

Quests of Doom 4

The Covered Bridge

By Kevin Wright



FROG GOD
GAMES

Quests of Doom 4

The Covered Bridge

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The Covered Bridge

The Covered Bridge is an adventure designed for a party of four to six characters of 4th to 6th level. Any character classes work in this adventure, but the difficulty will vary depending on those classes. Many of the opponents the characters may fight require magic weapons to strike; you may want to either include additional magic weapons to the treasure listed, or save this adventure until the characters have magic weapons of their own. The adventure is concerned with solving the centuries-old murder of a historic hero. Within the adventure, the characters are caught up in the haunted memories of the ghostly knight and help him to accomplish his heroic deeds. While doing so, the party becomes familiar with his world and the murder suspects, picking up clues to their motivations and actions along the way. At the end of the adventure, an enraged spirit confronts the characters and demands that they name his killer. If they can do it, they are richly rewarded; both in treasure and the knowledge that they let a good man finally find rest. If they fail, they must face the chilling wrath of the deathless phantom.

The adventure occurs in a little-traveled valley off the main roads that was once the prosperous fief of the Loga family. It fell into ruin and abandonment long ago and has since become a part of another lord's larger domain, though it remains uninhabited, its fields fallow. Of the few travelers it sees, many of them tend to disappear mysteriously (no doubt, attributed to bandits or wild animals), so it is even more desolate as a result. If you are playing this as part of the **Lost Lands** campaign setting by **Frog God Games**, then Saymere Valley lies north of Nains on the western fringe of the Kingdom of Foere, in the rolling ground where the Elderwood meets the Old Tors. The old road once provided a means of travel between Nains and distant Panetoth in the Grand Duchy of Reme but has long since fallen out of regular use.

Adventure Background

Some four hundred years ago, a heroic knight by the name of Varral et-Casan was poisoned, foully murdered by someone very close to him. The horrendous betrayal left Sir Varral's potent spirit unable to travel to its reward and find eternal rest. Worse still, Sir Varral's spectre does not even know the identity of the murderer; it only knows that its hunger for vengeance must be sated.

To that end, the spectre of Sir Varral now haunts a covered bridge in the Saymere Valley. On occasion, it draws people into the memories of its misty past in the hopes that they might uncover the truth behind its murder and bring his killer to light. Though hundreds of hapless people have been drawn into the shade's desperate scheme over the long years, none has uncovered the truth. For their failure, they suffered the ultimate penalty: the spectre of Varral et-Casan murdered them and carved another notch into the bridge. The characters are only the latest in a long line of the spectre's victims.

In the Time of Varral et-Casan

The household of the Manse Loga was traditionally a happy place; its masters were an old and wise family of good reputation dating back to the days of the Hyperborean emperors. They treated their servants well and governed their small demesne with measured judgment and kind hearts. There were flaws within the social structure of the manse's inhabitants of late (the young heir-apparent of the manse was impetuous and prone to fits of temper, the house steward lusted after one of the young maids, etc.), but overall nothing disturbed the equanimity of the household.

That all changed when Cnid came to visit. Cnid had been an ordinary cloaker in the Under Realms, wandering the perennial night of the plutonian underworld and indulging the peculiar urgings of its odd brain. One day, Cnid floated through a nameless hollow where it discovered a

rent in the cavern floor it had never noticed before. Entering the tear in the earth, it discovered a large grotto empty but for the skittering of pale, faceless crickets and a strangely glowing node jutting from the living rock.

Cnid's brain was overwhelmed by the node's emanations, wave after wave of bizarre energy deranging its already warped mind. The node was an extension of the Dimension of Dream, and it fundamentally altered the cloaker to suit its own tastes. Cnid became a nightmare creature and was granted awful power to shape and taint the dreams of other sentient beings. Cnid left that grotto a full century after it entered and immediately searched for slaves to work its will. The creature soon found a tribe of duergar that suited its needs perfectly. Speaking through the dreams of the tribe's shaman, the cloaker established itself as the "god" of the sullen dwarf-kin and sent them to unearth the node from its resting place.

With this accomplished, the cloaker and its worshippers made their arduous way toward the surface world. Cnid wanted to see what dwelt in the world above. Cnid wanted new playthings, beings with dreams undimmed by the eternal night below. Cnid wanted to corrupt such playthings into his nightmare version of existence, and Cnid knew no limitations to achieving its desires.

Unfortunately for the Loga family, the duergar broke surface in the basement of their mansion. Soon thereafter, the nightmare cloaker began to defile the dreams of the people above, to dreadful result and to the cloaker's fiendish glee. As tragedy piled upon tragedy, the lord of the manse, Erard Loga sent out messengers asking for aid. The duergar warriors, who now surrounded the mansion, slew them all — all save one: the messenger sent to Sir Varral et-Casan, called The Blessed.

Adventure Summary

In *The Covered Bridge*, the characters crossing an old covered bridge find it carved with score-marks and inscribed with a cryptic message. Though they don't know it, they have been transported into the memories of Sir Varral et-Casan, a hero foully murdered more than 400 years in the past. The characters come upon a battlefield at the tail end of the fighting. Making their way across the field, they encounter a force of duergar and eventually save Sir Varral and his party from destruction. Varral is on his way to the Manse Loga where he has been summoned to save them from an unknown evil. The characters accompany him to the manse and discover a household in the cold grip of terror. They hear their tale of woe, and when they go to sleep, encounter devilish terror in their own dreams.

Screams wake the characters from their shared nightmare. The son of the lord of the manse has been driven insane, and, in his madness, slew one of the servants and fled into the family's old menagerie. The characters are entreated to find him and bring him back alive. Later as the characters search the manse for the source of the supernatural malady, they find evils festering within the very house that need to be expunged. Eventually, their search leads them to the basement where they discover the entrance to the lair of Cnid, a cloaker twisted by his discovery of the Nightmare Node. The monster must be slain for the people in the manse above to be saved. The next time the characters sleep, they awaken on the bridge and must use the sum of what they have learned to save the soul of a long-lost paladin or join him in eternal damnation.

Dramatis Personae

Within *The Covered Bridge*, the characters encounter and interact with several long-dead personages who play a part in this centuries-long passion play that has repeated itself through the restless dreams of Varral et-Casan, inflicted upon countless hapless victims. These personalities are described below. If any of these NPCs are slain during the course of

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this iteration of Sir Varral's remembrance, they simply reappear at some later point as if nothing happened. Remember: These aren't living or even ghostly people. They are the memories of a stricken spirit, organized by his anguished mind to help unravel a centuries-old mystery that haunts him through his undeath.

Sir Varral et-Casan the Blessed

Sir Varral is a man on the cusp of greatness. Called by the divine Thyr to a life of service, Sir Varral has striven to be worthy of his calling: protecting the innocent, promoting justice and mercy, and opposing evil wherever it rears its ugly head. At this point in his life, Sir Varral has made significant headway in his heroic career. He was instrumental in the downfall of Lord Elva, the dread Marquis of Eauxe, freeing the thousand slaves sickening in Elva's mines. He averted the destruction of Rennier's Stronghold by befriending the Giants of Weld, persuading them to repair the dam of Lac Nylam before it burst. With his own hand, he slew the Singed Man, a vampire who had plagued the realm of Kear for nearly two centuries.

In his travels, Sir Varral made many friends, some of whom became his permanent companions. The Demoiselle Arbasa was to be the next item on the menu for the Singed Man before Sir Varral arrived and saved her. She then claimed the life-debt and swore to travel with him until she could repay him by saving his life. Since that time, she has saved his life at least twice, but declared that none of those actually counts.

Joln was a condemned man, found guilty of theft and cowardice by his own tribe of the Thunderbearers on the Haunted Steppe. Convicted on evidence discovered by Sir Varral, the sentence for his crime was death. Joln's life was forfeit, but Sir Varral redeemed it by defeating the half-beast Vangror the Ogre and winning the convicted man's freedom. Joln has been Sir Varral's right-hand man ever since.

Dari is Varral's pet, a large raccoon. Sir Varral picked the creature up in a bazaar in distant Ang for two copper zhu coins.

In recent months, some mysterious creature or organization calling itself "The Faceless" has turned its attention toward Sir Varral and his companions. Attacks have come in the form of wilderness ambushes by bandits and assaults by hired thugs. None has been overly daunting, but they have increased in frequency of late, and Sir Varral fears that they may be somehow involved in the troubles in Saymere Valley. He does not fear "The Faceless" but is growing concerned at the apparent extent of their reach.

As you roleplay Sir Varral, keep certain things in mind. He exudes self-assurance and calm joy. He laughs often and has a zest for life few people know. He is intensely curious about the world and takes genuine interest in and concern for the people in his life. He is willing to sacrifice himself on behalf of others, yet has no desire to be a martyr. Sir Varral sees Joln as a real friend and trusted ally, and is conflicted about his feelings for Arbasa. He doesn't know if his calling gives him the freedom to love her.

Demoiselle Arbasa

A tall woman, rangy and beautiful with deep copper skin and hair as unfettered and tawny as a lion's mane, Demoiselle Arbasa is the sixth daughter of the Comte de Tourne, her five older sisters sacrificed before her to the Singed Man. Arbasa is gracious and well-mannered, yet has learned to be taciturn in speech and immediate in action. She rarely displays emotion, and is reticent with strangers. Arbasa is deeply in love with Sir Varral and scared to death he will find that out and send her away.

As you roleplay the Demoiselle Arbasa, remember that she is of the nobility and used to the attention and devotion of others. She is reserved, intelligent and brave, but not an adventurer by nature. Her beauty often attracts unwanted attention which causes her no end of vexation, though she is not above using this for her own ends. A gray thread of fatalism runs through the core of her character, dulling what would otherwise be a radiant beauty.

The Truth of the Matter: For months now, the imp disguised as Dari has been subtly feeding Arbasa's fears that Sir Varral has risen too far too fast. He has defeated every foe that he has faced, and she now believes that with too many powerful enemies left behind his eventual defeat and corruption is almost assured. With the recent assaults by "The Faceless," she fears that the time is near at hand. She knows that should some monster of the likes of The Faceless ever capture Sir Varral, the

tortures he will endure will be ceaseless and without restraint. She sees Sir Varral as a shining soul of purity and fears that such ruthless treatment will surely darken his spirit and cause him to lose faith. She cannot bear the thought of Sir Varral falling from faith and losing his eternal reward with Thyr. Through Xola'am's insidious manipulations, Arbasa has reached the conclusion that she would rather see the man she loves and idolizes die a martyred saint rather than live a fallen sinner.

Joln of the Thunderbearers

Joln is a cheerful barbarian at heart, content to eat, drink, wench when possible, and serve his master well. He has been a liar, a backstabber, and a thief, and though Sir Varral has preached to him virtue, it is slow in coming. Rescued from a death sentence among the tribes of the Shattered Folk, Joln has trouble understanding the ways of civilization and tends to act before he thinks. He is as loyal to his master as he knows how to be. Joln can almost always be found smoking a foul-smelling, hand-rolled cheroot cigar — a custom of his tribe that he carries with him. As a result, a near-constant miasma of the eye-watering, acrid fumes surround him. Anyone who tries to smoke one of Joln's cheroots must make a saving throw or be nauseated for 1d4 minutes, and suffer a -1 to all rolls.

As you roleplay Joln, picture him as a happy-go-lucky rogue whose only loyalty seems to lie with Sir Varral. He is distant to the characters at first, but eventually sees them as brothers-in-arms. Joln is constantly on the lookout for treasure and is as greedy as any ordinary adventurer.

The Truth of the Matter: The raccoon Dari has been subtly working on Joln from several angles. First, he has correctly guessed Joln's true nature as a selfish and flawed man. He can see that Joln genuinely likes Sir Varral but that this fondness and the debt of gratitude that he owes goes only as deep as the next opportunity to enrich himself. Joln struggles with this and does not yet fully recognize the true extent of his own failings



Running a Mystery

Mystery adventures have great potential to go awry both from a player's and from your standpoint. Players have a pesky habit of doing the unexpected and ruining your surprises. To prevent this from revealing the game that is afoot too early (and substantially reducing the fun of the adventure), certain limitations are placed on the characters by the very nature of Sir Varral's haunted memories into which they have been drawn. During the course of the adventure, the spell *detect magic* will not function. Likewise, spells that seek answers by trying to circumvent the investigation process will not function either (your discretion). Finally, disposition-detecting spells, such as *detect evil and good* give only ambiguous results regardless of whom they are cast upon. Disposition-sensitive spells such as *protection from evil and good*, for instance, function normally, however. In addition, the spells *lesser/greater restoration* and *cure wounds* spells function only if cast upon a character. No NPC in the adventure receives any benefit from these spells.

