

A Merry Christmas

WINTER SOLSTICE MYSTERY



1 Introduction

Overview

The *Mystery at Valboro Observatory* one-off adventures is meant to be played with a group of 5 players at level 4. The adventure is meant to be completed in one session.

The setting for the story is at the Valboro Observatory, on the island of Valboro. A rare astrological event has caused a time rift to open, which is being amplified by the ancient telescope built directly through the mountain. On the other side of the rift, a mysterious figure known as the *Time Harvester* has been using this event to collect and convert time itself as energy.

Time within the observatory itself is at an almost standstill, and once the players find themselves within it, there is no escape from it. The only escape is to breach the rift and defeat the *Time Harvester*.

Background

The heroes find themselves on the island of Valboro, known for its beautiful weather, wealth and vineyards from which is produced the finest quality wine in the known world. The group has been hired by the Winemakers Guild to investigate mysterious circumstances around the famous Valboro Observatory.

The Valboro Observatory is critically important to Valborian society and to the Winemakers Guild because it provides very sophisticated weekly weather reports which contain essential information useful for the local agriculture and wine-making process. The observatory is centuries old and was originally built by brilliant gnomish engineers and scientists, who still operate it to this day.

The headmaster of the observatory is an older gnome named Frunsmag Karn. The scientists working at the observatory study various meteorological and astronomical sciences to produce finely tuned weekly weather predictions which helps local agriculture and vineyards. The gnomes have owned and operated the observatory for centuries and their trade has been passed down for many generations, making it the most sophisticated weather prediction in the known world.

The observatory is located high up in the Boro mountains, about a three days journey north-west of the coastal capital city of Aleytheas. Built right into the side of a large mountain, it is a marvel of modern engineering and architecture. It is a large cylindrical structure with a domed top containing the main telescope.

Quest

For the past month, the Winemakers Guild have grown concerned over the lack of reports or information from the observatory. The Guild sent the Valborian Guard and other mercenaries to investigate but none have returned in weeks. Desperate for this situation to be resolved, the Guild decided to hire off-islander heroes to discover what has transpired at the observatory. The heroes must hurry as every day that passes by without reports is damaging to

local farmers and winemakers. The heroes will be handsomely rewarded with a sum of **10,000 gp** by the Guild for their success.

As the sun sets over the mountains, the adventure begins with the players arriving at the observatory, only to find it eerily abandoned...

2 The Valboro Observatory

Arriving at the observatory, the players stand in front of a long staircase leading to the main entrance to the cylindrical shaped structure. Various broken or abandoned weather measuring devices litter the area around the observatory. The players may choose to investigate the area but there's nothing of value to be found. Since it is built right on the side of the mountain, the terrain around it is extremely treacherous, so there doesn't appear to be any other entrances to the observatory.

The heroes should make their way up the stairs and to the main entrance, which consists of very large and heavy metal doors. The doors are designed to close back up by themselves; once all of the players have passed through the door, they are now trapped in the observatory.

The air in the observatory smells stale and musty, with a faint smell of death and decay. A quiet humming noise from the generator can be heard, causing the lights to buzz and flicker quickly in the dimly lit rooms.

1. Main Entrance and Foyer

Once the players enter the observatory, time is set at a standstill due to the rift. The observatory is normally a busy environment where scientist perform their weather research, however, this observatory has been completely abandoned for what appears to be years or decades, or even possibly longer. Trying to leave through the main doors opens up to a mirrored copy of the inside of the observatory. Going in or out of the doors always results in starting back in the main foyer of the observatory. The foyer leads to the main telescope (*area 2*) on either side. There's nothing unusual about the foyer or corridors leading to the main room, other than it is abandoned.

2. Main Telescope Room

The main telescope room is in complete disarray. What was once a technological marvel has now been damaged beyond repair left to rust away. The main telescope is a very large lens that appears to be pointing out into the night sky, but isn't functional. The controls to move it have been broken and rendered unusable. Debris litters the floor showing signs of a fight occurring in this room. The players may investigate the room but all that can be found are various documents and old reports which appear to have faded with time. There are three additional doors in the main room. The western door leads to *area 3* which is the main laboratory. The eastern door leads to Frunsmag's office *area 4*. The northern door (*area 5*) has been barricaded and leads down to the ancient telescope.

