



## EPISODE 6: CASTLE NAERYTAR

The tunnel from the roadhouse emerges in a spot nearby that's screened by trees and brush from the camp. As characters approach through the tunnel, have everyone make a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check. Those who succeed hear bestial voices ahead, growling and murmuring indistinctly in Draconic. From there, a trail leads into the Mere of Dead Men, where a mix of swamp denizens and cultists of the dragon vie for power at the ruins of Castle Naerytar.

This stout, stone castle was the home of a half-elf wizard, but he abandoned it long ago when the swamp claimed the area. For a time, a group of astrologers called the Academy of Stargazers took over the structure, but they vanished mysteriously after a few years. No one knows what became of them. Before the group's destruction, the members modified the castle by building an observatory into the top floor of the keep. Some of their magical viewing equipment is still there.

Now the Cult of the Dragon has moved people into Castle Naerytar and formed shaky alliances with nearby swamp dwellers, but the surrounding swampland is far from under anyone's control. The cult brought lizardfolk, bullywugs, and a pair of black dragons together in an unstable alliance, but the factions are riven by deep distrust that outsiders can exploit.

### TRAVELING TO THE CASTLE

Castle Naerytar is not just a stone's throw down the road. It sits fifteen miles from the work camp—fifteen cold, muddy, difficult miles. It takes the characters two days to cover that ground at a moderate pace. Fortunately, the trail is marked by the lizardfolk who transport contraband through the mere to Castle Naerytar for the cult. Without the trail, finding the castle in this snarled, confusing maze would depend more on luck than skill. This trail doesn't make travel easy; the lizardfolk's trail is still treated as difficult terrain. It only shows the direction to go.

**Day 1.** The first day's travel is by foot through tangled marsh. The ground is what passes for dry in the mere: even "solid ground" is soggy, with water very near the surface. Lizardfolk porters carry the cult's contraband on their backs along this portion of the trail, and their tracks can be plainly seen where the path crosses wet ground. Much of the path is through mucky, cold, knee-deep water. On those stretches, blaze marks are cut into trees to keep porters on the right course. No skill checks are needed to avoid getting lost as long as characters stick to the trail. If characters leave the trail, then a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check is needed



to find it again. Each check equates to an hour of searching, which calls for a random encounters check.

**Evening 1.** After seven miles of progress, characters reach a campsite at the approximate halfway point on the trip between the work camp and Castle Naerytar.

It isn't much of a camp—just a clearing that's slightly drier than the muck you've been wading through—but four wicker lean-tos and a stone platform (for lighting a fire above the soggy ground) command attention in this wilderness. Three dugout canoes are drawn up near one of the lean-tos.

A few dozen yards beyond the campsite in the direction you've been traveling, dry land ends. Other than moss-covered trees, fallen logs, and thick clumps of reeds, nothing rises above the still, black water.

Each canoe has three paddles and is large enough to hold five humans without much gear, or two or three with packs and other gear. Inside the lean-tos are a few baskets containing smoked fish (edible) along with some lizards and birds that have been smashed flat and dried in the sun (very unappetizing to humans but edible).

If characters arrive before dusk, the camp is empty and they can explore it safely. No random encounters bother characters while they're in the campsite. As the sun begins to set, nine **lizardfolk** paddle up in three canoes. They are traveling from Castle Naerytar to the roadhouse to pick up a load of contraband. The lizardfolk expect no trouble near their camp, so if characters posted a watch, then those characters who are actively on watch notice the approaching lizardfolk automatically and the lizardfolk are surprised. If characters lit a fire, however, then the lizardfolk smell the smoke from quite a distance away and know someone is in the camp. They assume it's more of their own kind returning from the work camp with treasure bound for Castle Naerytar, but the mere is filled with potential enemies and one never knows for sure, so their approach is more cautious if they smell smoke. In that case, characters with passive Wisdom (Perception) scores of 10 notice the approaching lizardfolk canoes before the lizardfolk spot the strangers in their camp.

These lizardfolk won't negotiate or converse with characters. They've been told by the elf who commands operations at Castle Naerytar that strangers in the mere are to be killed or captured but never engaged in conversation. If they are captured and tied up, a successful DC 10 Charisma (Intimidation) or DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check loosens their tongues. If the lizardfolk aren't tied up, characters have disadvantage on these rolls because the lizardfolk think them soft-hearted.

Lizardfolk know that they're transporting treasure to the castle. The "dragon kneelers" take it into the castle, and the lizardfolk never see it again. They are paid in steel blades (they have no ability to manufacture with metal) and magic talismans. All the lizardfolk wear necklaces and bracelets made of bone, teeth, feathers, carved soft stone, and leather. On close inspection, characters see mixed in among these things traces of

civilization: glass beads, coins, costume jewelry, tiny mirrors, and stamped copper and tin amulets of the sort that can be bought for a few pennies at any trinket shop or souvenir stand. None of it is magical.

During the questioning, have every character make a Charisma check. Whichever character scores highest makes a strong impression on a lizardfolk captive. This lizardfolk, whose name is Snapjaw, is unhappy about the situation in the mere, and he develops the notion that these strangers could be the key to driving out the cultists and to slaughtering their cruel bullywug allies. Snapjaw tries to communicate with the chosen character, but he doesn't want any of his comrades to know. He speaks enough pidgin Common to converse in simple terms, in case no one in the party speaks Draconic.

How Snapjaw goes about opening a dialog depends on the situation. If he's the only surviving lizardfolk or he's questioned out of earshot from the others, he can speak openly. If several lizardfolk are tied up and they're being questioned together, he could sprinkle words of Common into his Draconic replies, such as "want to help" and "talk alone." If several lizardfolk are tied up and left alone for a few minutes, he could scratch a similar message into the ground. He might try provoking a character into a wrestling match or a duel (if your players are the type to take up such a challenge), and then whisper his message into the character's ear.

If characters don't mistreat Snapjaw and don't kill any more lizardfolk than they need to, he becomes a reliable ally for as long as they work against the cult and the bullywugs. Roll a die for each of the other lizardfolk captives. On an even roll, Snapjaw persuades that lizardfolk to join his little revolt. On an odd roll, that NPC refuses to cooperate under any circumstance.

**Day 2.** From the campsite on, the trip to Castle Naerytar must be made by canoe. Snapjaw can guide the characters. A guide isn't really necessary, because the course is marked with symbols scratched into tree trunks and totems hung from branches.

## MERE OF DEAD MEN RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

The Mere of Dead Men is a place filled with dangerous creatures. Roll a d20 per hour of travel; an encounter occurs on a roll of 18–20. Determine the encounter by rolling on the table below, or choose an encounter.

### MERE OF DEAD MEN ENCOUNTERS

d12	Encounter
1–2	Bullywugs (2 or 3 per character)
3	Crocodiles (2 per character)
4	Giant frogs (2 per character)
5	Giant lizards (2 per character)
6	Giant spiders (1 per character)
7–8	Lizardfolk (3 per 2 characters)
9	Quicksand
10	Shambling mound
11	Will-o'-wisps (3)
12	Yuan-ti hunting party (see below)



**Bullywugs.** Bullywugs patrol the mere haphazardly. Before characters reach the midway campsite, this encounter is with two bullywugs per character. After characters reach the midway campsite, this encounter is with three bullywugs per character. Not all bullywugs in the mere work for the cult, but any the characters run into do.

**Crocodiles.** An encounter with crocodiles always occurs in water at least 2 feet deep. The first time characters run into crocodiles in the mere, the creatures have advantage on their Stealth check.

**Giant Frogs.** Giant frogs use their sticky tongue attacks whenever they can, and they prefer halflings, gnomes, and other small targets over creatures they can't swallow.

**Giant Lizards.** Giant lizards of the Mere of Dead Men have the Hold Breath trait. There is a 30 percent chance that these are trained lizards moving ahead of a lizardfolk encounter group. If so, those lizardfolk (see below) appear on the scene at the start of the sixth round of combat.

**Giant Spiders.** The spiders' web is nearly invisible in an area of heavy fog. Spiders of the Mere of Dead Men have the Hold Breath trait.

**Lizardfolk.** The lizardfolk of the mere are reluctant allies of the cult, mostly because Dralmorrer Borngrey allows the more numerous bullywugs to push them around. The odds are 50 percent whether a group of lizardfolk works for the cult or is independent. An independent group helps the characters if Snapjaw is present to persuade them. They won't tackle the cult or a large group of bullywugs head-on, but they can help by scouting and creating diversions. Lizardfolk that do work for the cult attack immediately if they see Snapjaw tied like a prisoner. If Snapjaw is loose and characters don't seem hostile toward him, the lizardfolk hesitate, wondering whether the characters are cultists themselves.

**Quicksand.** A creature that steps into the quicksand must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or sink into the quicksand and be restrained. On its turn, as part of its movement, the trapped creature can escape by making a DC 15 Strength check. Another creature can attempt to pull the restrained creature out of the quicksand as an action but must succeed on a DC 15 Strength check to do so. As in a movie, the trapped creature is always more than 5 feet from the edge of the quicksand, so rescuers can't just grab the character; they must find a vine, a rope, or a pole and toss it to where the trapped character can reach it.

**Shambling Mound.** All the lizardfolk, Snapjaw included, are terrified of "the weed that walks." If it appears while Snapjaw is with the characters, he spends 1 round urging the characters to flee, then does so himself. Unless someone follows him immediately, it will take an hour to find him again.

**Will-o'-Wisps.** If this encounter occurs before characters reach the midway camp, the wisps don't show themselves immediately but instead follow the characters invisibly until nightfall. Then they try to lure just one or two characters into following them, by appearing as indistinct, flickering lanterns passing nearby. Anyone

who follows the lights even a short distance is lured into a patch of quicksand. If the encounter occurs after characters leave the midway camp, then the will-o'-wisps use the same trick but in heavy morning fog, and instead of luring characters into quicksand, they lure them to the lair of Voaraghamanthar, the black dragon.

