

Quests of Doom 4

Desperation of Ivy

By Lance Hawvermale



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GAMES

Quests of Doom 4

The Desperation of Ivy

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The Desperation of Ivy

The forces of Nature have formed a barricade around an ancestral home, not to prevent intruders but instead to keep something inside from getting out. *The Desperation of Ivy* is an adventure for 4 to 6 characters of levels 3-5 that can be placed in any suitably out-of-the-way location in your campaign. However, in the **Lost Lands** campaign setting, the abandoned village of Hythe Wexshaw lies in the Cut Horn Gap near the Dehari River that forms the border between the Free Duchy of Duquesne and the Domain of Hawkmoon. The ruins of the village stand some 7 miles north of the Hawkmoon Road in the lower foothills of the Forlorn Mountains.

Adventure Background

They say the god of Nature never forgets. This deity, known today as Oon, birthed himself from nothingness by planting his own seed among the stars. His first memory was of his roots sinking deeply into the Cosmos, stealing their secrets before the beginnings of Time. Countless millennia later, one of his clerics would try in turn to steal from Oon, and the god punished the man by transforming him into a deathless creature, forced to live in misery for eternity. Yet in his wisdom, Oon did not permit his fallen priest to roam the countryside freely and write terror in the hearts of the innocent. Instead, he commanded the very plants to imprison the undead creature forever.

Of course, that entire story is nothing but a tale told by old wives. Here is what is known as fact: A once-imposing residence called Coltherstone Hold was abandoned years ago, and in the decades since, a fantastic amount of vegetation has grown up the walls and rooftops, covering the structure. Many of the plants are dangerous — deadly, even — and reclaiming the hold will require more than just a few machetes to chop down some weeds. Much worse, a few of the plant specimens possess intelligence as well as an undo degree of malevolence. They've infested a nearby village — all but burying it in overgrowth — and have absorbed a few villagers along the way.

Starting the Adventure

The characters can enter the story in a variety of ways:

- In a previous quest, they found a deed to Coltherstone Hold and have come to claim it as their own to use as base of operations. (Such a document can be found in the adventure *A Midnight Council of Quail*).
- They've been employed by a concerned relative to find a missing family member in the village near the hold.
- They come upon the place purely by chance, and curiosity compels them to explore.

In reality, the rumors about the god Oon and an evil priest are mostly false. But as in most fiction, a core of truth can be found in those outlandish tales. A defrocked cleric was indeed transformed into an undead creature due to malign acts, and many years ago, his heartbroken family members sealed him within the hold's basement. Over time, the hold was abandoned. For centuries, it served as the manse of many important families, but by and by, they departed and left the great old building to its fate. Perhaps as the result of a druid's collateral magic, the surrounding vegetation grew to unnatural proportions, all but smothering the hold. The ivy is so comprehensive in its coverage that it seems as if it's intent on trapping something inside — and that something is the undead creature formerly known as Almeric, rector of the local parish.

Coltherstone Hold

A green mass of ivy completely encases Coltherstone Hold. So much of this verdant plant covers the building that the once-beautiful stonework is visible only in patches here and there. The windows and doors are completely obscured. The two-story structure retains its former shape, but otherwise it is unrecognizable.

Tightly woven together, the vines prove a serious blockade to anyone hoping to steal a curious look inside. Getting into Coltherstone means chopping at the ivy, and that takes time and not a small amount of effort. The ivy is so old that its main stems are several inches thick, as formidable as the ropes on a great sailing vessel. Some of the leaves are the size of parasols. Likewise, the property around Coltherstone is overgrown with rampant foliage. No discernable path leads to the house; visitors must wade through knee-high weeds and prickly brambles.

The characters have a few options for entering the hold:

Doors: The doors allow ground-level entry to **Areas 2, 3, and 11**. However, getting these doors entirely clear of vegetation so that they can be opened requires sufficient slashing or chopping weapons and 30 minutes of work. The noise alerts the shroom in **Area 15** and everyone else occupying the lower level, as well as the ophidian that are on the roof.

Windows: Nearly every window is smashed, the glass entirely gone, with cable-like vines snaking in and out of the openings. The characters may climb through any window on the first or second level. However, there is a 50% chance that any particular window is guarded by a **blood bush** (see **Appendix A**).

Roof: Because of the ivy, the walls are easily climbed with a successful DC 7 Strength (Athletics) check. The characters might also use magic to reach the rooftop. In either case, a tribe of **ophidian** (see **Appendix A**) who climbed the ivy and now make their home in the thick foliage on the roof attack ascending characters.

The ophidians drop heavy stones on anyone trying to climb all the way to the roof. These round rocks weigh 20 lbs. The rocks are +6 to hit and inflict 9 (2d8) points of damage, which can be avoided with a successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save the climber falls to the ground taking 1d6 points of falling damage for every 10 feet fallen. Other ophidian tactics include dropping venomous snakes onto climbers, or waiting until someone sticks his head above the roofline and then attacking as a group.

The thatch-roof huts of the ophidians contain spears, knives, and slings, along with plenty of food. They've also managed to amass 41 gp and 83 sp, though these coins are scattered throughout their huts and require at least an hour to collect. If the characters conduct a particularly thorough search, they also find a waterskin holding two doses of a *potion of heroism*.

The ophidians have cut a hole in the roof. A woven vine rope permits access to **Area 19**.

The Status Quo Within

The ivy has invaded the hold's interior through shattered windows and cracks in the walls. Unless otherwise noted, a matting of leaves and vines cover the walls, floor, and ceilings of all rooms and are considered difficult terrain, reducing movement rates by half.

Four main factions with which the characters might interact are within the hold:

Redwraith: Known as Almeric when he was alive and serving as the local rector, this undead horror is trapped in **Area 31** for his crimes. He cannot escape ... unless the characters open the door.

Shroom: This mysterious, intelligent, and evil fungal humanoid is a recent inhabitant, having been drawn here by the abundant plant life. The shroom has an innate kinship with plants and holds magical sway over

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them, so Coltherstone is a natural fit. The shroom — whose actual name is unpronounceable — only just arrived and has not explored much of the hold. It is located in **Area 15**.

Mushroom Men: The enigmatic mushroom men found Coltherstone a welcome place after the plants invaded, and they have lived here for the last two years. They've turned several rooms into a colony. The mushroom men are not inherently aggressive, and they deal with the characters as neutral traders, unless they are provoked to violence, in which case they respond assertively. They occupy three rooms, all of which are labeled as **Area 24**.

Ophidians: Having set up camp on the rooftop, these serpentine beings enjoy the rich plant life that grows there. They use the ivy as a ladder, and their elevated community has so far proven itself easy to defend.

1. Sagging Porch

Coltherstone Hold features two large porches, on the north and south sides of the building. Both have fallen victim to the ivy's heavy encroachment.

What used to be a grand veranda is now on the verge of collapse. The porch floor has buckled under a thick layer of vegetation, and long green runners hang down from the drooping ceiling. Honeybees and other insects delight in the many flowers, most of which are bright sunflowers and thistle.

The pleasant-looking patch of sunflowers contains a **cobra flower** (see **Appendix A**) that attacks anyone who attempts to cross the porch.

While combating the **cobra flower**, the characters have a 50% chance of drawing the attention of either the spiderweed in **Area 8** or the shroom in **Area 15**, depending on which porch they're occupying.

2. Cloak Room

This foyer contains racks, pegs, and hangers on either side. Long ago, guests hung their garments here, but now the ivy has woven itself through the hooks and shelves and tied them up in knots. Trapped behind the ivy are half a dozen coats and shawls, almost all of them damaged by



moisture, time, and hungry insects. One, though, is still clearly intact, a dun-colored cape pinned against the wall by leafy vines. The cape is long enough to drag the ground when worn by anyone shorter than 6ft, 4in tall. When tied around the shoulders of any humanoid, the cape changes color every turn, from black to beige to blue to red. This color shift happens every 10 minutes, but the pattern is entirely random, so the wearer never knows what hue is coming next. The cape has no other magical properties. It was crafted many years in the past at the behest of a fashion-minded family member whose name has been lost to antiquity.

3. Dining Hall

The plants have made this once-spacious room all but impassible. Resilient vines crisscross from wall to wall and from floor to ceiling. The room's chandelier was ensnared with *continual light*, and though the place fell into ruin, the artificial sunshine remains, bathing these plants in a warm and healthy glow. Green runners wrap around the large dining table, practically tying the chairs to one another. If the characters peer through the few openings, they see a large chest beneath the table, mostly obscured. Hacking through this room forces the characters to move at 10% their usual movement rates. Along the way, they draw the attention of an **assassin vine** (see **Appendix A**).

In order to grab and crush its prey, the assassin vine animates the other plants in the room if the characters try to force their way through the thick foliage. These plants seize and trap intruders unless the characters make a saving throw and quickly retreat the way they came.

The chest under the table is locked and contains the family silver: 14 place settings of silver in need of a polish, including plates, bowls, flacons, and flatware. Each setting weighs 3 lbs. and can fetch 50 gp on the market due to the antique nature of the pieces.

4. Kitchen

This kitchen is unlike other rooms in the hold in that no living plants can be found here. Other than a few dried and brown ivy strands, there is no sign of vegetation — which should strike the characters as strange considering that the rest of building has been all but overrun. The kitchen contains a 400-lb. butcher's block engraved with the name *Olin*, one of the family chefs. Also located here is a doublewide iron oven, an insulated wooden chest designed to store ice blocks cut from the nearby pond, and racks of dusty cookware.

The dead ivy and generally clean state of this room are due to a natural herbicide slowly being released by an earthenware crock in the oven. This lidded container contains a combination of old food, rot grubs, and green slime. Accidentally converging in the crock, these substances combined into a foul, airborne toxin that is fatal to plant life. The crock's contents may be used to kill a limited number of plants in the hold, though the effects take several hours to manifest. At your discretion, the fumes can adversely affect druids, clerics of nature deities, and elves, forcing characters to succeed on DC 11 Constitution saving throws. On failure, characters are poisoned and suffer headaches for 10 minutes, followed by vomiting and general unease for the remainder of the day (12 hours).

5. Northeast Stairwell

Stairs lead up to **Area 25** on the second level. A butler's pantry is also here, though the wooden credenza is water-damaged and coated in slimy mold. Vines run from the dining room across the floor and up the stairs, while a wild rose bush that thrust its way partially inside smashed the glass on the window to the south. The flowers are huge and scarlet in color, the thorns 3in long.

6. Bay Window

Padded benches and comfortable pillows once permitted Coltherstone residents to sit and gaze upon the gardens through large and impressive windows — all of which are now gone, other than a few sharp chips

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remaining in the window frames. Exceptionally thick vines have infiltrated the open windows and grabbed hold of the chair legs as if holding them captive. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a brass spyglass clutched vigorously in multiple coils of vines. This telescope was used to observe the surrounding countryside. Though it isn't magical, it's an antique and quite functional. However, the vines have tied it up tightly, so liberating it will require several minutes of hard work from the characters: sawing, tugging, and swearing. The spyglass is worth 100 gp.

7. Corner Portrait

A painting hangs here and remains in relatively good condition despite the ambient moisture. This portrait depicts a lovely half-elven woman of middle age and somewhat regal bearing. She wears a dove-shaped choker encrusted with pearls. Mounted to the gilded frame is a brass plaque that bears the woman's name, *Rochilda*.

Of the many people who have occupied Coltherstone Hold through the years, Rochilda is one of the few whose name has survived, and only because of the thoughtful inclusion of the painting's plaque. In reality, she was not an exceptionally important or wealthy woman, but she happened to be the mistress of the home when it fell on hard times and was abandoned. Rochilda is buried in the glass casket in **Area 34**.

The portrait is worth at least 300 gp to art dealers. If the characters remove the painting and intentionally search the wall behind it, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the hidden secret doors. If successful, the characters can pivot the wall outward to reveal space 10 feet wide and 25 feet deep containing 6d6 bolts of exotic, imported fabric, each one worth 100 gp. Though at first this may not appear to the characters to be a breathtaking treasure, in fact these exquisite fabrics are rarer than jewels. Included here are worsted wools from the sheep of isles that have since sunk beneath the waves, drider silk, silver brocade, golden-hued elven damask, and others. Each bolt weighs between 10 and 60 lbs., except for a roll of white linen that has been magically treated to be weightless, so that clothing as light as air can be fashioned from it by a master tailor.

