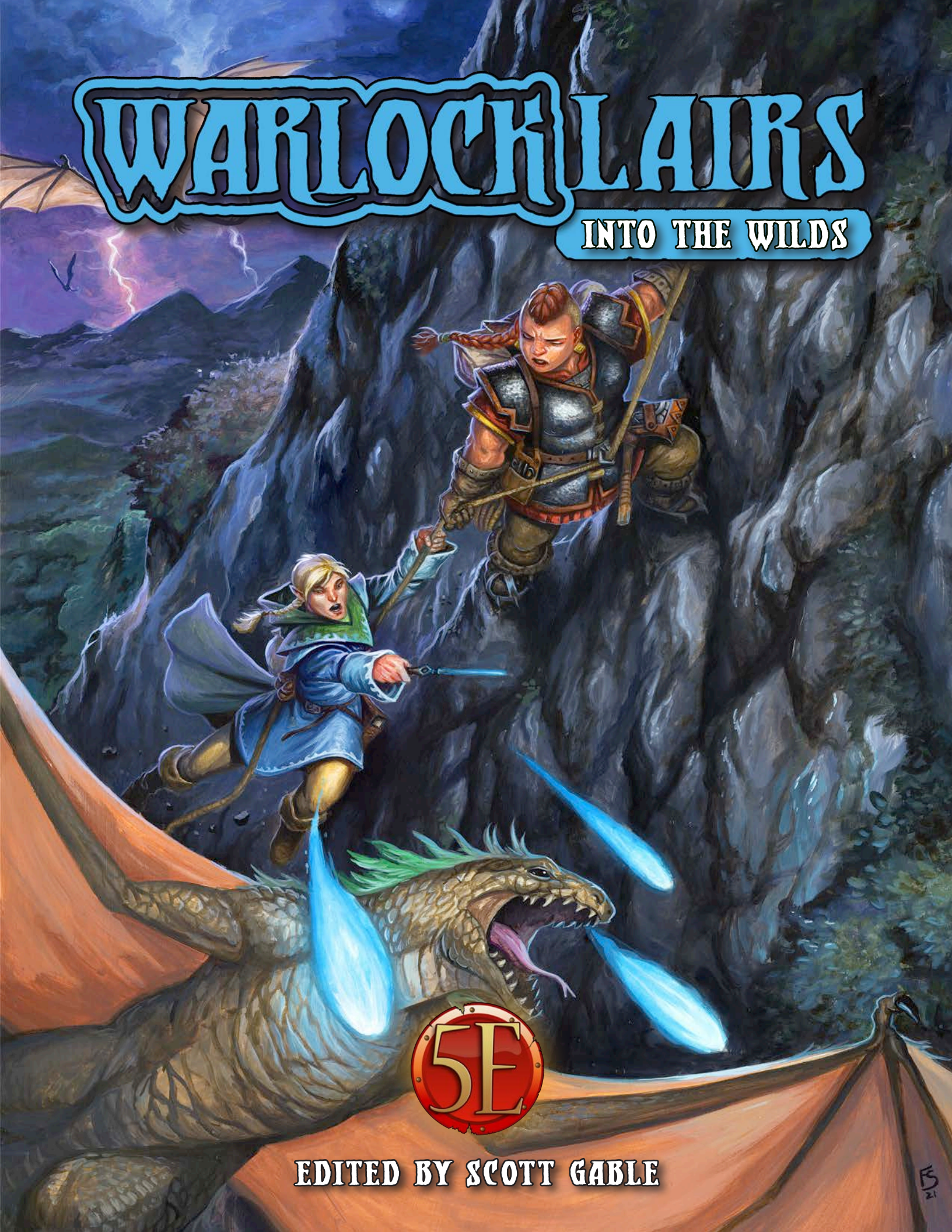

WARLOCK LAIRS
INTO THE WILDS
5E
EDITED BY SCOTT GABLE

Warlock Lairs

Into the Wilds

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Warlock Lairs: Into the Wilds brings you hand-picked selections from our *Warlock Lairs*. For this collection, we've chosen a wilderness theme with a strong emphasis on the shenanigans of fey and cultists. The focus is on Tier 2 play (so adventures for 5th–10th-level characters) but with enough lower-level adventures that those interested can create a mini-campaign from this collection, from 1st level to 10th level.

With four brand-new adventures, unique to this collection, we present you a total of nineteen adventures for your game, spanning half of Midgard and featuring the Western Wastes, Magdar Kingdom, Arbonesse and Margreve Forests, Grand Duchy of Dornig, Rothenian Plain, and Northlands—with forays into the Summer Lands and the Shadow Realm!

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aatxe (CC)	**gorgon** or **young brass dragon**
alnaar demon (CC)	**fire giant** or **glabrezu**
bagiennik (TOB)	**green hag** or **merrow** (increasing hp by 50%) or **troll** (decreasing hp by 50%)
battle mage (CC)	**ghost** or **mage** (removing 5th-level spells) or **red dragon wyrmling**
bearfolk chieftain (CC)	**gladiator** or **2 veterans**
beggar ghoul (TOB)	**ghoul**
beli (TOB)	**ettercap** or **2–3 ice mephits**
blood imp (TOB2)	**dust mephit**
bloom hydra (TOB2)	**shambling mound** (adding climb 30 ft.)
boloti (TOB)	**giant toad** or **2–3 steam mephits**
brimstone locusthound (TOB2)	**hell hound**
bucca (TOB)	**dust mephit**
cavelight moss (TOB)	**shambling mound** (decreasing hp by 50%)
centaur chieftain (CC)	**gladiator** (changing speed to 50 ft.) or **2–3 centaurs**
child of the briar (TOB)	**dryad** or **2–3 violet funguses**
chupacabra (CC)	**cockatrice** or **lizardfolk**
death butterfly swarm (TOB)	**2 swarms of poisonous snakes** (adding fly 40 ft.)
deathwisp (TOB)	**oni** or **wraith** and **specter**
dogmole (TOB)	**brown bear** or **giant toad**
dorreq (TOB)	**2 ankhegs** (decreasing hp by 25%) or **black pudding**
dust goblin (TOB)	**goblin**
eala (TOB)	**gargoyle** or **2–3 magma mephits**
elder shadow drake (TOB)	**wraith** and **specter** or **young black dragon**
execrable shrub (CC)	**gray ooze** or **1–2 violet funguses**
falsifier fog (TOB2)	**ghost**
fane spirit (TOB2)	**ghost**
fang of the great wolf (worg) (CC)	**winter wolf**
far darrig (TOB)	**druid** and **giant centipede** or **green hag**
fear smith (TOB)	**aboleth** or **guardian naga**
fey drake (CC)	**invisible stalker** or **mage** or **young brass dragon**
forest drake (CC)	**green dragon wyrmling**
fraughashar (TOB)	**ice mephit**
gloomflower (CC)	**green hag** or **phase spider**
gnarljak (TOB)	**6 animated armors** or **shield guardian** (decreasing hp by 50%)
gnomish knife cultist (CC)	**barbed devil** or **2–3 cult fanatics**
goat-man (TOB)	**minotaur**
herald of darkness (TOB)	**oni** or **young black dragon**
knight ab-errant (TOB2)	**gladiator** or **hill giant**
kobold alchemist (TOB)	**cult fanatic** or **druid**
lambent witchfyre (TOB2)	**3 will-o'-wisps**
lunar devil (TOB)	**chain devil**

mad piper (TOB2)	**gibbering mouther** or **priest**
mindrot thrall (TOB)	**mummy** or **6 zombies**
mineral ooze (TOB2)	**basilisk** or **green hag** or **ochre jelly** (increasing hp by 50%)
mold zombie (CC)	**mummy** or **6 zombies**
monolith champion (TOB)	**clay golem** (decreasing hp by 25%) or **hezrou** or **2 earth elementals** (decreasing hp by 50%)
moon drake (CC)	**young white dragon** (decreasing hp by 50%)
Moonlit King (TOB)	**archmage** (increasing hp by 100%)
moss lurker (TOB)	**bugbear** or **duergar**
nightgarm (TOB)	**oni** (decreasing hp by 25%)
owl harpy (TOB)	**4–5 harpies** or **night hag**
putrid haunt (TOB)	**ghast**
qwyllion (TOB)	**spirit naga** or **young green dragon**
ravenfolk scout (TOB)	**scout**
ravenfolk warrior (TOB)	**veteran**
razorleaf (CC)	**shambling mound**
roachling lord (TOB)	**cult fanatic**
roggenwolf (CC)	**giant boar** or **saber-toothed tiger** or **wererat**
rum gremlin (TOB)	**deep gnome** or **thug**
satarre destroyer (TOB2)	**bearded devil** or **minotaur** or **veteran**
satarre mystic (TOB2)	**bearded devil** or **green hag**
selang (TOB)	**ghost** or **succubus/incubus**
shadow beast (TOB)	**wraith** and **specter** or **young black dragon**
shadow fey (TOB)	**drow**
shadow fey duelist (TOB)	**drider** or **gladiator** (increasing hp by 25%)
shadow fey enchantress (TOB)	**mage** (increasing hp by 25%) or **oni**
shadow fey guardian (TOB)	**ettin** or **lamia**
shadow fey poisoner (CC)	**assassin** and **2 spies** or **horned devil**
shadow ooze (CC)	**basilisk** or **black pudding** (decreasing hp by 25%) or **phase spider**
shadow river lord (CC)	**bone devil**
shadow skeleton (CC)	**cult fanatic** or **minotaur skeleton** or **will-o'-wisp**
shroud (TOB)	**shadow** (decreasing hp by 50%)
snow cat (CC)	**elk** or **panther** or **wolf**
snow terror (TOB2)	**chain devil** or **frost giant**
spawn of Akyishigal (TOB)	**barbed devil** or **salamander**
spree demon (CC)	**barbed devil** or **salamander**
stryx (TOB)	**blood hawk** or **stirge**
tar ghoul (CC)	**black pudding** or **ghost**
trollkin raider (TOB2)	**bugbear** or **spy**
vættir (TOB)	**ghost**
void cultist (CC)	**thug** or **gnoll** or **hobgoblin**
void speaker (CC)	**mage** (increasing hp by 25%) or **oni**
voidling (TOB)	**horned devil**
wasteland dragon wyrmling (CC)	**blue dragon wyrmling**
wolf spirits swarm (TOB)	**ghost** (increasing hp by 100%) or **young white dragon**
zeitgeist (TOB2)	**mage** or **vrock**

THE LIGHT OF MEMORIA

For 1st-Level characters

This adventure takes place outside the village of Redtower in the White Forest (in the Magdar Kingdom). Its abandoned archway and pocket dimension, however, can be adapted to any location.

Adventure Background

Memoria is a forgotten ruin, mostly vanished into the lowland bogs north of Redtower. Its obscurity is ironic, for once, it was a settlement dedicated to Mnemosyne, goddess of memory, who has likewise suffered an unhappy fate. Centuries ago, a mysterious cult of benign necromancers founded Memoria after fleeing elven authority and condemnation in Kammae, settling in the White Forest to take advantage of the area's potent ley lines. These necromancers did not defile the dead, but rather, they utilized necromancy to interact with their ancestors, hoping to create a utopia of peaceful co-existence for the living and dead with the past and present side-by-side.

To achieve this vision, the Memorians devised a relic called the *Light of Memoria* to create a bridge to the afterlife and light the way for their ancestors' spirits to cross into the mortal world. Avoiding bloodshed, the Memorians empowered the relic with communal sacrifice of many years of their lives. When at last they enacted the ritual, however, something went wrong. Instead of their ancestors' spirits peacefully transitioning, they brought forward an army of twisted specters, wraiths, and shadows that overwhelmed Memoria.

The surviving Memorians retreated to a nearby shadow gate, but the undead followed. To prevent their mistakes from endangering others, the Memorians used the relic to sever the gate's connection to the shadow roads and sealed the undead—and themselves—in a pocket dimension called the Oubliette. Memoria and the cult of Mnemosyne who built it fell out of reckoning. The dormant gate became an eerie local curiosity, and the relic disappeared, buried by the elements.

Recent Events

A week ago, Tymon, an apprentice of Gellert the Gruesome, came investigating the archway. Unlike previous curious souls, Tymon benefited from a recent tree fall uprooting the *Light of Memoria*. Curious at the magic still stored within it, he stumbled his way through activating it enough to open the portal to Oubliette, only to fall through and drop the relic in surprise. Trapped on the other side, he has since fallen to the mercy of a wraith called the Forgotten (see **Area 10**). It has surmounted all other undead in the Oubliette, and it intends to experiment, as the Memorians did, with Tymon's living energy in order to open the portal again. The Forgotten has been trapped in a nightmare memory realm haunted by the madness and grief of the Memorians, and it craves escape to torment the living again.

Adventure Hooks

Here are some ways to bring the PCs to the arch and engage them in braving the Oubliette:

- The confluence of ley lines in the area attracts magical energy, and efforts from the Forgotten to force open the Oubliette increase the volatility of these ley lines. A magical mishap while teleporting or tapping into a ley line elsewhere in Midgard can drop the PCs nearby.
- The PCs could be drawn to the area to investigate the legendary dungeon known as the Scarlet Citadel, and the environs have several points of interest to discover, including the village of Redtower (see *Warlock 20: Redtower*) and the archway of the Memorians.
- PCs already familiar with Redtower may have met Gabe in town. He suffered nightmares after spending the night in the "lifeless clearing," prompting the PCs to investigate further.

Lifeless Clearing

The clearing containing the arch is in the northern outskirts of the White Forest in southern Magdar, near the village of Redtower. It is a barren break in the surrounding tree line with no visible cause for its lifelessness. Plants don't grow in the clearing, and animals, even insects, won't venture into it. Mounts or animal companions require a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to bring into the clearing without shying.

Nightmares. PCs sleeping in the clearing have dreams of shadowy labyrinths and being hunted by unseen creatures in a dark forest. Each PC that sleeps in the clearing must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw upon awakening or suffer one level of exhaustion.

Creatures. The first time the PCs arrive in the clearing, they discover four **bandits**, investigating the arch. One of them, Dameka, stands apart, holding the *Light of Memoria* and complaining loudly that she can't read it. Dameka and her companions reside in the White Forest, preying on adventurers drawn to the Scarlet Citadel and occasionally performing odd jobs for Gellert the Gruesome. She has never met Gellert and works primarily through his intermediaries. One such intermediary, Cagoth-ze (see the **Hapless Apprentice** sidebar), sent her in search of Tymon after the young apprentice didn't return from his task.

If the PCs aren't immediately apparent or if they sneak in closer to listen, Dameka grumbles about a "scrawny-necked apprentice" and wonders aloud why



he'd come here, suspecting he's holding out on them. Eventually, she pockets the relic, and the bandits spread out, likely flushing out the PCs. If found or if the PCs interrupt them, Dameka is relieved for an end to the boredom. She leads the attack, gleeful for the potential of better loot than Tymon's leftovers. If Dameka is killed, the other bandits flee into the forest, leaving the relic behind.

Treasure. Besides their equipment, the bandits also each have 10 gp and 2 days' trail rations, except Dameka. She has the *Light of Memoria* (see the **Light of Memoria** sidebar), 3 pp, 10 gp, two gems worth 10 gp each, and 3 days' rations. A note from Cagoth-ze, directing her to find the wayward apprentice, sits in her pocket.

THE ARCHWAY

The weathered stone arch, a looming structure almost as tall as the nearby trees, sits in the center of the lifeless clearing, one side sunken deeper into the soil than the other. A withered black vine wrapped around it is cold and unyielding to the touch, as though melded with the stone itself. Partial engravings line the arch, too old and worn to decipher.

Call from the Other Side. At sunset, midnight, and dawn—when shadows are longest and deepest—the archway flickers, its faded engravings emitting a soft blue glow. Short bursts of electricity zig-zag across the arch's opening, and for a brief moment, a glimpse into the Oubliette reveals itself. It shows a young, anguished man in tattered robes bound in shadowy chains. An ethereal voice calls for help before the glow surges and fades, ending the image.

This scene repeats again each following sunset, midnight, and sunrise, but the man, Tymon, does not look or sound identical each time. Every appearance, he is a little wearier and more desperate.

Traversing the portal in these split-second glimpses is impossible. These moments merely alert the PCs to Tymon's plight and serve as a warning that something on the other side is slowly learning how to escape.

Opening the Portal. Opening the way to the Oubliette is impossible without the *Light of Memoria*. The PCs must charge it with some of their life energy to open a portal in the archway since Tymon's bumbling drained what little magic the relic still held. If the PCs have

LIGHT OF MEMORIA

The *Light of Memoria* is a relic created by the Memorians as the magical focus of a ritual that permanently bridged their settlement with the afterlife in an attempt at peaceful coexistence with their ancestors. The relic is powered by the voluntary sacrifice of vital spirit energy.

The relic is approximately 1-1/2 feet long and painstakingly carved from a brilliant blue gemstone. Narrow at the base, the relic flutes outward, like a torch. Grooves along its length are dotted with small inlaid crystals, which are inscribed with Elven runes, altogether translated as, *We give of our years ahead to summon those whose years are behind*.

Dying Relic. The *Light of Memoria* was built to be consumed during the grand ritual. However, the ritual never fully completed, leaving the relic a glimmer of its former glory and a hairsbreadth away from collapsing into dust. The residual magic in the relic combined with the rage of the Forgotten and the spectral memories of the Memorians sustains both the relic and the Oubliette.

When the PCs find the relic, only faint sparkles of blue light in its crystals indicate it is anything but an extraordinarily carved, though cracked, gemstone. If a PC proficient in the Arcana skill studies it during a short rest, the PC understands it was the focus of a magical ritual that involved communicating with the dead. The PC also understands that the relic can be temporarily powered by the voluntary sacrifice of vital energy. The PCs need the relic to travel into the Oubliette and to return, but they also need it to better survive the perils awaiting them there.

Using the Light. As an action, a creature holding the relic can sacrifice some of its life energy to it, causing the gem to shed bright light in a 15-foot radius and dim light for an additional 15 feet. This light lasts for 24 hours and isn't reduced by the light-reducing effects of the Oubliette. The creature that made the sacrifice ages by 10 years or by 10% of its maximum lifespan, whichever is greater. Each time the relic is used in this way, new cracks appear, gradually spiderwebbing throughout it.

If charged with life energy while within 60 feet of the archway in the lifeless clearing, the *Light of Memoria* opens the portal to the Oubliette. Once the PCs cross through the portal, the duration of the light shed by the relic shortens to 8 hours, as the opening of the portal drained much of the life energy out of it.

Each time the relic absorbs a **spectral memory** (see **Memorian Specters** sidebar), the light it sheds increases by 5 feet and the duration of the light increases to 24 hours. Once it absorbs all three spectral memories, it can re-open the portal to Midgard from the Oubliette. This final act destroys the Oubliette, frees the spirits of the Memorians who have been trapped within the Oubliette for centuries, and destroys the relic (see **Memoria's Legacy**).



HAPLESS APPRENTICE

Tymon is a 17-year-old lanky human who is, ostensibly, an apprentice of Gellert the Gruesome. To be accurate, he's a hapless henchman that runs errands for one of Gellert's lieutenants, Cagoth-ze, a gnome wizard who specializes in ley line magic. Cagoth-ze uses the boy's eagerness to learn magic as a way of manipulating him into performing a variety of mundane tasks, ever-promising to teach him magic "soon." Minor magic came to Tymon through sheer stubbornness and scraps of arcane lore he snuck out of Cagoth-ze's sanctum.

Ambitious sorcery and banditry *sounded* romantic to Tymon in his former life as a bored merchant's son in Triolo. However, his time as Gellert's "apprentice" has yielded very little magical knowledge, several new scars and callouses, and much more involvement with bandits than he ever thought he'd have. Disillusionment is settling in, and Tymon's current predicament isn't helping.

Tymon uses the statistics of a **noble**, except he knows the *fire bolt* and *prestidigitation* cantrips and can cast *magic missile* once per day. He is helpful to the PCs but hangs back in combat unless coerced. During the final encounter with the Forgotten, he joins the fray without hesitation, desperate to escape his former captor. He is a little fatalistic about his life choices, something the PCs might be able to help him overcome.

difficulty figuring out what to do with the relic, it can respond intuitively to the pressure Tymon's efforts put on the ley lines and open the portal spontaneously when close to the archway.

The Oubliette

The Oubliette is a surreal realm, amputated from the shadow roads. Wedged between the Shadow Realm and Midgard, It is shaped both by the malevolent undead trapped here and by the memories and agony of the Memorians who perished here.

OUBLIETTE FEATURES

The Oubliette is unfixed in space. Each map hex is 15 feet by 15 feet, but distance becomes difficult to measure here. Travel from one area to the next is dreamlike, and while the memoryscape is not large, transitions between places stretch impossibly in perception, no matter how immediate the movement is.

Ceilings. The "ceiling" here is a dark, amorphous void. Effects or creatures moving more than 60 feet up cross the boundaries of the Oubliette and "fall," crashing back into the space they occupied. The PC doesn't take falling damage but is momentarily disoriented by the fall.

Cut Off. Magic still works in the Oubliette, but it is separated from nearby ley lines. Creatures in the Oubliette can't sense or tap into ley lines here.

Doors and Walls. Entrances and walls in the Oubliette are not solid boundaries; instead, areas blend at the edges, bleeding into one another as different memoryscapes overlap. To the viewer, the area they currently occupy seems to go on ahead and behind indefinitely. Terrain only changes visibly as the PCs pass through the boundaries.

All edges in the Oubliette lead into the void, though some are behind shadowy edifices mimicking structures. Falling from these edges is harrowing: after plummeting into darkness for 1 round, the creature appears back in the space it started, unharmed. The creature must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion and be frightened for 1 minute.

Hunting. It is impossible to hunt in the Oubliette and the PCs must rely on their own water and food.

Light. The Oubliette is utterly dark and impenetrable using only mundane light sources. Magical light sources still function but only at half their effective illumination radius.

Sleeping. PCs can take short or long rests in the Oubliette. Sleep, however, is haunted by nightmarish dreams of grasping shadows and a great city collapsing into oblivion. At the end of each long rest, the PCs must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw to gain the benefits of completing a long rest.

As the Forgotten wants the PCs to open the portal, it keeps most of its minions from pursuing them aggressively. If the PCs need more of a challenge or underestimate the dangers of the Oubliette, then resting periods are ideal times to attack with **shadows** or **shrouds** (see *Tome of Beasts*) to keep them harried and weakened.

AREA 1: THE ARCH

An intact archway riddled with cracks and shadow dominates the center of this large, obsidian plateau. Crumbled pillars surround the archway, and shadowy chains bind a young man to one of its legs.

The Apprentice. Tymon (see the **Hapless Apprentice**

MEMORIAN SPECTERS

Nearly all the surviving Memorians fell prey to the undead when they sealed the Oubliette, and these felled Memorians soon joined the ranks of undead. However, a few possessed *amulets of memory* (see **Appendix**), sacred items to this cult of Mnemosyne that protected them from corruption. These were Stefanya, Nevena, and Ivon, former pillars of Memoria and the spirits the PCs can use to empower the *Light of Memoria*.

While not forced into undeath, the three were nonetheless trapped souls, and the Oubliette took a toll on them. The permeation of rage and grief combined with the constant replaying of their worst memories, and over time, their identities fragmented. They became **spectral memories** (see **Appendix**), starved for their abandoned identities.

To restore a Memorian, the PCs must remind the Memorian of its former self. The *amulets of memory* still on the Memorians' bodies provide visions of each spirit's past, giving the PCs the information they need to restore the Memorians. Speaking a Memorian's name is sufficient to make the spectral memory stop attacking, and speaking at least one pertinent detail of the vision in the spirit's *amulet of memory* enables the Memorian to pierce its self-delusions and be restored.

If restored, a Memorian specter willingly binds itself to the relic, charging it. Destroying a spectral memory renders it dormant. It returns to lurk near its body after 2d4 hours, allowing the PCs another chance to interact with it.

sidebar) is bound to the archway by two shadowy chains. He is malnourished and has two levels of exhaustion. His rations and water are nearly gone, and he is relieved to see the PCs:

"By the gods, I can't believe you're here! You have to help me! That blue gemstone thing, do you have it? They hate that thing. Put it to the chains. I'm sure it will weaken them. Please, hurry!"

Tymon tells the PCs anything they want to know if they'll free him, but he urges haste. He warns them the Forgotten, a powerful wraith, is desperate for a way out and no doubt already knows they're here. Once free, Tymon urges them to the north side of the plateau (**Area 2**). They'll need help to use the relic and to face the Forgotten, who is not going to simply let them leave.

Breaking the Chains. Pressing the relic against the chains causes them to solidify. A successful DC 12 Strength check breaks them. Alternatively, dealing 10 damage to the chains breaks them.

Tymon's Knowledge. Cagoth-ze gave Tymon what little knowledge the gnome could find on the archway before sending their apprentice to investigate it. Tymon knows ancient mages once opened the archway during some ritual and became trapped beyond it. He suggests the PCs find the mages to enlist their help. He expresses some uncertainty if the mages are still alive, given his experience with the Forgotten, but he believes they are their best chance of learning more about the relic and using it to get out of here. Though a bit disillusioned by his time in the Scarlet Citadel, Tymon proudly claims to be the apprentice of Gellert the Gruesome. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check notices that Tymon's conviction in his claim isn't strong.

AREA 2: THE DIM PATH

Shadowed reflections of an ancient road, lined with withered trees and broken fencing, branches to the east and west. Beyond the path, a dark countryside gives way to sheer drop-offs on either side into the abyss.

Tymon prefers to head east. He knows the Forgotten most often approaches **Area 1** from the left, and he wants to find the mages before confronting the Forgotten.

AREA 3: STREETS OF MEMORIA

The ancient road rapidly transitions to a weed-strewn brick path with crumbling stone buildings along its edges. The path and buildings seem to continue indefinitely.



This place is an image of a ruined Memoria: once-elegant pillars shattered, sculptures toppled, walls gutted with gaping holes. Discarded items and mementos lie strewn around the area but dissolve into shadow when touched. The buildings on the sides are only facades, leading to a harrowing descent over the edges, as detailed in **Oubliette Features**.

Creatures. Three bodies lie in the streets. Each is a humanoid and clad in white robes but otherwise appears somewhat insubstantial. They house maddened **shrouds** (see *Tome of Beasts*), remnants of the Memorians who died here. If a creature approaches within 5 feet of a body, the body dissipates into swirling shadow, awakening the shroud within to attack.

AREA 4: THE RUINED LIBRARY

The terrain shifts to a set of black-veined marble stairs, leading to a grand archway flanked by shifting, shadowy pillars. Two joined, circular rooms lined with bookshelves stacked with books and scrolls stand beyond the archway.

The aisles between the shelves lining the area lead to sudden edges into the abyss. Tables and chairs are scattered through the room, but like the other objects in the Oubliette, they are insubstantial.

Nevena's Memory. Nevena's body, protected by an *amulet of memory* (see **Appendix**), lies in the center of the chamber leading to **Area 5**. Unlike the bodies in **Area 3**, she appears solid and possibly alive until closer investigation. A PC that examines her and touches the *amulet of memory* witnesses the memory enclosed of her greatest triumph and regret.

Read or paraphrase the following to the PC who touches the amulet:

The shadowy library vanishes, replaced by an intact room surrounded by bookshelves laden with knowledge. A woman wearing a gold diadem looks at you in concern. Looking down, you see hands that are not your own pressed onto a table covered in books and charts. Near you is a carved stone you recognize as the Light of Memoria*, and you feel a twinge of great pride for what is, ultimately, your creation.*

The woman tells you, "Sacrifice? Nevena, no! Then the elves, the Kammaens, they'll have been right about us all along."

You shake your head at your friend's narrow-mindedness. "Sacrifice can take many forms, Stefanya. The ley line provides the power, but the life energy to activate it need not be from one source. Couldn't we all make a small sacrifice, give a little of all our lives to tether our ancestors here?"

Stefanya puts a hand over her mouth in consideration, and you turn your gaze to the relic, touching it with quiet reverence. "Imagine what we'll learn!" you say. "A world where 'goodbye' is temporary. We could change everything—and perhaps be pariahs no more."

Creatures. A **spectral memory** (see **Appendix**) of Nevena lurks among the bookshelves and observes the PCs. She attacks if spotted, if the PCs attempt to leave the area, or after one of the PCs interacts with her *amulet of memory* (after the vision ends). See the **Memorian Specters** sidebar for guidance on how the PCs can peacefully interact with Nevena's spirit.

Restoring Nevena. If her identity is restored, Nevena says the following:

"The light was never meant for evil. Use it to mend the damage we've caused!" Once she vanishes into the light, her body crumbles to dust, except for the amulet.

Treasure. Nevena's body holds the *amulet of memory*. An intact *spell scroll of see invisibility* and a *spell scroll of magic circle* are within scroll cases on the bookshelves.



AREA 5: THE CROSSROADS

The terrain shifts into a quiet country road that forks. A signpost in the middle names the roads in a flowing script.

The signpost labels (in Elvish) the western road as "Loss" and the southern road as "Hubris."

AREA 6: THE SHADOW CORRIDOR

A dark corridor stretches westward.

The entirety of this corridor is pitch black, impenetrable by magical light sources of 3rd level or less. Only light from the *Light of Memoria* can penetrate the darkness.

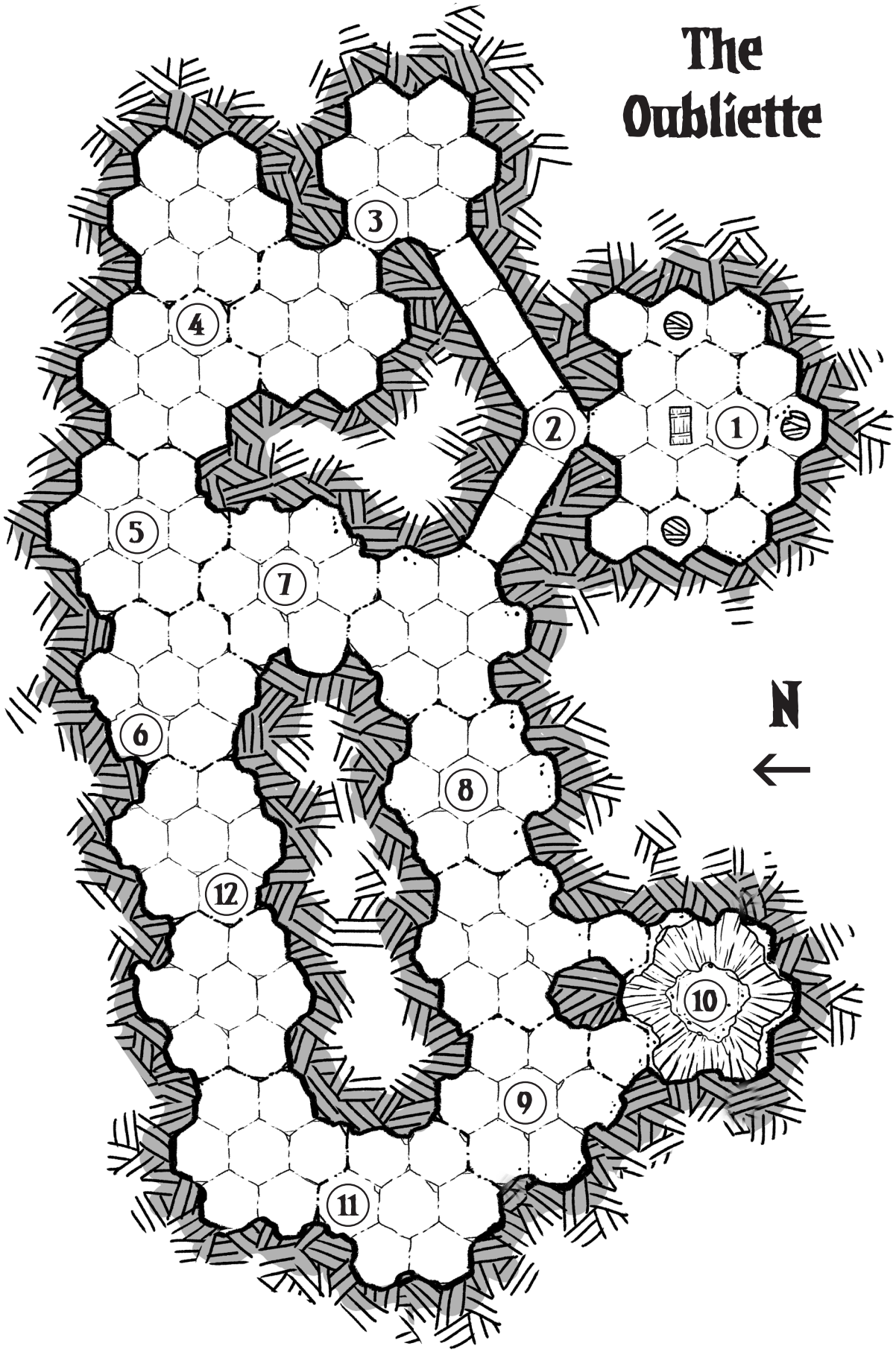
Creatures. The first time the PCs pass through this area, they disturb two **shadows** that attack immediately.

AREA 7: THE COLLAPSING WALL

The terrain shifts to a stone walkway on the ramparts of a high wall overlooking the abyss on each side.

The wall is a 15-foot-wide stone construction with sheer sides leading to rocky ground sloping off the edge. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check notices the wall isn't sound.

Hazard. The wall is damaged and at risk of giving way. Each creature that crosses the bridge must succeed on a


The Oubliette
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DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or cause part of the wall to crumble, taking 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage, and unless tethered to other creatures or to the wall, they fall into the abyss (see **Oubliette Features**). A creature that moves at half its speed across the bridge has advantage on the saving throw.

AREA 8: THE SILENT PATH

This road seems to stretch for miles, but it ends to the west in a mighty alabaster citadel, shimmering like a mirage. The length of the road is silent, and shadows flicker off to the sides.

While traveling the path, the PCs get the disturbing feeling of being watched and followed closely.

Creatures. The PCs *are* being followed: a **shroud** (see *Tome of Beasts*), born of one of the sudden deaths of the Memorians, silently trails them. It toys with the PCs' items, clothing, or equipment by staying close to the ground, tugging on clothing, tying shoelaces together, or other minor pranks. It hides in the shadows alongside the road to avoid the PCs' notice. It reveals itself with a high-pitched, mad giggle if the PCs exhibit confusion. It won't pursue if they flee from it, but it attacks if the PCs react in anger and disrupt its fun.

AREA 9: MEMORIA'S COURTYARD

The path crosses under a once-mighty gate into a large courtyard edged by silent, dark buildings and shadowy forms of market stalls. On the western side, a body lies beside a slightly insubstantial fountain, flowing with liquid shadow.

Ivon's body lies motionless beside the fountain in the western side near **Area 10**.

The paths from this chamber lead to the northwest (**Area 11**), apparently out of the citadel, to the east (**Area 8**), and to the south (**Area 10**), where two different paths vanish into darkness. Tymon, if able, advises against going south: something about it reminds him of the Forgotten's presence. Tymon says this only if the PCs haven't fully charged the relic with all three mages.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using Status (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs close the Oubliette, the PCs gain +2 to their Status with the residents of Redtower. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

Ivon's Memory. As with the other Memorian specters, touching Ivon's amulet of memory draws the investigating PC into one of his final memories:

You rush into the courtyard where the statue of Mnemosyne presides over brilliant blue waters, flowing from the fountain. The sight of it normally fills you with peace but not this night. Screams echo from everywhere, and you know the two mages by your side are among the precious few remaining. You order them to escort survivors to the shadow gate, your heart heavy.

Then, from the corner of your eye, you see a woman with pinned hair and blue robes, laden with scroll cases, fleeing from a nearby building with shadows at her heels. In her arms, you recognize the blue stone of the Light of Memoria. *Summoning your magic, you dissipate the shadows with a few well-placed blasts, but you know there are far more of them than you can handle.*

Nevena gasps, "Ivon! It's all gone wrong!"

"What happened?" You help her to her feet, gaping at her in disbelief. One minute, the ritual was underway; the next, shades erupted from seemingly every shadow in the city. "What did your relic do?"

"What it was meant to! It bridged the worlds, brought our ancestors to us, but something happened in the transition. Was it the Shadow? Was our sacrifice not enough?" She looks up at you in grief. "I thought we could bypass the bloodshed."

You knew, in your heart, you'd all asked too much of magic, but you'd prayed to finally understand the secrets of your elven lineage. "We all did. Now run." You nudge her toward the gates and pause long enough to gaze at the serene face of your goddess. "Oh, Mnemosyne, spare us your wrath." You tremble inside, reaching for your resolve. "All we have ever—all I have ever—longed to do is honor you, honor the past. Not destroy our futures."

Creatures. The **spectral memory** (see **Appendix**) of Ivon lurks in the fountain, hiding as he watches the characters. He attacks if they attempt to leave, discover him, or after one of them interacts with his amulet.

See the **Memorian Specters** sidebar for guidance on how the PCs can peacefully interact with Ivon's spirit.

Restoring Ivon. If his identity is restored, Ivon says:

"This place defiles our goddess, warping our sacred memories. I will help you end it if I can." Once he vanishes into the light, his body crumbles to dust, except for the amulet.

Treasure. Ivon's body holds his *amulet of memory*. The longsword at his side has not aged well, but its gem-studded scabbard is worth 150 gp.

AREA 10: THE WELL OF SHADOWS

The narrow corridors leading into this area have sheer drops on either side and are otherwise dark and featureless. They lead to a moat of bottomless, writhing shadows with a small bridge to a pillar in the center.

This area holds the remaining spirits of the people who inhabited ancient Memoria. Freeing them requires the collapse of the entire Oubliette (see **Escaping the Oubliette**). The central pillar is a favored place where the Forgotten contemplates its power and what it will do when unleashed upon the world.

Creatures. There is a 50% chance the Forgotten (see **Escaping the Oubliette**) is here. It attacks the PCs if they enter what it considers its abode, but it won't try to kill them until they activate the portal out of the Oubliette. If reduced below half its hit point maximum, it disappears into the well of shadows and sends a **shadow** to attack the PCs each round the PCs remain in **Area 10**. The shadows don't leave the area or pursue fleeing PCs. The Forgotten doesn't pursue fleeing PCs, hoping they will open the portal.

Treasure. Remnants of the Memorians' belongings remain scattered at the edges of the well, including gems, jewelry, silk scarves and belts, and small art objects able to withstand the test of time, worth a total of 70 gp, 1,050 sp, and 2,100 cp—if the PCs can collect it all. It takes 1 round to collect a third of the total value (rounded down).

AREA 11: THE WEEPING FOREST

The terrain transitions into a narrow corridor lined by thick, oppressive trees made of shadow. Skeletal branches form a dense arch overhead, and wailing and weeping emanate from among the trees without a visible source.

The feeling of grief permeates the forest. When a creature enters this area, and each minute it remains in this area, it must succeed a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or be convinced someone in the forest needs help, leaving the path to help the person.

Creatures. Four **shrouds** (see *Tome of Beasts*) lurk in the forest, drifting in hazy memories of rage, grief, and fear. They ignore creatures moving along the path, but they attack anyone stepping off it and into the forest.

AREA 12: THE SHATTERED ROAD

The northern part of this blasted clearing ends in an abrupt, jagged cliff. Paths from the east and west sweep into wide roads that flow toward it.

This cliff marks where the Oubliette was severed from the original shadow road. The paths out of **Area 6** and **Area 11** end at its edge, looking abruptly cut-off.

Stefanya's Memory. Stefanya's body lies near the edge of the cliff. Investigating her amulet produces a vision of her last, most painful memory:

Nevena made it a few feet from the portal before she died, overwhelmed by shrieking specters. You and your daughter, Mila, blasted them away from her but too late. Her fingers remain clasped around the Light of Memoria.

You know what you have to do. You reach out to take it, but Mila stops you and protests.

"Nevena was right," you say and gently remove your daughter's hand from your arm. "We have to cut them off from the shadow road to protect others from what we unleashed. You should go, quickly. Tell others to remember us—and not to repeat our mistakes."

"The power it takes will kill you!" she protests, but you know already.

"These things will do no less to us and to anyone else they find unless we trap them here." You reach again for the relic, but a searing, cold pain rips across your back. Turning, a hulking wraith looms before you with a deep, inhuman laugh within its formless darkness. Fire bursts on the creature's side, and you see Ivon stagger away from a pack of shadows. He is withered and drained. The wraith turns to him in rage, but Ivon looks to you.

"We can't hold them," he rasps, and then he is lost beneath a sea of shadows.

You turn back to see the relic and Mila both gone. You see a flicker, a lock of dark hair, waver through the portal. Dread and pride collide in your chest as you know what she's done, and the rumbling in the darkness confirms it. A terrible shrieking erupts all around you as the archway warps and goes dark, echoing the notes of triumphant grief in your mind before you feel cold, incorporeal talons tear into you.

Creatures. The **spectral memory** (see **Appendix**) of Stefanya lurks just over the edge of the cliff, rising to attack if she is spotted, if the PCs attempt to leave the area, or after a PC interacts with her amulet in any way.

See the **Memorian Specters** sidebar for guidance on how the PCs can peacefully interact with Stefanya's spirit.

Restoring Stefanya. If restored, Stefanya pleads with the PCs:

"I implore you, strangers, put an end to this place if you can. Allow it to defile our memories no longer." Once she vanishes into the light, her body crumbles to dust, except for her amulet.

Treasure. Aside from the *amulet of memory*, Stefanya's body holds a golden diadem worth 250 gp and inlaid with the same cresting wave symbol that appears on the amulet.

Escaping the Oubliette

Escaping requires the PCs to take the *Light of Memoria*, charged with the spirits of Stefanya, Nevena, and Ivon, to **Area 1** and use it to open the portal back to Midgard. The Forgotten doesn't plan to make it so easy. It restrained itself to allow the PCs to gather the means of their—and thus its—escape, but it reveals itself as they prepare the portal.

When the PCs activate the portal, the archway starts sparking and growing in power for 1 minute. As the portal begins to open, the Forgotten surges forward from the darkness and shrieks, *"Freedom! At last!"* It laughs as it attacks, gloating that it will claim them as its first living victims in far too long.

The Forgotten. The Forgotten is a **specter**, and it brings two **shadows** with it to slay the PCs. Ordinarily, this fight might be too difficult a challenge for the PCs, but the spirits within the *Light of Memoria* aid them against the Forgotten.

When the Forgotten attacks, an audible *"No!"* emerges from the relic as the spirits of Nevena, Stefanya, and Ivon react to the specter's presence. The relic surges with brilliance, and the light it sheds becomes sunlight, weakening the Forgotten and its shadows. The PC wielding the relic notices it begin to crumble, bit by bit.

If the encounter lasts for more than a minute, the portal crackles to life, and the Forgotten attempts to flee through it. The Forgotten won't risk being trapped here again just to kill the PCs. The PCs can pursue the Forgotten and continue the combat or let it escape, wreaking havoc best left for another adventure.

If defeated, the Forgotten unleashes an unholy screech as it dissipates. The Oubliette, no longer sustained by the Memorians nor the Forgotten's ego, warps and begins to collapse. Once the portal opens after defeating the Forgotten, the PCs have 3 rounds to escape through the portal before perishing in the collapse of the Oubliette. Once back on Midgard, they see, through the archway, the Oubliette crumble, giving way to empty darkness as the gate closes.

Memoria's Legacy

Once the gate closes, the relic pulses bright blue once more, illuminating the cracks and gaps within it, and then breaks. A fist-sized chunk of blue gemstone remains among the worthless shards, still glowing faintly. This chunk functions as a *gem of brightness* with 50 charges. If the PCs sacrificed life energy to the relic and aged as a result, the aging effects are reversed, with the PCs returning to the ages they were before sacrificing life energy to the relic.

The images of the spectral memories briefly flicker before the PCs, appearing as they did in life. Before fading, they thank the PCs. Ivon promises the PCs will be remembered, wherever the Memorians are going, and asks Mnemosyne to watch over them. Nevena hopes the PCs will not remember the Memorians unkindly; they meant to do good. Stefanya assures the PCs that Memoria can rest now, but she cautions them that the power here that inspired the Memorians to make a utopia could also be used for less benign purposes. The trio bids the PCs farewell and fades away.

The eerie feeling in the lifeless clearing vanishes, and the black vine around the arch withers to dust. Animals soon return, and in time, the plants regrow.

Concluding the Adventure

After his experiences, Tymon swears off returning to Gellert. In fact, he plans to keep an eye on this area to make sure no one comes tampering with the gate, echoing Stefanya's sentiments about its potential.

He intends to go to Redtower and start over. He knows Cagoth-ze won't be pleased with his disappearance, and he begins training to prepare himself for a possible retaliation from the gnome. To thank his rescuers, he gives the PCs his *stone of good luck*. He found it while poking around the Scarlet Citadel, and he's not entirely sure it ever did him any good. He hopes it works better for them.

The PCs may decide from here to investigate the dangers of the Scarlet Citadel (see *Scarlet Citadel*) or to rest, recuperate, and explore around Redtower (see *Warlock 20: Redtower*). They may also wish to pursue the threads of this adventure elsewhere, perhaps going to Kammae in the Seven Cities, seeking information about Mnemosyne and her unfortunate fate. They may also attempt to excavate what they can of what remains of Memoria, bringing it out of obscurity, or perhaps they have the ambition to attempt to reconstruct the shadow gate themselves.

Wrath of the Bramble King

For 2nd-Level Characters

This adventure takes place in the Margreve Forest but can be adapted to any forested location.

Adventure Background

Two centuries ago, a creature known as the Weft of Shadows broke into a minor elf noble's extraplanar vault in the Summer Lands, and stealing several powerful magic items, it deposited them in random forest locations throughout Midgard. However, thanks to an unusual set of rules involved in the creation of these artifacts, once mortal hands have touched them, the elves can no longer claim them.

Such was the case with the *Bramble Crown*, which landed in the Margreve Forest. A young orphan lost in the deep woods discovered the crown, and the boy's curiosity over the object overrode his fears about its thorns, glistening with green poison. He reached out for it. To his surprise, the thorns retracted, allowing him to grab the crown and place it on his head. As the crown settled in place, it transformed him into a plant-like fey.

The Bramble King, as he is now known, is a reclusive creature who has lived deep in the Margreve for a century and a half. His distance from most settlements keeps civilization away, and terrible bedtime stories about the Bramble King prevent most reasonable people from looking for him. As with many such stories, the warnings about the Bramble King do hold a kernel of truth. When a hunter trespasses on his territory, he threatens them with writhing, thorny vines and plants pruned in the likenesses of predatory animals. And all the thorns belonging to the Bramble King's plants are tipped with a poison that creates an itchy rash, so those who persist in intruding on his peace return with horrifying red patches on their skin.

In actuality, however, the Bramble King is a gentle soul who wishes only to be left with his creations. He often takes in lost souls and tends to their injuries before sending them back to civilization with a bramble animal escort. Perhaps ancient memories of his orphaning guide him to help those similarly lost.

This all changed when the Weft of Shadows took notice of the Bramble King's relative inactivity. It incited nearby children of the briar to envy the Bramble King's crown, and a contingent managed to wrest the crown from his head while he slept. They poisoned the vines and captured or killed many of the Bramble King's creations.

When the Bramble King awoke, he saw the devastation wreaked by the children of the briar and realized the *Bramble Crown* had been stolen. Despite the loss of his crown, he still wielded power over his surviving creations, so he sent them to the village of Cambervale. He had recently sent a lost elfmarked girl named Tremika to the village, and he reasoned the villagers must have raided his home as some sort of twisted revenge. He spoke through his creations, demanding the villagers return his crown, and when they denied having it, he instructed his bramble animals to tear apart homes in search of the prize. The Bramble King's servants now hold the village hostage while he forces villagers to search elsewhere for the crown.

Adventure Hooks

The PCs may be traveling to Cambervale following a lead on a rare herb only found near the village. They may be on other business in the Margreve but run across a villager desperate for help. Or the PCs may be searching for the *Bramble Crown* independently (see **A Strange Interlude** below), and investigations have directed them to Cambervale.

The Mad Plants of Cambervale

The PCs arrive in Cambervale to a state of verdant chaos. A thick, circular wall of thorny vines surrounds a group of villagers while a pair of badgers made of the same vines patrols. These two giant bramble badgers use the statistics for a **giant badger** with the **bramble creature** template (see **Appendix**). The Bramble King withdraws his creations if one of them is damaged; he can't risk losing more of his precious creations. It is possible for the PCs to give chase, but the wall of vines closes around the trapped villagers, who cry out for help.

The wall of vines is 20 feet in diameter and 20 feet high. Each creature that touches the wall or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d8 piercing damage and be poisoned for 1 minute. The wall can be

attacked and destroyed (AC 12; hp 10; vulnerability to fire; immunity to piercing, poison, and psychic damage per 10-foot section). A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Insight) check realizes the wall's retraction posed no immediate danger to the villagers, who are too panicked to realize the lack of threat.

If the PCs rescue the villagers, the villagers offer them thanks and a reward of 5 sp. The villagers will relate to them the sudden attack by the bramble badgers and the Bramble King's demands for his crown, spoken through the badgers. The villagers speak with horror about the attack on their village. They feared for their lives, but they do note, with some confusion, that none of the villagers were harmed during the attack. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check notices the poisonous nature of the vines, but none of the villagers have been poisoned.

The villagers are desperate to escape the Bramble King's grasp but are too afraid to confront him. They humbly offer an *alchemy jug* as a reward for ending the Bramble King's threat, leaving the details of how to the PCs.

Finding the Bramble King

The PCs have a few avenues available to them in their search for the Bramble King. If they immediately set after the bramble badgers, a successful DC 8 Wisdom (Survival) check allows them to follow the badgers' tracks. If they assist the villagers, the delay increases the DC to 12. The villagers recall the general direction to the Bramble King's abode, based on old reports about him. If the PCs overtly ask the villagers about the Bramble King's whereabouts, a successful DC 8 Wisdom (Insight) check notices a girl in the crowd nervously shifting from one foot to the other.

The girl is Tremika, the elfmarked child the Bramble King saved and sent to the village. She is reluctant to speak to the PCs. The Bramble King was nice to her (even having his "brambimals" perform tricks to delight her), and she doesn't want anyone to hurt him. In her mind, the Bramble King is mad because someone stole something he liked an awful lot, and he didn't mean to scare the others. A successful DC 11 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces her to open up about the Bramble King and give the PCs enough details to find his lair. If the PCs haven't been hostile toward the villagers, they have advantage on the check. If Tremika shares the Bramble King's location with the PCs, she asks them to promise not to hurt him.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using Status (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs return the *Bramble Crown* to the Bramble King, the PCs gain +1 to their Status with the humanoid inhabitants of the Margreve Forest and −1 to their Status with the children of the briar. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

A STRANGE INTERLUDE

As the PCs seek out the Bramble King's lair, they come across an oak tree with a pair of broken branches that touch the ground, forming an archway large enough for a person to pass through comfortably. The archway shimmers, and an elven woman composed of thousands of motes of light steps through. She addresses the PCs by name and commends them on a previous victory of your choice. She introduces herself as Daesanderena and tells the PCs she hails from the Summer Lands. Since she cannot personally retrieve the *Bramble Crown*, she asks the PCs to provide a clipping from the crown to her. She relates details on the crown (the first paragraph of the **Adventure Background** above) to inquisitive PCs and notes that possessing an infinitesimal fraction of the crown does not violate the rules preventing her from obtaining the item. She promises the PCs 100 gp if they return with the snippet of the crown.

As noted in **Adventure Hooks**, you can introduce Daesanderena prior to this adventure. If the PCs are at a loss in finding the Bramble King's lair, she can help them now that the crown has moved elsewhere.

THE BROKEN KING

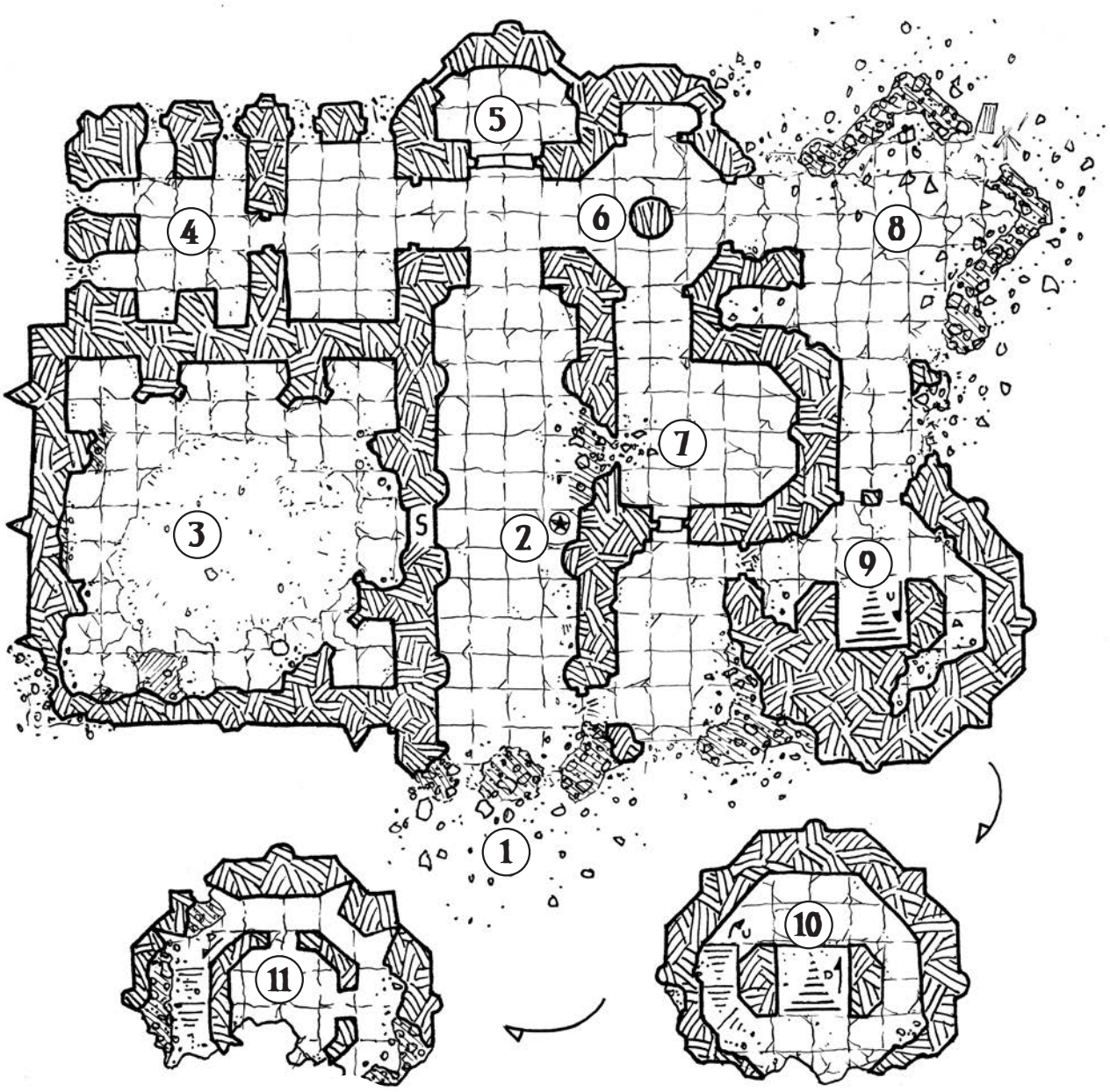
When the PCs reach the Bramble King, he is still angry about his missing crown, but his anger is tinged with despair that he will never find it again. He stands a head taller than the average human, and his body is composed of hundreds of thorny vines. Despite his physical age and appearance, he has matured very little beyond the boy who transformed into the Bramble King. He blusters and threatens the PCs when they arrive but makes no initial move to stop them from trespassing in his lair. If the PCs attack him and inflict damage, he begins to sob, leaking poisonous "tears" from his eyes. If the PCs cease attacking, he tells them about the theft of his crown and his overwhelming desire to get it back. If the PCs continue their attack, he protects himself by creating a wall of thorny vines between himself and the PCs, similar to the wall that surrounded the villagers, and commands them to leave him alone. Coaxing information out of him after a continued attack requires a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The Bramble King is a force of nature and, though distraught and without his crown, too powerful for the PCs to fight directly. The PCs must use diplomacy and tact to resolve the villagers' plight. If the PCs continue to attack him after he creates the wall, he retreats from them, disappearing

into the thorns and shadows of the forest. He keeps an eye on them either directly or through his bramble creatures and reappears if the PCs seem more receptive to conversation.

While the PCs are talking to the Bramble King, he suddenly becomes noticeably distracted shortly before his flower-like eyes widen in horror. He tells the PCs one of his creations was just murdered by a group of thorny people. He implores the PCs to stop them and expresses his hope that they will find his crown too. He promises to stop harassing the nearby villagers while the PCs undertake this mission, but he refuses to go with them, fearful of having his hopes dashed again. If the PCs ask about a reward, he indicates he will happily provide them with something wonderful if they find his crown.

The Overgrown Tower

Predating the Margreve Forest's famed Griffon Towers, the ancient Deepwood Towers stood watch within the more remote parts of the forest. These towers never achieved the same level of renown as the Griffon Towers, for even the most stalwart of soldiers could not fulfill their assigned duties. Many left the haunted woods early with their sanity intact while those who tried to persevere broke from the onslaught of chaos that attacked the towers. The woods eventually reclaimed the land occupied by the towers. Overgrowth hides the buildings from all but the most determined searches, and vegetation has returned to formerly cleared ground.



Children of the briar (see *Tome of Beasts*) have claimed the tower as their home, where they safely return after they waylay travelers in the woods. They attracted the attention of the Weft of Shadows, which asked them to steal the crown. Jealous of the Bramble King but fearful of his power, they reluctantly agreed to the task after the Weft of Shadows provided them with a magical powder to knock the Bramble King unconscious. The Weft left a pair of **shadows** behind to ensure the children of the briar performed their duties and to create a shadow clone of the crown after the children of the briar returned with it.

The tower's walls are 15 feet tall, and enough light penetrates the overgrowth to create dim light throughout the tower, except where noted.

AREA 1: ENTRANCE TO THE DEEPWOOD TOWER

The Bramble King provided directions to the tower, but the overgrowth makes it difficult to spot the tower and its entrance. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check finds the entrance among the plants. Even if the PCs don't immediately find it, they see enough evidence around the forested area to realize there is a habitable location nearby. If they fail to find the tower initially, the PCs find it after another half hour of searching, but the creatures in the compound are aware of their presence. Just inside the entrance, the PCs find a flayed giant bramble lizard—the "creation" the Bramble King lost while speaking with the PCs.

AREA 2: HALBERD-WIELDING STATUE

The inner part of this hallway is the most intact section of this building. A secret door to **Area 3** hides among the overgrowth on the western wall's masonry. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a thin line of damaged vegetation that marks the outline of the door. A statue of a heavily armored humanoid stands at the center of the hall along the eastern wall (marked with the star) and faces the secret door to **Area 3**. The statue's right hand holds a stone halberd, which forms the basis of a simple trap left by the children of the briar. The hole in the wall next to the statue is filled with rubble and is only big enough for Tiny or smaller creatures to squeeze through into **Area 7**.

Falling Halberd Trap. When a creature opens the secret door to **Area 3**, a trip wire snaps, releasing the halberd to fall in the spaces between the statue and the door. Each creature between the statue and the secret door when the trap triggers must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Prevention. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices the trip wire hidden among the thick grass covering the floor. Alternatively, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a fracture on the right wrist of the statue where it was broken and reattached to form the trap. A successful DC 12 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check harmlessly detaches the trip wire from the halberd. A character without thieves' tools can attempt this check with disadvantage, using any edged weapon or edged tool. On a failed check, the trap triggers. If no creatures are between the statue and the door when the trap triggers, the halberd loudly but harmlessly clatters to the floor.

AREA 3: FOREST DRAKE AND FALSE CROWN

This chamber is open to the sky and filled with a mound of weed-covered soil. A **forest drake** (see *Creature Codex*), charged by the children of the briar to guard the crown in its possession from "despoilers of the forest," prowls the room. If the drake is alerted to the PCs' presence (such as by the PCs triggering the trap outside the secret door), it climbs 10 feet up the overgrown wall and waits to ambush them from above. (The overgrowth on the tower obscures its full dimensions, which helps to hide the existence of this room.)

If the PCs get the drop on the drake and choose not to attack, they can convince the creature they are not despoilers of the forest with a successful DC 13 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check. If a PC exceeds the DC by 5, they convince the drake to hand over the thorny crown in its possession. A druid PC has advantage on Charisma checks when interacting with the drake.

Unknown to the drake, the thorny crown in this room is a fake, crafted by a child of the briar and given to the drake to perpetuate the ruse. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check makes it clear the crown has no power other than a glamour to make it seem magical. If the PCs are on friendly terms with the drake, they can convince the creature to join them in searching for the real crown with a DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The PCs have advantage on the check if they play on the drake's anger at being fooled. The drake's name is Zariss and only joins the PCs long enough to take his revenge on the children of the briar. After they obtain the crown, Zariss leaves the PCs with the warning to not despoil the forest. If the PCs make a particularly good impression on Zariss, he may return and aid them at a later time if they are ever in the Margreve Forest again.

AREA 4: SHADOWY ALCOVE

Unnatural gloom permeates this alcove, filling the area with darkness. Two **shadows** are finishing up the creation of the shadow copy of the *Bramble Crown*. Because they are focused on their task, they are not alerted to the PCs' presence. When combat starts, one of the shadows places the shadow copy of the crown on its head and attempts to escape through one of the openings in the wall while the other shadow stays behind to delay the PCs.

AREA 5: COMMANDER'S OFFICE

A rotting wooden desk holds some slightly moldy papers, detailing the last harrowing days of the final group stationed in the tower. The papers describe spirits and ghosts assaulting the tower for weeks and end with an entry about the captain's reluctant decision to abandon the tower. A gold band studded with sapphires worth 25 gp sits in what remains of the desk's bottom drawer.

AREA 6: SEALED WELL

A **mineral ooze** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) has infested this well since shortly after the soldiers abandoned the tower. It attacks any who come near its well, including any children of the briar. The children lost some of their number to the ooze and have since used the hole in the wall between **Area 2** and **Area 7** to travel deeper into the tower.

AREA 7: FLOWER-OVERGROWN KITCHEN

Excited by the prospect of carnage, two **execrable shrubs** (see *Creature Codex*) took up residence in the tower's kitchen when the children of the briar moved in. They are accompanied by a **child of the briar** (see *Tome of Beasts*) who keeps watch through the hole in the wall between **Area 2** and **Area 7**. As the companions to whichever child of the briar is on watch, the shrubs are often the first to feast on any intruders. If alerted to the presence of the PCs, this group might use the door in **Area 7** to ambush the PCs from behind.

AREA 8: COMMON ROOM

The children of the briar use this relatively spacious area to experiment with the *Bramble Crown*, channeling their energy through it to manipulate plants near them. Discarded remains of misshapen bramble creatures litter the floor, marking their failures. After dozens of attempts, they managed to create a deformed giant bramble spider: use the statistics of a **giant wolf spider** with the **bramble creature** template (see **Appendix**). Two **children of the briar** ride the newly created monster to attack intruders.

AREA 9: STAIRS TO THE BATTLEMENT

A tangle of thorny vines fills the base of this battlement but doesn't climb the stairs. Each creature that touches the vines or hits them with a melee attack while within 5 feet of them must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 9 (2d8) piercing damage. The vines can be attacked and destroyed (AC 12; hp 10; vulnerability to fire; immunity to piercing, poison, and psychic damage per 10-foot section). Hacking through the vines alerts every creature in the tower to the PCs' presence. A creature can squeeze through the vines without alerting the tower's residents, but it must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 4 (1d8) piercing damage for each 5 feet it moves through the vines.

AREA 10: MID BATTLEMENT

If the PCs reach this spot without unduly alerting the tower's current residents, they clearly hear an argument from above.

AREA 11: THE BATTLEMENT'S CROWN

Three **children of the briar** fight over the *Bramble Crown*, each arguing it is the most suited for the item. The crown rejected each of them after a short time, as it is bound to the boy who became the Bramble King, but each is convinced the crown will be swayed to its side with time and persuasion. They briefly set aside their differences to attack intruders.

Development. The *Bramble Crown's* centuries of being attuned to the boy-turned-Bramble-King have given it a limited sentience and tied it inexorably to the Bramble King. It desires to be returned to him and projects this desire continuously at whichever creature is holding it. If the bearer promises to return the crown to the Bramble King, it quiets its projections for 1 hour. It can sense the direction of the Bramble King and grows more insistent if its bearer carries it in the opposite direction.

The *Bramble Crown* is not happy being worn by any creature other than the Bramble King and only tolerates such creatures for 1 hour. Afterward, it becomes quiescent and appears nonmagical until a creature it believes can return it to the Bramble King is within 30 feet. Once such a creature is within range, it calls out to the creature for assistance in returning it.

PCs attempting to take a clipping from the crown for Daesanderena face a challenge: it is physically impossible to cut the crown unless the crown permits it. A successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces the crown to allow a PC take a clipping. A PC has advantage on this check if it promises to return the crown to the Bramble King.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs return the *Bramble Crown* to the Bramble King, he is delighted and rewards them with a *bag of bramble beasts* (see **Appendix**). Because of the PCs' assistance, the Bramble King is open to making an arrangement with the nearby village for mutual protection. This gives the Bramble King a little more insight into his neighbors and the goings-on of the area outside his section of the forest. It also provides the villagers safe passage into parts of the forest to harvest herbs and fruits, though the Bramble King doesn't agree to allow logging in the forest. Finally, if the PCs have been unable to obtain a clipping from the crown, the Bramble King gives them one.

The Weft of Shadows is aware of Daesanderena's involvement, and if the PCs encountered the shadows in **Area 4**, it becomes aware of them as her champions. If the PCs destroy the shadow with the copy of the *Bramble Crown*, the Weft of Shadows is annoyed at the setback but doesn't immediately plot revenge against the PCs unless they interfere again.

If the PCs return the clipping from the crown to Daesanderena, she pays them 100 gp, as promised.



THE EMPTY VILLAGE

For 2nd-Level Characters

This adventure begins in Fjellgard, a remote village in Trollheim (in the Northlands), and leads to the Shadow Realm. It can easily be adapted to any isolated settlement.

Adventure Background

For centuries, the cheshirians have stalked prey on Midgard from a seldom-traveled section of the Shadow Realm they call the Forlorn Roads. Their peculiar magic allows them to reach from the Shadow Realm into Midgard and drag their victims onto the Forlorn Roads. These lost and bewildered creatures then become easy prey for the cheshirians. Fortunately, it is only the inhospitable Northlands that are tied to the Forlorn Roads, preventing the cheshirians from hunting far across Midgard. It was during one of these hunts that the cheshirian Ariaira witnessed a group of adventurers rescuing a comrade she had transported to the Forlorn Roads. Seeing the group's heroism and comradery awoke a desire for companionship in Ariaira—a desire foreign to the solitary cheshirians—and she began to comprehend the loneliness of her existence. While contemplating her new desires, she decided the best way to obtain friends was to do something brave to help people, just like the adventurers she saw.

Such an opportunity arose, at least in her mind, when she stumbled upon a death cult intending to bring about the end of existence by calling forth a powerful, fiery demon lord to flood the world by destroying the ice in the Northlands. Knowing she couldn't stop the catastrophe, she decided the best thing she could do was move potential victims to her territory in the Forlorn Roads where they could avoid disaster.

Her first target was Fjellgard, a remote human village in Trollheim. Her efforts proved disastrous as nearly everyone she pulled into her realm became fearful or aggressive. Her attempts to calm people by describing the apocalyptic future awaiting them only made the situation worse. Fearful of the cheshirian, some attacked her while many others fled. Confused, she retreated, leaving the villagers scattered throughout the caves she called home. To make matters worse, Kettek, another cheshirian who had been hiding unnoticed nearby, grew jealous of Ariaira's "hoarding all the prey for herself." He brought in a host of monsters to join him in hunting the people of Fjellgard without Ariaira's knowledge after she ran from the villagers.

Adventure Hooks

A courier acting on behalf of Uffi Toothless tasks the PCs with checking on the village of Fjellgard. The jarl expected a dispatch from the village 2 days ago and has not received it. The courier offers 100 gp for the PCs to discover the reason for the delayed dispatch and deal with any troubles the village might be experiencing that are causing the delay. Alternatively, the PCs may travel to Fjellgard to meet with a sage in the village who has information the PCs need. Or the PCs simply could be looking for the nearest place for shelter in the unforgiving Northlands.

Half-Eaten Food, Still Warm

Ariaira planned the village's forced evacuation carefully. She selected a couple of young children to whisk away first. After speaking with the children to convince them of the game they were playing, she picked up enough of their voices to mimic them. She pretended to be the children to lure other villagers to a small clearing north of Fjellgard where she had found a way to temporarily thin the divide between Midgard and her lair in the Forlorn Roads. By some quirk of the magic that allowed her to create the portal, any creature that passed through the portal was stuck in the Forlorn Roads unless it used the same portal to leave the realm. Within days, the missing villagers became a lure in and of itself for the other villagers, quickly depopulating Fjellgard. Proud of her accomplishments, she was utterly unprepared to handle the villagers' reactions to her "good deed."

When the PCs approach Fjellgard, they spy the familiar sights and smell the familiar scents of a thriving village. Smoke from various fires rises above the buildings, dogs give chase to one another just outside the village, the aroma of a freshly cooked communal meal wafts gently by as the wind shifts. A successful DC

14 Wisdom (Perception) check notices that there are no sounds coming from the village other than those made by animals. There is no metal-on-metal sound from a smith, no sawing or hammering of wood, and most eerily, no conversation or shouting of children.

As the PCs pass into the village proper, they see no inhabitants. It looks as though everyone in the village left in the middle of their meal. The relative heat of the food and the state of the cookfires indicate the villagers left scant minutes before the PCs arrived. PCs who investigate notice no signs of struggle and no bloodshed. The weapons in the village rest in scabbards or on walls, or they are propped up against chairs, showing a lack of violence. The villagers' homes reveal no obvious attempts to flee the village. Necessities for travel, such as warm clothing and blankets, remain where they should be. Likewise, the PCs find personal treasures like gems and family jewelry in many homes. Unscrupulous PCs can gather various items worth a total of 50 gp from the homes.

A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival) check notices a large amount of recent tracks that lead out of the village to a clearing north of Fjellgard. As the PCs approach the clearing, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check hears faint cries for help, originating from the clearing. These cries come from an invisible and out-of-phase Ariaira, who has taken notice of the PCs. Since she is using voices unfamiliar to the PCs, they have disadvantage on their Wisdom (Insight) checks to determine whether the voices are fake. Each PC that enters the clearing is magically transported to Ariaira's redoubt (see **Meeting Ariaira** and **Area 5**).

The Forlorn Roads

The Forlorn Roads are in a perpetual twilight, like the rest of the Shadow Realm. Colors are muted, light doesn't seem to penetrate the darkness as easily, and the entire realm is dimly lit by some unseen source. Ariaira's lair is within a small cavern on the Forlorn Roads and unless otherwise stated is in complete darkness.

MEETING ARIAIRA

Ariaira (a **cheshirian**, see **Appendix**) approaches the PCs when they arrive in **Area 5**. Knowing the PCs aren't from the village, she hurriedly explains that she needs their help to calm the villagers. She states she is only trying to save them. If questioned about what she is saving them from, she mentions something big is coming and proclaims, "When the beacon is lit on top of the world, ice will fall and floods and fire will consume the world." Ariaira assumes a dire warning will impress the severity of the situation on the PCs and get them to act on her behalf.

A successful DC 12 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check assures Ariaira that the PCs are friendly, convincing her to reveal more information about her recent actions. She tells them about her attempt to be a hero, and she explains that she "rescued" the villagers because she overheard the death cult's plans. She expresses shame at her lackluster first attempt at saving people, and she hopes the PCs can help her convince the villagers to hear her out. She understands if the villagers want to return to Fjellgard and agrees to let them return if the PCs can help her talk to them first. If the PCs insist on compensation for their assistance, she offers all she has in return for their help (see **Area 5**). If she is to return the villagers to Fjellgard, she will need to stay in **Area 5** to protect the fragile link. If asked, she sketches out her lair in the dirt for the PCs (excluding **Areas 11–14**, of which she has no knowledge).

If the PCs attack Ariaira, she uses her Out of Phase ability and flees, returning regularly to make furtive attempts to convince them of her sincerity.

AREA 1: HUNTING PARTY

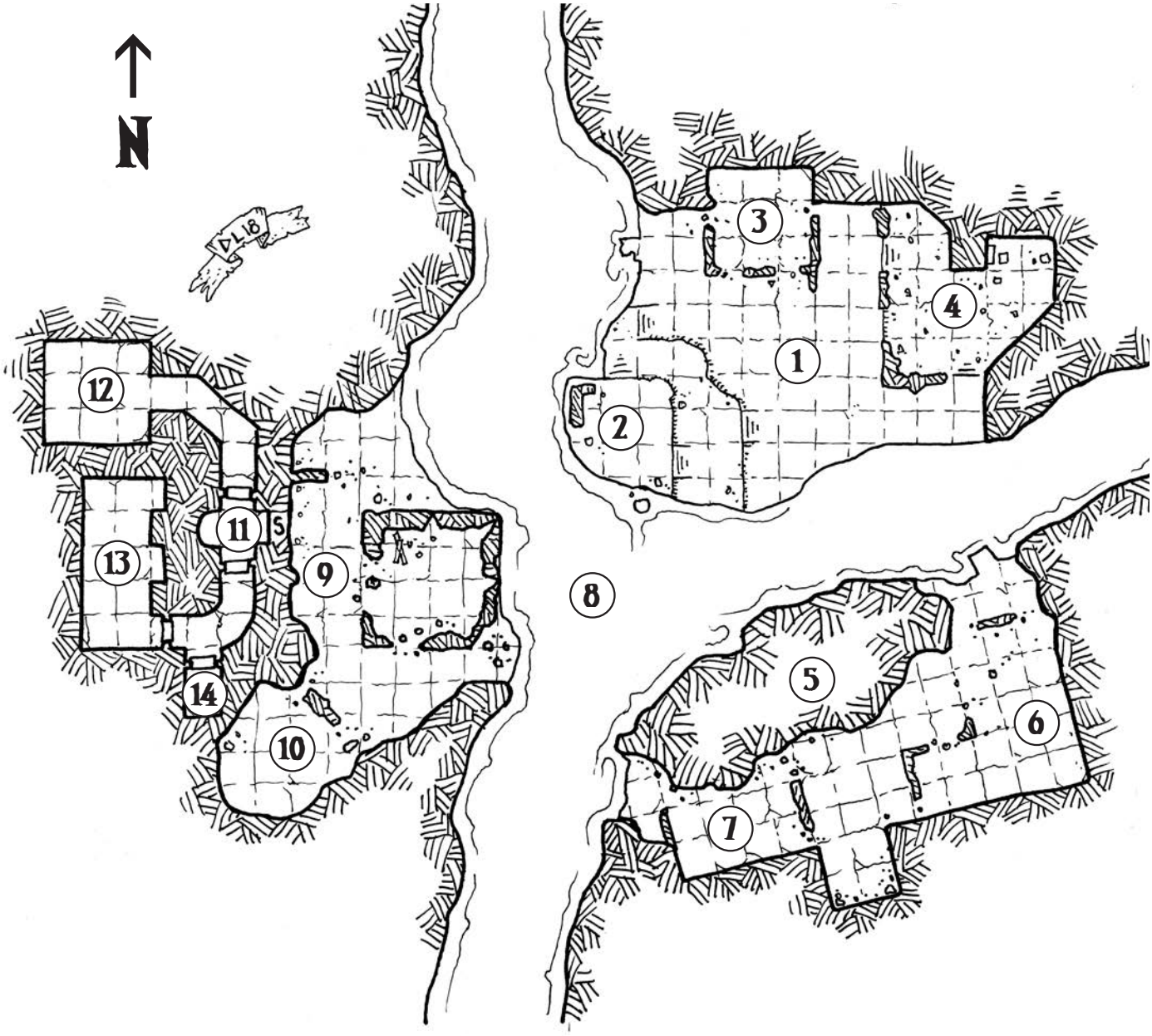
Despite the cheshirians' general dislike of other fey, Kettek found it expedient to involve three **fraughashar** (see *Tome of Beasts*) in his hunt for the villagers. Kettek knew he wouldn't be able to hunt all of the villagers at one time, and the fraughashar were easy to persuade into joining him in his sadistic scheme. The arrival of the PCs alleviates the fraughashars' growing boredom. While they prefer to dispatch intruders themselves, they have no problem goading the PCs into **Area 3** where they know Kettek's hunting "hounds" rest.

AREA 2: BROKEN STATUE

A single **beli** (see *Tome of Beasts*) awaits atop this terraced section of the caverns amid debris from an unidentifiable, tentacled statue. Allied to the fraughashar and curious about the spoils promised to them by Kettek, the beli invisibly followed the group to this realm where it remains unseen as it observes the fraghashar in **Area 1**. It only attacks when creatures other than its allies climb up to this area or if the PCs slay two of the fraughashar in **Area 1**.

AREA 3: HUNTER'S KENNEL

A pair of **darkmantles**, Kettek's trained hunting companions, rest on the ceiling of this chamber above the headless bodies of four villagers. The two have been instructed to stay in this chamber until called by Kettek for another hunt, but they attack any creature that enters the room or disturbs the bodies of their latest meals.



AREA 4: CONSERVATORY OF THE DEAD

Kettek and his companions killed dozens of Fjellgard's villagers in the initial assault. The bodies that weren't immediately consumed were piled here for later. Unbeknownst to Kettek, one of his companions had violet fungus spores on its clothing. The spores quickly took hold in the remains, and now four full-grown **violet fungi** inhabit the room, steadily consuming the corpses.

AREA 5: ARIAIRA'S REDOUBT

Ariaira keeps a modest room tucked into a hollowed-out rock abutting the new stream. The only entrance and exit is to the north, and it sits higher in the wall above the water line. A successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check is required to reach the entrance if the water level in **Area 8** is below 5 feet. A slight shimmer in the air in the center of the hidden chamber is the only indicator of this room's magical connection to Midgard.

Treasure. Ariaira keeps items she obtained from her hunts in a small recess, but her growing desire to be heroic and save people fills her with guilt when she thinks of them. She is happy to part with her treasures if the PCs are willing to help her. The recess holds a variety of rings, necklaces, and gems, totaling 150 gp.

AREA 6: DEN OF SPIES

Two **spies** in service to the Queen of Night and Magic hide in this room. They occasionally scout the remainder of the lair to give the shadow fey in **Area 7** updates on Kettek and his followers.

AREA 7: PORTAL-SEEKERS

The Queen of Night and Magic, aware of the cheshirians' magical talents, sent four **shadow fey** (see *Tome of Beasts*) to investigate after she noticed a long-lasting cheshirian portal on the Forlorn Roads. These shadow fey haven't seen Ariaira yet, but they know they are close to finding the location of the portal. The queen instructed them to destroy the source of the portal quietly and return without anyone the wiser to maintain peaceful relations with the cheshirians. Kettek's presence has kept the shadow fey in hiding as they work to destroy the portal without being discovered. They see the PCs as an opportunity to achieve their goal without getting directly involved.

If the PCs are open to conversation, the shadow fey offer them 50 gp to kill Kettek and destroy the portal. They promise an emissary of the Queen of Night and Magic will pay them on the Midgard side of the portal if it is successfully destroyed. They can't help the PCs directly since their mission is a covert one, but they can let the PCs know that Kettek exists and that he has scattered allies throughout the lair. Like Ariaira, they are unaware of **Areas 11–14** and can't advise the PCs on those locations.

