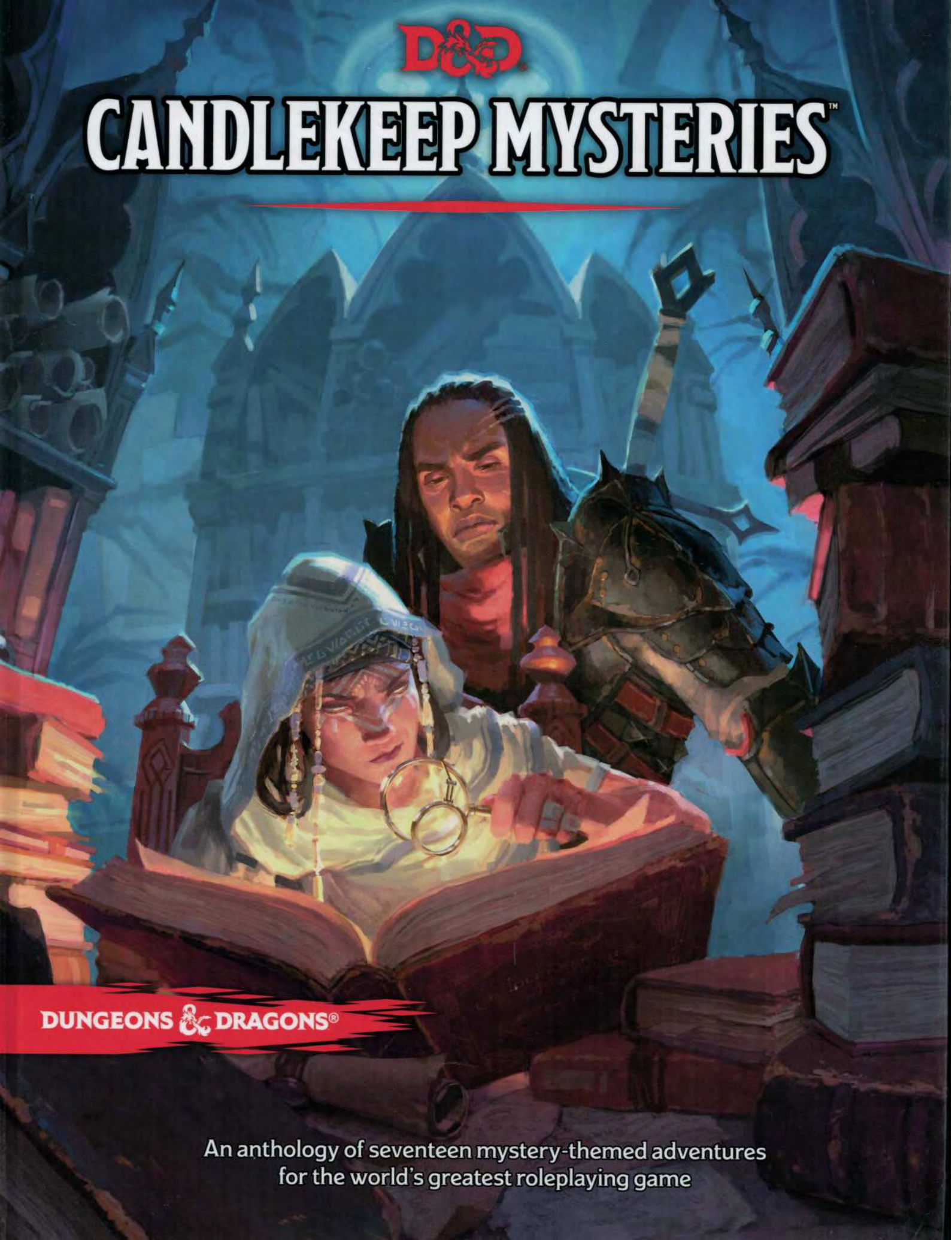
CANDLEKEEP MYSTERIES™



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

An anthology of seventeen mystery-themed adventures
for the world's greatest roleplaying game

CANDLEKEEP MYSTERIES™

KIERAN YANNER

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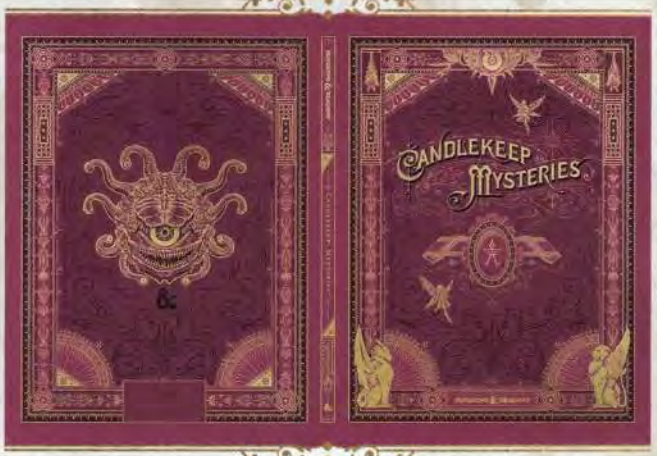
ON THE COVER

Clint Cearley gives us a glimpse of two adventurers trying to solve one of Candlekeep's great mysteries, unaware of the danger looming behind them.



ON THE ALT-COVER

Simen Meyer's cover incorporates the symbol of Candlekeep and various creatures into its design, creating what looks like a book one might find in the library's vaults.

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Disclaimer: This book has been compiled by the Avowed of Candlekeep, in accordance with the wishes of the late Alaundo the Seer, whose prophecies foreshadow all events of consequence in the Forgotten Realms. Alaundo warned that anyone who unravels all the mysteries of this tome will be hunted down by the Time Dragons of Chronepsis, tossed into the gaping maw of Dendar the Night Serpent, and cast into the Vortex of Ineffable Damnation. Ha ha. What a sense of humor, that Alaundo!

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A Book of Books

Candlekeep Mysteries is an anthology of adventures written by members of the Dungeons & Dragons community. Each adventure begins with a book that the characters find in Candlekeep, an enormous library located on the Sword Coast in the Forgotten Realms setting.

If you're not running a Forgotten Realms campaign, you can adapt the adventures in this book for other settings, substituting any large library similar to Candlekeep. Examples from other published D&D settings include the following:

- On the world of Exandria, the Soltryce Academy in Rexxentrum (a large city on the continent of Wildemount) or the Cobalt Reserve in Westruun (a small city on the continent of Tal'dorei)
- On the world of Eberron, the Library of Korranberg in the nation of Zilargo, the University of Wynarn's library in the nation of Aundair, or Morgrave University's library in the city of Sharn
- On the world of Oerth, the Great Library in the Free City of Greyhawk

Using the Adventures

The Candlekeep Mysteries table summarizes the adventures in this anthology. Each adventure is designed for four to six characters of a particular level, but you can adjust it for larger or smaller groups as well as for characters of higher or lower level by swapping one monster or trap for another, changing the number of foes in an encounter, and adjusting DCs to make important tasks easier or harder for the characters to accomplish.

Each adventure in this anthology embraces one of the following narrative conceits:

- The characters discover a book in the library that contains a mystery. Getting to the bottom of this mystery requires embarking on an adventure.
- The characters come to Candlekeep on a quest for information, perhaps to solve a crisis elsewhere in the world. During their research, they uncover a book and the mystery it contains, which leads to adventure.

These short adventures work best with players who like mysteries and discovering their secrets. That said, each adventure contains opportunities for exploration, roleplaying, and combat, to appeal to players of all persuasions.

Running the Adventures

To run these adventures, you need the fifth edition core rulebooks (*Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*).

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

The *Monster Manual* contains stat blocks for most of the creatures encountered in these adventures. When a creature's name appears in **bold** type, that's a visual cue pointing you to its stat block as a way of saying, "Hey, DM, get this creature's stat block ready. You'll need it." If a stat block is new, the adventure's text tells you where to find it.

Spells and equipment mentioned in the adventures are described in the *Player's Handbook*. Magic items are described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* unless an adventure's text directs you elsewhere.

Be a Sensitive Dungeon Master

Before running an adventure with a new group of players, have a candid out-of-game conversation with them about hard and soft limits on what topics can be broached in-game. Your players might have phobias and triggers you aren't aware of. Any topic or theme that makes a player feel unsafe should be avoided. If a topic or theme makes one or more players nervous but they give you consent to include it in-game, incorporate it with care. Be ready to move away from such topics and themes quickly if a problem crops up. It's okay for characters to feel stressed and anxious, but your players should be relaxed and having fun.

Tendays and Dalereckoning

In the Forgotten Realms setting, a week is ten days long and is referred to as a tenday. There are three tendays in a month and twelve months in a year. For more information on the calendar of the Forgotten Realms, see "The Calendar of Harptos" sidebar in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Dalereckoning (DR) is the most common reckoning of years in the Realms. The adventures in *Candlekeep Mysteries* are presumed to take place in 1492 DR, but the exact date is not important.

Candlekeep Mysteries

Adventure	Level	Description
The Joy of Extradimensional Spaces	1	A book leads characters on a quest to find a missing sage.
Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions	2	A monstrous revelation sheds light on a book merchant's scam.
Book of the Raven	3	A treasure map tucked inside a book beckons adventurers to a remote hilltop chalet occupied by a secret society that shuns visitors.
A Deep and Creeping Darkness	4	A book describing a mining disaster prompts adventurers to search for a missing town.
Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme	4	A catchy and contagious rhyme traces back to a sinister clockwork book.
The Price of Beauty	5	A book about beauty shows the way to a secluded temple where beauty is only skin deep.
Book of Cylinders	6	Engraved cylinders contained within a book tell a gripping and portentious tale when rolled across wet clay.
Sarah of Yellowcrest Manor	7	A haunted book points a ghostly finger at the perpetrators of an unsolved mass killing in Waterdeep.
Lore of Lurue	8	Adventurers become immersed in a storybook conflict involving Lurue the Unicorn Queen and Malar the Beast Lord.
Kandlekeep Dekonstruktion	9	A stolen book leads adventurers to a tower in Candlekeep that is more than what it seems.
Zikran's Zephyrean Tome	10	A djinni trapped in a book offers a *wish* spell to adventurers who find a way to release him.
The Curious Tale of Wisteria Vale	11	A book holds the key to unlocking a bard's prison.
The Book of Inner Alchemy	12	A search for the missing pages of a book puts adventurers in conflict with the monks of the Immortal Lotus.
The Canopic Being	13	A book brings several puzzling organ transplants to light.
The Scrivener's Tale	14	A tome leaves its magical mark on the adventurers, dooming them unless they can find a way to remove it.
Alkazaar's Appendix	15	A book chronicles an unsolved mystery about a wandering stone golem in the desert.
Xanthoria	16	A fell grimoire helps adventurers end a fungal plague.

Dissecting the Adventures

You can dissect an adventure and use pieces of it rather than the whole thing. Nothing in these adventures is too sacred to tamper with and repurpose to serve your own needs.

Most of the locations described in this book can be used as stand-alone adventure sites. With a little effort and a few name changes, you can transplant them into other campaign worlds, including your own.

Take the Lykortha Expanse, a cave network that figures prominently in one of this book's adventures. You could situate these caves in any wilderness or Underdark setting where fungi are likely to be found in abundance. You can also modify the villain and its goals to better support an ongoing story or threat in your campaign. Conversely, you could remove the villain, keep the map, and repopulate the Lykortha Expanse with creatures that better suit the characters' level or the particular story you want to tell. Sometimes a good map is all a DM needs!

About the Forgotten Realms

The world of the Forgotten Realms is one of high fantasy, populated by elves, dwarves, halflings, humans, and other folk. Steel-hearted adventurers from backcountry farmsteads and sleepy villages follow tales that take them to strange, glorious, faraway places. Good maps and clear trails can carry inexperienced youths with dreams of glory far across the world, but these paths are never safe. Traveling throughout the Realms invites the perils of fell magic and deadly monsters. Farms and freeholds within a day's walk of a city might fall prey to monsters, and no place is safe from the sudden wrath of a dragon.

Details about the history and nature of the Realms fill volumes, and much of that knowledge resides in books and scrolls sealed in Candlekeep's vaults. For a detailed description of Candlekeep, see the next section. This product also includes a foldout poster that features an illustration of the library-fortress.

CANDLEKEEP

WRITTEN BY CHRIS LINDSAY
EDITED BY MICHELE CARTER AND HANNAH ROSE

STANDING ATOP A ROCKY CRAG OVERLOOKING the Sea of Swords, the massive citadel of Candlekeep has endured the elements for centuries and defied the degradations of time. Visible for miles around, Candlekeep has an eye-catching silhouette: a high wall interspersed with towers. This wall encloses a large space from which more towers rise. Those who behold the edifice say it looks like nothing so much as a cake decorated with an overabundance of candles.

The entrance to Candlekeep is a double gate that stands at the end of the Way of the Lion, the only road that provides access to and from the outside world. The route follows a lonely path across the peninsula where Candlekeep stands.

Those who gain entry discover a cloistered community of scholars milling around inside Candlekeep's walls, a place of enlightened conversation and friendly debate. No better place in the Realms exists for those who have a love for or a need of knowledge and who want to pursue such interests alongside fellow seekers.

Candlekeep has the largest repository of written lore in Faerûn, including the collected prophecies of an ancient sage named Alaundo the Seer. Those compiled divinations make up a tiny fraction of the accumulated knowledge and secrets contained in the library's vast collection.

Not all knowledge preserved in Candlekeep is of historical importance. The library holds thousands upon thousands of lost recipes, old songs, collections of folklore, and journals written by folks whose time has long since passed. The abundance of these ancillary works makes finding notable tomes an exercise in patience and perseverance. Fortunately, a legion of scholars and sages called the Avowed look after the library and remain vigilant in the care and cataloging of all the knowledge it holds.

Entering Candlekeep

The required entrance fee for admission into Candlekeep is a work of writing not already collected therein. Those who show up at the gates without such a gift are kindly but firmly turned away.

Book of the Avowed

The enormous double gates of Candlekeep are three times the height of a human and wrought of black metal magically warded to foil attempts to damage them. Both doors are emblazoned with the sigil of Candlekeep. One of the two gates stands open far enough to admit visitors during the day, and the other is kept shut.

Bedecked in purple vestments, five Avowed **priests** of Deneir (god of writing) oversee the front gates, examining and discussing written works presented by hopefuls trying to gain entrance. If a question arises, the Avowed send a runner to consult with a sage in the library. The runner eventually returns bearing a missive of acceptance or denial. Visiting scholars experienced in this procedure often bring a selection of possible donations to ensure admittance. Despite the stringent entrance requirements, the Avowed do accept rare editions of tomes already in the collection, journals of those who recount unique or insightful experiences, or the odd work that has been annotated by a prominent scholar outside the library. Once granted admission, visitors quickly discover that it's wise to assemble a "wish list" of works that members of the senior staff are interested in collecting, potentially reducing the guesswork of readmission on future visits.

Those admitted to Candlekeep, referred to as seekers, can request the assistance of an Avowed

IRINA NORDSOL

adjutant who acts as a guide and research assistant for the duration of their visit. This guide has access to all the resources of the library, with the exception of the vaults that contain the rarest and most dangerous works. Seekers can appeal to higher-ranking Avowed for permission to peruse these off-limits works.

Securing a Guide

If the adventurers require a guide, roll a d8 and consult the Avowed Adjutants table to determine the adjutant who is assigned to them, or choose one that you like.

Avowed Adjutants

d8	Description
1	Fembris Larlancer, an 18-year-old human scribe with a bright smile, a can-do attitude, and an obnoxious need to impress others
2	Sprig Summerfoot, a 23-year-old halfling scribe with ink-stained fingers, a small bag of cookies in one pocket, and a good memory for recipes
3	Parmak, a 25-year-old human scribe who is constantly reading a book and occasionally walks into things
4	Garlyth Graystock, a 39-year-old dwarf scribe who cuts off others in mid-sentence and always seems to know what they want or need before they do
5	Nax Olossis, a 22-year-old dragonborn scribe (brass dragon ancestry) who loves conversation
6	Orrin Glass, a 67-year-old human scribe who is deaf in one ear, forgetful, and easily exasperated
7	Vooshadi Moonriver, a stoic 87-year-old moon elf scribe who is difficult to anger and doesn't mince words
8	Irony, a 15-year-old tiefling scribe who follows the rules, never lies or steals, and aspires to be Keeper of Tomes one day

Defenses and Decorum

Candlekeep is fortified by a fifty-foot-tall, fifteen-foot-thick, iron-reinforced stone wall with a double gate facing east. Although most of the Avowed are humble scholars, a number of potent spellcasters fill critical posts. If trouble occurs, the Gatewarden (an **archmage**) and up to four **mages** arrive to investigate immediately. If they can't bring the situation under control in short order, up to four additional **archmages** arrive to lend assistance.

Wards

Numerous magical defenses protect the library. The most innocuous include wards to protect the library's books from mold, weevils, and other threats. Other protections are more dramatic, as discussed below.

Magic Restriction. Wards prevent anyone from entering Candlekeep by any route other than through the front gates. Any attempt to magically bypass these gates fails. These wards do not prevent creatures from using magic to exit Candlekeep.

Anyone who tries to fly over the wall into Candlekeep is stopped short. Magical flight is dispelled, and the subject floats slowly to the ground fifty feet outside the gates. An intangible ward forces creatures that can fly naturally to either land or circumnavigate Candlekeep altogether. Ordinary birds are unaffected by this ward, and a clever wizard or other individual can bypass the ward by assuming the form of a Tiny bird. The Avowed don't discuss this flaw with outsiders, but anyone who can see the gulls flying over Candlekeep can easily reach the conclusion that certain creatures are exempt from this magical restriction.

Fire Suppression. Flames larger than a candle are suppressed within the keep. (The fireplace in the Hearth, Candlekeep's tavern, is an exception.) Thus, any spell that creates fire is wasted if it is cast within the keep.

Theft Protection. Every book, scroll, and other work considered part of Candlekeep's collection is magically protected against theft. Any such work that is removed from the keep disappears and immediately returns to its proper place in the library.

This ward also has a flaw that the Avowed don't discuss with outsiders. If pages from a book or parts of a scroll are torn away, these fragments can be removed from Candlekeep as long as the bulk of the work remains in the library. Similarly, if a work is split into pieces and entirely removed from Candlekeep, only the largest piece disappears and returns to its proper place in the library.

Shielding Mythal. From any location in Candlekeep, the Keeper of Tomes (see "The Avowed" later in this section) can activate a *mythal*—an exceptional, unbreakable magical effect—that envelops all of Candlekeep in a protective shield through which nothing but air and sound can pass.

Orders of Accordance

All who enter Candlekeep must agree to the Orders of Accordance, rules set forth by the senior staff to prevent misconduct. Violating one or more of these orders results in banishment from Candlekeep, and the banished are seldom allowed to return. The rules are simple:

Bird's-eye View of Candlekeep

No fighting. All arguments must follow the rules of cordial debate and discussion. Violent altercations are not tolerated.

No stealing. This rule applies to all objects in the keep, not just the library's works.

No copying. Visitors are permitted to take notes while studying the library's works, but anyone who wants to make a full copy of a work must pay to have the manuscript created by scribes at the House of the Binder.

No damaging, marking, or otherwise modifying the works. This rule doesn't apply to privately owned books, scrolls, and other documents that aren't part of Candlekeep's collection.

Sages and Master Sages

Candlekeep's resident lore experts are master sages and sages who dedicate themselves to scholarship above all. Stat blocks for the master sage and the sage appear on the facing page.

NPC Gender and Alignment

If no gender or alignment is specified for a nonplayer character in Candlekeep, you can choose that NPC's gender identity and alignment.

The Avowed

Roughly three hundred Avowed live in Candlekeep. The majority of them are low-level assistants, newcomers to the order, or scribes who handle the everyday work in the keep (use the **commoner** stat block to represent them).

High-ranking members of the Avowed include the individuals described below.

Keeper of Tomes

The Keeper is the highest-ranking member of the Avowed and the governor of Candlekeep, who selects scholars to fill vacant leadership positions. The Keeper's word is law, and each Keeper's edicts are recorded for the edification of future Keepers.

A Keeper of Tomes chooses their own replacement. If a Keeper dies or departs before making that choice, the council of Great Readers votes to determine who among them is elevated to the position. Tie votes are broken by the First Reader.

In 1492 DR, the Keeper of Tomes is the human **archmage** Janussi, a devoted follower of Deneir.

Readers

The Keeper of Tomes appoints individuals to fill key roles, as described in the sections that follow.

JULIAN KOK

Master Sage

Medium humanoid (any race)

Armor Class 10 (13 with *mage armor*)
Hit Points 54 (12d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (−1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)

Skills Arcana +11, History +11, Insight +7, Investigation +11, Medicine +10, Nature +11, Religion +11
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Common plus any five languages
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Actions

Shocking Grasp (Cantrip). *Melee Spell Attack:* +8 to hit (with advantage if the target is wearing armor made of metal), reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (3d8) lightning damage, and the target can't take reactions until the start of its next turn.

Fireball (3rd-Level Spell; 3/Day). The sage creates a fiery explosion centered on a point it can see within 150 feet of it. Each creature in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The fire spreads around corners and ignites flammable objects in the area that aren't being worn or carried.

Spellcasting. The sage casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *light, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation*
3/day each: *comprehend languages, detect magic, dispel magic, identify, levitate, locate object, Tenser's floating disk, unseen servant*
1/day each: *banishment, contact other plane, Drawmij's instant summons, legend lore, locate creature, planar binding, polymorph, protection from evil and good, scrying, sending, true seeing*

Reactions

Shield (1st-Level Spell; 3/Day). When the sage is hit by an attack or targeted by a *magic missile* spell, it calls forth an invisible barrier of magical force that protects it. Until the start of its next turn, the sage has a +5 bonus to AC, including against the triggering attack, and it takes no damage from *magic missile*.

Sage

Medium humanoid (any race)

Armor Class 10 (13 with *mage armor*)
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (−1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Skills Arcana +8, History +8, Insight +4, Investigation +8, Medicine +6, Nature +8, Religion +8
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Common plus any four languages
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Actions

Shocking Grasp (Cantrip). *Melee Spell Attack:* +6 to hit (with advantage if the target is wearing armor made of metal), reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) lightning damage, and the target can't take reactions until the start of its next turn.

Spellcasting. The sage casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *light, mage hand, mending*
3/day each: *comprehend languages, detect magic, identify*
1/day each: *dispel magic, levitate, locate object, see invisibility, sending, tongues, unseen servant*

Reactions

Shield (1st-Level Spell; 3/Day). When the sage is hit by an attack or targeted by a *magic missile* spell, it calls forth an invisible barrier of magical force that protects it. Until the start of its next turn, the sage has a +5 bonus to AC, including against the triggering attack, and it takes no damage from *magic missile*.

BRIAN VALEZA

First Reader

The First Reader constantly expands Candlekeep's literary resources and base of knowledge. Acquiring unique tomes and scrolls falls under the First Reader's purview.

In 1492 DR, the First Reader is Bookwyrm, a dragonborn **master sage** (see the stat block earlier in this section) of green dragon ancestry. Bookwyrm's real name is Skoda Valanaster.

Great Readers

Candlekeep maintains a council of eight Great Readers, senior Avowed who oversee day-to-day operations. These erudite scholars and gifted spellcasters are chosen from the ranks of Master Readers. Each is acknowledged as Candlekeep's foremost expert on a particular area of study. Many of them use the **master sage** stat block presented earlier in this section.

In 1492 DR, the Great Readers are:

- A'lai Aivenmore, a human **master sage** and worshiper of Oghma (god of knowledge). Primary expertise: divinity (the gods and the nature of the divine).
- Alkrist, a dragonborn **master sage** of bronze dragon ancestry. Primary expertise: politics, military strategy, and significant battles of Toril.
- Daral Yashenti, a human **master sage** and poet. Primary expertise: music, poetry, and literature.
- Fheminor Scrivenbark, a lightfoot halfling **master sage**. Primary expertise: history, folklore, and the cultures of Toril (past and present).
- Kazryn Nyantani, a human **master sage**. Primary expertise: the natural world and celestial navigation.
- Sylvira Savikas, a tiefling **archmage**. Primary expertise: the Great Wheel of the planes.
- Teles Ahvoste, a human **archmage**. Primary expertise: magic items, curses, and the Weave.
- V'ziir-Ag, a githzerai **master sage**. Primary expertise: all things unnatural (including aberrations, undead, and the Far Realm).

Master Readers

Master Readers (**sages** and **master sages**; see the stat blocks earlier in this section) oversee the scribes and teach the adjutants. These learned Avowed possess tremendous institutional knowledge.

Chanter

A chosen group of Avowed maintains a constant recitation of the prophecies of Alaundo the Seer. The Endless Chant, as it is called, travels throughout the keep day and night. It's led by either the Chanter or a hand-picked subordinate.

In 1492 DR, the Chanter is a middle-aged shield dwarf **priest** of Milil (god of poetry and song) named Benedora Stoneforge.

Gatewarden

The Gatewarden maintains security at the front gates, through which all visitors must enter.

In 1492 DR, the Gatewarden is Kalan Strongbranch, a human **archmage**.

Candlekeep Locations

From the fabled Emerald Door to the deepest catacombs, Candlekeep contains wonders for those with the patience to find them.

Court of Air

This wide courtyard has nary a tree nor a well cluttering its cobblestone expanse.

House of Rest

This three-story bunkhouse in the Court of Air provides seekers with a place to rest and store their gear. The rustic accommodations include both private rooms and common rooms. In addition to comfortable lodgings, the House of Rest offers guests peace and quiet. Noisy patrons are directed to the Hearth if they want to continue their revels.

The House of Rest can hold up to fifty guests comfortably. If more space is needed, extradimensional spaces are created using *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion* spells, the doorways to which are located at the ends of the upstairs hallways. Beneath the House of Rest is an extension of the library known as the Firefly Cellar (see "Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme" later in this book for details).

The Hearth

From outside, the Hearth appears to be a modest tavern of sturdy construction, with warm light emanating from a pair of small windows on either side of the front door. Upon entering the establishment, visitors quickly realize that it's three times more spacious on the inside.

The Hearth gained its larger dimensions courtesy of extradimensional magic created by worshipers of Gond (god of craft). An intricate clockwork device is suspended in a two-foot-diameter, faintly glowing crystal orb embedded in the ceiling over the bar. The Avowed call this device a geometric amplifier. It is the source of the magic required to maintain the integrity of the enlarged space.

The bar seats up to twenty customers, and patrons can also be seated comfortably at round tables with stout wooden chairs or at rectangular tables with benches. A dozen soft, cushy armchairs encircle the fireplace in the center of the room.

Candlekeep

Pillars of Pedagogy
Erudite Outfitters & Clothiers
Emerald Door
Gatehouse (Main Entrance)
Way of the Lion
Court of Air
Bath and Steam House
Temple of Oghma
Smithy and Stables
House of the Binder
Granary
The Hearth
House of Rest

Little One

One of Candlekeep's guests stands out from the rest of the crowd: a chaotic good **ogre** wearing a *headband of intellect*. He's most often found sitting by himself in a corner of the Hearth's taproom, reading a book.

A few years ago, the ogre was like many others of his kind—brutish and cruel. He met a halfling adventurer wearing the shiny gold headband and killed the puny runt for it. When the ogre attuned to it, the headband grew in size, enabling him to wear it. With an improved ability to reason and ponder, the ogre felt compelled to appreciate the error of his ways and seek out a better life. He adopted the name Little One, to honor the halfling whose life he cut short.

Shunned by polite society, Little One came to Candlekeep hoping to learn as much as he could. He's a quiet but popular fixture in the keep, and the Avowed are always saying hello to him and recommending new books for him to read. He is currently reading *Storm King's Thunder*, by Scriers Phink. This book follows the exploits of a band of adventurers searching for a storm giant king named Hekaton, whose sudden disappearance caused great upheaval up and down the Sword Coast some years ago.

You can use Little One to introduce your player characters to rare books such as the ones described in this adventure anthology. Little One doesn't mind sharing whatever book he is currently enjoying.

The Hearth's patrons are a mix of fresh-faced adjutants, stodgy scholars, and eclectic guests.

Demiplanar Chambers. Several doors line the walls of the Hearth. Although visible from inside the taproom, they do not appear to exist when the structure is viewed from the outside. Each of these portals leads to a 30-foot-square demiplane that houses either a private meeting chamber or a shrine dedicated to Deneir (god of writing), Gond (god of craft), or Milil (god of poetry and song). Anyone can freely enter one of the shrines, but access to a private chamber requires a key from the barkeep and a payment of 5 gp.

Meeting Chambers. Each of the meeting chambers is humbly appointed with a large round table and chairs, plus a pair of sideboards containing dishes and cutlery. The menu and beverage list are posted on one wall in case those inside want to order food and drink during their gathering.

Shrines. Each of the shrines is outfitted with a simple wooden altar, tables and benches for study and reflection, and suitable wall hangings. These adornments vary from deity to deity, but generally include beautiful tapestries telling key stories of the relevant deity or framed, illuminated scriptures discussing and illustrating the god's key tenets.

Bath and Steam House

Avowed and seekers alike use this building as a place to relax. Spacious rooms in the building contain heated pools for respite while engaging in casual conversation or debates with others. Side chambers hold hot saunas and massage parlors.

House of the Binder

A seeker can request a copy of any book or scroll in the library, and the work of creating copies is performed by scribes in the House of the Binder. The entire text must be replicated, since the Avowed insist on maintaining the scholarly intent and integrity of the original author.

Nonmagical Tomes. The copying and binding of a typical book in Candlekeep's library generally costs 100 gp or so (double for a translated version), though large books incur an additional charge. The manufacture of a facsimile takes weeks or even months for large tomes, so those who desire such a work must commission it in writing, provide payment in advance, and then return to the front gates to pick up the book or pay an additional price to have it delivered.

Spellbooks. A copy of a spellbook costs 50 gp per level of spells contained within it. For example, a spellbook that contains two 3rd-level spells, four 2nd-level spells, and six 1st-level spells (20 spell levels total) costs 1,000 gp to copy over to a new book.

Works of the Avowed. Each year, Candlekeep releases a small book stamped with the sigil of the library and credited to "The Avowed of Candlekeep." These limited editions contain short essays, excerpts, and other writings relevant to a particular theme or subject, such as gardening, gemstones, longevity, or transformative curses. They are sold at the keep and by Candlekeep representatives in large cities for between 50 gp and 100 gp per book; speculators often acquire multiple copies in anticipation of a high resale value.

Pillars of Pedagogy

Seekers engage in quiet study and research within this austere cluster of closely huddled, flat-topped towers of varying heights. Each tower contains private rooms, available by reservation only, that feature permanent *silence* spells, allowing their occupants to read without disturbance.

Most research conducted by seekers happens in these towers. Seekers at the Pillars must rely on their Avowed guides to retrieve or return specific works from the Great Library to assist with their research. Most seekers never pass through the Emerald Door into the library proper.

Temple of Oghma

This modest stone temple is dedicated to the god of knowledge. Its bronze bell announces the beginning of services. Four large stone gargoyles perch on the cornices and gaze down protectively; these

KATERINA LADON

seemingly inert statues are **stone golems** charged with defending the temple. If called to service, they glide gently to the ground using a programmed effect similar to a *feather fall* spell.

The caretaker of the temple in 1492 DR is a human **priest** of Shou descent named Lorekeeper Kei Tigersteel. Though not officially an Avowed, the Lorekeeper enjoys the privilege of entering the library unaccompanied.

Erudite Outfitters & Clothiers

Seekers and members of the Avowed can buy new robes or have their well-worn clothes mended at this modest exchange.

In 1492 DR, the exchange is managed by Feldmar Bisset III, a human **acolyte** of Gond, an expert tailor, and a sericulture hobbyist. He and his family fashioned a place among the Avowed, crafting robes and other garments upon request. Feldmar teaches a compulsory class on simple stitching to adjutants in an effort to reduce the amount of basic patchwork he and his family do to keep the Avowed neatly clothed.

Next to the workshop is an atrium where Feldmar indulges his hobby of raising silkworms and harvesting their cocoons to weave small amounts of the precious cloth.

Smithy and Stables

A gold dwarf **veteran** named Khe'ril Hammerbind oversees the smithy, which adjoins the stables. Khe'ril and his apprentices produce shoes for horses and other mounts here. The heat from the forge provides warmth when winter comes calling.

The stables accommodate a wide range of mounts. Most of the stalls are designed for horses and ponies, but specialized stalls offer secure lodging and care for hippogriffs, griffons, and wyverns as well.

Emerald Door

The Emerald Door—the main point of access to the Inner Ward—stands at the western end of the Court of Air. It is fifteen feet tall and made of a translucent dark green stone that glows with an inner light. An *arcane lock* spell seals the door, which is further warded against all damage. Here, a Keeper of the Emerald Door (a **mage**) stands at all times to welcome newly arrived seekers. The Keeper uses runners to help seekers secure lodgings at the House of Rest and places to study in the Pillars of Pedagogy.

Keepers of the Emerald Door politely dispel any mistaken notions seekers might have about passing through the Emerald Door and exploring the Great Library beyond. The Inner Ward is off limits to

The Emerald Door

seekers without special dispensation, which must come from the Keeper of Tomes, the First Reader, or one of the eight Great Readers. When permission to enter the Inner Ward is granted by such an individual, it's customary for the beneficiary of this consent to receive a signed and sealed letter of admittance. The wax seal must be intact and unbroken when the letter is presented to the Keeper of the Emerald Door. The Keeper determines the letter's authenticity by opening and reading it. If the letter passes muster, the Keeper returns it, opens the Emerald Door, and allows the letter's owner to enter the Inner Ward. Unless a shorter or longer duration is specified in the letter, permission to occupy the Inner Ward lasts for a tenday, during which time the letter's recipient can come and go as they please.

A Keeper can spot a forged letter of admittance with a successful Wisdom (Insight) check contested by the forger's Dexterity (Deception) check. Anyone caught presenting a forged letter is denied access to the Inner Ward indefinitely.

A seeker who is denied entry to the Inner Ward can still enjoy the bulk of Candlekeep's collected works. The seeker need only ask an Avowed adjutant to fetch the desired works and deliver them to the seeker's preferred place of study in Candlekeep (usually a chamber in the Pillars of Pedagogy). Not all books in the collection can be checked out in this manner, however; the rarest and most dangerous tomes can be accessed only by creatures who are granted passage through the Emerald Door.

If a request is made for a work that has been checked out by another Candlekeep resident, it could be days or weeks before that work becomes available.

Inner Ward

The poster map included with this book shows the Inner Ward, which contains the Great Library—a veritable forest of stone towers clumped around stockier buildings, all joined together in the shadow of a high-walled citadel called Exaltation.

Extradimensional Spaces

Candlekeep has invisible doorways to dozens of permanent extradimensional spaces, some as small as a room at an inn and others as large as the space created by a *demiplane* or *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion* spell. The Avowed try to keep track of all the extradimensional spaces in Candlekeep, but a few forgotten doorways lurk in the library, their locations or access requirements lost. Valuable books, scrolls, and other items might be trapped inside these extradimensional spaces.

When an extradimensional space is rediscovered, it must be thoroughly explored, the resources within cataloged, and the space tested for its stability. When an extradimensional space is no longer needed or desired, the archmages of Candlekeep dispel it.

Great Library

The Avowed transported the towers of the Great Library piecemeal from other locations and painstakingly reassembled them, creating a skyline of bristling spires in a panoply of architectural styles. Among the stone structures are a few towers made of stranger materials, such as infernal iron and the bones of a long-dead colossal red dragon.

Non-Avowed rarely enter the Great Library, but senior staff members occasionally bestow letters of admittance upon individuals of remarkable talent and impeccable reputation (including adventurers). These visitors may peruse the contents within, with an Avowed adjutant (a **commoner**) serving as their guide. Visitors are required to stay with their guide, since those unfamiliar with the library might become lost in its labyrinthine halls and extradimensional spaces.

The oldest of the library's buildings are soaring stone affairs with floors crafted from lustrous dark wood and floor-to-ceiling shelves. Ceiling heights vary, ranging from as low as ten feet to as high as one hundred feet in the tallest towers. The Avowed use floating disks, each one large enough to hold three Medium creatures, to reach the highest shelves. *Continual flame* spells light the well-traveled areas, and the Avowed employ *driftglobes* when visiting remote sections. An intricate arrangement of mounted mirrors lights the upper reaches of the tallest chambers, reflecting sunlight by day or a *continual flame* spell on cloudy days or at nights.

Modrons. Candlekeep is a haven for thirteen rogue modrons (**monodrones**) that escaped from Mechanus. The Avowed struck a deal with the creatures, and they've been part of the library staff ever since. Working alongside the Avowed, the modrons catalog and shelve books, though each of them can manage only one book at a time.

Exaltation

The bastion of Exaltation is the tallest and most heavily defended structure in Candlekeep. From the citadel's stone battlements, one can see over the walls of Candlekeep in every direction.

The Avowed live in Exaltation, and visitors are not welcome here unless they've made an extraordinary donation or performed a special favor for the Avowed, in which case they're allowed a room and given strict instructions not to wander the halls without their assigned guides.

The halls of Exaltation connect to its classrooms, kitchens, bakeries, dining halls, shrines, workshops, offices, study halls, scriptoriums, and dormitories.

Miirym the Sentinel Wyrm

Bells rung at dawn mark the beginning of everyone's daily routine, and bells rung at highsun and sundown signal the serving of lunch and dinner. These bells also denote the changing of the guard at the eastern gatehouse and the Emerald Door.

Beneath Candlekeep

Secret staircases abound in Candlekeep, leading down to dusty vaults and catacombs that hold the oldest books. The flooded caves at sea level are haunted by all manner of strange creatures.

Miirym the Sentinel Wyrm

Well over 1,500 years ago, the silver dragon Miirym broke into Candlekeep, intent on adding its riches to her hoard. She devoured scholars and destroyed a score of irreplaceable books before she was confronted by an archmage and bound into service to protect Candlekeep as penance for her misdeeds. The wizard passed away before Miirym's sentence had been served, and other spellcasters were unable to break the enchantment that bound her.

Time passed and so did Miirym, whose corpse has long since crumbled into dust. Unfortunately for Miirym, the enchantment remains in effect on her spirit. The spectral dragon—what's left of her—dwells in the catacombs and caves under the library. Those who have visited the depths describe Miirym as a set of immense spectral jaws whose essence roils with the promise of breath weapons and spells of destruction.

Adventurers who explore the passages beneath Candlekeep might encounter Miirym, who's more interested in news of present-day Faerûn than in fighting. Indeed, Miirym is an engaging conversationalist if one has the inclination to chat with her.

Miirym doesn't have a treasure hoard. Instead, she protects the books and scrolls kept in her subterranean domain. The Sentinel Wyrm can be summoned by the Keeper of Tomes and called upon to defend Candlekeep from invaders who would plunder or destroy it. In her role as Candlekeep's defender, Miirym can move anywhere within the library fortress, passing through walls and other solid barriers. She can't enter extradimensional spaces, since they are not on the same plane of existence as Candlekeep. Miirym's stat block appears at the end of this section.

Echoes of Alaundo

Shortly after Alaundo the Seer began speaking his prophecies, a wise novitiate devised a way to magically record his spoken words into prismatic gemstones now stored in a vault beneath Candlekeep. Only the First Reader and the Keeper of Tomes have the ability to coax audible recordings

Miirym

Large undead

Armor Class 10
Hit Points 262 (25d10 + 125)
Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	23 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +12, Int +11, Wis +9, Cha +13
Skills Arcana +11, History +11, Perception +16, Stealth +14
Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 26; see also "X-Ray Vision" below
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 22 (41,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +7

Bound to Candlekeep. Miirym can't leave Candlekeep and is immune to any effect that would place her in a location outside it, including an extradimensional space. If she dies, Miirym regains her form and all her hit points after 1d10 days, reappearing in the location where she died or in the nearest unoccupied space.

Regeneration. Miirym regains 40 hit points at the start of her turn. If Miirym takes damage from a magic weapon or a spell, this trait doesn't function at the start of Miirym's next turn. Miirym dies only if she starts her turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Incorporeal Movement. Miirym can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Miirym fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

X-Ray Vision. Miirym can see through solid matter out to a range of 60 feet. To her, opaque creatures, objects, and obstacles within that distance appear transparent and don't prevent light from passing through them. This vision can penetrate 5 feet of stone, 3 inches of common metal, and up to 10 feet of wood or dirt. Thicker substances block this vision, as does a thin sheet of lead.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 34 (9d6 + 3) force damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5–6). Miirym uses one of the following breath weapons:

Cold Breath. Miirym exhales an icy blast in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 21 Constitution saving throw, taking 67 (15d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Necrotic Breath. Miirym exhales a bolt of necrotic energy in a 120-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 82 (15d10) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Paralyzing Breath. Miirym exhales paralyzing gas in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of Miirym's choice that is within 120 feet of her and aware of her must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Miirym's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Spellcasting. Miirym casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (save DC 21) and requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights, mage hand*
3/day each: *detect magic, detect thoughts, dispel magic, locate creature*
1/day each: *dispel evil and good, wall of force*

Legendary Actions

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

Bite. Miirym makes a bite attack.
Teleport (Costs 2 Actions). Miirym magically teleports up to 120 feet to an unoccupied space she can see.

from these magic gemstones. Each one holds a prophecy spoken by Alaundo himself in an antiquated version of Common that is incomprehensible without the aid of magic. These gemstones came to be called the echoes of Alaundo.

Alaundo's prophecies are easily misinterpreted, which is why First Readers and Keepers of Tomes rarely consult or take advantage of the echoes.

Chamber of Lost Lore

Deep beneath Candlekeep, past Miirym and the echoes, is a rough-hewn chamber lit by *continual flame* spells. Here, one can gain the power to contact the spirits of long-dead sages that are willing to share their insights and knowledge. High-ranking members of the Avowed make use of this chamber, but few seekers know of it.

Any creature that has an Intelligence of 8 or higher that spends 1 hour meditating in the chamber gains the ability to cast the *contact other plane* spell once, allowing the creature to commune with a spirit. The spell doesn't need to be cast right away, nor does it need to be cast in the chamber. If the spell is not cast within 24 hours, however, it is lost.

AN ADVENTURE FOR 1ST-LEVEL CHARACTERS

THE JOY OF EXTRADIMENSIONAL SPACES

WRITTEN BY MICHAEL POLKINGHORN
EDITED BY HANNAH ROSE

The Joy of Extradimensional Spaces was donated to Candlekeep with the rest of the library of the mage Fistandia, following her untimely disappearance. In her will, Fistandia bequeathed her collection to Candlekeep in appreciation for the many years she spent in its hallowed halls. This book is a treatise on extradimensional spaces similar to those created by the *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion* spell. This information alone would make it worthy of note, but Fistandia's additions in the margins are even more interesting. In arcane shorthand, she details how she created a permanent *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion* spell and records the command word to open the mansion's doorway.

Many researchers perused this book over the years it spent in Candlekeep, but knowledge of the command word was useless without the location of the gateway to the mansion—until a chance discovery by the sage Matreous, an expert in the application and removal of curses. Upon arriving at Candlekeep to further his expertise, Matreous cast *detect magic*, as was his habit. The spell revealed a gateway in the very study room he had been assigned!

Forgetting about his earlier purpose, Matreous asked for any knowledge of who might have created such a gateway. Research by the Avowed revealed that Fistandia requested this room each time she visited the keep. They also turned up mysterious reports that she rarely left the room for weeks at a time. Rumors said that she was not even seen to eat or sleep during her visits. She would, however, go missing for hours at a time. Matreous concluded that she must have gone through the gateway during those absences. By searching through the books Fistandia donated to the library, he found the command word to open the portal and stepped inside.

The Joy of Extradimensional Spaces

Finding the Book

The characters have come to Candlekeep seeking aid for a stricken town, which could be the home of one or more of them. The settlement has withered this year. Crops have failed, the livestock stands in the fields like stick figures, and the rain has dwindled. A local mage determined that a curse had been levied on the land and recommended that the town seek aid from a sage named Matreous. After some inquiries, the mage found that Matreous was studying in Candlekeep and sent the characters to find him.

Alternatively, the characters could discover *The Joy of Extradimensional Spaces* while researching one of the following topics:

- Creating permanent versions of existing spells
- Demiplanes, pocket dimensions, and other spaces that exist outside the Material Plane

Tied to *The Joy of Extradimensional Spaces* are two mysteries. The first is the whereabouts of the missing sage Matreous. The characters can resolve this question by opening the portal to the mansion. The larger mystery, however, is how to escape once they are trapped inside.

Book Description

The Joy of Extradimensional Spaces is a heavy tome. Its thick covers are made of ornately tooled leather decorated with gold filigree. Of particular interest is the illustration on the cover: the bust of an imposing spellcaster. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or History) check recognizes the legendary mage Mordenkainen.

Opening the Portal

When the characters are shown into the private study room assigned to Matreous, they find it unoccupied. Only the sage's personal effects and a handful of books remain. *The Joy of Extradimensional Spaces* is open to the pages with Fistandia's handwritten notes. A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check is able to decipher the shorthand and find the command word, "scepter," that opens the doorway. Otherwise, the Avowed are happy to help examine Fistandia's notes.

Once the command word is spoken, shimmering, translucent doors appear in the middle of the room. The doors begin to slowly fade, and it's apparent that they'll disappear entirely in a matter of minutes.

When the characters enter the portal, they appear in area M1.

Fistandia's Mansion

Fistandia's mansion was created using a *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion* spell and made permanent by Fistandia's own enchantments. It's luxurious, but not ostentatious. The structure is open, airy, and constructed of stone blocks. The floors are hardwood, and the bedroom, study, trophy room, and dining room have carpets that cover most of the floor space in those rooms. The mansion has brass or bronze fixtures and doors of ironbound oak. The furniture is all of deep brown wood, and most of the rooms are illuminated by oil lamps.

Outside, a swirling indigo miasma hovers 20 feet from the building on all sides. A creature that enters the miasma feels increasingly uneasy during the first minute of exposure. If it remains in the miasma, it gains 1 level of exhaustion for every minute it spends there.

Puzzle Books

Opening the portal from inside the mansion requires another command word, which Fistandia hid in the form of a puzzle. She created seven books, each with a single gilded letter on its spine. When placed next to each other in the proper order, they spell the command word, "liberty." The books bear not only the lettered spines but also the same image of Mordenkainen that graces the cover of *The Joy of Extradimensional Spaces*.

Imp Figurine

The imp figurine in Matreous's possession (see area M1) appears to be a very detailed carving of an imp made from onyx. It's not a statue, however, but a real **imp** that Fistandia summoned and transformed into a statuette. Removing the figurine from the mansion breaks the enchantment and releases the imp.

Encounter Locations

Fistandia's mansion is eerily quiet. Rooms with windows to the outside are lit by the indigo miasma swirling outside the mansion, which colors everything in the room with its tint. In the larger rooms it tones down the warm light of the oil lamps.

The following locations are keyed to the map of Fistandia's mansion.

M1. Foyer and Hallway

The characters emerge from the portal in the grand foyer of the mansion. On this side, the portal looks like a double door.

> The ceiling arches to fifteen feet overhead, and long hallways stretch out on either side of the foyer. Standing in the middle of this area is a middle-aged man wearing gray robes.

Matreous, a neutral human **sage** (see page 9 for his stat block), is startled when the characters appear. After his initial surprise, he introduces himself to the characters and expresses his delight that they have opened the portal to the mansion. He has been trying different command words for the last half hour to get the portal to reopen.

Matreous takes on a thoughtful expression and pauses for an instant, tapping his chin in thought. The mansion must be a treasure trove of information, and there's no telling what wonders it holds! As an example, he shows the characters an intricately carved figurine of an imp that he has found and is taking back to Candlekeep for study (see the "Imp Figurine" sidebar).

Matreous explains that he would dearly like to continue to explore the mansion's mysteries himself, but he could be much more useful back in Candlekeep. Thanks to the research he conducted to find the mansion, he has the skills to keep the portal open from the other side. If the characters take this chance to explain their errand to him, he is willing to accompany them back to their village in exchange for their time and efforts exploring the mansion.

If the characters agree to explore the mansion, Matreous steps through the double door leading back to the study room. When he does, the characters hear Matreous shriek as the doors slam shut, locking them inside the mansion. (Matreous lets out the shriek as the imp figurine in his possession reveals its true nature. The characters can't help Matreous until they find a way to reopen the portal.)

Exits. The foyer gives way to a long hallway that runs the length of the extradimensional mansion, with several doors on the wall opposite the entrance.

M2. Patio

A semicircular patio paved with gray flagstones is nestled against the building, lit by the swirling indigo miasma that surrounds the mansion.

M3. Library

> Tall shelves filled with books line the walls of this room. Two more shelves run through the middle of the room with a ten-foot-wide aisle between them. Several stacks of books are piled high throughout the room. There are small reading desks with cozy scarlet chairs in the corners.

The shelves contain books on Fistandia's favorite subjects: arcana, natural science, religion, astrology, and planar travel, as well as volumes of poetry, mythology, and folk tales.

Book Attack. One of the heaps of books is a **swarm of animated books** (see the accompanying stat block). As the characters move through the room, the swarm knocks one of the 10-foot-wide freestanding sections of bookshelf over onto the characters. Any creatures in the affected area must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone and restrained by the fallen shelf. A restrained creature can use an action to make a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check. On a success, it frees itself. Restrained creatures are also freed if the shelf is lifted with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

Treasure. Sitting on the reading desk is a jeweled letter opener worth 20 gp.

Puzzle Book. The puzzle book with the letter R on its spine is on one of the shelves. Any character who has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 12 or higher notices the book. A thorough search of the shelf also yields the book.

M4. Exercise Room

> This room contains a battered wooden mannequin and a weapon rack holding staffs and daggers, all lit by indigo-tinted light streaming through a window. The floor is stained and scorched. At the far end of the room, a broom hovers in the air, sweeping the floor by itself!

This room was where Fistandia practiced her martial and magical skills (at the expense of the fine floors). The mannequin has numerous cuts and chips. The weapons in the rack are mundane but finely made. There are four daggers, four quarterstaffs, and twenty darts in a bandolier hanging

Swarm of Animated Books

Medium swarm of Tiny constructs

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)
Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)
Speed 0 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	1 (–5)	10 (+0)	1 (–5)

Damage Vulnerabilities fire
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

False Objects. If the swarm is motionless at the start of combat, it has advantage on its initiative roll. Moreover, if a creature hasn't observed the swarm move or act, that creature must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to discern that the swarm is animate.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a 1-foot-tall, 8-inch-wide, 2-inch-thick object. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Book Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage if the swarm has half its hit points or fewer.

Animated Broom

Small construct

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 17 (5d6)
Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	1 (–5)	5 (–3)	1 (–5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone
Senses blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 7
Languages —
Challenge Rating 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

False Object. If the broom is motionless at the start of combat, it has advantage on its initiative roll. Moreover, if a creature hasn't observed the broom move or act, that creature must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to discern that the broom is animate.

Flyby. The broom doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Actions

Multiattack. The broom makes two melee attacks.

Broomstick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

from one of the pegs. One wall holds diagrams of attack and parry positions for wielders of staffs and daggers.

The broom is an **animated broom** (see the accompanying stat block). If left alone, it goes about its duties cleaning the floors and ignores the characters. If a creature attempts to grab it or menace it in any way, it attacks.

M5. Study

The door to this room is left ajar so the cats can come and go as they please.

> The entire far wall of this room is a floor-to-ceiling bookshelf. Even more books are resting on several large scarlet armchairs and small wooden tables, and there are several paintings on the walls. A fluffy black cat is curled up on one of the chairs.

If the characters enter the room, the **cat** sits up, meows plaintively, and approaches. If they feed it or pet it and make a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check, it follows them until they leave the study or venture up the stairs, at which time it heads to the kitchen (area M6). If the characters don't pay attention to it, the cat waits for a short time, but then loses interest and leaves for the kitchen.

If the characters spend 30 minutes investigating the books in this room, they discover the following facts:

- Almost all the books in this study were written by someone named Fistandia. Most are her memoirs.
- Fistandia was a powerful mage as well as a priest of Mystra. She frequented Candlekeep to further her studies.
- In exchange for Fistandia's pious service and achievements in expanding the arts of magic, Mystra granted Fistandia a permanent extradimensional mansion for her to reside in when studying in Candlekeep.
- Fearful that a guest might become trapped in the mansion, Fistandia hid the command word to open the portal to Candlekeep on the spines of seven books in her mansion.

Paintings. There are three paintings hanging on the walls: a landscape scene with a large green dragon emerging from a grove of pine trees, a study of a pegasus in flight, and a portrait of a unicorn in a wooded glade.

Secret Door. There is a secret door behind the left bookcase on the far wall. When the bottom leftmost book in the bookcase is pulled, the bookcase slides forward to reveal the passage behind it. A character who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers the proper book.

Puzzle Book. The puzzle book with the letter I on its spine is sitting on one of the armchairs.

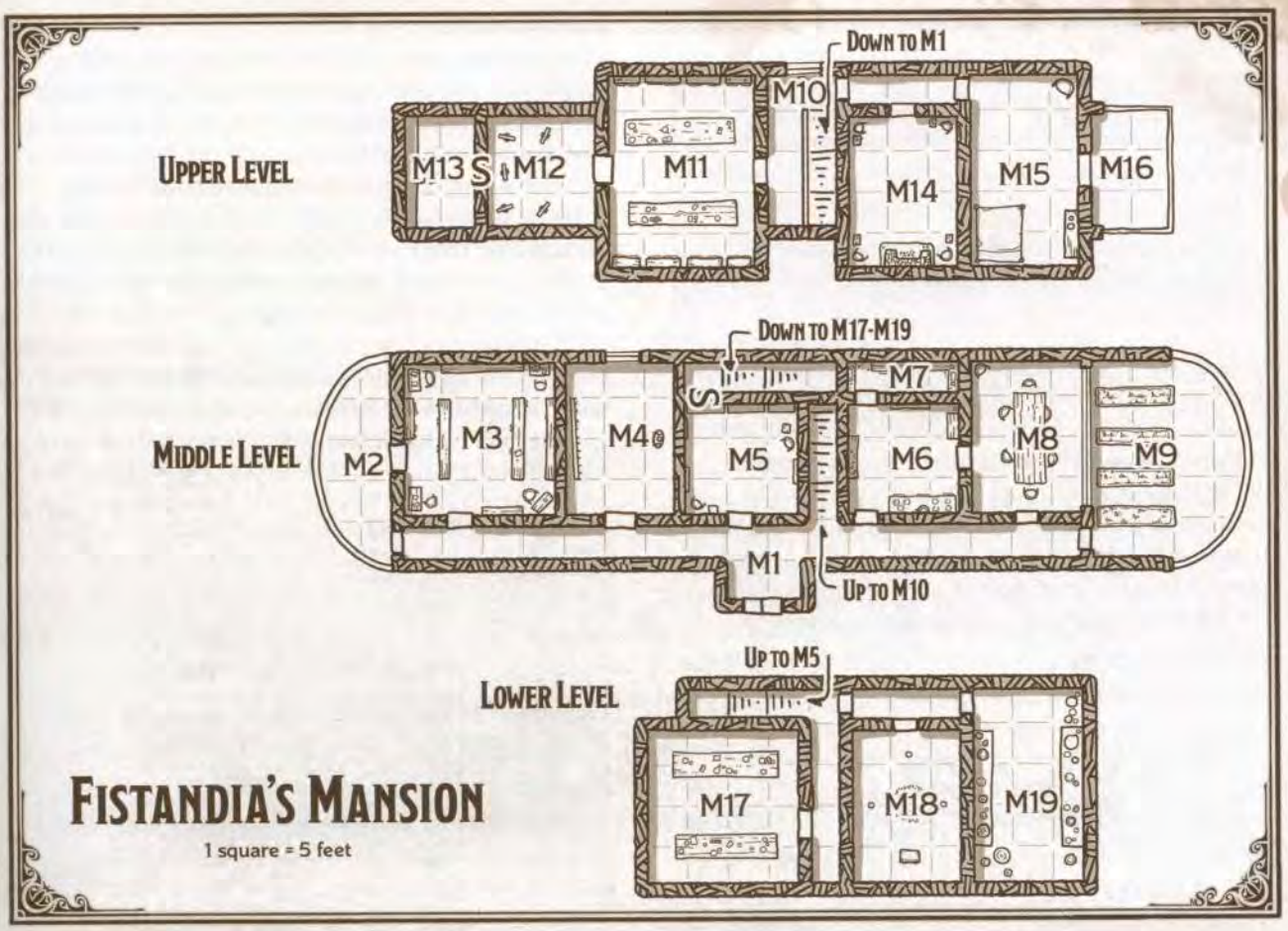
M6. Kitchen

The door to this room is left slightly open so the cats can enter and exit.

> The aromas of cooking permeate this kitchen. A large iron stove takes up one wall, and the rest of the room is filled with large tables and racks lined with hanging pots, pans, and cooking utensils. Everything is sparkling clean.

The kitchen is run by two **homunculi** named Cumin and Coriander. Most homunculi can't speak, but these ones have the ability to speak Common. When the characters enter the room, the homunculi greet the new arrivals in squeaky voices:

> With a flapping of wings, two small forms land on the nearest table. They bow low before you and ask, "How can we be of help to our honored guests? Cooking? Cleaning? Mending your clothes, perhaps?"



The homunculi have had only the cats and the faerie dragons in area M9 to cook for or clean up after for ages, so they practically trip over themselves in their eagerness to provide any service to the characters. They pester the characters for tasks to do and insist on serving them fresh bread and soup.

The duties of the homunculi are confined mostly to the kitchen and the adjoining dining room (area M8). They don't know much about what happens in the rest of the mansion, but they can answer direct questions with the following information:

- Cumin was created by Fistandia, while Coriander says that a mage named Freyot created it.
- Their masters went away a long time ago.
- They have been warned by their masters not to touch any books that have single letters on their spines. (The homunculi don't know the significance of these lettered books.)
- Fistandia used to go into the planetarium (area M12) and disappear for a long time afterward.
- Something keeps building piles of books in the library. (The homunculi are unaware of the swarm of animated books in area M3.)
- The imp that Fistandia summoned hasn't been seen in some time.
- The faerie dragons in the arboretum (area M9) are mischievous but harmless. Try to stay out of their way.

Cats. In one corner of the kitchen, several small ceramic bowls painted with stylized cats are filled with water and kitchen scraps. Any cats the characters have encountered in the mansion are found again here, along with an additional **cat** the characters haven't yet seen. The cats are eating from the food bowls and occasionally batting at one another to get the choicer morsels.

M7. Pantry

The shelves in this pantry are stocked with sacks of flour, vegetables, preserved meats, and other staples—all the dry goods needed to sustain a household.

Fistandia's and Freyot's Homunculi

A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check knows two vital facts about the homunculi in area M6. The first is that a master can have only one homunculus at a time. The second is that a homunculus dies when its master dies. This fact suggests that Fistandia and Freyot are still alive. Characters might encounter one or both mages in a future adventure.

M8. Dining Room

Large windows form the entirety of one wall, looking out on three planted beds filled with vegetation. Within this room, a crystal chandelier hangs above a table made of dark wood. Six matching wooden chairs with scarlet cushions surround the table. A seventh chair sits alone in the far corner.

In addition to the furnishings described above, this room is adorned with unremarkable tapestries that depict grapevines and the process of making wine.

Mimic Chair. The reason for the odd number of chairs is that the chair closest to the door to area M6 is a **mimic** that escaped from area M19. It moved the real chair to the corner and took its place, hoping to capture any creature entering from the kitchen. It has been able to ambush only the occasional cat or faerie dragon, so it's in a weakened state and has the following changes to its stat block:

- It has 30 hit points.
- The DC to escape its grapple is 10.

Treasure. The buffet contains silverware and a service for six, worth a total of 20 gp.

M9. Arboretum

The door leading from area M1 is partially open.

This end of the building is an arboretum with open, arched walls. Flowering shrubs and small trees grow between paved paths that meet in a semicircular patio. There's no sun, but two glowing globes hang above the plants, bathing them in light. There are colorful blossoms everywhere, filling the air with their perfume.

Two invisible orange **faerie dragons** are perched in the trees. They are mischievous creatures, always looking for fun, but the homunculi and the cats provide little entertainment, so they hope to keep the characters in the arboretum for as long as possible so they can play with them. Giggling incessantly, they fly toward the characters, use their Euphoria Breath, and flit out of danger, still invisible. If they are attacked, they disengage and retreat to a safe place, becoming invisible again if their concentration is broken.

Treasure. The two glowing orbs are *driftglobes*. Cumin and Coriander from area M6 periodically activate the globes to provide light for the plants.

M10. Stairs

The landing at the top of the stairs is occupied by a suit of armor holding a longsword, point down. It sits upon a wooden stand in front of a large window. The armor is clearly decorative, though the helmet and the sword are genuine items of good quality.

Above the armor is a trapdoor that opens upward into an attic that runs the length of the building. The attic is stuffy, dimly lit, and covered in a fine layer of dust. A character who has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13 or higher notices light coming through the floorboards above area M13. The floorboards can be broken through with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to allow access to the room below.

M11. Laboratory

Most of this room is taken up by long wooden tables that are covered with glass vessels and books. Cabinets with glass doors line the walls, and they contain all manner of specimens. Just below the ceiling in the middle of the room, colorful globes circle each other in an intricate dance. The far wall is almost completely covered by a map of the night sky, with a golden sunburst in the center above a closed door.

The cabinets are crowded with skulls, bones, mounted animals, rocks and minerals, dried plants, and jars with creatures floating in liquid. Measuring devices, glassware, and other scientific apparatus sit on the tables between books on the natural sciences, astronomy, astrology, physiology, and natural philosophy. Complex charts and mathematical formulas are drawn on a mobile blackboard.

Star Map. The map on the wall is the solution to the planetarium puzzle in area M12. Most of the stars are represented by mere dots or small circles, but the five most prominent stars are rendered as blazing silver suns. Those are the five bright stars to which the telescopes must be pointed to open the door to area M13.

Puzzle Book. The puzzle book with the letter T on its spine is among the books on the middle table.

M12. Planetarium

The door opens into a dark, open space offering a view of the starry firmament of the night sky. Five telescopes mounted on bronze plates point toward the constellations above. In the middle of the space, a one-foot-diameter sphere of clear crystal sits in a circular brass stand.

The room is a detailed and convincing illusion of a grassy knoll on a moonless night. Springy turf compresses underfoot, and when the doors to the room are closed, the starry night sky is visible in all directions. Terrain more than 20 feet away at ground level, however, is shadowy and indistinct; only the sky above seems sharp and clear. In fact, the stars shine down with an almost fierce light. Anyone who explores the room discovers that this effect is an illusion and can determine the size and shape of the actual space.

If the characters try to manipulate the telescopes, they find that it's easy to change the orientation of these well-balanced instruments. The telescopes cannot be moved in any other way, however, and are sturdily mounted to their pedestals. The crystal ball is also firmly fixed and cannot be moved.

Planetarium Puzzle. The planetarium is a useful feature for anyone who wants to gaze upon the stars. Its other purpose is to open the secret door to area M13. In order to solve the puzzle, the five telescopes must be pointed into the sky at the five brightest stars shown on the map in area M11. When all five telescopes are aligned, the light of the stars is focused through them onto the crystal ball and refracted to illuminate a secret door on one wall. The secret door to area M13 can be discovered only by solving the planetarium puzzle. From inside area M13, however, the door is plainly visible.

M13. The Chained Library

To reach this room, the characters must solve the telescope puzzle in area M12 or break through the ceiling from the attic above area M10.

> This room is bare except for a bookshelf covered in chains against one wall, a plain wooden bench, and a reading desk built into the shelves. A book with the bust of a mage on its cover sits on the desk.

The three shelves are filled with books bound in iron covers, which are attached to chains that secure them to the shelves—a chained library. The reading desk is used to support the chained books while they are being read. This chained library has been enchanted to be jealously possessive of its contents. It attacks any creature that comes within its reach (use the accompanying **animated chained library** stat block).

Fistandia's most treasured knowledge is kept here. There are rare tomes on the sciences, arcana, and alchemy, as well as books about planar lore and the summoning of fantastic creatures. All the books

The Chained Library

Animated Chained Library

Large construct

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 45 (6d10 + 12)
Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	8 (–1)	14 (+2)	1 (–5)	5 (–3)	1 (–5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone
Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 7
Languages —
Challenge Rating 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

False Object. If the library is motionless at the start of combat, it has advantage on its initiative roll. Moreover, if a creature hasn't observed the library move or act, that creature must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to discern that the library is animate.

Actions

Multiattack. The library makes two attacks.

Chained Book. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 12).

are firmly affixed to the shelves by enchanted chains and can't be freed without being destroyed.

Treasure. If the characters defeat the animated chained library, one of its books breaks free with a length of chain still attached and functions as a *+1 flail*. The book is entitled *Martial Attack Techniques*.

Puzzle Book. The book on the reading desk is the puzzle book with the letter L on its spine.

M14. Trophy Room

> Each corner of this pleasant parlor has a scarlet armchair and a reading table piled high with books. A cheery fire burns in the fireplace. A pair of swords sits in a rack above the fireplace, and the heads of various animals are mounted on the walls.

The books are all poetry or heroic fiction meant for entertainment. The trophy heads—a stag, a wolf, a peryton, a hell hound, and a black dragon wyrmling—are purely decorative. The fire is an illusion that looks pleasant but provides no heat. The swords above the mantel are two **flying swords** that attack if anything in the room is touched.

Puzzle Book. The puzzle book with the letter Y on its spine can be found on the table.

M15. Bedroom

The door to this room is left ajar, as is the one at the end of the hall to area M10, to let the cats roam as they please.

> This is an open and airy bedroom. A canopied bed with rich scarlet curtains occupies one corner. A jug and a washbasin stand on top of a chest of drawers, and a fluffy black cat is napping on a scarlet easy chair. One wall is covered with a large painting of a gold dragon perched heroically on a mountaintop.

When the characters enter the room, the **cat** jumps down from the chair and stretches. It then follows the characters around the room, mewing at them. If they feed it or pet it and make a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check, it follows them until combat or some other frightening occurrence scares it off. If the characters don't interact with it, the cat gives up and leaves for the kitchen.

The top drawers of the dresser contain elegant, well-made robes. The lower drawers hold more utilitarian tunics and dresses.

Puzzle Book. The puzzle book with the letter E on its spine is sitting on the chest of drawers.

M16. Balcony

> The door from the bedroom leads to a wrought iron balcony lined with slate flagstones. The greenery and colorful flowers of the arboretum are visible below.

The oppressive miasma seems to press in even closer above the mansion here than at ground level.

M17. Alchemical Laboratory

> The air here smells of astringent chemicals. Long wooden tables stretch across the room, laden with vials, beakers, and flasks holding various liquids and powders. Books are stacked between the glassware and chemicals. Yellowed paper charts and blackboards full of complex formulas cover the walls.

The books here cover chemical science and alchemy. A character who examines the charts and formulas and makes a successful DC 13 Intelligence check determines that the main goal of the research here was to transmute various materials into gold. Judging by the numerous scorch marks and acid burns on the furniture, the laboratory was the scene of several spectacular failures.

Four clay figures rest on a table in the middle of the room. They range from a rudimentary, barely humanoid shape to a small, winged body so lifelike that it almost appears to be a real creature that is merely asleep. A character who makes a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check can tell that these are figures used for creating homunculi.

Treasure. Several of the reagents here are quite valuable. By searching the room, the characters can gather 50 gp of alchemical materials. In addition, two of the vials contain *potions of healing*.

Puzzle Book. The puzzle book with the letter B on its spine is propped up against a large beaker.

M18. Summoning Room

> This dark, stone-walled room contains only a few objects. A five-foot-diameter circle of intricate runes covers the floor. There's an empty wooden bookstand opposite the door and bronze braziers at the other three cardinal points of the circle. Whatever material they contained has long ago burned to cinders, but the room still smells of charcoal and sulfur. Sitting next to the bookstand is a warty toad.

This is the room where Fistandia summoned the imp that would become the figurine found by Matreous. The current resident of the room is a **quasit** in toad form. It waits for a creature to approach and then attacks.

M19. Preserved Menagerie

> Smells of alcohol and brine permeate this room. Glass vessels large and small stand in rows on the floor and tables, ranging from one foot to six feet tall. Inside each vessel is the body of a creature floating in clear liquid. One four-foot-tall container is missing its lid and has no occupant.

Fistandia considered herself to be a knowledgeable natural philosopher, and she collected many rare specimens to study. She kept examples of common and natural creatures in area M11, and rare or aberrant creatures in this room. The collection includes a cockatrice, a flumph, a giant fire beetle, a small grell, a myconid sprout, a pseudodragon, four severed hands in the same jar, and a **slaad tadpole** that's still alive and attacks if its jar is opened.

The empty container once held the mimic found in area M8. Gravely injured when it was captured, it feigned death until it could recover and escape into the upper levels of the mansion.

The four severed hands have absorbed enough magical energy to become **crawling claws**. They push the lid off their jar and attack when any creature comes within 5 feet of them.

Assembling the Books

The command word to reopen the mansion's portal is "liberty," and it must be spoken within 10 feet of the portal to cause it to open.

Once the characters have recovered all (or most of) the lettered books, they should be able to guess the command word. When it is spoken, a pulse of power ripples through the mansion as the double door in area M1 swings open, forming a portal that leads back to the study room in Candlekeep. The doorway remains open only for a minute, but the characters can simply speak the command word to reveal it again.

Conclusion

When the characters return to the study room in Candlekeep, they find Matreous's body sprawled on the floor and the imp figurine missing. When the imp was taken from the mansion in its figurine form, the enchantment binding it ended, allowing it to sting and kill Matreous. The **imp** is now invisible and hiding in a corner of Matreous's study. It attacks the first creature that exits the mansion. If the characters defeat the imp, it disappears in a cloud of black smoke.

Any treasure, books, specimens, or weapons the characters acquired while in the mansion remain in their possession. Anything else taken from the mansion evaporates into smoke as they pass through the doorway.

Further Adventures

What will the characters do to save the village now that Matreous is dead? If they're willing to spend more time in Candlekeep, they might be able to find another sage who possesses the expertise they require. Alternatively, they might need to undertake new quests to earn enough money to have Matreous raised from the dead.

Fistandia and her wizardly colleague Freyot are alive, as evidenced by the homunculi they left behind in Fistandia's mansion. What are these two wizards up to, and where are they now? One or both of them might return to Fistandia's mansion some day. If the characters are using the mansion as a place to rest, how will Fistandia and Freyot react to the presence of uninvited guests in their home? These questions are left for you to answer.

AN ADVENTURE FOR 2ND-LEVEL CHARACTERS

MAZFROTH'S MIGHTY DIGRESSIONS

WRITTEN BY ALISON HUANG EDITED BY HANNAH ROSE
DEVELOPED BY HANNAH ROSE & CHRISTOPHER PERKINS

A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS CALLED *MAZFROTH'S Mighty Digressions* was brought to Candlekeep only a few days ago. It was donated by Yalerion Highscroll, a scholar from Waterdeep who purchased the journal in the markets of Baldur's Gate. Unbeknownst to the characters, the book is a monster in disguise and attacks them as they try to read it. Afterward, the characters discover that other books in Candlekeep have behaved similarly, suggesting there might be something more malevolent going on.

MAZFROTH'S MIGHTY DIGRESSIONS

FINDING THE BOOK

Characters who have already gained admission into Candlekeep might come across *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions* while researching topics including, but not limited to, the following:

- Magic and the Weave
- Lycanthropy and its origins
- Demon lords of the Abyss

BOOK DESCRIPTION

Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions is seven inches wide and nine inches tall. The brown leather cover is worn from time and use. The name of the book and its author, Mazfroth Gethur, are elegantly written in cursive with black ink on the first page. The care put into the front page, however, does not apply to the rest of the book's contents. Mazfroth's handwriting is messy and hasty, as if they couldn't write down their thoughts fast enough. Furthermore, the book's 151 pages don't all match, indicating that the author kept adding more pages. The book's stitching is haphazard, and looks like it could come undone at any moment.

ESSAYS AND RAMBLINGS

Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions contains a collection of eclectic essays, though not much is revealed or known about the author. Mazfroth's essays often go on long tangents. Although the topics in the book are many and varied, it is clear that divinity, the denizens of the multiverse, and the nature of magic were subjects of particular interest to Mazfroth.

HELPFUL KNOWLEDGE

A character who scans *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions* learns a piece of information relevant to their interests, such as one of these:

- All magic depends on the Weave, an interface between casters and raw magic that is governed by Mystra, god of magic. Arcane spellcasters access the Weave directly, while divine spellcasters are granted access to it by their deities and ideals. Damage to the Weave can cause unimaginable destruction, as evidenced by the Spellplague in 1385 DR, the Year of Blue Fire.
- Some scholars believe that Malar, god of the hunt, is responsible for lycanthropy. Mazfroth disagrees with this theory on the basis that not all lycanthropes are evil as Malar is. Werebears are an example of lycanthropes that are usually good.
- The Abyss is ruled by demon lords—Baphomet, Demogorgon, Graz'zt, Juiblex, Orcus, Yeenoghu, Zuggtmoy, and many others. Mazfroth ties the origins of several monsters to these demon lords (saying Juiblex created all oozes, for example).

After a character who reads *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions* finds an essay pertaining to their interests, but before they can finish reading the passage, the book attacks them.

MARK BEHM

Gingwatzim

A gingwatzim is a peculiar form of life created by a spell or a ritual. The magic that brings it into being draws on spirit energy from the Ethereal Plane to give the gingwatzim its true form—that of a luminous (but not too bright) sphere of ectoplasm roughly 3 feet in diameter. A newly formed gingwatzim appears as near to its creator as possible and follows its creator's commands without question, using telepathy to communicate.

A gingwatzim can assume two other forms that are determined by its creator at the time the gingwatzim comes into being. One is an exact duplicate of a Tiny nonmagical object that its creator is wearing or carrying. The gingwatzim's other form is that of a specific Tiny beast.

When the **gingwatzim** (see the accompanying stat block) that has taken the form of *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions* attacks the characters, it does so by assuming its true form and then using its Energy Drain action. A gingwatzim must feed on the life energy of other creatures to survive, but it can't feed while in the form of a beast or an object, which is why it must revert to its true form first. Its other form is that of a bat.

This particular gingwatzim was instructed by its creator to remain in book form, but it hasn't fed in days. Consequently, it tries to consume the characters' life energy and fights until destroyed. All the while, it terrorizes its prey with telepathic messages such as "Feed me!" and "Need life!" No trace of the destroyed gingwatzim remains, depriving Candlekeep of its copy of *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions*.

What's Going On?

The gingwatzim that attacks the characters was created by a jackalwere named Korvala, using a ritual taught to her by a now-deceased lamia named Nidalia. Korvala is the leader of the Amberdune Pack, a gang of jackalweres that sells books and scrolls in the markets of Baldur's Gate. Korvala commanded the gingwatzim to take the form of *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions*, one of the more valuable books in her collection. This ruse enabled her to sell a copy of the book without giving up the genuine item, which Korvala is loath to part with.

The Amberdune Pack remains fiercely loyal to Nidalia, even though she has been dead for months. Rather than corrupting individuals and acquiring slaves, Nidalia preferred to collect books and scrolls. Though she was peaceful and compassionate, she was nonetheless killed by a group of adventurers. The jackalweres that survived fled with Nidalia's heart and what books and scrolls they could carry.

Gingwatzim

Small aberration (shapechanger)

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 39 (6d6 + 18)
Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover) in its true form only

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (−4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	4 (−3)	11 (+0)	6 (−2)

Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10
Languages telepathy 60 ft.
Challenge Rating 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Alternate Forms. The gingwatzim has two alternate forms, both of which are chosen by its creator when the gingwatzim comes into being. One form is an exact duplicate of a Tiny nonmagical object (such as a book, dagger, or gemstone) that its creator is carrying or wearing when the gingwatzim is conjured. The other form can be any Tiny beast. Once these alternate forms are chosen, they can't be changed.

Actions

Energy Drain (True Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 16 (4d6 + 2) necrotic damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or gain 1 level of exhaustion. When the target finishes a short or long rest, the target loses every level of exhaustion gained from this attack.

Change Shape. The gingwatzim changes from its true form—a 3-foot-diameter sphere of luminous ectoplasm—into one of its two alternate forms, or from one of those forms back into its true form. In object form, it can't move or make attacks but otherwise retains its statistics, and it is indistinguishable from the thing it is imitating. In beast form, it retains its hit points but otherwise uses the stat block of the beast it is imitating. When it dies, the gingwatzim reverts to its true form and then vanishes.

With Korvala as their new leader, the pack began working on a way to resurrect Nidalia. It soon became clear that wouldn't be a simple task. After all, the *resurrection* spell requires both a diamond worth at least 1,000 gp and the services of a sufficiently powerful spellcaster.

The pack's plan to sell books and scrolls, as well as gingwatzims disguised as books and scrolls, proved to be more challenging than they expected. Most of their profits are spent to help them survive in a city with more than its fair share of bribery and corruption. They've pinned their hopes on raising enough money to resurrect Nidalia before someone discovers their ruse, but they didn't account for the possibility that some of their gingwatzims would end up in Candlekeep.

Monstrous Books

Characters interested in the mystery surrounding Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions might ask the Avowed of Candlekeep for information or conduct their own investigation.

What the Avowed Know

The following information can be learned from talking to Candlekeep's monks and sages:

- *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions* is the third book to transform into an ectoplasmic monster. The other two books were *The Dark Hunger* (about a powerful entity served by star-fearing warlocks) and *Fallen Tethyamar* (about a dwarf king named Ghellin who sought to reclaim his kingdom in the Desertmouth Mountains).
- All three books were used to gain entrance to Candlekeep in the past two months.
- The Avowed keep records of the seekers allowed into Candlekeep and the books they gifted the library. Two seekers who gained entry with monstrous books are still in Candlekeep: Yalerion Highscroll (who brought *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions*) and Valor (who brought *The Dark Hunger*). The Avowed know where to find them.

If the characters talk to the Avowed about the incident they experienced involving *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions*, the monks offer them a *helm of comprehending languages* as a reward for finding out who is responsible for the deception.

Questioning Seekers

If the characters question Yalerion Highscroll or Valor about the books they used to gain entry into Candlekeep, use the following information to roleplay these NPCs.

Yalerion Highscroll

Yalerion is a 26-year-old human **acolyte** with an approachable demeanor and a relaxed posture. A scholar from Waterdeep, they have a never-ending thirst for knowledge, especially information concerning the history of Toril. They made the trip to Candlekeep because they've read all the books contained within the Font of Knowledge, a Waterdavian temple to Oghma, god of knowledge. Yalerion hopes to make the best out of their tenday-long visit by reading rare books and meeting likeminded people.

Yalerion can be found in the House of the Binder, socializing with other followers of Oghma. They sometimes read books in the Pillars of Pedagogy. As long as the characters are friendly and not confrontational, Yalerion is happy to talk with them. They are surprised to hear that *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions* was actually a monster in disguise.

If asked the right questions, Yalerion discloses the following information:

- Ten days ago, Yalerion bought the book they thought was *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions* from a market stall in the Wide, a large and crowded marketplace in the Upper City of Baldur's Gate.
- They remember that the stall's name had "dune" in it, but nothing else about the place. The Wide was too noisy and hectic for their liking.
- They arrived at Candlekeep five days ago and intend to stay for five more.

Valor

With broad shoulders and a permanent scowl on her face, Valor is an intimidating, 24-year-old tiefling **knight**. Originally from Cormyr, a country to the east, she served as a Purple Dragon Knight in the Cormyrean army. Since leaving that life behind, she has taken up bounty hunting, which she greatly prefers. Valor is in Candlekeep to research a particularly elusive target. Her entrance gift wasn't cheap, and she's annoyed that it turned out to be a monstrous fake. She is helping the Avowed with various chores to make amends.

Valor is reshingling the roof of the Hearth during the day, or pacing in the Court of Air at night. Agitated and restless, she's wary of people who want to speak with her. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, or polite and persistent questioning, convinces her to talk to the characters, if only to get them to leave her presence sooner.

Valor can share the following information:

- Thirteen days ago, she arrived at Candlekeep with *The Dark Hunger*, a series of nearly incomprehensible notes about Hadar, a powerful yet inscrutable entity that lives among the stars.
- She purchased her book from a market stall in the Wide, a bustling marketplace in the Upper City of Baldur's Gate. She doesn't remember much about the stall because she didn't want to stay in the Wide for too long. (If the characters ask why, she says, "It reeks of greed.") But she does remember it was in "not the most reputable" corner of the marketplace.
- After finding the information she needed, she prepared to leave three days ago. That's when the Avowed informed her that her gift, *The Dark Hunger*, had revealed its true form, attacking and destroying a wizard's homunculus. The wizard killed the monster before it could harm anyone else, but not before it turned into a spider and tried to scuttle away. When the monster died, no trace of it was left behind.

Amberdune Books

Journey to Baldur's Gate

From Candlekeep, it takes five days of travel along the Coast Way to reach Baldur's Gate. Bandits and thugs lurk along this road, waiting to ambush anyone carrying rare books or other valuables.

Lycanthrope Looter

On the fourth night of their journey, the party is attacked by the **wererat** Mushika and three **giant rats**. Mushika bears nasty scars from his time in the thieves' guilds of Baldur's Gate, and has since turned to easier prey along the Coast Way. While the giant rats attack, Mushika stands back in hybrid form and uses his hand crossbow. He tries to flee if he's reduced to half his hit points or fewer or if all three giant rats are defeated.

The Wide

The marketplace known as the Wide is located in the Upper City—home to the patriars, the wealthiest citizens of Baldur's Gate. Visitors to this district find streets illuminated by magical lights, luxurious boutiques, and expensive restaurants. The elegantly dressed residents treat poorer people with great disdain. The Upper City is truly a place of exclusive decadence; a nightly curfew means that those who don't live there must leave at nightfall each day unless they have a special token.

Almost anything can be found in the Wide. Vendors can operate here without official licenses and taxation, as long as their wares are legal. Even so, the Wide is not immune to corruption: hefty bribes and reputations determine where every vendor is situated in the marketplace.

The Watch

Ten **veterans** of the Watch, a military organization that protects the citizens of the Upper City, patrol the Wide. Though their job consists mostly of watching out for pickpockets and thieves, they also break up disagreements and come to the defense of merchants being harassed by customers.

Finding the Stall

Packed full of vendors eager to make sales and customers clamoring to get good deals, the Wide is not the easiest place to navigate, let alone to find a specific stall in. If the characters spoke to Yalerion Highscroll or Valor, they're able to find Amberdune Books with relative ease. Otherwise, they can make a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check to ask around

the Wide. On a success, a customer or stall owner gives them directions to Amberdune Books. On a failed check, they eventually find the stall after 1 hour of searching.

Other stalls the characters might encounter in the Wide include:

- Autumn's Breads, a street bakery with fresh pastries, breads, and cakes for 1 sp each.
- Coppers to Crowns, an "antiques" shop selling a miscellany of trinkets and oddities (roll 2d4 times on the Trinkets table in the *Player's Handbook*). Each trinket costs 2d10 cp.
- Gems for All, a shop with a variety of gemstones, all worth 50 gp or less.
- Heath's Hot Drinks, a stall offering cups of mulled wine, hot cider, and strong teas for 2 sp each. In the summer, the sign is repainted to read "Heath's Cool Drinks" and the stall serves chilled fruit juice and iced tea.
- Wizards of the Wide, a tent bursting with dozens of arcane foci and *spell scrolls*, including scrolls of *comprehend languages*, *detect magic*, *feather fall*, *find familiar*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, and *unseen servant* (25 gp each).

Amberdune Books

Although it's located in an out-of-the-way corner of the Wide, Amberdune Books always has a few customers perusing its wares. This market stall is stocked with legitimate but commonplace books (25 gp each), as well as illusory copies of rare and expensive books (250 gp each). The stall does not sell spellbooks.

Work Shifts

Amberdune Books is always supervised by two **jackalweres** in humanoid form. At sunrise, those on the first shift set up the stall with Korvala, and at sundown the workers bring their unsold wares back to the pack's hideout in the Blackgate neighborhood.

Each work shift is four hours long, and Korvala checks in every two hours. The jackalweres return to their hideout when they are done with their shift. With the exception of Korvala, they always travel in pairs. You can decide which pack members are at the stall when the characters arrive (see "Amberdune Pack" below for names).

Speaking with the Manager. Korvala takes her duties as the owner of Amberdune Books seriously. She denies all accusations of deception with curt professionalism and threatens to call for the guards if characters are too aggressive. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that Korvala isn't being entirely truthful. To avoid making a scene, she invites characters who see through her lies back to the Amberdune Pack's hideout as long as they are willing to talk peacefully.

Tailing the Jackalweres. The characters can also find the Amberdune hideout by following pack members after their shift. If the characters succeed on a DC 13 group Dexterity (Stealth) check, the jackalweres don't notice that they're being followed. If they do notice the characters, they hurry to alert Korvala but don't engage unless the characters do so first. See "Roleplaying the Jackalweres" below for more information.

Amberdune Pack

The jackalweres of the Amberdune Pack were the servants of Nidalia, an unusually kind and learned lamia. The jackalweres' alignment is neutral evil rather than chaotic evil, and their goals are self-serving, not actively malicious.

Because the pack originally resided in the nation of Amn, their humanoid forms have dusky brown skin, brown or blue eyes, and varying shades of brown hair, like many of the Amnian people. If a surname is required, they use Amberdune.

There are seven **jackalweres** in the Amberdune Pack, including the leader, Korvala. The other pack members are as follows:

- Avani, a middle-aged jackalwere who considers it her duty to keep the rest of her pack from doing anything to attract attention from the Watch
- Inbar, a quiet, reserved jackalwere who wears spectacles in his human and hybrid forms
- Marliza, a petite jackalwere whose wide eyes and long braids belie her cunning
- Ramah, Inbar's outspoken brother, who prefers to spend his shift at Amberdune Books loudly orating from a tome to entice potential customers
- Theryn, a young jackalwere with deft hands, good for repairing damaged books or liberating a few coins from wealthy pockets
- Zan, the oldest pack member, who hums quietly while they organize the books

Roleplaying the Jackalweres

While working as booksellers in the Wide, the jackalweres are confident and happy to talk with customers. If they're unexpectedly questioned without Korvala present, they quickly become nervous. Though their innate ability to lie means that they can easily behave deceitfully, the pack doesn't cope well without leadership. The presence of Korvala comforts the other jackalweres. They admire her strength and guidance, and they defend her as fervently as they would Nidalia.

The Amberdune jackalweres are not hostile unless provoked. They attack only as a last resort, preferring to use their Sleep Gaze to subdue foes, then flee. They are notably more reluctant to fight spellcasters and characters using silvered or magic weapons.

Korvala

Korvala is a 32-year-old **jackalwere**. A tall and imposing figure, she has been the leader of the pack since Nidalia died. She has an authoritative air that instills confidence in her allies and fear in her enemies. Though normally calm and composed, Korvala becomes angry and combative when recalling the struggles she and her pack have experienced, including Nidalia's death. Though she is a capable leader in her own right, the burden of taking over from Nidalia is a heavy one.

While she was alive, Nidalia taught Korvala the ritual to create gingwatzims. The other members of the pack know of the ritual but are never present when Korvala performs it. Nidalia's *geas* spell forced Korvala to keep the ritual a secret, and although she's no longer under the spell's effect, Korvala refuses to divulge information about the ritual.

Personality Trait. "When I have a goal in mind, I will do everything to be sure it gets completed."

Ideal. "My pack should be able to live in peace."

Bond. "Nidalia, I owe everything to you. I will bring you back, mark my words."

Flaw. "If I can't benefit from it, I'm not interested."

Korvala

Blackgate

The jackalweres live in the northern neighborhood of Blackgate, not far from the Wide. This district is part of the Outer City, a sprawl of settlements that stretch beyond the city's actual walls. The Outer City is home to Baldur's Gate's poorer inhabitants, who live in ramshackle huts and flimsy tents—a stark contrast to the opulence of the Upper City. Merchants with wares too meager—or too illicit—to sell in the Wide make do with unregulated back alley markets here. The stench of stabled horses and other beasts of burden permeates the air.

Wererat's Revenge

If the characters allowed the **wererat** Mushika to escape earlier in the adventure, he tries to get his revenge as they make their way through Blackgate toward the Amberdune hideout. But if the characters are accompanied by one or more members of the Amberdune Pack, Mushika leaves them alone. He knows Korvala and her associates are jackalweres, and he's heard rumors that they serve a more powerful creature called a lamia.

Mushika has assumed humanoid form and is accompanied by a **swarm of rats** and two human **thugs** named Alaspar and Sufeni. Mushika has promised to turn both thugs into wererats, but first they must prove their worth by helping him slay the characters. If either the swarm or the two thugs are defeated, Mushika tries to flee the battle. Neither he nor the thugs have any treasure.

Amberdune Hideout

The Amberdune hideout, a dilapidated hovel with wooden walls, is located on a narrow street tucked away in a corner of the Blackgate district.

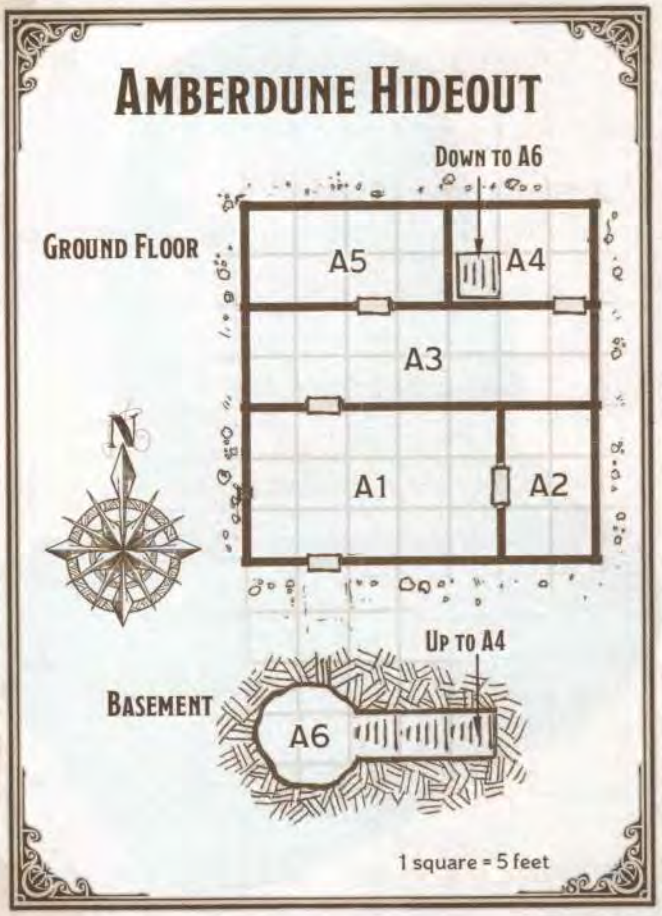
Time of Day

Between dawn and dusk, two of the jackalweres are on their shift at Amberdune Books. During other times, use the following information to help determine what the jackalweres are doing.

