

PREPARED!

• A DOZEN ADVENTURES FOR FIFTH EDITION •



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PREPARED!

A Dozen Adventures for Fifth Edition

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“FOR ADAM, FIRST INTO THE UNKNOWN.”

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
The Impregnable Fortress of Dib (Levels 1–2)	2
The Marrow Mines (Levels 1–3)	4
The Vault of Pallon the Pious (Level 2)	6
The Claret Wellspring (Levels 4–5)	7
The Room with Five Corners (Levels 6–7)	9
Upon the Icebound Terrace (Levels 6–7)	11
In Its Horrid Wake (Level 7)	13
A Bad Night for Betting (Levels 8–9)	15
The Burning Crater (Levels 9–10)	17
Atop the Mountain (Level 11)	18
Under Revelers’ Feet (Levels 12–13)	20
The Obsidian Pass (Levels 14–15)	22



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INTRODUCTION

Your GM is ill, but you want to game anyway and volunteer to run the game. Or perhaps you ran into a last-minute Life Situation that ate your usual preparation time for your campaign, and everyone truly needs a break from the ever-present Real World. Fear not! With the scenarios herein, you can quickly and easily take your group of adventurers through an interesting and compelling story, defeat some villainous forces, and save the day (or perhaps more). For those player characters (PCs) who are more pragmatic, yes, there are rewards of varying kinds!

Each scenario contains background information, adventure elements, area descriptions, and some ideas for continuing the story introduced in the scenario. They are organized by level recommendation, plus you'll see that information at a glance in the table of contents. For statistics on the creatures, please reference the 5th Edition *Monster Manual* and the *Tome of Beasts* (where you can find creatures such as the bone collective, dogmole, salt golem, and clockwork myrmidon). So, what are you waiting for? Dive in and get prepared!

THE IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS OF DIB

FOUR 1ST- TO 2ND-LEVEL PCS

We were traveling the old trade road up near the Blind Hills when we found it: an overturned wagon in the ditch. Evas took to the shadows, scouted ahead, and returned with strange details. The wagon had been transformed—such that it appeared to be a fierce fortress. Signs of goblin-work were apparent: broken shields reinforcing the walls, crude arrow slits cut into the driver's bench, a makeshift flag hanging limply atop the whole affair. We left it alone, but even at a distance the smell of the odd fortress's unfinished moat made us wretch . . .

Background

Several months back, Dib Halfling-Chewer and his cronies were ejected from a nearby goblin clan for indiscriminate wrestling. Their antics, though hilariously entertaining to themselves, were destructive and dangerous to the rest of the clan. The goblins spent several nights in the wilderness before discovering an abandoned wagon by the side of a trade road. There, the homeless cadre transformed the wagon into a distinctly goblinoid fortress. They have had some success in assaulting and looting travelers on the road.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT A: THE FORTRESS ATTACKS

Assaulting the fortress is a combat encounter. The fortress may take two of the following actions on initiative 10 each round:

- **ARROW BARRAGE.** Ranged weapon attack. +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., two targets. Hit: 5 piercing damage.
- **SPEAR THRUSTS.** Melee weapon attacks. +4 to hit, range 5 ft., two targets. Hit: 5 piercing damage. Spear thrusts gain advantage against PCs attempting to lift the wagon.
- **FAIRLY HOT OIL (RECHARGE 5–6).** Spray blobs of oil at all creatures within 20 ft. Each creature must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 fire damage; a successful saving throw halves the damage.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT B: THE FORTRESS DEFENDS

Adventurers can defeat the fortress in a number of ways.

“KILL” IT. The fortress has an AC of 14 and 40 hit points. It is resistant to piercing damage and weak to fire damage (see “Fire” below). PCs may attack it as they would a normal, albeit immobile, target. Once the fortress reaches 0 hp, the goblins retreat to area 3.

KICKING IN THE DOOR. The door at the back of the wagon is solidly reinforced. Forcing the door requires a DC 17 Strength check. The DC for this check is reduced to 14 if the fortress has less than half its hp remaining. Once the door is forced, the goblins retreat to area 3.

LIFTING THE WHOLE DAMN THING UP. Lifting and tipping the fortress over takes 2 rounds. Each round requires a successful DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check made by one PC. The DC of this check is reduced by one for each PC assisting. PCs involved in lifting the wagon may take no other actions that round. Failing the check on the second round results in the lifting PC(s) having to start over. Successfully lifting the wagon results in the goblins retreating to area 3.

FIRE. If the wagon takes fire damage, it has a 50 percent chance of bursting into flames. While aflame, the wagon takes 9 (2d6+2) fire damage each round on initiative 20. If the wagon takes 24 or more damage from being on fire, the goblins inside retreat to area 3.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT C: WRESTLING MOVES

The goblins inside the fortress gain advantage on all grappling-related checks and attacks. When forced into melee combat, they are as likely to attempt grabs and shoves as they are shortsword attacks. Dib, a regular goblin in every other way, gains the following:

Knee-Bar. Melee weapon attack. +4 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 bludgeoning damage and target must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be restrained. Dib can choose to maintain the knee-bar indefinitely, but can take no move actions and is considered prone while doing so.

AREA 1: THE EXTERIOR

A large wooden wagon has been overturned a few feet from the road. An incomplete moat rings the structure; the vapors from its gelatinous contents reach your nose even at fifty paces. The wagon has been reinforced with broken shields and scavenged planks; an unfortunate fox has been nailed unceremoniously atop a crude doorway. Slits and holes of various sizes have been bored and carved into the walls, and you hear whispering and rustling coming from within. A flag made from cloth scraps hangs unmoving in the still air.

The goblins do not leave the safety of the wagon willingly. They are interested in softer targets than a band of adventurers, and so they stay under the wagon and operate its attacks as previously described. In general, if the wagon seems likely to be destroyed, the goblins retreat to area 3.

THE IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS OF DIB





AREA 2: UNDER THE WAGON

The inside of the makeshift stronghold is a dank and foul-smelling place. A small cauldron of rendered animal fat boils over a smoky fire. Several poorly crafted spears sit abandoned on the ground. A ladder suggests the wagon's inhabitants have dug into the ground below.

Once their fortress is breached, the five goblins inside retreat into the throne room. A DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check uncovers an oily sack hidden under a rock. It contains 25 sp and some shiny rocks.

AREA 3: TUNNEL AND THRONE ROOM

The tunnel, precariously carved and shored-up with planking, runs straight for 30 ft. before turning sharply. Around the corner are the goblin's living quarters. A single sputtering torch illuminates the small chamber and the makeshift throne at the far end. Evil eyes blink from behind five small mounds of dirt and bedding. The sound of bow strings being drawn greets your ears.

The goblins make ranged attacks from behind half cover until forced into melee. At the entrance to the chamber is a simple spike trap. Noticing the trap requires a Perception (Wisdom) check of DC 12. Disarming the trap requires a DC 12 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check. Failure to notice or disarm the trap causes six sharp spikes to spring out of the ground. PCs within 5 ft. of the trap must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d6 (4) piercing damage; a successful saving throw halves the damage.

The throne hides Dib's treasure hoard. A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the seat of the throne is loose and offset. Inside the throne is a small wooden chest containing 60 sp, 15 gp, and a scrap of cloth with Dib's fortress design notes scribbled in smudged ink.

Conclusion

No doubt the local authority is thankful the PCs removed the nuisance from the side of the road. What of the clan from which Dib and his entourage were expelled? How did the goblin develop such strong wrestling moves? Perhaps the entire clan practices unarmed combat; their desire to test their skills on civilized folk grows as the subterranean wrestling rings increase in number.

THE MARROW MINES

FOUR 1ST- TO 3RD-LEVEL PCS

I was taken by the evil dogs while camping near Agav's bog. They dragged me into their lair, and it wasn't until I escaped that I knew the truth of the place: a great and bony wing buried in the side of a hill. They chained me in the dark with a candle made from foul wax and forced me to dig at the marrow. Their bonds were poorly made, and I fled several days later while they slept. What purpose did they have in mining that marrow? I cannot say . . .

This text does not specify the number of enemies in any given encounter; tailor the numbers to suit the challenge level you wish to create.

Background

The Marrow Mines are dug in and around the fossilized wing of an unnamed leviathan. A small pack of kobolds lives and works in the mines, which are heavily trapped. The kobolds defend the area fiercely and patrol the region around the mine. At night, a handful of urds make aerial surveys of the territory. The urds live in the deep reaches of the wing's tips.

The pack is led by Rikir, a large and brutish specimen who lost an eye in a fight with some nearby goblins. Rikir is responsible for the cunning traps dispensed throughout the place.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT A: THE MARROW

The marrow from the wing is an addictive substance for the kobolds, and some have been altered by long-term use. In addition to Rikir, one in five of the kobolds encountered in the mines has gained the following action:

VISIONS OF THE LEVIATHAN. *Staring into the kobold's eyes, you suddenly fall through a nightmarish stormscape: a dread leviathan wings through the rain and lightning—what evil do you see lost between worlds?* Recharge (6); all enemies within 30 ft. must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or are frightened for 1 round.

Consuming the marrow causes horrific visions of storms and malevolent monsters winging their way through the skies. PCs who consume the marrow must succeed at a DC 14 Constitution check to avoid being paralyzed for a day. Paralyzed PCs can attempt the saving throw again every hour. At the end of their paralysis, the PCs discover they can read, write, and converse in the Draconic tongue. This effect ends after five long rests.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT B: RIKIR'S TRAPS

CENTIPEDE PIT. *Falling, you land on uneven ground. A skittering horror moves nearby.* The pit trap consists of a well-disguised false floor covering a 10-ft. drop into a pit. Three giant centipedes attack anyone falling into the pit. Discovering the false floor requires a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. PCs can skirt its edge with ease.

BOX OF BATS. *A slight drag in your step and the audible snap of a tripwire alerts you to a trap. From the darkness comes a growling cacophony of leathery wings.* The box of bats trap consists of a cleverly hidden tripwire that releases a swarm of bats from a wooden cage 20 ft. above. The bats attack anyone in the passageway. Discovering the tripwire requires a DC 12

Wisdom (Perception) check. The tripwire can be stepped over (no roll required) or disarmed with a DC 10 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check.

AREA 1: THE ENTRY

The shoulder joint of a massive wing protrudes from the side of a hill. The bone has been hollowed out into a makeshift tunnel; the osseous walls, floor, and ceiling are covered in strange smudge paintings depicting canine-like humanoid. Piles of bones and broken tools lie in heaps outside the entryway.

Of all the areas in the mines, the entry is the most likely to be trapped. In addition to the previously described traps, the entry is guarded by **kobold** sentries. Unless great care is taken to eliminate the sentries, they alert the warren to the presence of intruders via whistles that, when blown, emit a single eerie note. The kobolds in the mines are generally on edge; luring the sentries away from their position with intriguing sounds or flashing lights is not difficult. A secret tunnel just inside the entry is found with a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. The tunnel exits deep in the reaches.

AREA 2: THE NEXUS

The tunnel widens into a large, irregularly shaped chamber. Crude pots of crimson soil line the eastern wall. A smudge painting depicting a massive winged creature dominates the room. A number of nest-like beds lay scattered on the earthen floor.