AREA 8: THE COLD STREAM

After figuring out how to create the link to Midgard from her lair in the Forlorn Roads, Ariaira used her magic to divert a stream through her lair, so the villagers would have a fresh supply of water. Since she had never used her powers to do something as grand as this before, her initial attempt flooded the caverns. After letting the water level subside, she renewed her efforts. Her unstable magic causes the stream to vary in depth, either 2 or 5 feet throughout the day. When the stream is lower, it is difficult terrain. When it is higher, a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check is required to stay afloat. A creature with a swimming speed automatically succeeds on this check.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using Status (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs return the survivors to Fjellgard, the PCs gain +2 to their Status with the villagers and +1 with Uffi Toothless. If the PCs honor any promise they made with the shadow fey, they gain +1 to their Status with the Queen of Night and Magic and her allies within the Court of the Shadow Fey, but they suffer a −1 if they do not. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

AREA 9: PROWLING THE RUINS

Three **snowcats** (see *Creature Codex*), more of Kettek's hunting pets, prowl this area, which is dimly lit by torchlight that is leaking through the blockade built by Fjellgard's villagers in **Area 10**. The blockade frustrates the snowcats, and they dislike the stream cutting off the rest of the lair. They are hungry and perk up at the arrival of the PCs. If they hear commotion from the stream, they hide within the ruined building where they wait to launch an ambush.

AREA 10: LAST STAND OF FJELLGARD

Fifteen villagers (use **commoner** statistics for the five of them that are old enough and well enough to fight) banded together in this easily defensible section of the lair. Under the leadership of a **guard** named Jakob, they grabbed what material they could, while avoiding the monsters stalking them, and erected a makeshift barrier. They attempted to leave as few gaps as possible to avoid being targeted by arrows, so their field of view is limited. The villagers are distrustful of everything they hear, believing it to be more lies from the cheshirians. A successful DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces the villagers that the PCs mean them no harm. It requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to breach the barrier. If the PCs attempt to breach the barrier without the villagers' permission, the villagers attack as soon as they have an opening.

AREA 11: KETTEK'S LOBBY

The entrance to a hidden section of Ariaira's lair escaped her notice when she first settled here. Kettek, who intentionally sought a secret place from which he could observe Ariaira, quickly found the door to this area and made himself at home in the confines beyond. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds the almost invisible seams marking the door. The door is unlocked, but it is trapped.

Shard Sphere Trap. When a creature opens the door, a rusted iron sphere falls to the ground and explodes in a shower of metal shards. Each creature within 15 feet of the door must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) piercing damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Prevention. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check locates a lead wire from the door connected to a group of wires holding the sphere in place overhead. A successful DC 12 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check disables the lead wire harmlessly. A character without thieves' tools can attempt this check with disadvantage using any edged weapon or edged tool. On a failed check, the trap triggers.

AREA 12: SAVED FOR LATER

Eight villagers (use **commoner** statistics) are locked in this room, Kettek's prisoners. If they hear the PCs attempting to break into the room, they try to gain the PCs' attention. They are afraid of Kettek and welcome any attempt at rescue. Unfortunately, they do not have the tools to disable the lock and have spent their time formulating plans to rush the cheshirian when he comes for them. If the PCs free the villagers before confronting Kettek, six of the villagers rush to **Area 10** to rejoin their families while two stay with the PCs to seek vengeance against the cheshirian.

Locked Door. The door leading into this chamber is locked. A successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the lock. Kettek in **Area 13** possesses the key to this lock.

AREA 13: KETTEK'S DOMICILE

The **cheshirian** (see **Appendix**) Kettek resides here, devising a plan to capture the remaining villagers in **Area 10**. When the PCs arrive, he attempts to deceive them into believing Ariaira is a monster hiding behind pleasantries. He claims she was the one who brought all the creatures to terrorize and kill the villagers. He further tries to convince the PCs he is working to rescue the villagers. To bolster this ruse, he makes a show of magnanimously offering to return the villagers to their home. He falsely explains that he has captured the villagers in **Area 12** to help him convince the larger group in **Area 10** to allow him to teleport them all back home at once—an easier feat than teleporting them individually. No matter how the situation plays out, he uses his Out of Phase action and leaves only his smiling mouth visible as he talks.

Kettek has a *constant dagger* (see **Appendix**) and uses it in place of one of his claw attacks. The chamber holds a comfortable mattress, which the cheshirian stole from another village, but is otherwise sparse.

AREA 14: ILL-GOTTEN GAINS

Kettek stores a smattering of items taken from his victims here. The cheshirian expects no one to make it this far, so the treasure is unguarded and in plain sight. This chamber houses a *potion of healing* and a collection of coins, gems, and jewels, worth a total of 250 gp.

Concluding the Adventure

If Ariaira survives and the PCs help her explain her motives to the villagers, she becomes an ally of the PCs. She doesn't join them on adventures, but she keeps an eye on them while they are in the Northlands. She might come to their aid in a time of need or pull them into the Forlorn Roads just in time to save them from a bad situation. Before they leave, she asks the PCs to teach her how to be heroic, and she works to improve the lives of others through her peculiar magic—starting with helping the villagers of Fjellgard.

If Ariaira does not end the adventure on good terms with the PCs, she reverts to her old hunting habits after the PCs escape through her portal with the villagers. She works to undermine the PCs while they are in the Northlands, subjecting them to inconvenient or dangerous practical jokes.

If Kettek survives, he seeks revenge on the PCs. If he survives and Ariaira was rejected by the PCs, he sways her to his side, and they hunt the PCs together. Kettek actively targets friends and relatives of the PCs, advertising his involvement in their accidents or deaths.

If the PCs promised to slay Kettek and destroy the portal for the shadow fey in **Area 7** (Ariaira permanently disables the portal after the villagers are returned to Fjellgard if the PCs help her talk to them), the Queen of Night and Magic sends an emissary with the promised 50 gp to the PCs. She makes note of their assistance and may seek out the PCs in the future.

If the PCs rescue the villagers, the people of Fjellgard offer 50 gp worth of jewelry and general supplies as a reward. They host a feast in the PCs' honor and commemorate the event annually. The PCs can broker a peace between Ariaira, if she survives, and Fjellgard, and she promises to watch over the village—without stealing them away to the Forlorn Roads.

If the PCs were contacted by Uffi Toothless, then after the villagers return to Fjellgard and recover the dispatcher, the jarl's courier pays the PCs the promised 100 gp.

The Bagiennik Game

For 3rd-Level Characters

This adventure takes place near Tuwold, a small hamlet east of Reywald and nestled at the edge of the Arbonesse Forest (in the Grand Duchy of Dornig), but it can be adapted to any swampy location on the outskirts of civilization.

Adventure Background

Little man of wood and soil, angry first then sad and loyal, strange faerie of inconstant mood, your rooty home so soft and crude...

In humble Tuwold, the youth have invented a deadly game. The lair of an inconstant **bagiennik** (see *Tome of Beasts*)—within the ruined chambers of an elven temple buried under the swamp—has been discovered not far from the hamlet. The youth have been taunting the creature, hoping to have it knock them unconscious where they "die" for a short time before being revived by the bagiennik. Otherwise, they've not explored the sopping elven ruins.

The story begins when one of the participants in the game doesn't return home. Concerned, the hamlet elders send word to the city of Reywald asking for adventurers to investigate. Arriving in Tuwold, the characters are met by irate adults and nervous youngsters who are reluctant to tell the truth. Whether they gain the youths' trust or not, the party strikes out to find the missing child.

Arriving at the ruins, the characters discover quickly that the bagiennik isn't the only inhabitant. The lord of the ruins, a foul-tempered **far darrig** (see *Tome of Beasts*), has taken the unconscious boy from the agitated bagiennik into the depths of the ruins. As they search for the youth, the party discovers the temple is overrun with dark fey that have no intention of allowing the party access to their home. A watery and muddy tromp through the ruins eventually leads to a confrontation with the far darrig who might trade for the boy but otherwise must be defeated.

Tuwold

Tuwold is a small community less than an hour walk from Reywald. Its chief export is timber from the nearby forest. There is a general goods store that sells most common equipment and provisions for market price. It has no inn, but a single-room bar, named Lost Steps, serves surprisingly good beer. Once a year, some nobles from Reywald come to drink the beer and spend a weekend "roughing it" in tents near the hamlet.

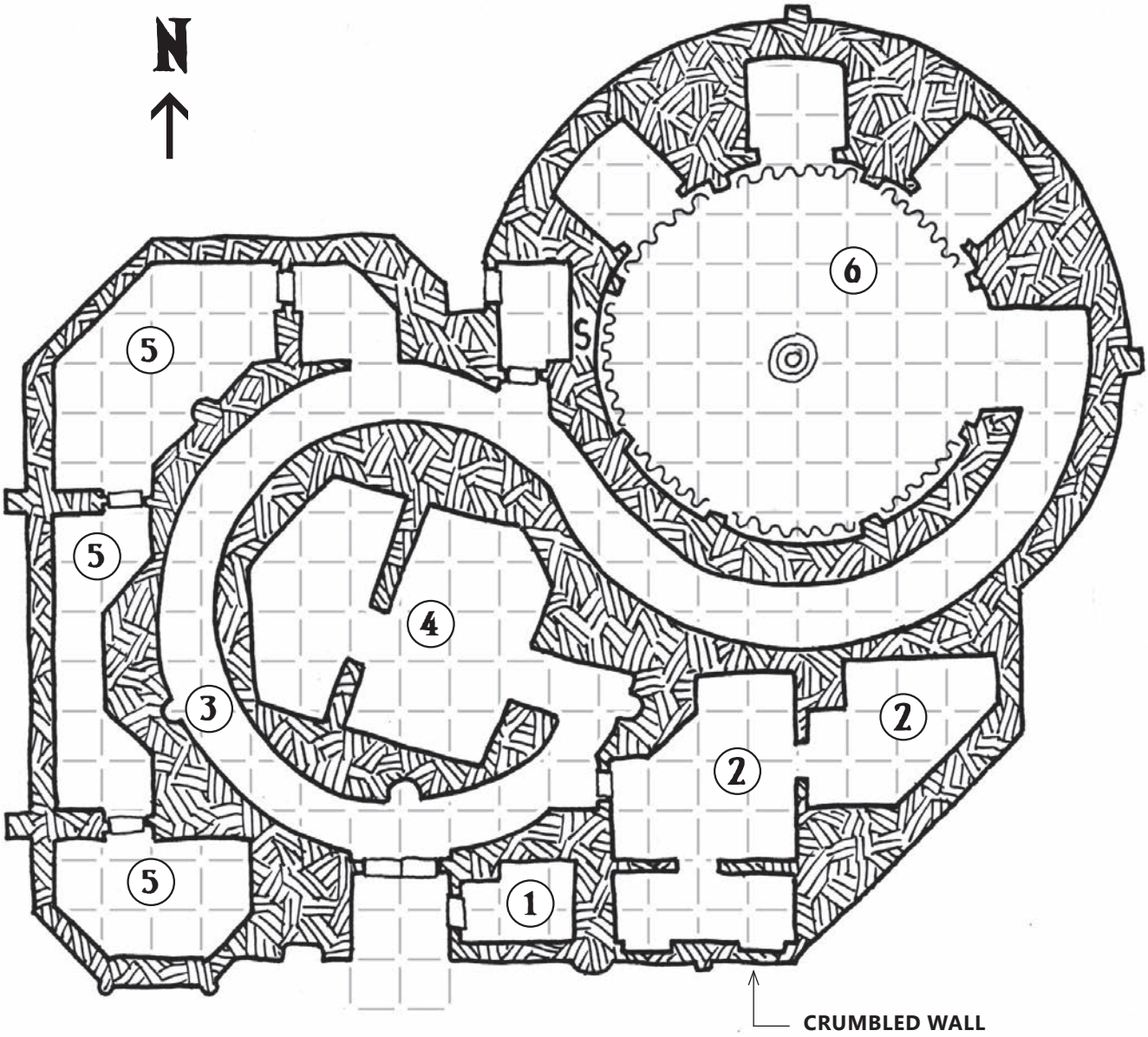
Ulran, Missing Youth (NPC). Ulran (**commoner**) was nabbed by the far darrig before the bagiennik could restore him. The children fled when this occurred. Ulran is currently alive and unconscious in the far darrig's lair in the elven ruins.

Tomra, Village Elder (NPC). Tomra (**veteran**) is a retired guard from Reywald. He is handy with an axe and shield, and he knows his way around bows and crossbows. He is an older man with a broad frame and close-cut silver hair. He has managed to extract the detail of where the children were playing from them but little more. He is a good-hearted man with sincere concern for the youth. If the party requires support, he is willing to join them as a combatant (taking a share of the XP). He offers each character a sack of 50 gp if they help find the boy. He has a *+1 handaxe* that he is willing to part with if the characters require more payment.

Ina, Halson, and Gralich (NPCs). The three reluctant youths (**commoners**) are currently at their respective homes. The families will allow the characters access to the youths for a few minutes provided they have Tomra's blessing. Ina is deeply traumatized by the experience, and she will reveal nothing unless a *calm emotions* spell is cast on her, at which point she reveals the fate of Ulran. Halson is terrified of the consequences of telling the truth, but he can be coaxed into revealing what happened to Ulran with a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

Gralich tells twelve different versions of the story, and he believes it is all a game. A *zone of truth* spell or a DC 17 Charisma (Intimidation) check forces him to tell the truth.

The Game. The game is simple: taunt the Bagiennik into beating you unconscious and then awaken from its healing magic. It's an exhilerating rush but also a terrible idea brought about by the carelessness of youth.



Exploring the Ruins

Tomra or any of the youth can direct the party to the location of the ruins. You may require a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check to ensure they find it quickly. The forest beyond the hamlet is filled with beastly things, and you may have the characters encounter such creatures before arriving at the ruins.

Lord of the Ruins. Ingyf, a far darrig and the current lord of the sunken elven ruins, is an old, cantankerous creature. He is unsure what he will do with Ulran, though many of the other fey in his lair encourage him to eat the poor youth. Ingyf likes magical items, and in particular, he likes staves and wands. When confronted in his lair, he does not attack immediately and suggests a trade. The party can make such an exchange to avoid combat with Ingyf. If they plan to retrieve such an item and bring it back, make it clear that Ulran might not survive another hour in this dark and wet place.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using Status (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs rescue the lost boy, the PCs gain +2 to their Status with the residents of Tuwold and +1 with the residents of Reywald. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.



Magic of the Retreated Elves. Spells cast by clerics, druids, and paladins inside the ruins are cast one casting level above the declared level. This is considered a magical effect, and it does not impact the caster's spell slots for the day.

AREA 1: MAIN ENTRY AND SHRINE

The once beautiful elven temple is now barely recognizable as the ever-encrouching swamp has reclaimed most of its earlier splendor.

The main entry is partially submerged in the swamp water and is blocked by roots and debris. A small shrine just before the blocked doors was ransacked long ago, and its contents are smashed. A DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a hidden button in a stone stand that can be pressed to reveal a hidden compartment. The compartment contains 43 gp of the old elvish style.

AREA 2: BAGIENNIK LAIR

These chambers can be accessed from the exterior through a crumbled wall. The Bagiennik is resting in the innermost lair, and his wasp friends (**swarm of insects**) fly through the other chambers freely. They attack and defend their lair. The bagiennik is upset by his inability to restore Ulran (an instinctual rather than morale frustration), and therefore, he will not restore any creatures he knocks unconscious.

AREA 3: THE HALL OF MUD

This long snaking corridor is filled with a foot of stinking mud. It is considered difficult terrain.

AREA 4: SUBMERGED PRAYER ROOM

This chamber is almost entirely submerged in muddy water. Two **boloti** (see *Tome of Beasts*) live in the brackish water, and they delight in drowning their victims. PCs who spend time swimming and searching (DC 18 Perception) here are rewarded with a pair of *greater potions of healing* in fine glass bottles.

AREA 5: TEMPLE STORES

The large chamber is pitch black and covered in fungal growth. Stone shelves, smashed along the wall, sit empty. The water is shallow, and the air is close and smells fetid. Five **violet fungi** grow here and will attack when the party is close. Each time a violet fungus dies, a **poisonous snake** slithers out of its innards and attacks the nearest PC.

To the South. In the southernmost storeroom lies a bucca nest. This small chamber has several narrow tunnels to the exterior, which let in fresh air and allow the three **buccas** (see *Tome of Beasts*) that live here to come and go as they please. With a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character spots a simple snare trap at the door that triggers when a Small or larger creature steps into the room; a successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check disarms the trap. Creatures caught in the snare must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is restrained until it uses an action to free itself. The buccas have amassed seven gemstones (50 gp each) and a pile of 112 gp.

AREA 6: INGYF'S LAIR (FORMER WORSHIPPING SPACE)

This round room has three makeshift curtains hung along its walls, hiding the contents of three small chambers. On a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check, a secret door is revealed in the western wall that leads back to **Area 3** via a small hallway. The chamber is filled with branches and deadfall, and a few holes in the ceiling let in light and air. Ingyf mutters and wanders through his wet lair. Behind the curtains are his treasures and the living quarters for his pet. Near the far eastern wall is Ulran, the unconscious youth.

Ingyf's pet **crocodile** splashes through the shallow water and defends the far darrig and will attack any intruders on sight unless it is commaned to stop by Ingyf. Once during combat, Ingyf can animate the branches and deadfall on the floor, forcing any enemy standing in the room to make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is restrained until the end of its next turn.

Ingyf uses a *wand of magic missil*e freely in combat. In one of the curtained chambers, he keeps a gilded elven strongbox filled with 200 gp, two common potions, and a finely carved owl made from gypsum (75 gp).

Concluding the Adventure

Ulran is unconscious but otherwise unharmed. He can be revived, but he is too weak to walk home. Once Ulran is carried back to the hamlet, his overjoyed parents thank the characters and offer them a humble meal in celebration.

THE WHITE WORG ACCORD

For 3rd-Level Characters

This adventure begins in Stannasgard and proceeds by boat to the western coast of Wolfheim (in the Northlands). It can be adapted to begin anywhere and end in some untamed northern region.

Adventure Background

One year ago, the great dragon Visandred the Horse-Eater dropped from the sky and burned the once-famous Stannasgard shipyards and docks to ash. Many lost their fortunes that day, but one of the most crucial blows was suffered by the noble dwarf Wulfstan vom Meer whose fleet of merchant ships were nearly all docked at Stannasgard that day. Vom Meer lost every vessel save for one ship mercifully under sail at the time, and the once proud owner of a grand fleet now teeters on the brink of financial ruin.

Vom Meer still has trading contacts across the Nieder Straits with business relations in the ports of Donnermark, Gemport, Cassadega, Bemmea, Maillon, and many more. But without the ships to move goods, he is helpless to rebuild his wealth and influence. Now he plans to restore his trading empire by borrowing longships from a clan of young reaver dwarves in Wolfheim known as the White Worg Reavers. Reavers are not known for their conciliatory manners, but vom Meer has an edge. He claims a tenuous relation with the White Worgs: a second cousin named Knud Stoneson. Bolstered by this family relation and aided by the gift of several casks of the finest ale his remaining gold can buy, he hopes to persuade the reavers to allow this very temporary alteration in their typical methods while he moves trade goods back and forth across the Nieder Straits until he has enough capital to recreate his fleet.

With this in mind, the dwarf seeks adventurers to travel on his one remaining ship to the clan's village. Vom Meer seeks to enlist the PCs to protect his vessel against any threats at sea and, upon reaching the White Worg Reavers, to negotiate as his representatives for the loan of two longships and their crew. Vom Meer offers 500 gp to anyone willing to undertake this task. However, unbeknownst to vom Meer, the Wolfheim clan has troubles of their own—a group of trollkin bandits known as the Mossback Raiders have been competing with the White Worgs for territory west of Wolfheim. Their rivalry is coming to a head. When the PCs arrive at the White Worg homestead, they learn that the reaver dwarves are recovering from a recent attack. Their homestead has been sacked and vom Meer's relation, Knud Stoneson, has been slain. Without a family connection, Revna Ravenstone, the clan's chief, will only agree to vom Meer's proposal if the PCs will help rid them of this troublesome band of trollkin who have been a persistent thorn in the clan's side. If the PCs are to succeed in their task and aid vom Meer in his return to fortune, then a reavin' they must go.

Adventure Hooks

Here are some ways to involve PCs in this adventure:

- An acquaintance of the PCs tracks them down with news that a dwarven noble of Stannasgard is seeking adventurers.
- The PCs have come to Stannasgard to partake in Volundag, the feast of Volund, god of smiths and fire, held each week in the Järnhall (see "Feast Halls of the Northlands" in *Warlock Grimoire* or in *Warlock 9: The World Tree*). While there, they make the acquaintance of vom Meer. Impressed with the PCs, vom Meer enlists them for his quest. Or perhaps they offended the dwarven noble or his kinfolk in some way and must instead work off the insult in conciliatory service. Or perhaps vom Meer asked the Grindstone Oracle how to best rebuild his wealth, and that sacred stone named the PCs in its response.
- Vom Meer is a relative of a dwarf in the party who sends a courier asking his kinfolk for help in rebuilding the family name and fortune after the devastation of Visandred's attack.
- The PCs are seeking passage east out of the port at Donnermark, and vom Meer offers them transport in exchange for service.

Trouble at Sea

This adventure begins as the PCs board vom Meer's ship, *Wellenreiter*, a fully crewed sailing ship under the captaincy of a dwarf named Torsten Meeresohn (**scout**). In addition to the regular stores for the trip, vom Meer has sent three casks of fine beer intended to help smooth negotiations with the reaver dwarves. He may also, at the GM's discretion, offer the PCs one or more *potions of healing* to help them through the dangers ahead.

The journey from Stannasgard to the western coast of Wolfheim is over 300 miles. Traveling east by boat through the Nieder Straits will take approximately 6-1/2 days. If desired, the PCs may engage in such downtime activities as the ship permits. Regardless, roll once a day for an encounter at sea or simply choose two to three encounters from the list.

LONGSHIPS ATTACK

Irrespective of other encounters, once the *Wellenreiter* is within a day of Wolfheim's western coast, the ship will be attacked by two longships bearing eight **trollkin bandits** (see **Appendix**). If the PCs are below decks, Captain Meeresohn calls them up to help repel the invaders. When they are all above deck, read or paraphrase the following:

Two longships are approaching out of the northeast. Powered by long oars in strong arms, they come speeding across the waves and overtake you in mere moments. As they near, you see that the dragonhead carvings on their bows are not these vessel's fiercest aspect: they are crewed by mottled, green-and-gray-skinned raiders of a fierce lineage—the trollkin. Protected by the shields mounted to the sides of their vessels, they bear down upon you, rowing hard to come up along the port and starboard sides of the Wellenreiter. *"Prepare to repel enemy boarders," shouts Captain Meeresohn. "Adventurers," cries the salty dwarf, "time to earn your pay!"*

These trollkin are part of the same group of Mossback Raiders who attacked the White Worgs. They are junior members of the outlaw group known as **trollkin bandits** (see **Appendix**). Trollkin bandits are not as strong as the more powerful trollkin raiders and reavers but still a threat. As they approach, the longships move to either

CONTINUED ADVENTURING

One of the two hooks for the *Warlock Lair 13: Bastion of Rime & Salt* proposes that the PCs are hired by a noble family of Stannasgard looking to claim the abandoned fortress of Binalric. These two adventures can be linked if vom Meer is that same noble who sought to restore Binalric as a way of bolstering his reputation or if he is another noble who heard of their exploits in service to a fellow family of Stannasgard and now wants to enlist the PCs for a second task to benefit his city.

SEA ENCOUNTERS

d20	Encounter and Tactics
1–14	No encounter occurs.
15	Two **sahuagin** climb onto the deck of the *Wellenreiter* during the night and creep below decks in search of loot.
16	A severe storm washes several sailors overboard. The captain calls "all hands on deck" to help navigate the waters. PCs must make a DC 15 group Wisdom (Survival) check or add 1 additional day of travel time.
17	A pack of **rum gremlins** (see *Tome of Beasts*) are discovered ransacking the beer barrels meant for the reaver dwarves. The pesky fairies need to be dealt with before they drink their way through all the stores.
18	A dwarven **vættir** (see *Tome of Beasts*) rises from the Drownstone Road, from below the Nieder Straits, and demands tribute of 100 gp. If rebuffed, the vættir casts *bestow curse* on the party member of highest status, targeting an ability score. It will only remove the curse if the party member pays its tribute, either immediately or on the return journey. The vættir does not stay to fight after the curse has been bestowed. (Note, for GMs without access to the *Tome of Beasts*, replace this encounter with a **sea hag**. She rises from the depths and climbs aboard the ship, disguised as a trollkin. She seeks out the PC with the highest Charisma score. Concocting a story about having escaped from pirates, she tries to lure them away for a private conversation where she can attack them in an attempt to mar their comeliness.)
19	Mutineers decide to take the ship for themselves. 2d4 sailors (**bandits**) plan to kill everyone and dump the bodies in the sea. They surrender or flee by jumping overboard if reduced to half their number.
20	A **will-o-wisp** appears circling the mast, attacking a sailor in the crow's nest. Even if driven off, the sailors think this an ill omen. They are keen to blame any elves traveling with the party for this apparition as well. Add a day of travel time after the attack to account for failed nerves and silly superstitions.

side of the *Wellenreiter*. The shields mounted to their sides give the trollkin half cover against any attacks from the *Wellenreiter*, three-quarters cover against attacks from a level position (such as from one longship to another or from someone walking on the water, should such a circumstance arise). Each trollkin bandit carries two handaxes. They will throw one when they are alongside vom Meer's ship, retaining the second handaxe for melee combat when they board (climbing up the *Wellenreiter's* sides takes one full movement). Once they reach the *Wellenreiter's* deck, the trollkin will attempt to subdue any and all defenders before heading belowdecks to raid the ship's stores. The trollkin will not surrender when wounded, trusting to their regeneration to stay in the fight. However, if the trollkin bandits are reduced to less than half their number, they will flee (without disengaging), attempting to all board one ship and leaving the other behind.

If any of the Mossback Raiders are captured alive, they are tight-lipped and will only speak after a successful Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. However, the threat of fire grants advantage to any such check.

CHARISMA (INTIMIDATION OR PERSUASION)

Check	Result
10–14	The trollkin are part of the Mossback Raiders, several allied clans operating in the Northlands.
15–19	Most recently, the Mossbacks attacked a homestead of reaver dwarves, making off with two of their longships and plenty of their stores. They killed several of the reaver dwarves in the fight.
20	These particular Mossback Raiders have a compound on the western shore of Wolfheim, a small village once belonging to a group of humans. Their leader has a powerful magic item that protects her from harm. It is a necklace known as the *baleful eye of Chernobog*, and its powers affect dwarves (see **Appendix**).

Ruins of the White Worg Reaver Village

The morning following the trollkin attack, the *Wellenreiter* arrives at the White Worg Reaver homestead, a small cluster of longhouses between woods and shoreline. Read or paraphrase the following:

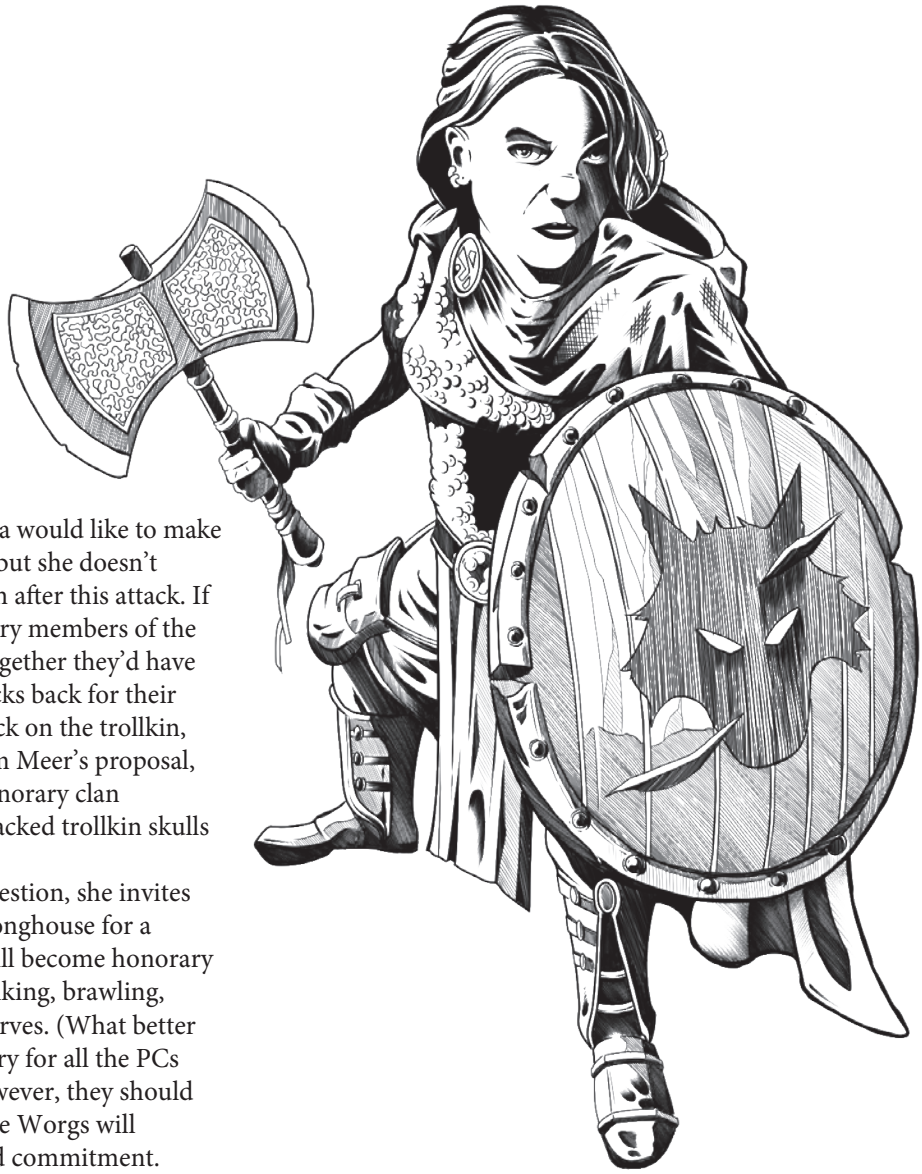
You see the smoke billowing from the land before you see the homestead. A collection of four longhouses stand to the north side of a small river, emptying quietly into the sea, but three of the longhouses are burning, and the planks of the small wooden pier are shattered near its end. Something has gone down here recently, and it didn't go well for the dwarves. You see several of them now moving about the homestead, putting out fires and clearing debris without much speed or enthusiasm. Captain Meeresohn orders the Wellenreiter *to drop anchor and instructs his crew to ready a rowboat to carry you to shore. "I don't know what happened here, but your mission may be over before it starts," the captain tells you. "Or who knows, perhaps the White Worgs will be more open to diplomacy after whatever setback they have suffered. Be what may, may Volund aid you in your quest."*

When the players step ashore, they will be greeted without much enthusiasm by Revna Ravenstone, the leader of the White Worg Reavers. She will inform them that their homestead was recently hit by the Mossback Reavers, a band of trollkin that have been invading the White Worgs' territory for some time. The Mossbacks slew several dwarves, including vom Meer's relation, Knud Stoneson. They stole the dwarves' longships and also made away with an albino worg pup, which the reavers view as something between a sacred animal and a mascot.

What Revna Ravenstone will not volunteer easily is that the White Worgs did not acquit themselves bravely in the raid on their homestead. Instead, several of the dwarves became uncharacteristically frightened and ran from the attack. Revna does not know that the trollkin possess a magical item known as the *baleful eye of Chernobog* that specifically targets dwarves. She would be extremely relieved to know that their performance at the battle had everything to do with dark magic and nothing to do with natural cowardice.

In addition to Ravenstone, there are seven other dwarves, four men and three women, left in the White Worg Reavers. Their names are Skarde Cleft Chin, Gorm the Pious, Frode Foul-Farter, Thordis Sound-Filler, Randi All-Men's-Sister, Hilda Twist Breeks, and Tora Wild Bear. Revna Ravenstone uses the statistics of a **veteran**, but she carries a battleaxe instead of a longsword. The other dwarves all use the statistics of a **thug**, though also with a battleaxe in place of the usual mace. (Note, for GMs with access to the *Tome of Beasts*, use the statistics of a **wolf reaver dwarf** for Revna Ravenstone instead if preferred.)

When the PCs present vom Meer's proposal, Revna will inform them that as the Mossback Raiders stole their longships, the White Worgs have no vessels to offer and aren't able to agree to the noble dwarf's terms even if they were inclined to, which they aren't since their only connection to vom Meer was just slain. However, Revna has a counter proposal. She wants her ships, her worg pup, and her loot returned, and she desperately wants the



chance to regain her lost honor. Revna would like to make a retaliatory raid against the trollkin, but she doesn't think she has the numbers on her own after this attack. If the PCs are willing to become honorary members of the White Worg Reavers, she feels that together they'd have sufficient strength to pay the Mossbacks back for their transgressions. After a successful attack on the trollkin, Revna would certainly reconsider vom Meer's proposal, seeing as how it would come from honorary clan members who had shed blood and cracked trollkin skulls alongside her brothers and sisters.

If the players agree to Revna's suggestion, she invites them into the one remaining intact longhouse for a pre-battle feast, during which they will become honorary clan members through the act of drinking, brawling, and gaming alongside the reaver dwarves. (What better way could there be?) It is not necessary for all the PCs to participate in all the activities. However, they should partake in some of them, or the White Worgs will become suspicious of their honor and commitment. Winning at these games is not as important as bravery, willingness, and being a good sport. The White Worgs put a lot of stock in bravado and participation as well as in smiling broadly as you take your lumps. Note that being caught cheating at anything will result in a severe loss of respect from Revna and her clan with the cheater being subject to disadvantage on any ability checks for social interaction with the dwarves going forward.

If the players refuse Revna's proposal, and unless they have a really compelling alternative proposition, Revna will become unfriendly and suggest the PCs leave her alone to see to her ransacked home. Should dialogues break down further, it's even possible that the White Worg Reavers may decide that the best course of action for them is to subdue the party and take the *Wellenreiter* for themselves. However, before things descend into such a sour turn, GMs might decide that the Mossback Raiders return for a second attack, nipping dwarf/PC hostilities in the bud before things go too far.

Not surprisingly, the reaver dwarves enjoy feats of strength, games of skill and luck, and heavy imbibing of alcohol. The following optional rules are offered for brawling (essentially boxing), drinking, and playing a game of ten pins (essentially bowling) for GMs who want to roleplay the evening's festivities. GMs are free to substitute their own games and rules in place of these or ignore all of this altogether and simply cut ahead through to the next morning with a bit of flavorful description and montage. Regardless, it should be an evening to remember, even if the PCs aren't capable of recalling it all in the morning!

OPTIONAL RULE: BRAWLING

- A match is 5 rounds.
- Combatants choose Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) as their fighting style.

- Combatants roll against each other. Highest number wins the round. Ties are rerolled.
- A critical hit or a win by more than 5 points is a possible knockout with the losing combatant making a Constitution roll to avoid being rendered unconscious—either at a DC equal to the knockout roll or at DC 15 (whichever is higher).
- Between rounds, combatants can choose to make a Charisma (Intimidation) or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) roll to try to gain an advantage in the next round (angering or frightening the opponent, slipping a rock into a glove unnoticed, and so on). Combatants may make a Charisma (Performance) roll to try to get the spectators on their side for that extra boost of confidence that a cheering crowd grants a competitor.
- A barbarian can rage for advantage on a Strength check. Other bonuses may apply at the GM's discretion.
- A knockout wins automatically; otherwise, a win is best 3 out of 5 rounds.

OPTIONAL RULE: TEN PINS (BOWLING)

- Any number of contestants can play.
- Contestants choose either Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) as their bowling style.
- A d20 is rolled with appropriate modifiers added.
- The result divided by 2 (rounded down) is the number of pins knocked over (maximum of 10).
- A 1 is an automatic gutter ball, a critical hit is a strike and the contestant gets to add 10 points to his/her next score.
- The highest score after 5 rounds is the winner. Ties are resolved by additional rolls. Or perhaps more likely by brawling.

OPTIONAL RULE: INEBRIATION

- A PC may imbibe a number of drinks equal to 1 plus double their Constitution modifier (minimum 1) without suffering any debilitating effects. This number resets after a short rest. For every drink over this limit, the PC must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw against poison or gain one level of exhaustion. Failure by 5 or more means the character also passes out and is unconscious.
- Particularly strong alcohol may count as more than one drink. Weaker alcohol, such as watered-down ale, only counts as half a drink. (The DC of the Constitution saving throw against poison is only 5 for watered-down ale and can be as high as 15 for stronger drinks.)
- After finishing a long rest, an inebriated character loses all but one level of exhaustion gained from drinking.

The three casks of fine ale that vom Meer sent as a gift to the White Worg clan will be much appreciated additions for the evening's festivities. Each mug of ale from the cask counts as one drink, and the Constitution saving throw after the limit of allowed drinks is set as DC 10. However, at a certain point in the evening, Hilda Twist Breeks will bring out some special honey mead that she insists is made from "mad magic bees" and attempt to entice one or more of the PCs to sample it. Whatever the veracity of her claims, each mug of this honey mead counts as two drinks and the Constitution saving throw is DC 12 after the allowed limit is reached.

Travel to the Trollkin Compound

The morning after the feast, Revna Ravenstone wakes everyone with the sun, insisting on an early start. She leaves half the reavers to guard the homestead, taking Gorm the Pious, Frode Foul-Farter, and Tora Wild Bear with her on the raid.

The trollkin compound is 3 days journey north along the Wolfheim coast. Lacking their longships and believing the *Wellenreiter* too slow and too large to make a stealthy approach, Revna suggests the party trek along the coastline, using the forest for cover as needed. Roll once a day for an encounter as the party travels overland or simply choose one to two encounters from the list. Note, these encounters assume the White Worg Reavers are participating in combat alongside the PCs. If this is not the case, GMs might consider halving the number of creatures in each encounter.

The Trollkin Compound

As the PCs near the Mossback compound, Revna Ravenstone will suggest they move into the forest for cover. She will lead them over a slight slope to the edge of the woods where they can spy on the village without being seen. When they reach this vantage point, read or paraphrase the following:

Peering through the trees, you see that you are on a slight hill, looking down at a small village. Six longhouses are clustered to either side of a river, which empties into the sea where three longships are docked. A lookout tower stands at the water's edge. A trollkin woman atop the tower makes a slow rotation, casting glances alternately at the forest and at the sea. Beyond the village, a trail leads into the woods, but where it goes you can't ascertain.

Revna will recommend the party split up, with the PCs approaching from one direction while the dwarves approach from another. She is open to discussing strategies however and sees the wisdom in any

WOLFHEIM OVERLAND ENCOUNTERS

d20	Location and Tactics
1–14	No encounter occurs.
15	Three **dire wolves** burst from the woods and attack the party. The wolves are famished, or they wouldn't behave so desperately as to attack a large force. They fight until one wolf remains. However, due to their hunger, they can be easily distracted by food.
16	Two **ettercaps** attack the party, making web attacks from the cover of the woods. They retreat if outnumbered, but if chased, the ettercaps lead their pursuers into a web where three **giant wolf spiders** await. The remains of a previous victim include a pouch with 16 sp and a diamond ring worth 15 gp.
17	Six **ice mephits** disguised as shards of ice wait for the PCs to walk between them. The mephits then summon a *fog cloud* before launching an attack.
18	A lone barrow stands on a promontory overlooking the sea. A rusted broadsword is driven into the stone door, blocking the entrance. If the broadsword is removed—DC 10 Strength check—a **specter** of an ancient dwarf appears, attacking those who disturbed his resting place. Inside the grave are 130 gp and an ornately wrought but heavily tarnished crown. If cleaned up and polished, it would be worth 250 gp. The broadsword however is too rusted to be of any use or value.
19	Four **trollkin bandits** (see **Appendix**) are spotted foraging for food for their tribe. They flee after only 2 rounds of combat but must be stopped lest they alert the Mossbacks of the impending raid.
20	A **white dragon wyrmling** named Isstormr, flying overhead, spots the party and lands to investigate. She demands to know what they can give her to buy their lives and safe passage in her territory. A hapless coward, Isstormr is bluffing.

suggestion to remove the lookout in the tower before mounting an assault on the compound. Privately, Revna is still shaken from the failure of the dwarves' nerves in the raid on their homestead. She'll readily agree to any strategy that sees the PCs leading the assault and may prefer to send the PCs in first stealthily, waiting to charge to their support when the fighting breaks out.

TROLLKIN COMPOUND FEATURES

The Mossback Raiders have made their compound in a once human village the trollkin "liberated" for their own use. It sits between the waters of a small bay and the forest. A lookout tower and two longhouses fall to one side of a stream while four longhouses cluster together on the other side. The stream has no bridge but is shallow enough to be forded where the two paths converge on opposite sides of its bank. (Crossing here counts as difficult terrain for movement purposes.) A little way from the compound, a cave in the hillside affords the Mossbacks a secure place to retreat when they are under threat. It is here they have secured the loot from their raiding as well as temporarily sequestered their young.

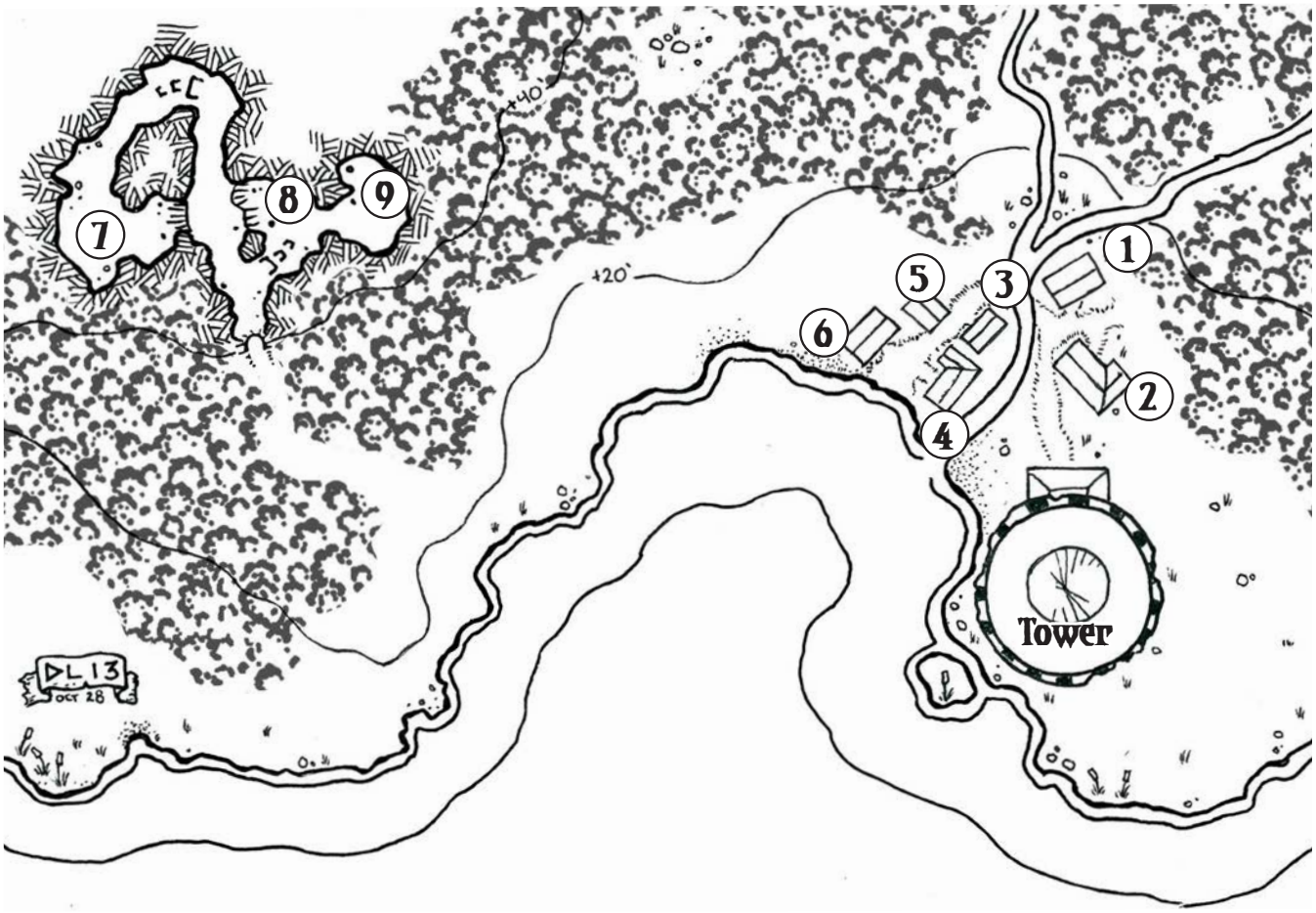
Lookout Tower. The 30-foot-tall stone tower might once have been a lighthouse. A shattered wooden door

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using **Status** (see *Midgard Worldbook*), Revna Ravenstone will address her comments to the PC with the highest Status. Furthermore, every PC who participates in the evening's festivities will gain +1 to their Status in the Northlands and an additional +1 after participating successfully in the raid alongside the reavers. Being caught out in a lie, cheating at any game or sport, or stealing from the White Worgs will result in –2 to their Status and may result in violence as well. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

ASSAULT ON THE COMPOUND

GMs have a choice in how they want this to go. If you prefer, you can allow your players to each control one reaver dwarf as well as their own PC. This can make for a fun opportunity to engage in a fight with less concern for a character's wellbeing (something perfectly suited to the reaver dwarves' personalities). However, if you'd rather not split a player's focus and you don't want to roll for the reaver dwarves attack actions, then you can simply say that Revna Ravenstone leads her three followers in an attack on **Area 6**. She will be successful in slaying all the trollkin therein, but she will lose one of her own number. This conflict can preoccupy the dwarves while the players explore the rest of the compound, or the dwarves may see to the recovery of their longships after this assault. They can be as present or as absent as situations demand, coming in to save PCs should a fight prove too difficult or being rendered unconscious if their aid isn't necessary.



on the village side gives access to the ground level. A central spiral staircase runs upward through broken floors to the rooftop. However, 5 feet below the stair's summit, the flagstones have crumbled away and been deliberately replaced in a precariously unstable position. Anyone failing a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check falls through the staircase, dropping 10 feet onto the steps below and taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage. Failing a subsequent DC 10 Dexterity check here means they roll down the next 10 feet of steps for an additional 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage. Regardless, the noise alerts the **trollkin bandit** above who will sound the alarm by blowing a large horn and take the Ready action at the top of the staircase. Otherwise, the trollkin maintains her solitary vigil until interrupted. It takes her roughly 5 minutes to meander a full circuit around the rooftop as she diligently studies the ocean and the forest. If she spots intruders approaching on the ground, she will sound the alarm before hurling a handaxe at any interlopers within range, and then she will charge down the staircase to engage. If accosted on the rooftop however, she will forget to sound the alarm and merely attack.

Longhouses. The longhouses are sod-roofed, wooden dwellings, each roughly 20 feet wide and 20–40 feet long. The ceiling runs from 6 feet at the sides to 15 feet at the apex. The longhouses all have a fire pit in their exact center and a hole cut out in the rooftop overhead as an egress for smoke. The hole is wide enough to allow Medium or smaller creatures to crawl through into the rafters. All but one of the firepits (**Area 2**) are not in use.

AREA 1

Three **worgs** have been penned up in this longhouse. They will whine and bark if they detect any intruders sneaking alongside the walls or standing immediately outside the doorway. The worgs are often noisy, and their commotion isn't loud enough to alert any of the nearby trollkin. However, if the door is opened, the worgs will come bounding out to attack. With more than 2 rounds of combat, the trollkin in **Area 2** will come to investigate. The stream is sufficiently noisy for a dustup not to attract any attention from the longhouses across the water however.

AREA 2

Smoke can be seen wafting from the hole in the rooftop of this longhouse. Inside, two **trollkin bandits** and one **trollkin raider** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) are very cautiously grilling a fish over a fire in the center of the room. When they spot the intruders, the raider, Broke Tooth, will order one of the two bandits to use an action to put out the fire while he and the other bandit attack. If extinguished, the fire can be rekindled in a single round due to how recently it was burning.

Treasure. The trollkin here carry nothing of value, but a tarnished weapon mounted on a crossbeam is actually a *+1 handaxe* in need of a good polish. The weapon can be spotted easily in any detailed search of the longhouse and does not require an ability check to find, though its magical nature will not be immediately obvious.

AREA 3

Two **trollkin bandits**, named Hates Bears and Burps Loudly, are sleeping off a bender in this longhouse. They celebrated too much after the recent raid and are all but dead to the world. They lie in filthy cots, one snoring loudly while the other sings incoherently in his sleep. Hates Bears and Burps Loudly each have three levels of exhaustion (speed halved and disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws). Their weapons are on a table on the opposite side of the room from their cots. A coin purse hidden in the hollow leg of Hates Bears's cot—DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) to spot—contains 20 sp and a golden tooth worth 2 gp. In the event that Hates Bears encounters a werebear, bearfolk, or druid shapeshifted into bear form, he will become furious, targeting all of his attacks on that character regardless of the wisdom of this strategy. If the fight goes against them, the trollkin will attempt to flee to the caverns.

AREA 4

Anyone within 10 feet of this longhouse will be surprised to hear a beautiful song emanating from inside, accompanied by vicious laughter and rude heckling. The song comes from Golden Throat, a trollkin bandit blessed with a magnificent singing voice that she insists is a gift from the northern god Baldur. Whether this is true or not, Golden Throat dreams of becoming an actual bard one day. She has been considering freeing the bard prisoner, Bragi Skallagrimsson (see **Area 5**), with whom she has spoken, and fleeing with him to Skaldholm. Thus far, her fear of how a trollkin will be received in Skaldholm has forestalled any such attempt.

The other **trollkin bandits** (see **Appendix**), two men and one woman, believe Golden Throat to be insane and tease and torment her for getting "above her station." If a fight breaks out, Golden Throat won't join in but will instead close her eyes and sing loudly, hoping that the PCs will recognize her value and, if not help her, at least leave her be to pursue her dream. If allowed to pass unmolested, she will muster the nerve to travel to **Area 5** and attempt to free Bragi. Remarkably, while Revna Ravenstone wants to put all other trollkin to the axe, if she hears Golden Throat's story, she will agree to spare the wannabe bard as she reveres Baldur and would rather not chance offending the god if she can help it.

AREA 5

This longhouse is empty save for a prisoner. Bragi Skallagrimsson is a bard of Skaldholm (human, 1st-level bard, neutral good). He is bound and gagged and tied to a cot. The gag is fairly loose however as Golden Throat has removed and replaced it several times. The other Mossbacks would have tortured and killed Bragi already, but he knows a secret about their cave, which he's used as a bargaining chip to keep himself alive thus far. If freed, Bragi, an inveterate coward when it comes to combat, will not fight. He will however be willing to cast *cure wounds* or *heroism* on a member of the party. He promises a reward of 300 gp if he is returned safely to Skaldholm. He doesn't have any money on him of course but is sure that he can get it.

Bragi's Secret. Bragi knows of an entrance to the shadow road Shield Maiden's Fancy. The entrance is located in **Area 9**. Bragi once heard a song in Skaldholm that told of the existence of the entrance as well as how to activate it. He traveled here to find out if the verses are true, unwittingly stumbling into the trollkin compound in the process. The song also hints at an intermittently appearing shadow road that connects Shield Maiden's Fancy with the Raven's Road. If accurate, Bragi might be able to use it to return to Skaldholm, something he would very much like to do.

AREA 6

Three **trollkin bandits** play dice games at a table. One of them, Cleft Ear, is winning, much to the annoyance of the other two. Cleft Ear was the one who found Bragi Skallagrimsson first. When he did, he lifted a gold bar worth 50 gp off the bard that Bragi brought as a requirement for the ritual to activate the ley line and open the shadow road. The gold bar is in a satchel hidden under a stone in the floor of the longhouse—DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) to spot. The other two trollkin are becoming suspicious at the way Cleft Ear keeps glancing nervously at it. If the fight goes against them, all three trollkin will flee to the caverns, but Cleft Ear will attempt to recover the bar on the way out.

HILLSIDE CAVERN

The small cave system in the hillside is really a winding tunnel that loops back under itself, widening in portions along its length and at its terminus. The tunnel is roughly 10 feet wide with the ceiling 10 feet overhead. The ceiling rises in the wider portions to a height of 15 feet. Just inside the entrance, the passageway forks with the right hand passage leading down some rough-hewn stone steps to **Area 8** while the left hand passage travels forward, descending more steps and broadening to form **Area 7** until passing under itself to reach **Area 8** and **Area 9**. Torches have been set in the walls of each cavern, affording decent illumination and casting the tunnels between them in dim light.

A well-trodden path through the woods leads to a cavern entrance set into the side of the hill. How far it goes into the ground, you can't tell, but it is obvious from the footprints that trollkin have come and gone this way quite often and quite recently.

Two **trollkin bandits** are stationed here, guarding the entrance to the cave. They stand one to either side of the entranceway, just inside and lurking in the shadows—DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) to notice them. If a commotion has broken out in the compound, they will take the Ready action, prepared to strike any non-trollkin entering. They have been tasked to remain here and won't leave this station. However, if they can tell that the fight has gone against the Mossbacks and they haven't been reinforced by any trollkin fleeing from the longhouses, they might try to bargain for their safe passage with the treasure in **Area 9**, in which case they will try to trick the PCs into taking the stairs down where the captured owlbear awaits in **Area 8**.

AREA 7

Two trollkin are here, protecting a group of five trollkin children who range in age from toddler to young teen. Also present is the albino worg pup stolen from the White Worg Reavers. The children are playing with the puppy when the PCs arrive. The trollkin adults offer only a token resistance before begging the PCs not to harm their children. However, if she learns about the children, Revna Ravenstone will want to slay them all to prevent the start of a blood feud. If the PCs intend to prevent the children's deaths, it will require some very persuasive argument to sway Revna's mind, possibly even invoking wergild of the trollkin before she will agree to let them go (see *Midgard Worldbook* for more information on wergild).

AREA 8

In one of their forays into the forests, the Mossback Raiders managed to capture an **owlbear**. They've chained the creature at the foot of the steps leading into this cavern. The chain allows the owlbear to reach and attack anyone coming down the steps. However, its range of movement doesn't extend to the tunnel leading from **Area 7** or into **Area 9**. The Mossbacks know this and always enter and exit by taking the longer route. They've also been taunting and starving the unfortunate owlbear, hoping to make it particularly vicious. The owlbear is smart enough to know who its persecutors are however, so if freed and within sight of a trollkin, things might not go as the Mossbacks expect.

AREA 9

The leader of this branch of the Mossback Raiders is a **trollkin raider** named Swift Death. She is here, studying the far wall of the cavern in a futile attempt to understand the magic that opens the shadow road entrance. She hopes to be able to utilize the shadow road to extend her territory and further her ambition to raid across the Northlands. She keeps a not-fully-tamed **giant boar** named Snot Snout as a pet and who follows her heels like a dog but isn't above taking the occasional bite out of other Mossbacks. She wears a magical necklace known as the *baleful eye of Chernobog* (see **Appendix**).

When accosted, Swift Death will first use the *baleful eye* on any dwarves in the party before attacking along with her giant boar. The boar doesn't respond to her commands, but Snot Snout is a savage creature that doesn't require provocation to attack intruders. Rather, it is preventing the boar from attacking that might prove difficult.

Shadow Road Entrance. Bragi Skallagrimsson is correct that there is indeed a shadow road entrance here. In a natural alcove in the far wall of the cavern, there is a symbol carved into the stone that resembles a winged wolf. On the floor in front of this carving is a perfectly symmetrical depression. If not less than 50 gp worth of gold is melted down and poured molten into the depression, the far wall of the cavern will dematerialize for 1 minute before returning to solid stone (3d10 force damage to creatures standing in the space of the cavern wall when it rematerializes). Anyone passing through the wall at this time enters a tributary of Shield Maiden's Fancy that swiftly ascends a mountain pass. What's more, entering Shield Maiden's Fancy from this passage, and only this passage, allows travelers to spot an otherwise hidden mithral bridge that reveals itself after a day's travel and links this shadow road with the Raven's Road. The bridge was built by the elves long ago and has been forgotten in all but the bard's song.

Treasure. A locked chest in the corner, requiring a DC 14 Dexterity check to open, contains the results of the trollkin's raiding. They have amassed 50 gp, 1,100 sp, 1,800 cp, eight gems worth 50 gp each, a *spell scroll of acid splash*, a *potion of climbing*, and three *potions of healing*.



Concluding the Adventure

Once the trollkin have been killed, captured, or run off, the PCs will have earned an ally in the White Worg Reavers and have the beginnings of a reputation in Wolfheim. Meanwhile, Revna Ravenstone will be in a good mood, feeling that honor has been satisfied. She'll be especially amenable should she learn of the *baleful eye of Chernobog's* powers as it absolves her guilt at what she thought was weakness of heart in her reavers. Regardless, Revna will gladly agree to the loan of two longships to vom Meer, tasking several reaver dwarves to accompany the ships on their return with the *Wellenreiter*. She may, at the GM's discretion, lay claim to some of the treasure stored in the cave if it was found since some of it was taken in the raid upon the White Worg compound. Or she may feel that the PCs have earned it for their aid. Revna will also lay claim to the trollkin compound as it will make a new base of operations for the White Worg Reavers, though she would gladly share it with her new honorary members if they wish to claim it as well.

Further Adventures

If the PCs wish to continue following the threads of this story, they can seek to track down more Mossback Raiders. The trail might lead them to the village of Nargenstal, the setting of the adventure *The Raven's Call* and another encounter with the trollkin. Alternatively, vom Meer may wish to enlist their aid in another quest. He may send them to Skogarholm in the Wolfmark to negotiate safe passage for his ships, or perhaps he has trade interests in Björnrike or seeks to bolster his reputation by finding a lost dwarven relic rumored to be in an abandoned hold deep inside Huldramose. Finally, should they survive, either Bragi or Golden Throat or both may enlist the PCs to escort them safely to Skaldholm.

Against the Dust Goblin Oracle

For 4th-Level Characters

This adventure takes place in an unspecified location in the Western Wastes (and is presumed to begin in a region bordering the wastes, whether that be the Magocracy of Allain, the Grand Duchy of Dornig, or other) but can easily be adapted to any isolated and desolate region.

Adventure Background

The Bloody Tunnelers were one of the many tribes of dust goblins that wander the wastes, digging into ruins to salvage the treasures of the lost magocracies. They were a small and poor tribe, often losing out on scavenge to the other, stronger tribes, especially the Dust Diggers with whom they had a running rivalry. When Braagezz began to unite the goblin tribes, the chieftain of the Bloody Tunnelers refused. He distrusted the half-mechanical dust goblin. Unwilling to submit to the rule of Braagezz, they broke off, braving the wastes on their own, to avoid conflict with the Dust Diggers and others that were now united under the Beloved Leader. Life was rough and took its toll on the tribe. Many, including their chieftain, succumbed to the myriad dangers of the wastes, and the Bloody Tunnelers' numbers dwindled. They faced the threat of total destruction.

Recently, while scavenging a buried tower, one of the Bloody Tunnelers, a young goblin named Durgleel, uncovered a vril artifact of unknown origin and purpose. While fiddling with the relic, she managed to activate it.

The artifact fused to her skull, and she has since been having what she claims are prophetic visions, brought on by terrible seizures. Many of these immediately came true, and by capitalizing on them, the tribe prospered. Soon Durgleel was leader of the Bloody Tunnelers, their all-seeing oracle and guide.

One day, after a powerful vision that left her twitching and rolling in the dirt for several minutes, a staggering and drooling Durgleel the All-Seer pronounced that the Wasted West would see a Mad Spring soon. This random phenomenon happens when magical storms rage across the wastes, producing all sorts of strange, wild plant life to burst from the dust, briefly turning the wasteland into a bountiful and verdant—if still dangerous—paradise. Durgleel proclaimed she would lead the tribe to a place of prosperity where they could live for years without toil or warfare. However, they must prepare.

One thing Durgleel was adamant about was obtaining a large supply of containers, mainly for water. Though puzzled, given the lack of potable water in the wastes, the tribe was spurred on by her visions of a coming deluge, so they began raiding across the borders into the Magocracy of Allain, north of Bourgund, giving rise to a puzzling number of thefts of barrels, crockery, and other such vessels while forgoing other, more valuable goods. Still, the rampant thefts have the locals clamoring for aid.

Adventure Hooks

The following scenarios can be used to entice the PCs into pursuing this adventure:

- ***The Inn's Run Dry!*** Eager for a hot meal and a cool tankard of ale at the end of a long journey, the PCs arrive to find that the inn has little to serve them aside from food. The innkeeper informs them that, just before dawn, a band of goblins attacked and swept through the stores, hauling out all the barrels of ale and wine to be had. Rather than steal the alcohol, they tore open the lids and dumped the contents out in the yard! Then they loaded the empty barrels into the wagon they brought with them, along with all her cooking pots, crockery, and bowls. She will pay the PCs to track down the goblins and return her goods as it could be a week or more before she can have new items brought in by a traveling merchant.
- ***Not a Pot to Cook In.*** The PCs pass through one of Dornig's border villages and are alerted to the villagers' problems through conversation or a posted notice in the village square. Dust goblins from across the border crept into town under cover of darkness. The goblins pillaged what they could carry, making off with a couple of the village's carts and an odd assortment of goods—rain barrels, cooking pots, animal troughs, and similar items—and what few were made of precious metals seemed to be taken incidentally.
- ***Double, Double, Toil and Trouble!*** The PCs stumble into the lair of a coven of hags. While this would normally be terrible trouble, the hags are in turmoil and in need of aid. Their cauldron, which they use to perform various rituals and concoct magical brews, has been stolen. They forgo any violent action toward

these new intruders, offering safe passage and a boon if the PCs will track down the thieves and return their cauldron. An abundance of goblin tracks identifies the culprits and points out the path they took with the stolen cauldron.

- ***The Wayward Peddler.*** As the PCs travel a lonely road along the border, they see a man in the distance, trudging alone in their direction. When the man notices them, he picks up his pace, jogging toward them and waving his arms to get their attention. As he gets closer, they notice his clothes are dirty and torn in places, and he has a bloodied bandage around his head. He explains that he is a peddler, making a living selling miscellaneous goods to border towns and remote farmsteads. While heading for the next town, he was attacked by a band of dust goblins. They forced him from his wagon and drove off with it, heading toward the badlands to the east. They seemed strangely excited by the newly crafted but empty barrels he was carrying, paying little attention to anything else.

Whatever hook brings the PCs into the adventure, they will first have to track the dust goblins back to their lair.

Luckily, the goblins are making no efforts to hide their tracks, and the carts and/or wagons they use to carry their ill-gotten gains are heavily laden: DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check to pick up and follow the trail, leading the PCs steadily south and west to the outskirts of the western end of the Goblin Wastes. Here the trail becomes even easier to follow as the dust and cracked earth crumbles beneath the passage of the wagon (DC 5).

The adventure assumes the dust goblins have enough of a lead to reach their lair without the PCs overtaking them. However, if the PCs have magical means at their disposal to move more swiftly or simply decide to push hard during mounted travel to overtake the goblins, you can have the PCs catch the raiding party they are tracking. There are a total of 16 **dust goblins** (see *Tome of Beasts*) in the group, pulling a wagon (or a pair of carts, depending on the hook used to start the adventure) piled with barrels and other assorted containers. If they are unable to outrun the PCs, the goblins stop and fight. If half or more of the goblins fall in combat, the rest will flee, taking whatever containers they can carry with them.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

You can have the PCs reach the lair of the dust goblins without incident. If you want to add some extra difficulty to their journey or buy time for the goblins to reach home ahead of their pursuers, roll on the following table for an encounter.

d6	Encounter
1	1d2 **ankhegs**
2	1d4 **death dogs**
3	4d4 **dust goblins***
4	1d2 **ettercaps**
5	1 **lamia**
6	1 **dorreq***

* see *Tome of Beasts*

Lair of the Bloody Tunnelers

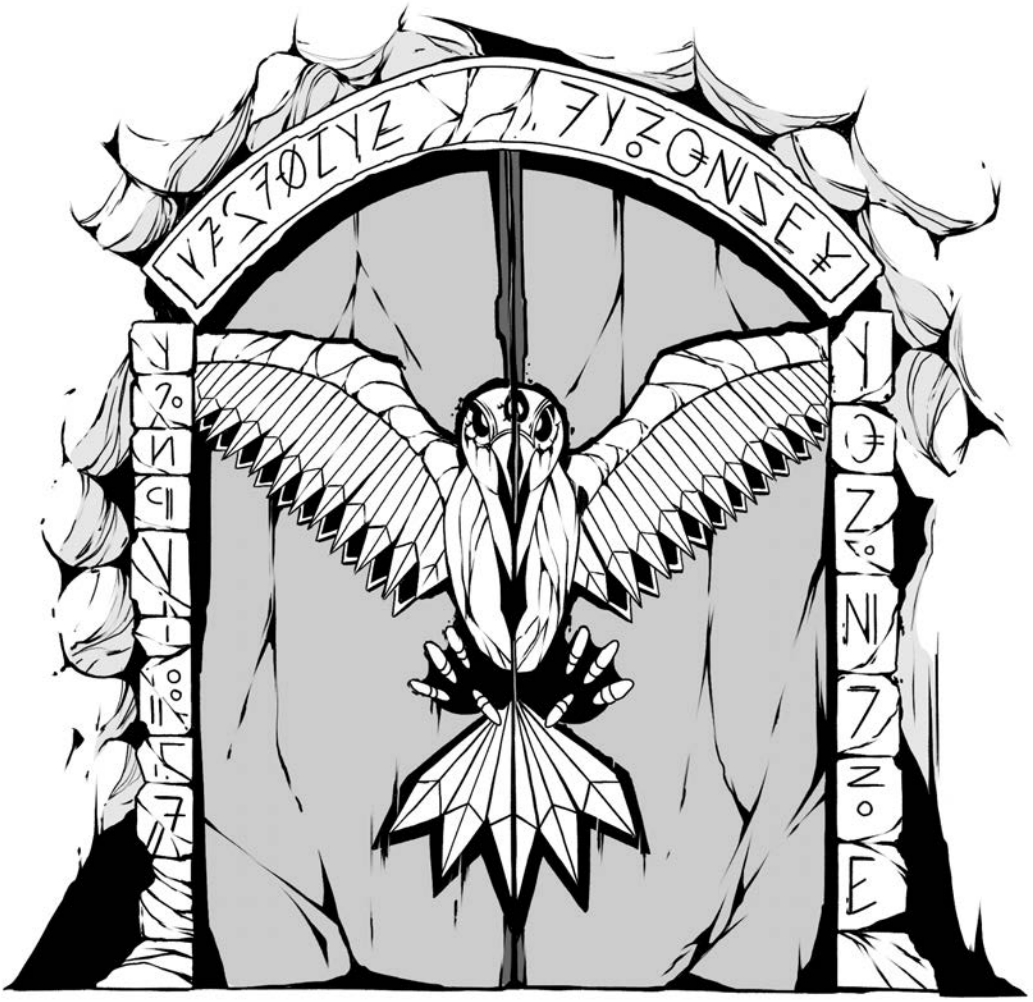
The trail leads the heroes to a ruin, little more than a tumble of wind-worn stones and rocky foundations where the now-empty wagons and/or carts are deposited along with a few others that the goblins have acquired on previous raids.

The goblins' trail is hard to miss, requiring only a DC 5 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check to notice. The trail leads to an area sheltered by the still-standing corner of an ancient building. A stone plug blocks a hole in one of the crumbling foundations. This is the entrance to the Bloody Tunnelers' home.

When the PCs first arrive at the site, a pack of four **death dogs** is nearby, attracted by the smells of barrels emptied of food and drink that were brought back. They will attack the PCs and flee if they are all dropped below half their hit points or if two of them are killed.

Once the fortress of an ancient sorcerer, all that remains of the place now are the subterranean caves and rooms beneath where the buildings once stood. A bronze pull ring allows the plug to be removed, requiring a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to do so. Opened, it reveals a steep staircase, descending into the earth, the ancient stone steps worn slightly concave in the middle from the passage of countless feet.

Should the PCs retreat from the lair after their initial foray, the goblins' numbers will be replenished by other members of the tribe, returning from raids or salvage missions. After at least 8 hours, enough goblins return to replace half of any losses suffered at the hands of the adventurers. The goblins will double the number of guards in **Area 8** and add a force of six **dust goblins** to



stand watch in **Area 3** (assuming enough goblins remain to do so) to help protect against any further attacks.

AREA 1: ENTRANCE

At the bottom of the staircase is a stone door. The door is intricately carved with strange symbols and glyphs. At the door's center is a carving of a three-eyed falcon, its wings outstretched and talons extended as if diving upon its prey.

Magical Lock. The door is under the effects of an *arcane lock*, though with a slight alteration to the spell. The sorcerer that built this place is long dead and forgotten, but he had a sense of humor. The symbol on the door is that of his bitter rival. To suppress the spell, one must poke the falcon in the eyes with three fingers.

A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check notes that the eyes of the falcon are grubby as if repeatedly touched by dirty hands. A *knock* spell or other means to bypass an *arcane lock* will also work. The door (AC 17; hp 24) can be forced open with a DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check.

If the door is battered down and the process takes more than 3 rounds, there is a 50% chance that a pair of **dust goblins** comes to investigate from either **Area 3** or **Area 8**.

AREA 2: PORTCULLIS

The passage here is blocked by several iron bars that rise out of the floor. A lever juts from the wall just in front of the bars.

Trap. If the lever is pulled, the portcullis will lower into the floor. However, this sets the bars to spring back out of the floor with great force.

If a creature attempts to move past the bars after they have been lowered, the lever suddenly snaps back to the upright position as the bars spring from the floor, back into their original position, dealing 11 (2d10) points of bludgeoning damage to the creature and knocking them back 5 feet.

A successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw allows the creature to jump back before the bars hit, avoiding the damage. If the roll for the save is 5 or more higher than the DC, the creature can choose to lunge forward, getting to the other side before the bars come up.

Prevention. A DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check made by the person who pulls the lever notes that it does not sound or feel as if the lever has locked down properly. It's also suspicious to have the trigger for a defense on the outside where potential enemies can use it.

A successful DC 13 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check can be made to jam the lever, preventing it from releasing and raising the bars again.

AREA 3: MUSHROOM FARM

This room is filled with a pungent, earthy odor and an underlying scent of rot. Large, rectangular basins of stone against the east wall sprout a riot of mushrooms. Some scattered gardening implements and a pile of compost sit between the basins.

This room is used by the goblins to grow mushrooms to supplement their food supply. The mushrooms are fed on whatever waste the goblins produce and any inedible organic materials fished out of the stream in **Area 5** and **Area 6**.

Creatures. Eight **dust goblins** occupy the room, tending the crop. They will fight until half their number have fallen before fleeing to **Area 4**.

Treasure. Between them, the goblins have a total of 64 sp and 96 cp. Each dust goblin also wears an amulet tied to its wrist: a scrap of blue-green metal held in a bracelet woven from dried grasses. Wearing this amulet prevents a creature from triggering the trap in **Area 11**. If any dust goblins are kept alive by the PCs and specifically questioned about the amulets, they will lie, saying that they wear them to identify themselves as members of the Bloody Tunnelers Tribe.

AREA 4: SORTING ROOM

This long hall is filled with piles of apparent junk. Two doors are set in the eastern wall. Stairs down exit the hall at the southern end, flanked by two bronze statues of robed, hooded figures carrying staves.

This room serves as storage for goods and materials gathered from their scavenging expeditions and those fished from the stream in **Area 6**. The goblins then sift through the piles, sorting treasure and items useful to the tribe from things that can be salvaged for scrap or worth enough to be traded for food and other goods. Organic materials that serve no useful purpose become part of the mulch for the mushroom farm in **Area 3**. The rest, true refuse, is simply taken to **Area 5** and dumped back into the stream to be carried away.

Creatures. There are 12 **dust goblins** working here, sifting and sorting various piles of salvage.

Treasure. The goblins have a total of 3 gp, 70 sp, and 102 cp on their persons. They also wear the same blue-green metal amulets as the goblins in **Area 3**. If the PCs take 10 minutes to search through the various piles of miscellanea in the room, they find the following: five iron ingots worth 1 sp each (1 lb. each), a 5-square-yard sheet of dirty canvas, a wooden scroll case, a mess kit, two tinderboxes, four candles, a vial of antitoxin, and a lyre (needs new strings).

The northernmost door on the east wall opens into a small room where the most valuable items are kept until they are taken to Durgleel to be deposited with the rest of the treasure in **Area 13**. It currently contains a lapis lazuli bowl worth 30 gp piled with small discs, rods, and coiled bits of wire made of orichalcum, worth a total of 45 gp.

If the dust goblin raiding party the PCs were tracking made it back, then this room also contains all the barrels and other containers they stole along with many others that were taken in prior raids.

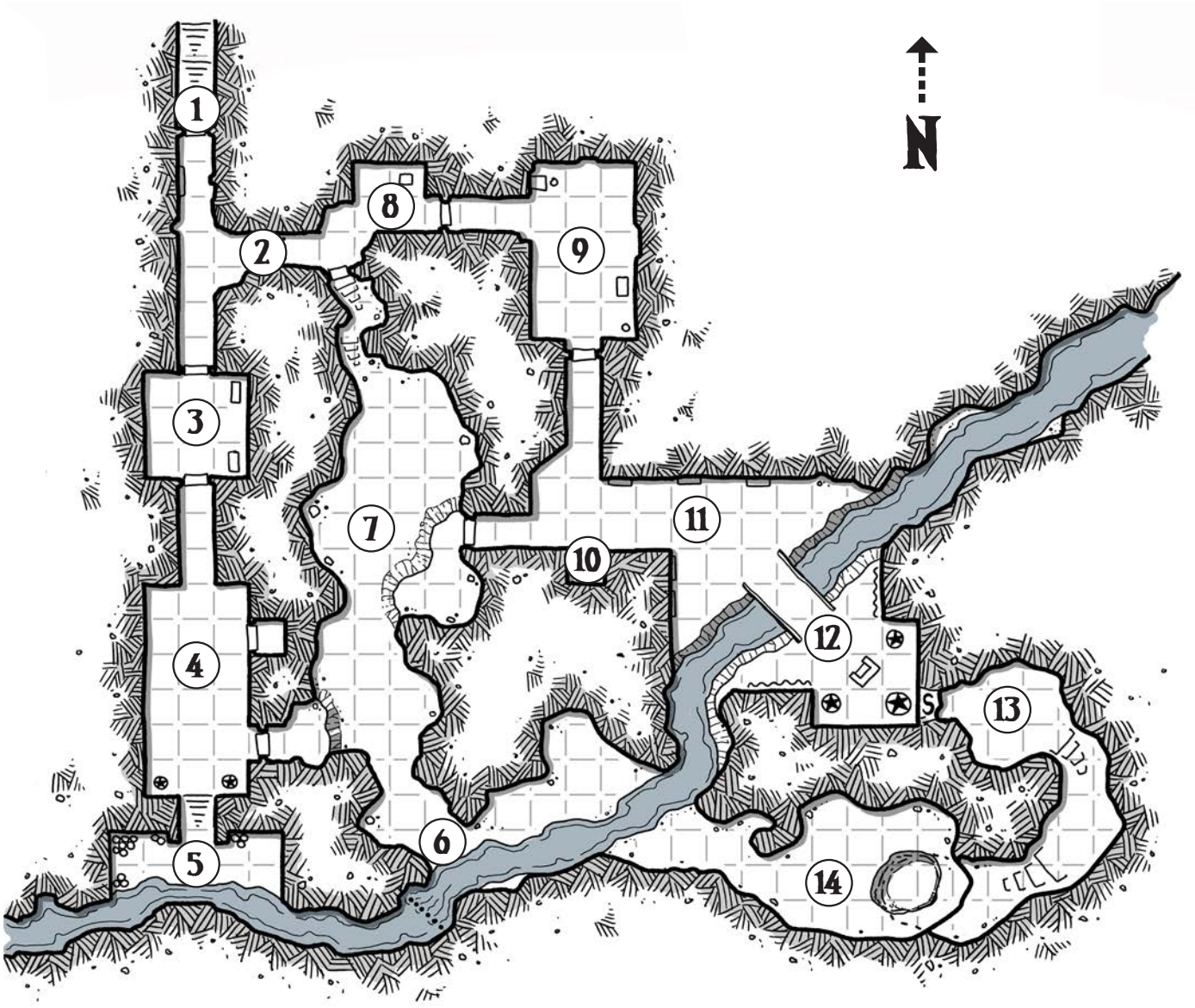
Trap. If a creature walks between the two statues at the far end of the room, an arc of electricity jumps between the tips of the staves the statues hold. Any creature in the path of the arc takes 11 (2d10) lightning damage and is stunned for 1 round. A successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw halves the damage and negates the stunned condition.

Prevention. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a hidden switch in the folds of the robe on the statue to the southwest. Flipping this switch will deactivate the trap for 1 minute. A successful *dispel magic* can also deactivate the trap.

AREA 5: ANCIENT DOCK

A damp, bitter smell grows stronger on the steps entering this area. Barrels are on the stone floor. An underground stream flows past, the stone floor at the far edge of the room forming its northern bank.

The water of the stream has a high mineral content but is still potable. This dock once served to bring supplies into the fortress that once stood above, secretly and without fear of blockade by besieging forces. The goblins have a net strung across the water here, meant to catch any materials flowing downstream that aren't caught by the gate in **Area 6**. This material is then brought to **Area 4** to be sorted. The barrels are full of stale water and rotted through. They will fall apart if anyone attempts to move them.



Treasure. At the bottom of one of the smaller barrels, hidden by the murky water inside, is a pile of coins, a total of 11 gp, 36 sp, and 44 cp. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check will spot the secret stash.

AREA 6: THE GRATE

An underground stream flows through, dividing the cavern in two. The water looks clear but carries a distinct, bitter smell. A corroded metal grate, thick with mineral build-up, stands at the point where the water flows out of the cave, blocking any access. A stone capstan stands off to one side, near the western wall.

The grate was once a security measure for the sorcerer who lived here, ensuring enemies could not sneak in from downstream. Now it serves the goblins, collecting any scraps that might flow in with the water that are too large to fit through the holes in the grating.

The capstan, if turned, will raise and lower the grate. The stream is about 3 feet deep at its shallowest. While the water has a high mineral content, it is potable, though unpleasant to drink. The grating (AC 18; hp 18) can be bent significantly with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check, partially removing it from its frame and allowing passage.

AREA 7: DRAGON'S CAVE

A long cavern stretches away into darkness. Natural ledges along the walls appear to lead to other areas. The floor is littered with bones—some whole, others split, and some simply fragments.

Creature. This cave is the lair of a **wasteland dragon wyrmling** (see *Creature Codex*) befriended by Durgleel. Recently forced from its mother's lair, the wyrmling was discovered by the dust goblins during a scavenging

mission in a nearby ruin. Desperate and hungry, the wyrmling killed one of the dust goblins. Durgleel managed to forestall any further violence between her people and the dragon, taking the risk of attempting to speak with it.

She managed to convince the dragon to come with them and take the cave as its lair. The dust goblins provide it with treasure, taken from their scavenging, as well as the occasional meal when they raid into the settled lands outside the wastes. Durgleel hopes over time the dragon will decide to stay permanently as an ally and guardian of the tribe. For now, the wyrmling is content to accept tribute from the goblins and has no plans to eat any others, as the first one tasted terrible.

However, the wyrmling is eager to feast on any intruding PCs, realizing they come from outside the wastes and are much better game than what can be found in these tainted lands. If the wyrmling is aware of intruders, it hides on the ledge with its hoard, attempting to catch as many of them as possible with its breath weapon before moving to attack.

