



# ADVENTURERS LEAGUE™



# VESTIGES OF DARKNESS

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*Adventure Designer*

***Adventure Code: ELMW2-3***

***Optimized For: APL 8***



*Legends say that the fall of Northkeep was orchestrated by one man, who sought ultimate power but was cursed to remain forever within the sunken ruins of the Bell in the Deep as his only reward. Now the great betrayer might himself have been betrayed, with dire consequences for the entire Moonsea region.*

*A four-hour adventure for 5th-10th level characters*

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Vestiges of Darkness*, a Convention Created Content D&D Adventurers League™ adventure, part of the official D&D Adventurers League™ organized play system and the Baldman Games Elmwood adventures.

*This adventure is designed for three to seven 5th-10th level characters, and is optimized for five characters with an average party level (APL) of 8. 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.

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## Adventure Primer

### Adventure Background

In the last year or so, the realm of Ravenloft has been oddly cotangent to the Moonsea. During that time, a band of seven adventurers slipped through the mists of Ravenloft. This group found themselves the unlikely heroes of the downtrodden people of Barovia. A vampire, Strahd Von Zarovich, ruled the land with cruelty and bloodshed, and the good adventurers could not refuse that challenge. After exploring the land and finding artifacts that would help them against the master vampire, the adventurers heard a rumor of a mystical place of power called the Amber Temple. The Amber Temple was founded by an order of paranoid and reclusive wizards who were stewards of the vestiges of dead gods. When a being as powerful as an evil god is slain, it still retains a shard of power and becomes a vestige of its prior self. After being defeated by Strahd once, the adventurers went to the Amber Temple because they had heard that the vampire had acquired his own formidable powers there. They knew that in order to have a chance against the ancient evil, they would need every advantage in the fight. They accepted gifts of power from the vestiges.

- Nesbit Gath (NEZ-bit Gath) is a gnome transmutation wizard. He's younger, nervous, and all he cares about is acquiring new magic and arcane knowledge. One of the dead gods gave him the secret to becoming a lich if only he had stronger command of magic.
- Olwain Jorudel (ALL-wane JŌ-ru-del) was an elven forest warden. His experiences in the Amber Temple transformed his loyal cooshees into hell hounds.

- Skamos (SKAY-mōs) is a tiefling warlock with dark purple skin and large black freckles. She is a big, buff woman with a jovial temper, but who is a berserker in a fight. She was gifted with great strength and likes to bully others and make them feel inferior.
- Alfred the Boneater is a human man dressed in simple clothes, with skeletal wings growing out of his back, and a crossbow in his hand.
- Lathai the Heartseeker (LATH-eye) is a drow ranger. She has assumed the power to walk on walls and ceilings like a spider
- Patrin (PĀTE-rin) is a silver colored dragonborn paladin. While he used to be exceedingly polite, he's gotten to the point where he won't take no for an answer.
- The dowager countess Constance Trentham (TRENTH-um) is a very old, very proper, very cultured half-elf woman who seeks political power. The magic of the dead gods gave her the power of storms.

However, the powers granted by the Amber Temple of Barovia changed the adventurers. They became paranoid, untrusting, merciless, and cruel as the vestiges of the dead gods slowly took them over. They fought the vampire and banished him for a while, but they were sure he would return. The adventurers returned to the Moonsea with new goals: to loot and pillage whatever they chose, and to gain power for their own glory and benefit. Nesbit Gath is the putative leader of the group, having enforced his will upon them with his magical prowess. Since they came to the Moonsea, they tangled with a local necromancer named Tyranne Epaline in a fight that ended in a draw. Nesbit Gath has decided instead to apprentice to the lich Akempus, who rules the sunken city of Northkeep. While he does so, the rest of his team has run amok. Nesbit Gath and Akempus have sealed Northkeep in a barrier of magical energy so that they can be left alone while they work.

In the first part of the story (ELMW 2-1 Tendrils in the Fog) the heroes discover that two evil adventurers have been raiding farms and homesteads near Elmwood. Aliana Mathnir, the Constable of Elmwood, hires the characters to investigate and put an end to the attacks. The heroes discover that this isn't an isolated incident, and that the evil adventurers are part of a larger group that is being called to Northkeep. Aliana Mathnir has worked to get a ship and captain to help adventurers to find a way in to Northkeep. Unfortunately, Northkeep has been sealed off behind a protective magical barrier.

In the second part of the story (ELMW 2-2 Mists of the Moonsea) Aliana Mathnir requested that the heroes recover an artifact that will help them penetrate the barrier of magical energy around Northkeep and to secure the portal leading to the Bell in the Deep. The adventurers reached the sunken wreck of the Eye of Akempus, the flagship of Northkeep, whose ship's bell is a key that opens a portal to Northkeep on Yarralumla Island. The characters were attacked by both the undead crew of the wreck and more of the corrupted adventurers. Upon reaching Yarralumla Island the heroes prepared to enter the portal, which can only be opened at spring tide.

In this adventure, the heroes have everything that they need to open the portal and enter the ruins of Northkeep. Their mission is to locate Nesbit Gath and the remaining members of the corrupted adventuring company, and deal with them before they can form an alliance with Akempus, the lich ruler of Northkeep. What the adventurers find on the other side of the portal, however, is a bit different than anyone had bargained for.

## The Alhoon and the Periapt of Mind Trapping

The portal to Northkeep is a trap set by an ancient mind-flayer lich, an alhoon. The alhoon has been using this portal to capture people and consume their souls in order to extend its unlife. The trap is a *Periapt of Mind Trapping*. The portal brings a traveler's body to the ruins of Northkeep, and their soul directly into the Periapt where it can be investigated and consumed at leisure by the alhoon. To the victim, being inside the *Periapt of Mind Trapping* feels like whatever fantasy landscape the alhoon chooses. For this purpose, this alhoon chose the *Periapt of Mind Trapping* to be like the airless ruins of Northkeep to confuse victims and let them think that it was reality.

Nesbit Gath used the portal with the intention of finding Akempus and he, Patrin, and the Countess were caught within the *Periapt of Mind Trapping*. The alhoon introduced itself as Akempus, and it was thrilled with the vestiges of dead gods from the Amber Temple of Ravenloft now also caught within the *Periapt* – this was a potential route to incredible power and true immortality! It set out to consume the souls of the adventurers and found that the vestiges of the dead gods empowered the possessed adventurers enough to fight back. Nesbit Gath has walled himself off in a portion of the *Periapt of Mind Trapping*. The Countess believes Akempus is a normal lich and is looking for its phylactery. Patrin, finally free of the corrupting

influence of Nesbit Gath and the Countess, is having a crisis of faith and is trying to reconnect with Bahamut.

When the adventurers arrive, their bodies are transported to Northkeep, and their minds are trapped within the *Periapt of Mind Trapping*. Normally, this would be a death sentence, but the alhoon has far too many problems to immediately consume them. It tries to enlist their aid against the evil adventurers. The characters have an opportunity to explore the mental construct of the *Periapt of Mind Trapping*, interact with the possessed adventurers, and perhaps escape the psychic prison and take the others with them.

This adventure takes place in mere moments. The adventurers arrive through the portal, spend heartbeats fighting off the alhoon's mental influence, and then break free to do battle with the alhoon itself. However, to the adventurers, the seconds spent fighting off the alhoon's mental influence feel like several hours of looking around through the ruins and interacting with them and the possessed adventurers.

Because the characters are within the *Periapt of Mind Trapping*, this adventure has special rules for death and dying for **Encounters 1-6**. See the "**Death and Dying in the Periapt of Mind Trapping**" sidebar in **Encounter 1**. The alhoon revivifies dead characters one minute after combat and brings them back to life with 1 hp and another level of exhaustion. **Characters that die during Encounter 7 have died in the real world and do not benefit from free revivification.**

Note that this is a low-oxygen, low-temperature environment, and the characters will need to make saving throws after significant exertion and short rests or take levels of exhaustion. See General Conditions sidebar in Encounter 1.

## Adventure Overview

This adventure is divided into 7 main scenes, along with a brief introduction and a conclusion. It is designed to be run in 4 hours.

**Introduction.** Have each player fill out **Handout 1**, whose details will be used in the adventure when Akempus is attempting to prey on the characters' minds. Give the players **Handout 2** for the story hooks that are appropriate to their characters. The characters meet each other and are transported to Yarralumla Island by Captain Mariam Wrathborne on the ship the Wave Queen.

**Encounter 1: Through the Portal.** The crew of the Wave Queen rings the bell. The portal opens and the characters step through. They think they are

## Location and NPC Summary

The following NPCs and locations feature prominently in this adventure.

**Akempus (A-KEMP-us).** A lich said to have betrayed Northkeep as it fell over a thousand years ago, only to be trapped in the ruins. The alhoon (mind flayer lich) calls itself Akempus, but it's unclear if the alhoon is really Akempus, or is insane and believes itself to be Akempus, or has adopted the persona of the ancient lich for another reason.

**Nesbit Gath (NEZ-bit Gath).** A gnome transmutation wizard who is seeking the power to become a lich.

Countess Constance Trentham (TRENTH-um). An elderly half-elf woman with the power of storms.

**Patrin (PĀTE-rin).** A silver dragonborn paladin who won't accept no for an answer, and who has fallen out of faith with Bahamut.

**Northkeep or the Bell in the Deep.** An ancient fortress sunk beneath the Moonsea. It's said that on some nights, the sounds of the bells can be heard from Elventree to Elmwood.

**Aliana Mathnir (AI-EE-ahn-ah MATH-near).** The Constable of Elmwood.

**Captain Mariam Wrathborne (MAR-ee-am WRATH-born).** The captain of the Wave Queen is a tough shipping captain, and reformed cultist of the Crushing Wave.

in a wrecked wine cellar in the sunken fortress of Northkeep. They are actually trapped in the alhoon's *Periapt of Mind Trapping*.

**Encounter 2: First Contact.** The characters have mental contact with the disembodied voice of the alhoon that claims to be the lich Akempus. It says that Nesbit Gath destroyed its physical form and tries to enlist the adventurers to help it. It tells the characters that the only way to get through the ward that Nesbit Gath has created to hide himself is to get talismans carried by Patrin, the dragonborn paladin and Constance Trentham, the half-elf warlock.

**Encounter 3: Exploring the Keep.** This is a description of the various areas inside the keep.

**Encounter 4: The Chapel.** The dragonborn paladin Patrin has lost his faith and his courage and is wallowing in suicidal despair. He asks the characters to kill him. The adventurers can either help him restore his faith and cast off the power of Zantras (roleplaying) or give him a heroic death to draw Bahamut's attention (combat).

**Encounter 5: The Crypts.** Patrin's holy symbol of Bahamut is one of the two keys needed to unlock Nesbit's ward. Unfortunately, the paladin sundered the item in a fit of despair, and Akempus caused the shards to be whisked away by undead servitors (which Patrin mistakenly concluded are dark avatars representing his loss of faith in Bahamut). If the characters destroyed Patrin in the chapel, then in this encounter they only need to search the crypts for the shattered pieces of Patrin's holy symbol. If the adventurers convinced Patrin to accompany them, then they must first destroy the bodaks and other servants of evil so that Patrin can break free of Zantras and return to the service of Bahamut. In either case, restoring the holy symbol takes the form of a puzzle.

**Encounter 6. The Garden.** Countess Trentham's location isn't known. Characters must follow the trail of her wormlike servitors to find her. A maze of burrowed tunnels (from small to large) runs through various areas of the keep (stables, barracks, gates). Following the trail, the characters eventually return to the central courtyard, where they discover that the Countess has made a few changes, including summoning and torturing "spirit animals" that represent each character. In reality, these totems are just another manifestation of the power of Akempus as the alhoon seeks to slowly drain away the adventurers' will to resist it. The adventurers must rescue their own totems to prevent their minds from being stolen, while also fighting the Countess and her minions. Once she has been defeated, the adventurers can recover her medallion, which is one of the two items needed to dispel Nesbit Gath's protective ward.

**Encounter 7. The Bell in the Deep.** The door to this area is sealed by magic that can only be undone using the tokens possessed by Constance Trentham and Patrin. When the adventurers tear down his ward, Nesbit tells them what is really going on, and the alhoon kills him. The alhoon is distracted enough that this allows the characters to wake and see the Bell in the Deep as it truly is. Akempus is a formidable foe, and the adventurers must defeat the alhoon and its minions.

**Concluding the Adventure:** There are three possible conclusions to this adventure. If the characters were slain by the alhoon in the final battle, it claims their souls and they are once again imprisoned in its *Periapt of Mind Trapping*. If the characters defeat Akempus it offers them a truce, gratefully loads them down with treasure, and allows them to leave through the portal back to the surface. Otherwise, the characters may destroy Akempus and must flee to the portal, grabbing what treasure they can as they go.

## Adventure Hooks

**On the Trail of Nesbit Gath.** If the characters have played ELMW2-1 Tendrils in the Fog and/or ELMW2-2 Mists of the Moonsea, give them **Handout 2A**. They are continuing to seek out the trail of Nesbit Gath and bring him to justice.

**Elmwood Needs Help.** If the characters have played other Baldman Games Elmwood adventures (ELMW1-1 The Sage of Cormanthor, ELMW1-2 The Lost Sanctum, or ELMW1-3 The Battle of Elmwood), give them **Handout 2B**. They have been personally asked by Constable Aliana Mathnir to help her face another threat to Elmwood.

**Asked to Help.** If the characters have played none of the Baldman Games Elmwood adventures, they have been asked by their faction to lend a hand. Give them **Handouts 2C-2G** as appropriate.

All characters will get **Handout 2H Dossier from Aliana Mathnir**. This is included with correspondence from her or the faction contacts and contains general history about Northkeep and Akempus.

## Introduction and Setup

The goal of this encounter is to establish the current situation and perform character introductions. Have each player fill out **Handout 1**, whose details will be used in the various scenes during the adventure when Akempus is attempting to prey on the characters' minds.

### What about Drake Holmstrumph?

If characters are wondering why the ship's captain from the previous adventure isn't helping here, it's because the Red Lock is in desperate need of repairs after it's encounter with the undead ship, The Eye of Akempus.

The Wave Queen is a large, vicious-looking ship. While ostensibly a merchant vessel she's got lines like she can move fast, maneuver quickly, and is bristling with ballistae. The captain, Mariam Wrathborne, is a tall, lean woman, her dark skin covered in elaborate tattoos, with a nasty-looking shark-tooth sword hanging at her waist. The crew works oars and sails to rapidly get from the docks out to the deeper waters, where the violet waves of the Moonsea are dark and clear. Once you're in the deeps, Captain Wrathborne goes belowdecks to retrieve a small, heavy chest, which she unceremoniously dumps overboard. There are several others here who don't look like crewmembers.

Have the characters introduce themselves and allow them to chat in character if they wish.

A character may make a DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check to recognize Captain Wrathborne's behavior as a typical sacrifice to Umberlee, goddess of storms and the sea, and is meant to ward off her wrath. This is what Captain Wrathborne knows:

- Constable Aliana Mathnir has hired her to take this group of people to Yarralumla island and wait there for them for four days. It will take most of a day to get there.
- Yarralumla island is in the middle of nowhere. It's a tiny island sometimes used by various small independent semi-legal shipping businesses to transfer cargo. It's little more than a rock pinnacle with a good mooring point that is sheltered from storms.
- Word in town is that some good adventurers have killed or driven off some evil adventurers. The evil adventurers were killing people up and down the coast.
- The evil adventurers are holed up in Northkeep. Northkeep is an ancient sunken castle. The sea elves say that Northkeep has been hidden behind a magical energy barrier. Adventurers hired by the Constable found a portal through the barrier on Yarralumla island. It only opens on spring tide, that's tomorrow.
- Captain Wrathborne knows the information in **Handout 2H Dossier from Aliana Mathnir**.
- The characters have little to do until the Wave Queen reaches the site.

### Roleplaying Captain Mariam Wrathborne

Captain Wrathborne is a reformed cultist of the Crushing Wave, who left Mulmaster after elemental cultists nearly destroyed Mulmaster and Elmwood a couple of years ago. Her arms are covered in tattoos that glorify the Cult of the Crushing Wave and Olhydra. ("The tide rises! Embrace the cold sea! The Crushing Wave devours all!). Those have been covered up and enhanced with tattoos that revere Umberlee, the chaotic evil goddess of storms at sea. Captain Wrathborne is tough, to the point, and has little patience for anyone. However, her crew knows she's also scrupulously fair, and an extremely skilled pilot, navigator, and sailor. Plus, she's rumored to be one of Umberlee's favorites, so sailing with her is lucky. While she makes most of her living through honest cargo, the Wave Queen has also been known to pick off a poorly guarded merchant vessel and pirate the spoils.

Quote: "Row faster, sea-rat, or I'll come down there and whip you til you bleed! I'd throw you overboard, but even the sharks ain't hungry enough to eat something that smells like you do. I don't want to pollute Umberlee's waters."



# ENCOUNTER 1. THROUGH THE PORTAL

**Estimated Duration:** 10 minutes

The Wave Queen arrives at Yarralumla island without incident.

- Yarralumla island is a rocky island about 150' x 80' with a 25' channel that bisects the island. There are a couple of moldy rope bridges that bridge the island over the channel. A few scrubby patches of vegetation cling to the weathered rock.
- The far south end of the island is where the bell must be rung. The bell is a rune-carved golden bell about the size of a chair. Miriam Wrathborne has the crew set up a tripod on the deck to ring the bell. Aliana Mathnir has told her the sound of the bell will open the portal – one just needs to be near the right area. As long as the bell is rung today, it will be the right time.
- When the bell is rung, there is a bright flash of light and a silvery portal opens. Odd, evil-looking mists pour out of the portal. Looking through it the characters can see nothing but silvery swirls.

