

4-6 PCs



Levels 4-5

Curse of the Full Moon

By Juan Lucha & Stephen Yeardley
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B9

CURSE OF THE FULL MOON

A 5E compatible adventure designed for four to six 4th through 5th level PCs.

CONTENTS

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|----|-----------------------------|----|
| Adventure Background..... | 3 | The Herbalist..... | 24 |
| Adventure Synopsis..... | 5 | ...and the Truth..... | 24 |
| Adventure Hooks..... | 6 | ...and the Whole Truth..... | 25 |
| Recruitment..... | 6 | Out in the Woods..... | 26 |
| Town Overview Map..... | 7 | The Hag's Lair..... | 26 |
| Tavern of the Dead..... | 8 | Hag's Lair Map..... | 28 |
| Church Matters..... | 11 | Alkumuoto's Shrine..... | 29 |
| The Church Library..... | 12 | Alkumuoto's Shrine Map..... | 30 |
| The Blacksmith..... | 13 | Ending The Adventure..... | 34 |
| Graveyard: Work Undone..... | 14 | Player Maps..... | 36 |
| The Mayor's Mausoleum..... | 18 | VTT Maps..... | 39 |
| Little Bakery of Horrors..... | 21 | | |

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ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The woods and marshes around the village of Rooknest are home to a very old, very lonely green hag named Harriot. Harriot, aware of her own mortality, was desperate for a child, preferably a daughter, to take both her name and works forward. But who would willingly mate with a hag, even when disguised as a fair maiden? As for Harriot herself, it would be difficult to contain her disgust of most humanoids for long enough to get through the necessary niceties.

But Harriot's prayers didn't fall on deaf ears. Alkumuoto, an ancient, cruel and dark fertility goddess, took notice of Harriot's longings and chose to answer them, but not in a straightforward way. Alkumuoto planned to drag Harriot to the very edge of Abyssal depravity before encouraging her to take at least one step more...

Alkumuoto sent vague and suggestion-filled dreams to Harriot, slowly revealing a legend that had been suppressed for centuries in this world. It confirmed the existence of a foul necromantic ritual that creates a creature of great power, one that is entirely under the thrall of its mistress. In order for the ritual to be successful, the female undertaking it needs to seduce a most wicked lycanthrope, usually a werewolf, using magical and deceptive means. The mistress-to-be has to make the creature drink a devious wolfsbane-based draught, one that forces the shapechanger to stay in his human form for 6 nights before a full moon. On the 7th night, that of the full moon, the female must draw a series of arcane and divine constraining symbols in a moonlit clearing, mate with the werewolf and then kill the creature, drinking its blood and devouring its brain whilst giving praise to Alkumuoto. If the ritual is followed precisely, success is guaranteed! A hellween child would be born.

Harriot could barely believe what had been shown to her. She begged to know how she could make the plan work, and so Alkumuoto put her cunning plan into action. Harriot, already evil beyond the imagination of most mortals, was lost.

Harriot's next step along her chosen path was to welcome a cleric of the goddess. The man who arrived at her home wasn't sure where he was in the broadest sense, but stated that Alkumuoto had guided him there to provide Harriot with something she needed. To Harriot, he had clearly been sent to the swamp to test her - but was he "the one?" He tested her knowledge and understanding of Alkumuoto, as well as her faith in the goddess. Harriot thought she barely knew a thing about her new patron, but seemed to come up with all the correct answers. After a moonless night of questions and challenges, the nameless cleric offered himself to her. Instinctively, Harriot knew that he wasn't the creature she was meant to mate with, and slaughtered him on the spot. She feasted on his heart and brain, unknowingly being given some of his wisdom. For the cleric had been keen to summon monsters and chose to practice this magic daily, something he had done for so long it was ingrained into his psyche. The goddess allowed this ability to seep into the corrupted soul of the hag, although Harriot didn't know it. Harriot became a cleric herself after she had contemplated the ways of the goddess (mostly through insights gained from eating the cleric's vital organs).

So if the cleric gifted to Harriot by Alkumuoto wasn't going to be the father, then perhaps the necromancer who visited Harriot next was going to be the father? Again she found herself tested; again she won through and got to eat rather than mate with her guest. The necromancer was an almost-continuous caster of the *animate dead* spell, which again Alkumuoto allowed to seep into the soul of the hag.

The most difficult part was to track down a lycanthrope, but Alkumuoto was not to be underestimated and Harriot managed to find a werewolf that was trying to integrate into the human village of Rooknest. His name was Marvo Wittyheart. She followed him invisibly for a few weeks, judging what he considered attractive, then shaped herself into a beautiful woman that matched those desires and seduced him. But she found that she did not need magical means to achieve that, as she had done her job well! And so, she was able to perform the ritual, mating with and then killing Marvo, drinking his blood and consuming his brain before disposing of the body deep within the swamp, where it was soon stripped and eaten by the fauna.

Harriot realized that all the elements of Alkumuoto's plan had fallen into place and that she was just the vessel for a demonic offspring. This stung her, as she thought she was being given favor by the goddess - Harriot had had little interaction with religion and had been blinded to the wicked ways of some deities by the promise of the child. But despite the growing pain within her and the sense of dread about what she would finally give birth to, Harriot carried her child to term.

As she had wished for, Harriot gave birth to a girl. The baby was beautiful, genuinely, because she was the image of the form taken by Harriot at her conception. And for a moment Harriot felt a deep sense of love and compassion for the child, emotions she had never encountered before. She knew she had been tricked by Alkumuoto, and that the child would never be hers if she brought it up in the woods and swampland. The wicked goddess would forever be attempting to take the girl from her and both their lives would be as miserable as one lived in the depths of the Abyss.



Harriot made a decision that was the result of all the tiny motes of love within her; she left her daughter at the church in the center of town, the home of a martial and protective order. On finding the child, the monks gave her the name of Margaret, after the consort of their god, and so the girl grew within the protected boundaries of the dwelling. Harriot would occasionally return to the town to see her child growing up through the watchgaps in the walls of the order's home, waiting for the time when the girl transformed into her true form, in order to take her with her to the wilderness.

But something had gone wrong with the ritual, or rather hadn't gone entirely correctly according to Alkumuoto's plan. An ingredient that wasn't supposed to be there had been included; Marvo was truly in love with Harriot, smitten by her when he first saw her, and Harriot had true love in her heart for her yet-to-be-conceived child, and that love changed the resulting hellween in two ways. Firstly, the hellween wasn't as deep-rooted in evil as Alkumuoto intended she should be. In fact, she remained the innocent girl Margaret even when she Adventure Background

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ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

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Margaret, scared by her new physical form, broke out of the grounds of her church home, cut a swath of damage as she fled the town and took refuge in a remote cave. Thankfully she hadn't killed anyone this time, but she became aware of the deep-seated desire for blood. The early transformation had saved her from the worst of its effects, but they would eventually surface. However, something good came out of this situation. Her newfound ability to cast *animate dead* attracted the attention of the ghost of her father, who has stayed with her since that day, consoling his daughter. And as flies to honey, nearby bodies seemed to drift to the cave to be animated instinctively by Margaret, taking the hellween as their mistress even against the surface will of the girl.

The result of the first full transformation of a hellween usually haunts the location where it takes place, due to the excessive violence and bloodlust of the creature. However, when Harriot returned to Rooknest, she found a place ravaged by paranormal activity, but its population unscathed, although living in fear of the possible repeat of the sudden destruction.

Harriot wants to recover her daughter at all costs, but she knows the cave could be filled with undead and she could die in a direct confrontation. So, she has murdered the mayor and taken his place. Now the only thing she needs is a group of adventurers to clean out the village of the growing number of undead creatures, dispose of the mayor in his current form, track down Margaret, and deal with anything guarding the young woman, thus clearing the path to her daughter.

Harriot, who is posing as the mayor of Rooknest, having murdered the incumbent and taken his place, will recruit the adventures. She and an unknowing Margaret are causing a series of unnerving events and encounters with undead to take place at various sites. At the same time, a werewolf has appeared in town - or at least something that looks like a wolf that is larger than anyone has seen before - and the adventurers will be asked to take on an investigation to find where the creature has its lair at the same time as dealing with the assorted strange occurrences.

The first night the heroes spend in the town, some of the dead kin of the townspeople rise from their graves as zombies and head towards the PCs. The fight takes place in the garden of the tavern as well as just inside the door. This is brought about by the hag using *animate dead* in order to focus the party's attention on the graveyard.

After the fight with the undead, the trail leads to the local graveyard, as Harriot planned. This is a false clue, but there they may find a crypt that has been opened recently, but is now barred with iron bands. The hag killed the mayor and Margaret's curse has turned his spirit into a revenant that wants revenge. The hag has confined him in that crypt, where the mayor's ancestors rest. Harriot sees the heroes as an opportunity to get rid of that vengeful spirit.

At some point after being recruited, it is suggested to the adventurers that they could begin their investigation in Matias's home. Matias and his wife Toyanda are the bakers of the town. They lost their child to illness almost exactly one year ago. Now, they are certain they can hear their son's voice in the attic, where the child had his room. This is an encounter with an Attic Whisperer, the spirit of a child affected by the hellween's curse.

When they return to the town, the townspeople says that the huge wolf (the town people can't see the difference between a werewolf and the huge wolf) has been spotted outside the town again. The trail takes the adventurers to the cave that's the lair of Margaret. This cave is like a small dungeon, populated with skeletons and zombies attracted unconsciously by Margaret to be by her side. The undead defend their mistress at all cost, even when Margaret wants to get rid of them. Deep down, she is good-of-heart even in this beast form. When the adventurers find Margaret, she won't fight them. However, she summons further creatures subconsciously, ones that attack the adventurers, whilst her father, in wraith form, will defend his daughter. At some point (maybe if Margaret is close to defeat), the avatar of the goddess appears and the final confrontation is there to win through!

GM Note:

The adventure has a number of separate encounters that can be experienced in several orders, although some of these may have to be adapted or even become redundant depending on what the PCs have previously done. Make sure you are clear about how each of these interact and be prepared to move through the encounters in a completely different order to the way they are listed.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

There are various reasons for the PCs to be in town:

The PCs have been sent by the capital to help Mayor Wrankin with a problem that is proving difficult to solve, involving undead and strange activities. When they arrive, Mayor Wrankin (the disguised hag) tells them about the “huge wolf” (she doesn’t reveal the “were” nature of the beast) and states that the hag that was recently killed in the marshes released a curse on the town. The mayor can’t exactly explain the relationship between the curse and the wolf, because the hag’s body was burned, but he tells them that the curse of the undead began when the beast first came to town.

The PCs arrive Rooknest to buy provisions. They are visiting the bakery and then hear strange sounds coming from the upper floor. Then, the bakers tell them about their dead son, ending their tale by asking for help to rid the bakery and indeed whole town of the restless spirits of the recently deceased.

The PCs are getting close to Rooknest when they see a small merchant caravan being attacked by assorted undead (skeletons and zombies on their way to Margaret’s lair) just a little way outside of town. Then the merchants tell them about the paranormal activities happening in Rooknest over the last few weeks, although this is the first attack that they know of.

The party has just managed to get through the dismal woods outside of Rooknest, but a sense of unease was ever-present as they crossed through the forest. It will be good to rest up in town, even if only to rid themselves of the feeling of dread that accompanied every step of their recent journey. A well-set tavern fire warms the chilliest of bones.

RECRUITMENT

Read the following:

“The town hall of Rooknest is as deserted as the rest of the town. No service personnel, no children, no councilors. Only the mayor, Jeremiah Wrankin, is there to receive you. The worried look on his face, and the bags under his eyes, makes it clear that the situation in the village is not good. He leads you to the dusty meeting room and invites you to take a seat.”

Mayor Jeremiah Wrankin is in fact Harriot the hag in disguise. She has killed the mayor and his family and hidden the bodies in the family’s crypt, in the town graveyard. She thinks she knows where her daughter’s lair is, but the hag wants to test the adventurers before throwing them against the undead that infest it. She will use the paranormal activity in Rooknest to do it.

The mayor’s recruitment requests should include some or even all of the following points:

Some kind of huge wolf has cursed the town somehow. Ghostly figures, undead and the like have been suddenly causing trouble

for the townspeople for about two weeks or so. The mayor asks the adventurers to finish off the wolf as part of this mission.

The people’s safety is the priority. The mayor’s agents will track the area looking for the wolf’s lair while the adventurers will help the townspeople with their own strange experiences and problems.

The adventurers should investigate how and why the wolf has cursed the town. They should investigate the strange source of the creature’s powers. This is the first time the people of Rooknest have seen anything like this monstrous animal.

Possible questions for the mayor and their answers:

When did the problems begin? Just over two weeks ago.

Where was the huge wolf spotted? There is only one definite witness, Old Farrer, and he’s the local drunkard. Farrer claims to have seen the wolf glowing with some kind of green aura in front of the local church. Some neighbors have labeled him as liar, but nobody can negate the strange activity that plagues the town. Farrer can be found in the local tavern, the “Welcoming Waiter”, almost all the time.

What time of day or night does the wolf appear? At dusk and dawn it seems, but paw prints have been found during the day as well.

Has anyone tried to deal with the wolf or undead so far? Some locals have tried to attack the undead, without much luck, whilst no one has seen the wolf at close enough quarters to strike it. Besides, its size makes it a daunting opponent.