8. False Spider

Long ago, this room was apparently a study or private library, as hundreds of books remain, yet thin vines with bright red flowers cross the shelves. A remarkable number of flying insects have landed on these flowers or hover around them, creating a rather loud collective buzzing sound. Like the shelves, vines entwine the desk, so inspecting the books or the contents of the desk require you to brave the insects and chop through the plants. Other identifiable items in the green strands include a padded reading chair and a small bar where several bottles and glasses are covered in dust.

If the characters take a few steps into the room, what looks to be a large spider emerges from the vines near the ceiling. The spider is about 3 feet across and uses the vines as if they were webs. In reality, this is no arachnid at all, but rather a **spiderweed** (see **Appendix A**). Though a single spiderweed likely poses little threat to a well-armed party, its position near the ceiling makes it difficult to strike with melee weapons given the profusion of vines. If attacked with a missile weapon or magic, it scurries into a weed-ball lair on the far side of the desk.

The characters may choose to explore various items in the room:

The Desk: The desk's knee hole serves as the spiderweed's nest. The vines that hold the desk drawers in place are coated in the spiderweed's sticky sap, forcing anyone who handles them to make a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw or suffer from the sap's painful effects. All but one of the desk drawers are empty, and it contains an excellent quill-

and-ink set worth 200 gp. The pen's nib is plated in gold, and the colorful feather is from a couatl's wing.

The Books: The insects are at their thickest here, proving to be a serious irritant. There are 621 books in all. Common subjects include travelogues, risqué fiction, arts and crafts, and dry family epics. You should invent a few unique titles to supplement these examples:

Calculus and My Other Lovers by the halfling mathematician Golanni Breembucket. This charming textbook is a treatise on higher-level math but also contains the author's unflatteringly caricatures of people he has met, including many well-known NPCs from the GM's own campaign world.

Magical Weapon No. 4, Second Attempt by Hjonmir Falsoson and Antordox the Augmented. This slender volume provides step-by-step instructions on how a magic-user and a weaponsmith can combine their talents to create a weapon called a *sword of winter's longing*. A few of the ingredients for the sword include iron from a frozen peat bog, forge coals from an efreeti's lantern, and a kiss from the North Wind. The process to create and enchant the sword requires 4 months of continuous work. You should assign specific properties to the sword if the characters are intent on forging it.

My Diary, Volume Two: Life in Hythe Wexshaw by Emblyn Falsdottir. The daughter of a local smith, young Emblyn recorded nearly every event of her girlhood, from the time she was able to write until leaving the hold at age 13. Her stories are full of hyperbole typical of a person her age, but there is value in skimming through her heavy-handed prose. In elaborate detail, Emblyn describes an old lakeside shack she used as a playhouse, noting its bright green roof and multitude of wind chimes. If the characters remember her description while visiting Hythe Wexshaw, they'll know to follow Emblyn's instructions and check in a hollow table leg to find "my dearest treasure" when they come upon the shack at **Area G**.

The Wet Bar: Though most of the vintage were removed when the last family finally departed the hold, they left behind dozens of pieces of glassware, service trays, and three intact bottles. The contents of one of these has spoiled over time, the result of a poorly placed cork. The second bottle, labeled *Kaun's Finest* is a dry sherry quite pleasing to the palette but not exceptionally expensive. The third bottle, from Totem Elf Vineyards, is 23 years old and incredibly rare, as ogres raided the vineyard in question a decade ago, razing its buildings and slaughtering its vintners. This wine is worth 450 gp.

The Chair: Though it seems to be a slightly worn but nonetheless comfortable place to sit and read, this is actually the *chair of the ancestors* (see **Appendix C**). The characters are likely to overlook its value unless specifically searching it for a magical aura.

9. The Way Down

This cellar door permits access to a stairway going down to **Area 29**, built below the stairs that wind up to the second floor and **Area 16**. The door is decorated with a stonework letter "C" that hangs from a wire so rusty with moisture that it breaks if the door is opened, causing the letter to hit the floor and shatter.

10. The Way Up

This set of wooden stairs, once elegant but now damp and covered in mold and mushrooms, curves up to **Area 16** on Coltherstone's second level. The heavy newel post, having been moistened from dripping water, is covered in a teal-colored moss. Each ascending baluster is likewise coated, albeit in varying hues, making the staircase look like a strange and brightly painted piece of artwork.

At the top of the stairs is a 4-foot toadstool known as a **shrieker**. Anyone moving up the stairs sees the toadstool before coming within 10 feet and causing it to erupt into an ear-splitting siren, but whether or not they identify it is another story. The piercing sound causes 1 point of damage to anyone within 30 feet who fails a saving throw, and, much worse, it alerts everyone in the hold that interlopers are afoot. All residents respond accordingly.

11. Briar Blockade

This once-grand entrance hall is filled with sharp brambles that have pushed up through cracks in the parquet marble floor and overtaken the entire area. The thorny bushes are 18 inches high. Anyone not wearing armor who forces his way through sustains 1 point of damage per 10 feet traveled. The briar patch may be burned away, or the characters can spend time chopping the plants and clearing a path; this requires 1 round per 5 feet square. Any activity here alerts the shroom in **Area 15**.

12. Ruined Equipment

Moisture caused the door to this closet to swell, and it is now sufficiently stuck in its jamb as to require a successful DC 12 Strength check to open. If the door is opened, water runs out across the floor, having pooled here due to a leaky floor in **Area 19** on the second level. A former master of the hold once stored riding and trekking gear here: multiple pairs of boots for different activities, a selection of riding crops, along with walking-sticks, sun hats, and miscellaneous leather gear. All of it is now damp, moist, and coated in moss and muck. In particular, **green slime** (see **Appendix B**) covers a few items. Anything organic or made of metal that comes into contact with this substance must make a saving throw or be transformed into green slime.

13. Watchtower

On the southwest corner of the hold is a tower that looks out over the entangled village of Hythe Wexshaw. The characters have an uninterrupted view of the village and the lake. All six windows have been smashed and invaded by ivy. The tower is crowded with knee-high plant life, requiring the characters to chop their way through. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check locates a loaded crossbow standing near one of the open windows, completely covered in ivy. It is loaded with a +2 *crossbow bolt*. Other items in the ivy's grip include an oversized signal lantern, a bugle once used to sound alerts, and a dead ophidian who was trapped helplessly in the vines.

14. Junk Corner

Over the years, different generations used this area for storage, piling up and then removing goods, only to pile up some more a few years later. These crates, easels, mannequins, and bags of clothing have no real value, though you should enliven the selection with interesting objects from your own campaign.

15. The Master Shroom

The shroom's level of readiness depends on whether or not the characters have announced their approach by the volume of their actions. If the shroom knows that intruders are advancing, it commands the multitude of plants in this room to gather around it in a natural-looking way, gaining full concealment. If caught unawares, the shroom is ordering the plants about, and they obey fully, rushing from side to side like a strange green tide as the shroom investigates the room. Either way, the **shroom** (see **Appendix A**) is highly intelligent and never stands face to face in combat. It uses its full resources to defend itself, commanding the surrounding plants to hold targets at bay while it casts spells.

The shroom's first action is to cast *mirror image* so that alternate shrooms appear and possibly confuse attackers. With *plant growth*, it can turn any room into a nearly impassible jungle. If it needs to escape, it casts *darkness* and retreats to the closest exit, commanding the plants behind it to thwart pursuit.

Shrooms are evil geniuses, toadstool creatures with considerable magical powers. They lurk in the deep places of the earth and in dank forests, plotting ruin against surface dwellers and scheming to gain power



for themselves by any means possible. They are highly adept with magic that influences plants, and most of them are knowledgeable in various forms of arcane study of other kinds, such as alchemy. Many, too, will surround themselves with strange minions that they have created, grown, or bred.

The shroom has only just arrived at the hold and has not yet claimed any particular room as a future lair, so it has gathered no treasure here. First, it intends to explore the breadth of the building, command the plants to do its bidding, and eliminate any potential rivals. Once a grand family room, this chamber still contains much of the old furnishings, including the usual chairs and sofas, but also a huge water clock, an impressive fireplace, and a large chandelier with almost two dozen glowing crystals bathing the room in magical light.

Water Clock: This intricate device is built into a maple cabinet that is 3 feet wide and 5 feet tall. If water is placed in the proper receptacle, it begins to drip, causing the gears to move and levers to rise and fall. The cabinet's glass door permits a full view of this clockwork operation, which keeps precise time so long as its water reservoir is replenished. If the clock is muscled outside — no small feat, given its bulk — it can be sold for as much as 500 gp.

Fireplace: A tree grows up through the hearth's stone floor, all the way up through the chimney flue to the open air of the roof, where branches sprout thick green leaves.

Chandelier: If the characters somehow get up to the ceiling to inspect the chandelier, they learn that 22 captive fairies provide the light. These inch-tall fey creatures glow constantly, like fireflies, but when closely examined, they are clearly humanoid in appearance. Being magical, they are effectively immortal, requiring no sustenance to survive. They have been imprisoned for decades. If released from their crystals, they vow eternal friendship to the characters and promise to serve them in whatever small way they can.



20. Child's Play

The walls of this room, seen in between tangles of ivy and large green leaves, are painted a bright yellow that hasn't faded with time. The ceiling is designed to look like the night sky and stars, and a mobile of flying fairies hangs down in one corner. A wooden rocking horse is trapped in an ivy net, and two small beds have been ruined by extensive plant life and the insects that live there. Ants, in particular, have claimed this space as their own. Two glass-eyed dolls are locked in an eternal embrace, along with a colorful box, yet more prisoners of the weeds.

At some point in the past, this served as a fine bedroom and playroom for children. The box can be removed from the weeds with a bit of work. A crank handle can be turned to release the box's occupant, who eventually grows impatient and leaps out on its spring even if the handle isn't turned, surprising the characters 50% of the time. The **jack-in-the-box** (see **Appendix A**) carries a *vicious dagger*.

At first glance, the room doesn't appear to contain anything of value. But characters who are especially industrious and spend at least 30 minutes hacking and yanking the plants away and succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check are rewarded for their efforts: One of the little girls who played here years ago borrowed her mother's emerald bracelet and attached it to a doll as a necklace. The bracelet is worth 270 gp.

21. A Peaceful Sleep

Countless flowers have invaded this room from the broken windows. Violets, lilacs, and dazzling roses form a sweet-smelling carpet on the floor. This used to be a fancy bedroom, but the bed has been taken over by chrysanthemums, and vines crawl up the four posters and hang down like a veil. A dressing table and mirror are barely visible through a layer of multi-colored tulips. A tall wardrobe against the wall is the only piece of furniture on which the flowers have yet to find solid purchase. The wardrobe's two doors are held closed with a delicate silver chain strung between the handles.

Though beautiful, this room can prove perilous, as a **flowerchild** (see **Appendix A**) lives on the soft moss beneath the bed. During long afternoons, the flowerchild suns itself in the beams shining through the open window, but even then it is mostly indistinguishable from the surrounding petals and vines. Anyone entering this room and inhaling the fragrant air must make a saving throw or slip into a blissful daze. Unless unaffected allies remove the dreamy victim, the flowerchild releases a pollen cloud that fills the room, forcing one saving throw every three rounds to avoid becoming a living, comatose planting ground for the flowerchild's seeds.

Little remains in this master bedroom that hasn't been claimed and composted by nature. One exception is the wardrobe, which was constructed solidly enough to protect its contents. If the characters overcome the flowerchild and clear away enough vegetation that they can open the wardrobe doors, they discover the following:

- long winter coat made of owlbear fur and feathers;
- three simple but lovely cotton dresses;
- pair of glossy riding boots; one of the heels is a hidden compartment capable of holding a few tiny items;
- hatbox containing a feathered and colorful *hat of protection* (as *ring of protection*...but it is a hat);
- a cursed blue velvet *cape of protection* (as *cloak of protection*, but cursed) that radiates magic but imposes -1 AC and -1 to all saving throws; once donned, the cape can be removed only with *remove curse*;

16. The Floater

Drifting slowly in this hallway at the top of the stairs is a non-intelligent plant known as a **gas spore** (see **Appendix B**). The stairs connect this area to the lower level at **Area 10**.

