bugbear responsible for capturing the dragon, hasn't returned to bring her under control, and the other goblins fear to enter.

The wyrmling finds her current situation superior to her station as the kobolds' pet. She is hostile to those who enter this chamber. If battle breaks out and Meepo accompanies the party, the dragon targets him first.

Treasure. The wyrmling has scoured the room and gathered all items of worth into a nest she made behind the table. The valuables include a dragon-shaped, jade figurine (worth 20 gp), a crystal goblet (5 gp), and twenty-four pieces of fine silverware (1 gp each).

Of particular note is a sealed scroll case carved of bone, carrying an inscription. Runes in the Dwarvish alphabet spell out the word "Khundruk." An old parchment is within the case. Age and water damage have destroyed most of it, but a short message in Dwarvish remains: "... the remaining few. By order of Durgeddin the Black, we have created a secret dwarven redoubt. None shall find us; however, ..." Though the information



makes little sense, even to most dwarves, the case and the parchment can fetch up to 100 gp if sold in a dwarf community.

38. GOBLIN PANTRY

The north and south walls of this chamber are stacked halfway to the ceiling with ill-made barrels, boxes, and crates. A clear path allows easy access between the west and east doors.

The goblins store water, wine, and food, none of which is of good quality, in a pantry accessible through two doors. The stockpile includes five pints of oil, along with a few small barrels labeled "Elf Pudding" in Goblin.

39. DRAGON HAZE

Several torches mounted in crude sconces burn fitfully around this chamber, filling the air with a haze. A double row of marble columns carved with entwining dragons runs the length of the hall.

As long as the torches burn, the hall is lighted, but the haze makes the area lightly obscured. The haze never builds to suffocating levels, thanks to natural ventilation.

Any loud noise in the chamber attracts the attention of goblins in the area 36 to the south, as well as in area 40. The goblins in area 40 prepare for danger but don't leave their stations, while those in area 36 come to investigate within 2 rounds.

40. GOBLINVILLE

Anyone who stands within 10 feet of a door leading to the goblins' main living area can hear the voices of the goblins inside, unless they have been alerted to danger.

What might once have been a cathedral is now a goblin lair, thick with the filth of years of goblin life. Scores of wall- and floor-mounted sconces filled with violet-glowing fungi provide illumination. Dozens of goblins go about their daily business, which involves a lot of rudeness and violence. Along the southern wall is a heaping pile of assorted items, including wagon wheels, broken armor and rusted arms, chests, small statues, antique furniture, and artwork.

Creatures. Thirty-four goblins are at home when the characters arrive, but only four of the **goblins** are warriors. Ten of the other goblins are **commoners**, but with 3 hit points each and a -1 reduction to hit and damage compared to the *Monster Manual* statistics. The other twenty creatures are noncombatants, too feeble or too fearful to defend themselves; they try to flee through the northernmost or the eastern exit. This stampede should dominate the first moments of battle, and even the gob-

lins capable of fighting refuse to stick around just to lose their lives. Noncombatants are worth no XP.

These goblinoids know the same information, in cruder form, that Erky in area 34 knows.

Development. An attack on the goblins brings reinforcements from area 36 and warns the goblin chief in area 41 that something is amiss. Grenl, the goblin shaman in area 41, might emerge to protect the tribe.

Investigating. The goblins collect the phosphorescent fungi from the grove below. They need its light for close work, such as reading, and the fungus is edible. Crude equipment for cooking, skinning game, tanning hides, and other basic gear fills the area. Food is usually collected from the Underdark through area 43.

Treasure. Among the tribal equipment, near the shaman's bedding, is a healer's kit and a poisoner's kit.

The pile along the southern wall contains the tribe's loot, mixed in with lots of other stuff taken from the goblins' victims. The characters can find almost any piece of mundane gear that has a value of 5 gp or lower. Two items of considerable value can be unearthed by separate successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) checks: a fine agate statue of the elven deity Corellon Larethian (worth 30 gp) and a Medium chain shirt.

