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GM'S MISCELLANY:  
PLACES OF POWER





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# GM'S MISCELLANY: PLACES OF POWER I (5E)

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*Places of Power* are short, richly detailed supplements that each present a flavoursome locale such as a remote temple, borderland fort or reclusive wizard's demesne. Ready to be plugged into almost any home campaign, each instalment can be used as a waystop on the road to adventure, the home of a powerful NPC or even as a mini-adventure site in its own right.

*Designed for use with the 5th edition of the world's most popular roleplaying game.*

## CREDITS

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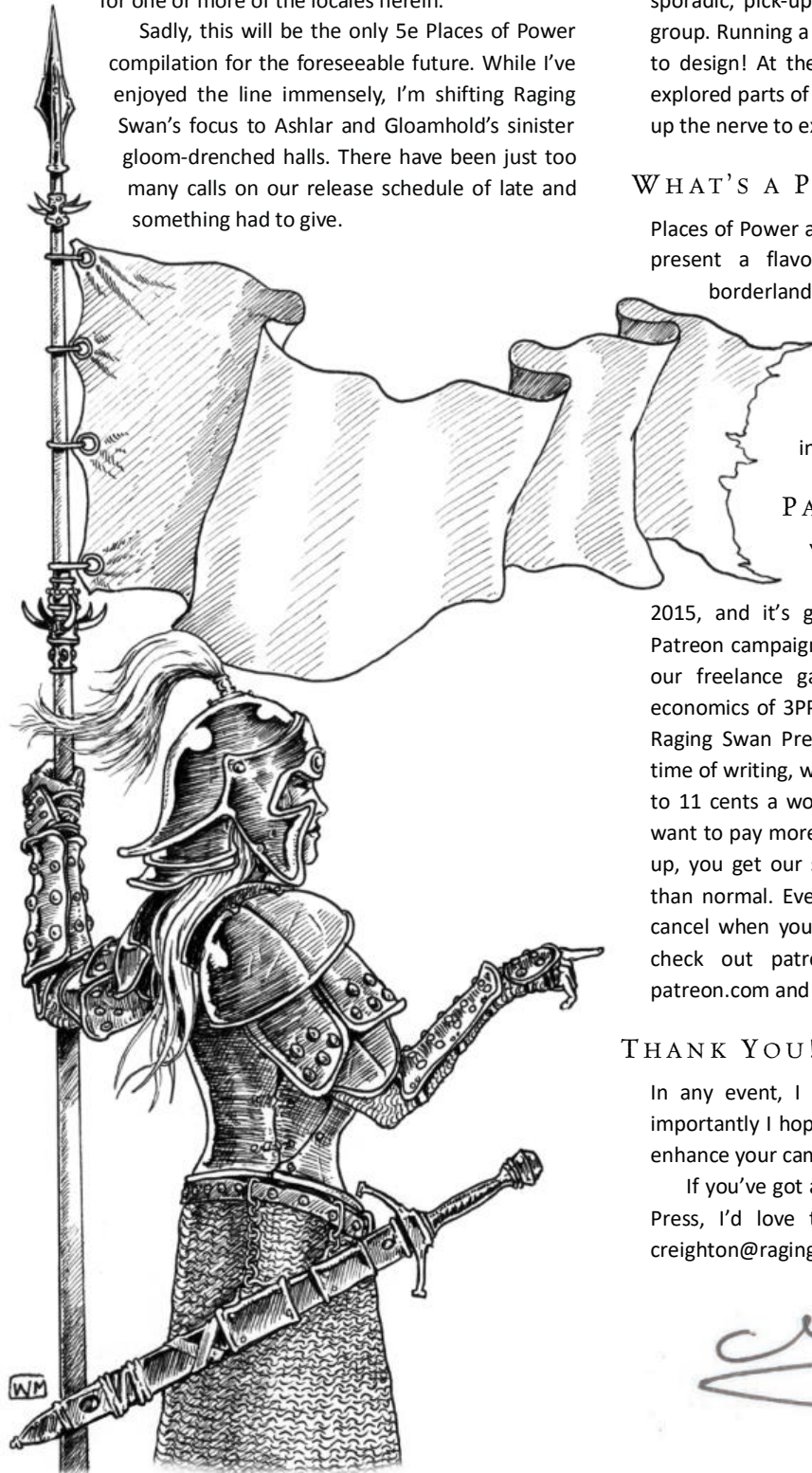
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Welcome to *GM's Miscellany: Places of Power (5e)*. I hope you enjoy this book and that you can find a place in your campaign for one or more of the locales herein.

Sadly, this will be the only 5e Places of Power compilation for the foreseeable future. While I've enjoyed the line immensely, I'm shifting Raging Swan's focus to Ashlar and Gloamhold's sinister gloom-drenched halls. There have been just too many calls on our release schedule of late and something had to give.



On the plus side, I'm looking forward to detailing more of Languard, Gloamhold and Ashlar as I've recently started a sporadic, pick-up campaign in the area for my normal gaming group. Running a game in Languard sure does give an imperative to design! At the time of writing, the heroes have only really explored parts of Greystone, but I'm sure they'll eventually pluck up the nerve to explore the megadungeon proper...

### WHAT'S A PLACE OF POWER?

Places of Power are short, richly detailed supplements that each present a flavoursome locale such as a remote temple, borderland fort or reclusive wizard's demesne. Ready to be plugged into almost any home campaign, each instalment can be used as a waystop on the road to adventure, the home of a powerful NPC or even as a mini-adventure site in its own right.

### PATREON

You might be aware Raging Swan Press is on Patreon. We signed up at the start of April 2015, and it's going rather marvellously. The thrust of our Patreon campaign is to be able to afford better rates of pay for our freelance game designers. As I'm sure you know, the economics of 3PP are notoriously tight, but Patreon gives us at Raging Swan Press a way to increase our freelancer rates. At time of writing, we've already massively increased our word rate to 11 cents a word, which gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling. We want to pay more, but to do that we need your help! If you sign up, you get our supplements earlier than normal and cheaper than normal. Even better, you can pledge what you want and cancel when you want. If you are interested in supporting us, check out [patreon.com/ragingswanpress](https://patreon.com/ragingswanpress) or head over to [patreon.com](https://patreon.com) and search for Raging Swan!

### THANK YOU!

In any event, I hope you enjoy this GM's Miscellany. More importantly I hope you find it useful and that the locales herein enhance your campaign (and make your job easier).

If you've got any comments or questions about Raging Swan Press, I'd love to hear from you. You can contact me at [creighton@ragingswan.com](mailto:creighton@ragingswan.com).

# BEACON PROMONTORY

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**Words** Mike Welham **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

*Beacon Promontory arose from the watery grave of Beacon Cove after a ferocious storm submerged the village. The handful of doughty northerners rebuilt their homes around Beacon Lighthouse, which lights the way for passing ships, many of which used to make the former village a port of call. Many consider the holdouts insane for staying, considering over half their neighbours left, but they feel they have a duty to seafarers who become stranded along the reshaped coastline. However, the truly insane person may be the lighthouse keeper who believes the deluge was a precursor to an invasion from beneath the waves.*

## BEACON PROMONTORY AT A GLANCE

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**Ruler** Vanya Colvin  
**Population** 19 (11 humans, 2 dwarves, 3 half-elves, 3 halflings)  
**Alignments** N  
**Languages** Aquan, Common  
**Resources & Industry** Fishing, safe shipping

Beacon Cove was a prosperous fishing village and a port of call for large ships embarking on or returning from sea voyages. Three years ago, the rainy season arrived and storms dumped an unprecedented amount of water on the village. Instead of drier weather supplanting the storms, the rain kept falling. The waters rose, and the village sank; most of the now homeless villagers fled the area. A few hardy folks retreated to the highest location, the rocky ground around their lighthouse. Thus, Beacon Promontory arose from the watery grave of Beacon Cove, just as the weather returned to normal. Now the residents wait for the water to recede, so they can reclaim their village.

### LORE

A PC may know something about Beacon Promontory, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 10:** Beacon Promontory is a remnant of a previous village, but the lighthouse still stands and is more relevant than ever in warning ships' crews about the dangerous shoreline.

**DC 15:** An unnatural deluge wiped out Beacon Cove.

**DC 20:** Some villagers drowned mysteriously and tales from fleeing villagers mention tentacled beasts lurking in the night.

### NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than ordinary individuals.

- **Appearance** All the locals are proud of their weatherworn skin and calloused hands.
- **Dress:** Villagers dress for the weather and often wear raincoats even when the sun is shining.
- **Nomenclature:** *male* Felgrim, Jorm, Yander; *female* Cass, Filipa, Maggie; *family* Colvin, Dever, Turkel.

Some of the inhabitants, however, are notable:

**Cass Dever** (location 1; N female human **commoner**) Cass maintains and guard Promontory Bridge.

**Felgrim Colvin** (location 8 and 10; N male dwarf **commoner**) Felgrim fanatically tends the lighthouse's light.

**Maggie Turkel** (location 2; N female halfling **guard**) Maggie is the chief blacksmith for the area.

**Vanya Colvin** (location 3; N female dwarf cleric 6) The village's spiritual leader is now leader of Beacon Promontory.

### MARKETPLACE

The following items are for sale:

- **Consumables:** *scroll of light* (50 gp), *scroll of water breathing* (400 gp)
- **Miscellaneous:** *ring of swimming* (500 gp), *wind fan* (250 gp)

Additionally, the following services are available:

- **Crafting:** Fishing gear, nets and water-related weapons (fishing spears, harpoons and tridents).

### EVENTS

While the PCs are at Beacon Promontory, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT   |
|----|---|
| 1  | A glowing green pearl washes up on shore.   |
| 2  | Several lacedons emerge from the northern waters and approach the village.                                |
| 3  | Writhing tentacles (as <i>black tentacles</i> ) surround the bridge and threaten to smash it to kindling. |
| 4  | At night, a cargo ship ignores the lighthouse's warning light and will imminently smash onto the rocks.   |
| 5  | The lighthouse's light begins to flash intermittently.  |
| 6  | Hundreds of dead fish float to the surface near the dock.   |

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Beacon Promontory, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

| D6 | RUMOUR   |
|----|--|
| 1  | Most fish from recent hauls have been half rotten.   |
| 2  | I swear I saw a tentacle pop out of the mouth of one of the fishermen who arrived recently.                        |
| 3  | The rainy season is upon us soon; Vanya has been praying fervently to keep the downpours to a minimum.             |
| 4* | I saw a ghostly ship hovering above the lighthouse.  |
| 5  | Felgrim is looking for an apprentice to eventually take over as lighthouse keeper, so he can help his wife, Vanya. |
| 6  | Even on cloudless days, lightning strikes the lighthouse at the same time of day.                                  |

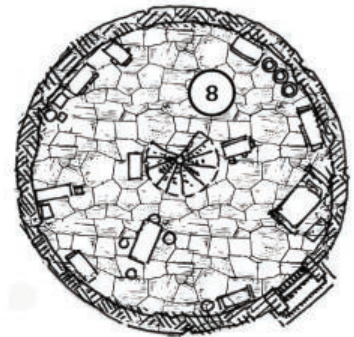
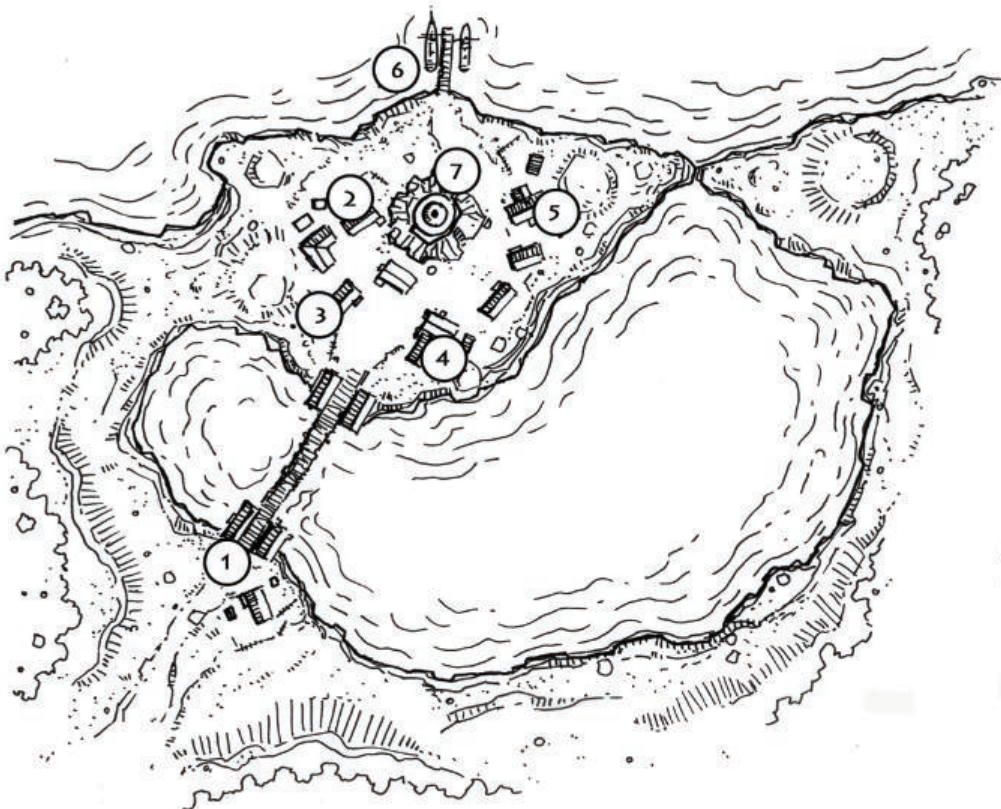
\*False rumour



## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Beacon Promontory comprises locations of little interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are notable:

1. **Promontory Bridge:** This hastily built bridge is the only safe approach to Beacon Promontory by land. It is rickety and only usable by pedestrians.
2. **Hooks and Gaffs:** Maggie Turkel spends most of her time here crafting fishing gear and the occasional weapon or suit of armour.
3. **Sea Queen's Blessing:** Everyone from Beacon Promontory comes here to at least give lip service to the Sea Queen, who impacts their livelihood with her savage, impulsive nature.
4. **General Supply and Salvage:** This store serves the crews of the now-rare ships anchoring nearby.
5. **Sea Bounty Inn:** Optimism prompted the rebuilding of the Sea Bounty Inn, a near-identical replica of the building in Beacon Cove; it stands mostly empty due to lack of visitors.
6. **Makeshift Dock:** There are enough ships stopping near Beacon Promontory to require this dock. It cannot accommodate full-sized ships, but can moor rowboats from those ships.
7. **Lighthouse Entrance:** Paranoia about the circumstances surrounding Beacon Cove's fall prompt the remaining group to set a guard at the lighthouse's entrance.
8. **Lighthouse Ground Floor:** During the day, when Felgrim isn't making repairs or assisting Vanya, he can be found here sleeping or eating.
9. **Hidden Storage:** A secret door known only to Felgrim and Vanya hides staple goods and a few weapons. If Beacon Promontory comes under siege, the Colvins plan to shelter the residents in this hidden area.
10. **Lighthouse Lamp:** Arguably the most important feature of Beacon Promontory, Felgrim has ensured the lamp's light has remained constant for the years he has been keeper.



## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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### 1: PROMONTORY BRIDGE

This bridge provides the only landward safe passage to Beacon Promontory. The remaining inhabitants of Beacon Cove worked together to strip drier planks for wood from houses submerged by the deluge to fashion the bridge. It is only suitable for foot traffic and, even then, travellers only cross a pair at a time as the bridge creaks audibly under their weight. Despite the return of normal weather to the area, the water refuses to recede, making the bridge a vital component for reaching the mainland.

Cass Dever (N female human **commoner**) has undertaken the task of bolstering the bridge and watches the approaches for invaders (Felgrim Colvin has effectively convinced her about otherworldly beings threatening to take over the land they flooded). After the flood, she stayed behind despite losing her spouse, who was carried out to sea while trying to rescue fisherfolk wrecked near the lighthouse. She decided to stay and help the remaining villagers out of devotion to her loved one, who would have done the same. Her skill at carpentry made her the best candidate to work on the bridge, and she did most of the work on the modest house standing nearby. Cass is warm toward visitors, but observant folk note a hint of sadness in her eyes. She uses her inherent charm to allay concerns about the many questions she asks about a visitor's business.

### 2: HOOKS AND GAFFS

Occupying the highest and driest spot around Beacon Lighthouse, the forge tended by Maggie Turkel (N female halfling **guard**) and a pair of teenage helpers (human **commoner**) produces metal fishing gear (mostly hooks, poles and suchlike). Of late, however, Felgrim has insisted Maggie shift her focus to weapons and armour, since he is convinced of an imminent attack from the sea. He also procured a shipment of cold iron and asked her to expedite harpoons for his use. During normal days, Maggie provides equipment to her neighbours for free and sells fishing gear to visitors for a ten percent mark-up. She sells weapons and armour produced at her forge at a ten percent discount to the other residents, with apologies for having to charge so much to recoup the cost of materials. She is reluctant to sell armaments to visitors, since the equipment is in such short supply. However, those who convince her of their desire and ability to protect Beacon Promontory can pry items from her at a 25 percent hike.

### 3: SEA QUEEN'S BLESSING

When it became clear the rain wouldn't stop, the people of Beacon Cove prayed and made offerings to the deity they revered as the Sea Queen (but also known more widely as the Mistress of Storms). When she seemingly refused to respond to

their pleas for aid, many villagers turned away from worshipping her before abandoning the village altogether. Vanya Colvin (N female dwarf cleric 6) was resolute in her adherence to the Sea Queen and managed to rally the remaining villagers with promises of great rewards for those who passed the goddess's tests. Shortly after relocating the Sea Queen's temple nearer to the lighthouse, sunlight broke through the clouds and the rain stopped. Vanya took this event as a sign of the goddess's favour and has used it to begin restoring faith among her people. As the unifying force for Beacon Promontory she became the mayor after the incumbent fled the village. Fortunately, the close-knit nature of the small group on the rocks surrounding the lighthouse and the decrease in arriving boats make her job easier, allowing her to devote much time to worship.

### 4: GENERAL SUPPLY AND SALVAGE

The General Supply was the largest building in Beacon Cove. With fewer ships arriving, and the lack of space around the lighthouse, the supply store is one quarter its former size. Filipa Shrayner (N female human **commoner**) manages the place, taking over from her parents whose ill-health forced them to flee the village's damp environs. She sells goods unavailable from Hooks and Gaffs and ensures she gives a fair price to villagers and travellers alike, except for those with odious personalities. She keeps her prices low because of the side business of salvaging shipwrecks she and her brother Thom (LN male human **commoner**) have started. In cases where all crew were lost, she claims rights to all material goods. For survivors who have no stomach to return to their ships, she offers a hefty recovery fee (typically 25 percent of the bounty's worth).

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#### IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Beacon Promontory serves as a bastion in a northern seaside beset by continuous rain. It is a lonely place, cut off from the rest of civilization due to the flooding which thwarts overland travel and the newly treacherous water driving ships away. A party could be forced to travel here because of shipwreck, leading them to rescue themselves or receive assistance from Beacon Promontory's residents, and then become involved in the fight against the strange beings Felgrim Colvin claims have instigated the region's plight. Alternatively, the PCs might be forced to oust the entrenched dwarf whose delusions have begun to adversely affect his ability to carry out his job.

With slight tweaks, a GM can move the lighthouse to a warmer location, beset by an unusually long monsoon season or affected by a persistent tropical storm.

## 5: SEA BOUNTY INN

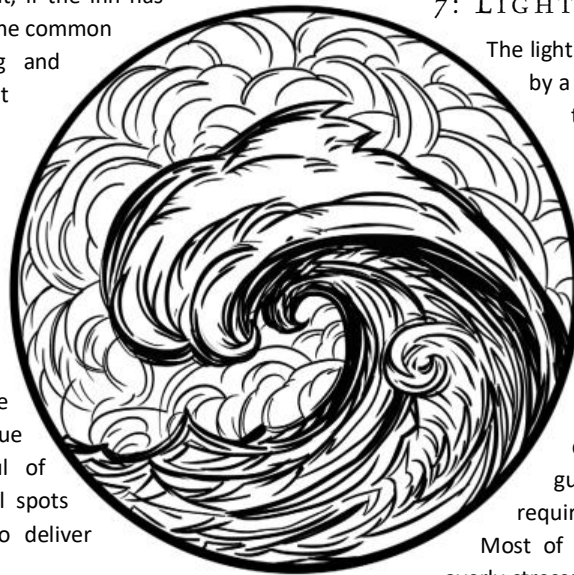
Another business casualty of the flooding, the Sea Bounty Inn once provided accommodations for up to 30 visitors but can now comfortably sleep only ten. A small tavern adjoins the inn, where workers and travellers alike gather.

- **Food & Drink** meal (typically fish soup with bread, vegetables and bread) 2 sp, ale 3 cp, wine (pitcher) 1 sp.
- **Accommodation** A standard room costs 2 gp a night. The room is draughty and has no lock on the door. Guests are welcome to cram as many people as they like into their room.

No single resident manages the inn; available villagers fill in to serve guests during the day. At night, if the inn has guests, one of the residents stays in the common room to question anyone coming and going, usually with a warning about frightful monsters emerging from the water at night.

## 6: MAKESHIFT DOCK

With ships arriving outside the now submerged rocky boundary to the cove and sometimes wrecking on those same rocks, Beacon Promontory required some way to receive visitors or launch rescue and salvage operations. A handful of boats are moored here, and several spots are open for rowboats or skiffs to deliver



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### DAILY LIFE

Life was already rigorous for villagers, who made their living by fishing. The village's mass desertion left a handful of residents who work hard to maintain and improve the buildings they hastily erected during their retreat to higher ground. Fortunately, the weather has returned to a semblance of normalcy with the recent summer mostly free of rain, allowing proper construction to take place. Many residents also travel out to sea to harvest fish for the others who can't leave the lighthouse and its immediate surroundings. With fish becoming less plentiful in the surrounding waters, fishing takes place at ever distant locations. The more frequent incidents of shipwrecks also add an element of stress and danger to the inhabitants' lives, since they do what they can to rescue sailors foundering in the freezing water and fending off increasingly aggressive marine life. Those who remain feel a sense of duty to one another and to the ships' captains and crews who rely on them to maintain the lighthouse and provide respite.

visitors and goods. Two boats traverse the water just beyond the dangerous rocks to warn ship's captains about the threat and guide smaller boats to Beacon Promontory. The patrols cease their activities one hour before dusk, so they don't get caught in open water after dark.

After Cass Dever completes upgrading Promontory Bridge, she intends to improve the dock to allow additional light watercraft to moor here. A month ago, the dock was destroyed, apparently by a powerful wave, diverting Cass's attention away from the bridge to rebuild the dock. It was this latest destruction which helped Felgrim convince Cass of a greater threat to the Promontory's residents.

## 7: LIGHTHOUSE ENTRANCE

The lighthouse entrance is guarded day and night by a rotating group of villagers. The door into the lighthouse requires a 20-foot-tall ladder to reach, and Felgrim Colvin (N male dwarf **commoner**) has the only ladder of such length in the village. He pulls it into the lighthouse when he enters, to keep himself safe. For the past two months, he has rarely emerged from the lighthouse and only allows Vanya to enter. When he does leave the lighthouse, he only does so to perform "inspections" of the guards, asking them bizarre questions and requiring an examination of their mouths. Most of the residents are convinced Felgrim is overly stressed because of the lighthouse's increased importance to warn off ships from the dangers presented by the transformed shoreline, so they put up with his strange behaviour.

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### SERAT

CN goddess of the sea, storms and voyages

**Epithets:** Mistress of Storms, the Uncaring

**Symbol:** A cresting wave

**Domain:** Tempest

**Favoured Weapon:** Trident

**Holy Text:** Book of Tides

**Additional Notes:** As wild and unpredictable as the sea, sailors, merchants and pirates alike placate Serat with glittering gifts to guarantee a safe voyage. Some believe Serat to be the physical embodiment of the sea while others believe she dwells in a glittering, crystal city far beneath the waves. During services, offerings are cast into the sea. Her priests are often shipwrights, navigators or sea captains.



## 8: LIGHTHOUSE GROUND FLOOR

Felgrim Colvin spends most of the daylight hours here when he isn't repairing the lamp or fastidiously reviewing the stores in his hidden storage. He keeps a journal of ships he sees arrive at night, but he has hidden it under a hatch (DC 20 Wisdom [Perception] locates). The past couple of months' entries also contain scrawled "evidence" of an attack from the sea carried out by creatures not of this world. The ramblings have grown more severe, and refer to inhabitants and travellers hosting tentacled creatures within their bodies which control their minds.

## 9: HIDDEN STORAGE

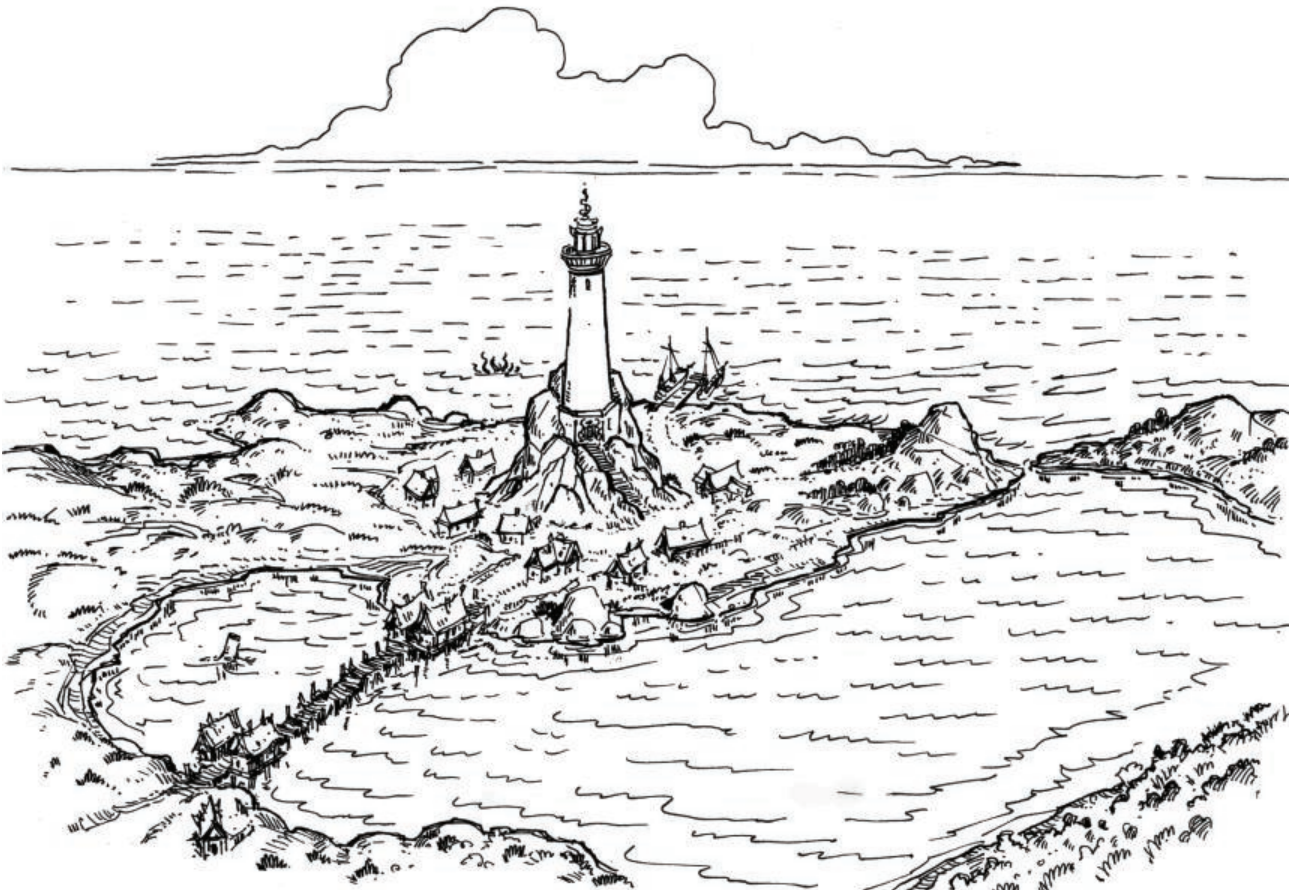
This storage area holds enough supplies to house the village for a week. Felgrim added this hidden space himself as part of his growing paranoia induced when the area began flooding. Finding the entrance requires a DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) locates check, and Felgrim has barred it with a sophisticated lock (DC 25 Dexterity opens). The storage area contains crates filled with hardtack, dried fish and skins of fresh water, along with a

stockpile of weapons and barrels filled with lamp oil. A ladder leads from the storage area to an even more difficult to find trapdoor (DC 30 Wisdom [Perception] locates spots) beneath the lighthouse lamp. Felgrim's duty to the ships passing near or travelling to Beacon Promontory outweighs his mania.

## 10: LIGHTHOUSE LAMP

Felgrim obsesses over Beacon Promontory's most vital piece of equipment. When he took over as lighthouse keeper he vowed to never let the light extinguish, and he adhered to that vow even when the land around the lighthouse flooded and many of the inhabitants fled. The floods make the sea even more treacherous, as the formerly dry ground and ruined buildings lurk just below the surface, waiting to breach passing ships.

Even when Felgrim hadn't given in to his paranoia, he refuses to grant admittance to this part of the lighthouse. Figuring he would outlive most of the residents anyway, he intended to pass on his knowledge of the lighthouse's inner workings to his child.



# DEAD MAN'S RUN

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**Words** Jacob W. Michaels **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

*The glint of gold coin and flash of pale bone peek out from the dark timbers of sunken buildings as a sad ferryman slowly pulls his boat across the clear water. This is Dead Man's Run, the only safe passage across the wild Brimbrook; for miles in either direction river races over rocky rapids and steep waterfalls, carving an otherwise impassable chasm through the forested hills.*

*Any who pay the price of passage—two golden coins given as tribute to the river—find a berth on the wooden ferry. They also find the operators of the ferry, the sad survivors who can share the tale of the natural disasters that destroyed the two villages and fort that once stood here, and learn why they remain to tend to the dead.*



## DEAD MAN'S RUN AT A GLANCE

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**Ruler** None

**Population** 11 (5 humans, 4 elves, 2 half-elves)

**Alignments** LG, LN

**Languages** Common, Elven

**Resources & Industry** Ferry services

This remote border between an elven kingdom and human realm may have never been settled had a human baron not seen it as a perfect spot to sneak troops into his neighbour's land for an invasion. The plan worked for a time, but the baron's forces were eventually repulsed, leading to several years of constant fighting that turned the Brimbrook's gently flowing waters crimson. In time, this stalemate led to a truce, and the truce eventually became a tenuous peace. Two villages grew, one on each side of the river, their growing friendship symbolized by the stone bridge erected to link them.

Dead Man's Run spans the graves of those two villages and almost all their inhabitants.

No one knows what caused it, but a single night of chaos ten years ago wiped the villages from the face of the earth. Nature itself seemed to turn against the inhabitants: the earth shook, the ground rising and cracking; lightning struck from the sky, igniting the fort and burning it to the ground; and the gentle creek became a rampaging river, sweeping homes from their foundations. When morning finally came, the villages were gone, and almost all their inhabitants with them.

Most of the few survivors fled the disaster, but a remnant of that remnant stayed to tend to the watery graves of friends and family. They bridged the divide, ferrying first themselves and later travellers across the river. With each passage, they offer tribute, a pair of gold coins, to the dead and the water in hopes that neither rise up again.

### MARKETPLACE

The following items are for sale:

- **Weapons & Armour** Miscellaneous items have been scavenged from the area: Much of it is finely made or even magical—lesser weapons didn't survive their exposure to the elements—but most such items are in need of repair.

Additionally, the following services are available:

- **Spellcasting** 3rd-level cleric

### LORE

A PC may know something about Dead Man's Run, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A

successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 10:** The ferry service at Dead Man's Run offers the only route across the Brimbrook for miles in either direction.

**DC 15:** The origins of the crossing's name come from a night of horror ten years ago, when the then-gentle Brimbrook's course was changed in a series of earthquakes, which turned it into a wide, rushing river that destroyed the two villages standing on its banks.

**DC 20:** A few of the survivors of the tragedy known as Nature's Night operate the ferry service, though they remain primarily to tend to the watery graves of their friends and family.

### FOLK

Most of the residents of the villages died or fled, but a few remain at Dead Man's Run.

- **Appearance** Even after ten years, most of the residents of Dead Man's Run bear a haunted look, faces marked by deep lines, sunken eyes and pinched lips.
- **Dress** The residents of Dead Man's Run wear simple, utilitarian wool clothing, with straw hats to protect them from the sun.

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Dead Man's Run, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

| D6 | RUMOUR  |
|----|---|
| 1  | The ferry charges an exorbitant fee: the silver piece per person or animal isn't too bad, but they also demand two gold coins for every passage across the water.                 |
| 2  | The ferryman always throws two gold pieces into the water before each trip.   |
| 3* | Anyone who tries to cross Dead Man's Run without paying tribute faces death themselves, tossed by a sudden wall of water into the river to be smashed into the rapids downstream. |
| 4  | The lower levels of the fort that once guarded the area are inaccessible after it burned down. Who knows what secrets they hold?  |
| 5* | The river is full of gold coins, but anyone who tries to recover them is hauled down by the grasping hands of the dead sleeping on the river bed.                                 |
| 6  | A powerful nymph resides in the area; she may have been responsible for Nature's Night, but now helps keep the surrounding area mostly peaceful.                                  |

\*False rumour

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

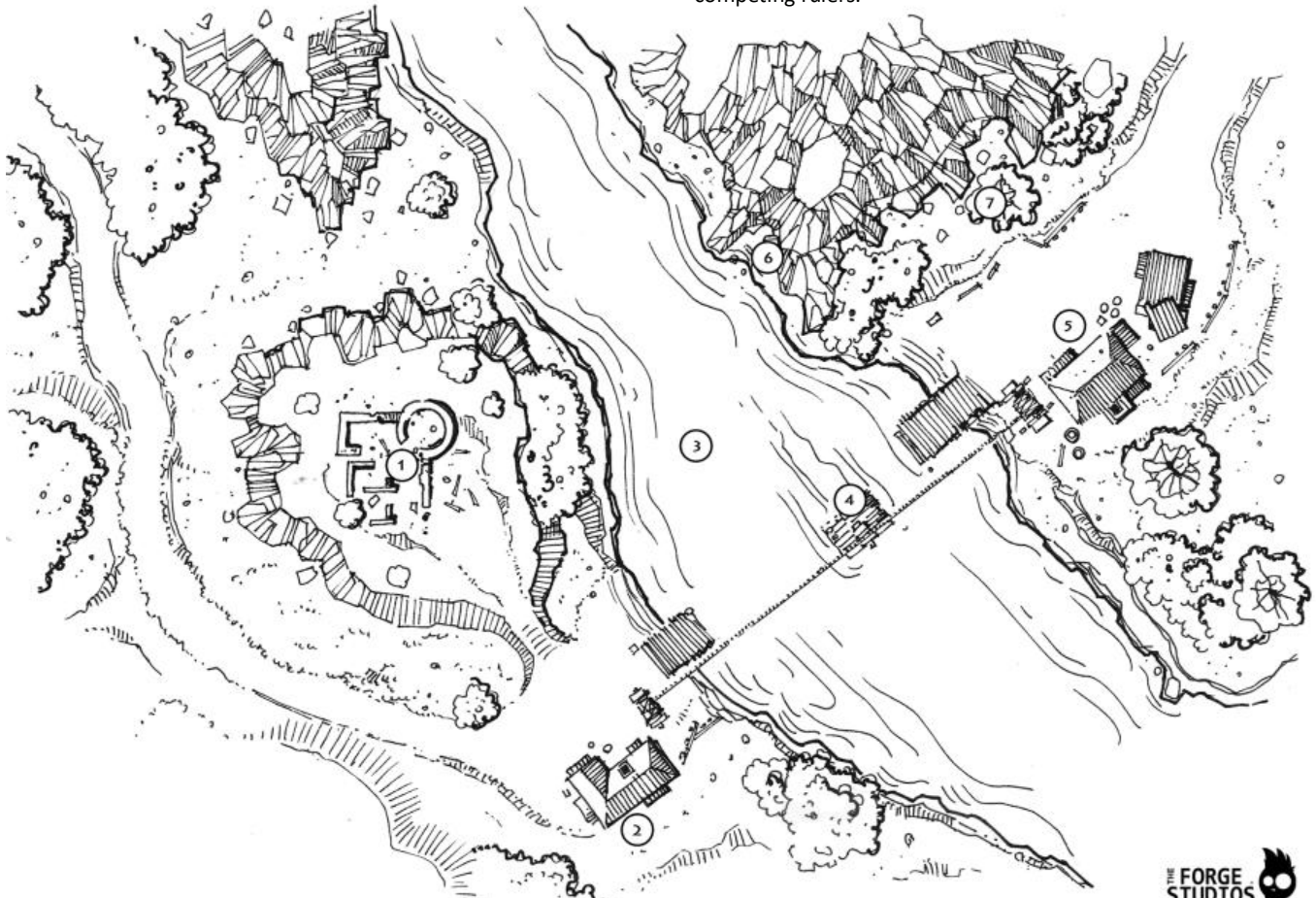
Dead Man's Run is a small community, which makes the most of the space it has:

1. **Fort Essayas:** The remaining residents of Dead Man's Run avoid the crumbling ruins of this fort, believing that whatever caused Nature's Night stemmed from activities here and that it's cursed by its past use. The fort's cellars and dungeon have remained unexplored since it burned down.
2. **The Manorhall:** Once the centre of the village's local government, the Manorhall is now home to a young family: the widower farmer-turned-ferryman, Vyncis Potte, and the elf Adoleid Potte, who found comfort in each other's arms. Their two children are the light of most of the survivors' lives. They share their home with Oror Highbird, though the elf spends much of his time hunting.
3. **The Brimbrook:** Once a gentle stream, the wide river now rushes over the sunken graves of most of the villagers. On clear days, the remains of homes and bodies of residents can be seen on the muddy bottom. The nymph druid Millenaphi dwells downstream, but is rarely seen.

4. **Brimbrook Ferry:** The primary source of income for the remaining survivors, the cable ferry is typically operated by either Irennen Fairarrow or Vyncis Potte, though the former refuses to cross at night.
5. **Lumber House:** This building doubles as a home and a mill, used to ensure spare ferries are available. In addition to Irennan Fairarrow, husband and wife Exard and Dottry Lysalt call the building home, as do Cedia Borne and Wyan Sabil.

### IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Dead Man's Run can be placed in almost any hilly or mountainous region where a river provides an obstacle to travel. It should be fairly remote, but can serve as a quick interlude to break up a cross-country journey; an interesting place to rest and possibly resupply; or a potential adventure spot in its own right. The border aspect of the two kingdoms can be played down if you wish, as the end of the conflict returned the area around Dead Man's Run to a backwater of little interest to either side. If having bordering kingdoms of different races doesn't fit in your campaign world, the conflict can also be changed to make both sides belong to the same race and simply be between competing rulers.



## LIFE IN DEAD MAN'S RUN

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Life at a mass grave gives little time for merriment as the nine adults toil to remain alive and bring peace to the dead. The days are brightened by the two children who spend much of their time playing in the woods or on the river banks.

### TRADE & INDUSTRY

Little industry takes place at Dead Man's Run, other than what's needed for the residents to survive and keep their ferry afloat. However, their efforts to tend the graves of the dead often lead the residents to items of value they are willing to sell to passers-by—mostly weapons and pieces of armour lost during the various skirmishes and battles fought in the area.

### LAW & ORDER

No formal law covers the region. Residents of Dead Man's Run try to solve problems amongst themselves. Dottry Lynsalt often plays peacemaker while her husband, the oldest-appearing resident (he wilfully forgets the long-lived elves have many decades on him), tries to exert the authority of his age. The residents can chase off scavengers, but are ill-equipped to deal with a larger, more-organized threat. Fortunately for them, the area is not well-travelled enough to attract bandits or they would likely have to seek help to deal with the menace.

### CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

The strongest (and strangest) custom at Dead Man's Run is the two gold coins given to nature and the dead every time passengers are brought across the Brimbrook (the residents don't give coins when it's only them crossing). If asked, the survivors struggle to explain this tradition to outsiders, given that it's part thanks for their own lives, part offering to the dead that they may remain at peace as people pass over their graves and part bribe to nature itself so another disaster does not befall the region.

Similarly, residents mark the late-summer anniversary of the calamity that destroyed the villages with the Nature's Night vigil, in which they keep watch all night and offer prayers to nature and the dead to be at peace. They refuse to transport any passengers across the river the day before or after the vigil.



### LOCATION DRESSING

Use this table, to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about Dead Man's Run.

#### D20 DRESSING/EVENT

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A clear, sunny day reveals sunken buildings and bleached bones in the water.   |
| 2  | Oror Highbird returns from a hunt with a deer carcass slung over his shoulder.   |
| 3  | Wyan Sabil hacks small branches off a tree as he prepares to build a new ferry boat.   |
| 4  | Adoleid Potte helps Dottry Lynsalt tend a small vegetable garden behind the Manorhall.   |
| 5  | The smell of cooking meat fills the air as the residents slowly roast a wild boar brought in by Oror Highbird.                                       |
| 6  | The hilt of a sword—spread eagle wings around theommel—pokes out of the soft ground.   |
| 7  | Dotty Lynsalt and her husband, Exard, argue heatedly about a mysterious "she," but stop as soon as they realize they're not alone.                   |
| 8  | Vyncis Potte yells instructions to Irennan Fairarrow across the river as the elf works to repair the ferry mechanism on the western side.            |
| 9  | The echoing clatter of falling stones comes from the crumbling walls of Fort Essayas.  |
| 10 | A mangy canine scavenger gnaws on a bleached femur, seemingly unafraid of attempts to chase it off.  |
| 11 | Two wet, muddy half-elven children come running excitedly from the river with a battered candlestick.  |
| 12 | As night falls, Dottry Lynsalt and Adoleid Potte hang small lanterns outside the doors of the Manorhall and lumber house.                            |
| 13 | Several days of rain leave the river muddy and flowing high and fast.  |
| 14 | Exard Lynsalt sits on a log near his home, fashioning a small boat from tree bark before setting it loose to float down the river.                   |
| 15 | Vyncis Potte braids long vines together, forming them into a spare cable for the ferry.  |
| 16 | Adoleid Potte furiously scolds her seven-year-old son for allowing his younger sister to play too close to the water (again!).                       |
| 17 | A ruddy red glow, like firelight, flickers in the ruins of Fort Essayas.   |
| 18 | The glint of gold on the muddy shore reveals itself to be a coin that appears to have washed ashore.   |
| 19 | A pair of pixies cavort above the river, doing flips as they hang on the ferry cable.  |
| 20 | Cedia Born leads a small service to the Goddess of the Dead as the residents gather to lay the recovered remains of a body to a more permanent rest. |



## THE SURROUNDING LOCALITY

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A seemingly pristine wilderness surrounds Dead Man's Run, a vibrant forest through which the Brimbrook has carved a deep channel splitting the area as thoroughly as any wall ever could. Even beyond the steep cliffs that must be scaled to approach or depart from the river, passage across the water is no simple matter. The river flows swiftly over rocky rapids and tumbles down steep waterfalls, its current too swift along much of its length to ford without magical help.

Once-warring kingdoms claimed opposite sides of the waterway but the region's distance from the hearts of those realms and the dangers now extant in traversing the river keep it from regular use. Even more so since the twin villages were destroyed, it now mainly serves as a thoroughfare, an area travellers pass through to get from one place to another, but not a destination on its own.

Fey and wild animals under the watchful eyes of the capricious nymph druid Millenaphi far outnumber the combined human and elves who live here. The powerful faerie duchess does not begrudge visitors to the area she considers her own, but acts quickly against those who abuse the land. She wields

more than enough power to have brought about Nature's Night and those few who know of her presence assume she was in fact the cause of the destruction—though they can only theorize why she chose to act. However, she has never claimed responsibility for the disaster.

In addition to its living inhabitants, the area holds many more dead than the remains of the villagers beneath the Brimbrook. The years of internecine warfare as superior numbers of human attackers couldn't overcome the woodcraft of elven defenders left the area for miles around the waterway littered with corpses. They mouldered away for a decade before Nature's Night tossed the land like a child's toy, in the process burying some bodies and unearthing others. Scavengers, human and otherwise, claim mementos and treasures in the woods, unwittingly bringing unlife to disturbed corpses. Most of those newly risen seek nothing more than a final resting place, but some remain infused with the spirit of the war and set out to continue their battle.



## NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN DEAD MAN'S RUN

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### 1: FORT ESSEYAS

*Rubble covers the ground between the fire-blackened walls and charred timbers of this once-mighty stone fort.*

Erected by the humans during the war, the fort housed a regiment of soldiers who watched over the area. Typically led by young officers getting a first chance to lead in a strategically unimportant area of the world, the regiment comprised mostly malcontents and poor soldiers who were assigned to the area as punishment. Less than a year before Nature's Night, the last captain to serve here, Geoddrey Ashmoor, arrived. Eager to whip his men into shape and impress his superiors, he began a campaign to control the fey in the area, an act the few scholars who have studied the calamity believe may have triggered Nature's Night.

Nothing remains of the fort above the surface but charred rubble thanks to the conflagration sparked by repeated lightning strikes on Nature's Night. What wasn't discovered by the survivors of that calamity when they went to help in the ensuing days is that an entrance to the fort's lower chambers remains, hidden and partially blocked by piles of stone. The residents of Dead Man's Run avoid the fort, which they fear is haunted in a way they can't lay to rest.

### WHAT'S GOING ON?

**Rise of the Underworld:** Unknown to anyone on the surface, the earthquakes on Nature's Night opened a passage below the

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#### OROR HIGHBIRD

LN male elf **scout**

*This green-clad elf carries a longbow strung across his back, a quiver of arrows and short sword hang from his hip.*

**Mannerisms:** Oror walks with a slight limp, but refuses to acknowledge his injury.

**Personality:** A tenacious hunter, Oror sets his mind to a task and then accomplishes it. He has limited use for other people, finding the solitude of his work and his home suit him well.

**Background:** A lackadaisical hunter before Nature's Night, Oror was in the woods during Nature's Night. He avoided the floods, but was injured when a tree felled by an earthquake pinned his leg. Crawling home, he was horrified by the destruction and found new purpose in his survival. He now provides almost all the fresh meat for the residents of Dead Man's Run, spending more time in the woods than in the home he ostensibly shares with the Potte family.

fort's ruins to a subterranean world. A **spirit naga** has slithered forth and begun to explore what this new area has to offer.

**Rubble Trouble:** Strange sounds from the fort lead the residents of Dead Man's Run to ask passing PCs to investigate: They discover a dire bear has taken up residence in the ruins and must find a way to relocate it without drawing Millenaphi's ire.

**Walking the Razor's Edge:** Geoddrey Ashmoor's nephew seeks a magic sword, a family heirloom that had been in his uncle's possession. He hires the PCs to search the ruins to find if it still exists. They must enter the haunted chambers below the surface and recover the blade while not alerting the nearby residents to their purpose in the area.

### 2: THE MANORHALL

*Children's toys and other clutter lie around this well-made stone building. A neat vegetable and herb garden grows behind it.*

Once the home of the richest man in the village, this well-built manor survived the destruction of Nature's Night. It now houses the Potte family—husband Vyncis (LG male human **commoner**; see location 4), wife Adoleid (LG female elf **commoner**) and their seven-year-old son, Ander, and four-year-old daughter, Irindel (LG young male or female half-elf **commoner**)—as well as the elven hunter Oror Highbird (LN male elf **scout**).

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#### ADOLEID POTTE

LG female elf **commoner**

*This attractive elven woman appears slightly unkempt, as if she has better things to do than worry about her hair and clothing.*

**Mannerisms:** Adoleid always seems slightly distracted, her eyes scanning for whatever trouble her two rambunctious children are getting into at the moment ("it's their human half," she jokes) instead of focusing on whomever she's talking to.

**Personality:** The sweet-natured, understanding maiden's grief over Nature's Night subsided in the face of the love she found with Vyncis Potte. She's utterly devoted to him and their two children. Of all the residents of Dead Man's Run, she cares the most about the living over the dead; if her husband were willing, she would leave for a happier place, especially as her children get older and she worries what effect their sad home might have on them.

**Background:** After Adoleid's parents drowned in Nature's Night, she stayed to help tend the injured survivors. In time, she fell in love with Vyncis Potte, much to her own surprise, and now stays for his sake.



## WHAT'S GOING ON?

**Lost ...:** Irindel Potte has gone missing, having wandered off into the woods. The ferry won't go anywhere until the girl is found.

**... and Found:** Ander Potte breathlessly presents a "treasure" he found in the woods: A battered, horned helmet. The only problem is it doesn't resemble anything worn by the old human or elf warriors, and the goblinoid blood on it is fresh.

- **For Sale:** antitoxin (50 gp), +1 short sword (500 gp), circlet of blasting (500 gp), potion of healing (50 gp), two suits of broken elven chain (2,500 gp each), potion of healing (50 gp), scroll of bless (50 gp)

## 3: THE BRIMBROOK

*The river runs deep, fast and wide here, cutting through the stony cliffs. Below the surface, glimpses of golden coins and white bone flash among the remains of sunken buildings.*

Once a shallow ford, this section of the river was transformed by the earthquakes of Nature's Night, making it far too dangerous to cross on foot. Below the surface, the remains of villagers who drowned before they had a chance to escape their sunken

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### MILLENAPHI

CG female nymph druid 8

*Water seems to cling to this unbelievable beautiful woman like a shroud, the drops from her long, pointed ears twinkling like diamond jewellery.*

**Mannerisms:** Millenaphi holds herself as a queen, giving any who approach her the opportunity to show obeisance as she feels she deserves.

**Personality:** Aloof and mysterious, Millenaphi holds herself above all others she meets. She is protective of the area, secretly invoking her wrath on any who travel through the region without offering respect to nature or the dead.

**Background:** Millenaphi arrived in the area after the conflict between human and elves subsided. She decided it would make the perfect new home and court for her, much to the chagrin of the soldiers stationed at Fort Essayas. During Nature's Night, Millenaphi rescued Exard Lysalt as he was being swept away by the floodwaters. She returned him to his wife with a lock of her hair to inspire him and instructions to send her a signal when he sees something that may be of interest to her.

**Special Note:** No official statistics exist for nymphs in 5e. Instead of creating a new monster, simply use the stats for a **dryad**. Modify the dryad's abilities that focus on trees to instead work with water. Thus, treebound becomes waterbound and tree stride becomes water stride.

homes rest on the bottom, largely picked clean by hungry fish. The dead seem to reach for the surface, though in truth the largest underwater danger is getting trapped in a submerged structure or swept downriver.

The river is home to a powerful nymph, who dwells not far downriver from Dead Man's Run. She keeps watch over the ferry and its happenings for her own interests, using her spells to trigger the water's wrath against those she feels disrespect the area's sanctity.

## WHAT'S GOING ON?

**One Good Threat Deserves Another:** A green dragon has moved into the area, leading to Millenaphi seeking help. Exard floats a bark boat down the river—their prearranged signal—when the PCs catch his eye and the nymph arranges to meet them to enlist their aid.

**A Shock to the System:** An electric eel is spotted in the water and eludes any efforts to catch it. If any of the PCs look like they are well-suited to deal with nature (such as a druid or ranger), the residents of Dead Man's Ferry ask for their help.

## 4: THE BRIMBROOK FERRY

*A vine cable stretches from one bank to the other, supporting a wooden raft to ferry passengers across the river.*

Designed by Vyncis Potte, the manually powered cable ferry is the only easy way across the Brimbroom for miles in either

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### VYNCIS POTTE

LG male human **commoner**

*The burly, bearded man offers a faint smile, as he worries a ring and small pouch hanging from a leather cord around his neck.*

**Mannerisms:** Vyncis is plain-spoken, his soft tone easing his sometimes blunt words. He wears a leather cord around his neck, a wedding ring from his first marriage and small pouch with a memento of his first-born son hanging from it.

**Personality:** On the surface, Vyncis is very solutions-oriented, with little interest in activities that don't have some point (such as small talk). Much of that masks his ongoing grief at the loss of his first family and fears of losing his new wife and children. Any perceived threats to his new life send him into a panicked tizzy.

**Background:** Vyncis lost his first wife and son in the Nature's Night calamity and threw himself into the work of surviving to avoid going mad with grief. Ironically his seemingly stoic approach to duty caught the eye of one of the elven survivors, Adoleid, and the two eventually fell in love, married and began a family.

direction. The simple wooden raft holds up to eight Medium creatures at a time. It's connected to vines braided together into a strong, stout cable.

### WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT   |
|----|---|
| 1  | The cable, frayed by a mischievous fey, snaps as the ferry crosses the river, sending the wooden raft and its occupants spinning down the river.  |
| 2  | One of the PCs' horses spooks as it crosses the river, repeatedly rearing up, threatening to destroy the raft if it's not settled (or sent into the water to a near-certain death) quickly. |
| 3  | A surge of water comes down the Brimbrook moments after the ferry launches, spooking Irennan Fairarrow, who turns around and refuses to transport the passengers across.                    |
| 4  | The cable mechanism jams, leaving the ferry raft and its occupants—including a frantic Vyncis Potte—stranded in the middle of the river as the sun sets.                                    |
| 5  | The river is particularly low after a dry spell, and the laden raft scrapes against submerged ruins as it crosses the river. The sound is like claws grating against the wood.              |
| 6  | One of the PCs catches Irennan Fairarrow's eye and, after a particularly smooth ride across the river, he invites the group to remain for a meal while he tries to impress the PC.          |

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### IRENNAN FAIRARROW

LN male elf **commoner**

*The tall, well-built elf's smile shows his white teeth, set off against his tanned skin and short, bright red hair.*

**Mannerisms:** Cocksure, Irennan acts as if he's the centre of the world and any travellers should be more than grateful for his conveying them across the Brimbrook.

