

MIDGARD SAGAS



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MIDGARD SAGAS

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ISBN: 978-1-936781-91-1

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FOREWORD

All six of these adventures started life as convention events. Designing an adventure to keep six to eight strangers entertained and excited for four hours is a different sort of challenge from designing an adventure to be played at home, among familiar friends, with characters whose abilities and foibles you know well, and in an open-ended time frame.

If you've played in more than a few roleplaying events at conventions, then you've probably had one or more of these sad experiences:

- Starting to play without a clear idea of what your characters are supposed to accomplish and consequently wasting valuable time while characters wander around looking for the hook;
- Realizing that the GM is working from only the barest notes, or no notes at all, while relying heavily on his or her ability to make things up on the fly—a talent that isn't nearly as robust as the GM believes it is;
- Encountering a string of challenges that were far too easy for the characters to overcome, or a single challenge that was far too difficult, because the adventure was intended for higher- or lower-level characters and no adjustments were made to compensate;
- Spending the whole session fighting monsters and never getting to explore, solve puzzles, interact with NPCs, or roleplay;
- Running out of time just as the adventure is finally getting interesting and exciting.

Thankfully, you won't run into those problems in any of the six adventures included in *Midgard Sagas*. These adventures have survived testing under the battlefield conditions of real convention play. They've not only survived, but emerged victorious.

A FIRST-RATE CONVENTION ADVENTURE:

- Gets the action going quickly or drops characters directly into it;
- Is well thought out beforehand but still leaves space for players to follow their own plans toward a goal;

- Continually lays obstacles in the characters' path that they must stretch and struggle to overcome but that never close off every avenue of advance;
- Offers something for every type of player and every type of character, whether they're a min/maxing combat adept, a puzzle-solving introvert, or a chatty amateur thespian;
- Reaches a thrilling, satisfying conclusion!

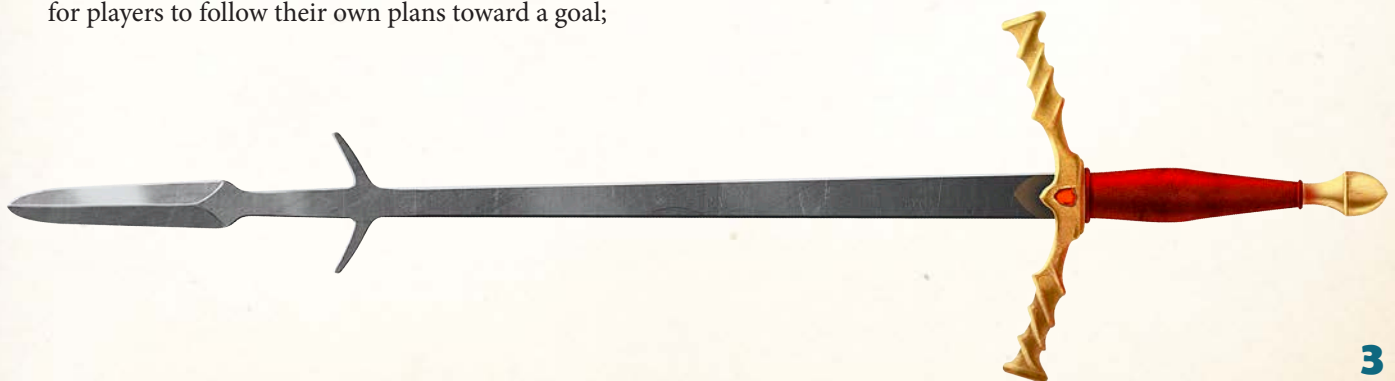
We're proud to state that these six adventures deliver on every front.

WHAT EXACTLY DO THEY DELIVER?

Murder At the Crossroads is a gothic murder mystery. The General who commanded the successful and profitable Crossroads Mercenary Company turns up murdered in his home, on the very eve of his scheduled announcement of which of his ambitious captains he's chosen to succeed him as commander-in-chief. Every one of those commanders was in the house when the murder occurred, so they're all suspects. If that's not enough to keep things exciting, the clock is ticking down to zero. The General made a pact with devils years ago, and unless the murder is solved quickly, an infernal gate will open, allowing devils to flood through the General's mansion into the world at large.

Madman At the Bridge drops characters into the thriving city of Zobeck, where a breakdown of the vital Puffing Bridge is throwing a wrench into the entire city. Workers can't reach their jobs, merchants and goods can't reach markets. In short, if this problem isn't fixed quickly, there'll be chaos in the Free City. Of course, this isn't a simple mechanical breakdown but an act of sabotage, and the saboteurs are still at work when characters arrive to investigate.

The Mhalmet Heist casts the characters as members of a highly skilled crew of master burglars out to pull off the perfect job. The challenge is that the target—a high-class gambling house—is heavily guarded and



organized specifically to prevent such robberies. It's an impossible job to begin with, made even more difficult by the timetable; characters have just four days to scout the casino, recruit insiders for help, prepare special gear, and concoct a foolproof plan. Anything short of foolproof is guaranteed to fail.

Raiders of the Chamber of Tomorrows begins in a warehouse stacked with explosives and ends in a mad race down a raging river while battling another band of adventurers, alligators, sahuagin, and an angry wight. Between those extremes, characters explore a unique but crumbling elven ruin that contains the answer to the ages-old mystery of the elves' Great Retreat from Midgard.

To Wake War sends characters deep into the heart of the Western Wastes. There they uncover the startling fact that the goblin tribes, which traditionally fight between themselves continually, are uniting under a powerful leader called Karbekul Four-Fingers. After fighting a few battles and ambushes along mountain paths, characters

can uncover clues that Karbekul has the means to summon a powerful, ancient horror and bind it to his will. Karbekul, however, is badly mistaken about what sort of entity will answer his call; he's set to summon not an elder horror but an angel of war.

Blood of a Fallen Star sees an alien, fungal menace from space infecting and enslaving communities of reaver dwarves. Characters spend some time in the village of Beryksheim, befriend the dwarves and learning their customs. An attack against the village by once-friendly dwarves driven by fungus-fueled madness sends the characters on a search into the infected territory. Nightmarish signs of contagion are everywhere and lead to the cave headquarters of the alien mi-go, where characters must not only defeat the star-born menace but also must figure out how to reinstall the brain of the dwarven heir in his seemingly lifeless body.

All of that awaits the brave, the adventurous, and the foolhardy in *Midgard Sagas!*

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MURDER ON THE CROSSROADS

A 5th Edition Murder Mystery for 3rd-Level Characters

By Brian Suskind


As a young man, Vartan Legora made a secret pact with the devils of the Eleven Hells; in exchange for devilish help in creating the greatest of the mercenary companies in Midgard, Legora tied his own life-force into the creation of a direct portal to the infernal realms. Today, with “swords” (or chapters) across the Midlands, the Crossroads Company truly is the gold standard of mercenary groups.

But when Legora dies, the gate will open. What seemed like a good idea to a young man has become a nightmare to an old one. As his pact nears its end, Legora has summoned his greatest captains and a few notable adventurers (the player characters) to his secluded estate. He intends to name his successor, hand over the Company, and then close the infernal gate himself.

SYNOPSIS

The adventurers arrive at House Legora in the midst of a blizzard only to be attacked by dire wolves. Battling their way inside, they learn the General was murdered during the night. With the General’s will naming his successor to be read the next day, the heroes must expose the

murderer before the culprit potentially becomes the head of the Company. Unfortunately all of the suspects are fractious mercenary captains with strong motives for killing the General. As they examine the evidence and interview the suspects, the characters begin noticing



odd things happening in the manor; effects of the slowly opening Infernal Gate.

Since making his pact, Legora has had an infernal observer whose job is enforcing the deal: Adderly, an incubus who's spent many years disguised as the General's major domo. Legora tried to hide his plan to destroy the gate from Adderly, but failed. Playing upon the tensions over the succession, the devil secretly influenced one of the captains to murder the General.

Matters take an even darker turn with the reading of Legora's will. It's bad enough that control of the Crossroads Company is to be put up to a vote by those in attendance, but then devils invade the manor. The halls of the estate erupt into pitched combat zones as the captains wage guerrilla-style war against the devils and against each other. Thanks to the General's will, the characters learn the gate will fully open at sundown in the center of the catacombs beneath the manor, so that's the likeliest place to stop it. If they're brave enough, they can venture into the trap-filled caverns, battle twisted abductees and extraplanar creatures, and eventually confront the true murderer alongside Adderly and his devilish allies. Only by defeating them can the infernal portal be sealed before it's too late.

SO WHO'S THE KILLER?

That's left up to the characters to determine—literally! All three suspects (Legora's captains) have the means, the motive, and the opportunity to have done it. There's evidence pointing to each of them, and there's evidence that clears each of them. As characters investigate and ask questions, they'll uncover that evidence in a sequence that eventually leaves just one captain as a suspect. Once that point is reached, the one remaining suspect becomes the actual murderer and the evidence that could clear that NPC doesn't exist.

Only you should know this is how it works! Never let on to players that the murderer wasn't predetermined all along (unless you decide to play the adventure a second time with the same group of players, in which case it won't take a great detective to figure out what's going on).

The point, ultimately, is to let people who probably aren't trained detectives enjoy the thrill of solving a mystery: questioning suspects, digging through evidence, compiling facts, and ruling out the innocent until only the guilty party remains.

RUNNING A MURDER MYSTERY

Murder-mystery adventures differ dramatically from dungeon crawls. The story unfolds through player choices about what to investigate and how to interpret clues, not by exploring a sequence of locations. Encourage players to question, persuade, or intimidate information out of NPCs, allowing the strength or weakness of their roleplaying to grant advantage or disadvantage on their skill rolls. But remember the clues are in motion, depending on where different NPCs are as the characters progress with their investigation.

Many players have no idea how to solve a murder beyond what they've seen on TV. They might need a few hints or nudges from you when they stall out and are unsure where to turn next. Remind them that solving a murder typically requires trying to find a motive, means, and opportunity for each suspect, clearing those who couldn't have done it and narrowing down the possibilities until the true culprit is revealed. Here, the murderer isn't predetermined; the heroes' successes or failures on their skill checks actually determine which of the three suspects is the murderer. This allows different outcomes on subsequent playings,

but also requires you to be a bit attentive and flexible.

Before beginning, it's vital that you review the Timeline and the Suspect Files so you have a good grasp of what happened before the player characters arrived and what will happen during their investigation that they won't necessarily witness. It's not complex, but it does need to be managed and presented coherently during play. The fewer times you need to back up and correct something you told players, the better.

Don't panic, the adventure has two built-in safety nets.

- If events drag, the spying NPC Tennrik can impart to the characters any information the GM wants them to know.
- If you or the characters are really stuck, that's the time to jump ahead and launch into the "Reading of the Will" (see Area 2). From that point on, the adventure becomes more traditional, with monsters to fight and clear villains to oppose. The only thing you must adjust is which captain (if any) ambushes the party in Area 22. We recommend choosing the one the heroes suspect (or dislike) the most, but it's up to you.

HOOKS

Murder On the Crossroads assumes one or more of the adventurers have worked with the Crossroads Company before. This is easily accomplished by the first letter (see Player Handout 1). If you're incorporating this adventure into an ongoing campaign, you can either change the name of the company to a group the characters have aided before or have General Legora mention their prowess as the reason he summoned them.

NPC FORCES

By default, each of the three captains is accompanied by a named lieutenant and by a squad of five **guards**. Depending on the strength of your player characters, however, five guards might not present much of a challenge—or it might be too challenging. Feel free to increase or decrease the number of soldiers to whatever number is appropriate for your characters. Alternatively, if you don't want increased numbers, consider increasing the guards' hit points to 22 and arming them with longswords (CR 1/4), or even replacing them with CR 1/2 **thugs**.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Give the players the first letter (Player Handout 1).

Characters arrive at the village of Zahn late in the evening, far too late to make the treacherous journey to House Legora. At dawn, as a heavy blizzard hammers the countryside, the innkeeper awakens the characters to tell them a message just arrived for them. When adventurers descend into the common room of the Sword and Plough Inn, they find a letter awaiting them along with a burly sled-driver named Vern.

Give players the second letter (Player Handout 2).

Vern is a gruff but quiet man who ushers the characters to his waiting sled-carriage pulled by two sturdy mountain ponies. With a crack of the whip, the carriage sets off across the snow.

HOUSE LEGORA

The entire adventure takes place in General Legora's palatial home, House Legora. It sits high on a cliff overlooking a pleasant valley and the village of Zahn. The massive two-story manor boasts the latest in interior design, including an indoor practice salle and a glass-roofed arboretum. The manor is constructed of native stone, carved oak, and thick leaded glass. Inside, the gothic-style decorations lean toward martial trophies; faded banners, ornamental weapons, and the like. Except where descriptions state otherwise, the interior of the manor has 10-foot ceilings and is illuminated by *continual flame* lamps.

1. COURTYARD

The sled-carriage shudders to a halt before wide steps leading up to the tall and imposing edifice of House Legora. Perched on the edge of a cliff overlooking the valley, gargoyles and other decorations on the ornamental façade of the two-story estate are caked with snow and ice from the raging blizzard. But the light streaming from the arched windows of the manor suggests warmth, comfort, and perhaps some mulled wine.

Vern leaps down from his seat to open the carriage doors. "Here we are, m'lords! House Legora. Better get inside before the cold is the death of—"

The screams of the horses split the air, quickly followed by a bestial roar. A large, dark shape hammers into the driver from behind. Blood splatters across the window.

As the driver's body slides down out of view, the carriage lurches as something lands on the roof!

The courtyard is covered in knee-deep snow that makes the whole area difficult terrain.

Fell energy leaking from the infernal gate altered 3 **dire wolves**, the alpha of a local wolf pack and his two mates. Driven mad, the dire wolves slaughtered their own pack and now search for others to kill. As this encounter begins, one of the wolves killed Vern, another killed the horses, and the third leaped onto the carriage roof. The wolves fight until killed. They are unaffected by the difficult terrain. Characters could choose to sprint for the manor house instead of fighting; it's a 50-foot dash up the shallow, snow-covered steps to reach it.

By the time this battle is over, the blizzard has worsened. White-out conditions reduce visibility to 10 feet. Characters without cold weather gear or magical protection have disadvantage on attacks, ability checks, and skill checks until they get out of the cold and wind. The path of the stone staircase can still be seen within 10 feet, and two *continual flame* lanterns on either side of the manor's huge double doors are a welcome sight. The doors open as characters approach within 10 feet.

BEFORE AND AFTER

This adventure is divided into two parts. Part 1 is everything that occurs before the reading of the will. Part 2 is everything that occurs after the reading. Most of the locations change somewhat when the adventure progresses from Part 1 to Part 2. Therefore, in each location you will find notations for both parts. Remember that the Part 2 stipulations don't apply until after the reading of the will.

2. ENTRY HALL

This 85-foot-wide hall has a 20-foot ceiling that's open in the center to reveal the arched walkway of the second floor. Three staircases on the northern end of the room ascend to tall, mahogany double doors with iron fittings and pull rings. Archways to the east and west open onto hallways. A red and blue disk of expertly arranged crystals is set into the floor to form the symbol of the Crossroads Company: a red gear with cogs extending to the borders, on a field of blue.

You are met by a thin, dignified man wearing tiny wire-rimmed spectacles. Only when everyone has stamped the snow from your boots and removed your ice-crusting overcoats does he speak.

"Good evening, honored guests. I am Adderly, your host's major domo. Welcome to Legora House. I fear you have come at a sorrowful time. We shall try to make you as comfortable as this weather allows. Your baggage will be taken to your rooms, but warm refreshments await you in the dining room, as do our other guests."

Other servants take coats and bags to the guest chambers (Area 17).

As Adderly leads characters to the dining room (Area 7), he avoids answering any questions, saying it's best if the visitors speak to the gathered captains first.

PART 1

If the characters mention the wolf attack or if anyone can be seen to be seriously hurt, Adderly reacts with genuine shock. He understands immediately what must have happened, but he didn't realize the infernal energy leaking from the growing gate has spread so much. He doesn't express any of these thoughts to the characters, of course. Instead, Adderly blames the attack on the blizzard reducing the wildlife to near-starvation. A character with proficiency in Animal Handling knows those wolves weren't starving. Adderly orders the servants to ensure all the doors and shutters are barred, lest any starving carnivores try to claw their way inside.

The raging storm should be enough to dissuade anyone from leaving the manor house. Within an hour after the characters' arrival, opening any door or window reveals a snow drift from waist to shoulder high. If a door is opened even the barest crack, the person who opened it must make a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check or the ferociously gusting wind forces it open and heavy snow pours through, preventing the door from closing again until annoyed servants have spent 10 freezing minutes shoveling away the drift.

READING THE WILL

This event occurs in the entry hall whenever you deem it will be most effective. You should allow characters enough time after their arrival to explore most of the mansion and to meet (and form opinions about) the principal NPCs.

When it's time, Adderly collects the heroes and requests they accompany him to the entry hall to witness the reading of the General's will. All the captains and their retainers are already present and waiting. Read or paraphrase the boxed text—but first, roll on the table below to determine the location of the key:

d6	Location
1	Games Room
2	Libation Room
3	Library
4	Kitchen
5	Grand Hall
6	Any, GM's choice

Note: The key is hidden in a secret compartment in the floor of the indicated room. It can be found automatically with a 10-minute search, or after a brief scan of the room and a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. It's best to allow just one check for the group, with additional characters aiding.

Adderly breaks an ornamental tablet that promptly crumbles to dust. As the major domo bows his way out of the chamber, the crystal disk embedded in the floor glows with a pulsing light and a magical silence falls upon the room. The ghostly form of General Legora rises from the fragments to stand before you.

"My friends," he says in an oddly echoing voice, "if you are seeing this, then I have fallen. I hope I met my end in some heroic fashion, but few of us get to choose our fate. I know the burning question in your minds is who should lead after me—but first I owe you all an apology.

"When I was a young and foolish man just beginning my career, I entered into a bargain I have come to deeply regret. I was promised fame, fortune, and the greatest mercenary company in Midgard. The devils I bargained with upheld their part of our deal. My career has been magnificent, as has my company, even with the observer they forced on me. But now, I realize I have not only damned my soul forever, I've also put the world at risk.

"In return for success, I allowed an arcane portal to be constructed beneath my ancestral home. This portal links our world to the eleven hells.

“This infernal portal is tied to my life. When I die, it will begin to open; by the time you see this message, it has begun. I implore you to close the gate before it opens fully and unleashes hell upon the world. The entrance to the caverns beneath the manor is behind the giant’s shield in my quarters. The key to that door is hidden beneath the symbol of a cog in the [insert location from above].”

The image continues. “I am sorry, my friends, for failing your trust. I hope you can undo what I foolishly set into motion. I hereby appoint the leadership of the Crossroads Company to the person or persons selected by common vote by my captains and other respected figures gathered to witness this message. I know you will choose wisely. Be well and take care of my Company.”

As the general’s image fades, he utters one last statement. “Don’t trust Adderly! He is a devil!”

When the image winks out, the magical sound-shielding around the room ceases. Screams, sounds of cracking wood, and demonic screeches burst in from elsewhere in the mansion. Something, or many somethings, have already emerged from the gate.

In the turmoil following the General’s message, the captains immediately fall to arguing about who should assume command while their soldiers either begin fighting between factions or cower in fear from the frightening sounds. If the characters try to gain control of the situation, a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check stops the fighting for the moment. The captains, however, still refuse to work together. Each orders their contingent to follow them and runs out to fortify a location.

From this moment forward, use the Part 2 sections for each location in the manor.

Adderly has fled to the gate chamber in the undermanor (Area 16).

PART 2

If the adventurers open the front door in an attempt to leave the manor, instead of the blizzard raging outside they see Area 3, as if they were opening the doors at the north end of the hall. If someone opens the other doors into Area 3, the two groups can stare at each other across the grand hall. Anyone who goes through the front door finds themselves at the north end of Area 3. Looking back through the door at that point, they see the entry hall from the south. In effect, both doors become portals leading only to each other.

3. GRAND HALL

This richly detailed ballroom is adorned with gold and silver trim and also features an open ceiling illuminated by golden chandeliers on the second floor. White cloths cover the dozen or so circular tables arranged around the room. Double doors exit the room from each of the four walls, and single doorways on the north wall lead to stairways up.

PART 1

The hall is normally used only for lavish parties during the social season. Characters moving through this area for the first time catch faint sounds of discordant music, hysterical laughter, and a whisper of breaking glassware. After first hearing it, the sounds can be heard again only with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

PART 2

A **bearded devil** lurks in this room, drawing infernal symbols on the floor with blood while a **spined devil** keeps watch from one of the chandeliers.

4. TROPHY (GAMES) ROOM


A large fireplace, open at the front and back, stands in the middle of this long, wood-paneled chamber. Relics of past campaigns decorate the room: broken shields, torn banners, and four suits of plate armor. A scattering of gaming tables surrounded by comfortable leather chairs denote the purpose of the room. Open cabinets display fine examples of chess, Nurian senet, and other strategic games.

PART 1

Captain Blademark spends the day in this room gaming with his men. Most of the regular soldiers play simple gambling games involving dice or cards. Blademark and Nova play chess.

If the heroes stay in this room for more than 30 minutes, they notice several fistfights almost break out among the soldiers after repeated accusations of cheating. There is no discernible pattern to the cheating. Anyone proficient in Sleight of Hand, or who makes a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check, gets the impression that all the soldieres are cheating but none of them remember or are even entirely aware they’re doing it.

If characters join in any games against Blademark’s cohort or against Blademark himself, have each gambling character make a DC 15 Intelligence or Wisdom check, adding their proficiency bonus if they have Sleight of Hand proficiency and are willing to cheat. They have advantage if playing against Blademark himself (he’s not much of a game-player). A character



who succeeds wins their game and has advantage when making ability checks on one line of questioning (such as means or opportunity) with Captain Blademark. If the result is 10 or less and the character cheated, they're accused of cheating and must either leave the room or get into a brawl with several of Blademark's soldiers.

You can use any system you prefer to resolve these games, from the simple ability check described here to actually challenging players to a quick game such as rock-paper-scissors, tiddlywinks, hangman, or checkers.

The Tonic. If asked about the tonic he made for the General, Blademark claims it is a "mixture of herbs and healing salts. It's nothing more than soothing tonic to promote good dreams and a healthy body." He does not mention the poison unless confronted with evidence. He also claims he gave the last of his supply of the tonic to Adderly yesterday (this is false; some remains in his room).

Treasure. Two of the game sets are quite valuable. An ivory chess set is worth 250 gp, and an ebony mancala board with semiprecious stones is worth 125 gp. A dwarf or any character with a mercantile background recognizes their value.

PART 2

During Part 2, Blademark and his soldiers are elsewhere. A pair of **imps** enchant the four suits of armor in this chamber, turning them into 4 **animated armors**, with commands to attack anyone who enters the chamber.

5. LIBATION ROOM

This spacious chamber, decorated in wood and leather, smells of rich smoke, rare vintages, and fine liquors. In the middle of the room, a large fireplace, open at the front and back, warms high-backed chairs and side tables littered with empty glasses and pipe stands. The stuffed heads of animals and monstrous beasts are mounted above the wide wooden bar running nearly the entire length of the western wall.

PART 1

Captain Rakell and her contingent loiter here exchanging wild stories and sampling the wide array of bottles arranged behind the bar. Not wishing to intoxicate her crew in case the other captains resort to violence, Rakell is careful to dole out the liquor in small doses.

If the adventurers join in the drinking, Rakell offers them an unopened bottle. Unfortunately, it's gone bad, rendering whatever liquid was inside toxic with all the features of the assassin's blood poison (ingesting creature takes 6 [1d12] poison damage and is poisoned for 24 hours, or half damage and is not poisoned with

a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw). A character with passive Perception 14 or higher detects the problem before taking a mouthful.

If Rakell is accused of trying to poison the characters, she laughs off the suggestion and says since the bottle was unopened, it was just bad luck.

If characters want to impress Rakell, someone must either tell the most outrageous story of the day (requiring a successful DC 15 Charisma [Performance] check) or stomach a full mug of the General's famous oGREKIN ale (requiring a successful DC 15 Constitution check). Success on either feat earns advantage when speaking to Rakell about one line of questioning (means or opportunity). Subsequent successes grant no bonuses.

Treasure. Most of the bottles at the bar are common vintages, but there are 1d12 bottles of rare wines and liquors, worth 100 gp each. An aristocrat or any character with a mercantile background recognizes their value.

PART 2

During Part 2, Rakell and her soldiers fortify themselves in their chambers (Area 15) and patrol the Overhall (Area 13). Here, the stuffed animal heads on the walls animate, thrashing wildly as if still alive and in unimaginable pain. Additionally, a few of Adderly's imps cast four low-powered *glyphs of warding* on the floor (DC 13 to spot; 3d8 lightning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw). Any character who walks around or searches the room has a 50% chance of triggering a glyph.

6. LIBRARY

Rows of floor-to-ceiling bookcases fill this room and the air is rich with the odor of aging leather, wood, ink, and paper. Comfortable chairs cap each row. The room appears meticulously clean and well-kept. A hand-printed sign asks guests to kindly not remove tomes from the library.

Most of the tomes on the shelves deal with martial matters (tactics, military theory and history, battle analysis, and weapons). A smattering of other topics can be found as well. There are no spellbooks among the collection, but it contains enough secondary sources to allow a mage to conduct minor spell research here.

PART 1

When not attending his regular duties, Adderly spends his time reading in the library (about half the time).

Adventurers who browse the shelves get the odd feeling that books are rearranging themselves when no one is looking. It's impossible to catch them in the act or even prove it's happening.

2ND FLOOR



**HOUSE
LEGORA**

1ST FLOOR



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

Once per day, a character who impresses the major domo with scholarly knowledge (requiring a successful DC 15 Intelligence [Arcana or History] check) has advantage when speaking to Adderly about one line of questioning (means or opportunity). Subsequent attempts by the same or other characters grant no bonuses.

Treasure. Nestled among the books are two rare tomes: *Blades of the South* (100 gp) and *A Question of Morality* (25 gp). Characters with History proficiency or with a scholarly background spot them automatically. If they're taken from the library, however, Adderly notices their absence within 1d6 hours.

PART 2

During Part 2, Adderly uses the secret stairs in Area 19 to descend into the undermanor but leaves 2 **ink devils** to protect his precious books. You can substitute spined devils if you prefer.

7. DINING ROOM

Golden chandeliers and wood panels abound in this large dining room. Three long oak tables occupy the middle of the room, set with high-backed chairs carved with stylized vines and flowers. The delicious odor of cooking meat and herbs wafts through the door in the east wall.

Here the residents of the manor take their meals. The three tables can be fitted together to form a single long table for formal meals, though for everyday use they remain separate. The door on the south wall opens into a pantry full of cutlery and dishware.

PART 1

Meals are served three times per day. During off hours, guests who enter the dining room and make no effort to remain quiet are approached by a servant within one minute. The kitchen (Area 10) can provide simple fare between regular meals.

When the heroes arrive escorted by Adderly, they find the three captains awaiting them. Hakar, Lucia, and Blademark all wear black uniforms bearing the heraldry of the Crossroads Company. Hakar wears a company amulet openly. Describe the captains according to their individual Suspect Files (see "GM Aids").

Adderly makes introductions before urging the characters to sit at the table and quickly serves hot drinks (or any other reasonable requests for refreshments). Then he withdraws to stand beside the door.

Once the characters are settled, Captain Rakell addresses them:

"We are all pleased you've managed to get here," says the half-elf captain.

"Late last night, the body of the General was discovered in his chambers. He'd been murdered! Given the adverse weather, it seems clear no one from outside of the manor committed this foul deed. So it must be someone within the Company. We immediately gathered everyone in the great hall and spent the night there. We can all attest no one left that room until this morning, other than the messenger we dispatched to you. You're the only people here who weren't present at the time of the murder, which means only you are beyond suspicion. The General thought very highly of you, and we hope his opinion was not in error. Will you take on the task of uncovering the murderer?"

Presumably, the characters agree to help. Satisfied, Rakell sits down and the gnome Blademark continues:

"I suggest we all return to our troops while our guests begin their inquiries. As custom dictates, the General's testament shall be read this afternoon. If you're as sharp as the General thought you were, we'll know who the murderer was by then."

The captains all want to return to their contingents. If the characters press to ask questions, it's suggested they examine the body first.

After Adderly escorts them to their rooms (Area 17) or to the master's quarters (Area 19), he returns to his regular duties. The major domo can answer some general questions as he guides characters through the manor. Refer to "GM Aids" for details on what Adderly knows and will say.

Treasure. The silver cutlery in the pantry is of fine quality and, as a set, is worth nearly 500 gp. Servants, however, will notice such a theft within 1d8 hours and report it to Adderly.

PART 2

This room is deserted but characters detect the sound of a disturbance in the kitchen (Area 10).

8. MAJOR DOMO'S QUARTERS

These spartan quarters are uncommonly roomy for a servant. A large bed dominates the southern side of the room with a desk tucked under the window in the northern wall. The other walls are covered with bookcases filled with books and scrolls.

Disguised as a human, Adderly has languished in the mortal world for decades with his only escape being his passion for books on every subject. Unlike the main manor library (Area 6), these books are Adderly's personal possessions.

PART 1

The bookcase in the northwest hides a secret door. Characters who search the area and make a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check find it. It is locked, however, requiring thief's tools and a successful DC 10 Dexterity check to open, or a successful DC 13 Strength check to yank open. Behind the door, a narrow corridor leads to a staircase to the General's quarters (Area 19).

When not overseeing the staff or reading in the library, Adderly can be found here.

Treasure. Four magical scrolls have been tucked into the bookcases. Each one requires a separate successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to find. There are scrolls of *alter self*, *detect magic*, *hold person*, and *witch bolt*.

PART 2

The room remains unchanged, but all the clothing and personal objects are sized for a devil rather than a human.

9. STAFF ROOMS

Each of these rooms contains three beds and footlockers plus a table, chairs, and other basic furnishings.

PART 1

The servants spend their off-duty hours in these chambers. They are basically loyal to Legora and Adderly but not devoted to them. They take care not to intrude on the guests, so they don't observe any of the goings-on during the night and are genuinely shocked by the General's death.

If you want to complicate the investigation, you can use the servants to mislead the characters with unfounded rumors, accusations, and observations. Be careful about doing this, however; players usually come up with plenty of red herrings on their own in an investigation, without additional help from you.

PART 2

Devils dragged off the servants to the undermanor, leaving these rooms in bloody ruin.

10. KITCHEN

Well-banked fires burning in the two large stoves at either end of this long stone kitchen fill the room with a heady warmth. Three walk-in pantries hold the manor's stores of food and a small attached greenhouse can be seen through glass doors to the south.

The domain of Chef Adelmarr (**commoner**), the manor's kitchen is redolent with the aroma of herbs, cooked meat, and woodsmoke.

PART 1

Adelmarr oversees a staff of four assistants. From dawn to dusk, the kitchen is abuzz with activity.

If questioned, servants talk about butter going rancid, milk spoiling, and bread not rising as it should, all within the last few days. If asked about Legora's evening wine, Adelmarr says Adderly is the one who prepares the draught. He usually brings the goblet back to the kitchen in the morning, but it wasn't returned today. Adelmarr doesn't know where it is, but it's unmistakable: a crystal goblet with the symbol of the Company etched on the side.

PART 2

Five **dretch** slaughtered Adelmarr, chopped up his body, and are currently cooking the parts over both stoves while chanting vile songs in infernal.

Treasure. Hidden below a loose flagstone in the middle pantry is Adelmarr's stash of potions. It can be found with a 10-minute search of the pantries and or with a quick search and a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. The stash contains 2 *potions of healing*, a *potion of greater healing*, and a *potion of poison resistance*.

11. COLONNADE

Partially suspended over the sheer cliff, this covered veranda usually commands a majestic view of the valley. Now, however, the columns and tiled roof do little to block the driving wind and snow.

PART 1

Ice and snow on the colonnade make the veranda difficult terrain.

PART 2

The opening infernal gate disgorged a mayhem (5) of **ice mephits** that now patrol the length of the colonnade. They think it great fun to attempt to knock anyone who intrudes on their new playground over the railing. Any adventurer struck by the ice mephit's frost breath must make a successful Dexterity saving throw or be pushed against the colonnade railing and frozen to it. The DC of the saving throw equals 5 + damage from frost breath. A character frozen to the railing is grappled (escape DC 10). If a character frozen to the railing is hit by frost breath and fails the saving throw, that character is pushed over the railing and falls 80 feet down the cliff before ending up on a rocky ledge overlooking an even longer drop. Should anyone survive that, how they get back up to the manor is a puzzle left for the characters to solve.

12. PRACTICE SALLE

The manor boasts its own indoor training facility. Dark wood inset into the light-colored wooden floor divides the salle into 10-foot-by-10-foot practice areas. A wraparound hallway to the west holds racks of training weapons, armor, and other martial equipment. A staircase near the entrance provides access to the second floor.

PART 1

Captain Hakar trains his cadre of 5 **guards** in single combat or group melees. The soldiers of the 4th Sword proudly maintain their captain's innocence of the crime as well as his worthiness to assume command of the Company. The soldiers insist it's an insult Hakar hasn't already been granted command.

The "training bouts" taking place seem more vicious than necessary. Only blunt, wooden weapons are used but many of the soldiers are eschewing armor, and the bloody bouts continue until someone is knocked unconscious. Once per day, if a character wins one of these bouts (no armor, bludgeoning weapons only), they gain advantage when speaking to Hakar about one line of questioning (means or opportunity). Subsequent attempts by the same or other characters grant no bonuses.

If characters disparage or insult Captain Hakar, they swiftly find themselves fighting 5 guards. The guards fight to knock the characters out unless a guard is killed. Then they switch to fighting to kill, but Hakar quickly steps in to stop the fight. Characters have disadvantage on all interactions with Hakar from then on.

PART 2

Hakar, Tennrick (**spy**), and 5 guards fortify themselves in the salle. They actively raid against Blademark (Area 18) and Lucia (Areas 13 and 15). Addled by the infernal influence of the gate, they suspect the worst from all who enter or approach the area. Characters can talk their way past guards with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check. Otherwise, the battle is on.

13. OVERHALL

Two wide hallways run the length of the manor's second floor with arched balcony openings overlooking the entry hall and grand hall below.

PART 1

A faint fluttering of wings can occasionally be heard. Perhaps it's a bird . . . perhaps . . .

PART 2

Lucia leads patrols through this area when not raiding her fellow captains' positions. There is a 60% chance to encounter her here with her soldieres at any time.

Nearby devils (including the spined devil in Area 3) avoid contact with humans in the Overhall. They're content to watch mortals slaughter each other from a distance.

14. MANTICORE SUITE

Murals of manticores engaged in combat against armored knights and each other decorate the walls of this very comfortable suite. Five cots are set up in the main sitting room. Doors lead to a common lavatory and a private master bedroom.

Blademark's soldiers bed down in the outer chamber while Tova and their captain take the master bedroom. Though most of the soldiers join Blademark in the Gaming Room (Area 4) during the day, there is a 60% chance Tova can be found here fetching something.

PART 1

Tova is fiercely loyal to Blademark and reacts violently if anyone tries to search the room without Tova's permission. Characters who persuade her their activities are for the benefit of Blademark (with a successful DC 13 Charisma [Persuasion] check) gain advantage on checks while talking to Tova.

Repeated viewing of the murals reveals details of horrible maulings and agonizing deaths inflicted on the knights by the rampaging manticores. This has no tangible effect on the characters, but it's not the sort of thing Legora would have wanted in his home.

A detailed search of Blademark's belongings, or a quick search and a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, uncovers the General's goblet (a crystal goblet with the Company symbol etched on it) hidden in a chest along with a blood-stained ornamental tassel from a dagger's pommel. The goblet contains flaky residue from some acrid-smelling concoction.

The same detailed search, or a separate, successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, uncovers Blademark's stash of poisons.

Treasure. 2 doses of pale tincture.

PART 2

Blademark and his crew relocate to the arboretum (Area 18), leaving this area empty. If characters spend more than a few moments here, a **manticore** in the mural launches a tail spike at one randomly-chosen character, then leaps out of the mural and attacks. Make a Dexterity (Stealth) check for the manticore (+3), with advantage because it's hidden. Compare the result to the characters' passive Perception scores to determine who's surprised on the first round. The manticore won't leave the room, but retreats back into the mural if everyone

else leaves. Each time it jumps out of the mural, its hit points are restored to full. If it's killed, the body rapidly decays into flakes of paint and bits of plaster.

15. GRIFFIN SUITE

An attractive three-room arrangement, this suite has been adorned with paintings of griffins in flight above various landscapes. The main sitting room contains five cots as well as the usual couches, chairs, and tables. Doors lead to a common lavatory and a private master bedroom.

Anyone with passive Perception 13 or higher gets the feeling that the griffins in the paintings move when no one's looking at them, but it's impossible to be sure.

PART 1

Bertram and Lucia's soldiers bed down in the outer chamber while their captain takes the master bedroom for herself. Most of the soldiers join Lucia in the libation room (Area 5) during the day, but Bertram remains here in the outer room. Disillusioned with the life of a mercenary, he busies himself writing letters to anyone he knows in an attempt to find a better position.

Though he wishes to leave, he still feels some loyalty to Lucia. He won't allow anyone to go poking through the captain's belongings without some convincing (successful DC 15 Charisma [Persuasion] check). Characters who take the approach that they're only looking for evidence to clear Captain Lucia because they believe one of her rivals is the culprit have advantage on this check.

A successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check causes Bertram to open up about what he considers an "ill-advised" affair between Lucia and Tennrick.

A detailed search of Lucia's chamber, or a quick search and a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, uncovers a wine-stained company amulet. It matches the shape left behind on the General's bedside table, and the wine is the same. Additionally, searching Lucia's luggage reveals a hidden compartment containing three doses of night orchid pollen (see Area 18).

PART 2

Lucia and her soldiers fortify themselves in their quarters, and she leads patrols of the overhall (Area 13) and raids against Blademark (Area 18) and Hakar (Area 12). Addled by the infernal influence of the gate, they suspect the worst from anyone entering the area. The heroes can talk their way past them with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check. Otherwise, battle occurs.

16. WYVERN SUITE

With its walls decorated in scale-like patterns, the sitting room of this suite additionally holds five cots arranged around a large statue of a clawing wyvern. Doors lead to a common lavatory and a private master bedroom.

Tennrick and Hakar's soldiers bed down in the outer chamber while their captain takes the master bedroom for himself. Though most of the soldiers join Hakar in the salle (Area 12) for training during the day, there's a 50% chance that Tennrick can be found here at any time.

PART 1

Tennrick is secretly a spy for the Black Brotherhood, but he's well practiced at maintaining his pretense of loyalty to Hakar. He won't allow anyone to go poking through the Captain's belongings unless he's offered a bribe worth at least 100 gp or is swayed with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check or a successful DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation) check (false loyalty goes only so far). Characters who gain his cooperation through one of these means also gain advantage on other checks while talking to Tennrick.

Characters with passive Perception 13 or higher occasionally catch a glimpse, with peripheral vision, of the wyvern statue weeping blood. When anyone looks directly at it, there's no sign of blood or any other seepage.

A detailed search of Tennrick's belongings, or a quick search and successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check, uncovers a hidden journal detailing the spy's observations about the Crossroads Company. Threatening to reveal this to Hakar is more than enough to make Tennrick tell the adventurers anything he knows; he'll assist them however they want in return for not revealing his betrayal to Hakar.

PART 2

Hakar and his crew fortify themselves in the practice salle (Area 12), leaving this area empty.

If characters spend more than a few moments in this chamber, the wyvern statue animates and attacks. In this case, it's actually a *phantasmal force* that affects everyone in the chamber. Every character in the chamber must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw to determine whether they see the statue unfurl its wings and come to life. Then make a Dexterity (Stealth) check for the phantasmal wyvern (+0), with advantage, and compare the result to the passive Perception scores of the characters who see it to determine whether anyone is surprised on the first round.

Because the wyvern is a phantasm, characters can't defeat it with weapons. On its turn, it automatically does 3 (1d6) psychic damage to everyone who sees it.

Characters who see the wyvern repeat the saving throw at the start of their turn, ending the effect on themselves with a success. The phantasm dissipates if everyone leaves the chamber, but it starts up again when people return, until everyone has saved successfully.

17. GUEST CHAMBERS

This simple but comfortable chamber contains several single beds, footlockers, and oak benches. A private lavatory is accessible via a door in the eastern wall.

PART 1 & PART 2

The door from the hallway has a standard lock, the key for which hangs from a hook beside the entrance. There are enough beds for each of the characters.

18. ARBORETUM

Beneath the glass roof, the almost uncomfortably warm and humid air of this indoor display garden is rich with the pungent aroma of exotic flowers, tropical trees, and other strange flora. A stone pathway overhung with branches and vines winds through the greenery.

PART 1

Thick with moisture and heat, the arboretum's heavy glass windows and roof keep the blizzard from the delicate plants. The vine-choked trees reach nearly to the ceiling. The vines are constantly underfoot or tangling at ankles, wrists, throats, and loose bits of gear, even if characters stick to the "clear" path.

In the center of the arboretum, the path diverts around a raised bed containing a grove of jacaranda trees, orchid vines, and decorative stones. Nestled in the middle of this arrangement is the night orchid, a shrub with black leaves and purple flowers. The yellowish-red pollen of the night orchid has a numbing effect if inhaled, and it can be concentrated into a paralytic poison by an alchemist. Identifying the flower and the effect of its pollen requires a close examination and a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine) check. Once the plant is identified, any character with proficiency in History or Medicine knows that night orchid pollen is a commonly used toxin in the Seven Cities (where Captain Lucia Rakell operates).

Hidden Dagger. After Hakar found Legora's lifeless body, he removed the murder weapon. He intended to flee with it, but during his retreat he encountered Blademark here in the arboretum. Hakar hastily hid the dagger in the northeast corner of the room. It can be found with a 15-minute search of the area or with a quick search and a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check. The dagger is a dikama or "fang

blade," with a curving blade that's sharp along one edge and serrated on the other. Other than that, it has the same attributes as a normal dagger. The dikama is missing an ornamental tassel from its pommel (found by Blademark and currently in his quarters).

Night Orchid Pollen (Inhaled). A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1d4 hours. The poisoned creature is paralyzed but remains aware and can speak normally. (200 gp per dose)

PART 2

Blademark and his soldiers set up a camp in the middle of the arboretum, and he leads raids against Lucia (Areas 13 and 15) and Hakar (Area 12). Addled by the infernal influence of the gate, they suspect the worst from anyone entering this area. Characters can talk their way past Blademark with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check. Otherwise, battle occurs.

19. LORD'S QUARTERS

Past an exquisitely carved door with images of triumphant soldiers, a vaulted antechamber served as the General's sitting room. Several ornamental suits of armor stand in the corners, a frost giant's shield is mounted to the western wall, and glass cases arranged around comfortable looking chairs and couches display various keepsakes and curios collected across the General's long and colorful career. A body—presumably that of General Vartan Legora—lies face down in the middle of the room beneath a blood-stained sheet. A wide pool of blood darkens the expensive rug beneath the body. Besides the door you entered through, there is also a door in the western wall and another in the southern wall to the east of the entrance. A short flight of stairs in the northeast corner ascends to what at first appeared to be a railed balcony, but on second glance you see is a whole other room, larger than this one.

General Legora preferred to conduct business in this area, surrounded by reminders of his previous accomplishments. The air has lingering hints of wine, pipe smoke, and leather polish.

The room behind the western door is a lavish bathroom and dressing room. The small chamber along the southern wall is a pantry containing glasses, wine, snacks, and other comestibles for the General's convenience. A secret door in the pantry can be found with a brief search and a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check. It opens onto a staircase that leads to Adderly's Room (Area 8) on the first floor. Adderly knows of this—he used it regularly, serving Legora—but doesn't mention it unless asked directly.

PART 1

Behind the frost giant's shield is a secret door connecting to the Undermanor. Detecting the door requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check while examining the shield specifically.

The Giant's Shield and Secret Door. Moving the shield to reveal the door triggers a ghostly magic mouth: "Beware, thief. Without the key, attempting to open this door will unleash magic that shall surely take your life. You have been warned."

This is no boast. Without the key (see Area 2), the trap on the door is activated when anyone tries to unlock the secret door or to disarm the trap. Doing either requires thief's tools and a successful DC 25 Dexterity check. If *dispel magic* is cast first to remove the *arcane lock*, the DC drops to 15. A *knock* spell opens the door but also triggers the trap. None of the magic on the door can be dispelled or even detected while the giant's shield is in place.

If anyone is foolish enough to try opening the door or disarming the trap and fails, a *glyph of warding* unleashes a *power word kill* against that character. Death is certain, as no 3rd-level character has more than 100 hit points. The power word glyph can be dispelled only if the attempt is coupled with a successful DC 25 spellcasting check.

If Adderly is asked about the door, he says the General keeps his personal arms inside. To any further questions he replies only that, according to directions received while his master lived, he must respectfully refuse to answer.

Opening this door by any means during Part 1 immediately triggers the start of Part 2. Within seconds, Adderly is present in the room, before characters enter the undermanor, and he insists they must accompany him to the reading of the will immediately lest tragedy befall everyone. See "Reading the Will" under Area 2.

The Body. Any close inspection of the body reveals that the General was stabbed in the chest. A character who inspects the body can make a Wisdom (Medicine) check. The result determines how much they learn. Each entry below includes the information from lower results.

The Bedchamber. When characters climb the stairs to the upper portion of the room, read the following:

The General's bedchamber boasts a massive canopied bed and a painted ceiling supported by fluted columns. An iron strongbox as tall as a man rests in a niche to one side of the bed. There are fresh scratches in the metal around the lock.

Bed and Bedside Table. A wide blood stain covers one side of the mattress with a less bloody patch in the center. A successful DC 10 Intelligence check determines the General must have been stabbed while lying on his back in the bed.

A puddle of wine is drying on the bedside table, but no cup or goblet is present. Examining the spill and making a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that a circular gap in the wine spill implies something of that size and shape (Lucia's amulet) was on the table when the spill occurred but was removed afterward.

Tasting the wine for poison requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine x2) check (a character with Medicine proficiency adds twice his or her proficiency bonus). If successful, the taster understands that the wine is poisoned but the dosage is extremely low; at that level, it would need to be ingested many times over a long period to have any effect. Not enough wine remains to positively identify the toxin.

Treasure. The strongbox can be unlocked with the key Adderly carries or with thief's tools and a successful DC 20 Dexterity check. Without thief's tools, the box can be opened only by destroying it (AC 17, 20 hit points, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage). The strongbox contains:

- a bronze coffer containing the manor's petty cash (1,232 gp)
- contracts and documents pertaining to the running of the Company
- General Legora's last will
- a +2 dagger
- a scroll tube containing Legora's copy of his infernal pact

Result	Discovery
8+	The wound is precise along one side but ragged along the other, indicating a weapon with both a honed edge and a serrated edge.
10+	A fine yellowish-red powder is sprinkled in Legora's beard near his mouth and nose. Anyone who identified the night orchid (Area 18) recognizes the powder as that plant's concentrated pollen. Otherwise, it can be identified with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check. Success on this check gives the character advantage when trying to identify the night orchid plant later.
12+	A faint trail of bloody boot or shoe prints leads from the body, up the stairs, to the General's bed. The prints are too fragmentary to indicate the size of the shoe.
18+	Tell-tale signs on the General's lips, eyes, and undersides of his arms indicate he was the target of long-term, low-dosage poisoning.

Legora's will indicates leadership of the Company should pass to the individual or individuals chosen by those gathered when the General dies.

The infernal pact is written in blood (the General's) on what appears to be human skin. Someone who reads Infernal can translate it. Otherwise, deciphering it requires a *read languages* spell or comparable magic, or a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check by someone who reads Abyssal, Celestial, Deep Speech, or Primordial. Such is the darkness and evil inherent in the document that anyone reading it must succeed at a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw to avoid having disadvantage on every ability check and saving throw they make for the next 1d4 hours.

If someone manages to translate the pact, it describes the general nature of Legora's agreement (unparalleled success in exchange for a permanent access point to the Material World after Legora's death), where the gate will be located (beneath Legora's home), and the fact that Legora will be accompanied for the rest of his life by an infernal manservant.