**Yuan-ti Hunting Party.** All residents of the mere, including the lizardfolk, the cultists, and especially the bullywugs, fear and despise the yuan-ti. For their part, the yuan-ti despise everyone right back, but they have no fear. This group of two **yuan-ti malisons** (type 1) and three **yuan-ti purebloods** is hunting for any intelligent creatures that would be suitable sacrifices to their long-slumbering god Merrshaulk. Yuan-ti won't ally with anyone or against anyone.

## CASTLE NAERYTAR

Over a century ago, a half-elf wizard built a castle at the edge of the Mere of Dead Men. He lived there a relatively short time before the growing swamp flowed past the castle on all sides and made the location too remote for even his taste. After the structure sat abandoned for years, a group of astrologers called the Academy of Stargazers claimed it. They built an observatory into the top level of the keep, where they installed a piece of magic equipment called the *farseer of Illusk*. But the astrologers vanished mysteriously after a few years.

After the disappearance of the astrologers, the castle again fell into disuse. It was built to withstand its cold, watery environment, so the encroaching water hasn't undermined the walls or flooded the dungeon. Over decades of abandonment, however, it filled with debris and attracted many unpleasant dwellers. Then Rezmir happened upon the castle on one of her trips into the mere to study and negotiate with the black dragon Voaraghamanthar. Rezmir suspected the castle could become a useful stronghold for her, being located so conveniently close to the lair of a black dragon. She explored the structure, cleared the giant spiders out of the tower, and forged an alliance with the nearby tribe of bullywugs.

During that time, the half-dragon was still thinking of the castle simply as a fortified hideout. When she discovered the portal in the dungeon and learned that it connected to an abandoned lodge in the Graypeak Mountains, a new thought took shape. Lugging large amounts of treasure fifteen miles through the mere would not be easy, but if it cut 700 miles of wagon transport out of the picture, it would be worth the difficulty—especially if bullywugs and lizardfolk did all the hard work. Rezmir laid claim to both structures, turned the Graypeak Mountain hunting lodge over to a trusted Cult of the Dragon associate (a half-elf named Talis who now despises Rezmir—see episode 7), and set about making Castle Naerytar an essential hub in the cult's treasure-amassing activity in the North.

Through diplomacy and intimidation, and by leveraging the influence of Voaraghamanthar with the monstrous creatures of the mere, Rezmir created an uneasy alliance in the Mere of Dead Men and brought her vision into reality.



## FACTIONS

Three power groups operate around Castle Naerytar: the Cult of the Dragon, a band of bullywugs, and a lizardfolk tribe. The black dragon Voaraghamanthar, along with its kobold and lizardfolk minions, could constitute a fourth group if it took an active hand in events, but for now it is biding its time to see how events develop.

Rezmir's three-way alliance is unstable. The cultists despise living in the swamp and have little respect for the bullywugs or lizardfolk; the leader of the bullywugs would like to seize Castle Naerytar for his own purposes; the bullywugs in general take every opportunity to push around the lizardfolk; and the lizardfolk chafe under the abuse of the bullywugs and wonder why Voaraghamanthar doesn't step in to protect them.

### CULT OF THE DRAGON

Although Rezmir is responsible for resurrecting Castle Naerytar and claiming it for the Cult of the Dragon (in name only; she considers it her personal property), an elf Wearer of Purple named **Dralmorrer Borngrey** (see appendix B) commands the castle for Rezmir. The half-dragon needs to show up occasionally to remind the bullywugs and lizardfolk that the Cult of the Dragon is really in charge, but Borngrey runs the operation.

Dralmorrer Borngrey is a member of the Eldreth Valuuthra, a group of elf supremacists dedicated to removing humanity from Faerûn. He longs for the age of great empires before humans claimed the continent. Being from Evermeet, he believes that his island home will be safely sheltered from the dragons' reign. Elves on the mainland will suffer, but that will be a small price to pay for the terror that will fall on humanity.

The elf idolizes Rezmir in all ways but one: he rues her decision to elevate the bullywugs in their alliance. In Borngrey's opinion, the lizardfolk would be more useful, more reliable, and more appropriate allies than the repulsive bullywugs are. He cannot alter the arrangement without countering Rezmir's orders, but Borngrey has taken small steps to restore the lizardfolk's tribal pride, such as by trying to teach them metallurgy. His effort has met with little success.

Borngrey is loyal to the cult and yearns for Tiamat's return. He genuinely looks forward to the whole world lying helpless under the claws of dragons, both because that's where the world belongs, and because it will mean that his job at Castle Naerytar is finished. The second-best day of his life will be the day when Borngrey can scrape the mud and stink of the Mere of Dead Men off his boots and return to someplace civilized. He has never mentioned his desire to leave to the bullywugs, whom he considers revolting necessities.

Only a handful of true Cult of the Dragon initiates and officers resides at the castle. All of them are noted in the

castle description. They act as overseers and aides to Borngrey and Rezmir.

### BULLYWUGS

The band of bullywugs serving the Cult of the Dragon follows the dictates of **Pharblex Spattergoo** (see appendix B), a rare bullywug who has mastered shamanistic magic. His "religion" is a mishmash of confused tradition, borrowed mysticism, hallucinogenic intoxicants, and manufactured lore that serves more as a road to personal power for Pharblex than as a spiritual system for the bullywugs. Pharblex's spellcasting holds his followers together, and that makes him useful to Rezmir.

Pharblex hopes that when Tiamat returns, Rezmir will hand Castle Naerytar over to him, and he will rule the entire Mere of Dead Men from the castle. The only obstacle he sees between himself and his goal is the castle's current master, Dralmorrer Borngrey; the notion that someone might want to not live in a swamp



PHARBLEX SPATTERGOO



has never entered Pharblex's narrow mind, and the bullywug seems deaf to Borngray's ironic and sarcastic jabs at the mere. When the time is right, Pharblex plans to remove the elf from the picture by any means necessary. It is unlikely that he would choose the middle of a battle against the characters, when he and Borngray are fighting side by side, to betray the elf—but it's not impossible. If it looks like the cult's operation at the castle is doomed, Pharblex is the sort of creature who will switch sides to save his slimy skin. The timing must be perfect, because he fears Rezmir more than he fears the characters. If, however, the characters have won the lizardfolk over to their side, slaughtered or driven off most of the bullywugs, overrun the castle, and are poised to kill Borngray and Pharblex in battle—Pharblex judges that the ideal time to forsake old allies and court new ones has arrived. He offers just about anything in exchange for the characters leaving him alive and in possession of Castle Naerytar (with or without the *farseer of Illusk* in operating condition).

The number of bullywugs around the castle fluctuates. They come and go as they please. On any given day, forty to fifty are camped outside the castle. Thirty-four more plus Pharblex live in the castle barracks (areas 1G and 2G). Another thirty to seventy are in the immediate area, close enough to respond within fifteen minutes to the beating of the drum in the barbican.

The bullywugs already believe themselves to be lords of the mere, and they act like it. They are easily confused, however. Under normal circumstances, they attack adventurers on sight, provided the bullywugs had superior numbers. They have grown accustomed to seeing cultists of many races coming and going around the castle, so when they see strangers, their first assumption is that the newcomers are more cultists. This assumption is reinforced if Snapjaw or other lizardfolk accompany the strangers or if the characters have any overtly cultish gear or clothing.

This doesn't mean characters can wander at will through the camp and the castle. Bullywug guards still challenge them to ask who they are and where they're going (in fractured pidgin Common if none of the characters speak Bullywug). They just don't assume that every stranger is an enemy and attack on sight.

#### LIZARDFOLK

The Scaly Death lizardfolk tribe has no leader. Pharblex killed its shaman, Suncaller, and the death left the tribe with an inferiority complex that was ripe for exploitation. When Rezmir promised that Voaraghamanthar would reward the tribe's labors for the cult, the lizardfolk were ready to listen.

Where the bullywugs fill the role of a static defense force, the lizardfolk perform five functions. First, they are the cult's laborers and porters. Lizardfolk did most of the heavy work while clearing debris from the castle, and they carry most of the treasure from the work camp to the castle on their backs and in their canoes. Second, they tend the giant lizards that are used to drag or carry especially heavy loads through the mere. Third, they do most of the hunting, fishing, and gathering to feed everyone at the castle. Fourth, they act as the castle's

far-ranging scouts and outlying guards, since they are far superior to any bullywug at actively patrolling, ambushing, and laying traps. Fifth, a cadre of lizardfolk has been enlisted as elite guards for the castle itself. Borngray doesn't expect that any force would ever mount a real attack against the castle; it's too inaccessible, lying deep in the swamp. But if that unlikely event ever happened, he knows that the swaggering bullywugs would desert rather than fight an organized enemy. The lizardfolk, on the other hand, can be courageous and disciplined when they have a leader worth following. Borngray hopes to be that leader, at least to the small contingent of lizardfolk warriors he houses in the castle and rewards with special treatment. In exchange for their work, Borngray "pays" the tribe in metal weapons that are brought to the castle along with the loot.

Meanwhile, the bullywugs boss and bully the lizardfolk, emboldened by their superior numbers, the lizardfolk's instinctive awe of Pharblex's magic, and the absence of any restraining sign from Borngray or from the lair of the black dragon. Voaraghamanthar's silence, more than anything else, makes the lizardfolk wonder whether fate is punishing them for some unknown transgression. They grumble, and occasionally a few desert, but most of them bear up with reptilian stoicism.

Snapjaw is one of the few who has suggested rebelling against the hated bullywugs and the cultists. He hasn't done so openly, because that would invite retribution from the bullywugs, but he has spoken to a few fellow tribesfolk he trusts. Their response was interested but noncommittal; they intend to take revenge on the bullywugs, but not until the omens are right. Meanwhile, they endure—and stockpile weapons. Borngray has only a rough idea of how many lizardfolk are in the tribe all together, and he hasn't kept close count over how many swords, spears, daggers, shields, and metal-tipped arrows have been turned over to them. The lizardfolk are much better armed at this point than they let on to either the bullywugs or the cultists. When the time comes to move against the bullywugs, the lizardfolk intend for every bullywug throat and belly to be slit open with a new, razor-sharp steel blade.