As you step through the portal the chilly mist flows up your body and completely obscures your vision. You have a brief impression of flickering lights, and a crushing pain envelops your skull as if it were being compressed in a vise and the mist slithering and twining around your body seems nearly solid for just a moment. When your vision clears, you find yourself in an ordinary, if very ancient, wine cellar full of broken bottles, tumbled racks, and thick tree roots that very nearly seem to writhe in the uncertain light. The portal remains in place for a while, it's silvery light is slowly fading. That is the only light in the room.

The characters emerge from the portal in the cellars, below the staircase marked as Area 1 on **DMs Map Keep Overview**.

What the characters do not know is that their minds and souls have been sucked into an alhoon's *Periapt of Mind Trapping*, which is a psionic and magical construct that exactly approximates an ancient, ruined, undersea castle. This area of Northkeep includes a large, castle-sized underground vault and a series of ancient tombs. The complex isn't very inviting to living visitors. Though air-filled, the atmosphere in the place is barely breathable. The complex has been unventilated

for centuries, and the air still carries traces of dust and acrid smoke from the fall of Northkeep. To make matters worse, there were thousands of corpses sealed in during the siege of Northkeep, and these make the air even fouler. The temperature hovers near freezing (as it is hundreds of feet below the Moonsea), and the humidity makes the place seem even colder. The chill inflicts cold damage each hour. The depleted air in the complex poses even more danger, as living visitors suffer slow suffocation.

## General Features

The following information applies to all locations in Northkeep, as well as the alhoon's psychic analog of Northkeep in the *Periapt of Mind Trapping*, unless otherwise specified in an individual encounter.

The environmental conditions (extreme cold and dangerously bad air) are a constant threat throughout the adventure.

**Light and Vision.** There are no sources of external light in the keep, except as detailed in specific encounters. The characters must rely on their own light sources and/or darkvision.

**Walls and Ceilings.** Walls are made of stone and ceilings are 10 feet high unless otherwise indicated.

**Air.** The air is incredibly stale and barely breathable. For each hour of normal activity, or at the end of any encounter involving strenuous activity (such as combat), a character must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution save or gain one level of exhaustion (see the *Player's Handbook* page 291). Creatures that do not need to breathe automatically succeed on these saves.

**Temperature.** The keep is clammy and cold. Characters who do not have protection against the elements must begin making Constitution saves after a number of minutes of non-activity equal to their Constitution score (DC 10 or gain one level of exhaustion). This only applies when the characters are trying to take a rest; normal activity generates enough body heat to ward off the chill. Characters wearing cold-weather gear have advantage on these saves. Creatures with resistance or immunity to cold damage automatically succeed on these saves.

**No extradimensional travel.** Spells and other effects that require the target to go to a different plane (*banishment*, *contact other plane*, *blink*, *Leomund's Secret Chest*, and others) do not work.

## Death and Dying in the Mind Trap

When a character dies within the *Periapt of Mind Trapping*, their soul is available for the alhoon to consume. As it consumes the soul, its undeath is extended by the number of years that the consumed soul would have lived. These souls are not destroyed. They remain within the *Periapt of Mind Trapping* and are available for the alhoon to study. It constantly goes back to old victims, searching through their minds for new memories and interesting things that it hasn't seen before. The alhoon has a lot of time on its hands, and only a few hundred souls in its periapt – it watches a lot of reruns.

The alhoon isn't ready to consume the adventurer's souls immediately. They are new and interesting, and it expects to have plenty of souls to choose from (Nesbit Gath, the Countess, and Patrin just to name three; not to mention anybody else who happens to come through the Northkeep portal looking for them or the adventurers). The alhoon wants to see how the characters think and perform under stress. It wants to have more time to probe their memories while they still think they are alive. Minds that are trapped in the *periapt* for very long have a strong tendency to go completely insane, and this makes their thoughts and memories fragmented and harder to follow. The alhoon wants to enjoy its new thralls before they inevitably go bad.

As a result, when a character dies during the main portion of the adventure (any time after the characters enter the portal in **Encounter 1** and before they break free of the pendant's control in **Encounter 7**), the alhoon chooses to send that character back. It waits for about a minute after combat is over to do this. This allows the characters to use other restorative magic first if they choose so. The alhoon's restoration has similar effects as a *revivify* spell being cast on the character with the exceptions that it can restore missing body parts – for instance if the intellect devourer eats someone's brain – and that it is not limited to characters that have died in the last minute. However, the transition is not seamless. The character feels his or her moment of death and then becomes aware of the sensation of being trapped inside the tight confines of a small chamber. The character feels leathery, dry skin rub across his or her face (the alhoon's tentacles). There is a sharp pain in the character's neck or jaw (the alhoon's tentacles burrowing into the character's brain to reset the memories and return them to the moment before they died). Then everything vanishes, and the character wakes up back in the keep a minute after

combat ends, with one hit point, and an additional level of exhaustion. If this would be the character's sixth level of exhaustion, then the character unfortunately dies and the alhoon must go ahead and consume their soul. Such characters are freed if the rest of the party succeeds at destroying the pendant in **Encounter 7**.

The alhoon attempts to wipe the character's memory of having experienced the brief flash of being outside the mind trap (since all of the adventurers' stunned bodies are actually inside the Bell in the Deep, with the alhoon). You should pick a fragment of the memory as noted above (different characters who die would have slightly different experiences, might overhear the alhoon muttering to itself, etc.) and describe it to the players, because it is a clue to what is really going on, but the alhoon does attempt to erase the character's memory. This character must attempt a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw to try and remember even a brief instant of the memory fragment, and even then, it just seems like something that happened in a bad dream.

If all of the characters die, the alhoon decides that it's not worth the trouble and simply devours them all. Proceed to the **Conclusion: Akempus Victorious**.





# ENCOUNTER 2. FIRST CONTACT

**Expected Duration:** 10 minutes

The adventurers find themselves in the cellars beneath (what they believe to be) the Bell in the Deep. They are contacted by “Akempus”, who claims to be under threat by Nesbit Gath, who the lich says is attempting to destroy its phylactery. Akempus promises the adventurers great rewards for dealing with the gnome and his allies. Since this dovetails with their main mission, there is every chance that the adventurers agree, but they are free to ignore Akempus if they don’t want to work with a lich. Either way, Akempus tells the adventurers that Nesbit is protected by a ward linked to two talismans carried by the gnome’s allies: the warlock Constance Trentham serves as the gnome’s eyes and ears in the keep, tearing the place apart in search of the phylactery, while the fallen paladin Patrín has gone insane and is barricaded in the chapel.

Assuming the adventurers at least play along with Akempus (whether they trust it or not), they need to track down Nesbit’s two allies within the keep to obtain the talismans needed to dispel the gnome’s protective ward. The next few encounters can be pursued in whatever order the players choose, leading up to the final confrontation with Akempus (and the other prisoners).

As you emerge from the cellars, you hear a disembodied voice. It’s unclear if you’re hearing it with your ears, or if it’s directly talking into your mind.

“Aha, more guests. I hope you’re easier to work with than the last batch. There I was, minding my own business, being the Overlord of what remains of Northkeep, when a group of adventurers plop down in the middle of my castle, and then the smiting started...

- **Remember that Akempus lies about virtually everything.** It is communicating telepathically and is a thousand-year-old mind flayer lich so there is not really any way for the characters to definitively determine when Akempus is lying. Any insight check is inconclusive.
- Akempus has already done a basic mental scan of all the characters using its *percept*. It knows their basic strengths and weaknesses, alignments and loyalties, etc. It doesn’t know their deepest darkest secrets and has not plumbed their memories yet, but it knows

enough to be able to decide which character is more likely to be willing to work with it. It makes that character its “primary contact.” **Other characters can join in the telepathic conversation at any time, but for the rest of the adventure Akempus always starts by contacting the primary contact.** At some point, this could be potentially used to try and split the party or sow dissension, at the DM’s discretion.

- Assuming the characters admit that they recognize its name, Akempus is cheerfully honest that “he” is a lich and the fact that it is trapped here (**it never says that it is a mind flayer or an alhoon!**). It says the isolation gives it plenty of time for its experiments in creating new types of undead, so every cloud has a necrotic lining after all.
- Nesbit Gath and his companions came here claiming that they wanted the secrets of immortality. Akempus was initially intrigued by the gnome transmuter and agreed to an information exchange. Nesbit tricked Akempus and tried to seize control of the keep. Nesbit destroyed Akempus’s physical form, so the lich is now waiting for its body to regenerate via its phylactery. However, Akempus is worried: Nesbit is attempting to discover and either destroy the phylactery or corrupt it with some strange power. Akempus has observed that all three of the intruders seem to be under the influence of some outside force (that Akempus does not know about but the adventurers do, i.e. the dark powers)
- Nesbit managed to barricade himself in Akempus’ personal library, sealing the entrance with magical wards. This sanctum is sealed by talismans that are held by Gath’s two lieutenants: the half elf Countess Trentham and the dragonborn paladin Patrín
- The Countess roams the keep searching for the phylactery. She seems to be borderline insane.
- Patrín has barricaded himself in the chapel and seems to be having a hard time dealing with the situation.
- Akempus is willing to cut a deal with the adventurers. It doesn’t think its own survival is really in doubt (yet) but would surely like to be rid of these interlopers. There’s a lot of treasure in the vault...
- If the characters don’t want to work with/for Akempus, that’s totally fine. They can explore the keep on their own. The lich cheerfully lets them know that it’s still going to “check in with them from time to time, you know, just to see if anything’s changed.”

## Roleplaying the alhoon “Akempus”

It is nearly impossible to describe the mental processes of a creature as alien as a thousand-year-old undead mind flayer. It lies constantly, and there is no way for the characters to determine one lie from another. It is extremely intelligent and knows way more about what’s going on than the characters, and will use this to expertly manipulate them. It starts off being cheerfully honest and wanting to work with the characters to destroy the evil adventurers, and adapting the best sort of collaborative lawful evil personality. The alhoon will adapt its projected persona to be the most believable to whomever it is talking to.

**Quote:** “Ah yes, before the fall of Northkeep, this castle was a beautiful home for my family.”

## Developments

After concluding their conversation with Akempus, the adventurers are free to explore the keep. Their primary objective should probably be to find Nesbit Gath regardless of whether they cut a deal with Akempus at this point or not; as a result, they are likely to choose either to go looking for the dragonborn paladin Patrin or the Dowager Countess Trentham. Proceed to Encounter 3.



# ENCOUNTER 3. EXPLORING THE KEEP

**Expected Duration:** 15 minutes

This is not a specific encounter, but rather a description of the various areas inside the keep. As they explore the keep the adventurers discover clues that they are not experiencing reality as it truly is. They are prisoners in Akempus's *Periapt of Mind Trapping*, a magical construct augmented by the massive telepathic powers of the alhoon's greatest creation, a creature known as a mindwitness. There is a constant theme of tentacles, roots, vines, and writhing worms, as each character's subconscious tries to warn them.

## Area 1 - Wine Cellar

Stairs lead down to the cellar where the characters arrived, and where as far as they know the portal exit is also located. There are tumbled over wine racks and broken bottles, and thick tree roots are visible in the earthen walls.

## Area 2 - Main Courtyard

There are four dead trees that must have once provided shade for a graceful courtyard. They are covered with dead vines with razor edged thorns. A dry well is stuffed full of rotted corpses that are little more than gristle and bones. This courtyard changes when the characters come here during **Encounter 6**.

## Area 3 - Stables

The stables are full of skeletonized horses that look like they've been undisturbed for decades. However, there are small holes burrowed through their bones and dusty rotting innards that are a few inches in diameter that look fresh. The Countess had her minions burrow through here to look for the phylactery.

## Area 4 - Office

This is a well-appointed, if dusty, office. There is a confusing welter of bodies piled up in the northern half of the room. It appears that they were all undead at some point that were animated and made to fight each other to death.

## Area 5 - Watch Tower

There are bodies here with battle damage from arrows and ballistae. The area is thick with the smell of old rot, sulfur, and fire from the sacking of the city. This watch tower is broken off about a story above the ground.

## Area 6 - Watch Captain's Duty Office

A neatly organized desk still has patrol rosters and other paperwork that is splattered with bloodstains. There are no bodies, but a truly startling amount of blood is dried onto the carpet.

## Area 7 - Barracks

There are soldiers dead in their beds, their bodies riddled with worms. Worms still wriggle if anything is disturbed (like maggots). There are holes as big as an orc's outspread fingers in the walls and through the furniture. There are long shallow tracks on the floor like massive snakes a foot or more across moved through here. The Countess had more of her minions burrow through here to look for the phylactery.

## Area 8 - Armory

This armory has the relatively fresh remains of twelve sea elves. Their bodies have been torn apart no more than a month or two ago.

## Area 9 - Chapel

See **Encounter 4**.

## Area 10 - Priest's Quarters

There is a single body here of a priestess of Deneir. It appears that her skull has been prized open and her brain removed. There are long wounds all over her face. A crashed open secret door between area 9 and 10 leads to the Crypts (see **Encounter 5**).

## Area 11 - Tall Watch Tower

The west side of this watch tower is mostly collapsed, but the east side is intact about three stories tall.

## Area 12 - Gatehouse

The gates have been sundered and there are signs of recent battle. There are sections of dead gargantuan wormlike creatures stinking and rotting here, leaving acidic pools of slimy mucus everywhere. It appears that they were trying to break out but were killed by something even more savage and fierce. Past the gates there is a silvery mist that is thick and unbreathable. Characters who end their turn in the mists gain a level of exhaustion.

## Area 13 - Overlord's Chambers

A ward of rainbow hued magical energy seals this door. Anyone who touches it takes 15 psychic damage. It cannot be dispelled.

### Note, tracking the Countess

The way the characters track down the Countess in **Encounter 6** is by following a specific trail of burrowing creatures from smallest to largest.

- The stables (**Area 3**), where the corpses and floor are riddled with small, worm-sized holes;
- The barracks (**Area 7**), where the walls show larger, snake-sized holes;
- The entrance to the keep (**Area 12**), where the battlements and front gates have been unsuccessfully attacked by huge slimy worms.



# ENCOUNTER 4. THE CHAPEL

**Expected Duration:** 20 minutes, 60 minutes with the fight

The chapel is where the fallen dragonborn paladin Patrín is wallowing in despair. His holy symbol is one of the two keys that the adventurers need to bypass the ward to reach Nesbit Gath. Patrín destroyed his own holy symbol in a fit of despair and must redeem himself in the sight of Bahamut before it can be restored. The adventurers can either give Patrín an honorable death or convince him to join them for his redemption.

## General Features

There is no tactical map for this encounter, but the dimensions and features of the chapel are found in sufficient detail on DM Overview Map: The Keep.

**Light and Vision.** Patrín, like all dragonborn, does not have darkvision. He's lit a few torches in the wall sconces.

**Ceiling.** 15 feet tall in the main chapel; 20 feet above the dais.

**Obstacles.** The broken pews, broken statues, altar, and lectern are difficult terrain and can provide cover for a Small character or a prone Medium character.

The doors to the chapel are not locked. When the adventurers decide to enter the chapel, Akempus sends a telepathic message to its primary contact.

You hear the now-familiar voice of Akempus in your mind. "Be careful, friends. The paladin Patrín is corrupted by the same sort of dark power that drives Nesbit Gath and his other servants. Since he entered the chapel, my ability to scry within that room has been blocked."

Akempus's statement about being unable to scry into the chapel is a lie: it wants to see how the characters act when they believe themselves to be unobserved.

When the adventurers enter the room:

The ancient chapel is roughly forty feet square and filled with wide benches. On the far side of the room, stairs lead to a dais, where the altar stands. Several statues

and paintings overlook the altar, but they have been smashed and shredded beyond recognition. Kneeling before the altar with his back to you is a silver-scaled dragonborn in heavy armor.

Patrín says nothing until addressed. When he turns around, the adventurers can see the dark scorch mark in the center of his breastplate where his holy symbol of Bahamut was located.

When the adventurers first arrive, Patrín has lost all hope. He wants to die and suggests repeatedly that the adventurers must destroy him to expunge his evil deeds. Patrín believes as long as he lives, the shattered holy symbol will be powerless to open the wards to Nesbit Gath because it has been defiled. This is not true, nor is destroying Patrín the only option. The adventurers can persuade Patrín that he should pursue redemption.

Patrín freely shares what he knows with the characters:

- Nesbit Gath, Constance Trentham, and Patrín came to the Northkeep portal together several days ago. The other members of their adventuring company had different missions and goals to pursue. Patrín does not know what happened to the others.
- Nesbit Gath gained the secret to transform into a lich but needed more power. Nesbit learned that power was to be had in the Bell in the Deep. He went to the library to learn more.
- The lich Akempus seemed eager to share its knowledge with Nesbit, and Nesbit sealed himself behind the wards.
- Free of Nesbit and the Countess's influence, Patrín realized that he had given in to the evil influence of the vestige. Patrín sequestered himself in the chapel and fell into a deep despair.
- Patrín destroyed the statues, paintings, and other icons in the chapel in a fit of anger.
- Patrín sundered his holy symbol hoping that the Platinum Dragon would strike him dead.
- Instead, dark shapes emerged from the shadows around the chapel, took the shards of the holy symbol, and spirited them away to the crypts beneath the keep. Patrín is afraid to go into the crypts and face the

dark shapes. (This is a clue that the adventurers can try to redeem Patrin by convincing him to go to the crypts with them and face his demons.)

- The entrance to the crypts is down a small hallway but hidden behind a secret door that Patrin can show to them if they convince him to seek redemption.

**There are two paths for dealing with Patrin:** the adventurers can destroy him to release the “curse” on his holy symbol, or they can persuade the dragonborn to try and redeem himself.

**If the adventurers fight Patrin here, run the section entitled “The Path of Courage.”** In this case they do not fight the monsters in the Crypts, but they still must go there to retrieve the holy symbol.