17. Water Closet

This windowless room served as the hold's latrine. Decades ago, one of the family matriarchs spent an exorbitant amount of gold on the construction of a magical disposal effect, so as not to have her home reeking of human waste. Two benches feature holes that permit waste matter to be deposited into a small space below, where it is vaporized. Materials such as metal, stone, ceramic, and wood are not affected, but organic matter is instantly subject to a *disintegrate* effect; living tissue thrust into the toilet hole is permitted a DC 16 Constitution saving throw to avoid being atomized.

18. Closet Dweller

A **violet fungus** occupies this dark closet and immediately attacks anyone who opens the door. You should determine surprise normally to see if the characters are taken unaware.

Water, time, and the presence of the violet fungus destroyed the contents of this closet. A pale, purple paste covers everything.

19. Ophidian Retreat

A hole in the ceiling allows the ophidians access to this room from the roof. It also lets in the rain, which leaks through the floorboards to **Area 12** below. This room formerly served as a guestroom for visitors to the hold, and remnants of that function remain. However, the ophidians have converted it into a nest where they raise their pet snakes. There are 4 **poisonous snakes** still present in the room.

These deadly vipers live under old furniture, and they attack if the characters make a commotion while searching the room. A search reveals that the ophidians have removed anything of monetary value.

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- flat wooden box that holds half a dozen silver threads; these strings are a component of the control rods for the flesh golem in **Area 34**.

22. The Creeper

Though the function of this room changed as one generation after the next occupied the house, most recently it was an artist's studio. Many blank canvases on wooden stretcher bars lean against one wall, and crusty paint pots of various sizes and shades are stacked in the corner. Brushes abound. Of course, ivy from the open window holds everything in its embrace. A **fungal crawler** (see **Appendix A**) clings to some of the pots like dried paint.

23. Fallen Armor

This broad hall formerly featured many portraits and sculptures of family members, but the departing residents carted it all away. Plants have taken over nearly every space, bathing in the light of the floor-to-ceiling window. A suit of full plate armor was once on display here, but it collapsed from its pedestal. A blossom of pale pink flowers sprouts from the helmet's visor. The armor is ceremonial, beautiful and intricate but not battle-ready. The flowers are harmless. The armor is sized for a humanoid of a little under 6 feet tall. Shoved into one of the fingers of the steel gauntlets is a tightly rolled piece of parchment. If someone attempts to don the gloves, he discovers the parchment, which can be unfolded to reveal an arcane scroll containing the spell *invisibility*.

24. Mushroom Enclave

Currently, 22 **mushroom men** (see **Appendix A**) call these rooms their home. Attacking en masse, they might overwhelm unprepared parties, but they are not inherently aggressive and choose a peaceful encounter if the

characters do not immediately demonstrate aggression. The characters first encounter a few mushroom men in the hallway outside their rooms; the mushroom men observe the characters, and by their postures, they are clearly wary but not threatening. What happens next depends on the characters. If the mushroom men are alarmed, they attack, calling upon all members of the colony. However, if the characters offer some gesture of peace, a mushroom man shaman who can speak Common approaches and invites the characters into the colony's rooms.

The Cauldron Experience

The shaman introduces the characters to the colony's hetman, or tribal leader (a normal mushroom man distinguished only by its red cap). Like the rest of his kind, the hetman is simpleminded and not overly inquisitive; he doesn't understand social nuances or abstract ideas. He is primarily interested in trade. He can provide the characters with a detailed description of Coltherstone Hold, its inhabitants and the adjacent village of Hythe Wexshaw, but he offers nothing until the visitors gain the colony's trust by undergoing a trial known as the Ceremony of the Cauldrons. He leads the characters into a corner of one of their rooms where three large pots boil over a fire of dried vines. The pots are all different: One is black, one is copper, and one is shiny steel.

The thick, gray substance in the black cauldron smells strongly of fish, and reminds you of the gruel served in orphanages and prisons. It looks unappetizing but palatable. The chunky red liquid in the copper cauldron smells like burning leather. Finally, the milky white fluid in the dented steel cauldron smells like honeysuckle, though it has a slight oily film on it that makes it seem less inviting.



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The hetman explains that the characters may join him in fellowship by partaking in the Ceremony of the Cauldrons. Anyone who accepts, even if he sips from just a single kettle, earns the alliance of the mushroom men. Those who opt out may wait outside in the hallway. Characters who wish to participate in the ritual may elect to imbibe from one, two, or from all three cauldrons. Doing so grants them the one-time ability to cast a single plant-based spell, regardless of their character class. However, the hetman does not explain these benefits before the characters drink up, so it's up to them to take a chance, not knowing what will happen when they consume the questionable fluids. The spell effect they receive as a reward for their bravery may be used only once, but it may be retained indefinitely before the character finally opts to cast it. The exact effect depends on their selection, as indicated on the table:

Cauldron Effects

Cauldrons(s)	Granted Power
Black	<i>speak with plants</i>
Copper	<i>antilife shell</i>
Steel	<i>suggestion</i>
Black and Copper	<i>wall of thorns</i>
Black and Steel	<i>transport via plants</i>
Copper and Steel	<i>plant growth</i>
Black, Copper and Steel	<i>compulsion</i>

After the ceremony, the mushroom men are visibly pleased with the characters and offer any information you deem appropriate. The mushroom men know the layout of both floors, and they know to avoid the basement, as they sense something malignant down there. They've learned of the shroom's arrival, and they consider it a threat to their community.

If the characters choose combat to eliminate the mushroom men, they can spend 15 minutes searching the colony's rooms, or they can make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, to discover various items plundered from other rooms, as well as 24 gp, a shield painted with the emblem of a local warlord, a locket containing a tiny portrait of a male half-orc, and a *scroll of protection from energy*.

25. Stairwell and Hall

The stairs here descend to **Area 5**. The secret door in the southwest corner is activated by pressing a small panel about 7 feet off the floor. At that height, certain demi-humans will not be able to discover it by tactile inspection. The mushroom men in **Area 24** have not yet discovered this door.

26. Butler's Room

As soon as this door is opened, dozens of birds rush from the open doorway and the window. Startled by the characters' sudden arrival, this flock of mourning doves erupts in a flurry of feathers and alarmed coos — knocking characters prone on failed DC 10 Dexterity saving throws. The room they vacate reeks heavily of bird droppings, which cover nearly every surface. Ivy entered through the window and now covers the floor, walls, and ceiling, providing ample nesting space for the birds. The heavily soiled remains of a bed and footlocker can be seen through the tangled vines. Anyone working his way through the bird droppings can extract the locker, which contains several matching suits belonging to a manservant, along with white gloves and a silver whistle to summon the family children for dinner. The whistle is lightly magical and makes a special sound capable of being heard up to one mile away.

27. Maid's Room

This narrow room, like nearly every other in the hold, teems with plant life. The flowers are so thick that thousands of bees careen in and out of the open window from sunrise to dusk, carrying nectar and pollen back

Halfling Two-Beet Pie

Ingredients

2 large beets, preferably from a halfling's garden
12 ounces shredded cheese of your choice
2 tablespoons honey
1 tablespoon mint
Pie crust made from your favorite recipe

Instructions

Roast the halfling beets for 45 minutes, then allow to cool. Add half the cheese to the prepared crust. Slice the peeled beets thinly and arrange in circles atop the first layer of cheese, then add the remainder of the cheese. Bake for 20 minutes at 350°. Drizzle the honey on top, then add a touch of mint. Serve warm.

to their hive. The bees are not threatening unless provoked, so careful characters can investigate the room. The most recent inhabitant left little behind, other than her uniforms and a pair of rugged-soled shoes. But resting inside one of those shoes is a small glass vial containing one dose of a *potion of diminution*; the nosy maid would shrink herself to spy on the mistress of the house. If the characters swat at even a single bee, the insect releases an alarm pheromone that calls all the others to attack (equivalent to a **swarm of wasps**). Barring some kind of area-effect spell to remove the agitated swarm, the characters are wise simply to flee the room.

28. Cook's Room

A bookshelf in this plant-heavy room used to be filled with recipe collections. Now only a few texts remain, and these are somewhat damp from the shattered window. These cookbooks have no real value, but the bookmark notes a page that bears what the annotation calls *the award-winner!* This is the recipe for Halfling Two-Beet Pie.

29. West Basement

The sub-level is not overrun by vegetation; the ivy has not yet penetrated the door at **Area 9**. The temperature drops considerably as the characters descend the stairs, as the basement chambers are much colder than the rooms above. Four large vats stand against the west wall. These contain the yeast-smelling remains of a brewing operation. Other equipment used to make ale can be found on shelves along the north wall. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check also uncovers a small barrel of a powdered hot spice, imported from Far Jaati and worth 125 gp in any urban area with particular culinary demands. Eight earthenware jars contain such household condiments as cinnamon, cardamom, fennel seed, and others.

A secret door in the west wall is hidden behind the large vats and will not be discovered unless the heavy objects are first shoved aside. Assuming the characters move the vats aside, a successful search permits the door to swing open into **Area 33** if a little force is applied on the wall.

The door on the east to **Area 31** is sealed with *arcane lock*.

30. Root Cellar

This damp, dark room apparently served as a storage area for preserved vegetables and dry foodstuffs. However, the dampness has ruined nearly everything, as the flour sacks are sodden and the crates are moldy. Shelves made of boards stacked on bricks support hundreds of jars — or at least they used to. One of the upper shelves has collapsed, taking several below with it. Glass litters the floor against the south

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wall, and only three jars remain whole. Several roots have worked their way through the ceiling from the sunlit world above. These long, black appendages look like tentacles.

The root cellar is more dangerous than it appears. Once upon a time, it contained preserves from the family garden, but now most of those are gone, victims of the falling shelves. Only three such containers remain. These three quart-sized jars are made of glass, with large wooden corks sealed to their rims with hardened wax. Green and yellow fungus coats all of them. One of the jars contains a *potion of poison* that looks, smells, and tastes like a *potion of healing*. The other is covered in **yellow mold** (see **Appendix B**). The last jar contains pure, raw honey.

31. East Basement

An *arcane lock* seals the door of this room. This is the prison of Almeric the Redwraith. Once the rector of the Parish of Hythe Wexshaw, Almeric was sentenced to immurement for his crimes, all of which have since been forgotten. Immurement involves sealing up the victim and letting him asphyxiate or starve to death. Trapped in this room, Almeric died of dehydration and then transformed into a wight-like undead called a **redwraith** (uses **wight** stat block).

A ghastly figure confronts you. This undead wears tattered red clothing, but that is the only vestige of its humanity that remains. Its head is a skull that crawls with worms, with red motes in eye sockets that are otherwise as black as voids. The spidery hair atop its head floats around its head. Tiny insects have picked its bones clean, and no muscle mass remains, yet still it manages to stand, fists clenched, empty ribcage heaving up and down in a ghastly imitation of life.

Redwraiths can see only the color red; everything else is black and white. Thus, Almeric directs his assault on anyone wearing red.



Almeric never discovered the secret door on the north wall. A nearly invisible stud in the corner causes a 5-foot section of wall to sink into the floor, revealing **Area 32**.

32. Heirloom Vault

If the characters manage to locate this small chamber, they may pillage the accumulated physical treasures of the various families who have inhabited Coltherstone over the years, discovering the following items:

- painting of a mustached family elder, in a silver-inlaid frame (200 gp);
- heavy carafe made of the finest crystal (310 gp);
- three matching perfume decanters, each containing a different scent (50 gp each);
- fist-sized, uncut jacinth in a polished rosewood box engraved with the words *STEALTH HEART* (405 gp);
- nobleman's walking-stick, made of mahogany with an ivory head (175 gp);
- white wedding gown on a wooden mannequin;
- four dozen love letters addressed to *Mynia* from someone named *Ranior*;
- fragile ceremonial rapier with an elegant swept hilt and a large pearl embedded in the pommel (75 gp);
- child's drawing of four family members holding hands;
- bronze medallion embossed with *WINNER — MIDSUMMER FEST TRIALS* (5 gp);
- iron key with a hexagonal-shaped head (unlocks the granite casket in **Area 34**);
- *arcane locked* (7th-level caster) iron coffer holding 225 gp and 114 sp.

33. Emptied Cavern

Beyond the secret door is a set of stone steps cut from the rock that lead down 10 feet into a room where the temperature is noticeably cooler. Several short pillars are arrayed around the room, the kind that might have displayed busts or works of art. None of that remains. One of the pillars has collapsed, throwing shards across the floor. Empty iron hooks on the walls indicate that tapestries once hung there, but that was long ago.