Like the bullywugs, the lizardfolk's first assumption on seeing strangers is that they are cultists, or allies of the cultists, come to work or parley at the castle. They don't share the bullywugs' arrogance, however, so unless they are attacked, they don't really care who wanders through the camp. Lizardfolk on patrol or standing guard are an exception. They are alert, and they assume everyone is a potential enemy. They won't attack until they know for sure, lest they incur the wrath of Rezmir or Borngray for killing an ally. As outlying guards, their instructions are to alert the camp when strangers approach, keep the strangers under observation, and await further instructions.

The Scaly Death tribe comprises eighty lizardfolk warriors, both male and female. About half of them are in the vicinity of the castle at any given time; twenty-six live in the castle and the rest in reed huts (area 3). The others are away hunting, fishing, patrolling, hauling contraband from the work camp, or visiting their families in the tribal village (a few hours away to the southwest).



## RED WIZARDS

Only one Red Wizard is present at Castle Naerytar: Azbara Jos, who was also in the cult camp on the Greenfields and traveled north with Rezmir. He has no interest in the Mere of Dead Men, bullywugs, or lizardfolk, and just slightly more interest in black dragons. He is here only as Rath Modar's liaison to Rezmir. The portal beneath the castle piques Jos's interest, however; portals are always of concern to the Red Wizards.

Adventurers appearing at this remote, secret site also interest him. If Azbara Jos sees the characters or learns of their presence, he arranges a private meeting—one that Rezmir and Borngrey don't even know about, let alone attend. He wants to learn how much the characters know of the cult's plans, where and how they uncovered the information, who else knows about it, and what they think of the plan's chance to succeed. If the characters are captured and locked up in the castle, Jos finds an opportunity to ask all the same questions, again privately, but he is in a better position to force answers out of the characters.

This assumes the characters are at Castle Naerytar posing as cultists or hiding among the lizardfolk. If they're rampaging through the castle, killing everyone they meet, then Azbara Jos has only one concern: escaping through the portal before someone or something kills him.

## VOARAGHAMANTHAR

Voaraghamanthar is an adult black dragon who claims the Mere of Dead Men as his territory. Although many creatures live in the mere and dominate it to one extent or another, none challenge Voaraghamanthar's supremacy. The bullywugs consider him a constant threat and tremble whenever his shadow passes near. The yuan-ti grant him grudging respect and covet his immense wealth. The lizardfolk honor him and wonder why he allows the cultists to abuse them. The cultists venerate him and divert some of the arriving contraband to his lair as tribute.

Voaraghamanthar has a secret that is known to only two other creatures in Faerûn. One of them is Rezmir. The other creature is the secret: Waervaerendor, the twin brother of Voaraghamanthar. For centuries, these twins have misled the world into believing that only one dragon dwells in the Mere of Dead Men—one dragon that must travel at immense speed, since it has been spotted at widely separated locales in rapid succession. The siblings seldom leave their lairs, but when they do, they coordinate so they are never seen together or seen in two distant places at precisely the same time.

Rezmir persuaded the twins to pledge their aid to the cult, but so far, the pledge hasn't carried much weight. Neither dragon leaves its lair frequently enough to provide much help. Like all black dragons, these two are paranoid about all other dragons. Tiamat's potential return and the establishment of a vast dragon empire seem like remote possibilities compared to the real danger of tangling with another dragon, any of whom would gladly murder Voaraghamanthar and Waervaerendor for their hoards. That's the twins' outlook, anyway. While their concern over the murderous nature

of other dragons is justified, the fact that they are two means they have little to fear from most solitary dragons. Rezmir is working hard to persuade them that they could gain great power by revealing their secret at the strategically correct moment. Until Tiamat's return looks more certain, however, Voaraghamanthar and Waervaerendor intend to keep playing it safe, stick close to home, and guard their secret.

Voaraghamanthar and Waervaerendor are not a true faction in the mere because they are not advancing any agenda of their own, but their presence affects the balance of power. Without Voaraghamanthar, the cult wouldn't be here at all. Without Voaraghamanthar, the lizardfolk probably could not have been maneuvered into making common cause with the bullywugs.

Characters should not encounter either of these dragons face to face in this adventure (they are likely to meet in *The Rise of Tiamat*). If characters stray from the lizardfolk's path between the work camp and Castle Naerytar, intentionally or unintentionally—if, for example, they follow will-o'-wisps into the mere—they could enter the blighted territory around one of the lairs. Many clues can inform characters that they're in dragon territory. First, they pass markers consisting of the acid-eaten skulls of humans, humanoids, yuan-ti, crocodiles, and just about every other creature that lives in the mere. The skulls hang from withered trees and from spikes driven into the ground.

Both dragons' lairs are heavily guarded by lizardfolk. The dragons' guards are selected from the Scaly Death lizardfolk that work for the cult. Kobolds infest the actual lairs, but they seldom come out into the mere.

## SQUARING OFF AGAINST THE CULT OF THE DRAGON

Characters have several options at Castle Naerytar, and events there can go in many directions. Here are the key points to keep in mind when running this episode.

- Rezmir and Azbara Jos do almost anything to avoid a battle with interfering adventurers. They have bigger concerns than the safety of Castle Naerytar and its occupants. If a battle develops, both of these characters head directly for the gate beneath the castle and teleport to Talis the White's hunting lodge (see episode 7). For purposes of this adventure, do everything you can to ensure that Rezmir and Jos survive this episode. It's not a catastrophe if they don't, but it's much better if they do.
- Dralmorrer Borngrey and Pharblex Spattergoo have everything to lose if enemies of the cult overrun Castle Naerytar; a defeat would cost Borngrey his hard-earned rank in the cult, and Spattergoo would lose the base from which he hopes to rule the mere after the cult is finished with the castle. They fight to the death to protect the castle (simultaneously buying time for Rezmir and Jos to escape). Despite their loathing for one another, they understand that they are much stronger together than apart. As soon as fighting breaks out, they join forces and cooperate.



- The best place for Borngray and Pharblex to make their stand depends on how the attack develops; you'll need to play that part by ear. Their best ploy against a determined assault may be a fighting retreat through the castle and down into the caverns, where the narrow passages and giant frogs work in their favor.
- The bullywugs are numerous but cowardly. They fight to protect Pharblex, but if he isn't immediately in sight—if Pharblex has retreated into the caverns while other bullywugs are fighting in the inner ward, for example—bullywugs who feel as if he has abandoned them are likely to leap away into the mere and never come back. If Pharblex is killed, most bullywugs desert immediately.
- The lizardfolk are brave, but they despise the bullywugs. If characters haven't recruited the lizardfolk to their side, then the lizardfolk fight well whenever they're alone. If bullywugs are nearby, lizardfolk pull back and let the bullywugs bear the brunt of combat and casualties. If the lizardfolk have been won over to fighting alongside the characters, then they hunt bullywugs through the castle and grounds and murder them mercilessly. If bullywugs flee into the swamp, lizardfolk chase them. They are half-hearted when facing cultists—not because they fear the cultists but because they don't hate them, and they have a harder time mentally turning against that alliance.
- The cultists are dedicated but not fanatics, and they are laborers, not soldiers. They fight bravely with Dralmorrer Borngray leading them. Without him, the cultists' attacks are uncoordinated and hesitant. Their situation becomes even worse if they are fighting against rebellious lizardfolk. In that case, without Borngray to egg them on, they are most likely to barricade themselves in the upper levels of the southwest tower or the library and try to ride out the slaughter.

## APPROACHING CASTLE NAERYTAR

How characters approach Naerytar can set the tone for everything that happens at the castle.

Snapjaw knows where the lizardfolk pickets are posted about half a mile out from the castle. If he is with the characters, he can prevent them from blundering into a trap or an ambush. He talks to the **6 lizardfolk** guards if characters let him. What he tells them depends on the opinion he's formed about the characters.

- If Snapjaw isn't yet sure whether the characters are the saviors he hopes they are, he tells the guards that these are cultists coming to join those already in the castle. The guards accept that story without question and let everyone pass.
- If the heroes have established strong trust between themselves and Snapjaw, he tells the guards that the characters are great warriors come to destroy the Cult of the Dragon, and that now is the time to make their move against the bullywugs. You can either decide for yourself how the guards react to that, or make a DC 10 Charisma check for Snapjaw. If the check succeeds, the guards are persuaded. If the check fails, the

characters don't impress them. They won't take action against the bullywugs now, but they won't interfere with the characters, either. If the result is 5 or lower, these guards decide Snapjaw's talk of an uprising is dangerously rash, and they attack him.

- If the characters have done nothing to win Snapjaw's trust or they've treated him no better than bullywugs would have, then he tells the guards that the characters are nothing but trouble, and the lizardfolk attack.

If Snapjaw is not with the characters, they still have a chance to detect the guard outpost on their own. Characters with passive Wisdom (Perception) scores of 15 or higher catch whiffs of wood smoke. Also make a single Dexterity (Stealth) check for the lizardfolk guards, with advantage (they've had plenty of time to conceal themselves). Compare their result to the characters' passive Wisdom (Perception) scores to see whether any of the characters notice the lizardfolk in hiding.

If the lizardfolk go undetected, they send two fast swimmers ahead by a secondary route to alert bullywugs at the castle. Two more scouts follow the characters while the last two remain at their post and continue keeping watch.

## OUTSIDE CASTLE NAERYTAR

Castle Naerytar was built on dry land, then a deep, dry moat was dug around it. When the mere expanded and surrounded the castle site, the moat flooded and overflowed. Now the whole site is swampy, and large pools of standing water dot the clearing. The castle was built on exposed bedrock, so its foundation is sound and mostly dry even a century after the flooding. Tangled brush and trees grow to within twenty feet of the walls on three sides of the castle. Only the front (southern) face is clear.

Bullywugs live in crowded, hastily made reed huts. The lizardfolk have sturdier, roomier reed longhouses.

### 1. LANDING

A half-dozen dugout canoes are pulled up onto land here. Three to five paddles lie in the bottom of each. Five of them are in good condition; the sixth has a rotten bottom, and the lizardfolk never use it. If characters grab canoes in a hurry, there is a 1-in-6 chance they get the rotten one. It starts leaking as soon as it's put in water, and it sinks after fifteen minutes.