If the adventurers persuade Patrin to accompany them to the Crypts and try to redeem himself, skip to “The Path of Faith.”

## 4A. Path of Courage

If the adventurers agree to destroy Patrin, he smiles and thanks them. He asks them to let him see the killing blow coming. He refuses to leave the chapel. The characters can kill Patrin with one melee attack if it is done face to face. When the characters strike Patrin down:

The dragonborn gasps and stumbles to one knee. He smiles grimly at you as his eyes begin to glaze over. “I go now to Bahamut. I hope my holy symbol serves you better than it did I.” With a final shudder, Patrin slumps to the floor.

Moments later, the paladin’s body begins to flare with silver light. A glowing spirit in the shape of a dragon emerges from the corpse and roars with anger. “This insult shall not stand! Who dares to defame the courage of a servant of Bahamut with ignoble death! Face me properly and prove your honor!”

As the gleaming dragon moves to attack, Patrin’s armor crackles with dark energy, jolting him back to consciousness. His eyes snap open and the paladin lurches to his feet, drawing his weapons. “You thought you could deprive Zantras of one of his pawns? Fools!”

The characters must now defeat the paladin’s spirit, manifested by the power of Bahamut as a **young silver dragon**. Any character that worships Bahamut

can sense that fighting this spirit will not anger the Platinum Dragon; it is a manifestation of Patrin’s courage and defeating it in honorable combat is a fitting testament to the fallen servant of Bahamut. The **half-silver dragon veteran** is a manifestation of Zantras the Kingmaker, one of the Dark Powers of Ravenloft; destroying it is clearly the right thing to do and may help release the paladin’s soul.

### Adjusting this Encounter

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

- **Very Weak:** Remove the **young silver dragon** and the **half-silver dragon veteran** (remember to leave out the last paragraph of the box text). Add a **young bronze dragon** with the appearance of a silver dragon.
- **Weak:** Remove the young silver dragon. Add a young bronze dragon with the appearance of a silver dragon.
- **Strong:** The **young silver dragon** automatically recharges its breath weapon after the first round.
- **Very Strong:** Remove the **young silver dragon**. Add an **adult silver dragon**.

### Visions of Courage and Cowardice

Use the information provided by the players on Handout 1 about times when their characters demonstrated great bravery or fear. In the real world, the alhoon is going through the adventurers’ memories while they struggle to overcome the monsters in this battle. These memories spontaneously manifest when the alhoon triggers them. This is a clue that the environment of the keep is more than it appears to be.

When a character rolls a natural 20 or a natural 1 for the first time during this encounter, Akempus discovers that character’s memory. Describe the memory as a flash of light coming from the affected character, carrying images and sounds that everyone can perceive — but change it so that it is the opposite of what the player wrote. For example, if the character’s memory is of having done something courageous, that becomes a memory of the same situation, but with the character acting in a cowardly or fearful manner, or vice versa (fear turning to courage).

### Tricks of the Trade

Consider the following guidance:

**Young silver dragon.** The dragon uses Paralyzing Breath to try and take enemies out of the fight right away, and Cold Breath when it can catch multiple enemies in the area of effect. The silver dragon

challenges the mightiest foe. It will not attack downed characters or commit other dishonorable acts. The dragon fights to the death.

**Half-silver dragon veteran.** If present, the veteran attempts to stay out of the silver dragon's way. The dragon spirit and this spirit are not allies, but both are focused on the adventurers. This spirit is a manifestation of the power of Zantras, the Kingmaker; as such, it goes after any character that seems like a leader, followed by spellcasting characters or other characters who are trying to avoid melee combat. It will happily massacre helpless foes. The half-silver dragon veteran fights to the death.

### Developments

After the fight, the energy of Bahamut (and Zantras) dissipates, leaving Patrin's dead body.

The adventurers must make saving throws against the environment, since they exerted themselves during the battle (see the Air under General Features in **Encounter 1**).

They can now proceed to the crypts to recover Patrin's holy symbol. The characters Proceed to **Encounter 5**. Remember that if they rest, they must make saving throws against the environment.

If the adventurers are forced to retreat from battle, the monsters pursue them into the courtyard, but the characters can escape by hiding elsewhere in the keep. If left alone, the essences of Bahamut and Zantras eventually destroy each other, leaving Patrin's dead body in the crypts. The characters don't get experience for any foes they fail to defeat, but the adventure can continue.

If the adventurers are completely wiped out in this encounter, then Akempus's attempt to turn them into thralls and absorb their essence proceeds to its final phase: go directly to **Encounter 7**.

## 4B. Path of Faith

If the adventurers convince Patrin to accompany them to the crypts to confront his demons and recover his holy symbol (and his faith), read the following:

The dragonborn considers your words carefully. "You make a compelling point. Perhaps there is hope for my redemption. I betrayed Bahamut in the most despicable way imaginable; therefore, my redemption must be the most humble and sincere act of contrition ever performed. Let us go to the crypts! The entrance is this way." The paladin strides towards the small hallway leaving the chapel.

### Developments

Go to the crypts, **Encounter 5**.



# ENCOUNTER 5. THE CRYPTS

**Expected Duration:** 20 minutes, 60 minutes with the fight

Patrin's holy symbol has been shattered and spirited to the crypts. The adventurers must search the area for the pieces of a puzzle that, when solved, allows them to restore Patrin's holy symbol, one of the two items needed to break Nesbit Gath's protective ward. They soon find they are not alone in the crypts!

This encounter consists of three sections: exploring the crypts to find the pieces of the holy symbol of Bahamut; battling the crypt guardians (if necessary) which represent the paladin Patrin's loss of faith; finally, restoring the power of Patrin's holy symbol in a puzzle that the characters must solve. If the adventurers fought the silver dragon in the chapel, then skip the combat, but run the exploration and puzzle sections of this encounter.

Once the characters leave the main chapel, the alhoon telepathically communicates with its primary contact. To maintain the fiction that it cannot scry on the chapel, Akempus asks what happened and accepts whatever description the adventurers give. If the characters ask Akempus about the secret door leading to the crypts, the lich can of course tell them where to look. If Patrin finds out that the characters are communicating with Akempus, he unhappily insists that they break off the conversation.

Akempus has the following information:

- The crypts: The lich simply laughs and says "Let's just say that I've done a lot of experimentation down there. You'll want to be careful... I don't have control in my current state."
- As for the holy symbol: Akempus scoffs, "it's a holy symbol of Bahamut. You think I keep track of things like that? I'm sure you can find it and fix it."

## General Features

The Crypts have the following general features.

**Light and Vision.** The crypts are dark with no source of illumination.

**Ceiling.** Dead roots poke through the cracked stone ceiling, which is uncomfortably low (8 feet high). The roots hang down and brush against the faces of characters moving around the room, but do not impede movement or vision.

**Rubble.** The shaded areas of rubble (mostly around areas 3 and 4) marked on the tactical map are difficult terrain.

**Necromantic Sludge.** For very weak and weak parties, these squares are difficult terrain filled with broken bones. For average, strong, and very strong groups of adventurers, they are also coated with necromantic sludge. Any living creature that starts its turn in a square of active necromantic sludge takes 5 necrotic damage.

**Sarcophagi and Altar.** These can provide cover to Medium and smaller creatures. A character can climb on top (no check needed) by spending 5 feet of movement.

**Mausoleums.** The two marble mausoleums are 10 feet square. They can be entered (the walls are solid) or climbed (DC 10). The gates are destroyed. One mausoleum is filled with broken bones and body parts, while the other (Akempus's crypt) is completely bare.

The entrance to the crypts is a secret door in the hallway between area 9 (main chapel) and 10 (priest's quarters) on the overview map. The secret door has been broken in, so is immediately visible.

The stairs descend some fifty feet, making several sharp turns, before opening into a wide hallway that leads to a long room filled with stone sarcophagi. Rubble and debris are scattered everywhere: many of the coffins are broken open, and you see what must be the bones of dozens if not hundreds of humanoids strewn amidst the wreckage. An altar stands nearby, covered in filth and bone shards. At the far side of the room stand two taller mausoleums made of marble.

## 5A Exploring the Crypts

The following areas are marked on the DMs Map of the Crypts.

**Area 1:** This 10-foot-wide hallway leads back to the staircase. This is the only way into or out of the crypts.



**Area 2:** A stone altar that was used to perform rites. It is covered with filth and broken bones. A DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check suggests that the materials on the altar could be the remnants of necromantic rituals.

**Area 3:** A small side room with a partially collapsed wall. Several tables have bodies on them in their grave wrappings. Shelves hold ruined tools and alchemical components which would have been used for embalming.

**Area 4:** Beyond the shattered door is a room containing pieces of marble of the same type used to make the sarcophagi, chisels and stoneworking tools, and blank brass plates that match the etched plates upon which are written the names of the dead in the main crypt.

**Area 5:** Filled with medium-sized sarcophagi with worn brass nameplates that are illegible. Most of the sarcophagi are damaged and several have been broken completely open. The stone floor is cracked and uneven throughout this section of the room, bones litter the area, and there is some sort of black ooze (see Necromantic Sludge in the general features).

**Area 6:** Larger mausoleums, one of which is broken open and filled with bones and dirt. The other is empty, but has a readable plaque, which says AKEMPUS: ETERNAL OVERLORD OF NORTHKEEP. If the adventurers think to check, Akempus's phylactery is not here, nor is there any sign that this mausoleum has ever been used at all.

## **5B Crisis of Faith (Combat)**

This combat ONLY happens if the characters DID NOT fight Patrin in Encounter 4.

Patrin examines the altar. "I am not proud to admit I caused the damaged in the chapel, but I am not responsible for this. And yet... I feel that there is power here - we must find the pieces of my symbol of Bahamut!"

A chill mist begins to rise from the rubble. The shadows coalesce into tall, thin, hunched figures wearing tattered grave rags. Their faces are stretched and elongated, mouths locked in an unnatural, silent scream. Each of the figures raises a single spindly arm and points directly at the paladin. Patrin recoils in horror and clutches at his head. "No... no! I have nothing left for you to take. You already have my faith! THERE IS NOTHING LEFT!"

The dragonborn screams and falls to the ground, whimpering in terror as the cloaked figures slowly advance.

The characters are attacked by three bodaks, which appear at the locations marked 3, 5, and 6 on the DMs map of the Crypts. Patrin lies prone and helpless at the position marked 2. The adventurers are positioned in the areas they were exploring or searching.

There is also an intellect devourer hidden inside one of the sarcophagi in the middle row. It does not reveal its presence until there is a helpless character other than Patrin.

### **Adjusting this Encounter**

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

- **Very Weak:** Remove two **bodaks**.
- **Weak:** Remove one **bodak**.
- **Strong:** Add one **intellect devourer**.
- **Very Strong:** Add two **bodaks** and one **intellect devourer**. The two extra **bodaks** materialize out of nothing at the start of round two.

### **Tricks of the Trade**

Consider the following guidance.

**Bodaks.** The bodaks activate their Aura of Annihilation. The intellect devourer is considered an extension of Akempus, so it counts as an undead for purposes of this aura. The bodaks advance on Patrin but stop to deal with any characters who interpose themselves. The bodaks always end their movement within 30 feet of at least one adventurer so that their Death Gaze is available. They use Withering Gaze as their primary attack action. If a character fails the save against Withering Gaze but still takes no damage, the bodaks are cunning enough to switch targets.

**Intellect devourer.** This creature bides its time, using Detect Sentience to monitor the adventurers. It waits for a character to become incapacitated due to the Death Gaze of a bodak or simply from combat damage. When that happens, the devourer crawls out of the sarcophagus in which it is hiding (assume that there are enough cracks and holes for the Tiny aberration to fit through) and then makes its way stealthily across the battlefield so that it can use Body Thief. If none of the characters have been incapacitated by the time there is only a single bodak remaining, the devourer attempts to use Body Thief on Patrin instead, who fights as a half-silver dragon veteran from Encounter 4.

## Visions of Faith and Faithlessness

During this encounter, use the information provided by the players on **Handout 1** about times when their characters had their faith in a higher power strengthened or weakened. In the real world, the alhoon is going through the adventurers' memories while they struggle to overcome the monsters in this battle. These memories spontaneously manifest when the alhoon triggers them. This is a clue that the environment of the keep is more than it appears to be.

When a character rolls a natural 20 or a natural 1 for the first time during this encounter, Akempus discovers that character's memory. Describe the memory as a flash of light coming from the affected character, projecting images and sounds that everyone can perceive — but change it so that it is the opposite of what the player wrote. If the character's memory is of something that affirmed or strengthened his or her faith, that becomes a memory of the same situation, but with the opposite result: the character's faith is weakened or betrayed. Likewise, a memory of doubt instead becomes one of belief.

## Developments

The adventurers must make saving throws against the environment, since they exerted themselves during the battle (see the Air under General Features in **Encounter 1**).

Once the characters have destroyed the bodaks, Patrin regains consciousness and gives thanks to Bahamut, and then pauses, as if he was surprised by what he just said. His speech patterns become less grandiose, and the adventurers may reasonably conclude that the influence of the Dark Powers on Patrin is waning. Now they just need to find his holy symbol and restore it. Continue with "**Fragments of the Faithful.**"

If a character is killed by the intellect devourer using Body Thief, that character falls under the control of Akempus. During the combat, the character fights against the other adventurers as described in the intellect devourer's stat block. When the devourer is (presumably) killed, the character returns to life at 1 hit point (getting a brief vision of Akempus's true form in the Bell in the Deep, as described in the adventure introduction). The character's return to life might make some of his or her fellow party members suspicious, since an intellect devourer destroys the brain, which makes those victims ineligible for normal resurrection magic (raise dead, for example, does not regenerate destroyed body parts). Let them ponder their suspicions as they see fit.

## 5C Fragments of the Faithful

When the characters are ready to conduct a thorough search of the crypts, have each character make an Intelligence (Investigation) or a Wisdom (Perception) check. Whoever gets the highest result notices something unusual about the sarcophagi.

The stone sarcophagi appeared featureless and blank when you first entered this area. The brass name plates were all weathered and unreadable. But now that you look closer, there seems to be something there...

For the rest of this scene, the sarcophagi take on a disturbing aspect. Whenever any character examines a coffin closely, that character finds that the relief on its lid is carved to look like them, or the name plate is etched with their own name! Each character sees his or her own grave represented repeatedly amongst the rows of silent stone coffins. This is another weird hint from their subconscious that may alert them that not all is as it seems.

**If Patrin is with the party**, the only way to find the fragments of his holy symbol is for the characters to convince him that he needs to look inside the graves that are marked with his name and image. This should provide a good roleplaying moment as the paladin is still shaken from the experience of seeing his lack of faith made manifest, but the characters can persuade him to lead the search. If guided by roleplaying a DC 15 Charisma check, Patrin seeks out the only one inscribed with his name and image.

**If Patrin is not with the party**, the characters must search for sarcophagi that have his name and likeness instead of their own. Any character who specifically says that they are searching for Patrin's coffin can find a sarcophagus bearing the paladin's likeness with a successful DC 10 Wisdom saving throw to see through the illusions.

Once the adventurers have figured out how to locate Patrin's sarcophagus, a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check opens it, revealing an inscription and a pile of broken holy symbols, but none of them are a symbol of Bahamut. Give the players the inscription and the broken holy symbols from **Handout 3**.

The solution to the puzzle is described in **DM Appendix Solution to the Holy Symbols Puzzle**. The puzzle should take between 5 and 15 minutes to solve.

## I Love/Hate Puzzles!

If you have a group of players who hate puzzles, it's not worth making them grind it out. Feel free to give hints as generously as needed, or even simply narrate the solution if that's what the players want. The adventurers need to recover Patrin's holy symbol to reach Nesbit Gath, so the characters must solve the puzzle even if the players don't.

Some players love puzzles but hate taking hints. After 15 minutes, you should begin moving things along to make sure that you don't run out of time for the session.

## Developments

Once the adventurers solve the puzzle, speaking the word DEVOTION causes all the holy symbol fragments to be drawn to the altar.

The different holy symbols glow with a brilliant white light. They melt, liquid metal flowing together to form a new shape... the Platinum Dragon of Bahamut is restored!

If (and only if) Patrin is with the party:

The dragonborn's eyes fill with tears as he gently touches the restored holy symbol to the scorch mark on his breastplate. In an instant, the damage is wiped away and the paladin's armor becomes brilliant and new once more. "My friends! I am restored to the service of Bahamut. Thank you..."

Suddenly Patrin begins choking and gasping for breath. Purple energy ripples across his body. A voice hisses from everywhere and nowhere: "So you spurn the Kingmaker's gift, do you? Ungrateful worm!"

Patrin clenches his fists and through gritted teeth he says: "I... serve... only... Bahamut!" The white light from the holy symbol flares more brightly with each word, burning away the purple energy of the Kingmaker. However, the paladin's body is burned away as well. The restored paladin turns to ash before your eyes, and nothing remains except for the silver holy symbol. You feel a sense of peace, as if the paladin's tormented soul is finally at rest.

Patrin's holy symbol is one of the two talismans needed to remove the ward from the library and reach Nesbit Gath. From here, if the adventurers have not yet found Countess Trentham, they can return to the keep and begin searching for her (proceed to **Encounter 6**). If the adventurers now have both talismans, they can attempt to break the magical barrier (proceed to **Encounter 7**).

## Treasure

Patrin's holy symbol is worth 300 gold pieces at the end of the adventure.



# ENCOUNTER 6. THE GARDEN

**Expected Duration:** 60 minutes

If the characters seek the Countess Trentham, they find a trail of destruction throughout the keep in her quest for Akempus's phylactery. Following that, the characters eventually return to the large central courtyard, where they discover the Countess along with imprisoned "spirit animals" that represent each character. They must face the mad Countess before their spirit animals are destroyed (and the alhoon gains more power over them)!