An **ochre jelly** oozes from a crack in the stone stairs and attacks the last character to enter the room, possibly gaining surprise.

34. The Seven Dead

Long, low alcoves have been roughly excavated here, providing just enough space to fit seven caskets, each constructed of a different material: alabaster, cedar, bronze, clay, granite, ivory, and glass. To examine a casket, characters must slide it from its niche. One of the former patriarchs of Coltherstone Hold commissioned these boxes, meant to inter the remains of various ancestors of note. Over the years, though, some of the bones were removed and relegated to less-interesting containers, replaced with other things.

Alabaster: Inside this elegant casket is a dusty set of bones, all that remains of Sir Nothyn Orsik, the Axle Man. Over 700 years ago, Sir Orsik gained fame as a serf to earn knighthood directly from a Foerdewaith Overking. According to legend, Orsik, a lowly carter joined the army of Osbert II in 2802 as he marched against the unstoppable Heldring horde that threatened to overrun all of Foere. After sabotage held up the army's supply train forcing them to halt in their desperate march, the lifelong carter saved the campaign from defeat when he miraculously repaired all the wagons in a single night, thus enabling the march to continue and the beleaguered Foerdewaith to catch the Heldring offguard and finally defeat them at the Battle of Oescreheit Downs. Orsik's story can be found encoded in a set of bronze tablets that rest between his skeletal feet. The writing is an older style of Foere, known as Gasquen, which means about half of it can be read by a modern-day speaker; the rest requires a linguist or an appropriate spell.

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Cedar: Much of the wood has grown soggy and rotten over the years. Iron fittings at its corners and joints hold it together. The lid is easily broken.

The body within the cedar casket has not decayed with time. Its torso and head are that of a scarred and tattooed human male, but its bare legs are those of a dwarf. One arm appears to be that of a woman, while the other bulges with masculine muscles, its wrist ending in a solid iron sphere instead of a hand. This misshapen figure stares up with one blue eye and one gray eye, alive but unresponsive. Lying between its knees are three flat wooden sticks of various sizes. Each stick has several holes along its length.

This is a **flesh golem**. It was cobbled together two generations ago to perform basic functions around the hold and to provide defense. After its creator died, the golem's control mechanism was disassembled when the creature rampaged and killed two stable workers, and the golem was entombed here.

The recumbent golem does not respond to anything the characters do. Reforming the marionette device is necessary to animate and control the golem. If the wooden sticks are reconnected using the special silver strings found in **Area 21**, the user gains near total authority over the golem's actions. The user may order the flesh golem to take any action of which it is normally capable. However, each time a command is given, there is a flat 5% chance that the golem's magically reconstituted brain misfires, and it savagely attacks anyone it sees, including the user. Disassembling the control device requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, and even then, a berserk golem remains active for 10 full minutes before finally sputtering and collapsing.

Bronze: The metal has mostly turned green over the years, but if cleaned and polished, it would shine again. The skeletons of two children are in this coffin, along with the crumbling remains of some of their

favorite toys. No evidence exists of what happened to them. Nothing else is here but sadness.

Clay: Pulling this casket free of its niche causes the **gray ooze** on the ceiling to drop down on whatever character is logically located at the coffin's head. Because it's the color of rock, the ooze will not be detected ahead of time unless the characters specifically state their intention to inspect the ceiling.

The clay casket isn't locked, but its lid is sealed in place, requiring it to be chipped open. Inside is the dusty cadaver of a long-forgotten family member. Whoever he was, he apparently practiced music, as a flute and a piece of sheet music rest beside him. Though the wooden flute has decayed to the point where it crumbles if handled, the piece of parchment is remarkably whole. This is due to a magical preserving spell placed on it. The title of this composition, written for a solo flute, is "Flute Concerto No. 2 in D." Anyone with a musical background identifies the work as a complex masterpiece that might fetch as much as 500 gp if the right buyer could be found.

Granite: This coffin is so heavy and it's wedged so securely in its alcove that it requires two characters to both succeed in a strength check in order to yank it clear. Further, its lid is held fast with a lock so complex that to open it, the characters must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity check with thieves' tools while at disadvantage. The key can be found in the vault in **Area 32**. If opened, a wretched stench boils out, forcing everyone within 10 feet to make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned until they leave the area to recover. At that same instant, the casket's occupant attacks, very likely with the advantage of surprise.

Highly intelligent, the **ghul** attempts first to paralyze everyone in the party before concentrating its attacks on any single target. One emaciated finger still bears a ring it wore in life. The ring is black onyx and quite rare, fetching 200 gp on the open market.

Ivory: The entire casket is made of beautiful white ivory, carved with arabesques and abstract forms. A fine seam indicates where the lid is somehow fused in place. In the center of this lid is the following script:

*In life I saw truth
in faces I know;
Now I see the world
from somewhere below.*

The "lid" is impossible to remove, as it isn't a lid at all, but simply a line etched around the edges of the casket. This box actually opens from its underside, as indicated in the poem. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check clues the in the characters that they must turn the casket over to reveal the actual lid, which is held closed by four latches, one on each side. Inside are the dusty bones of a man whose story is lost to time, but buried with him is his favorite pet — a mummified cat. Observant characters will note that the cat is actually still alive, held in a form of temporal stasis that suspends its life functions. If it receives a *dispel magic*, the cat returns to its normal, healthy, purring state and immediately adopts one of the characters as its new owner.

Glass: The preserved body of a woman is inside this glass box. She wears a necklace in the shape of a dove, studded with pearls. This is Rochilda, the woman featured in the portrait in **Area 7**; if the characters have seen the picture there, they recognize the corpse. The casket was treated with the *unguent of timelessness* to preserve its contents. If Rochilda is removed, her body turns instantly to dust. Her necklace is worth 455gp. The empty casket weighs 200 lbs.

35. The Unexplained

Moisture seeped through the hold's foundation and collects in this cavern. This has created an uncomfortably humid yet chilly environment. It's cold and damp down here, the perfect environment for the **brown mold** (see **Appendix B**) that covers most of the walls.

The brown mold will cause 22 (4d10) points of cold damage if the characters fail a DC 12 Constitution saving throw for each round they spend in this chamber. But the characters may want to linger, given what they see in the room.

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Astonishingly, a four-man war chariot fills this cave. The chariot is completely out of place and is far too large to have been moved down the stairs and through the doorways to arrive here, yet it is here nonetheless. More than 15 feet long and nearly 6 feet wide, the chariot is made of wood and metal, its four wheels banded in bright bronze, with hubs in the forms of flying falcons. The chariot walls are adorned with images of birds of prey, the colors bright, the designs militant. Either the builders constructed the chariot here in this cave, knowing they'd never be able to get it out, or it was brought here magically. Either way, it's an impressive sight to behold.

Barring *legend lore* or similar magic, the characters will likely never know that this vehicle was brought to this cave when an astral deva charioteer from the Upper Planes accidentally steered through an extra-dimensional portal and ran aground in the catacombs below Coltherstone Hold. The astral deva returned to his planar home but not before rewarding his magical chariot to the house's owner to commemorate an act of valor for the cause Good. The owner who received the reward and what his act may have been are long forgotten as is the presence of the chariot here, but nonetheless the vehicle remains. It is known as the *hardened chariot of paradise* (see **Appendix C**). If they want to make use of the chariot, the characters need to contrive some creative way of removing it from this cave.

Hythe Wexshaw

This small community was built upon the shores of a small lake called Ullswater and supported the generations of families who have occupied Coltherstone Hold. But just as the estate itself was abandoned and eventually consumed by plants, so too was Hythe Wexshaw. Eventually, the family's money evaporated, and the lands fell into ruin. Those who lived in Hythe Wexshaw depended on the hold for their livelihood, so they departed when the hold's fortunes changed. Now, overabundant plant life — some of it quite dangerous — is slowly devouring the village.

A. Diver Workshop

At one point in the distant past, Ullswater was known for its freshwater pearls. This building served as a launching point for small boats that carried pearl-hunters across the water to their favorite dive spots. Several dinghies and longboats are dry-docked here, along with seemingly endless yardage of rope. If the characters lack any type of gear associated with small watercraft, they can find it here. The building has several rooms, some used as offices, but most given to the process of shucking mollusks, preparing them to feed the residents of the hold, and caring for any pearls. A thorough search is difficult, as it involves cutting away layers of tough weeds grown up through the floorboards, but persistence and a DC 16 Perception check turns up 1 pearl per turn of exploration. Each pearl is worth 25 gp. A total of 6 may be discovered.

An overturned rowboat with a hull painted a faded blue is on the lakeshore near the workshop. Though it's covered in the white droppings of waterfowl and partially concealed by weeds, the boat is obviously of fine construction, as its hull has no visible damage from the elements. On the damp rocks beneath the boat is an intricate crystalline stone. If physically inspected, this **crystalline horror** (see **Appendix A**) attacks.

B. Fishery

This once-thriving facility processed fish caught by the residents of the village, then packed the fish in salt to be transported and sold in nearby cities. Coltherstone Hold was supported financially by this small but profitable trade. The back side of the building served as a warehouse, and now its

cargo-sized doors stands open, allowing long reeds and other wetland plants to invade. The ground within the warehouse is soggy, and the floorboards of the other rooms feel as if they might collapse at any moment.

Thrashing about in the fishery, moving from one room to the next in search of prey, is a **giant flytrap** (see **Appendix A**). The size of a horse, this carnivorous plant is in full bloom, with bright orange blossoms all along its bulk. It grips a long sailor's gaff in its tentacles and attacks on sight.

Inspecting the entire fishery requires a full hour to move and examine boxes, explore old desks, and move weeds aside. If the characters spend that time, they find that one of the barrels is quite heavy, as it is packed with salt. If the salt is probed, the characters discover a small wooden box. This is a *folding boat*.

C. Net-Mender

A pair of vigilant **archer bushes** (see **Appendix A**) defend this building. Having become aware of nature's reclamation of these lands, the archer trees slowly advanced, prepared to maintain what their cousin plants have claimed. Reaching the net-mender's house means either passing through the pine trees or avoiding the trees altogether and swimming to the building.

The net-mender's abode is two levels tall, with the residence on the upper, rickety floor and the business down below. Most of the shop has been cleared out, though a few dozen nets of various sizes remain, along with the raw materials required to make and maintain them. The characters also find several manuals relating to the skill of net making and might make use of these in learning the trade themselves. Upstairs, a suicide victim hangs from the ceiling. Carved on the rotting rafters is a single word: *Umbrage*.

D. Docks

Two long wooden piers extend out over Ullswater. For generations, family members of the hold enjoyed recreation and fishing here. Many different species of fish can be found here, and any angler of moderate skill can feed several friends with what is pulled from these waters. The middle of the lake is actually quite deep; if the characters are somehow able to explore depths of 200 feet, they discover a sunken canoe, weighed down by a rusty iron trunk, with a lock so fragile it crumbles if struck. Within the trunk are 2,200 gp in old gold coins.

Patrolling the depths is a **giant pike** (see **Appendix A**). The pike is 16 feet long and attacks the smallest prey first.

E. Groundskeeper's Home

This modest house was once the home of a family who worked as groundskeepers for the residents of the hold, though they haven't dwelled here for many years. A strange reddish light shines out through the many vines and weeds that crawl up the walls. The light is due to the 5 **giant fire beetles** exploring the house and feeding on the many plants within.

Anyone inspecting the building's interior discerns its former nature of a family home. There seems to be nothing of value here. However, the dead fire beetles continue to glow, and their glands may be used as a light source for 1d6 days before fading.

F. The Master

Sitting cross-legged on the floor of this poorly built shack is a bipedal and highly intelligent frog-like humanoid known as a gripli. His name is Han Wei (LG male gripli **ascetic**) (see **Appendix A** for gripli and ascetic), and he is a master of the martial arts and a seeker of truth. A bamboo staff waits within easy reach.

Han Wei was driven here by the rampaging ygg (**Area I**) and is meditating on that event before venturing out again. Quite serenely, he has come to believe that the encounter was somewhat humorous, as he envisions how awkward he surely looked, hopping through the reeds with an ambulatory tree chasing after him. In most situations, Han Wei is able

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to find a core of humor, crediting the cosmos with reminding him of what a fool he is and how much he has to learn. When the characters arrive at the door of his hovel, he doesn't open his eyes, though he is instantly aware of them; by their unique odors he knows their numbers and the nature of their equipment. He is not afraid of them, even if they are aggressive. In fact, he fears nothing, for fear is a false construct, based on the worry of losing something. Like all enlightened beings, Han Wei has nothing to lose.