### 2. ANIMAL STOCKADE

The lizardfolk keep their giant lizards penned here. The five-foot-high wall of the stockade is made from sturdy logs driven into the earth, spaced about six inches apart, and bound together with twisted fiber. The lizards can carry or drag loads that are too massive for the lizardfolk, such as large timbers or impressive crocodiles. They are also used to raise stone onto the castle battlements through ropes and pulleys—technology that never ceases to amaze the lizardfolk. There are **2d4 giant lizards** in the pen at any given time. They are ill-tempered and attack anyone who comes within reach if their



handlers aren't present to keep them under control. If set loose, they most likely romp away into the swamp. If the goal is to have the lizards rampage through the camp, someone needs to rile them up first. Poking them through the stockade wall with spears will do the trick.

### 3. LONGHOUSES

The lizardfolk warriors live in these longhouses.

The longhouses are made from reeds bound into long, thick bundles and bent into upside-down, U-shaped ribs. The spaces between the ribs are latticed and thatched with more reeds. Each longhouse has a single, woven door in the center of one end wall. The construction technique used in the longhouses is ingenious.

The lizardfolk may be technologically backward, but they are masters of their environment. They show the same building talent in their traps and snares.

Inside, longhouses are roomy and well ventilated. The ground is covered with reed mats, and the interior is dry and airy. Gear hangs from pegs on the walls to keep it off the ground. Lizardfolk are especially careful with their new, steel weapons, which rust quickly when exposed to dampness. They fill small stone ovens with coals for heat. There are no open fireplaces; the danger from sparks is too great.

Each of these longhouses could house twenty-five lizardfolk comfortably, and more with some crowding. When Rezmir first negotiated with the lizardfolk, they intended to move the entire village here, and built accordingly. As more bullywugs also flocked to the castle and the real situation became apparent, the warriors instructed their families to stay behind. Thus, they have far more longhouse space at the castle than they need. Characters observing the area from hiding and judging solely from the longhouses would estimate conservatively that over a hundred lizardfolk live at the castle. They won't count anywhere near that many lizardfolk in the clearing. Snapjaw can explain the discrepancy, if he's around.

### 4. HUTS

The bullywugs live in huts, which are crudely built.

A dozen or more huts are placed haphazardly on the boggy ground. Each is shaped like a slightly flattened dome. The doorways are open, but a low, short tunnel forces a creature to crawl into the hut. They are made of reeds woven through a lattice, with a generous layer of mud, grass, and dung smeared over the whole thing. Mud, swamp water, and muck slops between the huts and even flows in and out of the low, open doorways.

The interiors of the bullywugs' huts are the complete opposite of the lizardfolk's longhouses: wet, filthy, sloppily made, and reeking. The floors aren't just damp; they're churned into mud pits up to 2 feet deep, so the bullywugs can rest froglike in mud up to their eyeballs. They have no sense of privacy or personal space. At night, they crowd in atop one another until everyone is squeezed. Bullywugs aren't assigned to any particular huts. They sleep in whichever is most convenient when they grow tired, so it's common for some huts to be packed at night while others sit completely empty.

Eight **giant frogs** hop randomly among the huts or sit silently in the pools of standing water. These creatures were raised from tadpoles by the bullywugs and don't bother them, but they attack anyone else who carelessly wanders within reach of their 15-foot-long tongues.

### 5. MOAT

The muddy water lapping against the castle walls is indistinguishable at a glance from the puddles and hip-deep water standing throughout the area, but it hides a moat. Portions of the moat around the southwest tower have filled in to ground level, but elsewhere it is 30 to 40 feet wide and up to 15 feet deep. The causeway (1A) arches over the moat, providing a visual clue that the water may be deeper than it appears. Anyone splashing around in the moat attracts the attention of six **crocodiles**.

### 6. MAIN GATE

This is the only entrance into the castle that's used. When the castle was built, a pair of stout wooden gates and an iron portcullis closed off this 12-foot-wide, 10-foot-high gateway. The gates are never closed; they now sag on their hinges so badly that it's not worth the effort of levering them into place for any reason short of an imminent attack. The portcullis is rigged so it can be dropped with a hard yank on a lever (located on the upper level, area 2A), but since it was last tested, the mechanism has rusted to the point where the gate will drop only 3 feet, then jam in place.

## INSIDE CASTLE NAERYTAR

The castle's exterior walls average 10 feet thick. Interior walls are also stone but only about 1 or 2 feet thick.

Most of the structures inside the castle are more than one story tall. In the descriptions, areas are identified by floor, then letter, so area 1L is on the ground floor, 2L the second floor, and so on. If an area doesn't have an entry for a floor, then it doesn't exist on that floor.

## GROUND FLOOR

### 1A. BARBICAN

The barbican is the primary defensive position for the castle. It is guarded round-the-clock by ten **bullywugs** and **1d6 giant frogs**. Unless a fight or other disturbance has happened somewhere, these guards are at low alertness.





Sloppy mud covers the stone floor of this large chamber. Planks have been laid from the gateway to the causeway entrance to create a 10-foot-wide raised boardwalk for the cultists, who don't enjoy walking through mud the way bullywugs do. The slippery mud makes everywhere off the planks difficult terrain for characters. A few tables have been thrown together from planks laid across barrels, with crudely made benches for seats. The tables and benches are nearly as muddy as the floor.

The barbican has no windows or arrow slits at ground level. During daytime, bright light is within 20 feet of the open gateway and the open doorway to the causeway. Everywhere else, oil lamps cast only dim light (because the bullywugs never clean them).

Stairs lead up to area 2A.

## 1B. CAUSEWAY

This 180-foot causeway crosses the moat and leads to the castle's outer ward. It has no roof so defenders on the upper floor of the barbican (area 2A) can launch arrows into attackers crowded onto the causeway. A small defensive bulge along the east wall of the causeway is never manned.

## 1C. OUTER WARD

The ground here was once hard-packed earth, but the area in front of the barracks (area 1G) has been churned into mud by flapping bullywug feet. At any particular time, there are 1d6 – 1 **bullywugs** and 1d6 – 1 **lizardfolk** present in the outer ward. Lizardfolk are likely to be working (training their giant lizards), while bullywugs might be loafing or giving orders to the lizardfolk.

## 1D. INNER WARD

Originally, the passage between the outer and inner wards could be closed off with heavy wooden gates, but they have long since fallen apart and haven't been replaced. The inner ward is patrolled by three **guard drakes** at all hours of the day. They attack anyone they don't recognize or who isn't accompanied by someone they recognize.

## 1E. NORTHWEST TOWER

The door to this tower has been torn off its hinges and lies on the ground. Originally, a wooden floor was at ground level with a pit beneath it for confining prisoners. The wooden floor is completely rotted away, and the pit has been filled nearly to ground level with garbage and mud.



There must have been a wooden floor in this tower when it was built, to cover the dungeon pit beneath it. Now the floor is gone and the dungeon has been turned into a garbage pit and latrine filled with foul-smelling waste and swamp water to just a few feet below the level of the doorway. The floor above is badly rotted and large portions have collapsed. Through the gaping holes in the second floor, you can see that the third floor is still in good condition. But to reach the stone stairs that circle upward around the outer wall, you must cross 10 feet of indescribable muck.

The pit is home to an **otyugh** that consumes much of the castle's garbage. When characters arrive, it is sitting quietly submerged in the muck, making it undetectable unless characters stir the foul-smelling stuff with poles. If someone steps into the muck or leaps to the steps, the otyugh lashes out with its tentacles. A grappled character is dragged into the pit where, along with all the hazards of being savaged by an otyugh, there is the added danger of drowning. It's safe to assume that characters entering this tower will take a big gulp of clean air first, but the otyugh's attack might knock the wind out of them. Allow the attacked character to make a Constitution saving throw with a DC equal to 5 plus the damage caused by the otyugh's tentacle attack. A successful saving throw means the character has a lungful of air when dragged into the muck and can hold his or her breath for a number of minutes equal to 1 + his or her Constitution modifier, with a minimum of 30 seconds (5 rounds). Failure means the character's lungs are empty, and the character falls unconscious at the end of his or her turn after a number of rounds equal to the character's Constitution modifier unless the character breaks free from the otyugh's grasp before then. See the suffocating rules in the *Player's Handbook*.

## 1F. STABLES

The fittest, most ferocious of the giant lizards are housed here instead of in the open stockade (area 2), to protect them against the biting and clawing that goes on in the common enclosure. These lizards are used as riding mounts by lizardfolk on long patrols. The stalls, originally built for horses, have been enlarged to accommodate the beasts (eight **giant lizards**). The normally lethargic creatures grow agitated when strangers enter the stables. If characters linger for more than a minute, two of the lizards start lashing the walls with their tails. The others pick up the ruckus in short order so that within two minutes, all are thrashing at the walls and bellowing. The commotion draws four **lizardfolk** who are the giant lizards' handlers. The lizardfolk have a calming influence on the giant lizards, but if they are interfered with, the disquieted lizards smash through their stalls and attack anything in the stables.

A ladder in the southeast corner of the stables grants access to a loft above the stables.

## 1G. LOWER BARRACKS

This large structure was built to house the castle's garrison. Pharblex and his hand-picked circle of bullywug toughs has taken it over. Pharblex is seldom here, but during the day, twelve **bullywugs** lounge in the squalor. That number doubles at night.

If characters walk into the barracks during daytime, read the text below aloud. If they sneak in or enter in the middle of the night, adjust and paraphrase accordingly.

Twelve bullywugs eye you suspiciously from a room that might have been a tidy barracks once. Now it is largely empty of furniture, much of the floor is churned into mud, and the stink of bullywugs permeates everything.

If the bullywugs assume the characters are cultists, they tolerate their presence here on the lowest floor of the barracks. They won't allow anyone upstairs, and they won't take orders from someone they don't know and recognize. If a fight breaks out in this area, bullywugs from the upper level (area 2G) leap into the battle from the staircase on the third round.