The characters may search for the Countess or explore the church (**Encounters 4 and 5**) in either order.

The characters may have seen signs of the Countess's servants if they spent much time exploring the keep (as detailed in Encounter 3). The magic of the Periapt of Mind Trapping means the adventurers can only find her if they go looking for her specifically.

When the characters begin searching the keep with the intent of finding the Countess, the alhoon reaches out telepathically.

The raspy voice of Akempus fills your mind. "Such destructive urges the Countess has. She is tearing my home apart in search of my phylactery so that she and Nesbit Gath can steal my power and secrets. At this rate, I won't have anything left but a pile of worm-eaten rocks. Still, her activities do leave a clear trail for you to follow. Happy hunting!"

To find the Countess, the characters must trace a path through the areas of the keep where her servitors have been. This trail of burrowing creatures leads them through following three locations marked on **DM's Map Keep Overview**, in this order:

- The stables (**Area 3**), where the corpses and floor are riddled with small, worm-sized holes;
- The barracks (**Area 7**), where the walls show larger, snake-sized holes;
- The entrance to the keep (**Area 12**), where the battlements and front gates have been unsuccessfully attacked by huge slimy worms.

The characters are likely to pass through the main courtyard (**Area 2**) as they move, but the courtyard is unchanged from the description in **Encounter 3** until after the characters have completed the full circuit, including the gatehouse.

When the characters leave the front gates (**Area 12**) and reenter the main courtyard (**Area 2**), the terrain has changed dramatically. Refer to **DM Map of the Courtyard**, which shows a detailed view of the courtyard, and read:

The chill mist surrounding the gatehouse blocks your sight for a moment as you pass through it. On the other side, the keep's large courtyard is very different. The dead, vine-covered trees have fallen and been pulled apart to form a barrier around the central area. The vines themselves now sprout large, sharp thorns.

Through the wall of thorns, you see a series of cages. Inside each of the cages is a creature that seems familiar to you.

[Describe each of the spirit totem animals that the players listed on **Handout 1**.]

Levitating above the well is a half-elven woman with graying hair. Her clothes are expensively tailored. She peers haughtily at you and you can see madness in her eyes.

"So, my little pets! Your owners have come home to play." She gestures, and the caged animals howl in obvious pain. "Isn't that sweet of them? Mommy loves to play, doesn't she? DOESN'T SHE! Oh yes, she does. But my big pets want to play too! I hope they don't HURT anyone... that would be such a SHAME!"

She gestures theatrically, and gray-skinned creatures burst out of the ground all around the courtyard. They look like little more than writhing bundles of rubbery muscles covered in sharp teeth. As they slither toward you, the Countess howls with insane glee.

Countess Trentham is quite mad. She was the first to succumb to the alhoon's mental assault, but it keeps her mind in the Periapt of Mind Trapping to test the characters.

The characters now face Countess Trentham, a **warlock of the great old one**. Her servitors are **five gricks** and one **grick alpha**.

The Countess is levitating above the well (the dark circle in the center of the courtyard map). The gricks and grick alpha should be evenly divided amongst the locations marked 1-4 on the map. The adventurers begin the fight in the location marked 5 (having just returned from the gatehouse).

## General Features

The Courtyard has the following general features.

**Light and Vision.** There are no sources of illumination in the courtyard.

**Spirit Animals.** Each of the individual characters' spirit animals is trapped in a different cage (labeled A through E on DM Map of the Courtyard; assigned randomly). The totem spirits are all size small and are restrained in the cages. During the fight, any attack that targets a character's spirit animal (or includes the spirit animal in its area of effect) is considered to also be targeting the character. The attack uses the character's defenses, saves, and other game statistics, and any damage that would be dealt to the spirit animal is instead dealt to the character. Remember that the spirit animals are restrained, so attacks against them gain advantage and they suffer disadvantage on dexterity saving throws.

**The first time a character is reduced to 0 hit points in this battle, his or her spirit animal "dies" and the cage disappears.** This comes back into play during the final battle with Akempus in **Encounter 7**; for now, just treat it as ominous foreshadowing and make the players sweat.

If a character "rescues" his or her spirit animal by reaching the cage and using an action to open it, the animal leaps into the character's forehead and passes into his or her body. The character feels invigorated, either gaining 2 temporary hit points per level or removing one level of exhaustion.

**Height Limit.** The magic of the keep limits creatures to an altitude of 20 feet, whether flying or climbing. Note that Countess Trentham has already activated her at-will ability to levitate when the encounter begins.

**Well.** The old dried-up well is 20 feet deep and filled with dusty bones.

**Razorvine.** The dead trees and vines in this area have been shaped into a wall of thorns made of razorvine. Although the plant is no longer alive, it remains dangerous. Each square of razorvine is 10 feet high and 5 feet thick, and has AC 11, 12 hit points, and immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and psychic damage. When a character comes into direct contact with razorvine for the first time on a turn, the creature must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 11 (2d10) slashing damage from the razorvine's bladelikey thorns.

## Adjusting this Encounter

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

- **Very Weak:** Remove the **grick alpha**. There is one **grick** per character.
- **Weak:** Remove three **gricks**.
- **Strong:** Add a **grick alpha**.
- **Very Strong:** Add three **grick alphas**. Two of them burrow up from the soil in the second round.

## Tricks of the Trade

Consider the following guidance:

**Countess.** The Countess prefers to stay within the area of razorvine, directing attacks at the characters' spirit animals. Whichever character seems to be the greatest threat, the Countess will stand next to the cage containing that character's spirit totem so that the character is subjected to the effect of her Whispering Aura (if the spirit animal is in the aura, the character is affected by it). If she is threatened directly, the Countess uses dimension door to move to a safer vantage point, but she does not leave the courtyard. The Countess will not hesitate to use lightning bolt on the restrained spirit animals.

**Gricks.** The gricks and grick alphas are straightforward brutes. They ignore the effects of the razorvine. They swarm the nearest enemy and fight mindlessly to the death.

## Treasure

After she is defeated, the characters may claim Countess Trentham's medallion, which has the symbol of Zrin-Hala the Howling Storm. In addition to being one of the two talismans needed to bring down Nesbit Gath's ward, the amulet is worth 300 gp at the end of the adventure.

## Developments

The adventurers must make saving throws against the environment, since they exerted themselves during the battle.

If the adventurers have not yet found Patrin the dragonborn paladin, they can head to the chapel (proceed to **Encounter 4**).

If the adventurers now have both talismans, they can attempt to break the magical barrier (proceed to **Encounter 7**).

Any spirit animals that are still alive at the end of the battle and have not already been rescued can be freed, which heals the character for 2 hp per level or removes a level of exhaustion.



# ENCOUNTER 7. THE BELL IN THE DEEP

**Estimated Duration:** 60 minutes

The characters use the tokens possessed by Countess Constance Trentham and Patrín to undo the wards to reach Nesbit Gath – only for the gnome to reveal the horrible truth: the entire time the adventurers thought they were exploring the keep, they were trapped in a prison of the mind while Akempus has been taking an inventory of their brains! Will the characters break free and face the alhoon and end the threat that it poses to the Moonsea region, or will they merely become food for Akempus like so many before?

## Mind Games

The door to the Overlord's chambers is indicated on the **DM's Map: Keep Overview**. Now in possession of both talismans, they can break the ward and reach Nesbit Gath's hiding place.

As you approach the warded door, the two talismans begin to glow. The holy symbol of Bahamut and the strange medallion resonate in tune with the magic sealing the chamber, and the entire wall disappears in a flash of light.

What you see is a small, featureless stone room. Huddling in the corner on the opposite side of the room is a gnome clad in the robes of a wizard. He holds a quartz stone in his hands, which he tosses back and forth. His head snaps up as the magic ward fades away. "Constance? Patrín? Is that you? Oh, thank Azuth... I had nearly given up..."

The look of hope on the gnome's face quickly turns to one of horror when he realizes that you are not his companions. "Oh no... oh no... who are you? What have you done? Get in here, quickly, before IT finds us! We have to put the seal back! We have to..."

The all-too-familiar voice of Akempus echoes mirthfully through the chamber. "Oh, but it HAS found you, Nesbit Gath. You've given me quite a bit of trouble, but as you see, I make new friends easily. Now, are you

going to come along quietly? We can do this the hard way... or we can do it the VERY hard way."

Nesbit's quartz stone drops to the ground with a THUD, as the gnome is paralyzed with fear.

At this point, Akempus and Nesbit are focused on each other. This is the moment to check with the players and see if any of them have figured out what is really going on. Simply ask what they want to do. The answer you are looking for is any form of "wake up," "disbelieve the illusion," "shatter the glass," or anything similar. These characters may now attempt a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw. Anyone who succeeds on this saving throw sees that the stone walls of the room are actually made of glass.

Those who try to attack the gnome, protect the gnome, look for the lich, or do anything else that indicates they still believe that everything in the keep is real, do not get to make a saving throw yet.

After everyone has had a chance to take an action, continue:

The gnome screams in agony and his eyes begin to fill with blood. He falls to the ground, twitching uncontrollably. His body spasms and then he lies still.

"Well, I'm so pleased to be finished with all that unpleasantness," says the disembodied voice of the lich. "Now, won't you come and join me for dessert? After all, you ARE the guests of honor at my feast this evening..."

Once again, ask the players what their characters wish to do. Anyone who already made a saving throw does not need to save again. This time the DC of the Intelligence saving throw is 13. Characters who have already broken free can attempt to aid someone else, granting them advantage. Those who succeed perceive reality more clearly: the stone walls are completely gone, replaced by a thin glass jar, as if the characters are trapped inside some sort of specimen bottle. Those who fail the second save still see the keep as being substantial and real.

## Welcome to the Desert of the Real

Following the second saving throw attempt, regardless of success or failure, Akempus pulls the characters out of the *Periapt of Mind Trapping* and back into reality in the Bell in the Deep. If any of the characters are feeling dramatic, they might beat you to the punch by trying to shatter the glass walls. Picking up Nesbit Gath's transmuter stone and throwing it like a baseball through a window would be one example of a cool way for a character to trigger the final event instead of waiting for boxed text.

A bolt of pure pain passes through your skull. The world shimmers, and everything changes.

All around you, the stone walls of the keep begin to splinter, cracking and falling away like broken glass. Through the holes in the world you can see an entirely different place.

Where moments ago, you stood within a ruined keep, now you find yourself trapped inside a large jar, like a biological specimen. Your head is pounding, you have a row of small, bloody holes along your jawline, and you can't move a muscle... or can you?

### IMPORTANT NOTE – Mind Trap vs Reality

While in the *Periapt of Mind Trapping*, the characters have been using spells, charges of magic items, and other resources. They have also been accruing levels of exhaustion. However, this is mostly just in the mind. When the characters wake up back in reality, the only thing about them that has actually changed are their levels of exhaustion. By realizing it was all in the mind, they can reset to the state that they entered the portal in and lose one level of exhaustion.

Those characters who made the Intelligence saving throw (either the first or the second) find that the feeling is returning to their bodies. They are no longer under the effects of Mind Blast. Those who failed both saves will have to try again at the start of their first turn, but the DC decreases further each round, from 13 to 11 to 9, and so forth.

Refer to **DM Map Bell in the Deep** for this encounter. The adventurers are initially standing on the squares numbered 1-8 (roll randomly to determine where each character starts). The bodies of Nesbit, Patrin, and the Countess lie in the indicated squares. Akempus stands next to its throne on the dais, flanked by the shield guardian and the mindwitness (if present).

All around you there are more jars, each glowing with a faint blue light. Most of these containers are filled with desiccated corpses, but a few of the bodies still seem to have some life, twitching and jerking spasmodically. Other glass vessels nearby hold your adventuring companions. Cabinets hold various curiosities: a purplish-silver set of chain mail that seems as light as lace, dragon's teeth, various potions and scrolls.

Dead bodies lie on the ground at your feet: a gnome in the robes of a transmuter, a half elf woman clad in tattered finery, and a dragonborn in heavy armor. Their skulls are torn open, bits of brain matter and blood mingling on the floor.

Across the room you see a tall, thin figure. This must be Akempus. It stands about six feet tall and is clad in the robes of a scholar, with a brilliant blue pendant around its neck. Its face, however, is all wrong. Empty eye sockets gleam with cold pinpricks of light. What flesh you can see is withered and desiccated. And where its mouth should be, you see a row of tentacles. It is an undead mind flayer.

Floating near Akempus is a bizarre creature that looks like it might once have been a beholder, but some of its eye stalks seem to have been replaced with tentacles like those of the mind flayer. So much telepathic energy radiates from this creature that as it passes by, you can hear the babbling of thousands of voices in dozens of languages.

An impassive sentinel stands guard over Akempus: a creature of metal fused with flesh. It wears an amulet that looks akin to the pendant worn by the lich. The guardian clearly stands ready to leap to its master's defense.

The silvery portal that provided you entry is still visible on the far side of the room on the other side of the enemies arrayed before you.



[Choose a character who made his or her saving throw.]

Akempus seems to really look at you for the first time. “Well, well! You are not so weak-willed as I thought. A pity... I was looking forward to spending some more quality time with your delicious brain. Ah well, business before pleasure!”

Having escaped from the control of the Periapt of Mind Trapping, the characters now face Akempus who is an alhoon, a mindwitness, and Akempus’s shield guardian. Drained by having just overcome the last of Nesbit Gath’s defenses, Akempus cannot use its 5th- or 6th-level spells or its Mind Blast in this battle, and the shield guardian begins the encounter damaged, with 98 hit points. There is no spell stored in the shield guardian.

## General Features

The Bell in the Deep has the following general features.

**Light and Vision.** The Bell in the Deep is lit by hundreds upon hundreds of glowing humanoid-sized bell jars, each of which contains the desiccated corpse of one of Akempus’s previous victims. The area is brightly lit, although the blue tint of the light makes everything appear eerie, as if underwater.

**Ceiling and Walls.** Inside the area bounded by the walls, the ceiling is 20 feet high. Outside of the area bounded by the walls shown on the map and more than 30 feet above the floor is a choking miasma that surrounds the cavern, preventing anyone from going any farther.

**Dais and Dome.** The dais upon which Akempus’s throne sits is 10 feet above floor level, accessible by a staircase (or by climbing or jumping up the sides). The dome above Akempus’s throne is a further 20 feet high. If a flying creature ascends into the dome, that creature can neither see nor be seen by creatures who are not inside the area of the dashed lines indicated on the map.

**Glass Jars.** A character trapped within one of the specimen jars can break the glass as part of a move action. A character can shatter the jar holding someone else with any attack action that targets the jar. If the creature inside the jar is still stunned, then the act of someone else breaking the jar allows the stunned creature to make an immediate saving throw against the stunning effect.

**Portal.** As the characters just came through the portal a few minutes ago in real time, it’s still open. However, the alhoon is using its magic to render it inoperable. The characters will have to kill it or convince it to allow them to exit.

## Fate of the Spirit Animals

During **Encounter 6**, the alhoon drew on the adventurers’ memories and thoughts to create spirit animals representing each of their true natures. Some of these animals may have been killed by Countess Trentham and her gricks, while others were rescued (or at least not destroyed during the battle). The fate of each character’s spirit animal gives that character a bonus or a penalty during this encounter, as follows.

**If the character’s spirit animal was rescued by the character during the combat**, the character feels the full strength of his or her spirit as a mental and emotional shield. The character may reroll a failed saving throw or missed attack roll one time during the encounter, and this stacks with inspiration. Alternatively, if the character would be reduced to 0 hit points or below by an attack that hits and deals damage, the character may spend this benefit to be at 1 hit point instead.

**If the character’s spirit animal was rescued by a different character, or was not rescued until after the fight**, the character still feels empowered and emboldened by the presence of his or her spirit. The character starts the final battle with inspiration. If the character already has inspiration, then he or she instead starts the final battle with two temporary hit points per level.

**If the character’s spirit animal was killed** (either directly or because the character was dropped to 0 hit points during **Encounter 6**) then Akempus has gained valuable insight from stealing the character’s deepest memories and hopes. One time during the encounter, Akempus may give the character disadvantage on a saving throw or attack roll (or cancel advantage / inspiration if the character has it). This does not require an action.

## Adjusting this Encounter

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

- **Very Weak:** The **alhoon** cannot use any spells of 4th level or higher, nor can it use Mind Blast. Remove the **mindwitness**. The **shield guardian** begins the encounter badly damaged, with 71 hit points. There is no spell stored in the shield guardian, and it cannot use Regeneration.
- **Weak:** The **alhoon** cannot use any spells of 4th level or higher, nor can it use Mind Blast. The **mindwitness** cannot use Stunning Ray and its Psychic Ray deals only 18 (4d8) damage. The **shield guardian** begins the encounter with 71 hit points. There is no spell

stored in the shield guardian, and it cannot use Regeneration.

- **Strong:** The **alhoon** can use all its listed spells and abilities, except for Mind Blast. The **mindwitness** and the **shield guardian** have their normal game statistics. The bodies of Nesbit, Patrin, and the Countess rise as **doppelgangers** on the second round of combat.
- **Very Strong:** The **alhoon** can use all its listed spells and abilities, and gains one extra 6th-level spell slot. The **mindwitness** has 120 hit points and the alhoon can use the mindwitness when casting spells to determine line of sight and line of effect as if it were in the mind witness's square. The **shield guardian's** stored spell is lightning bolt cast at 5th level. Three previous victims of the alhoon animate on the second round of combat to defend their master. They have statistics equivalent to **deep scions** in their hybrid forms.

## Tricks of the Trade

Consider the following guidance:

**Mindwitness.** The mindwitness serves as artillery, taking cover where it can and coming out to unleash its devastating eye rays.

**Shield Guardian.** The shield guardian serves to both give Akempus additional hit points and to occupy melee characters while Akempus and the mindwitness barrage them with spells and eye rays.