- Once Amberdune Books is packed up for the day, and all the jackalweres have returned to the hideout, the whole pack shares a meal together in area A1.
- The jackalweres spend their evenings as they wish, before going to sleep in area A3. Korvala sleeps in area A4.
- They all sleep for eight hours. Korvala and the two jackalweres on first shift wake up just before dawn so they can set up the stall.

Friends

If Korvala invited the characters to have a civil talk with her, she brings them to her office (area A4).



Understandably, the jackalweres are uncomfortable with strangers in their home. Unexpected visitors are met with with trepidation and readied weapons, but the jackalweres are not hostile unless the characters attack.

On the subject of the monstrous books, the other jackalweres nervously defer to Korvala. If she's in the hideout, the jackalweres bring the characters to her office. If Korvala is not present, they ask the characters to wait in area A1 until she returns.

Foes

When fighting in their hideout, the jackalweres stand their ground instead of running away. When possible, the jackalweres gang up on one enemy at a time. They aim to kill only if the characters are also displaying lethal intent.

Hideout Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Amberdune hideout. Some of the jackalweres described in the earlier "Amberdune Pack" section are present in certain rooms, but you can easily change this information to suit your story.

A1. Common Room

The hideout's front entrance opens into this room.

> Seven mismatched chairs are scattered around this homely common room. A couple of mugs and plates sit on a small circular table in the center of the space. A tattered and faded rug decorates the wooden floor.

The jackalweres like to relax and chat with each other in this room, particularly during and after meals together. The faded rug is actually a **rug of smothering** friendly to the jackalweres, which defends them if they command it to. If no jackalweres are present in this area, the rug attacks intruders. It stops fighting if one of the jackalweres commands it to.

Development. Noise from fighting the rug of smothering causes Marliza, a **jackalwere** in hybrid form, to run into the room from area A2, scimitar at the ready. This jackalwere is willing to command the rug to stop if the characters explain themselves.

A2. Kitchen

> This kitchen is small but clean and organized. A shelf holds a row of pots and pans. On one side of the fireplace, a cutting board and knife rest on a counter. Clean plates and utensils sit on a matching counter on the other side.

The Amberdune Pack cooks meals in this kitchen before eating in the common room (area A1). There are currently two **jackalweres** in the room, Marliza and Theryn (see "Amberdune Pack" earlier in the adventure for more information on the pack members). Theryn, in his humanoid form, chops vegetables for a soup with a cleaver (which functions as a scimitar), while Marliza leans against a wall in hybrid form. They are happily chatting together. Noise in area A1 prompts Marliza to investigate.

A3. Corridor Dormitory

> More like a wide corridor than an actual room, this long and crowded space is occupied by six narrow cots.

Unless she is awakened by sounds of combat, the **jackalwere** Avani (in humanoid form) is taking a nap on one of the cots. Characters moving through this room must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check or wake her up. This check is made with disadvantage if characters made a commotion

SEAN MACDONALD

elsewhere in the hideout. Beneath each cot is an unlocked trunk full of personal belongings. Nothing of value can be found here.

Development. Combat in this room alerts Zan, the jackalwere in area A5, who enters with their scimitar drawn. At your discretion, Korvala might also investigate a ruckus in this room.

A4. Korvala's Office

> A large wooden desk takes up most of this room. Atop the desk, a quill and a bottle of ink sit next to a leather-bound journal. A pair of decorative swords hangs on the wall behind the desk. There's a single bed tucked against the western wall.

Unless she is with the characters, at Amberdune Books, or elsewhere in the hideout investigating a commotion, the **jackalwere** Korvala sits at the desk in her humanoid form: a woman with brown skin, sun-streaked brown hair, and piercing hazel eyes. If she has been alerted to the characters' presence by the other jackalweres or from a disturbance in the hideout, Korvala is expecting them. Otherwise, she is shocked but keeps her composure, silently assessing how to best take out the characters in a fight if it comes to that.

The decorative swords on the wall are actually two **gingwatzims** (see the stat block earlier in the adventure) that assume their true forms and attack intruders unless Korvala is present. If she is attacked in this room, the gingwatzims defend her. In addition to appearing as swords, these gingwatzims can turn into bats.

The journal on Korvala's desk is a ledger documenting all of Amberdune Books' sales, including *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions*, *The Dark Hunger*, and *Fallen Tethyamar*.

Development. If she is in the room and the characters are willing to hear her out, Korvala explains the Amberdune Pack's motives to them. She believes in her plan and doesn't feel the need to omit anything. Both her pain and her determination are evident in her steady voice and careful words.

If the characters ask Korvala about the monstrous books that wound up in Candlekeep, she shares the following information:

- Using a ritual taught to her by Nidalia, Korvala can create creatures known as gingwatzims. (Korvala claims to be under the effect of a *geas* spell cast by Nidalia that prevents her from sharing this knowledge. This is a lie. Regardless, Korvala will not divulge the ritual.)
- Korvala can empower a newly formed gingwatzim to assume two other forms, allowing it to duplicate a specific object and a tiny beast. As an object, a gingwatzim can hide in plain sight. As a common beast, it can move about without attracting too much attention.
- A gingwatzim isn't particularly bright, but it obeys the orders of its creator. The ones Korvala creates are instructed to remain in book form, but a gingwatzim must occasionally feed on the energy of the living to survive.
- Korvala has created eight gingwatzims so far, six disguised as books and two more to guard her office.
- Korvala never intended her gingwatzims to show up in Candlekeep. As reparations, she's willing to surrender the original versions of *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions*, *The Dark Hunger*, and *Fallen Tethyamar* so that the characters can deliver them to Candlekeep. (Korvala keeps these books along with three others in area A6.)

Trapdoor. A trapdoor leading down into the hidden vault (area A6) is concealed beneath the bed.

A5. Storage Room

> Except for a corner with two stacked wooden trunks, the walls of this room are lined with half-empty bookshelves.

This room contains all the legitimate and commonplace books that the Amberdune Pack sells, as well as a small portion of the money it has obtained. Zan, a **jackalwere** in hybrid form, is looking through the bookshelves to decide which books should be sold at the market the following day (see "Amberdune Pack" above for more information on the pack members).

False Storage Trunk. The top wooden trunk is actually a **mimic** that used to live in Nidalia's lair, protecting her from intruders. The mimic has a symbiotic relationship with the Amberdune Pack and a sense of kinship toward its fellow shapechangers. The jackalweres feed it leftovers, but it has become hungry from the lack of substantial meals in Blackgate. Unless a jackalwere tells it not to, it will attempt to eat any character who touches it.

True Storage Trunk. The bottom wooden trunk, which is unlocked, is empty except for 50 gp worth of assorted copper, silver, and electrum coins scattered across the bottom. This money is used by the jackalweres to buy provisions for the pack.

A6. Hidden Vault

This vault is accessible from area A4.

> A narrow, descending passage ends in a circular chamber containing two padlocked wooden trunks.

Korvala has the keys to the padlocks. A character using thieves' tools can use an action to try to pick a lock, doing so with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. A character can also use an action to try to smash a padlock with a blunt weapon, doing so with a successful DC 17 Strength check. The trunks are lined with lead to ensure that the *locate object* spell cannot be used to find their contents:

Trunk 1 contains Nidalia's desiccated heart, wrapped in a black silk cloth and resting atop a bed of 450 gp (saved up for Nidalia's resurrection).

Trunk 2 contains six books: *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions*, *Fallen Tethyamar*, *The Dark Hunger*, *Castanamir's Guide to Gingwatzims* (describing what gingwatzims are but not how to create them), *Wanderings of a Humble Aasimar* (a treatise on the Outer Planes), and *Daughters of Graz'zt* (about the origin of lamias).

Resolving the Mystery

The characters' interactions with the Amberdune Pack affect the resolution of this section, but they can discover what happened to the real books and find the original versions regardless of their approach.

Bloodbath

It's possible to kill or defeat the Amberdune Pack without ever hearing their side of the story. With no one to stop them, characters in this situation can search the Amberdune hideout for the real books and any treasure they can find.

If the party has difficulty finding the hidden vault in area A6, any of the characters can make a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a success, they arrive at one of the realizations from the following list. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, they come up with all three:

- There are keys on Korvala's person. This means that there must be locks somewhere.
- The hideout is square. If there are any secret nooks between the walls, they would be very shallow. It is unlikely anything would be kept there.
- Two gingwatzims defend Korvala's office. Were they guarding something else as well?

Characters who choose this violent path might never uncover the pack's motives, but they can find the real *Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions* and see the book safely back to Candlekeep, if they so desire.

> **Nidalia**
>
> The true leader of the Amberdune Pack, Nidalia is a **lamia** who delights in hoarding books rather than in corruption and torture. Though she is kind to her servants, this doesn't necessarily mean she's altruistic or generous. Ultimately, she cares only about herself and her pack. If she's treated with respect and loyalty, Nidalia won't betray her allies.

Restitution

Even if the motives of the Amberdune Pack are revealed, the party might not excuse the jackalweres for their actions. If characters insist on bringing the real books back to Candlekeep without offering a compromise, the jackalweres put up a fight, though they'll surrender rather than fight to the death. Losing the books is a great setback to the jackalweres, but they can't revive Nidalia if they're all dead.

If the jackalweres are slain in this battle, and the characters don't know where to find the vault, see "Bloodbath" for assistance.

Negotiations

The characters can reach a peaceful agreement with Korvala and the Amberdune Pack through civil conversation. For example, the party could help the jackalweres come up with another way to raise money, offer assistance with their goal to resurrect Nidala, or pay a fair price for the real books. (Korvala expects at least 250 gp for each book, but she'll settle for less if the characters are tough negotiators.) If they agree on a deal, the jackalweres let the characters take the real books back to Candlekeep.

Conclusion

If characters return to Candlekeep with the books, the Avowed reward them with a *helm of comprehending languages*. Valor and Yalerion are grateful for the party's efforts to solve the mystery. Both seekers could be useful allies in the future.

Characters who successfully negotiated with the Amberdune Pack gain the support of Korvala and the other jackalweres, as long as the characters hold up their end of the bargain. Furthermore, if the party is able to assist the pack in reviving Nidalia, such as by helping the jackalweres amass the money they need, they'll also have a lamia as an ally.

Characters who fought, but didn't kill, any members of the Amberdune Pack have a potential enemy once the jackalweres finish licking their wounds. If the Amberdune Pack becomes a recurring adversary, consider having Korvala learn other rituals or spells better suited to fighting the characters to reflect this grudge.

AN ADVENTURE FOR 3RD-LEVEL CHARACTERS

Book of the Raven

WRITTEN BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS
EDITED BY KIM MOHAN

The *Book of the Raven* arrived at Candlekeep, fittingly enough, by way of a raven in 1282 DR, the Year of the Many Mists. The raven bore the book in its talons, set it on the ground within Candlekeep's walls, and pecked at its covers until an Avowed acolyte, witnessing this act of defilement, scared it away. The marred book quickly found its way into Candlekeep's archives, where it garnered little attention until a visitor named Anil Zasperdes rediscovered it sixty years later and hid a treasure map inside it.

The treasure map is a prop around which you can create your own adventure, if you choose not to run the adventure described here.

Finding the Book

Characters in Candlekeep might uncover this book and the treasure map hidden inside it while researching one of the following topics:

- The Vistani and other planar travelers
- Possible routes into and out of the Shadowfell

Alternatively, the book can be delivered to the characters by a **raven**. Avoiding contact with strangers, it leaves the book in a place where the characters are likely to find it. This raven contains the restless soul of a dead girl named Heluthe, who wants to frighten away the squatters in Chalet Brantifax, her former home. The raven can't speak or make its intentions clear, but it hopes the map in the book will lead characters to the chalet, which is described later in the adventure.

Book Description

This thin book bears no title inside or out, though the keepers of Candlekeep cataloged it as the *Book of the Raven* based on how it was received. Its covers are cracked, unvarnished thin sheets of black oak covered with bird scratches and little indentations made by pecking beaks. Bound with black wire between these covers are thirty-three pages that have yellowed with age and wrinkled from moisture. Each page bears tiny, blotchy brown script written in an unsteady hand by an unidentified author.

If the book is left open and unattended, its pages flutter and rustle as though stirred by a silent wind.

Tale of Vistani Kindness

The *Book of the Raven* is the firsthand account (written in Common) of an anonymous author who, after falling off her horse and breaking her leg, was rescued and befriended by Vistani travelers who graciously nursed her back to health. The author and her horse traveled with the Vistani for three months, during which the author spent most of her time laid up in a Vistani covered wagon, where she took to writing this book to pass the time. Although a dozen Vistani are colorfully described in the tome, only two are mentioned by name: Drasha, a teenaged girl who applied bandages and poultices to the author's wounded leg, and Darzin, a one-armed boy with a terrible fear of wolves who sang beautiful songs to help the author take her mind off the pain.

The book provides a detailed account of the Vistani way of life, with emphasis on their food and music. Their overland journey is also discussed, albeit from the viewpoint of one who spent most of it inside a covered wagon. The author describes rough roads, days of travel through impenetrable mist and thick forest, crackling fires on cold nights,

Book of the Raven

CLAUDIO POZAS

wolves howling in the dead of night, and ravens pecking at the roof of the wagon in the wee hours of the morning.

Late in the book, the author writes of being able to hobble about on crutches. She describes the cheery mood of her benefactors as the Vistani caravan traveled a winding mountain road to the gates of a tall, dark castle. The book ends with a description of the castle's dreadful countenance. The writing abruptly stops on the third-to-last page, suggesting that the book was snatched from the author in midsentence. The last two pages are blank.

Vistani Lore

Characters who read the *Book of the Raven* learn the following information about the Vistani:

- The Vistani are planar travelers often encountered in the Shadowfell, and they seem to be immune to the despair that besets all other visitors to that plane. They travel in horse-drawn, barrel-shaped wagons and have no permanent home.
- The Vistani display their wealth openly as a sign of prosperity, sharing their good fortune with friends and strangers alike. Vistani resolve disagreements through contests that end with reconciliatory singing, dancing, and storytelling.
- Vistani families can be big or small, but each family is a gerontocracy, with the oldest member ruling the roost. This elder has most of the responsibility for enforcing traditions, settling disputes, setting the course for the group's travels, and preserving the Vistani way of life.
- The Vistani have the power—some say gift—to travel through the mists that lead to forlorn realms within the Shadowfell known as the Domains of Dread, where creatures born in darkness dwell. This "gift" was thrust upon them by mysterious entities called the Dark Powers, as a boon for their kindness toward strangers.
- The Vistani believe that ravens carry lost souls within them. Hence, killing a raven is considered bad luck in Vistani culture.

Map of Mystery

The mystery surrounding the *Book of the Raven* has to do with the map Anil Zasperdes slipped between its pages. It's clear that the map was never part of the book to begin with. You can photocopy and distribute the accompanying handout among your players when their characters find the map.

Zasperdes was a wereraven who had a gift for hiding things. He was also the founder of the Scarlet Sash, a group of wereravens known for stealing magic items from evil individuals and hiding evil items from the world at large. He chose the *Book of the Raven* as a hiding place for the map because anyone interested in its subject matter might also be interested in following the map to its destination: a ruined chalet nestled in remote highlands.

Wytchway

To use the map, the characters must first locate Wytchway, a hamlet that serves as a starting point. Its location is left deliberately vague so that you can place it anywhere you like. The characters can find it by consulting sages or old maps in Candlekeep.

Monster attacks forced the residents of Wytchway to abandon the hamlet years ago. All that remains is a broken-down wagon surrounded by rotted fences and dilapidated, fog-shrouded farmsteads overrun with wild pigs.

Following the Map

The character's destination is Chalet Brantifax, which you can replace with some other tantalizing adventure location of your own creation. Little remains of the trail that once led to the chalet, which is depicted in the bottom left corner of the map, but the other landmarks are still present: rock formations called the Hand and the Horn, a tall outcropping of rock with three pine trees growing atop it, a river, a bridge, and a hill scorched by dragon fire.

Flesh out the journey to the chalet as you see fit, adding one or more combat encounters appropriate for the characters' level if the players are spoiling for a fight. The characters' journey ends with a slog up a lonely hill, atop which is perched the chalet.

Chalet Brantifax

This stone chalet was built for a wealthy noble named Baron Brantifax on a site chosen for its seclusion and scenic beauty. In the years following the baron's death, the house fell prey to neglect, allowing the Scarlet Sash to lay claim to it without dispute. The wereravens chose the place because of its remoteness and its proximity to a shadow crossing, which they monitor for evil activity. See the "Shadowfell" section in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more information on shadow crossings.

Ravenkind

During daylight hours, skittish ravens perch atop the chalet and alight on the tombstones in its graveyard. They nervously stare and squawk at visitors but pose no threat to the characters; when night falls, the ravens fly off, and an eerie silence settles over the house until sunrise, when they return.

As the characters will discover, these birds are actually **wereravens** (see the end of the adventure for their stat block). Wereravens live and travel in groups called kindnesses, and this particular kindness is called the Scarlet Sash.

Characters who observe the chalet at night can see lights moving within as members of the Scarlet Sash creep about the old house in humanoid form, using oil lanterns to light their way. These lights occasionally cluster in the upper stories of the tower (area C14), where the wereravens spend the most time together.

The Scarlet Sash

Years after Anil Zasperdes's death, members of the Scarlet Sash continue to use the chalet as a meeting place. They keep some robes, sandals, and scarlet sashes in the house so that they have clothing to wear while in humanoid form. They occasionally stash magic items of evil repute here until better hiding places can be found for them. Adventurers who come to the chalet expecting trouble might be surprised to learn that its current occupants are neither evil nor much of a threat.

The Scarlet Sash has eight members currently, though it has had as few as three and as many as twelve in the past. Four members are present when the characters arrive at Chalet Brantifax: Madrina Natterask, Taspar Hatchhill, Rennick Groka, and Vinique.

Madrina Natterask

Lawful good human wereraven (age 55)

A short, stocky glassblower with a modest collection of homemade bottles and flasks, Madrina sees herself as the matriarch of the kindness. She speaks calmly and matter-of-factly, and scolds those who display bad manners or foolish behavior. She can easily mimic the sound of breaking glass, which she likes to use to create a distraction.

Personality Trait. "I can be trusted with a secret and will carry that secret to the grave."

Ideal. "Without vigilance, evil runs amok."

Bond. "I love glass. I adore its colors and its polished gleam. Watching glass bend and take different forms reminds me that anything is possible."

Flaw. "I love sticking my beak into everyone's business."

Taspar Hatchhill

Lawful good human wereraven (age 71)

The oldest member of the kindness and the chalet's self-appointed caretaker is a tall, timid man with wispy white hair and a lazy left eye. Taspar is polite but nervous around strangers. He mimics the sound of a snorting hog to scare away treasure hunters.

Personality Trait. "Words fail me often, so I'm happy to let others speak on my behalf."

Ideal. "I would rather eat a snake than fall prey to the trappings of the civilized world."

Bond. "Birds can be greedy, but they're not half as greedy as humans. I prefer to live among the birds, thank you very much."

Flaw. "I stutter when I'm agitated."

Rennick Groka

Lawful good human wereraven (age 22)

A morose, rail-thin figure, Rennick is cautious and wise beyond their years. They respect their fellow wereravens but are deeply mistrustful of others. Rennick frightens away unwanted visitors by mimicking the sound of creaking doors and floorboards, and bodies being dragged across the floor.

Personality Trait. "The Scarlet Sash gives me all the love I need. I don't need any more."

Ideal. "Freedom is the power to become a bird, take to the sky, and leave the world behind for a while."

Bond. "The Scarlet Sash means everything to me. I'm honored to be part of this kindness and would die to preserve it."

Flaw. "Wickedness ruins everything, and nothing I do seems to matter. I fear we're all doomed to suffer the insufferable. Misery has become my bosom companion."

Vinique

Lawful good human wereraven (age 30)

Vinique brought a ghastly, evil relic (see the "Orcus Figurine" sidebar later in the adventure) to the chalet. She stashes it in an old, nonfunctional lantern that she keeps with her at all times. Gifted with a wry wit and a witch's cackle of a laugh, Vinique mimics the happy cries of small children and the screams of a dying man to frighten intruders.

Personality Trait. "Once I make a decision, that's it. No one can change my mind."

Ideal. "Evil might be everywhere, but as long as there's breath in my body, I will never stop pecking at its heels."

Bond. "Madrina is the mother I never had. I don't know what I'd do without her."

Flaw. "I talk over others, and I always need to have the last word."

Roleplaying the Wereravens

The wereravens convene in area C14 of the chalet and use their powers of mimicry to frighten strangers. They can also throw their voices to make it seem like the sounds are coming from other parts of the chalet. If you're not sure how to handle this, you can roll a d6 and consult the Wereraven Mimicry table to determine what sound the characters hear and where it seems to be coming from. Use this table as often as you like.

Chalet Brantifax

Wereraven Mimicry

d6	Sound and Source
1	Madrina mimics glass breaking and makes it sound like it's coming from the servants' attic (area C16).
2	Taspar mimics a snorting hog, which sounds like it's coming from the kitchen (area C7).
3	Rennick mimics a creaking door, which sounds like it's coming from one of the guest rooms (area C10 or C11).
4	Rennick mimics creaking floorboards or a body being dragged across the floor, which sounds like it's coming from whichever area is directly above or below the characters.
5	Vinique mimics a laughing child, which sounds like it's coming from the attic nursery (area C15).
6	Vinique mimics a dying man's scream, which sounds like it's coming from the storage cellar (area C1).

The wereravens are wary of visitors, particularly armed ones, and avoid direct contact with the characters for as long as possible. When they are no longer able to conceal their presence, the wereravens greet the characters in humanoid form, clad in sandals and dusty black robes with scarlet sashes tied about their waists, and assure the characters that they mean no harm. They assume that the characters have come for one of two reasons: either to loot the chalet or to use the shadow crossing in the graveyard. The wereravens assure them that there's no treasure to be found in the chalet. If the characters act in a threatening or violent manner, the wereravens assume hybrid form or raven form and flee the chalet by the most expedient route, returning nevermore. (Other members of the kindness are warned to stay away from the chalet as well.)

Joining the Scarlet Sash

One or more characters might try to join the Scarlet Sash. To become a member of the kindness, a character must meet the following criteria:

- The character must be a wereraven.
- The character needs endorsements from at least three members of the kindness.

Characters who aren't wereravens but who meet the other criteria for membership must find a patron in the Scarlet Sash or some other wereraven willing to turn them into lycanthropes. Any member of the Scarlet Sash who bestows the "gift" of wereraven

lycanthropy on a character becomes responsible for that character's conduct in the eyes of the other members of the kindness; therefore, the decision to bestow the gift is not made lightly.

Getting the endorsement of Scarlet Sash members isn't as simple as succeeding on an ability check. Earning the trust and friendship of the wereravens should require good roleplaying, and it could take days, weeks, or months for members of the Scarlet Sash to trust any characters enough to welcome them into their tight-knit circle.

Members of the Scarlet Sash have no obligations other than to support the group's goal of keeping evil items out of evil hands. Madrina asks only that members visit Chalet Brantifax on occasion and keep her apprised of their efforts in this regard.

A character who joins the Scarlet Sash can leave the kindness at any time without fear of reprisal. If subjected to a *greater restoration* spell, a *remove curse* spell, or any other magic that ends a curse, that character is no longer afflicted with wereraven lycanthropy but can choose to remain a member of the Scarlet Sash.

Encounter Locations

Chalet Brantifax stands atop a high hill overlooking fog-shrouded scrubland. It has brick walls, sturdy wooden doors with rusty iron hinges and fittings, oak floors between levels, and clay roof tiles. The wereravens come and go through holes in the roof of the attic (areas C16 and C17). The chalet's doors are unlocked, although the outer door (see area C4) can be barred from within. Most of the windows are encrusted with dirt and have drapes or wooden shutters in poor condition.

The elements have gained a foothold inside the chalet, causing plaster to peel, wood to rot, metal fixtures to rust, and floors to bow and creak. Whatever grandeur the chalet possessed in its heyday is gone, replaced by the sight and stench of mold and decay.

The following locations are keyed to the map of Chalet Brantifax.

C1. Storage Cellar

To reach this cellar, the characters must descend a flight of stone steps from area C4.

> This cold, damp, oddly shaped cellar has an eight-foot-high wooden ceiling and a flagstone floor. The walls are made of rough, mortared bricks. Thick cobwebs cover crates, barrels, and old furniture stacked against the north wall. To the south are a pair of closed wooden doors. The door farthest from you swings open on rusty hinges, and beyond it you see a smaller, almost sepulchral chamber.

A change in air pressure causes the door to area C3 to swing open, and the characters hear a whisper coming from that direction. Characters who have a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or higher hear what sounds like a man whispering, "I can't get out." To others, the whisper is unintelligible.

The crates and barrels are empty. The old furniture includes six chairs, two hutches, an ottoman, an empty cabinet, a desk sized for a child, and a coat rack.

C2. Servants' Quarters

The door to this room is closed and stuck, having swollen in its frame. A creature can use an action to try to force it open, doing so with a successful DC 13 Strength check.

> This cold, windowless room contains a pair of wood-framed beds, two narrow wardrobes, and an old rug. Mounted on the east wall between the beds is a wooden shelf supporting a pair of candlesticks. The candles in them are unlit.

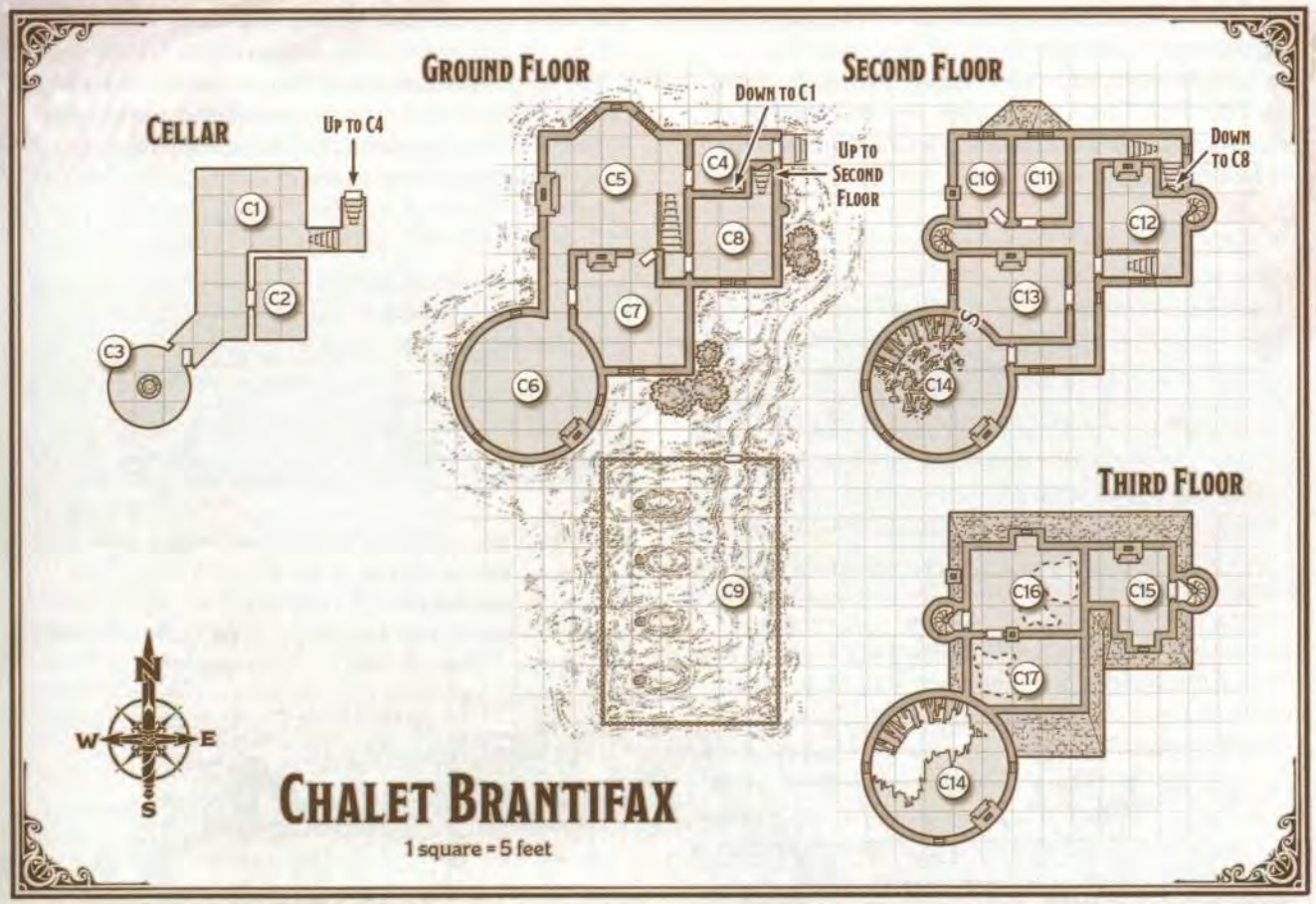
This room served as living quarters for the baron's cook and the chalet's groundskeeper. The wardrobes are empty, and anything of value in the room was removed long ago.

C3. Haunted Well

> The only feature of this damp, cold, circular room is a four-foot-diameter well in the middle of the floor. Next to this shaft sits a wooden bucket fastened to a coiled length of rope.
>
> The bottom of the shaft is veiled in darkness. From its depths, a whispering voice says, "Brorn! Where are you, boy?"

After the death of Brorn, his beloved mastiff, Baron Brantifax was beset by spells of sleepwalking, during which he would wander about the chalet looking for his lost hound. The servants mistook his sleepwalking for temporary madness brought on by insomnia, and they assumed he was awake at the time. He was sleepwalking when he fell down the well, and he drowned before the servants could get him out. The haunting whispers of his restless spirit terrified the staff, who fled the chalet shortly thereafter. The baron's spirit is too weak to manifest physically or cause any harm.

The rough brick walls of the well shaft can be climbed with a successful DC 11 Strength (Athletics) check. The shaft descends 60 feet to a flooded cistern 10 feet deep and 10 feet in diameter.



Treasure. Any character who spends at least 15 minutes searching the bottom of the well's cistern finds a holy symbol of Sune (god of love and beauty) on a gold chain. The item is worth 25 gp and doubles as a cameo. It contains a tiny portrait of the baron's wife, whom the characters might recognize from the larger framed portrait in area C17. If this cameo is reunited with the baron (whose remains are interred in area C9), the baron's spirit is laid to rest, and each character responsible for this act gains a *charm of heroism* (see "Supernatural Gifts" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

C4. Cloakroom

The door leading outside has a wooden crossbar that can be lowered into iron brackets on either side of the doorframe, sealing the door from the inside. A creature can use an action to try to break down this barred door, doing so with a successful DC 23 Strength check.

> Rusty iron hooks line the walls of this entrance foyer. Hanging from two of these hooks are a shovel and a rake. A dusty cloak is draped over a hook next to a round-topped door in the south wall.

Two harmless moths fly out of the cloak if the garment is disturbed. One of the cloak's pockets contains a rusty iron key that unlocks the padlock in area C16.

C5. Den

> Light enters this spacious room through a bulge in the north wall, where cracked and broken windows look out over a foggy vale. Dusty sheets cover most of the room's furnishings. Cobwebs stretch between the antlers, wolf heads, and other hunting trophies mounted on the walls above the wainscoting. A pale rectangle above the large fireplace suggests that a picture or a mirror once hung there.

Baron Brantifax liked to hunt. From time to time, the baron invited other hunters to join him and his hound on his merry hunts, after which they would socialize and wait for meals here. Although the trophies testify to the baron's hunting skills, nothing in the den is particularly valuable. A painting of the baron and his wife once hung above the fireplace, but the servants took it down and moved it to the attic (area C17) after the baron died.

A creaky wooden staircase with a beautifully carved banister climbs to a landing outside the parlor (area C8). Near the stairs is a partially open door through which the kitchen (area C7) can be seen. A short hallway connects to the dining room (area C6).

C6. Dining Room

This circular chamber at the base of the tower contains a large oak dining table surrounded by six high-backed chairs carved with images of stags. Suspended above the table is a gaudy chandelier tied off with ropes. Puddles of water on the flagstone floor are the result of moisture seeping in through three narrow, broken windows evenly spaced around the tower wall. A fireplace set into the wall is blackened by soot.

A search of the room yields nothing of value. Members of the Scarlet Sash don't use this room very often, so there are no signs of traffic or other recent disturbances.

C7. Kitchen

The ghostly scent of meals past still haunts this kitchen, forever trapped in the wood of its tables, the soot in its hearth, and the grime in its pots, many of which hang from hooks about the room. Almost everything you would expect to see in a kitchen of this size can be found here, including dish-filled cupboards, cleaning supplies, and cooking utensils. Mice scurry across the floor, trying their best to avoid you.

It's clear that the kitchen still sees use. Members of the Scarlet Sash store rations and spices in some of the pots and cauldrons, to keep them away from the mice, and a few dirty dishes are stacked near a washbasin, waiting to be cleaned.

C8. Parlor

The centerpiece of this parlor is a gold-inlaid low table, around which a handful of overstuffed chairs and sofas are neatly arranged. Other furniture includes a cabinet full of glass decanters and wine goblets, and a six-foot-tall gilded harp standing in the northwest corner. A staircase in the northeast corner ascends to the second floor, and several dusty sheets lie in a small heap nearby.

The harp and the table, though obviously valuable, are heavy and awkward to transport.

The wereravens removed the sheets that covered the furniture in this room so that they could use the space from time to time. They left the sheets in a heap by the spiral staircase.

C9. Graveyard

A seven-foot-tall wrought iron fence encloses a small graveyard south of the chalet. Set into the north side of the enclosure is a gate with the name BRANTIFAX worked into an arch above it. In the yard are four graves, each marked with an engraved headstone.

The elements have eroded the lettering on the headstones, so characters must be within 5 feet of one to read its weather-worn inscription. From north to south, the headstone engravings (in Common) read as follows:

BARON BRANTIFAX
Husband, Father, Hunter
"Let No Man Stand Above Another"

BRORN
Hound of Brantifax
Faithful to the End

HELUTHE
Our Pride and Joy
Lost Too Soon

SYLPHENE
Beloved Daughter
May She Find Peace at Last

The characters can use the shovel in area C4 to dig up the graves if they so desire. Buried six feet under each headstone is a rotting wooden coffin containing the moldy bones of its occupant, or something more terrifying. The baron's two daughters, Sylphene and Heluthe, perished at the ages of six and nine, respectively, and for different reasons (see area C12 for details).

A hag stole Heluthe's corpse a few years ago and replaced it with a **scarecrow** and two **crawling claws** that try to murder anyone who releases them. If exhumed, Syphene's skeleton shows signs of hideous deformities. Brorn, the baron's mastiff, died of old age shortly before the death of its master. Characters who stand on Baron Brantifax's grave feel a harmless chill run through them.

Treasure. Baron Brantifax had no heirs when he died, so he was buried with his gold signet ring (25 gp), which bears the silhouette of a stag.

Using the Shadow Crossing. Sylphene's grave is a shadow crossing, which the characters can use without offending members of the Scarlet Sash. Characters who befriend the wereravens can learn how the shadow crossing works (see the "Shadow Crossing" section at the end of the adventure).

C10. Guest Room

The door to this room is open.

> This bedroom hasn't been disturbed in years, as evidenced by the thick dust and cobwebs covering everything.

Furnishings include a narrow bed with a moldy mattress and an elegantly carved headboard, an empty wooden dresser, a nightstand, a coat rack, and a padded armchair. An oval mirror hangs on the wall next to the door.

C11. Guest Room

This room is similar to area C10, except that its door is closed.

C12. Study

> Against the west wall stands a handsome rolltop desk, north of which two leather-padded armchairs face a fireplace carved with images of wolves and stags. Draped over each chair is a wolf skin. A narrow spiral staircase choked with cobwebs winds up the east wall.

The spiral staircase leads up to the attic nursey (area C15). The staircase hasn't been used in years.

The rolltop desk is locked, and its key is missing. A character can use an action to try to pick the lock using thieves' tools, doing so with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check. A character can also smash the desk's lock with a blunt weapon.

The desk holds a set of calligrapher's supplies and a leather-covered journal with a stylized wolf's head on the front cover. The journal belongs to Baron Brantifax's wife and contains her delicate handwriting. In it, she describes her visits to the chalet, which she hated, and the tribulations of her daughters, whom she adored. Any character who spends an hour reading the journal learns the following:

- Baron Brantifax was an avid hunter and often invited guests to the chalet to hunt with him. The baroness admired his generous nature and his vigor.
- The baron loved his trusty mastiff, Brorn, as much as he did his wife and children. The baroness disliked it when the baron fed the hound scraps from the dining table.
- The baroness felt too isolated at the chalet. She much preferred the trappings of civilization and city life.
- Sylphene, the couple's firstborn daughter, was bedridden, having been born with terrible physical deformities. The baroness was glad that Sylphene could be housed in the chalet, to keep her far from the public's eye. A nursemaid was hired to watch over the child while the baroness was away. The baroness describes Sylphene's death at the age of six as "merciful," and there's some indication that the baroness had a hand in it.
- Heluthe, the younger daughter of the baron and baroness, was a tomboy—more like her father than her mother. Heluthe was slain on her ninth birthday, killed by a wolf while out hunting with her father. The baroness doesn't blame her husband for Heluthe's death, but neither does she absolve him of his guilt.
- Both daughters were buried in the chalet's graveyard, at the baron's insistence. In her final journal entry, the baroness speaks of "evil whispers" in the graveyard and makes plans to leave Chalet Brantifax, vowing never to return.

C13. Master Bedroom

> This spacious bedroom has walls decorated with wainscoting and rusty oil lamps. A four-poster stands against the south wall, its bedposts carved to look like stags and wolves. Opposite the bed is a stone hearth with a black marble mantel that has a pair of elk antlers mounted above it. A bare, dust-covered writing desk is set against the west wall under a pair of tall windows flanked by burgundy drapes. Other furnishings include a tall wardrobe in the northeast corner and an empty dog kennel in the southeast corner.

The wereravens share this room, which belonged to Baron Brantifax and his wife. The bed is the only piece of furniture that's bolted to the floor, as one of its bedposts unlocks a nearby secret door.

Secret Door. Characters who search the room for secret doors find one along the southwest wall. The bedpost closest to the secret door can be twisted counterclockwise; doing so causes the secret door to swing open, revealing area C14 beyond. A character can use an action to try to open the secret door using thieves' tools, doing so with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check.

Orcus Figurine

Vinique the wereraven stole this six-inch-tall sculpture from an evil merchant before it could be sold at auction in a major city. Carved from an ogre's petrified heart, the gray figurine depicts the Demon Prince of Undeath in ghastly detail, clutching his skull-topped wand in one hand and three severed heads by the hair in the other. The figurine smells like decaying flesh, and this scent is detectable out to a range of 5 feet.

The figurine is a Tiny object with AC 17, 3 hit points, and immunity to all types of damage except radiant damage. A *detect evil and good* spell or similar magic reveals that the figurine has been desecrated. As long as it has at least 1 hit point, the figurine has the following magical properties:

- Undead within 30 feet of the figurine can't be turned.
- Dead creatures within 30 feet of the figurine can't be brought back to life.
- A creature that holds the figurine while praying to Orcus for at least 1 hour has a 10 percent chance of summoning a smoky avatar of the demon lord. Once this avatar is summoned, it can't be summoned again for 30 days. Orcus's avatar has the statistics of a **wraith** except that it's chaotic evil. It attacks all non-undead creatures it encounters, and it disappears after 1 hour or when reduced to 0 hit points.

C14. Baron's Loft

Members of the Scarlet Sash gather in this part of the tower to hatch their secret plans (see "The Scarlet Sash" earlier in the adventure). If they are here when the characters arrive, note their presence before reading the boxed text to the players:

> An explosion of some kind damaged the two uppermost levels of this tower, creating a gaping hole between them and covering the area with soot. A curved wooden staircase that once rose along the outer wall has been destroyed, leaving no easy way to reach what remains of the tower's topmost floor. All that's left of the staircase are a few jagged shards of wood that jut out from the wall at different angles.

What's left of the staircase is not fit to climb. The explosion that destroyed it and much of the uppermost floor was triggered accidentally by the wereravens. Baron Brantifax dabbled in alchemy, and the characters can find some damaged and worthless alchemist's supplies if they search through the wreckage on the lower level.

Scarlet Sash Conference. If they are encountered here, the members of the Scarlet Sash are in the midst of discussing where best to hide the figurine of Orcus that's in Vinique's possession (see the "Orcus Figurine" sidebar). If this conference is allowed to play out, the wereravens conclude that the chalet is the best place to hide the figurine temporarily, whereupon Vinique buries it under some rubble in this room. See "The Scarlet Sash" earlier in the adventure for tips on how to roleplay the wereravens.

Secret Door. The secret door leading to area C13 can't normally be opened from this side. Even so, a character can use an action to try to open the door using thieves' tools, doing so with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check.

Treasure. On the uppermost level of the tower, not visible to characters on the lower level, is an unlocked wooden chest with a scorched lid and clawed iron feet. Its interior is divided into small compartments, one of which contains a *potion of mind reading* that also causes the imbiber's skin to sparkle for the duration of the potion's effect. The members of the Scarlet Sash have no use for the potion and don't care if the characters claim it.

Stuffed in the chest's other compartments are six trinkets that the wereravens picked up in their travels and which they won't give up as readily as the potion. Determine each trinket randomly by rolling on the Trinkets table in the *Player's Handbook*.

CHRISTOPHER BURDETT

C15. Attic Nursery

This attic has a peaked roof that slopes down toward the east and west. Dust blankets everything in the room, including a stone hearth in the middle of the north wall, an oval mirror mounted above it, and an oval rug on the floor. Against the west wall, half hidden behind curtains of cobwebs, is a bed sized for a young child, a rocking chair, a shelf lined with dolls, and a washbasin. A niche to the south contains a small wooden cradle, a wooden playpen, and a window box. Suspended above the playpen is a mobile made of colorfully painted fish on the ends of hooks.

Baron Brantifax had two daughters, both of whom died young (see area C12 for more information). This room was set aside for them. If characters disturb any of the dolls on the shelf, the spirit of Sylphene manifests in the room as a poltergeist that uses the **specter** stat block, with the modifications in the "Variant: Poltergeist" sidebar that appears alongside the stat block in the *Monster Manual*. It tries to frighten away the characters and discourage further exploration of the nursery.

C16. Servants' Attic

The door that closes off this room from the staircase is stuck, having swollen in its frame. A creature can use an action to try to shoulder it open, doing so with a successful DC 13 Strength check.

Two gaping holes in the peaked roof expose this attic to the elements. Shattered clay roof tiles, splinters of wood, dry leaves, and bird droppings cover the floor, which has begun to rot in a number of places. The rafters are home to several birds' nests formed out of twigs and straw.

Two wooden bed frames stand against the north wall. Built into the window box between them is a wooden storage trunk sealed with a rusty padlock. Other furnishings in the room include a pair of tall, narrow wardrobes.

The floor groans and creaks ominously when stepped on, but it's not in danger of collapsing.

One of the beds belonged to the baron's personal valet and hunting companion; the other was used by a maid.

Padlocked Trunk. The padlock on the window box storage trunk can be opened using the key found in area C4 or smashed with a solid hit from a bludgeoning weapon. A character can use an action to try to pick the lock using thieves' tools, doing so with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check. The trunk contains some of Baron Brantifax's hunting paraphernalia: a suit of studded leather armor sized for a portly adult human, a leather helm, a heavy crossbow, a wooden case with the monogram B.B., and two hunting traps. The wooden case contains fifteen crossbow bolts with crimson fletching.

Wardrobes. Members of the Scarlet Sash come here and hang up their robes and sashes before taking raven form, storing them and their extra clothes in the wardrobes and using the holes in the roof as their principal way of entering and exiting the chalet. Characters who search the wardrobes find five dusty black robes, five pairs of leather sandals, and five scarlet sashes.

C17. Storage Attic

You can see the sky through two large holes in the peaked roof of this attic. Much of the area has fallen prey to the elements, causing the objects stored here to rot. The room is filled with old chairs, tables, benches, hunting trophies, rolled-up rugs, a standing mirror, and similar unwanted decor. Leaning against the east wall are six flat, rectangular objects wrapped in canvas sheets—framed pictures or mirrors, one might venture to guess.

As the characters search this room, a tiny bird flutters out of hiding and flees through a hole in the roof. The bird is harmless.

Treasure. The framed objects wrapped in canvas are two gilt-framed mirrors, one of which is cracked, and four wood-framed oil paintings. The unbroken mirror is worth 50 gp, as is each painting.

One painting depicts three deer grazing on a hilltop, backlit by the dawn. Another shows a gray mastiff with a dead duck in its mouth. A third depicts an armored human knight on a hippogriff, both shown in profile; the knight's shield bears the holy symbol of Torm (god of courage and self-sacrifice). The fourth painting is a portrait of Baron Brantifax seated in a chair, with a gray mastiff sleeping at his feet, and his wife standing by his side. Brantifax is depicted as a stout, well-dressed man in his fifties, with bags under his eyes. The baroness is shown as a tall, thin woman in her fifties. One of her hands rests gently on the baron's shoulder, while the other grasps a small bouquet of roses. The painting expertly captures the nobles' aristocratic bearing and the genuine love they bore for each other.

SHADOW CROSSING

Sylphene, the baron's deformed daughter, was a tortured soul. After she was interred, her grave became a shadow crossing—a gateway to the Shadowfell. To use this gate, the characters must first open Sylphene's grave and remove the coffin (see area C9). In the darkest hours of the night, fog leaches into the open grave and fills it. Any creature that lies down in the fog-filled grave at night is instantly transported to a similar dug-up grave in the Shadowfell. There's nothing on the Shadowfell side of the crossing as grand as Chalet Brantifax, but the topography is similar, with a matching burial site situated in the middle of a large necropolis full of open graves, tilted headstones worn bare of inscriptions, and plundered mausoleums. The necropolis, which is roughly circular and 300 feet in diameter, is home to a host of creatures that attack the characters in waves:

- Two **gargoyles** roost atop a stone mausoleum located 30 feet north of the shadow crossing. The gargoyles have an unobstructed view of the entire necropolis and keep a close eye on the shadow crossing.
- If the gargoyles are destroyed or if the characters move more than 30 feet from the shadow crossing, twelve **ghouls** hiding in open graves converge on the characters in four groups of three, each group approaching from a different cardinal direction. They hunger for flesh.
- A **wight** named Drovath Harrn inhabits the mausoleum atop which the gargoyles perch. Drovath emerges from his crypt to join the ghouls in battle. On his right hand, Drovath wears a *ring of jumping* that he uses to leap onto the rooftops of the mausoleums, from where he can pick off enemies with his longbow.

Drovath and the ghouls can move freely about the necropolis day or night due to the persistent gloom of the Shadowfell, but a curse prevents them from leaving the place. Characters who defeat these creatures are free to continue their exploration of the Shadowfell, having survived their first brush with death in this ghastly realm.

HARRN MAUSOLEUM

Beyond the mausoleum's unlocked gate lies a central chamber strewn with the skulls and bones of three warhorses that were entombed here with their riders. Two of the mausoleum's three sarcophagi are closed and contain inanimate human bones. The third is open, its lid lying broken on the floor behind it. This sarcophagus, which once held the corpse of Drovath Harrn, now appears to be empty.

Treasure. A hidden compartment in the base of the open sarcophagus can be found with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check; it contains Drovath's *saddle of the cavalier*, which he used when he was alive. If the saddle is taken from the mausoleum by anyone other than Drovath, the skeletal remains of the horses animate and rise as three **warhorse skeletons** to slay the thief.

BACK TO THE MATERIAL PLANE

Characters can use the shadow crossing to return to Chalet Brantifax's graveyard, but only in the gloomy hours of the morning. Given the chance, however, members of the Scarlet Sash take the time to fill in Sylphene's grave, holding no hope of the characters' return. In a darkly humorous turn of events, characters who use the shadow crossing to try to get back to Chalet Brantifax might find themselves buried under six feet of earth! A character can use an action to try to crawl out of the grave, doing so with a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check.

Wereravens who are friendly toward the characters are eager to hear about their experience in the Shadowfell and can also provide a hook that leads the characters to their next adventure, depending on what direction you want the campaign to go next.

Wereraven

Wereravens are secretive and wary of strangers. They keep mostly to themselves, respect local laws, and strive to do good whenever possible. They are reluctant to attack with their beaks in raven or hybrid form for fear of spreading their curse to those who don't deserve it or would abuse it.

A Kindness of Wereravens. Wereravens refer to their tightly knit groups as kindnesses. Not surprisingly, wereravens get along well with ravens and often hide in plain sight among them.

Charitable Collectors. Wereravens collect shiny trinkets and precious baubles. They are fond of sharing their wealth with those in need and, in their humanoid forms, modestly give money to charity. They take steps to keep magic items out of evil hands by stashing them in secret hiding places.

Wereraven Lycanthropy. The lycanthropes entry in the *Monster Manual* has rules for characters afflicted with different forms of lycanthropy. The following text applies to wereraven characters specifically.

A character cursed with wereraven lycanthropy gains a Dexterity of 15 if their score isn't already higher. Attack and damage rolls for the wereraven's beak are based on whichever is higher of the character's Strength and Dexterity. The peck of a wereraven deals 1 piercing damage in raven form (no ability modifier applies to this damage), or 1d4 piercing damage in hybrid form (the character's ability modifier applies to this damage). This attack carries the curse of wereraven lycanthropy.

Wereraven

Medium humanoid (shapechanger)

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 31 (7d8)
Speed 30 ft. in humanoid form; 10 ft., fly 50 ft. in raven form; 30 ft., fly 50 ft. in hybrid form

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)

Skills Insight +4, Perception +6
Senses passive Perception 16
Languages Common (can't speak in raven form)
Challenge Rating 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Mimicry. The wereraven can mimic simple sounds it has heard, such as a person whispering, a baby crying, or an animal chattering. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check.

Regeneration. The wereraven regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the wereraven takes damage from a silvered weapon or a spell, this trait doesn't function at the start of the wereraven's next turn. The wereraven dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Actions

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). The wereraven makes two weapon attacks, one of which can be with its hand crossbow.

Beak (Raven or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage in raven form, or 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage in hybrid form. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wereraven lycanthropy.

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

Hand Crossbow (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Change Shape. The wereraven polymorphs into a raven–humanoid hybrid or into a raven, or back into its humanoid form. Its statistics, other than its size and speed, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its humanoid form if it dies.

AN ADVENTURE FOR 4TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

A DEEP AND CREEPING DARKNESS

WRITTEN BY SARAH MADSEN
DEVELOPED & EDITED BY MICHELE CARTER

A Deep and Creeping Darkness came to Candlekeep with another group of adventurers, given to them by a villager who found it among her grandfather's old possessions. Her grandfather—a traveling bard in his youth—claimed to have written it. Though appearing to be nothing more than a combination of diary and penny dreadful, the book satisfied the requirement of a unique work to grant that party entrance to Candlekeep. It chronicles the death of a mountain village called Vermeillon by slow, unknown means. Following a terrible accident in the platinum mine, survivors and other villagers began disappearing. Eventually Vermeillon's population all vanished or fled, leaving the village abandoned. (They never discovered the cause: a nest of meenlocks.)

A Deep and Creeping Darkness

Finding the Book

Characters receive a contract from a mining and exploration group to find out what happened to Vermeillon. Through divination magic, the speculators learned that a book in Candlekeep holds clues to the mystery. They give the characters another book to use as a means of entrance, which gets them in ... barely.

The Avowed at the front gates are initially doubtful about the quality or desirability of the work. After enough debate to make the players nervous, they accept the book. Characters gain entrance to the Court of Air, where they are assigned rooms at the House of Rest, a study room at the Pillars of Pedagogy, and an adjutant guide. Their guide is surprised and thankful that the characters already know the name of the work they're looking for.

Characters who aren't specifically investigating the village can discover *A Deep and Creeping Darkness* while researching one of the following topics:

- Local history, legends, and lore
- The mining industry
- Unexplained disappearances of individuals and entire settlements

Book Description

The book, bound in black leather with "A Deep and Creeping Darkness" embossed on the thin spine, shows minimal signs of wear and tear other than a few pages creased through carelessness and a spot here and there. The work is neat though not flawless, containing notable spelling errors and ink blotches. (If asked, the Avowed confirm this is not the work of a professional scribe.)

Tale of Tragedy and Terror

A Deep and Creeping Darkness tells the tale of a mountain village whose residents went missing over the course of several months. The book presents a series of vignettes allegedly collected from "those who were there": survivors, traveling merchants, and (in secondhand accounts) residents of nearby settlements. It is unclear whether it is a fictional tale, folklore, or history. The content seems factual, but the language is extravagantly dramatic.

Vermeillon, established after settlers discovered a platinum vein in the mountainside, did a booming business in both the raw ore and the refined metal for around a decade. Due to the rough terrain and the harshness of the climate, the village never grew large. It intermittently hosted a succession of

MARK BEHM

traveling merchants who came to the village for a week or two, sold and traded their wares, then left again. The nearest civilized settlement was three days' ride on horseback down the mountainside. The inhabitants named in the book include Mayor Lei Duvezin, a kind and talented dwarf smith named Tormun, and his wife, Blenyss.

Seventy years ago, an explosion rocked the platinum mine, collapsing the tunnels and burying workers under tons of rubble. Sixty miners were underground that day. Over thirty of them died in the initial collapse, and the instability of the tunnels made rescue of the others slow and dangerous. The miners who survived the collapse were trapped for days or weeks before they were rescued—or perished in the deep, alone and terrified. Sixteen came out alive. Eleven were never found.

In the wake of the catastrophe, another horror plagued the village as people began to disappear, starting with the survivors—not all at once, however. One or two would vanish in a single night, then a tenday might pass before the next disappearance. These unexplained disappearances terrified the remaining miners. After all the survivors either disappeared or fled, other villagers began to vanish. The villagers tried to protect themselves by sleeping with weapons and taking shifts on watch, but nothing changed. Traveling in groups didn't help, since a companion might vanish while even briefly out of sight.

With no one willing to keep the mine open and the disappearances leading to fears that Vermeillon might be cursed, merchants and other travelers stopped visiting the village. The end of the patchwork story claims that the village is still there, though whether anyone inhabits it is a mystery. The volume's writer muses over the decline of the village, speculating about the fate of its inhabitants. They wonder whether it would be worth hiring adventurers to see if anything remains of the village—particularly the platinum ore. Sketched on the back of the last page is a rough map of the village's location, with directions from the closest mountain town, called Maerin.

Truth Behind the Tale

In response to the swell of terror from the chaos and aftermath of the accident, a nest of meenlocks spontaneously manifested within the bedrock of the mountain. Their strange, twisting lair affixed itself to the tunnels of the mine like a leech. The creatures spent days psychically tormenting the trapped miners before taking them to their lair for further torture and, eventually, transformation. After all the trapped miners were captured or died—or were rescued—the meenlocks turned their attention to the village.

The lingering fear and trauma of the surviving miners called like a beacon to the meenlocks, who exploited the impaired mental states of the villagers and influenced their dreams to sow more terror. Slowly but surely, with ruthless patience and efficiency, the meenlocks tormented and kidnapped the remaining miners, and then started in on their friends and family. Most of the populace eventually fled. Those who remained behind were taken, one by one, and transformed into meenlocks.

A bard who heard about the catastrophe decided to chronicle the stories of the survivors. He traveled the area extensively, avoiding Vermeillon but seeking out its former residents in nearby towns. His account failed to draw interest, and the book remained among the remnants of his bardic career until his granddaughter found it and sent it on its way to Candlekeep.

Maerin

The characters can use the hand-drawn sketch in the back on the book to determine their starting point. The town of Maerin is the most likely stopover before attempting the trip into the mountains. If you're running a homebrew campaign, insert Maerin wherever it makes sense for you or substitute an already-existing town in your own world.

Nestled at the foot of a mountain range, the town is the last bastion of civilization before the inhospitable climate of the peaks. Not large enough to be called a city, Maerin is nonetheless bustling. Shops, taverns, and other establishments abound, as well as an open-air market at the center of town where vendors of all sorts hawk their wares.

Most of the citizens of Maerin have scant knowledge of the village hidden in the mountains above them. Two former residents of Vermeillon can share their experiences: Lukas Grosvenor, the owner of the Bored Weasel tavern and inn, and Astra Vorn, a flower vendor in the market.

A Stake in the Mine

For a long-term campaign, you have the option of reopening the mine once the party clears out the nest of meenlocks. Plenty of platinum lies in the ground near Vermeillon, and adventurers who make it accessible could be rewarded with a share of the mine's profits once production starts up again. Vermeillon as a potential home base or means of additional income could be an irresistible temptation for forward-thinking groups. Either Lukas or Astra in Maerin mentions this possibility in passing, if needed, though neither claims any knowledge of where to find the rightful owners.

The Bored Weasel

A mid-range tavern and inn, the Bored Weasel features a dining area that seats forty people comfortably, small bedrooms that have surprisingly soft mattresses, and one tub that can be rented for baths by the hour. The menu of tavern fare is simple but satisfying; the establishment is best known for a flavorful, piping-hot stew called Salty Fish Surprise. (Where the fish comes from is a mystery best left unsolved.) A large bowl of the stew costs 3 cp, while a small cup of it costs 1 cp.

Lukas Grosvenor

Neutral good human tavernkeeper (age 95)

Lukas is patient, though he suffers no fools. He has a charming smile for anyone who gives him a kind word or a good tip. His hunched shoulders have only a hint of the strength they once had, and his hands are callused from years of work.

Lukas lived in Vermeillon and worked there as a miner. His young wife, Lorna, died in the disaster. He left after her death but before the disappearances started. If the characters announce that they're heading to Vermeillon, he asks them to place flowers on his wife's grave for him, and to find her old necklace in a hollow of the tree in the center of the village and return it to him. Lukas can give them a rough map of the village, though he notes a lot can change in seventy years.

Personality Trait. "Every since me wife died, my life has been a dreary march toward death. I look forward to death when it finally comes."

Ideal. "Hard work won't erase my losses, but it goes a long way toward easing them."

Bond. "I've poured decades of hard work into the Bored Weasel. It's all I have."

Flaw. "I become surly and irritable when confronted with things beyond my control."

The Central Market

Maerin has a lovely open-air market in the center of town. Semipermanent tables and tents throughout the circular area allow space for carts and wagons brought in by traveling merchants. Maerin sits at the junction of three main roads. The market surrounds the intersection, making it a welcome stop for travelers of all types. Jewelers, clothiers, bakers, farmers, and occasionally enchanters and alchemists, frequent the central market.

Astra Vorn

Lawful good half-elf florist (age 78)

Astra has pale skin, shoulder-length red hair streaked through with white, and cloudy blue eyes. They run a flower stall in the market. Friendly and a bit wistful, Astra chats with anyone who stops at their stall, as happy to hear the recent news as to make a sale.

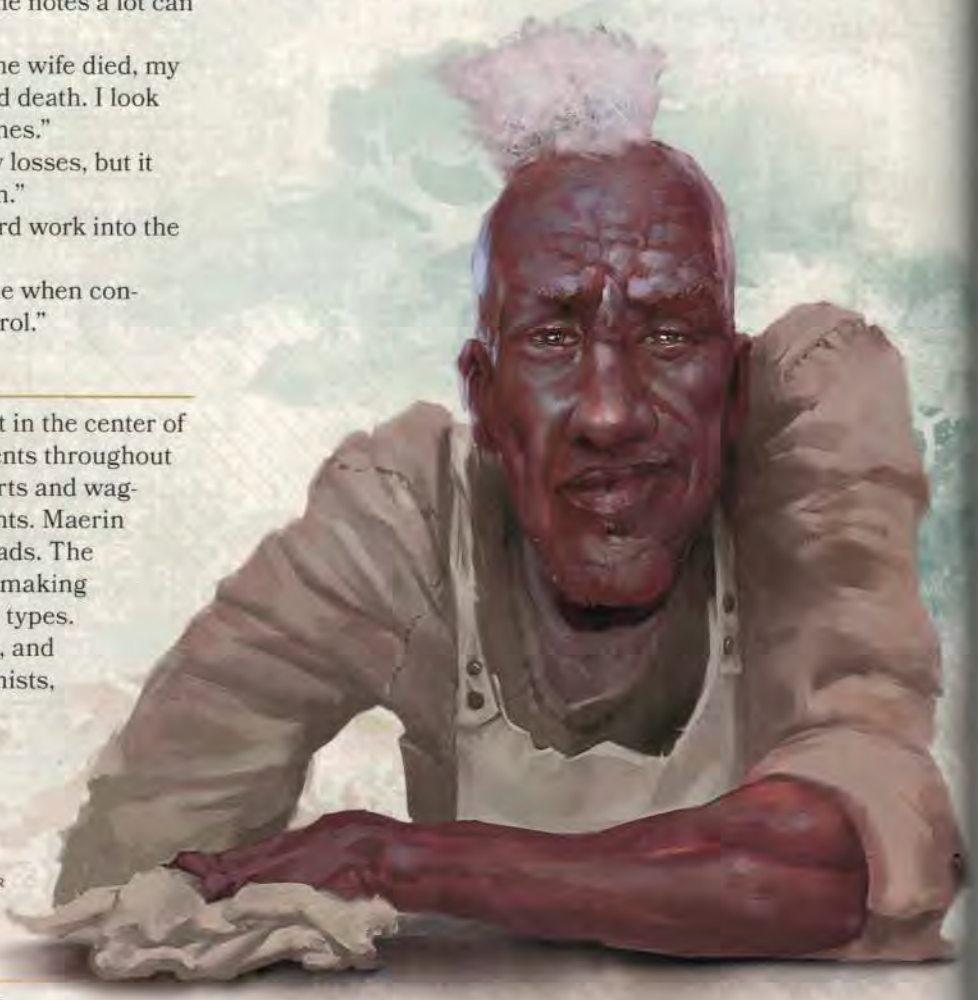
Astra was a child when their family left Vermeillon, so their knowledge of the forgotten village is clouded by time and the hazy memories of the very young. They remember the disaster at the mine, bits of conversation overheard from adults talking in hushed whispers, and the gossip of the other children. Astra's family fled the village when Astra's mother began to experience nightmares.

Personality Trait. "Gossip nourishes me like a spring rain, but I hate to hear or pass on bad news."

Ideal. "People are like flowers: Some grow best when left alone, others must be carefully cultivated—and some need to be pruned back, lest they overtake the garden."

Bond. "I am my own person, and I fiercely cherish my independence. I don't want to owe anyone anything."

Flaw. "I love to talk, which means I don't always listen to what's really being said."



Lukas Grosvenor

Astra Vorn

The Road to Vermeillon

Vermeillon lies nestled in the snowy mountain peaks north of Maerin, three days' ride by horse. The road from Maerin technically still exists, though it has fallen into disrepair and lacks guards or patrols. Place whatever obstacles or threats you feel necessary to engage the characters: they might face rampaging wildlife, marauding bandits, and weather and terrain challenges on the road to Vermeillon.

Vermeillon

When the characters enter Vermeillon, read the following boxed text to the players:

> The village is eerily quiet. Plants and wildlife have overtaken the crumbling houses. Leafless vines climb rotting walls, birds and other small creatures nest in the exposed rafters, and gnarled trees protrude from the fallen roofs of a few buildings. The overcast sky adds an air of oppression to the scene, seeming to envelop the village.

Lurking Danger

A nest of meenlocks lives in the mine outside the village. Though most of the creatures returned to the Feywild once the village was empty, six **meenlocks** (see the end of the adventure for their stat block) remained to prey on lost travelers. When the characters arrive in the village, these meenlocks become aware of their presence and stalk them from a distance, staying hidden in the shadows.

The meenlocks of Vermeillon include three that spawned after the disaster in the mine, two that were once villagers, and one that was a traveling merchant who thought he'd found a shortcut through the peaks. The three original meenlocks stay within the nest, while the other three venture into the village to torment the characters, either individually or as a group. You can change the number of meenlocks in in the village, depending on the number of characters and their abilities.

As the party makes its way through the village, the meenlocks try to remain unseen as they begin to psychically haunt the characters, causing hallucinations. Pick one character to target, or spread the hallucinations between multiple party members. A few suggestions:

- Characters see movement out of the corner of their eyes, but when they turn to look, nothing is there.
- A voice whispers indistinct words in their ears.
- A terrified shriek splits the air.
- Shadows follow the characters, stretching out abnormally across the floor to reach for them.
- Characters who view themselves in a reflection momentarily see the face of a lost loved one or a hated enemy instead of their own.
- The hair on their arms and neck stands up, and the space between their shoulder blades itches. They can't shake the feeling of being watched.

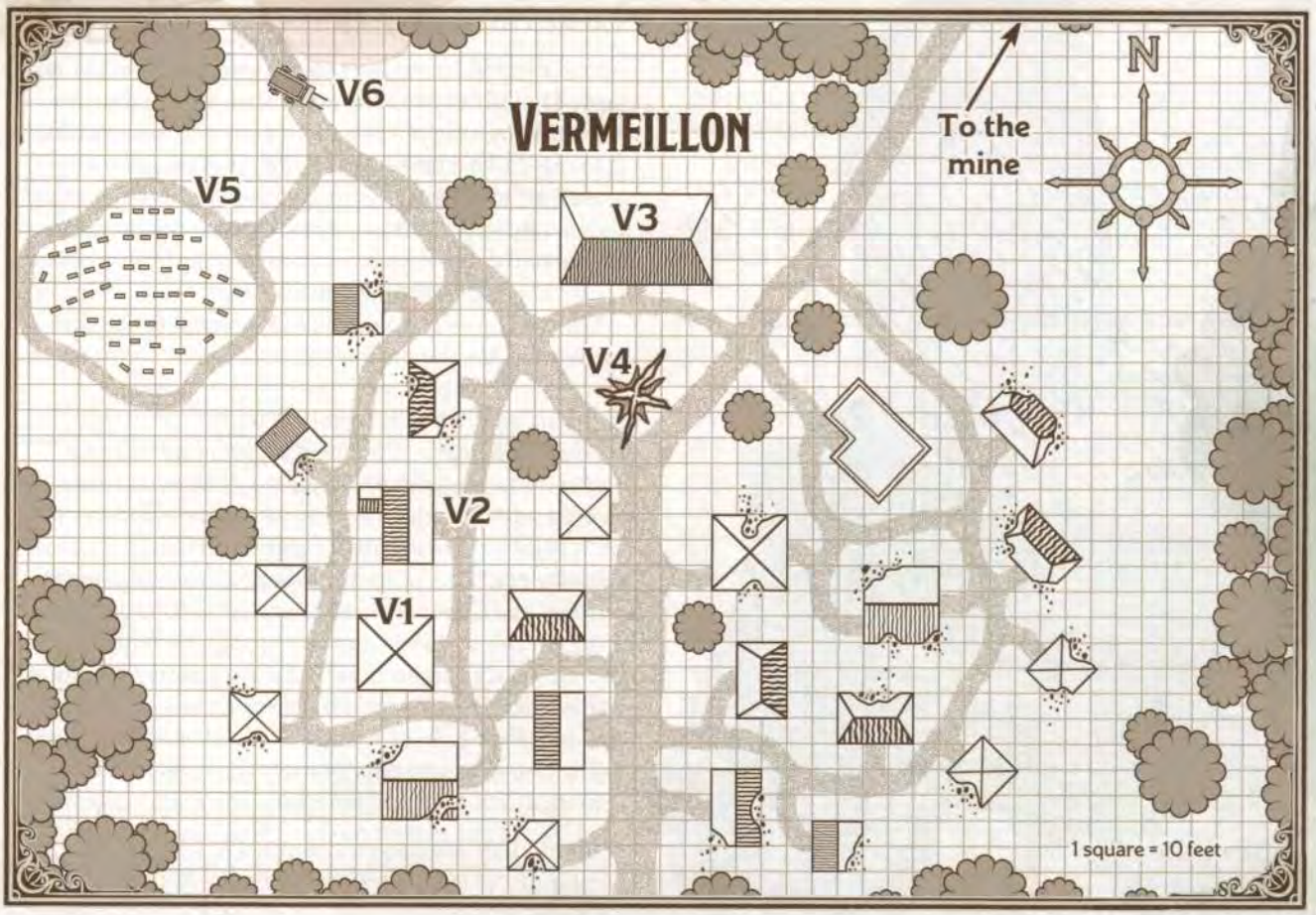
Nightmares

If the characters sleep in the village, the meenlocks inflict nightmares on them. The characters dream of being trapped in the suffocating darkness beneath piles of rock and rubble, unable to scream or move. After finishing a long rest, each character must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the character gains 1 level of exhaustion.

Places of Interest

Most of Vermeillon's buildings contain nothing but decaying furniture and whatever belongings were left behind when the inhabitants fled, but a few locations hold treasure or hints to the village's demise.

The following locations are keyed to the map of Vermeillon.



V1. The Wand and Hammer

Tormun and Blenyss's shop displays a sign featuring a wand crossed with a blacksmith's hammer. The sign hangs crookedly from one hook and falls as the characters enter through the front door.

> A thick layer of dust covers the interior of this building. A forge sits dormant in the far corner, a blacksmith's anvil and an empty quenching trough beside it. On the opposite side of the room are two workbenches with stools.

Tormun and Blenyss left with the second wave of villagers. With their livelihood drying up before their eyes and the hidden danger lurking in the village, the couple made the regretful decision to abandon their shop, buying space on one of the last merchant carts out. They took what they could fit on their backs, and they left their other possessions behind and hid their valuables in order to return and claim them later, which they never did.

Treasure. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a false panel in the corner of the floor. The false floor hides a steel shield with platinum filigree in the shape of winding serpents (50 gp), two matching shortswords with platinum filigree on the hilt and pommel in a similar serpent motif (25 gp each), and a stack of ten iron bars, each weighing 10 pounds (1 gp each).

A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a thin platinum *ring of swimming* in the dust under a workbench, where it fell and was forgotten.

V2. Stonemason's Workshop

The front door of the stonemason's home and workshop gapes open, with the remains of the door lying several feet away and covered in long brown grass. The roof has caved in, and remnants of rotting furniture are visible through the open doorway. Blank headstones stand in front of the house, and one beside the doorway is engraved with the words "Tiris Frosthair, Stonemason. Inquire at Back."

At the back of the house, a covered work area holds more blank headstones and slabs of granite and marble. Rusted carving tools hang from the wall. A hammer and chisel lie on the ground beside a half-finished headstone that reads:

ADALYN CREEN

May you alw

TIM HARTIN

V3. Mayor's House

This grand, two-story brick house has fallen prey to time and the elements like the rest of the village, but it remains in better shape than the smaller houses. Heavy wooden double doors are flanked by dark windows, and chimneys anchor the building at each corner, their masonry crumbling. In front of the house looms a wide, leafless tree. Its gnarled branches reach toward the clouds like twisted fingers, and its rough bark is pockmarked with large knots and beetle holes.

This house belonged to Mayor Lei Duvezin and her family. When the villagers continued to disappear, and the others fled, Mayor Duvezin sent her wife, Tifra, and their two small children to Maerin to wait until it was safe. Tifra fell ill not long after their arrival in Maerin and passed away three weeks later. The children remained there for a time before being sent off to the care of distant relatives. Mayor Duvezin was determined to find the source of the disappearances, stop them, and rescue anyone she could. As it happened, she was the last villager taken by the meenlocks.

If the characters decide to explore the house, see "Mayor Duvezin's House" later in the adventure for more information about this location.

V4. Tree

A bare tree stands on the lawn in front of the mayor's mansion. On the west side of the tree is a hollow knot, about 5 feet above the ground, filled with dead leaves and empty nut shells.

Treasure. Within the hollow rests a delicate necklace: a thumb-sized platinum oval pendant threaded on a thin chain (20 gp), inscribed with "For Lorna, Forever" in a careful script. A character who spoke with Lukas Grosvenor and knows the necklace is hidden in the tree can locate it with minimal searching. Someone unaware of the necklace must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discover it.

V5. Graveyard

A crooked, wrought iron archway stands at the entrance to the graveyard, which is overgrown like the rest of the village. Headstones sit at odd angles, some toppled completely. Small cairns, rather than inscribed headstones, mark the graves toward the back.

Characters who take time to read the inscriptions notice that the headstones near the cairns bear the same death date, which is also the date of the mine collapse. The cairns were intended to be temporary, but with so many stones needing to be carved at the same time, the stonemason was unable to complete all the work before she was taken by the meenlocks.

Characters who look for Lorna Grosvenor's grave can find it in the section at the back, a few headstones away from the cairns. Her stone stands a bit tilted but stable, and reads:

LORNA GROSVENOR

Beloved of Lukas. Forever, My Heart.

If the characters place flowers on the grave as requested by Lukas, they hear a soft, contented sigh on the wind.

V6. Merchant's Cart

The road heading northwest out of the village is soon overcome by overgrowth and disuse. Not too far past the graveyard, a cart stands abandoned in the middle of the road, covered with a heavy tarp.

The cart belonged to a traveling merchant who was taken by the meenlocks a little less than a year ago.

Upon closer inspection, the party finds the remains of a horse in the tall grass, still tethered to the front of the cart. Under the tarp are boxes, barrels, and trunks. Many of these containers are broken and empty; the few that remain carry salted dried meats (still edible but not tasty), three bolts of common fabric (10 gp each), and two small casks of wine (25 gp each). A successful Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the following information:

DC 15 Wisdom (Survival): The growth around the wheels and the decay of the horse's carcass suggests that the cart has lain here for roughly a year.

Running the Meenlocks

The meenlocks haunting Vermeillon avoid bright light. They prefer to stay in their nest until nightfall, though they sometimes hunt on overcast days.

The meenlocks avoid combat with a well-armed group of foes. If the characters don't split up on their own, the meenlocks try to divide the party using their ability to create hallucinations. Their aim is to isolate and paralyze one character, then drag that character back to their nest to be tortured and transformed into a meenlock. If given the opportunity, meenlocks psychically torment their prey for hours or days, breaking down their mental and emotional state to make the eventual transformation easier.

Be devious and tricksy with these foes—they're intelligent creatures, not mindless monsters driven by bloodlust. Hide them from the characters for as long as possible to heighten the mystery and suspense.

Dead Tree, Old House

DC 18 Wisdom (Survival): The scratches and tooth marks on the broken and empty containers lead one to conclude they were damaged by animals.

DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation): The driver's seat lifts up to reveal a compartment. Inside this compartment is a pouch containing 15 gp and a ledger listing sales in settlements around the area.

Tragic Transformation

Mayor Lei Duvezin was taken in the night and transformed into a meenlock. The **meenlock** that was once Mayor Duvezin now lurks around the mayor's mansion, drawn there by lingering memories, and it takes any opportunity to attack characters in the house.

The meenlock shed its clothing and other trappings of its former life once the transformation was complete, but it still wears the mayor's ring of office: an ornate platinum signet ring embossed with a snowdrop blossom (75 gp). The characters can recover the ring upon the meenlock's death or notice it during combat with a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check. The ring offers a hint to the fate of the mayor, and also serves as a potential plot hook if the characters decide to track down the mayor's children to return the item and give them closure on their mother's fate.

Mayor Duvezin's House

The furniture and belongings in the house remain in their customary places, the beds made and the desks arranged neatly under a thick layer of dust. The house served as both the home of the mayor and the center of government. Meals were prepared in the village and brought to the manor, and the servants slept in nearby cottages.

The house hides clues to the death of the village, for characters who take the time to look. If any characters are left behind in a room on their own, or if the party splits up to search the house, that's an ideal time for a meenlock encounter.

H1. Entryway

Dust covers everything in this wide hallway. Moth-eaten cloaks hang from hooks on the left-hand wall. To the left and the right, hallways branch off into the gloom. Ahead, a stairway leads up to the second floor, and a door stands beneath the stairs, seemingly leading to the back yard.

Robin Olausson

Dim light filters in through the dust-covered windows, the only light within the house. The cloaks are too decayed to be of any use.

H2. Assembly Room

> Chairs are arranged in staggered rows with their backs to the door, facing a podium in the southeast corner. A sideboard sits on the left side of the room, and a bookcase stands to the right of the doorway, filled with tomes and knickknacks. A cold brick fireplace occupies the southwest corner.

The mayor addressed the village's council here. The sideboard, once used to provide drinks and other refreshments during the meetings, is bare. The shelves in it hold glass tumblers, wine glasses, and small china plates, all covered with dust and rodent droppings.

Treasure. The bookshelf holds old and worn books, a small framed watercolor painting of a mountain range (2 gp), and a chunk of raw platinum ore from the mine (25 gp).

H3. Meeting Room

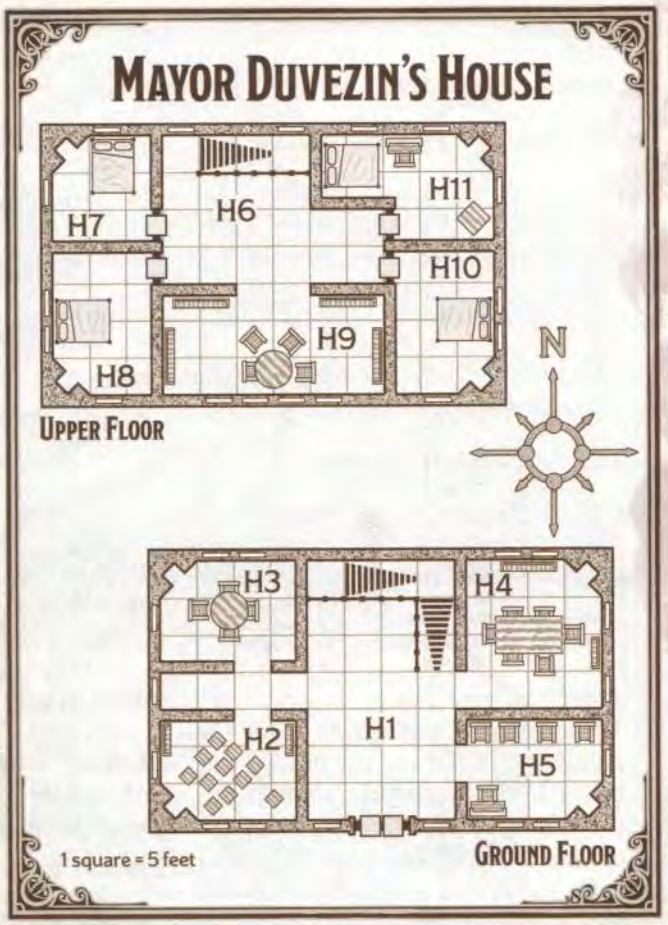
> A round table with four chairs stands in the center of this room. Windows look out into the back yard. The fireplace in the corner is filled with broken masonry. A framed portrait hangs on the right-hand wall.

This room is bare except for the furniture and a faded oil painting that depicts Mayor Lei Duvezin, a dark-skinned woman dressed in a cream-colored frock coat with a pale green cravat at her throat. Her dark hair is pulled up in an intricate twist, and she wears delicate platinum and diamond earrings. Her hands are folded in her lap. One finger bears a heavy platinum signet ring, inscribed with a snowdrop blossom.

H4. Dining Room

> This room holds a rectangular table with eight chairs. A sideboard sits against the far wall, with dusty ceramic serving dishes and bowls atop it. A fireplace is in the far corner.

This room was used mainly for dinner parties and family meals. A search reveals ceramic plates, bowls, and teacups with saucers in the sideboard cabinets, as well as flatware and serving utensils in the drawers. The ceramics are well made but simple; the flatware is made of a silver-plated steel alloy.



H5. Parlor

> The parlor is empty except for four wingback chairs situated along the left-hand wall and a desk in the right-hand corner beside the window. A fireplace dominates the southeast corner.

Once a waiting area for villagers hoping to see the mayor, this room holds little of interest. The chairs are infested with rodents; mouse holes and droppings are obvious with a simple glance. The desk on the front wall was available for public use and did not hold any personal papers. A few crumbling sheets of blank parchment, a quill, and a dried-up inkwell remain here.

H6. Upstairs Landing

> An open landing waits at the top of the stairs. Four closed doors lie before you, and a large entryway gapes from across the hall to the south.

The doors to the bedrooms are shut but unlocked. In the middle of the south wall is a open doorway to the library (area H9).

H7. Daughter's Bedroom

> This dim room holds nothing but a bed, partially coated in debris from the collapsed chimney. Cold air gusts in through the gaps.

This room belonged to the mayor's daughter, Nia. It contains nothing of interest.

H8. Master Bedroom

> A double bed sits beneath the windows along the far wall. A fireplace occupies one corner, and a window looks out onto the front yard.

This room belonged to Mayor Duvezin and her wife, Tifra. A search of the room yields a pile of crumpled, half-written letters on the fireplace mantelpiece, beseeching other nearby settlements for aid; among them is a completed letter addressed to the mayor of Maerin. This letter is stuffed in an envelope and sealed shut with a bright red wax seal embossed with an ornate snowdrop blossom; sticks of sealing wax in various colors as well as quills, ink, and paper; and the journal of Mayor Lei Duvezin.

The journal chronicles the disaster at the mine and the village's anguish at so many victims. The mayor recounts the rescue efforts in the following days, and how they had to stop the search due to fears of more cave-ins if they attempted to remove any more of the rubble, even with miners still missing. She writes of villagers going missing in the night, of her helplessness, and of stubbornly staying on, determined to find the missing villagers while Tifra and their two children, Tavin and Nia, evacuated to Maerin. The last few pages speak of the mayor's nightmares, of her creeping fear and waking in the night, soaked in sweat, with lingering screams echoing in her ears.

H9. Library

> Shelves filled with books line the walls of this library, and four wingback chairs sit around a low table in the center of the room. The wide bank of windows in the south wall affords a panoramic view of the dilapidated houses beyond the twisting branches of the tree in the front yard.

Since the village's business was conducted on the first floor of the mansion, the mayor and her wife spent their personal time in this room. The shelves hold books of all sorts, from tomes on history and treatises on business to thin volumes of folktales and grand, sweeping novels. An entire section on arcane theory includes books about the other planes of existence. If you so desire, the library can include books relevant to other plots in your campaign.

Several open books lie on the table, with notes scribbled on bits of paper stuck between their pages. The topics include the effects of physical and emotional trauma, nightmares, and mysterious disappearances. Seemingly out of place in comparison to the other topics, a book about the Feywild and its sundry creatures holds a single note, written in a shaky hand. It reads: *Could this be the answer?*

The note marks a page with an entry on meenlocks, which includes the following information:

- Meenlocks are corrupted fey creatures that spontaneously manifest in response to fear in places where the border with the Feywild is thin.
- Meenlocks create more of their kind by transforming humanoids through a process of psychic torment that takes hours or days.
- Meenlocks live in subterranean nests.
- Meenlocks are sensitive to bright light and can sense shadows and darkness.

By the time Mayor Duvezin discovered this book, she was already being harried by the meenlocks. They took her shortly afterward.

H10. Guest Bedroom

> Empty except for a bed and a fireplace, this room is cold and has an air of loneliness about it.

Intended as a guest bedroom, this chamber rarely saw much use.

H11. Son's Bedroom

> This bedroom has a tall chest of drawers made of dark wood in the corner across from the door. Farther into the room, a small desk sits between two windows, with a large bed to the left of it. The sheets and blankets on the bed are rumpled. One moth-eaten pillow lies on the floor beside it, the other on the mattress where it belongs.

Under the bed is a small stuffed toy bugbear, full of holes and with its stuffing removed by the resident rodents. It belonged to the mayor's son, Tavin.

Platinum Mine

A gaping hole in the mountainside northeast of the village marks the entrance to the platinum mine. Several carts sit outside the cavern. One is filled with rock and dirt pulled from the mine, the others piled with large beams of wood—new supports that were never installed after the collapse.

If the characters explore during the day, the first 30 feet inside the mine are dimly lit, and anything beyond 30 feet is in darkness. Cart wheels have carved shallow ruts in the dirt floor leading to the back of the mine, where the cave-in was never fully excavated. Smaller tunnels branch off from the main shaft. The entrance to the meenlock tunnel opens near the site of the accident.

The following locations are keyed to the map of the platinum mine.

M1. Main Tunnel

> The mine is dark and damp, and you hear the sound of dripping water echoing from deep within. The light fades faster than it should as you move deeper, until you're wrapped in oppressive gloom and shadow.

The main tunnel heads into the mountain, ending at a pile of rubble left over from the cave-in. Secondary hallways branch off to the left and the right. The meenlocks, having watched the characters in the village, escalate their psychic torment when the characters enter the mine.

Each character who enters the mine must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or have disadvantage on Intelligence and Wisdom checks from being distracted by whispers, shifting movement, and other hallucinations while inside the mine.

M2. Southern Wing

> This tunnel ends at a small chamber that holds worn picks, rusty shovels, and two hand carts filled with debris and rags.

The tools were left behind by the workers in the wake of the disaster.

Characters who look up see scores of bats hanging from the 20-foot-high ceiling. If bright light is shone at them or if someone makes a noise louder than a whisper, the bats coalesce into three hostile **swarms of bats**. These swarms were drawn to the

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mine by the meenlocks' unwholesome presence and attack all creatures except the meenlocks.

M3. Northern Wing

> This tunnel winds back toward the entrance, and the south wall of the chamber at the end has odd divots and alcoves within the rock at various heights.

This tunnel ends abruptly. The miners intended to keep digging here, but it was abandoned after the collapse occurred.

M4. Cave-In

As the characters approach the rubble of the cave-in, they see large rocks in the pathway that they can easily move past. The tunnel gets tighter and tighter until they come to the main body of the cave-in.

> Mounds of broken rock block the tunnel, piled from ceiling to floor. The other parts of the cave-in were passable after the collapse, but this seems an impenetrable wall of earth.

Traveling farther down the tunnel is impossible here. A character who attempts to move any of the rocks must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage as the rubble shifts, falling on them or sliding out from beneath their feet, sending them tumbling.

M5. Entrance to the Meenlock Lair

> The opening of this tunnel is nearly circular. Black moss covers the walls, floor, and ceiling of the tunnel as far as you can see. Within this tunnel are several branches, all of them covered in the same black moss.

The notable aspect of this tunnel is the uniform layer of black moss over everything. Characters who scrape the moss away from the rock see that the walls are smooth, not rough-carved by pick and shovel like the rest of the mine. Because the meenlock tunnels spontaneously manifested rather than being dug out, there are no scratch marks or signs of excavation on the walls, floor, or ceiling here. The moss muffles all sound, causing a lack of echoes and creating a sense of claustrophobia.

A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check reveals that the tunnels were not created by hand, claw, or tool, but rather by magic or another strange effect; if the check succeeds by 4 or more, the character pieces together the clues, if they haven't done so already, and realizes that meenlocks created the moss-covered tunnels.

M6. Chamber of Weeping

> Thick, velvety black moss covers every surface of this eight-foot-high chamber. Set into the far wall is a deep alcove.

Whenever a creature that isn't a meenlock enters the alcove or starts its turn there, tentacles of black moss sprout from the alcove's walls, forcing the creature to succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw to avoid being grappled by them (escape DC 14). The tentacles are an otherwise harmless magical effect and can't be harmed, though a *dispel magic* spell causes them to disappear.

Development. A character who wanders into this cave alone and is grappled by the mossy tentacles might have to deal with one or more meenlocks that creep into the room, hoping to take advantage of the character's unfortunate predicament.

M7. Mossy Maze

The meenlocks like to pick off interlopers in this moss-covered maze of tunnels, luring them into dead-end caves using hallucinations (such as the sound of someone calling for help).

M8. Pools

> This dead-end cavern opens wide, and the lingering dampness of the tunnels is pronounced in here. Moisture leaches through the moss ceiling above, forming fat droplets that fall into pools of dark water around the chamber. A sharp scent of minerals fills the air and mixes with the earthy smell of the moss. The sound of dripping doesn't echo, but is immediately dulled by the moss-carpeted surfaces.

The pools here vary in depth: the smaller ones are a few inches deep, and the larger pools measure 2 feet at their deepest. In the subterranean darkness, the pools look black. Light sources reflect off the water as if it were a dark mirror, and the characters are unable to see below the surface.

This is another ideal ambush location for the meenlocks or, if you want to shake things up a bit, for a **black pudding** or other ooze to lurk on the surface of one of the pools like an oil slick.

M9. Transformation Chamber

New scents greet you here: the musty funk of decaying fabric and old furs, and the smell of rot lingering in the stagnant air. Thick pillars of moss-covered stone support the twenty-foot-high ceiling, and waist-high stone slabs dot the cavern.

The meenlocks bring their victims here to be tormented and transformed. The stone slabs are coated with blood and filth—the result of mortals being laid out for days of torture. Any party members taken by the meenlocks are here, paralyzed on one of the slabs if they haven't already been transformed (see the "Telepathic Torment" sidebar at the end of the adventure). Any remaining meenlocks attack when the party reaches the center of this room.

Dynamite Trap. The miners-turned-meenlocks used remnants of their knowledge to rig explosives on the four pillars in this room. Attached to each pillar is a stick of dynamite with a long fuse leading to a plunger trigger. Any character who has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 18 or higher spots a candle-like object attached to each pillar, partially hidden beneath the moss. A character who closely examines a pillar spots the dynamite stick and the fuse leading from it with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check. A character can cut a fuse as an action (no ability check required). If a dynamite stick takes damage from any source, it explodes (as described below).

The meenlocks trigger the explosives as a last resort. If a meenlock starts its turn with 10 hit points or fewer, it moves to the nearest trigger, uses its action to set off the explosion, and then uses its Shadow Teleport bonus action to escape. The pillar is destroyed in the explosion. The last meenlock detonates any remaining pillars before it flees. Any creature within 5 feet of an exploding dynamite stick must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If all four pillars are destroyed, the cavern's ceiling partially collapses. Each creature in the cavern when the collapse occurs must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage, falls prone, and is restrained by the rubble and unable to stand up; on a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't trapped in the rubble or knocked prone. A creature can use its action to attempt to free itself or another creature trapped under the rubble within its reach, doing so with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. Meenlocks that flee return the next night to see what they've caught in their trap.

Old Remains. The remnants of other victims lie on the south side of the room, decades of belongings shed by transformed meenlocks and left to rot. Heaped piles of bones, clothing, boots, rusted blades, and splintered bows and arrows rest within the recessed portions of the walls.

Treasure. Most of the items in the refuse piles are worthless after rotting in the damp and dark for years. A thorough search reveals 50 gp, an ivory drinking horn with platinum filigree (120 gp), and a set of *goggles of night*.

Passage into the Feywild

Meenlocks manifest where the Feywild's influence is strong. A shallow lake on the mountainside above the meenlock lair (directly above area M8) is fed by a stream that becomes a river when summer melts the snow. When the full moon hangs in the night sky, the lake becomes a fey crossing. Anyone who completely submerges in the icy waters during this time surfaces in the Feywild.

Fate of Vermeillon

If the party clears out the nest of meenlocks and informs the citizens of Maerin, settlers restore the village of Vermeillon and the mine eventually begins production again. The new villagers treat the characters as local heroes. As news travels, Tormun and Blenyss eventually hear of the village's resurrection and return to restart their shop, unable to pass up the opportunity of being so close to a platinum mine.

If the meenlocks survive, travelers continue to go missing if they attempt to take the road through Vermeillon. The number of meenlocks in the nest grows to eventually threaten the town of Maerin.