The dragon will fight until it has lost three-quarters or more of its hit points and then flees through **Area 6** and up stream to **Area 12** where it warns Durgleel of intruders and seeks aid with its injuries.

Treasure. The wyrmling's hoard sits on the larger of the two ledges, about 8 feet above the cavern floor. The hoard consists of 20 gp, 300 sp, 600 cp, and seven zircon gems worth 50 gp each.

AREA 8: GUARD POST

This chamber is empty save for a single stone table in the corner. Stone doors mark two other exits from the room.

This room serves as a guard post for the goblin tribe. The true lever to raise and lower the portcullis in **Area 2** is on the wall under the table.

Creatures. Currently four **dust goblins** stand guard here. If the trap in **Area 2** goes off, the sound of it will alert them to intruders. They will fire their crossbows through the bars at those on the other side, until opponents manage to get past the portcullis, and then engage in melee. If the battle seems hopeless, they will retreat to **Area 9** for reinforcements.

AREA 9: MAP ROOM

This chamber holds a simple desk and chair carved of stone as well as a stone table holding an assortment of pots, bowls, sticks, and crude brushes. A small barrel sits in one corner. Much of the eastern wall of the room has been painted with a crude map.

The containers on the table hold various powders used to create the pigments that are used by Durgleel on the map on the wall, as well as oil to mix them into paint. The barrel holds water from the underground stream. The map represents an area of the Western Wastes that includes this location and the "paradise" she has foreseen, being created with the coming of the Mad Spring. The map also has a tentative route drawn out on it.

If you wish to run the later **Raid on the Savage Oasis** chapter for your players, you can use the contents of this room as a hook. The oasis is the paradise Durgleel has foreseen, the place to which her tribe shall make its exodus. Scraps of hide and paper on the desk, scrawled with notes in Goblin, detail Durgleel's plan and that the oasis will be a source of plentiful food and water during the time of the Mad Spring.

Items. There are enough pigments, brushes, and other tools here to assemble three sets of artisan's tools for painters.

AREA 10: MEDITATION CHAMBER

This small, cramped room smells of smoke and burnt herbs. A small stool sits against the wall. Two metal boxes stand in the room. One holds fresh charcoal. The other holds old, gray coals and ash.

Durgleel comes here to meditate and to try to induce visions from her vril artifact. Through isolation and the burning of herbs, she attempts to induce a mental state that activates the artifact, hoping to make it function when she chooses rather than erratically at random moments as it usually does.

Incense. Under the stool is a sack containing Durgleel's meditation incense. Mixed among some mostly innocuous herbs and weeds is a minute amount of spores from Roggsothof the Fungal Horror, one of the Dread Walkers of the wastes. If the PCs burn any of this incense, it releases a cloud of toxic smoke. All creatures in the area of this smoke must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw.

On a failed save, creatures take 9 (2d8) poison damage and are poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned from the incense, a creature is plagued with "visions," vivid flashes of other places and events, which cause the creature to have disadvantage on attacks and on any Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based saving throws and skill checks for as long as they are poisoned.

On a successful save, a creature takes half damage and is not poisoned. Should any creature directly inhale the incense for whatever reason, they inhale some of the deadly spores. The DC of the saving throw is then increased to 16, the poison damage increases to 18 (4d8), and the poisoned duration increases to 10 minutes.

AREA 11: HALL OF FORCE

The walls and floor of this room are smooth, worked stone. A stone bridge arches over the stream that cuts through the middle of the area. To the north, three large plates of a strange, blue-green metal are mounted to the wall.

Trap. Each plate projects a powerful wave of energy any time a creature passes in front of it within 15 feet. This wave is preceded by a faint smell of ozone in the air, and any hair a creature has on its body begins to prickle and stand on end. A creature caught in a wave must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 11 (2d10) force damage and is pushed 15 feet and knocked prone.

On a successful saving throw, the creature takes half damage, remains unmoved, and is not knocked prone. The first plate is only 10 feet from the opposite wall however, so a creature that fails its saving throw also takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from its impact with the opposite wall before falling prone. A creature that fails its saving throw against the third plate must also succeed at a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked over the side of the bridge into the stream below. The water of the stream is about 3 feet deep at this point and counts as difficult terrain if waded through.

Prevention. A *detect magic* spell will show an aura of evocation magic around each plate.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check will provide a way to neutralize the magic of the plates for 1 minute, allowing passage without setting them off.

The goblins all wear wrist bands with a piece of metal of the same type as the plates woven into them. This somehow negates the effects of the plates.

The dust goblins don't know why they work, just that Durgleel discovered it and that it is an effective way to bypass them while keeping them active as a defensive mechanism against intruders.

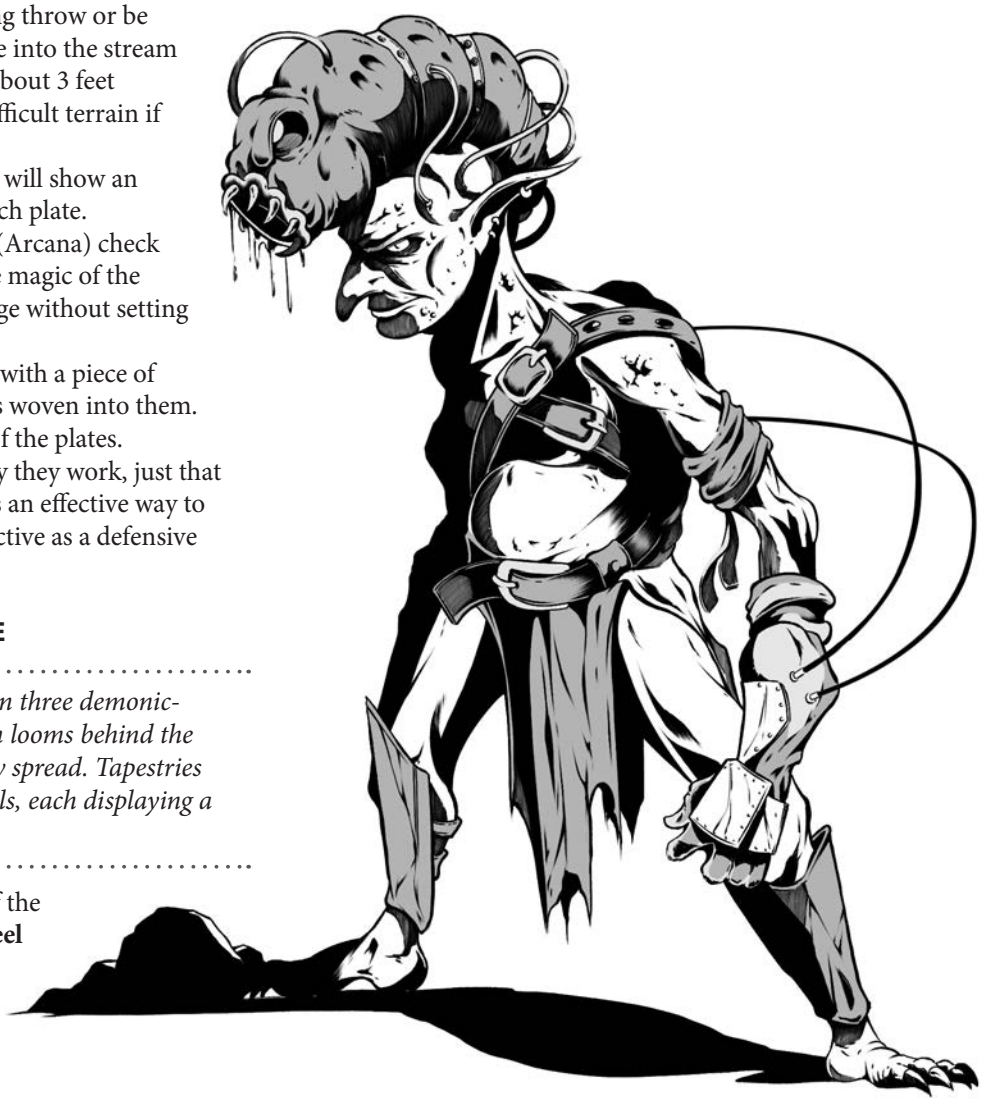
AREA 12: DEMONIC THRONE

A large, metallic throne sits between three demonic-looking statues, the largest of which looms behind the throne with bat-like wings partially spread. Tapestries of metallic cloth hang from the walls, each displaying a large, intricate glyph.

Creatures. The former throne of the sorcerer-king is now where **Durgleel** (see **Appendix**) holds court and issues her prophecies to the tribe. She can be found here advising a group of goblins on how to best oversee the preparations for their departure and exodus. Currently there are eight **dust goblins** conferring with her here.

The dust goblins fight to the death to defend their leader. Enemies sighted in **Area 11** will be targeted with ranged weapon attacks by six of the dust goblins while two will move to the bridge with melee weapons, ready to fend off attackers that attempt to cross. These goblins also carry the amulets that protect them from the force trap in **Area 11**, so they can carry the fight into that area if necessary. Their chieftain's force gauntlet is made of the same metal, so it also acts as protection from the trap. Durgleel likewise fights fanatically to defend her tribe.

Durgleel carries a bone whistle, and if she blows it, the sound will summon the **wasteland dragon wyrmling** from **Area 7** to come to her aid. While the dragon has formed a relationship of mutual trust with Durgleel, it has no stake in the tribe as a whole. If Durgleel is killed, the wyrmling leaves any remaining dust goblins to their fates, flying back along the stream to **Area 7** to guard its hoard. (The wyrmling has no amulet and so avoids **Area 11** if



possible.) If Durgleel is killed, the vril artifact attached to her "dies" as well. It powers itself with her psyche, and when she is killed, it burns out, and the stone casing cracks, releasing a thick acrid goo and giving off a smell like ozone.

Treasure. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check discovers a hidden compartment in the left arm of the throne. Inside are three *potions of healing*. The wall tapestries are worth 25 gp each.

Discovery. A secret door in the wall behind the largest demon statue can be found and opened with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

AREA 13: TREASURE CAVE

A pile of loose coinage and various odds and ends sits in the middle of the floor of this otherwise drab cave.

The secret door connecting this room with **Area 12**, as well as the mechanism for opening it, are easily seen on this side of the door.

Treasure. The cave holds the accumulated wealth of the Bloody Tunnelers Tribe. Piled here among scrap metal, trinkets, mundane tools, and other objects are 30 gp, 800 sp, and 1,300 cp. The following art items, each worth 25 gp, can also be scrounged out of the pile: a small jade statuette of a treant, a silver mask, a dagger with decorative copper wire hammered into the blade and a blue-quartz pommel, a hammered copper bowl with a mother-of-pearl rim, and a solid-gold bishop chess piece.

Deadfall Trap. A tripwire is stretched across the passage leading up from the bottom of the sinkhole in **Area 14**, right at the top of the first incline before the passage widens. If triggered, a deadfall—a large log with sharpened spikes along the side facing the tripwire—drops from behind a dip in the ceiling, swinging from ropes attached to each end, to arc down into any creatures in the widest area of the passage to the top of the first incline where the tripwire is located. The deadfall deals 22 (4d10) piercing damage to all creatures in its path and impales them on the spikes, where they are restrained. A successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw halves the damage and the creature is not restrained. If a creature beats the DC by 5 or more, it takes no damage at all and completely avoids the deadfall.

Prevention. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check will spot the camouflaged tripwire. The easiest method is to simply avoid the trap, stepping over the tripwire and moving on. Alternatively, the tripwire can be triggered from a safe distance. Once the trap is triggered, it will not go off again until reset, and the deadfall can either be cut down or bypassed.

AREA 14: DUST GOBLIN LAIR

This cave holds numerous piles of bedding, makeshift tables of flat rocks balanced on other stones, and small cookfires whose smoke trails up into cracks in the ceiling. At the far end, a large sinkhole has opened in the floor.

Creatures. The dust goblins prepare their food, eat their meals, and sleep here when not out scavenging or performing other tasks on behalf of the tribe. At any given time, 12 **dust goblins** can be found in this chamber eating, sleeping, or simply relaxing after their labors.

Items. Like the other goblins of the tribe, each wears a woven amulet containing a shard of blue-green metal. A rope ladder is anchored to the edge of the sinkhole, descending 20 feet to its bottom, allowing access to a rising passage that leads to **Area 13**.

Concluding the Adventure

Depending on the hook used, the PCs will be returning certain vessels to their rightful owners and will have a convenient means of carrying them awaiting them back on the surface. When they return the items, they can receive whatever reward you decide, though given the minor nature of the goods, it's not likely to be nearly as much as the accumulated treasure from the dust goblins' lair.

If you are running the later **Raid on the Savage Oasis** chapter, the adventurers now have a clear map to a locale the dust goblins were very determined to find and claim for their own (though they'll have to make themselves a copy since it's painted on the wall of the place).

However, adventurers setting out to find the locale may well find themselves caught in the storms that herald the Mad Spring as well as dealing with a whole new set of dangers when the wastes undergo their radical transformation as a result. See *Warlock 24: Weird Fantasy* for more information on this phenomenon and the changes it causes in the area. This material provides for a wild journey and the potential for numerous exciting encounters before even arriving at the Savage Oasis and dealing with the encounters there.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using **Status** (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs dispatch the Bloody Tunnelers Tribe and return the stolen containers, assuming they were looking for the missing containers, the PCs gain +1 to their Status with inns, shops, and taverns in whatever region they were set on this quest in, whether that be the Magocracy of Allain, the Grand Duchy of Dornig, or other. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

A LIFE IN THE FAMILY

For 5th-Level Characters

The adventure takes place at an abandoned estate in the White Forest (in the Magdar Kingdom) but can easily be adapted to any forested region.

Adventure Background

Centuries ago, a benign necromantic cult of Mnemosyne fled elven persecution in Kammae and came ashore in the as-yet-untamed Magdar Kingdoms. They founded a settlement, Memoria, in the western White Forest, and enacted a ritual intended to bridge Midgard with the afterlife to enable harmonious co-existence with their ancestral spirits. Catastrophe struck, and the ritual went wrong. Instead of bringing forth peaceful spirits, the ritual unleashed a host of malevolent incorporeal undead. Memoria fell within a night and sank into the margins of history (explored more thoroughly in the previous **The Light of Memoria** chapter).

However, not all the cultists lived in Memoria. Some, like Kaiti and Theodoro Vadeki, had small ambitions and struck out on their own when rumors of the impending ritual started. It sounded too risky.

So instead, they went deeper into the White Forest and built their estate there. They intended to raise a family and live their lives in peaceful study and magical practice with the aid of their personal ancestors, using the magics they gained from the cult: *summon ancestor* (see **Appendix**) allowed them to converse with direct ancestors, which the Memorians attempted on a much grander scale. The Vadekis used this ritual to summon and bind three of their ancestors: Kaiti's grandmother, Areti; her great-grandfather, Vaso; and Theodoro's younger sister, Tasia (see **The Vadeki Ghosts** sidebar for more information). Bound safely inside an underground cellar built for them and anchored by memory stones and menhirs shaped by an earth elemental, the couple and ghosts lived side by side in a peaceful if unorthodox harmony.

After Memoria fell, the remaining Memorians contained most of the undead host in a great sacrifice at a shadow gate. This eliminated the greatest threat, but some undead remained outside and sought different quarry, scattering into the forest. The Vadeki Estate came under attack by several waves of small groups of undead, attracted by the necrotic energy of the menhirs and the bound ghosts.

The Vadekis put up a ward around the cellar to protect it from intrusion and then fled. They always intended to return, but then Kaiti had their first child in Cronepisht, and not long after, Theodoro's health began to wane. They never made it back. Their notes and journals became old curiosities of family history, forgotten and passed down generation to generation.

Recent Events

Recently, their youngest descendent, Chrysanthi Vadeki, attempted to open her own alchemical shop in Cronepisht to disastrous results: she burned it down while experimenting with a new alchemist's fire formula. Newly destitute, Chrysanthi desperately pored over her family's old letters and journals looking for some forgotten debt owed or an unknown inheritance. In the search, she found references to the old estate, long lost in the White Forest. Seeing the opportunity for a fresh start, Chrysanthi set out to find it.

Using clues from her ancestors' journals, she found the place, though half-reclaimed by the forest already. The walls still looked intact, potentially with magic reinforcement, and Chrysanthi found that promising enough to investigate. Once she entered, the ghosts of her bound ancestors came out of their ethereal semi-hibernation and strained the wards in a rush to greet her—and warn her about the undead. Chrysanthi panicked in the chaos and fled, stirring up the undead and rousing the shambling mound in the shattered atrium.

When Chrysanthi made it out of the house, she ran into a group of goblins (scouts for Gellert the Gruesome) who'd been slowly looting the estate and feeding the shambling mound to keep it dormant. The goblins chased her off until she saw them intercepted by skeletons and shadows. After that, she just kept running.

Adventure Hooks

Here are some ways the PCs might hear of Chrysanthi's plight and decide to aid her:

- They may find Chrysanthi still in the White Forest, on her way back to Cronepisht after her disastrous visit.
- They may also find her in Cronepisht, after she's already returned, and hear about her asking for ghost hunters and putting up notices at taverns.
- The PCs may also come across the Vadeki Estate on their own and explore it, though the ancestral ghosts there will implore them to find Chrysanthi and bring her back. (If this is the case, consider including a journal Chrysanthi dropped in her escape, relating some of the background to this place and pointing the PCs to Cronepisht to find her.)

Chrysanthi

Chrysanthi is a chaotic good human professional alchemist (**acolyte**, adding Arcana +4 to skills). She is a direct descendent of Kaiti and Theodoro Vadeki and thus the rightful heir of the estate and its ghosts. She's also down on her luck and willing to do some outrageous things to get back on her feet, including imploring some adventurers to clear out a ruined house, so she can try and reclaim it.

She's impulsive, energetic, bright, and a little high-strung. She doesn't have much money to entice the PCs, but she's willing to allow the PCs their pick of what they find in the estate. She does ask them to leave the place as intact as they can. Once she's able to move in, clean up, and start her garden and alchemical lab though, she swears the PCs can come pick up some freebies any time.

The Vadeki Estate

The estate is located in the central White Forest within the Magdar Kingdoms, about a half-day east of Redtower village. The estate's walls are made of sturdy stone and still intact, though grayed with age and neglect. Unless otherwise noted, the ceilings are 15 feet high with wooden interior doors. The only exterior doors still intact are the sets of double doors in **Area 2**, and the northern doors are already open.

Squares within 10 feet of opened or destroyed exterior doors are slick with moss and plants, making them difficult terrain. Except for **Area 9** and **Area 10**, which can receive light from the exterior, the rest of the estate is dark unless otherwise stated.

The roof is less protected than the walls and has the potential to collapse (and, in **Area 9** and **Area 10**, it already has). Whenever the walls or ceiling inside the estate are subject to a significant disturbance—such as a *fireball* spell or a Medium or larger creature being thrown into it—there is a 20% chance the roof in that 5-foot square, and in a 5-foot radius around it, collapses. Creatures caught in the collapse must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. Additionally, all squares affected by the collapse become difficult terrain.

Courtyard Visitors. The undead in **Area 11** are attracted to significant noise. Specific areas call out when undead might be drawn from outside, but whenever there is a collapse, regardless of where, it might draw their attention. There is a cumulative 10% chance for each collapse that 1d3 + 1 **skeletons** or 1d2 **shadows** from **Area 11** are drawn to the noise and move into **Area 6**. Incorporeal undead continue through walls to find the source of the noise, while skeletons attempt to batter down any doors in their way.

AREA 1: FOREST PATH

The estate can be approached from any direction, but most of it is hidden away by overgrown foliage and trees. Approaching it from the north reveals a weed-choked, cracked cobblestone path when close to the estate, leading to the northern doors into **Area 2**.

Creatures. About 500 feet away from the doors to **Area 2**, a group of eight **goblins** are engaging in combat with an **owlbear**. They try to stay at range, pelting it with arrows as they attempt to withdraw (while screaming in Goblin).

The owlbear focuses on running down and killing the goblins one at a time unless the PCs engage, in which case she turns and faces the bigger threat. If the owlbear dies or there are four or fewer goblins remaining, the rest give up and scatter into the woods in a panic,

BIG-SCROUNGE GOBLINS

This goblin clan, led by chieftain Golden Top-Top, have been carefully looting the Vadeki Estate for years, tossing dead animals and difficult goblins into **Area 10** to keep the shambling mound there dormant. They panicked after Chrysanthi blundered in and woke the whole place up. In the aftermath, Golden Top-Top decided they needed bigger prey to lull the shambling mound back into dormancy and sent a war party to corral a pair of owlbears nesting nearby into **Area 10**. Many goblins died in the attempt, but they managed to hit-and-run the male owlbear into the atrium. They then lost control of the female, and she began mauling them.

screeching, "It's awake! The mound is awake, and we're doomed!" in Goblin.

Goblin Questioning. If the PCs capture any of the goblins alive (and are able to question them since they only speak Goblin), they plead to be set free and insist they don't know anything.

A successful DC 10 Charisma (Intimidate) check convinces the goblin to comply, and they are able to give the following information if asked:

- The Big-Scrounge Clan has been scavenging the estate while scouting for Gellert the Gruesome. They fear the undead and the shambling mound hibernating inside, so they have been slow and careful.
- If asked about the shambling mound, the goblin doesn't know the word *atrium*, so they just describe "the room with all the plants." The clan has tossed in offerings sometimes to keep it idle.
- Recently a human woman showed up and ruined everything. She went inside, panicked, and woke everything up.

None of the goblins present are willing to go into the estate, even with the PCs, or to give up the location of their camp unless they can be persuaded the PCs mean them no harm. Letting the goblin go and tracking them to their camp would be possible but beyond the scope of this adventure (see also **Continuing the Adventure**).

Treasure. Looting the goblin bodies nets 20 sp and 17 cp.

Owlbear Nest. Tracking the owlbears back to their lair requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check. It is beneath a fallen oak tree a mile to the southwest. There is a half-built nest without eggs and an assortment of coins, gems, and gear from—judging by the bones—dead goblins and an occasional traveler. In all, PCs can find 70 gp, 500 sp, 1,000 cp, 7 gems worth 10 gp each, a *potion of healing*, and a *spell scroll of light*.

SPELL SCHOOL KEYS

Both Kaiti and Theodoro were accomplished mages who might have taken on apprentices if things worked out differently. The puzzle in the courtyard was a fusion of their love for magical theory, a desire to keep the cellar safe, and an homage to Mnemosyne.

There are eight keys, each of them smooth, 8-inch-diameter stones with runes engraved on them, corresponding to one of the schools of magic. These runes are representative of the Vadekis interpretation of elven magic, so recognizing each rune requires a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check. The stones do not radiate any magic.

Approaching the Estate

The ruined cobblestone path ends at a pair of stone doors, both ajar and opened inward. Moss and creeping vines grow toward and around the doors, carpeting the pathway inside. The path continues to the west, disappearing around the corner of the building. Stone walls, 15 feet high, spread in both directions, covered in ivy and plagued by overgrowth. To the east, the wall gives way to ivy-choked iron fencing. Above the doors, a sagging lintel bears an inscription engraved in Elvish.

The inscription reads: "*In the past, we find our futures—Theodoro and Kaiti Va…*" The rest is illegible.

The path to the west leads to the broken doorway in the southern part of **Area 2**. The path to the east leads to **Area 11**.

AREA 2: MAIN HALL

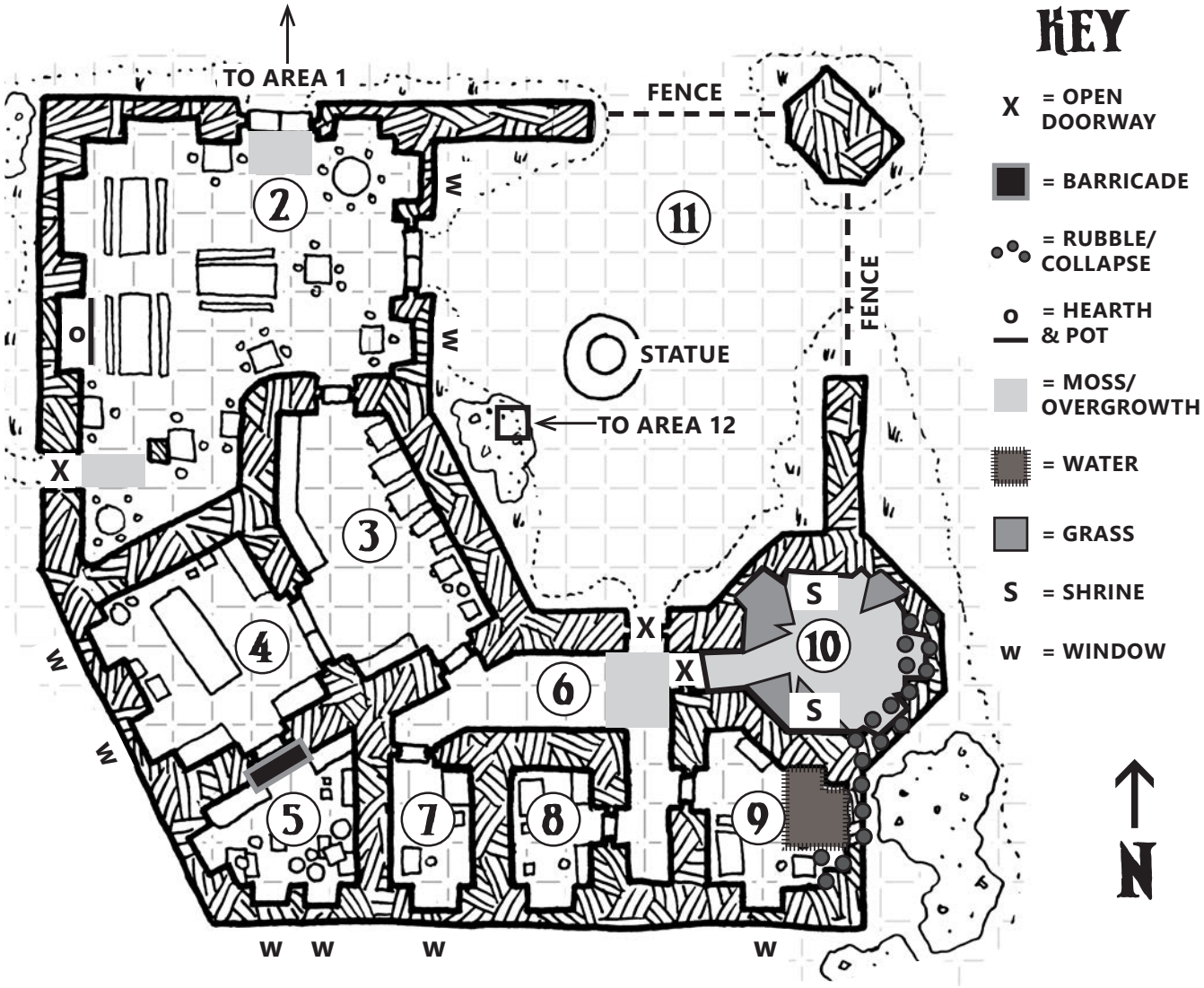
The overgrowth extends 10 feet into this room. This is a large space, roughly 30 feet by 50 feet, with a small alcove tucked in the southern part of the room with the remnants of chairs and couches. The rest of the room is littered with rotten tables and benches. A hearth on the western wall has a large iron pot sitting on it. Two windows on the east side are shattered, vines and foliage creeping around the edges. A set of double doors on the eastern wall are shut, but a stone door to the southwest lies in rubble on the ground, being reclaimed by the elements.

This room can receive light from outside through the broken windows and doorways, but it is otherwise dark without a light source. Goblin remains in various states of decomposition litter this room.

Creatures. Ten goblin **skeletons** (changing size to Small and replacing short swords with scimitars) sift through rubble and debris in different corners of the room, pantomiming what they were doing before they were slaughtered by undead. They are alerted when the PCs enter, and they lurch to attack.

Two **shadows** hide by the hearth on the western side of the room and behind the rubble created by a large, shattered table (passive Perception 14 or higher). They attack if spotted or if the PCs look in the cauldron. Otherwise, they remain hidden and wait until the PCs are resting or engaged in another combat that has softened them up.

Treasure. Most of this room has been looted by goblins. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check to search the room yields 11 gp, 19 sp, and 25 cp scattered in the debris.



Inside the cauldron, there is a smooth stone with a rune etched into it. This is the transmutation stone, one of the keys needed to solve the mnemonic puzzle in **Area 11**. Retrieving the stone prompts the hiding **shadows** to attack if they haven't already.

AREA 3: GALLERY

This oblong passage, 10 to 20 feet wide, is lined with empty, sagging bookshelves on the western side and assorted art objects on its northeastern, diagonal side. A few dusty portraits remain on the wall, looming with menacing expression, and in front rests a row of pedestals, bearing busts of humans and elves, broken up by several suits of cobweb-laced armor.

A feeling of being watched emanates from the sculptures and paintings. The eyes appear to move and follow the PCs to disconcerting effect, imposing disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made while in the gallery.

Tasia Vadeki, the Ghost Girl. Once the PCs enter the gallery, a toy wooden ball rolls down the passage from the south, pushed by an unseen force. Tasia, a translucent young human girl, between 10 and 12 years of age, appears in the middle of the gallery. She has her hair in two braids and points at the ball:

"Can we play later?" she asks the PCs in Elvish, but then she seems to get distracted by the armors. "Oh! Uh, oh, I think some things already want to play." She frowns. "They don't play nice."

Tasia vanishes after that.

She disappears immediately if the PCs attack her, calling, "No, please don't!" before she vanishes.

Creatures. Among the suits of armor are three **animated armors** and three **specters**, lurking behind

THE VADEKI GHOSTS

The three ancestral ghosts are bound in **Area 12** and currently being protected by a ward, preventing the undead from infiltrating. It also affects them, so they must strain to push themselves beyond it to manifest. When one of them appears aboveground, they remain no more than 3 rounds and space out manifestations by at least 1 minute.

The ghosts are friendly, though they understand their appearance might frighten the PCs. They attempt to help and don't become hostile if the PCs attack. The ghosts flee back to the menhirs, as described in their initial appearances.

Besides these appearances, they can be inserted anywhere the PCs need an extra clue in the adventure. The ghosts are neutral good and only speak Elvish.

Each of them has a different ability in place of Horrifying Visage, as described below:

Tasia. This is the ghost of Theodoro's little sister who died in a game gone wrong with a playmate in Kammae. She is playful but shies from combat. She discusses her life and is interested in plants and gardening and speaks at length about that and about games. She can use *telekinesis*, which recharges on 3–6.

Vaso. This is the ghost of Kaiti's great-grandfather who was a scholar and librarian. He passed away of old age and speaks fondly of the libraries where he once worked. He is soft-spoken and serious with a kindly, wizened demeanor. He can use *tongues* at will.

Areti. This is the ghost of Kaiti's grandmother who was arrested and died in prison for acting in a play with a bit too much truthful satire about a ruling elf. She remains talkative and flamboyant in death, her ghostly form still wearing her final, regal costume. She can use *thaumaturgy* at will.

The ghosts' memories of their lives are a little hazy, though they can pick out the specific details they liked the best. They are apprehensive around elves or elfmarked PCs but can be convinced that times have changed. One thing they look forward to is spending time with family in ways they didn't always get to in life. They miss Kaiti and Theodoro and want to reconnect with their descendant, Chrysanthi, whom they will help any way they can.

them. The armors animate and attack when a PC comes within 5 feet of one of them. The armors attempt to block the hall while the specters use hit-and-run tactics, striking at the PCs by moving through the armors and then retreating—or through the walls and ceiling if the armors can't provide good cover.

The **shadows** from **Area 2** (if not dispatched) may join this combat if the PCs are still outnumbered after 2 rounds.

Each time an animated armor is destroyed, it makes a significant amount of noise. There is a cumulative 15% chance for each destroyed armor that undead from **Area 11** will be drawn here (see **The Vadeki Estate**).

Strange Resemblance. The most prominent portrait in the gallery is of Theodoro and Kaiti Vadeki, now dusty and dingy with age. If the PCs have met Chrysanthi, they may attempt a DC 10 Intelligence check to notice a passing resemblance: a hawkish nose seems to have been passed down the family from Theodoro, and so has Kaiti's mane of frizzy hair. Some of the other portraits resemble the ghosts haunting the estate if the PCs have seen them.

Treasure. Most of the art here is too large or damaged to be of worthwhile value. Gemstones pried from the frames yield three gems worth 20 gp each and one of the busts wears a tiara of elven make worth 85 gp.

AREA 4: STUDY

A heavy oaken table takes up the center of this room, lurching perilously to one side. Worn and broken bookshelves line the walls, filled with moldy books, tattered scrolls, and grime-encrusted bric-a-brac.

Areti Marintos, the Thespian Ghost. Any torches or lanterns in the room flicker and suddenly brighten. "Don't be afraid," an ethereal, sparkling voice says before Areti, a translucent middle-aged woman in a mask and flamboyant dress, appears behind the table:

"Alas, we cannot linger long—" She is interrupted by one of the books flying off the shelf at her. "Oh, behave! Naughty books!" Her tone turns exasperated.

"Some of the magic around here is getting… cantankerous. But caution! Look to the shadows!" She calls her final warning before vanishing.

If the PCs attack Areti at any point, she disappears immediately after giving a shocked gasp. "We are on *your* side! How rude!"

Creatures. After Areti disappears, eight **animated books** (see **Appendix**) fly off the shelves and flap into the

air to attack the PCs. Once destroyed, they crumple to the ground in ruins of paper and leather fragments.

Two **shadows** are hiding in the room's alcoves and attack if spotted (passive Perception 14) or if one of the PCs is reduced to fewer than half their hit points during the battle with the books. Otherwise, they wait to attack the PCs until they rest or are engaged in another combat. These shadows, like the ones from **Area 2**, can be used as needed to harry PCs or increase difficulty.

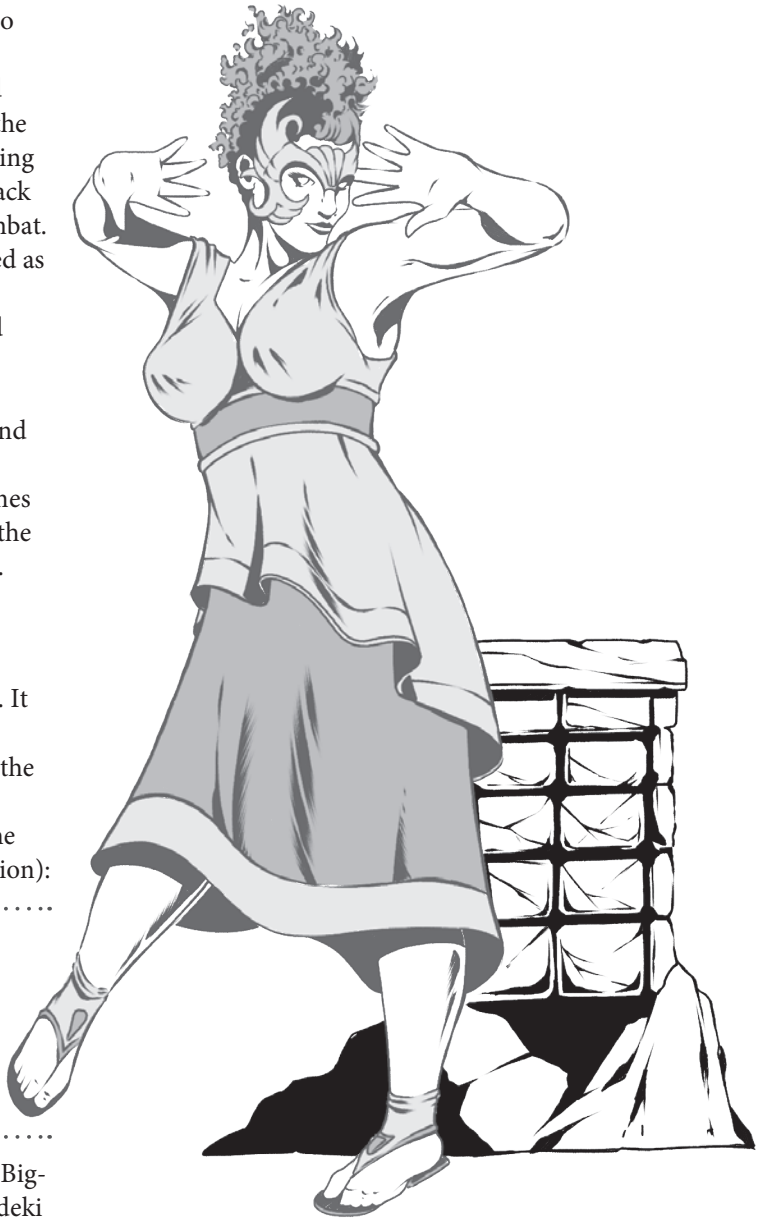
Treasure. Among the shelves is a pair of engraved bone dice worth 25 gp and a small obsidian sphere worth 10 gp. There are three intact scroll cases with *spell scrolls of comprehend languages*, *detect magic*, and *protection from evil and good*. Most of the books are too damaged to be of value, but there are several tomes useful for spell research, including some describing the *summon ancestor* spell (see **Appendix**), worth 75 gp.

AREA 5: STOREROOM

The door on the southeast wall of **Area 4** requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to open. It can also be beaten open (AC 15; hp 4).

Regardless, due to the barricade on the other side, the door can only be opened enough for one Medium or smaller creature to squeeze through at a time until the debris on the other side is removed (requiring an action):

A terrible stench, sickeningly sweet like rotten fruit and sunbaked waste, pervades this wrecked storeroom, littered with broken furniture and smashed crates and barrels. Two windows on the south wall have tattered cloth and bits of broken furniture shoved against them.



Creatures. Several weeks ago, a large troop of the Big-Scrounge Clan attempted a deeper push into the Vadeki estate. The undead routed them quickly into a dead end here, where the goblins barricaded themselves in, not realizing the incorporeal undead would just come in and pick them off.

Rotting goblin bodies drew the attention of Marrow-Tooth, a **ghast**, and his three **ghoul** followers. They came in through the windows and enjoyed a private feast. They've been making themselves fat on the goblins and hibernating for days at a time (after blocking out the windows) while the corpses continue to "ripen."

When Marrow-Tooth hears the PCs attempting entry, he quietly orders his ghouls to hide. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check made with disadvantage allows a PC to overhear Marrow-Tooth speaking but not the details.

Marrow-Tooth and the ghouls hide among the debris and try to ambush the first PC in the room. One of the ghouls will attempt to shut the door or barricade a hole to keep the others out.

The ghouls fight to the death, but Marrow-Tooth attempts to flee if dropped to 5 hit points or fewer. If captured and questioned (he speaks Common), he can tell the PCs how he came to be here after wandering the forest with his ghouls. He claims there is something "comforting" about this place, referring to the menhirs in the cellar (see **Area 12**).

If the PCs promise to let him go, he will tell them where a treasure is—the abjuration stone resting in the viscera of the goblin captain.

Treasure. Apart from the abjuration stone (see **The Mnemonic Puzzle** in **Area 11**), most objects in here are in terrible condition. However, the goblin captain has a *+1 scimitar* with his remains.

On a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, the PCs find one crate still intact underneath the rubble, containing some old, fine clothing of Elven design and with potential value to a collector, worth 250 gp.

AREA 6: HALL

This 30-foot-long, 10-foot-wide hallway smells like mold and mildew with a faint undercurrent of rot. The ceiling slopes perilously toward the eastern end where an open doorway spills vines and overgrowth into the hall and adjoining passages.

A door in the southern alcove leads to **Area 7**. At the end of the hall, the northern doorway is open and leads to **Area 11**. The door at the eastern end leads to **Area 10** while the passage leading south goes to **Area 8** to the west and **Area 9** to the east. The door to **Area 9** is rotted and hangs loosely off its hinges.

Creatures. If any undead were attracted here from the courtyard (see **The Vadeki Estate**) and couldn't reach the PCs, they will still be loitering here to attack. Otherwise, it's easier to attract undead here by making too much noise, including shouting, spellcasting, and combat, with a 30% cumulative chance of attracting undead for each incident.

AREA 7: BEDROOM

This bedroom, tucked away in the alcove, is surprisingly intact but incomplete. It seems intended to be a child's room but shows no sign of use. Under the dust and grime, the walls are painted a soft blue, and a small bed frame, an empty toybox, and a half-built dresser adorn the room.

Creatures. Tasia's ethereal voice sounds from nearby. "Go away! I don't want to play with you!" She darts through the western wall and runs across the room, pausing when she sees the PCs. "Watch out! They're mean!" She passes through the eastern wall and vanishes. A round later, two **specters** appear through the western wall and attack.

Treasure. Tucked under the bed, the PCs can find the enchantment stone (see **The Mnemonic Puzzle** in **Area 11**).

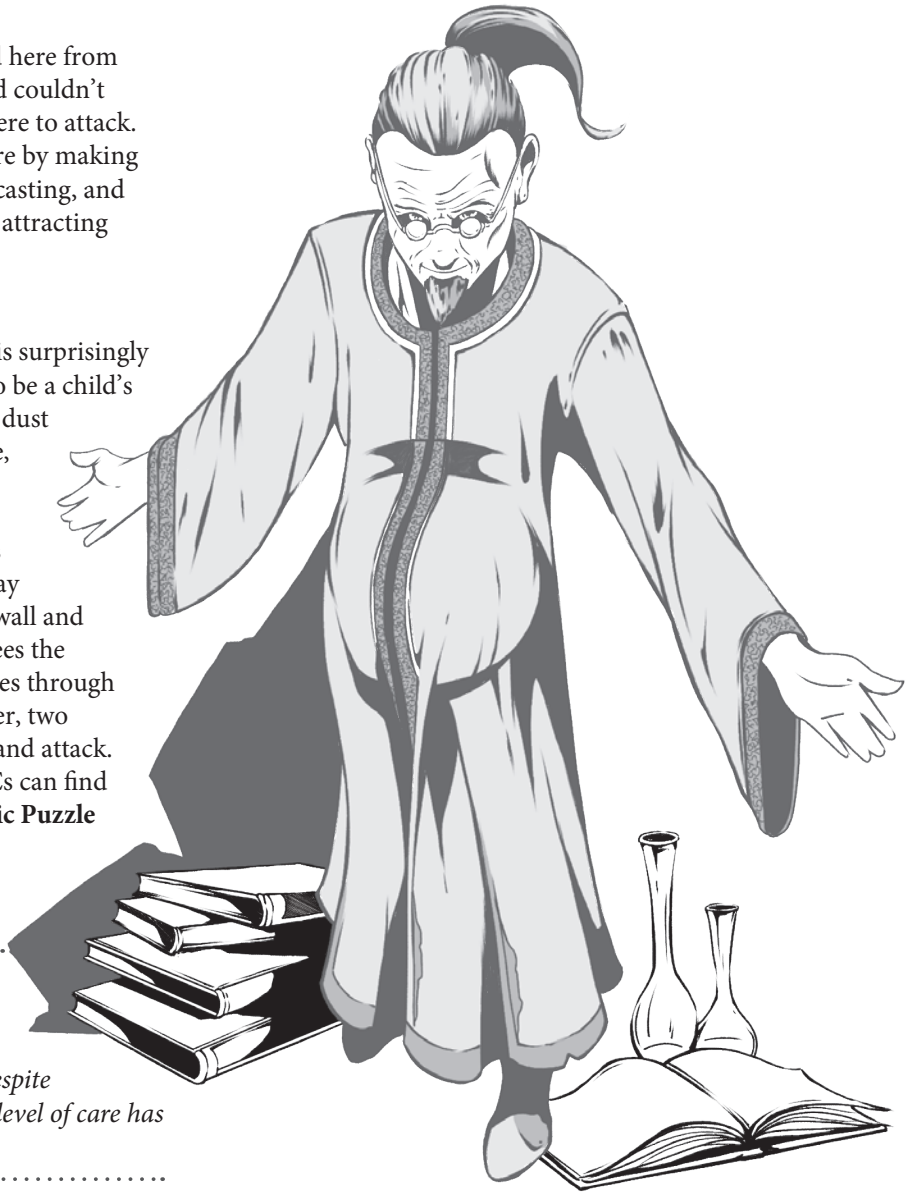
AREA 8: BEDROOM

A well-maintained bed, a neatly ordered desk, and a crimson flag with a golden auroch's head at its center are the only features of this otherwise spartan room. Despite the emptiness, it is obvious that a military level of care has been put into ensuring its tidiness.

The master bedroom contains a four-poster bed with moldering bedding; an open, rotting trunk; a collapsed bookshelf; and a wardrobe missing its doors.

Vaso Marintos, the Scholarly Ghost. A translucent elderly human man appears, dressed in robes and wearing spectacles. He clears his throat and addresses the PCs in any language he's heard them use the most often, employing *tongues*:

"The beast in the atrium has something you need to reach the cellar. Please do so in a hurry. I'm afraid in our excitement to see our descendent, we may have pushed on the ward a bit too much. I think it's failing. Kaiti and Theodoro did their best."



If the PCs don't attack him, he has time to answer one question before he must return to his menhir. If they attack, he vanishes immediately and scolds them:

"I don't think you understand! We are not like the other undead!"

Treasure. Searching the room for something useful among the debris requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. If successful, the PCs find Kaiti's jewelry box buried among moth-eaten clothing in the wardrobe, containing two necklaces worth 50 gp each, one worth 18 sp, and two rings worth 10 gp each. Additionally, they find a book on alchemy with an age-resistant enchantment on it, worth 40 gp. In the trunk, at the bottom, beneath a disintegrating blanket, they find two *potions of greater restoration*.

AREA 9: WASHROOM

The door to this room is rotten and hanging off its hinges. Inside, it is partially collapsed along the eastern wall, allowing in vines, moss, and mold from the northern room through the cracks. A pool of brackish water sits stagnant in a corner of the room beneath the fallen roof. Any furniture is long rotted—only the rusted-out remains of some tubs and basins remaining.

Slippery. The tiles in this room are slick with moss, water, and slime. Moving more than 5 feet in a round requires a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to avoid falling prone.

Creatures. Three goblin corpses have lain dead in this room for a long time, covered by the brackish water. Over time, their proximity to the shambling mound in **Area 10**, combined with the necrotic energy of the estate, turned them into **putrid haunts** (see *Tome of Beasts*, changing size to Small). They lie in the water until the PCs enter the room and then lurch out and attack.

Treasure. The remaining loot on the goblins includes 10 sp and 25 cp. One of the goblins has the evocation stone (see **The Mnemonic Puzzle** in **Area 11**), merged with the vines and moss growing out of its body.

AREA 10: SHATTERED ATRIUM

This oblong chamber is overrun with tangled overgrowth, vines, ferns, mushrooms, and less identifiable flora. The roof remains in pieces, a few jagged patches of glass curving out in the remnants of a dome. The walls are cracked and plant-covered, yielding before the elements with one large gap in the northeastern wall. The smell of dirt, mold, and rot is overpowering.

The overgrowth here extends into the hallway at **Area 6**. Each square of this room is difficult terrain.

A Medium or smaller creature can fit through the hole in the northeastern wall without squeezing. This is where the Big-Scrounge Clan have made most of their "offerings" to the shambling mound.

Creatures. Most of the vegetation here is the **shambling mound**, resting in a heap against the eastern wall, digesting its recent meals of owlbear and goblins. It has enough bodies to consume that it is unlikely to go hunting the PCs, but if they loiter too long, it may lumber free and come to them directly.

While fighting in the atrium, major impacts—including the mound missing an attack as well as *fireball* spells or a creature being slammed into a wall—have a 25% chance of causing the remaining glass above to shatter. If it does, a 5-foot square of glass breaks, dealing 11 (2d10) piercing damage to any creature under it and 6 (1d10) piercing damage to anyone passing through that square or remaining in that square each round.

Treasure. The non-digestible remains of the shambling mound's many meals can be found buried in its foliage, including 90 gp and 200 sp. Buried within its husk is also the conjuration stone.

Three small, stone shrines are buried beneath vegetation around the room. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies them as shrines of ancestral devotion. They generate a magic circle against undead around the atrium (to keep ghostly visitors from withering the plants) that has kept the shambling mound safe from the undead. Each of the shrines also contains a silver holy symbol of Mnemosyne, two opposing cresting waves, embedded in them, each worth 35 gp.

AREA 11: THE COURTYARD

This expansive courtyard is overrun with weeds and remnants of once-lush gardens. Walls to the north and east are joined by aging, 20-foot-wide iron fences strangled with vines. In the center is a 12-foot-high statue of a woman in repose on a pedestal, reading a scroll. Ivy wraps around the statue, but her toga-like dress is still visible, as is a crown like a cresting wave at her brow. At the base of the statue are eight carved recesses meant for holding small, round objects.

Scaling the iron fences requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check.

Creatures. The courtyard is a focal point of undead in the area, with the more mindless among them aimlessly milling about. They sense the draw of the menhirs below but are unable to get to it due to the ward Kaiti and Theodoro placed before they fled.

BYPASSING THE PUZZLE

If the PCs struggle with the mnemonic code, or prefer to skip ahead, consider the following suggestions:

- Allow a DC 15 Intelligence check to deduce the mnemonic's purpose and determine the right order to place the stones.
- If reading the inscription or identifying any of the stones is an issue, allow one of the ancestral ghosts to appear and help translate (they will read what they can within 3 rounds).
- There is no consequence if the PCs simply wish to try every combination of stones in every slot, other than time and potential encounters with more undead or goblins.

There can be a maximum of eight goblin **skeletons** and six **shadows** in the courtyard. However, these creatures are intended to drift through the estate in small groups to harry the PCs during other encounters rather than be faced here at once. To make the encounter easier, reduce the number of shadows. To make it harder, or if the courtyard is empty or nearly empty, replace the shadows with a **wraith** attempting to brute-force past the weakening wards. The shadows hide in the foliage until the skeletons engage before moving to attack.

Treasure. The skeletons have 23 sp between them and one turquoise gem worth 10 gp. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check in the garden finds several plants valuable to alchemists—a total of 50 gp worth of alchemical reagents.

The Mnemonic Puzzle. The courtyard statue depicts Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, recognizable with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Religion) check. Her statue's base is a wide circle with an inscription written in Elvish around it:

"Time dances in circles evermore, not endless angles."

Eight spherical depressions, each roughly 8 inches in diameter, run along the facing of the base beneath the inscription. To access the cellar, the stones must be placed in the proper order to unlock the trapdoor and bypass the ward. Each stone refers to a particular school of magic, and the inscription is a mnemonic device that tells them the order: *transmutation*, *divination*, *illusion*, *conjuration*, *evocation*, *necromancy*, *enchantment*, *abjuration*.

Placed improperly, nothing happens. When the stones are placed in the right order, there is an audible click of the trapdoor unlocking.

Two of the stones, divination and necromancy, are already in place. One of the stones, illusion, is on the ground within 10 feet of the statue. The remaining five are scattered within the estate.

AREA 12: THE CELLAR

The trapdoor to the cellar is hidden beneath bushes near the statue of Mnemosyne in **Area 11**. Finding it without solving the mnemonic puzzle requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. Unlocking it is possible with a successful DC 25 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, or it can be bashed open with the proper tools (AC 17; hp 15):

A 5-foot-wide hole in the ground has an iron ladder attached to one side, descending into a dark stone tunnel.

The PCs emerge at the 10-foot-by-10-foot landing of a stairwell, leading down. The cellar is dark and made of stone with a 10-foot-high ceiling. The staircase extends 10 feet down to an open stone archway where a faint blue glow is visible. Past the archway, describe the cellar by reading the following:

This 40-foot-long, narrow room ends in a wider chamber to the south and branches into an offshoot to the east about 10 feet away. Near the archway into this room stands a 6-foot-high menhir with a blue inlaid stone, glowing with an internal light and inscribed with a symbol

THE MENHIRS

Kaiti and Theodoro used an earth elemental to shape the menhirs as their anchor for *summon ancestor* (see **Appendix**). Incorporating magical stones from Memoria that could store memories, they were able to build that magic into the binding to make these summonings permanent. This has allowed the ancestral ghosts to remain, but destroying the stones will discorporate them, sending them back to the afterlife.

The menhirs are not inherently magical; they only radiate some residual magic from the persistent effect. The blue stones, however, are magic items now fused with the stone. Attempting to remove them from the menhirs will destroy them, and they can be broken (AC 13; hp 2).Tasia is bound to the northern menhir, Vaso is to the south, and Areti to the east.

of two opposite-facing, cresting waves. In the southern chamber, there is another one of these menhirs, and a blue light emanates from an unseen source from the eastern passage. Bookshelves line the wall across from the archway and in the southern chamber.

Once the PCs enter the chamber, Tasia appears at the closest menhir, greeting them with a cheerful "Hello!" unless they've been openly hostile, in which case she hides while they talk to Areti and Vaso.

Creatures. The ancestral **ghosts** remain visible for as long as desired in the cellar. Unless the PCs have been hostile, the ghosts are friendly but concerned about Chrysanthi and the estate. They are a little quirky from all the time stuck in the cellar, despite being unaware of how much time has passed thanks to many bouts of ethereal dormancy.

The ghosts can discuss any of the following topics. Areti is the most sociable and sentimental, Vaso is the most knowledgeable, and Tasia is playful and excited about having a living person in the family:

- They remember Kaiti and Theodoro, necromancers belonging to a cult of Mnemosyne, goddess of memory, though this is something that came after the ghosts' time. They know what they were told about Memoria and the rituals and that something bad happened, but they do not know why Kaiti and Theodoro never returned.
- Chrysanthi is their descendent and heir to the estate, which they sensed as soon as she stepped foot on the grounds. They feel badly for scaring her off by accident and would like to make amends.
- They are upset about the goblins pillaging aboveground and occasionally tried to scare them off, but they can't be up there long. The goblins are also perpetuating the undead problem.
- They are aware the menhirs exude a certain amount of necrotic energy, which draws the undead, but only in a limited area or there would be far more infesting the estate.
- They aren't sure what created the shambling mound but suspect it was a mix of old enchantments wearing down and the broken atrium, exposing the interior to the elements.

The ghosts are not hostile unless the PCs refuse to listen to them and try to destroy their menhir anchors. They want to convince the PCs they mean no harm, and they only want to help Chrysanthi come home.



STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using **Status** (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs reunite Chrysanthi with her ghostly ancestors and clear out the estate, the PCs gain +2 to their Status with the residents of Redtower. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

If the PCs attack a menhir, the ghosts plead with them to reconsider. They will attempt diplomacy up until one of the stones is destroyed and one of them discorporated. At that point, one of the ghosts will attempt to possess the strongest-looking PC while the other attacks.

The Vadeki Heir. Resolving the adventure depends on the PCs' decision with how to approach Chrysanthi. Her ancestral ghosts want to get to know her and help her however they can.

They acknowledge the necrotic energy of the menhirs may continue to draw undead but believe there may be means to get around it. And while they wish to stay and be a part of their descendant's life, they are willing to move on if Chrysanthi tells them she wishes it.

They implore the PCs to take their offer to Chrysanthi and will honor whatever she decides. If they do, they promise they will reward the PCs with something Kaiti and Theodoro left behind.

Treasure. Little survived here apart from dilapidated furniture and decaying goods, but a few books on Elven history and the Seven Cities remain intact, worth 250 gp to a collector.

If the PCs agree to bring Chrysanthi to them, the ghosts show them a loose stone in Areti's alcove that is actually one of the items Kaiti and Theodoro used to create this chamber: a *stone of controlling earth elementals*.

The ghosts also offer to tutor one of the PCs in the *summon ancestor* spell (see **Appendix**), if any of them are capable of learning it.

Concluding the Adventure

It is up to the PCs what they tell Chrysanthi about the ghosts at the estate. She'll opt for whichever path they recommend. If they tell her to get rid of the ghosts, whether because it's too dangerous or because they don't belong on this plane, then she will nervously agree to go tell them.

In that case, the ghosts sadly bid her farewell and show her how to destroy the memory stones binding them, which also gets rid of the necrotic aura that draws undead here.

If the PCs tell her the ghosts are friendly and want to help her, Chrysanthi will hesitantly go to meet them. The ghosts are overjoyed to see her and immediately beset her with advice on how to rebuild the estate.

Chrysanthi is a little overwhelmed but admits she never really got to know her parents before they died, and maybe this is a second chance at family—albeit a strange and unorthodox one.

Chrysanthi believes the gardens at the estate should offer enough alchemical material for her to put together some things to sell, especially if she has the ghosts' help. Once she's set up, she hopes to start being able to invest in repairing the estate, cultivating the gardens, and putting some life into the place—so to speak.

She promises the PCs can come back once she's established and get free potions for life—or at least one per visit. (If the PCs give her the alchemical materials and items they've collected so far, then she is very grateful and amends her offer to a free potion per PC when they come see her as well as a place to stay whenever they need it.)

Continuing the Adventure

If desired, the PCs can continue the adventure around the Vadeki estate:

- They can remain and help Chrysanthi clean up the estate and defend it from trouble around the forest, potentially creating their own adventuring safehouse here.
- They could seek out a means of reducing the effects of the menhirs' necrotic aura, protecting it from further undead incursion (if the ghosts remain).
- They could track down the Big-Scrounge Clan and drive them off or wipe them out.

If they are intrigued by the cult of Mnemosyne, perhaps they could investigate the ruins of this so-called Memoria (see previous **The Light of Memoria** chapter) farther west or go farther still and research this mysterious goddess in Kammae.

Raid on the Savage Oasis

*For 5th-Level Ch*aracters

This adventure takes place in a secluded oasis within a large gorge south of Allain and east of Bourgund, in what was once the Magocracy of Uxloon (in the Western Wastes), but can be adapted to any similarly isolated and desolate area.

Adventure Background

At random intervals—typically no more than twice annually but often not reoccurring for several years—massive storms brew in the Western Wastes, dangerous thunderstorms that unleash torrents of rain from clouds that flicker with multi-colored lightning. Flash floods sweep through the barren hills and across the dust-laden plains, washing everything in uncontrolled magic. In the wake of these storms, a great explosion of growth occurs.

This time is known as the Mad Spring, when plant life bursts from the ground in a lush eruption of strange life. Some scholars believe these plants may have been carried, as spores or wind-borne seeds, from Carnessa, a jungle to the south beyond the Wall. Unable to grow in the harsh conditions here, they have adapted, lying buried until the magic-charged rains come to give them the impetus to grow. Others suggest the plants are mutated remnants of the greenery that once existed here, forced into rapid resurgence and twisted by the strange magics carried by the storms. Whatever the case, the time is a boon for those tortured beings that eke out a living. The Mad Spring brings unprecedented resources into an otherwise barren land, and those that survive the terrible storms and floods seize upon the opportunity that awaits in the bounty which comes after.

The growing season of the Mad Spring is swift. Plants reach full size and fruit in a matter of weeks, using the water from the floods before it dries up. Eventually, the plant life shrivels and dies. But before this can happen, the tribes that live in and around the wastes forage from the great bounty that awaits them. The price can be high since many of these plants are dangerous, and monsters lurk among them. The risk is typically worth the reward though. The Wild Harvest, as the locals call it, can feed a group for the better part of a year, or beyond. Wastelanders risk their lives and possible mutation to gather the versatile and wondrous foodstuffs available in this short window of time. (You can read more about the Mad Spring in *Warlock 24: Weird Fantasy*.)

One of the most contested places during the Wild Harvest is a secluded, bowl-shaped valley that was once an experimental garden for a wizard who specialized in botany prior to the destruction of Uxloon. The only entrance (other than flight or scaling the sheer rock that surrounds the place) is a single door located in the great chasm where the Hungering Cocoon resides. During the Mad Spring, runoff feeds a waterfall that empties into a pool in the hidden vale, turning it into a "savage oasis" filled with wild and often dangerous life. An abundance of vegetation springs forth from the terraced landscape, once cultivated by the botanical wizard and now mutated with long exposure to the corrupt magic of the wastes. The greatest prize here is the seed of the Shrine Tree, said to be able to cure all manner of ills.

Recent Events

The Savage Oasis and the wizard's work area are currently occupied by the Fallen Children, a group of outcasts and outlaws led by a former slaver named Nazaire. This ragged group of dusty, wizened, desperate folk have bonded in their adherence to a strange, religious dogma that combines elements of druidism, Great Old One worship, and fragments of doctrine from worshipers of Mavros. Nazaire discovered the Savage Oasis while planning a pilgrimage to the Seat of Mavros shortly after the current Mad Spring started and quickly started collecting followers.

Having learned of the Shrine Tree and its powers, Nazaire's minions work to harvest the bounty of the place while he waits for the tree's seed to reach maturity, hoping it will cure his disfigurements. He has brokered a deal with a qwyllion, Acraecea, who is on the run. The twisted nymph is allowed to reside here, safe from her enemies, in return for protecting it while the Fallen Children restock their food stores before beginning their pilgrimage.

Adventure Hooks

Andres DeMarque, a wizard from Bourgund and still loyal to his bonded knight, worries that Sir Chancel's advanced years mean he is soon to depart this world. Andres loves Chancel and does not want to lose him—for reasons greater than just his feelings. Sir Chancel's death would mean Andres would need to be bonded to a new knight, and he finds most of them to be intrusive, abrupt, and suspicious of the mages. Worse, Andres fears that those mages seeking to throw off their own bonds would attempt to coerce him to assist them in another revolt once he was free of his bond to Sir Chancel.

During his research, Andres learned of the hidden oasis and the Mad Spring from agents in the wastes, telling of the Shrine Tree and its miraculous seeds. He wishes to acquire this rare seed and use it to create an elixir to bolster Sir Chancel's declining health. He has been discretely seeking adventurers to make the trek. Andres offers a reward of 2,500 gp, or potions roughly equal to the monetary reward, to any group that brings him a seed from the Shrine Tree.

The PCs could have other reasons for venturing into the wastes during the Mad Spring of course. Below are some suggestions:

- Bourgund is known for the strong and long-lasting perfumes crafted there. The strange plants that grow during the Mad Spring are sure to provide new scents that would be of great interest to Bourgund's perfumers, who would pay well for such ingredients.
- A wizard with interests in botany has discovered remnants of the work of another wizard who once owned a hidden oasis. She will pay well for samples of the various plants that grow there, including a hefty bonus for any research notes or tomes that might be found.
- Acraecea, a foul qwyllion, is wanted for terrible crimes against the people of Allain and Bourgund. Both nations have a standing bounty on her head. An informant has sold the PCs the location of her most recent hideout.

Entrance to the Savage Oasis

The main entrance to the place is at the bottom of a large gorge south of Allain and east of Bourgund, in what was once the Magocracy of Uxloon. A stone door is set into the cliff face on the north side of the gorge. The door has no handle or visible locking mechanism. Its only adornment is a bas relief of a humanoid face, like a death mask. A creature approaching within 5 feet of it causes the eyes of the face to open, revealing a pair of glowing, crystal eyes. If the creature is recognized, the door swings inward, shutting behind the creature when it passes unless braced open. If the creature is not recognized to be allowed within, the eyes shut again and the door remains closed. Those within are able to manipulate the door's magic to open under specific circumstances, allowing it to recognize specific creatures. A creature inside can leave simply by using the handle on the inside to open the door as if it were not locked.



PCs using *detect magic* can examine the pattern of the door's enchantment and find a way to circumvent them. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check allows a PC who can see the magical pattern to alter it, allowing the PCs access through the door. This procedure takes 1 minute. Forcing the door is faster but more difficult, requiring a successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check. If the PCs attempt to destroy the door, it has AC 17, 30 hit points, and a damage threshold of 8.

No creatures are encountered here as the gorge is home to the Hungering Cocoon. The massive, oozing mound of flesh travels blindly through the chasm, overrunning and absorbing every living thing it encounters. The quivering mound is encrusted with filth and grime, and occasionally, when seen from close enough, one can notice cysts on its surface. The cysts appear to hold fetal forms of creatures floating within them. The Hungering Cocoon is the size of a castle, and adventurers hear and see it coming from a long way off. The PCs aren't meant to combat the creature, but its presence should provide heightened tension while attempting entrance to the Savage Oasis. You can provide the players with descriptions of the behemoth as it jags and veers along the chasm in the distance as they examine the door and seek entry. Describe it for them as their characters watch the immense abomination getting ever closer as they work, its bulk eventually casting them into shadow as it shakes and shudders its way across the floor of the chasm. At the last moment, they get the door open and rush inside, shutting the portal behind them and hearing the scrape of the beast's massive bulk as it slides along the other side of the wall.

AREA 1: ENTRANCE

A short hallway ends in a second stone door. To the west of the entrance is an alcove with floor, walls, and ceiling crafted of a smooth, translucent blue crystal.

This hallway contains an alcove and the magical mechanism responsible for controlling the exterior door.

Decontamination Alcove. If a creature steps into the alcove, a shimmering *wall of force* seals it inside. The walls, floor, and ceiling then bathe the alcove in a soft blue light. Creatures in the alcove feel nothing but a faint tingling. The energies decontaminate the occupant, killing any spores, seeds, or living plants. If a plant creature enters the alcove, it must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 27 (5d10) radiant damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. If this damage reduces a creature to 0 hit points, its body is destroyed, turning to fine dust. Creatures that are diseased or carrying parasites are cured of such afflictions. After 1 round, the light fades and the *wall of force* vanishes, allowing creatures to enter or exit the alcove. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check after witnessing the alcove's activation determines the alcove's purpose. The DC increases to 18 if a PC is attempting to determine the alcove's purpose before it activates. This fixture was placed by the wizard who originally built the garden to ensure invasive species could not be accidentally tracked in and allowed to contaminate the experimental garden.

Outer Door, Interior. A magic sigil is inscribed on the interior of the southern door. A creature touching the sigil can take an action to specify the conditions under which the outer door will open, being as general (open for anyone) or as specific (only open for a bald dwarf carrying an adamantine axe) as they choose. The level of the door's security changes on initiative count 20 of the following round.

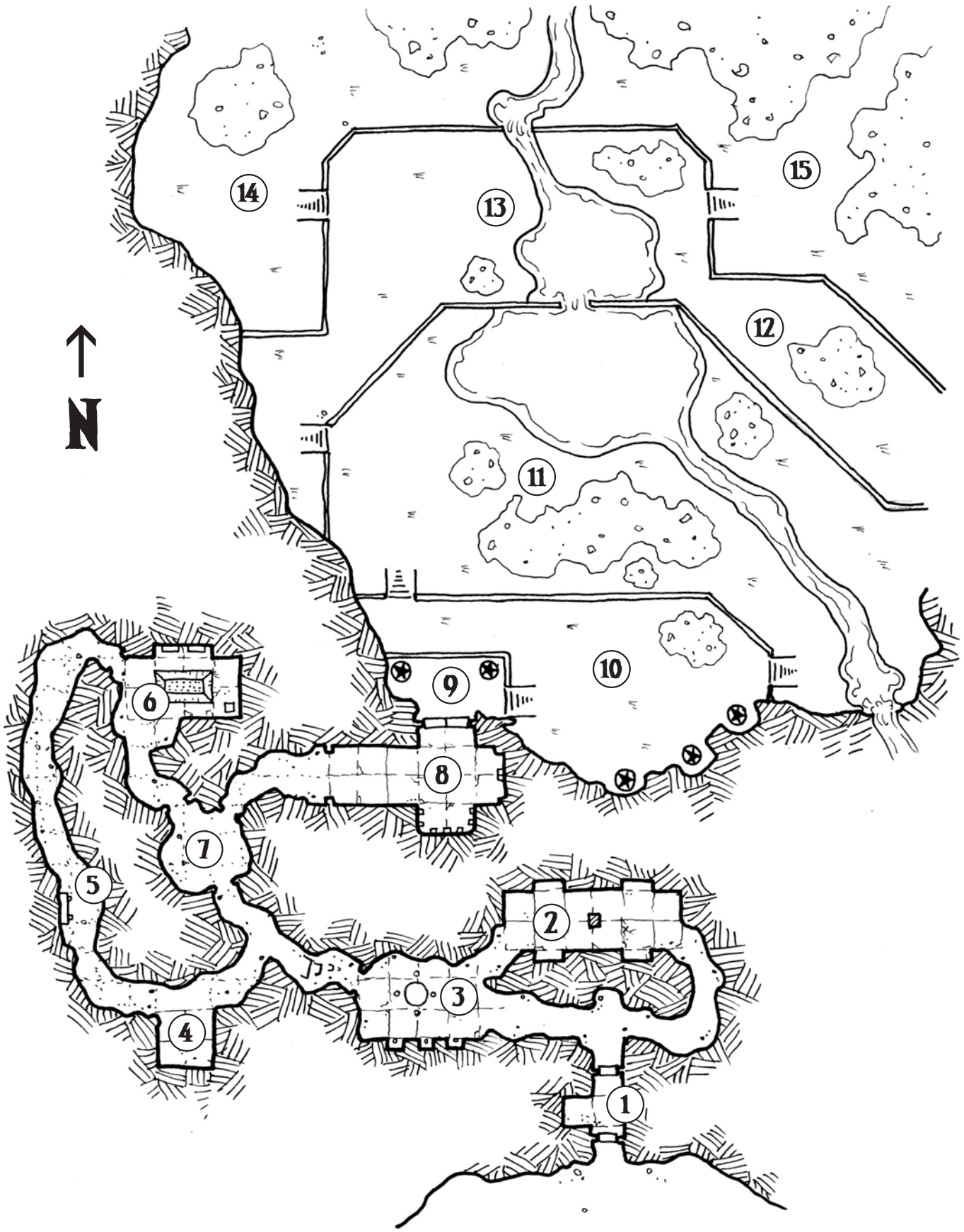
Inner Door. The second door is likewise magical and identical to the outer door, except it lacks a sigil and can't be changed. It opens only if every creature in the entrance hall has taken a turn in the decontamination alcove. A PC who casts *detect magic* to study the door's enchantment and succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check can spend an action to temporarily fool the door into thinking all creatures in the room have been decontaminated, thus allowing them to open the door.

AREA 2: ROOM OF THE VERDANT PILLAR

This hall is empty except for a single pillar at its center. Standing a few feet shy of the ceiling, this block of stone is a brilliant green and slightly translucent. The air smells fresher than in nearby rooms.

Nazaire's people originally bedded down in this room, but the strangeness of the pillar made them rethink that arrangement. Now they all crowd in **Area 8**. Thus far, they have avoided this room, but with the ever-increasing harvest, they may need to use it as storage.

Verdant Pillar. The pillar is a single block of stone, 2 feet to a side and standing 7 feet tall. It is fashioned of a translucent green stone. It is warm to the touch and smells of green, growing things. It radiates magic. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check determines the magic of the pillar is connected to living things, specifically plants, though without specific training, the exact extent of its powers are beyond most people. If a spellcaster takes the time to attune itself to the pillar, the next time the spellcaster casts a spell that has plants as part of its effect (such as *entangle*) or a spell that affects plants (such as *plant growth*), the spellcaster increases the area of effect of the spell by half. This only affects the first spell of this type that is cast. To gain the benefits again, the spellcaster must reattune to the pillar.


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AREA 3: DINING AREA

A large, round table sits in the center of this room, surrounded by four stools. The top of the table holds a strange assortment of fruits and vegetables. Piled on the floor against the unfinished north wall is an assortment of glassware and lab equipment. Three small niches are worked into the south wall, each holding a small bell jar.

Four **cult fanatics** occupy this room, sorting their latest harvest from the Savage Oasis. They are hostile to anyone they do not recognize as members of their tribe. If half of them fall, the others attempt to flee, moving to **Area 8** to call for reinforcements.

Treasure. The food on the table is equivalent to 30 days of rations, but it perishes within a week if not properly dried or otherwise preserved. The three bell jars in the wall niches are magical, and any organic material placed in one of them is magically preserved, remaining in the same condition it was when it was first placed inside. When removed from the jar, the material continues to decay at its normal rate. Each jar can hold up to 1/2 cubic foot of material (approximately 3 days of rations). The PCs can use a jar to store fresh rations or to preserve a small, wholly intact plant from the oasis for botanists and perfumers in Bourgund. The PCs receive 300 gp for each intact plant they bring to Bourgund. The **cult fanatics** collectively carry 28 sp and 34 cp.

AREA 4: STORAGE AREA

A finished area of stone juts off from the rough tunnel. It is stacked with sacks and baskets full of fruits and vegetables.

A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check hears faint rustling and chewing coming from the stack of foodstuffs. If the pile is disturbed, the insects that have infested the store become angry and defend their food, forming two **swarms of insects** that crawl out to attack intruders. If the PCs flee the area, the swarms don't pursue, returning to their feeding.

Food. There is currently enough food stored here to feed a dozen people for 2 weeks. However, much of it is full of holes, partially eaten, and laden with insect eggs. The food is still edible but possibly unappetizing. If a PC casts *purify food and drink* on the food, the insect eggs and remains in the food are removed.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using Status (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs successfully fulfill a quest involving the Savage Oasis, the PCs gain +1 to their Status in the region where the quest originated (likely Allain or Bourgund). These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

AREA 5: MEANDERING PASSAGE

This rough passage twists off into the distance, rubble and debris from the ages scattered on the floor and piled against the walls. A strange metal cabinet is affixed to the western wall, its rusty surface covered with levers, wheels, and switches.

The dirty floor of the passage shows the most traffic between **Areas 3**, **4**, and **7**. The northern section of the passage is dusty with signs of little to no traffic. The cabinet on the western wall appears to have remained untouched for decades.

Control Panel. This passage serves no real purpose but to house the strange piece of machinery that sits here. This was the control unit for experimental treatments the wizard had developed for his garden. Long unused,

d100	Effect
01–25	No effect.
26–50	Insecticide sprays in **Areas 10–15**, but the concoction has weakened over time. Insects are not killed but enraged. Add one **swarm of insects** to each of those areas. If this result is rolled a second time, the second dose kills any swarms. This result has no effect after the second time.
51–60	A magical fertilizer is applied to **Areas 6** and **10–15**, causing rapid growth. All terrain in **Areas 10–15** is now considered difficult terrain. Each plant creature in **Areas 6** and **10–15** gain 11 (2d10) temporary hit points and a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls. If this result is rolled again, it has no effect.
61–70	A purifying element is released into the water in **Areas 10–15**. Acraecea's corrupt form is inadvertently affected, and she is poisoned for 1 hour. If this result is rolled again, it has no effect.
71–90	Herbicide is released into the test planter in **Area 6**, killing the **quash moss** (see **Hazards** in **Appendix**).
91–95	That particular lever/switch/wheel shorts out, causing smoke and dealing 11 (2d10) lightning damage to the creature that triggered it.
96–00	Same as a roll of 91–95, except the resulting feedback shorts out the entire machine, causing a cloud of smoke to fill the entire passageway for 1 minute, which heavily obscures the area and possibly alerts creatures in nearby areas to the PCs' presence, at GM's discretion.

most of the controls no longer function; the ones that do are haphazard and unpredictable. Most of the effects of manipulating the controls can't be noticed here, but they can affect encounters elsewhere in the complex. If a PC activates a random switch, wheel, or lever, roll percentile dice and consult the table below to determine the results.

AREA 6: BOTANICAL LABORATORY

A large hollow is carved into the floor at the center of this room. It is filled with a thick green moss, which is covered in small white berries and gives off a scent reminiscent of baking bread. Small tables and cabinets stand against the walls, their tops covered with assorted glassware.

Three **druids**, members of Nazaire's clan, are here, experimenting with the patch of **quash moss** (see **Hazards** in **Appendix**) that grows in the depression. The moss attacks any creature that comes near it, except for the **druids** who wear small charms enchanted to make the quash moss ignore them. The **druids** attack anyone not of their clan who enters the area. If two of them fall, the third attempts to retreat to **Area 8** to warn of the intruders.

Treasure. The **druids** carry a total of 32 sp and 40 cp and wear small, rough wooden charms. If a PC wears one, none of the plant creatures in the oasis attack that PC unless the PC attacks or damages the creature first. The **shambling mound** in **Area 12** is immune to the effect of the charms.

One of the cabinets holds several journals belonging to the wizard that once owned this oasis. If read in full (a process taking several hours), they provide information on the special plants found throughout the complex and the garden, including the Shrine Tree and the proper method of harvesting its seed. The journals also contain the password needed to keep the guardian statues from becoming hostile (see **Area 9** and **Area 10**). Finding specific information within the journals requires 10 minutes and a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check to locate. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the time required to read the journals is halved. The books are worth 1,000 gp to the right buyer.

If the quash moss is killed, ten of the berries growing on it turn a vivid purple in color. These berries act as the products of a *goodberry* spell. If not eaten within 24 hours, however, each berry produces more quash moss, growing into a full-sized (and hostile) patch within 1 hour after 24 hours have passed.

AREA 7: TRAPPED JUNCTION

The passageway widens into a small cave, empty save for a few berries, leaves, and twigs scattered on the floor. Two other rough tunnels exit the area.

Illusion-Shrouded Pit. In the center of the room, a 50-foot-deep pit lies covered with an illusion to appear as a normal floor. When one of Nazaire's followers fell to his death, one of the others marked the floor, so they could avoid the trap in the future. Now they use the pit to dispose of unwanted vegetation. A creature that falls into the pit takes half the normal falling damage since the decaying vegetation piled at the bottom softens the fall.

Prevention. Anyone examining the floor carefully and succeeding on a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check notices faint scratches on the floor outlining a rough square, just over 5 feet per side. Tactile investigation of the floor within the square reveals it to be nothing more than an illusion.

Creature. Some of the plants have continued to grow and mutate, and a mass of **asp vines** (see **Appendix**) lurks in the pile at the bottom of the pit. The asp vines attack any creature that falls into the pit, scoring it with their poisonous thorns until it dies. The vegetation in the pit is littered with the bones of small rodents that have fallen prey to the vines.

AREA 8: EXHIBITION HALL

The rough tunnel transitions into worked stone. Where large doors once hung is an open doorway, leading into a cross-shaped hall. The floor is strewn with bedrolls and packs. A glass cabinet at the far end of the hall appears to be a terrarium of some sort, holding a cascade of moss and vines. An alcove to the south holds wall-mounted glass cases, and a pair of bronze double doors sit in a branch off the northern wall.

The doors that opened into this hall were removed long before the Fallen Children arrived. Nazaire's people have chosen to use this large area as a barracks during their time here. The cases in the southern wall have been left untouched after one of the clan's members broke open one of the small, glass cases and was infected with a rapidly spreading growth of vegetation. That clan member now lurks in the undergrowth of the middle tier of the oasis (see **Area 12**).

Creatures. The bulk of Nazaire's people are resting here when not laboring with the harvest. Ten Fallen Children clansfolk (**thugs**) are currently here, lounging. They attack anyone they do not recognize. If half or more of their number fall, the rest attempt to retreat out the doors to the oasis to warn Nazaire.

FURTHER ENCOUNTERS

The full extent of the final tier of the Savage Oasis is up to you. There is enough heavy undergrowth and trees to provide other encounter areas should you and your players wish to further explore the area. The Savage Oasis is a prime spot to add other plant creatures or even magically mutated river-based creatures, washed into this valley from the waterfall. You can also add flying fauna that would be attracted to such a place of bounty as well, such as insects, predators that spot the place from overhead, or other monsters that would like such terrain for food, rearing young, or lairing.

You can also take creatures that wouldn't normally be found in such environs and "reskin" them to your wants and needs. For example, you could use the statistics of a roper but describe it as a new type of carnivorous fungus or plant that looks like a tree or giant mushroom until it moves. A little creativity makes for new and exciting encounters.

The Green Mantle. A glass cabinet stands at the eastern end of the hall. What from a distance seems to be a terrarium of hanging plants is revealed to be a long garment woven of moss, vines, and other living plants: a cursed *green mantle* (see **Appendix**)—the decontamination alcove in **Area 1** destroys the *green mantle*, removing the curse. The cabinet opens easily, though it has remained untouched by the Fallen Children. After the accident with the display cases, Nazaire ordered his people to leave the rest of the cases alone as they might be dangerous. The cabinet is filled with magically created humidity, keeping the interior full of moisture even outside the season of the Mad Spring.

