

MESHUGGE MANOR ON HUNTER'S HILL



HOME BREW

A Dungeon for Two Supplement for the World's Greatest Role Playing Game

029/030

A HUNTER IS A HUNTER, EVEN IN DEATH...

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

An abandoned manor sits alone on Hunter's Hill, hunched and vine-choked. Apparently, some fool of a realtor purchased the old relic and has hired players to investigate and ensure the security of his new property.

At first, players find the manor far less abandoned than presumed, and meet its master, the enigmatic Varrus Orion. A ghost with an agenda, Varrus entreats players to fulfill his final wish – to slay the demon of the forest.

As players explore this manor and recover Varrus's bow, arrow, and poison, they may uncover a far darker truth to this story. After all, a ghost lives on not by will, but by obsession.

This adventure is designed to fit any campaign, providing a self-contained story sure to add intrigue to any location. It also works well on its own as a oneshot.

NOTES

Any text displayed in **bold** refers to a creature in the *Monster Manual*, a copy of which is required to run this adventure. Any creatures which reference either *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes* or *Volo's Guide to Monsters* are designated with an additional **asterisk***.

Text contained in these blocks is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when first arriving at an area, or as otherwise indicated in the text.

The information contained in this module is meant for dungeon masters, as it includes detailed descriptions of every area in the adventure.

PRODUCTION

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INTENDED LEVELS

This adventure is intended for players of 4th level, and can be played without adjustment at that level.

For Other Levels. This adventure contains content tailored very specifically to the intended level, including original creatures (see Appendix A). As such, it would be difficult to rebalance for play at other levels. You are encouraged to make any adjustments you feel are necessary of course, and if you have a suggestion for a large scale difficulty adjustment, visit reddit.com/r/DungeonforTwo and let the community know!

Additionally, we have created dungeons for many different level ranges, from beginning adventures to seasoned dungeon crawls, so be sure to check out the Dungeon for Two podcast for a new dungeon every two weeks.

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This dungeon was co-designed with the help of ThirdSector who you can find, along with a ton of other D&D lovers, over at our discord, the Discord for Two.

If you'd like to play through this dungeon the day it releases, you can! Join us on the Discord for Two at 8:00 p.m. (Arizona Standard Time), for a oneshot adventure run by yours truly, the Dungeon Doctor!

Finally, if you cannot make the oneshot, but you'd like to watch it live, check out the DungeonDoctorDMMD Twitch channel. In addition to our biweekly oneshots, I'm live Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights for D&D and other gaming and RPG content. Stop by and say hello!