However, players do not provide the only foibles to a mystery-based adventure. Sometimes the way the game plays out simply doesn't provide the players with the information necessary to make the proper deductions in their investigation. To help the characters uncover the murderers of Sir Varral, several clues are given to indicate the several guilty parties. You should strive to make sure that the characters have opportunities to discover most or all of these.

Arbasa

- Be sure to have her and the characters engage in a conversation wherein she shares her fears about Sir Varral's possible damnation. She closes the conversation with, "I almost think he'd be better off dead than ..." and then lets the sentence trail off.
- The demoiselle also carries with her the poison with which she intends to kill Sir Varral: a face powder box full of poisonous dust (DC 12 Constitution saving throw or reduction to 0 hit points).
- Careful questioning reveals that she loves Varral deeply.
- A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check, made when Arbasa is speaking about him, shows her gazing at him with love admixed with sorrow, as if she is gazing at him for the last time...

Join

- Be sure to play up Join's greed. Have him do something unscrupulous for money such as blatantly cheat at a friendly game of dice. If caught,

he laughs ruefully and says, "Old habits die hard, friend."

- He carries with him two fairly incriminating items:
First, he carries a sealed vial full of oily vapors: deadly poison (DC 13 Constitution saving throw or reduction to 0 hit points).
Second, he (foolishly) carries with him a missive from "The Faceless" offering him 5000 gp to kill Sir Varral.

Dari (Xola'am)

- Play up the intelligence and seeming indestructibility of the raccoon. He seems like an animal companion, but it is unclear as to why Sir Varral, a paladin-knight, would have such a companion. The others think little of it, seeing him as their good-luck charm, but he is obviously no normal raccoon.

Turo

- Turo is difficult; the characters may suspect him only because he meets them on the bridge at the end. He poisons Varral's wine at supper, but that is before the characters have a chance to see him do it. Later, if his room is searched, a small, empty vial holding residue of viscous poison can be found. In addition, he mutters some odd things when confronted in the menagerie ...

The Poisons

- If the characters detect and identify all four poisons used on Sir Varral at the end of the adventure, this too, may clue them in that all of the suspects are guilty.
- The presence of the poisons on the NPCs above, however, is not sufficient to solve the mystery until the death of Sir Varral. With the exception of Turo, none of the suspects has actually committed any crime or poisoned the good knight. If the characters manage to find and confiscate the poisons, they discover that the memories of Sir Varral simply cause additional doses of the poison to appear in the NPCs' possession. Likewise, attempts to keep them all completely away from Sir Varral in order to save them (including by even killing the NPCs) are doomed to failure as well. Remember, this is not an adventure about preventing a murder but rather solving a murder. The characters have to allow the events to resolve themselves in order to try to discover what actually occurred. Attempts to interfere only find that Sir Varral's memory thwarts them and prevent such strategies from working.

in his loyalty to the man who saved his life. At the same time, Join is a naturally petty man and cannot help but feel some resentment toward the uppity knight. Sure, Sir Varral saved him from a death sentence, but Sir Varral likewise presented the evidence that caused that death sentence to begin with. A tiny voice in Join's mind (largely the telepathic whispers of Dari) wonders if maybe Sir Varral didn't expose Join's crimes for the sole purpose of gaining an indebted henchman. Finally, Join is beginning to worry about these incessant attacks by "The Faceless" in recent months. The fact that he recently received a personal message that not only ensured his own safety but offered a substantial profit for assisting that group has him mulling over many options in his mind.

Dari is Sir Varral's raccoon companion. He tends to get underfoot and take things that don't belong to him. He eats whatever he gets his hands on and chitters oddly at inappropriate times. Most of the time, Dari rides on Sir Varral's shoulder and intensely dislikes Join. He is also clearly something more than an ordinary animal. Dari has survived things no normal raccoon could survive (*fireballs*, crossbow bolts, etc.) and always manages to find Varral if he becomes lost. Sir Varral believes Dari to have been a druid or ranger's animal companion whose master was lost in some accident of violence and is happy to inherit the unique animal's loyalties.

As you roleplay Dari, use him as comedy relief. He is constantly

underfoot, sometimes at the worst possible moment. He steals food and other shiny objects the characters might have, and has been known to give away Join's position when he is trying to hide.

The Truth of The Matter: Here lies the true mastermind behind the downfall of Sir Varral the Blessed. Dari is no raccoon; he is a vicious and crafty imp working his way up the infernal ladder by seeking to destroy a truly good man. His true name is **Xola'am**. For over a year, Xola'am has posed as Sir Varral's innocuous pet. During that time, he has studied his prey and its companions intensely. The imp didn't want to merely murder Sir Varral; he wanted Varral's most beloved friends to destroy him. To that end, he has worked hard to convince Sir Varral, Arbasa, and Join that they are being harried by a secretive organization known as "The Faceless." Xola'am has employed mercenaries and thieves to aid him in his deception, and eventually he will convince Arbasa and Join to murder Sir Varral.

Xola'am discovered that the Demoiselle Arbasa fears that all the contact with supernatural horror and evil is tainting the purity of Sir Varral's immortal soul. Using his telepathy, the imp has fed these fears to the point where Arbasa genuinely believes that killing Sir Varral will save him from the Abyss and send his soul to the heavens.

The crafty imp has also played on the weaknesses of the barbarian Join.

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Simply put, Joln loves money. Through various intermediaries, Xola'am has promised to make Joln filthy, filthy rich if Sir Varral dies by his hand. This is, of course, a huge lie, but Joln hasn't the wit to see it.

Upon arriving at the Manse Loga, the imp infects the off-kilter mind of Turo to poison Sir Varral. To seal the deal (and to gain some personal satisfaction), the imp intends to inject Varral with his own deadly venom.

Xola'am is an **imp** with the following changes:

- Xola'am can communicate telepathically up to a distance of 120 feet.

Turo Loga

Turo is the son of the lord at the Manse Loga. Cnid and the Nightmare Node (see below) drove him horribly insane, sinking him into a veiled suicidal frenzy. He is one of the first to greet the characters when they arrive at the manse, and, using his telepathic abilities, Xola'am immediately finds a tool to aid in the murder of Sir Varral. Turo slips a slow-acting poison into Sir Varral's wine before supper is served on the first evening.

Beginning the Adventure

In the course of their travels, the characters come upon a covered bridge. This innocuous looking span is the gateway through which a long-dead hero seeks justice. The characters are swept up into this spectre's memories to encounter him and his companions and to help uncover the identity of his murderer — a crime that has gone unsolved for four long centuries.

Lying in a remarkably serene valley in the northern extent of Barresque County, this covered bridge has spanned the Upper Saymere River for more than four hundred years. It is constructed of nigh-indestructible athewood, but the thing that really keeps the bridge in good repair is the curse of the man nefariously slain centuries ago. This bridge is the entry point into the tragic story of the murder victim.

A large, covered bridge spans the brightly flowing river, its surface worn smooth by years of wind and weather. Its shingled roof looks to be in need of repair, but the bridge itself seems sturdily built. A weed-strewn track leads to the span's entrance; it hasn't seen traffic for some time.

As soon as the characters see the bridge, they are caught within the caul of the cursed shade. If they avoid the bridge or refuse to cross it, they encounter it again over the next ridge. And again. And again. As many times as it takes until the characters come onto the bridge itself. If you do not wish to force the adventure on the characters in such a railroad manner, then you can allow them to avoid the bridge (without it reappearing before them); however, by doing so, they miss the adventure until such time as they approach the bridge to cross and see the inscription. The bridge measures 15 feet wide by 100 feet, and the peak of the roof is 12 feet from the bridge's surface.

As the characters step onto the bridge, they notice that its interior — floor, beams, and ceiling — is covered in dozens of score-marks. There are hundreds of these marks. The bridge is an anchor point for an angry spectre, and a *detect magic* spell reveals the overwhelming aura of dark magic.

Carved into the floor-planks in the middle of the bridge is an inscription in the common tongue that is easily spotted. It says:

In whose hand did the poison lie?

When the inscription is read, the next phase of the curse comes to pass. It is suddenly night (even if it was much earlier in the day when the bridge was approached) with no natural falling of evening — night is just come and the land is swathed in darkness. The stars are out in full force and the primary moon, Narrah, is a full, silver sphere in the sky; the smaller, dark moon Sybil is just visible peeking above the trees, but it is also full. A character proficient in the Wisdom (Survival) skill identifies that the stars in the sky show that it is now autumn. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) check allows a character to recognize by the stars and full phases of the double moons that the characters are now 400 years in the past. A final clue to the change is that all of the score-marks on the bridge have disappeared as if they had never existed.

The lighting outside is dim under the full moonlight; normal, unaided vision is only 10 feet.

Chapter One: A Murder of Crows

Though they seem to have remained in the same geographic location they were in before, the party has been swept into the remembered past of the murdered dead. Here, they stumble upon a battlefield and must confront many foes to succor Varral and his escorts.

When Sir Varral the Blessed received Loga's message, he and his friends were guests of the Comte de E'stil. Sir Varral decided to travel to the manse immediately and the comte granted him an escort of 50 men-at-arms to accompany him and assist in any way they could. Yet the evil that lurked in the Sieur Saymere's dreams divined his plan and sent out a party of duergar to intercept and destroy Sir Varral and all those with him. The characters stumble onto the battlefield as the majority of the battle itself is drawing to a close.

The events of this chapter are laid out as a series of encounters. Apart from **Encounter 1** and **Encounter 8**, any of the other encounters can occur in any order, any number of times. You may pick and choose which and how many encounters are appropriate for your group.

Encounter 1: Camp Invasion

This is the first event that the characters encounter after they move away from the bridge deeper into the Saymere Valley (regardless of which direction they travel from the bridge).

The night is clear and cold, the Pale Sister looming large and ominous in the starry expanse above, the Dark Sister skulking low on the horizon. The wind is a torrent of darkness amid the gusty trees. Suddenly, a shadowy form bursts through the underbrush and falls to the ground.

This is Alfosne (LG male **guard** with 5 hit points remaining), one of Sir Varral's cohorts. He has been done almost to death by the raiding duergar and has just fallen 20 feet from the bridge. Two rounds after he appears, 5 **duergar** burst from the brush in pursuit and immediately attack upon sighting the party.

Development: Alfosne doesn't know much about what is occurring. He knows that he and his compatriots were escorting someone important and that they were travelling to the Manse Loga farther up the valley, but knows little else. Alfosne implores the characters to help him find his commanding officer.

The Battlefield

Shortly after leaving the bridge, the characters come upon the battlefield. Most of the encounters for this chapter occur while the characters cross this battlefield.

Corpses of men and dwarves are strewn like crushed leaves across this moonlit meadow. The only word to describe it is "broken": broken spears, broken pennants, and broken bodies. Nothing moves except for a solitary crow. It glides from the shadows to land and peck the eye from a motionless body.

While crossing the battlefield, the characters have a chance to encounter various creatures and situations that test their mettle. Roll 1d20 every 5 minutes and consult the table below. Unless otherwise noted, each of these encounters can occur only once.

| 1d20 | Encounters |
|-------|----------------------------|
| 1–3 | Encounter 2: Looters |
| 4–6 | Encounter 3: The Banner |
| 7–8 | Encounter 4: Archon |
| 9–10 | Encounter 5: Wolves |
| 11–12 | Encounter 6: Dying Duergar |
| 13–14 | Encounter 7: Dying Soldier |
| 15–20 | No encounter |

Encounter 2: Looters

This encounter can occur multiple times.