Examining these documents triggers the Reading the Will event (see Area 2). Adderly and one of the captains arrive to escort the adventurers to the reading, which they insist must take place immediately.

PART 2

Before descending into the undermanor, Adderly activates one of the manor's defenders, a **helmed horror**, and commands it to kill anyone it encounters. Fortunately, the construct is very literal. Since it wasn't ordered to leave the General's quarters, here it remains. It will, however, try to kill anyone who enters.

20. GALLERY OF CONSUMED FLESH

This area can only be entered during Part 2, so the description is not split.

The characters descend down the long spiral stairway into the Undermanor. These are natural caverns connected by sloping, curving tunnels. Unless otherwise noted, passages are 10 feet wide with a 10-foot-high ceiling. Steam hisses from cracks in the floor and walls, and water drips everywhere.

The stairway ends in a long cavern wreathed in drifting clouds of steam and heavy with the stench of brimstone. The floor angles sharply and unevenly downward toward the front of the house. From somewhere below comes a discordant, pulsing vibration, like a sickly heartbeat within the stone itself. Fifty feet ahead, four of the manor's servants hang from the ceiling by fleshy tendrils.

The sharp angle of the floor, plunging fissures, and sharp dropoffs as well as the steam-slickened stones

makes maneuvering through this area treacherous. The terrain is considered difficult. In addition, while moving downward (toward the exit at the south end of the cavern), characters must succeed at DC 10 Dexterity saving throws for every 20 feet traveled. Failure results in a fall that does 1d4 damage and the loss of any remaining movement during the turn. Travel upward (toward the stairs up to Area 19) requires a similar DC 10 Strength saving throw.

Lurking in the cavern are six **gangly lemures** (identical to normal lemures but with reach 20 ft. on their fist attacks). These are what suspended the four servants (**commoners**) from the ceiling; they're now enjoying taking playful swipes at their prisoners.

The four servants are unconscious and near death (1 hit point each). They are about 25 feet off the ground. Freeing requires cutting the tendrils (AC 10, 5 hit points, immune to psychic damage). Most importantly, they must be safely lowered to the floor or caught as they fall with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check or special precautions, because the 25-foot fall will surely kill any of them.

If healed, the servants relate how devils dragged them down into the undermanor. Other servants were taken even deeper.

Treasure. Someone who examines the fleshy tendrils hanging from the ceiling and makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check realizes that sickly-yellow nodules on them contain a thick fluid with natural healing properties. Enough fluid can be squeezed out to yield the equivalent of four *potions of healing*. The taste is so vile, however, that anyone who drinks one is also poisoned for 10 minutes.

21. GALLERY OF BURNING SOULS

This area can only be entered during Part 2, so the description is not split.

The tunnel drops off sharply into a nearly 50-foot vertical shaft with a reddish glow emanating from the bottom. The air traveling up is uncomfortably warm.

Navigating down the shaft without climbing aids requires each character to make a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. If the characters use ropes, hooks, and other climbing gear, the DC drops to 5. Make the check just above the midpoint; anyone who fails, falls 30 feet to the floor. (The same condition applies when characters climb back out.)

When characters reach the bottom, read:

Sulfurous pools of stinking liquid belch goutts of fire and noxious clouds of scalding vapor into the miasma already clouding this cavern.

At the far side, four reddish, man-sized serpents rip chunks out of a pile of human corpses.

A particularly vicious **magma mephit** called Garv'c and three **fire snakes** guard this chamber on Adderly's orders. The fire snakes attack on the ground while the mephit lurks near the ceiling, ready to use its Heat Metal ability and Fire Breath to best advantage.

Treasure. Garv'c and the fire snakes collected a tidy pot of treasure that they submerged in one of the bubbling pools. It can be found with a detailed search of the pools or with a quick inspection and a successful successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. Reaching into the pool causes 1d6 fire damage. The stash contains 203 gp, 500 sp, 1020 cp, and a decorative metal scepter (an *immovable rod*).

22. GATE CHAMBER

This area can only be entered during Part 2, so the description is not split.

The winding tunnel down to this chamber from Area 21 has steep sections, but they're lined with many more narrow shelves and handholds, so the climb is strenuous but safe. There's no need for ropes or other climbing gear, but every character must make a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion from exertion, the rising heat, and noxious fumes. (The same condition applies when characters climb back out.)

At the far side of the cavern, a stone archway scarred with cruel-looking sigils glows with a crimson radiance while crackling streams of blood-red energy arc from rune to rune. In the center of the archway, a swirling ripple in the air denotes the boundary of the infernal gate. Beyond the disturbance, the faint image of a maddening Hellscape of fire, devils, and death grows stronger with every passing moment.

The portal emerged as a tiny pinhole at the moment of Legora's death, and it's been growing in size and power ever since. So far, only smaller, weaker devils can pass through; once it's fully open, it will be usable by any infernal entity. The adventurers have just 8 rounds from the beginning of combat to disrupt the gate before it reaches full size and permanence. Allow any character who asks to attempt a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) or a DC 20


Wisdom check; on a success, the character realizes that at least half (6) of the 11 sigils must be destroyed to collapse the gate. There are four ways to do this:

- Physically smashing them with fists or weapons;
- Spells that normally affect more than one target do half damage to every sigil in the affected area;
- Spells that normally affect just one target do double damage to one sigil;
- Channel Divinity destroys one sigil within 30 feet with each use.

When a character approaches within 50 feet of the gate, Adderly emerges from his etherealness. In his natural form, the major domo appears as a tall, impossibly beautiful man with bat wings and a pointed tail (**incubus**).

"Your task is hopeless! I've languished too long in this accursed plane to allow any band of mortals to stand in my way." At a gesture from Adderly, creatures resembling blobs of molten flesh with vaguely humanoid heads tumble out through the gate.





Two **lemures** immediately emerge from the gate, and two more emerge each round for the next 6 rounds. If characters are gaining the upper hand too easily, increase the number of lemures emerging each round.

At the start of the third round of combat, the real murderer of General Legora arrives and attacks the characters from behind. This should be either the person most clearly implicated on the Means/Opportunity tracker or the one the heroes hate the most, if there's a clear winner in that category. This captain arrives with two **guards**. If the characters managed to arrest the murderer before this scene, then this ambush doesn't occur. Be aware that this reinforcement can make the battle especially difficult. Consider withholding lemures this round if the party seems in danger of being overwhelmed.

If the characters manage to destroy at least 6 of the sigils before the end of 8 rounds of combat, the gate implodes and crumbles to ash; proceed to "Conclusion."

Treasure. *Adderly's ring of mind shielding*, equipment carried by the captain and guards

CONCLUSION

With the destruction of the gate, the remaining devils (if any survived) flee back to their infernal realms. The heroes emerge from the Undermanor to find the manor in ruins from the battles between the captains and the infernal invaders. The surviving captains offer the characters a substantial reward (either 750 gp per character or the equivalent in minor magic items) for their help in restoring the honor of the Company.

If you want, the characters can gain control of the Crossroads Company. The other captains all died in infighting or were killed by devils, and the surviving soldiers vote to offer the Company to the characters. How this impacts the characters, their travels, and your campaign is beyond the scope of this adventure.

GM AIDS

This section contains advice and forms that can simplify your job while running *Murder at the Crossroads*.

MOTIVES

Learning the motives of the various suspects in this adventure has been left deliberately easy. This gives the heroes a place to start their investigation. In many cases, characters don't even need to make successful checks to persuade an NPC to relate some dirt about a suspect. Soldiers and captains from rival factions are happy to implicate each other! The motives for each suspect and who knows what about them are listed in the individual NPC descriptions.

MEANS AND OPPORTUNITY DC TRACKERS

When characters succeed at a check to get information from one captain about the means or opportunity of another captain (see "Suspect Files" below), DCs for similar checks directed toward the other captains increase by 3. For example, upon getting a juicy tip about Captain Hakar's opportunity to commit the murder from Captain Blademark (DC 13), checks to uncover tidbits about opportunity from Hakar and Lucia increase from DC 13 to DC 16. If a successful DC 16 check is subsequently made when questioning Hakar, the DC to get similar information from Lucia increases to 19. With this adjustment, characters are less likely to amass piles of confusing and seemingly contradictory clues. If an attempt to gain this information fails, the DC doesn't change (for now).

This system works best if you don't reveal the DCs players are aiming for when they make these checks or that the DCs are increasing because of earlier events. When someone rolls as high on the second or third check as they did on the first and it fails, you want characters and players to conclude that they're being told the truth, not that conditions have changed.

It's also important to understand that a successful check doesn't elicit a confession or an outpouring of testimony. It could be nothing more than a slip of the tongue or an "oops, did I say too much?" moment. All the captains maintain their innocence, no matter how guilty they appear, until the confrontation at the portal.

Note that in many instances, information the captains can offer to incriminate other captains contradicts their own alibis. Captain Hakar, for example, claims to have spent the entire evening in the libation room, but when questioned he also might point out that he saw Captain Blademark near the General's quarters at 11:30 pm. Hakar can't have been in both places; he must be lying about one or the other. Consequently, Hakar is not likely to offer the tidbit about Blademark unless he himself has already been caught in a lie and he needs to deflect suspicion, or he doesn't seem to be under suspicion to begin with and so doesn't need an alibi. Similar cases exist for all three captains. In the role of the NPCs, you can reveal or conceal these inconsistencies in whatever manner you deem most dramatic or that you think the players will find most suspicious.

Since most players will not be trained investigators, this simple system allows them to narrow down the suspects without getting frustrated or stuck. Various ways to trigger Reading the Will also provide an escape from the investigation if characters work themselves into a dead end.

If characters gather enough evidence that they're convinced they've identified the killer, the other two captains happily help them arrest and confine the third. When this happens, proceed to Reading the Will immediately afterward.

Means Tracker: Questions about means involve weapons, poisons, and abilities.

	Starting DC	1st Increase	2nd Increase
Blademark	13		
Lucia	13		
Hakar	13		

Opportunity Tracker: Questions about opportunity involve timelines, suspects' locations at various times, etc.

	Starting DC	1st Increase	2nd Increase
Blademark	13		
Lucia	13		
Hakar	13		

Pulling the Trigger on the Will. Once characters succeed at three or four means or opportunity checks (in any combination), that's a good time to trigger the Reading of the Will (See Area 2). Characters are unlikely to learn much more after that (because of increasing DCs), which will only make the adventure seem to drag.

TIMELINE

Familiarize yourself with these events before starting the adventure and refer back to this table as often as necessary to keep things straight. If you discover that you've given incorrect information to the players, don't panic! The ideal solution is to work with that error, altering other things as little as possible as the facts are slowly revealed to avoid contradictions. Give the players a five-minute break if you need some time to work out smooth fixes. If that's not possible, consider revealing through another NPC that whoever passed the incorrect information to the characters was lying, and give players the correct information that way. Only as a last resort should you stop the game, back up, and externally alter "facts" the characters have been working with. It's one thing when a suspected murderer lies; it's something else again when reality shifts under your feet.

SUSPECT FILE A: THE PROCURER (BLADEMARK)

The information below summarizes the motive and alibi of Captain Blademark, and the incriminating information he can offer about his rivals' means and opportunity.

MOTIVE

- Captain Blademark's motive is **Greed**. He is deeply in debt to legitimate moneylenders and criminal loansharks. He seeks control of the Company so he can pay off his creditors before they publicly humiliate him, or worse, have him killed.
- His financial problems are known by both **Lucia** and **Bertram**, who overheard him being threatened by creditors two days ago.

ALIBI

- Blademark's alibi is that after his meeting with the General, he **returned to his rooms** for the night.
- This can be refuted by **Lucia** and **Hakar**, who **saw him in the arboretum**; and by **Tova**, who knows Blademark **wasn't in his room** at the time he claims.



Timeline

8:00 pm	Formal dinner ends with Legora informing everyone he will amend his will to place leadership of the Company to a Company-wide vote. Guests head to bed.
8:10 pm	Tennrik witnesses Blademark giving vials of powder to Adderly. Blademark witnesses Hakar angrily speaking to Legora and demanding to meet, the General agreeing, and both leaving together for the master's chambers. Blademark returns to his quarters to prepare the finance books for his meeting. Lucia returns to her quarters to prepare her night orchid pollen (until 9:45).
8:30 pm	Hakar meets with Legora and they argue; end of argument is witnessed by Adderly (around 9 pm).
9:00 pm	Adderly helps his master prepare for bed, then leaves to oversee kitchen cleaning.
9:15 pm	Hakar walks on the collonade (until 10:45 pm).
9:30 pm	Blademark meets with Legora in Area 19 to discuss Company finances (until 10 pm).
9:45 pm	When leaving the General's quarters, Blademark stops to gather herbs in the arboretum (until 11:30). Blademark observes Lucia crossing the area toward the General's quarters.
10:00 pm	Adderly brings Legora his evening wine with tonic powder in it. Leaves via secret stairs. Lucia meets with Legora and administers night orchid pollen in an effort to seduce him. When he verbally rebukes her, she throws her Company amulet on his bedside table and storms out.
10:30-12:30 pm	The murder occurs. Precise time depends on who the murderer was.
10:30 pm	Adderly inspects first floor, does not see Hakar in libation room. While exiting the General's quarters, Lucia sees Blademark gathering herbs in the arboretum. Tova goes looking for Blademark. Tennrik awaits Lucia for their meeting in the guest chambers.

OTHER CAPTAINS' MEANS

- Blademark saw a strange **dagger** in the **General's sitting room** during their finance meeting. When Blademark asked about it, the General said it was a gift from **Hakar**.
- Blademark knows that **Lucia** is from the Seven Cities, a place famous for **poisons**. In fact, she's famed for her use of a **paralysing pollen**.

OTHER CAPTAINS' OPPORTUNITY

- Blademark saw **Lucia** heading through the **arboretum** toward the General's quarters around **10:00 pm**.
- Blademark found a decorative **tassel** from a dagger in the **arboretum** around **11:15 pm**. It hadn't been there earlier and is certainly from the Southlands. **Hakar** recently returned from a trip to the Southlands.

SUSPECT B: THE MANIPULATOR (LUCIA)

The information below summarizes the motive and alibi of Captain Lucia Rakell, and the incriminating information she can offer about her rivals' means and opportunity.

MOTIVE

- Captain Lucia's motive is **revenge**. Legora promised he would turn over control of the Company to her, but then changed his mind and decided to put the new leadership to a vote.
- This is known by **Hakar** and **Tennrik**. Both of them witnessed Lucia's angry reaction when Legora announced that the Company would select its new commander by vote.

ALIBI

- Lucia's alibi is that she was **with Tennrik** when the murder occurred.
- This can be refuted by **Tennrik**, who knows Lucia was **late** for their scheduled 11 pm meeting, that she was noticeably **agitated** when she arrived, and she wasn't wearing her Company **amulet** like she always does.

Timeline (cont.)

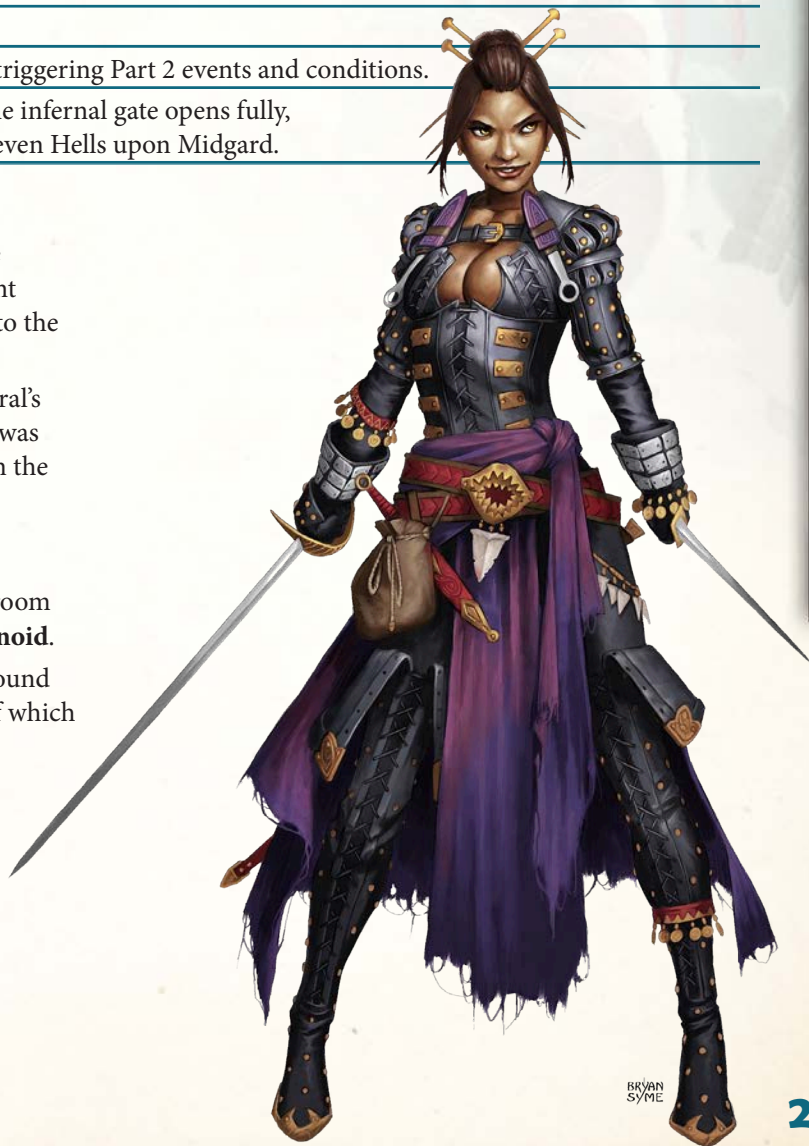
10:45 pm	Hakar claims he was in the libation room until 1 am, but he actually heads toward the General's quarters. On her way to fetch a bottle of wine from the libation room, Lucia notices Hakar heading in the direction of the General's rooms.
11:00 pm	Hakar returns to the General's room, finds the body, and removes the dagger. Lucia arrives in the guest chambers (Area 17) to meet with Tennrik (until midnight).
11:15 pm	Leaving the General's rooms, Hakar enters the arboretum but stops when he sees Blademark across the room. Hakar hastily hides the dagger and backtracks out of the area via the secret stairs to Adderly's room. Blademark finds a blood-stained tassel torn from the murder weapon and pockets it.
11:30 pm	Adderly inspects the second floor. Blademark enters the General's quarters and finds the body. He tries and fails to open the vault. As he leaves, he removes the goblet containing his poisoned herbs and hides it in his own room. Tova encounters Hakar on the first floor coming out of Adderly's room.
Midnight	Lucia returns to the General's room and finds the body. She removes her Company amulet from the bedside table and exits.
12:30 am	Adderly returns to collect the wine goblet, finds Legora dead, and raises the alarm.
1:00 am	After securing the house, the three captains and their soldiers bed down in the great hall (to keep an eye on each other) until dawn.
7:00 am	Player characters arrive.
12:00 pm	(or when desired) Will is read, triggering Part 2 events and conditions.
5:00 pm	(or when desired) Sundown. The infernal gate opens fully, unleashing the horror of the Eleven Hells upon Midgard.

OTHER CAPTAINS' MEANS

- Lucia heard **Hakar** bragging to Tenrik about the interesting **dagger** he'd acquired during his recent trip to the Southlands and his plan to present it to the General as a gift.
- Lucia knows that **Blademark** provides the General's **tonic**. There have been rumors for years that he was secretly in charge of arranging **assassinations** on the General's orders.

OTHER CAPTAINS' OPPORTUNITY

- Lucia saw **Hakar** heading toward the General's room around **10:45**. Hakar seemed **nervous and paranoid**.
- Lucia spied on **Blademark** in the **arboretum** around **10:30**. The gnome was collecting **herbs**, many of which she knows are **poisonous**.



RYAN SYME

SUSPECT C: THE MUSCLE (CAPTAIN HAKAR)

The information below summarizes the motive and alibi of Captain Hakar al-Atam, and the incriminating information he can offer about his rivals' means and opportunity.

MOTIVE

- Captain Hakar's motive is **Power**. He believes no one else is ruthless enough to command the Crossroads Company, and he's willing to kill to gain it for himself.
- Both **Blademark** and **Tova** overheard him vowing he would kill anyone who stood in the way of him claiming command.

ALIBI

- Hakar's alibi is that he was in the **libation room** at the time of the murder.
- This can be refuted by **Adderly**, who was in the libation room several times that evening but didn't see Hakar when the captain claims to have been there; by **Lucia**, who saw Hakar heading toward the General's rooms at 10:45 pm; and by **Tova**, who saw him leaving Adderly's room at 11:30 pm.

OTHER CAPTAINS' MEANS

- The Company used to have a secret team of **assassins** who were trained and led by **Blademark**. (This is not true; everyone in the Company has heard these rumors, but no such team of assassins ever existed.)
- Lucia is well-known for her dazzling **bladework**. During a joint campaign, he saw Lucia use a **powder** of some sort to paralyze a foe before stabbing him in the chest with her blade.

OTHER CAPTAINS' OPPORTUNITY

- Hakar saw **Blademark** suspiciously loitering near the **General's quarters** around **11:30**.
- Hakar's lieutenant, **Tennrik**, is having an **affair with Lucia** but he told Hakar that Lucia was very late to their assignation. Tennrik reported that Lucia seemed **agitated** and was not wearing her Company **amulet**.



SUSPECT FILE D: MINOR SUSPECTS

Questioning these NPCs requires a successful DC 10 Charisma check with any applicable proficiency.

ADDERLY (THE OBSERVER)

As the General's major domo, Adderly is responsible for General Legora's household. In truth, Adderly is an **incubus** masquerading as a human to make sure Legora upholds the dark pact. Adderly does not interfere or attempt to alter events, he merely watches with quiet glee as matters unfurl.

Description. Adderly is a thin man of indeterminate age with a dignified bearing, wire-rimmed spectacles that make him look scholarly, and a patient but long-put-upon expression.

Personality. He is quiet, unassuming, deliberate in everything he does, and subservient to the General but capable of expressing sardonic irony when dealing with others.

Special Skill. Adderly's bonus on Deception and Insight checks is +9.

What He Knows.

- "When I returned to his chamber to collect his **goblet**. I found the Master but not the goblet."
- "The **night orchid** was a gift to the Master from Captain **Rakell**."
- "Captain **Blademark** has been providing the Master's **tonic** for years. It ensures good dreams, or so I'm told."
- "Captain **Hakar** argued with the Master, and even threw a strange **dagger** into the Master's floor. It left a mark."

TOVA BLOMSDOTTR (BLADEMARK'S LIEUTENANT)

Tova Blomsdotter is Captain Blademark's second-in-command and personal bodyguard. Despite her barbaric exterior, she loves her little gnome deeply. The two have been carrying on a secret(ish) romantic relationship for several years.

Description. Half-orc female, **thug**.

Personality. Rude, temperamental, suspicious of everyone but Blademark, whom she trusts completely.

What She Knows.

- "Can't trust the Seven Cities folk like Captain **Rakel**. They are all **poison** users and cheats!"
- "I saw Captain **Hakar** sneaking out of **Adderly's quarters** around 11:30"
- "I overheard **Hakar** saying he'd be willing to **kill anyone** who stood in his way of command."

BERTRAM BODKIN (HAKAR'S LIEUTENANT)

An effete minor noble with a mysterious past unknown to his fellow soldiers. Bertram joined the Company after narrowly escaping an unfortunate adventure on the Leviathan which coincidentally also involved a murder.

Description. Human male, **scout**. Bertram wears octagonal spectacles, slicks his hair back with perfumed oil, and looks perpetually surprised.

Personality. Nervous and bewildered but well-meaning and devoted to Captain Hakar and the Company.

What He Knows.

- "Two days ago I saw **Blademark** being confronted by **moneylenders** demanding payment."
- "Captain **Lucia** knows many tactics from the Seven Cities, including the use of paralytic **poisons**."

TENNRİK GERVASTAG (LUCIA'S LIEUTENANT)

Tennrik appears loyal to his captain and boasts about their adventures. However, unknown to anyone else in the Company, he's an agent of the Black Brotherhood, a rival mercenary company. Tennrik's task is to spy on the Crossroads Company and report anything interesting to his superiors. Tennrik likes Lucia well enough, but he has no loyalty to the Company. If he believes it's coming apart, he'll sell whatever he knows to anyone willing to pay for as much as he can get.

Description. Male human, **spy**. Nondescript in almost every way, easy to lose track of in a crowd.

Personality. Friendly and inquisitive; some might call him nosy. Boisterous without being memorable.

What He Knows.

- "I was with **Lucia** last night. But she was **late** to our assignation and wasn't wearing her Company **amulet**. That's the first time I've ever seen her without it."
- "Captain **Hakar** recently returned from the **Southlands** with a present for the General . . . an odd **dagger**, I think."
- "I saw Captain **Blademark** give some sort of **powder** to **Adderly** right after dinner."
- "The **General** once promised the Company to **Lucia**. She was **not pleased** when he broke his word."

HANDOUTS FOR PLAYERS

Cut out, photocopy, or hand-write these notes so they can be handed to the players at the beginning of the adventure.

Handout 1

My Lords (and Ladies);

Our friendship and the honors we have won together bid me invite you to attend me at my manor, House Legora, on or before the last Khorsday of Deep Winter. I plan on announcing who shall assume control of the Crossroads Company after my departure. I beg you to come, as I fear not all shall be happy with my choice, and I desire those I trust to be close.

General Vartan Legora

Handout 2

Greetings;

We hope this missive finds you before long. A great tragedy has befallen the Company. General Legora is dead, and we fear he was murdered. As you were not present at the time of his death, you are beyond suspicion. For that reason, we implore you to aid us in determining who committed this foul act. A local sled driver, Vern by name, has agreed to bring you to the manor.

Come with all haste,

Captains Rakel, al-Atam, and Blademark



MADMAN AT THE BRIDGE

A 5th Edition Adventure for 4th-level Characters

By Wolfgang Baur Conversion by Ben McFarland

In the early hours before dawn, mist silently rises from the river. Then the sound of metal screeching and groaning cuts through the morning calm as the Puffing Bridge rises quickly, allowing a tall ship to pass downriver. Once the stately ship has passed, a distant voice calls out, “Lower away!”


But the bridge is silent, remaining resolutely open. Until it’s lowered, the city is split in half, with no convenient way to move from one side of the river to the other. In one short hour, miners and merchants will throng the streets, looking to cross the water. What’s wrong at the bridge?

SYNOPSIS

The Puffing Bridge is stuck open because of a mysterious equipment malfunction. What’s worse, the misbehaving machinery seems to have somehow infected nearby clockwork watchmen, and they’re acting strangely, too. Miners, workers, and freight can’t cross the river,

bringing the city’s mercantile heart to a standstill. The PCs are called in to find some missing engineers and fix the problem.

The whole of this adventure comprises a short timeline of events. Characters must work their way through



malfunctioning areas of the bridge Engine House and eventually enter the boiler room and deal with the dangers there.

Your goal is to see that the scenario quickly spirals out of control, with insane clockwork watchmen, alchemical firebombs raining down on the street, ogre conspirators sniping at meddlers, and so on, all while keeping players acutely aware of the ticking clock. The final encounter starts as a simple fight against a kobold zombie, then escalates to include a gnome wizard and dire badgers, reaching a cacophonous climax when it becomes clear that the entire structure the party is standing in is about to be destroyed by a massive boiler explosion that will also demolish the bridge and probably level a large portion of the city, too, along with hundreds of innocent bystanders.

By advancing from an easy victory to a fully engaged party to a party with more threats than it can deal with, players are put under ever-increasing pressure, just as the boiler itself pops rivets and threatens to destroy everything. A ticking clock or metronome makes a nice prop for this adventure.

If the party fails to stop the explosion through clever use of magic or with roguish skill, dozens or even hundreds of miners, engineers, and other bystanders will die, the city suffers massive damage, and the bridge is rendered inoperable for months, causing enormous

DESIGNER'S NOTE: CONVENTION SCENARIOS

I've run "Madman at the Bridge" at conventions many times, and each time it's worked out in entertaining ways. My favorite moment is always when I ask players which character they'd like to play: Barbarian? Rogue clockworker? Battle cleric? Or maybe the aristocratic sorcerer? I wait and let everyone decide, and then hand them pregenerated PCs, who are exactly as described—but are all kobolds.

Because, you see, *Madman At the Bridge* was designed for all kobold player characters. I love that aspect of running this at conventions, and players seem to love it too. At any rate, it triggers plenty of kobold voices and roleplaying and a relaxed sense of "well, we're just kobolds trying to get through this heroism thing."

The adventure can be played with any sort of characters, but the kobolds add something special to it. If you run this as a one-shot, consider insisting on everyone playing a kobold—or generate all the characters yourself and surprise the players with them.

problems for everyone in or passing through Zobeck. The city's reputation is besmirched for years, and so is the characters'.

LOCATIONS

These locations play key roles in the adventure. All are located on the map.

THE PLOTTER'S HOUSE

The plotters set up headquarters in a house on the south side of the street, less than a hundred feet from the bridge. The door to the house is locked as described in Scene 2. The interior is spare and clean with one immense tapestry and a table on the first floor. All windows on the ground floor are shuttered and the shutters are locked from the inside and reinforced with lumber. From the outside, they look like normal, closed windows, but the ground-floor shutters are as sturdy as the walls and can't be forced open within the limited time frame of the battle. The drawings on the table are as described in Scene 2. Wooden stairs lead up to a second floor with shuttered windows (standard shutters), a large wardrobe, a bed, and a chest filled with alchemical supplies.

THE BARGE

This heavy barge is anchored midstream in the River Argent, and the ballista on it is pointed up the street. The ogres aboard the barge are terrified of water (they can't swim), so they distract themselves by being attentive guards. Knocking a hole in the hull of the barge to sink it is possible, but exactly how that might be done is up to you. The simplest way to avoid being shot by the ogres and their ballista is to move through a door quickly; once characters are in the lower level of the Engine House, they can't be seen from the barge.

UPPER ENGINE ROOM

Trying to break into the engine room is a criminal offense in Zobeck; this fact is known to any character with proficiency in History or Investigation, or who's lived in Zobeck for more than a few months. Still, characters might decide to break in or out at some point. The iron double doors to this dwarven-built stone house are watched over by one of the berserk clockwork watchmen and are locked with a clever set of two nested gear-locks. Not one, but two successful DC 15 Dexterity checks with thief's tools are required to open the door. The iron doors have AC 20, 20 hit points, and are immune to all but acid, force, and bludgeoning damage. Attacking them is certain to make a lot of noise and draw the attention of every enemy within two hundred yards.

LOWER ENGINE ROOM

Two sets of stairs lead down to this high-ceilinged room, one from the Upper Engine Room and the other from an unmarked door across the street from the impressive, double-door entrance to the Engine House. The windows looking out to the river are opaque sheets of tempered glass that provide very little light. The corner shelf where the gnome hides is just 2 feet wide and 15 feet above the main floor. The entire room has dim illumination flickering out from the fire that heats the boiler.



SCENE 1: HELP, THE GUARDS ARE RUNNING AMOK!

Two brass clockwork guards stand near the bridge, one carrying a halberd, the other holding a *tipstaff*.

If a character makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight or Perception) check while perusing the situation from up the street, read the following as well:

The eyes of both guards are spinning in circles. This is not normal at all!

Stories are circulating about the bridge, but the real danger at the site is bigger than that. The city watch has been subverted by foul trickery.

The two **clockwork watchmen** guarding the Engine House and the plotters' house attack anyone who approaches within 50 feet of the bridge. Any character who didn't succeed on the Wisdom check above and wasn't warned by companions is surprised when the guards attack, because clockwork guards never do that!

A berserk clockwork watchman can be restored to its proper, calm functioning with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check using thief's tools. Using an action to make this check provokes an opportunity attack from the clockwork. Characters with the Tinker background gain +3 on this check. Don't simply tell players this is an option; they need to come up with the idea and risk the attempt on their own. Once restored to sanity, a clockwork watchman can be persuaded to aid the group with two successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) checks or with one successful DC 25 Charisma (Deception) check.

As soon as one construct is disabled, repaired, or otherwise removed as an enemy, progress to Scene 2: Firebombs!, while continuing the combat.

DESIGNER'S NOTE: PACING

You might notice that the first scene bleeds into the second scene, which bleeds into the barge attack, and so forth. As a convention scenario, my goal was to keep things moving constantly. Once the party approaches the berserk clockworks, events should race ahead and keep them off-balance: crazy automatons, then alchemical fire, ballista bolts, kobold-eating zombies . . .

Run with it. Don't let up!

SCENE 2: FIREBOMBS!

The clockwork man falls apart. But then, a fireburst explodes in the street! The flames burn blue and white, and the paving stones crack and buckle around it.

The clockwork watchmen in Scene 1 are dominated by and rigged to serve **Haltopan Irregan**, a mercenary and gladiator from Doresh. As soon as one of the clockwork guards is defeated, he joins in the fight by throwing alchemical fire into the street from his vantage point in a second-story window of his house. Haltopan enjoys a good alchemical firebomb much more than the next person and throws two each round until he runs out (after four rounds) or until someone makes him stop. He's guarded by a **clockwork hound** in the second-story room with him.

Irregan uses the stats block of a **gladiator** but with the addition of the Firebomb ranged weapon attack.

Firebomb. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) fire damage, and the target is on fire. While on fire, the target takes 1d6 fire damage at the start of each its turns. The fire is extinguished when the creature or an ally within 5 feet of it uses an action to make a successful DC 10 Dexterity check.

The window is 20 feet above the street level and shuttered so it provides three-quarters cover to Haltopan. The wall beneath the window can be climbed with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. The downstairs door is locked; it can be picked with thief's tools and a successful DC 17 Dexterity check, forced open with a successful DC 20 Strength check, or destroyed by 16 points of bludgeoning, slashing, acid, or force damage (AC 15). (The door is shielded with copper and grounded, making it immune to fire and lightning damage.)

If the house catches fire during this battle, neighbors form a fire brigade within 10 minutes. This could be a distraction during fighting in the Engine House (see Scene 5).

If Haltopan is captured, he is defiant and says very little except under magical compulsion or horrific intimidation (a successful DC 25 Charisma [Intimidation] check is needed to make him talk). Even then, he doesn't know much about the big picture and simply blames everything on "My master, the sorcerer of darkest Harkasa." He seems to

think this master is a "giant, apelike fiend who swings from rooftop to rooftop"—a misunderstanding that the sorcerer himself encouraged with a few well-placed illusions.

When the party approaches the Bridge Engine House door, progress to Scene 3: The Barge on the River.

Treasure. An enormous tapestry downstairs is worth 550 gp, but it weighs 120 pounds and is 10 feet long even when rolled up. A locked chest in the upstairs chamber contains the blueprints for a steam engine with illegibly scrawled comments. A character who spends at least 10 minutes studying the documents and makes a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check, or a successful DC 15 Dexterity check while taking measurements from the blueprints with clockwork tools, realizes that the scribbles in the margins reflect a keen interest in gauges, control mechanisms, and weak points of the mechanism. If someone figures this out and characters still have these plans with them when they try to fix the boiler in Scene 5, they have advantage on those checks. The chest also contains three more pots of alchemist's fire.

SCENE 3: THE BARGE ON THE RIVER

As characters approach either the north (to the left of the bridge) or south (to the right of the bridge) entrance into the Engine House, they come under attack from the barge on the river.



The Engine House is a well-built dwarven structure. One of the berserk clockwork watchmen guarded the entrance, but it probably was destroyed during the battle against Haltopan. The iron doors are double-locked with a clever set of nested gears. Not one, but two successful DC 20 Dexterity checks with thief's tools are required to open the entrance. The iron doors themselves have AC 15, 20 hit points, and are immune to all damage except acid and force.

The entrance on the south side of the street is much easier to get through, but nothing about it indicates it's an entrance to the Engine House. Characters need to figure that out on their own. The one, unmarked door can be unlocked with thief's tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, forced open with a successful DC 20 Strength check, or destroyed by 16 points of bludgeoning, slashing, acid, or force damage (AC 15).

The boxed text below assumes characters open the door to the south entrance. If they manage to open the north entrance, narrate appropriately.

Stairs descend to the right and left. Those to the left lead down to the docks. The stairs to the right look as if they descend into a chamber beneath the bridge. Before you can choose which to take, you hear a loud snap, like a huge bowstring, from the direction of the river. An iron spear flies right past you and punches clear through the wall of a nearby building!

A barge is anchored in the river, concealed by the morning fog. Its crew of two **ogres** have a perfect line of fire to either Engine House entrance. (Adjust the position of the barge on the river accordingly.) Anyone who tries to get inside the control house through either doorway is targeted by the ballista. They can fire the ballista every round, and unless they're in immediate danger, they always get ready to shoot the first person who comes within 5 feet of the door.

Floating Ballista. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 120/480 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) piercing damage, and a creature must make a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be pinned to a wall, if they're within 15 feet of one. A pinned character is grappled (escape DC 13). If no wall is within 15 feet, the creature is knocked prone instead of being pinned. If the creature is swimming, it is not pinned or knocked prone but is instead pushed 15 feet underwater and must make a Strength saving throw with a DC = 5 + damage from the attack. If the saving throw fails, the creature is drowning (suffocating).

The ogres are wearing heavy cloaks. Observers on the riverbank can see that the barge's occupants are larger than humans, but the fog and early morning light make it hard to pick out more detail than that. If the barge is approached across the water, the ogres use their greatclubs to smash would-be boarders.

It's possible to swim to the barge in the fast-running water of the River Argent, but it's a risky idea. Just keeping position relative to the shore requires a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check, because of the speed of the current. For every 5 points less than that (or fraction thereof), the swimmer drifts 5 feet downstream.

Several ropes lie coiled on the wharf. Throwing a rope to someone in the river requires a successful DC 13 Dexterity check, with a -1 penalty on the roll 1 for every 10 feet of range.

No one pursues characters down the stairs once they get through a doorway. Haltopan, his clockwork minions, and even the ogres on the barge know the boiler is set to explode, and they don't want to be anywhere nearby when it happens.

SCENE 4: ZOMBIE ENGINEERS

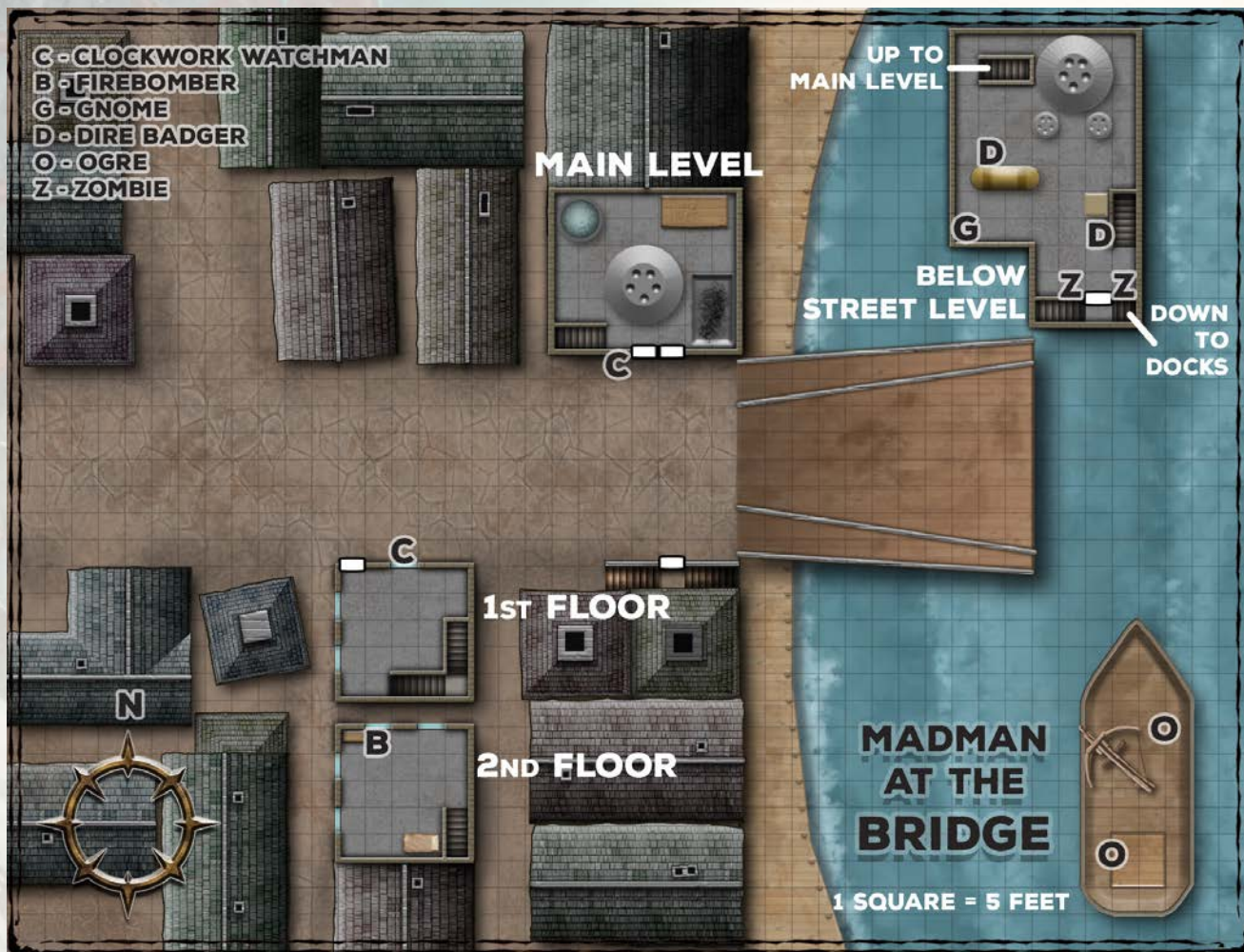
Assuming characters get into the Engine House through the southern stairs, read the following text. If they get in through the northern entrance somehow, narrate accordingly.

As the iron doors creak open, there is movement in the chamber below. You see a large, open landing at the base of these stairs, and another short flight of stairs that leads down into a mass of machinery.

A **zombie** and a **zombie ogre** are waiting on the landing to attack whoever comes down the stairs. They're hidden in shadows when the first characters enter, and can be spotted only with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check or by characters with passive Perception 18 or higher.

As soon as noise from the fight dies down, the party hears the ominous rumble of boiler rivets popping in the room below. Any character who makes a successful DC 13 Intelligence check understands that these are the sounds of a machine running past its normal tolerances and that it might soon suffer a complete failure—which, in the case of a high-pressure boiler, means a catastrophic explosion that would demolish the building and might even level the entire city block.

Treasure. An open tool box sits near the door, containing high-quality clockworking tools worth 50 gp (and priceless in the next scene). These tools provide a +2 bonus on checks that involve their use.



SCENE 5: THE BOILER WHISTLES AND RIVETS POP

Beyond the entry stairs and landing, the air is thick with steam. The vapor is swirling through a maze of boilers, gears, and machinery that hums, grinds, and generally grows noisier and louder with each passing moment.

This room is where it all blows to pieces if the party dawdles and plays it safe. See the sidebar “Round by Round to Destruction” for a detailed breakdown of how everything comes apart here.

Other dangers in the room include one trap, two **dire badgers** (death dogs), and one invisible gnome mage, **Mandebbok Urgenef**. The dire badgers are the most immediate threat but in the long run, the boiler is more dangerous to both the party and the city.

Mandebbok wears a hooded robe that’s far too large for his frame. The half-empty sleeves hang to the ground, the hood prevents any glimpse of his face despite being partially rolled back, and the hem is frayed into tatters from dragging across cobblestones and constantly being stepped on.

He is allied with gnomes who seek to cause chaos and to disrupt activity in the city of Zobeck. Mandebbok was chosen to sabotage the Puffing Bridge because of his spellcasting ability and his keen understanding of steam machinery. No one took his equally keen cowardice into account.

Mandebbok uses the **mage** stats block but with an altered spell selection, as shown below (spells marked with an asterisk are in effect when characters arrive):

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *color spray, mage armor*, magic missile, shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility*, crown of madness*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, conjure animals, protection from energy*

4th level (3 slots): *arcane eye*, confusion*

5th level (1 slot): *teleport*

The dire badgers are a rare two-headed variety that uses the stats block of the **death dog**. Their job is to

keep the party busy while the gnome mage pelts the characters with spells. The gnome is Mandebbok Urgenef, a stoop-shouldered fellow who wears an oversized hooded cloak big enough for a human. Urgenef is a coward through and through; he avoids melee at any cost and is easily intimidated. At the start of the fight, he's invisible and crouching on the platform 15 feet above the floor in the southwest corner of the room. He summoned the dire badgers while the party was fighting the zombies, then cast *mage armor* and *invisibility* for good measure.

See the Bridge Engine House map (inset) for creature locations, and review the "Round by Round to DESTRUCTION!" sidebar to see the progression of events once characters enter the boiler room.

The machinery in the room is complex and much of it is involved in transferring the rotary motion of the steam turbine to linear motion or hydraulic pressure

to lift the Puffing Bridge. Urgenef planned the damage he'd do very carefully, so not just anyone can repair it. To prevent the boiler from exploding, various valves must be unjammed and closed, and overridden control levers must be put back to their normal settings.

- The ideal method is to make a successful DC 17 Intelligence check to correctly diagnose the problem, followed by a successful DC 17 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to make the needed corrections. The Dexterity check can be made only by someone who is using (and is proficient with) clockwork tools or jeweler's tools. Each check takes an action, but they don't need to be made by the same character and it doesn't matter how many attempts fail between successes (until time runs out).
- The clockwork tools from Scene 4 provide their +2 bonus to this Dexterity check. A character who's

ROUND BY ROUND TO DESTRUCTION!

Unless noted otherwise, effects occur at the beginning of the round.

Round 1. Dire badgers rush to attack. The boiler whistles and the fire roars, as if they were being fed extra air and phlogiston, or perhaps powered by a salamander or elemental. Mandebbok holds his action to go on initiative count 20 in following rounds.

Round 2. Mandebbok casts *color spray* if he has a good target; otherwise, he conjures a cave bear. The boiler screeches and gears race and grind until one of them fails, shoots out, and strikes a character. Have each character make a Dexterity check; whoever gets the lowest result is hit by the gear and takes 5 (2d4) bludgeoning damage. In the case of a tie, all tied characters take damage from the same, ricocheting gear.


Round 3. Dozens of rivets pop from the boiler, and roiling clouds of water vapor fill the room. Everywhere on the lower level of the Engine House is heavily obscured. The mist clears at the end of the round.

Round 4. The boiler continues bulging and popping off rivets, and the firebox is glowing red hot. Somewhere a pipe is gurgling, as if water is even boiling in the inflow and outflow pipes. If anyone is working on figuring out or repairing the damage (making ability checks described in Scene 5), they realize that the previous burst of steam relieved enough pressure in the inflow pipes to allow more

water into the system. If fresh water rushes into the superheated boiler, it will explode into steam.

Round 5. Water pours into the overheated boiler and explodes into gas. The boiler bulges and roars, releasing dozens of jets of pressurized steam. Every creature within 5 feet of the boiler (the oval shape near the western wall) takes 14 (4d6) fire damage, or half damage with a successful DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. The boiler is visibly coming apart, and the sound of metal screeching against metal is so loud that no verbal communication is possible. Casting a spell with a verbal component requires a successful DC 10 Constitution check; if it fails, the action is spent but the spell is not cast and the slot isn't lost.

Round 6. EXPLOSION! The boiler fails catastrophically on initiative count 10. Every creature in the lower level of the Engine House takes 14 (4d6) fire damage plus 7 (2d6) piercing damage, or half damage with a successful DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. Creatures that positioned themselves so something massive was between them and the boiler take half damage automatically and no damage with a successful save. If Mandebbok is still alive at this point, he teleports to safety at the last possible moment before the explosion. Only characters with passive Perception 16 or higher notice this, even if they were adjacent to the gnome when he teleported. They must draw their own conclusions when no recognizable body is found in the wreckage.



proficient with jeweler's tools or thief's tools can use the clockwork tools proficiently, too. If no one in the group has such proficiency, you might allow these clockwork tools to be used anyway, if you're feeling generous.