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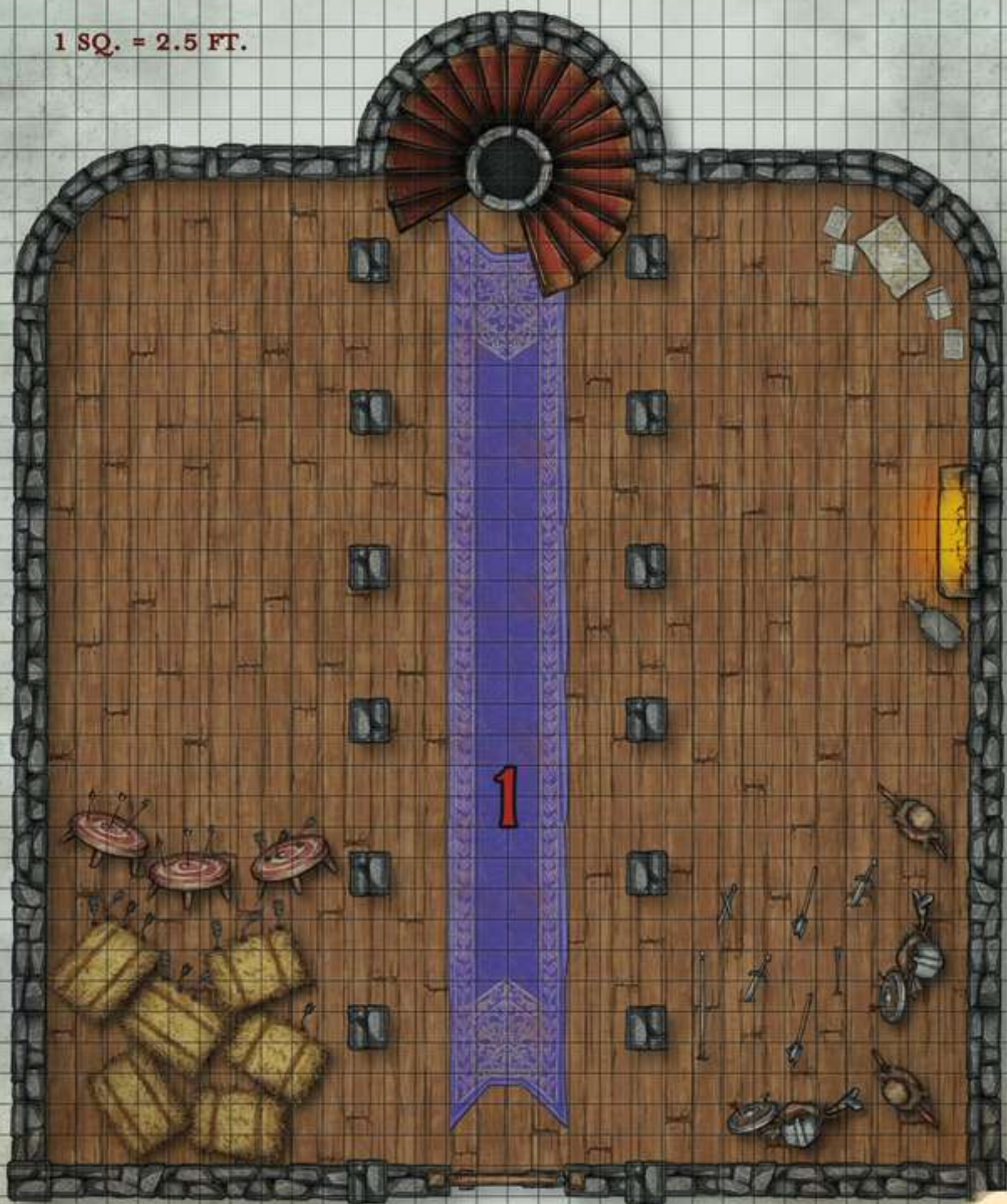
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MAP 1: MESHUGGE MANOR - GROUND FLOOR

1 SQ. = 2.5 FT.



PART 1: A MANOR NOT-SO-ABANDONED

The old home on Hunter's Hill has sat empty for long years. Its peaked roof and dark stone walls seem to shun the nearby forest, for no trees grow on the hill. Some curious fool has purchased the old manor, but has not the courage to delve its depths himself. Rather, the guild received his letter two weeks back, and after a long journey, players find themselves at the foot of Hunter's Hill:

Mists diffuse the light of a pale full moon, revealing a clearing in the old woods. Through the tree line rises a small earthen mound, atop which is perched a stone manor. Vines wrap around the structure like thorned veins, and the door sits closed. No windows adorn the bottom portion of the manor, and above, broken frames full of choking vines admit little light.

ARRIVING AT THE OLD MANOR

Though this adventure presumes players have received a letter of hire to investigate this manor, that is certainly not the only way for players to come across this place. A few other options are presented below:

- Players are in the woods when they come across an old manor. Perhaps they need shelter from the rain, or somewhere to sleep, and this seems their only option.
- Players hear strange tales of a famous local hunter. Apparently, he used to live on a hill nearby with his family, but vanished one day in his prime, never to be seen again.
- A friend has come upon a great opportunity -- a huge manor up for sale at auction! Strangely, none of the locals seemed interested, so the price was incredibly low. Now, players just need to make sure the place is safe.