**Personality:** Still traumatized by his experiences during Nature's Night, Irennan Fairarrow takes any setbacks as personal slights. He is devoted to himself, the elven dead in the area and the rest of the residents of Dead Man's Run (in that order), and has a short temper with anyone else he meets.

**Background:** Irennan barely survived Nature's Night, clinging to a tree when he was swept away by the first storm surge. He stubbornly refused to be "beaten by the damn river," viewing each crossing he makes as a victory against his own personal devil.

### 5: LUMBER HOUSE

*Sawdust, cut tree limbs and pieces of worked wood litter the ground near one side of this large wooden building. Several partially built rafts lie in a pile nearby.*

This small sawmill had to be partially rebuilt after Nature's Night, and now doubles as a cramped home for half of the residents of Dead Man's Run. Exard Lynsalt lives here with his herbalist wife, Dottry (LG old female human **commoner**), as do fellow survivors Irennan Fairarrow (see location 4) and Wyan Sabil (LN male human **commoner**).

They're joined by Cedia Borne (LG female human **priest**), a priestess who arrived five years ago to help bring peace to the dead. Somewhat overwhelmed by the task (and secretly afraid of the river), the young woman nonetheless perseveres, inspired by the example of her companions.

When not helping recover and lay to rest the dead with Cedia, Wyan works the mill to the best of his ability. After the first time a ferry was swept away by the river, he decided to ensure there would always be spares and doggedly labours at that self-assigned task.

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### EXARD LYSALT

LN old male human **veteran**

*A white beard does little to hide the deep lines in the face of this weathered man. His bears a deep scar along his scalp that stands out against his sunburned, bald pate.*

**Mannerisms:** Exard acts as if he carries the weight of the world on his shoulders, frequently wiping the sweat (both real and figurative) from his brow.

**Personality:** Exard believes his age and experience make him the clear leader of Dead Man's Run and tries to exert his nonexistent authority whenever he can (this leads to strife with his fellow residents, which his wife tiredly tries to soothe over). Despite that, the former soldier cares deeply about the village that was his home for much of his adult life and is devoted to tending its dead. He further bears the weight of his service to Millenaphi, torn by her gratitude for saving him by his belief that she is the source Nature's Night.

**Background:** Having arrived as a soldier, Exard eventually settled in the village with his wife, only to see his children and grandchildren killed in the flood. Exard himself was swept away, plucked from certain death by Millenaphi. He begged her to spare him and she acceded, offering him his life in return for his service. He returned to the sunken villages to find his wife had also survived, and he persuaded her to stay when other survivors departed. He keeps an eye on passers-by for Millenaphi, sending a toy boat made of bark down the river if he needs to get her attention.

# DRAGONMARCH KEEP

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**Words** Mike Welham **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

*A lonely edifice built atop a rocky crag at the edge of civilisation, Dragonmarch Keep guard over the borders of three formerly warring kingdoms. Men and women of noble birth from three kingdoms serve at the keep in a show of unity. They push back the raiders and marauders emerging from the wastelands and strength the bonds of friendship between the three kingdoms. While the keep's walls provide formidable protection, the surrounding farms are open to attack, usually in retaliation for a recent foray by the garrison. Dragonmarch Keep is, thus, a place of great adventure and great danger. Here, those of stout heart willing to stand against the forces of evil and chaos are in high demand.*

## DRAGONMARCH KEEP AT A GLANCE

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**Ruler** Countess Liana Van de Vore

**Population** 42 (25 humans, 5 dwarves, 7 half-elves, 2 half-orcs, 3 halflings)

**Alignments** LN, N

**Languages** Common, Orc

**Resources & Industry** Defence, farming

Dragonmarch Keep stand at the point where the border of three kingdoms intersect. Overlooking blasted, monster-infested land, the fortress serves as a monument to the hard-won treaty brokered by the kingdoms' 37 years ago. This compact derived not from a mutual desire for peace, but rather from the pragmatic need to counter marauding monsters raiding the kingdoms' easy-to-plunder lands weakened by years of fighting. The keep stands as a bastion against the waste's denizens. Its garrison—largely comprised of nobles from the three realms—frequently patrols the surround territory. Their actions act as a check to the many raiding parties creeping forth to pillage the civilised lands beyond.

### LORE

A PC may know something about Dragonmarch Keep, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains everything revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 15:** Dragonmarch Keep is the destination for low-ranking nobles who must prove capable of cooperating with their peers from other kingdoms to battle against wasteland creatures.

**DC 20:** Niles Van de Vore founded the keep over 100 years ago after he slew the powerful red dragon, Glitterfang.

**DC 25:** The strategically vital keep switched owner frequently until the three kingdoms reached a lasting accord.

### NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than ordinary folk.

- **Appearance** Many of the nobles are young, but a few veterans call the keep home. The working folk supporting the keep are all middle-aged or older. Dragonmarch's dangerous nature keeps couples from having children.
- **Dress** Most residents carry weapons and wear chainmail and heavier armour; during downtime, they wear simple tailored clothing. Workers wear functional, sturdy clothing.
- **Nomenclature** *male* Algar, Denys, Fandral; *female* Calexia, Hilde, Terese; *family* Garyan, Nemmic, Van de Vore.

Some of the inhabitants, however, are notable:

**Countess Liana Van de Vore** (location 6; LN female human fighter 11) Liana chose to stay at the keep after her five-year stint rather than deal with political machinations at home.

**Kameda Garyan** (location 4; N female dwarf **guard**) Kameda is the newest arrival to Dragonmarch Keep.

**Kelban Nemmic** (location 5; N male human **berserker**) In lieu of exile, Kelban volunteered to serve as training sergeant.

**Phedra Klauft** (location 2; LN female half-orc **commoner**) Arguably the most important non-noble in the keep, Phedra fashions weapons and armour for the garrison.

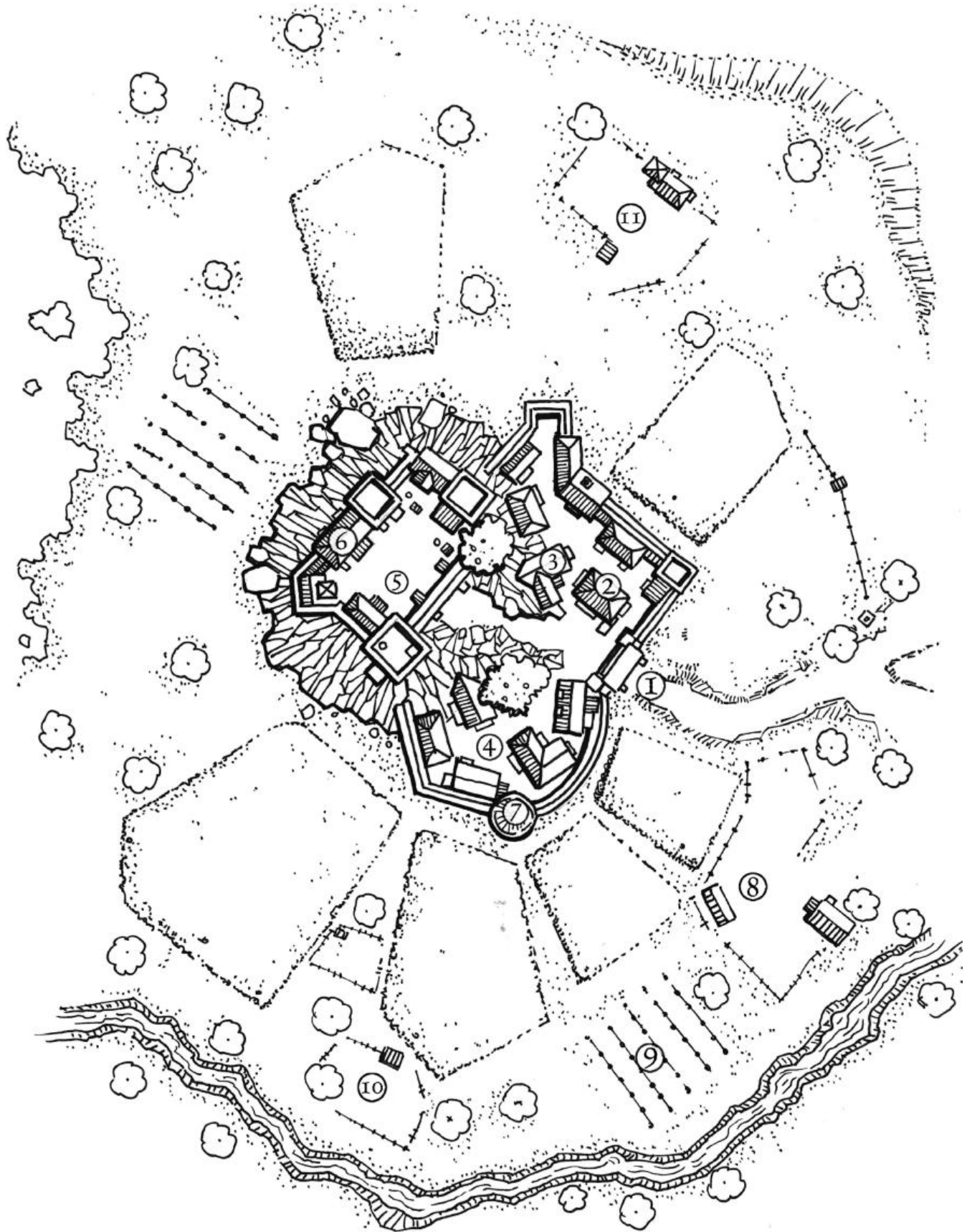
**Ralson Indra** (location 8; N old male halfling **commoner**) The oldest resident of the keep, Ralson along with his assistants grow barley and craft regionally renowned ales.

### NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Dragonmarch Keep comprises locations of little interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are notable:

1. **Main Entrance:** A portcullis and two guards protect the gate.
2. **Smithy:** Constant battle readiness requires new armour and weapons, as well as repairs, on a regular basis.
3. **Eagle, Hart and Wolf:** The sign on this tavern displays the animals from the three kingdoms' standards.
4. **Residences:** Each of the buildings hold cramped, semi-private rooms to house the nobles stationed at the keep. Visiting adventurers without credentials quarter here after the guards have questioned them.
5. **Practice Yard:** When not out in the wasteland or celebrating a victory, the keep's residents train on archery targets and training dummies. A hidden trapdoor to the north leads to a large cellar where the residents retreat if creatures overrun the keep.
6. **Manor House:** Currently the home of Countess Van de Vore, the manor house is the residence of the keep's leader. Largely unused wings stand ready to receive visiting dignitaries.
7. **Watchtower:** The highest point of the keep affords a view of the neighbouring land, allowing guards to sound the alarm in case of imminent attack or raid.
8. **Ralson's Farm and Brewery:** This stretch of farmland has given over to growing the barley used by Ralson for his ales.
9. **Staple Crops:** Several farmers grow a variety of grains and beans used to feed the keep's residents.
10. **Abandoned Farm:** This weed-choked farm is rumoured to be haunted; five years ago, the crops growing here suddenly became blighted and the farmer and his family died from a wasting disease shortly thereafter.
11. **Stables and Kennel:** Horses and hunting dogs rest here when they are not out with their owners on patrol. The non-nobles grumble the animals are better treated than themselves.







## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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Inside the keep, activity depends on the current mission or lack thereof. During downtime, the residents spend their days training and their nights nursing cuts and bruises at the Eagle, Hart and Wolf tavern. The tavern gets particularly rowdy after a successful attack against marauders, especially if much treasure is liberated. Treasure is proportioned equally among the sortieing group according to an individual's station and stored in the vault beneath the practice yard. Countess Liana Van de Vore keeps a record of all treasure, so it can be dispensed when a noble ends his or her service at the keep.

Outside the keep, life is fraught with fear, since the workers don't enjoy the same protection as the keep's residents. The garrison do their best to protect the workers. Day-to-day labour is easier than in the kingdoms, though, making it worthwhile to work the land here.

### 1: MAIN ENTRANCE

The area supporting Dragonmarch Keep has little protection, but the keep itself is inaccessible other than a track cutting through the surrounding fields. The road ends at a portcullis, where two guards (NG male human **guard**) are stationed, in eight-hour shifts. Visitors from the three kingdoms carry writs from their leaders to gain entrance to the keep. The guards challenge other arrivals to determine whether they are friend or foe. Dignitaries, or those obviously wealthy, receive an audience with Countess Van de Vore. Adventurers are shown to quarters in the Residences (location 4).

### 2: SMITHY

Phedra Klauft (LN female half-orc **commoner**) manufactures weapons and armour and oversees her two assistants (N human). The half-orc was part of a lord's retinue and remained here when her lord was slain. Continual sorties into the badlands keeps her busy crafting new armaments and repairing notched swords, broken links in chainmail, dented plate mail and the like. While Phedra prefers the smithy to herself, the demand is large



enough to warrant help. Her assistants have earned her trust, and she harangues any customer who critiques their work. (The half-orc and her staff cannot enchant weapons and armour, though.)

### 3: EAGLE, HART AND WOLF

As a sign of the three kingdoms' peace, this tavern features the animals from the individual kingdom's standards. To not show favouritism for a particular kingdom, the eagle, hart and wolf rotate relative position among all the signage in the tavern. Visitors here can learn much about the keep's goings on after drink has loosened tongues.

The barkeep—Algar Longbeard (NG old male human **veteran**)—is a veteran of many border skirmishes who, although aged, could not completely give up frontier life. This tavern is his compromise. A gregarious fellow much given to storytelling and boasting he loves welcoming new guests and is an inveterate consumer of news. Consequently, he knows much of interest about the surrounding lands and events occurring therein.

Ralson's Ale (location 8) is the favoured drink here, but a wide variety of wine vintages are available. Meals are less-than-sumptuous affairs, since the keep doesn't have access to high-end poultry or livestock and the cooks must make do with the wild sheep grazing untended fields.

- **Food & Drink** meal (turnip, ale and mushroom pie or parsnip and onion stew with bread) 3 sp, Ralson's Ale 1 sp, wine (pitcher) 2 sp.
- **Accommodation** None; guests usually stay at location 4 or the Manor House (location 6) if they are wealthy or important enough.

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### IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Dragonmarch Keep presents opportunities for adventurers to gain favour with one or more of the three kingdoms supporting the keep. It stands as a way station at the edge of civilized land, allowing the PCs to replenish their supplies before making their way into the wasteland.

If your campaign setup does not have three warring kingdoms next to one another simply change the kingdoms to the powerful noble houses of a single kingdom. These nobles—perhaps dukes or earls—require their tenant lords—barons, knights and the like—send their youth to Dragonmarch to strengthen the bonds to friendship between the three noble camps.

#### 4: RESIDENCES

Each of the three kingdoms has a residence hall here. An additional hall houses visitors who aren't important enough to warrant a bedchamber in the manor house (location 6).

Fifteen years ago, Helvar Garyan, the then lord of Dragonmarch, attempted to shuffle the residents together to promote unity. The experiment was unsuccessful and almost resulted in a bloody battle as complaints about preferential lodging grew into shouting matches and escalated to bloodshed.

#### 5: PRACTICE YARD

When the nobles aren't out on patrol, they train in the ample space outside the manor house. Kelban Nemmic (N male human **berserker**), due to an indiscretion with a prominent noble's daughter, took on the role of sergeant rather than face exile in the wastes. He guides training and breaks up fights between practicing nobles. The keep's founders carved out a space beneath the practice ground, which serves as vault and refuge if the keep's walls are breached. An **iron golem**, programmed to obey the keep's ruler, guards the vault as a final line of defence.

#### 6: MANOR HOUSE

Having space to oneself is one of the perks of being the highest-ranking noble at the keep. The manor house serves as the residence for the keep's ruler and provides the greatest

protection, since it only has easy access from the practice grounds. The cliff wall flanking the house to the west is difficult to scale and flying creatures have a tough time avoiding the arrows of the guards stationed on the house's battlemented roof. The house has a staff to serve the occupants and important dignitaries. Countess Van de Vore (LN female human fighter 11) prefers to be out among the garrison, so her staff comprises only a butler and cook. Visitors to the manor house are few, as higher ranking nobles dare not risk their necks visiting the frontier keep, despite its strategic importance.

- **Countess Can de Vore:** Except for their monarchs, all nobles from the three kingdoms have a five-year commitment at Dragonmarch Keep. Countess Van de Vore decided to stay after her five years were up, as she much preferred the straightforward nature of life here to the political machinations back home. She has remained a steadfast ruler of the keep for eight years now. Her disdain for separation between the keep's ruler and the residents (particularly in contrast to her predecessor who viewed everyone as his personal staff) make her a popular figure. Despite her relatively egalitarian nature, and her presence on frequent forays into the wasteland, the countess brooks no insubordination and quickly reminds those who overstep their bounds of the chain of command. Commanding when she must be, Liana can also put her subordinates at ease and celebrates with them after a momentous victory.

#### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Dragonmarch Keep, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

| D6 | RUMOUR   |
|----|--|
| 1  | Witch lights appeared at the abandoned farm again. I'm certain a coven of hags is hiding there.  |
| 2  | The wizard who just arrived to enchant Phedra's latest batch of swords doesn't look like the one we've had the past several times. His porcelain mask and all-red attire give me the heebie-jeebies. |
| 3* | Garret Van de Vore was spotted talking to a woman who cast a bat-winged shadow in the light of the full moon.  |
| 4  | The latest expedition to the Torrid Caves uncovered leathery red eggs, which radiated intense heat.  |
| 5  | For the past year on a fortnightly basis, a ghostly figure leaps from the top of the watchtower at midnight.   |
| 6* | A hidden sub-basement directly beneath the keep leads to a dangerous but treasure-laden dungeon.   |

\*False rumour

#### EVENTS

While the PCs are at Dragonmarch Keep, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A fire blazes in the Garyan residential hall; it appears someone deliberately started the fire.  |
| 2  | A pair of young nobles mock a beggar and turn him away; he pronounces a curse on the keep before leaving.  |
| 3  | A force of fifty goblins, led by a massive bugbear, advances on the keep.  |
| 4  | Horses escape their stalls and run around the grounds in a panic. Residents attempt to corral the horses to no avail; Liana demands someone with a rapport with animals calm down the terrified horses.  |
| 5  | Elves from the nearby Susurrating Forest arrive to discuss joining forces with Dragonmarch Keep for mutual protection; a past misunderstanding has fostered bad feelings on both sides and may require a neutral party to successfully negotiate a deal. |
| 6  | A massive earthquake strikes the region, threatening to topple the watchtower.   |

## 7: WATCHTOWER

The watchtower was a recent addition to the keep after a group of ogres destroyed a squat tower standing in the same spot. Taking advantage of the necessity for reconstruction, the residents erected a tower to give a clearer view of the land to the east. One sentry stands guard during the day. A seasoned veteran stands watch with a novice at night to ensure at least one person remains awake and alert.

## 8: RALSON'S FARM AND BREWERY

An unspoken agreement grants Ralson Indra (N old male halfling **commoner**) and his farm extra protection during the occasional monstrous incursion. The halfling, who is approaching seventy, spends more time overseeing field hands than working the fields himself, a situation which makes him unhappy. More importantly to everyone at Dragonmarch Keep, Ralson has not relinquished his brewing process to anyone. Ralson's Ale has increased in popularity over the forty years since the halfling began producing it, and he has become wealthy because of its success. Part of the ale's appeal is that few merchants make the trek here to sell their wares. However, increasing numbers of folk from the neighbouring kingdoms trek to the keep for samples or pay large sums of money for a cask.

## 9: STAPLE CROPS

The crops grown in these two fields often become the first casualties of raiding monsters, who usually set fire to the fields. Khevellin Monard (N male half-elf **druid**), an adventurer who was the only survivor from his party, decided to remain here and

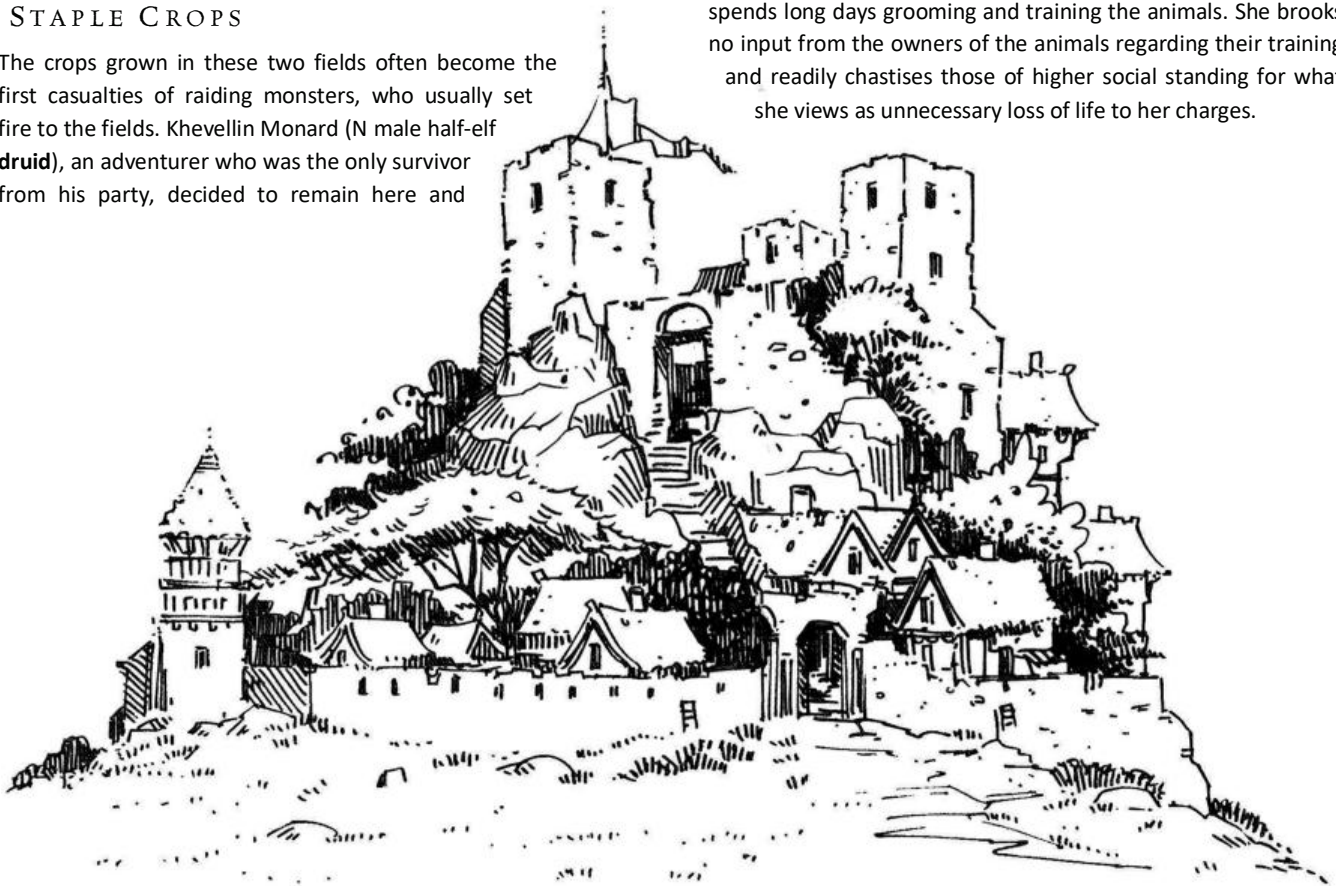
protect and enrich the plants. Corn and beans provide sustenance for the keep's garrison, while oats feed the horses. Khevellin ensures the rotation of crops, should they survive a growing season, to keep the land fertile. The fields are a destination for doe-eyed, adolescent farmhands who believe this is their chance to achieve a secret destiny.

## 10: ABANDONED FARM

Rumours of a curse surround this farm after a horrifying event seven years ago during which several farmers died under mysterious circumstances. Seemingly the farmers participated in a mass suicide but enough evidence points to a spree killing by one of the keep's residents to keep tongues wagging. The following year, locusts descended on the fields and devoured the plants growing here, but the other fields remained untouched. Animals and people developed wasting diseases after merely walking across the land. The farm has been cordoned off and the keep's residents stay away from the area.

## 11: STABLES AND KENNEL

The keep does not provide ample space for its residents and the dogs and horses necessary for hunts. This land is set near a sheer cliff, affording some protection from invaders. Viana Cullain (N female human **scout**) is the only person who lives here. She spends long days grooming and training the animals. She brooks no input from the owners of the animals regarding their training and readily chastises those of higher social standing for what she views as unnecessary loss of life to her charges.



# DREAMDEN

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**Words** Jeff Gomez **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

*Dreamden is debauchery disguised as enlightenment. Here, wealthy aristocrats exchange gold for false visions, misplaced purpose and distorted truth. In return, they invariably go mad.*

*Promoted as a rustic resort, Dreamden provides rich city-dwellers the opportunity to get in touch with their more primitive side. Here, the wealthy aristocracy feign connection with their ancestors and, after smoking a range of exorbitant narcotics, go on self-aggrandizing spirit quests. The whole thing is a scam, run by an enchanting elf named Dreamer. As customers stumble about in a stupor, Dreamer syphons their mental energies to feed the demon-king to whom he is indebted. Dreamer guides the dreams of his clients, introducing them to highly addictive substances and securing their life-long annual patronage.*



## DREAMDEN AT A GLANCE

**Ruler** Dreamer

**Population** 113 (30 humans, 6 dwarves, 21 elves, 12 half-elves, gnomes 9, 8 half-orcs, 19 halflings, 8 orcs)

**Alignments** CN, CE

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Elven

**Resources & Industry** Drugs, tourism

**Marketplace** *spellcasting* none; crafting drugs (haze, mirrormist, shell)

For those with more money than sense, there is always Dreamden. Promoted as a rustic resort, Dreamden provides the opportunity for rich city-dwellers to get in touch with their primitive side. Here, the wealthy aristocracy feign connection with their ancestors and, after smoking a range of exorbitant narcotics, journey on self-aggrandizing spirit quests.

The whole thing is a scam, run by an enchanting elf named Dreamer. As customers stumble about in a stupor, Dreamer siphons their mental energies to feed the demon-king Grahl to whom he is indebted. Dreamer guides the dreams of his clients, introducing them to highly addictive narcotics and securing their annual, lifelong patronage.

### LORE

A PC may know something about Dreamden, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 15:** Dreamden sits on the edge of an immense and deadly desert.

**DC 20:** Dreamden is built on an ancient battle site where a hero slew a gigantic demon.

**DC 25:** Patrons who stay at Dreamden for too long completely lose their wits.

### FOLK

There are three groups of people in Dreamden: patrons, servants and Dreamer's orc staff.

**Patrons:** Dreamden's wealth is their unifying quality. Generally, they are spoiled brats in search of enlightenment (for a fee)—overweight, pale and totally unsuited to the desert sun. Otherwise, they are as varied as the surrounding locales allow.

**Servants:** Servants carry water, serve food and perform other menial tasks. However, they are treated well by Dreamer and his companions and even provided with many of the same drugs.

**Staff:** There are only nine staff at Dreamden: Dreamer and his eight orc companions. While Dreamer is a charismatic charlatan, the orcs are nearly mute. They have devoted themselves to Grahl, but are unsure if this is truly the best way to serve him.

- **Appearance** Dreamden's patrons run the gamut of ethnicities, but most are pale, flabby folk unused to the desert's harshness.
- **Dress** When patrons arrive at Dreamden, they trade their fineries for simple (but comfortable) tan robes. Some even go nude or wear only basic loincloths.
- **Nomenclature** Names are as varied as the patrons' homes, but most take on esoteric pseudonyms inside the Den—for example: *Breeze, Falcon, Freedom, Hunter, Joy, Life, Whisper*.

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Dreamden, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

#### D6 RUMOUR

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 1* | Dreamer cut out the tongues of his orc slaves, lest their rough words disturb the guests.       |
| 2  | Every few years, a patron disappears on a spirit journey. Dreamer covers the whole thing up.    |
| 3* | A bitter spring lies far out in the desert. A demon dwells in this poisoned place.              |
| 4  | Fuse is a matriarch of a wealthy elven family who desperately wants her back.                   |
| 5  | A patron murdered another patron in the Den of Howling Winds last month. Dreamer covered it up. |
| 6  | The stone Hand of God connects to a massive statue buried deep within the sand.                 |

\*False rumour

### IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Dreamden can serve a variety of roles in your campaign or it may simply be a locale within a desert environment to be visited or stumbled upon as the situation warrants.

More likely, however, it is the locale of a wealthy patron with which the PCs must communicate. Perhaps this drugged out tourist has valuable information, but only shares it after the PCs engage in a spirit quest. Perhaps a grieving family sees their patriarch slipping away into an endless drug-fuelled stupor and desperately wants him back.

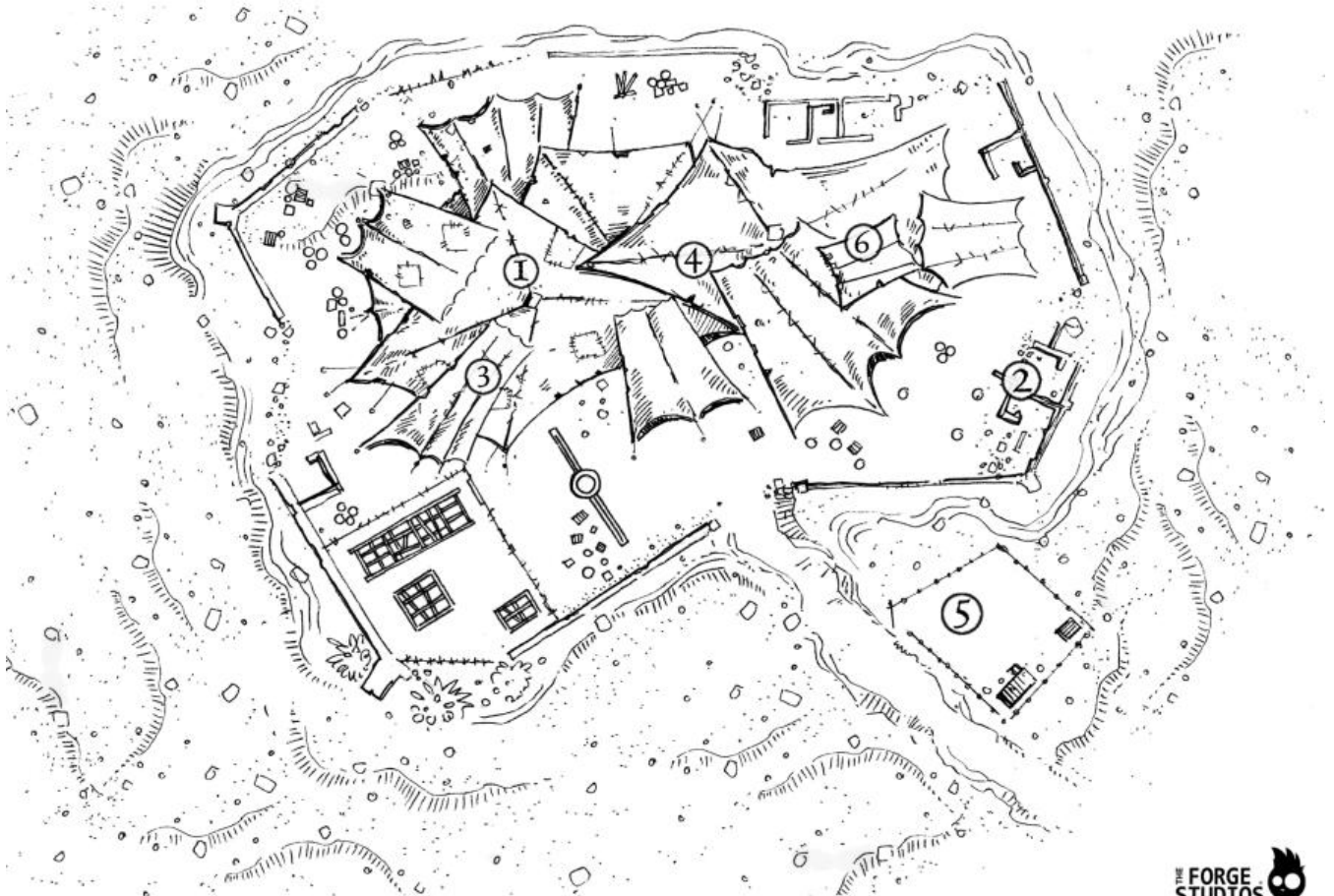
It's also possible that Grahl's influence seeps far past Dreamden's walls and into opium dens everywhere. Demonic cultists may provide clues which lead to Dreamden, and the PCs may need to destroy Grahl's statue to end the corruption.

When Grahl collects enough psionic energy from his unwilling victims, he returns to life as a demon-lord to be defeated. Grahl could be a worthy foe, for good-aligned PCs.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Most of the Dreamden comprises locations of no interest to adventurers. A few, however, are exceptional:

1. **Den of Falling Mirrors:** Hand-drawn patterns decorate the den's sand. Mirrors hang from the ceiling and lie strewn on the ground. Here, patrons smoke the hallucinogen "Mirrormist" to see the invisible and travel deep within the echoes of their own minds. A new patron, Walker (LN male halfling), has just started to experiment with the drug. However, he is unsure of what he will find.
2. **Den of Howling Wind:** Outside the covering of the great canopy, patrons become bestial and violent after smoking the stimulant "Shell." The area is bloody and chaotic, and must be monitored closely by the staff. The elven matriarch Lace (CN female elf **priest**) roams around in a fury, stripped of her mind by years of Shell use.
3. **Den of Velvet Dreams:** In its plush, carpeted room patrons smoke the opiate "Haze." In the heat and smoke of this concealed area, the dulling sensation of the drug is more pronounced. Once a powerful soothsayer, the oracle Fuse (LN male human cleric 7) is among many who loll on soft furniture.
4. **Hand of God:** The massive, petrified hand of Grahl emerges like a statue from the sand. Around it bubbles narcotic vapours and the unusual powder which Dreamer refines into other drugs. Here, Dreamer (CE male elf **mage**) gives morning sermons and performs other, darker rituals. Here too, the most decrepit and destroyed patrons make their home.
5. **Parley Grounds:** Outside Dreamden's walls, Dreamer and his staff meet with visiting non-patrons—merchants, bandits, nomads and the like. Those who do not pay are never welcome inside the walls.
6. **Place of Friendly Hands:** Most patrons bring two or three servants on the arduous journey across the desert. They stay in comfortable accommodations, though they are separated by tarps from the rest of the patrons. Dreamer visits the servants frequently and offers them narcotics, a gesture which only enhances his enlightened image.
7. **Transmuting Forge:** Dreamer and his orc servant Grub (CE male **orc war chief**) synthesize drugs in the furnace. It is the one place in Dreamden where patrons may not venture. Underneath the furnace, a small cellar contains a selection of valuable goods and gold.



## LIFE IN DREAMDEN

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Dreamden is debauchery disguised as enlightenment. Here, wealthy aristocrats exchange gold for false visions, misplaced purpose and distorted truth.

The great canopy covers most of Dreamden, protecting the fragile patrons from the harsh desert sun. The interior is divided loosely into sections for both meditation and drug use. Most sections are open to one another, with only sand as the floor. Only a few sections, such as the Den of Velvet Dreams, are separated from others by hanging tapestries.

Within the great canopy, patrons and servants stumble from place to place, or sit alone or in circles too drugged to move. People are friendly and eager to share their imagined revelations with others. They brag in false humility about the depth of their enlightenment. However, none of the drugs here lead to truth.

### TRADE & INDUSTRY

Dreamden is reasonably isolated from the web of commerce, but it requires a great amount of resources to function. With no source of food, textiles or building materials, Dreamden receives frequent caravans from specialty merchants with whom Dreamer has made close connections. These merchants take payment in both the copious gold Dreamer collects, as well as highly valued drugs to be resold or consumed.

### LAW & ORDER

Laws are not needed in Dreamden. Patrons are so eager to conform to Dreamer's utopian vision, and the groupthink so pervasive, they rarely act out of turn. Besides, grudges can be settled on the road back to civilization, or acted out back home in the grand fashion of the ultra-wealthy.

On the rare occasions where justice or intervention are needed, Dreamer rallies the other patrons to do his bidding. If there is a mess, word rarely gets out. Patrons would not have their beloved Dreamden besmirched by rumour.

### CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

Dreamden is steeped in endless ritual and tradition: morning meditation, weekly spirit journeys, monthly dreamflights and seasonal solstice festivals. Each hour, each tiny event warrants some sort of guiding sermon—always led personally by Dreamer. These rituals comfort and guide patrons who may not yet understand the rhythm of things.

However, the activities are rarely mandatory. While some enjoy participating in these ecstatic sermons, most prefer to continue their drug-fuelled decent into sloth. As Dreamer leads the new arrivals in meditation, the regulars lie in the sand overcome by narcotic stupors.

## LOCATION DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about Dreamden.

### D20 DRESSING/EVENT

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A bandit emissary collects a small tribute—a sack full of opiates—from Dreamer.  |
| 2  | A drugged debtor with no money left is loaded onto a merchant cart and sent back to civilization. He is totally comatose.  |
| 3  | A dwarf, blinded by hallucinogens, stumbles into the PCs and begins screaming.   |
| 4  | A great desert eagle lands on the highest point of the tent, defecates and then flies off.   |
| 5  | A howling sandstorm strikes the area. Servants and staff comfort the anxious patrons and distribute cloth masks.   |
| 6  | A caravan of six wagons rolls up to the gates. A corpulent half-orc dressed in finery emerges, kisses his wife goodbye and then enters Dreamden alone. The caravan leaves. |
| 7  | A meteorite streaks across the sky and falls into the desert many miles away. Dreamer claims a spirit journey to its location would be revealing.                          |
| 8  | A mute elderly gnome grabs a PC by the hand and won't let go. Her smile is vacant.   |
| 9  | A naked halfling runs into the desert laughing.  |
| 10 | A new patron wakes from a dream, screaming of a demon trying to eat her brain. She is calmed with the application of more Haze.  |
| 11 | A pack of wild camels wander across the sands. The patrons stop to watch, but quickly become bored with the natural spectacle.   |
| 12 | A servant takes too much Shell and flies into a rage. He attacks his master, but is subdued by the orcs.   |
| 13 | A small caravan of holy men approach. Dreamer meets them on the Parley Grounds, before sending them on their way.  |
| 14 | A terribly sunburned half-elf returns from a spirit journey. He gives a small speech to a group of halflings on the value of serenity.                                     |
| 15 | Dreamer gives a sermon on awakening the inner eye.   |
| 16 | In an exceedingly rare occurrence, clouds roll in and block the day's heat for an hour.  |
| 17 | It takes three orcs to subdue a pale dwarf hopped up on Shell.   |
| 18 | The drugged oracle Fuse prophecies an end to Dreamden. Even Dreamer comes to listen.   |
| 19 | The PCs notice two orcs with crossed arms glaring at the PCs. If the PCs approach them, the orcs are mute.   |
| 20 | Two members of the Den of Falling Mirrors get into a serious fight. One is stabbed with a shard of glass.  |



## THE LOCALITY

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Dreamden stands on the edge of a harsh, seemingly endless desert. While a handful of nomads roam the wastes, there are no major cities for hundreds of miles. The terrain is simply too severe for habitation.

Immense sand dunes roll away far past the horizon. The sun beats down on the baking earth. The endless blue sky provides no clouds for respite. Great beasts roam the sands, though they give Dreamden a wide berth.

When the wind comes, it whips the dunes into strange shapes and patterns. When a storm comes, the dunes become mobile, shifting giants. A man lost in a sandstorm may have to swim to keep above the surface.

No matter its origin, the path to Dreamden strips away fragments of comfort one by one. Over the weeks-long journey, the temperature slowly rises and all moisture evaporates from the air. Plants shrivel and die, and the sun burns clouds from the heavens. Many patrons see this as a symbolic metamorphosis, with the heat cleansing them of their many distractions.

The great canopy of Dreamden provides a respite, as does the cool water and fine meals provided. However, patrons cast off even these comforts when they make their way into the desert on spirit journeys. The scorching sun or freezing nights only heighten the effects of any hallucinogens. Dreamer encourages patrons to wear a blindfold for the first hour of their journey; these spirit seekers should get as lost as possible, without any means of orienting themselves.

And yet, miraculously, nearly every wanderer makes his way back. The patrons see this as divine providence, or the awakening of a third eye. In reality, Grahl calls them back. They feel his pull and they have no choice but to obey.

There are few features in the barren desert. Across the horizon, black granite columns loom far out of the bedrock to

breach the sands. Depending on the day and the winds, these structures are either gigantic monoliths or tiny pedestals only barely emerging from the highest dunes. These obelisks have names like constellations (Gilead's Hand, The Triplets, The Stork...), and serve as navigation landmarks.

One feature, however, remains despite the remorseless onslaught of wind and time. Dozens of miles from Dreamden, a tiny oasis sustains a miniature ecosystem. Birds and animals journey long distances to drink at its cool, bitter springs. Dreamer warns against this place, forbidding his patrons from visiting there. In reality, the oasis is the final resting place of the hero that slew Grahl. From his petrified body, purifying water flows. Once per week, drinking from the oasis at its source removes any madness besetting the drinker.

## SIGHTS & SOUNDS IN THE WILDS

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Heat shimmers rises from the sand, seemingly distorting the surrounding dunes' shapes into strange otherworldly forms. |
| 2  | A dazzling light—almost like a lighthouse's beacon—shines from far off in desert.                                      |
| 3  | Dark clouds scud across the desert sands, casting a gloom and otherworldly chill over any caught within their shadows. |
| 4  | A sudden fury of wind blasts at the dunes, hurling sand into the travellers' faces.                                    |
| 5  | A vulture soars high above the sands as it hunts for its next meal.  |
| 6  | A strange compulsion—to wander out into the burning sands—tugs at a PC's subconscious.                                 |





## NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN DREAMDEN

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### 1: DEN OF FALLING MIRRORS

*A dozen patrons draw shapes in the sand floor, or stare drooling into mirrors propped up on posts.*

Patrons come to the Den of Falling Mirrors to see the invisible. They sit in stiff chairs, take strong hallucinogens, then spend hours draw shapes in the sand. Many wander about, marvelling at the revealed world. Others simply stare into the handful of mirrors propped up against tent posts. When they emerge from their stupor, they cannot recall what they have seen.

The patrons of the Den of Falling Mirrors accost all visitors and attempt to share their new-found knowledge. In drug-fuelled visions, they proclaim prophecies or warn of absurd dangers. It can be a disturbing experience for somebody who is not on some kind of narcotic themselves.

Returning to the real world is a challenging experience. Lines seem too straight and surfaces too dull. The world revealed by Mirrormist is a far more interesting land to travel, and those who visit too frequently never return.

### 2: DEN OF HOWLING WIND

*Hair and teeth are scattered in a blood-soaked pit and wild-eyed patrons filled with violent energy lumber about like animals.*

The den resembles a fighting pit more than a place of pleasant debauchery. Blood is spattered on the baking ground and fences cordon off areas from one another. It's not uncommon to see teeth or clumps of hair scattered across the sand.

Here, patrons take a variety of stimulants. In the Den of Howling Wind, more than any other den, patrons utterly lose their minds. They strip naked, run wildly into the desert or beat each other bloody against the wooden gates.

Despite all appearances, these unusual acts produce the most pleasant possible effects. The drug Shell transforms every physical sensation into pleasure. In the Den of Howling Winds, sunburned and bleeding patrons attack one another with bestial ferocity—laughing all the while.

Given the dangers involved, at least two orc staff members are always present to bind wounds or restrain guests when things get out of hand.

### 3: DEN OF VELVET DREAMS

*This dark, smoky room is carpeted with velvet and separated from the rest of Dreamden by hanging tapestries. Limp figures lie in heaps on soft furniture.*

The Den of Velvet Dreams is the most lavish and luxurious den at Dreamden. Fine carpets cover the sand and servants take great

care to keep them clean. Tapestries hang from the tented ceiling, enclosing the dark, smoky and incredibly hot area.

Here, opiates are the drug of choice. Tourists recline on soft furniture or lie on the floor, completely out of their wits. Those with open eyes rub their hands and faces into the velvet cloth, or stare dully at patterns in the tapestry walls.

This is a slow, muffled place, and it is easy to fall prey to its lethargy. Some patrons have been here for months or even years

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#### “WALKER” (ANNO HAYWIG)

LN male halfling

*This thin, young halfling wears the clothing of a wealthy merchant. He has yet to don the robes of his companions.*

**Mannerisms:** Walker goes about fully dressed in merchant's clothes. He keeps one hand in his pocket at all times and sweats constantly.

**Personality:** Walker is cautious, talking slowing and in over-long sentences. He is still unsure about Dreamden and gives away little about himself.

**Background:** Walker is new to Dreamden. Second son of a wealthy merchant, he has had nothing but time and money to spend. He arrived here recently and is still coming to terms with things. There is still time to save him.

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#### “LACE” (ALYANE TRATHYRA)

CN female elf priest

*This haggard and bloody elf wears only a loincloth and grins a terrible, unmoving grin. Her skin, nearly black from the sun, hangs loosely from her frame.*

**Mannerisms:** Lace has become an animal. She lopes around, making wide gestures and giggling roughly through a permanently clenched smile.

**Personality:** Lace has completely lost her mind. She is incapable of rational thought and desires physical sensation above all else.

**Background:** Lace was once the matriarch to an ancient elven line. In pursuit of divine truth, she came to Dreamden to commune with her god. Instead, her mind was incinerated by Grahl's corrupting influence.

**Bringing Lace Home:** The Trathyra family will pay good money to any who can bring Lace home. Lace may be a shell of her former self, but her family believe there is a way to restore her mind. However, Dreamer does not take kindly to abductions and Fuse is beyond convincing.

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## DRUGS OF DREAMDEN

### MIRRORMIST

*Mirrormist is a silver powder which quickly sublimates into a metallic smoke. It is a strong hallucinogen which opens the eyes to both the invisible and the unreal.*

**Type** drug (inhaled or ingested); **Addiction** severe, DC 22 Constitution; **Price** 75 gp; **Effect** 1d4 hours; *detect magic* and *see invisibility*, gain the benefits of one *augury* with a 50% chance of success without paying material cost, -4 penalty on Wisdom saving throws, and has disadvantage on all attacks; **Damage** one level of exhaustion; DC 15 Constitution saving throw removes.

### HAZE

*Haze is a slow acting opiate which dulls the senses and temporarily suppresses madness. The drug is a purple paste which can be eaten, smoked or even mixed with rubber to produce a chewable gum.*

**Type** drug (inhaled or ingested); **Addiction** severe, DC 23 Constitution; **Price** 100 gp; **Effect** 1d4 hours; one level of exhaustion, disadvantage on skill checks, advantage on saving throws against enchantment effects and insanities; **Damage** one level of exhaustion; DC 15 Constitution saving throw removes.

### SHELL

*Shell is a crystalline red drug that must be inhaled (often cutting the throat and nasal passages in the process). It transforms all physical sensations into pleasure, driving the user to inflict harm on himself and others.*

**Type** drug (inhaled); **Addiction** severe, DC 24 Constitution; **Price** 90 gp; **Effect** 30 minutes; gains three levels of exhaustion instead of unconscious at negative hit points, advantage on attack rolls, *confusion* (roll 1d4 every 10 minutes to determine actions for next ten minutes, when below half hp runs in a random direction instead of attacking self), immune to pain effects; **Damage** one level of exhaustion; DC 15 Constitution saving throw removes.

### NARCOTIC SAND

**Price** 10 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

Narcotic sand is a mutable, unstable substance used in the creation of drugs. One pound of narcotic sand may be used as a substitute for 20 gp of raw materials when crafting drugs.

and remain here until their money runs out or Grahl has bled their minds dry.

### 4: HAND OF GOD

*In the centre of a large, shallow pit, a gigantic stone hand emerges from the smoking sand. Around this hand, a dozen near-comatose patrons mumble and moan.*

The Hand of God is Dreamden's centrepiece. It rises out of a pit of narcotic sand and steams with hallucinogenic vapours. Each outstretched digit is as large as a man and feature rough skin and sharp fingers. The hand's sheer size suggests a statue of titanic proportions buried deep within the boiling desert.

While Dreamer calls this the "Hand of God," this statue is truly the hand of the petrified Grahl, turned to stone where the hero slew him.

Here, where delirious odours bubble from the earth, the demon's dormant body transforms the land itself into dizzying, noxious chemicals. Like a hot spring of narcotics, hallucinogenic substances seep upwards to the surface where they are collected and refined. This is the source of Dreamden's drugs. From these fertile sands, Dreamer synthesizes powerful stimulants to confuse the senses and bring his patrons closer to Grahl. Grahl nourishes his worshippers and, in turn, they unknowingly nourish him and bring ever closer the time when he can return to the world.

Patrons who have totally lost their wits are drawn to the hand like moths to a candle. They lie around it in a stupor, eating the sand itself and mumbling about Grahl. There is no return for these poor souls. They have become carrion for the demon king, the psionic sustenance which he now uses to regain his strength.

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### "FUSE" (BRENEN RAYLE)

LN male human cleric 7

*There is something both strange and great about this blind man. Though young, wisdom and sadness radiate from him like sunlight.*

**Mannerisms:** Despite his youth, Fuse is blind, slow and groping. His dexterity left him, when the drugs took hold.

**Personality:** An aura of profound wisdom and sadness emanates from Fuse. He is, apparently, unable to speak in anything but riddles.

**Background:** Fuse was once a promising adventurer, a spellcaster and soothsayer of great power. He came to Dreamden to investigate strange rumours, but fell into the opiates hard. Haze has ruined Fuse's once prodigious spellcasting ability.

## 5: PARLEY GROUNDS

*Outside Dreamden, a small area is fenced off and filled with packed earth. It seems tiny and harsh in comparison with the grand canopy nearby.*

Not everybody who visits Dreamden is a patron, and those who have not paid cannot enter. Instead, Dreamer receives such guests in a fenced area just outside the main gates. The grounds are bare, without furniture or water, and they make the luxury of Dreamden seem more tempting by comparison.

The most common visitors are merchants bringing food and other materials to Dreamden. These merchants are paid well for their time and leave with both gold and drugs to spare. Bandits come to demand small tributes from Dreamer, which the elf willingly provides. Lost travellers are welcome to sleep outside for a night, and then given food and water and sent on their way.

Dreamer almost always provides a small sample of his wares to visitors. Addiction is a powerful motivator, and there's always the chance someone will scrounge up enough money to enter.

## 6: PLACE OF FRIENDLY HANDS

*Servants, slaves and butlers recline in comfy chairs, or lie on cots on a large cloth tarp. Many sample Dreamden's narcotics, but they remain far more cognisant than the patrons.*

Here dwell Dreamden's servants. Few patrons come alone. Most of these enlightenment seekers require small circuses of servants to carry their gear, set up camp and serve them food. When not needed, the servants are expected to get out of sight, lest they distract the other guests from nirvana.

The servants' quarters are separated from the rest of the tent by hanging tapestries. Unlike most of Dreamden, the sand

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### "GRUB" (GRUG HARGRUM)

CE male **orc war chief**

*This orc is as silent and impassive as his companions, but his green skin is tattooed with swirling white shapes.*

**Mannerisms:** Grub makes for an imposing figure and stands in silence with his arms crossed.

**Personality:** Like the other orcs on staff, Grub is humourless and without empathy. He works hard.

**Background:** Grub and his orc companions are the last of an ancient cult dedicated to Grahl's worship. They thought their cause lost until Dreamer happened upon the demon's petrified corpse. While Grub and his fellows are unsure if this is the best way to bring their master back to life, they have no better ideas. They follow Dreamer... for now.

here is covered by a thin tarp. Atop this tarp, the servants pass the time with cards and narcotics.

Servants are treated well. They bunk under the shade of the great canopy, and smoke low-grade drugs provided by Dreamer. Indeed, Dreamer often visits the servant's quarters. It is part of his allure to associate with such common rabble. Besides, his demon king is not picky—the servants' psionic energies are often stronger than their masters, and Grahl willingly takes both.

## 7: TRANSMUTING FORGE

*Stacks of large wooden crates filled with food and supplies stand neatly near several alembics and wood ovens. Nearby, a locked wooden cellar door protrudes from the sand.*

Outside of the great canopy, Dreamer and his orc servant Grub synthesize the drugs needed for Dreamden. Compared to most other alchemical mixtures, the process is easy. The narcotic sands bubbling up around Grahl's statue are unstable, and as mutable as clay. The simple application of heat, water or basic organic materials transforms it into powerful drugs. Despite the grandiose name of the area, it holds only basic alembics and ovens—nothing else is needed.

The furnace also serves as a storage area. The food and supplies needed to keep Dreamden running are stored both above ground and in a cramped cellar. Water created through magic is stored in great clay jugs. Copious amounts of gold are also stored in this shelter, though bandits and thugs have learned better than to steal from Dreamer. His orcs are vicious (when unleashed), and—anyway—most of the nearby gangs are addicted to Dreamer's drugs.

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### DREAMER

CE male elf **mage**

*This pale elf's silver hair hangs almost to his waist. His golden eyes and soft smile are both enchanting and comforting.*

**Mannerisms:** Dreamer is confident, deliberate and wildly intense. With his grand speeches and insights into the unknown, he has all the trappings of a pacifistic cult leader. His unblinking eyes pierce his victims like poisoned spears.

**Personality:** Dreamer plays the part of a guru well. He is calm and patient, but forceful when the situation demands. His confidence is staggering. From his tone of his voice, it's impossible to imagine his declarations would not come true.

**Background:** Dreamer wandered the desert in search of truth. Instead, he found Grahl and Grahl found him. After tasting the sands around Grahl's hand, Dreamer became an instant disciple. He built Dreamden to trap naïve aristocrats and to feed his demon master with their psionic energy.