Stout figures move among the dead, stripping them of weapons and other valuables. A groan rises from a pile of bodies, a muffled cry for help. One of the dwarves moves to the pile and drags a human soldier from its midst. The soldier feebly grasps the dwarf's arm in gratitude. His hand is knocked aside as the dwarf pulls a dagger from his belt and brutally cuts his throat.

Victorious, these 6 **duergar** are looting the bodies of the slain and helping along those who have not yet departed this mortal coil.

Treasure: So far, these looters have collected a total of 11 gp, 38 sp, 3 longswords (10% chance one is +1), 2 suits of chainmail, and 2 *potions of healing*.

Encounter 3: The Banner

A lone human man-at-arms stands surrounded by his dead companions. He holds a bared blade in one hand and a tattered banner showing three pinecones in the other. Three of the strange, dark dwarves advance on him slowly, confident of their prey. One of them holds a chain bound to a huge, misshapen beetle.

The man-at-arms is Gan (LN male **guard** with 4 hit points remaining), the standard-bearer that carries the Comte de E'stil's banner. His companions are slain, and he stands alone against 3 **duergar** and their trained **giant fire beetle**.

Development: Gan was one of the cohorts accompanying Sir Varral. He tells the characters of the escort's purpose and of the ambush, though he can tell them little else. Gan wants to rejoin Sir Varral and his commander, and encourages the characters to do the same.

THE COVERED BRIDGE

Encounter 4: Archon

An eerie light flits through the trees, shedding a watery glow in the black night.

This is a **lantern archon angel** (see **Appendix A**), drawn to the battlefield by the valor of the warriors and the evil of the duergar. It has slain five of the vile dwarves already, but knows its limitations. If possible, the archon follows the characters out of curiosity and helps them if it can.

Encounter 5: Wolves

Black canine forms pick their way through the battlefield. On occasion, they stop to consume particularly tasty bits, then move on.

These 4 **wolves** have come to feast and are led by a **worg**. The worg directs his followers to surround and attack the characters, eager for more bloodshed. If the wolves are killed and he is wounded, the worg flees into the night.

Encounter 6: Dying Duergar

Lying here are 2 **duergar**. They are dying, and bleed out at the moment the players encounter them.

Encounter 7: Dying Soldiers

There are 3 men-at-arms (N male human **guards** with 0 hit points remaining) here. They are dying, and are bleeding out. Remember, that spells that restore or heal will not work on NPCs, however, a DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check will stabilize the men-at-arms.

Encounter 8: The Lord of Crows

This encounter occurs at the conclusion of the characters' exploration of the benighted battlefield

This is the heart of the battlefield. The dead — both human and dwarven — are piled higher here. Across the glade, a small group of humans has formed: a last line of defense against their enemies. However, a larger group of the dwarves has them surrounded. This looks like a doomed last stand.

Sir Varral the Blessed and his men are in a tight spot and desperately need help. Varral is accompanied by Demoiselle Arbasa (N female human **noble**), Joln (N male human **berserker**), Dari (**imp** in raccoon form) and 3 men-at-arms (N male human **guards** each with 6 hit points remaining). Everyone in his group is wounded. Dari stays out of the fighting as much as possible, crouching on Varral's shoulder. Surrounding them are 20 **duergar** warriors who close in to attack.

Sir Varral Et-Cassan the Blessed is a **knight** with the following changes:

- Sir Varral is a 6th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following paladin spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots) — *bless*, *divine favor*, *heroism*, *wrathful smite*
2nd level (2 slots) — *aid*, *branding smite*

- As a reaction, while wielding a melee weapon, Sir Varral can add 2 to his AC against one melee attack that would otherwise hit. He must be able to see the attacker.

- He is equipped with a suit of plate mail, shield, lance, *longsword +1*, dagger, and a silver holy symbol

- He rides a heavy warhorse with chain barding

Development: If the characters take part in the battle, they do not have to defeat all the duergar, but they should *feel* as if they have to. The characters should be somewhat depleted and beat up by this point, and they have one more big battle to fight. As the GM, you should merely make the situation look absolutely hopeless. Just when things look their bleakest, a murder of crows appears and besets the duergar force. Read the following.

A violently fluttering, inky black mass descends from the skies and falls upon the strange dwarves. It appears to be an inky black murder of crows. Hoarse screams erupt from the deadly flock. The birds rise again into the air, leaving behind grisly, beak-pecked corpses, and then turn to attack.

The **swarm of ravens** attacks the characters and disperses if defeated, after which the Lord of Crows approaches.

After the swarm disperses, the Lord of Crows appears.

The remaining crows fly away, filling the cold air with their harsh calls. A group of large forms flutters to the ground. Two of them are crows of enormous size, the size of small dogs, but the third is a true specimen. A crow the size of a man, this massive bird is seemingly cloaked and hooded in a cloak of glossy black feathers. A beak extends from the front of its head and a pale, vacant eyes peer from its brow.

The Lord of Crows has descended with his retinue upon the battlefield as its rightful owner. A spirit of death and carrion, he views all living creatures to be unwelcome intruders upon his demesne, and immediately



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moves to dispatch them. The Lord of Crows is a **murder crow** (see **Appendix A**) of truly ancient mien that has haunted the eves of the Elderwood for years, taking its share from among the fallen and always escaping the slings and arrows of the land's occupants. On this night, it is accompanied by 2 giant ravens (use the **giant eagle** stat block) that serve as its attendants and intends to take its share directly from the two-legged walkers themselves. The Lord of Crows does not retreat from battle. However, if it is killed and its death throes swarm (use the **swarm of ravens** stat block) dispersed, the other two giant ravens retreat into the night sky, cawing their lament, and do not return. The spirit of the Lord of Crows enters another raven and begins the slow transformation over many years to swell it in size until it takes on the true proportions of the Lord of Crows once again.

Treasure: Around the neck of one of the giant raven attendants hangs a ring of *telekinesis* claimed from some past battlefield.

A Field of Victory

With the defeat of the Lord of Crows, Sir Varral and the others are effusive in their gratitude and eager to reach the (debatable) safety of the manse. Sir Varral tells the characters about the purpose of his journey, though he knows little himself. He still holds the missive he received from Lord Loga and gladly shows it to the characters.

*Esteemed Sir Varral et-Casan,
Liberator of Eauze and Slayer of the Singed Man,
Greetings! I pray this letter finds you hale and firmly
affixed in the favor of your god. I and my family can claim
no such favor. A curse has fallen upon my household; a
miasma of terror creeps into our nightly dreams. And dark
forces are seen at night marshalling upon the surrounding
lands. Many have died. Many more will die unless we can
somehow find deliverance from the evil which clings so
cloyingly to us.
I have heard tales of your valor and resourcefulness.
More importantly, we have heard of the grace of Thyr
which works so powerfully within you. You are a man of
conviction and power: SAVE US! We beseech you to fly to
our aid. Do not stay your haste. Make no delays. Our lives
slip away every moment salvation is denied us.
Very sincerely,
The Sieur Saymere, Erard Loga, 9th of the Line*

Varral knows no more about Lord Loga or his family but is adamant in his desire to help.

None of those on the battlefield knows anything unusual about the covered bridge (or the message and score-marks), though they crossed it earlier. If asked what year it is, they respond truthfully that it is the year 3133 in the Imperial Reckoning, but give the asker a strange look. (The characters' current year is 3517 I.R.) If a player asks whether they are telling the truth or not, allow them to make a DC 8 Wisdom (Insight) check. Success indicates that the NPC is telling the truth.

A character that makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check will recognize the Loga family as the Foerdewaith lords of the Saymere Valley until some 4 centuries ago when the family line ended and the lands were absorbed into the County of Barresque. Any claims by the characters that they are from the future brings laughs initially and uncomfortable looks if the claim persists. Regardless, none of these NPCs or those at the manse takes such claims by the characters seriously under any circumstances.

The journey to the Manse Loga takes over an hour from the vicinity of the Upper Saymere River bridge, but it should prove an excellent opportunity for the characters to interact with Sir Varral, Demoiselle Arbasa, Joln, and Dari. The players need to have a sense of the personalities with whom they are dealing, and this need only grows in the coming adventure. Unbeknownst to anyone (at this point), Sir Varral's compatriots are suspects in his murder, and the characters should develop specific ideas about them.

Though Varral and the others play a major role in this adventure, they will not play an active role. The characters are still the stars of the drama. Various things are built into the adventure to keep the characters in the forefront of the action.

Chapter Two: A Manse Loga

The characters arrive at the house of Loga and are greeted outside by Turo and one of the sentries, Arta, who quickly usher them inside. The manse itself is not an imposing structure. It stands in a pleasant meadow and is surrounded by a short, 5-foot wall. It is not designed to repel invaders; peace has lingered long in this region. The burnt remains of a large house (the servants' quarters) stand next to the manse. The smell of old soot and ash pervades the place. A surprisingly well-kept menagerie lies a quarter mile to the north of the manse.

Though this chapter takes place within the static confines of the Manse Loga, it is still an event-driven chapter. As a result, less information is given to location/room descriptions to provide more description of the events. The rooms of the house are described in a sidebox below with only general information about each room. Flesh out these descriptions as necessary for your game. The house in general has tasteful décor though of a somewhat dated, classical Hyperborean style. Add furnishings and décor as you see fit or use the tables in **Book Three of *The Tome of Adventure Design* by Frog God Games**. If the characters choose to loot the contents with the house, they will be met with hostile resistance by the occupants (whom they are ostensibly there to save), so try to discourage that sort of behavior.

The Manse Loga

First Floor

- 1. Front Porch:** Several large statues stand guard on this sandstone porch — marble maidens garbed in chaste robes.
- 2. Side Porches:** A load of firewood is stacked on each of these.
- 3. Grand Hall:** This hall is magnificent, its vaulted 10-foot ceiling is painted in frescoes of ancient heroes and its floor is covered in alternating tiles of marble and sea green. A large fireplace blazes in the southern wall, a moose head hangs above the oaken mantel. The male servants bed down in here at night since the servants' quarters burned down. During the day, their bedrolls are stored in the cloakroom by the front door.
- 4. Receiving Room:** A small table stands in the middle of this room, surrounded by four chairs. A large bay window opens up to the south and east.
- 5. Ballroom:** This parlor is well-appointed. Several couches and comfortable chairs line the edges of a floor large enough to waltz upon. A small fireplace stands in the northwestern wall, but the hearth is cold.
- 6. Library:** Shelves of leather-bound books line the walls. Two pub tables stand to the north. A small fireplace stands in the east wall. It is lit only when occupants are present in the chamber.
- 7. Dining Room:** A splendid oak dining table stretches the length of this room. Two golden candelabras shed light on the half-eaten repast on the table. A large fireplace stands on the north wall. Above the mantelpiece is a portrait of a decorated naval officer.
- 8. Kitchen:** Tables, sinks, and chopping blocks fill this large kitchen. Stairs in this room lead down to the cellar. The female servants bed down in here at night around the banked embers of the hearth ever since the servants' quarters burned down. They store their bedding in the closet next to the library during the day.
- 9. Pantry:** This pantry's shelves are filled with various foodstuffs: salt, flour, a salted ham, onions, potatoes, etc.

Second Floor

- 1. Hallway:** This hallway circles the interior of the second floor. A window and door open out onto the east balcony.
- 2. Southwest Bedroom:** The southwest corner of this room is a turret, most of its floor space filled by a circular bed. A large wardrobe, chest of drawers and writing table make up the rest of the room's furnishings. There is a secret door in the closet that is revealed with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.
- 3. Southeast Bedroom:** As the room above, but with the turret and bed in the southeast corner of the room.
- 4. East Bedroom:** A simple bedroom with a small closet, a bed with a chest at its foot and a sofa. A door in the eastern wall leads to a balcony.
- 5. Northeast Bedroom:** As the room above. This is normally Turo's room, but he moves into **Room 16** once the guests arrive.
- 6. Balcony**
- 7. Master Bedroom:** This expansive room has a woman's touch. Tasteful tapestries cover the walls — scenes of ice-covered mountains and picturesque lakes. A curtained four-poster bed stands in one corner. A disheveled cot lies at its foot and a huge wardrobe stands in the corner. A comfortable couch sits along one wall. Double doors open to a long closet. Lord Erard Loga has been sleeping on the cot since his wife's malady began. Turo begins sleeping on the couch with the guests' arrival.
- 8. Storage:** This room is stacked with boxes and chests. A trapdoor in the ceiling leads to the attic.