These suggestions are not comprehensive, and ultimately the DM should decide how best to integrate this adventure into any ongoing campaign.

THE OLD MANOR

The following descriptions and features correspond to maps 1, 2, and 3.

GENERAL FEATURES

This monolithic edifice seems built to withstand a siege. The bulk of the walls are built from chunks of dark stone, with eaves and a roof of equally drab wood. From a high set of chimneys rises a trail of thin smoke. The only entrance to this place seems to be a wide oak door at the front.

Eerie Decor. In the entry hall and throughout the old manor hang taxidermy -- hunting trophies propped up to mimic some semblance of life. Though not innately disturbing, players who succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check notice the eyes of the taxidermy look strangely real. Stranger still, the eyes seem to shift when not observed as to always stare directly at the party.

Latent Magic. If players cast *detect magic* nearby the manor, they can feel a pervasive aura of abjuration surrounding the place. Specifically, it seems the vines covering the exterior are the source of this aura. Attempts at destroying these vines are fruitless, suggesting powerful magic at work.

Lighting. No windows are set in the lower walls, so only the light of the forge keeps the lower hall dimly lit. A full moon overhead at least allows some measure of natural light, though through the mists even that does not amount to much.

Surrounding Woods. Once players exit the nearby woods onto Hunter's Hill, the player with the highest passive Perception notices the following:

As you approach the old manor, a pervasive silence falls upon this place. No birds chirp from the canopy, nor do any creatures scurry through the underbrush. The very trees seem to withdraw from the hill, and dark shadows gather beneath their boughs.

In reality, the Green Man of the woods has taken notice of the party, but is reluctant to intervene as of yet. On a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Nature) check, players can determine the forest must be incredibly old.



1. GRAND ENTRY HALL

The front door of the manor is unlocked. As players enter, the following occurs:

The creaky door opens to reveal a massive entrance hall, festooned with all manner of taxidermy. Two lines of stone columns support this open space, and a burning forge to the right casts about a steady orange glow.

To the left is a huge stack of hay bales littered with arrows, and to the right are numerous training dummies similarly skewered. Suddenly, the swish of an arrow in flight gives way to a low *thunk*, and a man emerges from behind the left pillars.

Dressed sharply, with a fine pointed cap and coat of silver and black, the man smirks at you, lowering his bow. "Welcome," he says, "to the humble abode of Varrus Orion, hunter extraordinaire! What can I do for you?"

Varrus is charming, quick witted, and clearly skilled with the longbow. He is quick to blow off any questions players have, instead inviting them upstairs to the lounge so he can "properly relay" his sorry tale.

Varrus's appearance can be best described as comfortably aristocratic. He seems more concerned with function than style, evidenced by the various scabbards and quivers slung across his outfit. Players will likely be surprised at Varrus's existence, but his charming and relaxed demeanor will likely put them at ease. If attacked, Varrus seems more upset than angry, and simply questions what he has done to deserve such a treatment.

Development. If players at any point turn on Varrus (see the "Turning on Varrus" sidebar, p. 6), the taxidermy in this hall comes alive! Puppeteered by Varrus, these unsettling facsimiles of natural life are diverse in form – a **moose**, an **elk**, a **giant boar**, a **tiger**, a **direwolf**, and an **eagle**. Other creatures also reanimate, such as an owl and swan, but they pose no real threat.