In the likely event that the kobolds are aware of intruders in their warren, they fortify their living quarters at the wing's

nexus. Several **kobolds** take half-cover position near the entry to the nexus and use slings as the PCs approach. Rikir and a few kobold guards take half-cover positions at the back of the chamber and use their slings when the PCs pass the entryway. After the PCs have reached the room, all remaining kobolds engage in melee and attempt to block the PCs from targeting Rikir and his guards. The marrow in the pots is magical, and a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals it is likely dangerous to consume.

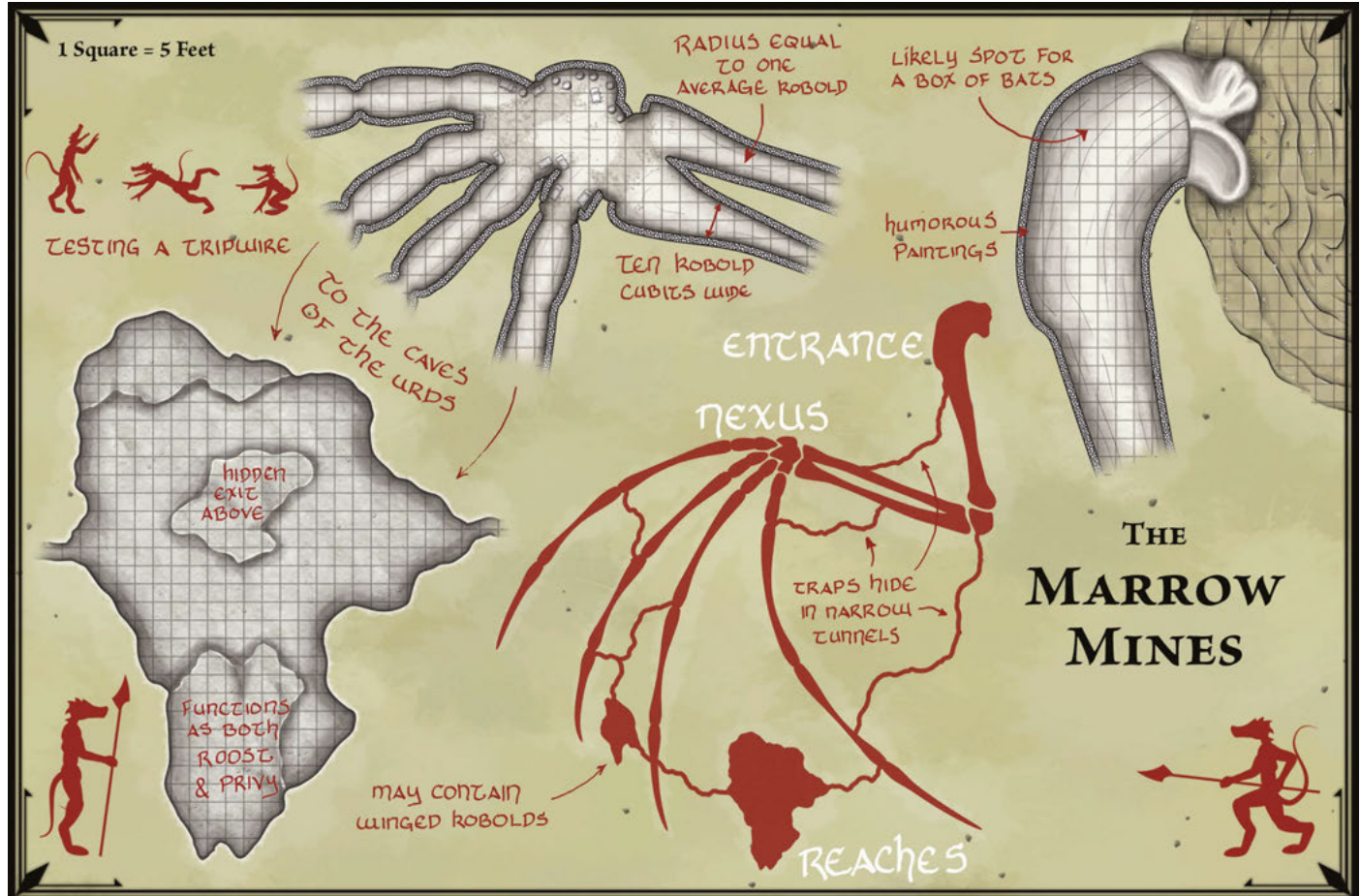
AREA 3: THE REACHES

The tunnel narrows until you must crouch to continue; at the end, you discover an opening into a large stone cavern. Piles of excrement sit on the floor, and shuffling noises sound from the darkness above.

The wing's tips extend deep into the ground. A cluster of **urds** live in the deep reaches of the wing, and they keep their distance from the rest of warren. The urds have dug caverns that intersect with the wing, and they perch high in the shadows where they drop stones on interlopers. They do not consume the marrow.

Treasure

Notable treasures in the mines include a pot of red paint made from the marrow. The paint is nearly impossible to remove from most surfaces, and it dimly glows in an unsettling crimson hue. Deep in the reaches is a perfectly preserved feather from the monster whose bones make up the mines. It makes an excellent **+1 staff**, or it could be processed into a quiver of **+1 arrows** by the proper craftsman. Rikir is fond of coins and baubles and likely has a small hoard kept tucked away in the nexus.



Conclusion

Who is threatened by the mine's existence? What can be learned of the leviathan from which the mines are made? What other, more dangerous foes lurk beyond the reaches of this place?

THE VAULT OF PALLON THE PIOUS

FOUR 2ND-LEVEL PCS

True, I was hired to sail them past the Witch's Teeth. Four adventurers looking to earn a name; who was I to throw vinegar on their fancies? I took 'em within a rowboat's jaunt of the place to the door on the rock. I know as much of the place as any sailor—nothing. The man who built that door and its innards was known as Pallon the Pious, a pirate of some renown. Given his actions in life, I don't know how he made right with any god when he died. The adventurers? Well, I imagine you four want me to take you out. Perhaps you'll find your answer there...

Background

A famous pirate captain came to worship a lawful god in his final years. After a lifetime of plundering, pillaging, scuttling, and murdering along the coastline, the fear-inspiring Pallon the Merciless rebranded himself as Pallon the Pious. But, a history of violence is a hard thing to reconcile, and the salty old dog slowly succumbed to madness. His most precious possession was a set of scales that reflected perfectly his own inner conflict. The Scales of Misjudgment are buried deep in the treasure room of his crazed rock-island vault.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT A: STRUGGLES WITHIN

At differing times (GM's discretion) throughout the party's exploration of the vault, the guilt of Pallon magically threatens the PCs. Each PC is compelled to tell one story from their past where they did a great wrong. There is no saving throw to avoid this compelled confession. After the story is told, the PC must succeed on a DC 10 Charisma saving throw to avoid incurring one level of exhaustion.

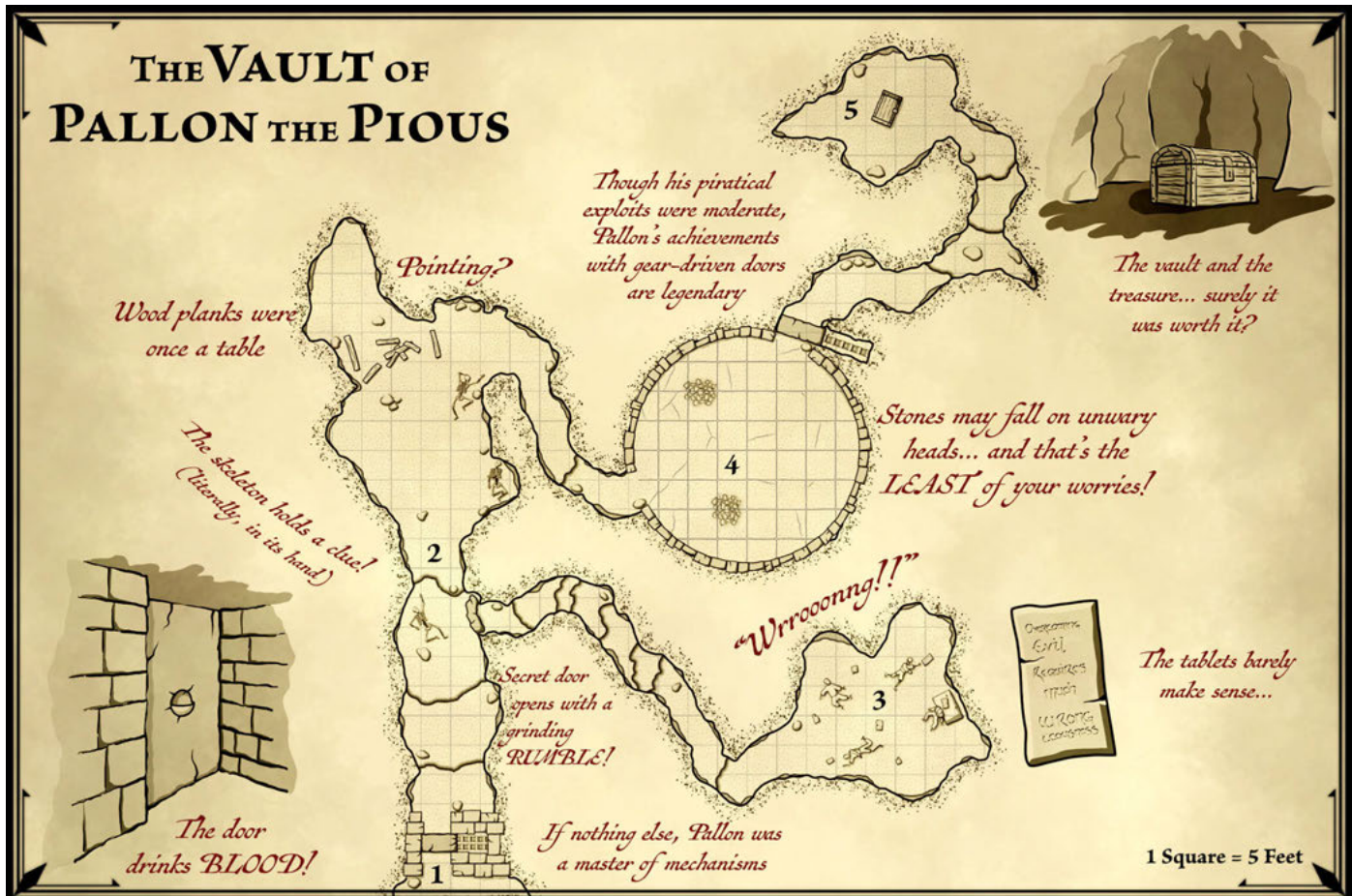
ADVENTURE ELEMENT B: STRUGGLES WITHOUT

At the beginning of each of the location's two combats, the cruel nature of Pallon magically threatens to seep into the PCs' personas. All PCs must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or become merciless for 3 rounds. While merciless, PCs cannot assist or target other PCs with helpful spells and abilities. Passive effects are unaffected. The GM must use their discretion when resolving this effect.

AREA 1: THE DOOR

A silver cup is fitted into the center of door with a small inscription carved above it. A gull watches you from a nearby perch; its eyes reflect the dull gray waters.