# FORGOTTEN ATHENAEUM

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**Words** Richard Green **Cartography** Dyson Logos

*Centuries ago, the librarians of the Athenaeum of Tirinos saved thousands of precious tomes and scrolls from the book-burning legions of an invading army. Casting a powerful ritual, they whisked the entire library and its grounds away to safety on another plane of existence. Today, the Forgotten Athenaeum remains on the Astral Plane, collecting and preserving blasphemous texts, uncomfortable truths and dangerous lore. Using a hidden network of portals, visitors travel to the library from across the multiverse to browse its shelves and uncover its many secrets. This great wealth of knowledge attracts both innocent scholars and academics as well as unscrupulous spies and rogues.*

*The next time your PCs need to track down an obscure piece of information, why not send them to the Forgotten Athenaeum?*



## FORGOTTEN ATHENAEUM AT A GLANCE

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**Ruler** Erasmus Spyridon

**Population** 19 (15 humans, 1 dwarf, 2 half-elves, 1 halfling)

**Alignments** CG, NG, N

**Languages** Common & many others

**Resources & Industry** Books, knowledge

Several hundred years ago, the peaceful and enlightened kingdom of Tirinos came under threat from the expansionist Venovian Imperium and its fearsome ruler, the Emperor Kazakul. Fiercely intolerant of beliefs and faiths different to his own, Kazakul decreed that any nation coming under imperial control must convert to the worship of Surtyr, God of Fire and War. All other religions were proscribed.

As the heavily armoured legions of the Imperium marched into Tirinos, they tore down the statues of the Twelve, the deities of the Tirene pantheon, and set fire to their temples and monasteries. Libraries and other places of learning were raided, and any books they found, whether religious texts or not, were seized by the soldiers, piled up in the streets, and burned.

Erasmus Spyridon was the Bibliognost at the Athenaeum, the largest library in Akratas, the Tirene capital. Horrified at accounts from the cities the Venovians had already taken, he searched through the Athenaeum's books for a means to save the library. As Kazakul's legions marched into the city, Erasmus discovered a powerful ritual in an obscure tome hidden in the stacks. Enlisting his fellow librarians' help, he cast the ritual and shifted the entire Athenaeum, its inhabitants and its ornamental gardens to the safety of the Astral Plane.

Today, the Forgotten Athenaeum of Tirinos still exists on the Astral Plane, and is dedicated to collecting and preserving blasphemous texts, uncomfortable truths and dangerous knowledge from across the multiverse. Erasmus remains as Bibliognost—although he has been there for over 300 years, nothing ages while on the plane. The Athenaeum's location is known only to a select few librarians and sages who can access it through a network of portals connecting to other libraries, universities and places of learning.

Because the Athenaeum holds a vast amount of lost or forgotten information that many powerful, wealthy and often dangerous individuals covet (or would prefer never saw the light of day), the library can sometimes play host to visitors with nefarious motives as well as innocent scholars and academics.

### LORE

A PC may know something about the Forgotten Athenaeum, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 20 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A

successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 20:** The Forgotten Athenaeum is a secret repository of lost and forbidden knowledge hidden on the Astral Plane.

**DC 25:** Centuries ago, the learned librarian Erasmus Spyridon used a powerful spell to move the library to the Astral Plane to save its collection from book-burning invaders.

**DC 30:** Portals to the Athenaeum exist in several libraries throughout the multiverse and can be accessed by using a copy of Erasmus Spyridon's tedious memoir *Meditations of a Bibliognost* as a portal key.

### NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the inhabitants of the Athenaeum are unremarkable individuals.

**Appearance:** The librarians come from several different cultures and worlds, and have a variety of skin and hair colours. Both sexes keep their hair cropped short, and the men are typically clean-shaven.

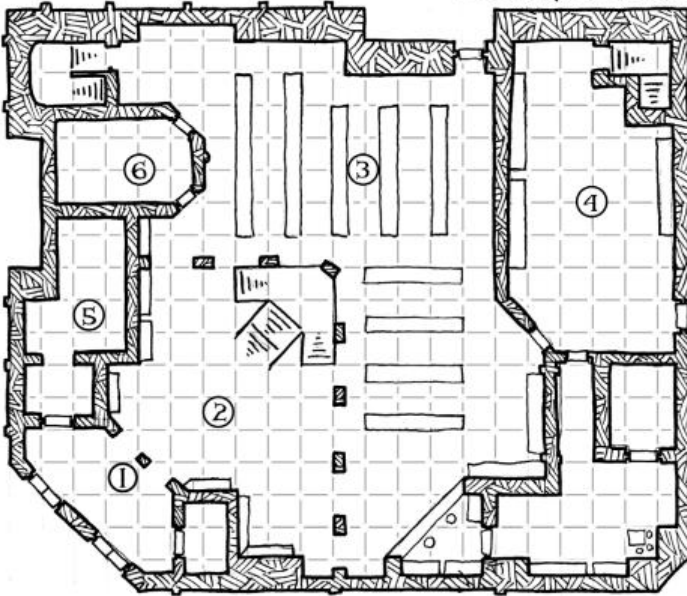
**Dress:** The librarians wear long tunics of dark blue wool and silver pendants depicting the Tree of Knowledge—a tree growing out of a book, the symbol of the goddess Minras.

Some of the more notable residents and visitors are:

- **Erasmus Spyridon** (location 6; CG old male human **archmage**) Erasmus is the learned Bibliognost of the Athenaeum and has dedicated his long life to preserving the knowledge held here.
- **Althiel Veroth** (location 11; CN male human **veteran**) Althiel and his companion Hallia Bloodthorn (N female human **spy**) are a pair of unscrupulous book thieves.
- **Euneas Heliax** (location 9; CG male human **druid**) Euneas is the Senior Librarian for the Hall of Nature.
- **Jocasta Melina** (location 8, CG female half-elf **mage**) A Tirene who has lived in the Athenaeum for centuries, Jocasta is Senior Librarian for the Hall of the Multiverse.
- **Lileth Silvertongue** (location 11; NE female human **bandit captain**) Posing as a bard in search of material for her songs, Lileth is here on secret orders from her king.
- **Reneida Lagaris** (location 10, N female human **mage**) Reneida is the Senior Librarian for the Hall of Arcana and joined the staff just three years ago.
- **Senuthius** (location 3; NG old male human **mage**) Senuthius is the dodderly Tirene Senior Librarian who runs the Hall of History.
- **Tadras Beldok** (location 7; N male dwarf **commoner**) Tadras is the cynical, irascible Senior Librarian in charge of the Hall of the Gods.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

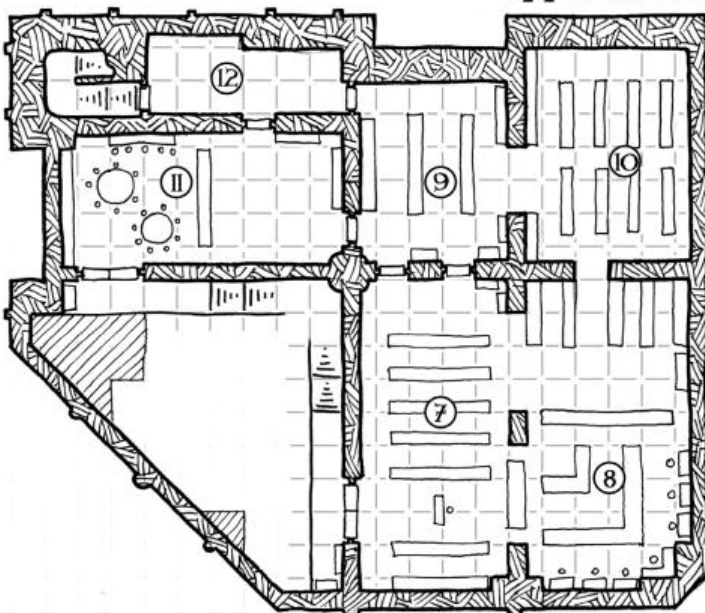
### Ground Level



Part of the Forgotten Athenaeum comprises locations of little interest to adventurers. Several locations, however, are notable:

1. **Entrance Hall:** The original entrance to the Athenaeum is rarely used, and the two pairs of double doors are firmly barred from the inside.
2. **Atrium:** Statues of gods and goddesses of knowledge from a variety of cultures and worlds decorate this impressive atrium. Marble stairs lead to the upper level.
3. **Hall of History:** Rows of shelves rising to the ceiling contain the Athenaeum's collection of books and scrolls covering the history and cultures of hundreds of different cities, kingdoms and empires, both well-known and long-forgotten.
4. **Dormitory:** The Athenaeum's librarians sleep in simple bunk beds in this large dormitory. Stairs lead down to a basement filled with crates of books that await cataloguing.
5. **Restricted Section:** This locked area contains the Athenaeum's most dangerous volumes, including necromantic tomes, books that send the reader insane and wicked demonologies.
6. **Bibliognost's Office:** Erasmus Spyridon, the Athenaeum's chief librarian, uses this chaotic, book-filled chamber as his office, private reading room and sleeping quarters. He says he knows where everything is.
7. **Hall of the Gods:** This room is dedicated to blasphemous and heretical religious texts, as well as the holy scriptures of many obscure and largely forgotten gods.
8. **Hall of the Multiverse:** This section of the library holds hundreds of volumes describing the many different worlds and planes of the multiverse. Librarians and visitors use the reading desks here to study or make copies of the texts.
9. **Hall of Nature:** Filled with bestiaries, books of trees, plants and herbs and maps and charts of strange lands, this room focuses on the natural world.
10. **Hall of Arcana:** The rows of shelves in this chamber contain both treatises on magic and a small number of spellbooks and scrolls. The most dangerous arcane tomes are kept in the Restricted Section.
11. **Common Room:** Both librarians and visitors to the Athenaeum like to come to this room to unwind and socialise after a hard day's study in the library.
12. **Guest Quarters:** Visitors to the library sleep in this simply furnished communal dormitory.

### Upper Level



## LIFE AT THE ATHENAEUM

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Because of its location on the Astral Plane, time does not really pass at the Athenaeum. Nothing ages or decays here: the librarians do not get older, and the oranges and olives growing in the gardens do not ripen and fall from the trees. But this doesn't mean time can be cheated. Since Erasmus, Jocasta and Senuthius have been at the Athenaeum for several centuries, if they were to ever leave, time would catch up with them as soon as they returned to the Material Plane and their bodies would crumble to dust.

Erasmus and his senior colleagues know they must remain at the library until they reach the point when they are tired of living. Since they still have a vast number of books left to read in the Athenaeum, and more volumes arrive all the time, this is unlikely. It has happened several times in the past, though—the original Senior Librarians of Arcana, Nature and the Gods all chose to end their lives by stepping through a portal after spending more than a century in the library. These days, Erasmus insists senior librarians serve a maximum term of ten years, and the rank and file librarians leave the Athenaeum after they have been here for five years.

The way time works also means no one needs to eat while they are at the library, but this doesn't stop the librarians from enjoying the taste of fine food and good wine. It is traditional for visitors to bring tasty treats as gifts for the staff when they come to the Athenaeum to study.

## IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

The PCs can seek out the Forgotten Athenaeum whenever they need to research a piece of obscure lore, especially dangerous information that has been suppressed by those in power. Perhaps they need to track down the last remaining copy of a book revealing the true heir to the throne so the evil king can be deposed. Or maybe they must steal this book and destroy it to keep their monarch in power. They may be sent here to discover which of the Seven Paths to Enlightenment is the true path, and which are heretical. Alternatively, they must research the true name of the powerful demon they need to summon to save their comrade's soul.

You can decide how easy or how hard it is for your PCs to get here. They might need to travel to a distant city to find a sage who knows where a portal to the Athenaeum can be found, or perhaps tracking down a copy of Erasmus' *Meditations of a Bibliognost* becomes a quest in itself.

You can also choose to locate the Athenaeum in a remote place in your campaign world rather than on the Astral Plane. If you decide to take this approach, you can designate some of the unnumbered rooms on the map as kitchens and other essential amenities.

## VISITING THE ATHENAEUM

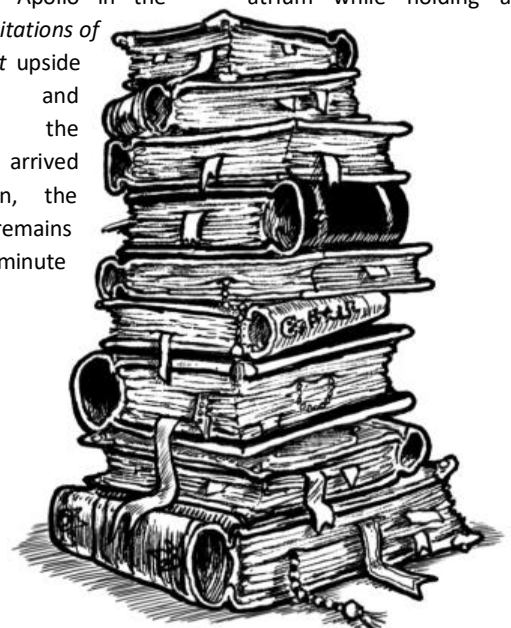
Portals to the Forgotten Athenaeum are hidden deep in the stacks or behind little-used doors in many of the world's great—and some of its less well-known—libraries and universities. To open a portal, a character must step through it while holding a copy of Erasmus Spyridon's *Meditations of a Bibliognost* in front of him with both hands. Once the shimmering portal appears, it remains open for a minute or so, allowing a few would-be researchers to pass through.

New visitors arrive in the atrium (location 2) and their appearance is greeted by the sound of a tolling bell, the result of a permanent *alarm* spell cast in the area. The duty librarian, and usually one or two others, will appear soon afterwards to greet the guests and relieve them of any comestibles, alcohol and other luxury items they have brought as gifts for the staff. Visitors are also expected to bring at least one book with them as a donation to the Athenaeum's collection.

Visitors are given a brief tour of the Athenaeum's halls, gardens, common room and guest quarters, and are warned against trespassing into other areas, particularly the Restricted Section. They are then free to spend up to a week studying the books in the library. After this time, they must leave and cannot return until at least a month has elapsed. Many of the current librarians were previously frequent visitors to the Athenaeum who joined the staff to gain unlimited access to its collections.

Intelligence checks involving research made at the library gain advantage after a full day's research. Such checks gain to +2 if they involve research into heretical, banned or dangerous lore.

To return home, a visitor must step between the statues of Minras and Apollo in the atrium while holding a copy of *Meditations of a Bibliognost* upside down and visualising the library they arrived from. Again, the portal remains open for a minute or so.





## EVENTS

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | An ignorant visitor eats one of the oranges growing in the gardens. He is summoned before a furious Erasmus and banned from the Athenaeum for life.              |
| 2  | A dangerous book breaks its chains and escapes from the Restricted Collection. The librarians enlist the help of the PCs and other visitors in tracking it down. |
| 3  | A brown-robed priest arrives in the atrium, bleeding heavily from a mortal wound, and clutching a satchel holding a single large book.                           |
| 4  | The <i>magic mouth</i> on the door to the restricted section cries out—Hallia Bloodthorn has just attempted to break in.   |
| 5  | A pair of crazy-eyed religious fanatics appear through a portal with the intention of burning any heretical works they find.                                     |
| 6  | One of the librarians is found unconscious in the stacks. She has been struck on the back of the head with a heavy tome.   |

## WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in the Forgotten Athenaeum, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns one additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

| D6 | RUMOUR   |
|----|--|
| 1  | There is something funny about that Lileth Silvertongue. Surely a bard should know how to tune a lute?   |
| 2  | The <i>Ebon Grimoire of Damnation</i> is one of the most evil and dangerous books in the restricted section. It holds the true names of seven demon princes.       |
| 3  | Erasmus' heart was broken when his wife, Hesper, the first Senior Librarian of Arcana, decided to end her life by stepping through a portal to the Material Plane. |
| 4  | The <i>Pelagic Apocrypha</i> , a slim folio found in the Hall of Nature, reveals the location of the Lost Islands of the Blessed.                                  |
| 5  | The basement of the Athenaeum contains crates filled with hundreds of books that are still to be catalogued.   |
| 6* | The oranges growing in the gardens have magical properties.  |

\*False rumour





## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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### 1: ENTRANCE HALL

This chamber was the original entrance hall to the Athenaeum in the city of Akratas; its white marble floor is inlaid with the tree symbol of Minras in gold and emerald green stone. Since the library moved to the Astral Plane centuries ago, its two pairs of sturdy wooden double doors have been kept firmly barred from the inside in the unlikely event the library comes under attack. Those librarians and guests who wish to wander the ornamental gardens must use the side doors to the outside from the Hall of History (location 3) or the Dormitory (location 4).

The last attack on the Athenaeum happened around 30 years ago, when a band of astral pirates landed outside and attempted to break in. They were beaten back by the magical might of Erasmus and the then Senior Librarian of Arcana, a powerful wizard named Venroth Cloudweaver.

### 2: ATRIUM

The Athenaeum's impressive atrium is the arrival point for visitors who come to the library through a portal. The domed ceiling here is two storeys high, reaching up 50 feet to where glass skylights in the roof fill the room with the glistening silver light of the Astral Plane. The floor is of polished grey marble streaked with porphyry; a wide stone staircase leads to the upper level.

But it's the statues that decorate the atrium that first draw the eye of new arrivals. Over a dozen marble, bronze and wooden sculptures representing gods and goddesses of knowledge from several different cultures and worlds stand here, including Minras, the Forgotten Athenaeum's patron goddess, handsome Apollo and his lyre, armoured Athena and her owl, bearded Oghma, one-eyed Odin, ibis-headed Thoth and the relevant god(s) from the GM's own campaign world.

When a portal opens from another library, the visitors materialize between the statues of Minras and Apollo in the centre of the chamber. This triggers an audible *alarm* spell—a ringing bell—which brings the duty librarian to welcome the guests. Charis (NG male human **commoner**) often fulfils this role. Good-natured and rather portly, he likes to be the first to sample any edible gifts brought by the visitors, and is particularly fond of cheese—the smellier, the better.

### 3: HALL OF HISTORY

Rows of bookshelves rising from floor to ceiling fill this huge chamber. These hold the Athenaeum's vast collection of books and scrolls on the history, culture and rulers of hundreds of cities, kingdoms and empires, both well-known and long-forgotten. It is said history is written by the victors, but among these volumes are the true (or at least alternative) accounts of

defeated nations, lost dynasties and sacked cities, ranging from a papyrus describing the corruption of the Boy Pharaoh Nermerkhet by the Whisperer in Darkness, to a large boulder inscribed with strange petroglyphs by the ancient inhabitants of the Forest of the Gray Spires.

At first glance, the books appear to be in no logical order whatsoever, but Senuthius (NG old male human **mage**), the dodderly Senior Librarian who looks after the Hall of History, has his own eccentric shelving system, based on when a book was added to the library. Senuthius has been at the Athenaeum as long as Erasmus, and took part in the ritual that saved its many books on the history and culture of Tirinos from the barbarous Venovians—these beloved volumes are at the heart of the collection here. Fortunately, Senuthius has an elephantine memory which allows him to track down a given volume in a matter of moments. He's not as nimble as he used to be, however, and delegates the retrieval of anything from shelves above chest height to younger folk who are willing to climb up one of the very tall and rickety library ladders.

Lileth Silvertongue (NE female human **bandit captain**; see location 11) spends a lot of time in this Hall, researching dusty genealogies of the kingdom of Kjarran.

### 4: DORMITORY

The Athenaeum's ten librarians and five senior librarians sleep in simple bunk beds in this large dormitory. Three bunks are empty. The Athenaeum is not currently fully staffed, so Erasmus or one of the senior librarians might discuss a potential job opening with a scholarly PC.

Chests by the side of the beds contain spare clothing and other belongings. Bookshelves line the walls, filled with the librarians' personal reading material. Each has one or more labelled shelves for their own collection, demonstrating a wide variety of interests and specialisms: Urmas' shelf is filled with books on unicorns and pegasi, while Rhea collects beautifully illustrated manuals of herbology, with a particular focus on cacti and other desert plant life.

Stairs lead down to a basement filled with crates of books that have recently arrived in the Athenaeum and await cataloguing. Going through these books is a long, tedious task, punctuated with moments of excitement at a valuable find (if you're a librarian). A cruel GM might decide that the information the PCs are seeking is held in these uncatalogued volumes and have Erasmus assign them the job of helping catalogue the books as they search through them.

## 5: RESTRICTED SECTION

The iron-bound door leading to the Athenaeum's Restricted Section is safeguarded with both a decent mundane lock and an *arcane lock* (DC 30 Dexterity check opens). It is further warded with a *magic mouth* that booms out "No admittance, by order of the Bibliognost!" when anyone other than a senior librarian touches it. Only Erasmus and his senior colleagues are trusted with keys to the restricted section.

Beyond lies a set of chambers containing the library's darkest and most dangerous volumes. These include books of demonology and necromancy, blasphemous tomes of cosmic secrets capable of driving the reader insane and other written works filled with twisted and evil magic. At the far end of the area is the strangest items in the Athenaeum's collection: a chained and muzzled ghoulish creature whose entire body is covered with eldritch runes that have been burned into its grey skin. This "book" reveals the horrors that dwell in the deepest dark beyond the Screaming Gate in Gloamhold's benighted depths.

Many of the books in the restricted section are chained to their shelves so they can be read at the study tables here, but not removed from these chambers. The chains are fixed to one corner of each tome's cover, and the books are shelved with

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### OUTSIDE THE ATHENAEUM

The Forgotten Athenaeum stands within five acres of ornamental gardens, transported to the Astral Plane along with the building when Erasmus performed his ritual. Beyond lies the endless silver void of the Astral Plane. An astral traveller approaching the Athenaeum would see a tiny island with a two-storey marble building surrounded by lawns, trees and shrubs, floating in the mists.

The Athenaeum's gardens are planted with a variety of attractive shrubs and flowers, as well as orange and olive trees. Small paths wander throughout the gardens, with stone benches at regular intervals for reading or quiet contemplation, and there are several pretty fountains. Two softly-spoken librarians, Edwulf and Rhea (NG male and female human **commoner**), make sure the garden is well-looked after. They keep the fountains topped up with a *decanter of endless water*.

Because time does not pass here in the same way as it does on the Material Plane, the trees and plants do not grow, the flowers do not wilt, and the fruit does not ripen. This also means any flowers that are cut or fruits that are picked are not replenished, so anyone caught stealing fruit or otherwise damaging the garden will face an enraged bibliognost. One small section of the garden was badly burned when Erasmus was forced to use a *fireball* to deal with the last of the astral pirates, and will never grow back. He has yet to forgive himself.

their spines facing away from the viewer, so that only the page edges are visible. This makes it hard for those who are unfamiliar with the restricted section to find the books they are looking for without assistance. To make things even trickier, some of the chained volumes are aggressive. Treat these books as **small animated objects**.

## 6: BIBLIOGNOST'S OFFICE

Two *arcane locked* doors (DC 30 Dexterity check opens) lead into this book-filled chamber which serves as the office, private reading room and sleeping quarters of Erasmus Spyridon (CG old male human **archmage**), the Athenaeum's chief librarian. The office appears chaotic at first glance. Piles of books and scrolls cover every available surface, including the bed and the chairs, but Erasmus is adamant he knows where everything is. A painting on the wall depicts a sad and beautiful grey-haired woman—this is Hesper, Erasmus' dead wife.

Although Erasmus is white-haired, balding and stooped, he doesn't look as ancient as he truly is—the Bibliognost is over 400 years old. Centuries after saving the Athenaeum, he is still as dedicated as ever to the preservation of knowledge, however uncomfortable it might be to those in power, and a steely glint comes into his eye whenever he hears about books being burned. If the PCs seem trustworthy, Erasmus may ask them to travel through a portal to a library or other place of learning under threat and rescue its important volumes from destruction.

## 7: HALL OF THE GODS

This chamber is filled with ceiling-height bookcases filled with religious texts. Many of these volumes were deemed to be blasphemous or heretical by rulers or powerful religious leaders and were brought here to the Athenaeum before they could be burned. There are also several bookcases dedicated to the holy scriptures, rituals and practices of many obscure and largely forgotten gods whose worship has been outlawed or superseded.

Tadras Beldok (N male dwarf **commoner**) is the senior librarian who looks after this hall. An expert on hundreds of deities and religions, Tadras is cynical, crabby and does not suffer fools gladly. He is contemptuous of gods in general and organised religion in particular, and is the only librarian who refuses to have Minras' symbol around his neck. Instead he just wears a plain silver chain.



## 8: HALL OF THE MULTIVERSE

This section holds hundreds of volumes filled with obscure knowledge and dangerous secrets from the many different worlds and planes of the multiverse. These include floor plans of the arch devil Baalzephon's infernal fortress, a map showing the safest route to the summit of Mount Olympus, and brass plates engraved with the correct method of addressing the Grand Sultan of the Efreeti, complete with diagrams of the necessary genuflections. Well-worn, ink-stained wooden reading desks line the walls in the far corner of the chamber—librarians and visitors use these when studying or making copies of the texts.

Jocasta Melina (CG female half-elf **mage**) is the Senior Librarian for this hall. A kindly, grey-haired Tirene who has lived in the Athenaeum since it moved to the Astral Plane, Jocasta still misses her dear friend Hesper but is happy to stay here for at least another century or two. "What could be better than having as much time as one needs to unravel all the secrets of the cosmos?" she says.

## 9: HALL OF NATURE

The smallest of the Athenaeum's halls, this chamber is focused on the natural world and is filled with bestiaries, beautifully illustrated books of trees, plants and herbs and maps and charts of strange lands. These volumes are shelved on wooden bookcases decorated with delightful depictions of animals and foliage, carved by past librarians. Mounted on the wall is the hall's most unusual "book"—a huge slice of tree trunk, 15 feet in diameter, on which is painted a world map marked with many long-forgotten and mythical places.

Euneas Helix (CG male human **druid**) became the Senior Librarian for Nature eight years ago, and brought his horned owl animal companion, Skritch, with him. Skritch likes to perch on top of the tree trunk map and hoot at newcomers. Euneas is an authority on strange beasts as well as a talented artist and spends much of his time writing and illustrating his own definitive "Monster Manual", humming tunelessly to himself as he does so.

## 10: HALL OF ARCANA

The rows of ceiling-high shelves in this chamber are crammed with books and scrolls rescued from places where oppressive rulers have outlawed or restricted the practice of arcane magic. The Hall of Arcana's collection includes both scholarly treatises on magic and a small number of spellbooks and scrolls. Many of the most dangerous volumes that arrive here have been moved to the restricted section.

Reneida Lagaris (N female human **mage**) is the Senior Librarian for the Hall of Arcana and joined the staff three years ago. She fled to the Athenaeum to hide from the Hooded Coterie, a group of corrupt arcanists she once belonged to until

she realised the true extent of their depravity. It is only a matter of time before these evil wizards track Reneida down—they will not rest until they recover the valuable tomes she stole from them when she fled.

## 11: COMMON ROOM

This room is used by both visitors to the Athenaeum and the librarians themselves to unwind and socialise after a hard day's study in the library, and perhaps enjoy some of the edible goodies brought by new arrivals. Many of the librarians like to play chess and enjoy taking on fresh opponents.

Burly Althiel Veroth (CN male human **veteran**) and his lissom adventuring companion (and ex-lover) Hallia Bloodthorn (N female human **spy**) are a pair of unprincipled thieves, newly-arrived at the Athenaeum. Both are affable enough, happy to swap tales of their adventures with the PCs. They claim to have come to the library to uncover "lost lore" but are cagey about exactly what this is. They keep the fact they have been hired by a shadowy middleman to steal the *Ebon Grimoire of Damnation* from the Restricted Section to themselves.

Lileth Silvertongue (NE female human **bandit captain**) is another visitor. Posing as a bard in search of material for her songs, she is actually a member of the Grey Rooks, a ruthless group of spies in the service of the king of Kjarran. Her mission is to remove and destroy any books in the Hall of History which prove that the king's cousin is the rightful heir to the throne. Lileth is a poor lute-player and has no original songs so her cover story is vulnerable to a curious PC's questioning.

## 12: GUEST QUARTERS

Visitors to the library—including the PCs—sleep in bunk beds in this simply furnished communal dormitory. A lockable chest stands next to each bed to store valuable items.



# FORT VIGIL

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**Words** Amber Underwood **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

*As night falls and the moon's pale light begins to shine, an aging knight takes up watch on the walls of a humble fort. Silver figures drift through the clearing below, shining brightly amidst shadow and vanishing in the moonlight. The waters of the nearby lake turn black as the darkened sky, but the stars on its surface are not the same as the ones above: these stars are a path of shimmering dust, and a woman shrouded in grey walks them, emerging from the lake to extend her hand to the vigilant knight far above.*

*This is the true nature of Fort Vigil, humble as it seems by day. The small fort is only manned by a token force and seen as a soft retirement for the honourable Sir Arnhelm, but it is far more than that. Ghosts haunt the fort and its woods, some clinging to purpose and duty, others mad and unable to rest. With the guidance of the oldest ghost of them all, the Medium of the Lake, Sir Arnhelm speaks to each ghost in turn to give them what peace he can. But the Medium struggles to maintain her humanity, and the number of restless spirits only seems to grow.*



## FORT VIGIL AT A GLANCE

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**Ruler** Sir Arnhelm Langeson

**Population** 29 (22 humans, 2 half-elves, 5 half-orcs)

**Alignments** LG, NG, N

**Languages** Common

**Resources & Industry** Guide and bodyguard services, foraging, hunting.

Fort Vigil stands next to the eternally still waters of the Wealdmere, its ancient stone walls sheltering it from assaults that seem unlikely to come. It hunches over its gate as if bent with age, and in truth the fort is ancient, with a lineage as varied as the people who have claimed it. Now it seems to rest in its quiet clearing, flowers growing in the field around it and weather smoothing its walls. Yet guards constantly watch from its motley towers, and its commander keeps his sword clean and sharp; if anything threatens, the old fort will wake from its slumber.

Not all is restful though. By night, restless spirits haunt the woods, the Clear and even the fort itself. For the Wealdmere is no ordinary lake, but a passage between worlds, a gate between life and death, material and spiritual. The fort's commander, Sir Arnhelm, sought his current post so he could protect the lake and aid the ghosts who are drawn to and from it. He does so with the aid of its previous guardian, the ghostly Medium who has lingered within the Wealdmere for centuries to guard the way and shepherd the dead.

Yet the Medium is worn and damaged by her long service, losing grasp on her humanity and sanity, and ghosts have begun to slip past her watch as she falters. Sir Arnhelm strives to ready himself to take her place, and in her moments of lucidity the Medium does her best to train and guide him so she can finally pass on.

### LORE

A PC may know something about Fort Vigil, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 10:** Fort Vigil is an old castle of little importance, mostly known for the man in charge: Sir Arnhelm Langeson, a veteran knight with a reputation that outstrips his humble post. As he is growing older, it is thought to be a soft retirement for him.

**DC 15:** The fort hasn't been tactically relevant in decades. As a result, it is manned by a token force of green soldiers, mostly would-be-knights learning their trade from Sir Arnhelm.

**DC 20:** Over the centuries, the fort has been a host to crusaders, rebels and ancient peoples. It is steeped in history, and a careful eye can find the signs of it.

### FOLK

Most of the fort's population are the ordinary guards who man it and the servants who work alongside them.

- **Appearance:** The people of Fort Vigil are tall and well-muscled, kept trim by daily training. Discipline shows in their posture and manners, though it is sometimes marred by lack of military experience.
- **Dress:** The garrison wear thick brown cloaks embroidered with the symbol of Fort Vigil: a downward pointing sword with a stylized eye in place of its crossguard. Servants and soldiers also wear the symbol as an amulet or have it on tabards or other garments.
- **Nomenclature:** *male* Arri, Finn, Haim, Rainard, Siward; *female* Auda, Brunn, Dagny, Ishild, Ragna; *family* Auttr, Erkson, Kettilson, Irnberg, Vollbyr.

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Fort Vigil, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

#### D6 RUMOUR

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Anyone who sleeps in the fort is beset with vivid dreams when they sleep.  |
| 2  | Whispering voices and silver shapes haunt the surrounding area and even Fort Vigil itself.   |
| 3  | Deep in the Wealdmere lies a grave even more ancient than the fort.  |
| 4  | Sir Arnhelm often wanders the area surrounding Fort Vigil alone, returning after a day or two. No one is sure why he takes such long sojourns.     |
| 5  | One of the guards, Od, is said to be a very helpful fellow. (A PC can make a DC 10 Wisdom [Insight] check to realize this means Od can be bribed). |
| 6* | The waters of the Wealdmere are cursed, and a horrible fate awaits anyone who drinks from it.  |

\*False rumour



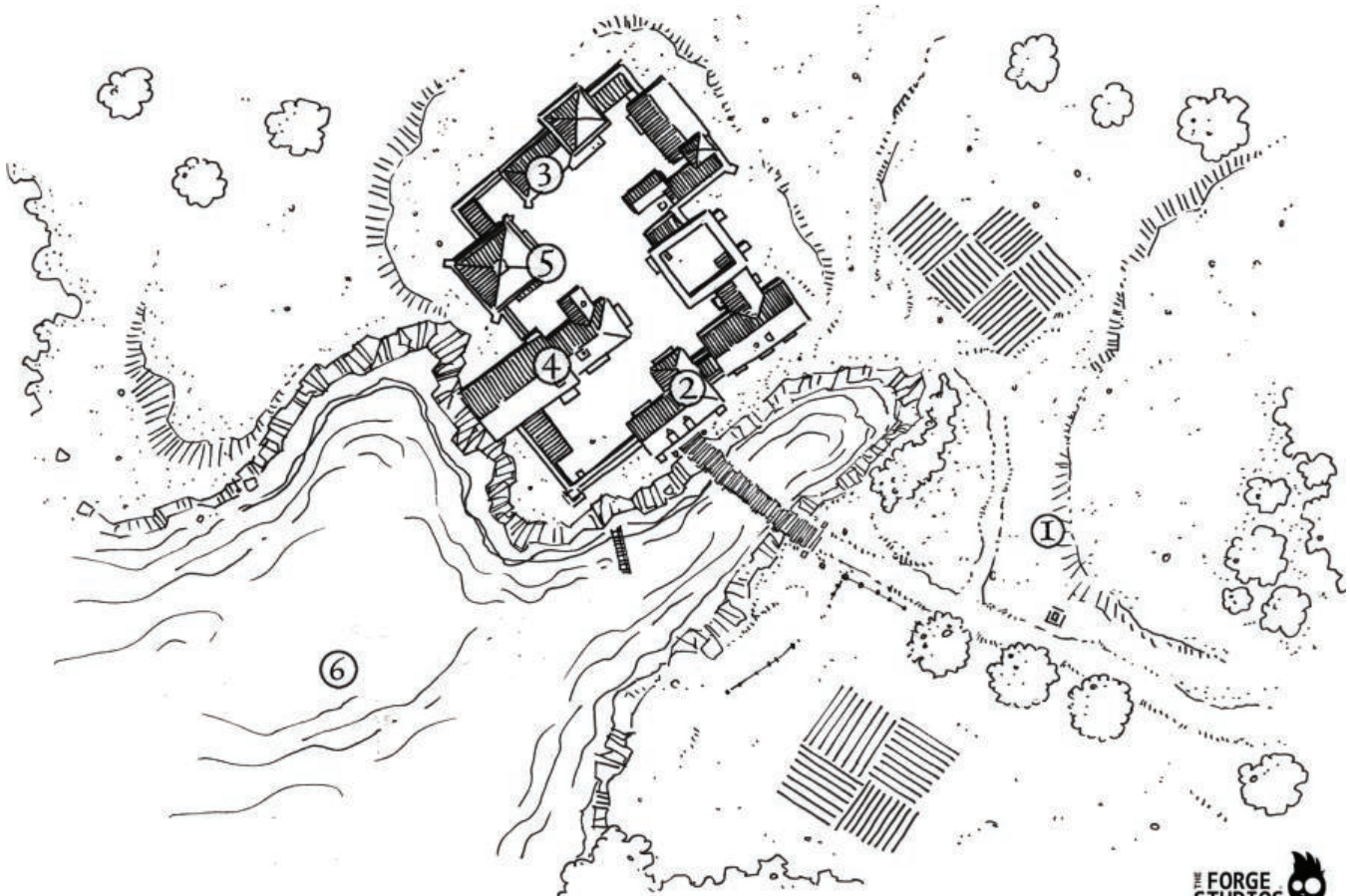
## NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Most of Fort Vigil comprises locations of no interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are exceptional:

1. **The Clear:** Soldiers refer to the idyllic meadow surrounding the fort as the Clear since it is an opening in the otherwise wooded landscape. The Clear is quiet by day and has a few farms and garden plots scattered over it. By night it is haunted by ghosts.
2. **Gatehall:** Entering Fort Vigil requires passing through the stout door and the guards of the fort's combination gatehouse and main hall. Sir Arnhelm's office is on the second floor and gives him a vantage point to watch the bridge and entrance. The main hall, also the dining hall, is almost a separate building, connected only by a stone hallway to the gatehouse structure.
3. **Chapel of the Vigilant Saints:** Named after the order that constructed it, the chapel is serene and solemn. It is not dedicated to any one faith or god, serving as a place of contemplation for all. Statues of saints and engravings of heroes and their deeds cover the walls, and at night their lingering spirits whisper to anyone willing to listen to them.
4. **Living Quarters:** Fort Vigil's largest building houses its barracks and living quarters. Most of it is taken up by rooms and beds,

but there is also communal space where off-duty guards spend much of their time gambling, swapping stories and playing games. Od Wray is a guard who spends more time here than he should, but his fellows overlook it because he keeps things lively and interesting.

5. **Training Yard:** The ground floor of the tallest tower and the yard in front of it are dedicated to daily exercise and military training. The yard is little more than a flat area of packed earth, but the tower has a small armoury and space for sparring. Signy Brandor, a new recruit, spends an inordinate amount of time here practicing. By night the spirit Watchman prowls, challenging and sparring with anyone who passes through.
6. **Wealdmere:** The waters of the Wealdmere are clear as glass and unnaturally still. Though all of the area is said to be haunted, the most pervasive rumours and stories are about the lake. Even by day an unseen presence can be felt around it, and by night the Medium walks through its depths and upon the surface, guarding the lake from other spirits.



## LIFE IN FORT VIGIL

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Military routines structure life in Fort Vigil: guards keep watch on the walls, train in the yard and patrol the surrounds. Sir Arnhelm maintains order, toiling to keep his people useful. He organises guards for passing nobles and merchants, sends soldiers to assist the local peasants and has servants maintain small garden plots outside the walls. Because of his efforts Fort Vigil largely remains self-sufficient.

### DREAMING

Lake Wealdmere pulls at the soul, and the ghosts haunting it are only one way this effect manifests. Anyone sleeping in or near Fort Vigil wanders through it in their dreams.

This dreaming reality reflects the waking world but shows subtle changes: ghosts manifest clearly, supernatural disturbances trouble the region and visions of the past linger. Dreamers only affect dream-like reflections of the world. Anyone awake cannot perceive the dreaming realm, only noticing hints of the events within it. Even dreamers are largely unaffected by their dreams; resources expended are unused and injuries received vanish when they awake. Hints of exertions linger though; characters who lose half their hit points or expend significant resources awake fatigued.

Though vivid, the dreams are easy to forget. When a character awakens, they make a Wisdom check to recall their experiences. At the GM's discretion a character may gain advantage to their check if they have experience with dreams, spirits or similar.

**DC 5:** The PC only recalls impressions of important moments.

**DC 10:** The PC has a good grasp of any notable experiences and generally remembers the rest.

**DC 20:** The PC remembers the dream's every detail.

Every 1d6 hours these memories fade by one step (clear to general, general to fragmented, fragmented to no memories). Related events and ideas can jog memories, however, enabling recall them even after they fade.

### GHOSTS & HAUNTINGS

Restless ghosts and eerie manifestations haunt Fort Vigil. Ghosts are drawn to the Wealdmere and sometimes escape from it, fleeing afterlives or other realms of existence. Whether tormented and hostile, or weary and ready to pass on, they dwell about the lake. Some plead with all they meet for aid, others attack and scream and still others fixate on inscrutable goals. They may show themselves as coherent apparitions or as feeble echoes—more unusual supernatural effects than ghosts. Sir Arnhelm does his best to put them to rest, whether by leading them to their next lives, fighting the malevolent forces or giving ghosts new purpose and focus. Despite his best efforts, the number of spirits in the area is slowly increasing.

### LOCATION DRESSING

Use these tables to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience at Fort Vigil. The first table should be used when the PCs are awake, and the second when they dream.

#### D10 DAILY LIFE DRESSING/EVENT

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|    |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | The watch changes, and guards trickle up to and down from their posts on the walls.                 |
| 2  | Thick fog rises from the Wealdmere, shrouding the Clear. Ghostly lights flicker within it.          |
| 3  | Quiet falls over the fort as Sir Arnhelm leads a ceremony in the chapel dedicated to a fallen hero. |
| 4  | Signy spars with another guard in the yard.   |
| 5  | A pilgrim arrives and expresses ardent interest in one of the chapel statues.                       |
| 6  | Crates stack up near Gatehall as a few guards unload a wagon of supplies.                           |
| 7  | Od returns from a successful hunt, with a deer.   |
| 8  | An honour guard marches from the fort to escort a passing noble.                                    |
| 9  | A local mason meets with Sir Arnhelm, requesting extra help to raise a home.                        |
| 10 | Wailing, thin and unearthly, echoes across the lake. Nervous guards try to dismiss it as the wind.  |

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#### D10 DREAMING DRESSING/EVENT

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|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Sir Arnhelm walks to the Wealdmere, holding his sheathed sword before him. The sword glows as he descends to speak with the Medium in the depths.  |
| 2  | A ghostly deer bounds past and off into the woods. Horns sound the pursuit of its hunters.   |
| 3  | Unnatural shadow spreads across the Clear; icy chill and cruel whispers assailing all within it.   |
| 4  | Soft weeping comes from the lake. The Medium wanders the shore, unable to remember her purpose. She fearfully prevents anyone getting closer.  |
| 5  | Campfires crackle in the woods, and figures of flickering shadows dance around them.   |
| 6  | Gentle melodies drift from the fort's tallest tower where Od rests and dreams as he plays his pipe.  |
| 7  | Voices and light come from the chapel, but no one is there. The eyes of the statues seem to follow visitors.   |
| 8  | A burning star shines on the wall, a bright brand held by the Watchman as he guards a sleeping sentry.   |
| 9  | Beckoning ripples distort the air, an ethereal current that draws spirits. This lasts for a minute, during which ghosts and dreamers are compelled to move towards the lake (DC 15 Wisdom save negates). |
| 10 | Cries for help come from the nearby forest. There, an emaciated ghost begs for comfort. His bones can be found in the forest and buried to put him to rest.  |

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## THE LOCALITY

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Fort Vigil is a lonely place, set in the midst of a sparsely populated, wooded region. Only a handful of roads connect it to the outside world, and the surrounding settlements are tiny villages of hunters and foragers who live in the area to avoid governance and keep to the old ways. Its small roads do offer shorter paths for those looking for swift travel, so it does see some traffic. Merchants and nobles often choose longer, better maintained routes that pass through major cities, but messengers and urgent travellers choose the quicker route. Bandits are rare in the region due to the presence of the fort, infrequent prey and the whispers of ghosts in the locality.

Ghosts and hauntings have spread from Fort Vigil into the furthest reaches of the woods. They are less common the further one is from the Wealdmere, but the common folk still share rumours of hostile spirits, lost souls and strange occurrences. Some of these wraiths have escaped from the pull of the Wealdmere and roam about, pursuing their own unfathomable goals, while others come from great distances, drawn to Fort Vigil by the Wealdmere's call. People speak of disappearances, and the local population has begun to paint symbols of protection on their doors, carve grotesque lanterns and wear hideous masks to ward away spirits.

For most of the year the weather is clear, crisp and cool. Boreal winds and light snows dominate the winter months, while the summer months bring gentle warmth and sunlight that peers through the trees. Of all the seasons, autumn seems to rule the longest; its cold breezes part leaves from the trees, and the sun, while present, races through the day while the moon and stars linger. The clear sky dresses in monochrome: it favours dim whites and pale greys over colourful blues.

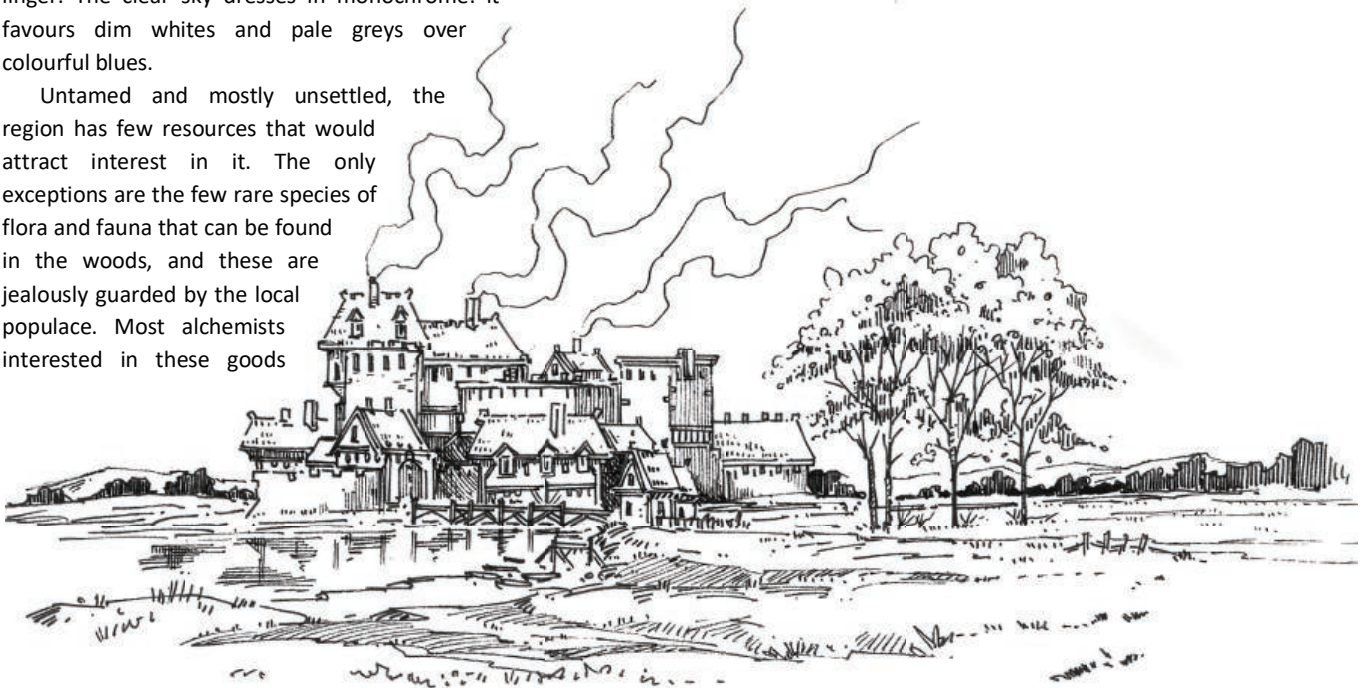
Untamed and mostly unsettled, the region has few resources that would attract interest in it. The only exceptions are the few rare species of flora and fauna that can be found in the woods, and these are jealously guarded by the local populace. Most alchemists interested in these goods

make deals with Fort Vigil's hunters, paying good gold to acquire small amounts that no one will miss. If demand grows though, larger operations backed by prominent guilds will begin to make their way into the region, buying their way past the locals. As the unearthly waters of the Wealdmere spread their influence, this possibility becomes increasingly likely; surely something valuable will arise from the joining of worlds.

## IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Fort Vigil is designed to fit into any forest or partially wooded area. It should not be a place of military importance, but the reason for this could be any number of things; it might have been built to protect from now absent threats, it could be overshadowed by another fortification or it could simply be an area with little worth protecting.

There are a number of options for including the fort in a game. PCs could come to Fort Vigil seeking the assistance of Sir Arnhelm, who makes an excellent ally against evil, a skilled mentor and a political force. The knight is willing to provide aid but is reluctant to abandon Fort Vigil except in times of great need. Fort Vigil could also be a place to rest, heal and resupply; a launching point to distant adventure sites or a location to retreat to in an emergency. Lastly, the haunted nature of Fort Vigil could attract the PCs' attention. Perhaps the restless spirits are growing in number and flooding the countryside, or one of the ghosts of Fort Vigil has secrets long lost to mortals.





## NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN FORT VIGIL

### 1: THE CLEAR

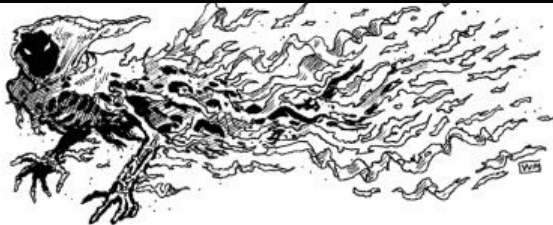
*Between the woods and the old fort lies a wide clearing, a peaceful meadow dotted with a handful of trees and a few small garden plots. Its long grass and white flowers bend in a gentle breeze coming from the nearby lake.*

The Clear was named by the soldiers of Fort Vigil, the only people who need to make a distinction between the clearing and the rest of the region; they watch the area from the fort, and can see little beyond it due to the surrounding trees. Quiet and tranquil, the meadow is a place of beauty. White flowers bloom among the grass, a few slender saplings and ancient trees grow alongside the road, and its small, tilled garden plots are well-tended and seeded with a variety of crops. Oddly, almost every tree, rock and fence post are covered with protective symbols and warding runes.

By night silver shapes flit from the woods and soft voices sound in the wind, speaking ancient languages. In rare instances a ghost manifests clearly, intent on performing some task or acting out a memory from its past life. The haunting of the Clear is usually subtle, but almost every guard has a story of a strange night on the walls.

### HAUNTINGS IN THE CLEAR

| D6 | EVENT   |
|----|---|
| 1  | Black liquid bubbles along the base of the fort's wall. Its touch is numbing and conveys the sound of screaming, but is otherwise intangible.   |
| 2  | Heavy, halting footsteps show on the dusty path and bend the grass, stopping at the Wealdmere's shore.  |
| 3  | A ghostly hedgewitch aimlessly wanders the Clear, vaguely aware of her state but unsure of what to do. She only lingers due to an adamant refusal to give up her existence or pass on.        |
| 4  | A weathered boulder shines with a blue-tinged light, and anyone nearby can hear a chanted prayer and see water rippling over its surface.   |
| 5  | Two thin strands of silver circle each other beneath a tree. Anyone who approaches hears a distant, merry song and feels a surge of affection.  |
| 6  | With the caw of a crow, the scenery changes. The fields are barren, the rocks spattered with blood. A dying man slumps against a tree, covered in wounds. The scene vanishes as the man dies. |



### 2: GATEHALL

*A squat building constructed of stone bricks hunches over the main entrance to the fort, its wooden door stout and bound with iron. Two guards are posted behind it and another guard keeps watch from the nearby wall.*

The Gatehall is part of Fort Vigil's wall and is its main entrance, so it is built sturdily and secure. Its walls are thick stone bricks, its only windows are high and barred and just beyond its heavy door is a small chokepoint of a room. Past this entrance is a narrow corridor leading to the main hall. A warm fire crackles in the hall's hearth, and a long table runs down the centre of the room. The walls are decorated with banners marked with the sword and eye of Fort Vigil, and fur rugs carpet the floor.

A stairway leads up to a small room on the second level, a loft Sir Arnhelm uses as an office. It has a barred window overlooking the road, a polished hardwood slab of a desk and several bookcases filled with logs and journals. His generously cushioned chair fits poorly in his otherwise austere and tidy office, a concession to his weariness and the fact he sleeps in his office too often.

### SIR ARNHELM LANGESON

LG male human paladin 6

*White frosts this knight's trimmed black beard and hair, and age has begun to define the wrinkles on his forehead and eyes. His years don't seem to hinder him, however; he still stands with a soldier's discipline, moves with brisk efficiency and carries a sword at his side.*

**Mannerisms:** Sir Arnhelm has the endless patience and unbending will of a mountain. His grey stare cows his subordinates and kindles fear and doubt in his opponents on the battlefield.

**Personality:** Though he is known for his tenacity, loyalty and courage, it is Sir Arnhelm's quiet compassion that now defines him. He dedicates himself to bettering the lives of those around him, whether by training his subordinates, aiding the common folk or speaking with restless spirits.

**Background:** In his youth, Sir Arnhelm won fame in contests and battle, defeated monsters and became known as a hero. He gained the ear and trust of his betters and for a time played at politics. Yet his humble retirement at Fort Vigil is where he has found the most meaning; he has pledged to aid the Medium, to take up her role in guarding the Wealdmere and shepherding lost souls.

### 3: CHAPEL OF THE VIGILANT SAINTS

*Bright wood and starkly coloured glass set this building apart from the others. Within, statues of ancient heroes and holy men are spaced along the walls, while windows of black and white glass depict dramatic scenes from their lives.*

Years ago, a priestess from the Order of the Vigilant Saints came to Fort Vigil. Soon after, the order raised a chapel in the fort and established their faith among the guards. Little of their influence remains now, as no one who lives in the fort knows their teachings or the rites they once practiced. The chapel, however, remains, and fear provoked by the constant hauntings of Fort Vigil and the piety of Sir Arnhelm see it still receives use and respect.

The chapel is now dedicated to the heroes and saints depicted in its statues, stained windows and the art engraved on the wooden walls. Chapel-goers dwell on these figures, drawing inspiration from their deeds and requesting their strength, wisdom or intercession. Some swear they even hear them answer, or that they feel the stirrings of requested comfort or forgiveness. By dream, it becomes clear the chapel is the home of spirits, but these are a very different sort than those outside. They can be seen in the subtly shifting expressions of the statues, in coloured light shining through particular scenes in the windows and heard in softly whispered advice.