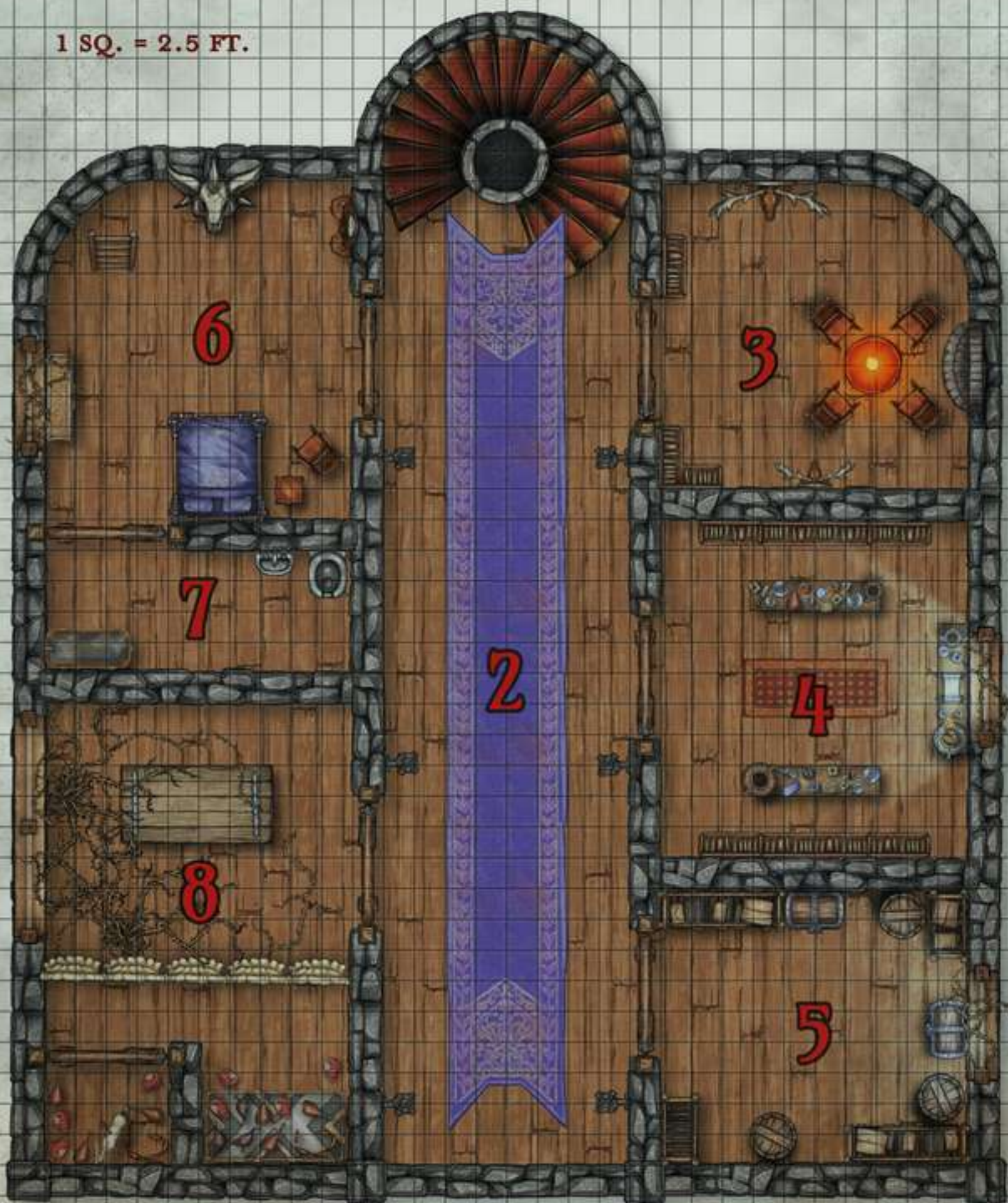
Players will likely end their adventure by either assisting or confronting Varrus in this hall (see "Ending the Adventure").

Treasure. On the floor near the target dummies are a variety of finely made weapons, most sticking out of the floorboards. In total, players can recover two shortswords, a longsword, a pike, a battleaxe, and two dozen arrows. There is also a well made anvil next to the forge that has clearly seen use, though not in some time. It could be recovered or sold for 25 gp, though it is damnably heavy (200 lbs).