Meenlock

Small fey

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 31 (7d6 + 7)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (−2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (−1)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +6, Survival +2
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge Rating 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Fear Aura. Any beast or humanoid that starts its turn within 10 feet of the meenlock must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the start of the creature's next turn.

Light Sensitivity. While in bright light, the meenlock has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage, and if the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Bonus Actions

Shadow Teleport (Recharge 5–6). The meenlock teleports to an unoccupied space within 30 feet of it, provided that both the space it's teleporting from and its destination are in dim light or darkness. The destination need not be within line of sight.

Meenlock

Meenlocks are cruel fey that invoke terror and seek to destroy all that is good, innocent, and beautiful. They primarily live in forests, although they adapt well to urban and subterranean settings.

Fear Incarnate. Meenlocks are spawned by fear. Whenever fear overwhelms a creature in the Feywild, or in any other location where the Feywild's influence is strong, one or more meenlocks might spontaneously arise in the shadows or darkness nearby. If more than one meenlock is born, a lair also magically forms. The earth creaks and moans as narrow, twisting tunnels open up within it. One of these newly formed passageways serves as the lair's only entrance and exit. Inside the warren, black moss covers every surface, muffling sound. A large central chamber serves as the meenlocks' den, where they torment captives.

Dark Dwellers. A meenlock shuns bright light. It can supernaturally sense areas of darkness and shadow in its vicinity and thus is able to teleport from one darkened space to another—enabling it to sneak up on its prey and run away when outmatched.

Telepathic Tormentors. Meenlocks have no form of communication other than telepathy. They can use it to project unsettling hallucinations into the minds of their prey. These hallucinations take the form of terrible whispers or fleeting movements just at the edges of one's peripheral vision.

During the day, meenlocks confine themselves to their dark warrens. At night, they crawl out of their tunnels to torment sleeping prey (see the "Telepathic Torment" sidebar).

Telepathic Torment

Up to four meenlocks can telepathically torment one incapacitated creature, filling its mind with disturbing sounds and dreadful imagery. Participating meenlocks can't use their telepathy for any other purpose during this time, though they can move about and take actions and reactions as normal. This torment has no effect on a creature that is immune to the frightened condition. If the creature is susceptible and remains incapacitated for 1 hour, the creature must make a Wisdom saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The save DC is equal to 10 + the number of meenlocks participating in the torment, considering only those that remain within sight of the victim for the entire hour and aren't incapacitated during it. The process can be repeated. A humanoid that drops to 0 hit points as a result of this damage instantly transforms into a meenlock at full health and under the DM's control. Only a *wish* spell or divine intervention can restore a transformed creature to its former state.

FILIP BURBURAN

AN ADVENTURE FOR 4TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

SHEMSHIME'S BEDTIME RHYME

WRITTEN BY ARI LEVITCH
DEVELOPED & EDITED BY MICHELE CARTER

SHEMSHIME'S BEDTIME RHYME HAS BEEN gathering dust on its shelf in Candlekeep for over six hundred years. The children's book arrived at the library in unceremonious fashion, though the same could not be said of its courier. Yowen Pilt, a procurer of rare books who did business with Candlekeep, was utterly insane when he arrived with his latest bundle. The records of the episode are sparse, but they report that he was placed in isolation for weeks after a "singing madness" began to spread among the library's Avowed. The records contain no further mention of the book dealer. The Avowed cataloged and shelved his final delivery, which included *Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme*.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The adventure takes place in the Firefly Cellar, a windowless basement beneath the House of Rest, so named because its only light comes from lamps lit by swarms of fireflies.

After spending the night here, all the characters wake up in the morning with the same tune in their heads, and each one hums it under their breath. They soon discover that the tune has "spread" to the Firefly Cellar's other occupants, and the Avowed institute a quarantine to contain what is actually a curse. The adventure is built around a sequence of events that unfold when the characters are quarantined in Candlekeep's Firefly Cellar with a handful of the library's attendants, in an attempt to keep Shemshime's curse from spreading throughout the entire library. The events describe Shemshime's growing supernatural influence and how people deal with the mounting pressure of confinement under dangerous circumstances.

SHEMSHIME'S BEDTIME RHYME

ZOLVAN BORCA

The characters must identify the curse's source. Their search eventually leads them to Crinkle, the Firefly Cellar's kenku caretaker, who has the book. *Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme* contains the malevolent spirit called Shemshime, and the book holds the secret of how to stop it.

Below is an outline of the events in the order that they occur:

Event 1: Quarantined. The characters and NPCs are sealed in the Firefly Cellar to keep their contagious curse contained.

Event 2: Ebder's Outburst. One of the Avowed is overwhelmed by the curse, and his manic humming causes creepy things to happen.

Event 3: Singing Skull. The cursed remains of the book dealer who brought *Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme* to Candlekeep are discovered when the skull begins to sing the rhyme about where it was hidden centuries ago.

Event 4: Escape Attempt. A visiting scholar named K'Tulah succumbs to the mounting tension and tries to break out of the cellar, threatening to spread the curse throughout Candlekeep.

Event 5: Puppets. Shemshime's magic takes control of characters trapped in the library, causing them to violently turn on each other.

Event 6: Shemshime. The characters find the book and must discover how to stop the curse while confronting Shemshime.

You dictate the pace at which the events unfold. If you want to draw out the tension of confinement, introduce a new event only after the characters think they have a handle on the current situation. Alternatively, you could bombard them with one event after the other so they can't catch their breath.

Player Handout: Shemshime's Rhyme

See a mother scything wheat
Forgotten husband sleeping near
With one swing she took his feet
With another took his ear

Does the shadow have a name?
SHEMSHIME
Causes grief, avoids the blame
SHEMSHIME

See a dog that knows how to heel
Never heeds plea nor command
Mother gave it a tasty meal
Dog chose instead to eat her hand

Does the shadow have a name?
SHEMSHIME
Causes grief, avoids the blame
SHEMSHIME

See a son doing his chore
Washing clothes for folk in town
Fell into the river's roar
Sank to the bottom and drowned

Does the shadow have a name?
SHEMSHIME
Causes grief, avoids the blame
SHEMSHIME

Finding the Book

Discovering the book's whereabouts is part of the adventure's mystery. A kenku named Crinkle, one of the Avowed and the caretaker of the Firefly Cellar, became enamored with the book and hid it in her quarters. Though the book is not present at the start of the adventure, the characters must deal with the foul magic emanating from it.

Book Description

This children's book is a mechanical curiosity of gnomish design, with a cover made of wood and copper. The front cover bears a faded, hand-painted rendering of a round millstone. The book is square, eighteen inches along each edge of the cover. A silver music box set into the book's spine is heavily dented at one end.

The book has no pages in the typical sense, but it opens to reveal a pop-up cutaway illustration of a quaint watermill made of painted panels of wood, tin, canvas, and leather. It's a clockwork device designed to animate four separate scenes while a music box built into the book's spine plays a metallic tune that implants a rhyme in the minds of those who hear it (see the accompanying handout). The mechanized scenes feature cutout figurines of members of a family dying in a series of grisly ways as a shadowy figure looks on. The images are as follows:

- A mother chops off the feet and ear of her husband with a scythe.
- The family dog bites off the mother's hand.
- The son drowns in a river while washing clothes.
- The final scene—which doesn't play out until the music box is repaired—shows the daughter defeating the shadow by crushing it under a millstone.

Background

Centuries ago, a family living in a remote water mill endured a string of unfortunate events. A malevolent spirit called Shemshime attached itself to the family and caused the "accidents." The daughter finally destroyed Shemshime by crushing it under a millstone that had been blessed by a traveling halfling cleric of Chauntea (god of agriculture).

The story became a local legend, a cautionary tale meant to warn people to keep their attention on their chores. When a traveling gnome bard heard the tale, he was so intrigued that he set the story down in the book, *Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme*. By doing so, he inadvertently created a conduit through which Shemshime could return.

Yowen Pilt procured the book from an adventurer who discovered it among the debris of a shipwreck. He brought the mechanical book to Candlekeep, where it has been ever since.

A Kenku's Curiosity

The kenku Avowed, Crinkle, loves to collect all kinds of curios and baubles. *Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme*, with its intricate mechanical workings and charming music box, was too tempting to resist. After years as the Firefly Cellar's caretaker, she discovered the book when it was selected to have its spine repaired as part of a restoration project involving this part of Candlekeep.

Before the adventurers arrive at the Firefly Cellar at the beginning of the adventure, Crinkle brought the book to her room (area F11) and opened it. The music box started to play, and she became the subject of Shemshime's curse.

The rhyme is presented in the accompanying handout. Until the music box is repaired, it always skips back to the beginning of the song before playing the last stanza. That means the last stanza of Shemshime's rhyme doesn't get implanted in the minds of those who hear the song until the music box is fixed and the tune plays in its entirety. The missing stanza is as follows:

See a daughter grinding grain
Wish the spirit's time was through
Trap set for the shadow bane
Her millstone killed it true

Shemshime's Curse

Those who hear the melody of the rhyme find it to be irresistibly catchy, and they hum it over and over again. Such individuals have become cursed.

The rhyme acts as a summoning ritual intended to restore Shemshime. When enough people join in the singing of the rhyme, or enough time passes while people are singing it, the ritual will be completed. As that occasion approaches, Shemshime's power grows. Anyone who hears the cursed tune is in turn cursed to hum or sing it. They are then capable of transmitting it further.

Resisting the Rhyme

The characters can will themselves not to sing the rhyme, but doing this requires concentration as though casting a spell (see "Concentration" in the *Player's Handbook*).

A *silence* spell or similar magic negates the rhyme in the affected area.

A *remove curse* spell or similar magic ends the curse on a creature, though it remains susceptible to being cursed again. If cast on the book, the magic suppresses the curse on all creatures for 10 minutes.

Cellar Inhabitants

A handful of people reside in the Firefly Cellar while the task of restoring its collection is under way.

Varnyr

Chaotic good sun elf scribe (age 685)

Varnyr is a senior scribe who has spent centuries at Candlekeep. She loves the books, which she cares for as though they were her grandchildren. She has little ambition to rise in the ranks of the Avowed, perfectly content as a senior scribe. She is hard-working and expects others to be as well.

Varnyr was an adjutant when Shemshime's curse first came to Candlekeep, though she is unaware that the book was the cause of the madness.

Varnyr is a **noble** with the following changes:

- Varnyr speaks Common and Elvish, and she has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet. She has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.
- Instead of a rapier, Varnyr wields a cane and can use an action to make two melee weapon attacks with it: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

Personality Trait. "I have a warm, calming demeanor, even when circumstances call for concern."

Ideal. "Everything has its place, and everyone has their role."

Bond. "Candlekeep is the beacon of civilization in an otherwise bleak and backward world."

Flaw. "When something irritates me, I try to ignore it, but I usually end up snapping at someone."

Ebder Smallstone

Lawful good human scribe (age 33)

Ebder is a pessimist who sees every setback as a disaster and every victory as dumb luck. He is a widower, and his daughter, Gailby, provides him respite from his anxious outlook.

Ebder looks older than his actual age, with few traces of black in his otherwise gray hair and a harried expression on his face. His clothes and his fingers are stained with ink.

Ebder is a **commoner** who speaks Common and has a set of calligrapher's supplies.

Personality Trait. "I'm an anxious person. I worry about what Senior Scribe Varnyr thinks about me and my work."

Ideal. "The measure of a person is the quality of their work."

Bond. "As much as I care about my duties as an Avowed, my daughter is my world."

Flaw. "I'm highly suspicious of other people's motives."

Crinkle

Gailby Smallstone

Lawful good human child (age 8)

Gailby is an energetic kid who lives with her father, Ebder Smallstone, in the Firefly Cellar. She loves to draw and insists on sharing her drawings with her father before bedtime.

She wears a yellow hooded cape that hides her short curly black hair and is missing one of her front teeth.

Personality Trait. "I'm curious about everything."

Ideal. "I'll never be bored as long as I have my imagination."

Bond. "I love discovering things on my own, especially things that are off limits."

Flaw. "I'll say anything to avoid getting in trouble."

K'Tulah

Neutral good tabaxi scholar (age 30)

K'Tulah is a gregarious tabaxi, a catlike humanoid. She arrived at Candlekeep six days ago and received permission to use the library to conduct her research on regional forms of folk magic.

She is an animated talker whose exaggerated gesticulations while chatting annoy Varnyr, but the elf appreciates her academic expertise.

K'Tulah is a tabaxi **druid** with the following changes:

- K'Tulah speaks Common and Druidic, and she has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet.
- When K'Tulah moves on her turn in combat, she can double her speed until the end of the turn. Once she uses this ability, she can't use it again until she moves 0 feet on one of her turns.
- As an action, K'Tulah can make a melee weapon attack with her claws: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) slashing damage.

Personality Trait. "I talk fast and can carry on a conversation about almost anything."

Ideal. "Decorum is overrated. Life's too short for formalities."

Bond. "The research I've collected painstakingly over the past decade is my pride and joy."

Flaw. "I don't like feeling trapped."

Crinkle

Chaotic neutral kenku custodian (age 55)

The aged kenku has lived in the Firefly Cellar for the past twenty-two years as its custodian and caretaker of its fireflies. She has lost many of her feathers, and those that remain are frayed and disheveled. She carries a long staff with a hook on the end, which she uses to change the firefly lamps that hang from the ceiling.

Crinkle has little patience for others, and she regards Senior Scribe Varnyr's restoration efforts as an invasion. Gailby Smallstone has softened the kenku's dour disposition with her appreciation of interesting objects.

Crinkle is a **kenku** who has a *ring of the ram* that has all its charges.

Personality Trait. "I'm a grump who prefers to be left alone."

Ideal. "I'm drawn to beautiful and interesting works of art."

Bond. "I cherish the stash of trinkets and treasures I've accumulated."

Flaw. "I rub my hands together constantly, as though washing them."

Starting the Adventure

The adventure takes place in the Firefly Cellar beneath the House of Rest. Characters might find themselves drawn to this location for one of two reasons. Perhaps the House of Rest has had an influx of guests, and the characters are forced to stay in the only available rooms, which happen to be in the Firefly Cellar. Alternatively, the idea of taking lodging in an actual part of the library, close to a

Tyler Walpole

collection of ancient books, might be a compelling enough reason for the characters to stay there.

The characters descend into the Firefly Cellar through the hatch in the ceiling of area F1. As they do, read the description of area F1 to the players.

When they arrive, they find the elderly elf Varnyr precariously balanced on a ladder while arranging a few of the flowerpots on top of one of the bookcases. She's engrossed in her work. Before the characters say anything, she starts speaking without looking at them.

> "Ebder, are you back?"
>
> "I never left!" grumbles a voice from below.
>
> "Oh?" The elf looks down and seems surprised at your presence. Then she says, indicating the room around her, "Ah. Visitors. I'm Scribe Varnyr. Sorry for the state of things. As you see, the restoration project is a work in progress. I'll be with you shortly." She returns to her work. A moment later, she says, "Actually, would you mind bringing that stack of books downstairs to Ebder? I'll meet you there." She points to a small pile of books on a stool. "Thanks so much."

Characters who head downstairs to area F2 find Ebder sitting at the table, hunched over a book. Visibly annoyed, he acknowledges the characters as follows:

> "Keep your voices down, please. I just put my daughter to bed."

Ebder gives his name if asked. If the characters present him the pile of books, he pinches the bridge of his nose with a sigh and explains that the books are not for him but for the other guest, K'Tulah, who's staying in one of the rooms below. He gives the characters directions to her room (area F13) and asks them to deliver the books.

If they agree, K'Tulah is grateful for the delivery and starts a conversation about her scholarly work.

After an hour, Varnyr finds the characters and apologetically says that she's exhausted from the day's work and they will talk in the morning. She offers areas F8 and F12 as rooms for the characters to stay the night. Behind her is Crinkle with a tray of food for them. With that, Varnyr bids them good night and leaves the characters alone.

The characters can look around the library, talk with Ebder for a few more hours, or go to their rooms. Ebder isn't much of a conversationalist, but he warms up if anyone asks about his daughter, Gailby.

Events

Below is a detailed look at the six events that play out over the course of the adventure.

Event 1: Quarantined

> After your first night in the Firefly Cellar, you gather around a table in the center of the collection's main floor. It's quiet, until you notice that your companions are humming a melody under their breath—the same tune that's been stuck in your head since you woke up. After a moment, you realize that you too are humming along.

The characters are humming Shemshime's rhyme. They don't know it by name, and though they all hum it perfectly, they're not entirely certain they knew it before today. Unknown to the characters, the cursed tune spread to them when Gailby Smallstone sang it in the hall outside the characters' room after she heard it from Crinkle.

K'Tulah and Ebder share the table with the characters. Ebder is reading from the same book he had last night. The humming clearly bothers him, and after a short time, he sternly asks the characters to keep quiet in the library. If the characters try to stop humming, they notice they can't do so without conscious effort (see "Resisting the Rhyme").

After a few minutes, Ebder begins humming the melody as well, though he is unaware of it at first. Moments later, the hatch in the ceiling of the upper floor (area F1) slams shut, followed by the sound of several mechanical locks engaging. Varnyr, the senior-ranking Avowed in the place, has locked the hatch, sealing herself, the characters, Ebder, Gailby, K'Tulah, and Crinkle inside the Firefly Cellar.

As she descends the spiral staircase to area F2, she hums the cursed tune in a soft voice. With effort, Varnyr suppresses her humming and shares the following information:

> "When I first arrived at Candlekeep, the Avowed were concerned about a 'singing madness.' A book merchant had been afflicted with it and was put in isolation after several Avowed began singing the song as well." She pauses and frowns. "I don't know what happened to him or the others. That was six hundred years ago."
>
> She gathers her composure and adds, "I've alerted the Avowed and sealed the exit to stop whatever this is from spreading."

K'Tulah is vocal about her discomfort with being confined down here. Ebder regards the quarantine as a minor annoyance and complains that all the commotion interferes with his work. Crinkle and Gailby are not present.

Varnyr refuses to speculate about the "madness," since she's not a spellcaster and doesn't want to guess at the cause without evidence. "But perhaps you can find an answer in all this," she says, waving at the disheveled room.

The characters can explore the Firefly Cellar and talk with the residents. As they do, emphasize the concentration needed to resist humming the melody.

When you think it's appropriate, introduce event 2.

Talking to the Residents

Each of the Firefly Cellar's residents offers their own information and perspective.

Crinkle. The steward of the Firefly Cellar is in the kitchen (area F7) preparing breakfast. She whistles the melody absentmindedly. If approached by the characters, she is dismissive and grows irritated if they pester her.

Ebder. He remains in the stacks, seated at the table. If questioned by the characters, he says he has been working in the scriptorium (area F3). Nothing has been out of the ordinary, unless you count the kenku, who keeps shuffling through that room on the way to and from her supply closet.

Gailby. She's in her room (area F9). If the characters approach her, she's more interested in showing off her toys than in fielding questions. If she's asked about her drawings, she gets scared that she's in trouble and becomes quiet.

K'Tulah. After an hour in the stacks, the tabaxi can be found in her room (area F13). She's having trouble concentrating on her work and is visibly anxious. If approached by the characters, she tells them she came here to study, not to get sealed away in a tomb.

Varnyr. The senior scribe remains in the stacks for an hour before retiring to her room (area F14). She has already shared everything she knows about the curse affecting them. If asked about what she's been doing lately, she explains that she has been dividing her time between fixing up the balcony level and working in the bindery repairing books. She is able to suppress the urge to hum the melody without any outward signs of duress.

Exit Hatch

The hatch has been targeted by an *arcane lock* spell, which can be dispelled by using the key in Varnyr's possession. The hatch has AC 21, 60 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. A character with thieves' tools can bypass the spell and unlock the hatch with a successful DC 25 Dexterity check, but each attempt to bypass the spell takes 1 minute. Alternatively, a character can force open the hatch with a successful DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check. A *knock* spell or similar magic suppresses the hatch's *arcane lock* spell for 10 minutes.

Shemshime's Influence

d6	Phenomenon
1	For the next 10 minutes, all the fireflies in the lamps flicker out at irregular intervals, leaving the library in darkness for several seconds at a time.
2	Random books fly off the shelves. Each creature in areas F1, F2, or F14 must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage from collisions with the flying books.
3	The library becomes much colder. This drop in temperature lasts until the end of the adventure.
4	Three **shadows** appear in the same area as the characters. The shadows attack the characters but disappear at the end of their third turn in combat if they have not been destroyed by then.
5	Shemshime's foul magic manifests as a random character's worst nightmare. That character must make a DC 12 Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, the character takes 9 (2d8) psychic damage and is frightened of the manifestation, believing it to be real. The manifested nightmare lasts for up to 1 minute, follows the character around, and can't be harmed. The character must repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the illusion on a success or taking 9 (2d8) psychic damage on a failed save.
6	Choose three creatures in the Firefly Cellar. Each one must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw, or it takes 7 (1d8 + 3) psychic damage and makes a melee weapon attack against one creature of your choice as a reaction.

Event 2: Ebder's Outburst

Ebder is seated at the table in area F2 when this event occurs.

> A shrill sound tears through the Firefly Cellar, overpowering all other noise. Though it rapidly rises to an uncanny pitch, you recognize Ebder's voice.

Anyone in area F2 sees that Ebder's eyes are bulging in terror. As he hums the rhyme's melody, the rest of his body is paralyzed. He's cold to the touch. He continues to sing the rhyme over and over for five minutes. During this time, Gailby runs into

the room to try to help her father, terrified by his behavior. Crinkle follows her and tries to console the child, with little effect.

Shemshime's influence has begun to reach into the world. When Ebder stops singing, roll on the Shemshime's Influence table to find out what happens next.

Haunting Occurrences

After Ebder's outburst, Shemshime's influence manifests in the Firefly Cellar in several unsettling ways. From this point forward, whenever at least half the characters are singing Shemshime's rhyme, roll on the Shemshime's Influence table to determine what happens. Add more of these rolls as you see fit, even during later events.

Event 3: Singing Skull

The remains of Yowen Pilt, the book seller who brought the book and its curse to Candlekeep, are hidden in a secret compartment in area F4. This event begins when his skull starts singing the words to the rhyme.

> The tune continues to tug at each of your minds, willing you to intone its sequence of notes. The notes take on the shapes of words you're certain you've never heard before but are somehow familiar to you as lyrics.

Share the handout of Shemshime's rhyme with your players. The final stanza is absent from the handout. Going forward, whenever a character is compelled to hum Shemshime's rhyme, they sing the words to the tune instead.

> You become aware that the song is not only in your head. Somewhere nearby, a deep and melodic voice is singing the words.

The skull continues to sing unless it's destroyed or Shemshime is trapped in *Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme*. The skull is a Tiny object with AC 15, 4 hit points, and immunity to poison damage.

Event 4: Escape Attempt

K'Tulah reaches the end of her patience with being confined, and she tries to break the quarantine. This event can begin in any area.

When you're ready to begin this event, read the following boxed text aloud:

> K'Tulah, biting her lip to keep from singing, slumps to the floor with her back against a wall and her head in her hands. After a moment her ears flatten, and she springs up and takes off at a full sprint.

K'Tulah runs for the hatch in the ceiling of area F1. She tries to evade anyone who stands in her path but fights them if necessary. If she reaches the hatch, she attempts to force the door. When that doesn't work, she demands that Varnyr open it, but Varnyr refuses. Unless K'Tulah is subdued, she attacks Varnyr to get the key.

A character can try to calm K'Tulah, doing so with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. A *calm emotions* spell or similar magic also does the trick, as does giving K'Tulah the mechanical oyster from her quarters (area F13).

Event 5: Puppets

This event can occur in any area except Crinkle's room (area F11).

> The air around you feels thick. It presses in on you from all sides, prickling your nerves. Your muscles twitch, as though something is yanking on them with invisible strings.

Crinkle and Gailby flee to Crinkle's room (area F11) when this event begins.

Choose half of the remaining characters, including NPCs (other than Gailby and Crinkle). Those who are not under the effect of a *protection from evil and good* spell or similar magic must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or be charmed by Shemshime for 1 minute. While charmed in this way, the creature is under Shemshime's control and is compelled to sing Shemshime's rhyme repeatedly while trying to cause physical harm to others.

Creatures whose actions and movements are being controlled by Shemshime remain aware of what's going on around them, but they are powerless to stop themselves from causing harm in accordance with Shemshime's wishes.

Shemshime's control over a creature is broken by the break enchantment effect of a *dispel evil and good* spell (magic that is probably beyond the characters' ability to cast) or by reducing the creature to 0 hit points. A charmed creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature succeeds on the saving throw or the effect ends on it, Shemshime can't take control of that creature again for 24 hours.

Scenes in the Opened Book

Event 6: Shemshime

The final event revolves around interacting with the book and learning the last stanza of the rhyme, which tells how to foil Shemshime and end the curse. Meanwhile, Shemshime coalesces around the book, lashing out at the characters to stop them from thwarting its manifestation.

As event 5 concludes, read or paraphrase:

> Gailby appears in the doorway, blood spattered on her face and down the front of her clothes. She's shaking, with wide eyes, and holding a large, square book that has blood on the corner of its metal spine.

The book in Gailby's possession is *Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme*. Though she's reluctant to share the truth, Gailby admits that she knocked Crinkle unconscious with the book. Either she or Crinkle was possessed when it happened, but Gailby's not certain which.

Repairing the Music Box

The key feature of *Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme* is its music box, which broke centuries ago. Rather than playing the tune all the way through, it skips near the end and starts over. The same is true for the pop-up scene that plays out when the book is opened.

The damage to the exterior of the box is immediately noticeable to characters who inspect it. A successful DC 15 Intelligence check reveals the problem. Anyone proficient with jeweler's tools or tinker's tools has advantage on the roll. Inside the music box is a brass cylinder dotted with tiny pegs. When the cylinder turns, narrow bits of metal pluck the pegs to produce the notes of the melody. The cylinder is sitting askew, which prevents it from working properly. Fixing the music box requires three successful DC 15 Dexterity checks, each check requiring an action. These checks can be made by one character or multiple characters working together.

Characters who try to fix the music box hear Shemshime's maddening whispers in their heads. After making an ability check to fix the music box, regardless of whether the check succeeds or not, a character must make a DC 13 Intelligence saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Once fixed, the music box plays its tune to the end. As it does so, the words of the rhyme's final stanza

Zoltan Boros

form in the characters' minds (see "The Rhyme"). The scene played out in the book also continues to its conclusion, showing the tiny representation of Shemshime being crushed beneath a millstone.

Confrontation

Singing the final stanza draws **Shemshime** (see the accompanying stat block) into the room.

> The book trembles, and its mechanical inner workings squeal to a halt for a moment before whirring back to life. You hear clicks, and shadows burst forth from the book like steam from a kettle, collecting along the ceiling until wisps of darkness outline a vague humanoid figure. Meanwhile, the scenes inside the book transform, creating an entirely new picture that includes tiny cutout figures of yourselves.

Shemshime attacks the characters, focusing its attention on anyone near the book. It also tries to break the characters' concentration, since it gains power when the rhyme is sung.

The newly formed illustration in the book displays a facsimile of the Firefly Cellar, complete with tiny cutout figures of the characters and NPCs. Noteworthy in the scene is the replica of the enormous sculpture hanging from the ceiling above the stacks (see area F1 for a description of the sculpture).

TYLER WALPOLE

Shemshime

Medium undead

Armor Class 13
Hit Points 31 (7d8)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (−2)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +4
Skills Perception +4, Stealth +7
Damage Resistances acid, bludgeoning, fire, lightning, piercing, slashing, thunder
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages telepathy 60 ft.
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Crushing End. If damage reduces Shemshime to 0 hit points, Shemshime instead drops to 1 hit point unless the damage is the result of Shemshime being crushed by an object weighing at least 1,000 pounds.

Incorporeal Movement. Shemshime can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Actions

Maddening Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (4d6 + 3) psychic damage.

Whispers of Violence. Shemshime chooses up to two creatures it can see within 60 feet of it. Each target must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw, or that target takes 7 (1d8 + 3) psychic damage and must use its reaction to make a melee weapon attack against one creature it can reach (Shemshime's choice) that Shemshime can see.

Howling Babble (Recharge 6). Shemshime targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The creature must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 21 (4d8 + 3) psychic damage and is stunned until the end of its next turn. On a successful save, it takes half as much damage and isn't stunned.

Destroying the Book

Destroying the book does nothing to defeat or otherwise impede Shemshime. *Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme* is a Tiny object with AC 14, 15 hit points, a damage threshold of 15 (see "Damage Threshold" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Defeating Shemshime

To defeat Shemshime, it must be crushed by an object weighing at least 1,000 pounds. Objects in the Firefly Cellar that qualify include the book sculpture suspended from the ceiling in area F1, the bookcases in areas F1 and F2, and the stone table in area F2.

Luring Shemshime to where it can be crushed takes some effort. Because Shemshime is fixated on the book, the spirit pursues whoever has it. In other words, the characters can use the book itself to lure Shemshime into harm's way.

Once Shemshime is in position, a character can use an action to drop or topple a heavy object on it. Shemshime must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid being crushed under the object. On a failed save, Shemshime vanishes and one of the following outcomes occurs:

- If the book is intact, Shemshime is yanked back into the book. It slams shut, silencing the music box and ending the curse.
- If the book has been destroyed, Shemshime is pulled into the nearest closed book, ending the curse. That book transforms into a copy of *Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme*, destroying the book's original content in the process.

Once Shemshime is trapped again, Varnyr or whoever has the key unlocks the hatch in area F1. Varnyr or Ebder immediately takes the book to lock it away in one of Candlekeep's secure vaults.

Reward. The Avowed give the characters a *bag of holding* as a reward for defeating Shemshime.

Troubleshooting

The adventure assumes that the quarantine remains intact. But there's a reasonable chance the characters in your game will want to leave the confines of the Firefly Cellar or even help K'Tulah escape. It's up to you whether to allow this and to consider how Candlekeep responds.

If the characters get bogged down in researching the books on the shelves, roll on the Shemshime's Influence table to maintain a sense of peril.

The Firefly Cellar

The basement library known as the Firefly Cellar is located beneath the House of Rest. It's entirely below ground, containing a collection of old manuscripts that focus primarily on travelogues and regional customs. Until Senior Scribe Varnyr initiated a restoration effort, its books had been largely neglected over the past few centuries.

Encounter Locations

The Firefly Cellar has three floors. The upper two contain the book collection. Despite its age, the cellar appears well kept, with smooth stone walls and worn wooden floorboards covered here and there with new rugs. The only entrance is a metallic orange hatch set into the ceiling at the top of the stairs that lead down into area F1.

The bottom floor contains a kitchen and living quarters. For many years, Crinkle was the only occupant, but Varnyr, Ebder, and Gailby have moved in during the recent restoration effort.

The Firefly Cellar has no windows. Unless otherwise noted, orange-gold light emanates from bottles of fireflies either set into alcoves in the wall or hanging from fixtures.

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Firefly Cellar.

F1. The Stacks, Balcony

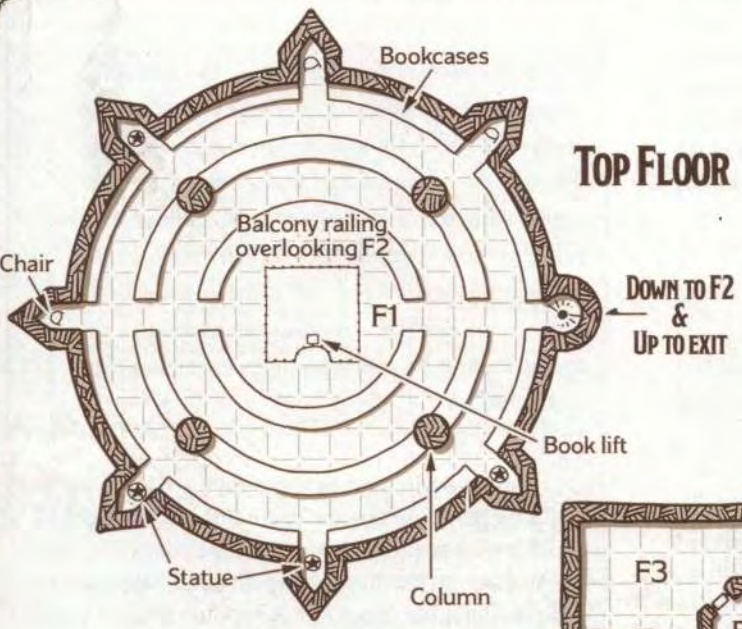
The circular room contains curved, dark wood bookcases packed with books of assorted shapes, sizes, and ages. Flowers in ceramic pots line the tops of the shelves, giving the area a sweet fragrance. Alcoves are spaced at regular intervals around the perimeter of the room. Four of them contain polished bronze statues of bespectacled scholars, and three hold overstuffed chairs. In the center of the room, a brass railing surrounds an overlook that gives a view of the lower level of the stacks.

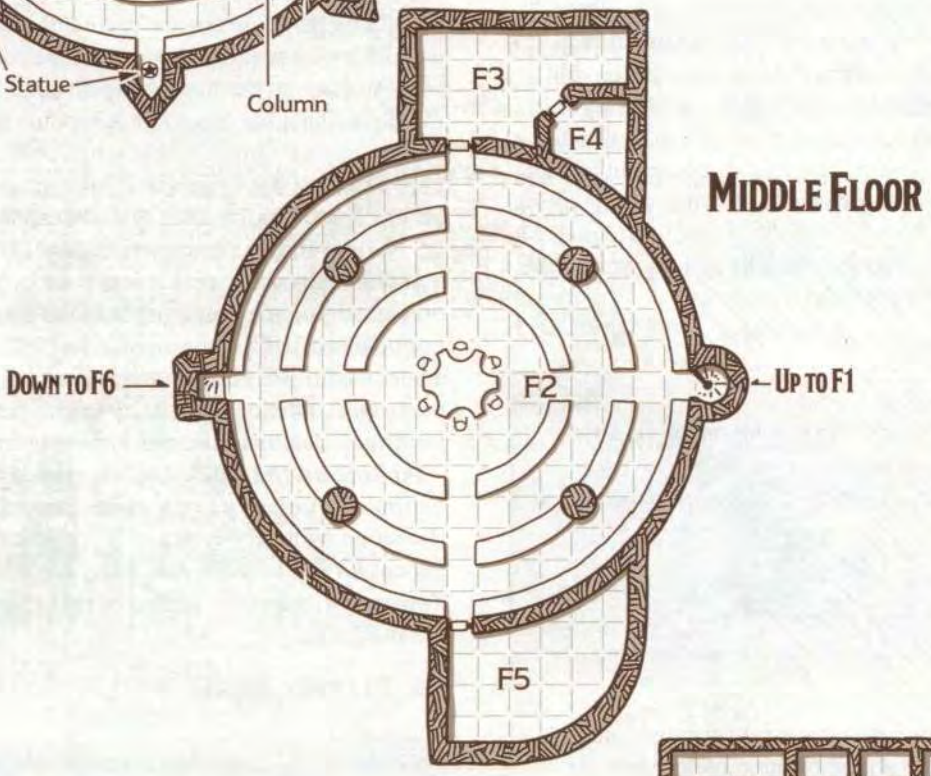
Hanging from the ceiling, above the opening in the floor, is an enormous stone sculpture of an open book that looks as though the cover is flapping to keep it aloft. A spiral staircase to the east leads down, as well as up to the trapdoor exit set into the ceiling. The occasional errant firefly flits about.

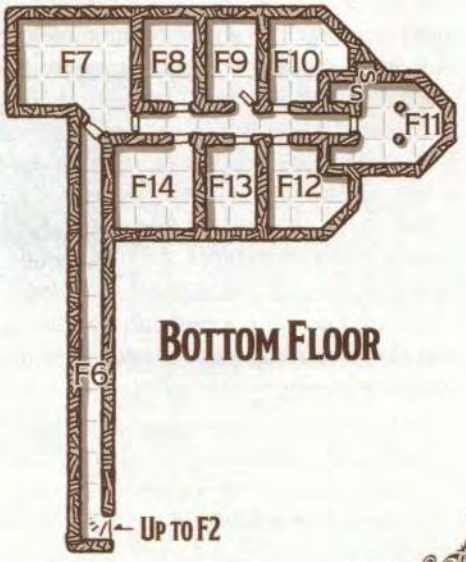
Varnyr's restoration project began in this room, and it's tidier and more welcoming than the chamber below. She has brought in rugs and flowers and polished the statues. Three of the statues were in such a poor state that she replaced them with comfortable reading chairs.

Firefly Cellar

1 square = 5 feet







The bookcases are 10 feet tall, and each one has a new rolling ladder attached to it.

Area F2 is visible from the balcony.

Book Lift. A rope-and-pulley mechanism with a fraying basket at one end is fixed to the railing. Centuries ago, the Avowed put it here to move books between floors. It's essentially a large lidded wicker basket that can be lowered or raised. It's not in the best condition, so it holds a maximum of 50 pounds without falling apart. The box is currently raised, and the rope is tied to the railing.

Characters who search the book lift find two small children's dolls. One has a scythe with a handle made from a round paintbrush and a blade cut from paper. The other doll is missing its feet.

Flying Book Sculpture. This piece of stonework is 12 feet across and weighs 1,500 pounds. The cover is etched with the words "BE CURIOUS." It's suspended above area F2 by three chains, but the chains' fittings in the ceiling beam above are in bad shape. If 200 pounds or more are added to the weight of the sculpture, the chains come out of the ceiling and the sculpture falls. Alternatively, striking the chains with enough force to break them makes it fall. Each chain has AC 19, 5 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

F2. The Stacks

> The musty smell of old books hangs in the air here. Concentric rings of bookcases dominate the space, with a heavy granite table occupying the room's center. The table would be a circle, but for six semicircular gaps cut into it around its edge, creating spaces for six chairs. Small stacks of books rest on the table along with a candleholder that contains firefly-filled jars.

The Firefly Cellar's general study area encourages quiet reading. The shape of the table creates six individual study spaces. The table weighs around 300 pounds, and four rolled-up indigo rugs rest underneath. Varnyr intends to use the 15-foot-long and 5-foot-wide carpeting as runners in the north, east, south, and west aisles on this floor.

The bookcases are 10 feet tall. Two of them have attached rolling ladders. An unattached ladder leans against a shelf in the southwest part of the room.

Looking up, characters can see into area F1 and the enormous stone book sculpture dangling overhead.

F3. Scriptorium

> All around, fireflies float lazily about like embers caught in the air. Three writing desks sit against the north wall, with a sheepskin rug beneath each one. On one of the desks rests a book beside a stack of paper, along with a stoppered ink jar and a porcupine quill pen. Another desk has a leather case on it. A moldering tapestry hangs, off-center, on the west wall. To the southeast is a wood-paneled wall with a closed door set into it. A weak yellow glow emanates from under this door.

This room is dedicated to the copying of library texts. The three desks are of fine quality but could use maintenance. Ebder works here to create new copies of books deemed unrepairable. The book on the desk has a bookmark poking out from its pages. It's an ancient tome, its title worn away over time. Its pages fall out if it's opened. The leather case on the other desk contains a set of calligrapher's supplies.

The door in the wood-paneled wall is closed with a padlocked latch. Crinkle has the key but gives it up only grudgingly, explaining that the fireflies should not be disturbed. A character can pick the lock with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, or it can be destroyed. The lock has AC 19, 5 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Writing on the Wall. Anyone who searches behind the tapestry finds words scratched into the stone wall—the lyrics of Shemshime's rhyme except for the final stanza. They were carved by Yowen Pilt, who was sealed in this room because of his madness.

F4. Firefly Room

> This small room is awash in the glow of thousands of fireflies. The luminescent insects flit around inside more than a dozen glass terrariums that fill shelves along the walls. A steady plinking noise results from their bouncing off the glass. Shallow wooden boxes are packed on the lowest shelves.

A former supply closet for the scriptorium, this room was outfitted by Crinkle for raising and caring for fireflies. The boxes on the lowest shelves contain vials of liquid nutrient for the insects.

Writing on the Floor. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals words scratched into the floorboards. In manic script, the words read, "FINISH THE RHYME."

Secret Compartment. A loose stone in the floor lies beneath the lowest shelf on the east wall. Finding it requires a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If singing is emerging from the room (see event 2), the DC is 10. Moving the stone aside exposes a pile of bones in a nook 5 feet across and 5 feet deep. Investigating the bones reveals two humanoid bodies. One of the skulls has a hole in the back of it. This was Yowen Pilt, killed by an Avowed who was desperate to end the curse. That Avowed, also stricken with the curse, killed himself to stop it from spreading. The bodies were hidden away in this closet.

F5. Bindery

> Leather bits, wood shavings, and paper scraps litter the floor near a large workbench. Tools and contraptions are organized neatly around a handful of books in different states of disrepair. Stools surround the bench, one of which has a leather apron draped over it.

Books in need of repair are brought to the bindery. Varnyr loves this task, and it's her work on display on the bench. The tools are used for bookbinding, leatherworking, woodcarving, and painting.

A ledger rests on one of the stools. It's open to a list of four book titles, each one with a "repairs needed" entry beside it. The titles and their associated repairs are as follows:

Festivals and Festivities of Ancient Cormyr: replace cover
Living a Dream: Three Years Among Stone Giants: replace cover
Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme: repair spine
Halfling Superstitions: rebind

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check notices that the books on the workbench are three of the books on the list. *Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme* is missing.

F6. The Worm Tunnel

This passage is accessible by the west stairs in area F2.

> It's cold here. A low, barrel-vaulted ceiling crowds the already narrow passage. Light from a firefly lamp that hangs on a hook in the wall is inadequate to illuminate the entire space.

This claustrophobic hallway runs beneath the stacks, leading to the living quarters. At the far end is a closed but unlocked door. Lamps hang from hooks every 10 feet on alternating sides of the passage but only one lamp, around halfway into the passage, gives off light. The others have dead fireflies piled at the bottom of them.

F7. Kitchen

> A dirty skillet stands out among an otherwise immaculate kitchen, and the smell of bacon in the air hints at the skillet's former contents. A door in the southeast corner hangs open a crack.

An oven occupies one corner; instead of being heated by open flames, it has a coil of iron enchanted with the *heat metal* spell, which activates when a toggle switch on the side of the oven is flipped. A well-stocked pantry rests in another corner. Pots and pans hang from wall hooks above a metal sink.

The southeast door leads to a hallway that connects to areas F8 through F14.

F8. Avowed Quarters

> Two beds, positioned on opposite walls, flank a washbasin in an otherwise bare room. Both beds are made, but the blanket on one of them is a bit rumpled.

In the past, this room would have housed two Avowed, but it's scarcely used nowadays. If the characters stay in the cellar overnight, this is one of their rooms. Otherwise, the room is unoccupied.

F9. Gailby's Room

The door to this room is open.

> A child sleeps here. Toys are scattered on an unmade bed, and piles of clothes obscure all but a few bare patches of the floorboards. Above a writing desk in the corner dangles a dragon marionette made from brass and wood, with wings of canvas dyed red. A round firefly lamp hangs in the opposite corner.

Gailby has been drawing creepy pictures that depict scenes from *Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme*. They're done in loud colored paint and in a style typical of a child, making them all the more unsettling. One of the images shows a man whose feet have been severed. Blood pours from his ankles and from the severed feet next to him. Another shows a boy

underwater, grasping at his throat. The last one shows a dog with a severed hand in its mouth. A black cloud hovers over each scene.

F10. Ebder's Room

> This sparse bedroom is tidy, apart from a clay bowl containing the remnants of a particularly vinegary meal resting on a large trunk.

Other than the trunk, which holds a set of Avowed robes and a heavy wool coat, the room is furnished with a bed, a small round table with a rickety chair, and a mirror hanging above a washbasin. A round, woven green rug with gray fringe covers the floor.

Anyone who looks under the bed finds an ornate circular box decorated with silver filigree. Inside the box is a small glass figurine of a woman fixed to a wooden stand and a post meant to hold a ring, though the ring is missing. These items are Ebder's keepsakes of his deceased wife, Valeshti.

F11. Crinkle's Room

Crinkle has the key to this locked room. A character can use an action to try to pick the lock using thieves' tools, doing so with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check, or force open the door with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check.

> This room is crawling with wingless, larval fireflies. Hundreds of these tiny glowworms cling to every surface, shedding light throughout. A canvas hammock hangs between two pillars near the center of the room. An engraving of a goat wearing a crown leans against the north wall.

When characters enter the room for the first time after event 6, add the following:

> Against the far wall is Crinkle's slumped form. The silence in the room is interrupted periodically by her ragged breaths.

There is nothing remarkable about the crowned goat engraving that leans against the north wall. It's about 3 feet tall and weighs 150 pounds.

Hidden Treasure. Anyone who has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or higher notices an occasional glow coming from a semicircular gap where the north wall meets the west wall. Alternatively, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the sporadic glowing. Anyone who puts their finger in the hole feels a toggle switch. If they move the toggle, a 5-foot-wide panel releases and can be slid to the side to reveal a bank of small storage spaces. Prior to event 5, *Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme* is found here. Otherwise, the spaces contain the following treasures: an amber ring that belonged to Ebder's wife (25 gp), an ornate curved dagger (25 gp), a set of four intricately shaped glass bottles (5 gp each) with nothing in them, a *potion of gaseous form*, and a *potion of heroism*.

F12. Avowed Quarters

> A beautiful painting of Candlekeep on the south wall looms over the five beds that crowd this room. A narrow shelf tucked into the northeast corner holds jars of fruit preserves and pickled vegetables.

If the characters stay in the cellar overnight, this becomes one of their assigned rooms. Otherwise, the room is unoccupied.

F13. K'Tulah's Room

> This room is furnished with a bed, a washbasin, and a writing desk. The desk has a tiny clockwork oyster resting on it.

Treasure. Lying next to the clockwork oyster is a metal key. If a character uses an action to wind the mechanical oyster with the key, the oyster produces soothing ocean sounds for 10 minutes. This nonmagical device is worth 50 gp.

F14. Varnyr's Room

> This bedroom could be another wing of the library for all the books packed into the shelves that line the walls. Two five-foot-tall candlesticks in the middle of the room have magical flames flickering atop them—a welcome reprieve from the relatively dim light of the firefly lamps.

Each candlestick is lit by a *continual light* spell that Varnyr can suppress by speaking a command word known only to her. The books in here represent Varnyr's personal collection.

The room includes a large cushion (which Varnyr sits on whenever she enters a trance to rest), an armoire, and a green velvet reading chair. The armoire contains clothes as well as a pile of books that won't fit on the shelves.

AN ADVENTURE FOR 5TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

THE PRICE OF BEAUTY

WRITTEN BY MARK HULMES
DEVELOPED & EDITED BY SCOTT FITZGERALD GRAY

IN THIS ADVENTURE, THE CHARACTERS LEARN the secret of the unique magic bound into a book of tips for channeling self-love and inner beauty, and they break up the sinister plots of a coven of hags.

Despite its ordinary contents, *The Price of Beauty* radiates auras of illusion and conjuration magic courtesy of a magic mirror set into its cover. Though the full function of the mirror has never been determined by the Avowed, the book is known to speak to some of those who read it—including an acolyte who has vanished from Candlekeep without a trace.

Beginning the Adventure

Start the adventure by having the characters seeking *The Price of Beauty*, or have them simply come across the book while undertaking other research in Candlekeep. Characters who come to the library looking for information involving Sune (god of love and beauty) will have the tome recommended to them. Or you could have a vain, wealthy noble hire the party to track down the book and have its advice copied by the scribes in the House of the Binder.

Depending on how you bring the book into the possession of the characters, they might spend enough time with it to discover the magic of the mirror on their own. In that case, see the "Mirror Magic" section later in the adventure for details. Either way, read or paraphrase the following when you're ready to begin:

> A nervous muttering precedes the approach of one of the Avowed, who scans the tomes on the surrounding shelves as they draw near to you. "She must have been here ... I don't understand ..." they murmur as they catch sight of you.
>
> "Ah. Forgive this disturbance," the acolyte says. "But I'm looking for ..." They stop short as they catch sight of *The Price of Beauty*. "Yes, I'm looking for that." Then, looking over your group, the acolyte appears saddened. "But you haven't seen anyone else ... well, you haven't seen Falthrax, have you?"

THE PRICE OF BEAUTY

The **acolyte** is Lorris Niss, a middle-aged, neutral good half-elf searching for a missing friend. Falthrax Loderr is a shield dwarf acolyte whom Lorris last saw two days before. Lorris is clearly upset but maintains her composure as she shares the following information:

- Falthrax is a dear friend who has been troubled of late by depression; he talked of feeling as though his life is passing him by.
- The dwarf's mood had improved in the last tenday after he discovered a book in the Candlekeep stacks—*The Price of Beauty*. Already a worshiper of Sune, god of beauty, Falthrax talked of how the book spoke to him, and how its advice on meditation and self-worth was helping him.
- The last time Lorris saw Falthrax, the dwarf was in a sad mood and said that he was going to spend time with the book. Falthrax didn't return to his quarters that night and hasn't been seen since. He was noticed entering the stacks where *The Price of Beauty* is kept, but no one saw him leave.

CAROLINE CARIBA

Book Description

The Price of Beauty is bound in soft green leather, eight inches wide and fourteen inches tall, and set with golden clasps. The book gives off the unmistakable scent of lilies. Set into its cover is a polished oval mirror with a delicate gold frame styled like locks of hair, which appear to spill down around the face of anyone who looks into the mirror.

The book is filled with beautiful illustrations of woodland scenes, art, and jewelry. Delicate handwriting accompanies the illustrations, in the form of short prayers and meditations dedicated to seeking self-worth, techniques for massage and healing, and recipes for creating balms and cosmetics.

On the last page is an inscription by the author, Sylvarie Silversong, which reads: "A mirror is a gateway to happiness, truth, and to accepting ourselves."

Mirror Magic

When any creature holds *The Price of Beauty* and gazes into the mirror, the image of Sune replaces their own reflection and speaks in a soft voice, saying, "Well met, dearest one. How do you feel today?" (If the characters have not experienced this already, Lorris looks into the mirror while recounting what happened to Falthrax, and then drops the book in fright when it speaks to her.)

The mirror's unique illusion magic reacts and responds to the creature looking into it. Though it is not sentient and cannot answer complex questions, the mirror offers encouragement and advice on grooming and self-confidence. As it does so, the illusion shows the creature looking into the mirror, but changing and grooming its skin, hair, makeup, and clothing as desired. If the creature holding the book is happy with how it looks, or shows no interest in such matters, the illusion reverts to a normal mirror until used again.

If the creature holding the book mentions a desire to change something about itself, or that it feels unwell, tired, or unhappy, the illusion responds, "If rest, relaxation, or transformation is what you need, then follow the lilies, dearest one. I am sure Sylvarie will see to your needs." The mirror then glows softly, and a 5-foot-wide, 7-foot-high portal appears in the nearest unoccupied space. The portal leads to an old woodland trail marked by posts that resemble sculpted stone lilies. As the characters will discover, the portal leads to a temple and bathhouse run by three elf sisters, where all is not as it seems.

The portal remains active for 5 minutes, then vanishes. *The Price of Beauty* cannot be used to create another portal until the next dawn.

If the portal manifests while Lorris is present, the acolyte guesses correctly that it was the cause of Falthrax's disappearance. She fears the powerful magic involved and is apprehensive about what might have happened to her friend.

If the characters aren't inclined to investigate the portal or go after the missing acolyte, Lorris goes to one of the library's Great Readers to report Falthrax missing, and she mentions having met a group of adventurers in the library. The Great Reader then summons the characters and beseeches them to look into the matter.

Temple of the Restful Lily

This grand temple and bathhouse rests in a serene and ancient grove in the High Forest, southeast of Silverymoon. The temple was built over a century ago by the author of *The Price of Beauty*, Sylvarie Silversong, after visions bestowed by Sune led her to a hot spring infused with fey magic.

Ten years ago, a coven of green hags calling themselves the Fetid Gaze tricked Sylvarie into a bargain that allowed them to take over the bathhouse. These cruel and cunning fey now use the temple to lure wealthy, greedy, and vain nobles and adventurers, preying on their insecurities and tricking them into accepting dark bargains that ultimately lead to misery.

The temple consists of three buildings. What was once Sylvarie's private tower has been taken over by the hags as a lair, and a former shrine to Sune has become a prison for the cursed elf. The main bathhouse looks exactly as Sylvarie built it, and it continues to provide services to visitors. Most of the staff of the bathhouse are the coven's wicked minions in disguise, but also here are an undercover Harper agent, a water spirit, and a cursed kobold—all potential allies who can reveal the coven's malicious machinations.

The Fetid Gaze

Three **green hags** named Dread Morgan, Vile Sazha, and Auntie Greenbones were once rivals who dwelled in an area of the Feywild coterminous with the High Forest. A decade ago, during a time when the boundaries between the planes thinned, the hags became aware of the magic spring controlled by Sylvarie—and decided to control and corrupt it for their own purposes. The covetous hags each knew part of a ritual for crafting magic paintings that could bind mortal creatures with a terrible curse. After agreeing to share their knowledge and work together, they formed a coven dedicated to claiming Sylvarie's temple and making it a base for their nefarious plans.

Azirssa, Greensong, and Morganna

The hags use their powers of illusion to pose as three elf sisters named Morganna, Azirssa, and Greensong. They are typically found in the bathhouse by day and in their tower lair at night. Each hag carries a master key that opens all the doors in the bathhouse and the tower.

Dread Morgan

In her true form, the neutral evil Dread Morgan appears as a thin, pale creature whose long, matted black hair is festooned with ornaments made from bones and teeth. Her mouth curves up unnaturally high at the corners, and her bloodred lips are covered in blisters and boils.

In her disguised form, the hag appears as Morganna, a slender moon elf with smooth black hair and sparkling sapphire eyes. She speaks in a husky, alluring voice and focuses on the business of running the bathhouse.

Dread Morgan knows the ritual needed to bind a creature's desire to a cursed painting, which is recorded on a tiny scroll hidden in a bone ornament in her hair.

Personality Trait. "I have made subtle insults into an art form."

Ideal. "Any brute can frighten someone. To truly make someone fearful is a high art."

Bond. "I will do anything to gain the upper hand over the other members of my coven and make them serve me."

Flaw. "I find powerful, intimidating figures irresistible."

Vile Sazha

Without her disguise, the chaotic evil Vile Sazha appears as a hunched figure with one muscular and one withered arm. She has catlike eyes, and rust-red hair covers her head, back, and arms. Her sharp fangs cause her to slur when she speaks, and she hisses and screeches when threatened.

In her disguised form, she appears as Azirssa, an athletic sun elf with copper hair who wears an ornate breastplate with a red fur mantle. She has a confident and jovial voice, and she promotes physical strength and good health.

Vile Sazha knows how to create a suitable canvas for the hags' cursed paintings. This secret is tattooed on her withered arm in Infernal, and it describes a macabre process of stretching elven flesh over a frame made from blood-soaked wood.

CAROLINE CARIBA

Personality Trait. "I despise the weak, and I love to inflict physical pain and violence when I can get away with it."

Ideal. "Strength is the only thing worth respecting."

Bond. "Dwarves burned down my home and killed my daughter long ago, and I will hate all their kind forever."

Flaw. "I am terrified of fire."

Auntie Greenbones

The eldest member of the Fetid Gaze, the lawful evil Auntie Greenbones often defers to the other two hags on decision-making. In her true form, she is shriveled and worn, her dark green skin covered in bark and fungus. Insects crawl across her and hide in the thick braid of white hair that curls around her shoulders like a serpent. Anyone who stares into her milky-white, seemingly blind eyes sees a reflection of their own face made decrepit and withered by age.

The hag's disguise is that of Greensong, a cheerful, rosy-cheeked wood elf who feigns blindness. She wears a delicate white veil across her eyes and speaks in a singsong voice, giggling often. She keeps her guard dog, Morty, with her at all times. This disguised hell hound appears as a mastiff with bloodshot eyes.

Auntie Greenbones knows how to infuse demon ichor into the paints needed to create the cursed paintings that drive the coven's evil bargains. This recipe is inscribed on the inside of Morty's collar.

Personality Trait. "Sometimes I sing to myself when I am distracted. It is an old song of the fey, about a daughter betrayed by her father and given to the unseelie in a bargain."

Ideal. "Patience is the key to survival. She who laughs last laughs longest."

Bond. "My beloved dog, Morty, is my world. Were anyone to harm him, I would hunt that person across all the planes if need be."

Flaw. "Those who have pure hearts literally make me vomit. I mean, I can't help but heave my bowels in their presence."

Coven Spells

Each member of the Fetid Gaze has access to coven spells, as described in the "Hag Covens" sidebar in the *Monster Manual*. The green hags use the following list of spells for their Shared Spellcasting trait, replacing the suggested spells:

1st level (4 slots): *charm person, witch bolt*
2nd level (3 slots): *alter self, suggestion*
3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, glyph of warding, slow*
4th level (3 slots): *blight, polymorph*
5th level (2 slots): *dominate person, seeming*
6th level (1 slot): *Otto's irresistible dance*

Coven Minions

The hags of the Fetid Gaze employ a number of minions to maintain the appearance that the bathhouse is running normally. Twice a day, the hags use their coven spells (see the "Coven Spells" sidebar) to cast *seeming* on their minions, disguising them suitably for their roles.

The following creatures serve the hags:

- Saeth, a **cambion**, was recruited by Dread Morgan in exchange for a gift of unusual components and secret rituals that he intends to put toward his own evil and ambitious plans one day. Saeth specifically wants to learn the secrets of the cursed paintings, and he is happy to betray his employers to obtain them. He carries a master key that opens all the locks in the bathhouse and the tower except the door to the tower studio (area T15). He also carries the coven's *hag eye*, which is disguised as a cat's-eye pin on his jacket. For more information on the *hag eye*, see the "Hags" section in the *Monster Manual*.
- Morty, a **hell hound**, belongs to Auntie Greenbones and is her loyal pet. The fiend never leaves her side and fights to the death to defend her. Vile Sazha hates Morty almost as much as she hates dwarves, and would love to see him dead.
- Six **scarecrows** were created by the hags to replace the acolytes of Sune who ran the bathhouse with Sylvarie, and whom the hags murdered when they took over. The scarecrows are disguised as attractive humanoids. They don't speak in their roles as bathhouse staff, but they nod and smile if spoken to.
- Two **gargoyles** act as the guardians for the coven's lair in the tower beyond the bathhouse, disguised as statues of other kinds.

Roleplaying the Hags

The hags use Sylvarie's tower as their personal lair, but they spend their days in the bathhouse, maintaining their disguises. There, they meet with visitors and seek out potential new clients to manipulate. At night, they retreat to the tower and torment their current victims before resting.

If any guests become suspicious of the hags or their minions, the hags try to use *suggestion* or *dominate person* to isolate those characters so they can be captured or killed discreetly.

Once the hags become aware that the adventurers aren't at the temple for its services, they try to distract them by beseeching the characters for aid, in exchange for one of their special rituals. The hags first try to recruit the characters to destroy Cyrena, the naiad who is bound to the baths (area T5), claiming that a "capricious elemental spirit" has been attacking guests and trying to claim the bathhouse as its home. If the characters appear particularly

capable or dangerous, the hags might also try to trick them into destroying Sylvarie in the sacred pool below the abandoned shrine (area T12), hoping that the cursed elf-turned-medusa petrifies one or more of them in the process.

The coven's greatest weakness is the hags' contempt for one another. Each yearns to learn the others' secrets for creating the cursed paintings so that they can replace their rivals with their own daughters one day. Characters who learn these secrets can thus gain considerable leverage over the hags.

Dark Bargains and Cursed Paintings

The process of creating the cursed paintings that are the hallmark of the Fetid Gaze was first attributed to a night hag grandmother whose name other hags fear to speak. The method remains shrouded in secrecy, and each member of the Fetid Gaze knows only one part of the procedure. Each hag guards her knowledge zealously, fearing that giving up her secret would make her expendable to the other hags.

Disguised as elves, the hags tempt guests into undergoing magical transformations. Their rituals, which they call treatments, seem entirely beneficial on the surface (see "Magic Treatments" below), and the hags are skilled at tricking guests into thinking the benefits outweigh the cost.

The price for these special rituals is described as "some small boon," which the sisters promise to call for within a year. Any creature that accepts the bargain is taken to the studio in the temple tower (area T15), where the sisters work together to paint a beautiful portrait of the creature over a period of 1 hour. At the end of that time, the magic of the portrait alters the creature in the desired manner.

The benefits granted by the bargain normally last for a year. After that, the beneficiary suddenly experiences the opposite of the intended effect of the ritual, which transforms the creature into the dark reflection of its initial desire. For example, those who sought physical power are weakened to the point of helplessness, while those who sought beauty become hideous to behold. If a creature renounces the hags' gift before the year is up, this curse takes effect immediately.

Over the last ten years, the hags have cursed hundreds of victims, most of whom have perished as a result of their dark bargains.

Magic Treatments

The magical benefits that the hags typically offer to NPCs can take whatever form makes sense for the story. If one or more of the characters enter into a bargain for the hags' services (even if only to learn more of the procedure), use the following guidelines to determine the benefit to the character.

Ability Enhancement. If engaging in a bargain to enhance physical or mental acuity, the character chooses one ability. The score for that ability increases by 2, as does the character's maximum for that score.

Physical Transformation. A character bargaining with the hags can choose to change their race, sex, or appearance in any way they desire. The character retains their ability scores and class features, but changes their racial traits if applicable.

Youth. A character who bargains for youth has their age reduced to one year older than the standard for adulthood (as noted in the traits for the character's race).

All such benefits last no longer than a year, and they end immediately if the painting of the character created by the hags is destroyed. If a character keeps their painting for a year or renounces the bargain, you can decide what effect the curse brings about. A cursed character also gains the following flaw, which suppresses any conflicting personality trait the character already possesses: "My appearance and how others perceive me is of the utmost importance to me."

Destroying the Paintings

The paintings' magic persists even if the hags are killed, and destroying a painting is the only way to end its curse. Any creature that studies all three parts of the procedure for creating a cursed painting knows that the painting is impervious to damage unless its magic can be momentarily disrupted. Without full knowledge of the procedure, it takes 1 hour of studying a painting and a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check to determine this fact.

A creature can use an action to try to destroy a painting, doing so with a successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check. On a failed check, the creature takes 14 (4d6) psychic damage. Any character who uses an action to examine the painting knows, with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check, that the painting can also be destroyed by splashing it with fresh blood from a celestial.

A compulsion placed on each cursed creature prevents it from trying to destroy a cursed painting.

Coven Victims

In addition to the missing Falthrax, several other victims of the hags' curse are presently at the temple:

Sylvarie Silversong (a neutral good moon elf) founded the Temple of the Restful Lily after being drawn to the hot spring by the visions of Sune. Her deep-seated insecurity over serving the god of beauty was her downfall. Hoping to develop more confidence in her role as a priest of Sune, she was drawn into a bargain with the hags that saw her transformed into a **medusa** and trapped in the temple's former shrine for ten years. See area T12 for more information.

Gorba Daardenrian (a lawful neutral dragonborn of gold dragon ancestry) was a mighty warrior who sought even greater strength through her bargain with the hags. When she realized the true nature of the bargain shortly before the curse struck, the dragonborn returned to the temple to challenge the coven, but she became a withered husk of her former self as she arrived (use the **commoner** stat block for her current state). Now trapped here, she is especially fearful of Vile Sazha, who torments her relentlessly.

Glitter (a chaotic good male tiefling) is a member of the Waterdeep Jewelers Guild, as well as an informant for one of the Masked Lords of the city. He came to the temple wanting to be a few inches taller, thinking the extra height would prove advantageous when conducting business transactions, but he renounced the hags' bargain when his new, taller form didn't suit him. The hags' curse transformed him into a kobold (though he uses the **spy** stat block). In his new form, Glitter now bitterly serves the hags, speaking eloquently and addressing guests kindly. If the characters agree to help him undo the hags' curse, Glitter assures them they will gain a powerful ally in Waterdeep, as well as receive 500 gp in gems as soon as he can return to the city.

Falthrax Loderr (a neutral good shield dwarf **commoner**) became fearful of growing old after a lifetime of dedication to Candlekeep. After coming through the portal and being drawn in by the splendor and magic of the bathhouse, he bargained with the hags to restore his youth. But when second thoughts caused him to renounce the bargain, the hags' curse aged him well into his venerable years, and he is now wracked with constant pain. Having no idea how to return to Candlekeep and his old life, he has accepted his fate with quiet resignation, and he weeps quietly to himself when anyone speaks to him.

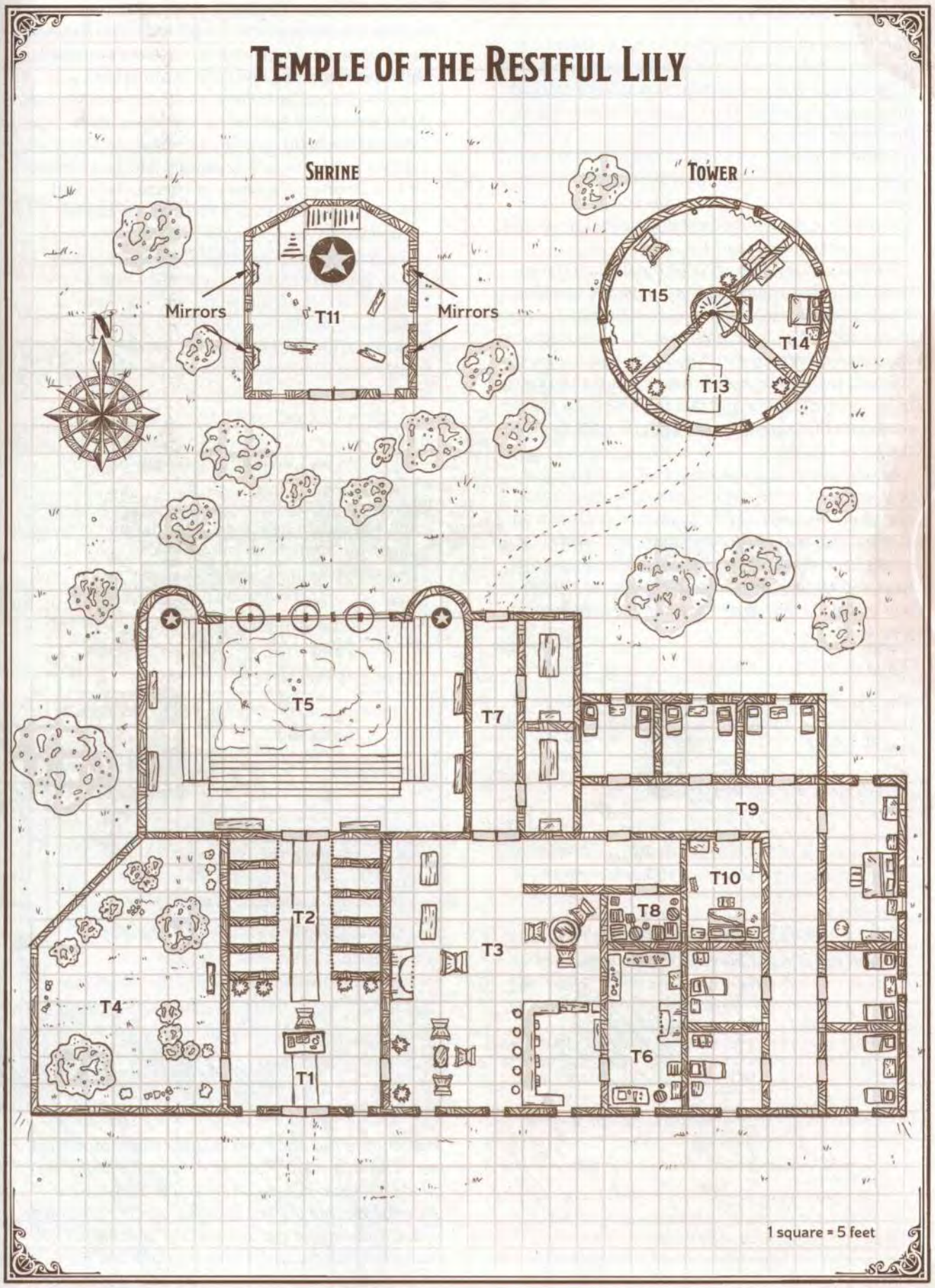
Guests of the Temple

The Temple of the Restful Lily is known among the more elite folk of the Sword Coast, and any number of those folk might be visiting when the characters arrive. You can roll for or choose entries from the Temple Guests table, or use those guests as inspiration for your own NPCs.

Temple Guests

d8	Guest(s)
1	A **drow** poses as Jarlaxle Baenre, the leader of a famous mercenary band called Bregan D'aerthe, in the hope of obtaining discounted treatments. The impostor's disguise is easily detected by anyone who has met the real Jarlaxle.
2	A **veteran** of the Flaming Fist, a ruthless mercenary company based in the city of Baldur's Gate, has come to the temple to recover from a leg injury. The treatments and physical therapy are helping, but the mercenary is bored and looking for excitement.
3	A pair of halfling **scouts** from the coastal city of Neverwinter used the profits from a recent shady job to treat themselves to a luxurious stay at the temple, but they are paranoid about other guests recognizing them.
4	A merchant and her wife (both **commoners**) have come to the bathhouse to celebrate their anniversary, but it is clear that the two are having relationship issues. One of them wants to go home, while the other does not.
5	A young **knight** who belongs to an order called the Purple Dragons has traveled all the way to the temple from Cormyr, seeking Sune's advice on how best to impress their betrothed.
6	A dwarf **noble** from Citadel Adbar, a dwarven city-stronghold far to the north, recently suffered a magical malady causing them to lose all their hair. Wearing a wig and fake beard, they have come to the temple hoping to find a cure for the condition before the truth is found out.
7	A rock gnome inventor (use the **noble** stat block) from the city of Silverymoon has come to the bathhouse to sell the owners a collection of cleaning gadgets.
8	A lawful neutral **assassin** targeting evil nobles has come to the bathhouse to hide out from the authorities, after recently botching an assignment in Waterdeep or some other city of your choice.

Temple of the Restful Lily



SEAN MACDONALD

Arriving at the Temple

The Temple of the Restful Lily is built around a fey-enchanted hot spring in a large open grove in the High Forest. The woodland trail accessed through the portal created by *The Price of Beauty* leads to the temple from the east after a journey of a quarter mile. A longer trail leads west from the temple, winds northward, and ends at the edge of the forest south of Silverymoon. Both trails converge on the south side of the bathhouse building and the double doors leading into area T1.

If the characters put off entering the bathhouse building to first wander the grounds, the cambion Saeth (see "Coven Minions" earlier in the adventure) leaves area T1 to intercept them. He encourages the characters to return with him to the bathhouse, describing the abandoned shrine as a dangerous place to be avoided, and saying that the tower is a private residence that cannot be entered. He does not force the issue, however.

Saeth calls for reinforcements if he is attacked or if anyone tries to forcibly enter the abandoned shrine or the tower. If the characters are intent on starting this part of the adventure with combat, you might lead off with a challenging fight against the hags and all their servants, then have the characters put the pieces of the mystery together in the aftermath.

Temple Features

The following features are common to all areas of the bathhouse, the tower, and the shrine unless otherwise noted.

Relaxing at the Restful Lily

The Temple of the Restful Lily offers many services and treatments that characters in search of rest and respite can make use of. This feature of the place can allow the characters to socialize with the NPCs in residence—or can provide opportunities for the coven's minions to attack them while their guard is down. Health services at the temple include the following:

- Entry to the bathhouse costs 5 gp per person and includes the use of the enchanted baths, a comfortable robe, and a private changing room with a lockable trunk to store weapons and equipment.
- Lodging for visitors who want to stay overnight at the temple is available at a cost of 4 gp per person. Meals cost 5 sp, and the lounge offers a wide range of beverages.
- Characters can enjoy a haircut, a shave, or a waxing for 2 gp, 1 gp, or 10 gp, respectively.
- Massages can be booked for 20 gp and last for an hour.
- A manicure and pedicure costs 2 sp. The pedicure might incur an additional fee depending on the cleanliness of the customer's feet.

Walls and Floors. The bathhouse and the tower are luxuriously appointed, with walls and floors of polished stone. The stonework in the abandoned shrine is crumbling and caked with grime.

Doors. Inside the bathhouse and the tower, wooden doors are carved with images of water lilies. Doors in the bathhouse are normally unlocked, but they can be locked by anyone who has a master key. Doors in the tower are normally locked. Unless otherwise noted, a locked door can be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, broken in with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, or attacked. A door has AC 15, 18 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Windows. Within the bathhouse and the tower, finely made windows display abstract designs in stained glass. A window can be broken through with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check or attacked; each one has AC 13, 3 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Light. All areas of the bathhouse and the tower are filled with bright light during the day and evening, either from sunlight or lanterns. After midnight, these areas are dark unless characters are using a light source. The ground floor of the shrine (area T11) is unlit, while its basement is lit by a magic pool (see area T12 for details).

Temple Locations

The following locations are keyed to the maps of the Temple of the Restful Lily.

T1. Lobby

The double doors open to the sound of a bell. Beyond the doors is a large lobby, the air heavy with the scent of fresh lilies. A desk stands at the center of the room, holding neatly piled papers and fresh-cut lilies in a vase. A dark-haired man in fine clothes stands up from behind the desk as he sees you.

"Welcome, friends, to the Restful Lily. Freshen yourselves in our luxurious bathhouse. Or perhaps you'd enjoy a massage? Haircut? A shave or pedicure? Oh! Road-tired feet simply cry out for comfort! Whatever your pleasure, I am here to serve."

The lobby is staffed by the disguised **cambion** Saeth (see "Coven Minions" earlier in the adventure). He greets the characters warmly and is happy to explain the treatments and services on offer (as noted in the "Relaxing at the Restful Lily" sidebar). If the characters ask about the missing Falthrax, Saeth

feigns ignorance. If the characters aren't interested in the Restful Lily's services at present, he encourages them to look around. In any event, as soon as he is able to do so, he leaves the characters to their own devices and slips away to inform one of the hags about the party's arrival before returning to his desk. The characters are free to explore the temple on their own at this point.

T2. Changing Rooms

> A corridor beyond the lobby runs between two rows of curtained cubicles, where guests can change out of traveling clothes and armor. Each cubicle contains a wooden stool, two white robes hanging on hooks, and a large wooden trunk with a lock.

If the characters pay to enter the baths or want to enjoy any of the other facilities, they are asked to change and store their weapons and equipment here. One robe of each pair is sized for Medium characters, while the other fits Small characters. Saeth gives a character a numbered key that corresponds to that character's cubicle and trunk. He carries a master key that opens all the trunks. As an action, a character can try to pick the lock on a trunk using thieves' tools, doing so with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, or force open a trunk with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check.

T3. Lounge

> Large cushioned chairs are set around this open space. Calming music fills the air, which carries a floral scent. A bar takes up one corner of the room, alongside shelves of expensive wines and spirits and baskets of fresh fruit. Two tables stand along one wall, each set up as a manicure and pedicure station with nail files, clippers, and bottles of nail varnish.

The lounge is watched over by two members of the staff, who serve drinks to the guests and perform other mundane tasks asked of them. Both are disguised **scarecrows** (see "Coven Minions" earlier in the adventure). The music is a permanent auditory illusion.

During the day, the hag Dread Morgan is often here in the guise of the moon elf Morganna, talking to other guests and trying to convince likely prospects to indulge in the temple's "special treatments." She takes notice of the characters and welcomes them, playing the part of a gracious host while she tries to learn as much about them as possible.

T4. Garden

> An iron fence overgrown with ivy surrounds this small garden. An earthen path weaves between a scattering of trees, flower bushes, and stone benches. Various iron weights, wooden poles, and heavy sacks are strewn about the place.

In the guise of Azirssa, one of the elf sisters, Vile Sazha uses the garden as a place to exercise and torment guests with physical training. One of the trees in the garden is an **awakened tree** under her control, which she uses in her workouts and which defends her if she is attacked.

When the characters arrive, a few other guests of the temple might be here, looking exhausted and clutching aching limbs while the disguised hag sarcastically congratulates them on doing their best.

Azirssa's Workouts. Any character who wants to can join in one of the hag's workouts. If any characters look particularly unfit or scrawny, Vile Sazha singles them out and tries to goad them into joining in, offering them a magic potion if they can complete three activities. A character can give up, ending a workout activity at any time. The three activities are as follows:

Squats. To complete this activity, a character must perform three sets of continuous squats and succeed on three incrementally harder Constitution checks—DC 10, DC 13, and DC 16, respectively. A character who fails a check has disadvantage on the next Constitution check they make as part of this activity. A character who fails three checks in a row must finish a short or long rest before attempting this activity again.

Tug-of-War. To complete this activity, a character must stay on their feet in a tug-of-war against the awakened tree. Have the character make DC 16 Strength (Athletics) checks until a check either fails by 5 or more or succeeds. In the former case, the character falls prone and takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage from being pulled to the ground by the tree. In the latter case, the character wins the tug-of-war. In either case, the contest ends.

Chain Skipping. To complete this activity, a character must succeed on three DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks, representing their attempt to stay on their feet while they try to jump over a heavy metal chain being spun by Vile Sazha and the awakened tree. If a check fails, the character is knocked off balance, and the DC for the next check becomes 15. If a check fails by 5 or more, the character is also struck by the chain and takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage.

Naiad

Treasure. If a character completes all three workout activities, Azirssa begrudgingly gives them a *potion of giant strength* (hill) as a reward. If more than one character completes all three activities, Vile Sazha gives the potion to the character who had the fewest failed checks or the one she likes best (a purely subjective choice on her part).

T5. Bath and Hot Spring

A floor of polished white marble surrounds a large central pool of steaming turquoise water in this large, open-air bath. Stone pillars stand along the outside wall, sculpted with relief carvings of Sune. Between the pillars, frosted windows diffuse the light from outside through the mist that hangs in the air.

This bathhouse is built around a natural hot spring. The pool is 10 feet deep, and its magically infused waters grant several benefits. Water removed from the pool loses its magic in 10 minutes.

Hot Spring. A creature that spends at least 1 hour in the bath gains the benefit of a *greater restoration* spell (the creature decides which of the spell's effects is bestowed on it). A creature can benefit from this property of the pool only once per month. Beyond the effect of the spell, the water causes a creature's skin to appear healthier and younger, tones down the appearance of scars and burns, and helps to regrow lost hair.

A fey creature called a **naiad** (see the accompanying stat block) is bound to this spring in the same way that a dryad maintains a connection to a tree. The naiad, Cyrena, came to an understanding with Sylvarie when the elf founded the temple: the naiad was allowed access to the pool and its magic in exchange for swearing to protect the waters.

Naiad

Medium fey

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 31 (7d8)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)

Skills Persuasion +6, Sleight of Hand +5
Damage Resistances psychic
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Common, Sylvan
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Amphibious. The naiad can breathe air and water.

Invisible in Water. The naiad is invisible while fully immersed in water.

Magic Resistance. The naiad has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The naiad makes two psychic touch attacks.

Psychic Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) psychic damage.

Spellcasting. The naiad casts one of the following spells using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (save DC 14) and requiring no material components:

At will: *minor illusion*
3/day: *phantasmal force*
1/day each: *fly, hypnotic pattern*

CAROLINE GARIBA

Cyrena can cause the water to harm creatures of her choice as though it were an equivalent volume of acid. Currently, she has made the water harmful to the hags and their minions, and she can make it harmful to characters who offend or threaten her. Any such creature that enters the pool or starts its turn immersed in it takes 11 (2d10) acid damage.

Cyrena knows the hags and their minions for what they truly are. Because the water of the pool is harmful to them, they have been forced to leave the naiad alone, even as they plot to destroy her.

Cyrena doesn't know what happened to Sylvarie, but even after ten years, she is sad about her friend's disappearance. Her nervousness around other creatures has prevented the naiad from asking directly for aid. She perceives dangerous-looking creatures as servants of the hags. If she believes a character to be pure of heart or an ally of nature, she begs them to help her discover what happened to Sylvarie.

T6. Kitchen

This kitchen has long counters and numerous shelves full of pots, pans, and utensils. Metal racks stuffed with herbs, flowers, fruits, and vegetables hang from the ceiling.

By day, Auntie Greenbones is usually here, in disguise as the blind wood elf Greensong with her faithful hound Morty at her side. She prepares delicious-looking but tainted meals for guests of the temple, often slipping in putrid ingredients or traces of poison. Any guest who suffers the effect of a tainted meal is told that they are feeling toxins and impurities leaving their body as a result of the healthy living the temple promotes.

The hag keeps her awful ingredients hidden in a secret compartment in the kitchen cupboards, which can be found with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check (see "Treasure" below). If her stash is discovered, Greensong feigns innocence and says, untruthfully, that the drow aesthetician Ilmar (see area T7) was seen poking around in the kitchen a few days ago.

Treasure. Auntie Greenbones's stash includes *beholder tears, ground unicorn hoof, chimera vomit,* and other foul reagents of your choice. These ingredients are worth a total of 100 gp to an alchemist or a poisoner. The stash also includes a stoppered and labeled glass vial containing three doses of assassin's blood (see "Poisons" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

T7. Treatment Rooms

These adjoining chambers, dimly lit with shrouded lamps, are each furnished with a bed whose frame can be tilted and folded into different positions. Shelves and counters hold an array of perfumes, oils, and lotions, and scented candles that fill the room with a pleasantly invigorating scent.

Guests who request haircuts, shaving, waxing, or massages are tended to in these treatment rooms. Ilmar Mizzrym (a chaotic good **drow**) works here as the head aesthetician of the bathhouse. He wears a simple belted silk robe and flat shoes, and speaks in a soft, hushed voice. Without armor, his AC is 12.

Ilmar is secretly a Harper agent and worshiper of Eilistraee who goes by the code name Dusk. He was a close friend of Sylvarie's years ago, but fell out of touch with her before the temple was built. If the characters get on Ilmar's good side with roleplaying or a successful DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check, he confides his true identity to them and shares his story.

Ilmar's Search. Three months ago, Ilmar received a haunting vision of his old friend Sylvarie, who appeared to be in a suffering state, and appearing as though her face was being reflected in a broken mirror. Looking into his former friend's activities since they parted ways led him to Silverymoon a month ago, then to the temple. Ilmar instinctively suspected that the goings-on at the bathhouse hid some dark secret and decided to investigate by posing as an aesthetician seeking employment.

Ilmar has seen through the illusions covering the hags and their minions, and he shares that knowledge if he trusts the characters. He suspects that information about Sylvarie's fate can be found in the shrine or the tower, but has so far been unable to investigate those areas because the coven's minions keep a close eye on him. (The two disguised **scarecrows** from area T9 lurk around the guest rooms at night, and the **gargoyle** above the tower entrance of area T13 watches the grounds north of the bathhouse for any sign of Ilmar skulking around.)

If the characters agree to help discover what happened to Sylvarie, Ilmar offers to join them, or to help by creating a distraction in the bathhouse that might give the characters a chance to slip into the tower or the shrine unnoticed.

Treasure. Ilmar keeps a silvered shortsword, a hand crossbow with twenty bolts, and a *spell scroll* of *greater restoration* hidden underneath the massage bed in the south treatment room. These can be discovered by any character who searches the

room. He keeps a vial of *oil of slipperiness* hidden among the massage lotions and oils on the shelf in the north treatment room. It can be spotted with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check.

T8. Storage

A silk-curtained doorway leads into a storage room piled high with crates and items on shelves. Stock and supplies for the bathhouse are kept here, including towels, robes, bed linens, bottles, and stores of grain, fruits, nuts, and salted meat.

When the characters first enter this area, one **scarecrow** disguised as a humanoid staff member (see "Coven Minions" earlier in the adventure) is present, sorting supplies and arranging boxes.

T9. Guest Rooms

All the rooms in this area have the same basic features, plus additional contents related to their occupants. You can decide how many rooms are occupied based on how many NPCs are presently at the temple (see "Guests of the Temple" earlier in the adventure).

> This well-furnished guest room contains a comfortable bed, a sturdy chest for storage, a wall lantern, a full-length mirror, and a desk that holds small bottles of lotions and soaps.

Each guest of the temple is given a key that locks both the door and the chest, either of which can also be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or forced open with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. The hags and Saeth each carry a master key.

During the day, two disguised **scarecrows** (see "Coven Minions" earlier in the adventure) clean any unoccupied rooms. If the characters are staying here, the hags might instruct the scarecrows to "misplace" (steal) any potions, weapons, or other valuable items left in the characters' rooms.

Working Late. If the characters take rooms and spend one or more nights at the temple, the character who has the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score is awakened at a time of your choice by a quiet disturbance:

> A kobold with white scales and purple eyes is fiddling with the lock on one of the guest room doors. He wears a patchwork dress and is quietly cursing and whispering.

Glitter, a tiefling **spy** transformed into a kobold by the hags (see "Coven Victims" earlier in the adventure), is working late for his masters. He is trying to fix a broken lock, though the characters might assume he is trying to break into the room by picking the lock. He has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet and doesn't need light to do his work.

Glitter immediately surrenders if confronted and tries to explain himself. If any character treats him kindly or seems to be heroic, he might tell the characters the truth of his transformation and beg their help to undo the curse. Glitter knows what happened to Sylvarie, as well as the layout of the bathhouse and the tower. He also knows that the hags store a selection of their cursed paintings in the servants' quarters in the tower (area T17).

T10. Ilmar's Room

> The cluttered state of this room suggests that its occupant has been staying at the temple for some time. Clothes and cosmetic products are scattered across the floor and the desk.

This room is the quarters of Ilmar Mizzrym (see area T7). A character who searches the room discovers a sack hidden in the mattress.

Treasure. The sack holds three diamonds (50 gp each) and a silver holy symbol of Eilistraee (25 gp), the drow god of beauty, dance, and the hunt. A chain shirt and a rapier are stored inside the room's locked chest.

T11. Abandoned Shrine

This former shrine to Sune has fallen into disrepair over a decade of neglect. It is partially hidden behind the baths and obscured by overgrown trees and scrub. If the characters haven't already scouted the grounds, any character in the baths (area T5) who has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13 or higher spots the ruined stone building behind the trees. Characters who travel from the bathhouse to the tower can easily see the shrine.

> This crumbling stone building must once have been a beautiful shrine. Engraved images of Sune are still visible on the moss-covered stones, her face gazing down on the path by which the faithful would have approached. Stone doors at the front of the shrine appear to be sealed shut by some sort of thick, clear resin. A faint inscription is still visible above them:
>
> "Welcome, dearest ones. Come find the beauty within you."

During the day, the shrine is quiet. At night, any character moving around the shrine who has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or higher hears what sounds like sobbing or muttering coming from within.

The door is sealed firmly, as are the shrine's four windows, and all are coated by an unnaturally resilient resin of the hags' creation. A character can open a door or window as an action, but only by forcing it with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. Any of the hags can touch an area of resin as an action, causing it to turn into slime that flows away over 1 minute.

A hole in the roof 30 feet above the statue of Sune (see below) offers another way in, and is just big enough for a Medium creature to squeeze through. One of the hags comes here at night every few days to throw down firewood and scraps of food for Sylvarie.

Inside the Shrine. When the characters get a good look inside the shrine, read the following:

> The interior of the shrine has the appearance of having been abandoned after some sort of terrible confrontation years ago. Broken benches with shredded cushions are overgrown by thick fungi, and four large mirrors hanging on the walls have been shattered, leaving the stone floor covered in shards of broken glass.

A grime-encrusted statue of Sune stands against the far wall. The statue's expression might once have suggested smiling laughter, but streaks of dirt now make it appear as though she is weeping. Behind the statue, a staircase descends into darkness.

The broken glass covering the floor imposes disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to move through the area. If any creature without footwear or other protection moves across the broken glass, treat the area as covered in caltrops (see "Adventuring Gear" in the *Player's Handbook*).

T12. Sacred Pool

The stairs behind the statue in the shrine lead down to a dimly lit chamber.

> A soft white glow rises from a square pool set into the floor of this chamber. Torn cushions, rugs, tapestries, and clothing have been piled in one corner as a makeshift bed, while twigs and scraps of deadfall form a simple campfire nearby.

Sylvarie has been transformed into a **medusa** and spends most of her time in this chamber. The glowing light is produced by an object at the bottom of the pool (see "Treasure" below). The pool is also home to a **water weird** that has been Sylvarie's only companion for the ten years of her incarceration. The water weird fights alongside her if it perceives that she is threatened.

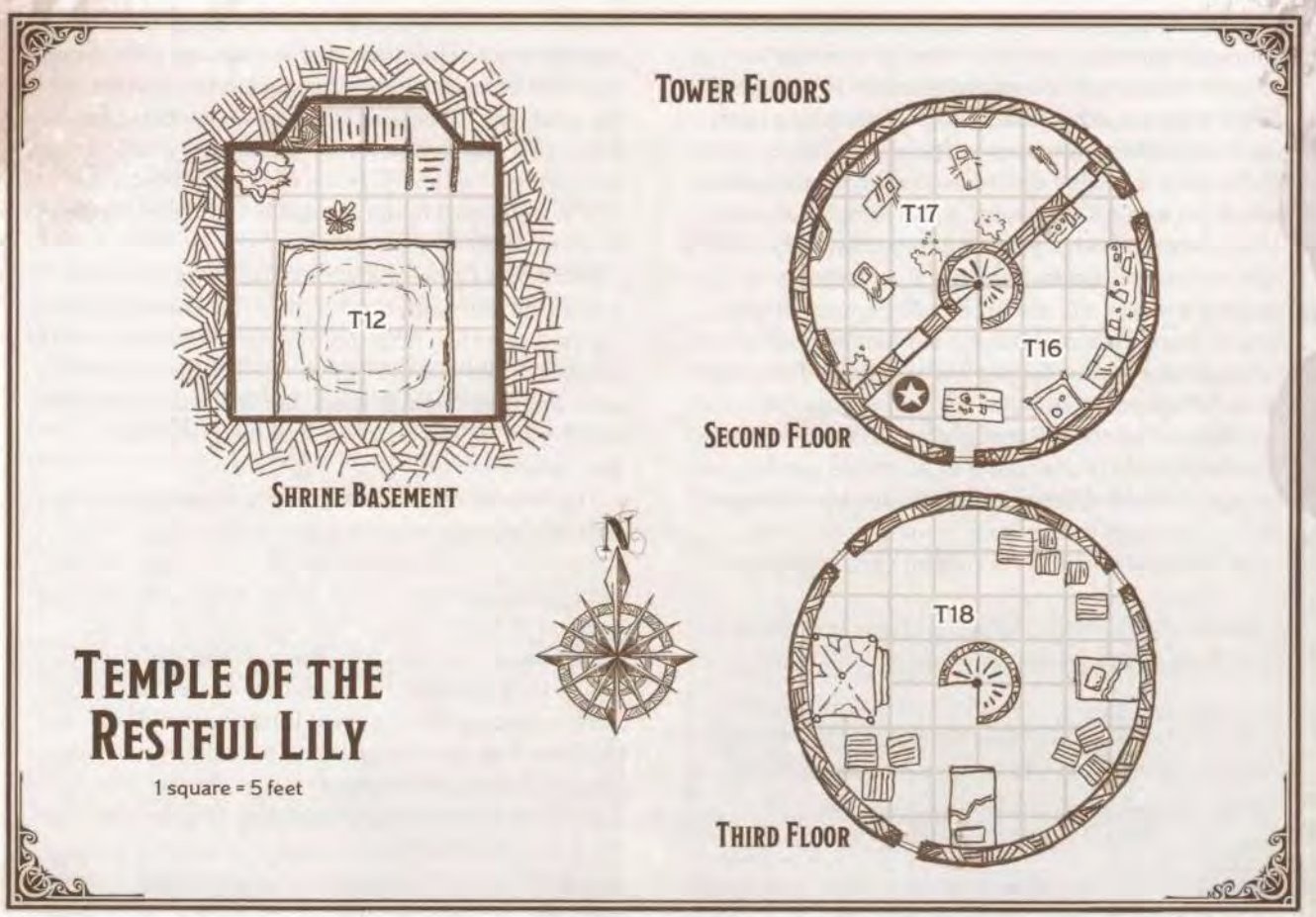
Sylvarie's Curse. Sylvarie Silversong was a devoted priest of Sune who shared her knowledge and uplifted others to help them realize their own worth. Sadly, her devotion to others masked the moon elf's own self-doubt, which made her feel that she wasn't worthy enough to be a priest of the god of love and beauty.

