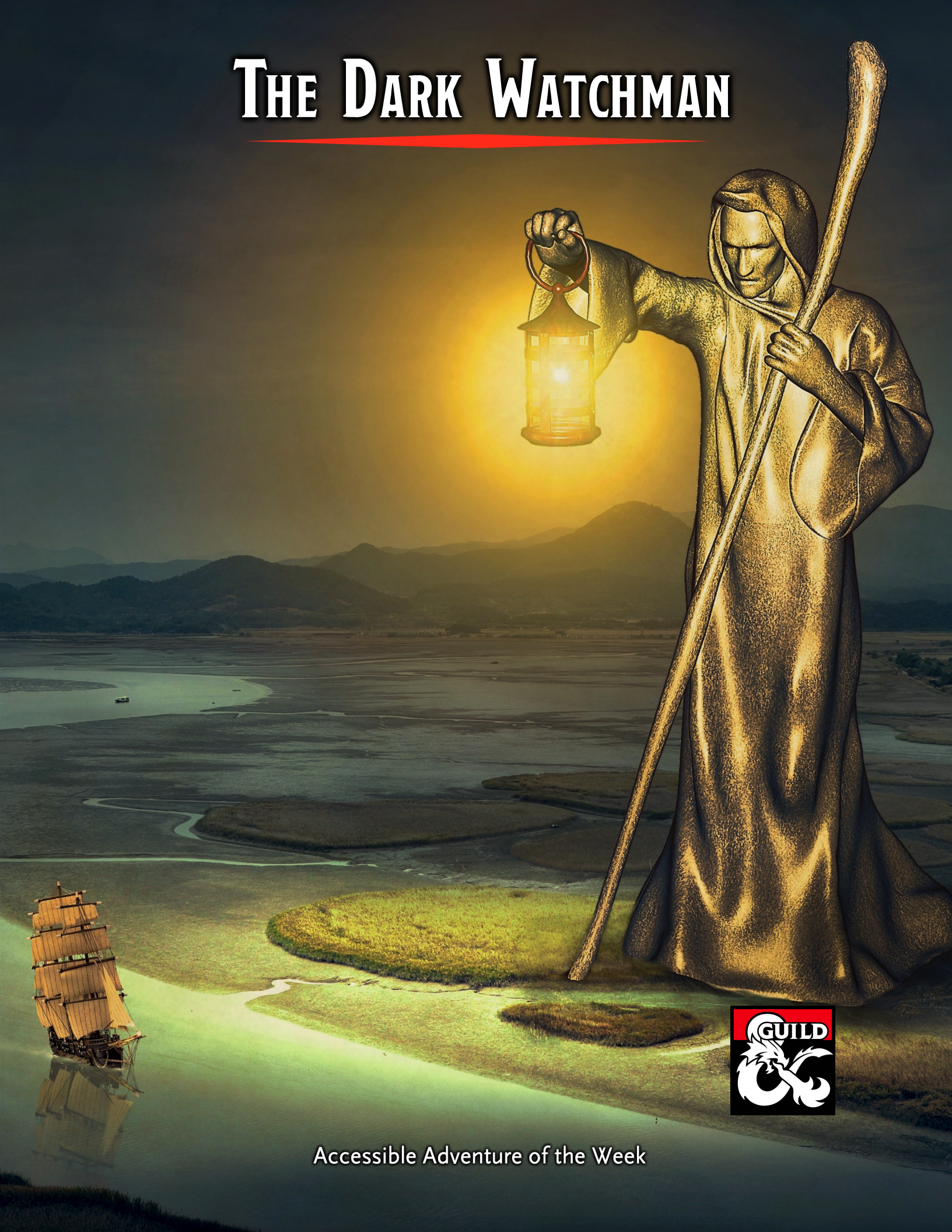


THE DARK WATCHMAN



Accessible Adventure of the Week

MAKE LIVES BETTER THROUGH D&D

This adventure is one piece of a movement within the D&D community to invite, encourage, and include those who have not been, both in the RPG community and nearly everywhere in real life. Wyrmsworks Publishing is dedicated to using RPGs to help *you* make lives better, to provide tools, training, and a community to this end. We believe that this will extend far beyond the ever-growing RPG community as more and more people learn, grow, and give and receive acceptance. If you want to help make that happen, we invite you to support the Wyrmsworks Publishing Patreon at <https://patreon.com/wyrmsworkspublishing> and enjoy the additional benefits we offer to our patrons. All of our Wyrmling-level patrons (\$9/month) get free access to our entire library, and we have other levels to get live access to our works in progress. 4K Combat Maps for this and other Adventures of the Week are available free to all patrons or [for purchase from our map store](#).

