
Vol 1
17
ANTI-TYRANNY
ADVENTURES
EAT THE
RICH
GUILD

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Producers' Notes

Not every villain in D&D is a monster. In fact, a lot of monsters are tragically misunderstood (did you read Uncaged? You should read Uncaged.). Just like in a lot of zombie and post-apocalyptic media, the problem was never the monsters. The real problem is other people. The adventures in this anthology address tyrants - people corrupted by power to the point that they hurt and oppress others. Sometimes, your players can choose to side with them: take the money and power and enrich their own lives at the expense of others. Mostly, these 17 adventures are a chance to help the underdogs: to be real heroes, fighting on behalf of people who have no one else to protect them against powers greater than they are. We hope that, whichever side you and your players choose, this book brings you hours of challenges, fun, and excitement. ***--- Cat***

D&D wasn't the first RPG that I played. That honour goes to a PbtA game called Night Witches, about Russian women fighter pilots in WW2. The game has two phases, a combat phase, where you bomb your enemies in outdated planes with railroad spikes, and the day phase where you navigate what it means to be a woman pilot in Stalinist Russian during the war. That game set the tone for the entire way that I have approached role playing games.

Marginalized folks often use RPGs as a way to create the world as they wish it was. Because the world? It's crap right now. It's literally burning. People's rights are being stripped away. Millennials face job insecurity and the looming reality that we will likely never be able to retire.

A year ago, I met a fellow crusty old punk and we asked "what would happen if we got a bunch of people together to imagine a world that wasn't crap?" Well dear reader, this is what happened. Over 100 people came together to create this book. Everyone has a unique perspective, a different idea about how they want the world to look, but we all agree: it starts with eating the rich.

--- Alicia

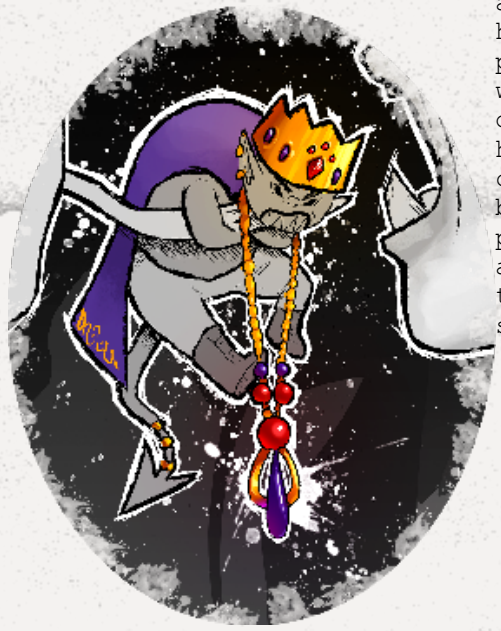


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How To Use This Book

You can run most of the adventures in this book using only the Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, and Dungeon Master's Guide. Some creatures or items are from Xanathar's Guide to Everything, Volo's Guide to Monsters, or Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes. This is denoted as XGtE, VGtM, and MToF, respectively. If no source is provided, the relevant game statistics are in the Player's Handbook or Monster Manual.

New creatures, items, and maps are provided at the end of each adventure.

For adventures set in Eberron or Ravnica, we recommend getting your hands on Eberron: Rising from the Last War or The Guildmaster's Guide to Ravnica, but they're not essential if you have a working knowledge of those settings.

Now go forth and dine on the unnecessarily affluent.

Determining Party Strength

Some adventures offer ways to adjust encounter for weaker/stronger parties. D&D Adventurers' League offers a formula for figuring out whether/how to adjust:

Add up the total levels of all the characters and divide by the number of characters. This is the group's average party level (APL). Party strength is as follows:

3-4 characters, APL less than adventure	Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equal to adventure	Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than adventure	Average
5 characters, APL less than adventure	Weak
5 characters, APL equal to adventure	Average
5 characters, APL greater than adventure	Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than adventure	Average
6-7 characters, APL equal to adventure	Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than adventure	Very strong

These adventures contain READ OUT TEXT (in blue boxes) and SIDEBARS (green boxes), for the DM's info only


TIER 1


Liz Gist

Before We're Bled Dry

Level 1| Setting Neutral

Lena Meier

Lena, usually known online as Saika, is a first-time TTRPG writer (though not at all new to writing as a whole) from Germany with an intense love for literature, whimsy, cosplay and bad puns. When she isn't thinking of ways to give the rich what they deserve, she's playing one TTRPG or another, writing a story, or rambling about literature, video games and weird ideas on Twitter.

Follow her @yakyuu_yarou for a lot of words and the occasional dog picture.

Brightcove, the village where the adventurers grew up, has been exploited by its ruling noble family for as long as anyone can remember. Each year, their demands become more outrageous and harder to meet. The people have had enough. The party decides to take back the resources the nobles have been hoarding.

This setting-neutral adventure is optimised for four 1st-level characters.

Adventure Background

The small village of Brightcove is located on the foot of a high mountain that casts its shadow over the village, so natural resources, specifically for agricultural opportunity, are rare. For as long as anyone in Brightcove can remember, the village has been governed by the Gutliss noble family. They are the only ones who know the location of the *Greenstone*, the source of the magic that is vital to Brightcove's survival. Without the *Greenstone's* nourishing magic, harvests are almost always guaranteed to fail. The Gutliss family are the ones parcelling out this power to the villagers so they can tend the land and secure their livelihood—for a price. They have always demanded a percentage of everyone's harvest as a tax for their portion of the *Greenstone's* magic.

Over time, however, this percentage has grown larger and larger, and the magic the villagers have received in return has come in smaller and smaller rations. Even in small rations, the *Greenstone's* magic fertilises the land, allowing the villagers to farm it and making life in Brightcove possible. By now, the villagers barely have enough on which to survive, and they need to give most of it to the Gutlisses to pay for next year's magic ration. Now, the village's finest (or most readily available) have had enough

and formed a raiding party to retrieve the Greenstone.

Dramatis Personae

Lillybell Sunwing: Brightcove's high elven mayor. They have been re-elected as mayor several times, partly due to their compassionate nature and partly because they tend to be the only one who isn't afraid to stand up to the Gutliss family. The fact that their attempts to negotiate for higher magic rations tend to fail—or end in even smaller rations, when the Gutlisses feel petty—doesn't matter as much as the fact that they *try*. Lillybell is a CG high elf **bard** (VGtM).

Juliana Woodrow: A young human woman, born to Brightcove's resident blacksmith and a cousin of the tavern owner. She began working as a guard for the Gutliss family to make sure her parents would be able to keep their home after a recent particularly poor harvest led to little business for the smithy. She keeps to herself in the village because she knows very few people would agree with her choice of work. Juliana is a CG human **scout**.

Morgan Gutliss: The current head—and only remaining member—of the Gutliss noble family that rules over Brightcove. He is rarely seen in the village, preferring to stay near the *Greenstone* instead. He is charming and intelligent, but a **DC 20 Wisdom (Insight)** check reveals the selfish cruelty underneath his veneer. Morgan claims that the *Greenstone*'s power is limited and thus needs to be rationed. Morgan is a LE high elf **druid**.

Adventure Summary

At the start of the adventure, Brightcove's mayor, Lillybell Sunwing, approaches the party to ask them to retrieve the *Greenstone* on behalf of the village, handing them a map of where they believe it to be kept, or, if the adventurers have already decided to go, just to give them the map. Then the heroes have to make a choice: follow the directions on the map, taking a path that they have been told will have Morgan Gutliss's guards on it, or approach the marked location through the forest itself, where there are less chances of enemy encounters, but more natural obstacles and traps.

The map is not entirely accurate, but after the heroes receive a tip from one of the guards, the party can adjust their course to find Morgan Gutliss hiding with the *Greenstone*. They confront him, and take back the *Greenstone*. If they defeat but do not kill him, they have the chance to gain more information about the *Greenstone's* magical capabilities.

Hooks

This adventure is meant for characters hailing from Brightcove, so the hooks are presented with that in mind.

- A group of characters who have spent all their lives in Brightcove is sick and tired of being exploited—or they are tired of seeing their families and friends suffer. They secretly form a party to search for and retrieve the *Greenstone*.
- The party is the village's best, brightest, and most courageous. They are approached by mayor Lilybelle Sunwing, who sees no other option but to rise up against the Gutlisses.
- Like many, the party left the village at some point to go somewhere with more opportunity. Now, their families and friends have called them back to help.

Part 1: A Plan and a Map

Depending on which hooks are in play, the characters meet up at the village's only tavern, *The Blustering Bunny*, for one of three reasons: to discuss their plan to steal the stone, to talk to the mayor about the plan to steal it, or they happen to be there for drinks. Either way, Brightcove's mayor, Lillybell Sunwing approaches them first.

Roleplaying Lillybell: They are friendly, but clearly used to being heard and listened to by the villagers. They know the party, having seen them grow up or having lived alongside the heroes for a long time, and they act like it. They genuinely care about the characters' wellbeing and health, and are immensely appreciative of their willingness to risk so much for the village. They are wholly against murder, and discourage the party from killing guards they may encounter, or even Morgan Gutliss, unless there is no way to incapacitate him.

After buying the party a round of drinks, Lillybell begins explaining their plan.

A Plan to Steal a Stone

If the adventurers have not yet decided to relieve the Gutlisses of the *Greenstone*, Lillybell asks them to do so on behalf of the village. They cannot promise substantial monetary rewards because the village is so starved and poor, but if a character seems doubtful, they remind them of their family and friends, and how much easier their lives could be with the *Greenstone* readily available to everyone. Once the characters agree, they move on to the next step: the map.

A Map to Find the Stone

If the adventurers have already made plans to steal the *Greenstone*, Lillybell thanks them for their bravery and initiative before revealing that they, along with some of the other villagers, have been making secret plans to get the *Greenstone* back for a while, and that they have managed to draw up a map of the item's most likely location. They admit that the map, which looks a lot like a treasure map, may not be entirely accurate but should still be helpful. They also explain that the path marked on the map is the same one frequented by the Gutlisses' guards, and can also outright suggest that the heroes try to capture one of them to find out how accurate the map is.

Lillybell points out that there is a second path visible on the map that represents a natural trail through the forest, albeit one that the villagers have not used in a very long time and that may hold its own



dangers, but leads to the supposed location of the stone as well.

If the party seems inclined to just abandon either trail and go through the woods at random, Lillybell insistently discourages them from this and explains that the monsters in the dark, deep parts of the forest are far too dangerous for anyone in the village to face, and they stress that the location marked on the map is likely inaccurate.

Once the heroes seem satisfied with the information, Lillybell offers to pay for another round of drinks, and eventually excuse themselves. They offer to help the party out with provisions should they need them, and if there are requests, Lillybell has them delivered to *The Blustering Bunny* free of charge the next morning—within reason. Lillybell's parting advice to the adventurers is for them to not wait too long to go, but to make sure they are well rested.

Part 2: The Path to Tread

Before the heroes set out, they need to make a decision: they can follow the trail drawn into the map by the villagers, where they will likely encounter guards, some of whom they may know. Alternatively they can go along the old, natural forest trail, which they may know fairly well, depending on the characters. A successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Survival)** check confirms that they know their way around the forest surrounding Brightcove. Succeeding with a 17 or more, they also remember a second old trail through the forest that branches off the one visible on the map, and that seemed to lead to a slightly different location than the more well known one. Whichever approach they choose, the next step is setting out.

If the party chooses to follow the villagers' map, continue with Along the Guard Trail.

If the party chooses to go along the old forest trail, continue with Through the Forest.

Through the Forest

The party enters the forest on an old, long-disused trail through the woods, which happens to begin near one of their childhood homes. Read or paraphrase the following to set the scene.

> The woods you've known for years seem strangely imposing and dark, now that you're entering them with the purpose of retrieving the *Greenstone*. The quiet of the evergreen trees that you're so used to has lifted just slightly, as if the trees and creatures of the forest could feel what you intend to do, and approve.
>
> The old trail is as overgrown as it's always been, used only by adventurous children and the occasional forager. As you walk deeper into the thicket, leaves and twigs brush against your arms and legs, and occasionally, when your shoulders jostle a rare flowering plant, a sweet, fresh smell fills the quiet air around you. Ahead of you, the forest seems dark, with the only lighter area being the trail you've decided to follow. Again, you can't shake the feeling that the nature around you approves of your quest.

As long as the heroes stay on the old trail, they can see normally, but should they choose to move off of it, the lighting turns dim. After a short while, they are ambushed by 3 (1d4) previously motionless **twig blights**.

Following this ambush, the old trail crosses a narrow, waist-deep creek. The creek's bed is mainly comprised of loose stones. If the party chooses to wade through the waist-high water, they must succeed on a **DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check or slip and suffer 1d4 bludgeoning damage. If they decide to try to cross the creek by jumping, they must succeed on a **DC 14 Strength (Athletics)** check, or will drop onto the stones in the creek's bed and suffer 1d4 piercing damage.

Soon after this, the second, even older trail splits off from the one the characters know. It is harder to find, but since they know to look for it, and since they have the map with them, the characters can spot it with a **DC 11 Wisdom (Perception)** check. Following this trail is distinctly harder than the one the adventurers have been on so far, so they must make a **DC 12 Wisdom (Survival)** check. If the party fails this check, they temporarily lose the trail and run into 1 **vine blight**.

Shortly after this encounter, the heroes approach the edges of a clearing in the forest that they have never been to or seen before, and there is a sense that they could not have found it, had they not followed this second, secret trail. The party can gauge that the meadow they are at the edge of is large, roughly 100 feet in diameter, and strangely circular, as if it was artificially created. Through a gap in the trees and bushes, the party can see into it.

Continue to Part 3: No Guts, No Glory.

Along the Guard Trail

When you set out on the well-used guards' trail, the tall evergreen trees that make up the woods you know so well sway in the wind, their ever-moving branches painting abstract shadow-patterns onto the earthy path in front of you. The path you've decided to follow winds through the trees, twisting and curving so often it was clearly designed to be confusing to follow, but you have the map Lillybell and the other villagers made with you, so it isn't too hard to stay on the trail. Ahead of you, the forest seems dark, with the only lighter area being the trail you've decided to follow. You can't shake the feeling that the nature around you approves of your quest.

Following the trail through the forest is indeed not very difficult, although the trees seem imposing. Have the character/s walking at the front of the party make a **Wisdom (Perception)** check. On a successful **DC 11 Wisdom (Perception)** check, any hero who succeeds hears someone approaching from a good distance away; someone who is not making any attempts to be quiet. They also notice a large, fallen standing stone that offers a hiding place for the party, should they decide to heed Lillybell's request to not kill any guards.

Whether or not the party chooses to hide, the approaching footsteps belong to Juliana Woodrow. The adventurers recognise her: she is the village blacksmith's daughter, a quiet girl who retreated from the village's social affairs two years ago. If the party chooses to attack her, she fights back, though not very seriously: she recognizes the characters in turn, and does not want to hurt them seriously.

Roleplaying Juliana: Juliana is a nervous girl, not untrained with her weapons, but clearly unused to fighting anything other than wildlife or woodland creatures. She is eager to offer the party the information they need, and supportive of their plan to retrieve the *Greenstone*. It

is very clear that she only took up the job of guarding Morgan Gutliss and the *Greenstone* because she saw no other choice.

If the characters overpower Juliana, she seems relieved, and immediately thanks the heroes for sparing her. She guesses their plan because she has heard rumours of it from her parents, and easily offers them accurate directions to the clearing, pointing out the way on their map. If asked why she is working for Morgan, she explains her reasons (see Dramatis Personae above), and expresses hope that soon choices like hers won't have to be made anymore.

If the heroes kill Juliana or knock her unconscious without waking her up again, they are still be able to find the secret clearing. However, their only help is a small scrap of paper with a vaguely scratched path that they can match to their existing map. A **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation)** check reveals a second path branching off the guards' trail they are on. Once the party is on this second path, they encounter 4 **guards** they need to fight to proceed.

On their way to the secret clearing, following an even more hidden guard trail branching off the one they have been following so far, the heroes come across a narrow, waist-deep creek. The creek's bed is mainly comprised of loose stones. If the party chooses to wade through the waist-high water, they must succeed on a **DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check or slip and suffer 1d4 bludgeoning damage. If they decide to try to cross the creek by jumping, they must succeed on a **DC 14 Strength (Athletics)** check, or will drop onto the stones in the creek's bed and suffer 1d4 piercing damage.

Part 3: No Guts, No Glory

When the party reaches the secret clearing, they do indeed find the *Greenstone*. They also find **Morgan Gutliss**, whom they recognize, but have seen only rarely. He does not quite seem surprised, and is focused more on the stone than the party, until they either address or attack him. If they do the former, he responds and then attacks; if they choose the latter, he retaliates. If the party manages to sneak up on him, which should be encouraged, they surprise him.

Within the uncharted clearing, there is a stone slab fashioned into something like an altar. There are vine-like patterns and cloud-like shapes carved into the mossy, overgrown stone, and on top of it, in a perfectly fitted indentation, rests a crystal. It is a deep, vibrant green, roughly as large as an adult human fist, and it looks as if it used to be sharp-edged, but has been sanded down by age and gentle touches. Next to it, focused intensely on the soft glow the stone emits, is a tall elven man. His fair skin seems to glow gently in the light emanating from the stone, which he seems unable to look away from. His dark hair is artfully swept back, and the robe and boots he is wearing are visibly tailor-made and of excellent quality. You recognize this man, even though you've seen him only rarely: next to what can only be the *Greenstone* is Morgan Gutliss, the man who is starving your home.

Roleplaying Morgan: Morgan is an educated, intelligent man who appears friendly, if distant, until inspected further. Once provoked, he drops the facade and begins acting

cruel and arrogant, convinced that he is better than the adventurers. He taunts the party if they attack him and retaliates relentlessly, clearly fighting to the death, but tries to lure their attacks away from the *Greenstone*, as if unwilling to let it be damaged at all.

If the party seems to be struggling to defeat Morgan, feel free to knock down his hit points or adjust your strategy accordingly. The heroes are meant to overpower him.

Part 4: To Greener Pastures

Once the party either kills or subdues Morgan and picks up the *Greenstone*, there are two ways for the adventure to end.

If the adventurers choose to loot Morgan, whether in an unconscious state or as a corpse, they find 2d4 *potions of healing*, as well as 3d10 gp.

If the Party Kills Morgan

Once the party kills Morgan and takes the *Greenstone* from its untrapped and unprotected altar, they are free to return to Brightcove, either through the forest or along the guard trail—there are no attacks or obstacles on either route, but the quiet forest seems more lively as they walk through it with the stone. In the village proper, Lillybell waits for them at the tavern, and takes the *Greenstone* from the party. They buy the heroes a round of drinks, and, after asking the party to wait, cast *identify* as a ritual to find out exactly what the *Greenstone* is.

After the ritual has concluded, they explain, in an awe-filled voice, that it seems like the stone's power is not a limited resource at all. They immediately decide that it will be installed in the center of the village and made accessible to all villagers at all times, to ensure that nobody in Brightcove will ever face starvation again.

They lead the party outside the tavern, where the villagers, including the heroes' family and friends (and, if she has not been killed, a frazzled-looking Juliana) have gathered, and announce their plan for the *Greenstone*'s future to the crowd, before publicly thanking the characters. The crowd cheers, and preparations for a feast to celebrate Brightcove's bright future begin.

Feel free to award the party treasure rewards per the DMG, but keep in mind that Brightcove is a materially poor village.

If the Party Subdues Morgan

If the heroes choose to subdue Morgan, either by restraining him effectively—he does not try to free himself if tied up, or shackled—or by knocking him unconscious, and take him back to the village per Lillybell's request, they are waiting for them to return at the village entrance, accompanied by two other villagers. The villagers take Morgan off the party's hands, and Lillybell promises Gutliss a fair trial as they request and then take the *Greenstone*, explaining that they will need some time to properly investigate it. The mayor asks the party for a few days of patience, and offers them free drinks at the tavern while they investigate and interrogate Morgan.

A few days later, the heroes are called to the tavern by Lillybell, who greets them with the *Greenstone* in hand.

Lillybell is smiling, and it seems like some of the lines that you're used to seeing on their face have smoothed out a little. The tavern is bathed in the *Greenstone*'s healthy, green glow, which seems stronger, somehow, than it was in the Gutlisses' meadow. Their smile widens when they turn to you, and they stand, gesturing for you to sit.

Once the characters have sat down and *The Blustering Bunny's* owner has brought them their customary free drinks, they hold up the stone and lay out their findings and the village's plans for the future.

- The *Greenstone*, it turns out, not only functions as a source of fertility magic for the surrounding ground, which it came out of several millennia ago, but, as Morgan Gutliss has revealed during his interrogations, controls the weather in the region to a degree. With this knowledge—and the knowledge of how to use it, which Morgan has also shared in an attempt to save his life—Brightcove will thrive, enabling its citizens to begin trading with neighbouring villages.
- Morgan Gutliss is put on trial publicly, where his crimes are evaluated by a democratically elected tribunal of villagers believed to be the most just. What he has revealed after his defeat will be considered, but the sentence will likely either be death or imprisonment for life.
- The *Greenstone* and all information on how to control its weather-changing capabilities are made available to all of Brightcove's citizens and people in need from other villages. Plans for a building to house the stone have already begun to take shape.

Lillybell finishes their explanations with a smiling announcement that there is going to be a feast in the village that night, to celebrate the party's success and Brightcove's freedom from the Gutlisses' tyranny.

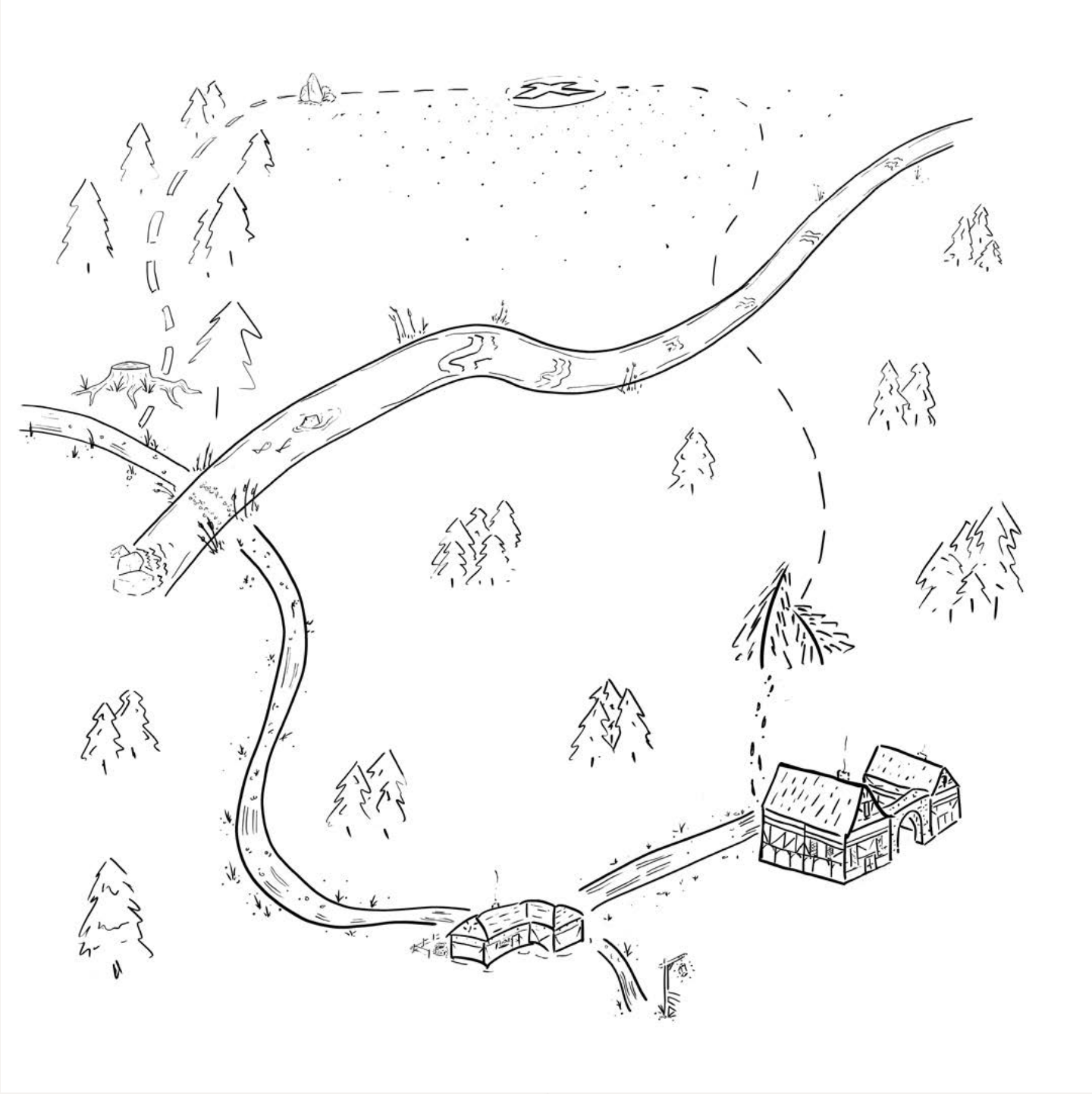
Feel free to award the party treasure rewards as per the DMG, but keep in mind that Brightcove is a materially poor village.

Continuing the Adventure

Once Brightcove's future harvests and prosperity are secured, the party may wish to travel the world, to help other people and properly become adventurers, or just to see more of it. In this case, the villagers see them off with provisions and their blessings, and potentially with a ration of the *Greenstone*'s power, should they ever make camp in a relatively inhospitable environment.

If Morgan has not been killed, the characters may want to be part of or at least bear witness to his trial. They should be allowed to do this, and the final sentence should be based on what the party seems to favor (Morgan's death or imprisonment for life).

Appendix A: Map




Missy Weir

A Mouse Unusual Scheme

Level 3| Setting Neutral

Alison Huang

Alison Huang is an Australian based writer and artist. She believes it is abhorrent that the rich are able to hoard wealth while the poor go hungry.

When she's not eating the rich, she is contributing to other D&D 5e projects, like the Uncaged Anthology, and Friends, Foes, and Other Fine Folks. She also creates narrative-heavy games, which can be found at drazillion.itch.io. Her Twitter handle is @Drazillion.

When famine strikes and food is hoarded by the nobles in Hamlen Castle, a polymorphing plan is devised. It's unconventional, but it just might work.

This adventure is optimized for 4 3rd-level characters.

Adventure Background

The farms that provide food for the city of Hamlen have been experiencing crop failure for the last few months. With their supplies dwindling, Hamlen's citizens turned to their leader, Lord Protector John, for salvation. To their surprise, the usually kind and benevolent Lord Protector instead turned his back on his people. Any food caravans that arrived in Hamlen swiftly had their contents taken by guards and stored in Hamlen Castle.

Robyn, a bard residing in the city, soon realised that she could use a polymorphing ritual she knew to assist her fellow civilians. Her idea was simple yet strange: transform willing adventurers into rodents, have them enter Hamlen Castle, and then demand Lord Protector John hand over the food in exchange for dealing with their new rodent problem. She knows it is improbable, but perhaps it will work with the right adventurers.

Adventure Summary

Part 1 of the adventure consists of Robyn explaining her plan in a private tavern room. Once the party is ready to be polymorphed into rodents, she performs her ritual.

During Part 2, the polymorphed party enters Hamlen Castle, trying to convince its inhabitants that there is an infestation without putting themselves in too much danger.

The adventure ends with Part 3, where Robyn fails to convince the nobles to let her deal with their rodent problem. Her girlfriend Lady Marie suggests that they evacuate the servants instead.

Hooks

- The party are civilians of Hamlen, or people who happen to be visiting, that have caught wind of Robyn's plan.
- Some civilians, possibly relatives of party members, fled Hamlen and have spread word of what is going on. The party decided to aid them.
- The party was hired to guard a food caravan entering Hamlen, promptly taken by guards upon arrival. Robyn approached them soon after.

If you are using this as a standalone adventure, or the beginning of a larger campaign, consider asking the party how the famine or the injustice of Lord Protector John's actions have personally impacted them. This is especially advised with characters who are usually motivated by monetary rewards.

A Mouse Unusual Scheme

Through means appropriate to their respective hooks, the adventurers have found out about Robyn's meeting. They know the following facts about it:

- It is to be held in The Merry Manticore tavern at dawn.
- The passphrase "The pipes, the pipes are calling" needs to be given to Dan (he/him human **commoner**) the barkeep.
- The meeting room is the tavern's back room.
- Monetary rewards should not be expected as this mission is for the good of the city.

Part 1: Here's the Plan

Robyn (she/her human **bard**) is already in the meeting room, laying maps and diagrams neatly across the wooden table in the room's center. She is a dark-skinned human with short curly black hair. She is wearing autumnal orange garments, and a shortsword hangs by her hip. Though she is clearly tired, her gestures are confident and deliberate.

Once the adventurers are present and ready to begin, Robyn explains her idea.

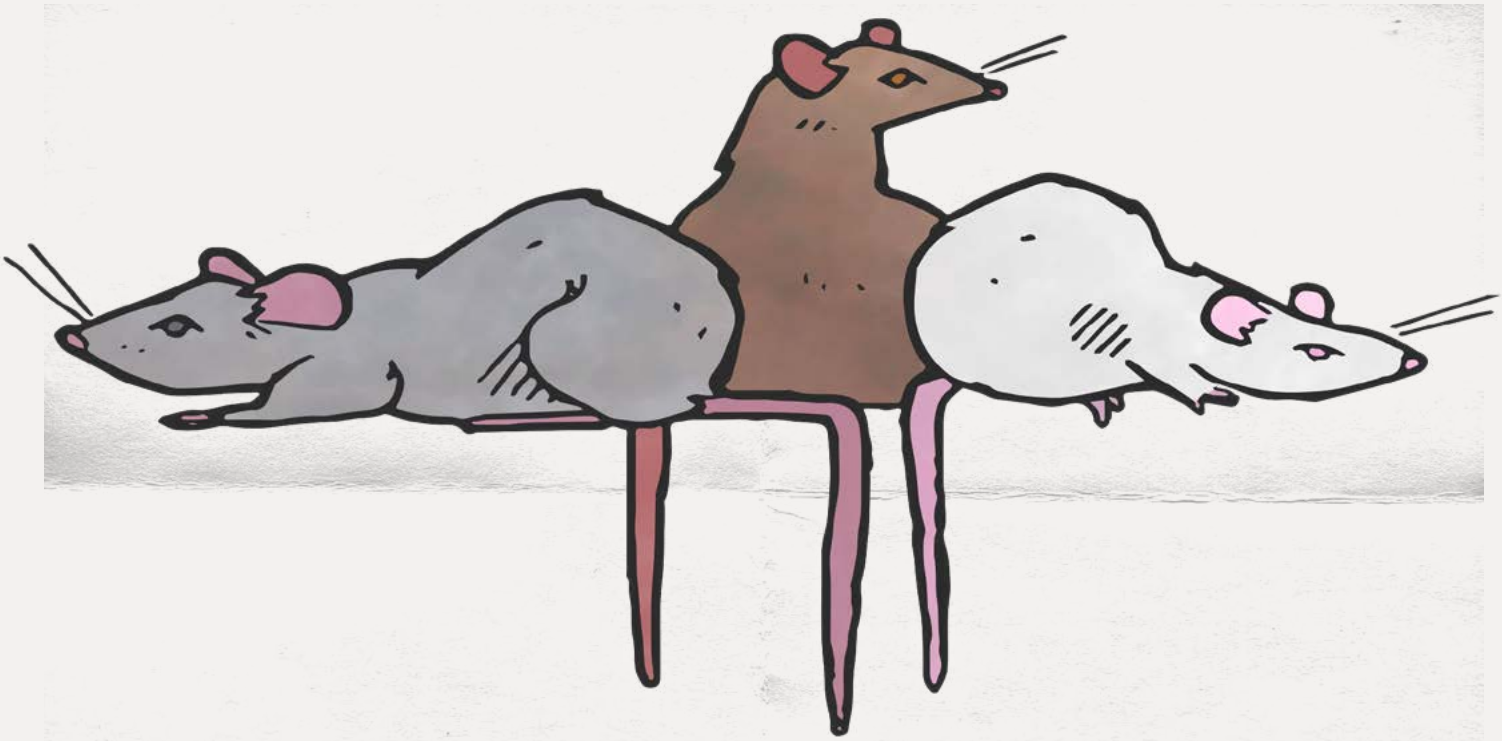
The Basic Plan

Robyn has a ritual that can transform the adventurers into rodents in a similar manner to *polymorph*. In this form they are able to communicate with each other, as well as actual rodents. Getting hurt (taking damage) ends the ritual's effects.

She wants to use this ritual so the adventurers can infiltrate Hamlen Castle as rodents. Her plan is for the adventurer rodents to cause a commotion. As she has performed in Hamlen Castle before, Robyn can secure an audience with Lord Protector John. She plans on offering to deal with the castle's rodent problem on the condition that food is distributed to the people. She wants the adventurers to cause enough of a ruckus that Lord Protector John, Hamlen's ruler, accepts her offer to get rid of them.

They have an ally in the castle, Lady Marie, who can help them once they're inside.

When Robyn plays her pipes, anyone who is still in rodent form should



find her and follow her out the castle.

Room for Negotiation

After explaining the plan, Robyn opens up discussion with the party. She wants the specifics of the plan to be theirs to decide, as they are the ones entering the castle.

Her main concern is that they need more rodents to sell the idea that there is an infestation. She does have *pipes of the sewers* but the user must be in their normal form to use it.

She notes that there is strategic value to being reverted back to normal early, as the characters won't be able to cast spells and use magical abilities while in rodent form.

The maps laid across the table depict the castle's basic layout, and can be used to plan entry to the castle, and any locations the party wants to aim for.

If the party is unsure of how to enter, Robyn says that she can get Lady Marie to lower a bed-sheet rope from her bedroom balcony, but that means the plan can't be acted upon for another day.

Ratty, Set, Go

Whenever the party is ready to act on their plan, whether immediately or a couple of days later, Robyn performs her ritual. Read or paraphrase the following:

> Robyn raises her pipe to her lips. As a hauntingly beautiful melody reverberates through the room, magic swirls around you, changing your forms into that of rodents.

While under the effects of Robyn's ritual, characters use the statistics of **rats** but retain their Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma scores, alignment, and personality. They are able to communicate with each other as well as actual rodents. Small or larger creatures have disadvantage on attacks against them in this form.

Potential Questions

The party may have questions regarding Robyn's plan. She supplies the following answers if asked.

Couldn't we just find where the food is located and steal it?

"Unfortunately that would only cause them to blame the servants. And well, I really don't think that's fair to them."

I'm a druid, I can shapeshift. Can I use this somehow?

"Oh that's great! I don't have any special for you, but your power might come in handy if you end up transforming back to your regular self. You could also shapeshift without the ritual, but you won't be able to understand the others."

I have an animal companion. Should they be polymorphed too?

"Yes they should! They should still recognise and understand your commands in rodent form."

How long does the spell last?

"Eight hours, though I hope you won't need that long."