The hags used her insecurity to manipulate and corrupt Sylvarie ten years ago. Concealing their true nature, they enticed the priest into a dark bargain—and a terrible curse. After a year, the painting created of Sylvarie that had boosted her esteem transformed her into a medusa. When she tried to strike back against the hags, they sealed her in the shrine, hoping that its great mirrors would turn her to stone. For fear of petrifying herself, Sylvarie destroyed the shrine's mirrors.

Sylvarie attacks characters who descend into this area, believing they have been sent by the hags to torment her. A character can use an action to try to convince Sylvarie to stand down, first by making the party's good intentions clear and next by succeeding on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If a truce is achieved, Sylvarie blindfolds herself with a strip of cloth so that the characters aren't petrified by her gaze accidentally. She removes the blindfold if she is forced to defend herself.

The curse that transformed Sylvarie doesn't end until her portrait in area T18 is destroyed. The painting's destruction has the added benefit of restoring Sylvarie's neutral good alignment, whereupon she offers to do everything she can to help the party rid the temple of the evil creatures infesting it. If the characters destroyed Sylvarie's painting before coming here, they encounter Sylvarie in her true form: a neutral good moon elf **priest** who is not wearing armor (AC 10). In this case, she is weeping by the pool and grateful to be free of the hags' curse.

Treasure. Submerged in the pool is Radiance, a *+1 wand of the war mage* in the form of an exquisite golden hand mirror. While surrounded by darkness, it sheds dim light in a 5-foot radius. A creature that is attuned to Radiance can use a bonus action while holding the mirror to cast the *enhance ability* spell, chosing itself and no other creature as the spell's target. Once this property of the wand is used, it can't be used again until the next dawn. The wand is Sylvarie's, but she offers it to the characters as a reward for ending her curse.



T13–T18. Tower

> A finely crafted stone tower rises among the trees not far from the bathhouse. A statue of a sharp-featured winged elf crouches above the front door, whose bright red surface is decorated with golden swirls.

The door is locked. The elf statue over the door is a **gargoyle** servant of the hags, wrapped in illusion magic (see "Coven Minions" earlier in the adventure). It watches the door but makes no move unless the characters go inside, whereupon it flies off to report to one of the hags.

T13. Tower Foyer

> This foyer has a central spiral staircase leading up. The staircase is flanked by two closed doors, each one set in the middle of a stone wall. A thin, weak-looking dragonborn is feebly trying to sweep the floor here with a well-worn broom.

The cursed dragonborn, Gorba Daardenrian (see "Coven Victims" earlier in the adventure), is so weak that she can barely hold her broom. When she sees the characters, she desperately tries to make them leave so she doesn't get into trouble. In the time she has spent at the temple, she has learned what happened to Sylvarie and knows the layout of the tower, but she will not share that information unless her fear of the characters can be overcome with roleplaying, a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check, or suitable magic.

Both the doors in this area are locked, and Gorba does not have the keys to them.

T14. Saeth's Room

Saeth carries the key that opens the locked door to this room.

> This luxurious room has a large bed covered with rich silk sheets. A wardrobe and a dresser with a mirror stand against the walls.

The dresser has clothes scattered across it but holds nothing of value.

Treasure. Characters who search the wardrobe find a suit of scale mail armor customized for a wearer with a tail, and a pair of shortswords ornately scribed with Infernal glyphs (50 gp each).

SEAN MCDONALD

T15. Tower Studio

The three hags carry the only keys to this room.

> Magical light illuminates this room, which has an oversized chair, heavy curtains covering the windows, and a large, ornate wooden chest.

Any characters who requested special magical treatments from one of the three sisters are brought to this room. The other sisters arrive in a few minutes, and they explain that all three working together can guarantee a greater possibility that the magic sought by the character can be channeled successfully. Characters who allow the sisters to work their magic can watch them labor together to create a cursed painting.

Tools and Supplies. The wooden chest is locked. As an action, a character can try to pick the lock using thieves' tools, doing so with a successful DC 18 Dexterity check, or break open the chest with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check.

Inside the chest are the materials the hags use for creating cursed paintings, including three blank canvases and paints infused with demon ichor. A character who examines the canvas determines that it is made of humanoid skin with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine or Perception) check. Physically touching the canvas grants advantage on the check. The paints appear normal unless examined closely by a character who has proficiency in the Arcana or Religion skill, whereupon their fiendish nature becomes clear.

Treasure. The canvases are worth 200 gp each and the paints are worth 100 gp in total, though finding a buyer for such vile materials might be a challenge.

T16. Tower Kitchen

> A dank scent fills the air in this well-used kitchen. Three tables stand in the room, one of which is covered in various vegetables and strange-looking cuts of meat. A wood stove burns brightly against the far wall, and a statue of a winged elf stands in the corner, its face carved into an open-mouthed smile.
>
> An elderly dwarf stands before the stove, his hands trembling as he tries to lift a heavy iron pot.

This kitchen is normally used by the coven's scarecrow minions to prepare meals for the hags and Saeth, but it now has a new servant in Falthrax Loderr, the cursed Candlekeep acolyte. The central staircase leads to the upper floors, and an unlocked door leads to area T17.

Falthrax (see "Coven Victims" earlier in the adventure) uses the **commoner** stat block and panics at the sight of intruders. He warns the characters that they should leave immediately while trying to appear loyal to the hags for the benefit of the **gargoyle** disguised as the elf statue, which has been placed here by the hags to watch over the coven's latest victim.

If the characters try to go upstairs or ask too many questions of Falthrax, the gargoyle attacks. If it is reduced to half its hit points or fewer, it flees by smashing out a window and tries to alert the hags.

If the gargoyle's threat is ended, Falthrax breaks down, revealing his identity if the characters haven't already sussed it out. He is desperate to have the curse undone so he can return to Candlekeep. Having just arrived at the temple, Falthrax can describe only the studio where his portrait was painted (area T15) and the room where he sleeps along with the other curse victims presently held at the temple (area T17).

T17. Victims' Quarters

> Piles of straw and moth-eaten blankets have been set up in this area as rough beds, and broken furniture and garbage is scattered around. In contrast to the squalor, four fine paintings hang along the curved outer wall. Each one is hauntingly beautiful—but also strangely unnerving to look upon.

Three of the victims of the hags' curse sleep and eat in this miserable chamber, forced to stare at the paintings that have caused their downfall. The fourth painting is the one that was done for Sylvarie Silversong ten years before. Each painting depicts its victim as the person they sought to become through their bargain with the hags:

- A brawny, female, golden-scaled dragonborn warrior engaged in battle (Gorba Daardenrian)
- A tall male tiefling with sparkling violet eyes wearing many fine jewels (Glitter)
- A youthful male shield dwarf dancing at a feast (Falthrax Loderr)
- A radiant female moon elf gazing upon her own reflection (Sylvarie)

If the characters don't yet know the significance of the paintings but have met Glitter in area T9, Gorba in area T13, or Falthrax in area T16, any character who studies the paintings recognizes that the paintings depict those individuals.

T18. Hags' Lair

> The air grows cooler as you near the top of the tower, and it carries a putrid scent. What might once have been an elegant bedroom has long since been soiled and ruined. Murals of Sune that lined the walls have been defaced with dirt and filth.
>
> Three beds are covered in moldy blankets and animal furs, including one topped by a canopy of giant bones and reeking, untanned hides. Empty crates are scattered throughout the room like furniture, holding broken weapons, moldering clothing, and other odd objects.

The top floor of the tower has been turned into the lair of the Fetid Gaze. Each of the three hags has its own disgusting bed, and the strange objects that fill the crates are shared by all.

Glyph of Warding. Scratched into the floor at the top of the stairs is a glyph created by a *glyph of warding* spell. The hags use this glyph to eliminate intruders. It can be detected with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check and triggers when any creature except the hags or their minions passes over it. When triggered, the glyph splashes acid in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on it—big enough to splatter the whole room and the central staircase, top to bottom. This sphere spreads around corners. Each creature in the area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Dark Mementos. The objects in the crates are souvenirs claimed from the hags' victims over ten years, including weapons, clothing, personal effects, tools, letters, trinkets, and more.

Treasure. Most of the hags' mementos are worthless, but a search of the room turns up a *spell scroll* of *clairvoyance* in a leather scroll case that has so far escaped destruction.

Conclusion

Once the threat of the hags and their servants is dealt with, the characters have a chance to rectify the dark deeds done at the temple.

Destroying the four portraits in area T17 frees Gorba Daardenrian, Glitter, Falthrax Loderr, and Sylvarie Silversong from the hags' curse. (See "Destroying the Paintings" earlier in the adventure for more information.) Gorba and Glitter are eternally grateful to the characters and might become lifelong allies of the party, at your discretion.

Falthrax's Resolve

With the curse lifted, Falthrax Loderr is ready to return to Candlekeep. The experience of having sought and then rejected a magical return to youth has taught him much about focusing on the positive aspects of his life and his service to knowledge. Though his struggles aren't over, a new inner resolve promises to leave him in a better position to face those struggles.

Sylvarie's Decision

Ten years under the effect of the hags' curse have left Sylvarie Silversong a changed person. As you see fit, she might be determined to restore the Temple of the Restful Lily to its former stature, refurbishing the shrine and making the site an even stronger place for the worship of Sune. Alternatively, she might decide that the temple holds too many dark memories for her, and that it should be up to others—perhaps the characters—to take charge of restoring the site. Either way, Sylvarie is grateful to the characters for what they've done and becomes a friend to the party for life.

WAYNE ENGLAND

AN ADVENTURE FOR 6TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

Book of Cylinders

WRITTEN BY GRAEME BARBER
DEVELOPED & EDITED BY KIM MOHAN

Fifteen years ago, the *Book of Cylinders* fell into the hands of the archivists and librarians of Candlekeep as part of a collection of works recovered from a ruined keep in Tethyr, far to the south. It describes a conflict between a settlement of grippli (froglike humanoids distantly related to bullywugs) and an invading force of yuan-ti. The explorers who found the *Book of Cylinders* and bore it safely to Candlekeep claimed it wasn't a historical account, but a warning of dire events yet to unfold.

Beginning the Adventure

While the characters are conducting research or relaxing in Candlekeep, a member of the Avowed approaches them with a book and a quest:

> A robed dragonborn clears her throat as she approaches you. Cradled in her arms is a green book. "Please forgive the interruption," she says. "My name is Pelk, and I speak for the Avowed. You're adventurers, are you not?"

Pelk is a dragonborn **commoner** of copper dragon ancestry and a member of the Avowed. Her superiors have authorized her to brief the characters on a situation requiring their unique talents:

> "Candlekeep has long relied on a community of grippli to the north for fresh seafood. These frogfolk capture and raise giant crabs as livestock in an offshore cluster of pens they have erected just outside their village, then trade the meat and other salvageable parts for items they can use, particularly those made of metal or glass. Candlekeep has long been a steady customer, but over the last several tendays the grippli have become less and less active, and the supply of food has been all but cut off. To make things worse, rumors have arisen about serpent creatures being seen near the Cloakwood and the grippli village."

Pelk tells the characters that this news came by way of Mitor Jans, a ship captain who makes a living transporting crab meat to Candlekeep. Pelk also reveals that Jans, eager for shipments to resume, has volunteered to take adventurers by sea to a trading post where they can meet with the grippli leader-in-exile, if they decide to undertake the quest to help the frogfolk.

Pelk informs the characters that the Avowed are willing to pay 500 gp to each character once the threat to the grippli village is neutralized.

Opening the Book

If the characters agree to undertake the quest, Pelk hands them the *Book of Cylinders* and says:

> "This book was brought to Candlekeep several years ago. The explorers who found it claimed it was not a historical text, but a warning. My superiors have authorized me to show it to you."

Pelk allows the characters to inspect the book. It is surprisingly light, and brief examination shows it to be a cunningly contrived container. Its covering is

Book of Cylinders

Wooden Cylinders

made of supple leather reinforced with thicker strips of hide. Opening the cover reveals three intricately carved, hollow wooden cylinders and a linen bag of dry clay artfully decorated with a drop of water.

The outside of each cylinder is covered with writing and simple images, apparently telling a story in three parts. If the characters can't figure out what the cylinders have to say, Pelk or another staff member at Candlekeep can give them instructions.

The first step is to remove some of the clay from its bag and mix it with water to form a thick paste, then spread the wet clay in a thin layer on a flat surface. Rolling one of the cylinders across this surface presses the writing into the clay and makes it readable. After repeating the process for each of the cylinders, the characters have the full story and can use that knowledge to determine what they do next.

The impressions in the clay are mostly characters in the Dwarvish script, combined with simple pictographs that tell a tale about the frogfolk and the serpentfolk.

The first cylinder shows and explains how the grippli became skilled at harvesting giant crabs, which are loaded onto seagoing vessels and taken away while the frogfolk celebrate their newly earned wealth.

The second cylinder's story begins with serpent creatures lurking ominously outside the grippli village. Then the serpentfolk rush forth, capturing or killing any of the frogfolk who try to stand against them. As the village falls into disarray, the giant crabs escape from their cages and head back into the sea.

The third cylinder depicts, and briefly tells about, the aftermath of the serpentfolk's assault. The village is vacant, most of its buildings flattened. Still standing is the grippli's temple to their deity, which has been taken over by the snake creatures.

Unbeknownst to the characters at this time, the ancient story told on the cylinders is unfolding now. Evil yuan-ti are tormenting the grippli, and their goal is nothing less than the obliteration of all who stand in their way.

Learning More

After the characters have deciphered the story told on the cylinders, they can learn more about the context of the situation by talking to Pelk or other members of the Avowed. The following information can be learned:

- Before communications with the grippli tapered off, people who returned to Candlekeep from a trip to the grippli trading post reported that a small band of yuan-ti had taken up residence at an old temple site where the grippli village used to be located. These serpentfolk, unlike others of their kind, are friendly toward the grippli, and the frogfolk are helping them excavate the location.
- One of the last people from Candlekeep to depart from the grippli trading post reports that the place has been overrun by frogfolk fleeing their village, which was invaded by a second group of yuan-ti. These monsters are vicious and cruel, the exact opposite of the earlier visitors.

Northward Ho!

It should be apparent to the characters, from whatever information they have gleaned, that the grippli trading post is the first stop on their mission. The trading post is on the coast, due west of the Cloakwood and roughly 90 miles north-northwest of Candlekeep by sea. They can get there either by accepting Mitor Jans's offer of transportation, or by a longer overland route that takes them east, north, and then westward through the forest.

Sea Voyage

If the characters need further persuasion, Mitor Jans tells them that he and his ship, the *Dog Ear*, have made the trip from Candlekeep to the trading post and back again more times than he can count. He and his crew know exactly where to sail to avoid

undersea hazards and stay on the most efficient route. If the characters are suspicious of Mitor's motives, a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check is all it takes to verify the truth of his claims.

In fact, this is the faster of the two routes. The trip takes a day and a half (36 hours), with no encounters en route.

Mitor Jans

Neutral good half-orc

Mitor (use the **bandit captain** stat block, if necessary) joined Candlekeep as a young acolyte but soon found he was more suited to a life on the sea. His greatest source of pride is the book he has written about fish anatomy, which includes a detailed examination of sahuagin biology. He is willing to transport the party, but neither he nor his crew will join in a fight.

Overland Voyage

If the characters decline the sea voyage, they can consult a map at Candlekeep that shows the safest and fastest overland route, starting with the Way of the Lion, the road that leads inland (east) from Candlekeep. That road intersects with the Coast Way, which runs north along the eastern edge of the Cloakwood. About 50 miles north along the Coast Way is a trail that runs west into the forest and eventually leads to the outskirts of the grippli village. This route, well over 100 miles in total, takes at least seven days to traverse by foot, and at the end of it the characters will be entering the village before they visit the trading post. Both of those facts might have a marked effect on how the adventure continues (at your discretion). In addition, you might pit the characters against some random encounters along the way, to hint at the error of their ways in turning down the sea voyage.

Helping the Grippli

The grippli of the Cloakwood are distrustful of strangers but forced by circumstances to consider outside help. The warriors of the village and its leader, Pond Mother, are doing all they can to protect the grippli who have taken refuge at the trading post, and they cannot mount a counterattack against the evil yuan-ti, who have already killed several grippli for trying to stand up to them.

Assuming the characters traveled by ship to reach the trading post, the grippli guarding the dock watch them carefully but don't speak right away. Grippli have difficulty voicing the language of humans, so they speak in Primordial. (Mitor Jans has some fluency in Primordial and offers to be an intermediary if needed.) As long as the characters are nonhostile, the grippli will allow them to disembark.

Mitor Jans and his ship remain at the dock while the characters go ashore. He suggests that they seek an audience with the grippli's leader, Pond Mother, to learn firsthand about what has happened. (Fortunately for the characters, she's not hard to find.)

Trading Post

> As the coastal mist clears, you get your first good look at the grippli trading post. Ramshackle shelters are clustered around a large permanent building. The low rumble of many voices softly croaking can be heard as your ship pulls up to the dock, where grippli bearing weapons are waiting to meet its passengers.

The central structure of the trading post is a fortified stone and mud-brick edifice, decorated with the preserved carapaces and claws of giant crabs, where commerce is normally conducted. The ground around it, usually clear of construction, now houses a host of makeshift dwellings, and business has slowed to a standstill. The place looks and feels more like a refugee encampment than a trading post.

The primitive shelters are the new homes of grippli who escaped when the evil yuan-ti came through the village in their search for the earlier group of serpentfolk. All these individuals are noncombatants, with no particular knowledge to be gained by communicating with them.

Pond Mother Speaks

The village's leader, who holds the title of Pond Mother, is an aged **grippli warrior** (see the end of the adventure for her stat block). She evacuated the village when most of the other residents did and has set up quarters inside the large building. Assuming the characters are cooperative, the grippli guards take the visitors directly to her. If the party seems trustworthy, she speaks to them. She prefers Primordial (it's easier on grippli vocal cords) to address outsiders, but she can speak Common if there are no Primordial speakers in the group.

She informs the party that a small band of yuan-ti arrived in the area over a month ago, claiming to be followers of a benevolent deity they called the Scaled Mother. They were friendly, the opposite of other yuan-ti that the grippli had encountered and fought with. These yuan-ti expressed interest in excavating and restoring the previous site of the grippli village, a mile from its present location. Pond Mother saw no reason to refuse them, since their motives were seemingly innocent. But then, two tendays afterward, another group of yuan-ti came on the scene. These yuan-ti attacked the village, killed

any frogfolk who tried to resist, and captured the grippli who weren't able to escape.

She asks the characters for help, telling them that the yuan-ti have been eating their eggs and tormenting the few grippli who remain in the village. Nothing has been heard from the friendly yuan-ti since the larger force of evil ones descended on the village. Pond Mother fears that either they have been disposed of, or they have been imprisoned in the old temple that lies north of the village. In any event, saving the eggs, or as many of them as possible, is the grippli's main concern.

If the characters demand payment, Pond Mother can offer the modest contents of the trading post's coffers (200 gp) for clearing out the village and safeguarding the eggs. She points out that the characters are also entitled to keep any items of value that don't belong to the villagers.

The trading post is about 5 miles south of the grippli village, which is most easily reached by sea. (An overland trip along the marshy coastline is a fool's route, fraught with obstacles and perils.) Mitor Jans will transport the characters as far as he can, then drop them off just outside the crab maze that borders the community before turning back south.

Crab Maze

> Columns of stone with platforms built around them, connected by rickety-looking gangways that touch the sea or disappear beneath the frothing waves, are arrayed before you. In the distance you can see the marshy shore. Dark shapes move under the surface, and flashes of red carapace draw the eye. This is not a safe place.

Getting to the village is the characters' first challenge. Between the characters and the village is a network of cages where the grippli have kept, captured, and bred giant crabs for centuries.

The crab maze is a collection of low-to-the-water walkways, ranging in height from just above the water to being submerged by up to 2 feet. Each main walkway is wide enough for two Medium creatures to walk side by side, while the smaller branching ones are wide enough for only a single person. Interspersed through this web of rickety wood and netting are processing platforms built around the stone columns, each large enough to hold four creatures. Under the water, in open-topped cages made of netting, lurk a great number of giant crabs that haven't been fed recently. As the characters start to make their way to shore, the water begins to froth as the giant crabs become excited.

Running the Crab Maze

No craft larger than a rowboat can navigate the crab maze because the water is too shallow and already occupied by angry giant crabs. The characters are dropped off outside the maze at a point of your choosing. The water is only 4 or 5 feet deep throughout this area, but wading to shore is impossible since the crabs are everywhere. The characters' goal is to get to the breakwater that separates the maze from the village while avoiding the crabs as much as they can.

As the characters move, they must make a successful DC 20 Dexterity (Stealth) group check every 100 feet to avoid attracting giant crabs. If any group check fails, 1d4 + 2 **giant crabs** claw their way out of their cages and attack the characters.

The processing platforms, located wherever two walkways join or intersect, are safe havens. The platforms are high enough above the water that the crabs won't attack creatures atop one.

Passing the Breakwater

After negotiating the maze, the characters come upon a low wall that the grippli have constructed to keep sea creatures away from the village and to protect the lagoon on the other side from rough water when a storm is raging. This breakwater is made of intertwined branches reinforced by tough vines. Hinged on the sides and split in the middle, it can be opened to allow the passage of small boats. In the closed position, as it is now, the breakwater is not designed to prevent entry to the village by anyone who can simply climb up and over it.

If the characters avoided any contact with the giant crabs, or if they have handled those threats with a minimum of commotion, they can easily move over and beyond the breakwater without alerting the yuan-ti in the village. By taking the shortest path to shore, the characters can make landfall just north of the docks.

Several yuan-ti are roaming through the village when the characters arrive, but the serpentfolk are not particularly vigilant. The characters can earn the yuan-ti's attention by making an undue amount of noise during their approach or giving themselves away with a display of flashy magic. If they do so, a squad of five **yuan-ti purebloods** ambushes them soon after they get out of the water.

The yuan-ti, overconfident to a fault, are likely to fight to the death without trying to summon reinforcements. To give the characters a stiffer challenge, you can have a patrol of 1d4 + 2 **yuan-ti purebloods** arrive on the scene, attracted by the sounds of combat, before the original squad has been vanquished.

Crab Maze

Village

The grippli village is set near the sea in a brackish marsh. Rising from the muck are circular, domed mud-brick buildings that the grippli use for homes and storage facilities. The carapaces and claws of giant crabs feature heavily in the architecture.

If the characters get to shore without causing a conflict with the yuan-ti, they can move freely (if carefully) around the village. (The evil serpentfolk are here for a particular purpose, and as a rule they have no quarrel with anyone who doesn't directly threaten their plan or try to impede what they're doing.)

The ground throughout this area is damp and soft at best. Staying dry is difficult to impossible.

The dozen or so **grippli warriors** (see the end of the adventure for their stat block) remaining in the village are there only to do the yuan-ti's bidding; they all show signs of abuse from their treatment. Some are in a state of mourning, after being forced to watch the yuan-ti consume their eggs.

Docks

Unlike the materials used for the crab maze, the docks are sturdy planks of wood tightly fastened together and treated to make the structure waterproof.

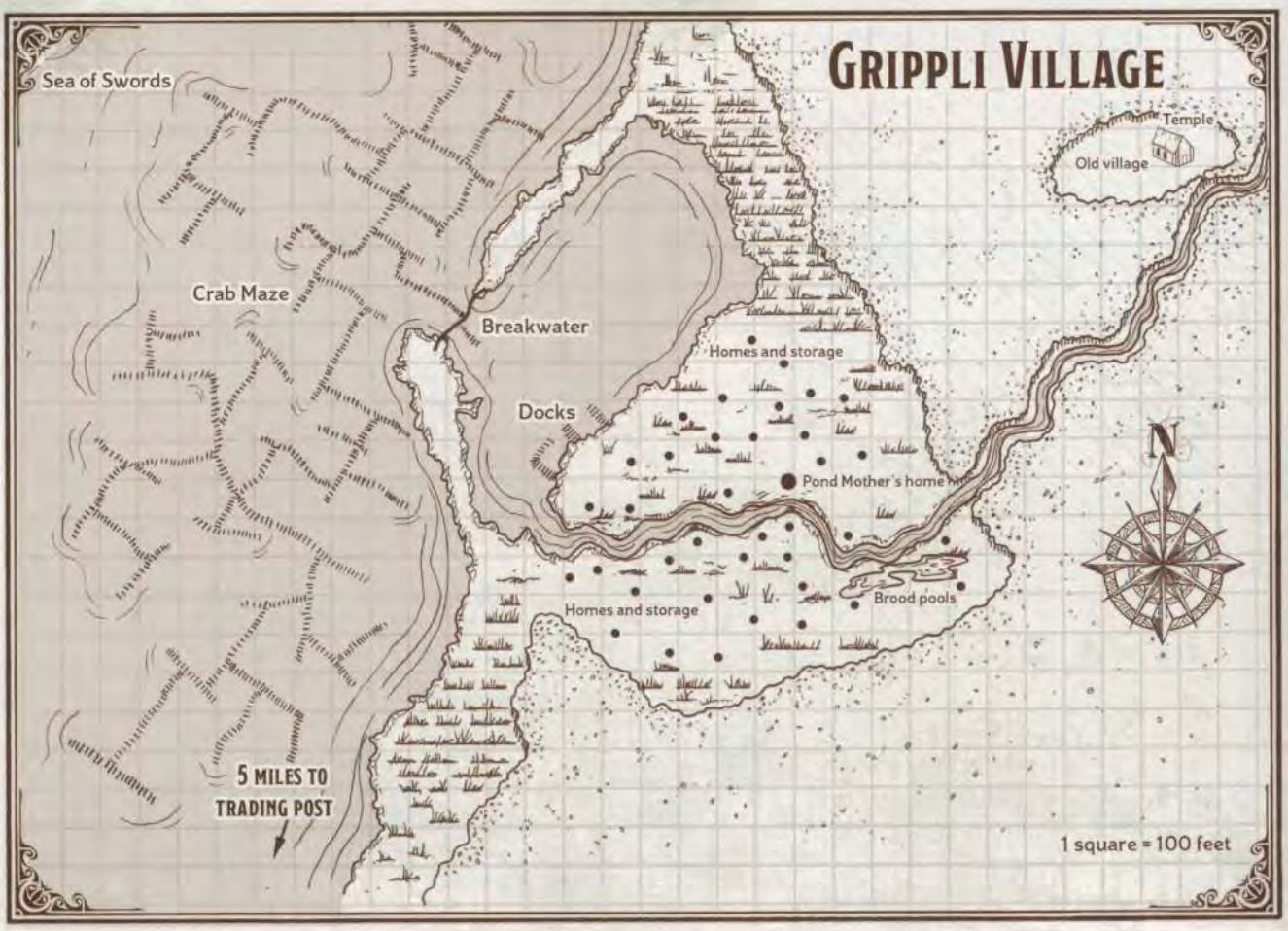
Only a couple of small boats remain tied up at these piers, the others having been used by the grippli who retreated to the trading post.

The yuan-ti have no interest in the small boats that are moored here—meaning that if they remain undamaged, the characters could use them for transport when they decide to leave this place behind.

Pond Mother's Home

The religious center of the village, this enormous building made of wood and mud bricks has been turned into a prison where the evil yuan-ti are holding some of the followers of the Scaled Mother. The hemispherical building, 20 feet high and 50 feet in diameter, is by far the largest structure in the community.

The ground level contains a pool of water in the center, directly beneath an opening in the roof of the same size. The marshy ground around the pool serves as an assembly area for group ceremonies.



Two staircases on opposite sides of the dome lead up to the second floor, which is divided into four chambers, each about 10 feet square. Three of these rooms currently hold a total of ten wounded **yuan-ti purebloods** with half their hit points remaining. These benevolent, neutral good yuan-ti are being guarded by four evil **yuan-ti purebloods** stationed just outside the cells.

The guards remain at their stations until they hear significant sounds of activity coming from the ground level, or until a character ascends one of the staircases and comes into their view, whereupon they all rush to attack. The prisoners, even if they're left unattended, won't leave their cells willingly while combat is going on.

If the characters dispose of the guards and free the prisoners, the benevolent yuan-ti explain what they know of the situation: they are allies of the grippli who have been victimized by the evil yuan-ti that invaded the village recently. They know from their captors that two of their number have been hauled through the marsh northward to the location of a temple in the old village, where they are to be sacrificed to the evil deity Sseth sometime soon.

Brood Pools

Near the outskirts of the village is the grippli nursery. In five places, built up like the sides of a well, stand 3-foot-high mud-brick walls enclosing 20-foot-diameter circular areas. These repositories, filled with clean, fresh water, are where the grippli lay their eggs and nurture offspring as they mature.

This location is under the control of four **yuan-ti purebloods** and two **yuan-ti malisons** (any type). They permit a small number of grippli to tend the eggs, which is why the eggs haven't all died since the arrival of the serpentfolk. This permission could be an act of mercy, or it could just be that the yuan-ti like to eat the eggs: each of the malisons has been consuming at least one egg per day, and always within sight of one or more of the grippli for no reason other than cruelty.

All six yuan-ti are languishing on the ground between the pools and don't react until at least one of them becomes aware of the characters. If one of the malisons remains alive after 3 rounds of combat, it pours a vial of poison into the water of one pool, which kills all the eggs in it. On each succeeding round, if the characters don't prevent it, the same creature moves to poison a different pool until it is vanquished or until all the eggs have perished.

Homes and Storage

> The simple domes of the grippli's residences and storage buildings are spread haphazardly around the marsh. Mud-brick with wicker roofs, they're modest affairs, primitively decorated with giant crab claws. Most are empty and show signs of abandonment.

Most of the village is made up of homes and storage facilities. The community is all but vacant at the present time, so there's nothing the characters can learn by examining any of the buildings.

Under normal circumstances, groups of bonded grippli live in each home, which consists of a single medium to large room, lit with simple fish oil lamps. Grippli don't sleep in the water, but in soft hammocks suspended over it. Their personal effects are secured to the walls above the water in netting. Furniture is of simple but well-crafted wood, or adapted driftwood. Some homes have ceramic and glass jars (obtained through barter) and bronze pots and pans (likewise), used on occasions when the grippli want to cook something before eating it.

Storage huts sit on stilts that keep their thatch floors from getting wet and thus protect the materials stored there from deterioration. Wood and other marsh vegetation used in construction are left here to dry out.

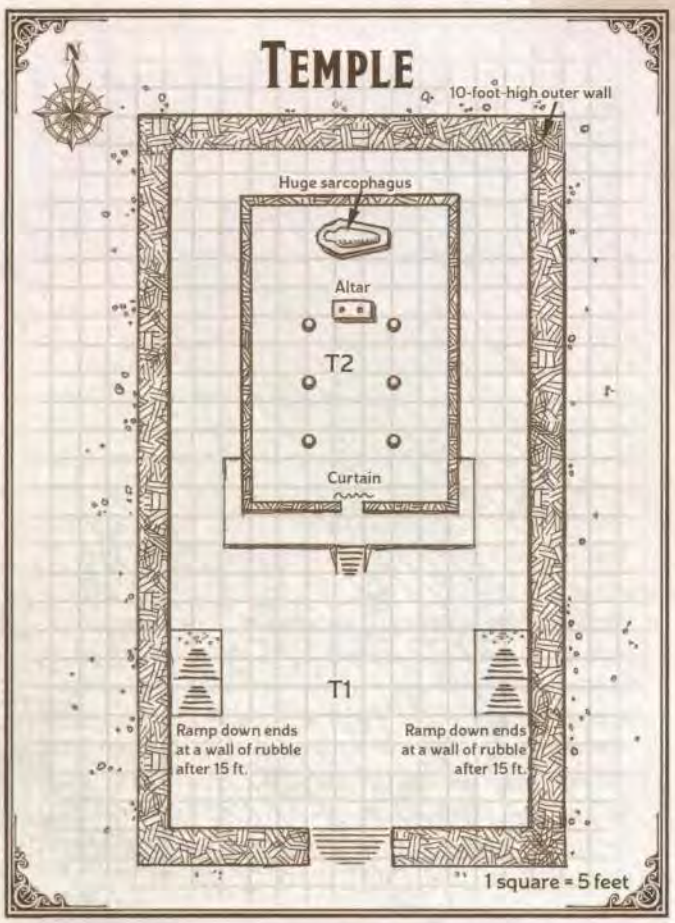
Old Village and Temple

Following the river leads the characters northeast through the Cloakwood. The characters should realize that this is the route to the grippli's old village, which they have heard about from Pond Mother and perhaps also from the yuan-ti captives.

The old village was abandoned when the grippli realized they would fare better being closer to the water. They relocated to where the village now stands. The only structure left in the old village is the temple—now the site of activity once again.

Before the evil yuan-ti arrived, the followers of the Scaled Mother had begun to excavate the temple ruins, hoping to find evidence of their benevolent deity. The work is continuing under the rule of the evil serpentfolk, but it's slow going. Several grippli have been forced to continue digging the place out, while their masters stay inside the part that has already been opened up. It's here that preparations are being made for the sacrifice of the yuan-ti's prisoners.

When the characters approach the temple, they won't be able to escape the notice of the grippli prisoners. But the frogfolk know enough to remain silent in the face of potential rescue, and they use hand signals to direct the characters toward the courtyard. From there, the characters can approach the upper court (area T2), where the prisoners are.



The following locations are keyed to the map of the temple.

T1. Courtyard

> At the top of a short set of steps lies an open area enclosed by a ten-foot-high outer wall and paved with tightly fitted stone slabs. To either side are truncated ramps that lead down to a lower area, still blocked with earth and rubble that needs to be cleared away. Ahead of you, some fifty feet away, is another short staircase that leads to a ten-foot-high inner wall with a door-sized opening in it that's covered by a curtain. Coming from beyond the doorway inside the enclosed area, you can hear the groaning and plaintive cries of creatures being mistreated.

The temple's courtyard can serve as a staging area for the characters, whose presence will not be noticed by the yuan-ti as long as they remain here. Any grippli in the courtyard when the characters arrive will make a hasty but silent retreat to places of safety outside the temple.

T2. Upper Court

The upper court of the temple has been completely cleared of debris. Six pillars support the ten-foot-high ceiling, and the northern half of the enclosed area is bathed in bright light, making it easy for you to see the horrific scene playing out in the far end of the room.

The following events are unfolding as the party enters. Lashed to a makeshift altar are two neutral good yuan-ti, a type 1 **yuan-ti malison** named Maaz and a **yuan-ti pureblood** named Vorsa. They are being tortured by an evil **yuan-ti abomination** that is presiding over a ritual. An enormous sarcophagus rests behind them, its exterior carved with serpents. Two **yuan-ti malisons**, a type 1 and a type 3, are positioned on either side of it. Both are evil. One carries a lantern that is the source of the illumination, and the other one is holding up a chime and preparing to strike it. As the characters take in the scene, the abomination is studying the script on the sarcophagus intently, engrossed in what it sees. At a gesture from the abomination, the chime is struck. As it rings out, the seam around the lid of the sarcophagus glows brightly for an instant. Then the sarcophagus comes open partway, and the bound prisoners howl in agony.

Even after the evil yuan-ti notice the characters, their first priority is to complete the ritual, which opens the lid of the sarcophagus and kills the prisoners. With fast action and accurate attacks, the characters can interrupt the ritual and prevent further harm to the victims. The abomination must use two of its turns to finish performing the ritual, which climaxes with one more sounding of the chime as the lid is thrown open. If the abomination takes any damage before completing the ritual, it stops what it's doing and turns its attention to the interlopers and attacks them, ordering the malisons to join the fight.

Treasure. The objects used by the malisons are a *chime of opening* and a *lantern of revealing* (which they use as a precaution against invisible enemies). After the malison strikes the chime for the first time, the item has 5 uses left. The lantern has 2 hours of fuel remaining.

Assuming the characters interrupted the ritual, the lid of the sarcophagus is only slightly open, and the chime must be struck once more to open the lid fully. Inside the sarcophagus are two items of great significance to the yuan-ti: a suit of *serpent scale armor* and a *serpent's fang* (both described below).

Serpent Scale Armor

Armor (scale mail), uncommon

This suit of magic armor is made from shimmering scales. While wearing it, you can apply your full Dexterity modifier (instead of a maximum of +2) when determining your Armor Class. In addition, this armor does not impose disadvantage on your Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

Serpent's Fang

Weapon (longsword), rare

This single-edged magic sword is made from the scrimshawed fang of a giant serpent. Its hilt changes shape to adjust to the grasp of any creature that picks it up. The weapon deals an extra 1d10 poison damage to any target it hits.

Aftermath

When the abomination and its malison minions fall, the captured yuan-ti are overcome with joy. They tell the characters that they hail from a land to the south called Chult. They were called into service by the deity they know as the Scaled Mother and followed her portents as they traveled north. They began excavating the old temple, with the grippli's consent, in the expectation of finding relics left behind by the yuan-ti that raided through this area in ages past. They were unable to open the lid of the sarcophagus once they unearthed it and were in the process of clearing rubble from the courtyard stairs when the evil yuan-ti descended on the village and captured all the followers of the Scaled Mother.

With the threat to the area neutralized, it doesn't take long for things to return to normal. When the grippli prisoners realize that the characters have persevered, they waste no time getting the news to the village and the trading post. The refugees return home, and within a tenday the frogfolk have repaired any damage to the crab pens and are back in business.

The benevolent yuan-ti, once they recover from their wounds, might decide to continue digging out the temple or to return to their homeland, as you see fit. If the excavation goes on, you can populate the lower level of the temple with treasures or traps at your discretion.

If the characters journeyed by land and went directly to the temple after spending little or no time in the village, the now-freed grippli prisoners explain that other evil yuan-ti are stationed in the village, and they too need to be dispensed with before the grippli can reclaim their homes.

Grateful Grippli

Having done what they came to do, the characters are free to take their leave of the grippli anytime; once regular traffic resumes between the trading post and Candlekeep, the heroes have no trouble finding a ship that will carry them back to the library.

In the meantime, if the characters prevented one or more eggs in the brood pools from being killed, the returning grippli are so ecstatic that Pond Mother offers to perform a ceremony for the party's benefit, called the ritual of friend marking. If they agree, they are brought to the pool in the center of Pond Mother's home at midnight. The grippli, croaking sonorously, surround the characters while they stand in the warm water and Pond Mother pours the contents of a jar into the pool. The liquid swirls, and motes of light begin rising up around the characters. Any party members who have second thoughts at this point can avoid the effect by succeeding on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. Party members who don't resist, or who fail their saves, fall into a trance until dawn—when they come to their senses, completely rested and healed. All party members who completed the ritual can speak and understand the Grippli language from now on.

Grippli

At first glance or from a distance, a grippli looks like a large frog. Its head and body are indeed those of a frog, but its front extremities end in hands with fingers that enable it to manipulate weapons and other objects, and its rear legs have similar digits that it can use for grasping and climbing. A grippli can move as quickly on all fours as it can on two legs.

Communal Effort. Grippli rely on ambushes and guerrilla warfare to defend themselves and their settlements. They can snare foes with their tongues to make them easier targets. Grippli villages are generally built from mud bricks and other natural materials harvested from the immediate vicinity.

Young grippli are raised by the community rather than by a single set of parents, and all of a community's eggs are kept in freshwater pools until they mature. Protecting their eggs is a major concern for grippli, since lizardfolk, yuan-ti, and other creatures are known to have a taste for them.

Close to Nature. Most grippli care more about survival than they do about abstract ideals such as good and evil. Grippli religion is based in animism and nature spirits; the frogfolk do not pay reverence to a single deity, but they might beseech a particular nature spirit for aid from time to time.

Grippli Warrior

Small humanoid (grippli)

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 13 (3d6 + 3)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

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

Skills Athletics +2, Stealth +4, Survival +4
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Grippli plus one other language (usually Common, Draconic, or Primordial)
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Hold Breath. The grippli can hold its breath for 20 minutes.

Standing Leap. The grippli can leap 30 feet horizontally or 20 feet vertically from a standing position.

Actions

Multiattack. The grippli makes one attack with its tongue. If this attack hits, the grippli can make a melee attack using its trident against the same target.

Tongue. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one Medium or smaller creature. *Hit:* The target is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the grippli can't grab another creature.

Trident. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack, plus 2 (1d4) piercing damage if the grippli had advantage on the attack roll.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, plus 2 (1d4) piercing damage if the grippli had advantage on the attack roll.

AN ADVENTURE FOR 7TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

SARAH OF YELLOWCREST MANOR

WRITTEN BY DEREK RUIZ
DEVELOPED & EDITED BY SCOTT FITZGERALD GRAY

IN THIS ADVENTURE, THE CHARACTERS ARE caught up in an unsolved mass killing in the city of Waterdeep—after the ghost of one of the victims seeks them out.

Sarah of Yellowcrest Manor came to Candlekeep five years ago, courtesy of a Waterdavian apprentice mage named Sirok, who bought the book at a street sale. It was part of a collection once owned by the renowned Yellowcrest family of Waterdeep. As he presented the book as payment for entry into Candlekeep, Sirok told the Avowed priests a grim story of how the patriarch of the family, Lord Yellowcrest, had returned to Waterdeep from a business trip to find his wife, their three children, and the house's four servants all murdered. In the aftermath of this terrible loss, the grieving lord sold all his possessions, then moved away from the city to live out his life in solitude.

Sirok never got around to reading the book, and his story about the Yellowcrests was something he learned from gossiping acquaintances. The dark pedigree of Sirok's donation was soon forgotten, and *Sarah of Yellowcrest Manor* was cataloged and placed into the library's archives, where it has gone unnoticed ever since.

SARAH OF YELLOWCREST MANOR

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins when the ghost of a young woman named Sarah appears before the characters as they peruse the stacks of Candlekeep. The reason that Sarah's ghost is able to manifest for the first time to the characters, after five years of silence, is left to your judgment. The spirit of the murdered woman might be drawn to a character who is dedicated to law or good, one whose background features a similar tragedy, or one who struggled to rise from poverty as she did. Alternatively, if one of the characters has a penchant for reading books from Candlekeep's shelves at random, you might have Sarah appear because her story is being read for the first time since her diary came to the library.

Sarah of Yellowcrest Manor is a nondescript general text, so it fits best in some forgotten corner of the library where tomes of no particular interest are stored. Read or paraphrase the following when you're ready to begin the adventure:

> The air around you grows suddenly chilly. A cloud of vapor begins to shimmer along the nearby shelves, growing thicker around a nondescript leather-bound book. The mist suddenly coalesces into the vague form of a young woman—a translucent spirit wearing a servant's uniform and bearing the symbol of a tree outlined by a rising sun at her shoulder.
>
> The figure weeps aloud, tears running down her cheeks. She opens her mouth as if to speak—which reveals that her tongue is gone. Moaning in anguish, she reaches toward you. Then the mist shreds away to nothing, and the spirit fades.

BOOK DESCRIPTION

Sarah of Yellowcrest Manor is a leather-bound book with brass corner fittings and an intricately carved brass clasp that holds the book shut. Embossing on the cover depicts the same symbol seen on Sarah's uniform—a lemon tree with the rising sun behind it. A character who has the noble background, who has

an extensive knowledge of Waterdeep, or who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (History) check recognizes this as the seal of the Yellowcrest family.

The book's title appears handwritten on the first page, and it is clear that all of its pages were once blank. Only a handful of pages at the end of the book remain so. The rest are filled with handwriting that starts out crude but slowly becomes more elegant, hinting that it was produced by a person learning to write, who then practiced their writing by keeping a diary.

A Humble Life

The pages of *Sarah of Yellowcrest Manor* are a mixture of exercises, drawings, and reminiscences. The earliest pages bear nothing but repetitions of the name "Sarah." Lists of household chores, pending activities, shopping lists, and names take up a full third of the book.

Where the diary begins, the book becomes a firsthand account (written in Common) of the life of Sarah, who describes herself as a servant in the Waterdeep manor of Lord Viallis Yellowcrest and Lady Maria Yellowcrest. The diary entries are not on consecutive pages, and most are undated. In addition to writing about her daily obligations and life in the manor, Sarah also wrote about Lady Maria, who came from a poor family and empathized with Sarah's own lack of education. Lady Maria's genuine affection for Sarah led her to teach the young servant to write, and to give her the leather-bound book that became the diary.

A Glimpse of Darkness

The last entries of the diary, dated just over five years earlier, change in tone as Sarah worries about the strange conduct of Lord Yellowcrest, and his habit of spending too much time with ancient books in his study. The final diary entry reads:

> I stole close to Lord Viallis today, and saw that he had chalked a circle marked with strange runes across the floor of his study. A puddle spread within the circle and appeared to me as bubbling blood. Lord Viallis stood next to it motionless, one of his vile books in hand, and muttered something I could not hear. I slipped away quickly, though I fear he might have heard me this time. I have never been so scared, but I must tell Lady Maria what I have seen. I must!

In her diary, Sarah tried to draw the image of the cover of an old tome Lord Viallis was reading. The sketch shows a monstrous creature with a bulbous head, long arms, tentacles for legs, and multifaceted eyes (see "Lord Viallis's Tome" later in the adventure for more information).

Sarah also attempted to sketch what she remembered of the rune-marked circle. Any character who has proficiency in the Arcana skill and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes the circle as part of a ritual casting of the *contact other plane* spell, and can intuit that the runes Sarah has hastily copied are tied to an entity from the Outer Planes. Characters who do not recognize the circle can seek assistance from one of the Avowed to determine this information.

Yellowcrest Lore

A thorough reading of the diary reveals the broad details of the lives of Sarah and the Yellowcrest family. Alternatively, if the characters call Sarah back (see below) and are able to communicate with her, you can allow the poor servant's spirit to reveal some of this information:

- Yellowcrest Manor stands on Delzorin Street in Waterdeep's North Ward.
- Lord Viallis and Lady Maria had two sons, Malik and Janus, and one daughter, Tianna.
- The family owned several tanneries and shoemaking shops in Waterdeep, but most of its wealth was inherited on Maria's side.
- Lord Viallis's closest business associate was an elf named Faerl, who visited Lord Viallis twice a tenday.
- Sarah had a romantic relationship with a young squire named Vecken, who lived close to the manor on Immar Street.

The details of the murders at Yellowcrest Manor can be learned from a few hours' research into recent Waterdeep history, or by consulting any scholar at the library who has an interest in that history or the noble families of Waterdeep. The public details of the dark event are well known:

- Lord Yellowcrest was away from Waterdeep on business, then returned to find his wife, his sons and daughter, and the manor's four servants brutally murdered. Shocked into a deep depression by the tragedy, Lord Yellowcrest left Waterdeep to be alone with his grief.
- Rumors seemingly spread by members of the City Guard after investigating the murders hinted at some sort of cult activity, but details of the killings were never revealed. No suspects were ever identified or charged.
- The Yellowcrest family had a good reputation, with no hint of personal or public impropriety. No one ever accused the grieving Lord Yellowcrest of having any connection to the murders.

Sarah's Ghost

Grieving Ghost

Sarah was one of the servants killed alongside Lady Maria and the three Yellowcrest children—all murdered by Lord Viallis as part of his willing descent into evil. For five years, the young woman's immortal spirit has been bound within *Sarah of Yellowcrest Manor*. Ever grieving, the spirit has had no way to communicate with the mortal realm—until the presence of the characters draws her forth.

Once she appears for the first time, Sarah (a **ghost**) reappears whenever the characters speak her name in the presence of the book. The anguished state of the young woman's spirit is clear to anyone who sees her.

Sarah understands characters who speak Common and tries to respond to them, but she can't speak because Lord Viallis cut out her tongue before killing her. The ghost tries to communicate through moaning whispers and by pointing the characters to the parts of her diary that hint at Lord Viallis's evil.

Sarah's ghost is bound to the diary and can't move farther than 30 feet from the book. If the book is destroyed, the ghost is able to move freely and redoubles her efforts to seek justice for the dead.

What Sarah Knows

A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check or who is able to calm the ghost with appropriate roleplaying can glean some information from Sarah's mournful moaning:

- Lord Viallis Yellowcrest was responsible for the murders of his wife, his children, Sarah, and three other servants, all of whom were killed as part of a dark ritual. (The trauma Sarah suffered has occluded her memories of the details of the ritual and of her own death.)
- The book that Sarah observed Viallis reading was the source of the ritual, and a work of evil.
- The souls of Lady Maria, Malik, Janus, and Tianna have not moved on since their deaths. All four are trapped in the mortal realm until their physical remains can be buried in hallowed ground.
- The remains of those victims are missing. Sarah doesn't know what happened to them, but she is certain that Lord Viallis has something to do with it.

Sarah's anguished state of mind means that she can share no information other than what is noted above. Though she has all the abilities of a ghost, Sarah has no wish to harm anyone. You might allow her to use her Possession action to speak what she knows through one of the characters if needed.

What Really Happened

Five years ago, Lord Viallis murdered his family, Sarah, and three other servants as part of a ritual to contact an otherworldly entity. The ritual was successful, and with the magic circle he had scribed, Viallis established contact with a Great Old One called Gaernoo. This aberrant patron offered to grant Lord Viallis arcane powers in exchange for establishing a cult dedicated to Gaernoo.

Lord Viallis, empowered by Gaernoo's otherworldly magic and wanting to get away from talk of his family's death, moved to the village of Greenfast, a day's travel southeast of Waterdeep and the home of his business partner, Faerl. Claiming that he wanted to have his family interred close to him, he took the remains of his wife and children along, with evil intent. For the last five years, Viallis has been building a cult to Gaernoo around himself, calling it the Burnt Tongue Cult for the sacrifice that new members must make before being accepted.

Lord Viallis's Tome

The crude sketch composed by Sarah shows the monster on the leather-bound cover of the book Lord Viallis was reading. This creature is a representation of the statue in area B7 of the temple of the Burnt Tongue Cult. Knowing that Candlekeep is

the best possible place to learn about a mysterious book, the characters can spend a day or two in diligent research to turn up references in other works to a book whose cover matches Sarah's sketch—a tome called *Retribution of the Ancients*.

That work is not a part of Candlekeep's collection, but several of the Avowed know it by reputation. It is a dark work of ritual magic, its contents potentially deadly in the wrong hands.

Secrets in Waterdeep

Accepting Sarah's mission to seek the truth of what happened at Yellowcrest Manor and to locate the remains of Lady Maria and her three children takes the characters to Waterdeep, which holds the first clues in the mystery. Like all other books in Candlekeep, *Sarah of Yellowcrest Manor* cannot be removed from the library, so make it clear to the characters that Sarah's ghost has revealed all she knows. The characters can have the book copied at the usual rates to have a way of referencing Sarah's notes and sketches, but you can also assume that they remember any necessary information from the book as the adventure continues.

To get the characters into the mystery as quickly as possible, their trip to Waterdeep unfolds with no problems or random encounters, unless you determine otherwise. The easiest way for characters without access to teleportation magic to travel from Candlekeep to the City of Splendors is to sail up the Sword Coast. Many merchant ship captains offer to carry adventurers as passengers for free, in exchange for their assistance if anything goes wrong along the way.

Yellowcrest Manor

The former Yellowcrest Manor is easily located, either by using Sarah's directions from the diary or asking in Waterdeep. Though no members of the Yellowcrest family remain in the city, their name is still well known because many people remember the terrible tragedy.

The manor is on Delzorin Street in the North Ward, and it is now home to the Falgarst family. Characters who present themselves at the estate are met by a well-dressed butler at the front door. Arnulf (a lawful neutral human **commoner**) is a short, balding man with a warm smile and a fine mustache, who gives off a faint scent of wine. He is amicable and conversational, especially if he has already undertaken his daily "inspection" of the Falgarst family's wine cellar.

Family Business

Arnulf knows the history of the house well, including the public details of the horrific murders. Though he expresses honest sadness for the fate of the Yellowcrest family and their servants, a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check made while speaking to the butler confirms that he finds the tale exciting for the dark reputation it gives the manor.

If the characters make it clear that they mean no trouble for the Falgarst family, effective roleplaying or a successful DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check inspires the butler to share what he knows. Offering Arnulf any alcoholic beverage grants advantage on the check, and magic such as a *charm person* spell guarantees an automatic success.

Arnulf can reveal any of the following details:

- The manor was previously owned by the Yellowcrest family, most of whom were killed one night.
- Though full details of the event were never made public, rumor holds that Lady Maria, her three children, and four servants were all stabbed to death, then had their tongues removed.
- The sole survivor of the family was Lord Viallis, who was allegedly away from the city that day.
- After the murders, Viallis sold the manor and all his family's possessions, then moved to a small village in the countryside.
- A few tanneries, leatherworkers' shops, and cobblers' shops in the Trades Ward reportedly still belong to Lord Viallis, but if he has ever returned to Waterdeep, Arnulf doesn't know about it.

Yellowcrest Businesses

A few hours of asking around the Trades Ward enables the characters to identify the three cobblers' shops, two leatherworkers' shops, and two tanneries still owned by Lord Viallis. The Yellowcrest businesses are all nondescript, and none of the workers or managers know Lord Viallis personally or know anything of his whereabouts, except that he lives "out in the country somewhere."

The characters can get on the good side of one of the cobblers or tannery managers working for Viallis with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check or 10 gp in bribes. Doing so earns them the knowledge that Lord Viallis has an overseer who comes once every second tenday to check the books of each enterprise, pay wages, and collect profits. The overseer, an elf named Faerl, lives in the village of Greenfast southeast of Waterdeep, and is expected in the city in two days.

The characters are free to head for the village in search of more clues, in which you can case skip to the "Greenfast" section later in the adventure. They can also wait in Waterdeep to try to talk to Faerl. The overseer arrives two days later, and spends that day visiting each business in turn. Characters who stake out any of those locations can see Faerl as he arrives just after noon in a private coach, which barely fits along the narrow Trades Ward streets

where the Yellowcrest businesses are located. His bodyguards include two **cult fanatics**, three **thugs**, and two **veterans**—all on horseback. The driver of the coach is an unarmed **commoner**. The characters can easily perceive that this is an unusually large entourage, even for someone carrying money.

Faerl

Faerl, a neutral evil wood elf, is proud and cruel. He believes that he must be in control at all times. He dresses in pompous finery and an oversized red hat. He speaks precisely, but in a volume so low that it forces people to pay close attention to him.

Faerl uses the **noble** stat block with the following changes:

- He speaks Common and Elvish.
- He has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Personality Trait. "Others are beneath me. My position in the cult ensures my future."

Ideal. "My loyalty to the cult is critical to its success. I must lead by example."

Bond. "With my loyal assistance, Lord Viallis will surely take over Waterdeep one day."

Flaw. "My standing makes it important that nothing happen to me. If it's necessary that others sacrifice themselves for my security, so be it."

Faerl

Speaking of the Past

As long as the characters approach in a nonthreatening way, Faerl is willing to talk to them, though his bodyguards stand close by. Faerl pretends to take an interest in any talk of the characters looking into the Yellowcrest murders, calling the fact that no one was ever charged with the crime "a terrible injustice." If asked about Lord Viallis, Faerl describes him as "broken by the tragedy." He denies that his employer could have had anything to do with those terrible events if any character suggests it.

Faerl's loyalty to the Burnt Tongue Cult and Lord Viallis is absolute, making him impervious to bribery and intimidation attempts. If magic such as a *charm person* spell is used to influence his attitude toward one or more characters, Faerl refuses to mention the cult, even to characters to whom he is friendly, so as not to incriminate himself. He calls the City Watch if the party gives him trouble.

If the characters express their intention to question Lord Viallis, Faerl orders his bodyguards to attack while he climbs back in the coach and tries to leave. If he gets away, he returns to Greenfast, where the characters might encounter him again.

Street Fight

If Faerl orders his bodyguards to attack, or if any character attacks him or the bodyguards first, the bodyguards do their best to protect Faerl and ensure that he escapes in the coach. They then lay into the characters without mercy. The cult fanatics cast *command* or *hold person* on melee combatants, hoping that the veterans and the thugs can dispatch them quickly. The thugs focus on the same target to make use of their Pack Tactics feature.

When more than half the bodyguards have fallen, the others surrender. All are Waterdeep mercenaries on long-term contract to guard Faerl when he visits the city. They don't know Lord Viallis personally and know nothing of the cult, but they can provide the following information about Faerl and Lord Viallis:

- Faerl met Lord Viallis in Waterdeep years ago and became his business partner. Faerl lives in the village of Greenfast southeast of Waterdeep, where Lord Viallis also lives now.
- The profits from the Yellowcrest businesses generate a tidy sum that funds Viallis's retirement.
- The bodyguards were to accompany Faerl back to Greenfast that evening with the latest profits from the Yellowcrest businesses, then make their way back to Waterdeep after being paid.

Treasure. If the characters overcome Faerl and the bodyguards and prevent Faerl from leaving, a search of the coach turns up a locked iron strongbox. Faerl carries the key. As an action, a character

can try to pick the lock using thieves' tools, doing so with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, or pry the box open with a successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check. Inside are the profits from the establishments Faerl has already visited that day—35 gp and 400 sp.

Faerl carries a *potion of healing* (superior) in his belt and 20 gp in a leather pouch. He wears jewelry worth a total of 20 gp.

Sir Vecken of the Broken Horn

While in Waterdeep, the characters might also think to seek out Vecken, the former paramour mentioned by Sarah in her diary. Asking around the vicinity of Yellowcrest Manor (or asking Arnulf the butler) reveals that Vecken still lives on Immar Street, a few blocks away from the manor.

All the people in the area know Vecken and speak of him as an example of bravery and perseverance. After Sarah was killed five years ago, Vecken joined an adventuring company and made a name for himself. A well-known sortie against a bandit lord south of Neverwinter earned him the nickname "Sir Vecken of the Broken Horn," after his horned helmet was nearly cloven in two during the fight. A year ago, he returned to Waterdeep to live with his father, Yacken, and has since retired from adventuring.

Sir Vecken

Sir Vecken

Vecken (a lawful good human **knight**) is a burly figure, heavily scarred but with a pleasant disposition. He turned to adventuring to help him move past the death of his beloved Sarah, and he becomes noticeably distraught when speaking of her.

Personality Trait. "We all have a moral obligation to protect the weak and the innocent, and I will do so at any cost."

Ideal. "Good will prevail as long as the strong stand against evil."

Bond. "My frail father needs my care. It is good that I gave up my adventuring life."

Flaw. "When anger and grief take hold of me, there is little I can do to control myself."

Dark Memories

Vecken is at home when the characters call, and he is initially pleased to see them. He assumes they are adventurers he must have met and forgotten about during his earlier days. When the characters make the reason for their visit known, he grows visibly grim but invites them into his home for tea. In the living room, Vecken's old helmet with its shattered horn hangs above the fireplace hearth.

Vecken is sympathetic to the characters' objectives because he still feels the pain of Sarah's death five years ago. Any talk of the characters having spoken to Sarah's ghost reduces him to tears. Through the course of their conversation with him, Vecken can reveal the following information:

- After the murders, the remains of Sarah and the other three servants were interred in the public cemetery, Waterdeep's City of the Dead. The remains of Lady Maria and her children were not.
- Vecken remembers talk of Lord Viallis wanting his wife and children to be interred near his new home, so that he need never return to Waterdeep to visit them.

Vecken doesn't know that Lord Viallis has relocated to Greenfast. If the characters share this information with him, he grows thoughtful, then says that he has heard from former compatriots of recent trouble along the roads in that area. South of Waterdeep, travelers are being robbed of valuable relics and jewelry, and more than a few have disappeared, their bodies never found.

Vecken's Retribution

If the characters ask Vecken to join their investigation, the warrior demurs, telling them he would rather let the past fade. In truth, he won't join the characters because their unexpected news has inspired thoughts of vengeance that he wants to undertake on his own. As soon as the characters leave him, Vecken dons his armor and weapons

and heads for Greenfast by horse. Assuming the characters don't set out for Greenfast immediately by faster means, the warrior arrives at the village ahead of them, confronts cultists on the road, and is captured. See area B11 of the temple of the Burnt Tongue Cult for more information.

Greenfast

The village of Greenfast is located a day's travel southeast of Waterdeep. Characters can easily obtain directions to the small farming settlement, which lies a short distance off the Trade Way, along a broad creek flowing into the Dessarin River. Greenfast is a prosperous community whose farmers take advantage of their proximity to the Trade Way to sell to both Waterdeep and Daggerford.

Lord Viallis is well known in the village, though any people the characters talk to describe the retired noble as a quiet person who keeps to himself. All the villagers know about the tragedy of five years before. They also know that when Viallis moved to Greenfast, he announced his plans to rebuild an old tower an hour away as a private estate. Not much has happened at the site as far as the villagers are aware, though construction and renovations are slowly ongoing, and Viallis is known to have a number of workers living at the tower. (Viallis's talk of rebuilding the abandoned tower is a cover for his sinister activities, as the characters will discover.)

Viallis lives in a comfortable house (see area G3), but he is not home when the characters arrive. The village features other places the characters might go and a number of NPCs they might talk to as they search for clues about what the evil noble is up to.

Greenfast Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of Greenfast.

G1. Mayor's House

The largest building in the village is the home of Mayor Kara Firenni (a neutral good human **commoner**), who is busy working in her garden if the characters seek her out. Mayor Kara is middle-aged and wears her hair in a short ponytail. She is a good and compassionate leader, but shows clear signs of stress as the characters talk to her.

Kara's Fears. If asked about Viallis, Kara says that the noble keeps to himself and that she barely knows him. Her manner is unusually brusque, and any character who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check can tell that she is hiding something. With appropriate roleplaying or a successful DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check, a character can convince her to speak openly.

Kara knows that Viallis is creating some sort of following, having attracted many admirers who now live in and around the village. She doesn't know the full extent of his activities, nor does she have any idea that he and his secret cult are responsible for the increasing number of travelers disappearing along the Trade Way.

Two months ago, Kara's sister, Yaeda, fell under Viallis's sway and went to what Kara calls the noble's "new estate" (the cult's temple). She believes that Yaeda is working for or romantically involved with Viallis, not knowing that he holds her prisoner. Kara has never been to the estate and has no idea of the extent of Viallis's activities there, but she can give the characters directions if they share what they suspect about Viallis and promise to bring Yaeda back.

G2. The Bulging Cauldron

This tavern has a warm, homey feel, filled with locals at mealtimes and the end of the workday. Travelers stop in more rarely, and the proprietor, Old Fargo (a chaotic good human **commoner**), is happy to serve them. Fargo is recognizable by his old flannel shirt and riding hat. The tavern has two spare rooms on the second floor that can be rented out by the day or tenday.

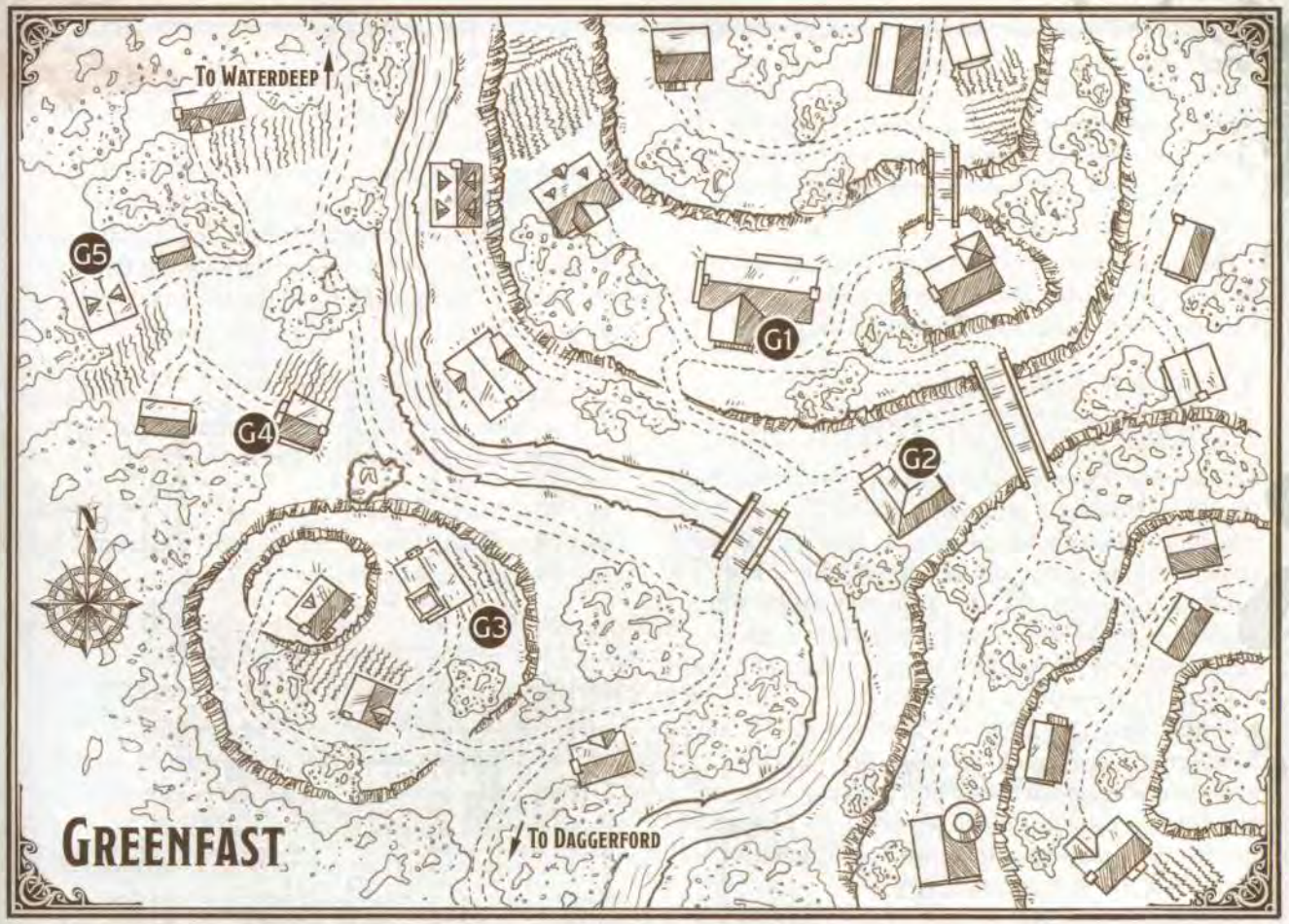
Old Fargo's Suspicions. Old Fargo has long distrusted Lord Viallis, instinctively seeing him as a bad sort, but he keeps his thoughts to himself unless the characters engage him in conversation. With appropriate roleplaying or a successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check, he describes Viallis as a collector of sycophants who uses wealth to try to impress people. His son, Young Fargo, fell into Viallis's circle of influence a month ago, and Old Fargo hasn't seen him since. He knows that Viallis and his followers are said to be building an estate away from the village, and he can give the characters directions there.

If the characters share their suspicions about Viallis being involved in the Yellowcrest murders or other dark business (especially if they have learned of the cult after a fight at the barn at area G5), Old Fargo becomes distraught and begs them to rescue his son from Viallis's grasp.

G3. Lord Viallis's House

Lord Viallis bought this comfortable home when he left Waterdeep, but he has spent little time here over the past year as the cult's activities have ramped up. The front and back doors are locked, and the windows are shuttered and curtained. As an action, a character can try to open a door or window using thieves' tools, doing so with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check, or force open a door or window with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

Inside, the house appears almost abandoned. Only the kitchen and the main room show signs of recent



use, and the place holds nothing of importance or value. (Lord Viallis has moved all his important belongings out of the village and into the cult's temple.)

G4. Faerl's House

The residence of Viallis's overseer is a comfortable cottage whose main room doubles as an office. The place is filled with business records and correspondence, all of which concern Lord Viallis's business and none of which appear suspicious or out of the ordinary.

If the characters came to Greenfast without meeting Faerl in Waterdeep, you can have them find the overseer at home if you see fit. Use the details in the "Yellowcrest Businesses" section and the information on Faerl there to shape the conversation. If the characters threaten him or ask questions that indicate they know more about the cult than Faerl likes, the overseer makes a point of opening a window "to get some air." This is a signal to the cultists at the barn (area G5) to come running.

G5. Barn

Two **cult fanatics** and two **veterans**—neutral evil humans loyal to Viallis—work here by day. They keep an eye out for trouble and keep their ears open for word of nondescript travelers passing through the area. When Viallis needs new sacrifices, the cultists snatch victims along the Trade Way at night. (If at least one day passes between the characters meeting Vecken and arriving in Greenfast, the cultists' most recent expedition ended with the capture of the vengeful warrior. See area B11.)

The cultists pay close attention to Faerl's house (area G4) and to any strangers in the village. If the characters ask them any questions about Viallis, the cultists respond by attacking. If they see the previously agreed-upon signal of a window being opened in Faerl's house, they go there immediately, ready for trouble.

Use the guidelines in the "Street Fight" section earlier to run the encounter if the cultists and the characters face off. Unlike the mercenaries in Waterdeep, these villains know a great deal of information that they share if they are defeated and threatened:

- Lord Viallis is the leader of what he calls the Burnt Tongue Cult, and he has made Greenfast the center of the cult's activities.
- Viallis worships a dark entity called Gaernoo, whose power he channels by sacrificing prisoners. This otherworldly patron provides Lord Viallis with aberrant creatures to command.

- Lord Viallis took over an old ruin outside the village, wanting to turn it into an estate. The work at the site is a ruse for opening up and rebuilding a series of subterranean chambers, which now constitute the cult's temple. With the temple completed, Lord Viallis has ordered the cult's activities to be stepped up.

The cultists know nothing of the whereabouts of the remains of Lady Maria and her children. Lord Viallis never speaks of his life before the cult.

Temple of the Burnt Tongue Cult

An hour out of Greenfast stands an old stone tower, long abandoned and crumbling. When Lord Viallis came to Greenfast after murdering his family, Faerl showed him the tower, thinking that Viallis might consider it a suitable site for a summer home. But Viallis, already well involved in his plans to make contact with the Great Old One called Gaernoo, saw even more potential for the site.

For five years, Viallis has led and nurtured a cult to Gaernoo, whose members have been working to reclaim the ruined tower site, creating a temple within the subterranean levels below. Though the cult remains small in numbers, it has grand ambitions.

Crumbling Tower

When the characters approach the tower site, read the following:

> Amid a grove of gnarled scrub trees stands a half-fallen stone tower. Rough workers' tents, piles of timbers, and tools scattered about show that the site appears to be under reconstruction, though little headway seems to have been made in restoring the tower to its former glory.

As the characters draw closer, it becomes clear that the signs of construction are largely spurious. The timbers that might have been used to shore up and help rebuild the tower walls are years old and beginning to rot. The tools are rusted. The tents show signs of recent occupation (cultists who don't live in the village bunk here, near the temple) but contain no personal effects.

Characters who search the site can see that inside the tower, a stone staircase leads down into darkness. The cultists, overconfident after years of having their operations ignored, have set no guards protecting access to what lies below.

Temple Features

The tower and its basement levels are of ancient construction, their original purpose long forgotten by the area's residents.

Ceilings throughout the temple are 10 feet high and flat. All areas of the upper level of the temple are illuminated by braziers, lamps, or magical light. All areas of the lower level are dark except for the the south cell in area B11 and the training room (area B12).

Temple Locations

The locations in the underground temple are keyed to the map of the Temple of the Burnt Tongue.

B1. Antechamber

Characters who descend the stairs in the crumbling tower arrive at this chamber.

> The stairs descend thirty feet before opening up into a chamber of worked stone. Two braziers flank the entrance, burning with an unnatural aquamarine light. Pillars stand in two rows, each carved with the visages of otherworldly creatures. A fountain flows quietly at the far end of the room in front of a double door. Another door stands along the west wall, and the wall opposite that appears to have collapsed, revealing a rough passageway beyond.

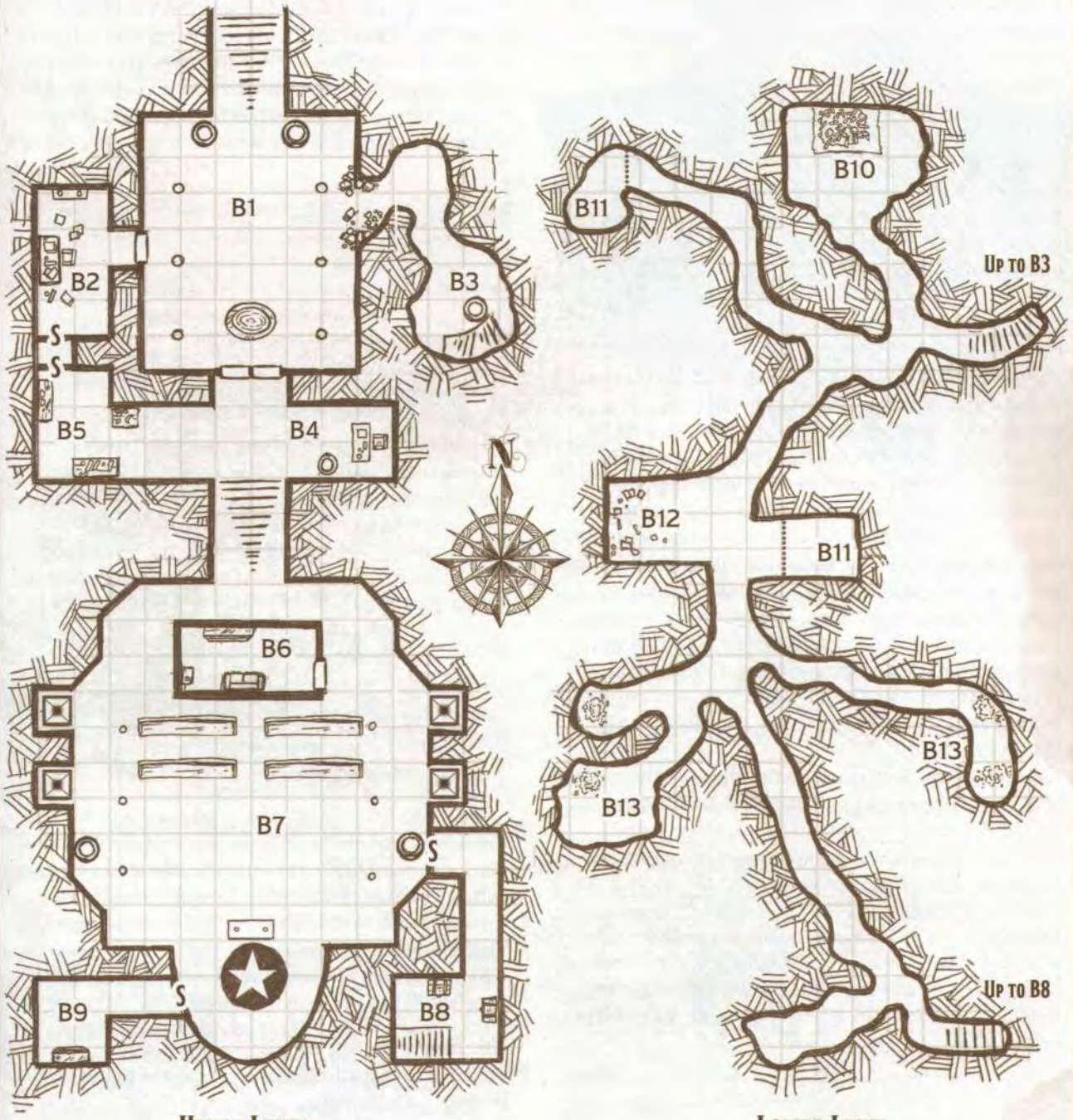
Two **grells** and four **cultists** stand guard in this chamber. If the characters made any obvious noise as they descended the stairs (including talking), these guardians try to hide along the walls adjacent to the stairs, behind the braziers—the cultists on the ground and the grells in the air. Combat here alerts the cult fanatic in area B3, who flees to area B7 to warn Lord Viallis of intruders.

Fountain. The fountain holds crystal-clear water and has a silver cup sitting on its edge. A *detect magic* spell reveals an aura of divination magic in the water, one sip of which bestows the effect of the *guidance* cantrip. A creature that gains this benefit can't do so again until the next dawn. Water taken from the fountain loses its magic after 10 minutes.

West Door. The door into area B2 is locked. Lord Viallis carries the key. As an action, a character can try to pick the lock using thieves' tools, doing so with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check, or force open the door with a successful DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check.

South Doors. This double door is unlocked.

Temple of the Burnt Tongue Cult



1 square = 5 feet

B2. Arcane Study

> Bundles of papers, diagrams, scrolls, and books lie scattered on a desk and across the floor of this room, which is lit by two glowing crystal spheres on a shelf along the north wall.

Lord Viallis studies magic in this room, which is off limits to his cultists. The papers are covered with formulas and schematics, recognizable as related to arcane magic by anyone who has proficiency in the Arcana skill.

The book *Retribution of the Ancients* sits on the table. In addition to describing various dark rituals, this tome serves as Lord Viallis's spellbook and contains the following spells: *cone of cold*, *contact other plane*, *counterspell*, *darkness*, *detect magic*, fear, fireball, greater invisibility, fly, ice storm, mage *armor*, *magic missile*, *misty step*, *polymorph*, *ray of sickness*, *shield*, and *suggestion*.

Pitfall Trap. The glowing spheres on the shelf are two cracked *driftglobes* that can no longer float or give off their *daylight* effect. Removing either orb from the shelf triggers a trap. A character who searches the area for traps and succeeds on a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check notes a slight depression in the floor in front of the shelf that warns of the trap. Triggering the trap causes any creature standing next to the shelf to fall 20 feet, landing prone in the north cell of area B11 and taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. Though the trap's trigger is magical, the floor must be lifted and set into place again for the trap to be reset. Before the trap is reset, a character can climb back up into this area from area B11 with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check.

Secret Door. A character who searches the south wall for secret doors finds one with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. Once found, the door can be slid sideways to reveal a short passage with an identical secret door at the far end. No check is needed to find the second secret door, as both doors are obvious to anyone in the short hallway that separates areas B2 and B5.

Treasure. Inside the desk drawer are two golden medallions worth 125 gp each. A wooden box on the table contains a *chime of opening*.

B3. Dungeon Access

> The tunnel that opens up through the crumbling wall of the antechamber is illuminated by a single brazier. At the end of the passage, a set of curving stone stairs descends farther down into darkness.

If the characters reach this area without making any sound, they find a single **cult fanatic** stationed at the stairs. If alerted to the characters' intrusion (such as by combat in area B1), the fanatic flees down the stairs, races along the tunnels of the lower level, up into area B8, and through the secret door into area B7 to alert Lord Viallis.

B4. Office

The lack of a door along the stairs to the chapel (area B7) means that characters going into this area or area B5 might attract the attention of the cultists in the chapel—or might be already in view from the foot of the stairs if Viallis has been warned of the characters' approach (see area B3 above).

> Books and trinkets are spread across a wooden desk set in this alcove chamber, which is lit by a burning brazier.

The trinkets are worthless, mysterious-looking objects. The books appear to be registries of purchases, as well as lists of items and people. These documents, created by Faerl, have nothing to do with the cult's activities but look important at a glance. Lord Viallis leaves them here to test security; if any of them go missing, Viallis knows his temple has been infiltrated by a spy or a thief. A character who spends at least 10 minutes examining the books can ascertain their lack of importance with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check.

B5. Symbol Workshop

> A bronze oil lamp burns on one of two tables in this area, both of which hold woodcarving tools and strange wooden objects.

Cultists work here to craft the wooden symbols that mark membership in the cult—a distended tongue with a torn root. Fifty newly carved symbols are spread across both tables, hinting at the scope of Viallis's expansion plans.

Secret Door. The north wall contains a secret door similar to the one in area B2.

B6. Study

This area is set within the larger space of area B7. Its door is unlocked.

> A glowing crystal sphere illuminates this chamber, which has a wooden floor and contains a couch and a tall bookcase.

Treasure. The bookcase holds a collection of debased literature, dark mythology, studies of aberrant magic, and mad treatises on elder gods. Lord Viallis has been building this collection for years for the benefit of his followers. The collection can be sold to a discerning purchaser for 300 gp. Alternatively, if brought to Candlekeep and donated, it might earn the characters favors and benefits as you see fit.

B7. Dark Chapel

If Lord Viallis has been alerted to the characters' presence, three **cult fanatics** are at the bottom of the north stairs watching for anyone approaching from area B4. These cultists hide along the walls as the characters descend the stairs, attacking as soon as they enter the chapel.

> This huge space has the appearance of a chapel, its walls carved with unnatural imagery. A large alcove to the south contains a huge, purple stone statue of a monstrous, otherworldly creature with a large, bulbous head, long arms, tentacles for legs, and multifaceted eyes glowing with aquamarine light. Two bodies are draped over an altar in front of the statue, and standing over them is a tall, bald man clutching a bloody knife. He is flanked by two robed cultists, and floating nearby is a hideous creature that looks like a giant, tentacled brain.

Lord Viallis Yellowcrest (a chaotic evil human **mage**) is performing a lengthy ritual that requires his undivided attention. He is surrounded by servants (see below), a bloodstained knife in his hand. The bodies of two adult humans lie dead on the altar in front of the statue, having just been sacrificed. See the "Lord Viallis" sidebar for additional guidance on how to portray this mad villain.

A **grell** and two **cultists** stand beside Lord Viallis but break off from the ritual to repel intruders, leaving him to finish it alone.

At the start of round 2, the characters see the bodies consumed by aquamarine fire and reduced to bone and ash, from which another **grell** emerges. Viallis and this second grell then join the fight in round 3.

If the characters reached this area without making an undue amount of noise (and if the guard in area B3 did not come here to warn of the characters' intrusion), three **cult fanatics** lurk behind the statue—the same three who watch the north stairs if Lord Viallis is expecting trouble. They join the fray.

Faerl is also here if he was able to flee Waterdeep and you did not choose to have the characters meet him at his house. He is reclining on one of the pews.

Viallis Yellowcrest

Without his coterie of bodyguards to protect him, he tries to flee the scene (and the temple) as soon as the battle starts.

Cult Tactics. Lord Viallis has already cast *mage armor* on himself, and he expended his 5th-level spell slot to fuel the ritual. He wears a *robe of scintillating colors* and uses his action to activate it if pressed in melee. In a pocket of the robe, he has a *spell scroll* of *teleport* that he uses to escape to a location of your choice if the battle appears lost.

> **Lord Viallis**
>
> Lord Viallis leads the Burnt Tongue Cult, conducting evil rituals and humanoid sacrifices in the name of his patron. Viallis is under the direct influence of an otherworldly entity called Gaernoo, and is gathering followers in the out-of-the-way village of Greenfast in the hope of one day returning to Waterdeep with a full-fledged cult. He fights fiercely when surrounded by his lackeys but tries to flee if things start to fall apart.
>
> ***Personality Trait.*** "I am superior. Those lesser than I do not deserve my attention."
>
> ***Ideal.*** "Gaernoo gifts us with insight. The knowledge from beyond the veil will open our eyes."
>
> ***Bond.*** "My soul belongs to Gaernoo."
>
> ***Flaw.*** "I must think about things, then think again. Decisions cannot be made quickly."

Pits. Four pits stand in alcoves along the sides of the chapel. After each sacrifice, the cultists throw the ashes and bones of the victims down these shafts to area B13 below.

Treasure. In addition to his *robe of scintillating colors* and *spell scroll* of *teleport*, Lord Viallis carries the keys to area B2 and the cells in area B11. A number of objects are arranged around the altar as offerings, including five gold bracelets (worth 150 gp each) amid various worthless trinkets.

Secret Doors. Characters who search the room for secret doors and succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check find sliding wall sections to either side of the altar. These secret doors open easily and reveal passages to area B8 and area B9.

B8. Secret Vault

A short hallway runs from the secret door in area B7 to stairs leading down.

> Two wooden chests are the only objects to be seen in this dark room, which has a staircase leading down.

Treasure. Both chests are unlocked, and they hold valuables the prisoners in area B11 had on them when they were taken: a longsword, two daggers, a pair of jeweled earrings worth 150 gp, and 115 gp. If the characters are captured by the cultists and moved to either cell, their belongings end up here as well.

B9. Secret Library

> This small, dark chamber holds a golden urn resting atop a small table and a bookcase stuffed with books and scrolls, many of them old and worn.

The books and scrolls contain arcane formulas, alchemical recipes, ritual instructions, and lore about the Outer Planes, half of which is written in Deep Speech. Interspersed among the older books are several newer journals written by Lord Viallis.

Characters who spend a few minutes reading through the lore here learn any information they might have missed about the murders at Yellowcrest Manor. Additionally, one journal reveals that Viallis placed the cremated remains of his wife and three children in a golden urn that he sometimes uses as a focus for his dark rituals. The golden urn mentioned in this journal is the same one that rests on the table. The urn is engraved with arcane sigils relating to the Outer Planes. It holds ashes—the remains of Lady Maria and her children—and radiates an aura of necromancy magic to a *detect magic* spell.

B10. Ossuary

> This dark, dead-end chamber holds a mound of charred bones, desiccated body parts, and skulls scattered across a linen sheet. Strange red-black runes mark the sheet's edges, seemingly scribed in blood.

On Gaernoo's instructions, Lord Viallis and the cultists have been gathering the remains of dozens of ritually slain victims in this area. A character who has proficiency in the Arcana skill or who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check can interpret the runes to realize that these remains are being collected to fuel a huge ritual at a later date—one that will ultimately require hundreds of victims.

B11. Cells

These two cells—one to the north and one to the south—are closed off by locked iron-bar doors. Lord Viallis carries the keys that unlock the doors. As an action, a character can try to pick a door's lock using thieves' tools, doing so with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check.

North Cell. This cell, which lies beneath the trap in area B2, is empty when the characters first arrive at the temple.

South Cell. This cell holds six prisoners, including Yaeda Firenni, Mayor Kara's sister. Though she originally joined Lord Viallis willingly, Yaeda was imprisoned after the full scope of the cult was revealed to her and she tried to flee. She is in poor health; treat her as an unarmed **commoner** with 4 levels of exhaustion.

If Vecken got to Greenfast ahead of the characters, he is also one of the prisoners. The warrior tells the characters that their news inspired him to seek his own vengeance for Sarah, but he was captured when he took on a squad of cultists looking for victims along the Trade Way. Vecken has been reduced to 25 hit points. Though injured, he is healthy enough to escort the other prisoners to safety if the characters have more of the temple to explore.

The four remaining prisoners include three unarmed **commoners** and a child noncombatant. Their names are Jalrax, Durz, Seffra, and Ashlan. They were part of a caravan attacked by the cultists a few days earlier. Two of their companions (the unfortunate victims in the chapel) were taken from the cell a few hours earlier.

B12. Acolytes' Training Room

Scrolls and notes are spread across the floor of this worked stone alcove. Four recent recruits of the Burnt Tongue Cult (three **cultists** and one **cult fanatic**) normally work here to learn and practice spellcasting. You can make the encounter tougher

by adding two **gricks** that act as watchdogs. If the cultist from area B3 passed through here to warn Lord Viallis of intruders, the creatures in this area are waiting for the characters and ready to fight. If they have not been warned, the gricks remain alert but the cultists are distracted as they try to cast a spell under the cult fanatic's watchful eye.

Familiar Face. One of the recruits bears a noticeable resemblance to Old Fargo and is his son, Young Fargo. He fights as furiously as the other cultists but loses his zeal if the characters subdue him. In the aftermath of the fight, appropriate roleplaying or a successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check can help the young man understand that Viallis has corrupted and used him.

Treasure. A search of the scrolls on the floor turns up a *spell scroll* of *counterspell*.

B13. Sacrificial Remains

Mounds of ash and bone dropped down from area B7 after Lord Viallis's rituals are piled up in these locations.

Conclusion

When the characters have ended the threat of the cultists, the threads of the mystery in *Sarah of Yellowcrest Manor* can be connected.

Aftermath in Greenfast

Learning about the actions of the Burnt Tongue Cult shocks the folk of Greenfast and neighboring communities. They undertake the process of clearing out the cult site, making what restitution they can to Viallis's victims, and collapsing the tower to seal off the entrance to the temple. The attacks along the Trade Way drop off immediately. The farm folk are grateful to the characters for their actions, and vow to become more watchful for unseen threats.

Fate of Lord Viallis

If the zealous cult leader died in his showdown with the characters, the cult is no more. Because Viallis shared none of his magical knowledge with his followers, any cultists who might have escaped have no connection to Gaernoo or the entity's power.

If the characters keep Lord Viallis alive, they can deliver him to Waterdeep for justice. The crazed cult leader freely admits his guilt before his execution, and the tragic tale of the Yellowcrest family comes to a close.

If Lord Viallis teleports out of the temple, his destination is for you to decide. Though he has lost the fruits of all his labor, his connection to Gaernoo remains strong, and he starts work immediately to regain what he has lost. Whether he returns to Waterdeep or emerges in some other location, his plots might spawn new adventures for the party.

Retribution of the Ancients

As a unique tome, *Retribution of the Ancients* can be used to gain entry to Candlekeep. Given its dangerous nature, donating the book might also earn the characters special favor from those among the Avowed who are pleased to know that its rituals can no longer be misused.

Young Fargo

If the characters spare Young Fargo's life, they come to understand that as a new initiate, the young man had not yet been exposed to the worst of the cult's depravities. In time, he is able to come to terms with what he has done and make amends. A grateful Old Fargo offers the characters the hospitality of the Bulging Cauldron, free of charge, whenever they pass through Greenfast.

Final Rest

The ashes of Lady Maria and her three children must be spread in hallowed ground to grant them eternal rest. Any of the mausoleums in the City of the Dead in Waterdeep would be a suitable location.

As the ashes are interred, the spectral forms of Lady Maria, Malik, Janus, and Tianna materialize before the characters. In silence, Lady Maria hugs her three children close to her as she meets each character's gaze. Sarah's ghost appears, her connection to the diary broken as her quest is fulfilled. The five spirits then vanish, their forms scattering like flower petals on the wind.

If Vecken is present, he weeps upon seeing Sarah again, then thanks the characters for what they've done after all the spirits have passed on. Vecken might remain a lifelong friend to the characters, and his own exploits could provide inspiration for future adventures.