41. HALL OF THE GOBLIN CHIEF

If the goblinoid guards in the chief's hall have been alerted, or if they hear conflict in area 40, they cover the door for 10 minutes, then investigate the source of the disruptions at their leader's behest.

A circular shaft pierces the floor of this forty-foot-diameter domed chamber. Dim violet light shines out of the shaft, revealing sickly white and gray vines that coat the walls of the shaft. The light is supplemented by four lit wall torches set equidistant around the periphery of the chamber. A crudely fashioned stone throne sits against the curve of the northwestern wall. A large iron chest serves as the throne's footstool. A sapling grows in a wide stone pot next to the throne.

Creatures. The chief of the Durbuluk tribe is Durnn, a **hobgoblin**. He wears splint armor (AC 19) and has 18 hit points, a +4 bonus to hit, a +1 bonus to damage, and Strength 15 (+2). These changes raise his challenge rating to 1 (200 XP). When not in combat, Durnn sits on the throne, and three other **hobgoblins** stand nearby or lounge on stone benches.

The shaman Grenl advises the chief. She is a **goblin** with 10 (3d6) hit points, a Wisdom of 13 (+1), and the following trait:

Spellcasting. Grenl is a 1st-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *poison spray*, *thaumaturgy*
1st level (2 slots): *bane*, *inflict wounds*

A **twig blight**, a gift from Belak the Outcast and a pet of Durnn's, is in the stone pot, and goblins from area 40

occasionally enter the chamber to see to the needs of the tribe's elite that languish here.

Development. Durnn has a *potion of healing* and two vials of antitoxin. Grenl has a *spell scroll of faerie fire* and another of *expeditious retreat*.

The goblins in area 40 don't join the battle if they hear sounds of violence coming from the north. If the fight turns against the chief, however, he might open the door to area 40 and call for aid, or withdraw to area 40 to continue the fight.

Durnn can't surrender for fear of losing face. He won't give up if the opposition includes kobolds. Otherwise, he might call for parley if doing so allows him to avoid death. But he must still look strong while negotiating, so he's unwilling to capitulate in an arrangement that makes him look weak.

Because Durnn and his hobgoblins usurped control of the Durbuluk tribe, Grenl hates them. She also wants to protect her tribe, so she is willing to negotiate a truce if Durnn falls. Grenl also hates and envies Belak, and she wants him gone from the citadel so she can control the Gulthias Tree.

If captured and interrogated, the goblinoids here know what Erky in area 34 knows, with the following addition: Belak wanted all the living human prisoners sent down to him, but in a fit of anger, Durnn slew Talgen. Thus, Durnn sent only Sharwyn and Sir Braford down to the Twilight Grove.

Shaft. The shaft has a 2-foot wall around it, much like the upper end of a well. Because of the wall, a creature pushed toward the shaft can avoid going over the edge by falling prone and succeeding on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. Thick, pale vines line the shaft. The vines are as good as knotted rope for the purpose of climbing.