Three mud-spattered chests are shoved into the sheltered space behind the staircase. These contain much of the bullywugs' accumulated pay. Dralmorrer Borngray pays them with articles of looted treasure that he deems too cheap or tacky to include in the hoard being accumulated for Tiamat. The chests contain hundreds of items made from copper and tin and that incorporate small or damaged semiprecious stones. The three chests combined contain 30,000 cp, 500 sp, and jewelry (copper and tin with ornamental or semiprecious stones) worth another 350 gp, for a total value of 700 gp. Their total weight is over 500 pounds: 305 pounds of coins plus another 200 pounds of jewelry.

Buried among all the copper and tin in one chest is a small mahogany box containing two *potions of healing* and one vial of *oil of ethereality*, overlooked by the cultists during sorting.

## 1H. FORGE AND ARMORY

Naerytar's builders set up this structure for the blacksmiths who would build and maintain the armor and weapons needed by the castle's defenders.

A large forge dominates the center of this chamber, which is pleasantly warm thanks to a bed of coals glowing dully in the forge. Half-a-dozen lizardfolk are working around the forge, but they don't seem to be accomplishing much. Other accouterments of the blacksmith's trade are scattered through the room, and many very poorly made metal items are heaped in the northwest corner.

A few months ago, Dralmorrer Borngray decided to put the forge back into operation. He despises Pharblex and the bullywugs, and he would prefer to deal solely with the lizardfolk if they could overcome the gloom that has gripped the tribe since Pharblex murdered



their shaman. Borngray thought mastering a craft as advanced as metalworking would instill the lizardfolk with a renewed sense of pride. He might be right, but so far, the lizardfolk have shown little aptitude for the craft. They do, however, enjoy basking in the warmth of the forge, and they have learned to take excellent care of their new weapons even if they can't manufacture more.

The six **lizardfolk** in the forge room won't attack unless they are antagonized first. They are trying to make an iron spear point from scraps of ruined armor, but their effort is producing something more like a shovel than a blade. They listen attentively if characters offer advice but show no sign of comprehending what they're told.

## II. LIZARDFOLK READY ROOM

The twelve **lizardfolk** selected by Dralmorrer Borngray to serve as his backup guards use this northeast tower as their barracks. This chamber is their daytime ready room. When they are not drilling with their weapons, the lizardfolk spend their time in this chamber, gambling, exercising, and telling stories of happier times. Borngray maintains this force as insurance against treachery by Pharblex and the bullywugs.

Like guards elsewhere in the castle, those in this room assume that strangers are newly arrived cultists unless they have reason to think otherwise (seeing strangers with weapons dripping blood from recent combat would be one such reason). They won't attack unless provoked, but they won't let anyone go upstairs or into areas 1J and 1K without an excellent reason, either.

## 1J. LIZARDFOLK SLEEPING ROOM

The ten dominant lizardfolk guards rest in this chamber, because it gets more warmth from the forge (area 1H) than area 1K does. They sleep on reed pallets that are spread across the floor in no apparent pattern, and each keeps meager belongings beneath his "bed." Despite the lack of order, the room is clean and dry. It is empty during the day, but ten **lizardfolk** sleep here at night.

## 1K. LIZARDFOLK SLEEPING ROOM

Ten lizardfolk guards sleep in this chamber. They are the less dominant half of Borngray's lizardfolk guards, consigned to this sleeping chamber because it gets less warmth from the forge (area 1H) than area 1J does. They sleep on reed pallets that are spread across the floor in no apparent pattern, and each keeps meager belongings beneath his "bed." Despite the lack of order, the room is clean and dry. It is empty during the day, but ten **lizardfolk** sleep here at night.

## 1L. CHAPEL

Over the years, this chapel has been consecrated to several different deities, depending on who ruled the castle. Now it is a shrine to Tiamat, adorned with a handsome wooden statue of the dragon queen crafted by lizardfolk. The workmanship is surprisingly good, though most of Tiamat's visages bear a stronger resemblance to lizardfolk than to dragons. A hidden compartment beneath Tiamat's black dragon head contains a *dagger of venom*. It can be found with a successful DC 15 Intelligence

(Investigation) check. Only Rezmir and a few of the lizardfolk (including Snapjaw) who were involved in carving the statue know about the dagger.

The cultists venerate Tiamat but do not worship her, so the chapel is seldom used for anything that could be considered a religious observance or mass. Instead, individual cultists or small groups sometimes retire here for quiet reflection on how the world will suffer when the Queen of Dragons rises.

## 1M. STOREROOM

All the trash from the chapel—broken stools, rotted altar cloths, corroded icons—was dumped in this room when the cultists took over. There's nothing of value here.

## 1N. RECTORY

This was originally the castle priest's living quarters, and it included many sturdy storage cabinets for vestments and religious paraphernalia. All the cabinets were hacked open and looted long ago. Four **dragonclaws** (see appendix B) moved into this chamber and turned it into their living quarters. They tend the library in area 1N.

## 1O. ARCHER'S GALLERY

This long gallery overlooks the causeway through arrow slits. In case of an attack, archers could man it. The cultists don't use it for anything, and aside from cobwebs, it is empty.

## 1P. KITCHEN

Meals for the cultists are prepared in this kitchen by a dwarf chef and his two human helpers (**commoners**). The chef is a **dwarf** named Tharm Tharmzid. If given the chance, he complains bitterly about the lack of ingredients here for good meals. Everything he receives comes from the lizardfolk hunters and gatherers, whose notions about what is and isn't edible don't mesh well with Tharmzid's.

## 1Q. GREAT HALL

The cultists eat their meals and conduct most of their business in this high, wide hall. The eastern end of the hall is used for dining and socializing. The western half is where contraband hauled in from the Carnath Roadhouse is inspected, cleaned, sorted, and repacked before being carried down to the portal beneath the southwest tower. The tables in that half of the hall are covered with valuables. The southwest corner of the room is a makeshift carpentry shop, where cultists build new chests and boxes to hold the plunder. If characters have a chance to paw through the piles and keep what they find, they get 450 gp, 520 sp, 80 pp, 22 semiprecious stones (5 × 35 gp, 6 × 45 gp, 6 × 55 gp, 4 × 65 gp, 1 × 80 gp), and a *potion of greater healing*. Alternatively, you can create your own expert-level hoard.

Looting won't be possible, however, as long as any cultists are alive. During the day, there will always be twelve **cultists** (of initiate rank) working in the Great Hall and four **dragonclaws** (see appendix B) keeping



an eye on them. Most of the cultists are human, but all the character races are represented. The precise mix doesn't matter.

If there is any disturbance in the Great Hall, everyone within hearing responds to the hue and cry. Cultists in the southwest tower and guard drakes from the inner ward show up at the start of the third round, and any bullywugs or lizardfolk in the outer ward respond at the beginning of the fourth round.

At night, two **guard drakes** (see appendix B) sleep in the Great Hall while a third **guard drake** patrols the hall and the inner ward. Even asleep, the guard drakes are at normal alertness.

## 1R. SOUTHWEST TOWER ANTECHAMBER

Swamp water seeps into this chamber through a crack in the foundation to pool inches deep on the sagging stone floor and fill the air with a cloying, moldy stink. The cultists laid a walkway of planks across the floor so they can walk between the two doorways without soaking their feet. This chamber isn't used for anything other than a passage between areas 1Q and 1R.

## 1S. SUBTERRANEAN ENTRANCE

The puddles in area 1R don't extend into this chamber, but the smell does. Because of that, the cultists use this chamber only as an accessway to other areas.

The most important feature of this chamber is the staircase that leads down to the caverns beneath the castle. It sits directly below the stairs that lead up to level two of the tower. There is no doorway across either set of steps. A door into area 1T is closed but not locked.

## 1T. UNUSED CHAMBER

This chamber is wet and moldy, though not flooded. The cultists don't use it because of the dampness, so giant centipedes have moved in and made a nest. Anyone who opens the door and enters the chamber becomes the target of ten **giant centipedes**.

If the characters pose as reinforcements sent by the cult, they are assigned this chamber as their quarters. Their first task is clearing out the centipedes, chinking leaks, and generally making the room livable.

## 1U. KEEP ENTRANCE

The entrance to the main keep is raised three steps above the level of the inner ward. A stout wooden door in good repair bars it, but the door is never locked or barred under normal circumstances.

This front chamber is a small version of the Great Hall, with a few tables and benches that are seldom used. Spiral stairs lead up to the second floor.

## IV. WEST GUEST ROOMS

Normally, these rooms aren't used, but Azbara Jos occupies them currently. They are reasonably warm and comfortable. Jos will be here when he isn't consulting with Rezmir in area 1U, 2N, or 3L. Jos keeps all of his real valuables with him. The only things he leaves

in these chambers are his clothes and his traveling spellbook, which is locked inside a box of silver-inlaid redwood. The lock can be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, but if the roll is less than 20, the tampering sets off a magical ward with the same effect as a *Melf's acid arrow* spell; the acid arrow launches at the character who opened the box and causes 4d6 acid damage immediately plus another 4d6 acid damage at the end of the character's next turn. The damage is halved if the character makes a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. Opening the box with the key disarms the trap automatically; Jos carries the key on a string around his neck.

## SECOND FLOOR

### 2A. UPPER BARBICAN

Although it is much cleaner than the lower level, the upper level of the barbican is still a mess. Muddy, webbed footprints of bullywugs trail up and down the stairs and fan out across the floor. This area is staffed by nine **bullywugs** day and night, but at night, they tend to sleep on watch.

This level of the barbican has no roof. Hundreds of melon-sized stones are piled around the battlements for throwing down on the heads of attackers. Many of the piles have collapsed, and the bullywugs are too lazy to restack them.

The causeway is fully exposed to archers positioned at the rear of the barbican, but the bullywugs seldom watch that direction.

The main feature of this area is a signal drum carved from an enormous hollow log. This drum can be heard for miles when it is beaten vigorously. The bullywugs send many different signals with the drum: they can recall patrols and foragers to the castle, wake up the camp, indicate mealtimes, announce changes of the guard, and sound a general alarm if the castle ever comes under attack. The drum is heard about six times on a typical day, and everyone who lives at the castle knows the meanings of the different drumbeats. Characters won't know what they mean without asking someone.

### 2E. ROTTED FLOOR

The second level of the northwest tower is in bad shape. There are large holes where the floorboards have completely rotted away or fallen into the muck below, and the floorboards that remain are unlikely to support a human's weight. The beams are still strong, but they are slick with fungus and mold. A successful DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check is needed to cross the level on a beam without slipping and falling into the awfulness of area 1E.