- In a pinch, a successful DC 22 Strength check can take the place of the Dexterity check, but that causes significant damage to the machinery all by itself. Disaster will be averted, but the bridge will still be out of commission.
- During the first three rounds of the fight against Urgenef and the dire badgers, the boiler can be shut down by casting *knock* (to open the jammed firebox door) followed by *create food and water* or two castings of *create or destroy water* to douse the fire. Other spells might have similar effect if used creatively, but dousing the fire takes far more water than the characters have in their canteens or waterskins. If the fire is doused or smothered somehow within the first three rounds, pressure in the boiler returns to a safe level within 10 minutes. After the third round, pressure is too high for this approach to prevent an explosion.

Treasure. The gnome has a sack of cash for bribes and to pay his mercenary Haltopar and the ogres. This amounts to 249 gp and three garnets, each worth 100 gp.

CONCLUSION: FOILING THE GNOME'S PLOT

As soon as the real danger has passed, a contingent of clockwork and human guards descends on the bridge and the Engine House to "secure the area" (chiefly, that means preventing anyone, including the player characters, from stealing valuable equipment from the Engine House).

If the party kept the boiler from exploding and didn't force the controls with Strength checks, the bridge can be repaired and put back into operation quickly. If they had to fall back on Strength checks to force controls open or shut, then the damage takes weeks to repair before the bridge can be used again. This is better than an explosion, but the authorities make their displeasure known. If the boiler exploded, chances are very good that the characters have more urgent concerns than how quickly merchants can start using the bridge again—like keeping their bodies in one piece.

If the boiler is intact, thirty clockworker kobolds get to work immediately, clearing away corpses and repairing the damage done by Urgenef: resetting valves, restoring rivets and welds, realigning the power train to the bridge, and generally fixing everything that's bent, burnt, and broken. By late afternoon, the bridge lowers to its usual position and cart and pedestrian traffic resumes at a frantic pace as if nothing happened.

The city is, naturally, eager to keep this entire unfortunate event quiet. A minor city consul (perhaps the Guildmaster of the Geargrinder's Union) offers the characters 500 gp each as a reward for a job well done. More importantly, the city consuls begin taking warnings about gnome plots seriously and the Arcane Collegium puts some major wards on the Engine House and the machinery behind the vital Puffing Bridge. There's even talk of building a second bridge, but given the enormous expense, it remains just talk.

If the party captured Urgenef Mandebbok alive, the group is paid an additional 200 gp bounty. The gnome is taken away to the Citadel, where he is very sternly questioned. If he reveals the names of his masters and those who funded his mad scheme, the party might be given a new target to pursue, an enemy somewhere outside the city. Or worse, perhaps an enemy within!



THE MHALMET HEIST

A 5th Edition Adventure for 5th-level Characters

By Greg Marks


Wazen Al-Shamuri has had enough of the competition damaging his business and so has turned to the rogues of the Golden Song to ruin his enemy. Their goal: rob the famed Lounge of a Thousand Whispers, a pleasure salon that caters to the rich and powerful. Their reward: everything they can carry away before the executioner's blade finds them!

This adventure initially appeared as a convention adventure at Gencon 50, in 2017.

SYNOPSIS

Wazen Al-Shamuri runs a club in the city of Mhalmes known as the Salon of Mysteries. In his club, the rich can have any delight catered to: feasts, flesh, intoxicants, gambling and more. Unfortunately his chief rival, Nadi Ud'aah of the Lounge of a Thousand Whispers, has started playing dirty: bribing bureaucrats to close

Wazen's doors without warning, hiring thugs to hassle Salon customers, and befouling shipments of food and other supplies to besmirch the club's reputation. Wazen wants to ruin his rival Nadi before the Salon of Mysteries is run out of business—and he has just the plan to do it.



Wazen Al-Shamuri approaches the Golden Song (an organization of high-end thieves who display finesse and panache in the commission of their crimes) and asks for a meeting at the Sandalwood House. At the meeting, Wazen entertains the characters to rob the Lounge of a Thousand Whispers the evening before Nadi Ud'aah is to pay his bribes to the Black Table for the continued blessing and protection of the city's rulers. Wazen Al-Shamuri wants the vault of the Lounge cleaned out, to bankrupt Nadi and draw the Black Table's wrath upon his rival. He will provide the secret information that makes the theft possible, and the Golden Song can keep whatever they steal. Wazen wants nothing in return beyond the ruination of his rival.

From that point forward, the adventure is freeform. Characters will spend time making plans, casing the Lounge, doing legwork, suborning employees with bribes, and making other preparations—some necessary, some unnecessary. They have only four days to gather supplies and information, and they must do it while avoiding the attention of Nadi Ud'aah's security team. If the characters are noticed, it makes the heist more difficult.

On the fourth night, the Lounge is hosting a large Viper's Nest gambling event where rich socialites, adventurers, and swindlers descend upon the casino

LOCALIZING THE ADVENTURE

The Mhalmet Heist is set in the city of Mhalmet in the Southlands, and it makes frequent references to the Golden Song, a criminal organization headquartered in that city. If you want to run this adventure as part of a thief-focused campaign taking place somewhere else, it should be easy to change city and group references to labels your players will recognize. Whatever organized crime ring, thieves' guild, or other cabal the player characters belong to can be approached by Wazen. If the player characters are independent, then he learned how to contact them from "a friend of a friend of a mutual friend," who described them as the perfect team for this task.

The adventure assumes, however, that all player characters are agents of the Golden Song or a similar organization. The characters need not all be rogues—anyone who makes a living via crime can join a thieves' guild—but no more than one or two should be hard-hitting "muscle." This adventure calls for slyness and a light touch from the characters. Paladins and clerics might have a hard time explaining their presence, too.

and swell the vault until midnight, when the funds are collected by the agents of the Black Table. Will the vault be empty by then, or will the characters fail?

LOCATIONS

The adventure focuses on these four locations. They're not, however, the only places characters might visit. Be prepared to let PCs go where their instincts and schemes take them.

SANDALWOOD HOUSE

The famous, or perhaps infamous, Sandalwood House is part social club and part adventurer's guild. Its members sponsor expeditions deep into the Southlands to hunt big game, track unknown monsters, and seek lost treasure. It is also the place where the Golden Song receives potential clients and serves as a sort of neutral ground for the characters to meet with Wazen Al-Shamuri.

THE SALON OF MYSTERIES

The Salon of Mysteries is Wazen Al-Shamuri's club where the rich and decadent trade coin for delights of all kinds. The club has long been a favorite of the rich in Mhalmet; it is extravagant while maintaining an air of elegance. Wazen offers the Golden Song a suite of rooms on the top floor from where they can plan their heist in relative safety and comfort. The Salon is a ten minute walk from the Lounge along busy streets, or a little longer through byways and alleys.

THE LOUNGE OF A THOUSAND WHISPERS

The Lounge is Nadi Ud'aah's club. In many ways it's a newer, larger, more exaggerated version of the Salon. Anything can be had here for the right price, no matter how debauched or excessive the demand. The Lounge never closes, but keeps its gaudy lights burning from dusk til dawn til dusk.

THE LADY LUCK

This small, dingy gambling parlor sits across the street from the Lounge of a Thousand Whispers. It's owned by Uzon Mashaeri, who dislikes both Wazen and Nadi.

SCENE 1: THE ENTICEMENT

As the adventure begins, the characters have been invited to meet with Wazen Al-Shamuri in a private room at the Sandalwood House. He hopes to convince them to deliver vengeance upon his rival while enriching themselves.

The rotund Tethyan man glances nervously around the room, sweat glistening off his bald pate and running into his full, dark beard. Licking his lips, he breeches the silence.

“A hundred blessings upon you, my friends. I am grateful that you were willing to speak with one so humble, and I hope you will find what I have to say rewarding enough to be worthy of our continued friendship.”

Wazen shows extreme deference to the characters, both because he wants to make a good impression and because he’s more than a bit frightened of them; he is an honest businessman meeting with thieves, after all. He also wants them to get the impression—which he himself believes wholeheartedly—that his proposition will be far more rewarding for them than for him. As the conversation progresses, work in the following details:

- Wazen owns and operates the Salon of Mysteries, a club that offers high-class games of chance, elegant companionship, and fine dining. His rival, Nadi Ud’aah, has created a crass mirror image of Wazen’s establishment that Ud’aah calls the Lounge of a Thousand Whispers. It has many clients, most of whom it lured away from the Salon of Mysteries with rumors and innuendos not worthy of an honorable person.
- Nadi Ud’aah is not content to have the second best pleasure house, which the Lounge of a Thousand Whispers clearly is. He bribes bureaucrats to close Wazen’s doors at random times for fabricated offenses, hires thugs to harass Wazen’s customers, and befouls or brazenly steals shipments of food and other supplies purchased for the Salon. The problem has grown so extreme that Wazen fears his business may be

doomed and he will become a pauper, unable to pay his creditors. In Mhalmet, for a man like Wazen, few labels could be worse than “debtor.” This could even cost him his life.

- Wazen has a plan. Nadi must pay a substantial bribe to the Black Table for its continued protection and blessing. In four days, the Lounge will host a “Viper’s Nest” gambling tournament. Such an event is certain to fill the Thousand Whispers’ vault with coin. Nadi needs the cash to pay his mounting “fees,” which are due at midnight on the night of the tournament. Agents of the Black Table will arrive to collect the payment of 100,000 gp. Wazen expects the vault could contain up to five times that much in proceeds from the tournament. If Nadi’s vault is instead empty when the Black Table agents arrive, Nadi will be humiliated in front of his guests, will be severely punished by the Black Table, and probably will lose the backing and protection of the city officials whose bribes he can’t pay. At a single stroke, the threat against Wazen’s more tasteful club will be gone.
- Viper’s Nest is a popular dice game with complicated scoring. Some of a player’s dice are rolled openly and seen by all players, and some are rolled under a cup and seen only by the player. Ostensibly, players (and onlookers) bet on their own chance of winning by rolling the highest total. In practice, even more bets are


RUNNING A HEIST

A heist adventure is different from other types of adventures, and it requires different ways of thinking and handling problems on both sides of the GM’s screen. Standard exploration and dungeon-delving tricks don’t work. Everyone may find themselves improvising more than they’re accustomed to.

A heist adventure isn’t focused on room-by-room exploration of a map, on random encounters during a cross-country journey, or on a sequence of planned events. Instead, it presents the outline of a situation, describes the key characters, locations, and potential hazards of the mission, and then leaves it up to the players to figure out where they’ll go, who they’ll talk to/spy on/bribe/kill, and even to decide what they consider an important problem and what can be ignored. At the same time, the GM must decide how NPCs react to the characters’ presence and actions, whether the situation changes, and how successful the characters’ preparations really are.

Besides their improvisational nature, the other key element of a good heist adventure is that nothing ever goes as planned. This doesn’t mean you must thwart everything the players do. Your job is to throw sand into the gears, not dynamite. A plan should go smoothly, for a short time—until something unforeseen happens and the characters are forced into a mad, improvisational scramble. Eventually they’ll get things back on track and the job will go smoothly again, for a short time . . .

You want the characters to take outlandish chances, chances that sometimes seem beyond their level. Remember (and remind players, if necessary) that members of the Golden Song are famous for their daring! Try to capture the flavor of Ali Baba mixed with “Ocean’s Eleven” mixed with “A Simple Plan.” If players get into the spirit and take bold chances, you can feel good about rewarding them with success—but always for a short time!



made on the side, covering number combinations, the players' order from high to low, doubles and triples, and even how players will act or react when the dice are revealed.

- To enter the tournament, a player must buy 5,000 gp worth of tokens from the house. For every hour a player participates, they make a Wisdom check. A character who is proficient in Insight or Deception, or with any dice-based gaming set, can add his or her proficiency bonus to the roll. Their winnings or losses for the hour = (modified Wisdom check result - 15) × 500 gp.
- Wazen has gathered details about the layout and security at the Lounge which he offers freely. He also will provide the characters with meals and a suite of rooms in the Salon to use as their headquarters. (See Part 2 for details.) He asks nothing in return, other than that four nights from now, the characters pull off the greatest heist in the history of Mhalmet and ruin Nadi's business!

If characters try to squeeze some additional form of up-front or bonus payment out of Wazen, he reminds them that the suite and its amenities are no small gift, which he is providing free to the characters for the duration of the operation. He does this solely out of the goodness and generosity of his heart. A character who makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check detects that Wazen became distinctly nervous when the characters asked for a guaranteed reward. If he is pressed, Wazen stresses how much the recent business conditions have hurt him financially, but if characters don't let up, he agrees to throw in 100 gp apiece, in advance, if they promise to spend at least some of it enjoying themselves in the Salon of Mysteries. He is clearly unhappy about this, and it should cast a cloud over any dealings the characters have with Wazen for the rest of the adventure.

Once characters agree to take the job, proceed to Scene 2: Legwork if characters launch into preparations outside the Lounge, or to Scene 3: Scene of the Crime if they go straight to the Lounge of a Thousand Whispers to scout the location.

THE WEIGHT OF THIEVERY

The GM should remember that there are 50 coins to a pound. This means that the vault will contain approximately 10,000 pounds of coin (slightly less since some will be in jewels or jewelry). It's too much to carry without carts or magic. Make sure players realize the magnitude of their task.

SCENE 2: LEGWORK

This scene is divided into sections dealing with the various resources the characters might utilize to gather supplies or information without going into the Lounge of a Thousand Whispers itself. When characters enter the Lounge, consult Scene 3. Don't force any or all of these options into your adventure. Let the players think for their characters and come up with their own ideas. These sections are a resource to help you deal with the different avenues the players might consider while planning their heist.

At some point—possibly many times—characters will go in a direction that isn't covered here. When that happens, you'll have to improvise, using the advice in this scene as a springboard. Just remember to always allow room for possible complications further up the road.

WAZEN AL-SHAMURI'S AID

Once the characters agree, Wazen can offer the following aid.

- He offers a suite of connected rooms in the Salon of Mysteries, which is located ten minutes from the Lounge through busy streets. He offers the group's leader a key to a trunk that has already been placed in the rooms. Inside the trunk, characters will find 500 gp for expenses, a set of thief's tools, 5 *potions of healing*, 50 feet of silk rope, a climber's kit, and a bottle of fine wine.
- He knows the general layout of the Lounge, but not extensive specifics or secrets. The ground floor has a casino and restaurant. The second floor has a ballroom and other smaller rooms. The third floor has rooms to rent. Two floors beneath the main floor contain rooms used by the casino staff and, somewhere down there, the vault.
- A new vault was installed on one of the below-ground floors two weeks ago.
- The Lounge has onsite guards, and also gets extra protection via a contract with the Black Scorpion mercenary company. Wazen doesn't know the details of that contract.
- There are no windows on the ground floor and only two doors; the main entrance in front and a service entrance in the back, off an alley. The Lounge sits on a corner with three-story buildings to the north and east. Across the street to the west is a park, to the south is a restaurant, and southwest is small gambling house called Luck's Lady, with only four tables. Luck's Lady is owned by Uzon Mashaeri, and he is no friend to either Wazen or Nadi.

Wazen does his best to answer any questions the characters might have, but he is not an expert on the layout or the defenses of the Lounge. That's why he gave this job to professionals. He can get any mundane equipment the characters ask for, usually within a few hours depending on how unusual the request is, but he grumbles about having to do this when he provided the characters with plenty of expense money up front.

BLACK SCORPION MERCENARIES

The Black Scorpion Mercenary Company is well known throughout Mhalmet as professional and loyal to those who pay the outrageous fees they require. They even provide security for some members of the Black Table. If characters want more information about the Black Scorpions, they are referred to the businesslike Captain Shella Monzoun (**veteran** but with Charisma 13) of the Black Scorpion company. She stresses the Scorpions' unbreakable loyalty to the client once a contract is signed, and offers a list of services costing 5 to 100 gp per day. Although Monzoun doesn't come right out and say it, the implication is clear (if the conversation turns in this direction) that the Black Scorpions don't care one bit whether they're hired to uphold, ignore, or break the law. They will turn down a job if it requires them to break an existing contract with another client. Other than that, legality is for lawyers, not mercenaries. They also sell clockwork constructs to those with the money.

While Captain Monzoun will not give details, she confirms that one of their current clients is Nadi Ud'aah and the Lounge of a Thousand Whispers. The Black Scorpions provide advice about how the Lounge can improve its security, and they are contracted to respond to threats and emergencies. This means that Black Scorpion mercenaries might be stationed in the Lounge if trouble is expected. If trouble erupts that the onsite security can't handle, a Black Scorpion team must respond within five minutes (30 rounds). When the Black Scorpions "respond," it's often with lethal force.

In the Black Scorpions' office, Captain Monzoun has a detailed threat response plan, as well as invoices for the clockwork hound, the *alarm* spells, and the poison gas trap on the vault door. Under no circumstance will Captain Monzoun hand over this paperwork or even discuss these details. Characters must get into the office furtively and locate the documents on their own if they're to get access. Details of that heist are left up to you and the players.

The contracted Black Scorpion threat response team consists of a **priest**, 4 **veterans**, and a **clockwork hound**.

If characters are foolish enough to start a fight with Black Scorpion mercenaries, they are first met by a

force identical to the threat response team. There are more than a hundred mercenaries in the company, and at least half them are likely to be in the barracks at any given time. Characters can't win a direct confrontation with the Black Scorpions. They wouldn't necessarily be killed in such a fight, but they'd certainly be beaten unconscious, stripped of their gear, and dumped in a filthy alley to reflect on their poor choices.

CONTACTS

Roguish characters may have a network of friends and contacts that look favorably upon them or owe them favors. No contacts are willing to help in a direct assault against the Lounge, but characters should be able to call on a wide selection of spies, fixers, and forgers who can help in setting up a scheme. Contacts won't know anyone who works for the Black Scorpions or the Lounge of a Thousand Whispers. If the players are looking for a particular type of aid, allow them to find someone with a maximum bonus of +8 in an appropriate skill or with a specific tool kit. Some possible examples are listed below, feel free to expand the list as needed:

- *Sweet Sonyal* (female elf): jewelry forger
- *Dal'lan Al-Bandi* (male human): talented pastry chef
- *Ameena* (female human): high-end lady of the evening
- *Dabir Saqqaf* (male dwarf): shady architect and engineer
- *Teacup* (male minotaur): fixer who can help acquire nonmagical gear

It's also possible that instead of looking for a specific person, a character might want to just ask around about a specific detail. Usually, asking simple questions of folks on the street is a matter of making a Charisma check to gather information. However, not every PC in this adventure may have the ability to any degree, and not every NPC reacts the same way when approached. Some need charming, some need bullying, and some need impressing.

Consider allowing player characters to gather useful tidbits of information with Deception, Intimidation, Performance, or Persuasion. Each information-gathering attempt burns one or two hours. Some information might require more than one successful check to uncover.

Assume any fact that isn't a secret (details of the trap on the vault, or the combination to the lock, are definitely secret) can be found with an hour of gossiping and following up leads, plus a successful DC 15 Charisma check. Players who are careful to maximize their characters' backgrounds might get advantage on this check. Bear in mind that rogues might have many features that are useful among criminals and low levels

of society but that might actually work against them when talking to the rich and powerful.

OBSERVING THE LOCATION

If the characters visit the Lounge, they can walk through the top floors without being accosted unless they try to break into locked rooms or otherwise cause a disturbance. The details on the Lounge are in Scene 3.

If strange occurrences accumulate, the characters risk placing the Lounge staff on alert. Every time the characters draw attention to themselves, such as getting caught trying to enter a room that's not theirs, causing a fire, getting in a fight, etc., roll 1d20 plus the number of times an odd occurrence has been noticed by the staff. If the total exceeds 20, Nadi grows concerned and places the staff on alert for a day before things go back to normal. If an alert is sounded, add 5 to all future rolls. If a second alert occurs, it lasts through the Viper's Nest tournament.

ABU'S HOME

At some point it is possible that the characters will seek out Abu the chef, since he's the only staff member who lives offsite. Abu has a modest home with an enclosed garden behind it. He has 4 **staff** (commoners) and 2 **guards**. Other than a few average locks, he has no other security.

Of particular interest to the PCs is that fact that Abu wears a golden unblinking eye pin necessary to bypass the *alarm* spells (see Scene 3 for details).

NADI'S DAILY ROUTINE

Nadi wakes at dawn and performs his morning routines to get ready before meeting with a handful of pit bosses and hostesses over breakfast in his office. They discuss events of the previous night and make plans for that day.

Then he tours the first floor, checking in with staff and meeting with department heads before going to the counting room to review the receipts. He takes any business meetings in one of the multipurpose rooms (Area G). He spends the afternoon moving through the Lounge, meeting guests, keeping people happy, and looking for ways to improve his staff. After dinner, he goes to the counting room one more time before checking on whatever entertainment or special events are happening in the Lounge. Before bed, he makes one last circuit of the basement floors and the sorting room, possibly changing the combination on the vault if he has grown concerned.

If necessary, his routine might change in response to actions taken by the characters. Nadi is very hands on, and he micromanages everything, becoming angry if there's anything he doesn't know about his business. On

the night of the third day, the staff begins setting up for the Viper's Nest tournament. High rollers start arriving then as well, requiring Nadi's personal attention, so his routine may be disrupted. (See Scene 4 for more details.)

LADY'S LUCK GAMBLING PARLOR

Across the street from the Lounge of a Thousand Whispers is a small gambling parlor known as The Lady's Luck. It has only four tables, and those are rarely more than half full. It is shabby in comparison to the Lounge. Its owner, Uzon Mashaeri, hates Nadi Ud'aah for building the Lounge across from his place and stealing most of his better customers. In addition Uzon holds a grudge against Wazen Al-Shamuri from a slight ten years ago, when Wazen refused Uzon's offer of partnership.

While Uzon hates Nadi and might be willing to assist the characters in a scheme against him, he is ill-disposed to any alliance that would also help Wazen. Characters can easily conceal their connection to Wazen, but they can just as easily let it slip. Once Uzon finds out about it, they have disadvantage on any Charisma checks regarding Uzon.

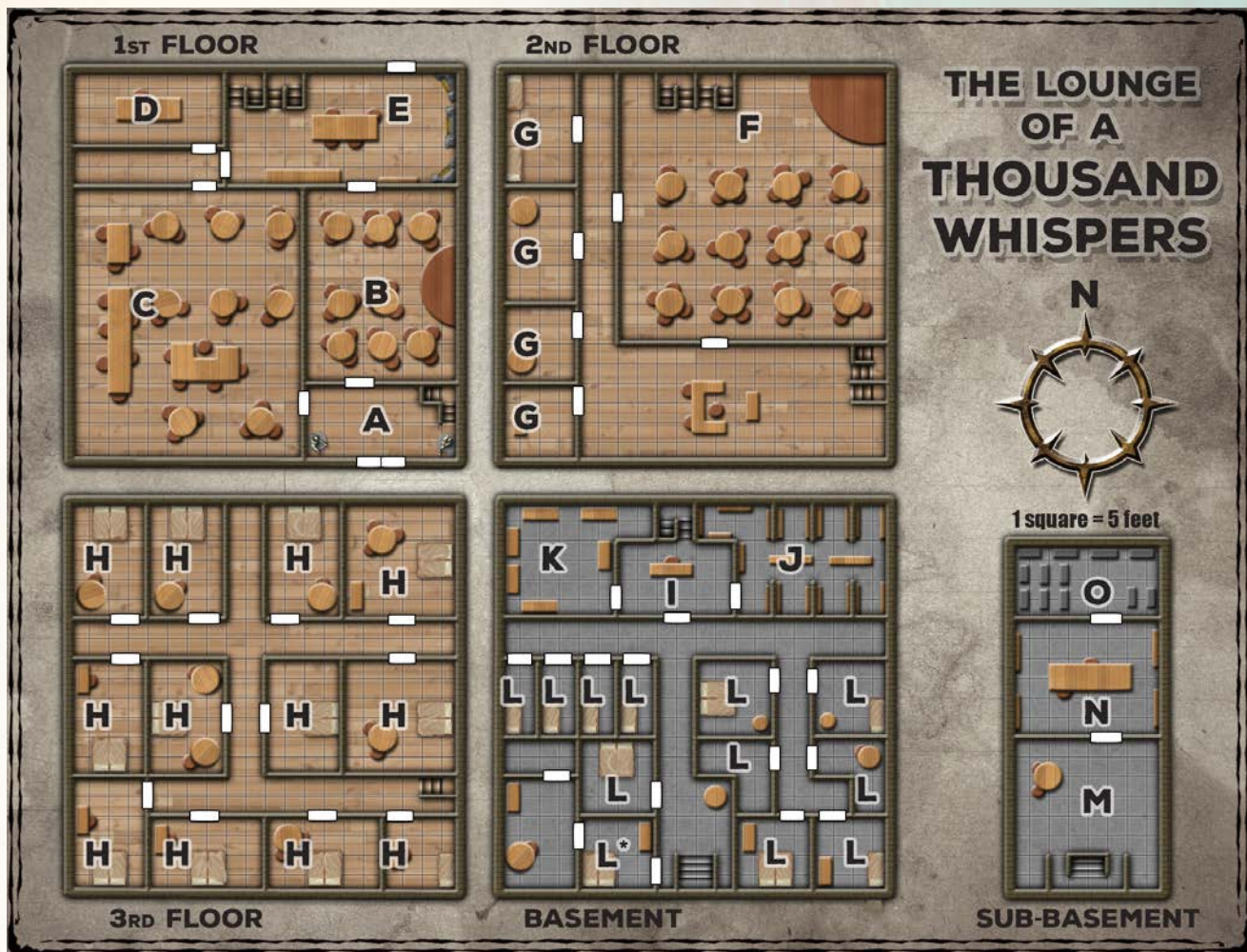
There is, however, one sure way into Uzon's good graces. Inside the Lady Luck, three of the four walls display beautiful paintings. Uzon fancies himself a collector of rare art, and he's looking for a true gem to mount on the fourth wall, above the bar. He wants the *Petals of Sunlight and Shadow* by Shial bin-Muftia; a painting not seen for a century and thought lost or in a private collection somewhere. (This is the type of information that can be gathered from random contacts, as described above.) If the characters should offer him this painting or a convincing forgery (few people have ever seen the original), they earn themselves a strong ally who is willing to take significantly more chances for them than he might otherwise.

WHEN THE CHARACTERS ARE READY TO PROCEED

When the party attempts to visit the Lounge before the big night, go to Scene 3: The Scene of the Crime. If they are ready to execute their plan, go to Scene 4: The Heist.

SCENE 3: SCENE OF THE CRIME

Assuming the characters have not yet drawn the attention of the Lounge's security forces, they are free to wander about as they please in areas of the Lounge that are open to the public. Each section below describes the areas to be found in the Lounge, with notes based on states of awareness. Note that the exact number of guards in an area is never listed; this decision is entirely up to you, based on how many you think are needed to create the



most excitement and propel the adventure forward. If more are ever needed, Nadi can hire as many as he wants from the Black Scorpion Mercenary Company.

The states of alert are:

- **Regular Business:** How the area appears during a normal business day, along with who normally staffs the area and what security it might have.
- **Alerted:** How the area appears when the Lounge has become aware that something is going on but doesn't know what. Nadi orders increased scrutiny and directs his staff to take the listed precautions.
- **Alarmed:** How the area appears when the staff is aware that a robbery attempt is in progress.

The Lounge caters to high-end clientele, though in a town of pirates and raiders, rougher sorts also come looking to spend their gains. Nadi doesn't like to turn away potential profit, but anyone who is hostile, disruptive, or rude to other patrons is bad for business. The guards know from experience that trouble escalates quickly once it starts, so their instructions are to stop it

before it really gets started. If characters come into the club looking or acting like they want trouble—wearing armor, carrying large weapons, obviously intoxicated, trying to intimidate the staff or other customers, or even just acting like big-shots no one's ever heard of—they'll be told to tone down their behavior or leave.

Conversely, anyone who looks rich, foolish, and ready to lose a lot of cash is likely to be offered free drinks, meals, or even some complementary betting tokens in the gaming hall, to get them started on a night of big spending.

Workers. Unless noted otherwise, employees of the Lounge—cashiers, waiters, dealers, etc.—are standard commoners. Guards are standard guards. Pit bosses use knight stats, but they don't carry crossbows. Hostesses are trained bards with some spellcasting ability; see Appendix 1 for their stats.

Doors and Locks. Many doors in the Lounge of a Thousand Whispers are kept closed and locked. In the descriptions that follow, a shorthand syntax is used to describe these doors. A sample description is:

(DC 15 Dexterity, DC 15 Strength; AC 17, 20 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage)

This translates to: the lock can be picked with thief's tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check; it can be forced open with a successful DC 15 Strength check; or it can be destroyed by attacking AC 17 and causing 20 points of damage, but the door is immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage.

A. ENTRY HALL

The door to the entry hall is open at all hours except during extreme situations, when it is closed and locked (DC 18 Dexterity, DC 20 Strength, AC 17, 27 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage). The entry hall has no windows.

Noise and perfume drifts into the street, assaulting you before you even enter into the Lounge of a Thousand Whispers. Garish red and gold silks drape the incense-filled entrance hall. Two large, golden statues of plump, smiling men flank the door. Scantly clad men and women call to you from a stairway balcony, offering you an evening of endless delights. Scents of cooking meat and the soft music of strings drift from an eatery directly ahead while the sounds of many voices echo from the gaming floor to your left.

There are two **guards** and Jumanah (**hostess**) generally found here. The guards do not interact with customers unless instructed to by Jumanah or they see a fight about to break out. Jumanah engages anyone who walks into the Lounge but who does not immediately walk with a purpose or appear to know where they're going. She makes polite small talk from her small podium and directs them toward their likeliest desire. She can quote prices if asked, but tries to get the customer not to worry about money and focus instead on what they desire.

Patrons are not allowed to carry weapons in the Lounge. Plentiful intoxicants, high passion, and deadly implements don't mix well. All weapons, even small daggers, must be handed over upon entering. They are kept in locked trunks behind the hostess station. The trunks are AC 12, have 15 hp, and are immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage. They are locked, but the lock can be picked with thief's tools and a successful DC 13 Dexterity check or forced open with a successful DC 13 Strength check.

Jumanah is well-paid and completely loyal to Nadi Ud'aah, so trying to bribe her is a waste of time. She is, however, accustomed to being offered gratuities by wealthy patrons in exchange for overlooking minor infractions of the Lounge's rules. A small bribe of 5 gp is enough to allow a small favor, such as bringing in

your own food or drink. Keeping a hidden dagger or similar weapon is much more serious and calls for a tip of at least 50 gp. In any case, the gratuity only buys the character the chance to attempt a Charisma check (with a DC set by you, depending on what sort of rule is being broken). If the check fails, Jumanah doesn't like the character's manners, looks, or companions and refuses both the bribe and the request.

Alerted: If the Lounge has been alerted to trouble, two additional guards are here as well as a Black Scorpion **veteran** and another staff member (**commoner**) whose job is to run for help if need be. Rough-looking customers are thoroughly questioned about their intentions when they arrive, and may be turned away if they don't have plenty of coin to spend.

Alarmed: If it's clear that the Lounge is being robbed or is under any sort of attack, the guards lock the front door and try to prevent anyone from leaving. Jumanah (**hostess**) calms anyone who wishes to leave by offering free drinks in Abu's. Before locking the doors, a staff member (**commoner**) is dispatched to alert the Black Scorpions that the Lounge needs help. Provided the runner isn't stopped, a Black Scorpion threat response team (see Scene 2) arrives in five minutes.

B. ABU'S DAYDREAM (RESTAURANT)

Abu's Daydream is open from midday to midnight. At other times, the restaurant is dark and empty with silk drapes drawn across both entrances. The restaurant has no windows, but the wall facing the gaming hall is only waist high.

Diners partake of a plethora of dishes while listening to a trio of musicians playing stringed instruments on a low stage. A Nurian woman with a throaty voice sways between them, singing about her lost love, looking wistfully in the direction of the bar.

Abu's is named for the chef, a local celebrity. Guests can partake of a wide variety of dishes. All of the food is excellent and meals can be had for as little as 2 gp to as much as 500 gp. Nearly any kind of beverage that could be imagined can be ordered from the bar.

When the restaurant is open, five waitstaff (**commoners**) are present, serving customers, moving back and forth between the kitchen, the bar, and the restaurant as well as going up the back stairs off the kitchen to the private rooms and ballroom on the second story. Occasionally hostesses come in to retrieve food or drink orders for patrons on the gaming floor. If there is trouble, staff members run toward the kitchen or the entry hall to find a guard.

Alerted: If security has reason to suspect a problem, two guards are stationed here: one by the entrance to the entry hall and one by the short stairs that lead to the gaming floor.

Alarmed: If the alarm sounds, the staff flee to the kitchen and the guards (if present) move toward the commotion.

C. GAMING FLOOR

The gaming floor is active all day and night, with late morning being the quietest part of the day. The gaming floor has no windows.

Surrounded by a smoky haze, dozens of men and women try their luck at games of chance under the watchful eyes of pit bosses. Cashiers sit in cages along the northern wall.

At any given time, 10d6 guests can be found gambling on the gaming floor, along with 10 dealers and 5 hostesses. The gaming tables each have 5d10 gp worth of miscellaneous markers on them for a normal game. At least one table has lower stakes where the markers are for sp instead, and one table plays for higher stakes where 5d100 gp are in play.

No tables use real coins but rather colored wooden tokens obtained from the cashiers in the cages. Four cashiers are inside the cages changing tokens for money and vice versa. The only entrance into the cages from the gaming floor is through a barred door (DC 25 Strength, AC 17, 20 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage). There is never more than 400 gp in the cages. Whenever an individual cashier has more than 100 gp on hand, the excess is sent to the counting room using a cart that resembles a tall metal coffer with wheels.

During normal business hours, 4 **guards** and 2 pit bosses (**knights**) are spread throughout the room watching the guests as well as the staff. High roller customers draw the attention of a hostess and a pit boss who do their best to please the customer, and separate them from their money.

One of the dealers, Hom Al-Ashareen, owes a great deal of money to a dealer of blue stardust (an intoxicant). He's an unmitigated coward, but for a bribe of 500 gp, he'll help with any plan as long as it can't connect him to anything that will get him fired. One of the hostesses is angry at Nadi Ud'aah for his treatment of her and hungry to see him humiliated or brought down; she is another potential ally inside the organization.

Alerted: If the Lounge is on alert, 2 Black Scorpion veterans are posted on the gaming floor: one by the entry hall and one in front of the entrance to the cages.

Alarmed: If the alarm is raised, the guards and veterans secure access to the cages. If no one is trying to breach

the cages, half of these warriors move toward any disturbance while the others move to protect the counting room.

D. COUNTING ROOM

All the money in the Lounge flows through the counting room. Guests are never allowed in here; no skill check, bluff, lie, or threat will ever get someone past the guards. The counting room has no windows.

A coin-covered table dominates this room. Small but sturdy carts resembling wheeled strongboxes are lined up along the walls.

The only door to this room is kept locked at all times. Occupants of the counting room can look through a small slot in the door to see anyone who's requesting entrance. Unless someone is entering or exiting the room, the reinforced door is always barred from the inside; it can't be forced open with anything less than a battering ram (DC 25 Strength, AC 17, 30 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage).

Seated around the table are 4 staff (**commoners**) tallying the proceeds as they come in. The cash counters are watched by a pit boss (**knight**). At any given time, the room contains (6d6 x 100) + 4,000 gp. Every eight hours, or anytime the total reaches 7,500 gp, the cash is taken by a pit boss and a guard from the gaming floor down to the guard room (Area I) for placement in the vault.

When the pit boss and guards transfer money, they use a wheeled cart and each wears a gold pin shaped like an unblinking eye. The pin is necessary to bypass the *alarm* spell in Area I. A metal coffer by the door has half a dozen pins in it, though the number varies. These pins aren't supposed to be worn at any other time except during a cash transfer; Nadi doesn't want customers getting curious about their purpose. The pins are complicated jewelry and would require a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Jeweler's Tools) check to duplicate. Unless the forger has one to examine, this check is made with disadvantage.

Every four hours, a hostess brings drinks and food into the counting room and retrieves the used dishes.

No one in the counting room is bribable. If any of them are approached with such an offer, they report full details about it to Nadi as soon as possible.

Alerted: If alerted to a threat to the Lounge, 2 **guards** are added to the room.

Alarmed: If the alarm is sounded, the pit boss (commoner) refuses to open the door for anyone short of Nadi himself.

E. KITCHEN

The kitchen is staffed at all times, but when the restaurant is closed, the number of workers is halved. Guests are not allowed in the kitchen. The kitchen has no windows, but there is a door to the alley (DC 18 Dexterity, DC 18 Strength, AC 17, 17 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage).

Ample counter space and three large hearths fill the warm and active kitchen. Off the kitchen to the west, a ramp leads up and down.

The ramp leads up to Area F (Silken Oasis ballroom) and down to Area I (guard room). There are doors to the restaurant, the alley behind the building, and past the ramp to the counting room.

When busy, the kitchen has 6 staff (**commoners**), 1 **guard**, and Abu. During off hours, Abu and three of the staff are not present. Staff are coming in and out constantly, dropping off orders and taking food throughout the Lounge. The head chef, Abu, is a **ratfolk rogue** and an expert chef. His boundless energy and talent with cuisine has made him something of a celebrity among the local rich, and he has even cooked for members of the Black Table. He is also possessed of a large ego and is given to emotional outbursts. If he were to feel underappreciated, he could be tricked into causing a grand disturbance or even leaving. He also wears a gold unblinking eye pin that is necessary to bypass the *alarm* spells. Abu wears this pin at all times while at work and even takes it home in the evenings, despite Nadi's constant objections to be more careful with it.

The guard in this room, Mallek, enjoys this post, as Abu allows him to sample the food. Because of this, he is more loyal to Abu than to Nadi, but he is also vulnerable to intimidation with threats that could cause him to lose his position.

One of the hostesses, Halla, delivers food to the counting room and the guard room below; she also requires an unblinking eye pin to bypass the *alarm* spell in Area I. She often carelessly leaves the pin on the counter in the kitchen when she isn't using it. If it were to disappear, Halla might not report it right away, out of worry that her negligence could get her fired (it almost certainly would).

Alerted: If the Lounge is alerted to trouble, a Black Scorpion **veteran** is assigned here next to the ramps.

Alarmed: If an alarm is sounded, the guard sends one of the staff down the ramp to the guard room to warn them and dispatches another of the staff to summon more Black Scorpions. Provided the runner is not stopped, a

response team arrives in five minutes. Once the staff are sent on their tasks, the guard makes sure the door to the alley is locked.

F. SILKEN OASIS BALLROOM

The doors to this room are kept locked except when the ballroom is in use. These are relatively light doors (DC 10 Dexterity, DC 10 Strength, AC 12, 10 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage). A ramp at the back of the room leads down to a hallway off the kitchen. The ballroom has windows but they don't open.

Numerous tables fill this expansive room, which also has a low stage against the north wall.

The ballroom is empty and available for renting (for 100 gp plus entertainment and catering costs) with two exceptions. On the afternoon of the second day, a party is held here for the crew of the *Songstress* (a pirate vessel); its captain just sold their latest prize and is treating the crew to an afternoon and evening of delights. The party gets loud and out of hand, and many of the guests rent rooms on the third floor for other activities. On the fourth night, a huge wedding party uses the room, paid for by the wealthy perfume merchant Nottan El-Hareesh. His only daughter is getting married, and he places high demands on the Lounge (see Scene 4).

Alerted: If the Lounge is alerted to danger, 1 **guard** stands watch in the hallway outside.

Alarmed: If the alarm has been sounded, the **guard** locks the doors to the ballroom if it is in use and tries putting off any concerns by the guests. If no guard is present, one is dispatched from the gaming hall to secure the ballroom, if it's in use.



G. PRIVATE MULTIPURPOSE ROOMS

These rooms are generally locked, but the doors aren't especially secure (DC 10 Dexterity, DC 10 Strength, AC 13, 15 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage). Each room can be rented for 15 gp an hour and set up (for additional charges) with tables, beds, pillows, or any other items required. They're most commonly used for small meetings and private meals. Each room has a window that does not open.

Alerted: No change.

Alarmed: If any of the rooms are in use when an alarm is sounded, the guard stationed outside the ballroom closes the doors and tries putting off any concerns as with the ballroom guests. If no guard is present, the one dispatched from the gaming hall takes care of these rooms after checking on the ballroom doors.

H. GUEST ROOMS

These luxurious rooms can be rented for 10 gp per day. Each lavish suite has accommodations for up to four people. These rooms are generally locked but aren't especially secure (DC 10 Dexterity, DC 10 Strength, AC 13, 15 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage). Each room has a large window that does open.

Feel free to elaborate on any guests that would be interesting for the development of the adventure. Some hostesses (male and female) visit the guests, bringing them whatever they've requested from the Lounge's many offerings.

Alerted: No change.

Alarmed: No change.

I. GUARD ROOM (BASEMENT)

The guard room at the bottom of the ramp from Area E (the kitchen) is the control center for access to the lower floors. No one but Nadi can pass through without being stopped and checked.

A desk and a few chairs are at the bottom of the ramp. Doors exit the room in three directions.

Anyone coming down the ramp is challenged by the 5 **guards** and 1 **clockwork hound**. Normally the challenge is routine, since the security team knows everyone who works at the Lounge by sight.

In addition to the security team, there is a permanent *alarm* spell on the room. The *alarm* triggers a mental ping to Nadi if anyone steps off the ramp without wearing one of the gold unblinking eye pins or without someone already in the room speaking the phrase "Whispers of Fortune." If Nadi is alerted to a problem, he immediately moves toward the guard room, grabbing a pit boss (**knight**) along the way as backup.

The doors to Areas K and J are not normally secured, but they can be locked (DC 10 Dexterity, DC 10 Strength, AC 12, 10 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage). The southern doors that lead farther into the complex, however, are always kept locked (DC 18 Dexterity, DC 20 Strength, AC 17, 27 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage).

Alerted: If the Lounge staff expects trouble, Nadi orders one pit boss (**knight**) to watch over the room along with the rest of the security team.

Alarmed: If an alarm sounds, the guards lock all the doors and defend this room, preventing anyone not accompanied by a pit boss (**knight**) or Nadi himself from passing.

J. STORAGE

The door to this room is generally unlocked. It is lined with shelves filled with foodstuff, liquor, intoxicants, linen, and other things needed to run a pleasure resort. A staff member enters the room at least once an hour to get supplies for elsewhere in the Lounge.

Alerted: No change.

Alarmed: If an alarm has been sounded, guards from Area I lock the door to this room but don't stay here.

K. DRESSING ROOM

The door to this room is generally unlocked. It's filled with instruments, makeup, and costumes used by the entertainers who perform at the Lounge, and by some of the hostesses. At any given time, there are usually 4 entertainers (**commoners**) and 1 **hostess** using this room.

Alerted: No change.

Alarmed: If an alarm has been sounded, guards from Area I lock the door to this room (DC 12 Dexterity, DC 12 Strength, AC 13, 12 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage) after sending any entertainers to their rooms (Area L). The guards don't remain here.

L. STAFF ROOMS

These dozens of small rooms are home to the various staff, entertainers, bosses, and guards that work in the Lounge. Only Abu lives outside the Lounge. None of the rooms have locks except for Nadi's suite, which is quite secure (DC 18 Dexterity $\times 2$ [dual locks], DC 15 Strength, AC 12, 15 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage). Nadi's suite of three rooms (marked on the map with an asterisk*) also contains his office, which is guarded by an *alarm* spell similar to the one in Area I.

Alerted: No change.

Alarmed: When an alarm is sounded, staff in their rooms have instructions to stay there.

M. GUARD ROOM (SUB-BASEMENT)

The ramp from the floor above leads to a guard area with an *alarm* spell, similar to Area I above. It is watched by a **clockwork myrmidon** that doesn't let anyone pass without a gold unblinking eye pin. Someone with a pin can enter the sorting room, but only Nadi can give the myrmidon orders.

Alerted: If alerted to a potential theft, Nadi purchases a **clockwork hound** from the Black Scorpions to assist the **myrmidon**.

Alarmed: Nadi changes the **myrmidon's** orders so it doesn't let anyone pass but Nadi.

N. SORTING ROOM

This room is used to recount proceeds and secure and catalog any valuables that the Lounge is holding, so it is relatively secure (DC 20 Dexterity, DC 20 Strength, AC 17, 20 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage).

Lockboxes and baskets of locks rest on shelves. A large table occupies the center of the room. A complicated vault door larger than a draft horse is set into the northern wall.

Valuables are brought here to be cataloged and coins are recounted. Then they are put into locked strongboxes (DC 15 Dexterity, DC 15 Strength, AC 17, 20 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage). The strongboxes are placed inside the vault by Nadi or by one of the pit bosses with the help of the clockwork myrmidon.

Valuables don't spend much time in this room, and it's staffed only while things are being cataloged and counted. The door to the vault is always locked and the trap is always active except when valuables are actively being put into or removed from the vault.

Alerted: If alerted to a problem, 2 Black Scorpion **veterans** are posted here.

Alarmed: If an alarm sounds, 2 **guards** who were off duty in Area L move to in front of the door to this room.

O. THE VAULT

The vault is a cube made of steel plates sandwiched around a lead core that has been warded to prevent teleportation or incorporeal passage. It has a complicated lock whose combination is known only to Nadi and the pit bosses (DC 25 Dexterity, DC 30



Strength, AC 18, 100 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage). Nadi changes the combination every week to limit the chance that someone else can find out the code.

The door is trapped so that anyone trying an incorrect combination triggers the trap, flooding the room with poison gas. Everyone in the room takes 22 (4d10) poison damage and is poisoned; a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw halves the damage and negates the poisoned effect. Poisoned creatures repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on themselves with a success.

Inside the vault are twelve strongboxes (see room N), each containing approximately 50,000 gp worth of goods.

Alerted: If Nadi suspects a problem, he changes the code and does not share it with any of the pit bosses. This requires him to do the coin transfers himself.

Alarmed: No change.

SCENE 4: THE HEIST!

This section is an outline of the events of the fourth day, assuming the characters haven't caused Nadi or his security team to become suspicious. These events are in addition to the normal routine (such as money transfers) detailed in Scene 3. Feel free to add or adjust

as necessary to maximize the excitement and drama of the adventure.

1. At dawn, Nadi meets with his staff. If there has been an alarm, he changes the combination to the vault as soon as the meeting finishes and he shares it with no one else.
2. Starting at midmorning, the Viper's Nest tournament begins. Seventy-seven participants buy in. By lunch, half of them have busted and don't have sufficient funds to buy back in. A two-hour break is called. Nadi spends most of that time walking the gaming floor, meeting the gamblers, schmoozing, and playing the good host.
3. During the late morning, Uzon Mashaeri comes across the street from the Lady Luck and orders a drink while disgustedly watching the tournament for a few minutes. After just a few minutes, he angrily slams the glass down and storms back to his gambling parlor, not having even finished his drink. For the few minutes this is going on, the guards are distracted by Uzon's presence.
4. At midday, staff members set up the Ballroom for the wedding.
5. As the tournament is about to restart, one of the players who went bust before lunch—a female gnoll named Varnga—angrily tries to rejoin a table. This eventually leads to a highly distracting fight with the guards, and could even draw in one of the characters, if any of them are participating in the tournament. Humans have a hard time telling one gnoll apart from another; for the rest of the day, guards regularly confuse any gnoll PC for the troublemaker and keep a close eye on that character.
6. Shortly before dinner, five men and two women arrive. They're dressed in dark clothing and carrying large bags. They rent one of the multipurpose rooms and lock themselves inside. If the Lounge is on alert, one of the guards from Area I is dispatched to unobtrusively observe the room. They are pickpockets who plan to work the gaming floor. After half an hour, the group wanders out of its rented room in ones and twos, dressed in dinner wear. The groups split apart and mingle easily with the crowd, making them difficult to track. Over the course of the evening, they lift more than 8,000 gp from unsuspecting (or overindulging) patrons. The guards won't catch on to what they're doing, but a player character who observes them for 15 minutes and makes a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception or Sleight of Hand) check spots one of them lifting someone's purse.

At some point, one of them tries to pick one of the character's pockets (+6 on their Dexterity check vs. the character's passive Perception score as a DC). Quick-thinking characters might work out a scheme to use the pickpockets to distract the guards. If they're not stopped, by 8 P.M. guards hear enough complaints from victims to place the Lounge on alert until the pickpockets are caught and ejected from the club (after a brutal beating in the alley).