Attic

The ceiling of the attic is sharply slanted; the characters may have to bend over near the eaves. It is filled with racks of old clothes, various chests and dressers, a cracked mirror, two busted chifforobes, a huge, old spinning wheel, piles of moth-eaten curtains and a great deal of other junk. It also holds an undead horror (see below).

Cellar

See **Chapter 4**.

Only 12 people still reside on the premises:

- Erard Loga, the Sieur Saymere (LN male human **noble**) Erard's comatose wife Elaise (N female human **noble**) and teenage son Turo (N male human **noble**) and 2 sentries, Arta and Bellerby (N male human **guards**) who double as stable hands and gardeners the chief steward Branwaith Tod (N male human **commoner**)
- the cook Kora (N female human **commoner**) 2 housemaids, Nella and the desirable Cherette (N female human **commoners**)
- 2 household servants, Arran and Stod (N male human **commoners**) the gamekeeper Gerrad (N male human **scout**)

The living exist in an anguish of fear, and the rest are dead. The inhabitants have tried to flee many times, but their dreams and the duergar turned them back. Fearing the gray dwarves and their dreams, they will not leave the manse until the evil is defeated.

Event 1: The Dinner

The characters, Sir Varral, and his companions are greeted at the gate to the Manse Loga by two nervous sentries who demand to know their business and seek to bar their entrance. However, when the guards recognize that Sir Varral has come to help, the heroes are greeted with open arms. The sentries escort them directly to Lord Erard who is sitting down to eat with his family.

An oppressive dread has fallen over the household, but Sir Varral and the characters are welcomed with tears of gratitude and a desperate hope. Servants rush to place settings for the newcomers as introductions are made, while any surviving men-at-arms are prepared places in the kitchen. Turo makes it a point to serve the wine. At table, the Sieur Saymere blesses the meal in the name of Archeillus, the household god, bids them all to eat, and asks about the heroes' wounds. As he hears the tale of the battle to get to the manse, his head bows grimly.

“It is no wonder that no other help could get through to aid us, if we are hemmed in by such dangerous foes. Thanks be that you managed to get through at all!”

He is mystified by the appearance of the duergar and by the characters' experience on the bridge, but unsurprised. Loga sees himself as a man accursed and sees that curse as infecting anything and everyone around him. When they have imparted their story, Sir Varral asks Loga what has befallen in the manse. Lord Erard tells them:

“A month ago, one of the servant's children died. Crib-death, or so we thought. The mother told us that the girl had slept fitfully, crying in her sleep ... We thought nothing of it. Tragic, of course, but hardly uncommon. The following week, one of the cooks died in her sleep. We were disturbed by this but didn't know what to think of it. My wife increased her prayers. None of us was sleeping well by that point, though none of us could articulate why that might be.”

The Sieur Saymere sighs and rubs his forehead as he continues, “A week later, the servants' quarters burned down. Eight people perished in the blaze. Then, my ... my youngest son, Altais ... he climbed to the rooftop and threw himself off. We were heartbroken and felt as if the hand of Death itself had fallen upon us. Perhaps ... perhaps it has. We knew then that we were accursed.

“Our household chaplain resolved that he would put an end to the evil, seeking help from blessed Archeillus. He disappeared the following night. The serfs who worked our land abandoned us. We sent out messengers pleading for succor. They went to liege lord, to family ... without reply. Our messengers never returned. We feared that they had fallen prey to the evil that haunts us.

“More people died. We fasted, we prayed...to no avail. My wife...my wife fell ill. She fell asleep and would not awake. I feel as if a silent battle is waging within her. One last messenger was sent out. Apparently, the fates have finally smiled upon us, for you all have come. Tell us, please: Is there any hope for us?”

Sir Varral grimly assures Lord Loga that he will do all he can, that hope is not lost. He asks to see Loga's wife. She is at rest in the master bedroom (**Room 16**), attended by two fretful maids. No stimulus can wake her slumber and she looks wan and frail. Cnid has trapped her in her dreams and is draining her away bit by bit.

Sir Varral goes to see to the lady, and the characters are welcome to come with him. However, nothing can be discerned from observing her comatose body. Though her pulse seems normal, her skin is warm and dry, and her breast rises and falls evenly as she breathes, she neither wakes nor

responds to any stimulus. No curative or magic provides any relief or clue. Sir Varral pulls the characters aside at some point.

“I have no clue what ails the lady,” he says. “With a good night's rest and morning prayers, perhaps something can be unveiled tomorrow. I should also be able to provide healing for you when the sun rises.”

Several undercurrents of emotion run through the inhabitants of the Manse Loga and can be sensed during the meal. Obviously, everyone is tense and afraid, yet other emotions can be detected by the canny observer who makes a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check (each observation requires a successful check). Branwaith Tod continually and uncomfortably watches Cherrite as she serves the meal, positioning himself for the best view whenever she bends over.

- Careful observation shows that Joln is enjoying an eyeful of the maid himself.
- Nella the maid is preoccupied with something above her. She surreptitiously glances upward often and mutters to herself. The only word that can be made out is “Bett.”
- Arbasa hangs on every word out of Sir Varral's mouth. Also, she slightly resents any attention given to him by the female staff of the Manse Loga.
- Turo has something important on his mind. He does his best, but still misses the occasional social cue and forgets the thread of conversation. Occasionally, his eyes stray to Sir Varral.

After dinner, servants arrive to show everyone to their rooms. Sir Varral and Joln stay in **Room 13**, and Arbasa is given **Room 14**. The characters are given **Rooms 11** and **12** to stay in. Any men-at-arms that accompanied the characters to the manse can bed down in **Room 3** with the male servants. Female servants sleep in **Room 8**.

Note: This is another excellent time for the characters to interact with the players in the drama, discovering motivations and relationships that will lead to them solving the murder.

Event 2: The Big Top

As the characters fall asleep, each of them seems to be haunted by the same horrific dream. In reality, this is Cnid reaching out to them through their dreams to infect them with soul-sapping night terrors. As each character falls asleep, describe the following to them separately.

You are woken by an odd sound piping through the darkness — the jarring, jangling tune of a calliope playing. The smell of carnival taffy fills your nostrils.

When the characters fall asleep, the nightmare cloaker enters their dreams and engages them in a dream-time assault. The transition from slumber to nightmare is seamless; the characters shouldn't know that they are dreaming, though there are certain clues that might tip them off. In the nightmare, all of their wounds are healed and all spells and class abilities are restored to them (as if they had completed a long rest).

After every sleeping character has gotten out of bed (in the dream), they each find themselves falling into a circus tent and all of them landing together on a canvas trampoline (suffering no damage). Above them, they see two trapezes, a tightrope, and the colorful roof of the tent. The stands surrounding them are filled with a crowd of spectators who commence oohing and aahing. Give the characters a round or two to orient themselves before the decapi descend.

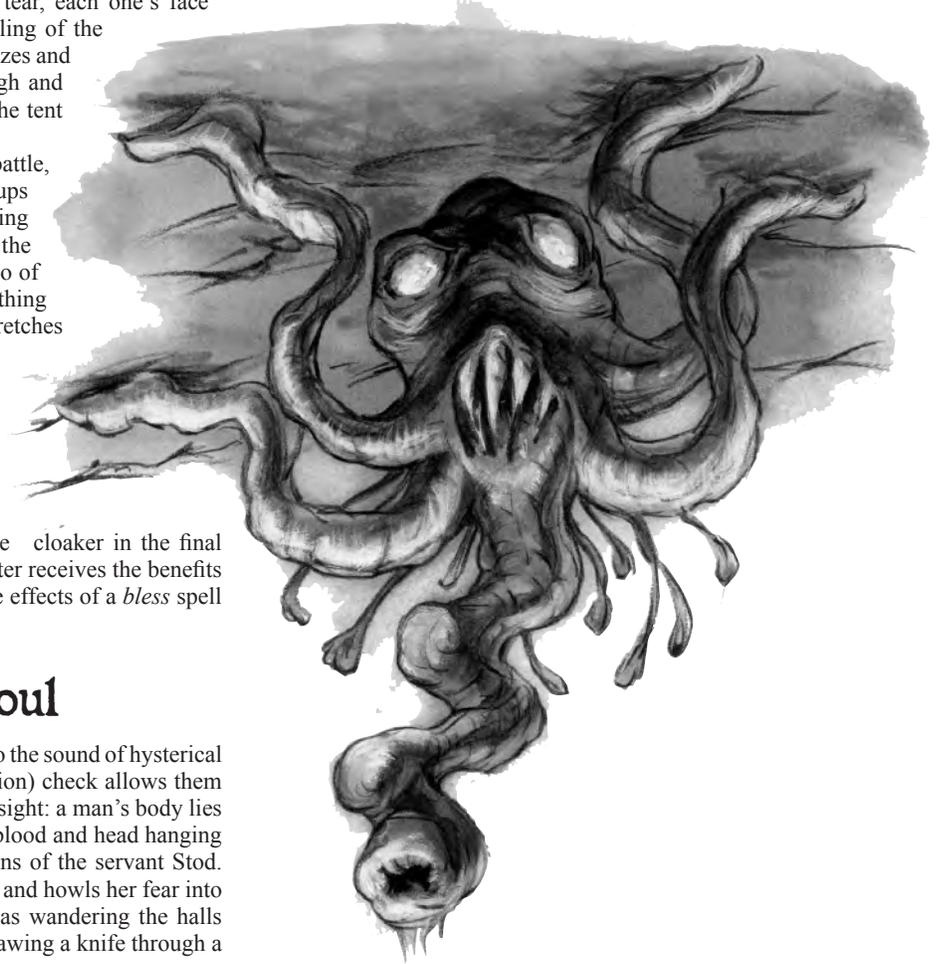
A ripping sound catches your attention. Looking up, you see a hole torn in the top of the tent. A huge clown face fills the hole, its wide mouth splitting in a drooling, lunatic grin.

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The face belongs to a **decapus** (see **Appendix A**). One round later, another of the vile creatures enters through the tear, each one's face painted like a clown. They enter through the ceiling of the tent, climb down the tent poles, swing on the trapezes and attack the characters. The tightrope is 15 feet high and trapezes are 20 feet off the ground. The roof of the tent is 50 feet above.

The crowd reacts positively to the ensuing battle, laughing and screaming, applauding wildly to the ups and downs of the melee. They are obviously rooting for the clown-faced decapi. On occasion, one of the decapi might swing over and munch on one or two of the spectators, much to the joy of the crowd. Nothing exists outside the tent itself. Gray nothingness stretches from horizon to horizon.

Development: The characters each awaken from the nightmare when all of the decapi are dead or all of the characters are dead. If a character dies during the encounter, they receive no benefit from his rest — no hit points recovered, no spells regained, etc. In addition, they will have one level of exhaustion when facing the nightmare cloaker in the final encounter. Any character that survives the encounter receives the benefits of a full night's sleep and acts as if he is under the effects of a *bless* spell when facing Cnid and the Nightmare Node.



Event 3: Murder Most Foul

The characters awake from their violent dream to the sound of hysterical screaming. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check allows them to track the source of the sound. It leads to a gory sight: a man's body lies on the floor at the end of the hallway, covered in blood and head hanging on by only a few strands of flesh. It is the remains of the servant Stod. One of the maids (Nella) kneels next to the corpse and howls her fear into the night. Striving to stave off slumber, Nella was wandering the halls until she rounded the corner to see a naked form sawing a knife through a servant's neck before leaping out the nearby window.

As the characters approach, they hear her muttering, "Turo, it was Turo."

The rest of the household comes running soon after the characters arrive at the scene. They are all horrified by what they see. The Sieur is ashen-faced and visibly shaken. If the characters have not already done so, Sir Varral interrogates Nella and she tells him what she saw. One of the sentries runs up to say, "I just saw Master Turo running naked across the lawn!" When asked where he was headed, the sentry tells them that it looked like Turo was heading toward the menagerie.

Sir Varral confers with the characters. He is grim faced with what he has seen and heard in the house of the Logas, and volunteers his companions and himself to guard the family if the characters bring Turo back from the zoo.