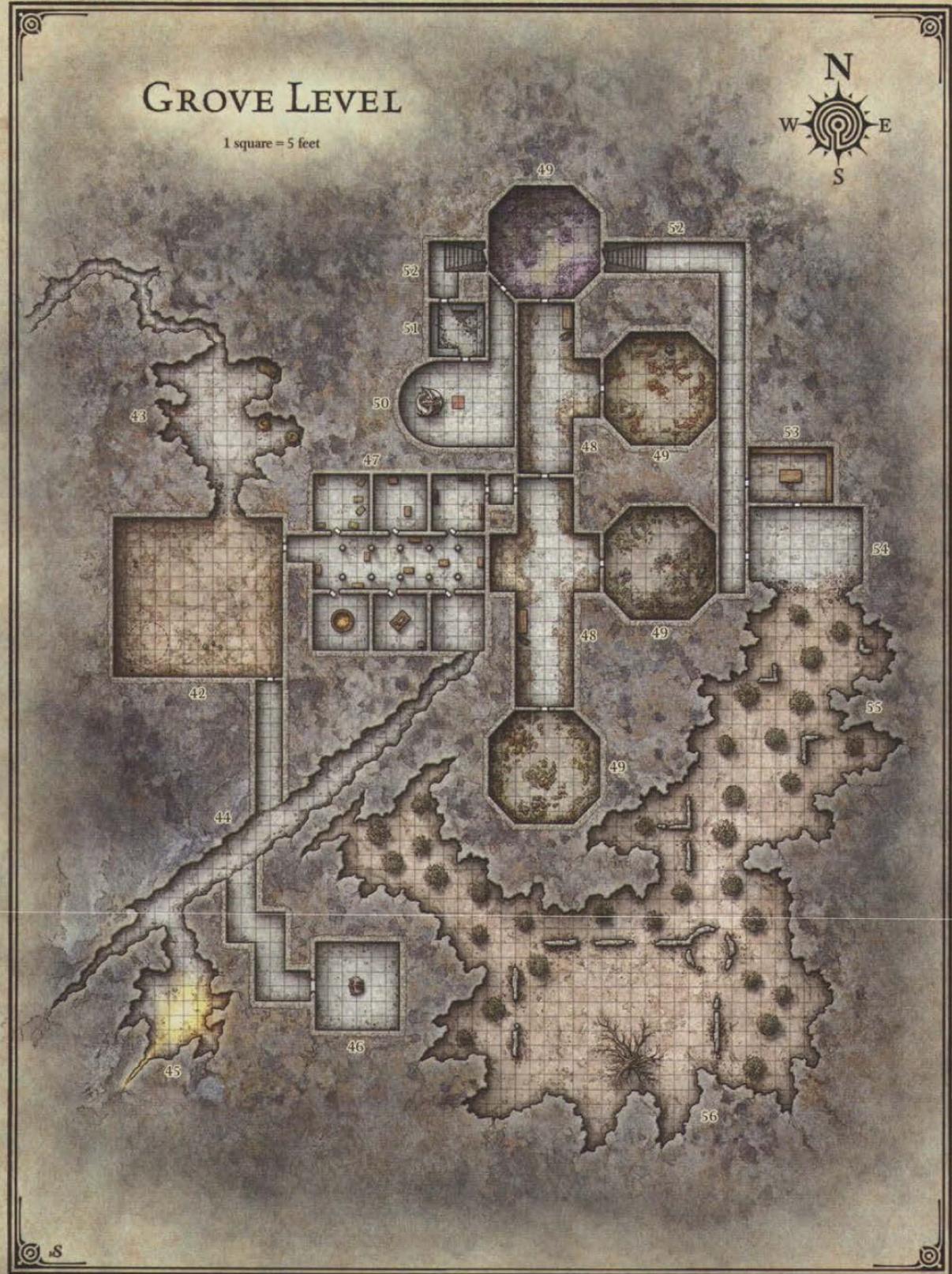
A creature that falls into the shaft can make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to catch the vines. On a failed save, the creature falls 80 feet to the floor of area 42.

Trapped Chest. Durnn's iron chest rests in front of the throne. It is locked (Dexterity DC 15 using thieves' tools) and trapped with a poisoned needle. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check deduces the trap's presence from alterations made to the lock. A character can then remove the needle from the lock by succeeding on a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. On a failed Dexterity check, the trap is triggered.

When the trap is triggered, the needle extends 3 inches straight out from the lock. A creature within striking distance takes 1 piercing damage and must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take 3 (1d6) poison damage.

Treasure. In addition to the valuables mentioned in the "Development" section, Durnn wears Talgen's gold signet ring (worth 20 gp) and splint armor, which is identifiable by the Hucrele family crest worked into the chest pieces. The chief also has the key to his iron chest. Grenl has keys to areas 34 and 37. One of the other hobgoblins wears silver earrings set with moonstones (20 gp each), and another wears a matching necklace (50 gp).

Inside Durnn's iron chest are 231 gp and two onyx gems (30 gp each).



MAP 1.2: GROVE LEVEL

LOCATIONS ON THE GROVE LEVEL

The grove level and the fortress level connect through the shaft that leads from area 41 to 42. The following locations are identified on map 1.2.