Skill Check

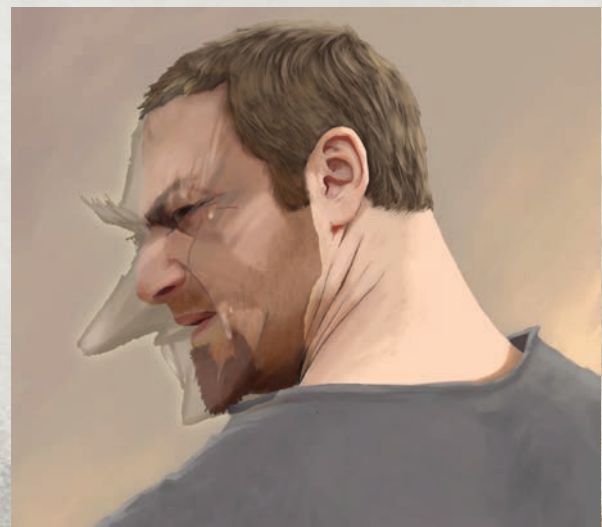
DC 16 Wisdom (Insight)

Success: "Something is wrong with the mayor. It seems he is hiding something."

Skill Check

DC 25 Wisdom (Perception)

Success: "You can see through the disguise! That nose, those claws, the hatred in the eyes...the mayor is a hag!"





TOWN OVERVIEW MAP



TAVERN OF THE DEAD

Read the following:

When you approach this imposing old building, it seems to be totally silent; no songs, no laughter, no clank of tankards. You can only tell this is a tavern by its sign, "The Welcoming Waiter".

Skill Check

DC 16 Wisdom (Perception)

Success: "You can hear low, murmuring sounds inside the building."



If they take a sneak peak through any window or enter the tavern, read this:

"You can see the dimly lit room. Three tables are scattered across the lounge, each with some chairs around it, along with a number of leather wing-back armchairs which shield their occupants. Everything is covered in dust thick enough to write your will in. The innkeeper, an old and thin man with death-white hair and beard, is cleaning the bar, with a blank look on his wrinkled face. He has a thin band of material around his eyes.

However, the most dismal thing about this business is its clientele; there are 10 people inside, all sitting trance-like at scarred tables, cradling cracked tankards as if the ale within is a life-saving elixir."

The tavern owner and waiter is Carmunder Brimon, a 73 years old human. He is blind, his eyes now just two sockets, and he keeps them covered. The "Welcoming Waiter" is more like a mausoleum. Brimon hasn't moved anything in years because he knows exactly where every table and chair is positioned due to him fixing them in place. This slightly unwelcoming aspect of the tavern's atmosphere means there have been very few new clients in years and certainly none in the last few months. The loud creak of the door's partially rusted hinges fills the taproom as the PCs enter. The place could do with a thorough cleaning, at the least. And it is gloomy, dark almost. Brimon obviously doesn't waste profit on candles, but then why would a blind man do so?

Brimon is surprised to hear the tread of the PCs, as all his usual clients are in place, so he calls out a welcome to them and then begins to try to convince the party to stay and talk with him a little while, sharing the room with the now-muttering regulars. He starts serving drinks to his "new clients", expertly grasping bottles and jugs before pouring from them and then precisely replacing them where they came from.

"So, new to town are you? I thought so. I didn't recognize your footsteps. I know everyone that comes here, not that there are many to know these days. It's a good job as I have simple tastes -

I'd be dead from hunger if I didn't! At least the lads here are loyal to me and always have been. Now what can I do for you?"

If asked about the lack of patrons, Brimon explains that this has typically been a "regulars' tavern", going back several generations. It has always attracted a certain type of person, the type that couldn't keep away, and that the urge of a few to drink here seemed to be passed from generation to generation. He also explains that his father and grandfather before him ran the place, and because everyone knows everyone else particularly well, not that much is ever said between drinkers.

If asked about Old Farrer or anything to do with the recent activity, Brimon has the following answers:

Who is Farrer? "Farrer is in his forties, with scruffy brown hair and beard with white tufts in it, so I'm told. He hasn't had a bath in weeks, and I can always tell when he walks in, but his drinking buddies don't seem to care about that."

Where is Farrer? Farrer sits in a table, sharing drinks with his grandfather. Brimon points straight to him even being blind. It seems it really is an ordered place.

Do you know anything about the huge wolf? Brimon says he was behind his bar when all of that happened. He didn't see it of course, but something must've have happened that night, because a few of his clients refused to leave then and now just want to stay.

If the party approaches Old Farrer, he looks up and eyes them suspiciously. The moment they try to speak, he dips his head again and stares at his nearly empty tankard. A **Charisma (Persuasion) check** is required to get him to talk, one that is aided by the purchase of his favorite drink of warmed red wine and nutmeg grants the PC advantage on the check. Brimon has this ready if a PC goes back to the bar.

Whilst not exactly unfriendly, Old Farrer is more than indifferent towards the party in the way regulars can be to those who use "their tavern".



Skill Check

DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion)

Success: Old Farrer looks up and seems prepared to talk with you

Failure: The check can be repeated in this instance, but all further attempts have disadvantage.



Skill Check

DC 18 Wisdom (Perception)

Success: "You can see through the disguise! That broken leer, those rotten fingers, the hatred in the eyes... Grandpa is a zombie!"



Notes for Roleplay:

During the adventurers' interrogation, Farrer keeps directing comments to his grandfather, sitting at his side, but not receiving any answer from the man.



What needs to be remembered is that Farrer's grandfather is actually a heavily disguised, magically protected zombie. Harriot has fed a pint of her blood to the creature and it has taken on the ability *disguise self*. Right now, Grandfather is hovering between being alive, dead and undead.

Questions to Farrer:

Tell us, what did you see two weeks ago, when all of this strange activity began?

"What? Do you really want to know?" His bloodshot eyes look at you with suspicion, but see that you really are interested, so he continues.

"Well, what can I say; a drunk who knows little and can prove less. You should ask this very question to the monks in the church. You can see that building from here. It's the tallest in the town. But, you know what? That bunch of bookworms won't tell you anything about the wolf. They just say there is no wolf, damn it! But there is a wolf indeed a huge one, biggest I've ever seen! Eh, Grandpa? The Wolf!" His grandfather stares at him for a moment, his eyes dark, sunken pits, and then returns to his drink.

Ha! Grandpa was much more the talkative type when he had tongue, you know? "The drunkard laughs soundly and take a good gulp of his beer, determined to enjoy his gifts. "But yes... I can tell you there is a wolf. It was around... two weeks ago, wasn't it, Grandpa? That night I met up with my grandpa again."

Another pause, another gulp. Old Farrer seems to be considering what to say next, but a **DC 20 Sense Motive** roll is required to pick up the change in tone.

Read the Following:

"So, yes, I know when that happened. It was... well... trying to stay upright," he laughs, guiltily.

"I was here before that, you know? Well, I was trying to stay upright, and I was getting a bit of help from the church door, if you know what I mean... But then, the door opened with such a strength that I fell down the floor... again. And what do you think was on the other side of the door? Yes! The biggest wolf you could imagine jumped out of the church to the middle of the street! Brown and red! And it stopped there, stared at me with those green glowing eyes and howled with so much pain, that all the street seemed to turn grey and... a bit green? Yellow? Whatever, the colors swam before my eyes! Well, that's what I recall from that terrible moment, you know?"

"Then the three monks jumped out the street and chased the creature up to the forest. Yes... that monks are something with their weapons, and robes, and whirling arms and legs - I did a good impression of whirling arms and legs as I fell, I can tell you - but... why would they say there is no wolf? I saw it as they did, damn it! Them saying I've made it up just isn't true!"

Other questions might include something like the following:

What was the direction the wolf's escape?

"Boy, that was a reaaaaally fun night, if you know what I mean..." He belches loudly, enough so that the aroma of partially-digested ale reaches your nostrils "Up into the woods, like an arrow, along the main track out of here... wasn't it, Grandpa? So... well... I have told you more than enough details for a night like that, you know?"

Have you seen the wolf again?

"Ah, my friend, only in my dreams, only in my dreams! Although I've heard it every night as I've returned home from this place." (Harriot has been plaguing Old Farrer with an imitation of the wolf/halloween each evening)

If the PCs press Old Farrer for any more details, or if they try to question his grandfather, the next event happens.

The PCs are left to deal with Grandfather, but he isn't the only problem. From the garden in front of the tavern comes the sound of earth and stone being torn apart; there are more zombies outside! 4 or 5 lurch into the bar, seeming to greet Brimon and call for specific drinks before heading towards the PCs. Even more strangely, from the reactions of the living patrons, they must have been clients of the tavern before each of them died. As one particularly ravaged creature calls out, Brimon gasps, "Tebet! That can't be you. You died when I was a child!"

As stated above, Old Farrer's grandfather is a zombie, but it seems nobody realizes this in the dark of the "Welcoming Waiter". However, if either a paladin or a cleric gets too close to him, he reacts, initially moving away, but if his disguise is seen through, he responds more violently! As soon as he does, the other patrons rush as far away from him as possible and cower against the bar, some even leaping over it.



There are 12 zombies in total; Grandfather, 4 or 5 that come into the bar, and the remainder outside, too dull-witted to be able to get through the door, although they do smash windows in the time-honored style.

Even when the other zombies appear, the patrons don't help, entirely gripped by fear. Old Farrer sobs in a drunken heap, wailing for his grandfather and begging the PCs not to hurt him as he wasn't causing any harm. Just once, he will try to grab the ankle of a PC who strikes out at Grandfather and attempt to grapple them, but will fail spectacularly, collapsing in a grief-stricken heap.

Allow the PCs to face no more than 4 zombies at a time. As one is dealt with, another might find its way into the tavern in 2 rounds, unless the PCs make it to the garden. If they are having an easy time of this encounter, have the zombie pack split up and begin to threaten the other patrons; this should make some party members a little more exposed as they go to help.

Combat

Grandfather (Zombie) and (11) Zombie; CR 5; XP 650; Adjusted XP 1950; Difficulty – Medium.

GRANDFATHER (ZOMBIE)

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 30 (4d8 + 12)

Speed 20 ft.

STR DEX **CON** INT **WIS** **CHA**
16 (+3) 6 (–2) 16 (+3) 3 (–4) 6 (–2) 5 (–3)

Saving Throws Wis +0

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Shadowy deception. Grandfather has a weak form of disguise self in constant effect targeting himself. It only functions in areas of shadow or gloom, or at night under a sky where the moon isn't visible. A DC 10 Wisdom Perception check sees through the magical disguise.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

ZOMBIE

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 22 (3d8 + 9)

Speed 20 ft.

STR DEX **CON** INT **WIS** **CHA**
13 (+1) 6 (–2) 16 (+3) 3 (–4) 6 (–2) 5 (–3)

Saving Throws Wis +0

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

After the fight, the PCs also may have more questions for Brimon. Here are some of his possible answers:

Why did you keep serving drinks to this zombie?

Brimon points out that he couldn't see that it was a zombie, and that the smell of the bar as a whole shielded the creature. And anyway, if the zombie wasn't here with him, it would've been attacking the neighborhood in search of fresh meat. He says this last point with a dull, humorless laugh.

What happened when you went to sleep? Did the zombie remain here in the tavern? Brimon has no idea, as he never heard anything moving around, so maybe it did.

Why are you still here, if there are zombies around your grounds? Brimon trusts in the church to help keep any such problem under control. And anyway, he has nowhere else to go.

It is tough to know what to do next with Brimon; he clearly didn't know about Grandfather and now his bar is in pieces after the fight. Some recompense would no doubt be the charitable thing to give, but are the PCs the charitable type?

Amazingly, considering what has just happened, when the PCs decide to leave the tavern, Brimon stops the PCs and asks them something:

"Wait! If you go to the church, give this to Margaret." He gives you a packet. "It's a few pieces of cooked chicken. That little redhead has had a cold for so many days. This could help her recover. Will you do this for me please?"

CHURCH MATTERS

If the PCs decide to approach the church use the following events.

As you get closer to the church, you can't help but notice the austere look of its facade. It's a one-floor building without any luxury ornamentation in the slightest, not even a grotesque waterspout or gargoyle. As you approach, you can see a young, bald monk talking heatedly with a tall, strong, brown haired woman who is wearing a dirty apron.



The church is unusual in that there are no clerics within it. Three monks tend to the spiritual needs of the locals in conjunction with help from the herbalist, Aimara. As such, with life cheap in these parts, the fear of injury and death is a little higher than elsewhere, hence the response to the events of the last 2 weeks and the zombie attack; the locals can't afford to be hurt!

The monk that the PCs see talking is Conwell, the youngest of the three living in this church. The woman is Fanella Clearwater, the local blacksmith. Fanella is demanding to see Margaret. She hasn't seen her apprentice since all of this strange activity began. The monks have told Fanella that Margaret is seriously ill, and she needs all the rest she can get. The PCs may have their suspicions, and they'd be correct.

The reality to this story is entirely different. Margaret's transformation into the full-blown hellween is what has triggered the curse that is afflicting Rooknest. Although she escaped from the worst of the transformation as a result of it happening too early, she is still slipping rapidly under its control and is now somewhere out in the woods or marshes that she ran off into. However, the monks still believe they can help the girl, particularly Conwell, who fell in love with her a long time ago. They grew up together in this church, she as a talented chorister and he as a monk-to-be.

