



ADVENTURERS LEAGUE



THE SPECTRAL INCURSION

JOHN ROGERS AND SHAWN MERWIN

Adventure Designer

Adventure Code: CCC-BMG-CORE03-01

Optimized For: APL 1



As Melvaunt rebuilds after the devastation wrought by the modron and orc attacks, the planar portal outside the city walls continues to worry everyone in the City of a Thousand Forges. A closer examination of the portal is needed, and brave adventurers are asked to help be part of the reconnaissance team.

A four-hour adventure for 1st - 4th level characters

Producer: Baldman Games

Development and Editing: Shawn Merwin

Proofing and Layout: Encoded Designs

Organized Play: Chris Lindsay

D&D Adventurers League Wizards Team: Adam Lee, Chris Lindsay, Mike Mearls, Matt Sernett

D&D Adventurers League Administrators: Lysa Chen, Bill Benham, Travis Woodall, Claire Hoffman, Greg Marks, Alan Patrick

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, the dragon ampersand, Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, Dungeon Master's Guide, D&D Adventurers League, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. All characters and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast.

©2018 Wizards of the Coast LLC, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707, USA. Manufactured by Hasbro SA, Rue Emile-Boéchat 31, 2800 Delémont, CH. Represented by Hasbro Europe, 4 The Square, Stockley Park, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB11 1ET, UK.



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *The Spectral Incursion*, a Convention Created Content D&D Adventurers League™ adventure, part of the official D&D Adventurers League™ organized play system.

This adventure is designed for three to seven 1st - 4th level characters, and is optimized for five characters with an average party level (APL) of 1. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

Adjusting This Adventure

This adventure provides suggestions in making adjustments for smaller or larger groups, characters of higher or lower levels, and characters that are otherwise a bit more powerful than the adventure is optimized for. You're not bound to these adjustments; they're here for your convenience.

To figure out whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the total by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group's APL. To approximate the party strength for the adventure, consult the following table.

Determining Party Strength

Party Composition	Party Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than	Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than	Average
5 characters, APL less than	Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent	Average
5 characters, APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than	Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than	Very strong

Some encounters may include a sidebar that offers suggestions for certain party strengths. If a particular recommendation is not offered or appropriate for your group, you don't have to make adjustments.

Before Play at the Table

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use in a combat. Become familiar with the adventure's appendices and handouts.

- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure--such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Playing the Dungeon Master

You have the most important role—facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You provide the narrative and bring the words on these pages to life. To facilitate this, keep in mind the following:

You're Empowered. Make decisions about how the group interacts with the adventure; adjusting or improvising is encouraged, so long as you maintain the adventure's spirit. This doesn't allow you to implement house rules or change those of the Adventurers League, however; they should be consistent in this regard.

Challenge Your Players. Gauge the experience level of your players (not the characters), try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to deliver the experience they're after. Everyone should have the opportunity to shine.

Keep the Adventure Moving. When the game starts to get bogged down, feel free to provide hints and clues to your players so they can attempt to solve puzzles, engage in combat, and roleplay interactions without getting too frustrated over a lack of information. This gives players "little victories" for figuring out good choices from clues. Watch for stalling--play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that players don't finish too early; provide them with a full play experience.

Adventure Primer

Adventure Background

Still recovering from the attack by the modrons and the orcs, the city of Melvaunt has fallen into a fitful stasis. The walls are mostly repaired, and the depleted City Watch remains vigilant against the frequent forays by the remaining modron and orc forces. A planar portal remains static outside the city walls, occasionally burping forth some monstrosity that must be defeated before it threatens innocent lives.

Captain LeCampe Eledstra has been tasked with renewing the effort to close the portal. Truushee the Sage and the ex-Red Wizard Zarabi Thar'khul are consulted, and the adventurers are hired to guard them from any attacks, from the gate or the surrounding countryside. Truushee believes the gate is becoming more active, and Zarabi can feel the increasing necrotic emanations from the portal.

Location and NPC Summary

The following NPCs and locations feature prominently in this adventure.

Captain LeCampe Eledstra (le-CAMP el-LED-strah). LeCampe Eledstra is a human of late middle age. She's a decent woman who takes her job of protecting Melvaunt's ordinary citizens seriously. Eledstra is tall, thin, and lanky with a shock of unruly white hair through which she runs her fingers constantly whenever she's trying to think. She is very bad at playing political games, which is why she was only recently promoted to captain despite her many years of service in the City Watch. She knows this promotion means that if anything goes wrong, she is the one who will take the political fall. And she suspects that she is expected to fail.

Truushee the Sage (TRUE-shee). Truushee is a young half-orc, no more than 20 years old. She looks more orc than human, which is disconcerting to many citizens, especially with the orc-infested lands of Thar so close. Truushee was found as a baby by a sage traveling between Melvaunt and Phlan, and she raised Truushee as her own. When the old sage recently passed away, Truushee took over. Truushee's social skills are significantly lacking, rendering concepts like personal space and small talk nonexistent. Truushee learned a great deal from her foster mother and has a knack for understanding incredibly complex information.

Quote: "The complexities of the multiverse dictate that the only constant is change, and even that constant is only true and valid in the exact moment of divergence from an infinite number of other constants."

Zarabi Thar'khul (zahr-RAH-bee thar-COOL). Zarabi, a necromancer, used to be a Red Wizard. It took the murder of her husband at the hands of a rival to realize how cruel and malicious Thayans can be. She fled the country soon after rather than seeking vengeance. She came to Melvaunt to study the effects of the planar portal. She is excited, confident, and brilliant. It may take her a few moments to open up the characters, but once she does, the necromancer is more than happy to yammer on about her research and her past.