The inscription reads: Give to receive. A DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check uncovers trace amounts of dried blood in the cup. The door slides open when 3 hit points worth of blood is poured into the cup. The door is extremely resistant to physical damage (AC 17, hp 70). Nonmagical attacks made against the



door with anything but a proper sledge have disadvantage to hit. A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a small release mechanism that can be activated with a DC 17 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check.

AREA 2: THE DESCENT

A tunnel descends below the water line. The stonework is crude and unfinished, and the floor is littered with loose stones. A thin layer of briny ooze coats the place. At the end of the tunnel, you discover a small chamber containing rotting wooden planks piled in a corner.

The chamber at the bottom of the tunnel has one exit leading to area 4. A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check made in the entryway reveals skeletal remains clutching a palm-sized stone with the word 'wrongteous' carved into it. A DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check also reveals a secret passage leading to area 3.

AREA 3: THE PRAYER ROOM

Descending the cramped passage, you emerge into a circular chamber with a simple stone altar along the far wall. Scattered on the floor are a dozen stone tablets with carved inscriptions. Four slumping figures occupy the space directly in front of the altar.

The tablets contain incoherent ramblings and prayers. They are at once exalting the virtues of an unnamed god and threatening to unleash wrath upon wrongdoers. The four figures will stand and turn in unison when the PCs approach. The zombies burble the word "wrong" as they shamble to attack. A DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check made on the tablets reveals a cryptic message from Pallon that "overcoming evil requires much wrongteousness."

AREA 4: THE JUDGMENT ROOM

Unlike the entryway, this chamber features carefully built stone walls. Some craftsmanship is evident in the stonework here, and the far wall suggests the frame of a door sealed by rock. Heaps of stones sit on the floor of the room.

A simple examination of the room reveals the stones are inscribed with the word "wrongteous." The far wall houses the sealed door that leads to area 5. Beside the door is a hole just large enough to pass a carved stone through. An inscription near the hole reads "do wrong to begin judgment, do wrong again to do right." Passing a stone marked "wrongteous" through the wall initiates the following:

- The door (if intact) into the vault seals.
- Magical radiant light flashes throughout the vault. All PCs must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution check or be blinded for one minute. Any undead in the vault take 2 radiant damage. Spellcasters recognize the light is radiant.

After the light flashes (for the first time only), three shadows emerge and attack the party. On every round of combat, another stone marked "wrongteous" falls into the judgment room from a hole above. The party may continue to pass stones through the hole at a rate of one per round. Doing so requires an action. The shadows take the damage each time, but the party risks blindness. When the shadows are defeated, a stone marked "righteous" falls from the ceiling. Passing the "righteous" stone through the hole opens all doors in the vault.

AREA 5: THE TREASURE ROOM

A simple wooden chest sits at the center of this small chamber. Seawater seeps through the walls here, and the smell of the ocean is strong.

The chest contains the Scales of Misjudgment, a silver set of scales and weights. Additionally, a handwritten note, written by Pallon states: "Here be the truth, all things are not balanced, and neither good nor evil can be weighted against the other." The scales do not work, and they provide consistently random measurements. They are worth 75 gp.

Conclusion

What was the incident that compelled Pallon to seek atonement? Perhaps the answer is out there on the seas: a secret story kept by a creaky first mate. Where did the wrongteous Pallon hide his real treasure, and who did he hire to construct this strange vault of traps and the undead . . .

THE CLARET WELLSPRING

FOUR 4TH- TO 5TH-LEVEL PCS

The first spell cast has not yet finished its work.

—Ancient sandstone inscription, author unknown.

Background

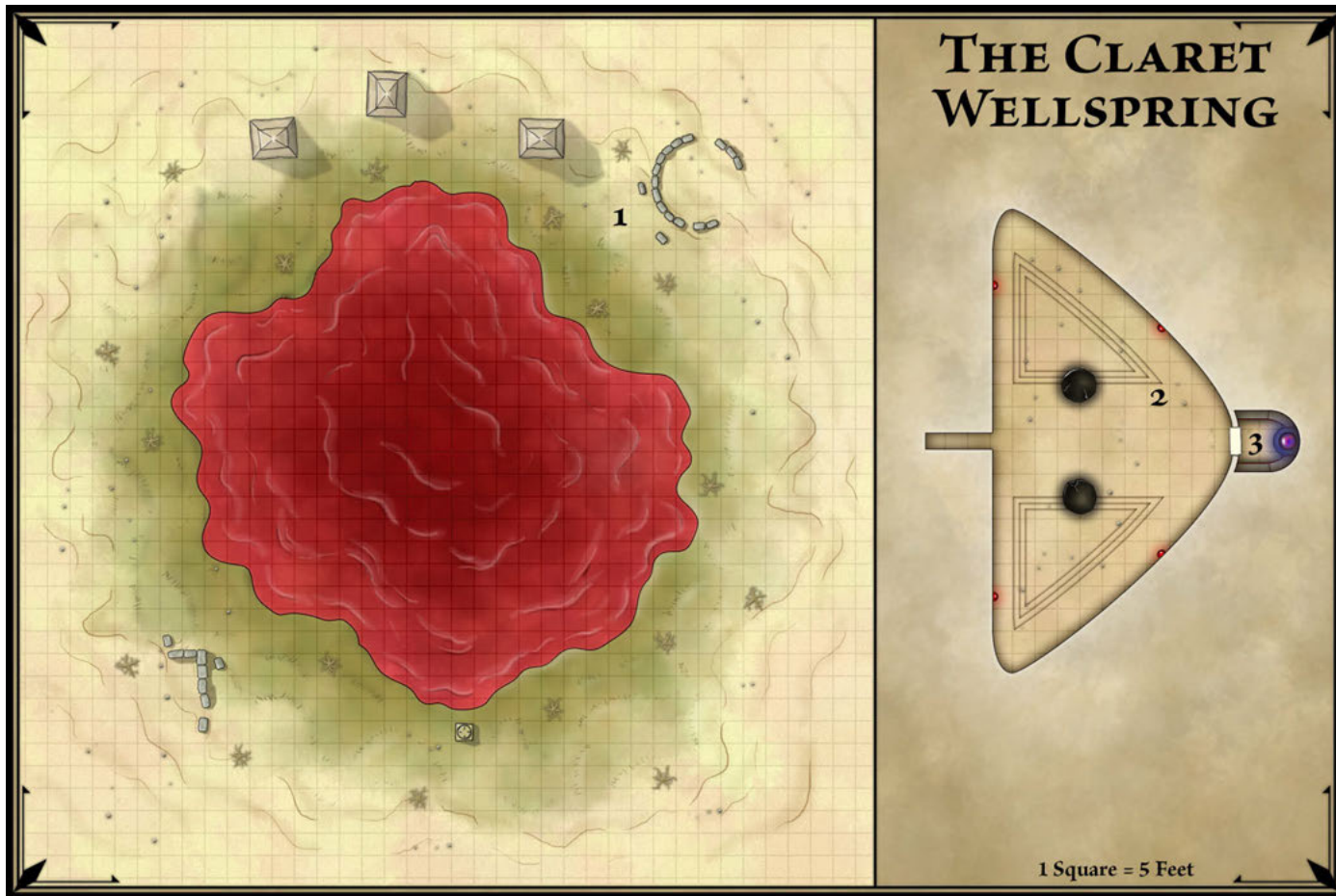
Strange lights in the desert lead the PCs to a long-forgotten oasis. Traveling toward the lights, the PCs are threatened by magic so old, it defies categorization. Arriving at the withered shore of a blood-colored pool, the PCs discover an ancient dial and three tooth-like columns rising from the ground. Turning the dial results in the water being magically siphoned into the column's hollow cavities. If the pool is emptied, a small door is revealed in the crimson-stained muck. They must defeat a blood-infused water elemental before proceeding.

Once inside, the PCs share a room with a dark ritual running since the origin of the world. The keeper of the place, an immortal fey inside a powerful suit of armor, offers little explanation as to the nature of the ritual, and he seeks to ensure they tell no one of the Claret Wellspring.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT A: FIRST MAGIC

Approaching the Claret Wellspring activates the powerful magical defenses left behind by its creator. Spellcasters whose primary statistic is Intelligence feel subtle force waves starting at one mile. A DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the magic is old and primal in nature; PCs with a scholarly background gain advantage on this check. If the check is outstanding (17+), the PC learns something profound about the nature of magic in the world; they gain advantage on all Intelligence rolls for 24 hours.

SHOCKWAVE. When the PCs are within half a mile of the oasis, the defenses trigger. A massive wave of force explodes out from the wellspring. PCs must first succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be thrown backward 20 ft., taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage as they tumble across the sand. A DC 12 Constitution saving throw prevents the PC from becoming deafened for an hour from this effect. Finally, all PCs feel compelled to envision then share the first time they encountered magic. Refusing to share their experience cause 2 (1d4) psychic damage.



ADVENTURE ELEMENT B: THE RITUAL OF ENDINGS

Before you, a dark sphere turns in a sea of stars. The sphere passes through the hues from crimson to royal blue in an unending pattern. A single musical chord plays eternally; its notes tear at the tethers that bind your mind to reality.

The ritual of endings is one of several rituals that maintain the magic of the first spell. None know the ultimate aim of the original spell, but its secrets may yet be revealed by brave adventurers and scholars. The actions required to stop the ritual, and the effects of such tampering, are entirely for the GM to decide. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) allows a spellcaster whose primary attribute is Intelligence to learn a minor version the ritual. It may be cast weekly, requires 500 gp worth of materials (GM discretion), and adds 1 to the caster's spell saving throw DC for the week.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT C: ARMOR OF THE KEEPER

Interlocking plates of obsidian-colored metal refuse even the smallest reflection. From its heart, suspended in a sphere of flashing magical light, a tiny fey-like creature stares at you enigmatically.

Mechanically, the armor is a **minotaur**. It behaves as an additional opponent, albeit under the control of the wearer. While inside the armor, the wearer gains advantage to saving throws against spells. The armor does not interfere with the wearer's actions or abilities. Treat the armor and wearer as two

separate targets when resolving spells and effects. The wearer may be targeted normally but is immune to attacks and effects that would force it out of the armor. If the armor reaches 0 hp, it "dies" and the wearer is ejected.

AREA 1: BESIDE THE OASIS

A blood-colored pool surrounded by withering vegetation sits at the feet of three towering stone columns. The jagged columns rise like teeth from a maw buried under the sand. A stone dial sits upon a small pedestal on the far side of the water, its face marked with four distinct lines.

The dial has four positions. Turning the dial requires a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. Turning the dial clockwise from its starting position begins the transfer of water from the pool to the hollow columns. When the dial reaches its final position, the pool is emptied, revealing the small door to the area 2.

One round after the pool empties, the water in the columns sprays up into the air and forms a **water elemental** that attacks the PCs. Damaging the elemental causes the creature's "blood" to fall to the sand adjacent to it. The blood forms characters in the Draconic script. Upon its death, PCs who read Draconic can study the script with a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) to reveal the following message: "Before words were divine ambitions."

The flora beside the pool animates and threatens to entangle the party. On initiative 20, the fibrous plants lash out at the feet of one PC within 50 ft. of the empty pool's edge. A DC 12 Dexterity saving throw is required to avoid being pulled prone. When the elemental is defeated, the plants cease their attacks.