MAP 2: MESHUGGE MANOR - UPPER FLOOR

1 SQ. = 2.5 FT.



PART 2: ONE LAST HUNT

Aware now that the old manor is far less abandoned than they suspected, players find themselves being invited to tea by Varrus Orion. Whether they accept his offer or not, the large spiral staircase at the rear of the manor is sure to draw the eye. Unlike the lower entry hall, the upper floor of this manor is divided into many rooms, each of which hide their own peculiar secrets.

2. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

This simple hall bears a fine rug and not much else in terms of adornment. Sconces line the walls but no torches burn within, so unless otherwise lit the hall is bathed in total darkness.

3. SITTING ROOM

Varrus guide players immediately to this room upon leading them upstairs. He begins pouring tea and gestures to the seats, explaining his tale:

"Yes, I am dead. The foul demon of the forest trapped me in my own manor, left me for dead. I managed to craft three implements that could kill the fiend: an ironwood bow, a silver arrow, and a poison of forest's bane.

"Yet before I could slay the demon, starvation took me. I manage now to cling to life so that I may partake in one last hunt. However, that clever beast cursed me in death. The very touch of my bow, arrow, or poison is debilitating.

"I beg of you, please, retrieve these three crafts of mine, so that I may slay the demon and free the forest!"

On a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check, players can recognize Varrus's tale as a lie. If called on his bluff, Varrus scowls, sinking into the floor (see "Turning on Varrus" sidebar below).

TURNING ON VARRUS

While inspiring and delivered with much dramatic aplomb, Varrus's story of defiance and death is a farce. In truth, Varrus Orion is a plague on this land, an obsessed hunter who lived to kill.

One day several years ago, Varrus took his obsession too far and killed a young unicorn, forever damning his soul. Cursed by the Green Man of the woods, Varrus died alone, but did not pass on to the next plane. Trapped in his manor, Varrus desires nothing more than to kill the Green Man and roam the land once more.

During this adventure, players are initially at odds with the Green Man, the so-called "demon" of the woods. However, they may at any point realize the truth about Varrus and decide to turn on him, or at least draw his ire. Doing so causes many changes, specified in each area's description.

If players decide to trust Varrus, or at least do not call out his lie, they can glean much information from him, including the following:

- "This place was once my home, where I entertained many guests."
- "There is no beast of land or sky that I have not hunted, including dragons."
- "My curse forbids me from wandering much of my old home. I wish to venture further, but the demon keeps me bound to the lower hall and this sitting room."
- "Now that I have shared my secret, the demon of the forest will no doubt try and stop you, sending its foul minions after you at every turn."

Besides this, Varrus is willing to share any information he thinks will help convince players to assist him. He can even promise riches if players are inclined to request a reward, claiming that he has no use for such things in death.

Development. If players return to this room after leaving for the first time, they can find two **greenlings** (see Appendix A) trying to coax vines down through the fireplace. If allied with Varrus, they are hostile, and if against Varrus, the greenlings ignore players.

4. ALCHEMY LABORATORY

Pale moonlight shines through an overgrown window, illuminating this cramped room. On several shelves throughout the room alchemical reagents are piled high. A scroll sits open just beneath the windowsill, and next to it a gorgeous flower blooms, seeming to glow in the pale light.





The flower bathed in moonlight is a rare feyrose, a delicate bloom from the effervescent Feywild. It appears a different color to all who gaze upon it (DMs are encouraged to ask players what color flower they see).

The scroll on the counter appears to be written in an unknown script. Next to it is scrawled a hasty translation:

From far within the earth I come. My frigid touch brings death to some.

Out from corruption's heart I beat. My harvest means a fiend's defeat.

Remnant of a forest's beauty lost, to bring about its end at any cost.

If must you boil this brew of holy bane, use cauldron of this scroll's first part again.