What do we do if we transform back?

"If you transform back, try and stay out of sight. Things could get messy if intruders are discovered. But you'll be able to use your usual abilities to aid the others."

What does Lady Marie look like?

"Well, she's a half-elf around my age, has blonde hair, generally wears pink, and is really cute. You can't miss her."

Is Lady Marie your girlfriend?

"Yeah. Was it that obvious?"

Are we allowed to kill anyone?

"Please try not to. The castle's guards and servants are innocent people. The nobles are… less so, but we need to focus on feeding the people, rather than starting a revolution. That can come later."

Can we steal from the castle?

"Yeah. Feel free to keep whatever you take from the castle. But please don't steal from Lady Marie's room."

Part 2: Here's How It Goes

The party can make their way into the castle through various means. As a point of reference, the castle layout is arranged floor by floor, starting with the top floor and ending with the basement floor.

If the party took Robyn's offer of asking Lady Marie to help them into the castle, a rope made out of bed sheets dangles down at the back of the castle, leading up to a balcony on the top floor. The party can climb up this rope, and onto the balcony without issue.

Top Floor

The top floor of Hamlen Castle consists of the private quarters of Lord Protector John, his wife Lady Isabel, and his daughter Lady Marie. The party enters the castle from the balcony in area A1. Two spiral stairways, one in the northwest, and the other in the north east, lead down to the Middle Floor.

A1: Marie's Chambers

Lady Marie's rooms, and the furniture within them, are uniformly pale pink. Despite the vast size of her quarters, she has decorated them in a surprisingly sparse and humble fashion. A pleasant flowery scent fills the room.

If she was told to lower the bed sheet rope, Lady Marie (she/her half-elf **noble**) sits on her bed. She has a book open on her lap, a *sending stone* nestled between its pages. Robyn has the *sending stone* paired with it. Lady Marie has pale skin and shoulder length blonde hair. Her dress is a similar shade of pink to her room's decor.

Upon seeing the rodents, Lady Marie retrieves the bed sheet rope, and opens her door for the party. She tells them that if they need her, she is heading to the library on the Middle Floor.

A2: John and Isabel's Chambers

These rooms belong to the Lord Protector and his wife. They are opulent, as if the couple were royalty rather than nobles. A large four poster bed is along the back wall, between large windows facing onto a balcony. A vanity, complete with mirror, rests against one of the side walls. The other wall is occupied by a desk and some bookshelves. The room smells of an expensive perfume with hints of sandalwood and bergamot.

Hazards

If a book from the bookshelves falls down onto adventurers in rodent form, they must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d4 bludgeoning damage.

Rewards

2d4 pieces of jewelry worth 25 gp each can easily be found within this room, as well as 2d8 sets of fine clothes worth 15 gp each.

Middle Floor

The middle floor is filled with guest rooms and rooms dedicated to recreational activities. Two spiral stairways, one in the northwest, and the other in the northeast, lead up to the Top Floor, and down to the Ground Floor.

Enemies

A **cat** belonging to one of the nobles prowls from room to room. Two **guards** patrol the central corridor, though they won't go into any rooms unless they hear something suspicious.

Tactics

The cat chases any rodents it sees, even if it means moving to other levels of the castle. Its Keen Sense trait helps it sniff out hiding rodents.

The guards attempt to kill any rodents they see. If they see adventurers who are not *polymorphed*, and they outnumber the guards, they focus on running down to the barracks on the ground floor for reinforcements.

B1: Parlour

Plush couches occupy the left wall of this room, next to a row of square tables, and ornate chairs. At one of these tables, a **noble** eats gold-dipped fruit at a leisurely pace.

B2: Gallery

This gallery contains sprawling landscapes, and portraits of Lord Protector John, Lady Isabel, and Lady Marie, all in ornate frames. A **guard** is sleeping on a couch in the middle of the room.

Hazards

Adventurers must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check to avoid waking up the guard. A party member in rodent form has advantage on this check.

If a painting falls down onto adventurers in rodent form, they must succeed a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d4 bludgeoning damage.

B3: Library

This room smells of old books. Bookshelves line its walls. Chairs and coffee tables fill the center. Provided that a commotion has not begun, Lady Marie sits at a table, clearly lost in her own thoughts. She is clutching her *sending stone*. She is startled if approached, but quickly regains her composure. She provides any information about the castle that she can.

Hazards

If a book from the bookshelves falls down onto an adventurer in rodent form, they must succeed a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d4 bludgeoning damage.

B4: Guest Rooms

These lavish rooms are all clearly in use. A **noble** is in the westernmost guest room, drinking wine while staring out the window.

Rewards

4d6 gp and 2d4 sets of fine clothes can be found in these rooms collectively.

B5: Gatehouse

This gatehouse is over the castle's entrance. It has spiral staircases leading down to areas C4 and C7.

Ground Floor

The ground floor is more modestly decorated. Suits of armour adorn its walls. Two spiral stairways, one in the northwest, and the other in the northeast, lead to the Middle floor.

Enemies

3d4 **guards** are on the ground floor, patrolling the corridor, eating in area C1 and resting in areas C4 and C7.

Tactics

The guards attempt to kill any rodents they see, and knock over the sets of armour to do so. If they see adventurers that are not *polymorphed*, they presume that they

are trying to enter area C2, the Great Hall, and try their best to prevent that from happening.

Hazards

If a set of armour falls down onto an adventurer in rodent form, they must succeed a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d8 bludgeoning damage.

C1: Dining Room

Long wooden tables fill up most of the room. Lady Isabel (she/her elf **noble**) sits at a more elaborately designed table towards the back, with an array of food before her. A servant (**commoner**) stands to the side, awaiting her orders. This area contains a staircase that goes down to the basement.

Though she is not a cruel person, Lady Isabel cares about her own survival above all else, and intends to make the most of her circumstances.

Lady Isabel despises the sight of rodents, and orders guards to kill them immediately.

C2: Great Hall

Guests and visitors wishing to talk with the Lord Protector are brought into this large hall. Lord Protector John (he/him human **knight**) is here, sitting on a throne more befitting a king. He is conversing with two **nobles**.

Lord Protector John is cruel and ruthless, only appearing to be kind when it benefits him to do so. Before the famine, he pretended to be a considerate man with the city's best interests at heart. Now, he has shown his true colours.

Lord Protector John finds rodents distasteful, but is confident that the guards will take care of it.

C3: Chapel

The chapel is dedicated to a deity of wealth and prosperity. It smells of freshly-lit candles and incense, and is clearly well maintained. Rows of church pews fill up most of the room.

C4: West Guard Barracks

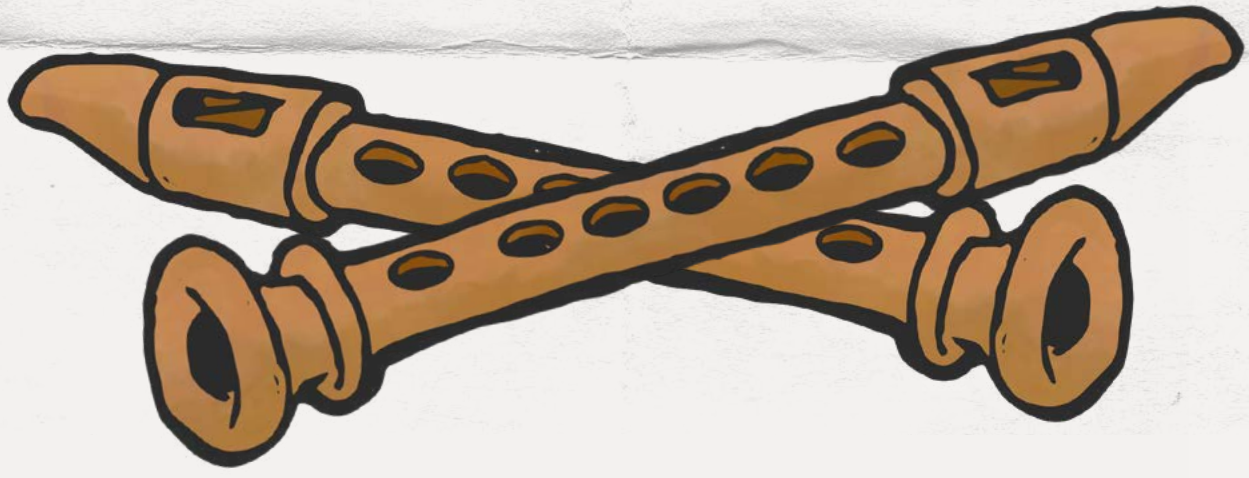
Beds, with chests at their feet, neatly fill most of the room. It smells of armour polish and steel. A corridor to the east of room leads past Area C6, the Castle Entrance, and up into Area B5, the Gatehouse. A **scout** is in this eastern corridor.

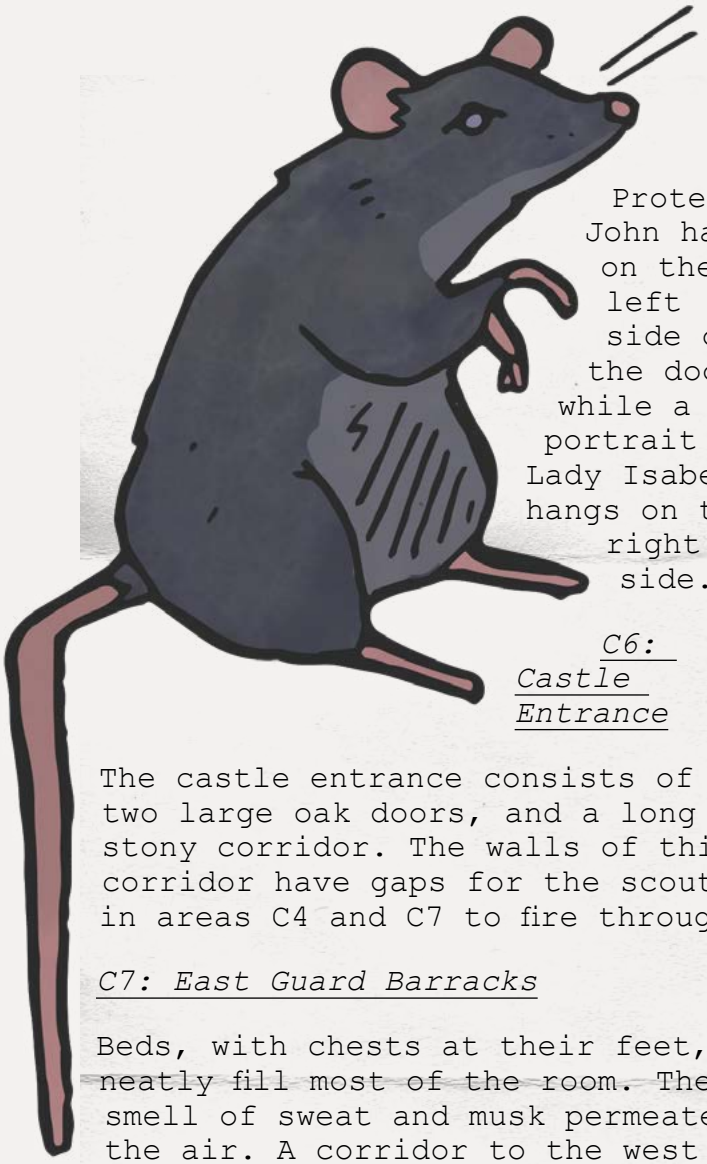
Rewards

Each chest contains 3d6 sp, a whetstone, and a set of common clothes.

C5: Vestibule

The castle's entrance room. It also functions as a chokepoint if intruders enter the castle through its front doors. A portrait of Lord





Protector John hangs on the left side of the door, while a portrait of Lady Isabel hangs on the right side.

C6: Castle Entrance

The castle entrance consists of two large oak doors, and a long stony corridor. The walls of this corridor have gaps for the scouts in areas C4 and C7 to fire through.

C7: East Guard Barracks

Beds, with chests at their feet, neatly fill most of the room. The smell of sweat and musk permeates the air. A corridor to the west of room leads past Area C6, the Castle Entrance, and up into Area B5, the Gatehouse. A **scout** is in this western corridor.

Rewards

Each chest contains 3d6 sp, a whetstone, and a set of common clothes.

Basement Floor

The basement contains all of the rooms the castle's servants operate in. The staircase in the northwest goes up to area C1 on the Ground Floor.

D1: Servants Quarters

The room contains many beds. Each has a chest at its foot, but their contents are scarce.

Rewards

The chests collectively contain 10d4 cp and 3d4 sets of common clothes.

D2: Kitchen

This room is thick with the smell of freshly cooked food. Pots and pans hang from hooks. Both the stone oven in the middle of the back wall, and the stoves on either side of it, are in use. Servants (**commoners**) hurry around this room, preparing meals for the castle's inhabitants.

If they see any rodents, the servants panic and attempt to kill them using any knives (daggers) or pans (clubs) they have on hand.

Hazards

If a servant attacks an adventurer in rodent form with a kitchen utensil, the adventurer must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d4 bludgeoning or piercing damage, depending on the object.

D3: Pantry

The pantry is a surprisingly large room, nearly the size of the kitchen itself. It contains wall to wall shelves of fresh and high-quality ingredients. The castle will not be going hungry for some time.

D4: Cold Storage

All of the ingredients that easily spoil can be found within this cold storage.

D5: Servants Entrance

A wooden door, too heavy to be opened by rodents, partially hidden on the side of the castle. Servants are able to leave and enter through this door. A **guard** stands on the inner side of the door. They do not attack adventurers on sight, though they do attack rodents.

Part 3: Here's How It Ends

Once the inhabitants of the castle are all aware of the rodent infestation, Robyn makes her way to the castle, and is allowed an audience with Lord Protector John.

You may choose to narrate Robyn and Lord Protector John's conversation, allowing characters to know what happens no matter where they are in the castle. Alternatively, you can have characters that are on the ground floor overhear them.

The Lord and the Piper

As planned, Robyn offers to deal with Hamlen Castle's rodent problem in exchange for food to be distributed to the rest of Hamlen.

If the party wasn't caught in their normal forms, made their presence as rodents known to the nobles, and convincingly sold the idea that there is a rodent infestation, this succeeds. This is only because the other nobles, including Lady Isabel, are loud in their complaints. Proceed to Conclusion A.

Otherwise, Lord Protector John declines Robyn's offer. He either believes that the guards will be able to handle it, or he believes that his castle is under attack by suspicious adventurers.

Change of Plans

Feeling defeated, Robyn makes her exit. Using her *sending stone*, she sends a message to Lady Marie, venting about how distraught she is at the plan's failure. Lady Marie receives this message and decides to try and salvage Robyn's plan.

Lady Marie finds as many adventurers as she can. Once the whole party is together, she brings them into her chambers. She asks them if they have any ideas of their own and assists with any plans that she thinks has a chance of working.

If no plan is put forth, all of the plans seem flimsy, or an adventurer has a plan similar to hers, Lady Marie speaks up. She suggests persuading servants and guards to leave the castle. Though the efforts of the servants and guards are often thankless, the castle is unable to operate without them.

In addition, Lady Marie states that she is considering telling her father how she really feels and leaving the castle in protest as well. Though Lord Protector John is a callous man, he does genuinely care about his family. Lady Marie goes through with this if the party encourages it. She cautions against them accompanying her as they will be seen as intruders, unless they have a plan for that too.

Rally the Troops

Convincing the servants collectively requires a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Though their job is tiring and unappreciated, they have easy access to food, which they won't if they leave. If adventurers encourage them to take food with them, this becomes a DC 5 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

The guard protecting Area D5, the Servant's Entrance, lets the servants pass through without a fight. This guard leaves as well if asked.

A successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check is needed to convince a group of guards that the adventurers mean no harm, and that they should abandon their guard duties. Adventurers who initiated combat against those guards have disadvantage on this check. This becomes a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check if they bring up the guards' families.

Daughter Dearest

Provided the party approved of her plan, Lady Marie makes her way to the Great Hall. There, she explains to her father, that she is disgusted by his behaviour, as well as her mother's, and the rest of the nobles. She declares that she is tired of how selfish all of the nobles have been, and that she's leaving.

Lord Protector John is shaken by her daughter's words, and pleads for her to stay. She walks out of the castle.

Concluding the Adventure

Conclusion A

This conclusion is achieved if Lord Protector John agrees to Robyn's offer. He asks her to deal with the rodent problem first, but Robyn stands her ground, stating that she wants the food to be distributed first. He complies, and commands that food from the basement pantry to be put onto wagons and brought into the heart of the town.

Robyn then plays her pipe, the signal for the party to find and follow her. The civilians of Hamlen are able to eat once more.

Conclusion B

This conclusion is achieved if Lady Marie's plan is successfully carried out. After walking out of the castle, and meeting up with the party again, Lady Marie reunites with Robyn, kissing her in relief. After being informed of what happened, Robyn tells Lady Marie that she is proud of her.

With his daughter, servants and guards gone, Lord Protector John concedes. Wagons full of food are brought to the heart of the town. However, Lady Marie refuses to return.

Conclusion C

This conclusion is achieved if the party successfully carries out another plan. Whether they stole it, or convinced Lord Protector John to distribute it, they are able to provide civilians with food.

Continuing the Adventure

If the civilians of Hamlen received food, they no longer have to worry about their immediate survival. They now feel equipped to start a revolution against Lord Protector John and the other nobles.

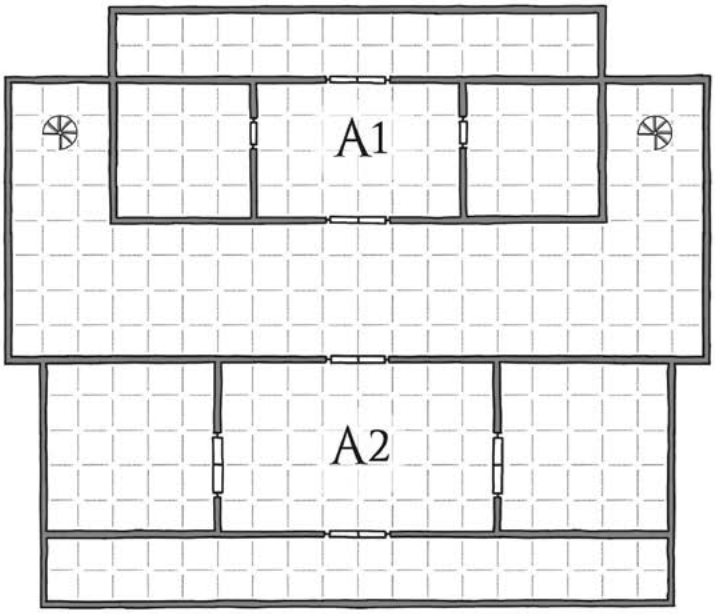
If the party failed in acquiring any food for Hamlen's civilians, they may want to seek alternative ways to feed the city.

The famine in this adventure exists both on a literal level, and as an analogy for the populace's mistreatment by tyrants. You may want to have other antagonists be behind the famine that the party can track down and defeat.

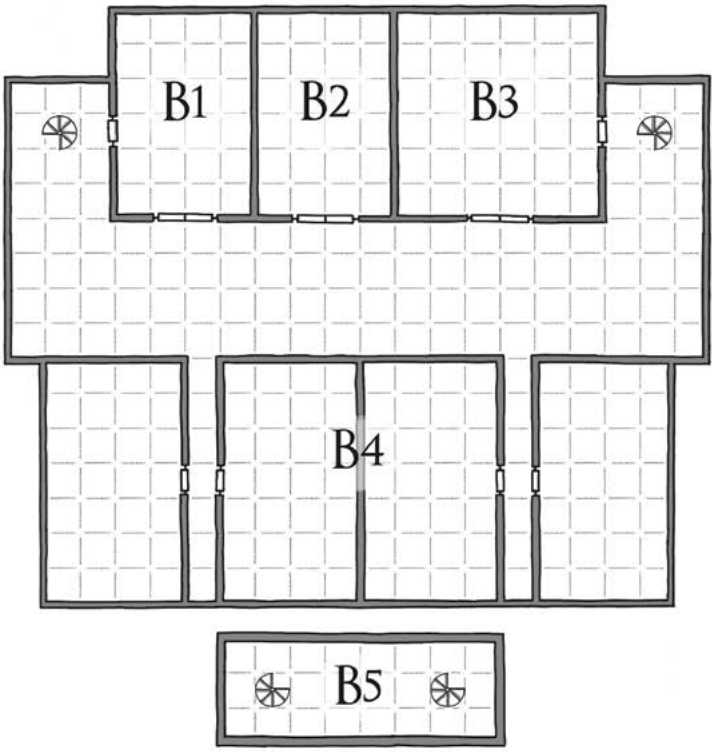


Appendix A: Maps

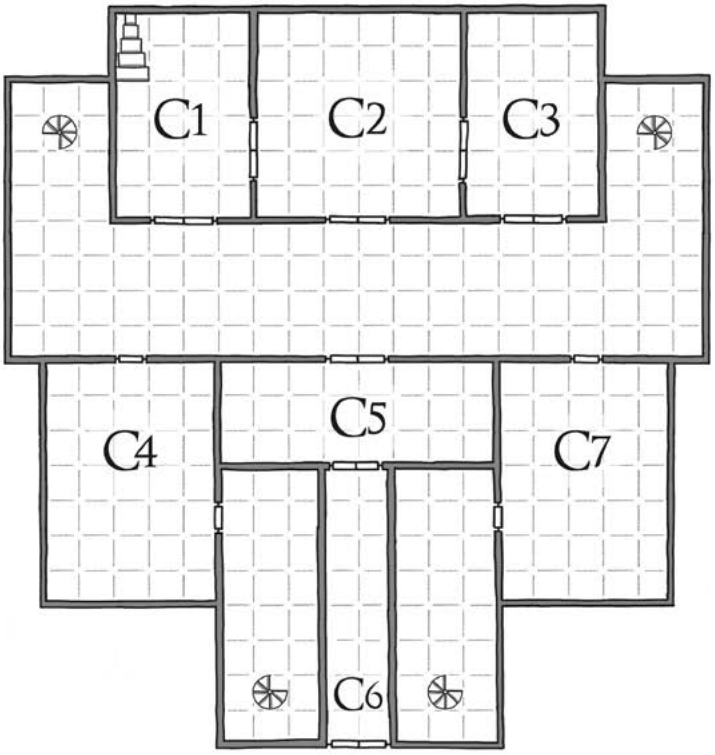
Top Floor



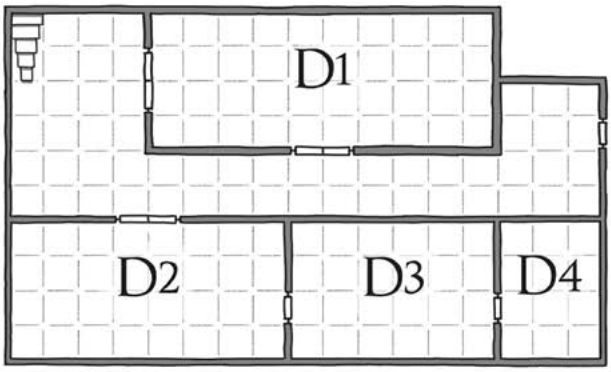
Middle Floor



Ground Floor



Basement Floor




Apollo Spiva

Smothering Tithe

Level 3| Forgotten Realms

Ben Heisler

Ben Heisler is a tabletop RPG enthusiast, adventure writer, con organizer, and D&D live play podcaster on the show Feats & Fables. Author of D&D and Cyberpunk Red adventures, he's no stranger to fighting the man - in 2019 a large corporate entity (Bethesda) stole his and Paige Leitman's work, DDAL5-2 The Black Road, to promote their Elswyr expansion. Here's hoping the corporations don't steal this one, too!

He lives in Atlanta, Georgia with his wife and frequent collaborator Paige Leitman and their two cats, Huginn and Muninn. When not playing D&D, they enjoy playing Magic: the Gathering, cooperative boardgames, and going on adventures.

He can be found on twitter at @zhentarimpr and @featsandfables.

This is the first of a series of four adventures set in Hillsfar, where the characters aid the resistance against a corrupt government. Future adventures will be featured in following Eat the Rich volumes. The adventures can be played in a series or as stand-alone adventures.

The city of Hillsfar is located on the southern edge of the Moonsea in central Faerun. There, the First Lord Torin Nomerthal has enacted cruel laws that make Hillsfar a plutocracy, and criminalizes the existence of nonhumans in the city. Aided by demonic presences that encourage xenophobia and greed, the city is rapidly spiraling into a fascist regime. Many non-humans have been exiled or killed, while some are forced to fight to the death in the infamous Hillsfar arena.

In this adventure, an agent of the Hillsfar resistance recruits adventurers to look into two of his missing comrades who were last seen in a sympathetic temple to Torm. What terrible corruption will the characters find as they look for missing revolutionaries in a city ruled by greed?

This adventure is designed for 3-7 1st through 4th level characters and is optimized for 5 characters with an average party level (APL) of 3. It is set in the city of Hillsfar in the Forgotten Realms campaign setting.

Part 1: Since You're Passing Through...

This section serves as the call to action. The characters are approached by a half elf fixer seeking a party of adventurers to look into two of her missing companions. The Nymph & the Roc Tavern is to the east of Hillsfar along the road to Elventree, Elmwood, and eventually Mulmaster.

Dramatis Personae	
Naal (he/him)	An elderly male half-elf and agent of the Hillsfar resistance who hires the characters
The Red Plumes	The corrupt and brutal city police loyal to the First Lord
Captain Ruluk Slagar (he/him)	Male human captain of the Red Plumes assigned to persuade Thorburn Silverbond to promote adherence to the great laws of Hillsfar
Priest Thorburn Silverbond (he/him)	Elder human priest of Torm the True, the God of Law in the Forgotten Realms. Thorburn comes to Hillsfar from Baldur's Gate, where he preached about how law united disparate groups for common causes
First Lord Torin Nomerthal (he/him)	The king of Hillsfar who enacted greedy and xenophobic laws
Melancholy/Mel (she/her)	A female tiefling agent of the Hillsfar resistance captured in the Temple of Torm the True
Jamaa Steelstrike (he/him)	A male half-orc agent of the Hillsfar resistance captured in the Temple of Torm the True.

Location: The Nymph & the Roc Tavern

The Nymph & the Roc Tavern is a comfortable tavern half a day's travel from Hillsfar that caters to travelers and refugees fleeing the city. As such, there are quite a few non-humans who dine and stay there, and it is a frequent den of spies and fixers looking to aid non-humans stuck in the city.

For convenience, the common room is full this morning and the characters are seated together for breakfast. After they have made introductions, Naal introduces himself.

Features of the Area

The area has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The Nymph & The Roc is a well-kept and comfortable tavern. The common room has a bar and enough seating to accommodate 20 patrons.

Lighting. The common room is well lit by windows by day that overlook the shores of the Moonsea.

Smells. The scents of omelettes, chicken sausage, and pancakes with honey fill the air.

Creatures

Loravoire (a female half-elf) and her wife **Dhamlyn** (a female triton)

run the establishment with the aid of their three children. A variety of mostly non-human **commoners** are enjoying a meal. Naal, a **master thief**, joins the characters after studying them a short period to determine if they are worth hiring.

Tactics

After watching the characters for a time (characters with a passive Wisdom [Perception] of 17 or higher can tell they're being watched), Naal approaches the characters' table with the offer of employment: two of his friends, Mel and Jamaa, have gone missing in Hillsfar. They were supposed to be staying somewhere safe, and he would like to hire the characters to investigate what happened and get them back out of town if they're still alive. For what should be a day's work, he offers 50 gp each.

Development

Should the characters accept, Naal also shares that Mel and Jamaa haven't been seen since they visited the Temple of Torm the True. The priest there, Thorburn, is sympathetic to non-humans and should be able to help.

The objective is finding out what happened to Naal's friends or freeing them if they got caught by the Red Plumes.

Rewards

Naal offers to pay the characters the amount above. He can be bargained up to 65 gp each through roleplay or on a successful DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

New to Hillsfar?

If characters are new to Hillsfar, Naal quickly explains the following: the city is run by a fascist First Lord, whose military force and secret police, The Red Plumes, ruthlessly run the city according to two laws:

1. The Law of Trade. Anything which causes a disruption to commerce is illegal.

2. The Law of Humanity. Only humans are welcome in the city. Everyone must have documentation with them at all times for the Red Plumes to inspect.

If there are non-humans in the group, he offers to disguise them before they enter. He also offers them a set of forged documents that should last a day or more.

Part 2: Sacred Space

In this encounter, the characters gather information, infiltrate, and explore the Temple of Torm the True in Hillsfar to find Mel and Jamaa.

Outside the Temple

This section provides information should the characters wish to examine the outside of the temple or gather information.

The new church of Torm the True is under construction. The main building is mostly complete, but there are a few gaps on the eastern side where scaffolds cover an incomplete section of the wall and roof.

During the day, a few people come and go to the temple. More importantly, a squad of Red Plume guards in full armor come and switch

out with another set every few hours.

Features of the Area

Construction. The Temple is under construction. Scaffolds, tools, carts, and laborers are busy around the outside and many sections inside by day.

Light. The temple is in a sunny, well-lit part of town by day and well-lit by lanterns at night.

Creatures

Laborers (**commoners**) toil outside by day. By night, three sellsword guards watch over the construction areas against foul play, sabotage, or unwelcome entry. On opposite streets, a few beggars (commoners) watch and plead for alms.

Tactics

Characters can learn the following information from the beggars or from other neighboring establishments, such as The Elegant Cup tavern across the street, on a successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) or (Deception) check. Every 2 points over the initial check gets an additional piece of the following information:

1. The priest's name is Thorburn, and he's come east from Baldur's Gate to start his own temple.

2. The priest's initial sermons were very tolerant and about the law being a way to unite people of different races and backgrounds for the common good. Many people didn't like that compared to the other temples in town.

3. A few days ago, the Red Plumes came to visit. Now it's almost like it is a temple to the Red Plumes—it seems like there's a squad in there every day.

4. The temple seemed like it was near completion a couple tendays ago, but workers keep coming. They must have messed something up or be changing designs.

5. There used to be rumors of non-humans hiding out inside, but that isn't the case now.

The laborers are too busy to discuss anything with the characters ("every day they change something about this job—it's like it's never going to end!"), but the sellsword guards don't mind chatting as long as the characters don't try to get past them (they can provide the same information above).

To infiltrate the construction area during the day without questions being asked, the characters must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) or Charisma (Deception or Stealth) check. At night, characters must succeed on a group Dexterity (Stealth) check against the guards' passive Perception of 12. The guards aren't paid enough to deal with adventurers but call for the Red Plumes if they spot intruders. A set of 4 Red Plumes (one **veteran**, one **spy**, and two **guards**) arrive 3 minutes later.

Hopping the fence into the grounds (currently a soggy mess of mud) requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. If done at night, the group Stealth check against the guards must also be made.

Development

If characters enter through the open wall, they begin their infiltration in the kitchen. If the characters hopped the fence, they begin in the grounds.

Rewards

None.

Within the Temple of Torm the True

The Temple of Torm the True is under construction, and many areas are unfinished. Within, walls are incomplete, tools are scattered, and there are measurements drawn on the walls and floor.

Features of the Area

Dimensions. The ceilings are 10 feet tall throughout the temple other than the main worship area, where they steeple to a height of 30 feet.

Construction. The building is made of marble.

The following are the rooms in the temple. Refer to the map in Appendix C for layout.

Worship Hall

Carved into the floor in front of the double doors leading into the Worship Hall in Common and Celestial is, "No One is Beyond the Reach of Divine Law."

The worship hall is mostly finished and is the cleanest area throughout the temple. While there are only a few seats here, the room is dominated by a 15-foot-wide, 25-foot-high marble statue of Torm, the Hand of Righteousness, in his human form astride a dragon. In front of it is a modest pulpit.

Creatures

In the worship hall is Slagar, a **Red Plume Captain** (See Appendix A).

Tactics

Slagar is waiting for an opportunity to speak with Priest Thorburn to discuss the temple and deliver the newest tithe from the First Lord. If approached, he is happy to talk to humans (or human-seeming characters), but blatantly ignores conversation from non-humans ("I don't know whose pet you are, but somebody better shut you up before I gut you like the filthy fish you are.").

Captain Slagar is pleased that the priest has seen the error of his ways ("To think he spoke of using the law for unity rather than for punishing the filthy non-humans!") and has agreed to preach about the laws of Hillsfar. As such, the First Lord has seen fit to help finance the completion of this temple with some changes to better promote the great laws.

Slagar is happy to talk about how important it is that the God of Law is promoting the right message, and how Hillsfar is prospering now that they are enforcing the rules to make this a better city for everyone (he only considers humans to be people).

Development

Slagar meets with Thorburn at a narratively appropriate time. Should a fight break out, he calls for backup with his *sending stone* and then is among the first responders.

Priest's Office

The priest's office is small with a desk, a chair on each side, a bookshelf, and a small chest. Rolled out on the desk is the current building plan for the church, and holding down the edges is a small, well-worn holy symbol of Torm and, across from it, a ledger. The room also has a small chest with a sturdy lock on it.

Features of the Area

The Building Plans. Succeeding on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation)

check or a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that there are fresh changes to the design: a change from kitchen to vault and relics to holding. There are other marks on the designs that indicate additional changes are being proposed.

The Ledger. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check on the ledger reveals that there are significant amounts of coin being added in the past three tendays from "FLTN." Another is due today. This coin is offsetting construction costs, which had nearly bankrupted the account before. Small amounts of coin to an adventurer (30 to 60 gp a tenday) were in miscellaneous expenditures that are not well detailed.

In addition, a check of 17 or higher reveals that the additional costs are close to the amounts being added - so every change being made keeps the account near empty and reliant on the income. In addition, a character who succeeds on this check realizes "FLTN" is shorthand for First Lord Torin Nomerthal.

The Holy Symbol. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Religion) or (Insight) check notices that the holy symbol is well worn, as if with worry. Whoever owns this has been having some serious anxiety lately.

The Chest. The lock on the chest requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves tools to open. Within is a canvas sack containing 10 gp.

The Desk. Within the desk are a few notes from the congregation, a treatise on Hillsfar history with a number of bookmarks set into it around passages on religion, and a pamphlet about the importance of the Laws of Hillsfar.

The Bookshelf. The bookshelf has a few curios and books from Baldur's Gate on it, none of which are magical or pertinent. Hiding atop the bookshelf is an invisible quasit which is a spy for the Cult of Graz'zt, sent to keep an eye on the priest. The quasit can be detected by such means as a detect good and evil spell or with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. If detected, the quasit takes the form of a bat and attempts to flee. If caught or defeated, it disappears in a cloud of brimstone. If Thorburn is present when the quasit disappears, the characters have advantage on ability checks to convince him to help the refugees or break off his agreement with the First Lord.

Creatures

Priest Thorborn can frequently be found here, consulting designs, updating his ledger, and praying for guidance. If he is not here (such as when he's examining construction, meeting with Captain Slagar, or walking the grounds), the characters are welcome to examine the room. Hidden in the room is an invisible quasit, planted by the Cult of Graz'zt to keep an eye on the priest and his doings.