42. CENTRAL GARDEN

Luminescent fungus, shedding violet light, clings to the walls and ceiling of this wide cavern. The air is damp, chilly, and redolent with the odors of loam and decay. A layer of earth, mixed with rotting vegetation and the remains of cave animals, covers the floor. Several varieties of mushrooms and fungi grow on the detritus, as well as a few saplings.

Creatures. Two robed **skeletons** (AC 12) serve Belak by tending a fungus garden, using shovels and a rusted wheelbarrow to turn the soil and spread compost. In addition, two mature **twig blights** are rooted in the garden. The twig blights ambush intruders that aren't goblins, and the skeletons attack (with shovels, 1d6 bludgeoning damage) anything that the twig blights target.

Development. The creatures in area 43 investigate any disturbance in the garden after 3 rounds.

43. THE GREAT HUNTER'S ABODE

The floor of this rough cavern is stained and smells of blood and animal musk. Light from glowing fungus reveals the eastern niche, which holds a pallet of matted furs, a wide wooden board on which a variety of weapons are affixed, and a great cloak of patchy black fur hung on a slender pole. To the edge of the niche are two large nests made of hair, dry fungus, and refuse.

Creature. Balsag the **bugbear** and his two **giant rat** "hounds," named Grip and Fang, reside in a natural stone chamber when they're not hunting (25 percent chance of being absent when characters arrive). The bugbear wears a crown of antlers on his head to enhance his frightening appearance. Balsag considers all non-Durbuluk creatures to be potential prey, so he attacks any he meets, roaring in Goblin, "Get ready to meet the cook pot!"

Underdark Access. In the dark of the northern cavern section, a crude tunnel leads away, angling west and downward. The tunnel is like the one in area 23.

Treasure. Two spears, six javelins, one longsword, one greatsword are affixed to the weapon rack. A box hidden under one of the furs in Balsag's bedding, requiring a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice, contains 241 sp and 54 gp.

44. RIFT

A rift opens here, its debris-strewn floor two feet below that of the corridor. No phosphorescent fungus grows in the rift. The corridor continues past the rift, though the opening of the rift has caused it to shift 10 feet to the west. A number of two-foot-diameter holes riddle the floor of the rift. The smell of burnt earth hangs in the air.

The small holes in the floor extend as far down as anyone is capable of probing.

45. RIFT NODE

The rift widens, creating a cavern-like chamber. Small, two-foot-diameter holes riddle the node. A dim fiery glow shines out of one such hole.

Creature. In the glowing hall rests a **fire snake**. Belak used magic to call the creature forth and hopes to train it to be a loyal servant before it matures.

Treasure. Belak has already appealed to the snake's greed with a small gift. In its nest, the adventurers find two sapphires (worth 50 gp each).

46. OLD SHRINE

The stone door at the end of the corridor is closed and stuck, requiring someone to make a successful DC 15 Strength check to pull it open.

Faded mosaic tiles still decorate parts of the wall, but most have fallen to the dust-covered floor and shattered. Situated at the center of the chamber stands a slim pedestal of rusted iron shaped like an upright dragon. In the dragon's mouth rests an empty tray.

The room once held items of importance to the old dragon cult. The remaining features are dust-covered and worthless.

47. BELAK'S LABORATORY

Two rows of dragon-carved marble columns march the length of the hall, most completely covered in luminescent fungus. The cobble floor is cracked and stained, and on it sit many small wooden tables. The contents on the tables include mortars and pestles, small tools, bowls filled with crushed leaves, chopped fungus stalks, and other plant specimens. The many doors leading off this hall are all partly open.

Belak prepares various experimental concoctions in his laboratory and the small chambers that lead off it (see the sections below), with the fumbling aid of goblins that



serve him. Any noise or disturbance in the main area draws all the monsters, although those in the northwest chamber respond most slowly.

Investigating. The containers on the small tables in the main area hold mashed leaves, fungus, bark, and powdered roots. A character who makes a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies many common varieties of tree, shrub, and fungus, although all have a pronounced pallor, as if sun-starved.