"Alive," Lord Erard interjects. "Please, bring him back alive!"

Sir Varral feels (correctly) that the new arrivals in the manse have caused the unnamed evil to intensify its attacks. He wants to make sure the Logas and their servants are safe and feels responsible to ensure that it is so. Sir Varral is right to fear further reprisal. Assuming the characters agree to his plan to retrieve the murderous Turo, soon after they depart a **gibbering moulder** — a foul accumulation formed by the horrific dreams of the household and the Nightmare Node — appears and tries to kill Arbasa (see **Event 5**).

Chapter Three: The Menagerie

Four decades ago Piron Loga, the great-grandfather of Lord Erard Loga, constructed this small menagerie to house the exotic animals he collected on his foreign travels. Over the years, it has become the symbol of the prosperity and affluence of the Logas, and the family has been careful to maintain the zoo. The family jokingly refers to it as “the petting zoo” as only a fool would attempt to pet many of the beasts.

When Turo’s hellish night-terrors drove him to insanity and murder, he fled from the manse to the menagerie. Turo burst into the gamekeeper’s hut and kidnapped the poor man, hurling him into the hippopotamus pool. He then released the peryton and other animals from long imprisonment and hid himself in the back of an abandoned cage where he promptly had a mental breakdown, entering a catatonic state.

As the characters move through the menagerie, they encounter several enraged and hungry beasts. They have the opportunity to save the gamekeeper, fight the peryton and capture the mad Turo. The menagerie lies a quarter mile north of the manse. It includes a combination of encounter areas and events.

Event 4: The Peryton

Turo released several dangerous creatures when he came to the menagerie, but none deadlier than the **peryton** (see **Appendix A**). Captured three years ago, this malicious creature sought to escape several times, but never met with success. Though mistaken for a dumb, albeit dangerous animal, its rage grew more with each passing day. When it was released, it immediately went to slay the one creature it feared and hated



in the zoo: the lion. It now lingers in the zoo, seeking to slay whomever it encounters, venting its wrath in a storm of goring antler and ripping fang.

The peryton may attack the characters at any time you deem opportune, though to build tension, it would be best to spread the battle over several encounters if possible. The creature uses hit-and-run attacks and looks for weaknesses before committing itself to a full attack.

The Menagerie

1. Entrance

A large, green archway rises above the entrance to the menagerie, its faded surface covered with fanciful images of birds and beasts. Beyond the arch, a dark, ill-tended pathway winds past several cages. A raucous bellow reverberates through the darkness.

2. Fountain

A circular fountain stands in the middle of an open square, the carvings on its side weathered and covered with creeping ivy. Several stone benches surround the fountain, and the water within it is pure and clean.

A **lioness** (same stat block as a **lion**) lurks on the other side of the fountain with total cover. The peryton killed the lion that was caged with her, dropping it elsewhere in the zoo, then came back for her. Enraged and frightened by the attack of the peryton and the loss of her mate, she stalks the party and attacks at an opportune time, preferring prey that is separated from the rest or bringing up the rear. As she stalks the party, compare her Dexterity (Stealth) roll to the passive Wisdom (Perception) of each of the party. Whichever of the characters does not have a passive Wisdom (Perception) value above the lioness’s Dexterity (Stealth) roll are surprised when she attacks and cannot move or take an action on their first turn of combat. They also will not be able to take a reaction until that turn ends.

3. Aviary

A fine, metal mesh covers the bars of this cage. Inside, scores of brightly plumed birds are going mad, flying in frenzied circles, ramming headfirst into the mesh, and squawking in abject panic.

This flock of exotic birds from lands as far as distant Chi’en and Irkaina is maddened by the presence of the vicious peryton. If they are released, they fly helter-skelter into the night.

4. The Corpse

Two statues stand over a small shrine — a goat-legged, horned man playing the pipes and a beautiful faun dancing nearby. A dark form lies at the foot of the shrine. It lies unmoving and silent.

This is a small shrine to the ancient Hyperborean faith of Pan. The form lying on the ground is the body of a lion, recently slain by a peryton. The body has been bitten, gored and dropped from a great height, and it bears the marks of all of these wounds. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check allows a character to discern from the wounds that a peryton killed it.

5. Open Cage

The door of this unusually large cage stands unlocked and wide open. Inside, a large tree trunk lies propped against the eastern side of the pen. A trapeze hangs from the ceiling, swaying in a slight breeze. Straw and dung cover the hard-packed dirt floor. The stench of the place is overbearing.

This cage held the peryton. The inside of its thick bars are nicked and scored from the beast's ferocious attempts to escape. Now, the cage holds only the skeletal remains of its former meals (mainly opossums) and blood-smearing droppings.

6. Oryx Paddock

This large enclosure seems to be a pasture dotted with small trees and shrubbery. Shadowy shapes flit across the grass in the moonlight.

The enclosure houses a small herd of oryxes, a type of long-horned antelope native to far Libynos. The recent events in the menagerie disturbed them, leaving them very flighty.

7. Hippo Enclosure

This fenced-in area holds a pool of deep water, and what looks to be a small island on the far side. Harsh sobbing echoes from the darkness across the water.

Two **hippopotami** (see **Appendix A**) lurk under the surface of the water in this 20ft-deep pool. They were resting peacefully there until Turo Loga hurled old Gerrad, the menagerie's gamekeeper, into the water of their pen. The old man immediately swam to the dry land on the other side of the pen, where he now huddles, crying in terror of his situation. If he hears the characters approach, he immediately and stridently cries for help. The hippos have done nothing to harm Gerrad. They have been disturbed enough tonight, however, and attack anyone else who enters their domain.

If the party rescues Gerrad, he gifts them with his gamekeeper's axe: a *handaxe +1*.

8. Amphisbaena Cage

This cage holds a jungle of oak trees and thick undergrowth. The cage's open door squeaks noisily in the night breeze.

This is the lair of an **amphisbaena** (see **Appendix A**). Turo unlocked and opened the cage, but the fearsome creature has yet to exit its lair. It immediately attacks anyone who enters the cage. If the characters do not enter the reptile's lair, it may come out and hunt them later at the Referee's discretion.

9. Wolf Pen

The ground falls away behind the fence railing. Several canine forms prowl around the perimeter of the enclosure, yellow eyes shining in the black.

Like the other animals in the zoo, these 3 **wolves** are highly agitated. Being well fed, they try to avoid the characters unless they sense weakness or get one by themselves. If cornered, they fight.

The monkeys are manic because Turo let himself into the cage, locking himself inside, and killed two of them. If the door is opened, 12 **monkeys** (use the **baboon** stat block) swarm anyone in their path, but attack only for 1 round before scattering throughout the menagerie and into the surrounding forest.

Development: Turo Loga (CN male human **noble** armed with a *dagger +1*) is slumped in the back of the cage, naked but for a pair of tall riding boots. He rocks back and forth, muttering to himself and bursting into tears or giggles. He still carries the dagger with which he slew the servant. Turo is in the grip of madness and will not give himself up. He attacks the characters on sight. It will be no easy thing to bring him in alive. Turo has a *dagger +1* and a Loga signet ring (100 gp value) in his possession).

Tactics: Turo's night-terrors triggered the primal rage within him, and he behaves as if he were under the effect of a *potion of heroism* (see the *bless* spell). During combat, Turo alternates between muttering and shrieking, "He'll be dead, damn you! Dead! And all flame dies with him!" He is referring to Sir Varral, but in his madness, he is unable to expound more than that.

Event 5: Return to the Manse

The characters return to a house in chaos. While they were gone, a creature composed of bulging eyes and wailing mouths (a gibbering moulder) invaded the manse. Sir Varral and the others defeated it, but its death left a wide, sooty stain on the hallway floor that smells of charred flesh and cannot be removed. If any of the men-at-arms survived from **Chapter 1**, they were all killed in the battle against the creature and now lie in shallow graves behind the house.

If the characters return with Turo's body: The household is wracked with even more grief. They held no hostility toward the boy, knowing that his action was only a result of the terror they all faced. The Sieur Saymere is more than grieved; he is angry at the characters for killing his son and compounding his sorrow. He verbally pours his wrath upon the characters and treats them with ill-concealed contempt hereafter, though he still treats them honorably for any service they render.

If the characters capture Turo alive: They have decisions to make: What should they do with the boy? Where will they keep him? How will they treat his madness? If they treat the boy well, they earn the undying love of Lord Erard and the rest.

Chapter Four: The Awakening

One unexpected benison occurs when the characters return with Turo: His mother Elaise awakens from her enforced slumber. After Turo is dealt with, one of the servants rushes to tell the Sieur that his wife has regained consciousness. He immediately rushes to her side. She is weak and groggy, and can only vaguely recall that her dreams were dark and horrifying. She has no clue that she has slept for so long. Lord Erard is ecstatic. He orders the servants to bring her broth and milk, and spends what is left of the night hovering over her anxiously.

Sir Varral examines Elaise but can find nothing telling about her experience. He claims that he got no rest earlier and must get some sleep to recover his spells. He goes to his room taking the raccoon with him. Joln and Arbasa follow suit, though they both look extremely worried.

When he falls asleep, Sir Varral comes under the sway of Cnid and the Node and cannot be awakened by any means. Cnid has chosen his prey and will not release him until one or the other is dead. When this is discovered, Arbasa is distraught, but seems fatalistically resigned. Joln will not leave his master's side. The raccoon sits on the headboard of Sir Varral's bed and cleans his paws. To save Sir Varral and break the curse, the characters must destroy Cnid and the Nightmare Node.

Though they have no initial ideas as to the true cause of these events, they may nonetheless suspect that something hidden within the house may be the source. If they do not come to this conclusion on their own, have servants and other household members mention hearing strange bumps in the walls or footfalls in empty rooms to spark the idea that all is not well within the confines of the house itself. The result of this prodding is that the characters should begin a systematic search of the manse itself to try to save Sir Varral and the Loga household.

Encounters within the Manse

The deadly dreams of the nightmare cloaker have had dread effect on the residents of the manse, bringing madness and death to some, giving life to the dark dreams of others, and twisting the very nature of still more. While the characters search for the entrance to Cnid's hidden chamber, they may encounter some of these. They are tied to specific locations within the house and are encountered only when those areas are entered.

Encounter 1: Dream Lolita

This encounter occurs in **Room 9**. Whenever the characters are near the pantry, they hear the following:

A loud thump and a muffled scream come from behind the closed door of the pantry.

The licentious dreams of Branwaith Tod have finally boiled over into waking life. For months the hapless steward lusted after the innocent young housemaid Churette, but he kept his desire under tight rein. The tawdry visions sent him by the Node have recently frayed Branwaith's rigid control. In his nightly dreams, the beautiful Churette taunts and

teases him, flaunting her nubile body, but keeping him at a distance. Even in his dreams, he could look but not touch. All the tension in the home has finally driven Branwaith over the brink. As the poor maid passed him in the kitchen, naively desirable yet untouchable, the exasperated steward shoved her into the pantry and locked the door behind him. The time had come to make her his own. The characters come to the doorway just as he is struggling to force himself upon the frightened girl. The characters must get through the locked door to rescue the girl. The door can be opened with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check with thieves' tools or a successful DC 15 Strength check.

If confronted in the act, Branwaith's body warps and changes into that of an **incubus**, the bitter fruit of sinful dreams come to life.

Encounter 2: A Head for Numbers

This encounter occurs in the upstairs hallway (**Room 10**). When the characters near it, proceed with the following:

An unearthly shriek shreds the quiet of the household. Bursting through the window above the bloodstain marking where the servant Stod was murdered, three horrific beings — twisted, blackened heads flapping on sluggish batwing ears — swoop into the hall and look for prey to sate their hunger.

As Cnid poisons the dreams of the manse's inhabitants, the Nightmare Node uses this sour miasma to give birth to living nightmares. These 3 **vargouilles** (see **Appendix A**) are the Node's most recent creations. They entered the house through the portal in the basement last night, but were unable to open the basement door. A hapless servant (Arran) released them earlier in the day and paid for the mistake with his life. His body now lies on the top steps of the basement. The vargouilles managed to escape the house but have now broken back into the upper floor, sensing prey.

