

# VALLEY OF THE GILDED TOWER



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EDITION



# VALLEY OF THE GILDED TOWER

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*Valley Of The Gilded Tower* is a single-session adventure for four to six players of 2nd-level characters using the fifth edition of the world's greatest roleplaying game.

This adventure can be used as a continuation of *Masque of the Worms*, or it can be used as a standalone adventure.

While from a proud tower in the town / Death looks gigantically down.

-Edgar Allan Poe, *The City in the Sea*

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## SYNOPSIS

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- The PCs begin in the sick chambers of Baron Henrik Rennet. He tells the characters he has been haunted by dreams of his departed wife, Elenore, and asks them to put her remains to rest in her family's **mausoleum**.
- The party arrives at an overgrown valley housing the mausoleum and meet its strange groundskeeper.
- The characters approach the ivory **tower** where Elenore's remains must be interred and encounter hostile flora and fauna.
- They meet Elenore's ghost and learn they must confront an invasive plant, the **mortis node**, that is controlling the nearby plants and animals from its nest inside the tomb.
- After the battle with the mortis node, the PCs must place Elenore's remains to rest and escape the mausoleum before it falls.

## BACKGROUND

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- Elenore Rennet recently died in a tragedy that resulted in her **ghost** remaining behind in the material world. She now haunts her husband, Baron Henrik, and cannot end her haunting unless she is laid to rest.
- Elenore was the final living member of her noble line. In life, she had wished to restore her family's ancestral **mausoleum** and be laid to rest there upon her death.
- The mausoleum is a dilapidated, ivory tower in an abandoned, forested valley. Nobody knows the tower is now home to an invasive plant, a **mortis node**, that has grown inside the corpse of Elenore's evil grandmother, Berenice.
- The mortis node has been drinking the consciousness of all nearby sentient creatures, and it will not abide intruders into its nest inside the mausoleum's tombs.

## A WORD TO THE GM

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This adventure is meant to be run at a glance with **minimal preparation** and a **natural delivery**. This required re-thinking the normal adventure presentation a bit. Here's what you'll find included:

- Each encounter contained on one page.
- Bulleted lists. **Bolded** keywords.
- Hyperlinks to monsters and rules online for quick reference.
- Printable cards for each monster and PC so you can run encounters using a card stack. A short video walkthrough of this method can be found **here**.
- Printable cards for special treasure handouts.
- Short room and area descriptions. No paragraphs of droning flavor text — set the scene naturally and embellish as desired.
- Briefly explained non-encounter rooms. Again, embellish as desired!
- GM maps and player-safe digital maps for use with virtual tabletops.
- A short video walkthrough of the adventure that can be found **here**.

## PACING/TRANSITIONS

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A dramatic question is presented with most scenes. Once that question has been answered, the tension of the scene is resolved. That's your cue to work toward the **transition** provided at the end the scene — even if that means summarizing the end of a clearly decided combat, or in the case of clever players, skipping combat altogether. Keep the game moving toward the next challenge!

Room descriptions that are usually long blocks of literary read-aloud text have been left short and informational in this adventure. Many Game Masters prefer to paraphrase read-aloud text and set the scene based on what tone and level of detail his or her group finds engaging. Anything listed before a **Development** section is safe to share however you prefer to do so.



## SEEK THE GILDED TOWER

The characters are summoned to the sick bed of **Baron Henrik Rennet**, the local lord whose wife, Elenore, recently died in a horrific tragedy. The chamber where he lies is draped in mourning black and crowded with doctors in beak-nosed masks. The baron is distraught and ill with grief.

Henrik tells the characters he has been haunted in his dreams by the voice of his dead wife. In the dreams, she begs him to be laid to rest in her family's ancestral mausoleum in the Painted Valley. The baron pleads for the characters' help **interring** her remains there. Use the following adventure hooks:

### APPEAL TO REWARD

The baron offers the PCs a **keep** and tract of land if they lay his wife to rest in the gold-and-ivory tomb on her family's old property.

### APPEAL TO HEROISM

The PC with the highest passive Wisdom (Insight) score senses that Baron Henrik is slipping toward **madness** in his grief. Undertaking this mission might grant him peace of mind and save his sanity.