Adventure Overview

The adventure is broken down into three parts:

Beginnings. An Offer from the Captain. Captain Eledstra asks the adventurers to escort a sage and a wizard outside the walls of the city to investigate the planar portal.

Part 1. Through the Portal. Arriving at the portal, the adventurers witness massive creatures burst through, immediately charging them and the people they were tasked to protect. In the midst of the chaos created by the creature, the portal belches forth incorporeal undead that take possession of the townsfolk and guards, including the wizard Zarabi.

Part 2. Trekking North. The adventurers follow the trail of Zarabi north into the wilds, dealing with the traps and other surprises left by the possessed necromancer. After dealing with a potentially hostile group at a tavern, the adventurers learn the final destination of the necromancer.

Part 3. The Abandoned Tower. At the tower of the lost necromancer, Zarabi sets a trap for the pursuing adventurers, and then she attempts to use an item of great power to create an undead army.

Adventure Hooks

Story Hook. Word is spread that Captain LeCampe is looking for adventurers to pick up the slack left by a depleted city guard. The factions specifically ask their members to help her out, so as to garner her favor if needed at a later time.



BEGINNINGS: AN OFFER FROM THE CAPTAIN

Estimated Duration: 10 minutes

When the players are ready, read the following text. If the characters have played any of the previous Core adventures from Baldman Games set in Melvaunt and assisted Captain Eledstra, she greets them warmly by name:

You find yourselves in the office of Captain LeCampe Eledstra, a high-ranking member of the City Watch. She runs her hand through her spiked white hair as she dispenses with some Watch business, barking orders to a number of her lieutenants. Finally, when the room is cleared of distractions, she plops down at her desk with a weary sigh. She finally addresses you.

“Thanks for answering the call. Your references have checked out, so it is time to get down to business. With all the orc and modron trouble recently, we are finally getting some stability. Efforts to recruit new members of the City Watch are going well, but training is not going as quickly as I would like. That is why I am turning to adventurers.” She lets that thought hang in the air for a moment, then continues.

“The portal outside the city has been more active recently, and the Council of Lords has been arguing for months about what to do. They still fight, but now they want me to oversee its investigation. I have recruited two experts to study the portal closely. One is a sage called Truushee, and the other is a former Red Wizard named Zarabi Thar’khul. With the dangers plaguing the area outside the walls, and with monsters coming through the portal from time to time, they need an escort. I want you to be that escort.”

The adventurers may have questions. Use the bullets below to guide that conversation:

- The portal appeared about a year ago. It only opened periodically, but when it did it was connected to a world known as Mechanus, run by modrons. The modrons were somehow convinced to attack Melvaunt via the portal.

- At the same time, orcs from Thar attacked Melvaunt. Some sabotage from within the city allowed the orcs to breach the walls and gain access.
- Truushee the Sage and others used magic to move the portal outside the city, causing the attacking modrons to run headlong into the orcs. This, and only this, saved the city from total destruction. Melvaunt still suffered major damage and significant loss of life.
- The portal has not moved since, and no magic has affected it. Cultists of Cyric the Mad tried to harness the power of the portal for their own uses, but they were stopped.
- However, since the attempts from the Cult of Cyric, the portal has been more active, bringing terrible extraplanar creatures through to attack the city. So far the threats have not been insurmountable, although the City Watch is being depleted through attrition.
- The wizard Zarabi Thar’khul, a former Red Wizard, believes that the energy given off by the portal has become more necrotic in nature, so she fears something terrible might be happening.

After the adventurers have had the chance to get this background information, Captain Eledstra offers them each 25 gp to escort Truushee and Zarabi to the portal and protect them from any threats they might encounter. This could take just a few hours, or it could take several days. Food and tents are available if a longer stay is needed, but the pay remains the same. There is no room for negotiation.

Truushee and Zarabi are planning to begin their examination bright and early the following morning, giving the adventurers a chance to rest for the night and prepare in any way they see fit. They can meet the pair at the North Gate at sunrise.

If the adventurers agree, continue to **Part 1 Through the Portal**.



PART 1. THROUGH THE PORTAL

Estimated Duration: 50 minutes

When the adventurers arrive at the North Gate at sunrise, Truushee and Zarabi chat excitedly. A DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check is needed to even begin to understand that they are talking about the arcane and philosophical workings of planar portals, and theorizing why this one is so unpredictable and impossible to control with conventional magic.

Zarabi, being a former Red Wizard, is shaved bald and covered with arcane tattoos. She is both affable and a bit ghoulish, as necromancy is her specialty.

Truushee looks like a smaller version of a full-blooded orc, although she is a half-orc. She cannot even begin to comprehend social niceties. She ignores anything that is not directly intriguing to her, and all that is intriguing to her is magical and planar theory.

General Features

A large tent sits near the portal, acting as a temporary guardhouse to monitor occasional planar incursions. Currently it houses eight City Watch guards and four local volunteers.

Terrain. The portal area is relatively clean with only a few pieces of debris left as remnants of the earlier conflicts that have taken place there.

Weather. Freezing rains fall slowly at first, but when the portal releases its incorporeal undead, the wind picks up and the rains intensifies into sleet.

Light. The deep overcast of the sky keeps the light at normal levels.

Smells and Sounds. The normally metallic odors that overwhelm the air near Melvaunt have been rinsed clean by the rains. Approaching the portal brings with it a scent of ozone.