Encounter 3: Wanted: A Playmate

This encounter occurs when the characters explore the **Attic**.

The attic is drafty and cold, full of dusty chests and old, unused furniture. Moth-eaten sheets cover several bulky objects. A child's giggle bumbles from out of the gloom.

Within the first week of Cnid's arrival beneath the Manse Loga, the creature sent its night-terrors into the slumbering thoughts of Bett, the 3-year-old daughter of Nella, the manse's head cook. The child died within days. Brokenhearted, Nella has dreamt of her lost daughter every night since. The Nightmare Node has fed and used her grief-stricken dreams, eventually using her anguish to create an **allip** (see **Appendix A**). This creature — pathetic and deadly — now lurks in the attic, longing for a playmate to call its own.

The Cellar

When Cnid and his duergar breached the surface, they found themselves in the basement of the Manse Loga. Recognizing the wine cellar as part of a civilized habitation, Cnid reined in the murderous urges of his minions, and withdrew into the natural caverns beneath the basement. There, he began to weave his accursed will upon the sentient beings above him.

1. Main Cellar

Rickety wooden stairs descend into sullen darkness. The air is redolent with soured moisture. A cautious whisper and a hesitant shuffle sound from below, then all is silent. A dead body lies halfway down the stairwell. By its clothing, it appears to be one of the household servants, but the bloody and brutalized condition masks its identity.

Arran, one of the manse's servants, opened the door to the basement earlier today only to encounter and release the *vargouilles* (see **Encounter 2** above). The foul creatures fell upon the poor soul, ravaging him with their fangs, biting him, and injecting their poison. His body is bloated and purpled with their venom, requiring a careful check by someone who knew him previously to correctly identify him. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check can determine that *vargouilles* killed him.

Racks of wine fill the wine cellar (to the south), but the walls of the main basement are lined with crates and barrels. Most of them are empty, but sundry goods fill others. In the cellar beyond the door, the Nightmare Node created a magical gate to cover the hole in the cellar's wall, and 6 **duergar** were set to guard the entrance when it opens. These duergar turn invisible as soon as anyone comes down into the cellar and do not reveal themselves unless they or the portal are discovered.

The Portal

The entrance to the caverns below is hidden behind various barrels and crates. It is opened only if Cnid has presently trapped his chosen prey (as it is with Sir Varral) in an inescapable cauld of dreams. Otherwise, it appears merely as the image of an elaborate doorway etched into the stone itself. In that case, for all intents and purposes, the doorway doesn't even exist.

2. The Stuff Dreams are Made of

The rough floor of this cavern is sprinkled with gravel and nodules of stone. A soft mist curls around your feet. A shimmering ball of light appears, and flickers and bounces along the dirt ceiling. As you watch, the sphere turns a moody claret color and stretches until it splits only to reform into a single globe moments later.

As the Nightmare Node opens seams into the Dimension of Dreams, bits of dream-stuff have squeezed into the Material Plane in the form of a **will-o'-wisp**. This being is pure chaos and eager to interact with the characters. Unfortunately, its mere touch is damaging to Material Plane creatures, and its actions may be perceived as hostile. It reacts to any violence with violence of its own.

3. Darkling Dregs

Rough earthen excavation gives way to well-crafted granite tiles lining the floor, walls, and ceiling. This room looks well lived-in — a short table stands against the wall, its stone surface littered with odd stones and the remnants of an expansive meal. Several stools surround it. A fire-pit stands in the center of the room, its ashes dark and cold. Two low doorways exit the room, one to the left and the right. A large archway stands on the north wall, strange luminosities glimmering from its depths.

This room has been used as a dwelling place for Cnid's duergar. Unfortunately, the constant exposure to the Nightmare Node has transformed them into 6 **shadows**. One round after the characters enter the common room, 2 duergar shades enter from the east doorway and attack. One round after that, 4 more duergar shades enter from the west doorway and join the fray. They immediately attack anyone bearing a light source, trying to douse any illumination and slaughter the characters. Without any character light sources, the room has dim illumination due to the glimmer entering from **Room 4**.

3a. East Side Room

This room contains 5 stubby beds, each with a stone chest at its foot. The room is otherwise unadorned. Each chest contains 20 silver ingots worth 20 gp each.

3b. West Side Room

This room contains 5 stubby beds, each with a stone chest at its foot. The room is otherwise unadorned. Four of the chests are empty, but one is full of 100 neatly stacked, cut and polished agates worth 10 gp each.

4. The Nightmare Node

Viscous moisture drips like syrup from the stalactites that cling to the ceiling of this natural grotto. On the north side of the room, sickening lavender light pulses erratically from a large, crystalline node that juts up from the cavern floor. A seemingly humanoid figure sits atop the crystal, its legs akimbo and head bowed.

This is the festering heart of the horror that has descended upon the Manse Loga. From this place, Cnid the nightmare cloaker uses the Nightmare Node to inflict its madness upon the hapless denizens above. The cloaker is presently hiding among the stalactites on the ceiling 50 feet above. It knows that the characters have arrived and lurks above to see what it can make of them. The broken floor of the cavern is considered difficult terrain.

The figure atop the node is the corpse of the household priest, Arvis Yanto. Two weeks earlier, he discovered the entrance to this area and fell in battle with some of the duergar. Cnid had its servants place the body on the crystal for its own amusement, but the corpse may serve as a decoy for the characters. Any attack on the body knocks it behind the node.

As soon as the characters enter the cavern, the Nightmare Node emits a burst of purple light that washes over them and affects each character in the room. Consult the table below to determine the effects of the light. A successful DC 14 Wisdom saving throw neutralizes the Node's effects for that character. Every round thereafter, there is a 1-in-4 chance that the Node bursts again, emitting another spell-effect determined by the chart below. The Nightmare Node is not required to maintain concentration on any of its effects.

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below. It descends only when forced into combat, attempting to engulf the character it perceives as the greatest threat.

When Cnid is in physical contact with the Nightmare Node, he gains additional abilities. Through the Node he has the ability to invade and influence the dreams of 4d4 people each night within a 1-mile radius. The nightmare cloaker has used this ability to observe and analyze the psyche of each individual at the manse, learning their hopes, fears, and motivations while tracking the fault lines of each personality. It then puts their dream-selves through harrowing trials and horrific situations to sate the monster's vile curiosity and to test the depths of human weakness. These dreams normally leave the victims shaken and questioning their sanity, character, and identity. Prolonged exposure to these dream-invasions can lead to madness and suicide or, sometimes, supernatural transformation. The Nightmare Node itself uses all of the negative emotions and psychic pain created by Cnid to craft those nightmares into reality, creating monsters and illusions of its own.

Development: The nightmare isn't over until Cnid is slain and the Nightmare Node itself is destroyed. The Node has 25 hit points and AC 17. If the Node is destroyed, it shatters into lavender dust. A single splinter survives the impact and hovers above the floor as a *dusty rose prism ioun stone* (circles around the bearer's head; grants a +1 bonus to AC).

Treasure: Arvis Yanto's corpse still wears a suit of chainmail and carries a light mace at its belt. Tied around his neck is an *amulet of proof against detection and location*.

Event 6: Return from the Cellars

When the characters emerge from the basement, Sir Varral and the others greet them. As the characters defeated Cnid and destroyed the Nightmare Node, Sir Varral emerged from his nightmare coma. He looks wan and exhausted, having battled his own fears all night, yet is elated that the characters conquered the evil below.

The Sieur Saymere is extraordinarily grateful to the characters for all of their help. As reward, he brings them up to the dining room and feasts them royally. He leaves them there to fetch their reward. Sir Varral, Arbasa, and Joln (and Dari) want desperately to know what transpired beneath the manse. Lord Erard returns and offers each of them a golden torque bearing the insignia of the Loga family. This torque is worth 500 gp, but when the characters return to their own time, the historic and antique value of the items triple. In addition, Lord Erard also offers some of his household's treasures: a heavy silver ring set with a square-cut carnelian that is a *ring of spell storing* (it presently has no spells stored within it), and a spear crafted of one seamless piece of engraved steel (a *spear +1*).

Privately, he gives Joln a sack of 100 pp; a beautiful, gold-threaded scarf (that functions as a *ring of protection*) to Arbasa; and for Sir Varral, the promise of a pilgrimage and offering in honor of Thyr.

The Loga family and household are weary and heart sore, but they have weathered the worst. In their future, the family would rise to prominence in the Kingdom of Foere if this past were the one that had transpired, but in reality the line diminished and fell on hard times, being absorbed in the County of Barresque by the time of the characters.

1d6 Node Effect

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | As <i>charm person</i> (character considers the Node and its allies as friends) |
| 2 | As <i>confusion</i> |
| 3 | As <i>sleep</i> (affects up to 10d8 hit points of creatures) |
| 4 | As <i>levitate</i> |
| 5 | As <i>fog cloud</i> centered on the Node |
| 6 | As <i>darkness</i> centered on the Node |

Cnid (**cloaker**) remains hidden above as long as possible, using its *moan* and *phantasms* abilities to weaken and disrupt the characters

Chapter Five: The Murder of The Blessed

After the Sieur Saymere presents his gifts — victory seemingly in hand — the murderers strike. While the characters are in another room or another part of the manse, Xola'am (see **Dramatis Personae**) telepathically goads his puppets into action. While Sir Varral is in the dining room relaxing after a satisfying meal and sipping wine with Joln, the imp overwhelms Arbasa with the thought that Sir Varral's soul is on the brink of damnation, that one more encounter like this will condemn him for eternity, and that the only way to save him is to kill him. The poor woman dons gloves and then applies her poisonous extract to them. She enters the dining room, places her poisoned hands on either side of Sir Varral's face and kisses him deeply. The poison takes effect 1 minute later.

Meanwhile, the imp's telepathic sendings coerced Joln into dousing Sir Varral's cloth napkin in his own poison. When Sir Varral dabs his mouth, he inadvertently inhales the deadly fumes. Wanting to be sure of his kill, Xola'am (as Dari the raccoon) has been riding on the doomed man's shoulder. When the imp sees Sir Varral's reaction to the poisoned napkin, he drives his claws (poisoned with the venom of his own stinger) into the back of Sir Varral's neck, injecting him with again with poison.

The characters see none of this, but they do hear the hideous shriek of the dying man. When they get into the dining room, they find him alone and flailing on the floor. The others have all departed the room unseen. Sir Varral is dead within seconds. He has four different poisons coursing through his body. The characters are unable to save him.

The characters have exactly 1 minute to examine the body. By doing so, they can uncover the following information. Each attempted check listed requires 1 round.

- A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the purpled welts left by Arbasa's extract on the paladin's cheeks in the shape of five slender fingers on each side. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check notes the telltale mark of lipstick on his lips where Arbasa kissed him. A character making a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Medicine) check is able to identify the type of poison that caused it.
- A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check uncovers the deep and angry wounds left by Dari's claws. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check may reveal that these wounds are coated in poison.
- A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check also reveals the bitter-smelling, stained linen napkin clutched in the knight's hand. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals mottled, black smudges in and under Sir Varral's nose, the residue of the poisonous fumes. A character making a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Medicine) check identifies the type of poison on the body as the same as on the napkin. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, however, detects a subtle aroma of some other stench clinging to the napkin. If this odor is detected, a DC 13 Intelligence check identifies it as the lingering smell of cheroot smoke.
- Finally, a character making a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check sees that Sir Varral has amazingly bloodshot eyes and swollen glands. A character making a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check recognizes the symptoms of poisoning that would have had to have been ingested a full day earlier to take effect now.

When the 1-minute time limit is up, the world once again goes black around the characters, and they find themselves on the covered bridge where they started.

Incident at Saymere River Bridge

Once again, you find yourself on the covered bridge where you began, though it is not as you have seen it before. The ends of the accursed span stretch as far as you can see in either direction, lost in infinite space. It no longer rests in a wooded valley across a tranquil stream. Rather, the bridge hangs suspended in a night-blue sky, the star-strewn cosmos whirling slowly around it. A dark figure approaches, the rod he uses as a cane thumping rhythmically on the wooden surface.