**Intercession:** The chapel's spirits are not powerful, but do their best to aid and guide those who ask it. Once a week they might give cryptic advice or hints about the near future, they might remove a curse, poison, or disease or bestow advantage on rolls made for a specific purpose (such as attacks against an enemy type) until the next dawn.

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#### OD WRAY

N male half-elf **scout**

*Though compact and well-muscled rather than lithe, this soldier shows the grace, pointed ears and angular features of elven heritage.*

**Mannerisms:** Od grins easily and jokes often, but both are coloured by his moods. When frustrated his grin becomes a threatening display of teeth and he uses gallows humour when worried.

**Personality:** Creative, clever and witty, Od keeps life in the fort from being tedious by telling wild stories and betting on everything. He is not a disciplined soldier, and he'll take bribes or make unscrupulous deals when he has the chance.

**Background:** Lured into a soldier's life by the promise of adventure and glory, Od has had enough experience to learn the lie of that promise. He sought out an uneventful post to keep him from fighting and found it at Fort Vigil.

### 4: LIVING QUARTERS

*Raucous laughter and light spill from the windows of Fort Vigil's largest building, a multistoried structure of thick log frames and brick. Within, off-duty guards relax and enjoy their free time.*

The centremost building of Fort Vigil is its barracks, which is designed to house far more people than it currently does. Even after the guards repurposed the first floor to a generous living room filled with tables, a rough counter for a bar and shelves of dice and games, the cots on the upper stories are sparsely inhabited. Sir Arnhelm freely offers these unused beds to travellers and adventurers, allowing them to rest here as long as they need.

Many of the guards spend their free time on the first floor, drinking mead, playing dice games and telling stories. One of the guards, Od Wray, is the centre of the attention when he is off duty or when he abandons his post or tasks early. His stories are enthralling, his wagers extravagant and his jests loud and clever.

### 5: TRAINING YARD

*The first floor of the tallest tower is carefully arranged; racks of weaponry and armour line the walls while the centre is clear except for a thick mat of straw. Just outside is a level yard of packed earth furnished with a few archery targets and a practice dummy.*

Practice and training are a constant in Fort Vigil due to how many of its soldiers are green recruits. Sir Arnhelm uses the practice to eliminate idleness, keep skills sharp and to improve all those under his command. Throughout the day handfuls of

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#### WATCHMAN

LG male **ghost** human **veteran**

*Time has worn away the features of this ghost, leaving him without a face or distinction beyond his long cloak and the weapons he bears.*

**Mannerisms:** The Watchman is eternally silent but attentive, watching everything with endless patience.

**Personality:** He has lost much of who he was, and only two things seem to drive him now: the protection of Fort Vigil and the thrill of the fight. When he spars he seems to regain a little of himself, becoming more expressive and emotive.

**Background:** The Watchman's life is long lost and forgotten, he remembers none of it. His time worn and archaic appearance suggests he lived in the area ages ago when the fort was more relevant. Investigation might reveal artefacts from his life that could restore pieces of his memory.

people can be found in the training yard, sparring with one another, holding impromptu archery contests or talking as they maintain the armoury's weapons and armour. In particular, Signy Brandor spends an inordinate amount of time here performing weapon drills with her spear, watching others fight as she rests or listening intently to every lesson Sir Arnhelm gives.

By night the yard is quiet, though anyone passing through might see movement at the edge of their vision, notice odd flickering of light and shadow or swear they hear the faintest echo of clashing weaponry. Exploring the yard by dream brings the scene into clarity: circles of bright torches light the yard and weapons lie ready within them, spears driven into the ground, lines of arrows at measured paces in front of lit targets, shields leaning against swords planted in the dirt. By dream, the Watchman takes charge of the yard and challenges all comers to prove their mettle. Of late he spars nightly with Signy, and it is their clashing blades people hear in the night, her brave lunges and the Watchman's graceful leaps people see out of the corner of their eye. Signy is not consciously aware of what she does in her dreams, and in them she is nearly as silent as her teacher.

## 6: WEALDMERE

*The lake's water is as still and clear as solid crystal, instantly calming after disturbances. A presence is palpable here, something that watches every movement with knowing eyes.*

The Wealdmere is a gateway between worlds. It is a channel between physical and spiritual, between reality and dream. The truth is a secret kept by the Medium and Sir Arnhelm, but rumours and stories have spread among the guards and locals. They fear it, knowing it only as a source of strangeness and ghosts.

Out in the lake's distant centre, secreted in its darkest depths, is a sunken mausoleum of black stone. The waters of the Wealdmere flow into it and out to distant afterlives, and sometimes the waters of those places flow to it in return, issuing spirits into the lake. For years uncouneted the Medium has guarded against these spirits while guiding ghosts through the mausoleum's gates and to their afterlives, but she has begun to falter in this task, twisted by her centuries of ghostly existence. Due to her periods of forgetfulness and anxiety, restless souls now gather at the shores and malevolent forces slip past her watch.



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## THE MEDIUM

LG female **ghost** human cleric 8

*As this grey ghost moves her hair changes shape and positions like liquid and her flowing garments part and merge with her flesh until there is no telling the two apart. Her eyes are gleaming black pools that never close, but ripple and stir like water.*

**Mannerisms:** The Medium desperately clutches a talisman that might be a holy symbol, sometimes braiding its chain between her fingers and holding it before her in both hands. Other times she wears it about her neck while holding the symbol in one hand over her heart.

**Personality:** An iron will and a solemn vow are all that hold the Medium together in the face of her growing amnesia and paranoia.

On her good days she is wise and patient, faithfully guarding the Wealdmere, but other days she loses focus, staring into the lake's depths, and on others her paranoia takes over and she delivers wild threats to anyone who approaches the lake or nearby ghosts.

**Background:** The Medium has guarded the lake and helped the ghosts for a long time indeed, so long everything else is a distant, fading memory. When she lived she was a spiritual leader, and her people raised the structure that would eventually become Fort Vigil. Years ago, she picked Sir Arnhelm as her successor and began training him so that she can finally rest.

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## SIGNY BRANDOR

NG female human **veteran**

*This tall, lean young woman wears her brown soldier's cloak with pride, and her sky-blue eyes shine with lively energy.*

**Mannerisms:** Restlessness and a soldier's confident stance vie for control of Signy's features. She strives to be still and disciplined, but this is frequently spoiled by her desire to move and practice with her weapons.

**Personality:** Signy has the untempered enthusiasm of youth, or perhaps inexperience. She gives her all to her training and takes her work seriously.

**Background:** When she was a young girl, Signy dreamed of being a knight. That desire never faded, and it drove her first to learn the skills of combat, then to serve under the banner of Sir Arnhelm, the most honourable knight she knew.

She still dreams of being a hero and daily pushes herself so that when the opportunity comes, she'll be ready.

# FRAYWRACK

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**Words** Jacob W. Michaels **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

*When a flight of harpies, beset by a relentless demonic menace from beneath the dark seas, used their captivating song to lure a ship to ruin, they sought allies instead of food. Thus, was born Fraywrack, a war camp created by the strange alliance of man and monster against a far greater threat. Now, hidden by the broken remains of their ship, the wreck's survivors and their later recruits train endlessly for a fight they fear they have little hope of winning. Still, they persevere, welcoming adventurers who may wish to learn some lessons of their own or, just maybe, lend their own might to the struggle.*



## FRAYWRACK AT A GLANCE

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**Rulers** Captain Jorne Bitser and Shurasal  
**Population** 39 (17 humans, 2 dwarves, 5 half-elves, 2 half-orcs, 5 halflings, 8 harpies)  
**Alignments** N, CN, CE  
**Languages** Common  
**Resources & Industry** Maritime salvage, martial training

On a rocky headland known as Harpy's Head, the wreck of the *Sea Spite* hides a secret: a war camp where a strange alliance of men and monsters train for battle against Dagon, the demon lord of the sea, and its strange, deformed minions.

### LORE

A PC may know something about Fraywrack, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check:

**DC 10:** After their ship wrecked on Harpy's Head, the survivors of *The Sea Spite* formed a small community, Fraywrack, and now eke out a living along the coast.

**DC 15:** The residents of Fraywrack place great emphasis on martial ability, spending hours training to face some shadowy threat from the sea.

**DC 20:** The flight of harpies that called the area home before *The Sea Spite's* wreck formed an alliance with Fraywrack.

### NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the sailors are nothing more than ordinary individuals.

- **Appearance** Residents of Fraywrack are strong and fit, almost gaunt. The harpies' white wings have dark grey tips.
- **Dress** Fraywrack's residents wear rough clothing, often mismatched from what they can scrounge. All carry weapons.
- **Nomenclature** *male* Bosek, Helmar, Rozla; *female* Alburn, Ritra; *family* Novidno, Telgria, Sovca; *harpies* Nirhul, Tesara, Voalda.

Some of the inhabitants, however, are notable:

**Andumil** (location 3; CE female **harpy**) Shurasal's daughter, she doesn't appreciate being forced to "play with her food."

**Captain Jorne Bitser** (location 4; N male human **veteran**) *The Sea Spite's* first mate, he claimed command after the wreck.

**Herstil Toriklif** (location 7; N female human **bandit captain**) The proprietor of The Got and Give trading post.

**Shurasal** (location 10; CN female **harpy**) Leader of the harpy flight, she keeps order with an iron talon.

**Skettri Howsell** (location 9; CN male half-orc **priest** [Serat]) Fraywrack's only cleric, he tries to attend to everyone's spiritual needs.

**Veigga Tavidalr** (location 2; N female halfling fighter 2/rogue 4) An early recruit, she serves as the camp's main trainer.

**Wulhem Senis** (location 8; N old male human fighter 4/wizard 3) With his own agenda, he's not who he says he is.

### MARKETPLACE

The following items and services are for sale:

- **Consumables** holy water (5, 25 gp), *potions of healing* (2, 50 gp).
- **Spellcasting** 3rd.

### EVENTS

While the PCs are at Fraywrack, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A nearby shipwreck sends the harpies and Got and Give scavengers racing to find prey and salvage, respectively.      |
| 2  | The anniversary of <i>The Sea Spite's</i> wreck spurs a raucous wake; barrels of rotgut are opened for the occasion. |
| 3  | A deformed villager from Coldwater arrives at Fraywrack's gates, prompting a frantic call to arms.                   |
| 4  | A training accident leaves a raw recruit badly injured and at severe risk of dying of her wounds.                    |
| 5  | A severe storm at high tide floods the cavern; half a foot of water and muck cover the ground.                       |
| 6  | A drunken sailor loudly proclaims he saw something moving the previous night on <i>The Sea Spite</i> .               |

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Fraywrack, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

| D6 | RUMOUR   |
|----|--|
| 1* | The ship's haunted, and don't you forget it! The cap'n's spirit wanders its decks at night, looking for a way out. |
| 2  | The Got and Give's mostly got junk, but the owner's holding out on a few magic trinkets she's hidden away.         |
| 3* | Those that don't make the cut in training are strung up from <i>The Sea Spite's</i> mast and fed to the harpies.   |
| 4  | Wulhem used to live in Coldwater, but fled in the middle of the night with just the clothes on his back.           |
| 5* | The survivors of <i>The Sea Spite</i> are merely biding their time before they can repair the ship and sail away.  |
| 6* | Mark my words, that priest is consorting with one of them harpies, and not in no priestly way neither.             |

\*False rumour

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Fraywrack comprises ramshackle wooden shacks crafted from timber salvaged from the *Sea Sprite's* wreck. They are of little interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are notable:

1. **Gates:** The main entrance to Fraywrack is blocked by heavy gates made from *The Sea Spite's* masts. Guards always watch from atop the palisade.
2. **Battleground:** The training ground, where new recruits are taught how to fight. This area is rarely empty; training takes place on an almost continual basis.
3. **The Nest:** The harpies' living quarters, its rank odour nearly overpowers the smell of the sea. Few humans willingly visit this location.
4. **Captain's Quarters:** Jorne Bitser, the first mate of *The Sea Spite* who claimed the mantle of captain after the wreck, lives in Fraywrack's largest home. His first mate—Telina Erevrad—also dwells here.
5. **The Carpenter's Shop:** Slightly less ramshackle than most of the other homes in Fraywrack, weapons and other goods are produced here for the camp by One-Hit Lukil.
6. **Quartermaster's:** From this central location, Quartermaster Boloi Hammerstone doles out food and supplies to anyone who needs them. Boloi hates Herstil (location 7).
7. **The Got and Give:** Herstil Toriklif, having given up on fighting after suffering a bad wound, runs a scavenging and bartering business, providing any goods residents might want that the quartermaster won't or can't give.
8. **Wulhem's Home:** Jaska Vuolle, the man known as Wulhem Senis, lives here in secrecy after fleeing for unknown reasons from the nearby village of Coldwater.
9. **Chapel:** This sturdy structure in a sheltered cavern is dedicated to Serat (the uncaring Mistress of Storms). The cavern also has shrines dedicated to several other deities, although these are rarely used.
10. **The Sea Spite:** Long ago picked clean of any remaining wealth, the wreckage of *The Sea Spite* is nearly a sacred space to the survivors of the ship's destruction. Fish feature heavily in Fraywrack's denizen's diet, and humans armed with nets and rods are a common sight here.



## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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Life in Fraywrack is difficult and wearying, with work of some sort occupying almost all the denizens' waking hours. The primary focus is on training, with nearly a third of the camp engaged in martial practice in the Battleground at any time of the day. Those not so occupied are responsible for other chores, largely keeping the camp supplied with food and other goods, which is a constant struggle. The harpies typically keep watch from above, keeping their distance from the rest of the camp.

### 1: GATES

A wooden palisade blocks Fraywrack's only landward entrance, uneven timbers forming rough crenulations along the parapet. The heavy wooden gate, made from *The Sea Spite's* masts, is typically closed. Wooden platforms on both sides of the gate allow guards clean fields of fire into the area beyond, though typically only one person (male or female human **guard**) is stationed here. If Fraywrack is on alert, three guards keep watch from each walkway.

Though a rope hawser secures the gate, its weight proves the major impediment to entry or exit, as opening it is no easy task. Typically, three or four Fraywrack guards force the gate open and closed as needed.

### 2: BATTLEGROUND

Much of the mud and debris in this area of the cave complex has been pushed to the sides, moved out of the way by the constant sweep of feet. The Battleground serves as the primary training area for Fraywrack's recruits. Here they drill at all hours in preparation for battle against savage fishmen from the sea, their demonic patron and his deformed followers on shore.

Though no actual battle has taken place here, Veigga Tavlidalr (N female halfling fighter 2/rogue 4) prefers that description to "the training grounds" or any similar appellation to emphasize the seriousness of her lessons. The gaunt halfling, her hair shorn almost to the skull, is deadly serious about weapons training, and pushes her charges hard: accidents, sometimes fatal ones, are not unheard of, but are simply incorporated into the lessons. One of the first additions to Fraywrack who wasn't a survivor of the shipwreck, Veigga scoffs at some of the nautical traditions of the war camp, often pointing out that surviving a battle (which she claims she's done on numerous occasions) is much more than a matter of luck like "holding on for dear life as a boat hits something." Despite this, her skill and experience helped her quickly rise to a position of prominence in the camp.

### 3: THE NEST

The briny smell of the ocean can barely conceal the sickly sweet and sour odour of rancid flesh and perfumed oils in this cavern, which serves as the main roost for Fraywrack's harpies.

Once larger in number, the harpies lost about a third of their members to attacks from deformed fishmen, provoking their leader, Shurasal (CN female **harpy**), to come up with a plan to use their song to lure allies instead of food. Though they previously considered the entire cave complex their home, they retreated to this cavern after making a deal with the survivors of *The Sea Spite*.

The flight stands out from others of their kind: The underside of their long wings are white, though often stained with dirt and filth, while the dark grey feathers on the back of their wings deepen to black at the tips. Like other harpies, they wear trinkets from their victims, though much of this group's baubles are tarnished and tattered with age.

Not all the harpies are pleased with the situation. A small faction led by Shurasal's daughter, Andumil (CE female **harpy**), dislikes being forced to "play with their food." They believe they could have either defeated the fishmen on their own or found a new place to live. Andumil often sulks in the nest. At times, however, she lurks outside near the training ground. When she thinks she can get away with it, she uses a momentary snatch of her captivating song, hoping to cause a distraction and fatal injury among the warriors training in the Battleground.

### 4: CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

This home, like almost all the buildings in Fraywrack, was hastily built, as much from flotsam and the guts of *The Sea Spite* as from wood brought in for construction. Unlike most, the interior belies expectations, with many rich accommodations taken from the wreck, including the ship's wheel, with its silver-inlaid spokes and bolts carved to look like shark's teeth.

Captain Jorne Bitser (N male human **veteran**), was second in command on *The Sea Spite* when the harpies' song led the ship into disaster. He lives here with his "first mate" Telina Erevrad (N female half-elf **scout**). With the captain killed in the wreck, Jorne claimed the title for himself and agreed to join forces with the monstrous women against the sinister fishmen and their demonic patron. Jorne oversees the camp, running it much as he

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#### IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Fraywrack can fit almost any relatively coastal location. It's designed as a companion to Raging Swan Press' *Village Backdrop: Coldwater*, but can stand on its own. It serves as a place PCs might go to receive martial training, or to rest and recuperate between adventures.



would a ship, but has little tactical acumen, leading him to be incredibly cautious in planning any action outside the camp. Much to the harpies' irritation (and some of his own recruits), he must be pushed to commit to any sort of aggressive action outside the camp. Jorne argues, the recruits need more training. In truth, he has no idea how to plan a military campaign and dreads evidence of his ignorance coming to light and threatening his position.

#### 5: THE CARPENTER'S SHOP

*The Sea Spite's* carpenter, One-Hit Lukil (N female half-orc **commoner**), works from this wooden building, which looks marginally sturdier than most of Fraywrack's other structures. Once responsible for most of the camp's infrastructure, One-Hit Lukil—named for how many hammer blows it takes her to drive a nail through a board—now focuses on arming the recruits, though she's no great talent at it. She's can craft most simple weapons, other than crossbows, but anything more complex takes about one and a half times as long as normal, and has a small chance (10%) of breaking when used.

#### 6: QUARTERMASTER'S

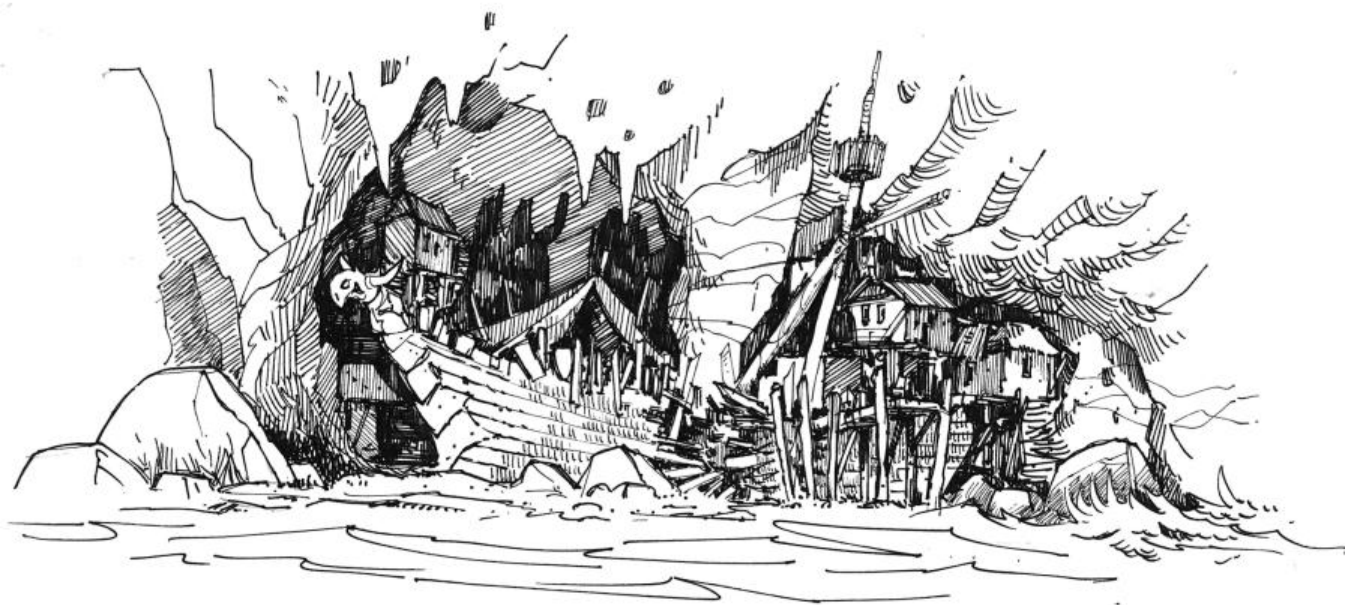
This central building houses the camp's quartermaster, Boloi Hammerstone (NG male dwarf **spy**), who is responsible for doling out food and supplies from his first-floor storerooms. Though dedicated and experienced, Boloi is largely overwhelmed by his current duties. They are far more than he had to handle on the ship, especially due to the lack of most of the supplies needed to keep the camp running. The perpetually haggard dwarf responds gruffly to any requests, running his hands through his thinning hair and tugging frequently on his salt-and-pepper beard, though he does his best to accommodate

any requests. He loathes The Got and Give and its proprietor, seeing them as a blatant criticism of his abilities to provide for his fellows.

#### 7: THE GOT AND GIVE

This ramshackle building holds The Got and Give, Fraywrack's only real shop. Proprietor Herstil Toriklif (N female human **bandit captain**) arrived as a recruit but a training accident left her lame. After trading away her good armour and blade for the home that now houses The Got and Give trading post, she realized she had the makings of a business. She organizes salvage parties to bring in goods that aren't otherwise available, trading "luxuries" such as nicer clothes, superior weapons and armour and better food, for other items. Herstil continues to hold on to three magic items she acquired over the years, waiting for a trade worth her while: a *girdle of hill giant strength* (4,000 gp), a *cloak of the manta ray* (500 gp) and a *rope of climbing* (500 gp).

Though she buys and sells items, she finds there's little use for the precious metal in the camp. She offers far better value for barter. (She buys items for half their listed price, and sells items with a 25% mark up. However, she's far more generous with barter, taking items for 75% of their value with no mark up on the items she gives in return.)





## 8: WULHEM'S HOME

This small house is home to Wulhem Senis (N old male human fighter 4/wizard 3) and his many secrets. Wulhem is in fact Jaska Vuolle, the rightful ruler of the nearby village of Coldwater, a dismal, sullen haven for smugglers and other miscreants (see *Village Backdrop: Coldwater*). Jaska fled nine years ago in the middle of the night, after seeing something horrifying emerge from the Sunken Stair in Devil's Cove. It was so frightening the encounter turned his black hair completely white. Such was his terror, he even left behind his family's prized relic, in his panic. After spending years on the road, he heard of Fraywrack and made his way to the camp, hoping to use its inhabitants to cleanse and reclaim his home. He pushes Captain Jorne Bitser to take more aggressive action, hinting Coldwater is the source of all their ills. He's not above lying to adventurers about a great treasure in Devil's Cove, to have them take care of his troubles. He knows if he returns to Coldwater as a heroic saviour, reclaiming his title will be that much easier, and hopes to use proxies to achieve his goal.

## 9: CHAPEL

Built in a sheltered section of the cavern complex, Fraywrack's chapel provides for all the spiritual needs of the war camp. It's run by Skettri Howsell (CN male half-orc **priest** [Serat]), who was pulled from the ocean several months after *The Sea Spite's* wreck. The tragedy—Skettri was the only known survivor after leaping overboard when his Coldwater-bound ship was attacked by creatures from the deep—left Skettri traumatized. He's terrified of the water, though equally determined to see vengeance against the attackers.

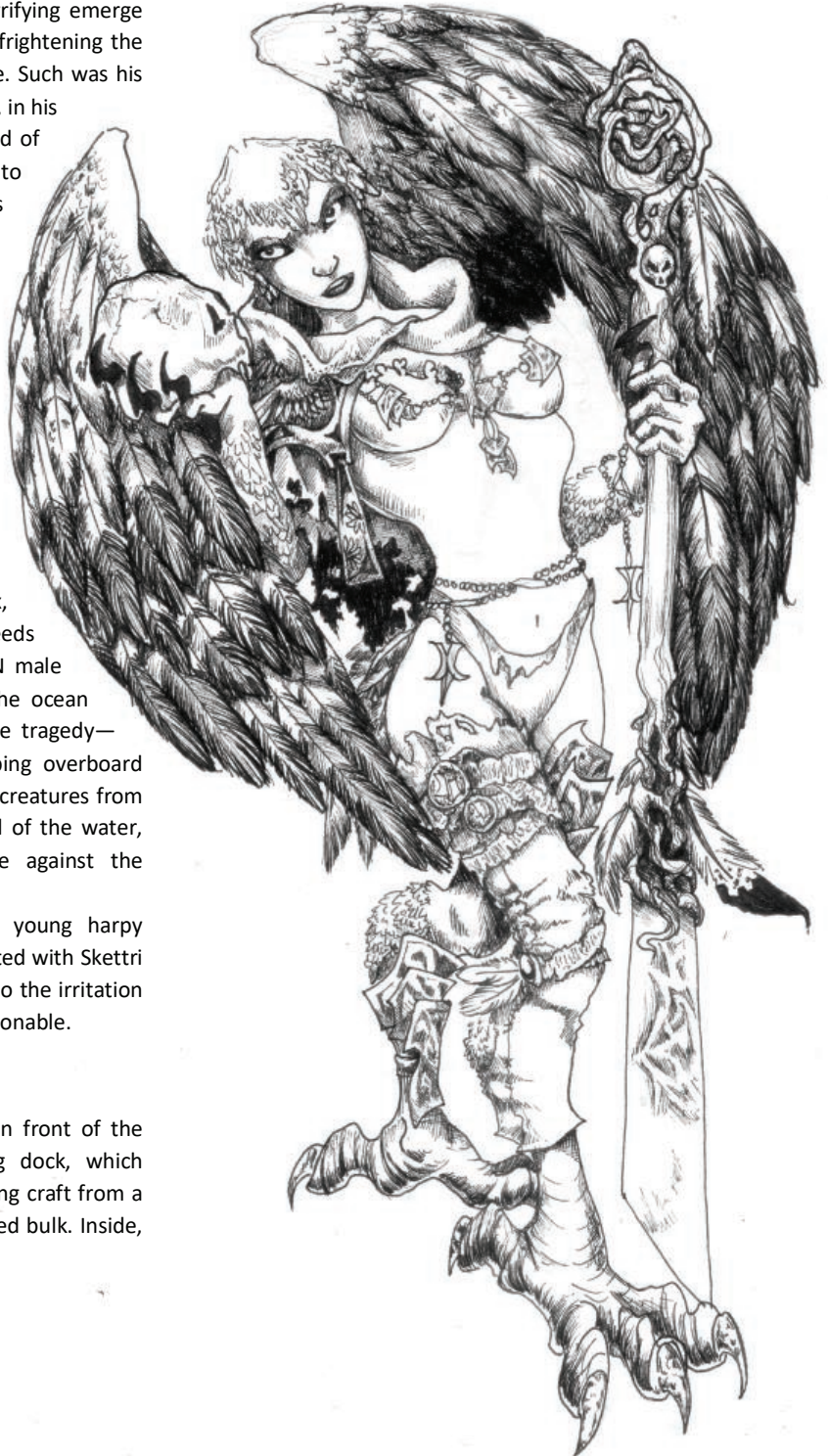
Among those visiting the chapel are the young harpy Ololvaya (CN female **harpy**), who appears fascinated with Skettri and his teachings. She can often be found here, to the irritation of many of the recruits who find her odour objectionable.

## 10: THE SEA SPITE

The once-proud ship lies broken on the rocks in front of the cavern complex's opening to the sea. A long dock, which residents fish from or use to moor the rare landing craft from a nearby ship, juts into the water from the shattered bulk. Inside,

much of the ship has been stripped of valuables, taken for Captain Jorne Bitser's home or to trade for needed supplies. Even the bones of the ship have not gone unused, pillaged to erect the shelters that keep Fraywrack's residents dry and warm.

Shurasal (CN female **harpy**), the leader of the harpy flight, often rests here, away from both her fellow monsters and the



# KHLA'AKEAR

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**Words** John Bennett **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

*Once the home of a violent clan of rakshasas, the holy stupa of Khla'Akear is now the monastery of the Yellow Dawn. This order of clerics, monks and wizards defeated the rakshasas, entrapping their souls within Khla'Akear's dome. Today, the order harnesses the rakshasas' spiritual energy to perform feats of healing, curse breaking and exorcisms of evils spirits. Khla'Akear's wizards plumb the depths of new research into enchantment and illusion magic, the forte of the imprisoned rakshasas. Meanwhile, the Yellow Dawn's monks continue to train, developing new techniques and strategies to defeat supernatural threats. Visitors come from across the land to learn from the Yellow Dawn, explore the stupa's famous library and train with the fierce warrior monks. Yet, the rakshasas, removed from the cycle of reincarnation, yearn for freedom and a chance at revenge on the Yellow Dawn.*

## KHLA'AKEAR AT A GLANCE

**Ruler:** Arkar Bakshi

**Population:** 53 (46 humans, 2 dwarves, 3 half-elves, 2 halflings)

**Alignments:** LG, N, LN

**Languages:** Common, Dwarven, Elven

**Resources & Industry:** Arcane knowledge, healing, specialized combat techniques

**Marketplace:** *spellcasting* 7th-level cleric, **mage**

**Potions (wizard):** *fear* (400 gp), *mirror image* (300 gp)

**Potions (cleric):** *remove curse* (450 gp), *sanctuary* (50 gp)

Generations ago, a clan of tiger-headed rakshasas inhabited the ancient stupa of Khla'Akear. The malevolent spirits terrorized the surrounding lands for their own perverse pleasures. Finally, an order of clerics, fighting monks and wizards called the Yellow Dawn defeated the rakshasas. Fearing the spirits' eventual reincarnation, the order imprisoned the rakshasas' souls with a powerful ritual inside the stupa's hollow golden dome.

The Yellow Dawn has since overseen Khla'Akear and the rakshasas' imprisonment. They quickly learned to siphon off the rakshasas' power and enhance magic related to enchantments and illusions. In addition, the rakshasas could be used to break powerful curses with the right rituals. The order also built a small compound next to the stupa for training and defence. There the monks continued to perfect their unique fighting techniques, both of body and mind, created to fight evil spirits.

Today, Khla'Akear attracts various sorts of visitors. Some seek to study the stupa's extensive research on enchantment and illusion magic. Others train with the monks to learn new and advanced fighting techniques. Many also come to Khla'Akear seeking powerful healing magic, exorcisms or the dispelling of a curse. Despite the order's great achievements, the perversion of altering the cycle of reincarnation, even of evil spirits, causes the malevolence of the entrapped rakshasas to occasionally bleed through into the stupa.

## LORE

A PC may know something about Khla'Akear, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 10:** The order of the Yellow Dawn specializes in removing curses, exorcisms, extensive arcane knowledge and unique fighting techniques.

**DC 15:** Khla'Akear once belonged to a clan of tiger-headed rakshasas who practiced all kinds of depravities.

**DC 20:** The rakshasas weren't only defeated, their spirits were imprisoned, as well. The Yellow Dawn uses their souls to power their own magic.

## FOLK

Most of the population are clerics, monks or wizards.

- **Appearance** The order's members shave their heads, though the monks are allowed top knots. Wizards ink their faces with arcane writing.
- **Dress** Everyone wear long, plain yellow robes. Clerics wear large, elaborate prayer beads around their necks and wrists.
- **Nomenclature** *male* Chea, Heng, Sothear; *female* Mony, Phary, Veata; *family* Dith, Keo, Tang.

## WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Khla'Akear, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

### D6 RUMOUR

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | Khla'Akear's clerics excel at breaking and removing curses, though their services don't come cheaply.                     |
| 2* | The Yellow Dawn are really con artists who use magic to convince people they are healed.                                  |
| 3* | Khla'Akear sits on the corpse of an ancient demon. The order makes regular human sacrifices to ensure it does not awaken. |
| 4  | Enchantment and illusion spells cast within Khla'Akear are more powerful than normal.                                     |
| 5  | The monks of Khla'Akear know specialized techniques to fight evil spirits and other monsters.                             |
| 6* | The Yellow Dawn turn into tigers, devouring guests who anger them.  |

\*False rumour

## IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Khla'Akear is a stupa (or temple) with an Asian-themed flavour, roughly analogous to real-world southeast Asia. The stupa's residents are learned in enchantment and illusion magic, exorcisms, healing, removing curses and new combat techniques. PCs might be attracted to the stupa's library or want to learn from the monks (perhaps to learn certain new combat styles). The PCs might also seek the clerics' aid to remove a curse. The rakshasas attempt to free themselves can be removed or even amplified as you wish (perhaps the order wants the PCs to help exorcise some of the spirits in the tower before assisting them). The exact religion of the Yellow Dawn has intentionally been left vague to better suit your campaign world.

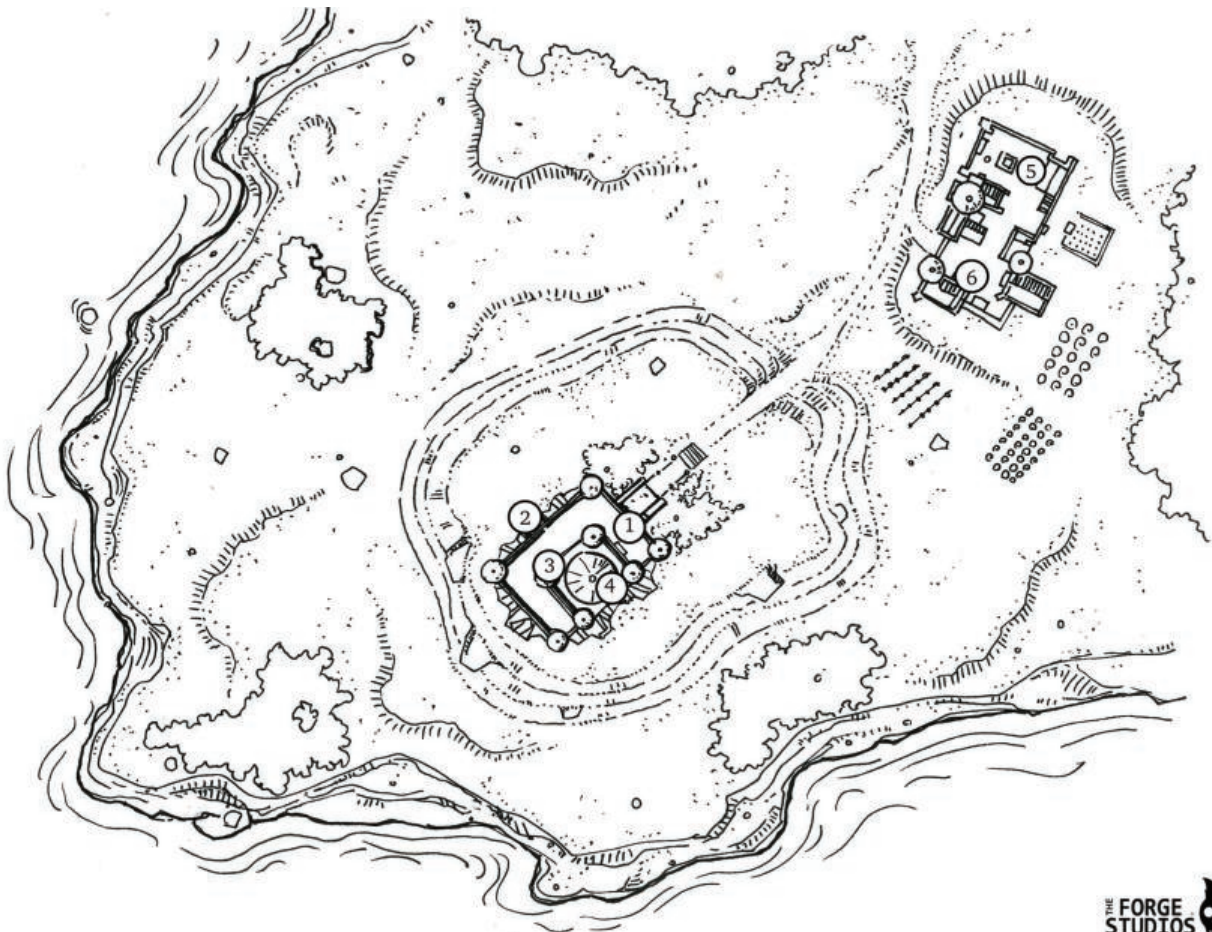


## NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

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Most of the Khla'Akear comprises locations of no interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are exceptional:

1. **Sal Dei:** Located on the ground floor, Sal Dei is the name given to a large and elaborate ceremonial room. Ornate carvings of religious scenes and figures cover the walls while smoke from burning incense and candles darkens the ceiling. A large statue of the Yellow Dawn's deity squats on an altar at the far end of the room. Here, Arkar Bakshi and the other clerics tend to the wounded, sick and cursed. Arkar Bakshi is normally here aided by his most promising student, Tola Tat.
2. **Library:** A winding stair leads from Sal Dei up to Khla'Akear's second floor and the order's library. Thousands of scrolls lie stacked in cramped bookcases. Many discuss history, philosophy and other mundane matters. Others, only readable with the Yellow Dawn's permission, deal with the arcane, particularly the order's research into enchantment and illusion magic as well as rituals regarding exorcisms. The library is overseen by the imperious wizard, Rachma Ma.
3. **Khla Vea:** On Khla'Akear's third floor rests a workshop primarily used by the Yellow Dawn's wizards and occasionally, clerics. Beyond just maintaining the barriers around the rakshasas' prison, the order's wizards delve into arcane research regarding enchantment and illusion magic. Khemera Sor oversees the wizards here.
4. **Jorani's Dome:** The rakshasas are imprisoned within Khla'Akear's hollow, golden dome. The hateful spirits attempt to lure the weak-minded to set them free.
5. **Training Grounds:** The Yellow Dawn train extensively in a small compound located next to the stupa overseen by the order's highest-ranking monk, Malis Soun. Even the clerics and wizards practice both unarmed combat techniques and spells here.
6. **Living Quarters:** Within the compound are extensive living quarters for most of the order's members; remaining rooms are set aside for visitors or the orphans the order occasionally takes in. A number of exotic weapons lie in storage rooms nearby. One of the order's upcoming members, Sohka oversees cleaning duties and general maintenance.





## LIFE IN KHLA'AKEAR

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Daily life at Khla'Akear is one of prayer, meditation and training the body and mind to fight and resist the temptations of evil spirits.

### TRADE & INDUSTRY

After the rakshasas' defeat, the order sought to heal the damage the monsters caused. They opened the stupa to the sick and wounded. In addition, they used the rakshasas' power to aid in breaking powerful curses, quickly making Khla'Akear a popular destination for those thus afflicted. Their continuing research into enchantment and illusion magic attracts many wizards who must make donations before perusing the order's library. Additionally, the monks, teach their specialized fighting techniques designed to defeat evil spirits (for a price). Most of the order's revenue goes towards the costly incense and other exotic materials needed to maintain the barriers imprisoning the rakshasas.

### LAW & ORDER

The Yellow Dawn exists largely autonomous from any outside governing entity. Instead, the order divides itself into three divisions along the lines of clerics, monks and wizards. Each division is under the jurisdiction of its most powerful or respect member; from those three, one is charged with overall leadership of Khla'Akear. Currently, this is Arkar Bakshi who has held the position for over 40 years.

Most visitors to Khla'Akear deal with the clerics who are charged with providing healing services, exorcisms and the removal of curses. The monks provide security for the stupa against both human, and more often, inhuman foes. In addition to their research, Khla'Akear's wizards perform daily maintenance on the many magic barriers in and around Khla'Akear.

### CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

The Yellow Dawn's daily life is one of celebrating numerous minor holidays to appease various spirits. However, two days a year are of particular note. The first is a holy day celebrating the order's defeat of the rakshasas. Guests come to see the order perform re-enactments of the battle, replete with elaborate and colourful costumes and illusions while spicy dishes of meat and vegetables are served. Clerics conduct any healing services for free while their spells last. The second, and most important day at Khla'Akear, occurs during the darkness of winter when rakshasas' souls strain against the barriers imprisoning them. The three orders come together in prayer to perform the ritual to renew the magic trapping the rakshasas.

### LOCATION DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about Khla'Akear.

#### D20 DRESSING/EVENT

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A procession of chanting monks files into the temple, their hands clasped in prayer.   |
| 2  | Two children in robes spar with each other on Khla'Akear's steps, before being shooed off by an old man.                                     |
| 3  | The dying sunlight hits Khla'Akear's dome, staining it red like blood which seems to flow down the stupa.                                    |
| 4  | A crowd of local peasants hobble towards Khla'Akear, some physically supporting the others.  |
| 5  | In the training ground, Khemera Sor lies on this back cursing as Malis Soun stands over him, fist raised.                                    |
| 6  | A group of young men and women singing a hymn tend vegetable plots.  |
| 7  | A bookcase suddenly falls over in the library, eliciting a sharp cry of rage from Rachma Ma.   |
| 8  | Arkar Bakshi leads Tola Tat in prayer, soothing the writhing form of a possessed farmer.   |
| 9  | Sokha Tat almost barrels into a PC while carrying two large bundles over his shoulders.  |
| 10 | An explosion from a miscast spell rocks the top of the tower, sending down bits of loose debris.   |
| 11 | A stone fresco of a hero or villain looks uncannily like one of the PCs.   |
| 12 | A young female cleric tells the PCs she's heard their voices before and can even recall a previous conversation they had.                    |
| 13 | Two wizards spar in the training grounds, summoning magnificent but illusionary beasts to do battle.   |
| 14 | A wizened old cleric looks at a PC, and says, "You looked better in your last life."   |
| 15 | A ghostly spirit darts frantically around a series of pillars as if looking for an escape.   |
| 16 | Children, wearing yellow robes, rush past the PCs while chased by Sokha Tat.   |
| 17 | A frightening demon suddenly appears in front of Khla'Akear and demands to face the stupa's champion or anyone else willing to challenge it. |
| 18 | A small festival of thanks is being held outside Khla'Akear. Celebrants sing and dance. The tantalising smell of exotic food fills the air.  |
| 19 | A cleric stops to examine a PC before hurrying off to consult with another cleric. They return, claiming the PC has been cursed.             |
| 20 | A PC hears a strange woman's whisper, "Beware the Tiger's Den." No woman appears to around, however.   |

## THE LOCALITY

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Khla'Akear rests on a bend in a long, sedate river which sees considerable boat traffic. The river, dotted with numerous small settlements, cuts through a wide, fertile valley where numerous crops grow. Other stupas, similar to Khla'Akear dot the landscape, though most are small monasteries without fame or prestige. The area is home to numerous, nameless gods and spirits, some benign and some evil who must be exorcised or appeased. As such, the ability to thwart these malicious entities keeps not only the residents of Khla'Akear busy, but other stupas in the area as well.

To the east lies a vast swath of jungle where the remains of even older temples lurk in ruins under the thick canopy. Locals believe the vast majority of the evil spirits, such as the rakshasas who once claimed Khla'Akear, live in the jungle, worshipped by small tribes of primitive humans and demi-humans. These creatures occasionally spill forth from the jungle in devastating raids, taking prisoners before slinking back into the sun-fearing darkness. Therefore, few dare traverse the jungle but occasionally, intrepid explorers return with valuable treasures and strange objects appearing to belong to an elder age.

A massive mountain range dominates the western horizon and stretches itself like a great stone snake to the north. Snow

covered peaks thrust upwards to dizzying heights. The snow covered passes remain blocked most of the year but a booming industry has sprung up of seasoned mountain guides who can assist travellers in journeying through the lower passes. Legend claims the most powerful of the gods live in golden cities high atop the mountains where they can observe the valley and surrounding landscape. Indeed, some of the lower peaks support ancient monasteries, the inhabitants believing they better be able to hear the whispers of the gods.

Southwards, the river begins to break up into numerous tributaries as it passes through a stretch of gently rolling hills before the land becomes a morass of swamps. The numerous strange lights seen floating in the swamp have led many to believe it is a home for restless spirits who have become separated from the cycle of reincarnation. They believe these spirits often travel northwards to the populated regions, meddling in human affairs, unable to move on. People living near Khla'Akear often buy incense to ward off these ghosts. Besides ghosts, strange reptiles, some reported to be larger than a building, traverse the deep depths of the swamp.



## NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN KHLA'AKEAR

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### 1: SAL DEI

*Stone carvings of various divinities and spirits adorn the walls. The smoke from incense wraps itself around a large statue of at the far end of the room.*

Those seeking healing come to Sal Dei, or the “Earth Hall,” on Khla’Akear’s ground floor. Here, incense burns amongst elaborate wall carvings of fantastic beasts and gods. Doors open from the main hall into smaller surrounding rooms, mostly living quarters for the order’s highest-ranking members. The Yellow Dawn prays within Sal Dei three times a day. At other times, clerics tend to the sick behind silken screens set up along the walls. They charge a hefty fee for their services to those they believe can pay. Arkar Bakshi (LG old male human cleric 7) is normally here aided by his most promising student, Tola Tat (LG female human **priest**).

#### WHAT’S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A cursed peasant undergoing treatment from the clerics suddenly throws them off. The wispy outline of a spirit hangs over him. |
| 2  | A PC sees a sudden glimpse of a shadowy tiger pouncing across the room.  |
| 3  | The Yellow Dawn members are engaged in prayer, their sing-song voices reverberating amongst the heavy smell of incense.        |
| 4  | Two locals barge in, dragging a wounded man. They claim the man was attacked by a strange beast.                               |
| 5  | The PCs feel a swelling of peace and calm coming from the large statue and gain advantage on their next roll.                  |
| 6  | A cleric stops suddenly and stares at a PC before saying, “Oh, my friend, you have returned to us.”                            |

### 2: LIBRARY

*Tall, narrow bookshelves, containing scrolls, and many low desks fill this large room. A breeze wafts in through an open window.*

After wresting control of Khla’Akear from the rakshasas, the Yellow Dawn decided to use the second floor of the tower as a library, housing both the knowledge they had already accumulated and the new research they were conducting. The order built an impressive collection of arcane and spiritual knowledge. People began arriving from distant lands to study the order’s numerous scrolls.

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### ARKAR BAKSHI

LG old male human cleric 7

*Wrinkles crowd the face of this elderly man who exudes a palpable radiance of calm and peace.*

**Mannerisms:** Arkar rarely speaks first, his quiet demeanour putting people at ease.

**Personality:** As the head of the Yellow Dawn, Arkar oversees Khla’Akear and takes the lead in all prayers and rituals. A consummate teacher, Arkar always has a story or fable relating to any problem.

Advanced in age, Arkar has begun worrying about the future of Khla’Akear and who to name as his successor.

**Background:** Arkar joined the Yellow Dawn as a young orphan when famine and plague took his family. A quiet, precocious student, Arkar diligently studied the order’s religious texts and become their youngest exorcist at the age of 13.

Powerful but soft-spoken, few expected Arkar to become leader at the age of 20. However, when a demonic attack killed many of his fellows he took charge, rebuilt the order and defeated the evil spirits.

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### TOLA TAT

LG female human **priest**

*With her shaved head, this woman could almost pass as a young boy. Her eyes possess a faraway look to them.*

**Mannerisms:** Tola has heard strange voices all her life and often her head is slightly cocked as if listening to something. She is prone to being unaware of her surroundings.

**Personality:** Despite her burgeoning clerical abilities, many in the Yellow Dawn think Tola is empty-headed due to her dream-like expression.

Tola is quiet and likes to go unnoticed. She realizes most of the order does not believe she hears voices, which she believes to be the gods speaking to her.

**Background:** Tola has always heard voices, leading to difficulty with her family. Abandoned with her twin brother, Sokha, she survived on the streets until found by Arkar Bakshi and taken to Khla’Akear. She quickly excelled at divine magic, realizing the voices she heard were the gods speaking to her. She longs to travel to their home in the nearby mountains.

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## KHEMERA SOR

N male half-elf **mage**

*A long, pointed beard adorns this man's too thin face. Hawkish eyes and beaked nose match his look of disdain.*

**Mannerisms:** Highly intelligent, Khemera often looks down at others with a piercing stare. When deep in thought, which is often, he strokes his long beard.

**Personality:** Khemera is one of the order's least liked members, but his strong presence and keen intellect command respect and sometimes a little fear.

Khemera takes his research seriously, displaying an abundant lack of patience or social graces. He hates being forced to go to prayer or practice in the training grounds, believing it all nonsense.

**Background:** Khemera came to Khla'Akear, already an acclaimed magical prodigy, eager to delve into the Yellow Dawn's secrets.

Unfortunately, the strict monastic life of prayer and training did not sit well with his burning curiosity and desire to study magic. More than once, Khemera faced expulsion from the order but was always saved by the intervention of his friend, Arkar Bakshi. Arkar recognized his friend's genius and value to the order; however, it took many patient years to smooth away Khemera's arrogance and disdain for the Yellow Dawn's spiritual teachings.

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## RACHMA MA

LN middle-aged female human wizard 4

*This haughty, imperious-looking woman has a curious stoop.*

**Mannerisms:** Rachma walks with a stoop due to long hours spent poring over scrolls. Her fingers, and often her nose, bear ink stains.

**Personality:** Rachma takes her job as the order's head librarian very serious, giving her a high opinion of herself. She takes a no-nonsense approach to things, ruling the library like a queen. She only defers to Arkar Bakshi or Khemera Sor.

**Background:** Rachma arrived at Khla'Akear as a small child, given to the order by her parents during a famine. Arkar practically raised the young child and Rachma inherited his love of knowledge.

As she showed a penchant for arcane magic, Arkar encouraged Rachma down her current path. Rachma rarely leaves Khla'Akear, hating to leave behind the many scrolls she still hasn't read. (Reading, and understanding, them all is her personal mission).

The library's staff carefully interviews prospective entrants regarding their purpose and the research they are conducting to ensure their knowledge is not be used to further evil ends. Rachma Ma (LN female human wizard 4) oversees the library.

### WHAT'S GOING ON?

**Uninvited Guest:** Recently, someone or something has been causing a disturbance in the library—rearranging scrolls, spilling ink pots and tipping over bookshelves. Attempts to exorcise the area have failed. Rachma is desperate and would be unusually thankful for assistance.

**Research Project:** A sage approaches the PCs. He needs a scroll from Khla'Akear's library but was refused entry. He'll pay the PCs handsomely if they can recover the scroll (by whatever means necessary).

### 3: KHLA VEA

*Dark shadows seem to drip from the ceiling of a workshop stuffed with benches covered with scrolls and strange materials.*

Khla Vea, or the Tiger Den, serves as the workshop for the Yellow Dawn's clerics and wizards. Above them rests the hollow dome where the souls of the rakshasas writhe in torment, unable to be reborn. The wizards, under Khemera Sor's (N male half-elf **mage**) direction, harness the spirits' energy to fuel their research into enchantment and illusion magic, the very same magic the rakshasas once used against the people of the land. The wizards also work on daily maintenance of the barriers (which must be completely renewed once a year) imprisoning the rakshasas.

Numerous arcane and divine writing, tools and instruments litter the work benches. The wizards often spend years researching a specific topic or subject. Protective screens partition off sections of the workshop so the wizards can perform tests without disturbing, or harming, others.

### WHAT'S GOING ON?

**The Possessed Wizard:** Recently, one of the wizards became possessed when a summoning spell cast for research went awry. An alien entity has taken over the wizard and so far, has remained undetected. It's very curious about the rakshasas and can hear their calls for freedom. The entity hasn't mastered normal human interactions so tries to stay quiet and distant.

**Strange Magic:** Lately, some of the illusion magic cast by the wizards seems erratic and almost too lifelike. Occasionally, spell effects reappear hours after the spell was cast and are uncannily solid to the touch. They then suddenly vanish again. Khemera doesn't understand this odd occurrence and keeps the matter to himself and the wizards.



#### 4: JORANI'S DOME

*A layer of beaten gold encases an exquisitely carved dome which throws off a pure, golden light.*

Jorani's Dome, named after the Yellow Dawn's leader who gave her life to defeat the rakshasas, serves as the foul monsters' prison. Their souls, ripped from the cycle of reincarnation, swirl within the hollow dome, crying out in pain and rage. Several magical barriers keep them imprisoned through a specific ritual performed once a year. The wizards perform daily maintenance on the barriers but occasionally vile energy leaks out.

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A PC hears the roaring of a tiger as a dark shape slides across the dome.                            |
| 2  | A PC hears an enticing whisper, beseeching it to begin smashing the dome.                            |
| 3  | A wizard stands under the dome, casting a long and complex spell before repeating the process again. |
| 4  | The vision of a woman in a flowing yellow robe appears before a PC.                                  |
| 5  | A fleck of gold falls from the dome and dark shadow oozes along its surface.                         |
| 6  | The dome suddenly rumbles as if shaking in agony.  |

**Renew the Seal:** The barriers on the dome seem to be inexplicably weakening. The Yellow Dawn has decided to call on outsiders to help them investigate and maybe get a new perspective. The gods have decreed, it must be the PCs.

#### 5: TRAINING GROUNDS

*The earth here is packed hard by thousands of feet. You hear the din of nearby sounds of combat.*

The tight confines of Khla'Akear may have suited the rakshasas but not the Yellow Dawn whose membership tends to fluctuate. Shortly after claiming the stupa, the order built this small compound for housing and training.

One of the compound's prominent features is a large training ground. Not only do monks practice their forms, but the clerics and wizards also engage in martial training as well as practicing their magic. Malis Soun (LN female human monk 6) oversees the training here.

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

**The Challenge:** Once a year, Malis takes on any challenger who dares face her in a nonlethal bout. If the challenger wins, the order will perform any one service free of charge.