Freezing rain has been slowly falling since you woke, which is odd since it is summer in the Moonsea region. By the time you arrive at the portal area outside the city, 'miserable' is the best word to describe the weather.

The first caravans of the day are trundling along the north road, and a large tent sits within fifty feet of the pulsing portal, a large circle of energy. Grumpy and tired-looking City Watch guards peek out and nod at you.

With a brief wave to the guards huddled within the tent, Truushee and Zarabi walk excitedly toward the portal.

Allow the adventurers to do whatever they want: watch the proceedings from a distance, accompany the pair right up to the portal, chat with the guards, or interact with the passers-by along the road.

At the Portal. Truushee and Zarabi whisper excitedly about the portal. Truushee claims she has not seen it this active since the day of the modron attacks, and Zarabi says she can practically feel the necrotic energy pulsing from it.

The Guards. The guards are a mixture of terrified and angry. The portal has been popping and buzzing all night, the weather makes things even more miserable, and they fear what might soon happen.

Travelers. The travelers are all merchants, with their guards and porters, who are either leaving Melvaunt to transport their wares or who are just arriving in Melvaunt with their goods. They have heard about the portal, and they are wary to get to close—for good reason.

The Opening of the Portal

After the adventurers have had a few moments to interact with the NPCs (or not), the portal flares to life:

A thunderclap rips through the air around you. Truushee and Zarabi are knocked backward away from the portal, and everyone else stands paralyzed with shock and fear.

Through the portal leaps two canine creatures, each bearing two snarling heads, red eyes aglow with the very fires of Hell. They look for something to attack.

Any adventurer standing within 10 feet of the portal must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be knocked prone and stunned for one round.

The two **death dogs** spend the first round of combat snarling, looking around, and getting their bearings. Adventurers do not have surprise, but they can spend a round acting while the death dogs get their bearings.

On the second round, the death dogs act. They go after the closest creature other than themselves.

At the start of the third round, stop combat for a moment and read:

A second thunderclap erupts from the portal. This time it looks like the portal itself is shredding, as a host of flying spectral forms of various shapes and sizes emerge. These terrifying forms cackle in silent madness, as if they are escaping from a prison, gleeful in their newfound freedom. The forms, which pour through the portal by the dozens, spread out in all directions.

Some move directly into the bystanders, including Zarabi, some of the guards, and people in the merchant caravans. Others head toward the newly repaired city walls, which do nothing to slow their incorporeal forms.

Those infected by the specters get strange looks on their faces—then they go wild. They attack the nearest creatures: unarmed civilians attacking heavily armed guards with their bare hands, guards attacking each other, and Zarabi casting a spell.

Zarabi casts *dimension door* to get 500 feet to the north, and then she casts *expeditious retreat* to escape. Later she steals a horse and rides to the abandoned tower. Through the intensifying sleet and fog, the adventurers cannot see her. (The next part of this adventure sees the adventurers following her trail to the tower.)

As a powerful **necromancer**, she could destroy the adventurers quite easily. She does not under any circumstance attack them. Her stat block is added only for informational purposes.

Distractions

While the adventurers fight the death dogs, they may be distracted by other happenings. First, they may try to attack the spectral entities coming through the portal. Make it clear that tactic does no good. They are impervious to damage, and there are too many.

Next, the adventurers may try to fight the possessed individuals who are attacking. If they do, make it clear that the death dogs are the most dire threat. If they insist, however, use the stats for **commoners** and **scouts** to represent the possessed people. However, don't attack the adventurers with these people unless the adventurers attack first.

Finally, the adventurers may try drive the spirits from their hosts. Make it clear that doing so is currently impossible without much study and a greater understanding of what is happening.

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak or Weak:** Remove one **death dog**.
- **Strong:** The **death dogs** attack the adventurers immediately.
- **Very Strong:** Add one **death dog**.

Development

When the death dogs are defeated, all the possessed people in the area are either defeated by the others, or they flee the area. All, that is, except for one. Read:

As you survey the area, you see no more possessed people causing trouble. They have either been put down or have fled. Truushee stands and brushes herself off, her face a mask of something between horror and curiosity. Then a child's laugh breaks the silence. A human boy of about 10 years crawls toward you, his limp legs trailing.

"Oh, the bitter irony. Escape from torment in hell to be trapped in this body." The words coming from the boy's mouth have a raspy quality.

The boy is named Eduar Hugot, and he is the son of a merchant named Patrithia Hugot. The boy was born without the ability to walk, so he rides his mother's cart, uses crutches when necessary, while learning the family business.

He has been possessed by a spirit calling himself Ember. In life Ember was an arsonist and murderer, and when he died he went to the first layer of the Nine Hells to be punished for his crimes. The spirit Ember can relay the following information through the possessed Eduar:

- Ember's soul or spirit or essence was being tortured, and then he felt himself being pulled through the portal.
- Something very strong is urging Ember to wreak havoc in the city of Melvaunt, but his current host's lack of mobility is making that nearly impossible.
- He can feel the other spirits around him. Most are like him, being called to spread chaos, but some of the spirits are definitely undertaking particular tasks. He knows nothing more than that.
- He wants to leave this host, but he is not able. Something is anchoring him here. It might be a

factor in the powerful magic that brought him through the portal.

Aftermath

At this point, Captain Eledstra rides out to hail the adventurers and find out what is happening. She heard the thunderclaps when the portal opened, but she saw nothing of the attack, although she witnessed spectral beings flooding into the city.