Tactics

The priest's main concern is to complete this church to the glory of Torm the True, even if that means supporting the law of the land in order to get funding (which goes against his principles).

Thorborn is conflicted. He believes serving the god of law is best done by following the laws of the land, but he finds the Law of Humanity immoral. If the characters wish to convince him to throw in his support with the rebels, they do so on a successful DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The characters have advantage on this check under the following circumstances, and each additional circumstance reduces the DC by 5:

- Characters found and dispatched the quasit spy
- Characters found proof that the First Lord was using coin to control him (from office ledger)
- Characters remind him that he once espoused law for unity (information obtained from beggars or Captain Slagar)
- Good roleplay (at your discretion)

Development

If the characters convince him to support the rebels, Thorborn is willing to help the characters in any nonviolent way he can, as he cannot risk funding which he can channel where it is needed among the people and the rebels. Some useful ways the characters can use Thorborn include:

- Distracting Slagar to keep him from joining any fight
- Distracting the Red Plume guards in the Reliquary (where the prisoners are kept)
- Casting *silence* into the reliquary so no one notices the characters confronting the Red Plumes
- Helping the characters escape through the kitchen sewer outlet

If attacked, Priest Thorborn attempts to flee to the protection of the Red Plumes on site— Captain Slagar in the Worship Hall and the soldiers in the Reliquary. This sets all encounters with soldiers to combat and may prove a deadly scenario.

Rewards

If the characters convince Thorburn to help the rebels, he thanks them by giving him his holy symbol of Torm (see Appendix B).

Kitchen

This small kitchen is in disarray, construction clearly not complete. There's a large hole in the outward wall leading to the back of the temple. Adjoining the kitchen area are a few restrooms.

Features of the Area

Construction. This area looks more like it is being torn apart instead of put together. A successful Intelligence (History) check at DC 13 shows that the work here is being re-done to be fortified—expensive work for a new temple.

Construction Gear. There is a crate of construction gear and uniforms here, including basic tools and work coveralls.

Hidden Exit. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check shows that work has been done to cover a sewage grate with stone. Breaking the stone requires a successful DC 18 Strength check, but the noise would be loud. A character with a passive Perception of 15 or higher realizes the sewers could provide an unseen way out of the temple.

The Grounds

The grounds are fenced in and currently little more than a field of mud. The grounds have a set of double doors that lead to the worship area.

Meeting room

This small meeting space has long, old wooden table with eight wooden chairs arrayed around it. Freshly smelling of construction, it has little to adorn it.

Development

If narratively appropriate or if Thorborn has been persuaded to help, Captain Slagar and Thorborn are here, discussing the importance of the great laws and how the temple must be changed at great expense to turn the soup kitchen into a reinforced bank and the Reliquary into a prison.

Reliquary

This is the room where Mel and Jamaa are being held under guard.

Features of the Area

The area has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The reliquary is a 30-foot-long, 10-foot-wide, and 10-foot-tall room made of stone.

Lighting. The reliquary room is lit by lanterns that provide bright light.

Creatures

The Red Plumes (a **bandit captain**, a **scout**, and two **guards**) are here watching over a pair of Hillsfar rebels (Melancholy and Jamaa).

Tactics

The Red Plumes are immediately suspicious of anyone who enters their area who isn't the priest or Slagar, and order them to leave. The Red Plumes can be convinced to give up their charges with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check or ordered out with good roleplay and a successful DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation) check. A non-human character has disadvantage on these checks. If the characters don't leave or trick the Plumes, the Plumes draw steel and fight.

If the fight with the Plumes isn't silenced or Captain Slagar isn't distracted by Thorburn (or by some similar plan), he calls for reinforcements using his *sending stone* and rushes toward the Reliquary to join the fight. Slagar arrives at the beginning of the 2nd round of combat.

Development

With the prisoners freed, the characters must now escape town with them.

Difficulty Adjustments

Make the following adjustments if the party is weak or strong:

If the party is very weak or weak, remove the **bandit captain**, and change the scout to a guard.

If the party is strong, change the **bandit captain** to a **veteran**.

If the party is very strong, modify as strong, and change the **scout** to an **archer** and the two **guards** to **bandit captains**.

Rewards

The Red Plumes have a total of 38 gp among them, as well as weapons and armor with the stamp of the Hillsfar armory (attempts to sell them in the Hillsfar area attract the attention of Red Plumes, which could be an adventure in itself!).



Part 3: The Great Escape

With the prisoners freed, the characters must escape before Red Plume reinforcements arrive.

The Temple of Torm the True

Two minutes (or less if appropriate) after the prisoners are freed, the shift change of Red Plume guards arrives at the Temple.

Creatures

The shift change consists of a squad of four **guards** and one **spy**.

Tactics

If there was a combat in the reliquary, the new patrol immediately attacks when they arrive. The spy runs for reinforcements (using their Cunning Action ability to escape). If Captain Slagar isn't already alerted, he calls for reinforcements by *sending stone* and joins the fight.

If there wasn't a combat in the reliquary, the shift change runs into the party in the temple when you think it's appropriate. These Plumes won't be convinced by words and order the characters and the rebels back to the jail. If the characters refuse, the Plumes draw steel and fight, with the spy running for reinforcements and Captain Slagar joining as above.

Development

After the shift change Red Plumes are defeated, the characters need to figure out how to escape before more Red Plumes converge on the Temple. To simulate the limited time before the Plumes begin raining down on the temple, after the combat with the second set of Red Plumes, give the characters five minutes of real time to discuss how they would like to make their escape and then play out their decision with the options below.

Options for Escape

Run for It. If the characters run for it, they need a way past the Red Plume guards at each of the town's gates. Without a significant bribe of 100 gp, disguises, or being very stealthy (use DC 15 checks), the characters face a fight involving the gate crew of one Red Plume Captain (see Appendix A), two scouts using their longbows to serve as archers, and eight guards.

Escape Through the Sewers. This option is only available if the characters made an ally of Thorburn (who mentions it during the five minutes of planning) or if they found the sewer grate while investigating the kitchen. See that section for how to access the exit, which avoids any entanglements.

Slip Out as Construction Workers. There are a lot of construction workers' uniforms in the kitchen area. By using those disguises and causing a panic (setting a fire, destructive spellcasting, or otherwise; encourage creativity), the characters can attempt to escape in the rush. A crew of one Red Plume Captain (see Appendix A), two scouts, and eight guards arrive to try to contain the panic and find the characters. A successful DC 15 group Dexterity or Charisma (Stealth) check avoids the patrol. On a failure, the scene turns into a street brawl as the Red Plumes attempt to capture the characters.

Something Else. The party will no doubt think of another way out. Use your best judgment.

Difficulty Adjustments

Make the following adjustments if the party is weak or strong:

If the party is very weak or weak, remove both **scouts** and five **guards**.

If the party is strong, remove four **guards** and add two **veterans**.

If the party is very strong, treat as strong but remove two **guards** and add one **Red Plume Captain**.

Treasure

If Slagar is slain, the characters can claim his *sending stone* and any potions he didn't use.

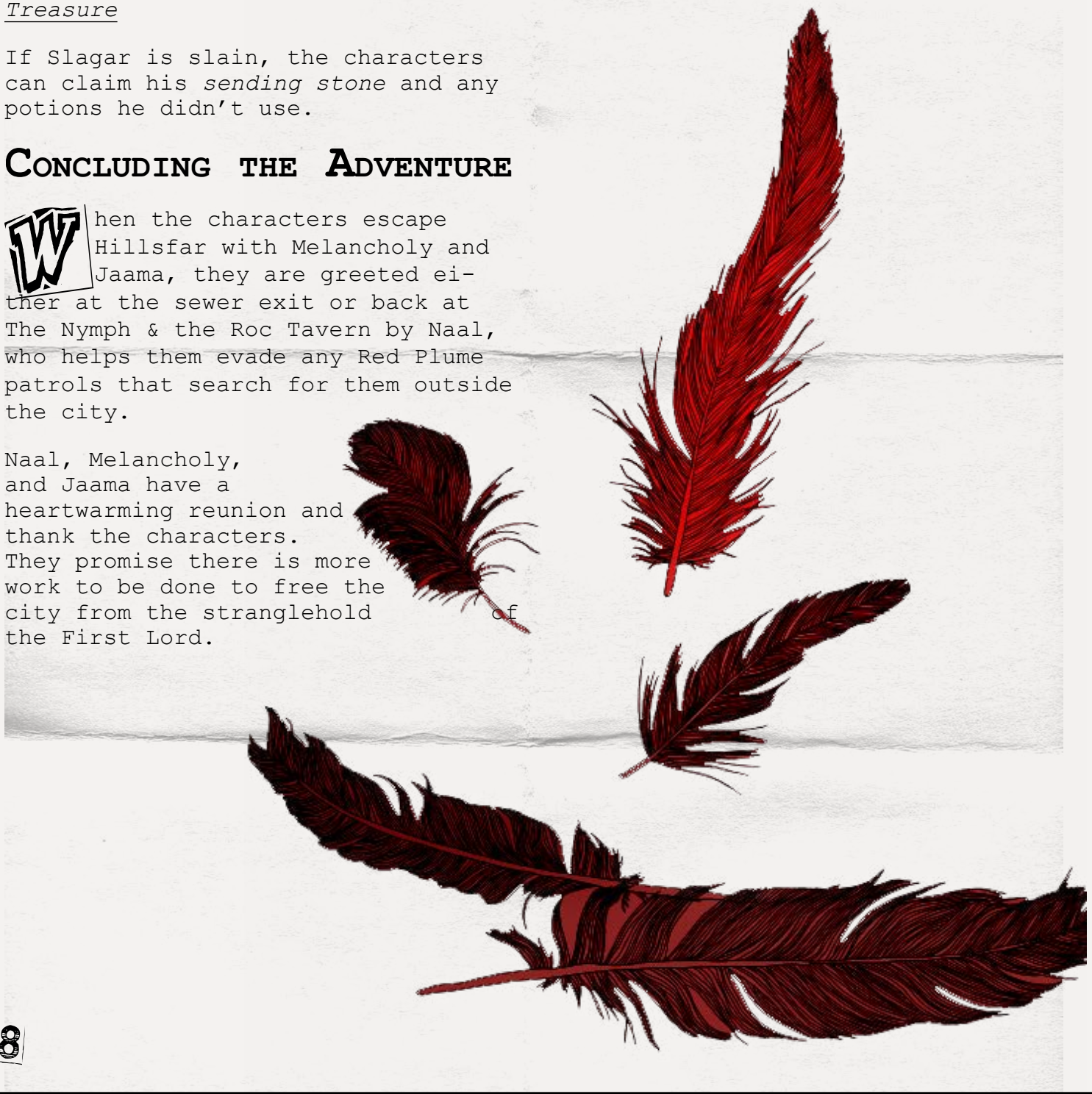
Concluding the Adventure

When the characters escape Hillsfar with Melancholy and Jaama, they are greeted either at the sewer exit or back at The Nymph & the Roc Tavern by Naal, who helps them evade any Red Plume patrols that search for them outside the city.

Naal, Melancholy, and Jaama have a heartwarming reunion and thank the characters. They promise there is more work to be done to free the city from the stranglehold of the First Lord.

Continuing the Adventure

This adventure is continued in the second of the Hillsfar Quartet adventures, Heroism in Hillsfar, which will be published in Eat the Rich Volume 2.



Appendix A: Monsters & NPCs

Red Plume Captain

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class	18 (plate armor)
Hit Points	60 (8d8 + 24)
Speed	30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws	Constitution +4, Wisdom +3
Skills	Intimidation +4, Perception +5
Senses	passive Perception 15
Languages	Common, Elvish, and two others of dwarvish, halfling, orcish, or other non-human languages
Challenge	3 (700 XP)

Brave. The Red Plume Captain has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Heart of Hatred. The Red Plume Captain has advantage on attack rolls against non-human enemies.

Actions

Greatsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 +3) slashing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

Leadership (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). For 1 minute, the Red Plume Captain can utter a special command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature that it can see within 30 feet of it makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand the Red Plume Captain. A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if the Red Plume Captain is incapacitated.

Reactions

Parry. The Red Plume Captain adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the captain must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Captain Slagar

In addition to the above, Captain Slagar carries a *sending stone* to Red Plume headquarters at Hillsfar Castle that he uses to call reinforcements where needed. He also carries a *potion of greater healing*, two *potions of healing*, and a *potion of invisibility* he uses if he is forced to escape.

Appendix B: Items

Priest Thorburn's Holy Symbol

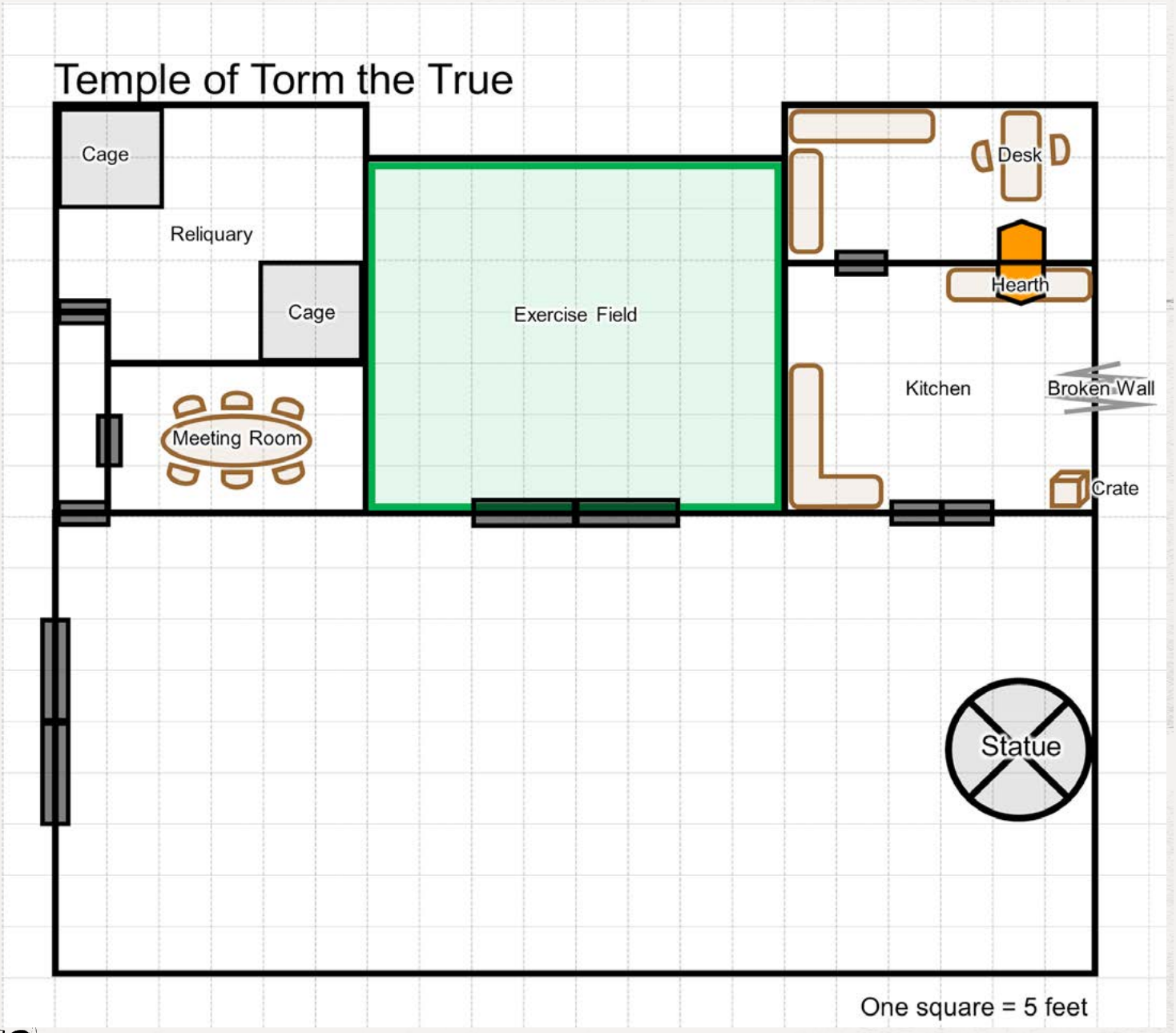
Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement by a cleric)

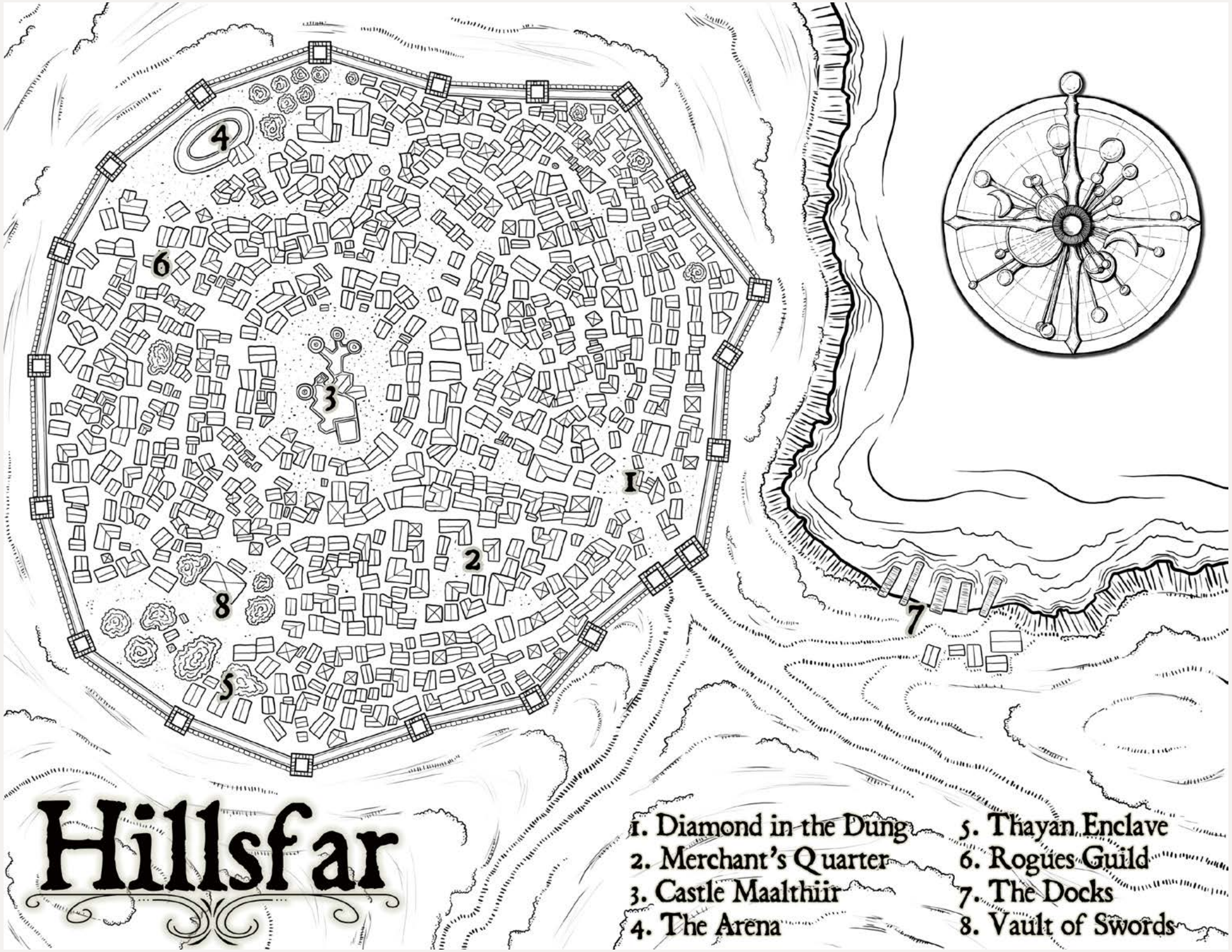
While holding this holy symbol in your hand, you gain a +1 bonus to your spell attack rolls and to the saving throw DCs of your cleric spells.

In addition, while holding the symbol and uttering a prayer to Torm the True, as an action you can regain 1 cleric spell slot of 3rd level or lower. Once you use this property, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

If you ever lie or break the law, this item ceases to function until you seek atonement and have a remove curse spell cast upon you by a cleric of Torm at least 3 levels higher than you.

Appendix C: Maps




Hillsfar
1. Diamond in the Dung
2. Merchant's Quarter
3. Castle Maalthiir
4. The Arena
5. Thayan Enclave
6. Rogues Guild
7. The Docks
8. Vault of Swords


John Latta

Acceptable Magic

Level 3| Setting Neutral

Meghan Kinnett

Meghan Kinnett, also known as Taru online, has been telling stories since she was old enough to speak. This love of stories followed her to college, where she earned a degree in English Literature in 2017. She only thought to pair her enthusiasm for writing and gaming in the past few years. "Acceptable Magic" marks Meghan's not only first published adventure on DM's Guild, but her first-ever foray into writing for tabletop RPGs. It explores a theme close to her heart - higher education's close ties to classism. You can find Meghan on Twitter (@swordnspell).

A prestigious magical academy is to be built near the failing rural town of Blackburn. However, the school's construction encroaches on a forest sacred to the local druid grove.

This dungeon is optimized for four 3rd-level characters.

Adventure Background

Powerful wizard Master Augustus Calmar made his way to the top through not-so-legitimate means. Now, the wizard has grand ambitions of being the headmaster of the Calmar School of Magic. Nobody knows for sure how he managed to convince the local lord to give up such a massive plot of land in the Moonbright Forest for development, but the rumor mill whispers Master Calmar's aptitude for the School of Enchantment has pulled more than a few strings on his behalf.

There's one problem - the Moonbright Forest is already inhabited. A longtime gathering place for many druid circles, the forest is considered both a sacred place and a home to them. They're not fond of the idea of going down without a fight. Construction on the Calmar School of Magic has slowed to a halt due to constant sabotage from the **druids**.

Meanwhile, the townsfolk of the nearby rural village Blackburn are caught in the middle. Their closeness to the forest made them old friends with the druids, but they saw the construction of the academy as their last hope amidst failing crops and an aging population.

Adventure Summary

Master Augustus Calmar has sent out a call to mercenaries and adventurers. He is offering a reward to anyone who can assist him in defending construction of the academy. Adventurers find their way to the town of Blackburn before the forest, where the poverty-stricken townsfolk are generally in support of the construction of the Calmar School of Magic in the hopes of having a more comfortable future.

After the heroes arrive, they meet Tammalee, a resident of Blackburn who serves as a go-between for Augustus and the druids. She offers them a place to sleep and an audience with Augustus. Upon meeting with the wizard, the adventurers are introduced to the knight Sir Derrick Emberlight and given a proposal: meet with the druids to act as a third-party for neutral diplomatic relations.

Unbeknownst to the party, Derrick is under the sway of one of Augustus Calmar's enchantments, and attempts to harm the leader of the druids Coriander. The altercation between the druids and the party leads to two reveals - Derrick realizes everyone he knows has been manipulated by Augustus, and Coriander tells Tammalee the town's crops are failing because the druids have been unable to perform the yearly fertility ritual they use to help the townsfolk.

Coriander invites the party, along with Tammalee and Derrick, to help the druids fight back against the wizard who has abused his magic to take their sacred land and ruin the lives of the townsfolk. Augustus Calmar, realizing the druids are preparing for one last confrontation, attempts to flee, but not without his own guards to defend him.

Hooks

Blackburn and the Moonbright Forest are remote. The town is a dilapidated farming village located off a well-traveled trade route, the kind of place people pass through without stopping for long. Adventurers often pass by without anything catching their eye.

A Call For Help

Bernard (NG he/him human **commoner**) is not a messenger by trade, but the plight of his hometown Blackburn has driven him to beg for help from adventurers. He enters any tavern he can find along the major trade route to put up fliers (see the section "The Flier"). If the party shows interest in his cause, Bernard tells them about a conflict between Master Augustus Calmar and the druids sabotaging the construction of his school of magic. He also tells them to ask for his mother **Tammalee** (NG she/her human **commoner**), who can provide them a place to stay in Blackburn, and hands them a flier with more information.

Stranger On The Road

Parties of traveling heroes also stumble across Bernard making camp at the side of the road. He invites them to keep company with him by the fire and offers them food and drink. Bernard, noticing they are adventurers, tells them the same information he gives them in "A Call For Help."

Rumors and Fliers

The same fliers carried by Bernard appear in other villages, towns, and cities across the country. Because other messengers have been through these places, the status of the conflict between Augustus Calmar and

the **druids**, as well as Blackburn's failing crops, is the latest talk of the town.

Acceptable Magic

The Flier

If the hook involves the party seeing a flier, this is the information they receive.

Reward: 300 gp per person. Follow trade route to Blackburn. Master Augustus Calmar's School of Magic attacked by druids. Ask for Tammalee.

Part 1: Blackburn

After a few days' journey of traveling along the old trade route, you stumble across a small farming village. The houses are run-down, the crops failing, and the people tending them weak and aging. One house stands out from the rest, nearer to the dilapidated sign that says, "Welcome to Blackburn!"

Features of the Area

Market. The town center is 60 feet across and 30 feet wide, lined with market stalls. In more prosperous days these stalls got more use, but now the residents only come out occasionally to offer sparse goods and crafts. Still, the party can find tools, rations, and other trinkets here. Some townsfolk also use the Market as a communal area to gamble.

Bar. The largest gathering spot in town is an old bar not far from the Market. Because travelers don't frequently stop in Blackburn, there is no formal inn and tavern, but the bar has a few makeshift bedrooms in the back for patrons who imbibe too much drink and passing strangers with some spare coin.

NPCs

Tammalee (NG she/her human commoner). Tammalee has lived in Blackburn her entire life. All her adult children have flown the nest; her husband passed a few years ago. She now tends her small farm alone.

Development

Regardless of whether or not the party was told to look for Tammalee in the hook, she is working in the field by her home. She owns the house nearest the town's entrance. Tammalee shouts a greeting to the party and welcomes them to the town.

If the party does not mention the flier themselves, Tammalee asks them if they saw the flier. She answers any questions the party has regarding the construction of Calmar's School of Magic and the village's plight with eager sincerity, but is hesitant to discuss the **druids** beyond the fact they've been attacking the construction workers' work camp. A DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals Tammalee is hiding something about the druids.

Tammalee deflects any further questions, instead offering to take the adventurers to see **Master Augustus Calmar**.

Part 2: The Work Camp

A portion of the forest's edge has been cleared to make way for the foundation of the Calmar School of Magic. A few walls are in the process of being built. Wind picks up dust from the freshly dug earth and sweeps it across the site. Around the skeleton of the academy is a makeshift work camp consisting of large pitched tents crafted from heavy, textured canvas.

Features of the Area

Cover. The work camp has three 10 ft. long partial walls and five low piles of construction material occupying a 10 feet by 10 feet block that can serve as cover. Partial walls are tall enough to provide three-quarters or total cover. Construction materials provide half-cover.

Tents. There are ten large work tents. These are sturdy, rectangular shelters about 10 feet by 15 feet and one belongs to Augustus. The other nine are for guards and commoners hired to work for him. The tents are organized around the edges of the construction site.

NPCs

Master Augustus Calmar (LE he/him high elf) Augustus uses his magical education and connections to do what he pleases. He also wears a ring of mind shielding; any magical attempts to communicate telepathically or read his mind fail. Augustus uses the stat block for a **mage**, but has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips: *friends, mage hand, prestidigitation, sword burst*

- 1st level: *charm person, mage armor, shield, sleep*
- 2nd level: *crown of madness, suggestion*
- 3rd level: *counterspell, dispel magic, nondetection*
- 4th level: *confusion, hallucinatory terrain*
- 5th level: *dominate person*

Sir Derrick Emberlight (LG he/him human, **knight**) Derrick serves a nearby lord who owns the land on which Blackburn is built. While he is loyal to the law, he also believes his role is to enforce justice and keep the people safe.

Guards There are two guards patrolling the forest edge at any given time, two stationed at Augustus' tent, and six more distributed through the camp. They respect the authority of both Augustus and Derrick. .

Development

Heroes find a mix of workers in the work camp. Some Blackburn townsfolk have offered their aid, but many workers look like they've been brought in, especially the order of **guards** patrolling the forest's edge. If questioned, they mention their lord is a friend of Augustus, but are otherwise tight-lipped. Anyone with whom the party speaks deflects them to the future schoolmaster's authority on the topic of the **druids.**

Master Augustus Calmar's tent is the largest, the furthest away from the forest, and has two guards posted outside the entrance. Tammalee advocates for the party, and the **knights** allow them inside. Augustus sits at a makeshift desk surrounded by books, plans, maps, and materials. He is accompanied by Sir Derrick Emberlight.

Augustus explains the druids, led by their elder, have been stealing, burning, and destroying materials needed to finish construction, as well as attacking workers clearing trees. He would like to attempt reasoning with them one last time through a third-party - the adventurers. If the party accepts, Augustus requires Derrick to accompany them.

Master Augustus Calmar's Motives

Augustus is sincere in his mission. He believes the **druids'** ways are undeveloped, even backwards, and the academy encourages a more refined, progressive view of magic. He also believes reaching this goal justifies the means, but won't openly admit this.

Tammalee offers to act as a messenger to the druids because of the town's past friendly relations with them. She invites the party to stay in her home. In the meantime, she goes to request an audience with the **druids'** elder at the forest's edge.

Part 3: Tammalee's Home

The inside of the old farmhouse smells of baked goods and fresh linens. A breeze ruffles the curtains around cracked windows. Tammalee's home is large but modest, but there is a feeling of emptiness due to the absence of her late husband and ten kids that have since grown and left.

Features of the Area

Plenty of Space: Tammalee's ten children shared five rooms - three rooms with two small beds and two rooms with bunk beds, so there is ample room for a party of adventurers to spend the night.

Gifts From The Forest: If an adventurer succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check while looking around Tammalee's home, they find dried herbs, old bottles of herbal tinctures, and carved wooden gifts that appear to be of druid make.

Development

This is an option to have a scene in Tammalee's home when the party spends the night. Tammalee spends most of her days tending to the fields, since she now lives alone and has little help with the farm, so the party is alone in the house during the day. At sunset, she comes home to prepare dinner and get ready for bed. If confronted about the gifts from the **druid**, she admits the **druids** and the townsfolk are old friends. She mentions the yearly spring fertility festivals they hold together in which Coriander blessed Blackburn's land, but this didn't occur the past year due to the conflict over the Calmar School of Magic.

Part 4: The Meeting

Tammalee and Derrick meet the adventurers in the morning. Coriander and four **druids** are waiting at the forest's edge at dawn.

NPCs

Elder Coriander: (NG she/her wood elf). Coriander is several hundred years old and has watched over Moonbright Forest for centuries. She is stern, but sincere. Coriander's stat block can be found in Appendix A: Monsters & NPCs.

Druids: Coriander is accompanied by four **druids**. They are loyal to Coriander and unwavering in their devotion to the forest.

Under the Influence

Augustus cast *suggestion* on Derrick with instructions to kill Coriander if she refuses to leave the forest. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check on

Derrick reveals he is affected by enchantment magic.

Development

There is no argument convincing enough to make the **druids** leave Moonbright Forest. Coriander can be persuaded to offer ideas for alternate locations for the school and invite the party back to the **druids'** village, but Moonbright Forest is sacred to her people. Once this becomes clear, Derrick attacks unless he is no longer charmed.

The **druids** attack to subdue and capture Derrick and anyone who assists him, not to kill. Derrick is outmatched. If the party helps Derrick, the **druids** capture them; if they help, the **druids** invite them back to the village. Any damage dealt to Derrick removes the spell effect, but if he is still under Augustus' influence at this time, Coriander lightly slaps him. Once in his right mind, Derrick is appalled at his master's actions and questions Augustus' motives.

Features of the Area

Bartering: The shops in Moonbright Forest's village have no use for currency, but trade items. Shops in the druid village include:

- An Herbalist: *potions of healing* can be found here, along with any other potions you deem appropriate for the party. Keep in mind most potions are magic items and adjust rarity accordingly.
- Armory: Weapons and armor of druid make do not contain metal, but heroes who wear leather armor or wield weapons such as a quarterstaff find goods here.
- Traveling Goods: Items such as bedrolls, torches, rations, and ropes can be found in this shop.

Captives Entangled: The **druids** of Moonbright Forest typically do not take prisoners, so they have no prison. Instead, captives are kept by casting the *entangle* spell. If the adventurers are restrained by this spell, they must make a DC 14 Strength saving throw.

Part 5: Moonbright Forest

The canopy of the forest allows some sunlight to filter through in radiant columns. Soft moss grows underfoot, and aside from your muffled footfalls, Moonbright Forest is peaceful. Only the sound of delicate birdsong and the sight of small white butterflies fluttering through dappled shadows captures your attention. Suddenly, the forest opens into a small village built in and around the trees, surrounded with lush, flowering gardens full of vegetables and herbs.



Development

Regardless of whether or not the party came willingly, once the party reaches the village, Coriander tells Tammalee the **druids** used to cast *plant growth* on Blackburn's land every year after the melting of the last snow, but the past year the **druids** were driven from the land by Master Calmar's men. Blackburn's crops are failing because of the school, not the **druids**.

Coriander asks Tammalee, Derrick, and the adventurers to help her drive Master Augustus Calmar from the land. Tammalee points out many of the townsfolk should help if they know the truth about their crops. If any of the adventurers are still influenced by the reward offered by Augustus, Derrick informs them his lord will withdraw financial patronage once the wizard's corruption is exposed, leaving Augustus penniless.

Once she is sure the party means no harm, Coriander releases any captives.

Preparing For Battle

The party has the opportunity to remain in Moonbright Forest with the **druids** or return to Blackburn with Tammalee. Coriander casts *pass without trace* on Tammalee and any companions so they can slip past the **guards** patrolling the forest's edge.

Trustworthy: If adventurers choose to help recruit **commoners** in Blackburn, they roll with an additional +2 to Persuasion when Tammalee is within 5 ft. of them. Have the heroes accompanying Tammalee roll a single Charisma (Persuasion) check to determine how many townsfolk are recruited.

- DC 5: five **commoners**
- DC 10: five **commoners**, one **archer** (VGTM 210)
- DC 15: ten **commoners**, two **archers**

If no one accompanies Tammalee to Blackburn, she brings back five **commoners** and one **archer**.

Either way, when townsfolk come to the forest to help the **druids'** cause, the **druids** lend those who use the **commoner** stat block padded armor and a javelin per person.

Part 6: The Final Confrontation

The work camp is oddly silent. Fewer guards than usual patrol the forest's edge. The tents flap in a whistling gust of wind as the first few unfinished walls of the academy and piles of materials and debris stand in the midst of the camp.

Features of the Area

See section "The Work Camp." All features remain unchanged.

Development

Augustus is anticipating a large-scale attack from the **druids**. He is in his tent packing supplies for the road and preparing a horse for his escape. He is accompanied by two **guards**. There are eight **guards** hiding throughout the camp along with ten **commoners** on whom Augustus has cast *suggestion*. They attack as soon as the party and their companions arrive at the camp.