7. At dinnertime, Nottan El-Hareesh and his family arrive to celebrate the wedding.
8. An hour after arriving, Nottan El-Hareesh demands to speak to Abu about what he considers substandard food served to the wedding party. If Abu is present, the ratfolk becomes so enraged that he tries to stab the bride's father with a salad fork. Guards separate them before anyone is injured. Nadi is called in to calm the situation and appease Nottan. This keeps Nadi occupied and away from his usual routine for almost an hour.
9. Around nightfall, the final round of the tournament begins. It will go on for four hours, followed by an hour break, and four more hours.
10. During the tournament break, a goblin named Beetle is caught selling intoxicants in the hallway of the third floor. The Lounge staff is not concerned about illegality but that the goblin is undercutting their own prices. Guards take Beetle to Area I, where he is vigorously "interrogated." One hour later, the barely-conscious goblin is tossed into the alley. Unnoticed at the time, Beetle palmed a gold unblinking eye pin and key ring from one of the guards. If characters help him or talk to him in the alley, Beetle makes several angry comments about how blind the guards are and how he'll have the last laugh.
11. A few minutes after midnight, a wagon and a dozen enforcers (**thugs**) from the Black Table arrive in the company of six **clockwork myrmidons** to claim the bribe/tax for their masters.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of the mission depends on how well characters lay their plans and seize unexpected opportunities. If they get away with the money, Nadi is taken away by the Black Table operatives and is never seen again. If the characters are caught, Nadi turns over not only the money, but the characters as well, to the tender mercies of the Black Table. Whether the characters are ever seen again is up to you and them.



RAIDERS OF THE CHAMBER OF TOMORROWS

A 5th Edition Adventure for 6th-level Characters

By Troy Taylor

Saintmistress Rowanmantle is the self-appointed guardian of the Tommierran Forest and the Ruins of Thorn, which contain powerful time-warping artifacts. She intends to establish her own noble house with this territory as a base. But some members of the house of Aldous-Donner are selling its artifacts to amass their own fortunes and influence.

The player characters are agents of Saintmistress Rowanmantle, head of the church of Yarila and Porevit. These paired deities are the gods of fertility, fields, and forests in the elf and elfmarked domain of the Grand Duchy of Dornig.

The characters are opposed by Professor Skein Devinshire, a dapper, scheming ravenfolk who holds the post of Deputy Director of the Treasury of Antiquities in the Dornig city of Reywald. Devinshire is aided by a retinue of mercenary treasure hunters.

The adventure hinges on the conflict (described in the *Midgard Campaign Setting*) between Saintmistress Rowanmantle and unscrupulous members of House of Aldous-Donner.

SYNOPSIS

The adventure begins in an Aldous-Donner warehouse in Reywald. Acting on orders from the Saintmistress, the characters were tipped off and have a chance to

spy on an illicit exchange of artifacts from the ruins of Thorn, including a legendary time-warping artifact, the *Agua-Sintellus Orb*, said to contain water vapor collected from waterfalls at the edge of the world.

The characters can try to stop Devinshire and his goons from making an illicit purchase of the artifact. Everyone scrambles to obtain the Orb in a game of hot-potato and keep-away. If things go as expected, Devinshire flees rather than risking his life, enabling the characters to take possession of the Orb.

At the Imperial Conservatory in the forest city of Tomierau, characters receive background information on the Orb from Saintmistress Rowanmantle. The most important revelation is that it's actually a key to open the legendary Chamber of Tomorrows. Ancient maps showing the city of Thorn in its heyday, before the Archon Court sounded the Great Retreat, are produced and compared to the diary of a dwarf from the time of the war for Mithral. The diary describes the likely location of the Chamber of Tomorrows, and also mentions the Archway of Horizons, a structure spanning a tributary of the River Thorn. The dwarven diarist describes how he originally obtained the Orb and how, from the Archway, he espied something he described vaguely as an "effervescent flotilla."

EXPLORING THE RUINS OF THORN

The characters arrive at the vast Ruins of Thorn during a driving rainstorm. The western span of the Archway of Horizons is mostly collapsed and the water is surging under it from the rain. But the east wing, including the center apex suspended over the water, appears sturdy. The archway also emanates transmutation magic. At the base of the western span, a grand staircase leads to a stone door. The immediate area of the Archway is also an intersection of several ley lines; one of many in the ancient city.

After defeating a shambling mound, the characters can explore the archway. Inside, they find a map table and models of the navigational devices attuned to the Orb, a mysterious staff in a tank of water, and a statue of an undead guardian.

Eventually, characters move on to the Chamber of Tomorrows. Whether or not they deactivate the time-warping effects, they encounter the undead guardian inside the chamber. They also find a *Celestial Sextant* and its companion piece, a *Thornish nocturnal*. These navigational devices can lead the worthy to follow the elves to their Great Retreat.

That's when Devinshire and his thugs arrive, triggering a three-way fight. At a crucial moment, the floor of the Chamber of Tomorrows opens up and everything

drops into the surging river. A rollicking fight takes place between the characters, Devinshire's crew, and the undead guardian. By the time the river pours into the sea, the characters will either have possession of the priceless navigational tools, or their mission ends in failure.

If the mission succeeded, the characters should have the means for exploring the disappearance of the elves from Midgard. You can continue the story if you like, allowing them to eventually discover the truth of the Great Retreat for themselves.

PART 1: REYWALD WAREHOUSE

Characters begin the adventure in the warehouse. Because they have advance notice of the meeting, they're allowed to scope out the place, note the arrangement of barrels and crates, devise a plan, and position themselves to their tactical advantage.

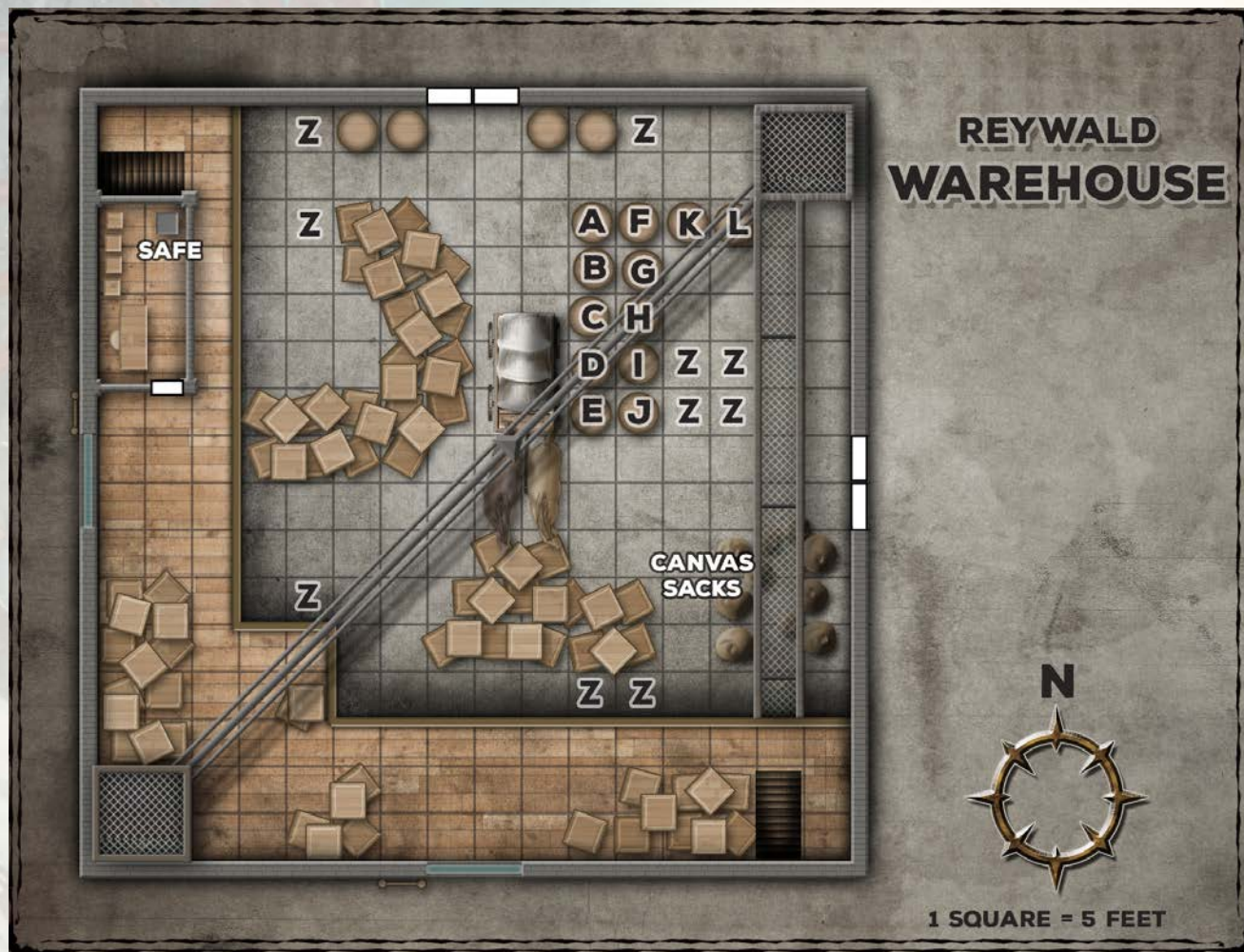
Remind players, however, that if their characters act recklessly or reveal their presence prematurely, the seller might never arrive with the Orb. They shouldn't take action until the Orb is out in the open.

Letting the characters set up first gives them a sense of control over the situation that they don't actually have. It also establishes an important lesson for the rest

TIMING IN CONVENTION PLAY

The adventure has roughly eight encounter areas. Only six should be required to complete the adventure. If time becomes an issue, you can skip the combat encounters in Rooms 3 and 5 in the Archway of Horizons. In a four-hour convention time slot, you can roughly follow this schedule.

0:00	Welcome players and dole out characters
0:15	Reywald warehouse opening encounter
0:45	Mission briefing at the Imperial Conservatory
1:00	Arrive at Archway of Horizons, fight shambling mound
1:30	Explore first floor of the Archway
2:00	Break
2:15	Explore second floor of the Archway
2:45	Explore third floor of the Archway
3:00	Navigate the collapsed stairs
3:15	Infiltrate the Chamber of Tomorrows
3:30	River chase
3:45	Conclusion and cleanup
4:00	End session



of the adventure, regarding how “even the best-laid plans go astray.”

Ideally, this will play out akin to the scene in an action movie when the villain tries to negotiate for an item. Everyone is tense, no one quite trusts the other side. At the worst possible moment, someone says a phrase or makes a move that sets off a single firecracker, and before anyone realizes it, the whole place is bedlam.

The warehouse is stacked with stuff that goes boom, will ricochet off other things, create slick surfaces, and cause all sorts of mischief and difficulty for combatants. Once the chain reaction starts, anything can happen. Things topple, fall, spill, and explode. Amid the confusion, the villains escape.

Savvy players will recognize the potential for this this as they investigate the contents of the room. Don't discourage their ideas. Let them move barrels around and set up crazy Scooby-Doo-style, Rube Goldberg-esque booby traps. It's all in fun.

Overhead Winch. One thing that should be pointed out is the presence of the overhead winch apparatus that

diagonally spans the roof of the warehouse. Operating it requires two people, one at each end of the machinery on the second floor. One set of controls is in the storage area in the southwest corner of the warehouse, and the other is on a platform in the northeast corner that's only accessible by a catwalk that runs parallel to the east wall.

It should occur to the player characters that the winch is a natural trap: its heavy load can be dropped onto whatever's below with the yank of two levers. When characters arrive, the winch is holding up a heavy marble statue that's an exquisite likeness of the Imperatrix. It was commissioned by House Aldous-Donner, which intends to present the statue to the ruler on her naming day. Several very powerful people will be extremely angry if the statue is damaged. Once characters figure out the winch's controls, they can easily swap the irreplaceable statue with something just as heavy but much less valuable.

Figuring out the winch's controls takes a successful DC 10 Intelligence check. If the check fails by 5 or more, the statue crashes to the floor and suffers substantial

damage. Otherwise, the first person who figures out the mechanism can show other characters how it works. They can position the hoist's load anywhere they want along the track. When the moment is right, the characters at either end of the track both yank their levers, and the load crashes to the floor. Every creature in the square directly beneath the load and in the eight adjacent squares takes 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw.

Canvas Sacks. The pile of sacks (filled with grain) can soften a fall somewhat, halving damage. A grain-filled bag can be used as an improvised weapon (1d4 bludgeoning damage), but only once. After one hit, the bag splits open and grain spills everywhere.

Buckets of Sand. Buckets of sand hang on hooks near each corner on both the first and second floors. Pouring a bucket of sand onto a fire extinguishes a 5-foot-square area of flame.

Stacks of Crates. Each stack is 20 feet high. Their contents are determined by the Chain Reactions table.

Containers (lettered). The contents of these barrels are determined randomly from the Chain Reactions table. They are lettered so you can make a list of their specific contents.

Barrels. A few unlettered barrels stand along the north wall. Their contents can also be determined from the Chain Reactions table.

Upstairs/Downstairs. To simplify matters, obstacles shown on the map's second floor are the same on the floor immediately below; where the office, stairs, and crates are shown on the balcony, for example, the same features are also on the first floor. The only exception is the winch and its supports.

Catwalk. This rickety wooden walkway is just 30 inches wide, suspended by ropes 20 feet above the floor. It has railings, and while they might inspire a false sense of confidence, they don't provide any real safety.

CHAIN REACTIONS

It's entirely possible that characters who discover the volatile nature of some of the warehouse's contents during preparation for this encounter will set off some type of explosion intentionally. If so, your job is simple. More cautious characters (or those who try to avoid wanton destruction of property) might choose a safer tactic. The thugs accompanying Devinshire, however, have no such compunctions and aren't even aware of the risk. An itchy trigger finger and an errant crossbow bolt could be enough to set off a chain reaction in the warehouse. How and when that happens is up to you. Time it for maximum dramatic (or comedic) effect.

Once a chain reaction begins, intentionally or unintentionally, roll a d20 at the start of every player

character's turn and Devinshire's turn. Find the roll on the Chain Reactions table and implement that result at some point during the turn. It doesn't need to happen immediately at the start of the turn, although it certainly can. But if, for example, a crate is going to explode, it's more amusing to have the explosion happen just as a character is running past rather than before. Once it gets started, the chain should be easy to maintain. Have fun, improvise, and let things happen randomly.

Each event can occur only once; once a result comes up on the chart, cross it off. If the same number is rolled again, either shift upward (on an odd roll) or downward (on an even roll) and use the first available result you reach. If you shift off the top of the list, start again at the bottom, and vice versa.

Your object during this sequence is to keep the chain reaction going. There's nothing wrong with an occasional break or pause when characters (and players) can collectively catch their breath and say things like "I'm glad that's over." At which point, of course, it starts up all over again.

Be sure to have the rules on various conditions available for easy reference during this encounter.

ORB ON THE MOVE

Each time an incident is activated from the Chain Reactions table, the Orb moves involuntarily. If it's loose, it's knocked away by an explosion or a piece of flying debris. If it's in someone's possession, the person holding it may drop it because they're startled or jostled, or the Orb is just knocked from their grasp. Explain it however you like, but the Orb skitters, slides, rolls, or flies to a new location. This should seem to be a comical but mundane recurrence to the players. In fact, the Orb is trying to escape because it wants to be reattached to its magical staff. A character with passive Perception 16 or higher, or who watches the Orb purposefully and makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check, notices that it seems to pause momentarily in its path and nudge up against objects like a broomstick, a discarded spear, or a club.

Holding onto the Orb is difficult in combat; it always pops loose the moment anyone is struck by an attack or takes damage from a chain reaction event.

If the Orb is loose at the start of a round, roll a d8 for direction and a d6 for the distance in squares that it moves.

MAGICAL COUNTERMEASURES

The Orb automatically resists the *mage hand* spell. Uncannily, it activates its own *dispel magic* effect in response when a *mage hand* touches it. *Dispel magic* cast directly on the Orb prevents the Orb from

defending itself this way for 1 minute per spell slot level used in casting *dispel magic* on it. It doesn't prevent the Orb from spinning, sliding, and ricocheting around the warehouse seemingly at random.

If the Orb becomes attuned to one user, that creature can use *mage hand* on it as usual.

AN ILLICIT EXCHANGE

Devinshire's ten **thugs**, all elfmarked, arrive by the eastern door. They take up positions as indicated on the map (their positions are marked by the letter Z) and try to hide. Each of them has a lit lantern that they set somewhere nearby to illuminate the warehouse. If any characters are already hidden in spots the thugs are

CHAIN REACTIONS TABLE

d20 What Happens

- 01 **Sprayed.** A pressurized drum containing oil is punctured, spraying oil in a 10-foot cone in a random direction (roll d8). A character doused in oil takes 5 fire damage if the oil catches fire, before the oil burns off.
- 02 **Spill.** A stack of crates topples, crashes down, and breaks open, sending iron nails flying like shrapnel. Every creature in the warehouse takes 1d2 piercing damage. The square containing the crate and all eight surrounding squares now contain the equivalent of caltrops (a creature that enters an affected square must make a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 1 piercing damage and stop moving; its speed is reduced by 10 feet until it receives at least 1 point of healing; a creature moving at half-speed or less doesn't need to make the saving throw). In addition, anyone who takes damage from a caltrop immediately hops or stumbles to the nearest randomly-chosen square that doesn't contain caltrops. If that space contains another obstacle, add it to the chain reaction.
- 03 **Bridge teeters.** A guy-wire on the catwalk snaps. Every creature on the catwalk must make a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 5 (1d10) slashing damage from the whipping cable and fall 20 feet to the floor below. After the guy-wire snaps, the swaying catwalk becomes difficult terrain and a character who moves more than 10 feet per turn on the catwalk must make a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall from the catwalk.
- 04 **Powder cloud.** A barrel filled with powder topples and bursts, puffing out a cloud of powder that fills a hemispherical volume 20 feet in radius. The area within that radius is heavily obscured. The cloud spreads around corners. It is not flammable, and it dissipates after one round.
- 05 **Marbles?** A jar filled with small steel or glass balls topples over, spilling those tiny balls across the floor in a 20-foot-radius circle. A creature must make a successful DC 8 Dexterity saving throw every time it enters a square in that area or fall prone. This effect persists for the remainder of the encounter unless someone takes special actions to clear them away, such as sweeping the area with a broom or clearing it with a *thunderwave* spell.
- 06 **Stench.** These earthenware jugs are filled with asafetida, salt pepper, sulfur, and decayed fish. They're popular with sailors and marines, who call them stinkpots and use them in shipboard defense. When one breaks, it fills a 20-foot radius with a noxious stench. Every creature that starts its turn in that area must make a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be incapacitated until the start of its next turn. These are packed in crates of four. Thankfully, they tend to break one at a time.
- 07 **On a roll.** The side panel of a tall, narrow crate breaks open, allowing an immense gong to roll out. It rolls in a straight line (in a random direction, or one chosen by you for maximum effect) until it meets an obstacle. Once it hits something, it falls to the floor, crushing whatever is in the 10-foot-by-10-foot space it falls into. Roll any die to determine whether it falls right (even) or left (odd). Each creature in the gong's path and in the space where it falls takes 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage and is deafened for one round, or no damage with a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw.
- 08 **Drink, please.** The plug on a whiskey cask pops loose, spraying high-proof whiskey in a 15-foot line. If the whiskey touches an open flame, the flame trails back to the cask and sets off an explosion. Each creature within 5 feet of the cask takes 7 (2d6) fire damage, or half damage with a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw.
- 09 **First the tar ...** A barrel of pine tar bursts open, oozing tar. Creatures that start their turn in the barrel's space or that enter it must make a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or become grappled (escape DC 13) and restrained. The tar is flammable. If lit, it does 3 (1d6) fire damage for two rounds before burning out.

headed toward, the characters must slip away before the thug arrives and beat the thug's passive Perception score with a Dexterity (Stealth) check. The thugs aren't expecting trouble here, however; to the best of their knowledge, no one else knows anything is going on in the warehouse tonight. They're here primarily to look intimidating to the dwarf who's selling the Orb, not to fight off interlopers.

Devinshire arrives next. Give him the full "villain treatment" as he enters the scene. He strides imperiously to a position near the center of the map. When he sees the Orb, he exclaims, "That belongs in a museum! My museum, in fact!"

Last to arrive is the seller, a dwarf (**commoner**) who arrives in a horse cart through the northern door. He drives the cart to the middle of the warehouse. He's

-
- 10 ... then the feathers.** A bag of feathers rips open and poofs out into a cloud of feathers with a 20-foot radius. The cloud persists for 5 minutes. The feathers adhere to anything that's wet or sticky. They have no other effect, but cleaning them off of clothes and gear takes 30 minutes.
-
- 11 Bocce anyone?** A crate opens up and various yard games spill out, including heaps of heavy wooden bowling pins (treat as clubs) and a bowling ball (improvised thrown weapon, range 20/60 ft., damage 1d4 bludgeoning).
-
- 12 Too much scent?** Bottles of perfume concentrate are upended. Each creature within 5 feet of the mishap takes 3 (1d6) acid damage and is blinded until the end of its next turn, or takes half damage and isn't blinded with a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw.
-
- 13 Sharps.** Sharpened farm tools spill out of a broken crate. Creatures in adjacent squares when the crate breaks take 1d4 bludgeoning damage plus 1d4 piercing damage plus 1d4 slashing damage, or half damage with a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw.
-
- 14 Splish splash.** A water barrel topples over, spilling a wave of water in a 30-foot cone. Fires in that area are extinguished and other hazards might also be neutralized, at your discretion.
-
- 15 Mrs. O'Leary's cow.** A lit oil lantern falls into a mound of packing straw near a crate containing fireworks. Lit fireworks shoot off in all directions. Every creature in the warehouse rolls 1d6; the result is the number of rockets that might hit that character or NPC. For each rocket, the character takes 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage plus 6 (1d12) thunder damage. A successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw negates the bludgeoning damage and halves the thunder damage.
-
- 16 Missile fire.** An anti-theft device is triggered on the second floor, unleashing a barrage of ten missiles from an ammunition mechanism in the northwest corner. The missiles aren't especially accurate or lethal; they're really meant just to frighten intruders. Each creature in the warehouse rolls a d10. Anyone who gets a 1 takes 5 (1d10) piercing damage, or no damage with a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw.
-
- 17 Blast.** Something in a crate simply explodes, blasting splinters in a 30-foot cone. Every creature in the cone takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage, or no damage with a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw.
-
- 18 Monkey cage springs open.** A cage containing five **baboons** was covered with a tarp on the second floor of the warehouse. The uproar from the fight got the baboons in a frenzy, and they burst through the bars of their cage. The baboons move and fight together, concentrating on just one enemy at a time until it's unconscious, dead, or has run away. They choose their targets at random from among those that are within one move of the baboons' current position.
-
- 19 Horse bolts.** The **draft horses** pulling the dwarf's cart panic and bolt forward. They rush 40 feet, pulling the cart, veering and careering through the warehouse at random. If they ever find themselves moving on a clear, direct path toward a door, they head straight out of the warehouse. Anything in their path gets attacked by the horses' hooves and takes 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage from the cart and is knocked down; a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw halves damage from the cart and negates being knocked down.
-
- 20 Strain is too much.** The column holding up the platform in the southwest corner (part of the winch apparatus) gives way with a loud creak and snapping noise. The winch, the overhead track, and anything being hauled on the winch falls 40 feet to the floor along the line that runs diagonally across the warehouse. Every creature within 10 feet of the winch's path takes 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. The damage is 11 (2d10) bludgeoning for creatures that are anywhere in the 25-foot-by-25-foot square butted against the southwest corner of the warehouse, on the first or second floor, halved by a successful saving throw.
-

ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTY

On paper, this is a deadly encounter. By the end of the second round, however, Professor Devinshire understands this is an ambush and chooses escape over valor.

Much depends on whether the characters use deadly force against the thugs. They weren't sent to the warehouse with orders to kill anyone, but depending on the tone of your campaign, that's still a likely outcome. As noted above, these thugs were hired for the evening to stand around looking tough, not to fight to the death against a pack of homicidal, hardened adventurers. Most of the thugs won't stick around in a losing fight.

accompanied by two brawny dwarves (**guards**) who are sitting on either side of a crate in the bed of the cart. The dwarves didn't come here for a battle, and they flee when hostilities break out.

Devinshire (or more correctly, Professor Devinshire) is a ravenfolk mage. He uses the standard mage stat block with the following exceptions.

- His Dexterity increases by 2 to 16, which adds +1 to his armor class and to his dagger attack rolls.
- His Charisma increases by 1 to 12.
- He has advantage on attack rolls against a surprised creature.
- He can mimic any sound he's heard by making a Charisma (Deception) check against the passive Wisdom (Insight) scores of any listeners. Success indicates they believe the sound was real.
- He speaks Huginn and Northern Tongue in addition to Trade Tongue.

The Shell Game. The Orb can be in one of three places on the cart: on the seller's person, in the chest the dwarves seem to be guarding, or tucked into a compartment hidden under the bed of the cart. You can choose to cheat a bit here and simply decide that the Orb is never in the first place the characters look. Their first guess is guaranteed to be wrong.

The reason for this shell game isn't to frustrate the players, but rather to extend the encounter and make sure it devolves into a case of "hot potato." If characters grab the Orb too easily or too early, most of the enjoyment of this encounter will be cut short.

If the battle somehow goes on for 20 rounds and exhausts the Chain Reactions table, any remaining thugs

dive out the now numerous holes in the warehouse walls and escape. If the characters get control of the Orb or the opposition is reduced to four or fewer thugs, the opposition melts away as above. Characters might want to do the same, since sticking around the warehouse at that point is risky. If they stick around and manage to bring the erupting warehouse under control, they should be rewarded for their bravery when they return to Tomieriau.

Once characters arrive with the Orb, wizards and sorcerers of the Saintmistress's order place it in a lead chest for safekeeping. The adventurers are allowed to retire to the guest quarters of the compound, with copious congratulations. Saintmistress Rowanmantle is thrilled by their victory and requests they meet her tomorrow evening to discuss the situation further.



PART 2: MISSION BRIEFING

Moonlight streams through the windows of the long hallway connecting the Imperial Conservatory in Tomirau to other buildings in the complex. Occasionally a dark cloud floats past, obscuring the light. “Storm’s a-coming,” mutters one of the two lorekeepers who are serving as your escorts. The lorekeepers of House Reickenbacht are clad in red and white livery. Their features are elfin; the old blood runs strong in this house.

You are brought to one of the observatory’s many libraries. Two prominent persons greet you. They are your host—the free earl Ulmer Wilfaden Reickenbacht, wearing wizard’s robes—and your patron, Saintmistress Rowanmantle, clad in cleric’s vestments with a stole and adornments of a martial order of Yarila. The baton hanging from her belt is not mere decoration.

Two artifacts sit on the table. One is a large, unrolled map, ancient in coloring and the manner of the inscriptions. It shows the layout of a city and adjoining communities. The other is a grand tome, bound in thick leather with metallic Dwarven runes stamped into the cover and ragged, mismatched pages assembled across ages.

After thanking the party for its efforts in trying to retrieve the *Agua-Sintellus Orb* and assisting in her effort to foil attempts by the House of Aldous-Donner in retrieving time-warping artifacts from the Ruins of Thorn, she asks the characters to sit for a briefing on the next aspect of this mission.

She makes several points during the briefing.

“The Agua-Sintellus Orb has been rumored in many forms, but we believe it is a physical device. It contains water vapor collected from the waterfalls at the edge of the world. The Orb acts as a trigger or key to open a place called the Chamber of Tomorrows.”

Saintmistress Rowanmantle points out a place on the map near to a flowing stream that leads directly into the River Thorn. She believes the Chamber of Tomorrows is located there. She asks the earl to continue the briefing. He opens the large tome to a bookmarked page.

“This is the logbook of a company of dwarves dating back to the time of the war for Mithral. It describes places they explored and loot they seized, including something that fits the description of the Orb. The entry that matters most to us is this one—the diarist refers to ‘the Archway of Horizons’, which is where they found the Orb. The writer describes this as a grand archway, several stories tall, spanning a tributary of the River Thorn in a deep box canyon. The members of the company also spied something the diarist tried, but failed, to describe in meaningful terms. His colorful name for it, however, was the ‘effervescent flotilla’.

“You succeeded in capturing the Orb, but it’s clear that Professor Skein Devinspire, deputy director of the Treasury of Antiquities, is not giving up. Our informants tell us that he’s assembled another team of mercenary treasure hunters and is already headed to the ruins of Thorn.

“We don’t know whether they’re using magical transportation or Shadow Roads, but we have something better; something that can not only let you catch the professor but beat him to the site. The good earl can provide you with speedy mounts and an armed escort that will accompany you as far the outskirts of the old city. We’ve made a facsimile of this map and the relevant portion of the diary for your use; they’re included in your pack.”

The Imperial Conservatory markets can provide any nonmagical gear the characters require. Because House Reickenbacht is aligned with the Lords Arcane, some magic items of a common variety can be found and purchased, such as *potions of healing*, *greater healing*, *climbing*, and *fire breath*; spell scrolls (up to five cantrips, three 1st-level spells, and two 2nd-level spells); and *+1 ammunition* for ranged weapons (up to 10 arrows, 10 bolts, and 10 sling bullets).


Once the characters are ready, they should set out on the seven-day trip from Tomieriau to the ruins indicated on the map. The escort (3 **veterans**, 10 **guards**, and a **mage**) stays with them for five entirely uneventful days. About midday on the sixth day, a courier overtakes the group with a message for the escort. The leader of the NPCs reads it, then tells the characters they should continue on but all fourteen of the escorts must leave to deal with an emergency elsewhere. They can’t discuss their orders and they certainly can’t disobey them. They apologize for not completing the journey, wish the party luck, and depart.

PART 3: ARCHWAY OF THE HORIZONS

The characters arrive at the archway after their overland journey from the Imperial Conservatory in Tomieriau. The week-long trip is uneventful unless you want to inject a few encounters or a brief side trek of your own. Otherwise, read the following.

For the past hour, as you’ve approached Thorn, the weather has gotten steadily worse. Rain is now relentless, and although it’s early afternoon, the sky is as dark as dusk. Forking bolts of lightning regularly illuminate the surrounding canyon walls without revealing anything useful about the path ahead. To your left, a tributary of the River Thorn rushes and surges over its banks. An hour ago, it was a sluggish stream.

Unexpectedly, you hear the horses’ hooves striking



cobblestones. Looking down, you see you've arrived at the junction of several ancient flagstone roadways. To right and left is a landscape overgrown with vines and creepers, dark trees with twisted and grasping branches, and sprawling walls of bushes that once must have been manicured hedgerows.

An ear-splitting clap of thunder is accompanied by a flash of lightning bright enough to illuminate a structure several hundred yards ahead. The base is hardly discernible from the mounds of vines and creepers, but above those rises a stone structure over a hundred feet high and arching across the river.

The eastern end, nearest to you, appears intact, but across the river the structure has fallen into ruin. A second flash illuminates a grand staircase leading to stone double doors partway up the structure.

The Archway of Horizons bridges the river, but it's not a typical bridge. A better description is that it's a building that arches across the river, with foundations on both banks; or it was, before the structure on the western bank collapsed.

The doors atop the grand staircase are ajar and open or close at the slightest touch.

Gaining entry through the roof is near impossible in this storm. Climbing the walls requires a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check, made with disadvantage because of the rain and wind. The walls are also protected by ancient magic that prevents damage and magical travel directly into the apex of the structure. In other words, the doors aren't just the obvious way inside, they might be the only way.

Doors and Locks. Many doors in the Archway are closed and locked. In the descriptions that follow, a shorthand syntax is used to describe these doors. A sample description is:

(DC 15 Dexterity, DC 15 Strength; AC 17, 20 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage)

This translates to: the lock can be picked with thief's tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check; it can be

forced open with a successful DC 15 Strength check; or it can be destroyed by attacking AC 17 and causing 20 points of damage, but the door is immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage.

1. APPROACHING THE ARCHWAY

The lightning strikes also stirred a **shambling mound** that's perfectly hidden inside the vines and creepers around the base of the archway. It strikes when characters reach the 'X' marked on the map. (For a tougher challenge after an easy journey, add a second shambling mound.) The shambling mound surprises anyone who doesn't have Nature proficiency and passive Perception 14 or higher.

The doors are flanked by statues of marble, highly stylized portrayals of Lada, golden goddess of life, and Sarastra, goddess of knowledge, whom elves venerate. The statues are markers placed by Thorn's ancient inhabitants to indicate that the archway's location is a ley line intersection point. A character who makes a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check realizes this; a character with proficiency in both Arcana and History has advantage on this check. A thorough examination of the area (10 minutes or longer by someone who has proficiency in Arcana or who has the Ley Initiate feat from *Deep Magic 5: Ley Lines*) reveals this is an access point for a shadow road (which the pursuing Professor Devinshire and his minions are currently traveling on, although no check can reveal that fact).

2. ENTRANCE HALL

Matching doors face each other in opposite walls of the entrance hall. The pattern on the tile floor has faded, as have the frescoes on the wall, but you can make out the outlines of figures in the paintings. Muddy footprints lead to the door in the east wall.

A close examination of the frescoes tells a portion of the story of the archway. The west wall depicts masons and builders constructing an arch over the waterway. The east wall shows stylized spellcasters manipulating ley lines. The north wall shows an elf so ancient it looks undead, its long arms outstretched and standing over something, but that portion of the painting is too indistinct to make out any more detail.

Doors from this hall are unlocked.

Characters who listen at the door to room 3 hear guttural speech and, with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, identify the language as Gnoll. The scent of wood smoke wafts under the door.

SETTING TRAPS FOR DEVINSHIRE

What if the characters want to set snares and traps to delay Professor Devinshire's crew? Let them. Since the characters won't be around to see the effect, when Devinshire's crew appears later in the adventure, describe them with subtle clues that the traps had the desired effect: cuts and bruises, torn or burned clothing, etc. Just a description on your part is enough. There's no need to roll for the exact effect of the traps unless you want to.

3. GNOLL HUNTING PARTY

A hunting party of gnolls has taken refuge from the rain and started a fire to dry themselves. Smoke escapes upward through cracks in the 20-foot high ceiling.

The hunting party consists of Oglek, a female **gnoll pack lord**, and seven **gnolls**. They've traveled a long distance from the windswept desert near Cindass to explore visions Oglek claims to have received from the Spider Prophet. Besides her usual gear and weapons, Oglek has a pouch of *dust of sneezing and choking*. If the situation looks dire for the gnolls, she tosses the *dust* and tries to escape.

Treasure. Oglek carries a *potion of growth* and a pouch containing *dust of sneezing and choking*. Another has a *cloak of the manta ray* tucked into its pack. Each gnoll also carries the equivalent of 20 gp in old coins and other trinkets.

4. OLD REFUGE

A midden pile, discarded bones of fowl and boar, and scorch marks and ash piles indicate cook fires have been lit in this chamber within the last few months.

Evidently, this was not the first time a hunting party holed up in the first floor of the archway. This was their regular camp site until it became so filthy they switched to the adjoining room.

5. STAIRCASE LOBBY

Upon entering this room, you hear a snorting sound from the northwest corner. The stench of wild pig is overpowering. A large staircase ascends from the western part of the room.

A pair of **giant boars** use this room as their den, and they defend it vigorously. If the characters haven't yet fought the gnolls in Area 3, they hear the battle and either attack the characters from behind or quietly set an ambush for after this fight concludes.

USING LEY LINES

Spellcasters can tap into this intersection of ley lines while casting spells. Doing so requires a successful spellcasting check with a DC = 10 + the level of the spell slot being used. If the check succeeds, the caster rolls on the Strong Ley Line Effects table to find the effect of tapping into the ley line.

This table is a modified version of the table from the *Midgard Heroes Handbook* and *Deep Magic 5: Ley Lines*. If you have either of those books and already use the more complete rules for ley lines found in them, you can ignore this version of the table.

If the result rolled on the table doesn't make sense in the context of the spell being cast, it's up to you whether to roll again for a different result or assume the ley line had no effect.

STRONG LEY LINE EFFECTS, D12

- 1 **Duplication.** The spell effect happens twice in rapid succession.
- 2 **Empowerment.** The spell's variable effect becomes 50 percent more powerful (multiply by 1.5).
- 3 **Swift casting.** A ritual spell is cast as a single action, or a single action spell is cast as a bonus action.
- 4 **Persistence.** The spell's target makes its saving throw with disadvantage.
- 5 **Reach.** The spell's range is doubled. Range Self becomes Touch, and Touch becomes 10 feet.
- 6 **Poisoned.** The target has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks for the duration of the spell.
- 7 **Strength.** The caster heals 1d4 hit points for each slot level of the spell slot used in casting this spell.
- 8 **Thanotopic.** The spell's damage type becomes necrotic. Resistance and immunity to necrotic damage have no effect against it.
- 9 **Threnodic.** The spell's damage type becomes psychic. Resistance and immunity to psychic damage have no effect against it.
- 10 **Thunder.** The target is deafened for the duration of the spell or for 1 minute.
- 11 **Umbral.** The target radiates complete, magical darkness in a 10-foot radius for the duration of the spell or for 1 minute.
- 12 **Backlash.** The caster gains one level of exhaustion.

6. EMPTY LIBRARY

Five fluted columns in a classical style support the ceiling. There are bookshelves running the length of the north, south, and east walls. All the shelves are empty of everything but dust and trash. A door in the east wall is closed.

The door in the eastern wall is locked (DC 15 Dexterity, DC 15 Strength; AC 17, 20 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage).

The secret door in the eastern wall is cleverly built into the bookshelf. Finding it takes a ten-minute search of the eastern bookshelf, or one minute of searching and a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The first indication a character gets that they've found a secret door is when the latch clicks open.

7. ANTECHAMBER

The door to the antechamber is locked (DC 15 Dexterity, DC 15 Strength; AC 17, 20 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage).

An oval table stands in the center of the room. It is a map in relief, with raised mountains and flat seas painted in brown, green, and blue.

A character who makes a successful DC 10 Intelligence (History) check determines this represents the continents known as Midgard, the Southlands, and Far Cathay. Someone who examines the table quickly realizes the top is mounted on a swivel so it can be flipped over. When it's flipped, it shows a completely different geography.

If characters study it in an effort to identify it, the coastlines, rivers, forests, and highlands seem to shift when observed, never looking quite the same twice. The map portrays the Elflands on the opposite side of Midgard; correctly identifying them requires a successful DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check. A character who achieves at least a 20 on this check suspects the map might represent the Elflands, but only because they consider it a reasonable guess, not a certainty. Such a map would be valuable to scholars, if it could be properly studied. The table radiates illusion magic.

The door in the north wall is locked (DC 15 Dexterity, DC 15 Strength; AC 17, 20 hp, immune to poison, psychic, and radiant damage). The mechanism is identical to the lock between Areas 6 and 7, so a character who picked that lock successfully has advantage when attempting to pick this one, and vice versa.

8. ROOM OF DEVICES

The air in this room is stale, as if it's been sealed for centuries. A table in the center of the room contains two models of intricate devices. Engraved into the table in Elvish script are three labels; two labels are near the two devices, but the third is near an empty portion of the table.

There are also three sand-glasses on the table. Each sand-glass is mounted on a central pivot so it can be flipped upside down to start the sand flowing from top to bottom. The two sand-glasses near the models are tipped on their sides. The third is upright, with all the sand in the bottom glass, and it's next to the label near the empty portion of table.

The Elvish labels are in the language of Thornish, also known as Old Elvish. A character proficient in modern Elvish can read the labels with a successful DC 13 Intelligence check. The labels identify the two devices as "Celestial Sextant" and "Thornish Nocturnal." The third label reads "Agua-Sintellus."

Upending any sand-glass triggers an illusion. As the sand falls into the lower glass, the associated model slowly fades from view. Turning the glass over again slowly makes an invisible model visible again. Tipping the glass on its side causes no change. The "models" themselves have no physical reality; they're illusions.

The "missing" model near the label *Agua-Sintellus* can be made visible by turning over its sand-glass. It looks just like the Orb the characters captured in the warehouse, with one change: this version of it has an attachment, as if the Orb were placed in a cradle fixed atop a rod or a staff.

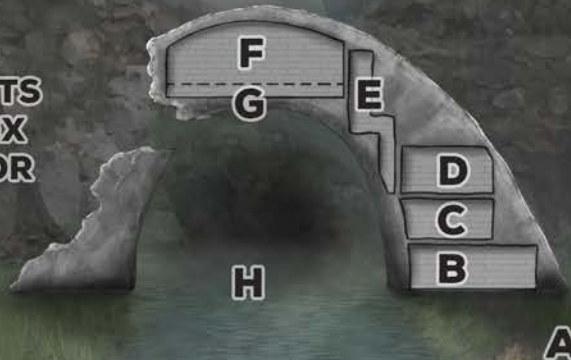
9. TAPESTRY OF TIME

This chamber is a large landing for a spiral staircase extending to the floor above. Other than the staircase, the most prominent feature of the area is a tapestry hanging on the south wall. The tapestry is entirely blue but it's also obviously magical. As you watch, a group of elves drifts into view from the left edge. The elves are in seated positions, as if they're sitting on invisible benches. They move across the tapestry from left to right, slowing down as they rise up a fold in the cloth and speeding up as they slide down, the same as a boat sailing across a wave-tossed sea. Three of the elves hold devices that may be navigational instruments. As they near the right side of the tapestry, they appear to sail over the edge of a waterfall, unconcerned. A moment later, they reappear at the left edge and the scene replays exactly as before.

The illusion on the tapestry repeats endlessly. One elf holds aloft a *Celestial Sextant*, another the *Thornish Nocturnal*, and a third a staff with a glowing Orb in its cradle.

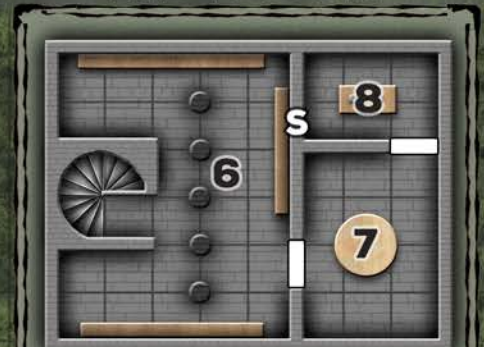
ARCHWAY OF THE HORIZONS

- A. APPROACH
- B. 1ST FLOOR
- C. 2ND FLOOR
- D. 3RD FLOOR
- E. STAIR SHAFTS
- F. DOMED APEX
- G. FALSE FLOOR
- H. TRIBUTARY

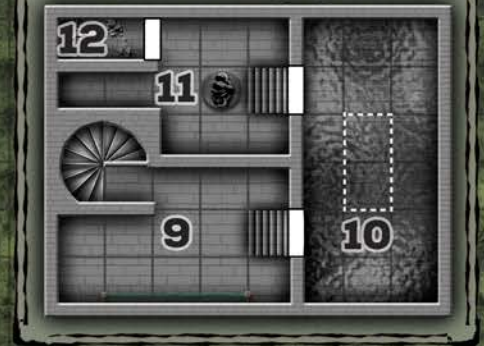


1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

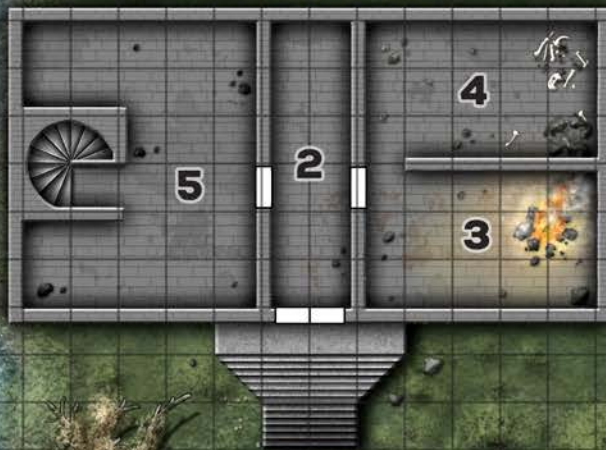
2ND FLOOR



3RD FLOOR

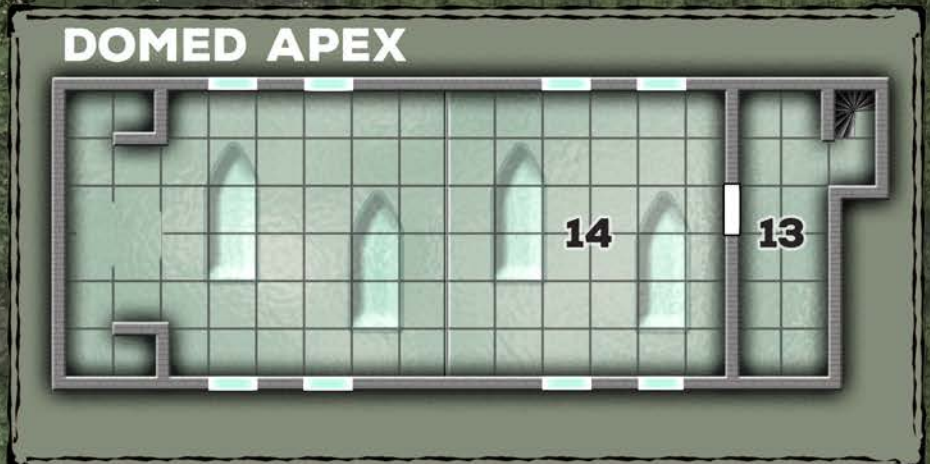


1ST FLOOR



X

DOMED APEX



1

The exit from this room is a steep 10-foot stair leading up to a narrow landing with a doorway into Area 10.

10. GREAT JOURNEY

This room is dim. The walls and ceiling are painted black, and the floor is translucent black obsidian. Beneath the glass is a 10-foot deep tank filled with liquid that you can hear lapping against the walls. A thick line of mold and algae grows along the seam between the floor and the wall.

Even a cursory search of the room reveals an oval hole through the floor, about 10 feet by 5 feet, in the center of the room. It's not apparent from the entrance, but anyone who enters the room notices it moments before stepping in it.

The liquid-filled tank under the floor has the same horizontal dimensions as the room and is 10 feet deep. This is impossible in the natural world, as characters know if they explored Areas 7 and 8; there's no space for such a tank under this room. Characters have no way of discerning exactly what this space is, but there's no denying it's real.

A black staff lies at the bottom of the tank at the point marked "X" on the map. A *detect magic* spell detects it automatically. Otherwise, it can be spotted with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check while peering into the tank. This is the attachment that makes the *Agua-Sintellum Orb* work.

After characters move onto the glass, read the following.

Through the water, pairs of yellow eyes blink at you through the glass.

Inhabiting the tank are a cloister of fifteen corrupted (lawful evil) aquatic flumphs. They are aggressive and territorial. Anyone who enters the tank is attacked. The stench spray of these flumphs doesn't wash off in water, and they can't spray it outside the tank. They avoid positions where they can be attacked from the edge of the hole, except to swarm anyone carrying the staff.

The staff can be retrieved safely and easily with a *mage hand* spell cast from above the tank.

If someone holds the Orb openly, they must make a successful DC 15 Strength saving throw or it leaps from their hands, bounces through the hole, and attaches itself to the staff.

Treasure. A rod that serves as a staff-sized attachment to the *Orb of Agua-Sintellus*.

11. PLINTH OF THE GUARDIAN

Looming over the downward stairs is a sculpture of a fearsome, ancient elf clothed in priest's robes, seemingly old beyond imagining. The base of the sculpture is inscribed in Thornish script. A spiral stairway has collapsed in the northeast corner of the chamber.

The inscription on the base of the sculpture reads "Guardian" in the Old Elvish language. The statue is neither magical nor dangerous.

12. COLLAPSED STAIRWELL

The floor of the stairwell is filled with twisted, rusted iron, the remains of a spiral staircase that must have climbed up the neck of the arch.

The stairwell shaft ascends 35 feet to a small landing, then continues up another 20 feet to another landing outside room 13, the entryway to the Domed Apex.

Enough of the wall-bolts and bracing for the former staircase remain that an adroit climber can scale the shaft. Making the climb requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. Once someone makes the climb, they can lower a rope. Characters coming up the rope can make the climb with a successful DC 8 check.