AREA 2: SOUNDLESS VAULT

This cramped triangular chamber is supported by two dark stone columns at its center. Sound is strangely muted here; voices carry a few feet and disappear into the darkness. The stale air suggests the vault has been closed a long time.

The ritual in area 3 is responsible for the auditory effects. Spoken messages do not travel more than 5 ft. before being silenced. Spells and effects requiring targets to hear fizzle and fail if the target is more than 5 ft. away. The small chamber is occupied by the ritual's eternal guardian, a **mamura** inside the armor of the keeper (see adventure element C). The armor and the mamura take their actions on the mamura's initiative. The mamura begins combat by using its complement of spells while the armor uses its charge and gore liberally. Each round on initiative 5, the columns (AC 10, hp 15) each make one attack (ranged 20/40, +6 to hit, 3 (1d6) fire damage). Destroying both columns triggers a minor cave-in causing 4 (1d6+1) bludgeoning damage or half as much on a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. The key to area 3 is located in the armor, and it is discovered by anyone searching the remains. The script above the door to area 3 is written in Draconic and reads as follows, "Here rises the end."

AREA 3: RITUAL ALCOVE

The door opens to a small alcove. Ringing the alcove at shoulder height are three locked compartments. A dim light emanates from the deepest point of the alcove. A musical chord plays faintly and grows in volume as you approach the light.

The door to this area is locked by a complex lock. Forcing the lock without proper study requires a DC 21 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check. If the PCs first succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, the DC to force the lock is reduced to 10. Behind the door is a small alcove containing an unending ritual begun when magic was originated. The ritual is described in adventure element B. The three compartments are locked and can be opened with thieves' tools and a DC 14 Dexterity check. They can also be opened with a crowbar and DC 15 Strength (Athletics) checks.

Treasure

There are 500 gp worth of spell components in the compartments of area 3. A skilled blacksmith can reinforce existing plate mail with some of the pieces of the armor of the keeper. Plate mail strengthened with the armor gains 20 lbs. of weight and provides the wearer with resistance to piercing damage.

Conclusion

The first magic is kept active by several rituals similar to the one under the Claret Wellspring. To know the nature of the magic, the PCs must search for the locations. What is the ultimate effect of the first spell cast? Who was the caster, and how are the destinies of the PCs connected with the spell's resolution?

THE ROOM WITH FIVE CORNERS**FOUR 6TH- TO 7TH-LEVEL PCS**

It's true I used to run with the Untamed—back when Owl was the leader. I don't associate with 'em now, though—not after what I saw. I got a stomach for all manner of things, but whatever it was I spied through the door at the back of the hideout. A room with a wall changing shape—like a puzzle putting itself together—filled me with a kind of fear I ain't known before or since. I can't say what dark thing the Untamed are up to, but there ain't a one of 'em casts a shadow no more—not that you'd see 'em out in sun anyway.

Background

The Untamed are a street gang in a busy city. A recent change in leadership has transformed the members from pickpockets and second-story thieves into kidnappers for an interdimensional aberration named Xlrieh'oc. Their hideout is now a strange and wicked factory, capable of extracting the firm essence from a person; the process leaves the victim partly ethereal and their form no longer casts a shadow. Although most victims die during the procedure, those who survive are conscripted into the gang. The extracted essence is crated and shipped to the aberration's home plane through a breach between worlds in the hideout's backroom.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT A: THE CURSE

The gang members are all survivors of the strange extraction ritual. As such, they are afflicted with a curse condition with the following effects:

- Resistance to nonmagical weapons (slashing, bludgeoning, piercing)
 - +5 stealth rolls
 - Weakness to fire
 - Disadvantage on all rolls made while in direct sunlight
- *The curse affects only humanoid gang members.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT B: SYMBOLS OF XLRIEH'OC

Three symbols, drawn in reference to Xlrieh'oc, maintain the portal to his realm and cause various effects upon the viewer. After a PC has been affected by a symbol, or makes a successful saving throw against its effect, the PC becomes immune to that particular symbol. If all three symbols are destroyed, the portal in the backroom closes. Destroying a symbol requires a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Though this text suggests places where the symbols are located, you are free to distribute them as you see fit.

- **SYMBOL, FEAR.** Witnesses to this symbol must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw to avoid being frightened for an hour. The saving throw is repeated every 15 minutes.
- **SYMBOL, ANGUISH.** Witnesses to this symbol must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 9 (2d8) psychic damage; a successful saving throw halves the damage.
- **SYMBOL, MADNESS.** Witnesses to this symbol must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become *blinded* and *stunned* for 1 minute.



AREA 1: THE ALLEY

Refuse and rubble obscure the entry to this dark alleyway. Stepping over an open sewer channel, you find yourself standing in a passage between several warehouses. Small things scuttle between broken crates and general filth.

Three gang members (**scouts**) and a hired doorman (**gladiator** who is unaffected by the curse) are hidden in the alley, and they attempt to attack the PCs by surprise. The Untamed have secreted the entry to their hideout well. Finding the door requires a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. Scrawled on the door is a **Symbol, Fear**. Whoever finds the door, and whoever is nearby when it is found, are subject to the symbol's effects.

AREA 2: THE WAREHOUSE

A maze of crates fills the warehouse. Rising up to the bare wood rafters, the crates vary in size and each display an enigmatic brand. Pale violet light emanates from unseen sources. A small footpath winds its way among the stacked cargo.

The warehouse proper is currently unoccupied. Most of the crates are empty. In the midst of the crate labyrinth is the Untamed's extraction table.

A long wooden table with leather-strap restraints is bathed in the violet light of several candle stands. Knives in dark scabbards lay on its surface, and a peculiar burn mark is found repeated near the collar restraint at one end. On the floor are two crates showing evidence of being recently sealed. A parchment is crudely nailed to the table; it hangs down apron-like from the table's edge.

The parchment is a set of instructions for removing the essence of a mortal. It is written in an unknown tongue. Looking too closely at the parchment triggers the **Symbol, Anguish** that marks it; once looked at, the viewer and those nearby are subject to its effects. A DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation) reveals the diagram is a ritual object describing a surgical technique of sorts. Opening the crate requires a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. Inside the crate is a harmless white powder.

AREA 3: THE ROOM WITH FIVE CORNERS

The view through the doorway into the back room portrays a dizzying spectacle of nightmare. Beyond the threshold is a plain chamber, breached along one wall by a geometric impossibility. A fifth corner has appeared there and yet the shape of the room remains square. Space and time argue in this place; a precipitation of dread hangs in the air. Pale figures pass crates into the anomalous corner; unseen hands receive the grim cargo.

Two gang members (**scouts**) are passing crates to an unseen party through the extradimensional portal. Gang leader Emit (**priest**) oversees the transaction. When disturbed, the members take half cover positions behind crates near the portal. Two **grells** lurk in the rafters and attempt to float down behind the party once combat starts. The floor here displays the **Symbol, Madness**; PCs fighting near the portal trigger its effects. Shortly after the grells descend, the PCs see the outline of a humanoid stepping through the portal into the room. As it arrives, its shape transforms and a gibbering moulder emerges to join the fight.

Treasure

For a street gang, the hideout is suspiciously devoid of stolen goods. Emit carries an impossibly complex navigation tool made from gold set with several perfect diamonds. A DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check suggests it is aligned to a fifth cardinal point. It is worth 300 gp in raw materials.

Conclusion

Did the party close the strange portal in the back room? What horrible place does it lead them to if traveled through? What of the white powder in the crates? How long does Xlrieh'oc hold a grudge, and how is his anger manifested?

UPON THE ICEBOUND TERRACE

FOUR 6TH- TO 7TH-LEVEL PCS

We left Gorol's Outpost and went north for several days. The weather held, and we counted our blessings. We'd heard stories of the place and had it in our hearts to find those ruins. Vladimir had a map we'd bought from some locals; they said it was as old as some words—whatever that meant. It was early evening when we saw the crack in the glacier. We went single-file through a long tunnel that opened up into a valley. At the end of the valley we saw it: a stone terrace partially encased in ice. We made camp with the intention of exploring the ruins in the morning. What came for us just before dawn, I cannot say. White wings and cruel faces—laughter . . . I fear I am the only one left alive.

Background

Oithois the exceptional ice mephit and his foul underlings have uncovered a powerful relic at the entry to ancient ruins. The monstrous mephits seek to crack a hole between the material plane and their icy homeworld. Oithois plots to lead an army of elemental lackeys and conquer the civilized outposts of the north. This ice mephit has studied the machine and is confident he can open a gateway to the elemental plane of ice. PCs are approached by a frostbitten traveler, who pleads with them to assault the terrace. The adventurers must mount an attack against the mephits, contend with an unintentionally summoned young white dragon, and defeat Oithois upon the icebound terrace.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT A: STRANGER WITH A TALE

A stranger named Jom appears in a northern town or city desperately seeking adventurers. He is a short man with pale skin and squinting eyes. He explains that his exploration party discovered ruins buried in a glacier. They decided to make camp for the night and explore the ruins in the morning, but were attacked just before dawn; cackling monsters on frosty wings murdered or captured his companions. Before he escaped, he saw a stone terrace rising up out of the snow: an ancient machine glinted from the topmost level.

He provides the following information:

- The ruins are a day's walk away.
- The ruins are massive, but only the entryway and its terrace is accessible.
- The ruins are of unknown origin.
- He does not know the fate of his companions; he sustained a nasty injury from the cold claw of the larger monster.
- He hopes some of his companions still live.

A DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals he is ill. If pressed, Jom shows his injury. A massive laceration in his leg shows signs of a strange infection. A DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check uncovers the injury's magical nature. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check suggests Jom is slowly turning into an ice mephit. The only cure is to pour the melted remains of his attacker's clawed finger over the injury. Jom offers 100 gp to save him.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT B: OITHOIS THE BIGGER THAN AVERAGE MEPHIT

Oithois has the following bonuses owing to his large size: +1 AC, +2 HD, +1 hit/damage to all attacks. Creatures struck by his claw attack must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or suffer from rime disease. Victims of rime disease lose 25 percent of their movement speed immediately and 25 percent per day for 3 days. On the third day, the victim transforms into an ice mephit. The disease may be cured with a *cure disease* spell, or by pouring the melted remains of Oithois's claw over the wound.





ADVENTURE ELEMENT C: THE PLANEWALKING DEVICE

On the topmost platform (A) is an ancient machine capable of opening gates to other planes. The machine still functions. Operating the machine requires a DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Once activated, energy from the crystals located on the terrace arcs into the machine for 1 round. After 1 round, the machine opens a gate to a random plane for a minute. The gate appears within 10 ft. of the large dead tree at G. PCs could open a gate to a specific plane provided these conditions are met:

- The user can conjure up a specific image of the destination in his or her mind.
- The user can cast 3rd-level spells.
- At least two gate crystals are intact on the terrace.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT D: GATE CRYSTALS

Used to energize the planar device, the translucent white crystals on the terrace hum audibly and radiate magic. Coming into contact with a crystal while it is energizing the machine initiates a DC 14 Constitution saving throw to avoid being stunned for 1 round. The crystals can be destroyed (AC 10, hp 10); a destroyed crystal cannot power the machine. The crystal at C has a small, removable crystal set into its base. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals its function as a *lantern of revealing*.