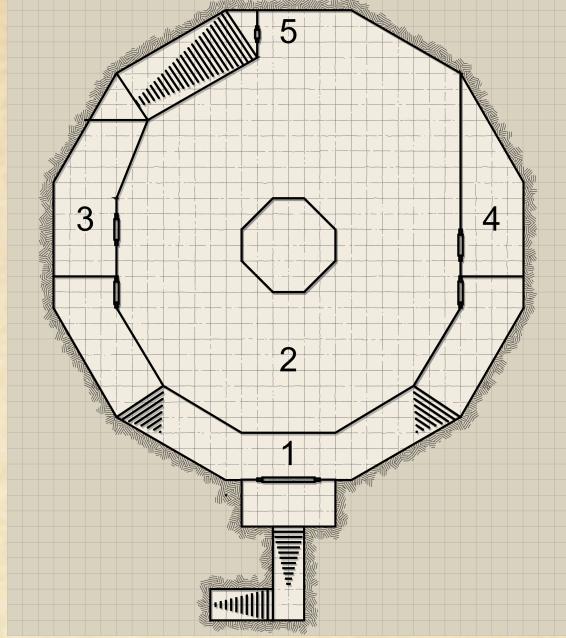


Figure 1: The Valboro Observatory Top Level

3. Laboratory

The laboratory is not in any much better state than any of the other rooms. It contains many spilled over or abandoned experiments. The floors are covered with sharp broken glass from broken tubes and various other glass labware. Any player investigating the room require a DC 10 acrobatic check or take 1d6 slashing damage upon falling. The only object of value in this room is a **Potion of Time Rejuvenation** but the players will need a DC 15 investigation check to find it. Unless they have found the similar vial in Frunsmag's office, identifying the potion requires a DC 15 arcana or medicine check.

4. Frunsmag's Office

Frunsmag's used this office to try to find an escape from the observatory when he was still alive. The walls are covered with writings of what appears to be someone completely going mad. Most of the writing is along the lines of "NO TIME", "DEATH IS WELCOMED HERE", "ESCAPE". In the corner of the room is a bed containing the remains of Frunsmag. Investigating the body reveals it appears he died of old age, over a hundred years ago.

The room contains a desk with scattered papers and Frunsmag's journal. The journal contains a log of Frunsmag's captivity in the observatory. The first few entries are dated a month back, but later entries have the date marked as unknown (apparently Frunsmag had lost track of time). The gist of the entries include Frunsmag's day to day life, various attempts to escape. One entry mentions his colleagues going down to the ancient telescope to try to find a way out and them being killed by a strange creature. The final entry in the journal reads:

Date: Does it really matter?

To whom ever reads this,

It has been months, years, or decades since I last saw any daylight. There is no escaping this place. Death will be a welcomed event. I wish I had died and been buried in the mountain with Tarack and the rest of them. Although barricading the door to the ancient library seemed wise at the time, I now believe it would have been better to just let that evil creature take me.

Time has no meaning here. All I know and was taught doesn't apply here. My efforts to find the cause of this phenomenon have failed. I have explored every possible rational scientific explanation for this, yet I have no answer to give. Perhaps the answers lie in our irrational ancient beliefs and mythologies? Sadly, it is too late for me, I am too old and weak to go down there.

If you are reading this, don't waste your time (ironic!) trying to find an exit, there is none. The answer to this mystery lies with that creature and possibly with the ancient telescope deep in the mountain. Best of luck to you!

PS: I have saved a vial of rejuvenating ointment for anyone brave enough to face the abomination. Use it wisely!