Inventive characters might come up with other ways of navigating the shaft. In most cases, use DC 15 as a starting point for required checks and adjust up or down based on the practicality of the idea. Magic (*fly*, *levitate*) can make a skill check unnecessary.

13. ANTECHAMBER OF TIME

Aside from the shaft you just climbed up, the only other exit from this chamber is a stone door on the western wall. In the center of the door is an ancient, elvish-looking mechanism of stunning beauty and complexity.

Radiating out from that mechanism onto the walls, ceiling, and floor are hundreds of straight and curving lines that swoop across the room and re-intersect in complex combinations at six points scattered seemingly at random across the room. The effect is reminiscent of navigational lines one might see on a nautical chart, but nothing else in this chamber resembles a map.

The only other markings in the chamber are seven-digit numbers written in Thornish along some of the longer lines.

A character who studies the patterns in the room and makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes the pattern as an abstract representation of ley lines. A character with the Ley Initiate feat (*Deep Magic 5: Ley Lines*) has advantage on this check. Without a starting point or other reference, however, it's impossible to figure out how this portrayal of

ley lines relates to the real world. Once characters understand what the lines represent, they also realize that it probably isn't an accurate map but a stylistic representation of ley line connections.

The lock mechanism is keyed to the *Orb of Agua-Sintellus*. The Orb alone can be used to unlock the mechanism. But it takes the attached rod to negate the time-warping effects of walking into Room 14. Unless the rod is in place, characters don't encounter the Guardian in real time.

As a key, the Orb needs only to be touched to the locking mechanism; it need not remain in the mechanism.

If characters haven't retrieved the staff from Area 10 and reunited it with the Orb before entering this chamber, roll a d6 and check the Time Warping Effects table to see what happens the first time someone enters the chamber.

D6 TIME WARPING EFFECT

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Time slows; each hour spent in this room equates to a month outside. |
| 2 | Time slows; each hour spent in this room equates to a year outside. |
| 3 | Time slows; each hour spent in this room equates to 10 years outside. |
| 4 | Time quickens; each hour characters experience in this room ages them by a month. |
| 5 | Time quickens; each hour characters experience in this room ages them by a year. |
| 6 | Time quickens; each hour characters experience in this room ages them by 10 years. |

These time warping effects have little meaning in a one-shot adventure, but if characters continue adventuring after this, they could have dramatic effects. Their first indication that something is amiss comes when Devenshire and his minions arrive; at some point, the Professor declares how he was delayed, possibly for years (by wars, natural calamities, or anything else you choose to shock the players with) or expresses his amazement at how the characters have aged.

If characters have reunited the Orb and staff, the encounter in this room takes place in real time. When

OBSTACLES AND ENCOUNTERS

D20 Effect

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 1 | An especially violent swell hits the trailing (southern) boat. Every creature in the boat must make a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or be swept overboard. Creatures that are prone or seated have advantage on the check. |
| 2 | The eastern boat collides with a tumbling tree trunk in the water. Every creature in the boat must make a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or be thrown overboard. Creatures that are prone or seated have advantage on the check. |
| 3 | A crocodile lunges over the gunwale of the northern boat and attacks a randomly-selected creature in that boat. |
| 4 | A giant constrictor snake is tossed into a random boat by a crashing wave. It's terrified and attacks randomly. |
| 5 | Two lizardfolk in a canoe, fighting against the current, are overtaken by the effervescent flotilla. The canoe slips into the center of the four-boat formation. They're more interested in surviving the storm than getting drawn into the fight in the boats, but they can attack anyone who's in the water, not submerged, and not hanging onto the gunwale of a boat. |
| 6 | A reckless party of four kuo-toa spring from the river; one lands in each boat and attacks someone. |
| 7 | A big wave washes over the western boat. Every creature in the boat must make a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or be swept overboard. Creatures that are prone or seated have advantage on the check. |
| 8 | A treant that fell into the river swirls past, shouting "Help me! Help me!" It's far too big to be pulled into a boat, but it can be lashed alongside. The treant floats but can't control its movement in the water at all. |
| 9 | A sahuagin climbs into the northern boat, hoping to shove or pull someone overboard to become a meal for its pair of reef sharks, which are lurking nearby. |
| 10-20 | No incident this round. |

the Professor and his minions arrive, they declare they must have been just steps behind the characters.

14. CHAMBER OF TOMORROWS

The ceiling of this chamber is domed and the floor is arched; you must have reached the arch atop the structure. Porthole-sized windows are arranged along the north and south walls, permitting viewing outside.

Opposite your position, enthroned in grandeur on a stone throne abutting the west wall, is the remains of an ancient creature resembling the statue you saw in the chamber at the base of the collapsed staircase. Its hollow, elven eyes, sunken cheeks, shaggy hair, and gnarled fingernails make it clear it's been dead for ages.

The crash of driving rain can be heard through the stone roof, punctuated regularly by thunder. Flashes of lightning through the portholes cast eery shadows on the walls and across the moldering remains on the throne.

An especially bright flash of lightning reveals that the floor is translucent, like streaked glass. You can see the rushing water of the Thorn River a hundred feet below.

Also beneath the floor, seemingly suspended in midair, are what you can only describe as boats—four of them, made from the same translucent material as the floor. Their prows point northward. Above two of the boats are two stone “pedestals” that float above the floor. Objects resembling the navigation instruments you saw earlier rest on the pedestals.

The objects are clearly the *Celestial Sextant* and the *Thornish Nocturnal*.

After characters have a few moments to take all that in and perhaps ask a few clarifying questions, the creature on the throne speaks to them.

“Thou are not of the true blood. Thou may observe and take thy bearings in this place, as many have done before thee, and as did a lone dwarf these eight days past. But touch nothing! Remove nothing! The Effervescent Flotilla is for the true of blood, and none others. Disdain these warnings, and thee shall surely incur wrath everlasting!”

This, of course, is the point at which Professor Devinshire (**mage**; see “An Illicit Exchange,” above, for alterations) and his minions (4 **scouts**) arrive on the scene behind the characters. Devinshire pushes his way into the room and declares something like, “We’ve been hunting for this place for a decade/year/month” or “I saw you but a week ago, yet you look as if you’ve been here a month/year/years,” or “Navigating the shadow roads was worth it! We’ve been right on your heels the entire time!”

Devinshire either didn’t hear the Guardian’s warning or doesn’t believe it. He immediately reaches for the nearest object, the *Celestial Sextant*. Even if a character

intervenes to prevent him from picking it up, Devinshire still manages to touch it. This sets off the guardian.

“Fool!” exclaims the Guardian. “Unworthy fool! You’ve set the Great Retreat in motion!”

In the background, a chorus of elves singing is heard. Those who know Elvish recognize it. The song is a melodic counting backward from “15 ... 14 ... 13 ... 12 ... 11 ... ” The singing fades away at the end of the third round of combat, when the countdown reaches zero.

The Guardian doesn’t discriminate between good and bad intruders. All are foes. It attacks indiscriminately, generally targeting against the nearest target. The Guardian uses the stats of a **wraith**, but its Speed is 30 feet and it can’t fly.

Devinshire’s minions also spring into action.

As combat begins, characters also become aware of a whirring sensation. At the start of the second round, they feel the floor vibrating beneath their feet. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character realizes that the floor is thinning out, becoming less substantial. At the end of the third round, it simply ceases to exist, and everything in this chamber—the characters, Devinshire and his minions, the Guardian, the navigation instruments—and the four effervescent boats suspended beneath the floor drop into the raging torrent of the river below. A tremendous whirlwind envelops the occupants of the chamber. Proceed to Part 4 and adjust character positions as directed.

PART 4: DON’T ROCK THE BOAT

The point of this encounter is to randomly assign everyone from the Domed Apex to a boat as they hit the water and begin flowing down the raging river. The magic of that chamber put everyone in a boat, but in an unexpected manner.

There are four boats, numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4. Roll a d4 for each character, NPC, monster, and navigational instrument. Every creature and object ends up in the boat matching the number it rolled.

The river flows swiftly from south to north. The boats land in the water in a diamond arrangement, with boat 1 in the lead (north), boat 4 trailing (south), and boats 2 and 3 opposite each other on the flanks (east and west). A gap of 10 feet separates boats from each other.

With the characters, Devinshire, his minions, and the Guardian all mixed together on the boats, there should be reason for combat on most of the boats. Devinshire and his crew want to kill the characters and capture the *Agua-Sintellus Orb*. The characters want to kill or drive off Devinshire and preserve the Orb and the two other navigational artifacts. The guardian wants everyone

dead so it can return the boats and artifacts to the time-safe sanctuary of the archway.

Emphasize the pounding rain, flashing lightning, howling wind, and the violent rocking and tossing of the boats. Communicating between the boats is possible only if the person hollering at another boat devotes an action to the attempt, and someone in the target boat makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

POSITION CHANGES AND INCIDENTS

At the start of every round after the first, roll a d6 to determine how the boats' positions change. They always wind up in a diamond shape, but the individual boats switch positions.

D6 BOAT POSITION CHANGE

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Swap: N & E switch, W & S switch. |
| 2 | Rotate clockwise: all boats shift 1 position clockwise. |
| 3 | Swap: N & W switch, E & S switch. |
| 4 | Rotate counterclockwise: all boats shift 1 position counterclockwise. |
| 5 | Flip: N & S switch, W & E switch. |
| 6 | Repeat the previous move (or choose to roll again). |

The boats might also encounter obstacles in the river. After rolling for the boats' shifting position, roll a d20 and check the Obstacles and Encounters table to determine whether a boat encounters something or has another incident. Where something affects a random boat, roll a d4 to determine which.

JUMPING FROM BOAT TO BOAT

All the occupants are free to leap from boat to boat. Characters can't get a 10-foot running start for a long jump over the side of a boat; they can only make standing broad jumps, to a distance in feet equaling half the character's Strength score.

A character with Strength 20 can make a 10-foot standing jump directly into another boat.

Characters with Strength less than 20 might be able to jump far enough to catch the gunwale of another boat and pull themselves in. The character must make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. If it succeeds, they catch the gunwale and pull themselves into the boat, but they can't do any other action or movement that turn. If the roll fails, the character lands in the water and catches the target boat's gunwale but can't get into the boat this turn. They can pull themselves in on their next turn, or someone else in the boat can use an action to pull them in. Enemies in that boat can attack them. If the check fails by 5 or more (result = 10 or less), the character lands in the water and doesn't catch hold of the gunwale.

The undead Guardian (wraith) can shift to any other boat as an action, without making a Strength check.

CHARACTER OVERBOARD!

Anyone who rolls a 10 or less on a jump attempt or goes overboard for another reason (being pushed, for example) is swept along in the surging water. The creature in the water is somewhere in the midst of the boats, but their exact position is constantly changing. If you use miniatures or other tokens, place the character anywhere in the water but remind everyone that the miniature doesn't represent the character's actual location; it's just a reminder that they're somewhere in the water. A character that starts its turn in the water must make a Strength (Athletics) check. The result determines their immediate fate, as shown below.


Str Check	Effect
20 or higher	Creature grabs the gunwale of a randomly-selected boat; can climb in on their next turn, or a creature in that boat can use an action to pull them in. Creatures in that boat can attack the creature in the water.
15-19	Creature swims next to a randomly-selected boat. On its next turn, it has advantage on its Strength check. A creature in that boat can use an action to aid the character's next Strength check, or can push the character farther away and negate advantage on the next roll.
10-14	Creature keeps its head above water; check again at the start of its next turn.
9 or less	Creature is swept underwater but is holding its breath; its next turn's Strength check is made with disadvantage.

ENDING THE RIVER BATTLE

The battle continues until one of the three sides prevails.

The storm continues until the boats have been washed all the way down the river to the sea. How long this takes is up to you; anything from an hour to a day could be appropriate. When the boats reach the sea, they trigger a magical "fail-safe" mode instilled in them by their elven builders. Once they leave the river mouth, the boats are driven approximately a mile out to sea by the storm, but then they actively fight the current and make their way back to shore, where they find a sheltered cove and beach themselves gently.

The boats have oars and sails stowed beneath their benches. They can be rowed or sailed as very old but otherwise quite normal elvish boats.



Their true purpose, however, was hinted at by the Guardian. They were built to transport elves to the mustering point of the “Great Retreat,” the elves’ migration to the other side of the Midgard disc. This mustering point isn’t delineated on any navigational chart, and may in fact not be reachable by any method other than vessels such as the Effervescent Flotilla. Even these boats won’t go there automatically; their passengers must give the boats the correct instructions.

The Great Retreat is not the boats’ only purpose, either. As noted, they can be used as normal boats, they can carry passengers to the mustering point of the Great Retreat, or they can be controlled magically through the use of the three navigational devices from the Domed Apex: the *Thornish Nocturnal*, the *Celestial Sextant*, and the *Agua-Sintellum Orb*. The full use of these devices is explained in Appendix 2.

CONCLUSION

If the characters win the battle on the river, they can decide whether to take the boats back to Reywald and present them to the Saintmistress, keep them for themselves (extremely useful for reaching any location near water), or investigate how to journey to the underside of Midgard. Any of these adventures can be continued in your extended campaign. What exactly lies on the underside of Midgard is still a mystery; no one in the world can tell the players what they’ll find on that journey, how long it will take, what dangers and wonders they’ll encounter, and whether they can return to the world’s “topside” once they make the transition to the underside. The only thing that’s certain is, if they don’t return to the Saintmistress and at least report on what happened at Thorn, they earn her undying enmity.

If the group returns to Reywald, the Saintmistress rewards each character with +1 Status in her region and the Earl grants them +1 Status in the Grand Duchy of Dornig. They are also gifted an uncommon magical item; it doesn’t need to be of the characters’ choosing, but it should be something they’ll find highly useful. The Orb and staff are placed in safe storage while Rowanmantle tries to determine the best way to handle their magic and learn more about their destination. She even allows the characters to keep one of the four elvish boats. Without all three navigational devices, it can only be used as a standard boat, albeit an uncommonly beautiful, sleek, and sturdy one.

If Devinspire gets away with the Orb and/or any of the boats or other navigational devices, he takes his prizes back to House Aldous Donner. The characters are now his hated enemies, and he’ll go to any length to see them ruined or killed. Fortunately, his interest in the Orb is based entirely on bad information; he believes its purpose is manipulating time, not navigation or travel.

If the Guardian prevails, it returns the boats and navigation devices to the archway. With the Orb and staff recombined, the wraith can now split into three perfect copies of itself when defending the items, making the prospect of ever seizing the items again far more perilous.



TO WAKE WAR

A 5th Edition Adventure for 7th-level Characters

By Kelly Pawlik

*The trail along the mountain pass that leads to the Seat of Mavros has been barren for weeks.
Has something deadly taken over the treacherous mountain path?*


The western heartlands of Midgard were once prosperous, populous, and beautiful. Tragically, they fell to warring among themselves, and the mighty mage-kings who ruled the region subjected it to magical ruination. Now its desert wastelands are home to little more than desperate dust goblins scrounging for survival.

But also to be found here is the Seat of Mavros, where the god of war first trod the soil of Midgard and showed men how to use fire and steel. The sprawling fortress shrine is the objective of countless pilgrims from the Seven Cities and beyond, and the headquarters of the

Order of Mavros: a knightly organization of paladins and faithful warriors who patrol the Wasted West to safeguard traveling pilgrims.

SYNOPSIS

In this adventure, the player characters are either respected allies or reasonably successful members of the Order stationed at the Seat of Mavros. The pilgrimage to the fortress-shrine and settlement is always difficult, but a sudden decline in pilgrims has caused concern among



leaders of the Order. The PCs are enlisted to trek toward the city of Savoyne, one of the most popular pilgrims' starting points, to uncover the source of the problem.

As characters cross the lifeless and deserted mountain pass, they are attacked by dust goblins stationed at a cliffside outpost. They learn of a nearby tent city inhabited by hundreds of members of rival dust goblin tribes who banded together to awaken what they believe is an immensely powerful elder entity—and which is, in fact, an angel of war called Ylia.

What starts as a simple investigation escalates into a race against the clock to save prisoners, stop an advancing tribe of dust goblins set on joining the growing horde, and assume control of the ritual to bring forth the angel of war.

If the heroes are unsuccessful, countless lives will be lost to the growing army of dust goblins led by Karbekul Four-Fingers, to the angel of war, and through the destruction of the Seat of Mavros, the city of Savoyne, and surrounding communities.

HOOKS

The party could begin this adventure as:

- Pilgrims who were waylaid by goblins on the road and subsequently rescued on the road by paladins patrolling from the Seat of Mavros. Now, having recovered, they seek to atone for the failure of their pilgrimage by aiding the Order.
- Guards assigned to the Seat of Mavros. They volunteer for this dangerous assignment in the hope of obtaining promotions.
- Hired mercenaries who arrived at the Seat of Mavros with a caravan or other armed group. Now they're looking for further mercenary work, and the Order offers them this mission for pay.

Whichever hook you choose, after a briefing by an officer of the Order, the characters ride out to determine what plagues the pilgrimage route.

LOCATIONS AROUND THE SEAT OF MAVROS

These locations play significant roles in the adventure. They are described in greater detail in sections devoted to them. These snapshots are for quick reference, and include information most characters would know from rumors, tales, and their own travels.

THE OUTPOST AND LOOKOUT

After several days of travel, the group arrives to an outpost at the mouth of the pass, where they discover the goblins have taken control.

BREAK IN THE PASS

Tall mountains line the sides of the pass, but every so often, breaks in the imposing crags reveal narrow mountain paths. Those paths are treacherous for the dust goblins and the wildlife that survives in the wastelands and occasionally ventures down them.

This particular path, which is used by the Ghost Goblin tribe of dust goblins in Scene 2, turns sharply several times near the mountain pass to skirt immense boulder mounds around the base of the mountains.

A web of smaller paths crisscrosses deeper into the mountains, making travel possible—slowly—should access to the larger path be blocked. Where a few of these smaller paths join, there is a relatively flat area forty feet across. The ground is strewn with rocks and boulders. Loose rocks perched on larger outcroppings may be precariously balanced.

THE DUST GOBLIN CAMP

A motley collection of tents, some appearing to be made with far too many, or far too few, supports, are arrayed across the valley floor in a chaotic jumble. Moving through and around the tents are hundreds of dust goblins. There are no fewer than three different tribal sigils crudely marked on ragged banners displayed throughout the encampment. Despite its size and large number of inhabitants, there appears to be an empty area reserved for additional dust goblins.

A makeshift shrine in the center of the camp bears the remains of offerings to the Great Old Ones: pilgrims who met an untimely end. A large pen near the center of the camp houses a dozen prisoners. Sentries patrol the perimeter of the valley.

SHRINE TO YLIA

A large boulder rests against the side of the mountain. It's obvious the boulder was moved with great effort involving ropes and levers, to reveal a makeshift doorway carved into the rock face behind. The dark doorway leads into a long, narrow hallway that opens into a small cavern, twenty feet wide and forty feet long. Near the far wall is a large, flat stone that once held the *rod of ruin*.

This cavern was obviously lovingly carved out and then embellished with cave drawings depicting a great winged being at the head of an army calling down columns of flame upon a rival army. Now blood, both new and old, smears the walls.

Hundreds of years ago, two groups fought for control over the *rod of ruin*. One group deemed Ylia, the angel of war, a menace to the world. They are the ones who desperately sealed the door to this small mountainside shrine with the boulder, trapping their opponents and a few allies inside the shrine. Many of those

entrapped continued fighting each other to the death. The survivors of the battle died slowly of thirst. Over centuries, their restless spirits became a rotting wind.

THE RITUAL SITE

In the midst of the mountains is an enigmatic, barren, hard-to-reach hollow. The ground is covered in gravel and shale, so nary a plant livens up the gray landscape. Just 80 feet by 120 feet, this flat-bottomed glen is just large enough to hold a hundred or more dust goblins. It's also the site where Karbekul Four-Fingers achieved rulership of his tribe by slaying the previous chieftain of the Maimed Ones tribe. Because of that incident, it has been selected as the ritual site.

A rough circle, 50 feet in diameter, has been laid out with primitive runes, pieces of cast-off armor, and broken weapons. It sits at the center of the glen, and numerous dust goblins kneel and chant around its perimeter.

The air here is oddly heavy, and the incessant, arrhythmic beating of drums by dust goblins creates an even more oppressive atmosphere.

SCENE 0: THE SEAT OF MAVROS

The adventure begins with the presumption that the group has agreed to meet with Lieutenant Tonia Half-tempered, a deputy commander in the Order of Mavros.

The lieutenant looks out the window and pauses for a moment. She squints as if she sees a pilgrim approaching, but it is merely a trick of the light, a cloud passing over the sun. She turns to address you, her face drawn with concern. "This time of year, it's common to see at least two groups of pilgrims arrive each week, but not a single new face has graced the halls of the holy site in almost three weeks.

"We've sent several squads to patrol the popular pilgrimage routes. We need you to scout the southern road.

"This is a matter of great importance to the Order. We're placing a lot of trust in you." She turns slightly, glancing out the window again, before facing you once more.

"Please, be as thorough as possible. Find out as much as you can before you return. Pilgrims who come to the Seat of Mavros aren't just faithful worshipers; most of them are also capable, experienced warriors. They wouldn't be waylaid by some simple obstacle. We must learn what's happening to them."

The lieutenant can provide the following further information in response to questions.

- No pilgrims have arrived in three weeks. The characters were among one of the last groups to reach the shrine.

- No caravans have arrived with supplies, and the community has begun using its emergency stores. Those supplies won't last more than a few weeks, even with careful rationing.

- There are signs of greater-than-normal goblin activity in the surrounding region, but no tribe has attacked the Order directly.

She offers the following supplies to the party.

- Food, water, climbing gear, camping gear, and other mundane supplies.
- 1 *potion of healing* per investigator.
- A rough map to guide them along the Verrayne Road, the route leading from the Seat of Mavros to Verrayne. It shows the Seat of Mavros, the outpost three days to the south, and the Melano Pass. The road is clearly defined for the entire length, but the map doesn't show many other features or landmarks.
- She has no horses or other mounts to spare; they're all required for defense, should this turn out to be a prelude to an attack.

Characters have a day to gather their supplies and make preparations before they must depart on their mission.

Following the road south for three days brings the party to the northern edge of the pass. They should reach the old outpost by noon on the third day. They see no signs of travelers along the route that are more recent than three weeks ago.

When characters reach the outpost, proceed to Scene 1.

PACING

While it takes time for the PCs to move from one location to the next, it's best if they move quickly. Time is of the essence when it comes to breaking up the growing army of dust goblins and whatever scheme they're hatching. Characters shouldn't be allowed to take long rests whenever they want. The adventure is going to stretch across many days simply because of the distances involved. Try to keep the characters moving until day's end instead of stopping for a long rest after every significant battle. You can break up unnecessary long rests with random attacks against the sleeping characters, or you could let the characters spot a large dust cloud behind them, implying that a sizable force of goblins is moving in the same direction the characters need to go, less than an hour behind them. Do whatever you think will motivate your players to press forward and keep the action moving.

SCENE 1: OUTPOST

On a small plateau, twenty feet up the rocky walls of the mountain pass, is an old tower outpost. Four crude shelters made from stitched hides are pitched around its base. A dust goblin is barely visible, crouching on a rocky outcropping above the mountain pass and surveying the area below.

From a distance of 400 feet or more, it's not possible to make out more detail than what's described above. The tents stand by an enclosed pen, all built against the steep walls of the mountain side.

The outpost is inhabited by 7 **dust goblin warriors**, 2 **dust goblins**, and 1 **death dog**. The group is awaiting the imminent arrival of the Ghost Goblins tribe, and has instructions to keep watch over a handful of prisoners at this location. When the horde arrives, the captives will be transported to the ritual site.

An outcropping fifty feet to the north serves as a lookout post. It rises eighty feet above the pass. A steep, treacherous path leads from one to the other. The pass wall can be scaled with a successful DC 15 Strength

(Athletics) check. The outcropping has a flat top and provides a good vantage of the pass for several hundred feet in both directions. The dust goblins posted here are certain they'll hear the Ghost Goblins approaching long before they're sighted, but they remain vigilant.

Three dust goblins guard the pen where the four prisoners are held, while two more dust goblins stand watch on the outcropping. One dust goblin enjoys a rest by the low-burning fire while his death dog mount chews on a hunk of unidentified meat. The remaining three goblins are playing dice inside one of the tents. All of the goblins, on and off duty, are alert to danger and ready for immediate action.

The two dust goblins keeping watch above the pass might notice the PCs approaching. Make Wisdom (Perception) checks for the dust goblins (-1) and group Dexterity (Stealth) checks for the characters. The characters are spotted unless at least half of their Stealth results are higher than both goblins' Perception checks. If either lookout spots the party, they alert their companions with bird calls. A character with proficiency in Nature recognizes these calls as mimicked.



If the party is not spotted, the goblins respond haphazardly when attacked. If the characters are spotted so the goblins are alerted, one dust goblin, disguised in clothing stolen from a pilgrim, flees into the mountain pass to lure the characters into dropping their guard. In that case, read the following.

After days of travel along the barren and vacant mountain pass through the Melano, the dreary monotony is broken as a small figure dressed in ragged clothes partly runs, partly stumbles down the path toward you. The figure waves its arms frantically one last time before collapsing to the ground in a heap.

When characters approach the disguised dust goblin, he draws his light crossbow from under his clothing and shoots. The remainder of the dust goblins then attack from hidden positions. Before the first attack, ask every character to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check. Characters who fail are surprised. Remember the dust goblins' Twisted trait: characters attacked by hidden dust goblins must make DC 10 Wisdom saving throws to avoid being frightened.

A few rounds into combat, assuming the goblins are losing, a dust goblin warrior mounted on the death dog tries to flee from the fight by racing up the pass to the north, in the direction the characters came from. All the other dust goblins fight to the death.

Evidence. A small band of dust goblins on the path is unusual but hardly enough to keep pilgrims from reaching their destination for weeks. It's common for dust goblins to conduct small raids along the trail, and these have never choked off all pilgrimages before.

Exploring the Outpost. With the dust goblins incapacitated, the party can explore the outpost. The goblin camp is positioned around a low-burning fire surrounded by discarded pieces of bone. The tents are filled with dirty scraps of bedding and, in one, a well-used deck of cards.

Four captured pilgrims are caged in the pen. All of them are malnourished and dehydrated. The bulk of their clothing and any valuables or weapons they had were taken by the dust goblins. These prisoners were captured seven days ago by this group of dust goblins. One of them understands enough of the dust goblins' language to have picked up that these goblins were expecting a strong party of the Ghost Goblin tribe, who would take the prisoners somewhere deeper into the mountains to be offered as a sacrifice to some powerful, ancient entity.

Though weary and malnourished, the freed prisoners are willing to continue on their own to the Seat of Mavros. In fact, they explain that they want nothing from the characters beyond the assistance they've already received, because the point of their pilgrimage is

to prove their strength and worthiness to Mavros. They will carry the warning about the horde of dust goblins back to the Order.

In the unlikely event that a player character was killed during this encounter, that player can assume the identity of one of the rescued pilgrims, all of whom are capable fighters.

Interrogating Dust Goblins. If any dust goblins were captured alive and are interrogated, they tell the same story as the prisoners: a war party of over a hundred Ghost Goblins is coming to collect the prisoners and take them to a much larger tribal gathering, where the prisoners will be sacrificed. Once that happens, the horde of dust goblins to the south will become unstoppable.

The war party is expected within the next day or two. The dust goblin who tried to flee was dispatched to warn the Ghost Goblins about the characters. The war party, led by Marlik the Fearless, is to come through a pass half a day's journey north, then travel south along the main road past this outpost to join the growing horde led by a fearsome dust goblin named Karbekul Four Fingers. The prisoners confirm that they heard the goblins describing the same story among themselves during their captivity. The dust goblins cackle with glee whenever they talk about the expected war party and the growing horde of dust goblins.

If the characters slipped past this outpost without combat, they can still encounter a patrol headed this way and learn much of the same information if they take prisoners from that group.

Proceeding. If the characters didn't stop the fleeing goblin during the battle, they can still catch him before he links up with the advancing war party, if they leave immediately. Proceed to Scene 2a if the party wishes to hunt the escapee, or to Scene 2b if the party plans to ambush the war party in the narrow pass. Continuing south along the pass road brings the party to Scene 3.

SCENE 2A: ESCAPEE

The characters must race to the mountain pass half a day's journey north to stop the escaping dust goblin from delivering his warning to the advancing war party. Unless the PCs are slow to act, they should have no difficulty catching the pair and defeating them.

Characters must move fast to catch the mounted dust goblin. For every 10 minutes (or fraction of 10 minutes) the goblin is ahead of them, characters must pursue for an hour to catch up. For every hour of pursuit, each character must make a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion.

At the end of the pursuit, characters must make a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check to spot the

tracks of the death dog veering off the trail into rocky cover. If that check fails, they continue forward for another hour before realizing they've lost the goblin's trail. If the Survival check succeeds, it can be followed with a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. A character who makes that check successfully spots the goblin peering around a boulder. Otherwise, they'll need to search the area to find their prey. See the map, Break in the Pass, for details about the scene.

Interrogating the Dust Goblin. If the goblin (Lukat) is taken alive, he can provide any information characters failed to gather at the outpost. With a successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) or DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check, Lukat will even provide the location of the dust goblin camp to the south. Lukat knows generally where the ritual will be held but not the precise location of the sacred site, so he can't lead characters there.

If Lukat evades the characters, he finds the Ghost Goblins and warns them about the characters. If the heroes aren't careful, they could be sandwiched between the approaching war party and the goblins already at the growing camp. If the Ghost Goblins spot the PCs, they attack relentlessly. Their goal is to take the characters alive and bring them to the dust goblin camp for torture and sacrifice.

Proceeding. Once the dust goblin messenger is dealt with, characters are free to prepare an ambush for the advancing war party, if they choose. In that event, proceed to Scene 2B. Otherwise, if the party returns and continues south, proceed to Scene 3.

SCENE 2B: AMBUSH!

The advancing Ghost Goblin war party must move through a narrow defile north of the outpost (between the outpost and the Seat of Mavros). If characters scout if for likely ambush spots, they notice a section where the 75-foot-high cliffs are lined with narrow ledges where large, loose rocks have accumulated (see the map, Break in the Pass). One of these ledges is large enough for two characters to stand on and push the rocks down. Climbing up to that ledge requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, made with advantage if characters have climbing gear.

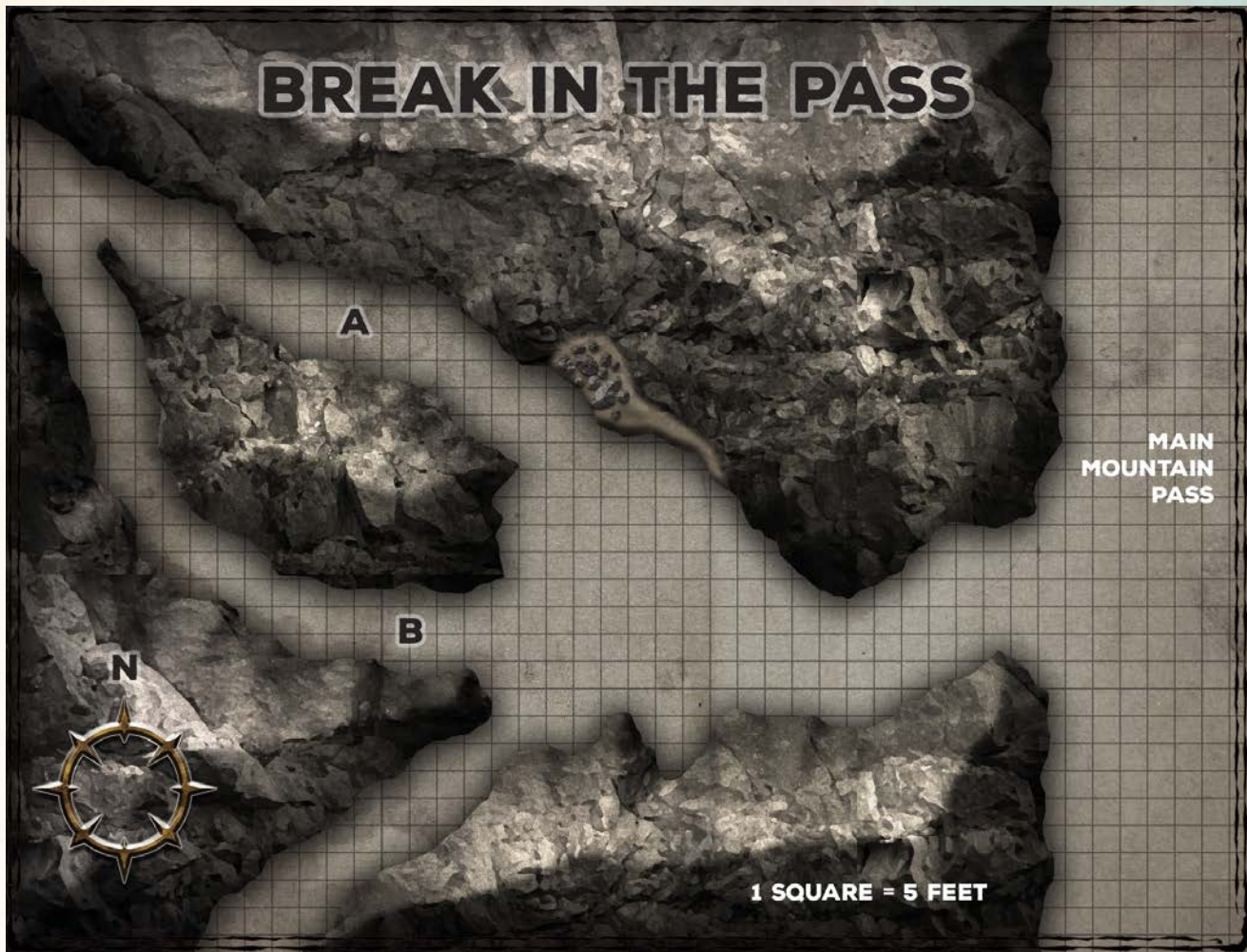
The rocks can be rolled down onto the Ghost Goblins as they march up the pass, or they can be tumbled down beforehand to block the path. Only one of those options can be chosen.



The Ghost Goblins arrive 1d10 × 10 minutes after the PCs' arrival. When they arrive, read the following.

Pouring through the mountain pass like a swarm of locusts is a column of dust goblins. Unlike the ones you saw at the outpost, some of these goblins are little more than emaciated skeletons. Others have a strange pallor to their already unhealthy-looking skin. The smell of death surrounds them as they march in silence along the trail.

Triggering the avalanche onto the goblins requires a successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check. One character can aid another in this attempt. When it succeeds, the rocks tumble over the ledge and start a small avalanche, which takes the ledge down the cliffside along with everything else. Characters on the ledge must make a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to grasp a tree root and stop themselves from plunging down with the debris. They can then climb down the cliff the same way they



came up. Alternatively, a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check allows the character to slide down the shale-covered slope in one round, taking no damage. In either case, if the check fails, the character falls with the avalanche and takes 1d3 bludgeoning damage for each point by which the check failed.

Any characters on the floor of the pass within 20 feet of the point of impact must make a successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d6 bludgeoning damage. The landslide also blocks the trail, creating difficult terrain for 40 feet in either direction.

Ghost Goblin War Party. The war party consists of 11 dust goblins, 8 dust goblin warriors, 10 Ghost tribe ghouls, 20 Ghost tribe skeletons, and Marlik the Fearless. If the avalanche was triggered onto them, it kills 6 dust goblins, 6 dust goblin warriors, 6 ghouls, and 12 skeletons. The survivors are eager for a fight. They attack in waves, with more swarming across the rubble to attack just as the characters slay the last of the previous wave. See “Wave by Wave in the Mountain Pass” for the composition of each wave.



The undead goblins have undergone rituals to become ghouls or skeletal warriors. They have no fear of death or pain, like any other undead.

Keep pushing the characters with successive waves. If a round ever begins with only one Ghost Goblin tribe member in the fight, the next wave arrives right away. At the same time, don't overwhelm a small or weak party. This encounter is meant to be exciting, not to wipe everyone out.

If the path was blocked by the avalanche, some dust goblins use the path marked B, as noted in "Wave by Wave in the Mountain Pass."

If characters didn't drop the rocks onto the oncoming army or block the trail, Marlik the Fearless directs the majority of his minions (those who would have been killed in the avalanche) to press on to the dust goblin camp, confident that half his force can destroy the interloping characters. The rest remain to attack the characters in waves.

Treasure. Marlik the Fearless has a pouch containing one *potion of greater healing*, four *potions of healing*, 40 gp, 5 one-lb. silver trade bars worth 5 gp each, two

wheels of cheese, and a crude map of the route to the dust goblin camp. An additional 21 gp, 103 sp, and an ornately carved holy symbol of Mavros (worth 10 gp) can be scavenged from the bodies of the other dust goblins who weren't buried by the avalanche or sent forward to the outpost.

Proceeding. It's a two-day walk south to the dust goblin camp. Most of the journey can be made on the main pass, but the camp is located slightly east of the main road. Any surviving dust goblins press on through the night, immune to exhaustion. They stop at the outpost only long enough to slay any pilgrims who didn't immediately set out for the Seat of Mavros.

If any player characters are killed in the battle against the Ghost Tribe war party, the surviving PCs can cross paths once more with the previously released pilgrims. Replacement characters can be drawn from them.

If the Ghost Goblins were able to march onto the main mountain pass and use it, they encounter the pilgrims and butcher them. The characters should stumble onto that grisly scene later.

Proceed to Scene 3 when the party resumes its journey southward.

WAVE BY WAVE IN THE MOUNTAIN PASS

- Wave 1.** Two dust goblin warriors, accompanied by 2 dust goblins, move quickly toward the PCs via the path marked A.
- Wave 2.** As the dust goblins fall, 4 dust goblin ghouls descend on the party via the path marked A.
- Wave 3.** With the fall of the dust goblin warriors or the ghouls, 6 dust goblin skeletons clamber toward the PCs. They use the path marked B if the avalanche was staged on the path marked A.
- Wave 4.** Using the path marked A, 3 dust goblins and 2 dust goblin skeletons navigate the remains of the avalanche and charge the characters.
- Wave 5.** One round after Wave 4, Marlik charges the party in a fury of rage over his minions' inability to destroy the humans. He emerges from the path marked B.

When's the Next Wave?

The dust goblin assault is designed in waves rather than rounds to ensure the PCs are not swarmed with more opponents than they can handle, but also to ensure there's no lull in combat. If a round ever begins with only one dust goblin opponent, the next wave should arrive immediately.

OPTIONAL SCENE 2C: RAIDERS

If the PCs make short work of the Ghost Goblins, avoid the combat entirely, or fail to learn where the camp of dust goblins is, a dust goblin raiding party can be brought in to provide the missing information through an extra combat encounter. This group ventured away from the camp to patrol the path through the Melano, watching for pilgrims and hunting animals for meat. They can also be found moving through the mountains away from any trail if necessary, making it easy to add this encounter at a later point or even multiple times if desired. The dust goblins are bored and happy to run into a party of adventurers looking for a fight. This group of goblins can be any size, but **2 dust goblins** and **4 dust goblin warriors** is a good starting point.

Alternatively, the characters could encounter a group of gnoll raiders. These savages are aware of the dust goblin presence and are also eager for combat, having been pushed out of their usual territory by the dust goblins. The gnolls can be met along the path through the Melano or away from the trails in the trackless mountains. This group can be any size to challenge the characters, but **1 gnoll pack lord**, **2 gnoll havoc runners**, and **5 gnolls** is a good starting size.

Interrogated dust goblins give up their camp's location easily. Captured gnolls are quick to share information about the growing horde of goblins in the hope that the characters will focus their attention against the gnolls'

enemies. They're far less forthcoming about other gnolls in the area, but it should become clear fairly quickly that the gnolls avoid the pilgrimage route and aren't causing the recent problem.

Information from Captives.

Either group can point PCs toward the approximate location of the camp, can reveal that

hundreds of dust goblins have assembled there, and that a large party left the camp recently for another site.

Dust goblins present this gloatingly, with many threats and predictions of the characters' demise. They also reveal that their leader, Karbekul Four-Fingers, came to possess a "very fancy cap" that makes it possible for him to call forth an ancient entity of immense power by completing a ritual that's already underway. (Karbekul and his dust goblin minions are mistaken in what is being called forth, but the *great king's crown* gives Karbekul power over the being that comes forth.)

Gnolls are almost as concerned about the gathering goblins as the characters are. They won't join forces with the characters under any circumstance short of magical compunction, however, because they'd be cast into exile or even killed if their clan ever found out.

SCENE 3: THE DUST GOBLIN CAMP

From the outpost, the dust goblin camp is about a day-and-a-half walk to the south along the trail, then another half-day trek east along a rugged defile through the mountains. Enough goblins have used the route from the trail to the camp that it's easy to spot and to follow, though it's by no means an easy hike. The path crosses numerous gullies, rushing streams, tumbled boulder fields, and steep slopes covered with loose scree that shifts treacherously under the climbing characters' feet. Eventually the trail crests a ridge that provides a good vantage down into the dust goblin camp. Unless characters are being unusually reckless, they smell smoke and hear the sound of a large camp ahead before crossing the ridge and can take precautions so they don't blunder into it.

If they conceal themselves on the ridge and observe the camp, read the following.

From your vantage point, you see an expansive camp. Hundreds of dust goblins dressed in their distinctive garb have set up tents that fill a large, flat glen in the mountains. The creatures are sleeping, eating, gambling, occasionally bickering among themselves. Ragged banners



display the sigils of at least three different tribes across the encampment. The camp shows few signs of organization; tents, cookfires, two-wheeled carts, and supply caches are crowded together haphazardly. But the sheer size of this assemblage is alarming.

In the center of the camp is a make-shift pen holding captured pilgrims near a large shrine.

A handful of **dust goblin** sentries patrol the perimeter of the camp, but they believe the camp is secure and aren't very attentive; characters can avoid them easily. There's no organized security inside the camp, but anyone who's not a goblin walking loose in the camp causes alarm.

Optional: Spotting the Sentries. If your players enjoy sneaking past sentries or dealing with them in more lethal ways, you can make the dust goblin sentries a bigger obstacle.

Moving around the perimeter of the camp are sentry teams of 2 **dust goblin warriors** riding on the backs of

2 **death dogs**. They've become a bit complacent since the camp grew so big, but they still ride dutifully around the camp, sometimes patrol into the surrounding mountains, and keep the path from the main trail under observation.

If the characters don't try to keep concealed while they're within a half-mile of the camp, a team of sentries spots them automatically and attacks from cover with their light crossbows. If the goblins are still fighting at the end of the third round of combat, they start hollering for help on the following round. There is only a 25% chance per round that anyone in the camp hears them. When they're heard, 2d4 **dust goblin** reinforcements join the combat two rounds later.

If the characters flee, the sentries chase them only a short distance before concluding the characters are just pilgrims who wandered off the trail and return to their patrols.

Capturing a Supply Cart. If characters observe the camp for 15 minutes or longer, they see a group of dust goblins prepare a two-wheeled cart for transport. In a short time, the cart is loaded with food, hitched to two mules, and sets off in a northeasterly direction. It's accompanied by 2 **dust goblins**, 4 **dust goblin machinists**, and a **dust goblin void caller**. To the characters, all of them just look like dust goblins, but they do notice that the four machinists walk with a jerky motion and carry unfamiliar, complex-looking weapons (vril rifles).

The supply wagon is being taken to the ritual site. The dust goblins accompanying it know the location of the site. The food and drink on the wagon isn't entirely palatable to humans, but much of it would still be welcomed by the people at the Seat of Mavros who are running short of food.

If the supply wagon isn't stopped, it arrives at the ritual site ahead of the PCs. The escorting dust goblins join those already assembled to aid in defending the site and completing the ritual.

Any members of the escort who are interrogated express complete confidence in their leader's plan and the PCs' inability to stop it. One of them reveals that Karbekul Four-Fingers and his "very fancy cap" traveled east with "Squidface" and a band of dust goblins to begin a ritual. Karbekul first mentioned the ritual after finding the *great king's crown* (the goblins never describe it with that phrase), and now he vows that a being of immense power will soon awaken and fight side-by-side with the dust goblins as they conquer the region. They merely chuckle at questions about the identity or origin of "Squidface."



If someone questioning the goblins makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Intimidation) check or a goblin is charmed, the characters also learn that Karbekul seeks the *rod of ruin* ("the staff of awfulness") to ensure his status in the eyes of the great being when it appears. A group of dust goblins was tasked with retrieving this staff from a nearby mountain shrine and bringing it to the ritual site. Karbekul was very vocal about acquiring the rod, but that group hasn't returned with it yet.

Karbekul and his dust goblin minions are seriously mistaken about what type of entity they're summoning, but the *great king's crown* will give Karbekul power over the being when it arrives.

If Lukat (the goblin courier from Scene 2) is still with the characters, he bides his time and provides what assistance he can, believing that's his best chance to get closer to the ritual site.

Treasure. The cart's escort carries 4 vril rifles (each with 1d6 shots remaining), 35 gp, 63 sp, 6 *potions of healing*, 2 *potions of greater healing*, and a *scroll of see invisibility*. The cart is loaded with food and drink of the sort goblins prefer.

Proceeding. If the party decides to intercept the group going to get the rod, proceed to Scene 4. If the

characters decide to ignore the group retrieving the rod, proceed to Scene 5 instead. The acquisition party brings the rod to Karbekul a day and a half later.

SCENE 4: SHRINE TO YLIA

Characters who search around the camp during daytime discover the tracks of many dust goblins headed north through the mountains from the camp. During nighttime, a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check is needed to spot the tracks. If the tracks are followed to the north for six hours, they lead to an ancient shrine that houses the *rod of ruin*.

Over a dozen goblin bodies sprawl outside an opening in the mountain. The opening was closed off by stone doors sealed with plaster, but the plaster and the doors lie in broken chunks. A fine dust covers the bodies of the goblins and the rocky ground all around.

Beyond the narrow entrance is a wide, dark hallway.

The entrance to the shrine is lit only by the stars and moon shining above at nighttime, or by a sliver of sunlight shining between the steep, surrounding crags during daytime. Beyond the entrance, the passage

widens into a tunnel 15 feet wide and 50 feet long, extending straight into the mountain before descending stairs for 20 feet that open into a 25-foot-square chamber. There is no map for this location because it's so simple: a straight hallway, a staircase, and a square chamber chiseled from the natural rock.


A dwarf recognizes immediately that this stonework wasn't done by goblins but has no idea who did construct it; the curving, strangely intersecting geometric shapes carved into the stone (now nearly obliterated by time) don't correspond to the carving or decorative style of any race the characters are familiar with. A character who makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check concludes that the site predates known history and may have been constructed by a race that no longer exists.

The dust goblins sent to retrieve the *rod of ruin* were slain by the rotting wind as soon as the seals around entrance to the shrine were broken. The stone doors shattered and the ancient creature attacked immediately. In all the confusion, a handful of courageous dust goblins managed to slip past the vengeful rotting wind, enter the shrine, and grab the *rod of ruin*.

That was as far as they got, because the rotting wind followed them and killed them at the bottom of the stairs. When characters explore the shrine, they find the



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bodies of three dust goblins sprawled in tortured poses at the base of the staircase, covered in the same dust as those outside. Clutched in the hands of the furthest dust goblin is the *rod of ruin*.

The **rotting wind** is still here, invisible, lying in wait for any other intruders. As soon as someone touches or interacts with the *rod of ruin*, the rotting wind attacks. It will pursue the rod but doesn't move more than 200 feet from the shrine. If characters survive long enough to get outside that distance, they're safe from the rotting wind. If the character carrying the *rod of ruin* drops it, the rotting wind scoops it up and flies it back into the mountain chamber.

If your characters are tough enough, you can make this encounter more challenging by adding **skeletons** or **zombies** created from the bodies of the fallen goblins. These can be the bodies inside the chamber, or those outside the chamber who attack the characters as they exit the shrine.

Once the shrine is cleared of enemies, characters can study the odd carvings and decorations inside it more closely. The style of carving is unfamiliar and the race that created them is impossible to discern, but they feature recurring images of an angelic woman with her hands resting on the pommel of a longsword, kneeling before a man in a strange crown with points that resemble large, jagged teeth. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion or History) check reveals that the kneeling woman is an angel of war and the figure in the crown almost certainly depicts Mavros, the god of war and tempests. Characters who succeed on those checks

recall tales of an angel of war called Ylia and her deadly war song. This particular angel of war comes to mind because she was linked in the tales to a magical rod whose wielder was immune to her fatal song.