Map Notation Index

A: Planewalking device, Oithois

F: 3 Ice mephits

B, C, D: Gate crystals

G: The gate

E: 6 Ice mephits

AREA 1: ARRIVING AT THE TERRACE

A frosted stone terrace rises from the snowy ground and ends several levels up at a large door. A myriad of staircases provide access to elevated platforms; other regions of the terrace are locked behind massive walls of ice. Crystals, mounted in stone receptacles, pulse and hum in the cool air. A great bronze machine sits on the topmost elevation; a spindly white figure hunches near the machine—its long and wicked face regards you.

The mephits at E and F attack the party. Oithois remains by the machine and works frantically to activate it.

Fight Choreography

Depending on your playing style, use this section as a round-by-round breakdown or a loose narrative sequence; vary the events to suit the players' actions.

- 1—Mephits attack the PCs.
- 2—Oithois starts up the planewalking device.
- 3—Crystals activate; gate opens at G; Oithois attacks PCs.
- 4—A young white dragon emerges through the gate.
- 5—The dragon attacks; mephits flee.
- 6—The gate pulses brightly; crystals deactivate.
- 7—The gate unleashes a blizzard on initiative 20.
- 8—The gate closes.

The Angry Dragon

When the gate opens, a **young white dragon** named Halicix falls through. He is entirely surprised by his interplanar journey and is quickly enraged. He begins by using his breath weapon on the

largest clump of creatures. He has no affinity to the mephits and happily freezes them to death. Once Halicix attacks, the mephits use their turns to flee. Oithois, angry at being thwarted, stays and continues attacking the party until slain.

BARGAINING WITH HALICIX. Halicix is understandably angry. A determined PC can halt the brute's aggression long enough for a short exchange. Two DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) checks combined with a cessation of attacks stops Halicix from attacking the party for 1 round. Assign further checks or a roleplaying challenge to determine if the adventurers are able to convince the dragon they are not to blame for his unplanned jaunt to the material plane. Keep in mind that white dragons are more beast than not, and an offering of something valuable may be required.

The Blizzard

The round before the gate closes, on initiative count 20, a blast of powerful wind from the frozen world beyond blows over the terrace. The blizzard has the following effects:

- PCs must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 10 cold damage; a successful saving throw results in half damage.
- Snow covers the terrace, making the area difficult terrain.
- Small creatures must succeed on a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check or be blown 20 ft. in a direct line away from the gate. A further DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check avoids falling prone at the end of this movement. Creatures running into a wall or other object during this movement take 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage as they topple over the obstacle.

Treasure

The stands containing the crystals have a total of six small diamonds (100 gp each) set into their rims. Removing a diamond requires a DC 12 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check. A failed check results in a loss of 25 gp value for each point the attempt missed by (for example, a roll of 10 would reduce the value to 50 gp)

Conclusion

Here are a few suggested story arcs stemming from this location:

- The slight opening into the icy ruins leads to a vast complex full of magical interplanar technology.
- The action on the terrace catches the attention of the ruin's occupants, who take poorly to being discovered.

IN ITS HORRID WAKE

FOUR 7TH-LEVEL PCS

We saw it—don't turn your heads. Up near Hilltop Crossroad and the temple. It walked south; the trees fell in its path. Even the moon hid. Gods help Father Dren . . .

Background

A colossal demon has walked upon a sandy temple. Following closely behind, gnolls and hyenas slay all living things that cross their path. PCs discover a grisly sight when they investigate the temple: a pack of gnolls is finishing the ritual to summon a gnoll fang of Nkishi. They have readied a great gift in preparation of the fang's arrival: the temple's sacred scythe. PCs must carve a

path through hyenas and gnolls to reclaim the temple before facing the fang and his newly acquired prize.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT A: ACOLYTE'S DESPERATION

An acolyte named Ider pleads for the party to save his master. He smooths his torn robes and tells the PCs that his temple is under attack from dark forces after a huge beast passed by. He offers the PCs his jeweled prayer mantle (60 gp) to investigate and return the temple's holy symbol (a scythe) to him.

First a great evil passed; it crushed the graves and most of the east wall as it went. We cowered in the stores—overwhelmed by fear. We spent the next day in shock and prayer. The following night, the unearthly howls and cries began. Soon after, they came. A horrible pack—eyes aglow in the darkness. I fled—he remained . . . his screams haunt me.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT B: THE SCYTHE

The scythe is the temple's holy symbol. The gnolls found it, covered it in their foul excrement, and transformed it into an instrument of evil. When wielded by the fang of Nkishi, the scythe has several effects:

- The first 5 damage from any attack against the wielder is dealt to a random ally (gnolls and hyenas).
- The wielder receives +1 to all saving throws against spells.
- The wielder gains **Abyssal Harvest** (requires the use of the fang's 2 claw attacks) *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., up to 4 targets. Hit: 5 (1d8+1) slashing damage.

Spellcasters whose primary attribute is Wisdom become aware of the following when they are within 20 ft. of the scythe.

- It is a corrupted holy object.
- It can be cleansed; cleansing the scythe requires the spellcaster to expend a 4th-level spell slot and succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom ability check. Once cleansed, the scythe loses all powers and is dropped unceremoniously by its wielder.
- The scythe can be cleansed after the combat in a similar manner that excludes the need for an ability check.

AREA 1: TEMPLE GROUNDS

Numerous stone cairns have been erected in the grounds of a small walled temple. Great clawed footprints press into the grass and travel from north to south; the cairns directly in its path have been scattered and destroyed. The wind carries a foul smell from the temple, and smoke rises from within it. Unsettling yips and stirring can be heard among the ruined monuments.

The cairns contain the remains of the faithful. They provide half cover to adjacent combatants. The destroyed cairns create difficult terrain. A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the smoke is unnaturally thick. A DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check confirms the smoke is rising from ritual magic.

Lurking in the cairns are 5 **hyenas**, gnawing on the bones unearthed by the demon's passing. They are bolstered by having such close contact with the greater evil; the hyenas receive +1 to hit and gain the **panther's** pounce ability. The hyenas attack loudly and alert the gnolls inside the temple. On round two, three **gnolls** arrive at one of the temple's entryways and fire their longbows at the PCs. They switch to melee attacks when pressed. The gnolls attempt to keep the party occupied as the **gnoll pack lord** finishes summoning a **gnoll fang** of Nkishi. Move the



action to area 2 when the PCs are within 10 ft. of a doorway into the temple.

AREA 2: TEMPLE

Entrails have been strung up around the doorways—a grim decoration that confirms the fate of the priest. The temple's open-air worshiping area has been horribly desecrated. Dark smoke rises from around a burning pyre of furniture and temple items. A towering canine brute plants an excrement-covered scythe into the ground beside the fire, readies its glaive, and charges.

The gnoll pack lord joins the fray. It incites rampage if any gnolls remain. The round after the pack lord attacks, the fang of Nkishi leaps from the smoky blaze and lands beside the scythe. The fang retrieves the weapon, and all three attack the party.

The fire burning here is magical in nature. Used by the gnolls to summon the dreaded fang, the flames drive the evil pack into a frenzy. As long as the fire burns, on initiative 10, all gnolls and hyenas within 25 ft. of it regenerate 1 hp. The fire can be extinguished with a *create water* spell, or with a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to scatter the fire's fuel.

Read the following when the fang enters the combat:

From the smoke and flame a charred canine monstrosity leaps toward the scythe; its long teeth glow like smouldering embers. With a quick jerk, the beast frees the scythe and cuts a menacing swath before bounding into battle.

The fang of Nkishi prefers to be at the center of melee, engaging as many targets as possible with Abyssal Harvest.

Treasure

The gnolls wear the jewelry collected from their victims as they follow the demon: there are four gold and silver earrings (20 gp), a fine leather belt with a copper buckle depicting a ram's head (10 gp), and an archer's gauntlet made from boiled leather and silver (15 gp). The pack lord's coin purse has 30 blood-encrusted gold pieces.

Once cleansed, the bone and wood scythe gleams an alabaster white. It is worth 70 gp. The acolyte happily trades his mantle for the scythe and offers his knowledge and healing for a week. He will not fight, but out of combat he confers advantage to all Wisdom (Medicine only) and Intelligence (Religion only) ability checks made by the PCs.

Conclusion

What brought the gargantuan evil into the material world? It walks a straight path toward some undeclared destination. Tracking the abyssal evil is not difficult; what allies and enemies are made when the PCs decide to follow?

A BAD NIGHT FOR BETTING

FOUR 8TH- TO 9TH-LEVEL PCS

We've been running these fights since before my granddaddy helped drive them gnolls out. We have a proud history of taking care of the animals, too—we get 'em as pups from the dwarves up in Granitehold. Sure it's bloody, but you're not in the soft lands of kings and queens anymore, are you. Say, did you hear that?

Background

Bleak Rock is a small village at the edge of civilization. The last outpost before a massive mountain range, the village and the remote setting attracts those wishing to hide or escape. Trade with a nearby dwarven city has kept Bleak Rock on the map; metal goods from the dwarven forges travel through the village before being sold in the markets of major centers.

While staying in Bleak Rock overnight, the PCs are invited to attend the town's only source of entertainment: dogmole fighting. The night's fights go awry when the animals' owners feed their fighters an alchemical concoction sold to them by an unscrupulous merchant. During the fight, the small animals become magically enhanced, and the shallow fighting pit cannot contain their fury. When the town residents are threatened by the rampaging animals, the PCs must contend not only with the maddened dogmoles, but also their owners, who refuse to let their prize fighters be put down.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT A

NPC: Magh Udneer, miner, mother, dogmole owner

A tall woman in stained coveralls and enormous leather mitts, Magh stares unflinchingly with hard gray eyes.

Magh is the tough-as-nails glue that holds the Bleak Rock mining operation together. She oversees a crew of twelve in the iron mine just north of town. Magh's dogmole, Ingot, is the love of her life, much to the chagrin of her husband Uro and son Klip. Having won many battles against the region's inhospitable invaders, Magh is considered a **veteran** in combat; she has no crossbow and has an AC of 12 (leather armor).

Attacking Ingot makes her hostile toward the PCs and she attacks them to defend her pet. Magh is immune to intimidation attempts, but a DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces her to stop attacking the party. An extraordinary DC 21 Charisma (Persuasion) check enlists her aid in putting Ingot down. (*If anyone's to do it, it ought to be me.*)

Killing Magh incurs the wrath of the miners. The twelve miners (**thugs** without crossbows) attempt to drive the PCs out of town after you resolve the combat with the dogmole juggernauts. Calming them requires a DC 17 Charisma (Intimidation, Persuasion) check; the check is reduced to 12 if a PC succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check determining that only a quarter of the miners are committed to fighting.



ADVENTURE ELEMENT B

NPC: Old Balf, rocking chair warmer, darts enthusiast, coot

Bent and wiry, Old Balf wears fine clothing and a fancy hat. He moves with an unsettling speed for such an old man.

Old Balf is a long-retired performer turned town crank. His past as an acrobat and juggler for the Yellow Haze traveling circus show makes him surprisingly limber and quick. His dogmole, Skitch, is the only living thing in town that feels affection toward the crotchety crackshot.