If the characters insist on battling the peaceful gripli, he defends himself as long as is reasonable, then he attempts to flee. As a last resort, he lays down his arms and surrenders. In the event that they parley with him, they find the gripli to be a keen but meandering conversationalist, prone to metaphor and instructional anecdotes. Han Wei sees all adventurers as too bound to the material world, and he subtly encourages them to see life through new eyes. He is quite content to speak for hours, serving the characters tea from leaves he crushes and steeps while they watch. If it becomes clear that his guests are intent on continuing their journey, as primitive as it may be, Han Wei offers to present them with a trial to draw them closer to the truth. He asks the characters to complete one challenge as a group. Optionally, he can assign different trials to different characters, but no character will ever be asked to compete in an event that tests his or her highest ability score; the trial must always be one that offers a true challenge. Regardless, the GM should select whichever trial he finds most appropriate or entertaining:

Trial by Water

The gripli challenges the characters to swim across the Ullswater. The distance from the docks on the eastern shore to the far western side (not pictured on the map) is roughly 300 feet. Unless a character is a particularly talented swimmer, based on his history or former occupation, completing a 100-yard swim requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. Failure indicates that the character must dog paddle and rest for 10 minutes before continuing on, facing another DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. Three failed Strength (Athletics) checks means the character begins to drown once they can no longer hold their breath (a character can hold their breath for a number of minutes equal to 1 plus its Constitution modifier).

Anyone who succeeds on the three Strength (Athletics) checks is able to cross Ullswater and reach the far shore, exhausted but victorious. Upon their return to Han Wei's hovel, he rewards them as indicated below.

Trial by Earth

The ygg must be buried, ridding the area of the negative aura it spread in the area. Refer to **Area I** for details of the gallows tree if the characters have not yet encountered it. Han Wei wishes it destroyed and put into the ground where the soil will reclaim it and transform it into something positive. If they agree to this trial, the characters must find shovels (most likely in **Area E**) and get about digging a truly massive trench — without the aid of magic. This task requires a base of 12 hours to complete, minus the number of characters participating.

The work is taxing. All diggers must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw every hour to endure the grind of this constant, depleting labor. Success means that the character is able to continue working another hour without resting. A failed saving throw means the character needs to stop and rest for at least 15 minutes. Two consecutive failed saves means that the character gains a level of exhaustion, and another DC 13 Constitution saving throw is required to resume work. Failing a third save causes the character to gain another level of exhaustion and be unable to complete the work. The third failure does not need to be consecutive to gain the level of exhaustion. All characters that complete the work receive a reward, as noted below.

Trial by Air

Han Wei asks the characters to catch as many butterflies as possible in the next 10 minutes. Multi-colored butterflies are found everywhere around **Area G**. Using their hands or makeshift nets (perhaps from materials taken from **Area C**), the characters must leap through the tall weeds in pursuit of the elusive butterflies, being careful not to harm them during the capture.

Everyone wishing to take part in this happy activity must make a DC 14 Dexterity check. Success means that the character safely snares 1d4 butterflies and receives a reward, as indicated below, but only after releasing the butterflies and sending them on their way. Failure indicates that the character trips and falls frequently in the tangling vegetation or simply gets outmaneuvered by the flying insects. Another Dexterity check is required to try again. Failing three checks in a row means that no butterflies are caught during the allotted time.

Trial by Fire

Few tasks are more difficult than trying to start a fire with wet wood. Han Wei leads the characters to the marshy ground at the Ullswater's perimeter and challenges them to make a fire using only materials they find within this area — all of which are at least slightly damp. A standard flint and steel may be used to provide a spark, but all tinder and kindling must come from these immediate wetlands.

The only way to locate the correct materials — perhaps the inner fluff of an otherwise damp milkweed stalk — is to succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check. Success means that the character brings a tiny blaze to life, even in the moisture, and Han Wei offers a reward from the list below. Failing three Wisdom (Survival) checks results in the character not being able to light a fire under these conditions.

Rewards: You should award successful characters with one of the following items each, which Han Wei carries in a woven basket on his back:

- amulet of proof against detection and location figurine of wondrous power, golden lions
- figurine of wondrous power, ebony fly figurine of wondrous power, onyx dog
- +2 bamboo quarterstaff
- *Lumberdoom* (see **Appendix C**)

G. Emblyn's Hideaway

This ramshackle, two-room abode has a bright green roof and four wind chimes hanging from its eaves, though three of them have been clenched to silence by ivy that has climbed the walls. The fourth tinkles gaily. The characters might recognize this place as described in the journal of Emblyn Falsdottir in **Area 8**. The building's interior can be accessed only if a tight curtain of vines is chopped away. A few crude furnishings remain inside, including a broken chair, a thick-legged kitchen table, and a surprisingly comfortable bench. Fading paintings that were probably made by a child adorn the walls. An unusual number of butterflies flutter in and out of the open windows.

If the characters have visited **Area 8** and read Emblyn's diary, they know to inspect a hollow table leg for what the girl called "my greatest treasure." Inside the hollowed-out space is a letter to Emblyn from her young suitor, Ijobelian, the magic-user's apprentice. Drawn on the letter is a map that shows the location of a secret entrance to one of the rooms in the master wizard's tower. Though the exploration of that esteemed repository of magic is beyond the scope of this adventure, you should design an appropriate quest along those lines if the characters wish to pursue the secret of Ijobelian's map.

H. Pavilion

This open-air structure contains two dozen wooden tables and outdoor chairs, most of which are difficult to see, given the height of the weeds. Hundreds of birds roost on the inside ledge of the roof, and their constant chatter can be heard long before the characters arrive. The families that dwelled in Coltherstone Hold used this area for festivals, wedding ceremonies, and religious events. It serves no purpose now other than that of a bird shelter, but there is still something here worth finding if the characters take the time to force their way through the mosquito-heavy weeds. Unfortunately, anyone pushing through the tall plants under the pavilion has a 25% chance of stepping on a **poisonous snake**, unless they

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state their intention of watching the ground as they walk and succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check.

Assuming they safely explore the pavilion grounds, they come upon a body:

A dead dwarf lies tangled in the unusually tall weeds. He's been deceased perhaps no more than two days. Insects have consumed his eyes, and birds have torn away much of the flesh on his face, but otherwise he is still intact. His beard is laced with green plant tendrils, and thin vines grip his legs like manacles. There is no immediate indication of how he died.

This was a mountain dwarf named Brutton. A cottonmouth snake bit him, and he died of the venom. His name becomes apparent if the characters inspect his body, as the word is engraved on a tarnished silver belt buckle worth 20 gp. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check can determine the cause of death if characters extricate the corpse from the weeds and thoroughly examine it. Brutton's pouches hold a total of 5 gp and 12 sp. He carries a stout warhammer and wears a scrimshaw necklace worth 32 gp. More importantly, a watertight scroll tube at his belt contains a letter of introduction written by the dwarven scribe Siscwin and signed by High Thane Thorodrum IV, of the Great Mountain Clan Targ. The letter grants the bearer safe passage through the Moryl Escarpment and its dwarven guardians, and admittance into something called the Tomb of the Emerald Tigers. This letter is of particular interest because it has long been believed that the Great Mountain Clan Targ was scattered with the fall of the dwarven hold of in 3392 and has had no high thane since then. However, according to this letter the Great Mountain Clan or some remnant of it has reformed secretly within the Forlorn Mountains beyond something called the Moryl Escarpment and guards or occupies the mentioned Tomb of the Emerald Axes. Whoever this Brutton was, he apparently had some connection to this hidden dwarven court, though what they might be is left to you to determine.

I. The Gallows Tree

The most daunting denizen of Hythe Wexshaw is a marauding **ygg**, also known as a **gallows tree** (see **Gallows Tree** in **Appendix A**). The ygg roams the village, reveling in the wild growth, its 30-foot branches able to grab up to six victims at once and impale them on its life-draining thorns.

Shambling through the heavy undergrowth is a horrible sight: a leafless tree with humanoid bodies skewered on its sharp limbs. The tree is easily 30 feet tall and carries in its limbs a mass crucifixion. As the tree draws closer, one body slides free and falls to the ground. The tree's roots churn it into the soil as the huge thing advances.

Though the ygg seeks only to feed and carries no treasure, characters may harvest its fruits and use them in various magical and alchemical processes.

J. The Man in the Diamond Mist

You see it long before you arrive: a building with walls made of light. Unlike the grounds nearby, which are almost impassible with rampant undergrowth, this area is clear. The radiant building before you — if indeed it can be referred to as building, given that its walls are insubstantial — is composed of a floor and ceiling made of crystal, about 40 feet square. The ceiling is 12 feet above the floor. Connecting the two are four walls that seem to be made of nothing but softly glowing mist. As you approach, it's as if the faint wind of your arrival is enough to stir the mists, causing them to part in the shape of open doorway. Through that doorway, underneath the floating ceiling, is what appears to be a body, lying in regal repose.

This strange structure is the cenotaph of the paladin, Sir Ankwyn Dimarra. The remains of the great warrior do not reside here; the body glimpsed through the parted mists is a permanent *programmed illusion*, as the characters discover if they physically inspect the bier on which he seems to rest. This one serves to remind the people of Hythe Wexshaw that a hero once saved their village from destruction.

If the characters inspect the cenotaph's exterior, they find that the four walls are highly magical. A somewhat muted, silvery blue magical light emanates from a foggy wall that forms the structure's walls. The ceiling is a solid slab of crystal weighing thousands of pounds but held magically in place by spells of the magic-user Giophanix who served as Sir Ankwyn's right hand. The walls are not solid, and the characters may pass through them as easily as they walk through normal fog. Within the cenotaph, the walls, the light, and the floor and ceiling create a visually stunning, emotional experience for visitors who come to pay their respects. The smooth stone bier in the center of the room supports what looks to be the body of a middle-aged man in a mail shirt, trousers of black leather, and riding boots adorned with silver and gems. His hands wear well-oiled gloves stitched and repaired from the rigors of many campaigns. His fingers are laced together and rest on his chest like a man at peaceful sleep.

Tactile investigation proves that the body is an illusion. Seemingly nothing of value is in the area, and without *legend lore* or similar magic, the characters might never understand the importance of the man honored here. However, anyone successful in a search for secret doors realizes that one of the stones in the bier pivots on a hinge pin, revealing two books within the hidden cavity. The first tome is titled *Illumination and Manumission: The Life and Heroics of Paladin Lord Ankwyn Dimarra*. The book is more than 800 pages long and written in an elevated, overly descriptive style. A dog-eared page designates the chapter describing how Ankwyn saved the village of Hythe Wexshaw from a naga that had taken



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up residence in the lake, hence their construction of this memorial upon his death. The second book, bearing the much humbler title of *A Simple Story* has 100 pages of fine parchment, all but one of which is blank. This book is a trap to punish grave robbers. In the middle of the book is a single sentence of 25 words that mentions the magic-user Giophanix ... and the next letter activates a *glyph of warding* which targets all creatures in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on the reader. The sphere spreads around corners. Each creature in the area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) thunder damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The reader can notice the glyph with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

Appendix A: New Creatures and NPCs

Animated Object, Jack-in-the-Box

Jack-in-the-Box

Small construct, unaligned
Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 44 (8d6 + 16)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	2 (-4)	8 (-1)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 9
Languages —
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Antimagic Susceptibility. The jack-in-the-box is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by a *dispel magic*, the jack-in-the-box must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.
False Appearance. While the jack-in-the-box remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal child's toy.

Actions

Multiattack. The jack-in-the-box makes three attacks with its vicious dagger.
Vicious Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.
Vicious Weapon. When rolling a natural 20 on an attack roll, the critical hit deals an extra 2d6 piercing damage (damage type varies from weapon to weapon).

Archer Bush

This creature looks like a small mound of brownish-green leaves. From its trunk sprout several thick branches, each covered sparsely with leaves, and each sporting rows of needle-like thorns. The leaves have small pale buds of gold and purple.

Archer Bush

Small plant, unaligned
Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 78 (12d6 + 36)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

Skills Stealth +4
Senses tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The archer bush makes two attacks with its thorns.
Thorns. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) piercing damage.