Treasure. The *rod of ruin*, 27 gp, 53 sp, 217 cp, holy symbol of Ylia the angel of war (worth 112 gp), and a crude map to the ritual site. See Appendix 2 for a description of the *rod of ruin*.

Proceeding. With the *rod of ruin* safely in hand and a crude map to the ritual site, the party can attempt to stop Karbekul Four-Fingers and his dust goblin army from completing the ritual. Proceed to Scene 5.

SCENE 5: SUMMONING RITUAL

The ritual is well underway by the time the heroes arrive at the sacrificial site in the valley. Refer to the Ritual Site map.

Two dozen dust goblins, most of them wearing the clothing and fetishes of the Maimed Ones tribe, are bowing and chanting around a large ritual circle. Several more dust goblins stand nearby, thumping out an arrhythmic pattern on massive drums. A dozen more dust goblins mill about the valley floor: sharpening weapons, chanting, and preparing food and drink.

The air is heavy with the thrumming of drums. Numerous chanting dust goblins kneel around a large circle created out of bones, broken weapons, and pieces of ruined armor while dozens more busy themselves in this barren swale. South of the ritual circle stands a tall, muscular dust goblin wearing a headpiece made of

WHEN DEATH CALLS

If all the combatants present in this scene attack at once, they stand a distinct chance to overwhelm the characters or leave them too weakened to fight the angel of war, if it arrives. The battle escalates as shown below. Difficulty ratings assume the characters are 6th level.

Round	Combatants	Difficulty
1	6 dust goblin warriors, 1 void caller	Medium
2	all above + dogmole juggernaut	Hard
4	all above + Karbekul + 60-hp boost	Deadly

The biggest danger kicks in at the start of the 4th round. If all the dust goblin warriors are already dead by then,

the 60-hit-point boost has no effect and characters probably are in OK shape to deal with Karbekul and Squidface. If some of the dust goblin warriors are still fighting and the characters are hard-pressed, consider delaying Karbekul's entry into the fight and the hit point boost until the 5th, 6th, or even later round, when characters have dealt with the dust goblin warriors and the dogmole juggernaut is on its last legs. Note that only one void caller ever joins combat voluntarily. The other is focused on the ritual and fights only if attacked.

If by some chance characters are still fighting Karbekul when the ritual completes and Ylia appears, they're probably toast. This outcome is very unlikely unless characters mismanage the battle terribly, in which case, they probably deserve what they get.

leather with upward-pointing reptilian teeth fastened around it, giving the appearance of a crude and terrifying crown. Beside him is a massive, spike covered monstrosity with tentacles writhing around its maw.

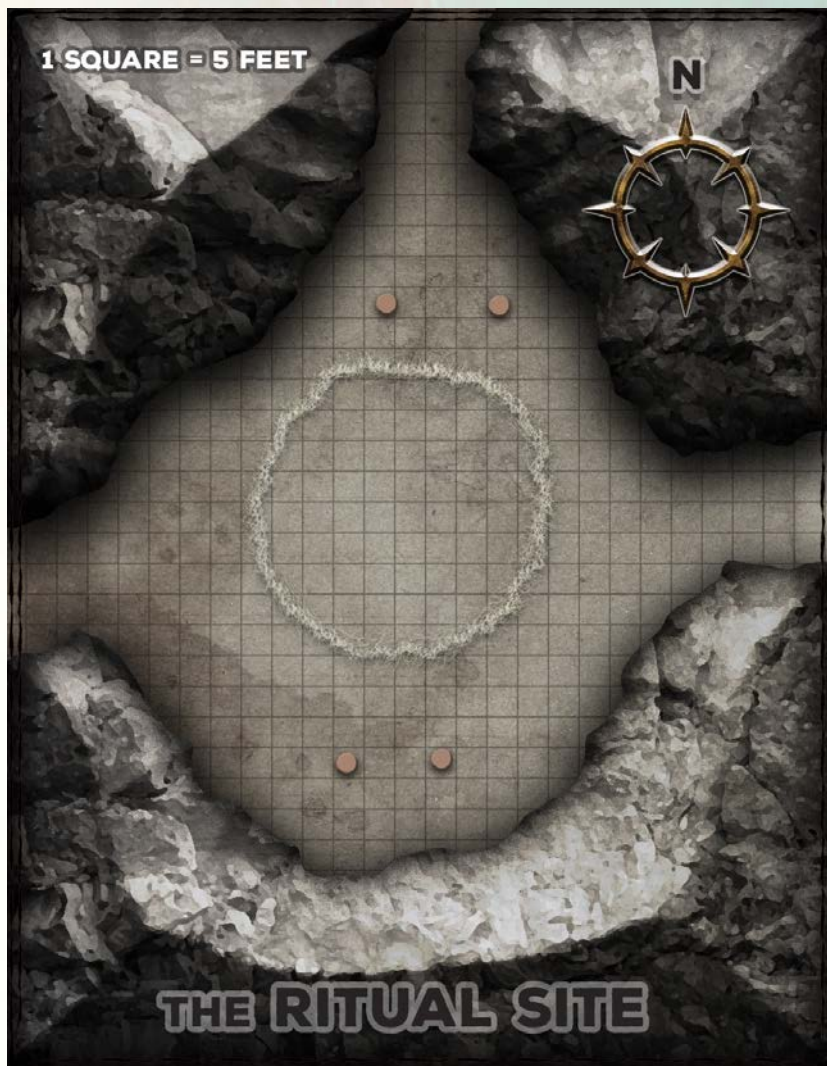
Arrayed in this area are 6 **dust goblin warriors** keeping guard, 2 **dust goblin void callers**, 40 noncombatant dust goblins, and any of the supply cart escort from Scene 3 that weren't slain or captured. The figure standing south of the ritual circle is **Karbekul Four-Fingers** of the Maimed Ones, and the hideous creature crouching near him is Squidface, his pet **dogmole juggernaut**. Karbekul holds no weapons but is readily recognizable by his maimed hands: his right hand has the thumb, ring, and little fingers, while his left hand has the thumb, index, and little fingers. The dust goblins carrying out the ritual are all noncombatants.

Discovery. It's only a matter of time before the characters' presence at the ritual circle is discovered. If the characters immediately start planning an attack, give them a few minutes to work out their plan and launch it. If they decide to observe the scene for more than a few minutes or fall to bickering or dithering over how to proceed, their presence is discovered by a dust goblin who spots them from a nearby crest. Or, if Lukat (from Scene 2) or any other captive dust goblin is still with the PCs, they work loose from any gag so they can yell a warning to Karbekul.

As soon as intruders are spotted, Karbekul orders the dust goblin warriors to attack while the ritual continues. "You are too late!" he bellows to the heroes. "The summoned one is about to appear!"

The 6 **dust goblin warriors** charge the PCs, with support from 1 **void caller** who keeps his distance. At the start of the second round, a nod of Karbekul's head sends the **dogmole juggernaut** thundering into the battle. Exactly how you stage this fight is crucial; see the sidebar for details on keeping this battle exciting but survivable for the characters.

The Ritual. Meanwhile, 24 dust goblins continue chanting and drumming, led by a dust goblin void



caller. The remaining 16 dust goblins stand by, ready to jump in and replace any chanters or drummers who are felled by the player characters.

Four dust goblins thump on the two drums. As long as four drummers work the drums and are audible, all the characters' foes in this fight have advantage on attack rolls.

At the end of the third combat round, read the following.

Karbekul Four-Fingers cracks his knuckles, takes a step closer to the ritual circle, and roars "It draws near! Beat the drums! Chant the ancient song!"

The drumming intensifies as the sky darkens. A sudden wind arises, lightning rips through the grim clouds, and sparks flicker across the teeth of Karbekul's crown.

The surviving dust goblin warriors are imbued with renewed confidence at this point, as 60 temporary hit points are divided as evenly as possible between them.

Karbekul joins the combat in the fourth round, fighting alongside his dogmole juggernaut if possible. If Karbekul is slain, his crown falls off his head and wobbles along the ground before settling a few feet away. His death triggers Wormkiller Rage in Squidface, if it's still alive, but the ritual continues with or without Karbekul.

The ritual can continue as long as 16 dust goblins remain alive to keep it going (12 chanters, 4 drummers). One dust goblin void caller can fill in for any number of fallen dust goblins. The ritual fails only when more than 24 noncombatant dust goblins and both void callers are killed. The ritual reaches its conclusion at the end of the tenth combat round, if it's not stopped before then. At that point, proceed to Scene 6.

Treasure. Great king's crown, 2 potions of healing, 1 potion of greater healing, 112 gp, 133 sp, 257 cp.

SCENE 6: ANGEL OF WAR

If the ritual goes on unabated through 10 combat rounds, read the following.

The chanting, drumming, lightning, and howling wind reach a crescendo. Then one ear-splitting clap of thunder leaves you momentarily deafened, and a flash of lightning dazzles your eyes. As your vision clears and your hearing returns, you realize the beating drums and war cries have died away.

The figure of an angelic woman floats above the center of the dust goblins' ritual circle. Her long blonde hair falls in waves over her armored shoulders; her eyes are a piercing and eerie blue. Her right arm holds a magnificent longsword high above her head as she inspects the battlefield with curious indifference.

Ylia is obligated to serve the attuned wearer of the great king's crown. It was made for one of her mythic warrior followers in the ancient past from the teeth of great wyrms slain in her name. After that warrior's death, the great king's crown changed owners many times, and few of them were true worshipers of Ylia or Mavros, much to her frustration. Now she regrets the crown was ever made.

Ylia enjoys bloodshed and strife, so she's happy to observe while characters and dust goblins slaughter each other. What she really wants, however, is to seize the great king's crown and take it with her when she leaves so she can't be commanded anymore by unbelievers and tyrants who serve only themselves and not the glory of Mavros. If the fight is going against the characters, she



might intervene on their behalf if someone offers her the crown in thanks. If Karbekul is still alive and still wearing the crown, however, Ylia has no option but to obey his commands.

Note that simply putting on the crown isn't enough to command Ylia's obedience; the wearer must attune to the crown, which takes an hour. The characters don't have that much time. Ylia will simply snatch the crown off the head of anyone who's foolish enough to wear it in her presence without being attuned to it—possibly by separating that head from its shoulders first.

As noted earlier, the characters stand essentially no chance in a fight against Ylia. Such a fight could happen two ways: if Karbekul is still alive and wearing the crown when Ylia appears, or if the characters kill Karbekul but then foolishly attack Ylia or treat her with disdain or disrespect. In the absence of orders to the contrary, she's free to kill anyone she takes a dislike to.

If Karbekul Four-Fingers is alive and wearing the crown when Ylia materializes, she salutes him (with a

certain amount of disdain evident on her face) and asks how she can aid the wearer of the crown. Karbekul is obviously confused; he expected an elder horror from the Far Realm to materialize, not a magnificent celestial being. He recovers quickly, however, and commands Ylia to attack the player characters. Any vagueness in his instructions is interpreted by Ylia in a way that suits her intense displeasure over being commanded by a goblin. You can use this as a way to subtly aid the PCs if they're in serious trouble—which they obviously are, if events have reached this point. For example, Karbekul could command Ylia to “slay my enemies,” not realizing that one of the void callers was plotting to overthrow him and seize the *great king's crown* once the ritual was done. The characters would gain a few rounds' respite while Ylia laughingly struck down the void caller and Karbekul struggled to understand why that happened.

If the angel of war is summoned but Karbekul is dead or the crown has been taken from him, Ylia is free to do as she pleases. Karbekul may still scream commands at her in a vain attempt to assert control, but Ylia gives him only scornful glances before beginning her warsong. A creature wielding the *rod of ruin*, and

that creature's allies within 100 feet, are immune to the effects of Ylia's warsong. After singing for 1d4 rounds (or until all the dust goblins are dead from thunder damage, if you prefer), Ylia snatches up the *great king's crown*, ascends into the sky, and flies away in a random direction. She is free to do as she pleases, and time will tell whether she poses a threat to the world.

If a PC is in possession of the great king's crown when Ylia manifests (but isn't attuned to it), that character can attempt a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The character gets a +5 bonus on the check if he or she is also wearing a holy symbol of Ylia or Mavros. If the check succeeds, Ylia offers one boon for the return of the crown. Otherwise, she takes it by force and grants no favors to anyone.

In the unlikely event that a PC is attuned to the *great king's crown* when the angel of war materializes, she salutes that character and asks what orders they have. Even this is a dangerous situation, because Ylia is not a willing servant to anyone who isn't a fervent follower





of Mavros. She looks for any opportunity to seize the crown and leave the material world behind (if she was well treated) or wreak vengeance on mortals (if she was commanded by someone she doesn't respect or was ordered to do things she would have preferred to not do).

CONCLUSION

If the characters manage to take control of the ritual (exactly how they might do this is left up to the players' inventiveness), they can ask the angel of war for a single favor, such as turning the goblin tribes against each other. Any infighting between the goblin tribes ends the shaky alliance that exists now and the dust goblins go back to being a small, manageable threat, as they've always been.

The Seat of Mavros is grateful the mountain pass is open again to pilgrims, and members of the Order of Mavros are proud of their fellows for all they accomplished. The characters' names are inscribed on the Tablet of Legend alongside other heroes at the Seat of Mavros.

If the heroes were unable to secure the *great king's crown* or stop the summoning ritual, Ylia arrives under the control of Karbekul Four-Fingers, who demands she stand with them in their coming battles. The forces quickly march toward Savoyne, destroying all in their path. Only time will tell if it's too late to break the alliance of dust goblins and defeat the horde that is quickly growing in power or if the massing forces will succeed in bringing ruin to Verrayne and its capital. Killing Karbekul or stealing the crown from him would be a good start.



BLOOD OF A FALLEN STAR

A 5th Edition Adventure for 8th-level Characters


By Dan Dillon and Robert Fairbanks with Jaye Sonia, Brian Suskind, and Ben McFarland

Midgard's Northlands test the most stalwart adventurers with bitter winters bearing the wrath of Boreas, brutal giants, fearsome trollkin, and depraved blood cults to dark gods of the deep woods. Recently another, far more dire threat has fallen to these snow-capped peaks.

Blood of a Fallen Star is a 5th edition adventure set in the Northlands region of the Midgard Campaign Setting. It's designed for four 8th-level characters, or a larger party of lower-level characters. The adventure setup assumes the party includes a character who either is a reaver dwarf or who has close ties with the reaver dwarf settlement in the story. While such a relationship isn't absolutely essential, it does help draw player characters into the story.

SYNOPSIS

Midgard's stars hold mystical significance to her children, offer glimpses into future events, provide magical paths to power, or divine the will and wisdom of the cosmos. One of the most significant sidereal events is a falling star. According to legend, falling stars are actually powerful beings traveling to Midgard on inscrutable errands, often taking mortals with them when they return heavenward.



Just over a month ago, one such star plummeted into the mountains west of Wolfheim. A great stone burned its way across the sky before driving deep into the mountainside. When this “stone” split open, it released passengers from the outer darkness: alien spores that seeped, tumbled, and floated into a network of caves and fissures in the mountains. The spores swiftly evolved into mi-go: terrifying, insectlike, sentient, alien fungus creatures.

The mi-go set to work immediately, fashioning weapons and tools from the strange metal in the meteor that brought them to Midgard. Before long, they carved a lair from the mountain and cultivated their spores in alien gardens irrigated by nearby springs. The fungal gardens matured and propagated, releasing more spores into the water of the stream, which runs down to a nearby settlement of reaver dwarves.

Vorstaag is a prosperous settlement that’s been home to the Vors clan for seven generations. The Vors reavers were feared by enemies, honored by friends, and known for their successful and stable community. All of that came to a horrifying end when stream-borne spores infected Vorstaag’s drinking water and were ingested by every citizen. One by one, old and young, the Vors succumbed to the spores. The dwarves grew ever more enthralled by strange visions and compulsions. Life in Vorstaag became erratic; lunacy, sickness, and delusion were rampant; and soon, the village would tear itself apart.

Gundren Stoneheart, chief of the Vors clan, was desperate to find the source of what ailed his people. After consulting Vors mystics, Stoneheart set out with his warriors. They followed the stream, whose banks were lined with twisted mushrooms and unearthly, purplish fungi, up to the mountain caves, where they found the dreadful answer the mystics foretold. The mi-go easily overpowered the warriors, who were already weakened by spores growing in their bodies and brains. Once enslaved by the alien invaders, Stoneheart and his warriors returned to Vorstaag to bring their families and friends to the mi-go.

Many of the Vors had already succumbed to the spore-driven madness by then, stumbling or crawling across the mountain like broken marionettes. Those with enough intellect remaining to realize the growing horror’s nature fought as best they could before being murdered or subdued and delivered to the mi-go. A handful escaped this harvesting of Vorstaag by hiding in attics, root cellars, or among the dead. Even these few didn’t fully escape the horror; all eventually went mad. Now they haunt Vorstaag like living ghosts, raving and wandering through the ruins.

Part 1 begins far from Vorstaag, in the Northlands settlement of Beryksheim. Most of the settlement’s warriors are away at sea and not due back for days. In their absence, trolls have plagued the settlement, and the reavers offer the characters a reward if they can help deal with the threat swiftly.

Once the characters track and destroy the trolls, Beryksheimers welcome them as friends and a feast is planned in their honor. When the chieftain and her warriors return from their voyage, a doubly raucous celebration is had, both to honor a successful raid and to thank the characters for their services.

At daybreak the following day, raiders from Vorstaag strike Beryksheim without warning or mercy. The characters wake to screams of butchery and must defend themselves and the village from savage invaders. The attack is devastating, many Beryksheim citizens lay slain or kidnapped by the raiders. The villagers implore the characters to rescue the chieftain’s son and heir from the raiders.

Part 2 sees the characters traveling to Vorstaag, armed with a general knowledge of its location. Subtle signs of spore infection are seen, offering hints of the horror to come. Along the way, characters may encounter infected fauna, driven mad by disease.

Spore infections soon grow worse. PCs may become infected and display disturbing symptoms. It becomes clear the situation in the surrounding region is just as bad. Game is scarce and any beasts encountered are agitated, aggressive, and unhealthy looking.

Part 3 opens with the characters discovering the ruins of Vorstaag. The village is destroyed, with many buildings burnt or looted and scattered corpses moldering in the streets showing signs of scavenging by creatures both natural and unnatural. A pack of darakhul drawn by the scent of death are foraging for corpses and hunting survivors in the ruins. Survivors might retain sufficient shreds of sanity and identity to answer a few of the characters’ questions about what transpired.

Small, unidentifiable mushrooms grow everywhere in the devastation, and ultimately lead characters to the stream. The banks are thick with alien fungus that becomes larger and more vigorous as characters progress upstream toward the source.

The stream leads characters up the mountain to the last of the Vors reavers living outside the mi-go infested caves. Inside the cave, adventurers confront the ultimate evil of the alien mi-go.

HOOKS

Blood of Fallen Stars can begin several ways. Ultimately, how characters come to Beryksheim is up to you. Following are some recommended hooks for DMs and players looking to create plausible links to a larger story.

Storm-Tossed Summons. The characters are dispatched from Wolfheim to Vorstaag to deliver an important summons, but a wicked storm forces them to take shelter in Beryksheim to the south. Characters are given shelter from the storm but must earn the reaver's trust by killing a pair of trolls who have been harassing the villagers.

A Welcome Respite. Although most outsiders know reavers as merciless and brutally violent raiders who wade into battle calling for blood and thunder, a few bards tell tales of their equally ferocious revels (parties). Outsiders seeking entrance to the party must present the heads of at least two trolls from the area as tribute.

Boreas Calling. Rumors abound that the Great Falling Wall is losing ground at an accelerated rate. Concerned the Living Glaciers are headed toward warmer, southern climes at an accelerating rate, concerned parties from the region dispatch the characters to meet with Augustus De Marquise, a local explorer, collect his reports, and escort him south. When the characters meet Augustus, he's shaken and in complete disarray. He quickly explains he was waylaid by trolls and needs the characters to recover his belongings.

NORTHLANDS CUSTOMS

Blood of a Fallen Star utilizes specific elements to showcase the Northlands setting and the growing alien presence in the countryside (and possibly in the characters themselves). Some Northlands customs are strange to southerners. Review these beforehand so you can make the most use of them for feel and effect. (For a more detailed discussion of Northlands culture, see the *Midgard Worldbook*.)

Hard Work. One unifying trait is simple, practical, hard work. Everyone from king to slave works to survive in the harsh environment.

Honor and Reputation. Reputation is everything to Northlanders. Tales told of great deeds and vile betrayals ring through the ages; all want history to remember them. Honor in the North can be tricky, as it doesn't equate directly to goodness. Wicked people can be honorable if they are fearless in battle, extend hospitality, and are bold and decisive. "Evil" can entertain a sense of justice, even fairness.

Insulting a person's honor is a serious offense. When an offender is called to task, they are expected to either admit wrong and apologize, or fight to defend or prove their claim. All are expected to be ready to duel to protect their name. If an offender makes a sincere apology, the matter ends. If not, the offender had best be ready to back up words with steel. Duels consist of a one-on-one fight ending when one party dies, retreats, or submits and apologizes. The loser's position is then determined invalid.

Reaving. While outright thievery is dishonorable and ruins a warrior's good name, reaving (raiding) isn't viewed the same. A reaving band consists of a crew of warriors setting out to strike at other settlements to capture supplies, treasure, and slaves by force. If they return home richer in goods and in spirit, the raid was a success. This is, in contrast to how it might appear to more cultured sensibilities, widely accepted as an honorable, almost sporting, pursuit.

Winter's Arrival. The adventure is set in late autumn. Arcticlike temperatures and weather are the norm, although truly heavy snow hasn't yet arrived.

With the exception of the caves in Part 3, the entirety of the adventure is considered extreme cold. A creature exposed to the cold must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw every 3 to 4 hours or gain one level of exhaustion. Creatures naturally adapted to cold climates, those with resistance or immunity to cold damage, or who are wearing appropriate cold weather clothing, automatically succeed on the save.

A TOUCH OF THE VOID

The goal of the mi-go on Midgard is colonization. They're here to establish a beachhead for the assimilation of sentient life. These alien beings serve a vast, inscrutable intelligence dwelling in the outer darkness that directs and whispers its unfathomable will to them.

The tool by which the mi-go intend to overtake Midgard is their spores. The spores infect creatures through ingestion or inhalation, then grow throughout the creature's body until eventually they infest its brain.

Symptoms develop slowly, so infected creatures only gradually become aware they're infected. An infected creature must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw every 3 (or 1d4, if you prefer) days. If the saving throw fails, the infection proceeds to the next stage. A victim might progress to the next stage early if they're affected by a mutated or powerful new source of infection that requires another saving throw.

VATIC GROWTH (MI-GO ORGANIC TECHNOLOGY)

To anyone but a mi-go, this 10-foot-tall bulbous arch studded with funguslike nodules seems to be a freestanding, organic tumor instead of a complex telepathy amplification device. When a creature stands in the archway, spongy tendrils descend from the nodules above and connect to the creature's nervous system through its ears, mouth, and nostrils. The device also allows mi-go to increase the range of their void-spore connection to 100 miles.

A creature (other than mi-go) who stands below the arch must make a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) piercing and 7 (2d6) psychic damage from the filaments slithering into its head and tunneling toward its brain. On subsequent rounds, the creature can pull free of the tendrils by using an action to make a successful DC 15 Strength check to pull free. This also inflicts 3 (1d6) lightning damage if the check fails or 7 (2d6) lightning damage if the check succeeds.

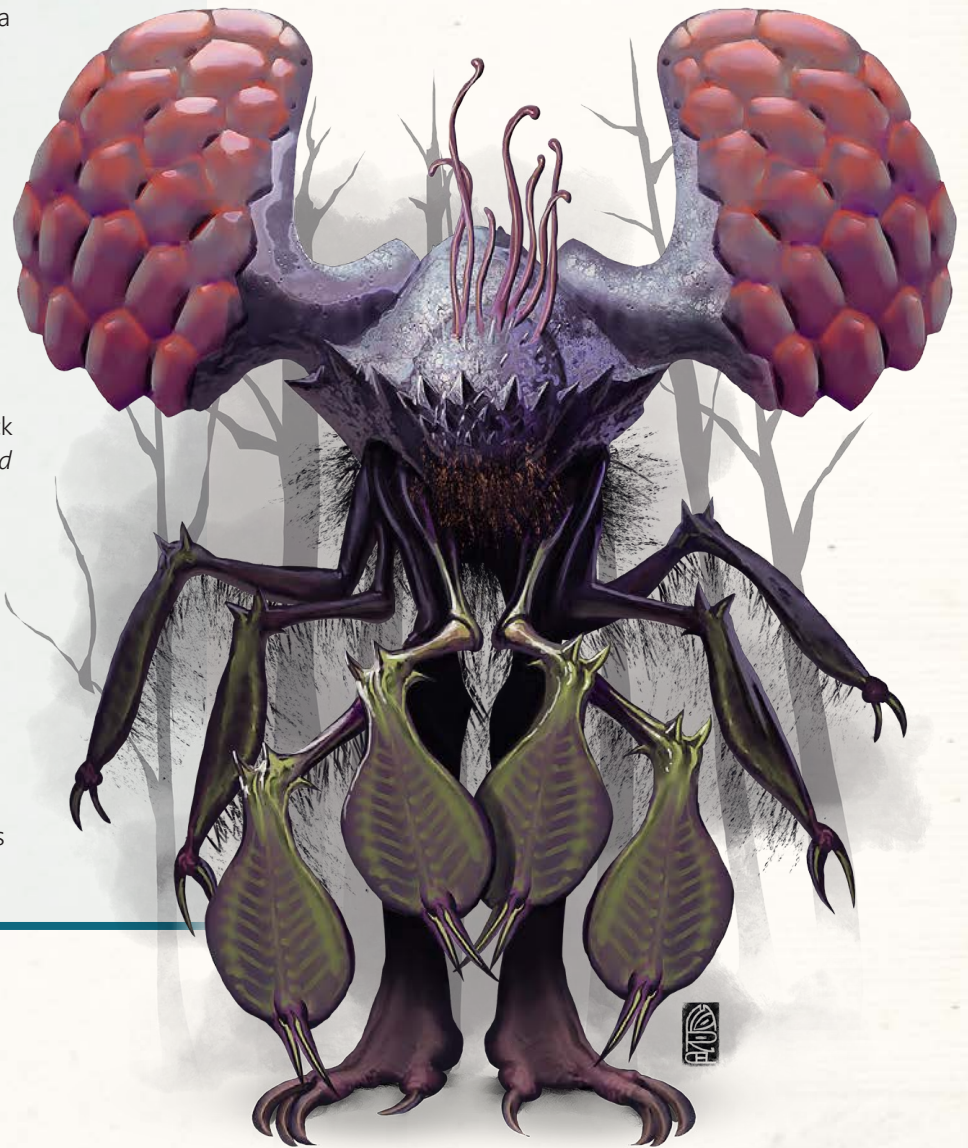
While a creature is connected by tendrils to the mi-go device, it can use an action to influence nearby mi-go thralls. The creature must make a successful DC 20 Intelligence check or the attempt fails. If the Intelligence check succeeds, the creature can *command* (as the spell) 1d8 thralls within 100 feet of the device, or use *suggestion* (as the spell) on one thrall within 100 miles.

The mi-go technology takes an increasing toll on those who use it. A creature trying to use vatic growth to influence thralls has a cumulative -2 modifier on its saving throws, and all damage increases by 1d6, for each previous time it was connected to any vatic growth.

Stage 0 (Incubation). Immediately after infection (no saving throw), the spores begin growing and spreading tiny tendrils through the host's body. No symptoms appear during stage 0, but from this point on (in every stage) the victim must make a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw every three days or progress to the next stage.

Stage 1. Victims' limbs tingle slightly and they develop a mild cough. They also begin having isolated, strange thoughts and making occasional disjointed comments. A *lesser restoration* spell or comparable magic kills the spores and restores the victim to health.

Stage 2. When creatures progress to stage 2, the spores grow into fungal rhizomes that extend into the creature's brain. Symptoms become more pronounced: victims experience audio and visual hallucinations and respond to questions no one asked or converse with no one.



Physical symptoms include facial tics, muscle cramps, and a purplish rash. The mi-go can implant suggestions in the victim's mind (as the *suggestion* spell; see sidebar) unless the victim succeeds at a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw, repeated daily.

Additionally, when an afflicted creature finishes a long rest, it must make a successful DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or gain the effect of one long-term madness.

At this stage, *lesser restoration* and comparable magic removes long-term madness and relieves minor symptoms, but the infestation can be cured only with *greater restoration* or comparable magic.

Stage 3. At stage 3, the spore's effects become impossible to overlook or ignore. Infected creatures suffer frequent and painful muscle tremors and involuntary movements and speech. Creatures may black out for periods, perform random, puppetlike actions, or wander jerkily away toward the mountains. Later, when clarity returns, they have no memory of events from this or any later stage.

Stage 3 victims can be implanted with a *suggestion* (as the spell) once per day as with stage 2 victims, but the Wisdom saving throw increases to DC 25. The same distance restrictions apply.

In addition to suffering long-term madness (as in stage 2), the creature must also make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw immediately after any stressful event such as a serious mental or physical shock or injury (you have the final determination of what situations apply). If the saving throw fails, the creature suffers a bout of short-term madness. A creature should suffer from only one or two instances of short-term madness per day.

Stage 4. At the final stage, the creature becomes a thrall of the mi-go with no will of its own. Its Intelligence drops by 5 (minimum of 3), and the creature becomes immune to fright. Any mi-go can command and communicate telepathically with any thrall within 100 feet. Thralls unquestioningly obey commands given by a mi-go. Player characters who progress to stage 4 become NPCs until they recover, and nothing short of a *wish* spell or comparable magic can cure a stage 4 victim.

PART 1: BERYKSHEIM

Carved from permafrost and stone over a century ago by Chief Barbörd Torman and Clan Beryksheim, the village of Beryksheim was settled by hardy, practical people who made the most of its abundance of good fishing and rich, dark soil—even if the ground was frozen half the year. It took nearly three decades, but eventually Chief Barbörd Torman turned the small village into a proper base of operations for his reavers.

Chief Barbörd's daughter Falgred inherited clan and village twenty years ago, after Torman was felled in a

spring raid. Although the loss turned her bitter, Falgred eventually transformed her grief into practicality. Today, Beryksheim is a prosperous coastal reaver dwarf village across the channel west of Wolfheim.

The Beryk reavers typify their kind. Fiercely devoted to family and clan, they subsist on hunting, fishing, and farming but derive the bulk of their wealth and goods, and joy of life, through raiding. Beryksheim's reavers remain exuberant proponents of this tradition while their southern cousins shy from the task.

Beryksheim is a collection of stout, sturdy longhouses surrounded by a large stone-and-earth berm. A wooden and ironbound palisade surrounds the village. Crossbow-armed dwarves patrol the wall and the many watchtowers looming over the berm. The sea meets Beryksheim in a harbor at the town's eastern edge. When ashore, the reavers moor their ships to the long dock there.

Regardless of how or why characters come to Beryksheim, read the following when they arrive. (If characters have been to Beryksheim before, you can skip or alter any of the following to suit your larger story).

The people of Beryksheim have been raiding surrounding settlements and holdings for generations, and this season is no different. As you approach the dwarven village, the smells of the village—a medley of cold earth and hot iron, livestock, and low tide—wafts inland to greet you.

APPROACHING FROM LAND

Tall earthen berms topped with watchtowers and supported by a strong, wooden palisade suggest an obvious and probably necessary emphasis on defenses. A young, sourfaced dwarf looks down from the nearest watchtower as you approach the sturdy gates.

APPROACHING FROM THE SEA

As your ship pulls alongside the pier, you can't help but notice the scarcity of people. It appears the chief and her retainers are out raiding. As you disembark, the laughter of young dwarves alerts you to a gathering crowd.

REAVER FORTS

Reaver settlements are kept quite dark, save for the glow of cooking fires occasionally leaking from their earthen homes. Where humans embrace the light, reavers forsake it. Torches and lanterns are practically nonexistent in Beryksheim. Most indoor structures are dimly illuminated by hearthfires, which also keep them relatively warm.



A QUICK LOOK AT BERYKSHEIM

Beryksheim is a small, tightly run reaver settlement making good use of its rocky coastline and varied terrain. Easily defensible on most fronts, its hawk-eyed dwarven snipers keep it safe by focusing on eliminating enemy scouts, patrols, and couriers early and often by striking silently from camouflaged sniper's nests, foxholes, and ambush points.

The locations described below are indicated on the Beryksheim map.

1. CHIEF'S LONGHOUSE

Among the largest in Beryksheim, this long, low structure is Chief Falgred's longhouse where she, Yrngar, and their bodyguards live. Celebrations occur in the large communal area outside the hall.

2. RAIDER LONGSHIP

These are the chief's longship and the Vors ship used to raid the settlement.

3. LONGSHIP

This is another reaver longship, used to raid, trade, and explore.

4. SMOKEHOUSE

Warm and filled with dense, thick smoke, this small building contains racks of salted fish, reindeer jerky, and wild game of all kinds.

5. LIVERY

Livestock of all kinds wander here in the open pen attached to the livery, lowing and bleating around braziers to keep warm. Two long, wooden buildings shelter larger animals.

6. TEMPLE OF THOR

This black-roofed, domelike structure rising defiantly above the snow is Thor's temple. It is always open to the strong and to those seeking Thor's strength and wisdom in all things.

7. WAREHOUSE

The tallest building in the settlement (watchtowers notwithstanding) is the warehouse that stores the plunder taken in raids. Several cages in the back are empty but are clearly intended for captives and thralls. Unscrupulous characters who sneak into the warehouse and make a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discover a forgotten cache of bundled otter, mink, and ermine pelts worth 90, 250, and 450 gp respectively.

8. MAIN GATE

Two sturdy, reinforced towers flank the heavy, wooden gates at the western edge of Beryksheim. Each tower is manned by a squad of four dwarves. A third squad guards the gate and a fourth patrols the palisade. Squads are reduced to half strength during celebrations.

THE BERYKSHEIM REAVERS

Although Falgred favors her warriors' advice, she also weighs the advice of kinfolk. When it comes to certain matters, the chief occasionally heeds the sometimes naive and impulsive counsel of her young heir apparent, Yrngar Stonehand.

Chieftain Falgred Tomasdottir. Calm and quiet, Falgred wears her head shaved on either side, the top pulled into a painfully tight braid. She is perpetually armed for battle and always accompanied by a trio of her most loyal dwarves.

Guldark Olufsen. Housecarl and shield brother Guldark Olufsen acts as second-in-command in the chief's absence, but his only responsibility and authority lies in matters of safeguarding the village and the chief. Guldark's word is enough to summon nearly two hundred dwarves (tribal warriors) on two day's notice, so he does speak with a degree of authority few can ignore.

Herrga Wotansdottir. The shieldmaiden of the temple is a proud and dedicated servant of the spiritual needs of the community and the wider village populace. She sees herself as a core element of the village and works hard to keep it vibrant and growing. She wears her blonde hair in dozens of small braids.

Rolstav Arneson. Dedicated to Thor at birth, Rolstav has read the blood omens, made the sacrifices, and interpreted the Thunderers' divine will on his people's behalf for generations. The ring mage is a master of runic mysteries who advises the chief with auguries and on spiritual, shamanistic matters.

Yrngar Stonehand. The first son of Beryksheim is a proud, emotionally stunted, and aggressive dwarf with

a beard of barely sixteen summers. This unruly young warrior has twice his father's bravado and half his mother's sense. Usually well intentioned, the hot-headed Yrngar is easily offended. If he perceives disrespect (intentional or not) toward himself or his clan, he'll challenge the offender on the spot, demanding his honor-right to a public duel. Regardless of Yrngar's emotional state, he obeys his mother unquestioningly, resentfully honoring her commands to the letter. He isn't in the settlement when characters arrive, having gone on a hunting expedition with a few of his retainers and a handful of dwarves from Vorstaag (who subsequently captured him for the mi-go, but no one in Beryksheim knows that yet).

TROUBLE WITH TROLLS

Regardless of initial incentives, the characters quickly discover the people of Beryksheim desperately need them to kill or drive off the two trolls harassing the villagers and their herds. Otherwise this knowledge is available through Rolstav, the local priest of Thor (see above).

After exchanging introductions, food, and drink, Rolstav explains two trolls are harassing his hunters, herdsmen, and prospectors at the worst possible time, and he needs the characters' assistance terribly. He plans to use hunting parties to bring down several reindeer for a local feast, so he would like the characters to deal with the trolls while dwarves hunt the deer. If all goes as planned, the characters will eliminate the trolls as a threat and the hunters will bring in the meat at about the time the chief is disembarking. With everyone arriving simultaneously, the grand celebration can begin.

TRACKING THE TROLLS

What the dwarves believe is two trolls harassing hunters and herders is actually a trio of boreal trolls named Giartharr, Grani, and Sótr. The trio spent many years steering clear of the local dwarves but was emboldened by the omenlike sight of the falling star, which they interpreted as divine sanction of their desire to start killing and sacrificing local dwarves again.

The trolls' Touch of Boreas gives them away; their ice-infused tracks persist even in a frigid environment, reducing the difficulty of tracking them from DC 20 to DC 10. Three successful checks (each one representing about 90 minutes of travel) are enough to bring the characters to the trolls' lair. If a check fails, characters get three chances to find the trail again by making a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check. If all three of those checks fail, the trail is lost and characters can pick it up again only by returning to Beryksheim and trying again the next day.

Rangers using Primeval Awareness note the unusual (elemental) nature of these trolls.

THE TROLL HOUSE

The trolls' lair is in a cave that's well concealed by a copse of closely-growing fir trees. Several frostbitten, starveling sheep bleat thinly nearby. All four sheep are tied with leather cords to an iron ring mounted to the stone wall just inside the cave mouth.

ICE MOUTH

Characters who search for traps and succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check notice large, sharp icicles suspended fanglike from the cave mouth and ceiling. These are closely spaced and less stable than they appear at a glance. The regenerating trolls don't care if they occasionally get speared by an icicle.

A creature trying to slip through the icicles must make a successful DC 16 Dexterity (Acrobatics or Stealth) check. Small creatures have advantage on the check; Large or larger creatures have disadvantage. If the check fails, an icicle falls onto the creature, doing 10 (3d6) piercing damage plus 5 (1d10) cold damage.

Alternatively, characters can simply smash a clear path through the icicles. This takes two rounds with bludgeoning weapons or four rounds with slashing weapons. All three trolls are immediately alerted to the danger.

BOREAL SIBLINGS

The trolls occupy a small, shallow lair at the end of a sloping, winding entry passage that extends 50 feet into the hillside while descending 20 feet.

The lair at the end of that passage is a dank, dark, frigid space approximately 30 feet in diameter, with a 15-foot ceiling. It's only real feature is a refuse pit (5 feet in diameter) at the center of the room. The pit is nearly filled with the frozen, gnawed remnants of bears, elks, giant boar, and several dwarf hunters. All the remains are intermingled and in various stages of dismemberment, consumption, and decomposition. (No map of the lair is provided because it's so simple.)

During daytime, 1d3 trolls are awake. Between midnight and sunrise, 1d3 - 1 are awake. As soon as any troll catches sight or smell of the characters, it bellows out a warning and the others become instantly alert.



Treasure. Scattered haphazardly around the lair and in the refuse pit are the murdered hunters' salvageable possessions, consisting of a blood-soaked quiver holding 10 +2 arrows, a suit of studded leather armor sized for a dwarf, 17 arrows, 2 hand-axes, 3 hunting knives, a silver and turquoise pendant worth 250 gp, and a sack of 500 cp minted in Zobeck stuffed into a crack in the wall. Finding all of this takes 30 minutes of searching. The same search coupled with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check determines that the lair contains the remains of three dwarves. Anyone familiar with reaver dwarf culture knows their families would appreciate having their skulls (at least) brought home for interment.

TRIUMPHANT RETURN

When the characters return, the village is already preparing for the grand celebration. Scouts report incoming reavers flying the chief's flag and riding low, laden with bundles, barrels, and thralls. By nightfall, the vessel makes port and the otherwise somber community bursts into wild, almost dangerous revelry. Tests of strength, bravery, and skill, drunken pranks, games, and dancing drive the townsfolk feverishly through the night.

During these revels, characters can engage in any number of sporting challenges, drinking games, tests of strength and skill and song, even weaving contests. As the characters complete challenges, they earn renown with the reavers. The more challenges a character wins or helps a reaver to win, the more renown and clan favor garnered by the character.

CONTESTS OF HONOR, SKILL, AND DEBAUCHERY

At some point during the night, Rolstav collects the characters and takes them to listen to the chief speak. As the characters sit among the audience, the chief recounts how her latest quarry—Vløss “Troll’s Blood” Brunn, a rival dwarven reaver chief—was released from earthly shackles (she wipes an imaginary tear) and “lifted unto grace, by my own gentle hand.”

Smiling at the convincingly raucous laughter, the chief continues.

“And he wan’ more than a foot or two from me—about where ya’re now. Or them.” She points at one of the characters to make her point. “An’ then he leaps for his blade. But I was faster. I put the iron of me boot down on his hilt ‘for he could pack iron. Then, I raised my axe high and . . .”

She pauses, looks from face to face, and asks, “What would you have done, or you, or you?”

She expects an answer from each player character. Anyone who says they’d have offered mercy gains a white d6. Others get a black d6.

At any point during the next 24 hours, a character can spend this die to modify any d20 roll, similar to Bardic Inspiration. A white die can only be used to increase a roll made by the character or the character’s ally. A black die can only be used to reduce an opponent’s roll. Multiple players can affect the same roll, and their combined dice effects stack.

Characters might also use this opportunity to introduce themselves to the chief, or better, bond somehow with these dwarves.

DRINKING CONTESTS

Characters returning as heroes or who are seen regularly in the chief’s company slowly earn the local reavers’ acceptance, but little else. Actually earning a reaver’s favor, or even begrudging respect, can be distasteful to most civilized sensibilities. Among the reavers of Beryksheim, this social initiation is accomplished by engaging in a drinking contest. The reaver’s produce a thick, noxious, inebriating slurry of fermented buttermilk and curdled cheese called “wolf-mother’s milk.”

To earn the reavers’ back-slapping comradery by drinking wolf-mother’s milk, a character must succeed on four Constitution saving throws at DCs 14, 15, 16, and 16, while a Beryk opponent does the same. The Beryk NPC has +7 on these saves. After failing three saves, a creature becomes poisoned for 1d4 hours. Whoever makes more saves successfully wins the contest. If the contest is tied after four rounds, there’s a tie-breaking round at DC 16.


The winner of a drinking contest gains a +1 Status bonus within the Northlands region (to a maximum of 8) and the appellation “irongut,” presuming the Beryksheim community survives to spread the tale of the character’s drinking prowess.

AXE-THROWING CONTESTS

Physical contests of all kinds are popular in Beryksheim, but Beryks excel in two particular areas (beyond reaving, of course): axe throwing and sledding. The Beryksheim reavers pride themselves not only on bravery but also their ability to harness those skills for war, peace, or reaving.

Among these routes to reaver status, the favorite is a show of martial skill using a reaver’s signature weapon, the hand-axe. An axe-throwing contest is held in two rounds with three throws each round by each contestant. Each throw is at a different target, with the difficulty (AC) of the targets gradually increasing. First-round targets are AC 15, 15, and 16; second-round targets are AC 17, 17, and 18. If a throw hits the target, the thrower scores points equal to the adjusted d20 roll; for example, an adjusted roll of 18 against an AC 15 target scores 18 points. A miss scores 0 points. A critical hit (roll of natural 20) scores the adjusted roll plus 5. Contestants are allowed to use only common hand-axes, selected from a communal barrel.

If the contest is tied after six throws, the contestant who hit the highest-AC target wins, then the second-highest, then third-highest, etc. If that doesn’t break the tie, both contestants take turns throwing at an AC 15 target until someone loses by missing the target.



The winner gains a +1 Status bonus in the Northlands region (to a maximum of 8) and the appellation “razorhand,” presuming the Beryksheim community survives to spread the tale of their martial prowess.

SLEDDING CONTESTS

A sledding contest is comprised of three Dexterity checks as the contestant barrels down a steep slope with obstacles and jumps on a wooden sled. The checks are

1. DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics).
2. DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics); this check can be preceded by an optional DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check, which earns a +2 bonus on the Dexterity check if it succeeds or a –2 penalty if it fails.
3. DC 14 Strength (Athletics) followed by DC 16 Dexterity (Acrobatics); both must be made successfully to win points for this stage.

Each successful stage earns the contestant 5 points. A natural 20 on a Dexterity (not Strength) check indicates a spectacular landing that earns a 5-point bonus.

The current Beryksheim champion succeeds on the first check automatically and has a +6 bonus on all the other checks.

The winner gains a +1 Status bonus in the Northlands region (to a maximum of 8) and the appellation “otterborn,” presuming the Beryksheim community survives to spread the tale of their prowess.

STORIES AND TALES

Although offputting and cold to mistrusted newcomers, the villagers of Beryksheim are as ravenous for a grand tale or a good song as any Northlander. Characters willing to share a tale or song can earn the reavers’ respect by making successful Charisma checks.

At some point during one of the character’s performances, a barrel-shouldered Beryk skald named Lork stands and challenges the character to a test of storytelling skill. The stories are told in three rounds. Each round, each contestant makes a Charisma check using Performance (round 1), Deception (round 2), and Intimidation (round 3). Lork has a +7 bonus on these checks, and he tells a tale of a dwarf who steals a legendary sword from a group of giants who were using it to whittle trees into whimsical shapes. The checks have no DCs; whoever rolls highest each round, wins that round. Whoever wins the most rounds is acclaimed by the crowd and wins the contest.

A character who beats Lork in a test of bardic wit and talent gains instant respect in the eyes of any clan members present. The winner gains a +1 Status bonus in the Northlands region (to a maximum of 8) and the

appellation “gloryweaver,” presuming the Beryksheim community survives to spread the tale of the character’s entertainment prowess.

LATE NIGHTS, DEADLY MORNINGS!

In the early hours of the morning, when everyone in Beryksheim is sleeping off the previous night’s revels and the sea is shrouded in heavy fog, Vors raiders slip silently up to the docks and into the town. The raiders assault the Beryksheim docks and the chieftain’s hall simultaneously. They burn the longships at the docks (including the characters’ craft, if present). About 30 seconds into the raid, smoke from the burning ships alerts reaver guards, who sound the alarm. With a bellow, the camp explodes into brutal (if hung over) violence.

RAID EVENT 1: HOPE’S HARVEST

This event takes place immediately after the attack begins, if you choose to use it. You can skip it if characters have already gotten caught up in repelling the raiders, or use it later. It takes place in whatever building the characters spent the night. That could be the chieftain’s lodge, if they earned the respect of Chieftain Falgred Tomasdottir, or any other unlabeled lodge in the settlement otherwise.

A warhorn sounds but is abruptly cut off with an audible gurgle. The smell of smoke claws up your nose as your eyes snap open. The sounds of panic and violence roll through camp.

Characters have just a few minutes to don armor, gather weapons, barricade doors, prepare traps, etc., before 4 **Vors-go raiders** attack the lodge, seeking any way inside. The attack comes so quickly that characters shouldn’t be able to seal the building tightly against assault. If they bar the door, the Vors-go raiders just chop through shutters or walls with their axes. If characters manage to kill a few raiders before they get inside, more raiders can arrive to reinforce the attackers so the fight is still challenging.

As the battle is winding down, Guldark emerges from the pre-dawn darkness outside with a trio of Beryk warriors. He tells characters that more raiders are infiltrating the town. He’s headed toward the waterfront to secure the shipworks, and Falgred intends to barricade the mead hall. He directs the characters to the temple, to assist Shieldmaiden Herrga. Proceed to event 2.

RAID EVENT 2: THOR’S FALL

Believing stories of divinely inspired strength and ferocity of the Beryksheim reavers, the Vors-go raid leaders assigned a special team to assault Beryksheim’s temple of Thor. A band of 2 **Vors-go raid leaders** and

2 **Vors-go war wolves** are trying to cut their way into the temple. The temple doors are barred and characters can't get inside until they've dealt with these attackers outside. Once the immediate threat is removed, the doors are opened. Inside is a small force consisting of **Shieldmaiden Herrga**, 2 dwarf **guards**, a dwarf **priest**, 2 dwarf **acolytes**, and a dozen dwarf and human **commoners**.