5. Barricaded Door

The door has been barricaded and requires a DC 15 strength check to clear the debris blocking the door. A failure of on this check causes debris to fall on whomever is around for 2d6 of bludgeoning damage. The second attempt requires a DC 10 strength check and deals 1d6 on

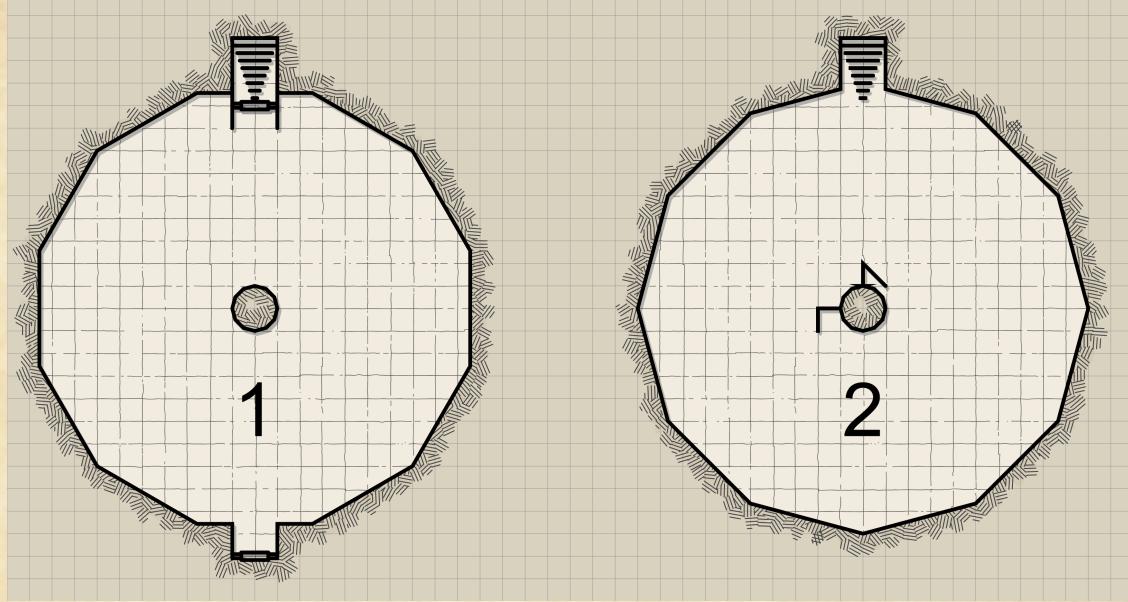


Figure 2: The Valboro Observatory Top Level

failure, and the debris is cleared completely. The door opens to a long staircase that leads to the ancient telescope, deep underground inside the mountain.

3 The Ancient Telescope

Once the debris has been cleared, the door in *area 5* opens to a long staircase leading deep into the mountain. At the bottom of the staircase, a mile long straight dimly lit corridor leads to a closed door. The door opens to *area 1* in the ancient library room. Once the players have entered into the library, they are now trapped in this room. Trying to escape through the door takes them into a copy of the library room, similar to the phenomenon occurring at the observatory's entrance.

1. Ancient Library

The ancient library is a large circular room which contains wall to wall bookshelves full of ancient and modern science, history, and mythology books. However, something unusual is happening in this room, gravity appears to be reversed. The room is actually upside down, the players are in fact standing on the ceiling. Knock over books cover the floor above the players heads. If they attempt to touch any of the objects, the objects react and fall down to the ceiling.

In the center of the room is located the ancient telescope. The ancient telescope is essentially an 10 foot diameter shaft which was drilled straight through the mountain with lenses positioned at intervals within the shaft to provide maximal magnification. However, since the room is upside down, the shaft appears to be point down into the ceiling. On the other side (above the player's heads) is the other end of the telescope. From this room, the players can only see some sort of reflective surface at the

bottom, which is actually the mirror found in *area 2*. The telescope appears to be pointed directly at some sort of constellation:



Hourglass Constellation

The hourglass constellation is the root cause of what is happening in the observatory. Every few centuries, when the constellation aligns with the ancient telescope, it creates a time rift. The *Time Harvester* uses this event as an opportunity to siphon time from this dimension. In order for the party to close the rift, the players will need to align the mirror in *area 2* and jump through the shaft to transport to the harvester's universe.

To the north of the room is a ladder leading down to *area 2*.