The Verdict

If the characters Guess Wrongly

This would be any answer to Sir Varral's question other than naming all four of the suspects as guilty of his murder. If this occurs, the suspects look immensely relieved. The **spectre** of Sir Varral, however, becomes enraged. He casts imprecations at the characters, and the dead attack. The semblance of life drops away from Arbasa, Joln, and Turo, and they attack as 3 **ghasts**. The illusion of Xola'am (in raccoon form) runs around the bridge chattering gleefully and staying out of the way, exulting in the misery he has wrought. This is merely a representation. The imp himself is alive and well to this day, continuing in his mission to vex and condemn the feeble mortals of the Material Plane.

Development: Obviously, not discovering the true murderers leads to a very dark place for the characters. If some manage to survive, they reappear on the bridge with little or nothing to show for it. Even if the characters defeat these undead horrors, the mystery remains unsolved. The shade of Sir Varral reappears in 1d4 months, continuing to lead unsuspecting travelers to their doom and anguishing over his own demise.

If the Characters Guess Correctly

However, if the characters correctly accuse all of the killers, the spectre of Sir Varral smiles beatifically, and a glorious sun appears among the stars. Dari the raccoon transforms into the imp that he is, and he and the others cry out in agony and relief, fading away into nothingness. The sun grows so bright that the characters are blinded ... then it diminishes and the characters find themselves back on the covered bridge in their own time.

The shade of Sir Varral stands before them, peace and calm suffusing his face. He looks gratefully at each of the characters and says, "For these long years I have suffered an agony beyond knowing. Betrayal, grief, and maddening indignation had etched themselves into my soul. But you — you! — have delivered me from myself. You have saved me. Thank you, my friends. Beyond all measure, may you be blessed."

With that, he reaches out and draws something on each of their palms. Placing all of their palms together reveals a magically drawn map that leads them to his tomb: a beautiful granite structure hidden in the hills not far to the west. In Sir Varral's sarcophagus, the characters find his remains and his armor, now +1 *plate mail*, a worthy reward for their labors.

Further Adventures

If your players have enjoyed their time questing in the Saymere Valley on behalf of the spectral paladin, other tasks remain unfinished that you could build further adventures on if you wish.

The Tomb of Sir Varral: Perhaps the journey to the tomb and reclamation of his treasures isn't as easy as all that. Giving Sir Varral his final rest may agitate a tribe of duergar who reside beneath the valley and consider the tomb of the paladin to be their own trophy. For the characters, claiming their prize may become an adventure in itself.

The Imp: The murder of Sir Varral at the hands of his own compatriots was a huge coup for the forces of Hell, and Xola'am has prospered greatly in the 400 years since. Now that the characters have uncovered the truth, they may seek to bring justice to the little devil (who may not be such a little devil anymore, having been promoted through the ranks of devilkind). Worse yet, Xola'am may become aware that the characters freed Sir Varral's spectre from his torment and decide to come calling, perhaps with some infernal henchmen of his own.

The characters return to the bridge fully rested and with their full complement of spells, hit points, etc. Any resources that they used during the adventure are gone, however. The approaching figure is the **spectre** of Sir Varral et-Casan, now cursed to undeath by the nature of his foul betrayal and murder. He looks the same as he did when the characters originally encountered him, though if they look carefully they can see the stars shining dimly through his body. Sir Varral's eyes are no longer full of hope; they seethe with righteous indignation.

When he reaches the characters, Sir Varral asks them a single, tense question, "In whose hand did the poison lie?" and looks back along bridge. Four other figures approach: the Lady Arbasa, drooping with grief and anguish; Joln, hanging his head and refusing to look anyone in the eye; and Turo Loga, looking pale and confused. Dari the raccoon rides silently on Arbasa's shoulder.

When they near, the spectre of Sir Varral turns back to the characters:

"Centuries foregone, I was most foully murdered, struck down in my prime by a spiteful and malevolent hand. I cannot — will not — rest until the murderer is named. Heaven is denied me so long as my murderer escapes justice. For weary and countless years I have drawn those I thought could help me into my world and shown them my ruin, hoping beyond hope that one of them could unmask my assassin. For weary and countless years I have found nothing but disappointment. Those who failed me have paid with their lives."

As he says this, the spectre gestures to the planks of the bridge and their peculiar ornamentation of score-marks.

"You have walked through my past. You have witnessed my death. The guilty party," he says, pointing at his ghastly companions, "stands before you. I beg of you; name for me my murderer. Release me — us — from this endless torment. Tell me, tell me, tell me who it is."

After delivering his monologue, Sir Varral then waits for the characters' answer. Spells such as *commune* or *legend lore* have no effect in guiding their decision; the characters must figure this out on their own based on the clues they have uncovered.

They may question the suspects as much as you see fit, though the truthfulness and completeness of the answers are up to you. Allow the characters to make Wisdom (Insight) checks when questioning the suspects, but keep in mind how much is actually revealed when a successful check is made. None of them comes out and confesses to the crime.

The answer to the dilemma, of course, is that all of them — Arbasa, Joln, Turo, and Dari (Xola'am) — are guilty of killing Sir Varral the Blessed. Several pieces of information that the characters may have gleaned should help them determine that this is true:

- The sheer number of score-marks on the bridge is a clue. Each score-mark represents someone who tried and failed to discover the truth. With only four options to choose from, chance alone should have named the killer. After all those attempts, the answer must not be an obvious one.
- Joln and Arbasa both appear to be weighed down with guilt. Even the homicidal lunatic Turo Loga seems distressed.
- Four different types of poison were used, indicating four possible murderers.
- The many clues and inferences that the characters doubtlessly picked up during their interactions with the suspects at the Manse Loga.

Appendix A: New Creatures and NPCs

Allip

This malignant cloud of shadows boils in the air; its skeletal maw eerily babbling as the creature's claws manifest from the darkness.

Allip

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed fly 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 6 (-2) | 13 (+1) | 13 (+1) | 11 (+0) | 11 (+0) | 16 (+3) |

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Deep Speech

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Babble. The allip incoherently mutters to itself, creating a hypnotic effect. All creatures within 30 ft. that aren't incapacitated must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature becomes charmed for the duration. While charmed by this spell, the creature is incapacitated and has a speed of 0. The effect ends for an affected creature if it takes any damage or if someone else uses an action to shake the creature out of its stupor.

Madness. Anyone targeting an allip with a spell or effect that would make direct contact with its tortured mind must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or take 7 (2d6) points of psychic damage.

Actions

Touch of Insanity. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) psychic damage.

Amphisbaena

This creature appears as a huge snake with a head at each end of its body. Its scales are blackish-blue with bands of lighter blue fading into its coloration near the middle of its body. Its heads are glossy-black and its eyes are crimson.

Amphisbaena

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 60 (8d10 + 16)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| 17(+3) | 15(+2) | 14(+2) | 2(-4) | 12(+1) | 2(-4) |

Skills Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages --

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Split. The amphisbaena functions normally even if cut in half. If dealt a critical hit with a slashing weapon, the creature is cut in half but continues to function as two separate creatures, each with half of the original amphisbaena's current hit points. The split amphisbaena can rejoin its two halves after completing a short or long rest. If one of the split creatures is slain, the amphisbaena can regrow the lost portion over the course of several weeks (1d4 + 2 weeks).

Actions

Multiattack. The amphisbaena makes two bite attacks (one with each head).

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 hour.

Angel, Lantern Archon

Shedding a warm and calming radiance, this orb of light moves with a preternatural silence and otherworldly grace.

Lantern Archon Angel

Small celestial, lawful good

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 13 (3d6 + 3)

Speed fly 60 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 11 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 11 (+0) | 16 (+3) |

Saving Throws Dex +2, Con +3

Skills Insight +2, Perception +4

Damage Resistances radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages all, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The lantern archon's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). The lantern archon can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components:

At will: *continual flame*, *detect evil and good*, *invisibility* (self only)

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

Actions

Multiattack. The lantern archon makes two ranged spell attacks with its light rays.

Light Rays. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) radiant damage.

QUESTS OF DOOM 4

Decapus

This creature is a large spheroid with ten octopus-like tentacles protruding from its body. Hair grows in broken patches along its body. Its eyes are stark white and pupil-less. Its large mouth sports long, yellow fangs.

Decapus

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 10 ft., climb 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 14(+2) | 13(+1) | 15(+2) | 10(+0) | 10(+0) | 8(-1) |

Skills Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Deep Speech, Sylvan

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Brachiation. A decapus can move through trees at its base climb speed (30 feet per round) by using its tentacles to swing from tree to tree. Trees used by the decapus in this manner can be no further than 10 feet apart.

Mimicry. The decapus can mimic any sounds it has heard, including voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check.

Actions

Multiattack. The decapus makes four tentacle attacks.

Tentacle. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (2d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 13) and restrained until the grapple ends. The decapus has many tentacles but can only grapple two targets maximum at any given time.

Hippopotamus

This massive creature has gray hide and an overlarge mouth with teeth large enough to tear through the hull of a small boat.

Hippopotamus

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 76 (9d10 + 27)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| 19(+4) | 10(+0) | 16(+3) | 2(-4) | 12(+1) | 4(-3) |

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages --

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Hold Breath. The hippopotamus can hold its breath for up to 1 hour.

Keen Smell. The hippopotamus has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Trample. If the hippopotamus moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a slam attack, 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The hippopotamus makes one bite attack and one slam attack.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (3d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Murder Crow

This creature appears to be a crow about 4 feet tall. Its feathers are tattered, blood-soaked, and matted against its rotting form. A decaying stench emanates from it as it circles overhead.

Murder Crow

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 71 (13d8 + 13)

Speed 10 ft., fly 60 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 12 (+1) | 18 (+4) | 13 (+1) | 2 (-4) | 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) |

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +4

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages --

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Death Throes. When the murder crow dies, it explodes into a murder of crows. These smaller swarms continue to relentlessly attack all living creatures within sight. Use the statistics for a **swarm of ravens** for the murder of crows.

Actions

Multiattack. The murder crow makes three melee attacks: two with its claws and one with its bite.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (2d6 + 1) piercing damage.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d8 + 1) slashing damage.

Eye Rake. If the murder crow hits a target with both claw attacks in the same turn, the creature must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded as the Lord of Crows scratches and tears at the target's eyes. The blindness can be removed if a character spends their action to attend to the blinded target, and makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check, or by a lesser restoration spell.

THE COVERED BRIDGE

Peryton

This creature has a stag's body, a hawk's wings and talons, and the head of a slavering wolf with a rack of sharp antlers on its brow.

Peryton

Medium monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 17(+3) | 16(+3) | 17(+3) | 11(+0) | 12(+1) | 10(+0) |

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands Common but cannot speak

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Dive. If the peryton is flying and dives at least 30 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with either its gore attack or with its talons, the attack does an extra 9 (2d8) damage to the target.

Flyby. The peryton doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of the reach of an enemy.

Keen Sight and Smell. The peryton has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight or smell.

Actions

Multiattack. The peryton makes one gore attack and one talon attack.

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Vargouille

Hideous, disgusting, and vile, vargouilles stream out of the Abyssal plane. Little more than a severed head with bat wings, these fiends carry a potent disease that perpetuates their abominable kind.

Vargouille

Tiny fiend, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armour)

Hit Points 13 (3d4 + 6)

Speed 5 ft., 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 6 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 4 (-3) | 7 (-2) | 2 (-4) |

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages understands Abyssal and Infernal, and any languages it knew before becoming a fiend, but is unable to speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage.

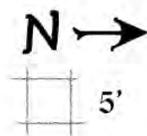
Demon's Kiss. If an incapacitated target is within 5 feet of the vargouille, the vargouille can kiss that creature, which must succeed on a DC 12 Charisma saving throw or become cursed. The cursed target loses 1 point of Charisma at the end of each hour, as its facial features take on a fiendish aspect. The curse held at bay by direct sunlight or the *daylight* spell. Once the cursed target's Charisma drops to 2, it suffers an excruciating, violent death from its head tearing from its body to become a new vargouille. The curse can only be ended by a *remove curse* or *greater restoration* spell. The physical changes are undone when the curse ends through these means.