An avid fan of darts, Balf always carries a magical dart that returns to his hand after being thrown. Balf is treated as a **spy** in combat; he carries no melee weapons and uses darts instead of a shortbow. Attacking Skitch sends Balf into a cunning rage. He sneak attacks as often as he can by hiding in the seating around the fighting pit and hurling darts at PCs who engage Skitch. Balf is too deaf to be sweet-talked and is immune to persuasion attempts but a DC 17 Charisma (Intimidation) check drives him off and ends his sniping. If Balf is the target of two or more melee attacks, he gives up fighting and resorts to cursing. Killing Old Balf has no immediate consequences, but he was loved and respected by his circus mates, and the Yellow Haze traveling show might or might not be a cover for well-trained assassins.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT C

Use the following as a round-by-round tactical guide, or as a loose narrative sequence depending on your style of play:

- **ROUND 0.** Suddenly, the animals stop their growling and circling. Their small frames contort, and the snapping sounds of their skeletons changing shape echoes off the pit's walls. Dust rises from the dry floor of the arena and obscures the view momentarily; settling slightly, the dust settles to reveal the dogmole's dreadful and gargantuan transformation. Otherworldly calls silence the crowd. "A bad night for betting," whispers a nearby villager, and then all is violence.
- **ROUND 1.** Skitch (**dogmole juggernaut**) leaps into the stands at A. Ingot (**dogmole juggernaut**) starts at B then burrows east 10 ft. through the wall of the pit. If attacked, Ingot flees out of his tunnel and fights in the pit. Magh begins at C, while Old Balf begins at D.
- **ROUND 2.** Skitch eats townspeople. Ingot burrows east 10 ft. Magh and Old Balf defend their pets as described in adventure elements A and B.
- **ROUND 3.** Skitch continues to eat townspeople. Uncontested, Ingot burrows out of the ground and begins eating townspeople at F.

AREA 1: THE FIGHTING PIT

A circular pit dug 10 ft. into the ground, the dogmole's arena is 45 ft. across at its widest point. Dried blood from previous contests is visible on the bare earth walls. Two heavy wood poles serve as tether points for the animals.

The walls of the pit are easily climbed. A row of vicious wooden spikes lines the wall at the pit's floor. Creatures forced onto the spikes must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) saving throw to avoid 6 (1d8+2) piercing damage or half as much on a successful saving throw. The dust kicked up from the animal's transformation fills the air in the pit and the tunnel dug by Ingot.

PCs who start their turn in the pit must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or have disadvantage on their attacks. The dust persists for 2 rounds and can be dispersed with magic.

AREA 2: THE AUDIENCE STANDS

The impressive carpentry and design of these wooden bleachers suggests the people of Bleak Rock take their dogmole fighting seriously. Small barrels full of cheap mead punctuate the rough circular rows of seating that rise steeply from the edge of the pit.

The benches are made of plain unfinished wood. A dogmole juggernaut moving over the seats crushes them, leaving behind a trail of difficult terrain. Humanoids gain advantage on all Stealth rolls made on the bleachers since the barrels and open rises between benches make ideal hiding spots in the dim evening light. The audience stands are highly combustible. If a target standing in the bleachers is the subject of a fire or electrical spell or effect, the bleachers catch fire. The fire spreads randomly at a rate of 5 ft. per round and causes 4 (1d4+2) fire damage to any creature ending its turn in the flames.

EATING THE TOWNSPEOPLE. Dogmole juggernauts that begin their turn in the stands may use their action to eat a hapless town resident. There are a total of six residents who can be eaten this way. Targeting a dogmole juggernaut with an attack draws the attention of the brute, who no longer munches on the gristly audience members.

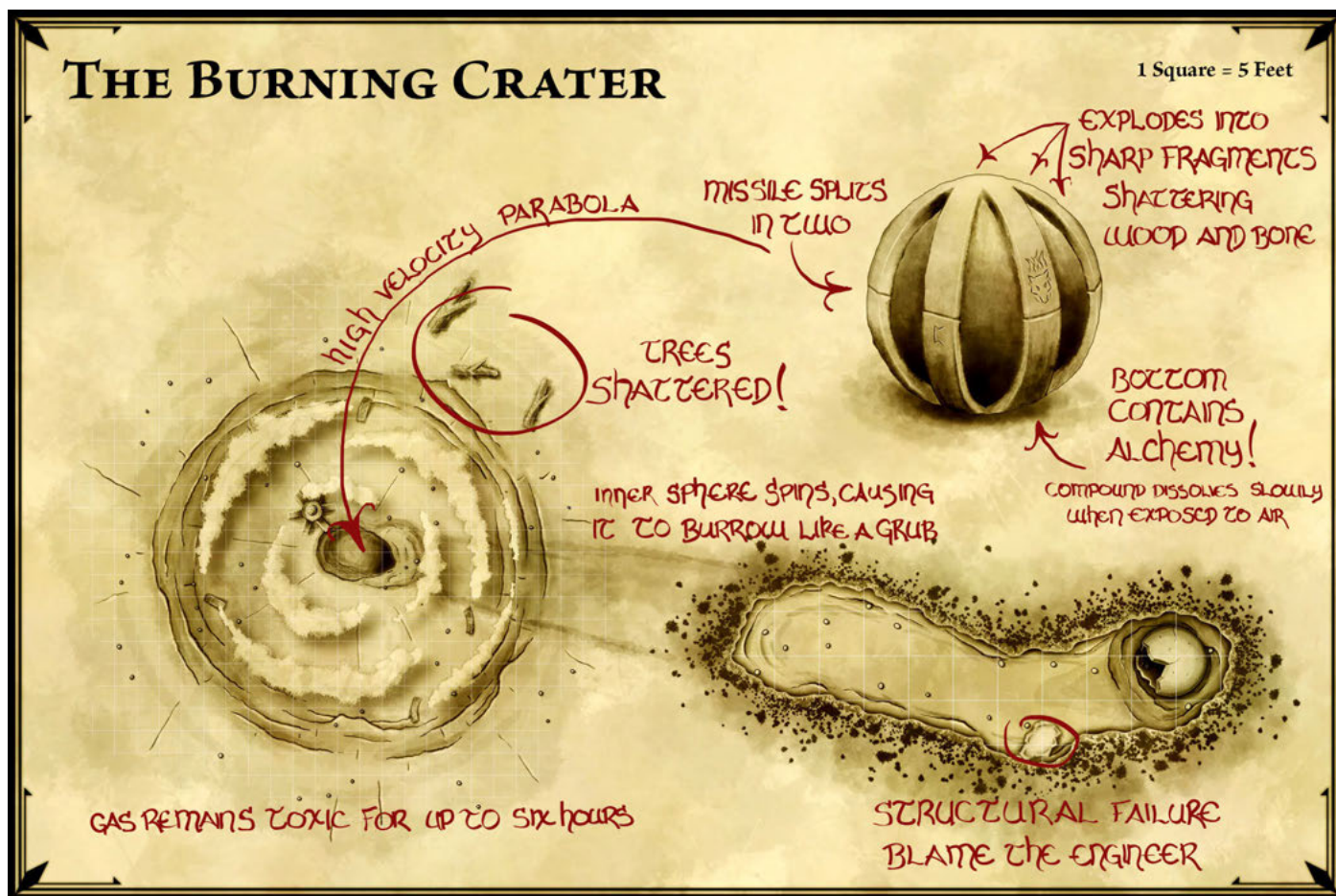
Treasure

There is not much treasure in the ruins of Bleak Rock's fighting arena. Each of the six townspeople who survive offer the PCs 10–15 gp worth of coins or other valuables as thanks for saving their lives.

Conclusion

Who sold the townspeople such monstrous potions? What price does the town put on the head of that vile swindling alchemist? What secrets does Magh keep in her iron mines, and why is Old Balf such a steady hand in combat?





THE BURNING CRATER

FOUR 9TH- TO 10TH-LEVEL PCS

The mountains are the border between our kingdom and the realm of the fire giants. Look far eastward. See how the peaks turn black? Their forges must burn night and day to mark the mountains so. Some mornings, sunrise dims from the smoke and soot. Long have we watched the pass and tallied our fortunes at its stillness. Recently, though, there are signs our luck is turning. Fiery orbs sail through the night skies and land too near these woods. Scouts report deep craters shrouded in smoke and ash. One sits a mere hour's walk from this outpost. I fear the enemy makes ready some terrible weapon . . .

Background

In a remote mountain range, a clan of fire giants prepares for war. The plains at the base of the mountains hosts a number of human communities. Recently, heavy smoke rises from the giants' forges as they manufacture a terrible new weapon: hellshot. A single large metal sphere of hellshot launched from an arcane canon can strike targets several miles away. The impact of these dread munitions is only the initial threat; inside, hell hounds have been packed into a hollow space—emerging when the sphere lands. Furthermore, a device emitting toxic gas activates once impact occurs. The giants now test their weapon, with mixed results.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT A: LIGHT IN THE SKY

Night falls. The stars are numerous and bright; the mountains to the east form a black shape. A fiery light sparks suddenly from the stony ridges; it sails through the air and crashes to the ground several miles away.

As the PCs camp in the area, they witness the giants testing one of the hellshot rounds. Several minutes later, traces of the gas pass through their camp. A DC 12 Intelligence check determines the gas is poisonous in larger concentrations.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT B: A FIRE IN THE FIELD

In the distance, a column of thick yellow smoke rises into the sky. A murder of crows appears suddenly, cawing and winging away from the smoke at high speed. The mountains loom nearby, their peaks obscured by encircling clouds.

PCs trained in Survival, or PCs whose class or background is connected closely with the natural world, notice that there are no animals or insects within 2 miles of the smoke column.

AREA 1: THE RIM

A large crater smolders before you. Shattered trees and upturned soil sit in heaps around the site; a noxious white gas rises from the obscured bottom of the pit. All around the impact site are twists of glowing metal. Insects flee the area as you arrive; their chitinous escape is frenzied and audible.

The crater is 40 ft. across. The twists of melted metal provide no as to their origin. The noxious gas is caused by an enchanted

brazier at the bottom of the crater. The brazier was designed to break away from the main projectile when it landed. The gas affects anyone in the crater or within 10 ft. of its rim. Magical in nature (cast as a 5th-level spell), it can be dispelled; otherwise, it remains toxic for up to 6 hours. The effects are as follows:

- Visibility reduced to 15 ft.
- PCs breathing the gas must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. The poisoned status ends 1 minute after the PC is no longer exposed.

AREA 2: THE CRATER

You arrive at the bottom of the crater. On your descent, you saw an abundance of metal shards sunk into the blackened walls. A freshly bored tunnel extends deeper into the earth. An oddly shaped brazier sits near the center of the crater. Plumes of choking gas rise from its bowl.

The floor of the crater is 20 ft. down from the rim. PCs with the artisan (blacksmithing) background recognize that the brazier's metalwork originates in fire giant forges. PCs can "disarm" the brazier with a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check and then a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. Success ends the gas effects. If the PCs succeed on the checks, read the following:

Your close examination of the strange brazier suggests superior metalwork combined with complex mechanisms and magic; a damaged impress on the bottom evokes the number 14.

A thorough examination of the crater in combination with a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a large piece of metal embedded in the crater wall.

Though warped by heat, a clear imprint of a fiendish wolf's head surrounded by flame is visible on the surface of the metal wall.

A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check recognizes the head is that of a hell hound.