The ten **commoners** fighting for Augustus have been instructed to target the druids. They do not pursue anyone else. After the spell is broken, these commoners flee the battle. The two **guards** with Augustus follow his orders. All the other

guards target anyone except Derrick. Succeeding on a DC 10 Persuasion check against any of the **guards** sway them to the party's side.

Augustus does not fight unless he must defend himself. His goal is not to harm anyone, but to flee as soon as possible. Because of his high CR, you may choose to have Augustus target Coriander rather than the party. She has a high Wisdom score and rolls with advantage on saves against being charmed due to her ancestry.

The party is accompanied by Coriander, five **druids**, Derrick, and however many **commoners** and **archers** (if any) joined the cause.

Combat ends when Master Augustus Calmar is incapacitated.

Rewards

Augustus is wearing clothing worth 15 gp, three mundane rings worth about 5 gp apiece, and a ring of mind shielding. If Augustus is killed in combat, his consciousness becomes trapped in the ring of mind shielding and is able to communicate with whomever wears it. He is also carrying the deed to the land on which the school is being built, his personal spell book, and an arcane focus.

The **guards** are carrying spears and shields as well as wearing chain shirts.

Concluding the Adventure

After Augustus Calmar has been incapacitated in some way, the adventurers and friends easily find the deed to the land as gifted to him by Derrick's lord. Derrick and a few of the **druids** keep an eye on Augustus, along with any **guards** who defected to the party's side. Meanwhile, the villagers and other **druids** celebrate while Coriander performs the traditional ritual blessing to revive their crops in time for the harvest. The heroes have the option to join in the festivities or help Derrick.

Afterwards, Derrick invites the party to bring Augustus and the deed back to his lord to pursue persecution for the wizard and sanctuary for the **druids**. The town, despite their overall lack of funds, pools enough gold to reward the party the promised 300 gp per person, while the **druids** furnish the adventurers with a *healing potion* per person and a *wand of goodberry* (see Appendix B: Items).

Continuing the Adventure

- The conclusion to the adventure can serve as the next hook for the party. The adventurers can choose to request an audience with Derrick's lord alongside the **knight**. Some ideas for solutions would be to designate the forest as protected land or even negotiate to give them the deed to the forest.

- Alternately, if Augustus manages to escape, either from the Final Confrontation or during Blackburn's celebration with the druids, the party can choose to track him down.

- Was the lord truly under the influence of Augustus Calmar's magic, or were they as corrupt as Augustus? The party can pursue an interwoven network of nobles and aristocrats granting one another illicit favors. The system that allowed Augustus' manipulation to occur is still in place.

- Some of the more nomadic **druids** are preparing to travel through to the other side of Moonbright Forest. They invite the party to accompany them in their journey. The deeper parts of the forest are inhabited by dangerous beasts. Perhaps even under the light of the full moon, some of the more tricksy Fey folk come out to play.

Appendix A: Monsters & NPCs

ELDER CORIANDER

Medium humanoid (wood elf), neutral good

ARMOR CLASS 13
HIT POINTS 35 (8d8)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)

SKILLS Medicine +7, Nature +4, Perception +7
SENSES passive Perception 17
LANGUAGES Common, Elvish, Sylvan
CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

FEY ANCESTRY. Coriander has advantage on saving throws against being Charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.

TRANCE. Coriander does not need to sleep. Instead she meditates deeply, remaining semiconscious, for 4 hours a day. After resting this way, Coriander gains the same benefits a human does from 8 hours of sleep.

SPELLCASTING. Coriander is an 8th level spell caster. Her spell casting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks).

Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft, produce flame, shillelagh, thorn whip*
1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, earth tremor, entangle, longstrider*
2nd level (3 slots): *barkskin, moonbeam*
3rd level (3 slots): *conjure animals, dispel magic, plant growth*
4th level (2 slots): *grasping vine, guardian of nature*

ACTIONS

QUARTERSTAFF. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6 -1) bludgeoning damage, 3 (1d8-1) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands, or 8 (1d8+4) bludgeoning damage with *shillelagh*.

Appendix B: Items

Wand of Goodberry

Wand, common

This wand has 3 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend a charge to cast the *goodberry* spell from it. The wand regains all expended charges daily at dawn.





Rise And Fall

Level 4| Forgotten Realms
Christian Eichhorn

Christian Eichhorn grew up playing classics like the Baldur's Gate and Icewind Dale series, as well as unforgettable games like Fallout and Planescape: Torment. Since nothing captured these intense experiences in the years after, Christian set out to write his own.

Two years later, there are a plethora of Christian's stories available on the DMsGuild. If you want to know more, follow him on Twitter under @squirrelgolem.

Anger is brewing in Krakbarr, and the pressure has reached a critical stage. A violent uprising from the belly of the Undercity is about to sweep away the old order and the ruling class. A band of heroes must assemble to lead the revolutionaries to victory. Otherwise, the rebellion will be snuffed out by the king's troops and the old order will remain in place.

This adventure is designed for 3-5 3rd to 5th level characters and is optimized for 5 characters with an average party level (APL) of 4.

Adventure Requirements

Before playing this adventure, familiarize yourself with the **Unearthed Arcana Mass Combat** rules (https://media.wizards.com/2017/dnd/downloads/2017_UAMassCombat_MCUA_v1.pdf). Most importantly, you must know how a unit's initiative is calculated and how attacks are handled.

Adventure Background

An unprecedented surge of births, caused by the Thunder Blessing, led to overpopulation and food shortages in Krakbarr, a dwarven stronghold. As a remedy, the king sent dwarves on punitive expeditions against the drow and other dwellers of the deep or enslaved them as cheap labor. To keep the lower caste in check, King Habromm goes as far as to abduct children who are gifted with arcane talent. These children are brainwashed, trained, and enlisted in his secret police.

At first, the ruling caste deemed the oppression a necessary evil. However, many luxuries came with the increased production and influx of spoils for the ruling class. After many years, the King and his advisors considered these boons indispensible and fastened their iron grip on the Undercity.

The Thunder Blessing

In the Year of Thunder, 1306 DR, Moradin increased the fertility of the dwarves, considering it a gift to a dying race. If your campaign takes place in a setting in which Moradin doesn't exist, consider a different explanation for the increase in births.

Sarion, a charismatic veteran and hero, has finally returned from one of the many punitive expeditions. He rallies the dwarves in the Undercity who are ready for change and takes the fight to the King.

Adventure Hooks

Krakbarr-Born and Raised. The characters are Krakbarr natives and witnessed the terrible conditions themselves. Each of them has their own story to tell, and eagerly supports Sarion in his endeavor. Maybe they returned with him from the expedition, or maybe there is a traitor among the characters? Work with the players and create intriguing backgrounds for their new characters to play this as a one-shot or the start of a campaign.

Troubling News. Emigrants carried news about the conditions and atrocities of Krakbarr into the world. Considering its location in the Cloud Peaks, the Lords' Alliance send investigators to verify these claims. If your campaign isn't set in the Forgotten Realms, consider a different faction that upholds order. The collapse of an entire dwarven kingdom could lead to a crisis on the surface, after all. Disguised as merchants, the characters journey to the Undercity and hear of an imminent speech. Intrigued, they join the assembled dwarves.

Adventure Summary

In Part 1, the characters listen to Sarion's speech in the Great Foundry during which the King's troops arrive to break up the gathering and arrest the ringleaders. After the characters get their hands dirty, Sarion approaches them with a simple request: lead the rebellion to the surface and to victory!

In Part 2, the characters and Sarion meet at a junction to form squads and debate tactics.

In Part 3, the characters each lead a strike team to wrest control of the Grand Hoist, a gigantic elevator. With the machine in the hands of the revolutionaries, enough dwarves can be brought to the Upper City for the final battle.

In Part 4, the characters rest and prepare for the attack on the surface. Use this time for role-play and exposition.

In Part 5, the characters must break through the enemy lines and rush to the throne room, where King Morcholas Habromm needs to be relieved of his head.

Part 1: Sarion's Call

The Great Furnace never sleeps. While hundreds of dwarves have gathered and wait for the speaker, others operate the colossal smelters and pour metal into the molds. Waves of intense heat wash over you and sweat soaks your clothes. Next to you stand dwarven workers, women and children as well as armed warriors. Finally, the murmur ends when a scarred dwarf ascends the dais.

Features

Sights, Smells and Sounds

The characters stand in the Great

Furnace, a hot, smoke-filled, inhospitable place. Liquid metal smolders in gigantic kettles. It stinks of coal, sludge, and sulphur. Ash and iron chips rain down on the assembled mass of dwarves, who whisper amongst themselves and look quizzically upon the empty stage. Everybody is tense.

Dimensions and Construction

The Great Furnace is a gigantic hall. It is 600 feet long, 300 feet wide, and 300 feet high. The walls feature many stairs and scaffolds with which the dwarves reach the machinery and workshops.

Worldbuilding

It is essential to set up the history of Krakbarr to explain the characters' motivation and capture the player's interest. Let the characters interact with the following NPCs before Sarion enters the stage.

The Veteran

A soldier missing an arm and one eye calmly waits for Sarion to enter the stage. The veteran notices the characters and asks them why they are here. After listening to their story, the soldier tells the characters of the senseless slaughter of the punitive expeditions they were sent into and that they returned with Sarion a few days ago. Yesterday, the veteran was drafted to participate in another punitive expedition. Enough is enough!

The Grieving Parent

A dwarf with a portrait in their arms stands next to the characters. The picture shows a young dwarven child. From time to time, the dwarf hopelessly shouts "They took her!" with tears streaming down their face. If asked about it, the dwarf explains that their child was taken by strangers just the night before. The parent fears that the child was taken by the secret police, never to return.

Development

Sarion's Appearance.

Sarion appears in the Great Furnace and makes his way to the stage. The crowd cheers him on, but his face is stoic. He ascends the stairs and begins to speak:

> "Comrades, friends, my family! Against all odds, I have returned. However, many of our brothers and sisters needlessly lost their lives! We all know what these so called expeditions are. Cullings! These pompous fools send our best into the deep to die for nothing. While we starve, they eat from overflowing tables! While we die in the digs, in the shafts, and in the trenches, they lead a sweet life and suck the marrow from our bones! I say it ends. It ends today!"

The King's Troops

During the speech, the king's troops occupy the scaffolding to the right of the listeners. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15 or higher notice thirty cowled and armed troops 150 feet away from them. They are disguised as simple workers but not perfectly so. Should the characters decide to make a preemptive strike at this point, the king's troops are surprised by the attack. After Sarion's speech ends and the applause and shouting quiets down, or after the characters warn the dwarves about the suspicious troops, the captain of the King's troops addresses the assembled dwarves from the scaffolds:

"This is an illegal gathering. In King Habromm's name I hereby dissolve this assembly. Return to your homes peacefully and surrender your leader to us!"

The crowd ignores the warnings, stones start flying in the direction of the speaking captain. The captain gives a signal and bolts fly into the mass of the protestors. Sarion must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw as several bolts hit him. Sarion takes 18 (4d8) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

The Skirmish

Most of the crowd runs, but a few armed warriors (guards) stem the tide and advance on the King's troops, Sarion (veteran) among them. If the characters join the defenders, they must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw during the advance. They take 9 (2d8) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The King's troops discard their spent crossbows and go into melee after one volley.

Monsters

The characters face ten guards, led by their captain, a knight.

Tactics

The guards fight methodically in closed ranks. Once the captain is dead, the troops surrender. Their aim is to throw back the attackers, or retreat and return with reinforcements.



Difficulty Adjustment

This is a Deadly encounter. Make the following adjustments for weaker or stronger parties:

If the party is very weak, remove 6 guards.

- If the party is weak, remove 4 guards.
- If the party is strong, add 4 guards.
- If the party is very strong, add 4 guards and 1 **veteran**.

Aftermath

While the characters fight some of the King's troops, Sarion and his warriors rout the remaining forces. After, Sarion approaches the characters:

"I am impressed, and this seldom happens. I need your help. We have to take the Grand Hoist before the King's army arrives. If we don't, they'll cut us to pieces for what we've done here. I will gather more fighters and equipment. You do the same. Meet us at the last junction before the Hoist. Don't squander any time!"

Cowards!

Assuming the characters did not engage the king's forces and fled instead, they are approached by Sarion's recruiters. They tell the characters of the impending raid on the Grand Hoist. Should they decline to join, the raid fails and the adventure ends.

Stocking Up

The characters now have the chance to buy additional equipment from nearby vendors. If you play this as

a one-shot, let the players each choose items worth 150 gp for their characters. Characters who negotiate with the vendor and succeed on a DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check get one item worth up to 50 gp for free.

Part 2: The Junction

After gathering your equipment, you arrive at the junction, but you're alone. Were you too late? You can't hear the sound of battle so either the fighting is done or hasn't started yet.

Give the characters time to discuss and roleplay. Before they make any fatal decision, continue as follows:

After a few minutes of indecision you see a signal light in the distance. You answer, and finally, Sarion arrives with his warriors.

Forming the Squads

To mount the attack the characters each take charge of a small squad. They can each pick two from the following: **acolyte**, **scout**, **thug**. (The thugs don't have their heavy crossbows.) While forming squads, the characters can spend hit dice to recover hit points without taking a short rest.

Battleplan

Sarion explains that they need to strike at two places simultaneously: the barracks and the foreman's office. Both places are usually heavily guarded. Sarion plans to take his warriors to the barracks and hold the guards back, while the characters occupy the foreman's office and the adjacent machine room. After that, the surviving dwarven guards in the barracks should surrender, cut off from reinforcements. Sarion provides a map of the complex for the characters but dwarves who were born and raised in Krakbarr know it inside out.

Against the Clock

Sarion knows the hoist will transport reinforcements after the attack starts. This means the attackers must swiftly either occupy the machine room to temporarily disable the machinery or the foreman's office from where the machine is operated. Otherwise, it spells the rebellion's certain doom. You can model this with a countdown of 1 hour in real time. The close-quarters combat in these confined spaces against the clock should make for an exciting battle.

Part 3: The Grand Hoist

Assuming the characters didn't advance stealthily, read or paraphrase the following:

When you enter the chamber, a handful of dwarves are occupied with routine maintenance work. Their friendly smile is washed away by the sight of your weapons and in their confusion, they scream for help! The guards at the entrances fall back when they see you coming.

Features

Sights, Smells and Sounds

A breeze blows up the large borehole of the Grand Hoist, which functions as a large chimney. Wailing can be heard from high above, produced by the rushing air. The smell of oil permeates the area since the enormous cogs must be kept lubricated. A map of the area displays the most important features.

The Foreman's Office

The door to the foreman's office can be barred from the inside, which the foreman does when the alarm is raised. The characters can break

down the door by succeeding on three DC 20 Strength checks, which gradually break the heavy iron door. These checks need not be in succession.

Development

The Struggle

Sarion and his warriors storm the barracks, where there's a total of 70 guards. Meanwhile, the characters engage the troops in the machine room and the foreman's office. Sarion's fight is resolved as a series of abstract checks. To determine whether Sarion is successful in his task, roll a d20 at the beginning of each round of combat. If you roll below 11 at the beginning of two subsequent rounds, 1d4 + 1 guards break through and attack the characters' forces located at the foreman's office or the machine room. Each time this happens, Sarion takes 2d6 slashing damage. Once Sarion dies, the remaining forces break through.

Monsters

Five veterans are stationed in the machine room. In the foreman's office are the foreman and two members of Habromm's secret police (Appendix A) as well as two **spies**. Treat the foreman as a thug.

Tactics

The veterans fire their crossbows from inside the machine room. They have half cover since they hide behind the machinery. Veterans who lose more than 30 hit points fall back further into the room so they can't be engaged with ranged attacks. This way, the veterans try to goad the attackers into the machine room so the forces in the foreman's office can attack them from behind. The dwarves hiding in the foreman's office wait for their enemies to pass and then attack them in the rear. If that is not possible, the members of the secret police use their action to cast invisibility and try to get behind enemy lines for a surprise attack.

The Secret Police

If you use the "Krakbarr-Born and Raised" hook, consider the possibility that one member of the secret police could be a character's lost relative. A character who recognises one of the members as a relative can attempt a Charisma (Persuasion) check to bring the dwarf to their senses:

Check	Result
12-14	The dwarf is confused and Disengages, but rejoins the fight after 3 rounds as a foe.
15-17	The dwarf is confused and attempts to flee.
18+	The dwarf remembers and joins the fight against the king's troops.

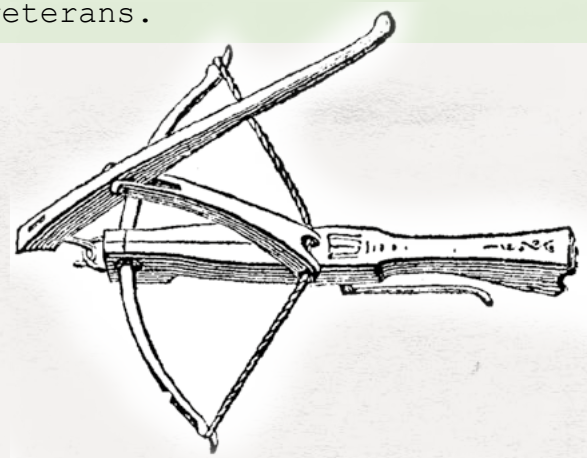
Difficulty Adjustment

This is a Deadly encounter. Make the following adjustments for weaker or stronger parties:

If the party is very weak or weak, remove 1 veteran.

If the party is strong, add 1 veteran.

If the party is very strong, add 3 veterans.



Part 4: Calm Before the Storm

Assuming the characters prevailed, paraphrase or read the following:

> Finally, the last of your enemies lies dead. You take a good look at each of the slain dwarves' faces—something to remember. The insurgents secure the hoist by removing one of the cogs, rendering it inoperable until the final assault. It's time to catch your breath and clear your head. The biggest challenge is yet to come!

Preparing the Assault

Sarion approaches the surviving characters, thanks them, and explains what comes next. The army and the Grand Hoist must be prepared for the attack. Sarion tasks the characters to prepare everything which is needed and gives them 8 hours. During this time, the characters can take a long rest, come up with a battle plan, and order the workers to prepare the Grand Hoist with whatever modifications are needed. The modifications determine how much cover the attackers have from attacks from above once they ascend in Part 5, if at all. It depends on the ingenuity and foresight of the players or characters. Meanwhile, Sarion rallies additional troops and equips them with armor and weapons from the barracks. Players whose characters were killed can take control of Sarion or a different NPC for the final fight.

The Fallen

During the fight, the characters might have killed the two members of the secret police. Both of them were children abducted by the King's men many years ago. Depending on the characters' backstory, they might find that one of them is a relative. Otherwise, they might find a different dwarf mourning the dead dwarves.

Sarion's Plan

The key to victory is killing Habromm and not killing every last soldier in Krakbarr. Therefore Sarion gives the following order: Units who eliminate—in other words rout—an enemy unit don't reinforce their comrades but instead hastily make their way to the throne room and kill King Habromm.

The Ascent

After 8 hours, the warriors assemble at the Grand Hoist. The characters each take charge of one unit according to the Unearthed Arcana Mass Combat Rules as the Commander. At your discretion, Sarion takes charge of one unit as well. Each unit is comprised of 50 thugs and has a Battle Rating (BR) of 10. The morale rating of each unit is 0, adjusted by the Charisma modifier of its Commander. Each character may address their troops individually with a speech, raising the troops' morale by +2 if they succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Performance) check. The Grand Hoist brings the forces of the rebellion to the surface, where the final battles awaits them.

Part 5: The Ascent

The cogs and shafts of the Grand Hoist labor under the weight of the revolutionaries, but slowly the platform brings you to the surface—you hope that you have prepared well enough. By your side stand ordinary people: smiths, fletchers, brewers, and farmers who have armed themselves with what they've found. Their spirit must offset their lack of training now!

Features

Sights, Smells and Sounds

The destination of the ascending troops is a place high up in the mountains, where snow gathers on high spires and a crisp wind blows. The familiar smell of earth and molten metal is completely absent here. Aside from the defending troops, the Upper City appears deserted. No civilians in sight! Several cranes and minecarts surround the area which usually freight the goods transported to the surface.

Battleground

The battle takes place on a 500-foot square. The attackers are encircled by the defending units.

Against the Clock. Once King Habromm receives word about the fight, he prepares to run. The following could occur:

- If the first unit that breaks through moves immediately to the throne room, they find the King sitting on the throne.
- If the first unit that breaks through delays the move to the throne room to wait for a second unit, the Commanders must succeed on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to still reach the throne room in time. Only one of the Commanders must succeed on the check, which applies to their entire unit. If either succeeds, they find the King sitting in the throne room.
- If the third unit breaks through and no unit has moved to the throne room, the king has fled. The throne room is empty when the revolutionaries arrive.

Development

Attack From Above

The defenders await an attack and pepper whatever comes up on the Grand Hoist with bolts. If the attackers have full cover, they are safe from the attacks. Reduce their Battle Rating (BR) by 1 if they only have three-quarters cover or half-cover with regard to attacks from above. Reduce their BR by 2 if they have no cover at all.

The Melee

Once the Grand Hoist reaches the surface, the units engage. The number of enemy units matches that of the characters. The enemy units are composed of 50 thugs and have a BR of 10. They start with a morale of +4. When an attacking unit is eliminated, the defending unit helps an ally. The unit which receives help has advantage on its Attack action. Remember: When the BR of a unit is reduced by 1, five creatures in the unit die.

Breakthrough

Once the first unit eliminates an enemy unit, paraphrase or read out loud:

Cheers and taunts fill the air, a breakthrough was made! You see dwarves throw down their weapons and run in fear—unsightly but

understandable in the face of your onslaught. However, the battle rages on, the rest of the defenders seemingly unimpressed by their wavering comrades. You hear Sarion's scream loud and clear despite the battleroar: "Run now! To the throne room, or all is lost!"

Part 6: The End

Should one of the characters arrive in time to find the King still sitting on the throne, paraphrase or read out loud:

Your heavy boots send echoes through these extensive halls, accompanied by the panting of the men and women following you. Exhausted, you storm into the throne room. King Habromm, in the midst of taking a deep swig from his rhyton, stares at you in horror and lets go of his drink. The red wine pools at his feet, flowing down the marble steps.

Otherwise, the insurgents lose the day and have to retreat. Paraphrase or read out loud:

The King is gone, the throne stands empty. What now? You search the hall for any traces of the coward but to no avail. It brutally hits you: the mission has failed. Without the King's head, there will be no swift end to the fighting—time to fall back and regroup.

Development

Monsters

The character and the rest of their unit must face King Habromm (veteran) and his bodyguard (**gladiator**).

Tactics

The bodyguard storms right into the mass of intruders, while King Habromm hides behind his large stone throne. When the bodyguard dies or Habromm loses more than 40 hit points, the King surrenders. Habromm throws his weapon to the ground and prostrates himself. By doing this, he hopes that reinforcements arrive in time to save his life.

The King Surrenders

Paraphrase or read out loud:

"What do you want of me? I have done no wrong! My advisers conceived all the plans and machinations. I am but a puppet, forced to put my name on every decree they authored! Let me go, and I will guide you to the secret treasure chamber. It's yours for the taking!"

The King Dies

Assuming the characters kill the king, they fulfill their mission. Habromm's death marks the end of the story. Continue to Concluding the Adventure, read a short epilogue, and ask the players how their characters might act in the future, now that they have become the revolutionary council.

Concluding the Adventure

The King is Dead, Long Live the Revolution!

The only way to end Habromm's reign of terror is to kill him. Should the characters achieve this goal, paraphrase or read out loud:

After the King's death, peace returns to Krakbarr. The Revolutionary Council does its best to root out the last loyalists and distributes the supplies found in the Upper City to the hungry dwarves in the deep. Many challenges loom in the future but you are hopeful.

The King Lives

Should the characters arrive too late they find the throne empty and Habromm gone. Without his head, the loyalists and defenders refuse to surrender and drive the revolutionaries back into the deep. Since King Habromm proved a coward, the seeds of rebellion sprout in the dark, and may once more break through the surface in the future. Meanwhile, the characters and Sarion have to lie low.



Appendix A: Monsters & NPCs

DWARVEN SECRET POLICE

Medium humanoid (dwarf), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 14 (studded leather armor)
HIT POINTS 39 (6d8 + 12)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

SAVING THROWS Constitution +4, Intelligence +5
SKILLS Insight +3, Investigation +5, Stealth +4
SENSES passive Perception 17
LANGUAGES Dwarvish, Undercommon
CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

INNATE SPELLCASTING. The dwarf's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13). The dwarf can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *disguise self*
3/day each: *charm person, invisibility (self only), magic missile*
1/day each: *detect thoughts, scorching ray, suggestion*

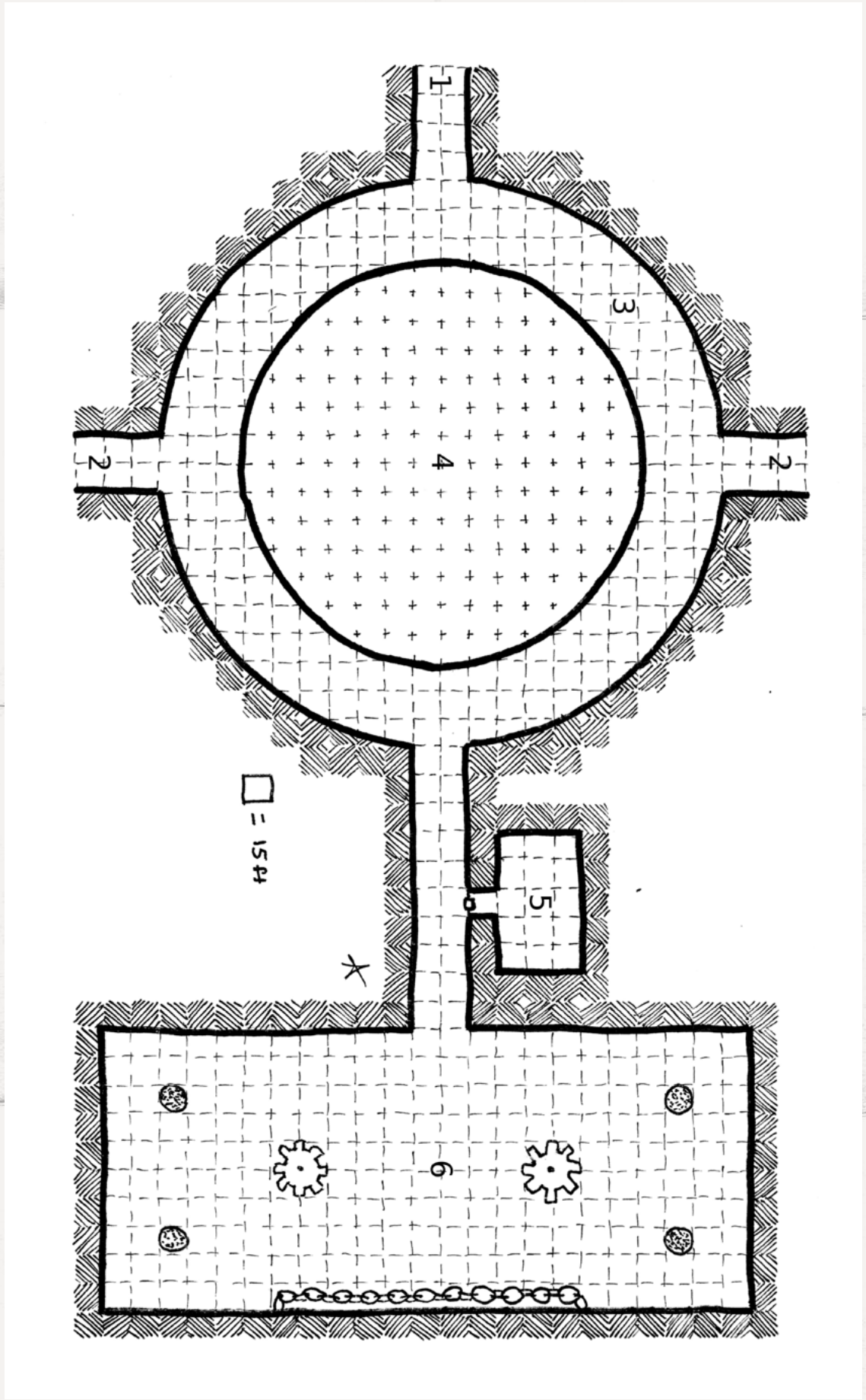
ACTIONS

MULTIATTACK. The dwarf makes two dagger attacks.

DAGGER. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.

MIND ATTACK. (Recharge 5-6). Choose a creature within 30 feet of you that you can see. The creature must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or takes 4d6 psychic damage.

Appendix B: Maps





Is Dryad Property Theft?

Level 4| Setting Neutral

Joe Sullivan

This is Joe's first published work as a writer, he has no idea what he's doing. He's been playing D&D for too long and blames it for all the problems in his life. And the rich. Let's eat those guys.

He's one half of The Secret Cat Shop and would like to thank his other half Bridie for eternally putting up with his shit. Together they bring goofy D&D merch to the unsuspecting public.

You can find him @JoeSullivanDM or @secretcatshop on twitter where you can ask him for the meaning of life, obsure movie trivia, or why he's so into Owlbears.

The adventurers find themselves caught between a ruthless logging oligarch and a commune of sapient animals who want to tear each other apart. Courted aggressively by both sides, how will they resist the lure of power?

This adventure is designed for 3 to 6 characters of 3rd to 5th level and is optimised for 4 characters with an average party level of 4.

Adventure Background

Having spent a lifetime caring for the creatures of the forest, Goodwind Proudhorn, a **dryad** (NG, 200 HP, they/them), has made a pact with Eldath, the Goddess of Peace to become the centre of a new World Tree. Their branches supply all the food the current population requires and Goodwind has the ability to raise beasts to sapience using specialised ioun stones in the fruit.

A peaceful community of intelligent beasts dwells in the grove, expanding their newfound intellects in whatever manner they choose.

Unfortunately for the commune, the former dryad couldn't have picked a worse spot.

Orwellton, once a sleepy hamlet on the forest's edge, has become the site of ruthless strip-mining and logging. The Headman is responsible: Kankor Balsam (LE **noble**: 20 HP, 15 Int, 15 Wis, +8 to Insight). Kankor has spent years turning the village into a haven of prosperity. The villagers are poor and miserable, but his bourgeois elite are fat and happy. Kankor's ambitions have sprawled unchecked, until Orwellton's expansion has come up against Goodwind's animal community.

Kankor has aims above mere minerals and lumber. He seeks the promise of infinite resources and the ability to raise animals as "properly trained" war beasts. He will open his bloody

Art: Joseph C. Weide

war beasts. He will open his bloody coffers to anyone willing to do his dirty work. Will the adventurers be manipulated into helping Kankor strip another natural resource from the land? Or will they help the commune fight back?

Adventure Summary

The adventure begins in Orwellton. Hired by Headman Balsam, the adventurers investigate the deaths of some loggers (secretly sellswords) in the forest, where Aieko (a speaking **owlbear**) ambushes them. Whatever the outcome of the fight, they end up speaking with Goodwind, who explains the commune's situation. The adventurers then have a choice to make: raid Orwellton to assassinate Kankor, attempt a peaceful solution, or sell out the commune.

Hooks

- The players arrive in Orwellton or its vicinity, where they hear Kankor is paying top dollar to hire sellswords to purge the forest of dangerous creatures.

- An ally or loved one has written of increased sellsword requests from Orwellton, encouraging the adventurers to come and aid in their effort to protect the town.

Part 1: Arrival at Orwellton

The adventurers arrive at Orwellton and spend time taking in the sights, meeting the people, and the like. They meet Kankor before heading to the Logging Site to investigate the attacks. Kankor presents Orwellton as in the right and merely responding to unprovoked aggression.

Note that the town guard discourages outsiders from visiting the poorer sections of Orwellton (see Slums, below), where they might see the poverty of the area.

Orwellton

The village of Orwellton is extremely opulent. The wealth of the village is apparent at first sight, feeling more like a rich quarter in a bustling city than a forest-side village. Large stone houses flank the road to the city centre.

Features of the Area

The Rich Town Centre. The inns, armourers, apothecaries, and the like have a higher quality of goods than the adventurers might expect. Merchants are only too happy to sing the Headman's praises, and echo Kankor's request for sellswords to protect Orwellton. From the Hooks, the adventurers likely know about this already, and the townsfolk expect them to visit the Headman's offices of their own volition. If they don't attend Kankor within a couple hours of their arrival, word spreads and the Captain of the Guard (a veteran) and five guards will come for them, politely but firmly "offering" the adventurers an audience. The Captain arrests the adventurers if he must.

The Slums. If the adventurers wander too far from the wealthy area, they are blocked at a security checkpoint staffed by one **veteran** and three **guards**, who prevent them from moving into the poorer slums that surround Orwellton. The guards suggest they go see the Headman or go to the logging site if they've already received the mission from Kankor.

The slums reveal the squalor that Orwellton's lower class live in; if questioned, the inhabitants explain that Kankor works them mercilessly for little pay, and now, on top of that, folk have disappeared recently in the forest, victims of animal

attacks. They beg the adventurers for help.

The Headman's Offices

The central courthouse is a large marble edifice that must have taken years of hard labor to construct. The adventurers are directed to Kankor's opulent office/apartment on the second floor, where Kankor waits at his desk.

Role-playing Kankor

Kankor has guile, cunning, and money to spare, and he's obsessed with material wealth. He's also an unscrupulous psychopath with no moral compass, and clever enough to hide this trait from anyone who may take umbrage. Short of a DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check, he seems perfectly likeable and earnest, concerned about the safety of his people.

He knows Goodwind's settlement exists somewhere and he has become obsessed with finding and exploiting it. His sellswords have so far failed, but the adventurers represent a better chance.

Features of the Area

Apartments. Kankor's rooms are accessed from a doorway in his office. All the second floor rooms are his: sleeping quarters, pantry, toilets, and several comfortable sitting rooms and studies. He also keeps a torture chamber, accessed through a secret panel in Kankor's bedroom, where he keeps Kaizu (awakened **owlbear**, CN, leather armour/barding, AC 15; this is Aieko's mate).

Desk Lever: A lever under Kankor's desk can be pulled to release Kaizu from a false panel in the wall. Driven to a frenzy by his experiences, Kaizu attacks anyone until Kankor calls him off or he dies.

Development

Kankor informs the adventurers that "rabid and mad beasts" (a phrase he's particularly fond of using) have killed several of his loggers. He keeps the conversation centrally about how he worries for the worker's safety, and not being able to feed them while logging is suspended. He offers the adventurers 100 gp to go to the logging site and track the beasts, with additional gold for any carcasses they bring back. If the adventurers hesitate, Kankor tries to sweeten the deal: careful not to appear too eager, he suggests that the beasts are congregating somewhere, and bringing him knowledge of this location earns the players 200 gp each.

Rewards

If the adventurers accept the task, Kankor signs a "notice of employment" for them with his seal, allowing them access to the logging site.