After getting the report from the adventurers on the occurrences so far, she asks them to try to find Zarabi. She orders Truushee to get back to the city and figure out what is happening with the spectral incursion, and she orders the remaining guards to take Eduar to the temple of Oghma, known as the House of Scholars, to figure out the situation.

If the adventurers are unsure of how to proceed, one of the merchants who witnessed the attack saw where Zarabi teleported, then saw her cast a spell and run quickly along the north road. With the weather threatening snow in summer, they'd better find her trail quickly.



PART 2. TREKKING NORTH

Estimated Duration: 90 minutes

During this part, the adventurers trek northward, following the trail left by the possessed Zarabi and others whose possessing spirits serve her.

Along the way the adventurers must cross the partially frozen Tormel River while dealing with the zombies Zarabi left behind. The weather eventually makes tracking impossible. At that point, with exposure to the elements weighing on the party, they spot a hunting tavern in the distance. This place provides clues that lead to the abandoned tower where Zarabi is hiding.

A. Racing to the North

After the confusion of the portal opening and the spectral intrusion, the adventurers might need to get their bearings and decide what's next. They

General Features

The region north of Melvaunt has the following general features.

Terrain. The area north of Melvaunt is a rocky and inhospitable region. Occasional farms, mining operations, and logging outfits dot the map, but for the most it is the realm of treasure seekers, hunters, and orc raiders.

Weather. The temperature continues to drop, and freezing rain turns to sleet and then snow. Combined with the wind, all these encounters are affected by heavy precipitation, strong wind, and extreme cold.

Light. The deep overcast of the sky keeps the light at normal levels during the day. At night the moon and stars are blotted out, providing no light.

are told by witnesses that they saw Zarabi heading away from the city along the north road. Some also say that a few caravan guards and workers simply abandoned their posts and followed her—probably they too were possessed by spirits.

The chaos of this situation should be clear. With rain falling, wind blowing, and all the troubles in the area, use Captain Eledstra to keep the adventurers on task.

Once the adventurers are intent on finding Zarabi, they can head out. If they ask for horses, Eledstra provides mounts for each adventurer, insisting that the horses be returned at the end of the mission.

Finding the Trail

The north road out of Melvaunt is not full of traffic, but neither is it abandoned. About every 30 to 60 minutes the adventurers pass a merchant caravan, hunting party, mining group, or farmstead. They can learn from each of these groups that a rider matching Zarabi's description, plus about a dozen followers, rode past within the last 2 hours.

The north road runs along the eastern edge of the Tormel River, heading deeper and deeper into the badlands known as Thar. The further north the adventurers go, the fewer civilized folks they encounter.

A DC 10 Intelligence (Nature or Arcana) check reveals that the weather happening in the area right now is definitely not natural, and may be a result of some planar bleed.

B. Crossing the Tormel River

Soon it is snowing heavily, and the ground is covered in slush and muck. While this slows travel for the adventurers, it also makes following the trail of Zarabi and her helpers very easy—the tracks are the only ones in the newly fallen snow.

Their trail diverges from the main road, taking a less-used path to a place where ferries are needed to cross the Tormel River.

After trekking north off the main road for half an hour, you come to the southeastern shore of the Tormel River. The river is partially frozen.

Recent signs of a crossing can be seen where two ferries smashed their way through the thin ice and were deposited on the northwestern shore. The pulley system that guides the ferries across the river looks like it was dismantled purposefully to hinder pursuit.

At this point there are several possible ways to get across the 100-foot-wide river. Crossing at another point would involve hours of backtracking with little hope of a successful pursuit in this weather. The river is 10 feet deep for most of the crossing.

- Thick pieces of ice dot the river, and adventurers could cross by jumping from ice floe to ice floe. Each time the adventures jump from one to the other, a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check is needed. On a failed check, the adventurer falls into the water after landing on the floe. Three successes are needed to completely cross the river in this way.
- An adventurer could swim. Each round, the adventurer must make a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to make progress. One check allows for a movement of half normal speed, and the character could also dash as an action to move half normal walking speed again. The cold of the water, however, gives any living creature who spends more than 1 round in the water one level of exhaustion.
- Getting a horse to swim across the water with a rider requires a DC 10 Wisdom (Handle Animal) check each round. The horse can move 30 feet total in a round in this manner. On a failed check the horse refuses to budge that round.
- If a character can get across the river and repair the ferry's pulley system with a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Dexterity check, they can get the ferry back to the other side. The ferry is a 20 by 20 foot square raft that moves 20 feet by round, although one rider must use an action to use the pulley system. Trying to cross in a raft or other vessel that is not tethered in some way is impossible without magical help: the ice floes smash wooden vessels, and the current is too strong to steer.

Zombie Attack

While the adventurers are trying to cross the river, they find that Zarabi has left them a small surprise in the water: four **zombies**. These creatures, who have blue skin and frost-tinged features, were created by Zarabi as a way to hinder pursuit. The zombies wait until the adventurers are halfway across the river, and then they jump out of the water to attack.

The adventurers notice the zombies just before they attack with a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. Any adventurer failing this check is surprised by the zombie attack.

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak or Weak:** Remove one **zombie**
- **Strong:** Add one **zombie**
- **Very Strong:** Add two **zombies**

At the end of the battle, any living creature that has entered the water of the icy river must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed check, the living creature gains one level of exhaustion. Even living creatures that are resistant or immune to cold suffer these effects.

Developments

After crossing the river, the adventurers can pick up the trail again quite easily. The trail leads into an area of Thar known for its hunting, logging, and mining. The characters who continue along the trail soon find themselves at the Hunter's Moon.