#### 6: LIVING QUARTERS

*Simple sliding doors hid austere, almost empty rooms.*

A majority of the Yellow Dawn members live in the compound next to Khla'Akear in simple, austere rooms. There are a few more elaborate rooms designed for guests unaccustomed to the order's frugality. A large shared-sex bath is always open. The newest members of the Yellow Dawn often spend their first few years on cleaning duty, polishing the area to a crisp shine.

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#### MALIS SOUN

LN female human monk 6

*A fierce flame red ponytail adorns the head of this striking woman.*

**Mannerisms:** Raised amongst a dwarven clan, Malis still speaks with a thick dwarven accent punctuated by inventive curses and expressions.

**Personality:** A true warrior, Malis trains the members of the Yellow Dawn hard, knowing first hand each battle could be their last. She possesses a fierce loyalty to the Yellow Dawn and takes issue with anyone disparaging them.

**Background:** Born in a distant land, Malis, left her clan as an adventurer, wanting to see the wider world. An ill-fated expedition into the nearby jungles left her at death's door and in the care of the Yellow Dawn members. Feeling she owned the order for her life, she joined the Yellow Dawn.

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#### SOKHA TAT

LG male human monk 3

*This clean shaven, well-muscled youth brims with energy.*

**Mannerisms:** Sokha always seems to be in a hurry to go somewhere or do something. Inaction bothers him which makes his daily meditations difficult.

**Personality:** Sokha knows he is only young once and his body is close to its physical peak. He believes the time for reflection and mediation will be for later in life. For now, he wants to enjoy the vigorous adventures of his youth. This makes him seem brash and impulsive.

**Background:** The twin brother of Tola Tat, he often got into fights when the two lived on the streets before coming to Khla'Akear. Bigger than most children, Sokha relied on his natural strength to get him through. He's learning now, the hard way, that strength alone won't always win the day. He yearns to travel with Tola to her mysterious destination in the mountains.

# OLEANDER'S SANCTUARY

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**Words** Thilo Graf **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

*Deep within a dense forest lies a well-hidden, secret path leading into the wood's wildest and deepest recesses. The only sign of civilization for miles on end upon the winding path is a distant thin finger of smoke wafting up through the trees. All manner of animals lurk in the surrounds seemingly drawn to the little hut and surrounding buildings hidden deep in the forest. Here dwells the so-called witch Oleander, a mysterious being possessing incredible powers she uses to heal and improve animals seeking her care.*

## OLEANDER'S SANCTUARY AT A GLANCE

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**Ruler** Oleander

**Population** 5 (1 mysterious entity, 1 intelligent bear, 1 intelligent hamster, 1 intelligent owl, 1 intelligent wolf)

**Alignments** LG, NG, N, CN

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Gnomish, Halfling, Sylvan

**Resources & Industry** Animal healing and transmutation

Protected to the south by massive cliffs, hidden deep within the forest and guarded by a plethora of grizzled old wolves, bears and worse, few visit the sanctuary looking for trouble. Oleander's Sanctuary is an obscure legend at best, and that is just how Oleander likes it. People in the closest town, regard the prospect of visiting the place with abject horror. Those that know of the sanctuary remember all too well Oleander's displays of power, whispering the witch in the woods has tapped into ancient and primordial ley lines. The sanctuary indeed seems to allow for unique transmutations, but it remains to be seen whether this is due to its mistress, a ley line or a stranger reason yet undiscovered.

### MARKETPLACE

The following services are for sale:

- **Spellcasting:** Arcane and divine spellcasting of up to 15th level.

### LORE

A PC may know something about Oleander's Sanctuary, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 20 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 20:** Well-concealed in the wilderness, few know about this place, where pawed and taloned animal companions receive care and recover from all but the direst of curses. Oleander does not take gold, only favours in return for her service.

**DC 25:** The site is whispered to be situated atop an ancient ley line, struck by a stone from the skies in dark ages ill-remembered. The magic of the place can radically change creatures treated there. Some druids consider the transmutations to be abominable violations of the natural order.

**DC 30:** Oleander talks to the animals while treating them and has been known to punish cruel masters. More than one rich owner has left the sanctuary with a cursed cloven foot, a regrowing feather on the head or an annoying habit of bleating once in every seventh sentence.

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Oleander's Sanctuary, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

| D6 | RUMOUR  |
|----|---|
| 1  | Old Garm was supposedly once a deadly companion of a particularly vicious raider.   |
| 2* | Oleander is a sentient swarm of squirrels, cloaked in illusions!  |
| 3  | Oleander can be just as poisonous as her namesake. If you have exotic poisons to peddle, this is a good place to sell them.                       |
| 4  | Master Petz has an irrational hatred of lumberjacks and wyverns and has clashed with them more than once.   |
| 5  | Syrouac has a spy network of mice, songbirds, spiders and scorpions. They are always watching.  |
| 6* | Never touch the tea or the food! That place has been touched by horrors from the void between the stars and seeks to spread a mutating contagion! |

\*False rumour

### USING OLEANDER'S SANCTUARY

Oleander's details are deliberately kept vague to suit your campaign's needs and theme. Oleander could be one entity or a male and a female individual, posing as the same being. She could be fey, a creature from the stars, an eccentric spellcaster or something else entirely.

Her transmutations, while benevolent and helpful for the subject, could be a source of conflict between traditionalist druids and Oleander. Think of what would happen if you'd cross animal rights questions with the central transhumanist conundrums—Oleander has only the best interest of the patients in mind, but does she have the right to "violate" the natural order? Tonally, this can be played for laughs, but at the same time, most aspects of this place and its inhabitants can have a sinister edge as well. The inhabitants deliberately evoke the tropes of childhood fairy tales and their visuals, but tints them with an uncanny valley edge that allows a GM to turn the proceedings strange, alien...horrific, even!

If your campaign has a down to earth tone, consider making this location a semi-real psychedelic hallucination generated by a non-carnivorous version yellow musk creeper. Alternatively, Oleander's could be a bridge between the fey realm and the Material Plane.

## NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the residents are animals and magical beasts, but they share some general characteristics:

**Appearance:** Animals are well-groomed, unless contrary to the animal's nature, and they live in peace with one another

**Dress:** Oleander always has calloused hands, stained a vibrant green, but keeps her green-brown robe in immaculate condition.

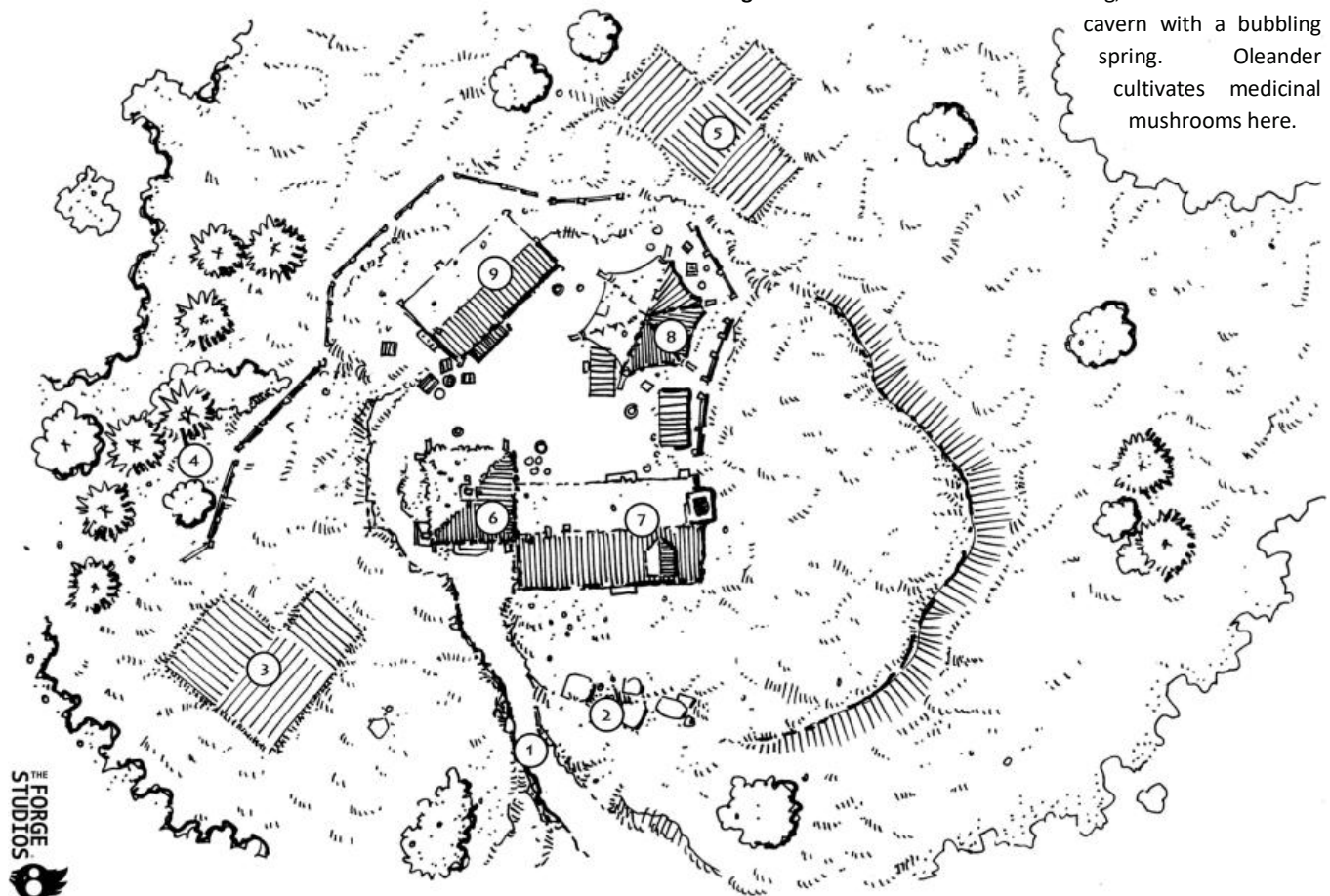
The permanent residents of the sanctuary comprise:

- **Oleander** (anywhere, N androgynous mysterious entity) Oleander is always busy, tending to wounds, brewing strange draughts or drying herbs.
- **Master Petz** (location 3 or 9, CN very old intelligent bear barbarian 5) Master Petz is very strong, but very sleepy.
- **Old Garm** (location 6, NG venerable intelligent wolf sorcerer 8) The old wolf acts as Oleander's apprentice and assistant.
- **Syrouac Fortescree** (location 4, CN intelligent owl rogue 8) An owl clad in ill-fitting finery half of the time, Syrouac acts as the sanctuary's greeter and spymaster.
- **Aasic "Woolly" Movasi, the 13th** (location 4, LG intelligent hamster paladin 1) Aasic is an eccentric silver-grey hamster who claims to be a champion from outer space.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Oleander's Sanctuary and its surrounds comprise locations of little interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are notable:

1. **Main Approach:** This well-concealed trail leads to the sanctuary. Steep inclines flank the trail.
2. **Targeting Rocks:** Here animals suffering injuries to their fine motor skills learn once again to precisely strike their foes.
3. **Daylight Garden:** This field contains a variety of potent, exotic herbs that should not grow in these climates and soil.
4. **Aviary:** Here grow unruly trees and bushes, weaving a dense web of branches; the perfect spot to train aerial agility.
5. **Northern Field:** Here grows food for the sanctuary's guests and the ingredients for Oleander's spiced bread.
6. **The Witch's Tower:** The impressive annex of the sanctuary's main building contains Oleander's private quarters as well as a perpetually locked cellar door and acts as Old Garm's library.
7. **Main Building:** Here Oleander meets guests for herbal tea.
8. **Treatment Tent:** This massive gazebo, allows for the treatment of animals that are more confident outside.
9. **"The Stables":** This massive building is the home and living quarters for larger animals.
10. **Night Garden:** Below the main building, lies a subterranean cavern with a bubbling spring. Oleander cultivates medicinal mushrooms here.





## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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### 1: MAIN APPROACH

Approximately four miles south of the nearest town, a nigh imperceptible trail meanders through the dense foliage of a sombre forest, leading slowly uphill to a small glade. A thin column of smoke beckons travellers closer, as the path winds its way in a semi-circle through the dense undergrowth, finally breaching the glade's perimeter from the south. Travelers straying from the path soon regret their decision, as a surprising amount of poison ivy, thorny bushes and irritated animals, including non-native serpents and arachnids, infest the area.

The approach to the main building is signalled well in advance by the melodious, almost symphonic chirping of a vast plethora of songbirds, making the trip surprisingly calming, though paranoid trackers can spot trails of various deadly animals. The steep inclines (DC 20 Strength [Athletics] check) flanking the final stretch can be scaled though those attempting the like invariably encounter hedgehogs, squirrels and similar woodland critters, eyeing them suspiciously.

Syrouac (CN intelligent owl rogue 8), if present to greet guests, wears a pince-nez on his beak and often perches here, berating newcomers for their lack of manners while fidgeting with his comically oversized noble's attire. He inspects potential patients in the entourage, all the while peppering visitors with questions, usually while Oleander watches from the distance and relative safety of the balcony atop the main building, her heterochromatic eyes stark pools of colour in the distance. Guests that look like trouble usually are cowed into cooperation by the approach of grizzled Master Petz (CN very old intelligent bear barbarian 5). Oleander seems to be awake at all hours and on the rare occasions when she is not present, she usually arrives within the hour. In such cases, Syrouac are all too happy to show visitors around.

### 2: TARGETING ROCKS

The rigors of adventuring and fighting horrid monstrosities require, nay, demand, those stalwart creatures following their masters in this foolhardy profession are skilled combatants. The rocks here are used for the swooping attack training of raptors, to help climbing creatures with broken or crippled limbs regain their mobility or just for target-practice. Web-covered dummies with acid burns, copious stinger marks, ripped off wooden limbs and the like are testament to Oleander's conviction that only creatures truly prepared should be pitted against the supernatural creatures adventurers frequently face. More comical for the onlooker are the cases, where Oleander has granted an animal a gag reflex to allow them to not swallow the undead's putrid flesh or the flesh-eating moulds and slimes haunting the corridors of ancient tombs.

### 3: DAYLIGHT GARDEN

This herb garden is the envy of even the most accomplished horticulturalist or druid. Although wild and untamed, the exotic herbs and spices growing here, in sheer defiance of nutrition requirements or climate, render this place a truly wondrous sight. Chilies grow next to exotic gentian and bay leaf, with spring time and summer providing a tantalizing blend of mouth-watering scents that never become overpowering. The herbs even seem to grow in a way that makes the colours of their leaves and flowers combine in the most aesthetically pleasing of ways. More than one noble scion's daughter dreams of being married in this lush little miniature paradise of delicious ingredients. Visitors are asked to stick to the furrow-like paths by Syrouac, though, for quite a few of the more exotic plants that grow here can be quite toxic.

### 4: AVIARY

A jumbled collection of trees and bushes, this part of the sanctuary is home to Oleander's avian patients and doubles as a kind of obstacle course for convalescent flying creatures. The staggering mass of entwined branches almost generates a feeling the different plants have been fused into a strange miniature version of the higher regions of the far south's most dense jungles. The constant bickering chirping of the birds makes this by far the loudest and most chaotic place in the sanctuary; a welcome respite for those restless souls unnerved by the sanctuary's peculiar calm and peace. Even visitors with the magical means to navigate the otherwise impassable underbrush are forbidden from doing so, though, as many rodents and other small creatures dwell therein.

This proximity of predator and prey, once noticed, tends to unnerve visitors. Here is also the home of one of the more eccentric beings in the sanctuary, Aasic "Wooly" Movasi the 13th (LG intelligent hamster paladin 1), a silver-furred, talking hamster. Those listening to his story, preferably while feeding him sunflower or pumpkin seeds, are treated to an impossible

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#### VISITING OLEANDER'S

An animal companion or familiar suffering a horrible curse or wound or any form of poison and disease could require Oleander's ministrations. Similarly, a master of magic who wants a different familiar, but to retain the personality of his ally may want his partner polymorphed into a new, more potent form. Alternatively, the unique benefits and modifications Oleander offers may be worth the trip. Of course, the enigmatic being has made more than her share of enemies—many of which would pay good coin to see this site purged from the face of the earth.

yarn, as he claims to be sent from an otherworldly realm to guide a prophesied champion on a quest of utmost importance. The hamster is an odd fellow, though he does have a peculiar talent and seems to be able to cure certain types of insanity with a touch of his little, knobby fingers.

## 5: NORTHERN FIELD

An old, withered oversized ploughshare rests next to an immaculately kept field of grains, which provide much of the food for the animals resting at the sanctuary. Oleander does not answer any inquiries regarding how she feeds the predators among their charges and usually only flashes a disheartening grin. The grain seems to be free of mould and is not touched by any of the animals, unless prepared by Oleander.

## 6: THE WITCH'S TOWER

Behind sturdy double doors of oaken wood, Oleander's and Garm's private quarters remain closed and private. In rare cases, a select few are granted admittance to the surprisingly cosy library beyond the gates. Here, Garm naps in front of a small stove or reads tome upon tome from the vast collection of treatises, herbariums and fables collected here. A small table with freshly baked spiced bread as well as herbal paste are available for visitors who receive the honour of talking to Oleander in this intimate space.

### EVENTS

While the PCs are at Oleander's Sanctuary, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A disgruntled noble in hunter's attire, hobbling with a cloven hoof, arrives with a retinue of men and demands satisfaction.   |
| 2  | Aasic is convinced a PC is the champion of legend he has been waiting for, the destined one to thwart the cataclysm! He challenges the PC to a quest to prove his worth. |
| 3  | Master Petz has been prone to narcolepsy and fell asleep in front of the stables. He may well hibernate there, unless he can be moved.                                   |
| 4  | A conservative druid arrives with his entourage, preaching that Oleander's transmutations are an affront to the natural order.   |
| 5  | A creature from the subterranean realms has infiltrated the Night Garden, preventing access.   |
| 6  | The strange calm that results in all animals getting along suddenly abates. The results are not pretty.  |

A steep stair leads to Oleander's private chambers and a balcony. Oleander has been known to take lovers to her private chambers—both male and female—for the androgynous entity does not seem to possess a fixed gender, changing it at whim.

Below the charmingly rickety stair, a massive door of black metal conceals steps of natural rock leading to the cellar. No one has ever been there, except for Oleander. The door sports a superb lock (DC 30 Dexterity check opens) and is reinforced with deadly runes that seem to alternate their precise effects on a daily, as well as seasonal, basis. More than one sage theorizes this cellar contains the source of Oleander's power...or a clue to the mysterious entity's identity. So far, no one who has attempted to breach the cellar has returned to tell the tale.

## 7: MAIN BUILDING

The main building is a picturesque dream of a witch's house in the most benevolent sense, and always unlocked. Over a large fireplace, three cauldrons of dented iron bubble at any given time, the pastes and soups filling the room with a muted scent to bring tears of envy to the eyes of even the most accomplished cook. Shelves are stacked with phials of glass, earthenware and iron, immaculately labelled in graceful handwriting. All kinds of dried herbs hang in bundles from the rafters and a cosy, very low table dominates the centre of the room, sitting amidst comfortable cushions, providing an easy way for the smaller animals and humanoids to talk eye to eye.

Once visitors have been invited here after passing Syrouac's inspection, they inevitably find delicious herbal tea ready for them, as Oleander personally interviews all visitors...and, much to the shock of many visitors, also the animals in question in their respective language. Only when the wishes of the animal in question mirror those of the master does Oleander contemplate whatever treatment is requested.

It is also here visitors who stay the night are expected to sleep, though warm blankets and furs of deceased animals who wished to remain of service, are provided—always accompanied with a brief story of the animal's life. Some claim disrespect or evil intent causes the rugs to come to life, strangling offenders in their sleep. Of course, Oleander only smiles enigmatically when questioned about this rather unpleasant rumour.



## 8: TREATMENT TENT

A fortified gazebo of fir wood stands around an out-of-place looking, massive, rectangular box of metal, held shut by a mithral chain (DC 30 Dexterity opens). Oleander always wears the key to this chain in her golden hair and only unlocks the box in the direst of cases, whereupon a soothing, green light cascades forth from within, enhancing the healing process. Most of the time, furs and blankets cover the metal box and provide a comfortable place to rest in the open air.

When the weather is bad, the gazebo can be transformed into a surprisingly weather-proof tent, as some geothermic heat seems to emerge from below the box. Songbirds, squirrels and other animals act as surprisingly capable assistants in medical procedures and more than one visitor has rubbed his eyes in shock as a swarm of songbirds by day, or even bats at night, bringing herbs, water or tools to help their enigmatic host.

## 9: "THE STABLES"

Nicknamed the stables by visitors due to horses, mules and similar animals resting in this hall-like building, it does not really look like a traditional stable—there are no boxes here and the hay covering the wooden floors is always fresh.

In the back, at least during the winter, a deep and sonorous snoring that softly send vibrations through the whole building, comes from Master Petz (CN very old intelligent bear barbarian 5). This snoring, while at first grating, seems to have a calming effect on even the most insomnia-stricken beings.

Master Petz does not react kindly to being woken, and his sleep-addled brain seems to be the one anomaly and exception to the sanctuary's calming effects. The bear has been known to lash out and reflexively fly into a dread frenzy when woken from

his hibernation-like bouts of narcolepsy. Master Petz ends up being inconsolable upon regaining his senses, but visitors should still beware his mithral-laced claws. To date, his rages have destroyed the stables no less than three times; Aasic and Syrouac have a standing bet on whether his rages or his snoring will make the stables collapse the next time.

## 10: NIGHT GARDEN

No less impressive than the Daylight Garden, significantly fewer visitors get to visit the Night Garden. Sometimes, though, Oleander moves away the central table in the main building and unveils the well-hidden trapdoor leading to this natural cavern.

Here, a truly gorgeous biome of phosphorescent fungi and moulds lights the darkness with unearthly colours. A crystal-clear spring bubbles up from under shrouding caps of majestic mushrooms, as strange creatures from the realms below skitter about in the dark.

Some visitors claim Oleander has contacts with the loathsome races dwelling below. Oleander's only reply is, "All patients are welcome, regardless of the race of their master." This could explain the surprising number of exotic spiders, scorpions and snakes encountered in the vicinity.

Oleander never lets unprotected guests linger in the cave for long, though, for there are poisonous fungi here and some of the spores perpetually shrouding the area in all colours of the rainbow are mildly hallucinogenic. All permanent inhabitants except Aasic are protective of the Night Garden and the hamster has, curiously, so far been denied access to Night Garden, which irks him no end.





## OLEANDER'S TRANSMUTATIONS

Oleander's sanctuary is a means for the GM to reward players that care about their animal companions and familiars. The player with a crow familiar who wants a more capable familiar or companion as he becomes more powerful, but also wants to retain his familiar's character, thus gets a chance to retain his familiar instead of just dismissing him. Oleander's Sanctuary is intended as a way for a GM to say "yes" to the players who want to "upgraded" companion instead of just getting a new one.

Oleander offers many transmutations—boons—for willing animal subjects; none can be purchased. Oleander does not care for gold and thus only helps those she deems worthy...and only on a quid-pro-quo basis. PCs seeking Oleander's services must be ready to embark on a quest as a means of paying their bill. The more significant the boon, the more dangerous the quest.

Oleander provides a variety of lesser, moderate and major boons. Lesser boons provide mainly cosmetic benefits. Moderate and major boons provide tangible mechanical benefits and as such, modify the creature's CR. To avoid abuse when granting boons to a PC's companions, one can use a simple formula: the boons have a point value and a creature's point value should not exceed 1/5th of their total HD, rounded down.

### LESSER BOONS (0 POINTS; CR +0)

- Transform a companion into another companion, retaining the original companion's personality and alignment.
- Healing a curse, disease or slow-working, potent poison.
- Exchange the physical damage type (bludgeoning, slashing, piercing) inflicted by one of the companion or familiar's attacks with another physical damage type.

### MODERATE BOONS (1 POINT, CR +1/2)

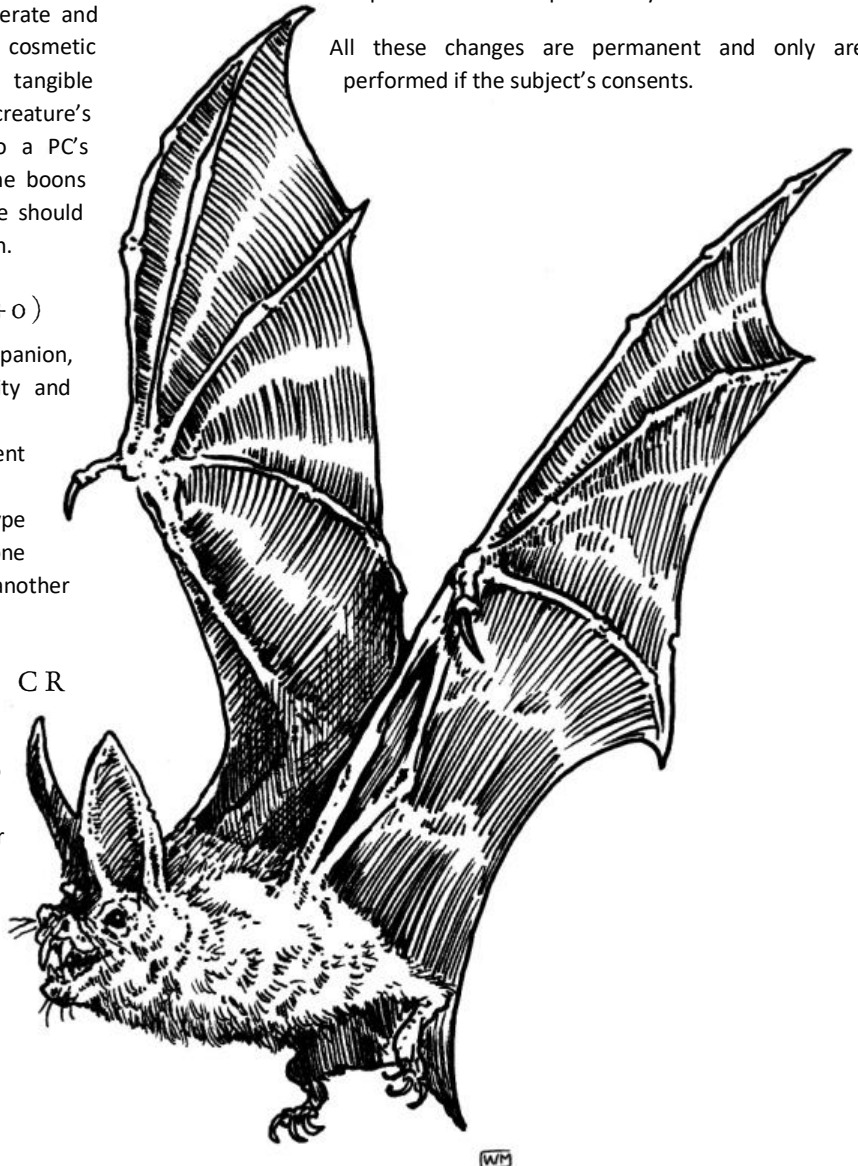
- Grant a companion or familiar the ability to breathe water as well as air.
- Exchange the values of a companion's or familiar's swimming and land speed.
- Replace an existing climb speed with swimming speed or vice versa.
- Coat a companion's or familiar's claws natural attacks with silver.

- Grant a companion or familiar low-light vision.
- Grant a companion or familiar darkvision 60 ft. or extend an existing darkvision by +60 ft.
- Grant a companion or familiar proficiency with one tool.

### MAJOR BOONS (2 POINTS; CR +1)

- Grant a companion or familiar blindsight 30 ft.
- Grant a companion or familiar a 30 ft. swimming or climbing speed or increasing an existing swimming or climbing speed by +30 ft.
- Grant a companion or familiar a 60 ft. flying speed, but also reduce the base land speed by 10 ft.
- Coat a companion's natural attacks with mithral.
- Grant a companion or familiar proficiency with one skill

All these changes are permanent and only are performed if the subject's consents.





### AASIC "WOOLY" MOVASI, THE 13TH

Aasic is a paragon of his kind, a veritable demigod of his race, with ripped muscles, sparkling eyes that hint at a keen mind and...shining fur. He is, after all, a hamster.

**Distinguishing Features:** Aasic is perhaps one of the cutest hamsters ever seen, his grey fur shining like silver in the sun. Even the fact he can speak in a surprisingly sonorous, pleasing voice does not reduce his inherent Charisma. A particularly shining, comet-shaped strand of longer fur on his back is a sign of his royal bloodline, he claims.

**Personality:** Aasic adheres to a stringent moral code. He has no tolerance for evil, selfish behaviour and his impeccable sense of justice is tempered only by a fervent belief in his important destiny. Aasic believes he was sent from outer space to guide a champion to thwart a cataclysmic evil. He does not take well to people laughing at his convictions. His one character flaw is his extreme curiosity.

**Mannerisms:** Aasic behaves like a cute little hamster and a knight in a shining armour, at the same time. He'd gladly give his last sunflower seed to the needy. He also has a knack for curing some forms of madness via touch. Aasic does not know why he has this gift, but believes he has it for a reason.

### MASTER PETZ

Master Petz is a towering, savage-looking dire bear whose black pelt is now splotched with grey. The massive bear proudly wears a veritable crisscross of scars, bespeaking his untold battles.

**Distinguishing Features:** Oleander has treated Master Petz several times—his claws are laced with mithral and he breathes as easily underwater as on land—his throat's fur is hiding gills.

**Personality:** Master Petz is like a grumpy grandpa, if grandpa had the body of a massive, lethal, living engine of destruction prone to uncontrolled rages when woken. Master Petz can speak, but mostly communicates via threatening growls.

**Mannerisms:** Either due to a persistent infection, injuries or old age, Master Petz suffers bouts of narcolepsy and insomnia.

### OLD GARM

Old Garm is a grizzled, ancient, one-eyed, grey wolf. He walks with a slightly limp. His eyes twinkle with deep intellect.

**Distinguishing Features:** Old Garm lost one of his ears in battle and his right hind leg was once badly mauled. Despite Oleander's prodigy-level-expertise, the leg has healed badly and bears horrid scars. He does not talk about the injury.

**Personality:** Old Garm loves telling stories (particularly fables and myths with strong morals and ethics). He is the

perfect narrator and a calm, deliberate being, shying away from needless exertion. Garm only gets riled up when faced with lupine monsters.

**Mannerisms:** Garm enjoys smoking a pipe and has had one custom-made to fit his muzzle. He claims the herbs help with the pain of his leg. He also tends to question visiting scholar regarding the transference of souls and astral projection, which can be unsettling, considering his impressive appearance.

### OLEANDER

Oleander has long, gold-blond, braided hair with twigs of oleander and hemlock woven into its locks. She always has one green and one purple eye, both of which have a piercing and almost intoxicating quality on those meeting Oleander's gaze.

**Distinguishing Features:** Beyond her heterochromatic eyes, Oleander always wears a mithral key braided into her hair. Oleander changes her gender and body shape on a daily whim.

**Personality:** Oleander is a compassionate host for those that respect their companions, but a predatory capacity for violence always seems to simmer just beneath the surface. She does not suffer fools or those that breaching confidence lightly and has pronounced several violent curses upon transgressors. With animals, she is carefree and almost saccharine in demeanour.

**Mannerisms:** Oleander, when troubled, has been known to unconsciously use a completely wrong pitch, which can result in a thin female form speaking with the booming baritone of a chain-smoking sailor or vice-versa. Oleander also seems to derive some mischievous pleasure from addressing males as female and vice-versa.

### SYROUAC FORTESCREE

Syrouac in the wild looks like an, unremarkable owl. When acting as Oleander's speaker, he wears an oversized noble's outfit and a pince-nez on his beak.

**Distinguishing Features:** Syrouac's eccentric dressing habits set him apart, but when not acting in his official function, he cultivates a look of deliberate inconspicuousness.

**Personality:** Syrouac is ambitious in the extreme. He knows he lacks Garm's magical talent or Oleander's otherworldly might, but he has managed to establish a surprisingly efficient ring of avian spies and allies. And he is not planning on living out the rest of his days in this backwater hovel.

**Mannerisms:** Syrouac is well-read and speaks over ten languages. However, much to his chagrin, an owl's screech escapes his beak, like clockwork, after every seventh sentence.

# RAVENEYE SANITORIUM

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**Words** David N. Ross **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

*A castle near a backwoods crossroad may be the only hope for the cursed and possessed, but not everything is as it seems where magic and madness intertwine. The doors open for anyone suffering a magical malady or struggle with their own minds, but those deemed too far gone are locked up for their own safety and the safety of those around them. Rumours swirl about the true intentions of those running Raveneye Sanatorium. Some patients are effectively prisoners—are they too dangerous to be let free, or harmless victims of fear run amok? Can Lady Alumora and her staff contain the dangerous powers and dark plans of the monsters lurking among their patients?*

## RAVENEYE SANATORIUM AT A GLANCE

**Ruler** Lady Alumora Raveneye

**Population** 83 (49 humans, 2 dwarves, 3 elves, 8 gnomes, 6 half-elves, 5 half-orcs, 11 halflings) plus visitors

**Alignments** NG, LN, N (staff), NG, N, CN (patients)

**Languages** Common

**Resources & Industry** healer's items, curse-breaking, long-term care, containing those who endanger themselves and others

Travellers can find the lonely Raveneye Sanatorium looming over the intersection of two backwater roads. Once a bulwark against the dangers of the wild, the sanatorium now presents the only opportunity for magical healing in an often-overlooked region. Here, the cold but efficient Lady Alumora and her staff contend with magical maladies and imprison those who are beyond help until new treatments are developed. Many come from afar to acquire Lady Alumora's rare alchemical remedies.

Adventurers might visit Raveneye to identify or cure their own maladies, unlock hidden magical powers or to seek help for another. The party might also be hired to escort here or even free a hapless lycanthrope, vampire-to-be, possessed innocent or natural spellcaster unable to control her powers.

### LORE

A PC may know something about Raveneye Sanatorium, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 10:** Patients are sent to Raveneye Sanatorium when they suffer from curses, madness, uncontrolled magic or other supernatural afflictions that make them a danger to themselves or others.

**DC 15:** Raveneye Sanatorium has grown steadily since it was founded thirty years ago. There are always more patients taken in than are cured.

**DC 20:** The sanatorium makes use of dangerous and questionably-legal substances in subduing and treating patients.

### NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the patients and workers are nothing more than ordinary individuals.

- **Appearance:** Almost everyone in Raveneye looks tired and at least a little unkempt. Few sleep well and fewer care about the impression they make on others. Patients dangerous or restless enough to get shackled have marks on their wrists and ankles.
- **Dress:** Patients wear simple linen clothes without fasteners—easy to slip on or off, easy to repair and hard to injure anyone with. Staff wear grey, white or pale blue robes with aprons.

- **Nomenclature:** *male* Aberrick, Egger, Sarman, Vansarr; *female* Constance, Fidelia, Linseed, Pru; *family* Dunn, Livewood, Pallman, Silversmith.

Some of the inhabitants, however, are notable:

**Chaplain Sister Marvielle Silverblossom** (location 4; NG female elf **priest**) Sister Marvielle knows the patients better than anyone and hears much, although she prefers not to gossip.

**Chief Attendant Zox Ironwood** (location 8; CG female gnome **priest** [god of knowledge]) Zox relies on guidance from Lady Alumora and Erzot Chargrave to know what treatments are most likely to work. He oversees the other attendants.

**Doctor Erzot Chargrave** (location 2; N male dwarf **commoner**) Doctor Chargrave diagnoses new patients and locks up anyone meeting a wide variety of ambiguous standards for at least temporary observation.

**Head Orderly Janik Quinn** (location 3; LE female human **veteran**) Janik oversees the other orderlies who ensure patients don't wander and whips those who cause trouble.

**Lady Alumora Raveneye** (location 8; LN female human **mage**) Lady Alumora is the founder and chief physician of Raveneye Sanatorium.

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Raveneye, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

| D6 | RUMOUR   |
|----|--|
| 1  | Recently, more patients and visitors than usual have been critically injured or killed in the upper ward.  |
| 2  | The alchemists at the sanatorium use dangerous poisons and herbs to sedate and treat the more extreme cases.   |
| 3* | The healers dissect any dead body found or killed within a mile of the sanatorium. (In truth, patients sometimes will their bodies to the healers for the furthering of the healing arts.) |
| 4  | Lady Alumora is the best physician but you must convince Doctor Chargrave that waiting for him to observe your symptoms over time would take too long before seeing her.                   |
| 5  | The apprentices who run the apothecary accept custom orders, but only from those who do them favours.  |
| 6* | Lady Alumora has hired bandits to capture travellers who will not be missed to use as extra test subjects for her frightful experiments.   |

\*False rumour

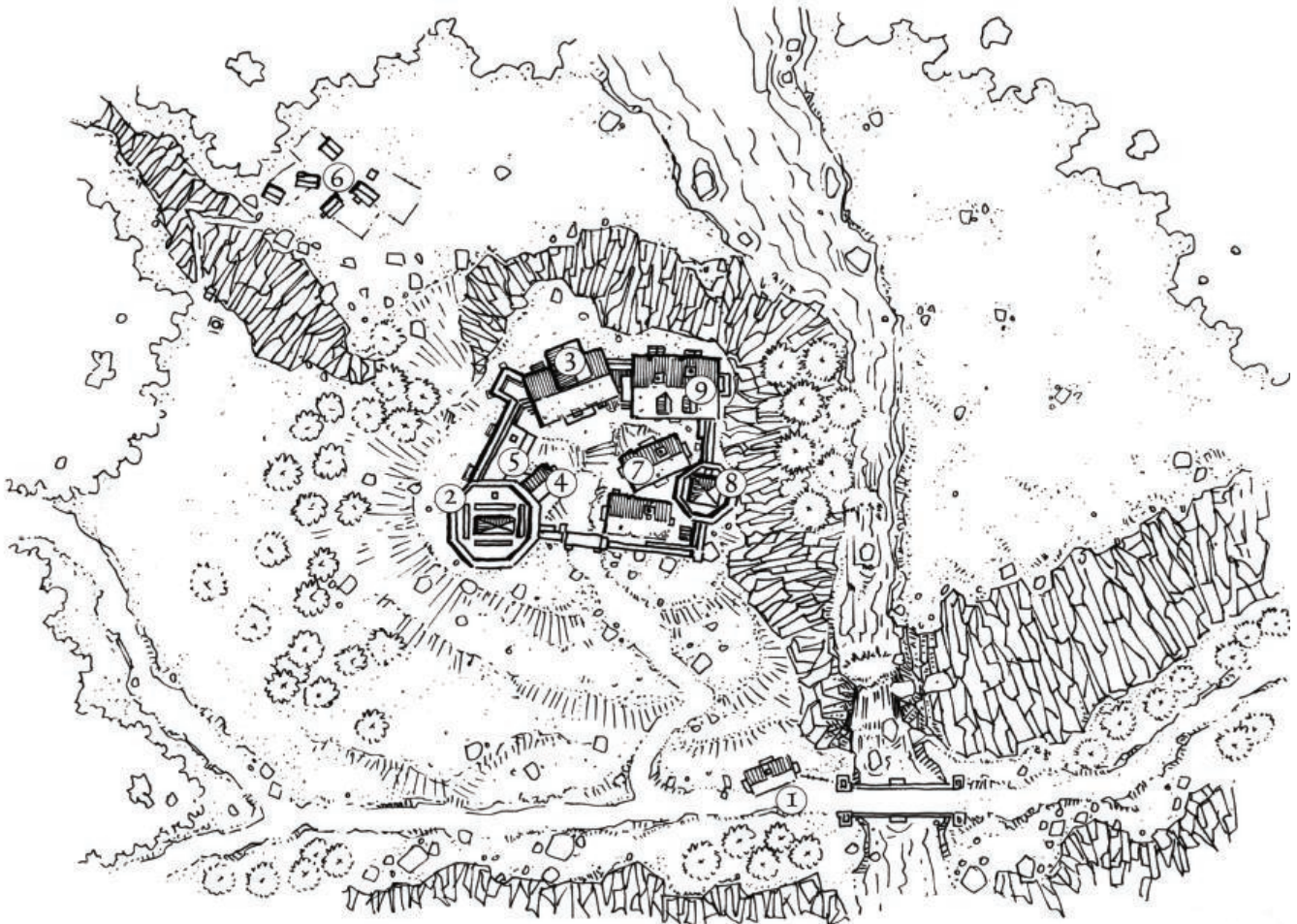
## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Raveneye Sanatorium comprises locations of little interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are notable:

1. **Tollhouse at Roserock Bridge:** This is the first point of contact visitors have at the sanatorium. Visitors must pay a 1 sp toll to cross the bridge whether they are visiting the sanatorium or not.
2. **Hospital Tower:** The most unwell patients as well as staff and visitors injured by patients rest here while they recuperate. Here works Doctor Erzot Chargrave.
3. **Garden Ward:** These shared rooms are used by the most stable and self-sufficient patients. The Garden Ward hosts numerous patients.
4. **Raveneye Chapel:** The simple chapel has minor trappings for a variety of faiths and is open to anyone. Here Sister Marvielle tends to patients needs and leads services to all major deities.
5. **Apothecary:** This large apothecary constantly bustles with activity to meet the needs of Raveneye's many patients. The staff are keen to try out their own concoctions and only sell

their excess stock of more common creations to those submitting to their experimentations.

6. **Botanical Garden:** This garden grows a variety of herbs and magical plants, many of which are dangerous. Its gardener—Warmark Ironaxe—sells excess herbs and drugs to line his own pockets.
7. **Dormitory:** The dormitory houses most of the staff and hosts visitors. Many of the staff come from families that have served the Raveneyes for generations. Most are loyal to their mistress.
8. **Laboratory Tower:** The laboratory tower contains chambers used to examine patients as well as Lady Alumora's personal chambers. Here she formulates new remedies, potions and elixirs
9. **Upper Ward:** These locked rooms keep the dangerous patients isolated. Visitors are not often granted access to this area; most rooms are stoutly secured here. The inmates' movements and freedoms are carefully managed to keep the other patients and staff safe.





## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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### 1: TOLLHOUSE AT ROSEROCK BRIDGE

The tollhouse charges a fee (1 sp per traveller) for the use of Roserock Bridge and checks visitors before they are permitted inside the sanatorium to make sure they aren't trying to steal dangerous compounds or break out a patient.

The sanatorium's few guards (N human **guard**) work the tollhouse in shifts.

### 2: HOSPITAL TOWER

Here new admissions and unstable or ill patients are sent to be diagnosed and treated. Doctor Erzot Chargrave (N male dwarf **commoner**) handles more routine tests. Then, the patient is either ordered the appropriate treatment or admitted to one of the sanatorium's wards (location 3 or 9) if longer-term treatment is necessary. If Erzot can't identify the problem, he prefers to admit the patient for observation. If forced to admit he's stumped, he arranges for Lady Alumora to examine the subject in the laboratory tower (location 8).

### 3: GARDEN WARD

Originally the Raveneye family manor, the garden ward is a series of single or shared rooms and short halls clustered around a grand hall. Its fixtures and furniture are fine but old and ill-maintained. These rooms are generally left unlocked, as they are used by patients who are either on the road to recovery or who were never worrisome to begin with. Patients might be suffering from wasting curses, rare toxins or long-lasting physical or mental illnesses that leave them able to interact with others. The garden ward has numerous patients, the most notable of which are the following:

- **Andwyn Tollemark (N male half-orc sorcerer 1)** Andwyn seems beset by terrible luck and occasional telekinetic attacks resembling those of a poltergeist (which get him sent to the upper ward for weeks at a time). He thinks he is cursed by the gods for a youth wasted on reckless pursuits and pleasure without regard for his family or responsibilities. He only speaks to Sister Marvielle, confiding that the strange happenings tend to target those he is frustrated with.
- **Dewick Underridge (N male human commoner)** Dewick was among the sanatorium's first patients and has been trapped in a transitional state between human and skum ever since. He has always been a model patient except for his nightly sleepwalking attempts to escape toward the sea. His children want him freed and think the staff drugs him into compliance. He claims he is grateful to be restrained.
- **Tourmaline Hazelthorpe (CG female human werewolf)** Tourmaline is one of the most popular patients and very outspoken. Although she spends most of her time in the

garden ward, she is moved to the upper ward for the three nights of the full moon. Her wife wants her to come home, saying that routine chaining is a small price to pay when no treatment shows signs of banishing the curse completely. Her father, on the other hand, insists she stay here until completely cured. She stays largely because she wants to stop Jannik Quinn's (LE female human **veteran**) mistreatment of some patients.

### 4: RAVENEYE CHAPEL

Raveneye Chapel opens its doors to all faiths, in the hopes of making patients more comfortable. It is elegantly appointed and features the holy symbols of several good and neutral deities associated with healing and knowledge. The chapel features several rows of pews, the last of which includes manacles. Chaplain Sister Marvielle Silverblossom (NG female elf **priest**) had the manacles installed so she could bring patients to the chapel for holiday services even if they were having difficulty controlling themselves. Sister Marvielle speaks to each patient about their beliefs. She knows the patients better than anyone, but is often on the verge of being overwhelmed by the sheer number. She has proven the most skilled at helping patients with nonmagical mental illnesses.

### 5: APOTHECARY

The apothecary is a set of adjoining chambers filled with a dense maze of boxes, vial racks, pots, cauldrons, benches and alchemical tools. Alumora's apprentices Fingold Ironwood (CN male gnome wizard [illusionist] 1) and Wenda Calmount (NG female human wizard [diviner] 1) prepare the patients' alchemical treatments. They also maintain a stock of remedies in case of sudden need, and sell extras from this supply to visitors. They are very busy and only offer to make custom orders for those who do them favours. Fingold offers a trade: anyone willing to try one of his experimental elixirs gets to request one item at half cost. Representative examples of his experiments

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#### VISITING RAVENEYE

Guests are welcome to visit the common areas while they wait for an attendant to examine them or one of the administrators to answer any questions. Patients spend their time working on personal projects in common areas, writing, eating or sleeping long hours. Some in the garden ward socialise or eat together quietly since orderlies disperse them to their rooms when they get loud or rowdy (as happens a few times a week). Most of Lady Alumora's servants are kept busy tending to and moving patients, repairing clothes and preparing food and medicine.

include growing the drinker's nose to triple size, replacing the drinker's ability to see colour with the ability to see lawful or chaotic alignments, alchemist's fire that also functions as antitoxin for diseases and suppressing the ability to unconsciously blink.

Wenda wants belladonna from the botanical garden (location 5) without Warmark knowing who it's for. Warmark refuses to give either apprentice anything for their personal projects since one of their gaseous experiments accidentally gave half the staff disconcerting hallucinations.

## 6: BOTANICAL GARDEN

Alongside a vegetable garden that provides for the sanatorium's meals, the botanical garden grows many rare and potent herbs and other plants. Many of these plants are dangerous without the proper precautions and some remain poisonous even then.

The garden ward overlooks the botanical garden and those patients are sometimes allowed to spend time in the garden. The head groundskeeper, Warmark Ironaxe (CN male half-orc **scout**), sells excess herbs, drugs and poisons from the garden to those with written permission from Lady Alumora or Doctor

### EVENTS

While the PCs are at Raveneye Sanatorium, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A large area or group of creatures turns a random colour for 1d4 hours and all items weighting less than 5 pounds drift slowly in random directions for 1d4 hours.   |
| 2  | An inhuman wailing or howling emanates from the upper ward's arrow slits, possibly featuring threats and curses in many languages.   |
| 3  | A person, object or room falls magically <i>silent</i> for 1d4 hours. A man who was shouting for voices only he can hear to stop rests calmly in her room while the effect lasts. Attendants are confused.   |
| 4  | A patient attempts escape by squeezing out a window and gliding on wings made from magically rigid tapestries. Orderlies attempt to lasso her.   |
| 5  | A pudgy female human patient with chained legs argues with a brawny male half-orc patient over whose turn it is to work in the garden today until she is suddenly thrown against a wall by an invisible force. The man faints as the woman turns into an angry wolf and orderlies rush to restrain her with chains and a mancatcher. |
| 6  | A human man with fangs begs to be smuggled across the river. If anyone agrees, he thanks that individual with a passionate kiss that draws a trickle of blood (to his apparent surprise).  |

Chargrave. Warmark also quietly sells substances that would have gone to waste anyway to those who promise to be discreet.

## 7: DORMITORY

Much of the sanatorium staff share rooms in the dormitory. The ground floor has common rooms for eating, a kitchen and guest rooms. The staff are polite but distant with guests. Many have been with the Raveneye family for generations and remain staunchly loyal, but some regret the castle's new purpose. Alumora's work brings just as much gossip and tension as it does gratitude and wealth to Raveneye Sanatorium.

## 8: LABORATORY TOWER

The laboratory tower is reserved for the use of Lady Alumora, chief attendant Zox and Alumora's personal servants. The tower's laboratories are used for studying undiagnosed patients and formulating experimental alchemical remedies, potions and elixirs.

Alumora's methods generally involve exposing a patient to a subtle magical or alchemical agent and then watching for tell-tale reactions. A suspected lycanthrope or vampire's victim might have subtly recoil from silver. A bird's feather might be lighter than a drop of blood from someone carrying certain curses or the blood of a hag ancestor. Few of these tests are yet consistent in their results. The uppermost rooms include Alumora's personal chambers.

### MARKETPLACE

The following items are for sale:

- **Alchemical Remedies** antitoxin (50 gp), healer's kit (5 gp)
- **Poisons** belladonna (100 gp), poisoner's kit (50 gp)
- **Miscellaneous** *elixir of health* (800 gp)
- **Potions & Oils** *healing* (50 gp), *greater healing* (300 gp), *superior healing* (1,000 gp), *vitality* (10,000 gp)
- **Scrolls** *dispel magic* (300 gp), *lesser restoration* (250 gp), *magic circle against evil* (400 gp), *protection from evil* (100 gp)

Additionally, the following services are available:

- **Spellcasting** 2nd-level cleric, 9th-level wizard
- **Crafting** alchemical items, potions, scrolls
- **Services** affliction diagnosis (45 gp), nonmagical affliction treatment (2 gp/day), long-term care (1 gp/day)

The most notable residents are:

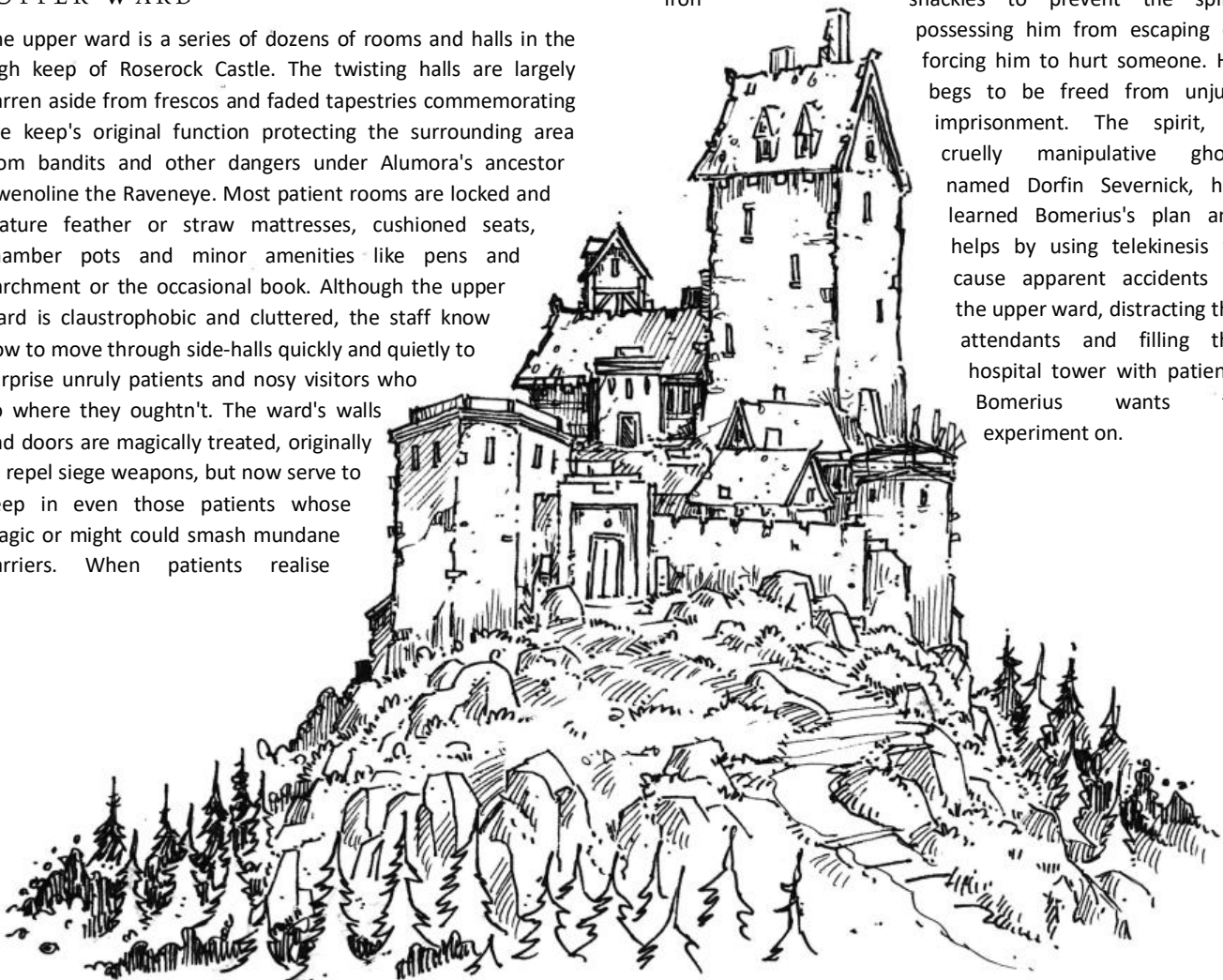
- **Lady Alumora Raveneye (LN female human mage)** Lady Alumora is a meticulous and ambitious academic more concerned with learning and sharing momentous discoveries than best helping individual patients. She asks that every symptom be described as specifically and concretely as possible, often seeming cold. She is responsible for analysing and diagnosing the most difficult and peculiar cases, but leaves treatment to Zox and the other attendants when possible.
- **Zox Ironwood (CG female gnome priest [magic deity])** Chief attendant Zox oversees the attendants who do much of the work of healing patients. A priest dedicated to the god of knowledge and magic, she meticulously records all she learns and compares notes with Lady Alumora and Doctor Charginv daily. Zox has begun to develop some means of identifying sorcerer bloodlines and helping sorcerers to focus their magic into specific spells, but it still works on fewer than half of nascent sorcerers.