The Logging Site and Forest

The logging site is about an hour's walk from town toward the forest, along a road flanked by ripped-out stumps and tents full of itinerant labourers who appear poor and discontent.

Features of the Area

The Crowd. The road ends at a crowd of people and a group of ten guards preventing any further progress. A Captain (**veteran**) expects the Adventurers.

The Bodies. The Captain leads the adventurers past the guards to the corpses at the treeline, near one of

the few remaining stacks of logs. There are ten mauled bodies, about a day old, all in ragged commoner's clothes.

- The Captain claims that the "foresters" were killed less than a mile into the forest by animals. Some of the bodies are little more than parts, and all exhibit gashes, bite marks, and puncture wounds.
- A DC 8 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals these to be the work of claws, beaks, talons, and antlers.
- A DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that the bodies have been tampered with post-mortem; they were originally wearing armour.
- The adventurers are told there were no survivors and the Captain himself found the bodies. The guards dissuade the adventurers from talking to the workers, who know the dead were actually armed sellswords.

Part 2: The Forest

About 5 minutes into the forest, the adventurers find where the sellswords died. The ground is churned with blood and mud, and there are obvious tracks leading deeper into the forest. Brambles and thick overgrowth crowd the forest floor, making it difficult terrain.

After following the tracks for 100 feet, the adventurers must make a DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check. On a success, the character realises the tracks are being covered as if by an intelligent creature. This allows the adventurers a chance to spot the looming ambush: a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spots a boulder moving slightly above them at the top of the gully. If the first check is failed, the adventurers are automatically surprised in Aieko's Ambush.

Aieko's Ambush

As the adventurers enter a gully, Aieko (who assumes, somewhat correctly, that they are murderous agents of Kankor) pushes a boulder onto them.

Creatures

The ambush includes Aieko (awakened **owlbear**, CG, leather armour/barding, AC 15, speaks Common, INT 13, she/her), a **giant elk**, a **giant boar**, and a **dire wolf** from Goodwind's grove.

Features of the Area

The Gully. The battle takes place in a gully 20 feet wide with 30-foot-tall cliffs on either side.

Tactics. Aieko begins the battle by pushing a boulder off the cliff on top of the party. Each character must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 bludgeoning damage on a failed save and half as much damage on a successful one.

After pushing the boulder, Aieko joins in the fight. The dire wolf, boar and elk move to block one end of the gully, cornering the adventurers and attacking aggressively as a team:

- The fight should be Hard, incentivising the adventurers to consider options other than kill or be killed.
- Aieko's priority is to scare the adventurers away, and won't kill them unless they kill her allies. If the adventurers show restraint or kindness, she reveals her ability to speak, hoping to turn them against Kankor.
- Any animals fight until they have

lost half their hit points, at which point Aieko orders them (in Common) to retreat.

- If any animal is brought close to death or dies, Aieko shouts in Common for the adventurers to stop. If they refuse, she orders a full retreat.

Developments

After one or two rounds, once the adventurers have shown they are not like Kankor's usual minions, Aieko prefers to talk rather than continue fighting. Aieko speaks calmly and with surprising effectiveness given that she has a beak.

If Aieko wins outright or a truce is called, she pleads with the adventurers to follow blindfolded to "meet someone important," pointing out that if she wanted them dead, they could have kept fighting. A DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Deception) check convinces her to forgo the blindfold and trust their good intentions.

If animals were killed in the fight, Aieko is less amenable; she initially demands the adventurers go back to their "master" and tell him the forest "belongs to us." Evidence of the adventurers' distrust of Kankor or their desire to make amends will convince her to take them to Goodwind, albeit blindfolded; the adventurers have disadvantage on checks to convince her to forgo this safety measure.

If the adventurers kill Aieko, they find the grove with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check. The check can be made once a day.

Goodwind's Grove

Read or paraphrase the following when the adventurers arrive:

> The gnarled, mossy trees before you peel away to form a clearing. Several much larger trees stand amidst rolling grass, great branches curling to form interwoven pathways. In the centre, a gigantic willow tree spreads into the sky.

The adventurers are directed to walk through the camp to the willow tree. On the way, they see many animals of all sizes conversing, writing, painting, and generally behaving like humanoids.

Features of the Area

The Willow. A gigantic willow tree reaches 120 feet into the air, and its branches spread just as wide. Its massive trunk is 20 feet in diameter.

The Treetop Walkways. Spread out around the willow are 6 large trees of varying species, each of their gnarled branches entangling to form large walkways in a ring 60 feet up.

"The Anarchist Beasts"

The species, rarity, and number of the awakened animals in Goodwind's grove is at your discretion. Feel free to choose any creature with the Beast tag, especially the giant variants (giant owl, giant elk, etc.). Be creative: the only constraint is a disdain for organisational structure and a refusal to do violence unless absolutely necessary (see Aieko and Goodwin's arguments below).

The Fledgling Tree Of Life

Goodwind Proudhorn has evolved from their dryadic form, and finds it hard to move more than 5 feet from their tree, as the two are slowly becoming one. When the adventurers arrive, Goodwind is in a meeting. Read or paraphrase the following:

The willow branches hang thick with pale, silver-green leaves, and feel heavy as you part them. All manner of animal noises chirp and bark from just beyond sight. Suddenly, the curtain parts. You see a figure covered by interwoven leaves, hair like willow branches covering their entire figure, holding court over a menagerie of attentively listening animals.

"Welcome," the figure says, lifting their head to reveal an aged bark-skinned face more like a tree's than a human's. "Please, sit. Listen."

Goodwind is giving a philosophy lecture of sorts concerning the commune, and encourages the adventurers to attend.



Roleplaying Goodwind

Goodwind looks like an androgynous, miniature, humanoid willow tree. Their skin is indistinguishable from the pale bark of a willow tree. They prefer to sit on the roots of their tree and, after a minute being stationary, begin to merge softly with the willow wherever they touch it.

Goodwind is slow to anger and values peaceful, thoughtful deliberation.

Eldath has appeared to them many times, and the deity has given her blessing to Goodwind's plan. To Goodwind, it is not a matter of faith, but one of *fact*.

Goodwind has overseen this section of forest for a thousand years, so while their words and actions carry the weight of wisdom and experience, there is a lot of room for colourful history. Don't be afraid to break from the "wise old mentor" stereotype and play them with a more assured fierceness.

Developments

Goodwind is cool to the new arrivals, but also curious. They allow Aieko to explain herself, having brought potentially untrustworthy interlopers to this secret place. Aieko and Goodwind speak heatedly, like fast friends rehashing an old, familiar argument with more than a bit of familial love.

From here, the story can progress in various ways. Convey the following arguments to the adventurers naturally, either during the lecture or later when the adventurers are free to explore the grove (see The Choice, below).

Aieko's Argument. Aieko is the principal defender of the grove. She kills when she must, such as when Kankor escalated the conflict by dispatching sellswords to attack the grove. The sellswords also taunted Aieko about her captured mate, Kaizu, whom Kankor has apparently broken and made his slave. Aieko believes Kankor is an utter monster and cannot see any other way than to depose or assassinate him, along with a good few of his bourgeois as well, to ensure no one from Orwellton will come for Goodwind.

Goodwind's Argument. Goodwind is a pacifist and an anarchist. The commune has no natural hierarchy: Goodwind believes that if the denizens are given shelter, food, and leave to follow their passions, there is no need for such structure. Goodwind, being a disciple of Eldath, believes firmly that violence only begets violence, and any retribution visited on Orwellton will only come back to harm the grove. At the same time, Goodwind is not completely naive: they have awakened and enlisted Aieko and the others with the express purpose of defending them. This is the only acceptable form of violence in Goodwind's view. Goodwind urges the adventurers to act as their emissary, to make a deal with Kankor and show him they are no threat and have nothing of value he can take or exploit. Goodwind hides a few details, however, requiring a DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check to reveal:

- Eldath won't tolerate her blessings being used to promote suffering, and will repeal her blessing if the grove is compromised. If Kankor cannot be placated and invades, the animals will lose their awakened intelligence and Goodwind will fade away in disgrace. Even if he obtains the tree's fruit peacefully, unless the Headman drastically changes his intentions, the fruit won't awaken intelligence as he desires.
- As an anarchist, Goodwind values freedom. The choice of how to live one's life is ultimately for oneself to decide. If Aieko leads everyone to a bloody revolution, then that is her choice. Goodwind will not stop her and will even welcome her back. The knowledge of this irreconcilable conflict in their philosophies is deeply depressing them, and a kind-hearted adventurer may be able to get Goodwind to confide in them.

Kankor's Argument. Kankor is a an industrialist through and through. He wants the tree, the fruit, and the ability to make sapient animal soldiers. If the adventurers return to Orwellton to discuss events with him, Kankor offers to pay them 1000 gp for the location of the grove. The problem is that there isn't a lot the grove can reasonably offer him. He wants to continue logging, and refuses to believe the intelligence-giving fruit will not function for him. A conflict seems inevitable, and Kankor readily turns on the adventurers when he feels they can't (or won't) give him what he wants, preferably by unleashing his captive owlbear.

Part 3: The Choice

Unless the adventurers do something violent or malicious, Goodwind gives their blessing for them to wander freely through the grove and invites them to talk to the animals. The adventurers have some time to come to a conclusion, and can leave anytime they want, but make sure the adventurers get to hear from both Goodwind and Aieko about their positions and views.

Aieko will find them before they leave if they do not seek her out. If the adventurers seem sympathetic to her views, she informs them that

she is eager to attack and can do so this coming nightfall should the adventurers wish.

There are many outcomes from this point onwards, categorised into (A) Anarchist, (B) Pacifist, or (C) Tyrant. As always, feel free to deviate and reward clever roleplay and ingenious ideas.

(A) Anarchist

The adventurers have heard enough about Kankor and want him gone. This is Aieko's preferred solution: remove Kankor by any means necessary. However, it's obvious that either a proletariat revolt or an animal assault will lead to a chaotic war in the streets with Orwellton's militia of forty **guards** and ten **veterans**), outnumbering the adventurers and any grove strike team they muster. The adventurers can:

Stir Up Dissent. If they do, they must be careful to avoid the suspicion of the guards. Sneaking into the shanty towns around the logging site, or the slums around Orwellton, a character finds a suitable ringleader to stir up a revolution on a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check. They can give an inspiring speech to the masses, succeeding on a DC 10 Charisma (Performance) check. The folk don't take much provocation, as they have been under Kankor's thumb for years, and will follow the adventurers gladly. The adventurers gain 50 revolutionaries: bandits with a mix of simple weapons, handaxes, quaterstaffs and shortbows.

Deal Directly With Kankor. Kankor accepts them into his office to hear their report, but he is paranoid. If he senses danger he calls in his bodyguards (three **veterans** wielding halberds) and pulls a lever under his desk, releasing Kaizu. His guards and Kaizu attack while he flees.

Facilitate Assassination. Aieko and four **giant eagles** can fly the adventurers under cover of darkness to Kankor's private apartments, where they aid the adventurers in fighting the 20 household guards and capturing or killing Kankor.

(B) Pacifist

If the adventurers approach Kankor diplomatically, he listens to their position. He can be very patient, as he expects that playing nice will give him a better chance at getting to the awakened animals and the grove. He of course looks for advantage, freely using dirty tactics. A thoroughly irredeemable villain, Kankor will coerce/bribe the adventurers to his side, working particularly hard on anyone he has managed to dig up dirt on in the time since the adventurers left him.

If necessary, Kankor may well bring up Kaizu as a bargaining chip. The owlbear is a tortured wreck, and is afraid to leave the cage lest he upset his "master." A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check entices him out. The appearance of the tortured, mind-warped owlbear should be proof positive of Kankor's evil.

It's up to you whether this situation can be resolved peacefully. Even if it is, ultimately Kankor will return again and again to endanger the grove. The adventurers should understand in no uncertain terms that if they leave this situation unresolved, it's only a matter of time before Kankor makes another attempt to find the grove and subjugate the commune.

(C) Tyrant

Adventurers aren't all cut from the same cloth. If they sell out the grove, Kankor pays them what he promised. He also gives them letters of recommendation, granting them advantage on Charisma checks with constabulary or nobility in the surrounding region.

They may even participate in sacking Goodwind's grove. Twenty awakened animals (see The Anarchist Beasts sidebar) fight to the death to defend the grove.

Concluding the Adventure

Depending on the path taken, the adventurers may be rewarded in various ways:

Save Goodwind's Grove. The grateful former dryad gives them one of the ioun stones. The stone increases the intelligence score of any creature with an Intelligence score of 9 or less to 10: the creature will still need to be taught language, proper behaviour, or skills.

The Anarchist Approach. Aieko thanks them and offers her support travelling through the forest. Goodwind is cordial, but after conferring the ioun stone, they do not offer nothing except advice.

The Pacifist Approach. Even if the adventurers are unsuccessful, in addition to the gift of the *ioun stone* Goodwind recognises the spark of peace in them. They are gifted a *flute of peace*, conjured from the wood of the tree (see Appendix A: Magic Items).



The Tyrant's Approach. Promised transactions with Kankor fulfilled, the adventurers are sent on their way.

Assuming the adventurers didn't side with Kankor, the grove is safe for now, but Orwellton may be in trouble. The new government might need more help, such as staving off other barons or lords who miss Kankor's industriousness and seek to take over his business. Conversely, if the grove has fallen, dealing with the fallout of Kankor's destruction could pose an interesting continuation for the adventurers.

Appendix A: New Magic Items

Flute of Peace

Wondrous item, rare

The flute has three charges. As an action, you can expend a charge to cast the *calm emotions* spell. The flute regains 1d3 expended charges at dawn.



Cecily Cunningham (Soup)

For the Good of the Few

Level 4| Setting Neutral

William Allen

William is based out of the endless cornfields of Indiana where he lives with his wife and their cat. His passions in life include writing, TTRPGs, and dinosuars.

If you would like to follow Will to see what he gets up to next, you can find him on Twitter at @William_C_Allen.

The Baron has sold the lives of his citizens to the King, allowing for them to be introduced to a magically crafted plague as test subjects. The town has been quarantined, and now the Baron hides within the inner city walls of his keep, waiting for the settlement to die. After escaping from their cells, a group of prisoners must fight their way to freedom, and bring justice to the Baron for his actions.

This adventure is intended for a party of 4-6 members of 3rd-5th level.

Adventure Background

The town of Brinsdale is dying. The Baron, Lord Micheal Waylier IV, has sold the lives of his citizens and left them to rot. The King's alchemists and mages have crafted a virulent plague through manipulating nature and nurtured it through arcane abuse. Now they are looking to test with an appropriate sample size.

When originally approached, the Baron refused any deal offered, though a sense of loyalty to the crown stopped him from making a public affair from the offer. However, over many months of consistent badgering, increasing reward, and eventually subtle threat, Lord Waylier caved. The disease was quickly and quietly introduced into Brinsdale's food and water. In exchange, the Baron received a large cache of potions to cure the disease in case he or those within his keep accidentally became infected, a large sum of wealth, and the promise that when this is all over, he will be brought to live safely and comfortably in the capital as an advisor to His Majesty.

A month has passed since the plague began. Many people have passed and more still lay dying. The local church is completely unable to keep pace with the outbreak, and those

who still hold the strength to stand plot rebellion against their ruler. Lord Waylier has locked himself inside his keep and behind its walls in the town's interior, growing increasingly more paranoid as each day passes and his guilt increases; many of his staff have been sent away in his growing anxiousness. None can leave, for an army of the Crown's soldiers arrived to quarantine the town shortly after the disease began, surrounding the exterior walls and blockading all exits with lethal enforcement.

Adventure Summary

Part 1: The characters begin inside the Baron's dungeon beneath the keep and have to fight their way up to the ground floor through the barracks, or sneak their way up by way of secret exit.

Part 2: After making their way upstairs, the characters explore the keep, and deal with wandering patrols as they work their way towards the throne room.

Part 3: Eventually the heroes reach the climax of their adventure by confronting Lord Waylier and the soldiers he has remaining under his command.

Hooks

For the People

The characters have joined the newly formed resistance and intentionally gotten themselves imprisoned. They've heard rumor that the Baron is keeping the cure hidden from the population. The characters all have a key to their cell hidden on their person.

Public Enemy

The characters have angered the Baron through public disrespect and have had special effort made to find them landed in the dungeon of the keep, going so far as to manufacture circumstances for their arrest if necessary.

Hired Help

The heroes are hired by Ronaldo, the mayor's son who lives in the neighboring village, to investigate rumors that the Baron and his men seem immune to the disease. They sneak into the dungeon via the same path a notable criminal used to escape.

Individual characters can have different motivations or reasons for being here.

Part 1: Escape the Dungeon

Baron Waylier's personal dungeon lies beneath his keep at Brinsdale's center. The air is heavy, musty, and saturated with an unpleasant smell strong enough that each breath gives you an unavoidable taste on your tongue. In one corner, the consistent drip of water leaking through a small crack in the ceiling plops into a puddle.

Outside in Brinsdale, the people are dying at an alarming rate, victims of sudden illness ravaging the population. No one can leave, as an army from the capital has quarantined the city. No help or word comes from the Baron. He has locked himself inside his keep behind the towns inner walls, seemingly content to let everyone perish. Something must be done, and it must be done now.

Each prison cell is 15 feet square, with a 10-foot ceiling. The room has nine cells: three on the east, west, and south walls respectively. On the north wall, there is a door that exits the cell block to a 70-

foot long, 10-foot wide hallway that heads east and turns to the left at a corner, as well as an office immediately to the left where the character's equipment is being kept. In the center of the room stands a thick support column 10 feet in length on all sides. Torches provide light from slots in the walls.

If no character begins with a key (see Hooks), after a few minutes a single guard enters the cell block with gruel bowls on a cart. After distributing the bowls to the characters, he instructs them not to eat it too quickly before exiting the cell block with the door unlocked behind him. Each bowl has the key to open the character's cell inside the food. The guard in question doesn't want to stand by and do nothing while the people outside die painfully. He is also unwilling to harm his comrades and quietly sneaks out of the keep and into the town after giving the characters their keys.

For expediency's sake, a suggested alternative is to instead begin with the characters having just unlocked the doors of their cells.

Searching the Cell Room

On the west side of the cell room's column, there is a secret door with a ladder to the surface. A hero that runs their hand across the rock face finds the button that opens the door. The door closes on its own 10 seconds after being opened.

A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check reveals the slight opening between the bottom of the wall and the floor and/or the draft coming from it.

Searching the Office

Inside are several chests as well as a desk and several cabinets. There is one chest per character imprisoned, plus one if you choose to offer them extra equipment.

Party Equipment

These chests contain each character's equipment.

Optional Extra Equipment. An extra chest contains equipment collected by the guards from previous prisoners:

- *Necklace of fireballs* with 2 beads
- 1 *potion of healing* per party member (consider increasing the number of potions if no characters have innate healing abilities)
- 2 bags of caltrops
- 1 50-foot coil of silk rope
- 1 container of *dust of sneezing and choking*



Documents. Inside the cabinets and desk are documents of varying bulk. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) checks yields noteworthy details quickly, otherwise it takes 10 minutes to find the following information:

- An old blueprint inside one cabinet detailing the dungeon floor plan, including the secret entrance leading up
- Recent deployment orders for the keep's guard, noting a large number were assigned to wall duty around the keep because the Baron feared rioting
- Several letters from the Baron with arrangements to move the families of the keep's staff and city guard out of Brinsdale six weeks ago, two weeks before the outbreak
- An unfinished letter from one guard to his wife telling how he and many of his comrades hate watching the people of Brinsdale die

Guard Patrol

Allow at least ten minutes from the point the heroes have recovered their equipment so that those who have armor may don it. After that, a squad arrives on its regular patrol through the keep.

If the characters were prisoners and have already escaped the dungeon through the secret exit, the patrol turns around to alert their comrades and more patrols begin moving through the keep.

Enemies. A squad of guards has one guard per character.

Tactics. The squad blocks the party from escaping, positioning half of their numbers in front with spears and the other half behind with bows. A more deadly tactic is to combine movements and arrow fire using the walls around doorways for cover if the players are still in the cell room.

If a guard drops to 0 hit points, one member Disengages and runs for reinforcements.

If the fleeing guard escapes, they raise the alarm and return in five minutes with a number of guards equal to the number of characters and Tali Mho (See Appendix A).

Difficulty Adjustment

The difficulty of this encounter is dictated more by the actions per round than the danger posed by the guards. To make the encounter easier, deploy one less guard than there are characters. To make it more difficult, deploy one more guard.

Rewards

- A keyring that locks or unlocks any door within the dungeon and barracks
- 1d4 *potions of healing*

Development

After defeating the patrol, the characters have two ways out:

- If they found the secret exit, they can take the ladder up 50 feet to a covered grotto inside the keep's garden.
- Heading through the hallway, rounding the corner, and continuing the next 50 feet ends in a spiral stone staircase ascending up to the barracks on ground level.

Part 2: Housekeeping



Unless specified, all rooms besides the garden are well lit by a combination of torch and candlelight. Locks can be locked or

unlocked with the guard's keys unless specified otherwise, or with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools. Doors can be forced open with a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check but doing so alerts everyone in adjacent rooms.

The Garden

You emerge into a stone alcove with a short, rounded exit. Immediately outside and surrounding your grotto expands a wildly overgrown garden full of blooming flowers of countless vibrant colors that fill your nose with intoxicating scents, tall grasses that reach above the tops of your heads, and large bushes whose branches have grown to uneven lengths. This place doesn't appear to have been tended to in quite some time.

The garden is rectangular with an open roof and stretches 50 feet both north and south from the center as well as 25 feet to the east and west walls. In the center of the east wall, there is a single doorway that leads into the keep. The walls stand 40 feet tall with an overhang over a 5-foot-wide walkway surrounding the garden. While in the garden, creatures have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks they make.

If the characters defeated the guards and prevented any from escaping, they have enough time within the garden to take an uninterrupted short rest. If either the initial patrol or the reinforcements arrive at the cell to find them gone, a patrol soon enters into the garden and walks its perimeter, scanning the foliage for the characters before leaving. This only spoils the short rest if they discover the characters.

After a complete short rest, the heroes hear the door open and two human women quietly enter. They are Tali Mho and Zale Lhinger (See Appendix C), an assassin and a wizard serving as specialists and lieutenants for Lord Waylier. The characters can observe them having a short, tense, hushed conversation. They finish after only a minute, exchange a quick kiss, and head back through the door into the keep.

A DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals enough of the conversation to convey that they are discussing:

- Prisoners escaped the dungeon
- Violent protests in town erupted into skirmishes with the town guard
- They agree to leave if things get any worse, meeting up at "the room" to make their escape.

The heroes may choose to interrupt the conversation before they leave.

Parley

If the characters try to talk to the women, a DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces the women to stay a moment to hear the heroes out, though several successful checks and/or well-spoken words may be required to convince them to do anything in the party's favor. In most cases, the best the characters could hope for is to convince these two to leave the keep.

Ambush

If the characters launch a surprise attack, have the players roll for initiative (See Appendix A for statistics for Zale and Tali). On their turn, Zale and Tali retreat into the keep, dragging an unconscious companion with them if necessary.

The Barracks

You pass through the arched doorway at the top of the stairs into a long, narrow room ending in a closed door. There are empty tables and chairs throughout this room, and one with a game of dice left unfinished. On your immediate right is a small, simple kitchen with several cabinets and dangling cutlery. Further along the right side of the room is a large opening leading into sleeping quarters. Many bunk beds lay in orderly rows, each one's bedding tidy. The barracks consist of three rooms.

The Kitchen

- The barracks kitchen is 15 feet long with 5 feet of width between the two counters on each side. There is a healthy stock of bread, cheese, dried meat, as well as plenty of utensils and plates. Among the utensils are tools that would function as weapons:
- 2 cooking knives (treat as daggers)
- 1 meat cleaver (treat as handaxe)

The door to the kitchen is unlocked and standing open.

The Commons Room

There is not much of note in this room. The doorway on the far side enters further into the keep and is locked.

Sleeping Quarters

There are twenty bunk beds set up in five rows of four each, all clean and neatly made. If the characters have succeeded in preventing the guards from being alerted of their break out, this could be a comfortable place to take a short rest. This room's door is locked.

The Foyer

The foyer is a large room looking more fit for an estate than a castle originally built as a military fortification. Gold curtains drape the walls, dotted by fine paintings of the Waylier family several generations back. The carpet is a velvet red, still-burning cinnamon incense dot the walls throughout.

Entering from the garden brings the characters in on the west wall. Entering from the barracks brings them in on the east wall. The room stretches 90 feet from north to south and 40 feet east to west, with a staircase leading up to a closed double doorway on the north wall and a large barricaded wooden gate on the south wall.

There is a visible upper floor in the form of a 5-foot wide walkway with guard rails that skirts the edges of the room, coming to a center point at the north wall's double doors. There are several doorways on both the ground floor and the upper floor.

Ground floor (3)

- Garden entrance (West)
- Kitchen and Dining Hall (East)
- Barracks entrance (East)
- Vault entrance (East)

Upper Floor (10)

Nine of the ten doors lead to long unused bedrooms covered in a thin layer of dust. Each has a queen-sized bed, a low, long dresser with a tall mirror, and two armoires. These rooms are unlit.

The tenth room—the northernmost—is decorated vividly with a gold and magenta color scheme. This is Tali and Zale's room. It has the same furniture as the other bedrooms with the addition of a couch and

loveseat. Additionally, there is 200 gp worth of jewelry and several sets of fine clothing and a spellbook containing the spells *detect magic, comprehend languages,* and *gentle repose.*

A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a hidden passage dug into the wall. This passage is sized for a Small creature to fit through comfortably, so a Medium creature could squeeze. It leads to the throne room, exiting behind a painting on the rear wall behind the throne.

Removing the blockade

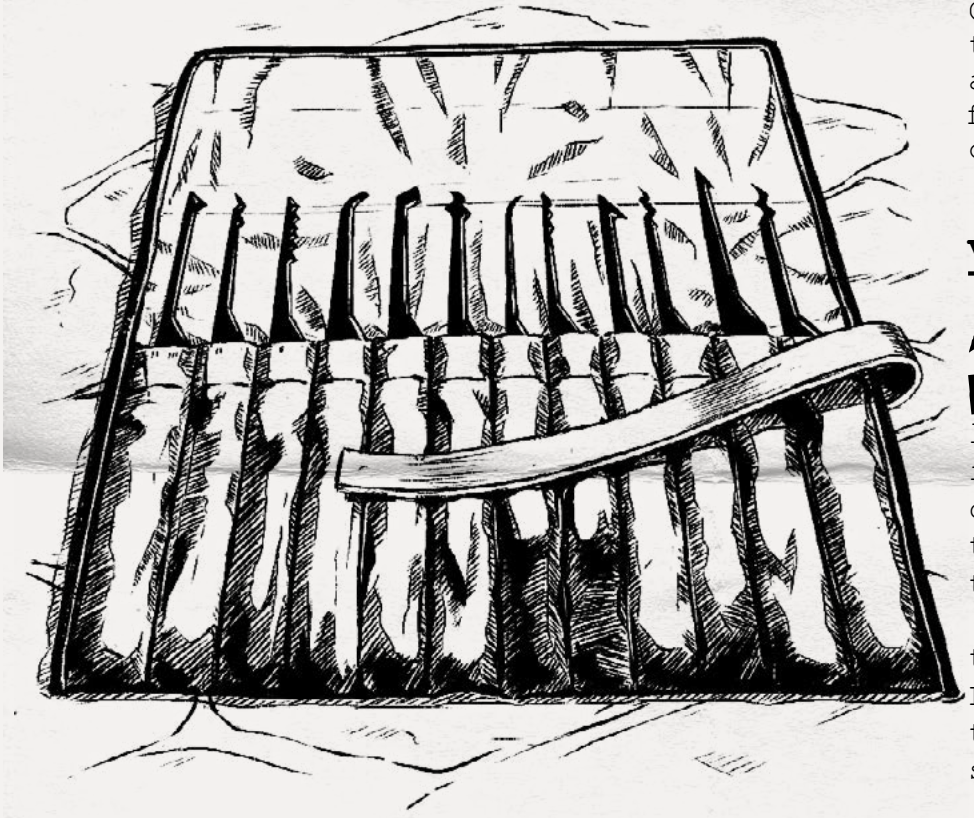
A successful DC 15 Strength check can remove the wooden beams blocking the south entrance. On a failure, the task takes 5 minutes to properly remove.

Outside the gate is a stretch of grass that surrounds the keep for several hundred feet and a pathway that cuts across the lawn to the tall stone walls that encircle the keep, separating the keep from the rest of Brinsdale. Even from here, the characters can see dozens of guards milling about at any given stretch of the wall and the guards on the wall will recognize the characters as not belonging if they approach.

Patrolling Guards

As the heroes move from room to room there is a 10% chance that 1d4 guards are patrolling inside each room (excluding the abandoned rooms). There are two patrols moving throughout the keep if the characters defeated the squad in the dungeon. Consider increasing the percentage to 20%, or adding an extra squad if the characters attacked Zale and Tali in the garden or failed to prevent the original guards from reaching reinforcements.

If combat breaks out in the foyer, the sounds of battle and the calls for help easily draw out the combatants guarding Lord Waylier in his throne room. There is a 30% chance that twi Guard Captains (**knights**), up to four **guards**, Tali, and Zale all join the fight on the second round of combat.



Vault

The vault is a small 10-foot by 10-foot square room with a large metal door built into the wall. A successful DC 18 Dexterity check with thieves' tools or DC 21 Strength (Athletics) check opens the vault. In addition, Lord Waylier has a key to open it on his person.

The vault contains:



- 470 vials of antidote that cures the disease currently afflicting Brinsdale (See Appendix C): enough to cure Brinsdale's population with some to spare
- 1500 gp
- A small black lockbox inscribed with silver inlay reading M.W., containing communications from the King detailing his interactions with Waylier over the last several months. It requires a DC 19 Dexterity check with thieves' tools or DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check to break open
- A *+1 battleaxe* of dwarven craft. Along the length of its handle is written "Blessed By My Ancestors Before Yours Even'd Been Born" in Dwarvish
- A *chain shirt of necrotic resistance* (see Appendix B)
- A spell scroll of *dimension door*

Kitchen and Dining Hall

Both rooms are unlit. The dining hall is a large, long room, but the table and chairs are covered by sheets. The kitchen is a yawning, oval-shaped room stocked with fine dining ware, but no food to speak of save a few pieces of moldy bread.

Secret Room

Tali and Zale have a secret room in the keep not accessible by conventional means. It is a small square room with a permanent *teleportation circle*. If at any point it becomes evident that they are in danger of death or capture, the two flee to their bedroom where Zale casts dimension door to place them inside the room where they teleport far away.

Part 3: For the Good of...

Through the double doors and up the short hallway of shallow stairs, you come into a long, rectangular room with a curved wall at its rear. Several thin windows give you a view of Brinsdale, as well as the faint scent of death that drifts from it. Thin trails of smoke rise into the air in several places, and the sounds of combat can be heard in the distance.

Baron Micheal Waylier's sunken eyes widen in shock and fear; he raises a shaky finger to point at you as he

shouts with an equally uneven voice.

"Kill the intruders! Protect your lord! Do it, now! Keep them away from me!"

The room is about 60 feet long and 30 feet wide with a rounded wall on the far side and a large gold curtain hanging behind the Baron, who sits upon a wooden throne stained dark brown and decorated ornately with gold and silver. There are four windows on each side, each 15 feet tall and 2 feet wide.

Enemies

- 4-6 guards
- 2 guard captains (knights)
- Tali Mho
- Zale Lhinger*
- Lord Waylier*

*Zale and/or Tali may have already fled, removing them from this encounter.

Lord Waylier has the stats of a **commoner** but is not armed with a weapon, though he is wearing a *ring of warmth*. It is a trivial task for most any character to overwhelm him.

Tactics.

- Zale casts *mage armor* on herself. Her first priority is to cast haste on Tali or *invisibility* on herself.
- Tali aims to sneak around the edge of the fight, looking for opportunity to Sneak Attack.
- The knights charge up to the nearest character who looks to be melee-focused, using their Leadership ability to help maneuver their men into place against less armored targets.
- Half the guards form a line between the Baron and the heroes. The rest stay near the back and focus on ranged attacks.

Conclusion

The adventure concludes when the Baron is captured, incapacitated, or killed and the characters are free to distribute the antidotes to the citizens. The guards in the town will not stop them, as the vast majority just want to see the death end.

Continuation

Dealing with the King

The King's army still holds Brinsdale hostage. After curing the town of the disease, they may need to find a way to get a message to the commanding officer and convince him that the Brinsdale is now safe. The letters taken from the lockbox in the vault go a long way towards getting him on their side.

Chasing Tali and Zele

Someone who used to work in the keep moves back to Brinsdale and knows where Tali and Zale kept their teleportation circle. Even if they locate it, they need to do some digging if they want to try and follow them. Were they pawns of the baron or instrumental in creating the plague?

Appendix A: NPCs

Tali Mho

Chaotic neutral human **assassin**, (they/them)

Tali Mho stands at just over 4 feet tall in a flowing, dark cowl that covers their snugly-fit leather armor and standard traveling outfit. Their hair is blonde and cropped short. In almost any situation that doesn't involve threatening someone, they let Zale do the talking. The two have been traveling and working together for the better part of a year and have formed a loose relationship. In Tali's mind it's more sexual than romantic, but Zale is starting to grow on them.

Tali uses the **assassin** stat block with the following modifications:

- Tali carries a +1 *Dagger of Disappearance* (See Appendix B). Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.
- Tali can make one melee attack with their shortsword as a Legendary Action. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Spent legendary Actions are regained at the start of each turn.

Zale Lhinger

Lawful evil human **mage**, (she/her)

Zale is nearly 6 feet tall and dresses in a low-accessory traveling shirt with a baldric to hold spell components, along with a small purple cloak that drapes over her shoulders and is tied in a knot near her neck. Her hair comes down past her shoulders, is usually braided, and she colors it vibrant colors regularly using prestidigitation. Currently, it's magenta. She is the brains of the pair, while Tali is "the stab." It was Zale's idea to take the job working for this Baron for a few months considering how low-risk they expected the task to be and how easy it was to negotiate a comfortable level of pay.

Zale uses the **mage** stat block, with the following modifications.

Zale has the following wizard spells prepared:

- Cantrips (at-will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*
  - ◊ 1st level (4 slots): *mage armor, magic missile, magic missile, shield*
  - ◊ 2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, suggestion*
  - ◊ 3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fly, haste*
  - ◊ 4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, dimension door, dimension door*
  - ◊ 5th level (1 slot): *hold monster*
- Zale can cast a cantrip as a Legendary Action. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Spent legendary Actions are regained at the start of each turn.
- Legendary Resistance (3/day): When Zale fails a saving throw, she can choose to save instead.

Appendix B: Items

Dagger of Disappearance

Weapon (dagger), very rare (requires attunement)

This elegant silver dagger has wavy grooves carved into its sides in which small arcane runes are laid.