The monks have been taking turns for the last 2 weeks ago to search for Margaret, both in the woods and beyond. There is always at least one monk outside the town searching for her, and at least one of them in the church, studying old tomes to learn more about this kind of creature and find a way to help her. Meanwhile, they don't want to hurt Margaret's reputation in the town by letting everyone to know what has become of her.

By watching the discussion, the party has a chance of detecting Conwell's fabrications.

If any of the adventurers upbraid him about his lying, Damiam, the older of the monks, a human in his fifties who has been listening to the conversations with Fanella and the party, steps out the building to put an end to the conversation by directly answering the party's questions once he has ushered Conwell back through the door.



Skill Check



DC 15 Wisdom (Insight)

Success: Conwell is disguising the truth, although not lying outright.

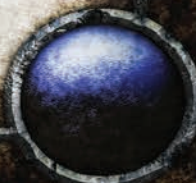
Failure: This is obviously just another religious center that is determined to stick by its rules.

Questions for Conwell or Damiam:

What does the order stand for? This is the Order of the Merciful Punishment. We are the punishers of those souls who deserve it for their sins. We pray and train in combat as part of our daily duties.

We've been told that a huge wolf came out this church the other day? Is that true? Conwell will lie, telling the adventurers that's not true. If Damiam is present, he will try to end the conversation and return inside with Conwell.

What do you think about all these strange activities? Why aren't you helping the townspeople with their problems? "We are helping. We are investigating the best way to solve this problem in our library. When we know what could we do, we will intercede."



This is the version Conwell and Damiam will tell the PCs, but the reality is quite different. They are searching information about the hellween and the way to return Margaret to her human form. They are certain Margaret isn't to blame for her condition, but have nothing to back this up at present. They raised the girl and know she is one of the most innocent and good people in the town.

We thought there were three monks in this church. Where is the other one? He is inside, attending the health of Margaret.

Why don't you let Fanella see Margaret? "Margaret is very ill. We don't want the illness to spread all over the town. Fanella, and the rest of the town, will just have to wait until she fully recovers".

Despite all of this twisting and distorting of the truth, something the monks find incredibly difficult to do, Conwell is just plain desperate for help. He genuinely wants to save Margaret so much that he has even revealed his secret to his two order brothers. If the PCs feel they might be able to help somehow, a successful **Wisdom (Insight) check** will lead the PCs to **The Church Library** scene.

Skill Check

DC 18 Wisdom (Insight)

Success: "Alright. I'll tell you. Please, come in." Go to **The Church Library** scene.

Failure: The monks become more general in their answers, even evasive, before going back into the church and locking the door behind them after another minute or two, taking the chicken with them.



Once the monks have gone, the PCs can speak with Fanella if they are still outside. If the party has already met Fanella at the forge, they may well have already got these answers. In that case, Fanella will encourage them to "Get on and get going!" with solving the mystery.

Questions to Fanella:

What is your relationship with Margaret? "Oh, well, Margaret is my apprentice, although she doesn't seem to want to craft weapons... not yet, at least. She only performs minor tasks, like dealing with customers and organizing shipments. But she could be making weapons and armors very soon. She is very capable, you know? Has a real eye for detail and strength of metal"

How much time has passed since you last saw her?" Too long; I have been dealing on my own with my concerned customers for the last two weeks, you know? I need that girl back, but still, two weeks are too long for a normal cold, isn't it?"

Are you having any problem with the strange activities that have affected everyone ? "There are still some houses that aren't saying they are having any problems with ghosts and goblins and the like, mine included, so I have my suspicions about the truth of the matter. I have never had any family here, so I have no ghosts to be haunted by! And... well... maybe the gift from Aimara, the herbalist, had something to do with my 'relatively peaceful' state of mind. To be honest, it's a blend and a half, and an intoxicating one at that, but it seems to be doing me some good."

THE CHURCH LIBRARY

If the adventurers gain Conwell's or Damiam's trust they will be led to the library of the order.

"You are guided though some corridors that poorly illuminated, a few guttering pig-fat coated torches on the walls. You arrive at the church library. In contrast to the corridors you have just walked along, this big room is very well lit with candles everywhere, and wax stains decorating the three tables of this warm and comfortable space. A large number of shelves along the walls contain so many books that many of them are stacked on the floor and on top of the carefully cataloged main rows. This is a real treasure trove of inspiration and knowledge. There are 4 suits of armor in the room, one in the middle of each wall, all standing in their own compact alcove with bookshelves all around it. These are all quite old but well-maintained suits, acting as both decoration representing the martial nature of the order and as emergency suits for any visiting clerics should they need them. 2 suits are for females, 2 for males; all four are suitable for medium humanoids."

As the party and its escorts reach the library, the rather dismal appearance of the rest of the church is forgotten. Damiam gestures to the PCs to pull up a seat and then pulls on the arm of his own chair to add it to the growing circle. Conwell either stands and faces which ever PC does the bulk of the talking, or paces back and forth in an agitated way. Each round, there is a 50 % of either happening.

"Please, take a seat You have shown genuine concern for our plight and seem to have the interests of the town at heart above all else, so I - we - will let you know the truth."

With this, Damiam takes a seat in one of the softer-looking chairs in the library. He turns and sees Conwell, pacing back and forth; "Conwell, please, make some tea for our friends."

While Conwell leaves the room to bring the tea, the look on Damiam's face becomes severe. He speaks again.

"That beast, the huge wolf... it's almost certainly not what you think it is. It another kind of creature altogether, one we know almost nothing about it. But we realize enough to sense that it's dangerous, perhaps too dangerous for a village as small as ours to survive. So we need help, sooner rather than later."

“This creature is a hellween. Yes, it’s appearance is the same as a dire wolf, even a werewolf, but not her powers. Yes, it’s a female. In fact...the creature once was Margaret.”

At that point, Conwell steps back into the room, just catching the last of what Damiam has said. His face has a look of horror.

“She is Margaret,” exclaims Conwell, staring at Damiam with a defiant look in his eyes as he strides forward, slightly off balance and sends the tea pot and cups scattering across the room. “She IS Margaret! We don’t know why she has turned into this...this... THING, but we have to find out how to help her.” He looks again straight into Damiam’s eyes, emphatically stating, “We must help her!”

The PCs may have some questions for the monks. Some possible answers are below:

So, if Margaret is somewhere out in the wilderness, where did your colleague go looking for her? Conwell: “Jeremiah is out, looking for the place where Margaret hides. We are taking turns: one searches for the place and two stay here in the library, conducting research to find a solution to Margaret’s condition.” Damiam: “Jeremiah is the least connected to the girl, so he is less likely to make an emotionally-charged decision where to look. He is also the most experienced one of the three of us when it comes to local flora and fauna; he will see things we don’t.”

Isn’t it far too dangerous to be alone out there? Conwell: “We’re worried more about scaring the villagers by going out as a group and about scaring Margaret if she sees more than one person approaching her and about not being here to stop anyone breaking in.” Damiam: “We need to find a way to help Margaret as a priority. The people of Rooknest are depending on our investigation. And the solution is most likely to be here in the library than there in the woods. That’s why we focus our resources here in the most part. Two of us here. One out there.”

Do you have any clues about the hiding place for this hellween creature? Conwell, visibly sad: “Not one. We have been looking for two weeks, but the forest is just too big, and we have to search carefully to avoid getting lost ourselves. Margaret is out there somewhere, helpless to defend herself against her condition, and I fell so useless.” Damiam: “Conwell doesn’t like to speculate, but I am prepared to tell you what we have found out...”

As Damiam begins to move towards a small pile of papers, the suits of armor spring to life. The two nearest to Damiam expertly slice him with their wicked-looking serrated scimitars and the man falls, needing to be healed the next round if he is to live. Then all 4 head towards the PCs, clashing their weapons against their armor!

Combat

Armored Skeleton, CR 3; XP 400; Adjusted XP 800; Difficulty - Easy.

ARMORED SKELETON

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (plate armor)

Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

10 (+0) 16 (+3) 15 (+2) 6 (–2) 8 (–1) 5 (–3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands all languages it knew in life but can’t speak

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) or 8 (1d10 + 3) if wielded in two hands: piercing damage.

Once the PCs have defeated the skeletons, they may want to look at the papers. They are a stream of monkish shorthand, detailing much of what is in the Adventure Background. Conwell demands to tend to Damiam’s body before reporting the event to the mayor, but isn’t all that clear on Damiam’s note-taking anyway.

Skill Check

DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation)

Success: You are able to make sense of the notes Damiam has made about the mysterious creature

Failure: The monk’s notes are just too convoluted to make sense of, as if written by a man possessed.

THE BLACKSMITH

This is an old but soundly built building with three metallic chimneys sticking out of the roof. Each has a flag flying from it, each one carrying the symbols for a metalworker in Common, Dwarven and Elven. The door to the forge area is open, and a wave of heat constantly flows out the room as the party stands there. Remember, the party may have already spoken with Fanella at the church, so two possible conversations are presented here.



When the PCs enter the blacksmith read:

"Inside, you can see a massive forge at the far end of the building. On the right wall there are a several used farm tools in various states of repair. This type of work is a big percentage of the jobs a smith has to perform in order to earn a living around these parts.

On the left side of the shop, you can see some well-crafted weapons and armor. They are new and clearly ready for sale and then enthusiastic use. However, it seems like there isn't market for this kind of product in Rooknest. In the middle of the scene, you find the blacksmith. Surprisingly, it is a woman, but her build and balance tend to suggest she isn't one to be messed around."

If the PCs haven't met her in the church scene, you can read the following:

"A tall woman with a red long braid over her left shoulder and determined blue eyes is getting rid of her dirty apron. She watches you all a moment, makes an approving sound and then speaks.

"Hmm, I haven't seen you before. My name is Fanella Clearwater. And you catch me just getting ready to go to the church. No, I'm not the religious type, boy no! I just have to talk with those faint-hearted monks about something, you know? You can wait out or come with me. Later, I can attend to you as I would any other customer around here. You choose."

If they choose to follow her, they will find the scene in **Church Matters**. Read that scene to know about some questions and answers the PCs could ask her about.

Fanella is generally well-disposed to adventurers as she used to be one herself and knows they bring coin that is eager to be spent! So whilst not overly friendly, she certainly isn't indifferent towards the party, and a Diplomacy DC 8 roll will ensure she is friendly.

If the PCs are visiting the forge after meeting Fanella at the church, they find here hammering away at a piece of silver, blending it into a red hot iron sword blade. She has a look of grim determination on her face. So long as they haven't upset her at any stage before, she catches the PCs' eyes and momentarily stops, gesturing to the party with her hammer to come towards her. She draw her forearm across her brow and begins to speak.

"I don't know about you, but this stinks! There's undead appearing in the middle of the day, idiotic monks chasing around the countryside, the mayor unsure what to do and the people getting more nervous by the hour. And then there's this wolf of Old Farrer's. Now, call me paranoid, but undead and wolves always - always - meant trouble when I earned my coin as you do now. So here's a little something for you. A loan, if you like. No, no, no need for money. Just bring it back when you are done. Or you can pay me what you think its worth when you are done."

Fanella picks up the glowing weapon and plunges it into the barrel next to her. The hiss of steam rises angrily from the water, but as she removes the blade, there is a different sound, almost a musical note. She holds a perfectly made shortsword, its edge lined with silver that seems to ripple in the heat and light of the smithy.

Fanella smiles again and looks at you all. "Now, who should I be givin' this little beauty to?"

Treasure

+1 shortsword



GRAVEYARD: WORK UNDONE

The party may wish to visit the graveyard, which is small and is located near the Transit river in such a way that almost all the time the place is covered in a thick fog. This makes the going slow and treacherous, because as you approach you can barely see some of the freshly-dug grave sites that have been left open, so you have to take particular care in order to not fall into one of them. The area as a whole seems surrounded by a hate-filled, vengeful feeling that could creep into the most brave and pure warrior's heart.

Skill Check

DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)

Success: "You can hear the sound of a shovel digging a hole in the dirty ground."

Failure: the fog must be playing tricks on your ears as there's nothing to hear here





ETHEREAL GRAVEYARD TOOL

Small construct, unaligned

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 14 (4d6)

Speed 5 ft., Fly 50 ft.

STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA

3 (-4) 14 (+2) 10 (+0) 1 (-5) 3 (-4) 1 (-5)

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, frightened

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ethereal shovel makes two spade attacks.

Spade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Eerie Lights. An ethereal graveyard tool can use its action to produce four lights that take the form of four lanterns which place themselves at the main compass points so the shovel can see what it is doing.

Ethereal Escape. The ethereal graveyard tool is able to slip into the Ethereal Plane as an action. It can remain in the Ethereal Plane for two rounds before it must shift back to the Material Plane.

As a result of constant use, an ethereal graveyard tool takes on a little of the former essence of every creature it has helped bury. It has to be involved with at least 1,000 funerals to spontaneously become a living creature. In general, the shovel finds itself tasked with burying those who aren't undead (all seem to have lost the distinction between alive and dead) and returning undead to their graves after it has destroyed them. Once defeated, it falls to the ground, a standard shovel once more.

An ethereal graveyard tool prowls about the resting places of the dead, using its ethereal jaunt ability to move about unseen (and often through solid objects, such as tombs and mausoleums). Upon locating a body to inter, whether living, dead or undead, it shifts to the Material Plane, attempting to catch its victim unaware. The creature attempts to strike its victim or push it into a nearby open grave, then retreats quickly back to the Ethereal Plane. It is not above delivering a blow to distract its target. Once it manages to get its victim into a grave, it rapidly tries to fill the grave in as quickly as possible. When badly wounded, it escapes rather than continuing the fight.