Stunning Shriek. The vargouille unleashes a piercing shriek. Creatures within 30 feet of the vargouille that hears the shriek must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened and stunned until the end of the vargouille's next turn. While frightened in this way, a target is stunned. If the creature's saving throw is successful, then it is immune to the vargouille shrieks for the next 1 hour.

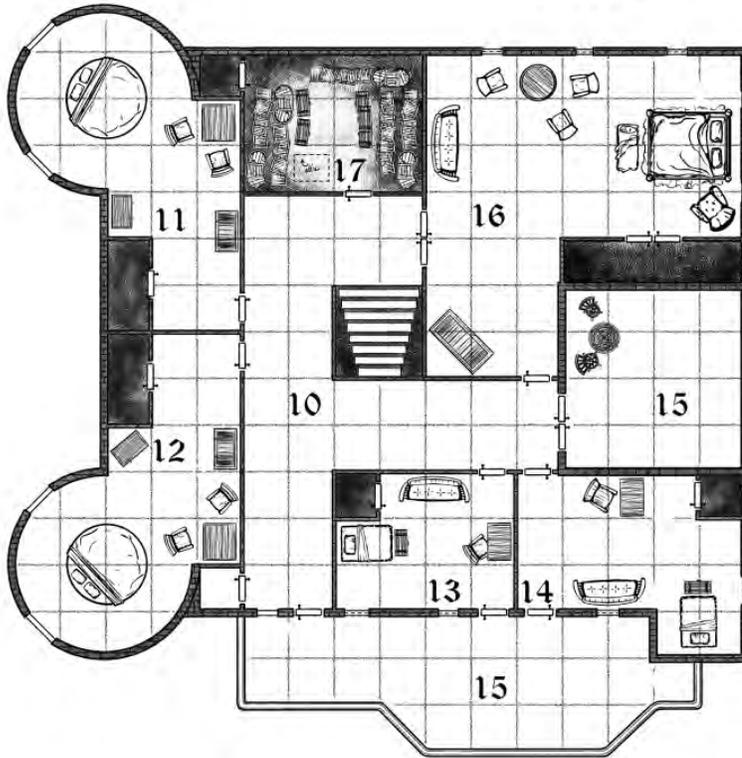
The Manse Loga



- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. Front Porch | 4. Receiving Room | 7. Dining Room |
| 2. Side Porches | 5. Ballroom | 8. Kitchen |
| 3. Grand Hall | 6. Library | 9. Pantry |

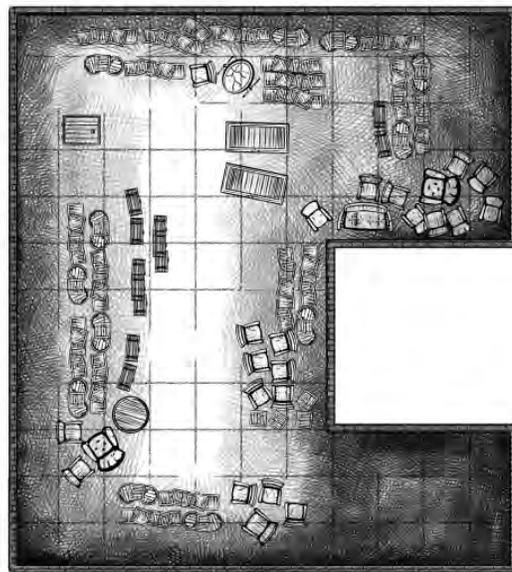


The Manse Loga



2nd Floor
Ceiling Height 8'

- 10. Hallway
- 11. SW Bedroom
- 12. SE Bedroom
- 13. East Bedroom
- 14. NE Bedroom
- 15. Balcony
- 16. Master Bedroom
- 17. Storage



Attic
Ceiling Heights

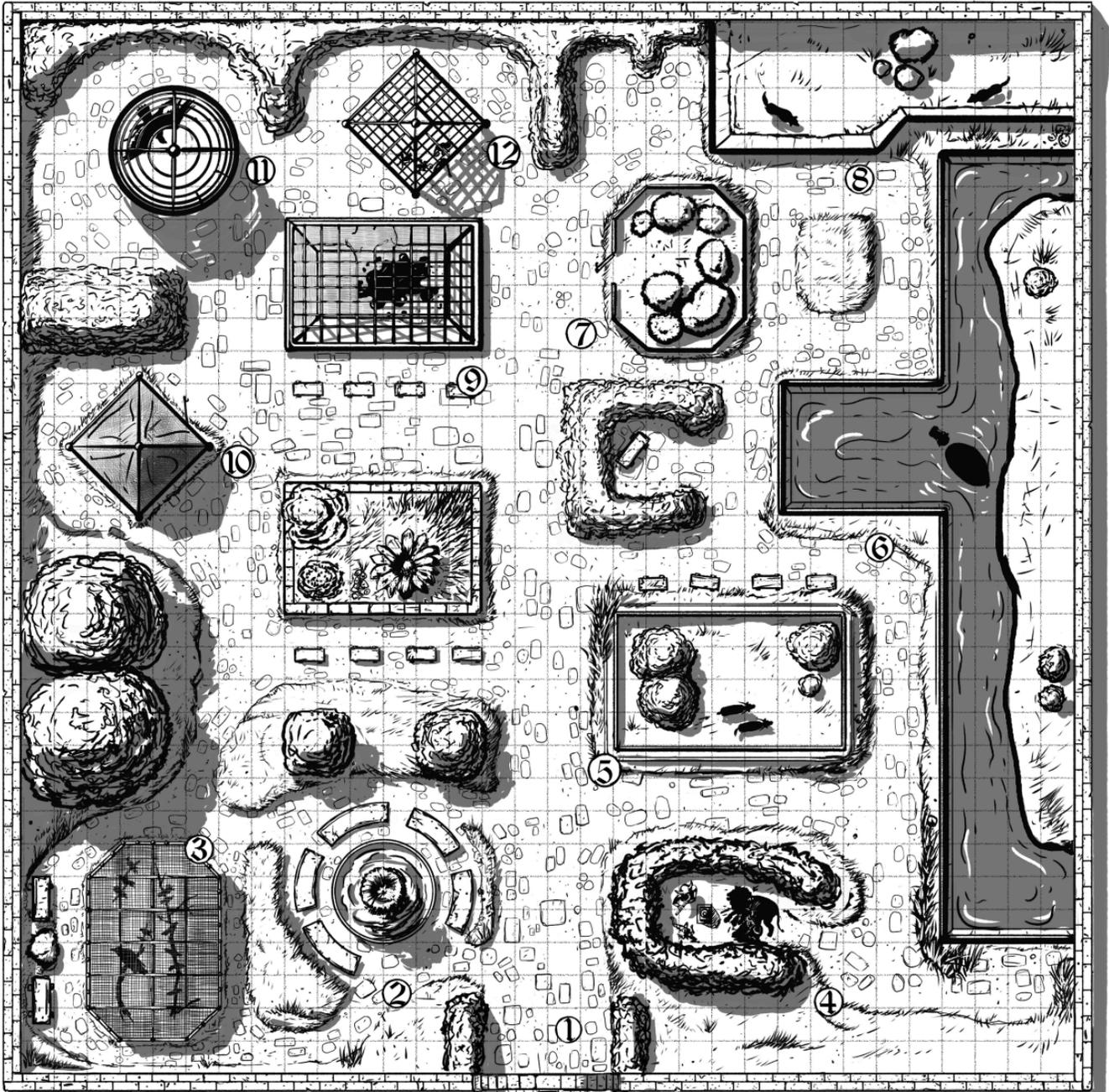
□ 15'

■ 3'

N →

□ 5'

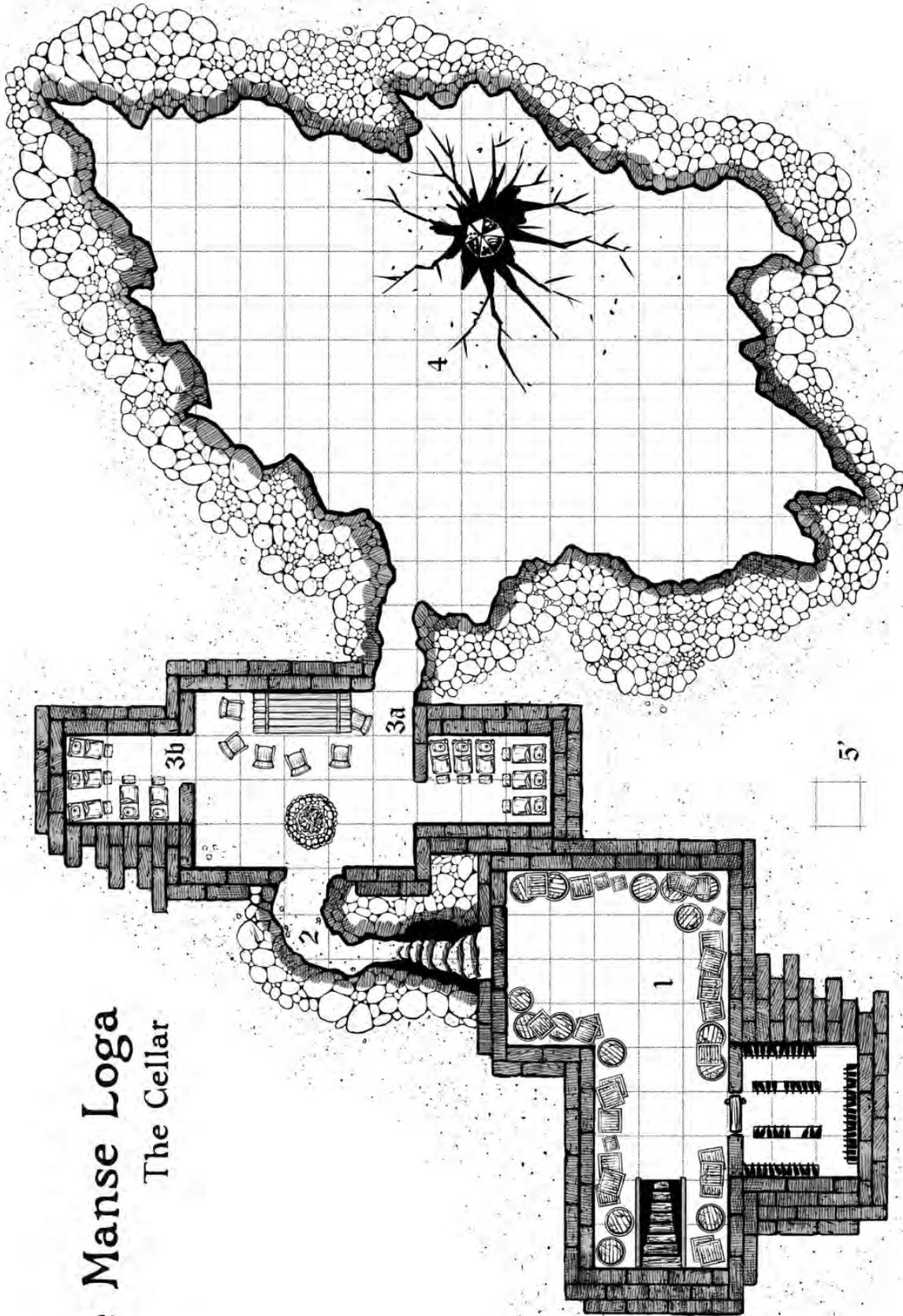
The Menagerie



- 1. Entrance
- 2. Fountain
- 3. Aviary
- 4. Shrine

- 5. Oryx
- 6. Hippopotamus
- 7. Amphisbaena
- 8. Wolves

- 9. Broken Cage
- 10. Bat Roost
- 11. Blood Hawks
- 12. Monkeys



The Manse Loga
The Cellar

QUESTS OF DOOM 4

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Author: Kevin Wright

QoD4c

Quests of Doom 4

The Covered Bridge

The Covered Bridge is an adventure designed for a party of four to six characters of 4th to 6th level.

Some four hundred years ago, a heroic knight by the name of Varral et-Casan was poisoned, foully murdered by someone very close to him. The horrendous betrayal left Sir Varral's potent spirit unable to travel to its reward and find eternal rest.

The characters are only the latest in a long line of the spectre's victims.



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