2. Constellation Chamber

The constellation room is a circular dome-shaped room. The walls are arrayed with hundreds of different symbols which can be discovered to be various constellation formations upon a successful DC 10 arcana or history check. In the middle of the room is a mirror on a pedestal which is aligned directly with the telescope above it, and projects the image from the telescope onto the wall. The pedestal holding the mirror has two main levers which enables the mirror angle to be swiveled around so it can project the image anywhere in the room.

When the players first arrive in the room, the mirror is projecting the hourglass constellation onto a random spot on the wall. When the players attempt to approach the mirror, the **time guardian** and **two temporal elementals** climb out from the mirror. Once the guardian is defeated, it vanishes into a hazy rippling cloud covering the entire floor. Every round a creature stands in the cloud, they must perform the DC 12 constitution saving throw or be affected by *time's grasp* (see the **time guardian** stats for details, but no necrotic damage dealt).

In order to breach the time rift, the players must align the mirror's projection with the correct constellation. Finding the correct constellation will require a group effort of investigation checks. Before beginning the rounds of investigation, each player will perform either an arcana or a history check to determine their ability to identify constellation symbols. The symbols are aligned in a logical and chronological pattern, therefore players who succeed a DC 15 arcana or history check will have advantage on their investigation rolls. Once investigation starts (use the same initiative order from the previous combat), each player rolls for investigation. Finding the correct symbol will require a successful DC 25 investigation check (decreases by 5 every round). Remember to perform the checks for the time's grasp cloud.

The correct symbol is the hourglass constellation. Once found, at least one character must swivel the mirror to project the image onto the correct symbol. Once aligned, the time cloud dissipates, a loud ringing sound can be heard, and a bright light emerges from the symbol on the wall flowing into the mirror and upward through the telescope. The time rift is now successfully opened.

4 The Time Harvester's Lair

With the rift now open, the players should return back up the library. The library has now been restored back to its correct upright position. The light coming from the mirror below can be seen rushing up through the telescope. Characters that step onto the light are transported directly to the Time Harvester's lair.

The lair is a brightly lit circular dome shaped room similar to the constellation chamber. In the middle of the room is a giant floating golden hourglass, where the sand looks like bright energy specks and appears to be flowing in both directions inside the glass. Behind the hourglass, the **Time Harvester** can be seen performing some sort

of ritual at an alter. He notices the intruders and stops the ritual. The players may choose to interact with him, but regardless, the time harvester is only interested in harvesting energy through time.

There are two ways to defeat him, either by killing him or by destroying the golden hourglass. The hourglass has an AC of 20, and must be hit three (or more or less times if the difficulty needs to be adjusted) in order for it to be destroyed. Once defeated, the players are returned back to the observatory in the ancient library.

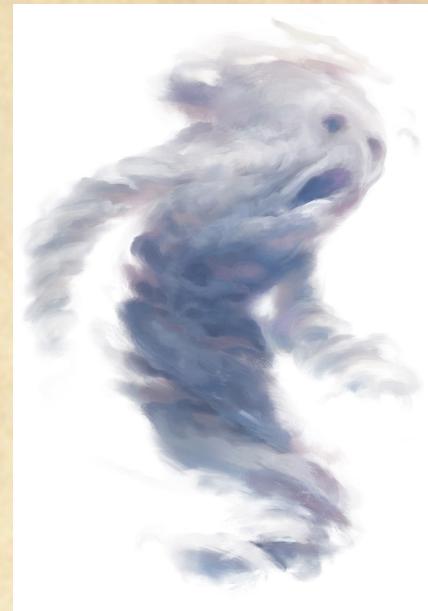
5 Conclusion

Once returned back to the observatory, the players are free to leave and return back to Aleytheas for their reward. When they arrive in town, they find things have changed tremendously. The players return to the Wine-makers Guild, but none of the administrators know anything about them or their quest. Upon discussions, the players realize the reason for this behavior. It seems time stood still in the observatory, but time continued on normally on the outside. Roll a d10 to determine how many centuries have passed since the players were sent on the quest. Once the administrators and historians researched the historical records, the heroes are given their promised reward of 10,000 gp.

6 Appendix A: Treasures

POTION OF TIME REJUVENATION

A small vial containing an ointment that can be applied topically to affected areas. The ointment rejuvenates an area affected by time (see **time's grasp** ability).