This is Willem's shovel, but he's not the one that's doing the work. It's the shovel alone, flying around the graveyard, followed by a trail of lanterns which allow it to "see" what it is doing. If the PCs approach the source of the noise, read this:

"You can see a light, slim shovel digging a hole, but nobody is holding it! As you approach the shovel, it disappears in the fog."

The shovel has been used in the graveyard for as long as anyone can remember. In fact, it dug the first hole of the first grave and has been used for every burial since. Somehow no one seems to have spotted or realized this, as it is just one of many tools that are used. However, as a result of this unbroken run of interments, the shovel has become imbued with a life force of its own, so that it is now a fully-living creature rather than a simple wooden shovel, crossing between this world and the ethereal plane inhabited by the ghostly.

Combat

Ethereal Graveyard Tool, CR 1/2; XP 100; Difficulty - Easy.

After the shovel is defeated, the party may continue to search the graveyard. Alternatively, when close to defeat, the shovel may flee for the gravedigger's house. If the PCs have to find the house by themselves, use the following information.

Skill Check

DC 19 Wisdom (Perception)

To find the gravedigger's house in this fog, the group needs to succeed 3 times at this skill check.

Success: If any member of the group succeeds, the group gains 1 success token. If the group has now 3 success tokens: "You find an old ramshackle house in the middle of the fog."

Failure: If nobody makes a success in one round of checks, the DM rolls 1d6:

1 means the group encounter a group of wandering undead (1d4+1 skeletons OR 1d4+1 zombies; 50% chance for either);
2-4 means one of the group members falls into a grave, with a 50% chance of encounter a zombie that is trapped in the hole. This creature will attack him/her alone, attempting to collapse the walls of the grave onto both of them.

5-6 Nothing happens, but the rolls to find the gravedigger's house start again.

When they find the house, read this:

"You can barely see the gravedigger house. This is a small ramshackle house, much of it made from rotting wood. There is a light inside, dim and barely visible, so you're hopeful that the gravedigger is at home and receiving visitors."

Willem Cooper is the local gravedigger. He is a dirty human, with earthy black clothes, thick, matted black hair and tired black-irised eyes. Anyone could notice that he isn't sleeping well lately by the enormous bags under those distinctive eyes.



SKELETON

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (armor scraps) **Hit Points** 13 (2d8 + 4)
Speed 30 ft.

STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA

10 (+0) 14 (+2) 15 (+2) 6 (-2) 8 (-1) 5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

ACTIONS

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

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

ZOMBIE

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 22 (3d8 + 9)

Speed 20 ft.

STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA

13 (+1) 6 (-2) 16 (+3) 3 (-4) 6 (-2) 5 (-3)

Saving Throws Wis +0

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS


Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage

Willem is rough and sharp. Their neighbors think this is because of his wife Megan's sudden departure. They think she left the town never to return because Willem refused to change his ways. But, in fact, she never left her husband. Megan is dead, buried in the graveyard, near the house she shared with Willem.

It happened a few months ago. Willem and his wife were trying to have a child. But all was worthless. Megan happened to be incapable of having children. But at that time, Alkumuoto was getting ready for Margaret transformation and became curious about the couple. Alkumuoto, being a dark goddess of fertility and with her eye already on Rooknest, was deeply insulted by the mere existence of the condition, blaming Megan for her physical state. So, she haunted the mind of the gravedigger, filling it with hatred for any woman who couldn't give him a son. Finally, one day he returned home and killed her with the very same shovel he uses to perform his job.

Now, for the last two weeks, the spirit of his wife has returned as a shadow, lurking in the former marital home and making the life of her husband a misery by draining his strength almost to nothing, only to allow him to regain health before repeating the process. Willem knows that it is his wife who is responsible for his current difficulties because she appears in her previous form as she exacts her revenge.





By now, Willem realizes he was tricked (he doesn't know by what) and doesn't have it in him to try and kill his wife again or get their home cleared of the vengeful spirit. He feels her actions are a just reward for his treachery, but doesn't know what to do, with the former Megan not telling him.

Megan's spirit will only rest if one of this things happens:

- Willem's crime is revealed and he ask her forgiveness openly, on his knees and with tears in his eyes, showing real regret. This needs to be done in front of the whole village.
- Willem dies.
- Megan is raised and together they help defeat a specific representative of Alkumuoto (Harriot in this case)
- The hellween dies, which lifts the influence of Alkumuoto from the entire area.

Skill Check

DC 15 Wisdom (Insight)

Success: "As you talk with the gravekeeper, you notice strange twitches in his face. He also appears to be paying attention to someone else, someone not truly in this room. Someone that only he can sense is there."

Skill Check

DC 15 Intelligence (Religion)

Success: "There is no doubt. This poor man is under the influence of some kind of evil cloud."

If a cleric or paladin checks the area for any kind of undead presence, there is an air of a spectre having been in the vicinity.

If the PCs attack Willem for any reason, Megan returns in spectre form and attacks them. Despite all that has happened, she is still deeply in love with her husband and will defend him as best she can. If *detect good/evil* is cast, or any spell that is designed to protect the party from evil or specifically attack evil, it won't have any effect. Love is proving stronger than hate here, and Megan is still Lawful Good by some miraculous means. She is an Unwilling Spectre, which has a number of differences from a standard spectre.

Combat

Unwilling Spectre, CR 5; XP 1800; Difficulty - Medium.

Whether or not they deal with Megan, the party may have some questions for Willem the gravekeeper:

Skill Check

DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation)

Success: "The gravekeeper can't stand the interrogation and begins to cry for what he has done. Sobbing, he tells you what really happened to his wife."

Tell the PCs the story of his wife's murder, but omitting the Alkumuoto part. He knows he could never have harmed his wife on his own, but can't prove it. Willem does not understand what happened to him to make him act the way he did; he certainly doesn't know that Alkumuoto's influence is what made him do so. Crying, he openly ask her wife's forgiveness. In that moment, the main door opens and the PCs can see the flying shovel with the blade tip resting in the ground. Gradually, Willem's wife begin to appear holding the tool's handle. Her clothes and hair floats in the air, like she was submerged in water. The couple stares each other for a while and then she points towards the village centre, smiles and disappears. The shovel falls to the wooden ground soundly.

UNWILLING SPECTRE

Medium undead, lawful good

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 0 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA

6 (-2) 16 (+3) 16 (+3) 13 (+1) 14 (+2) 15 (+2)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The unwilling spectre 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.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the unwilling spectre has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Unnatural Aura. Animals, whether wild or domesticated, can sense the unnatural presence of a spectre at a distance of 30 feet. They do not willingly approach nearer than that and panic if forced to do so.

ACTIONS

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 21 (4d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

An unwilling spectre looks much as it did in life and can be easily recognized by those who knew the individual or have seen the individual's face in a painting or a drawing. In many cases, the evidence of a violent death is visible on its body. However, if the person who has been killed was deeply in love, even with the killer (so long as that person has been tricked into the act of murder), they retain their original alignment (usually Good of some kind) and do all they can to protect the object of their affections. As a by-product of this "love for life", unwilling spectres don't create spawn; rather, they just kill creatures and leave them at peace.

An unwilling spectre is roughly human-sized and is weightless.



Beside the undead and the ghostly shovel, have you noticed anything else strange here in the graveyard? He has been listening from time to time terrible screams from the mayor's family's mausoleum.

When did all this began to happen? Just over two weeks ago.

THE MAYOR'S MAUSOLEUM

If the party asks Willem where the mayor's family's mausoleum, he shudders, but explains what directions to take. Because he is so shaken by seeing Megan in her current undead form again, he forgets to mention that there are many open graves on the route. There is a cumulative chance of at least 10% per round that a PC falls into an open grave.

Skill Check

DC 20 Wisdom (Perception)

To find the mausoleum, the group needs to succeed 3 times at this skill check, as the fog swirls around and the path to the building comes in and out of view. The party can undertake it as individuals or can aid another to complete the search

Success: If any member of the group succeeds, the group gains 1 success token. The group also gains 10% towards the cumulative chance of the person making the skill check falling into an unnoticed open grave. If the group has now 3 success tokens: "You find the mausoleum in the fog bound graveyard"

Failure: If the skill check fails, the group gains 20% towards the cumulative chance of the person making the skill check falling into an unnoticed open grave.

If someone does fall in, the GM rolls 1d6:

1-3 means one of the group members falls 8 feet into a grave.

4-5 means one of the group members falls 8 feet into a grave and encounters two grave-carrion beetles at the bottom of the hole

6 means one of the group members falls 8 feet into a grave, but nothing happens, although the person who fell in has the smell of grave earth on them and animals won't approach for four hours or unless the person is washed clean in alcoholic spirit during that time.

Combat

(2) Grave-carrion Beetle, CR 2; 400 XP; Adjusted Difficulty 600 XP; Easy

GRAVE-CARRION BEETLE

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d10 + 4)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

16 (+3) 15 (+2) 12 (+1) 2 (–4) 11 (+0) 4 (–3)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

These creatures feed primarily on carrion and offal, gathering heaps of the stuff in which to build nests and lay eggs. A grave-carrion beetle is about 6 feet long. Grave-carrion beetles normally attack only to defend themselves, their nests, or their eggs.

Treasure

The grave-carrion beetle is eating on the remains of a body that has been dug out from an ancient grave that was originally at a deeper depth in the yard long ago. It is the body of someone who must've been reasonably wealthy, because even dead it has a +1 dagger and a headband with 6 pearls in it, each worth 120 gp, on its body. 2 pearls are missing from the headband.

On finally reaching the mausoleum, the party finds a squat stone structure about 40 feet square and 10 feet tall. It is windowless and has two thick wooden doors in the middle of one wall. The doors are each 5 feet wide and have 3 cold iron bands across them, sealing them shut. The bands run from corner to corner and horizontally across the middle of the two doors. A closer inspection can reveal that the lock has been broken open recently.

Skill Check

DC 15 Wisdom Perception

Success: The lock has clearly been broken into recently

Combat

Revenant, CR 4; 1100 XP; Easy.

If the PCs remove the bands from the entrance, the doors swing open slightly on their own. The PCs find that the walls are 5 feet thick and that the doorway, almost a short corridor, leads to an open chamber. If they have light with them, they can see that all the walls are covered with racks for storing bodies; these are also 5 feet wide, which leaves the open space as 30 feet by 30 feet. - Immediately opposite the door, about 10 feet from the far wall are two stone chairs facing towards the door, both of them close to and on the far side of a low stone altar. Sitting in one of the chairs is a revenant.

The ex-mayor is outraged for a number of reasons; that Harriot killed him, has taken over the town, has performed the ritual on Margaret, and that she managed to trap him in this mausoleum. However, if the PCs find some way to calm this rage and talk with him, he will reveal all. But his current state of mind is such that he will attack the party to get past it as soon as the bands are removed and he can see his escape path.

REVENANT

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 54 (12d8)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

18 (+4) 14 (+2) 10 (+0) 10 (+0) 14 (+2) 17 (+3)

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Ethereal Sight. revenant can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The revenant 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.

Reason to Hate. A revenant's existence is fueled by its hatred for its murderer. As long as the murderer exists, the revenant exists. If the murderer dies, the revenant is immediately banished. A murderer who becomes undead does not trigger a revenant's destruction. When a revenant encounters its murderer, it gains the benefits of a *haste* spell that lasts as long as its murderer remains in sight. Against its murderer, the revenant also gains advantage on attack rolls, grapple checks, and saving throws.

Self-Loathing. When confronted with its reflection or any object that was important to it in life, a revenant becomes overwhelmed with self-pity. This condition renders the revenant stunned, and lasts until the revenant is attacked or sees its murderer.

Sense Murderer. A revenant knows the direction but not the distance to its murderer—this sense can be blocked by any effect that blocks scrying.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The revenant makes two withering touch attacks.

Withering Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d6 + 4) necrotic damage.

Etherealness. The revenant enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

Baleful Shriek. Once every 4 rounds, a revenant can shriek as an action. Each non-undead creature within 60 feet of the revenant that can hear it must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success.



If the encounter with the revenant ends with the revenant's destruction, Harriot will enter the fight without giving the PCs time to rest, in an attempt to weaken the party. In a few rounds of combat, she will seemingly flee to her lair; she wants the party to follow her so that they appear to have just gone missing or wandered off, rather than be found dead after a severe fight. Once she is back in her lair, she will heal herself and regroup with her two giant lizards, waiting to finish the party off.

Combat

Harriot The Green Hag, CR 5; 1800 XP; Medium.



HARRIOT THE GREEN HAG

Medium fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Deception +7, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +6

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

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Sylvan, Primordial

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Amphibious. The hag can breathe air and water.

Innate Spellcasting. The hag's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights, minor illusion, vicious mockery, detect magic, magic missile*

2/day each: *animate dead, plane shift (self only), ray of enfeeblement, sleep, Invisibility*

Mimicry. The hag can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check.

Magic Resistance. The hag has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Claws (Hag Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Illusory Appearance. The hag covers herself and anything she is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes her look like another creature of her general size and humanoid shape. The illusion ends if the hag takes a bonus action to end it or if she dies. The changes wrought by this effect fail to hold up to physical inspection. For example, the hag could appear to have smooth skin, but someone touching her would feel her rough flesh. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern that the hag is disguised.