Across the tower, up against the south wall, is a single, locked trunk. The lock can be opened with a set of thieves' tools and a successful DC 10 Dexterity check. The chest contains 1,825 cp, 54 sp, and a pair of garish gold earrings that would be worth another 10 gp if melted. The chest was left behind when the last tenants of the castle departed, being considered not worth the effort to lug down the stairs.

The stone steps that wind around the outer wall come



to a small (approximately 3 feet by 3 feet) stone landing, then continue upward to the third level. Characters are safe from falling as long as they stay on the landing or the steps.

A trapdoor closes off the top of the stairs at the ceiling. The door is latched with a simple wooden turn-button. The door also bears a warning but, because the warning was drawn in chalk nearly a century ago, it is all but invisible now. It can be noticed with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. After the chalk mark is noticed, anyone who reads Dwarvish can correctly interpret it as a warning that powerful undead reside in the room beyond. Adventurers placed the rune here decades ago after running afoul of the specters in area 3E.

## 2F. STABLES LOFT

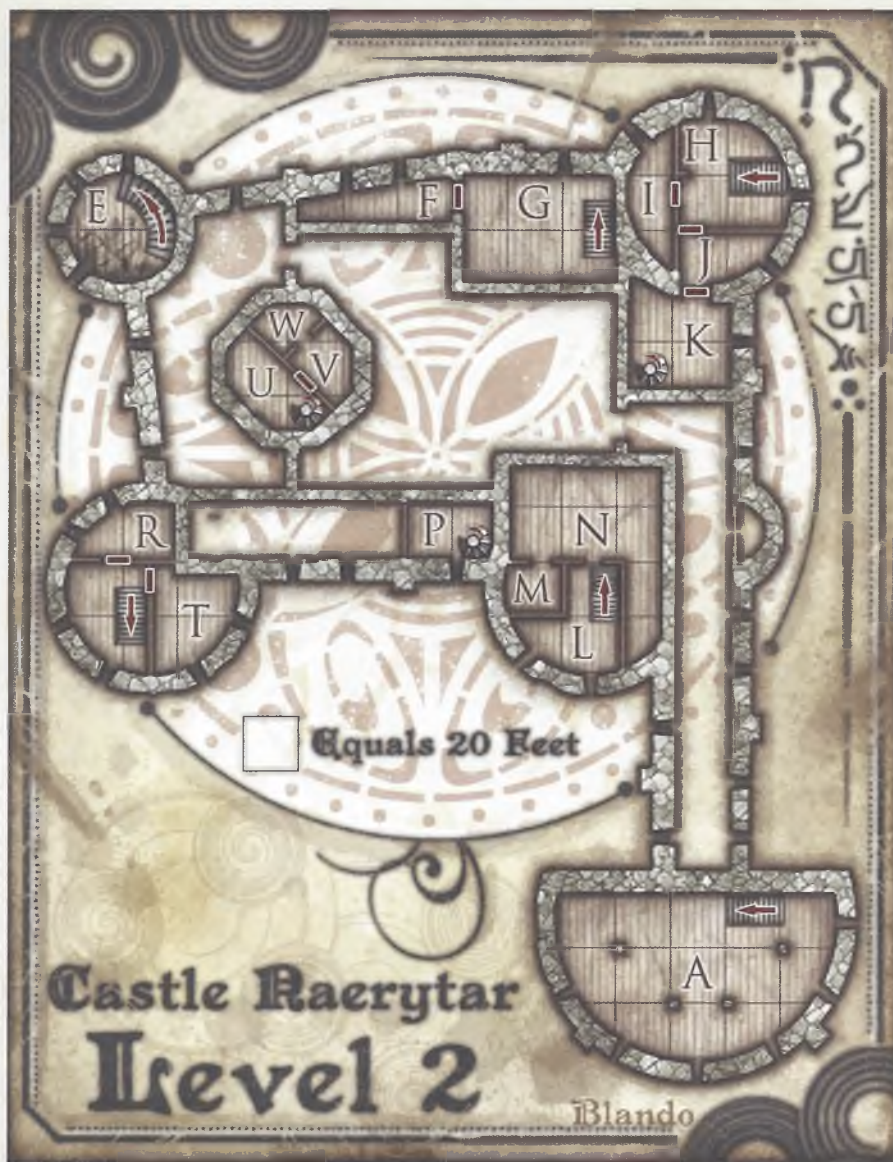
The loft above the stables is where the lizardfolk store bundles of cut reeds to use as bedding in the stalls of the giant lizards. Other than reeds and a few bats, nothing else is here.

## 2G. UPPER BARRACKS

**Pharblex Spattergoo** (see appendix B) and his personal retinue of ten **bullywugs** use this level of the barracks as their living quarters. No one else has any business being in this chamber, including cultists. Not even Borngray or Rezmir herself are welcome here. The bullywugs are always here at night but only two stand guard over the treasure chest during the day, when Pharblex spends most of his time in the giant frog hatchery beneath the castle. Those two guards trust no one, and one of them is equipped with a horn made of crocodile bone with which to sound the alarm if trouble develops.

Like all areas occupied by bullywugs, this chamber is a mess. Reed pallets, dirty baskets, and animal bones litter the floor.

In the southeast corner of the room is a large, sturdy chest, wrapped in chains and padlocked. The lock can be picked with thieves' tools and a successful DC 12 Dexterity check. Inside is Pharblex's share of the bullywugs' pay: silver and electrum jewelry, hand mirrors, shell combs, hair pins and brooches with semiprecious stones, all with a total value of 1,376 gp. Most of the silver is black from tarnish. In a civilized land, every one of these items is something that would be found on a



woman's dressing table or nightstand. This is a private joke that Dralmorrer Borngray finds quietly hilarious. It's all the same to Pharblex, since he knows nothing of civilization or the fashions of human noblewomen.

## 2H. ARSENAL

This chamber was stocked with armor, weapons, and hundreds of arrows when the castle was abandoned. The metal rusted to dust, the arrows warped into uselessness, and the leather was chewed away by rats and other vermin. Now this chamber is the unofficial headquarters of the lizardfolk in the castle. Neither the bullywugs nor the cultists ever come up here.

The arsenal chamber is the warmest in the castle, thanks to heat rising from the forge (area 1H). The lizardfolk that live in the castle gather here—usually at night—to discuss their situation and what they should do. The debate is between accepting their fate as lowly servants of the Cult of the Dragon, attacking the bullywugs in a glorious yet suicidal assault, or biding their time until they can attack with a chance of winning.



The lizardfolk's stockpile of new weapons is hidden beneath stacks of rusted, rotten, century-old arms. Just a few minutes of searching through the junk can turn up one or two bundles of sharp, clean blades for short-swords, daggers, and spears, neatly wrapped in oilskin.

Unless the lizardfolk are meeting, this chamber usually is empty. The lizardfolk seldom come here when they could be observed gathering, to avoid attracting suspicion or making anyone curious about what's in the "unused" room above the forge.

## 2I, J, K. VACANT ROOMS

Dralmorrer Borngrey assigned the entire northeast tower to the lizardfolk for their use, but they sleep and live mainly on the ground floor. The second-floor rooms contain nothing of interest or value.

If characters poke around in this area, however, those with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or higher notice that the doors between areas 2H, 2I, and 2K open and close smoothly and soundlessly, unlike most other doors in the castle, which squeak and squeal loudly on corroded hinges. The lizardfolk keep these doors well-oiled so they can slip up to area 2H in the dead of night without awakening any bullywugs in the barracks (areas 1G and 2G).

A trapdoor closes off the top of the stairs up to area 3I. The trapdoor isn't locked, but a pair of iron spikes has been hammered between the door and the frame. Opening the door requires either a DC 10 Strength check or ten minutes spent carefully prying out the spikes. If the door is forced and no one is standing by ready to catch the spikes, they clatter noisily down the steps.

If characters are captured, they are confined in area 2J.

## 2L. OUTER LIBRARY

Dralmorrer Borngrey has converted the second floor of the chapel into a library. This chamber at the top of the stairs contains a few crates and chests of books culled from the arriving treasure that haven't been sorted and cataloged yet. Otherwise, it is empty.

## 2M. READING ROOM

A small table and two chairs are the only furnishings in this chamber.

## 2N. LIBRARY

Since treasure first started funneling through Naerytar, Dralmorrer Borngrey has pulled out any books, parchments, tablets, and other written material that interested him. He knows better than to claim it as his own; he will forward these treasures to Tiamat's hoard when the work at Castle Naerytar draws to a close. Until then, he keeps the written material at the castle to study and to divert him from the miserable surroundings. Rezmir knows about the library and approves of using the books this way, as long as they are delivered to the Well of Dragons before Tiamat's arrival.

Borngrey has assembled an impressive library. It contains over one hundred books, quartos, and manuscripts covering the history of the Sword Coast, natural philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, magic, and

many theoretical works on alternate reality, time, and dimensional travel. This collection would be a priceless addition to any library or collector in Waterdeep if it could be removed from the castle before the cultists spirit it away or the bullywugs spoil it.

The books and manuscripts are stored on wooden shelves built by the cultists from salvaged lumber.

One **dragonwing** (see appendix B) and four **cultists** (initiates) spend most of their time here, organizing the books.

## 2P. KITCHEN STORAGE

Items that are needed in the kitchen (area 1P) occasionally but not every day are stored here, along with nonperishable food such as cooking oil, grain, cheese, wine, and salted meat.

## 2R. CULTISTS' SLEEPING CHAMBER

The lowest-ranking cultists sleep here. At night, five **cultists** are present. Otherwise, the chamber is empty of all but their reed mattresses and simple belongings in wooden trunks. A small stone hearth in area 2T provides meager warmth.

## 2T. CULTISTS' SLEEPING CHAMBER

At night, seven **dragonwings** (see appendix B) sleep here. Otherwise, the chamber is empty of all but their reed mattresses and simple belongings in wooden trunks. A small stone hearth keeps the chamber warm.