Treasure. One pile of herbs and supplies in the main chamber contains the ingredients of a healer's kit. An assortment of tools and herbs can be salvaged to make up a herbalism kit and a set of alchemist's supplies.

Northwest Chamber. Snores are audible from the room to the northwest, which is a rough barracks. Sixteen small pallets of matted fur cover the floor. Two pallets currently hold a sleeping **goblin** and two goblin **commoners** (like those in area 40).

Southwest Chamber. The goblins use a crude mashing, straining, and casking facility to create goblin wine, which they and Belak are quite fond of. Two goblin **commoners** currently stand barefoot in the mashing-tun, squashing roots and fungi into pulp. A dirty straining bin stands nearby, as well as ten 2-gallon casks of the end product.

North Central Chamber. Two goblin **commoners** currently repair dirty goblin armor with cord, iron needles, leather patches, and other crude implements of tailoring.

South Central Chamber. One **goblin** and two goblin **commoners** monitor the health of a diseased giant rat, which is strapped spread-eagled onto a wooden bench. The rat suffers from horrible tumors that look woody and fruit-like. Its tumors stem from an elixir Belak created to infuse twig blight traits into giant rats.

On a stand in the corner is a fancy crystal vial (worth 5 gp) that contains the elixir. Drinking the elixir exposes the drinker to the same disease that the diseased rat might impart with its bite, except the initial saving throw DC is 15.

Northeast Chamber. Extra weapon stores include five battered scimitars, six shortbows, and forty arrows.

Southeast Chamber. The room stands empty, and the caved-in back wall leads to a natural rift in the earth (see area 44).

48. GARDEN GALLERIES

The two galleries that lead to the arborets have the same characteristics. The doors to all connecting areas are closed.

Nodules of luminescent fungus hang from the ceiling and walls and grow in clumps on the flagstone floor. The light illuminates portions of grand bas-relief carvings on the stone walls that aren't covered with the fungus. The carvings depict dragons in various stages of raining fire down upon terrified people. Soil and compost cover half the chamber's floor, which allows a variety of feeble plants to grow. A bench containing simple gardening implements stands along the west wall.

Belak is using the galleries to grow aboveground vegetation using the light of luminescent fungus.

Creature. A **bugbear** gardener roams both galleries, tending the grasses for Belak. She is armed with a sickle-bladed glaive; she has a reach of 10 feet and deals 2d10 + 2 slashing damage with it.

Treasure. The bugbear carries a *potion of healing*.

Development. The neighboring arborets (area 49) contain additional monsters. The closed doors and stone walls prevent sound from entering these four areas. The creatures within join the battle here at your discretion.

49. ARBORETUMS

Luminescent mist blurs the edges of this octagonal chamber. Nodules of glowing fungus dot the stone walls and ceiling, as well as the caps of toadstools and mushrooms, small polyps, puffballs, and lichen. The humid air reeks with rot.

The arborets hold small samples of traditional Underdark ecosystems, which aren't difficult for Belak to nurture. The stone doors leading to them are unlocked.

Southern Arboretum. A **goblin** and three goblin **commoners** gather fungus for use in area 47.

Southeast Arboretum. Several growths in the chamber are scorched and dead. Fungus shrouds holes similar to those found in area 45, and a **fire snake** lurks inside one of these openings. It emerges if anyone pokes into or closely examines the holes. If the snake comes out, a character who reaches into the snake's burrow can recover two sapphires (worth 50 gp each).

Northeast Arboretum. Three **skeletons**—AC 12, 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage with shovels or rakes—are at work, clearing scorched plants. One **twig blight**, which is hostile to the adventurers, is with them. The skeletons attack anything the twig blight attacks.

Fungus shrouds holes similar to those in area 45.

Northern Arboretum. The northern room contains only its plants.