Invisible Passage. The hag magically turns invisible until she attacks or casts a spell, or until her concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). While invisible, she leaves no physical evidence of her passage, so she can be tracked only by magic. Any equipment she wears or carries is invisible with her.

Terrifying crones known to haunt foul swamps and tangled forests, green hags harbor an intense hatred for all beauty and purity. Making use of their varied deceptive abilities, these crones delight in murdering innocents, unhinging noble minds, and debasing the pure of heart. They are particularly fond of using *disguise self* to assume the forms of alluring young maidens and then seducing young men away from their lovers or families. In this form, they can infect such noble and upstanding citizens with all manner of debauchery and scandal. Some green hags prefer to reveal their true natures to their lovers at a moment precisely engineered to drive the man mad with horror and shame. Others drag out their dalliances and do what they can to utterly ruin the lives of the men they seduce before showing the broken shell that remains the truth. In the end, the luckiest of these unfortunate lovers end up being eaten by their green hag companions—for the unlucky, their final doom can be much worse, for the cruel imagination of the green hag is vast.

A typical green hag stands between 5 and 6 feet tall and weighs just under 160 pounds.



Harriot now knows that her pretence isn't working anymore, so she wants the PCs to follow her to her lair, where they could face her along side her lizards. The lair is near enough to follow her without risk of lost her track, something that is deliberate on Harriot's part. However, if anyone else comes along, she will revert to the form of the mayor. The PCs may see this and it will confirm to them that they have been tricked!

LITTLE BAKERY OF HORRORS

Matias and Toyanda are the local bakers. They lost their boy over a year ago and they were just getting over their depression. But now, with the hellween's curse, their boy has returned and has been corrupted, turning him into an Attic Whisperer.

Toyanda is happy to have her child here again, even if they can't talk with him or enter his room, as they are afraid of being attacked. Toyanda thinks that the actual state of her son is the result of the confusion of just being in this world again. However, Matias knows this boy isn't his son. Not now; too much has happened. He is aware of the other incidents with undead rising and knows no good can come of having this spirit in the building. But he hasn't found a way to convince Toyanda, and the situation is tearing them apart.

Read the following:

"The smell of cookies and a fresh bread attracts you to the bakery. This is a small building, and you can see that the upper floor of the structure is also the bakers' home. When you enter you find one of the local bakers, a slightly overweight man, taking out bread from the oven with a big wooden paddle. In the very moment he closes the burning door of the oven, what seems to be his wife came out from the back door of the shop to attend you. You can see the happy look on her face."

If the revenant remains "alive", the hag won't dare to attack the party, as the PCs could use the assistance of the undead creature to destroy her. The PCs have a chance to notice her presence though. However, the check has disadvantage as Harriot makes a special effort to remain hidden.

Skill Check

DC 16 Wisdom (Perception)

Success: "You feel as somebody is watching you as you came out of the crypt. You try to pierce the dense fog. Then you see a woman hiding in a scrub nearby! As soon as she is detected she flees to the woods!"



She will ask the adventurers for their orders. If the adventurers ask them about any strange problem, Toyanda will vigorously deny any unusual happenings in her house. However, her husband hesitates a moment, as if he is going to speak, but then thinks again and continues paddling bread out of the oven.

Skill Check

DC 15 Wisdom (Insight)

Success: "Matias does not seem to agree with his wife about the absence of strange events."

While the PCs are questioning the bakers, a child calling for his mother can be heard coming from the upper floor. Toyanda bids the PCs farewell and returns to the back of the shop, where the party can hear her climb the stairs to the upper floor.

The PCs can either ask Matias some questions, or listen to the voices from up stairs.

If they ask questions, it takes a **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion)** roll to get Matias to respond. He is not generally unfriendly, but on this subject he is aware of the rift it is causing and doesn't want to make matters worse. Whatever the PCs ask, his answers revolve around the fact he thinks that all is not well with the child, but he can't prove it, because every time he tries to enter the room, the boy hides and demands to see his mother. Matias feels there is something very wrong.

If the PCs choose to listen in on what goes on up stairs, use the following information.

Skill Check

DC 17 Wisdom (Perception)

Success: "There is something strange in that voice. It's like there are more than one boy talking at the same time, but both are saying the same thing."

Only a few moments later, Toyanda screams and the boy laughs in a manner that could freeze the blood in the veins. Toyanda isn't heard anymore. Matias runs to the back of the shop. If the PCs follow him, they will go up the stairs and find that Toyanda is holding the door of the children's room from outside, with a scared look in her face. The boy is calling her mother from inside the room, hitting the door.

If the PCs ask her what happened, she won't reveal anything. In fact, she can't talk right now. Her returned child has stolen his mother's voice and she won't be able to talk again for a while. Toyanda will impede the entrance to anyone who try to enter the room. She will defend her son no matter what. Her husband will try to convince her, but she won't give way quite so easily.

It takes a **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion)** to convince Toyanda to let the party into the room.

Skill Check

DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion)

Success: You manage to convince Toyanda that this boy isn't her child anymore. With an anguished sob, she lets you in. Matais says, "Please, remember he is - was - will always be our son."

If the PCs try to force their way past Toyanda, her whole demeanor changes. She falls into a rage, the adrenalin bringing about a complete transformation into a desperate, raving beast! There is a touch of Alkumuoto about the distraught mother.

The party needs to be aware that killing Toyanda IS NOT a good idea - all of any other good work will be completely undone if they do so. She simply tries to get in the way of the first PC to touch the door, but can easily be pushed aside. Anything more physical or violent ends the rage immediately, rendering Toyanda unconscious and close to death. Any healing will restore her.

However the PCs manage to enter the boy's room, read this:

"You see what was once a beautiful room completely turned upside down. Children's clothes are strewn all over the place, a chair with all of its legs snapped clean off rests on the ground, an open closet stands with its contents shredded and stained with a variety of substances, and a bed that has wide rents in both the sturdy wooden frame and plump mattress creaks ominously on weakened legs. No one visible is in the room, but you can feel an unnatural cold on your skin. From time to time, a child's snickering can be heard from all the corners at the same time."

This is now the lair of an attic whisperer, which was once the son of Toyanda and Matias, a lad named Antoine. It has formed itself from some of the clothes in the wardrobe, using the legs of the chair as its own limbs and a tattered toy bear head as its own head. A few of the splinters from the thicker wood of the bed make up its teeth. Antoine is hidden in the disorder of the closet and will bite the first PC that gets near enough when they are investigating the room.

Combat

Attic Whisperer, CR 3; 700 XP; Easy.

An attic whisperer spawns as the result of a lonely or neglected child's death. Rather than animating the body of the dead youth, the creature rises from an amalgam of old toys, clothing, dust, and other objects associated with the departed—icons of the child's neglect. The widely varying materials that fuse together to form these creatures lead to attic whisperers with vastly different appearances. Attic whisperers linger in the places where they were formed, typically old homes, orphanages, schools, debtors' prisons, workhouses, and similar places where children might be discarded. When an attic whisperer first forms, it does so without a skull—this does not impact the creature's abilities in any way, but it usually seeks out a small animal's skull as a form of decoration soon after it manifests.

ATTIC WHISPERER

Small undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 42 (12d6+6)

Speed 25 ft.

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

10 (+0) 18 (+4) 12 (+1) 10 (+0) 14 (+2) 9 (-1)

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Aura of Sobs. All of the voices that an attic whisperer steals linger around it in an invisible but audible aura of unnerving childlike whimpers, songs, and sobs. Any living creature that comes within 30 ft. of the attic whisperer has disadvantage on all attack rolls and saving throws as long as the creature can hear the voices.

Steal Voice. Any creature hit by an attic whisperer's claws must make a DC 12 wisdom saving throw or lose its ability to speak for 1 hour. During that time, the creature cannot talk, cast spells with verbal components or use any other ability that requires speech. Once an attic whisperer has stolen a creature's voice, it can perfectly mimic that voice at any time, even after its victim's voice has returned, and while using that voice can speak any languages the victim knew.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The attic whisperer makes two claws attacks.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 4) necrotic damage.

An attic whisperer haunts shadowy, forgotten places like old buildings and dilapidated institutions, places that were once homes to both young children and subtle evils. Hiding in drafty attics and moldy basements, an attic whisperer might lie dormant for decades while the quick go about their lives—often a scant floor away. The coming of a new child, though, rekindles some hope in the creature, its animating spirits motivated by loneliness, and ever seeking comfort and companionship. Once an attic whisperer finds a potential playmate, it does all it can to ensure it will never be lonely again by attempting to lure its friend to it, singing nursery rhymes, leaving trails of old toys, or calling out in the stolen voices of other children.

Destroying an attic whisperer reduces it to its component parts, usually consisting of dusty junk left to molder in the attics of old houses, though a few items, such as china dolls, small locket, music boxes, precious marbles, fine teacups, sculpted metal soldiers, or the like, may have some value.

If they finish off the creature, Toyanda will shut herself in the room to cry for her son, while the baker thanks the PCs for their help between his desperate sobs.

It may be that the party spends time asking questions of the bakers if they manage to diplomatically win them over before any fighting begins.

When did your son return? Over two weeks ago.

Why didn't you tell anyone about their problem? "It's our son!" Toyanda replies sharply. "You can't understand this. Antoine was taken away from us a year ago and now he has returned! To me! To his mother! It didn't seem like a problem"

Do you know anything about the huge wolf which was said to be seen around two weeks ago? They know nothing about the wolf. They have been busy dealing with the return of their son from around the time the wolf was first seen. But, they tell the PCs that there is an old drunkard, Farrer, who is a permanent customer of "The Welcoming Waiter". He told them that the monks living in the church knows everything about the wolf incident. He even speculates about the monks having something to do with the strange things happening in town.

Do you know anybody that could tell us something more about all this problems? Matais says, "Well, our neighbor, the old woman living just behind us." He hesitates for a moment because he is worried that he is involving someone who is innocent. But he continues.

"For the last two weeks she has been making and giving away little toys like this." He shows the party a small toy resembling some kind of priest with purple cloth and a head made of a little pumpkin. "The first few days since our Antoine returned were far more problematic. But, since Aimara gave us this toy, our boy calmed down just a little. Until today, that is."



THE HERBALIST...

...AND THE TRUTH

Read the following:

"Just behind the bakery, set a little away from other buildings, there is a small, two-story property. Over the main door, which is propped open with a squat carving of some mysterious creature, there is a sign that says "Aimara's Ointments". When you enter the shop, the smell of myriad dried petals and herbs fills your nostrils. You can see a glass cabinet with a wide range of colorful balms, lotions and unguents. There are crystal bottles all over the wooden shelves and the surface of a counter. Dangling from the ceiling there are some pots with hanging plants inside, tendrils reaching towards the floor. Some of them have flowers, the strong aroma of which suggests to you that sooner or later they will be transformed into another ointment.

Close by the counter you can see an old but vigorously healthy woman. She wears purple robes and her russet-orange hair is in a bun. Her penetrating blue eyes show more energy than any old woman you have encountered in your travels up to now. You have interrupted her whilst she is making a small toy with purple robes and the smiling head of a miniature pumpkin."

This old woman is Aimara Laferre, the local herbalist. She is 82 years old, but she wasn't a mere herbalist all her life. In her youth, she was a priestess of Alkumuoto, although she left the order over 40 years ago because of its wicked ways. She couldn't understand why some people should die in order for others to born, particularly when those that died were always those that disagreed with Alkumuoto, whether knowingly or otherwise. The ritual sacrifices to Alkumuoto were the main reason for her to leave the order, but there were others. Since then she has studied arcane magic as well as divine.

Her order was based far from Rooknest, even in another realm or perhaps plane. She ended up here 35 years ago and became one of the locals almost overnight. But the past seems to always find a way to return to haunt us. Alkumuoto fixed her gaze upon Rooknest (but didn't sense Aimara, thankfully for the herbalist) and Aimara noticed something went wrong 17 years ago. She saw in little Margaret unmistakable signs of the influence of her former patron deity. Since then, she has watched Margaret all the time, knowing that sooner or later Alkumuoto's influence would cause problems for the townspeople here in Rooknest, even if she couldn't predict just how terrible those problems would be.

At her age, she has no power other than her knowledge. She has been making toys resembling the ritual vestments of Alkumuoto's priestesses and giving them as a gift to the various townspeople that have been experiencing problems with the undead. It is said that these figures make the undead a little less dangerous, that they have fewer murderous urges. She could be

the reason why nobody has died in the town so far (aside from the Mayor's family, killed by Harriot, the hag).

The PCs may have questions for Aimara:

Do you know anything about the huge wolf? "Aside the fact that it likes to scare villagers? No, my child, I know nothing in particular about the creature. It's been a long time since the last time I saw one of them, big or small."

What do you know about the strange things happening in town? "I only know that I haven't had any problems. Well, now look at me closely. I'm at the very doors of death so maybe I'm not as interesting to the undead around the place as the younger villagers are. Perhaps the undead have mistaken me for one of them!"

We have been told that you are giving away little toys like that you are making now. Why? "My child, can't an old woman like me be a little bit generous with her neighbors without you being suspicious? They are suffering because all these things happening in their very homes. I only want to make their lives a bit lighter with my toys. Nothing wrong with that, is there, hmm?"

The PCs may think Aimara is hiding a lot of things in her responses. It take a **DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check** to be sure.