## 9: UPPER WARD

The upper ward is a series of dozens of rooms and halls in the high keep of Roserock Castle. The twisting halls are largely barren aside from frescos and faded tapestries commemorating the keep's original function protecting the surrounding area from bandits and other dangers under Alumora's ancestor Gwenoline the Raveneye. Most patient rooms are locked and feature feather or straw mattresses, cushioned seats, chamber pots and minor amenities like pens and parchment or the occasional book. Although the upper ward is claustrophobic and cluttered, the staff know how to move through side-halls quickly and quietly to surprise unruly patients and nosy visitors who go where they oughtn't. The ward's walls and doors are magically treated, originally to repel siege weapons, but now serve to keep in even those patients whose magic or might could smash mundane barriers. When patients realise

visitors are in the area, at least a few shout for help. The upper ward has numerous patients whose maladies range from demonic possession to persistent enchantments to contagious magical plagues. The most notable residents include:

- **Bomerius (NE doppelganger mage)** Bomerius infiltrated Raveneye Sanatorium as an apparently delusional patient, a wiry young boy who keeps claiming to be whomever seemed to be in charge. Nobody knew his name or his origins before he was found wandering the roads near the Roserock Bridge. As soon as he is alone with Alumora, he plans to overpower her and lock her up. He has memorised the recipe for an elixir to polymorph her into the shape of his current disguise, so if anyone finds her they will believe her to be a delusional patient. In the guise of Lady Alumora, he plans to begin experimenting on lycanthropes and other patients with great powers in hopes of gaining those powers without the drawbacks.
- **Ervannaral Mumblebarter (CN male gnome spy)** Ervannaral languishes here, chained to his bed with spirit-trapping cold iron shackles to prevent the spirit possessing him from escaping or forcing him to hurt someone. He begs to be freed from unjust imprisonment. The spirit, a cruelly manipulative ghost named Dorfin Severnick, has learned Bomerius's plan and helps by using telekinesis to cause apparent accidents in the upper ward, distracting the attendants and filling the hospital tower with patients Bomerius wants to experiment on.



# SOULSPUR INN

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**Words** Josh Vogt **Cartography** Dyson Logos

*Inns have forever been the safe havens of adventurers, providing protection and a chance to rest and recover from whatever dangers they've survived thus far. Yet Soulsapur Inn presents a unique threat of its own, cloaked in the guise of the very respite adventurers seek. The inn's mistress is a fine hostess, none would deny, but some say she seems a bit too eager to help those in need—and where she gets her seemingly endless resources from, no one quite knows. It's said that one can capture more flies with honey than vinegar. But why bother with mere honey when one can offer a frothing mug of spiced ale instead?*



## SOULSPUR INN AT A GLANCE

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**Ruler** Erlgamm

**Population** 15 (4 humans, 1 dwarf, 3 half-elves, 3 halflings, 4 undead)

**Alignments** LE

**Languages** Common

**Resources & Industry** Lodgings, meat pies, spiced ales

The ever-present Erlgamm is the undeniable mistress of Soulsapur Inn—a benevolent innkeeper, who welcomes the weary, injured and lonesome to her hearth and refreshes their spirits while listening to their tales of wonder and woe.

Soulsapur Inn has been around for well over a century, and is marked on many a map passed between adventurers, merchants and other travellers. It is renowned for both the warm welcome found within and the safety its stout walls provide. What no-one knows, however is that its owner—Erlgamm—is a powerful necromancer and would-be lich. She uses her power to hide the handful of undead she keeps around, and uses the travellers who pass through her doors as sources of information, relics and —occasionally—fresh corpses.

While brightly lit, Soulsapur Inn has its shadows and dark cellars. While the inn shows the regular wear-and-tear of an establishment that serves the common rabble, everything is kept neat and tidy by the staff.

### LORE

A PC may know something about Soulsapur Inn, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 10:** Soulsapur Inn is a welcome respite on the trail. Its mistress is kind, the food plentiful and the spiced ale is a particular speciality!

**DC 15:** Soulsapur Inn is considered neutral ground when it comes to legal or moral conflicts. Erlgamm welcomes all to her hearth, and does not brook conflicts or violence even between those of differing values or codes of conduct.

**DC 20:** A small cemetery is located not far off, providing a final resting place for the poor souls who perished along the road or succumbed to their wounds after they reached the inn.

### MARKETPLACE

Erlgamm does not advertise her magical abilities, but has a few items for sale. If asked, she explains their previous owners couldn't afford to pay their bills and left them in exchange.

- **Consumables:** *scroll of spider climb* (150 gp), *scroll of speak with animals* (120 gp)
- **Other:** *bird feather token* (750 gp), *gloves of thievery* (500 gp)

### NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the folk at the inn are nothing more than ordinary travellers or locals.

- **Appearance:** A motley lot of all ages and races. Almost everyone has a road-wear look.
- **Dress:** Common clothing—travelling cloaks, mud-caked boots and heavy leather vestments. Most folks, except for the staff, are prepared for long days on muddy and dusty roads.

Erlgamm is the sole major NPC at Soulsapur Inn:

- **Erlgamm** (LE female half-elf necromancer 10) The welcoming mistress of the inn has a dark secret.

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Soulsapur Inn, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

| D6 | RUMOUR  |
|----|---|
| 1  | No one knows how Erlgamm came to own the inn. She's just always been there. But who cares? Who'd want to replace her?   |
| 2  | At least a dozen travellers have set out from the inn with the full intent to return—but never did. Most figure ill fortune befell them on the road, but some say they never left at all. |
| 3* | "Erlgamm's a twin, tis true! That's why she's always a hustlin' and bustlin' with nary a wink of sleep. She and her sis just swap over soon as one gets too tired."                       |
| 4  | Erlgamm's got a soft spot for priests. Doesn't matter what faith they follow, a priest will always find a free meal and bed in Soulsapur Inn.   |
| 5  | No-one knows the inn's age; it's always been there.   |
| 6* | Every traveller leaves something behind by accident, sooner or later. The Soulsapur Inn has a secret stash of such forgotten goods and relics.  |

\*False rumour

### IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Inns are a mainstay of most campaigns, providing havens for the PCs to rest and gather news. As described, Soulsapur Inn stands amid a scattering of peasant huts but could be set in almost any village, town or city. It can even stand elsewhere—perhaps at a lonely crossroads—far out in the wilds.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Most of Soulspur Inn comprises unremarkable locations. A few locations, however, are exceptional:

1. **The Commons:** Here guests and locals alike can rest, drink, eat and enjoy one another's company.
2. **The Spice Room:** This locked and warded room holds several vats and tubs.
3. **Bone Cellar:** Below the inn lies the Bone Cellar. Along with the inn's supplies, Erlgamm keeps several mindless undead minions here.
4. **Erlgamm's Laboratory:** In the rare hours where Erlgamm isn't tending to her guests, she's often here, brewing potions or tinctures to further her necromantic studies.
5. **Phylactery Den:** This small chamber is locked. The crystal vial intended to contain her soul on becoming a lich is contained within and is Erlgamm's most precious possession. A few undead servitors also lurk here.
6. **Arcane Study:** Erlgamm's office doubles as a study. Here she pores over the various tomes and scrolls she's acquired over the years.

### UNKEYED AREAS

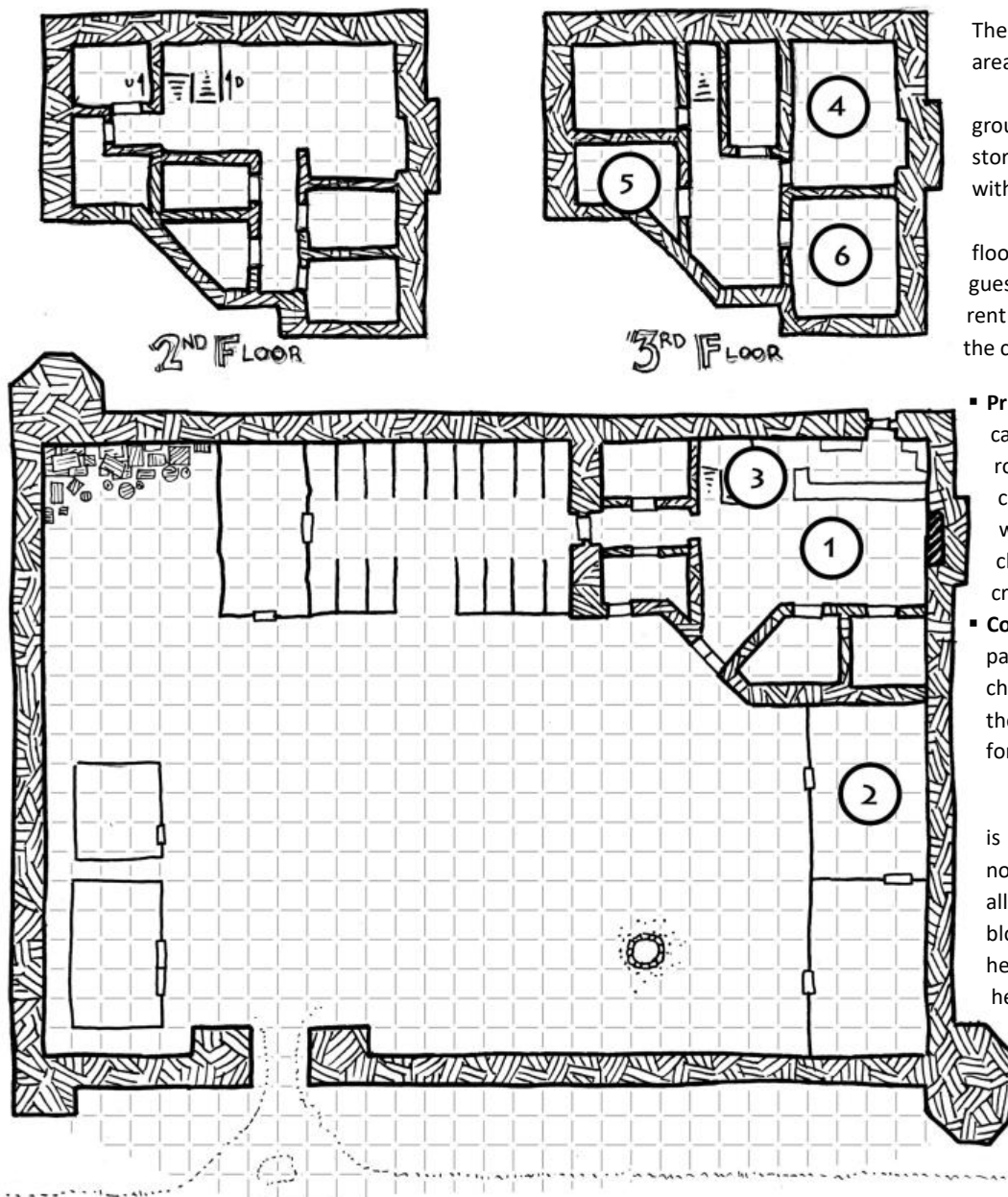
The map has several unkeyed areas.

**Ground Floor:** The inn's ground floor comprises various storerooms and a kitchen along with stables and so on.

**Second Floor:** The second floor is wholly given over to guests. Here guests can opt to rent their own room or sleep in the communal dormitory.

- **Private Room:** For 2 gp, a guest can hire a comfortable double room. Well-appointed with chest, table and chair along with two single beds the chamber is warm (if a little cramped).
- **Common Chamber:** 5 sp buys a patch of floor in the common chamber; guests must bring their own bedrolls and blankets for Erlgamm provides none.

**Third Floor:** The third floor is Erlgamm's domain. No-one—not even her (living) staff—are allowed past the heavy curtain blocking the stairs leading to her personal quarters. Here is her ordered and tidy bedroom along with various work chambers. Magical wards on the curtain alert Erlgamm to intruders in her chambers.



## LIFE IN SOULSPUR INN

Soulspur Inn is always open, no matter the hour (which some locals find odd, but accept thanks to the coin the inn brings to the area). It presents the usual bustle of any other inn, with ebbs and flows of travellers, the occasional performing bard and supply deliveries. Lights burn in its windows all night, and its main doors are unlocked all day.

### ATMOSPHERE

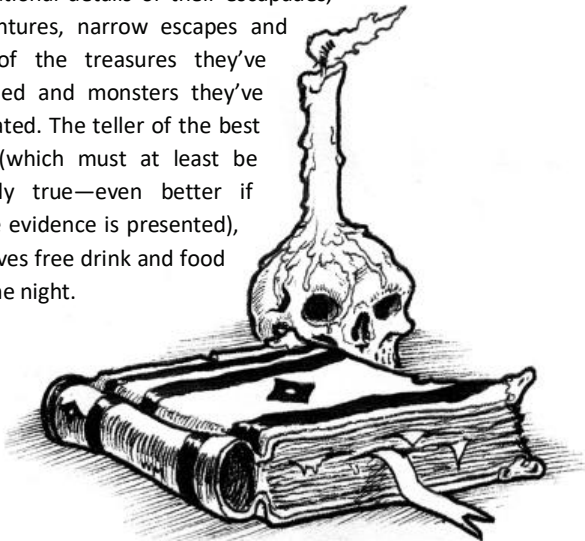
Erlgamm has gone to extraordinary lengths to make Soulspur Inn feel both homey and refined. The inn is furnished with silver and brass fixtures, a large candelabra and a cosy fire pit that adds even more warmth beyond the main hearth, which is forever ablaze. Delicious smells of exotic spices and roasted meats waft from the kitchen through the inn, and servers are always in attendance, ready to swiftly satisfy even the most demanding patron—though Erlgamm often attends the Commons herself.

### LAW & ORDER

Erlgamm runs Soulspur Inn as neutral ground for all patrons. This means one might find a known criminal drinking next to a local guard, or a demon-worshipping priest debating theology with a righteous paladin. All feuds and grievances must be set aside for the sake of enjoying her abundant hospitality. How she enforces this—beyond her scolding tongue and piercing glare—is unknown, especially in the long-term. But anyone who tries to start trouble or deal violence to another inn-goer is quickly tossed out by Erlgamm’s surprisingly strong helpers, and often never seen again.

### CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

Erlgamm is voracious when it comes to hearing new stories, and she often holds evening contests, daring patrons to reveal sensational details of their escapades, adventures, narrow escapes and tell of the treasures they’ve accrued and monsters they’ve defeated. The teller of the best tale (which must at least be mostly true—even better if some evidence is presented), receives free drink and food for the night.



### LOCATION DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about Soulspur Inn.

#### D20 DRESSING/EVENT

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | The doors bang shut as a newcomer shakes the rain off her cloak before heading for the fireplace.   |
| 2  | Erlgamm smiles at no one and nothing in particular as she wipes down the bar with a rag.  |
| 3  | A server bumps a table while sweeping, almost knocking over a few drinks and earning a harsh look from Erlgamm.                                       |
| 4  | One of the human staff climbs a ladder to light a few of the candles on the candelabra that have gone out.  |
| 5  | Two patrons grunt and curse as they struggle in an arm-wrestling match, cheered on by the crowd.  |
| 6  | A bard strums her lyre by the fire pit, singing slightly off-tune of vague heroic deeds.  |
| 7  | A halfling barmaid weaves her way through the crowd, carrying a platter of sizzling meat pies.  |
| 8  | A group of adventurers raise a sombre toast in memory of a companion lost on their latest adventure.  |
| 9  | A half-orc lies slumped over a table, snoring, having lost her bet in an impressive drinking contest. Her elven competitor continues to sip his wine. |
| 10 | A cloaked figure sits off by himself, face barely visible beneath his hood as he puffs on his pipe and studies the crowd.                             |
| 11 | A pair of smitten lovers head upstairs to the room they’ve rented for the night.  |
| 12 | A local guard stands in one corner, glowering at the wanted thief enjoying a beer with his friends a few tables over.                                 |
| 13 | A priest has set up a small altar on his table and is now mumbling and gesturing in subdued supplications to his deity.                               |
| 14 | A wounded dwarven ranger is led upstairs to get some peace and quiet.   |
| 15 | Raucous laughter breaks out over a game of cards as one player’s bluff is called, costing her a huge pile of coin.                                    |
| 16 | A chorus of horse whinnies rise from the stables, loud enough to briefly overcome the inn’s din.  |
| 17 | Bawdy laughter erupts as Erlgamm finishes telling an incredibly raunchy joke to a group of labourers.   |
| 18 | Ash flies up as an inn worker pokes at the large logs burning in the main hearth.   |
| 19 | The main room is so full of the smell of spiced ale, it’s enough to make a person’s head swim.  |
| 20 | A cart rattles by out front, carrying barrels into the courtyard.   |



## THE SURROUNDING LOCALITY

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Soulspur Inn sits nestled in the foothills of a low mountain range, with several passes leading down from the peaks, almost to its very doorstep. A few mines operate in the rocky heights, staffed by humans and dwarves, but none have struck it rich, yet.

The inn is decidedly out of place when compared to the rest of the region. The road leading through the main valley and past its front doors is broad and well-travelled, with merchant caravans and marching troops alike making consistent use of it. Yet the inn isn't anywhere near a place of importance, which has perhaps spared it the ravages of the occasional war or other hostilities marring the countryside.

Beyond the main road are an expanse of grassy fields, with the occasional stretch of wildflowers. This abuts a thick forest, and many rumours abound of the wild beasts, ancient ruins and priceless treasures to be found by those who brave the darkest depths of those woods. No paths, except game trails, lead through the forest, though a few lumbering communities have supposedly established semi-permanent camps within.

The inn stands amid a scattered community of farmsteads, hunter's cabins, charcoal burner's huts and so on. Perhaps two-dozen homes—some little more than wooden shacks held together by rusty nails and dried mud—spot the valley in random formation. Most denizens seem like worn-out adventurers who stopped by the inn years ago and just decided to never move on. Some now ply their rusty fighting skills as guards and guides. All respect Erlgamm's total dominion over her inn, where her word is absolute law.

The inn is the sole commercial business in the valley and is the largest single building. The community use the inn as a meeting hall, on the rare occasion they gather to discuss matters of import. Erlgamm is an important and influential figure in the local community. She also provides employment—both directly and indirectly—for a score or so folk in various capacities. Most of the travellers moving through the area use inn's services, and every denizen knows if any ill should befall the inn, they would lose their livelihoods—making everyone highly protective of Erlgamm's establishment.

The climate is temperate much of the year, though heavy snowfalls in the deepest winter months tends to see the inn even more crowded than usual as travellers seek shelter from the icy storms that can last for days. Wild game is plentiful, and

Erlgamm eagerly rewards those hunters and trappers who bring fresh kills to her kitchen.





## NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN SOULSPUR INN

### I: THE COMMONS

*Cheery chatter, delicious smells and the warmth of a roaring fire fill this inn's main room, where patrons crowd around tables and servers hustle to serve food and drink.*

This is the inn's common area and public front, where Erlgamm is her own self-styled queen, keeping the crowd under control with equal portions of her generous hospitality and firm hand.

- **Food:** Spiced meat pies with vegetables (2 gp), tenderised rabbit (or other unidentifiable meat) in spiced wine (3 gp), partridge stuffed with wild herbs (3 gp)
- **Drinks:** Spiced ale (4 sp/pint), white wine (10 gp/bottle), spiced red wine (10 gp/bottle), apple brandy (1 gp/glass)

### WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Every torch and open flame turns blue and burns particularly brightly for a few moments before returning to normal.  |
| 2  | Erlgamm suddenly blurts out an arcane-sounding incantation that turns out to be gibberish. She blushes and blames it on sneaking a few too many sips of ale.                         |
| 3  | Each PC feels they are being followed and watched no matter where they go or how many wards they conjure, so long as they are inside the inn.  |
| 4  | One of the servers helping Erlgamm has a sudden convulsion and falls to the floor, dead. The corpse appears to be just slightly older than the person appeared to have been in life. |
| 5  | For a few minutes, if viewed at the right angle in the darkest hour of night, the logs burning in the hearth appear to actually be bones.  |
| 6  | All magical items within Soulsapur Inn's walls fail to work properly, if it all, for a brief time  |

**Meet the Mistress:** On learning of the PCs' reputation as successful adventurers, Erlgamm invites them to a private meeting under the guise of honouring her distinguished guests. She may even have a job for them, such as dispensing with an undead abomination lurking in the nearby graveyard—a secret test to determine the scope of their abilities and whether they may be of use to her.

**Something's Amiss:** The PCs can observe eerie occurrences or behaviours that hint at darker secrets behind the inn's bright and cheery facade.

### ERLGAMM

LE female half-elf necromancer 10

*Slender—perhaps a little too slender—with curly black hair and welcoming eyes, this woman wears plain, functional clothes.*

Erlgamm can be encountered anywhere in the inn. She always maintains her innkeeper persona unless caught in obviously egregious actions. If backed into a corner, she might bargain with the PCs, offering items from her secret stash in exchange for her life. In the end, though, she fights to the death, hoping perhaps her necromantic pursuits and experimentations will see her resurrected into the lich form she's long sought.

**Mannerisms:** Erlgamm is forever on the move, chasing down the slightest speck of dust with her cleaning rag, bustling between tables with a tray of fresh drinks, chatting with regulars or directing her staff to one chore or another. The only time she's seen standing still is when she retires to her little shadowed corner behind the bar to rest for a minute as she listens to the latest patron tell of their travels. While her eyes are an icy blue, they usually hold a surprisingly warm look, though they can turn as sharp as daggers when she confronts a violent drunk or other disruptive patron.

**Personality:** Energetic and indomitably positive, Erlgamm loves nothing more than good stories, good company and good meals. She is equally sympathetic to those in need and inspiring to those whose courage has failed. While she rarely provides the inn's services for free, she never cheats her patrons, and always demands her guests treat one another with the same respect she gives them. She is a woman of simple tastes, preferring functional clothing over finery, though she often tucks a shiny bauble or two into her curly black hair—gifts from past guests, she explains.

**Background:** One of several barmaids who worked at Soulsapur Inn over a century ago, Erlgamm's fortunes changed when an alcoholic wizard drowned himself in a watering trough.

While going through his belongings to see what she might pawn, Erlgamm discovered an ancient tome she found she could read. Fascinated by its forbidden necromantic secrets, she began to practice its rituals and discovered an innate talent for deathly magic. Erlgamm's ultimate goal is to unlock the secrets of lichdom and achieve true eternal power.

## 2: THE SPICE ROOM

*This cramped room is full of vats and tubs brimming with fetid-looking liquids. An acidic reek wrestles with the heady mix of spiced ale.*

The door to this room is locked and magically barred. This is where Erlgamm and her unliving minions take the remains of her victims. After Erlgamm has harvested the essentials she needs from her victim's corpse, the rest is distilled via acid baths and vile enchantments into a slurry that provides the unique spice for which her ale is famous.

### WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT   |
|----|---|
| 1  | A skull bobs to the surface of one of the vats.   |
| 2  | A tub of slurry bubbles briefly, releasing an odour eerily like the spiced ale.                                 |
| 3  | One of the paddles used to stir the vats falls over from where it leaned against the wall, with a loud clatter. |
| 4  | The smell of spices and slurry is briefly overpowering.   |
| 5  | When inspected, one tub wobbles on its stands and topples, spilling slurry everywhere.                          |
| 6  | A bloodstained cloak is wadded up in a corner.  |



**The Spice is Life:** If Erlgamm has been exposed and confronted, she may claim the slurry she uses to flavour the ale is actually a long-term poison that slowly builds up in a person's body. The villagers who frequent her inn will die if they do not get regular doses of it. So, the PCs must choose between destroying her and ending her vile operations or letting dozens of people live. However, she may be bluffing...

## 3: THE BONE CELLAR

*A well-stocked root cellar sits at the bottom of a flight of stone steps. Barrels, crates, and shelves stacked high with preserved goods and other supplies fill the space.*

This one-room cellar is connected to a second room via a tunnel hidden behind a shelf of preserved goods (DC 15 Wisdom [Perception] locates). The tunnel ends in a locked door of iron bars, beyond which Erlgamm keeps her undead minions until she needs them. They are mindless and allowed to roam only when disguised and under her direct control. She does not raise more powerful minions not wanting any potential upstarts to threaten her position or research. Soulspur Inn is hers, and none other's.

### WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT   |
|----|---|
| 1  | A guttural moan wavers out from a dark space tucked behind one of the supply shelves.   |
| 2  | The cellar door slams shut and latches behind the PCs, and a cackle is heard fading into the distance.  |
| 3  | A PC spots a bone that was half-buried in the muddy floor. It doesn't look like an animal's.  |
| 4  | A clanking sound echoes through the cellar, like someone rattling the bars of a cage.   |
| 5  | When inspected, a crate crumbles, revealing the wood is rotted, as is all the foodstuffs that tumbles out from inside.  |
| 6  | On entering the cellar, the PCs find a rather sickly looking person standing in front of a shelf, staring blankly at the items arranged on it. They are unresponsive. |

**Preserved Remains:** The PCs could discover the presence of the undead here, which suggests all is not as it seems at the inn.

**Rot in the Root:** Erlgamm use of necromantic powers has begun to infuse her very touch, and much of the goods in the cellar are spoiling faster than normal. She asks the PCs to escort a wagon to the nearest town to secure new supplies.

#### 4: ERLGAMM'S LABORATORY

*A table stands laden with beakers, vials and jugs of foul liquids, some of which contain organs and other bobbing body parts. A workbench holds a random assortment of stone, metal and crystalline fragments.*

This laboratory is where Erlgamm concocts various necromantic experiments, distils potions and attempts to learn how to control the occasional magical item she acquires.

The place holds a main table and bench, with vials and jars bubbling with strange fluids while fragments of broken relics lie scattered about. While odd smells and the occasional foul odour are emitted by her experiments, the heavy miasma of spiced ale and seasoned meats wafting from the Commons and kitchen easily disguise this.

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT   |
|----|---|
| 1  | A glob of yellow sludge lashes out with sticky tendrils at any PC who gets too close.   |
| 2  | A piece of jagged metal on the workbench starts to vibrate.   |
| 3  | A vial of bubbling blue fluid begins to froth, with foam spilling over the edge to sizzle and smoke on the table.                           |
| 4  | One of the eyes floating in a greenish liquid twitches and turns to look at the PCs.  |
| 5  | The PCs find a half-dissected corpse on the workbench instead of the expected magical experiments.  |
| 6  | As the PCs approach the main table, the many vials and jars begin to shudder before exploding, spewing noxious liquids throughout the room. |

**It's just a Hobby:** Discovering Erlgamm laboratory can clue the PCs into her passion for arcane experimentation and reveal her more disturbing proclivities.

#### 5: PHYLACTERY DEN

*This stout door is secured with a large padlock.*

Here, Erlgamm keeps the phylactery she has enspelled—a beautiful crystal vial—to contain her soul when she becomes a lich. It is highly protected through both mundane and arcane means and is Erlgamm's most treasured possession.

Erlgamm keeps several assistants that are actually disguised undead in disguise. She doesn't make use of them often, and mostly employs them as enforcers should anyone defy her rule about treating the inn as neutral ground.

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A clattering sound comes from behind the door, like a set of oversized teeth chattering in the cold. |
| 2  | A bright blue light briefly glows from under the door.   |
| 3  | A PC who touches the door sees a mental flash of Erlgamm's eyes, cold and hate-filled.               |
| 4  | A wave of foul energy emanates from behind the door, leaving the PCs nauseous.                       |
| 5  | The instant a PC touches the door, Erlgamm's shriek echoes through the inn.                          |
| 6  | Frost begins to form on every surface in the room.   |

**Heart of Ice:** If the PCs discover Erlgamm's phylactery and discern the object's purpose, they could destroy it and ruin Erlgamm's near century-long work, which would, of course, incur her wrath.

**A Lich at Last:** If Erlgamm is killed during the PCs' stay, she could transform into a lich thanks to her many years of necromantic experiments. If so, her soul flees to her phylactery, where she begins to gather her strength to strike down her foes.

#### 6: ARCANE STUDY

*Though simply adorned with a desk, chairs and a few mostly bare shelves, this office feels strangely dark and crowded, as if occupied by an unseen presence.*

Here Erlgamm manages the inn's operations and studies her scrolls and tomes, most of which are hidden away with other artifacts, wands and magical devices. It looks plain enough at first glance, with a desk, bookshelves and a few chairs, but many hidden cubbies and cabinets fill the space.

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A breeze from an unknown source fills the room.                                  |
| 2  | Erlgamm is present, studying, and looks up in bewilderment at the PCs' presence. |
| 3  | Whispers fill the air, words undecipherable, source unable to be pinpointed.     |
| 4  | The temperature in the room plummets until one's breath can be seen.             |
| 5  | The hair on the back of a PC's neck tingles.                                     |
| 6  | Footsteps sound from the hallway.  |

**Jotting it Down:** One of the secret cubbies here holds Erlgamm's private journal, noting decades of attempts to achieve lichdom.

# THE LAST RESORT

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**Words** Mike Welham **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

*The Last Resort sits on a lonely stretch of nearly forgotten road passing through withered, brambly forest and cracked, barren hills. The collection of inns comprising the Last Resort offers a variety of services, some for more peculiar tastes than others for it is not only a waypoint for living travellers, but is also the interim destination for those who have died without a clear path to the afterlife. These wayward souls have a chance to account for their actions in life to improve their ultimate lot. Those lost souls whose final destination remains unclear, linger on at the inn—doomed to dwell there until their place in the afterlife becomes clear.*



## THE LAST RESORT AT A GLANCE

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**Ruler:** Harlan Arbiton XVII

**Population:** 55 (14 humans, 7 dwarves, 8 elves, 3 gnomes, 7 half-elves, 8 half-orcs, 5 halflings)

**Alignments:** All

**Languages:** Common, Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal, Sylvan

**Resources & Industry:** Rest, relaxation, resurrection

**Marketplace:** *Spellcasting* up to 17th-level

The Last Resort was originally a collective of inns and taverns providing respite on a lonely stretch of road. It is also one of the few earthly locations to sit on a planar nexus. The first signs of trouble arose when the ghost of dead people—actually lost souls unable to pass onto the afterlife—arrived at the (now aptly named) Last Resort. Powerful angels, devils and demons quickly appeared to claim the lost souls. Fighting inevitably broke out shortly thereafter, all but destroying the inn and killing most of the folk dwelling therein. Unsurprisingly, the survivors fled.

Each of the factions of otherworldly folk—angels, devils and demons—tried to relocate the rift so they could control it (and the lost souls drawn there). When this proved impossible, the disparate planar entities struck a bargain so each could maintain a presence near the rift. To avoid the constant strife resulting from so many angels, devils and demons remaining in close proximity, a powerful being of neutrality and law—the Arbitrator—was given the task of deciding each lost soul's fate. Once judged, most souls journey onwards to one of the outer planes. In cases where a final destination remains unclear, the lost soul remains at the Last Resort until the Arbitrator can settle the matter.

Instead of remaining themselves the various factions formed creatures shaped from the very stuff of their home planes. Each entity runs an establishment at the Last Resort suited to folk with similar morals and argues for the lost souls when the Arbitrator holds court. Thus, was reborn the Last Resort.

### LORE

A PC may know something about The Last Resort, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 15:** The Last Resort stands on a remote, forlorn stretch of road. It provides a welcome respite from the road's dangers.

**DC 20:** Several loosely affiliated establishments comprise the Last Resort. Each of the eight inns cater to wildly different clientele.

**DC 25:** The Last Resort is a planar waystation and enables travel to other planes. Most notably, wayward souls manifest there and await a decision on their ultimate fate in the afterlife.

### FOLK

Most of the population are anything but ordinary. The “normal” folk working at the Last Resort are lost souls trapped here by the Arbitrator's deferred judgement. The landlords and landladies of the Last Resort are something entirely different—creatures formed from the very stuff of the planes themselves imbued with powerful abilities. They are unaware of their true origins.

- **Appearance:** People at the inn run the gamut of aspects, but a few stand out as not being “right” somehow.
- **Dress:** Most folk wear outfits appropriate for travel or work at an inn, but a handful are more ostentatiously attired.
- **Nomenclature:** Travellers can have nearly any name, but “villagers” choose those they think sound “humanoid.”

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in The Last Resort, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

#### D6 RUMOUR

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | One of the Warehouse's guests has yet to emerge after three days inside.   |
| 2  | You just missed a trial. Jeremil was not happy with the result considering his terrified screams as they dragged him through the gate. My guess is he was assigned to one of the bad places. |
| 3* | Scourge Rhodain is actually an angel impersonating a demon impersonating a human.  |
| 4  | A rhinoceros escaped from the Preserve and injured one of the guests. The rhino then used its horn to heal the wound before returning to the Preserve.                                       |
| 5  | Ear-piercing shrieks emanated from the Rift, the other night. No one could get any sleep, but Corrinne Fade seemed especially pleased the next morning.                                      |
| 6  | Gremlins labour in a workshop beneath the Diablo Inn to craft a sword they dubbed “The Angel Killer.”  |

\*False rumour

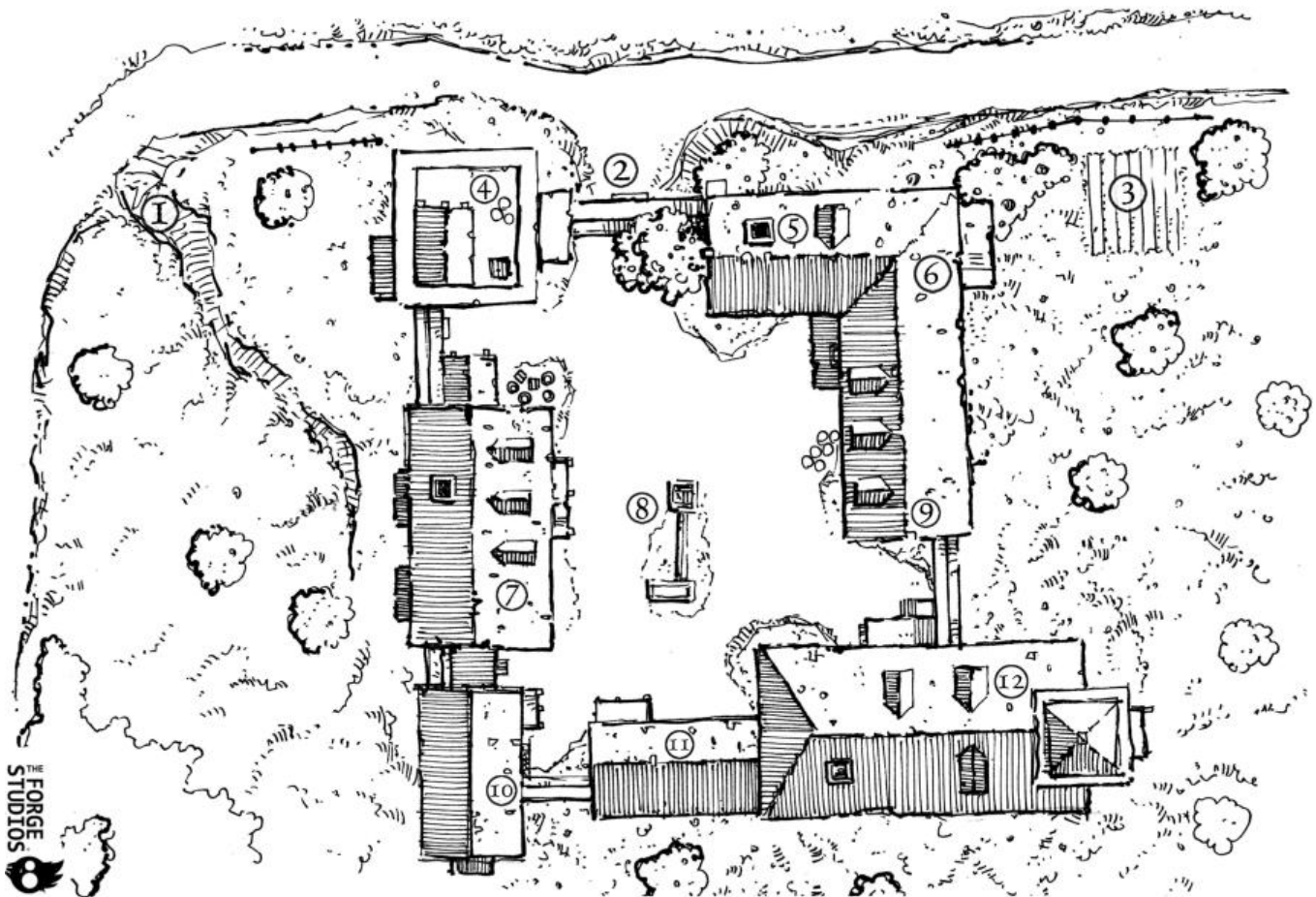
#### IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

The PCs may encounter one of their own, a friendly NPC or an enemy who has died and arrived at the Last Resort. This demonstrates the true purpose of the place and allows the PCs to help determine the person's fate. Alternatively, the PCs could use this location as an unreliable means of planar travel, since its gate (and the nearby rift) touch on many outer planes.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Most of The Last Resort comprises locations of interest to adventurers:

1. **Perdition's Rift:** Light and sound of all description emanate from this tear in the ground. One can see a distorted version of him- or herself, by studying the rift's depths long enough.
2. **The Gate:** A nominal guard stands at the gate. Entry to the Last Resort is safe, but the gate's destination for those leaving the compound can be surprising to the unprepared.
3. **Everchanging Garden:** Tended by the elven druid, Peri Huxtaun, the plants reflect the gate's current planar destination.
4. **Haven:** Beulah Blue refers to her inn as a "little slice of Heaven," and she is not far off in her assessment. Soothing music plays in the background, the food tastes delicious, but is not filling, and the beds induce instant and restful slumber.
5. **The Preserve:** Fenric Vogel song manages this building with an impossibly large interior containing a riot of flora and fauna. It is a harmonious place, despite the seemingly dangerous animals roaming around; part of it serves as a stable block.
6. **Freedom's Delight:** This rowdy establishment is busy day and night; it boasts the resort's finest ales and wines.
7. **The Orrery:** When not handling business concerning the entirety of The Last Resort, Harlan Arbiton XVII oversees this inn, filled with mechanical devices of all description including an intricate orrery depicting the planes.
8. **Courtyard:** Here, guests and locals gather to chat, accept during the trial of lost souls.
9. **The Warehouse:** Ululul Gallee is in charge here and this building has become a storage depot as well as an out-of-the-way place to rest for those who don't mind the clutter or the possibility of being lost here forever.
10. **Diablo Inn:** Quentin Balazar's establishment offers access to any number of vices. The costs, both listed and hidden, may be steeper than the buyer can afford, though.
11. **Bleak House:** The ground floor of this seemingly haunted building is empty but for from cobwebs and broken furniture. Corrinne Fade sees to her guests in the basement.
12. **Rampage's Bar and Grill:** Those looking for a bar fight can find one here. The proprietor, Scourge Rhodain, ensures cheap ale flows freely to lower inhibitions and enjoys encouraging arguments between patrons.



## LIFE IN THE LAST RESORT

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For all intents, The Last Resort is a strange collection of unique establishments which seem like they do not belong together. They offer a variety of experiences, ranging from a peaceful night of sleep, through a host of decadent activities and even a (relatively) consequence-free bar brawl.

### TRADE & INDUSTRY

On the surface, the Last Resort is merely an eclectic place to rest. Each establishment charges its own fees for lodging and services (including ostensibly free lodging at the haunted Bleak House), putting the onus on visitors to decide which establishment they prefer.

Many of the powerful denizens managing the various inns have impressive spellcasting capabilities and a secondary industry has sprung up for services related to this magic. Good-aligned denizens offer healing, convenient for travellers who suffer from maladies related to their journeys. This healing comes at a reasonable price, but beneficiaries could pay with favours, usually involving healers' rivals. Evil residents provide darker magic to prospective clients and accept similar payment to their good counterparts. They also bargain for souls, either belonging to the buyers or upcoming defendants, for payment. Balazar and Corrinne enjoy calling surprise "character witnesses" from such patrons.

### LAW & ORDER

Harlan Arbiton XVII has served as the arbiter at the Last Resort for centuries. A state of grace exists among the entities, preventing them from directly harming one another, which makes Harlan's job easier, but the outsiders employ mortal visitors to spy on their enemies or directly attack them. Harlan and his human and half-orc enforcers attempt to put a stop to such activities, and have been largely successful. They escort mortal violators off the premises and toss egregious mischief makers into a random plane through the gate. Harlan's primary concern rests with the increasingly frequent trials. During these trials, interested planar denizens make their case for claims on the souls to be judged and call witnesses to back up their case. Harlan makes his decision after all sides have presented their arguments. His decision is binding and carried out immediately to prevent the possibility of escape.

### CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

The appearance of the Court is its own tradition and even the more relaxed residents treat it with seriousness, even during trials when they have no vested interest. Trumpets blare and oblivious guests are ushered from the Courtyard just before the Court arrives.

## LOCATION DRESSING

Use this table, to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about the Last Resort.

### D20 DRESSING/EVENT

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A light pink drizzle smelling of lilacs descends from the heavens. The scent lingers for an hour afterwards.   |
| 2  | A bright blue gourd jumps the fence between the Wherehouse and Rampage's Bar and screams profanities at the PCs.   |
| 3  | A tan woman with impressive antlers arrives and demands to know where Huxtaun is.  |
| 4  | Crows roost on the Preserve's roof; their croaks sound like a conversation in Common.  |
| 5  | The sound of shattered glass coincides with a chair flying through one of Rampage's windows. Shortly thereafter, two half-orcs dive out the window as they pummel each other and shout epithets. |
| 6  | A tremor shakes the ground. One of the workers looks amused and says something about a bad shift.  |
| 7  | The court building materializes with no fanfare in the centre of the grounds, catching unsuspecting guests by surprise and forcing them to dive aside.   |
| 8  | A white-robed woman approaches the PCs and tells them she has had a crisis of conscience and wants them to represent her tomorrow.   |
| 9  | A dog covered in pustules limps out of the Bleak House; its eyes are rolled back in abject terror.   |
| 10 | Harlan puts an immediate stop to an attempt to build a bonfire in the courtyard.   |
| 11 | A metallic creature appears in the courtyard and announces Harlan Arbiton's recall.  |
| 12 | A troop of winged humanoids emerges from the gate followed shortly by a mob of barb-tailed humanoids.  |
| 13 | A visiting angel drunkenly celebrating a recent victory accidentally reveals his true form.  |
| 14 | One of the workers shouts a warning as someone exits through the front gate...and disappears.  |
| 15 | The smell of sulphur precedes Balazar's arrival.   |
| 16 | A shouting match erupts between patrons of Freedom's Delight and Rampage's Bar.  |
| 17 | Clouds swirl above the resort and strange green light emanates from them. The display persists for 10 minutes before the clouds dissipate.   |
| 18 | At night, the moon turns blood red and stars begin to disappear from the sky.  |
| 19 | An explosion rocks the Wherehouse; a dishevelled Ululul Gallee emerges shortly thereafter.   |
| 20 | The sun shifts forward in the sky as if four hours had passed, but there is no sensation of time passing.  |



## THE LOCALITY

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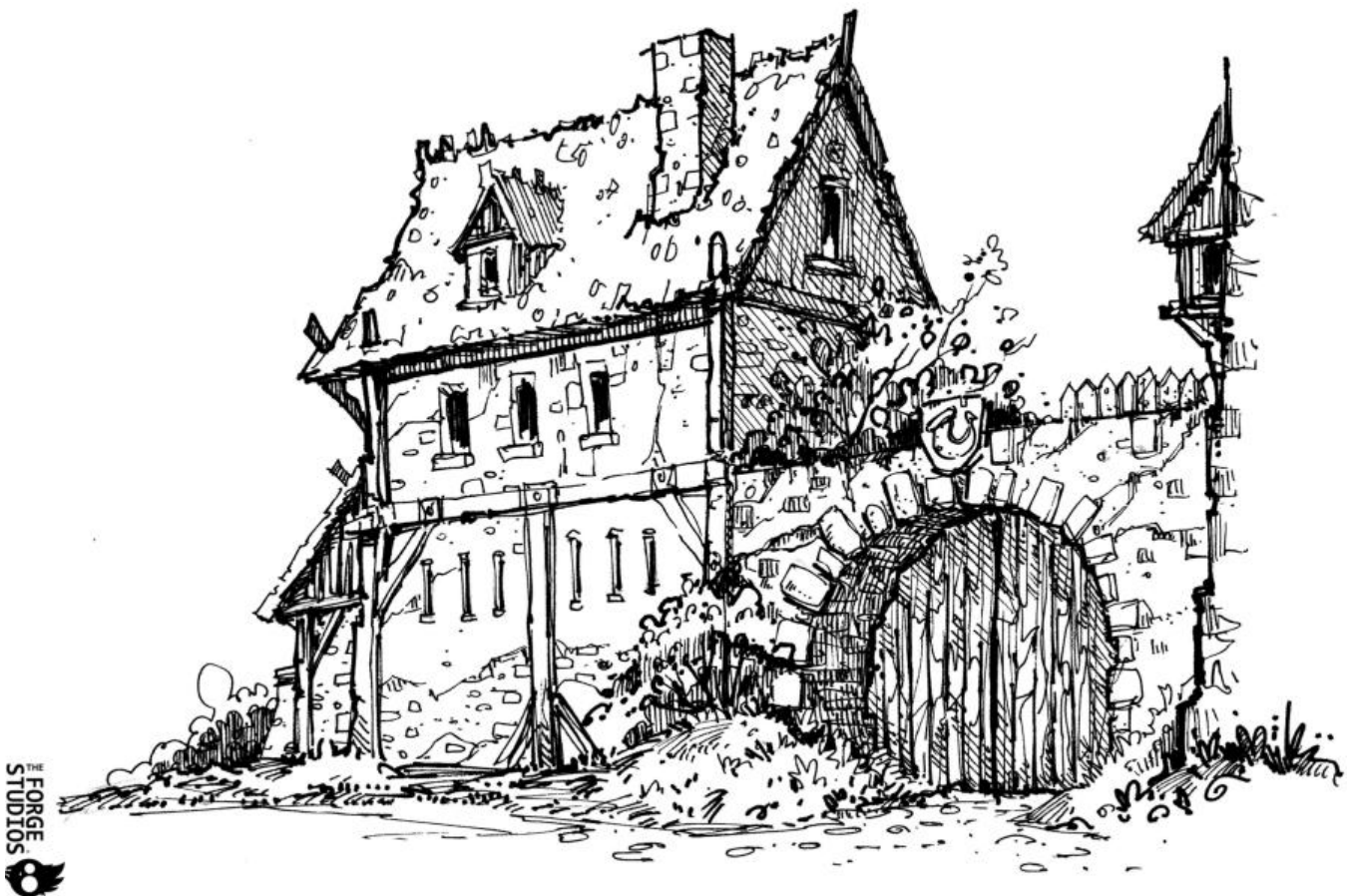
The surrounding land has never been settled. The sole road leading past the Last Resort is a dirt track which is maintained only near the compound. One of the inn's draws is the relative safety it provides travellers in this lonely, dangerous land. With no barony or country claiming the area, it has fallen to lawlessness, exasperated by the increased planar activity at the Last Resort. The Malachite Triad, so named for the orcs, hobgoblins and devils working together to terrorize travellers, maintains tight control of the immediate area around the resort. Balazar has made overtures to the devil leading the gang and uses it to eliminate potential threats to his plans. In addition, two savage, but intelligent, demons escaped from the rift and called a cadre of ordinary goblins to their side. Fortunately, the Malachite Triad has shown no interest in working with the goblins and their leaders and currently compete with them for the best hunting grounds. The more organized Triad has thus far held off the goblins. Finally, the rift has also spit out numerous evil planar threats, which accost travellers in locations the Malachite Triad does not patrol.

The good-aligned residents are aware of the growing menaces and are prepared to hire adventurers to cleanse the surrounding area. They are also willing to fund expeditions into

the rift to cut off the threats at their source and to discover the reason for the rift touching only upon the lower planes.

With the increasing number of planar creatures appearing near the Last Resort, small apocalyptic cults have sprung up in the surrounding area. The cults view the arrival of extraplanar creatures as a sign of a planar war taking place on an earthly battlefield and seek to be on the winning side. To garner favour with these powerful beings, cult members have tried to infiltrate the Last Resort. For the most part, Harlan Arbiton and his retinue prevent them from establishing themselves within, but he has little control over their activities outside, and they often waylay travellers or attempt to sacrifice lone victims.

A nearby forest is home to fey led by those who feel slighted at their exclusion from planar representation. These fey believe their primal realm stands separate from the Material Plane, and they have witnessed fey creatures receiving assignments to one of the planes rather than returning "home." The creatures often "rescue" wanderers from attacks by the creatures controlling the surrounding land. They ask those they save to petition Harlan for an audience to hear them out. They also use the resort's resident elves to engineer events to make a case for a fey participation in the trials.





## NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN THE LAST RESORT

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### 1: PERDITION'S RIFT

*This fissure cuts the ground like a wound inflicted by a titanic creature. A panoply of horrible sights, sounds and smells emanate from the rift.*

The rift predated the Last Resort, but it was hardly more than an innocuous crack in the ground when the inn was founded. As the frequency of planar travel increased, the tear grew, often accompanied by earthquakes and bizarre weather.

Its current growth is almost imperceptible but powerful creatures continue to emerge from the rift and escape into the surrounding land. No one who has ventured into the rift has returned to report on what it contains, but the various good-aligned denizens of the Last Resort are desirous of getting to the bottom of the rift's provenance.

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A scintillating curtain of sickening light shoots from Perdition's Rift, while a guttural choir accompanies the light. PCs pick out their own names in the lyrics. |
| 2  | A pair of orcs carry another orc between them and yell "'S'what you get for defying the chief!" before tossing the orc into the rift.                              |
| 3  | A woman climbs up out of the chasm and whispers, "They're coming" before falling unconscious.  |
| 4  | The rift ejects a sword made of a strange grey metal. Maybe it's not cursed!   |
| 5  | A bloodied gnome stands at the edge of the chasm, grins at the PCs and asks if they would claim he is with them when they enter the inn.                           |
| 6  | A massive black dragon erupts from the rift, breathes a line of acid and is then immediately sucked back in.   |

**Dare to Delve:** Fenric Vogelsong asks the PCs to investigate the rift and uncover why it is growing and the source of the creatures escaping into the world. He promises to provide powerful magical armour and weapons in return for a credible report. (A demon cursed the rift centuries ago as it died in battle against its angelic enemies. The curse binds the rift to the lower planes, and this connection grows whenever a good-aligned extraplanar being uses the gate. Breaking the curse requires destroying the demon's body (which is lost deep in Hell).

### 2: THE GATE

*A modest wooden gate opens outward revealing a courtyard fringed with taverns and inns*

The gate is the only entrance from the road (though there are a couple of low fences allowing easy access, PCs may draw attention by making a surreptitious entry).

Recently, Harlan has stationed a guard here, partially to bar obvious cult members from entering the inn and to watch over the influx of planar creatures emerging from Perdition's Rift. The guard also ensures departing visitors don't accidentally activate the gate's magic and trigger a one-way trip to a random plane. The gate used to require a command word to access to the planes, but it has developed sentience and a wicked sense of humour, sometimes splitting up groups of travellers as they leave. The guard must speak a command word to disable the gate. PCs who learn about this function can use the gate to travel to a plane, but they are at the mercy of the gate's arbitrary destination. The plants in the Everchanging Garden and the orrery provide clues to the gate's destination, (DC 20 Intelligence [arcana] check reveals).

### 3: EVERCHANGING GARDEN

*Vines with a mishmash of fruits and vegetables cover the ground.*

This small garden supplies food for the resort. When the accessible planes change, the fruits and vegetables transform to reflect the plane connected to the gate. The soil composition also shifts to support the plants. Fascinated by the garden's mercurial nature, Huxtaun (NE male elf **druid**) and his fellow elves decided to tend the strange plants. This is not as simple as watering and fertilizing their charges, however, as several evil planar cultivars are carnivorous and attempt to eat the gardeners. The elves make a game of avoiding the deadly plants and sometimes invite good-natured guests to try their luck with the plants.

The elven druids are otherwise protective of their garden and shoo away any creatures they think might harm it. They offer to sell (usually for 20 gp) exotic, but less dangerous, plants to visitors who promise to tend them. Despite his training as a druid, Huxtaun cares little for the ecological impact of introducing potentially invasive planar species into the world. He also has plans to expand his current domain, as he sees it, to include the unclaimed woods surrounding the garden. He envisions adding fey animals and other rare terrestrial beasts to the forest and hopes they transform as the resort shifts from plane to plane.

**A Rare Cultivar:** Huxtaun seeks a lily which grows on a layer of the Abyss. He offers 5,000 gp for the flower, but canny

adventurers can talk him up to 10,000 gp. He describes the lily as a unique beauty in an otherwise blasted landscape. While he doesn't initially reveal the flower induces blinding rage and madness, he does so if questioned directly about its properties.