C. The Hunter's Moon

The Hunter's Moon is a ramshackle tavern that serves the hunters, loggers, miners, and farmers in the area. Here the adventurers may recognize one of the possessed guards, left behind by Zarabi to hinder the pursuit further. This individual has told the rough lot in the tavern that the adventurers are actually murderous bandits and demonic cultists responsible for the change in weather. The adventurers must talk themselves out of the sticky situation, and they may learn a bit about the possessing spirits in the process.

After another two hours of following the trail north, the drifting snow has finally erased the tracks completely. With nothing more to follow, you catch a faint scent of wood smoke in the wind. A small ramshackle tavern called the Hunter's Moon rests in the distance. In better weather this might be considered a dump, but with two roaring fires inside, today it is a palace.

When the adventurers peek in or enter the tavern, read:

The tavern, or really more of a hunting lodge that serves food and drink, has no sign or placard. A gangly human stands behind the bar, pulling mugs of ale from a rustic keg. A half-elven woman carries steaming bowls of stew to huddled men and women at rough-hewn benches. Most of the individuals wear leather armor and wear weapons. The fires warm the room nicely.

Ten individuals occupy the tavern, including the bartender and tavern owner Horace Woodwright and his wife Lilac, who are retired **swashbucklers** from a now-defunct Moonsea pirate ship. Seven of the others are **archers** who make a living hunting in the area, and they are here escaping the startling change in weather.

The final person in the tavern is Shubert Budd, a Melvaunt City Guard who was possessed and traveled here with Zarabi. He told the inhabitants that the change in weather is the work of an evil demon-worshipping wizard and its helpers, and then he described the adventurers in detail as the perpetrators. He said that he witnessed the ritual, which involved the adventurers sacrificing people to some dark power. He claims the adventurers are hunting him down to silence him for witnessing their terrible acts.

With no other truth to believe, the superstitious folks in the Hunter's Moon have chosen to believe the possessed Shubert. When the adventurers enter, the patrons play it cool, remaining in their seats but keeping an eye on the adventurers.

After the adventurers take stock of their surroundings, continue:

The bartender greets you with a grim smile. "Terrible weather, eh? Damn near supernatural. Still, we got fire, ale, and stew. Have a seat if you have the coin, and we'll take care of you."

A DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that one of the people sitting at a bench is one of the City Guard who was possessed and ran off with Zarabi.

A DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check tells an adventurer that while the bartender is feigning politeness, he is actually very nervous.

Threat Assessment

How this encounter plays out depends on the roleplaying wishes of the DM and the players. The scene can be quickly resolved with a couple of successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) checks from the adventurers: first to convince the patrons that they are not evil, and then to show them Shubert is possessed and is the real villain.

However, this scene allows the DM and players to flex some roleplaying-interaction muscle. If any of the adventurers recognize Shubert as a possessed person, they might confront him and threaten violence. This, of course, plays into his story that the adventurers are out to kill him.

One way the adventurers cannot solve this problem is through pure violence. If the characters cannot convince the patrons that they are not villains, and they start using magic or acts of violence against Shubert or anyone else in the tavern, the full fury of the patrons is directed on the characters. This is not a fight the adventurers are likely to win, and killing these innocent folks is definitely an evil act.

The **7 archers** and **2 swashbucklers**, if they attack the adventurers, do not outright kill them. They attempt to knock the adventurers unconscious and tie them up to take them to Melvaunt for trial. If this battle does take place, have the NPCs ask the adventurers to drop their weapons and cease the violence at every opportunity.

Be sure to encourage and reward excellent roleplaying with inspiration and with bonuses (like advantage) on skill checks.

Roleplaying Shubert Budd

Shubert Budd is possessed by the spirit of a flamboyant Waterdhavian actress, Piety Winston, who found her soul in Avernus after she murdered a rival with poison in a jealous rage and paid the ultimate price of justice for her offense: she was executed.

Shubert is a heavysset man with muttonchops and a belly built by the finest ale. Piety, an actress of limited range even when she was alive, is finding it hard to act the part of a gruff law officer.

As the lies Shubert/Piety told the tavern's patrons unravel, she becomes more and more frantic, slipping more and more into Piety's melodramatic persona.

The Outcome

The two most likely outcomes are that the adventurers are either knocked unconscious by the patrons, or the adventurers are able to convince the patrons that Shubert is possessed. In the latter case, read the boxed text below then go directly to **Resume** or **Rest** below.

If the adventurers are knocked unconscious or surrender to the patrons without convincing them that they are innocent, Shubert's story unravels as Piety lets too much slip. However, by that time the night has passed. This counts as an automatic long rest for the adventures, and the encounters in the last section of the adventure are made a bit more challenging as the villains have more time to prepare.

Either way, after Shubert cracks, he relays the following information in Piety's melodramatic persona:

A wicked sneer plays across the rough face of the City Guard. It is obviously a possessing spirit in control. While the voice is rough, the tone is lilting. "You may have foiled me, but the rest are at the tower by now. Plans are already in motion. I don't know what called us here, but this land belongs to us now! All of your fancy prancing and pathetic attempts to stop us will only end in your demise."

A DC 10 Intelligence (History) check reveals that there was a tower used by a necromancer decades ago just north of here. If the adventurers cannot

figure out this information, one of the local hunters can relay that information. The next step in their journey is apparent!