Skill Check

DC 16 Wisdom (Insight)

Success: Aimara is not so much hiding something from you, but has definitely not revealed all there is to know, as if she doesn't quite trust you entirely yet.

Failure: Aimara doesn't seem to know much more than any of the other villagers

The PCs could try to convince her to tell them the truth, but that's a difficult task.

Skill Check

DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion)

Success: See the "All the truth" event.

Repeat: See below.

Aimara only wants good for Rooknest. She likes the townspeople and wants to end her days here. So, getting rid of this curse is a must for her. But she won't tell the PCs anything beyond the "strictly needed" if she doesn't trust them. That's why the DC of the check to convince her is so high; she is classified as unfriendly only because she needs to be sure she can trust the PCs. The way to reduce this is to help the townspeople resolve their problems. If the PCs have helped 3 or more townspeople they gain advantage on the check. These are the people the PCs can help;

- the problem of the bakers (2 people - Matais and Toyanda)
- the problem with the church suits of armour (3 people - the monks)
- the problem in the tavern (2 people - Old Farrer and Brimon)
- the problem with the gravekeeper's wife (2 people - Willem and Megan)
- the problem in the mayor family's mausoleum (1 person - the mayor)

The PCs gain disadvantage on the check if any person from the above list is killed by either the PCs or agents of Harriot and Margaret.

...AND THE WHOLE TRUTH

If the PCs gains the trust of Aimara, read the next:

"Children, you are just what these poor people need." The old woman goes near the back door of her little shop, opens it and invites you to step through with her. "Please, come here and take a seat."

This lounge is one of the creepiest places you have visited in a civilized area. The furniture is normal, made of wood, but there are innumerable little trimmings all over the place resembling ghosts, skeletons, hags, werewolves, vampires and other less recognizable but scary undead creatures. All the light in the room come from big lanterns made of pumpkins, scattered around the place.

Aimara serves you all a cup of tea and takes a seat herself. She stares at the grinning pumpkin lantern in the middle of the table, lost in memories for long ago.

"Alkumuoto is the responsible for all of this." Her eyes go from one of your to another looking for some trace of recognition for this name. "No one knows who she is, right? Good. That's one fewer problem in your lives... at least for the moment. Alkumuoto is an almost forgotten deity. She was, well, is a goddess of fertility... but she is too obsessed with balance. One is born, another has to die. This dark goddess demanded that we, her priestesses, sacrifice those who weren't in favor of her ways in order to bring new lives to our communities. Elves, dwarves, humans... every family had to pay for the new lives that came to their lineages."

The old woman takes a sip from her cup.

"Yes, I was a priestess of Alkumuoto and you can believe me when I tell you that I'm not proud of it at all. I did some despicable things I don't want to talk about. I left more than 4 decades ago. And I didn't think I would become a pawn in the games of the goddess once more. Now it's my turn to try to repair this situation as expiation for my faults. For my sins... But now I do not have enough strength in this old and decrepit body anymore. That's why I... no, we all need you."

The answers to the questions for Aimara have changed as she now wants the PCs to help her solve this situation:

Do you know something about the huge wolf? "That creature isn't a wolf. She is a hellween. And I call her "she" because she was Margaret until her transformation. My friends, the hellween isn't a creature from this world. There is a terrible and bloody ritual that only can be performed by a hag. That ritual makes involves the killing of a werewolf and its result is the hag to be impregnated with a hellween. The hellween should grow up as a normal girl until her eighteenth birthday. At that very moment, she will become a creature made of foul evil. But, in this case... something went wrong with the ritual. I don't know why, but the hellween retains the consciousness of Margaret, and remains as innocent as she was before the transformation. I'm pretty sure she fled in order to avoid damage to her neighbors. So, there should be a hag around, looking for her daughter. Be aware of that, my children."

What do you know about the strange things happening in town? "The transformed hellween curses the place with these kind of events. The barrier between our plane and the spirit plane has become thinner in this place because of that, and they can cross to our side more easily. Aside from that, the hellween attracts the nearby undead, so you could expect a good number of them wherever Margaret hides."

We have noticed that you are giving away little toys, like the one you are making now. Why? "This," says Aimara, as she rises up with effort from her seat and goes to one of her toys, placed by the chimney, "Yes... yes... this toy wears the ritual vestments of one of Alkumuoto's priestess. Yes, we were all women. But powerful ones, you can be sure of that. Giving these toys to the affected townspeople means that I can partially calm the undead that haunt them. I can't get rid of them with my toys, of course, and I have no other power aside my knowledge, so I did this. I couldn't make many more until your arrival, children, as I had to help each family individually. Now you've done that and I can play my part. If I place one of this in each of the houses, Alkumuoto's servants think of it as real priestess of their mistress, and became less dangerous, less violent."

How can we end this? "First of all, we need to help these poor people. We can't leave them in this situation. Once we end all of their personal problems with the undead, we need to find the lair of the hellween, and kill it. I believe I know where she has fled. It's said that some centuries ago, there was a temple around this place. Alkumuoto's followers always built her temples in dark, protected places, in an imitation of the mother's womb. I'm sure that Alkumuoto's influence guided Margaret to that place.

For now, we will deal with the issues in town. I'll go with you if you let me do so. I know your enemy very well, and I could give you a helping hand from time to time that could save your lives, my children. Of course I don't mean me physically - what use would an 82-year old woman be? I mean, part of me!"

And with that, Aimara hands you 4 of her rare little icons.

Icon of Undead Calming

Wondrous item, rare

A small Icon are always made to look like clerics of the god or goddess that controls undead. Made of cloth in the colour of the deity's priests' vestments, they are topped of with something natural, like small pumpkins, tiny apples or large nuts (such as a walnut) that can be clearly carved into faces.

As an action the wielder chooses a single undead within 20 ft. That creature has disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws for 1 minute. Furthermore the undead may not attack the wielder of the Icon as long as it can attack another target. The undead can move away from the icon and will act normally outside of this radius, but the moment they re-enter the circle, they become calm again.

The icon may be used again after a short rest.



HARRIOT THE GREEN HAG



Medium fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Deception +7, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +6

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

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Sylvan, Primordial

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Amphibious. The hag can breathe air and water.

Innate Spellcasting. The hag's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights*, *minor illusion*, *vicious mockery*, *detect magic*, *magic missile*

2/day each: *animate dead*, *plane shift* (self only), *ray of enfeeblement*, *sleep*, *Invisibility*

OUT IN THE WOODS

Once the PCs have done all they can in town Aimara will encourage them to look for the temple, probably using clues left by Margaret's route when she fled the town. What no-one knows is that the temple and Harriot's lair are in the same place.

Once out on the path, or possibly when after the PCs have seen the hag near the graveyard, Harriot will be spotted and the party may decide to follow her instead. Whether they do or don't, she will attack, then flee deeper into the forest when injured. Finally the PCs will confront Harriot in her lair and defeat the hag and her pet. Then they will move on to trying to find Margaret and, if possible, discover where the temple is. Of course, the temple is hidden underneath Harriot's home and has been all along. This is where Margaret is currently held, being prepared for the final stage of her transformation into Alkumuoto's daughter!

THE HAG'S LAIR

Once on the trail, whether they are following Harriot or taking Aimara's advice and heading out on the route the wolf-shaped Margaret took, the hag will attack them. It is not a particularly devastating attack and is again designed to try and weaken the party, literally. Harriot will attempt to touch three PCs before fleeing along the path. At the edge of the party's vision, she will change into the form Margaret and call out to them for help, before disappearing in the gloom.

Combat

Harriot The Green Hag and (2) Giant Lizard, CR 7; 1900 XP; Adjusted Difficulty 3800 XP; Deadly



Mimicry. The hag can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check.

Magic Resistance. The hag has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Claws (Hag Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Illusory Appearance. The hag covers herself and anything she is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes her look like another creature of her general size and humanoid shape. The illusion ends if the hag takes a bonus action to end it or if she dies. The changes wrought by this effect fail to hold up to physical inspection. For example, the hag could appear to have smooth skin, but someone touching her would feel her rough flesh. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern that the hag is disguised.

Invisible Passage. The hag magically turns invisible until she attacks or casts a spell, or until her concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). While invisible, she leaves no physical evidence of her passage, so she can be tracked only by magic. Any equipment she wears or carries is invisible with her.

Read the following:

“The trail brings you here. The nearby river has developed enough fog so that it swirls around your feet even this far inland, as if it would be happiest attempting to drag you all to the dismal and cold waters from whence it came. The path ends abruptly at the opening of a dark cave; its entrance seems to be just quietly waiting for its next meal. You sense danger inside. But that sensation could be the result of the idea that has been in your mind the whole time you’ve chased Harriot; it was too easy to find this place. As you peer into the gloom of the cave you think you can see a body on the floor. You can, as it is the body of one of the monks.”

The lizards are inside the cave, hidden near the entrance, waiting orders. The hag has turned invisible again and is waiting for the best opportunity to attack. If the PCs get close enough to the cave’s entrance, the hag will command her lizards to attack before launching herself at the weakest member of the party.

When one of the lizards is killed or Harriot has been severely wounded, she will flee to the interior of the cave. There, she will turn invisible and again try to hurt the weakest member of the party.

While she fights she try to explain her motivations with phrases like: “I just didn’t want to be alone anymore”, “Margaret is MY child! I have the right to reclaim her!” or “You will never get her back! She has changed forever!”

GIANT LIZARD

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 19 (3d10 + 3)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

15 (+2) 12 (+1) 13 (+1) 2 (–4) 10 (+0) 5 (–3)

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

When they kill her the place suddenly becomes deathly quiet; the lizards, sensing themselves released from her yoke, will try to escape the combat into the nearby river. The cave becomes still, with no sound from outside. But after just a couple of rounds, a bird is heard in the woods, a single trill from something like a robin. It seems normality has returned.



RIVER



TRAIL

CLIFF SIDE

CAVE ENTRY

DEAD MONK

HAG'S LAIR



The PCs may think this is it, that they have achieved their aim. Many will be curious, asking “But what about the hellween?” Say that there is no sign of the creature, just a sense of a lifting of an evil presence with the death of Harriot. Let them search the cave; there is nothing to be found other than anything that may still be on the body of the hag.

After 10 rounds have passed, read this. Of course, the PCs may have left the cave within one minute, but it is unlikely, so the following is still relevant.

Developer’s Suggestion:

For dramatic effect, have the players relaxing, or beginning to discuss or question all that has gone on during the adventure. **DO NOT ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS AT THIS POINT.** Look like you are working out XP or making notes.

Then, if possible, ring a small bell (or similar), once. Then as the note fades, ring the bell once again. Do not reply to any questions, but just read the following:

“As you stand in the cave, the blood that has come from dead body of the hag starts to flow along the cave’s floor. It begins to illuminate the walls in a faint, pulsing red tone. It’s a unnerving scene, but the strangest fact is that the blood is forming the shape of a building. You can see walls, doors and a nine-pointed star forming in an area that covers about 6 feet by 3 feet. Just as all the details of the building become clear, the blood flows to fill the entire space and the pool takes on a reflective quality. However, the reflection in the hag’s blood isn’t this cave; when you dare to look in the blood to check the image, you can see an entirely different place, some kind of room dedicated to a religion. Yes, you can perceive a temple there.”

If they try to stick something (a sword, a stick, etc) into the blood, they can see that the pool itself has turned into a doorway to another place; whatever item is used will go straight through the wall or floor. In fact, this place is the underground temple of Alkumuoto, and is where Margaret is hidden with her father’s ghost. If the party submerges into the blood, they will transport themselves into the temple.?

ALKUMUOTO’S SHRINE

Read the following:

“The vision is as terrible as it is strange. You can see a dark shrine dedicated to Alkumuoto. There is a representation of the “dark mother” hanging from the ceiling. The pose is of her blessing her followers. There is an altar just under the statue and some rows of benches spaced evenly across the room, the wood rotten due to being soaked by blood.

There are 2 individuals at various points around the room, standing still yet occasionally twitching almost imperceptibly, each bearing the ritual vestments of a priestess of Alkumuoto. By their strange

movements and your recent experiences, you would guess they are zombies or skeletons, each wearing a desiccated pumpkin mask.

But the strangest thing in the scene is the creatures by the altar. One of them is some kind of werewolf-like creature, with red fur and a mysterious green halo emanating from its eyes. The other, a ghost seeming to be... comforting it?”

ZOMBIE PRIESTESS

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 22 (3d8 + 9)

Speed 20 ft.

STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA

13 (+1) 6 (–2) 16 (+3) 3 (–4) 6 (–2) 5 (–3)

Saving Throws Wis +0

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages understands the languages it knew in life but can’t speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Margaret’s father is comforting her again when the PCs enter the room. The priestesses are the zombies of the former worshipers of Alkumuoto, raised by Margaret’s inner powers. They will attack the PCs on sight.