Display Cases. Seven glass cases are mounted to the walls. Each contains some type of plant matter—seeds, mosses, cuttings, flowers, and other parts—except for one, which is broken. Shards of glass lie on the floor beneath the broken case. Withered vines, moss, and other plants lie in patches on the floor among the glass shards and even on the wall, spreading out from the broken and now empty case. The other cases have doors that can pulled open and contain the following:

- A dozen small, hard brown seeds lie in grass clippings. If these seeds are planted and watered, they sprout into long, thorny vines, becoming a full-grown patch of **asp vines** (see **Appendix**) in 30 days (or 24 hours if planted in the Savage Oasis).
- A puffball mushroom sits alone in the case. If touched, it releases a cloud of spores within 5 feet of the display case. These spores act as *dust of sneezing and choking*.
- A vine covered in small, purple flowers wraps around a makeshift tree branch. If the case is opened, the heady aroma of the flowers is released. Each creature within 5 feet of the display case must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature falls unconscious for 10 minutes. On a success, a creature is incapacitated until the end of its next turn. If the flowers can be transported fresh and intact to a perfumery in Bourgund, they can be sold for 250 gp.
- This case is half full of clean, clear water with a layer of pinkish-white algae growing on its surface. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a fine layer of silver dust on the bottom of the case. This algae feeds on impurities in water, turning them to silver. The algae can remove any contaminants in up to 1 gallon of water in 1 hour, making it clean and safe to drink, while producing 5 cp worth of silver dust in the process. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check determines the algae's properties without opening the display case. If the PC interacts with the algae or the water, the PC has advantage on this check.
- A half dozen dark brown mushrooms with caps covered in white pustules grow in this case. A tea brewed from one of these mushrooms is bitter and difficult to choke down, but it has useful healing properties. If a creature completes a short rest within 24 hours of drinking this tea and spends Hit Dice to regain hit points, it rolls two dice and uses the higher of the two rolls. If a creature completes a long rest within 24 hours of drinking this tea, it regains 1 extra spent Hit Die. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine or Survival) check recalls the properties of this mushroom.
- A small plant bears a golden, plum-sized fruit that gives off bright light in a 5-foot radius and dim light for an additional 5 feet. The fruit is juicy and delicious. For 8 hours after eating the fruit, a creature gives off light like the fruit. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 11) counters the effects.

AREA 9: BALCONY

A railed stone balcony overlooks a chasm filled with vibrant, verdant life. A series of terraces descend down into the crevasse, each rife with a variety of plant life. A waterfall plummets down the cliff to the east, feeding a stream that empties into a multi-level pond, which fills a portion of the two middle-level terraces. A pair of bronze nymph statues, green with age and exposure, stand in the corners of the balcony. Several score marks cover their surfaces, exposing the metal beneath the verdigris, as if something had raked them repeatedly with claws. A set of stairs to the east descends to the first terrace.

The balcony provides an excellent view of the entire oasis, impeded only by the vegetation and light conditions (during the day, the entire area is brightly lit). A successful Wisdom (Perception) check against the following DCs allows those observing from the balcony to see the following occupants of the Savage Oasis: Acraecea in **Area 13** (DC 18); Fallen Children clan members in **Area 11** (DC 13) and **Area 14** (DC 14), Nazaire in **Area 15** (DC 20), or the shambling mound in **Area 12** (DC 25).

Creatures. The two hollow bronze statues (**animated armor**) on the balcony animate and attack anyone that does not speak the password *discedo* before moving to the steps.

AREA 10: FIRST TERRACE

This terrace abuts the southern side of the chasm. A low stone retaining wall lines its outer edge. A lush patch of vegetation rises above the low grasses and mosses that cover most of the terrace. Hard-packed earthen stairs to the north and east descend to the next terrace. Three bronze statues of satyrs, one playing pipes, one holding a lyre, and a third beating a drum, stand in niches carved into the cliff face.

The edible vegetation here has been picked over by the Fallen Children, but the rapid growth of the plants is evident, and there may be another harvest ready in a matter of days. Though there are Fallen Children on the terrace below, they are accustomed to the occasional problem with strange plants and the need for violence. If they hear combat, they assume some of their clansfolk are simply dealing with yet another problem. They don't come to assist unless they hear cries for help.

Creatures. The three hollow bronze statues (**animated armor**) attack any creature that doesn't speak the password *discedo* before moving to one of the staircases.

AREA 11: SECOND TERRACE

This terrace is larger than the first and holds more vegetation. The waterfall that pours down from the cliff impacts here, forming a rushing stream that feeds a large pond on the terrace's northern end. Water spills over a low section in the retaining wall to a second pond on the terrace below. Earthen stairs to the west provide access to the lower terrace.

Four Fallen Children (**thugs**) are working here under the supervision of a **cult fanatic** and a **druid**. They attack anyone they don't recognize.

AREA 12: THIRD TERRACE, EASTERN SIDE

The eastern side of this terrace holds a large cluster of flowering plants. Trees, vines, and shrubs are ablaze in a riot of color, covered in blossoms of myriad shapes and sizes. Even from a distance, the heady fragrances are impossible to ignore.

The grove here holds a large variety of flowering plants. While the mixed fragrances of the blooms are powerful, none of them have any extraordinary effects. Should the PCs collect samples of various blossoms, they can sell the samples to a perfumery in Bourgund for 300 gp. Live cuttings of the plants that can be transplanted would fetch them 1,500 gp.

Creature. A **shambling mound** lurks in the grove of flowering plants. This creature was once Mara, one of the Fallen Children. While exploring the outer complex, Mara broke open one of the display cases in **Area 8**. The vegetation inside exploded into growth, covering her. She fled into the oasis, quickly succumbing to the vegetation as it enveloped her. The rest of Mara's clan took her for dead, but she revived in her current form. The shambling mound has dim memories of her past life. Though she doesn't harm the Fallen Children, she makes them nervous, and they avoid getting too close to her. Nazaire has discovered that she still obeys his commands as long as they are simple. The creature attacks anyone that disturbs her grove, but she doesn't pursue creatures that flee. If Nazaire calls her by name, she comes to him and obeys him as best as she is able. She fears Acraecea and avoids the qwyllion, if possible.

AREA 13: THIRD TERRACE, CENTRAL POND

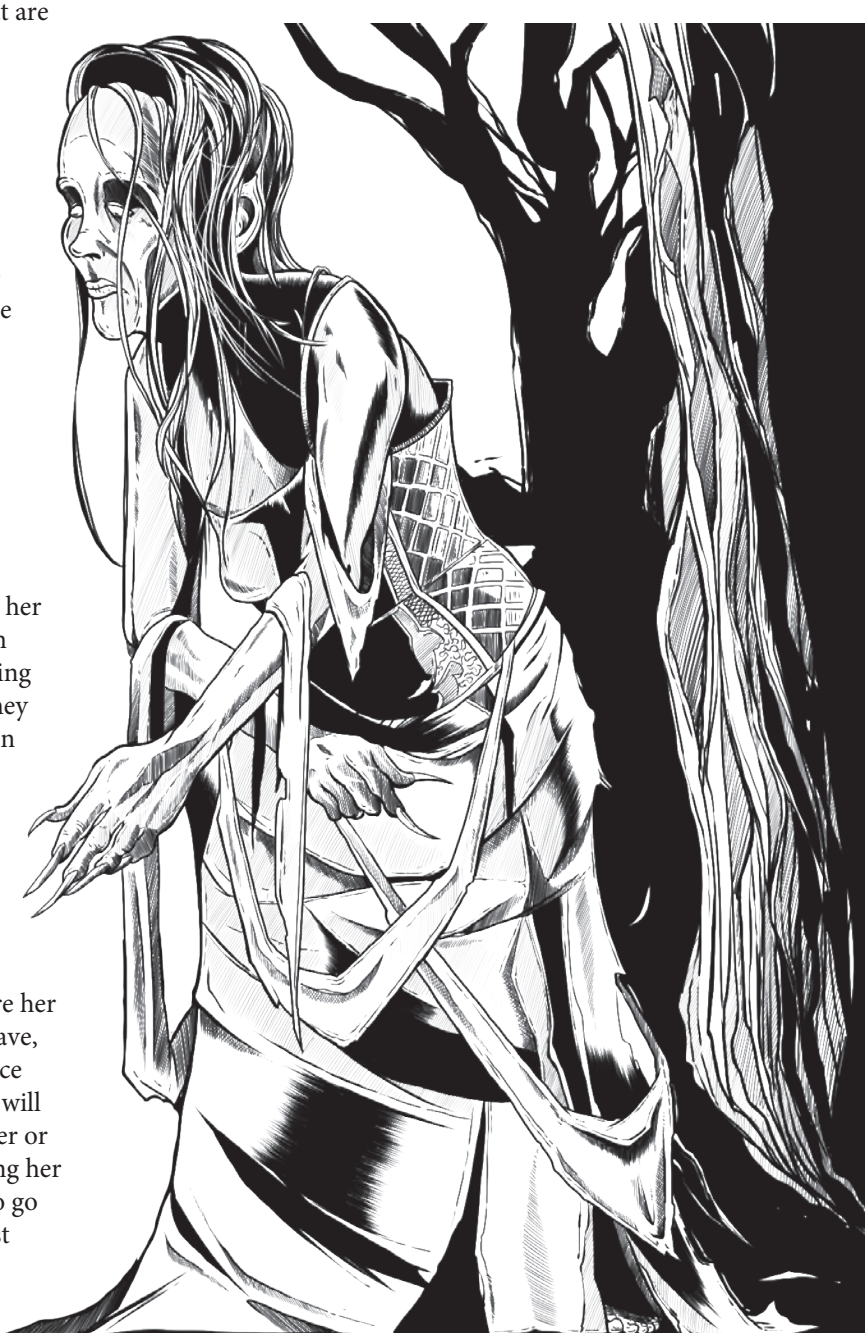
Water spills from the terrace above to form a pool here. It then continues to flow down over a low section of the retaining wall and wind its way through the terrace below. The water is murkier than the pool above. Earthen stairs to the east and west provide access to the lowest terrace.

The vegetation here has been picked over, but about half of it has refreshed and is ready to harvest again. There is plenty of fresh food to be had here, though some of the vegetation is highly toxic. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check finds food that is safe to eat. If a creature fails the check by 5 or more, it finds plants that look safe but are actually poisonous. The creature must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, it takes 14 (4d6) poison damage and is poisoned for 1 hour. On a success, it takes half the damage and isn't poisoned.

Creature. Acraecea, a **qwyllion** (see *Tome of Beasts*), typically lounges in the waters of this pool. Her corrupt presence fouls the waters. Acraecea is a wicked creature that has murdered many people in both Allain and Bourgund. Bounty hunters from both nations are actively seeking her to claim the hefty reward offered for her death. She tolerates the presence of Nazaire and his people only because she has struck a bargain with him. He has given her access to the Savage Oasis, a refuge from her pursuers, in exchange for her guarding the place against any interlopers once they leave for their pilgrimage. Her protection of the oasis would mean his people could safely return and benefit from another harvest after the next Mad Spring begins.

Acraecea detests this place and its abundant life and beauty. She especially hates the nymph statues, which remind her of what she was before her corruption. After the Fallen Children leave, she plans to pollute and corrupt this place as quickly as she can, unaware the oasis will perish after the Mad Spring ends whether or not she corrupts it. She is already plotting her betrayal of Nazaire. In time, she plans to go out to slay more victims and build a host of specters to unleash on the Fallen Children when next they return. In the meantime, she upholds her end of the bargain, attacking any outsiders that intrude upon the oasis. Acraecea fights until she is reduced to half her hit points or fewer, and then she flees, heading down to the lower terrace or to the east to rouse the **shambling mound** to distract the PCs. If the PCs are well-prepared for an encounter with a single, high-challenge creature such as Acraecea, consider adding one or more **specters** under her control.

If it is clear the PCs are after her to claim the bounty from Allain or Bourgund, she attempts to escape and find a new place in the wastes to hole up until the heat dies down.



AREA 14: FOURTH TERRACE, WEST

This lowest level of the chasm has large patches of tall, thick vegetation covering much of the ground between here and the cliffs to the north. The stream pours over the low section of the third tier's retaining wall to flow off into the trees and out of sight.

The lowest and largest tier of the Savage Oasis, this area holds the bulk of the oasis's wild growth. The Fallen Children have removed most of the dangerous plants around the terrace's edges, but more lurk within the thickets that grow north toward the base of the cliffs. There, the stream gathers in a small whirlpool as it plunges into a narrow crevice to continue on underground.

Creatures. A **druid** and a **cult fanatic** are overseeing four of their fellow Fallen Children (**thugs**), harvesting from the edge of the larger area of vegetation west of the stream. In combat, the druid and cult fanatic attempt to draw enemies into the smaller grove to the west where a pair of **hammer hollies** (see **Appendix**) grow. The two leaders are wearing the special charms that ward them from the plants in this area, and they don't fear attack from the plants. Should both leaders fall first, the other four Fallen Children flee. The **druid** or **cult fanatic** flees or surrenders if it is the only member of the Fallen Children that remains and the PCs defeated the hammer hollies.

AREA 15: FOURTH TERRACE, EAST

There is very little space to walk on the eastern side of the terrace since the wild growth of the place encroaches on the grass and moss. The stream borders this portion to the west, flowing into the vegetation toward the north wall of the chasm. A narrow path stretches into the undergrowth toward a tall tree with silvery bark and long, spear-like leaves of deep green.

The Shrine Tree. The path leads to a small clearing where the Shrine Tree stands. This tree is the crown jewel of the magnificent flora here. The tallest tree in the area, the Shrine Tree is 8 feet across at its base and some 25 feet high. The first branches spread away from the trunk about 15 feet up, nearly perpendicular to the trunk itself. The tree's bark is smooth and silvery. The leaves of the tree average 1 foot long and look like dark-green spearheads. No flowers or fruit can be seen on the tree, but its base holds a hollow, 3 feet wide and 4 feet high, that opens into the heart of the tree. Dangling from the peak of the hollow is a single seed. It is 1 foot long and half as wide at its middle, tapering at both ends, and enclosed in a soft, velvety coat of sea green.

The Shrine Tree grows one such seed every 20 years. If the seed is eaten, it serves as an antidote to any poison and a cure for any disease. The creature consuming the seed also has resistance to poison damage and advantage on saving throws against poison and disease for 1 year. If eaten by a creature that is neither diseased nor poisoned, it adds 10 years to that creature's lifespan. The seed must be allowed to mature and fall from the tree for these benefits however. If it is plucked before then, a creature that consumes it only has advantage on saving throws against disease and poison for a month. Alternatively, an immature seed can be prepared with other ingredients to create 5 doses of *restorative ointment,* a process that takes 1 week and 150 gp worth of additional materials. The Shrine Tree's seed matures and falls from the tree 3 days after the PCs arrive.

Creature. Meditating in front of the hollow of the tree is the leader of the Fallen Children, **Nazaire the Corrupted** (see **Appendix**). He read the journals in **Area 8** and is waiting for the seed to separate from the tree. Nazaire challenges any intruders to the oasis, and if they declare they have come for the seed of the Shrine Tree, he attacks, shouting to rally any of his allies nearby. Nazaire refuses to give up on this opportunity and fights to the death against any that try to take his prize. If Nazaire is defeated, the rest of the Fallen Children leave the Savage Oasis to the victors.

Nazaire's Allies. When engaged in combat, Nazaire calls to his allies for help. If still alive, allies in the surrounding areas come to his aid. Mara, the **shambling mound** in **Area 12**, is the first to answer the call and arrives in 1d4 rounds to defend Nazaire. The Fallen Children in **Area 14** arrive in 2d4 rounds, but they flee if Nazaire is defeated. Acraecea remains hidden, observing the fight from a safe distance until the PCs are gone or Nazaire kills them. If they defeat Nazaire, she attempts to kill or drive them out while they are weakened, but she flees if reduced to 30 hit points or fewer.

Concluding the Adventure

Once the enemies here have been killed or driven off, the PCs have the run of the place (though there still may be plenty of hazards to face in the Savage Oasis, per the **Further Encounters** sidebar). It is a veritable cornucopia, at least for the time being. Once the water from the highlands runs dry, the stream is no longer fed, and the ponds shrink and dry up, leaving nothing but muddy holes. When the water is gone, the abundant plant life quickly withers and dies, leaving seeds and spores in the earth that recreate the oasis anew during the next Mad Spring. The Shrine Tree remains, losing its leaves and hibernating as though through a long winter. It buds again when the Savage Oasis is revived, though it is decades before it produces another seed.

BENEATH THE WITCHWILLOW

For 5th-Level Characters

This adventure takes place in the city of Reywald and on the edge of the nearby Arbonesse Forest (in the Grand Duchy of Dornig) but but can be adapted to any city in or near a large forest.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The adventure centers on a murder that occurred in one of the duchies of Dornig. Lilli Amberthaud and Harper Elincourt, the heirs of two rival families, fell in love. Because of the bad blood between their families, they kept their affair secret until Lilli was betrothed to another. A few days after the announcement, Lilli went missing. After an extensive search, the affair came to light, and Harper was accused of killing her out of anger or jealousy. Though no body was ever found and he staunchly maintained his innocence, Harper was imprisoned for the crime and remains in jail. However, the PCs have discovered something that may shed new light on Lilli's disappearance: a children's book called *Beneath the Witchwillow*… with a secret hidden within.

THE BOOK

The book is a children's story, bound in faded blue leather with gold embossing and woodcut illustrations. It bears a bookplate inside the front cover that proclaims, "From the Library of Lilli Amberthaud."

The fairytale tells of a young girl who lived in a terribly abusive household: her father drank too much, her mother was often absent, and the girl suffered at both of their hands when they were unhappy, which was most of the time. On the night of her twelfth birthday, after a fierce beating from her father, the girl's fairy godmother appears and tells her there's a way out of her terrible situation. All she needs to do is take a lock of hair from each of her parents and bring them to the old witchwillow in the woods where she will be taken to the land of the fairies to live happily ever after. The girl does as she's asked, and when she meets her fairy godmother beneath the witchwillow, the fey woman opens a doorway in the trunk of the tree, and the two step through to a world beyond.

The back cover of the book is peeling away from the interior. It seems to have been removed and then rather poorly repaired. A strange metal disk, paper thin and covered with runes, hides between the two layers along with a letter:

My Dearest Harper,

I'm sure you've heard by now what my parents wish for me. They refuse to listen to reason, but I cannot tell them the truth of why I do not wish to marry Lord Ransible. I must get away.

Meet me beneath the witchwillow north of my estate in two nights as the moon is at its highest. Bring this favor, and together we will escape our parents' petty squabbles and finally be together.

Yours Forever,
Lilli

THE TRUTH

When Lilli Amberthaud was told of her arranged betrothal, she tried to appeal to her parents to cancel the wedding. Yllara and Koriandril Amberthaud, however, thought they knew what was best for their daughter and refused.

Lilli fled to the woods in despair. The grove north of her family's estate had long been a place of comfort to her, and after a time, she found herself beneath the witchwillow. There Lilli was discovered by a companion of Yffreyja, a powerful fey, and was invited into the witchwillow demesne to converse with her. Lilli was startled at first but remembered the story she'd read as a child and thought there must be some truth in it. She appealed to Yffreyja, begging for assistance. Yffreyja agreed and sent Lilli on her way with two keys—metal disks, thin as a whisper, that would open the gateway to the Summer Lands and allow Lilli and Harper to escape through the witchwillow on the night of the full moon.

Lilli returned home, wrote the letter to Harper, and hid it within her copy of the tale. The next day, she sent it off with a courier to the Elincourt house, but the courier never made it to his destination. He was waylaid by bandits, killed, and hidden within the undergrowth. The bandits took everything he carried, even the book.



Two nights later, Lilli waited for Harper beneath the witchwillow. As time passed, the moon climbed higher in the sky, but Harper did not arrive. Distraught that her beloved had abandoned her, Lilli fled within the witchwillow to the world waiting beyond. There she's been in the company of Yffreyja in the tower at the heart of the demesne.

Adventure Hooks

There are a number of ways to introduce the adventure to your PCs. If you are weaving this adventure into an existing campaign, seed rumors of the murder into your local flavor ahead of time. Feel free to make it a recent murder or something that happened anywhere from several weeks to a few years in the past.

- ***Finding the Book.*** The book is a key hook for the quest, but where your PCs discover it is up to you. Whether they discover it in a bookstore, on a shelf in an abandoned house, or on the very bandits that stole it in the first place, they can easily find the hidden letter and disk at the back.
- ***A Personal Plea.*** If your players need a stronger call to action, Harper's parents are willing to pay a hefty sum to anyone who can prove their son's innocence. It's easy enough to hear of the reward being offered while at a tavern.

Once the PCs have taken the hook, they should travel to Dornig to investigate. They can speak to the Elincourts, the Amberthauds, and Harper himself in order to glean more information, or they might choose to immediately search for the witchwillow mentioned in the letter.

There are multiple opportunities for side quests and encounters as your PCs make their way to Dornig. Feel free to throw in your own random encounters as needed for those parties who need a little more action.

Part 1: Reywald

The reception the PCs receive when arriving in Reywald depends on two main factors: on whether or not they've been in Dornig before and made a name for themselves and on the racial composition of the party. The more elves, elfmarked, and humans in the party, the more favorably the citizens of Reywald will treat them. Conversely, if the PCs are mostly lesser or bestial races, they'll likely get more side-eye from the locals. Unless they've created a terrible reputation however, these elements won't block their investigation, but it might require a bit more elbow grease (and gold passing hands) for them to find their way.

Finding the Elincourts and/or Amberthauds is not a difficult task. Asking in any of the town's taverns will get them the directions they need.

THE ELINCOURT TOWNHOUSE

The Elincourts live in a townhouse in the Easternholds of Reywald. Harper is an only child, and his parents, Ollana and Maramir are staunchly convinced of his innocence. They welcome the PCs into their home out of hospitality and will quickly warm to them when they hear the PCs intend to investigate Lilli's disappearance. They not-so-subtly imply that the only reason Harper is in jail is because the Amberthauds have influence in the city and that Lilli likely ran off and that they are simply looking for someone to blame. It's obvious the animosity between the families runs deep, even before Lilli went missing.

The Elincourts, though adamant about Harper's innocence, do not accept the thought that their son may have been in a relationship with Lilli. If pressed on the matter, they even go so far as to suggest it's a plot by the Amberthauds to further incriminate him—jealous lovers are, after all, prime murder suspects—and beg the PCs not to go to the authorities with the information. They instead ask the PCs to do more investigating on their own and to track down Lilli or more evidence that Harper wasn't at fault. If the PCs leave on good terms, the Elincourts offer a letter of introduction to Karlora Everrest, Captain of the Guard, explaining they've been hired by the Elincourts to investigate the supposed crime and permitting the PCs access to Harper for questioning.

Lady Ollana Elincourt: *Neutral good elfmarked (age 56).* Ollana Elincourt is a lovely elfmarked whose fair face is lined with grief, making her look older than she is. Her blond hair is streaked with silver at the temples, and the entire time she is speaking to the PCs, her eyes flick between them as if searching for something. She is a stereotypical doting mother who believes the best of her son and cannot imagine him harming anyone. She knows nothing about the situation other than the certainty that Harper is innocent. She is soft spoken and kind and only shows any anger when speaking of the Amberthauds.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using **Status** (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs find the missing girl, Lilli, and remain in Captain Karlora's good graces, the PCs gain +1 to their Status with the residents of Reywald (except with the Amberthauds). If they sour their relationship with Captain Karlora, no matter the outcome with Lilli and Harper, they suffer a –1 to their Status with the residents of Reywald. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

Lord Maramir Elincourt: *Neutral good human (age 59).* Maramir Elincourt is a human with salt-and-pepper hair, dark skin, a straight nose, high cheekbones, and a strong chin. He carries himself in a way that suggests he's seen battle, and it wouldn't be surprising if he knows how to use the sword on his hip. His knuckles are scarred, and there's the silvery shadow of an old wound on his right jaw, just under his ear. He had his own share of adventuring as a young man, only settling down in Reywald once he met (and fell in love with) Ollana. Her reserve is the only thing keeping him from charging off and challenging Koriandril Amberthaud to hand-to-hand combat.

THE AMBERTHAUD ESTATE

The Amberthauds reside in a manor on a sprawling estate outside the city limits, near the borders of the Arbonesse. They are considerably richer than the Elincourts and are held in higher esteem, and they are therefore markedly more influential.

If the PCs go to the Amberthaud estate, Koriandril and Yllara Amberthaud initially welcome the group, thinking they have more information to further damn Harper. However, as soon as the PCs mention a possibility of Lilli being alive, Lilli's parents will thank them and ask them to leave, stubbornly insisting their daughter is dead and that Harper killed her and that's that. No amount of evidence, short of Lilli's presence, will convince them otherwise. In fact, if pressed too far or if the PCs mention a potential affair between Harper and Lilli, the Amberthauds become angry, accuse the PCs of working for the Elincourts to discredit the Amberthauds and get Harper out of prison, and kick them out. If the PCs visited the Elincourts first, the Amberthauds have already heard of the visit, further cementing their misconceptions.

Lenora Amberthaud, however, listens in on the PCs' conversation with her parents from behind a door. When Yllara and Koriandril excuse themselves, Lenora will waylay the PCs on their way out. She begs the PCs to find her sister. Lenora did not know about Lilli's affair with Harper, though she long suspected and suggests the PCs speak to the Elincourts if they've not already visited them. She knows the location of the witchwillow as she and her sister used to play in that area of the woods often as young girls (much to their parents' distress) and can mark it on the PCs' map. If the PCs have mentioned wanting to speak with Harper, she will present them with a letter of introduction to Captain Karlora Everrest, stating they are working for her family… though Lenora has forged her mother's signature, and she tells the PCs not to linger near the jail longer than necessary as the deception may not hold up to scrutiny for too long.

Baroness Yllara Amberthaud: *Neutral evil elf (age 212).* Yllara Amberthaud is every inch the stereotypical haughty elven noble. With blond hair that falls in ringlets, alabaster skin, and a mouth that's pressed in a nearly constant line of disapproval, she certainly makes an impression. For Yllara, the idea that her daughter could have had an affair with Harper, or that she ran off on her own, is something she cannot fathom—it's too scandalous and wounds the pride of their family too deeply.

Baron Koriandril Amberthaud: *Neutral elf (age 130).* Koriandril Amberthaud is wide-shouldered but otherwise lithe of figure with straight blond hair and dark eyes that are nearly black. His eyes soften, however, when he speaks of his daughter, and his resolve about Lilli's fate is not quite as solid as his wife's, but the doubts are quickly buried with a glance from Yllara or the thought that his precious daughter may not have loved them as much as he'd hoped.

Lenora Amberthaud: *Neutral good elf (age 18).* Lenora Amberthaud is young with pink cheeks and her father's straight blond hair. She has always held out hope that her sister was alive somewhere and is frustrated to the point of exhaustion with her parents' stubborn refusal to consider the possibility. It's obvious by the way she speaks that she and her sister were close, and she misses Lilli dearly. Forging the letter for the PCs is a new act of rebellion for her, and she seems surprised that it was so easy.

THE PRISON

The Reywald prison is a surprisingly small building made of stone, with a large front room and eight small cells behind a sturdy door. Upstairs are a set of offices in the front and temporary barracks with bunks for any of the watch in need of a place to sleep between shifts. When the PCs arrive at the prison, no matter what time of day or night, there are six **guards** and the guard captain (**veteran**) within the building: Lucian D'or (human) at the front desk, Benn Barlin (dwarf) and Djoran Dunn (elfmarked) in the back area near the cells, Lilah Talinan (elf) and Ungol Wrathbone (bearfolk) asleep in the barracks, and Captain Karlora Everrest (elf) in her office upstairs.

The locks all require a DC 17 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check to pick.

Captain Karlora Everrest: *Lawful good elf (age 150).* Captain Karlora is a formidable figure. Though she has the typical slender elvish build, there's something in her green eyes that tells you she brooks no nonsense. She is reluctant to discuss any aspects of the Amberthaud case with the PCs since they are strangers, but she harbors doubt at Harper's guilt while feeling pressured to keep him imprisoned due to his family's stature. On a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check, the PCs can tell she is a woman bound by duty and who is frustrated at their inability to crack the case.

If the PCs wish to speak with Harper, they must convince Captain Karlora they're worth her time. To do so, they must succeed on a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check, but there are several conditions that adjust the DC:

- If the PCs have secured a letter of introduction from the Elincourts and/or Amberthauds (through Lenora), the DC is reduced by 2 for each letter in hand.
- If the PC doing the persuading is either lawful good or an elf, the DC is lowered by 1 for each quality.
- If they appeal to Karlora's sense of right and law, the DC is reduced by 3.
- If the PCs attempt to bribe her, the DC increases by 5.

If the PCs present the forged Amberthaud letter to the captain, she realizes it's a fake after 24 hours, and the guards will arrest the PCs on sight.

Harper Elincourt: *Lawful good elfmarked (age 24).* Harper Elincourt is a handsome elfmarked with his father's facial structure and his mother's fair skin, blond hair, and slightly pointed ears. He has spent his time since Lilli's disappearance in prison, and it is apparent in the circles under his eyes and his thin frame. When speaking with the PCs, his mood fluctuates from anger to despair. He insists he's innocent, rails against the Amberthauds (but speaks kindly of Lenora, Lilli's sister), and wishes nothing more than to be free, so he can find his beloved—or the one who took her life.

Harper begs the PCs to find Lilli or track down the person responsible for her disappearance. He wishes he could accompany them, and he tells them everything he can: about their secret affair, about how much he wished to run away with her, about his anger at her parents for forcing her into a betrothal with someone she'd never even met. He knows the location of the witchwillow and can mark it on the PCs' map.

If the PCs inform Harper about the note in the book, he redoubles his petition and will promise them anything to help find Lilli: gold, influence, whatever he has is theirs. He paces the cell in frustration, begging the guards to release him and imploring the PCs to show the letter to Captain Karlora, convinced she'll see her error and set him free (hint: she won't).

If the PCs break Harper out of jail, he asks to accompany them. If the PCs refuse to allow him to go with them, he will claim he's finding somewhere to lay low. However, if the PCs told him about the witchwillow, he will go straight there instead; otherwise, he will find an alleyway to hide out in, too worried to go home and risk his parents but unwilling to leave the city. If he arrives at the witchwillow before the PCs, he will investigate the area and hide nearby and wait.

OWLBEAR ENCOUNTER

The owlbears have a nest with three eggs within the cave, and they fiercely defend them. The male owlbear stays within the cave near the nest while the female prowls the area. If the PCs make it into the cave without drawing the female's attention, she returns as soon as combat begins. Both the male and the female will fight to the death.

PART 2: THE WOODS

The woods north of the Amberthaud estate are thick and imposing. Not quite part of the Arbonesse, they are nonetheless full of strange and marvelous things. Wagon trails struggle to maintain their hold against the encroaching greenery. If the PCs know the location of the witchwillow (given to them by Harper or Lenora), the tree is relatively easy to find. If they do not have the location marked on their map, they must succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence (Survival) check to find the tree. On a fail, they lose their way and stumble across a cave with a pair of owlbears nesting, not far from the tree. The PCs find the tree after the owlbear encounter is resolved.

The witchwillow is not the tallest tree within the forest, but it is still easy to spot—its pale trunk and widespread branches with silver-green leaves make it stand out against the darker oak, elm, and other trees around it.

A sprawling tree stands before you with smooth, pale bark and thin silver-green leaves. The trunk of the tree is bigger around than your arms are wide, and the umbrella of branches spans nearly 60 feet from one end to the other. When the wind blows through the twisted, arching branches, it sounds as if a thousand voices whisper, sending a shiver down your spine.

When the PC carrying the disk comes within 5 feet of the witchwillow, the bark "cracks" apart, and a faintly glowing portal opens within the trunk. The portal is 10 feet tall and 5 feet wide. A creature can use 5 feet of movement to pass through the portal. When the creature carrying the disk passes through the portal, the portal closes at the end of the round. Stepping through the portal causes the creature to enter the pocket dimension of the witchwillow demesne.

PART 3: INSIDE THE WITCHWILLOW

The pocket dimension within the Witchwillow is a personal demesne created by a powerful fey, Yffreyja. She lived for centuries within this beautiful slice of her own creation, entertaining guests within her breathtaking tower, dancing and dining with elves and other fey. But within the past century or so, the Shadow Realm has been pressing in, causing the demesne to decay and slip away. Her visitors stopped coming, and the creatures that dwelled here have fled with the exception of Ellilee, a violet fey drake. Yffreyja fears for her very existence, terrified of sliding into Shadow herself, and only Lilli's shining presence—her pure heart and unconditional love for Harper—gives Yffreyja the power to keep the darkness at bay.

As you pass through the witchwillow, you emerge on a low, grassy hill. The sky here is an orange-pink around the ridge of the horizon, as if in the midst of sunset, fading toward purple and then dark blue until directly above is a circle of night seemingly tacked in place by a shining silver full moon. Below, a sprawling hedge maze fills the hollow. Impenetrably dense, deep green, and impeccably manicured, the hedges twist and bend in a multitude of dizzying pathways. In the exact center of the hedge maze stands a tower. Thirteen stories tall, the stone spire is an impressive sight. Though it is old and crumbling, it is nonetheless awe-inspiring… perhaps made even more so by the fact that, about halfway up, one entire floor seems to be missing, the walls broken away, and you can see the pink of the sky on the other side, yet the tower somehow remains standing.

The portal in the demesne opens and closes in a matching witchwillow tree on a hilltop above the hedge maze. Ellilee, the **fey drake** (see *Creature Codex*), waits in the branches of the tree and invisibly follows the PCs as they work their way through the maze. If any of the PCs are of elven heritage or wear any sparkly or fancy jewelry or equipment, Ellilee fixates on them in particular. She is the companion to Yffreyja, who Ellilee refers to as "Her Lady," and is the descendent of a long line of fey drakes that have lived in the witchwillow demesne for centuries.

If Harper is with the PCs, she will reveal herself immediately and aid the party as much as she can. (She knows the answers to the puzzles, for instance, but she stays out of any combat.) If the party is composed of all good-aligned PCs, Ellilee will reveal herself to them as they arrive at the first puzzle and will aid them if they give her sweets or other baubles. Otherwise, she is content to watch them struggle, amused by their blunders (and potentially even tripping them up on purpose, like shoving them onto a trapped paver in **Puzzle 1**). If the PCs befriend her, she will talk cryptically of "Her Lady" in the tower and how kind she is and how Ellilee hopes the PCs can help her against the coming darkness.

THE DISK

The disk hidden within the book is a key that triggers the portal in the witchwillow. If your PCs have lost it, sold it, or otherwise find themselves at the tree without it, you can force them to recover it before they can enter or, in the interest of moving the adventure forward, place Ellilee the fey drake in the branches of the tree. She invisibly observes the PCs as they investigate the area and opens the portal for them after some initial hesitation. If Harper is with the PCs, she recognizes him from Lilli's tales and reveals herself, treating Harper as a friend, and opens the portal immediately.

THE MAZE

A sprawling hedge maze surrounds the broken tower, which is always visible from anywhere within the maze. With magic or some mundane trick of perspective, the tower always appears to be the same distance away, no matter where in the maze the PCs stand.

The maze itself is woven through with illusion magic. Anyone who attempts to bypass the maze finds themself at a loss:

- If the PCs attempt to fly over the maze directly to the tower, they find that they get no closer no matter how long they travel; teleportation magic fails; any map drawn from outside the maze is no longer accurate once they enter; and so on.
- If the PCs attempt to cut through the hedges, they find they make no progress, and the attacker must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the attacker takes 1d6 slashing damage as the hedge lashes out with a thorny vine to defend itself.

There are two sections to the maze, each ending in a clearing containing a puzzle. In order to arrive at the central tower, the PCs must successfully solve both puzzles. To find their way to the first clearing, the PCs must succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence (Survival) check to navigate the first portion of the twisting maze. On a failure, they spend 2 hours wandering through the labyrinth until they finally come to the clearing.

Puzzle 1: Along the Twisting Way. The clearing at the end of the first segment is 35 feet by 35 feet and paved with square marble flagstones in a variety of colors: black, white, green, red, orange, blue, and pink pavers create a dizzying spiral pattern. In the center of the clearing is a stone archway that shimmers with arcane energy.

Only the pink stones are safe to walk upon. If the PCs step on any other color paver (including if they walk toward the archway without specifying what paver they're stepping on), they take 1d4 damage of a type according to the paver's color: necrotic (black), radiant (white), force (green), fire (red), acid (orange), and cold (blue).

Once they reach the center archway, they simply step through and appear in the interior section of the maze. The tower appears larger here, though the same restrictions on travel are in place as before. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Survival) check is necessary to navigate to the next puzzle, or they spend 4 hours wandering before finding their way to the next clearing.

Puzzle 2: A Foe of Your Own Choosing. The second clearing is larger than the first—the hedges here open to a 50-foot-square clearing. Soft green grass covers the ground. Again, a stone archway stands in the center, though this one lacks the shimmering arcane energy.

In front of the archway, a stone statue of a woman kneels with her head bowed in supplication and her hands cupped before her. Four marble plinths surround her, two on each side. On each plinth is a delicate stand made of silver filagree, and in each stand is a different gemstone: a blue sapphire, a yellow diamond, a red corundum, and a brilliant green emerald. They are modified *elemental gems*.

To activate the archway, the PCs must choose a gem and place it in the outstretched hands of the statue. The statue then closes her hands around the gemstone, stands, and changes into an elemental according to the gemstone chosen: **air elemental** (blue sapphire), **earth elemental** (yellow diamond), **fire elemental** (red corundum), or **water elemental** (emerald). The elemental immediately attacks the party. Once the elemental is defeated, the other gemstones vanish, and the archway activates. Stepping through the archway takes the PCs to the base of the broken tower.

THE BROKEN TOWER

Thirteen stories tall, the tower is a marvel of engineering and fey magic. Lilli Amberthaude resides in the topmost chamber with Yffreyja, which can only be reached by ascending the tower room by room.

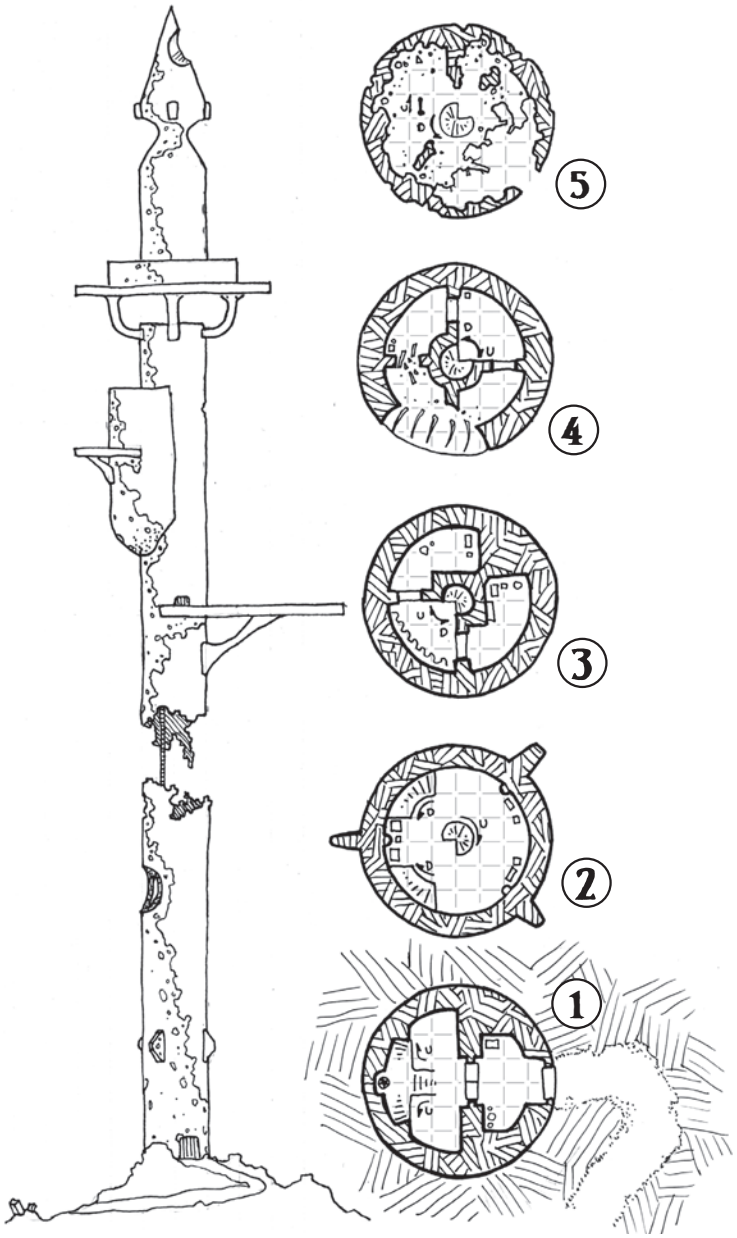
A winding pathway leads up a small hillock to the doorway of the tower. A heavy, solid wooden door bound with brass, the entryway to the tower has no handle, only a knocker in the center. If the PCs knock, the door swings open soundlessly.

AREA 1: FOYER/ENTRY HALL

The front door of the tower opens into a foyer roughly 20 feet wide. Some empty coat racks and a dusty side table are the only items here. On the far side of the foyer are two wooden double doors that open into the entry hall. A staircase rises up ahead of them before stopping at a landing and splitting to rise to the left and the right to **Area 2**. A crumbling statue stands in an alcove on the landing: the likeness is of Yffreyja with Ellilee on her shoulder. Time has worn away much of the fey woman's features, and the tips of her long ears have broken away, which can be found in the rubble near the base of the statue with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

AREA 2: SITTING ROOM

The sitting room's stone floor is covered with numerous throw rugs. The rugs look as if they were once plush and beautiful, but they are now threadbare and dusty. Several groupings of decrepit couches and chairs sit against the far wall, arranged for quiet conversation. A spiral staircase in the center of the room leads up to **Area 3**.



AREA 3: GUEST ROOMS

The staircase opens into a small foyer with a tapestry on the far wall. The tapestry depicts a hunt of some sort with twelve figures upon horses in a forest glen. Upon closer inspection, each "horse" has the head, front legs, and wings of an eagle. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check allows the PCs to recognize them as hippogriffs. The figures upon the hippogriffs are graceful and crowned with flowers and greenery and have pointed ears longer than any elf's the PCs have seen.

There are two doors in this foyer, one to the left and one to the right. They both open into small bedrooms with queen-sized four-posters, but the linens are moth eaten and the mattresses musty.

The spiral staircase continues up to **Area 4**.

AREA 4: ENCHANTING PARLOR

The staircase opens into another foyer, again with wooden doors to the left and the right. Both open into small rooms with their far walls crumbling and broken away, revealing a third room at the back of the level. Here, a tall worktable stands against the far wall, made of heavy wood, and a chunk of the wall is missing completely as if it had been scooped away with a giant spoon. Upon inspection, the PCs see the stone is not shattered but instead seems almost cut. Scattered on the floor and worktable are shards of glass, the broken remains of bottles and phials, as well as dried and moldering herbs, mushrooms, flowers, and mosses.

This was Yffreyja's first realization that something was amiss in her realm: she was crafting a potion when things went inexplicably wrong, and the potion she was creating exploded in her hands, evaporating a portion of the wall.

The spiral staircase continues up to **Area 5**.

AREA 5: DESTROYED ROOMS

This level is… mostly missing. The exterior wall stands only a 1-1/2 feet tall, and the rest of it is open to the elements. A large portion of the floor on the southeast side has fallen into the room below, and there are holes in the ceiling to the room above. Most of a large bed lies under the hole, shattered from the fall from above, as well as a broken dresser and chair. A *rope of climbing* lies coiled beneath the largest hole in the ceiling. There is no staircase or other obvious means of accessing **Area 6**.

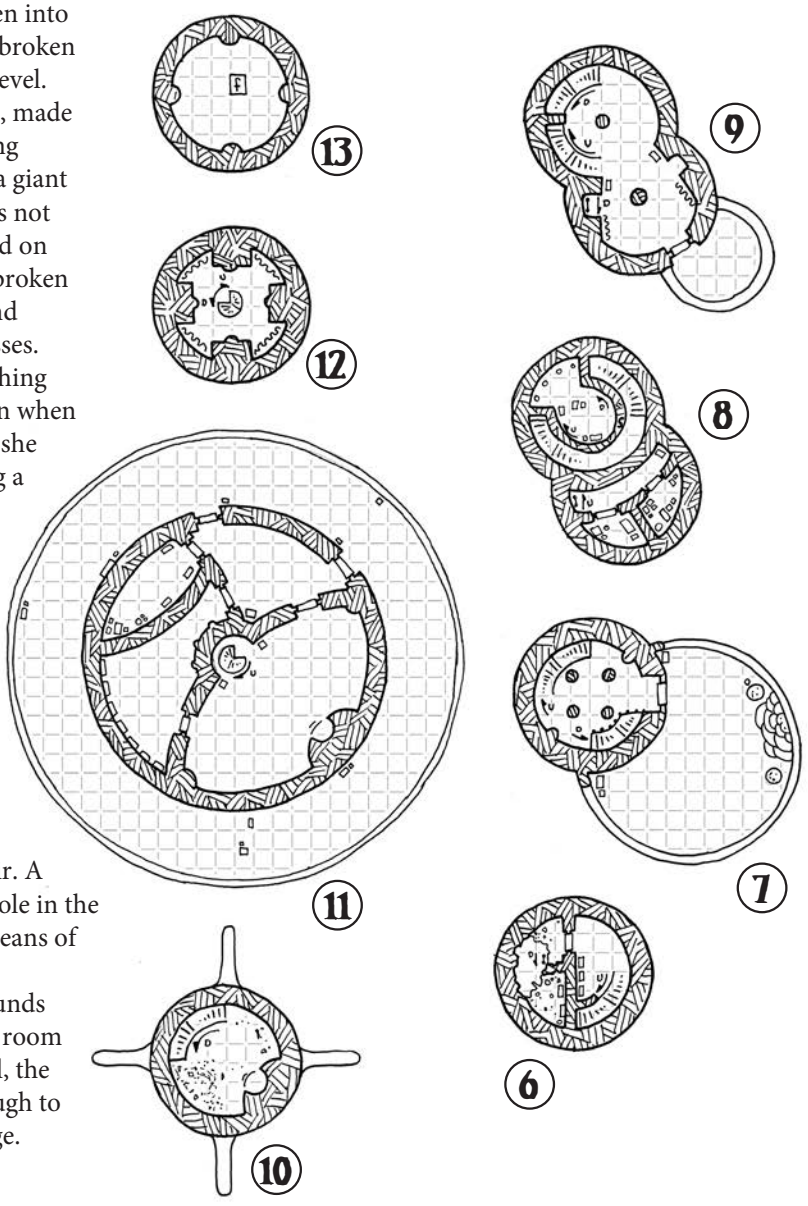
Any character who weighs more than 150 pounds must make a DC 14 Dexterity check within this room when they move faster than half speed. On a fail, the floor collapses beneath them, and they fall through to the room below, taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage.

The *rope of climbing* leads up into **Area 6**.

AREA 6: GUEST ROOM

The floor here opens into the space between two rooms, what was once a bedroom and a sitting room. Most of the furniture lies broken in the room below. A door in the upper room leads into a foyer with a thick, colorful **rug of smothering** at the base of the stairs and several bookshelves against the right-hand wall. The bookshelves hold moldering storybooks, written in Sylvan. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check allows the PCs to realize the rug is not threadbare like the others in the tower but appears to be in pristine condition. When the PCs touch the rug of smothering, it animates and attacks.

The staircase leads up to **Area 7**.



AREA 7: CORRUPTED GARDEN

The staircase from **Area 6** opens into a large, round room with four stone columns positioned at each of the cardinal directions. To the right, a wooden door opens onto a sprawling stone balcony filled with terraced planters, potted trees, and other greenery. Flowers of all shapes and colors bloom beneath the twilit sky, and the air is filled with a sweet, entrancing scent. The plants seem wild and untended.

On the far side of the balcony, a veritable waterfall of glowing blue fungus sprouts from the low wall. This used to be a lush and well-manicured garden, but the press of the Shadow Realm caused it to shift and change—a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Nature) check allows the PCs to recognize that each and every plant and fungus on this terrace is either highly poisonous or carnivorous (though they're only a danger to bugs or other small creatures).

A **bloom hydra** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) has taken up residence in the garden, hiding in the shadows among the untended planters. It lies in wait until a creature comes within reach. It will not enter the tower though, so it will not give chase to fleeing creatures. However, it will climb the outside of the tower to continue harrying creatures venturing out onto the open terraces of **Area 9** and **Area 11** and even attack into the broken space of **Area 5**.

Another stairway continues up to **Area 8**.

AREA 8: STORAGE ROOMS/TREASURY

The layout of this floor is complicated: the two circles are inaccessible from one another. The upper circle is accessible via the staircase up from **Area 7** and down from **Area 9**. From this vantage point, there seems to be nothing on this level except the enclosed staircase. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check or DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a secret door just at the top of the staircase from **Area 7**. To open the door, the PCs must press a stone in the wall beside it, tripping the mechanism. Inside are several chests along with two sets of **animated armor**, one in each corner, that attack when the first PC enters the room. The treasure within the room consists of 485 gp, 1,204 sp, 3,348 cp, three bags of gems worth 50 gp each, a vial of *dust of disappearance*, a set of *pipes of haunting*, and an *efficient quiver*.

To access the lower crescent room, it is necessary to go up to **Area 9** and then down the ladder into the storage rooms there. Within these rooms are boxes filled with supplies: dry goods for cooking, bolts of cloth, bottles of wine, tins of tea and coffee and sugar, and other various sundries. Some of the crates have been opened, others are still tightly sealed, though they're all covered in a thick layer of dust.

AREA 9: RECEIVING HALL

Yffreyja loved hosting lavish parties, and this receiving hall was where the guests would arrive, enjoy drinks and hors d'oeuvres, and await the invitation to the ballroom two floors above. Once-brilliant cloth-of-gold curtains hang on either side of a door to the balcony: one curtain hides a narrow door that opens to the ladder down to the storage rooms on **Area 8**, the other hides shelving filled with wine glasses and china.

The staircase leads up to **Area 10**.

AREA 10: WAITING ROOM

The staircase opens into a round room with no obvious exits. The room is empty, save for an ornate but threadbare carpet on the stone floor. A low, empty dais rises in a nook on the other side of the room. Within the nook is a teleportation circle: a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check or DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check allows the PC to notice arcane symbols etched in the stone of the dais. When a PC steps onto the dais, they disappear from the room and reappear on the matching dais in **Area 11**. (If a creature steps onto the dais while a creature is on the dais in **Area 11**, the creature from **Area 10** is teleported and then both creatures are knocked 5 feet off the dais into an unoccupied space and take 1d6 force damage.)

AREA 11: BALLROOM/LIBRARY/ANTEROOM

A creature teleporting from **Area 10** arrives on the dais in the ballroom in **Area 11**. The floor here is of polished white marble with golden veins (again under a layer of dust), and a glittering gold-and-crystal chandelier hangs dark above the room. The door to the right opens to an empty room with doors that open onto the balcony; the door to the left opens to an empty room with mirrors lining the outer wall. The wide balcony wraps the entirety of the tower and provides a stunning view of the maze and the wilds beyond. From this angle, the PCs can see a strange, undulating darkness just on the edge of the horizon, encircling the entire demesne.

A circular staircase in the center rises up to **Area 12**.

AREA 12: NOOKS

This floor is small, and each wall holds a nook with a curtain hanging behind a bench large enough for two people. One can easily imagine couples canoodling in these nooks over glasses of wine.

The circular staircase continues up to **Area 13**.

AREA 13: THE LIBRARY (LILLI AND THE FADING FEY)

A trapdoor opens to the top level of the tower: a gorgeous, well-appointed library. Ancient yet well-cared-for tomes line the floor-to-ceiling shelves. A fireplace 6 feet tall sits on the opposite side of the room with a fire crackling within. Two wingback chairs of purple brocade sit angled slightly toward each other with a mahogany end table between them and their backs to the fire. A tea set sits on the end table with two cups plus a number of cups equal to the number of members in the party. It is the only room in the tower not covered in dust and decay. In one chair sits Lilli Amberthaud, and in the other sits Yffreyja.

A tall, slender woman, Yffreyja has an otherworldly look to her. Her cheekbones are high and sharp, and her eyes are a pale violet. Her golden hair is twisted up in an elaborate braid, and a diadem adorns her brow. Her long ears sweep up and back, almost touching at the back of her head, and delicate jeweled earrings dangle from the lobes. She wears a deep-green gown with pointed sleeves and embroidery that echoes the twisting and winding of vines and branches.

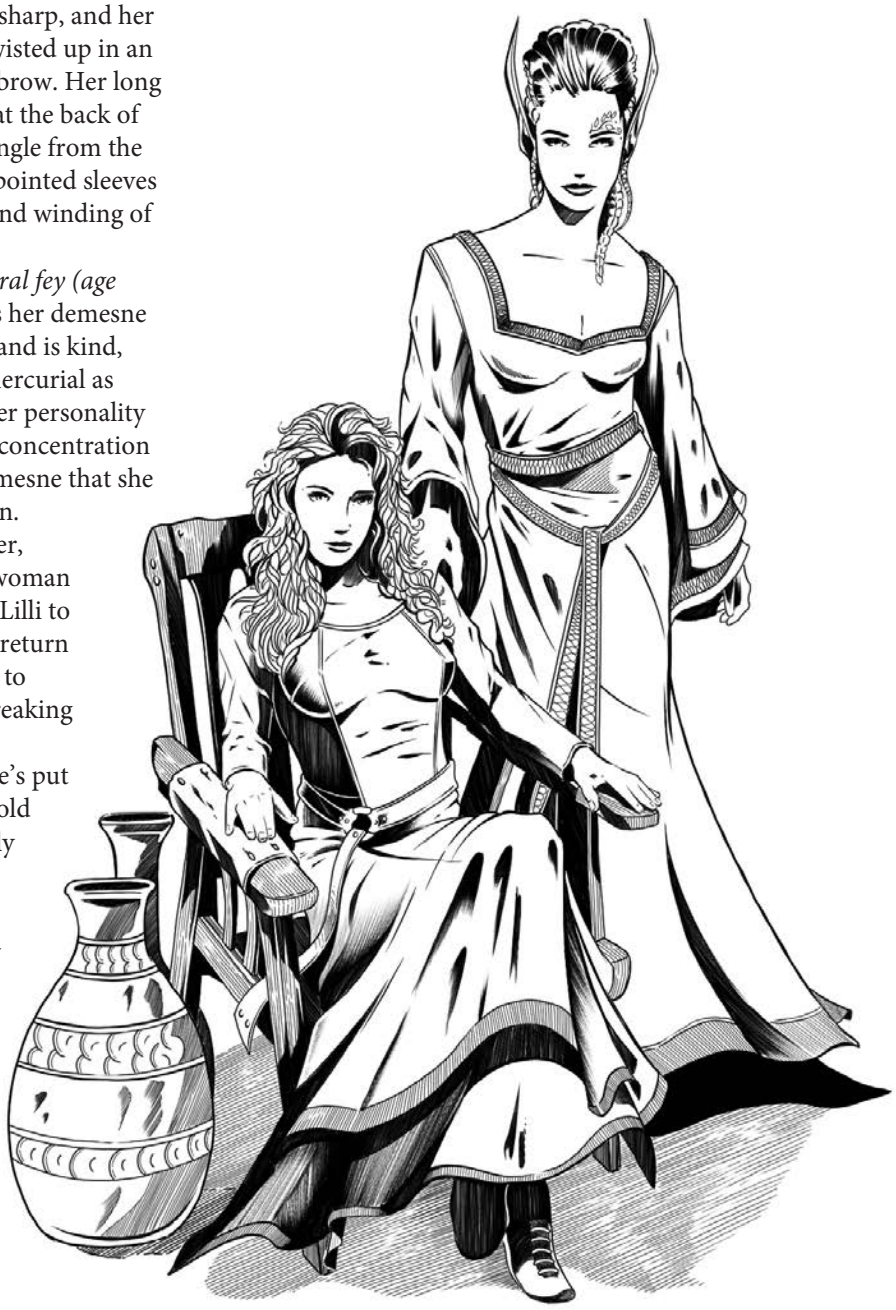
Yffreyja, the Shining Swallowtail: *Neutral fey (age 423).* Yffreyja is expecting the PCs—this is her demesne after all. She welcomes them to her home and is kind, though she is occasionally forgetful and mercurial as her concentration slips, and the PCs see her personality fraying around the edges. So much of her concentration is used to maintain the integrity of her demesne that she sometimes misses parts of the conversation.

Yffreyja is desperate to keep Lilli with her, though she won't go so far as to hold the woman against her will. She attempts to convince Lilli to remain or suggest the adventurers should return to the jail and slaughter everyone in order to free Harper as she has no qualms about breaking mortal laws.

Yffreyja cannot leave her demesne as she's put so much of herself into maintaining her hold against the darkness that she would quickly fade and perish outside of its boundaries.

Lilli Amberthaud: *Neutral good elf (age 21).* Lilli Amberthaud is a young elf with a mass of curly blond hair, bright blue eyes, and a sparkling smile. She wears a gown of yellow and white and a pendant shaped like a lily of the valley set with seed pearls.

Lilli met Yffreyja while wandering the forest at the edge of her estate. Distraught over her parents' decision to betroth her to another against her will, Lilli sat beneath the witchwillow and sobbed. Ellilee sat in the branches above her and watched curiously, and once Lilli had gone, Ellilee entered the witchwillow and relayed what they had seen to Yffreyja. Sensing some purity in Lilli's grief, Yffreyja had Ellilee extend an invitation to Lilli the next time the young elven woman visited the witchwillow. Lilli was hesitant at first but was desperate enough to cling to any hope, and she visited Yffreyja within her demesne. Enthralled by Yffreyja's beauty and bearing, Lilli poured her heart out to the fey over tea, and after several visits, the two became friends. When Yffreyja offered her the opportunity to escape to the witchwillow demesne with Harper, she took the chance happily.



When the PCs arrive, Lilli does not know what happened to Harper and thinks he must have forsaken her. If she is told what really happened, she wishes to return to her love, but she knows that if she leaves the witchwillow, Yffreyja's power will fade quickly. If Harper is with the PCs, the two lovers have a tearful reunion.

Concluding the Adventure

There are several ways the adventure can end, depending on the choices the PCs have made.

IF THE PCS FREED HARPER

If the PCs broke Harper out of jail and allowed him to accompany them, there's not much more they are required to do in the witchwillow demesne. Harper and Lilli remain in the tower with Yffreyja, and the three are happy in their shared realm. Over time, the tower regains some of its former glory. Yffreyja allows the party to keep one of the disks and says they are more than welcome within her demesne whenever they wish.

If the PCs broke Harper out of jail but left him in Reywald, they must return to the city to track him down. Finding him is easy enough: he lingers near the jail (perhaps foolishly) and approaches the party when he sees them return. However, the guard will arrest the PCs on sight for the crime of breaking Harper out of prison, and they're on high alert, especially if any guards were killed during the jailbreak.

IF LILLI LEAVES THE WITCHWILLOW DEMESNE

Unless the PCs convince her otherwise, Lilli leaves the demesne and returns to exonerate Harper. Unless Lilli returns to the witchwillow demesne in 3 days, Yffreyja's control slips over the threshold irredeemably toward the Shadow. If the PCs return to the demesne after a week, they find the land plunged into darkness, the hedge maze dead, and the top half of the tower lying broken in the bushes below. Yffreyja is nowhere to be found. If they return to the witchwillow after a month, the disks no longer open the portal within the trunk, and the demesne is inaccessible. Ellilee is found hiding in the branches of the tree and weeps for the loss of her lady. She is unable to divulge any details other than visions of the shadows swarming in.

The Amberthauds are thankful to the PCs for returning their daughter and grant them a reward of 100 gp per person (a rather paltry sum for such a wealthy family). They insist that Lilli return home and marry her betrothed as arranged and place her under guard day and night.

The Elincourts are likewise grateful and pay the PCs whatever was agreed upon if they spoke previously. Harper is freed and weeps when he sees Lilli again. He is heartbroken at the prospect of her marrying another, but it is nothing compared to when he thought she was dead, so he is resigned to let her go.

IF LILLI REMAINS IN THE WITCHWILLOW DEMESNE

The PCs can convince Lilli to stay with Yffreyja by promising to bring Harper to her. The PCs can attempt a jail break or may try to convince Captain Karlora or the Amberthauds that Lilli is alive and well with no desire to return to them. If the PCs mention returning to her parents or the guard, Lilli will give them her necklace as proof that she yet lives.

The PCs can present the necklace to Captain Karlora or to the Amberthauds… the Amberthauds attempt to shift the blame to the PCs, accusing them of being part of the plot and taking the necklace from her body, but Captain Karlora has grown tired of their excuses and takes the opportunity to release Harper, and she asks Harper and the PCs to wish Lilli well. Harper returns to the witchwillow with or without the PCs and joins Lilli in the tower. If the PCs return with him, Yffreyja will offer one of the disks to the PCs to keep. If the PCs return to the demesne in the future, they find the tower in better shape, filled with unseen servants cleaning and repairing the building. Music fills the halls. The sky, though still twilight, seems just a bit brighter.

If the PCs convince Lilli to stay within the demesne and do not return with Harper in a week, Lilli leaves the demesne herself to find her love, sealing Yffreyja's fate.

TERROR IN ALTBACH

For 5th-Level Characters

The adventure begins in Altbach, a small town on the outskirts of Zobeck, but takes place primarily in the surrounding wilds of the nearby foothills of the Ironcrags. The adventure can easily be adapted to any similarly situated region.

Adventure Background

North of the Rothenian Plain, the winterfolk village of Keiru sat nestled within the Silver Mountain Kingdom. Unlike their winterfolk kin in the lower steppes, Keiru's more remote location afforded them added protection against the onslaught of the giants that swept into the land—at least initially. Their bonfire songs and hearty gratitude for life, even amid the war and darkness sweeping through Domovogrod, brought the favor of Baldur upon them in the form of a guardian aatxe.

For years, the aatxe fulfilled its task of protecting the village and its people. It guarded the fields and hills by day, sometimes driving away ogres that found their way into the village pass. By night, it sat among the winterfolk at their bonfires, in humanoid form, keeping its ears up and eyes open for danger.

The hope and goodness that ran through the small, steadfast village fed into the aatxe's own spirit, energizing it. But the surrounding darkness that had been pressing down upon the land finally caved in upon Keiru. The deranged thursir warlord, Mensnark Obsbane, after hearing several reports about the remote village, finally sent a brigade of giants to destroy the haven and bring back winterfolk as slaves. The noble aatxe could not protect them all. The giants killed many, stomping them into the ground, and the aatxe was direly wounded.

After the attack, the aatxe searched the village for surviving winterfolk but found none. Only those few that escaped to the forests of Domovogrod and those turned slave had survived. The catastrophe sent the aatxe into a great depression.

The beast left the ruined village and headed south, following what it thought were the cries of winterfolk and the taunts of giants, carried by the southern winds. It traveled through the lands of the Kariv and across the Rothenian Plain. There, after many weeks of isolation, it lost its noble senses to despair, becoming a shadow of its former self, unpredictable, deluded.

But the grace and goodness of Baldur had not completely abandoned the aatxe. In the hills northeast of Altbach, the aatxe discovered and took up residence in a forgotten temple of Lada (a mask of Baldur to many in the Crossroads). Her divine presence and holy symbols, painted and etched into the walls, brought the aatxe a faded memory of purpose and peace somewhere deep inside its soul.

Within the stone halls of the temple, the aatxe was flooded with the memories of the glory of the Silver Mountain Kingdom and the crisp, joyous songs of the winterfolk, rising from blazing bonfires… until they morphed into haunting screams of despair.

Maddened to fulfill its divine task, the aatxe set off through the hills until it came to the town of Altbach. Day after day, it quietly watched the town and its people until it had found what it was looking for—winterfolk. Except these were not truly winterfolk but the dwarven children of Altbach, children the aatxe deemed, in its darkened state-of-mind, to be winterfolk in need of its protection.

A giant indeed was coming into Altbach, one full of crazed determination to fulfill its task—and may the gods help anyone who stands in its way.

Adventure Hooks

An omen has fallen upon the small town of Altbach. Its children are vanishing. One day from the fields, the next from the mills. Dwarven families have been attacked—the parents killed and the children nowhere to be found.

The disappearances and killings have brought the once-spirited town to a hush. Rumors of dark elves, goblin raiders, and ghouls are talked about in the local tavern. Many dwarves have left Altbach, and many others have begun staying behind the safety of their locked doors along with their children.

As a result, the forges have grown cold, and the gold leaf production has slowed:

- Altbach's mayor, Calmuresh Coppersmith, knows the town will not be able to resume its normal way of life until whatever is behind the terror is dealt with—the dwarven presence in Altbach, while small, is crucial. He hires the adventurers to get to the bottom of the events, stop whatever or whoever is behind them, and find the children.

- Hammerfell, 120 miles northwest of Altbach, feels the ripple effect of the events in the small town. Altbach is one of its major trade partners for the often-peculiar iron springs it produces, as well as a few other ironworks sold in its shops. Work has slowed for Hammerfell's miners and forgecrafters, and many are threatening to leave the canton and find work elsewhere. Efgar Ollmoran, a prominent overseer of the canton's iron production, needs answers. He is willing to pay the adventurers handsomely to get to the bottom of the grim events in Altbach so that the forges can flow again at full strength.
- Crishy and Vodolf Vikkelsheide, of the Hammerfell Wagon Company, have done quite well selling copper and iron ingots to the merchants of Altbach. The recent events have hurt their business. They seek to hire a party of adventurers to deal with the threat and restore peace to Altbach.

The Town of Altbach

The town of Altbach—with a population of 2,000 humans and 200 dwarves—sits midway between the Margreve Forest and the Ironcrags.

Its mother city, Zobeck, lies approximately 46 miles southeast while the canton of Hammerfell, one of its major trade partners, lies approximately 120 miles northwest in the Ironcrags.

Altbach is quiet and down-to-earth yet full of wondrous craftsmanship. It offers both a simple way of life, free from the noise and hustle of Zobeck, and a lively existence with Altbachers keen to follow a variety of unique pursuits, like making enchanted buttons and hammering exquisite gold leaf.

The town's inn, *Sprig and Spring*, is a favored meeting place for all the residents, human and dwarf alike. Altbach also boasts a large town hall, five major waterwheels, several forges, a shrine to Rava, and a variety of shops.

ADVENTURE STARTING POINT: CALMURESH COPPERSMITH

No matter which adventure hook is chosen, meeting Calmuresh Coppersmith (LN gearforged) will be the launching point. If using a hook other than the mayor himself, the contact (either Efgar or Vikkelsheide) directs the PCs to seek out the mayor as their initial point of investigation.

The mayor says that many dwarves are leaving Altbach because of the killings and disappearances. He remains hopeful and composed, despite beginning to fear the loss of his job and dignity if he doesn't get the issue resolved as soon as possible.

Calmuresh brings the PCs up to speed, relaying that five dwarven children are currently missing (ranging in ages from 5–12): Grin, Serr, Rolu, Yurk, and Petal. They were last seen with their parents in the fields.

Four dwarven adults have also been killed and interred within dwarven tombs just outside of town:

- Boshtand and Greeva Craftbeard, the parents of Grin, Serr, and Rolu. Their bodies had large puncture wounds, as if made by a spear. They were interred last week.
- Obert Shortshadow, parent of Yurk and Petal. His torso was severed and had similar wounds to the others. Interred 2 days ago.
- Scaldrum Forgefeather. He had the same type of wounds and multiple bones broken. Also interred 2 days ago.

One dwarf has been wounded: Esper Catskull, found lying unconscious in a ravine on the outskirts of the fields the same day the bodies of the Craftbeards were discovered.

He had a severe concussion, six broken ribs, a broken foot, and a gashed arm. Some tracks were found leading up into the hills but have been disregarded as being from livestock as several Altbachers own cattle that graze at the foot of the hills.

Calmuresh says that a lot of rumors are flying about, and he's not sure what to believe. He lets the PCs know that talking with Esper would be the best place to start (see **Rumors** below). The dwarf was in a coma for a few days after they found him, so Calmuresh hasn't had a chance to talk to him.

RUMORS

The following rumors can be meted out to the PCs should they choose to canvas the town for more information:

- Camile Landis (human **scout**) heard what sounded like a scream, coming from somewhere in the hills, though she doesn't remember exactly when.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using **Status** (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs free the children and kill the aatxe, the PCs gain +1 to their Status with anyone in Altbach and +1 with those from Hammerfell, an important trade partner of Altbach. If the PCs are able to free the children and cure the aatxe of its corruption, their bonus with those in Altbach instead becomes a +2. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

- Olgrim Silverstare (dwarf **commoner**), the tender at the *Sprig and Spring*, heard that goblin raiders came through the area and stole the children as slaves.
- The aged Moss Frescolo (human **commoner**) swears he saw a group of shadow fey with a handful of children by the western mill.
- Blind Isabella (human **commoner**) heard what sounded like the roaring of a bull on the night Boshtand and Greeva were killed.
- Nels Rockdrift (dwarf **commoner**) remembers a noble but anxious man with yellowish-hazel eyes and a red cloak, walking through the marketplace. She knows everyone in town but has never seen him.
- Esper Catskull (dwarf **commoner**) is just waking up from his coma. He was attacked by the aatxe when it spotted him working in the fields, not far from Boshtand and Greeva Craftbeard. He doesn't remember much of anything from that day after entering the fields to gather crops. But he does show the PCs his ripped tunic from the attack. On a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check, soft bright-red hairs (belonging to the aatxe) are found on the tunic. On a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check, the hairs are surmised to come from a beast that is celestial in nature (GM's discretion).
- The mysterious Sprite of Altbach (**sprite**), who lives quietly in a grove of trees near the field, saw a red bull with yellow eyes trotting up into the hills with several children on its back. The sprite is extremely shy. There is a 30% chance she will show herself to a PC passing by her home, as the party begins their ascent into the hills, and relay what she saw.

The Hills

The hills leading up to the forgotten temple of Lada span 18 miles, which has been sectioned below into three 2-hour treks wherein encounters can take place. The grasses are thick in the hills, and there is no trail, but travel is fairly straightforward and easy.

While there is flexibility in not using all the encounters below, it is recommended that the **Escaped Child** encounter be used as fodder for the PCs to resolve the aatxe's madness using a healing/social resolution.

FIRST TREK ENCOUNTERS

Here are some possible encounters for the party's first trip into the hills.

Digging for Scraps. Two **dogmoles** (see *Tome of Beasts*) are ranging the hills in search of food.

Fomenting Fog. A **falsifier fog** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) has taken up residence around the base of the hills—having been attracted to the area by the recent killings—and has begun feeding from the distress and anxiety that permeates the town. As the PCs move into the area on their beginning ascent up into the hills, the fog closes in around them.

Lada's Devout. A **ravenfolk warrior** and five **ravenfolk scouts** (see *Tome of Beasts*) journey out of the hills to Altbach. They are on a trek to fulfil an oath they made to a local dwarven blacksmith who lives there. They know nothing about the aatxe or the missing children but do have knowledge of the ancient temple of Lada along the ridge and will share the following if they take a favorable disposition to the PCs, requiring a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check:

- There is a temple located within a grove of trees at the top of the hills.
- The name of the temple is Athnuadaca—the temple of restoration.
- The temple was dedicated to the goddess Lada.
- There's a well in the temple, fed by an underground spring. The waters were an important part of a ritual of healing.
- Fellark Hailbright, also known as Fellark the Valiant, a renowned warrior in the region, forsook the ways of war and became a monk at Athnuadaca.
- Most of the common goods of the temple have been looted, but the library was locked by an arcane puzzle so is likely largely intact.

The ravenfolk will only attack if they feel threatened. If the ravenfolk receive the PCs favorably, there is a 70% chance that the warrior and leader of the group, Grenlow Razorbeak (**ravenfolk warrior**, see *Tome of Beasts*), will offer to lead/accompany the PCs to the temple for 10 gp and some food. If he does so, he sends the scouts on their way to fulfil their oath.

SECOND TREK ENCOUNTERS

Here are some possible encounters for the party's second trip into the hills.

Bring Out Your Dead. Three **beggar ghouls** (see *Tome of Beasts*) are drawn in by the recent dead, trying to dig their way into the tombs near town.

Sudden Storm. A sudden storm forms above the hills of Altbach and quickly sweeps down upon the PCs. Until they hit the final trek, the hills around them become difficult terrain, perception checks relying on sight and hearing are made at disadvantage, and there is a 10% chance that one of the PCs is struck by a weakly discharged bolt of lightning and must succeed

on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) lightning damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.

Turn Back. The **aatxe** (see *Creature Codex*, using the corrupted variant), manifesting as a red-robed man with yellowish-hazel eyes, crosses paths with the adventurers and tries to misdirect them from continuing their journey to the ancient temple.

The man tells the PCs that the area is sacred ground and dedicated to his family, so as trespassers, they must turn back. If the PCs do not heed him, the aatxe falls back to the temple to protect the "winterfolk" in its newly familiar domain when the PCs arrive.

On a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, a PC perceives signs of delusion from the man, and if the PC previously noticed the red hairs on Esper Catskull's tunic and succeeds by 8 or more, they note that the threads that make up the man's red robe are like those red hairs (see Esper Catskull in **Rumors** above).

FINAL TREK ENCOUNTERS

Here are some possible encounters for the party's third trip into the hills.

Escaped Child. Approximately 5 miles away from Athnuadaca, the PCs encounter a 12-year-old dwarven child named Petal Shortshadow. She is upset yet composed enough to relay information.

Petal escaped from the temple wherein she was being held and was hurrying down through the hills toward Altbach to get help. She won't accompany the PCs but will either climb up into a nearby tree to wait for them to return or continue on her way to Altbach to a relative's house.

The PCs can learn the following from her:

- A red bull with yellow eyes attacked their parents and took them from the fields.
- They were locked up in a room with a lot of books.
- Sometimes the bull changes into a man.
- The man has been very kind to them, too kind, and sometimes goes into a fit of sorrow. He keeps calling the children his "little winterfolk." To Petal, the man seems mad.
- The man often brought them food and water but always kept them locked up, always telling them that "the giants will not find you here."
- Her younger brother, Yurk, is still up there with the others.
- She was able to escape after the man began taking the children out of the room one at a time at certain times during the day to show them images of the god who he said sent him. Petal took off when the man brought her into a chapel.
- The chapel had paintings of a woman in a yellow dress.

Follow the Path. On a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Nature or Perception) check, a PC spots an area of the grasses that are trodden down as if something large passed this way. The trodden grasses form a faint path that leads to the ancient temple of Athnuadaca.

Turn Back Now. The PCs meet the **aatxe** as in the **Turn Back** encounter above. If the aatxe already encountered the PCs during the second trek, it is more forceful this time about its demands for them to turn back.

If the PCs do not turn back, it will revert into its true form (that of a massive crimson bull) and attack them, fleeing or vanishing at some point during the combat to stand ground at the temple only if it feels the PCs are getting the upper hand on it.

Old Temple Grove

The ancient temple, Athnuadaca, sits hidden within a grove of trees at the top of the hills. The temple cannot be seen unless one walks through the grove for at least 80 yards or flies above it.

The grove spans 140 yards of tall trees with shaggy limbs and streaked with gray bark and lichen. As the PCs traverse the grove, the following optional events can be used:

- ***Hope and Healing.*** The statue of Lada, with the palm of her hand extended, stands at the edge of a long-overgrown trail once used by pilgrims on their way to the temple. An inscription at the base of the statue reads, "To All in Need of Hope and Healing." In the palm of the statue's hand are six magical healing berries that, though shriveled, have not succumbed completely to the effects of time and decay. The berries contain healing energy as if created by the *goodberry* spell.
- ***Natural Pit.*** A certain area of the forest—one that used to have an underground spring coursing through it—begins to cave in. The PCs must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or fall into a sudden 15-foot earthen pit, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. Climbing out of the pit requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

When the PCs break through the grove, they find themselves standing before the temple of Athnuadaca, lying across a lush swath of green grass 40 yards away.

The Ancient Temple of Athnuadaca

A large yellowish-gray stone structure, its surface streaked with bright-green moss, stands at the center of the grove of trees in an open, grassy field.

The temple was built by Lada's devotees as a place of peace and healing, offering the compassion of the goddess to pilgrims who came seeking a remedy from their physical and spiritual ailments.

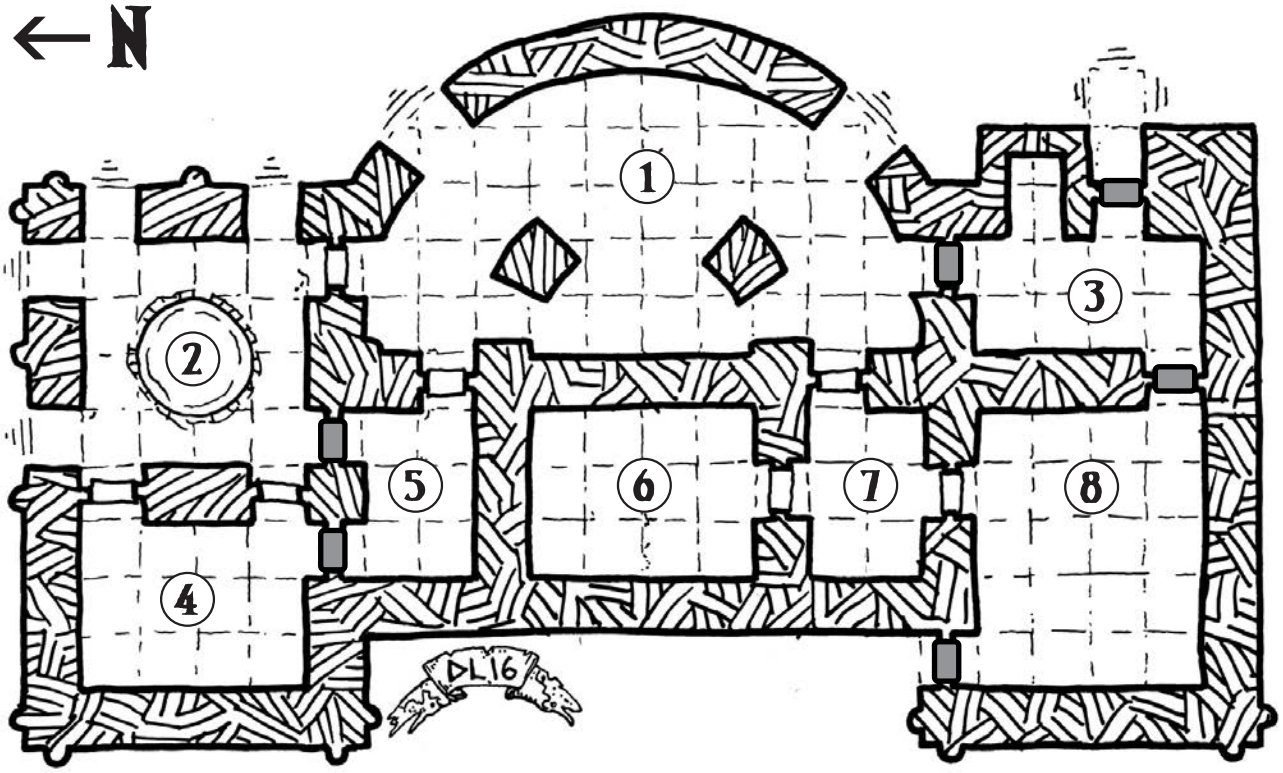
Many years later, it was sacked by goblin raiders. The goblins, however, were unable to gain access to the temple's library, which was protected by an arcane puzzle lock.