### APPEAL TO DISCOVERY

The baron tells the characters that Elenore's family cemetery has been **abandoned** for nearly thirty years. She had hoped in her lifetime to restore it to dignified use. Any news the group can bring about the state of the cemetery would be a great boon.

**Baron Henrik Rennet**, LN human **noble**

*"Her last wish is all that matters to me, now."*

- *Appearance.* Red beard, dark circles under eyes. Black robes.
- *Does.* Eyes dart around the room as if seeing invisible spirits.
- *Secret.* Even while awake, hears Elenore's voice pleading for a proper burial.



### TRANSITION

Baron Henrik equips the characters for the two-day journey to the Painted Valley and gives them the small, silver urn holding Elenore's ashes. The roads to the valley are safe, but dreams of a woman's whispers haunt the characters at night. Go to *The Painted Valley*.



## THE PAINTED VALLEY

### Sidebar: The Mortis Node

- The mortis node has grown large and controls much of the flora and fauna in the Painted Valley.
- The mortis node slowly drinks the consciousness of its victims. Creatures under its sway have a glassy stare and black tongue.

### THE VALLEY

- Elenore's family cemetery lies in a fragrant, overgrown **valley**. Low, golden clouds roll past the mountains.
- A path winds past an ivy-choked gate toward a small **cottage** with dusty windows.
- Beyond the cottage, the path continues into dense forest. The **mausoleum's** golden spire glints through the trees.

### DEVELOPMENT

- The gruff groundskeeper, **Valdemar**, lurks near the cottage.
- Valdemar says he's been the only one here for 30 years.
- He warns the PCs to leave before something bad happens, and then he **forgets** he said that and denies it if questioned.
- Characters who pass a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notice Valdemar's glassy stare and the black spots on his tongue. He is unaware of both.
- The shabby **cottage** holds little of value.
- Valdemar points the way to the **mausoleum** and tells the characters to hurry up and then get out.



### Valdemar, N human **commoner**

*"You'd best go, before somethin' bad happens."*

- **Appearance.** Ancient, grizzled. Wears a brown work apron and holds a rake.
- **Does.** Mouth slowly droops open and eyes grow distant while others are speaking.
- **Secret.** Is mostly under the control of the mortis node, but still has traces of his own consciousness.

### THE FOREST PATH

- The path to the mausoleum cuts through the vibrant grass into a dense **forest**.
- Birds of paradise sing in the trees and purplish-black fungi bloom everywhere.

### DEVELOPMENT

- After the first round inside the forest, PCs with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 13 or higher notice the birds have stopped singing.
  - Characters who examine their surroundings notice trees lined with **birds** whose beaks hang open, revealing black tongues.
  - The second round, two **violet fungi** spring into motion and attack the group from behind.

### DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the characters escape the violet fungi?

### COMBAT

- Each round, two **violet fungi** animate 15 feet behind the characters in the opposite direction of the mausoleum.
- The **ghost** of Elenore materializes up the path and urges the group to follow.

### TRANSITION

If the characters go toward the mausoleum, go to *In Shadow*.



## IN SHADOW

### TOWER DOORS

- The white marble **mausoleum** sits in a narrow clearing in the forest. It's 70 feet tall.
- The tower's weathered roof is inlaid with flaking gold leaf. The tower has no windows.
- Its heavy stone **door** is locked shut.

### DEVELOPMENT

- **Violet fungi** pursue the PCs, closing in from the perimeter of the clearing. 1d4 fungi animate every round.
- Elenore's **ghost** passes through the door and beckons the characters to follow.
- PCs can smash the **door** open with a successful DC 20 Strength check, or unlock it with a successful DC 18 Dexterity check by a character proficient in Thieves' Tools.
- Characters can climb the **walls** with a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check.



### DRAMATIC QUESTION

Can the characters get inside the tower before the violet fungi overwhelm them?

### COMBAT

- The **violet fungi** close in from all sides. Each time a new fungus animates, distribute it evenly in a ring around the characters.

### FLOOR 1: TOWER ENTRANCE

- This room's walls are carved with viols, violets, and vines. **Stairs** on the wall lead up.
- Black **vines** erupt through the ceiling, snake down the walls, and plunge into the earth.
- The **ghost** of Elenore hovers in the center of the crumbling room, waiting to speak.