AN ADVENTURE FOR 8TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

LORE OF LURUE

WRITTEN BY KELLY LYNNE D'ANGELO
DEVELOPED & EDITED BY KIM MOHAN

LORE OF LURUE IS THE WORK OF ECAMANE Truesilver, the first High Mage of Silverymoon, at the behest of the lesser deity Lurue the Unicorn. It was later added to Ecamane's personal library, where it collected dust long after Ecamane's death in 712 DR. Eventually, the book made its way into the hands of a young and eager traveling monk, Ulraunt. He thought that the book would be an appropriate offering for his entrance into Candlekeep, and right he was. After being accepted, the book was stored in the library's archives. The book offers a look into the history behind the founding of one of the most prominent cities in Faerûn, Silverymoon.

In actuality, *Lore of Lurue* is an enchanted storybook—one that, if read, could bestow upon its reader gifts and blessings. The moment the characters open the book, they are transported to a demiplane in the heart of a forest. From there, they are set on a course that leads them to investigate a blight that has arisen in the woods. It's up to them to find the source of this corruption and expunge it from the world. What is causing this disruption, and what is its purpose?

FINDING THE BOOK

Characters in Candlekeep might discover *Lore of Lurue* in its place on the shelves, or elsewhere in the library, in one of several ways, including:

- Assisting one of the Great Readers of Candlekeep by helping them sort a pile of books that need to be reshelved
- Talking to a scholar about books that describe ancient conflicts between deities
- Examining the History of Faerûn section of the library

Whether the book is shelved or not, it captures the characters' attention the first time any of them sets eyes on it. If it's unearthed from within a pile, it stands out immediately because of its rich purple leather covers and the golden relief of a unicorn's head that adorns the front cover.

LORE OF LURUE

If the book has been properly put away, on a high shelf in the History of Faerûn section marked "Silverymoon," the vibrant color of its leather outshines the dusty tomes on either side of it. The title appears on the spine in elaborate gold calligraphy. Someone who looks closely enough can spot the crest of Silverymoon intricately rendered at the end of each word: a silver crescent moon with horns pointing to the right and a silver eight-pointed star enclosed within the crescent.

The tome is large—twelve inches wide and sixteen inches tall—and contains hundreds of pages. If the characters intend to read it, all they need to do is find a place in Candlekeep where they can all gather around as the book is opened.

LURUE'S ORIGINS

Thought by many to be the daughter of Selûne, god of the moon, Lurue the Unicorn is a lesser deity with strong ties to Mielikki, god of the forest. Mielikki oversaw the forest in the early days of creation, but once her work was done, she needed a guardian to represent her and be her eyes and ears on the Material Plane. Selûne agreed with Mielikki's assessment and offered Lurue for the role. Lurue took on the mantle of Mistress of Moonlight with pride, diligently working for the coexistence of humans, elves, and other talking beasts within the forest's expanse.

Lore Comes to Life

A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check confirms that the book is enchanted. As soon as a character opens it, a few sentences in Common appear on the first page, as if someone is writing it, word by word. As this text unfurls, read:

> "Our story starts during the time leading up to the winter solstice on the final night of Uktar in the year 374 DR. A nearly full moon rises behind wispy clouds, as a star-speckled sky darkens against a fading horizon. It seems silent and still, here in the heart of the forest. But to anyone who knows the forest well, that silence can be misleading.
>
> "When you are ready to proceed, turn the page."

When the reader turns the page, the book glows briefly, as a delayed-action *gate* spell is activated. Any creature within 10 feet of the book is pulled into the portal and transported to a demiplane along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying (see the "Other Planes" section in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more information on demiplanes). If other player characters are not in the vicinity when the gate is activated, they are free to move to and through the passage to join their comrades.

After the characters open and "enter" the book, their literal path through the demiplane is dictated by the story that Ecamane Truesilver penned long ago. The characters begin a short distance south of where a meadow meets the edge of a forest. If anyone tries to move away from the forest, they are halted by an impassable barrier of force that disallows any other route.

The story takes the characters generally northward through several noteworthy locations, each one equivalent to a major section in the book. No map is necessary for the adventurers to get from one place to the next; if they try to deviate from the direction the story takes them, the same barrier of force prevents them from making any progress.

The Book's Demiplane

Anyone who opens *Lore of Lurue* and begins to read it, and those who accompany the reader, become subject to the book's unique enchantment, which was placed upon it by Ecamane Truesilver shortly before his death in 712 DR.

The geography of the demiplane to which the book permits access bears some resemblance to the area of Faerûn near where Silverymoon is located today, particularly the High Forest and the River Rauvin, but the book's story dates back to the days before the future site of the city was settled.

As the story opens, the weather in the demiplane is brisk but not frigid, and the winter solstice is imminent. When the characters follow the course of the story, they arrive at the site of the adventure's climax just before midnight on the day of the solstice.

The characters are active participants in the story, and its events are real to them: they can defeat enemies and be defeated by them. But a player character who drops to 0 hit points while on the demiplane is immediately teleported out of the demiplane and back into Candlekeep where the book is located.

A teleported character reappears with 1 hit point and loses any items they had collected on the journey so far. Explain to the player of the character that they can rejoin the party by going through the gate again after finishing a long rest. In the meantime, the other party members will have moved along in the story. Because time passes differently on the demiplane from how it flows on the Material Plane, the returning character appears back with the party in the encounter area that follows the one the character previously experienced.

The gate remains active until the characters' contribution to the story has come to an end (one way or the other), whereupon the characters are ejected from the demiplane and deposited around the book back in Candlekeep. No one other than the characters can use the gate, or even perceive it, while the mission is under way.

Satyrs in Distress

Once the characters have entered the book, read:

> You're on the fringe of a meadow that borders a forest. Tall trees of several varieties stretch before you as far as the eye can see. Behind you is a range of formidable mountain peaks. As the remnant of the setting sun dips below the horizon, a rising full moon illuminates the darkening sky.

When one or more characters move to within 20 feet of the forest's edge, three **satyrs** come into view. When this happens, read:

> Three bipedal creatures that combine the features of men and goats laugh drunkenly as they stumble from the woods. They sway back and forth while greeting you enthusiastically in Sylvan.

If none of the characters speaks Sylvan, one satyr laughs and greets the party in Elvish. A character can confirm the truth of what he says with a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check:

"I'm Tragos ... and this is Artelio and Funagi," he says. "We were out for a bit of a revel when a swarm of wild-eyed ravens attacked us. We're in no fit state to fight. Could you perchance help us get home?"

The satyrs want to get back to Polvarth Plateau, where they can party safely. They aren't sure how far they've strayed, only that the plateau lies to the north and is a journey of a few hours by hoof. The satyrs pass the time by singing, drinking wine from wineskins, and sharing ribald stories.

During the trip, the characters have an opportunity to converse with the satyrs. If this happens, the characters learn the following information:

- Often over the past tenday, several cracks of thunder have sounded, even when there appears to be no storm brewing. At night, in places where the canopy of trees thins to provide a clear enough view, occasional bolts of red lightning can be seen in the distance.
- Strange tribesfolk, foreign to the area, have been wandering the forest, killing any animal they see on sight.
- There's a community of pixies and sprites near the Polvarth Plateau called Dewlight. Tragor is friends with a jovial sprite there, Wheeldoli, who might know more about recent happenings.

Random Encounters

The journey with the satyrs should take at least 2 hours and as long as 6 hours, at your discretion. After every hour of travel, roll a d20 and consult the Demiplane Encounters table to determine if the characters have an encounter at that point. If you get a previous result (other than "no encounter") a second time, that might be an appropriate spot to end the trip and proceed with the story.

Demiplane Encounters

d20	Encounter
1–5	No encounter.
6–7	Three **swarms of ravens** fly overhead. A successful DC 14 Dexterity (Stealth) group check allows the party to pass them by without being noticed. If the group check fails, the swarms attack.
8–9	Two hungry **wereboars** barge out of the underbrush and attack the party.
10–13	A nearby tree bleeds gold sap. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that the sap has healing properties. (The satyrs know about these properties.) Anyone who consumes the sap regains 2d4 + 2 hit points. The tree has enough sap for four doses.
14–16	Three human **berserkers** pass nearby while on a hunt, pursuing a family of deer. If the characters make their presence known, the berserkers attack them instead.
17–20	Four injured **wolves** come upon the party but keep their distance. Each has 1d8 hit points remaining. If approached, they instinctively snarl but then quickly whimper in pain. Their blood-matted fur is evidence of a recent attack on the wolves (they were wounded by hunters but escaped). If a character makes a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check, the wolves become calm and allow the characters to treat their wounds. If they are given aid, the wolves trail behind the party and assist in fights if needed.

Into the Wood

After being guided by the satyrs through several miles of the forest, the characters ascend a gentle slope as they come upon a break in the foliage. From this elevated vantage, they behold an impressive sight: a circular clearing beneath and around the canopy of a gigantic maple tree. This is Polvarth Plateau, a hidden sanctuary for fey creatures.

Polvarth Plateau

As the characters approach the clearing and the tree at the center of it, read:

Before you stands a maple tree of impossibly large size in the center of an open area nearly one hundred feet in diameter. Shafts of light cut through the leafy canopy overhead and reflect off thin streams of water that trickle along and between the tree's gnarled, thick roots.

As you approach the trunk of the tree, the satyrs gambol ahead of you, elated to be back in their safe haven. Suddenly, the tree seems to come awake. It gives off a guttural noise—and then it speaks!

"Pardon my rudeness for being asleep!" it says. "It's been a long time since I've seen travelers like you in these parts."

The tree is a **treant**. The satyrs call it call Feynor.

Feynor embraces the satyrs and welcomes them home. The satyrs, who keep their wine reserves hidden nearby, quickly scamper off to get drunk and be merry, leaving the characters alone with the treant.

Feynor apologizes for the satyrs' behavior ("I'm sure they're grateful to you, but they're so happy to

be home they forgot their manners") and then asks why the characters are traveling through the forest. If they respond truthfully, Feynor treats them as allies and offers to add to their knowledge.

The treant takes a moment to communicate with the wildlife throughout the region. He reports his findings in a sonorous voice: "The Pool of Eternal Spring is being sullied, tainted by blood lust." He begs the characters to continue on their journey, which is taking them toward the pool, and do whatever necessary to make the pool pure and clean again. The treant urges the characters to resume their travels and suggests that they stop along the way at the community of Dewlight to speak with a sprite named Wheeldoli, who might have more news for them. Feynor gestures with one of his branches toward a narrow path leading north into the woods.

Treasure

Before the characters leave, Feynor uproots a corked wooden vial buried in the dirt and offers it to them. The vial contains a *potion of giant strength* (hill), and the treant says as much. The potion vanishes when the characters leave the demiplane if it is not consumed before then.

Dewlight

A narrow path leads north from Polvarth Plateau, wending its way between densely packed trees. Less than an hour after setting out, the characters reach their next stop:

> Moss-covered trees and overgrown brush suddenly thin out, giving way to a small glen not more than a hundred feet across. This area is peppered with colorful mushrooms growing virtually on top of one another, some of the clusters more than three feet high. A warm glow emanates from tiny lanterns that hang from each mushroom. Jutting up from the caps of the mushrooms, chimneys made of petrified bark let out wisps of acorn-scented smoke. These mushrooms appear to be homes—dozens of them—scattered around the clearing.

Moments before the characters emerged from the forest, the pixies and sprites that live in Dewlight detected their approach, turned invisible for safety's sake, and fled into their homes for good measure. The lone exception is Wheeldoli, an elderly **sprite**

whose curiosity outweighs his sense of caution. After a moment, he steps out from behind the stem of a mushroom and introduces himself:

> "Greetings, big folk. I, Wheeldoli, welcome you to Dewlight and suggest you be on your way."

Wheeldoli is prepared to turn invisible and make himself scarce at the first sign of aggressiveness, but if the characters start by mentioning that they have spoken with Feynor, or if they talk to him about the book they discovered, the sprite becomes friendly and contributes some additional details about their situation.

As a scholar among his kind, Wheeldoli knows about some of the gods revered by the big folk, and he shares his supposition about the nighttime thunderclaps and lightning strikes in the distance. "Signs of a battle brewing," he says. A group of vicious predators have been stalking through the forest of late, and Wheeldoli fears they are disciples of Malar the Beast Lord (see the "Cult of Malar" section later in the adventure). The disturbances to the north, he says, seem to be coming from the vicinity of the Pool of Eternal Spring, a hallowed site associated with a lesser deity known as Lurue the Unicorn. The sprite says he would not be surprised to find that Malar's minions are behind that turn of events as well.

In conclusion, Wheeldoli injects some urgency into the situation. "Whatever's happening at the pool is likely to reach its peak on the winter solstice, which is at most a day or two from now."

When the characters have learned all they can from Wheeldoli, the sprite directs them to a narrow gravel path that skirts the community and then continues northward through the underbrush.

"Hurry along now," he says. "Danger along the way might impede your travel, so there's no time to waste!"

Webbed Path

The pebbled path leading out of Dewlight soon turns into dirt, and the area on either side of it is sparsely covered with underbrush. After the characters walk for a few more minutes, they discover that the road ahead is covered in large patches of spiderwebs. The webbed path, 20 feet wide and 60 feet long, is difficult terrain. A creature that enters the area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or become restrained by the webs. A restrained creature can use its action to try to escape, doing so with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Each 10-foot square of webbing has AC 10, 15 hit points, vulnerability to fire damage, and immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage.

Four cowardly **ettercaps** are lurking nearby, waiting for their webs to snag some prey. At the sound of intruders, they scurry into the underbrush and hide, staying 30 feet away from the webbed path, loosely spread out. The ettercaps are ambush hunters and run from a prolonged fight.

Hag's Hovel

The characters' path takes them into a densely forested area. By following a break in the trees that sends them north and west, they come upon a sign that this area is inhabited:

> Gnarled bushes and dead or diseased trees surround a run-down wooden shack. A wisp of smoke rises from a rotted-out hole in the roof that is lined with fungus. South of the shack is a low stone wall that forms the perimeter of a large hole, while east of the building is a larger wooden structure covered with creeping vines.
>
> As you come a bit closer, the sound of voices suddenly emerges from the shack. One occupant cackles wickedly, and two other voices emit muffled whimpers and groans.

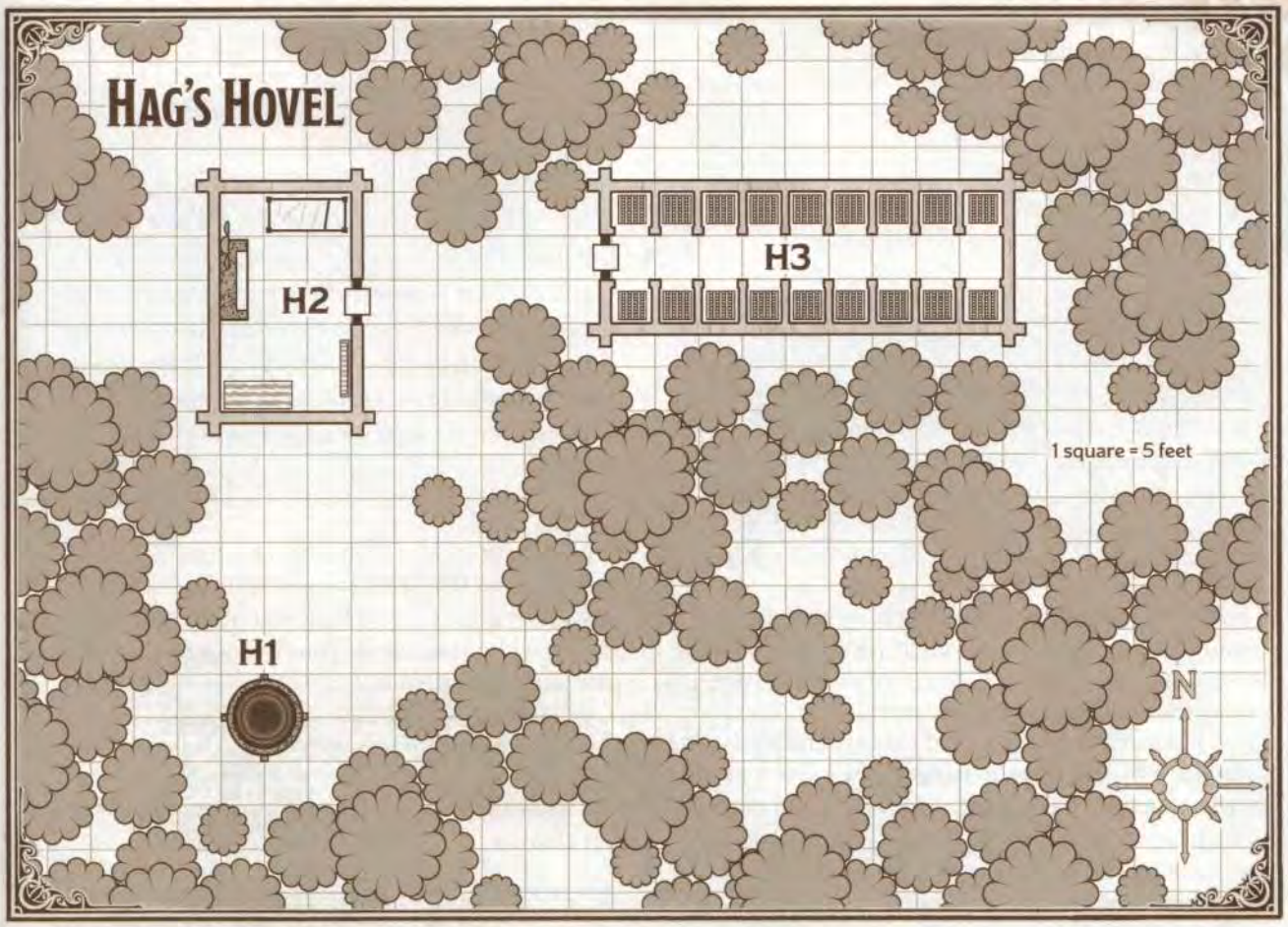
The following locations are keyed to the map of the hag's hovel.

H1. Dry Well

The characters might correctly assume that this place is what it looks like: the site of a well (which is now abandoned). If they approach to within 5 feet of the stone wall, they can peer over the 2-foot-high wall into the hole, which is dark, but they don't get an idea of how deep the hole is or what's in it.

If a character comes up to the stone wall and looks down inside the hole, this activity attracts the attention of a **grick alpha** that uses the place as a lair. The water source at the bottom of the 30-foot-deep hole has long since dried up, making it an ideal place for the grick to lurk when it's not out hunting.

The grick's Stone Camouflage trait prevents the characters from realizing its presence—unless they shine a light source down into the hole or have some other way of seeing the bottom of the pit. If they don't see the grick at the same time it sees them, the monster lurches out of the well to confront its prey. A character who can see into the hole and has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or higher notices the grick before it attacks; any other characters start the encounter surprised.



H2. Hag Shack

This run-down shack is the occasional home of a **night hag** named Lanedrie Staggersoul. When she spends time on the Material Plane, she enjoys imprisoning and terrorizing denizens of the forest. Her two "house guests" at the moment are among the prisoners she has taken most recently.

The only way into the shack is through the door on the east side. When a character first peers into the room, read:

> The inside of the shack is in a terrible state of disrepair. The only contents of note are a ramshackle bed, a scratched-up table, a warped wooden shelf with several containers on it, and a fireplace with wooden spoons and ladles hanging from hooks above it. To your left, two figures are bound and gagged on the floor while a blue-skinned hag looms over them. The captives appear to be dryads.

The night hag is focused on tormenting her captives and can be taken by surprise if the characters succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) group check. Lanedrie begins by using her claws and spells to teach the interlopers a lesson, but if the characters don't dispose of her promptly, she does not hesitate to cut her losses and uses a *plane shift* spell to leave their company.

The two **dryads** are named Trekaila and Argentia. If the characters free them from their bonds, the dryads are appropriately grateful. If the characters ask how they got here, they sheepishly explain that the hag caught the two of them and a third dryad named Hanah unawares while they were paying little attention to their surroundings. Trekaila and Argentia are quick to disclose that Hanah was taken away by the hag several hours ago, and they fear that the worst might have happened to her. The dryads tell the characters about seeing the hag return from someplace that lies to the east of the shack and urge them to investigate.

Treasure. All of Lanedrie's prized possessions are sitting on the shelf. A character who makes a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation) check identifies two useful items: a *potion of clairvoyance* and a *potion of healing* (greater). As figments of the demiplane, these potions vanish when the characters leave if they're not consumed before then.

H3. Hag's Menagerie

Tucked in a clearing is a ramshackle structure 15 feet wide and three times as long. If the characters rescued Trekaila and Argentia in area H2 before coming here, the dryads follow closely behind the characters, eager to find their missing dryad companion, Hanah. A door on the west end of the building opens easily, revealing the following:

> The moment the door is opened, you are met with a cacophony of wild sounds. Clawing and gnashing at the cages that confine them, animals of all sorts screech and holler in every which way, some growling with pent-up aggression, others wincing in pain.
>
> Eighteen cages, most of them occupied, line the walls of this grotesque menagerie.

The door to each cage is barred on the outside and features a small window through which the characters can see what's inside. Seven of the cages are empty (though their doors are still barred). Ten of them hold single specimens of various animals—a **baboon**, a **hyena**, a **boar**, an **ape**, a **vulture**, a **blood hawk**, an **eagle**, a **giant rat**, a **hawk**, and an **owl**. All of them are weakened from minor wounds and insufficient nourishment, but they are still able to fend for themselves. If the door is opened on an occupied cage, the animal inside immediately bolts (or flies) for freedom, doing what it must to foil any attempts to keep it from escaping.

The door of the last cage, in the far southeast corner of the building, has no window. The characters need to open the door to see what's inside:

> Curled up on the floor is a dryad. Her arms and legs are bound, and she appears to be unconscious.

This unconscious **dryad** is Hanah. If Trekaila and Argentia are present, they try to rush to Hanah's side and minister to her. Hanah has been reduced to 0 hit points from the hag's rough treatment, but she is stable. If the characters don't administer healing of their own, one of the other dryads casts a *goodberry* spell and force-feeds the berries to Hanah. If she regains even 1 hit point, Hanah becomes conscious.

After she gets her bearings, Hanah says she's able to travel. She wants nothing more than to leave this place. Trekaila and Argentia, of course, are in complete agreement. The dryads part company with the characters, heading back toward Polvarth Plateau after wishing the adventurers success in whatever they are trying to do.

River's Edge

> At last, it seems as though you have reached the northern edge of the forest. The trees are fewer and farther between, and a short distance ahead you can see the edge of a body of water. As you come closer, you see it's a wide river running perpendicular to your path. Off to the east, the river runs between two swaths of dense forest. To the west is a well-worn trail that leads through the underbrush and seems to follow the watercourse. On the ground in front of you are the remains of campfires, suggesting that others have used this area as a place to rest.

This stop is what it seems: an opportunity for the party to rest before their next confrontation. The characters can finish a long rest (if they choose to do so) without incident. The river water is good to drink, and if the characters have the means, they can fish for their supper.

When the characters are ready to move on, they quickly discover that the story is compelling them to follow the trail heading west. (Turning back is not an option.)

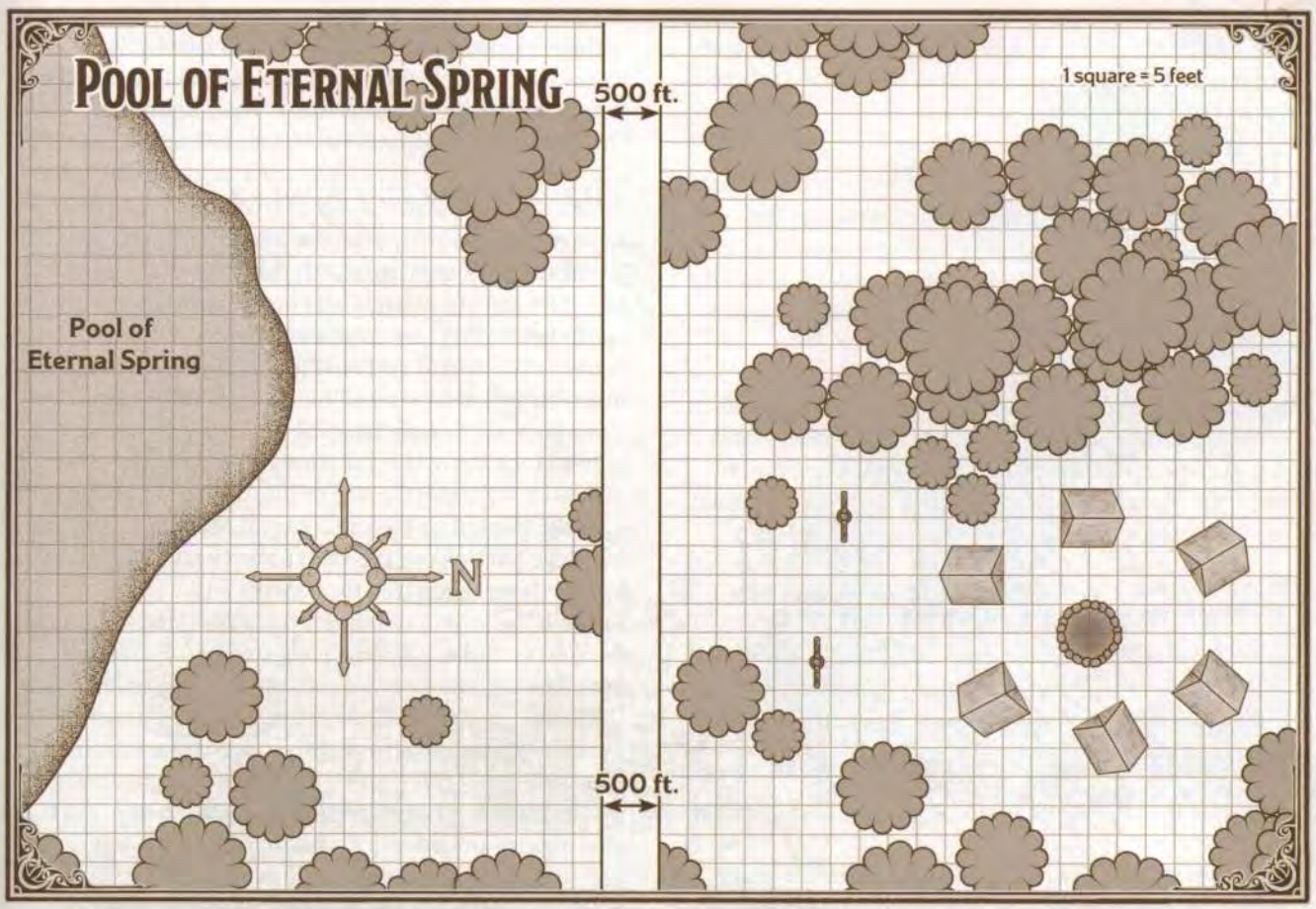
Cult of Malar

In the prologue of *Lore of Lurue*—not a part of the story that the characters witness or experience—Ecamane Truesilver describes the underlying truth of the situation and identifies the entity responsible for the upheaval of the demiplane.

The evil creatures waiting to confront the characters at the end of their journey are the bloodthirsty minions of Malar, god of the hunt, also known as the Beast Lord. Malar's goal is to assume dominance over the forest—particularly the area around the Pool of Eternal Spring—and his agents have been hard at work brutally killing animals of all sorts in tribute to their god, then casting the carcasses into the pool.

As the adventurers will discover, this cult of Malar (otherwise nameless) includes several crazed berserkers as well as worgs and werewolves. When the characters arrive on the scene, the cultists' depredations have corrupted the water of the pool, setting the stage for Malar's final act in his campaign of terror.

Malar believes that there is no better way to demonstrate his dominance than by using his cult members to help bring forth a corrupted version of the avatar of Lurue the Unicorn to serve the Beast Lord's ends in his newly claimed domain. It is this effort that the characters must foil if they are to see their role in the story of *Lore of Lurue* end happily.



Cult of Malar Campsite

No matter when the characters set out after their rest, the passage of time on the demiplane speeds up or slows down to ensure that night has fallen by the time they reach the next encounter location:

> Following the river course enabled you to make good progress for a while by skirting the forest. Now, as the sun dips below the horizon, the river makes a sharp turn to the north away from the trees. From the opposite direction comes a rumble of thunder and a flash of red lightning, vivid against the darkening sky.

The thunder and lightning should make it apparent which direction the characters are meant to take. The last leg of their journey takes them south along a wide trail through the forest. After a few minutes of careful travel, they get evidence that they're not alone: from somewhere nearby ahead, they hear gruff voices growling and roaring. It's easy for the characters to sneak toward the sounds for a closer look. The following boxed text corresponds to the campsite shown on the right-hand side of the Pool of Eternal Spring map:

> Six huts circle the perimeter of a clearing. In the center of the open area, a large bonfire burns. Targets made of bones and stuffed animals, as well as dummies made of hides and furs, complete the encampment.
>
> A group of vicious-looking warriors are gathered around the fire. They clink together their bone mugs and rip into raw animal flesh with their teeth. Fresh blood drips from their mouths and hands. It seems like a celebration of some sort. Occasionally, between the warriors' cruel laughs, you can hear a cry of "To the Beast Lord!"

Eight **berserkers** of the cult are consuming a pile of animals they have killed as a way of paying tribute to Malar. If they aren't tearing at the meat, they are playing with the dead bodies, kicking them to and fro. Two **worgs** chained to nearby posts snarl and growl anytime a dead carcass gets close enough.

This noisy revelry provides each character with advantage on any Dexterity (Stealth) check to get closer to the cult members. If the characters linger too long before acting, one of the worgs picks up their scent and, with a roar, alerts the berserkers

to the characters' presence. The berserkers fight to the death until one remains. That warrior tries to retreat to the south, hoping to alert the cult members gathered at the pool (see below).

Peril at the Pool

After the characters deal with the cultists at the campsite, the way forward is obvious: lightning flashes in the sky every few minutes, seeming to be centered over a place that's within a couple minutes' walk to the south.

In the far distance, the sky is clear, but directly above the pool is a black storm cloud spitting bolts of red lightning. When the characters arrive, standing at the edge of the pool are six wolf-like humanoids, their backs to the characters. With faces raised up in supplication, they chant ominously. Read:

> You have come upon the Pool of Eternal Spring, or at least what's left of it: its once clear waters are now streaked with red and black impurities. Standing at the edge of the pool is a feral-looking human clad in animal skins. This individual leads five werewolves in chanting "Water into blood, earth into bones!"

In less troubling times, the Pool of Eternal Spring was a little slice of Mount Celestia on earth. Its crystal-clear waters nourished the nearby lands and fostered the most abundant plant and animal life imaginable. The usual pleasant fragrance that wafts from the pool is now replaced by the scent of metal and blood.

The cult of Malar has prepared the pool in anticipation of the winter solstice. By filling the Pool of Eternal Spring with offerings to Malar—creatures of the forest that have been brutally killed and slain, then tossed into the water—the cult has tainted it as a gesture of reverence to their deity. Unbeknownst to them, the arrival of the solstice triggers the final phase of Malar's plan.

The cultists at the edge of the pool are six **werewolves**. Five begin the encounter in hybrid form, and the one leading the chant is in humanoid form. The characters have come on the scene just in time to witness the final stage of the ceremony, which culminates at midnight. Before the characters can do anything to prevent it, a bolt of red lightning splits the sky and strikes the surface of the pool. When the resulting steam cloud dissipates, the **corrupted avatar of Lurue** (see the accompanying stat block) materializes at the edge of the pool—and suddenly, the characters and the cultists have a common enemy (see "The Corrupted Avatar" for more information).

If any creature drinks the corrupted water from the pool, it must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, the creature gains a randomly determined form of short-term madness (see "Madness" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

The Corrupted Avatar

In normal circumstances, the avatar of Lurue is a breathtaking sight; her silver, stardust-like mane, her shimmering hooves, and her perfectly formed spiral horn elicit awe from even the most hardened souls. As powerful and striking as she is in her true form, she's just as wicked in her alternative state. With necrotic energy twisting and dancing at the tip of her black horn, this corrupted avatar of Lurue is instead a nightmare come to life.

While tainted by the influence of Malar, the avatar of Lurue carries out the Beast Lord's will: to slaughter anything that dares to cross its path.

When the corrupted unicorn comes into being, it does so within reach of at least one of the cult members. If a fight has not already started, roll initiative. On each of the avatar's turns, and when using its legendary actions, it randomly attacks one or more creatures from among any targets it can reach. The avatar prefers a wounded foe over a fresh one, but it also singles out enemies who deal grievous injuries to it and attacks them without mercy.

The cult members, briefly transfixed by the spectacle they have just witnessed, are not immediately hostile, though they defend themselves against characters who threaten or attack them. When it becomes apparent to the werewolves that they are also being targeted by the avatar, they might join forces with the characters (if the avatar is getting the upper hand) or break off and run away (if the characters seem to be in control of things).

Final Scene

If the characters vanquish the corrupted avatar of Lurue or are in danger of being vanquished themselves, read:

> A jagged stroke of white lightning originates from the moon and strikes the unicorn, transforming it into a true, living avatar of Lurue the Unicorn with a silvery mane, shimmering hooves, and a spiraling horn. She gives a thankful nod and bends down to dip her horn, now cleansed of corruption, in the pool.

The lightning bolt from the moon either destroys the corrupted avatar to spare the adventurers from a likely tragic ending, or revives and purifies the slain avatar. (The book speculates that this divine intervention is courtesy of Selûne, who has been

waiting for Malar's plan to come to fruition so that she might demonstrate to him the utter futility of his desire to hold sway over the forest.)

Divine magic pours from Lurue's horn and turns the tainted pool back into silvery, glistening pure water. The Pool of Eternal Spring is restored to its former nature. A short distance away along the bank of the pool is a narrow, spring-fed outlet stream that leads north toward the river. The purifying effect continues to flow into and along the stream, removing all traces of corruption that might have escaped in the current. Her work finished, Lurue lifts her head, regards the characters once more, and prepares to take her leave.

Conclusion

Regardless of the outcome of the characters' efforts, the book's final scene ends the same:

> The avatar of Lurue galloped through the night, freed from the threat of Malar. As a way of showing her gratitude, and ensuring that Malar and his minions would never dare to ravage the forest again, she continued to let the silvery spring flow, turning the place into a Pool of Eternal Silver. These waters, forever protected by her grace, lie near the site of a city now called Silverymoon, which was named as such in honor of this tale.

As these words pass into the characters' consciousness, the book begins to pull the characters out of the story. When the last line is read, the characters return to the same spot in Candlekeep they left. *Lore of Lurue*, closed and sealed, rests where it did when the characters' experience began.

If the characters defeated the corrupted unicorn before Selûne intervened, and thus they feel deserving of a reward, they might discover that Lurue herself has provided them with one. Sitting on the front cover of the book as the characters emerge from the demiplane is a moonstone and opal ring. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals this to be a *ring of shooting stars*. In addition, each character is the recipient of a supernatural gift from Lurue: a *charm of animal conjuring* (see "Charms" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Corrupted Avatar of Lurue

Large monstrosity

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 90 (12d10 + 24)
Speed 50 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +3, Wis +6, Cha +6
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, paralyzed, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Celestial, Elvish, Sylvan, telepathy 60 ft.
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Actions

Multiattack. The avatar makes two attacks: one with its hooves and one with its horn.

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 32 (8d6 + 4) necrotic damage.

Horn. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 32 (8d6 + 4) necrotic damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be transformed into a wolf under the avatar's control. This transformation lasts for 1 hour, or until the target drops to 0 hit points or dies. The target's game statistics are replaced by the wolf's statistics, but it retains its hit points. The target is limited in the actions it can perform by the nature of its wolf form, and it can't speak, cast spells, or take any other action that requires hands or speech. The target's gear melds into the new form, and it can't activate, use, wield, or otherwise benefit from any of its equipment.

AN ADVENTURE FOR 9TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

KANDLEKEEP DEKONSTRUKTION

WRITTEN BY AMY VORPAHL
DEVELOPED BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS EDITED BY SCOTT FITZGERALD GRAY

IN THIS ADVENTURE, THE CHARACTERS FIGHT against a ticking clock to stop a misguided cult from launching one of Candlekeep's towers into space, along with a small trove of valuable tomes. One of the cultists has a change of heart and tries to thwart the whole enterprise by stealing one of the books, hoping to delay the launch. This book ends up in the characters' possession after the cultist dies while carrying it.

Titled *Kandlekeep Dekonstruktion*, the book describes how Candlekeep was built and contains architectural diagrams for most of its structures. The book's author, a former Keeper of Tomes named Isajar, also describes the magical wards protecting Candlekeep. Among other things, Isajar was well known for detesting the use of the letter C as a hard consonant, preferring the letter K.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Read or paraphrase the following to the players, adjusting to account for their location in Candlekeep, when you're ready to begin:

KANDLEKEEP DEKONSTRUKTION

> You are approached by a decrepit, gray-bearded dwarf in a custodial uniform carrying a heavy, square tome bound in black leather. The weight of the book causes the old dwarf to wheeze, squint, and clench his teeth. Before he can utter a word, his knees buckle and he collapses with the book pressed underneath him.

The dwarf, Buron Sternmettle, is dead—the victim of a sudden heart attack. Because his soul doesn't want to return, spells such as *revivify* and *raise dead* can't restore him to life.

Buron Sternmettle was a quiet Avowed acolyte who also belonged to a secret cult called the Livestock. In the cult, Buron was known by the alias Rooster Muffin (see "Stonky's Cult" later in the adventure). A search of Buron's body yields nothing of value except the book he was carrying.

BOOK DESCRIPTION

Kandlekeep Dekonstruktion is bound in sturdy black leather, with the title and Isajar's name neatly engraved on the front cover and spine. Images of a smiling dwarf and a builder's hammer are stamped into the front cover. Its crisp white pages, which measure fifteen inches square, are marred by an occasional smudge or tear from a reader's thumb. A quick flip through the book reveals diagrams and descriptions of almost every location in Candlekeep.

SECRETS OF THE BARN DOOR

Any character who studies the book comes across a bookmark at an unusual set of renderings for a tower known as the Barn Door. How it got that name is not explained. On the facing page is a floor plan detailing the tower's lowest level (a small dungeon complex), which contains an array of odd mechanical devices. Any character viewing these diagrams who succeeds on a DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check can ascertain that the devices are designed to launch the tower into the sky—perhaps all the way to the stars.

What Next?

If the characters are alone, they can notify other members of the Avowed about the death. Acolytes remove Buron's body, seizing the book with a firmness that makes it clear the dwarf should not have had it in his possession. If asked, the acolytes explain that the book came from the restricted vaults and is not to be viewed by outsiders.

Barn Door Inquiries

If the characters ask about the Barn Door, any friendly member of the Avowed can share what little information they know:

- The Barn Door is one of many towers in Candlekeep's Inner Ward. Like everything else in the Inner Ward, it's off limits to most visitors.
- The tower has been condemned for years, though the reason has become obscure. No effort has been made to tear it down or repair it.
- There have been a few recent reports of strange noises coming from the tower, but nothing to warrant great concern.

Speaking with the Dead

Characters who can cast the *speak with dead* spell or similar magic might be able to question Buron's corpse. If asked the right questions, the dead dwarf can furnish the following information:

- Buron, a custodial engineer, was a member of a secret Candlekeep cult called the Livestock. In the cult, the dwarf was known as Rooster Muffin.
- The leader of the Livestock is a gnome visionary and Avowed zealot named Stonky J. Noptopper. He aims to keep Candlekeep's most valuable tomes from falling into the hands of the unworthy (anyone who is not an Avowed).
- After reading *Kandlekeep Dekonstruktion*, Stonky realized that one of Candlekeep's towers—the Barn Door—is actually a flying vehicle powered by arcane devices called rockets.
- With the help of several constructs, Stonky has spent months secretly repairing the Barn Door with the goal of launching it into space. The gnome plans to take a choice selection of the library's books with him.
- Once he realized that Stonky was insane, Buron stole *Kandlekeep Dekonstruktion*, hoping to delay the launch of the tower long enough for someone to thwart Stonky's mad scheme.

Further Investigation

Characters who offer to investigate the Barn Door are initially denied access, since visitors to Candlekeep are not permitted to enter the Inner Ward. Then a sudden new development changes everything.

Earthquake!

Rather than halt or slow Stonky's progress, the theft of *Kandlekeep Dekonstruktion* has inspired the gnome to accelerate his plan to launch the Barn Door into space. Soon after the book finds its way to the characters, an earthquake rattles Candlekeep.

> An earthquake causes all of Candlekeep to shudder! And then it stops as quickly as it began.

A range of emotions from calm assertiveness to outright panic spreads through the Avowed and visitors alike as folk gather in the Court of Air. No one can recall the last time an earthquake shook the library.

Characters who talk to witnesses and compare their own recollections of the quake can try to ascertain its nature. With a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check, a character is confident that the earthquake wasn't magically created. As such, it must have been caused by a natural phenomenon.

What's Happening?

Decades of neglect have made the Barn Door inoperable as a vehicle. But now Stonky has repaired that damage with the help of his cult, made up of members of Candlekeep's custodial staff, as well as several homemade constructs called skitterwidgets (described at the end of the adventure). As soon as he learned about the theft of *Kandlekeep Dekonstruktion*, Stonky test-fired the ship's rockets, which triggered the earthquake.

Following the test, Stonky set the Barn Door on an automatic countdown to launch. The characters have 1 hour (starting from when the earthquake ends) to deactivate the countdown timer or disable the rocket before it blasts off and launches Stonky's cult (and its modest collection of books) into space.

Investigating the Quake

Among the folk gathered in the Court of Air is Bookwyrm the dragonborn, who was having a drink in the Hearth when the earthquake struck. Bookwyrm is the First Reader of Candlekeep (see the "Candlekeep" section earlier in this book) and has the authority to grant access to the library's Inner Ward.

If the characters make the case that the Barn Door should be investigated at once, Bookwyrm listens to what they have to say, then puts them in charge of the investigation, escorts them through the Emerald Door, and gives them directions to the tower. Along the way, the First Reader explains that the Barn Door was condemned years ago when sages concluded it was no longer safe for occupancy. Bookwyrm knows nothing about the Barn Door's

true nature, having never read *Kandlekeep Dekonstruktion* or entered the tower. He does, however, know the command word to bypass the *arcane lock* spell on the tower's front door ("jeopardy"), which he shares with the party.

If asked about Stonky Noptopper, the First Reader knows that the rock gnome oversees the custodial staff assigned to clean and maintain the towers of the Inner Ward. Bookwyrm believes that Stonky would never do anything to endanger Candlekeep.

Heading to the Barn Door

It takes 5 minutes to walk from the Emerald Door to the Barn Door. As the characters begin to investigate the condemned tower, Bookwyrm meets with the Keeper of Tomes and the Great Readers to discuss next steps. None of them can act soon enough to stop the Barn Door's launch. From this point forward, the characters are on their own.

Stonky's Cult

The Livestock is the name of Stonky's secret cult of custodial engineers, chosen as a play on the Barn Door tower's name. All the cult's members came to Candlekeep hoping to be accepted as acolytes, but the leaders of the Avowed never gave them the opportunity. The custodians recruited by Stonky are united in their bitter belief that they have been overlooked and underappreciated.

Stonky has persuaded his followers that the way to ascend in the hierarchy is to reveal that the higher-ups are not as capable of protecting the lore of Candlekeep as they should be. He dreams of delivering a solution for its protection that no Avowed has yet considered: sending the most important books in the library into space.

The cultists look to Stonky for validation and the promise of ultimate knowledge. Having finally found purpose in the triviality of their roles, the cultists take up positions in the tower when the countdown to launch begins.

Stonky has assigned aliases to the members of the Livestock. Each alias is a combination of a farm animal and a farm export, as shown in the Livestock Cult Members table. All these cultists are chaotic neutral and wear custodial uniforms.

The Barn Door

When the characters arrive at the Barn Door, read or paraphrase the following:

> The Barn Door is a three-story stone tower topped with a roof of metal shingles painted red. The only entrance appears to be a ground-level iron door with a wooden sign bolted to it that reads in Common, "Danger! No Trespassing!"

There's nothing outwardly peculiar about the tower. It has a retractable roof on its topmost level (see area B4), but this feature can be noted only from above, not from the ground. The Barn Door's rockets can't be seen because they're hidden underground. Characters who examine the ground around the tower find several metal shingles that came loose during the test firing.

Barn Door Features

The tower has the following features.

Ceilings. Ceilings throughout are 10 feet high and have murals painted on them depicting humanoids with the heads of farm animals.

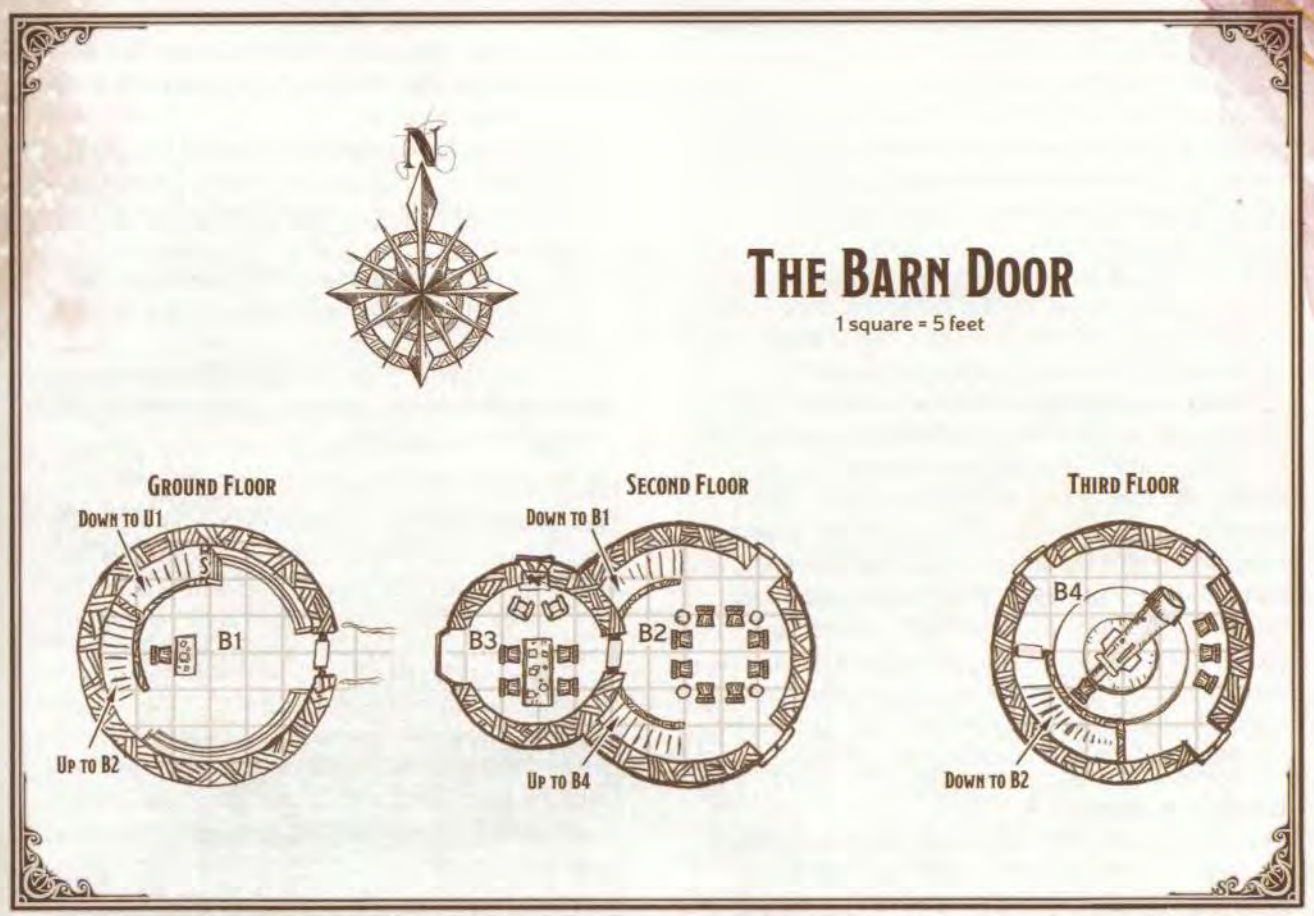
Cleanliness. The interior is cleaned daily by the cultists and is free of dirt, dust, and cobwebs.

Doors and Windows. Doors are made of iron and fitted with iron fittings and handles. The tower's windows, which are made of a transparent metal called glassteel, can't be opened or smashed by any mundane means.

Light. All areas of the tower are lit by lanterns holding wax candles.

Livestock Cult Members

Alias	Real Name	Notes
Alpaca Macadamia Nuts	Marci Plumpitter	Human **cultist**; speaks Common
Chicken Peach	Baff Boltlock	Rock gnome **cultist** with darkvision 60 ft.; speaks Common and Gnomish
Cow Cotton	Patch Varnast	Half-elf **cultist** with darkvision 60 ft.; speaks Common and Elvish
Donkey Biscuit	Merla One-Tusk	Half-orc **cultist** with darkvision 60 ft.; speaks Common and Orc
Duck Bean	Trop Thunderhew	Shield dwarf **cultist** with darkvision 60 ft.; speaks Common and Dwarvish
Goat Beet	Stekk	Half-orc **cultist** with darkvision 60 ft.; speaks Common and Orc
Horse Egg	Glynn Yamanachi	Half-elf **cultist** with darkvision 60 ft.; speaks Common and Elvish
Pig Wheat	Neff Cunningfoot	Lightfoot halfling **cult fanatic**; speaks Common and Halfling
Ram Sugar	Norty	Brass dragonborn **cult fanatic**; speaks Common and Draconic
Sheep Sweet Corn	Yohn Blofrond	Human **cult fanatic**; speaks Common



Barn Door Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Barn Door.

B1. Library

The tower's front door is sealed with an *arcane lock* spell, the password for which is "jeopardy." Stonky and his cultists know the password. The door can also be opened with a *knock* spell or similar magic, or broken down with a successful DC 30 Strength (Athletics) check.

> The tower's ground floor smells of old books and has walls lined with floor-to-ceiling bookcases. Wood-framed doors set with small, diamond-shaped panes of glass keep the books secure on the shelves, each section of which has a rolling ladder anchored to a ceiling rail.
>
> Three custodians are working here, sweeping the floors: a human, a gnome, and a half-elf.

After *Kandlekeep Dekonstruktion* was stolen from this room, Stonky ordered three of his most fanatical **cultists**—Alpaca Macadamia Nuts (the human), Chicken Peach (the rock gnome), and Cow Cotton (the half-elf)—to guard the remaining books. The three of them attack intruders at once and gladly throw away their lives for Stonky's cause. Each wields their heavy broom as a weapon, using the statistics for the cultist's scimitar attack but dealing bludgeoning damage.

After the fight, or as the characters get a better look at the room during the fight, add the following:

> Against the far wall, a wooden staircase covered with green carpeting leads up. In front of the staircase rests a golden credenza with images of farm animals carved into it. A high-backed chair with burgundy cushions sits behind the credenza.

Books. Members of the Livestock have been snatching books from other parts of Candlekeep and storing them in this room for eventual transport into outer space. Although the cultists believe this collection to be priceless, most of the books are plodding dissertations of questionable value. The books are arranged in alphabetical order by title. A gap on one shelf shows where *Kandlekeep Dekonstruktion* was stored before Buron took it.

Credenza and Chair. These furnishings were installed in the tower when it was built. They are unremarkable, albeit finely made.

Secret Door. A secret door is built into a short stretch of bookcase. A character who searches the bookcase finds the secret door with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. Once the door is found, closer examination identifies a false book that, when pulled, causes the door to swing open.

A narrow staircase beyond the secret door leads down to area U1. A small wooden pedal at the top of the stairs opens the door from the inside.

Stonky and Friends. Five minutes before the launch, any members of the Livestock in the underlevel who haven't been defeated make their way to this chamber by way of the secret door. That includes Stonky Noptopper (a rock gnome **master sage**; see page 9 for his stat block) and three **cult fanatics** (Pig Wheat, Ram Sugar, and Sheep Sweet Corn). Eager to get to their assigned spots in area B4 prior to the launch, Stonky and the cult fanatics avoid combat with any characters still exploring the tower. As he runs upstairs, Stonky shouts, "To the stars, my animals! To the stars!"

B2. Main Room

The larger part of the tower's second floor contains two staircases, which descend to area B1 and ascend to area B4.

> The scents of salted meat and dried fruit fill this area. Bookcases built into the stone walls and fronted by wood-and-glass doors are stuffed full of rations. Huge windows seal off a pair of alcoves set into the tower walls, and an inward-curving wall between the staircases has an iron door at its center.
>
> The ceiling is braced by four wooden pillars, between which are set four pairs of stocky wooden chairs facing inward. Each chair is bolted to the floor and fitted with two lengths of rope. Four of the chairs have people in custodial uniforms tied to them—two half-orcs, a half-elf, and a dwarf.

Four Livestock **cultists** have tied themselves into the chairs in preparation for blastoff, with the ropes acting as seat belts. All four are unarmed, restrained, and unable to free themselves. They go by the names Donkey Biscuit (the first half-orc), Duck Bean (the dwarf), Goat Beet (the second half-orc), and Horse Egg (the half-elf).

Despite their helplessness, the cultists are uncooperative. They refuse to talk about why they're here, divulge Stonky's whereabouts, or shed light on his intentions. Only if magic is used to coerce them do they reveal what they know:

- Stonky is planning to launch the Barn Door and all its books into space. The countdown has begun. (The cultists don't know precisely when the launch is set to occur.)
- Stonky and three senior members of the Livestock (Pig Wheat, Ram Sugar, and Sheep Sweet Corn) are in the underlevel, making final preparations before launch.
- A secret door hidden in a library bookcase (see area B1) conceals the only route to the tower's underlevel.
- The Barn Door will be launched into space by arcane devices called rockets, which are attached to the bottom of the tower.

B3. Stonky's Study

This smaller tower is attached to the main tower's second level. The door to this area is sealed with an *arcane lock* spell that only Stonky can bypass. The door can be opened with a *knock* spell or similar magic, or broken down with a successful DC 30 Strength (Athletics) check.

> This circular chamber appears to be a private study with a large bay window. A fireplace along one wall is unlit and faced by two burgundy armchairs, one small and one large.
>
> Tall bookcases are built into the wall opposite the fireplace, their contents protected behind wood-and-glass doors. A rolling ladder attached to a ceiling rail allows access to the highest shelves.
>
> An oak table is bolted to the floor, flanked by two high chairs designed for shorter people and two chairs built for human-sized folk. Lying on the table is a small piece of paper.

The paper is Stonky's task list, which reads as follows in Gnomish:

> Seven Steps to Success:
>
> ~~Test rockets~~!
>
> ~~Separate Barn Door from foundation!~~
>
> ~~Set correct coordinates!~~
>
> ~~Set countdown timer for 60 minutes!~~
>
> Evacuate underlevel!
>
> Tie self to command chair!
>
> Blast off!

Books. One or more of the other books described in this adventure anthology might be found here at your discretion, having been purloined by Stonky. The remaining books are mostly dull treatises with titles that tickled the gnome's fancy. The books are

arranged by color rather than some more useful system, but characters who make a quick survey of the shelves discover three tomes that warrant further examination:

Heroes' Feast: A Cookbook. This richly illustrated book of recipes was written by a trio of culinary enthusiasts named Wyk Nenmael, Nojen Eptros, and Imrit Welachwe. Any creature that spends a short rest poring over the book's recipes gains a supernatural charm called the *charm of the heroes' feast*. This charm allows you to cast the *heroes' feast* spell as an action, no components required. Once used, this charm goes away. See "Supernatural Gifts" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more information on how charms work. The book teleports to a secret vault in Candlekeep after bestowing its charm on a creature.

Stonky Noptopper's Spells o' Plenty. Stonky's fat little spellbook contains the following wizard spells: *alarm, animate objects, arcane lock, banishment, chain lightning, clairvoyance, detect magic, dispel magic, fabricate, fireball, flesh to stone, fly, globe of invulnerability, glyph of warding, grease, knock, legend lore, levitate, locate creature, locate object, mage armor, planar binding, polymorph, programmed illusion, protection from evil and good, scrying, see invisibility, sending, shield, telekinesis*, and *true seeing*.

Trobriand's Machinations, Vol. X. This hefty tome, written by the mad wizard Trobriand of Undermountain, describes the processes by which he creates animated metal constructs. The book is filled with the wizard's ravings and drawings of his contraptions. Characters who compare those drawings with Stonky's skitterwidgets can tell where the gnome got the inspiration for his mechanical creations.

Navigation Notes. A slip of paper tucked into Stonky's spellbook is covered with the notes he made while studying the possible settings for the steering wheel in the observatory (see area B4). A character who examines the notes and succeeds on a DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check discerns that Stonky has identified 626 through 666 as an important range of numbers, but he doesn't yet understand what those numbers refer to.

B4. Observatory

An iron door at the top of the staircase from area B2 leads into the observatory on the third level of the tower. The door is closed but not locked.

Read or paraphrase the following boxed text when the characters arrive here for the first time:

> The top level of the Barn Door is an observatory with three wide, windowed alcoves. The chamber houses a large telescope mounted on a revolving dais. A small chair is bolted to the dais under the telescope, with an iron lever jutting up from the floor next to it, topped by a perfectly round ruby. A small wooden steering wheel attached to the chair is adorned with glowing numerals at its copper-plated center.
>
> Three larger chairs along one wall have likewise been bolted to the floor, all facing the telescope. Two lengths of rope are fastened to each chair, including the one on the dais.
>
> Chains and wheels attached to the tower's conical metal roof suggest that the strong, tightly fitting panels can be retracted, enabling the telescope's user to peer into the starry heavens on clear nights.

This observatory doubles as the control room for the rocket ship. Stonky's chair is the small one on the dais. The other three chairs are reserved for his cult fanatics, Pig Wheat, Ram Sugar, and Sheep Sweet Corn.

If anyone other than Stonky tampers with the telescope or the steering wheel, three lightning golems are conjured to appear next to the dais and attack anyone who isn't Stonky or a member of the Livestock. These golems resemble humans made of crackling lightning. They use the **flesh golem** stat block but deal lightning damage instead of bludgeoning damage with their slam attacks, and they lack the Aversion to Fire trait. The golems can't leave the observatory.

Lever. Stonky has placed a *glyph of warding* spell on the red ruby atop the lever. Any character who inspects the lever and succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check spots the tiny, nearly invisible glyph. If any creature other than Stonky moves the lever, the glyph activates to fill the room with magical lightning. Each creature in the room must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 36 (8d8) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The glyph disappears once the spell is triggered, rendering the lever safe to use.

The lever can be moved to fit into one of three slots, which are labeled Coop, Shed, and Stable, all in Common. The lever is currently in the notch labeled Stable. When the countdown timer in area U7 reaches zero, the rocket reacts according to the lever's position:

Coop. The launch is aborted when the countdown timer reaches zero. The engines under the tower shut down and remain inoperable for 24 hours.

Shed. The countdown is paused and the Barn Door's launch is delayed for as long as the lever remains in this position.

Stable. The Barn Door blasts off when the countdown timer reaches zero.

Steering Wheel. This wheel sets the rocket's trajectory. Its glowing numerals currently read 646; this number scrolls up if the wheel is turned clockwise and down if the wheel is turned counterclockwise. Any setting from 626 to 666 is sufficient to launch the Barn Door into space.

Under the Barn Door

Stonky and his cult fanatics are in the process of evacuating the chambers beneath the tower, having set the Barn Door on a programmed countdown to launch. But their evacuation has been delayed by an unforeseen complication: Stonky can't find his *ring of telekinesis* and doesn't know where he left it. It's a race against time to find the ring before the four of them must go up to the Barn Door's observatory, secure themselves to the chairs there, and blast into space along with the rest of their cult and their collection of "priceless" books.

Before running this part of the adventure, determine how much time has elapsed since the earthquake. That tells you how much time the characters have left before the 60-minute countdown timer reaches zero. What happens then depends on the position of the lever in the observatory (area B4). See that area and the "Conclusion" section for details.

Underlevel Features

The Barn Door's underlevel is hewn from solid rock and has the following features.

Ceilings. Ceilings are 20 feet high and flat.

Debris. The floor in all areas was once littered with scraps of metal, most of which have been swept out of the way and piled near the walls.

Doors. Doors are made of thick iron and fitted with iron fittings and handles.

Light. The underlevel is lit by oil-burning lanterns that hang from iron hooks embedded in the walls.

Underlevel Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of the underlevel.

U1. Descending Staircase

This hidden staircase can be reached by way of the secret door in area B1.

> As this unlit stone staircase curves downward, the air in the stairwell grows warmer.

The staircase's inner wall eventually gives way to an iron bannister, affording an unobstructed view of area U2 as the characters complete their descent.

Wall of Stone. When the countdown timer reaches zero, a wall of stone magically appears on the stairs at the point marked on the map, as if created by the spell of the same name. The wall seals off the underlevel as the tower soars into the sky.

U2. Rocket Boosters

A four-section rocket engine is attached to the underside of the tower above this area and protrudes down through the ceiling. The embers falling from the rocket fill the area with bright orange light.

> At the bottom of the stairs, a thirty-foot-diameter room opens up directly underneath the Barn Door tower. Four ten-foot-long metal cylinders protrude from the twenty-foot-high ceiling, glowing with intense heat and shedding bright embers that rain down on the floor. Four mechanical constructs resembling wolf-sized, dog-headed cockroaches march in a circle around the perimeter of the cylinders.

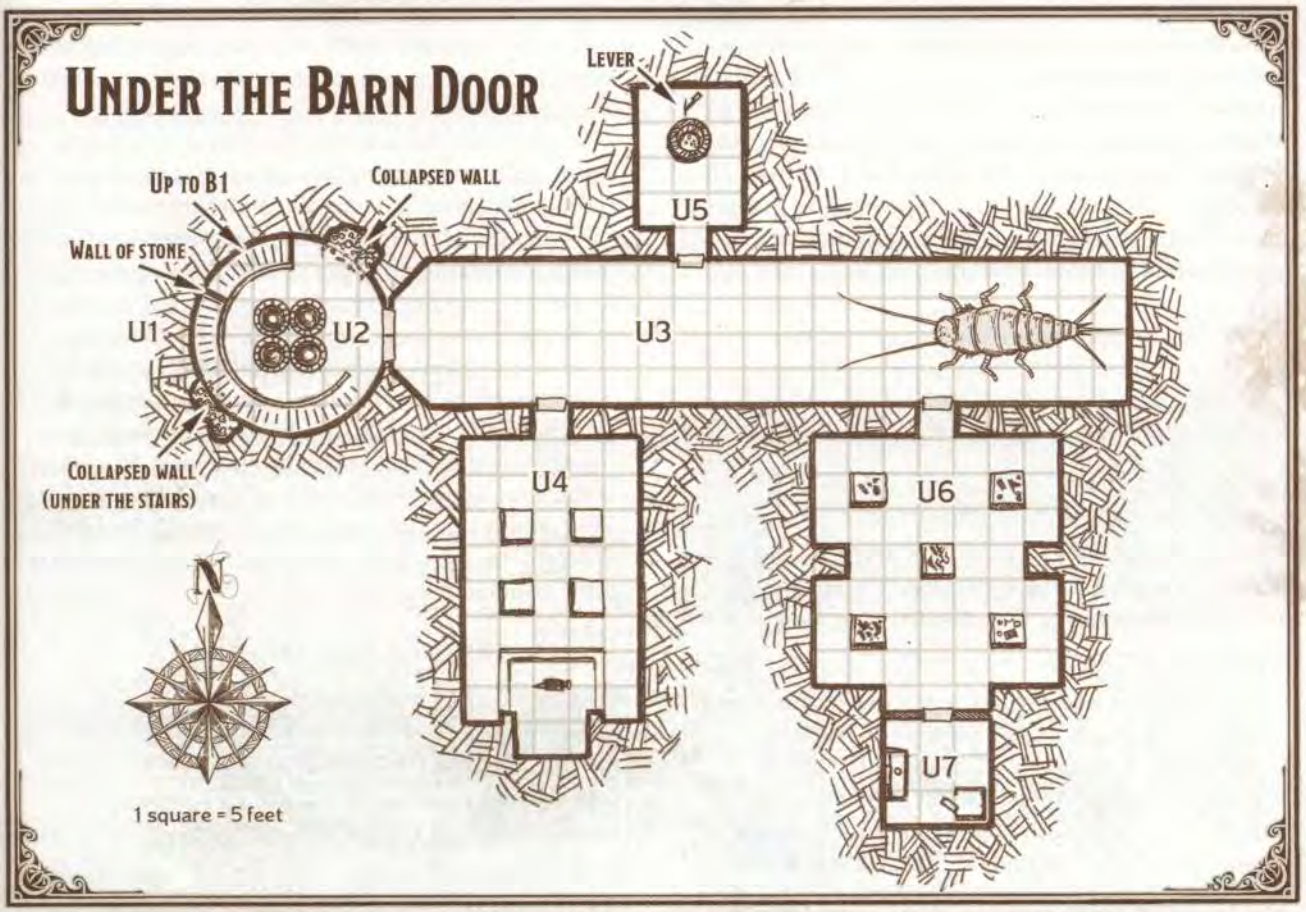
The constructs are four **skitterwidgets** (see the end of the adventure for their stat block). They have orders to attack anyone approaching the double doors who is not a Livestock member. They break off their attack if the characters take one or more kiddywidgets as hostages (see "Kiddywidget Nests" below). The skitterwidgets won't do anything that might harm their young.

If the characters are eager to fight the skitterwidgets, run that combat now. Otherwise, describe the rest of the room:

> The floor of the room is covered in scorch marks that grow darker and more intense closer to the center. Two sections of wall have crumbled, one on the staircase and one opposite it, where stone cornices, molding, and carved panels have collapsed to rubble. Near the foot of the stairs, an iron double door stands closed.

Cylinders. The four metal cylinders jutting from the ceiling are rocket engines attached to the base of the Barn Door. There is 10 feet of clearance between the floor and the cylinders, which put out a lot of heat. Any creature that moves into the area beneath the cylinders for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there takes 14 (4d6) fire damage.

Double Door. If Stonky has not yet evacuated the underlevel, the iron double door to area U3 is



locked. The complex lock can be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, but any such check takes 1 minute. A character can also use an action to try to force the doors, doing so with a successful DC 22 Strength (Athletics) check.

Kiddywidget Nests. The fallen sections of wall collapsed when the Barn Door's rockets were test-fired, exposing cavities behind the walls. Characters who investigate find one **kiddywidget** (see the end of the adventure for its stat block) in each cavity. These offspring of the skitterwidgets chirp loudly if disturbed by anyone other than their parents.

Stonky and his cultists are unaware of the kiddywidgets, and they would be surprised to learn that skitterwidgets can procreate. Stonky would be even more surprised to find that he can't control kiddywidgets by using his *ring of telekinesis*. (See area U5 for more information about Stonky's ring.)

U3. Unlit Hallway

> Beyond the double door is a dark, twenty-foot-wide hallway with three iron doors leading off it: two on the right side of the hall and one on the left.

Stonky has reprogrammed the illusion magic that protects this hallway, which functions similarly to a *programmed illusion* spell. The magic triggers when any creature except a member of the Livestock enters through the double door, creating the illusion of a giant silverfish at the east end of the hall, beyond the range of most characters' darkvision. As one or more characters enter the hall, the monster scuttles toward them threateningly:

> Out of the darkness comes a giant, wingless arthropod ten feet tall and thirty feet long. The creature's head has two long feelers and multifaceted eyes, and its carapace gleams with a silvery sheen. Its tapered body swishes from side to side as it crawls toward you!

Have the players roll initiative for their characters. The illusory monster acts on initiative count 15 and does nothing except approach the characters, moving at a speed of 30 feet on each of its turns and making no attacks. This illusion is intended to scare away intruders, though characters might be tricked into attacking it or wasting spells on it.

A character can use an action to examine the creature, discerning its illusory nature with a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Physical interaction with the giant silverfish also betrays its true nature, since it has no substance and objects pass right through it. If the illusion is not dispelled (DC 16), it disappears after 5 minutes. The magic then resets, triggering again the next time one or more intruders enter the hall.

U4. Forge

A stone forge stands at the back of this dark room, which contains four stone tables apparently meant to serve as workstations. Smith's tools are spread across the tables, protective aprons and helmets hang from hooks on the walls, and pieces of sheet metal and weapons are stacked up in the corners of the room.

The components of the Barn Door's rocket engines were built here, and Stonky made use of this room when he and his cultists repaired the rockets.

Treasure. A quick search of the room yields four sets of smith's tools. Characters who spend 5 minutes exploring the room find a 4-inch-tall mechanical owlbear figurine (750 gp) tucked in the pocket of a leather apron. The key used for winding the figurine sticks out of the owlbear's back. Using an action to wind the figurine causes it to walk in a straight line at a speed of 5 feet for 10 minutes. At the end of every minute of operation, the owlbear changes from walking on all fours to walking on its hind legs. It turns 180 degrees whenever it hits a barrier, reversing its course.

U5. Stonky's Missing Ring

A five-foot-diameter well enclosed by a two-foot-high stone rim stands in the center of this room. An iron lever juts up from the floor next to the well, resting in a position that points it toward the door.

The well is 30 feet deep and contains a 10-foot-deep pool of corrosive acid that Stonky uses to dispose of malfunctioning skitterwidgets. Any creature that enters the pool of acid for the first time on a turn or that starts its turn there takes 21 (6d6) acid damage.

Pulling the lever so that it angles away from the door causes valves to open at the bottom of the well, draining it in 1 minute. Returning the lever to its previous position seals the valves but doesn't refill the well. Once the well is emptied, it's easy to see the corroded remains of a dead skitterwidget at the bottom of it.

Treasure. Hidden amid the acid-pitted wreckage at the bottom of the well is an undamaged *ring of telekinesis* that Stonky accidentally dropped while working here.

Stonky's ring doubles as the control ring for the seven skitterwidgets he has created (the four in area U2 and the three in area U6). Without the ring, he can't command them to do anything other than what they're programmed to do: attack intruders on sight. Any character who attunes to the ring gains control of Stonky's creations, though the skitterwidgets ignore commands spoken more than 30 feet away from them. The ring cannot control the kiddywidgets in area U2, even if they become skitterwidgets.

A character needs to spend a short rest attuning to the ring, and a short rest is at least 1 hour long. This means that unless the countdown is delayed or aborted, the Barn Door will launch before the character attunes to the ring.

U6. Workshop

Eight lanterns hang from the ceiling of this spacious workshop, filling the area with light and shadow. Marble molding and columns embellish the stone walls, while the far wall is made of riveted iron plates with an iron door set in the middle of it. A copper sign bolted to the door reads "Control Room" in Common.

The room contains five stone tables that hold unfinished mechanical constructs, all in various stages of completion. Components and parts are scattered across the tables and the floor. Skittering around in the debris are three creatures that look like oversized, dog-headed cockroaches made of articulated metal.

If Stonky's three cult fanatics have not yet been encountered (see area B1), add the following to this area's description:

In addition to the metal constructs, three figures in custodial uniforms—a halfling, a dragonborn, and a human—are crawling around on the floor as though searching for something.

The insectoid creatures are three **skitterwidgets** (see the end of the adventure for their stat block). They are programmed to attack intruders on sight. A character attuned to Stonky's ring (see area U5) can issue commands to these skitterwidgets, which follow those commands to the best of their ability.

The figures crawling on the floor are three Livestock **cult fanatics** who go by the names Pig Wheat (the halfling), Ram Sugar (the dragonborn), and

Sheep Sweet Corn (the human). As a dragonborn, Ram Sugar has resistance to fire damage and the following additional action option:

Breath Weapon (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Ram Sugar exhales fire in a 30-foot-long line that is 5 feet wide. Any creature in the line must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

The cult fanatics are trying to help Stonky find his *ring of telekinesis*, which he has lost. They fight alongside the skitterwidgets as soon as the characters enter this area, and they gladly throw away their lives "for Stonky!"

Treasure. A thorough search of the room requires 10 minutes and yields four metal gizmos worth 250 gp each. These gizmos serve no function on their own, but their value can be used toward the cost of constructing an iron golem or a similar metal construct.

U7. Stonky's Command Center

The door to this room is sealed by an *arcane lock* spell that members of the Livestock can bypass. The door can be opened with a *knock* spell or similar magic, or broken down with a successful DC 30 Strength (Athletics) check.

> This chamber contains an iron safe roughly five feet on a side and a low metal console with a slanted top. The safe's thick door stands open on its iron hinges. The console, which is securely bolted to the floor, has a countdown timer and a blinking red button built into it. Suspended above the console are four wireframe windows, each displaying a projected image.

Unless the characters have already encountered him (see area B1), Stonky is here. The intrepid gnome **master sage** (see page 9 for his stat block) is currently crawling underneath the console, looking for his *ring of telekinesis*. (The ring is in area U5, but it hasn't yet occurred to Stonky to search there.)

If anyone knocks on the door, the distracted Stonky opens it, expecting to see his cultists on the other side. As soon as he sees the characters instead, he attacks them in a panic. See the "Stonky Noptopper" sidebar for additional guidance on how to portray him.

Stonky carries an iron key that unlocks the double door between areas U2 and U3. See "Treasure" below for his other possessions.

Stonky's Plots. If he's captured and interrogated, Stonky is delighted to share his master plan with his captors. That plan entails launching the Barn Door into space, thereby keeping Candlekeep's most precious books out of the hands of all who are unworthy of such knowledge. (Stonky makes it clear he considers the characters part of that group.)

The gnome can't take credit for building the rocket ship, but he takes great pride in having made it operational once more. "Once the countdown timer reaches zero, WHOOSH!" He also divulges that the only way to abort the launch once the countdown has begun is to shift the lever in the tower observatory (area B4), and that he has placed a spell on the lever to keep others from tampering with it.

Console. The blinking red button indicates that the Barn Door is on a countdown to launch. If the timer on the console reaches zero, the tower blasts off. Pushing the button has no effect while the countdown is in progress. If the characters delay the launch by using the lever in area B4, the countdown timer pauses. If the launch is aborted, the timer resets and the red button stops blinking.

The wireframe windows mounted above the console are magic projection screens that act as security cameras, showing the interior of the tower (areas B1, B2, B3, and B4, respectively). Stonky has been too busy searching for his ring to pay any attention to them. Casting a *dispel magic* spell on the console causes these projected images to vanish, as does destroying the console.

The console is a Large object with AC 19, 27 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Destroying the console doesn't stop a launch in progress.

Safe. The iron safe is empty. It sports a combination lock with a dial that displays tiny images of farm animals in place of numerals—bull, cat, cow, dog, donkey, falcon, goat, hen, horse, llama, ox, pig, pigeon, rabbit, rooster, sheep, and turtle. Only Stonky knows the safe's combination: pig, goat, llama, hen, rooster. The safe's door locks automatically when it closes and can't be opened from the

Stonky Noptopper

Stonky J. Noptopper ("the J is for genius!") is chaotic neutral and proud to a fault. He is particularly braggadocious once the countdown to launch has begun, but once his adrenaline is pumping, he is bound to panic and let his true colors show. Stonky's main goal is to protect the books he has collected. In his warped mind, a few deaths are a small price to pay for success.

Personality Trait. "I don't like most people, which is why I relish the thought of spending the rest of my life in the cold darkness of space, surrounded by books and skitterwidgets."

Ideal. "Knowledge is power, and most people are undeserving of it. Not me, though. I am knowledge incarnate!"

Bond. "Won't someone please think of the books?!"

Flaw. "I am burdened with the curse of being right all the time."

inside except by a *knock* spell or similar magic. A character outside the safe can spend 1 minute trying to find the combination with a successful DC 25 Dexterity (Perception) check. Thieves' tools are of no benefit in opening the combination lock, since its mechanisms are inaccessible; what's needed here is a delicate touch and a keen ear.

See the "Variant: Skills with Different Abilities" section in the *Player's Handbook* for guidance on how one makes a Dexterity (Perception) check.

Treasure. In addition to the key in his possession, Stonky carries a wand he uses as a spellcasting focus, a brass locket with a broken chain (5 gp), and a scrap of paper. The locket contains a painted portrait of Stonky on one side and a sketch of a rocket ship with little hearts surrounding it on the other. Scribbled in Gnomish on the scrap of paper are the following word pairs:

Coop—Abort
Shed—Delay
Stable—Blastoff!

These words provide clues to how the lever in area B4 works. Stonky wrote them down as a reminder to himself.

Conclusion

Depending on what actions the characters took to affect the impending launch, this adventure can end in a few different ways.

Blastoff!

The characters can use the lever in area B4 to abort or delay the launch. If they fail to do that, you must determine when the launch occurs based on your estimation of how much time has elapsed since the earthquake. If the characters take a short rest or otherwise waste time, the Barn Door launches at the end of the 60-minute countdown. When that happens, the entire tower flies into the sky, soaring along its preset trajectory. It leaves behind a cloud of smoke large enough to engulf the entire Inner Ward of Candlekeep (treat the area as heavily obscured for 1 minute). Any creature in area U1 or area U2 takes 132 (24d10) fire damage from the rocket engines as the tower lifts off.

Any creatures clinging to the outside of the tower when it launches are shaken off, while those inside are borne upward at phenomenal speed. Creatures in the tower that are not tied down when it launches are thrown about, taking 10 (3d6) bludgeoning

damage and falling prone at the start of each of their turns until they find some way to secure themselves.

If the Barn Door's trajectory is altered enough to prevent it from reaching outer space, it crashes and explodes in a remote location of your choosing, dealing 88 (16d10) bludgeoning damage plus 56 (16d6) fire damage to each creature aboard. If it reaches space, the tower begins to orbit the planet, as magical wards kick in to provide occupants with artificial gravity and a continuous supply of air and heat.

If the characters were inside the Barn Door for the launch and have come along for the ride, you can decide what measures might allow them to return to the world, from reprogramming the tower's controls and the rocket engines, to having a *spell scroll* of *teleportation circle* found amid Stonky's books. If Stonky and his cultists take off alone, the tower's supply of rations keeps them fed for a year, after which they turn to cannibalism.

Launch Delayed or Aborted

If the characters use the lever in area B4 to delay or shut down the launch, they can continue exploring the tower and its underlevel without fear of the Barn Door launching into space. They can also let the Avowed deal with Stonky and his cultists. The Avowed aren't likely to punish Stonky severely for his transgressions, since there are technically no laws against launching rocket ships in Candlekeep. But the gnome and his minions are forbidden from entering the Barn Door thereafter, and the structure is placed under the protection of a *guards and wards* spell to discourage further exploration of the place.

Skitterwidget Problem

If any of Stonky's skitterwidgets or their kiddywidget offspring were left to their own devices after the characters' excursion into the Barn Door, those constructs might become a problem for Candlekeep. Any pair of skitterwidgets—including any left undestroyed in area U6, which survive even if the Barn Door launches into space—can mate and give birth to kiddywidgets. Those tiny constructs soon grow to be as big as their parents, and they can make kiddywidgets of their own in turn. If the construct population isn't culled, Candlekeep might one day be overrun by the creatures.

Stonky's ring allows a character to control his original seven skitterwidgets (the four in area U2 and the three in area U6). No others, including the offspring of the original skitterwidgets, can be controlled using the ring. The Avowed permit skitterwidgets under the characters' control to remain in Candlekeep, but not in the Inner Ward. Stray skitterwidgets are eventually hunted down and destroyed.

New Monsters

This section provides stat blocks for the two new creatures encountered in the adventure: the skitterwidget and its offspring, the kiddywidget. The stat blocks appear after the creatures' descriptions.

Skitterwidget

A skitterwidget is made of metal and bears a passing resemblance to a giant dog-headed cockroach. No two skitterwidgets look exactly alike, but all are surprisingly cute.

Language of Squeals. Skitterwidgets speak their own simple language, which is composed of high-pitched, vowel-heavy squeals.

Control Ring. A skitterwidget that was created is bound to a magic control ring and must obey the commands of whoever is attuned to that ring. It understands the ring wearer's commands as though they were spoken in the skitterwidget's language. Up to seven created skitterwidgets can be linked to the same control ring.

Protective Parents. Skitterwidgets have the ability to mate and breed, producing kiddywidgets that are even cuter than their parents. A skitterwidget strives to protect nearby kiddywidgets, whether it gave birth to them or not. If it receives a command from its master that would endanger the life of one or more kiddywidgets in its care, a skitterwidget can make a DC 5 Charisma saving throw, ignoring the command and all other commands from its master for 1 minute on a success.

Kiddywidget

A skitterwidget that gives birth to a kiddywidget can't procreate for 3d6 days afterward. Still, given that skitterwidgets are constructs with no natural life span, there is no telling how many kiddywidgets a pair of skitterwidgets can produce.

Growth Cycle. It takes 3d6 hours for an impregnated skitterwidget to give birth to one kiddywidget. A newborn kiddywidget magically grows into a full-sized skitterwidget in 10 days.

Autonomous. Unlike skitterwidgets that are created rather than born, kiddywidgets aren't beholden to the wearer of a control ring, even after they grow to become skitterwidgets.

Skitterwidget

Medium construct

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 85 (10d8 + 40)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	3 (−4)	10 (+0)	1 (−5)

Damage Immunities lightning, poison
Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Skitterwidget
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Lightning Absorption. Whenever the skitterwidget is subjected to lightning damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the lightning damage dealt.

Unusual Nature. The skitterwidget doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Actions

Multiattack. The skitterwidget makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled by the skitterwidget (escape DC 13).

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) lightning damage, and if the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of its next turn.

Reactions

Good Parent. The skitterwidget imposes disadvantage on one attack roll made against a kiddywidget it can see within 5 feet of it.

Kiddywidget

Small construct

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 15 (2d6 + 8)
Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (−2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	1 (−5)	10 (+0)	1 (−5)

Damage Immunities lightning, poison
Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Skitterwidget
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Unusual Nature. The kiddywidget doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Actions

Multiattack. The kiddywidget makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled by the kiddywidget (escape DC 8).

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage plus 2 (1d4) lightning damage.

AN ADVENTURE FOR 10TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

ZIKRAN'S ZEPHYREAN TOME

WRITTEN BY TAYMOOR REHMAN
DEVELOPED & EDITED BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS

ZIKRAN'S ZEPHYREAN TOME WAS DONATED to Candlekeep by adventurers seeking refuge from a storm that seemed to follow them wherever they went. A junior member of the Avowed, although unable to open the book, cataloged it as a treatise on the Inner Planes, based solely on Zikran's reputation as an expert on the subject. The book has been moving through the archives ever since, as Avowed who were also unable to open it take guesses at its contents. After a time, they stopped trying.

Finding the Book

Characters in Candlekeep might uncover this book while researching any of the following topics:

- Denizens of the Inner Planes, especially the Wind Dukes of Aaqa (powerful beings of elemental air) and djinn
- Extraplanar travel
- Magic fortresses

Book Description

The book is a heavy tome with covers of white marble bound in pale blue leather. A large padlock prevents the book from being opened and resists all attempts to open it with magic, but it snaps open when the book is held by someone who intends to leave Candlekeep with it. The book contains one hundred eight mostly blank pages made of tissue-thin white paper and emits a soft breeze whenever a page is turned. Most important, when the book is first opened, it reveals the creature trapped inside it: a djinni named Gazre-Azam.

The first ten pages of the book contain various notes in Zikran's hand that indicate he tried several times to trap a djinni in the book before finally succeeding. The next eight pages are observations of Gazre-Azam's behavior during his time of servitude to Zikran. The last ninety pages of the book are blank, and a character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check can figure out that this volume used to serve as a wizard's spellbook. At some point, the spells were removed in such a way as to leave the pages blank.

Gazre-Azam's Predicament

Gazre-Azam has been trapped in the book for many years. When the book is opened, it releases small, wispy clouds that form into the shape of Gazre-Azam's head. The djinni speaks to any character willing to listen and asks for their aid.

Gazre-Azam was summoned by Zikran, a water genasi wizard, and bound to the book. Zikran wanted the djinni to teach him how to make elemental devices, with the ultimate goal of building a floating castle fortress. For some time, the djinni served the wizard. Hoping to earn his freedom, Gazre-Azam shared much of his knowledge, but the wizard would not release him. When Gazre-Azam changed tactics and became less helpful, Zikran cast a complicated and near-permanent spell to keep Gazre-Azam from escaping. The djinni reveals that the only way to free him is for Zikran to end the enchantment willingly or for Zikran to be killed. Repeatedly and desperately, yet still with a noble manner, Gazre-Azam asks for the characters' aid. In exchange, he offers the characters one free casting of a *wish* spell.

ZIKRAN'S ZEPHYREAN TOME

If the characters agree to Gazre-Azam's request, he asks that they take him along. While bound to the book, Gazre-Azam can't use his magical abilities, but he can speak freely to the party and provide valuable information. Once members of the Avowed learn that a creature is trapped in the tome, they will allow the characters to leave Candlekeep with it, on the condition that the book is returned to them once the djinni is freed. (The Avowed are in no rush to get the book back.)

Finding Zikran

Gazre-Azam hasn't seen Zikran in a long time, but since his enchantment is still intact, he knows that Zikran must be alive. He suggests searching for Zikran at a seaside laboratory—the last place where the djinni interacted with Zikran. It might hold clues about what the wizard is up to now. Gazre-Azam describes to the characters a landmark that might help them find this hidden location. His directions are as follows:

> "Follow the Sword Coast south for two nights and a day until you find a spire made of coral. Stand at the base of this spire and look inland, and you will see the mouth of a flooded cave. This cave contains Zikran's laboratory and sanctum."

To follow Gazre-Azam's instructions, the characters must travel along the cliffs and beaches of the Sword Coast. The party might encounter a number of foes or NPCs along the way, as appropriate for your campaign. If no such enemies or NPCs are present, you can harass the party with three **wyverns** that are hunting along the coast.

After traveling for a day and a half, the characters spot a spire of bright coral just off the coast. Characters who approach the spire and face inland see the opening to a partially flooded cave, just as Gazre-Azam described.

Zikran's Laboratory

Zikran's abandoned laboratory, located in the driest part of a seaside cave system, has recently become the lair of a young bronze dragon named Ashgarlyth.

Cave Features

All chambers in the cave complex are hewn from solid rock. Areas L1 through L3 are flooded with seawater, and the walls of these caves are slick with moisture and algae. Area L4 is above sea level but still damp. Area L5 and the secret passage on the west side of it are dry. Only area L5 is illuminated.

Encounter Locations

The following encounters are keyed to the map of Zikran's laboratory.

L1. Coral Spire

> A spire of coral rises from the water just off the coast. Its base at sea level is ten feet across, and it tapers to a point forty feet above the water. Through the clear, gentle waves, you can see that it extends down into a coral reef that would destroy seafaring vehicles that dared sail into it. Directly east of the spire is the opening to a flooded cave.

Characters who explore the area underwater can search the submerged portions of the coral. They find that the plant life is healthy, and they see long claw marks in the coral leading to and from the flooded cave. Any character who has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or higher notices similar marks on the walls at the cave entrance and can, with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check, determine they were made by a young dragon.

L2. Flooded Cave

To enter this flooded cave, the characters must wade or swim into the water that fills it.

> This cave has a twelve-foot-high ceiling and rough, natural walls. The clear water that flows into the cave is four feet deep. A nook in the northeast corner contains two corpses preserved by the seawater. The cave's back wall is flat, with a large opening in the southeast corner.

The flooded cave is difficult terrain for any creature that doesn't have a swimming speed.

Corpses. Characters can identify the corpses as those of two half-elves who look like siblings. Any character who uses an action to examine the corpses closely can, with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check, confirm that the two died in their sleep from drowning. It appears they stopped in the cave after an intense battle, fell asleep, and did not wake when the tide came in. Their spirits, corrupted by this horrific death, lie in wait. If a character interacts with either corpse beyond simple examination, the half-elves' restless spirits rise as two **ghosts**. The ghosts are hostile but can't leave this chamber. If the characters fight the ghosts, Ashgarlyth hears the commotion but remains in his lair (area L5).

When the ghosts are defeated, the half-elves' spirits can be laid to rest by removing the corpses from the cave and burying them side by side in the earth.

Treasure. After the ghosts have been dealt with, a search of the corpses yields two *potions of healing* in addition to 37 gp. Leather armor worn by the corpses is not salvageable, nor are the half-elves' weapons (two shortswords and two shortbows).

Secret Tunnel. A character who spends at least 1 minute searching the chamber for secret doors finds one with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. Behind this secret door is a dry, dark tunnel above the water line. Another secret door at the opposite end of the tunnel can be found without a check; it pulls open to reveal area L5 beyond.

L3. Tidal Chamber

The floor here is 6 feet lower than in area L2.

> This cave is filled with water to a depth of ten feet, and its ceiling is another ten feet above the water's surface. A large opening to the east leads to another chamber. A lip along the bottom edge of this opening prevents water from proceeding any farther, and large claw marks are visible along this lip.

The claw marks were made by Ashgarlyth and are similar to the ones in area L1.

Characters must swim to cross the room, which acts as a reservoir to prevent the incoming tide from flooding the rest of the cave system.

L4. Zikran's Quarters

> This chamber appears to have been dug out of the surrounding stone. The floor is slick with moisture but not flooded. This place was once a bedroom. Stains on the floor mark where once stood a bed, a desk, a table, and chairs. The splintered remains of this furniture have been pushed into a corner. A large wooden door to the north is ajar.
>
> Mounted on the wall next to the door, seemingly left untouched, is a shelf of books and scrolls. It has been filled with colorful covers and attractive shades of parchment.

Bookshelf. Characters who examine the contents of the bookshelf find that there's no rhyme or reason to the organization of the books and scrolls. The books are ship logs with daily entries; the scrolls

are navigational charts. Ashgarlyth recovered these "treasures" from the sunken wrecks of ships off the coast. Their pages are wrinkled from being underwater. Although the dragon values this collection, the books and scrolls are worthless.

L5. Laboratory and Lair

Characters can approach this room through either the door from Zikran's quarters (area L4) or the secret tunnel from the flooded cave (area L2).

> Several small, glowing stones hang from the twenty-foot-high ceiling of this large cave, which is cluttered with laboratory equipment and beautiful coral sculptures. Rising from the floor in the center of the room is a circular stone dais that has obvious grooves to accommodate a device of some kind, though no such device is present. Atop this dais is a bronze-scaled dragon wearing a coral crown.

Ashgarlyth, a **young bronze dragon**, stands on the dais. Characters who enter through the secret tunnel startle the dragon, who is reluctant to leave his treasures unguarded.

Roleplaying Ashgarlyth. The characters can fight Ashgarlyth or attempt to negotiate with him. The dragon is lawful good, meticulous, and incredibly prideful. He recently claimed Zikran's old laboratory as his lair and is wary of other creatures that might try to take it from him.

Ashgarlyth values beautiful, colorful things and hoards a collection of colorful books and coral sculptures, including the crown of coral that he wears. He will not let anyone rifle through his treasures freely. (These items are worthless, despite being of value to the dragon.) When bargaining with Ashgarlyth, the characters can get through to him in a few ways:

- They can appeal to his good nature by urging him to help save Gazre-Azam and bring Zikran to justice.
- They can offer a valuable or beautiful treasure in exchange for being allowed to carefully peruse Zikran's old laboratory.
- A character familiar with bronze dragons can bring up their famous love of ships and the sea in an attempt to bond with Ashgarlyth.