Unless otherwise noted in the location descriptions, the temple has these general features:

- ***Ceilings.*** The chapel's ceiling is 50 feet high at its center. The rooms and passageways of the temple have 15-foot-high ceilings made of rough granite.
- ***Doors.*** All doors are made of carved wood and have iron hinges. Locked doors can be unlocked with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check, and stuck doors (AC 15; hp 30; immunity to poison and psychic damage) can be forced open with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. The temple's library contains magically locked puzzle-doors. On the temple map, locked doors are shaded gray while open doors are unshaded.
- ***Floors and Walls.*** The temple walls are comprised of 5-foot-thick granite blocks (except in parts of **Area 3**), and the floors are smooth stone.
- ***Light.*** Empty iron sconces line the walls of each area. In the daytime, **Area 1** and **Area 2** are well lit. All other areas of the temple are dimly lit due to the light filtering in through cracks and fissures in the ceiling and walls.
- ***Orientation.*** The main doors of the temple face east, allowing the light of dawn to bathe the chapel and portico.

AREA 1: CHAPEL

Images of men, women, and children throwing rose petals at the feet of a black-haired woman in a bright-yellow dress with a staff in one hand and a scimitar at her side adorn the walls of this domed chapel. Busted-up chairs and pews lie scattered across the floor. At the back, between two large pillars, a robed figure stands in front of an altar with their hands raised in prayer. On the chapel ceiling, above the altar, a painted yellow eye with ray-like lashes looks out over all who enter. A set of steps leads through open archways on either side of the eastern arched wall. Ornate wooden doors flank each end of the western altar wall, and there's a closed door on each of the north and south walls.



The northern and western doors are open, and the southern door is locked by a magic puzzle (see **Area 3**).

The woman portrayed on the walls is the goddess Lada, to whom the temple is dedicated, recognizable by PCs that the GM deems would know this or on a successful DC 13 Intelligence (History) check.

Creatures. The robed figure before the altar, Irenu, the once-human priest of the temple, is now a **fane spirit** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*). He was killed during the goblin raid but has no memory of the event. If the PCs approach the altar, they see that he is praying over a golden holy symbol of Lada that sits atop the altar.

The PCs hear him finish his prayer with these words: *"O compassionate lady, imbue this, your holy symbol, with your divine grace so that the water in which it is submerged may flow with your healing love."* After Irenu finishes the prayer, he turns and respectively greets the PCs, supposing they are pilgrims who have come to venerate Lada and receive healing from the well during a ritual of restoration. PCs notice that his lips are painted silver, an outward sign that he has taken an oath to speak only words of priestly prayers. Irenu may nod or shake his head if questioned but ultimately leaves through the door on the left side of the western wall, quietly retiring to his cell.



He has seen the aatxe once, in humanoid form, believing him to be a devotee come to honor the goddess of light. He doesn't know that the aatxe is keeping children locked up in the refectory on the other side of the temple complex.

As a fane spirit, he is caught in the routine he knew best as an arch priest of the temple—praying at the altar at certain times during the day, especially asking for Lada's grace upon her holy symbol for the ritual of restoration, and spending the rest of his time meditating in silence behind locked doors. If threatened, Irenu transforms into his undead form and attacks.

If the PCs arrive at night, Irenu either has already transformed into his undead nature or the PCs witness his transformation (GM's discretion). Refer to the *Tome of Beasts 2* for detailed information regarding the fane spirit's transformation. In his undead form, Irenu attacks any intruders in the temple.

Treasure. The iris of the "radiant eye" holy symbol is an amethyst worth 100 gp. The total value of the holy symbol in its entirety is 210 gp. When the goblins attacked the temple, Irenu had just enough time to hide the symbol in a secret compartment in the back of the altar before fleeing to his quarters for refuge.

AREA 2: PORTICO

At the center of this spacious portico—with four archways leading down a set of steps and outside—stands a 3-foot-high stone pool filled with clear water. Two closed doors flank the western wall, and two closed doors flank the southern wall. An inscription at the top of the southern wall reads: "O Lady of the Healing Hand, we beseech thee to restore our minds, hearts, and bodies."

On the southern wall, the eastern door is open, and the western door is locked.

Both doors on the western wall are open.

The pool is fed by an underground spring and was used in a rite of restoration to bring healing to pilgrims. To prepare for the rite, the priest places the radiant eye holy symbol on the chapel altar and prays to Lada, asking for her divine grace to infuse it.

When it's time for the rite to begin, the symbol is brought into the portico and placed in the water. This action magically transforms the water into a *Wellspring of Greater Restoration*—once infused, a creature that drinks or bathes in the water receives the benefits of a *greater restoration* spell.

The water retains its efficacy for an hour once removed from the pool, and there is enough for 10 uses. The water's grace-filled healing is potent enough to cure the madness of the aatxe and restore it to its former nobility.

AREA 3: LIBRARY

The temple's sacred library is guarded by the same magical puzzle lock on each of its three doors.

Puzzle Lock. A series of letters, six down and six across, is etched in the upper center of the door. This code was specifically arranged in a six-by-six pattern to cause initial confusion as to whether the focus should be on the rows or columns. The inscription above the puzzle's code reads, *"A name spoken will open this door. To find it, look to the east and west, never to the north and south."*

It reveals that the answer lies in the rows (*"look to the east and west"*), starting at the top row, and not the columns (*"never to the north and south"*). The code below the inscription contains the solution: a phrase or word spoken that opens the door (GM's discretion to use either **Option 1** or **Option 2** below). The key to finding the phrase or word lies in understanding the code. The code is made up of a series of six sets, starting with a Roman numeral followed by two Arabic numerals. The Roman numeral denotes the row number, starting with the top row of letters, and the Arabic numerals point to two letters in that row via the number of spaces. For instance, the first set is *I 1,2*. This is translated as letters *L* and *A* in the first row of the series.

The solution is "Lady of the Sun":

- ***Option 1.*** The PCs have to say, "Lady of the Sun," aloud and the door will open.
- ***Option 2.*** The PCs have to say, "Lada," who is the Lady of the Sun, aloud and the door will open.

Upon entrance into the library, read the following:

DOOR PUZZLE					
I 1,2	**II 3,6**	**III 4,5**	**IV 2,5**	**V 2,5**	**VI 1,3**
L	A	R	T	R	I
E	N	D	O	N	Y
T	T	H	O	F	D
G	T	E	M	H	T
A	E	G	I	S	X
U	M	N	I	O	O

DOOR PUZZLE SOLUTION					
L	**A**	R	T	R	I
E	N	**D**	O	N	**Y**
T	T	H	**O**	**F**	D
G	**T**	E	M	**H**	T
A	**E**	G	I	**S**	X
U	M	**N**	I	O	O

The smell of parchment and leather fills the room, which contains bookcases stacked with a variety of books and scrolls. A small desk with a quill, inkwell, and a red leatherbound book resides in the eastern alcove. There are closed wooden doors on the eastern, northern, and western walls.

The books and scrolls that fill these bookcases contain writings on the goddess Lada, history, herbalism, meditation, prayer, worship rites, poetry, gardening, and architecture.

The inkwell on the desk is dry. The red book details temple rituals, and a particular priestly ritual—regarding how the radiant eye holy symbol is blessed by Lada while on the altar and then brought into the portico where it is submerged in the pool, permeating the water with Lada's healing energies—is marked with a ribbon.

Key. A locked desk drawer contains a key that unlocks the northwestern door of the refectory (**Area 8**).

Treasure. On a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, a *spell scroll of cure wounds* is discovered. On a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check, a *spell scroll of beacon of hope* is also found.

AREA 4: APOTHECARIUM

The deep smell of earth permeates the air of this room. A slew of broken terra-cotta jugs, glass jars, and potion bottles litter broken shelves and the floor. A pack of small reptilian-looking creatures with spiny backs and razor-sharp teeth turn in unison to gaze at you with glowing blue eyes.

The eastern doors are open, and the southern door is locked.This room was used to store a variety of herbs and potions to aid pilgrims. Most of the contents were destroyed or looted during the goblin raid.

Creatures. Five **chupacabras** (see *Creature Codex*) lost the trail of the wild boar they were hunting in the grove and found their way to the temple's apothecarium, investigating its variety of odors.

Treasure. A few empty potion bottles remain intact on one of the shelves still standing. PCs who investigate the intact bottles find a full potion bottle behind the empty ones. It contains a blue liquid that bubbles faintly and steams: a *potion of heroism*.

AREA 5: PRIEST'S QUARTERS

This small room contains a desk that sits against the north wall, a rotting cot against the southern wall, and a dilapidated bookshelf holding a few books.

The eastern door is open, and the northern doors are locked but can be opened from inside the quarters.

This is the priestly quarters of Irenu, priest of the temple. Killed here during the goblin raid, he is now a **fane spirit** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*). When not in the chapel, he is here, sitting on a stone chair near the bookshelf, quietly reading a book. If met here, the PCs notice that his lips are painted silver, an outward sign that he has taken an oath to speak only words of priestly prayers.

While here, Irenu remains completely quiet, having entered a prayerful state of mind that was part of his normal routine during the day. In such a state, Irenu does not acknowledge the PCs unless he is physically disturbed, and any such disturbance to him here triggers in him a memory of his last moments during the goblin raid, and he suddenly transforms into his undead form and attacks the PCs.

AREA 6: MONASTIC QUARTERS

Three raised stone beds, a bookshelf, three small reading tables with chairs, and a tapestry of a radiant eye looking out over a wilderness scene adorn this room. Near the center of the room lies a headless skeleton wrapped in a blood-stained gray robe.

The door is open.

The headless skeleton is that of Fellark Hailbright, who was killed here during the goblin raid. Fellark took his renunciation of war and violence with the utmost sincerity, bowing his neck to a goblin scimitar without a fight. The goblins took his renowned head with them as a trophy.

Aged books on prayer, stillness, the goddess Lada, and nature can be found on the bookshelf. On a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, PCs searching the books find a journal that belonged to Fellark. The journal details some important aspects of his life, especially how he forsook the ways of war and joined the temple as a monk, specifically mentioning his wondrous helm and how he felt the radiant eye of Lada was what called him to a life surpassing that of war and violence.

The wooden reading table is barren.

Tapestry. The tapestry depicting the radiant eye is saturated with mysterious, divine energy from years of intense and repentant prayer in front of it. PCs who investigate or look at the tapestry for more than 20 seconds must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be paralyzed in ecstasy for 1d4 hours.

Treasure. Fellark's helm, the *warrior's eye helm* (see **Appendix**), is located in a hidden compartment at the foot of his stone bed. The faint outline of the compartment can be noticed on a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. The compartment can be located by a PC searching around the stone beds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

AREA 7: MEDITATION ROOM

Four stone seats protrude from the western wall, which has wood panels depicting a radiant eye. A simple wooden lectern lies face down on the floor. A large hole in the ceiling allows you to gaze up into the sky above. Shadows suddenly move over the opening as a pair of giant spiders swiftly crawl inside and begin to climb down the wall toward you.

The doors are open.

Creatures. The two **phase spiders** have recently phased onto the temple roof to investigate. Having sensed the PCs in the room below, they descend through the hole, hoping for a quick meal of opportunity.

A book of prayers and meditations to the goddess Lada lies beneath the fallen lectern.

AREA 8: REFECTORY

Broken tables and chairs are strewn across this large room. Near the northwestern corner lies a small humanoid skeleton in an aged, murky-green tunic and leather armor. Four dwarven children sit huddled together behind a table and chairs in the southwestern corner. A red-robed man standing near them quickly moves toward you, suddenly morphing into a giant red bull with fierce yellow eyes.

The northwestern door is locked (its key can be found in **Area 3**), the southeastern door is locked by a magic puzzle (see **Area 3**), and the northern door is open.

See **Concluding the Adventure** for the aatxe encounter.

The missing children are here. The skeleton is that of a goblin, one of the few who died at the hands of devotees during the raid on the temple. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a small pouch tied to a belt hidden beneath the garments. The pouch contains two pieces of turquoise, worth 10 gp each, and 5 sp.

Concluding the Adventure

The **aatxe** (see *Creature Codex*, using the corrupted variant) cannot be reasoned with in its maddened state. It sees the PCs as direct threats that must be dispatched. If the PCs have blessed water from the *Wellspring of Greater Restoration* (see **Area 2**), splashing the aatxe with this water will be enough to bestow upon it the restorative healing effects of the water, curing it of its madness and restoring its nobility.

Otherwise, the aatxe charges and will not stop attacking until it is defeated.If the aatxe is splashed with the water from the *Wellspring of Greater Restoration*, it retreats to a corner of the room as it begins to return to its former self. Moments later, it is completely cured and can recognize its fall from its former grace. It thanks the PCs and offers to take the children back to Altbach.The healed aatxe now desires to fulfil its task by becoming the protector of Altbach, coming to the realization that Baldur's grace never left it and simply led it here to be healed. It seeks to restore the temple and vows to watch over and protect Altbach.The healing of the aatxe acts as a divine catalyst of restoration that extends to the rest of the temple—and even the priest, Irenu, finds rest and is no longer seen in the temple.

Pride of the Mushroom Queen

For 6th-Level Characters

This adventure takes place in the Arbonesse Forest but can be adapted to any forested location.

Adventure Background

Two centuries ago, a creature known as the Weft of Shadows broke into a minor elf noble's extraplanar vault in the Summer Lands, and stealing several powerful magic items, it deposited them in random forest locations throughout Midgard. However, thanks to an unusual set of rules involved in the creation of these artifacts, once mortal hands have touched them, the elves can no longer claim them. (This adventure continues with the background introduced in the previous **Wrath of the Bramble King** chapter.)

Similarly, these odd rules prevented the Weft of Shadows from making shadow versions of the relics without them first touching mortal hands. While the Weft of Shadows was content to allow the other artifacts to wreak havoc in their own ways, it had different plans for the *Enoki Scepter*. The item was capable of corrupting plants and flesh with fungus, and the Weft planned to use it to inflict terrible harm on the Arbonesse elves.

The agents of the Weft of Shadows found a victim in Elela Argaria Sheoloss, an elf with a predilection for the mushrooms growing in the shadows of the Arbonesse's great trees. After flooding her mind with visions of a paradise filled with all varieties of beautiful fungi, they watched as she embraced these visions and espoused the rights of these overlooked plants. Her fellow elves regarded her as eccentric and ignored her rantings as harmless…until she began to poison plants and cultivate harmful fungi. The elven leaders had no choice but to imprison her while they discussed her fate. They didn't want to execute her, but exiling her into the forest would allow her to continue endangering it.

It was a moot point since she escaped with the aid of those same agents. Angered at her treatment and the elves' lack of understanding about the inevitable fungal paradise, she "conveniently" discovered the *Enoki Scepter* at the most opportune time. After surreptitiously infecting a community of Arbonesse elves with the scepter's magic, she remained nearby until the elves began to succumb to the fungal rot, which was resistant to their magic. Disappointed when the first casualties transformed into shambling plant creatures (instead of fungus) that followed her around, she decided she needed a place to study the scepter and further unlock its magic. Unknowingly led to a clearing with a thinning border to the Shadow Realm, she used the scepter to create a modest garden of fungi. As she grew more confident with the scepter, she devastated other small communities, which fell to virulent fungal infections inflicted by the scepter. Ultimately, she nearly depleted the scepter's power to create her grand Fungal Citadel, which stands as a blight in the forest and a beacon to her "converts."

Surviving Arbonesse elves watch helplessly as their loved ones die and then arise the next morning to shamble mindlessly, deep within the forest toward the citadel. Aware of their susceptibility to the so-called Mushroom Queen's magic, they seek outside assistance to defeat the menace.

Adventure Hooks

The PCs may be traveling through the Arbonesse on other business and end up in an afflicted village or encounter a villager seeking assistance. Daesanderena may have worked with the PCs to retrieve portions of the wayward artifacts (as detailed in the previous **Wrath of the Bramble King** chapter) and seeks their assistance once again (see **A Simple Request** below). Or one of the PCs may be an Arbonesse elf, or the PCs may be friends of the elves from other adventures, compelling them to assist the elves.

ADAPTING PRIDE OF THE MUSHROOM QUEEN FOR TALES OF MARGREVE

Though this adventure takes place in the Arbonesse Forest, it can easily be adapted to fit into the Margreve. First, the Arbonesse elves afflicted by the fungal conversion should be changed to elves with Stross ancestry. Second, while the Fungal Citadel is regarded as "natural" to a certain extent, the Margreve regards it as an affront, especially as it creeps outward. Thus, the PCs receive Status for destroying the Fungal Citadel and allowing the Margreve to reclaim the land.

A Rotten State of Affairs

The PCs arrive at an afflicted village and can view the horror of elves covered in a wide variety of toadstools and other fungi. Most of the elves are bedridden, hours or days away from their terrible fate of transforming into shambling plants bound to walk toward the Fungal Citadel. The fungus resists efforts to remove it as a disease or to destroy it as a plant and seems to intensify its growth in response to such countermeasures. Investigating the spread of the fungus reveals it only seems to affect Arbonesse elves. This is corroborated by anecdotes of uninfected elves touching infected elves and waking the next morning with fungus growing from their bodies. The Arbonesse elves are reticent at best to confront the Mushroom Queen and plead for the PCs to eliminate her and find a cure for their condition. The elves' desperation induces them to offer a suit of *elven chain* as a reward to the PCs, even if none of them are elves.

To find the Fungal Citadel, the PCs can follow a dead victim that arises and meanders toward the complex. Alternatively, a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check picks up a broken trail of mushrooms leading to the citadel.

A Simple Request

Daesanderena, an elf from the Summer Lands, finds the PCs as they travel to the Fungal Citadel, if she has not already commissioned them to find the *Enoki Scepter*. If the PCs helped her with the *Bramble Crown*, she expresses her appreciation for their assistance. She requires the PCs to retrieve a fungal growth from the *Enoki Scepter* for her (relaying the information in the first paragraph of the **Adventure Background** if necessary). Once the PCs return with the requested item, she gifts them with a *gem of brightness*, hoping it will serve them well in future dealings with the Weft of Shadows.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using **Status** (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs defeat the Mushroom Queen, the PCs gain +1 to their Status with the River Court and the elves of the Arbonesse. If the PCs also destroy the Enoki Scepter, they gain an additional +1. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

The Fungal Citadel

The Mushroom Queen found this clearing in the Arbonesse Forest, with its meandering stream feeding a couple of ponds, and decided this was the perfect location for her seat of power. She expended most of the *Enoki Scepter's* power to grow this compound from surrounding fungus. The centerpiece of the citadel (**Area 6**) is shaped like a giant mushroom, measuring 30 feet high and topped with a bright-red cap, which shades most of the remainder of the complex. The walls and doors of the rooms have the consistency of wood, but the walls constantly sweat and breathe, giving the whole place an unsettling appearance.

Though the citadel's floors are spongy, they provide adequate support for most creatures and are normal terrain except where noted. Bioluminescent fungi provide dim light throughout the citadel except where noted. Innumerable spores float gently in this light.

The *Enoki Scepter's* corrupted magic permeates the citadel. While within the Fungal Citadel, elves and elfmarked take a –2 penalty on all saving throws against poisons or diseases. Arbonesse elves are especially susceptible to the scepter's magic and have disadvantage on these saving throws in addition to the penalty.

The smell of rot pervades every room in the citadel. A PC who does not take precautions to cover their nose and mouth must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 hour. An unprotected PC must attempt this save every 10 minutes they remain within the citadel.

AREA 1: ENTRANCE TO THE CITADEL

Black and red fungus forms striped doors, marking the entrance to the Mushroom Queen's compound. There are no handles or knobs to open the doors, but a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds an indentation on the door that holds a slimy nodule. The doors swing inward when the nodule is pressed. The doors can also be hacked apart with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check using an edged weapon or tool, but the noise alerts the creatures in **Areas 3**, **4**, and **6** to the PCs' presence. If the PCs followed a risen victim here, it melds through the door and into the citadel without issue. The body then continues to shamble to **Area 5** where the fungal vines on the wall embrace the new convert and hang it from the wall in a supplicating pose.

A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Perception) check notices four **shriekers** hidden among the fungal growth surrounding the door. The shriekers create a loud enough noise to alert every creature within the Fungal Citadel.

Opening the door reveals a grand hallway covered by a pale "carpet" of nauseating orange striations on the floor. The "carpet" changes color to a deep purple hue in the hallway to **Area 2**, to the color of fresh blood in the hallway to **Area 3**, and to a golden color as it curves into **Area 5**. The alcoves in the western wall are filled with statues of the Mushroom Queen, albeit less ostentatious than the one found in **Area 2**.

AREA 2: THE MUSHROOM QUEEN'S EFFIGY

As the PCs round the corner to the north, the rotting stench gives way to an intoxicatingly pleasant fragrance. Doors seem to lead out of this chamber from all cardinal directions. The floor and walls shift from a deep purple to lavender, and the bioluminescent fungi intensify such that the room is filled with bright light. A statue of the Mushroom Queen with her arms outstretched, pointing to the east and west doors, stands 15 feet tall and fills most of this chamber. None of the doors open to any chambers, but accessing the northern and southern doors unveils two parts of the key necessary to gain entrance to the central garden in **Area 6**, exposing PCs to the traps described below. The eastern and western doors are not trapped, but they conceal abstract carvings of the Mushroom Queen.

Vomiting Slime Mold Trap. When a creature opens the northern door, a barely contained flow of slime mold sprays out. Each creature within 15 feet of the door must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage and 11 (2d10) poison damage and is poisoned for 10 minutes. On a success, a creature takes half the damage and isn't poisoned.

Prevention. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check hears a gurgling sound behind the northern door as if a high-pressure fluid is pushing against it. A successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check when opening the door holds it open just enough for the pressure from the slime to be released without harming all creatures within 15 feet of the door. On a failure, the trap triggers as normal.

Violet Fungus Expulsion Trap. When a creature opens the southern door, a wall of violet fungus explodes in rotting spores. Each creature within 20 feet of the door must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Prevention. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the smell of rot behind the southern door. A successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check when opening the door slows the flow of spores, limiting how many are ejected at one time. If successful, each creature within 20 feet of the door has advantage on its saving throw. On a failure, the trap triggers as normal. Alternatively, a *gust of wind* spell timed with opening the door disperses the spores harmlessly.

Two key halves carved from a gold-colored mushroom sit imbedded in the walls behind the northern and southern doors. Tendrils wriggle out from each half, harmlessly grasping at any creature that holds it. When the two halves are put together, they make a sucking sound and combine into one triangular, golden mushroom key. Once formed, the key can't be separated into its two halves again.

AREA 3: RECEPTION AREA

The Mushroom Queen believes that once she becomes established in the Arbonesse as a ruler in her own right, she will need to meet with guests. She carved out this chamber near the main entrance to serve as a room where she could greet subjects and visiting dignitaries in a comfortable and friendly manner. The floor is checkered in alternating patches of white and dark-brown fungi, and the ceiling is covered in lacy, luminous moss. Two red-surfaced tables surrounded by chairs carved from sturdy fungus rest near the northern and western walls.

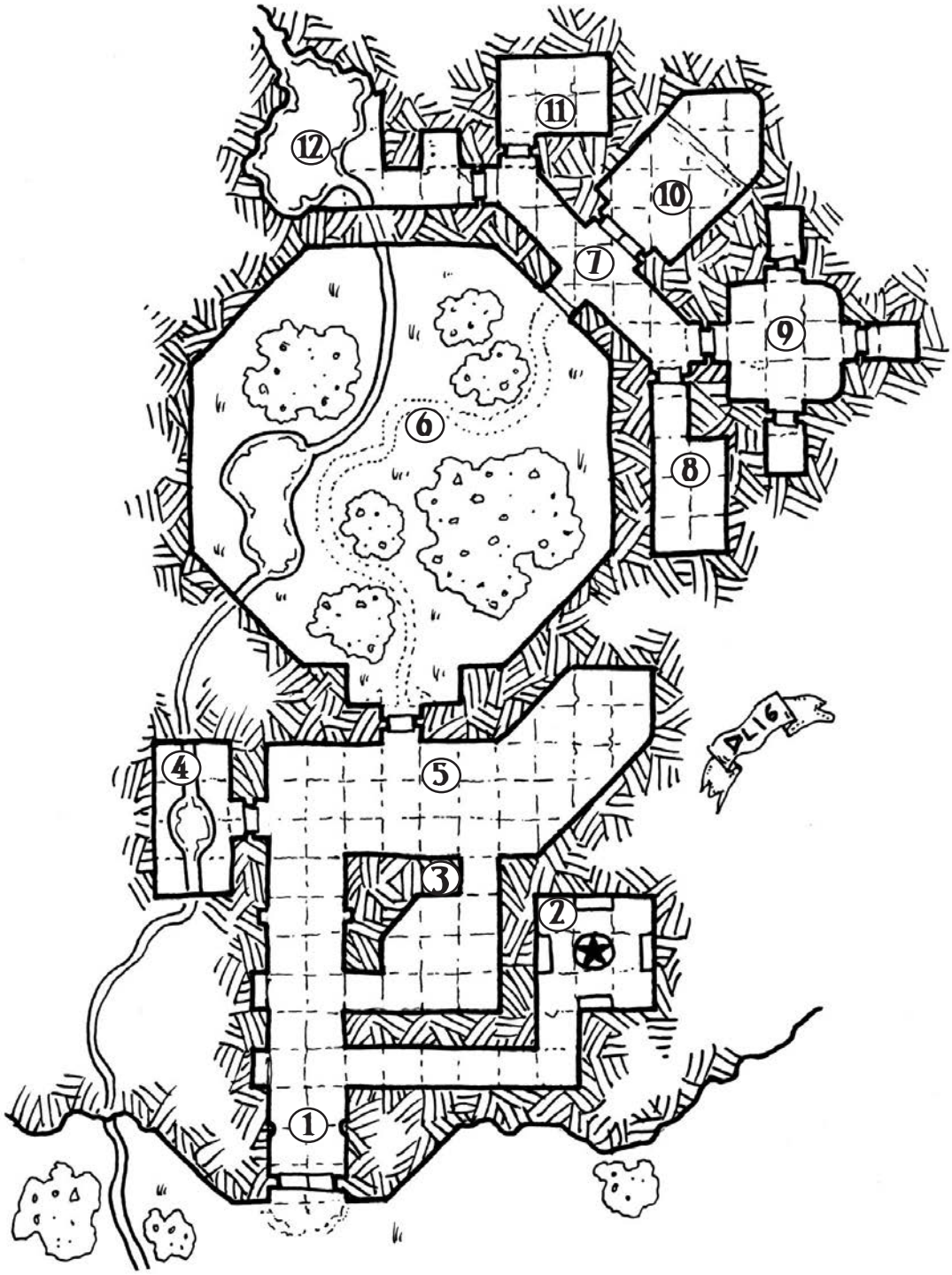
Two **cavelight mosses** (see *Tome of Beasts*) cling to the ceiling and attack any creature not accompanied by the Mushroom Queen.

AREA 4: RESPLENDENT POND

The Mushroom Queen preserved the vibrant purple and orange flowering plants in this room when she found the **death butterfly swarm** (see *Tome of Beasts*) attending them. The swarm does not bother her or any other fungal creatures. The butterflies composing the swarm flit about the flowers for 1 round before coalescing into a swarm and attacking fleshy (or undead) intruders. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check recognizes the swarm's danger before it forms.

AREA 5: GALLERY

Elf victims who die because of the *Enoki Scepter's* fungal infestation become mobile, semi-sentient, elf-shaped plants and wander to the Fungal Citadel. They station themselves along the walls of this gallery, becoming "statues" that give the Mushroom Queen a grand view of her handiwork when she leaves the central garden. All of them are long dead, but each hangs on the wall, suspended by "vines" of silver fungus in various poses of supplication or heroism—whichever the Mushroom Queen found most pleasing upon the creature's arrival. After the Mushroom Queen's magic is reversed in the Fungal Citadel, these unfortunates revert to flesh, but they remain dead. The gallery's floor is a spongy carpet of golden fungus, and the walls are drapes of silver fungus that emit bright light.



The door to **Area 6** appears to be a contiguous section of the wall broken only by a circular golden panel made of fungus. A triangular indentation sits in the center of the panel. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation) check realizes the unique and slightly magical nature of the lock and that it requires a special key to open.

Treasure. Many of the victims still wear or carry mementos of their former lives. A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check while inspecting the "statues" finds a few wedding rings, necklaces, wooden carvings, and other personal trinkets worth a total of 75 gp.

AREA 6: THE CENTRAL GARDEN

While the other areas in the Fungal Citadel have been cultivated to mimic passageways and rooms of an ordinary building, the central garden has been allowed to run rampant. A meandering walking path cuts through the veritable fungus forest. The various standing mushrooms and toadstools in the area have

a disturbing tendency to lean toward flesh-and-blood creatures. If a creature brushes up against a fungus, the fungus releases relatively harmless spores, which induce a mild cough, watery eyes, or a runny nose but otherwise inflict no harm.

The water from the stream flows into a pond in the southwestern portion of the garden. The pondwater is clear, allowing creatures to see its entire 20-foot depth. While the water seems uncontaminated, the six **moss lurkers** (see *Tome of Beasts*) hiding in this room were allowed to poison it. A creature that drinks the water must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 hour. The moss lurkers use their natural camouflage to hide in the forest of fungus and attack intruders with hit-and-run tactics.

A clearing in the northeast holds the remains of a *putrescent faerie circle* spell (see **Appendix**). The wilting black toadstools that form the ring are harmless now, but the bones of animal and humanoid victims brought here by the Mushroom Queen's servants are still present. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check realizes the ring was created by a spell. A druid or a cleric of a nature-focused deity that spends 1 hour studying the ring can learn the *putrescent faerie circle* spell, though the druid or cleric can't cast the spell unless they are of the appropriate level to do so.

AREA 7: THE SHADOW HALL

The walls and floors in this hall are made of a black fungus with dark-purple geometric patterns. The hall is shrouded in darkness. Unless otherwise noted, the rooms connected to this one are made of the same material and are similarly dark.

Once the Mushroom Queen gave herself over fully to the Weft of Shadows, she agreed to permit shadowy creatures with tenuous ties to fungus to roam freely here. One such creature, a **razorleaf** (see *Creature Codex*), stands in front of the double doors leading to the throne room (**Area 10**) and exacerbates the gloom pervading this hallway. The razorleaf has planted its roots in the fungal ground outside the throne room, its Dark Ground trait actively reducing any light that tries to pierce the gloom.

AREA 8: THE GARDEN OF DEAD MUSHROOMS

Contrasting to the vibrant, if grotesque, life pervading most of the Fungal Citadel, this room is covered in what appear to be dead mushrooms. The caps of the mushrooms have been carved out and filled with an inky liquid. A ring of twenty such mushrooms surrounds a 10-foot-tall toadstool, which sits in the center of the room. The air in the room is noticeably colder than the others off this hallway. The room's close tie to the Shadow Realm allows the Mushroom Queen to use the pools of inky liquid to commune with the Weft of Shadows. The inky liquid within the giant toadstool holds two **shadow oozes** (see *Creature Codex*), which attack intruders that aren't accompanied by the Mushroom Queen.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check gives a PC the feeling of being watched. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check while inspecting the pools of dark liquid recognizes the pools' use as rudimentary scrying devices. However, the pools currently only allow for something to view into this chamber and not vice versa. If a PC attempts to remove any liquid, it evaporates into wisps of shadow within 1 round of being removed from its mushroom.

AREA 9: MACABRE EXPERIMENTATION

A wooden table covered in oozing plant matter stands in each of this chamber's corners. Another, larger table sits in the chamber's center. A mold-covered corpse lies on the table with a single black flower sprouting from its chest.

As the Mushroom Queen's attempts to create rotting thralls grew more sophisticated, her minions improved from short-lived, mindless, shambling plants that rooted themselves in her gallery (**Area 5**) to shambling zombies capable of following orders. She used this room for various experiments after creating the two mindrot thralls in **Area 12**. The Shadow Realms's influence in the Fungal Citadel seeded a **gloomflower** (see *Creature Codex*) in the chest of the Mushroom Queen's latest victim, the **mold zombie** (see *Creature Codex*) that lies on the central table. The zombie awaits the queen's orders or for intruders to disturb its slumber. The gloomflower detaches itself from the mold zombie on the first turn that it acts.

Each of the three chambers adjoining this room contains a mold zombie, similarly awaiting the queen's next order. Each has a nascent gloomflower embedded within its chest, which can't attack and dies if the mold zombie is destroyed.

AREA 10: MUSHROOM QUEEN'S THRONE ROOM

The Mushroom Queen spends much of her time in this room. A mottled purple throne covered in bright-red mushrooms sits on a dais in the northeastern section of the chamber. Sheets of fungus in various hues of red and purple with varying degrees of transparency hang from the ceiling. As a gesture of solidarity toward the Weft of Shadows, she allows the interior of the doors to retain the black and purple coloration found in **Area 7**.

The Mushroom Queen waits upon her throne, even if she is alerted to the PCs' presence through the shriekers' alarm or nearby sounds of combat. She is imperious and regards non-plant creatures as her inferiors. However, she is impressed by the PCs making it past her guardians. She offers to harmlessly remake them if they

agree to serve her. Indeed, the Mushroom Queen is true to her word, and the process is pain-free for those who peacefully submit to her. Of course, she doesn't expect the PCs to agree and attacks when they threaten her or move threateningly within 15 feet of her.

The Mushroom Queen uses the statistics of a **void speaker** (see *Creature Codex*, adding immunity to poison, removing the Repelling Word option of the Word of the Void action, and replacing *cone of cold* with *putrescent faerie circle* [see **Appendix**]). When she feels the PCs are threatening her or if they move to attack her, she casts *putrescent faerie circle* to ensnare as many of them as possible and continues attempting to sway them to her side. She dismisses it if the spell noticeably weakens the PCs too quickly, not wanting to outright kill potential new minions. If further attempts to convince them to join her do not work, she resigns herself to the task of killing them and attacks without restraint. The mindrot thralls in **Area 12** can sense when the queen is in danger and arrive in the throne room 1d4 rounds after combat starts.

The Mushroom Queen's dagger attack inflicts iumenta pox (see mold zombie in *Creature Codex*) if a creature hit by it fails a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. The Mushroom Queen's iumenta pox requires three successful saving throws to cure it, and a creature that dies from the disease rises as a **mindrot thrall** (see *Tome of Beasts*) instead of as a mold zombie.

AREA 11: MUSHROOM QUEEN'S BEDCHAMBER

This simply appointed room contains a plush canopy bed made of fungus with transparent drapes, also of fungus. A small, wooden desk with a mushroom stool beside it sits across from the bed. The desk contains parchment, quills, and ink. Several pieces of the parchment contain what appear to be various iterations of a royal emblem—the Mushroom Queen's attempts at creating her own seal in preparation for her establishment as a ruler in the Arbonesse.

Treasure. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a hidden compartment in the desk that holds a golden crown set with rubies and amethysts worth 150 gp.

AREA 12: THE POLLUTED POOL

The Mushroom Queen shoved the *Enoki Scepter* into the bottom of this stream-fed, muck-filled pool to keep it out of her enemies' hands and to give it time to recollect power. A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the scepter protruding just above the pool's surface. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the scepter has gone dormant, depleted of much of its magic. The Mushroom Queen used most of it in the creation of the Fungal Citadel.

After the Mushroom Queen achieved her greatest success by creating a pair of **mindrot thralls** (see *Tome of Beasts*), she placed them in this chamber to guard the weakened scepter. The creatures tried in vain to communicate their desire for closer proximity to her to protect her better, but she refused. She feels the scepter needs more protection than see does, and she feels it would be a sign of weakness if she entertained guests with a retinue of guards at her side. The creatures are linked to her though and make their way to her throne room (**Area 10**) if they sense she is in distress. They are also linked to the scepter and can sense when a creature other than the Mushroom Queen touches it.

Development. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check reveals a process for destroying the depleted scepter. A character who spends an hour studying the scepter has advantage on this check. To destroy the scepter, it must be exposed to 12 continual hours of sunlight and be dealt at least 10 radiant damage by the end of each hour. Destroying the scepter in this way causes the Fungal Citadel to dissolve and cures all creatures of any diseases inflicted by the Mushroom Queen.

Concluding the Adventure

If the *Enoki Scepter* is not destroyed, it goes into a period of dormancy for 50 years. The Arbonesse elves prefer to sequester the relic away to avoid possible misuse again. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces the elves to give the scepter to the PCs for study or eventual destruction. The afflicted villages are quarantined, and the infected die within a week as their fungus-covered bodies root themselves where they perish. The elves burn the affected villages to the ground after they are certain the disease no longer spreads.

If the PCs destroy the scepter, the villagers slowly return to normal and all signs of the Mushroom Queen's influence vanish within 24 hours.

If the PCs defeat the Mushroom Queen, the Arbonesse elves regard them favorably and allow them to travel the forest unchallenged. If the PCs also destroy the scepter and restore the living victims, the River Court names the PCs friends of the Arbonesse, and the PCs may be able to parlay this into a future favor from the court.

The Weft of Shadows becomes directly aware of the PCs' involvement, and it sends shadowy minions to harass or destroy its new enemies.

If the PCs bring a fungal growth from the *Enoki Scepter* to Daesanderena, she gives them the *gem of brightness*, as promised.

Run Like Hell

For 6th-Level Characters

This adventure takes place in and near the village of Rosedale (on the Rothenian Plain), south of the Wormwood, but can be adapted to any location near populations of centaurs and humans—and evil gnomes.

Adventure Background

The infernal gnomes of Niemheim look to expand their influence into the lands neighboring their holdings at their hellish masters' demands. While the gnomes have enacted several plans to claim the Rothenian Plain, they have made few inroads. One gnome cult, the Hellfire Runners, believes the physical power possessed by centaurs is the root of the problem. In the cultists' minds, the ability to best the centaurs physically will ensure free access to the plain. They devised a ritual to create a distorted version of the centaur, fusing gnome and hell hound. The ritual is imperfect and, after a few initial successes, resulted in the deaths of several of the cult's gnomes.

The cultists and surviving infernal centaurs moved onto the Rothenian Plain to test their might against the centaurs. They discovered they could pick off stragglers without much resistance, but they were overmatched by centaur tribes. Seeing the need for more of their number and reasoning that they were only a few tweaks away from perfecting the ritual, the gnomes decided to enact the ritual on the unwitting, who would serve as sacrifices rather than failed experiments. As fortune would have it, they found an abandoned and forgotten complex just south of the Wormwood from which they could kidnap and transform victims. Beyond the goal of consistently producing infernal centaurs, they also wish to merge larger humanoids with nightmares to create even more powerful versions.

The gnomes decided their failed attempts at ritually creating these creatures could serve the secondary purpose of promoting some mayhem, where they could foment dissent between centaurs and humans. Thus, on a recent morning, a farmer in the village of Rosedale made a gruesome discovery when he went to feed his horses: a corpse stitched together from a man's torso and a headless horse.

Adventure Hooks

The PCs might simply be passing through Rosedale on their way through the Rothenian Plain just as the tragedy is discovered. They may be investigating suspected cult activity, especially involving newly established villages seeking permanency. Or they might be investigating a rash of kidnappings among the Kariv and various settlements. Whatever the case, the PCs are on-hand shortly after the farmer stumbles on the grisly scene.

Investigation in Rosedale

Darash Ilvari found the body and immediately left the stables to lose his breakfast. He locked the building and refused to let anyone in. When asked, he gave the excuse that one of the horses had taken ill, and he didn't want to stress the animal. Unfortunately, rumors quickly spread that something horrible happened in the stables, and a crowd gathered. The villagers, including Darash, are fearful of entering and require a successful DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check to be coaxed into the stable to identify the human. The villagers don't recognize the victim and confirm the man is not an inhabitant of Rosedale.

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check notes the surgical skill used to sew the bodies together. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check finds small runes etched among the stitching, and a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check realizes the runes are Infernal.

If the PCs ask the villagers about who or what might have done this, many point to centaur bandits and discuss a wandering clan they have spotted near Rosedale recently. The villagers also worriedly suggest that one of their number who left the village to trade has been gone longer than expected.

A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check notices numerous unusual, dog-like tracks beside smaller humanoid tracks behind the stable, which the PCs can follow to the gnomes' lair. Failing that, the PCs can travel to the centaur clan's most recent location as indicated by the villagers.

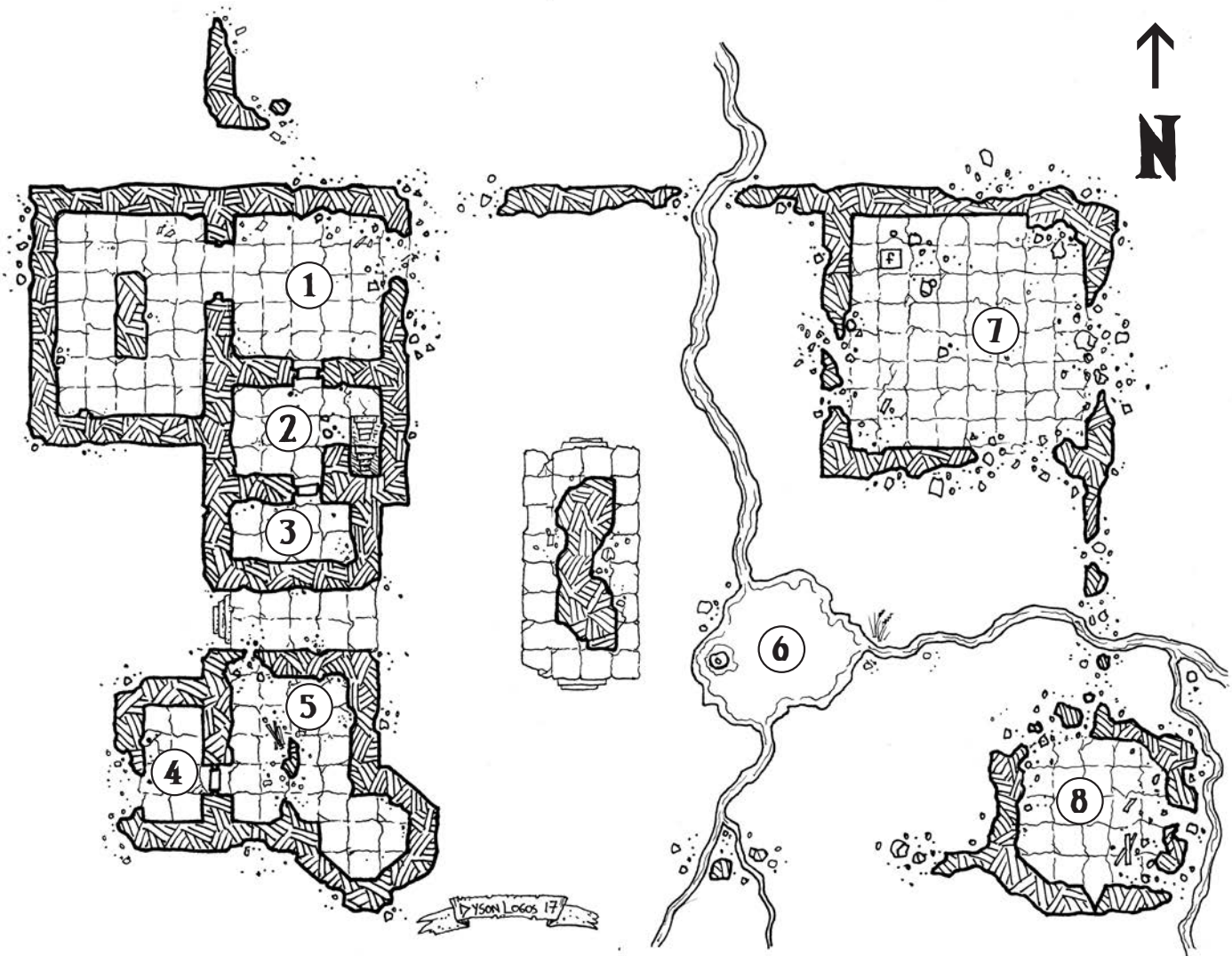
Local Centaurs

The PCs either track down the Khorval Clan based on the information they received in Rosedale, or the centaur clan intercepts the PCs as they follow the trail left by the gnomes. The clan has discovered additional grotesque corpses: one created from the torso of one human and the lower half of a different human sewn together and one with a horse's head attached to a human's lower body.

The clan's **centaur chieftain** (see *Creature Codex*), Gelban, and eight **centaurs** comprise the small nomadic clan. The awful discovery has them all on edge, and they are suspicious of the PCs. The discovery of four horseshoes next to the bodies gives them the false impression that "two-legs" from a nearby village are responsible for leaving the macabre homunculi. Many of them assume the PCs are there to complete the work.

A successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces the centaurs of the PCs' good intentions, and they stand down. They lead the PCs to where they found the corpses. Convinced the PCs were not involved, the more hot-headed centaurs among the clan wish to retaliate against Rosedale's populace, who they presume perpetrated this awful incident. A successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check sways Gelban to allow the PCs a chance to fully investigate the situation and exonerate Rosedale.

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check notes the surgical skill used to sew the bodies together and discovers the corpse is composed of two different humans. If the PCs inspected the body in Rosedale, this check also discerns that the lower half of the composite human is a match for the upper body found in Rosedale, while the upper body of the composite human and lower body of the reverse centaur are a match. If the PCs spent time talking to the villagers, they also realize the second human fits the description the villagers of Rosedale gave the PCs of the trader who left a few days ago. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check finds small runes etched among the



stitching similar to the runes on the body in the stable, and a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes the runes as Infernal.

A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check notices unusual dog-like tracks beside smaller humanoid tracks near the bodies, which the PCs can follow to the gnomes' lair.

The Infernal Ruin (Upper Level)

Wanderers of the Rothenian Plain give this compound a wide berth, owing to its terrible history and the general feeling of unease they get when approaching it. The site served as the temple to a now-forgotten deity. The ancient cult that once occupied the site was responsible for sacrificing hundreds of victims to a dread god before an order of knights razed the temple and slew every cultist they could find. Seemingly led here by their devil patron, the Hellfire Runners cult quickly made themselves at home in the abandoned temple. From this base of operations, they test their might against centaurs roaming the plain and kidnap wanderers for their horrific rituals.

AREA 1: TETHERED HORSES

Two **riding horses** and two **warhorses** are tied to a central post in the western portion of this adjoined chamber. The horses have the poisoned condition from sedatives the gnomes gave them to keep them quiet until they are needed for a transformation ritual. If untied, the horses slowly and quietly trot out of the area. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check guides the horses to the north, where they go unnoticed by the gnomes in the watchtower (**Area 8**). If the PCs release the horses, award them experience as if they had defeated the horses in combat.

AREA 2: THE WAY DOWN

A **gnomish knife cultist** (see *Creature Codex*) guards access to the library in **Area 3** and the nightmares in **Area 9**. If the watchtower's alarm has been raised, he summons a demon to attack intruders while attempting to attack from hiding.

AREA 3: LIBRARY

A haphazard array of books and parchment scrawled with diagrams fill this room. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check realizes that nearly all of the material in the library details a specific ritual: one which draws power from the Eleven Hells to merge two creatures into a composite creature considerably more powerful than the component creatures.

Treasure. Two books stand out. Ancient and dusty, they list the previous occupants' prayers to the cult's ancient deity, whose name is obscured in both texts despite all other words remaining intact. The gnomes intend to suss out the deity's identity to determine if it is aligned with their interests—but only after they perfect their transformation ritual. Despite the omitted name, the books are worth 500 gp in total to an interested collector.

AREA 4: FURROWED LOBBY

After their partial success in creating a centaur-like monstrosity rendered the creature insane, the gnomes dragged it through this room into **Area 5**. Deep furrows scar the floor of the room, leading to the door, evidence of the creature's struggle as the gnomes dragged it. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check hears labored breathing from the other side of the door.

Barred and Locked Door. The door to **Area 5** is barred from this side and locked. Removing the iron rod barring the door requires no effort while a successful DC 13 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the lock.

AREA 5: CRAZED CENTAUR

The gnomes successfully created an infernal human-horse hybrid from a kidnapped farmer and his horse, but their creation went insane. The gnomes managed to partially subdue the beast and drag it here where they could leave it and decide later on its fate. While they hope they can convince the centaur to maraud outside the compound, they realize they may have to put the beast down.

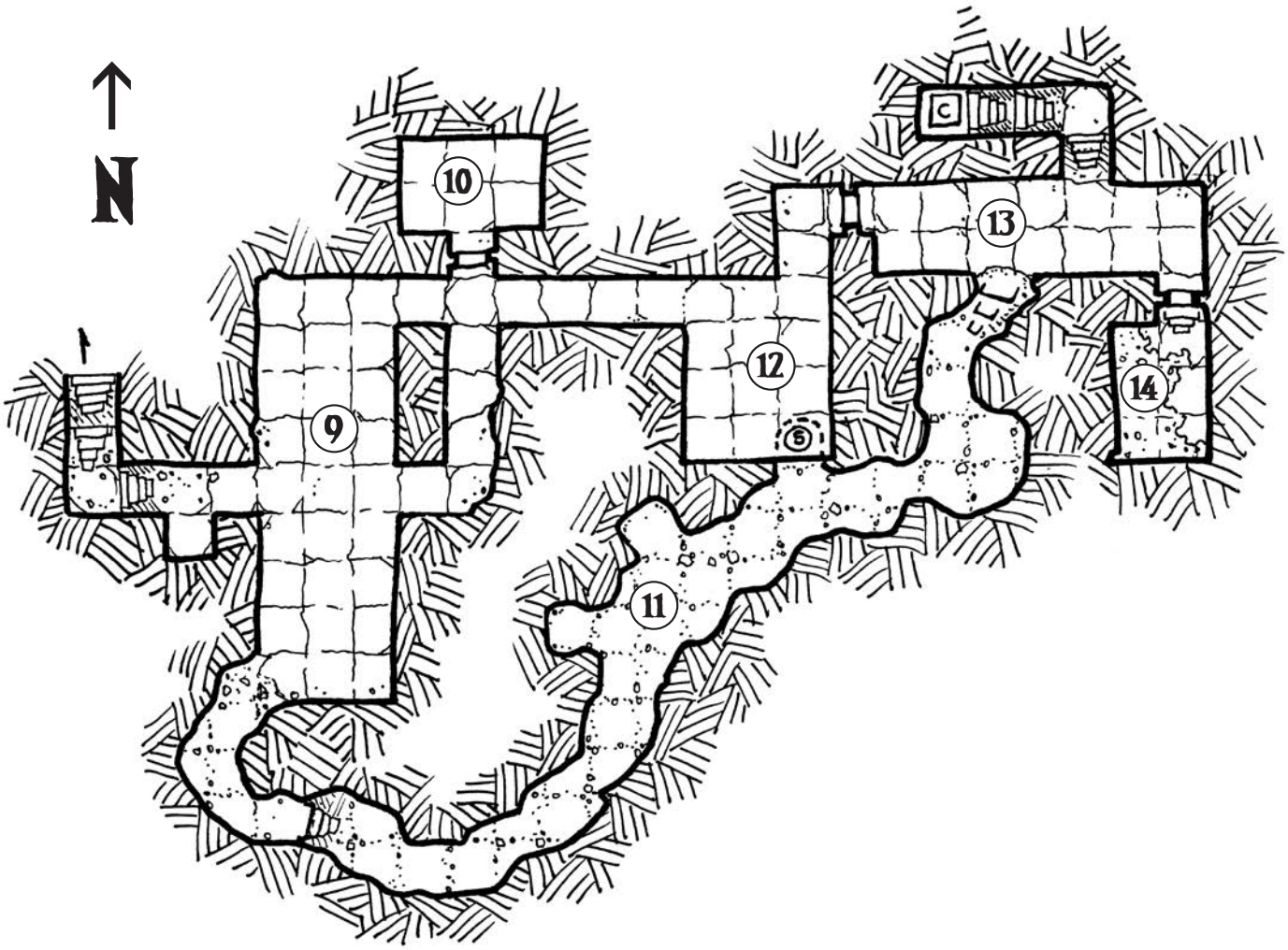
In its madness, the **centaur** (with no pike or longbow) can make a melee weapon attack as a bonus action on its turn.

AREA 6: DISPOSAL LAKE

The gnomes dump the bodies of their failed rituals in this lake, mostly to despoil the stream feeding the nearby plain. The lake currently holds the remains of two hell hounds, one riding horse, two gnomes, and three humans.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using **Status** (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs defeat the cult, the PCs gain +1 to their Status with the inhabitants of the Rothenian Plains that are not aligned with Niemheim and −2 to their Status with the gnomes of Niemheim and their allies. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.



Treasure. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers a jeweled gold ring worth 500 gp accidentally dumped with one of the bodies.

AREA 7: DEBRIS-STREWN ROOM

The gnomes left this room empty to divert suspicion away from the concealed trapdoor (labeled *F* on the map).

Stuck and Hidden Trapdoor. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check locates the trapdoor. Alternatively, the PCs can discover the trapdoor by spending 20 minutes, clearing the rubble from the room. The trapdoor, which the gnomes do not use, has warped in place. A successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check pulls open the stuck trapdoor.

AREA 8: WATCHTOWER

Four gnome **cult fanatics** inhabit the remains of this tall tower. Two of them keep watch in all directions while the other two relax or sleep below. If the watchers notice the PCs approaching, one of them rings a clapperless bell, triggering a magical, audible alarm that sounds throughout the compound, while the other descends the tower wall to rouse their compatriots and attack intruders.

If the PCs manage to sneak into the compound, a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check allows a PC to climb to the top of the watchtower to reach the gnomes. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 13) cast on the bell destroys the alarm. On a failed check, the alarm sounds. A *silence* spell or similar magic also quiets the alarm.

The Butchery (Lower Level)

The lower section of the cultists' temple remained relatively untouched when the main complex fell to the knights. It holds remnants of the previous inhabitants' activities in the form of rusted sacrificial knives and blood stains turned rust-colored with the passage of time.

Illumination. Unless otherwise noted, all areas are bathed in darkness.

AREA 9: NIGHTMARE HALL

Two **nightmares** pace this relatively confined room, awaiting their turn at transformation at the behest of the cult's patron. The creatures have no fear of dying as they serve their infernal patron loyally. However, they don't intend to sacrifice themselves to the PCs for the cult's sake and use Ethereal Stride to flee when reduced to 13 or fewer hit points.

AREA 10: SURGICAL PREP

The gnomes perform surgery in this chamber. A couple of hooks hold headless torsos of victims who proved unviable for their rituals. A tray has a neatly arranged set of cutting implements, including an array of razor-sharp scalpels—one of which is a *thirsting scalpel* (see **Appendix**).

Two poisoned and unconscious **commoners** are propped up against a wall, sedated similarly to the horses in **Area 1**. The PCs can easily awaken them, and though a bit groggy, they both act thankful at being rescued. However, one of the commoners volunteered for the transformation ritual as a way to escape a dull life and is actually disappointed at the PCs' intrusion. A successful DC 9 Wisdom (Insight) check uncovers this fact.

AREA 11: SUBTERRANEAN TEMPLE

A **spree demon** (see *Creature Codex*), drawn to the carnage, claims this tunnel. An eroded effigy to the deity to which the temple was formerly sanctified holds its attention. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check hears its strange mutterings before the demon notices the PCs.

Maddening Statue. The effigy's worn state makes it difficult to discern any details about the deity, but the PCs can make out the remains of whorls and eyes carved all over the statue. If a PC spends more than 1 round inspecting the statue, the PC must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be afflicted with a short-term madness for 1 minute. If an affected PC hits an unaffected creature, that creature must also succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be afflicted with a short-term madness for 1 minute. A creature so afflicted with a short-term madness can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

A PC that spends 2 rounds inspecting the statue and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check realizes the deity is an ancient god of insanity.

AREA 12: STOREROOM

The gnomes keep barrels of potable water and crates of dry rations here. Black candles, chalk, salt, and other minor ritual implements sit on shelves around the room.

AREA 13: INFERNAL ANTECHAMBER

The gnomes anoint themselves here for the ritual before entering the ritual room (**Area 14**). The landing beyond the first flight of stairs leading north out of this chamber holds jars of oil that smell of brimstone. The trapdoor in the ceiling (labeled *C* on the map) leads to **Area 7** above and is easily noticeable from here. A successful DC 14 Strength check forces open the stuck trapdoor.

A **bearded devil** contracted by the gnomes keeps watch here and prevents unauthorized creatures from entering the ritual room. If the alarm sounds (see **Area 8** above), the devil attempts to hide, so it can ambush intruders.

Locked Door. The ritual room is locked when not in use or when the gnomes are forced to use it as a redoubt (which is the case if the alarm sounds in **Area 8**). A successful DC 16 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the lock.

AREA 14: RITUAL ROOM

Blood smears the floor and walls of this chamber, which is lit by black candles and glowing runes inscribed in the floor. Regardless of whether the two gnome **cult fanatics** and two **infernal centaurs** (see **Appendix**) have been alerted to the PCs' presence, they occupy this chamber. If they haven't been alerted, they are in the middle of their ritual, wherein they have begun to graft the upper body of a human to the headless body of a nightmare. The illumination is dim light thanks to the ritual candles. If they have been alerted, they snuff the candles and await creatures attempting to force entry into the chamber.

Concluding the Adventure

Assuming the PCs defeat the gnomes, the situation settles down to normalcy in Rosedale and among the Khorval Clan. If the PCs established amicable relationships with the villagers of Rosedale and the Khorval centaurs, they have the opportunity to broker a deal between the two factions. The PCs are also welcome among the centaur clan and within the village, which could benefit the PCs in future excursions to the Rothenian Plain.

Regardless of the gnomes' fate, details of the ritual have spread beyond their cohort. If the PCs wish to end the gnomes' diabolical tampering with nature, they may decide to search for, and attempt to destroy, existing copies of the ritual.

The gnome cult's fiendish sponsor is aware of the PCs' intervention in their schemes. Depending on their ire with the meddlers and their level of patience, they enact schemes against the troublemaking PCs at some point in the future.

Ill-Met by Moonlight

For 7th-Level Characters

This adventure takes place in and around Keep Aunun (in the Grand Duchy of Dornig), in the nearby eastern Arbonesse Forest, and in the Shadow Realm, but it can be adapted to any location where the fey hold influence.

Adventure Background

A gateway to the Shadow Realm, lost during the Black Sorceress's Revolt, has returned to Midgard. The gateway reveals a fragment of the shadow road and its missing watchhouse, once used by the Courts of the Shadow Fey. This reappearance is not yet well known in the courts, and certain individuals are taking advantage of its return.

The esteemed Lady Madaera D'Faucon fell into disfavor with the queen due to her transmutation research, too similar to the twisted magic of Her Majesty's husband and rival, the Moonlit King. Akyishigal, a demon lord, heard of the conflict and sought to sow further discontent between the queen and her lady. Akyshigal informed Madaera of the watchhouse and the vulnerable mortals living nearby. Madaera fled the courts in anger to continue her research on kidnapped Dornitian citizens living near Keep Aunun.

Adventure Hooks

Keep Aunun is the seat of a domain in the Grand Duchy of Dornig that borders the eastern Arbonesse Forest. It is well known for its farmland, cattle, and horses. The keep itself marks the western edge of the small town of approximately 2,000 citizens. The residents are distressed by nighttime kidnappings that have resulted in over a dozen people missing. Lord Roth Cereck Aunun, ruler of the area, has offered a reward of 2,500 gp to anyone who can end the abductions.

Keep Aunun

Entering town, the adventurers hear the angry voices of a mob of humans and halflings surrounding a shadow fey dressed in stylish clothing. If the PCs investigate, they learn that **shadow fey** (see *Tome of Beasts*) were seen in the area just prior to the kidnappings. The mob is convinced that the fey, Aspera, is hiding something. Aspera insists that she is not involved and appears amused by the furious mortals.

If the PCs intervene, the crowd can be dispersed with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Grateful, Aspera then requests to speak with the PCs privately and cryptically offers to share information if the PCs meet her in the forest at midnight. If the PCs do not intervene, Aspera turns invisible and escapes. She later sends Coban, a **stryx** (see *Tome of Beasts*), with this meeting request.

The Shadow Road

If the PCs approach the forest at midnight, Aspera and Coban emerge from the trees to greet them. Aspera informs the party that she is an agent of the **Queen of Night and Magic** (see *Tome of Beasts*) and has been sent to investigate a rogue member of the court who acts against Her Majesty's wishes. Aspera shares her suspicion that, although Lady Madaera is likely behind these kidnappings, another faction of the courts may be acting against the queen in this matter. Aspera explains calmly that, together with the PCs, they may be able to rescue the mortals. She offers to show the party how to enter the Shadow Realm and find the watchhouse while she continues her investigation in the mortal realm. Aspera suggests sending the stryx, Coban, along to report to her if help is needed. Although smiling, Aspera's manner is cool. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that she does not care about the mortals.

If the PCs agree, Aspera describes a hidden shadow road southwest of Keep Aunun, accessible only under moonlight. She informs them that blood must be spilled to open the road: each individual must take 5 damage, whether self-inflicted or otherwise. Upon this action, the environment changes—the moon and stars fade away, and a broken road leads west into the forest. In the distance, a structure looms, indistinct in the mist. A DC 10 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check reveals trails of blood that can be followed to the structure's southeast entrance.

Unknown to the PCs, Aspera is not interested in investigating the mortal realm and follows the PCs at a distance. She waits outside for Coban to report on their progress, hoping they will clear the building, so she may investigate the watchhouse safely after their probable deaths. Although the stryx is a serious investigator, he

babbles jovially and feigns clumsiness. Coban monitors the party and feigns cowardice when the party is confronted by danger.

Watchhouse Exterior

The watchhouse lies just to the west of the shadow road. The building is a forbidding structure of black stone with two clear glass domes on the roof. The southeast and northeast entrances are visible. There are no windows. A character searching the exterior walls for secret doors can discover a door along the north wall that leads directly to the gardens (**Area 11**) with a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) check.

Illumination. All rooms in the watchhouse are in darkness except where noted.

Sounds. Sounds have difficulty penetrating the watchhouse's black stone. Perception checks based on sound have disadvantage.

Players will be able to take a short rest in most rooms since the creatures do not leave their posts unless indicated in the room descriptions.

AREA 1: SOUTHEAST ENTRANCE

Two short stairs lead to doors separated by the southeast corner of the watchhouse. A statue of a shadow fey woman, carved of black obsidian, stands between the stairs, its arms broken off. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies the statue as the Queen of Night and Magic. The eyes of the statue appear to follow the adventurers as they move. A successful DC 16 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check will unlock either door.

AREA 2: NORTHEAST ENTRANCE

The northeast stairs lead to a set of massive double doors that are barred from the inside. The doors can be forced open with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check, which reveals a small vestibule with similarly barred doors that lead into the keep.

AREA 3: SOUTHEAST ENTRANCE INTERIOR

A pressure plate just inside the doors triggers a **poison darts** trap. Setting off the trap summons the two **shadow fey guardians** (see *Tome of Beasts*) to **Area 6**.

AREA 4: LIBRARY

Largely empty bookshelves are inset into the southern walls. A **rug of smothering** sits in the middle of the room, and it attacks the first non-fiend or non-shadow fey creature that steps on it. A **shadow fey guardian** (see *Tome of Beasts*) rests in the room unless called to **Area 6** by the party's actions. A successful DC 15 Wisdom Intelligence (Investigation) check finds an *spell scroll of call shadow mastiff* (see **Appendix**) on the shelves.

AREA 5: BEDROOM

Cockroaches, centipedes, and other insects crawl over the rotting beds. A **spawn of Akyishigal** (see *Tome of Beasts*) and two **roachling lords** (see *Tome of Beasts*) inhabit this room and will defend it to their deaths. PCs see an unholy symbol displayed on a dresser. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) or Wisdom (Religion) check reveals the symbol belongs to **Akyishigal, the Demon Lord of Cockroaches** (see *Tome of Beasts*).

AREA 6: INTERIOR HALLWAY

Two **shadow fey guardians** (see *Tome of Beasts*) are summoned to this location (from **Area 4** and **Area 10**) if the adventurers set off the trap in **Area 3** or engaged the gnarljak in **Area 9**. They will immediately attack intruders. The two doors to the east and the door to the west are locked. A successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check will unlock each door.

AREA 7: SCRYING CHAMBER

A large basin of clear water, radiating divination magic, is set into the floor. If studied, an image of the shadow road outside the watchhouse appears as if using the *scrying* spell. If a character further examines the image, they experience the sensor moving as if they were running down the shadow road. This experience is draining; a character who views the image must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or receive one level of exhaustion.

AREA 8: ARMORY

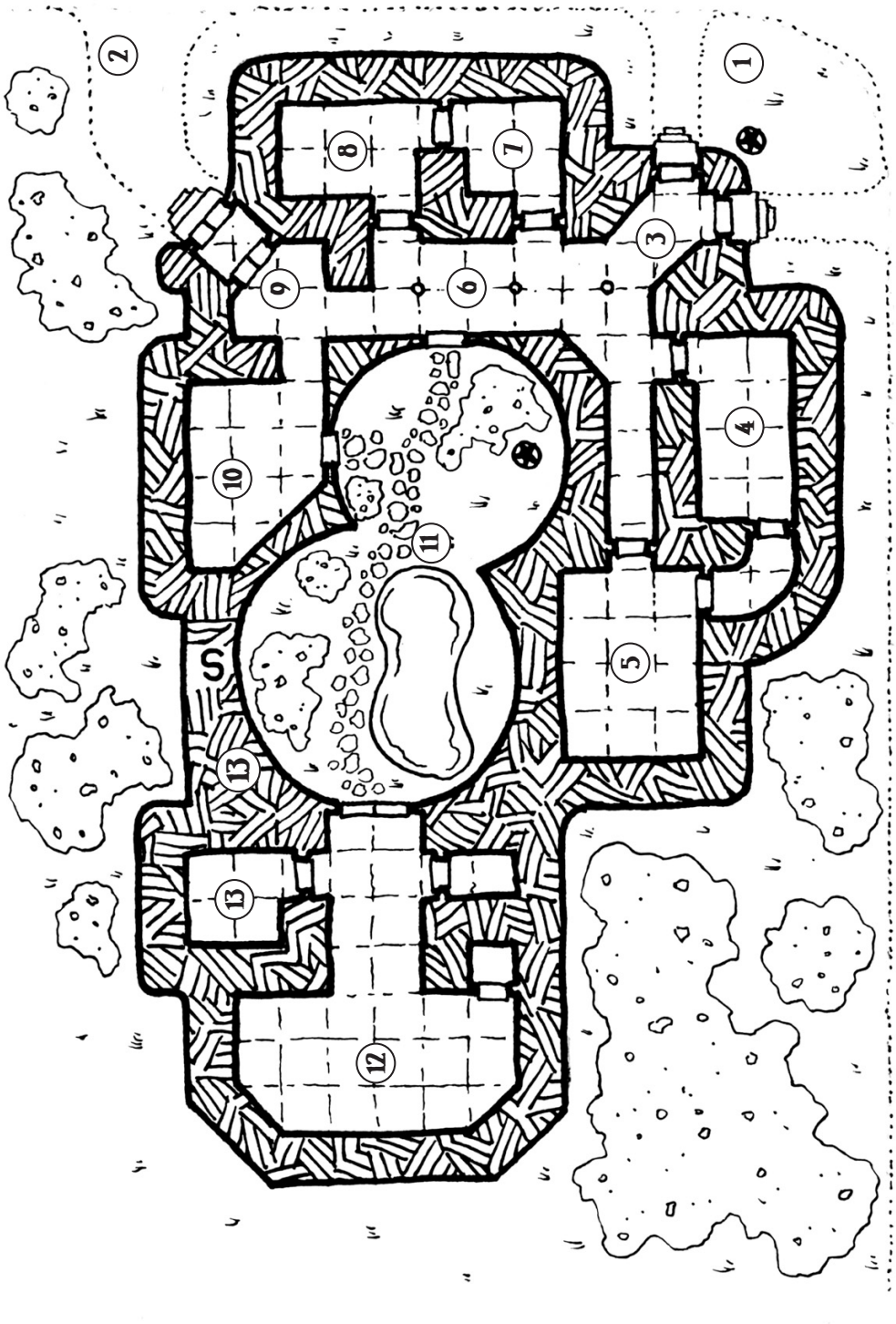
Largely empty weapon racks and armor stands fill the room. A breastplate and shield of dark metal sit on one stand. A massive ornamental boomerang is the only weapon that remains on a rack.

AREA 9: THE NORTHEAST ENTRANCE INTERIOR

A rusted **gnarljak** (see *Tome of Beasts*, changing AC to 14, the Gnaw action to allow only one additional attack against prone opponents, and CR to 5) is chained to the floor next to the inner set of doors. It cannot move farther than 10 feet from this position. Engaging the gnarljak summons the two shadow fey guardians to **Area 6**.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using **Status** (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs end Madaera's research and report the Akyishigal symbol to Aspera, the PCs gain +1 to their Status with the Queen of Night and Magic and her allies within the Court of the Shadow Fey. If the PCs save the citizens, they gain +1 to their Status with residents of Dornig. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.



AREA 10: ZENO'S APOTHECARY

A **shadow fey guardian** (see *Tome of Beasts*) is found in this room unless earlier called to **Area 6**. A large immovable cabinet covers the northern wall with drawers of herbs harvested from the adjacent garden. The cabinet radiates transmutation magic, and each drawer has multiple compartments and false bottoms.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a random alchemical item: a dose of poison, alchemist's fire, or acid. The first search takes 15 minutes. Each successful successive search by an individual reveals another item, but it takes twice as long as the previous search. An audible magical alarm sounds throughout the keep after three successful searches in a single day. The cabinet can be used as an herbalism or alchemical kit.

AREA 11: GARDENS

The twilight sky of the Shadow Realm is visible through the two large glass domes, illuminating the overgrown foliage and pond of steaming black waters that heat the room. A **chimera** guards this area, attacking any creature that enters without Madaera. An **eala** (see *Tome of Beasts*) swims lazily, calm unless attacked first. If any creature steps within 5 feet of the locked western doors, an *alarm* spell silently notifies Madaera, and the eala grows audibly agitated. The eala attacks the following round unless a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check is made, allowing the adventurers to pass into **Area 12** without violence. A successful DC 10 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check will unlock the door to **Area 12**.

AREA 12: LABORATORY

At the far wall, a nobly dressed woman stands at a table covered gruesomely with various bloody creature limbs. **Lady Madaera** (see **Appendix**) wears a *brooch of shielding*, and if notified by an alarm, she prepares by casting *mage armor* and *false life*. Madaera begins combat by commanding a hybrid manbear (**polar bear**, adding darkvision 60 ft. and changing size to Medium and type to monstrosity), the result of her latest experiment, to attack the party. Overconfident, Madaera attempts to incapacitate the party, so she can use them in her research later. Madaera will cast *polymorph* and *telekinesis* on party members when possible. The door to **Area 13** is locked with *arcane lock*. A successful DC 25 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check is required to pick the lock, or a successful DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check is needed to break the door open. Otherwise, the party must destroy the door to free the prisoners.

AREA 13: PRISON

This room, once used for storage, currently imprisons nine terrified humanoids: five humans and four halflings survived. Upon being released from their bonds, they are excited and relieved to return to their homes on the outskirts of Keep Aunun.

Concluding the Adventure

As the PCs exit the watchhouse, they are stopped by a pleasantly surprised Aspera. If the PCs end Madaera's research and report the Akyishigal symbol to Aspera, they will have the gratitude of the queen—and Akyishigal will hold a grudge against the party. If the PCs saved the citizens, they will receive the gratitude of the duke and his people, plus the reward money.



OUT OF PHASE

For 7th-Level Characters

This adventure takes place in the hills near Lake Jingar (on the Rothenian Plain), but it can be adapted to any location set in the hills or plains.

Adventure Background

A solar eclipse approaches, and a fiend plots to give the Moonlit King a foothold in Midgard. Recently, a meteorite fell in the hills near Lake Jingar on the Rothenian Plain. A group of druids from across the plain made a pilgrimage to the crash site to investigate the auspicious omen. Seeing an opportunity to curry favor with the Moonlit King, a lunar devil named Palus stalked the assembly and began to twist the minds of the fearful druids. Under the fiend's influence, the druids banded together to form a lunar druid circle, intent on drawing in the moon's power. The druids erected a compound around the crash site and now unknowingly prepare a ritual that will tear open a gate to the Shadow Realm.

Adventure Hooks

Here are some ways to involve PCs in this adventure:

- Several druids from across the Rothenian Plain traveled to investigate the meteorite, and none have returned. One of the affected communities asks the PCs to locate their missing druid (see more information about these druids in **Playing the Druids**).
- A traveling merchant named Zara Suresh claims a powerful item was stolen from her private collection. She has sent messages to major settlements across the plain, asking capable adventurers to meet her in the hills by Lake Jingar for more details.
- Since the flaming rock fell from the sky, the hills in the region around Lake Jingar have begun to grow unnaturally dark, as if the sun's light doesn't fully reach the ground. Locals are concerned and are in need of a group willing to investigate the cause.
- One of the wise hermits of the plain seeks out the PCs. The hermit reports ominous dreams of evil growing in the hills by Lake Jingar. The hermit warns that if the PCs do not stop it, the region will come under attack. The hermit does not have any more specific information but pleads for the PCs to investigate.

Growing Dark

This adventure begins as the PCs arrive at the hills surrounding Lake Jingar. They encounter a spirited trader named Zara, who has a curious story to tell. After speaking with her, the PCs must head into unnatural darkness and locate the mysterious compound among the hills.

WHEN BEARS FLY

As the PCs near the hills, read the following:

Though there is no smell of smoke, the sky over the area around Lake Jingar is dark and hazy. A small encampment sits just outside this perimeter of darkness, consisting of two wooden trade wagons on either side of a circle of red tents.

This camp belongs to Zara Suresh, a human who brokers trades across the plains. Zara is a self-proclaimed "acquisitions expert" and prides herself on being able to locate any item (for an appropriate fee, of course). Zara also keeps a personal collection of acquired curiosities, and one of these was stolen from her a couple of days ago.

Zara welcomes travelers into her camp, eager to hire anyone capable enough to solve her problem. Zara invites them to sit around the fire as she explains her plight:

"Two days ago, I awoke to the sound of something tearing apart one of the wagons. As I rushed out of my tent, I saw the thief making off with my mirror. I know this sounds odd, but… the thief was a massive, flying bear."

Zara is telling the truth. She witnessed a bear, accompanied by a swarm of owls, carry off her prized mirror. After the shock had passed, Zara discovered her mercenary guards were dead, their skin blistered by some kind of spell. She rallied the rest of her group as fast as she could and pursued the flying thieves. Even after they lost sight of the bear, the caravan continued onward, hoping to find a clue to their quarry's destination. They eventually ran into this curtain of darkness and decided to put out the call for a better-armed group to investigate further.

Lyra Ironhide (see **Playing the Druids**), in the form of a bear, and a swarm of conjured birds were the culprits. A **lunar devil** (see *Tome of Beasts*) was also present

during the robbery, but it stayed hidden from Zara.

If asked further questions about her encounter, Zara knows the following:

- The bear was massive, unlike any naturally occurring species in the region. It did not have wings, but it was still able to fly. Both the bear and the birds seemed more intelligent than average animals.
- Zara does not know the full properties of the *phase mirror* (see **Appendix**) stolen from her. However, she knows that it is a rare and ancient object that is used in rituals as an arcane focus. She spent a lot of money and effort liberating it from the ruins of a wizard's tower.
- Whatever the darkness effect is, it is getting worse. The terrain has continued to darken over the past few hours, and the radius seems to be slowly expanding.
- Her hired guards died from some type of magical burn. They were covered in blisters, but no flame source was evident, and no objects were damaged.



Zara answers all the questions she can before asking the PCs to recover her mirror. If her mirror is returned to her unharmed, she offers them 6,000 gp worth of gems and art objects. If the PCs seem hesitant, Zara also impresses that if they accept she will owe them a favor. Zara has many connections across Midgard, and a favor from her is undoubtedly worth more than any sum of gold.

If the PCs accept the job, she is happy to offer them the hospitality of her camp.

ZARA'S CAMP

If the PCs decide to rest at Zara's camp before investigating further, Zara introduces them to her crew. Here is a list of her companions:

- A fiery male kobold named Thim Thom serves as Zara's appraiser. Thim Thom possesses an uncanny ability to appraise any object correctly. He has served Zara loyally since she first offered him a job, freeing him from a hard and dull life in Zobeck's mines.
- An elven sorcerer named Tessadora serves as Zara's arcane specialist. Tessadora is a brooding woman, but she has an incredible talent for predicting if trouble is nearby. Tessadora is very distracted by the shadows beyond camp and doesn't engage with newcomers.
- A gigantic man named Olin handles the heavy lifting around camp (and strikes a highly intimidating figure). He is so large, it is hard to identify if he is the largest human in existence or the tiniest giant. Olin also has a slight tinge of blue to his otherwise pale skin. If asked directly about his heritage, Olin cracks jokes and diverts the conversation to other topics.
- Zara's 7-year-old son, Amir, also travels with the band. He is bright and has a penchant for liberating small treasures from people's pockets.

- Zara has hired a Rothenian centaur named Androos to guide the group as they travel around the plains. Androos stands apart from the others, but he is approachable. He knows a great deal about the terrain and politics of the Rothenian Plain.

Zara and her crew are accustomed to a nomadic lifestyle, so they are well supplied and can offer the PCs any standard equipment needed.

After the theft, the band is down to only two wagons, which are now reserved for equipment. They can offer extra bedrolls or tents if the PCs wish to rest before seeking out the mirror.

TRAVEL TO THE COMPOUND

The hills surrounding the compound are not difficult to traverse, but finding the exact location of the compound may prove a challenge.

For every half hour the PCs spend searching the hills, they must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check. On a success, they locate the compound. On a failure, they must search for another half hour. After 2 hours have passed, the PCs automatically locate the compound.

If you would like to increase the difficulty of the search, roll a d20 and consult the **Dark Hills Encounters** table (see below) every 10 minutes they travel.

Compound of the Moon

The Compound of the Moon surrounds the crashed meteor site. The druids have taken advantage of the natural cliffs and crater ridges, using their magic to shape the formations into an ideal structure. Most of the compound is open to the sky, allowing the druids to continually bathe in the moonlight that fuels their power.

APPROACHING THE COMPOUND

The hills bottom out here, creating a small valley. A structure formed of raised black stone sits at the center of the valley. The growing atmosphere of darkness hangs most heavily over the structure, which appears to be faintly glowing.

The druids crafted their compound here, so they could spot any intruders coming from a healthy distance. They built a watchtower on the compound, and PCs that don't conceal their approach are spotted long before they reach their destination.

SPOTTED

If the PCs are detected approaching the compound, the watching druid alerts Palus to the unwelcome visitors.

The **lunar devil** flies from the compound to attack the PCs. Due to the darkness, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check is required to spot the devil before it descends. When Palus is reduced to half its hit points or fewer, it spends its next actions retreating to the compound at full speed.

If the devil successfully flees, it warns Lyra to start the ritual immediately, and the 1-hour timer begins (see **Ritual Countdown**).

Devil Tactics. When attacking the PCs, the devil employs cunning and deception. If it successfully sneaks up on the group, it cloaks itself with *greater invisibility* before attacking. The devil uses a *wall of ice* to separate the PCs from each other and swoops through the skies to rain down attacks from above.