Originally derived by a mad wizard, this scroll has been translated from its owner's indecipherable scrawl by Varrus. Each line details an ingredient needed to create a *poison of forest's bane*, detailed below:

POISON OF FOREST'S BANE

Poison, rare

This potent brew shifts with all the colors of the northern auroras. A bottle contains six doses of foul poison that erodes the target's connection to the Feywild.

After applying the poison as a bonus action, the next attack with said weapon gains a bonus of 4d6 necrotic damage if the target is a Fey or originated in the Feywild. This damage ignores any resistances or immunities and if the target is reduced to 0 HP by this poison, it withers and crumbles to colorless dust.

A huge variety of alchemical ingredients are available to players to mix the poison, as well as vessels and methods to combine the ingredients. These details are left to the DM's discretion.

Ultimately, in order to brew a successful poison players must combine the following ingredients and boil them in an iron cauldron (hinted at in the last line):

- **Cold iron shavings.** Corresponds to the first line.
- **Demon's blood.** Corresponds to the second line.
- **Burnt wood sliver.** Corresponds to the third line.

ALCHEMICAL COMPLICATIONS

The riddle of the alchemical laboratory is meant to be variable in difficulty. If your players struggle with riddles, feel free to make the required reagents stand out as odd and unique. That way, players will be more likely to notice and consider them as the answer to the riddle.

On the other hand, if your players generally breeze through riddles, feel free to add potential reagents very similar to the correct ones (e.g. devil's blood, copper shavings, or a wet wood sliver). Including options that seem *almost* right can greatly increase the difficulty of this riddle.

Once players boil the required reagents in the correct cauldron, the ingredients melt down into a gently simmering slime that glows with multi-hued light. Players can test the success of their brew by using it on the feyrose nearby.

Development. With a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Nature) check, players can discern that the flower is indeed a feyrose, and is not fiendish in origin, but Fey. Nevertheless, the poison Varrus said kills demons seems to work on this delicate flower.

5. WORKSHOP OF FAILED BOWS

This small storeroom seems dedicated to the manufacture and storage of bows. You spy several odd bows resting on nearby racks, as well as closed trunks and barrels, their contents yet unknown.

A thorough search of this room reveals a variety of bows Varrus collected over the years. Every time players pick up a

new bow, roll on the table below to determine it randomly (ignoring repeats), or choose one of the following strange bows:

d10 Collectible Bows

- 1 **Rubberwood Bow.** This stretchy shortbow is useless as a weapon, as it cannot impart an ounce of force behind its arrows.
- 2 **Bow of Hand Holding.** This helpful longbow adjusts its wielder's aim to strike the closest threat, even if the wielder does not consider that creature a threat at all.
- 3 **Deathstench Bow.** This foul malodorous bow functions as a longbow, but its stench causes the wielder to wretch, imposing disadvantage on attack rolls made with this weapon.
- 4 **Pink Satin Bow.** Though identical in appearance to a bow that would adorn a fine pink dress, this strip of cloth functions surprisingly well as a shortbow, though its range is halved.
- 5 **Diffident Bow.** This shortbow lacks any self-confidence, and breaks down crying if its wielder misses, imposing disadvantage on attack rolls made with it for the next three rounds.
- 6 **Ethereal Bow.** Though seemingly a normal longbow, any nocked arrow turns wispy and transparent. This bow can only harm those on the ethereal plane, such as ghosts and spirits.
- 7 **Arrow Bow.** This oversized arrow functions as a longbow, transmuting any arrows shot from its string into tiny unstrung bows (it's a big arrow that shoots bows). Deals only half damage, but can be used as a glaive in a pinch.
- 8 **Philosopher's Bow.** This otherwise normal shortbow fires metaphysical arrows, imparting the idea of an arrow rather than doing any damage to its target. Aberrations struck by these arrows take 3d6 psychic damage as they are forced to question their own irrational existence.
- 9 **Bow of Billowing.** While holding this shortbow, the wielder experiences a constant dramatic wind, striking quite the imposing figure. In combat, however, this is quite annoying, as the high winds impose halved range and disadvantage on attack rolls made with this weapon.
- 10 **Ironwood Bow.** Carved from the rarest wood on the mortal plane, this longbow is flawless. Varrus's favored bow, it is incredibly hard to draw, requiring a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check, but dealing an additional die of damage on a hit.