Temporal Elemental

7 Appendix B: Monsters

TEMPORAL ELEMENTAL

Medium elemental, neutral

The temporal elemental lives outside of normal time and space.

Armor Class: 11

Hit Points: 9

Speed: flying 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)

Damage Resistances: acid, fire, lightning, thunder

Damage Immunities: cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities: charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages: Does not speak

Challenge: 1/4 (50 XP)

ACTIONS

Temporal Bubble: The temporal elemental explodes into a 15ft diameter time bubble around the elemental (it then vanishes into other dimensions) which lasts for 1 minute. All creatures in the radius of the explosion must succeed a DC 12 dexterity save to escape or be caught in the bubble. All time within the bubble is at a standstill so all creatures caught or moving into the bubble are *paralyzed*. At the start of their turn, the creature must make a DC 12 wisdom saving throw to escape the bubble.

The temporal elemental do not have any other actions or attacks.

TIME GUARDIAN

Medium construct, neutral

The time guardian lives outside of normal time and space.

Armor Class: 15

Hit Points: 88

Speed: 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Damage Resistances: acid, fire, lightning, thunder

Damage Immunities: cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities: charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages: Does not speak

Challenge: 4 (1,100 XP)

ACTIONS

Time's Grasp: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (4d6 + 3) necrotic damage. Targets hit by time's grasp must succeed a DC 12 constitution saving throw or experience rapid aging of the affected body part (determined by a d10, doesn't stack), permanently (a **potion of time rejuvenation** can be used to heal the affected area).

d10	Area	Effect
1-4	Legs	Movement speed is halved
5-7	Chest	AC is reduced by 2
8-9	Arms	Has disadvantage on attack rolls
10	Head	Has disadvantage on all rolls



Time Guardian

TIME HARVESTER

Medium Humanoid, lawful evil

The time harvester siphons and converts time into energy and power.

Armor Class: 15

Hit Points: 85 (10d8 + 40)

Speed: 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Skills Deception +5, Insight +4, Perception +4, Stealth +5

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages: Common, Celestial

Challenge: 8 (3,500 XP)

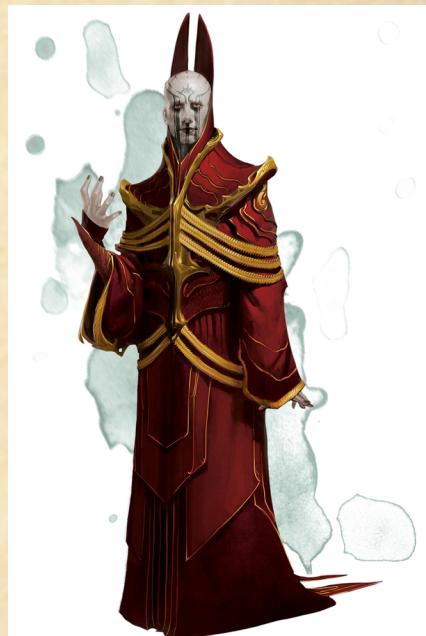
ACTIONS

Time Push: Ranged Attack: +5 to hit, reach 60/120 ft., one target. Hit: 4d6 + 4 force damage. The target must succeed a DC 12 strength saving throw or be pushed back 15 ft away from the time harvester and is prone.

Summon Temporal Elementals: Summons two temporal elementals, once a day. The elementals last for one hour.

Siphon Time: Bonus Action: reach 60/120 ft., one humanoid target. The target must make a DC 10 (20 negates the effect completely) wisdom saving throw or on failure will age by 1d100 years (halved on success), and the time harvester heals for $2d4 + 3$ (halved on success). If a creature's age exceeds the maximum age for their race, they immediately die of old age. If they become elderly, they have disadvantage on attack rolls and their movement speed is halved.

Race	Adult	Elderly
Human	18-65	65-100
Dwarf	18-200	200-350
Elf	100-650	650-750
Half-Elf	20-150	150-180
Halfling	20-150	150-250
Dragonborn	15-50	50-80
Gnome	20-200	200-400
Half-Orc	14-60	60-75
Tiefling	18-70	70-100



Time Harvester