DARK HILLS ENCOUNTERS

d20	LOCATION AND TACTICS
1–14	No encounter occurs.
15	The PCs are ambushed. A group of five **bandits** and one **bandit captain** spring from a concealed trench and attack the PCs. PCs with a passive Perception of 15 or higher are not surprised by the attack.
16	Loud shrieks echo around the PCs as five **swarms of bats** descend upon them. The creatures are confused and hostile due to the unnatural shift in the atmosphere. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check diverts the ire of the swarms.
17	The PCs encounter a pair of **centaurs**, also searching the landscape. The centaurs ask if the PCs have learned anything about what is causing the darkness. The centaurs are not interested in sharing their names or anything they have discovered in their search. If the PCs act hostile toward them, they flee.
18	The PCs spot a hilltop swarming with hundreds of fireflies. If they push through the surging swarm, they find a *stone of good luck* lying in the tall grass.
19	The PCs hear a pained cry and snarling just over the next hill. If they investigate, they see three **dire wolves** circling in on a wounded deer. If the PCs attract any attention, the deer escapes, and the hungry wolves turn to attack the PCs.
20	A **will-o'-wisp** appears one hilltop over. It attempts to lead the PCs to a hidden cave carved into a hillside. If they step inside, they are attacked by the ten **shadows** that dwell within.

PLAYING THE DRUIDS

The newly formed lunar druid circle is deeply misguided by the devil's influence. These druids of different races and cultures are all assembled at the meteorite crash site to investigate the strange omen. Most possessed the best of intentions, aiming to discover what they could before reporting back to each of their communities with news.

Palus manipulated their concern and persuaded them this crash is a sign that the natural balance of the cosmos is in peril. Palus listened to the fears of each druid and encouraged paranoid connections between troubling current events. Ultimately, Palus convinced them a new kind of druid was necessary to restore the cosmic balance. The devil offered the druids a way to harness the power of the moon and stars to become champions that guard against evils to come.

The devil then told the druids of a powerful object called the *phase mirror* and explained that one such mirror must be acquired to harness the real power of the cosmic web. The frightened druids eagerly listened and swore themselves to the devil's plot.

In addition to their leader Lyra, six druids form the lunar circle. Here is a list of the druids and from where around the Rothenian Plain they originally hail:

- Enosso, a human from Misto Kolis.
- Irinna, a centaur of Clan Morav.
- Murook, a trollkin hermit.
- Flick, a ravenfolk from Vidim.
- Anders, a winterfolk halfling from Domovogrod.
- Brigita, a human from the Kariv Sergin family.

Hardship is common amongst the factions of the plains, and each of these druids has allowed their people's misfortune to weigh heavily upon them. This empathy has made them all easy prey for the devil.

Each druid arrived at the meteorite site with their traveling equipment, which they still use. Each druid wears a piece of the meteorite around their neck to serve as a grim reminder of the circle's purpose.

LYRA IRONHIDE

A bearfolk druid named **Lyra Ironhide** (see **Appendix**) was unanimously elected the leader of this lunar circle. Lyra hails from the northern kingdom of Bjeornheim but has spent the past decade wandering Midgard, looking for purpose. She happened to be traveling through the Rothenian Plain when she saw the meteorite fall to Midgard. She, like the other druids, viewed the fall as a dark omen and went to investigate.

As Palus initially observed the group of druids, it determined that Lyra's strength and charisma made her the most suitable vehicle for its purposes. The devil concentrated its corruption most heavily on Lyra, whispering that it, like herself, was a creature of the moon, and they must work together to keep balance.

Lyra absorbed the fiend's lies and played a hearty role rallying the other druids behind its plan. With the devil's instruction, she led the others to officially form the lunar circle, to build the compound, and to steal the *phase mirror*. She now prepares the circle to conduct the ritual of power, which is scheduled to conclude right as the eclipse occurs.

Lyra does not view her actions as evil, and she truly believes this ritual is necessary to protect the balance of the cosmos. She is sharp, well-spoken, and possesses a magnetic personality that draws others to her. Lyra gives frequent sermons on the natural world, the power of the stars, and the role druids must play in preserving the natural order of the cosmos.

RITUAL COUNTDOWN

The moment the characters enter the compound, the ritual of opening a gate to the Shadow Realm begins. In 1 hour, the eclipse occurs, and the ritual is complete. The PCs have only that hour to stop the ritual, or they, and the entire compound, phase to the Shadow Realm.

Over the hour, the compound begins to change. As part of the preparations, Lyra has woven a series of magical constellations through the stone walls of the compound. The constellations glow gradually brighter as the *phase mirror* absorbs more energy. The change is gradual, but the intensity of the glow alerts the PCs to how much more time they have.

To stop the ritual, the PCs must either destroy the *phase mirror* or remove it from the compound grounds. One of these goals must be achieved before the hour is up, or the PCs fail.

COMPOUND FEATURES

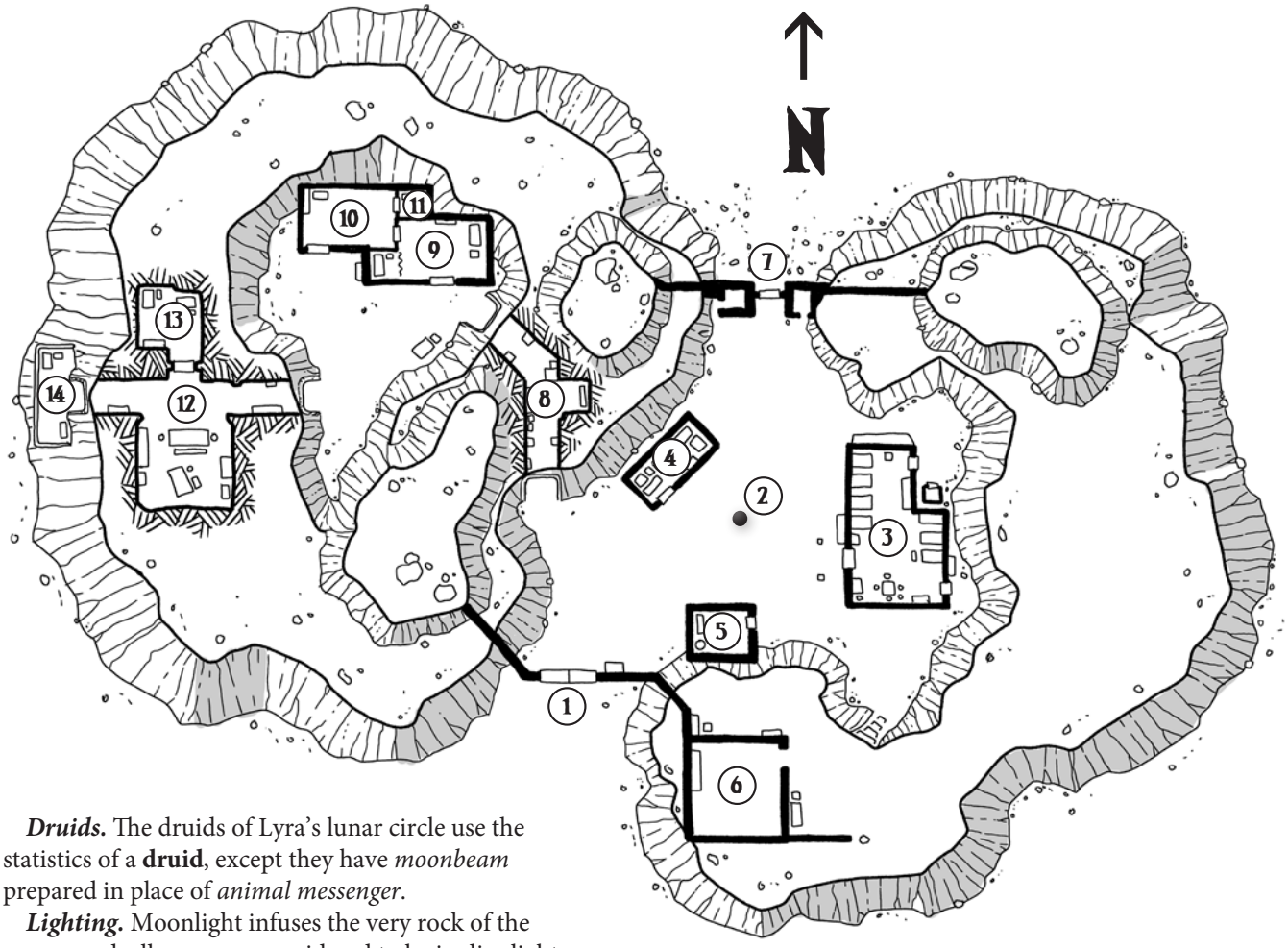
The compound is formed from roughhewn rock, and it contains very few buildings. The dark sky above and the glowing patterns adorning the walls create a surreal atmosphere within the compound walls.

Ceilings. Where the compound is not open to the sky, the roofs are made of shaped stone and stand 10 feet tall.

Doors. Unless specified otherwise, doors of the compound are composed of thin wood with no locks.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using Status (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs stop the cultists from finishing their ritual, the PCs gain +1 to their Status with residents of the Rothenian Plain. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.



Druids. The druids of Lyra's lunar circle use the statistics of a **druid**, except they have *moonbeam* prepared in place of *animal messenger*.

Lighting. Moonlight infuses the very rock of the compound; all areas are considered to be in dim light.

Moonlit Night. Regardless of whether it is day or night when the PCs enter the region, the compound is cast in moonlight, allowing the druids and the lunar devil to use certain traits and features.

AREA 1: LUNAR GATES

Depictions of phases of the moon adorn opalescent gates set into the rock. There are no handles on this door.

These gates are the only visible entrance to the compound. The only way to open the gates is to touch them with the *moonbeam* spell (or other moon-related spell or feature, at your discretion). The druids rarely use these gates, but they employ them as an extra defense against outsiders. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check determines what magic is necessary to open the door. A druid or a creature with some association to the moon, such as a cleric who worships a deity of the moon, has advantage on this check.

If the PCs don't have the means to open the gates, the exterior rock walls of the compound are 20 feet high and can be scaled with a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check.

AREA 2: COURTYARD

The ground is marred by a large crater. A small boulder rests at the center of the shattered depression. It glints silver in the dim light. Several roughhewn buildings surround the crash site.

This area is the compound's central courtyard. It is also the crash site of the meteorite that initially drew the druids here.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check determines the meteorite is composed of a type of rock not found on Midgard.

The buildings surrounding the crater are the barracks (**Area 3**), the owl roost (**Area 4**), and the outhouse (**Area 5**).

Treasure. The meteorite is composed of soft rock and is easy to break apart. A palm-sized chunk of the extraterrestrial rock is worth 50 gp to the right buyer. With 1 hour of work, the meteorite can be reduced to twenty palm-sized chunks.

AREA 3: BARRACKS

This large room contains cots and trunks. Thick pelts cover the walls and floor. An open skylight is cut into the ceiling, bathing everything in a dim glow.

There are currently two **druids** in this room. If the PCs were spotted on the way to the compound, these druids are awake and attack intruders immediately. Otherwise, the druids are asleep. Any noise causes them to awake and attack the PCs.

Treasure. If the PCs search the trunks, they find 200 gp worth of precious stones. They also find two *potions of animal friendship*.

AREA 4: OWL ROOST

Unlike the others, this small building is made of wood. It has several circular holes cut into its walls, and loud shrieks come from inside.

This building is a roost built for the nocturnal birds the druids have befriended. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check correctly identifies the purpose of this building.

Three **giant owls** are currently roosting here. If the PCs open the door to the roost, the owls are startled. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check calms the owls. Otherwise, they attack.

Treasure. The birds who roost here have stashed a few shiny baubles in their nests. Searching the roost reveals 15 gp, a silver cuff (worth 25 gp), and two amethyst stones (worth 100 gp each).

AREA 5: OUTHOUSE

A ripe stench hangs around this building. A crescent moon is carved into its wooden door.

This building is the compound's outhouse. Inside is a deep hole filled with refuse.

AREA 6: WATCHTOWER

This cube-shaped building rests at the highest point of the compound walls. Large windows look out toward each cardinal direction.

This building is the watchtower the druids have constructed to increase security. A steep stone path leads up to it.

A **druid** is posted here at all times to keep an eye out for any trouble approaching the compound. The druids keep watch in 6-hour shifts, relieving each other as needed. The area around the compound is flat in all directions, allowing the watcher to see a great distance around the compound.

A mounted telescope sits beside a well-padded chair in the center of this room. The telescope has been modified to spot a wide variety of threats.

Treasure. The telescope is fitted with a *gem of seeing* instead of a standard glass lens.

AREA 7: BACK GATE

This gate can only be seen from inside the compound. On the outside, it is carved to look like part of the natural rock wall. The druids use this gate to leave the compound quickly.

Locating this gate from outside the compound is extremely difficult. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the presence of the gate. Dwarves and creatures with proficiency with mason's tools have advantage on this check.

AREA 8: PATH OF CONTEMPLATION

A soft blue glow dimly lights this long hallway. The glow comes from a pair of shut opalescent doors on the north end of the hall. A line of painted tiles leads from the southern entry to the doors.

This hallway is the path of contemplation, a meditative exercise for the druids to partake of before visiting the chapel. It doubles as a deadly trap to any who do not traverse it correctly.

The Trapped Path. To open the doors on the far side of the hallway, the PCs must walk on the correct tiles in the correct order. Once one PC has correctly walked the path, the double doors open. If a PC steps on the wrong tile, each creature in the room must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) radiant damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one as it is wreathed in ghostly flames. The PCs must travel from tile to tile in the correct sequence to open the doors. If an incorrect tile is pressed, all tiles in the room cease to glow, the trap activates, and the path resets.

A spell such as *detect magic,* or other effect that can sense magic, reveals an abjuration aura around the tiles. Infused with moonlight, the magic of the tiles can't be dispelled until the darkness covering the compound disperses and sunlight shines on the hills again.

There are eight painted tiles in the hall. Each tile is painted to represent a different phase of the moon, and the tiles are not laid down in the correct order. The PCs must correctly identify what the tiles represent, then step on the tiles in the correct order. Each 5-foot

tile is 1 inch tall and melded to the floor. Applying any pressure to a tile activates it, causing its paint to glow faintly. The tiles are laid out in a path down the center of the hallway as follows (the first tile is closest to the southern entry, and the last tile is closest to the sealed glowing doors in the northern wall):

1. A tile painted completely white, which represents the full moon.
2. A tile with only the southwestern corner painted white with the rest black, which represents a waning crescent moon.
3. A tile with the eastern half painted white with the rest black, which represents a first quarter moon.
4. A tile painted completely black, which represents a new moon.
5. A tile with the western half painted white with the rest black, which represents a last quarter moon.
6. A tile with the southwestern corner painted black with the rest white, which represents a waxing gibbous moon.
7. A tile with only the southeastern corner painted white with the rest black, which represents a waxing crescent moon.
8. A tile with the southeastern corner painted black with the rest white, which represents a waning gibbous moon.

The correct tile sequence is as follows:

4, 7, 3, 6, 1, 8, 5, 2

The PCs can walk around the hall without stepping on the tiles, but they must step on the tiles in the correct order to open the door in the northern wall. If they are struggling to figure out the puzzle, consider allowing a DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check to give a hint that the tiles resemble different phases of the moon.

AREA 9: CHAPEL

Neat rows of wooden chairs are lined up in this room. They face a small stone podium, which holds a piece of shimmering rock.

This room serves as a chapel for the compound. The circle frequently meets here to listen to Lyra's sermons. The shimmering rock is a palm-sized chunk of the meteorite in **Area 2**.

A **druid** sweeps this room while its **dire wolf** companion watches. When the characters enter, the druid and the wolf are startled and attack immediately.

AREA 10: ALTAR ROOM

A bizarre statue sits in the corner of this room. The stone is carved into the likeness of a winged creature with many circular rows of pointed teeth. Dried flowers and unlit candles sit at the statue's feet.

This statue depicts the lunar devil that has been manipulating the minds of Lyra and the other druids. The flowers and candles are offerings.

AREA 11: STORAGE CLOSET

This closet holds cleaning supplies, candles, additional chairs, and other useful items.

AREA 12: RELIQUARY WORKSHOP

Seven alcoves are set into the room's stone walls, and each holds a golden orb adorned with symbols. A large worktable in the center of the room is covered with diagrams and metal scraps. Another set of opal doors leads out of this room to the west, and a wooden door sits in the northern wall.

This is Lyra's workshop where she builds magical orbs. These orbs represent the foundation of her teachings: that the patterns of the heavens shape an individual's power.

There are seven orbs here, and each grants a temporary gift to any creature that activates it. Energy diverted from the *phase mirror* powers these orbs. Once used three times, an orb's energy fades, and it becomes a nonmagical metal orb.

A creature that examines the diagrams on the table can make a DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check. On a success, the creature successfully identifies the diagrams as star charts, mapping eight different constellations. Lyra has not yet finished the eighth orb.

If a PC approaches an orb, read the following:

The orb whirs to life and begins to glow with a gentle light. Tiny holes arranged in patterns appear on its surface, sparkling like stars with the orb's inner light.

While touching the orb, a PC can use their action to activate the orb and gain a boon. These boons last for 24 hours. Once a PC has received a boon, that PC can't gain the benefit of any other orbs until 24 hours have passed. Each orb depicts one of the following constellations:

The Warrior. This constellation depicts a champion in combat. Activating this orb gives the PC a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with melee weapons.

The Hunter. This constellation depicts a hunter stalking its prey. Activating this orb gives the PC a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with ranged weapons.

The Mage. This constellation depicts a spellcaster launching an arcane attack. Activating this orb causes the PC's spells to deal additional damage. When the PC casts a spell that deals damage, the spell deals an extra 1d6 radiant damage.

The Rogue. This constellation depicts a rogue brandishing a twisted dagger. Activating this orb gives the PC the ability to cast the *invisibility* spell once before the boon ends. Casting this spell doesn't expend a spell slot, if the PC has spell slots.

The Diplomat. This constellation depicts an orator speaking before a crowd. Activating this orb gives the PC the ability to cast the *suggestion* spell (save DC 15) once before the boon ends. Casting this spell doesn't expend a spell slot, if the PC has spell slots.

The Beast. This constellation depicts a powerful beast charging across the sky. Activating this orb increases the PC's speed by 10 feet.

The Sage. This constellation depicts a scholar penning a tome. Activating this orb allows the PC to add its proficiency bonus to any Intelligence-based skill checks it makes before the boon ends.

AREA 13: LYRA'S CHAMBER

This quaint chamber holds a single cot and a desk piled high with parchment. A woven tapestry depicting the night sky hangs on one wall. A skylight is cut into the ceiling of this chamber.

This is Lyra's private chamber. The papers on the desk are a collection of sermons and lectures she is composing, among which is a key that explains the various effects of the orbs in **Area 12**. If the PCs spend at least 1 minute searching this room, they discover the compartment hidden behind the tapestry of stars. Otherwise, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the edge of the wall cavity behind the tapestry.

Secret Compartment. Lyra has hollowed out a cavity in the wall where she keeps her journal. The majority of the pages are filled with daily reports and mediocre poems, but one passage might be of interest to the PCs:

Sometimes I fear all of this is a grand deception. Palus is unlike any fiend I have ever encountered, but it is still a devil at day's end. However, I am so tired of wandering. It can't all be a coincidence, can it? The very stars are falling from the sky, and I cannot deny that corruption is growing in the world. I must keep the faith; I must be strong for the rest. We shall carry this through, and we shall succeed.

AREA 14: MIRROR BALCONY

Three druids stand clustered around a giant mirror on this stone balcony. The mirror lies face up toward the sky. It seems to pull all surrounding light into its surface. A towering bearfolk lifts her gaze, and her lips curl into a snarl as she bellows, "You are too late to stop us now. Perish, agents of chaos!"

This area is the balcony where the *phase mirror* has absorbed energy from the skies over the past few days. The two **druids** and **Lyra Ironhide** (see **Appendix**) attack the party. When in combat, Lyra prefers to take the form of a **polar bear**, though she takes the form of a **giant eagle** if the PCs decide to pursue Palus in the air (see **Devil Moon**). The druids do whatever they can to keep the PCs away from the mirror.

DEVIL MOON

When combat with the druids begins, Palus joins the effort to protect the mirror on initiative count 20 of the second round. The devil uses its turn to lift the giant mirror and keep it out of the PCs' reach. To keep the ritual active, the mirror must stay within 30 feet of the compound at all times (even vertically), forcing Palus to fly low above the rocky walls. The devil flies as quickly as it can to the courtyard in **Area 2**, leaving the druids to prevent any pursuit.

If the PCs pursue the devil without first defeating the druids, the circle follows close behind, doing everything they can to prevent damage to the mirror.

STOPPING THE RITUAL

The *phase mirror* in this adventure is tied to the Shadow Realm, and Lyra's lunar circle is tied to it. They are taking advantage of the thin veil between worlds created by the solar eclipse to transport themselves and the entire compound to the Shadow Realm—a feat normally outside the scope of the mirror's magic, but the power of the lunar devil and the solar eclipse have strengthened the mirror beyond its normal capabilities.

The PCs can stop the ritual by breaking the *phase mirror* or by taking it more than 30 feet away from the compound. The PCs have 1 hour from when they enter the compound to stop the ritual.

The mirror can be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 50; vulnerability to bludgeoning damage; immunity to slashing, poison, and psychic damage). If the mirror is reduced to half its hit points or fewer, it is considered "broken," and the ritual is effectively prevented. The broken mirror can be repaired with 1 hour of work by a creature with proficiency with tinker's tools. If the mirror is reduced to 0 hit points, it is destroyed with no hope of repair.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs succeed in destroying the mirror or removing it from the compound, the ritual is prevented. The haze of darkness around the compound disperses in time for the PCs to see the solar eclipse pass by harmlessly.

If Palus still lives, the devil disappears entirely, fleeing to its moonlit domain.

If any of the druids still live, they become despondent, believing the world is now truly doomed. They offer no further resistance to the PCs, though it will take medical care and patience to undo the brainwashing they have undergone under the devil's influence.

If the PCs return the undamaged mirror to Zara, she is delighted and pays them in full. If the mirror is damaged (but not destroyed), she isn't entirely pleased, but she follows through with payment. If the mirror is completely destroyed, Zara is furious. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces Zara the PCs' actions were necessary, and she hands over 1,000 gp for their efforts. Alternatively, if they offer Zara the telescope with the *gem of seeing* intact from **Area 6** or a magical orb from **Area 12**, she forgives the destruction of the mirror and provides the full payment.

Ritual Success. If the PCs do not stop the ritual in time, a gate to the Shadow Realm opens. For 24 hours, the entire compound becomes a bridge between the two planes. Dangerous creatures desperate to escape the Shadow Realm begin to pour into Midgard. The Moonlit King himself may even break free of his prison. The situation is dire, but the specifics are up to you.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

If the PCs wish to continue following the threads of this story and Palus still lives, you can allow them to track Palus to its lair. Or perhaps another druid of the lunar circle was not present during this series of events and attempts to start rebuilding the circle with another group. If the ritual was not prevented, the PCs have to pursue some of the darker fey denizens that broke into Midgard.



THE WILDING CALL

For 7th-Level Characters

This adventure takes place in unspecified locations in Trollheim and the Vargrike (in the Northlands), though likely beginning in or near the burned-out Trollheim village of Hoydeholm, but it can easily be adapted to any northern region.

Adventure Background

The Pack of the Howling Sun has gained notoriety lately as a cult bent on the fiery death of any that cross their path. Their raids beyond the borders of the Kingdom of the Wolf have left charred bodies and burning villages in their wake. Uffi Toothless believes the pack is tied to the Children of Surtur, an unusual death cult whose members believe self-immolation is the way to convince the demonic lord of fire to destroy the world. The immediate threat posed by the death cult's new offshoot troubles him, especially as it shows outward aggression formerly absent from the cult. He seeks stalwart folks who can gain intelligence on the Pack of the Howling Sun, such as the group's size and reach and the extent of their ties to the Children of Surtur. Since the Kingdom of the Wolf's inhabitants hunt, capture, or outright kill non-lupine humanoids, close intelligence gathering is almost impossible for Uffi's scouts and warriors. Anything short of powerful illusions to conceal investigators' identities would prove disastrous for any team and reveal Uffi's involvement to the pack leaders, potentially painting a target on the old jarl and his people.

A solution to this problem arrived recently in the form of Albrus Svendig, an alchemist specializing in transmutational serums. He developed a concoction to temporarily transform the drinker into a werewolf. Uffi hopes a team could use this serum to infiltrate the Pack of the Howling Sun and gain the information he seeks.

Unfortunately, the real Albrus Svendig fell prey to Greta the Sly, the **nightgarm** (see *Tome of Beasts*) leading the Pack of the Howling Sun. She spawned a falseman to take his place and use his skills to produce more "children" for her. Knowing the serum is only temporary, Greta commands her werewolves to "bless" those worthy to join her pack with permanent lycanthropy and feeds the unworthy to her pack.

Recent Events

A few days ago, a rescue party sent to Hoydeholm after it burned to the ground discovered the pack had kidnapped survivors. They found no bodies, but they did see several sets of werewolf tracks leading out of the village.

Adventure Hooks

If the PCs rescued the people of Fjellgard in the previous **The Empty Village** chapter or performed other services for the jarl's people in Trollheim, Uffi Toothless may send someone to ask them to undertake this intelligence-gathering mission. Instead, the PCs may know someone in Hoydeholm taken by the Pack of the Howling Sun. Or the PCs might have heard about Albrus Svendig's serum independently.

A REQUEST TO GO BEHIND ENEMY LINES

Regardless of the reason for the PCs' involvement in the adventure, they meet Sondre Rasmussen, a high-ranking official who serves Uffi and who is responsible for the safety of the jarl and his people. Sondre introduces Albrus Svendig and explains the situation detailed in the **Adventure Background** (except for Albrus's secrets, of which he has no knowledge). He expresses his hopes that the PCs can use the alchemist's serum to discreetly investigate the Pack of the Howling Sun and rescue any surviving villagers of Hoydeholm. He offers them a reward of 1,000 gp on behalf of Uffi Toothless for the dangerous undertaking. Assuming the PCs accept the offer, he turns things over to Albrus to explain the serum's effects.

Albrus is a thin, middle-aged human who wears simple, woolen clothing with a wool cap pulled down to just above his eyebrows. The heavy clothing and cap are ostensibly to ward off the cold, but in actuality, the clothing covers unnatural features that give away the alchemist as a falseman, most notably the tuft of white fur sprouting from his forehead. Albrus explains the serum's effects and answers what questions he can about it (see **The Wilding Serum** sidebar). He only has a few doses of the serum left and cautions the PCs to not lose or spill the serum as it takes months to create a single dose.

Once the PCs are satisfied with the information they have, Sondre directs them to a clearing where they believe werewolf initiates travel, in order to gain admittance into the pack. The clearing is 2 days of travel away with the last half a day in wolf territory. He cautions the PCs to take the serum after they have left Trollheim and well before they reach the clearing. Aside from the obvious desire to avoid causing a general panic in the streets, he warns them that prematurely taking the serum will jeopardize the mission—as will slaying lycanthropes.

Meeting the Pack

When the PCs arrive at the clearing Sondre mentioned, they see signs of a recent bonfire with partially gnawed and charred bones of animals and humanoids in the ashes.

Shortly after the PCs arrive, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the stealthy arrival of five werewolves. They circle the PCs, taunting the group with the nickname "wolflings" and laughing heartily if a PC shows signs of aggression at the circling pack. After a minute of this appraisal and mocking, the group's leader, Vanya Tongueripper, introduces herself and the rest of the group, which consists of Georg Halflingeater, Hilda Spleenkeeper, Metti Fleabitten, and One-Eyed Marcus.

Vanya confirms the PCs are there to become part of the Pack of the Howling Sun. She expresses her pleasure at growing the pack and puts on a show of resignation as she explains how all "wolflings" must prove themselves before they are welcomed into the pack. Much as they would like to swell their numbers, they can't let in "just any mangy cur." Vanya tells the PCs they have to perform two simple tasks, and then Vanya can introduce them to Mother for their final induction into the pack.

TO KILL A BEAR

The first job Vanya gives the PCs is to track down and kill a bearfolk who has killed several of their members. Vanya expects the PCs to bring her a trophy as proof of their kill. While she would settle for the bearfolk's head or a paw, she prizes the silvered axe the bearfolk wields. Vanya directs the PCs to where the bearfolk was last spotted and tells them to return to the clearing once they've completed their task or to not return at all. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check finds a bearfolk's trail at the location, and the trail leads to a small cottage deep in the forest.

Esben Frosttuft is a **bearfolk chieftain** (see *Creature Codex*, changing her battleaxe to a silvered *+1 battleaxe*). She doesn't take kindly to werewolves snooping around her home and is prepared to kill the PCs on sight. If a PC attempts to speak with her, she pauses as this is unexpected behavior when compared to the beasts she fought previously. If the PCs show no sign of aggression, she agrees to listen to their tale. If the PCs explain about their mission for Uffi Toothless, she admits she prefers to directly attack all lycanthropes she encounters, but she sees the value in gaining intelligence on an organized foe.

If the conversation turns to the presentation of a trophy to Vanya, Esben becomes less agreeable. She doesn't part with a paw, but she agrees to give up her axe with a successful DC 16 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check, provided the PCs promise to return her axe to her after they have gathered the information they need. She requires the PCs to state their actual names and declare an oath to return her axe, a family heirloom, to her upon the completion of their mission. There is no magic to bind them to the oath, but Esben ruins their reputation in the Northlands if they survive and fail to return her axe.

If the PCs fail to persuade her to give up her axe, Esben offers one of her silvered handaxes and suggests fooling Vanya about its power. Esben correctly assumes the werewolf won't test the axe's power. A successful DC 10 Charisma (Deception) check convinces Vanya of its authenticity.

THE WILDING SERUM

Albrus Svendig's *wilding serum* transforms the drinker into a werewolf in hybrid form for 1 week. The drinker retains its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores. The drinker's statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of a **werewolf**, except the drinker can use its action to polymorph only into a wolf-humanoid hybrid or a wolf, and not back into its true form. Any equipment the drinker is wearing or carrying isn't transformed, and the drinker reverts to its true form if it dies.

The werewolf hybrid's hands are dexterous enough to wield a weapon and attack with that weapon; however, a drinker of this serum that uses a weapon can't take the Multiattack action. A spellcaster who drinks this serum can cast spells in hybrid form but not in wolf form.

While transformed by the *wilding serum*, the drinker can't be cursed with lycanthropy. The change brought about by the serum is unnatural and taxing on the body if it is used more than once. Each time a creature drinks the serum after the first time, it must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature is unaffected by the serum as its body is unable to accept the transformation. On a success, the creature is transformed by the serum as normal, but it has disadvantage on the saving throw if it drinks the serum again.

Killing Esben carries the risk of removing a potential ally in Uffi's fight against the Children of Surtur and the Pack of the Howling Sun, but the PCs are free to provide Vanya with a trophy they deem appropriate.

A LITTLE ARSON BETWEEN FRIENDS

Assuming the PCs bring one of the requested trophies or convince Vanya that Esben's handaxe is the silvered axe Vanya saw the bearfolk wielding, the werewolf is pleased. She informs the PCs they have one more task to fulfill before she can accept them into the Pack of the Howling Sun. Since her group's focus is using fire to kill their prey, she tasks the "wolflings" with setting fire to a home while barring those within the burning building from leaving. She directs them to human and trollkin farmsteads they can target along the edge of the Kingdom of the Wolf. As with the task involving the bearfolk, Vanya expects proof of the deed and leaves it up to the PCs to decide what proof they bring her.

Considering the PCs' appearance, negotiating with the family owning the farmstead is difficult. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check convinces the family to listen to the PCs. Of course, the family is aghast at the idea of losing their home. If the PCs offer the family at least 50 gp in reparations, the family agrees to go along with the PCs' plan. Otherwise, the PCs must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check to convince the family to work with them. If the PCs offer the family at least 25 gp in reparations, the PCs have advantage on the check.

If the PCs attack the family, the family is made up of two **commoners** and four humanoids too young and small to fight.

Development. Under normal circumstances, Vanya exerts the same minimal level of scrutiny over completing this task as she did for the PCs' encounter with Esben (to the extent that she watches for the burning building). However, if the PCs brought her the handaxe and failed the Charisma (Deception) check to fool her about it, she indulges her suspicions about the PCs and sends one of her cohort with the PCs to verify the deed is done to her satisfaction. The PCs can deal with this situation as they wish, but if they kill the **werewolf**, they must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check to craft a story about the werewolf's death that will convince Vanya the PCs didn't kill the werewolf.

One of Us. If the PCs return successfully from Vanya's last mission, the werewolf is ecstatic and welcomes them to the pack. She gives them directions to the lair of the Pack of the Howling Sun and races ahead to inform Mother of their success.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using Status (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs put an end to the Pack of the Howling Sun's schemes and free the villagers, the PCs gain +1 to their Status with residents of Trollheim. If the PCs return Esben Frosttuft's axe, they gain +1 to their Status with bearfolk of the Northlands, but if they don't return the axe (or if they kill Esben), they suffer −5 to their Status with the bearfolk. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

The Howling Sun's Lair

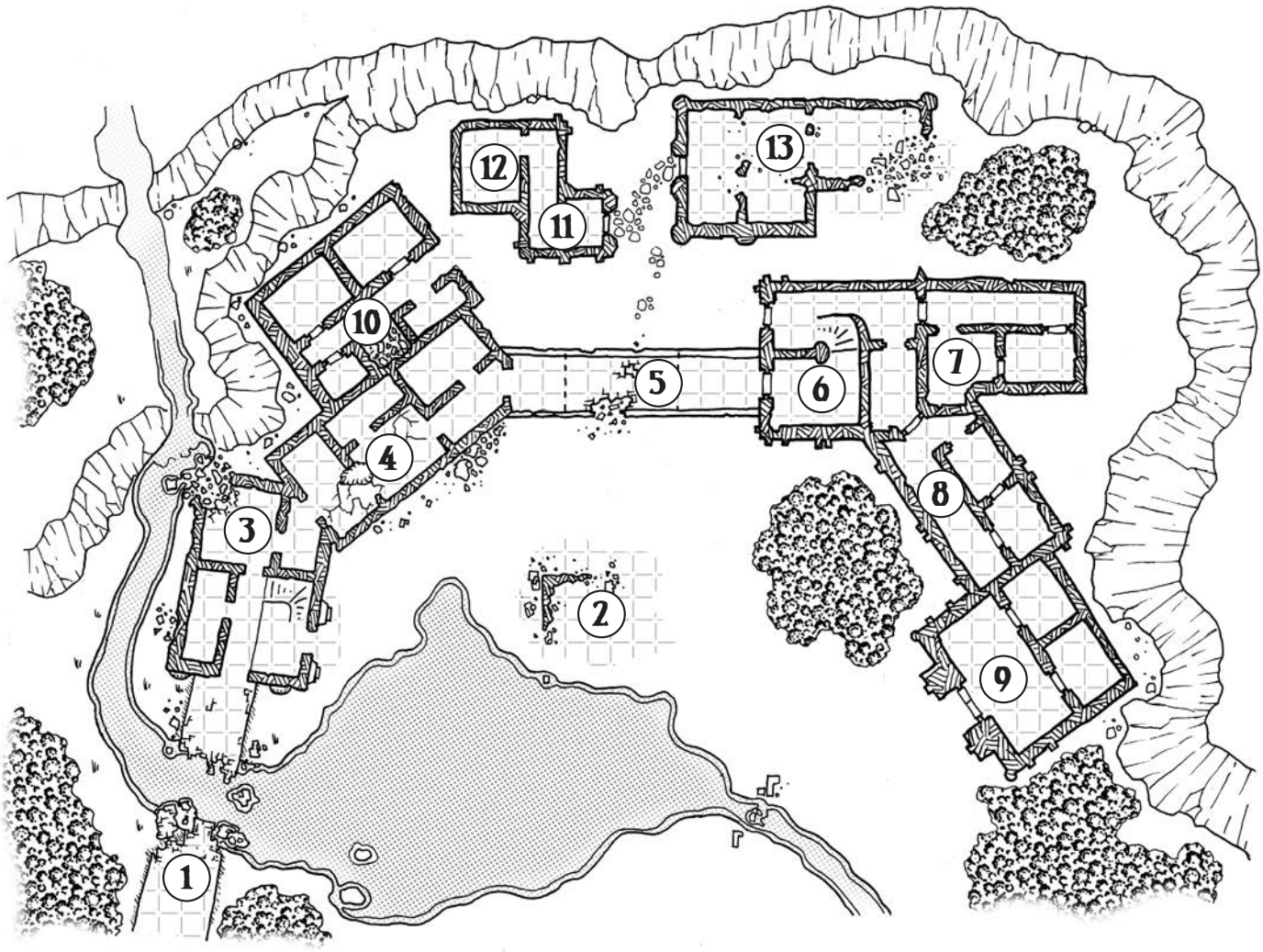
This complex was once a temple devoted to Freyr and Freyja, but the priests and other inhabitants could not withstand the attacks of marauding werewolves and abandoned the temple. Greta the Sly, the pack's leader and a nightgarm called Mother, kept the werewolves from gutting the temple, so she could use it as a sort of headquarters for the Pack of the Howling Sun.

AREA 1: THE PATH OF FIRE

A 10-foot path of hot coals and a small stretch of icy water stand between the PCs and the complex. If a PC refuses to walk across the coals or through the water, Vanya, from atop the bridge in **Area 3**, frowns and informs the PC that refusing is an insult to Mother, who might be less-inclined to induct the PC into the pack. A character that walks across the hot coals must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5 (2d4) fire damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. A character that walks through the shallow, icy water must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or have their speed halved until they finish a short rest by a fire (or other source of prolonged warmth).

Development. Mother bade the falseman Albrus Svendig to return from Trollheim after he gave the serum to the PCs. He provided enough identifying information about the PCs for her to realize they were the same as Vanya's latest initiates. The morning prior to the PCs' arrival at the compound, Albrus broke Mother's control over him, and he now awaits an opportunity to escape. Unfortunately for him, the nightgarm is aware of his state of mind.

As the PCs are crossing the hot coals and the icy water, Vanya Tongueripper, who was made aware of the situation while the PCs were completing their tasks, stands slightly above them, just before **Area 3**, on the remains of a bridge and makes a show of congratulating the PCs on their success. She then indicates she has a surprise for them and produces a bound-and-gagged Albrus Svendig. A



successful DC 12 Charisma (Deception) check conceals a PC's recognition of the man. Regardless of the result, she states there is no need for worry because Albrus works for them. She then tears the wool cap from his head to reveal the tuft of fur jutting from his forehead. Albrus struggles in his bonds as Vanya mimics a troubled expression. She states Albrus appears to have had second thoughts about his loyalties this morning, and he must be punished. She removes his gag long enough to tear out his tongue and slit his throat. She then cheers, calls out, "More villagers for us!" and ducks into **Area 3**, leaving a pair of **werewolves** to distract the PCs.

AREA 2: THE WELCOMING SPOT

Ordinarily, this is where initiates to the Pack of the Howling Sun are welcomed into the group, preceding a feast of animals and humanoids prepared by the pack. The villagers entrapped in **Area 8** were meant to be the main course for a feast honoring the latest initiates, but events have changed the reception the PCs receive, as described in **Area 1**.

AREA 3: RUINED WEST WING

Two **werewolves** remain here to kill or stall the PCs. The werewolves use their silvered spears in humanoid form to attack the serum-infused PCs. The stairs lead from the ground level up into **Area 3**.

AREA 4: WORG SLEEPING QUARTERS

A **roggenwolf** (see *Creature Codex*) and three **worgs** stationed here are aware that the PCs aren't members of the pack, and they attack. The creatures have been blessed by the Children of Surtur, and their bite attacks are magical.

AREA 5: CRUMBLING BRIDGE

A 20-foot-high stone bridge crosses between **Area 4** and **Area 6**. It has been damaged by previous assaults to the compound and is now dangerous for the unwary to cross.

Crumbling Bridge. When a creature walks across the center of the bridge, it must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the creature falls to the ground 20 feet below as part of the bridge gives way.

The creature takes 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone and buried under the rubble below the bridge. The buried target is restrained and unable to breathe or stand up. A creature can take an action to make a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, ending the buried state on a success.

Prevention. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival) check finds a set of tracks that appear to follow a safe path across the bridge. Creatures on the safe path don't trigger the trap.

AREA 6: EAST LANDING

A **werewolf** and two **winter wolves** wait here for any intruders. These creatures were among those blessed by the Children of Surtur, making their bite attacks magical.

AREA 7: SLEEPING QUARTERS

Several mats fill this section of the former temple. Most of the werewolves sleep here. Vanya keeps her quarters in the locked room to the southeast, and she carries the key to the room on her. A successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check unlocks the door.

Treasure. The werewolves keep trinkets from their various raids. The PCs can gather a total of 100 gp worth of jewels, hand-carved statuettes, and other items precious to the locals, from the main room. Vanya has a prized sapphire worth 500 gp she keeps hidden in her room.

AREA 8: CAPTURED VILLAGERS

A mated pair of **fangs of the great wolf** (see *Creature Codex*) stand guard over the captured villagers of Hoydeholm, which are being held in the room in the southeast. Unlike the werewolves, the worgs do not draw the attention of the creature in **Area 9** and can tolerate the eerie howls emanating from the area. Blessed by the Children of Surtur, each fang of the great wolf's bite attack is magical and, when a fang of the great wolf hits a target with a bite attack, the attack deals an extra 3 (1d6) fire damage.

If the **werewolf**, Vanya, has survived, she is also here. She taunts the PCs by attacking the villagers, hoping to help the two worgs by splitting the PCs' focus. If the PCs gave her an axe from their encounter with the bearfolk, she uses that weapon in place of the werewolf's spear attack.

The villagers, a dozen **commoners**, crammed into the enclosure are nearly useless in combat. They each have one level of exhaustion due to the lack of nourishment and their exposure to the howling that echoes from **Area 9**.

AREA 9: THE HAUNTED HALLS

A **wolf spirit swarm** (see *Tome of Beasts*), the remains of a wolf pack killed in an over-exuberant bout of arson, lurks here. Mother has exerted some control over the pack, such that they remain in this location as a surprise for intruders. However, their unnerving howls penetrate the walls, which forced the bulk of the pack to relocate from **Area 8** to **Area 7**. The swarm attacks werewolves that aren't part of Mother's pack in preference to other creatures. The swarm pursues opponents outside, but it stops short of reentering the complex through any entrance other than the one to this area.

AREA 10: WOLF KENNELS

The **werewolf** in charge of caring for the Pack of the Howling Sun's wolves resides in this building with a group of six **wolves**. The wolves were recently blessed by the Children of Surtur, but the blessing only took hold in half the group. Three of the wolves have magical bite attacks, revealed by their glowing red fangs. The werewolf, an older farmer who was recently conscripted into the pack to care for the wolves, flees when reduced to 10 or fewer hit points.

AREA 11: THE HONOR GUARD

A pair of **werewolves** (replacing their spears with silvered greatswords and changing AC to 15 [breast plate]) protects the nightgarm from intruders.

AREA 12: MOTHER'S LAIR

Mother, the **nightgarm** (see *Tome of Beasts*) leading the Pack of the Howling Sun, resides here. If the PCs defeat her honor guard, she calls for a truce. If the PCs promise to let her go, she shares what she knows about the Children of Surtur's plans (to bring about the end of the world with a great flood by summoning their demon lord of fire to melt the Northlands). If the PCs agree, she asks to leave the building, where she has freedom to move should the PCs renege on their promise. Once outside, she matter-of-factly tells the PCs that the Children of Surtur plan to summon their demon lord by sacrificing hundreds of innocents at once in a great pyre that will light the world.

If the PCs attack her, she resigns herself to combat, but she uses swallowed creatures as hostages to facilitate her escape.

AREA 13: THE TETHERED DRAKE

The Pack of the Howling Sun captured a **moon drake** (see *Creature Codex*) and chained it within the temple's former stables while Mother decides what to do with the creature. She has the devious notion of using the drake to remove lycanthropy from werewolf rivals, allowing her pack to tear apart the reverted humanoids. However, she

has yet to convince the creature to go along with her plans.

The magical shackles holding the drake prevent it from using its Form of Moonlight reaction. Mother (see **Area 12**) possesses the key to the shackles. Otherwise, a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check breaks them, or a successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the lock.

If the PCs free the moon drake, it spends 1 round attacking the PCs before attempting to flee. If a PC is subjected to the moon drake's bite or Lunarbeam, it reverts to its normal form for 1d4 rounds before the serum transforms it back into a werewolf. Since the serum does not grant true lycanthrophy, the moon drake's Moonlight Nip has no effect on the PCs, a fact that surprises the drake and tips it off that the PCs aren't part of the Pack of the Howling Sun if they haven't already convinced it they're friendly.

A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces the drake the PCs are friendly. A PC who speaks in Draconic to the drake has advantage on this check. If the PCs convince the drake they are friendly and free it, the drake is unwilling to attack the creatures in the compound as it just wants to return home, but it uses its Moonlight Nip to cure a creature suffering from lycanthropy if the PCs request it. Once the PCs have cleared the compound through slaying, running off, or curing the creatures within it, the drake thanks them and flies away in a blur of moonlight.



Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs defeat the nightgarm, what remains of the Pack of the Howling Sun becomes considerably less-organized. While individual packs still set fires as they once did, their attacks are random and poorly coordinated, making them no more dangerous than any other pack of werewolves. Uffi dispatches warriors to scatter cells and remove the overall threat before they can regroup under a new nightgarm. As promised, the PCs receive their 1,000 gp reward.

If Mother escapes, she retreats to another werewolf pack that serves the Children of Surtur and continues where she left off. While she may not have seen the PCs' true forms, she committed their scents to memory. She makes regular forays into Trollheim to locate the PCs and seeks to gain her revenge through their friends and family.

The Children of Surtur notice the loss of their allies, but they do not attempt any retributive action. They view their werewolf allies as barely controlled partners in their plots, and they view the loss of the Pack of the Howling Sun as the culling of a weak link in their chain. All the same, they are aware of some resistance to their plans, so they become alert for more direct attacks against them.

If the PCs return the axe to Esben Frosttuft, she gifts three silvered weapons of the PCs' choice to them. If they don't return the axe to her, she spreads tales about them as oathbreakers, hurting their reputation throughout most of the Northlands.

Moonlight Sonata

For 8th-Level Characters

This adventure begins and ends in the hamlet of Elmshire, in an unspecified region of Midgard (though presumably a less urban area on the Rothenian Plain or in the Margreve Forest)—and takes a jaunt to the Shadow Realm in between—but can easily be adapted to any out-of-the-way site.

Adventure Background

After failing to create a bridge to the Shadow Realm (see the previous **Out of Phase** chapter), certain new and unseen forces have become intent on freeing the Moonlit King—or rather the shard of a previous Moonlit King.

Alquam, Demon Lord of Night, in fulfillment of a bargain with the current Moonlit King in his madness—and in a circuitous attempt to diminish the machinations of Akyishigal, Demon Lord of Cockroaches—seeks to free a long-forgotten shard of a previous Moonlit King, who should prove a welcome thorn in the side of the Queen of Night and Magic. To keep his intentions hidden from the queen, for now, Alquam must infiltrate a desolate corner of the Shadow Realm by dragging the PCs into a world of dreams and his twisting melodies, trapping them there, tricked into freeing the shard of the Moonlit King imprisoned within, and redirecting the scrutiny of the queen and the Roach Lord.

The heroes must somehow work to break free of the strange labyrinth they find themselves in, and each move they make unknowingly brings the Moonlit King closer to freedom.

Adventure Hooks

Here are some suggested hooks to involve your PCs in this adventure:

- If the PCs previously completed the previous **Out of Phase** chapter, they hear rumors that a lunar devil has been spotted, visiting a nearby series of Valeran ruins.
- While on the road, the PCs meet with a caravan of merchants eager to sell their wares and exchange news. The merchants recently passed through a small hamlet plagued by hauntings and a series of missing persons.
- While staying in a city or town, the adventurers hear rumors of strange Valeran ruins nearby. No one knows more about them except that several people who investigated them are now missing.

Part 1: Missing Maiden

This adventure begins as the PCs arrive in the sleepy hamlet of Elmshire, a small community with big problems. Their arrival interrupts a gathering outside the local trading post.

GET A CLUE

As the PCs enter Elmshire, read the following:

Your travels have led you to an isolated hamlet. While this settlement is too small to appear on any map, the clustered wooden buildings seem friendly enough. As you pass a painted sign, "Welcome to Elmshire," you notice that a small crowd has gathered in the central square. The group is exchanging heated words, and a few are wielding unlit torches.

As the PCs arrive in town, they interrupt a gathering of the residents of Elmshire. The group of locals is hotly debating whether or not to organize a search party to investigate the nearby ruins.

If the PCs get closer to the group, a woman from the crowd spots them and waves them over. She is an elfmarked gem merchant who introduces herself as Silvana Redleaf. She tells the PCs that she and her daughter Sophia are traveling merchants who arrived

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using **Status** (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs return with the missing residents, the PCs gain +2 to their Status with the residents of Elmshire and with any other village within 3 days travel. Their Status with the Courts of the Shadow Fey is more complicated though, and they gain +1 to their Status, or suffer −1, with any given fey depending on the actual outcome of this adventure and its fallout in the courts and on that particular fey's alignment with the Moonlit King. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.



in town a few days ago. They were planning on staying in Elmshire a few days before moving along, but then Sophia went missing along with some other villagers. Silvana proclaims to be frustrated with the slow action of the others and wants to hire the PCs to find her daughter:

"Well, it's a good thing you got here! You all look capable. At least more so than the rest of these backwater fools. All the trouble started with that strange music a few nights ago, and no one is doing a damn thing to get to the bottom of it. My daughter is missing, and I will pay you good money to find her."

If the PCs ask more questions of Silvana or the rest of the villagers, here is what they can learn:

- Two nights ago, villagers heard strange music coming from the nearby Valeran ruins. The music has continued to play each night since and always starts around midnight. Nothing like this has ever happened in Elmshire before.
- Several people have gone to investigate the source of the music, and none of them have returned. The missing people are an elderly halfling trapper named Wilhelm, a human teenage boy named Reed, an elfmarked farmer named Marjorie, and Marjorie's prized truffle pig Snuffles.
- The villagers have investigated the ruins during the day, but they found no trace of the missing villagers. There were no clues to the music's source either, just the empty ruins that have always been there.

Silvana claims her daughter is among the missing people who investigated the ruins, though this is not true. Silvana is a servant to the demon lord Alquam and planted to lure the adventurers to the ruins. The other villagers aren't familiar with Silvana, but since she seems so distraught, they are not suspicious of her.

Silvana offers to pay the PCs in precious stones and jewelry if they can find and return her daughter to her. She can reward gemstones equal to 1,000 gp and promises to also gift the PCs a magic ring from her collection if her daughter is brought back alive. Silvana has no intention of paying this reward, so she offers more if the PCs insist on haggling.

ELMSHIRE

Elmshire is a tiny community too small to appear on any map. The residents of Elmshire have bonded together to carve out a patch of safety from the surrounding wilderness.

Population. Around 40.

Government. None. Elmshire has escaped the notice of any local lords interested in collecting taxes.

Defenses. Most residents of Elmshire possess basic fighting skills and are capable of driving off and hunting beasts. In the event of greater danger, the hamlet would most likely be abandoned.

Notable Locations. The only public building in town is a trading post called Gil's Goods, which doubles as a meeting place for the residents and has basic adventuring gear for sale.

Part 2: Music of the Night

In this portion of the adventure, the PCs head to the ruins and discover a strange trapdoor. Descending through the door leads them into a series of bizarre rooms conjured by Alquam, Demon Lord of Night.

RIDDLE OF THE RUINS

If the PCs approach the ruins during the day, they find nothing of interest. As the villagers reported, the ruins are an empty collection of partially caved-in stone rooms, overgrown with brush. The place was likely a small stone castle or manor house. There are no tracks or clues to indicate what has happened.

If the PCs approach the ruins at night, read or paraphrase the following:

As you draw nearer to the elven ruins, you begin to hear ghostly whispers of music. The lilting tune is melancholic, discordant, and altogether otherworldly. The structure itself is just as described, a broken collection of stone walls and foundations whose purpose has long since become unidentifiable.

Searching the ruins at night is an entirely different experience than searching them by day. Examining the ruins does not reveal any tracks or clues as to what happened to the missing villagers. Any character who declares they search inside the crumbling ruins however finds an old trapdoor. The haunting music comes from somewhere below this door.

CONSIDERING THE COURTS

For GMs who have run *Courts of the Shadow Fey* or who are thinking about running it, you might review the events of this adventure and think, "But how does this fit with the Moonlit King as he's presented there?" or "But I thought he was waiting in the..."—right, no spoilers. However, these are reasonable questions, so let's address them.

"What if we've already encountered the Moonlit King?" Then you know that he is unhinged and a shade of his former self. The character in this adventure is but a portion of the Moonlit King's being—a memory of a past Moonlit King. Would releasing it strengthen His Grace back at the courts? Is his imprisonment here part of what allows him to manifest again and again or be replaced when killed by subsuming any who attempt to take his place? The king's situation here is intentionally ambiguous, and unless you're purposefully looking to continue the story told in *Courts of the Shadow Fey*, the king should not recognize or remember the PCs, and truly, this aspect of the Moonlit King likely never met the PCs. The GM should tailor this shard's role to that which best compliments the conclusions of the past adventure. Here, the Moonlit King is a fragment of the whole, and his defeat might destroy him forever or keep him fragmented and deluded.

"What if we haven't played* Courts of the Shadow Fey *yet?" In this case, if you haven't run *Courts of the Shadow Fey* but are considering doing so, then you might use this encounter to foreshadow the later stages of that adventure to the PCs or to provide them some key information that has no value until they're deep within the intrigues of the Shadow Court. This encounter might serve to reinforce the king's splintered state and offer them leverage in their activities while reminding them that defeating the Moonlit King, rather than bargaining with him, is not possible, since a portion of his essential being survives here. This option is complicated as well by the chance the group kills the king here. In this case, the GM needs to decide, "Does this shard of the previous Moonlit King's death add to or subtract from the king's overall madness, and how will it impact the situation in the Shadow Realm?" The easiest course of action is that the death of the shard here weakens the current king's form in the Tower of the Moon but also gives him memories of the encounter, which makes engaging him in *Courts of the Shadow Fey* a more nuanced encounter when the PCs discover the current king there.

"Wait, we killed him before, and now he's gone, or one of our old friends, or a demon lord of filth!" And in this situation, the spirit of the Moonlit King can be released. Doing so probably makes whoever is currently the Moonlit King a bit offput as they experience memories from the old king. The current king remembers the outcome of this encounter and might send agents to waylay the PCs, whether out of spite, appreciation, or curiosity, depending on the outcome. He would now also remember his previous death, should the PCs kill this aspect, and any encounter where he engages with the PCs should be spent taunting those who previously injured him and mocking them for their efforts with descriptions of their failings during the last battle.

FINDING THE MUSICIAN

Once your PCs open the trapdoor, read or paraphrase the following:

The creaking trapdoor opens to reveal an earthen cellar. Moldering remains of smashed barrels and crates are the only objects left in the space. A bloated wooden door is set in the northern wall. The whining melody is louder with the trapdoor open, but the source is clearly beyond the next door.

This cellar is the beginning point of the ruins and the anchor point for Alquam's nightmarish construction. The ruins don't have a stable shape. They are a series of rooms designed to keep the adventurers inside long enough to hear the entire piece of night music, currently being played by Alquam. Once the whole of the sonata has been played, a portal opens to the Shadow Realm.

NAVIGATING THE RUINS

Each time the PCs open a door, they conjure one of the following rooms. If the PCs return to investigate the trapdoor that led them into the ruins, they discover that the trapdoor opens into one of the following rooms. Once a room has been selected, opening and closing the door again does not again change the previously determined room.

It is recommended that your players encounter three rooms before the final confrontation, but you can adjust this number as you see fit. Roll or choose on the **Conjured Rooms** table below to generate the rooms the PCs find once they move beyond the first cellar door.

CONJURED ROOMS

d6	Room	d6	Room
1	Graveyard	4	Laboratory
2	Greenhouse	5	Portrait Hall
3	Hall of Mirrors	6	Toy Workshop

GRAVEYARD

The door opens to a square courtyard, surrounded by stone walls on all sides. Far above, you can see the swirling stars of the night sky. There are several mossy gravestones and a closed sarcophagus scattered around the overgrown grounds.

As the PCs enter the room, **skeletons** begin to dig their way out from the gravesites. It takes the skeletons 3 rounds to dig themselves out of their graves, so this is not meant to be a serious combat challenge, just terrifying to behold. If a skeleton is destroyed, another skeleton starts to dig its way out of the vacant grave.

The PCs must find the trapdoor inside the only sarcophagus (AC 18; 75 hp; immunity to poison and psychic damage) in the graveyard to exit this room. A successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check pushes open the sarcophagus's marble lid. Opening the lid or destroying the sarcophagus reveals the trapdoor, leading to the next room.

GREENHOUSE

The door opens to a large domed chamber. Black mist sluggishly curls outside, pressing against the glass that forms the ceiling. Lush plants and thick vines cover the floor and walls.

This room is a neglected greenhouse. The vines have grown thick over the walls to conceal the exit door. Chopping through the plants or otherwise removing the vines reveals the door.

If the glass ceiling or walls are damaged in any way, the black mist begins to pour into the room. The mist smells like rot but is harmless. Allowing the mist to fill the confines of the chamber slowly is meant to scare the PCs, not harm them.

ATMOSPHERIC SUGGESTION

If possible, it is recommended that you play a piece of actual music for your players during this section. Finding creepy orchestral music to play in the background while your PCs explore this ghostly construction of Alquam will ramp up the tension. Searching online for "atmospheric gothic music" yields plenty of results.

Classical music also works well. In particular, check out Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A Minor as well as the first movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Moonlight* Sonata.

HALL OF MIRRORS

Hundreds of eyes stare at you as you open the door. Reflections of yourself bounce back at you from the walls, floor, and ceiling of this disorienting space.

The room is made of mirrors. Characters who smash the mirrors or search the walls by touch discover a loose panel. Removing the panel reveals a door hidden behind it.

LABORATORY

The door opens to a chamber crammed with worktables and shelving. Every surface is cluttered with brightly colored bottles, papers, and other items common to a wizard's study. Hanging from one corner of the ceiling is a large golden cage with a cramped humanoid figure stuffed inside.

The figure inside the cage is a realistic human dummy. If the cage is opened and the dummy removed, the cage lifts upward, and a portion of the stone wall drops to reveal a door. If weight is placed back in the cage, it sinks once again, and the portion of the wall slides back to cover the door.

The bottles in this room are all empty, and every piece of paper in the room is blank.

PORTRAIT HALL

The door opens to a long hallway with another door at the very end. The walls are crammed full of dusty portraits depicting people.

Characters who examine the portraits or have a passive Perception of at least 18 notice the portraits depict familiar people. The faces portray many of the villagers the PCs encountered in Elmshire and aged versions of themselves.

The portraits can be removed from the wall, but they are dusty and worthless.

TOY WORKSHOP

The door opens to a workshop crammed with toys. Shelves stuffed full of stuffed animals, puppets, and carved dolls line the walls. At the center of the room is a worktable with a hyper-realistic dollhouse, complete with a lawn and painted front door.

The workshop has a pristine collection of toys. The dollhouse in the center of the room is the key to exiting. By opening the doll house's front door, a character causes a door to appear in the room suddenly. Closing the dollhouse door causes the exit to disappear.

THE FINAL ROOM

Once the adventurers reach the final room, read or paraphrase the following:

The door opens to a dark chapel with a soaring vaulted ceiling. Black tapestries adorn the walls, and dripping red candles cast eerie shadows on pillars carved like screaming skulls. You finally see the source of the crawling tune that has plagued you this entire time.

A figure draped in a cloak of blackest night furiously taps its talons against a massive pipe organ. Three wriggling humanoid figures with sacks over their heads are bound to the tall silver pipes. The music pauses for just long enough to allow you to hear a chorus of shrieks from above.

This dark chapel is the final stop for Alquam's trap. The bird-like humanoid playing the organ is an illusory avatar of Alquam, Demon Lord of Night. The pipe organ, the figures, and Alquam are all the product of a *major image* spell. Interacting with these elements reveals the illusion but cannot stop the music.

While Alquam himself is not real, the three **owl harpies** (see *Tome of Beasts*) he has commanded to guard the chapel certainly are. The harpies are seated on top of three of the 60-foot-tall pillars carved to look like columns of skulls. The owl harpies immediately attack the PCs but will largely fight defensively, doing everything they can to keep the PCs in the chapel for 3 rounds.

At the beginning of the third round, Alquam's magic takes effect, and a portal opens in the middle of the room. The harpies' goal is to get the PCs into the portal—at least one of them, trusting that the rest will follow. Once the portal opens, the owl harpies will use their Hovering Darkness (dragging any unconscious PC into the portal) and Luring Song (luring any charmed PC into the portal) traits to achieve this.

If one or more PCs enter the portal, read the following and proceed to the next section of the adventure:

The ghastly music swells to a mighty crescendo that forces the world to spin. Shadows cast by the red candles and dark figures swirl into a blanket of utter black.

As you get your bearings, you realize you are no longer in the chapel. Wherever you are, at least the music has finally stopped.

Alquam's magic continues for 10 minutes after the portal opens, after which the portal closes and any remaining PCs find themselves in the original cellar with no trace of the illusory rooms.

Part 3: Vault of dreams

The portal has transported the characters to a remote corner of the Shadow Realm known as the Vault of Dreams. To escape the vault, the PCs must collect the items required to conduct the *Ritual of Awakening*. Once the ritual is complete, the adventurers have their window to escape—and so does the shard of the previous Moonlit King.

VAULT FEATURES

This tomb-like vault is carved from stark geometric patterns of black and white stone. There are no windows, and the whole place is filled with stale air.

Ceilings. Unless specified otherwise, the ceilings of the vault are 15 feet tall and covered with black-and-white mosaics of twisting abstract patterns.

Doors. Unless specified otherwise, the doors in the vault are made of black and white stone with no locks.

Light. Unless specified otherwise, there are no light sources in any area of the vault.

Restless Whispers. The Vault of Dreams is a small piece of the Shadow Realm and haunted by dreamers. Anyone who listens can hear a soft chorus of worried whispers while inside the vault.

Stasis. The vault is trapped in a stasis that keeps both the shard of the previous Moonlit King trapped and prevents the vault from being damaged. Anything that is destroyed or displaced in the vault resets to its original state after 10 minutes have passed. The vault areas where this effect is most likely to influence the adventure are noted in each section.

AREA 1: POOL ROOM

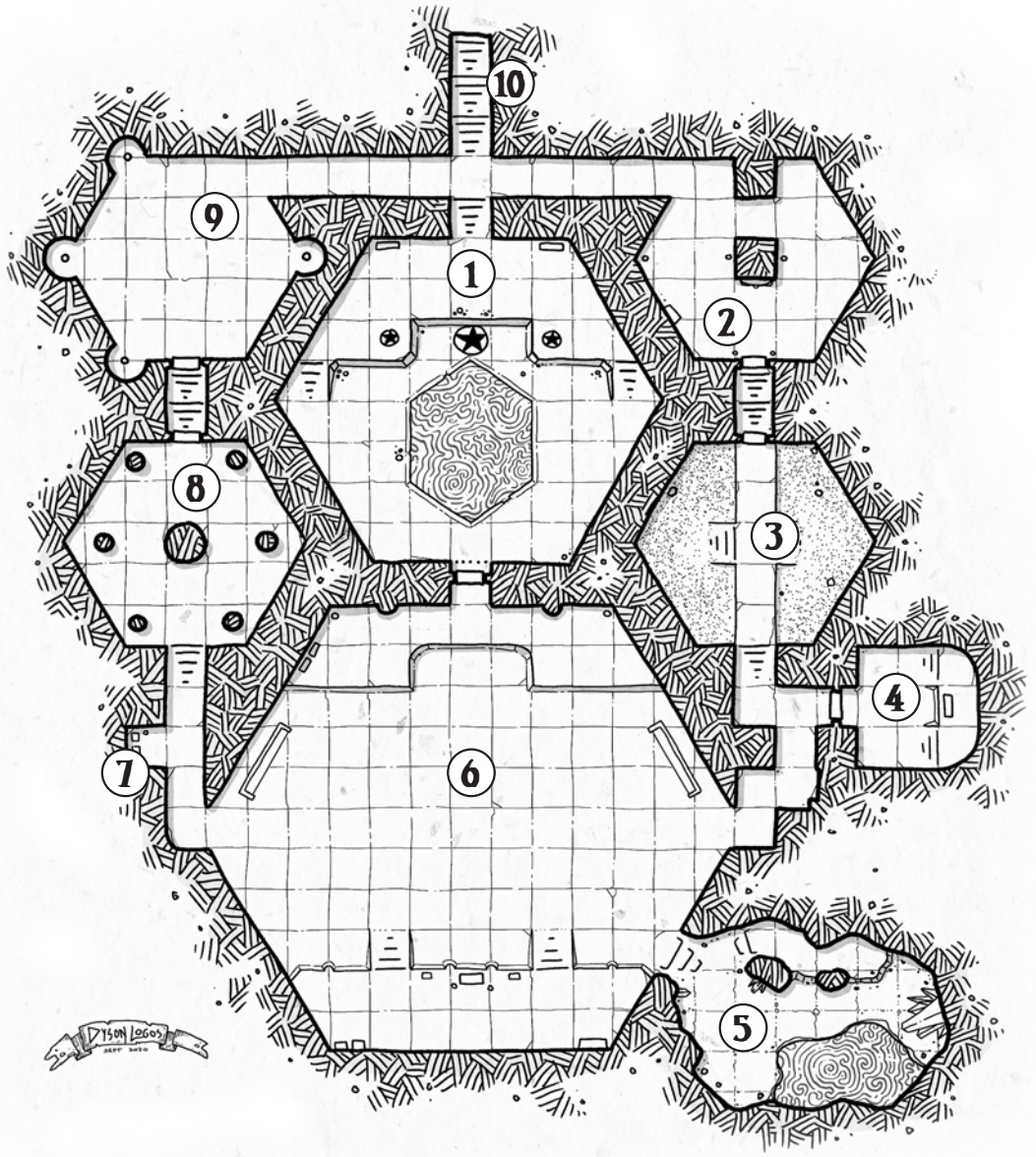
You find yourself in complete darkness. As your eyes adjust, you see a pool set into the floor of this hexagonal room. The pool glows with a faint lavender light, illuminating the base of a marble statue at its edge.

The portal has transported the PCs to the Shadow Realm. In particular, a hidden shrine called the Vault of Dreams. This chamber is the center of the vault and holds the key to the PCs' escape.

Characters who look around the room find several things of note.

Braziers. Two large stone braziers rest on the balcony. Each brazier has a neat pile of dried twigs and aromatic leaves ready to light. When lit, these braziers illuminate the entire room.

Pool. The faintly glowing substance in the pool is not water. It is a viscous, opalescent liquid. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check confirms this is no natural substance, and it appears to be raw magical



energy in a semi-tangible state. If any liquid is removed from the pool, it ceases to be magical. If the pool is drained, any fluid lost replenishes after 10 minutes.

Statue. The marble statue at the pool's edge depicts a male humanoid figure dressed in otherworldly finery. The man looks mostly human, except for one monstrous clawed hand. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (History) check identifies this large statue (AC 18; 75 hp; immunity to poison and psychic damage) as a depiction of the fey lord known as the **Moonlit King** (see *Tome of Beasts*). A successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check topples the statue. If the statue is damaged, moved, pushed into the pool, or destroyed, it reverts to its original state and place after 10 minutes.

Escaping the Vault. Several things have to happen in this room to escape the Vault of Dreams. In the other regions of the vault, the PCs can find a knife, a wand, and a chalice. When these three items are dropped into the pool, the *Ritual of Awakening* begins, and the characters will have an opportunity to escape the vault. When the three items are tossed into the pool, jump to the **Return of the King** section below.

AREA 2: RELIQUARY OF RITUAL

This hexagonal room is empty except for an ornate silver chest atop an altar at the room's very center.

As you take in your surroundings, a booming voice issues from the chest, "You are in the presence of the Reliquary of Ritual! Step forward, pilgrims, if ye seek knowledge."

If any characters approach the chest, the reliquary poses them a series of questions. The reliquary asks a question, waits for each character to answer, and then delivers its response.

The first question the reliquary asks:

"Who comes before the Reliquary of Ritual?"

If the player answers anything other than their real name, the reliquary says: "*Ye are unworthy. Step away, pilgrim.*" The reliquary then refuses to interact with that character any further.

The second question the reliquary asks:

"Would you name yourself as strong or wise?"

If a character answers, "Strong," the reliquary will say, "That is too bad. You are unworthy of my knowledge. Run along."

The reliquary opens its lid and spits out a child's toy sword as a consolation prize. The reliquary then refuses to interact with that character any further.

The third exchange is not a question but instead a demand:

"Demonstrate your power if ye be worthy."

The reliquary wants to see something impressive to demonstrate a character's worth. Casting a spell is one way to impress the reliquary, but a creative demonstration using a skill is also acceptable. The reliquary will judge who gave the most impressive display (preferring anyone who cast a spell). It then says to that character, "*Only ye are worthy, step forward and receive the gifts of the reliquary.*"

Treasure. The reliquary opens to the person it deems "worthy." Inside the chest is a *spell scroll of telepathic bond* and a *spell scroll of phantom steed*. In addition to these, there is a piece of rolled parchment that details the *Ritual of Awakening*.

Following is the text of the *Ritual of Awakening*, instructing the PCs on how to perform the ritual:

While caught in sleep
Your soul we'll keep
Locked in the vault of dreams

Our mad liege
We'll keep from siege
Locked in the vault of dreams

One day to wake
The steps to take
To escape the vault of dreams

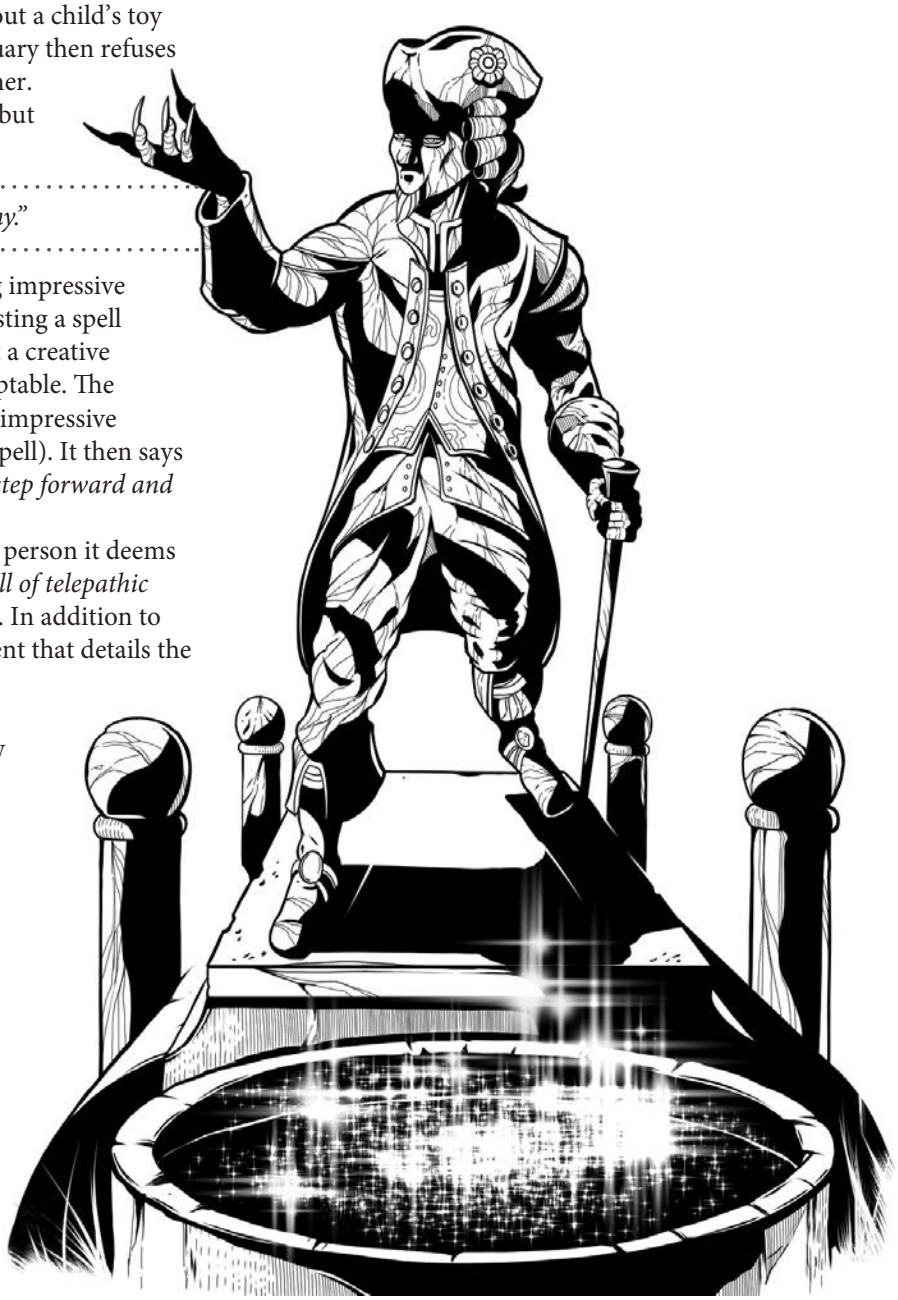
Key objects found
Then promptly drowned
To escape the vault of dreams

One a chalice
Stained by malice
Kept in the vault of dreams

Forge the knife
Of nightmares life
Kept in the vault of dreams

Reveal the wand
From pillars spawned
Or die in the vault of dreams

With all three
Our king you'll see
Or die in the vault of dreams



AREA 3: SANDS OF SLEEP

A thin walkway stretches between the two doors of this room. Just underneath the walkway is a lake of white sand that continuously churns like ocean waves. Every so often, you glimpse objects in the sand, whispers of golden treasures that bubble to the surface and then sink back into the depths.

This pit is filled with *sleeping sand*. Any character who touches it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or fall unconscious. An unconscious PC is rapidly pulled underneath the sand and begins to suffocate. An unconscious character can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns to see if they wake up. Pulling a character out of the sand or swimming out of the sand requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

Buried Treasures. There are various golden objects buried in the sand, everything from ornate clocks to crowns to weapons. A character who reaches into the sand or dives in must succeed a DC 15 Constitution saving throw each round they are in contact with it (as per the rules above). Characters who use magic or other creative means for fishing objects out of the sand do so easily. All objects pulled from the sand disappear from the inventory of characters who teleport out of the vault.

Golden Hilt. Characters who have investigated the Dream Anvil in **Area 6** can easily spot a golden hilt among the sand's treasures.

AREA 4: DREAM ANVIL

A faintly glowing anvil sits at the far side of this small room. Set into its surface is a depression shaped like a knife with a unique hilt.

The anvil is the only object in this room. The PCs can use it to craft the knife needed for the *Ritual of Awakening*. When *sleeping sand* and a hilt from **Area 3** are inserted, the anvil flashes and magically assembles a glass dagger.

Clue. If the PCs are struggling to figure out how to use the anvil, randomly determine a character who notices an empty packet of *sleeping sand* at the base of the anvil.

AREA 5: REFUSE PIT

The roughhewn walls of this cavern reveal it was a later addition to the vault. A rocky crater on the south side of the room is filled with a bubbling black liquid. A sudden presence enters your mind as you hear a voice crawl into your thoughts.

This stone cavern serves as a refuse pit for the vault. Trash is dumped into the bubbling black liquid, which breaks down all materials.

The telepathic voice belongs to an unfortunate servant named Elwood. Elwood served as the vault's caretaker until he defied instructions and removed the coverings of the mirrors in **Area 6**. He was promptly slain by the mirror images, who dropped his body into the black pit. While his body is gone, Elwood's consciousness remains trapped in the pit. Elwood cannot be saved, but he wants revenge on the creatures who trapped him in this eternal nightmare. Elwood asks the PCs to smash the mirrors in **Area 6** and dump every single shattered piece into the black bubbling pit. This process is the only way to ensure the mirror images cannot respawn.

If the characters do as Elwood asks, he spits out the chalice required to conduct the *Ritual of Awakening*.

AREA 6: MIRROR CHAMBER

This room is large with soaring ceilings and a wide expanse of a tiled floor. On the southern side of the room rests a stage scattered with objects. Two ornately carved mirrors, at least 15 feet in height, rest in opposite corners. On the northern side sprawls a balcony, 15 feet up.

Two **mirror images** (see **Appendix**) lurk inside this room, one inside each mirror. The mirrors are angled, so the mirror images do not perceive anyone on the northern balcony. However, if a creature enters the room

ROLEPLAYING ELWOOD

Elwood was once an elf commanded to clean and look after the Vault of Dreams. He has been trapped in his current incorporeal state for so long however that he can only vaguely recall details about his former life.

The realization that he will be trapped here for centuries until his consciousness finally fades away has shredded his sanity. Elwood is desperate for the characters to help him enact his revenge and will try every emotional tactic to get them to help.

If the PCs ask Elwood questions about the vault or how they arrived, he can only provide cryptic hints at information. He genuinely cannot remember the purpose of the vault, but he does suggest the characters visit the Reliquary of Ritual in **Area 2** if they need help.

from the west or east or climbs down from the balcony, they immediately step from their mirrors to attack.

Destroying the Mirrors. The gigantic mirrors and the mirror images that inhabit them are one creature. The standing mirrors share the mirror images' AC, saving throws, and hit points. The mirrors shatter when the mirror images are destroyed, scattering the shards on the floor. Like everything else in the vault, the mirrors will repair themselves 10 minutes after being destroyed.

The Stage. The stage at the southern end of the room has a variety of equipment stacked on it. These items include moldy rations, candles, kindling, cleaning materials, and other standard equipment. The only notable item is a set of massive black-velvet curtains. If these curtains are draped over the mirrors, the mirror images are forced to retreat into their respective mirrors and do not attack anyone who passes through the room. The curtains were originally placed here by Elwood, who met a nasty fate and now resides in **Area 5**.

AREA 7: LECTERN

A stone lectern rests in this unadorned alcove. A tome rests on it, open. The page shows an image of a beautiful, crowned figure dressed in a cape made of flowing water.

The tome resting on the lectern is titled *Pimm's Faerie Tales*. It is a collection of stories chronicling the various fey monarchs who vie for power.

Anyone who spends time examining the book or flipping through its pages discovers a note written inside the front cover:

Night stares across the sky upon her cast-out lord, flanked by her sister queens, ready for a fight.

Winter's monarch keeps His Rippling Majesty oh so close by her side, whose watery throne rests to the Moonlit King's right.

This note reveals how to solve the spinning pillar puzzle in **Area 8**. The PCs can also use the book to identify the carved images of the fey lords and ladies.

AREA 8: SPINNING PILLARS

Six floor-to-ceiling pillars surround a central column of transparent glass. Five of the pillars are carved with five different panels. The sixth pillar on the eastern side of the room shows the same panel on every side depicting a man dressed in finery with a single clawed hand.

This room is a puzzle that can be solved using the note written in the book in **Area 7**. To solve the puzzle, the PCs must rotate the pillars, so the correct sides face the center's glass column.

The panels depicted on the five pillars (that can be rotated) are:

- A man dressed in animal hides with antlers growing from his head: Lord of the Hunt.
- A crowned woman dressed in a gown carved with stars: Queen of Night and Magic.
- A woman with wild, tangled hair, holding a silver ring: Queen of Witches.
- A crowned man dressed in robes carved like waves: River King.
- A woman draped in thick furs fringed with carved shards of ice: Snow Queen.

The correct faces to show on the pillars are:

- Top left: Snow Queen.
- Top Right: River King.
- Far-Right: Moonlit King.
- Bottom Right: Lord of the Hunt.
- Bottom Left: Queen of Witches.
- Far Left: Queen of Night and Magic.

Once the pillars have been set correctly, the glass column cracks, and a glass wand rolls onto the floor. The wand is not magical, but it is one of the three items needed to conduct the *Ritual of Awakening* in **Area 1**.