After players recover four bows, five **greenlings** (see Appendix A) sprout from the nearby vines and take notice. If players are allied with Varrus, they attack. If players are actively working against Varrus, they keep to themselves.

The only bow Varrus will accept is the ironwood bow, but players are free to take the others with them as well.

Treasure. In addition to all the bows, this storage room also contains two dozen arrows (none of them silver).



6. GRAND BEDROOM

The following occurs as players enter into Varrus's bedroom:

This ornate bedroom features a navy blue bed on one wall, and opposite that a huge collection of trophies, no doubt Varrus's prized possessions. Among these you spy the heads of a lion, an ankheg, and most impressively, a white dragon. Mounted in its eye sockets are two gleaming sapphires.

This room is dimly lit with moonlight through an overgrown window, and if players are allied with Varrus, no dangers present themselves.

However, if Varrus feels betrayed, he reanimates the head of the dragon, creating a deadly trap for players. As they pass the center of the room, the taxidermied dragon lets out a constant stream of icy breath. Players in the room must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5d8 cold damage on a failure or half as much on a success. Players can climb up and disable the trap with a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

In the northwest corner of this room is a ladder leading to the attic (see area 9).

Treasure. Each sapphire socketed in the dragon's eyes is worth 250 gp, and the frame itself could be resold for 100 gp.

7. GILDED BATHROOM

This fanciful, ridiculous display of wealth consists of a gilded bathtub, a golden privy, and a diamond crusted soap dispenser. Taking up the entire south wall is a tapestry displaying a red dragon in flight, its form pierced by a mighty arrow.



Outside of an ostentatious display of wealth, this bathroom serves players no real purpose.

Treasure. If players so desire (or figure out a means), the furnishings in this bathroom would sell quite nicely to an interested buyer. Altogether they could sell for several hundred gold, most would consider the fixtures, however tasteless, a part of the manor at large.

8. KITCHEN AND BUTCHERY

If players are allied with Varrus, the following occurs upon entering this room:

Through the far window of this room grow a tangle of thick vines, choking a large dining table and crawling on both ceiling and walls. From this tangle suddenly sprouts three faces, two of them small and delicate, and the last a trio of dancing yellow lights.

Soon after, the trio emerge from the vines, two small hunched creatures and a wood armored warrior bearing a spiked club. Wordlessly, they attack!

The two small **greenlings** (see Appendix A) are led by a stoic **wood woad**®. The three fight as a team, attempting to pincer players between them as the wood woad uses the vines to travel around the room.

If players are working against Varrus, or at least suspicious of him, the following occurs instead:

This room is completely overrun with vines, which grow small purple fruits. A white curtain hangs to the south, blocking view further into the room. From beyond comes squelching and rustling, as well as some kind of squealing.

The small fruits are gifts from the Green Man of the woods, to ensure players succeed in foiling Varrus's escape. Each berry restores 5 HP when eaten as an action.

If they gaze behind the curtain, players find a most disgusting sight indeed:

Chunks of rotted meat drip from ceiling hooks, staining red the metal butcher's table below. Before your eyes, the pile of refuse rises of its own accord and lurches toward you!

This foul creature of rotten meat is reanimated by Varrus, the product of his final hunts before his untimely demise. It uses the statistics of a **flesh golem**.