**Deep Scion.** The deep scions are there to deliver psychic screeches to stun characters if possible, and to block melee fighters from getting to the alhoon.

**Alhoon.** The alhoon is concerned above all else with self-preservation, but it begins the encounter extremely overconfident. The adventurers have done it the great favor of breaking Nesbit Gath's final defenses. Although the alhoon is annoyed that the characters themselves have temporarily broken free of its mental control, Akempus is confident that it will have them as thralls soon enough. It begins the encounter by casting a defensive spell (globe of invulnerability at higher tiers, or mirror image at lower tiers). It will move forward to engage the adventurers if necessary, but it keeps the shield guardian within 60 feet so that the guardian can take damage for it. If it thinks it has the upper hand, Akempus is aggressive, preferring to incapacitate rather than outright kill characters so that it can resume experimenting on them later. If it feels threatened, however, Akempus goes into a full defensive mode, using all its available protective spells and abilities and sacrificing its guardian and other minions to protect itself.

## Developments

The characters must defeat the alhoon to have any chance of escaping the Bell in the Deep alive. When a character hits with an attack that would reduce Akempus to 0 hit points or below, pause the combat and read or paraphrase the following:

For the first time, you hear genuine fear in Akempus's voice. "Wait, wait. Perhaps I was hasty. You are clearly powerful – powerful enough that we could work together. If you slay me, the magic holding Northkeep together will come apart. You will all die. Hundreds of souls in this" – it indicates its glowing amulet – "will die. Is that really what you want? Let me unbar the portal, and we can part as allies. There are many treasures in the vaults below our feet that could be yours."

Ask the player of the character who is about to strike the killing blow whether he or she wishes to complete the strike and destroy Akempus or pull the punch and allow the alhoon to live.

If the characters choose to spare the alhoon and accept its offer of an alliance, proceed to the Conclusion: Akempus Magnanimous.

If the characters choose to destroy Akempus, proceed to the Conclusion: Akempus Interruptus. After the alhoon falls, it's minions will disintegrate.

If the characters are defeated, go to the conclusion Akempus Victorious.

## Conclusion

**Estimated Duration:** 10 minutes

There are three possible conclusions.

**Akempus Victorious:** If the characters were slain by the alhoon in the final battle, it claims their souls and they are once again imprisoned in its Periapt of Mind Trapping.

**Akempus Magnanimous:** If the characters accepted Akempus's offer of a truce, it gratefully loads them down with treasure and allows them to leave through the portal back to the surface.

**Akempus Interruptus:** The characters decide to destroy Akempus and must flee Northkeep, grabbing what treasure they can as they go.

## Conclusion: Akempus Victorious

The Akempus Victorious conclusion occurs if the entire party is defeated, either inside the Periapt of Mind Trapping (**Encounter 2** through **Encounter 6**) or during the final battle in the Bell in the Deep (**Encounter 7**).

The last thing you remember is the feeling of tentacles boring into your face and the bitterly cold air blowing directly on your brain. Wait, can brains even feel?

Eventually the Council of Elmwood sends another group of adventurers to retrieve your brainless bodies.

Each character must spend 50 Downtime Days and 3,500 gold pieces to pay for an expedition to Northkeep to find their body and to have Resurrection cast on them. Raise Dead won't work because the body is missing the brain. Give the characters the story award "The good news is..."

## Conclusion: Akempus Magnanimous

The Akempus Magnanimous conclusion occurs if the characters strike a bargain with Akempus during **Encounter 7**. This can happen when they are about to kill it and they accept its surrender instead, or if they attempt to surrender to it and are able to convince it that letting them go back to the surface is the best course of action. "They'll just send more after us..." is a pretty good starting point for the negotiations, since Akempus has no way to leave Northkeep on its own and is unwilling to destroy the portal as it still hopes that someday it will find a way to escape.

Constable Mathnir is not entirely enthusiastic to hear that you struck a bargain with Akempus, but it's better than having to send a rescue team in to dig out a bunch of brainless, soulless bodies. Probably. At least you were able to secure the body and soul of Nesbit Gath as part of the deal. If someone wants to pay enough to resurrect him, he could even stand trial for his crimes. You can't help but feel like the spirit of the dragonborn paladin Patrin is out there somewhere, and he can't be happy about the way things ended up. The folk of Elmwood are grateful that you finally defeated the evil adventurers and provide your group with a thousand gold and their thanks.

Later on, you hear a rumor that the lich has started to supply undead to certain power groups within the Moonsea and has name-dropped you as a reference.

## Conclusion: Akempus Interruptus

The Akempus Interruptus conclusion occurs if the characters defeat Akempus in battle and make the decision to destroy it rather than accepting its surrender.

You ignore Akempus's offer to negotiate and strike the killing blow. The alhoon dies and its desiccated corpse withers in on itself in a grotesque display of rot. Dark vapors start to flow from Nesbit Gath, Countess Trentham, and Patrin's corpses. The dark curse, the vestiges of dead gods that had driven the former adventurers, has moved on.

Northkeep shudders and starts to quake. The silvery portal beckons...

The folk of Elmwood are grateful that you finally defeated the evil adventurers and provide your group with a thousand gold and their thanks.

## **Treasure**

Nesbit Gath's transmuter stone (which is nonmagical except when carried by him) is a beautiful chunk of quartz crystal about the size of a man's fist. It is worth 300 gold pieces.

If the adventurers destroyed Akempus, they may claim the remains of its *periapt of mind trapping*. The item no longer has any magical power, but it is still a beautiful piece of jewelry with an extraordinary provenance worth 1,000 gold pieces.

If the adventurers cut a deal with Akempus, it gives them ancient coins and art objects from the vaults of Northkeep with the same value (1,000 gold pieces) instead of the amulet.

In either case, the characters also receive an exquisite set of elven chain armor that Akempus kept as a trophy, a Spell Scroll of *Reincarnate* that it can't use, a Potion of Psychic Resistance that it brewed itself, and a Potion of Growth. These are easy enough to grab as the characters are running towards the portal. The shield guardian is destroyed.

Finally, for bringing Nesbit Gath and the rest of his crew to justice, the Elmwood Council gives the adventurers a reward of 1,000 gold pieces.

## 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: 4500/6000)

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
Adult Silver Dragon	15,000
Alhoon	5,900
Bodak	2,300
Deep Scion	700
Grick Alpha	2,900
Grick	450
Half-Silver Dragon Veteran	1,800
Intellect Devourer	450
Mindwitness	1,800
Shield Guardian	2,900
Warlock of the Great Old One	2,300
Young Bronze Dragon	3,900
Young Silver Dragon	5,000

### Non-Combat Awards

Task or Accomplishment	XP Per Char
Recovering Patrin's Holy Symbol (solving the puzzle)	7500
Redeeming Patrin without defeating him in combat	750

## 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
Patrin's Holy Symbol	300
Countess Trentham's Amulet	300
Nesbit Gath's Transmuter Stone	300
Akempus's Amulet	1,000
Elmwood Council Reward	1,000

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.

### Elven Chain

*Armor (chain shirt), rare*

This weird silvery-purple chain shirt is as thin and light as a linen shirt. It has a muted wave symbol of Istishia, the neutral god known as the Water Lord, patterned into the links. This must have once belonged to a sea elf.

You gain a +1 bonus to AC while you wear this armor. You are considered proficient with this armor even if you lack proficiency with medium armor. This item can be found in **Handout 4** and is detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 168.

### Spell Scroll of Reincarnate

*Scroll, rare*

This scroll contains the spell Reincarnate. This item can be found in **Handout 4** and is detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 200 and the *Player's Handbook* page 271.

### Potion of Psychic Resistance

*Potion, uncommon*

When you drink this potion, you gain resistance to psychic damage for 1 hour. It tastes entirely too much like a mind flayer smells. This item can be found in **Handout 4** and is detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 188.

### Potion of Growth

*Potion, uncommon*

When you drink this potion, you gain the "enlarge" effect of the enlarge/reduce spell for 1d4 hours (no concentration required). The red in the potion's liquid continuously expands from a tiny bead to color the clear liquid around it and then contracts. Shaking the bottle fails to interrupt this process. This item can be found in **Handout 4** and is detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 187 and the *Player's Handbook* page 237.

## **Player Rewards**

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

## **Story Award**

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The characters have the opportunity to earn the following story award:

***The good news is...*** that you're not dead. Constable Mathnir had to send a rescue team to Northkeep to recover your brainless body and have the chief cleric of the Temple of Bane in Elmwood cast Resurrection. The cost for the process is 50 downtime days and 3,500 gold. If you do not have 3,500 gold, the Temple of Bane takes whatever gold you have. Not your finest hour. More information can be found in **Handout 5**.

## **DM Rewards**

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

## Appendix:

### NPC / Monster Statistics

#### Chapel Monster/NPC Statistics

##### Patrin's Spirit, Young Silver Dragon

*Large dragon, lawful good*

**Armor Class** 18 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 168 (16d10 + 80)

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	10 (+0)	21 (+5)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	19 (+4)

**Saving Throws** Dex +4, Con +9, Wis +4, Cha +8

**Skills** Arcana +6, History +6, Perception +8, Stealth +4

**Damage immunities** cold

**Senses** blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 18

**Languages** Common, Draconic

**Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP)

#### Actions

**Multiattack.** The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

**Breath Weapons** (Recharge 5-6). The dragon uses one of the following breath weapons:

**Cold Breath.** The dragon exhales an icy blast in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking 54 (12d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Paralyzing Breath.** The dragon exhales paralyzing gas in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a D 17 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

##### Patrin's Spirit, Adult Silver Dragon

*Huge dragon, lawful good*

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 243 (18d12 + 126)

**Speed** 40ft., fly 80ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	10 (+0)	25 (+7)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	21 (+5)

**Saving Throws** Dex +S, Con +12, Wis +6, Cha +10

**Skills** Arcana +8, History +8, Perception +11, Stealth +5

**Damage Immunities** cold

**Senses** blindsight 60ft., darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 21

**Languages** Common, Draconic

**Challenge** 16 (15,000 XP)

**Legendary Resistance** (3fDay). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

#### Actions

**Multiattack.** The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. Hit: 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 15ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

**Frightful Presence.** Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

**Breath Weapons** (Recharge 5-6). The dragon uses one of the following breath weapons.

**Cold Breath.** The dragon exhales an icy blast in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw, taking 58 (13d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Paralyzing Breath.** The dragon exhales paralyzing gas in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

**Change Shape.** The dragon magically polymorphs into a humanoid or beast that has a challenge rating no higher than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the dragon's choice). In a new form, the dragon retains

its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, Legendary Resistance, lair actions, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Its statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the new form, except any class features or legendary actions of that form.

### Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Detect.** The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

**Tail Attack.** The dragon makes a tail attack.

**Wing Attack** (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 10 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

### Patrin's Spirit, Young Bronze Dragon

*Large dragon, lawful good*

**Armor Class** 18 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 142 (15d10 + 60)

**Speed** 40ft., fly 80ft., swim 40ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Dex +3, Con +7, Wis +4, Cha +6

**Skills** Insight +4, Perception +7, Stealth +3

**Damage Immunities** lightning

**Senses** blindsight 30ft., darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 17

**Languages** Common, Draconic

**Challenge** 8 (3,900 XP)

**Amphibious.** The dragon can breathe air and water.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

**Breath Weapons** (Recharge 5-6). The dragon uses one of the following breath weapons.

**Lightning Breath.** The dragon exhales lightning in a 60-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) lightning damage on a failed save,

or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Repulsion Breath.** The dragon exhales repulsion energy in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is pushed 40 feet away from the dragon.

### Patrin, Half-Silver Dragon Veteran

*Medium humanoid (dragonborn), lawful good*

**Armor Class** 18 (plate)

**Hit Points** 65 (10d8 + 20)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Saving Throws** Str +5, Con +4

**Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +2

**Damage Resistances** cold

**Senses** blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Common, Draconic

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The veteran makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.

**Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

**Heavy Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

**Cold Breath** (Recharge 5-6). The veteran exhales cold in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

### Reactions

**Parry.** The veteran adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the veteran must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

### Notes

Half-Red Dragon Veteran, Monster Manual page 180. Change from half-red to half-silver. (This is not a reskin; the half-dragon template is in the MM.) The only things that change in the stat block are: damage resistance changes from fire to cold, and breath weapon damage changes from fire to cold.

## Crypt Monster/NPC Statistics

### Bodak

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

**Skills** Perception +4, Stealth +6

**Damage Resistances** cold, fire, necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** lightning, poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

**Languages** Abyssal, the languages it knew in life

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Aura of Annihilation.** The bodak can activate or deactivate this feature as a bonus action. While active, the aura deals 5 necrotic damage to any creature that ends its turn within 30 feet of the bodak. Undead and fiends ignore this effect.

**Death Gaze.** When a creature that can see the bodak's eyes starts its turn within 30 feet of the bodak, the bodak can force it to make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw if the bodak isn't incapacitated and can see the creature. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the creature is reduced to 0 hit points, unless it is immune to the frightened condition. Otherwise, a creature takes 16 (3d10) psychic damage on a failed save.

Unless surprised, a creature can avert its eyes to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If the creature does so, it has disadvantage on attack rolls against the bodak until the start of its next turn. If the creature looks at the bodak in the meantime, it must immediately make the saving throw.

**Sunlight Hypersensitivity.** The bodak takes 5 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

### Actions

**Fist.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 9 (2d8) necrotic damage.

**Withering Gaze.** One creature that the bodak can see within 60 feet of it must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful save.

### Intellect Devourer

Tiny aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 21 (6d4 + 6)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Perception +2, Stealth +4

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't made of adamantite

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** blinded

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 12

**Languages** Understands Deep Speech but can't speak, telepathy 60 ft.

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Detect Sentience.** The intellect devourer can sense the presence and location of any creature within 300 feet of it that has an intelligence of 3 or higher, regardless of interposing barriers, unless the creature is protected by a mind blank spell.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The intellect devourer makes one attack with its claws and uses Devour Intellect.

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

**Devour Intellect.** The intellect devourer targets one creature it can see within 10 feet of it that has a brain. The target must succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence saving throw against this magic or take 11 (2d10) psychic damage. Also, on a failure roll 3d6: if the total equals or exceeds the target's Intelligence score, that score is reduced to 0. The target is stunned until it regains at least one point of Intelligence.

**Body Thief.** The intellect devourer initiates an Intelligence contest with an incapacitated humanoid within 5 feet of it. If it wins the contest, the intellect devourer magically consumes the target's brain, teleports into the target's skull, and takes control of the target's body. While inside a creature, the intellect devourer has total cover against attacks and other effects originating outside its host. The intellect devourer retains its Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as its understanding of Deep Speech, its telepathy, and its traits. It otherwise adopts the target's statistics. It knows everything the creature knew, including spells and languages.

If the host body drops to 0 hit points, the intellect devourer must leave it. A protection from evil and good spell cast on the body drives the intellect devourer out. The intellect devourer is also forced out if the target regains its devoured brain by means of a wish. By spending 5 feet of its movement, the intellect devourer can voluntarily leave the body, teleporting to the nearest unoccupied space within 5 feet of it. The body then dies, unless its brain is restored within 1 round.



## Courtyard Monster/NPC Statistics

### Grick

Medium monstrosity, neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 27 (6d8)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't made of adamantine

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

**Languages** --

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Stone Camouflage.** The grick has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in rocky terrain.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The grick makes one attack with its tentacles. If that attack hits, the grick can make one beak attack against the same target.

**Tentacles.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (2d6 + 2) slashing damage.

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

### Grick Alpha

Large monstrosity, neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d10 + 20)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	4 (-3)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't made of adamantine

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

**Languages** --

**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)

**Stone Camouflage.** The grick has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in rocky terrain.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The grick makes two attacks: one with its tail and one with its tentacles. If it hits with its tentacles, the grick can make one beak attack against the same target.

**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

**Tentacles.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (4d8 + 4) slashing damage.

**Beak.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

## Countess Trentham, Warlock of the Great Old One

Medium humanoid (half elf), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 91 (14d8 + 28)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	20 (+4)

**Saving Throws** Wis +4, Cha +8

**Skills** Arcana +4, History +4

**Damage Resistances** psychic

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common, Elvish, telepathy 30 ft.

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** The warlock's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. It can innately cast the following spells (spell save DC 16), requiring no material components.

At will: *detect magic, jump, levitate, mage armor* (self only), *speak with dead*

1/day each: *arcane gate, true seeing*

**Fey Ancestry.** The Countess has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put you to sleep.

**Spellcasting.** The warlock is a 14th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. It knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, eldritch blast, guidance, mage hand, minor illusion, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*

1st-5th level (3 5th-level slots): *armor of Agathys, arms of Hadar, crown of madness, clairvoyance, detect thoughts, dimension door, dissonant whispers, dominate beast, lightning bolt, telekinesis, vampiric touch*

**Whispering Aura.** At the start of each of the warlock's turns, each creature of its choice within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 10 (3d6) psychic damage, provided that the warlock isn't incapacitated.

### Actions

**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

### Notes

Volo's Guide to Monsters, page 220. Added lightning bolt to spell list to match narrative vestige.

## Final Encounter Monster/NPC Statistics

### Akempus

*Medium undead, lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 120 (16d8 + 48)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	17 (+4)	17 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Con +7, Int +8, Wis +7, Cha +7

**Skills** Arcana +8, Deception +7, History +8, Insight +7, Perception +7, Stealth +5

**Damage Resistances** cold, lightning, necrotic

**Damage Immunities** poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

**Senses** truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 17

**Languages** Deep Speech, Undercommon, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)

**Magic Resistance.** Akempus has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Innate Spellcasting** (Psionics). Akempus's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *detect thoughts*, *levitate*

1/day: *dominate monster*, *plane shift* (self only; however, Akempus cannot use plane shift due to the curse that binds it to the Bell in the Deep. This curse also makes Akempus immune to banishment and any other spell or effect that would send it to another plane of existence or otherwise move it outside the Bell in the Deep.)