AREA 9: CHRONICLE OF DREAMS

Wooden shelves with dozens of tiny drawers cover the walls of this room. There are several alcoves that each contain a marble stand topped with a shallow bowl. The bowls are filled with viscous black liquid.

This chamber is a storage space for the Moonlit King's dreams. While the king slept, a caretaker named Elwood was supposed to collect the dreams and place them in these drawers. Since Elwood met his unfortunate end centuries ago (see **Area 5**), the Moonlit King's dreams have gone uncollected, and most of the drawers are empty.

Searching the Drawers. Most of the dozens of drawers are empty, but a few contain glass marbles. Each of these marbles is of varying sizes and has a different pattern of colored glass. When a marble is dropped into the black liquid, the creature that dropped the marble experiences the king's dream.

DREAM MARBLES

d8	Dream
1	You experience the sensation of physical touch for the first time in what feels like forever. Her beautiful face, like marble perfection, swims into view. So close, you can count the constellations that swirl in her gaze. She's going to take you back this time. This time, you're sure.
2	Wind whips against your face as you soar through the moonlit sky. It is the warm winds of Faerie however, so not so unpleasant. Far below, you watch the forests stir as you head home to rest.
3	Your tongue feels the sweet burst of yet another ripe summer berry. You sigh with pleasure as gilded pixies lay silver dinner platters before you. Your eyes fill with the delight of soft cheeses, honeyed meats, rich wines, and fresh breads.
4	White-hot light blinds your vision as stone walls shatter nearby. Your vision recovers slowly, allowing you to see a hole in the wall of your prison. Fresh air, real night air, fills your nose. You are free.
5	The caress of silk is a revelation as you slide your arm into yet another gossamer sleeve. You smile at the rows of beautiful clothing. Excessive finery made just for you.
6	You feel the crown's weight settle on your head and hear the cheers of your subjects. Everyone in the court has come to witness your triumph. You wave to the folks as the band begins to play.
7	Panic surges in your chest as you claw along the dark stone floor. There is not a single crack in your prison. You can no longer feel the moon's light, and you are going to die here alone.
8	Wolf songs echo through the hills somewhere far away. You long to run with them once again, but no matter how fast you run, you can't seem to catch up. Surely, they must be over the next hill... you just have to push a little farther.

If a character drops a marble into a bowl, you can roll or choose on the **Dream Marbles** table below to determine what they experience:

AREA 10: COLLAPSED PASSAGE

Large chunks of stone and rubble have fallen from above, collapsing the passage.

This passage used to lead to the rest of the Shadow Realm, but it has collapsed over the centuries.

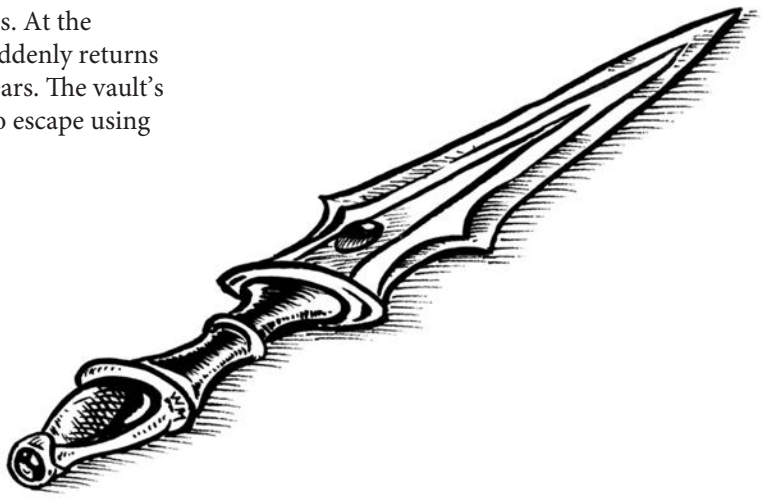
A character can spend an hour of hard work clearing the passage, at which point viscous black liquid pours from the opening. The liquid continues to flow in a torrent, flooding the vault for 10 minutes. At the 10-minute mark, the collapsed passage suddenly returns to its original state, and the liquid disappears. The vault's ability to reset itself makes it impossible to escape using this route.

RETURN OF THE KING

Once the glass knife, the wand, and the chalice are dropped into the pool, the *Ritual of Awakening* begins.

As the items sink into the opalescent pool, the liquid begins to spin, rapidly speeding to create a whirlpool. Cracking sounds come from the marble statue as you see flecks of stone fall from a now-animated face.

The swirling vortex in the pool is the portal back to Midgard. If the PCs jump into the vortex, they are transported out of the vault and return to Midgard.



By opening the vortex, the characters have allowed the shard of the previous Moonlit King an opportunity to escape as well. The Moonlit King's goal is to jump into the portal and escape (not necessarily to fight the characters). Each round the Moonlit King remains conscious, he becomes less statue-like. After 3 rounds, he has full control of his powers and does everything he can to leap into the vortex.

If the characters decide to fight the **Moonlit King** (see *Tome of Beasts*) and manage to defeat or incapacitate him before he leaps into the portal, he will revert to a stone statue in 10 minutes due to the vault's stasis effect. Before this happens, the vortex closes, which means the king's memory is forced to remain in the vault.

Use the following changes to the Moonlit King's stats for this encounter:

- Has hit point maximum halved. (Once the shard steps through the portal, his memories are now shared by the current Moonlit King. Should the shard of the Moonlit King ever fall to 0 hit points while outside of the vault, the shard is destroyed.)
- Has a speed of 0 feet until after 3 rounds of combat have passed.
- Does half damage with Fearful Shadows action.
- Cannot take Summon Devil action nor take legendary actions.
- Cannot take lair actions, and the Vault of Dreams is not affected by regional effects.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs can neutralize the Moonlit King, he reverts to a statue and is unable to escape his prison in the Vault of Dreams:

The final strike shatters the Moonlit King as if he were made of stone. The pieces lay scattered on the floor, no longer living. The whirl of the portal in the center of the room begins to grow quieter as you see the whirlpool growing smaller. If you are going to escape from the vault, you have to do it now.

Characters who jump into the vortex appear back on Midgard within the cellar of the ruins just outside Elmshire. When they appear, they notice that the missing residents have appeared with them and cannot remember anything since they last heard the music. Silvana has fled Elmshire by the time the characters return for their reward.

THE MOONLIT KING ESCAPES

If the PCs decide to jump into the vortex without confronting the Moonlit King, they return to Midgard as above. However, the Moonlit King follows them when he regains full control of his body after 3 rounds. Once he is free, the shard of the Moonlit King has better things to do than fight adventurers, but he might be inclined to give them a gift or a last-minute sucker punch.

However that interaction ends, the shard is now free to wander the world. What he does with his freedom, especially with regard to the current Moonlit King and the courts, depends on what works best for your campaign, but he has many scores to settle and isn't too concerned with whatever global fallout might ensue.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

If the PCs wish to continue following the threads of this story, here are several hooks to craft a follow-up adventure:

- The PCs can attempt to track down Silvana Redleaf to get their just rewards. This route leads them to interact with the demon cult of Alquam.
- If the PCs succeeded in keeping the Moonlit King trapped, this attracts the gratitude of one of the fey lords or ladies. Perhaps the fey is interested in giving them a few tasks of their own to complete.
- The PCs' presence in the vault has likely alerted the Queen of Night and Magic to their efforts—and maybe also the current Moonlit King or his allies. The PCs might subsequently get drawn into quests for any number of related parties, perhaps even being drawn into the intrigues of the *Courts of the Shadow Fey*.

Race for the Shining Dawn

For 8th-Level Characters

This adventure takes place in an unspecified location in the Western Wastes in the path of Pah'draguusthlai, the Dread Walker, but can easily be adapted to any isolated and desolate region.

Adventure Background

Xandar Demir grew up in Bemmea—yet another arcane practitioner produced by the Magocracy of Allain. Demir is a competent mage but overshadowed by many. His one claim to fame is that he is the last known direct descendent of Enkada Pishtuhk, the treacherous mage who summoned the first Dread Walker, during the Great Mage Wars.

Demir spent years trying to live up to the expectations inherent in being related to the most infamous wizard in the world. But he never did. Xandar could never muster what was needed to step out from under the shadow of his ancestor—and even Enkada's shadow was more famous and feared than he would ever be. Finally, he decided that the family reputation should work in his favor for once, so he journeyed to Enkada's tower, affixed to the back of the looming Walker that the ancient mage had summoned, in the hopes of studying under his ancestor.

Xandar had expected there to be some sort of familial connection, some special dispensation for a relative. Instead, Enkada refused to see him, sending his magical shadow to speak in his stead. The shadow stated that only those who came bearing acceptable gifts were allowed consultation with Enkada. Xandar's despair quickly turned to anger. He became obsessed with proving himself worthy of Enkada's bloodline, of simultaneously earning Enkada's respect while punishing the mage for spurning his request for aid. He lurked in the wastes, observing the tower and the looming abomination that bore it. Whether it was a family predisposition for madness, the time spent in the vicinity of the Dread Walker, studying it and the tower, or a wearing down of his mind after years of trying to resolve the disparity between the greatness of his legacy and the relative mediocrity of his talents, eventually Demir's mind snapped.

He determined that to truly reach his full potential, he needed access to his birthright: the secrets held in Enkada's tower and the Dread Walker itself. Demir embarked on a mission to find a way to reverse the spells that keep Pah'draguusthlai locked outside of time, to gather useful followers to assist him in creating and eventually performing the ritual that he is sure will dissolve the bonds that imprison the Walker, releasing the abomination and the legacy it carries upon its back. And so the Heralds of the Shining Dawn were born. Led by Demir, this group of fanatical lunatics have slaved and studied, watching the stars and seeking the necessary ancient tomes, rare components, and fit sacrifices. Now the time of the Shining Dawn is nigh. The cultists have begun the long, complex ritual devised by Xandar to undo the mighty spells laid down upon the Dread Walker by the mages of old. Worse, the ritual is having effects that those sensitive to magic have noticed, causing great concern among the wise.

Adventure Hooks

Here are some options for introducing the PCs into the adventure:

- Dire portents from divinations conducted at the Temple of Lada in Bourgund warn of great danger associated with a thing or event known as the Shining Dawn. Whatever the Shining Dawn may be, it is somewhere in the Western Wastes, and the time until its dangers are unleashed is short. Powerful figures in Allain seek adventurers to travel into the wastes and seek out the source of this peril and end it.
- Mages from the Academies Arcana in Bemmea have been receiving reports of strange magical events from researchers in the Western Wastes. Investigation into these reports show these events to be temporal anomalies, minor and seemingly random alterations to the flow of time. They also seem to be growing in frequency and effect the farther one moves into the wastes. Through the efforts of several mages, they were able to determine the origin of the magical energies that are causing the events. It lies near the feet of one of the Great Walkers. The mages need seasoned adventurers to swiftly reach the site, determine the cause, and stop it before it gets out of control.

- A prominent NPC in the PCs' lives has been abducted. An investigation turns up the name of an organization called the Heralds of the Shining Dawn. How this information is brought to the PCs' attention can vary depending on circumstances and the NPC involved. Perhaps the NPC was investigating the cult or suspicious individuals were poking around, asking questions about the abducted NPC, prior to the kidnapping and were later identified as members or associates of the cult. Tracking down leads brings them information of an occult ritual being conducted at a remote location in the Western Wastes where sacrifices are being made. The PCs must race to save this individual before they meet their end upon a sacrificial altar.

The Ritual of the Shining Dawn

The Ritual of the Shining Dawn is the grandiose name that Xandar Demir has given to the complex and lengthy ritual he has devised as a means of piercing the veil that unseats Pah'draguusthlai from reality, allowing the Devourer to reenter the normal flow of time.

The ritual requires the aid of many participants and several individual elements, some to manipulate the magical fields that hold the barrier in place, others to act as beacons to draw the Dread Walker's attention so that it comes through at the appointed time when the barrier is briefly opened.

Demir is certain that it will work if finished to completion.His mad minions are too zealous and ignorant of the theories to question it; they merely live to serve him and the abomination he seeks to free. Should the cultists in one room be attacked, the others in the adjacent rooms will leave them to their fates, single-mindedly pursuing their own portion of the ritual in an attempt to ensure success, though they will be expecting trouble after hearing or seeing combat taking place elsewhere in the complex.

THE RITUAL COMPLEX

The Heralds of the Shining Dawn have found a suitable site for Demir's ritual. It is an ancient complex directly in Pah'draguusthlai's path. It lies beneath a ruined tower, the remains of its outer wall jutting up like a talon into the sky atop a low hill. The massive, fleshy bulk of the Devourer looms, towering in the near distance, its long shadow falling across the ruin like an ill omen.

The strange temporal effects are strongest in this region, and a simple *detect magic* spell will be enough to discern the incredible amounts of magical energy that are emanating from somewhere in the ruins. The entrance to the caves under the tower is plainly visible: an iron-bound trapdoor with a pull ring set into the foundation beneath the ruined walls. Lifting the door reveals a set of stairs descending into darkness, and bits of music and chanting can be heard echoing up from below.

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using **Status** (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs defeat the cult, the PCs gain +2 to their Status with the individual or organization that set them on this journey and with Enkada Pishtuhk. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

MINOR TEMPORAL EFFECTS

One thing that is certain is that the magic of the ritual does indeed have noticeable effects on the flow of time, starting in the immediate area and spreading outward, like ripples in a calm pool when a stone is cast into it. The longer the ritual goes on, the more intrusive and persistent these effects become. Some of these have a definitive mechanical effect on the game while others are mostly atmospheric.

During the PCs' travels to the site of the ritual, you can have fun playing up these effects. Once within the complex, there will be specific, more potent side effects of the ritual that will come into play during the encounters set there, as laid out in the descriptions.

As GM, you are free to devise other minor temporal effects if you wish, but the general rule is that they should have no effect on in-game mechanics, or at least not while in combat. (See also **Major Temporal Effects** below for those effects that occur in the cultist's complex where the magic is much more powerful.) During the time prior to their arrival at the cultist's complex, you can use the following effects:

- ***Altered Time Flow.*** The PCs see obvious signs of the flow of time being altered in a particular area or for a particular creature or creatures. They might notice a bird that seems paused in mid-flight. Closer observation reveals the bird is still moving but at a pace that's only noticeable with prolonged attention: it takes a full minute for the bird to flap its wings a single time. Or they might witness a tortoise outpacing them. It might even affect the PCs directly if you wish: perhaps for a brief period the world seems to speed up around them (they slow down) or everything else seems to move in slow motion while they remain at what appears to be a normal speed (they speed up).
- ***Déjà Vu.*** The PCs find themselves repeating sentences or taking actions that they're sure they've already done before. They might come around a low hillside and pass a broken wagon, only to realize they just passed

it a minute ago, yet they'll see no signs of their tracks indicating that they've already been by it once before.

- ***Reversals.*** Time might seem to move backward for small periods. During the night, the stars and planets may seem to traverse the wrong direction across the night sky, only to reverse themselves to the correct course again. This is an isolated pocket effect, which corrects itself once the PCs travel outside of the affected area, which is at most 100 yards in diameter.

MAJOR TEMPORAL EFFECTS

The strain that the Shining Dawn's ritual is putting on the temporal flow is much greater at the source. As such, the effects experienced within the complex are much greater than in the surrounding lands and more likely to have a dramatic effect on events, for better or worse.

When combat ensues, before initiative is rolled, roll percentile dice for each creature. There is a 50% chance it is affected by a temporal effect on its turn; the exact effect is determined by rolling on the **Major Temporal Effects** table. This effect lasts until the beginning of the creature's next turn (unless the individual effect states otherwise), when percentiles are rolled again to see if it suffers another effect.

Each result lists the name and the effect as well as the caster level for purposes of a *dispel magic* spell, which can counter the effects if successfully cast on the affected target. In the case of a large group of creatures, you can speed up the process by making one percentile roll for a group of the same type of creature to see if they are affected, and/or a single roll to determine the effect.

MAJOR TEMPORAL EFFECTS

d%	Effect	Caster Level
01–10	Quickening	0
11–20	Precognitive flash	1st
21–30	False precognitive flash	1st
31–40	Deceleration	2nd
41–50	Acceleration	3rd
51–60	Haste	3rd
61–70	Slow	3rd
71–80	Magical insight	3rd
81–90	Deep precognition	4th
91–00	Time loop	6th

As the adventurers successfully defeat the cultists and put an end to portions of the ritual, the effects of the Shining Dawn begin to lessen. The chance of a temporal effect lessens by 5% each time a ritual room (**Areas 2**, **3**, **5**, **6**, **7**, **9**, **10**, and **11**) is cleared, to a minimum of 10%.

If Demir is killed in **Area 12**, then all major temporal effects cease immediately, and the lesser temporal effects in the surrounding areas lessen and eventually stop over the course of the next 8 hours.

Quickening. The creature affected has an altered view of time, allowing for swift reactions. If this result comes up prior to combat, the creature rolls a d4 and adds the result to their initiative roll. Otherwise, the creature can roll a d4 and add the result to an attack on their turn or to a Dexterity saving throw rolled before the start of their next turn.

Precognitive Flash. The creature has a brief glimpse of the future, viewing an opening in an enemy's defenses or seeing an attack before it happens. The creature gains advantage on one attack it makes before the beginning of its next turn or causes a creature to have disadvantage on one attack against it that takes place before its next turn.

False Precognitive Flash. What seems to be a brief view of the future is merely a possibility that never comes to pass, a misreading that brings woe. The creature gains disadvantage on its next attack roll, or an attacker gains advantage on an attack against it (GM's choice) that occurs before the creature's next turn.

Deceleration. The flow of time slows around the creature, reducing its speed to half until the beginning of its next turn, unless it rolls this result again the following round. In that instance, it continues to decelerate, reducing its speed by half again (rounded down). If the effect is received multiple times, a creature's speed can never be reduced to less than 5 feet.

Acceleration. The flow of time around the creature quickens, doubling its speed until the beginning of its next turn. If this effect is rolled for the creature a second time (or a third and so on), its movement rate does not increase to more than double, but it instead can use a bonus action on its turn to use the Dash action, and it has advantage on Dexterity saving throws until the effect ends.

Haste. The creature is under the effects of the *haste* spell until the beginning of its next turn.

Slow. The creature is under the effects of the *slow* spell until the beginning of its next turn.

Magical Insight. A flash of foresight gives the creature time to prepare against magical attacks. It gains advantage on any saving throws against spells and other magical effects until the beginning of its next turn.

Deep Precognition. The creature receives a brief but detailed glimpse into the near future of its current surroundings. If the creature is controlled by the GM,

then each player must declare, in initiative order, what their next action will be.

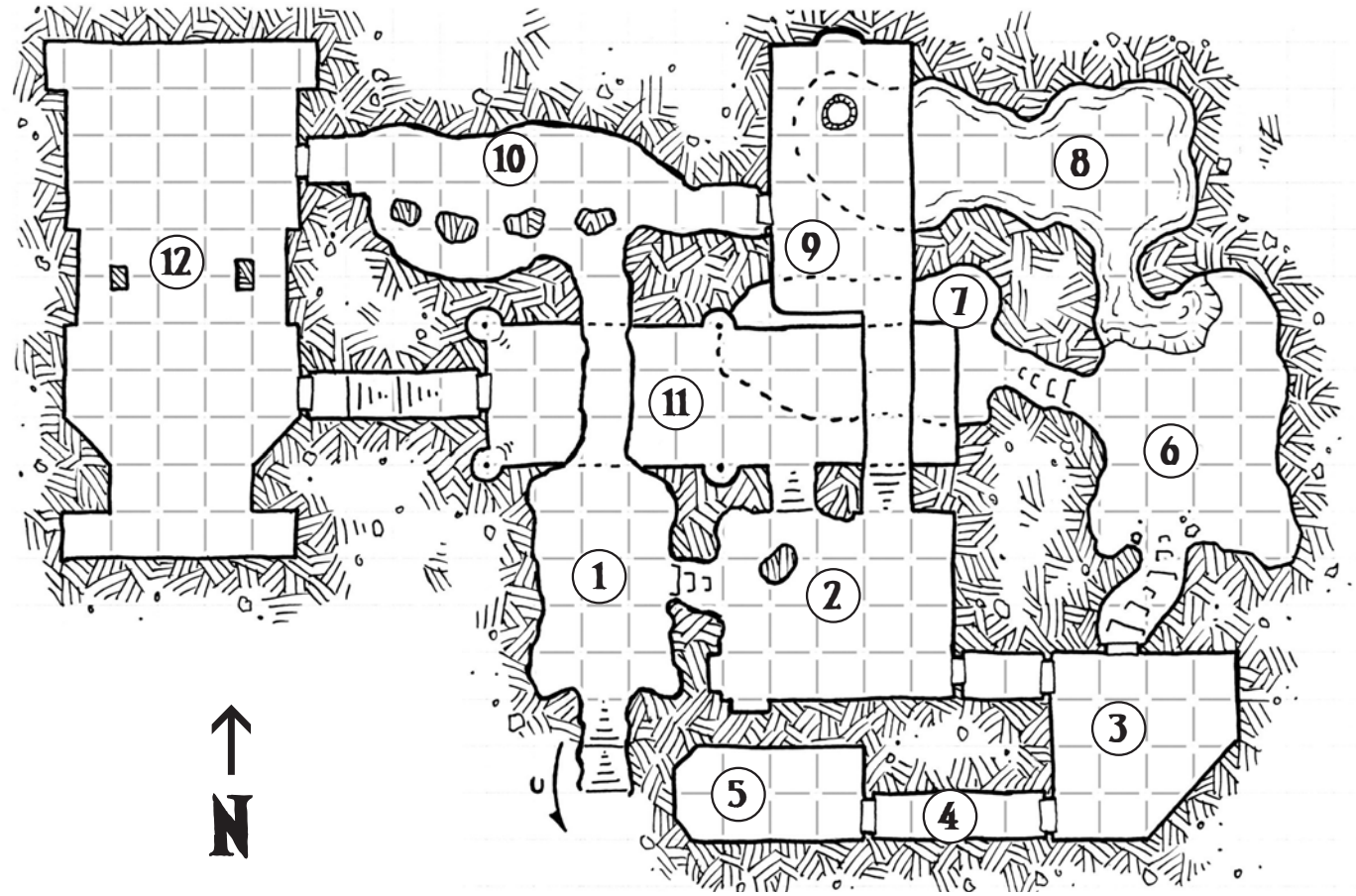
If the creature is a PC, then the GM must declare the actions of each remaining creature on the initiative order between this turn and the PC's next turn. Once those actions are declared, the creatures must take the action declared, or one as close as possible if circumstances make it impossible once their turn is reached. The affected creature has advantage on attack rolls, ability checks and saving throws until the beginning of its next turn while any creatures that have declared their actions have disadvantage on attack rolls against the affected creature.

Time Loop. A thread of time around the creature circles back and forms a loop. The creature takes its turn normally. However, instead of rolling again the following turn for a possible effect, the time loop takes hold. The creature is teleported to the space where it began its last turn. The creature must repeat the activities it took on its previous turn, following the sequence of moves and actions to the best of its ability. Movement does not need to be along the same exact path, nor does an attack have to be against the same target, but if the creature moved and attacked on its last turn, then it must move and attack on this turn. If the space where it began its last turn is occupied, or the creature is unable to take the same action (if it cast a spell last turn but is unable to do so this turn because it is out of spell slots, for example), then the target becomes incapacitated.

Once a creature is caught in a time loop, it does not roll again on the table until it breaks free. Each round after its first repetition of actions, it can recognize it is in a time loop and make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a successful save, the creature breaks free of the time loop, rolling again for a possible major temporal effect on its next turn.

AREA 1: HALL OF ECHOES

This rough-hewn chamber of stone has a high, vaulted ceiling, cast into flickering shadows by clusters of lit candles that have been placed in random locations on the floor. The smell of beeswax and smoke is heavy in the air. Strange, droning chants can be heard from the passages exiting the room to the north and east, woven with strains of piping, alien music. These sounds seem to bounce off the walls of the chamber and multiply, becoming a



multitude of eldritch voices that cause the very air to tremble. The room is smoky, and the smoke concentrates around four strange beasts—horrible amalgamations of insect and canine—that sit near the exit on the northern edge of the room.

Echo Chamber. While the acoustics here are unusual, they are being enhanced further by another of the ritual's temporal manifestations. Not only are there actual echoes of recent sounds but echoes returning from the past, accumulating and building, making echoes of echoes. These voices are distracting to intelligent, language-using creatures, causing them to be at disadvantage on attacks and ability checks in this room. This effect lasts until the ritual going on in **Area 11** has been disrupted or at least two other rituals in other rooms have been stopped.

Creatures. Four **brimstone locusthounds** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) prowl this chamber. Tamed and trained by Xandar Demir, they will attack anyone entering the chamber who is not wearing the orange robes of the cult, and they are unaffected by the echo chamber effect. They are desperately hungry and fight to the death.

AREA 2: THE SACRIFICIAL FEAST

Several orange-robed figures surround a flat-topped stone in the northwestern corner of the room. Laid out on the stone is a figure, wearing nothing but a tattered loincloth. Several other bedraggled, near-naked forms huddle in chains in the southwestern corner. As the chanting of the robed figures rises, one holds aloft a sacrificial knife. To the east, four gray-skinned, emaciated figures crouch on the floor around the remains of a previous victim.

Creatures. A pair of **cult fanatics** lead four **cultists** in the ritual sacrifice of a **commoner**. Four other **commoners** and a **noble** sit, chained and drugged, awaiting their turn under the knife. Four **ghouls** devour the remains of the victims after the sacrifices are completed. The cultists fight to the death. The ghouls ironically have a better sense of self-preservation, attempting to flee if two of their number are struck down.

The prisoners would be willing to fight for their freedom if released except for their current drugged state. If the effects of the drugs are somehow removed and they are freed, they will use their manacles as makeshift weapons against their captors, fleeing the place once the battle is over.

Reward. If rescued and returned home to Bourgund, the noble will reward the PCs with 1,000 gp.

AREA 3: CHAMBER OF VIOLENCE

An elaborate circle of glyphs has been chalked in the center of this room and surrounded by lit candles. Two figures stand within it. A grotesquely muscled humanoid—easily over 9 feet tall and with strange sigils crawling over its flesh—is eagerly assaulting a much smaller humanoid in a torn and bloodied orange robe. With every twist of a limb or meaty smack of a backhand, the robed figure cries out in pain and mumbles a chanted passage in a strange tongue.

Creatures. A **knight ab-errant** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) is engaging in ritual violence against a **cult fanatic** at the cultist's own direction. The violent acts build power, which is channeled through the ritual circle drawn out on the ground to help fuel the magic of the ritual. When the fanatic reaches their limit, they drink one of their potions, healing any damage, and the ritual starts again. If intruders enter, the fanatic commands the knight to attack. The knight hefts its maul and wades into combat while the fanatic drinks a potion to heal their wounds before using spells to support the knight. Both combatants fight to the death.

Treasure. The knight carries a pouch containing 70 gp and 210 sp. In the pockets of their robe, the cultist carries four *potions of greater healing* and a pouch of 40 gp.

AREA 4: FOREVER HALL

This stone hallway stretches for about 20 feet between two doors. Two glass globes, glowing with blue light, sit in iron sconces, hanging from the ceiling about 10 feet apart. The floor of the hallway is covered in a mosaic pattern of whorls and wavy lines in black and white tiles.

When creatures enter the hallway, the light from the glass orbs flares and flickers (a response by the creatures trapped inside to potential prey), possibly misleading the PCs into thinking they are linked to the trap described below.

Trap. If either door is entered, it will swing shut 2 rounds after a creature passes over its threshold. The hallway seems to lengthen with the door at the far end receding into the distance. No matter how fast a creature runs the length of the hallway, they never seem to get any closer to the door. Looking in the other direction, back to the entrance, reveals a similar lengthening of the hallway. The lengthening of the hall is an illusion, and the reason a creature can never reach the end of the hall is because a creature entering the square in front of either of the doors will be teleported to the center of the hallway.



Prevention. A *detect magic* spell will note illusion magic in the hallway, conjuration magic at the two true ends of the hall, and abjuration magic from the glass globes above.

Creatures that are flying or otherwise not touching the floor do not activate the teleportation effect. This will allow them to interact with the illusion. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds the door beyond the illusion. Damaging the mosaic on the floor in front of the doors will disable the teleportation effect. The squares have an AC 15. Doing at least 14 damage to the tiles is enough to disable the teleportation effect in that square.

Creatures. The glass globes are immune to fire damage but otherwise as fragile as normal glass (AC 13; hp 3). Breaking a globe releases the malnourished and stunted **lambent witchfyre** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*, changing size to Small, current hp to 35, and challenge rating to 3) from within. The witchfyres are starving and will attempt to incinerate any and all creatures in the hallway, and they will pursue creatures anywhere in or out of the complex, though they may become distracted by other sources of food (creatures) nearby.

AREA 5: RITUAL HALL OF THE BLACK GOAT'S BLESSING

The air of this room carries a heavy, musky odor. Drawn on the floor at the far end of the room is an elaborate magic circle. The air within the circle appears filled by a roiling darkness. Tendrils of smoke—or perhaps tentacles?—snake outward to test the barrier of the circle as if searching for an opening to escape. Standing around the circle are four figures. Two are wearing orange, hooded robes. The other pair are monstrous amalgamations of goats and men, crouched and staring into the darkness within the circle while emitting excited grunts and bleats.

Creatures. Conducting a ritual to garner the attention and aid of the Black Goat of the Woods are two **cult fanatics**, aided by a pair of **goat-men** (see *Tome of Beasts*). They will attack any intruders, fighting to the death.

Black Goat's Presence. While the writhing, smoky, tendrilled mass within the circle remains, any saving throws made against the spells and effects of the room's occupants are made at disadvantage. Once the cultists

have entered combat and are no longer performing the ritual, the presence fades in 4 rounds. A creature can perform the Use an Object action to mar the circle, scuffing it with a foot, splashing water on it, or otherwise marring the circle's border and intricate glyphs, immediately banishing the presence, but any creatures within 5 feet of the circle take 11 (2d10) necrotic damage as the smoky tendrils lash out before fading away.

Treasure. In the back of the room are sacks containing materials for the ritual being conducted as well as components for the crafting of the magic circle. These include silver dust worth 150 gp, gold dust worth 150 gp, diamond dust worth 300 gp, and rare oils worth 50 gp.

AREA 6: WATER PREPARATION CHAMBER

One passage into this rough-hewn cave is partially flooded. The cloudy water lapping at the cavern floor bears an unwholesome, oily sheen. Orange-robed figures chant as they ceremoniously empty the contents of jars into the water. To the east, a robed kobold stands near a collection of other jars, surrounded by several sacks, meticulously adding ingredients from those sacks to the jars.

Creatures. A **cult fanatic** and four **cultists** are ritually poisoning the water in the pool with specially formulated toxins that are being crafted by a **kobold alchemist** (see *Tome of Beasts*). The cultists will rush intruders while the fanatic supports them with spells. The alchemist will provide alchemical protection to their allies before attacking from range with explosive flasks. All enemies here fight to the death.

Treasure. The gear and ingredients in the alchemist's sacks provide the equivalent of a set of alchemist's supplies, an herbalism kit, and a poisoner's kit. There is also a pouch containing 10 gp and 25 sp.

AREA 7: RITUAL CHAMBER OF THE CHILDREN OF THE VOID

This chamber is devoid of light, and what light you bring with you seems too dim to illuminate the edges of the place, as if you have intruded upon an endless, silent void. In fact, the echoes seem to fade, leaving you with just the small noises your companions make in a vast, terrible silence—save for the whispers of some horrible tongue from out of the darkness ahead.

Creatures. Three **satarre destroyers** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*), led by a **satarre mystic** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*), conduct their portion of the ritual in this cave, bleeding just a trickle of the Void into the darkness of the place. These four are followers of a Void cult who assist because of the sheer amount of destruction that could be wrought should the Dread Walker be freed from its imprisonment.

Darkness of the Void. The magic being wrought here has bled the true darkness of the Void into the room. Nonmagical light sources are suppressed while the radius of magical light sources is reduced by half. A successful *dispel magic* against a 5th-level spell will end this effect.

Treasure. Among the various ritual trappings in place are six fist-sized orbs of black onyx, worth 50 gp each.

AREA 8: BEFOULED POOL

The water here is murky with churned sediment, and an unhealthy sheen coats the surface like a slick of oil. The water ripples as if something swims farther within. On occasion, a resounding moan echoes from deeper within the chamber.

Corrupted Water. The water in this cave is already foul due to its occupant, but the cultists have further polluted it during the ritual. If a creature is in contact with the water for at least 1 minute or drinks the water, then they must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 7 (2d6) poison damage and is poisoned for 1 hour. On a successful save, a creature takes half damage and is poisoned for 1 minute.

The water has a depth of approximately 2 feet, where it extends into **Area 6**, deepening to about 3 feet in the eastern end of this area to a maximum depth of 8 feet below the hole in the ceiling on the western end that leads to **Area 9**.

Creature. A **qwyllion** (see *Tome of Beasts*) resides here. She has agreed to partake in the rituals, which call for the Shining Dawn cultists to further contaminate her pool with alchemical concoctions. She is now quite intoxicated by the additional pollutants and enjoying their effects immensely. The qwyllion is considered poisoned. She will attack intruders who enter the cave and disturb her bliss but will not pursue them beyond the room. In her current state, she cares only to luxuriate in her pool while the ritual goes on.

Treasure. Under the murky water in the northeast corner of the cave is a small casket. It contains 10 pp and 70 gp.

AREA 9: CHAMBER OF VILE BAPTISMS

This finished chamber has a well cut into the floor. A shallow alcove carved into the north wall holds a bas relief of a creature whose body is but a torso held aloft on long arms that split at the elbow into a pair of forearms ending in taloned hands. A tripartite maw blossoms from the center of its chest, ringed in terrible, spider-like mandibles. Orange-robed cultists draw water from the well with buckets at the end of ropes, anointing themselves with

it, leaving a strange, oily sheen on their bodies, and then return to the walls, cutting their hands and tracing fresh blood over crawling glyphs that appear to have been drawn dozens of times over and now pulse with unholy power.

The water is drawn from **Area 8** and has the physical effects described there if it is drunk or touched.

Creatures. A **void speaker** (see *Creature Codex*) leads three **void cultists** (see *Creature Codex*) in the rituals here. Due to the effects of the polluted water, the cultists are currently poisoned and have 25% fewer hit points than normal, but they gain advantage on attacks and ability checks while under the effects of the unholy baptism. The speaker will use her spells against intruders while her cultists engage in melee. These nihilistic opponents will fight to the death.

AREA 10: THE CHAMBER OF THE BLOODLETTERS

Four natural pillars run the length of this cavern. A slumped, nude form is manacled to each, their skin awash with blood. Tiny, winged crimson fiends flit about the figures, alighting on the pillars or on the head or shoulders of a prisoner, to put yet another incision in their skin and send another scarlet rivulet running to the floor. Orange-robed figures at the north side of the room stand with arms upraised, chanting. The blood upon the floor seems to flow and ebb to the rhythm of the chant, spreading in unnatural ways to form strange, twisted glyphs.

Creatures. A total of eight **blood imps** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*), one pair for each pillar, work at drawing blood from the sacrifices chained to the pillars. They labor while three **cult fanatics** perform their rituals over the spilled blood. The imps are filled with bloodlust, and the cultists are blindly obedient to their master. All of them fight to the death.

Prisoners. The four **commoners** being used as sacrifices here are weak from blood loss and terrified. They want nothing more than to escape this nightmare and return to their homes and families.

AREA 11: THE DANCE HALL

The strange sounds of singing and weird, fluting music fill the chamber. Robed cultists move about in erratic but intricate patterns, twirling and twisting to the discordant tune. The music comes from the center of the room, where a prancing, twitching mass resides, where musicians and pipes have fused together into a single tootling abomination. Next to this horror is an ebon-skinned figure with insect legs and feathery antennae, wailing away on a set of pipes of its own, fashioned of the body and bones of some terrible creature.

Creatures. The musicians for this ritual are a **mad piper** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) and a **selang** (see *Tome of Beasts*). The dancers are 12 **cultists**, which will hurl themselves at intruders while the selang attacks with its alien piping and the mad piper plays its terrible dirge and inspires its allies. All present are committed to the cause and will lay down their lives, attempting to destroy the intruders.

Treasure. Alcoves in the room hold strange statues of classically proportioned humanoids that display disturbing portions of arachnid anatomy. One is male with mandibles in place of a mouth.

A second male displays two extra pairs of spidery limbs, growing from his waist. A female figure has multiple spider-like eyes while a second female has an arachnid abdomen and spinnerets protruding from her lower back.

The base of each statue has a hidden compartment that can be discovered with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check.

The first holds a vial containing a single dose of wyvern poison. The second holds a pair of *slippers of spider climbing*. The third contains a set of *goggles of night*. The last holds a *wand of web*.

AREA 12: THE CHAMBER OF THE FINAL RITUAL

This large chamber thrums with building energy. Two pillars rise in the center of the room, a sheen of energy crackling between them. Within the surging magic can be seen an image, a view of a massive creature looming over the wastelands with a tower on its back held in place by giant webs. In front of the image, a man in dirty, ragged robes and with wild hair and a tangled beard makes intricate gestures with a pointed, silvery rod. Behind him, four orange-robed cultists chant a refrain in some alien tongue.

Creatures. Xandar Demir stands before the magical image, performing the final tasks of the ritual. Behind him, four **void cultists** (see *Creature Codex*) provide additional aid. The cultists move to attack intruders while Demir completes the ritual. Laughing triumphantly, Xandar completes the final passes, using the sharp end of the rod to finish carving a sigil into one of the stone pillars:

"You fools are too late to stop me! Behold! Pah'draguusthlai the Devourer is unleashed, and I am triumphant!"

Demir laughs maniacally as the energy between the pillars explodes, but his laugh quickly becomes a scream. And the scream turns into a sound unlike anything that can be produced by a human throat as the backlash from the ritual envelops him. There is a metallic clatter as the *rod of rampancy* (see **Appendix**) he is holding drops to

the floor. Demir is thrown out of—or perhaps *through* would be the better term—time all at once, becoming a **zeitgeist** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*). Already insane, and now enraged, the zeitgeist hurls himself at the PCs, considering them the reason for the failed ritual. Not understanding that their leader has failed or what fate has befallen him, the cultists will continue to fight on his behalf, fanatically and to the death. Due to the zeitgeist's nature, he is unaffected by the major temporal effects. In fact, those effects are now tied to his existence. When the zeitgeist is killed, the major temporal effects end immediately. The lesser temporal effects will gradually fade, disappearing entirely within the next 8 hours after Demir's death.

Concluding the Adventure

The PCs' work may be done—with regard to the terms for any patrons that may have hired them—once Demir's ritual fails, or it may require his death, for while no new temporal effects appear after the ritual is ended, existing ones will remain as long as Demir lives on as a zeitgeist. However, though he blames the party for his failure and would gladly kill them, they don't need to fight. He can't perform any further rituals in his current form, and he can't even leave the site as he is now bound to it, though bouncing through various times in that same locale.

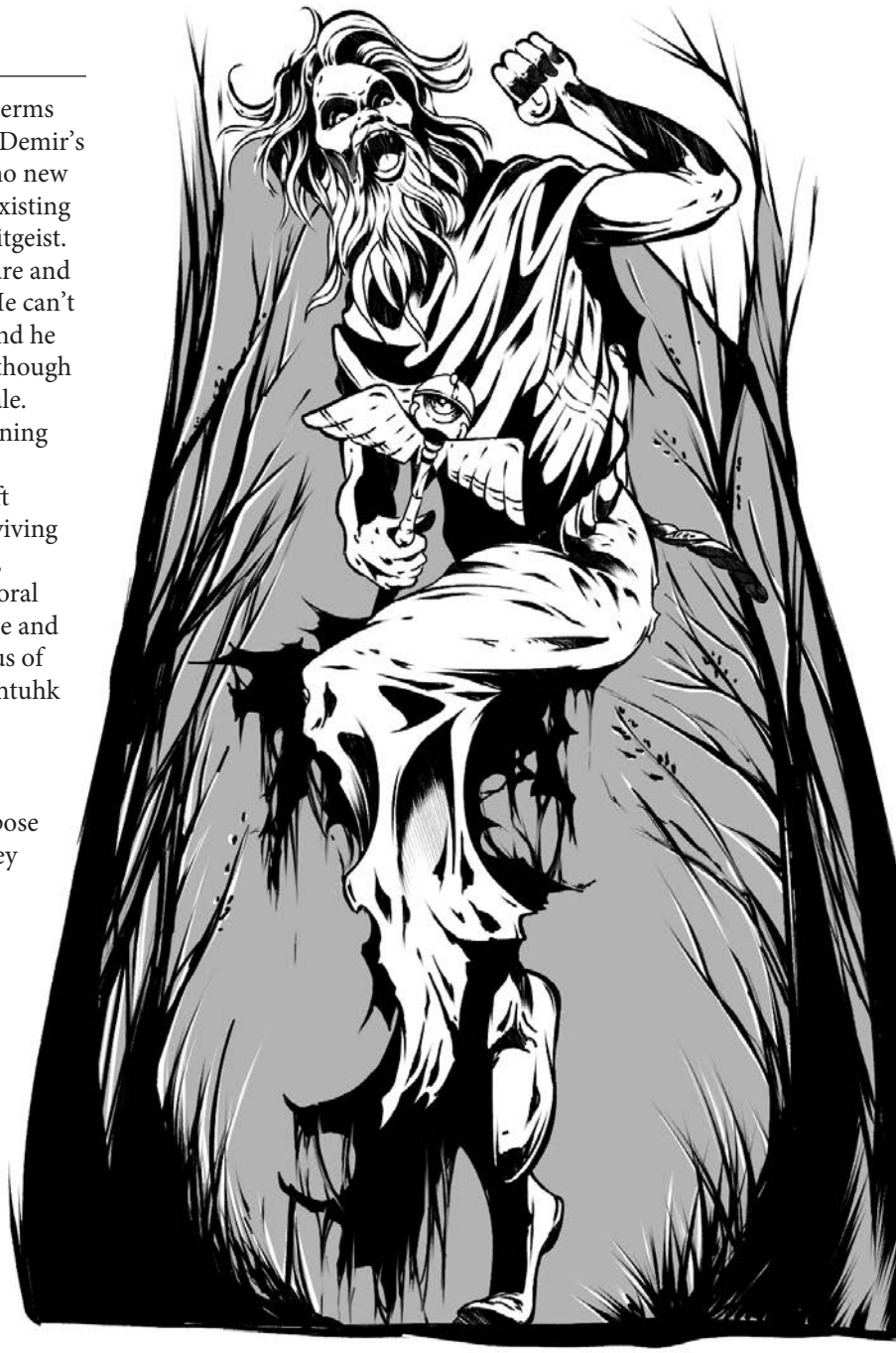
If he is killed, any remaining Heralds of the Shining Dawn will flee, confused and demoralized at this unexpected turn. However, if Xandar Demir is left alive in his current form, that may embolden surviving members of the Shining Dawn to rebuild the cult, perhaps returning to break Demir from the temporal storm that tosses him back and forth through time and to restore him to normal. If this happens, the focus of his vengeance will surely switch from Enkada Pishtuhk to the PCs.

ENKADA'S SHADOW

Should the PCs defeat the Shining Dawn and dispose of Xandar Demir, when they return to **Area 1**, they are approached by a living shadow, resembling a hooded and robed humanoid figure with two yellow eyes shining amid its dark form. This is Enkada Pishtuhk's magical shadow. The shadow makes no hostile moves but speaks to the PCs in a soft but deep voice, saying the following:

"My master congratulates you on your success here. Your actions have pleased Enkada Pishtuhk and thus should be rewarded."

Attacking Enkada's shadow will simply cause it to flee. While this will not raise Enkada's ire, it means the adventurers forfeit any hope of the aforementioned reward. If the PCs respond without hostility or any hint of impoliteness, the shadow provides them with directions to one of Enkada's many caches of magical goods hidden in the Western Wastes. Following these instructions leads the PCs to a hiding spot where they can claim a *periapt of proof against poison*. The ancient mage sometimes forgets to mention what safeguards or guardians there might be defending such caches, so feel free to have a monster or magical trap the PCs first must bypass before they are able to claim their reward.



THE UNDYING FLAME

For 9th-Level Characters

The adventure begins in an unspecified location within the Northlands and ends in a dormant volcano within the Troll's Teeth Mountains, but it can easily be adapted to any northern region with nearby mountains.

Adventure Background

The bitter winters, unforgiving landscape, and hostile giants, werewolves, and other terrifying creatures make life in the Northlands brutal for its humanoid inhabitants. While communities and families work hard to blunt the worst of the Northlands' threats, none of them can proclaim true safety. The Cult of the Undying Flame, devoted to Alsikaya, the Screeching Mother of Volcanoes (see *Tome of Beasts 2*), exploits the desire for a sanctuary by creating the enclave of Havenhearth.

The cultists found the complex carved into a high, lone plateau that was home to a dormant volcano, which the cult has reawakened through their initial wave of sacrifices. To bolster their supply of sacrifices, cultists travel the Northlands looking for loners, people dissatisfied with their communities, and others whose extended absence would not raise concern. They act as "guides" to Havenhearth, leading their charges through the hazards surrounding the enclave. Several of the cultists pretend to be ordinary folk living among those seeking refuge in Havenhearth, so they can identify troublemakers and others suitable for sacrifice. When they secretly mark someone for sacrifice, they pretend to the others to exile the victim, using one of the cultists to appear like the victim and pretend to walk away from the enclave. They occasionally mix in a real exile to throw off suspicion within the enclave and for those who might go amiss. They carry out their sacrifices judiciously to appease Alsikaya while not alarming their fodder.

Ultimately, the Cult of the Undying Flame plans to induce their volcano to erupt for a pyroclastic mass sacrifice to its demon mistress, who will then ignite all the Northlands' dormant volcanoes.

Adventure Summary

Once the party undertakes the mission to find and investigate Havenhearth, they must locate the enclave through one of the few available options. If they travel to Havenhearth alone, they confront a pair of troll guardians and encounter dangerous terrain. Assuming the party doesn't immediately instigate an assault on the enclave, the cultists welcome them and allow them respite.

During their visit, they witness the "exiling" of one of the residents. As they investigate further, they gain a growing sense of something being wrong, forcing the cultists to truly exile the group or grab the most bothersome PC. The PCs then breach the lower chambers and must fight cultists and demonic guardians to access the rest of the lair. The PCs' intrusion forces the cultists to accelerate their ultimate sacrifice, welcoming their untimely deaths to bring Alsikaya into Midgard. They must stop the cultists while contending with extreme heat and tremors.

Adventure Hook

The party could seek out Havenhearth for several reasons. A GM with time and opportunity could seed rumors about the sanctuary to pique the party's interest. More directly, an NPC familiar to the party could leave for Havenhearth, and the PCs learn about the NPC's departure during a visit to the NPC's home. Finally, a village leader may hire the party to locate a relative with whom the leader had become estranged, and the relative left a cryptic message about finding a more welcoming family in Havenhearth.

Finding Havenhearth

Regardless of the reason for the PCs to travel to the sanctuary held by the Cult of the Undying Flame, they must first confront the difficulty of locating the place. Havenhearth is located on a plateau contained within the remotely populated Troll's Teeth Mountains. The cult avoids sharing its location with outsiders to avoid having an armed force show up at their doorstep, increasing its obscurity. However, the party has several options to find the enclave.

The PCs are at a level where one could use divination spells to give them a general idea of the direction and distance to Havenhearth. If the PCs are searching for someone specific and have learned enough details about the target to familiarize themselves, then the *locate person* spell gives a clear idea of the target's location.

If the PCs investigate in a village where one of the inhabitants left with an Undying Flame guide, they discover the person was inquisitive enough to convince a cultist to carelessly divulge the rough distance and direction. That person then shared the information with a relative for reassurance.

Since the cult employs guides who search for prospective sacrifices, the PCs can find one (a **cult fanatic**) and present themselves as possible candidates. Convincing the cultist of one's sincerity requires a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check. The DC increases by 2 for each additional PC after the first since the cultist is reticent to bring multiple people who know each other into the fold.

If the characters are at an impasse, they stumble upon Javith Gren, an exile from Havenhearth, who gives them coherent instructions and a general feel for the enclave. Javith's "crime" was theft, but he claims to have not stolen anything and believes his questions about Havenhearth's leadership led to the banishment.

He knows nothing about the creatures on the way to the enclave (other than possibly noting the "strange snowperson" outside the pass) or any of the hazards, having avoided those on his way out. Note, this encounter might be useful even if the PCs know how to reach Havenhearth.

TROLL PATROL

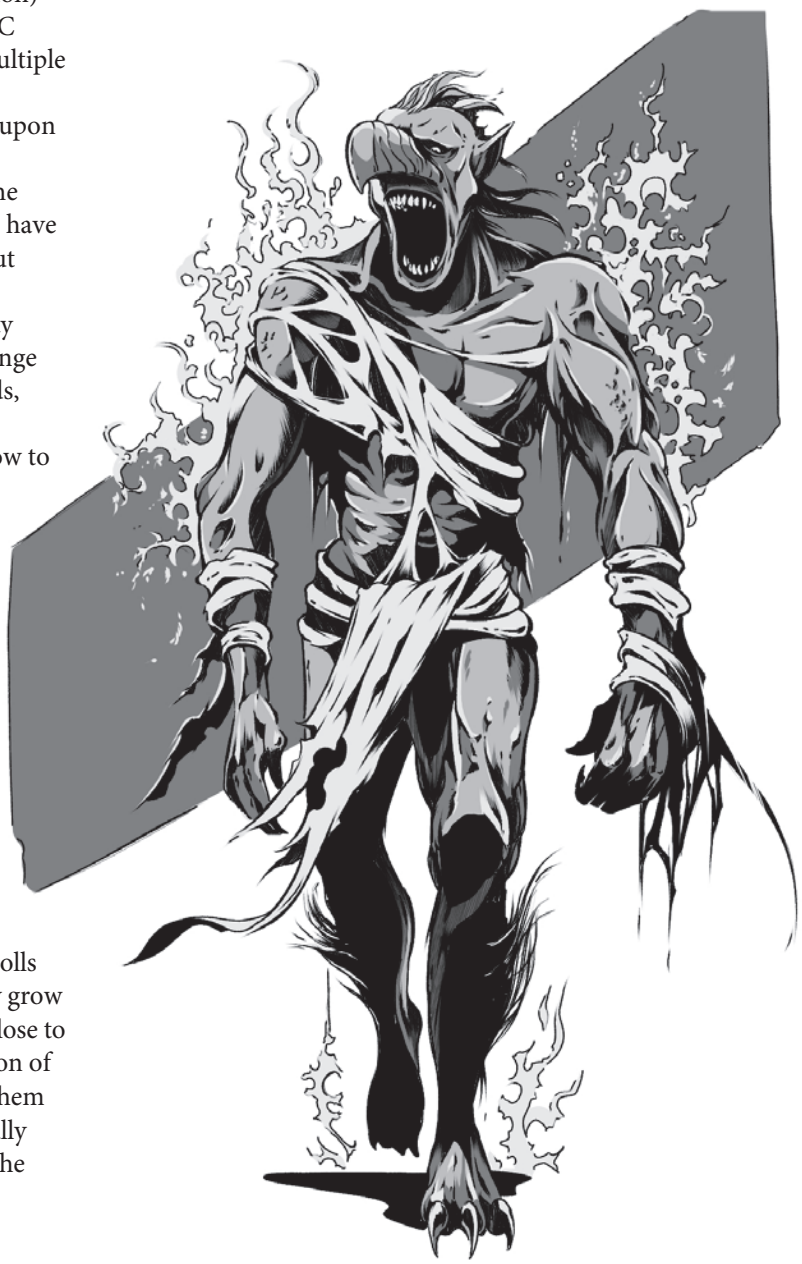
A light snow begins to fall, bringing a sense of peace to the journey. This serenity is cut short by a whispered question: "Where is it?"

Two **ash trolls** (see **Appendix**), serving the Cult of the Undying Flame, act as an initial deterrent to unaccompanied travelers drawing close to Havenhearth. When they encounter people without a cultist guide, they pretend to demand the location of the enclave and combat those who refuse to provide the information. The trolls know their deceit won't hold up to scrutiny, so they grow impatient with those who question them or come close to the truth about their loyalties. They have no intention of forfeiting their lives here, so they flee when one of them drops below 20 hit points. Surviving trolls return fully healed to harass the party within 2–3 hours unless the PCs attempt to conceal their tracks through the snow. The trolls continue to do so until the PCs reach the pass leading to Havenhearth.

TERROR AT THE PASS

The trail leads to a pass cutting through a mountain range. The icy stretch is wide enough to fit two people side-by-side with some discomfort. A cheerful snowperson stands 10 feet from the entrance to the pass, its left arm raised as if in greeting.

A **snow terror** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*), a gift from Alsikaya to the cult, guards the pass and attacks anyone approaching without an accompanying cultist. It always assumes its innocent snowperson guise and greets



STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using **Status** (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs foil the cult's plans and save the innocents, the PCs gain +2 to their Status with the survivors and their communities and +1 to their Status with other communities within a week's journey of Havenhearth. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

travelers about 20 feet from the pass, even though its incongruity may draw suspicion. It hopes its odd appearance distracts intruders from the pits it has dug out and covered with a thin layer of snow, which the cultists know to avoid.

Snow Pits. Three snow pits randomly placed 20–30 feet from the pass's entrance await the unwary. When a creature steps anywhere in the pit's 10-foot square, the layer of snow gives way, dumping the creature 30 feet into the pit below unless it succeeds on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. The pit's walls are sheer ice, requiring a trapped creature to succeed on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to scale.

Prevention. A successful DC 19 Wisdom (Perception) or DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check alerts a character to a pit's presence and allows them to walk around it. Topping a pit with a stout tarp or other covering allows free movement across the pit.

Treasure. The cult collects most of the items belonging to the snow terror's victims. However, the creature has secreted away insoluble mementos from its kills: a ruby worth 100 gp and a sapphire worth 250 gp.

FALLING ICICLES

Inches-long icicles hang from the trees in this forest and lightly chime as they sway in the breeze. Through the trees, you can see a plateau, smoke rising from it.

The cult maintains this section of the forest, with its dangerous, spear-like icicles, as it provides the most direct route to Havenhearth.

Icicle Spears. Sound and vibration dislodge the icicles, which impale those below. Anything above whispered conversation disturbs them as does walking heavily. A creature passing through the area must make a DC 16 passive Dexterity (Stealth) check. On a failure, 1d4 icicles fall on the creature. Each icicle makes a ranged attack with a +9 bonus. If an icicle hits the creature, the target takes 9 (2d8) piercing damage and 4 (1d8) cold damage. If a creature fails the check by 5 or more, all creatures within 10 feet of the creature are subject to the above attacks.

Prevention. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check or DC 17 Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Investigation) check realizes the icicles' inherent danger. Armed with this knowledge, creatures can make their Dexterity (Stealth) checks with a die roll. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that a spell or effect that deals thunder damage causes the icicles to fall, rendering the area harmless afterward.

A success by 5 or more also informs the character that the area of effect for such a spell or effect increases by 50% (thus a 20-foot-radius burst would affect icicles in a 30-foot-radius burst). Each creature in the area is subject to the icicles' attacks.

Welcome to Havenhearth

A 40-foot-tall plateau comes into view, venting smoke from its top. The ice-and-snow-covered ground give way to muddy fields, which then become arable land. The temperature becomes pleasant upon approach to the plateau, equivalent to those of early summer days in the Northlands, rather than the current early winter cold.

Stairs carved out of the rock climb all four faces of the roughly rectangular plateau. Only the north face features an entrance, while the other three stairs end at walls. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check notes the walls have subtle differences to the surrounding rock.

The plateau has a gentle slope, and a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check allows a creature to scale the slope without the benefit of the stairs.

Three **commoners** work the fields nearest the plateau and notice the PCs' arrival, provided the party doesn't approach stealthily. Two of them hail the newcomers while the third climbs the steps to the entryway. Moments later, the **battle mage** (see *Creature Codex*) Zeren Brusch greets the PCs and invites them to the enclave's entrance.

Unless the PCs have somehow convinced a guide to escort them to Havenhearth, Zeren calmly explains he must interview prospective inhabitants individually. He leads each PC to **Area 5** (going along the passage east of the common area and cutting through the nearest entrance).

If asked about the process, he promises a short interview with simple questions. He has a +4 bonus on Wisdom (Insight) checks.

"Name?"

Zeren doesn't react to any name given but remembers it for any possible contradictions in later conversations.

"Place of birth?"

If a PC balks at this question, Zeren shrugs and asks, "Surely, you're not embarrassed about the place from which you hail?"

"Trade?"

Zeren accepts most applicable trades but raises an eyebrow at "adventurer" or similar responses. He states, "We have no need for adventurers here. This place is a haven, and mercenaries are bad for morale." He then prompts for something useful the PC can contribute to the group.

"Have you ever killed anyone?"

If given an affirmative answer, Zeren follows up with a question about the circumstances around the killing. Zeren gives the PC an additional chance to answer the question if he detects a lie. If he doesn't like the answers to this round of questions, he ends the interview and sadly states the PC is not fit to live in Havenhearth.

"Have you ever stolen from someone who trusted you?"

This question provokes the same reaction from Zeren as the previous question.

If Zeren is satisfied with the answers, he eases into small talk, asking the PC about their association with the other characters, how they heard about Havenhearth, aspects of the journey to the enclave, and related topics. If the interview ends with Zeren turning the PC away, this doesn't directly impact the other characters' chances to remain in Havenhearth.

HAVENHEARTH EVENTS

The following list details some day-to-day activities taking place in the enclave. These events could serve as inspiration for other occurrences that alert the PCs to something off about Havenhearth.

The Hunt. One or more PCs receive an invite to hunt a deer. Three **commoners** and a **cult fanatic** disguised as a commoner fill out the group. During the hunt, the cult fanatic attempts to cast *sacred flame* surreptitiously, requiring a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Arcana) check to notice. If questioned about this, the cultist claims the plateau's radiance filled her with power, and she wanted to use it.

Proficiency Challenge. Several members of Havenhearth compete in a crafting contest based on one of the trades given by the PCs during their interviews. Zeren provides tools and materials to every participant and encourages the relevant PC(s) to show off their prowess. The materials given to the PCs are poor quality, giving them disadvantage on ability checks to complete the challenge. Each participant makes an ability check. The group gently mocks those with results of 5 or less than the winner's results, which seems to alienate the losers.

Exile. Zeren reports the sad news that one of the residents has been found stealing from another resident. This could be someone with whom the PCs have become acquainted or one of the residents who keeps to themselves. The wrongdoer is ushered into the offices (**Areas 5–7**), and the door at **Area 4** is locked while Zeren prepares the person for exile. A few minutes later, he and another cultist lead the "offender" (cloaked and hooded, ostensibly to keep them from looking at or speaking to the residents, but a cultist has replaced the actual victim) out of the enclave and down the plateau.

Group Exercise. When the cult needs to access the secret door, usually to carry a sacrifice to the lower level, they call for the entire enclave to leave the plateau's confines and enjoy the fresh air. Zeren and a couple of

SLOW BURN OR FULL BOIL?

Understandably, the PCs will have suspicions about Havenhearth, which eventually bear out. However, the people who have sought shelter here are comfortable with their existences and react accordingly to open hostility by the party.

While 20 or so commoners (with a few cult fanatics mixed in) won't pose a real threat to the PCs, the party should hesitate to slaughter a bunch of innocents on the way to defeating the cult.

The pace for the cult's revelation is adaptable, and the events listed below provide options to uncover the enclave's true purpose. The PCs might settle in for a couple of days and witness someone falsely accused of a crime for which exile is the punishment. They may discover the secret door leading to the lower level or spy someone using the entrance under the mistaken belief of going unobserved.

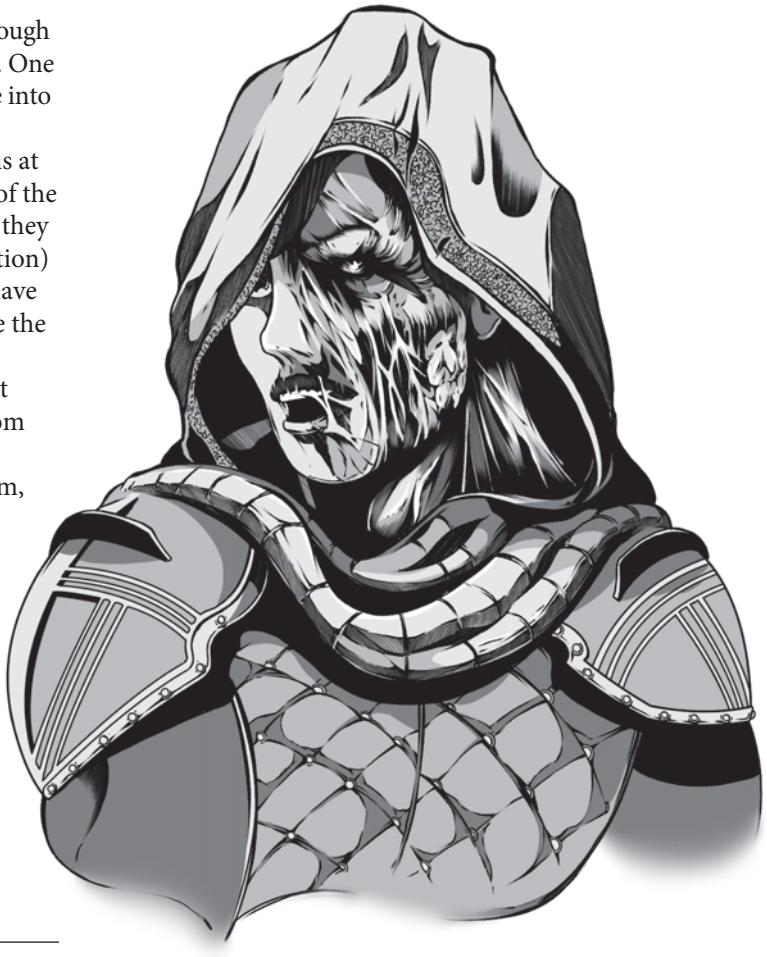
Concrete proof may get some of the current residents on the PCs' side or at least allow the PCs to evacuate some of the residents before hell breaks loose.

other known Havenhearth leaders take the group through a series of stretching exercises, which last for an hour. One of the cultists stands at the entryway and bars passage into the plateau.

Muffled Scream. The cultists sacrifice their victims at dawn, and their latest victim managed to work free of the gag. The sacrifice lets out a blood-chilling scream as they burn to death. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check hears the scream. The residents claim not to have heard the scream and dismiss it as a creature outside the plateau. Zeren likewise downplays the scream.

The Glow. The night after a sacrifice, the southeast portion of the passageways outside the common room takes on a reddish hue. A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check notices it from the common room, but anyone who exits the common room to the south or east into the surrounding passageways automatically notices it. Anyone who moves to the area perceives a noticeable rise in temperature but not enough to become uncomfortable.

Long-time residents brush it off since they have seen it infrequently. If someone asks Zeren or one of the other disguised cultists, they explain the plateau is heated by an underground magma flow, but they have had no concern about its ebb and flow.



Havenhearth Upper Level

The plateau supporting Havenhearth formed when this region was volcanically active. Magma carved out paths through the plateau's upper region, creating a large, natural chamber. When followers of Thor claimed this area as an outpost, they built a living area and a hidden storage area and hideout beneath the living area.

A few decades ago, the warriors abandoned the outpost. Most of it has remained intact, apart from collateral damage from a battle fought in the eastern part of the outpost, making it ideal for the Cult of the Undying Flame.

The rough passages surrounding the constructed chambers vary in height from 8 to 15 feet. The cultists blocked off all but the northern passage to the plateau, and the walls require 15 minutes of hard labor to destroy. The outer area is unlit, but illumination filters out from the common area, creating dim light. The constructed portion of this level has 10-foot-high ceilings, except for the common room, which has a 20-foot-high ceiling. The common room's central fire and torches lit throughout the rest of the complex provide bright light, except where otherwise noted.

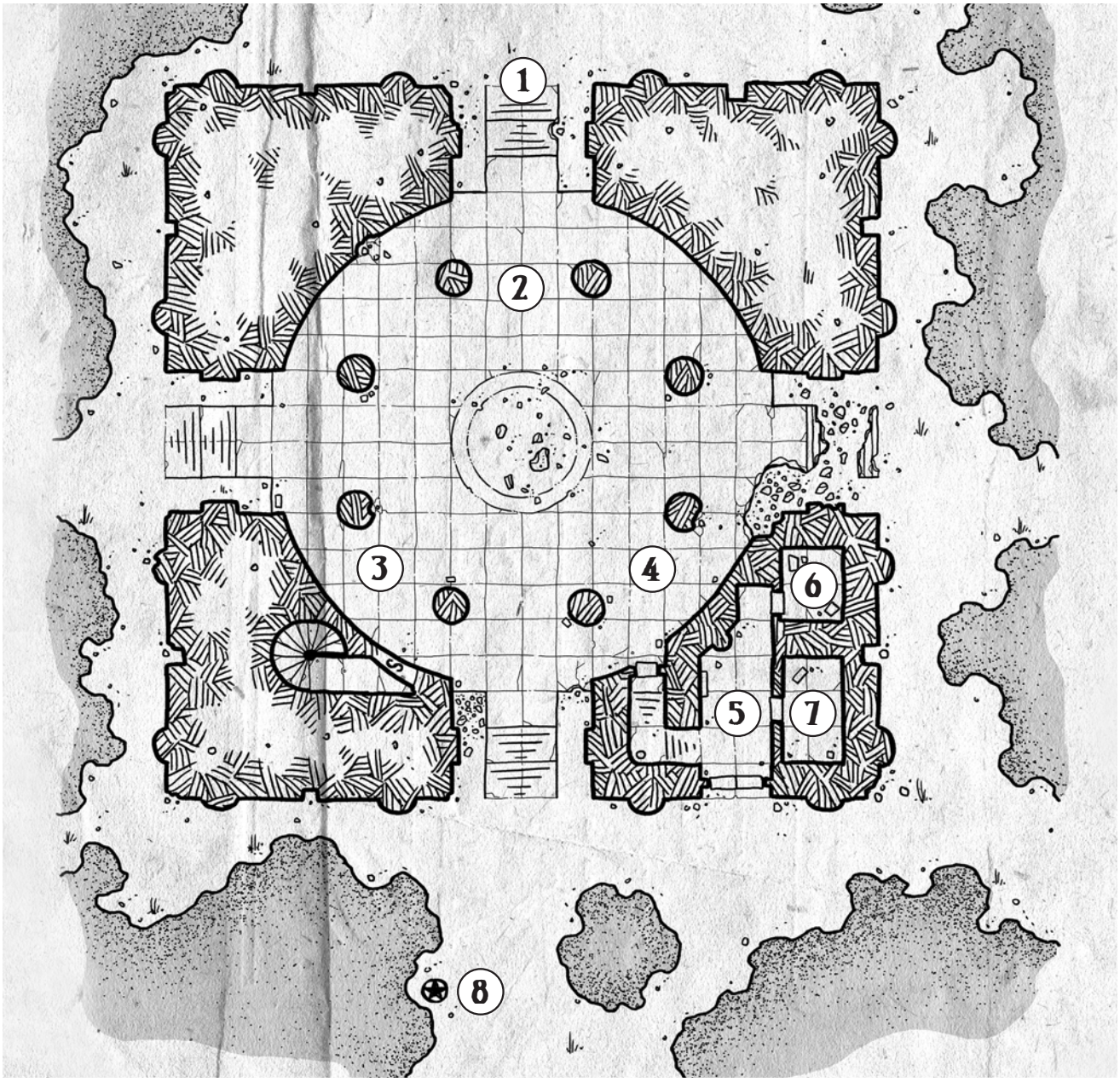
AREA 1: ENTRYWAY

A narrow passage cuts through the top of the plateau and leads south 10 feet before opening into a wider T-intersection. A set of rough-hewn stairs climbs to the south.

The cultists walled off all the other passages exiting the plateau, leaving only this passage. When they decide to enact their ultimate sacrifice, they plan to close off this exit as well.

Rockfall. A concealed hatch blocks several hundred pounds of loose rocks. A lever in **Area 10** of the lower level triggers this trap. Alternatively, a successful DC 16 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check opens the hatch, albeit unsafely. When the rocks are released, they completely fill the 10-foot corridor, crushing everything within.

Each creature in the area must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 28 (8d6) bludgeoning damage and is both prone and restrained. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and is not otherwise affected. A creature, or any adjacent creature, can take its action to free itself with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check.



Prevention. A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check finds the hatch. A successful DC 19 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check jams the hatch mechanism, rendering the lever useless.

AREA 2: COMMON ROOM

This massive, 80-foot-diameter chamber is supported by eight columns that reach 20 feet to the ceiling above. A 20-foot-diameter hole cut into the ceiling allows the fire to vent. Thirty cots line the walls, and most of them have modest belongings bundled underneath. A set of stairs leads down 10 feet out of the chamber in most cardinal directions, but the eastern set has been destroyed.

Havenhearth's residents live and work in this chamber. The fire provides constant warmth and bright light with the illumination fading to dim light in the chamber's furthest reaches (the area beyond the pillars) to allow for comfortable rest.

The Undying Flame. A cookpot usually sits atop a pile of wood, which burns endlessly. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check realizes this is equivalent to a *continual flame* spell. Succeeding by 5 or more reveals the source as the plateau.

Meet Your Neighbors. Havenhearth's residents number 22 **commoners** and six **cult fanatics**, who blend in with the commoners. Most keep to themselves, but the PCs have the chance to acquaint themselves with some of

them. The below examples should give the PCs people to relate to as they discover Havenhearth's secrets:

- ***Kareena Desmontague.*** A cultist who pretends to be one of Havenhearth's earliest residents, this human **spy** establishes an easy rapport with most new arrivals. She susses out troublemakers by providing a sympathetic ear to conspiratorial musings. Kareena often stages thefts to remove those she believes pose a threat to the cult.
- ***Meerie Fitzgray.*** This friendly and welcoming halfling **commoner** arrived 18 months ago and is the most likely person to introduce herself to newcomers. She believes she knows the enclave better than anyone else since she is one of the enclave's senior residents. Meerie verges on nosiness when talking to others and tends to gossip, which helps Kareena with her duties.
- ***Vinyu Nisp.*** The cultists found this human **commoner** in his early 20s wandering away from the remains of his village after a devastating frost giant attack. One of the PCs reminds Vinyu of a village elder, so he is drawn to that PC.
- ***Berendor and Finnian Hallowhall.*** The dwarf Berendor arrived with his young son 7 months ago and ran afoul of Havenhearth law when Finnian innocently grabbed another resident's necklace. Faced with exile or death for him and his son, Berendor agreed to join the cult. The PCs may be able to sway this **cult fanatic** if they assure him they can protect his son.

AREA 3: ENTRANCE TO THE LOWER LEVEL

A stone slab fits seamlessly with the rest of the wall, concealing a passage behind it.

The cult never uses the secret entrance leading to the complex's lower level in view of the ordinary residents.

Locked and Trapped Secret Door. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check discovers the nearly invisible seams marking the door. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check concludes that symmetrical doors must exist at all walls. A success by 5 or more on this check discovers wear on the floor near this entrance.

The door has been sealed with *arcane lock*. A successful DC 25 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check unlocks the door. Speaking the phrase, "*Mother is expecting me*," opens the door and bypasses the lock and the trap. If the PCs somehow sneak in when the common room is empty (per the "group exercise" event above), they hear Zeren or one of the other cultists speak this phrase.

The door is trapped with a *glyph of warding*. If the door is opened without speaking the above phrase, it triggers a *pyroclastic burst* spell (save DC 18, see **Appendix**) centered on the creature that triggered the glyph.

Prevention. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers the glyph etched on the door's center. *Detect magic* or another such spell reveals the glyph's abjuration aura. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 14) cast on the door destroys the glyph.

AREA 4: ENTRANCE TO THE LEADERSHIP AREA

This wooden door blocks entrance to the chambers beyond.

During the day, this door remains open, allowing access to Zeren and his lieutenants. When discussing an exile or other matters important to Havenhearth's administration, the door is locked. A successful DC 20 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check unlocks the door.

AREA 5: ZEREN'S OFFICE AND QUARTERS

This tidy room holds a cot and several cushions arranged in a circle. Stairs lead up to the west out of this room, two doors open to the east, and a set of barred and locked double doors open to the south.

Zeren Brusch oversees Havenhearth's operations from here. He arranges hunting and growing schedules and uses this room to interview new arrivals and settle disputes between residents. As his focus is on the residents, he tries not to involve himself in cult activity, mostly so he can enjoy some plausible deniability when asked about any strange goings-on.

Locked and Barred Door. This door is barred to prevent entrance from the south. If asked, Zeren casually says, "Sometimes we get unwelcome guests from outside." A successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check unlocks the door, and a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check breaks through the wood holding the door shut.

AREA 6: GENAVIE BARTOSS'S QUARTERS

Tanned and stretched animal skins adorn this otherwise sparse room's walls.

The human **scout** Genavie spends much of her time outside, preferring open spaces to the plateau's confines. She often leads the enclave's hunts.

Treasure. When not out on a hunt or otherwise required to be armed, Genavie stores her *+1 longbow* on a rack above her cot.

AREA 7: JERILLE QUENN'S QUARTERS

Contrasting with Zeren's office, this room is a disorganized mess. Clothes and parchment lie strewn about the area, and smudges of dark ink mark the walls and floor.

Jerille, an elfmarked **mage** (replacing *greater invisibility* with *dimension door*, under Spellcasting), scribes scrolls for the cultists and provides surreptitious travel when the cult can't use the secret door in **Area 3.**

Treasure. The mage lost a *ring of cold resistance* amid the chaos and hasn't bothered to find it since he hasn't ventured beyond Havenhearth recently.

AREA 8: FORMER SHRINE TO THOR

This nook holds a statue only recognizable as a bipedal humanoid. Its features have eroded, and one of its arms has broken off, leaving a pile of rubble at the base.

The warriors dedicated to Thor fought giants, dragons, and other beasts prevalent in this region. They created this shrine to Thor and received blessings from the god. Disease and attrition from battle forced the warriors to desert the remote location, but they had driven away most of the horrors they combatted, making this a relatively safe home for the Cult of the Undying Flame to take over.

A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Religion) check manages to identify the statue as Thor. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check recognizes the statue's more recent defacement and uncovers Abyssal runes reading, "Mother is coming."

If asked, Zeren nor any of the new arrivals claim to know anything about the vandalism.

Havenhearth Lower Level

The builders of this section of Havenhearth constructed it for security. The hallways have 8-foot-tall ceilings, most of the remaining rooms have 10-foot-tall ceilings, and the central chamber of **Area 14** has a 15-foot-tall ceiling. Bright light illuminates this level unless otherwise noted.

AREA 9: BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS

The stairs descend 20 feet to a landing at a junction in a 5-foot-wide hallway, leading north and west. A bright-red glow suffuses the area, as does a light haze carrying a faint odor of sulfur.

If the PCs avoided setting off the trap and the cult is not on alert, the hallway is quiet. Otherwise, two **cult fanatics** attempt to hold off the intruders. Additionally, any cultists remaining in the upper level arrive after 1d6 rounds and each subsequent round thereafter. Any named cultist avoids combat and makes haste for **Area 17** to help enact the cult's pyrrhic ritual.

AREA 10: DEFILED CRYPT

Once a place for honorable burial, this crypt has been thoroughly desecrated. Black candles fill the room with smoke, and the formerly interred bodies lie charred on the ground. A raised lever juts from the center of the northern wall.

Four of the bodies rise as **tar ghouls** (see *Creature Codex*) 1 round after someone opens the southern door if the phrase, "Mother is expecting me," is not uttered.

Lever. The lever triggers the trap in **Area 1** of Havenhearth's upper level. A successful DC 19 Intelligence (Investigation) check realizes the connection between this lever and the trap. A successful DC 14 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check jams the lever, so it can't be thrown.

Secret Door. For additional security, a hidden door hides the storeroom and auxiliary living quarters from view. A successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a shift in light along the floor. The door is unlocked and swings open easily.

AREA 11: STOREROOM

This empty room held stacks of crates at one point, indicated by the stains and slight indentations. A door to the east provides an exit.

The enclave's former inhabitants kept a few days' provisions in case they needed to wait out a siege on their outpost. The cultists moved the crates and dug out a pit to torment their victims awaiting sacrifice.

Pit Trap. When a creature steps in one of the areas denoted by the *X* on the map, the trap activates. The creature must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or fall 15 feet into a lava-heated pit. At the beginning of each of its turns, the creature takes 4 (1d8) fire damage.

Prevention. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check notices the incongruities in the floor.

Treasure. One of the previous sacrifices dropped a ring set with a garnet, defiantly preventing the cult from obtaining the item. The ring is worth 150 gp.

AREA 12: MACABRE KITCHEN

This combination dining hall and kitchen contains a small table with three chairs arranged around it and a couple of food preparation stations in the southern corners. Charred, severed limbs lie discarded near the southeastern station. A door exits this room to the south.

Alsikaya sends random messengers through the portal to her domain, including the occasional **alnaar demon** (see *Creature Codex*). The cultists keep the limbs on hand to feed one of these eternally hungry demons, so it won't devour them instead.

AREA 13: LIVING QUARTERS

A quick, 5-foot descent down a set of stairs leads to this chamber. Two cots each line the eastern and western walls, and four heavy cloaks adorned with flame motifs hang from hooks on the southern wall.

When the cultists aren't communing with their demon mistress or sacrificing victims to her, they recuperate here. Currently, two **cult fanatics** attempt to keep a **glabrezu demon** messenger entertained, and they all welcome the interruption provided by the party.

AREA 14: CENTRAL CHAMBER

A 20-foot-diameter column fills the center of this 50-foot-diameter chamber. The load-bearing column glows bright red. A 10-foot-wide staircase descends to the east, and a doorway to the south opens to another chamber. The hallway leading to the staircase to the upper level cuts through a 10-foot-wide passageway, exiting west from this area.

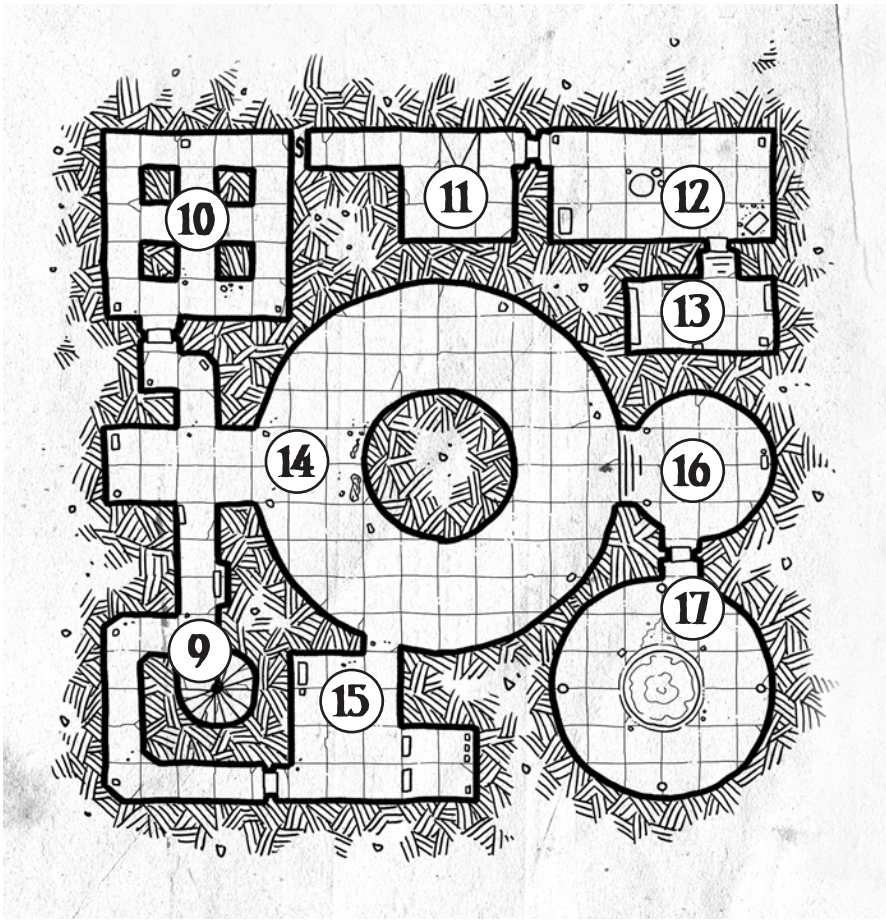
Four **cult fanatics** are stationed in this room and stand guard against intruders who might breach the inner sanctum. They don't leave this room to pursue PCs traversing other parts of the lower level, instead assuming the other threats will dispatch trespassers. However, once they are sure **Area 10** is clear, one of the cult fanatics moves there to throw the lever and trap everyone inside the complex.