E. Rest or Resume

The adventurers must now decide whether to rest here for the night or continue. They can take a short rest with no detrimental effects (although they don't know that). If they take a long rest, however, the final part of the adventure becomes



PART 3. THE ABANDONED TOWER

Estimated Duration: 90 minutes

Based on what they learned at the Hunter's Moon, the adventurers arrive at the ruined tower. If they took a long rest or got delayed at the tavern, this part of the adventure is a little more difficult for the characters.

General Features

The second and third floors of this old tower have crumbled onto the first. The interior is far from waterproof, and the snow outside creates constant dripping inside.

Terrain. This area contains sporadic woods and rough hills. Only the bravest hunters, miners, herders, or loggers venture this far north.

Weather. The wind and snow worsen as the minutes pass.

Light. The overcast skies provide only dim light during the day, and the cloud-choked night skies offer no light at all.

Smells and Sounds. The moldy smell of aged stone and rotting timber greet the adventurers as they approach the tower.

Arrival at the Tower

Before you lies an abandoned, decrepit tower. Age and disrepair have taken their toll on the structure. The second and third floor have crumbled on top of the first, but the remaining portions appear to be structurally sound. Remnants of a stable have collapsed on the right side of the building. Thick wooden doors have fallen from the entryway hinges.

a bit more difficult, as Zarabi has more time to get her plans in motion.

Treasure

If the adventurers are able to convince the patrons of the tavern of Shubert's possession without resorting to violence, they receive an XP bonus of 50. Lilac also gives them 2 potions of healing to help them on their mission.

Hidden within the entryway and in some of the rubble just outside the tower are 2 **scouts** and 4 **commoners**, all possessed by spirits that serve the apparition infesting Zarabi.

If the adventurers did not take a long rest, the DC to see the hiding foes with a Wisdom (Perception) check is only 8, and they can roll initiative normally. If they did take a long rest, the check is made against DC 15, and they roll initiative at disadvantage.

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak** or **Weak:** Remove one **scout**
- **Strong:** Add one **scout** and two **commoners**
- **Very Strong:** Add two **scouts** and four **commoners**

The possessed individuals fight to the death, since the spirits care little for the wellbeing of their hosts.

The Tower Entryway

The entryway of the tower is littered with debris and fragments of old furnishings and a few empty weapon racks. The door to the tower's inner chambers is intact and closed. Rain is dripping unimpeded through the decayed roof.

The door to the inner chamber is unlocked but trapped. There is actually a secret entrance on the back of the tower that can be found with a DC 15

Intelligence (Investigation) check. This is how the possessed folks enter and exit the building safely.

Collapsing Roof Trap

Simple trap (Levels 1-4, moderate threat)

The ceiling has been rigged to collapse when the unlocked door is opened. The ceiling falls on everyone standing within the entryway if the trap is triggered.

Trigger. A character opens the door, and all creatures within the entryway are affected.

Effect. If the trap is sprung, the ceiling collapses. Those affected must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. Those who succeed avoid the falling ceiling. The entryway becomes difficult terrain.

Countermeasures. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the trigger. The ceiling can be reinforced with a DC 10 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to carefully slip support pieces into place that reinforce the ceiling and allow the door to be opened without the roof collapsing.

XP Award

Each character earns 25 XP for surviving the collapsing roof trap.

Zarabi's Plan

Within the main section of the tower, the floor is riddled with scattered debris and large piles of wood and stone from the collapsed upper floors of the tower.

On the wall opposite the entryway door, Zarabi stands atop a ten foot high pedestal, her hands clutching a large round crystal orb. The ball glows, and a strong wind whips around the interior of the tower. The former Red Wizard's eyes glow with a strange power.

A voice that is not hers speaks. "The master was right. The necromancer who studied in this tower trapped energy of life and death. Now I will use it to create an army that will crush you and your masters in Melvaunt."

The glowing in her eyes diminishes for a brief moment, and you hear Zarabi's voice break through: "Please help me. The power is too much. I cannot hold out for long."

Using the crystal, Zarabi summons three **shadows**. These undead creatures come through the walls behind the adventurers, striking the rear members of the group.

Zarabi is a non-combatant in this encounter. She cannot attack, nor can she be damaged: the power of the crystal orb is too powerful. If the adventurers do attack her describe the crystal orb absorbing the attack and turn the counter down another number while describing the crystal cracking and powering up, sparking with dangerous energy.

This encounter is a race against time. After five ticks the power of the orb grows to be too much. It explodes, killing Zarabi. As the adventurers deal with the shadows, they must also rescue Zarabi. (Put a die on the table with the 5 face up, and at the end of each round, or if Zarabi is damaged, count down the number.)

To do so, they must somehow physically remove each of her hands from the orb, and then they must find a way to interrupt the magical connection between her and the orb. These require three successful skill checks of DC 10. Which skills are used are up to you and the players, but here are some recommendations:

- A Strength or Dexterity check is needed to mount the 10-foot pedestal to interact with Zarabi and the orb
- Strength (Athletics) to pull a hand away
- Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) to slip something between a hand and the orb
- Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) to break the connection between Zarabi and the orb
- Constitution to take the brunt of the energy to allow Zarabi to pull herself free
- Spells that don't damage Zarabi or the orb but make separation easier, such as grease

The key to the encounter is to balance the threat of the shadows with the countdown to Zarabi's destruction. Don't allow a single spell or check to bypass the entire encounter, but be flexible.

When the timer runs out, if Zarabi is still connected to the orb, she dies as it explodes. The shadows disappear into nothingness.