#### Elenore, NG human **ghost**

*"Let us bring peace to this place so I may rest."*

- **Appearance.** Wears the torn masquerade gown she died in.
- **Does.** Smiles gently and tries not to frighten good-aligned creatures.
- **Secret.** Wishes to be laid to rest so she can let Baron Henrik find peace.

### SPEAKING WITH ELENORE

Elenore tells the PCs the following:

- An evil **ancestor** of hers has brought corruption to this place. It must be annihilated and Elenore laid to rest.
- The fungi and black-tongued creatures are a **symptom** of the corruption.
- The source of the evil lurks upstairs in the **tombs**. It is not human. It is not natural. It will try to kill them.
- The characters must act quickly before the creeping fungi outside find a way in.

### TRANSITION

Once the group is ready to continue, go to *Delerium*.



# DELIRIUM

## FLOOR 2: MEMORIAL HALL

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- Faded oil paintings and busts of Elenore's ancestors line the walls.
- **Stairs** on the wall lead up.
- Clusters of knotty, black **vines** hang overhead like reaching hands.
- The air has a strange **haze** similar to a light rainfall.

### DEVELOPMENT

- PCs who inspect the paintings notice one of a middle-aged woman with a cruel smile named **Berenice**. The placard shows she was Elenore's grandmother. A character who passes a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check spots the signs that the woman was a **sorceress** of a dark order.
- The vines of the mortis node pollenate this room with **spores**. PCs who breathe the unfiltered air must pass a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or fall asleep for 1d4 hours.
- Any character who falls asleep here must choose a **memory** to permanently sacrifice to the hunger of the mortis node.
- While the characters are in this room, the black vines begin to writhe. Every 1d4 rounds, they spit out a **violet fungus** in a random area.

### Treasure

One of the dusty statues in the room is actually a *Figurine Of Wondrous Power (Silver Raven)*.

### DRAMATIC QUESTION

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Can the characters safely pass through the hall?

### COMBAT

- The fungi target PCs who are sleeping.
- A sleeping character who takes damage automatically **wakes up**. A character can also spend an action to shake someone awake.

### TRANSITION

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If the characters go up the stairs, go to *Death's Throne*. If they move downstairs, go to *In Shadow*.





# DEATH'S THRONE

## FLOOR 3: TOMBS

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- Coffins and urns rest on the floor and shelves of this dusty chamber. The gold **roof** comes to a point 30 feet above the room.
- Four unlit, iron **lamps** hang on chains from the ceiling. They are ten feet off the ground.
- Thick, black vines erupt from a central **coffin**. The vines push through the floor and walls.

## DEVELOPMENT

- The **mortis node** is inside the vine-covered coffin. When the PCs approach, a woman's **voice** inside the coffin says: "I have been sleeping... waiting for you, Elenore!"
- The mortis node bursts from the coffin to attack the PCs once they are within range.

## DRAMATIC QUESTION

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Can the party defeat the mortis node, lay Elenore to rest, and escape the tower?

## COMBAT

- The mortis node **summons** 1d4 **violet fungi** on each of its turn and hides behind them, using its tentacles to attack.
- The mortis node **climbs** the walls if needed, shooting its spines at creatures below.
- While fighting, the mortis node screams **phrases** it absorbed from other creatures in their own voice. Phrases include:
  - (Berenice's voice) "Elenore, my granddaughter. You were made perfect in loveliness, only to die!"
  - (Valdemar's voice) "I saw something horrible in the tower... But I can't remember what..."
  - References to a **memory** the mortis node stole from a sleeping characters on Floor 2.

## DEFEATING THE MORTIS NODE

- When the mortis node **dies**, it screams, "living I have been your plague, and dying I shall be your death!"
- The black vines lash out, weakening the tower walls. The mausoleum begins to tremble and will **collapse** in 3 rounds. Characters inside when it collapses must pass a DC 15 Dexterity save or take 17 (5d6) bludgeoning damage (half on a success).
  - **Elenore** appears and begs the PCs to lay her urn to rest before they go.

## Treasure

If the characters lay Elenore to rest before leaving, she grants them each a **blessing** in the form of good luck. Once per day, each PC may re-roll one failed roll and must use the new result.

## TRANSITION

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Outside the tower, flora and fauna return to their original colors and behaviors. Valdemar awakens as if from a long dream. Go to the *Aftermath* section once the characters leave the Painted Valley.