With the temple now safe (at least temporarily), Shieldmaiden Herrga directs her NPCs to repair and reinforce the temple barricades. She looks at the player characters, tosses them a satchel with the potions (see "Treasure," below) and says, "What are you waiting for? The meadhall needs help!" If the characters ask for any assistance, she tells one of the surviving guards to accompany them, with a nearly audible roll of her eyes. Remember to make necessary checks for infection, and proceed to event 3.

Treasure. The sack Shieldmaiden Herrga tosses to the characters contains 2 *potions of greater healing* and 3 *potions of healing*. These do not cure spore infections.

RAID EVENT 3: A CHIEFTAIN FALLS

As the characters wade through the chaotic fog of war, they eventually reach the main hall, where they see Asgren, the vile Vors-go war leader, strike down Chief Falgred in one-on-one combat. As the regrouping Vors raiders prepare to slaughter the now demoralized Beryks, the characters see their chance: they must act!

The war leader's band consists of **Asgren**, 2 **Vors-go raiders**, and 2 **Vors-go war wolves**. As long as Asgren isn't incapacitated, members of his war band can't be frightened.

Chieftain Falgred has 0 hit points and has failed one death save. Her surviving clansmen now consist of 17 **commoners**, a wounded **ringmage** (8 hit points, 2 1st-level spells slots remaining), 2 **wolf reaver dwarves** (5 hit points each), and a handful of reaver dwarves so wounded and exhausted they can't fight.

Unless the characters take care to hide themselves from Asgren, he immediately turns his attention on them when they enter the scene and orders a full attack. The other villagers join in the fight only if one of the characters falls to 0 hit points; otherwise, they form a defensive ring around Falgred and protect her. If they do attack, the monsters spend their next action attacking one of the NPC defenders,

either the ringmage or the reavers. If someone heals Falgred, the rest of the dwarves pull her inside the mead hall and reinforce the barricade, allowing the characters to finish the battle without fear of more Beryksheim casualties.

After the Battle. If the characters save the chieftain, she grants them titles, rewards, and status on the spot, and immediately continues with a sobbing plea for the characters to seek out her son Yrngar and fetch him (or



his body) back home to Beryksheim; she must stay here and tend to her people's needs. She offers the characters any items listed as treasure or reward provided the characters set out at once.

Falgred recognized the attackers as reavers from Vorsheim, where her son had gone to participate in a hunt with someone she believed was an ally. Now, it appears to have been a trap or a ruse, and she can only hope he's being held hostage.

If the chieftain doesn't survive, Shieldmaiden Herrga immediately steps in, converses briefly with the wounded but surviving Guldark, offers the listed treasure as reward to the characters, then asks them to seek out the clan heir. The young must be recovered before the chieftain's lineage is cut off.

Proceeding. The Beryksheim clan will not allow their surviving boats to be taken because they'll need them more than ever in the coming days. If the characters sailed here, their ship is infested with a swift-acting, dry-rotting fungus with which the raiders sabotaged the keel; only a few of the Beryk's vessels weren't infested. Beryksheim boatwrights will repair the characters' boat for free while the characters are away.

The characters can get supplies for the trip from the smokehouse, and plenty of warm furs are available. The trip is roughly five days overland, and at this point, dawn is just breaking. There's no time to lose.

Characters who fought in the battle of Beryksheim gain a +1 Status bonus with other villages in the region, presuming the Beryksheim community survives to spread the tale, and they can preface their names or titles with the word "undaunted."

Make any checks for infection and proceed to Part 2.

Treasure. The chieftain possesses a set of white dragon scale mail, its bands etched with her clan's line. It was originally intended for her son, but she will gladly exchange it for his safety.

PART 2. TRAIL OF SORROW

The trip to Vorstaag takes roughly five days on foot. On the trail, the forest is eerily hushed. Normally docile animals are hostile, and predators are outright bloodthirsty. For the time being, these spore-infected beasts remain noncontagious.

Every three days, check to see whether infected characters advance to the next stage as worsening symptoms take hold.

WINTER'S WRATH

The percentage chance for random encounters = the number of creatures in the traveling party × 10. Characters and creatures with proficiency in either Stealth or Survival aren't counted. Make this check once per day. If an encounter is indicated, it has a 20% chance to occur during daytime and 80% during nighttime. Roll 1d8 to determine what attacks.

1d8	Encounter	Challenge
1	Nightgarm*	6
2	Owlbear (2)	3
3	Bereginyas* (2)	4
4	Frostveil* (2)	4
5	Worg Pack (5d4)	1/2
6	Weeping Treant*	6
7	Giant Boars (1d4)	2
8	Darakhul* (1d4)	3

* See *Tome of Beasts*

SILENT VORSTAAG

Beyond the forest's edge, Vorstaag sprawls like a beached corpse. Much of the town is rampant with dry rot, and many buildings have collapsed. In the distance, foothills descend to the sea and shelter a nearby cove where two longships are seen, rocking quietly with the tide. An unfamiliar aroma that's sweet and faintly floral drifts on the breeze, but it doesn't cover the stench of decay wafting from the town.

Patches of fungus and small, alien-looking mushrooms grow on the few moldering corpses lying in the streets or in mildewed structures. A character with proficiency in Medicine who inspects two or more bodies detects signs of cannibalization but can't tell if it's the work of ghouls or something else; it's definitely not animals. Infected characters who enter the town must make an immediate check for disease progression, regardless of how many days it's been since their last check.

DINNER INTERRUPTED

A pack of darakhul scavenging through the ruins for bodies (dead or alive) to feed on sniff out the last pocket of life in this grisly ghost town. Characters with passive Perception 12 or higher hear or smell the darakhuls as they're clawing and digging at a rubble barricade heaped in the entrance to a sturdy log structure. If the characters want to take the ghouls by surprise, the darakhuls' passive Perception is 11. If the characters made enough noise during their exploration of the town to be noticed by the darakhuls, the creatures set up an ambush, placing a severed hand with several jeweled rings on the fingers as bait. The severed hand is actually a crawling claw.

The pack consists of 2 **darakhuls**, 2 **ghasts**, 3 **beggar ghouls**, and a **crawling claw**.

If the characters defeat or lure away the ghouls, they can rescue the last Vors survivor and hear his story. Otherwise, what they hear are the horrific screams of a defenseless dwarf being devoured alive by the ghouls.

The survivor is Logar Hammerfast, a dwarven ringmage with AC10, 15 hit points, no remaining spell slots, and no possessions of worth. He is in stage 3 infestation and suffering from uncontrollable spasms (long-term madness) that leave him effectively paralyzed. Only *greater restoration* or comparable magic can cure him. *Lesser restoration*, *cure wounds*, or a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check with an herbalism kit can quiet his symptoms and bring him to his senses long enough to tell his story.



Hammerfast knows the general outline of events from the adventure background. All of Vorstaag saw the fallen star as an omen of glory. They couldn't have been more wrong. He doesn't know about the mi-go specifically, but he claims to hear a raspy,


ALARM RHIZOMES

Mi-go require no illumination to see. Characters who venture into this subterranean, alien outpost must provide their own light unless they can see in darkness.

Several areas in the caves have fungal alarm rhizomes: thin, vinelike tendrils that grow along walls and floors. If these rhizomes are touched, they radiate faint purple light (noticeable by anyone with passive Perception 15 or higher) that pulses along the length of the rhizome, which extends farther into the caves, beyond sight. Creatures can avoid stepping on rhizomes by moving at half speed, provided they can see. A creature moving at normal speed must make a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw each round to

avoid stepping on rhizomes. In both cases, characters must make a conscious effort to walk carefully; characters who aren't aware of the risk or who don't care step on rhizomes automatically.

Once a rhizome is triggered, the flashes race all through the cave complex, reaching Area 7 within six seconds. This alone isn't enough to alarm the mi-go; small animals trigger the rhizomes frequently. If two characters step on rhizomes during the same round, the mi-go interpret it as a sign of danger and conceal themselves, intending to ambush invaders who arrive at the teleport pad.



whispered song calling to him from the mountains. He hears it so clearly that he becomes agitated if the characters say they don't hear it. As it grew clearer and more frequent, Hammerfast feared he would surrender to its demands (which he can't define, but he knows it wants him to do something). Fearing the song, he used the last of his failing physical ability to barricade himself inside his home: not to keep the ghouls out but to seal himself in. He understands that the stream brought the affliction to town, and he knows that the stream originates in caves in the mountains.

He can tell the characters how to find the cave system ("follow the stream"). Before lapsing back into madness, the dwarf can enact a ritual augury of haruspicy to read omens in the entrails of the fallen ghouls. The omens aren't good: with his eyes rolled back in his head and his limbs again twitching uncontrollably, he intones "Insanity awaits you in the darkness! Death is for the lucky!"

Treasure. Two jeweled, gold rings (alexandrite and peridot, 600 gp each) and a *ring of resistance* (psychic, jade gemstone) are worn by the crawling claw.

A DISH BEST SERVED COLD

The Vors reavers had been marauding most of the month, before ranging as far as Beryksheim in their search for living bodies to deliver to their mi-go masters. One of the settlements sacked was Kaashgar, a trollkin colony up the coast. The few surviving trollkin hunters, now overcome with rage and grief, have sworn blood vengeance against the Vors. Unfortunately, these trollkin won't recognize the difference between the actual culprits and another party of humans and humanoids tracking those same culprits. They won't parley unless the characters take risks to initiate communication.

If characters aren't traveling stealthily (slow pace, 2 mph), a war band of 3 **trollkin reavers** detects them and sets an ambush in a thinning section of forest with many large rock formations.

When the trollkin attack, describe this war party as unlike any other trollkin the characters have encountered. (Even if the characters have never fought or interacted with trollkin directly, they've undoubtedly seen enough trollkin in markets and inns to know what to expect.) These trollkin have trollkin women's dresses draped around their shields, children's toys tucked under the straps of their armor, war paint that resembles tears streaking their faces, and they use battlecries like "Vengeance," "Now you'll pay," and "How brave are you when you're not facing children?"

If the characters restrain their response and try to halt the battle to communicate, someone must use their action to make a successful DC 17 Charisma

(Persuasion) check. At that point, the trollkin back off (while remaining guarded against trickery) and explain what happened to their settlement: that it was attacked by dwarves while this group was away hunting, and even the survivors were overcome by infection and succumbed to madness. Only when characters explain they're trailing the same killers will the trollkin lower their weapons.

The trollkins' leader is called Vjolar. He lived in seclusion for years, growing more out of touch with the physical world in favor of increased communion with the spirits of his ancestors. The recent falling star served as an omen of doom for his tribe. But he returned with a warning too late, so now he only wants to die gloriously in a headlong pursuit of revenge.

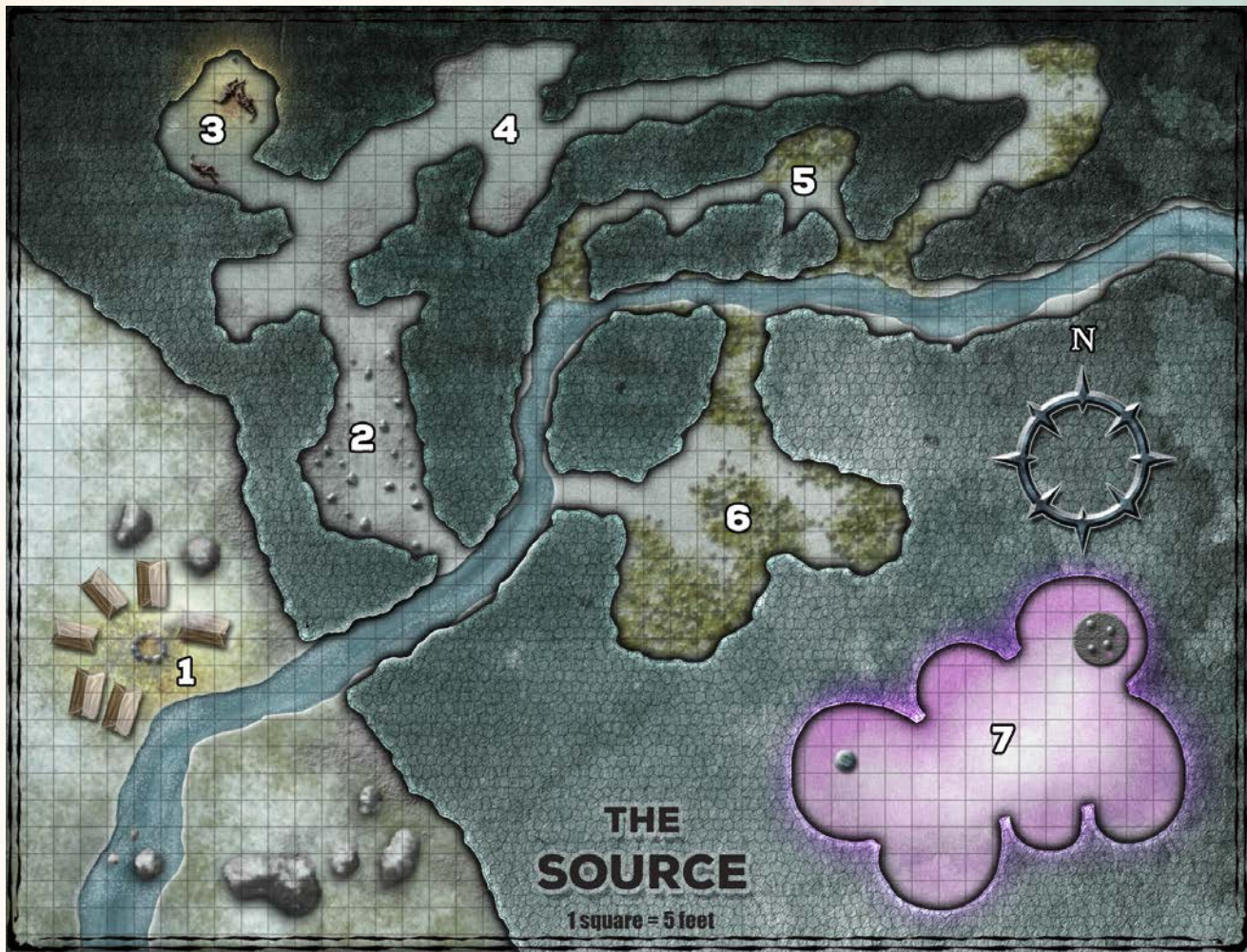
The trollkin confirm what Logar Hammerfast told the characters about the stream's source. If the characters elaborate on current events, the trollkin gravely predict Beryksheim will be overwhelmed by infection and madness before the characters accomplish their mission. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check enlists the trollkin to go to Beryksheim and help the dwarves fight against the affliction by restraining those who go mad and preventing them from causing more harm. They'd rather accompany the characters, but make it clear they'd be more a hindrance than a help. Their only interest is hurling themselves suicidally against the enemy; the characters would lose any chance for surprise or reconnaissance with these trollkin in tow.

PART 3. ALIEN GROWTH

If any characters are infected, they should make a check for disease progression while following the stream upward toward its source. Characters who aren't infected yet must make a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become infected (stage 1) during this journey.

Increasingly vigorous fungal growth lines the stream's banks. It's unpleasant, but it provides a perfect trail for characters to follow. It's abundantly clear the fungus is the source of the sweet, musky aroma noted earlier. Creatures who approach within 15 feet of any fungus must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be infected with mi-go spores. A successful saving throw provides 24-hour immunity to the spores. (This check is in addition to the once-per-trip DC 15 saving throw mentioned in the preceding paragraph.)

Inside the cave, the stream expands into a 5-foot-deep pool. The only ways to advance from the cave entrance toward Area 6 is to swim through the infected stream, fly above it, or use a small boat. A raft won't protect characters from getting doused.



THE SOURCE

The mi-go occupy a cave network stretching deep into the mountainside. Darkness, warmth, and moisture from the subterranean stream provide ideal conditions for fungal growth.

1. THE CAMP

Gundren Stoneheart, the former warleader of Vorstaag, and his few remaining warriors (6 **zombies**) camp here. All are moldering in the final stages of spore infestation. They are beyond recovery, with toadstools growing from their eyes and heads. They don't fight in a coordinated manner.

2. RHIZOME CAVERN

Within 15 feet of the entrance to this cave system, the alarm rhizomes begin. The rhizomes are newly grown and haven't yet connected to Area 7. Touching the tendrils in this area causes the flashes of light described in the sidebar but doesn't alert the mi-go. Beyond this area, alarm rhizomes function normally.

3. THE MIDDEN HEAP

The discarded corpses of failed mi-go experiments are deposited here. The stench wafting from this cave is thick and repulsive, with clouds of droning flies being audible from 15 feet away. Many of the fungus-covered bodies are missing their skull caps and brains; a character with proficiency in Medicine can determine that these are not battle wounds or the work of predators or scavengers; the skulls were opened and the brains removed with great precision. Several of these skull cavities now have faintly glowing, spherical alien fungi growing in them.

Six of these corpses are fungal zombies animated by the mi-go fungus. Treat them as 6 **ogre zombies** with the following changes: size is Medium, type is Plant, Undead Fortitude is foiled by necrotic damage instead of radiant, and the Morningstar attack is made with the zombie's fists and requires a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw to avoid contracting stage 1 spore infestation. Loud battle sounds, such as *thunderwave* spells, are heard by the mi-go sentry in

Area 6, who alerts its comrades in Area 7.

One Vors reaver dwarf still survives. After the battle, characters hear its pitiful sobs. A quick search of the chamber turns up the unfortunate dwarf, almost perfectly camouflaged by a thick growth of fungus over its entire body and utterly insane from the spores eating away its brain. The dwarf raves quietly about mildew, mold, darkness, and the living fungus that came to carry everyone away to the stars.

Also among the dead are corpses the characters recognize from their time in Beryksheim, but the chief's heir isn't among them. They wear the heir's colors, indicating these are probably his entourage, but all were too old to be the heir.

4. SPORE NURSERY

The air here is stifling with the familiar, sickly-sweet perfume thanks to the fungus growing more vigorously here than anywhere. It flourishes in semi-orderly, raised patches of earth on either side of the tunnel, in what is obviously a tended garden. Bulbous fungal "balloons" hover above these "patches," attached by tendrils from 3 to 12 feet in length. Closer inspection reveals the patches are actually decomposing corpses, but none wear the colors of Beryksheim's noble house. The floating bulbs range from 1 foot to 5 feet in diameter, and the larger orbs pulse and hum softly. The four largest orbs are mature **spore bulbs**. These use the stat block of gas spores but with the following changes: replace Death Burst, Eerie Resemblance, and the gas spore's Touch attack with the following:

- **Good Vibrations.** A humanoid creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the bulb gains 1d6 temporary hit points from the alien ovoid's resonant humming. If the creature remains within 10 feet of the spore bulb for one complete round, the spore bulb drifts into physical contact with the creature at the start of the creature's next turn, triggering a Touch attack.
- **Touch.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature that isn't undead. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) poison damage, and the target creature and all creatures within 10 feet of it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or contract stage 2 spore infestation.

5. FALSE SUNLIGHT CHAMBER

Arching along the recessed, northern wall of this chamber is a row of tall, thin fungoid growths resembling lifeless saplings. Each of these four "fungus trees" is topped by a small bulb about 3 inches in diameter. If any creature approaches within 10 feet of a fungus tree, this bulb radiates a dim lavender light. Within 5 feet, the illumination becomes bright to a 10-foot radius.

These organisms are alien sunlight generators that provide the mi-go with needed nutrients. Because these creatures require only brief interludes of their native sunlight, there is only a 20% chance of a mi-go being present here when characters arrive. If one is present, determine randomly whether it came from Area 6 or 8.

Treasure. The illuminating bulbs atop the sunlight generators are entirely safe, despite their odd appearance. The stems can be trimmed to any length up to 8 feet. A bulb continues glowing for one week for every foot of stem left attached to it. Its illumination level can be controlled by gently squeezing the stem: no



illumination; dim light in a radius up to 20 feet; bright light in a radius up to 20 feet; or a blinding flash (1/ day) in a 30-foot cone. If the blinding flash is triggered, all creatures in the cone that rely on sight are blinded for a number of rounds = 1d4 – the creature's Dexterity modifier (minimum of 1 round).

6. FUNGUS GARDEN

The chamber is crowded with a bewildering array of glowing, pulsating, buzzing, gently waving fungi in every imaginable size, color, and shape, from spheres to spirals to arching canopies to pitcherlike bowls. They fill the chamber, cling to the walls and ceiling, and spill out into the oily water of the stream.

This chamber is guarded by 2 **mi-go** sentries and 2 **deathcap myconids**. They can be detected by a character who scans the area from one of the entrances and makes a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check. The moment either mi-go becomes aware of intruders, it taps the alarm rhizomes to alert the mi-go in Area 7. These sentries are armed with mi-go neural agonizers (see Appendix 2).

Creatures not already infected with mi-go spores must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw the first time they start their turn in this chamber or become infected.

The deathcap myconids don't wade into combat, but look for an opportunity to team up against a character who's hanging back from the fight in isolation. The myconids and mi-go aren't allies; in fact, they seem unaware or uninterested in one another.

Concealed beneath the fungi near the eastern edge of the chamber is a mi-go teleportation device: a fleshy, silvery disk embedded in the floor. It can be found with a careful (10-minute) search of the chamber, with a quick search and a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check, or with a *detect magic* spell. The disc is 10 feet in diameter and etched with alien hieroglyphs that pulse with a faint, lavender light. A metal panel bearing four geometric buttons hovers near the disc's edge with no apparent support.

The pad is simple to operate, even for creatures with no understanding of it. Three of the buttons on the hovering pad (triangle, square, star) do nothing. Pressing the circular button causes the pale lavender light to slowly grow bright purple. Six seconds later, when the light is very bright, all creatures on the disc teleport to the matching disc in Area 7 and the light instantly drops back to barely perceptible level.

7. MI-GO HIVE

The hive was carved into the mountain with inscrutable mi-go technology. Multiple overlapping, hemispherical volumes were disintegrated from the solid rock to create one large, irregular cavity roughly 75 feet long, 35 feet wide, and varying from 15 to 30 feet high. The whole area is difficult terrain (the mi-go simply fly above it) and is dimly lit by the unsettling purple light of luminescent fungi.

The teleporter disc (near the western edge) sits on one of two level surfaces. The teleporter can be used to return to Area 6 (triangle button), to teleport to the other level area in the northeast portion of the chamber (square button), or to the hovering metal disc described below (circle button).

The area to the northeast is the second level area. Here a metal floor delineates a laboratory space containing many strange and disturbing devices. The centerpiece is a metal table with insectoid limbs poised over it. Each articulated limb is tipped with a needle, saw, drill, or some unidentifiable tool. Lying on the table is the body of a dwarf: the heir of Beryksheim. His skullcap is sliced off and his cranial cavity is empty. The body emanates necromantic magic; it's protected by mi-go technology that mimics *gentle repose*, in case they decide to place the brain back in the skull (or transplant the brain of some other creature). A nearby metal rack holds dozens of crystal cylinders, sixteen of which contain individual brains that appear to still be alive.

A four-foot-wide disc of unidentifiable metal hovers near the ceiling above the lab, also with a floating panel bearing the same four geometric buttons.

There are three **mi-go** in this chamber. All have neural agonizers (see Appendix 2). Two are hiding among the fungus in the southeast portion of the chamber, the third is lurking on the hovering platform. The mi-go on the platform can perform lair actions, thanks to the platform controls. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the mi-go takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects:

- Fungi in the chamber fling out grasping tendrils. All creatures on the ground must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be pulled 10 feet in any direction the mi-go chooses, knocked prone, and grappled (escape DC 14) until initiative count 20 of the next round. The mi-go can't use this lair action twice in a row.
- The mi-go targets any number of creatures it can see. Each creature must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be confused (as if affected by the *confusion* spell) until initiative count 20 of the next round. The mi-go can't use this lair action twice in a row.

- The mi-go shoots lightning at any number of creatures it can see. Each target takes 7 (2d6) lightning damage. The mi-go can use this lair action multiple rounds in a row.

For a greater challenge, a fourth mi-go can teleport in on the mi-go turn of round 3.

Using the Mi-go Lab. Once the mi-go are defeated, characters who spend an hour scrutinizing the laboratory machinery can attempt an Intelligence (Arcana) check to puzzle out the lab equipment. Don't tell players whether their rolls succeed or fail; tell them only that the higher the result, the better they understand the machinery. After seeing their rolls, they must decide for themselves whether to risk activating the machinery in an effort to restore Yrngar's brain to his body. If they do, no subsequent roll is made; the outcome depends on this roll.

A result of 19 or higher on the Arcana check means the machinery is understood well enough to be activated properly. It selects Yrngar's brain from the rack of cylinders, replaces it in the cavity, closes the skull, and revives the dwarf to life. He emerges from stasis with 1 hit point and 4 levels of exhaustion, but he groggily remembers everything. He relates a distorted, dreamlike consciousness and long, exhausting rounds of questioning by disembodied voices, but no other sensations from his time as a brain in a jar. For the rest of his life he'll have an ugly scar encircling his head that his hair will never conceal, but that's the only lasting effect.

If the machinery is activated with an Arcana outcome of 15 to 18, a different brain is replaced in the body. The other fifteen brains are a mix of Vors reavers (some sane, some insane) plus two trollkin, a darakhul, a nightgarm, an owlbear, and a giant boar. Select one of these randomly by any method you like! If the machinery is activated with a result of 14 or lower, it saws and hacks the body and brain into a grisly mess.

The bodies of the remaining victims are all quite dead, either nourishing fungi or turned into fungal zombies. This presents a small conundrum for characters, as the shelved brains—and thus the people—are still alive. Theoretically, the bodies of dwarves killed during the raid (or who die in the future) could be brought to the lab, their dead brains removed, and the living brains of survivors implanted for renewed life. By extension, the player characters could swap their brains into different

bodies, too, if they wanted to. Whether any of this works is up to you. In any case, the mi-go machinery is delicate and needs constant maintenance that the characters can't hope to perform. The device is guaranteed to break down sooner rather than later, and it's impossible to repair without access to the technology of Yuggoth.

In the event that the characters are defeated by the mi-go, they awaken to find they're now just brains encased in crystal pods. They experience complete sensory deprivation except for those periods when the mi-go question them or perform experiments on them. The mi-go aren't intentionally cruel—in fact, they're genuinely interested in anything the characters can teach them—but they treat the brains in their collection with no more concern than we treat worms or fruit flies in a laboratory. Eventually the brains will be transported through space to Yuggoth, where they'll endure eons of nightmarish testing.

CONCLUSION

With the mi-go defeated, the party can return to Beryksheim to report what's transpired. The best outcome is returning with Yrngar Stonehand restored to health. Chieftain Falgred Tomasdottir asked that they bring back his body, at least. If they bring the body back alive but with the wrong brain inside, the chieftain (if she survived the raid) is neither understanding nor forgiving. In that case, the characters are locked up until Falgred decides what to do with them; the best they can hope for is to be scarred as outlaws and exiled from dwarven lands forever.

If the mission succeeded, the Beryk reavers are heartily grateful and forever call the characters friends. They are horrified and somber when they learn the horrible fate that befell their brethren. The characters are rewarded with two magic items of your choosing and the characters will always be provided with free lodging and food whenever they visit Beryksheim, as long as they keep telling the tale of their exploits during the "fungus war" with gusto.

Surviving characters can add the appellation "Beryksfriend" to their names and gain a +1 Status bonus in the Northlands region, presuming the Beryksheim community survives to spread their fame. This increase can raise their Status above 8, but only among dwarves.

APPENDIX 1: MONSTERS

Many monsters in the adventures can be found in the 5th Edition rules. The creatures presented here are either unique to these adventures or were published in *Tome of Beasts* from Kobold Press. Creatures from *Tome of Beasts* are indicated here by a “ToB” superscript appended to their names.

ASGREN THE INFECTED

Asgren is the war leader of the Vors-go dwarves. Before being infected by mi-go spores, he was not much different from any other reaver dwarf: a little braver and a little more bloodthirsty, perhaps, as befits a war leader. The spores flipped a switch in his brain and turned Asgren into a hateful creature who revels in cruelty.

Asgren the Infected

Medium humanoid (dwarf), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 18 (breastplate, shield)

HIT POINTS 97 (15d8 + 30)

SPEED 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	11 (+0)	7 (-2)

SAVING THROWS Strength +6, Dexterity +5, Constitution +5

SKILLS Athletics +6, Deception +1, Intimidation +4, Stealth +5

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES Dwarvish, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Pack Tactics. Asgren has advantage on attack rolls if at least one of the dwarf’s allies is within 5 feet of the target and the ally isn’t incapacitated.

Spore Vigor. When damage reduces Asgren to 0 hit points, he immediately makes three greatsword or dagger attacks. After making the three attacks, Asgren dies.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Asgren makes three melee or ranged attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Asgren’s Command (recharges after a short or long rest).

For 1 minute, Asgren can utter a command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature it can see within 30 feet makes an attack roll or saving throw. The creature can add 1D6 to the roll provided it can hear and understand Asgren. A creature can only benefit from one bonus die at a time. This effect ends if Asgren is incapacitated.

BEREGINYAS

These small, winged faeries appear to be made out of gray mist and can conceal themselves completely in the fogbanks and clouds enshrouding their mountainous lairs. They overcome their victims by seeping into their lungs and choking them on the bereginyas’s foul essence.

Bereginyas

Tiny fey, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15

HIT POINTS 70 (20d4 + 20)

SPEED 20 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

SAVING THROWS Dex +7

SKILLS Perception +5, Stealth +9

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES bludgeoning

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

LANGUAGES Common, Elvish, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bereginyas makes two claw attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, the target is grappled (escape DC 12) and the bereginyas immediately uses Smother against it as a bonus action.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage.

Smother. If the bereginyas grapples an opponent, it extends a semi-solid gaseous tendril down the target's throat as a bonus action. The target must make a successful DC 14 Strength saving or it is immediately out of breath and begins suffocating. Suffocation ends if the grapple is broken or if the bereginyas is killed.

CAPTAIN BLADEMARK

Captain Blademark is a dark-haired but balding male gnome with a cruel smirk that shows off his carefully pointed teeth. He began his military career as a quartermaster, but his cruelty got him moved to command and eventually promoted to captain of the 2nd Sword stationed on the Krakova border. He believes that he should gain command of the company by dint of his superiority and long service. He is secretive, cunning, argumentative, and always suspicious that everyone outside his immediate circle of supporters is plotting against him.

Captain Blademark

Small humanoid (gnome), lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 15 (+1 studded leather)

HIT POINTS 27 (6d6 + 6)

SPEED 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)

SKILLS Deception +5, Persuasion +5, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +4

SAVING THROWS Dex +4, Int +4

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES Draconic, Gnomish, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

Magic Resistance. Captain Blademark has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spellcasting. Captain Blademark is a 2nd-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks, 2 sorcery points). He has the following sorcerer spells at the ready:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*, *message*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (3 slots): *disguise self*, *magic missile*, *silent image*

Cunning Action. Captain Blademark can use a bonus action on his turn to Dash, Disengage, or Hide.

Sneak Attack (1/turn). Captain Blademark deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon

attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Captain Blademark that isn't incapacitated and Captain Blademark doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

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

EQUIPMENT

shortsword, +1 *studded leather*, serpent venom poison, poisoner's kit, antitoxin, 215 gp

CAPTAIN LUCIA RAKELL

Captain Lucia Rakell captains the 3rd Sword located in the Seven Cities. Her bearing is distinctly nonmilitary; she wears form-fitting leather outfits adorned with semiprecious gems, and with design elements that heighten her half-elven features. The seductive twinkle in her eye, however, is alarmingly cruel. She can be charming and friendly, but also manipulative and ambitious. Captain Lucia loves to dig up compromising information about her rivals and use it against them. She believes she has earned the right to command the Company through her inspiring leadership.

Captain Lucia Rakell

Medium humanoid (half-elf), neutral

ARMOR CLASS 15 (studded leather)

HIT POINTS 27 (6d8)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Str +4, Con +3

SKILLS Acrobatics +5, Athletics +5, Intimidation +5, Perception +2, Persuasion +5

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

LANGUAGES Elvish, Goblin, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

Action Surge (1/day). On her turn, Captain Lucia can take one additional action in addition to her regular action. She must finish a short or long rest before using this feature again.

Cunning Action. Captain Lucia can use a bonus action on her turn to Dash, Disengage, or Hide.

Second Wind. On her turn, Captain Lucia can use a bonus action to regain hit points equal to 1d10 + 4. She must finish a short or long rest before using this feature again.

Sneak Attack (1/turn). Captain Lucia deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when she hits a target with a weapon

attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Captain Lucia that isn't incapacitated and Captain Lucia doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

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

EQUIPMENT

rapier, studded leather, *ring of protection*, *potion of healing*, antitoxin, ink pen, leather journal, fine clothes, fur lined cloak, 132 gp

CAPTAIN HAKAR

Captain Hakar al-Atam, Captain of the 4th Sword headquartered near the Magdar/Mharoti border, is a dragonborn. He claims the right to command the Company because of his skill at arms. His red and gold scales accent a long scar that slices across his face, from his eye to his chin. Captain Hakar is immensely proud, even arrogant, and confrontational when crossed or frustrated. He chews bits of dried meat compulsively, a habit that gives him dreadful breath.

Captain Hakar al-Atam

Medium humanoid (dragonborn), chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 15 (scale mail)

HIT POINTS 39 (6d8 + 12)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	9 (-1)

SAVING THROWS Str +6, Con +4

SKILLS Athletics +6, Intimidation +1

DAMAGE RESISTANCES fire

SENSES passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Draconic, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

Action Surge (1/day). On his turn, Captain Hakar can take one additional action in addition to his regular action. He must finish a short or long rest before using this feature again.

Great Weapon Fighting. When Captain Hakar rolls a 1 or 2 on a damage die for an attack he made with a melee weapon wielded with two hands, he can reroll the die. He must use the new roll. The weapon must have the two-handed or versatile property for him to gain this benefit.

Improved Critical. Captain Hakar scores a critical hit on an attack roll that is a natural 19 or 20.

Second Wind. On his turn, Captain Hakar can use a bonus action to regain hit points equal to 1d10 + 4. He must finish a short or long rest before using this feature again.

ACTIONS

Shatterbone. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Fire Breath. Captain Hakar exhales flame in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the cone takes 7 (2d6) fire damage, or half damage with a successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. Captain Hakar must finish a short or long rest before using this attack again.

EQUIPMENT

Shatterbone (+1 *maul*), scale mail, dried meat, dice, wineskin, 85 gp

CLOCKWORK HOUND^{TOB}

Partners to the clockwork huntsmen, these black hounds follow the trails of criminals, escaped slaves, and other unfortunates. Their infused spirits are those of hunting hounds, and their animating magic allows them to follow a scent with preternatural speed and accuracy.

Clockwork Hound

Medium construct, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 14 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 84 (13d8 + 26)

SPEED 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

SAVING THROWS Dex +4, Con +4

SKILLS Athletics +7, Perception +4

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison, psychic

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES understands Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

Diligent Tracker. Clockwork hounds are designed to guard areas and track prey. They have advantage on all Wisdom (Perception) and Wisdom (Survival) checks when tracking.

Explosive Core. The mechanism that powers the hound explodes when the construct is destroyed. All creatures within 5 feet of the hound take 7 (2d6) fire damage, or half damage with a successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw.

Immutable Form. The clockwork hound is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d12 + 5) piercing damage.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d12 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Tripping Tongue. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Disarming Tongue. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage and the target is disarmed unless it makes a successful Strength saving throw with a DC equal to the damage done by the attack. If the saving throw fails, the weapon drops at the target's feet.

CLOCKWORK HUNTSMAN^{TOB}

These metal huntsmen were once the province of corrupt aristocrats, running down escaped slaves and tracking prey in hunting expeditions. Their masters may vary, but the clockwork huntsmen still perform when called upon. In some places they operate only on the command of the secret police, hunting down persons of interest wanted for questioning. Common folk detest them; all but their keepers and commanders shun them.

Clockwork huntsmen stand nearly six feet tall and weigh 400 lb.

Clockwork Huntsman

Medium construct, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 14 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 110 (20d8 + 20)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

SAVING THROWS Str +5, Dex +4

SKILLS Perception +4, Survival +4

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison, psychic

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES understands Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Explosive Core. The mechanism that powers the huntsman explodes when the construct is destroyed,



projecting superheated steam and shrapnel. Every creature within 5 feet of the construct takes 10 (3d6) fire damage, or half damage with a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw.

Immutable Form. The clockwork huntsman is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

ACTIONS

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

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

Net Cannon. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 5/15 ft., one target. *Hit:* the target is restrained if it is size Large or smaller. A mechanism in the clockwork huntsman's chest can launch a net with a 20-foot trailing cable anchored in the huntsman's chest. A creature can free itself (or another creature within 5 feet) from the net by using its action to make a successful DC 10 Strength check or by dealing 5 slashing damage to the net. The huntsman can fire up to four nets before it must be reloaded.

CLOCKWORK MYRMIDON^{TOB}

Clockwork myrmidons are heavily armored at their joints and at most vital parts. They are much too valuable to undertake patrols or menial labor, and they are unleashed only for dangerous situations that clockwork watchmen cannot handle.

Clockwork Myrmidon

Large construct, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 16 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 153 (18d10 + 54)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

SAVING THROWS Str +11, Dex +5

SKILLS Athletics +8, Perception +6

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison, psychic

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

LANGUAGES understands Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Alchemical Fireball. The clockwork myrmidon's alchemical flame reservoir explodes when the construct is destroyed, spraying nearby creatures with burning fuel. A creature within 5 feet of the myrmidon takes 19 (3d12) fire damage, or half damage with a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. This explosion doesn't occur if the clockwork myrmidon has already fired its alchemical flame jet four times.

Grease Spray (Recharge 5–6). As a bonus action, the clockwork myrmidon's chest can fire a spray of alchemical grease with a range of 30 feet, covering a 10-by-10 foot square area and turning it into difficult terrain. Each creature standing in the affected area must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. A creature that enters the area or ends its turn there must also succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. The clockwork myrmidon can use this attack four times before its internal reservoir is emptied.

Immutable Form. The clockwork myrmidon is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The clockwork myrmidon makes two attacks: two pick attacks or two slam attacks, or one of each.

Heavy Pick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d12 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Alchemical Flame Jet (Recharge 5–6). The clockwork myrmidon can spew a jet of alchemical fire in a line 20 feet long and 5 feet wide. Any creature in the path of the jet takes 26 (4d12) fire damage, or half damage with a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. The clockwork myrmidon can use this attack four times before its internal reservoir is emptied.

CLOCKWORK WATCHMAN^{TOB}

Proper clockwork watchmen are built with iron parts instead of tin, and given keener senses. Many have small bits of armor covering their joints and most vital parts. They do not perform menial labor, but they do endlessly patrol the city day and night, pausing only to receive maintenance. Their speech is slow and halting, but their distinctive shouts and whistles bring human guards at a run.

Clockwork Watchman

Medium construct, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 14 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 55 (10d8 + 10)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

SAVING THROWS Con +3

SKILLS Athletics +4, Perception +4

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison, psychic

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

Immutable Form. The clockwork watchman is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

ACTIONS

Halberd. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage.

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

Net Cannon. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 5/15 ft., one target. *Hit:* the target is restrained if it is size Large or smaller. A mechanism in the clockwork huntsman's chest can launch a net with a 20-foot trailing cable anchored in the huntsman's chest. A creature can free itself (or another creature within 5 feet) from the net by using its action to make a successful DC 10 Strength

check or by dealing 5 slashing damage to the net. The huntsman can fire up to four nets before it must be reloaded.

DEVIL, INK^{TOB}

Ink devils have small, pursed mouths and long, thin, bony fingers. Their nails resemble quills. Their heads are often bald or shaved in a monastic tonsure, and they have two small horns, no larger than an acorn. They often wear robes and carry scroll cases. They cannot be trusted, and they delight in altering documents for their own amusement or in their master's service.

Ink Devil

Small fiend (devil), lawful evil

ARMOR CLASS 14

HIT POINTS 54 (12d6 + 12)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Dex +6

SKILLS Arcana +9, Deception +8, History +9, Stealth +8

DAMAGE RESISTANCES cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES poisoned

SENSES darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 9

LANGUAGES Celestial, Draconic, Infernal, Trade Tongue; telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the devil's darkvision.

Disrupt Concentration. Their sharp, shrill tongues and sharper claws make ink devils more distracting than their own combat prowess might indicate. As a bonus action, an ink devil can force a single foe within 30 feet of the ink devil to make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or lose concentration until the beginning of the target's next turn.

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



Innate Spellcasting. The ink devil's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). The ink devil can cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*, *illusory script*, *invisibility*, *teleportation* (self plus 50 lb. of objects only)

1/day each: *glyph of warding*, *planar ally* (1d4 + 1 lemures 75%, or 1 ink devil 25%)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., single target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., single target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Corrupt Scroll. An ink devil can corrupt the magic within any scroll by touch. Any such corrupted scroll requires a DC 13 Intelligence saving throw to use successfully. If the check fails, the scroll's spell affects the caster if it is an offensive spell, or it affects the nearest devil if it is a beneficial spell.

Devil's Mark. Ink devils can flick ink from their fingertips at a single target within 15 feet of the devil. The target must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw (DC 13), or the affected creature gains a devil's mark—a black, red, or purple tattoo in the shape of an archduke's

personal seal (most often Mammon or Totivillus but sometimes Arbeyach, Asmodeus, Beelzebub, Dispat, or others). All devils have advantage on spell attacks made against the devil-marked creature, and the creature has disadvantage on saving throws made against spells and abilities used by devils. The mark can be removed only by a *remove curse* spell or comparable magic. In addition, the mark detects as faintly evil and often shifts its position on the body. Paladins, witchfinders, and some clerics may consider such a mark proof that a creature has made a pact with a devil.

DOGMOLE JUGGERNAUT^{TOB}

Brutalized from birth and hardened by scarification, foul drugs, and warping magic, the dogmole juggernaut is barely recognizable as a relative of its smaller kin. A furless mass of muscle, scar tissue, and barbed piercings clad in haphazard barding, a dogmole juggernaut stands seven feet tall at the shoulder and stretches nine to twelve feet long. Its incisors are the length of short swords.

Dogmole Juggernaut

Large monstrosity, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 15 (chain shirt)

HIT POINTS 126 (12d10 + 60)

SPEED 30 ft., burrow 10 ft., swim 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	-2 (-4)	10 (+0)	2 (-4)

SAVING THROWS Con +11

SENSES blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Burrow. Dogmole juggernauts cannot burrow into solid rock, but they can move through softer material like soil or loose rubble, leaving a usable tunnel 10 ft. in diameter.

Ferocity (1/Day). When the dogmole juggernaut is reduced to 0 hit points, it doesn't die until the end of its next turn.

Powerful Build. A dogmole juggernaut is treated as one size larger if doing so is advantageous to it (such as during grapple checks, pushing attempts, and tripping attempts, but not for the purposes of squeezing or AC). It gains advantage against magical pushing attempts such as *gust of wind* or *Repelling Blast*.

Wormkiller Rage. Wild dogmole juggernaut packs are famed for their battles against the monsters of the dark caverns of the world. If a dogmole juggernaut draws blood against vermin, purple worms, or other

underground invertebrates, it gains a +4 bonus to Strength and Constitution but suffers a -2 penalty to AC. The wormkiller rage lasts for a number of rounds equal to 1 + its Constitution modifier (minimum 1 round). It cannot end the rage voluntarily while the creatures that sent it into a rage still live.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dogmole juggernaut makes one claw attack and one bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d12 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (4d6 + 5) slashing damage.

DUST GOBLIN^{TOB}

Dust goblins vary greatly in size and appearance, although they are universally scrawny, bony, and lanky. They are twisted creatures, tainted by many generations of life in a blasted wasteland. The lingering magical energy saturating the wastes of their home, coupled with the harsh conditions in which they scratch out a living, have tainted the minds of all dust goblins. Their thinking is alien and unfathomable to most creatures. Whereas most goblins are cowardly, dust goblins don't seem to experience fear.

Dust Goblin

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 14 (leather armor)

HIT POINTS 5 (1d6 + 2)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	8 (-1)

SKILLS Stealth +7

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, frightened

SENSES darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 9

LANGUAGES Goblin, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 1/4 (50 XP)

Twisted. When the goblin attacks a creature from hiding, its target must make a successful DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of its next turn.

ACTIONS

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

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

DUST GOBLIN MACHINIST

While these creatures mostly resemble their dust goblin kin, their considerable skill with technologically advanced tools and weapons allows some members of the dust diggers tribe to have an almost mechanical aspect to their appearance and to their physiology. They no longer need to sleep, but they must spend four hours every day maintaining their clockwork enhancements. Otherwise, they gain one level of exhaustion for every 24 hours of activity without maintenance.

Dust Goblin Machinist

Small humanoid (goblin), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (studded leather)

HIT POINTS 33 (6d6 + 12)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	8 (-1)

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, diseased, frightened, poisoned

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES lightning

SKILLS Stealth +5

SENSES passive Perception 9

LANGUAGES Goblin, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

Twisted. When the goblin attacks a creature from hiding, its target must make a successful DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of its next turn.

Mechanical Mind. The dust goblin machinist does not need to sleep but must spend four hours every day maintaining its clockwork enhancements.

ACTIONS

Vril Rifle. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 40/160 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d10) force damage.

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

DUST GOBLIN VOID CALLER

Some dust goblin shamans dabble in void magic and eventually become void callers. They are greatly feared among the tribe's enemies, and even more so within the tribe itself.

Dust Goblin Void Caller

Small humanoid (goblin), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 14 (hide armor; 16 with *barkskin*)

HIT POINTS 38 (7d6 + 14)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Wis +5

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, frightened

SKILLS Religion +2, Survival +5

SENSES passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Goblin, Trade Tongue, Void Speech

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Twisted. When the dust goblin void caller attacks a creature from hiding, the target must make a successful DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of its next turn.

Whispers of the Void. When the void caller casts a spell, as a bonus action it can utter a few words of void speech and weave dark magic into the spell. The target of such a tainted spell has disadvantage on the next attack roll or ability check it makes until the start of the void caller's next turn. The void caller can't use this ability while unable to speak.

Spellcasting. The dust goblin void caller is a 7th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The void caller has the following druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *crushing curse**, *poison spray*, *word of misfortune**

1st level (4 slots): *entangle*, *faerie fire*, *thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *barkskin*, *destructive resonance**, *spike growth*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic*, *void strike**, *wind wall*

4th level (1 slot): *blight*

* See Appendix 2.

ACTIONS

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

REACTIONS

Rebuke from Beyond (3/day). When the void caller is damaged by a creature within 60 feet, it can use its

reaction to bark a destructive word of void speech. If the creature can hear the void caller, it takes 6 necrotic damage. A void caller can't use this ability if it is unable to speak.

DUST GOBLIN WARRIOR

The largest, cruelest dust goblins become the tribe's most admired champions. To maintain their positions of honor, they're compelled to be at the forefront of any fight.

Dust Goblin Warrior

Small humanoid (goblin), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (studded leather)

HIT POINTS 55 (10d6 + 20)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	8 (-1)

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, diseased, frightened, poisoned

SKILLS Stealth +5

SENSES Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

LANGUAGES Goblin, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Twisted. When the dust goblin warrior attacks a creature from hiding, the target must make a successful DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of its next turn.

Martial Advantage. Once per turn, the dust goblin warrior can deal an extra 3 (1d6) damage to a creature it hits with a weapon attack if that creature is within 5 feet of an ally of the dust goblin warrior that isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dust goblin warrior makes two melee attacks with its handaxe.

Handaxe. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target.

Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

DWARVEN RINGMAGE^{TOB}

The dwarven ringmage is a master of the imbuing magic of the reaver dwarves. With his aid, his reaver allies are more than just dangerous warriors; they can augment their abilities with powerful spells or surprise their enemies with unexpected powers. Often well armored and always bearing a host of spells, the dwarven ringmage can dominate any battlefield.