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak** or **Weak**: Remove one **shadow** and add 1 tick to the timer
- **Strong**: Add one **shadow** and remove 1 tick from the timer
- **Very Strong**: Add two **shadows** and remove 1 tick from the timer

If the adventurers manage to separate Zarabi from the orb in time, read:

As you cut the connection between the orb and the wizard, its energy flickers, pulses, and then dies out. The orb shatters harmlessly. Zarabi collapses in exhaustion. Any undead creatures still in the area vanish in a puff of mist. Outside, the snow stops falling.

XP Award

If the characters save Zarabi's life, award each character 25 XP.

Treasure

Whether they save Zarabi or not, the pieces of the orb are made of diamond, worth a total of 500 gp. If they save Zarabi, she offers the group an additional 200 gp and a potion of hill giant strength.

Conclusion

With the orb destroyed, the weather begins to return to normal. Even as the adventurers rest and/or make the trip back to Melvaunt, the clouds disperse and warmer air returns, creating an eerie fog.

If Zarabi is still alive, the spirit that possessed her was destroyed in the separation from the orb. Zarabi can remember a few things about the experience:

- The possessing spirit definitely knew about this place, and about the orb.
- Someone or something messed with the portal to connect it to one of the lower planes, where spirits had been contacted and were ready to come through to possess mortals.
- Whoever did this has a larger plan. Creating an undead army to march against Melvaunt was just one aspect. There is a larger plan that is still in progress.
- Zarabi cannot remember much more than that, but she needs to rest before she figures out how she can help in the danger that currently threatens Melvaunt.

The adventure ends as the adventurers approach the walls of Melvaunt. The series continues with *BMG-CCC-CORE3-02 The Ghostly Infestation*.

Rewards

Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

Experience (Min/Max XP: 225/300)

Total up all combat experience earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For non-combat experience, the rewards are listed per character.

Combat Awards

Name of Foe	XP Per Foe
Death dog	200
Zombie	100
Scout	50
Commoner	10
Shadow	100

Non-Combat Awards

Task or Accomplishment	XP Per Char
Reveal Shubert without violence	50
Survive the ceiling trap	25
Save Zarabi's life	25

Treasure

The characters receive the following treasure, divided up amongst the party. Treasure is divided as evenly as possible. Gold piece values listed for sellable gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

Treasure Awards

Item Name	GP Value
Eledstra's Payment	25/character
Crystal Orb Shards	500
Zarabi's Reward	200

Consumable magic items should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the DM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

Permanent magic items are divided according to a system detailed in the D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide.

Potion of Hill Giant Strength

Potion, uncommon

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* on page 187. When you drink this potion, your Strength score changes to 21 for 1 hour.

Potion of Healing

Potion, common

This item can be found in the *Player's Handbook*.

Player Rewards

For completing this mission, the characters earn downtime and renown as described in the D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide (ALDMG).

DM Rewards

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn DM Rewards as described in the D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide (ALDMG).

DM Appendix: NPC Summary

The following NPCs are featured prominently in this adventure:

Captain LeCampe Eledstra (le-CAMP el-LED-strah). LeCampe Eledstra is a human of late middle age. She's a decent woman who takes her job of protecting Melvaunt's ordinary citizens seriously. Eledstra is tall, thin, and lanky with a shock of unruly white hair through which she runs her fingers constantly whenever she's trying to think. She is very bad at playing political games, which is why she was only recently promoted to captain despite her many years of service in the City Watch. She knows this promotion means that if anything goes wrong, she is the one who will take the political fall. And she suspects that she is expected to fail.

Truushee the Sage (TRUE-shee). Truushee is a young half-orc, no more than 20 years old. She looks more orc than human, which is disconcerting to many citizens, especially with the orc-infested lands of Thar so close. Truushee was found as a baby by a sage travelling between Melvaunt and Phlan, and she raised Truushee as her own. When the old sage recently passed away, Truushee took over. Truushee's social skills are significantly lacking, rendering concepts like personal space and small talk nonexistent. Truushee learned a great deal from her foster mother and has a knack for understanding incredibly complex information.

Quote: "The complexities of the multiverse dictate that the only constant is change, and even that constant is only true and valid in the exact moment of divergence from an infinite number of other constants."

Zarabi Thar'khul (zahr-RAH-bee thar-COOL). Zarabi, a necromancer, used to be a Red Wizard. It took the murder of her husband at the hands of a rival to realize how cruel and malicious Thayans can be. She fled the country soon after rather than seeking vengeance. She came to Melvaunt to study the effects of the planar portal. She is excited, confident, and brilliant. It may take her a few moments to open up the characters, but once she does, the necromancer is more than happy to yammer on about her research and her past.

Eduar Hugot/Ember(ed-DWAR YOU-goh).

Eduar is a 10-year-old human boy, lame from a disability he has had since birth. His mother Patrithia is a merchant, who is teaching her son the family business. Eduar's inability to walk does not slow him down, and his curiosity and intellect serve him well in his studies.

He is possessed by the spirit of a dead human who calls himself Ember. In life, Ember was an arsonist and murderer. He was released from his tortures in the Nine Hells to wreak havoc and burn things in Melvaunt.

Horace and Lilac Woodwright. This husband and wife were one pirates on the Moonsea. After the pirating life became too complicated and dangerous, they moved north of Melvaunt and built a tavern and hunting lodge called the Hunter's Moon that services a rough-and-tumble clientele of hunters, loggers, miners, and others who make a rough living in the foothills of Thar.

Shubert Budd/Piety Winston. Shubert is a veteran member of the Melvaunt City Watch who got possessed by the spirit of a murderous Waterdhavian actress called Piety. Piety is working hard to make people believe she is Shubert, but her acting abilities are not up to the task. She often breaks into melodrama when trying to play the part.