## 2U. DRALMORRER BORNGREY'S COMMON ROOM

The second level of the keep is occupied entirely by Dralmorrer Borngrey. This chamber is a combination sitting room and office, and a small hearth along the western wall provides heat. A writing desk, a large padded chair, and a bench are drawn up near the hearth. Otherwise, the room is largely empty.

## 2V, W. BORNGREY'S SLEEPING AND DRESSING ROOMS

Area 2V is Borngrey's sleeping chamber, furnished with a bed, a carpet-draped table with a wash basin and grooming supplies (comb, brush, soap, scented waters), and a stool. Rugs cover most of the floor. A raven in a large cage squawks loudly enough to be heard in the outer ward if a stranger enters the chamber, and the squawking awakens and draws the cultists and dragonwings from areas 2R and 2T to the tower.

Borngrey is seldom here except when sleeping, immediately before retiring, and immediately after rising.

In addition to the elf's clothing and personal effects, a small strongbox is hidden beneath a loose floorboard under a rug. The hiding place is spotted automatically if the rug is moved and missed automatically if the rug is left alone. The strongbox contains Borngrey's emergency funds: 200 gp, 200 sp, and 10 precious stones worth 100 gp each. The locked box can be opened with a key from Borngrey's belt or with a set of thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check.



## THIRD FLOOR

Many of the topmost levels of the castle are unused by cultists. Some of them are still home to dangerous creatures that were sealed off instead of being cleared out.

### 3E. SPECTERS' SANCTUM

Several years after its builder and original owner abandoned Castle Naerytar, the castle was re-occupied by an all-female school of astrologers called the Academy of Stargazers. A few years after the astrologers moved in, they were wiped out by their own leader. Several of the castle's residents were murdered in this topmost room of the northwest tower in particularly hideous fashion. They are still here in the form of six **specters** haunting the chamber. They rest quietly, ignoring everything and everyone in the castle, until someone opens the trapdoor and enters.

The open chamber contains a large table and star charts in scroll racks around the walls. Three bodies are sprawled on the floor, reduced by time to powdery bones and dusty tatters of cloth. As soon as someone enters the room, they rise as specters and attack. They pursue anywhere in the castle, but they won't leave the castle. They attack other living creatures if they can't get at those who disturbed their rest, but they prefer the intruders over anyone else.

Most of the paper star charts crumble into dust when touched, but three are still sturdy enough to be carried away. One of these was drawn on parchment, one scribed on a clay disc, and one etched on thinly rolled copper. The surviving charts would fetch 700 gp each from an astrologer in Waterdeep or other major city.

### 3G. UNUSED CHAMBER

Originally, this level of the barracks was used for storage and for training during severe weather. Several fencing dummies and targets still stand around the room, but they will fall apart if put to hard use.

### 3H, I, J. SPIDERS' LAIR

The top level of the northeast tower is the lair of five **giant spiders**. They hunt in the swamp at night and return to the tower to rest during the days, entering through a hole in the roof. The spiders are wary, so they've never been seen coming and going. The lizardfolk know of them but haven't mentioned them to others.

The chamber is not hung with webs, but the cracked and bones of many animals (including bullywugs) litter the floor. The spiders nestle among the deep shadows between ceiling beams, and they have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks while hidden in their recesses.

A trapdoor is closed across the steps from area 2K and jammed shut with two iron spikes driven between the door and the frame. See the description of area 2K for notes about opening the door. The door is sufficient to keep the spiders out of the lower levels of the tower, since the spiders and the lizardfolk have an unspoken understanding to leave each other alone. That doesn't extend to strangers such as the characters.

## 3L. REZMIR'S OFFICE

The third floor of the old chapel is converted to living quarters for Wyrmspeaker Rezmir. No one else uses these chambers even when Rezmir is away from the castle for tendays or months at a stretch.

The furnishings in all four chambers are lavish—surprisingly so, compared to everything else at the castle. All other furnishings were built on site, but Rezmir's come from the workshops of the finest carpenters and upholsterers in Faerûn. They were brought to the castle through the portal from Talis the White's lodge.

This front chamber serves Rezmir as an office. It contains a writing desk, several smaller tables stacked with inventories and reports, and four beautiful but uncomfortable wooden chairs. Two matched onyx carvings of black dragons flank the top of the staircase. A serious collector would pay up to 3,000 gp for the pair. They are three feet tall and weigh 400 pounds apiece.

Among the papers on the desk are Rezmir's notes describing the portal beneath the castle and how to operate it, including its command word ("Draezir").

### 3M. REZMIR'S SITTING ROOM

This chamber is a sitting room, comfortably furnished with upholstered chairs, padded benches, and two small carpet-draped tables. Rezmir does not entertain guests, so the chamber is never used by anyone but her.

### 3N. REZMIR'S SLEEPING CHAMBER

A large bed, two wardrobes, a standing mirror, and an armor stand with a spare suit of scale mail armor dominate the room. One of the wardrobes is filled with clothing. The other, whose doors are painted with a depiction of a five-headed dragon, contains Rezmir's Cult of the Dragon regalia—purple robes, cloaks, mantles, and many items of rank, but not the *Black Dragon Mask*. Because Rezmir is a half-dragon, it's unlikely that her clothing or armor will fit anyone else.

The wardrobe containing the cult regalia is trapped. The trap can be detected with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. Once spotted, the trap can be disarmed automatically by using Rezmir's *insignia of claws* or with a set of thieves' tools and a successful DC 20 Dexterity check. If the wardrobe is opened without disarming the trap or if the Dexterity check fails, the trap goes off. Vials of acid explode, causing 25 (7d6) acid damage to everyone in area 3N. Damage is halved with a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw; the character who set off the trap has disadvantage on the saving throw. All Cult of the Dragon items in the wardrobe are ruined by acid, as are most of the furnishings and other objects in the room, including the dragon statuette described below.

One of the few easily portable items of value in the room is a 2-foot-tall statuette of a black dragon, made from actual black dragon scales and claws, with ruby eyes and diamond teeth. It is perched atop a heap of treasure consisting of actual gold and gems. Its value to a collector is 4,800 gp, and it weighs only 20 pounds. Rough handling will damage it, however, and reduce its value to just 1,200 gp.





### 3O. REZMIR'S SANCTUARY

This chamber is where Rezmir retires to venerate Tiamat privately. The room is bare. Its only decoration is a stylized depiction of a five-headed dragon rising from a volcano, painted on the back of the door (where it won't be seen unless someone closes the door while they're in this room). The artist had only a few colors to work with and was not especially talented, but the five heads are recognizable as the five chromatic dragons.

### 3P. KITCHEN STORAGE

This room contains more kitchen storage, similar to area 2P. Only dry goods are kept here—flour, sugar, dried fruits and vegetables—to avoid the hassles of hauling tubs or barrels of liquid up the stairs.

### 3R. CULTISTS' SLEEPING CHAMBER

Middle-ranking cultists have the entire top floor of the tower for their use. At night, six **dragonwings** (see appendix B) are present. Otherwise, the chamber

is empty of all but their reed mattresses and belongings in wooden trunks. A small stone hearth provides meager warmth. The door to area 3S is always kept closed but not locked.

### 3S. UNUSED ROOM

A portion of the roof and north-west wall has collapsed in this chamber, so it isn't used for anything. The door to area 3R is always kept closed but not locked.

### 3T. CULTISTS' STUDY

The six cultists who share area 3R use this chamber for studying their spellbooks and for practicing their magical craft. The chamber is empty except for three stools, three writing desks, and a basin of water.

### 3U. OBSERVATORY

The Stargazers converted the top level of the keep into an astrological observatory. The most interesting device they installed was a *farseer* of *Illusk*—a telescope-like contraption that is useful for observing and studying heavenly bodies but which can also be used in a manner similar to an *arcane eye* spell. In that mode, the *farseer* can view a location within fifty miles of it. Tuning and focusing the device this way calls for

a considerable amount of skill and practice, and the device's dilapidated condition makes the process more difficult.

Both Rezmir and Borngray visit this area frequently to study the *farseer*. The elf has had limited success with it, but Rezmir has mastered its use. Over the past year, she used the *farseer* to study Voaraghamanthar in the dragon's lair. During those spying sessions, Rezmir discovered the dragon's secret twin.

To protect this area, Rezmir enlisted the service of four **gargoyles**. They perch day and night on the four corners of the keep's roof, where they can be seen from the ground and where they can see through windows into the observatory. Only Rezmir and Borngray know the gargoyles are alive. If anyone enters the observatory without being accompanied by one of the two cult officers, the gargoyles tear open the observatory's four ceiling hatches and attack. This is the only intrusion they respond to. The gargoyles don't interfere elsewhere without direct orders from Rezmir, and she won't give such an order unless it is the direst of emergencies.

A character who inspects the contents of the



observatory recognizes the *farseer of Illusk* with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check. After its true nature is ascertained, using it to view a distant location requires a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check and a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. If the Intelligence check fails, the desired location can't be found. If the Dexterity check fails, the image is too distorted to convey any information. If the Dexterity check result is 5 or less, a key part of the *farseer* breaks off, rendering the item inoperable.

When characters find it, the *farseer* is focused on Waervaerendor's lair. This is a golden opportunity for characters to learn Voaraghamanthar's secret.

Characters might try to take this item when they leave. The *farseer* is bulky (approximately 40 pounds of brass, crystal, and wood) and fragile (with crystal lenses for focusing and delicate gears in the tuning mechanism). Worst of all, it has suffered almost two centuries of neglect and exposure. The least amount of rough handling will shatter its brittle workings and ruin it. A team of brass-smiths and sages, working patiently, might be able to remove the device from Castle Naerytar intact, but adventurers working in haste have no chance.

## BENEATH THE CASTLE

The caverns beneath Castle Naerytar are accessible through area 1S. At the top, the steps are smooth and well made. As they descend, they are rougher, make several turns, and descend about 20 feet to area 1 of the dungeon map. This subterranean area is largely the realm of the bullywugs, who breed giant frogs in the cold lake. Pharblex spends most of his time down here, as do his bodyguards and many workers.

### GENERAL FEATURES OF THE CAVE

Everywhere the walls drip water and the floor is slick with moisture. The temperature is a steady 50 degrees. There are no doors in the caverns.