If the players fight Ashgarlyth, treat the laboratory as his lair, granting the dragon lair actions as described in the *Monster Manual*. If he is reduced to 15 hit points or fewer, Ashgarlyth tries to bargain with the party again. If that doesn't work, the young dragon fights to the death, unwilling to swallow his pride.

Searching the Laboratory. Use the following boxed text to describe Zikran's lab in more detail:

> The cave contains several tables covered with intricate machinery and crafting tools. Bookshelves are filled with books and dioramas. Freestanding chalkboards in wooden frames once displayed arcane formulas, though only smudges and streaks of chalk remain.

Characters who succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to search the area can find clues to Zikran's whereabouts. If the characters have *Zikran's Zephyrean Tome* and use it to consult with Gazre-Azam, the djinni helps up to two characters who attempt this check, giving them advantage. The clues are as follows:

- An old diary tells the tale of a paranoid and lonely man. In this diary, Zikran writes about a rival named Laffa, who sought the location of this laboratory. Fear of discovery prompted Zikran to pack up and leave in a hurry. (Gazre-Azam reveals that Laffa was an adventuring wizard. Laffa and his companions were the ones who found *Zikran's Zephyrean Tome* and used it to gain entry into Candlekeep.)
- A stray map describes a route to a mountain range farther south, labeled the Cloud Peaks. A particular mountain is circled in ink with the word "Here?" written beside it. (Gazre-Azam can tell the party that the Cloud Peaks were home to a clan of cloud giants centuries ago. The giants occupied a keep near the top of the mountain circled on the map. Perhaps its ruins are still there. The djinni knows Zikran was interested in this possibility.)
- Diagrams show the structure and inner workings of a magical cannon powered by elemental air. Though its function as a cannon is obvious, only characters who succeed on a DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check can understand the images well enough to operate such a cannon if they find one. A character who gets a 20 or higher on this check knows that the device can be operated manually or by a command word, but there's no command word written on the diagrams.

The Cloud Peaks

After the party deals with Ashgarlyth and finds the clues in the dragon's lair, the characters can travel to the Cloud Peaks in search of Zikran.

Flesh out the journey with encounters appropriate for your campaign, and give the characters a chance to prepare before they start climbing mountains. They will be encountering extreme weather conditions and might have difficulty with the harshness of the climb.

Ashgarlyth the Bronze Dragon in Its Lair

Rules for extreme cold, strong wind, and high altitude can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

The Climb

The climb into the mountains of the Cloud Peaks is incredibly taxing and dangerous. To reach the location marked on the map in Zikran's abandoned laboratory, the characters must climb for 3 days. This time frame assumes everything goes well. The journey is divided into three legs.

Day 1

The first leg of the journey is straightforward and takes the characters from the base of the mountain to the edge of the mountain's snow line. Few creatures will confront a party that looks well prepared.

Day 2

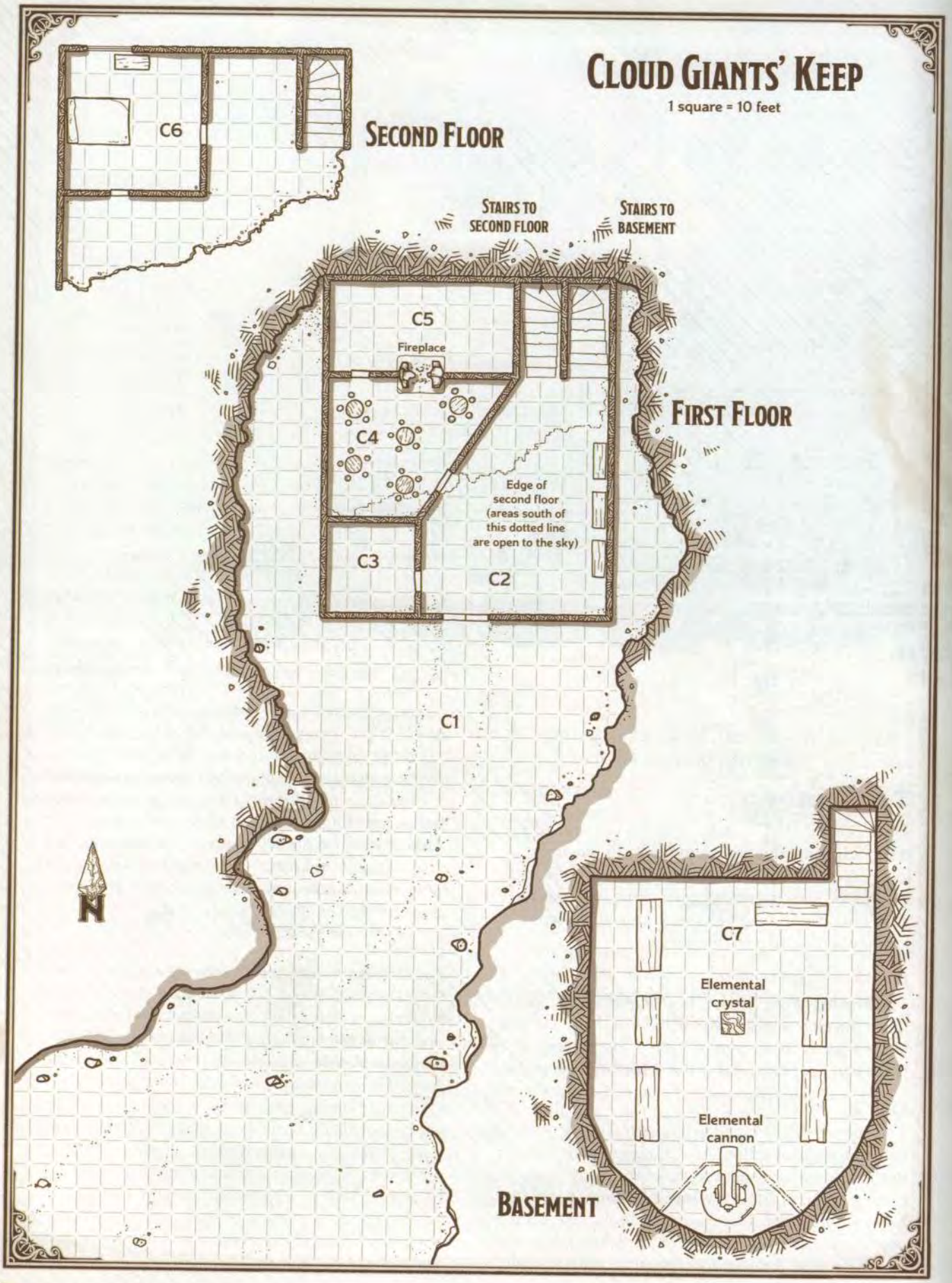
The second day of travel is hampered by extreme cold and high elevation. Above the snow line, natural predators are eager to make the party their prey. A group of 1d4 + 3 **winged kobolds** harry the party at one point. These kobolds have resistance to cold damage. Whenever one of these kobolds would deal 5 or more damage to a character with a single attack, it can instead damage the character's clothing, rendering it ineffective as cold weather gear until the clothing is mended. A character with weaver's tools can mend the clothing while taking a short rest. A *mending* spell also repairs the damage.

Shortly after nightfall or whenever the party decides to take a long rest, the characters are attacked by an **abominable yeti**, after which they are left alone for the remainder of their rest.

Day 3

The final leg of the journey takes place under the effects of extreme cold, strong wind, and high altitude as the party nears the ruins of the cloud giant keep. The day includes another encounter with 1d4 + 3 **winged kobolds**, plus any that were left alive after yesterday's encounter.

Toward evening, the characters come to a 40-foot-high, slanted cliff face that they must climb to reach their destination unless they use magic to complete the ascent. Each character must make a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check to climb the cliff face. On a failed check, the character still makes it to the top but gains 1 level of exhaustion, or 2 levels of exhaustion if the check fails by 5 or more.


Cloud Giants' Keep
1 square = 10 feet
Second Floor
C6
Stairs to second floor
Stairs to basement
C5
Fireplace
First Floor
C4
Edge of second floor (areas south of this dotted line are open to the sky)
C3
C2
C1
N
C7
Elemental crystal
Elemental cannon
Basement

Cloud Giants' Keep

The ruins of a cloud giant keep sit in a frozen, naturally formed cleft in the mountain near its peak. Sheltered by the high walls of the cleft, the ruins are not subject to strong wind. Rules for extreme cold apply, however.

What was once a truly impressive structure, six or more floors in height, is now frozen rubble. Only the first floor of the castle, part of the second floor, and the basement are traversable. The surrounding rubble is scattered in a way that suggests a tornado might have been responsible.

Keep Features

Everything about the keep is sized for cloud giants, who average 24 feet tall. Doorways are 25 feet high, and the doors set into them are made of thick, bleached wood that has begun to rot. Ceilings, where they exist, are typically 30 feet high; much of the second floor is open to the sky.

The bricks and tiles that make up the intact portions of the keep emit soft light from their interior sides. This effect causes all interior spaces to be brightly lit.

Cloud Giant Ghosts

The keep is haunted by the ghosts of cloud giants who perished long ago (see the end of the adventure for the **cloud giant ghost** stat block). These ghosts are indifferent toward the characters until some action on the characters' part causes the ghosts to turn hostile. What actions cause the ghosts to turn hostile vary from one encounter to the next. Characters who are cautious can avoid combat with the ghosts by not doing anything to anger them.

Encounter Locations

The following encounters are keyed to the map of the ruined cloud giant keep.

C1. Front Yard

The mountainside splits, leaving a natural cleft in the rock. Descending into this cleft, you come to an icy courtyard strewn with rubble. Hardy blue shrubs rise from the frozen ground. Lodged at the far end of the cleft is a keep sized for giants. Only the first floor and part of the second floor remain intact, the higher floors having collapsed long ago. The rubble left from this collapse surrounds what's left of the keep.

A twenty-five-foot-tall double door made of bleached wood with bronze fittings provides the only entrance at ground level.

In the courtyard, there are pieces of rubble large enough that characters can hide behind them. If they keep watch, the characters can take a short or long rest here without being disturbed. If the characters use *Zikran's Zephyrean Tome* to consult with Gazre-Azam, the djinni encourages the party to press on, eager to be freed.

C2. Entrance Hall

Part of this room is open to the sky, as shown on the map.

The ghosts of two cloud giants wander this hall, the floor of which is made of frost-covered white and green tile. A worn carpet leads from the entrance to staircases going up and down. Two doors to the west lead to other rooms. Three giant-sized display cases along the east wall hold faded documents.

The two **cloud giant ghosts** seem to have no regard for the party. They are indifferent toward intruders but turn hostile if attacked or if any of the display cases in this room are destroyed or looted.

The three display cases are 15 feet tall, made of bleached wood, and enclosed by panes of frost-covered glass. In them are twelve artistically displayed scrolls that contain the clan's history—four scrolls per case. The scrolls are in Dwarvish, the written language of giants. A character who can speak Dwarvish or Giant realizes that these writings tell the history of the cloud giants who once occupied this keep.

They were an isolated clan, content to live in peace away from the squabbles of other giants and mortals. Their propensity for using magic to alter the weather caught the attention of one of the Wind Dukes of Aaqa on the Elemental Plane of Air. This benevolent entity gave them access to powerful elemental magic in exchange for their fealty. After learning and harnessing this new magic, the giants became a force for good in the region for many years, until their patron was overthrown in a coup. Enemies of the deposed Wind Duke wiped out the giant clan, and their keep fell to ruin as the last remnants of the clan fought against their eradicators.

Stairs. The stairs leading up to the second floor and down to the basement are sized for cloud giants. Creatures smaller than Huge treat the stairs as difficult terrain.

Treasure. The twelve scrolls that chronicle the clan's history are worth 250 gp each to a historian or to the Avowed of Candlekeep. Each scroll is a sheet of parchment measuring 3 feet wide and 6 feet long.

C3. Armory

This room is missing its ceiling. Stone racks along the walls hold giant-sized morningstars, shields, warhammers, and helmets, all with icicles hanging from them. The room also contains a padlocked wooden chest in one corner and an enormous, wheel-shaped whetstone in another corner, frozen in position. Standing by the wheel is a cloud giant ghost staring blankly into the sky.

The **cloud giant ghost** is indifferent toward intruders but turns hostile if attacked or if the items in the chest are removed (see "Treasure" below).

Treasure. The chest is 5 feet long, 3 feet high, and 3 feet wide. It weighs 250 pounds, and the padlock holding it shut is frozen solid. Any character using thieves' tools can spend 1 minute trying to remove the padlock, doing so with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. Attempting this check without first melting the ice in and around the padlock imposes disadvantage on the roll. The chest contains two *potions of healing* (greater) and a rusty iron sphere (*iron bands of Bilarro*).

C4. Mess Hall

This room's ceiling is mostly intact, except for a portion to the south.

This room has large fur carpets on the floor and sturdy tables that can seat a dozen cloud giants at mealtime. A center table accommodates three cloud giant ghosts, who are playing some kind of card game.

A door in the north wall stands ajar. That same wall has a lit fireplace that also heats the adjacent room.

Three **cloud giant ghosts** sit at one of the tables. A character who is proficient with any type of gaming set or who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (History) check can determine that the ghosts are playing Three-Dragon Ante with spectral cards. The game distracts them, at least temporarily. Characters moving through the room must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity (Stealth) check to keep from being noticed by the ghosts. If the ghosts notice one or more intruders, they turn hostile and attack.

Fireplace. A character who closely observes the fire can, with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check, tell that it's a **fire elemental**. Zikran summoned the elemental and trapped it inside the fireplace, forcing it to heat both this room and the kitchen (area C5). Dealing damage to the fire elemental frees it and causes it to go berserk.

C5. Kitchen

This kitchen contains a large stove, cupboards and cabinets for storage, and a fireplace. Two ceramic jugs sit on a twelve-foot-high table in the middle of the room. One of the jugs is blue, the other orange. Standing next to this table is a cloud giant ghost going through the motions of preparing food, but without actual food or utensils—the act is just a mime.

See area C4 for a description of the fireplace. The stove is unheated.

The **cloud giant ghost** is indifferent toward the characters unless they disturb either of the jugs on the table, in which case the ghost turns hostile.

Treasure. The two jugs function as *alchemy jugs*, except that neither produces acid or poison. The blue jug can produce 1 quart of boiling hot tea, while the orange jug can produce 1 gallon of soy sauce, in addition to their other properties.

C6. Second Floor Bedroom

This room was once a giant's bedchamber. A huge four-poster bed stands against one wall. Other furnishings include a desk, chair, and three wardrobes, all sized for cloud giants. At the desk sits a spectral cloud giant wearing a fancy housecoat. It appears to be in the act of writing something, but without paper or pen—the act is just a mime.

Characters who observe the **cloud giant ghost** can tell that it's weeping silently as it "writes." This giant is doomed to spend eternity penning a farewell letter to its long-dead lover. The ghost defends itself if attacked but otherwise ignores the characters.

Treasure. The wardrobes contain clothes fit for a female cloud giant of noble status. In one of the wardrobes, the characters can find a pair of *boots of the winterlands*. They are giant-sized but shrink to fit whoever attunes to them.

C7. Zikran's Basement Workshop

The characters can access the basement from the entrance hall (area C2). If they try to do so, one of Zikran's magical safeguards triggers, releasing two **water elementals** and six **ice mephits**. They appear in unoccupied spaces on the staircase and try to prevent intruders from reaching the basement. If Gazre-Azam is present, he can invoke his rank as a noble genie as soon as the elementals and mephits appear. When he does so, 1d6 of the mephits vanish as if affected by a *banishment* spell.

Once the characters have defeated these creatures, they can enter the basement.

This high-vaulted basement room is full of equipment similar to what you saw in Zikran's abandoned laboratory. A bed, a chair, and a table sized for a person of human stature occupy one corner of the room. Stone tables arranged about the chamber are covered with half-finished machines, and a large dais built into the far side of the room holds a cannon mounted on a swivel. A dull blue glow emanates from the inside of the cannon's barrel.

In the middle of the room is a glimmering white crystal, eight feet tall and four feet wide. It pulses with arcane and elemental energy, filling the room with whipping winds and biting cold. Standing next to the crystal is a water genasi with turquoise skin and blue robes. He is guarded by a water elemental and an air elemental.

Zikran stands in front of the crystal when the party arrives. He is a chaotic evil water genasi **archmage** with these changes:

- Zikran speaks Aquan, Common, Primordial, Sahuagin, and Undercommon. He has 144 hit points, resistance to acid damage, a swimming speed of 30 feet, and the ability to breathe air and water.
- He has prepared the *conjure elemental* spell in addition to his other spells.
- While in the basement, he gains a special action option (see "Elemental Cannon" below).

Genasi have strong ties to the Inner Planes and the blood of genies flowing through their veins. Like the marids of the Elemental Plane of Water, Zikran is turbulent and unpredictable.

Zikran was alerted to the characters' presence when they fought the elementals and mephits on the stairs. Now ready for action, he has cast *mage armor*, *stoneskin*, and *mind blank* on himself. He carries a handheld magic device that controls the elemental cannon. This device, shown in the accompanying illustration, looks like a metal rod with a tip shaped like a bird's head. The **air elemental** and the **water elemental** obey Zikran's orders.

Given a chance, Zikran brags about his plans to restore the cloud giants' keep to its original glory, turning it into a flying fortress that he can ride into battle. If a character is carrying *Zikran's Zephyrean Tome* openly, Zikran offers the characters a chance to surrender and give up the book in exchange for their lives. If the party refuses this offer or if Zikran is unaware that the characters have the book, the genasi archmage and his elementals attack.

Elemental Cannon. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Zikran uses his handheld device to fire the cannon at one creature he can see, provided the creature is in the basement or on the staircase. Zikran's target must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The basement furnishings provide half cover, should a creature wish to hide behind them.

The cannon is a Large object with AC 16, 80 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. It is mounted atop a swivel and bolted to the dais. The cannon draws power from the crystal in the middle of the room. This crystal sparks with elemental power whenever the cannon is about to fire. If the crystal is destroyed, both Zikran's handheld device and the cannon become powerless. The crystal is a Large object with AC 13, 40 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Development. When Zikran is defeated, the lock on *Zikran's Zephyrean Tome* shatters and Gazre-Azam is released from the book. The djinni materializes in an unoccupied space within 30 feet of the book and lets out a deep sigh of relief.

Treasure. The room contains assorted material components for the spells Zikran can cast and Zikran's spellbook, which contains all the spells the archmage has prepared.

Conclusion

Once freed, Gazre-Azam offers to cast a *wish* spell on the characters' behalf. Unless he was treated terribly by the characters, he is unlikely to twist the wording of the party's wish. If he wasn't brought along, he teleports to the party now that he has free access to all his abilities.

If the party brought the djinni along and treated him well, he suggests an alternative to the *wish* spell: Gazre-Azam can imbue *Zikran's Zephyrean Tome* with the properties of a *censer of controlling air elementals*, except it summons only Gazre-Azam. Altering the book in this way deprives Gazre-Azam of the ability to cast a *wish* spell for one year. The characters must weigh their decision against any promise they made to return *Zikran's Zephyrean Tome* to Candlekeep.

Cloud Giant Ghost

Huge undead

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 104 (16d12)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	11 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +7, Cha +7
Skills Perception +7
Damage Resistances cold
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages Common, Giant
Challenge Rating 9 (5,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +4

Ethereal Sight. The ghost can see 120 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The ghost can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Regeneration. The ghost regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the ghost takes radiant damage or damage from a magic weapon, this trait doesn't function at the start of the ghost's next turn. The ghost dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Actions

Multiattack. The ghost makes two melee attacks.

Spectral Weapon. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d8 + 8) force damage.

Etherealness. The ghost enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

Spellcasting. The ghost casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability and requiring no material components:

At will: *fog cloud*
3/day: *telekinesis*
1/day: *control weather*

Wind Howl (Recharge 6). The ghost emits a dreadful howl that summons a cold, biting wind. This wind engulfs up to three creatures of the ghost's choice that it can see within 60 feet of it. Each target is pulled up to 20 feet toward the ghost and must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

AN ADVENTURE FOR 11TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

THE CURIOUS TALE OF WISTERIA VALE

WRITTEN BY KIENNA SHAW
DEVELOPED & EDITED BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS & HANNAH ROSE

The Curious Tale of Wisteria Vale is the script of a play written in Common. It is split up into three acts, telling the story of a heroic bard before he becomes corrupted by evil. A wizard named Ryllia Liadon donated the book to Candlekeep as an entrance gift. She didn't tell the Avowed that the book contains the secret to accessing Wisteria Vale, a magical demiplane created by the Harpers to imprison a bard named Arrant Quill until they could free him from the influence of an evil artifact.

The book has been hidden in the Candlekeep archives for three years, but the Harpers have finally discovered a cure for Quill's corruption, and the time has come to visit Wisteria Vale once more.

Finding the Book

The characters have been hired by Ryllia (a female human **archmage**) on behalf of the Harpers to administer the newfound cure to Quill. They received directions on how to find *The Curious Tale of Wisteria Vale* in Candlekeep and a promise of 5,000 gp if they successfully complete their task. The Avowed of Candlekeep furnish the characters with the book and a private room in which to read it.

Alternatively, the characters could uncover the book while searching through Candlekeep's archives, if they've been granted access to the Inner Ward.

Book Description

The Curious Tale of Wisteria Vale is bound in green leather, with leaves and vines carefully burned into the corners of the front and back covers. The title is embossed in gold on the front, but no author is credited on the outside or inside of the book. The book is six inches wide, nine inches tall, and an inch thick. The thick, cream-colored pages emit a faint scent of flowers and grass. The writing is neat and steady, each line inscribed in practiced calligraphy.

Although the design of the book is simple, the crafting and materials are of the highest quality. In fact, the book is a magic object that transforms into a portal when the activation phrase is spoken.

The Curious Tale of Wisteria Vale

The Play's the Thing

The story of *The Curious Tale of Wisteria Vale* serves as the background for the adventure. Characters who succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence (History) check recognize that the play is a fictionalized retelling of Arrant Quill's rise and fall, with many parallels to real events, including the appearance of the Harper wizard who hired the characters. Characters who succeed on this check by 5 or more also know that Wisteria Vale was the name of a village on the River Chionthar, just east of Baldur's Gate, that was destroyed over a decade ago. You can adjust Wisteria Vale's location to suit your campaign.

Who Are the Harpers?

The Harpers are an organization of spellcasters and spies who covertly oppose any abuse of power, magical or otherwise. Working alone or in small cells, they gather information throughout Faerûn, analyze the political dynamics in each region or realm, and use what they uncover to help the weak, the poor, and the oppressed from behind the scenes. Harpers act openly only as a last resort.

Act I

In the first act, the protagonist, Vargan, lives out a peaceful childhood in the village of Wisteria Vale. Vargan is a boy with a penchant for storytelling and a knack for magic. During the day, Vargan helps his parents on the farm, and in the evening he performs in the tavern to the delight of all the villagers. When Vargan is on the cusp of adulthood, the cruel Lord Ephraim Rathmore visits Wisteria Vale, demanding drink, food, and a place for him and his retinue to stay. When the hospitality isn't to his liking, he burns down the village. Lord Rathmore leaves Vargan alive as a witness to his village's punishment, but not before slashing him across the face with a crystal dagger. The event changes Vargan forever, and he vows to bring down the pitiless lord and prevent him from hurting anyone ever again.

Act II

Vargan tracks down Lord Rathmore in a bustling city. Unsure how to proceed, the young bard starts asking around the city for information. He is approached by a wizard, who tells him that she belongs to a secret group looking to bring down Lord Rathmore and others who have been corrupted by evil. The wizard invites Vargan to join the secret organization, and he agrees, becoming a member of the Harpers. With the aid of information from the Harpers, Vargan sneaks into Lord Rathmore's manor during a banquet disguised as a performer and dispatches Rathmore once and for all. Although his quest for vengeance has been fulfilled, Vargan is obsessed with the fact that many other corrupt and evil people exist across the land, and that only people like him and the Harpers can stop them.

Act III

Vargan becomes more powerful, using his talents in magic and espionage to single-handedly take down corrupt kings and mages. Although he becomes a legend among and outside the Harpers, Vargan stays humble, believing that it is his duty to protect others. At the climax of the play, Vargan battles an archmage who was turned evil by an ancient crystal touched by the evil god Cyric. Though Vargan defeats the archmage, prolonged contact with the crystal corrupts the bard, convincing him that his former allies are too powerful and must be eliminated. The Harpers devise a solution to prevent Vargan from hurting anyone while they develop a cure: banishing him to a demiplane.

The play ends with a short monologue by the Harper wizard who befriended Vargan years ago, saying that though Vargan's ultimate fate is still unknown, the day will come when light will banish darkness.

The Cure

To reverse Quill's corruption, the Harpers crafted a dagger infused with several forms of purifying magic. The magic dagger is carved from a single piece of amethyst, with leather wrapped around the hilt and minuscule runes emblazoned on the flat of the blade. When light hits the dagger, the blade appears to pulse with an inner radiance. The dagger resembles the one that scarred Quill as a child.

To activate the spells imbued within the dagger, the weapon must pierce the flesh of the intended target. After the purifying magic is released, the dagger loses its magical properties.

Adventure Summary

The characters begin their adventure by activating the portal to Wisteria Vale, after which they can explore the village and talk to the inhabitants. The locals reveal that Quill lives in a manor on the edge of the village, but he hasn't left it recently because he has a very important guest: a beholder that suddenly appeared in Wisteria Vale. To allay the villagers' justifiable concerns about his guest, Quill is planning a party for that evening and has invited everybody in town to meet the beholder.

As the characters explore the manor, they must avoid the gaze of the beholder. They learn from Quill's notes that the beholder dreamed itself into Wisteria Vale from the Underdark, and that Quill has been trying to charm it into revealing how to escape the demiplane. It eventually becomes clear that the beholder has imprisoned the real Quill in a magic painting.

The characters must find Quill, convince him that they're here to help, and administer the cure without incurring the wrath of the beholder, who wants to keep its new haven intact.

Into the Demiplane

The secret to entering the demiplane of Wisteria Vale is hidden in the text of the play. Ryllia tells the characters that there is a line in the final scene that gives a clue to the portal's activation phrase, though she doesn't know the details. A character who examines the script notices that the penultimate line spoken by the Harper wizard in the play is underlined twice. This line reads:

> We lift up our light to reveal what is hidden and banish the darkness forever.

A character who makes a successful DC 12 Intelligence check realizes that this line might be more than a metaphor—a puzzle that requires literal

interpretation of an aphorism would be just the kind of thing a Harper playwright would enjoy. Shining a source of light directly on the page reveals a phrase written in invisible ink: "Harpers at Twilight."

When that phrase is uttered, the book shakes and flies into the air, pages flipping of their own accord and separating from the binding, then rearranging themselves to form a portal. Anyone who steps through the opening is transported to Wisteria Vale. After all the characters pass through the portal, the pages rearrange themselves back into the form of the book, and the portal closes.

Wisteria Vale

Wisteria Vale is a demiplane created by the Harpers for one purpose: to imprison Arrant Quill while they devise a cure for his corruption. Everything in Wisteria Vale is bright and colorful, tailored to keep Quill comfortable and entertained. The weather is always mild and temperate, with just enough rainy days to nurture crops. Wisteria blossoms are always in full bloom amid the verdant greenery. The air is filled with the soothing sounds of nature, from birdsong to the chirping of crickets to gentle breezes ruffling the leaves. Time passes differently here: each day in Wisteria Vale equates to three days on the Material Plane.

Because of the nature and purpose of the demiplane, any spells used to try to escape Wisteria Vale fail. The only way to leave the demiplane is to terminate it by curing or killing Quill.

Constructed Commoners

To populate the demiplane without endangering any innocents, the Harpers created constructs out of wooden mannequins to act as villagers (see the accompanying stat block). Magic makes them look like flesh-and-blood people, and the constructs conduct themselves as convincingly real humanoids who are simply living their lives in Wisteria Vale. *Detect magic* spells do not reveal their true nature, as each construct is shielded by a spell that makes it seem nonmagical.

Though these constructed villagers can physically interact with the environment around them and hold lengthy conversations, a few clues to their true nature exist. A character who observes one or more of the commoners closely and succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a faint clicking sound whenever a villager touches a hard surface. The villagers are also cold to the touch, which can be ascertained only through physical contact. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check notices that if the villagers are asked about anything outside Wisteria Vale or their individual talents, they quickly change subjects to

Constructed Commoner

Medium construct

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 6 (1d8 + 2)
Speed 25 ft.

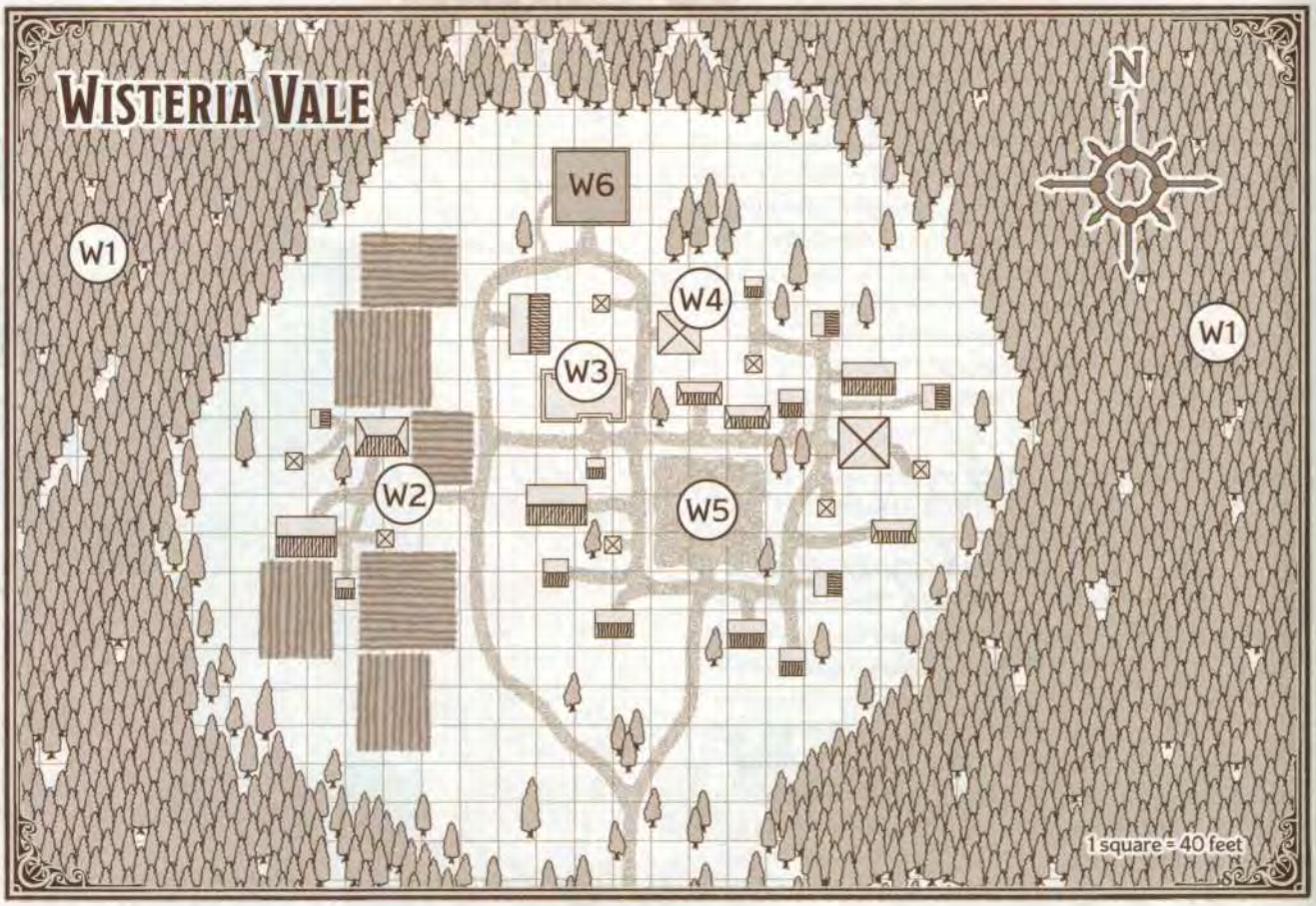
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Common
Challenge 0 (10 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Unusual Nature. The commoner doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep, and it gains no benefit from finishing a short or long rest. When it drops to 0 hit points, it becomes a lifeless object.

Actions

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.



small talk about the weather or gossip, and always in Common regardless of their apparent origin.

Constructed commoners don't bleed or feel pain like flesh-and-blood humanoids. If a villager's hit points drop to 0, its true form is revealed: that of a lifeless wooden mannequin. Overnight, the mannequin disappears, and a replacement villager is generated by the demiplane to take over the "slain" villager's place and role in the village a few days later. If the mannequin is disintegrated or reduced to ashes, it is not replaced and the population of the village permanently decreases by one.

Aberrant Events

Beholders can alter reality when they dream. Recently, a beholder named Renekor entered Wisteria Vale by dreaming itself into the demiplane. Renekor sees Wisteria Vale as its own creation—a very real (if utterly bizarre) sanctuary brought into being by its dreaming mind.

Renekor's presence warps the demiplane, causing erratic weather and strange phenomena. Each time the characters move to a new location or room, roll on the Wisteria Vale Events table to determine what strange effect they experience, if any. When the characters are in the manor, closer to the beholder itself, roll twice and use the higher result.

Wisteria Vale Events

d8	Event
1–2	None.
3	Light rain falls from a clear sky.
4	The sky turns dark as thunderclouds roll in. Lightning flashes in the distance, but it doesn't rain.
5	An object near the characters suddenly loses its color and becomes gray and dull.
6	An object near the characters suddenly becomes saturated with bright colors.
7	An incongruous smell or sound manifests.
8	A smell or sound that should be present is noticeably absent.

Unexpected Visitors

The villagers of Wisteria Vale are surprised to see outsiders. Nevertheless, they welcome the characters with warm hospitality. The villagers are curious about where the characters come from and why they're here. If the characters mention that their purpose is to cure Quill of his corruption, the villagers are confused, since Quill has been nothing but kind and friendly to them since his arrival.

In further conversation, the villagers describe the arrival of a terrifying creature that appears to be a giant floating orb with a central eye and sharp teeth, with many smaller eyes on stalks. Though the villagers were frightened by the creature, Quill assured them that he would keep it under control. He urged them to treat the creature as an honored guest while it was in Wisteria Vale.

Locations in Wisteria Vale

In an attempt to make the demiplane as comforting and familiar as possible for Quill, the Harpers designed it to resemble his hometown, down to the buildings, the villagers, and the name. The locals find Wisteria Vale to be normal and don't question any of the oddities of the demiplane. Although they know that there are places outside Wisteria Vale, they have no interest in leaving home.

The following locations are keyed to the map of Wisteria Vale.

W1. Vyridian Forest

The Vyridian Forest encircles the village. It is an ancient forest with well-worn trails, old-growth trees, and a supply of wild game such as deer, boar, and rabbits. The villagers supplement their crops with occasional hunts in the forest, especially for feasts on holidays and for village gatherings.

While in the forest, the characters might encounter Ki'lara, a half-elf hunter and a **constructed commoner** who knows how to navigate the woods and where the best hunting spots are. She warns the characters about wandering too far into the woods, since the ancient forest can often be disorienting. If they walk far enough into the woods in one direction, they end up on the other side of the forest approaching Wisteria Vale, as if they had walked in a giant loop. Characters who succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognize that this is part of the demiplane's magical design to keep Quill inside the village.

W2. Farms

A group of family-owned farms dot the western edge of the village. These farms have a variety of crops and livestock, from produce and grains to cattle and sheep to medicinal plants.

These farms exist for Quill's benefit alone, though they provide enough food to sustain an entire village indefinitely. The farmers surreptitiously get rid of almost all of what they produce.

W3. Blossom's Rest

Blossom's Rest is the tavern in the center of the village owned by Ulrich (male hill dwarf) and Daphne (female wood elf), both **constructed commoners**. They are a married couple. The tavern is the heart of the village, a place where people gather to talk and share meals. Even though the villagers don't need to eat or drink because they are constructs, they do so when Quill is around. In the evenings when Quill visits the village, Ulrich always insists that Quill perform for an enraptured audience that never seems to get bored of his stories and songs.

Daphne tells the characters that Quill hasn't visited in the past two weeks, which is unusual for him. She theorizes that his absence is due to the arrival of the many-eyed creature, and while the villagers trust Quill, they are still concerned about him.

W4. Silks and Soles

Silks and Soles is owned by Josephus Lovett (male human) and Henrietta Storm (nonbinary tiefling), both **constructed commoners**. Josephus is the tailor and the village gossip, gathering and sharing information as he measures his neighbors and sews their clothes. If given the opportunity, he talks about his favorite topic: Quill and his secretive past. Henrietta is a cobbler by trade and also a social butterfly, helping to organize community events and create decorations from spare cloth and leather.

Josephus or Henrietta shares information on Quill, his arrival in Wisteria Vale, the appearance of the creature two weeks ago, and the party in the manor taking place that evening, to which all the villagers have been invited. Like their neighbors, Josephus and Henrietta have reservations about Quill's strange houseguest.

Without any need for a check, the characters can convince Josephus or Henrietta to let them tag along as their "plus ones" to the party.

W5. Marketplace

This small marketplace is where the farmers along the edge of the village sell their wares. Once in a while, the demiplane generates a traveling merchant who passes through Wisteria Vale to sell food, fabric, and other goods from "outside" the village, to further enhance the illusion that Wisteria Vale is a real village. Three traveling merchants visit regularly. Each of these **constructed commoners** never stays longer than a day, and one appears only once every few weeks to break up the monotony of the village's everyday events.

W6. Manor

The manor on the northern edge of Wisteria Vale stands out as the biggest and most ornate building in the village, two stories tall and made of white stone that gleams when the light catches it.

Exploring the Manor

The characters can approach the front door or try to sneak in through the side door that leads to the kitchen (area M2). If they try the front door prior to the time of the party, they find that it's locked and no one answers. The door can be broken down with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check or unlocked with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. The back door is unlocked, but Damien (see "Servants" below) notices the characters using it unless they succeed on a DC 15 group Dexterity (Stealth) check.

Inside the manor, the characters might feel as though they're constantly being watched, but this isn't necessarily the case. There are, however, three **stone golems** and six suits of **animated armor** that guard the halls of the manor and attack intruders (see the Manor Encounters table below).

Manor Occupants

As the characters explore the manor, they might encounter one or more creatures roaming the halls or moving from one room to another. Whenever you feel the need for a random encounter, roll a d20 and consult the Manor Encounters table to determine whom or what the characters encounter.

Manor Encounters

d20	Encounter
1	Roll twice more on this table, using 2d10 instead of a d20 for each roll.
2–9	Two suits of **animated armor** (see "Servants" below)
10–12	One **stone golem** (see "Servants" below)
13–17	The fake Quill (see "Arrant Quill and the Fake Quill" below)
18–20	Renekor the **beholder**

Arrant Quill and the Fake Quill

Neutral evil human (age 36)

Quill is a charismatic bard who carries himself with a quiet confidence that doesn't hint at the full extent of his skills or powers. His handsome features are marred by a scar that curves from the top of his left cheekbone down to his jaw, though he doesn't consider the scar disfiguring. If asked about the scar, he explains that he got it years ago when the man who burned down his home village slashed his face with a dagger. It serves as a grim reminder of his past.

Although outwardly friendly, Quill is driven by three selfish desires: to preserve his well-being, to alleviate his boredom, and to escape Wisteria Vale. He holds a grudge against the Harpers and Ryllia for imprisoning him in a place that reminds him of the people he lost in his childhood, though he also takes some comfort in being able to live out the life he could've had. His time spent alone with his thoughts in Wisteria Vale has led him to suspect that the Harpers were never going to find a cure, and that they were simply biding their time until he became complacent enough that they could kill him without his being a threat. Quill's corruption has convinced him that the Harpers have become a powerful force that must be taken down; he trusts only himself to identify and eliminate agents of tyranny.

Fake Quill. Renekor the beholder has imprisoned Arrant Quill in a magic painting. Furthermore, the beholder has used its reality-altering dreams to create a twin of Quill that feels real to the touch. A *detect magic* spell reveals an aura of illusion magic around the fake Quill, which otherwise looks and behaves exactly like the real Quill. The fake Quill can't do anything except move and talk, and it is dispelled if it takes damage from a spell or a magic weapon. No other magic or damage affects it.

Renekor the Beholder

Lawful evil beholder

This beholder dreamed itself into Wisteria Vale from the Underdark to escape its enemies. Due to the unconventional way that it entered the demiplane, Renekor believes that Wisteria Vale and its inhabitants are all products of its imagination. Therefore, the beholder is unusually complacent and relaxed as long as nothing disturbs or threatens its new haven and playthings.

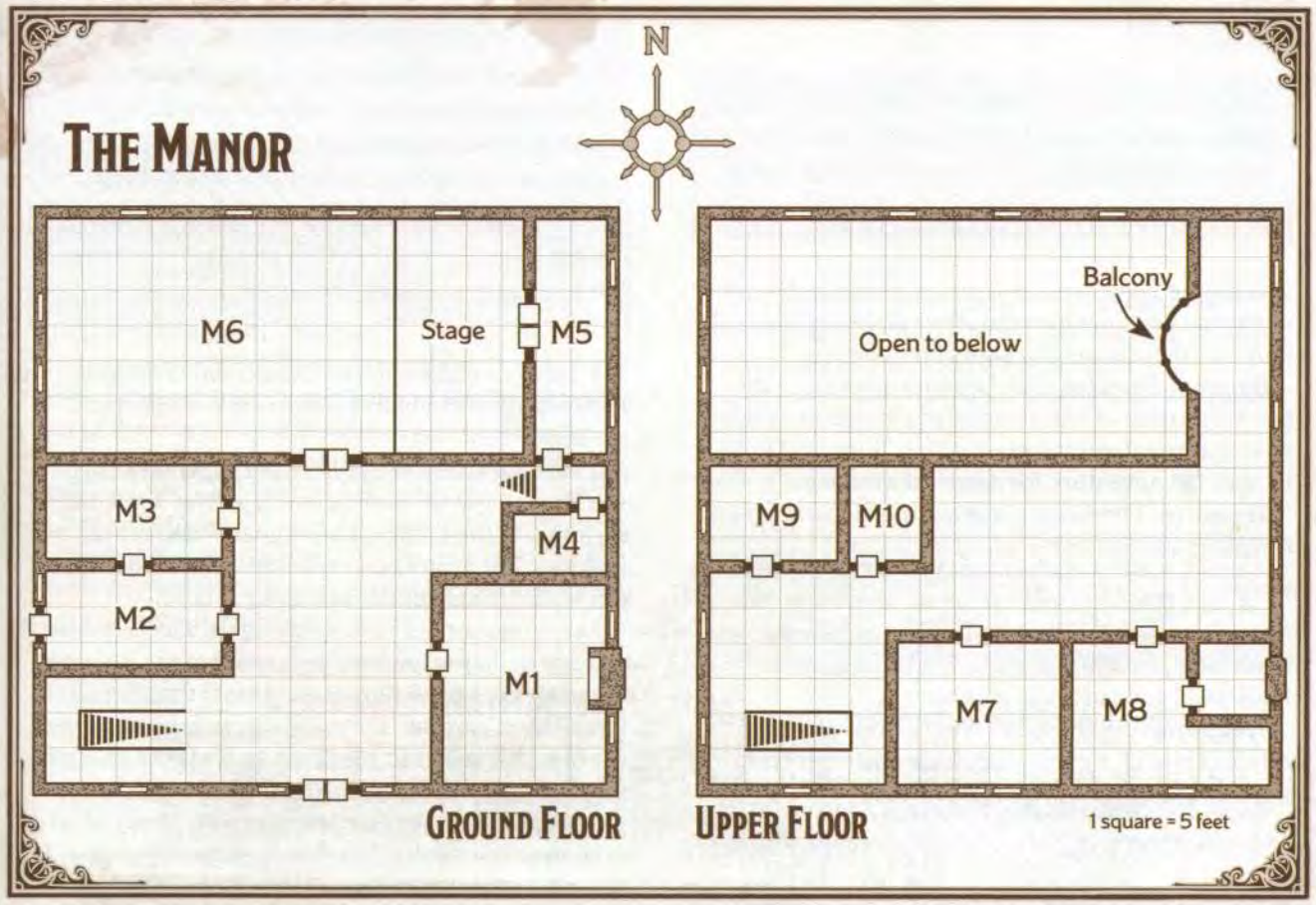
Renekor floats around the manor during the day before retreating to the ballroom at night. Although it might not be on high alert, it is still keenly observant and paranoid as all beholders are.

Servants

The manor is guarded by six suits of **animated armor** and two **stone golems**. One of the stone golems doesn't leave the library (area M7), and two suits of animated armor are stationed outside the doors to the ballroom (area M6). The remaining sentries roam the manor freely. The suits of armor and golems also perform hands-on labor that doesn't require conversation or delicate movements.

A housekeeper named Damien takes care of the cooking and cleaning. He is a **constructed commoner** and the only full-time staff member in the manor, although some local villagers have been drafted to serve as waiters during the party in the ballroom (see "Quill's Party" later in the adventure).

Renekor's presence is slowly warping the demiplane, causing these servants to shift allegiance, becoming loyal and obedient to the beholder rather than to Quill or the Harpers.



Manor Locations

Within the marble walls of the manor, the rooms and hallways are spacious and clean, and the decorations are luxurious without being gaudy. Its doors are unlocked unless noted otherwise.

The following locations are keyed to the map of the manor.

M1. Lounge

> This lounge is warm and smells of wood smoke. The furniture is plush and inviting, with chairs and couches arranged for conversation. On the west wall hangs a large painting of a forest. A fireplace crackles along the east wall. Above the mantel hangs a painting of two figures, one of whom has had her face scratched over with ink.

The portrait depicts a younger Quill standing next to a second figure that has been defaced. A character who examines this figure closely and succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check recognizes it as a younger Ryllia Liadon. (Quill ruined her likeness when he concluded that she had betrayed him.)

Forest Painting. The forest painting is the gateway to one of four connected extradimensional spaces throughout the manor. See "Finding Quill" later in the adventure for more information.

M2. Kitchen

> This kitchen is bright and clean, with two windows looking out into the yard. The air smells of spices, and a man hums to himself as he stirs a large iron pot over a fire. Dishes and platters of artfully arranged hors d'oeuvres sit on the table alongside a bowl of magenta punch.

Damien, a **constructed commoner**, is here preparing food for Quill's party. If he notices the characters and they appear to be friendly, he offers to take them to Quill. If the characters accept this offer, Damien leads them to area M10. If the characters look like trouble, Damien alerts one of the suits of **animated armor**, which goes to warn Renekor about the intruders.

Damien has a ring of keys hooked onto his apron. These keys can lock and unlock all the doors in the manor.

M3. Dining Room

This room is dimly lit by a golden candelabra resting atop a rectangular dining table that has a silver place setting at the head of it. On the east wall hangs a large painting of an opulent banquet.

The dining table can easily seat six people, but the chair that accompanies the silver place setting is the only one that shows any sign of regular use.

Banquet Painting. The banquet painting is the gateway to one of four connected extradimensional spaces throughout the manor. See "Finding Quill" later in the adventure for more information.

Treasure. The silver place setting is worth a total of 750 gp.

M4. Storage

This cluttered space holds cleaning supplies, spare silverware, cooking utensils, food, and general household goods for the manor.

Treasure. Any character who spends at least 5 minutes searching the room finds a satchel containing a packet of *dust of disappearance*.

M5. Backstage

This rectangular space is stuffy, dark, and cluttered with large wooden set pieces and furniture. Props are scattered in disorganized piles, and a rack of dusty costumes stands next to a vanity. Two large ropes dangle at either end of a set of drawn curtains. A black table against the north wall holds a stack of instrument cases.

The backstage area of the ballroom's stage is filled with set pieces, props, and costumes.

Treasure. Among the many other instruments stored here is Quill's *instrument of the bards* (Cli lyre), which is kept in an ornate wooden case that bears the monogram A.Q. Quill takes this instrument with him whenever he entertains villagers at Blossom's Rest.

M6. Ballroom

Two suits of **animated armor** stand guard at the double door, outside the ballroom. Prior to Quill's party, these doors are locked. As an action, a character can try to unlock the doors using thieves' tools, doing so with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, or force open the doors with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. Trying to open the door without the proper key causes the suits of animated armor to attack.

The wooden doors open into a dazzling, spacious room. The polished walls gleam in the light of hanging lamps shaped like celestial bodies, and the ceiling is painted with constellations. On the east wall is a long stage with red velvet curtains closing off a backstage area. A portrait of Quill posing on a chaise longue hangs on the north wall, though the image is distorted as if someone had smeared the paint before it dried.

The ballroom takes up two floors, with a 50-foot-high ceiling and a balcony that is accessible from the upper floor.

If the characters arrive here during Quill's party, see "Quill's Party" later in the adventure for a description of the ballroom's occupants and other features. If it hasn't been encountered and defeated elsewhere, Renekor the **beholder** is here.

This room serves as Renekor's lair. The beholder can use its lair actions (as described in the *Monster Manual*), but only within this room. If the characters forced their way into the room, destroying the suits of animated armor in the process, Renekor assumes they're hostile and attacks them on sight. Otherwise, it assumes the characters are creations of its dreaming mind until they demonstrate otherwise. If the characters make a scene, Renekor feels threatened and attacks them. If one or more characters move to within 10 feet of the painting on the north wall, the beholder instructs them (in Undercommon) to keep away from it on pain of death. Characters who can't understand the beholder can surmise that it doesn't want them near the painting.

Quill's Prison. The painting on the north wall is the entrance to an extradimensional space where Arrant Quill is imprisoned. Renekor has covered the painting in slime to prevent Quill from getting out, though characters can still enter the painting's extradimensional space from the ballroom. A character who has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or higher notices that the image of Quill in the painting is moving slightly. See "Finding Quill" later in the adventure for more information.

M7. Library

Large wooden doors open to reveal a cozy library lit by warm candlelight. Two walls of shelves stretch to the ceiling, with a rolling ladder to help reach the higher books. In the center of the room is an armchair and a desk. Books are piled haphazardly on the desk, many of them left open next to a bottle of ink and a quill. An imposing stone statue stands in the corner next to the door, silently watching.

The library is a replica of one of the Harper libraries that Quill frequented. The books contain well-known stories and plays, research on monsters, and information about the Harpers. A character who spends time studying here can learn facts about the Harpers (see the "Who Are the Harpers?" sidebar earlier in the adventure) or any monster described in the *Monster Manual*.

The books on the desk cover research about the Underdark and beholders, with notes written by Quill scribbled in the margins.

The statue is actually a **stone golem**. If a character attempts to take Quill's notes or any of the books out of the room, the stone golem activates, stepping in front of the door. It doesn't fight the characters unless they try to push past it and leave with the notes or books.

A character who takes 10 minutes to read Quill's notes can learn the basics of beholder lore as well as obtain the following information:

- Quill has been researching beholders, particularly their ability to warp reality and bring to life things from their imagination.
- Renekor dreamed itself into Wisteria Vale from the Underdark. The beholder believes that the village and its residents are its own creations. The beholder's appearance has caused weird events to happen in Wisteria Vale, and these strange occurrences are becoming increasingly common (see "Aberrant Events" earlier in the adventure).
- Quill thinks that if he can get close enough to Renekor, he can charm the beholder into revealing information on how to escape Wisteria Vale, or manipulate the beholder's reality-warping magic to create an exit from the demiplane.
- The last note Quill made was about his fear that Renekor suspects his schemes. The ink is smeared as if he had been interrupted in the middle of writing it.

M8. Master Bedroom

> The furnishings and ornate decorations make it clear that this is Quill's bedroom. A large four-poster bed draped in blue velvet occupies the middle of the room. Next to it is a dark wooden wardrobe and a bedside table with a leather-bound journal sitting next to a vase of freshly picked flowers. Set in the east wall is a door.

The door in the east wall opens into a private bathroom with a mirrored vanity.

The journal on the bedside table is Quill's diary. A character who spends at least 10 minutes leafing through it obtains the following information:

- Quill used to write frequently during the first few months of his captivity, with the entries becoming more sporadic until the arrival of Renekor.
- Quill believes that a year has passed in Wisteria Vale, when it really has been three years on the Material Plane. (Quill is unaware of this fact.)
- Quill knows that he can't be harmed in Wisteria Vale unless he gives his consent.
- Quill believes that the Harpers were lying when they said they were going to find a way to cure him, and he is worried that the Harpers are just biding their time until they can kill him.
- Quill notes that the beholder might be his key to escaping Wisteria Vale.

M9. Guest Bedroom

> This bedroom contains a double bed and a spacious wardrobe. A large painting of a roc in flight hangs on the north wall.

The wardrobe is stuffed with formal and informal clothing.

Roc Painting. The roc painting is the gateway to one of four connected extradimensional spaces throughout the manor. See "Finding Quill" later in the adventure for more information.

M10. Guest Bathroom

The guest bathroom is unremarkable, though characters who search the room and succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notice a loose tile on the ceiling. Above the tile is a crawl space that spans the entire upper floor. The crawl space is dusty and has a 3-foot-high ceiling. Characters can use the crawl space to enter any other room on the upper floor through removable panels in the ceiling.

Finding Quill

Renekor has imprisoned the real Quill in a magic painting in the ballroom. The extradimensional space where Quill is trapped can be accessed in one of two ways: by sneaking through the ballroom or by traveling through the other magic paintings found in the manor.

Magic Paintings

Four magic paintings are scattered throughout the manor, each one a portal to an extradimensional space. These framed paintings are 5 feet square and can't be removed from the walls to which they're attached.

Any creature that touches one of these paintings is magically transported to its extradimensional space—a cube-shaped stone chamber 30 feet on a side. A creature can resist this effect by succeeding

on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw. From inside its extradimensional chamber, a painting looks like a frameless, 5-foot-square open window through which is visible the interior of the room in which the painting hangs. Characters inside the extradimensional space are visible as part of the painting itself as they interact with the extradimensional space's contents.

In addition to the wall with the window, each extradimensional chamber has a 7-foot-high, 3-foot-wide wooden door set into each of its other three walls. These doors lead to the other paintings' extradimensional chambers. Only one of the three doors can be open at any given time, and a door can't be opened unless the other two doors are closed. Each door is opened by pulling on its shiny brass doorknob, regardless of which side of the door one happens to be on.

The chaotic nature of the connection between the spaces means that a door is likely to lead to a different chamber each time it is opened. To determine where a door leads, use the appropriate table for whichever extradimensional chamber the characters are in presently. The characters always enter a new chamber through the doorway on the wall opposite that chamber's window.

Forest Painting's Chamber

d6	Door's Destination
1–2	Banquet (behind the painting in area M3)
3–4	Quill's prison (behind the painting in area M6)
5–6	Roc (behind the painting in area M9)

Banquet Painting's Chamber

d6	Door's Destination
1–2	Forest (behind the painting in area M1)
3–4	Quill's prison (behind the painting in area M6)
5–6	Roc (behind the painting in area M9)

Quill's Prison Chamber

d6	Door's Destination
1–2	Forest (behind the painting in area M1)
3–4	Banquet (behind the painting in area M3)
5–6	Roc (behind the painting in area M9)

Roc Painting's Chamber

d6	Door's Destination
1–2	Forest (behind the painting in area M1)
3–4	Banquet (behind the painting in area M3)
5–6	Quill's prison (behind the painting in area M6)

An extradimensional chamber's walls, floors, ceilings, and doors are impervious to damage. A creature can leave an extradimensional chamber and return to the manor by climbing through the chamber's window (although Quill's prison is a bit different, as described below). A creature that climbs through the window emerges from the painting without damaging it.

If one of the paintings is damaged, the window in that extradimensional chamber disappears, leaving a bare stone wall. If all four paintings are damaged, the paintings' extradimensional chambers remain connected to one another, but not to the manor.

Forest

Within this painting's extradimensional space, the walls are painted to depict a forest of trees and shrubbery, the floor is covered with a thin layer of dirt, and the ceiling is painted to resemble the sky. Hiding against the wall with the window are four **medusas** wearing hooded robes and covered with greenery for camouflage. The medusas attack intruders as they cross the room. Characters who have a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or higher spot the medusas and aren't surprised by them.

Banquet

This painting's extradimensional space contains a 15-foot-long banquet table covered with prepared dishes that look and smell delectable. Each dish has a magical property that functions only when the food is consumed in this room. The dishes and their properties are as follows:

Candied Yams. Any creature that eats from the plate of candied yams is targeted by a *faerie fire* spell (save DC 15) that affects only it and lasts for 1 hour or until dispelled.

Cheese-Stuffed Peppers. Any creature with 75 hit points or fewer that eats a whole cheese-stuffed pepper must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or instantly drop to 0 hit points and explode, leaving behind a mess plus whatever it was carrying and wearing.

Jerk Frog Legs. Any creature that eats from the plate of jerk frog legs gains the benefit of a *jump* spell that lasts for 1 hour or until dispelled.

Salted Cockatrice Eggs. Any creature that eats a whole salted cockatrice egg gains immunity to the petrified condition for 1 hour.

Stirge Burgers. Any creature that eats a whole stirge burger gains 10 temporary hit points.

Veggie Kabobs. Any creature that eats from the plate of veggie kabobs must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Quill's Prison Chamber

When the characters enter the ballroom painting, the doors on the walls of this extradimensional space close and disappear. The window is fogged over, covered in slime that prevents anyone from exiting through it.

Arrant Quill (see the accompanying stat block) is sitting in a chaise longue, protected by his *mind blank* spell and occupying his time by reading the book he was holding in the library when he was trapped in the painting two days ago. He's outwardly friendly, and he politely asks the characters who they are and what they're doing here. Because he's hungry and parched, he also kindly begs them for some food and drink. If the Harpers are mentioned, Quill can barely hide his contempt.

As long as Quill remains in Wisteria Vale, he is immune to all damage and automatically succeeds on all saving throws. This feature is suppressed if Quill wills it (no action required) or while he is within 15 feet of Renekor the beholder.

Good roleplaying or a successful DC 19 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check convinces Quill that the characters are his allies and that they've come to help him escape Wisteria Vale. However, he insists that they not stab him with the magical crystal dagger until they're all back in the manor. If the characters fail to earn his trust, Quill pretends to be agreeable but tries to escape using his *teleport* spell once he escapes the painting, denying characters the chance to stab him with the dagger. Where the *teleport* spell takes him is up to you, but the destination must be somewhere in Wisteria Vale.

Escaping Quill's Prison. The only way to escape from this room is to damage the slime that covers the window with a magic weapon, which causes the slime to disappear and opens the window. Quill doesn't know this and doesn't have a magic weapon.

Roc

Within this painting's extradimensional space, the walls, doors, and ceiling are painted to resemble thick clouds. The air is cold and fresh. A hostile **roc** takes up much of the room and attacks intruders on sight. It's sustained by magic and is too big to leave the room. If killed, the roc is not replaced.

Quill's Party

No matter how much time seems to have passed inside the painting, when Quill and the characters leave the extradimensional space, they land near the north wall of the ballroom during the party that Renekor and the fake Quill are hosting. The room has been decorated with garlands of wisteria, and small tables hold hors d'oeuvres and drinks. Renekor and the fake Quill are in the middle of the room, surrounded by a crowd of thirty villagers dressed in fine attire, all having a good time. Five villagers have gathered on the stage to perform instrumental music. This band includes a harpsichordist, a cellist, a violinist, a flutist, and a fiddler. Milling through the crowd are four waiters. All the guests, performers, and waiters are unarmed **constructed commoners** that do not engage in battle and flee if combat erupts.

Renekor can tell the real Quill from the fake one. When it notices the characters and the real Quill, the **beholder** attacks, hovering just out of reach of melee weapons and using its lair actions when appropriate. The two suits of **animated armor** standing guard outside the ballroom also attack at the command of the beholder. Renekor wants to keep Quill alive and avoids attacking him.

The two Quills look the same. However, the fake Quill can't do anything except move and talk, and it is dispelled if it takes damage from a spell or magic weapon. No other magic or damage affects it.

Arrant Quill

Medium humanoid (human)

Armor Class 14
Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +6, Cha +9
Skills Arcana +11, Deception +9, History +7, Performance +13
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Common, Draconic, Elvish, Undercommon
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +4

Actions

Multiattack. Quill makes two attacks with his dagger and uses Supreme Mockery.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Quill's Fable (Recharge 6). Quill utters a short fable while targeting up to five creatures within 30 feet of him that he can see. Each target that can hear Quill's magical fable must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw, taking 36 (8d8) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Spellcasting. Quill casts one of the following spells using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (save DC 17):

At will: *light, mage hand, prestidigitation*
3/day each: *detect magic, dispel magic, faerie fire, hold monster*
1/day each: *mind blank, teleport*

Supreme Mockery. Quill hurls a string of insults laced with enchantments at a creature he can see within 60 feet of him. If the creature can hear Quill (though it need not understand him), it must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or take 66 (12d10) psychic damage and have disadvantage on the next attack roll it makes before the end of its next turn.

The Bard and the Beholder

If the real Quill believes the characters are on his side, he gives them permission to stab him with the magical crystal dagger. If he thinks the characters have come to Wisteria Vale to kill him, he flees using his *teleport* spell, reappearing in some other location of your choice in Wisteria Vale. Quill's priority is to stay alive.

Quill loses his immunity to damage while he's within 15 feet of Renekor, but he is not immediately aware of this. Once Quill realizes that Renekor is negating his invincibility, he tries to distance himself from the beholder.

If combat erupts in the ballroom, the villagers begin to panic and scatter, turning the ballroom into difficult terrain until they clear the room, which takes 2 rounds.

Administering the Cure

If Quill is stabbed with the magical crystal dagger, he staggers backward, momentarily dazed as he overcomes the effects of his corruption. His eyes glow an eerie purple for a few seconds before returning to normal, whereupon his alignment reverts to neutral good. After regaining his senses, he thanks the characters for helping him—just before the world around them disappears.

Aftermath

When Quill is either cured or killed, the demiplane of Wisteria Vale unravels. Everything around the characters fades before a streak of blue light flashes across their vision and they arrive back in Candlekeep, appearing in unoccupied spaces as close to *The Curious Tale of Wisteria Vale* as possible.

If Quill survives the ordeal, he happily reunites with Ryllia, who gives the party the full reward of 5,000 gp. Quill is indebted to the characters and might become a valuable ally in the future. If Quill dies, the demiplane unravels as the characters and Quill's corpse return to Candlekeep. Ryllia is saddened to hear of Quill's death, but if his body is delivered to her, she pays to have the bard resurrected. The reward she promised to the characters is instead used to pay for Quill's resurrection.

If Renekor is alive when the demiplane unravels, the beholder is sent back to its lair in the Underdark, where it holds a deep grudge against the characters. It sends its minions to spy on them while it gathers resources and plots revenge.

AN ADVENTURE FOR 12TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

THE BOOK OF INNER ALCHEMY

WRITTEN BY DANIEL KWAN
DEVELOPED & EDITED BY HANNAH ROSE

The Book of Inner Alchemy is one of the oldest books in Candlekeep. The precise date of its curation has been lost to time, but its origin can be attributed to three masters of the Open Hand, the Ren Brothers—Rendi (pronounced REN-dee), Renjie (REN-jee-eh), and Renmei (REN-may). The Way of the Open Hand is a monastic tradition centered on the defensive and healing uses of ki and martial arts combat. The masters recorded their life's work in this book, describing how they turned the traditional Open Hand martial arts techniques into tools for achieving everlasting life.

Rumors of an ancient tome containing martial arts techniques associated with immortality circulated among the martial orders. The three masters knew that many would seek out this power, and that circulating this knowledge would bring chaos to the world. Torn between the need to preserve their secret techniques and the guilt from making use of such powerful martial lore, the three masters chose to conceal the knowledge they discovered among the vast collection in Candlekeep.

The Book of Inner Alchemy remained unnoticed for centuries, its secrets hidden in plain sight, until one day it captured the attention of a monk determined to bend the natural order of life to his will.

The Book of Inner Alchemy

Finding the Book

Characters in the Great Library of Candlekeep might encounter *The Book of Inner Alchemy* while researching one of the following topics:

- The nature of ki and its uses in hand-to-hand combat and healing
- Legends pertaining to immortality
- Monastic traditions, especially the Way of the Open Hand
- The crafting of magic weapons

Book Description

At first glance, this book of moderate thickness appears to be one of the many insignificant tomes that fill the shelves of the Great Library. Upon closer inspection, this volume reveals itself to be of exceptional quality. Except for minor damage to the corners, its olive-green covers are in perfect condition. Sewn into the binding with silk threads are sacred texts and medical illustrations. Text is recorded on paper pages, and illustrations are drawn on silk sheets. The paper pages appear to have aged, but the silk illustrations have stood the test of time, appearing as they did when the original artist first laid a brush upon the pages.

Composed in the language of the lands to the east of Faerûn, the text of *The Book of Inner Alchemy* is written in columns that are read from top to bottom, right to left. The *comprehend languages* spell can be used to understand the text. Alternatively, many of the Avowed can translate the text for a small fee (no more than 100 gp). The Avowed will not make copies of the book because it contains dangerous knowledge.

Esoteric Martial Arts

The Book of Inner Alchemy is an esoteric document on the mental, physical, and spiritual practices pertaining to the life energy known as ki. Contained within it are meticulous diagrams of the humanoid form, outlining the flow of ki through

the body and obscure practices for cultivating one's vitality. It describes the techniques monks learn to consciously control their life energy, to gain advantages in combat or perform extraordinary feats. These techniques emphasize the use of controlled breathing, meditation, and spiritual discipline as the primary means of achieving control over ki.

Also contained in the book is a secret body of sacred wisdom about ways to manipulate the flow of ki. Unlike the conventional teachings of the Open Hand, this catalog of martial arts techniques tells how the physical and spiritual aspects of one's being can be joined to achieve immortality. The book offers detailed descriptions of pressure points that all the bodies of humanoid beings have and how ki can not only be attacked, but also stolen.

The book opens with theories on how the natural energies of the primordial trifecta—soul, essence, and mind—can be combined. It notes that obstacles on one's journey are common. The soul can be corrupted by the absence of wisdom. One's body can be sullied by violent deeds. The mind is easily compromised by ego and emotional attachment.

Following the sections on spiritual and medicinal wisdom is one on the crafting of magic items that augment the user's martial abilities, with grisly details of how the authors obtained such knowledge. Accounts of experiments on captured people and animals are found throughout. It is through these experiments that the masters developed rituals for the creation of magic items capable of circumventing the work that would otherwise be needed to perfect the soul, the essence, and the mind.

Inner Alchemy

Characters who read from *The Book of Inner Alchemy* learn the following information about ki:

- Though commonly thought of by those outside the monastic orders as mystical energy, ki has strong ties to elemental air, for breath is what connects one's soul to one's essence (body).
- Ki is a vital force present in all living things. Medical techniques and training can be used to control the flow of ki.
- All living beings are made up of two "lives," physical and spiritual. When these aspects are in harmony, great power can be attained.

Missing Pages

Several pages have been sliced from the binding of *The Book of Inner Alchemy*. They were recently stolen on behalf of a radical monk named Bak Mei, an apostate practitioner of the Open Hand who seeks physical and spiritual perfection—the keys to true longevity and immortality. The life he has chosen to live, however, has rendered his primordial trifecta (soul, essence, and mind) corrupted. Unable to achieve an immortal state of being, he ordered his most trusted students to infiltrate the library and steal pages from the book that might have a solution to his problem. Using the instructions on the stolen pages, Bak Mei seeks to craft a pair of magic gloves and use their necromantic power to enhance the techniques of the Open Hand to god-like levels.

Attack on the Great Library

After delivering *The Book of Inner Alchemy* to the characters, an embarrassed member of the Avowed informs them that critical pages from the tome are missing.

> "My apologies, seekers, but *The Book of Inner Alchemy* has been vandalized. This manual is said to grant untold power over life and death to anyone who can master its secrets ... and last night, someone had the audacity to come into this sacred place and desecrate it!"

Though they might not understand the intricacies of the concepts in the book, the Avowed know that the stolen pages contain instructions for creating *gloves of soul catching* (see the item's description at the end of the adventure). They want the characters to retrieve the stolen pages so that, in addition to restoring the tome to its original state, a magic item of such power will never be created.

The Avowed acolyte accompanies the characters to the Great Library to view where the attack and subsequent theft took place:

> You are led to a section of the stacks that has been ransacked. Countless literary treasures are strewn across the floor. The covered bodies of two Avowed acolytes still rest on the floor.

For the return of the stolen pages, the Keeper of Tomes is offering 8,000 gp or the equivalent in transcribed magical knowledge from the Candlekeep archives.

Scene of the Crime

The following clues point the characters in the direction of the Cloakwood, an ancient forest located near the Coast Way that leads north to the city of Baldur's Gate:

- A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check can tell that the Avowed acolytes slain during the attack were killed using martial arts. Their bruises and broken bones are evidence of powerful unarmed strikes.

- *Speak with dead* spells cast on the slain acolytes yield descriptions of the two killers: a dark-haired woman in her late thirties or early forties, her face marred by a thin scar, and an attractive silver-haired man in his thirties. Both killers wore simple, fitted black clothing under white, flowing robes.
- A character who examines the bodies and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers a torn piece of white cloth clutched in the fist of one victim. The scrap of fabric is emblazoned with a white lotus inside a black circle. The Avowed recognize this as the symbol of the Order of the Immortal Lotus, a league of monks led by a master martial artist known as Bak Mei. For years, Bak Mei's followers have attacked travelers on their way to Candlekeep from Baldur's Gate, stealing their offerings of knowledge before the travelers could reach the library.

Development

If the characters don't locate any clues or identify the wounds, an Avowed scholar discovers the scrap of white cloth.

A *commune* spell or similar magic can be used to establish the location of the killers, leading characters into the heart of the Cloakwood. Alternatively, any character who studies the scrap of white cloth and succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (History) check) knows that the Order of the Immortal Lotus is rumored to have a sanctuary deep in that forest.

Order of the Immortal Lotus

Bak Mei and his original students traveled as vagabonds until they settled in the city of Baldur's Gate. Clashes with criminal organizations and the local peacekeepers soon forced the fledgling order out of the city after the monks' influence began to threaten the established powers. The monks took refuge in the heart of the Cloakwood. Toughened by the area's rugged terrain and monstrous inhabitants, the fledgling order became a dominant force in the forest.

The order has a simple hierarchy in which Bak Mei is the elder abbot, followed by apprentices and rank-and-file monks. His trusted apprentices, Steel Crane and Jade Tigress, serve as secondary leaders who help instill in members the values Bak Mei deems most essential: obedience, discipline, and tenacity in the pursuit of knowledge.

Bak Mei is a traditional master of the Open Hand, and other members of the order bring knowledge from various traditions. They are united in the belief that the world has become sullied by war and corruption. For them, the only path is that of the lotus, a pure white flower that floats even upon the dirtiest waters. To represent this belief, Immortal Lotus monks wear simple, fitted black clothing under a white, flowing robe. The symbol of the Immortal Lotus is a white lotus inside a black circle. When operating outside the Cloakwood, the monks pass themselves off as beggars or trappers to avoid attention, or they disguise themselves as traveling rangers, druids, or rogues.

Members of the order are responsible for acquiring knowledge through force or thievery. They are each obligated to contribute at least one new tome or scroll a month. The proximity of their temple to Baldur's Gate and Candlekeep enables them to take advantage of the traffic that flows into and out of the nearby metropolis as well as the knowledge-seekers on their way to the library.

Inside their temple in the Cloakwood, members of the order lead structured lives, engaging in intellectual, physical, and spiritual training from dusk until dawn. Bak Mei's teaching and training methods appear insane in their use of violence but are effective nevertheless. Those who persevere accomplish in weeks what others take months to learn.

Important Members

Bak Mei is the undisputed leader of the order, and he relies on two apprentices—Steel Crane and Jade Tigress—to help train its junior members. Steel Crane and Jade Tigress are also the ones Bak Mei entrusted to attack Candlekeep and obtain the pages he needed from *The Book of Inner Alchemy*.

Bak Mei

Lawful evil human monk (age 70)

Bak Mei was once an agile and skilled Shou monk famous for upholding justice and helping the needy in his distant homeland to the east of Faerûn. As he grew older, learned more about the world, and began to feel the weight of old age, his worldview changed dramatically. Motivated by his growing fear of death, Bak Mei became obsessed with living an unending life. He began collecting texts on the subject, consulting with practitioners of the necromantic arts, and seeking audiences with dark forces.

The abbots of his temple confronted Bak Mei about his radical pursuits and demanded that he cease his activities. In response, he tried to stage a revolt at the temple, a traitorous action that resulted in the excommunication of Bak Mei and his followers, who christened themselves the Order of the Immortal Lotus. The small group eventually settled in the forest near Baldur's Gate, where they recruit new members. Under Bak Mei's cruel tutelage and eccentric training methods, the order has grown in power and numbers, living in seclusion while he planned his revenge on his former superiors.

Bak Mei is notorious among the monks of Faerûn. Some see him as a vagabond, exiled from his order for traitorous acts and disregard for tradition. Others see him as a radical seeker of knowledge.

Bak Mei is an old man with a long white beard and bushy eyebrows. Like the other members of his order, Bak Mei is clad in snow-white robes secured by a black sash over a form-fitting black shirt and trousers.

Personality Trait. "I judge others by their actions. Words mean nothing."

Ideal. "Knowledge. *The Book of Inner Alchemy* will help me leave behind the sins of my past by giving me an unending future."

Bond. "I will lead my students to a life unstained by the problems of the world. We will rise above all into eternity."

Flaw. "I am convinced that I deserve eternal life, despite all the suffering I've inflicted on others."

Steel Crane

Lawful evil human monk (age 36)

Steel Crane is tall and slender. He is exceptionally handsome, with neat silver hair and deep green eyes, and carries himself with the grace of a dancer.

A strip of cloth was torn from the left sleeve of Steel Crane's white robe during the raid on Candlekeep, and Steel Crane hasn't yet bothered to mend the garment. The robe's damage is clearly visible—evidence of Steel Crane's role in the theft.

Personality Trait. "The technique of the Immortal Lotus is beautiful and powerful. I will succeed Master Bak Mei."

Ideal. "The ancient traditions and secret martial arts must be preserved and learned. Hiding them away in libraries dishonors our teachers."

Bond. "The Immortal Lotus is my new family. Bak Mei will lead me to a brighter future."

Flaw. "The monks of my old temple know my shameful history. I can never return."

Jade Tigress

Lawful evil human monk (age 40)

Jade Tigress is a powerfully built woman whose body has been honed by intense physical training. She is rugged in appearance, with jet-black hair, hazel eyes, and a long, thin scar running across her right cheek. She matches the description of one of the thieves who infiltrated Candlekeep.

Personality Trait. "Nothing can shake my faith in Bak Mei."

Ideal. "I do what I must. The authority of the temple is to be obeyed."

Bond. "I owe my life to Bak Mei. He took me in when my parents left me for dead."

Flaw. "My pride won't let me back down from a challenge or forgive any insult."

Into the Cloakwood

The characters can use the clues found at Candlekeep to track the thieves north along the Coast Way to the Cloakwood. Within this dark forest is the base of operations for the Temple of the Immortal Lotus. When the characters enter the forest, read:

> As you begin your journey into the Cloakwood, the forest darkens at an alarming rate. From all around, you hear whispers, rustling foliage, and the distant roars of unidentifiable beasts.

The Cloakwood is home to many fierce fey and beasts. Due to its dangerous inhabitants and flora, only the desperate dare enter these woods, making it a suitable location for Bak Mei's secret temple complex.

Disposing of Evidence

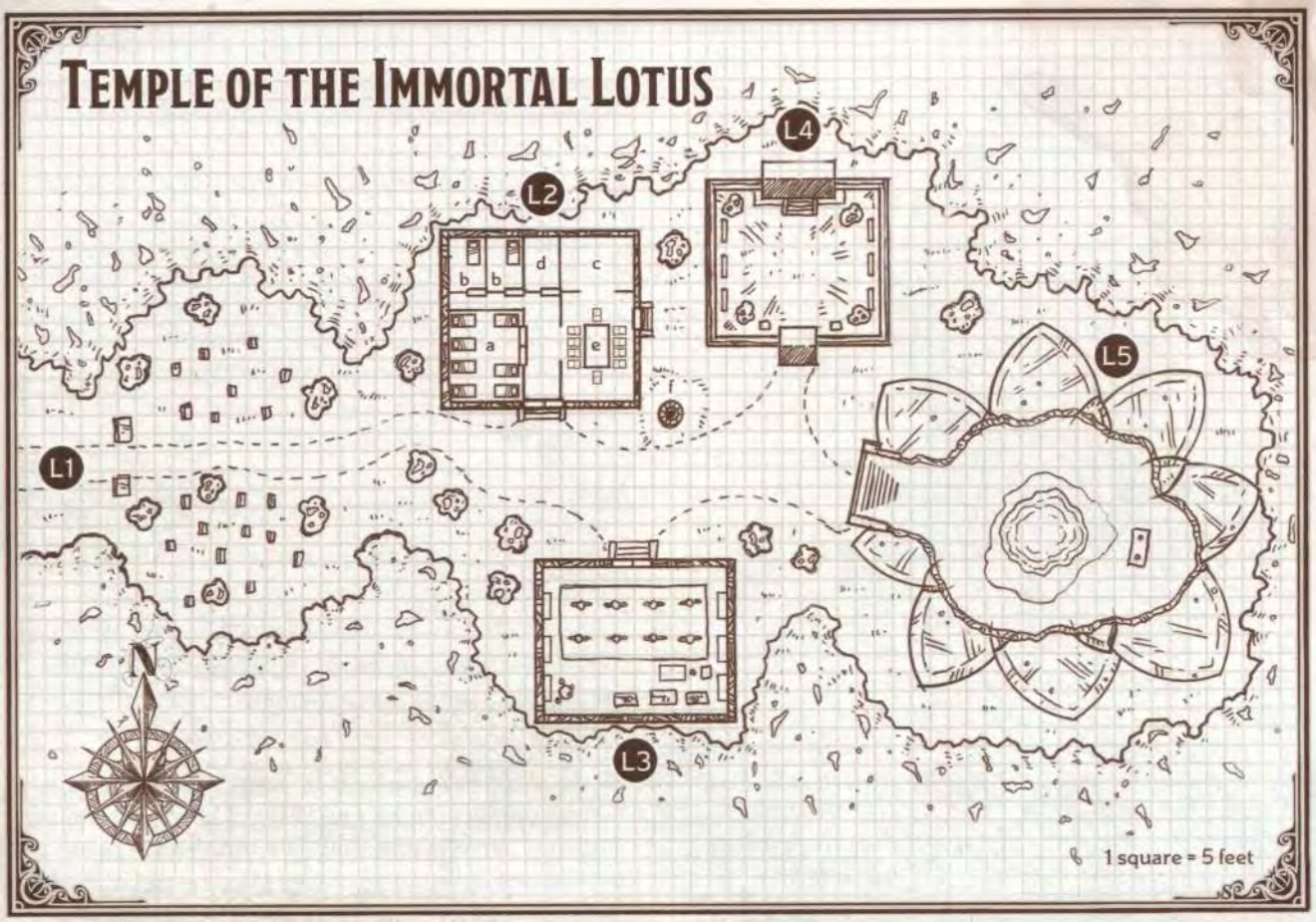
After a few hours of travel, the characters discover a worn path leading deeper into the forest. If they follow the path, they happen upon a grisly scene:

> A noxious smell fills your nose. Just off the path is a hollow, petrified tree trunk filled with a viscous black ooze. Black tendrils extrude from the ooze, reaching toward two figures clad in white robes. These figures are twenty feet away from the tree trunk and pushing a wheelbarrow filled with bodies toward it.

Two **black puddings** reside within the hollow, petrified tree. Bak Mei uses these oozes to dispose of initiates who can't handle the rigors of training, spies who meddle in his affairs, and lost travelers who accidentally discover his temple.

The white-robed figures are two **Immortal Lotus monks** (see their stat block later in the adventure). Their wheelbarrow contains four bodies—the remains of two adult humans (monks) who were killed in training exercises, and the remains of two forest gnomes who were caught stealing from the temple's garden. If the characters do nothing but watch, the monks dump the bodies within 5 feet of the tree trunk. As the bodies tumble out of the wheelbarrow, the puddings seep out of the tree and begin consuming the remains. Each black pudding can devour one gnome corpse in 2 rounds or one human corpse in 4 rounds. The puddings ignore creatures that leave them alone.

The monks don't stick around to watch the puddings' feast; they guide the wheelbarrow back to the temple, about 500 yards east of the dump site. If the characters make their presence known, the monks



abandon the wheelbarrow and take cover behind trees, hoping to draw the characters into melee range. Perhaps foolishly, they stay and fight—eager to put their new training to the test. If they are captured, the monks remain tight-lipped and won't divulge information willingly. A *suggestion* spell or similar magic, however, can force them to share information about the temple's location, configuration, defenses, and leaders.

No ability check is needed to follow the monks' tracks back the way they came, since the wheelbarrow leaves a deep furrow in the earth. Characters who follow these tracks arrive at area L1.

Friendly Dryads

If the characters slay the black puddings as well as defeat the monks, five **dryads** appear, using their Tree Stride ability.

> The ominous sounds of the forest fade as warm singing fills the air. Beautiful fey forms step out from inside the trees surrounding the clearing. They raise their hands in a gesture of peace and smile at you.

Treasure. The dryads are grateful to the characters for ridding their forest of the black puddings. Each dryad presents the party with a reward: a wooden vial containing a single dose of sweet sap that functions like a *potion of healing* (superior).

Development. The dryads urge the characters to follow the tracks left by the monks, saying they lead to a "greater evil that must be defeated." The characters can't convince the dryads to accompany them, because the dryads fear the temple and avoid it.

Temple of the Immortal Lotus

If the characters follow the tracks leading to the temple, read:

> The tracks lead you to the western edge of a secluded glade. The trees partially obscure what appear to be several wooden structures in the clearing, but these are dwarfed by a tower-sized monument at the far end resembling a giant lotus blossom, hewn out of solid rock and bursting out of the earth.

SEAN MACDONALD

Steel Crane

If the characters arrive at the temple without alerting its inhabitants, they can observe the monks' movements and routines. Life at the temple is highly regimented. The day-to-day activities of the order involve patrolling the perimeter, hunting in the forest, groundskeeping, training, and practicing the teachings of Bak Mei.

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Temple of the Immortal Lotus. A gravel footpath extends up to the entrance of each structure. Clever characters can avoid certain encounters by moving through the forest rather than the clearing.

L1. Stele Forest

> Towering over you is a gate with two carved stone columns and a gabled roof made from bark tiles. Above the gateway hangs a wooden plaque painted with a white lotus on a black circle. Beyond the gate is a well-kept gravel path that passes through a small forest of vertical stone slabs and ancient trees.

As the characters make their way through the Stele Forest, they encounter one of Bak Mei's most senior students, **Steel Crane**, and four **Immortal Lotus monks** (see the accompanying stat blocks). They are on the lookout for trouble and spoiling for a fight. When the characters approach, read:

Steel Crane

Medium humanoid (human)

Armor Class 17 (Unarmored Defense)
Hit Points 76 (9d8 + 36)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Int +4
Skills Acrobatics +7, Deception +5, Perception +6, Stealth +7
Damage Resistances poison, psychic
Senses passive Perception 16
Languages Common
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Unarmored Defense. While Steel Crane is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, his AC includes his Wisdom modifier.

Actions

Multiattack. Steel Crane makes three attacks.

Force Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) force damage, and if the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the start of Steel Crane's next turn.

Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) slashing damage or, if the target is a creature, Steel Crane can grapple the target instead (escape DC 15). Steel Crane can't make attacks with the whip while using it to grapple a creature. Anytime on his turn, he can release a creature grappled by the whip (no action required).

Heal Self (Recharges after a Long Rest). Steel Crane regains 2d8 + 4 hit points, and all levels of exhaustion end on him.

Reactions

Deflect Missile. In response to being hit by a ranged weapon attack, Steel Crane deflects the missile. The damage he takes from the attack is reduced by 1d10 + 10. If the damage is reduced to 0, Steel Crane catches the missile if it's small enough to hold in one hand and Steel Crane has a hand free.

Slow Descent (3/Day). When Steel Crane falls, he can slow his descent, taking no damage from the fall.

"Very few people would dare to come here," says a voice from above. Perched twenty feet above you is a man balanced with his legs braced between two of the larger stone columns. He has a slim, athletic build and stares at you with piercing green eyes. Around him are four younger individuals who are similarly balanced on other stone slabs.

With the grace of a bird, he floats down from his perch, silently landing on the ground as he draws a nine-sectioned chain whip from around his waist.

"You've got courage. I'll give you that. But before you get a chance to fight Bak Mei, you'll have to deal with me—Steel Crane!"

As Steel Crane presses his attack, the monks use the steles for cover and leap between them to engage the characters in close-quarters combat.

Red Key. Steel Crane carries a red wooden key that unlocks the door to area L3.

L2. Living Quarters

Members of the order live in a modest single-story building built on raised posts. Its shingled roof provides protection from the elements, and its sliding exterior wall panels can be opened and closed to meet the needs of the order. The walls of the living quarters are made of paper on wood frames, offering little privacy. The dwelling is within view of the Jagged Sanctum (area L5), but far enough away to provide Bak Mei with solitude he requires.

L2a. Monk Quarters

This room contains several narrow, hard bunks where the Immortal Lotus monks sleep.

L2b. Private Quarters

Jade Tigress and Steel Crane sleep on proper beds in these two rooms.

L2c. Kitchen

All members of the order participate in a rotating schedule for duties such as washing dishes and preparing meals. Inhabitants of the temple eat a simple but balanced diet of what they grow in the garden, harvest from the Cloakwood, and hunt in the forest. Bak Mei has his meals brought to the Jagged Sanctum, where he prefers to dine.

Treasure. The kitchen contains a small box of spices worth 25 gp.

L2d. Storage

Adjacent to the kitchen is a modest storage space that holds food, kitchen supplies, and spare robes.

Treasure. A thorough search of this room yields a silk bag containing ten 50 gp gemstones.

L2e. Dining Hall

A long table made from a tree trunk cut lengthwise dominates this room, surrounded by stools made from small tree stumps. Monks take their meals in shifts. Bak Mei usually keeps to himself, rarely eating among his students.

L2f. Garden

Next to the living quarters is a well, north of which is a small garden where the order grows its vegetables. Next to the garden is a chicken coop. As with all temple duties, the monks take turns maintaining the garden and feeding the chickens.

Four **Immortal Lotus monks** (see the accompanying stat block) are tending the garden and drawing fresh water from the well. If the monks are aware that the characters are nearby, they're standing guard and ready to fight. These foes use their gardening implements as weapons (use the monk's Unarmed Strike attack option but change the damage type to piercing or slashing, as appropriate). If two of the monks are defeated, the remaining ones flee to the training grounds (area L4) to seek reinforcements.

Immortal Lotus Monk

Medium humanoid

Armor Class 15 (Unarmored Defense)
Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)
Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Acrobatics +6, Perception +5, Stealth +6
Senses passive Perception 15
Languages Common
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Unarmored Defense. While the monk is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, its AC includes its Wisdom modifier.

Actions

Multiattack. The monk makes two attacks.

Force Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) force damage, and if the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone.

Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

L3. Hall of Knowledge

This grand wooden building is constructed around ancient stone walls of a structure forgotten by time. Its red-lacquered double door, which is locked, bears a carving of a lotus floating above two open palms.

As an action, a character can try to unlock the doors using thieves' tools, doing so with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check, or break down the doors with a successful DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check.

The building's interior is one large space containing two rows of wooden practice dummies, with some other furnishings pushed toward the back of the room. Scrolls are stored in lattices along the east and west walls.

It's here that members of the order develop their understanding of the flow of ki and practice techniques to manipulate it. The wooden dummies are carved with grooves that represent where the energy of ki flows along their surfaces. Characters who are monks or who succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check understand the purpose of the dummies.

More than a hundred instructional scrolls handwritten by Bak Mei are stored in the lattices along the west and east walls. Anyone who reads Common can understand these scrolls.

Jade Tigress

Jade Tigress

Medium humanoid (human)

Armor Class 15 (Unarmored Defense)
Hit Points 71 (11d8 + 21)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +5
Skills Athletics +7, Insight +6, Intimidation +3, Perception +6
Damage Resistances poison
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses passive Perception 16
Languages Common
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Unarmored Defense. While Jade Tigress is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, her AC includes her Wisdom modifier.

Actions

Multiattack. Jade Tigress makes three attacks.

Force Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) force damage, and if the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the of Jade Tigress's next turn.

Poisoned Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage plus 7 (3d4) poison damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or gain 1 level of exhaustion.

Heal Self (Recharges after a Long Rest). Jade Tigress regains 2d8 + 2 hit points, and all levels of exhaustion end on her.

Bonus Actions

Nimble Escape. Jade Tigress takes the Disengage or Hide action.

Reactions

Deflect Missile. In response to being hit by a ranged weapon attack, Jade Tigress deflects the missile. The damage she takes from the attack is reduced by 1d10 + 9. If the damage is reduced to 0, Jade Tigress catches the missile if it's small enough to hold in one hand and Jade Tigress has a hand free.

Tormented Captive

As the characters explore the area, read:

> You hear a faint moan nearby, from behind the rows of practice dummies. A dwarf suspended from thick ropes, stripped to their undergarments, hangs limply in the bonds. As you draw closer, you see dark, painful bruises on their body in a pattern that matches the grooves on the wooden dummies.
>
> They look up at you with tears streaming from their eyes and rasp, "Please, let me die."

The 145-year-old shield dwarf held captive in the southwest corner of the building is named Kharbek. They use the **scout** stat block with these changes:

- Kharbek speaks Common and Dwarvish.
- They have 1 hit point and 5 levels of exhaustion.
- They have darkvision out to a range of 60 feet, resistance to poison damage, and advantage on saving throws against being poisoned.

Kharbek is the only survivor of a party of adventurers captured by the Order of the Immortal Lotus. If questioned, Kharbek is able to recall how a member of the Immortal Lotus disguised as a beggar lured the group to the temple, where the adventurers were tortured one by one. Kharbek's weapons rest on a nearby table. If their wounds are healed and levels of exhaustion removed, Kharbek offers to fight alongside the characters as a sign of gratitude.

Kharbek is a mountain dwarf explorer with brown skin, brown eyes, and jet-black hair. They stand just over 4 feet tall and have an athletic build.

Personality Trait. "I am a zealous worshiper of Moradin and take it upon myself to protect those in need."

Ideal. "Honesty is the best policy."

Bond. "When someone helps me, I'm bound by my honor to return the favor."

Flaw. "I am far too trusting and have a difficult time discerning a lie."

L4. Training Grounds

> Cries and the sounds of stomping feet cut through the air. Within the open courtyard, a tall, imperious woman barks orders at four younger individuals.

This wide stone courtyard is surrounded by weapon racks, balance beams, sandbags, and wooden training posts for striking. From sunrise to sunset, the inhabitants of the temple train here under harsh conditions. Violence is the primary teaching tool employed by Bak Mei and his apprentices, leaving the students well acquainted with pain.