Red-Hot Pillar. A creature that moves adjacent to the pillar must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 3 (1d6) fire damage. If a creature is shoved into the pillar or otherwise forced to make contact with the pillar, it must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) fire damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful save.

AREA 15: LIBRARY

This may have once been a repository of knowledge as two empty bookshelves in the southeastern corner and a mostly empty bookshelf in the northwest corner attest. The sole book in the northwest corner sits open, violently spewing sulfurous smoke throughout the room. A door exits on the southwest side, and an opening in the north leads to a large circular chamber.

The smoke reduces this room's illumination to dim light. An **assassin** loyal to the cult hides in the alcove behind the bookshelves to the southeast. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the gap between the bookshelves and the alcove beyond. The assassin recognizes the sound of the key used to open the door and can differentiate it from attempts to bypass the lock with thieves' tools, so she is aware of intruders entering



that way. The cult fanatics in **Area 14** make enough noise to put her on guard too.

Treasure. Though devoted to the Cult of the Undying Flame, the assassin can't bear to give up her worldly possessions. She carries four diamonds worth 500 gp each and wears a necklace fashioned from cold iron worth 775 gp.

Locked Door. The southwestern door is locked to prevent access from the hallway to the west. All named cultists have a key. Otherwise, a successful DC 17 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check unlocks the door.



AREA 16: ANTECHAMBER

Heat radiates from the door to the south, bringing the temperature of this 20-foot-diameter chamber to a swelter.

Two **ash trolls** (see **Appendix**) act as the last line of defense to prevent access to the ritual chamber.

Locked Door. Out of an abundance of paranoia, the cult always keeps this door locked. Uttering the phrase, "Mother, I seek your embrace," grants someone access to **Area 17**.

Otherwise, a successful DC 19 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check unlocks the door. The creature attempting the check must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take 5 (1d10) fire damage from the door's intense heat.

AREA 17: DORMANT VOLCANO

The heat in this 30-foot-diameter chamber is unbearable. The source of the heat, a 10-foot-diameter pool of lava, glows a lurid red as vague shapes swim near its surface.

Desperate to bring Alsikaya into the world and forced by the party's intrusion to act immediately, the remaining cultists perform a ritual that will transform the plateau into an active volcano, violently destroying the complex and everyone inside. A **cult fanatic** (possessing 54 hp and immunity to fire) stands in the pool's center to act as a conduit. The cult fanatic benefits from an effect similar to the *blur* spell while within the pool. Three additional **cult fanatics** block access to the conduit and to the priest conducting the ritual and replace the cultist in the lava pool if necessary. The priest uses a **void speaker's** stats (see *Creature Codex*), except their power is fueled by Alsikaya rather than the Void.

Ambient Heat. At the beginning of each non-cultist's turn, the creature must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 4 (1d8) fire damage and have disadvantage on future saves against this effect.

Lava Pool. Moving into or through the lava pool is extremely dangerous. A creature that moves into or begins its turn within the lava takes 55 (10d10) fire damage.

Summon Magmin (Recharge 3–6). At initiative count 0, the lava pool disgorges a **magmin**, which appears in any open square in the chamber. The first time a 6 is rolled for the recharge, an **alnaar demon** appears instead.

Tremors (Recharge 2–6). The ground violently quakes for the ritual's duration. At initiative count 10, all creatures (except the conduit and the priest) must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.

Completing the Ritual. The time to complete the ritual is up to the GM and the pace of this encounter, but if the GM desires a truly random amount of time, assume 2d6 + 2 rounds.

Once the ritual is complete, every creature in the immediate area takes 70 (20d6) fire damage while all other creatures in Havenhearth takes 35 (10d6) fire damage.

Concluding the Adventure

Provided the party ended the ritual and averted catastrophe, they can make Havenhearth a true sanctuary. If the PCs must move on to other adventures, the inhabitants may look to them to name a leader.

Meerie desires the role but gladly accepts the party's decision. If the party decides the best course is to abandon Havenhearth, they must escort the survivors to their former homes or help find new homes for refugees.

Alsikaya is aware of the party's meddling and seeks her revenge against the PCs. The party's next visit to a volcano may prove exceedingly dangerous.

THE SHADOW'S ENVY

For 10th-Level Characters

This adventure takes place in the Summer Lands and in the demesne called the Blot, a projection of the Shadow Realm intent on consuming the Summer Lands. It can be adapted to any region where the fey hold dominion.

Adventure Background

The creature now known as the Weft of Shadows was once a planar elf named Qeldar who enjoyed the light and warmth of the Elflands just like his brothers and sisters. However, one day he met a shadow fey on one of his journeys along the shadow roads and spoke at length with her. After that encounter, he felt sorrow for the attachment of all shadow fey to the shadows and for their exile from his own home of light.

Of course, he knew the shadow fey were once like him, and he had heard the stories about their turning to darkness. But idealistically, he believed they had suffered long enough and wanted them to rejoin the elves of the Summer Lands. After all, he reasoned, the shadow roads were connected to the Elflands and to the Shadow Realm, so the divide between summer elves and shadow fey was unnecessary and should be closed.

Qeldar first gained an audience with the Queen of Night and Magic, who hid her amusement at the elf's proposal. She had no problem agreeing to close the gulf between the shadow fey and the elves he ostensibly represented, for she knew his naive efforts would result in failure, but she was delighted to witness his disappointment. If he achieved the miracle of bringing the Birch Queen and Oak and Holly Kings to his side, she would find some technical reason to back off from her promise.

Decades later, Qeldar finally met with the Holly King. The elf went into the meeting full of confidence, having used the intervening time to hone his arguments. He had also gathered a few allies convinced of the righteousness of his plan to unite the summer elves with the shadow fey. The Holly King gave Qeldar less than 10 minutes to make his case before flatly denying his request. Guards dragged the sputtering elf out as he continued to shout his arguments in vain. This would have been embarrassment enough for Qeldar, but nearby courtiers heard his impassioned plea to rejoin the elves. They whispered poetic yet ugly epithets about him, which spread far and wide. No longer wishing to be associated with the disgraced elf, Qeldar's former allies left, either shunning him or joining in on the name-calling.

His calls for protest met with even more mockery, so he plotted to engineer a confrontation between the shadow fey and his people to show them there was no real difference between them. He researched a way to divert travel along the shadow roads and found a group of traveling shadow fey to forcibly bring to the Summer Lands. The surprised shadow fey, thinking they were under attack, drew weapons and attacked the equally surprised planar elves who defended themselves. Qeldar futilely tried to bring order to the chaotic scene, but the shadow fey were all dispatched. The summer elves charged him with treason for bringing shadow fey to the Elflands. His explanation fell on deaf ears, and his punishment was exile.

Consumed by rage but knowing he needed to bide his time, he brooded within the Shadow Realm and unknowingly drew shadows to him, which ever-so-slowly transformed him into something else. He approached the Queen of Night and Magic again, and she gave him a sympathetic audience as he described his anguish at his treatment. She claimed to be unable to work directly against her counterparts in the Summer Lands, but she slyly indicated several entities, shadow fey included, who no longer acquiesced to her. Many of these creatures were swayed by the shadowy Qeldar and allied with him.

The fully transformed and newly self-designated Weft of Shadows learned about several artifacts contained within a minor elf noble's extraplanar vault in the Summer Lands. It wanted to use the artifacts to wreak havoc on Midgard, especially among the elves remaining there. It also wanted to create shadow copies of the artifacts that would allow it to grow a shadow blight to engulf the Elflands. However, it also learned about an unusual set of rules involved in the creation of the items: once mortal hands touched the artifacts, the summer elves could not reclaim them. This set of rules also indicated that only mortals could possess and use these artifacts, preventing the Weft from making its shadow duplicates while the artifacts remained in the vault. Two centuries ago, the Weft of Shadows broke into the vault and scattered the artifacts across Midgard to set its plans in motion.

The summer elf Daesanderena investigated the missing artifacts and realized the inherent danger in the Weft

of Shadows's schemes. She found heroes to help her reclaim some of the artifacts (see the previous **Wrath of the Bramble King** and **Pride of the Mushroom Queen** chapters for examples of Daesanderena's efforts to reclaim the artifacts). Despite her interference, the Weft was able to create an undetectable blight in the Summer Lands—an area it calls the Blot. As it brought more shadowy artifact duplicates to its new demesne, it was able to grow the Blot and draw more shadowy allies to it.

The Weft of Shadows defined a horrific price for entry into its home, which serves to deter intruders from storming its lair. To its delight, this price incidentally prevents the planar elves from entering the Blot. Unless the planar elves find allies of their own from outside the Summer Lands, the Weft of Shadows will achieve its goal of uniting shadow fey and summer elves by consuming the Summer Lands in shadow.

Adventure Hooks

Daesanderena might know the PCs from previous adventures or discover them in her many searches for competent non-planar elves. She asks them to enter the Blot and destroy the Weft of Shadows before the Elflands are engulfed. Alternatively, the PCs could be traveling the shadow roads for unrelated business, and warps in their path caused by the Weft of Shadows dump them near the Blot. Or the PCs may have heard rumors about the Weft of Shadows and learn of its presence in the Elflands.

The Encroaching Shadow

Once in the Elflands, it should be clear to the PCs that most of the elves there don't trust the PCs and resent Daesanderena for looking to outsiders to solve their problem. They openly talk about the PCs whether the PCs are within earshot or not. If the PCs are within earshot, the elves leave off all discussion about their efforts to stop the spread of the Blot. They become indignant if the PCs ask anyone other than Daesanderena about their efforts or for any information on the Blot. Daesanderena helpfully explains to the PCs that the Blot demands something in return for entrance, though they are uncertain what it demands. All elves from the Summer Lands who have attempted to breach the structure have disintegrated when they tried to enter, leaving only a vague shadowy outline where they once stood.

If the PCs ask for a reward for entering the Blot and destroying it and the Weft of Shadows, the planar elves become incensed at their presumption. Daesanderena, a practical elf more in tune with the ways of mortals, calms them down and offers to pay the PCs either 5,000 gp or with a *ring of shooting stars* or a *scimitar of speed*.

The Blot

Fed by an influx of shadow from the Shadow Realm, the Weft of Shadows's lair continuously expands its boundaries. The Weft isn't quite powerful enough to impose its will on the halls and rooms composing the complex, but it and its allies have worked together to physically mold the shadowstuff surrounding and filling the area. As the Blot creeps outward, it creates indistinct chambers that fool the senses when someone enters them. PCs have no problem navigating the chambers within the bounds presented on the map. However, it is possible to step beyond the boundaries into shadowstuff. When this happens, a creature must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw for every 5 feet it attempts to move within the shadow stuff. On a failure, the creature moves 5 feet in a random direction (roll a d8 to determine the direction). Creatures calling the Blot home can maneuver through the shadowstuff without the possibility of getting lost. While a creature is within the Blot's hazy boundaries, all attacks against the creature have disadvantage.

Accessing the Blot requires a creature to give up its soul or essence. The Weft set up this failsafe to ensure that those who fled the compound would be unable to return. An additional unintended "side effect" is that the summer elves, who only consist of their essences, are wholly consumed when they attempt to enter the Blot, their essences becoming trapped in the *Cauldron of Souls* in **Area 5**.

The Blot is illuminated by dim light, and all colors are washed out in the gloom. The shadows consume *light* and *continual flame* spells, reducing their durations to 1 minute and 10 minutes, respectively, and only allowing a 10-foot radius of bright light. *Daylight* lasts for 10 minutes and sheds bright light out to 30 feet.

AREA 1: ENTRYWAY

A solid black door presents the only entrance to the Blot. It is the only fixed outer location in the complex. While the rest of the Blot stretches and flows as it extends its boundaries, the southern border remains unchanging. The door is inscribed with flowing gray script that reads, "Offer only your lightest possession, and you will be

STATUS IN MIDGARD

If you are using **Status** (see *Midgard Worldbook*) and the PCs defeat the Weft of Shadows, destroy the Blot, and free the captive souls of the elves, the PCs gain +1 to their Status with the elves of the Summer Lands—if somewhat begrudgingly—and also, perhaps surprisingly, with the Queen of Night and Magic. These modifiers stack with similar Status modifiers the PCs may possess.

permitted entry." The Weft of Shadows enjoys what it sees as a taunting riddle, which doesn't actually require a creature to solve it to gain entry. Merely touching the door transports a creature to its other side and to a set of stairs made of grasping shadowstuff. In the process, the creature loses its soul or essence, which teleports to **Area 5**, leaving the creature feeling lethargic and like something vital is missing. Exiting the Blot costs nothing, but a creature that hasn't reobtained its soul or essence can't reenter the complex. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check understands this effect. A creature whose home plane is not the Material Plane or Shadow Realm is consumed by the Blot and ends up in the *Cauldron of Souls* in **Area 5**.

AREA 2: SHADOW FEY BARRACKS

With the exception of the shadow fey, all the creatures residing in the Blot have no need for food, water, or rest. This spartan room serves as a place of recuperation for the few shadow fey guarding the complex. The Weft of Shadows intends to expand this room as it grows in power, knowing it must have an army of disposable minions to protect the Blot as it consumes more land and gains the attention of the Summer Lands' rulers. As it stands, the Weft of Shadows doesn't entirely trust the shadow fey, so it posts them near the entrance where they can repel intruders at no great cost to the Weft's plans.

The Weft of Shadows's distrust is not misplaced. The Queen of Night and Magic purposefully disowned the four shadow fey currently operating in the Blot, so she can retain the appearance of diplomatic neutrality. She enjoys the metaphysical punch in the nose delivered by the Weft of Shadows but wishes to suffer no backlash when its plans eventually fail. At the same time, she presents herself as an impartial adviser to the Weft. She subtly directed it to find allies not associated with her court, and the shadow fey quartet was conveniently available. One of them uses the shadow river to travel to the Shadow Realm and report on the Weft's activities and the summer elves' reactions to the queen.

Two **shadow fey duelists** (see *Tome of Beasts*) and a **shadow fey enchantress** (see *Tome of Beasts*) rest in the barracks. The duelists and enchantress find the shadow fey poisoner in **Area 3** disturbing and tend to keep their distance from him.

AREA 3: ANTECHAMBER

This room serves to comfortably seat visitors to the Blot while they await an audience with the Weft of Shadows. A long table and six chairs, all made of shadowstuff, stand against the northern wall, helping to conceal the secret door. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a cool spot on the wall where the secret door is hidden while a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers the door's nearly imperceptible seams in the wall. The door is obvious from the other side.

A **shadow fey poisoner** (see *Creature Codex*) keeps an eye on arrivals from the shadow river flowing into **Area 9** and spends much of his time patrolling between **Area 3** and **Area 9**. He escorts Shadow Realm dignitaries to this chamber or helps the shadow river lord in **Area 9** repel intruders.

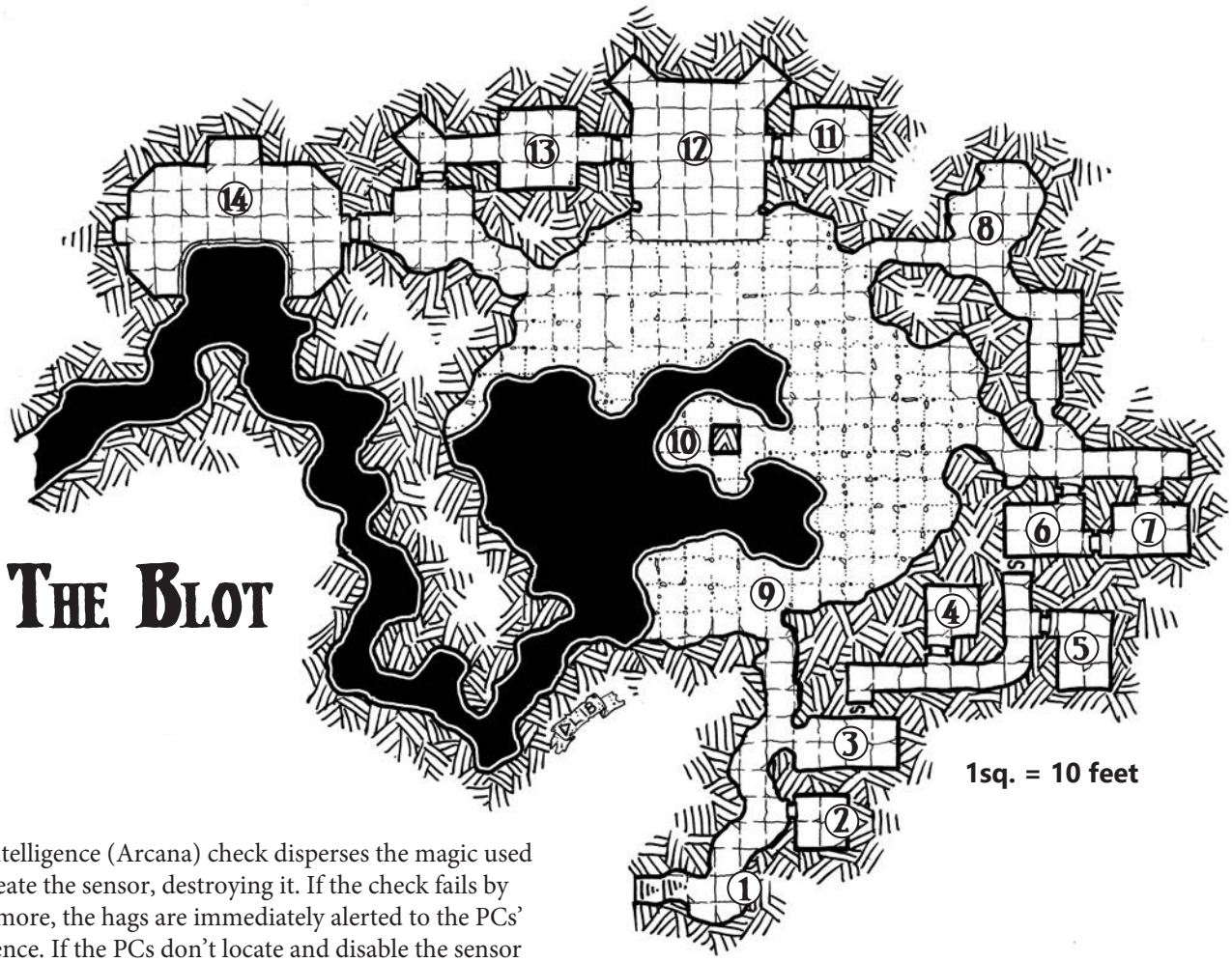
AREA 4: MOONLIT CHAMBER

A **lunar devil** (see *Tome of Beasts*) lairs in this chamber, which contains a shadow version of a *gem of brightness* that sheds moonlight rather than sunlight. The gem dissipates in a puff of black smoke if removed from the Blot. The devil sometimes roams the hall or checks in on the night hags in **Area 5**. While the Weft uses the devil to provide checks and balances against the night hags in **Area 5**, the devil has its own plans to destroy the night hags and obtain all the captured souls for itself. On rare occasions, it "borrows" a soul from the *Cauldron of Souls* and exits the Blot to harass the summer elves, using the borrowed soul as a means of re-entry. The hags put on a show of reluctance to release a soul from their watch, but truthfully, they are happy when the devil is gone, knowing the loss of one soul is worth the potentiality of the devil's destruction by the elves.

AREA 5: CAULDRON OF SOULS

One of the Weft of Shadows's negotiations involved obtaining the services of a coven of three **night hags**. The Weft needed their assistance to operate and protect a soul-harvesting device known as the *Cauldron of Souls*. The cauldron is tied to the Blot, imposing its terrible cost of entry and fueling the Blot's expansion. The Weft's appeals for the night hags, as former fey beings, to join it in getting revenge against fey who bask in the light failed to sway the hags. The Weft then discovered that the souls the cauldron collected were valueless to the Weft beyond fueling the expansion of its lair. Upon this realization, the Weft changed tactics and offered the hags their choice of souls with the stipulation they could take only one per week. Confident that the Blot's expansion will soon become self-sustaining and no longer require the cauldron's magic, he magnanimously offered the remainder of the souls to the hags once the cauldron was no longer needed. The night hags readily agreed.

The night hags created a magical sensor in the hallway between **Area 4** and **Area 5** to monitor the hallway for intruders and to spy on the lunar devil. A hag can use an action to see or hear through the sensor as if using the *clairvoyance* spell. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the sensor as a tiny, slit pupil in the shadowstuff on the wall. A successful DC



15 Intelligence (Arcana) check disperses the magic used to create the sensor, destroying it. If the check fails by 5 or more, the hags are immediately alerted to the PCs' presence. If the PCs don't locate and disable the sensor within 2 rounds of entering the hallway, the hags use their Change Shape actions to appear as mortal elves searching the cauldron for their stolen souls. They attempt to convince the PCs to destroy the lunar devil, or they use their guises to catch the PCs by surprise.

Development. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check discovers the following information about the *Cauldron of Souls*: destroying the cauldron outside of the Blot will release the souls trapped within, returning them to their bodies, while destroying the cauldron inside of the Blot will destroy the souls trapped within it. The cauldron weighs 100 pounds and can be removed from its shallow pit with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. If the souls are freed, the planar elves, who were seemingly disintegrated when they attempted to enter the Blot, return to life with no memories of the intervening time.

AREA 6: MAKESHIFT MORGUE

Obsidian slabs covered in corpses fill this room, leaving little space to maneuver. The victims are the remains of other groups summoned by Daesanderena to investigate the Blot. The fear smith in **Area 7** has picked up the rudiments of surgical procedures to enhance its fear-inducing capabilities. It dissected the bodies and arrayed them in disturbing positions to unsettle visitors and trespassers alike. If the fear smith is aware of the PCs' presence and is able to read their minds with *detect thoughts*, it hastily reconfigures one of the corpses into a person at least one of the PCs knows. A creature that recognizes the corpse must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. If the fear smith appears while a PC is frightened, it becomes the source of the PC's fear.

Secret Door. The room's disturbing scene helps conceal the secret door hidden in the southeast corner. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a cool spot on the wall where the secret door is hidden while a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers the door's nearly imperceptible seams in the wall. The door is easily visible from the hallway on the other side.

AREA 7: WALLS OF TERROR

The **fear smith** (see *Tome of Beasts*) in this chamber uses a warped version of a relic meant to mollify fears. The *Mask of Unmitigated Terror* helps carve out new territory for the Blot and fills the indistinct terrain it creates with horrified screams that echo back on each other.

Mask of Unmitigated Terror. The fear smith carries a shadow version of an artifact known as the *Mask of Unmitigated Terror*. If the fear smith dies, the mask dissipates in a puff of black smoke. While the fear smith carries this item, they can use an action once each day to create a pulse of darkness that extends outward from them to all creatures within 20 feet. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or have disadvantage on its first attack roll each turn when in dim light or darkness for the next 24 hours as it fears the unknown things that might lurk unseen nearby. A *remove curse* spell cures the creature of its fear.

Treasure. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a *helm of brilliance* (with one diamond, three rubies, four fire opals, and six opals) hidden in the nearby shadowstuff. This helm was gifted to one of the slain adventurers by Daesanderena.

AREA 8: TWISTED SHADOW FOREST

This formless area is filled with shadowy imitations of trees and brush. While nearly insubstantial, the shadows still grasp at the PCs' feet, filling the chamber with difficult terrain. This does not affect the forest's denizens: a **shadow beast** (see *Tome of Beasts*) and a **deathwisp** (see *Tome of Beasts*) who lurk among the trees. The deathwisp benefits from the Blot's inherent shadowy environment and can use its Shadow Jump action anywhere within the Blot.

Bramble Crown. The shadow beast wears a shadow version of an artifact known as the *Bramble Crown*. If the shadow beast dies, the crown dissipates in a puff of black smoke. While the shadow beast wears this item, it can use an action once each day to create a *wall of thorns*, except the wall deals necrotic damage instead of piercing or slashing damage.

AREA 9: SHADOW RIVER

This enormous chamber is the Blot's core, and a writhing shadow river feeds into it. The river provides travel to the Shadow Realm and generates much of the energy fueling the complex's expansion. It poses a threat to creatures not native to the Shadow Realm or granted protection by the Weft of Shadows.

Shadow Tendrils. A creature that touches the shadow river or ends its turn within 10 feet of it takes 5 (2d4) necrotic damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or have its Strength score reduced by 1d4. The creature dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the creature finishes a short or long rest. A humanoid that dies from this damage or Strength reduction rises as a **shadow** under the shadow river lord's control after 1 minute.

Creatures. Two explorers previously sent by Daesanderena died to the river's shadow tendrils and rose as two **shadow skeletons** (see *Creature Codex*). These skeletons are under the control of the **shadow river lord** (see *Creature Codex*), who plies the river, and have been instructed to bring mortal intruders to the river to meet the same fate as the skeletons. The shadow river lord hides in the shadows of the river, only revealing itself if the shadow skeletons are destroyed.

AREA 10: BLOT'S HEART

This peninsula in the shadow river holds a giant gray obelisk with an intense gray light that pierces the Blot's ceiling. When a creature moves within 10 feet of the obelisk, the light leaves the object and coalesces into a **monolith champion** (see *Tome of Beasts*). The monolith champion's Blatant Dismissal ability functions as if it were in a fey locale, and the illusory duplicate of the target remains for 1 minute or until the monolith champion is destroyed.

Treasure. The monolith champion's eyes are lenses that operate as *goggles of night*.

AREA 11: A GLIMPSE INTO THE VOID

This chamber once held creatures the Weft of Shadows used to feed the elder shadow drake in **Area 12**. However, an unexpected visitor, a **voidling** (see *Tome of Beasts*), was drawn to the Blot's darkness and ate the smaller creatures in this room. The voidling presents a problem and a potential opportunity for the Weft of Shadows. To keep the voidling contained, the Weft feeds it lesser creatures not necessary for the Weft's schemes.

Locked Door. The door leading into this chamber is locked. A successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the lock.

AREA 12: BALCONY

This raised area looks down on **Area 9**. The Weft of Shadows spends the vast majority of its time near the shadow pool in **Area 14**. When it wishes to address allies gathered in **Area 9**, it moves here, where it can speak from on high. The room contains the Weft of Shadows's sole personal touch: a centuries-old portrait of Qeldar, as a young elf, hangs on the northern wall. The portrait shows scoring and scratches all around the portrait's subject, which is unmarred by the damage.

The Weft keeps an **elder shadow drake** (see *Tome of Beasts*) here as a sort of pet. Where every other creature serves to achieve the Weft's goals, the shadow drake is left to roam the Blot as it pleases, though it usually remains here with its growing hoard.

Treasure. The portrait of Qeldar is worth 500 gp to a collector of esoteric objects. The Weft allowed the shadow drake to collect trinkets belonging to former explorers that perished in the Blot, which includes 120 gp, a gold band set with diamonds worth 1,000 gp, and a pair of amethyst-inset earrings worth 750 gp.

AREA 13: SHADOW'S ADVISER

The voidling isn't the only dark, uninvited guest to the Blot. A **herald of darkness** (see *Tome of Beasts*) heard rumors among the shadow fey about the Weft of Shadows and its plans in the Elflands. Intrigued by this and hoping to assist in the Elflands' literal corruption by the spreading Blot, she insinuated herself as a consultant to the Weft of Shadows, convincing the Weft with a well-spun story about her status as a rogue agent of the Queen of Night and Magic. She stationed herself in this room, where she can counsel the Weft when it needs a sympathetic ear regarding the suitability of its plans and potential allies.

Enoki Scepter. The herald of darkness carries a shadow version of an artifact known as the *Enoki Scepter*. If the herald of darkness dies, the scepter dissipates in a puff of black smoke. In addition to using the scepter to push the Blot's boundaries to the north, the herald of darkness can use an action once each day while holding the scepter to spray shadowy spores in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 21 (6d6) necrotic damage and becomes infected with the shadow mold disease. On a success, a creature takes half the damage and doesn't become infected with the disease. A target infected with shadow mold sprouts gray fungal growths from its body. Until the disease is cured, the target can't regain hit points except by magical means. At the end of each long rest, the infected target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or have its hit point maximum reduced by 7 (2d6). The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. When an infected creature dies, a **gloomflower** (see *Creature Codex*) sprouts from its corpse 24 hours later.

AREA 14: SHADOW POOL

The door to this chamber is seamless save for three indentations in the shape of a crown, scepter, and mask. The only resident of the Blot that can enter the Weft's chamber without the Weft's permission is the herald of darkness from **Area 13**. The Queen of Night and Magic and her immediate lieutenants are allowed entry if the Weft is aware of their presence in the Blot. To gain entry, the PCs must defeat the creatures that possess the corrupted versions of the *Bramble Crown*, the *Enoki Scepter*, and the *Mask of Unmitigated Terror*. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check is enough to realize these indentations are connected to powerful magical items. If a PC has seen one of the items or has defeated one of the creatures that holds one of the items, it has advantage on this check. When a creature that possesses one of these items is slain, the indentation on the door to **Area 14** fills in. When all three creatures possessing the items have been defeated, a knob appears on the door, allowing any creature access to the Weft's chamber.

The **Weft of Shadows** (see **Appendix**) experiments with the pool of shadow in this chamber to increase its power and figure out a way to accelerate the Blot's growth. While it resents any intrusion into its sanctum, it calmly asks the trespassers to leave. If the PCs decide to parlay with it and do not threaten it, it patiently answers questions for a minute before demanding they leave. If the PCs refuse to leave, it attacks to force them to leave. The Weft can't afford to let the Blot fall and defends its home to the death.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs can't defeat the Weft of Shadows, the Blot continues to grow until the Birch Queen and Oak and Holly Kings decide to take action, launching an assault on the Blot that results in the deaths of hundreds of planar elves and allies from outside the Elflands. Over the course of a century, the Blot slowly shrinks in size to the dimensions it has at the start of the adventure. The elves are eventually able to recover some of the lost artifacts and use those to break into the Blot and destroy the objects holding it together, removing the Blot from the Elflands forever.

If the PCs defeat the Weft of Shadows, the Blot stops growing without the Weft to guide it. The *Cauldron of Souls* and the shadow copies of the *Bramble Crown*, the *Enoki Scepter*, and the *Mask of Unmitigated Terror* must be destroyed to cause the Blot to fully collapse. The destruction of each device (or the device's wielder in the case of the crown, scepter, and mask) reduces the Blot's diameter by 20%. When all four items and the Weft of Shadows have been destroyed, the Blot implodes, and a bright radiance flashes for a moment immediately afterward. Each non-shadow creature in the Blot when it implodes is harmlessly ejected outside its entrance. Each shadow creature in the Blot when it implodes must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or take 55 (10d10) radiant damage.

If the PCs defeat the Weft of Shadows, they earn their choice of 5,000 gp, a *ring of shooting stars*, or a *scimitar of speed* from the elves. They receive one additional reward for restoring the elves taken by the *Cauldron of Souls* and another for collapsing the Blot. If they achieve all three goals, they become celebrated among the planar elves, who treat them nearly as equals. Daesanderena becomes an ally to the PCs and gives them a silver pin in the shape of a sunflower (worth 1,000 gp), which they can use as a bonus action once per day to ask for her aid. This aid comes in a form of your choosing, though it is usually in the form of advice on otherworldly topics or similar assistance that doesn't require the planar elf to physically manifest on the Material Plane (a taxing and dangerous task).

APPENDIX

Any new game elements in these adventures are presented here.

Hazards

Do watch your step, adventurer. The road ahead is fraught with peril.

QUASH MOSS

This thick, deep-green moss grows quickly after a spawning storm, typically in shaded areas.

A typical patch of quash moss covers a 10-foot square. It appears as completely normal moss until pressure is applied to its surface, as when a creature walks upon it, and it then curls up, wrapping around whatever is on it. A creature must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to jump clear; otherwise, the quash moss rolls up tightly around it. A captured creature is restrained and takes 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage and 5 (1d10) acid damage each round on its turn. A captured creature may make a DC 13 Dexterity check each round, slipping free on a success.

Quash moss cannot otherwise move. Any effect that causes fire damage or 48 hours of exposure to direct sunlight will destroy an average patch of quash moss.

Magic Items & Spells

This magic may prove useful to resourceful adventurers. Though it's best to be wary.

AMULET OF MEMORY

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

Made of gold or silver, this spherical locket is engraved with two cresting waves, facing away from each other while bound in a twisted loop. It preserves a memory to be re-experienced later.

While wearing this amulet, you can use an action to speak the command word and open the locket. The open locket stores what you see and experience for up to 10 minutes. You can shut the locket at any time (no action required), stopping the memory recording. Opening the locket with the command word again overwrites the contained memory.

While a memory is stored, you or another creature can touch the locket to experience the memory from the beginning. Breaking contact ends the memory early. In addition, you have advantage on any skill check related to details or knowledge of the stored memory.

If you die while wearing the amulet, it preserves you. Your body is affected by the *gentle repose* spell until the amulet is removed or until you are restored to life. In addition, at the moment of your death, you can store any memory into the amulet. A creature touching the *amulet* perceives the memory stored there even after your death.

Attuning to an *amulet of memory* removes any prior memories stored in it.

BAG OF BRAMBLE BEASTS

Wondrous item, uncommon

This ordinary green cloth bag appears empty. Reaching inside, however, reveals a small ball of brambles. The bag weighs 1/2 pound.

You can use an action to pull the ball of brambles from the bag and throw it up to 20 feet. When the ball lands, it transforms into a creature you determine by rolling a d8 and consulting the table below. The creature is a bramble version (see **bramble creature template** in **Monsters & NPCs** below) of the beast listed. The creature vanishes at the next dawn or when it is reduced to 0 hit points.

The creature is friendly to you and your companions, and it acts on your turn. You can use a bonus action to command how the creature moves and what action it takes on its next turn or give it general orders, such as to attack your enemies. In the absence of such orders, the creature acts in a fashion appropriate to its nature.

Once three balls of brambles have been pulled from the bag, the bag can't be used again until the next dawn.

Alternatively, one willing animal companion or familiar can be placed in the bag for 1 week. A non-beast animal companion or familiar that is placed in the bag is treated as if it had been placed into a *bag of holding* and can be removed from the bag at any time. A beast animal companion or familiar disappears once placed in the bag, and the bag's magic is dormant until the week is up. At the end of the week, the animal companion or familiar exits the bag as a bramble creature (see **bramble creature template** in **Monsters & NPCs** below) and can

be returned to its original form only with a *wish* spell. The creature retains its status as an animal companion or familiar after its transformation. Once the bag has been used to change an animal companion or familiar into a bramble creature, it becomes an ordinary bag.

1d8	Creature
1	Weasel
2	Giant rat
3	Badger
4	Boar
5	Panther
6	Giant badger
7	Dire wolf
8	Giant elk

BALEFUL EYE OF CHERNOBOG

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

A ruby orb set into a golden circle, the pendant of this necklace somewhat resembles a malicious eye with the lids draped across the ruby. The *baleful eye* has five charges. Using an action, you may expend a charge to cause the eye to open. When this happens, all dwarves within 60 feet of the bearer must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or behave as if under the effects of a *fear* spell. After all charges have been expended, the *baleful eye* loses its power and becomes an ordinary if ghastly necklace valued at 200 gp to the right collector.

Call Shadow Mastiff

3rd-level conjuration (shadow)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a dog's tooth)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You conjure a **shadow mastiff** (see below) from the Shadow Realm. This creature obeys your verbal commands to aid you in battle or to seek out a specific creature. It has the body of a large dog with a smooth black coat, 2 feet high at the shoulder and weighing 200 pounds.

The mastiff is friendly to you and your companions. Roll initiative for the mastiff; it acts on its own turn. It obeys simple verbal commands from you within its ability to act. Giving a command takes no action on your part.

The mastiff disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the spell ends.

SHADOW MASTIFF

Medium monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 30 (4d8 +12)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	4 (–3)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +8, Survival +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages understands Common but does not speak

Challenge: 2 (200 XP)

Bay. When a shadow mastiff howls, all creatures within a 300-foot radius who are not evil monstrosities must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be panicked. On each of its turns, a panicked creature must take the Dash action and move away from the mastiff by the safest and shortest route, if such a route exists. If the target moves out of range of this ability, the effect ends.

Scent. Shadow mastiffs have advantage on all Wisdom checks that rely on their sense of smell.

Shadow Blend. Shadow mastiffs can hide in any condition of illumination other than bright light.

Trip. Whenever a shadow mastiff hits an opponent with a bite attack for the first time on a turn, the opponent falls prone unless it succeeds on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the shadow mastiff makes an immediate second bite attack as a bonus action.

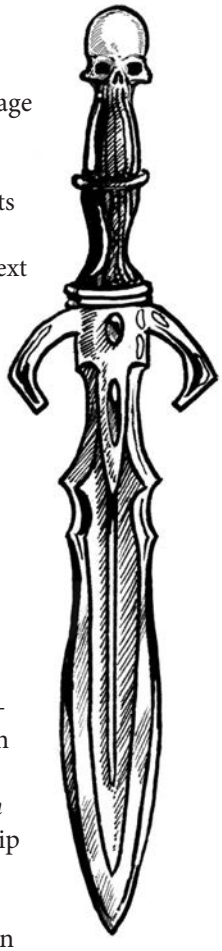
ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6+3) piercing damage.



CONSTANT DAGGER

Weapon (dagger), rare



You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

When you roll a 20 on an attack roll made with this weapon, the target loses its resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage until the start of your next turn. If it has immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, its immunity instead becomes resistance to such damage until the start of your next turn. If the creature doesn't have resistance or immunity to such damage, you roll your damage dice three times, instead of twice.

GREEN MANTLE

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This garment is made of living plants—mosses, vines, and grasses—interwoven into a light, comfortable piece of clothing. When you attune to the *green mantle*, it forms a symbiotic relationship with you, sinking roots beneath your skin. While wearing it, your hit point maximum is reduced by 5, and you gain the following benefits:

- If you aren't wearing armor, your base AC is 13 + your Dexterity modifier.
- You have resistance to radiant damage.
- You have immunity to the poisoned condition and poison damage that originates from a plant, moss, fungus, or plant creature.
- As an action, you cause the mantle to produce six berries. It can have no more than twelve berries on it at one time. The berries have the same effect as berries produced by the *goodberry* spell. Unlike the *goodberry* spell, the berries retain their potency as long as they are not picked from the mantle. Once used, this property can't be used again until the next dawn.

Curse. Once you don and attune to this mantle, you are cursed and can't remove it unless you are targeted by the *remove curse* spell or similar magic. The *green mantle* requires at least 1 pint of water each day. If you fail to provide water to it, it draws the moisture it needs from your body, dealing 10 (3d6) necrotic damage to you.

If it is unable to gain moisture, whether due to its host's immunities or magical protections or to being in a dry environment on a dead host, the *green mantle* begins to wither. After the first 24 hours, it is unable to gain moisture, the AC it provides is reduced by 1, and you lose resistance to radiant damage. After 48 hours without moisture, it no longer provides any benefits to AC, and you lose immunity to the poisoned condition and plant-based poison damage. After 72 hours without moisture, it dies, becoming nonmagical, and you are able to remove it.

PHASE MIRROR

Wondrous item, rarity varies (requires attunement)

Unlike other magic items, multiple creatures can attune to the *phase mirror* by touching it as part of the same short rest. A creature remains attuned to the mirror as long as it is on the same plane of existence as the mirror or until it chooses to end its attunement to the mirror, during a short rest. *Phase mirrors* look almost identical to standard mirrors, but their surfaces are slightly clouded. These mirrors are found in a variety of sizes, from handheld to massive disks. The larger the mirror, the more power it can take in, and consequently, the more creatures it can affect.

When it is created, a *phase mirror* is connected to a specific plane. The mirror draws in starlight and uses that energy to move between its current plane and its connected plane.

While holding or touching a fully charged mirror, an attuned creature can use an action to speak the command word to activate the mirror. When activated, the mirror transports all creatures attuned to it to the mirror's connected plane or back to the Material Plane at a destination of the activating creature's choice. This effect works like the *plane shift* spell, except it transports only attuned creatures, regardless of their distance from each other, and the destination must be on the Material Plane or the mirror's connected plane. If the mirror is broken, its magic ends, and each attuned creature is trapped in whatever plane it occupies when the mirror breaks.

Once activated, the mirror stays active for 24 hours, and any attuned creature can use an action to transport all attuned creatures back and forth between the two planes. After these 24 hours have passed, the power drains from the mirror, and it can't be activated again until it is recharged. Each *phase mirror* has a different recharge time and limit to the number of creatures that can be attuned to it, depending on the mirror's size.

Handheld (Rare). This mirror fits easily in one hand. Only one creature can attune to it, and the mirror must spend at least 24 total hours (approximately 3 days) exposed to moonlight or starlight before it can be activated.

Vanity (Very Rare). This mirror is about 2 feet wide. Up to four creatures can attune to it, and the mirror must spend at least 40 total hours (approximately 5 days) exposed to moonlight or starlight before it can be activated.

Floor (Legendary). This mirror is about 5 feet wide. Up to seven creatures can attune to it, and the mirror must spend at least 56 total hours (approximately 7 days) exposed to moonlight or starlight before it can be activated.

Phase mirrors connected to planes without moonlight or starlight can be recharged in whatever light is native to its connected plane, but it must still be recharged by moonlight or starlight while on the Material Plane.

Putrescent Faerie Circle

5th-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a piece of poisonous fungus)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You create a 20-foot-diameter circle of loosely packed toadstools that spew sickly white spores and secrete a tarry substance. At the start of each of your turns, each creature within the circle must make a Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 4d8 necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

If a creature attempts to pass through the ring of toadstools, the toadstools release a cloud of spores, and the creature must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 8d8 poison damage and is poisoned for 1 minute. On a success, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't poisoned. While a creature is poisoned, it is paralyzed. It can attempt a new Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns to remove the paralyzed condition (but not the poisoned condition).

PYROCLASTIC BURST

4th-level evocation (sorcerer, wizard)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S, M (residue from a magmin)

Duration: Instantaneous

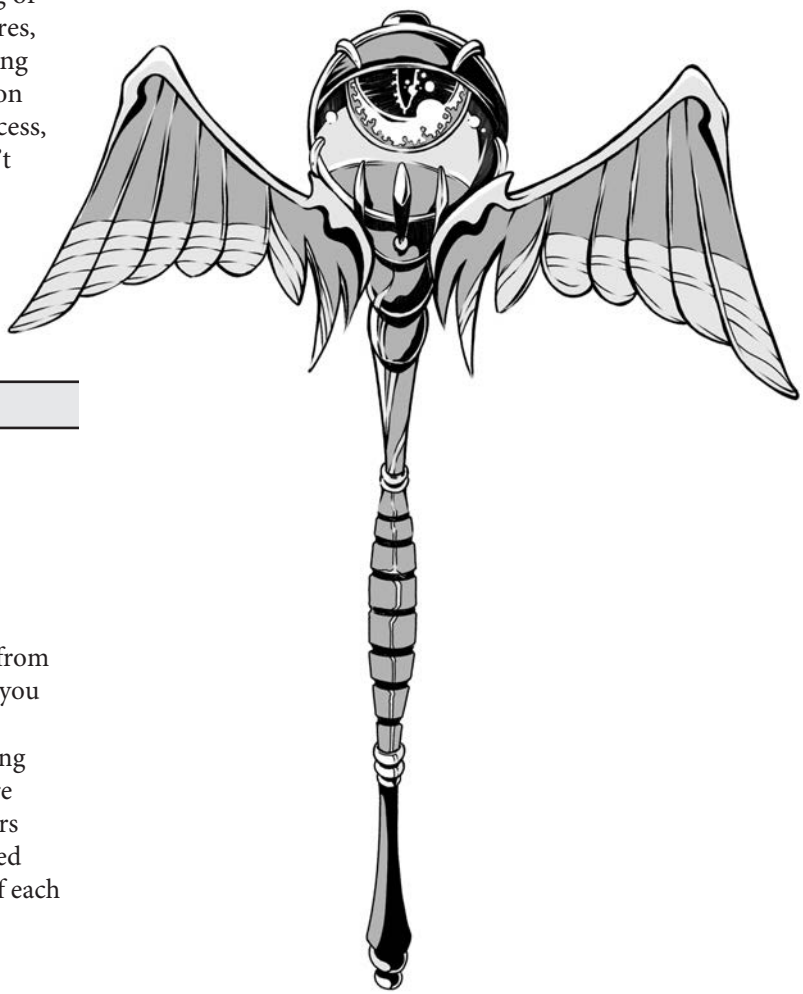
When you cast this spell, a ball of magma shoots from your hand and messily explodes at a point where you indicate. Each creature in a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on the point must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking 6d8 fire damage and catching on fire on a failed save or half as much damage and suffers no additional effect on a successful save. An ignited creature takes 1d8 fire damage at the beginning of each of its turns. Any adjacent creature can take an action to douse the fire.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 for each slot level above 4th. The extra damage dealt to an ignited creature increases by 1d8 for every two slot levels above 4th.

ROD OF RAMPANCY

Rod, very rare (requires attunement)

This rod of polished, silvery metal resembles a scepter. It has an eye fashioned at the top of it, flanked by a pair of wings. The octagonal rod narrows into a sharp point at the other end. You can wield the rod as a javelin, and it counts as a magic weapon. When you are attuned to the rod, you are unaffected by spells and other magical effects that would reduce your speed or cause you to become paralyzed or restrained (including the temporal effects described in this adventure). The rod has 3 charges. You can expend a charge from the rod to cast *freedom of movement* on a target as an action by touching a creature with the rod or to cast *knock* by touching an object. The rod regains all expended charges at dawn.



SLEEPING SAND

Wondrous item, uncommon

Found in a small packet, this powder resembles soft white sand. There is enough of it for one use. When you use an action to throw the dust into the air, you and each creature within 30 feet of you that requires sleep must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or fall unconscious until the sleeper takes damage, someone uses an action to shake or slap the sleeper awake, or 1 minute has passed.

SUMMON ANCESTOR

5th-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 10 feet

Components: V, S, M (natural stone; optionally, an object connected to target's memories for binding, see text)

Duration: 10 minutes or 1 hour if bound

You speak the name of one of your ancestors (you need not be blood-related, but you must be considered part of their family line) while touching a stone as a focus for the spell. If you wish to bind the spirit (see below), you must also hold a personal object of theirs or something infused with their memories, like a journal, which is consumed at the end of the duration. The ancestor is summoned as a **ghost** with their memories and personality, except for memories of their death and the afterlife, which are suppressed.

You can attempt to summon an unknown ancestor, but the spell has a 30% chance of failure.

The ancestor will perform one of the following tasks for you when summoned:

- ***Answer Five Questions.*** This functions as *speak with dead*, but as you are speaking to an intact soul, it can give more complete answers and can speculate if needed.
- ***Provide Advice.*** Your ancestor gives you information or guidance based on their skills and specialties in life. You gain advantage on all skill check rolls of a relevant skill until the next dawn.

Binding an ancestor ties them to the stone used as a focus for the spell, unable to move more than 120 feet away from it. You may choose to have your ancestor watch or guard the area.

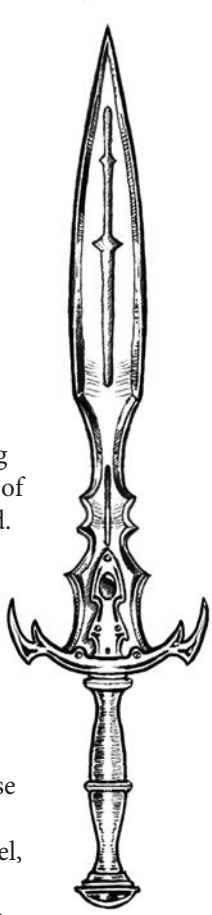
If watching, the spirit hides in the Ethereal Plane and observes, appearing to you at the end of the duration to tell you what it saw.

If guarding, it attempts to scare off any creatures entering the area (or specific creatures you describe after casting the spell) but will only attack to defend itself.

You cannot summon the same ancestor more often than once in 10 days.

THIRSTING SCALPEL

Weapon (dagger), uncommon (requires attunement)



You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls with this magic weapon, which deals slashing damage instead of piercing damage.

When you attack a creature with this weapon and roll a 20 on the attack roll, that target takes an extra 2d6 slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an undead or construct, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or lose 2d6 hit points at the start of each of its turns from a bleeding wound. Any creature can take an action to stanch the wound with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check. The wound also closes if the target receives magical healing.

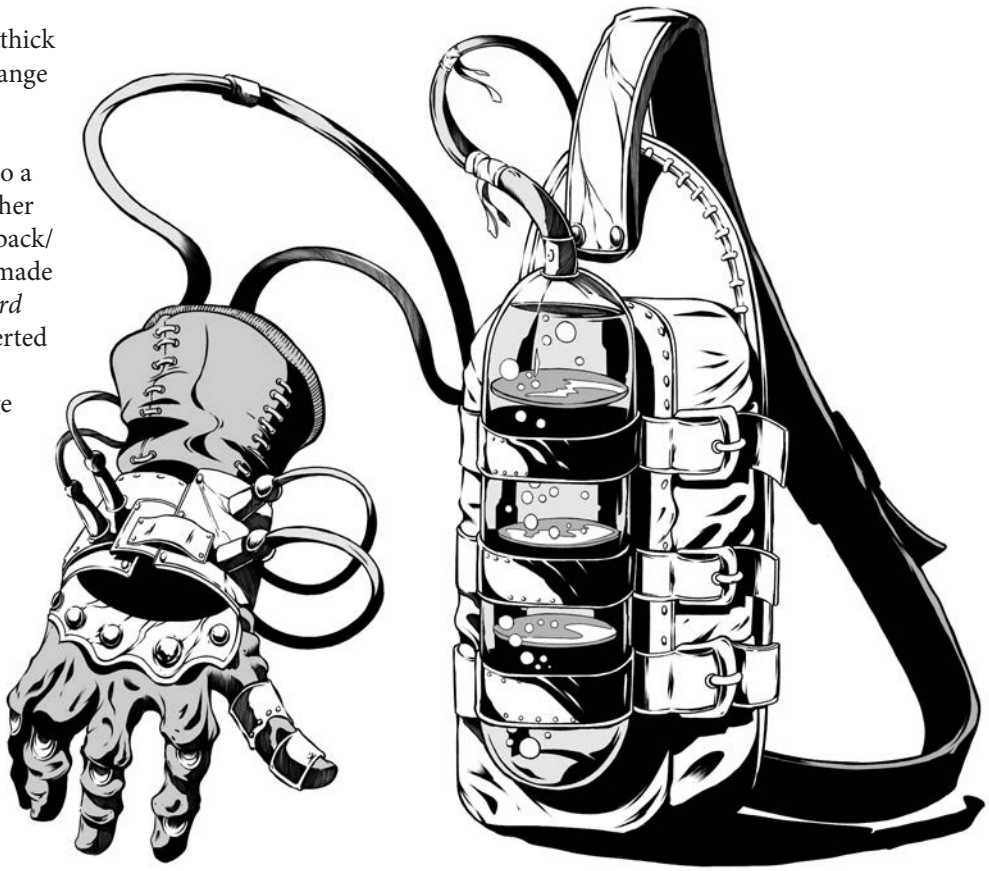
Curse. This scalpel is cursed and contains a bearded devil's essence. Becoming attuned to it extends the curse to you. As long as you remain cursed, you are unwilling to part with the scalpel, keeping it on your person at all times. While attuned to this weapon, you have disadvantage on attack rolls made with weapons other than this one.

In addition, once per week while the scalpel is on your person, you must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or become driven to feed blood to the scalpel. You have advantage on attack rolls with the scalpel until it is sated. The dagger is sated when you roll a 20 on an attack roll with it or deal 14 slashing damage with it. If 1 hour elapses and you haven't sated its thirst for blood, the dagger deals 14 slashing damage to you. If the dagger deals damage to you as a result of the curse, you can't heal the damage for 24 hours.

You can break the curse in the usual ways. Alternatively, casting *banishment* on the dagger forces the devil to leave it. The scalpel then becomes a *+1 weapon* with no other properties.

VRIL FORCE GLOVE

This bulky gauntlet is crafted of thick leather covered in plates of a strange blue-green metal. Orichalcum studs and wires bedeck the gauntlet with the wires leading to a metal cylinder attached to a leather harness that fits to the wearer's back/shoulder. The metal cylinder is made to hold a vril battery (see *Midgard Worldbook*), which must be inserted for the force glove to function.



You use an action to discharge a bolt of force as a ranged weapon attack against a target within 60 feet, dealing 3 (1d6) points of force damage on a hit and knocking the target prone if it fails a DC 10 Strength saving throw, expending 1 charge from the vril battery to do so. You can delay discharging the glove for up to 3 rounds, using your action to build up a more powerful bolt. Each round you spend building up power affects the force bolt as follows:

- ***1 Round.*** 7 (2d6) force damage, DC 12 Strength saving throw, costs 2 charges.
- ***2 Rounds.*** 14 (4d6) force damage, DC 14 Strength saving throw, costs 3 charges.
- ***3 Rounds.*** 28 (8d6) force damage; DC 16 Strength saving throw, costs 4 charges.

Holding a charge requires concentration. If your concentration is broken while delaying the discharge, all spent charges are lost, and the resulting bolt deals only 1d6 + 1 per round of delay. Attempts to charge the device for more than 3 rounds cause it to overload, dealing 35 (10d6) force damage to everything in a 10-foot burst. A successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw reduces this damage by half. There is a 50% chance the force glove is destroyed by the overload. Otherwise, the vril battery that powers it is simply drained of all charges.

WARRIOR'S EYE HELM

Wonderous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This finely crafted silver and bronze helm is etched on each side with a stylized eye surrounded by ivy.

When wearing it, you are better able to anticipate your opponent's movements during battle. You gain either a +2 on your attack roll or a +2 to your AC during each round of combat. You can change how you use this bonus with a bonus action. In addition, you can use an action to cast the *invisibility* spell. Once used, the *invisibility* effect can't be used again until the next dawn.



There are many foes that seek to block your progress. You'll live longer if you're prepared for anything.

ANIMATED BOOK

Small construct, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 12 (5d4)

Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	1 (−5)	5 (−3)	1 (−5)

Saving Throws Dex +3

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 7

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Antimagic Susceptibility. The book is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the book must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.

False Appearance. While the book remains motionless and isn't flying, it is indistinguishable from a normal book.

ACTIONS

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

ASH TROLL

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 126 (12d10 + 60)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	21 (+5)	8 (−1)	11 (+0)	7 (−2)

Skills Intimidation +1, Survival +3

Damage Vulnerabilities thunder

Damage Resistances fire

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Abyssal, Giant

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Keen Senses. The creature has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on certain senses.

Regeneration. The ash troll regains 10 hp at the start of its turn. If the troll takes acid or thunder damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the creature 's next turn. The ash troll dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate. If the troll uses its Exhale Ash action, this trait doesn't function at the start of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ash troll makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 2 (1d4) fire damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Exhale Ash (Recharge 4–6). The ash troll breathes fiery ash in a 15-foot cone. A creature in the area must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 14 (4d6) fire damage and is poisoned for 1 minute. On a successful save, it takes half the damage and suffers no additional effect. A creature poisoned by the ash troll can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.s

ASP VINE

Medium plant, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 55 (10d8 + 10)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	1 (−5)	3 (−4)	1 (−5)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, frightened

Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

False Appearance. While the asp vine remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal cluster of vines.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The asp vine makes four vine attacks.

Vine. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage and 5 (2d4) poison damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and must succeed on a new saving throw each round it remains grappled or take another 5 (2d4) poison damage. The asp vine can grapple up to four targets at a time, though it can still make vine attacks against other targets even if it has four grappled opponents.

BRAMBLE CREATURE TEMPLATE

Only a beast can become a bramble creature. It retains all its statistics except as noted below:

Type. The creature's type changes from beast to plant.

Vulnerabilities. The creature is vulnerable to fire damage.

Resistances. The creature has resistance to piercing damage from nonmagical attacks.

Immunities. The creature has immunity to poison.

Condition Immunities. The creature can't be poisoned.

Senses. The creature has tremorsense with a radius of 10 feet.

New Trait: Thorn Body. A creature that touches the bramble creature or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 4 (1d8) piercing damage.



CHESHIRIAN

Small fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 66 (12d6 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Cha +5

Skills Deception +7, Stealth +6, Survival +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Sylvan

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Claim Territory (1/Day). The cheshirian spends 1 hour out of phase, attuning itself to a section of the Forlorn Roads up to 1 square mile in size. This section becomes its territory until it dies or it designates another area as its territory. It also attunes itself to a similarly sized swath of land on the Material Plane in the Northlands as part of this process. More than one cheshirian can claim the same territory, though this overlap often ends with one of the cheshirians slain by the other or moving on to a different area.

Out of Phase. As a bonus action, the cheshirian can magically exist on the Material Plane and the Forlorn Roads simultaneously. While it is out of phase in this way, it is invisible in both realms (though it can choose for its mouth and teeth to remain visible), and it has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks. A creature that the cheshirian hits with its claw attack while out of phase has resistance to the cheshirian's claw damage. As a bonus action on a subsequent turn, the cheshirian can choose to fully manifest on the Material Plane or the Forlorn Roads.

Sound Mimicry. The cheshirian can mimic humanoid voices. A creature that hears the voices can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The cheshirian makes two claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 11). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the cheshirian can't use its claw on another target.

Drag to the Forlorn Roads. The cheshirian teleports itself to its claimed territory in the Forlorn Roads, its claimed territory in the Northlands, or to an area of the Forlorn Roads with which it is familiar. If it is grappling a creature, the grappled creature must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw (a creature can willingly fail this saving throw). On a failure, the grappled creature teleports with the cheshirian to the chosen location. A creature that is in the Forlorn Roads and not native to the Shadow Realm can attempt a new Wisdom saving throw at the end of each hour, reappearing in the space it left (or in the nearest unoccupied space if that space is occupied) on a success. A creature can choose to fail this saving throw. If a creature fails this saving throw each hour for 48 hours, it is permanently stuck in the Forlorn Roads and must find a different way out. A fey creature or a creature native to the Shadow Realm can choose to permanently remain in the Forlorn Roads or not at the end of the first hour.

DURGLEEL

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)

Hit Points 44 (8d6 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (−1)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Int +5

Skills Intimidation +3, Stealth +8, Survival +3

Damage Resistances psychic

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Ankeshelian, Common, Goblin

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Alien Mind. Durgleel has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened. In addition, she can use a bonus action to read the surface thoughts of one creature within 30 feet. This works like the *detect thoughts* spell, except it can only read surface thoughts and there is no limit to the duration. Durgleel can end this effect as a bonus action or by using a bonus action to change the target.

Cunning Action. On each of her turns, Durgleel can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Durgleel deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage when she hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of hers that isn't incapacitated and she doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Twisted. When Durgleel attacks a creature from hiding, the target must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Force Glove. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) force damage, and the target must succeed at a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be knocked prone. The force glove is powered by a fully charged vril battery, giving her a maximum of 50 shots with this attack, less if she delays powering it up. (See vril force glove for full effects and abilities.)

Psychic Blast (Recharge 5–6). Durgleel lashes out with the power of her vril artifact, projecting a wave of psychic energy in a 15-foot cone. Creatures in the area of effect must make a DC 12 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 10 (4d4) psychic damage and suffers disadvantage on its next attack, saving throw, or skill check after taking the damage. On a successful save, the creature takes half damage and does not have disadvantage on its next roll.

REACTIONS

Parry. Durgleel adds 2 to her AC against one melee attack that would hit her. To do so, she must be able to see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

HAMMER HOLLY

Huge plant, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 60 (8d12 + 8)

Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	1 (−5)	10 (+0)	1 (−5)

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, frightened

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

False Appearance. While the hammer holly remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal holly tree.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (5d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage and target is stunned for 1 round. If the target succeeds on DC 12 Constitution saving throw, it is not stunned.

INFERNAL CENTAUR

Medium fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)

Skills Intimidation +3, Perception +4

Damage Immunities fire

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Gnomish, Infernal

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

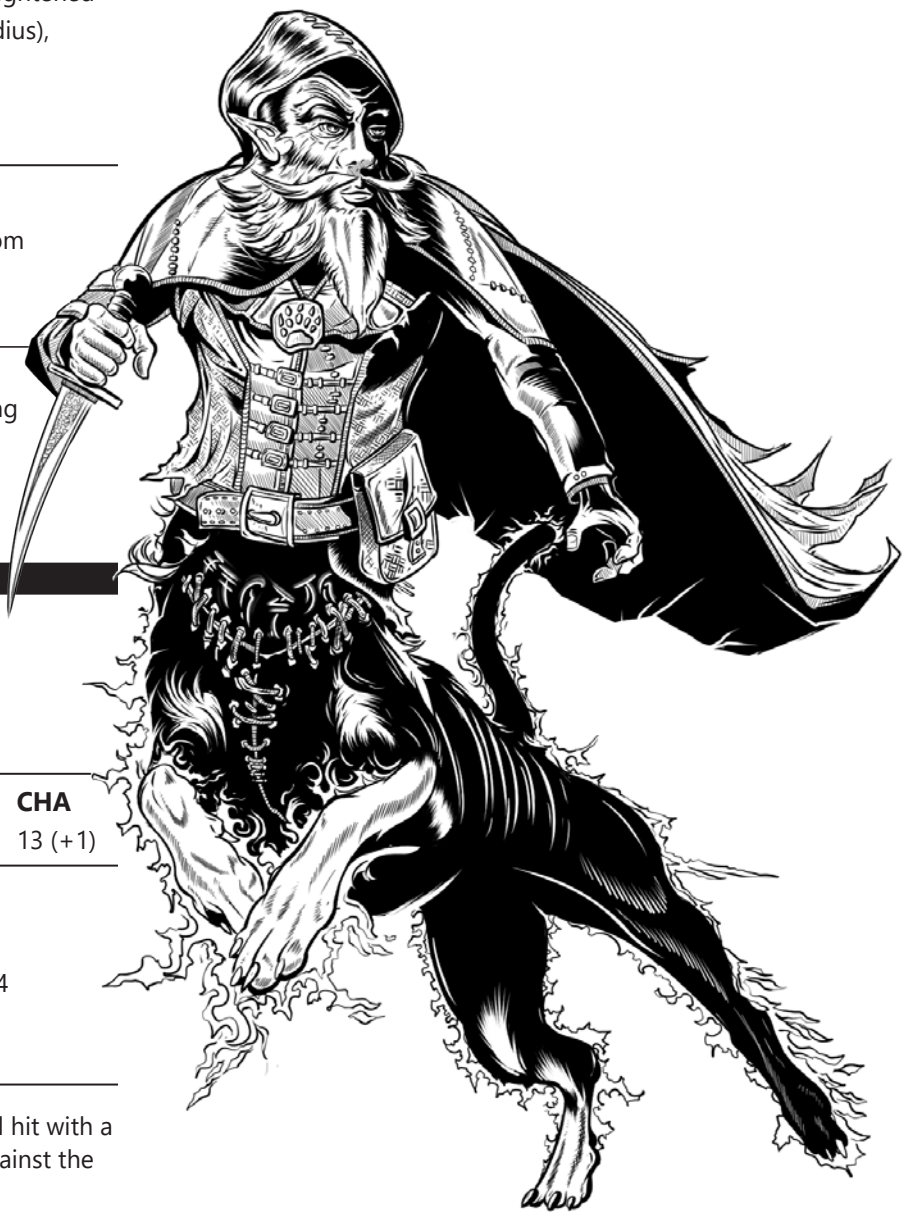
Cruelty. If the infernal centaur scores a critical hit with a melee attack, it can make a second attack against the same target as a bonus action. It has advantage on this attack roll.

Hell Hound Affinity. Hell hounds view infernal centaurs as leaders of their packs. A hell hound refuses to attack an infernal centaur unless the centaur attacks it first. If magically coerced, the hell hound has disadvantage on attack rolls against the centaur. The centaur has advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks against hell hounds.

Pack Tactics. The centaur has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the centaur's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The infernal centaur makes two dagger attacks.



Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Fiery Breath (Recharge 5–6). The infernal centaur exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) fire damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

LADY MADAERA D'FAUCON, THE CHIMERIC MAGE

Medium humanoid (shadow fey)

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 55 (10d8 +10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (−1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +5

Skills Arcana +7, History +7

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Elvish, Infernal, Umbral

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Chimeric Magic. Madaera can grant another creature within 30 feet one of the following benefits when she casts a transmutation spell:

- The creature's arms elongate for their next attack, granting them an additional 5 ft. reach.
- The creature's legs strengthen, granting them an additional 10 ft. of movement for 1 round.

Fey Ancestry. Madaera has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. Madaera's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. She can cast the following spells innately, requiring no material components.

3/day: *misty step* (when in shadows, dim light, or darkness only)

Spellcasting. Madaera is a 10th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Madaera has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *false life**, *mage armor*, *magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *arcane lock*, *enhance ability**, *hold person*

3rd level (3 slots): *blink**, *fireball*, *slow**

4th level (3 slots): *polymorph**, *stoneskin*

5th level (2 slots): *modify memory*, *telekinesis**

*Transmutation spell of 1st level or higher

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Madaera has disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Traveler in Darkness. Madaera has advantage on Intelligence (Arcana) checks made to know about shadow roads and shadow magic spells or items.

ACTIONS

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

LYRA IRONHIDE

Medium humanoid (bearfolk), neutral

Armor Class 13 (natural armor) (16 with *barkskin*)

Hit Points 136 (21d8 + 42)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +5

Skills Animal Handling +7, Perception +7, Persuasion +5, Religion +3

Senses passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Druidic, Sylvan

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Frenzy (1/Rest). As a bonus action, Lyra can trigger a berserk frenzy that lasts 1 minute. While in a frenzy, she gains resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks and has advantage on attack rolls. Attack rolls made against Lyra while she is frenzied have advantage.

Keen Smell. Lyra has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Moon Touched. While she or her target is in moonlight, Lyra's weapon attacks are magical, and when she hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 2d8 radiant damage.

Spellcasting. Lyra is an 8th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Lyra has the following druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft, mending, produce flame*

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, entangle, faerie fire, speak with animals*

2nd level (3 slots): *barkskin, hold person, moonbeam*

3rd level (3 slots): *conjure animals, dispel magic, meld into stone*

4th level (2 slots): *blight, stone shape*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Lyra makes two attacks: one with her bite and one with her quarterstaff.

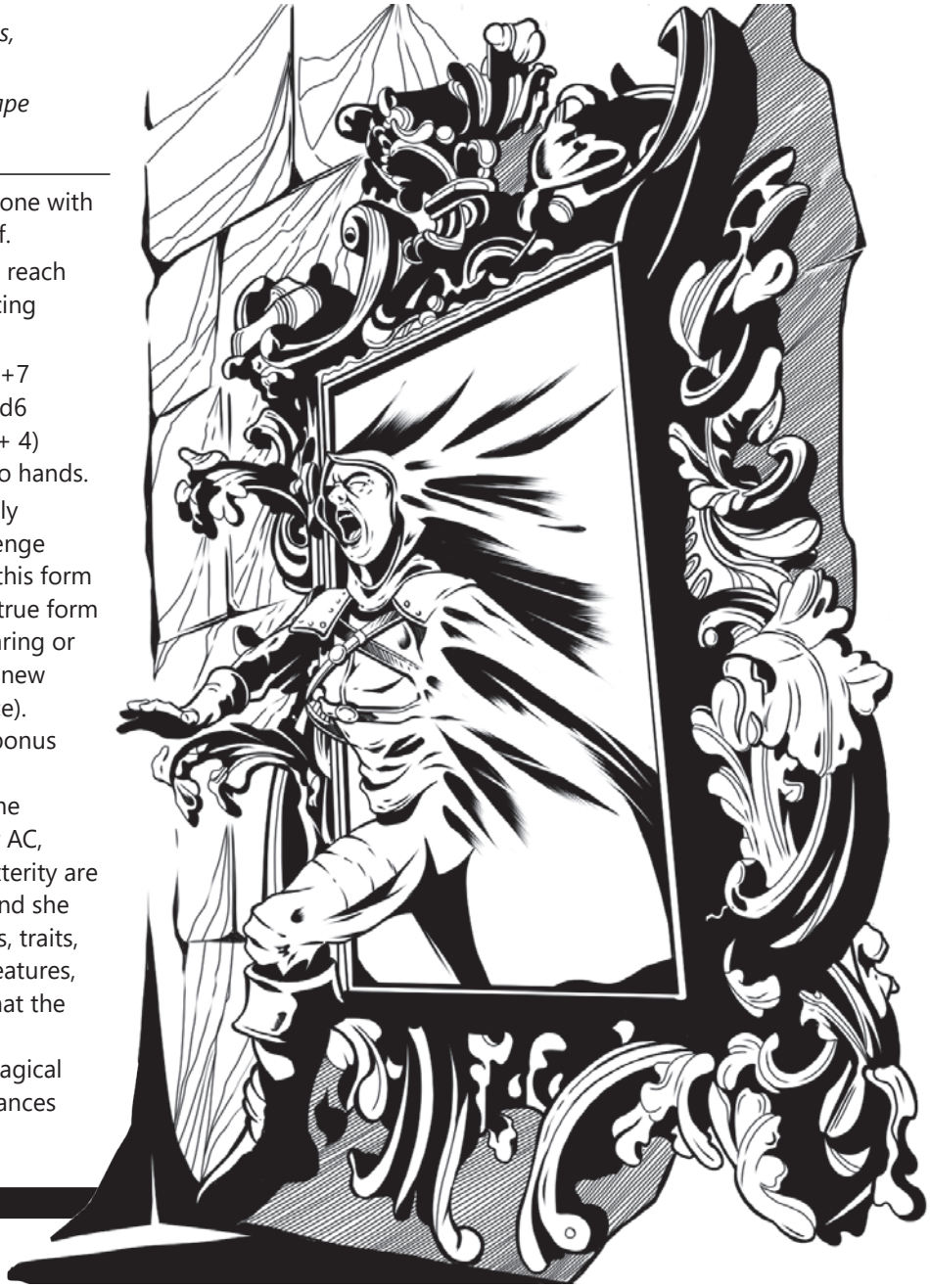
Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage or 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

Change Shape (2/Day). Lyra magically polymorphs into a beast with a challenge rating of 2 or less and can remain in this form for up to 4 hours. Lyra reverts to her true form if she dies. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form or falls to the ground (her choice). She can revert to her true form as a bonus action on her turn.

In a new form, Lyra retains her game statistics and ability to speak, but her AC, movement modes, Strength, and Dexterity are replaced by those of the new form, and she gains any special senses, proficiencies, traits, actions, and reactions (except class features, legendary actions, and lair actions) that the new form has but that she lacks.

Her new form's attacks count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistances and immunity to nonmagical attacks.



MIRROR IMAGE

Medium monstrosity, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 170 (20d8 + 80)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	20 (+5)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+2)	16 (+3)

Damage Immunities radiant

Condition Immunities blinded

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands the language of its creator but can't speak

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Refract. If the mirror image is hit with radiant damage, every creature who can see it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be blinded.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The mirror image makes three slash attacks. One of these attacks can be replaced with its Multiplicity action.

Slash. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Multiplicity (Recharge 5–6). The mirror image conjures three illusory duplicates of itself that appear in its space. The duplicates move with the mirror

image and mimic its actions, shifting positions, so it's impossible to track which image is real.

Each time a creature targets the mirror image with an attack, roll a d20 to determine whether the attack targets one of the duplicates. On a roll of 10 or higher, the attack targets a duplicate, which is immediately destroyed.

A creature is unaffected by this ability if it can't see, if it relies on senses other than sight, such as blindsight, or if it can perceive illusions as false, as with truesight.

REACTIONS

Copy. When the mirror image takes damage from a creature within melee range, it can use a reaction to assume the form of its attacker for the remainder of its turn.

While a creature is copied, all damage dealt to the mirror image is also dealt to it.

NAZAIRE THE CORRUPTED

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 97 (15d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

Skills Arcana +5, Investigation +5

Damage Resistances bludgeoning

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Goblin, Void Speech

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. Nazaire's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *eldritch blast, minor illusion*

3/day each: *charm person, vampiric touch*

1/day: *black tentacles*

Virulent Pustules. When Nazaire takes piercing or slashing damage, the pustules on his hide erupt in a noxious spray. Each creature within 5 feet of Nazaire must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 7 (2d6) poison damage and is poisoned for 1 minute. On a success, a creature takes half the damage and isn't poisoned. A poisoned creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Void-Touched Weapons. Nazaire's weapon attacks are magical. When he hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 2d8 psychic damage (included in the attack).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Nazaire makes two melee attacks.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage or 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack, plus 9 (2d8) psychic damage.

SPECTRAL MEMORY

Medium undead, neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (–5)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The spectral memory can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

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

Remembered Expertise. If the spectral memory makes an attack roll while at least one creature within 30 feet of it is missing a memory from Memory Drain, the spectral memory can roll a d4 and add the number rolled to the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Memory Drain. Melee Spell Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or lose a cherished memory. This loss lasts until the target

finishes a short or long rest. Whenever a creature that is missing a memory makes an ability check or attack roll, it must roll a d4 and subtract the number rolled from the ability check or attack roll.

TROLLKIN BANDIT

Medium humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 14 (hide armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Trollkin

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Regeneration. The trollkin regains 1 hp at the start of its turn. If the trollkin takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the trollkin's next turn. The trollkin dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Thick Hide. The trollkin's skin is thick and tough, granting it a +1 bonus to AC (included above).

ACTIONS

Handaxe. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

WEFT OF SHADOWS

Large monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 171 (18d10 + 72)

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +8

Skills Arcana +5, Intimidation +8, Perception +6, Stealth +5

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, stunned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Elvish, Umbral

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Shadow Blend. In areas of dim light or darkness, the Weft of Shadows is invisible.

Shadow Traveler (5/Day). As a bonus action while in shadows, dim light, or darkness, the Weft of Shadows disappears into the darkness and reappears in an unoccupied space it can see within 30 feet. A tendril of inky smoke appears at the origin and destination when it uses this trait. If the Weft of Shadows is in the Blot, it can use this trait to teleport to any unoccupied space within the Blot, whether it can see the location or not.

Traveler in Darkness. The Weft of Shadows has advantage on Intelligence (Arcana) checks made to know about shadow roads and shadow magic spells or items.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Weft of Shadows makes three tentacle attacks.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage, plus 9 (2d8) necrotic damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16) if it is a Large or smaller creature and the Weft doesn't have two other creatures grappled. Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained and takes 9 (2d8) necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

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

Dismiss Light. The Weft of Shadows dispels a single source of magical light. This effect works like the *dispel magic* spell.

Move. The Weft of Shadows moves up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Strength Drain (Costs 2 Actions). The Weft of Shadows drains energy from one creature it is grappling. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or have its Strength score reduced by 3 (1d6). The target dies if this legendary action reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. A humanoid that dies from this action rises as a **shadow** under the Weft of Shadows's control at the start of the Weft's next turn.



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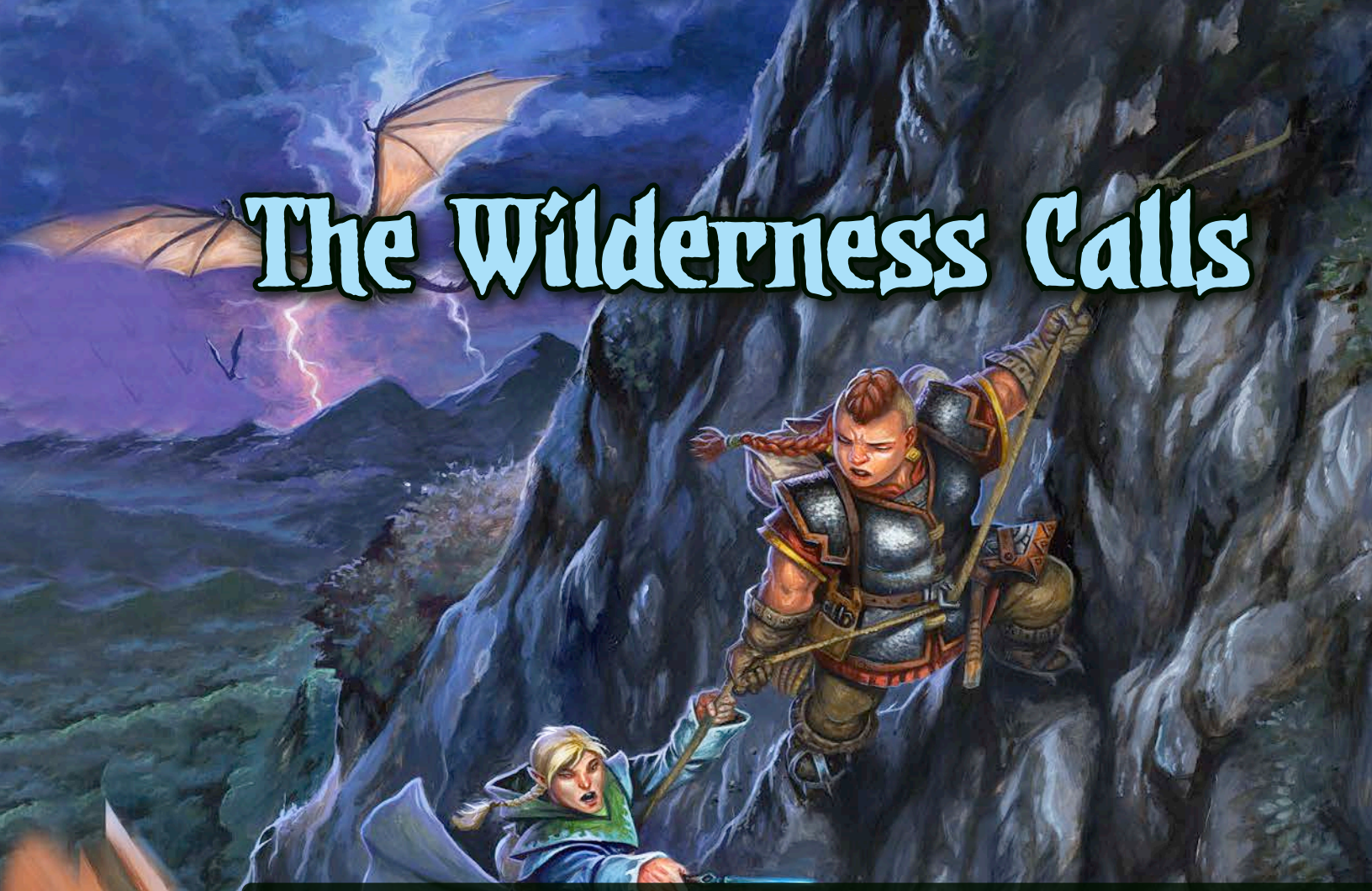
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