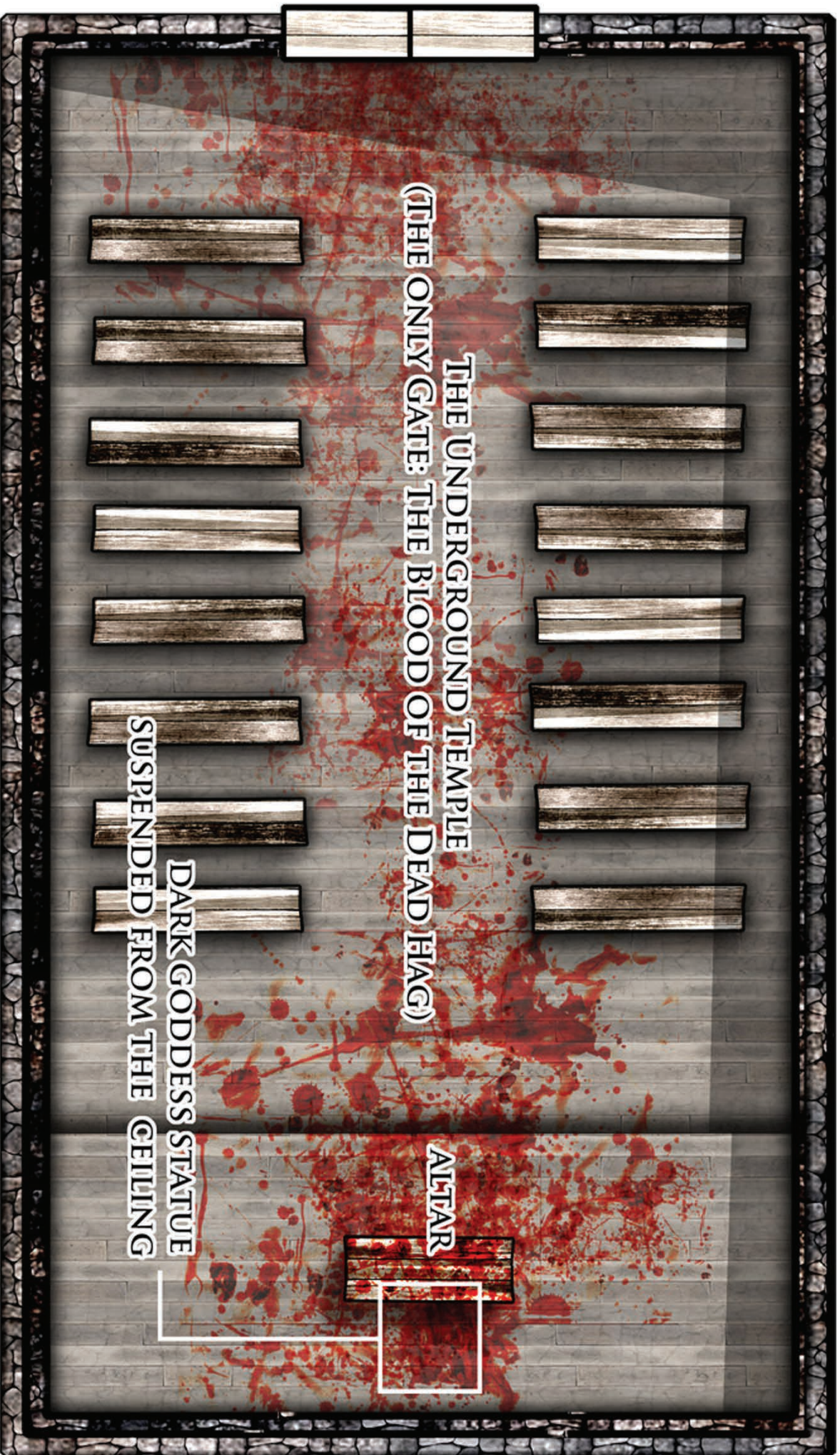
Whilst the PCs are fighting the zombies, Marvo, the ghost, gets closer to the fight, warning the PCs with phrases like “You are not welcome here!” or “You better go while you still can, you fools”. After two rounds of combat with the zombies, or if the PCs directly attack either Margaret or Marvo at any time, the wraith will attack the PCs, shouting phrases like “You won’t hurt my daughter!” or “Leave us alone, you fools, we’re the only ones who can save us all!” If he is attacked, he turns into the form of a huge werewolf, his eyes glowing a deep green in the semi-darkness of the temple, but is still a ghost when it comes to attacks and abilities.

Combat

Margret The Hellween, Marvo The Ghost and (2) Zombie Priestess, CR 7; 1900 XP; Adjusted Difficulty 3800 XP; Deadly.



ALKUMUOTO'S SHRINE



THE UNDERGROUND TEMPLE
(THE ONLY GATE: THE BLOOD OF THE DEAD HAG)

DARK GODDESS STATUE
SUSPENDED FROM THE CEILING

ALTAR

If the PCs ask, it is this form that has been seen around town. The footprints were just Harriot leaving clues on a false trail most of the time.

MARVO THE GHOST



Medium undead, chaotic good

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 45 (10d8)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

7 (-2) 14 (+2) 10 (+0) 10 (+0) 12 (+1) 17 (+3)

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Ethereal Sight. The ghost can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The ghost can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Create Spawn. A humanoid slain by a marvo the ghost becomes a ghost in 4 rounds. Spawn are under the command of the ghost that created them until its destruction, at which point they become free-willed ghosts.

Lifesense. A marvo the ghost notices and locates living creatures within 60 feet, just as if he possessed the blindsight ability.

Unnatural Aura. Animals do not willingly approach within 30 feet of marvo the ghost.

ACTIONS

Withering Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (4d6 + 3) necrotic damage.

Etherealness. The ghost enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

Horrifying Visage. Each nonbundead creature within 60 feet of the ghost that can see it must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. If the save fails by 5 or more, the target also ages 1d4 × 10 years. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end

of each of its turns, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to this ghost's Horrifying Visage for the next 24 hours. The aging effect can be reversed with a *greater restoration* spell, but only within 24 hours of it occurring.

Possession (Recharge 6). One humanoid that the ghost can see within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 13 Charisma saving throw or be possessed by the ghost; the ghost then disappears, and the target is incapacitated and loses control of its body. The ghost now controls the body but doesn't deprive the target of awareness. The ghost can't be targeted by any attack, spell, or other effect, except ones that turn undead, and it retains its alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, and immunity to being charmed and frightened. It otherwise uses the possessed target's statistics, but doesn't gain access to the target's knowledge, class features, or proficiencies.

The possession lasts until the body drops to 0 hit points, the ghost ends it as a bonus action, or the ghost is turned or forced out by an effect like the *dispel evil and good* spell. When the possession ends, the ghost reappears in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the body. The target is immune to this ghost's Possession for 24 hours after succeeding on the saving throw or after the possession ends.

Margaret has never fought in her life. She doesn't know how to react to her father's actions. But if she sees her father heavily wounded or on the verge of death, she will jump instinctively to fight with all her might, using her powers at will for the first time in her life. First, she will spontaneously summon a dretch and will then attempt to grapple whichever PC is attacking Marvo. This pattern will be repeated each round the PCs attack either her or Marvo.

MARGRET THE HELLWEN



Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger), chaotic good

Armor Class 12 in humanoid form, 13 (natural armor) in wolf or hybrid form

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. in wolf form)

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

15 (+2) 14 (+2) 14 (+2) 10 (+0) 11 (+0) 14 (+2)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common (can't speak in wolf form)



Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Shapechanger. Margret the hellween can use its action to polymorph into a wolf-humanoid hybrid or into a wolf, or back into its true form, which is humanoid. Its statistics, other than its AC, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Keen Hearing and Smell. Margret the hellween has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Animate undead. Margret the hellween can spontaneously animate skeletons and zombies as per the *animate dead* spell.

Curse location. When Margret the hellween transform into her true form, she curses the place. From that day on, in that place, the barriers from the physical world and the negative plane weakens. All kinds of paranormal activities begin to take place in that location until Margret the hellween is killed or she ends the curse by her own will.

Undead magnetism. When Margret the hellween finds a lair to stay, any nearby skeletons and zombies finds themselves attracted by the hellween. They will become Margret the hellween guards, populating the lair and the surroundings.

ACTIONS

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). Margret the hellween makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws or spear.

Bite (Wolf or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with werewolf lycanthropy.

Claws (Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Spear (Humanoid Form Only). *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Summon Dretch. As a bonus action Margret the hellween may summon a dretch to appear within 30 feet of her. The creature is under her control and acts on her initiative. The dretch disappears after two minutes. She may only have two dretches summoned at any one time.

There is a legend among the hags that asserts the existence of a necromantic ritual that creates a creature of great power at the service of its maker. The hag has to lay with a human werewolf in his human form in a full moon night and then kill it and drink his blood. She impedes his transformation with a special potion made with wolfsbane, but not lethal. If the ritual succeeds, the hag will be impregnated with a hellween.

A hellween is born as a normal shapechanger. When she reaches the age of 18, she awakens his true powers and become a hellween. A hellween physical form is always as a hybrid werewolf. She hasn't the ability to shape into human anymore, like normal werewolves have. She doesn't have the curse of lycanthropy special ability either.

The dark ritual performed by her mother the day of her conception gave the hellween necromantic powers that allow her to summon different kinds of skeletons to her command. The ritual bonds her will to her mother's will, but in order to command the hellween, the hag has to make eye contact with the creature once she has transformed. Killing the mother will free the will of the hellween again.

Combat

Dretch, CR 1/4; 50 XP; Easy.

DRETCH

Small fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 18 (4d6 + 4)

Speed 20 ft.

STR DEX **CON** INT **WIS** **CHA**

11 (+0) 11 (+0) 12 (+1) 5 (-3) 8 (-1) 3 (-4)

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Abyssal, telepathy 60 ft. (works only with creatures that understand Abyssal)

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dretch makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

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

Fetid Cloud (1/Day). A 10 foot radius of disgusting green gas extends out from the dretch. The gas spreads around corners, and its area is lightly obscured. It lasts for 1 minute or until a strong wind disperses it. Any creature that starts its turn in that area must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. While poisoned in this way, the target can take either an action or a bonus action on its turn, not both, and can't take reactions.



Even the lowest demons of the Abyss are dangerous and filled with a driving need to spread ruin and dismay. The lowly dretch is as hideous and foul as it is cruel, even if it lacks the strength and power to realize its need to brutalize others in its native realm. The lot of the dretch's existence is to serve more powerful demons as victims, and only the lucky few survive long enough to evolve..

The dretch is a favorite target for dabblers in Abyssal summoning to call forth. Relatively weak and easy to bully, dretches can often be pressured into long periods of servitude with only vague promises of the opportunity to vent their frustrations and anger on softer foes. Yet the prospective dretch-summoner would do well to remember that these demons are as craven and untrustworthy as they come. A dretch faced with a more powerful foe is only too eager to trade what it knows for its pitiful excuse for a life. Unlike most demons, a dretch's slovenly personality and disdain for prolonged physical labor rarely result in success. Advanced dretches are rare, but those who do find it within themselves to be more than they were at creation often become the pauper-kings of the Abyss, cruel and bitter in their rule over vermin, broken souls, mindless undead, and other dretches. Their empires are confined to abandoned stretches of sewers under backwater cities, unstable reaches of swampland avoided by more sensible minds, and other undesirable corners of the Abyss that even demons find uncomfortable or foul. Yet to the dretch lords, these realms are their empires, and they defend them with a pitiful tenacity.

A dretch stands 4 feet tall and weighs 180 pounds. Dretches typically form from the souls of slothful, evil mortals—yet it only takes a small fragment of a soul to trigger such a hideous birth. A single soul can often trigger the manifestation of a small army of dretches, and the sight of a horde of fresh-birthed dretches pulling free from the heaving protomatter of the Abyss is a nauseating and terrifying one indeed.

If the PCs attack Marvo first, and Margaret flies into a blind rage for a round or two as a result, the PCs may miss the start of what happens next; the avatar of Alkumuoto begins to appear from the mix of the pooling corporeal blood of Margaret and the flecks of incorporeality of her father. At the sight of the avatar, Margaret faints, and her father stands over her to protect her. He stops fighting the PCs and gasps at them;

“See! See! I - no, we - tried to warn you! Now you have brought our doom down upon us! Please, can't you see who the real enemy is here?”

As the PCs have fought the zombies, Marvo and Margaret for a short while, and any dretches summoned by Margaret, they may have been weakened. When they realise what they have done, it makes the situation all the more desperate! Imagine the look on the players' faces when they grasp the fact that they are the ones who have released the true evil at the heart of this plot!

“As another wound is drawn on the hellween's skin, you can see her blood begin to flow on the ground as the hag's had done before. It seems that another gate is forming just in front of you, but the sickly green color of the liquid tends to suggest that this gate isn't for your use. As you watch the progress of the pooling blood, one sinuous, glistening, emerald tentacle weaves its way out of the blood, flicking a drop or two in your direction as the tip probes the air of the temple, and a second follows immediately after that. The tentacles begin to creep and curl around the benches, using them as anchor points for the large creature that is rapidly emerging from the “gate”. You have never seen anything like this, and those of you with the knowledge realize that you are experiencing the goddess in her avatar form. The lower half of the creature is an enormous pumpkin whose tendrils keep grabbing the benches and try to grasp anything else in range. The upper half is a monstrous, multi-breasted female torso. Her head is a more vegetable than human, yet is still a series of acute angles and barbed points. Its face is a horrible caricature of a smile, with a sharp-toothed maw waiting to inflict nothing but pain. Her arms are two more tendrils with little pumpkins growing constantly from them.”