**Ceilings.** Cavern ceilings are 10 feet high except where noted otherwise.

**Light.** Area 1 is brightly lit by lanterns. All other areas have no light.

**Sound.** The caverns are filled with the faint sounds of dripping water, scratching rodents, and scrabbling lizards. Sound does not carry well; the sound of a fight travels into neighboring chambers and attracts attention if the fight lasts more than three rounds.

### 1. ENTRY CAVERN

The steps down from the southwest tower of Castle Naerytar spill out into this chamber. The chamber is brightly lit by one lantern hanging next to the entrance steps and another hanging near the northwest opening to area 9. The chamber is empty. Only the sound of dripping water comes from the direction of areas 3 and 9.

Steps to the northwest descend 5 feet to area 9. Steps to the southeast ascend 5 feet to a passage that descends again 5 feet to area 3. A search for muddy footprints accompanied by a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that only bullywugs use the southeastern passage, never cultists or lizardfolk.

The water flooding the center of the chamber is little more than a puddle; it reaches a depth of 1 foot near the center. The water is slightly acidic, but not enough to cause damage. The gap in the wall connecting to area 2 is only about 3 feet high above the water, so most characters must crouch to get through.

### 2. GRAY OOZE LAIR

This chamber is the lair of a **gray ooze**, though none of the bullywugs or cultists are aware of it. Occasionally it slithers out of its chamber and eats a giant frog; the rest of the time, it stays out of sight. The ooze matches the surrounding stone perfectly and has nothing but time in which to camouflage itself. Compare the ooze's Dexterity (Stealth) check to the characters' passive Wisdom (Perception) scores to determine whether one or more of them spots it.

Searching characters do see the glint of gems beneath the water at the east end of the chamber. Fishing through that area turns up a handful of fancy and semiprecious stones worth 1,800 gp (2 × 50 gp, 5 × 100 gp, 200 gp, 400 gp, 600 gp). The gems came from a less-than-devoted cultist who throws a fistful of coins and other treasure items into area 2 every time he gets the chance. His plan is to come back to the castle after the cult leaves and collect his "retirement fund." Unknown to him, the ooze living in area 2 scoops up the items when it passes through its lair. All the items except the gems dissolve in the ooze's body. The stones fascinate the creature's tiny brain, so it "spits out" the gems in the corner and collects them. The ooze won't bother those who enter, look around, and leave. It fights back if attacked, and it attacks (probably with surprise) anyone who takes gems.

### 3. MUD ROOM

The floor of this room is flooded a foot deep with sticky, reeking mud, making the whole chamber difficult terrain. Bullywugs roll in this mud, both because they enjoy it and for obscure ceremonial purposes mandated by Pharblex. Two **bullywugs** maintain the mud at just the consistency and depth the bullywugs prefer. They don't leap to the attack when characters enter, but they are hostile and quick to anger.

The steps to the west descend steeply 10 feet to area 4. A lip of stones across the top of the steps keeps most of the mud from spilling down the steps, but enough slops over to make the steps slippery. Every character who walks down these steps must make a successful DC 8 Dexterity saving throw to avoid tumbling into area 4. The fall causes 1d4 bludgeoning damage and makes a lot of noise.

### 4. CENTIPEDE LAIR

This chamber is empty, but swarms of centipedes live in niches and alcoves lining the western wall. They are frightened away by torches, but lanterns, candles, and *light* spells don't bother them. They attack any group that isn't carrying at least one lit torch. There are two **swarms of centipedes** per party member.





## 5. EMPTY CHAMBER

The steps to the west descend 5 feet to area 6.

## 6. FROG LAKE

Pharblex and the bullywugs raise giant frogs in this water-filled cavern. The ceiling arches 30 feet overhead. The floor of the pool drops off suddenly from the shore, with the water varying from 10 to 15 feet deep.

When characters enter, a **giant frog** sits still on the island and watches them. Most characters can't see that far from the entrance with torches or lanterns. If the characters stick to the shore between the east and north entrances, the frog doesn't react. If someone enters the water or walks out onto the promontory, the frog croaks loudly and splashes into the water. Characters hear more croaking and at least a dozen splashes from area 7. If they are still in area 6 or area 7 after 2 rounds, they are attacked by twelve **giant frogs**. The frogs focus their attacks on small characters they can swallow.

Frogs move into and out of this area by swimming through a passage that opens below the water level in the southeast corner of the pool. Characters can deduce this fact if they watch the pool for 10 to 15 minutes and make a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check. The passage connects to water south of the bullywugs' huts outside the castle. Its total length is 300 feet. At 80 feet from the entrance in this pool, the tunnel branches;

the left branch leads to the surface and the right branch extends 50 feet to a dead-end. In the pitch blackness, a swimmer has few cues about which tunnel to follow. A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals which tunnel to follow.

Many bats also roost in this cavern. They can reach the outside through natural chimneys in the roof. The bats don't bother anyone normally, but if a fight breaks out, they become agitated and fill the air.

## 7. FROG LANDING

When they aren't swimming in the underground lake, most of the giant frogs in the cavern sit on this rocky shelf, occasionally snatching bats out of the air with their long tongues. There can be as many as twelve **giant frogs** here at a particular time, plus up to five **bullywugs**. The bullywugs don't join the fight if the giant frogs attack characters as described in the area 6 description. Instead, they dive into the water and watch the fight from the edge of the characters' light. If the giant frogs look likely to win, the bullywugs join in. If the giant frogs lose, the bullywugs swim for the underwater exit in the southeast corner of the pool (see area 6).

Bones of larger animals brought here by the bullywugs and fed to the frogs also litter the ground. Most disturbing of all are three sets of iron shackles anchored to the stone, with human, elf, dwarf, and halfling bones.



## 8. TADPOLE HATCHERY

Giant frog tadpoles are raised in this small pool until they are large enough to avoid being eaten by the adult frogs in areas 6 and 7. The tadpoles currently in this area are harmless to characters.

The passage from area 6 is guarded by two **bullywugs** to keep adult frogs out. They hide from enemies in area 6 if they can. They'll fight if cornered or if a fight develops in area 6 and they see a chance for victory.

## 9. CRANE

The ledge dividing area 9 from area 10 is a 15-foot drop. A wooden, crank-powered crane has been set up for lowering heavy crates of treasure down to area 10. The crane effectively triples a character's Strength score in terms of how much weight can be lifted. A wooden ladder is lashed to the ledge for climbing up and down.

## 10. MISTY ROOM

Mist flowing out of area 2 and through area 9 accumulates here to a depth of 3 feet before spilling into area 6 and dissipating. Otherwise, the chamber is empty.

## 11. FROG SHRINE

Pharblex turned this area into a shrine to his distorted notions of religion. Niches in the walls are filled with carvings of frogs ranging from the size of a fist to the size of a pumpkin. Larger carvings sit on the floor. Crude renderings of frogs are scratched into the walls around the niches and colored with chalk.

Anyone with the Intelligence (Religion) skill recognizes elements in these designs taken from the worship of both Ghaunadaur (god of slimes) and Shar (goddess of shadows), but none of these elements are used in a canonical manner. Pharblex used pieces that he saw in religious icons that arrived in treasure shipments, but he has no understanding of their real meaning. With a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Religion) check, a character also sees indications that Ramenos is venerated here. Ramenos is an ancient entity now believed to be in a deep slumber. As far as the character is aware, Ramenos was a god of one of the ancient creator races—if it was ever anything more than a legend. Judging from this chamber, whoever created this place has only the shallowest knowledge about these entities.

Unless a disturbance develops elsewhere in the caverns, the most likely place to find Pharblex is here, followed by areas 12 and 7 (in that order). Wherever he goes, **Pharblex** has ten **bullywugs** protecting him.

## 12. PHARBLEX'S SANCTUM

Pharblex comes to this chamber to contemplate the great mysteries of the universe—or so he tells his followers. This is the only place Pharblex goes alone. His bodyguards wait in area 10 or 11 while Pharblex "communes with the great powers." The chamber contains a mud-covered chair and reading table, a box of candles, and a wooden chest.

The chest is not locked, but it is trapped. If the chest is moved or if the hasp is not opened properly, six clay pots drop from concealed niches in the ceiling. Roll a d6 to determine how many pots shatter on the floor. The pots contain fine powder coated with hallucinogenic frog poison. Every creature in the chamber that is neither a frog nor a bullywug must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC equal to 11 + the number of pots that broke. A creature that succeeds on the save is unaffected. A creature that fails the saving throw succumbs to the hallucination that all other creatures in the chamber have been transformed into nightmarish, frog-like monstrosities. While affected, the creature cannot take reactions and must roll a die at the start of each of its turns. If the die result is odd, the creature must use its action and all of its available movement to move to area 6, enter the pool, and remain underwater. If the die result is even, the hallucinating creature attacks the nearest creature to it, treating it as hostile. The effect lasts for 10 minutes.

The trap can be spotted by someone who inspects the chest or the ceiling and succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. Unbroken clay pots can be saved and used as poison grenades. A pot has a 50 percent chance to break open any time it's thrown. Bullywugs and frogs of all kinds are immune to the poison's effect.

## 13. TO THE GRAYPEAK MOUNTAINS

Mist from area 10 seeps into this room and keeps it filled to a depth of two to three feet. Aside from the mist, the chamber appears empty.

It is not empty, however. A permanent teleportation circle is carved into the floor, where it is obscured by the mist. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 10 or higher spot the circle, while dispersing the mist (using a gust of wind spell, for example) reveals the circle to all.

To travel through the gate, a command word must be spoken aloud (a whisper will do). The command word ("Draezir") can be found on a paper on Rezmir's desk in area 3L or from Dralmorrer Borngray if he faces defeat with no escape. When the command word is spoken, everyone and everything inside the gate's circumference is teleported to the corresponding gate in the hunting lodge of Talis the White (see episode 7). Castle Naerytar and the Graypeak Mountain lodge were constructed by the same reclusive wizard, and this was his means of transit between the two.

## REWARDS

Award standard XP for defeated foes. If you are using the milestone experience rule, the characters reach 6th level after activating the gate.