Dwarven Ringmage

Medium humanoid (dwarf), any

ARMOR CLASS 16 (breastplate)

HIT POINTS 82 (15d8 + 15)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)

SAVING THROWS Int +7, Con +4, Wis +4

SKILLS Arcana +7, History +7

DAMAGE RESISTANCES poison

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Dwarvish, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

Dwarven Resistance. The dwarven ringmage has advantage on saving throws against poison.



Ring Magic. The dwarven ringmage can imbue a nonmagical ring with a spell that has a range of self or touch. Doing so expends components as if the dwarven ringmage had cast the spell normally and uses a spell slot one level higher than the spell normally requires. When the wearer of the ring activates the ring as an action, the spell is cast as if the dwarven ringmage had cast the spell. The dwarven ringmage does not regain the spell slot until the ring is discharged or the dwarven ringmage chooses to dismiss the spell.

Ring-Staff Focus. The dwarven ringmage can use his ring-staff as a focus for spells that require rings as a focus or component, or for his Ring Magic ability. If used as a focus for Ring Magic, the spell does not require a spell slot one level higher than the spell normally requires. Once per day, the dwarven ringmage can imbue a spell of 4th level or lower into his ring-staff by expending a spell slot equal to the spell being imbued.

Spellcasting. The mage is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The mage has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, mage hand, shocking grasp, true strike*

1st level (4 slots): *expeditious retreat, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, web*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fireball, fly*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, ice storm*

5th level (1 slot): *cone of cold*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dwarven ringmage makes two melee attacks.

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

FROSTVEIL

Whipped through the air by snowstorms and resembling a spider's web dangling with delicate ice crystals, these silently gliding, beautiful killers are semi-sentient plants adapted to the merciless cold of the North. Flat nodes shaped like large snowflakes connect their net-like bodies and trailing tails of transparent fibers. Streaming gossamer tendrils are ready to grab any warm-blooded creature it detects.

Frostveil

Medium plant, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 16

HIT POINTS 67 (9d8 + 27)

SPEED 10 ft., fly (varies; see Windborne)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)

SKILLS Stealth +7

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES fire

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning and piercing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES cold

CONDITION IMMUNITIES blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, prone

SENSES blindsight 100 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

Chilling Acid. The frostveil's frozen acidic mist breaks down flesh and organic materials into useable nutrients. Creatures who strike the frostveil with a non-reach melee weapon or an unarmed strike take 4 (1d8) acid damage.

False Appearance. While the frostveil remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a formation of frost and ice.

Windborne. While in blowing wind, the frostveil can fly with a speed of 30 feet. In a strong wind this speed increases to 60 feet.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The frostveil makes three tendril attacks.

Tendrils. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If two tendrils hit the same target in a single turn, the target is engulfed.

Engulf. When a frostveil wraps itself around a Medium or smaller creature, the target takes 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 13 (3d8) acid damage and is grappled (escape DC 15). The target takes another 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage plus 13 (3d8) acid damage at the end of each of its turns when it's still grappled by the frostveil. A frostveil can't attack while it has a creature engulfed. Damage from attacks against the frostveil is split evenly between the frostveil and the engulfed creature; the only exceptions are slashing and psychic damage, which affect only the frostveil.

Spirit Spores (recharge 6). In distress, frostveils release a puff of psychotropic spores in a 10-foot cloud around themselves. Creatures within the cloud of spores must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw against poison or suffer hallucinations, as per a *confusion* spell, for 1d3 rounds.

GHOST TRIBE GHOUL

More than a few members of the Ghost Goblin tribe have undergone dark rituals to become undead. These unfortunate creatures are reminiscent of dust goblins, but their skin is paler and the ends of their fingers bear long claws.

Ghost Tribe Ghoul

Small undead, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 12

HIT POINTS 21 (6d6)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES Goblin, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. A poisoned creature repeats the saving throw at the end of its turn, ending the effect on itself on a success.

GHOST TRIBE SKELETON

More than a few members of the Ghost Goblin tribe have undergone dark rituals to become undead. Though far less graceful than their living counterparts, these skeletons march alongside their Ghost Goblin brethren and wear the clothing of their tribe with honor.

Ghost Tribe Skeleton

Small undead, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 13 (armor scraps)

HIT POINTS 13 (3d6 + 6)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

LANGUAGES Goblin, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 1/8 (25 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.

GHOUL, BEGGAR^{TOB}

Most citizens of the ghoulish empire are not darakhul but lesser strains of ghouls and ghosts. Beggar ghouls are by far the weakest of these. They eke out miserable livings by scrounging for food near the surface or by begging in the ghoulish cities. Thin and emaciated even for undead, beggar ghouls are shriveled versions of their standard cousins—little more than flesh-covered skeletons.

Beggar Ghoul

Medium undead, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 12

HIT POINTS 13 (3d8)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES Undercommon

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

Pack Tactics. The beggar ghoul has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the beggar ghoul's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Savage Hunger. A beggar ghoul that hits with its bite attack against a creature that hasn't acted yet in this combat scores a critical hit.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. A paralyzed target repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

GHOUL, DARAKHUL^{TOB}

In the lightless depths beneath the ground, an empire of devouring ambition grows and plots and dreams. They call themselves the People, but the people of the surface world call them the Lords Subterranean, the Ghoul Imperium, or simply the Empire of the Ghouls. Their cities lie out of sight, their agents infiltrate the underworlds of a score of surface cities, and their goals know no limits. To them, if you are not a member of the People, you are food.

Darakhul

Medium undead, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (scale mail; 18 with shield)

HIT POINTS 78 (12d8 + 24)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

SKILLS Deception +3, Stealth +5

DAMAGE RESISTANCES necrotic

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Darakhul, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Master of Disguise. A darakhul in a prepared disguise has advantage on Charisma (Deception) checks made to pass as a living creature. While using this ability, the darakhul loses its stench.

Stench. Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the darakhul must make a successful DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. A successful saving throw makes the creature immune to the darakhul's stench for 24 hours. A darakhul using this ability can't also benefit from Master of Disguise.

Sunlight Sensitivity. The darakhul has disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight and on attack rolls while it or the object it is trying to see or attack is in direct sunlight.

Turning Defiance. The darakhul and any ghouls within 30 feet of it have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The darakhul bites once, claws once, and makes one war pick attack. Using a shield limits the darakhul to making either its claw or war pick attack, but not both.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage, and if the target creature is humanoid it must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or contract darakhul fever.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an undead, it must make a successful DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. A paralyzed target repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a humanoid creature is paralyzed for 2 or more rounds (the victim fails at least 2 saving throws), consecutive or nonconsecutive, the creature contracts darakhul fever.

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

GNOLL HAVOC RUNNER^{TOB}

Havoc runners are scouring storms across the trade routes that crisscross the tribe's territory. Like all gnolls, they are deadly in battle. Havoc runners incorporate another quality that makes them the envy of many raiders: they can tell at a glance which pieces of loot from a laden camel or wagon are the most valuable, without spending time rummaging, weighing, or evaluating. Their ability to strike into a caravan, seize the best items, and withdraw quickly is unparalleled.

Gnoll, Havoc Runner

Medium humanoid (gnoll), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (chain shirt)

HIT POINTS 58 (9d8 + 18)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)

SKILLS Athletics +5, Perception +5

SENSES darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 15

LANGUAGES Gnoll

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Harrying Attacks. If the gnoll attacks two creatures in the same turn, the first target has disadvantage on attack rolls until the end of its next turn.

Lightening Lope. The gnoll can Dash or Disengage as a bonus action.

Pack Tactics. The gnoll has advantage on its attack rolls against a target if at least one of the gnoll's allies is within 5 feet of the target and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The gnoll makes one bite attack and two battleaxe attacks.

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

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

HOSTESS

Most of the hostesses and hosts who work at the Lounge of a Thousand Whispers are trained bards with spellcasting ability. The bardic training makes them better able to entertain the lounge's guests; spellcasting makes them better able to defend themselves and the business against rowdy revelers.

Hostess

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 11

HIT POINTS 36 (8d8)

SPEED 30 ft.

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

SKILLS Deception +5, Insight +3, Perception +3, Persuasion +5

SENSES passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Southern

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP)

Spellcasting. The hostess is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The hostess knows the following bard spells:

Cantrips (at will): *mending*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person*, *comprehend languages*, *sleep*, *unseen servant*

2nd level (2 slots): *calm emotions*, *hold person*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hostess makes two melee attacks with her dagger.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

KARBEKUL FOUR-FINGERS

Karbekul is physically immense for a goblin (though still Small), but he's better described as hard and wiry, not muscle-bound. He is covered with swirling, criss-crossing scars caused by years of ritual cutting. His honorific "Four-Fingers" is a literal reference to the fact that he ritualistically amputated two fingers from each hand.

This imposing goblin is almost never seen without either the *great king's crown* or his devoted dogmole juggernaut companion. The *great king's crown* is a leather headpiece ringed by upward-pointing reptilian teeth that give it the appearance of both a crude crown and a terrifying, vicious mouth atop his head.

Karbekul Four-fingers

Small humanoid (goblin), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 17 (half-plate)

HIT POINTS 75 (10d6 + 40)

SPEED 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	7 (-2)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +7, Con +7

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, frightened

SKILLS Acrobatics +7, Intimidation +6

SENSES passive Perception 9

LANGUAGES Goblin, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 8 (3,900 XP)

Bullying Presence. Dust goblins within 100 feet of Karbekul will not retreat from combat and are immune to being frightened. This feature does not work when Karbekul is unconscious or dead.

Personal Space. As a bonus action, Karbekul can cause a creature he has hit with an unarmed strike to either fall prone or be shoved 10 feet away from him unless the affected creature makes a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw.

Twisted. When Karbekul attacks a creature from hiding, the target must make a successful DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Karbekul makes three attacks, in any combination of melee or ranged.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Air Punch. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

REACTIONS

Deflect Missiles. Karbekul can deflect a missile when he is targeted with a ranged weapon attack, reducing damage to himself by 19 (1d10 + 14) points.

MARLIK THE FEARLESS

Marlik is an elite dust goblin warrior who rose to leadership within the tribe by virtue of his legendary fearlessness. No foe daunts Marlik, and he's survived battles against enemies most goblins would never face voluntarily. His survival probably has as much to do with luck as with martial prowess, because he didn't win all those battles—but he fought every one until he could fight no more, and that earned him the admiration of foes and a reputation as a paragon among goblins.

Marlik the Fearless

Small humanoid (goblin), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (studded leather)

HIT POINTS 78 (12d6 + 36)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	13 (+1)

DAMAGE RESISTANCES necrotic

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, frightened

SKILLS Intimidation +3, Stealth +6, Survival +1

SENSES Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

LANGUAGES Goblin, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

Twisted. When the dust goblin attacks a creature from hiding, the target must make a successful DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of its next turn.

Fury. Marlik the Fearless deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when he hits with a weapon attack (included in the attack).

Second Wind. Marlik can use a bonus action to regain 17 (1d10 + 12) hit points. After using this feature, Marlik must finish a short or long rest before using it again.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Marlik the Fearless makes two attacks with his shortsword and one with his dagger.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 11(2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

MI-GO^{TOB}

The mi-go are a space-faring race of great skill and vast malevolence. They travel in large numbers between worlds, somehow folding space to cover astronomical distances in months rather than decades. Mi-go have been described as “vaguely insectlike,” but the emphasis belongs on “vaguely.”

Their technology includes mastery of living things, powerful techniques to implant mi-go elements and even minds in alien bodies (or to extract them), and an unparalleled mastery of living tissue in both plant and animal form. While they have their own secrets and goals, they also serve ancient powers from between the stars and carry on an interstellar effort to conquer and spread their species

Mi-go

Medium plant, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 76 (8d8 + 40)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	19 (+4)	21 (+5)	25 (+7)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Str +6, Con +8, Cha +4

SKILLS Arcana +10, Deception +7, Medicine +5, Perception +5, Stealth +7

DAMAGE RESISTANCES radiant, cold

SENSES blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 240 ft., passive Perception 15

LANGUAGES Mi-go, Trade Tongue, Void Speech

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Astral Travelers. Mi-go do not require air or heat to survive, only sunlight (and very little of that). They can enter a sporulated form capable of surviving travel through the void and returning to consciousness when conditions are right.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The mi-go does an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it hits a target with a claw attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the mi-go that isn't incapacitated and the mi-go doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Disquieting Technology. The mi-go are a highly advanced race, and may carry items of powerful technology. Mi-go technology can be represented using the same rules as magic items, but their functions are very difficult to determine: *identify* is useless, but an hour of study and a successful DC 19 Intelligence (Arcana) check can reveal the purpose and proper functioning of a mi-go item.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The mi-go makes two attacks with its claws.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) slashing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 13). If both claw attacks strike the same target in a single turn, the target takes an additional 13 (2d12) psychic damage.

REACTIONS

Spore Release. When a mi-go dies, it releases its remaining spores. All living creatures within 10 feet take 14 (2d8 + 5) poison damage and become poisoned; a successful DC 16 Constitution saving throw halves the damage and prevents poisoning. A poisoned creature repeats the saving throw at the end of its turn, ending the effect on itself with a success.

MYCONID, DEATHCAP^{TOB}

These sentient mushroom folk tend the white forests of fungi in the underworld and are allies of the darakhul. Despite their ominous name, deathcap myconids are chiefly farmers. They cultivate dozens of species of mushrooms anywhere they have water, dung, and a bit of earth or slime in the underworld deeps. For this reason, other races rarely attack them. The ghouls do not eat them, and they cannot be made into darakhul.

Deathcap Myconid

Medium plant, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 90 (12d8 + 36)

SPEED 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

Distress Spores. When a deathcap myconid takes damage, all other myconids within 240 feet of it sense its pain.

Sun Sickness. While in sunlight, the myconid has disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws. The myconid dies if it spends more than 1 hour in direct sunlight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The myconid uses either its Deathcap Spores or its Slumber Spores, then makes a fist attack.

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (4d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (4d4) poison damage.

Deathcap Spores (3/day). The myconid ejects spores at one creature it can see within 5 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 3 rounds. While poisoned this way, the target also takes 10 (4d4) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. The target repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Slumber Spores (3/day). The myconid ejects spores at one creature it can see within 5 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned and unconscious for 1 minute. A creature wakes up if it takes damage, or if another creature uses its action to shake it awake.

NADI UD'AAH

Nadi Ud'aah is a businessman—a shrewd and cutthroat businessman, but his methods are secondary to his goal of running the preeminent pleasure palace in Mhalmet. If achieving success means bribing officials, hiring criminals, and driving honest competitors out of business, then that's what he'll do.

Ud'aah isn't an especially young man, but he's young for someone who's been this successful. He wears tailored, fashionable clothing, is meticulously groomed and manicured, and wears makeup and eyeliner in the latest style (but always tastefully, no matter what the current rage might be). He is the consummate host to his guests, but his temper is ferocious with employees who don't live up to his considerable demands.

Nadi Ud'aah

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 15 (*bracers of defense, ring of protection*)

HIT POINTS 91 (14d8 + 28)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Dex +6, Con +6, Wis +4

SKILLS Deception +5, Intimidation +5, Insight +3

SENSES passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES Southern, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 8 (3,900 XP)

Action Surge (1/day). Nadi Ud'aah can take one extra action in addition to his regular action and a possible bonus action.

Directed Strike. As a bonus action, Nadi Ud'aah issues a command to an ally within 30 feet. That ally makes a melee attack against a target of Nadi Ud'aah's choosing.

Pack Tactics. Nadi Ud'aah has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of Nadi Ud'aah's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Second Wind (1/day). Nadi Ud'aah regains hit points equal to 1d10 + 16 hit points.

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, Nadi Ud'aah can deal an extra 11 (3d6) damage to one creature he hits with an attack if he has advantage on the attack roll, if another enemy of the target is within 5 feet of it, or if that enemy isn't incapacitated and Nadi doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Nadi Ud'aah makes three melee or ranged attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Leadership. For 1 minute, Nadi Ud'aah can utter a special command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature that he can see within 30 feet of him makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The attacking creature can add a d4 to its attack roll provided it can hear and understand Nadi Ud'aah. A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if Nadi Ud'aah is incapacitated. After using this feature for 1 minute, he must finish a short or long rest before using it again.

REACTIONS

Parry. Nadi Ud'aah adds 2 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit him. To do so, Nadi Ud'aah must see the attacker and be wielding a weapon.

Redirect Attack. When a creature Nadi Ud'aah can see targets him with an attack, Nadi Ud'aah chooses an ally within 5 feet of him. Nadi Ud'aah and the ally swap places, and the chosen ally becomes the target instead.

POSSESSIONS

bracers of defense, ring of protection +1, ring of mind shielding, periapt of proof against poison, greatsword (not carried unless alerted to potential danger; generally nearby), 3 daggers, platinum unblinking eye pin, fine clothing, keys, pouch with 50 pp

NIGHTGARM

These humanoid creatures work with their lupine mother and their worg and winter wolf brothers and sisters to destroy human and dwarvish settlements. All nightgarms are female, and all are loyal followers of Fenris. They can wield items in their front paws and can walk on their hind limbs when necessary. A nightgarm's jaws can open to swallow items larger than themselves, a magical trick that takes only seconds.

Nightgarm

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 114 (12d10 + 48)

SPEED 20 ft. (bipedal), 40 ft. (quadrupedal)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

SKILLS Perception +5, Stealth +5

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES radiant; silvered weapons

DAMAGE RESISTANCES lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

LANGUAGES Common, Giant, Goblin, telepathy 200 ft. (with falsemen only)

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Spawn Falseman. If a nightgarm spends an entire round consuming a humanoid corpse, it immediately becomes pregnant. Nine hours later, it gives birth to a duplicate of the devoured creature. Known as a falseman, this duplicate has all the memories and characteristics of the original but serves its mother loyally, somewhat similar to a familiar's relationship to a wizard. A nightgarm can have up to 14 falsemen under her control at a time. A nightgarm can communicate telepathically with its falsemen at ranges up to 200 feet. See *Tome of Beasts* for details on falsemen.

Distending Maw. Like snakes, a nightgarm can open its mouth far wider than other creatures of similar size. This ability grants it a formidable bite and allows it to swallow creatures up to Medium size.

Superstitious. A nightgarm must stay at least 5 feet away from a brandished holy symbol or a burning sprig of wolf's bane, and it cannot touch or make melee attacks against a creature holding one of these items. After 1 round, the nightgarm can make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw at the start of each of its turns; if the save succeeds, the nightgarm temporarily overcomes

its superstition and these restrictions are lifted until the start of the nightgarm's next turn.

Innate Spellcasting. The nightgarm's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *darkness, dissonant whispers, hold person*

1/day each: *conjure woodland beings* (wolves only), *dimension door, scrying* (targets falsemen only)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (4d10 + 5) piercing damage, and a Medium or smaller target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be swallowed whole. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained and has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the nightgarm. It takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the nightgarm's turns. A nightgarm can have only one creature swallowed at a time. If the nightgarm takes 25 damage or more on a single turn from the swallowed creature, the nightgarm must succeed on a DC



14 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate the creature, which falls prone within 5 feet of the nightgarm. If the nightgarm dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 10 feet of movement, exiting prone.

RATFOLK ROGUE^{TOB}

The ratfolk are canny survivors, rogues and tricksters all. Their strong family ties make it easy for them to found or join criminal societies—though others serve as expert scouts and saboteurs, able to infiltrate army camps, city sewers, and even castle dungeons with equal ease.

Ratfolk Rogue

Small humanoid (ratfolk), neutral

ARMOR CLASS 15 (studded leather armor)

HIT POINTS 18 (4d6 + 4)

SPEED 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

SKILLS Acrobatics +5, Perception +2, Stealth +7

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

LANGUAGES Southern, Thieves Cant

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

Cunning Action. A ratfolk rogue can use a bonus action to Dash, Disengage, or Hide.

Nimbleness. A ratfolk rogue can move through the space of any creature size Medium or larger.

Pack Tactics. A ratfolk rogue has advantage on its attack roll against a creature if at least one of the ratfolk's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally is capable of attacking.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). A ratfolk rogue deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of one of its allies that isn't incapacitated and the rogue doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

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

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Rat Dagger Flurry. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., three targets. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

ROTTING WIND

Hundreds of years ago, a handful of combatants were sealed alive inside a temple during their desperate struggle against each other. The temple housed a magical item that could exert control over the deific figure these warriors fought over: one side worshiped her, the other considered her a threat and wanted to keep her out of their world. No one can know who won the battle inside the sealed temple, but the survivors were rewarded with slow, agonizing death by thirst in the inescapable cairn. Over centuries, their restless spirits merged into an angry, vengeful guardian for that temple: the rotting wind.

The rotting wind is so putrid that all normal plant life and liquid it passes over, even momentarily, becomes blighted and cursed. Normal vegetation dies in 1d4 days, and unattended liquids become noxious and undrinkable.

Rotting Wind

Large undead, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15

HIT POINTS 82 (11d10 + 22)

SPEED 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagic weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES necrotic, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, grappled, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

SENSES blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this), passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 8 (3,900 XP)

Air Form. The rotting wind can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Blight. Damage from the rotting wind's Wind of Decay is doubled against plant creatures.

Invisibility. The rotting wind is always invisible.

ACTIONS

Wind of Decay. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with tomb rot. The cursed target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) for every 24 hours that elapse. If the curse reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies and

its body turns to dust. The curse lasts until removed by *remove curse* or comparable magic.

TREANT, WEeping

This twisted tree's face is made of cracked, black bark knotted into vaguely humanoid features, and thick tears of sap run down its face. Weeping treants clearly are related to other treants, but they are smaller than the normal variety. They are inherently distrustful, particularly of anything not of the natural or shadow world, and they're notoriously difficult to fool or deceive.

Weeping Treant

Huge plant, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 105 (10d12 + 40)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning and piercing

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES fire

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Common, Druidic, Elvish, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Siege Monster. The treant deals double damage to objects and structures.

Treespeech. A weeping treant can converse with plants, and most plants greet them with a friendly or helpful attitude.

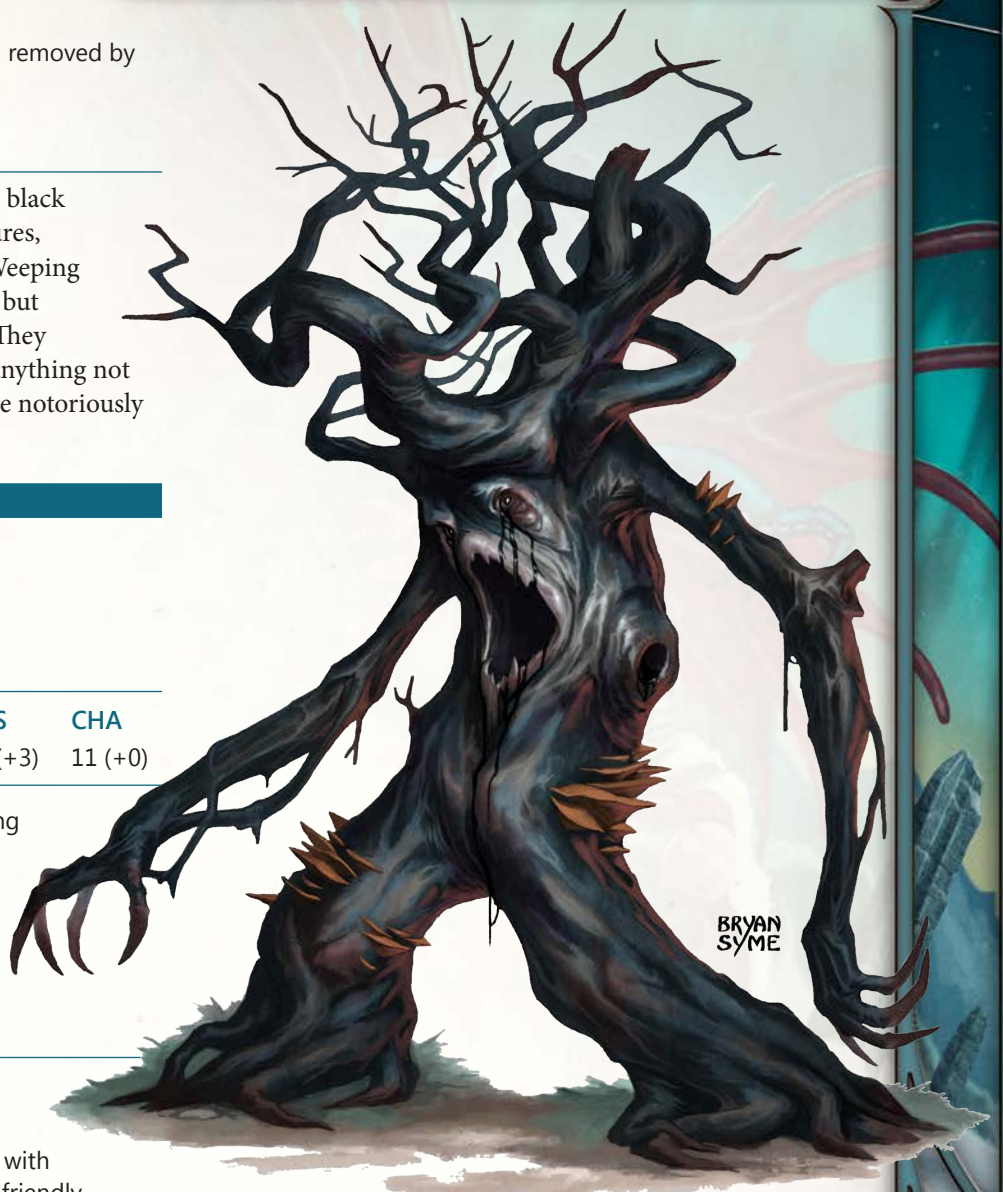
Acidic Tears. Thick tears of dark sap stream continuously down the treant's face and trunk. These tears are highly acidic—anyone who attacks the treant from a range of 5 feet or less must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 6 (1d12) acid damage from splashed tears. This acidic matter continues doing 6 (1d12) acid damage at the start of each of the creature's turns until it or an adjacent ally uses an action to wipe off the tears or three rounds elapse.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The treant makes three slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., single target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 60/180 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage.



TROLL, BOREAL

These large, blue-skinned humanoids have an alien, almost asymmetrical look about them. They carry massively heavy shields fashioned from the totem figureheads of captured reaver dwarves' ships, both for protection and to emphasize their murderous hatred for the dwarves.

Boreal Troll

Large humanoid (giant), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor, shield)

HIT POINTS 84 (8d10 + 40)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	7 (-2)	9 (-1)	7 (-2)

SAVING THROWS Constitution +5
DAMAGE IMMUNITIES cold, poison
CONDITION IMMUNITIES poisoned
SKILLS Perception +2
SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
LANGUAGES Giant
CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Cl cloak of Winter. A creature that ends its turn within 10 feet of the troll takes 5 (1d10) cold damage.

Cold Absorption. Whenever the troll is subjected to cold damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the cold damage dealt.

Keen Smell. The troll has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks relying on smell.

Regeneration. The troll regains 10 hit points at the beginning of its turn. If the troll takes acid or fire damage, this trait does not function at the start of the the troll's next turn. The boreal troll dies only if it begins a round with 0 hit points and does not regenerate.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The boreal troll makes one bite attack and two claw attacks.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

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

TROLLKIN REAVER

Trollkin have a well-deserved reputation for savagery, and the reavers help reinforce that perception among their neighbors. Raiding is a staple industry among the trollkin, and the reavers lead the most savage raiding parties in search of wealth, slaves, and supplies. Trollkin reavers are fearful of spirits and ghosts, and they prefer to raid only in times of good omens.

Trollkin Reaver

Medium humanoid (trollkin), neutral

ARMOR CLASS 14 (hide armor)

HIT POINTS 82 (11d8 + 33)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Con +5, Wis +3, Cha +3

SKILLS Intimidation +5, Survival +3

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Common, Trollkin

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

Regeneration. The trollkin reaver regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. This trait doesn't function if the trollkin took acid or fire damage since the end of its previous turn. The trollkin dies if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Thick Hide. The trollkin reaver's skin is thick and tough, granting it a +1 bonus to AC. This bonus is already factored into the trollkin's AC.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The trollkin raider makes three melee attacks: two with its claws and one with its bite, or two with its battleaxe and one with its handaxe, or it makes two ranged attacks with its handaxes.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.



Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) slashing damage.

Battleaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands. Using the battleaxe two-handed prevents using the handaxe.

Handaxe. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Howl of Battle (Recharge 6). Up to three allies who can hear the trollkin reaver and are within 30 feet of it can each make one melee attack as a reaction.

VORS-GO DWARVES

These northlands dwarves of the Vors-go tribe have been infected by mi-go spores that drive them into a violent frenzy. Their eyes glow faintly, shifting from green to purple and back again. Other than this—and their generally crazed appearance, even more savage than usual—they don't look much different from normal, uninfected dwarves.

SPORE INFECTION. Each encounter with infected Vors-go dwarves or wolves carries risk of spore infection. A creature damaged by any of the raiders, their weapons, or their wolves must make a successful DC 12 Constitution saving throw at the end of the battle or be infected by mi-go spores (see “A Touch of the Void” in *Blood of a Fallen Star* for the effects of infection).

Vors-go Raider

Medium humanoid (dwarf), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (chain shirt, shield)

HIT POINTS 76 (9d8 + 36)

SPEED 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

DAMAGE RESISTANCE poison

SKILLS Athletics +6, Intimidation +1

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES Dwarvish, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Danger Sense. The Vors-go raider has advantage on Dexterity saving throws while it is not blinded, deafened, or incapacitated.

Pack Tactics. The Vors-go raider has advantage on attacks if at least one of the dwarf's allies is within 5 feet of the target and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Reckless. At the start of its turn, the Vors-go raider can gain advantage on all melee attack rolls during its turn, but attacks against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Vors-go raider makes two hand-axe attacks.

Hand-axe. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Spore Vigor. When damage reduces the Vors-go raider to 0 hit points, it immediately makes two hand-axe attacks. After making the two attacks, it dies.

Vors-go Raid Leader

Medium humanoid (dwarf), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (breastplate)

HIT POINTS 91 (14d8 + 28)

SPEED 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Strength +6, Dexterity +5, Wisdom +3

DAMAGE RESISTANCE poison

SKILLS Athletics +6, Deception +5, Intimidation +5

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES Dwarvish, Trade Tongue

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Danger Sense. The Vors-go raid leader has advantage on Dexterity saving throws while it is not blinded, deafened, or incapacitated.

Pack Tactics. The Vors-go raid leader has advantage on attacks if at least one of the dwarf's allies is within 5 feet of the target and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Vors-go raid leader makes three melee or ranged attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Leadership. For 1 minute, the Vors-go raid leader can utter a command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature it can see within 30 feet of it makes an attack

roll or saving throw. The creature can add 1d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand the Vors-go raid leader. A creature can only benefit from one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if the Vors-go raid leader is incapacitated. After using this feature for 1 minute, he must finish a short or long rest before using it again.

REACTIONS

Spore Vigor. When damage reduces the Vors-go raid leader to 0 hit points, it immediately makes three melee or ranged attacks. After making the three attacks, it dies.

Vors-go War Wolf

Medium beast, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (chain barding)

HIT POINTS 11 (2d8 + 2)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

SKILLS Perception +3, Stealth +4

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The wolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pack Tactics. The Vors-go war wolf has advantage on attacks if at least one of the wolf's allies is within 5 feet of the target and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

REACTIONS

Spore Vigor. When damage reduces the Vors-go war wolf to 0 hit points, it immediately makes a bite attack, if a target is available. After making the attack, the war wolf dies.

YLIA, ANGEL OF WAR

Ylia is an angelic servant of Mavros, a deity of tempests and war much worshiped by soldiers and mercenaries. Angels of war serve Mavros but with a high degree of independence. They can pursue their own interests, as long as those pursuits align with and further the interests of Mavros.

Ylia appears as a 7-foot-tall, angelic warrior woman. Long blonde hair falls in waves over her armored shoulders, and her eyes are a piercing and eerie blue. Her armor can be of any type but is always magnificent, and she is always armed with a gleaming longsword. Ylia is an angel, but an angel of war. Her purpose is not spreading peace and love, but fueling strife. Her concern is not with good or evil, law or chaos, but only glorious conflict.

In the ancient past, a magical device called the *great king's crown* was made from the teeth of great wyrms for one of her warrior followers. The angel must follow the commands of the wearer of the crown—but again, she has great leeway in deciding how to carry out those commands. Orders that run against her naturally warlike inclinations or that come from someone she doesn't respect as a warrior are likely to be twisted in unexpected ways that rebound against the crown's wearer. Ultimately, she regrets that the crown was ever made and would like to remove it beyond the reach of mortals.

Ylia, Angel of War

Medium celestial, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 19 (half plate, shield)

HIT POINTS 190 (20d8 + 100)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Int +6, Wis +4

SKILLS Insight +14, Intimidation +9, Perception +9

SENSES passive Perception 19

LANGUAGES Dwarvish, Giant, Trade Tongue; see Gift of Tongues

CHALLENGE 13 (10,000 XP)

Angelic Weapons. The angel of war's weapon attacks are magical. When she hits with any weapon, it does an extra 18 (4d8) radiant damage (included in attacks).

Battlefield Awareness. The angel of war can instantly discern which side of a conflict all participants belong to.

Focused Mind. The angel of war automatically succeeds on Constitution saving throws made to maintain concentration.

Gift of Tongues. The angel of war becomes fluent in any language she hears spoken for at least 1 minute and she retains this knowledge forever.

Warsong. As a bonus action, the angel of war can sing a song of martial glory in her clarion voice. All creatures within 100 feet of her take 16 (3d10) thunder damage. A creature doesn't need to hear the song to be affected (deafened creatures are affected), but the song must be able to reach the creature (a creature is immune while inside the area affected by a *silence* spell, for example).

Innate Spellcasting. The angel of war's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *bane, bless, invisibility, sacred flame, spare the dying, speak with animals, thaumaturgy*

5/day each: *gentle repose, healing word, warding bond*

3/day each: *flame strike, mass healing word, revivify*

1/day each: *commune, death ward, freedom of movement, geas*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The angel of war makes two melee attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8 + 6) slashing damage, or 11 (1d10 + 6) slashing damage if wielded with two hands, plus 18 (4d8) radiant damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage, plus 18 (4d8) radiant damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

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

Cast a Cantrip. The angel of war casts one spell from her at-will list.

Melee or Ranged Attack. The angel makes one longsword or longbow attack.

Raise the Valiant. The angel of war casts *healing word, mass healing word, or revivify*.

WOLF REAVER DWARF

Like his totem, the wolf reaver dwarf travels in a pack with his brothers in arms looking for worthy challenges to prove himself. Rushing into battle beside his allies for glory as much as plunder, the wolf reaver dwarf throws caution to the wind and fights without care for his own safety.

Wolf Reaver Dwarf

Medium humanoid (dwarf), any chaotic alignment

ARMOR CLASS 16 (chain shirt, shield)

HIT POINTS 76 (9d8 + 36)

SPEED 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

SKILLS Athletics +6, Intimidation +1

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES Common, Dwarvish

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Danger Sense. The wolf reaver dwarf has advantage on Dexterity saving throws against attacks it can see when it is not blinded, deafened, or incapacitated.

Dwarven Resistance. The wolf reaver dwarf has advantage on saving throws against poison.

Pack Tactics. The wolf reaver dwarf has advantage on attacks if at least one of the dwarf's allies is within 5 feet of the target and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Reckless. At the start of its turn, the wolf reaver dwarf can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls during that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The wolf reaver dwarf makes two melee or ranged attacks.

Battleaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

APPENDIX 2: MAGIC ITEMS AND VOID MAGIC SPELLS

MAGIC ITEMS

These magic items aren't limited to the six adventures in this book. They can reappear anywhere you like.

CELESTIAL SEXTANT

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

The ancient elves constructed *celestial sextants* to use as navigational aids on all their seagoing vessels. The knowledge of their manufacture has been lost, and few of them remain.

A creature that possesses the *sextant* and is attuned to it can determine its latitude and longitude in one minute, provided it can see the sun or stars. It can also simultaneously steer up to four vessels that are within one mile of the *sextant*, provided their crews are willing. The creature must have spent at least an hour aboard each of the controlled vessels, performing activity similar to becoming attuned to them (but the vessels themselves don't need to be magical).

GREAT KING'S CROWN

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

The perimeter of this worn leather skullcap is ringed by jagged and yellowing dragon's teeth of various sizes, giving it the appearance of an unsettling crown.

Upon becoming attuned to this headdress, you gain knowledge of the ritual required to summon Ylia, an angel of war, from her extraplanar home. Once summoned, Ylia is obligated to follow your commands so long as you wear this item. You have a telepathic link with Ylia as long as the two of you are on the same plane of existence. You can use this telepathic link to issue commands to her while you are conscious (no action required). You can specify a simple and general course of action, such as "attack that creature," "move over there," or "bring me that object."

The zeal with which Ylia carries out these commands depends on how well you serve Mavros. If you are a devout follower of the tempestuous deity, or if you are a strong warrior with a history of spreading violence and strife, she carries out your commands enthusiastically. If you are not a warrior, or if your past actions focused more on bringing peace than on spreading conflict, Ylia still must follow your commands but she will drag her feet or twist your orders in unexpected ways. She's



neither dominated nor charmed by the crown's wearer, but only obligated to obey by an oath sworn ages ago—an oath that she now regrets, in light of how many of the crown's mortal owners Ylia had no respect for.

While wearing the *great king's crown*, you are immune to the thunder damage from Ylia's warsong, but not from other thunder damage.

MI-GO NEURAL AGONIZER

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

The mi-go manufacture and/or grow many inscrutable technological devices. The *neural agonizer* is a tool that aids them in capturing victims whose brains will be removed for study or for transport to Yuggoth. Like much mi-go technology, these devices don't have a standard appearance or functioning system. Each one must be figured out individually (represented by attunement, which also requires a successful DC 19 Intelligence [Arcana] check to succeed).

The *neural agonizer* has 5 charges. While you hold the agonizer, you can use an action to make a Neural Agonizer attack (expends 1 charge; see below). If you are not a mi-go, you must make a successful DC 15 Intelligence saving throw when you make the attack or the weapon's psychic damage affects you instead of your intended target.

The *neural agonizer* regains 1d4 + 1 charges daily at dawn. If the device is reduced to 0 charges, roll a d20. On a 1, the neural agonizer goes dead and never regains charges.

Neural Agonizer. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 10/40 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) psychic damage plus 7 (1d4 + 5) lightning damage, and a creature must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or be paralyzed or stunned (50/50) for a number of rounds = 1d4 – the creature's Constitution modifier (minimum of 1).

ROD AND ORB OF AGUA-SINTELLUM

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

The *orb* contains water vapor from the waterfalls at the edge of the world. By spending an hour concentrating on the orb, a creature that's attuned to it knows the direction to the mustering point for the elves' Great Retreat for the next 24 hours, and is able to sense the network of ley lines within ten miles. The *orb* can simultaneously propel up to four vessels that are within one mile of it by filling their sails with light or strong wind, even if there is no natural wind in the area. The creature must have spent at least an hour aboard each of the controlled vessels, performing activity similar to becoming attuned to them (but the vessels themselves don't need to be magical).

The orb doesn't negate natural wind blowing against the direction of desired travel, but it can balance or overpower the natural wind. To provide these functions, the orb must be within ten miles of a ley line.

Finally, the *orb's* owner also has advantage on saving throws against effects that manipulate time (*time stop*, a ghost's Horrifying Visage).

These devices were made especially for the elves' journey to the Elflands from Midgard. The knowledge of their manufacture has been lost, and few of them remain.

ROD OF RUIN

Rod, very rare (requires attunement)

This rough rod feels as though it is made of petrified wood, and in fact looks like nothing so much as an ancient quarterstaff that has had a third of its length broken off.

While holding this rod, you and any creatures within 100 feet of you that you identify as allies are immune to thunder damage from an angel of war's warsong and have advantage on saving throws against other thunder damage.

In ages past, this rod was called the *battle singer's redoubt*. Its current name derives from dust goblin legends.

THORNISH NOCTURNAL

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

The ancient elves constructed *Thornish nocturnals* to use as navigational aids on all their seagoing vessels. The knowledge of their manufacture has been lost, and few of them remain.

A creature that possesses the *nocturnal* and is attuned to it can determine the precise local time within one minute, provided it can see the sun or stars. It can also simultaneously protect up to four vessels that are within one mile of the *nocturnal* from unwanted effects of the local weather. For example, vessels protected by the *nocturnal* can't be damaged by storms or blown onto jagged rocks by adverse wind. The creature must have spent at least an hour aboard each of the controlled vessels, performing activity similar to becoming attuned to them (but the vessels themselves don't need to be magical).

TIPSTAFF

Wondrous item, uncommon

This is a short ebony baton, equivalent to a club, with a cord-wrapped handle and silver-capped tip bearing the seal of the Praetors. To the uninitiated, it appears to be a heavy-duty wand or sap, but guardsmen use them to ambush and immobilize enemies. As part of a successful

melee attack, the wielder can say the command word to expend 1 charge. If a charge is expended, the creature struck by the attack must make a successful DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be paralyzed for 3 rounds. A paralyzed creature repeats the saving throw at the end of its turn, ending the effect on itself with a success.

If an officially-issued warrant is slipped under the cords of the grip, the saving throw DC increases to 15 for persons named in the warrant. Only one warrant can be kept in a *tipstaff* at a time, naming no more than three people.

VOID MAGIC SPELLS

Void magic spells are drawn from *Deep Magic 3: Void Magic*.

CRUSHING CURSE

Void magic cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You speak a word of void speech. Choose a creature you can see within range. If the target can hear you, it must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or take 1d6 psychic damage and be deafened for 1 minute. A deafened creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the deafness on a success. A creature deafened in this way can still hear void speech.

This spell's damage increases by 1d6 when you reach 5th level (2d6), 11th level (3d6), and 17th level (4d6).

DESTRUCTIVE RESONANCE

2nd-level void magic

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self (15-foot cone)

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You shout a scathing string of void speech that assaults the minds of any creatures who hear it. Each creature in a 15-foot cone who can hear you takes 4d6 psychic damage, or half damage with a successful Wisdom saving throw. Creatures damaged by this spell can't take reactions until the start of their next turn.

The wielder of a *tipstaff* also gets a +2 bonus to initiate or maintain a grapple. This bonus applies even when the *tipstaff* has 0 charges.

A *tipstaff* has 5 charges, and it regains 1d4 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the *tipstaff's* last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the *tipstaff* permanently loses its ability to paralyze but retains its grappling bonus.

The Spyglass Guild vigorously works to keep these items within the organization.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 2nd.

VOID STRIKE

3rd-level void magic

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

With a short phrase of void speech, you gather writhing darkness around your hand. When you cast the spell, and as an action on subsequent turns, you can unleash a bolt of darkness at a target within range. Make a ranged spell attack. If your target is in dim light or darkness, you have advantage on the roll. On a hit, the target takes 5d8 necrotic damage and is frightened of you until the start of your next turn.

At Higher Levels. When you cast the spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 for each slot level above 3rd.

WORD OF MISFORTUNE

Void magic cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You hiss a word of void speech. Choose one creature you can see within range. The next time the creature makes a saving throw during the spell's duration, it must roll a d4 and subtract the result from the total of the saving throw. The spell then ends.

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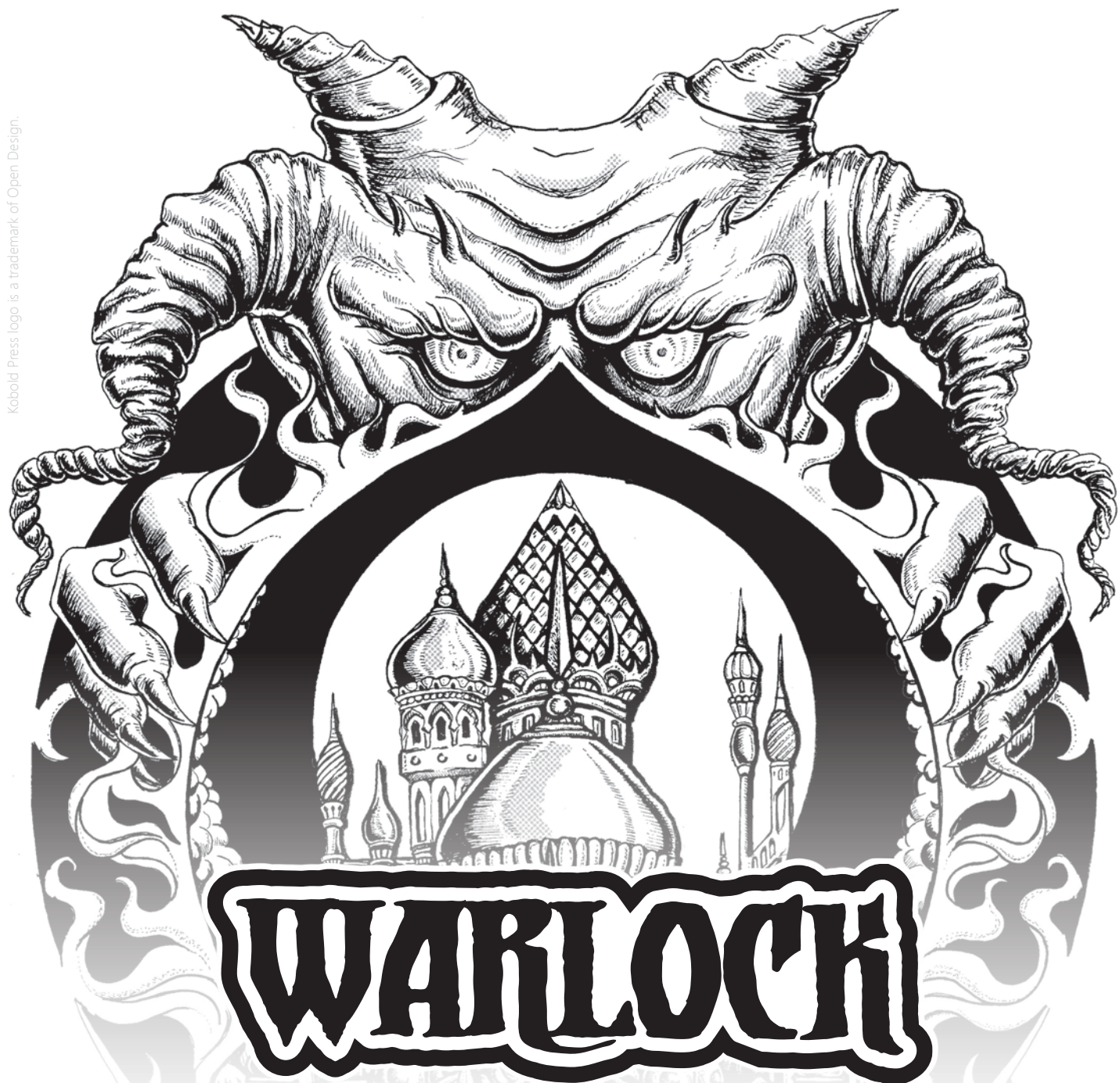
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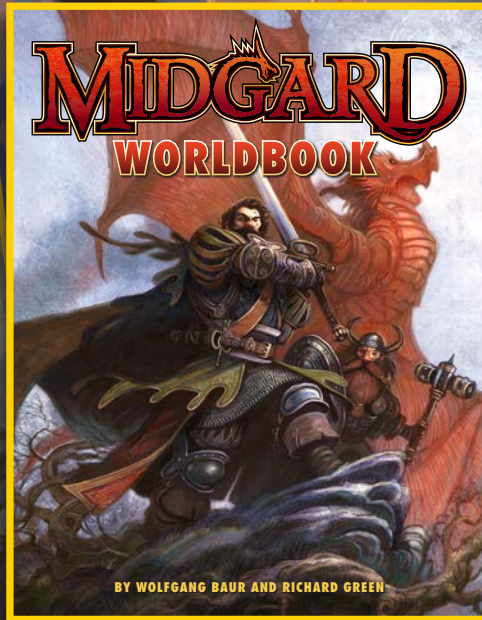
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MSRP \$24.99

ISBN 978-1-936781-91-1
Printed in the USA



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PO Box 2811 | Kirkland WA 98083
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