You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls you make with this magic weapon. In addition, whenever you deal damage when attacking with advantage or successfully perform a Sneak Attack with the dagger, you can use your reaction to become invisible until the end of your next turn or until you attack or cast a spell. Once you use this ability, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

Chain Shirt of Necrotic Resistance

Armor (chain shirt), rare (requires attunement)

While you wear this armor, you have resistance to necrotic damage.

Appendix C: Brinsdale Plague

This magical disease targets humanoids, wearing them down until they perish. It is highly infectious, and designed to overwhelm the disease-curing abilities of a single cleric or paladin.

A humanoid that comes in contact with anyone infected with Brinsdale Plague must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become infected. Those infected with the plague have their maximum hit points reduced by 1d4 points. At the end of each long rest, an infected creature may attempt another DC 15 Constitution saving throw, with each failed save further reducing the creature's maximum hit points by 1d4. A creature whose maximum hit points are reduced to 0 dies. The symptoms of this disease include coughing, nausea, sore joints, and general exhaustion.

The Brinsdale plague can be naturally resisted if an infected creature successfully makes three saving throws before being reduced to 0 hit points. Effects which cure a disease (such as a paladin's *lay on hands* or a *cure disease* spell) end the disease, as does a *lesser restoration* spell. Any creature cured of the disease is immune to Brinsdale Plague for the next 3 days, after which they may be infected again.




TIER 2



Corin Kumamoto

Burning Hearth

Level 5| Setting Neutral
Gaia Sicolo

Gaia is a cat lover, an avid tabletop content seeker and a writer, first and foremost. They're based in Italy and they love to make stories that both reflect their own life and their love for SFF.

If you wanna check out their cool GMless TTRPGs just go to gaia-sicolo.itch.io

In the outskirts of a certain small town lives a community, huddled together inside an old, abandoned house. Your life there isn't idyllic but you get by, at least until you find an eviction note.

This adventure is optimized for four 5th level characters.

Adventure Background

A group of marginalized folks has found refuge within the walls of an abandoned house in the outskirts of the town of Greybridge, where they make do as best as they can. One morning they find an eviction notice affixed to their door, warning them that William Blythe, a local tycoon with a penchant for gentrification, intends to demolish their abode to build a luxury tavern in its place.

Dramatis Personae

Old Vaska. The elder leader and heart of the community. They're a half-orc and they speak in hushed tones, always encouraging but unable to do much due to age having taken its toll on them. They have an ironic spark to them.

Calla Flatweaver. Halfling mayor of Greybridge. Always flanked by at least a couple of guards. She's got a lot on her plate and a lot to be careful about, which makes her a cautious person. As paralyzed by inaction as she may be, she still wishes the best for her town and the people inhabiting it.

William Blythe. Local tycoon, born into riches and pampered his whole life. He's a human mage but has no academic aspirations whatsoever. Extremely greedy and self-absorbed, he only cares about expanding his territory and saving his own hide.

Levin Garth. Blythe's personal bodyguard, a human knight disgraced by his cruelty. He's a hulking figure with a scar on his face and underlings at his beck and call. He commands obedience through fear but he's loyal to Blythe because he understands the man is in a position of great power over him.

Adventure Summary

Burning Hearth is an adventure about a group of people fighting for the sake of their home and their lives together. The characters find the eviction notice telling them they have to leave the house. Old Vaska (half-orc, CN, they/them, commoner), the elder leader of the community, encourages them to take action and go into town to gather information.

Wandering into Greybridge, the characters can discover how the townsfolk have started to hate Blythe for his recent aggressive expansion. There is rising resentment, as well as suspicions about the legality of his actions. The characters may survey Blythe's manor as well.

Later, the characters spring into action. They find a way to get inside the manor to either dispose of Blythe or find incriminating evidence about his actions to stop him. They can explore or fight until they've reached their goal and secured their right to keep living in the abandoned house.

In the end, they go back to their lives, safe from retaliation.

Hooks

This adventure begins with the characters already involved in the action, as they're the people whose housing situation is being threatened. Thus the hooks are more concerned with getting them to believe there are still things they can do.

Old Vaska

Old Vaska is inside the house when the characters are confronted with the eviction notice. Vaska reassures them and pushes them to go check out the situation in the rest of Greybridge, claiming people like Blythe are rarely without enemies or skeletons in the closet.

The Townsfolk

The townsfolk corroborate Vaska's surmise if the heroes ask. The townsfolk lament how Blythe has been aggressively expanding, taking their homes, and that the mayor isn't doing anything, despite the fact that the whole thing can't be legal.

The Mayor

If the characters take their grievances to the mayor, or investigate her because of her passive stance on Blythe's activities, they can find her at the town hall. She indeed agrees that it seems strange Blythe would be able to obtain all those permits for eviction. She is, however, unsure how to stop him.

Burning Hearth

The small town of Greybridge is not perfect, far from it, but at its edge is an old, decrepit house that fell into abandonment. Nowadays that place is a welcoming safe haven for people who, just like the house itself, exist in the margins of society. Unfortunately, there's a disquieting shadow looming over the relative peace of this rag-

tag found family.

Part 1: A Terrible Surprise

The characters have been gone for the better part of the morning, busy with work and obligations, until they come back home to find a piece of paper attached to their rickety front door. It is an eviction note, informing them that local tycoon William Blythe intends to demolish the place in order to build a luxury tavern. There is no one around, except for the cicadas singing in the summer heat and a dog



barking in the distant fields.

A familiar voice beckons you from inside the house. Old Vaska, the elder leader of your community, is looking at you with their hands resting on the top of their walking stick with a placid look in their beady yellow eyes.

Old Vaska tells the characters that not all hope is lost. In fact, something's not quite right about the situation. They invite the characters to go survey the situation into Greybridge, claiming they might find something useful about Blythe. Men like him tend to have quite a number of enemies, as well as skeletons in the closet.

Part 2: The Shadows of Greybridge

Spurred by Old Vaska's words, the characters decide to make their way into town proper. Its narrow streets, usually so sleepy at this time of the day when everyone's inside eating, are alive with incessant murmuring.

In the distance, you can see the Mayor, Calla Flatweaver, standing in front of the town hall and surrounded by a few guards. She's wringing her hands nervously and her eyes keep darting in different directions.

Features of the area

Creatures

Several **commoners**, three **knights**, Calla Flatweaver (halfling, N, she/her, **noble**)

Tactics

The commoners ignore the characters unless approached. They're distrustful of the characters, but their need to complain about the current situation trumps their usual wariness. On a successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check, the commoners open up to them about Blythe's recent onslaught of evictions inside Greybridge. On a

successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character overhears the commoners talk about it without interacting directly with them. In both cases the commoners complain both about Blythe stealing their homes and about Flatweaver not doing anything to stop him despite how suspicious his actions seem.

Development

If the characters wish to speak to Flatweaver, they must succeed on a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check to appeal to her. On a failed check, the knights tell them to back off and disperse. On a success, she agrees to speak to them. She confirms what the commoners have said about Blythe's dubiously legal means, implying that the proof she needs to put an end to his conquest might be inside his manor, but at the same she laments that she can't act on her own given her position. At your option, if the characters decide not to speak with her, a character with a passive Perception of 18 or higher overhears her discuss the same things with her knights.

Rewards

Information about how the townsfolk want Blythe gone as much as the characters (since for once they're all on the same side) and about the possibility of stopping Blythe by finding evidence of his wrongdoings inside his manor.

Part 3: Dangerous Garden

William Blythe lives in an ostentatious manor in the northern part of town. Everyone in Greybridge can't help but be familiar with its towering appearance, barely peeking through the rose bushes that line the walls of its yard.

As you circle its perimeter, you can see from the gaps in the huge iron gate that the yard is filled with marble statues of Blythe himself, together with those of mythological creatures. Among the statues you spot the lumbering silhouettes of two owlbears.

Features of the area

Environment. There's a tall tree growing near the outer wall. Its branches extend all the way to one of the balconies of the manor and they seem sturdy enough to be walked on. The characters must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check in order to climb it all the way to the balcony without falling.

Creatures

Two owlbears stand by the entrance of the manor.

Tactics

The two owlbears immediately attack creatures they haven't been trained to recognize. To avoid combat, the characters may attempt a Dexterity (Stealth) check opposed by the owlbears' Wisdom (Perception) check; remember that owlbears have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight and smell.

If the characters get spotted while on the tree, the owlbears start climbing the wall and then the tree itself to get to them.

The owlbears fight to the death and pursue the characters inside the manor, but they won't leave the yard if the characters run away into the town.

Development

If the veterans in Area 4 succeed at a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check they hear the sounds of battle. They won't go outside, as they're scared of the owlbears themselves, but they'll be waiting for the characters in the entrance hall after having woken up their boss, Levin Garth.

Difficulty Adjustments

Make the following adjustments if the party is weak or strong:

If the party is weak or very weak remove one owlbear.

If the party is strong add one owlbear.

If the party is very strong add 1 owlbear and increase the owlbears' HP by 15.

Part 4: Blythe's Manor

The interior of the manor is just as imposing and luxurious as its exterior, if not more. High ceilings, marble floors, paintings and expensive furniture cover every inch. The air smells faintly of dust, but it's barely noticeable underneath the overpowering smell of all the vases of flowers that dot the corridors and the rooms. There's silence inside, except for occasional muffled sounds from the outside and the steps of Blythe's guards patrolling the place.

> Despite its opulence, you can tell at first glance that this place doesn't feel lived in. There's something about it that's so picture-perfect it comes off as sterile, the polar opposite of your own home.

Features of the area

Manor. Two floors. On the first floor there are only the big entrance hall with two twisting staircases and a dining room to the left. On the second floor there's a small area from which two corridors stem: both corridors have four rooms each, two per side of the hallway. The room with the documents is the second on the right of the right corridor. Blythe's bedroom is the first on the left of the left corridor.

Door to Blythe's Bedroom. It isn't trapped but it is locked. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools opens the lock.

Door to the room where the documents are. The door is trapped. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the small holes in the walls. A spell or other effect that can sense the presence of magic, such as *detect magic*, reveals an aura of evocation magic on a glyph on the doorknob.

Stuffing the holes with cloth or wax prevents the darts contained within from launching. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 13) cast on the statue destroys the trap.

The trap activates when a creature turns the doorknob, releasing 4 darts. Each dart makes a ranged attack with a +8 bonus against a random target within 10 feet of the pressure plate (vision is irrelevant to this attack roll). (If there are no targets in the area, the darts don't hit anything.) A target that is hit takes 2 (1d4) piercing damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Safe containing the documents. The safe is trapped with a *glyph of warding* that activates when the safe is touched. The glyph

is revealed on a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. A successful dispel magic (DC 15) cast on the safe destroys the glyph. When the glyph is triggered, a powerful flash of light fills the room. Each creature within 5 feet of the safe must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until they finish a short rest.

Creatures

The manor is patrolled by 3 veterans. To sneak past them the characters must succeed at a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check.

William Blythe (human, NE, he/him, **mage** except he has an Intelligence of 20) and Levin Garth (human, CE, he/him, **knight**).

Tactics

The three **veterans** patrol the manor. If they've heard the sounds of battle from Area 3 they gather in the entrance hall and resume their patrolling after a few minutes. If engaged, they fight to the death for fear of retribution from Garth were they to run away. They don't know the location of the documents. If a veteran finds the characters they first yell to alert the others and then engage in battle. If Garth is defeated they flee.

Blythe and Garth sleep in two adjacent rooms. Were they to be awakened, either by Garth's veterans or by the general ruckus, Garth moves into Blythe's bedroom to guard him and they both stay there.

In a fight Blythe mostly supports Garth's melee attacks from a distance but if reduced to half his hit point maximum or less he casts *greater invisibility* on himself and flees. Garth targets the less-armored characters with his *Multiattack* and he fights to the death. Garth should also be positioned in a way that opens the characters to attacks of opportunity should they to try to bypass him and attack Blythe.

Only Blythe knows the location of the documents. If the characters manage to force him to give up the documents he uses *mage hand* to disable both traps.

Rewards

The documents prove that Blythe's various eviction requests had been in fact denied by the Governor and that he's acting illegally, using forged papers. The manor is also full of various jewelry and assorted precious items totaling 1000 gp.

Difficulty Adjustments

Make the following adjustments if the party is weak or strong:

If the party is very weak remove 1 veteran and reduce both Garth's and Blythe's HP by 20.

If the party is weak remove 1 veteran and reduce both Garth's and Blythe's HP by 10.

If the party is strong add 2 veterans.

If the party is very strong add 2 veterans and increase both Garth's and Blythe's HP by 20.

Concluding the Adventure

There are various possible endings depending on the characters' actions.

If the characters have retrieved the documents without killing Blythe, they may take the documents to Flatweaver, who uses them to arrest

him, giving everyone their homes back.

If the characters have killed Blythe without retrieving the documents, Flatweaver investigates and finds the documents herself but she won't pursue the characters for the murder.

If the characters killed Blythe and retrieved the documents, she lets them go without punishing them for the murder.

In all three cases the characters save their home and come back to Old Vaska for a celebratory feast. The rest of the townsfolk remain wary of them, but start treating them better bit by bit because of what the characters have done for them.

Continuing the Adventure

Revenge

Blythe has relatives in neighboring towns and they may come to his aid or to avenge his death. They ask around for what happened and will be eventually directed to the characters.

They could try to trick the characters by first approaching them in a friendly manner, or they could go for a surprise attack at night. Either way there's a 20% chance someone from Greybridge will warn the characters of what's coming out of gratitude for their actions.

Haunting House

It turns out Blythe's manor is haunted. Blythe was keeping a powerful ghost constrained in a concealed basement and now that he's gone the ghost has finally escaped its prison. Not only has it destroyed the manor, but is now running wild among Greybridge in a fury and attracting other spirits at the same time.

Scout's Honor

Calla Flatweaver, impressed by the characters' work with the Blythe affair, comes knocking at their door one day. One of her scouts has gone missing and she's worried they might have been attacked by someone shady as they were passing through the forest. She asks the characters to investigate with the promise of compensating them more than adequately.





Julia Jeghers-Elam

Good Stock, Quiet Neighbours

CONTENT WARNING: Cannibalism

Level 5-7| Setting Neutral

Kale Brown

Kale is a first-time TTRPG writer, though they've been writing since childhood and were published as a runner-up in the 2018 Literary Taxidermy Short Story Competition's "Against The Bar" edition. When Kale isn't having conversations about the logistics of literally eating the rich or dreaming up new TTRPG universes based on strange premises, they're a stage manager and an aspiring repairsmith.

When they're doing none of the above, they're probably yelling about actual play podcasts, engaged in cosmetic shapeshifting, or professing their love for the live action 1993 Super Mario Bros movie under the handle @superhumanfoods on Twitter. They also have an extremely cute cat.

Adventure Background

Long ago, when the fields around the village of Yravine began to fail, the Farrowmore family stepped forward to ensure there was enough food. What the villagers don't realize is that the family employs a necromancer to blight their fields. After years of providing food for the entire village, the Farrowmore farm can no longer meet its needs.

The Farrowmores propagandize against an invented threat of outside influence to maintain control over the village. As a result, the roads to Yravine have fallen into severe disrepair, making travel by vehicle near-impossible.

Good Stock, Quiet Neighbours is intended for 3 - 5 characters of level 5 - 7.

Dramatis Personae

Ghritvrulk. Bugbear. Joined Last Shift after escaping indentured servitude. Has a vested interest in the Yravine case due to the potential involvement of one of their captors.

Amos Farrowmore. Human. Yravine's mayor. Head of the Farrowmore family. Charismatic coward. Proposed using humans as supplementary livestock. Blodwen's nephew. Elis's father. *(Gossip: considers Elis an embarrassment.)*

Elis Farrowmore. Human. Local good-for-nothing layabout. Amos's son. *(Gossip: only respects Blodwen.)*

Blodwen Farrowmore. Human. Captain of Yravine's Watch following the death of her husband, Ivor. Terse and secretive. Proposed luring outsiders into Yravine after Yasoum grew suspicious about local vagrant

Bold Fenner's disappearance. Amos's aunt. Noria's grandmother. *(Gossip: may have killed Ivor.)*

Carne the Unrepenting. Elf. Necromancer hired by the Farrowmores to sabotage competing farms.

Rousa Copperveins. Dwarf. Owner and bartender of the Pride of the Hollow tavern. Reclusive and industrious. Lived in Yravine before the blight began. Suspects the Farrowmores. *(Gossip: may have connections to a secret society.)*

Noria Dewillo. Human. Rousa's apprentice. Blodwen's granddaughter. Does not consider herself a Farrowmore. Believes in bootstrap rhetoric and refuses her grandmother's financial assistance as a result. *(Gossip: often argues with Blodwen about money.)*

Emrick Tenhaven. Human. Elderly farmer. Lost his farmlands to the blight. Makes ends meet doing odd jobs and playing his lute at the Hollow. Local conspiracy theorist. Believes the blight is an assault on Yravine's independence and that the Farrowmores employ a druid to combat this. *(Gossip: farm was failing before the blight.)*

Mortraine the Mouse. Half-orc. Watch guard. Notorious gossip. Has seen workers entering Yravine, but hasn't seen them leave. Yasoum's friend.

Yasoum Axeview. Dwarf. Butcher. Noticed an unusual volume of meat coming from the Farrowmore estate after they began handling their butchery in-house. Suspicious of local vagrant Bold Fenner's disappearance. Murdrelin's twin brother. Mortraine's friend.

Murdrelin Axeview. Dwarf. Carpenter. Struggling to find work because of the blighted trees. Yasoum's twin sister. *(Gossip: in love with Rousa.)*

Summary

Workers have been disappearing while seeking work in the remote village of Yravine. The adventurers are enlisted to solve this mystery. During their adventure, they discover how the missing workers found their way onto the plates of unsuspecting villagers. It's clear something must change, but without the extra food, the village starves. Must Yravine eat itself to survive or will the party forge a different path?

Adventure Hooks

The adventure doesn't begin in Yravine, but in a town or city of your choice. The hook you choose dictates whether the party enters Yravine on a mission from a guild or to investigate the missing workers. This will impact how your party engages the adventure.

Revolutionary Action.

If one or more characters has a chaotic alignment, or less than half the party has a lawful alignment, Ghritvrulk approaches on behalf of the Last Shift collective. They are investigating the missing workers.

Stranger Brews.

a representative of the Brewers' Guild approaches the party. The guild requires someone to travel to Yravine to register a new applicant.

Part 1: Bad Roads to Bad Places

Revolutionary Action

Ghritvrulk (they/them **bugbear**) approaches one of the characters. If the character is goblinoid, Ghritvrulk speaks Goblin instead of Common.

> In a hoarse whisper, a voice calls out to you from the dark mouth of a nearby alleyway. "Hey. Hey, you. C'mere." You see a ginger-furred hand extend out of the gloom and beckon you with sharp-clawed fingers. "C'mere. I gotta ask you something."

If the party chooses not to approach Ghritvrulk, they move out of cover.

> An old bugbear with greying fur shifts uneasily from one foot to the other, eyes darting between you and the open alleyway behind them. "I need help. Can I trust you?" As they speak, you notice something peculiar: above the worn collar of their shirt is a wide band of scarred and nearly hairless skin.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check identifies this scarring as the result of long-term irritation to the skin. If asked about it, Ghritvrulk checks their surroundings before revealing they spent more than a decade as the indentured servant of a noble household before they escaped, but are evasive about identifying which one.

On a successful DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check, they admit the family no longer exists, implying this to be related to the circumstances of their escape. Recently, they became aware of a surviving family member who escaped to Yravine and took up work in law enforcement.

Ghritvrulk is a member of Last Shift, a network of revolutionary unionists. They are investigating disappearances related to an ad for work in the village of Yravine and need assistance gathering information from the townsfolk, citing prejudice against non-humanoids as an obstacle.

Ghritvrulk promises access to Last Shift's resources and assistance as a reward for the party's cooperation. They are initially defensive if asked for a monetary reward but suggest the party is welcome to keep whatever they find during the investigation.

Speaking to Ghritvrulk reveals:

- The advertisement promised compensation for the restoration of a local temple.
- Yravine is difficult to reach by vehicle due to poorly-maintained roads.
- Ghritvrulk suspects law enforcement's involvement.
- Last Shift suspects humanoid trafficking.

After the party agrees to help investigate, Ghritvrulk hands them a sigil of Last Shift (an embroidered patch featuring the words "To Have Laboured in Vain is to Know the Greatest of Evils") and reveals they intend to leave immediately and begin covertly investigating the farmland surrounding the village, and requests a rendezvous at the temple once the party reaches Yravine.



Stranger Brews

A smiling elven woman of impressive stature calls out to you, one hand raised in greeting. "Hail! I was told your services are currently available: is this correct?" She wears an oiled leather smock, and as she approaches, you notice her clothes smell strongly of yeast and barley.

An elven woman approaches the party on behalf of the Brewer's Guild. A guild member named Rousa Copperveins requested a representative be sent to register her apprentice, but because the roads leading into Yravine are so poorly-maintained, travel by vehicle is nearly impossible. The guild decided to send adventurers in their stead.

She offers the party 150 gp in reward. If the party has not antagonized her, she also offers advance access to the guild's unreleased brews as additional incentive. Despite being presented as a joke, if the party expresses interest, she adds this to their official reward.

Speaking to her reveals:

- Rousa is a known recluse and has never taken an apprentice before.
- Rousa's tavern, The Pride of the Hollow, is one of the oldest in the area and the only in Yravine.
- The people of Yravine are known for being slow to trust outsiders.
- Yravine was once known for the size and quality of its hops.

After the party agrees, she hands them an envelope containing a guild registration form and asks them to meet her at the guild hall upon their return.

Part 2: What Bad Gossip Brews

Rocks and creeping weeds litter the road to Yravine, forcing you to step carefully. As you grow closer, the road clears, first to dirt and then to cobblestone. A handful of buildings line a single central street. Amongst them, only two boast a second storey: a square-faced brick tavern with a faded wooden sign over the door and a simple stone temple with a vacant bell tower.

There is a 50% chance of encountering Blodwen Farrowmore (she/her human **knight**) when entering Yravine. Characters must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check to avoid detection by Blodwen.

If Blodwen is not encountered, this check may be repeated whenever a character not attempting to hide exits a building other than the Watch House during the day. Initiate the Captain of the Watch encounter if a character is detected. Characters not initiating Captain of the Watch proceed freely.

Captain of the Watch

"Halt. What brings you to Yravine, stranger?" An armoured human woman in her seventies approaches you, one hand already on the hilt of her sword. Despite her age, she looks strong and alert, and as her eyes sweep over you, you get the impression she's looking for something. "State your business."

Blodwen introduces herself as the captain of Yravine's Watch, the group responsible for policing the village.

If the characters mention the missing workers, Blodwen claims

complete ignorance. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals this is a lie. Further inquiries trigger the Watch House encounter.

Blodwen demands further information if Rousa's apprentice is mentioned. Mentioning the guild's involvement causes her to become visibly upset and storm off towards the tavern. If the party follows, initiate the Tavern encounter.

If the party reveals their business and destination without mentioning the workers or Rousa's apprentice, Blodwen escorts them. Characters must succeed a DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check to dissuade her. Notes on the effect of having Blodwen present are included in the encounters.

If the party refuses to reveal their business and destination, initiate the Watch House encounter.

Watch House

Blodwen summons 4 **guards** and escorts the party to the Watch House for questioning. The Watch House is a one-room building containing 3 empty cells, a single cot, and a wooden desk. Mortraine the Mouse (he/him half-orc **guard**) is sitting behind the desk when the party enters.

The Watch House is a squat stone building with narrow windows and an iron door. A half-orc in light armour peers at you as you pass.

The members of the Watch usher you into the nearest of three empty cells. Through the bars, Blodwen frowns at you. "I have business to attend to. We'll speak again later." She pauses as she turns to leave. "Mortraine. Mind your business." With this, she's gone, followed by her companions.

The moment she's gone, the half-orc turns to you. "So, what'd you do?"

Speaking to Mortraine reveals:

- Blodwen became Captain after the death of her husband Ivor.
- Yravine's mayor, Amos Farrowmore, is Blodwen's nephew.
- Mortraine has seen workers enter Yravine.

A notorious gossip, Mortraine also speculates about other villagers if prompted (see Dramatis Personae).

Mortraine becomes visibly uneasy if asked about the missing workers. Upon further inquiry, he recommends speaking to Yasoum Axeview at the butcher's shop about someone called Bold Fenner. He refuses to elaborate. Pursuing this lead at any time initiates the Butcher encounter.

On a successful DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check, Mortraine releases the party from the cell. Other methods of escape are resolved at your discretion.

Temple

While simple and sparsely decorated, the stone interior of the temple appears well-maintained.

If the party is following the Stranger Brews hook, Ghritvrulk approaches them as though in the Revolutionary Action hook.

Speaking to Ghritvrulk reveals:

- The temple is not in need of restoration.
- The Captain of the Watch patrols the streets during the day.
- The animals in the surrounding area seem sick and strange.

- Large amounts of farmland lie fallow despite the area's reputation for good soil.

Ghritvrulk intends to investigate the surrounding farms and recommends the party proceed to the tavern to gather information.

If Blodwen is present:

> While simple and sparsely decorated, the empty stone interior of the temple appears well-maintained. As you enter, Blodwen turns to you expectantly. "What is it you expect to find here?"

Ghritvrulk does not appear if Blodwen is present.

If the party cannot persuade Blodwen to leave, she attempts to convince them to leave the village. If the party resists, initiate the Watch House encounter.

Tavern

> The main floor of the Pride of the Hollow is a long, open room littered with an assortment of mismatched tables and chairs. A dwarven woman stands behind the bar at the back wall, inspecting the colour of a newly-pulled draught of ale against the light. To her right is a door to the kitchen, and along the left wall is a stairwell to the second floor. The only other people in the tavern are a second dwarven woman sitting at the bar and an elderly human man playing a lute in the corner.

Regardless of which hook the party is following, entering the tavern causes Noria Dewillo (LG human, she/her) to rush out of the kitchen and ask if they represent the Brewer's Guild.

If Blodwen is present:

Blodwen confronts Noria on seeking guild membership. Noria cites the Farrowmore family work ethic as inspiration to succeed on her own, saying she can't take pride in what she hasn't earned.

On a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check, Blodwen appears guilty.

> For a moment, it looks as though Blodwen is going to say something else, but instead she turns to you. "Do what you came here for then, guild-mongers. I have business to attend to."
>
> After this, Blodwen leaves.

Speaking to the bartender, Rousa Copperveins (she/her dwarf **commoner**) reveals:

- Rousa has lived in Yravine long enough to remember when it was also known as The Fertile Hollow, the source of the tavern's name.
- Rousa suspects foul play behind the blight. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals she suspects the Farrowmores.
- Rousa has doubts about the Emrick's theories.

Speaking to Noria reveals:

- Blodwen is Noria's grandmother.
- Noria believes in bootstrap ideology and refuses financial assistance from Blodwen as a result.
- Noria wants to open a tavern of her own.
- Noria saw a strange man at the Watch House the week before (triggers Murdrelin commenting about her brother's conspiracies).

Speaking to the lute player, Emrick Tenhaven (he/him commoner) reveals:

- Emrick believes the Farrowmores employ a druid to offset the blighted soil.
- Emrick believes the blight is the result of a conspiracy to rob Yravine of its independence.
- Emrick saw a robed figure in the Farrowmore's back garden once (triggers Murdrelin commenting about her brother's conspiracies).

Speaking to the barfly, Murdrelin Axeview (CN dwarf, she/her) reveals:

- Murdrelin's carpentry is struggling because the trees have been affected by the bad soil and their trunks are full of knots and holes.
- Murdrelin's twin brother, Yasoum, recently became obsessed with the disappearance of a local vagrant named Bold Fenner.

Butcher

The butcher shop is a low-ceilinged brick building with a strong metallic smell. A haunted-looking dwarven man in a blood-stained leather smock looks up at you when you enter. "You're in danger, outsiders."

Yasoum Axeview (he/him dwarf **commoner**) warns the party to never go anywhere alone in Yravine. Asked about Bold Fenner, he reveals:

- Fenner vanished just before the Farrowmores started handling their butchery in house.
- Fenner told Yasoum he was offered work by Amos Farrowmore shortly before his disappearance.
- Yasoum doesn't believe Farrowmores' herds account for how much meat they're selling.

Yasoum offers the party trail rations and 10 gp to investigate the Farrowmore estate.

Part 3: Bad Estate of Affairs

The Farrowmore family home is surprisingly humble: it's obvious the dark-shingled stone building predates its occupants by at least a century. A high wooden fence encloses the yard behind it. To the east, lush and prosperous fields stretch out over the landscape, their vivid colours gaudy against the wilted backdrop of the neighbouring fields.

A passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a side door in the fence.

The building contains a front hall, 2 bedrooms, a dining room, a study, and a kitchen.

Front Door:

If the party enters the home from the front door, they must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity (Stealth) check or encounter Elis Farrowmore (he/him human **noble**). Elis runs out of the house to find Blodwen unless persuaded or incapacitated.

Back Door:

Succeeding on a DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check grants access to the back yard, which contains a small herb garden, an outhouse, and direct access to the kitchen. Roll 1D20. On 10 or 20, Elis is present in the kitchen.

If Elis escapes the building, add

1d4 **guards** to the combat encounter in Part 4.

Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 10 detect the scent of blood from the cellar door when entering the kitchen for the first time. The cellar door is unlocked.

Carne's Cellar

At the bottom of the creaking wooden steps, the air grows increasingly damp and metallic. Half-emptied shelves line the walls above a dirt floor grown muddy with blood. In the centre of the room, a gaunt man in black watches the stairs disinterestedly, wiping his hands as skeletal servants separate meat on a table nearby.

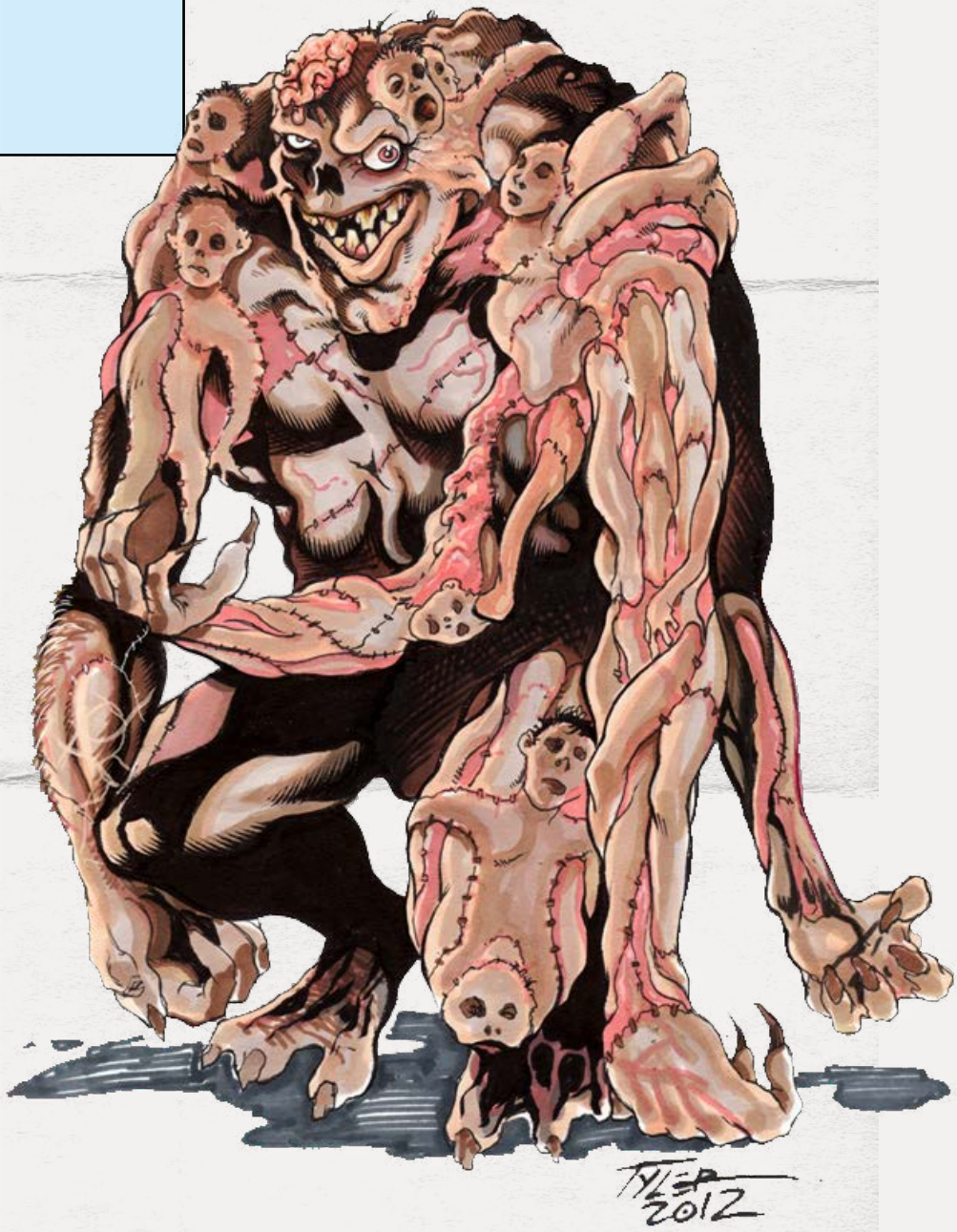
The cellar is a 50-foot square room.

Carne the Unrepenting (he/him elf **necromancer**) is not immediately hostile and can be engaged in conversation. He speaks matter-of-factly and is not evasive with information. If questioned, he reveals:

- 60 years ago, the Farrowmores hired him to blight their competitors' farmlands, and to do so every spring following.
- Over time, the necrotic energy had unforeseen effects on the soil and may be irreversible except by magical means.
- Over the past year, the Farrowmores realized their farm is no longer adequate to feed Yravine's growing population.
- The Farrowmore patriarch, Amos, proposed using vagrants as a supplementary meat source, citing village improvement.
- Blodwen proposed luring outsiders when villagers became suspicious about the disappearance of Bold Fenner.
- Carne resents being treated like a butcher.

If a character attempts to leave the cellar, Carne initiates combat.

Carne smiles at you in a way that is decidedly unfriendly. "Oh, come now. You know I can't let you leave."



Carne summons a **flesh golem** and 1d4 + 2 **skeletons**. The skeletons block access to the stairwell.

The flesh golem comes with the following changes:

- It is a mass of bones, many of which bear signs of butchery.
- Strange whispers come from the skulls in its body.
- If Carne and another creature are an equal distance from it while it's berserk, it attacks Carne.

Characters may make a DC 20 Wisdom or Intelligence check at any point during their turn. On a success, they hear the following from the golem:

> You hear words in the whispers. "…good honest work… Lorelai is expecting… shoe to the road…" As you listen, the voices begin to speak in unison. "…go home… let me go home…"

If this occurs, characters may attempt a Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince the golem to attack Carne on its turn. Carne contests this with Charisma (Intimidation).