The tunnel's entry is 6 ft. in diameter. PCs standing in or near the entry find it uncomfortably hot.

AREA 3: THE TUNNEL

The tunnel slopes slightly downward for 30 ft. before ending abruptly. Intense heat makes the walls smoke, and exposed roots snap as they slowly burn. Shards of red hot metal protrude from the ceiling and floor. At the end of the tunnel is a pit roughly 12 ft. in diameter. Inside the pit, a large metal ball has come to rest. The sides of the ball are contorted by the impact, and the interior of the projectile is exposed.

The tunnel presents a hazard to any PCs attempting to traverse it. The heated metal in the ceiling falls randomly and burns those who pass underneath. Passing safely between entryway and pit requires a DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. A failed check triggers a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw to avoid 9 (2d6+2) fire damage; a successful saving throw results in half damage.

The projectile's contents can be seen from the edge of the pit. The projectile is dangerously hot, and climbing atop it is a foolish notion.

Inside the hollow metal ball are the remains of several large beasts. Their charred skulls and limbs suggest a canine shape. The unfortunate passengers have all perished.

The remains belong to six hell hounds launched inside the ball by the nearby fire giant stronghold. The giants' experiment with a living payload has proven unsuccessful. Eventually, and

likely just as the party discovers the metal ball at the end of the tunnel, a **fire giant** scout and her **hell hound** companion arrive at the scene. The giant's duty is to investigate whether any of the hounds survived. The giant is happy to engage the PCs in combat. The general tactics of the monstrous pair are as follows:

- The hellhound engages in melee while the giant stays back and hurls boulders.
- The giant is content throwing boulders until she is forced into melee.
- Both enemies attempt to push PCs standing near the rim into the crater if possible.

Treasure

The giant carries a leather satchel with some supplies for an overnight stay in the wilds. She wears a masterfully crafted steel gauntlet embellished with small rubies worth 125 gp.

Conclusion

How close are the giants to perfecting these horrible missiles? Which settlements in the area are likely to be targeted, and do they require warning? What motivates the giants to create such a weapon after many years of calm and peace?

ATOP THE MOUNTAIN

FOUR 11TH-LEVEL PCS

She lay down her sword and wept; her tears are the water.

She lay down her body and slept; her bones are the fountain.

Atop the mountain, at the war's end, a place for gods to wonder.

Background

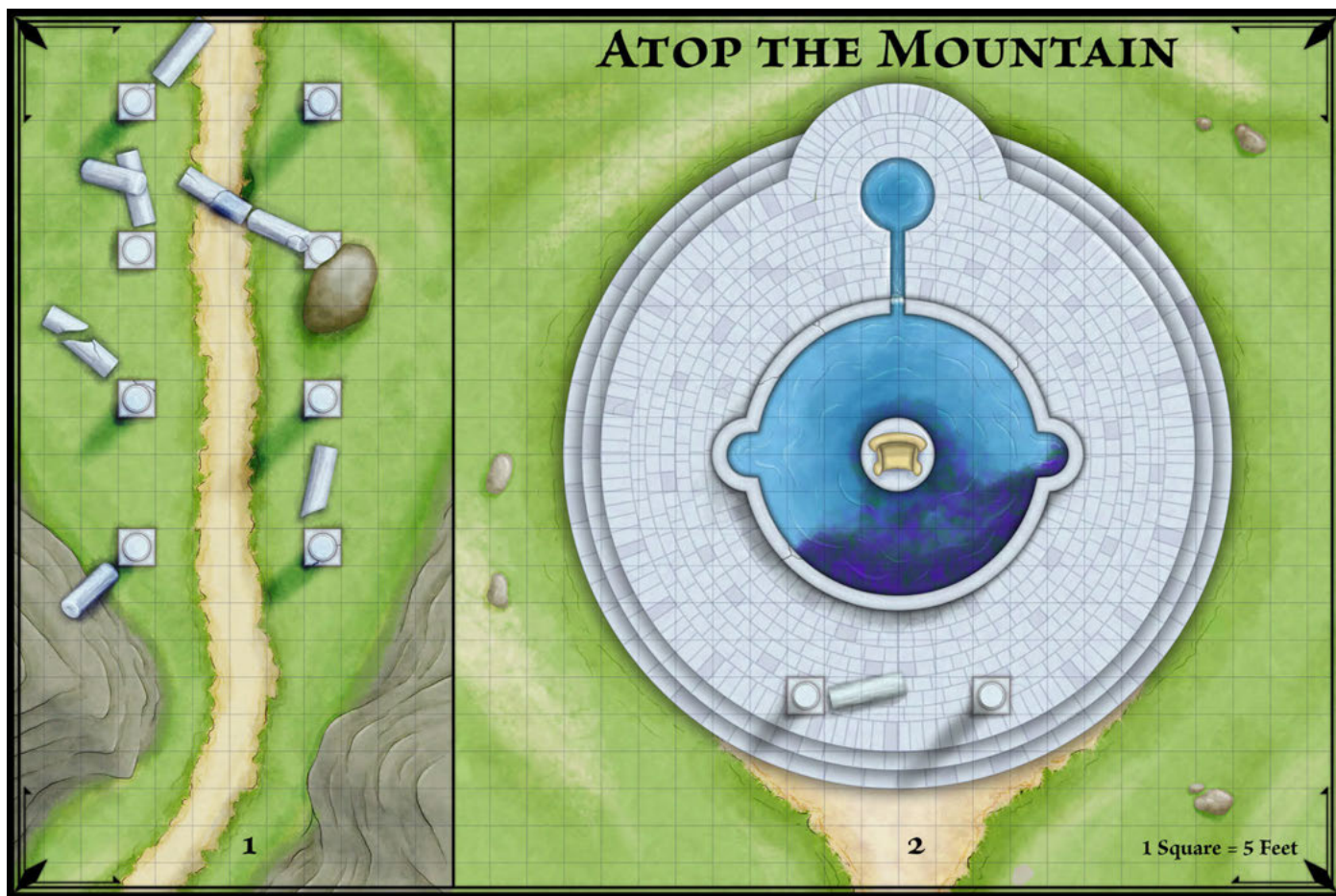
A planetar rests at the top of a mountain. A veteran of an ancient war against the hells, and a champion to a god long forgotten, sleep has transformed her into a radiant fountain. The fountain now serves as a place of reflection for good-aligned clerics. One such cleric has returned from the mountain with an unsettling tale: the fountain's waters are spoiling, and strange magics hover visibly near the holy place. In truth, a host of devils plots to corrupt the fountain and claim the planetar as a servant of an unnamed devil lord. Arriving atop the mountain, the party must battle through crumbling pillars, repel the devilish corruption, and prevent the planetar's dark awakening.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT A: CORRUPTING THE FOUNTAIN

The threat of the planetar's awakening is very real. The **chain devil** in area 2 is performing a ritual which, if completed, awakens the planetar as a corrupt and evil being. Left unassailed, the chain devil completes the ritual in 3 rounds. If the ritual is interrupted, the chain devil does not attempt to restart, and it attacks the PCs. There are several ways to interrupt the ritual:

- Deal melee damage to the chain devil.
- Compel the chain devil to move from its place beside the fountain.
- Deal radiant damage to the chain devil.

If the ritual is completed, a **planetar** appears above the fountain; after 2 rounds, its coloration changes to a deep crimson and it attacks the party. It does not pursue if the adventurers retreat.



ADVENTURE ELEMENT B: TETHERED TO HELL

The mission to acquire a planetar is important to the unnamed devil lord. The infernal patron has provided its minions with an additional boon while performing his bidding. Smoky violet tendrils from the deep reaches of hell appear from the ether and attach to the shoulders of the devils. The tethers provide advantage on saving throws against magical attacks and effects. The tendrils can be physically severed with an attack (AC 13, hp 10) or withered (counts as a 60-ft. ranged attack) by clerics and warlocks with a DC 10 (primary attribute) check. A warlock may expend mystic arcanum to sever the tendrils of all devils within 60 ft.; this replaces the normal effect of the mystic arcanum.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT C: SEAT OF THE PLANETAR

The fountain is actually a potent weapon that can battle the invading devils. Any spellcaster within 60 ft. of the seat knows it is magical. Any good-aligned PC may sit in the throne-like seat and attempt to use its magic. Understanding the powers of the fountain requires a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation). Divine spellcasters gain advantage on this roll. Using a power requires an action. The fountain can be used to do the following:

HOLY MOTES. The seat casts *magic missile* as a 12th-level spellcaster (12 darts). The missiles cause radiant damage. The occupant of the seat chooses the targets.

REPEL EVIL. (Recharge 5–6) All evil-aligned creatures under 10 HD are instantly moved to the perimeter of the fountain's flagstones. Affected creatures move in the straightest path possible; a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw is required to avoid falling prone at the end of the forced movement.

AREA 1: COLUMNS IN THE WIND

The trail passes between two rows of crumbling columns. A stone tablet has fallen from its place atop one of the columns; its face appears vandalized. A cold wind blows through the ruined approach; with it comes a faint dark whispering.

Hiding in the toppled columns are 2 **barbed devils**. They attempt to ambush the party and attack from different directions once the PCs are between the column rows. "She will serve and all will serve" is scratched crudely into the tablet in the Infernal tongue. A DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check on the tablet reveals it bears some strange features reminiscent of scribed scrolls. Any spellcaster may attempt to read the tablet with a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check. Reading the tablet restores 10 hp to all good-aligned PCs within 20 ft. If the reader is a good-aligned divine spellcaster, the affected PCs also gain the benefits of taking a long rest.

A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check while searching the area uncovers several traveler's packs abandoned amongst the columns. The packs contain a quiver (12) of +2 arrows, 2 *potions of supreme healing*, and a small pouch containing 300 gp worth of finely cut rubies.



AREA 2: FOUNTAIN OF THE PLANETAR

Climbing the final short ascent, you see a great stone fountain standing at the highest point of the mountaintop clearing. Flagstones are set in a circular pattern surrounding the large basin, and a throne-like seat is mounted on a pedestal at the fountain's center. A small host of devilish figures cavort in the basin; the water near them darkens.

The contingent of devils consists of 4 **spined devils**, 2 **bearded devils**, and 1 **chain devil**. They grin at the PCs as they approach the fountain. The chain devil attempts to corrupt the fountain as previously described. The remaining devils attack the PCs. The bearded devils actively try to block the PCs' movement toward the chain devil. The spined devils stay at range and focus their tail spine attacks at PCs attempting to use the Seat of the Planetar.

Although interrupting the devil's ritual does end the threat posed by the awakening planetar, it does not remove the brackish spoiling of the water. A *heal* or *greater restoration* spell restores the water entirely. Alternatively, good-aligned divine spellcasters may also restore the water by succeeding on a DC 18 Wisdom (Medicine) check. Restoring the water casts a boon on the PCs; they gain advantage on all attacks against chaotic evil opponents of 10 HD or more for 24 hours.

Conclusion

How is the history of the planetar connected with the identity of the devil lord? Perhaps a war long forgotten is but postponed as the infernal forces gather strength and launch new plots. Maybe a divine complex hidden below the fountain offers answers, treasures, and further battles with the damned?