The archer bush is a subterranean, semi-mobile plant that gains sustenance from the blood of living creatures. Hidden beneath its trunk is the archer bush's mouth, which appears to be nothing more than a dark recess or cavity.

An archer bush attacks by firing a cluster of thorns at any creature that comes within 30 feet of its location.

Ascetic

Ascetic

Medium humanoid (any), any alignment
Armor Class 16
Hit Points 60 (11d8 + 11)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)

Skills Acrobatics +5, Insight +5, Stealth +5
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Unarmored Defense. If wearing no armor or shield, the ascetic's AC includes its Wisdom modifier.

Actions

Multiattack. The ascetic makes 3 unarmed strike attacks or three dart attacks.
Unarmed Strike. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, the ascetic can choose one of the following additional effects:
1. The target must make a successful DC 13 Strength saving throw or the creature drops one item (ascetic's choice);
2. The target must make a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone;
3. The target must make a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw or stunned until the end of ascetic's next turn.
Dart. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Reactions

Deflect missile. As a reaction, the ascetic deflects one missile and any damage is reduced by 1d10 + 3. If

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damage is reduced to 0, the ascetic catches the missile if it small enough to hold in one hand and the ascetic has at least one hand free.

Assassin Vine

This gnarled vine, as thick as a man's arm and bearing hand shaped leaves, convulses across the ground in an unnatural slither.

Assassin Vine

Large plant, unaligned
Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)
Speed 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	13 (+1)	9 (-1)

Damage Resistances cold, fire
Damage Immunities lightning
Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages —
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The assassin vine can make two melee attacks: two slams or one slam and one constrict.
Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 15) if the assassin vine isn't already grappling a creature. The grappled target is restrained until the grapple ends.
Constrict. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature grappled by the assassin vine. *Hit:* 17 (3d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Blood Bush

This creature appears as a 3-foot tall flowering bush with a thick trunk and small whip-like branches. Each branch is topped with a blood-red flower and deep, rich green leaves.

Blood Bush

Small plant, unaligned
Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 59 (7d6 + 35)
Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Con +7
Damage Vulnerabilities thunder
Damage Resistances cold, fire
Damage Immunities lightning
Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages —
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Germinate. Creatures that are implanted with a blood bush seed begin to suffer the effects of the seed rapidly germinating inside of them. Once implanted, the seed quickly begins to germinate, with the effects beginning on the creature's next turn.

Turn	Saving Throw (Constitution)	Effect
1	DC 14	Poisoned 1 minute
2	DC 14	Gain 1 level of exhaustion
3	DC 14	Bleed until seed is removed

On the creature's next turn following the seed being implanted, the creature must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. Failure results in the creature being poisoned for 1 minute. Success ignores the effect. On the very next turn, the creature must succeed on another DC 14 Constitution saving throw or gain 1 level of exhaustion. Again, success ignores the effect. The third turn after being implanted, the creature must again succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 2 (1d4) piercing damage as the seed sprouts begin to emerge, tearing the skin in the process. The creature continues to take 2 (1d4) points of piercing damage until the seed is removed by a lesser restoration spell or a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check. If the bleeding creature drops to 0 hit points, it dies. On the next turn, a new blood bush begins to rapidly grows out of the carcass.

Actions

Multiattack. The blood bush makes three attacks: two with its tendrils and one with its flower darts.
Tendril. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage.
Flower Dart. Ranged Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d4 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw of be implanted with a blood bush seed (see **Germinate** above).

Cobra Flower

This tall, slender plant has a large flowering bulb topping its brownish-green roots. Two green, wing-like leaves flank its flowering top, giving the appearance of a cobra's hood. Its leaves are thin and have transparent blotches on them.

Cobra Flower

Large plant, unaligned
Armor Class 11 (natural armor)
Hit Points 51 (6d10 + 18)
Speed 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	13 (+1)	9 (-1)

Damage Vulnerabilities necrotic
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities frightened, exhaustion, stunned, unconscious
Senses tremorsense 30 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages —
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage and 4 (1d8) acid damage.

Crystalline Horror

This humanoid creature seems to be made entirely of crystal and glass. It is man-sized and its head sports no eyes, nose, ears, or mouth. Its body appears razor-sharp and jagged. Its hands end in wicked claws.

Crystalline Horror

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skill Perception +4, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances cold

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Crystal Claws. The crystalline horror's attacks are magical.

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

Actions

Multiattack. The crystalline horror can make two with its claws.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Shard Spray (Recharge 6). The crystalline horror launches a spray of razor-sharp shards of glass from its body in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Reactions

Bend Light. The crystalline horror can refract natural light into a bright light that makes it harder to be hit by melee attacks. The crystalline horror adds up to 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the crystalline horror must see the attack and be wielding a melee weapon. This ability cannot be used in natural or magical darkness.

Flowerchild

This odd plant resembles a mass of flowers that can shape itself in any way it desires, from a carpet to a roughly humanoid form.

Flowerchild

Medium plant, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 82 (15d8 + 15)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	1 (-5)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Skill Perception +4, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, frightened

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

False Appearance. While the flowerchild remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary flowering plant.

Actions

Peaceful Feelings. Any creature that comes within a 60-foot radius of the flowerchild notices a sweet smell and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or fall into a deep slumber. The magically-induced lassitude is permanent unless the creature is no longer able to smell the flowerchild's scent.

Pollinate. Any creatures incapacitated by the flowerchild's **Peaceful Feelings** effect, must, at the start of their next turn, succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. While poisoned in this way, the creature is infected by flowerchild pollen spores and will begin transforming into a flowerchild. Transformation is complete in 1d4 + 2 days. The poison can be cured with a lesser restoration spell.

If the creature's saving throw is successful, the creature is immune to the flowerchild's **Pollinate** for the next 24 hours.

Flytrap, Giant

This towering plant is a mass of vines and barbs. Several stalks are horribly mobile, each ending in a set of green, toothy jaws.

Giant Flytrap

Huge plant, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 202 (15d12 + 105)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	10 (+0)	24 (+7)	1 (-5)	12 (+1)	6 (-1)

Saving Throws Con +11, Wis +5

Skill Perception +5, Stealth +8

Damage Resistances acid

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities frightened, poisoned, prone

Senses tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages —

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Actions

<RULE>

Multiattack. The giant flytrap can make three bite attacks.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 25 (4d8 + 7) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 19).

Swallow. The giant flytrap makes one bite attack against a Large or smaller target it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target is also swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the giant flytrap, and it takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the giant flytrap's turns. A giant flytrap can have only one creature swallowed at a time.

If the giant flytrap takes 30 damage or more on a single turn from the creature inside it, the giant flytrap must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate the creature, which falls prone in a space within 10 feet of the giant flytrap. If the giant

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flytrap dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 15 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Fungal Crawler

This giant fanged cricket is caked in pungent fungal growths and topped with a mushroom-like cap.

Fungal Crawler

Small aberration, neutral

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 49 (9d6 + 18)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	2 (-4)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skill Acrobatics +7

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Standing Leap. The fungal crawler's long jump is up to 10 feet and its high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

Actions

Multiattack. The fungal crawler makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) slashing damage.

Gallows Tree

This creature appears as a massive, tall tree with thick branches from which hang several humanoid corpses tightly secured by their necks with greenish-brown ropes. Its canopy is thick and bushy, and its trunk is mottled brown.

Gallows Tree

Huge plant, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 287 (23d12 + 138)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25(+7)	10 (+0)	22 (+6)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws Con +11

Skills Perception +7, Stealth +5

Damage Resistance fire

Condition Immunities frightened, prone, stunned, unconscious

Senses tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 22

Languages Common, but cannot speak, telepathy 100 ft. with gallows tree zombies

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Create Gallows Tree Zombie. When a creature dies within 15 feet of a gallows tree, it uses a sharpened tendril to slice open the creature's abdomen, thereby spilling the corpse's innards on the ground. The organs and fluids are then absorbed by the tree's roots. Corpses of a size other than Medium or Large are simply left to rot. Medium or Large corpses are filled with a greenish pollen fired from one of the tree's branches. The abdominal wound heals over the next 1d4 days, at which time the slain creature rises as a gallows tree zombie connected by a tether-vine to the gallows tree that created it. Gallows tree zombies possess none of their former abilities.

Gallows Tree Zombies. Each gallows tree has several gallows tree zombies connected to it. A Huge gallows tree may have no more than 7 gallows tree zombies connected to it at one time. A Gargantuan gallows tree can have a maximum of 11 zombies connected to it at any given time. See the gallows tree zombie entry for details on that monster.

Actions

Multiattack. The gallows tree makes three slam attacks.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 28 (6d6 + 7) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 22).

Gallows trees are sentient plants that sustain themselves on the internal organs and body fluids of living creatures. They use deception to lure potential prey into range at which time they unleash the gallows tree zombies attached to their branches to kill or capture the prey.

While mobile, a gallows tree prefers to remain in one spot for an extended length of time (usually until its food supply in the area runs out). From this location, it simply waits for prey and then attacks when such beings come into view. Gallows trees do not collect treasure but occasionally such items (the remnants of devoured prey) are found in the vicinity of a gallows tree.

A gallows tree normally stands idle, lowering its zombies to the ground when living prey come within 100 feet of the tree. If a foe comes within 15 feet of the tree itself, it lashes out with its sharpened branches and pummels the creature or attempts to wrap a branch around the foe. A grabbed foe is subjected to additional damage as the gallows tree pummels it with its other branches. Occasionally the tree works in concert with its zombies, grabbing a foe and holding it while its zombies pound it into goop. Slain creatures are dragged close to the tree, sliced open, and their innards devoured by the tree's roots.

Gallows Tree Zombie

This creature is a humanoid with deathly gray-green skin dressed in tattered and torn clothes. Small plants, weeds, and fungi grow on the creature's body. A long, sinewy, greenish-brown noose connects the creature to the massive tree behind it.

Gallows Tree Zombie

Medium plant, unaligned

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (7d8 + 21)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistance fire

Damage Immunities poison

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Condition Immunities poisoned; frightened, prone, stunned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common, but cannot speak, telepathy 100 ft. with gallows tree
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Regeneration. The gallows tree zombie regenerates 5 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.
Tether-Vine. A gallows tree zombie is connected to the gallows tree that created it by a long, sinewy vine. This vine can be lengthened to allow the zombie to move up to 100 feet away from the tree. The vine is AC 12 and has 10 hit points. Harming the vine deals no damage to the gallows tree zombie or the gallows tree, but if severed, does prevent the zombie from regenerating any health at the start of its turn.

Actions

Multiaffack. The gallows tree zombie makes two slam attacks.
Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.
Spore Cloud (Recharge 6). A gallows tree zombie can breathe a cloud of poisonous, greenish spores at the space directly in front of it (5-foot cube). A creature caught in the cloud must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. Until this poison ends, the target is slowed (as the *slow* spell). The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Gallows tree zombies were once living humanoids slain and devoured by a gallows tree and reborn from the seedlings as a minion of said creature. They serve no purpose in life now other than killing or capturing living prey for the gallows tree that created them. These monsters retain small memories of their former lives and these scenes sometimes manifest in the zombie's mind, causing it great anger which it vents on the nearest living creature. Gallows tree zombies appear as humanoid creatures with deathly graygreen skin that feels coarse and rough to the touch. A long, sinewy cord of greenish-brown wraps around the zombie's throat and connects it to the gallows tree. Gallows tree zombies show no spark of life in their eyes, but are not completely mindless. They are not undead even though their name suggests otherwise; therefore, they cannot be turned or rebuked.

Gallows tree zombies hang motionless from the tree that created them, being lowered to the ground only when a living creature comes within 100 feet of the gallows tree they are connected to. They are formidable opponents and relentlessly pound their foes with their club-like fists while breathing a cloud of choking spores. The zombies prefer uneven odds that favor them, so ganging up on an individual is the norm in battle. Slain foes are dragged back to the gallows tree, devoured by the tree, and eventually transformed into a gallows tree zombie to replace any that fell in battle.

Ghul

Draped in fine dark robes, this undead creature's body seems to be made of equal parts bone, leathery flesh, and blood-red smoke.

Ghul

Medium undead, chaotic evil
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)
Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +5
Damage Resistances fire
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Ignan, Infernal
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Cursed Weapons. The ghul's attacks are magical.
Elemental Demise. If the ghul dies, its body disintegrates into a warm, putrid breeze, leaving behind only the equipment the ghul was wearing or carrying.
Genie-kin. Ghuls are undead djinn and are considered genies even though their type is undead.