#### 4: HAVEN

*This inn has a dreamlike quality. Everything is slightly gauzy, a pleasant smell wafts by and a light tune plays in the background.*

Beulah Blue (LG female elf paladin 15) conceals her pride about having the first establishment inside the gate, but she never fails to use the prime location to her advantage. As with the other taverns and inns, a visitor making a close inspection of Haven discovers otherworldly aspects. Haven presents a comforting image, and Beulah expresses her delight when someone decides to stay. She is careful to admonish the less-reputable locales for their sinfulness, since she has discovered this normally results in guests visiting the aforementioned. She tries to convince wayward souls to remain at the resort in the hope they commit selfless acts, easing a transition to a good afterlife.

Beulah's cheery disposition drops when she sees Balazar (location 10), who delights in flaunting his activities in front of the paladin knowing well she can do nothing directly to intervene. She manages a practiced smile, though, but a DC 20 Wisdom check reveals her disdain. If asked about the devil, Beulah muses about putting an end to his nonsense and possibly eliminating him, but immediately makes a show of correcting herself about acting, or having someone act on her behalf, against Balazar. Nonetheless, PCs who manage to remove him find themselves anonymously rewarded for their trouble.

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#### HARLAN ARBITON XVII

LN genderless dwarf **archmage**

*This dwarf has golden skin which seems metallic rather than organic. His eyes also have golden irises.*

**Mannerisms:** Harlan walks stiffly as if he just learned how to walk. He laughs mechanically at jokes.

**Personality:** The dwarf has developed somewhat of a sense of humour over the centuries he has overseen the Last Resort. Harlan finds it amusing to return as his own descendent when he feels the last "Harlan" has overstayed his welcome and devises variations on his personality to trick long-time residents.

**Background:** Harlan has been at the Last Resort from its inception as a waystation for lost souls. His superiors believe he has lost his impartiality and seek to replace him, but no other suitable replacement wants the job.

#### 5: THE PRESERVE

*Animals of all description live in this building which seems considerably larger on the inside.*

This area used to host ascetic meditation on the nature of good in the universe but the celestial who ran it became frustrated with the lack of response to the idea and returned to the planes. Fenric Vogelsong (NG male dwarf druid 16) had grown tired of battle and wanted to settle down. He took over and decided on a more active presentation of harmonious living. Introducing animals from Freedom's Delight (location 6) solved their overcrowding problem and allowed him to demonstrate how different beings can live together. The animals all have otherworldly qualities, making them more gently predisposed toward visitors. Predators must still hunt, but Fenric ensures this takes place out of view of his guests. Staying in the Preserve gives visitors the impression of sleeping under the stars on a clear night. Fenric believes seeing the grandeur of the universe imparts a much more contemplative view than a sterile environment. As a highly nature-oriented person, he has also worked to bring fey nobles into the fold, seeing them as equal planar partners to the other outsiders. A stay is free in terms of money, but Fenric asks for advice on improving the experience as recompense.

#### 6: FREEDOM'S DELIGHT

*The taps flow freely as mugs of ale and mead appear without bidding. A boisterous atmosphere permeates the tavern.*

Less of a place to sleep, Freedom's Delight is a sure destination for those looking to unwind after days of difficult travel (or a harrowing death and revival for a wayward soul). The tavern is under new management after the untimely death of the former proprietor. Rava Thornbane (CG female elf bard 13) is finding her way around, keeping the bar from devolving into complete chaos while allowing patrons to enjoy themselves without unnecessary restrictions. She has no problem directing troublemakers to take their business to Rampage's, despite the proprietor's opposing alignment. Alcohol is reasonably priced at 1 sp per mug or glass and food is typically provided along with the alcohol. As its name implies, Freedom's Delight provides another service to adventurers: freedom from curses, enchantments and literal shackles. Spellcasting services are half price (but purchasers must still pay full price for expensive material components).

**Criminal Investigation:** Rava seeks her predecessor's murderer, but her divinations have only revealed the killer remains on the grounds. She suspects either Balazar or Scourge is behind the killing, but she needs evidence. She has no qualms about PCs taking justice into their own hands, but she still requires proof of the killer's involvement.

## 7: THE ORRERY

*Clockworks of all description cover the walls, and an intricate orrery takes up much of the interior. Despite this, the building seems uncluttered.*

Harlan Arbiton XVII (LN genderless dwarf **archmage**) retires here to contemplate the movements of the multiverse when he is not overseeing trials. While not as relaxing or stimulating as the other locations, the orrery draws several guests, some of whom spend days in rapt study of the device. After spending an hour understanding its intricacies, a PC gains advantage on Intelligence (arcana) checks for 24 hours afterwards.

## 8: COURTYARD

*This central space is devoid of features, but the ground betrays evidence that a large building once stood here.*

Normally, residents and guests congregate here to talk and enjoy the outdoors. However, it also serves as the location for the courthouse which materializes when trials are conducted. A trial determines a wayward soul's ultimate destination in the outer planes. PCs may become involved as character witnesses, and a PC with knowledge of the planes or experience with law might take on an active role as an advocate for a trial's subject. A contingent of powerful dwarf fighters stands guard during a trial

## 9: THE WHERHOUSE

*Boxes and crates are stacked precariously in this large building. They threaten to fall over with the slightest touch.*

Ululul Gallee (CN female half-elf **mage**) runs the Wherehouse, insomuch as an agent of chaos can be said to run something. The half-elf, who takes on a different appearance (changing clothes, gender and skin colour, but never her tell-tale violet eyes) and pronounces her name differently each time she introduces herself, has no designs on souls. Instead, she seeks to sow chaos among the other residents. Her latest scheme involved slaying Rava Thornbane's predecessor and watching as the elf tries to pin the death on one of the evil outsiders.

The building itself houses a myriad of bits and bobs from across the multiverse. Legend states one can find almost any lost item in the Wherehouse, but the search may literally consume the person doing the searching.

## 10: DIABLO INN

*An air of gentility suffuses this lounge replete with lavish furniture and hunting trophies.*

Quentin Balazar (LE **horned devil**) lost (but survived) a battle against a troop of demons. As punishment for failure, he wound

up in this "backwater" world to claim souls for Hell. Balazar makes no attempt to conceal his establishment as a den of all manner of vices and often uses this fact as a selling point to entice visitors inside. He downplays the consequences of indulging at Diablo Inn with the old canard, "What happens at the Last Resort stays at the Last Resort," but he knows how to hook potential victims. Oftentimes, rather than forcing someone to sign over their soul to partake in something they can no longer afford, he suggests pulling a "prank" at one of the good-aligned buildings. These pranks involve poaching a rare animal from the Preserve, poisoning the ale at Freedom's Delight and other destructive acts. Balazar then enacts his endgame, promising to keep the deed secret, or providing protection from retribution, in exchange for signing a meagre contract.

## 11: BLEAK HOUSE

*The ground floor of the building is empty but for cobwebs and broken, mouldy furniture.*

Corrinne Fade (NE female half-orc **mage**) has an outwardly similar outlook to Ululul about obtaining souls and makes a token effort when a potential soul is up for grabs. She doesn't particularly care for guests, except as a trap for fools who decide to investigate the haunted building. She instead has taken the long view and seeks to manoeuvre events to ensure this experiment implodes, and the location becomes the focal point for an apocalyptic planar battle. She is aware of the curse associated with the rift and has been building tension among the good-aligned residents to encourage them to summon more of their kind to the Last Resort. She shares a laugh when Balazar prods one of his pawns to fool or trick the opposition and gently prods Ululul to arrange more murders in the name of chaos. When she isn't carrying out her schemes, she fosters the growth of the nearby cults or works on new and terrible plant blights.

## 12: RAMPAGE'S BAR AND GRILL

*Smashed glass litters the floor of this bar filled with overturned tables and unconscious (or dead) patrons.*

Scourge Rhodain (CE male dwarf barbarian 11) enjoys his role at the Last Resort and oversees this bar. Like many here, he seeks to procure souls, and he hit upon the idea of making wanton destruction seem fun. Every night at Rampage's features a bar brawl promising property destruction and death. The next morning, the bar reassembles itself from the rubble and ashes ready to greet another grand melee. Sure, the deaths are permanent (except for lost souls who reform the next day), but Scourge claims it wouldn't be fun without the risk. He hopes those succumbing to their bloodlust will make for prime candidates for the Abyss when they die.

# THE MUDDER MANSE

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**Words** Mike Welham **Cartography** Dyson Logos

*Hidden in the dismal, swampy depths of the Salt Mire, the Mudded Manse is a well-kept secret among the wealthy and powerful, who travel here to rest and receive treatments for various afflictions. Built around a pit of bubbling mud, reputed to have miraculous cure-all powers, the secluded manse is well worth the trouble of a visit if one is afflicted with a terrible disease. Thanks to the powerful clientele frequenting the manse, a secondary trade in political information has developed, as the comfortable atmosphere encourages visitors to loosen their tongues.*



## THE MUDDED MANSE AT A GLANCE

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Protected to the west by a river and along its other bounds by treacherous, crumbling cliffs leading up to the plateau on which it rests, the Mudded Manse enjoys further safeguards due to its remote location in the swamp. The people of the nearest settlement, Thornhill, regard the manse as a fearful place and rarely speak of it to strangers. The oddest feature of the manse is the bubbling mud underlying the plateau. The mud has healing properties, so the manse's proprietor, Vississi Leeai, has transformed the place into a hospice and spa where the rich or adventurous come to receive miraculous cures.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

**Ruler** Vississi Leeai  
**Population** 21 (8 humans, 4 halflings, 3 half-orcs, 3 sylphs, 2 elves, 1 lizardfolk)  
**Alignments** LN, N, NE  
**Languages** Auran, Common, Draconic, Halfling  
**Resources & Industry** Healing, restoration

### LORE

A PC may know something about the Mudded Manse, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 20 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 20:** Little known to the world, the Mudded Manse is a destination for those who have the protection necessary to reach the swampy location and the money to spend on its services, which include cures for diseases and other maladies.

**DC 25:** Vississi Leeai founded the manse thirty years ago, after she and an associate cleared out a lizardfolk tribe.

**DC 30:** The land on which the manse stands served as the stronghold of a powerful earth elemental in antiquity.

### NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the residents are nothing more than ordinary individuals.

- **Appearance** Despite the omnipresent mud, the manse's residents are always clean; the staff are always cheery.
- **Dress** The staff dress in simple, white robes, but happily change to other colours to suit a client's desires.

Some of the inhabitants, however, are notable:

**Aqalarian of the Grove** (location 10; NE female elf **druid**)  
Aqalarian tends the plants in the grove behind the manse.  
**Demben Indra** (location 7; NG male halfling **acolyte**) Ever jolly, Demben ensures guests are comfortable.

**Pel Gort** (location 1; LN female half-orc [see stat block]) A nonsense warrior, Pel watches over the only path to the manse.

**Sslaryss** (location 3; N female **lizardfolk shaman**) Sslaryss oversees the recovery process for clients with dire illnesses.

**Vississi Leeai** (location 2; NE female sylph) Founder and leader of the Mudded Manse.

**Xar Gort** (location 5; N male half-orc **thug**) Pel's twin brother, Xar has served as masseuse since the manse opened.

**Zev Kaldan** (location 4; N male human **priest**) Zev is responsible for high-profile guests in the private ward.

### NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the Mudded Manse comprises locations of little interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are notable:

1. **Main Approach:** A barely visible trail leads to the Mudded Manse. A path flanked by twenty-foot-high cliffs funnels visitors through an area overseen by trained guards.
2. **Welcome and Mud Well:** Vississi Leeai receives guests here and discusses available treatments and payment.
3. **Convalescents' Wing:** Visitors who have been treated for grievous maladies rest and relax here in semi-privacy.
4. **Private Ward:** This room houses one or two guests who can afford the exorbitant fees for seclusion.
5. **Masseur:** Despite his appearance, Xar Gort's gentle touch removes all aches and pains.
6. **Mud Application:** The primary draw for the manse, this room is where experts apply health-giving mud to patrons.
7. **Waiting Room:** Retinue of clients who are not receiving treatment wait here for their employers.
8. **Quarters:** Most of the manse's staff remains on site; Vississi ensures the comfort of her staff in this crowded room.
9. **Administration:** Vississi Leeai's office and payment storage.
10. **The Grove:** This beautiful shaded area provides respite from the surrounding swamp's oppressive heat.
11. **Mud Hole:** Rarely, a mud elemental escapes from the hole.

### MARKETPLACE

The following items and services are for sale:

**Consumables** *potion of healing* (50 gp), *potion of greater healing* (150 gp), *mud of longevity* (10,000 gp; works like the *potion*), *mud of vitality* (6,000 gp; works like the *potion*), *spell scrolls* (varying cost; any transmutation cantrip, 1st or 2nd level spell)

- **Spellcasting** Arcane and divine spellcasting of up to 7th-level.

## EVENTS

While the PCs are at the Mudded Manse, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

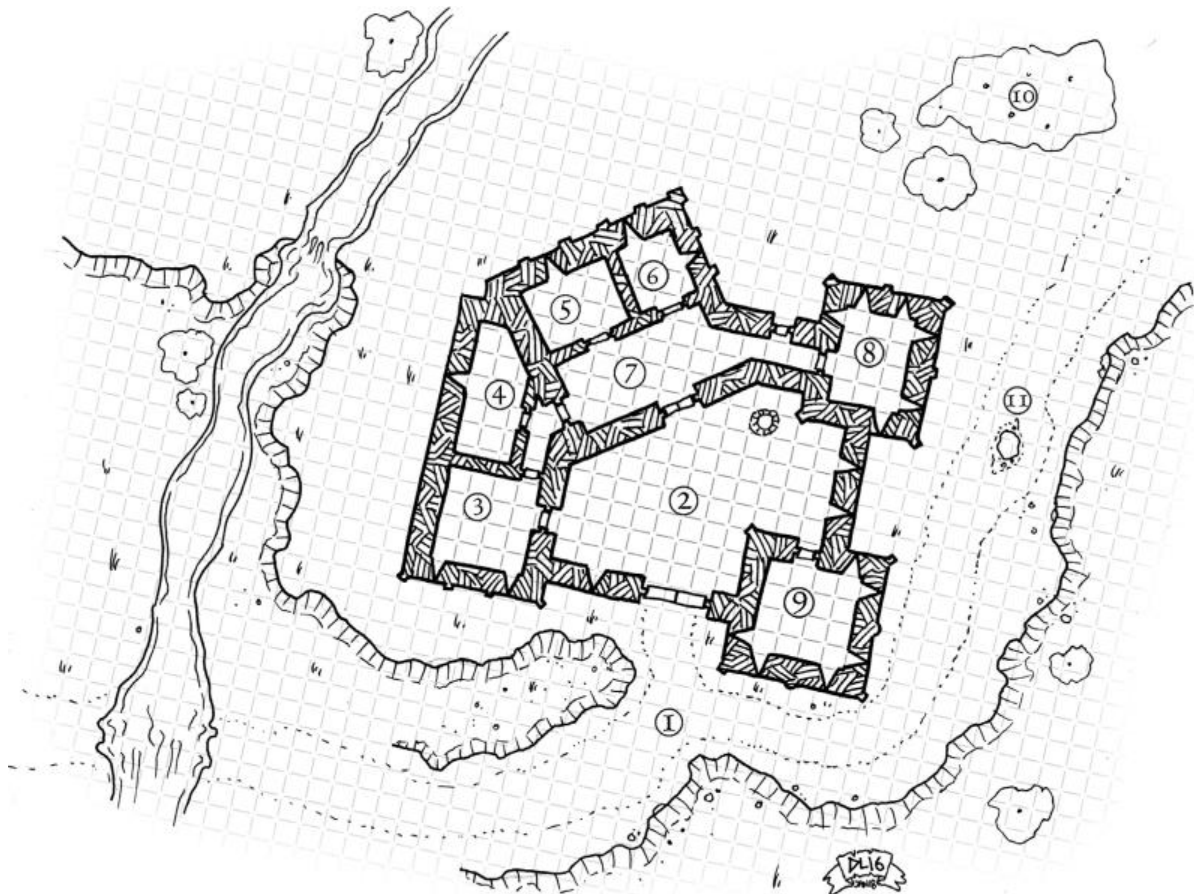
| D6 | EVENT   |
|----|---|
| 1  | A murder of crows, numbering in the thousands, circles the grounds for an hour, blotting out the sun. Afterwards, they disperse in all directions.  |
| 2  | An earthquake shakes the manse's foundations. Terrified clients flee the building as the employees attempt to calm them. Vississi determinedly clutches her staff as she storms out the north exit.   |
| 3  | Zev leaves the private ward in a panic, grabbing anyone who can help him, as mud used to treat acid scarring on a guest has solidified and threatens to suffocate him.  |
| 4  | Aedwen Sirett arrives from Thornhill to ask Vississi to provide aid for villagers suffering from a deadly disease.  |
| 5  | A powerful noble's envoy arrives and demands the manse clear of patrons before her arrival, raising objections from clients. Vississi confers with the envoy who whispers to her for a minute. The sylph offers full refunds and insists everyone depart by tomorrow night. |
| 6  | Pel drags a pair of gnomes to the administrative office. Eavesdroppers hear Vississi briefly ranting about spies before telling the half-orc to take them to Aqalarian to deal with them.   |

## WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While researching the Mudded Manse, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

| D6 | RUMOUR  |
|----|---|
| 1  | You don't want to go to the grove when the druid's not around; some of the vines there would strangle you if it weren't for his intervention.           |
| 2* | The neighbouring lizardfolk believe the manse defiles the swamp, and they are planning a massive assault to destroy the building.                       |
| 3  | Aqalarian has put feelers out for information about a powerful magic item that controls earth elementals.   |
| 4  | This section of the swamp shares a thin border with the elemental plane of earth. It seems odd someone with air elemental heritage would be drawn here. |
| 5  | Be careful what you say around the staff. Selling secrets is another way they generate revenue for the manse.   |
| 6* | Vississi and Aqalarian are the sole remaining members of an adventuring party that amassed a great fortune before the group fell to deadly in-fighting. |

\*False rumour



## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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### 1: MAIN APPROACH

Three miles from the village of Thornhill a faint trail cuts through underbrush and fords the shallow, sluggish Mucktwist River. The trail continues through brambles and cloying mud before reaching a low, muddy plateau. At the turn where the trail rises, travellers can see a single-storey, mud-brick building. Before visitors can go further, they must answer Pel Gort (LN female half-orc [see stat block]) questions to her satisfaction. Pel and four archers (LN human **scout**) train their bows on arrivals while she interrogates them.

Other approaches are possible, but the way is treacherous. The mud comprising the plateau's cliffs falls is unstable (DC 20 Strength (Athletics)). The western access gradually leads up to the plateau, but stirges and lizardfolk infest that way. The east and north also present their own hazards, described below. Additionally, Pel has set another patrol of three archers to watch for troublemakers from the west. Pel is much more comfortable with a well-armed group who make their presence known, since most of the clientele are wealthy enough to afford the protection necessary to traverse hostile terrain. Those who try to sneak onto the grounds meet with harsh penalties.

### 2: WELCOME AND MUD WELL

Once Pel has vetted guests, she sends one of her archers to alert Vississi Leeai (NE female sylph) to their arrival. A pair of guards (N human **knight**) stand inside the manse's entrance. The stone double doors are usually closed but unlocked. If the staff are aware of an incursion, they lock the doors (DC 20 Dexterity (thieves' tools) unlocks).

Vississi greets all welcome arrivals and offers to show them around the spa. The first stop is a well set in the northeast corner of this room. Light grey mud bubbles at the bottom of the fifty-foot-deep well, and a pristine stone bucket rests on the well's shelf. A pleasant fragrance emanates from the well.

Vississi is awake at all hours to welcome guests to the spa. On rare occasions when she sleeps or prepares spells, she delegates greeting duty to Aqalarian, who despises it.

The doors leading to the waiting room to the northeast are usually unlocked, unless the manse is under attack. One of the guards at the front doors gently dissuades anyone from moving into the convalescents' ward. The stone door leading to the

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#### IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

A PC suffering from an exotic and seemingly incurable disease could discover the restorative properties of the mud at the Muddled Manse and must negotiate with Vississi for the fee. Alternatively, the party repels an attack by rampaging mud elementals and traces them to the Manse.

administration office is closed and always locked, even when Vississi conducts business in the office. Only she and Aqalarian have keys (DC 30 Dexterity [open lock] opens).

### 3: CONVALESCENTS' WING

One of the advantages to the Muddled Manse's location is that higher profile officials suffering from horrific maladies can ostensibly go on holiday, while receiving a cure out of sight of their subjects. In keeping with the manse's policy, guests in this area are afforded privacy, protected by thick linen sheets that form bays in this room.

The lizardfolk Sslaryss (N female **lizardfolk shaman**) helps ensure privacy by keeping traffic to a minimum while tending to each guest in turn. Tired of patching up her tribespeople's wounds after unnecessary skirmishes, she won Vississi over and joined the staff five years ago. Much to the surprise of the spa's clients, she has an excellent bedside manner. Her calm bearing and healing prowess speed up the recovery process. Her abilities are so well appreciated she often must turn down offers to become the departing guest's personal physician.

### 4: PRIVATE WARD

For guests who value their privacy and solitude, Vississi converted the former kitchen into a private room, for which guests pay handsomely. In the rare instance of two demands for seclusion, the sylph uses *stone shape* to fashion a wall separating the room into two chambers.

Zev Kaldan (N male human **priest**) exclusively sees to the care of his charge(s), begrudgingly bringing in Sslaryss for consultation if something drastic happens. Otherwise, the bard spends his days entertaining guests with stories or music, or in response to other requests made by his charges. Discretion is his watchword; despite whatever secrets accidentally slip from guests into Vississi's clutches elsewhere in the manse, nothing said in Zev's presence spreads any further. In his duties, he sometimes finds himself the recipient of devastating secrets that could topple kingdoms.

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#### DAILY LIFE AT THE MANSE

A typical day sees the guests waited on by staff, who see to their treatments and courses of relaxation. Vississi, when she is not handling the spa's daily business, makes sure to stop and check in on each guest to ensure they feel welcome and have everything they need. Low-ranking staff make liberal use of *prestidigitation* to ensure the building remains sparkling clean.

Most clients who use the private ward leave within a week, since they cannot afford to tarry here. Thanks to the place's charms and the promises of seclusion and secrecy, many royals and obscenely wealthy clients make this an annual destination.

## 5: MASSEUR

Three massage tables, along with a bath, fill much of the room; Xar Gort (N male half-orc **thug**) oversees them. Twin brother to Pel, Xar realized he had little aptitude for combat, but surprised everyone in his adventuring group with his ability to massage away the aches and pains of battle, eliminate fatigue and bring relaxation before another day of exploration and fighting. As fortune would have it, Xar's adventuring group found the manse. Vississi recognized the half-orc's talents and offered him job.

Xar works with clients waiting for their mud treatments and has a two-person team (halfling **commoners**) assisting him. He also dabbles in alchemy, creating liniments that decrease the severity of exhaustion by one step. He sells them for 100 gp per bottle, half of which goes to the manse. Any given creature may only benefit from one of these potions once in any given week.

### POSSIBLE REASONS FOR VISIT

There is a wide variety of reasons to come to the Mudded Manse, with the magically-infused mud offering a plethora of strange effects to the guests. To quickly determine a guest's reason for visiting the Mudded Manse, roll on the following table or choose a fitting motivation.

| D20 | MOTIVATION   |
|-----|--|
| 1   | Cure an embarrassing disease contracted from an affair.                                      |
| 2   | Procure sensitive information.   |
| 3   | Meet up with co-conspirators.  |
| 4   | Magically change sex. (d4: 1-2: temporarily; 3-4: permanently)                               |
| 5   | Magically change race. (d8: 1-2: human, 3: Halfling, 4: gnome, 5: dwarf, 6: elf, 7-8: other) |
| 6   | Cure a crippling disfigurement.  |
| 7   | Capture a living slyph.  |
| 8   | Purchase specific mud for master.  |
| 9   | Receive a Five Winds mission briefing from Vississi.   |
| 10  | Visit a relative.  |
| 11  | Long-time treatment for trauma.  |
| 12  | Honeymoon.   |
| 13  | Diplomatic mission from the elemental earth lords.   |
| 14  | Incurable disease.   |
| 15  | Hereditary curse.  |
| 16  | Meet up with an illicit affair.  |
| 17  | Purchase contraband.   |
| 18  | Discuss a theological insight that may be heresy.  |
| 19  | Assassinate another guest.   |
| 20  | Kill Vississi and burn the manse to the ground.  |

## 6: MUD APPLICATION CHAMBER

The whole purpose of the Mudded Manse coalesces here. While the mud has power in and of itself, it requires clerics to unlock that power. Two trusted staff members (sylphs, use stats of **air elemental**), add spells such as *lesser restoration* and *remove curse* to the mud before applying it to a client; the mud grants an additional save against the effect, which is made at advantage. For more powerful afflictions, Sslaryss imbues the mud herself.

An endowed application of mud persists for one hour after it has been enchanted. In exceptional cases, and after taking an extortionate fee, allow the mud to leave the premises. This usually is done to save the life of a well-known client who has succumbed to his or her infirmity before reaching the manse.

Sslaryss has engaged in some debate with Vississi about using the mud to return patients to life, mostly by appealing to the sylph's greed, but Vississi has adamantly refused to allow it. PCs who have lost a compatriot may be able to convince Sslaryss to attempt it (DC 30 Charisma (Persuasion) succeeds). She makes no guarantees, but is genuinely curious about the results.

### PEL GORT

*Medium humanoid (human, orc), lawful neutral*

**Armor Class** 16 (breastplate)

**Hit Points** 67 (9d8 +27)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 14 (+2) | 17 (+3) | 16 (+3) | 15 (+2) | 13 (+1) | 7 (-2) |

**Saving Throws** Str +4, Con +5

**Skills** Athletics +4, Intimidation +1

**Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., passive perception 11

**Languages** Common, Orc

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Deadly Accuracy.** When Pel scores a critical hit with a bow, she can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the extra damage of the critical hit.

**Pinning Shot (short or long rest recharge).** Pel can restrain opponents with her arrows. When seh deals piercing damage to a creature adjacent to a solid object, it must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained until the end of its next turn.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** Pel makes two attacks.

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

**Longbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 +3) piercing damage.



## 7: WAITING ROOM

A lush and brightly decorated waiting room serves the retinue and guards of the guests who come to the Mudded Manse. Here, Demben Indra (NG male halfling **acolyte**) works tirelessly to ensure everyone is comfortable. A stocked bar covers the southeast wall, and a small stove used by Demben to brew tea and coffee stands in the northwest corner. Another pair of halflings (halfling **commoner**) provides spa amenities, including manicures, pedicures and hair styling. While most guards gruffly refuse such services, attendants used to courtly life welcome them. Guarded doors to the north lead outside.

## 8: QUARTERS

While Vississi has considered expanding the building to accommodate more staff, she has not done so at Aqalarian's request. Thus, over a dozen people share this cramped space, overloaded with bunkbeds and chests (to hold their belongings). Staff who do not mind sleeping in the muggy climate and receive insect repellent from the druid camp out between the building and the grove.

## 9: ADMINISTRATION

If the services requested are atypical, Vississi takes the discussion of such requests here. She is polite but firm when it comes to negotiating prices, and never leaves a client alone here. PCs who break into the office must bypass a *lightning bolt* to access her desk, which contains correspondence from an organization referring to itself as the Breath of Five Winds. The letters caution the sylph to bide her time and watch for earth elemental incursions.

## 10: THE GROVE

Aqalarian (NE female elf **druid**) tends this grove and rarely interacts with guests or staff. The aloof elf sometimes must greet newcomers when Vississi is otherwise occupied, and she does her best to grit her teeth and put on a good show. She much prefers to stay here where she can mould her pets, a trio of **vine blights** she feeds with trespassers and the occasional stray lizardfolk. The vines are docile while she is in the grove.



## 11: MUD HOLE

Mud bubbles up from this hole. Worse, the hole spews out the occasional mud elemental (**earth elemental**) which fortunately does not attack anyone on the grounds. The elementals wait at the nearby cliff, acting as incidental protection against trespassers, but occasionally wander out into the marsh. While the sylph grumbles about the creatures, she seems afraid to act against them.

## VISSISSI AND THE FIVE WINDS

Vississi Leeai is an agent of the Breath of Five Winds, a mysterious organization with the purpose of destroying earth elemental presences in the world. Vississi associated herself with various adventuring groups, guiding them toward her goal of defeating earth creatures and cults springing up around the worship of powerful earth elemental nobles. Upon discovering the plateau from which a mighty earth elemental ruled and where it met its end, the Breath of Five Winds dispatched Vississi to exploit the area and ensure the elementals would never return to power. With her trusted companion, Aqalarian, she exploits the elemental corpse's residual power to amass wealth.

**Appearance:** Vississi has long, flowing hair that flutters in a breeze that is not always there. She has piercing grey eyes that flash emerald green when she becomes angry.

**Distinguishing Features:** A tattoo of five differently coloured swirling winds behind her right ear marks her as an agent of the Breath of Five Winds.

**Personality:** When dealing with clients, Vississi is pleasant and charming. However, her demeanour becomes nasty toward trespassers and earth-based casters.

**Mannerisms:** Regardless of the situation, Vississi always makes sweeping gestures. She makes bombastic display when casting her spells.

# TIBOL-KORRIN

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**Words** Mike Welham **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

*The Strait of Tibol-Korrin provides seafaring merchants a relatively safe and easy way to reach the otherwise hard-to-reach, landlocked rival baronies of Tibol and Korrin. A decade ago, the strategically important strait became the focal point of a war between the two rival baronies when a dispute over equitable distribution of tariffs dramatically escalated when a Tibolian ship mysteriously sank (allegedly through the actions of Korrin saboteurs). The war brought shipping through the strait to a halt, as no captains dared to venture into range of the many siege weapons covering the strait and its approaches. A recent truce borne of economic necessity, and a blossoming romance between opposing, high-ranking commanders, allows ships to once again safely traverse the strait. However, unbeknownst to almost all, the fighting dislodged ancient and dark relics, portending the return of things best left forgotten.*

## STRAIT OF TIBOL-KORRIN AT A GLANCE

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**Ruler** Kir Teggin (Tibol side) and Lyriana Lassiter (Korrin side)  
**Population** 87 (63 humans, 5 dwarves, 7 half-elves, 4 half-orcs, 6 halflings)  
**Alignments** LN, N, CN  
**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven  
**Resources & Industry** Transport, trade and relics

For hundreds of years, raiders preyed upon the vessels passing through the Strait of Tibol-Korrin. Only the most desperate ship's captains risked paying off the raiders for a shaky guarantee of safe passage. Seventy years ago, the small, landlocked baronies of Tibol and Korrin simultaneously sought to control the straits. Advancing from opposite directions, the baronies' armies routed the disorganized raiders and secured their respective sides of the strait. A mutually beneficial pact ensured both countries gained from what many seafarers saw as a more predictable form of extortion, and both baronies enjoyed their fair share of the tolls generated by vessels passing through the strait.

Greed, however, eventually sundered the pact and war broke out after a ship flying Tibol's colours sank and the Tibolians blamed Korrin for its sinking. As the two sides bombarded each other, travel through the strait became too dangerous. The conflict has now ended, and each side is now picking up the pieces and working to re-establish safe passage. The process of recovering treasure from sunken ships has revealed a trove of ancient artefacts further restoring both nations' treasuries.

### LORE

A PC may know something about Tibol-Korrin, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 10:** The Strait of Tibol-Korrin enables swift travel to the otherwise landlocked baronies of Tibol and Korrin. Until recently, the two baronies fought for control of the strait and the fighting made the straits too dangerous for merchantmen to use.

**DC 15:** A secret romance between opposing, highly placed officers became common knowledge and led to a truce. Their upcoming marriage will seal a treaty between the two baronies.

**DC 20:** Not everyone wants to see an end to the war. Both forts' commanders have suffered assassination attempts.

### MARKETPLACE

The following items are for sale:

- **Consumables** *elixir of water breathing* (450 gp)
- **Weapons & Armour** *+1 shield* (500 gp), *+1 chain mail* (2,500 gp)

Additionally, the following services are available:

- **Crafting** arrows, bows, leather armour and goods

### NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than ordinary individuals.

- **Appearance** Soldiers stationed at the strait still show scars and weariness derived from years of combat.
- **Dress** Predominantly military uniforms have given way to practical clothing befitting the rugged environment.
- **Nomenclature** *male* Edwin, Galan, Rogar; *female* Bellice, Mavra, Vennie; *family* Allerin, Bailey, Lassiter, Teggin.

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Tibol-Korrin, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

#### D6 RUMOUR

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | Because of the assassination attempts against the two forts commanders, the soldiers regard strangers who tarry too long with suspicion.  |
| 2* | Blood bubbled up from the ground at Bailey Farm, covering all the crops. I'd avoid the turnips if I were you.   |
| 3  | Tibol's chancellor and her husband are visiting soon to meet their son and Korrin's Commander Lassiter and to give their blessing to their upcoming union.                                    |
| 4* | The reason the mad hermit keeps covered up is because all his flesh is rotting off.   |
| 5  | I once saw a large, serpentine shape through the early morning fog—strangely—inland.  |
| 6  | Lightning is a common occurrence during storms here, even during the winter. Lately, though, the lightning is an eerie shade of green and a sound akin to a screaming banshee accompanies it. |

\*False rumour

### IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

The Strait of Tibol-Korrin connect two large bodies of water. It significantly reduces travel time to the two, but the recently ended hostilities baronies made using it too dangerous. The discovery of ancient artefacts beneath the waves could portends the awakening of an ancient evil—something good-aligned PCs would no doubt want to stop.

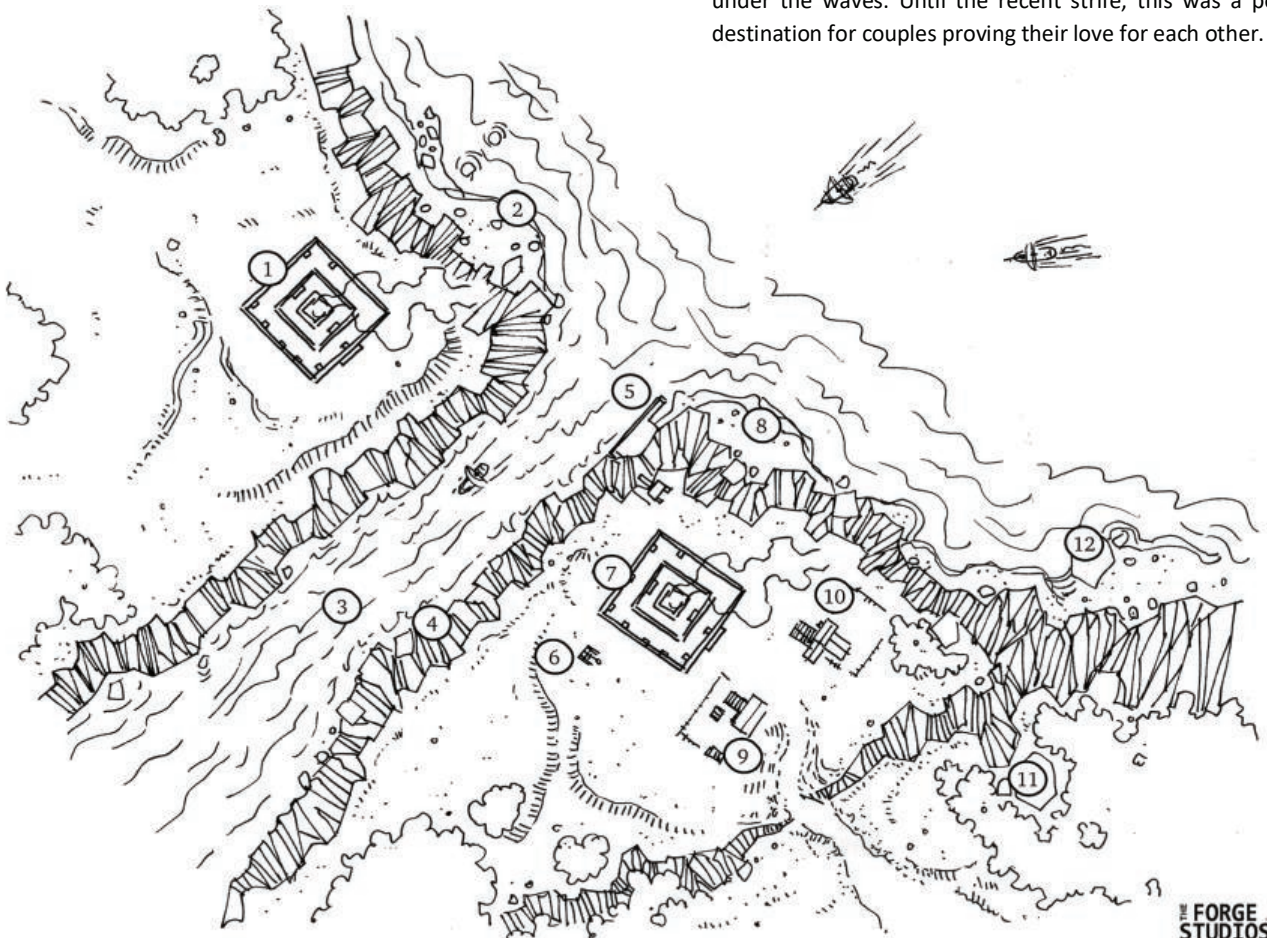
## NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Most of the Strait of Tibol-Korrin comprises locations of no interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are exceptional:

1. **Fort Teggin:** Fort Teggin is the only permanent structure on the Tibol side of the strait. During the war, the Tibolians excavated beneath the fort to create barracks. They even tried to tunnel under the straits, but abandoned the attempt.
2. **Tibol-Side Beach:** Gentle sands allow ships to beach here. The sheer cliffs on either side of the strait, and for several miles inland make it difficult to drop anchor anywhere else on this side of the strait.
3. **Delver's Depths:** Site of the sinking of the Tibolian ship which kicked off the recent war, this part of the strait holds myriad ancient treasures.
4. **Mad Hermit's Cove:** Many residents claim the Mad Hermit—no one knows his actual name—has lived here for over 200 years. The entrance to his home is usually underwater, and traps guard the tunnels to his sanctum.
5. **The Gateway:** The raiders once controlling the strait carved a gate from a natural outcropping and used it to control traffic.

The gate pivots from the Korrin side of the strait, but, even during the war, they did not use it to restrict sea traffic.

6. **Peacebound Catapult:** A reminder of the recent warfare across the strait, this catapult is no longer functional. Flowers are strewn about the siege weapon as a sign of peace.
7. **Korrin Bastion:** Despite being designed by a different architect, this fortress's upper works mirror Fort Teggin. Badly damaged during the war, it is undergoing extensive repairs.
8. **Korrin-Side Beach:** A preponderance of crabs wander this beach, which serves as a waystation, similarly to the Tibol side, for ships entering or leaving the strait.
9. **Bailey Farm:** The land here on the Korrin side of the strait is surprisingly fertile and supports root vegetables and legumes grown by the halfling Bailey family.
10. **Huford's Orchard:** Recently widowed Bertram Huford tends rare trees bearing a citrus fruit with a spiky skin.
11. **Griffon Roost:** A mated pair of griffons returns here every two years to rear their young.
12. **Lovers' Leap:** A local myth tells of a young couple fleeing from their families. They dove hand-in-hand into the sea from this flat rock, transformed into merfolk, and lived happily together under the waves. Until the recent strife, this was a popular destination for couples proving their love for each other.





## LIFE IN THE STRAIT OF TIBOL-KORRIN

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The forces of the Korrin and Tibol work to repair the damage wrought to their towers during the recent war. While Korrin's took the most damage, they have more people and a better local infrastructure which enables them to recover quicker than their once-enemies.

Even with the truce in place and the efforts of both Lyriana Lassiter (location 7; N female human **knight**) and Galan Teggin (location 1; LN male human **veteran**), distrust between the two sides persists. The recent assassination attempts, one on each of the pair of lovers, has not helped calm moods.

### TRADE & INDUSTRY

Now war is no longer raging and naval traffic has resumed, the residents rebuild and return to the task of managing traffic through the strait. Most captains only see, and grumble about, the charge of 50 gp per 100 feet of ship length, but are unaware of divers who clear ship-foundering rocks from the strait. Each fort offers inexpensive food and lodging, and residents buy goods from passing ships.

The recent finds in Delver's Depths have created a secondary industry. Artefacts predating the current civilization have drawn the interest of collectors and historians alike, and both sides share equitably in the exorbitant prices the artefacts command. As the soldiers and workers have no experience with such matters, specialists from Tibol and Korrin have arrived to evaluate the items and determine their value.

### LAW & ORDER

As both sides recover from the recent conflict and because of the recent assassination attempts on Lassiter and Teggin, the strait is under a form of martial law. Both sides enforce curfews and only soldiers can leave the forts at night. Visitors have a not-so-subtle shadow while they conduct business here.

### CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

While both sides give nominal attention to their national holidays, the strait has three major festivals. Founder's Day is the most important and celebrates the liberation of the strait from the raiders plaguing it. Until the start of the war, it was a joint celebration, which grew ever more ostentatious as each side tried to outdo the other in pageantry. As a nod to the event's import and a symbol of reunification, the wedding between Lassiter and Teggin is planned for next Founder's Day.

The beginning and end of winter also mark vital observances among the residents. As winter starts, a sombre affair led by clerics to winter deities beseeches the deities to keep the strait free of ice. At winter's end, the residents celebrate and give thanks to the deities for protecting the strait.

## LOCATION DRESSING

Use this table, to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about the Strait of Tibol-Korrin.

### D20 DRESSING/EVENT

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Two soldiers carry a banner declaring the upcoming marriage of Lyriana Lassiter and Galan Teggin.  |
| 2  | A rock calves from one of the cliffs lining the strait and crashes into the water below.   |
| 3  | One of the griffons roosting nearby takes off, two of its young trailing behind. The group circles the Korrin side thrice before heading out to sea.     |
| 4  | Black clouds build over the sea; once they coalesce, massive strokes of lightning strike the water.  |
| 5  | Shouts reach the PCs from the Tibol side beach, as a ship's captain argues about the fee to enter the strait.  |
| 6  | An alarm bell sounds from Fort Teggin and a flurry of activity occurs at the beach, as soldiers and workers swim out to a nearby ship which lists badly. |
| 7  | Everywhere the PCs travel outside, a gull lands nearby and croaks, "Your doom is nigh." None of the locals see this as anything out of the ordinary.     |
| 8  | A loud clacking sound comes from the Korrin beach as dozens of crabs face the rising sun and pinch their claws in unison.                                |
| 9  | A tremor shakes the Tibol side of the strait. It is apparent this is out of the ordinary by the residents' alarmed reactions                             |
| 10 | Tibolians and Korrins, arms interlinked, sing about peace and love while standing around the Peacebound Catapult.  |
| 11 | A near-rhythmic crashing of waves against the cliffs breaks through the gentle roar of the sea.  |
| 12 | A strong wind blows through the strait creating an eerie whistling as it passes through the many openings along the cliffs.                              |
| 13 | Incoherent ranting drifts upward from the Mad Hermit's home. The residents ignore the shouts.  |
| 14 | A variety of construction sounds come from Korrin Bastion, punctuated by the occasional epithet.   |
| 15 | A young roc chases a flock of seabirds; the birds' distressed cries create a cacophony as they pass.   |
| 16 | The wind carries the strong citrus scent of Spikefruit from Huford's Orchard.  |
| 17 | Workers strain at a pulley to lift a heavy crate from the Tibol beach.   |
| 18 | A pair of crabs scuttle up the cliff from the Korrin beach and fight each other once they reach the top.   |
| 19 | The wind kicks up a bracing spray of salt water to the top of the cliff.   |
| 20 | The fire pit atop the Korrin Bastion gutters and spews smoke. Workers rush to relight the fire.  |

## THE SURROUNDING LOCALITY

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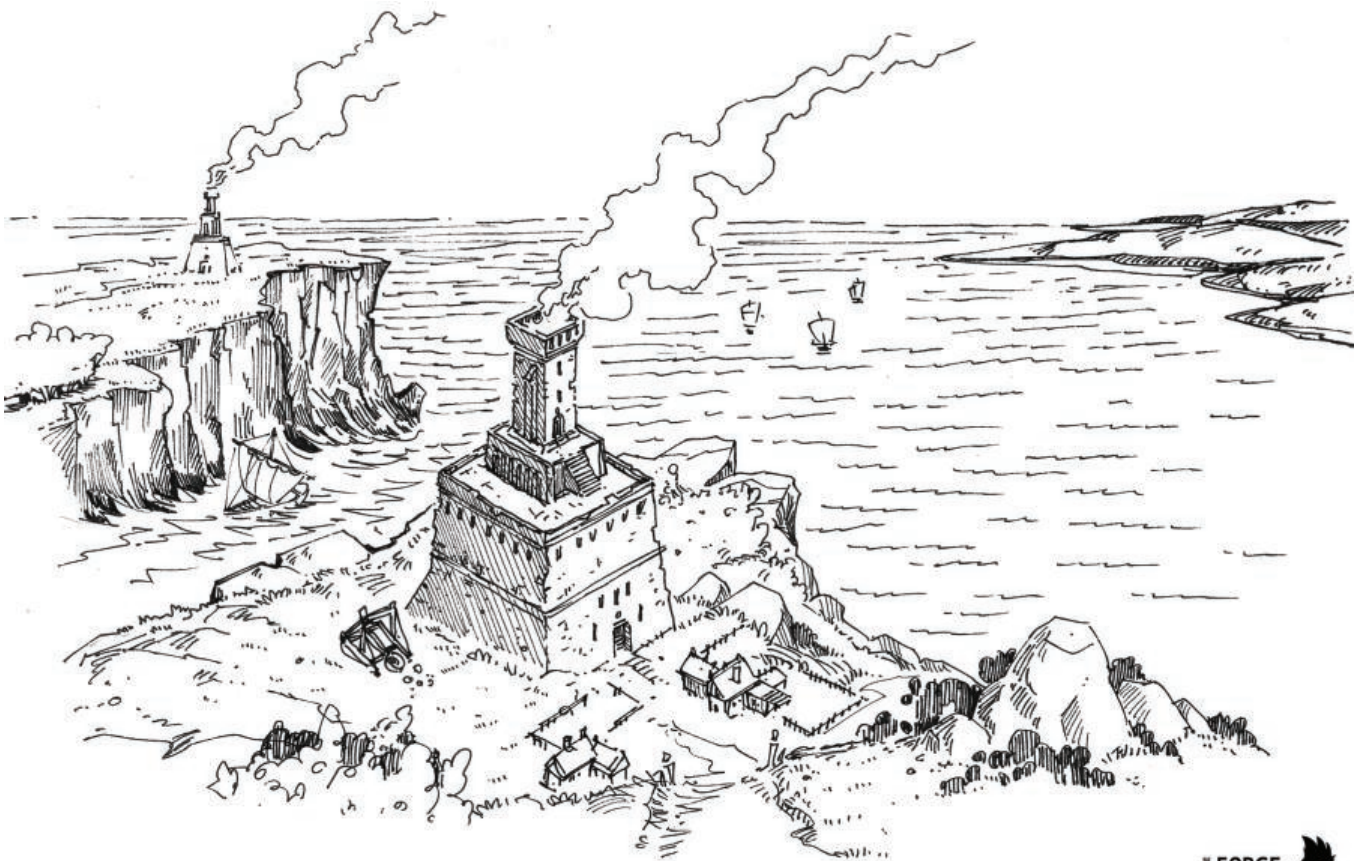
The strait itself runs for miles and grows wider as it reaches the Basalt Sea. The sea is relatively tranquil with no major aquatic monsters to speak of. The dangers come from the untamed wilderness at its shore; ships avoid the shoreline as they make their way inland.

The ocean contains several notable dangers, including a sea dragon dwelling roughly two miles away from the strait's entrance. The heavy sea traffic drove many predators away, but they have returned as the recent conflict brought shipping to a halt. Sharks and sea serpents hunt the shipping lanes, but the resumption of trade should drive the larger creatures away. Before the conflict, the residents supplemented goods they traded for with tuna and other fish, but lately fishing has become as dangerous as hunting game animals in the nearby woods. Fortunately, the crabs provide good meat, so the inhabitants have resorted to eating what they don't sell.

The surrounding wilderness, known colloquially as the Rancid Forest, is largely untamed and overrun with bandits. Tibol and Korrin built forts not as defences against each other, but as bulwarks against humanoid and monstrous incursions. The ousted raiders moved into the woods and joined up with the orc and goblinoid creatures living therein. Until the Tibolian and

Korrin arrival, no other power desired to clear out the woods. Since other baronies and countries have access to large bodies of water, they saw no need to open the strait. Landlocked Tibol and Korrin, however, have a vested interest in ensuring free access to the sea. The two baronies had a joint plan to expand their influence and drive the creatures and raiders out of the wilderness, especially as they attack ships outside the confines of the strait. The recently ended conflict thwarted their plans, but they intend to return to the task when they finish their rebuilding. Prior to the recent hostilities, small outposts (the largest numbering just over 20 folk) had popped up in the Rancid Forest, but they have had difficulty repelling the newly emboldened bandits.

Finally, the cave system within the cliffs lining the strait has their own ecosystem. The Mad Hermit has carved out one cave as his home, and no one dares to remove him from it, partially out of fear they will catch whatever malady torments him. Most of the caves are submerged, but the further inland the tunnels go, the drier they get. Rumours speak of a tunnel connecting to a vast underground sea, but no one has been able to verify the truth of the stories.



## NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN THE STRAIT OF TIBOL-KORRIN

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### 1: FORT TEGGIN

*Standing four storeys high, this white marble fort features a firepit, spotlight and large spyglass on its roof.*

Fort Teggin serves as government centre, residential space and visitors' accommodations for the Tibol side of the strait. Kir Teggin (LN male human cleric 7), leader of the Tibol faction, and his younger brother Galan (LN male human **veteran**) dwell here along with a small garrison of soldiers and workers. When the fort housed more soldiers, they excavated a basement level, but are now in the process of filling it in. The fort sustained less damage than its counterpart, so most non-Korrin visitors lodge here (1 gp per night, including meals).

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT   |
|----|---|
| 1  | Nearby walls ooze a near translucent slime. The slime is harmless but creates a tingling sensation when touched. It evaporates within a minute. |
| 2  | The PCs overhear a snippet of conversation about "taking care of the Galan problem." The conspirators vanish, if pursued.                       |
| 3  | One of the soldiers asks a PC to buy a Spikefruit from Huford's Orchard and promises to pay them double.  |
| 4  | The floor caves in, exposing the basement level below.  |
| 5  | Soldiers grab a visitor and drag him away. If asked, they state he was acting suspiciously.   |
| 6  | A jade idol sculpted like a serpent with hundreds of insectile legs appears in a PC's pack.   |

### 2: TIBOL-SIDE BEACH

*The water runs deep up to this rocky beach, which has several torches (unlit during the day) near the water's edge. Awnings hanging from nearby cliffs protect workers from the sun.*

This beach has no dock, but the water is deep enough to allow most ships to anchor near enough to the beach to disembark without the use of rowboats. For ships flying the Tibolian flag, this beach works as a safe berth. Other ships stop here or along the Korrin beach, depending on traffic. The availability of lodging on the Tibol side makes this a more popular destination. Only one permanent ladder climbs the cliff to Fort Teggin from the beach; there used to be two and a pulley system for cargo, but the Tibolians tore these down during the conflict.

### 3: DELVER'S DEPTHS

*This section of the strait appears unremarkable, until a diver pops up from beneath the waves.*

When the war between Tibol and Korrin broke out, each side attempted to send ships on resupply runs. Most of the ships went down in this section of the strait, and it quickly became clear no ships would survive travel through the strait, even those flying neutral flags. Oddly, during the regular siege weapon duels, ammunition would randomly fly toward this area, as if drawn here.

After the conflict ended, Tibol and Korrin undertook joint salvage missions to recover lost treasure and the bodies of those who perished at sea. A surprise awaited the first divers, as they discovered treasure of great antiquity. A pair of jade idols of humanoids with distorted features were the first finds, and soon afterwards an eel-like statuette was recovered. The treasures bear inscriptions predating known languages and defying divination spells cast to translate them. While both Tibol and Korrin wish to keep their find secret, they have sent some of the items to certain learned sages to determine their origins. Some of these experts have had difficulty containing their excitement at the discoveries and are planning to visit the straits soon. The soldiers and other residents are focused on rebuilding, so they have spent very little time on a treasure hunt. The authorities may allow treasure seekers to search the area, provided they have proper credentials and do not disturb waterborne traffic.

**Return to Sender:** One of the antiquarians researching a relic from Delver's Depths has suffered horrifying nightmares related to the item. Convinced the artefact is cursed, he believes it must be returned to the depths. He entrusts the item to the party for its safe return.

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#### GALAN TEGGIN

LN male human **veteran**

*This tall man keeps his red hair short and beard neatly trimmed. His grey uniform is pressed and unadorned.*

**Mannerisms:** Galan walks crisply, but his military bearing gives way to warmth when he greets others.

**Personality:** While Galan tries to keep his comportment to avoid embarrassing Kir, his impetuous nature gets the better of him; thus his decision to romance Lyriana.

**Background:** Galan is Kir Teggin's younger brother and two levels down in Tibol's hierarchy. He met Lyriana during a truce and was immediately smitten. He worked hard to keep their liaison a secret, but has embraced the relationship as a means to ending the conflict.

#### 4: MAD HERMIT'S COVE

*A large opening in the cliff leads to a submerged passageway; bones and filthy clothes at the entrance indicate someone, or something, lives here.*

Home to the so-called Mad Hermit (CN old male half-elf **archmage**), this cave and series of tunnels is filled with traps to keep trespassers out. The traps are all relatively harmless (gluing victims to the floor, creating fear effects and so on.) and serve to deter people from further exploration. Half-eaten gulls and crabs and other detritus cover the ground. A PC making a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check hears the hermit clearly and allows the party to take him unaware.