50. ASHARDALON'S SHRINE

Dragon-carved granite blocks line this chamber's walls and ceiling, though many are crumbled and broken, leaving stony debris on the floor. A huge marble statue of a rearing red dragon stands in the curve of the western wall. The eye sockets of the dragon are empty, but a red glow lingers there, providing reddish light throughout the chamber. The radiance casts an inky shadow behind the statue's wide wings. A five-foot-diameter, circular tile of dark stone is set in the floor in front of the dragon statue. Runes are carved around the circular tile's inner edge.

Investigating. Viewed in white light, the circular tile is red. A *detect magic* spell can reveal that the tile and statue give off an aura of transmutation. The runes on

the tile's inner edge read, in Draconic, "Let the sorcerous power illuminate my spirit." If anyone speaks this sentence aloud while standing on the tile, a puff of spectral flame harmlessly envelops the speaker, granting the target advantage on Charisma checks for 24 hours. Once the tile is activated, it is dormant for 24 hours.

Creature. A **shadow** hides in the gloom behind the dragon statue. It attacks only those who spot it or who attempt to investigate the circular tile or claim the treasure. The creature doesn't pursue those who flee.

Treasure. A loose stone is in the wall behind the statue, requiring a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to find. Inside are 34 gp and two flasks of alchemist's fire.

51. DRAGON LIBRARY

Leaning and fallen stone bookshelves fill this chamber, though a clear path connects wooden doors on opposite walls. Torn and burnt pages, bindings, and scrolls form disordered piles in the corners.

Treasure. Rooting around in the wreckage, separate successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) checks uncover a *spell scroll of scorching ray*, a *spell scroll of Melf's acid arrow*, and a tome of dragon lore bound in dragon scale and written in Draconic (worth 150 gp).

52. UNDERPASS

Damp and crumbled steps descend sharply.

The steps descend 15 feet. An 8-foot-high stone corridor passes about 7 feet below the northern arboretum (area 49), connecting the stairways on either side.

53. BELAK'S STUDY

The wooden door leading to Belak's study is closed and locked. The lock can be undone by someone who uses thieves' tools and succeeds on a DC 20 Dexterity check.

A layer of soil covers the floor. Rough wooden shelves, filled with a scattering of tomes and scrolls, line the north and east walls, and a rough-hewn desk stands in the center of the chamber. Fungus on the ceiling provides light, apparently in sufficient quantity to nourish several small bushes and pale saplings that grow in the soil.

Investigating. In his study, Belak stores seasonal records of growth, precipitation, harvests, and similar notes for the surrounding lands for the last dozen years. One interesting tome titled (in Draconic) *Treasures of the Fire Lords* has a *glyph of warding* spell with an explosive runes effect on it. The glyph is on the second page, and it's triggered when someone opens to that page. Otherwise, the book is blank.

If the glyph is triggered, it erupts with magical energy in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on the book. The sphere spreads around corners. Each creature in the area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 22 (5d8) cold damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one. The cold doesn't damage the other works here.

Development. If any obvious disturbance occurs here, the goblins in area 54 set an ambush for intruders. They wait at least 10 minutes before coming to investigate.

Treasure. Separate successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) checks uncover a *spell scroll of entangle*, a *spell scroll of protection from poison*, and a tome on druidic theories on the cycle of life and death (worth 150 gp). Cubbyholes in the desk hold 365 gp and four agate gems (20 gp each).

54. GROVE GATE

Twigs and roots are piled on the floor of this sagging chamber. The collapsed southern wall opens into a vast cavern. Luminescent fungus on the rough walls and the high roof loom over a twilight grove of sickly briars, bushes, saplings, and other woody plants. Ruined walls and hollow towers protrude from the briars.

Creatures. Four **goblins** sort the specimens for Belak. They are hostile to intruders. If things go badly for them, they cry out in Goblin, saying, "Aid us, Protector of the Twilight Grove!"

Development. Sometimes the twig blights in area 55 attack the goblins out of sheer malice. Thus, a call from the goblins doesn't bring all the forces of the cavern down on the characters. But if the goblins do call, four **twig blights** arrive from area 55 and attack.

Investigating. Any character who gazes into area 55 and succeeds on a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the blackened top of the Gulthias Tree in the distance. If the check succeeds by 3 or more, the character also spots the twig blights creeping around in area 55.