Actions

Multiaffack. The ghul makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.
Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage.
Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d4 + 5) slashing damage.

Grippli

Its slick skin a mottled pattern of bright colors, this agile, frog-like humanoid carries a bow and wears leather armor.

Grippli

Small humanoid, neutral
Armor Class 14
Hit Points 13 (3d6 + 3)
Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Medicine +3, Perception +5, Stealth +7
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Grippli
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Actions

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.
Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.
Net. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 5/15 ft., one target. *Hit:* the target is restrained.

Mushroom Man

Mushroom Man

Medium plant, lawful neutral
Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 38 (7d8 + 7)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Undercommon
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

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Distress Spores. When the mushroom man takes damage, all other mushroom men within 240 feet of it can sense its pain.

Death Throes. When the mushroom man dies, it releases 1d6 spores which will grow into new mushroom men within 1d4 rounds. The new mushroom men have 16 hit points and regenerate 5 hit points per turn until they are fully healed. The spores that are released by the death of the mushroom man are AC 10 and have 2 hit points.

Actions

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Pike, Giant

This fish is long and slender with light spots along its body and a tooth-filled maw.

Giant Pike

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 60 (8d10 + 16)

Speed swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	1 (-5)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)

Skills Perception +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Water Breathing. The giant pike can only breathe underwater.

Keen Smell. The giant pike has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on scent.

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 12).

Swallow. The giant pike makes one bite attack against a Medium or smaller target it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target is swallowed, and the grapple ends. The swallowed target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the giant pike, and it takes 7 (2d6) acid damage at the start of each of the giant pike's turns. The giant pike can have only one target swallowed at a time.

If the giant pike dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 5 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Giant pikes are highly aggressive predators swimming the waters of freshwater lakes and rivers, attacking any living, moving creatures that come nearby. Giant pikes are highly adaptable and can be found in the coldest to the warmest waters. A saltwater variety exists and can be found in inland seas and saltwater lakes and rivers.

Giant pikes, like their smaller counterparts, are voracious and often attack prey much larger than themselves. Their diet consists mainly of soft-finned fish, trout, perch, frogs, mice, ducks, birds, and small humanoids. Larger prey includes humanoids, other giant fish, deer, and sheep or goats. Giant pikes have no qualms about eating those of their own kind, especially when food is scarce.

The giant pike averages about nine feet long and can grow to a length of 20 feet. Its coloration varies from dark green to brown and its body is covered in lighter colored spots. It has a single dorsal fin and a white or cream-colored underbelly.

The giant pike hides in weeds, behind rocks, or some other such cover, waiting for potential prey to wander nearby. It coils its body into an "S" position, and when prey passes by, strikes with blinding speed, biting with its sharp teeth. If the pike gets a hold on prey smaller than itself, it swallows it.

Ophidian

This serpentine humanoid has bright scaly skin, a long sinuous tail, and a fanged serpent's head.

Ophidian

Medium monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +6, Perception +4

Damage Immunities poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Deep Speech, Draconic, Undercommon, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The ophidian's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14), and requires no material components for the following spells:

At will: *disguise self*, *minor illusion*

1/day each: *blur*, *mirror image*, *suggestion*

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

Actions

Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour.

Spiderweed

Spiderweed

Medium plant, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Actions

Multiaffack. The spiderweed makes two thornslash attacks.
Thornslash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 24 hours. Until the poison ends, the target moves at half its normal movement speed. The poison can be cured by a *lesser restoration* spell.

Appendix B: Encounters, Diseases, Hazards, and Poisons

Brown Mold

Brown mold is an ectotherm and feeds on the warmth of the environment surrounding it. When within 30 feet of brown mold, the temperature is noticeably colder, often to the point of freezing depending on the size of the brown mold patch. It is common for brown mold to cover a 10-foot square but it isn't unusual for patches to be much larger.

Creatures that come within 10 feet of brown mold, or start their turn within 10 feet of the mold must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw. A failed save results in 22 (4d10) cold damage, or half as much on a successful saving throw.

Exposure to fire causes the brown mold to rapidly expand and grow in the direction of the fire. Exposure to cold will instantly destroy brown mold.

Gas Spore

From a distance, the gas spore is likely to be mistaken for an eye tyrant, using its mimicry to lure would-be victims to their doom. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check discerns the true nature of the gas spore. The gas spore has a fly speed of 10 feet with average maneuverability.

When a creature encounters a gas spore, it must make a successful DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be injected with rhizomes that cause the creature to be poisoned. The poison lasts until it is cured. Every 24 hours, the poisoned creature must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The target dies if this effect reduces its Constitution to 0. A creature slain in this manner will expel 2d4 gas spores from its body the next turn after it dies.

The Constitution damage cannot be regained while the creature remains poisoned, however a lesser restoration spell will cure the condition. Once cured, the creature regains the lost Constitution after completing a long rest.

If a gas spore is struck for a single point of damage, it explodes in a violent blast of gas that deals 21 (6d6) points of damage to all creatures within a 30-foot radius, unless they succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, halving the damage.

Green Slime

Green slime is corrosive, slick, and adhesive, sticking to anything it comes into contact with. Metal, flesh, organic material are especially vulnerable to the corrosive properties of the slime. It is often found in warm, humid caverns and ruins, and will be noticeable as it clings to ceilings, walls, and covers floors, usually in 5-foot squares.

Green slime can detect movement within 30 feet and will drop on unsuspecting victims when they are below it; it is unable to move so much depend on unwitting prey. If a creature is aware of the presence of the slime, they can attempt to avoid the hazard by succeeding on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw.

The green slime secretes acid and does 5 (1d10) acid damage to any creature it comes into contact with. This damage continues on each of the

creature's turns until it uses an action to remove or destroy the slime. Much like its move evolved ooze relatives, the green slime is doubly caustic to nonmagical wood and metal, doing 11 (2d10) acid damage against objects of these types.

Green slime is vulnerable and will be destroyed by fire, cold, radiant damage, sunlight or any disease curing magic.

Yellow Mold

Patches of yellow mold are most commonly encountered in dark, damp locations, and grows in 5-foot square and larger patches. If disturbed, the yellow mold releases a cloud of spores in a 10-foot radius around itself. Creatures caught in the spore cloud must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or incur 11 (2d10) poison damage and be poisoned for 1 minute. Creatures that fail their saving throws will take recurring damage from the poison, taking 5 (1d10) poison damage at the start of each of their turns. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a successful save.

Yellow mold is instantly destroyed by fire damage or sunlight.

Appendix C: New Magic Items

Hardened Chariot of Paradise

Wondrous Item, rare

The object is a large, four-man war chariot, which weighs 1,500 pounds, and was built in the Twin Paradises of the Upper Planes. Its steel wheels provide durability at the expense of a comfortable ride; the rig is not cushioned against bumps or rough terrain. It is well armored and imbued with powerful abjuration magic. Anyone riding in the chariot that comes under attack from missile weapons has a 25% chance of the chariot's magic protecting them from harm in the same manner as a *shield* spell. When attacked, roll 1d20. If the result is 17 or higher, passengers are surrounded by an invisible barrier of magical force and can add a +5 bonus to their AC against that attack only.

Chair of the Ancestors

Wondrous Item, very rare

When sitting in this heavily padded reading chair, you can invoke the chair's command word to cast *legend lore*.

Unguent of Timelessness

Wondrous item, rare

This small, dark glass jar contains 2d4 + 4 applications of thin, oily substance that smells faintly of well-oiled leather. A single application is enough material to coat a Small object. Two applications would be required to coat a Medium object, three applications for a Large object, and so on.

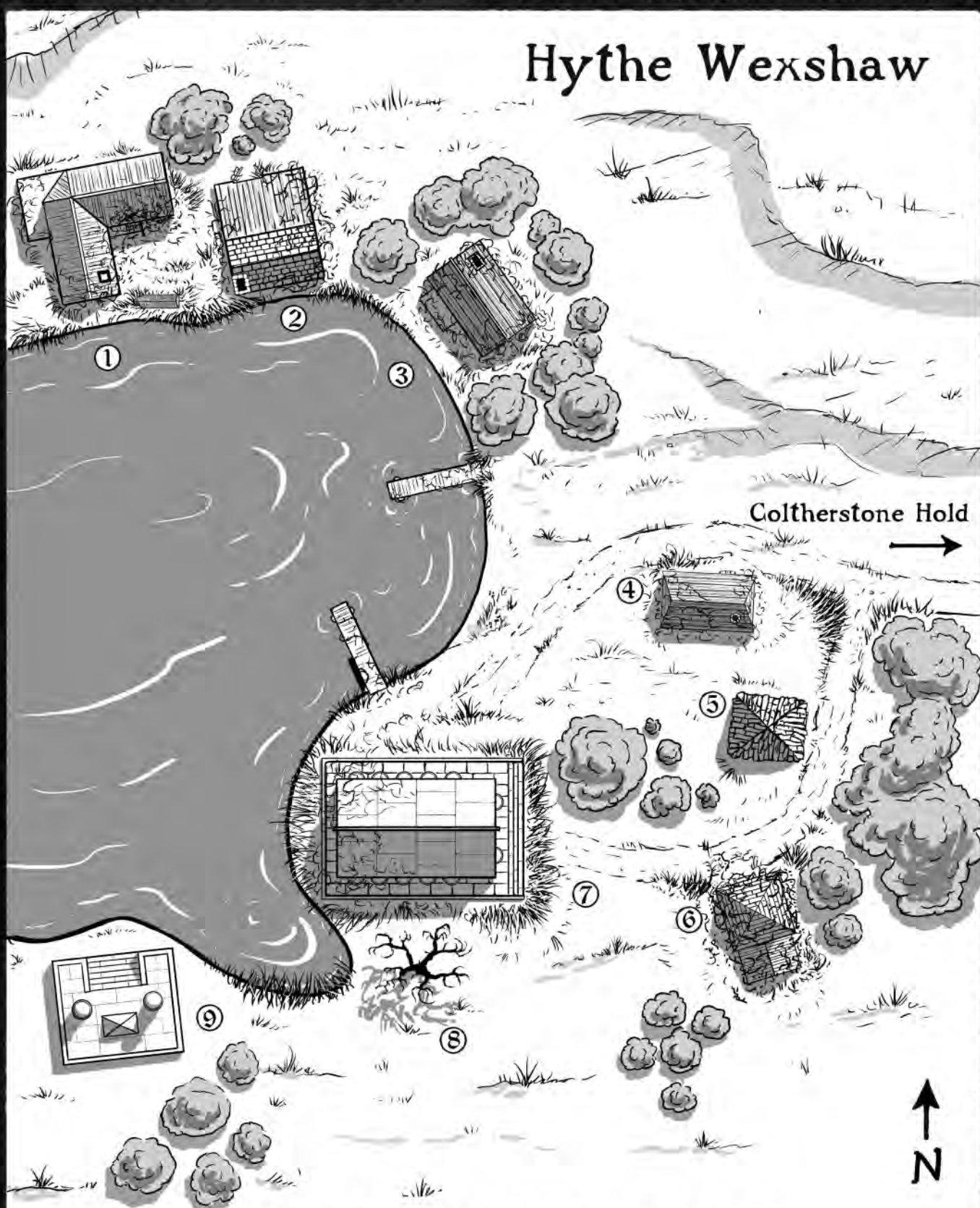
When applied to something that was once living, such as a body, wood, or paper, allows the matter to resist the passage of time. Each year of actual time has the effect as if only a single day had passed. The coated object has advantage on all saving throws, and the unguent never wears off unless magically removed by a spell such as *dispel magic*.

Lumberdoom

Weapon (battle axe), uncommon

Though this appears to be nothing other than a 3-foot axe handle without a head, it is actually a +1 *battle axe*. The weapon's large blade is invisible to normal vision. The blade glows pale blue when observed in full darkness with darkvision.