Development. Whether players defeat the guardian of the Green Man or that of Varrus, they can access the meat locker in the far south of the room. The door to the locker is kept barred by an old, rusted padlock which falls apart at the slightest touch. Within, players may see the following:

The Green Man makes clear that Varrus is no simpleton, and must be lured out in order to defeat him. He tells players the following:

"That foul spirit...his clever mind...can be overcome...by his own obsession...Bring him what he desires...and his form will again...be corporeal...Only then can he...die..."

As the Green Man says, players must go along with Varrus's plan if they intend to destroy him. In this case, as soon as Varrus takes hold of the bow, arrow, and poison, the following occurs:

As Varrus aims the bow at the door, vines lash out, and his aim goes wide, striking the wall instead. In your minds you hear a voice say "NOW!"

The fight with the fully armed **dreadhunter Orion** (see Appendix A) will test players' resources and strategy. The clever spirit now wields his favored weapon and can summon endless arrows that pierce not only flesh but spirit.

If defeated, Varrus drops to the floor, seeming more surprised than pained. With a final glance, the foul spirit fades away. All around, remnants of his taint crumble to dust, cleansing the manor and the world of his influence.

Now free, players may exit the manor, whereupon they see the following:

A massive treant stands in front of you, his kind gaze glad and relieved. The figure turns, walking some distance from the house, where he halts, gazing at the moon. As you watch, the treant seems to go stiff, his limbs blossoming into a great oak tree, the first of a new forest on this hill. Above, the sky shifts to a cerulean blue as morning light begins to peak over the horizon.

Now having freed the lands and woods of Varrus's cursed existence, players notice the woods seem to be more at peace, and if they were contracted to clear out the manor, it is certainly more inhabitable now!

And finally, if using the milestone system of character progression, now is the perfect time to award a level increase!



APPENDIX A: CREATURE STATISTICS

GREENLINGS

Servants of the Green Man of the woods, these diminutive creatures resemble needle blights, but free of the dark, brooding aura that surrounds such creatures. They serve their master peerlessly, and when inert they are impossible to tell apart from plant matter.

DREADHUNTER ORION

The original owner of the crumbling manor on Hunter's Hill, Varrus Orion was in life a proud and cunning man. His greatest renown, however, was with the longbow. As his fame in hunting grew, his care for all else shrank, leaving the man with nothing but his trophies as company after some years.

Eventually, Varrus lost all semblance of care for the things he killed, and even began to need to hunt out of a deep obsession with perfection. His final act of desolation was the slaughter of a young unicorn, whose horn he took as a prize before drinking it in a fine brandy. In retribution, the Green Man of the woods trapped Varrus in his own manor to starve and die. But his cursed soul would not pass on so easily. As his body faded away, Varrus Orion lived on, reborn as the foul Dreadhunter, menace of the woods.

GREENLING

Small plant, chaotic good

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	4 (-3)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 9

Languages understands Sylvan but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Healing Fruit. The greenling produces a small purple fruit from within its form. This fruit can be thrown up to 30 feet or ingested. Either way it heals 5 HP.

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 1) piercing damage.

DREADHUNTER ORION

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 6 (2300 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. Orion can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. He takes 5 (1d10) force damage if he ends his turn inside an object.

Peerless Hunter. If Orion takes a bonus action to aim, he gains advantage on the next attack he makes against a target.

Quiver of Malice. Orion never runs out of arrows, drawing more from his memories of the hunt. These malice infused arrows inflict an extra 1d12 necrotic damage on a hit (included in the attack below).

Actions

Multiattack. Dreadhunter Orion looses a volley of two arrows from his ironwood bow.

Ironwood Bow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage, plus 6 (1d12) necrotic damage.

Animate Trophy. Dreadhunter Orion imbues a past trophy of the hunt with life, summoning either a **direwolf**, **tiger**, or **giant boar** (determined randomly). This creature is entirely loyal to Orion, and cannot be charmed or frightened. Orion can have no more than three such trophies under his direct control at any time.

APPENDIX B: UNNUMBERED MAPS