**Spellcasting.** Akempus is a 12th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). Akempus has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *dancing lights*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *disguise self*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fly*, *lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *confusion*, *Evard's black tentacles*, *greater invisibility*, *phantasmal killer*

5th level (2 slots): *modify memory*, *wall of force*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate*, *globe of invulnerability*

**Turn Resistance.** Akempus cannot be turned within the Bell in the Deep. Outside its lair, Akempus has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

### Actions

**Chilling Grasp.** *Melee Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (3d6) cold damage.

**Mind Blast** (Recharge 5-6). Akempus magically emits psychic energy in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw or take 22 (4d8 + 4) psychic damage and be stunned for 1 minute. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

### Notes

Volo's Guide to Monsters, page 172. Standard alhoon stats, except for the removal of the ability to plane shift 1/day (Akempus is unable to leave the Bell in the Deep by any means due to the curse), addition of greater invisibility to spell list, and upgrading the alhoon's existing turn resistance to turn immunity while within the Bell in the Deep.

## Mindwitness

*Large aberration, lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 75 (10d10 + 20)

**Speed** 0 ft., fly 20 ft. (hover)

---

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

---

**Saving Throws** Int +5, Wis +5

**Skills** Perception +8

**Condition Immunities** prone

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 18

**Languages** Deep Speech, Undercommon, telepathy 600 ft.

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Telepathic Hub.** When the mindwitness receives a telepathic message, it can telepathically share that message with up to seven other creatures within 600 feet of it that it can see.

### Actions

---

**Multiattack.** The mindwitness makes two attacks: one with its tentacles and one with its bite.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 16 (4d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Tentacles.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 20 (4d8 + 2) psychic damage. If the target is Large or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 13) and must succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until this grapple ends.

**Eye Rays.** The mindwitness shoots three of the following magical eye rays at random (reroll duplicates), choosing one to three targets it can see within 120 feet of it.

**1. Aversion Ray.** The targeted creature must make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, the target has disadvantage on attack rolls for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

**2. Fear Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

**3. Psychic Ray.** The target must succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence saving throw or take 27 (6d8) psychic damage.

**4. Slowing Ray.** The targeted creature must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the target's speed is halved for 1 minute. In addition, the creature can't take reactions, and it can take either an action or a bonus action on its turn but not both. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

**5. Stunning Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be stunned for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the start of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

**6. Telekinetic Ray.** If the target is a creature, it must make a DC 13 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the mindwitness moves it up to 30 feet in any direction, and it is restrained by the ray's telekinetic grip until the start of the mindwitness's next turn or until the mindwitness is incapacitated. If the target is an object weighing 300 pounds or less that isn't being worn or carried, it is telekinetically moved up to 30 feet in any direction. The mindwitness can also exert fine control on objects with this ray, such as manipulating a simple tool or opening a door or a container.

## Shield Guardian

Large construct, unaligned

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 142 (15d10 + 60)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

<b>STR</b>	<b>DEX</b>	<b>CON</b>	<b>INT</b>	<b>WIS</b>	<b>CHA</b>
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

---

**Senses** blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

**Languages** understands commands given in any language but can't speak

**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)

**Bound.** The shield guardian is magically bound to an amulet. As long as the guardian and its amulet are on the same plane of existence, the amulet's wearer can telepathically call the guardian to travel to it, and the guardian knows the distance and direction to the amulet. If the guardian is within 60 feet of the amulet's wearer, half of any damage the wearer takes (rounded up) is transferred to the guardian.

**Regeneration.** The shield guardian regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

**Spell Storing.** A spellcaster who wears the shield guardian's amulet can cause the guardian to store one spell of 4th level or lower. To do so, the wearer must cast the spell on the guardian. The spell has no effect but is stored within the guardian. When commanded to do so by the wearer or when a situation arises that was predefined by the spellcaster, the guardian casts the stored spell with any parameters set by the original caster, requiring no components. When the spell is cast or a new spell is stored, any previously stored spell is lost. The spell currently stored in the guardian is counterspell at 4th level.

### Actions

---

**Multiattack.** The shield guardian makes two fist attacks.

**Fist.** *Melee Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

### Reactions

---

**Shield.** When a creature makes an attack against the wearer of the guardian's amulet, the guardian grants a +2 bonus to the wearer's AC if the guardian is within 5 feet of the wearer.

## Deep Scion

Medium humanoid (shapechanger), neutral evil

**Armor Class** 11

**Hit Points** 67 (9d8 + 27)

**Speed** 30 ft. (20 ft. and swim 40 ft. in hybrid form)

---

<b>STR</b>	<b>DEX</b>	<b>CON</b>	<b>INT</b>	<b>WIS</b>	<b>CHA</b>
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

---

**Saving Throws** Wis +3, Cha +4

**Skills** Deception +6, Insight +3, Sleight of Hand +3, Stealth +3

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Aquan, Common, thieves' cant

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Shapechanger.** The deep scion can use its action to polymorph into a humanoid-piscine hybrid form, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its speed, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. The deep scion reverts to its true form if it dies.

**Amphibious** (Hybrid Form Only). The deep scion can breathe air and water.

### Actions

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**Multiattack.** In humanoid form, the deep scion makes two melee attacks. In hybrid form, the deep scion makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

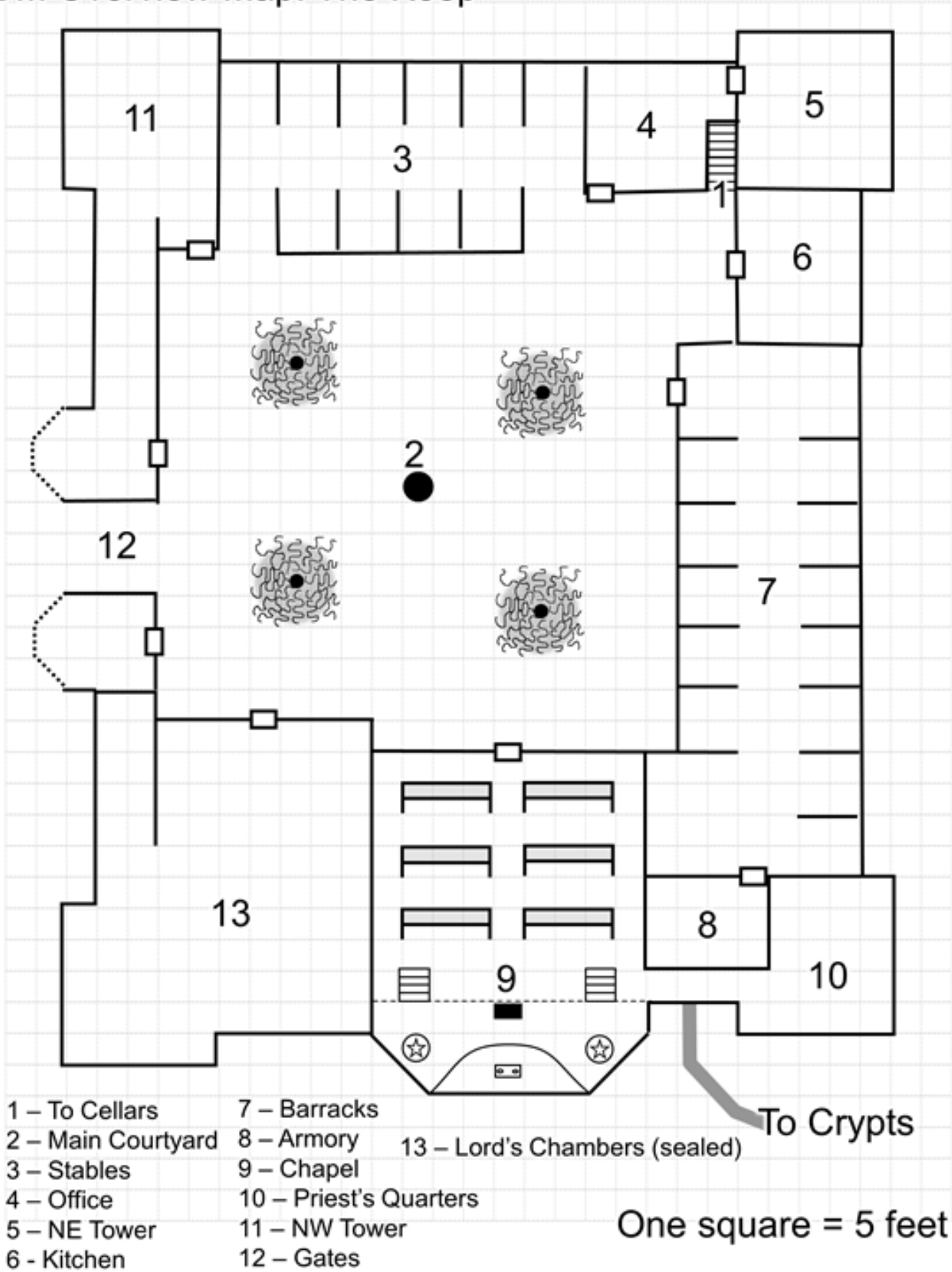
**Battleaxe** (Humanoid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands.

**Bite** (Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

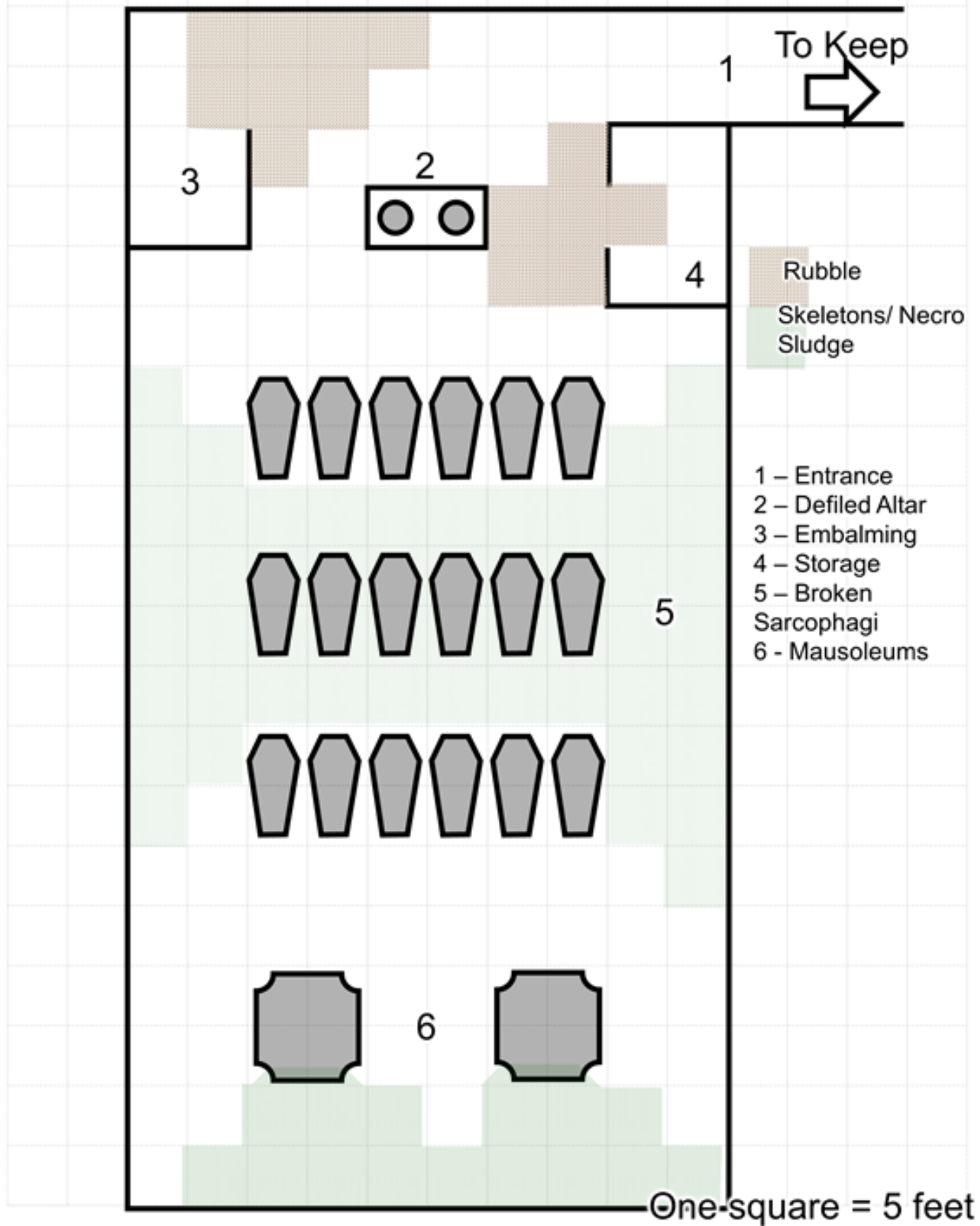
**Claw** (Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

**Psychic Screech** (Hybrid Form Only; Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The deep scion emits a terrible scream audible within 300 feet. Creatures within 30 feet of the deep scion must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned until the end of the deep scion's next turn. In water, the psychic screech also telepathically transmits the deep scion's memories of the last 24 hours to its master, regardless of distance, so long as it and its master are in the same body of water.