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[Wyrmsworkspublishing.com](https://wyrmsworkspublishing.com) is the first place to get notified when our compendium of comprehensive game mechanics for including characters with disabilities, mental illness, and neurodivergence in fifth edition goes live on Kickstarter.

A NOTE ON ACCESSIBILITY

These adventures are designed to explore disability concepts, so some may be surprised that this adventure uses a ladder instead of a ramp. This choice was made to highlight Wynford's capability as an archer with the effect of the giant spider dropping. The Dungeon Master is welcome to modify that narrative for characters or player sensibilities that prefer a ramp spiraling through the Watchman. We have included ramp-based alternative maps in our [battle map collection](#).

CONTENT TRIGGER WARNINGS

This adventure includes topics of violence, death, and spiders.

THE DARKNESS HAS COME

As the river carves its way through the marsh, the Watchman, a 500 foot tall lighthouse overlooks the passing ships, lighting their way and alerting them to dangers that would lurk in the shadows. But what happens when the shadows extinguish the light, and what purpose do they have?

This adventure is designed for a party of characters around the third through fifth level with a combined total of about 20 levels.

BACKGROUND & SYNOPSIS

The Watchman is a lighthouse overlooking a canal that's a major commercial thoroughfare. The lighthouse allows for safe travel at night by allowing sailors to see other ships in the canal and any danger coming from the land. The light in the Watchman was lit by a trapped fire elemental, but the light recently went out.

The light was extinguished by a darkling raiding party who released the elemental, which fell into the water and was carried by the current downstream until presumably extinguished. The darklings plan to hijack a merchant ship containing artwork.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

SHADOW MASTIFF

Medium monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks while in dim light or darkness

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Ethereal Awareness. The shadow mastiff can see ethereal creatures and objects.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The shadow mastiff has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Shadow Blend. While in dim light or darkness, the shadow mastiff can use a bonus action to become invisible, along with anything it is wearing or carrying. The invisibility lasts until the shadow mastiff uses a bonus action to end it or until the shadow mastiff attacks, is in bright light, or is incapacitated.

Sunlight Weakness. While in bright light created by sunlight, the shadow mastiff has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.



WYNFORD TEAGUE

Medium humanoid (human), lawful good

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 30 ft.

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

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

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

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

Stiff Neck and Back (Severity Degree 3). Your neck and back muscles are stiff, resulting in pain when moved sharply or quickly. Whenever anything jarring happens to your body (e.g. attempting a Strength or Dexterity check or saving throw, taking damage), you need to succeed on a DC 8 + (Severity Degree) × 2 Constitution saving throw. Failure results in taking 1 level of exhaustion until you take a short rest. This stiffness limits your head and neck movement, so you have –1 per Severity Degree penalty on all Wisdom (Perception) checks involving vision against Dexterity (Stealth).

Actions

Multiattack. Wynford makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

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

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



GIANT WOLF SPIDER

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +7

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Spider Climb. The spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the spider knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Bite. Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.



FIRE ELEMENTAL

Large elemental, neutral

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 102 (12d10 + 36)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities fire, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Ignan

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Fire Form. The elemental can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing. A creature that touches the elemental or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 5 (1d10) fire damage. In addition, the elemental can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. The first time it enters a creature's space on a turn, that creature takes 5 (1d10) fire damage and catches fire; until someone takes an action to douse the fire, the creature takes 5 (1d10) fire damage at the start of each of its turns.

Illumination. The elemental sheds bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light in an additional 30 feet.

Water Susceptibility. For every 5 feet the elemental moves in water, or for every gallon of water splashed on it, it takes 1 cold damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The elemental makes two touch attacks.

Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) fire damage. If the target is a creature or a flammable object, it ignites. Until a creature takes an action to douse the fire, the target takes 5 (1d10) fire damage at the start of each of its turns.

DARKLING

Small fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 13 (3d6 + 3)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Acrobatics +5, Deception +2, Perception +5, Stealth +7

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Death Flash. When the darkling dies, nonmagical light flashes out from it in a 10-foot radius as its body and possessions, other than metal or magic objects, burn to ash. Any creature in that area and able to see the bright light must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of the creature's next turn.

Light Sensitivity. While in bright light, the darkling has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage. If the darkling has advantage on the attack roll, the attack deals an extra 7 (2d6) piercing damage.

DARKLING ELDER

Medium fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (studded leather armor)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)

Skills Acrobatics +5, Deception +3, Perception +6, Stealth +7

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Death Burn. When the darkling elder dies, magical light flashes out from it in a 10-foot radius as its body and possessions, other than metal or magic objects, burn to ash. Any creature in that area must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 7 (2d6) radiant damage and, if the creature can see the light, is blinded until the end of its next turn. If the saving throw is successful, the creature takes half the damage and isn't blinded.

Actions

Multiattack. The darkling elder makes two melee attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage. If the darkling elder had advantage on the attack roll, the attack deals as: extra 10 (3d6) piercing damage.

Darkness (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The darkling elder casts *darkness* without any components. Wisdom is its spellcasting ability.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The characters get drawn into this adventure as they cross the marsh by the attack of the shadow mastiffs.

WHERE ARE WE?

This adventure can be tucked into any existing campaign as a side-quest or one-shot. It takes place in a swamp or marsh with a river used for trade.

In *The Forgotten Realms*, this fits well in Lizard Marsh, south of Waterdeep, or the Marsh of Chelimber on the eastern side of The High Moor. In *Eberron*, the Watchman may stand over the Shadow Marches along the Glum River.

SHADOW PACK

As the party crosses the marsh, a pack of 4 **shadow mastiffs** attacks.

As you cross the marsh, you see a huge figure up ahead. Initially, it looked like a giant, but it's not moving, yet the shape of what must be a 500 foot tower looks almost humanoid. As you ponder this shadowy figure, the shadows around you seem to move on their own and let loose a baleful howl. The next moment, the shadows leap at you, snarling.

As the characters battle the shadow mastiffs, a humanoid figure approaches from the direction of the tower. He reaches a distance of 150 feet from the fray at the third round and fires an arrow at the nearest shadow mastiff, offering continuing assistance until the mastiffs no longer pose a threat.

WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMAN?

Once the battle ends, the archer, Wynford Teague, introduces himself to the party and invites them back to the Watchman for a rest.

As you near the massive stone tower, which appears to be a statue of a hooded person holding a walking staff and a lantern, standing impossibly tall on such soft ground, you smell, over the mold and mud of the marsh, something like baking bread. Wynford invites you in, and as soon as the wooden door opens, the smell of baking barley bread wafts out. "Right, then," he says, "Not much for furniture 'ere, but the floor's dry, anyway."



The 200 foot diameter round stone room with a twenty-five foot ceiling consists of a straw sleeping mat that's inclined on a wooden frame, a wooden table with two wooden chairs that don't quite sit level, a stone hearth, a few wooden cabinets, and two bookshelves. The bookshelves are full of neatly arranged books on the top shelves, and the bottom shelves are mostly empty with a few books strewn haphazardly on them. The books cover a range of topics on local history, geography, and legends. Opposite the hearth, a rusty iron ladder leads through a hole in the ceiling. Wynford's bow and quiver lean against the wall by the hearth.

Wynford had just finished cooking a loaf of barley bread, which is still slightly warm. He shares it as he throws some turnips, leeks, and parsnips into a kettle to make soup, which he will serve from wooden bowls when it finishes cooking. The party may notice that he always keeps his back straight, has trouble bending over, and when he turns to look at someone, he turns his whole body, not just his neck.

If asked about himself, he tells the party that he's the lighthouse caretaker. "They just keep me 'ere t' clean up cobwebs an' swat spiders, but the ship traffic passes th' day, an' nary a cap'n passes without a moment o' convers'n."