Jade Tigress (see the accompanying stat block) and four **Immortal Lotus monks** (see their stat block earlier in the adventure) are training in this area. When the fighting starts, read:

> "Intruders!" shouts the woman. "They're here to steal the secrets of Master Bak Mei! Students, show these interlopers what the power of the Immortal Lotus looks like!"
>
> In one swift motion, as her students rush forward to attack, she assumes a powerful stance, hands outstretched like the claws of an attacking tiger.

Jade Tigress charges into battle with the monks. All of them are willing to die for Bak Mei and are determined to stop the characters from reaching the Jagged Sanctum.

Red Key. Jade Tigress carries a red wooden key that unlocks the door to area L3.

L5. Jagged Sanctum

> This stone structure rises ominously above the rest of the temple complex. It resembles a giant stone flower growing in the heart of the forest. Stone steps draped with a long red carpet climb ten feet to the entrance of a rough-hewn chamber. The soft glow of torches beckons you inside.

The Jagged Sanctum is a study, meditation hall, and residence for **Bak Mei** (see his stat block later in the adventure). At the center of the chamber is an artificial pool filled with water and covered with floating lilies.

The stolen pages from *The Book of Inner Alchemy* rest on an intricately carved wooden altar beyond the pool. Bak Mei has yet to collect the materials needed to craft the *gloves of soul catching*. The pages feature detailed illustrations of hands, showing how ki flows through them. When the pages are held up to the light of the moon, instructions for creating the *gloves of soul catching* are revealed. Bak Mei knows this fact but won't share it with anyone, not even his most trusted subordinates.

Bak Mei is joined by four **Immortal Lotus monks** (see their stat block earlier in the adventure). To increase the difficulty of this encounter, add more monks who have just come back from foraging. They arrive in the middle of combat.

Bak Mei

Bak Mei

Medium humanoid (human)

Armor Class 17 (Unarmored Defense)
Hit Points 102 (12d8 + 48)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +5, Dex +9, Con +9, Int +6, Wis +8, Cha +8
Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +5, Medicine +8, Religion +6, Stealth +9
Damage Resistances poison, thunder
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Auran, Common
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +5

Legendary Resistance (2/Day). If Bak Mei fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Special Equipment. Bak Mei carries a *staff of striking* with 10 charges.

Unarmored Defense. While Bak Mei is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, his AC includes his Wisdom modifier.

Actions

Multiattack. Bak Mei attacks three times: twice with Thunder Strike and once with his *staff of striking*.

Thunder Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) thunder damage, and if the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be deafened and stunned until the start of Bak Mei's next turn.

Staff of Striking. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage when used with two hands, and Bak Mei can expend up to 3 of the staff's charges. For each expended charge, the target takes an extra 1d6 force damage.

Heal Self (Recharges after a Long Rest). Bak Mei regains 2d8 + 4 hit points, and all levels of exhaustion end on him.

Bonus Actions

Nimble Escape. Bak Mei takes the Disengage or Hide action.

Reactions

Deflect Missile. In response to being hit by a ranged weapon attack, Bak Mei deflects the missile. The damage he takes from the attack is reduced by 1d10 + 12. If the damage is reduced to 0, Bak Mei catches the missile if it's small enough to hold in one hand and Bak Mei has a hand free.

Legendary Actions

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

Crane Dance. Bak Mei moves up to 20 feet. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.
Thunder Strike (Costs 2 Actions). Bak Mei uses Thunder Strike.

Nikki Dawes

When the fighting begins, read:

> Stroking his well-kept white beard, the old man begins to mock you as his students take up fighting positions around the chamber.
>
> "Do you really think that you can defeat my Immortal Lotus style? You are mere worms slithering through the mud on a rainy day. I am the bird, here to feast!"
>
> Bak Mei enters a low fighting stance. His arms and hands move in a flurry, displaying unnatural grace and agility for a human of such advanced age.
>
> "I have no weakness. No flaw. Show me your so-called power."

Bak Mei doesn't hesitate to kill. He attacks ferociously and chides the characters for their lack of martial refinement. When he's near death and victory for his order looks unlikely, he begs for mercy.

> Choking on blood, Bak Mei looks up at you in disbelief. "Who in the Hells are you? My Immortal Lotus style was supposed to be ... unbeatable."

Bak Mei's fate is ultimately up to the characters. Death is a fitting end for one who feared death so much that he inflicted great pain on others, but Bak Mei was once a kind man devoted to justice, so perhaps he could find a path to redemption.

Treasure. Scattered around the Jagged Sanctum are shelves and chests containing a total of ten rare books (100 gp each) and twenty rare scrolls (50 gp each).

The backside of the altar has a secret compartment. A character who examines the altar can find this compartment with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check. It contains a *potion of mind reading* and a *Quaal's feather token* (bird).

Aftermath

The characters have defeated Bak Mei, left the Order of the Immortal Lotus in disarray, and recovered the stolen pages from *The Book of Inner Alchemy*. Now what?

When the party returns to Candlekeep with the stolen pages, the Avowed are grateful and set about repairing the book. They hail the characters as heroes and provide them the promised 8,000 gp worth of coin or transcribed knowledge from the Candlekeep archives. The conclusion of the adventure can serve as a catalyst for the next chapter in the characters' journey. The following questions might help you shape future adventures:

- What happened to the original masters of the Open Hand?
- Will the monastic orders in Bak Mei's homeland east of Faerûn want to know his fate?
- Considering the knowledge contained in *The Book of Inner Alchemy*, is it safe in Candlekeep? Should it be destroyed—and if so, how?
- Who else might know the secrets of this book?
- What should happen to the now-abandoned Temple of the Immortal Lotus? Are there surviving members of the order who will try to avenge Bak Mei's death?
- The last breaths (souls) of three individuals—one of great intellect, one of strong body, and one of a pure heart—are required to craft *gloves of soul catching*. How can this be accomplished?

Regardless of the characters' choices, they have now been exposed to martial arts secrets that many would kill for. They are marked, and there are repercussions for having such knowledge.

New Magic Item

The Book of Inner Alchemy contains instructions for crafting magic gloves that grant the wearer the ability to siphon vitality from other creatures. The authors note, however, that this item is theoretical and has never been created.

Crafting the gloves requires silver thread, fine leather, and other material components worth a total of 5,000 gp. To imbue the gloves with magic, a ritual must be performed, and this ritual requires three sacrifices: a being of great intellect, a being of strong body, and a being of pure heart. The ritual must take place under the light of a full moon and requires 5 hours to perform. The ritual consumes and destroys the souls of those who are sacrificed, meaning they can't be brought back from the dead.

Gloves of Soul Catching

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

Your Constitution score is 20 while you wear these gloves. This property of the gloves has no effect on you if your Constitution is already 20 or higher.

After making a successful unarmed strike while wearing these gloves, you can use the gloves to deal an extra 2d10 force damage to the target, and you regain a number of hit points equal to the force damage dealt. Alternatively, instead of regaining hit points in this way, you can choose to gain advantage on one attack roll, ability check, or saving throw you make before the end of your next turn.

AN ADVENTURE FOR 13TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

THE CANOPIC BEING

WRITTEN BY JENNIFER KRETCHMER
DEVELOPED & EDITED BY SCOTT FITZGERALD GRAY & CHRISTOPHER PERKINS

IN THIS ADVENTURE, THE PLAYER CHARACTERS investigate the disappearance of a Candlekeep sage and disrupt the plans of a mad oracle bent on domination.

The Canopic Being arrived at Candlekeep nine months ago, wrapped in yellow cloth embroidered with the image of an eye. It was delivered with a handwritten note reading, "As fate wills it," signed by Xemru Thaal, a high priest of Savras, god of divination and fate. As preservers of the teachings of Alaundo the Seer, the Avowed of Candlekeep were keen to study what they expected to be a book exploring the divinatory arts. When its horrific contents were revealed, *The Canopic Being* was relocated to the library's vaults, where it currently resides.

The book is the record of a ritual that allows the transplanting of a mummy lord's organs into living vessels to forge a dark connection between donor and recipient. The end of the book contains a list of those recipients—which includes the names of all the characters.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure begins with the characters being tasked with finding a Candlekeep scholar who has not returned from a research expedition to the distant eastern realm of Tashalar. The characters can be in Candlekeep already doing research of their own, or they might be summoned there if they are known to the library and its scholars.

Read or paraphrase the following when you're ready to begin the adventure, replacing Great Reader A'lai Aivenmore with another scholar of the characters' acquaintance if you so choose:

> A'lai Aivenmore's mood is dark as they pace before you. "Mayastan Sadaar, one of our finest sages, had been studying a particular tome, held in the vaults." So saying, A'lai gestures to a book on a cluttered desk whose cover appears to be of made translucent crystal.

A'lai describes the book as a treatise on dark rituals and tells how it arrived at Candlekeep as a donation from a high priest of Savras. She talks of how Mayastan came to her, clearly bothered by something she had read in *The Canopic Being*, and saying that she wanted to continue her research with the help of the oracle of the House of the All-Seeing Orb in Tashalar, east of Chult. Mayastan went there by way of teleportation. Shortly after Mayastan left, A'lai consulted the tome, hoping to gain some sense of what was troubling the sage.

> A'lai pushes the book toward you, opening it to a page near to the end that is filled with a list of names in a half-dozen different hands. Across the top of the page in the rushed script that fills the rest of the book is written the legend: "Those Who Have Been Bestowed—The Willing Sacrifices." At the bottom of the page is Mayastan Sadaar's name—followed by the names of each of you.

THE CANOPIC BEING

Book Description

The Canopic Being has a cover and spine made of thin crystal sheets, with gems that represent eyes embedded in them. Every so often, the eyes move, shifting their gaze between different locations. The book's pages are edged in a protective crystalline finish and filled with a hurried, nearly illegible scrawl. Xemru Thaal's note (see the accompanying player handout) still accompanies the book and is tucked in an envelope that bears the seal of the House of the All-Seeing Orb, a temple of Savras in Tashluta, the capital city of Tashalar.

The book describes rituals relating to the creation of a mummy lord. One is a unique and horrific process by which a mummy lord's organs, normally stored in sacred canopic jars during mummification, can be magically preserved and transplanted into living humanoids. The transplant recipients come under the control of the mummy lord, either as living supplicants or mindless golems through which the mummy lord can see and speak. The book also hints of a ritual that can free a servant after the mummy lord is destroyed.

The last page of the book appears to be a list of those who have undergone this rite to become a mummy lord's servants—but it also includes the names of the missing Candlekeep sage and of the characters.

Named by an Oracle

Before arriving at Candlekeep, *The Canopic Being* was stolen from the person who has most recently made use of it. Valin Sarnaster is an honored oracle of Savras, based in the House of the All-Seeing Orb in Tashalar. In accordance with visions she experienced years before, the oracle has embraced undeath by becoming a mummy lord, using the rituals described in the book. The list of names in the back of the book is written by many hands, since it includes creatures bonded to other mummy lords before the tome came to Valin. The names Valin has added at the end are those of the oracle's current and intended victims, as seen in her visions:

- Alessia Baseer, Valin Sarnaster's longtime attendant (and the unwitting custodian of Valin's heart)
- Xemru Thaal, the high priest who sent the book to Candlekeep (now a golem serving Valin)
- Zeren Zoradius, a human mage (who now serves Valin as a golem)
- Okuzor, a tiefling gladiator (and another of Valin's golem servants)
- Mayastan Sadaar, the dragonborn sage
- Each of the characters, using whatever names they are best known by

The sections that follow have more information on Valin Sarnaster's servants.

Player Handout: Xemru's Note

Author's Note

When we began this journey, only the oracle of the All-Seeing Orb, the great Valin Sarnaster, had an inkling where it might lead. It is my honor to have been selected as the first donor and recipient. By giving Valin a piece of myself and receiving a piece of her in return, I can help the fate of the world unfold as she has foreseen.

It is my honor to protect the oracle in her sanctuary, ensuring that only donors and recipients may visit her. I have no need of the rite of reclamation, for I believe in the vision and perfection of Valin Sarnaster.

For clarity's sake, I offer this record of the procedures performed on the donors and recipients, whose fates and organs are now bound to the oracle. May she serve the All-Seeing for centuries to come.

In transparency,
Xemru Thaal, High Priest of Savras
House of the All-Seeing Orb, Tashluta

Mission to Tashluta

A'lai Aivenmore asks the characters to travel to the city of Tashluta in Tashalar, find Mayastan Sadaar at the House of the All-Seeing Orb, and bring her back. The First Reader has no proof that Mayastan is in danger, but the implications of her name appearing in *The Canopic Being* are alarming. A'lai expects that the characters have their own reasons to investigate, having seen their names in the book. If they need further incentive, she offers the party 5,000 gp or the future services of Candlekeep to undertake the mission.

Mages at Candlekeep can set up the characters' journey by casting the *teleportation circle* spell to reach a permanent teleportation circle at the House of the All-Seeing Orb. This is the same destination to which Mayastan Sadaar traveled the previous day.

House of the All-Seeing Orb

Tashluta is the busy port-city capital of Tashalar, set between sea, mountains, and jungle. It is a welcoming stopover point for travelers, merchants, and traders in the south. Tashalar is a land known for warm, breezy weather, bright, flowing garments, and spicy, delicious foods. It is also famous for the obsession its citizens have for divining the future; most Tashlutans claim to have some amount of skill with personal prognostication.

One of the most notable sights in Tashluta, the House of the All-Seeing Orb is an immense compound dedicated to the study of magical divination. Clerics, mages, and other scholars work at the institution's Celestial Observatory, its Library of Ultimate Truth, and its College of Divination.

When the characters arrive at the temple, read or paraphrase the following:

> The teleportation circle is surrounded by a courtyard garden and several buildings. The day is warm, with a mild breeze. Yellow-robed sages and priests, some carrying tomes or mysterious-looking magic devices, bustle about the immense compound. The largest building is patterned with inscribed eyes. A larger, more detailed eye is carved above the building's main doorway.

The large building is the compound's main temple, home to the priests and oracles of Savras. Despite its elaborate exterior, the interior of the temple is simple, containing only an altar, modest living quarters, a kitchen, and a dining area. The building's only noteworthy feature is its reflecting pool, which is filled with holy water.

Entering the Temple

When the characters enter the temple, read:

> Several priests are present in the temple, all with a third eye tattooed on their foreheads, and all wearing simple yellow robes belted at the waist with a sash. Many carry elaborately carved and decorated staffs. Some are at work sweeping or scrubbing the temple's floors, while others gaze into scrying bowls or scrutinize tea leaves.
>
> The priest who sits at the largest table has her tattooed eye decorated with gemstones. Her dark green hair is close-cropped, with a mark shaved into it that matches a sigil on her cherrywood staff. She looks up toward you as she pours from a steaming pot of tea.
>
> "More visitors from Candlekeep. Most delightful. I trust that your journey was not too taxing?"

The figure with the bejeweled third eye is Shir Endellion (a lawful neutral human **priest**), currently the highest-ranking official in the temple. While engaged in her divinatory studies a tenday ago, she foresaw the arrival of both Mayastan Sadaar and the party, but she does not know the purpose of the characters' visit.

If the characters join her, Shir offers them tea, then calls for fine Tashlutan wine, pastries, and other finger foods to be delivered to the table. The priest knows the following information, which she is happy to share:

- Mayastan arrived yesterday, intending to speak with the oracle Valin Sarnaster. The sage was taken to Valin's sanctum and has not returned.
- Valin Sarnaster is known to all who serve Savras, and her works have long been an inspiration. She has lived alone for decades now, so that the influence of the outside world will have no effect on her divinatory abilities.
- If *The Canopic Being* is discussed, Shir doesn't recognize the name of the book. If its contents are described, she is horrified, but she says that the dark rituals the book describes have nothing to do with Savras's work. If she is told that Xemru Thaal sent the book to Candlekeep nine months ago, she has no idea why that happened.
- If the characters ask to see Xemru, Shir says that the high priest went through the portal to visit Valin eight months ago and has not come back. Messages received from him through Valin's attendant, Alessia, say that he continues to study with Valin and plans to remain with her for the foreseeable future. (Xemru accepted the future in which he saw himself becoming Valin's servant.

House of the All-Seeing Orb

But a sense of misgiving caused him to send *The Canopic Being* to Candlekeep as evidence of what Valin had become—as Valin had already foreseen.)

- Valin lives in a secret sanctum, since she would otherwise be sought out by too many people seeking her wisdom and counsel. A portal hidden in the temple complex is the only means of reaching her. The oracle sends her attendant, Alessia, through the portal regularly to convey and receive messages.
- Three other people have traveled through the portal to seek Valin's guidance within the past three months: Zeren Zoradius, a human mage; Okuzor, a tiefling gladiator; and Mayastan Sadaar, the Candlekeep sage. As with Xemru Thaal, none of the other visitors have yet returned.

The Oracle's Portal

Behind the main temple stands a nondescript and locked shed, within which is the portal that leads to Valin's sanctum. The shed is quietly watched at all hours by faithful acolytes, and an *alarm* spell regularly cast on the door by the temple's mages sounds out if the door is opened by anyone except Shir Endellion or Alessia Baseer (see area T1 of Valin's tomb). Shir and Alessia carry keys that can unlock the door from inside or outside. The door can also be unlocked with a successful DC 25 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or forced open with a successful DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check.

The shed holds unused gardening equipment and has a hidden trapdoor that can be found with a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check if not revealed by Shir. Below the trapdoor is a 5-foot-diameter stone-walled well with a sturdy wooden ladder. The well descends 20 feet before

What Is and What's to Come

The presence of the characters' names in *The Canopic Being* points to the mummy lord oracle, Valin Sarnaster, having seen them in visions of the future. The particulars of that future and the oracle's interest in the characters is left to your determination.

Valin has long plotted to usurp the role of Savras, acquiring power through her dark rituals that will enable her to become a new demigod of fate. In her visions, she has seen that the characters will thwart her plans—so she has arranged the events that cause them to come to her, so she can end their threat before it begins. In the course of their fight to expose and destroy Valin, the characters might gain glimpses of the future or hear coded threats from her about the fate she sees for them. Especially if your campaign is built around an epic story line, these oracular insights can help you foreshadow what's to come.

SIDHARTH CHATURVEDI

opening up into a 40-foot-square chamber whose walls and floor are worked stone. The portal that leads to Valin's sanctum is on the wall opposite the well's ladder.

> The plain gray stone of the wall diffuses into a swirling ellipsoid of blue-and-white light, edged by translucent crystals. From across the room, the portal resembles an enormous eye.

This portal is a permanent magical effect set up by Valin Sarnaster. It connects to the crystalline demiplane that serves as the mummy lord's tomb.

Valin's Tomb

Valin's tomb exists on its own demiplane. The site was once a temple and was long abandoned until the oracle's magic rediscovered it. It is filled with the signs and symbols of Savras, but whether it was built as a temple to the god or whether it was constructed by Savras when he was still a mortal, not even Valin has been able to determine.

The former temple is built entirely of clear, sparkling crystal. Though the complex has its own gravity and is not fully transparent, moving through it can sometimes create the unsettling sense of floating in space.

Valin's Victims

If a creature dies after one of its vital organs is replaced by Valin's organs, it can be returned to life by a *wish* spell or in one of the ways described below.

Rite of Reclamation. A ritual known as the rite of reclamation involves claiming some of the dust of Valin's body after she has been reduced to 0 hit points. The ritual describes a process for mixing the dust with wax to create a magic candle, then floating the lit candle in a vessel of holy water. If a creature imbued with one of Valin's organs spends an entire long rest within 5 feet of the candle, the candle is consumed, Valin's organ is destroyed, and the creature's missing organ is restored. The rite of reclamation is known to Valin and detailed on a scroll found in area T5. The characters might also be able to learn the ritual through research or a side quest.

Replacing What's Lost. A more direct restoration can be undertaken if the creature imbued with one of Valin's organs has been killed and the characters have access to the creature's original organ. Removing Valin's organ from the creature's body reveals it to be shriveled, glassy, and pulsing with unnatural life. If the creature's original organ is replaced within 1 hour of its death at the same time Valin's organ is destroyed, the creature returns to life immediately as if targeted by a *resurrection* spell. A character who removes one of Valin's organs from a dead host creature and succeeds on a DC 17 Wisdom (Medicine) check intuits how this process works.

Characters who look outside the temple see the demiplane beyond as a shifting space of glowing crystals. The demiplane does not enter into the adventure, and its full details are left to your determination.

Canopic Golems

Three of the creatures that have received Valin's organs—Okuzor, Xemru Thaal, and Zeren Zoradius—have been transformed into canopic golems by the dark rituals the oracle learned from *The Canopic Being*. Valin can see through these golems' eyes and can speak through them as she wishes. Mayastan Sadaar, the Candlekeep sage, would have become a golem if she had not destroyed her transplanted organ and died. Her body is in area T7.

Organ Recipients

Recipient (Location)	Transplanted Organ(s)
Alessia Baseer (area T1)	Heart
Okuzor (area T5)	Eyes
Xemru Thaal (area T6)	Nerves
Zeren Zoradius (area T6)	Kidneys
Mayastan Sadaar (area T7)	Pancreas (destroyed)

Tomb Features

Valin's tomb has the following features:

Walls and Floors. The crystal from which the temple was constructed glows with a bright light that fills all areas, even as it allows the characters faint glimpses of what lies beyond it. The magic of the walls obscures certain features, however, so that secret passages and rooms can't be seen from outside them. The crystal that makes up the tomb can't be damaged by any means available to the characters.

Ceilings. Hallways and smaller chambers in the tomb are 15 feet high with flat ceilings. The ceilings in larger chambers are 20 to 30 feet high.

Doors. All doors in the tomb are made of crystal, and most of them are unlocked. A character can use an action to try to open a locked door, either by using thieves' tools and succeeding on a DC 20 Dexterity check, or by forcing open the door with a successful DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check. A door has AC 15, 60 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Eyes of Savras. The walls of the tomb are adorned with decorative eyes that serve as magical sensors, following the movements of visitors who explore the site. Valin Sarnaster controls the eyes, which have truesight out to a range of 120 feet and allow her to surveil the characters from anywhere in the tomb. She must maintain concentration (as

if concentrating on a spell) to do so. The eyes are free-floating in area T9 and are prevented from functioning in area T3.

Extradimensional Interference. The tomb is warded against teleportation, and creatures inside it can't travel using teleportation or by extradimensional or interplanar means.

Tomb Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of the tomb of Valin Sarnaster.

T1. Portal

The portal beneath the House of the All-Seeing Orb brings the characters to this location. The portal is not affected by the wards against teleportation magic that fill the tomb.

> Stepping through the portal brings you into the center of a square room, its walls, floor, and ceiling made of glowing crystal set with images of unblinking eyes. A crystal door stands closed, but you can just make out the long corridor beyond it, and a lone, yellow-robed priest of Savras waiting for you.

As the characters move around in the room, the eyes in the walls turn to follow them.

The guard is Alessia Baseer, a lawful good human **priest** of Savras (see the "Alessia Baseer" sidebar). A premonition of someone arriving through the portal brought her here to await the characters. When she sees them, she assumes they have been summoned by or have important business with Valin, and she freely answers any questions put to her.

Power of Disbelief. Alessia scoffs in response to a suggestion that Valin might be involved in improper activities or evil plots, and insists that the characters will know better once they speak with her. If the idea that Valin might be a mummy lord is mentioned, Alessia confirms that she sees the oracle regularly and that Valin appears quite normal. (This is a product of the mummy lord's diadem, which functions as a *hat of disguise*.)

Having escorted all the recent visitors to the temple, Alessia is under the impression that they are communing with Valin in the observatory of fate (area T9). She explains that time passes differently in the observatory, making it not unusual that those visitors have apparently been gone from the world for months. (This is a lie told to her by Valin.) She thus does not understand that the canopic golems have been created from Valin's visitors. She has not been through area T7 in a few days, and so likewise does not know Mayastan Sadaar's fate.

Alessia's Aid. Alessia does not wander the temple except as directed by Valin, who sends orders to the attendant through her canopic golems. She tells the characters that they have free run of the temple, and that they will find Valin when fate determines it. She does warn them against the dangers they might face in certain areas, including the mirrors of fortune (area T3), the testing chamber (area T4), and the phasing passage (area T7). She also knows why the sword hilt has been hidden in the dais in area T4, but does not share that information until Valin's true nature is revealed to her.

With suitable roleplaying or a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, Alessia agrees to escort the characters through area T3, but then returns to her quarters (area T2).

Alessia keeps the key to her quarters and the key to the portal door on a leather thong around her neck.

T2. Alessia's Quarters

The door to this room is locked, and Alessia carries the key.

> This room is furnished with a simple cot, a small footlocker, a round table and chair, and a wooden cupboard with one door ajar. Small figurines of cats set along the top of the cupboard are the room's only decoration. A folding screen obscures the far corner of the room.

Alessia's collection of cat figurines include sculptures made of glass, ceramic, and wood. She has collected them since childhood, though they are

Alessia Baseer

Alessia's curly brown hair is tied into a long braid. She is dressed in the simple yellow robes, belted sash, and leather sandals of the priesthood of Savras, and bears the customary third-eye tattoo on her forehead.

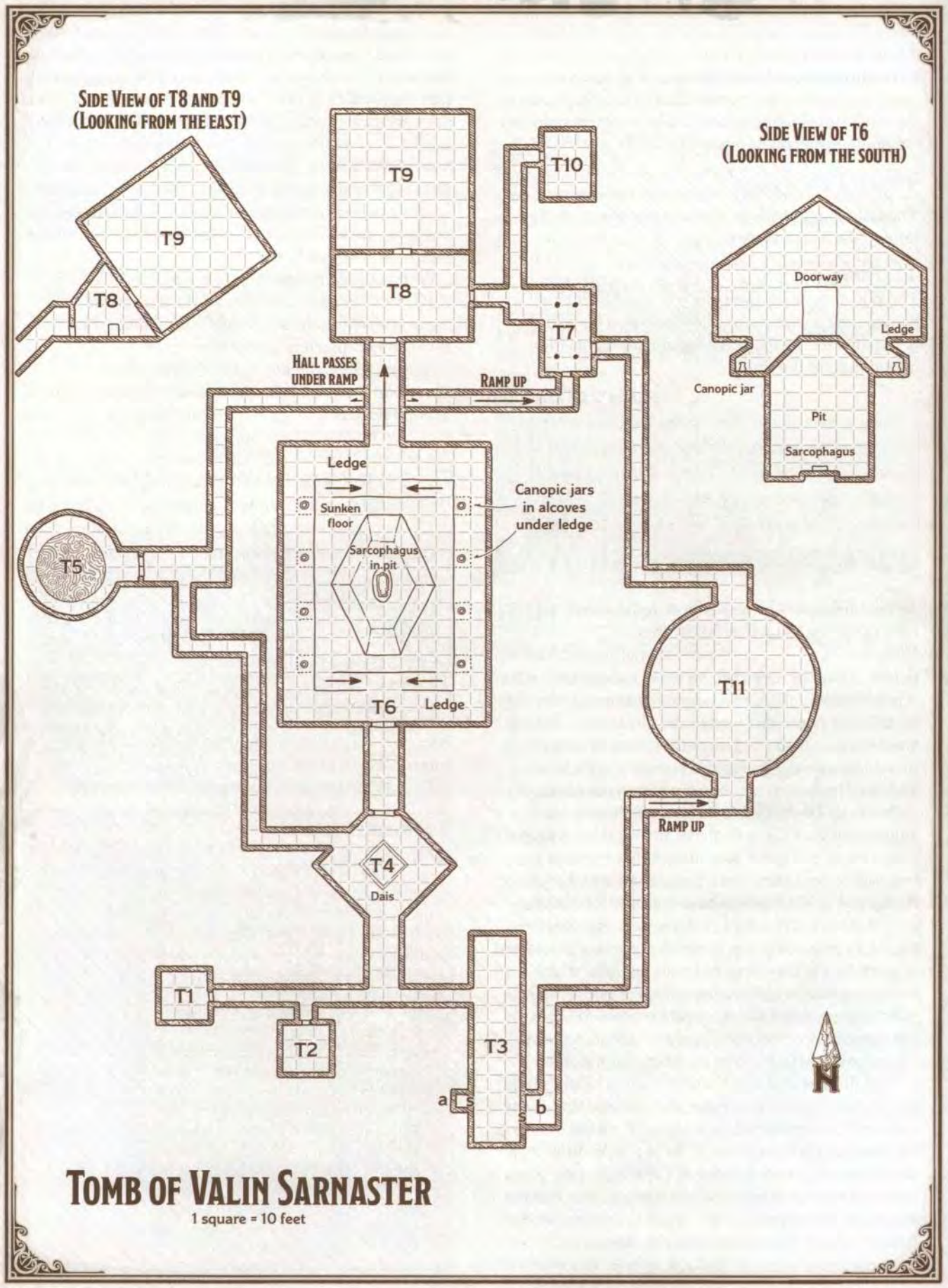
Naive curiosity paired with a lack of conversational practice makes Alessia honest to a fault. She remains unaware of Valin's evil nature—and of the fact that she is the living canopic vessel for Valin's heart. Alessia's own heart was removed three years ago as part of the unique ritual described in *The Canopic Being*. The magic of the ritual allows her to remember being involved in a ceremony that bound her to Valin's service, but she recalls no details of the transfer. The ritual likewise leaves no physical signs behind.

Personality Trait. "I serve my masters in faith willingly, and I let fate and faith command me."

Ideal. "I yearn to see the best of all possible futures, so that I can help those futures come to pass."

Bond. "I faithfully serve Valin Sarnaster, the living embodiment of the divine will and power of Savras."

Flaw. "I never question orders."



Tomb of Valin Sarnaster

1 square = 10 feet

not valuable. The footlocker holds the attendant's modest personal effects, including a stuffed cat with green button eyes and a bracelet with five charms. One of those charms is the key that unlocks the door to the antechamber (area T8).

Cupboard. This magic cupboard radiates an aura of conjuration to a *detect magic* spell. It generates food and drink for Alessia and any visitors to the tomb. It currently contains empty glass flasks, half a loaf of bread, and three peaches.

If the cabinet door is closed, a bell rings. When the door is reopened, the previous contents are gone and the cabinet's shelves are filled with foodstuffs—fresh bread, dried meat, flasks of clear water, fruit, sweet cakes, and more. Once used, this property of the cabinet cannot be used again for 24 hours.

Folding Screen. The folding screen in the corner of the room conceals a magic self-cleaning toilet.

T3. Mirrors of Fortune

> The crystal floor, walls, and ceiling of this room are obscured by hanging mirrors whose brightness intensifies as they catch your reflection.

This chamber was once used by the priests of the temple for meditation, and its magic is still intact. Two-sided mirrors set along the outside walls of this area reflect everything inside and outside it, causing the area to appear empty from the outside. From the inside, the mirrors block the eyes of Savras, preventing Valin from looking within.

The magic mirrors that cover this area and hang as freestanding walls inside it show a super-realistic reflection of everything in the room, including the other mirrors—quickly creating a confusing cascade of images. Any creature that enters the area and can see normally is overwhelmed by multiple visions of itself. Each creature that passes through this area must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or accidentally make contact with a mirror. A creature that makes contact with a mirror for the first time on a turn or starts its turn in contact with one takes 22 (4d10) psychic damage.

A creature that passes through the area without taking damage earns a gift of supernatural insight that lasts until it finishes a long rest. While it has this gift, the creature can roll a d8 and add the number rolled to one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw it makes. The creature can wait until after it rolls the d20 before deciding to use the number, but it must decide before the DM says whether the roll succeeds or fails. A creature can't gain this gift again until it finishes a long rest.

Creatures that have blindsight or truesight can move through the area normally, as can Alessia. If the attendant leads the characters through the area, she tells them to follow her closely, and doing so grants them advantage on their saving throws.

Secret Panel. A hidden panel along one wall of the room can be noted with a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) check. It slides open to reveal a meditation room (area T3a) that holds a number of rotting cushions and two *potions of healing* (superior).

Hidden Hallway. Any character who has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 20 or higher, or who succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check while moving through the room, notices that one of the mirrors near the corner of the room has a shimmer in its reflections. A creature that touches that mirror takes no damage and causes the mirror to turn sideways, revealing an empty chamber (area T3b) and a hallway that leads to area T11.

T4. Testing Chamber

> The wide corridor you are following leads into a huge square chamber whose only feature is a large crystalline dais at its center.

This area was once used by priests and acolytes to sharpen their mental acuity against harmful psychic energy. Valin has turned it into a formidable hiding place for a powerful weapon.

As soon as any character enters this area, they feel a sudden pulse of psychic energy radiating from the dais, which can't be sensed from the corridors beyond. The effect of this numbing energy causes any creature in the room to suffer visible tremors and have its speed halved.

A creature that has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 18 or higher, or that succeeds on a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check made to observe the dais, spots an ornate sword hilt embedded within it (see "Treasure" below). The hilt can be noted automatically by anyone within 5 feet of the dais.

Genie Guardians. Obtaining the hilt requires smashing through the dais, which has AC 18, 50 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. If the dais is attacked or touched by any creature, two **dao** wearing bejeweled necklaces are conjured above it and immediately attack any creatures in the room.

On their first turn in combat, the genies target intruders with their *phantasmal killer* spells, maintaining concentration on these spells for as long as possible while attacking with their mauls on later turns. When a dao dies, its body disintegrates into crystalline powder. A slain dao leaves behind its maul and its necklace (see "Treasure" below).

The dao do not pursue creatures that leave the room. If the characters all leave the area, any dao that wasn't defeated vanishes after 1 minute but returns with full hit points if the dais is touched again.

Shattered Dais. The hilt (see "Treasure" below) can be easily claimed once the dais is destroyed. The first creature to pick it up must make a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A character wearing gloves or other protection has advantage on the saving throw.

The shattered dais repairs itself 1 hour after being destroyed. If the hilt (or any other object) is left amid the rubble, it is trapped inside the dais when it re-forms. The dais can't re-form around creatures and can't repair itself while one or more creatures occupy its space.

A character who studies the rubble of the shattered dais and succeeds on a DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check determines that its original function was allowing acolytes to focus their divinations in the presence of low levels of psychic energy, and that its power has now been corrupted.

Treasure. The hilt in the dais is a *sun blade* placed there by Valin. It came into her possession years before, after she had received two visions about it—one in which she used the weapon to slay a great enemy, and one in which it was used to slay her. Not willing to destroy the weapon for fear of thwarting the first vision, she has kept the hilt hidden in an attempt to keep the second vision from coming to pass.

Each dao wears a golden, gem-encrusted necklace worth 2,500 gp.

T5. Scrying Pool

This chamber was once used to conduct scrying training and rituals, but it has been desecrated by Valin's corruption, as can be confirmed by a *detect evil and good* spell or similar magic.

> Dark swirls of noxious steam fill this circular chamber, whose floor is taken up mostly by a large reflecting pool. Runes carved into the pool's rim glow faintly, and heat shimmers off its fetid water. On the far side of the pool's edge, a figure moves, its two bright ochre eyes piercing the fog.

Okuzor, a tiefling gladiator, sought out Valin expecting to persuade the oracle to offer up predictions for Okuzor's success in the arena. Instead, Valin enticed Okuzor into undergoing the ritual that transferred Valin's eye into the gladiator and turned her into a **canopic golem** (see the accompanying stat block).

Valin controls Okuzor and uses her to interact with the characters. The oracle speaks through the golem, greeting the characters warmly and asking why they've come to the temple. She describes the golem as one of her servants, and responds to any talk of her illicit activities by saying that such rumors were no doubt started by enemies of the House of the All-Seeing Orb. She offers to have her golem servant escort the characters to her location if they seek an audience. Okuzor then leads the characters to the false tomb in area T6, where she and the other two canopic golems there attack at once.

If the characters attack Okuzor, the golem fights until reduced to 30 hit points or fewer. She then tries to flee to area T6, hoping to draw the characters to the false tomb and the other golems waiting there.

Toxic Steam. The room is heavily obscured by the dark steam coming off the scrying pool. At the end of each minute a creature spends here, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 14 (4d6) poison damage.

Scrying Pool. Any character who has proficiency in the Arcana skill, or who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check, recognizes that the runes along the edge of the pool once channeled divination magic, but have been corrupted. Though the 10-foot-deep pool once held holy water, the liquid is now unpleasantly odorous and boiling. Any creature that starts its turn in the water takes 36 (8d8) fire damage. A creature that drinks the water must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour.

A character can spend 1 minute trying to undo the corruption of the runes, doing so with a successful DC 19 Intelligence (Arcana) check. If this occurs, the noxious smell dissipates as the water cools and reverts to holy water over the course of 1 hour.

Divine Insight. Any character who has a background involving Savras, or who succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (History or Religion) check, understands that once its corruption is undone, the pool can bestow a blessing on anyone who meditates here. A character who finishes a long rest in this area can roll a d20, taking note of the number rolled. The character can then substitute that roll for one attack roll, saving throw, or ability check made by them or another creature they can see. This benefit is lost if the substitution isn't made before the character finishes another long rest.

Treasure. A small cabinet that stands against the back wall of the room can't be spotted through the fog until a creature is within 5 feet of it. It holds a collection of dusty divination ritual components. A character who searches the cabinet and succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check discovers

a locked compartment in its false back. A character can use an action to try to open this compartment, either with thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, or by forcing it open with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check.

The cabinet contains twelve sticks of incense (5 gp each), several candles, a bowl of polished stones, and an amethyst pendant inscribed with an open eye (500 gp). The secret compartment in the cabinet holds a *crystal ball of true seeing* and a scroll describing the rite of reclamation (see the "Valin's Victims" sidebar earlier in the adventure).

T6. False Tomb

Adjust the following boxed text if Okuzor fled here from area T5:

> This huge chamber is edged by a broad floor surrounding a sunken lower-level gallery, reached by way of sloping ramps. The center of the lower level is a diamond-shaped pit that descends some hundred feet. Flanking the opening are two tall, crystalline figures whose amber eyes watch you.

The crystalline figures guarding the pit are two **canopic golems** (see the accompanying stat block) who were once the high priest Xemru Thaal and the mage Zeren Zoradius. Zeren came to Valin hoping to become a master of divination. Instead, she showed him a very different future.

The golems attack intruders at once, while Valin speaks through them to challenge the characters. She arrogantly proclaims that no one will ever break through her sarcophagus to face her, hoping to entice the characters to approach the magically warded sarcophagus at the bottom of the pit.

Canopic Gallery. The gallery below the main platform houses eight canopic jars, four on either side of the room. It can be reached by descending the steep ramps, dropping a rope down from above, or any other way the characters might devise. Each canopic jar is ceramic and approximately 2 feet tall. Five hold organs from the servants currently under Valin's control, and each jar is carved with a symbol that represents the former owner, as summarized in the Canopic Jars table.

Canopic Jars

Symbol	Organs and Former Owners
Cat	Heart from Alessia Baseer
Sword	Left eye from Okuzor
Crystal ball	Brain stem from Xemru Thaal
Wand	Kidneys from Zeren Zoradius
Book	Pancreas (shriveled) from Mayastan Sadaar

TYLER WALPOLE

Canopic Golem

Large construct

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 252 (24d10 + 120)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	7 (−2)	11 (+0)	1 (−5)

Saving Throws Int +3, Wis +5, Cha +0
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +5

Limited Spell Immunity. The golem automatically succeeds on saving throws against spells of 7th level or lower, and the attack rolls of such spells always miss it.

Unusual Nature. The golem doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Actions

Multiattack. The golem makes two attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (4d10 + 5) force damage.

Crystal Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) force damage.

Reactions

Spell Deflection. In response to a spell attack missing the golem, it causes that spell to hit another creature within 120 feet of it that it can see.

The other three jars are empty. At your discretion, you can have the empty jars scribed with symbols representing three of the characters, as if Valin has prepared those vessels for sacrifices to come. The jars can be easily shattered, but the organs inside (with the exception of Mayastan Sadaar's) can't be destroyed as long as the matching organ from Valin remains in its host.

See "Treasure" below for more information on Okuzor's canopic jar.

Sarcophagus. Whenever the characters are in a position to see down into the pit, read:

> At the bottom of the pit is a dais resembling an enormous eye peering up. A ten-foot-long black onyx sarcophagus forms the pupil of the eye.

Valin placed her sarcophagus at the bottom of the pit not for security, but as a deadly trap. The sarcophagus is presently empty. Valin returns to it only if she is slain and re-forms, and uses the *dimension door* spell to leave it afterward.

The sarcophagus radiates auras of abjuration and evocation magic to a *detect magic* spell. Its first ward triggers when any creature that is not a construct or an undead moves within 20 feet of it, filling the area of the well to a height of 30 feet above the floor with a noxious gray fog equivalent to the effect of a *stinking cloud* spell. The vapors vanish after 1 minute, and this ward resets after 1 hour.

The sarcophagus's lid weighs 550 pounds. When opened, the sarcophagus vents a blast of stale air and triggers its second magical warding. Each creature within 5 feet of the sarcophagus that is not a construct or an undead must make a DC 17 Charisma saving throw, taking 27 (6d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. This ward resets when the lid of the sarcophagus is closed again.

Treasure. Okuzor's canopic jar also contains *eyes of minute seeing* and an eye patch set with a sapphire-and-moonstone eye (2,500 gp). Okuzor lost her right eye in an early gladiatorial bout, and she used both of these items while she was alive.

T7. Meditation Room

> The ceiling of this room is supported by four crystal columns with eye-shaped capstones. A dozen thick cushions are scattered around the room, in the center of which a dragonborn lies in a pool of dried blood on the floor. A dagger and an oblong rock broken into two pieces lie near the body's outstretched arms.

The fallen figure is Mayastan Sadaar, the scholar who came to the temple to confront Valin, and who became another unwilling recipient of the mummy lord's rituals. Though she remembered nothing of the ritual, Mayastan's recollection of her mission and what she had read in *The Canopic Being* allowed her to successfully guess what had happened to her. She thus chose to end her life by carving out Valin's pancreas from where it had been placed in her and destroying it, rather than submit to the oracle's dark will.

Turning the body over reveals the horrible abdominal wound that killed Mayastan. Any character who has proficiency in the Medicine skill, or who succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Medicine) check, recognizes that the shape of the rock resembles a pancreas, which shows signs of being hacked nearly in half before it petrified. A character who has proficiency in the Medicine skill and examines the wound notes that the body's pancreas is missing.

If the characters need information on how to permanently slay a mummy lord, any search of Mayastan's body reveals a sheaf of papers in an inside pocket. These are pages copied from a tome of lore regarding mummy lords, and they note the fact that a mummy lord's heart must be destroyed to keep the mummy lord from re-forming.

T8. Antechamber

Both doors to this area are locked, and each can be opened with the key charm from area T2.

> The walls of this room converge in a high peak overhead. Through the wall opposite the door, the room beyond can be vaguely seen—a vast, cubic chamber filled with shimmering points of light.

Any character who has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 18 or higher, or who succeeds on a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check to scan the interior of the chamber beyond this one, notices a strange motion within.

> The points of light in the chamber beyond are shifting slowly, like dust motes stirred by a gentle breeze. At the center of the haze of light, a flash of yellow marks the presence of a figure clad in the robes of the faithful of Savras. The figure circles slowly at the apex of the room, motes of light swirling behind it.

The door into area T9 opens automatically whenever any creature moves within 10 feet of it.

Valin Sarnaster

T9. Observatory of Fate

Valin's sanctum is a gravity-free chamber whose magic focuses her oracular sight. Having watched the characters progress through her lair, the **mummy lord** (see the "Valin Sarnaster" sidebar for changes to her statistics and roleplaying notes) is fully prepared to face them for a final showdown—but the characters might find fighting in this strange environment to be a challenge.

> Each of the thousands of motes of light that fill this cube-shaped room takes the form of a tiny eyeball, all of them shifting to stare at you as they drift past.

Unusual Gravity. When any character enters this area, a strange sense of lightness fills them, and they feel their feet begin to lift gently from the floor. A zero-gravity effect in this chamber grants any creature a flying speed equal to its walking speed while in the area, but it might take a bit of practice for characters to get used to the effect. A creature that starts its turn in this area must make a DC 15 Dexterity check. On a failed check, the creature has disadvantage on the first attack roll it makes on its turn. On a successful check, the character has become acclimated to the local gravity and does not need to make checks on subsequent turns.

Valin's Stand. When any character moves more than 10 feet into the room, read or paraphrase the following:

> A woman in yellow robes floats in the mote-filled void. She wears a diadem that frames her third-eye tattoo, which glows with a pulsing white light. "I have waited for so long," Valin Sarnaster says with a thin smile. "Now we will discover if you are ready."

Valin challenges the characters, saying that she has already seen their defeat written in their past and future. As you like, she can share key details from your campaign's past to indicate that she has been watching the characters—and might even reveal secrets that the characters have yet to figure out. She can also offer visions of futures that might have been before the characters fell into her trap. You can have the oracle describe a key encounter or challenge you expect to play a part in your campaign's future, or use the Adventure Climax table in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to come up with an idea you can then direct the campaign toward.

Nikki Dawes

Valin Sarnaster

Valin Sarnaster has been thoroughly corrupted by visions of a future in which she sees herself as the immortal heir of Savras's realm. *The Canopic Being* came into her possession years ago, and an obsession with the dark rituals therein set the oracle on her present course.

Valin has become a powerful undead as the first step on her path to godhood, and is now a **mummy lord** with these changes:

- She has the *clairvoyance*, *dimension door*, and *scrying* spells prepared instead of *animate dead*, *guardian of faith*, and *insect plague*.
- While her heart remains in Alessia's body, Valin's Rejuvenation trait causes her to re-form inside the sarcophagus in area T6.
- Valin can use her lair actions in any area of the tomb.

Personality Trait. "I have seen the future. Therefore, nothing surprises me."

Ideal. "To know all things is the goal of the most powerful oracles. And I will be the most powerful oracle of all."

Bond. "This temple was made for me. It has come to me. It is part of me."

Flaw. "Each future that allows a chance for my failure to occur must be tracked, must be focused on, and must be destroyed."

Fate's Boon. All creatures in the room experience glimpses of the immediate future flashing through their minds. At the start of the second round, each creature in the room can use a bonus action to focus on the future, granting advantage on its next attack roll, ability check, or saving throw. (The characters are aware of the effect and the benefit it imparts. Describe the boon to the players so that their characters are aware of it and can use it.) Once a creature uses this boon, it can't do so again until it finishes a long rest.

Endgames. If Valin is reduced to 0 hit points but her heart has not been destroyed, she snarls out a threat before turning to dust:

> "I still have lessons yet to teach you. But you will learn ..."

Unless her heart is destroyed within 24 hours of her defeat, Valin re-forms in her sarcophagus (in area T6) after that time. See the "Conclusion" section for more information.

If the characters destroy Valin's heart before defeating her, she says the following before dying:

> "Fate defies me. So be it. But though you defeat me, I promise you will not survive the future I have seen ..."

The validity of Valin's threat is up to you and the needs of your campaign.

Treasure. Valin's diadem remains behind when she turns to dust. It functions as a *hat of disguise*. A search of the dust that was Valin's body also turns up a large adamantine key (50 gp) that opens the door to area T10.

T10. Treasure Room

The door to this room is locked and can be opened with the key in Valin's possession (see area T9). A *glyph of warding* cast on the door triggers if the door is opened any other way. A character who searches the door for traps spots the tiny glyph with a successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check. When triggered, the glyph erupts with magical energy in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on it. The sphere spreads around corners. Each creature in the area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking (31) 7d8 thunder damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

> A large pile of clear, crystalline gems fills one corner of this room, gleaming in the light given off by the walls. Hovering in the middle of the room are three objects: a six-foot-long staff made of transparent crystal, a shiny steel helm embossed with lidless eyes, and a tiny blue rhomboid about the size of a piece of candy.

Treasure. Though most of the crystals piled in the corner are of no value, a 10-minute search of the pile yields ten fine gemstones worth 500 gp each. One of these crystals radiates an aura of transmutation magic under the scrutiny of a *detect magic* spell. If this crystal is crushed (destroying it), its powdered remains magically coalesce into a *ring of spell storing* that holds the spells *bless* and *revivify*.

The objects hovering in the middle of the room cease to float as soon as they are grasped. The blue rhomboid is an *Ioun stone* (awareness). The crystal staff is a *staff of fate*, and the embossed steel helm is a *watchful helm* (see the "New Magic Items" section for descriptions of these two items).

T11. Observatory of History

> The shell of this large, spherical chamber begins to shimmer with color, forming patterns and images.

Creatures that enter this area feel their feet begin to lift gently off the floor. As in area T9, a zero-gravity effect grants any creature a flying speed equal to its walking speed while in this chamber. Because there is no combat in this area, characters do not need to worry about acclimating to the unusual gravity.

Visions of the Past. The images that begin to flow and ebb along the spherical wall of the chamber are random at first—creatures and places unfamiliar to the characters. But any creature that remains in this area for 1 minute feels their mind open up as the room establishes a connection with them.

As an action, a character can use the room to replay up to 10 minutes of any past event they are aware of, whether personal or historical. The event plays back in perfect detail along the wall of the chamber for all to see and hear. When the vision ends, the character must make a DC 20 Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, the character gains the following flaw, which lasts until removed with a *greater restoration* spell or similar magic: "I obsess about the past, and I'm constantly trying to go back to undo my mistakes."

New Magic Items

The new magic items described below wait to be claimed in area T10 of Valin's tomb.

Staff of Fate

Staff, very rare (requires attunement)

This transparent crystal staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it.

Altered Outcome. The staff has 6 charges. As a bonus action, you can expend 1 of the staff's charges to give yourself or one other creature that you can see a d4. The recipient can roll this d4 and add the number rolled to one ability check, attack roll, damage roll, or saving throw it makes before the start of your next turn. If this extra die is not used before then, it is lost.

If you expend the staff's last charge, roll a d20. On a roll of 9 or lower, the staff becomes a nonmagical quarterstaff that breaks the first time it scores a hit and deals damage. On a roll of 10 or higher, the staff regains 1d6 of its expended charges.

Watchful Helm

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

While you wear this helm, you gain a +1 bonus to AC and remain aware of your surroundings even while you're asleep, and you have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

As a bonus action, you can cast the *see invisibility* spell from the helm. Once this property of the helm is used, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

Conclusion

Although the treasures in Valin's tomb technically belong to the House of the All-Seeing Orb, the temple priests allow the adventurers to keep what they find as their reward for defeating the mummy lord.

Destroying Valin

Valin is permanently destroyed only if the characters reduce her to 0 hit points and also destroy her heart before she re-forms. Once Valin is destroyed, the priests of the House of the All-Seeing Orb can convert the tomb back into the temple it once was. If the characters can't find Valin's heart, spells such as *commune* or *divination* can lead them to the truth about Alessia Baseer.

Valin's Vengeance

If Valin's heart is not destroyed, the mummy lord re-forms 24 hours after her defeat, appearing in the sarcophagus in area T6. If the characters are still in the tomb at that point, you can set up the terms of the rematch. As soon as she is restored, Valin is able to see through the eyes of Savras throughout the tomb, and she uses *dimension door* to move directly from her sarcophagus to the characters' location provided they're still in the tomb.

If the characters leave the tomb before Valin re-forms, the mummy lord oracle might hunt them down, becoming a recurring villain. If the characters bring Alessia with them but don't remove Valin's heart from her, the vengeful mummy lord tries to recover her heart by the most direct means.

Mayastan Sadaar

Word of Mayastan Sadaar's death hits the scholars of Candlekeep hard. At your discretion, the characters can return the scholar's body to Candlekeep so that she can be returned to life (perhaps with the characters performing the rites). Alternatively, you might decide that the nature of Valin's ritual prevents Mayastan from being restored to life even with a *resurrection* spell. The characters might thus be charged with a side quest to learn more about the ritual, with the knowledge they gain eventually allowing the sage to be resurrected.

Alessia

Characters who learn the rite of reclamation from the scroll in area T5 and retrieve Alessia's heart from the canopic jar in area T6 can perform the rite, destroying Valin's heart and saving Alessia. If the characters rescue Alessia, the young priest is overwhelmed by the realization of what was done to her but grateful to the characters for their actions. She might remain in the House of the All-Seeing Orb, return to Candlekeep to take up a place among the scholars there, or stay with the characters (especially if the party has a base of operations and other NPC followers).

AN ADVENTURE FOR 14TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

THE SCRIVENER'S TALE

WRITTEN BY BRANDES STODDARD
DEVELOPED BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS EDITED BY SCOTT FITZGERALD GRAY

AN EVIL ARCHFEY IS BOUND WITHIN THE tome known as *The Scrivener's Tale*. When the characters run afoul of the book's magic, they must find a way to defeat the archfey before they succumb to her power.

Candlekeep received *The Scrivener's Tale* ten years ago from Machil Rillyn, a noble and a former adventurer from the city of Baldur's Gate. The terms of Machil's gift stipulated that the book was to be locked away and never read. Alas, his stipulation fell on deaf ears. When the book falls by accident into the characters' hands, each of them is afflicted by a supernatural malediction known as the scrivener's mark. The characters must travel to Baldur's Gate to learn the origin of this potentially deadly mark, then retrace Machil Rillyn's steps to a ruined library called the Haven of the Red Quill. All the while, the archfey bound to the book assails their minds, begging to be freed from her dark prison.

THE SCRIVENER'S TALE

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure can be tied to any research undertaken by the characters in Candlekeep. *The Scrivener's Tale* comes into their hands by accident, courtesy of an unwitting Avowed acolyte named Ramilir. In the course of delivering the characters an armload of requested texts, Ramilir inadvertently scooped up *The Scrivener's Tale* from its shelf in Candlekeep's vaults.

BOOK DESCRIPTION

The Scrivener's Tale is bound in soft brown leather, its title embossed on the book's cover and spine. It is seven inches tall and five inches wide. Its pages appear to be ancient, delicate parchment, but any attempt to damage the book fails, confirming that it is indestructible.

The writing, in Sylvan, on each of the book's seventy-two pages is in a fine, spidery hand, using black ink flecked with silver. A *detect magic* spell reveals that the book gives off auras of illusion and transmutation magic, but an *identify* spell does not reveal the magical mark it bestows.

TALE OF REVENGE

The Scrivener's Tale tells the story of a selfish and amoral archfey called the Princess of the Shadow Glass, who is locked in a blood feud with the Queen of Air and Darkness, the ruler of the Gloaming Court in the Feywild. The queen is described as an intelligent, gleaming black crystal that hovers above a throne of twisted, petrified wood. The princess is cast in the role of the protagonist, yet she views everyone else as a pawn in her struggle. The tale ends with a monologue promising bloody reprisals upon everyone the princess believes has wronged her.

Exiled to the mortal realm, the Princess of the Shadow Glass finds a home in the land of humans, elves, dwarves, gnomes, and halflings. They show her true friendship, gifting her with treasures, lands, and titles. In the end, her companions (including the book's narrator, known only as "the scrivener") convince the princess to reclaim her rightful place as a high noble of the fey.

The details of *The Scrivener's Tale* indicate that the Princess of the Shadow Glass began as a fey of indeterminate type, most likely an eladrin, and ultimately became an archfey possessing powerful magical abilities relating to shadow, glass, and illusion. The scrivener of the title is an elf named Zyrian, who wrote the book nine hundred years ago. The content of the book suggests that the scrivener was compelled to write the tale, which contains effusive praise for the princess.

The Scrivener's Mark

Machil Rillyn ordered *The Scrivener's Tale* hidden away by the scholars of Candlekeep because he understood the potency of its magic, having borne the scrivener's mark until he paid to have a *wish* spell cast to end its effect on him.

When a character reads even a small part of *The Scrivener's Tale* for the first time, all the characters feel the magic of the book wash over them. After finishing a short or long rest, each character discovers that 20 percent of their skin is covered in writing that matches portions of *The Scrivener's Tale*. The text starts at the character's fingertips and winds around one arm to the shoulder, chest, and back. The lettering in the Elvish script is tiny but precise and legible. Each character also gains the level 1 benefit and drawback of the mark, as noted in the Scrivener's Mark Effects table. Any character marked in this way must make a DC 20 Charisma saving throw every third dawn thereafter. On a failed save, the level of that character's mark increases by 1. Each additional level of the mark covers another 20 percent of the character's skin with writing until 80 percent of the character's body is covered; the character also gains a new benefit (up to level 4) and a new drawback, in addition to retaining the ones from lower levels. A character can choose to fail the saving throw, and a character instantly becomes aware of any new benefits and drawbacks.

This progression means that the adventure might end after 12 days as a character succumbs to the highest level of the mark's effect, assuming that character fails every saving throw.

You can adjust the progression of the mark as you see fit. If you want to run lengthy side adventures while the characters travel overland to Baldur's Gate, you might lower the DC of the Charisma saving throw or call for the save at longer intervals. Conversely, if the characters have access to enough magic that they're likely to finish the adventure quickly, the effects of the mark might increase by one level every day at dawn with no saving throw allowed.

The mark can't be removed from any character except by a *wish* spell or by destroying the Princess of the Shadow Glass, either of which ends the mark on all the characters. If a character dies and returns to life, the scrivener's mark remains in place.

Scrivener's Mark Effects

Level	Benefit and Drawback
1	*Benefit:* You can speak, read, and write Sylvan, and magic can't put you to sleep. *Drawback:* You no longer cast a reflection or a shadow.
2	*Benefit:* You can cast the *message* cantrip at will, no components required. *Drawback:* Magic potions no longer affect you.
3	*Benefit:* Choose one of the following spells: *blur*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *phantasmal force*, or *silence*. You can cast the chosen spell once (save DC 15), no components required, and you regain the ability to cast this spell after you finish a long rest. *Drawback:* You can't attune or be attuned to magic items.
4	*Benefit:* You cease to age naturally, and magical aging no longer affects you. *Drawback:* You become as brittle as glass. You gain vulnerability to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, and effects that grant you resistance or immunity to such damage are suppressed.
5	*Drawback:* If the Princess of the Shadow Glass has not been released from her prison by the time your mark reaches this level, you transform into a statue made of solid, smoky gray glass. You are petrified while in this state. Any magic that ends the petrified condition restores your true form until the next dawn, when you revert to a glass statue.

Assessing the Mark

Whether making use of their own experience and knowledge or seeking information from the sages of Candlekeep, the characters can assess the magic that has afflicted them to learn the following:

- Any character who has proficiency in the Arcana skill and inspects the writing confirms that spells such as *dispel magic*, *greater restoration*, and *remove curse* aren't powerful enough to remove it.
- With a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character determines that the affliction is progressive but double-edged, granting benefits as well as negative effects. (The characters would be correct to assume that the drawbacks outweigh the benefits, but there's no way to know until the benefits and drawbacks are bestowed.)

Inquiries in Candlekeep

Knowing that *The Scrivener's Tale* came to them from Ramilir, the characters are likely to question him about the book's origins. Horrified at having mistakenly given the characters the tome, the acolyte does what he can to make amends.

Ramilir (a human **commoner**) is a hardworking, earnest man in his mid-forties. He takes great pride in his work—and is mortified by his mistake. He explains how *The Scrivener's Tale* came to Candlekeep under the condition that no one ever open it, and that it has been shelved with other dangerous volumes for ten years. While collecting books for several scholars at the same time, Ramilir guesses that he must have accidentally taken *The Scrivener's Tale* instead of a book intended for another scholar, then placed the unrecognized tome in with the characters' books. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check confirms that the acolyte's mistake was an honest one.

Seeking Higher Knowledge

As they try to learn more about the affliction that has befallen them, the characters might use magic such as *commune*, *divination*, or *legend lore* spells. The Princess of the Shadow Glass has the ability to misdirect such inquiries.

The Scrivener's Tale. Questions asked about the book with *commune* or *divination* spells yield only the information given earlier in the adventure. The *legend lore* spell returns only the following response: "The shackle that is the key, the prison built by a prisoner." That cryptic clue refers to the manner in which the book binds the Princess of the Shadow Glass, even as it allows her to magically mark the book's readers and others near and dear to them.

Princess of the Shadow Glass. *Commune* and *divination* spells reveal nothing about the Princess of the Shadow Glass, who has magically hidden her history under other names. If the characters learn the names "Nintra Siotta" or "Lady of Dread Omens" later in the adventure and use those names in their inquiries, such magic returns the hoped-for results.

The *legend lore* spell returns an especially cryptic result for the princess: "Glass omens, dread crowns, three princesses, shadow lady, deathless is the seeker." The response alludes to each of Nintra Siotta's known titles—Princess of the Shadow Glass, Lady of Dread Omens, and Seeker of the Three Crowns.

Haven of the Red Quill. When the characters learn the name of the ancient library beneath the fallen city of Delimbiyran, *commune* and *divination* return no information regarding the site, because it is warded against divination magic as a side effect of the scrivener's binding ritual. *Legend lore* returns the following: "Where once was a dream of kinship and valor, disparate kin under three crowns, wisdom was preserved in deep places. In that depth was a great deed done, the quill named, and the scrivener showed his cunning."

In response to any discussion of the mark that has appeared on the characters, Ramilir suggests that they speak with one of the Great Readers of Candlekeep: Teles Ahvoste, a scholar who specializes in curses. The acolyte arranges that meeting, then escorts the characters to Teles a few hours later.

Great Reader Teles Ahvoste

Teles Ahvoste (a human **archmage**) is Candlekeep's foremost expert on the subject of curses. Born and raised in the magocracy of Halruaa, Teles has always been comfortable around magic but also understands its inherent dangers.

If the characters are still seeking any of the information in the "Assessing the Mark" section, Ahvoste can provide it. Teles can also reveal that *The Scrivener's Tale* was brought to Candlekeep by Machil Rillyn, an adventurer from a noble family in Baldur's Gate. Teles doesn't know what became of Rillyn, but if the characters don't automatically think about traveling to Baldur's Gate to question the noble, Teles suggests they do so.

At your discretion, Teles might offer to stay in touch with the characters once they leave Candlekeep, providing support and answering their questions by way of *sending* spells.

Personality Trait. "I crave new experiences, perspectives, and ways of connecting ideas."

Ideal. "The gods have hidden the great truths throughout the world and tasked us with finding them."

Bond. "Halruaa will always be my home."

Flaw. "It's not that I want to tell stories out of order. It's just important sometimes to circle back and explain things properly."

A Mysterious Dream

After gaining the level 1 benefit and drawback of the scrivener's mark, the characters experience a dream that comes to them during a time of rest, reverie, or quiet reflection. Even characters who don't sleep have the dream. If the characters don't rest at the same time, you might decide that only the first character who rests has the dream.

Read the following boxed text only to the players whose characters experience the dream (preferably out of earshot of those players whose characters didn't have the dream). If all the characters have the dream, read the boxed text to everyone:

The dream is as vivid as anything you remember from your actual life. You feel the sweltering sun beating down as you take shelter in the shadow of a tumble-down tower. In the distance, a vast army is on the march across mud-churned farm fields. The need to hide from that force overwhelms you, and you quickly retreat inside the tower.

Inside the tower's half-ruined walls, you discover a boar spear that is driven shaft-down into the ground, and whose head is adorned with three crowns. One limb of the spear's crossguard bears a narrow silver circlet. On the other hangs a crown of adamantine, shaped to be worn over a helm. Around the spearhead is a golden crown adorned with emeralds. You feel the need to seize one of them—and then the dream ends.

The dream, which ends abruptly, is meant to be mysterious. The dream's imagery will make more sense as the adventure progresses.

Any character who has proficiency in the History skill, or who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (History) check, remembers that the silver circlet, the adamantine crown, and the golden crown were symbols of Phalorm, also known as the Realm of Three Crowns. This kingdom fell to an invasion of goblinoids nearly nine hundred years ago.

A Troubled Journey

Whether the characters travel overland or teleport to Baldur's Gate, they come under attack by forces serving the Queen of Air and Darkness, who yearns to possess *The Scrivener's Tale* in order to control the Princess of the Shadow Glass. Because the Queen of Air and Darkness banished the princess, the ritual of the scrivener that bound the princess established a connection between the queen and the book, as well as between her and creatures marked by the book. That connection was lost when Machil Rillyn used a *wish* spell to break the mark. When the characters became marked by the book, that connection activated once more. The Queen of Air and Darkness assumes the marked characters must have the book in their possession—and she wants it back.

Marked for Death

Agents of the Queen of Air and Darkness dispatch four **fomorians** to intercept the party. Riding in howdahs strapped to the fomorians' backs are four wood elf wizards (use the **drow mage** stat block but omit the Sunlight Sensitivity trait). This attack can take place at any location. The queen's servants are just as likely to assault the characters in a crowded street as they are to set up an ambush in a remote location. All are fanatically loyal to the queen and fight to the end.

If the characters capture and subdue one or more of these assailants, threats and intimidation do nothing to break their loyalty to the Queen of Air and Darkness. Effective roleplaying, magic, or a successful DC 18 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check enables the characters to convince the elves and fomorians that they are not a threat to the Gloaming Court.

If they believe the characters, and particularly if the characters agree (truthfully or otherwise) to help the queen destroy the Princess of the Shadow Glass, the elves and fomorians can reveal that the Queen of Air and Darkness sent them from the Feywild to slay the marked characters and steal back *The Scrivener's Tale*. The queen is set on ending the threat of the princess by destroying the book and all those connected to it.

If the characters ask about the Princess of the Shadow Glass, the elves say that she was exiled from the Gloaming Court for treason against the Queen of Air and Darkness. They know that *The Scrivener's Tale* is linked to a ritual that trapped the Princess of the Shadow Glass in an extradimensional prison after her exile, but they do not know that her prison is the book.

The characters might also use the *speak with dead* spell to learn some of the above information from fallen enemies.

Treasure

Each wizard wears a ring of gleaming black glass (worth 10 gp) on the third finger of their left hand.

Other Foes

If the characters dispatch the fomorians and the elves, you can have other creatures loyal to the Queen of Air and Darkness home in on them. Level-appropriate creatures that might serve the queen include an **archmage** with a **death slaad** bodyguard, a pair of elf **vampires**, a team of four **assassins**, or an **adult green dragon**. After the failure of the first group to deliver the characters, subsequent foes might follow the party for a time, watching the characters' movements and trying to determine their plans. Being shadowed by the queen's agents for days on end can be unsettling for the characters and the players alike.

While being shadowed, the characters can try to treat with the queen's fey agents. With suitable roleplaying or a successful DC 20 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check, they can convince the agents that they're attempting to destroy the book on the queen's behalf, buying them time to continue their investigations.

Voice of the Princess

When the characters became imbued with the scrivener's mark, the magic of *The Scrivener's Tale* tied them to the Princess of the Shadow Glass. After the first assault by agents of the Queen of Air and Darkness, the princess communicates telepathically with a character of your choice. See the end of the adventure for her stat block and guidance on how to portray her.

The princess, who does not reveal her true name, claims to be the only one who can destroy the Queen of Air and Darkness and free the Gloaming Court from that tyrannical ruler. It's clear that the speaker's hatred of the queen runs deep, as she's unable to keep her scorn out of her voice.

The princess insists that the characters free her, in exchange for which she will end "the scrivener's curse" placed upon them. The characters can't tell whether she's lying or not, since she's nothing more than a voice in their heads. She claims she's being held in the ruins where Machil Rillyn found *The Scrivener's Tale* and tells the characters (truthfully) that she doesn't know where those ruins are. (She knows that the ghost of the scrivener, whose name was Zyrian, still lingers where the book was found. She wants the characters to destroy Zyrian's ghost so that she can free herself from *The Scrivener's Tale*, but she doesn't share that information yet.)

If the characters require further enticement, the princess offers to immediately bestow upon each of them the following supernatural charm (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more information on supernatural charms), which she can do even while imprisoned.

Charm of the Shadow Glass

This charm allows you to cast the *shatter* spell (save DC 16) as an action, no components required. The next time you finish a short or long rest after casting the spell, you gain temporary hit points equal to double your proficiency bonus. Once it is used three times, this charm goes away.

Baldur's Gate

The city of Baldur's Gate lies some 150 miles north of Candlekeep. Overlooking the River Chionthar, it is one of the dominant trading hubs on the Sword Coast and home to much wealth, greed, and corruption.

A number of separate agencies keep a semblance of order in Baldur's Gate. The most widely known among them is the Flaming Fist, a mercenary company that deals out violence freely to keep the middle and lower classes in line. The wealthy elite of Baldur's Gate, known as patriars, generally keep to the Upper City, which is built on high ground. The Lower City, closer to the river, holds the middle classes and is the site of much of Baldur's Gate's long-simmering class conflict. The city's poorest folk live in the Outer City, a series of squalid neighborhoods located outside the city walls.

Rillyn House

After arriving in Baldur's Gate, the characters can make general inquiries about the retired adventurer and patriar Machil Rillyn. They learn that Rillyn House, his noble estate, is in the Upper City. Their inquiries also inform the characters that Machil died ten years ago (not long after gifting *The Scrivener's Tale* to Candlekeep), having built up a fortune as an adventurer but squandering most of it before his death. His family is now led by his niece, Yvandre, who has only recently begun to regain her family's former standing.

The characters' status as seasoned adventurers means they have no difficulty entering the Upper City, finding Rillyn House, and arranging an audience with Yvandre Rillyn. Taresson the butler (a human **commoner**) meets them at the gate and takes their message to Yvandre. If he can see the writing on their skin resulting from the scrivener's mark, Taresson recognizes the mark from having seen it on Machil Rillyn and promptly brings the characters to see Yvandre.

Yvandre Rillyn

The driving force behind the Rillyn family's revival, Yvandre (a human **veteran**) is an iron-willed and accomplished swordfighter as well as a rising political figure in Baldur's Gate. Her manner is brusque but professional. She is happy to deal with anyone who appears likely to further her family's goals, but she can be ruthless toward those who cross her. A former member of the Flaming Fist, she has many friends in that mercenary company who would be only too happy to make trouble for the characters on her behalf.

If Yvandre is attacked, 1d4 **guards** arrive at the end of each of her turns until twenty have appeared.

Personality Trait. "Complicated problems are defeated in the same manner as overwhelming forces: divide and conquer."

Ideal. "The Rillyn clan must put aside its past scandals and return to our values of honorable behavior and hard work."

Bond. "My family comes first, in every word and action."

Flaw. "I can't hide my scorn for laziness, or the arrogance of other patriars."

What Yvandre Knows

Yvandre works to conceal her anger as she talks about how her uncle, Machil, squandered the Rillyn fortune. Instead of establishing a legacy and serving the needs of Baldur's Gate with the riches earned during his adventuring career, he continued his mercenary explorations, seeking glory and plunder across the Sword Coast. Machil found less glory over time, though, and even less wealth.

Yvandre knows that Machil discovered *The Scrivener's Tale* in a vault deep beneath the ruins of Delimbiyran. That capital city of the lost kingdom of the same name once stood near where the town of Daggerford is now. Yvandre knows also that her uncle suffered briefly from a magical malady that produced strange writing on his skin, and which he finally overcame only by spending the last of the family fortune on a *wish* spell.

Deep in debt and clearly shaken by his experience, Machil was killed by unknown assailants a month later—no doubt someone calling in a debt, Yvandre assumes. (In truth, Machil was murdered by agents of the Queen of Air and Darkness, who were looking for the book.) Those who accompanied Machil on his final expedition were mercenaries, and Yvandre doesn't know who they were or where they might be found.

With suitable roleplaying or a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, Yvandre informs the characters that Machil's possessions have been stored away since his death. Anything of value was sold off years ago, but a few "worthless journals and letters" remain. She offers to let the characters look through her uncle's possessions in return for an equal share of the wealth they might earn as a result of information found in his old notes.

Characters who want to take a stealthier approach to gaining information at the estate (or who anger Yvandre) can try to approach Taresson or other servants. With a bribe of at least 100 gp in addition to suitable roleplaying or a successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check, Taresson can be convinced to grant the characters access to Machil's possessions.

Machil's Remaining Possessions

The office that Machil once kept in the east wing of Rillyn House has long since been turned over to storage for items the family has no use for but doesn't want to throw out.

> This dusty chamber is crammed with stacks of old books, barrels of broken tools and weapons, unmarked crates, and shelves of bric-a-brac. The grimy windows barely allow a view of the city beyond.

Yvandre Rillyn

Machil's notes and journals are packed haphazardly into three boxes in this storeroom. Taresson stays with the characters and watches while they search the boxes. They contain the following pieces of information relevant to *The Scrivener's Tale* and Machil's expedition to the ruins of Delimbiyran:

- A vellum map labeled "Delimbiyran and Environs" shows a few locations in the aboveground ruins of the city. A note written on the map in Elvish identifies one site as "Haven of the Red Quill." The handwriting matches that seen in *The Scrivener's Tale*.
- A folio torn from an unknown tome details the history of Delimbiyran and Phalorm. Also called the Realm of Three Crowns, Phalorm was one of the many kingdoms of old in the North. When the Realm of Three Crowns fell, the kingdom of Delimbiyran rose after it.
- Tucked into the folio is a sheaf of notes written by Machil. The notes talk of the adventurer seeking "the shadow glass," which he expected to be a great treasure.

Ernanda Souza

- Within a stack of old bills marked "Past Due," the characters find an unsigned and apparently unsent letter from Machil, which reads: "To my family. Forgive me the vanity that took me from you, and must soon claim my life or soul. You know how ambition corrupted my love for you. I pray that someone avenges the evils done by Nintra Siotta, Princess of the Shadow Glass, Lady of Dread Omens, Seeker of the Three Crowns. But spend not your own lives against it. The scrivener bound her in his haven, and only there can I be free of her. But it is too late for me." (Machil wrote the letter when he knew he was being pursued by agents of the Gloaming Court but was killed before he could send it.)
- A piece of parchment is shot through with dry rot and crumbles when handled. What remains of the parchment afterward displays writing in Machil's hand, which reads: "... stairs among the surface ruins of Delimbiyran and descended deep to the Haven of the Red Quill. The guardians almost finished us before the door was opened. Gods, how I wish ..."

The characters are welcome to take or copy any of the documents, but Taresson makes a record of any items removed from the room.

Any character who rifles through the other objects in the room can make a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. On a success, the character pockets a random trinket (determined by rolling on the Trinkets table in the *Player's Handbook*). On a failed check, the character sends a pile of dusty items spilling to the floor and earns a stern look from Taresson.

Crimes against House Rillyn

If the characters commit murder or other crimes in House Rillyn, they are tracked down 4d12 hours later by one of Yvandre's allies, an **adult copper dragon** named Hastarglyrr, who demands gold from them to pay for damages and for *raise dead* spells.

Haven of the Red Quill

With Machil's notes and map in hand, the characters are ready to retrace the late adventurer's steps to the place where *The Scrivener's Tale* was found: the library called the Haven of the Red Quill, hidden beneath the ruins of Delimbiyran. An overland journey from Baldur's Gate or Candlekeep would take a month, so the characters' best course of action is to teleport to Delimbiyran or the nearby town of Daggerford. If the characters lack the means to teleport themselves, Teles Ahvoste can cast the *teleport* spell for them, or he might know a suitable spellcaster in Baldur's Gate who owes him a favor, or whom the characters can hire for the job.

Exploring Delimbiyran

The city of Delimbiyran, located a day's march north of Daggerford, was once part of Phalorm, the dwarven, elven, and human Realm of Three Crowns. Repeated attacks by powerful neighboring clans eventually laid Phalorm low. The smaller kingdom of Delimbiyran rose in Phalorm's place with the city as its capital, only to fall in turn. The passage of nearly nine centuries since then have left little more than a few partially collapsed walls and archways to mark the fallen city aboveground, though its underground ruins are better preserved.

If you have not yet staged a follow-up encounter with agents of the Queen of Air and Darkness, an appropriate time to do so would be shortly after the characters enter Delimbiyran. The surface ruins are otherwise bereft of dangerous inhabitants.

Using Machil's map, the characters can easily find the entrance to the Haven of the Red Quill.

At your discretion, there might be other dungeon complexes of your own design hidden amid the ruins of Delimbiyran. Previously undiscovered trapdoors might conceal staircases leading down to long-forgotten cellars, crypts, armories, workshops, shrines dedicated to dwarven deities, prisons, and tunnels to the Underdark. Terrifying creatures such as arcanaloths, beholders, and vampires would find themselves at home in such places.

Entering the Haven

The entrance to the library is a vertical shaft that plunges deep into the bedrock, with a crumbling stone staircase clinging to its stark gray walls. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check indicates that no one has passed this way in years.

Dark Manipulation

As the characters prepare to explore the Haven of the Red Quill, the Princess of the Shadow Glass telepathically urges them to follow Machil's route into the haven and destroy the ghost of Zyrian the scrivener, whom she describes as the queen's evil pawn—the same pawn who cursed the party with his scrivener's mark.

If the characters refuse to aid her, the princess continually makes telepathic contact with random characters, urging them to reconsider before it's too late. She tries to convince the characters that if they don't vanquish the ghost quickly, the scrivener's mark will destroy them. At the same time, she uses the link binding her to the characters to gain an instinctive sense of their actions, though she is not aware of the details of what they're doing. "Destroy the scrivener," she says, "and I will rid you of his evil mark!" She also says, "The only way this ends well is with us saving each other!"

Entrance to the Haven of the Red Quill

Haven Features

The library ruins have the following features:

Floors, Walls, and Ceilings. All areas of the ruins except the cavern (area H7) are worked stone. Ceilings are 30 feet high, except in area H8, which has a domed ceiling 50 feet high.

Light. Unless otherwise noted, all areas are unlit.

Golems and Mummies. Each section of wall marked "G" or "M" on the map indicates the location of a hidden stone golem (G) or mummy (M) in stasis. A *detect magic* spell reveals an aura of conjuration magic emanating from that section of wall. When called for in the text, the golems and mummies phase out of the walls and materialize in the dungeon. Until then, they are hidden and can't be harmed.

Haven Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Haven of the Red Quill.

H1. Deep Stairwell

The wall near the top of the stairs has the word "HAVEN" and a crude picture of a quill scratched into it, left by Machil before he made his descent.

> A narrow spiral staircase descends fifty feet from the ruins on the surface. A weathered mosaic decorates the stairwell, depicting dwarves, elves, and humans working together to forge the Realm of Three Crowns. The area reeks of decay, and a few birds fly out of the shaft.

The birds are harmless. Images of the silver circlet, the adamantine crown, and the golden crown from the characters' dream are still recognizable in the mosaic.

Descending the crumbling stairs on foot is perilous, and each creature doing so must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature either tumbles down the stairs before being able to stop itself or pitches over the edge and falls to the ground below, taking 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage in either event.

When the characters reach the bottom, they see an open archway at the base of the stairs. Beyond this archway lies area H2.

ROBIN OLAUSSON

H2. Collapsing Room

The walls of this chamber show cracks and other signs of stress from the weight of fifty feet of earth and stone above, but have so far remained standing. The floor is covered in a thick layer of rot and debris, within which can be seen scraps of leather, the husks of countless dead insects, and bits of rusted metal. A doorway in the far wall has collapsed and is fully blocked by a pile of rubble.

Though this area appears dangerous at first glance, a dwarf or any character who has a background or a proficiency related to stonework can tell that it's stable.

Ten years earlier, Machil and his companions collapsed the archway in the north wall as they left, leaving it blocked. A Small character can squeeze through gaps in the rock with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check, but unless the characters pass the barrier by magical means, it needs to be cleared. For each hour of work, one character can make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check or Intelligence check using mason's tools. On a failed check, a character triggers a short rockfall and takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. After three successful checks, the archway is cleared.

H3. Central Chamber

Though a layer of debris and dead insects coats the floor of this area, its contents remain largely intact. Four trestle tables, a side table set with what looks like cups, and two dozen chairs stand covered in dust.

Clearing the dust from the furniture shows that all the pieces are constructed of heavily lacquered wood. Half are afflicted with dry rot, but the other pieces are in good condition. The side table holds a tea urn and two dozen teacups, all coated in a vermilion glaze.

Three other 10-foot-wide open archways lead out of this area, which was once a meeting and dining hall. The archway to the west has the word "CANDESCA" inscribed above it (see area H4).

Treasure. The tea service is fragile but can be sold for 150 gp if it is safely transported out of the ruins.

H4. Reading Room

Decaying desks, chairs, and lecterns fill this chamber. Three smooth, one-foot-diameter crystal hemispheres protrude from the ceiling, evenly spaced along the center of the room from east to west.

A concave wall on the far side of the room has a steel-banded stone door in the middle of it. Three sharp-edged glyphs are cut into the surface of the door.

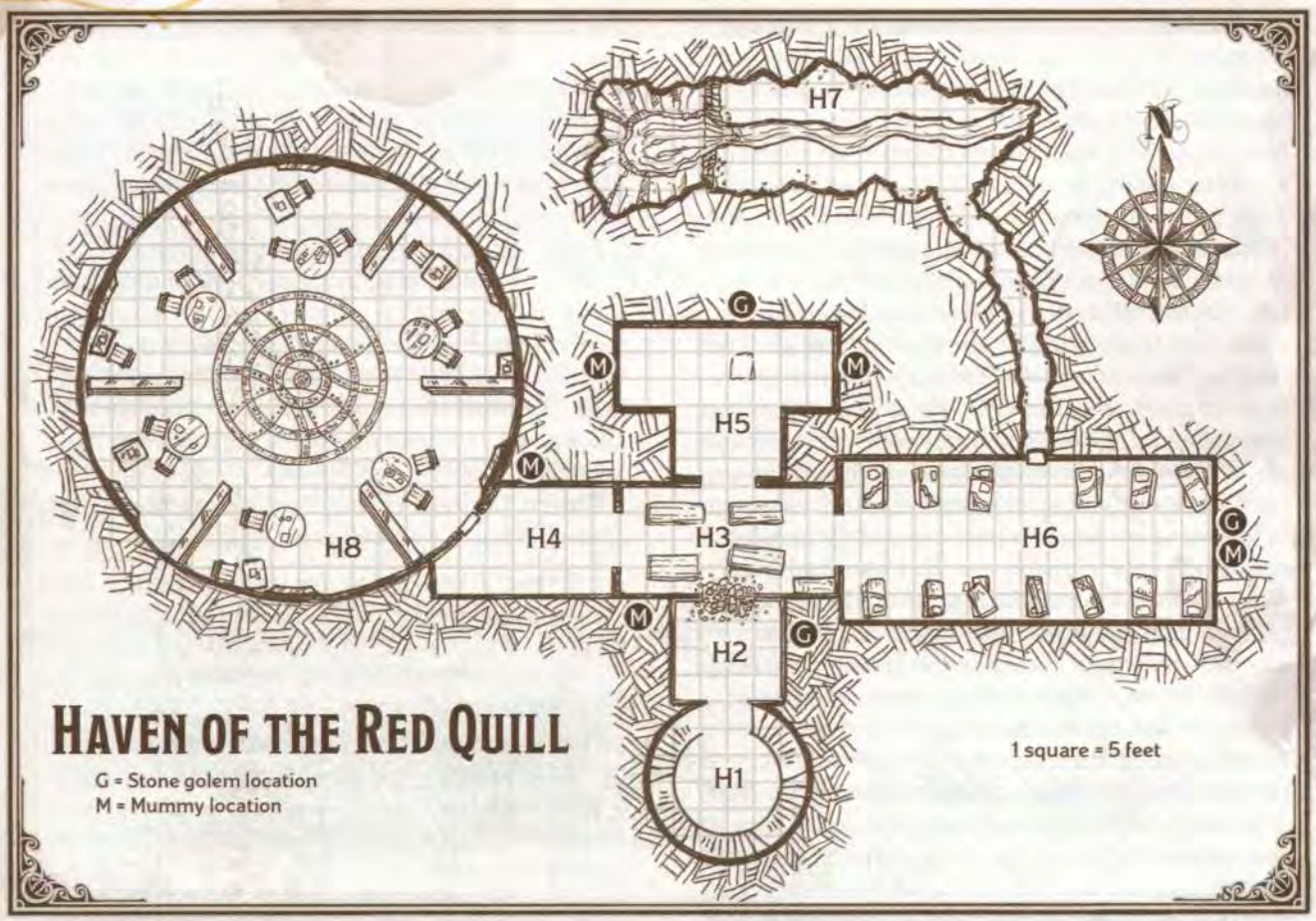
Scholars and guests of the library once worked and taught in this area. The furniture here is of similar construction to that seen in area H3, surviving for centuries in the relatively dry environment of the haven but eventually succumbing to rot.

The room is dark when the characters enter. Any creature in the room that speaks the command word "candesca" causes the three crystal hemispheres in the ceiling to glow, filling the room with bright light. The hemipsheres go dark again as soon as there are no longer any creatures in the room.

Warded Door. The door in the center of the concave wall opens by sliding into the wall, but it's sealed by powerful magic. The door is airtight and imbued with a dimensional lock that prevents characters from teleporting through it. It is impervious to damage, and its magic cannot be dispelled or dismissed by anything short of a *wish* spell. Opening the door requires fitting the three key runes carried by the haven's stone golems (see below) into the three indentations on the door. Any character who has proficiency in the Arcana skill recognizes that the indentations have the shape of arcane glyphs. Any inspection of the indentations suggests that each is meant to have an object of the same shape pressed into it.

The first time a character tries to damage the sealed door or open it with an ability check or magic, or if a character touches any of the indentations, the ghostly figure of an elf steps through the door. (If the characters try to break through the door by dealing damage to it with a spell, go to "Opening the Door" below. The fight that immediately ensues will have the characters taking on the haven's guardians without knowing what's going on, but the ghost of Zyrian the scrivener can fill them in during the battle.)

The spectral elf initially ignores the characters and wanders around the room, nodding and moving his mouth as if speaking to unseen people. If the characters interact with the ghost, or after a few minutes of this one-sided silent conversation, it finally takes notice of them.



Zyrian the Scrivener. The ghostly figure is Zyrian the scrivener, the archmage who created the Haven of the Red Quill to preserve the lore of Phalorm. Zyrian (use the **ghost** stat block) doesn't attack the characters unless attacked first. He disappears if reduced to 0 hit points, but the magic that binds him to this place causes him to re-form at full health after 1 minute with no knowledge of any previous interaction with the characters. Zyrian can be permanently destroyed by reducing his ghost to 0 hit points after the haven's guardian creatures have been dispatched and the door sealing off area H8 has been opened. (See "Opening the Door" and "Guardian Battle" below for more information.) If this is done, Zyrian screams as he passes on from the world.

If the characters attack Zyrian at once, he fights back and begins to speak, saying, "You shall not free her! I will protect the free peoples of the world against the Princess of the Shadow Glass until the end of time!" If the characters show Zyrian the writing of the scrivener's mark on them, the ghost immediately understands what has happened to them and becomes kindly and coherent.

Zyrian can fill in any details of the story of the Princess of the Shadow Glass that the characters haven't sussed out. He then relates how, shortly before the fall of Phalorm, the Princess of the Shadow Glass attempted to subvert and destroy that kingdom and was bound into *The Scrivener's Tale* by a powerful ritual created by Zyrian. The ghost can't open the sealed door into the great library (area H8), but Zyrian can explain how the characters can do so (see below) and how they can end the threat posed by Nintra Siotta (as described in area H8).

Throughout any of the characters' interactions with Zyrian, the Princess of the Shadow Glass is a continual presence in their minds, moving telepathically from character to character to frantically warn them that the ghost is lying, and that it and its guardian creatures must be destroyed.

Opening the Door. Generations of the haven's scholars bound themselves to defend the site beyond death. Three stone golems and a number of undead scholars (now mummies) protect the site, held in magical stasis until a threat is detected. The masters of the haven once knew the rituals that would summon the keys held by the golems, allowing easy passage through the door to the great library. With those masters long gone, the characters must now defeat the combined forces of the library's guardians to claim the keys.

SEAN MACDONALD

Zyrian knows that the guardians are summoned when any damage-dealing spell is directed at the door to area H8. When the characters are ready, the ghost wishes them luck. As soon as a damage-dealing spell targets the door, the ground trembles and a cold wind gusts through the haven as its guardians are released.

Guardian Battle. Three **stone golems** (carved to resemble an 8-foot-tall crowned dwarf, a 10-foot-tall crowned elf, and a 12-foot-tall crowned human, respectively) guard the haven. Each golem has a key rune set into its chest that fits one of the indentations on the door to area H8. The golems are joined by an effectively unlimited number of undead scholars, all of which use the **mummy** stat block but are lawful neutral. The scholar mummies are wrapped in funeral robes set with purple-glowing runes of oath-binding, recognized as such by any character who has proficiency in the Arcana or History skill.

When the fight starts, two mummies per character emerge from stasis at each of the locations marked "M" on the map. When half of those mummies are destroyed, the first stone golem and one more mummy per character emerge from stasis. When the first stone golem is reduced to 0 hit points, its key rune pops out of its crumbling form and the second stone golem appears—along with one more mummy per character to sustain the pressure. The third stone golem emerges 1 round later, along with two more mummies per character. Reducing each golem to 0 hit points allows the characters to claim its key rune.

The guardians pursue characters who move from area to area, but they move no farther than area H2 if the characters ascend the stairs and flee out of sight.

You can adjust the number of mummies depending on whether the characters are having too easy or too hard a time, with more mummies appearing intermittently until all three key runes are touched to the sealed door. At that point, any remaining mummies disappear as they fall back into stasis, and the sealed door opens.

Treasure. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check made while searching this area finds a *spell scroll* of *conjure fey* jammed into a compartment in one of the lecterns.

H5. Dragon Fresco

> The floor of this room is covered with filth and moldering debris, and reeks of untold generations of rats. A faded fresco on the back wall depicts several human, elf, and dwarf wizards battling a black dragon.

The floor of this room is so covered with detritus that the whole room is difficult terrain. Any inspection of the debris spots fragments of well-gnawed bone, which can be recognized as humanoid with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check. These are the decades-old bones of unknown adventurers who were killed by the guardians of the haven.

A *detect magic* spell reveals three magical auras in this room. Two of these auras—one of divination magic and one of conjuration magic—emanate from a pair of magic items hidden beneath a loose flagstone in the middle of the floor (see "Treasure" below). The third aura is one of transmutation magic, and it comes from an iron wand embedded in the north wall (see "Fresco" below).

Fresco. Characters who examine the fresco that spans the north wall notice the following:

- The dragon is as big as one would expect an adult black dragon to be, and it clutches a small chest in one of its foreclaws. This chest, like the dragon, is a flat image rendered as part of the fresco, but it has a deep, half-inch-diameter hole bored into it.
- The wizards, like the dragon, are life-sized. One of them appears to hold a 1-foot-long black wand. This wand is not part of the fresco; it's an actual iron wand embedded in the wall, and it looks like it can be removed.

The first creature that touches the wand triggers a *chain lightning* spell (save DC 17) that springs from it, targeting that creature. The bolts that spring from that creature then target other creatures randomly. Once the spell goes off, the wand is safe to handle and can be removed from its indentation.

The half-inch hole in the fresco is as deep as the wand is long. If the wand is inserted fully into this hole, there's an audible "click" as the wand locks into place and the dragon vanishes from the fresco. At the same time, an **adult black dragon** materializes in the middle of the room. The dragon, whose name is Caustilancer, has been trapped in the fresco for hundreds of years. It has no quarrel with the characters but attacks them if they harm it or stand in its way. If it's given a clear path to the exit, the dragon stomps through areas H3 and H2 before escaping the dungeon by flying up the shaft in area H1.