## AFTERMATH

### LAST WISH UNFULFILLED

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- If the characters weren't able to lay Elenore to rest before the Gilded Tower collapsed, they lost the chance to fulfill her last wish. She haunts Baron Henrik for the rest of his days, or until some greater intervention happens. The baron's madness grows during this time, and he becomes deranged and evil.

### ELENORE LAID TO REST

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- If the PCs were able to lay Elenore to rest before the Gilded Tower collapsed, her spirit departs to the afterlife. Baron Henrik is still stricken with grief, but his health slowly returns, and his growing madness dissipates.

### THE PAINTED VALLEY... SAFE?

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- The Painted Valley is a quiet, peaceful place following the death of the mortis node. Or is it? What other secrets are hidden away on the property? Does Valdemar know anything about what caused Elenore's family line to die out?

### ANGRY ENTITY

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- The fey or demonic being who planted the mortis node in Berenice is unhappy that it has been destroyed. It plots revenge against the characters, striking out when they least expect it.

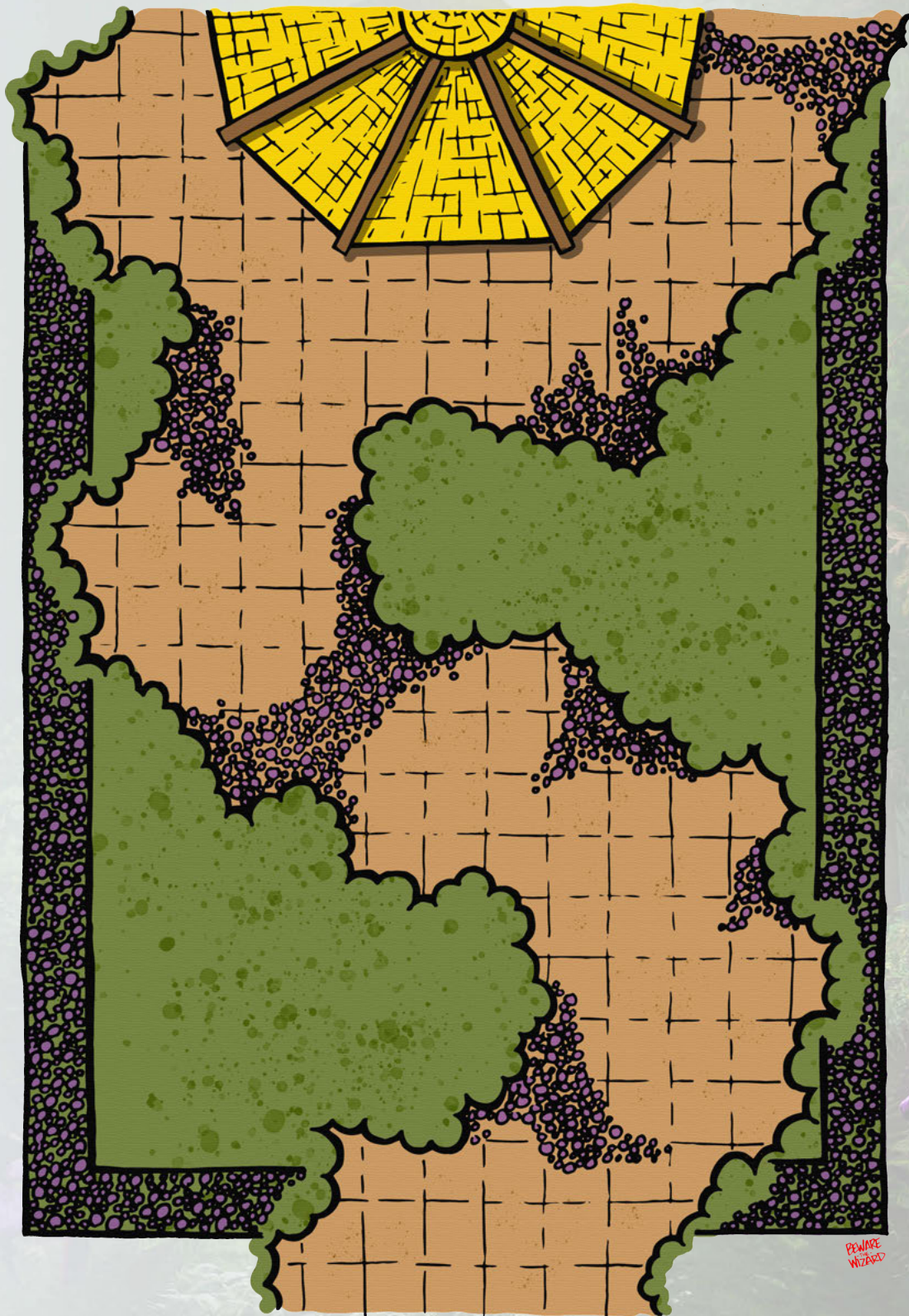




## APPENDIX A: MAPS

### THE FOREST PATH

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# THE GILDED TOWER





## APPENDIX B: NEW MONSTERS

### Mortis Node

A bulbous mass of tentacles, leafy hide, and human anatomy bursts out of a cluster of black vines. Its mouths howl in a cacophony of dissonant voices, screaming the same twisted phrases over and over.

**Madness and Rot.** The seed of a mortis node is unknowingly planted within its host during contact with a mighty fey creature or powerful abomination of fungus and decay. When the host creature dies, the mortis node takes over its corpse, absorbing the remains of life and growing its first malignant roots.

**Mind-Drinker.** A mortis node grows more intelligent as it saps the vitality and consciousness of the creatures around it. Most creatures near its nest eventually fall under its total control, kept alive only by a trickle of nourishment from the mortis node's far-reaching vines.

### A MORTIS NODE'S LAIR

Mortis nodes sprout in the bodies of fell warlocks and sorcerers who have made pacts with unseelie fey or beings of rot and mold. The mortis node's lair is often a tomb or earthen grave in an area of heavy vegetation. The area around the lair transforms as the mortis node drinks the psyche of all living things around it — plants become warped and alien, or even psychotically sentient, and the wildlife grows listless and confused.

### REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region containing a mortis node's lair becomes mutated as the plant devours the life and consciousness around it. This creates one or more of the following effects:

- Each year, a radius of effect centered on the mortis node increases by one mile. Black, oily vines erupt from the ground in the area. Each time a creature spends a day in the area of effect, it must pass a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or lose one point of Wisdom. A creature whose Wisdom score becomes zero due to this effect falls under the control of the mortis node. While controlled by the mortis node, the creature's eyes are glassy and its tongue is black. A creature who leaves the area of effect regains one point of Wisdom per day.
- Mushrooms within the area of effect transform into **violet fungus**.

- Wildlife in the area have a hive intelligence shared with the mortis node.

If the mortis node dies, the effects fade over the course of 2d6 days.

### MORTIS NODE

*Large plant, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 12 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 76 (9d10 + 27)

**Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

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STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

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**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Common, Sylvan

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Putrescent.** The mortis node may summon 1d4 **violet fungi** under its control on its turn. The violet fungi appear within 10 feet of the mortis node and act on its initiative order. The violet fungi die if the mortis node dies.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The mortis node makes two attacks.

**Spines.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20 ft./40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

**Tentacle.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage. The target must pass a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or its Wisdom score is reduced by 1d4 for the next 24 hours. Any creature the mortis node reduces to 0 Wisdom in this way falls under its control, acting on the mortis node's initiative order.



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Want to see the first Edgar Allan Poe-inspired adventure in this series? Check out *Masque of the Worms*, a terrifying 1st-level one-shot. You can watch Castle Mac's live play-through of the adventure in the Edgar Allan Poe Museum [here!](#)





## Acknowledgements

This adventure was written in partnership with the amazing **Castle Mac** crew for their second livestream from the Edgar Allan Poe Museum in Richmond, VA on April 27, 2019. I can't thank the Castle Mac folks enough for their talent, hospitality, and generosity — they are all an amazing boon to the gaming community, true friends, and heroes of great legend.

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Some of Poe's works that influenced this adventure included "Eldorado," "The City in the Sea," "Eleonora," and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar." Inspiration credit also goes to the movie "Annihilation." If you want to see Steven MacLauchland and I concept the ideas for this adventure, check out the **adventure-writing episode** of Adventure Engineers!

## Art Credits

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