Appendix:

NPC / Monster Statistics

Death Dog

Medium monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Two-Headed. The dog has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, or knocked unconscious.

Actions

Multiattack. The dog makes two bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw against disease or become poisoned until the disease is cured. Every 24 hours that elapse, the creature must repeat the saving throw, reducing its hit point maximum by 5 (1d10) on a failure. This reduction lasts until the disease is cured. The creature dies if the disease reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Commoner

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 4 (1d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Actions

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

Zarabi Thar'khul (Necromancer)

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 66 (12d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +5

Skills Arcana +7, History +7

Damage Resistances necrotic

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal, Abyssal

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Spellcasting. The necromancer is a 12th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The necromancer has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, dancing lights, mage hand, mending*

1st level (4 slots): *false life, mage armor, ray of sickness*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness, ray of enfeeblement, web*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, bestow curse, vampiric touch*

4th level (3 slots): *blight, dimension door, stonework*

5th level (3 slots): *Bigby's hand, cloudkill*

6th level (1 slot): *circle of death*

Grim Harvest (1/Turn). When a necromancer kills a creature that is neither a construct nor undead with a spell of 1st level or higher, the necromancer gains hit points equal to twice the spell's level, or three times if it is a necromancy spell.

Actions

Withering Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) necrotic damage.

Zombie

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 22 (3d8 + 9)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Wis +0

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Scout

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

Skills Nature +4, Perception +5, Stealth +6, Survival +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Keen Hearing and Sight. The scout has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight.

Actions

Multiattack. The scout makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

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

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, ranged 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Archer

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)

Hit Points 75 (10d8+30)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Perception +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Archer's Eye (3/Day). As a bonus action, the archer can add 1d10 to its next attack or damage roll with a longbow or shortbow.

Actions

Multiattack. The archer makes two attacks with its longbow.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Shadow

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +4 (+6 in dim light or darkness)

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Amorphous. The shadow can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the shadow can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

Sunlight Weakness. While in sunlight, the shadow has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

Actions

Strength Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) necrotic damage, and the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a new shadow rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

Swashbuckler

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 17 (leather armor)

Hit Points 66 (12d8+12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +5, Persuasion +6

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Lightfooted. The swashbuckler can take the Dash or Disengage action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Suave Defense. While the swashbuckler is wearing light or no armor and wielding no shield, its AC includes its Charisma modifier.

Actions

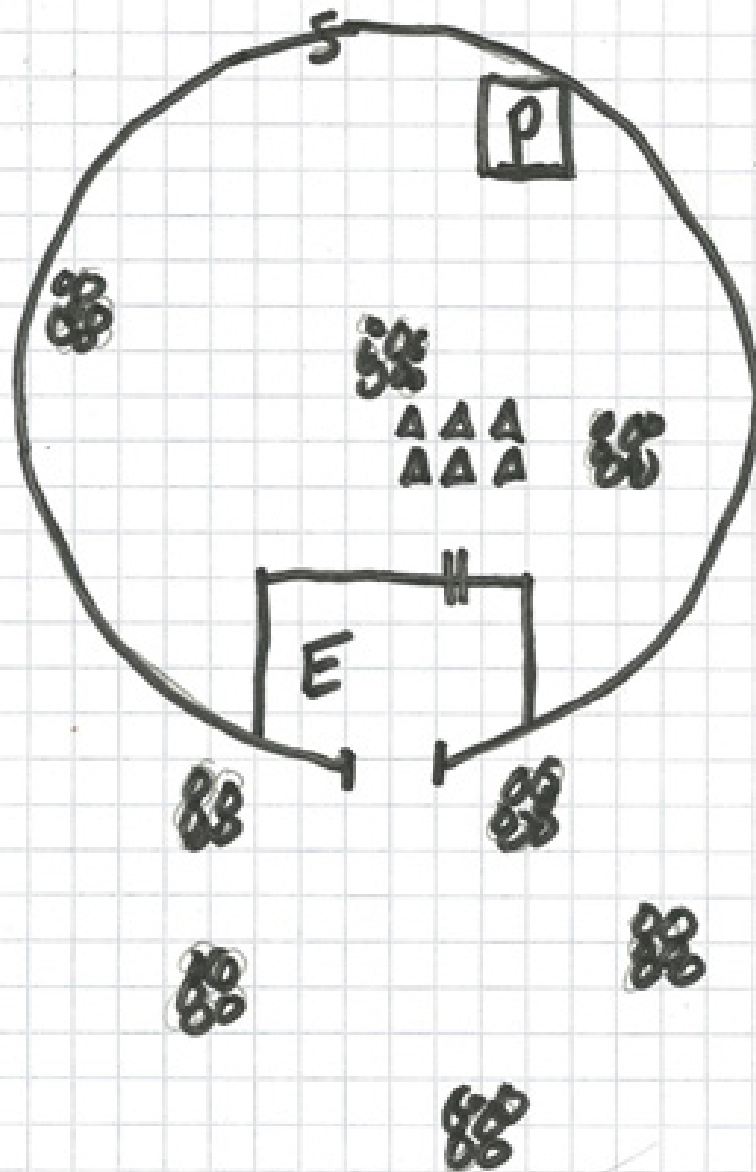
Multiattack. The swashbuckler makes three attacks: one with a dagger and two with its rapier.

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

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Appendix. Abandoned Tower Map

The Abandoned Tower



P = Pedestal

Δ = Rubble

⊗ = Rock piles

E = Entryway