UNDER REVELERS' FEET

FOUR 12TH- TO 13TH-LEVEL PCS

Let nothing end the Feast by the River. Let the celebration of our enemy's vanquishing ring out night and day for eternity. Let the bones of our enemies and our prey mingle below our feet. This is your time, our time, the best time.

—Queen Gellao on the eve of her victory over the followers of Dur; decreed at the River's Bend feast hall

Background

A feast hall by a swiftly moving river has hosted six weeks of continued celebration. The owner of the hall, Johan Bathe, is giddy from the riches the feast has brought him and is sincerely doing his best to keep the party going forever. A local monarch's victory over a dangerous group of rebels caused the elated queen to fund a feast without end. The merriment can be heard a mile away.

However, the last several days have seen some strange and ominous events occurring in the River's Bend hall. Johan's hired help responsible for cleaning out the refuse pit under the main hall have gone missing. Worse, a guest perished mysteriously last night when a fragment of bone erupted from her abdomen. Johan is looking for adventurers to investigate the storeroom and refuse pit, and do what they can to ensure the gold keeps pouring in. If the PCs take Johan's offer, they descend into the dark where the bones of vanquished enemies and roasted animals mingle and conspire under revelers' feet.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT A: JOHAN BATHE

NPC: Johan Bathe, overworked, anxious, emotional

A weary middle-aged halfling with a bright red beard and expensive hat can't hide his sleep deprivation as his mood turns from elation to anxiety in the same breath.

The owner of the River's Bend feast hall, Johan Bathe is currently experiencing the joys and hardships of catastrophic success. His livelihood, and likely his neck, requires that the feast continues. He has sent out word for adventurers to investigate the strange goings-on under his hall; he offers the party 500 gold and lifetime access to the feast.

Johan (Bard 5) is keeping a dark secret. He offered refuge to the defeated rebels during the rebellion. Now he is sure their spirits have returned to the storeroom and waste pile; there they have but one thought: revenge. A DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check suggests he is hiding information. A DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion, Intimidation) check convinces him to reveal his secret. In conversation he also provides the following information:

- Two hired help went missing while working downstairs.
- A guest was killed when a fragment of bone burst from her stomach.
- A horrific stench has been wafting up from below; he uses perfume but the guests have begun to complain.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT B: THE PARTY ABOVE

The party continues on overheard. Throughout the PCs' exploration of the feast hall's basement, they can hear the sounds of merriment above them. The grating material that comprises ceiling of area 2 allows light from the feast to stream down in eerie columns. Furthermore, refuse cast to the floor by the revelers occasionally falls through the grate. On initiative 20 of each round, refuse falls into the room. Each PC must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 piercing damage from the falling debris. Additionally, PCs struck by the debris must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or have disadvantage on attack and skills rolls that round. The bone collective and its undead minions are unaffected.

AREA 1: THE STOREROOM

The cold stone storeroom of the River's Bend feast hall is stocked to bursting capacity. Hanging from the ceiling are countless haunches and whole sides of game and livestock. Barrels of mead and wine line the walls under overflowing shelves of preserves and cheeses. Under the pleasant aroma of the food is a note of rot.

A **bone collective** in its humanoid form begins to stalk the PCs in the storeroom. It remains well hidden (Stealth 25) and watches them from among the hanging meat. PCs trained in Survival or those with a hunting background sense they are being watched. If discovered, the bone collective transforms into a swarm and flees into area 2—dashing as required. After a short while in the storeroom, the PCs notice one side of beef swaying in a strange way. If they investigate, the PCs are shocked when the following happens:

Suddenly, like worms burrowing to the surface, the bones of the cured meat escape from within and clatter in a pile on the floor. They form up into a small fanged humanoid. Soon, all the hanging carcasses begin to sway.

At this point, 25 Small **skeletons** attack the party. They have no weapons, but their bite is equivalent to the shortsword action in the stat block. A party that is the correct level should have spells and abilities that trivialize this threat; the potential to destroy all 25 in 1 round is expected. This encounter is meant to add flavor. Adjust the encounter to create a greater threat as desired.

The bone collective stealthily retreats into area 2 when the skeletons form.

AREA 2: THE REFUSE PILE

The door opens to reveal a massive chamber of stinking refuse. Along the far wall of this rectangular room is a large opening with an iron cover hanging off its hinges. Shovels lean near the dark chute. Fresh air from the riverbanks beyond the room mingle with the smell of rotting waste and something far worse. Tall piles of garbage rise from the floor; a steady downpour of food and bones and broken dishes fall from the grates in the ceiling high above.

The floor of this room is considered difficult terrain. The **bone collective** and its two minions, a pair of **wights**, are hidden in the piles of garbage. Once the PCs are well into the room, they attack—rising up to ambush the party. Garbage from above continues to fall as described in adventure element B.

The bone collective attempts to attack and move away. If the bone collective has no enemies adjacent to it at the beginning of its turn, it may attempt to hide. All Stealth rolls made by the bone collective in this area gain advantage. If no wights remain alive at the beginning of the bone collective's turn, it may use an



action to summon two additional **wights** within 15 ft. of itself. The haunts rise from the piles of seeping garbage and join the fray. Once the bone collective is defeated, the strange haunting of the hall is ended.

Teetering Piles of Garbage

Any enemy can use its action to push over a pile of garbage (located at A, B, C) onto a PC provided both the enemy and the PC are adjacent to a pile. The PC must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained for 1 round. On their next turn, the PCs can use an action to free themselves from the waste. There are three such piles; once used, they may not be used again.

Conclusion

Attempting to communicate with the bone collective is a very real possibility. What unsettling truth does the creature reveal about the queen's victory? Is the rebellion against her truly defeated?

THE OBSIDIAN PASS

FOUR 14TH- TO 15TH-LEVEL PCS

Once, we were friends. She used her spells to ward our grove against the darkness in the woods. It was the mirror that turned her mind to covetous thoughts; she saw its power and changed. We have kept the mirror safe for an era, but her soldiers grow strong—and now something makes for our tree we cannot repel. If her aberration reaches the grove, the mirror will be hers, and then we will all know what lies at the tip of the wickedest branches.

Background

A fey village in an ancient grove has been repelling the aggression of a sorcerer living in the nearby mountain. The village leader, Eusim Bladewreathe, is very concerned that the enchanted mirror that the faeries protect will be taken by the sorcerer. The mirror, also known as the Bending Glass, is a powerful artifact, made to amplify magic.

Eusim has received word that the sorcerer has created a monstrous siege weapon and is moving its two halves across a nearby pass. The sorcerer's soldiers have reinforced the forest side of the pass to secure the area for the arrival of the siege weapon's power source. If the two halves are joined, the resulting weapon would be near impossible to stop. Eusim offers the PCs permanent access to the faerie's teleportation portal if they agree to prevent the siege weapon from being constructed. Arriving at the front line, the PCs must break the fortified positions of the sorcerer's clockwork soldiers and stand before a true juggernaut: the salt golem.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT A: EUSIM BLADEWREATHE

NPC: Eusim Bladewreathe, ancient, severe, weary, and waning

A fading amber light emanates from this small, concerned faerie. His wings curl slightly at the tip, and, unlike those of his kin, they are slightly frayed. His voice sounds of rain falling on a forest canopy.

Eusim brought the Bending Glass to the grove many centuries ago. He swore to a fey god that he would keep it safe; its power to amplify magic was deemed too dangerous for mortal hands. In his small village, he has worked tirelessly to ensure the mirror

was kept out of sight. He cast a spell that hid the mirror in the grove's great tree; it is bound there—one with the boughs and the roots.

The grove has a small portal enchanted with teleportation magic that allows two-way travel between the material world and the wild dimension of the fey. He offers free travel through the portal to the PCs if they agree to stop the sorcerer's siege weapon. He reveals the following information:

- The Obsidian Pass is half a day's travel to the east.
- The sorcerer's soldiers reinforce the forest side of the pass.
- The siege weapon has two halves; the first is already across the pass.
- The second half now makes its way down from the mountains—a massive golem crafted to be the siege weapon's engine.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT B: POWER OF THE GROVE

Spending time in Eusim's grove has the following effects:

- For 1 week, all PCs gain the monk's timeless body ability.
- All PCs gain the ability to cast *misty step* in place of a move action; this ability may be used only once.

ADVENTURE ELEMENT C: THE JUGGERNAUT IS FORMED

The golem steps into the harness of the massive bladed drill. A terrible whine amplifies to an unbearable volume before stopping abruptly. The ground trembles as the juggernaut stands upright.

Though the juggernaut defends itself, its primary target is the grove. It does not pursue the PCs if they retreat. If the salt golem in area 1 reaches the other half of the siege weapon, the following occurs instantly:

- The salt golem is completely healed and any conditions on it are removed.
- The salt golem gains resistance to slashing, bludgeoning, piercing, cold, and fire damage.
- The salt golem is weak to electrical attacks.
- The salt golem gains **Annihilating Swathe**, a melee weapon attack: +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., up to 3 targets. Hit: 12 (4d6) slashing damage.





ADVENTURE ELEMENT D: FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHY

Use the following as a round-by-round tactical guide or as a loose narrative sequence, depending on your style of play:

ROUND 1. Begins when the PCs engage the soldiers. Two veterans collaborate to use the arcane canon (see area 1) while the other two fire crossbows. The clockwork myrmidons rush to engage in melee.

ROUND 2. *At the top of the pass, moving slowly and deliberately, a towering humanoid figure appears; its footsteps can be felt even at a distance.* The salt golem appears (at A) and begins its journey to the first half of the siege weapon (at B). The golem moves 40 ft. per round, using both its actions to move. If engaged in melee, the golem ceases its journey and defends itself. If there are no adjacent enemies, it uses its actions to continue moving toward its destination.

ROUND 4. Uncontested, the golem travels the 120 ft. required to reach the first half of the siege weapon. Refer to adventure element C.

AREA 1: THE OBSIDIAN PASS

The trees and loam give way to rocky soil at the edge of the forest. A jagged mountain range dominates the eastern sky; snowcapped peaks are shrouded in swift-moving clouds. A wide pass descends into a fortified camp. The spiked barricades and rough stone walls encircle a wicked bladed drill attached to a large leather harness. Figures move behind the walls.

There are 2 clockwork myrmidons and 4 veterans inside the camp. They guard the first half of the siege weapon with their lives. The object has been magically strengthened (AC 15, hp 90). Destroying the harness and its bladed drill prevents the juggernaut from forming, but it does not stop the arrival of the salt golem. One veteran keeps watch at all times.

If attacked, the myrmidons are deployed first and engage in melee while the veterans stay behind the walls (partial cover) and attack with their heavy crossbows. The soldiers do their best to prevent the PCs from hampering the approach of the golem. The myrmidons use their grease spray strategically and the veterans use the arcane cannon to slow the PCs' advance.

ARCANE CANNON. Two veterans can coordinate to use the arcane cannon provided by their mistress. The cannon can be destroyed (AC 12, hp 25). Firing the cannon requires the action of both veterans.

ARCANE PULSE. Ranged weapon attack: +7 to hit, 60/120 ft. range, one target. Hit: 8 arcane damage and the target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be stunned for 1 round. Consult adventure element D for information on running the fight.

Conclusion

Clearly the threat of the sorcerer remains. What vengeance does she seek to enact upon the PCs for their meddling? What terrible evil does she unleash should she possess the Bending Glass?

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