Tactics

Carne attempts to hide behind the Golem whenever possible, providing himself partial cover.

If the characters defeat Carne, the necromantic magic animating his minions dissipates and the minions collapse.

Rewards

Carne is wearing the *ring of the faltering seed* (See Appendix A). Hidden in the pockets of his robes are stolen keepsakes valuing 125 gp.

Part 4: Bad Stock, Good Neighbours

Upon exiting the cellar, the party hears arguing from the front hall.

> "Uncle Amos, we trust you. All we need is for you to prove you haven't been hiring someone to sabotage the fields. That's we all need. Please."

If the party has encountered Noria Dewillo, they recognize this voice as hers.

> You don't recognize the voice that answers. "Noria. Rousa. Everyone. Is this all it takes? One unsigned note left beneath a tavern keeper's door. Is this all it takes to send us into such dissolution that we suspect our neighbours, our relations, our friends—our oldest friends, Rousa, by gods—of conspiring to hide wicked secrets from one another? Is this what we have become? Is this our Yravine?"
>
> The crowd murmurs uncertainly for a moment, and then another unfamiliar voice calls out "Spoken like a Farrowmore: between the teeth!" and the arguing begins afresh.

If the party has not entered the front hall during this speech, Amos Farrowmore (he/him human **noble**) backs into the kitchen, away from a crowd of villagers blocked by Blodwen and 4 **guards** (+1d4 if Elis escaped).

When Amos sees the party, he blames them for the note, claiming they're agents of a plot to rob Yravine of its independence, and initiates combat.

Tactics

Included in this combat are Amos, Blodwen, and all but 2 of the guards

present (these 2 take up position as a barrier between the villagers and the combat).

A character may attempt a Charisma (Persuasion) check to persuade the crowd of the truth. Amos contests this with Charisma (Persuasion). If the character invites the villagers to investigate the contents of the cellar, they roll with advantage.

On a failed check, the villagers do not intervene. This check may be repeated on the character's next turn.

On a success, the villagers rush the guards and combat ends.

Conclusion: A Few Bad Seeds

After Amos, Blodwen, and the guards are restrained by villagers, Emrick and Yasoum investigate the basement.

> Only moments after they've descended, Emrick rushes back up the stairs, face ashen, followed soon after by Yasoum, carrying a human skull. Around you, a few members of Yravine's Watch recoil before looking to Blodwen for answers.

Rousa takes charge following this revelation, proposing the villagers take control of the Watch House to imprison the people involved while the village investigates the extent of the conspiracy and discusses a solution. Yasoum points out that without the extra meat, Yravine isn't producing enough food to support its population.

Amos attempts to use any opportunity during this encounter to his advantage, claiming he was forced to find a solution to the food shortage after inheriting the problem from his father, and was acting in the village's best interests.

At this point, the villagers look to the party for assistance. Characters can propose both magical and non-magical solutions to the food shortage, provided they take into account Yravine's inaccessibility by vehicle and that Yravine's fields and livestock will need years to recover without magical intervention.

If the party cannot present an actionable solution, Rousa intervenes:

> There's grim humour in Rousa's face as she speaks. "Well, they've been feeding us each other without us knowing—if I had to eat a neighbour, I'd rather know about it, wouldn't you?" The laughter rippling through the crowd seems to surprise even them.

Amos begs Noria to dissuade the villagers, but she turns away, requesting the party follow her out of the house. Once outside, she tearfully presents them with a *sigil of Last Shift* (see Revolutionary Action). Regardless of the hook being followed, Noria asks if the party recognizes the sigil.

Rewards

If the party is following the Revolutionary Action hook, Noria says the note had instructions to tell them: "Your labour is acknowledged, and you may call on ours when in need."

If the party is following the Stranger Brews hook, they are rewarded 150 gp upon their return to the guild hall.

Continuing the Adventure

According to Rousa, a reclusive druid lives to the north. Can the druid heal Yravine's blighted soil?

Appendix A: New Magic Items

Ring of the Faltering Seed

Ring, rare (requires attunement)

Made from the knotted wood of an ancient treant, the time-bleached surface of this ring prickles with necromantic energy.

This ring has 4 charges and regains 1d4 expended charges daily at dawn. While wearing this ring, you can use an action to expend 1 of its 4 charges to cast a necromancy spell you know without expending a spell slot.

If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, tiny green shoots sprout forth from the cracked wood and the ring becomes a *ring of regeneration*.




Timothy McCown Reynolds

The Fury of Naathrun Delda

Level 9| Setting Neutral
Timothy McCown Reynolds

Timothy is an artist working in Brooklyn on planet Earth in the Sol system. He is an actor, director, illustrator, sculptor, painter, poet, playwright, carpenter, designer, and occasional escape-artist. All Love & Work dedicated to the Emperor Maximillian, the Empress Charlotte, and the late great Joey, Familiar Eternal & Supreme. www.timothymccownreynolds.com .

A setting-neutral adventure for 4 - 6 characters of 9th level. The heroes meet a grove of druids, go to a river town, and attend a festival held by a feudal lord in honor of himself.

Things get complicated when the feudal lord hires the adventurers to investigate a shocking crime that may involve their new friends.

Things get more complicated when it turns out their new employer is a murderous devil-worshipper.

Adventure Background

House Naath

800 years ago, Fard Naath, a shadar kai noble persecuted for worshipping Asmodeus, fled the Shadowfell to settle Naathrun Delda and establish his House and fortune selling branded "gourmet fur, artisanal beastcraft, and luxury meats", all in service to an infernal contract with Asmodeus himself.

Recently, after squandering nearly all Naathi wealth and resources on foolish ventures, his grandson Dimwad "renegotiated the deal" with Asmodeus. Dimwad receives influxes of gold, and in exchange must sacrifice innocent souls on sacred druid lands… "or else". Every year since, Lord Dimwad holds his own birthday party open to the townsfolk, ostensibly "giving back" to the community, but uses the occasion to fulfill his contractual obligation.

Druids

After years of abuses against Nature, the druid elders plan to exact vengeance on House Naath in an attempt to restore the Balance. Today, they complete the casting of an ancient ritual to pre-

pare 13 initiates to become avatars of nature's vengeance called **primal furies** (Appendix A).

Forest People

These are folk of various humanoid races living in the Wyvern Wood and on Willow Isle. They live in harmony with the land, traveling into town to work and trade. Dimwad privately preys upon them for his sacrifices and publicly scapegoats them to distract from his abuses.

The Region

The area covers two hills divided by a river. The eastern hill bears the verdant and bustling rivertown of Naathrun Delda. Across the river, atop the gutted remains of the western hill, perches the seat of Naathi rule, Fort Naath. The Blazing Gate Bridge spans the distance and the iron fist that burns upon it is visible from every vantage.

Dimwad's Domain effect. This is operant in Naathrun Delda and Fort Naath for as long as Dimwad lives. When spending happens within sight / hearing of the heroes, they must make a DC15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure:

- Compulsively spend 1d20 % of their available money / resources.
- Gain 2d6 temporary hit points and advantage on social checks for 1 hour.

Inability to spend results in disadvantage on social checks for 1 hour.

Dramatis Personae

Lord Dimwad Naath

(CE he/him **warlock of the fiend** with shadar-kai traits and the following changes):

Innate Spellcasting. At will: *mage armor, speak with animals*

1/day: investiture of flame (6th level)

Spellcasting. Dimwad is a 12th level spellcaster. Charisma is Dimwad's spellcasting ability (spell save DC17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). Dimwad regains expended spell slots after finishing a short or long rest. Dimwad knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch (3d8 necrotic damage), eldritch blast (3 beams, +4 bonus to each damage roll & the target may be pushed 10 ft.), infestation (3d6 poison damage), minor illusion*

1st-5th level (3 5th-level slots): *armor of Agathys, counterspell, danse macabre, darkness, dispel magic, earthbind, find familiar, flock of familiars, infernal calling, magic circle, mirror image, protection from evil and good*

Wears *displacer beast fur (cloak of displacement), rod of rulership, fiend key* (Appendix B).

Ideal: The Dimwad. *"I'm The Dimwad. The world is my ashcan."*

Bond: Infernal Pact. *"You can make a deal with a devil. That's a win."*

Flaw: Thin-skinned entitlement. *"I take everything personally, because I'm an everything person!"*

Dimwad's raven, **Pooty (familiar imp), always on his shoulder, smells of sulphur and drops obscenities in Infernal.**

Dirinka Naath

(LE she/her **noble** MM, with **shadar-kai** traits MToF)

Clothes, hair, and makeup always on point. Secretly bides time for her inheritance, plays dumb trying to be smart. Wears displacer beast fur (*cloak of displacement), ring of mind shielding.* Daughter of Dimwad.

Ideal: Self-control. "I become a blank."

Bond: Patience. "My time will come."

Flaw: Misfit. "I lack worthwhile connections."

Battle tactics: Non-combatant.

Bilby Blackruff

(NE he/him noble MM, with shadar-kai traits MTF)

Go-between, lickspittle, toady, and fixer. Terrified of Dimwad. Oilier than oil. Wears displacer beast fur (*cloak of displacement*).

Ideal: Flexibility. "I bend as I am bent."

Bond: Opportunity. "Oho! What yum is this?"

Flaw: Cowardly. "I crush easily."

Battle tactics: Non-combatant.

Artemisia

(LG she/her commoner MM)

Half-shadar kai elf; druidic devotee; crafts potions and tends bar at the Nectar & Ambrosia. Artur's twin. Earthy, generous, intelligent.

Ideal: Tradition. "My devotion gives old ways new life."

Bond: Community. "We are stronger together."

Flaw: Naive. "I don't believe anyone could truly be evil."

Artur

(CG he/him commoner MM)

Half-shadar kai elf; druidic devotee; gifted but financially struggling harpist; Artemisia's twin. Seems confident and stoic, but is deeply sensitive.

Ideal: Heroism. "I need to make a difference in the world."

Bond: Beauty. "Nothing moves me like a sunset … or your smile."

Flaw: Impulsive. "Life's too short for death!"

Battle tactics: *primal fury* (Appendix A)

Adventure Summary

In Part 1, the heroes boat toward Naathrun Delda for a birthday festival celebrating its feudal lord, Dimwad Naath.

In Part 2, on Willow Isle the heroes meet Artur, Artemisia, and Mugwyrd. They unknowingly witness a druidic ritual transforming 13 young adults into primal furies. They learn about tensions between the Forest People and House Naath. Artemisia offers accommodation in town.

In Part 3, the heroes get to know the town as they travel through it.



In Part 4, the heroes end

the night at the Nectar & Ambrosia with competition and carousing. While they sleep, the irresistible force of the druidic Primal Fury intersects with the immovable object of Naathi devil-worship, to catastrophic results.

In Part 5, an urgent summons comes from Dimwad to investigate the terrible event that happened the night before in the Wyvern Wood.

In Part 6, at the massacre site, heroes may encounter ghosts and have the opportunity to find evidence of devil sacrifices.

In Part 7, the heroes find their druid friend Artur and 3 unicorn foals at the druid's *moonwell*. Chance of fight with Primal Fury. Challenge of the fiendish shackles.

During Part 8, the heroes attend Dimwad's Birthday Party. Most roads lead to conflict.

Hooks

- Buy and sell at the renowned Dimwad Festival marketplace.
- Bards, entertainers, art-lovers and professional drinkers come for the Bardic and Drinking Competitions.
- Druids and rangers come to commune with the druids of Willow Isle.

Part 1: The Boat

It is summer. Our heroes wake in the pre-dawn gloom aboard the *Rain Dog*, a riverboat which has been their home the past week. The captain, Craggy Dimbleshizz (CG he/him **bandit captain**, with **rock gnome** traits) announces:

> "We're nearly there! Naathrun Delda, where we're putting in to port for the Festival of Dimwad. First, though, I plan to visit friends on Willow Isle. Gotta pay respect to the druids and Forest People there. Share their morning ritual, drink some druid tea, and get the best free hot breakfast this side of Celestia. Are you with me?"

- The Festival Of Dimwad is an arts and commerce festival celebrating the birthday of Naathrun Delda's lord, Dimwad Naath.
- House Naath came from the Shadowfell. It's rumoured they were exiled for devotions to powers "other than the Raven Queen".
- The Naathi are infamous monster hunters. Many fall before their ruthless tactics, but their brutality against displacer beasts in particular is that for which House Naath claims legendary status.

Part 2: Willow Isle

Craggy leads the party ashore. A group of **Forest People** (adults and children) gather quietly by a campfire on the beach.

A prayer hut stands 15 feet inland at the edge of a dense woodland opposite the fire from the gathering. Indistinct chanting can be heard from within.

Artemisia welcomes Craggy and the heroes:

> "You're just in time, they've been at the ritual all night!"

As the sun rises, 5 druid elders (including Mugwyrd TN they/them human **druid**) and 13 young initiates (including Artur) emerge from the hut.

The druids raise their arms to the sun and make elaborate gestures. They place necklaces with *mistletoe charms* around each initiate's neck as they sing (in Druidic):

"Sunlight seal thy sacrifice,

Balance Nature's need

Mistletoe preserve thy life

When primal furies feed."

Mugwyrd speaks in common:

"Witness the Land!"

All druids and initiates speak in common:

"The Land is the Life."

Mugwyrd speaks in common:

"Welcome to our Community of Spirit.

Eat our sun-grown food

To get that belly full of love.

Drink our moonwell tea

To stay in touch with what is good.

Remember our missing and honor our dead."

The ceremony ends. The initiates socialize, eat, drink moonwell tea, and swim in the shallows.

Craggy introduces twins from the town, Artemisia and Artur, who offer accommodation for the heroes at the Nectar & Ambrosia. The heroes learn many Forest People have gone missing over the past few years.

Mugwyrd meets them, and then leaves with the elder druids into the woodland.

Developments

- **Creatures that drink the** *moonwell* tea receive immunity from Dimwad's Domain effect for 24 hours (this is not communicated overtly by the druids).
- This is the only obvious organized worship in Naathrun Delda. There are no churches.

Part 3: Town

Note: The *Dimwad's Domain effect is operant from this point onward.*

Craggy drops the heroes and Forest People off at the Market Road pier, explaining he's charged a fee per passenger when he docks at the Marina. He says he'll meet them at the Bardic Competition at the Nectar & Ambrosia later that night.

Market Road

Flowering trees line the dirt road. Bees buzz lazily and birds chirp. An incomplete wall stands between the hilltop town and the road. Music plays distantly.

Naathi troopers (neutral **guard** with **shadar-kai** traits) patrol in pairs. They wear displacer beast fur (*Cloak Of Displacement* DMG). Their bright red helmets grant advantage on Charisma (Intimidation), but disadvantage on all other social checks.

Banners hang at regular intervals displaying Naathi heraldry: a fiery mailed fist grasping a chain restraining 2 collared displacer beasts, rampant, over a grey escutcheon. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that worked into the design is a hidden motto: a series of elaborate curling red sigils which read "Hell Supreme" in Infernal.

Hilltop Gate

Festival crowds pour into town. Naathi troopers stand at the gate, eyeing entrants. The streets are constantly packed with people committed to partying and commerce, making them difficult terrain.

Free Market

Street vendors sell flattering images of Dimwad's face for 1 gp each (Some Naathi troopers wear these). Sex workers, food vendors, fortune-tellers, jugglers, dancers, actors, and mimes compete for the heroes' attention and their money. Forest People sell food and work as laborers and street cleaners.

A play begins, depicting Naathi propaganda:

> "The Raven Queen herself sent Naathi sThe Raven Queen the Naathi blessed, and did herself foretell
>
> Of fierce Fard's burst into our air forth from the Shadowfell!
>
> Now Dimwad masters monsters more, grows glorious in gold..."

An elf interrupts:

> "And eats up everything there is, that he has not yet sold!"

The crowd laughs. Some Naathi troopers move the actors along, while others pursue the heckler.

Old Town

This walled area features specialty goods dealers and the homes of the wealthier townsfolk (mainly elves, humans, and tieflings). The Jailhouse, Guildhall, and broadsheet press ("*The Delda Daily*") are here.

The Naathi Boutique. The Boutique dominates this area, advertising "Exotic Furs, Artisanal Beastcraft, & Luxury Meats". A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the sign has a motif of curling red "designs" which read "Hell Supreme" in Infernal.

Tchaad, a Naathi seller (LE **commoner**), upbeat and self-interested, is inside. Tchaad knows the following rumors and relates them on a successful Intelligence (History) or Charisma (Persuasion) check or bribe. A character who speaks Infernal with Tchaad has advantage on the checks.

DC 10: "Lord Dimwad wants to wall out Forest People to safeguard borders." Wink.

DC 20 or 25 gp: "We accommodate any taste, if the price is right." Wink.

DC 25 or 50 gp: "Word is we'll be getting some unicorn meat very soon." Wink.

Free Samples include such delicacies as catoblepas veal, al-miraj sausage, jellied owlbear eyes, and misty mountain oysters.

For pricing, use the relevant creature's Challenge Rating (CR) as a multiplier for determining price in gold pieces for furs (CR x 200 gp), beastcraft (CR x 100 gp), and meats (CR x 20 gp / 5 lbs). The Boutique has in stock items made from al-miraj, catoblepas, displacer beast, gryphon, manticore, owlbear, and peryton.

Scholar's Grove

The Scholar's Grove hosts the Bardic College of the Green (specializing in druidic

study), College research Library, and Children's Schoolhouse. One thing dominates campus conversation: the Bardic College has noted a recent spike in primal magic.

Part 4: The Nectar & Ambrosia

The Nectar & Ambrosia is a 3-storey plaster and timber structure with a stone foundation, large entryway featuring a wide taproom of glossy hardwood, ventilated cooking pit, and a 3-tiered gallery overlooking a full proscenium stage. Large bay windows open to the street, allowing customers in the courtyard access to inside entertainment. A back door leads to an herb garden, outdoor privies, and stables, all of which are also accessible from a gate on the street.

Artemisia introduces the heroes to Abe (NG they/them human **commoner**), who agrees to rent them the 3rd floor loft (1 big room with 10 beds) for only 10 gp per night.

Artemisia is sleepy after tending fire for the all-night ritual. She retires to her room until she has to work.

At 6 bells, Artemisia begins work at the bar, mixing potions. She mentions dreaming about "a three-eyed monster".

Drinking Competition.

At 7 bells, the Drinking Competition begins and lasts until 9. Craggy arrives and competes with gusto. The competition costs 1 gp to enter, then each contestant bets 1 gp per drink in contested Constitution checks. The first to roll 3 failures loses the match. The winner takes the gold and can either stay in the competition by accepting challengers, or resign in triumph, leaving room for other contestants.

If a contestant has 6 failures in 1 hour, they make a Constitution saving throw, the result of which has an effect as follows:

DC 15: unconscious 1d6 hours

DC 20: stunned 1d4 hours

DC 25: poisoned 1 hour

DC 30: reset to 0 failures, and ready for more!

Gambling

Abe takes bets for drinking matches as well as the bardic competition. Minimum bet is 1 gp.

Bardic Competition

At 9 bells, as the full moon rises outside, the room is packed with enthusiastic attendees. Artur arrives and speaks quietly with Abe, who announces a new order, and Artur takes the stage. Artur harps and sings:

"The rich pull us to their table
Lick our scraps up once a year.
What'll they do when we're able
To feed ourselves on what they fear?
The rich are always eating ever
Eating even up their own,
All of us can't eat together
What the rich eat up alone.
Strip rich skin like tanner's leather,
Tease out all rich marrowbone,
We must eat what we together

Could not eat up all alone!

Eat! (x9)”

Artur stops abruptly, bows, and leaves through the side door, disappearing into the festival crowd.

The competition proceeds as follows:

- Participating heroes improvise / describe their “act” and make an appropriate skill check (Performance, Acrobatics, etc.). NB: Drinking contest winners have advantage.
- For Artur’s entry make a Charisma (Performance) check with a +4 bonus.
- High score wins door-prize (1d12 x 100 gp). Runner-up wins 6 months room and board at Nectar & Ambrosia.

Part 5: Summons

The next morning, the heroes wake to knocking and voices calling for help.

Bilby Blackruff waits in the taproom. He explains a terrible tragedy has struck the Naathi family:

“An ultra-exclusive Naathi... hunting party, including Dimwad’s sons, got into… trouble last night and... went missing. This morning, possible signs of the… hunting party were discovered in the Wyvern Wood… which is druid territory. We Naathi need neutral investigators. Lord Dimwad heard of the arrival of powerful heroes, and seeks your help to settle it without disturbing his birthday party.”

Bilby promises 1,000 gp and VIP invitations to Dimwad’s Birthday Party. He instructs the heroes to report to Fort Naath after their investigation. He summons a luxurious Naathi carriage to take them to the Wyvern Wood massacre site.

Part 6: Massacre

The heroes arrive in the Wyvern Wood. It is silent.

The flayed and dismembered remains of 7 people (cultists including Dimwad’s sons Dorcaak and Dimwad Too, and son-in-law Dushnir) lay scattered about a 120-foot area. The forest floor is soaked with blood.

As the heroes explore the scene, they can gain information by asking questions or making checks. Read the following closely. If the players ask appropriate questions as they explore, reveal the information without checks. Otherwise, for speed and expediency, you can simply ask for checks.

Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception):

- DC 15 or lower: The character disturbs the unquiet resting place of 1d6+1 ghosts of entitled Naathi cultists (Dorcaak and Dimwad Too, Dushnir, 1 halfling, 2 tieflings, 1 tortle), which rise and demand vengeance. If questioned: “We were attacked while offering devotion to our Lord and Savior Asmodeus. Dimwad fled, now we’re dead.”
- DC 20: The character discovers a silver dagger with Naathi crest (+1); a bloodstained, leather-bound ledger with itemized dates, names of innocents, including recently missing Forest People; last entry was for last night: “unicorn foals [3]”. The journal is written in Infernal.
- DC 25: Remains identified: 2 shadar kai (Dorcaak and Dimwad Too), 1 human (Dushnir), 1 halfling, 2 tieflings, 1 tortle.

DC 10 Wisdom (Perception/Survival):

- The character discovers tracks of a large unidentifiable beast which lead east. If followed, the tracks lead to the river's edge, across a cluster of islands called The Tiptoes, onto Willow Isle, and ultimately to the druid Moonwell.

Part 7: Moonwell

Artur sits near the *moonwell*, naked except for the *mistletoe charm*, and covered in the blood of the hunting party.

3 **unicorn foals** (each has 33 hit points and a speed of 25) lie at Artur's feet. Iron manacles engraved with red sigils (which read "For Asmodeus" in Infernal) chafe their necks and cut into every limb. See Appendix B for these *fiendish shackles*.

What happens next depends on what the heroes do and how they interact with Artur and the unicorn foals.

Speak Loudly

If the heroes act or speak aggressively, Artur weeps helplessly. The unicorns get into a formation around him. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling or Insight) check reveals the unicorns will die to protect their friend.

Speak Softly

If the heroes treat them gently, they look to the heroes as saviors. Artur claims not to remember anything after singing. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that Artur is in severe shock, suffering 2 levels of exhaustion. He is otherwise unharmed. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals Artur remembers everything and is haunted by it.

Act Like Murderhobos

Primal fury (Appendix A) erupts from Artur and attacks only those who attack it or the unicorns. The unicorns attack whatever attacks Artur / primal fury. If the primal fury is brought to 0 hit points or fewer, it reverts to an unconscious Artur, provided the *mistletoe charm* is intact.

Mistletoe Charm

A successful Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check reveals the following about the charm:

DC 15: The mistletoe radiates abjuration magic.

DC 20: If the mistletoe is removed from Artur's neck while in primal fury form, the transformation is permanent. If the primal fury is reduced to 0 hit points or fewer, and the mistletoe is still worn, Artur survives. If not, he dies. When a primal fury reduces a creature to 0 hit points, that creature dies immediately and rises as a ghost in 1d12 rounds.

Druids have advantage on this check.

If Artur is taken to the druids (or they to him) alive, they ceremonially remove his mistletoe and treat him, stating he should recover in a few days.

If Artur dies, they prepare his body for funerary rites.

If the heroes question the druids about their involvement:

> "Our Circle felt the land's need for balance. We asked our community for volunteers to serve that need. Artur has served, and is released. 12 servants of the Land remain."

The druids explain only to another

druid, in Druidic:

"The Land demanded vengeance. We serve the Land."

If the unicorns are not freed from the *fiendish shackles* within 3 days, they die. If the unicorns are released, they touch their horns to the heroes, imbuing them with a momentary pearlescent glow (see Rewards at the Conclusion). They bid farewell, and teleport away.

Part 8: Birthday Party

The heroes cross the Blazing Gate Bridge through the tunnel road to meet Dimwad.

The Bridge is 60 feet wide. Above its entrance stands a three-dimensional sculpture of Naathi heraldry: a huge iron fist surrounded by actual fire. The fist grasps an iron chain collaring 2 huge iron displacer beasts. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the sign has a motif of red sigils which read "Hell Supreme" in Infernal.

The tunnel (1 mile long, 50 feet wide, and 35 feet high) ends at the hilltop, opening into the Garden of Gravel & Gold, a wide courtyard 500 feet in diameter, enclosed by walls 30 feet tall and filled entirely with red and black gravel.

Features of the Area

Statues. 18 "gold" statues of Dimwad (6 Huge, 12 Large) are placed randomly, roughly every 50 feet. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the statues are lead, covered in gold leaf.

Screens. Screens separate the outer wall and the main house. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the screens hide cages holding 37 al-miraj, 8 displacer beasts, 7 tigers, 15 wolves. The cages are locked. The locks are opened on a successful DC15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools. If the beasts are released, these desperate animals attempt to escape the Garden. They attack if cornered or threatened, doing so with advantage against Naathi tormentors.

No Soup for You. There is no food. Terrible wine is the only free option. Drinks are otherwise 1 gp each, served by roving waiters.

The Hosts. Dimwad, Dirinka, and Bilby laugh and cajole a mostly lackluster and inebriated crowd of 150 townsfolk to sing Happy Birthday to Dimwad. They stand on a temporary stage. All wear Naathi brand artisanal beastcraft headpieces.

Stay Off the Stage. 13 Naathi guards stand at the base of the stage, alert.

Dimwad speaks:

"It's sad that my boys, Dimmy and Dorcaak, and my babysweet's hubby, Dushnir, couldn't wish me Happy Birthday. Hunting accident. Tragic loss. I totally lost getting 3 birthday presents. Speaking of losing: the Forest People, am I right? I'm right."

If the heroes haven't interrupted by now:

"Here they are, champions of lost losers - my Dimwad Squad! Everybody! Happy Birthday to me, Happy Birthday to me!"

If the heroes side with Dimwad, he rewards them with titles, holdings, and goods, all stolen from others. Then he orders Willow Isle burned



and the moonwell poisoned first thing in the morning.

If confronted about cult activity, Dimwad uses D.A.R.V.O.:

Deny. "Read these lips: No devil worship."

Accuse. "Sounds like maybe you're the baby unicorn killer."

Reverse Victim. "It's. My. Birthday."

Obfuscate. "What about adventurers? You murder at the drop of a flumph!"

If confronted further, Dimwad will take personal offense, and attack.

Tactics

Dimwad first casts *infernal calling* to summon a barbed devil, ordering it to protect him. He then casts *investiture of flame*. Thereafter he uses his *rod of rulership* and shouts contradictory orders at his guards. Dimwad's ego won't let him flee.

Fiendish Claim. If Dimwad is reduced to 0 hit points, Pooty appears in his imp form and becomes a door. Asmodeus (no stats necessary) steps through, waving Dimwad's infernal contract, roars "The Law is the Law!", seizes the shrieking Dimwad, pulls him inside-out backside first, and exits with him through the Pooty-door, leaving Dimwad's blistered empty orange skull smoking on the ground. The fiend key also remains, clinking onto the ground beside the skull. Pooty gestures obscenely and exits through his own backside with a wet sulphuric pop.

Part 9: Conclusion

Dimwad Defeated. A cloud of oppression lifts from the town. Dirinka attempts to take over as sole heir, denouncing the abuses of Dimwad. Will the community believe her (lies)?

Dimwad Escapes. As above but tinged with uncertainty. Will the heroes remain to enact change?

Artur Lives. Artemisia leaves the potionery to deepen her druidry and unite all people in harmony with the Land.

Artur Slain. Artemisia leaves druidry to deepen her study of divination.

Mugwyrd and the Druids. Wait and see: 12 servants of the Land remain.

Rewards

Saving Unicorn foal. After the next long rest, this grants +1 to an ability score of the hero's choice, not to exceed 20. Limit 1 per hero.

Saving Artur. Gain druidic apprenticeship: choose 1 of the following cantrips from the druid spell list: druidcraft, thorn whip, or produce flame.

Defeating Dimwad. The townsfolk offer Fort Naath and the stewardship of the region to the heroes.

Sparing Dirinka. Dirinka offers marriage and co-rulership, or her weight in emeralds (worth 1,000 gp) in exchange for her life and freedom.

Appendix A: Custom Monsters & NPCs

PRIMAL FURY

Large monstrosity, lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 120 (12d12 + 48)
SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)

SAVING THROWS Charisma +4, Constitution +8, Wisdom +8
SKILLS Perception +8, Stealth +8
DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons
DAMAGE IMMUNITIES cold, nonmagical fire, necrotic, poison
CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, poisoned
SENSES devil's sight 120' see through magical darkness, passive Perception 18
LANGUAGES druidic, sylvan
CHALLENGE 9 (5,000 XP)

BLOODIED REGENERATION. Once reduced to half its hit points (60), the primal fury regains 15 hit points at the start of each of its turns.

FEARSOME. Creatures that can hear and/or see the primal fury must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened. Those who save against this effect are immune to it for 1 hour. Targets who fail this saving throw may attempt it again at the end of their turn.

KEEN SENSES. The primal fury has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.

REND. If the primal fury hits the same target with four claw attacks in one turn, the target takes an additional 24 (4d12) slashing damage.

SLAY, FLAY, AND DAMN. If the primal fury reduces a target to 0 hit points or fewer, the target is killed outright as its skin is flayed from its body. It rises as a ghost in 1d12 rounds, its spirit denied afterlife and bound to the land upon which it died. The primal fury and those it protects are immune from the attacks and effects of ghosts created in this way.

ACTIONS

MULTIATTACK. The primal fury makes 4 claw attacks and 1 bite attack.

BITE. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d12 + 5) piercing damage.

CLAW. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 +5) slashing damage.

REACTIONS

FERAL WARD. If a creature or area under the primal fury's protection is targeted by an attack, the primal fury may use its reaction to impose disadvantage on the triggering attack. If the resultant attack misses, the triggering attacker takes 11 bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone.

Physical Description

The primal fury stands 12 feet tall, its powerful shoulders covered in thick black and brown yak-like hair. Its head is crowned in a trio of twisted horns overlooking three baleful eyes. Its snout is long and lupine, its teeth that of a saber-tooth tiger, its long and muscular simian forelimbs end in jagged claws, and its raptor-like back legs pad on taloned feet.

DC20 Intelligence (Arcana/ Nature)

A primal fury is a natural spirit of vengeance summoned up in times of extremity to restore the Balance of Nature. In an all-night ceremonial ritual of song and meditation, a volunteer makes an offering of themselves as a sacrifice to the primal spirits of Nature in order to become a vessel for a primal fury to physically manifest from within them.

At sunrise, the ceremony ends and they are given a sprig of mistletoe to be worn as a protective ward. The mistletoe has abjuration magic. If the primal fury is reduced to 0 hit points or fewer, and the mistletoe is still worn, the vessel will survive. If it is not, they will die.

If the mistletoe is removed from the vessel while in primal fury form, the transformation will be permanent. If it is still worn, the vessel's body will revert from the primal fury's at the next sunrise. Victims of a primal fury brought to 0 hit points or fewer die immediately, and rise as unquiet spirits cursed to haunt the land they defiled.

Tactics

When motivated, the primal fury will literally burst from within, tearing its host's body to shreds, and attack each of its targets one at a time with its bite and claw until each is killed and skinned with its slay, flay, and damn effect.



Appendix B: Magic Items

Fiendish Shackles

Wondrous item, very rare

These rough-hewn iron manacles are cursed and enchanted. Inscribed with red glyphs (in Abyssal, Celestial, or Infernal), they uncomfortably bite into the wearer's flesh and reduce its speed by half. In addition, they suppress any spellcasting abilities of the wearer, and any attacks and saving throws made by the wearer are made at disadvantage. An identify spell or a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check reveals that they may be removed by one of the following methods:

- the use of its accompanying *fiend key*
- casting *dispel evil and good*
- casting a combination (in either order) of *dispel magic* using a 5th level spell slot or higher and *remove curse*
- a fiend of CR 6 or higher speaking the word "release" in its native planar tongue within hearing range of the shackles
- a *wish* spell

- A character making a successful DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves' tools unlocks the shackles. A creature which unlocks the shackles in this way must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or the shackles will attach themselves onto that creature. If the shackles fail to attach, they attempt to bind the next physically closest adventurer, in rapid succession, then each remaining non-player character (if any), until they manage to shackle another creature. Any creature saving against this effect is immune to this set of shackles for 24 hours.