55. TWILIGHT GROVE

Pale, spindly briars press close, casting twisted shadows on the earth floor in the violet light.

Briars. The most successful aboveground plants that Belak has transplanted in the Twilight Grove are the briars, though they appear sickly and pale, with blighted leaves. Other common plants and bushes are also represented, though they are equally afflicted.

The briars don't hinder Small and smaller creatures. Larger creatures must either spend 2 feet of movement for every 1 foot moved or make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw for every 10 feet moved. On a failed save, the creature takes 1 piercing damage from the briars.

A 5-foot-by-5-foot area of briars can be cleared if it takes 20 damage of any type other than psychic.

Creatures. Ten **twig blights**, less any that were dispatched in area 54, are spread about the grove. After moving 50 feet into the cavern, the characters come upon 1d4 of the hostile creatures. Any significant noise, such as from combat or clearing the briars, also attracts 1d4 – 1 twig blights (minimum 0) each round.

Development. If the characters get to area 56 before all the twig blights have engaged, the rest of the monsters hold off their attacks. Any conflict that involves yelling in a language other than Goblin, the use of flashy magical effects, or similar noticeable elements alerts Belak in area 56 to the approach of invaders.

56. THE GULTHIAS TREE

A walled clearing is here among the briars. The walls are about twenty feet high, which is less than half the height of the cavern's ceiling. Several varieties of plants grow around the perimeter of the clearing, including a few suspicious-looking saplings, but their importance pales before that which stands at the courtyard's center. Beneath the fungal light grows an evil tree. Its blackened, twisted limbs reach upward, like a skeletal hand clawing its way out of the earth. Before it stand a few twig blights; a heavily armored, young human male with a shield and sword; a blonde, young human woman in a robe fit for a noble; and a middle-aged, bearded human male wearing a hooded brown robe and armed with a staff and sickle. The younger humans have black eyes and gray skin with the texture of bark.

Creatures. Belak the Outcast spends much of his time studying the Gulthias Tree, but he is well aware when the characters are approaching. He is a human **druid**, and he has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft*, *poison spray*, *shillelagh*
1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds*, *entangle*, *faerie fire*, *thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *barkskin*, *flaming sphere*

Standing with Belak are **Sir Braford** and **Sharwyn Hucrele** (both described in appendix B). Belak's **giant frog**, Kulket, lurks stealthily in the branches of the Gulthias Tree. A character who has a passive Perception score of 15 or higher or succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the frog. If combat breaks out, the frog jumps down and joins the fight in the second round. Three **twig blights** are here, too.

Interaction. When the characters arrive, Belak says loudly, "Hold a moment, you know not what you do!" If the characters engage him in conversation, he can share the following information:

What are you doing? "I am Belak, called the Outcast. My circle expelled me, the fools. Why? Because I dared to expand nature's reach in ways they couldn't grasp. I have found what I sought in the Gulthias Tree."

What is the Gulthias Tree? "It's beautiful, no? It lives, though it looks dead. In an age long past, someone

THE GULTHIAS TREE

A Gargantuan plant, the Gulthias Tree has AC 10 and 35 hit points. It is immune to necrotic, poison, psychic damage, and it has resistance to piercing damage. The tree has vulnerability to fire damage.

Fruit. Two magical fruits (evocation school) ripen on the tree each year. Each fruit resembles an apple, but it slowly extrudes from the tree like a cyst.

Up to a week before the summer solstice, a ruby red fruit grows. Someone other than a construct who eats a quarter or more of it regains 70 hit points. In addition, any blindness, deafness, and diseases affecting the eater end.

Up to a week before the winter solstice, a sickly white fruit grows. Someone who eats a quarter or more of it takes 70 necrotic damage. Each fruit has 1d4 seeds that, if planted, grow leafless woody shrubs that animate as twig blights after one year.