Treasure. A loose flagstone near the center of the room (at the location shown on the map) can be lifted, but it must first be spotted beneath the filth and debris by conducting a thorough search of the room and making a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check. Beneath the loose flagstone is a 3-foot-deep, 4-foot-wide cubbyhole that holds three rotted crates (empty), several empty glass vials, a *potion of giant strength* (fire), and a bundled-up *robe of eyes*.

H6. Bunkroom

This chamber is filled with moldering wooden furniture. Only three bunk beds remain recognizable as what they are, and all are close to collapse from rot.

A door in the north wall has been smashed open, and a damp draft comes from beyond it.

The haven's scholars and mages once slept here. The floor is covered with slippery mold. If a fight occurs here, each creature that moves more than half its speed on its turn must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. The stone golems automatically succeed on this save.

H7. Deep Spring

This natural cavern has been worn smooth by water erosion and is made cool and damp by the spray of a four-foot-high waterfall, which feeds a small stream that disappears into a hole at the opposite end of the cavern. A skeletal figure lies sprawled across the floor, its head pointed toward the narrow stream.

This underground spring supplied the haven with fresh water. The body is that of an adventurer killed by the haven's guardians. The body's clothing and leather armor have rotted away to scraps.

Treasure. Any character who searches the stream finds an ivory drinking horn (500 gp) with a gilded rim, which belonged to the fallen adventurer.

H8. Great Library

A large, circular chamber heavy with the scents of dust and stale air opens up beyond the door. A fifty-foot-high dome of crystal panels forms the ceiling, and tall bookshelves stand perpendicular to the curved wall in six places. The space between each pair of shelves is set with a table, a scribe's desk, and several chairs, with six tall panes of smoky gray glass hanging on the walls, one in each compartment. At the center of the space, a ritual circle thirty feet across is inscribed into the stone floor.

This was once the library and scriptorium of the Haven of the Red Quill. It has been kept in pristine condition even over nine hundred years by the same magic that wards the door. The panels set into the ceiling are magicked to match the sunlight on the surface directly above the haven, ignoring weather.

The panes of smoked shadow glass on the walls are each 5 feet wide and 8 feet tall. The panes can't be moved and are impervious to damage until the ritual to destroy the Princess of the Shadow Glass is completed.

Closer examination of the ritual circle reveals that it contains a semicircle of candle stubs, a stack of unused parchment, an inkwell filled with silver-flecked black ink, and a crimson quill.

Summoning Nintra. The process for destroying the Princess of the Shadow Glass can be learned from Zyrian the scrivener in area H4. The first part of the ritual summons Nintra, who must be reduced to 0 hit points. The second part of the ritual then destroys the Princess of the Shadow Glass for all time (see "Nintra's End" below). If the characters do not speak with Zyrian for some reason, spending an hour searching the books of the library turns up references to the ritual that created *The Scrivener's Tale* and bound Nintra, and to the second part that can destroy the evil archfey.

To begin, a character imbued with the scrivener's mark must stand in the ritual circle, light six candles, and invoke all of the princess's names: Nintra Siotta, the Princess of the Shadow Glass, Lady of Dread Omens, and Seeker of the Three Crowns. The marked character must use the parchment and ink found in the circle to express in writing their intent to free Nintra—whereupon the Princess of the Shadow Glass appears in the circle and the fight begins.

Fighting Nintra. Nintra screams in ecstasy when she is finally released from *The Scrivener's Tale*, then attacks at once. (During the fight, you can have Teles use *sending* to contact the characters in a panic, telling them that *The Scrivener's Tale* flared with light just moments before, releasing a shadowy form within.) Even if the characters have played the part of Nintra's helpers thus far, her link to them through the book makes her aware of any intention to destroy her, and she tells the characters that their betrayal will be their undoing.

As a bonus action in the first round of combat, Nintra summons six shadow glass warriors. Each one steps out of one of the wall-mounted panes of glass around the room and resembles an elf made of smoky gray glass. Use the **gladiator** stat block to represent the glass warriors. When one is reduced to 0 hit points, it shatters like glass, and the scattered shards melt away to vapor in 1 round.

Nintra treats the library as her lair for the purpose of using her lair actions, but she cannot use those actions elsewhere in the Haven of the Red Quill.

Scrivener's Marks. Nintra is aware of what type of scrivener's mark each character bears when the fight begins. If any character has a level 4 mark, or if Nintra is having too hard a time in the fight and

needs an additional edge, she can use an action to force a character to make a DC 20 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, the character's mark becomes one of the next higher level.

Nintra's End. When Nintra is reduced to 0 hit points, she falls to the ground, unconscious. To complete the process, a character with one or more levels of the scrivener's mark must extinguish the candles, whereupon Nintra turns to ash, as does *The Scrivener's Tale* in Candlekeep. The panes of shadow glass lose their magic when Nintra is destroyed and shatter harmlessly, and the scrivener's mark fades from all the characters.

If the ritual is not completed, Nintra regains all her hit points and expended spells in 1 hour. During that time, she is immune to damage. If she returns to life, Nintra summons six more shadow glass warriors and sets them on the characters, then tries to flee.

Treasure. Any character who succeeds on a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check while searching through or collecting shards of shadow glass, or who checks the shards with a *detect magic* spell, notes an aura of abjuration magic around one small piece of shadow glass. That shard functions as an *Ioun stone* (awareness).

The books in the library amount to nearly ten thousand volumes and cover a host of subjects including arcana, history, and nature. If the characters want to sell the collection, you can decide what it might be worth, but the characters should earn at least 50,000 gp for the lot (see also "A Little Light Reading" below). Such a reward might take the form of one or two very rare magic items, a small keep, a large parcel of land, or a seaworthy galley with a full crew.

Conclusion

After Nintra is defeated and the characters are freed from the threat of the scrivener's mark, the adventure might wrap up in several different ways.

Zyrian's Legacy

Nintra's demise frees Zyrian from his pledge to guard against her return, but his ghost lingers in the world long enough to thank the characters before fading away.

The characters might decide to seal the site away or take it over as a home base or stronghold. If the latter occurs, news of a group of powerful adventurers setting up shop in the ruins of Delimbiyran travels quickly. Other groups might become interested in restoring the greatness of the fallen city or searching for other dungeon complexes buried under the ruins—and might inadvertently stumble upon dangerous secrets and magic.

Favor of the Gloaming Court

Ending the threat of the Princess of the Shadow Glass brings the characters to the attention of the Queen of Air and Darkness—whether they want that attention or not. Though the queen does not deign to consider herself in the debt of mortals, she might bestow favors on them if asked, or she could become a powerful but unpredictable ally or patron.

A Little Light Reading

The wealth of knowledge in the great library of the Haven of the Red Quill represents an amazing find for the scholars of Candlekeep. If the characters offer up some or all of the collection for donation, they earn the favor of the First Reader and all the Avowed, and might develop close, permanent ties to the library-fortress.

Dragon Matters

If the characters harmed or killed Hastarglyrr the copper dragon, other good-aligned dragons might track them down and try to settle accounts.

If the characters allowed Caustilancer the black dragon to escape into the wild, it returns to its old lair in the Lizard Marsh, not far from the town of Daggerford. If the characters spend time in Daggerford before setting out on their next adventure, they might encounter the black dragon once more as it swoops over the town's walls, settles on a rooftop, and demands tribute from the townsfolk.

Nintra Siotta, Princess of the Shadow Glass

Nintra Siotta, a chaotic evil archfey who was exiled from the Gloaming Court by the Queen of Air and Darkness long ago, is known in Faerûn by three titles: Princess of the Shadow Glass, Lady of Dread Omens, and Seeker of the Three Crowns. She appears as a 9-foot-tall humanoid made of smoky gray glass, wrapped in a cloak-like darkness that appears to devour the light.

Nintra's eyes burn with green fire, and she speaks in a high, musical voice. Deception comes naturally to her, but imprisonment in *The Scrivener's Tale* has made her impatient and prone to telepathic outbursts that betray her cruel nature.

Personality Trait. "I have no patience for those who are less than me—and all are less than me."

Ideal. "After I destroy the Queen of Air and Darkness for her weakness and insolence, I will take my rightful place at the head of the Gloaming Court."

Bond. "I have many supporters in the Gloaming Court who worship the ground I walk on. They deserve a sovereign who is worthy of their love."

Flaw. "Why should I worry about the schemes of others? No one is my equal in cunning."

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Nintra can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects; she can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Nintra targets one pane of shadow glass in her lair, causing it to explode into shards. Each creature within 20 feet of the exploding pane must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 13 (3d8) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The shards fade away to vapor and the pane is restored to normal at the next initiative count 20.
- Nintra targets one pane of shadow glass in her lair, briefly transforming it into a swirling vortex. One creature of her choice within 20 feet of the pane must succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw or be drawn into the vortex, taking 11 (2d10) necrotic damage. The creature is then teleported to an unoccupied space within 5 feet of another pane of shadow glass in Nintra's lair (determined randomly).

Nintra Siotta

Large fey

Armor Class 17
Hit Points 306 (36d10 + 108)
Speed 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	24 (+7)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	24 (+7)

Saving Throws Str +8, Dex +12, Wis +7
Skills Deception +12, Insight +7, Perception +7
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, stunned
Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +5

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Nintra fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Actions

Multiattack. Nintra makes two attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d4 + 7) piercing damage.

Shard of Shadow. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d6 + 7) necrotic damage, and if the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the end of its next turn.

Spellcasting. Nintra casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (save DC 20) and requiring no material components:

3/day each: *dispel magic, faerie fire, mirror image*

Storm of Shattered Glass (Recharge 6). Nintra targets a point she can see within 60 feet of her and creates a 20-foot-radius sphere of swirling glass shards centered on that point. Each creature in the sphere must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) slashing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If Nintra is in the sphere, the shards deal no damage to her.

Legendary Actions

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

Attack. Nintra makes one attack.

Fey Step. Nintra teleports to an unoccupied space she can see within 30 feet of her.

Shadow Strikes (Costs 2 Actions). Provided she is in bright or dim light, Nintra causes her shadow to attack a creature within 10 feet of her. Her shadow makes two claw attacks, each attack identical to Nintra's claw attack except that it deals psychic damage instead of piercing damage.

ERNANDA SOUZA

AN ADVENTURE FOR 15TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

ALKAZAAR'S APPENDIX

WRITTEN BY ADAM LEE
DEVELOPED BY MICHELE CARTER & CHRISTOPHER PERKINS
EDITED BY MICHELE CARTER

THIS ADVENTURE REVOLVES AROUND A THIN book titled *Alkazaar's Appendix*, brought to Candlekeep by a renowned explorer named Alkazaar in 1363 DR, the Year of the Wyvern. This slim volume accompanied a thicker tome titled *Alkazaar's Thrilling Tales*, in which Alkazaar chronicled his numerous heroic exploits. He bequeathed these books to Candlekeep and also gifted the Avowed with a series of live storytelling sessions. The longer-lived Avowed remember these performances with fondness and have passed the stories on to the adjutants over the years. One story stands out from all the others, and the Avowed of Candlekeep wonder about it to this day: the tale of the lost golem, featuring the one adventure that Alkazaar could not complete. This story is told in *Alkazaar's Appendix*.

ALKAZAAR'S APPENDIX AND ALKAZAAR'S THRILLING TALES

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

This adventure begins when the characters read the story of the lost golem in *Alkazaar's Appendix* and discover the magic picture in the book. The picture-portal can teleport the adventurers to the golem. The book was found by members of a tribe of nomadic people called the Bedine, who live in the desert of Anauroch. The Bedine are discussing what to do with the golem and how they can profit from it. The golem appears inactive, but the party can figure out how to activate the golem from the book. By talking with the Bedine, the adventurers learn about a ruined cave complex known as the Hall of Rainbows that could contain clues to the golem's origin. But the Bedine also warn that the cave complex is in the territory of a deadly purple worm.

The adventurers travel to the Hall of Rainbows. After defeating the worm, they discover clues that lead to the ruined city of Azumar. They must navigate the ruins and find the vault where the golem's master, Prince Hamukai, now rests.

In the final showdown, the party must defeat a dracolich named Zikzokrishka and then command the golem to open the vault and complete its mission—to deliver the prince's body to Elysium.

FINDING THE BOOKS

Alkazaar was an adventurer of great renown. Tales proliferate about his daring and incredible discoveries across Faerûn. Knowing that the definitive collection of Alkazaar's adventures rests within the walls of Candlekeep is reason enough for an adventurer to seek out this legendary book and claim a cozy corner to read about the escapades of Alkazaar and his dungeon-delving companions. *Alkazaar's Thrilling Tales* is a hefty tome, but its smaller companion—*Alkazaar's Appendix*—contains the intriguing story of Alkazaar's one unfinished quest.

The Avowed in Candlekeep could bring *Alkazaar's Appendix* to the characters' attention and approach the characters (especially if the party has visited Candlekeep before) in hopes that they can complete Alkazaar's unfinished quest and perhaps procure for the library the fabled *Nether Scroll* that Alkazaar believed the golem once guarded.

Alternatively, an ogre named Little One (see the "Little One" sidebar in the "Candlekeep" section earlier in this book) might approach the characters while they're relaxing in the Hearth and give them the books, thinking they might be intrigued by the tale of the lost golem.

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Book Descriptions

Alkazaar's Thrilling Tales is a weathered and cracked leather-bound tome eight inches by ten inches by two inches thick. Embossed gold letters proclaim the title on its lavishly decorated cover. Its beautifully rendered interior abounds with images of Alkazaar's handsome, mustachioed face under his wide-brimmed hat. Alkazaar is often shown with the wind whipping at his flowing shirt but having no effect on his tight pantaloons and shiny boots. He's depicted looking marvelous in fantastical realms alongside his rugged and ready adventuring companions.

Alkazaar's Appendix is barely half an inch thick but otherwise has the dimensions of its companion. When it is opened, a few grains of sand fall from between its crisp, dry pages. It contains the story of the lost golem as well as detailed drawings of a stone golem with a brilliant blue sapphire for a heart. One of these illustrations doubles as a portal to Anauroch (see "The Picture Portal" below).

The Lost Golem

Adventurers who read the story of the lost golem in *Alkazaar's Appendix* learn the following facts about the one quest Alkazaar couldn't complete:

- Alkazaar was searching for a *Nether Scroll.* This was to be his last adventure before retiring.
- In the Anauroch desert, he came across a wandering stone golem. Alkazaar believed this golem was the legendary Sapphire Sentinel, rumored to have been created by Netherese wizards to protect one of the fabled *Nether Scrolls* under the control of Prince Hamukai.
- The golem recognized its master's name, Hamukai, when Alkazaar mentioned it. From that point on the golem followed him, obeying his commands.
- The golem communicated through sign language. It seemed lost and sad.
- Alkazaar met Bedine nomads who said they knew of a place that held clues about the golem, but it was in purple worm territory. He followed the Bedine guides until a sandstorm obscured the route. The camels ran off, and, after losing his guides and his transportation, Alkazaar called an end to the expedition.
- Before he left the desert, Alkazaar inscribed a magical tracer on the golem in the hope that he could find it again.
- He begs the reader to go to Anauroch and find the lost golem, which might lead to the discovery of a *Nether Scroll.*
- On the final page of the story, cryptic symbols surround an illustration of the golem. If deciphered, this code reveals the magic words to activate the picture portal.

The Picture Portal

The symbols bordering the illustration of the golem unlock magic that turns the picture into a portal, teleporting any adventurer willing to touch the portal to where the golem waits, thanks to the tracer inscribed on it.

Deciphering the code requires 1 hour of study. After that, a character knows the magic words needed to activate the portal.

When an adventurer activates the portal, it stays active for 1 minute and then reverts back to an ordinary picture. Anyone who touches the activated portal appears instantly in an unoccupied space within 50 feet of the golem (see "Arriving in Anauroch" later in the adventure).

Adventure Background

Long ago, the wizards of Netheril created a magnificent stone golem to guard one of the *Nether Scrolls*—a collection of dangerous scrolls that described the creation of magic and the nature of the Weave. The wizards gave the golem a sapphire heart and magically bound a sliver from the gem to the right palm of its master, Hamukai. They charged the young wizard-prince of the ancient nation of Anauria with guarding the priceless scroll. The sapphires allowed both Hamukai and the golem (whether together or separate) to unlock a magically sealed vault that held the *Nether Scroll.*

The blue dragon Zikzokrishka discovered the scroll's location, and she arrived at the vault ready to destroy any and all in her path. In the ensuing battle, the golem gravely wounded Zikzokrishka, but she blasted the golem with eldritch magic that damaged its memory and hurled it to a far corner of Faerûn. Thinking his golem destroyed, Hamukai put a shield around the vault containing the scroll that could be opened only by the sapphire's power. Too weak to continue the fight, Zikzokrishka limped away to heal her wounds. But as she left, she incanted a powerful Netherese curse: when the prince died, the shield would disappear and the scroll would be hers for the taking.

Knowing that Zikzokrishka's curse had sealed his fate, Hamukai made a decision. Against the wishes of his subjects, who dearly loved him, the prince ordered his wizards to perform a ritual that would keep him on the brink of death for millennia. His magically sustained life force would maintain the shield that would seal him in the vault and protect the *Nether Scroll.* Since opening the vault required

either the sapphire shard in his right palm or the golem's sapphire heart (which he assumed was destroyed along with the golem), Hamukai felt sure of the scroll's safety.

Zikzokrishka returned with an army, intent on ripping the sapphire from the prince's head. She scattered the populace and reduced the prince's city of Azumar to ruin. To her dismay, she found the prince's tomb to be impregnable. Howling with rage, Zikzokrishka knew that the spell that kept the prince alive would thwart her curse for thousands of years, far beyond her draconic life span. In her thirst for power, she sought and achieved transformation into a dracolich, willing to wait an eternity to outlast the spell that held Hamukai near death, knowing his life force would one day dissipate and the vault would become openable.

As she held her vigil, the desert wasteland of Anauroch consumed the city. Believing the golem and its sapphire to be destroyed, Zikzokrishka now lies coiled around the vault's entrance, waiting with the patience of undeath for the death of the prince, surrounded by her undead minions and jealously guarding her promise of godhood.

Arriving in Anauroch

Created by fearsome magic, the ancient desert of Anauroch hides ruined cities under its sands. The most famous include the lost cities of Netheril, an empire of wizards doomed by their lust for magical power.

When the characters come through the portal, read the following:

> The desert sun blinds your eyes, and you feel the heat trying to pull every bit of moisture from your body. The bone-dry air makes each breath burn hot and taste of the baked earth.
>
> Below you, about fifty feet away, a camel watches two desert nomads unearth a hulking stone golem half-buried in the sand. Intent on their investigation of the golem, they don't notice your arrival.

The two desert nomads (use the **bandit** stat block) and a **camel** they call Old Stink (for good reason) hail from a Bedine tribe. They are discussing what to do with the golem. Their curiosity about its potential value conflicts with their fear of disturbing items of Netherese origin. The golem sits motionless, its eyes glowing dimly.

The Bedine nomads are wary of the characters until they assess the party's intentions. A successful DC 12 Charisma check quickly allays their fears.

The Bedine

The Bedine are a group of disparate nomadic tribes that interact with one another in the desert of Anauroch. Bedine tribes differ in how friendly or hostile they are to outsiders. But all Bedine obey a code of hospitality and honor, and they provide shelter, food (goat cheese and dates), and drink (strong tea or water) to anyone who visits the desert unless the visitors prove unworthy of such kindness.

Bedine guides know how to survive in the desert. Stories about the magical destruction wrought by the Netherese on Anauroch make them wary of wizards and abhor magic, believing that it brings destruction and ruin.

Bedine are dark-haired and olive-skinned, with brown eyes. They wear a loose-fitting, linen robe called an aba, covered by a dark cloak called a jellaba. They carry daggers and scimitars as weapons, and some use eagles and falcons to catch prey such as small antelope and hares.

The Bedine speak Common.

Pesh

16-year-old human nomad

Pesh has the naive charm of a young human adult but is also wise to the unforgiving ways of Anauroch. He warms up to kind adventurers quickly (especially if they offer gifts).

Personality Trait. "I want to learn about everything."

Ideal. "Life is an adventure."

Bond. "My grandfather is my best friend."

Flaw. "Sometimes I put curiosity before caution."

Shamir

64-year-old human nomad

Shamir is Pesh's grandfather. He's cautious and pragmatic, with a kind and honorable heart. As an elder of a Bedine tribe, he is wary of magic users and not above scolding them, citing the folly of the Netherese and how their arrogance destroyed a once lush and verdant land.

Shamir is cautious and superstitious, but he's also intelligent and curious. The blue circle painted on the golem's chest and the symbols on its body make him think it's the same golem he heard about as a boy. His grandmother used to tell a strange story about a foreigner named Alkazaar and a lost golem with a sapphire heart that once guarded a powerful treasure. He believes this to be the same golem. His grandmother tried to guide Alkazaar to the caves of Haruun, but a sandstorm created by a wild djinni drove them back. A cavern inside Haruun called the Hall of Rainbows holds colorful paintings, some of which depict a golem.

Golem in the Desert

Shamir knows the story of Hamukai and his stone golem and can help the characters remember the details as needed.

Personality Trait. "I know much about the ancient history of Netheril."

Ideal. "I want to know what my ancestors knew."

Bond. "My grandson, Pesh, is my life."

Flaw. "I think magic is a road that leads to ruin."

The Golem

The Bedine allow the characters to examine the 14-foot-tall **stone golem** known as the Sapphire Sentinel. It has the following features and behaviors:

- The golem understands Common but can't speak.
- It can open the sealed vault where the prince rests (see area V3).
- The golem remains a noncombatant unless it is directly attacked.

The Sapphire

The sapphire is inside the golem's chest, hidden behind an 8-inch-diameter stone disk. The outer surface of the disk is inscribed with a blue circle that has eight golden beams radiating from it like rays of the sun.

The disk can be removed to reveal the glowing sapphire only when the golem receives a command to use its power from someone whose commands it obeys (see "Getting the Golem's Attention" below). Otherwise, the sapphire remains hidden. The gemstone is 6 inches in diameter and has the following properties:

- It is indestructible until the golem completes its mission.
- The sapphire has 3 charges. As an action, the golem can expend 1 charge to cast *dispel magic* (as a 9th-level spell) from the sapphire using Constitution as its spellcasting ability. The sapphire ceases to glow if all its charges are expended, but it regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn and glows again once it has 1 or more charges.
- The golem attacks anyone who tries to remove the sapphire, which is worth 25,000 gp.

Getting the Golem's Attention

The golem perks up considerably if the characters mention Hamukai's name. Its stone face grinds and changes into a pleased expression as its eyes light up. It then bonds with and follows the party member who mentioned the name and obeys that person's commands.

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Attempting to pry out the sapphire in its chest activates the golem, and it does not take kindly to thieves. If provoked further, it fights to the death.

What Pesh and Shamir Think

Pesh and Shamir are both suspicious and impressed when the golem wakes. Pesh, in particular, thinks the golem is the coolest thing since sliced goat cheese and wants to learn all about it. Shamir thinks the golem is valuable and will lead to a big treasure. Both are keen to go on a treasure hunt and offer to guide the adventurers to Haruun. Shamir reminds the characters that the area is purple worm territory.

Roleplaying the Golem

The golem expresses itself through a variety of expressions and postures, much like Frankenstein's monster. Characters can infer the golem's intent through its gestures and body language. The golem rubs its head when it's confused, becomes animated when it's excited, and slumps its shoulders when it loses hope.

The golem also employs a unique sign language created by its master, Hamukai. Any character who spends 1 hour observing the golem as it uses this sign language can, with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check, learn enough of the language to communicate with the golem on a basic level. A character who fails the check can repeat it after spending another hour watching the golem communicate in this fashion.

The golem's memories are damaged and it wants to return to its master, Prince Hamukai. It has vague impressions of its past. The golem can be as communicative or as noncommunicative as you like.

Keeping the Golem Alive

For story purposes, the golem or its sapphire must reach area V3 for the vault to be opened. On seeing the golem restored, Zikzokrishka can't contain her glee. She tries to destroy the golem so she can use the sapphire to open the vault and steal the *Nether Scroll*. If the dracolich is defeated, the golem goes to be reunited with its master and complete its mission to deliver Hamukai's body and the *Nether Scroll* to Elysium.

Over the course of the journey, the golem might face mortal peril. If it drops to 0 hit points, the golem stabilizes and topples over but isn't destroyed. It doesn't make death saving throws, and it can be revived and repaired using healing magic. If if has 0 hit points after being struck by a *disintegrate* spell or similar magic, the golem is obliterated, but the sapphire is left behind.

Travel in Anauroch

Due to its magical history, Anauroch is more than a barren wasteland and a hostile desert climate to those who wander within its borders. Anauroch holds lost cities, savage monsters, and more than its share of otherworldly phenomena.

Traveling across the desert by day is not recommended. Use the extreme heat rules in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for daytime travel in Anauroch.

Traveling in the cool of the night is the best way to journey across the desert, but explorers should beware of nocturnal creatures hunting for prey.

The Bedine travel mostly by night, along the ancient roads and paths that crisscross Anauroch. Some of these paths are invisible on the ground, and the Bedine navigate by using the stars at night. Groups of Bedine might be traders carrying goods, scouts looking for food, or bandits hoping to raid merchant caravans that try to shortcut their way across the desert rather than circumnavigate it.

The Bedine nomads can act as guides for lost characters, offer clues for stuck players, and provide food and water for adventurers in desperate need.

Desert Encounters

If the players are restless or spoiling for a fight, use the following encounters. Pesh and Shamir avoid combat and try their best to stay out of harm's way.

Wandering Monsters

- The characters encounter three **cyclopes** who are bickering at each other while looking for food. They have Bedine prisoners tied up in their lair—a cavernous crack inside a granite escarpment that juts out from the sands.
- Two **rakshasas** masquerading as Bedine nomads named Imura and Sikkat offer to guide the party to a magic oasis. The rakshasas attack the characters as soon as they let down their guard.

Stone Androsphinx

The characters find a sandstone sphinx crouched atop a granite pedestal. Bleached humanoid bones lie half-buried in the sand around the pedestal.

Any character who touches the sphinx telepathically receives the following riddle:

> *Forked like a serpent's tongue,*
> *I spark the thunder's peal;*
> *With every stroke, the storm is wrung*
> *Of darkness by my zeal.*
> *What am I?*

The riddle's answer is lightning. The first character who answers the riddle correctly while touching

the sphinx gains resistance to lightning damage for 10 days. If an incorrect answer is given, the statue transforms into an **androsphinx** and attacks the party. If it is victorious, the sphinx returns to its pedestal and reverts to its inanimate state. It turns to dust if reduced to 0 hit points.

Voices of Netheril

As the adventurers walk along the dunes, a cold wind howls across the desert. The shrieks of the wind soon turn to cries of anguish, as if coming from tortured souls. Bedine nomads believe that these are the voices of evil wizards who are enduring an eternity of punishment for defying the gods and dooming the land to ruin. To the Bedine, the wind is an ill omen.

Arrival at Haruun

Haruun was a series of natural caves set into a cliff face that comprised one wall in a twisting maze of canyons. Those who fled the destruction of Azumar thousands of years ago used this area as a refuge. Over time, they carved and painted the interiors with the story of their prince, the golem, the battle, and the vault containing the *Nether Scroll*.

Within the last five centuries, all the caverns except one have been reduced to rubble as the area fell under the sway of a purple worm. Only a small section of the old cavern complex now remains—the Hall of Rainbows.

When the characters arrive, read the following:

> The landscape around you bears the scars of a purple worm's habitation, a complex of caves that collapsed as the worm created its rubble-filled tunnels. You see a crack in the face of a cliff that looks like an entrance to an undamaged cave. Around it, a few fifteen-foot-diameter, rubble-filled holes provide clear evidence of a purple worm's passage. Vultures circle overhead, as if anticipating scraps.

As the adventurers explore this place, every so often they feel rumbling—caused by the passage of a purple worm moving below the surface. Play up the tension if the characters make any disturbance during their exploration of the caves, since it's well known that purple worms are alerted by vibrations in the ground.

The following locations are keyed to the map of Haruun. Unless otherwise noted, all tunnels are sandstone, unlit, and 12 feet high.

H1. Cave Entrance

As the characters approach the entrance, a horrid stench hits their nostrils. Any Bedine with the party grip their weapons and remark grimly, "Worm dung. Move carefully."

As they enter the cave, the characters see that the walls are sculpted and chiseled, empty sconces dot the walls, and chunks of stucco—once brightly painted with scenes and writing—lie crumbled on the floor. Long, viscid, rubbery tubes of glistening purple worm dung lie strewn about, giving off their acrid odor.

Treasure

A creature that spends 5 minutes digging through the dung can roll on the Worm Dung Treasure table. Once a treasure is found, eliminate that entry from the table.

Worm Dung Treasure

d4	Treasure
1	Two fire opals (1,000 gp each)
2	An *animated shield*
3	A dung-encrusted suit of *dwarven plate*
4	A bright and shiny *ring of resistance* (acid)

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H2. Worm Rubble

Rubble from the passage of a purple worm blocks the tunnel, with chunks of stone reaching almost to the ceiling. A character who clambers to the top of the rubble sees that the tunnel continues on the other side, but one must make the climb with care or risk causing the rubble to shift and alert the worm (see below).

Removing enough debris to allow a Small or Medium humanoid to fit through the opening takes one person about an hour, but the noise caused by the work could summon a hungry purple worm. To avoid doing so, whoever is clearing the rubble must succeed on two DC 15 Dexterity or Strength checks. Failure on either check means a boulder falls from a height or the character slips and causes a cascade of rubble, alerting the worm's tremorsense.

Once a gap is created, the rubble counts as difficult terrain.

Purple Worm Attack

Whenever the time is right (and it's never not right), a **purple worm** erupts from the earth and attacks the party. This can happen anywhere in the caves at any time.

H3. Hall of Rainbows

> The tunnel opens into a cave fifty feet long, thirty feet wide, and twenty feet tall. Bats chitter near the ceiling, and the floor reeks with mounds of their guano. Colorfully painted frescoes line the walls deeper in the cave.

The wizards who escaped Zikzokrishka's wrath used this cave as a scriptorium and hall of records. They recorded what they knew and continued their work. What remains are benches, wooden desks, and scaffolding gnawed by beetle larva and ravaged by time. Evidence of a cooking fire and tools lie at the far end of the cave, partially covered by the rubble from a purple worm's passage.

The brightly colored murals are intact, and *detect magic* or similar magic causes the magic ink that preserves the work to glow.

Any Bedine with the party display amazement on seeing the murals, since the works prove that their legends about a city that was destroyed by a dragon are true. Shamir says that he knows of a cursed place in the desert that looks like the ruined city depicted in mural F. He is willing to guide the party there.

If the golem sees the murals, it looks confused or reacts with vague recognition as it tries to recall images from its fractured memory.

Each mural measures 10 feet by 10 feet and has a caption below it written in Draconic. The images are described below.

Mural A

> This mural shows three wizards wearing strange hats and using magic to bring life to a stone golem. The stone golem has a bright blue sapphire in its chest. Ancient script labels each wizard, and a larger inscription is engraved below the scene.

The three wizards' names translate as Abzin, Kaalin, and Sharisa. The inscription reads: "Here the Consortium of Three creates the Sapphire Sentinel."

Mural B

> This mural illustrates three wizards with odd hats presenting a stone golem to a young man dressed in royal finery. One of the wizards embeds a sapphire shard in the right palm of the young man. Ancient script labels the young man, and a larger inscription is engraved below the scene.

The name translates as Prince Hamukai of Azumar. The inscription reads: "Here the Sapphire Sentinel is bound to the wizard prince Hamukai of Azumar."

Mural C

> This mural shows the golem and the prince placing a golden cylinder inside a vault filled with stars. A beam of blue light emerges from a gem in the golem's chest. There's a large inscription engraved below.

The inscription reads: "Here, by Hamukai's command, the Sapphire Sentinel unlocks the Vault of Stars to hide and protect the Nether Scroll."

Mural D

> This mural portrays a battle between the young man with a blue stone embedded in his right palm and a blue dragon and its army of monsters and men. The dragon is wounded in one eye. Three wizards wearing peculiar hats accompany the young man. The dragon has blasted the golem with dark energy that is hurling it through a crack in the sky. The dragon has a label, and there's an inscription below.

The dragon's name translates as Zikzokrishka. The inscription reads: "Here the Sapphire Sentinel is destroyed in the terrible battle against the dragon Zikzokrishka, who curses Hamukai."

Mural E

> This mural shows the young man being entombed in a sarcophagus along with a golden cylinder inscribed with symbols. Three wizards with unique hats cast a spell on the young man, whose eyes are closed. Mourners crowd all around. Small labels identify the figures, and there's a larger inscription below.

The labels translate as Prince Hamukai of Azumar and the three wizards Abzin, Kaalin, and Sharisa. The inscription reads: "Here Hamukai enters the eternal sleep to avert the dragon's curse and is sealed in slumber with the Nether Scroll."

Mural F

> This mural shows the destruction and slaughter of a city by an assault from a one-eyed blue dragon and its horde of monsters. The blue dragon stands atop a mastaba under which lies a star-filled vault surrounded by a magical aura. The vault holds a young man inside a sarcophagus. On the left side of the mural, three wizards wearing curious hats flee toward a distant series of caves. An inscription below the painting is accompanied by a rough map.

The inscription reads: "Here the dragon returns to destroy the city of Azumar and open the tomb of Prince Hamukai as the survivors flee to Haruun."

The crude map shows the location of the city of Azumar relative to Haruun. Following the map correctly requires a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check. If a Bedine is present to consult, the check succeeds automatically.

Travel to the Necropolis

After seeing the murals in the Hall of Rainbows, the characters know their next destination: the ruined city of Azumar that is now the necropolis ruled by Zikzokrishka. Any Bedine guide knows the tale of the city of Azumar, which was plunged into ruin by a terrible dragon. The Bedine also know of the eternally seething sandstorm there and believe that nothing but death and misfortune lie within the cursed city.

Optional Encounter

If the characters are struggling or you worry about their ability to defeat the dracolich at the end of the adventure, this encounter adds a "here comes the cavalry" possibility to bail them out if they face serious trouble. You can also use this encounter as a purely feel-good moment.

As the characters make the trek from Haruun to the necropolis, you can place this encounter in their path. The journey to Azumar takes a few days. A Bedine guide fills each night around the campfire with horrifying stories about the accursed city.

Ogruhl the Dragon Tortoise

If you use this encounter, read the following:

> You crest a dune and see a rocky escarpment in the distance with small cave entrances all over its surface. Dozens of tiny humanoid creatures dash back into the caves, sensing your presence.

The tiny creatures are desert-dwelling **chwingas** (see their stat block at the end of the adventure) that live in tiny caves built up on the shell of a giant dragon tortoise. If the characters approach the escarpment, the earth rumbles as the dragon tortoise raises its massive head out of the sand, addresses them, and asks their intentions.

For the dragon tortoise, use the **dragon turtle** stat block with the following changes:

- It speaks Draconic and Terran.
- It lacks a swimming speed and the Amphibious trait.
- Its breath weapon is a 60-foot cone of abrasive sand instead of steam that deals slashing damage instead of fire damage.

Ogruhl has been trapped here for millennia, restrained by magic chains. Ogruhl was the prisoner of a cruel Netherese wizard. When the city around the tortoise was abandoned, Ogruhl was left to die. A band of chwingas found the tortoise and brought it food and water little by little to keep it alive. Over time, the chwingas and Ogruhl developed a symbiotic relationship—it defended them and provided a home for them, and they helped it to survive.

Helping Ogruhl. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check determines that the chains that bind Ogruhl can be broken with a successful *dispel magic* spell (DC 19).

If commanded to do so, the golem uses its sapphire heart to cast *dispel magic* with a flash of blue light. If the players don't realize that the golem can dispel magic, you can have the golem do this automatically and the players learn about it that way.

If freed, Ogruhl expresses its immense gratitude and eagerly wants to reclaim its ancestral territory. The bravest chwingas come out to bestow a charm on each of the characters.

Necropolis of Azumar

A consortium of wizards secretly used Azumar, a small Netherese city, to house one of the *Nether Scrolls* under a mastaba that they built near the city center. The city fell into ruin thousands of years ago and is now surrounded by sand dunes that partially bury its outer walls and buildings. No structures on the surface aside from the mastaba remain completely intact.

This place feels like a graveyard, where battle and the sands of time destroyed a city and its population. It's eerily silent except for the hissing of the sandstorm in the distance. Despite the silence, the characters can't shake the feeling that they're being watched (even though the city is clearly abandoned).

As the characters enter the necropolis, read the following boxed text:

> You see before you a city that has long fallen to ruin. Scoured husks of once-magnificent stone buildings jut out of the desert like rotted teeth. Emerging from under the smothering sands, the remnants of ancient streets wind their way around crumbled walls and through the rubble of collapsed buildings. Ahead, you see and hear a sandstorm in the middle of the ruined city that swirls in place like the dome of an immense, seething cathedral.

The golem points to the sandstorm and seems puzzled about what to do next.

Exploring the Necropolis

As the characters explore the necropolis, describe the scene to keep them on edge—the desolation, the scent of scorched sand, and the hiss of the sandstorm that increases in volume as they draw near. With the exception of the mastaba (see area V1), the necropolis consists of a series of ruined stone walls jutting out of the sand and patches of paved streets revealed by the howling winds. The swirling sandstorm at its center can be seen and heard from anywhere in the necropolis.

The necropolis also contains buried treasures. A character who searches for an hour and succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds some hidden treasure determined by rolling on the Treasure Hoard: Challenge 5–10 table in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Up to four such hoards can be found before the city is picked clean.

To keep the characters on their toes, you can use one of the following encounters.

Hands of the Dead

A 20-foot-square area underneath the characters erupts with hundreds of skeletal arms that try to drag them down into the sands.

Each character must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or be caught in the iron grip of 1d4 + 1 skeletal arms that are anchored to the sands. Each arm has AC 13 and 10 hit points. They try to drag a captured character underground (use the quicksand rules in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Not until all the arms holding a character are destroyed can that character pull itself out of the sand or be pulled out by others.

Consortium of Three

The party encounters three **flameskulls** floating around the ruins, each wearing an odd, tattered hat. With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, a character recalls the hats worn by the wizards on the murals in the Hall of Rainbows. (One or more players might remember this even if their characters don't.) The flameskulls are startled upon seeing the adventurers and begin chattering to one another, wondering what to do about these strange visitors.

These are the remains of the Consortium of Three, the Netherese wizards who were loyal to Prince Hamukai. After establishing the refuge at Haruun, they honed their magic and vowed to return to Azumar to defeat Zikzokrishka. When they did, they discovered to their horror that Zikzokrishka had transformed into a dracolich, becoming even more powerful. They were defeated, transformed into flameskulls by the dracolich, and commanded to guard her necropolis for eternity. Though their minds are warped by their current state, if the characters try to befriend the flameskulls—invoking their names and appealing to their loyalty to the prince—the flameskulls offer to help. A character must succeed on a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check to sway the flameskulls. Charisma (Deception or Intimidation) checks do not work on them.

If the characters antagonize the flameskulls or fail to communicate with them, the flameskulls either attack or flee to alert Helmdar, the storm giant skeleton in area V1.

Magic Sandstorm

A dome of swirling, scouring sand covers the mastaba (Hamukai's tomb) at the heart of the necropolis. Zikzokrishka created this disturbance to keep everyone else out until she gains the *Nether Scroll*.

When the adventurers arrive at the outer edge of the sandstorm, read:

Necropolis

150 ft.
100 ft.
50 ft.
25 ft.
To Ytivl
To Alagh's Pass
To Ma'atar
To the Lion's Eye Oasis
The Lost Road
N
W
E
S
0 50 100 250 500 1,000
feet

Mastaba

Surface Level

V1
V2
W
S

1 square = 5 feet

Underground Level

a
b
V3
V4
V5
Up to V2

MIKE SCHILEY

> You see a dome-shaped sandstorm, four hundred feet wide, before you. Flashes of purple lightning course through the roiling storm, and the sound of the sand is nearly deafening. Scoured bones litter the ground beneath it, and the stone of the nearby ruins has been gouged by its ceaseless winds.

The dome of swirling sand is 80 feet thick. The properties of the sandstorm are as follows:

- Any creature that enters the sandstorm for the first time on a turn or starts its turn in the storm takes 55 (10d10) slashing damage.
- Creatures in the sandstorm are blinded.

The golem's *dispel magic* creates a 20-foot-wide, 20-foot-high tunnel through the sandstorm that lasts for 1 minute.

Those who make it through the sandstorm emerge to see the ruined wall and the mastaba that houses the vault. The following locations are keyed to the map of the mastaba.

Storm Giant Skeleton

Huge undead

Armor Class 13 (armor scraps)
Hit Points 204 (24d12 + 48)
Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
29 (+9)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	3 (−4)	8 (−1)	1 (−5)

Saving Throws Str +14, Con +7
Skills Perception +4
Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning
Damage Resistances cold
Damage Immunities lightning, poison, thunder
Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages —
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +5

Actions

Multiattack. The giant makes two attacks with its greatsword or hurls two rocks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (6d6 + 9) slashing damage plus 18 (4d8) necrotic damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 35 (4d12 + 9) bludgeoning damage.

Lightning Strike (Recharge 5–6). The giant hurls a magical lightning bolt at a point it can see within 500 feet of it. Each creature within 10 feet of that point must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 54 (12d8) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

V1. Mastaba

This mastaba is a 20-foot-high mesa built from 50- to 80-ton megaliths in the form of a step pyramid with a mausoleum on top of it. A ruined stone wall surrounds the mastaba, which is the only structure still standing in the area.

Inside the wall, sand lies in deep drifts over the stone floor. Three **giant scorpions** and four **wights** hide under the sand at each end of the mastaba, in the locations indicated on the map, ready to attack anyone who climbs the nearest steps. The wights chant a word in Netherese ("Meat!") in a rasping chorus as they advance. If fighting breaks out at either end of the mastaba, a **storm giant skeleton** (see the accompanying stat block) lying dormant on top of the mausoleum awakens and attacks.

The storm giant, Helmdar, was sent to destroy two frost giant criminals who stole a *horn of blasting* from a storm giant king. Helmdar completed his mission but was killed by Zikzokrishka and turned into an undead thrall to guard her lair.

Treasure

The *horn of blasting* hangs across the giant's back and is sized for a storm giant. However, it magically resizes to fit in the hands of whoever holds it.

V2. Mausoleum

Locked stone double doors stand at opposite ends of this structure. Each double door requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity check to open using thieves' tools. A *knock* spell or similar magic also opens a double door. Characters can also try to smash open the doors, which have AC 17, 100 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

If the **storm giant skeleton** (see area V1) was not alerted earlier, it awakens and attacks as soon as either double door opens. It can enter the mausoleum. When the characters open a door, read the following:

> Before you is a sixty-foot-long, twenty-foot-wide, pillared hall brightly lit by torches in wall sconces. The carved floral motifs on the pillars have faded, and the walls are covered with cracked and crumbling paintings of farm life in a verdant landscape. A stone staircase leads down.

The torches that light this hall go out if removed from their sconces. The stone stairs descend 60 feet and end at an opening into area V3.

V3. Dracolich's Antechamber

> At the bottom of the stairs, you see a thirty-foot-wide by sixty-foot-long hall lit with blue crystals that are set into the walls and pillars in the room. At the far end, a dais stands before a limestone door inscribed with symbols and glyphs that glow dimly. Framing the door, the crystallized bones of a dragon are embedded in the wall, its wings outstretched.

Zikzokrishka, an **adult blue dracolich**, guards the doorway to the vault. She lies flush against the wall and ceiling over the far door so that she looks like a decoration. A character who looks closely, underneath the crystalline deposits on the skeleton, can see that one of the dragon's eyes has been destroyed (hearkening back to the murals in the Hall of Rainbows).

Playing the Dragon

Seeing the golem that she thought was destroyed fills Zikzokrishka with glee, because its sapphire is the key to opening the vault. Her long vigil is at an end. She orders the characters to use the golem to open the door. She can also try to bargain with them, offering treasure from her hoard (see below) or power once she obtains the *Nether Scroll*.

Lair Actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties) whenever she is in area V3, Zikzokrishka can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects. She can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Part of the ceiling collapses above one creature that the dracolich can see. The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone and buried under rubble. A buried creature is restrained and unable to stand up. A creature can use an action to try to pull itself or another creature out of the rubble, doing so with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check.
- A cloud of sand swirls in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a point the dracolich can see within 60 feet of it. The cloud spreads around corners. Each creature in the cloud must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be blinded for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.
- The dracolich chooses two points that it can see, each of which must be on a solid surface, and creates a 5-foot-wide line of lightning between them. The two points must be within 60 feet of the dracolich and 60 feet of each other. Each creature in the line must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 10 (3d6) lightning damage.

If She's Winning. All Zikzokrishka cares about is getting her claws on the *Nether Scroll*. During her encounter with the characters, she bargains with them or issues threats to make them use the golem's sapphire heart to open the door to the vault.

If the fight goes poorly for the characters and they helped Ogruhl earlier, the dragon tortoise might come to their aid, tearing through the mastaba with its claws to aid its saviors.

If She's Losing. If Zikzokrishka is reduced to 50 hit points or fewer, she tries to escape. If she can't escape, she begs and offers extravagant lies about fabled Netherese power—eternal life, wealth beyond imagining, mastery of magic—to postpone her demise or give her time to escape. If all else fails, she fights to the death, cursing the characters and telling them she will hunt them down. If the characters don't find and destroy her phylactery, the dracolich makes good on her threat (see "Zikzokrishka's Phylactery" at the end of the adventure).

Treasure Hoards

Zikzokrishka has divided her treasure into two separate hoards (marked "a" and "b" on the map) and carefully buried them under the flagstones of the floor. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check discovers the troves, or the party can find them by spending at least 30 minutes searching the antechamber.

Treasure Hoard A

4,450 gp
370 pp
Spell scroll of wish
Wand of polymorph

Treasure Hoard B

1,240 ep
Staff of withering
+2 longbow
A petrified **chwinga** (see the end of the adventure for its stat block) that reverts to flesh when touched and uses its Magical Gift action to reward its liberator

Sealed Door

Netherese magic seals the double door that blocks passage to area V4. The only way to get past the door is through the use of the golem's sapphire. The *dispel magic* property of this gem alone unlocks and breaks the spell. There is no other way, magical or not, to reach areas V4 and V5.

The character who bonded with the golem can command it to use its sapphire to break the seal and open the door.

If the golem is instructed to open the door, read the following boxed text aloud to describe this event:

> The golem's chest opens to reveal its sapphire heart. Blue light bursts from the gem and hits the double door. The symbols on the doors glow with blue fire, accompanied by a perceptible shudder and a crackle of magical energy. With a groan and the grinding of stone on stone, the doors open for the first time in ages.

V4. Hall of Records

The walls along this hallway of descending staircases contain a record of the deeds the prince accomplished in his life. The plaster and the paintings are perfectly intact. Scenes include images of him tending to the welfare of his people and the matters of the city, reading books, falling in love, and cultivating his garden.

About halfway down the staircase, the paintings turn to depicting the entombment of the prince, the spell cast by the wizards of Netheril, the sealing of the prince in the sarcophagus with the *Nether Scroll*, the return of Zikzokrishka, and the destruction of Azumar. As the golem views these murals, sand begins to trickle from its eyes.

Closer to area V5, the paintings depict more recent events: the characters' journey from Candlekeep, their first contact with the golem, their adventures across Anauroch, their exploration of Haruun, and their encounter with Zikzokrishka. The final painting is of the characters standing before the prince's tomb. It shows them in exactly the positions they're all holding, rendered in perfect detail.

V5. Vault

When the party reaches the vault, read the following boxed text aloud:

> A spacious tomb holds a sarcophagus made of stone covered with glyphs. Magically glowing stars painted on the stone adorn the ceiling. The west wall bears a carving of a beautiful scene of a river and rolling hills inside a stone frame etched with symbols.

The carving of the river scene is a portal to Elysium that activates when the golem enters the room. If the golem does so, read the following boxed text aloud:

> A glyph appears on the golem and illuminates, and at the same time the scene on the west wall of the room slowly comes to life. The carved river begins to flow, and the flowering plants by the river take on color and start to wave in a gentle breeze. The stone frame looks like a portal to this beautiful place.

The stone golem looks at the party member who is bonded with it as if awaiting its next command.

The sarcophagus is 5 feet tall and covered in Netherese incantations that have kept the prince in suspended animation inside it for millennia. If the sarcophagus is opened, the spell keeping the prince alive fails. Within a matter of seconds, his body turns to dust.

The portal is a one-way door to the plane of Elysium. The symbols etched around the frame form the following inscription in Draconic: "May Hamukai find his way to Elysium and eternal rest for his sacrifice."

Treasure

Inside the sarcophagus are the following treasures:

- The *Nether Scroll of Azumar* (see the item's description below) inside a 24-inch-long, 5-inch diameter cylinder made of wood and encased in a sheet of gold (500 gp); the scroll is a thin sheet of hammered copper etched with Draconic writing
- Gold funerary items wrapped into the prince's shroud (2,500 gp)
- A platinum death mask (5,000 gp)
- The sapphire shard from the prince's right palm (250 gp)
- The prince's memoirs, which explain the story and the dangers of the *Nether Scroll of Azumar*

Nether Scroll of Azumar

Scroll, legendary

Unlike most scrolls, a *Nether Scroll of Azumar* is not a consumable magic item. It takes 30 days of concentrated study—at least 8 hours per day—to attempt to understand this scroll. After completing this study, you must make a DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check. If this check fails, you take 16d10 psychic damage, and you can attempt the check again after another 30 days of concentrated study.

When you succeed on the check, you gain the following benefits:

- Your Intelligence score increases by 2, to a maximum of 22. Once you gain this benefit, you can't use this scroll to increase your Intelligence again.
- You gain advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Hamukai in His Sarcophagus

IRINA NORDSOL

When you gain the scroll's benefits, a stone golem magically appears in an unoccupied space within 60 feet of you and acts as your ally. If you die, the golem turns to dust.

What Happens Next?

The story can conclude in one of the following ways.

Open the Sarcophagus. Opening the sarcophagus ages the prince thousands of years in a few seconds, turning him to dust but leaving his treasures (including the *Nether Scroll of Azumar*) intact. If the golem is active, it shudders and falls to its knees, its sapphire heart cracks with an audible pop (rendering it worthless), and the golem turns to dust.

Let the Golem Do Its Thing. If the golem is allowed to do as it wishes, it pushes the prince's sealed sarcophagus through the portal into Elysium. Three **solars** meet the golem on the other side, open the sarcophagus, welcome the prince into the afterlife, and take the *Nether Scroll of Azumar* into safekeeping.

Revive the Prince. The prince is a human **archmage**, but only a *wish* spell can keep him alive after the sarcophagus is opened. If a wish is used to prevent the prince from turning to dust or to resurrect him after he turns to dust, he thanks the characters profusely. He embraces his golem as it bows before him, sands of joy pouring from its eyes. The prince speaks Common and offers the characters all the treasure in his sarcophagus, except for his memoirs, the sapphire shard, and the *Nether Scroll of Azumar*. Then, without hesitation, he walks into Elysium alongside the golem, taking his memoirs and the *Nether Scroll* with him.

Zikzokrishka Obtains the Nether Scroll

If Zikzokrishka makes a deal or defeats the party, she rips the sapphire from the golem's chest, killing it. She then rushes to the sarcophagus and cracks the seal, turning the prince to dust. Then she grabs the *Nether Scroll of Azumar*, howling with maniacal laughter. The dracolich's mastery of magic and her evil spirit enable her to access the darker aspects of the *Nether Scroll of Azumar*, turning the sky over Anauroch black and ushering in a reign of terror and darkness over the desert. She rules the southern part of Anauroch from her lair with cruelty and malice. Her presence prevents caravans from crossing the desert, and she enslaves Bedine tribes or turns them into undead thralls to serve her whims.

Paladins, members of holy orders, and Harpers across Faerûn respond to the disaster in a joint campaign to defeat the dracolich and destroy the *Nether Scroll of Azumar.*

Zikzokrishka's Phylactery

Zikzokrishka hid her phylactery deep within the Scimitar Spires, a mountain range to the east of the necropolis of Azumar. If the characters defeat her, Zikzokrishka uses her phylactery to rematerialize, having long ago prepared a dragon's corpse to house her spirit upon its return to the phylactery. She relentlessly seeks them out, using all her evil ingenuity to recover the *Nether Scroll of Azumar.* Zikzokrishka harbors a personal vendetta against the characters, who remain targets of her wrath even if they don't have the *Nether Scroll.*

Chwinga

Chwingas are tiny elemental spirits that exist all over Faerûn. These gentle creatures tend to nature as humble custodians. Chwingas live inside plants, rocks, and springs far from civilization. Painfully shy, they prefer to move about unseen.

Though no two chwingas look exactly alike, they all resemble 6-inch-tall animated dolls with strange masks, spindly limbs, and wild hair. Chwingas brighten a natural setting as they adorn their burrows with colorful rocks and plants.

Humanoid Fascination. Chwingas shun other creatures, but they find the trappings of civilization fascinating. They puzzle over creatures that wear armor, carry weapons, use tools, and cook food. When a chwinga encounters one or more humanoids, its curiosity compels it to shadow those creatures for a short time and observe them. If it takes a liking to a particular humanoid, a chwinga uses its cantrips to aid it, or bestows a magical gift before departing. The features that attract a chwinga to a particular humanoid vary. A chwinga might like the way a humanoid walks or the way it combs its hair, or be smitten by a humanoid's ability to play music or to eat copious amounts of food.

Chwingas that live in the desert can bestow the following additional supernatural charms:

Charm of the Mirage. This charm allows you to cast the *hallucinatory terrain* spell (save DC 15) as an action. Once used, this charm vanishes from you.

Charm of the Water Bearer. This charm allows you to create up to 1 gallon of fresh water, which fills one or more empty containers in your possession. You can do this up to thrice per day for 10 days, after which this charm vanishes from you.

Chwinga

Tiny elemental

Armor Class 15
Hit Points 5 (2d4)
Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (–5)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

Skills Acrobatics +7, Perception +7, Stealth +7
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages —
Challenge 0 (10 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Evasion. When the chwinga is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Unusual Nature. The chwinga doesn't require air, food, or drink. When it dies, it turns into a handful of flower petals, a cloud of pollen, a stone statuette resembling its former self, a tiny sphere of smooth stone, or a puddle of fresh water (your choice).

Actions

Magical Gift (1/Day). The chwinga targets a humanoid it can see within 5 feet of it. The target gains a supernatural charm of the DM's choice. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more information on supernatural charms.

Natural Shelter. The chwinga magically takes shelter inside a rock, a living plant, or a natural source of fresh water in its space. The chwinga can't be targeted by any attack, spell, or other effect while inside this shelter, and the shelter doesn't impair the chwinga's blindsight. The chwinga can use its action to emerge from its shelter. If its shelter is destroyed, the chwinga is forced out and appears in the shelter's former space, but is otherwise unharmed.

Spellcasting. The chwinga casts one of the following spells, requiring no material or verbal components:

At will: *druidcraft, guidance, pass without trace, resistance*

IRINA NORDSKI

AN ADVENTURE FOR 16TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

XANTHORIA

WRITTEN BY TONI WINSLOW-BRILL
DEVELOPED BY BILL BENHAM & CHRISTOPHER PERKINS
EDITED BY KIM MOHAN

A DEADLY FUNGAL INFECTION CALLED THE saprophytic plague is ravaging the Sword Coast. The plague not only targets beasts and humanoids but also destroys crops and stored foodstuffs, causing famine and sickness on an epic scale. Religious and civil authorities are unable to stem the tide of the saprophytic plague, and even a *wish* spell can't undo the contagion, given how widespread it has become.

The mystery surrounding *Xanthoria* has to do with the discovery of a mad druid's quest for lichdom and the plague she unleashed in the process. Ordinary liches contain their souls in inanimate objects, but the druid Xanthoria discovered a way to house her soul in a living being.

Beginning the Adventure

Read the following boxed text to the players to kick off the adventure:

> A fungal plague is ravaging the Sword Coast, spreading quickly from one settlement to the next. Although magic has proven effective at ridding individuals of the spore infection, the plague is spreading too quickly to contain. Creatures that become infected fall ill with a fever and sprout disgusting, gooey, fungal growths before losing their autonomy, acting like zombies. They also release spores that infect other beasts and humanoids. Eventually, the plague reduces all infected creatures and foodstuffs to puddles of ooze.
>
> Humanoids infected with the plague drone the word "Xanthoria" over and over for no discernible reason before death finally claims them. You have determined that there's a book by that name contained in the library-fortress of Candlekeep. With luck, the book holds information that might help you end the saprophytic plague before it wipes out every village, town, and city in Faerûn.

XANTHORIA

MARK BEHM

Xanthoria was a powerful druid who transformed herself into a lichen lich (see the end of the adventure for a description of this new monster). Liches typically use inanimate objects as phylacteries, but Xanthoria discovered a way to house her soul in a living sprite named Thunderwing. Though initially concerned with ways to end the unnatural life of the undead, Xanthoria's research took a dark turn as her madness bloomed. The book titled *Xanthoria* chronicles her descent into madness.

The Saprophytic Plague

Xanthoria's research into lichdom and her creation of a living phylactery led to the emergence of the plague spreading across the Sword Coast. Any beast or humanoid that comes within 10 feet of a creature infected by the saprophytic plague must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or become infected as well. On a successful save, a creature is immune to the plague for 24 hours, and any creature that is immune to disease succeeds on the save automatically.

After a failed save, a creature experiences the first symptoms—body aches, nausea, slurred speech, and uncontrollable drooling—1d4 hours later and gains 1 level of exhaustion. Every 24 hours thereafter, the creature automatically gains another level of exhaustion. Any creature killed by the saprophytic plague transforms into a lifeless magenta ooze.

A creature infected by the saprophytic plague for at least 24 hours behaves like a zombie and seems barely aware of its surroundings, as fungal growths sprout from its head, body, and limbs. It feels an overriding urge to be around groups of uninfected creatures so that it can spread the contagion. This is the time when infected humanoids begin speaking the word "Xanthoria" over and over, with no understanding of what the word means. This behavior is the result of a mycelial network of spores that forms a tenuous connection between Xanthoria and humanoids that become infected by the plague.

Foodstuffs that are exposed to the plague's spores decay or go sour within 2d12 hours, leaving behind a lurid magenta mass of oozing fungi. Eating infected food requires a saving throw as above.

Any magic that cures a disease can rid a creature of the saprophytic plague. Casting *purify food and drink* destroys the infection in foodstuffs.

Finding the Book

Upon arriving in Candlekeep, the characters can use an Avowed guide to help them track down the book titled *Xanthoria*. This quest brings them to the attention of Zelyth Lightleaf, one of Candlekeep's sages and the foremost expert on Xanthoria—both the book and its mysterious author:

> Your guide does not return. Instead, you are greeted by a robed wood elf with brown hair and a plain face. In her hands, she holds a book so encrusted with lichen that its covers can barely be closed around its wrinkled pages. "I believe you're looking for this," she says with a warm, bright smile. "My name is Zelyth Lightleaf. I'm Candlekeep's foremost expert on this book and its author."

A few months ago, Zelyth Lightleaf (neutral good wood elf **sage**; see the "Candlekeep" section at the front of the book for her stat block) joined the Avowed, using the book as her entrance gift into the library. She found it in an abandoned satchel near a secluded cave system called the Lykortha Expanse, which is known among druids for its rare fungal growths. Zelyth assumed the book had been lost and took possession of it.

Quiet and unassuming, Zelyth concentrates on training new acolytes and tending to those in need, but she's aware of the fungal plague spreading like wildfire up and down the Sword Coast. She has been expecting someone to show up looking for the book.

Zelyth allows the characters to peruse the book and assures them it's safe to do so. (The lichen covering the book poses no danger.) She also shares the following information with the characters:

- Xanthoria was a druid of Silvanus (god of wild nature) whose forest home was threatened by undead. By researching fungi and lichen, Xanthoria hoped to create a weapon that could protect her forest against undead invaders.
- At some point, Xanthoria's research became more geared toward creating a ward against death itself, then finally toward achieving lichdom.
- According to the book, Xanthoria never discovered the source of the undead incursion that prompted her initial research.

Zelyth doesn't know what caused Xanthoria's slide into madness. If questioned about the saprophytic plague, Zelyth muses that the book's information could be helpful in preventing further outbreaks.

Zelyth allows the characters to spend as much time with the book as they need. When they're done with it, Zelyth returns the book to its vault.

Book Description

The book's browned pages have become swollen and wrinkled due to age and exposure to moisture. Crumbling yellow lichen obscures the title on the front cover, rendering it illegible. Harmless spores puff into the air when the book is opened. Standing eight and a half inches tall and five inches wide, it has been cataloged as *Xanthoria*, titled after the author who is identified inside the work.

Joining of Two Worlds

Written in Common, *Xanthoria* begins with a set of scientific essays about symbiotic relationships in nature before deteriorating into confusing ramblings on the merits and similarities of life and death. It describes the author's numerous experiments both natural and unnatural. One of the more thorough studies details the life cycle of a worm-like parasite that infiltrates different species of wasps, taking over their motor functions, while essentially wearing their still-living bodies as a disguise so the parasites can infect other wasps.

Ultimately, Xanthoria found a way to link her soul to the life force of another creature and thereby unnaturally prolong her own life, by transforming the other creature into a phylactery.

Characters who peruse *Xanthoria* learn the following additional information:

- Xanthoria was fearful of a surge in undead invading the forest near her home in the Lykortha Expanse, a cave complex. She was seeking a way to stop their spread and preserve what she viewed as the natural order of things.
- Most of the book discusses healthy symbiotic relationships in nature.
- The author spent time researching undead in the hope of gaining insight into their actions and ascertaining where they could be coming from.
- As the author sinks into madness, the writing turns into almost incomprehensible fragments, many alluding to her desire to combine natural life and the undead.
- The end of the book records several failed attempts by Xanthoria to extend her life through a process similar to becoming a lich. There are various drawings of dissected animals and humanoids alongside musings on the viability of experimenting on fey creatures.
- The sketches and margin notes get progressively darker the farther one reads. The terms "Mycorji? Shedaklah?" and "Lady of Lichen" appear several times each. Furthermore, the number 222 appears frequently throughout the latter half of the book devoid of explanation.

Characters can locate the forest containing the Lykortha Expanse on a map. If one or more characters try to draw some conclusion about the outbreak based on the forest's location, a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check allows them to safely conclude that the plague likely originated there.

Zelyth doesn't know the meaning of the words "Mycorji" or "Shedaklah," nor does she know the significance of the number 222. If the characters have experience fighting demons or knowledge pertaining to the Abyss, you can allow them to make an Intelligence (Arcana) check. On a check total of 20 of higher, a character recalls that the Abyss's 222nd layer is known as Shedaklah and sometimes is called Mycorji. On a total of 25 or higher, the character also knows that this layer is home to two demon lords: Juiblex, the Demon Prince of Oozes, and Zuggtmoy, the Demon Queen of Fungi.

The Lykortha Expanse

Characters can use the notes in *Xanthoria* to locate the Lykortha Expanse and the forest surrounding it. This natural cave complex was created by eons of erosion and hosts a wide array of lichen, molds, and fungi—an ideal location for Xanthoria's research. Though she worked to make it suitable for habitation, it has fallen into an unhealthy state and reflects the druid's deepening insanity.

General Features

The areas that make up the Lykortha Expanse have several common physical features, summarized here:

Light. The complex is dimly lit by bioluminescent fungi growing in patches on the walls.

Fungus. The ceilings, walls, and floors are coated in fungal growth.

Passages. The caves and tunnels are made of unworked stone. Ceilings throughout are 20 feet high unless otherwise noted.

Madness of Zuggtmoy

Certain effects within the Lykortha Expanse can afflict characters with a type of madness brought on by the influence of Zuggtmoy. A *greater restoration* spell or more powerful magic rids a character of this madness, which otherwise lasts until cured. The madness gives the character a new flaw that suppresses any contradictory character trait. Roll on the Madness of Zuggtmoy table to determine the flaw.

Madness of Zuggtmoy

d100	Flaw (lasts until cured)
01–20	"I see visions in the world around me that others do not."
21–40	"I periodically slip into a catatonic state, staring off into the distance for long stretches."
41–60	"I see an altered version of reality, with my mind convincing itself that things are true even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary."
61–80	"My mind is slipping away, and my intelligence seems to wax and wane."
81–00	"I am constantly scratching at unseen fungal infections."

Encounter Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Lykortha Expanse.

L1. Entrance

> Ahead, a darkened cave mouth beckons from beneath the forest canopy. Growths of green, brown, and gray lichen cover the cave mouth, and a small stream flows deeper into the yawning darkness.

The character who has the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score hears faint crying coming from a small stand of stones. Investigating the cries reveals a tiny winged figure, head in hands. This is

Thunderwing

Thunderwing, a **sprite**. She immediately gravitates toward characters who are friendly toward her.

Thunderwing looks mournfully at the adventurers and snuffles loudly, bubbles of snot forming beneath her tiny nose. If someone is kind to her, she tells them the following:

- She used to live here with her friends, Xanthoria and Bunny Blossom. Xanthoria is a druid of Silvanus, and Bunny Blossom is a yellow faerie dragon.
- Xanthoria subjected her to some terrible experiment. It hurt badly, but she managed to escape somehow. She flitted about in the darkness until reaching the cave mouth. She's been sitting here feeling sad and missing Bunny Blossom ever since.
- Thunderwing has no sense of direction and no sense of time. Any questions relating to such topics just confuse her.

The first character who touches Thunderwing experiences an image in their mind's eye of a female half-elf in a gossamer cape made of mycelial threads. This brief vision is accompanied by a momentary feeling of intense longing and hunger. This event occurs only once.

Thunderwing was Xanthoria's friend until the druid's mind became twisted by the influence of Zuggtmoy, causing Xanthoria to conduct grisly experiments on living creatures. Thunderwing is one of Xanthoria's more recent subjects. The sprite looks alive, yet she is subject to effects that turn undead.

Thunderwing can't be harmed unless she chooses to be. This is true for as long as she functions as a living phylactery for Xanthoria. Weapons and harmful effects pass through her as though she were a mere projection.

Thunderwing accompanies the characters as they explore the Lykortha Expanse, providing additional information she "remembers" if they need clues. The sprite can't remember if Xanthoria is home or not, but she doesn't recall seeing the druid outside the cave complex recently. Since Xanthoria moves freely throughout the Lykortha Expanse, she could be anywhere, according to Thunderwing.

Personality Trait. "I'm very emotional."

Ideal. "Living things should be free and wild, not caught up in the trappings of civilization."

Bond. "I will always try to help a friend."

Flaw. "I'm such a scatterbrain. I forget important pieces of information until something reminds me."

L2. Alchemist's Alcove

Spiderwebs and mold cover everything inside this room. A rotting wood table and a set of shelves stand along the far wall. Glass jars, a mortar and pestle, and various other alchemical supplies lie scattered about the space.

Treasure. Though most of the bottles in this room have been ruined, a few are in fairly good shape. A thorough search yields a *potion of healing* (superior) and a mildewed notebook containing instructions for concocting a *potion of longevity* out of fungi and a pint of blood from an archfey, all harvested within the past 24 hours. The handwriting in this notebook matches the handwriting in *Xanthoria*.

The potion-brewing ritual described in the notebook requires alchemist's supplies and the aforementioned ingredients. The ritual takes 1 hour to perform, at the end of which the brewer makes a DC 30 Intelligence (Arcana) check. On a successful check, a *potion of longevity* is created. On a failed check, the potion is created but loses its potency after 10 minutes; on a check that fails by 5 or more, the brewer also ages 4d10 years.

CHRISTOPHER BURDETT

SEAN MACDONALD

L3. Cavern of Souls

> Stalks of slimy, violet mushrooms as tall as a person dot this cavern. Mycelial tendrils drift from the domed roof of the cavern, softly pulsing with a mauve glow. Two humanoid figures lie suspended in the strands ten feet above the cavern floor, their flesh intertwined with the oozing tendrils.

This cavern was created by Xanthoria to conduct more experiments as she descended deeper into madness. Specifically, Xanthoria found herself able to communicate with other beings that had been infected with her spores and wanted to understand the process further.

Suspended Subjects. The two beings suspended in the mycelium were a human named Konrad and an orc named Rugga Two-Guts. Now they are fused with the fungus and constitute something else entirely. Both Konrad and Rugga are in constant agony. They can communicate telepathically out to a range of 60 feet. Their communications consist of pleas to release them from their torment. This can be accomplished by cutting both creatures free of the mycelium or by destroying the mycelium that holds them. Either accomplishment spells their doom.

A character with a knife or other small blade can use an action to try to cut a subject free of the mycelium, doing so with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. On a failed check, the character takes 20 (4d8) necrotic damage and disturbs the mycelium; roll a d6 and refer to the Mycelium Effects table. Fungus creatures and those that have been infected with saprophytic plague are immune to these effects and are not targeted by them.

Mycelial Threats. Three of Xanthoria's fungal servants lurk in this room, each indistinguishable from one of the mushroom stalks. The fungal servants try to destroy intruders. For one fungal servant, use the **mummy lord** stat block, but omit its lair actions and regional effects, and replace its sand-based effects with spore-based ones that are functionally identical. Use the **vrock** stat block for the other two.

Attacking the Mycelium. If the party is inclined to destroy the mycelium, treat it as a Huge object with AC 16, 300 hit points, a damage threshold of 10, and immunity to acid and poison damage. Every time the mycelium takes damage, a random effect occurs as determined by rolling on the Mycelium Effects table.

Mycelium Effects

d6	Effect
1–2	The mycelium lashes out and makes the following melee weapon attack against a target of the DM's choice: +10 to hit, reach 60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 24 (6d6 + 3) acid damage.
3–4	Spores fill a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a point in the cavern chosen by the DM. Creatures in the area must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 55 (10d10) poison damage and is poisoned for 1 hour on a failed save, or takes half as much damage and is not poisoned on a successful save.
5–6	Psychic energy fills a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a point in the cavern chosen by the DM. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw or take 31 (4d12 + 5) psychic damage and be stunned for 1 minute. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the stunned condition on itself on a success.

If the mycelium is destroyed, the room is engulfed in a psychic backlash. Those present receive visions of an endless forest of tower-sized mushrooms, a woman wearing a holy symbol of Sylvanus running between them crying gooey, ochre tears, and a skull-splitting cry of anguish. Each creature in the cavern must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or take 44 (8d10) psychic damage. Thunderwing is immune to these visions.

L4. Moldy Bedroom

An unlocked wooden door seals off this cave.

> This cave reeks of mold and mildew. Delicate white vines with brilliant purple flowers drape portions of the walls and floor. A large straw pallet in disrepair sits in the far corner with a broken oak table next to it.

This room was Xanthoria's sleeping chamber, though once she completed her transformation into a lichen lich, she had no more need of it. At the back of the cave lurks a strange bundle of white poison ivy with a single bulbous eye in the center (use the **death tyrant** stat block, but omit its lair actions and regional effects). In the middle of the room, a mold-encrusted skeleton jerkily rises, wearing armor made of calcified lichen and covered in fungal growths (use the **death knight** stat block).

White Vines. If one or more characters enter this cave, the white vines clinging to the walls quiver as the purple flowers open wide and spread their sweet scent. Each character in the cave must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or fall unconscious. Characters who are immune to any effect that would put them to sleep succeed on the saving throw automatically. An unconscious character is restrained by the vines and takes 66 (12d10) piercing damage at the start of each of its turns until it is no longer restrained in this way.

Characters can kill the vines by attacking their root in the center of the room. Treat the root as an immobile, Medium object with AC 15 and 100 hit points. When the root is reduced to 0 hit points, the vines release spores into the air as they die. These spores attach themselves to all creatures in the cave and have no effect until those covered with them face off against Xanthoria (see area L11). Those who are exposed to the spores but take the time to wash themselves off with water suffer no ill effects.

Development. If the characters are having trouble understanding the path that Xanthoria now walks, this is a good point to have Thunderwing remember being subjected to an experiment like one described in *Xanthoria*.

L5. Faerie Ring

> In the center of this oval cave stands a ring of brightly colored mushrooms ranging from three to eight feet tall. The air smells heavily of mildew.

The mushroom ring in the center of the room is a fey crossing. It was through this gateway that Thunderwing and Bunny Blossom first arrived, though the ring was not contaminated at that point in time.

The ring in its corrupted state makes Thunderwing feel ill, and she turns away from it in sadness. Thunderwing warns those near the ring to stay away from it, saying that something is wrong with it and it doesn't lead to home anymore. Anyone who ignores her warning and steps into the ring to try to use it sees an image that only they experience:

> The cave disappears and is replaced by a field carpeted in spongy moss and pockmarked with pools of ooze. A colossal palace constructed of giant mushrooms with interconnecting bridges rises in the distance. A cloud of spores falls gently from the sky, covering everything in a fine layer of the substance.
>
> A tall creature beckons with a smile. Her body's top half vaguely resembles that of a humanoid. Four ropy, fibrous antennae grow from her forehead, somehow enhancing her disgusting and compelling beauty. Her lower half is a mass of writhing, pulsing tentacles covered with fungal growths, resembling a horrific gown.

DOMENICO SELLARO

The figure in the vision is Zuggtmoy, with her fungal palace in the background. Anyone who experiences the vision becomes afflicted with the madness of Zuggtmoy (see "Madness of Zuggtmoy" earlier in the adventure).

The vision is fleeting, and characters who experience it find themselves back inside the faerie ring when it concludes.

L6. Flooded Cavern

> A huge pool of stagnant water fills this cave. Blooms of glowing green algae drift on the surface while tiny, white bioluminescent fish flit around in the water.

The water has a layer of algae that thickens at one end of the pool, and on the other end tiny bubbles rise from an underground spring that slowly flows into the pool. Tiny fish swim under the algae, occasionally surfacing to eat water bugs.

Drinking the water or bathing in it causes no ill effects. A character who succeeds on a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check finds the image of an oak leaf—the symbol of Silvanus—etched on one of the walls. This is a safe room to rest in.

L7. Kitchen

An unlocked wooden door seals off this cave. The door is covered with what is obviously a patch of yellow mold (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Any intruder who opens or otherwise disturbs the door causes the mold to release its spores.

> The stonework in this cavern suggests this area was once a kitchen. Pots and pans lie piled on the floor in one corner, as if someone had started to gather them. Kitchen utensils are scattered about the floor, most of them bent and misshapen. Open bags of spices rest on shelves, and rat droppings are evident on every surface.

The pots and pans are rusted, and many have broken handles. A bent utensil breaks if someone tries to repair it, and the bits of spices and other ingredients here and there in the room have infestations of mold and insects. Thunderwing looks forlornly about the kitchen and cries a bit, lamenting the loss of the Xanthoria she remembers.

Lost Memento. Searching the room uncovers a recipe book wrapped in oilcloth under a pile of

refuse. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the handwriting closely resembles the older writings of Xanthoria. A preserved oak leaf serves as a bookmark, and sketches of Thunderwing and Bunny Blossom are drawn in the margins. See area L11 for more information on how seeing this book affects Xanthoria.

L8. Meditation Cavern

An unlocked wooden door seals off this cave.

> The air hangs heavy and rotten in this terraced cavern. Patches of brilliantly colored mushrooms dot the upper terrace, in the middle of which is a narrow stone staircase leading down to a roughly hemispherical lower chamber. The walls of the lower area sport murals of animals and fey creatures depicted in fungal reliefs.

This is Xanthoria's space for meditation and relaxation. The murals covering the lower chamber's walls are truly disturbing; their colors, textures, and patterns are nauseating to behold. Any character who takes the time to study the murals and succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Religion) check uncovers subtle symbology related to the worship of Zuggtmoy. A character who succeeds on this check must then succeed on a DC 16 Charisma saving throw or become afflicted with the madness of Zuggtmoy (see "Madness of Zuggtmoy" earlier in the adventure).

A search of the cave yields a bundle of parchment detailing research on Shedaklah, the 222nd layer of the Abyss. A fetid wasteland of fungus and oozes, this is the seat of Zuggtmoy's power.

L9. Cove of Experimentation

Thunderwing trembles in fear upon reaching this area. She can't remember why this particular location frightens her, and convincing her to enter the cave requires some gentle coaxing.

> The stench of rot pervades the air in this cavern. Several stone tables covered in suspicious-looking red stains stand amid several rusty cages. A two-foot-deep coating of gray fog blankets the floor, and two huge, reptilian creatures with twelve legs apiece crawl across the damp ceiling.

The creatures crawling across the ceiling are two **behirs**. When they roar or discharge their lightning breath, thousands of gray, parasitic blood worms can be seen writhing inside their mouths.

Any creature swallowed by a parasite-infested behir must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the behir's turns or be feasted upon by blood parasites, taking 36 (8d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. (This damage is in addition to the damage caused by the behir's digestive acids.) Targeting the behir with magic that removes a disease kills off its blood parasites.

Fog. The fog is confined to this chamber and covers the floor here to a depth of 2 feet. Any creature or object completely submerged in the fog is heavily obscured.

The behirs avoid the fog by crawling along the walls and ceiling. When a creature enters the fog for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, it must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or gain 1 level of exhaustion. A creature that makes a successful saving throw against the fog becomes immune to it for the next 24 hours (although levels of exhaustion already gained aren't removed).

If Thunderwing sees one or more party members struggling with the effects of the fog, she overcomes her fear of the cave and flits around it while avoiding contact with the fog. Pulsing with arcane power, she blows the fog away before collapsing. She recovers after 1 minute with only a hazy memory of what she did. A *gust of wind* spell or similar magic also disperses the fog, which returns after 10 minutes.

Cages. The cages contain some of Xanthoria's failed experiments, which she left to die and rot:

- The rotting corpse of what looks like a displacer beast, but one with far too many tentacles and limbs.
- The yellowed skeleton of a tiny dragon with a second head, all its flesh rotted away. Its body is curled up in an unnatural position, and its wings are outstretched oddly as if it were suffering some unknown agony. These are the remains of the yellow faerie dragon Bunny Blossom.
- The skeletal remains of a sprite dressed in brightly colored but tattered clothing. Its translucent wings are shriveled and crumble at the lightest touch.
- The rotting and mutilated remains of four goblins and two wood elves.

Development. Anyone who touches Bunny Blossom's corpse is filled with a kaleidoscope of visions: a feverish half-elf with long blonde hair (Xanthoria), Thunderwing screaming at the center of a runic circle, and the two staring into each other's eyes.

Treasure. Once the undead behirs are dealt with, characters who search the cave thoroughly find Xanthoria's *staff of the woodlands* leaning against a wall in the eastern alcove. The staff is fully charged.

L10. Charnel Pit

> The stench of death is thick in this yawning cavern. The floor slopes toward a hole rimmed with corpses and oozing fungi. Amputated pieces from a variety of creatures hang from the walls and ceiling in this hideous space.

This is where Xanthoria disposes of failed experiments or anything else she dislikes. The pit is inhabited by a **purple worm** bound to Xanthoria's will. The worm consumes anything thrown into the hole.

As the Worm Turns. Once the characters enter the chamber, the worm rumbles forth and tries to devour everyone. At the end of each character's turn, roll a d4 and consult the Charnel Worm Effects table to see what additional danger the party faces from the worm.

Charnel Worm Effects

d4	Effect
1	The worm smashes a horde of thrashing, animated body parts loose from the walls. Treat the floor of the cave as difficult terrain for Medium and smaller creatures until the worm's next turn.
2	The worm vomits a gout of rotten flesh in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in the cone must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 55 (10d10) poison damage and is poisoned for 1 hour on a failed save, or takes half as much damage and is not poisoned on a success.
3	The worm thrashes about in rage. Each Large or smaller creature in the cave must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or be moved 20 feet closer to the pit's edge. If this movement forces a creature into the pit, it takes 35 (10d6) bludgeoning damage from the 100-foot fall.
4	No additional effect.

Treasure. Lodged in the purple worm's gullet is an emerald the size of a halfling's head (worth 25,000 gp). Once the worm is dead, a search of its gullet yields the enormous gemstone.

L11. Xanthoria's Grove of Horrors

An unlocked wooden door seals off this cave. The door is covered with what is obviously a patch of brown mold (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Any intruder who opens or otherwise disturbs the door causes the mold to release its spores.

> The scent of decomposing vegetation is overpowering in this area. Creatures of all shapes and sizes are partially entombed in fungal growths resembling a horrifying botanical garden. Ancient mushrooms as large as trees loom overhead, and puddles of stinking goo dot the floor.

The spores from area L4 have fully incubated by the time the characters reach this location. Any creature that was exposed to the spores and did not wash them off is now subject to their full effect. At the start of its first turn after arriving here, the creature must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw, taking 50 necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

When the characters reach the north end of the grove, read:

> The tunnel leads to a dead-end cave supported by a natural pillar of rock. The chamber contains a riot of fungi and tree-sized mushrooms, as well as more puddles of ooze.
>
> Under one of the giant mushrooms, a robed figure works furiously on a vivisected deer splayed across a moss-covered table. Ten feet away, a young boy bounces excitedly in an iron cage, swinging it to get a better view of what the robed figure is working on. He is not afraid but seems curious, and he is clean and seems well fed. He addresses the robed figure, calling her Xanthoria and asking her to show him what she's doing in an attempt to alleviate his boredom.

Xanthoria, a **lichen lich** (see her stat block at the end of the adventure), senses the characters and shoots them a crooked smile. As she does so, the boy's form abruptly stiffens and his body withers into a dry husk. Stealing the life force of the boy enables her to cast *antilife shell* immediately and without visibly doing so. She continues to concentrate on the spell as she resumes her grisly work.

Xanthoria was a half-elf druid of Silvanus, and a small symbol of Silvanus hangs around her neck. Unfortunately for her, she fell into madness and her research became twisted due to the machinations of Zuggtmoy. She began to perform terrible experiments on living creatures to try to find ways to bridge the gap between life and death. Eventually, she turned her experiments on herself, causing her to transform into an unholy lichen lich.

Xanthoria is quite lonely and willing to talk to the group that has entered her grove, though she cannot be persuaded to discontinue her experiments. She

has been aware of the characters' presence since they first entered the ruins of Lykortha and has been eagerly awaiting their arrival.

Xanthoria should be well prepared for the adventurers by the time they arrive at her warped druid grove and laboratory. She has called a **nalfeshnee** named Danjak to her service. Danjak is an emissary of Zuggtmoy, and the demon's form is crusted and interwoven with a riotous blend of molds, lichen, and fungi. He lurks at the back of the cave, awaiting Xanthoria's command before stepping out of the shadows. Additionally, nearby lurks the rotting husk of an infected **treant** ready to defend its master. The treant can't use its Animate Trees action here, since there are no other trees in the vicinity. In addition to the treant, four invisible **will-o'-wisps** flit about the grove, ready to use Consume Life on adventurers who fall in battle.

Environmental Factors. Xanthoria's grove and the tunnel leading to it from area L9 are warded against magical travel by creatures other than Xanthoria. Such creatures can't teleport into or out of this area or use planar travel to enter or leave it. Effects that allow teleportation or planar travel do function if the starting point and the destination are both within this area.

Lost Memento. Showing Xanthoria the book from area L7 awakens long-dormant memories of her previous life and causes her to take no actions, legendary actions, or lair actions until the end of her next turn. The book affects Xanthoria in this way only once.

Xanthoria's Defeat

Once Xanthoria is defeated, the characters find the last few pages of her notes among her possessions. They detail her growing obsession with undead and her success at turning Thunderwing into her phylactery.

Armed with the information about Xanthoria's phylactery, the characters must convince Thunderwing to give up her life to destroy the lichen lich once and for all. Here are some of the ways in which the characters might convince Thunderwing to sacrifice herself for the greater good:

- Promising to raise her friend, Bunny Blossom the faerie dragon, from the dead.
- Promising to complete Xanthoria's original mission to rid the surrounding forest of undead.
- Destroying Xanthoria's notes so that the process of creating a lichen lich can never be duplicated by anyone else.

Convincing Thunderwing to give up her life should be handled through roleplaying rather than ability checks, although you can require the characters to succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) group check if the scene proves difficult to roleplay. If Thunderwing is convinced to sacrifice herself, she lets out a deep sigh before flying about and kissing each character on the forehead—even the ones she doesn't like. Finally, she approaches the character with whom she has made the strongest connection, lies down in their open hands, and shivers slightly before expiring. Thunderwing can't be brought back to life by any means.

If the adventurers fail to convince Thunderwing to give up her life, she turns invisible and leaves the cave complex, taking refuge in the surrounding forest. Xanthoria re-forms 1d10 days later, appearing next to Thunderwing. The rejuvenated lichen lich then relocates to another lair to resume her research as the plague continues to ravage Faerûn.

If the characters return to Candlekeep, they find Zelyth eager to hear the tale of their harrowing experience. If the characters inform Zelyth that Xanthoria has been destroyed, Zelyth thanks them for putting an end to Xanthoria's madness and granting her the final rest that she deserves.

The destruction of Xanthoria and her phylactery halts the spread of the saprophytic plague. Creatures infected by the plague continue to suffer its effects but no longer utter the word "Xanthoria" as they lose their mycelial connection to the lichen lich. Moreover, their spores are no longer contagious.

Lichen Lich

Lichen liches are the undead remnants of powerful druids.

A lichen lich looks like a skeleton covered with fungi and bark-like lichen. A lichen lich has vines writhing within its chest cavity. These vines exude viscid and poisonous black fluid.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the lichen lich can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects:

- Poisonous spores fill a 10-foot cube that the lich can see within 120 feet of it. Any creature that enters the cloud for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the end of its next turn. The cloud lasts for 1 minute or until it is dispersed by a strong wind.
- The lich commands the might of its diseased grove, creating a **shambling mound**. The shambling mound appears in an unoccupied space within 30 feet of the lich, acts on its own initiative count, and obeys the lich's commands. The shambling mound dies after 1 hour or when the lich uses this lair action again.
- Rotten roots and vines magically erupt in a 20-foot radius centered on a point on the ground that the lich can see within 120 feet of it. the lich is unaffected by the roots and vines. For all other creatures, the area becomes difficult terrain, and each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 19 Strength saving throw or be restrained by the roots. As an action, a creature can try to free itself or another creature within its reach, doing so with a successful DC 19 Strength (Athletics) check. The roots and vines wilt away when the lich uses this lair action again or when the lich dies.

Lichen Lich

Medium undead

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 225 (30d8 + 90)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +9, Int +8, Wis +11, Cha +9
Skills Medicine +11, Nature +14, Perception +11, Survival +11
Damage Resistances cold, necrotic
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 21
Languages Common, Druidic, Sylvan
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +6

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the lich fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Rejuvenation. If it has a phylactery, a destroyed lich gains a new body in 1d10 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of the phylactery.

Actions

Multiattack. The lich makes four attacks.

Poisonous Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 17 (5d6) poison damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Wither. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) necrotic damage.

Fire Storm (7th-Level Spell; 1/Day). The lich fills up to ten 10-foot cubes with fire. Every cube must be within 150 feet of the lich and occupy a space the lich can see, and each cube must have at least one face adjacent to the face of another cube. Each creature in the area must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw, taking 38 (7d10) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The fire ignites flammable objects in the area that aren't being worn or carried. If the lich chooses, plant life in the area is unaffected by the spell.

Spellcasting. The lich casts one of the following spells using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (save DC 19):

At will: *druidcraft*
3/day each: *detect magic, fog cloud, pass without trace*
1/day each: *antilife shell, dispel magic, speak with plants, transport via plants*

Legendary Actions

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

Attack. The lich makes an attack.
Poison Prick (Costs 2 Actions). The lich targets one poisoned creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or fall unconscious until the poisoned condition ends on it.
Sap Life (Costs 2 Actions). The lich targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) necrotic damage. The lich regains a number of hit points equal to the amount of damage that the creature takes.

Contributor Bios

GRAEME BARBER has worked as a scientific and commercial diver, deployed multiple times overseas with the Canadian Armed Forces, and done wet site archaeology. He's currently living a quieter life in the interior of British Columbia, where he enjoys diving, writing, and being a dad.

BILL BENHAM is a producer and sometime writer for the D&D team, having lived all over the world during his 20-year career in the U.S. Army. When he's not working on D&D, Bill enjoys overeating and watching movies with his loyal hound, a sassy French Bulldog named Kizzy.

MICHELE CARTER began her career as an editor for TSR in 1992. She's been working on D&D projects ever since and still considers it the best job in the world. She lives in Maryland with her husband, Bill Slavicsek, and an increasingly vocal elder cat named Mouse.

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SCOTT FITZGERALD GRAY is a writer of fantasy and speculative fiction, a fiction editor, a story editor, and an editor and designer of roleplaying games—all of which means he finally has the job he really wanted when he was sixteen. He shares his life in the Canadian hinterland with a schoolteacher, two itinerant daughters, and a number of animal companions.

ALISON HUANG began creating adventures in late 2018 and contributed to the *Uncaged* anthology. She won two silver ENnie Awards in 2020 and helps train new adventure writers as part of the RPG Writer Workshop. She lives in Melbourne, Australia.

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JENNIFER KRETCHMER is a writer, performer, consultant, and producer for television and tabletop gaming. Jen, who has Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, is also an advocate for disabled accessibility, inclusion, and representation in media and storytelling. She lives in Los Angeles, CA.

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ADAM LEE has been a worldbuilder, story guy, character creator, adventure writer, and narrative designer for Wizards of the Coast for over 10 years. He likes all forms of cake and enjoys the silent wilderness, which constantly calls to him.

ARI LEVITCH toils as a writer for D&D, which he will continue to do without complaint until the terms of the curse have been fulfilled. His adventure is dedicated to his dad, Elliott, to whom libraries were hallowed ground.

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CHRISTOPHER PERKINS is a world-famous Dungeon Master who has contributed to more than five hundred D&D products and worked on every edition of the game. He is one of the architects of fifth edition and has been a Wizards of the Coast employee since 1997. He lives in Seattle, WA, with a hell hound named Milo.

MICHAEL POLKINGHORN started his professional life as a geologist. He now works in the wine industry and can often be found walking the vineyards of Sonoma County with his family and four house tabaxis.

TAYMOOR REHMAN works with the creative teams behind D&D and *Magic: The Gathering*. He misses the snow of New York, loves nonalcoholic beverages, and wants you to be happy. This isn't the last you've seen of him.

HANNAH ROSE is an editor, writer, erstwhile software developer, and perpetual nerd. When not playing games, she enjoys cooking, traveling, and reading (though usually not all at once). She lives in Seattle with her partner, James, and two feline familiars.

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BRANDES STODDARD designed crafting systems in the video game industry. From there, he resorted to designing and running LARPs, then degenerated into freelance writing. He lives in Atlanta, GA, with his wife, Rabbit, their two sons, and two cats.

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Great Books Hide Their Secrets Well

Candlekeep attracts scholars like a flame attracts moths. Historians, sages, and others who crave knowledge flock to this library fortress to peruse its vast collection of books, scribbled in which are the answers to the mysteries that bedevil them. Many of these books contain their own mysteries—each one a doorway to adventure. Dare you cross that threshold?

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