Hythe Wexshaw



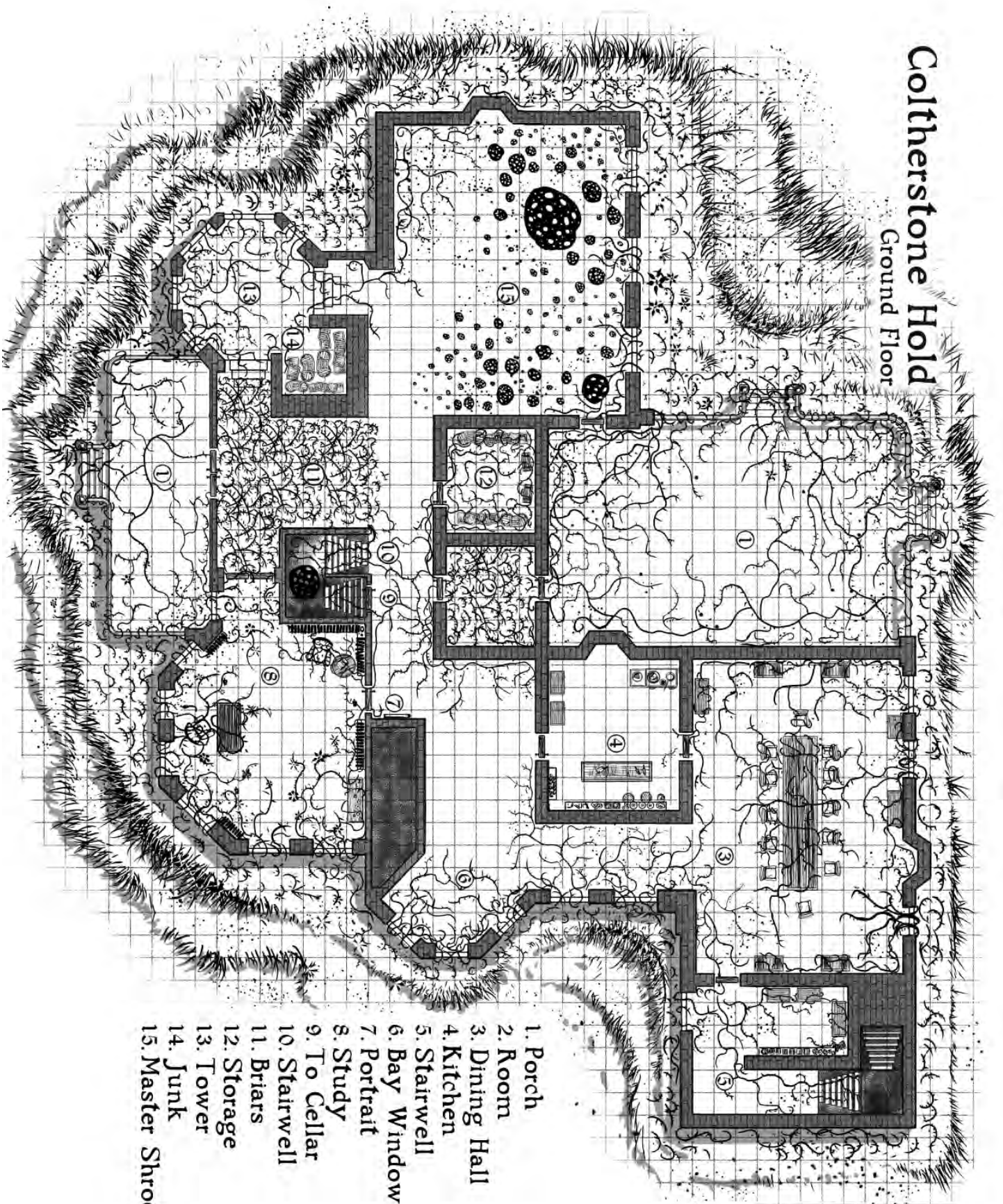
- 1. Diver Workshop
- 2. Fishery
- 3. Net-Mender

- 4. Groundskeeper's
- 5. Shack
- 6. Dilapidated House

- 7. Pavillion
- 8. The Gallows Tree
- 9. Buidling of Light

Coltherstone Hold

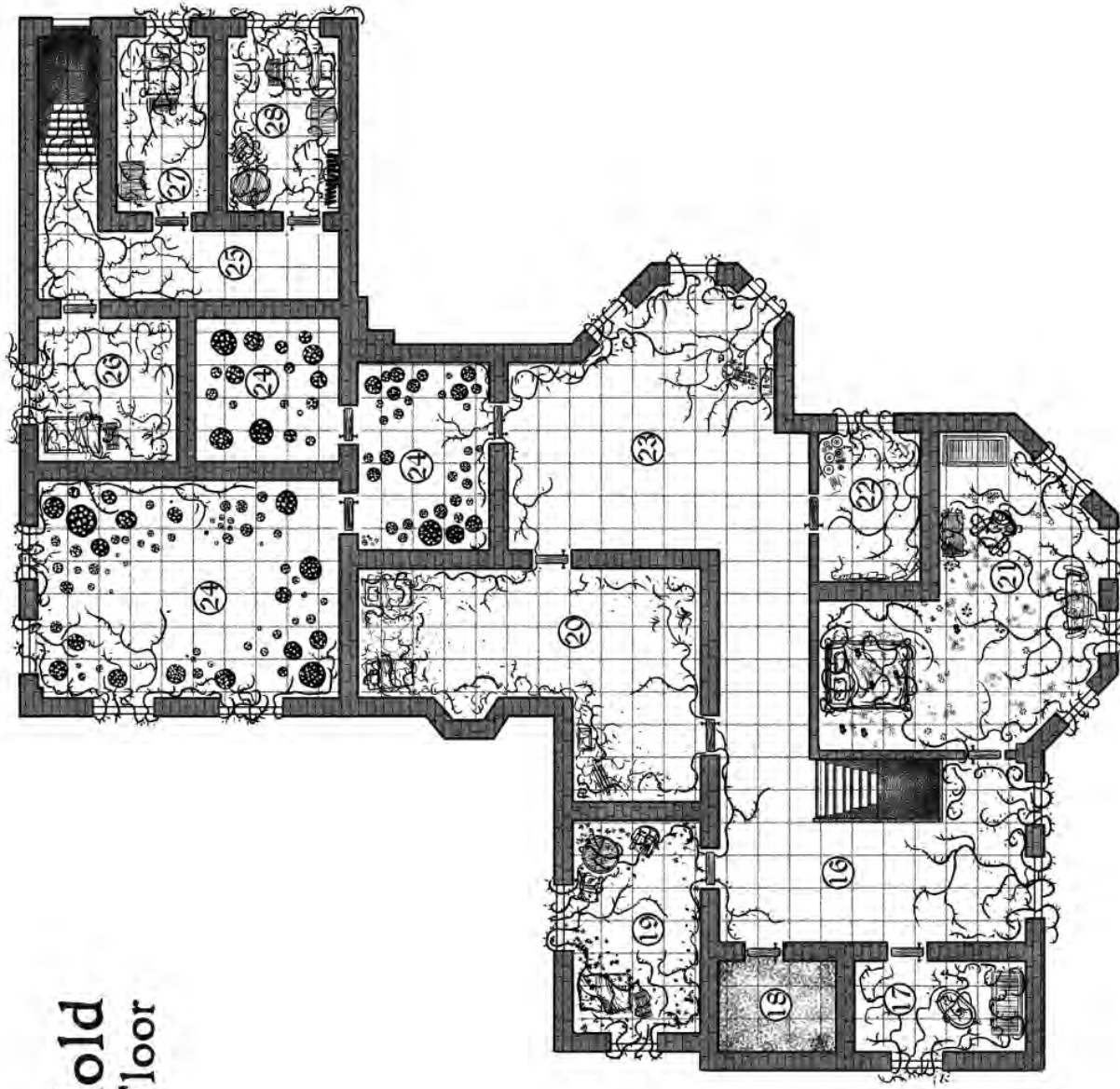
Ground Floor



1. Porch
2. Room
3. Dining Hall
4. Kitchen
5. Stairwell
6. Bay Window
7. Portrait
8. Study
9. To Cellar
10. Stairwell
11. Briars
12. Storage
13. Tower
14. Junk
15. Master Shroom

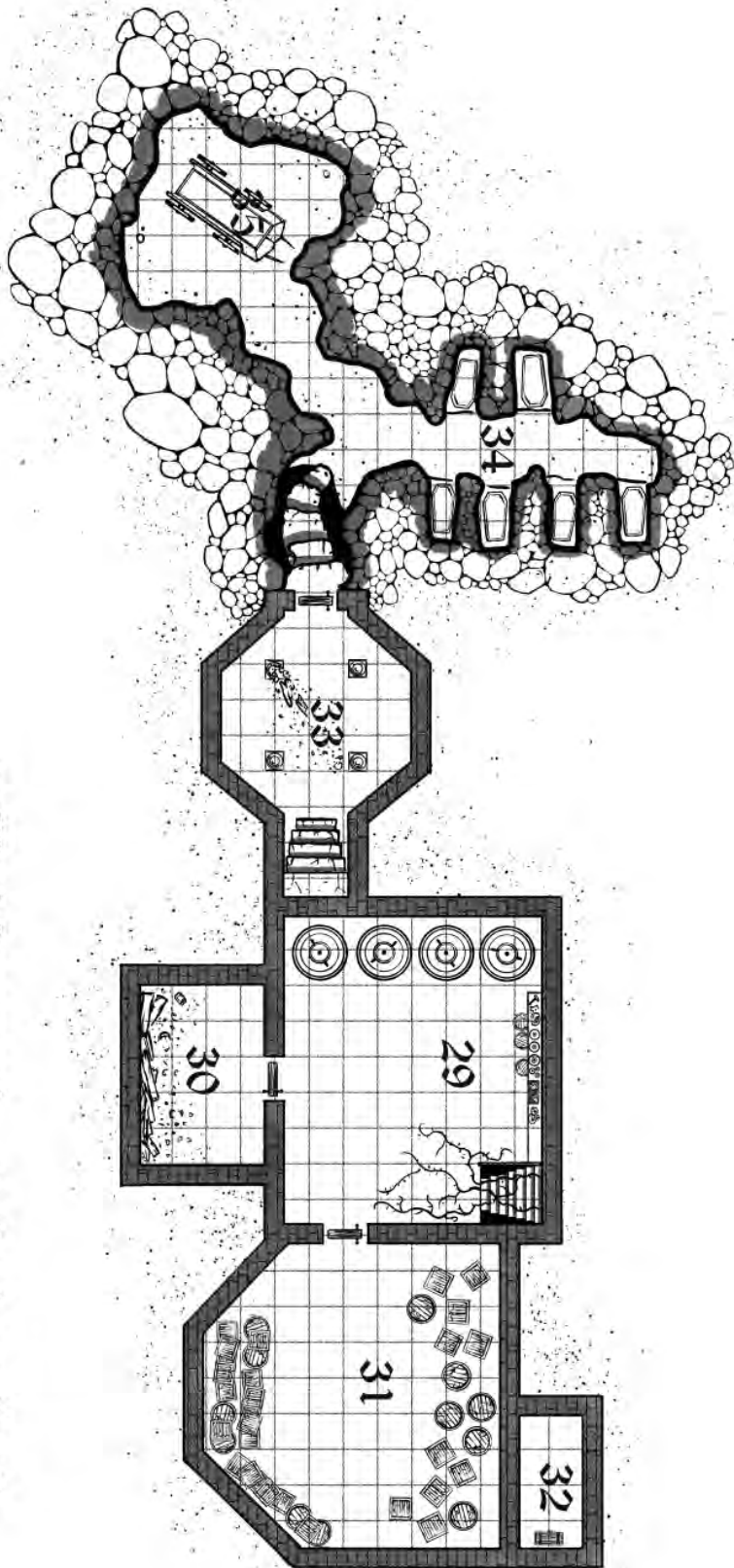
Coltherstone Hold

Second Floor



- 16. The Floater
- 17. Water Closet
- 18. Closet
- 19. Ophidian Retreat
- 20. Child's Play
- 21. A Peaceful Sleep
- 22. The Creeper
- 23. Fallen Armor
- 24. Mushroom Enclave
- 25. Stairwell & Hall
- 26. Butler's Room
- 27. Maid's Room
- 28. Cook's Room

Coltherstone Hold Cellar



- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 29. West Basement | 32. Heirloom Vault |
| 30. Root Cellar | 33. Emptied Cavern |
| 31. East Basement | 34. The Seven Dead |
| | 35. The Unexplained |

THE DESPERATION OF IVY

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Quests of Doom 4

Desperation of Ivy

The Desperation of Ivy is an adventure for 4 to 6 characters of levels 3-5 who are tasked with adventuring the ivy-choked Coltherstone Hold.



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