The lower half of the creature is an enormous pumpkin whose tendril-like roots form legs. Replacing what would be the stalk of the pumpkin is a thin, humanoid waist leading into a multi-breasted torso, the flesh of which alternates between firm lushness and withered sagging each round, as Alkumuoto “feeds” some creature in a far-away alien plane and the avatar's appearance reflects that. The arms are two writhing tentacles, both of which split into two about halfway along, so that four quivering, probing arms flex and flash in front of the PCs' eyes. Small pumpkins sprout from these arms and rapidly grow to be about six inches across in 2 rounds. These growths glow ominously, their fiery center suggesting a wicked use. After 5 rounds they wither away, but are replaced immediately. There always seems to be at least four pumpkins, 1 on each tentacle. This is going to be a fight to the finish!

Combat

Avatar of Alkumuoto, CR 6; 2300 XP; Hard.

AVATAR OF ALKUMUOTO

Large demon, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 105 (10d10 + 50)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

18 (+4) 15 (+2) 20 (+5) 10 (+0) 12 (+1) 16 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +8, Wis +4

Skills Perception +4

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal; telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 6 (2300 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The avatar of alkumuoto's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *animate dead*, *fear*, *misty step*

Entangle. An avatar of Alkumuoto's tentacles can grapple opponents of any size. Typically, an avatar entangles a foe, pulls it into its chest, and drops pumpkins to activate continuous *walls of fire*. If all 4 tentacles are used for this attack then the attempted grapple is automatically successful.

Fiery Pumpkins. Each of the 4 tentacles of an avatar of Alkumuoto always has a fiery pumpkin ready for use. These appear spontaneously and grow for 5 rounds, when they burn out and are replaced by new fruit. When used in a successful ranged attack, these pumpkins hit for 4 (1d4+2) bludgeoning damage and then activate a ringed *wall of fire* around the targeted opponent, with the waves of heat flowing inwards. These walls last for 5 rounds.

Alternatively, on a successful entangle, the avatar automatically drops a pumpkin at its feet so the ring of fire surrounds it and its entangled opponent.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The avatar of alkumuoto makes 4 attacks or 2: 4 with its tentacles or 2 ranged attacks with its pumpkins.

Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Fiery pumpkin. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, Range 30/60. 4 (1d4+2) bludgeoning damage and *wall of fire*.

An avatar of Alkumuoto stands about 7 feet tall and weighs about 150 pounds. Its purpose in life is to take the souls of those who are Alkumuoto's enemies and reforge them in the fiery womb of the goddess prior to releasing them as the offspring of loyal believers that haven't be able to conceive previously. This gift can be to any creature type that has live offspring and isn't limited to humanoids.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

There are multiple endings for this adventure, based on the PCs actions.

Possibilities include:

The PCs destroy Alkumuoto's avatar and save Margaret. This is the most desirable ending. When the avatar is defeated, the seal of the temple is destroyed, and everyone could exit by normal means (so long as they can climb or fly as a stairway out through the hags cave DOES NOT appear. Alkumuoto isn't destroyed (in the end, she is still a goddess), but her influence in this part of the world has been removed for a long time to come. Without that influence, Margaret returns to her normal state. Marvo, realizing that his daughter is no longer under the influence of neither Alkumuoto nor her mother, Harriot, says farewell to Margaret and goes to rest in peace, thanking the PCs for their help. Margaret will return to Rooknest and continue living her life alongside the monks (which makes Conwell more than happy). The strange activity in the town ends with the destruction of Alkumuoto's avatar. Although Rooknest has no leader since the entire mayor's family has been slain by Harriot, the townspeople will help them and offer them products and services without asking for money in return as a sincere token of their appreciation. Fanella would make a steady short-term mayor (at the moment, she doesn't want the job long-term, but that could change) and the PCs could help her re-establish the town.

The PCs destroy Alkumuoto's avatar and kill Margaret. This could be done by having party members that wants to eliminate all that they consider "evil" or "potentially evil" in the world, regardless of any other aspects of their lives. Alternatively, the PCs may realize that Margaret is no longer human, and could become a hag someday if she were to listen for, and hear, "the call" of a covey, and therefore decide to dispose of her. If this happens, most but not all of the people in Rooknest



will be grateful for the release of the curse, but some, such as the remaining monks, the blacksmith and the tavern owner won't offer free services to the PCs. They think that girl should be alive and among them.

Conwell, in particular, won't receive the news of Margaret's death well, and will become one of the most tenacious enemies of the party. He will seek his own revenge - not just physical, but blackening the party's name, hindering its preparations and supplying information to rivals and foes alike - so you could use him in subsequent adventures as an antagonist.

The PCs are killed, in which case Alkumuoto's avatar completes its ritual, Margaret and Marvo are killed, and the town is overrun with fertile undead. A cult dedicated to Alkumuoto quickly springs up, rapidly growing into a defensible church (1 year), a fortified compound (2 years), and a town with a cathedral (4 years). The place becomes a spawning

ground for all manner of undead and aberrations. The PCs' souls are drawn to Alkumuoto's realm and used as energy for the birth of a child in answer to a prayer from a follower. In effect, they are reincarnated as a child. The GM can use this information as they see fit.

In all cases Alkumuoto won't forget the insult the PCs have dealt her and she will begin to plot her vengeance against them. Now the party has a determined and resourceful enemy among the gods.

Additional Experience. Grant your PCs an additional 8,000 XP for completing the adventure.



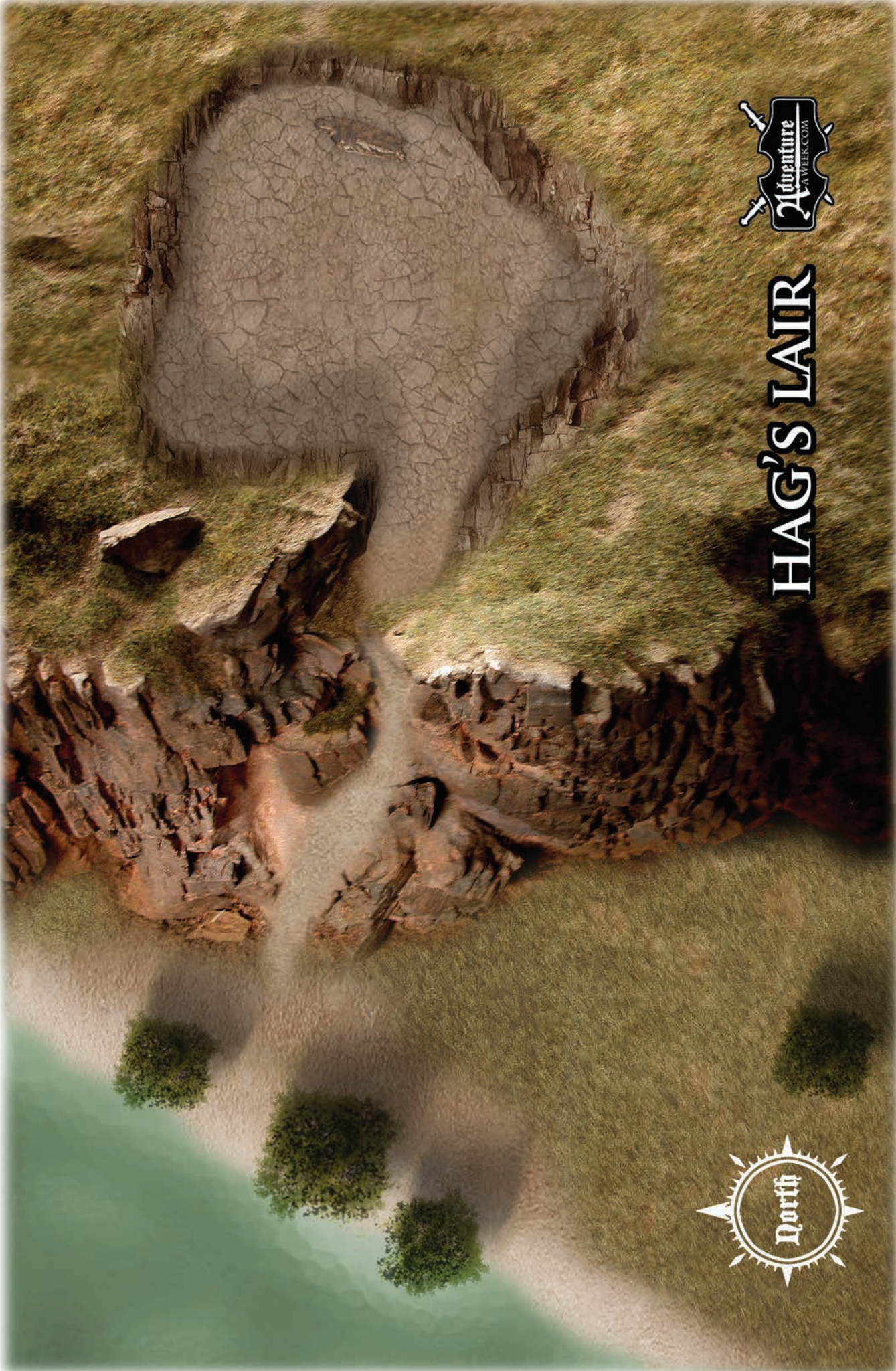


TOWN OVERVIEW MAP





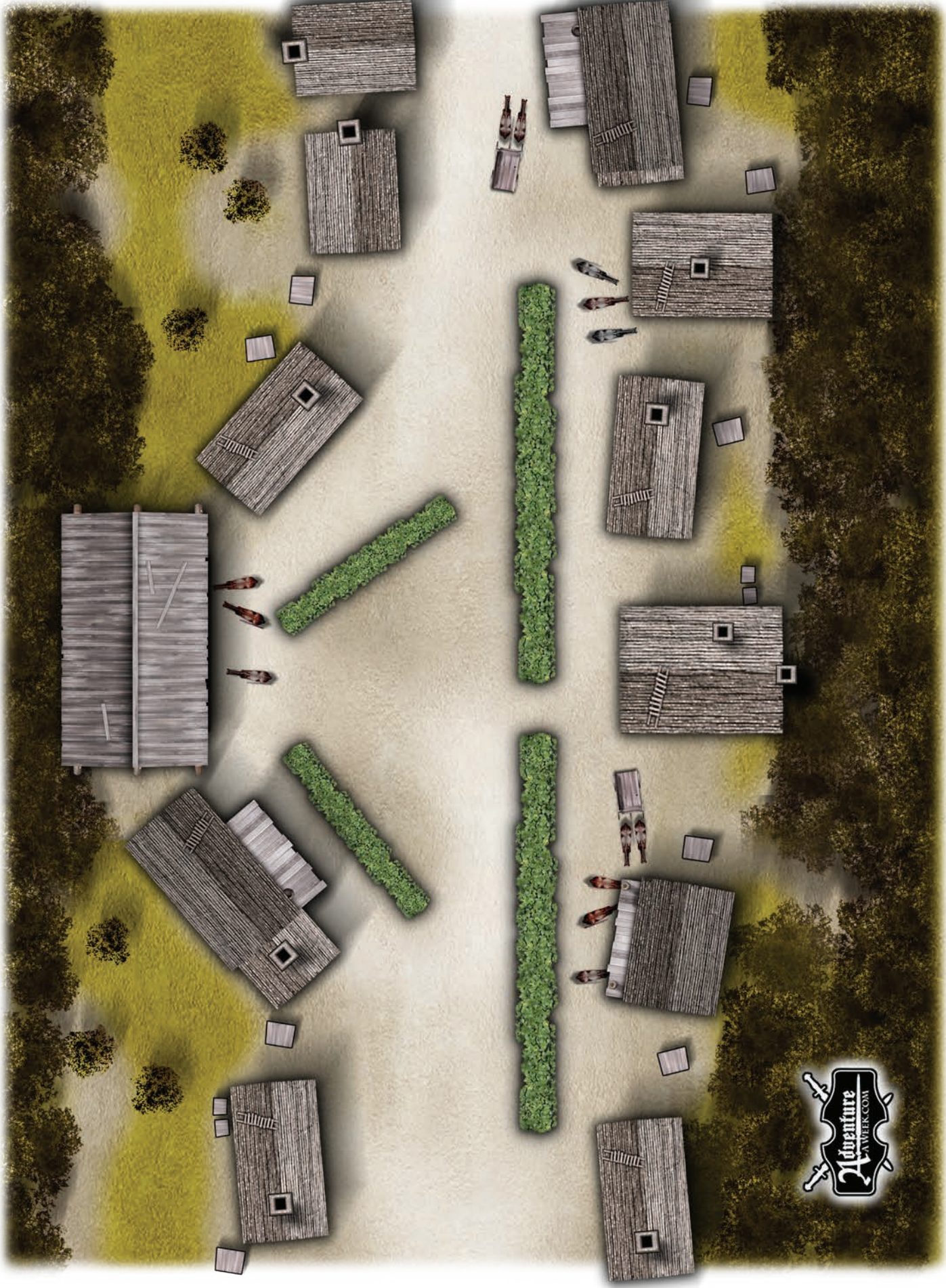
HAG'S LAIR





ALKUMUOTO'S SHRINE









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“Have you ever been jostled awake by the shrill howl of a terrible beast? Felt the hairs on the back of your neck rise up, and goosebumps wash over your body like death’s cold caress? I have. For the past two weeks, every single night, a big wolf-like beast, covered in thick fur has invaded our normally quaint village, disturbing the peace. Right about the time this thing started appearing folks began reporting odd events in town. The dead are rising from their graves to torment the living. Many townsfolk have begun to pack to leave town. We just can’t live here anymore, it’s unholy and unsafe.”

“If you feel like helping out, the folk here in Rooknest sure would appreciate it. You can see the mayor ‘bought the job and the pay. Good luck, you’ll need it.”

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