Tree Thralls. If a humanoid is bound to the bole of the Gulthias Tree, over the next 24 hours the victim is sucked completely into the tree. Once the victim is completely absorbed into the tree, it becomes the tree's thrall, and is expelled over the course of 1 hour. The Gulthias Tree can have only four thralls at any one time. A victim's skin is rough, gray, and bark-like. A thrall is totally corrupted, becoming neutral evil. Such a creature exists only to serve the Gulthias Tree and those who tend it (such as Belak). It possesses all of its former abilities and gains the following traits:

Barkskin. The thrall's AC can't be lower than 16.

Tree Thrall. If the Gulthias Tree dies, the thrall dies 24 hours later.

staked a vampire on this very spot. The stake took root. And so grew the Gulthias Tree, reverberating with primal power for those who can tap it."

What's with the stick-monsters? "The twig blights grow from seeds of the tree's fruit."

What's going on with the fruit? "I give fruit to the goblins with orders to disperse their seeds on the surface. Deceitful beings that they are, the goblins barter the fruit, but the seeds are dispersed all the same. My plan for colonizing the surface with the children of Gulthias continues."

What did you do to the other adventurers? "They were the first supplicants. The Gulthias Tree has accepted them, and they are mine to control, just like the twig blights. You can't save them."

Why are you talking to us? "Though your remains would enrich the compost, you'll serve my needs better as supplicants. You shall retain your lives, after a fashion. Surrender and submit peacefully, or perish!"

While this interaction proceeds, Sir Braford, the three twig blights, and Belak's frog position themselves between the characters and Belak (Sharwyn stands next to Belak).

Combat. If a fight breaks out (which will happen unless the characters actually submit to Belak), the twig blights, the frog, and Sir Braford attack the characters physically. Sir Braford uses *Shatterspike* (see appendix A) to destroy his foe's weapon, if possible.

Belak casts *barkskin* on himself, possibly before melee occurs. He also makes early use of his *wand of*

entangle (see appendix A), attempting to hold the transgressors in place. If Braford looks like he needs healing, Belak casts healing spells on him, as well. Sharwyn uses her repertoire of spells to best advantage, resorting to her dagger only in desperation.

Development. During a battle, if any twig blights remain in area 55, 1d4 – 1 of them (minimum 0) enter this area each round.

Targeting the Tree. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check or Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check allows a character to deduce that destroying the tree might have an effect on Sir Braford, Sharwyn, and the twig blights. If anyone attacks the Gulthias Tree, Belak and the twig blights try to kill the aggressor. If the Gulthias Tree dies, Belak loses his influence over the twig blights, Sharwyn, and Sir Braford. These monsters turn on Belak before targeting the characters again.

Walls. The courtyard's walls stand 20 feet tall, and the cavern's stalactite-dotted ceiling is 50 feet up.

Treasure. Belak has a key (to area 53), three *potions of healing*, two doses of antitoxin, and his *wand of entangle*. Sharwyn wears her gold Hucrele signet ring (worth 20 gp).

AFTERMATH

If the characters kill the Gulthias Tree, Sharwyn and Braford die 24 hours later (unless you decide they can be saved somehow). If Belak survives, his former servants turn on him, and he attempts to escape. If he succeeds in getting away, he might appear later to trouble the characters.

If the characters reveal the truth about the fruit's seeds to the villagers of Oakhurst, those folk cut down and burn all growing saplings.

As the villagers set the evil saplings alight, the mayor turns to you with a frank expression. "You realize that our actions have set loose several of these abominations upon the world. Who knows what these twisted plants are doing now?"

The mayor is right. Twig blights that are already loose in the world can still reproduce through root sprouts, as aspen trees do. Although it is likely a hopeless task, the characters can search out these twig blights and destroy them. It's up to you and your players to determine what happens next. At any rate, if the characters warn Oakhurst's residents about the seeds, they have taken their first steps toward gaining a measure of fame and establishing a rapport with local residents.

In addition, if the characters return the Hucrele signet rings to the family matriarch, they receive the promised monetary award. If they bring back the remains of Sharwyn and Sir Braford, the matriarch begins funeral arrangements and invites the characters to attend. If they accept, they can begin to establish a long-term relationship with the Hucrele family, which can prove useful in later adventures. ☩