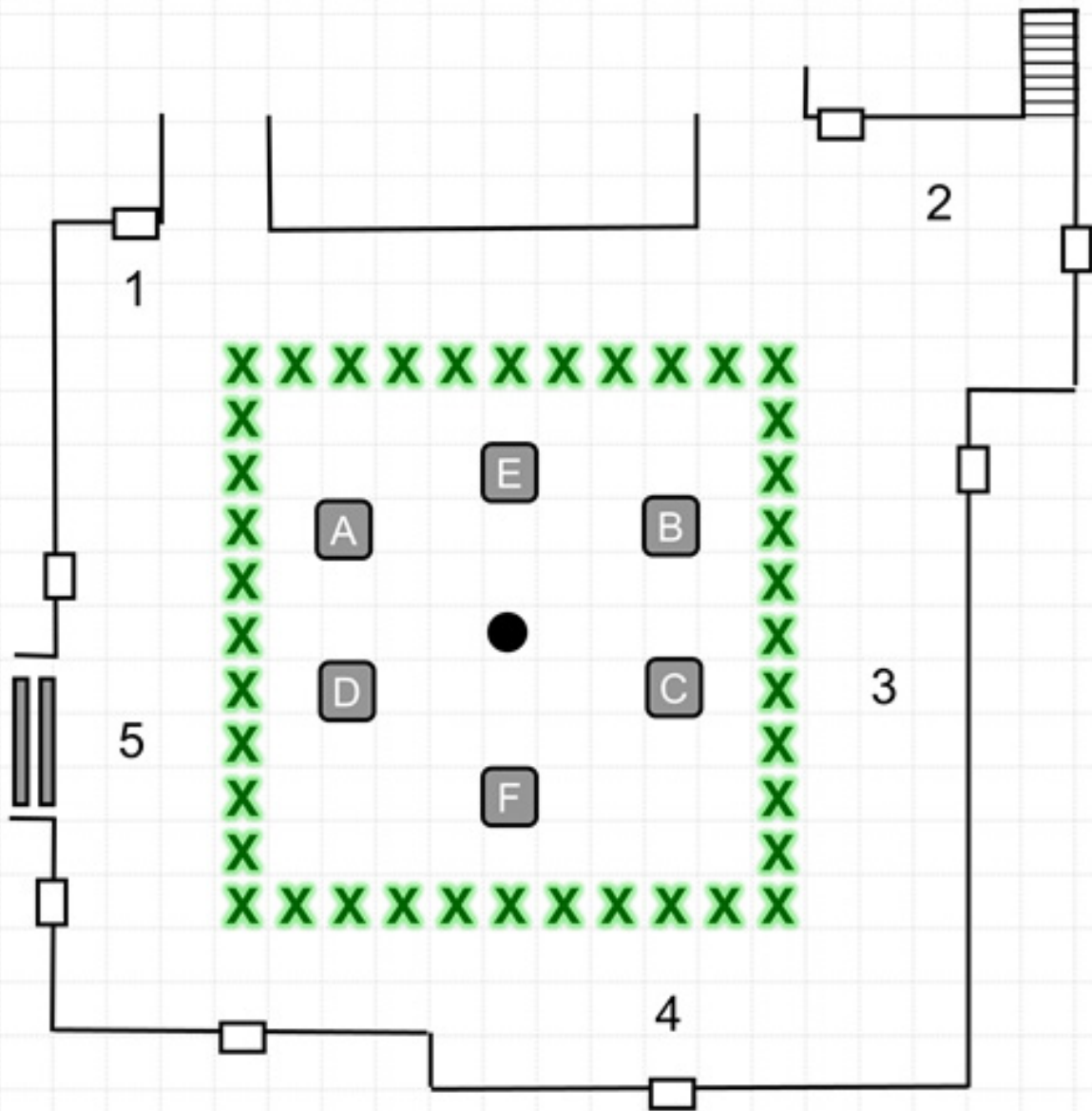
# DM Overview Map: The Keep



# DM Map: The Crypts



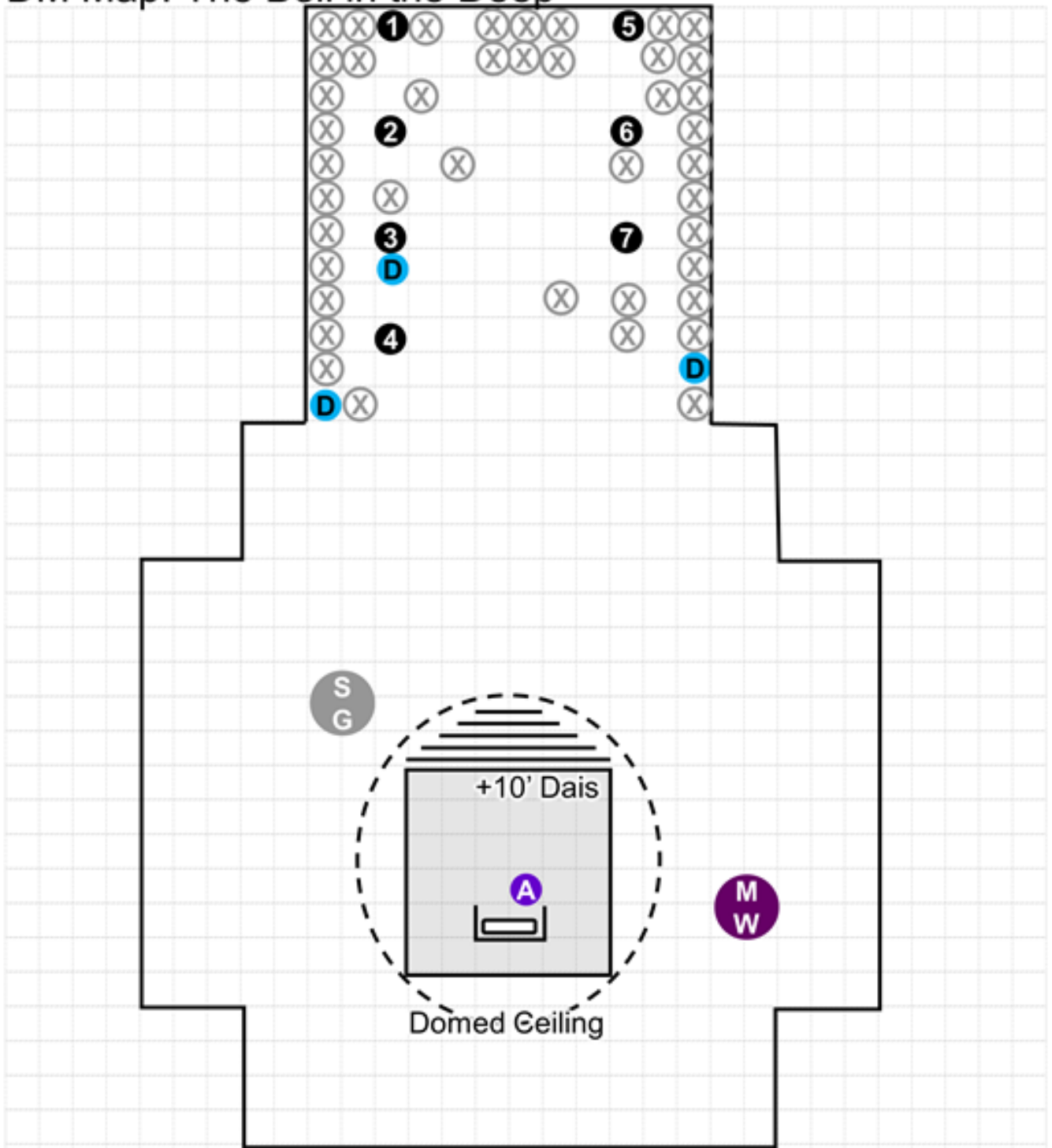
# DM Map: The Courtyard



- Well
- A Cages
- 1 Spawn Points
- X Razorvine Barrier

One square = 5 feet

# DM Map: The Bell in the Deep



- A** Alhoon
- S/G** Shield Guardian
- M/W** Mind Witness

- 1** PCs (Random)
- D** Deep Scions appear here (if part of this encounter)
- X** Chamber with dead creature

One square = 5 feet



# DM Appendix: Solution to the Holy Symbols Puzzle

DO NOT GIVE THIS PAGE TO THE PLAYERS!

If possible, please pre-cut and mix up the 16 pieces on Handout 3 and give them to the players as a jumbled pile. Please note that the edges do NOT need to be precise! Just cut the shapes out as rough outlines.

For your reference, the following table contains information about each symbol, the deity it represents, the particular piece of that deity's portfolio as described in the puzzle inscription, the letters inscribed on each symbol, and the missing letter from the deity's name. That should be all the information you need to resolve skill checks and give out hints if the players need any help while solving the puzzle.

## The players should

- 1) Match the broken halves of the holy symbols.
- 2) ID the god/goddess that goes with each holy symbol with a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check.
- 3) Figure out which letter is missing from the name of the god/goddess on each holy symbol.
- 4) ID the domain that goes with that god/goddess with a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check.
- 5) Put the missing letters ("what you have not found") in the order suggested by the inscription. That gives them the word DEMOTION.
- 6) Figure what "upend the third of your new eight splitting it in half as you turn it over" means. M is the third letter of DEMOTION. Cut the M in half and turn it over and it looks like a V, which forms the answer DEVOTION.

Deity	Portfolio Reference	Holy Symbol	Letters on Symbol	Missing Letter
Auril	Winter	Snowflake diamond	A U R L	I
Bane	Tyranny	Hand on Shield	B A N	E
Eldath	Peace	Waterfall	E L A T H	D
Gond	Craft	Gear	G N D	O
Ilmater	Suffering	Bound hands	I L M A E R	T
Mask	Trickery	Mask	A S K	M
Oghma	Knowledge	Scroll	G H M A	O
Silvanus	Nature	Leaf	S I L V A U S	N

Handout 1. This is Your Life (1 copy per player)

Player's Name:

Character's Name:

Please describe a few incidents in your character's background. These do not have to be extremely detailed but give enough information for the DM to understand the basics of what happened. 2-3 sentences should be sufficient to convey the level of detail needed. (You will not be reading these out loud to the other players, just to be clear, and neither will the DM, but the information is important at various points during the adventure.)

Describe an incident in which your character showed either great bravery or great cowardice.

Describe an incident in which your faith in a higher power was strengthened (and please name the power/deity in question), or an incident in which your faith was weakened or even lost completely.

If you had to choose a single animal, magical beast, or similar creature as your character's spirit totem, what would it be?

## Handout 2. Adventure Hooks

### 2A On the Trail of Nesbit Gath

---

*(For characters who have played ELMW2-1 Tendrils in the Fog and/or ELMW2-2 Mists of the Moonsea.)*

Constable Mathnir met with you to go over what you'd learned previously – a band of adventurers had run afoul of some dark magic in a place called Ravenloft. They carry within them the evil vestiges of dead gods from that land of dread. The possessed adventurers had been raiding up and down the coast of the Moonsea. You had tracked some of them down, but three remain who have fled to the sunken fortress of Northkeep:

- Nesbit Gath, gnome transmutation wizard
- Countess Constance Trentham, half elven dilettante
- Patrin, Dragonborn Paladin of Bahamut

The speculation was that the wizard wanted to ally with a lich there and become one himself. Northkeep has been sealed by a barrier of magical energy which has prevented anyone from entering. Adventurers have found a portal that would penetrate that barrier, and now Constable Mathnir calls upon brave souls to track the three remaining marauders in Northkeep. Mariam Wrathborne, Captain of the Wave Queen, has been contracted to take you to Yarralumla Island to use this portal and chase down the possessed adventurers.

### 2B Elmwood Needs Help

---

*(For characters that have played other Baldman Games Elmwood adventures - ELMW1-1 The Sage of Cormanthor, ELMW1-2 The Lost Sanctum, or ELMW1-3 The Battle of Elmwood)*

Due to your past service to Elmwood, Constable Aliana Mathnir has turned to you for help. There is a group of evil adventurers (under some sort of curse or possession) who have been razing some of the outlying towns near Elmwood. Constable Mathnir wants these evil adventurers killed so they can't hurt anyone else. Some of them have already been taken down by local heroes. The ones left who have fled to the sunken fortress of Northkeep are:

- Nesbit Gath, gnome transmutation wizard
- Countess Constance Trentham, half elven dilettante
- Patrin, Dragonborn Paladin of Bahamut

The speculation was that the wizard wanted to ally with a lich there and become one himself. Northkeep has been sealed by a barrier of magical energy which has prevented anyone from entering. Adventurers have found a portal that would penetrate that barrier, and now Constable Mathnir calls upon brave souls to track the three remaining marauders in Northkeep. Mariam Wrathborne, Captain of the Wave Queen, has been contracted to take you to Yarralumla Island to use this portal and chase down the possessed adventurers.

### 2C Asked to Help: Harpers

---

*(For characters that have not played other Baldman Games Elmwood adventures and who are members of the Harpers.)*

Help is needed. There is a roving band of evil adventurers loose in the Moonsea. Other agents have killed or captured four of them, but there are three left and they've holed up in the sunken fortress of Northkeep. These people have hurt a lot of innocent folk in the area and must be stopped. You're looking for:

- Nesbit Gath, gnome transmutation wizard
- Constance Trentham, half elven dilettante
- Patrin, Dragonborn paladin

On the one hand, no one would shed a tear if these monsters all died. On the other hand, the Harpers are concerned about what caused them to turn evil. There's some indication that they're under the effects of a curse. Be careful – that kind of thing could happen to any adventurer, right?

Meet Captain Mariam Wrathborne at the Elmwood docks. She has been contracted to take you to Yarralumla Island on her ship, the Wave Queen. You will arrive on the island at spring tide to open the portal to Northkeep where the possessed adventurers are hiding.

*Ragnir Nejit*

## 2D Asked to Help: Order of the Gauntlet

---

*(For characters that have not played other Baldman Games Elmwood adventures and who are members of the Order of the Gauntlet.)*

Thank you for responding to this emergency – and may Tempus ward your soul. There are three murderers hiding in a wrecked underwater ruin. I hear they were good once, but a gnome wizard (named Nesbit Gath) has led them to ruin. Typical wizard, right? There's a half-elf woman with them named Constance Trentham. Some kind of nobility I think, but I have no idea where from.

The third concerns me the most. His name is Patrin, and he's a dragonborn who was a paladin of Bahamut. My understanding is that he's fallen from the faith. Please go to the sunken citadel of Northkeep and find these murderers. It would be a good thing if you can save Patrin's soul and restore his faith instead of killing him. Of course, if he's fallen to irredeemable evil, there's only so much mere mortals can do. You'll make the right choice, I'm sure.

Leave from the Elmwood docks on the Wave Queen. Her captain is Mariam Wrathborne. She'll take you to Yarralumla Island in the Moonsea where you can open the portal to Northkeep.

*Granthar Copperhelm*

*Priestess of Tempus*

PS – Supposed to be a lich involved in this somewhere. You know what they say – smite early and smite often!

## 2E Asked to Help: Emerald Enclave

---

*(For characters that have not played other Baldman Games Elmwood adventures and who are members of the Emerald Enclave.)*

A group of evil adventurers has destroyed a few small towns along the south coast of the Moonsea – that's not a large disturbance to the greater ecosystem, and not a terrible cause for concern (though it's certainly regrettable). Adventurers were called to deal with it, and we thought the matter was settled. However, we've become aware that another one of the adventurers is still at large and is seeking the patronage of the lich of Northkeep with the idea to also become a lich.

Unacceptable. Undeath is a perversion of the cycle of life and death, and the damage a lich or two could do to the local area is unthinkable. We're still recovering from the magic fire that burned the whole area to the ground a couple of years ago.

Please go to the Elmwood docks. We've arranged for Captain Mariam Wrathborne to take you to Yarralumla Island. There's a portal there that will penetrate the magical barrier around Northkeep. Enter Northkeep and slay these threats to the natural order.

*Rogon Stragoth*

In service to the Circle of Druids at the Grove of Eldath

## 2F Asked to Help: Lords' Alliance

---

(For characters that have not played other Baldman Games Elmwood adventures and who are members of the Lords' Alliance.)

The Lords' Alliance has significant interest in seeing that Elmwood remains peaceful and secure as it rebuilds from being burned down a couple of years ago. Mulmaster is a mess of intrigue and destroyed infrastructure, so Elmwood is a center of local stability. Accordingly, the Alliance was extremely concerned when a small group of powerful cursed adventurers started burning down small towns in the vicinity. Of course, we orchestrated events to have them killed, but three remain. They've left the area (thank the Golden Lady Waukeen!) and have, according to my intelligence, gone to the sunken city of Northkeep. There's a magical energy barrier around Northkeep. The local town Constable in Elmwood, Aliana Mathnir, sent adventurers to find a way through the barrier. There's a portal on a tiny island nearby that goes directly into Northkeep. The Constable is sending some adventurers to this island and we want you to go with them. SEER says that you can be relied upon to utterly destroy any threats to local peace and security. Meet Captain Mariam Wrathborne at the Elmwood docks. Her ship, the Wave Queen, has been discretely hired to take you to the island to open the portal.

Your targets are:

**Nesbit Gath**, gnome transmutation wizard, **Constance Trentham**, half elven dilettante, **Patrin**, Dragonborn paladin

Good hunting,

*Norin Steelstrike*  
Shield Trading Company

## 2G Asked to Help: Zhentarim

---

(For characters that have not played other Baldman Games Elmwood adventures and who are members of the Zhentarim.)

Look, I know you're busy, but we have bigger problems. Most of the mortgages in Elmwood are held by Semyon and Daughters bank, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Black Network. We have a large financial investment here and we need help. YOUR help, in specific.

There have been a few crazed adventurers raiding up and down the coast. I would have been ruined if they'd made it to Elmwood! Fortunately, some do-gooders stopped them. There are three of these nutjobs left. Apparently, they went to the sunken city of Northkeep to find a lich there and get friendly with it. On the one hand, ew. On the other hand, a network of liches – that isn't OUR network of liches – is a threat to us. So, go to Northkeep and kill 'em all.

There's an energy barrier around Northkeep. Totally impenetrable. However, a little gold in the right places, and I've found out the Constable of Elmwood's hired thugs found a way in. A little more gold in the right places, and I've gotten you in on the expedition to Northkeep. I'm sure the people the Constable hired are in this to smite evil, yadda yadda, you know how it goes. Go with them and make sure that none of these whacko adventurers or this lich is around to threaten our sovereignty in the area. Here's the hit list:

**Nesbit Gath**, gnome transmutation wizard, **Constance Trentham**, half elven dilettante. **Patrin**, Dragonborn paladin, **Akempus**, lich of Northkeep (ha ha, good luck!)

Meet Captain Mariam Wrathborne at the Elmwood docks. Her ship, the Wave Queen, will take you to the island to open the portal into Northkeep.

*Fiorei Semyon*  
Semyon and Daughters Bank

## 2H Dossier from Aliana Mathnir

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The Bell in the Deep (sometimes called the Bell in the Depths) is one of the great mysterious sites in the Moonsea area. It related to legendary Northkeep, an island kingdom that was the first human citadel on the Moonsea. Northkeep was a great and magical city, and it was while under the protection of those magics that humanity began to press back the orc hordes and take command of the sea.

The power of Northkeep made it an obvious target for orcs, giants, and other evil races. However, these creatures were not inclined toward sea action, until the day when (according to legend) 40,000 inhuman mages, shamans, witch doctors, and priests of all foul races gathered on the northern shore of the Moonsea, and began to chant, bringing the vengeance of their gods down upon the human interlopers. Their gods (at least some of them) came and destroyed their priests for disturbing them, but they also sank Northkeep beneath the waves.

The upper reaches of Northkeep — its slender, now-broken spires — can be seen beneath the water by boats that sailed nearby. This is not attempted often, as the region is said to be haunted by the original defenders of Northkeep, seeking company in their watch over the Cold Lands.

Sailors claim that on foggy nights the ghostly bells of Northkeep can be heard as far away as Hillsfar.

The legends say that Akempus was once a citizen of Northkeep. Akempus betrayed Northkeep to its enemies in return for the title and privileges of overlord of the city. However, Akempus's allies double-crossed him, destroying the city instead of merely conquering it, though they kept the letter of their word to Akempus. They left him the undisputed master of the city... though it became entombed deep below the ground. Akempus purportedly survived by becoming a lich (a plan he already had set into motion before the city's fall). However, he is cursed to remain within the Bell in the Deep, unable to leave the site of his betrayal.

In order to enter the portal to Northkeep, go to the far south side of Yarralumla island, and ring the bell of the Eye of Akempus. Leave the bell on the Wave Queen and have the crew ring the bell – it's too bulky to cart around easily. The sound of the bell will open the portal through the energy barrier that is surrounding Northkeep. We've consulted a few sages and they indicate that once you get into Northkeep, getting out should be as easy as turning around and walking the other way. After all the portal was designed to keep things out – not keep things in. The Wave Queen will wait on you for four days. I'll send someone out every few days after that to look for you.

## Handout 3. Inscription and Broken Holy Symbols

### ON THE SUBJECT OF FAITH

I HOPE THAT THESE MEDITATIONS BRING YOU **PEACE**.

LET NOT THE **TYRANNY** OF YOUR THOUGHTS UNSETTLE YOU.

THERE IS NO **TRICKERY** EXCEPT WHAT YOU MAKE IN YOUR OWN MIND.

IT IS A TRUE **CRAFT** TO BE ABLE TO SEE THROUGH THE MISTS.

ONLY THOSE WHO **SUFFER** WILL REACH THE OTHER SIDE.

NOW IS THE **WINTER** OF YOUR SOUL'S DISCONTENT.

THE **KNOWLEDGE** THAT YOU HAVE GAINED MAY SUSTAIN YOU.

IT IS IN THE **NATURE** OF ALL BEINGS TO SEEK THEIR TRUE SELF.

NOW, WITH ORDER ESTABLISHED, LOOK NOT TO WHAT YOU HAVE FOUND.