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##### THE MAD HERMIT

CN old male half-elf **archmage** (unable to cast spells)

*This half-elf wears many layers of clothing. Only his grey hair, filled with guano and sticking out in random directions, is visible. A well maintained, stuffed seagull sits on his left shoulder.*

**Mannerisms:** The Mad Hermit speaks to his “familiar” Gustav and listens to a response only he can hear. He alternates between incomprehensible whispering and shouting.

**Personality:** The hermit views himself as a sacred guardian, protecting the world from the foul influence of the eldritch creatures which seeded the area with their terrible relics. Time has addled his mind further, and he has mostly forgotten his duty. PCs who make him friendly (DC 20 Charisma [Deception] or [Persuasion] check succeeds) learn about his background, albeit with some confusion about the time frame. If the PCs point out the recent recovery of artefacts from Delver’s Depths, he sighs as if resigned to, or relieved by, the imminent end of the world.

**Background:** The Mad Hermit was once known as Quentin Galavriel and was part of a successful adventuring party, until he and his companions arrived here. After the party routed the group of raiders holding the strait at the time and discovered one of the relics in Delver’s Depths, Quentin experienced an apocalyptic vision of serpentine creatures erupting from the earth and devouring all living things. He tried to convince his fellow party members to destroy the artefact. When his arguments fell on deaf ears, he concluded the item had corrupted the party. He destroyed his former friends, and, in his madness, cannibalized them to ensure they would never return to bring about the prophecy he witnessed. He has lived hundreds of years—well beyond his natural lifespan.

#### 5: THE GATEWAY

*A basalt formation at the mouth of the strait swivels such that it could block passage.*

A group of raiders carved this gate from existing natural stone and used it to trap ships as they approached the strait. The gate swivels easily, which allowed the raiders to swing it shut and lock it into place, trapping ships unable to manoeuvre back. Before the start of the conflict, both sides fought for control of the gate to prevent opposing ships from sailing through the strait.

#### 6: PEACEBOUND CATAPULT

*Bright flowers cover this non-functional catapult.*

When Tibol and Korrin ratified the truce ending the conflict between them, they dismantled their siege weapons and returned them to their respective countries or stored them in their forts. They agreed to display this catapult as a symbol of peace. Thick, flowery vines, which Bertram Huford (location 10; CN male half-orc **druid**) cultivates, restrain the arm.

#### 7: KORRIN BASTION

*Similar to its cousin across the strait, this tiered, white marble building stands four storeys tall and features a blazing beacon, spotlight and large spyglass on its roof.*

This building serves the same purpose as its Tibolian counterpart. Designed independently of the other building and built simultaneously, it has the same structure. When questioned about the similarities, the baffled architects had no

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##### COMMANDER LYRIANA LASSITER

N female human **knight**

*This woman stands nearly six feet tall and has chestnut brown hair. Her piercing eyes take in everything around her.*

**Mannerisms:** Lyriana strides purposefully and speaks curtly to those with whom she has no business.

**Personality:** Commander Lassiter presents a non-nonsense attitude when on duty. This attitude persists when she is off duty and around subordinates. Outside a military setting, she is relaxed but still guarded when she converses with non-Korrins.

**Background:** Lyriana took command of the Korrin side of the strait a year ago when the previous commander died in battle. She realized both sides were in a precarious economic situation and desired an end to the war. The opportunity came in an unexpected fashion when she got involved with Galan Teggin. She leaked news of the relationship and let events take a natural course.



answers, and no one could find evidence the two were related in any way. The recent conflict caused more severe damage to Korrin Bastion than to Fort Teggin, so the buildings are currently distinguishable from one another. Kir Teggin complains about the extra personnel as a potential violation of the treaty but understands the need for them to repair the damage.

### WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the PCs are here, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A low hum resonates from the walls for one minute and then stops. There is no obvious source of the sound.                             |
| 2  | The PCs overhear a snippet of conversation about "taking care of the Galan problem."   |
| 3  | A soldier asks the PCs to deliver a Spikefruit to a Tibolian soldier, and offers 2 gp for their trouble.                               |
| 4  | The ceiling gives way and crushes those who fail to get out of the way (4d6 bludgeoning damage, DC 15 Dexterity saving throw negates). |
| 5  | Soldiers grab a visitor and drag her away. If asked, they state she engaged in suspicious behaviour.                                   |
| 6  | A visitor gasps in surprise as he pulls out a jade idol, sculpted like a serpent with hundreds of insectile legs, from his pack.       |

**An Eerie Match:** One of the divers swears he saw a carved building shaped like Korrin's Bastion half buried by silt deep underwater. Fearing negative reactions from his people, he asks strangers (the PCs) to investigate. If they do, they find a pair of jade buildings matching both forts.

### 8: KORRIN-SIDE BEACH

*Numerous crabs scuttle about this sandy beach, while seabirds wheel and hover overhead.*

The beach on the Korrin side of the strait is gentler than the Tibol side beach and has better landings for ships passing through the strait. Damage caused to Korrin Bastion makes it difficult to accommodate travellers, so most traffic stops at Tibol beach, much to Commander Lassiter's annoyance.

### 9: BAILEY FARM

*A picket fence surrounds a single-family home and rows of apparent root vegetables.*

This farm has stood for two generations of Baileys, a halfling family whose tenure began with Yavvi and Miriam Bailey. Miriam was a soldier, and Yavvi was an expert dockworker, and they had four children while stationed on the Korrin side of the strait. Taking leave to raise their children, they returned when their children were old enough to continue the family tradition. To

their dismay, none of the children cared for soldiering or dock work, and all but one returned to Korrin. Their youngest, Thom (N old male halfling **commoner**), explored the area, and discovered a fertile patch of land. He built a farmhouse and grew root crops and beans and raised his own family. The elderly halfling still lives here but has turned its management over to his daughter, Miriam (N female halfling **commoner**). The pair remained on the farm throughout the war despite protestations from Korrin soldiers. Miriam reportedly stated matter-of-factly, "The turnips and beans won't grow themselves, and you need to stay fed. You won't be getting malnourished on my watch."

### 10: HUFORD'S ORCHARD

*A small house stands near an orchard of bright orange fruit.*

This orchard is devoted to a rare tropical fruit known as the Spikefruit. As a means of defence against animals attracted to the fruit's sweet flavour, it has cartilaginous spines (allowing the fruit to act as an improvised thrown weapon dealing 1d4 piercing damage). Bertram Huford (CN male half-orc **druid**) took over the grove of trees from the Baileys, who had no desire to deal with the wound-inducing fruit. He sells the fruit for 1 gp per intact piece or 2 gp for a peeled piece.

### 11: GRIFFON ROOST

*Flattened grasses, bracken and so on shaped into a vast nest covers this large, flat rock.*

Shortly after the raiders were driven from the strait, a pair of griffons arrived, established a nest and raised their young. They have done so every two years, and some of their young permanent roost here. The creatures hunt in the nearby woods and keep the orcs and goblinoids infesting the woods at bay. The Korrins respect the griffons and have never taken an egg; they react violently to anyone who does.

### 12: LOVERS' LEAP

*This column of rock stands ten feet from the cliffside. It provides a dizzying view of the water below.*

Up until the war, this rock was a popular destination for Korrins and Tibolians alike. An enduring myth speaks of a young couple belonging to rival raider clans. Neither side approved of their union and they pursued the pair to separate and punish them. The lovers reached the rock column and, having nowhere else to go, dove into the sea with their hands intertwined. They never resurfaced, so the raiders assumed they drowned. Shortly afterwards, a pair of merfolk began harassing the raiders. Whispers grew to legend about the leaping couple transforming into the merfolk. With the conflict's end, both sides have welcomed the return of the tradition of couples jumping off the rock into the deep water below as an affirmation of love.

# TUMBLESTONE INN

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**Words** Creighton Broadhurst **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

*Built atop the ruin of a fallen borderland keep, Tumblestone Inn stands amid the wilderlands, far from civilisation's comforts. Within its stout walls can be found warmth, good cheer and a hearty welcome; without lies little but howling wilderness, marauding orcs and other lurking dangers.*

*Here, gather mercenaries, sellswords and the like eager to sell their unique services to prospective employers who also flock here to shop in a most unusual marketplace. Often the place resembles an armed camp—which is fortunate—for the vicious Jagged Fang orcs lurk nearby and gaze upon the inn and its surrounds with covetous eyes. However, the inn is not without powerful defenders of its own. Here dwells Aelliah Wilmaytn—so-called Lady Tumblestone—and the veterans of her Crimson Shield mercenary company who crushed the Jagged Fang at the Battle of Tumblestone years ago; these skilled warriors yet skirmish with the resurgent orcs and watch over the inn.*

## TUMBLESTONE INN AT A GLANCE

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**Ruler** Aelliah Wilmatyn

**Population** 66 (56 humans, 2 dwarves, 1 gnome, 3 half-elves, 4 half-orcs) This number represents permanent residents; normally upwards of 40 other folk can be found here.

**Alignments** LN, N, NG

**Languages** Common

**Resources & Industry** Mercenaries

Tumblestone Inn lies a score of miles from the nearest settlement of note. This fortified inn, established 20 years ago, lies in a wilderness region unclaimed by any lord. Its owner, Aelliah Wilmatyn, now daubed Lady Tumblestone, was the captain of the Crimson Shields mercenary company, who retired after the blood, suffering and constant campaigning became too much for her weary bones. Now, she runs Tumblestone Inn as a place for those with coin to hire mercenaries, sellswords and other martial specialists. Here can be found—among others—bodyguards, siege engineers, mercenaries and more.

The inn serves as neutral ground, a place where patrons and prospective employees can gather and negotiate in relative safety. Aelliah guarantees peace within her walls, and her staunchly loyal guards—veterans of her old company all—back up her word with bared blade. Fist fights are tolerated; but the use of lethal force is forbidden. To Aelliah all have an equal right to safety within her walls; without such a guarantee her business could not function. Those who contravene her laws are summarily ejected and never allowed to again pass through the inn's gate. Because the inn is such a good place for hiring mercenaries, few patrons or mercenaries dare to test her resolve in this matter.

Set upon the fringes of a forest marking the kingdom's borderland, the inn not only acts as a marketplace of sorts, but also as an important, if minor, border fort. Because Aelliah pays for and garrisons the place herself—and watches over the surrounding area—the local lords leave her alone. (That and, of course, they have all had cause to use the inn's unique services from time to time).

The inn itself is built upon the ruins of a much older keep. Destroyed in a border raid nearby a century ago, none of the lord's family survived the onslaught. With no one to inherit the place—and wreathed as it was in tragedy and vague suggestions of a terrible curse—the site lay unclaimed. Thus the keep faded from prominence until the so-called Battle of Tumblestone when the Crimson Shields defended the place against the Jagged Fang orcs. After the battle, Aelliah, tiring of blood, slaughter and death, claimed the place as her own and set about building Tumblestone Inn.

### LORE

A PC may know something about Tumblestone Inn, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check:

**DC 10:** Tumblestone Inn is the place to go if you want to hire mercenaries or sellswords. The inn serves as neutral ground for such dealings.

**DC 15:** Tumblestone inn is a fortified inn built amid the ruins of an elder fortress sacked by orcs long ago.

**DC 20:** Aelliah Wilmatyn—Lady Tumblestone—was a skilled mercenary captain and is still a fearsome warrior.

### NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than ordinary semi-retired mercenaries and their camp followers.

- **Appearance** Many of the warriors guarding the inn are now in or approaching middle-age. Many have served Aelliah for decades. They appear as what they are—grizzled, veteran warriors.
- **Dress** Aelliah's guards are well equipped; all wear half-plate and use a variety of personal weapons. The guards' families—many of whom work in the inn—wear typical peasant garb.
- **Nomenclature** *male* Aaro, Hannu, Onni, Teijo, Usko; *female* Aila, Aune, Laila, Pirjo, Terhi; *family* Aalto, Eerola, Leino, Rekunen, Varala.

Some of the inhabitants, however, are notable:

- **Aelliah Wilmatyn** (location 8; LN female middle-aged half-elf fighter 8) Although retired, Aelliah practises daily with her weapons and oversees every part of the inn's operation. She loves the inn—it's the culmination of a long-held dream—and fiercely protects it and her followers.
- **Erfael Fonkinbeak** (location 6; N male gnome fighter 4/ wizard [illusionist] 5) Aelliah's lieutenant is a gregarious, hard-drinking fellow who much enjoys the taproom's boisterous atmosphere. He might seem like a fun-loving rake—and in truth he deliberately portrays such—but in reality, his eyes miss little of import.
- **Sergeant Mikko Keto** (location 8; LN male old human fighter 5) Fiercely loyal to Aelliah this grizzled old warrior oversees the inn's defences. A childhood friend of Aelliah's mother, Mikko has served Aelliah for five decades and views her as his own flesh and blood.
- **Armas Eerola** (location 5; NG male middle-aged human cleric 5/fighter 3) A devout follower of the god of war, Armas maintains the Chapel of Dancing Blades.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Tumblestone Inn comprises locations of little interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are notable:

1. **Field of the Fallen:** Here lie the fallen of the Battle of Tumblestone.
2. **Gates:** These always guarded gates open at dawn and close at dusk each day.
3. **Courtyard:** Overlooked by high walls, this expanse of mud sometimes serves as a temporary campsite for those who can find no place in the tavern.
4. **Stables:** This large two-storey building protrudes from the outer wall. The second floor is set up both for storage and defence.

5. **Chapel of Dancing Blades:** Here, mercenaries come to worship the god of war and to practise their martial skills.
6. **The Common Room:** Here—in the throbbing heart of the settlement—much of the business of hiring mercenaries is done. Amid pipe smoke, deals are sealed and compacts made.
7. **The Halls:** Here, the inn's guests rest, sleep and plot.
8. **The Black Tower:** So named for its fire-blackened stones, this tower rises high above the rest of the compound. It is the only part of the original keep to survive relatively intact.





## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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Although of relatively new construct, the inn's stonework is old. When building her new home, Aelliah cannibalised the tumbled stones from the original fortress.

The courtyard walls are 15-foot high, ten-foot thick and topped with battlements and a walkway. From here, roving sentries keep a careful eye on the surrounding tree-line.

The inn's buildings are of similar stout construction. None have external ground floor windows; rather light filters in through well-sited arrow slits. Upper floors have windows protected by stout shutters.

In total, 24 experienced ex-mercenaries (LN middle-aged human **veteran**) guard Tumblestone Inn.

### 1. FIELD OF THE FALLEN

Here lie all those who fell at the Battle of Tumblestone. Soldiers lie in individual graves while their enemies were cast into the mass grave to the south. A riot of wild flowers now grows over the mass grave while the individual graves are yet tended by the fallens' friends and companions. A stout wooden fence surrounds the graveyard and provides some small measure of protection from the local wildlife's depredations.

### 2. GATES

Opened at dawn and closed at dusk, these heavy oak, iron-bound gates are always watched by at least two warriors (LN middle-aged human **veteran**). The gates have no portcullis or warding gatehouse, but they can be reinforced with a huge oaken beam, if necessary (although this is only employed when some known threat lurks nearby).

Generally, visitors are not questioned or subject to search or toll when entering the inn. However, the guards do explain Lady Tumblestone's rules to first-time guests—namely those using violence within the inn's walls will be immediately expelled and never allowed to return.

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#### MARKETPLACE

The following items are for sale, when the PCs arrive:

- **Consumables** *potion of invisibility* (2,500 gp)
- **Miscellaneous** *ring of jumping* (400 gp)
- **Weapons & Armour** *+1 heavy flail* (400 gp), *javelin of lightning* (250 gp)

Additionally, the following services are available:

- **Spellcasting** Arcane 3rd, Divine 3rd

### 3. COURTYARD

Overlooked by high stone walls and flanked on three sides by buildings, this expanse of mud and earth resembles a tent village when there is no room in the Halls.

A well provides fresh drinking water; persistent rumours suggest a great treasure is hidden in the well—concealed there before castle fell. Aelliah does not allow anyone to search its depths, but occasionally the subject of exploring the well comes up during drunken drinking sessions in the taproom.

### 4. STABLES

This large, stout, two-storey building is heavily fortified. The second floor is given over to storage, staff quarters and defence while travellers' horses and other animals are stabled on the ground floor. The stable's wide double door can be barred from within. Jani Rintala (CN middle-aged male human **veteran**), a tall and thickset man with delusions of grandeur and strong opinions on almost everything, runs the stables

### 5: CHAPEL OF DANCING BLADES

This small, unassuming building serves as a chapel for Kalron (NG god of battle and heroic struggle). Beautiful frescos of war and battle decorate the chapel's walls. The resident priest, Armas Eerola (NG male middle-aged human cleric 5/fighter 3), dwells above the chapel. An energetic, grey-hair man of middle years, Armas is renowned for his skill with a blade and is much sought after as a trainer. A devout man, he gladly provides such service for those who worship his patron. Armas is also a skilled artist and it is he who is responsible for the beautiful artwork decorating the chapel.

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#### IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Tumblestone Inn stands in a forested wilderness area far from any settlement of note. Standing on the edge of a kingdom it serves both as a waystation for travellers and a border fort. Adventurers could come here either to hire mercenaries—or even henchmen—or to use it as a base from which to explore the surrounding wilderness. Several humanoid tribes—primarily goblins and orcs—dwell in the surrounding forests and hills and launch occasional raids against the inn. Thus far, the inn's stout defences and garrison have rendered it immune to these minor cross-border attacks. Of course, the party could be unlucky enough to arrive at the inn just before the local tribes launch an all-out assault on the place...

## 6: THE COMMON ROOM

Built amid the ruins of the old castle's great hall, this lofty two-storey room is the inn's common room. Often busy (and raucous) the common room is rarely empty. The one-armed Aila Ahokas (LN middle-aged female human fighter 5), oversees both the common room and the Halls. She has a staff of almost two dozen workers (who dwell in the building between the Common Room and the stables). Banners, shields, weapons and many other pieces of war booty hang from the walls.

|                                    | PRICE |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Ale                                | 1 sp  |
| Meal (often stew or roast chicken) | 5 sp  |
| Wine (pitcher)                     | 2 sp  |

## 7: THE HALLS

Four dormitories fill the ground floor of this large, two-storey building. The first floor hosts a warren of private chambers. Generally, the rooms are dry, clean and well appointed.

|                  | PRICE |
|------------------|-------|
| Dormitory        | 5 sp  |
| Private (shared) | 1 gp  |
| Room (private)   | 2 gp  |

### EVENTS

While the PCs are at Tumblestone Inn, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Two patrons both want to hire the same mercenary band; at first they bid against each other but quickly fall to loudly arguing.  |
| 2  | An injured man rides into the courtyard on an exhausted, mud-splattered horse. He falls from the saddle and staggers into the common room to gasp out his news, but collapses before he can speak.   |
| 3  | A deep rhythmic drumming starts from deep in the surrounding forest just after darkness falls. It continues all night and puts many of the inn's guests and residents on edge.   |
| 4  | A drunken fistfight breaks out in the courtyard, between two rival mercenaries. Before long, both are muddy and bloody.  |
| 5  | Faint lights are seen moving about the Field of the Fallen at night. Are grave robbers, the spirits of the dead or something else responsible?   |
| 6  | Feng the Flayer is arguing with Azakial Firisond, in the common room over the terms of service with her lord. The argument is loud, but both parties are too clever to come to blows. Eventually, the two fail to come to an agreement and Azakial leaves. |

## 8. THE BLACK TOWER

The only part of the original castle to survive relatively intact, the Black Tower is fully 60 ft. tall. It boasts four floors and serves as the barracks and armoury of Aellah's remaining unmarried warriors. Lady Tumblestone and her closest henchmen dwell on the upper floors. Guests are not allowed in the Black Tower unaccompanied.

A little-known sub-cellar lies buried deep below the tower's extensive cellar. Herein, Aellah keeps her remaining loot and valuable trophies from her mercenary days. Persistent rumours tell of a hidden escape tunnel running from the tower's cellar to a hidden exit deep in the surrounding forest. Other forgotten tunnels host the undead remnants of prisoners trapped when the castle fell.

The Black Tower is the most heavily fortified part of Tumblestone Inn. In the case of determined attack, and the outer wall is breached, the garrison along with their families retreat here to make their final stand. In the chaos of such a retreat, the inn's guests will likely be left to fend for themselves.

Aelliah is well aware of the inn's vulnerability and so a careful watch over the surrounding forest is always kept from atop the Black Tower. A large bell stands ready atop the tower to alert folk to approaching danger.

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While at Tumblestone Inn, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

| D6 | RUMOUR  |
|----|---|
| 1  | Extensive hidden tunnels honeycomb the rock under the inn. Built when a castle stood on the site, some prisoners were left to starve to death in their dank depths when the place fell.                   |
| 2* | Lady Tumblestone is a spy for a foreign power. She uses her position to foment trouble between the various nobles hiring mercenaries. In this way she gets rich, and achieves her unknown master's goals. |
| 3* | Lady Tumblestone hides much loot in the Black Tower (which is why it is so well guarded).   |
| 4  | The humanoid tribes dwelling in the surrounding forest are plotting an alliance to destroy the inn and slay all within.   |
| 5* | Much treasure was buried with the dead after the Battle of Tumblestone.   |
| 6  | Armas Eerola is looking for acolytes to help run the Chapel of the Dancing Blades.  |

\*False rumour

## SAMPLE MERCENARIES

While at Tumblestone Inn, the PCs may encounter one or more of the following mercenaries:

1. **Armi Ahokas** (N female human fighter 7) Tough, dependable and insanely brave, Armi dreams of one day captaining her own company. She has come here to learn from Aelliah Wilmatyn but has yet to properly speak with her idol.
2. **Atro Varala** (LN male human **veteran**) Atro seeks employment as a bodyguard, although he has almost no experience as such. Tired of fighting on the frontier, he fancies watching over some gilded noble living a comfortable, safe life.
3. **Ausk Splinter-Shield** (CN half-orc **berserker**) Wild and unpredictable, Ausk is terror incarnate in battle. His wild mood swings and violent temper make it hard for him to remain with any employer for long.
4. **Azakial Firisond** (NG female half-elf **scout**) Azakial leads a band of skilled foresters and trackers. Her trackers currently camp amid the trees a half-mile or so from the inn. She is mud-splattered and weary, but eager to sign a new contract.
5. **Eereo Earthcloak** (N female halfling rogue 6) A scout of superlative abilities, Eereo can slip into even heavily guarded enemy camps. She is inquisitive and polite, but—for some reason—dislikes dwarves, who she will only work with for double her normal fee.
6. **Huroian Kaniateir** (LG female half-elf bard 5) A warrior-bard, Huroian is well known for his abilities to exhort his fellows to great heroics. He currently seeks a new company, as his last disbanded after particularly heavy losses—losses for which some of his fellows blame him.
7. **Morcaer Cobbald** (N male human **mage**) Morcaer is a powerful battle wizard, willing to blast virtually anyone or anything for the right price. He has three apprentices, who he treats poorly, but who seem devoted to the portly mage.
8. **Nalrid Dwojyr** (N male dwarf **veteran**) A skilled engineer, Nalrid is an outcast from his homeland. He drinks heavily, attempting to forget the (truthful) accusations of cowardice levelled against him by his fellow dwarves. Consequently, he is in a perpetually foul mood. He has no intention of accepting employment until his funds are depleted.
9. **Rasal Folkor** (NG male gnome fighter 4) Rasal represents a small band of gnomes particularly skilled at fighting in cramped, confined spaces. They prefer battling kobolds and the like, but consider any contract that pits them against any of the common evil humanoid races.
10. **Teothic Wyberg** (LN old male human fighter 5) Far past his prime as a fighting man, Teothic is nevertheless much in demand as a tactician and student of military history. The hoary old fighter is a cunning warrior and has fought many battles over his six decades of life.

## SAMPLE PATRONS

While at Tumblestone Inn, the PCs may encounter one or more of the following patrons.

1. **Arnulf Gall** (N male human **commoner**) A wealthy merchant, Arnulf is planning a long sea voyage to open up a new trade route and to establish a business in a far-off land. He needs skilled guards to guarantee his safety. The job is a long one—probably a year or more—and Arnulf is willing to pay a percentage of any initial profit.
2. **Enneal Beren** (CG female gnome fighter 4/wizard [illusionist] 3) Enneal has a problem involving a dragon. It seems a “really big silvery dragon” has recently established itself near his home. The dragon isn’t actually attacking the village or anything like that, but is eating lots of the local game—game the gnomes rely on for food, clothes and so on. Enneal needs someone to find the dragon’s lair and convince it to stop.
3. **Feng the Flayer** (LE female half-orc **fighter 3**) Feng is at the inn to secure the services of a small band of skilled mercenaries to provide protection for her lord while he negotiates a truce with a band of hobgoblins preying on his domain. In reality, Feng’s lord plans to bind the hobgoblins to his service and to use them to further his own ambitions.
4. **Fosco Underbough** (N male halfling **guard**) Fosco represents a druid who needs help clearing out a small band of trolls that have settled near his grove. In exchange, Fosco is offering a trove of darkwood freshly cut and crafted by the druid herself.
5. **Nafre Khmun** (NE female human **mage**) is far from home. She has a long journey ahead of her and requires skilled guards (and porters). Unfortunately, she is also low on funds and cannot pay much until she returns home.
6. **Raimo Markku** (N male old human **archmage**) Raimo needs to find a few stout-hearted hirelings to protect him on a long journey. He needs to travel to a far-off city to further his magical researches, but fears he is too old to make the journey alone.
7. **Veli Korpela** (LG male human **knight**) Veli has been charged with a sacred quest; he hates that he must come here to truck with common mercenaries but he fears the mission is beyond his capabilities; Veli has been charged with escorting a priest to a borderland town to establish a new church. The job entails guarding the priest on his journey and watching over him as he preaches his message (because in the past, the locals have been spectacularly unresponsive to such overtures).
8. **Wynstan Balston** (LN male human **commoner**) This master smith needs a half-dozen or so stout guards; he has heard the dwarves of a nearby hold have a small amount of mithral for sale, which he needs to complete a commission for a powerful lord. He doesn’t want to risk the journey alone.

# VISIONARY'S PERCH

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**Words** Jacob W. Michaels **Cartography** Maciej Zagorski

*Far from the nearest shore, an ancient tower rises from the cold sea. Visitors who brave storm-lashed and pirate-filled waters to reach this remote island can gain a glimpse into the future or answers to their questions...for a price. The ancient cyclops seeress who dwells here, still watched over by the elves who conquered her people, requires a tribute from the penitents seeking her visions. Such prices may be designed simply to help fill the tedium of centuries in her gilded cage, or may in fact be a piece of a plan to rebuild her ancient empire; in any regard, they are non-negotiable.*



## VISIONARY'S PERCH AT A GLANCE

**Ruler** Eudonia

**Population** 20 (3 humans, 15 elves, 1 half-elf, 1 cyclops)

**Alignments** N, LN

**Languages** Common, Cyclops, Elven, Giant

**Resources & Industry** Oracular divinations

Far from the nearest shore, this ancient cyclopean tower houses one of the world's great seers. Watched over for centuries by the elves, the cyclops seeress lacks for nothing, but the centuries grow tiresome even in a cage as gilded as hers, and she chafes at its confinement. She welcomes visitors who share news of the outside world, though she demands a price if they wish to learn of their destiny.

### LORE

A PC may know something about Visionary's Perch, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains everything revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 10:** Set on a remote rock in the Sapphire Sea, Visionary's Perch is home to a powerful seeress.

**DC 15:** The seeress is a cyclops, the last survivor of their ancient empire, she demands a price of those who come to learn the future.

**DC 20:** Elves watch over the island, though whether they serve the seeress or serve as her wardens is unclear.

### NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than ordinary individuals.

- **Appearance** The elves, lean and fit and with a military bearing, wear their dark hair tied back in utilitarian style.
- **Dress** Layers of well-made wool clothes keep residents warm; those working outside don an oilcloth outer layer.
- **Nomenclature** *male* Ahednill, Lahoal, Oleriut; *female* Danabah, Rosatildr, Talgaerel; *family* Erineri, Keroniy, Rehaneh.

Some of the inhabitants, however, are notable:

**Chelindra 'Songbird' Seawright** (location 5; NG female human bard 4) Chelindra is Eudonia's closest companion and entertainer.

**Eltheirell Bararisi** (location 2; LN male elf **knight**) Eltheirell commands the elven forces on the island.

**Eudonia** (location 5; N female cyclops cleric 8) Eudonia is the visionary last scion of an ancient cyclops empire.

**Lenalis Idihani** (location 3; LN male elf **priest**) Lenalis is the keeper of the tower's vault of gifts.

### EVENTS

While the PCs are at Visionary's Perch, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

| D6 | EVENT   |
|----|---|
| 1  | A monstrous storm looms, turning the sky black as far as the eye can see. No ship can leave for several days.   |
| 2  | Eudonia summons the PCs to tell of a vision she's had of them, which she shares without payment.                |
| 3  | An elven holiday prompts a celebration, with a great feast, in Elvenhome. Even Eudonia attends.                 |
| 4  | An ostentatiously rich merchant, clearly shaken, asks the PCs to help avert the foretelling he's just received. |
| 5  | Three ships, with sails as black as night, are spotted on the horizon sailing directly toward the tower.        |
| 6  | An item from Eudonia's vault is discovered on the PCs' boat as they prepare to depart.                          |

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Visionary's Perch, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

| D6 | RUMOUR  |
|----|---|
| 1* | Eudonia seeks items to allow her to restore the cyclopean empire, with herself as its empress.  |
| 2  | "The elf-guard may be mostly for show these days, but that don't make them any less dangerous, you know."   |
| 3  | "Lady" Peleny, captain of the <i>Spume Princess</i> , has an arrangement with the seeress ( <i>true</i> ), using visions to lead a campaign of piracy across the region ( <i>false</i> ). |
| 4* | A sea dragon lurks near Visionary's Perch, demanding its own tribute of any ships that wish to approach.  |
| 5  | Horrific storms lash the area, driving ships with unwary captains and crews onto the cliffs.  |
| 6* | "An elf-door connects to the elven kingdom. Some people say it's lost or broken, but I don't believe that."   |

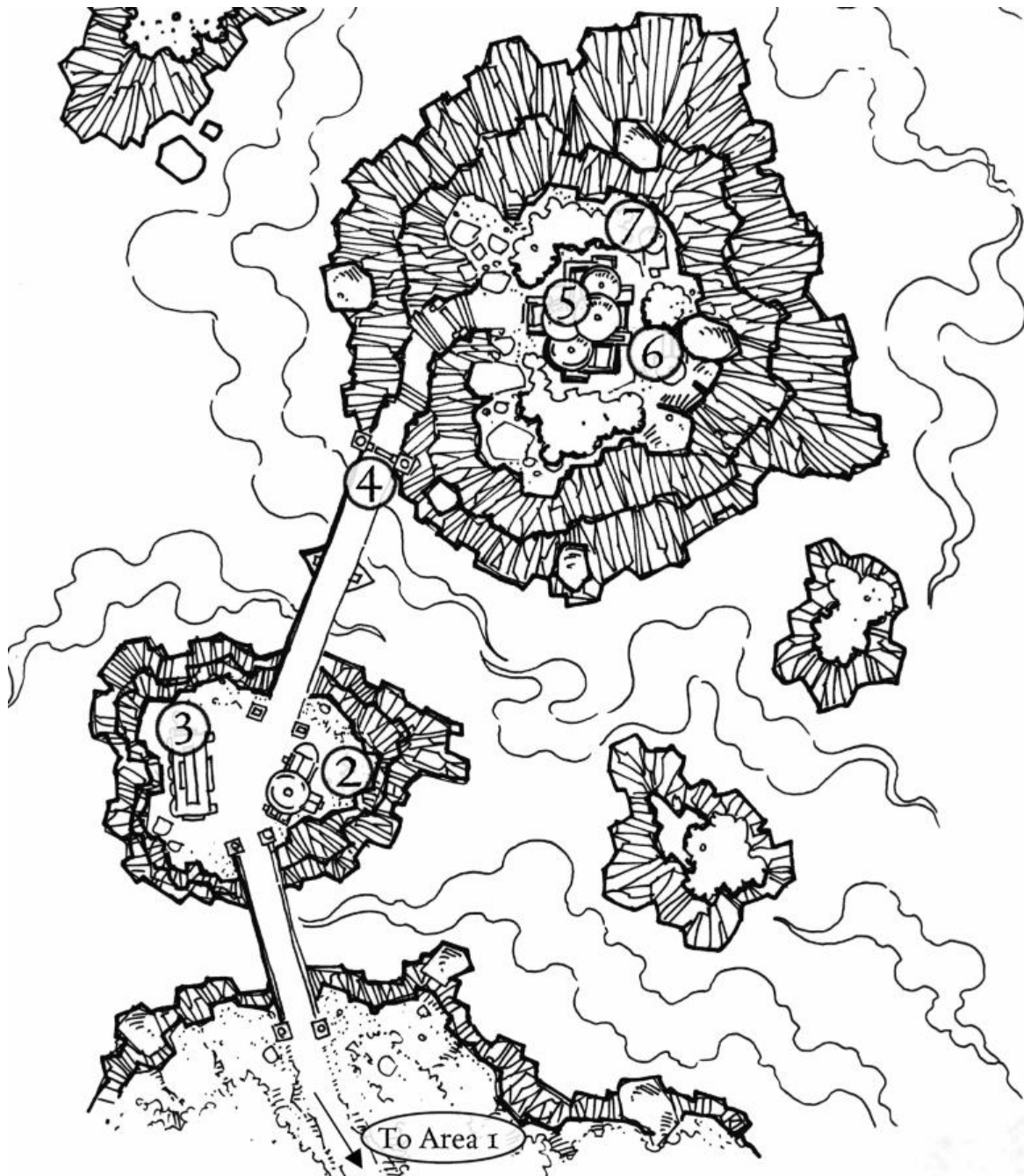
\*False rumour



## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Visionary's Perch comprises locations of little interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are notable:

1. **The Beach:** The rocky beach on this nearby island provides a place for launches from anchored ships to land. It can accommodate up to three boats at a time.
2. **Elvenhome:** This stately stone building houses the elves of Visionary's Perch.
3. **The Working House:** This building houses the various industries needed by those who live on the island, from library and offices to smithy and woodshop.
4. **Gate:** This gate serves as a bottleneck the elves can use to seal the Seeress' Tower from any outside forces.
5. **The Seeress' Tower:** A massive structure, built to giant scale in the fashion of the ancient cyclops empire, houses the seeress.
6. **Greenhouse:** In this small building grows a supply of fresh fruit and vegetables.
7. **Watch Post:** This small watch post offers an expansive view of the back of the island.



## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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### 1: THE BEACH

Nearly sheer rock cliffs surround the island beneath Visionary's Perch and its closest neighbours. Rock-strewn treacherous seas preventing any ships from getting too close. The only non-magical means of ascent is on a nearby island, which slopes down to a small, rocky beach suitable for a small landing party to come ashore.

### 2: ELVENHOME

Pulled by magic from the island's rock, this elegant manor bears the flowing lines and curves typical of elven architecture. It serves as the residence for the 15 elves at Visionary's Perch, as well as the three humans and a half-elf child, Parthenia (NG young female half-elf **commoner**). Inside, rich furnishings—from the carpeting on the floor to the artwork on the walls to the crystal chandeliers hanging from the ceiling—make it feel as if the building were in the centre of a wealthy metropolis, not on a remote island.

Other than cooking and basic sewing and other such tasks, little work is done in the house, which is a place for rest and relaxation. The one exception is a guard (LN male or female elf **guard**) who is stationed at all times in a cupola at the dome's height. Here panoramic views of the surrounding waters allow early warning of any approaching ships.

When not engaged in other duties, the commander of the elven guard, Eltheirell Bararisi (LN male elf **knight**) often spends his time here. The longest-serving elf on the island, he takes his duties almost too seriously, little trusting any visitors. Though he knows the long-ago pact between the seeress and the elves means he must allow access to Eudonia, he is constantly alert, not only for attempts to harm or abduct her but also for any efforts on her part to escape. He brusquely questions any visitors, caring little for how they may react.

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#### DAILY LIFE AT VISIONARY'S PERCH

Most days at Visionary's Perch provide little new for the full-time residents, the day-to-day tasks broken only by the frequent storms and occasional visitors. During their downtime, residents attend to basic chores and drills, keeping up with the mundane work of running Visionary's Perch. When storms come, most of the residents gather in Elvenhome, passing time with food and music.

Visitors, typically spotted well before their arrival by lookouts perched in Elvenhome's cupola or the Watch Post, bring a different energy to the islands. The guards form up to keep a wary eye on the proceedings, while those who have no reason to interact with visitors retreat to Elvenhome.

### 3: THE WORKING HOUSE

This stone building, though finely built, is far more utilitarian than neighbouring Elvenhome. The original barracks of the elven guards stationed at Visionary's Perch during the war with the cyclops, the building now serves as a workspace for the various industries supporting the island's residents.

The lower level contains a smithy and woodshop where residents can make minor repairs to basic goods and maintain the guards' weapons. Upper levels contain areas for magical study and crafting, as well as an office holding records of any visions and foretellings known to the elves. The records also detail the contents of Eudonia's vault. These records and the vault itself are maintained by Lenalis Idihani (LN male elf **priest**), a young (for an elf) scholar who was brought to Visionary's Perch to be a calming counterpart to the commander of the elven guard. Instead, to everyone's surprise including his own, Lenalis found himself entranced by the wilder aspects of his new life. When "Lady" Peleny (CN female human **bandit captain**), captain of the pirate ship *The Spume Princess*, was stranded by a storm for several days at Visionary's Perch, he was irresistibly drawn to her. Their eventual union resulted in a daughter, Parthenia (NG young female half-elf), now eight, who brightens the spirits of all but the dourest of the elves. Parthenia has the run of the islands, and is as often found in the Seeress' Tower or the Working House as she is in her own room in Elvenhome. She is watched over by all on the island, who care for her as if she were their own. She often finds herself in the Watch Post, searching for sign of a visit from her mother, who continues to regularly

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#### IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Visionary's Perch is intended to be placed in any remote stretch of sea, and should work particularly well in a nautical/pirate campaign. In a more land-bound campaign, Visionary's Perch can be moved with some adjustments to just off-shore, with the bridge to Area 1 instead leading to mainland cliffs in a remote area.

While Visionary's Perch serves an obvious purpose of giving PCs access to higher-level divinations and other sources of information, it can also serve well as a quest-giving location. Eudonia may demand specific payments that could lead PCs into exploration of remote locations to find cyclopean empire ruins that hold forgotten lore, or may offer a vision of some crisis that only the PCs can prevent. In addition, it can serve as a source for uncommon magic items—Eudonia could easily have foreseen the PCs' needs for some item and demanded it in payment from some previous visitor with the intent of trading for some item or service from the PCs.



stop at the island. While some of the elves accept the pirate captain is there to maintain her role in her odd family, others fear she has her own reasons, possibly involving the vault or Eudonia's visions. Eltheirell even wonders if the seeress may be using the pirate as part of an effort to corrupt her elven captors (and thus watches both Lenalis and Parthenia with some suspicion). The seeress inevitably meets with Peleny for a time during each visit, but has never revealed the substance of their discussions.

#### 4: THE GATE

This stone gateway, built to cyclopean scale, dates to the original tower's creation, though it's not clear if it was intended to keep intruders out or Eudonia in. Though almost always kept open these days, the gates are preserved by magic and remain in excellent condition, swinging closed with a command phrase known to all the elven guards.

#### 5: THE SEERESS' TOWER

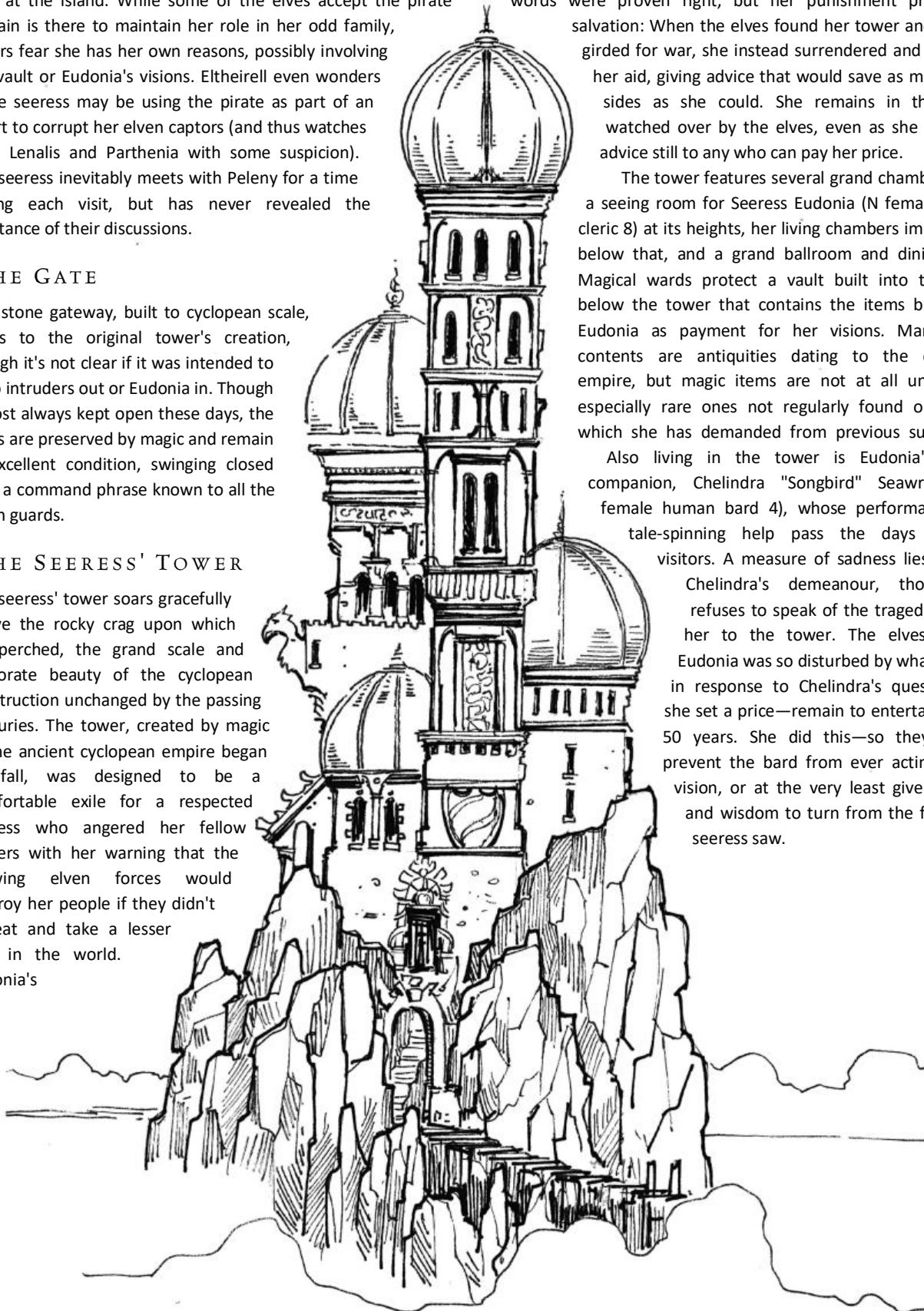
The seeress' tower soars gracefully above the rocky crag upon which it's perched, the grand scale and elaborate beauty of the cyclopean construction unchanged by the passing centuries. The tower, created by magic as the ancient cyclopean empire began its fall, was designed to be a comfortable exile for a respected seeress who angered her fellow leaders with her warning that the growing elven forces would destroy her people if they didn't retreat and take a lesser role in the world. Eudonia's

words were proven right, but her punishment proved her salvation: When the elves found her tower and entered girded for war, she instead surrendered and promised her aid, giving advice that would save as many on all sides as she could. She remains in the tower, watched over by the elves, even as she doles out advice still to any who can pay her price.

The tower features several grand chambers, from a seeing room for Seeress Eudonia (N female cyclops cleric 8) at its heights, her living chambers immediately below that, and a grand ballroom and dining room. Magical wards protect a vault built into the island below the tower that contains the items brought to Eudonia as payment for her visions. Many of its contents are antiquities dating to the cyclopean empire, but magic items are not at all uncommon, especially rare ones not regularly found or crafted, which she has demanded from previous supplicants.

Also living in the tower is Eudonia's closest companion, Chelindra "Songbird" Seawright (NG female human bard 4), whose performances and tale-spinning help pass the days between visitors. A measure of sadness lies beneath

Chelindra's demeanour, though she refuses to speak of the tragedy that led her to the tower. The elves whisper Eudonia was so disturbed by what she saw in response to Chelindra's question that she set a price—remain to entertain her for 50 years. She did this—so they say—to prevent the bard from ever acting on the vision, or at the very least give her time and wisdom to turn from the future the seeress saw.





## 6: GREENHOUSE

Though small compared to the other structures on Visionary's Perch, this outbuilding is nonetheless built to cyclopean scale. Wide glass windows allow sunlight to nourish rows of soil beds, where fruit and vegetables grow in a protected environment. A cunning hydration system funnels pure rainwater to the plants.

## 7: WATCH POST

This building, which like the greenhouse was built to giant scale, was intended to house servants when Eudonia was first exiled. It now serves as a watch post to the rear of the island, offering views of an area that would otherwise be blocked by the Seeress' Tower. Two elven guards keep watch from here at all times.

## SEERESS EUDONIA

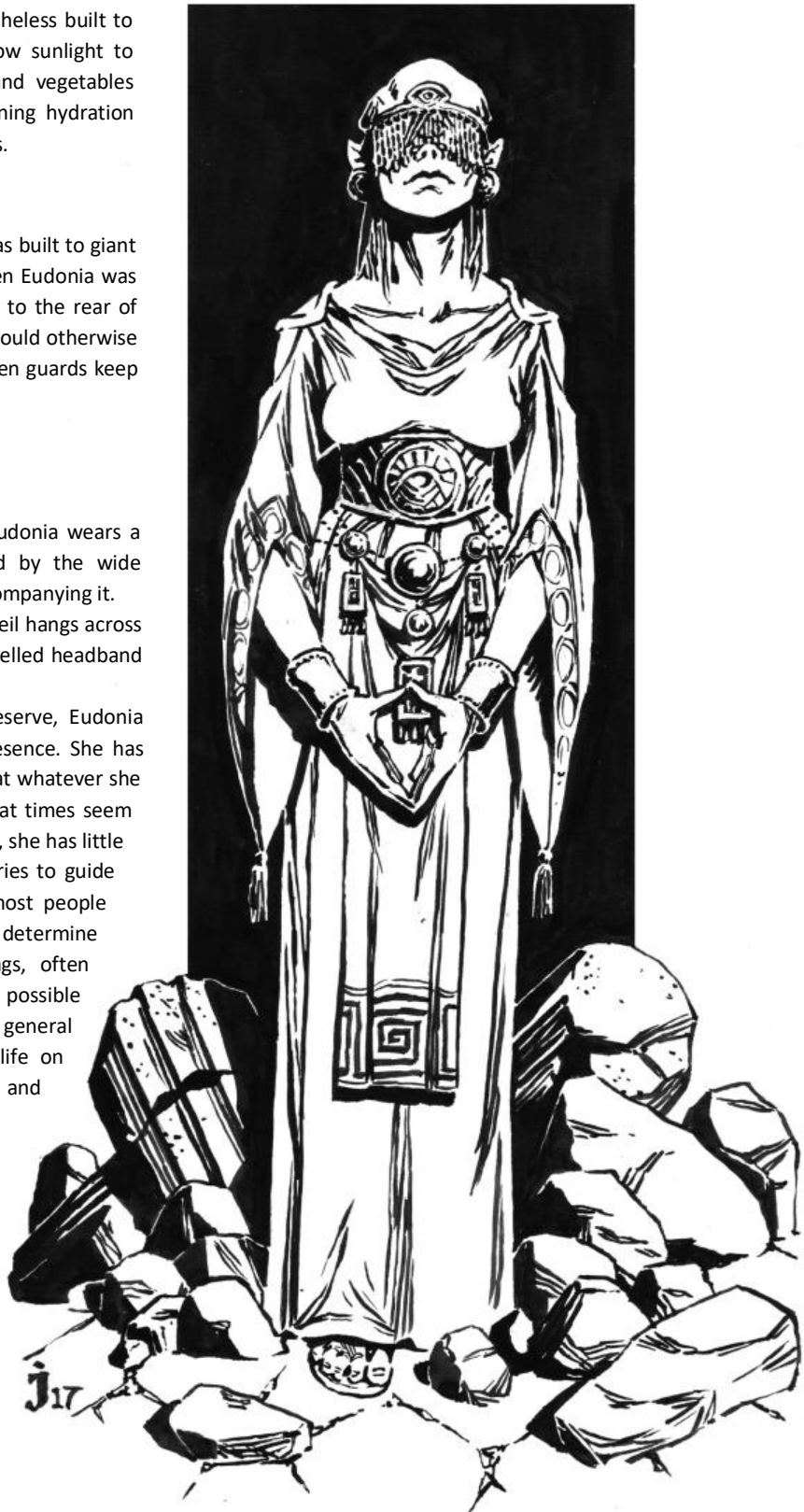
N female cyclops cleric 8

**Appearance:** A tall, slender cyclops, Eudonia wears a spotless white robe, its simplicity belied by the wide golden belt and other ornate jewellery accompanying it.

**Distinguishing Features:** A gold mesh veil hangs across Eudonia's single clouded eye from a bejewelled headband across her brow.

**Personality:** Despite her quiet and reserve, Eudonia fills any room she's in with her mere presence. She has absolute faith in her visions, a certainty that whatever she sees will come true, which can make her at times seem cold in her matter-of-factness. Despite that, she has little wish to inflict any pain or suffering and tries to guide supplicants in a way that protects the most people possible. She uses her own abilities to determine prices she should set for her foretellings, often demanding items to avert the worst possible outcomes she's foretold. Despite her general desire to avoid harm, she does tire of life on Visionary's Perch, and shapes her visions and prices to further a long plan to gain her freedom and some measure of greater power.

**Mannerisms:** Eudonia almost never looks directly at someone talking to her, preferring to train her clouded vision on any other strangers in the room. If questioned, she says this lets her hear the truth, as her visions have already let her see it.



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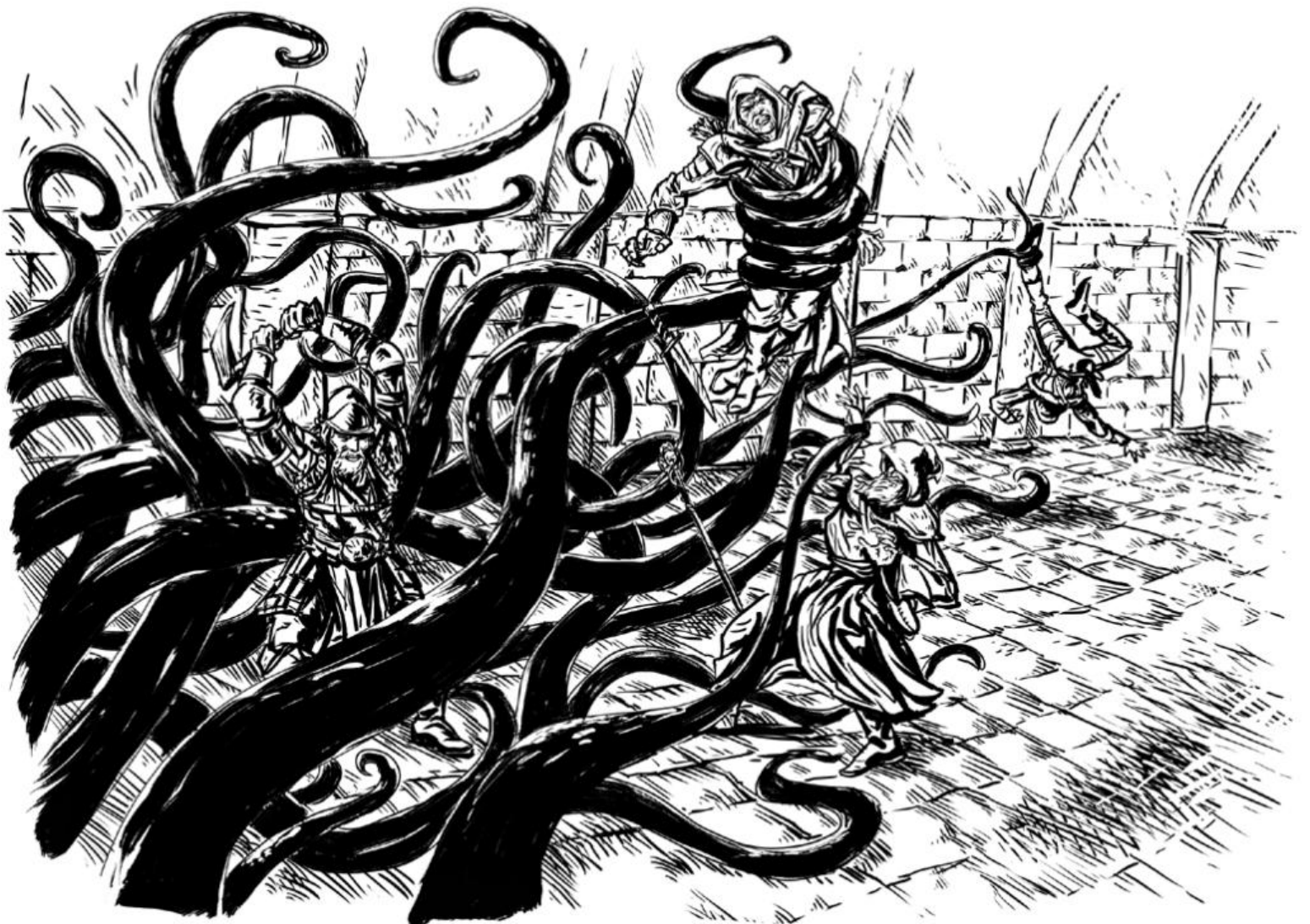
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