As the party eats and tends to any necessary wounds, Wynford suddenly grabs his bow, and in one fluid movement, fires a shot at the top of the ladder. A **giant wolf spider** about the same size as the dogs they were fighting. It falls to the ground, dead. He winces in pain and starts shuffling over to the sleeping mat. "Yup, swatt'n spiders. Looks like meat's on the menu for breakfast. Been more o' that since the light went out. I c'n 'ear the skitters. Gonna need t'rest the back now though." He slowly lowers himself onto the mat, wincing again and again, and breathing a sigh of relief once he settles in.



If asked about the light, Wynford explains that the lantern was brightly lit by a trapped fire elemental until just a few days ago. "I'd climb up'n check it, but with them creepers up there, I want to see where I'm goin', an' m'neck don' go up."

If asked about his neck and back, he says, "I just woke up with it sore one day. Don' know why, but 'ere we are, 'n I get along jus' fine mos' the time. You mind grabbin' m'bow & quiver t'me in case we get more fuzzy guests?"

THE NIGHT WATCH

Whoever in the party has the highest passive (Wisdom) Perception hears voices coming from the hole. If asked about them, Wynford says, "Y'know, I thought I 'eard somep'n last night, but I fig'd I dreamt it. I don't recall spiders chatterin' like 'at. Mus' be some'n up there. Maybe they have somep'n t'do wit' d'light goin' out. I don't suppose you'd be interested in a little recon? I'd put in a good word wit' the magistrate for yeh."

The Watchman consists of twenty stories, each twenty-five feet, connected by iron ladders mounted to the wall. Most of the levels are empty except for large spider webs and an occasional rusty bucket, rotted mop or broom, broken oil flasks, and moldy rags. The party encounters another giant wolf spider on the seventh, ninth, and fourteenth floors. The spiders have webs attached to the ladders and will sense the party's approach. They will attack each member of the party as they come up through the hole.

The 15th story has a long hallway (the arm of the Watchman) that slopes upward, where 4 **darklings** and 1 **darkling elder** lie in wait, ready to ambush the party as they come up.



If the party manages to communicate with the darklings, a successful Charisma (Intimidation) check will reveal that the darklings released the elemental, causing it to fall into the river below, and the current washed it away. "Nothing like a little water to knock out that scintilla!" Whenever the darklings speak, as lovers of all things beautiful, they describe everything with vivid sensory descriptions.

The darklings had planned to wreck a ship in the darkness, specifically the Fiscard, which is due to come through tomorrow night, filled with works of art.

The darklings have 13 gp among them in pouches if searched.

LIGHT THE WAY

Once the darklings are defeated, if the party searches the arm, they will discover a brass amulet cemented into the wall at the end of the hallway. A wizard will be able to use it to summon a new fire elemental and bind it to the lantern. Attempts to remove the amulet from the wall will destroy it.

BURNING ANGER

Once the party comes back down, they begin to smell smoke around the fifth floor, which is almost unbreathable by the time they get to the bottom. Wynford is standing in the doorway, bow in hand, and says, “Y’ave m’ gratitude, an’ I wanna ‘ear the tale o’ what ‘app’n’d upward, but looks like the ol’ lan’rn fire came back to roost ‘r somep’n. Y’got anythin’ left t’ put out a fire now’t y’got another lit?”

The **fire elemental** survived the river and has returned to get revenge on anyone and anything around the Watchman. Its fire is burning the wet vegetation of the swamp, causing massive smoke. All characters have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks, and every round, all characters must succeed on a DC 8 Constitution saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion from smoke inhalation. Wynford will lend his aid with his bow as soon as the elemental is in range.

CONCLUSION

Once everything calms down, Wynford will offer to let the party get some rest at the Watchman with the promise of spider stew for brunch.



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Dale Critchley is the owner, lead writer, and chief tea drinker at [Wyrmsworks Publishing](#). He's been playing tabletop role-playing games since 1982 and launched Wyrmsworks Publishing as a hobby in 2001 to share his homebrew resources with the world. In 2021, after seeing the power that a TTRPG group can have to change the lives of the participants for the better, he rededicated Wyrmsworks Publishing to focus on using TTRPGs to intentionally improve the lives of others and turned a hobby into a full time pursuit.

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