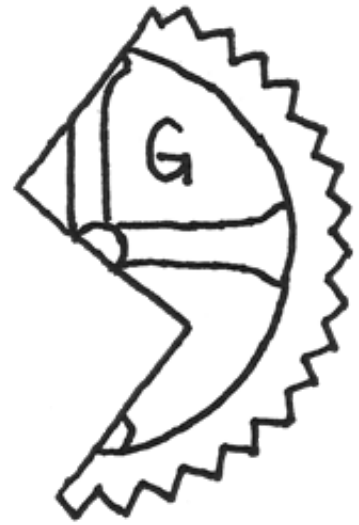
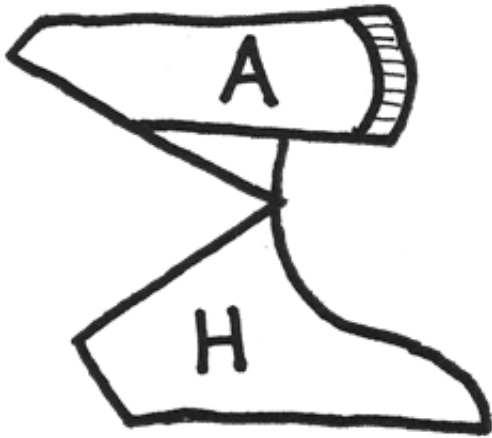
INSTEAD, USE ONLY WHAT YOU HAVE NOT FOUND.

THUS DO YOU SEE THE REALITY OF YOUR CURRENT LOWLY STATION.

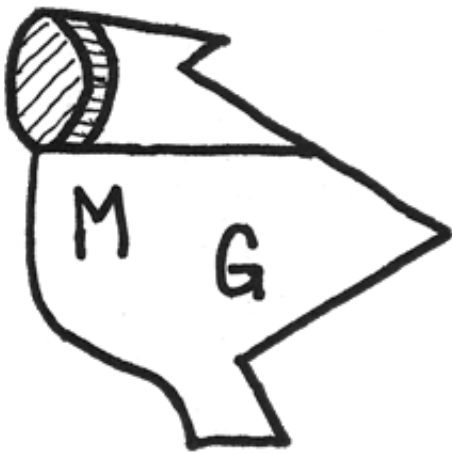
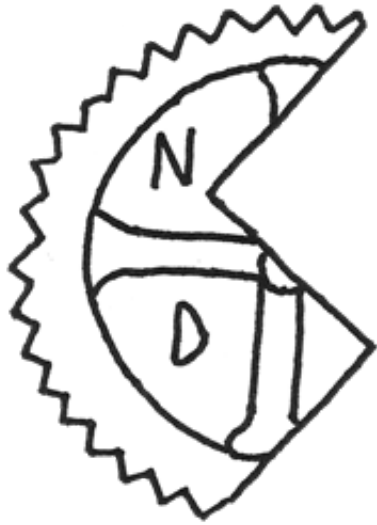
TO REVERSE YOUR FATE, UPEND THE THIRD OF YOUR NEW EIGHT,  
SPLITTING IT IN HALF AS YOU TURN IT OVER.

CAST ASIDE ONE OF THE TWO HALVES

AND SING TO THE HEAVENS WHAT YOU HAVE THUS RESTORED.







## Handout 4. Treasure

### Elven Chain

*Armor (chain shirt), rare*

This weird silvery-purple chain shirt is as thin and light as a linen shirt. It has a muted wave symbol of Istishia, the neutral god known as the Water Lord, patterned into the links. This must have once belonged to a sea elf.

You gain a +1 bonus to AC while you wear this armor. You are considered proficient with this armor even if you lack proficiency with medium armor. This item is detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 168.

### Spell Scroll of Reincarnate

*Scroll, rare*

This scroll contains the spell *Reincarnate*. This item is detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 200 and the *Player's Handbook* page 271.

### Potion of Psychic Resistance

*Potion, uncommon*

When you drink this potion, you gain resistance to psychic damage for 1 hour. It tastes entirely too much like a mind flayer smells. This item can be found detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 188.

### Potion of Growth

*Potion, uncommon*

When you drink this potion, you gain the "enlarge" effect of the enlarge/reduce spell for 1d4 hours (no concentration required). The red in the potion's liquid continuously expands from a tiny bead to color the clear liquid around it and then contracts. Shaking the bottle fails to interrupt this process. This item can be found in Handout 6 and is detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 187 and the *Player's Handbook* page 237

## Handout 5. Story Award

During the course of this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award. If you are printing these out for your characters, print as many as you may need to ensure that any eligible character receives a copy:

### The good news is...

---

... that you're not still dead. Constable Mathnir had to send a rescue team to Northkeep to recover your brainless body and have the chief cleric of the Temple of Bane in Elmwood cast Resurrection. The cost for the process is 50 downtime days and 3,500 gold. If you do not have 3,500 gold, the Temple of Bane takes whatever gold you have. Not your finest hour

# Appendix

## Elmwood at a Glance

DMs can use this information as needed to help flesh out encounters in Elmwood proper.

**Population.** Approximately 1,500 and growing.

**Races.** Humans are the most numerous demographic (50%). Elves (15%) and half-elves (25%) are the most common nonhumans.

**Alignment.** Elmwood tends toward lawful (as influenced by Mulmaster) and towards neutral.

	LAW	NEUTRAL	CHAOS
GOOD	8%	31%	8%
NEUTRAL	18%	18%	0%
EVIL	10%	7%	0%

**History of Elmwood** - Elmwood is an old town which was founded 1,300 years ago. It has no valuable natural resources worth stealing (like gems or precious metals). The long history of the town is both peaceful and boring. They have been exporting fish and fine elm wood to Mulmaster for centuries. As Mulmaster grew in size and might, Elmwood became a vassal of the “City of Danger”. The nobility of Mulmaster (particularly the Culkin family) bought some of the land and began to manage it directly. About two years ago. The Cult of the Eternal Flame accidentally detonated a devastation orb in Elmwood. When the orb detonated, it created a 1-mile-wide area of intense, extreme dry heat for a full day. Wildfires started within the first hour. Anyone who didn’t flee was caught in the fires. For the next hellish day, people tried to save what they could from the burning. Most of the population was killed, and the vegetation and buildings were burned.

**Elmwood Today** - In the wake of “The Burning,” Elmwood was destroyed, but the survivors decided to rebuild. Since then, houses and inns and industries have been rebuilt, and the land cleared by the Burning has been turned into a patchwork of farms. The area is alive with the sound of hammering all day as new buildings are built.

The various disasters happening around the Moonsea in Phlan, Hillsfar, Mulmaster, and the Underdark have led to a refugee crisis in the area – but Elmwood needs people! The unstated policy is that anyone is welcome, as long as they are willing to keep the peace and work the land.

**Culture** - Crime is relatively rare, due, to the Order of the Gauntlet and the Lords’ Alliance lending their influence and manpower to peacekeeping in Elmwood. There is also a strong social pressure for everyone to do their part for the common good because the memories of the Burning are still fresh.

There is friction between the survivors and the refugees. The survivors are having to process their whole social order changing. While the survivors are sometimes not good hosts, the refugees are sometimes not good guests.

**Climate** - Like the rest of the Moonsea region, Elmwood is quite cool (consider the climate to be similar to Montreal, Canada). Elmwood is cool in the summer (highs about 70°F, 20°C) and cold in the winter (highs around 20°F, -6°C).

**Economy** - Elmwood exports timber and fish and there is a small merchant fleet that calls Elmwood home. While Elmwood now produces some crops, meat, and dairy, they still must import food until agricultural production becomes self-sustaining. Goats and sheep do well in Elmwood, as they are small enough to be herded into barns during the long cold winter. Industry in Elmwood is starting to grow given the need to rebuild. Any complex specialty items must be purchased in Mulmaster.

**Government** - Elmwood has never been big enough to have much of a formal system of government. In the past, a constable was chosen by popular assent. Given that the rebuilding is a much larger effort, Elmwood has expanded its government services. The constable has appointed six deputies. These officials can arrest lawbreakers, as well as assemble and lead a militia.

### Organizations

**Refugee Groups** - There are semi-organized groups of Phlan, Hillsfar, and Drow refugees.

**Survivors** - The Elmwood survivors tend to stick together.

**Elmwood Council** - The Council meets every week or so. The Elmwood council consists of: Aliana Mathnir (Constable), Alksuth Cork (Head of Sailfollowers), Aranda Fletcher (Head of Greenstriders), Drake Holmstrumph (Leader of the Survivors), Kala Namak (Deputy, Leader of Hillsfar Refugees), Larissa Aerasumé (Priestess of Selûne), Nils Sankt (Priest of Bane), Shayad (Priestess of Chauntea), Thyra Stoneshoulders (Leader of Phlan Refugees), and Yao Seiju (Head of the Shield Trading Company).

**Greenstriders** - The Greenstriders are a semi-official professional organization of foresters and scouts that cooperate with each other to bring in timber.

**Sailfollowers** - The Sailfollowers are a tightly organized group of shipping captains, fishers and sailors. They bargain as a group to make sure shipping deals are handled fairly and to prevent arguments over fishing grounds.

**Semyon and Daughters Bank** - This bank has underwritten most of the loans in Elmwood, so it's in their best interest to see that the town is protected, well managed, and prosperous so people can pay back those loans.

**Shield Trading Company** - This is a small merchant house that has opened up a warehouse, an inn, and a trade office in Elmwood to capitalize on trade in the area.

## The Factions

**The Harpers** - want to make sure the refugees are not abused and are not cultists of the dragon or elemental evil, or mad. The contact for the Harpers is Ragnir Nejit, the innkeep of the Silvery Gem.

**The Order of the Gauntlet** - has two major goals. The first is to check the influence of the Church of Bane and to promote justice and peace in Elmwood during the rebuilding. The faction contact for the Order of the Gauntlet is Granthar Copperhelm who runs the local shrine to Tempus.

**The Emerald Enclave** - is making sure that the farms are set up appropriately, and that people aren't taking too much timber from the forest for rebuilding. Rogon Stragoth is the official faction contact. The druids circle in the Grove of Eldath is very friendly with the Emerald Enclave.

**The Lords' Alliance** - want to boost trade and security so that the area is peaceful and prosperous. Norin Steelstrike is the faction contact for the Lords' Alliance. She works at the Shield Trading Company.

**The Zhentarim** - are making money and gaining influence over important people in the area. The banker from Semyon and Daughters - Fiorei Semyon - is the faction contact for the Zhentarim.

## Important Locations

**Elmwood Hall** - is a new, sturdy two-story building made out of elmwood. The downstairs hosts the offices for the city officials. The upstairs is the Constable's office and home.

**The Grove of Eldath** - was a shelter during the Burning, and the survivors are grateful to the druids there. The grove itself was mostly burned to the ground, except for thirteen giant elm trees.

**Karsure's Axelworks and Smithy** - produces fine elmwood: wagons, carriages, wheels, and various metalwork (but not weapons). The smith can silver weapons for normal costs.

**The Last Book Boardinghouse** (poor 2 sp/day) - is a ramshackle mansion that was not burned entirely to the ground, and has been partially repaired. The rooms are very basic, but they're clean. The boardinghouse does not serve food.

**Moline's Sundries and Equipment** - sells adventuring gear, weapons and armor in the Players Handbook worth less than 100 GP. A variety of goods is displayed through the front windows.

**Oghma's Ointments and Unguents** - is run by the only apothecary in town. It sells alchemist's supplies and other reasonable alchemy and herbalism items.

**The Phoenix House** (wealthy 4 gp/day) - is a large public house and inn that is elaborately and expensively furnished. It caters to adventurers. There are a few conference rooms as well as a well-stocked wine cellar and extensive hot baths.

**The Phoenix Monument** - is a memorial marker for all of the people who died in the Burning. It is a large fountain with a golden phoenix rising from ashes lit by continual flame spells.

**The Refugee Barracks** (squalid, 1 sp/day) - is where refugees can live for free. The cost is paid by taxes on the other citizens of Elmwood.

**The Shield Trading Company** - is a trading house along the docks.

**The Shrine to Tempus** - is a small military field camp and open pavilion.

**The Sign of the Shield** (aristocratic, 10 gp/day) - is the finest inn in Elmwood. It is owned by Shield Trading Company and is mainly used for their business.

**The Silvery Gem Inn** (modest 1 gp/day) - is comfortable, friendly, and has really delicious cabbage soup. It is the official central meeting place for the Phlan refugees.

**Stone's Dwarf Inn** (comfortable 2 gp/day) - is a whimsical inn run by a gnome illusionist. Children go to school there in the mornings. There is a very lifelike stone dwarf in the front yard.

**The Temple of Chauntea** "The Bounty of the Goddess" - contains a large structure and elaborate gardens. Many farmers and ranchers are adherents of Chauntea.

**The Temple of Selûne** "The Path of Silver Light" - is the center of faith in Elmwood, and the oldest religious faith in town. The prior temple was destroyed in the burning, and rebuilt with help from the elves. Many survivors and elves pay their respects here.

**The Temple of Bane** “The Black Lord’s Fist” - is newly built by philanthropists from Mulmaster. Given that this is the official faith of Mulmaster, the Temple is very important in Elmwood.

**The Wayfarer’s Rest Tavern** (modest 1 gp/day) - is a modestly priced inn that caters to the docks area in specific. Ship captains and officers stay here.

## Elmwood Council

**Aliana Mathnir, Constable** – LN female human Veteran. Brown hair, blue eyes, brown skin. Aliana is more interested in the greater good than in penalizing every small infraction. She likes to keep a neat and efficiently running town. She is friendly and honest. Likely at Elmwood Hall.

**Alksuth Cork, Head of Sailfollowers** – CG male human Bandit Captain. Bald head, gray eyes, brown skin. Alksuth has a sharp wit and a booming voice. He’s gregarious, if somewhat ill-tempered. He likes to ask a lot of questions and see what makes people tick. Likely at the docks.

**Aranda Fletcher, Head of the Greenstriders** – NG female half elf Scout. Blond hair, brown eyes, golden skin. Aranda looks out for others but only if they are willing to help themselves. Likely at Wayfarer’s Rest Inn.

**Drake Holmstrumph, Leader of the Survivors** – NE male human Guard. Gray hair, dark eyes, brown skin. Drake is suspicious of anyone who’s not a survivor of the Burning, and comes off as rather cold until you get to know him. Likely at the docks.

**Kala Namak, Deputy, Leader of Hillsfar Refugees** – LE female dragonborn Knight. Purple eyes, black scales. She is patient, thoughtful, and cunning. She uses her reputation and position as a shield and is more likely to threaten her way into finding what she wants/needs. Likely at Elmwood Hall.

**Larissa Aerasumé, Cleric of Selûne** – NG female half elf Cleric 9. Black hair, blue eyes, black skin. Larissa is a calm and thoughtful woman. She has a penchant for seeing all parts of life, the good and the bad, as part of Selûne’s divine plan. Likely at The Path of Silver Light temple to Selûne.

**Nils Sankt, Cleric of Bane** – LE male human Cleric 9. Bald head, blue eyes, white skin. Nils is quite cranky about being old. He remembers better days and likes to tell people about how it used to be. He will argue about almost anything. Likely at The Black Lord’s Fist temple to Bane.

**Shayad, Cleric of Chauntea** – NG female half orc Cleric -9. Brown hair, green eyes, gray skin. Shayad is calm and peaceful woman. She reacts poorly to those who make comments disrespectful of her heritage. She is a pacifist at heart and will

try to dissuade others from violence if possible. Likely at The Bounty of the Goddess temple to Chauntea.

**Thyra Stoneshoulders, Leader of Phlan Refugees** – LN female dwarf Guard. Red hair, brown eyes, rosy skin. Thyra is professional and warm as a barkeep, and enjoys getting drawn into philosophical conversations. Likely at the Silvery Gem Inn.

**Yao Seiju, Local Leader of the Shield Trading Company** – LE male half elf Noble. Black hair, brown eyes, golden skin. Yao Seiju is a calculating man that likes to live the luxurious life. He is willing to make a deal on most anything as long as he can get the better end of it. Likely at the Shield Trading Company.

## Faction Contacts

**Ragnir Nejit, Harpers** – NG male dragonborn Knight. White eyes and white scales. He is extremely secretive and serious about Harper business. He owes his life to the Harpers for rescuing him from the Hillsfar arena. Ragnir is a no nonsense kind of guy. He knows the lay of the land and so he expects to get what he deserves. He doesn’t want to see anyone hurt, but a little cut or bruise is just a learning experience. Likely at the Silvery Gem Inn.

**Granthar Copperhelm, Priestess of Tempus, Order of the Gauntlet** – N female dwarf Priest. Black hair, brown eyes, brown skin. She’s a gruff soldier, formerly from Phlan, but has taken well to being a leader and protector in Elmwood. Likely at the Shrine to Tempus.

**Rogon Stragoth, Emerald Enclave** – N male half orc Scout. Brown hair, brown eyes, gray skin. He works closely with Shevarra Dyernina and the other druids in Eldath’s grove as well. Rogon is very secretive with his association with the Emerald Enclave. Rogon does not put up with racial hatred – he got enough of that in Hillsfar to last him his whole life. Likely at his ranch or out in the forest.

**Norin Steelstrike, Lord’s Alliance** – LN female dwarf Spy. Brown hair, black eyes, copper skin. She keeps this work completely separate from the Shield Trading Company and takes her responsibilities deadly seriously. Norin is inquisitive and asks questions whenever she thinks it is appropriate. Likely at the Shield Trading Company.

**Fiorei Semyon, Zhentarim** – LE female human Noble. Black hair, dark eyes, mahogany skin. The rest of Semyon and Daughters doesn’t know that she’s in bed with the Black Network, so she’s extremely circumspect with her dealings for faction business. Fiorei thinks before she speaks, and has a “can do” attitude. Of course, she always makes sure that the things that get done benefit Semyon and Daughters. Likely at the Sign of the Shield.