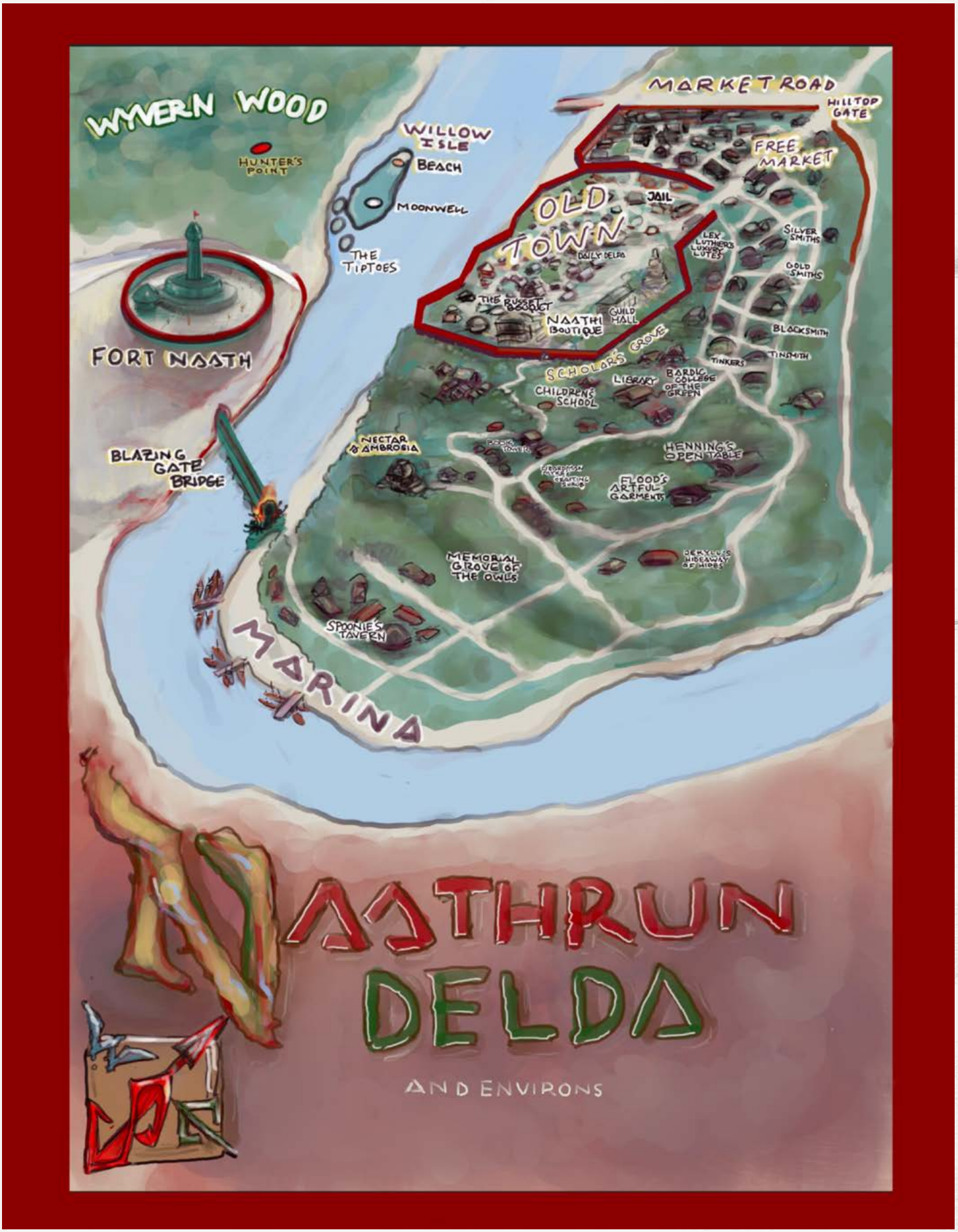
Fiend Key

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

A set of fiendish shackles always has an accompanying fiend key. A fiend key always opens the set of fiendish shackles it is designed to control. As long as you're attuned to a fiend key, you're immune to the fiendish shackles your key controls. In addition, if the shackles aren't currently restraining a creature, the fiend key renders the shackles dormant until you speak the command word to activate them.



Appendix C: Map





Fish In Every Basket

Level 6| Setting Neutral

N.K. Kratsas

Nick is a multimedia poet from Cleveland, Ohio. They were born among the city's sidewalk weeds and raised in comic book shops and dingy punk bars. They hope this adventure serves as a fantastical allegory about the inherently exploitative nature of tyranny.

Nick's work can be found at nkkratsas.com

The mountainside town of Cobluff is at the mercy of a hill giant who lumbers through the streets each night, demanding an offering from every household— specifically, fish caught from the local lake. While the townsfolk scramble to meet the giant's demands, the members of the exclusive Fishing Guild suddenly find themselves in a uniquely profitable position.

This dungeon is designed for 3-5 6th to 8th level characters and is optimized for 4 characters with an average party level (APL) of 7.

Adventure Background

Nestled beneath the Driflop Mountains, Cobluff is a town of a few hundred halflings, several human families, and the remainder a mix of other races. Historically a working-class halfling town, the past 200 years has seen a substantial influx of humans settling in Cobluff. In that time, the Fishing Guild was founded: a predominantly human-run organization meant to regulate fishing of Cobluff's lake and establish trade networks with other cities and foreign traders.

Above Driflop's tallest peak sits the palatial gardens of an evil cloud giant named Umoor. A month ago, the mayor's son, Norkum Limmons, led a reckless expedition into Umoor's garden, angering the giant and barely escaping with his life. In a mischievous revenge plot, Umoor conscripted Tor, a hill giant from an inferior caste within the Ordning, to do his bidding. Eager to follow the wishes of a social superior, Tor arrived in Cobluff two weeks ago and smashed the mayor's guest house before delivering his final message: "A basketful of fish. Cobluff Perch. A basketful from every house. Tor's dinner every night."

Ever since, a magical fog rises at dusk as Tor lumbers through Cobluff to gobble up the fish left at each doorstep and damage the homes whose offering is insufficient. While most townsfolk scramble to meet Tor's

demands, the members of the Fishing Guild turn dividends amid the panic. Although the Guild had previously turned a blind eye to hobbyist fishers, who've traditionally fished the lake for generations, they now strictly enforce their exclusive rights to fish the lake.

Dramatis Personae

Rofwin Arld: A stubborn halfling and local historian, Rofwin maintains that everyone in Cobluff (especially halflings) has the right to catch fish. Unafraid of the Fishing Guild's intimidation, Rofwin wishes to spread knowledge of Cobluff's secret rivers and fishing holes.

"Nana" Erma Flynhorn: The oldest living halfling in Cobluff, "Nana" is a skilled animal tracker and herbalist, a legendary and secretive figure of Cobluff. Watching Tor since his arrival, "Nana" seeks to learn more about the hill giant's peculiar actions.

Hira Woodby: A halfling with a powerful presence, Hira is the owner and barkeep of The Dabbling Duck. With a special interest in civil law, Hira is keen to learn more about the Fishing Guild's operating manual.

Welyse Rosk: Welyse is a firebrand halfling and the de facto leader of the local militia. Cobluff's one and only hometown halfling hero, Welyse plans to kill Tor and end his reign of terror.

Dolo Bophill: An aloof and soft spoken halfling, who was first among the militia to join the Fishing Guild's private guard. Above all else, Dolo works to provide for his family.

Bertio Yavoy: A wealthy human and leader of the Fishing Guild. Like his father and grandfather before him, Bertio employs political negotiations to ensure power and wealth for the Guild.

Mayor Larbo Limmons: The halfling mayor is a toady and a pushover. Larbo has been in politics all his life. Up until this point, Larbo's mayorship has been largely uneventful, and he hopes to ruffle as few feathers as possible. Larbo wants to protect his son, Norkum.

Norkum Limmons: A foolish young bard, Norkum constantly relies on his father to bail him out of trouble. Guilt-ridden for bringing distress to Cobluff, Norkum struggles to find the courage to right his wrongs.

Lore They Know—Or What They



Think

Townspeople

- Mayor Limmons is in the pocket of the Fishing Guild.
- The Fishing Guild has profited from the situation with Tor.
- Cobluff's nobility is concerned with Mayor Limmons' lack of action.
- The people have faith in the militia's plan to eliminate Tor.

"Nana" Erma Flynhorn

- Tor maintains some control, but his motivations are being manipulated by a magical effect. Despite the damage Tor has caused, the creature deserves the right to reclaim his own fate.

Hira Woodby

- If I gain access to the Guild's operating manual, I can decipher it by finding a loophole that allows the townsfolk to fish in all waterways other than the lake.

Norkum Limmons

- I'm familiar with the lazulite orb; I saw one just like it when I scaled Driflop, and I'm certain it provides a doorway to Umoor's Garden.

Mayor Larbo Limmons

- I'm the only person besides Norkum who knows the truth about Umoor, and I hope to keep it that way.

Adventure Summary

The adventure is divided into 2 parts. In Part 1: A Survey of Cobluff, the adventurers investigate the troubles plaguing Cobluff and hatch a plan with the town's militia leader. In Part 2: Umoor's Garden, the adventurers find their way to Umoor's Garden and take the final battle to the cloud giant's lair in the sky.

Hooks

Contraband

The party is hired by the Fishing Guild to put an end to what Bertio Yavoy calls "a network of poaching and the traffic of contraband." A few days prior, local merchants tipped the Guild off to a group that was selling low-cost fish in the market, fish that hadn't been distributed by the Guild. Claiming that this is illegal activity clearly in violation of the Guild's operating manual, the Guild will pay for any information regarding the identities of these unlicensed fishers or their clandestine fishing spots.

Auction

The heroes experience a peculiar commotion at dawn, as crowds of people fill the piers flanking the Fishing Guild hall. Merchants shout and wave at the dockworkers attempting to inventory scores of freshly-caught fish. A few Guild Members with ledgers marshal the commotion, acting as auctioneers taking bids from eager merchants. Soon, a scuffle breaks out as merchants from a neighboring town are outbid for the perch they came to purchase, and don't understand why its price has increased ten-fold since their last visit.

Part 1: Survey of Cobluff

In Part 1, the adventurers investigate the situation and determine the best course of action. Once the *lazulite orb* is destroyed, the adventure advances to Part 2.

Magical Fog

While exploring Cobluff, the adventurers are at risk if they remain outdoors at night. From dusk to dawn, the entire city falls under a magical fog, which heavily obscures vision.

Tor

Tor the **hill giant** roams the streets at night, but doesn't confront the adventurers unless he is openly provoked or prevented from gathering fish. Tor is protected by a *lazulite orb* (see below), which magically floats in the air in front of him, maintaining a distance beyond his reach. The orb emits bright light in a 40-foot radius, and dim light for another 40 feet which allows Tor to see despite the fog.

If addressed, Tor speaks with surprising civility. He is unable to fully explain his situation but can recount the orders he receives from Umoor. Tor believes it is his duty to satisfy Umoor, a higher-ranking giant within the Ordning.

Tor may admit that as the days have passed, his body and willpower have been strained. Tor craves Cobluff Perch more than anything, and yet his hunger is never sated. Although he hesitates to betray a fellow giant, Tor ultimately agrees to help the adventurers put a stop to Umoor, and thus, his hunger.

The Lazulite Orb

The lazulite orb is a magical object with AC 14 and 8 HP. If unobstructed, the orb floats and actively moves forever out of the reach of Tor and his greatclub, but has no special ability to avoid attacks by other creatures. The orb has 3 charges and casts true resurrection (expends 1 charge) on Tor if he is killed.

Griffons

2 **griffons** roam the skies at night, trained by Umoor to keep a watchful eye on Tor. They descend only when the *lazulite orb* is attacked or otherwise touched.

Tactics

Tor fights until his hit points are reduced to 1/3 of his maximum HP, at which point he surrenders. Tor doesn't plead for mercy, but instead woefully embraces his demise. The griffons fight to the death to protect the *lazulite orb*.

Development

After the *lazulite orb* casts *true resurrection*, Tor is unaware of anything that happened in the hour before the spell was cast.

If the *lazulite orb* is destroyed, every creature within 60 feet of it is transported to Umoor's Garden. If the orb is destroyed by Tor's own hand, he is rid of his eternal hunger, and is grateful to the adventurers. If the orb is destroyed by anyone other than Tor, he attacks the nearest creature to him and fights to the death.

Market Square

This city block contains stalls for artisans and merchants to sell their wares. Since the arrival of Tor, the market has been chiefly concerned with one good: Cobluff Perch. All day long, wagons compete for space to sell their fish. The perch are always in demand, and the Fishing Guild keeps the mer-

chants well supplied. When the adventurers approach the market, read or paraphrase the following:

> The town square is home to many merchant stands and artisan shops, but most remain largely unnoticed, save the many fish-carts that crowd the central avenue. On the periphery of the desperate buyers, a small group of halflings defiantly holds fishing rods to the sky and shout insults at the merchants.

Rofwin Arld

Rofwin Arld (CG male halfling **commoner**) and a handful of others gather into a group calling itself "The Free Fishers." They meet in the market every day and hand out fishing rods to the townspeople. Rofwin requests the aid of the adventurers to help distribute fishing supplies and information to the people of Cobluff.

"Nana" Erma Flynhorn

"Nana" Erma Flynhorn (CG female halfling **druid**) settles in the market daily just before dusk. With her eyesight failing, "Nana" requests the help of any keen-sighted adventurers to assist in observing Tor.

Development

A few days after their initial visit, the adventurers notice distress among the Free Fishers, and Rofwin is nowhere to be found. Other Free Fishers explain that Rofwin was apprehended with a creel of freshly caught fish and was taken to the town jail. Rofwin maintains the fish weren't caught in the lake—and is therefore innocent—but he refuses to reveal any details about where he caught the fish. The town guards have disposed of the contraband and kept Rofwin "for questioning." They release him the following morning, as the guard are unable to prove where the fish came from.

The Dabbling Duck

A quaint tavern popular among Cobluff's working class, The Dabbling Duck comfortably serves up to 60 guests. Central to the tavern's layout is a wooden spiral staircase that leads up to the second-floor suites as well as down to the basement. As the adventurers enter, read or paraphrase the following:

> There is little revelry among the patrons of the humdrum tavern, and they mutter grimly as they sip their ale. The only person who notices you is the barkeep, a halfling with a striking gaze, who kindly hails you, her new customers as she wipes the smudges off a mug.



Hira Woodby

Hira Woodby (CN female halfling **spy**) is warm and welcoming to the adventurers despite the circumstances. Upon noticing well-armed newcomers, Hira directs the adventurers to Welyse Rosk.

Welyse Rosk

Welyse (CG female halfling **knight**) and her militia can be found in The Dabbling Duck's basement each night, planning their assault on Tor. She asks the adventurers to recruit the former militia-members who now serve as the Fishing Guild's private guard.

Fishing Guild Hall

A sturdy brick building flanked by two of the waterfront's biggest piers, the hall serves as a meeting place for Fishing Guild functions. It also contains office space and living quarters for many of the Guild members. At any given time, 8 to 12 private **guards** stand armed around the perimeter of the hall. As the adventurers approach, read or paraphrase the following:

> You approach the formidable brick hall and the guards stand tense as you draw closer. One of them raises a hand and calls out, "Stop right there, what business d'you have? Hall's for Guild members only."

Dolo Bophill

If the adventurers seek counsel with a member from the Fishing Guild, Dolo (NG male halfling **knight**) can arrange a meeting with Bertio Yavoy. If the adventurers can guarantee an alternate means for Dolo and the guards to provide a source of fish for their families, they agree to rejoin the militia.

Bertio Yavoy

Bertio Yavoy (LE male human **noble**) remains tight-lipped about the Guild's operating manual and suggests the adventurers take further inquiries up with Mayor Limmons.

Mayor Limmons' Manor

Large and colorful with practical sensibilities, the mayor's manor is in the wealthy part of town, largely occupied by humans. The mayoral estate also contains expansive gardens and a few other buildings, including a stable and a guest house. The entire property is surrounded by a brick wall 6 feet high. As the adventurers approach the front door, read or paraphrase the following:

As you approach the door, a disheveled servant excitedly bustles outside to greet you, "Ah yes, what do we have here, upstanding citizens, no doubt! The mayor's office is always open to the people, Mayor Limmons Man of the People is what they call him, ahem. Yes, yes; come, come, he is very busy, but no one is turned away."

Mayor Larbo Limmons

Mayor Larbo Limmons (LN male halfling **noble**) has spent a stressful few weeks listening to concerned citizens, while trying to keep Norkum out of the public eye. The mayor believes he lacks the authority of overrule the Guild's operating manual but agrees to lend them a copy of the document.

The Guest House

On a quiet corner of the mayoral property is a guest house larger than most homes in Cobluff. Part of the guest house's exteri-

or is under repair, as is the brick partition nearby. As the adventurers approach, read or paraphrase the following:

A muffled singing voice and the sound of a lute can be heard from within the guest house. The melody falters at a misplaced note, followed by a yelp of frustration, then a crash as of furniture being toppled over.

Norkum Limmons

Norkum (LN male halfling **noble**) has been under his father's strict orders to remain in the guest house since the arrival of Tor, and the bard has grown restless in his solitude.

Part 2: Umoor's Garden

When the *lazulite orb* is destroyed the adventurers (and possibly Tor and the militia) are transported to Part 2. In this section, they take the fight to the cloud giant Umoor.

Once transported, the adventurers stand high atop the Driflop Mountains, in Umoor's domain among the clouds. The garden's terrain is that of gentle rolling hills with a scattering of large trees, all of extraordinary colors and proportions. To the north is a stream, which flows southward until it bends to the west. Further north, beyond the stream, Umoor's tower stands nearly 200 feet tall. The tower is cylindrical and has a blue-black mirrored surface which doubles the garden's splendid sights. One mile to the west, the stream spills over a waterfall into an expanse of clouds and sea-mist. To the south and east, the grass grows tall and thick until the landscape becomes dense with vegetation. As the adventurers enter the garden, read or paraphrase the following:

> The sights of Umoor's Garden are otherworldly. Blades of tall silvery-pink grass carpet the landscape, lush with flowers and vines of every hue. Enormous trees stand ripe with fruit of purple and gold. Rolling white clouds extend toward the horizon, and the sounds of birds and flowing water fills the air. In the distance to the north, a cylindrical tower stands, shining like a beacon.



The Lazulite Tower

The tower is enormous. Each floor is a circular room 80 feet in circumference and 70 feet high, with a 15-foot wide spiral staircase winding around its perimeter. While the tower's exterior is smooth, mirrored lazulite, the interior walls are rough crystalline fragments. There tower contains no windows, but the crystalline construction allows the gentle diffusion of sunlight during daytime. The rooms are further lit with a scattering of gem-like wall sconces that radiate magical pink light. The floors, ceilings, and staircases are smooth white marble with ornately etched patterns. Sized for a cloud giant, all the tower's furnishings are about 5 times larger than typical of a human dwelling. As the adventurers approach the tower, read or paraphrase the following:

> The smooth, shining blue tower is even more magnificent up close, and it seems to radiate with a faint hum of magical energy. Leading to the building's entrance is a path of white marble, lined with columns that gradually ascend as they near the tower. Atop each column is a statue made of crystalline lazulite, carved in an unnerving and vaguely humanoid shape, angular and featureless, but with wings sprouting from them.

Forecourt

The tower's forecourt extends 120 feet leading to its entrance, through which a 30-foot-wide path of white marble leads to the building's door. Lining the path every 20 feet are cylindrical marble columns ascending from 10 to 100 feet tall. Atop each column, statues are made of the same rough crystalline fragments as the tower's interior, and have the indistinct appearance of winged humanoids. Four of the statues are crystalline **gargoyles**.

Tactics

The crystalline gargoyles wait until the adventurers are about halfway along the marble path before they attack. They remain mid-flight whenever possible during combat. Although they protect Umoor's tower, when a gargoyle is reduced to less than half its hit point maximum it flees to the top of its column.

Floor 1: The Dining Hall

Central to the hall is a dining table, covered with food and drink and surrounded by 8 dining chairs. Elsewhere throughout the room are pantry cabinets absent of food and tableware. When the adventurers enter the dining hall, read or paraphrase the following:

Prominent in the enormous room is a large dining table, arranged with a most decadent display of food and drink. The feast is complete with a table setting for 8, as if in preparation for company.

Features

Umoor notices the adventurers the moment they enter his tower. Nonetheless, he doesn't confront them until the adventurers reach the throne room or trigger the sliding staircase trap (see below).

Umoor has the following lair actions:

On initiative count 20 (losing ties), Umoor takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects:

- A boulder of crystalline shards flies off an interior wall toward a creature Umoor can see within 60 feet. The creature must succeed a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or

take 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.

- A strong gust of wind rushes across the tower's roof. Creatures other than Umoor must succeed a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be pushed 15 feet away from Umoor and be knocked prone.
- A swarm of dragonflies descends in a 20-foot-radius centered on a point Umoor can see within 60 feet of him. The swarm lightly obscures vision. Creatures in the swarm must succeed a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of their next turn. The swarm lasts for one round.

Dining Table

All of the food and drink is contaminated with a sleeping poison. 10 minutes after being ingested, the affected creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 6 hours. The poisoned creature suffers 2 levels of exhaustion and falls unconscious. The creature wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to rouse it awake.

Staircase

Halfway up the staircase to the second floor, one of the marble steps acts as the trigger for a sliding staircase trap. A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the marble on the step is less-worn than the rest of the staircase. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check confirms the step is the trigger for a trap. When a creature stands on the step, all the steps angle downwards to form a smooth slide. A successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check is required to climb the slippery ascent of the slide. A successful DC 16 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disables the trap or returns the slide to a staircase.

Floor 2: The Throne Room

In the center of the room, 3 marble steps lead up to a dais featuring Umoor's throne, which is made of lazulite and marble. Flowing down the steps and surrounding the stage in a semicircle is an ornate rug in royal purple and silver. Above the throne hangs a magnificent crystal chandelier which emits a soft pink glow. Umoor the **cloud giant** sits on his throne, flanked by 2 pet griffons who await his command. When the adventurers enter the throne room, read or paraphrase the following:

> You are greeted by the raucous caws of two griffons, which stand guard and watch you intently from the flanks of a magnificent throne, upon which Umoor sits. The giant merely smiles as he lifts his morningstar.

Tactics

If Tor is present, Umoor avoids fighting him, as he wishes to kill everyone else and save the hill giant for last. Umoor makes use of his spellcasting abilities to keep enemies at bay, and uses his morningstar when they come close enough. When Umoor is reduced to half his hit points, or when both griffons are killed, he casts *gaseous form* on himself and flees to the tower's domed roof, where he returns to his physical form and continues to fight, utilizing *control weather*. The griffons target creatures which pose an immediate threat to Umoor.

Rewards

Umoor carries a pouch containing 220 gp and the key to the iron chest in his chambers. He wears a magnificent purple silk robe (750 gp), a silver crown (2,500 gp), a jeweled platinum ring (7,500 gp), and a lazulite

belt buckle (which has magical properties; see Concluding the Adventure).

Floor 3: Umoor's Bedchamber

The tower's spiral staircase ends in this room. A large metal ladder is attached to the room's northern wall, which leads to a rooftop access hatch in the ceiling. When the adventurers enter Umoor's chambers, read or paraphrase the following:

> Umoor's bedchamber is lavishly furnished and adorned. Behind the bed hangs a purple silk tapestry, which sways in a stiff draft that blows down from an open hatch in the ceiling. As the tapestry billows, you notice a metal ladder affixed to the wall behind it.

Rooftop Access

The ladder is extremely large and requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check to climb.

Rewards

A large iron chest at the foot of Umoor's bed is locked and can be opened with the key carried by Umoor or with a successful DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. The chest contains the following gemstones: 3 garnets, 2 spinels, 2 amethysts, 1 tourmalines, 1 pearl, 1 jet, 1 amber, and 1 jade; each stone is worth 250 gp. The chest also contains 600 cp, 4000 sp, 1800 gp, and 140 pp. Casually placed elsewhere in Umoor's chambers are the following magic items: *a staff of the adder, a ring of warmth, and a quiver of Ehlonna.*

The Roof

The rooftop access hatch opens 5 feet from the roof's edge. The rooftop is gradually domed and made of the same smooth white marble as the tower's floors. When the adventurers reach the roof, read or paraphrase the following:

The roof is a gently domed surface, made of exquisitely smooth marble. From this height, the clouds appear even closer than ever, and the wind howls wildly.

Features

Floor: The roof is difficult terrain. Characters using the Dash action must make a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone at the end of their movement. When attempting to stand, prone characters must make a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or remain prone and unable to stand. Whenever a character falls prone or fails a check to stand, they slide 5 feet towards the roof's nearest edge.



Concluding the Adventure

Once Umoor is defeated, if any militia members accompanied the heroes, the survivors want to return to Cobluff. Umoor's lazulite belt buckle can be destroyed to transport any number of creatures within a 60 foot radius of it back to Cobluff's Market Square. Additionally, if Norkum Limmons is with the militia, he can direct the adventurers to an alternate path down the mountain.

If Tor survives, he thanks the adventurers for helping him achieve his freedom. He promises to leave Cobluff for the foothills beyond the mountains.

If the adventurers assisted the Free Fishers, the Fishing Guild's operating manual becomes merely an antiquated legality that Cobluff no longer recognizes.

If Norkum Limmons joined the militia, the Limmons family name will be redeemed in the public's eyes. If Norkum did not join the militia, Mayor Limmons will be regarded as incompetent, and Welyse Rosk will be the people's favorite in Cobluff's next mayoral race.

Continuing the Adventure

Having only seen a glimpse of his former domain, the adventurers may further explore Umoor's garden. Beyond the lazulite tower lies a wyvern aerie, a cursed fountain, and a forest teeming with owlbears. The adventurers may also discover that at the time of his death, Umoor was in the midst of a high-risk bet with another giant, a bet that he can no longer fulfill.

If Tor survives, the adventurers may grow curious to see what has become of the hill giant. After following his trail through the foothills, they will find him trying to adjust to a new way of life. Tor struggles to find his place in a world that views him as a menace.

If Norkum survives his stint with the militia, he is emboldened to continue his adventures. He offers to serve the adventurers and join them as an NPC follower. Alternately, Norkum may set forth with his own band of companions and have occasional and friendly run-ins with the adventurers as they explore the region surrounding Cobluff.





Rowan Lee

Life Finds a Way Out

Level 8-10| Setting Neutral

Brittney Hay

Originally from the wild northlands of Michigan (the Upper Peninsula, not the lower), Brittney now lives a transient lifestyle which is its own adventure. When they aren't writing, sewing dice bags, or playing TTRPGs, they can be found hanging out near the mountains of Colorado with their husband, adventurous 3 year old goblin child, and two rambuncious dogs, Tilly and Lokey.

If you wanna follow along on said adventures, you can find them over on Twitter @FNDungeon_Mom.

"Help Wanted: Job opportunity as guards for an event at the Sicc Estate. 50 gold upfront, 50 upon completion." Who wouldn't want an easy guard job between adventures?

This dungeon is optimized for 5 8-10th-level characters.

Adventure Background

Gerrod "Jerry" A. Sicc (LE human Appendix A, he/him), is a calculatingly enthusiastic retired wizard adventurer, with vibrantly flamboyant robes, and salt and pepper sculpted hair. He is often referred to as chaos in blue lipstick. Gerrod owns a lucrative business where he breeds, "trains" and sells dangerous creatures for the discerning adventure seeking customer (no refunds or returns, sales are final upon the moment of payment exchanged). He has been getting increasingly more exotic with his breeding program, using his knowledge of alchemy and his background as a wizard, to help create even more dangerous creations for his clientele. His latest experiments, the **Equestradon Rex** (Appendix A), a cross between a warhorse and raptor, however has been a total failure, due to their submissive nature. This would have been fine if he hadn't promoted their ferocity, sinking a substantial amount of gold into their creation. Worried about losing his grip on the market, and his shady business practices being found out, Gerrod decides to stage a break out, framing the failed creatures, and collecting on damages and insurance money.

Adventure Summary

The adventure begins by using one of the 3 plot hooks. In each hook, they are eventually hired as extra guards for Gerrod's next event. The adventurers arrive at the estate, and are given their assignments, being interspersed throughout the crowd to prevent shenanigans. All hell breaks loose when a few of the compound guards stage a "break out" of the Equestradon Rexes

behind the scenes, and the adventurers are tasked with restoring order. Throughout exploration, the adventurers discover Gerrod's horrible business practices. They will have to make a choice, find a way to save the animals or do the job they were tasked with.

Hooks

D.R.U.I.D.S

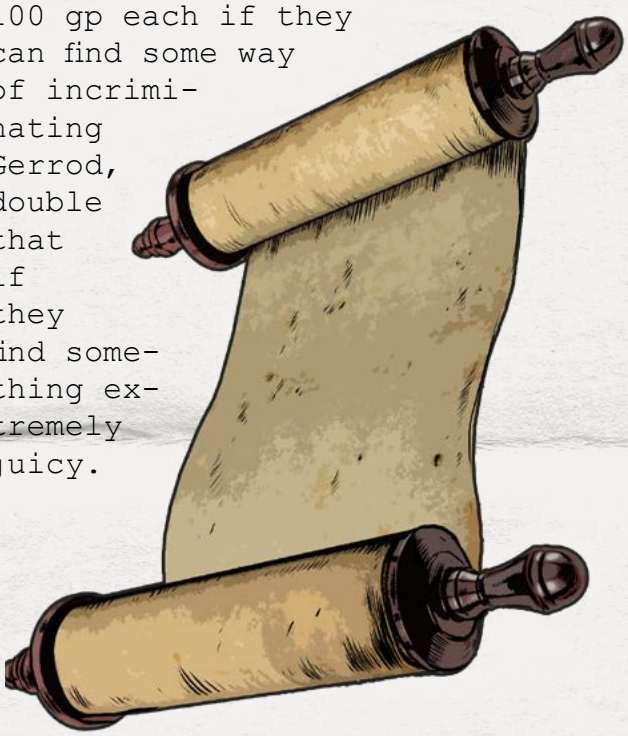
The adventurers are contacted by a member of **D.R.U.I.D.S.** (**D**ruidic **R**angers against **U**nsafe, **I**nhumane practices & **D**estruction of wildlife **S**paces), a non-profit, local creature rights group that has been investigating Gerrod for a while. They would have the adventurers apply to be guards at his next auction, and attempt to make contact with their agent, Carol (NG, female halfling **druid**, she/her), who is posing as a member of staff. She didn't report in and the organization is getting concerned that something bad has happened. Help extract Carol (if needed), and gather any evidence that they can while posing as guards. D.R.U.I.D.S. suspects mistreatment, but need more evidence to prove it. The contact gives each adventurer a D.R.U.I.D.S badge to help convince Carol that they are there to help.

Help Wanted

The adventurers respond to a "Help Wanted" advertisement placed on jobs board in town. The advertisement promises 100 gp upon completion of the job, plus "hazard pay", and to inquire with the head of security **Roose "Teddy" Veltvatine** (LN, male dwarf **gladiator**, he/him). The adventurers are easily hired on; Roose seems takes everyone and anyone who can hold a spear, some not even correctly. Roose "yada-yada's" questions away with vague platitudes, assuring everyone that "it will be the easiest 100 gold you'll make in a long time."

Disgruntled Noble

A local noble contracts the adventurers to pose as guards for a creature auction and dig up some dirt on Gerrod Sicc. The noble recently purchased what they call "faulty merchandise" and were less than satisfied. Adventurers notice that this noble walks with a very pronounced limp, and they refuse to go into detail about how the merchandise was faulty regardless of the amount of persuasion. This is mostly true, and adventurers can see that he's lying with a DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check. While he did buy faulty merchandise, he also used to be an investor in Gerrod's business, and Gerrod kicked them out due to creative differences. The noble agrees to pay the adventurers 100 gp each if they can find some way of incriminating Gerrod, double that if they find something extremely juicy.



Life Finds A Way Out

If you used the "Help Wanted" hook, feel free to skip directly to Part 1: The Set-Up. Regardless of the hook, the adventurers find their way to the estate. There are 4 **guards** at the main entrance to this gated estate. The adventurers are lead to the office of Roose "Teddy" Veltvatine, Head of Security (**A5**). They will be posted as extra guards amongst the stands during the event. The adventurers are asked to sign a liability agreement, which has the fine print "adventurers must cover their own resurrection fee", and are paid 50 gp up front, with the other 50 gp upon job completion.

Part 1: The Set-Up

The adventurers patrol the arena, and while the event is in progress, the Equestradon Rex "escape" from their pens, and set up to cause havoc on the estate. The adventurers are tasked with getting rid of them before they destroy everything.

A1. The Arena

The arena is a sprawling complex and is the building that draws the adventurers eyes. The arena is where the adventurers are tasked with keeping order during the event.

Features of the Area

Arena Floor: Set 30 feet down off the stands, this sandy area is 40 by 75 feet, and has a trap door in the center by which the auction items are raised up in a cage.

Stands: Ringing the entire area are stands that rise 30 feet at an angle for watching the entertainment. Embedded into the stands are magic-damping glyphs that automatically counterspell spells higher than 2nd level. Characters can sense these with a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check.

Safety Fence: This structure, made of iron rods, rings the entire arena, going 10 feet up and 10 feet out, making sure that no audience members get knocked down to the floor below. This is reinforced by a continual *wall of force* spell that extends 10 feet up. Guards can pass through this barrier with the *keypass bracelets* (Appendix B) they wear.

Gerrod's Box: This 20 by 15 foot box, centered on the highest point of the stands, is where Gerrod sits during the entertainment, with a few of his favored guests. It has plush expensive furniture and a velvet canopy, shielding the occupants from the elements. If Gerrod addresses the crowd, he does so from here.

Spectators: The arena can hold a few hundred people, and attracts a wide variety of viewers, from **commoners** to **nobles**. There are also snack vendors selling goodies to the assembled crowd.

Development: The event goes smoothly, until the Equestradon Rex escape. Interspersed amongst the auction items, which include various different creatures, are gladiatorial fights between other adventurers and Gerrod's creatures. Adventurers with a passive Perception of 15 or higher can see the creatures are not well cared for: dull scales, matted fur, emaciated bodies, and a general sense of lethargy that makes them fight defensively rather than offensively all point to mistreatment. Each of them wears a heavy metal collar, and creatures that can fly have had their wings altered, making extended flight impossible.

You can describe the creatures for sale or the gladiatorial fights that take place. When you're ready, read or paraphrase the following:

The last auction item, the Equestradon Rex, is announced. But unlike the other exhibits, after the announcement no creatures appear. There is a moment of nervous energy, and then one of the handlers comes running into the arena, up to Gerrod, whispering in his ear. Another pause followed by an audible CRASH! The assembled audience looks around nervously, murmurs rippling through the crowd. Gerrod stands, smiling. "Everything is under control," he says. "If I could have my guards please join me in the box." He gestures to the guards in the arena.

Adventurers can see dust clouds being kicked up and moving away from the arena, 1 cloud to the northwest and 1 to the east. When they join Gerrod in his box, along with 18 other guard, he quickly informs them that the Equestradon Rex have broken out of their pens and are running rampant in the estate. He produces a *minor illusion* of the creatures. Due to the liability they pose, he tasks the adventurers with hunting the creatures down by any means necessary. Gerrod cautions them that they are extremely dangerous and lethal force may be required. To sweeten the deal, Gerrod also promises to pay them an extra 200 gp per creature dealt with. The rest of the guards are ordered to escort the crowd to safety.

An adventurer that has a passive Perception above 18 notices a shiny electrum bracelet on Gerrod's wrist. They also see that the other guards, not ones specifically hired for this event, have one as well. These are *keypass bracelets* (Appendix B). If asked, Gerrod says that they "denote members of staff from temporary hire-ons". Adventurers who wish to can make a Wisdom (Insight) check contested by Gerrod's Charisma (Deception) check; on a success, the character sees that Gerrod is holding back information. If challenged further Gerrod uses *mass suggestion* on the naysayers, saying things like "you have a job to do" and "we don't have time for silly questions."

Part 2: The Chase

The adventurers start hunting down the escaped Equestradon Rex and they may choose to explore the estate in any order they wish.

Development: The arena is being evacuated by the remaining guards. There are several hundred spectators so this will take some time. If you want to increase the tension, you can add a random encounter consisting of escaped creatures (see **A2**) attacking the massive crowd as they flee, though not the Equestradon Rex.

On the northeast area of the arena there is a large, 10-foot-radius hole. Upon inspection it looks like several large "somethings" busted through the wall.

A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the ruined portion of the wall was weakened by an acidic compound, allowing creatures to escape.

A2. Display Cages

These cramped metal cages hold a variety of creatures from small **owlcats** (Appendix A), **cockatrice**, and **wyrmlings** stacked in even smaller cages, to larger creatures; **bulettes**, **hippogriffs**, **dire wolves**, **owlbears**, **displacer beasts**, **wyverns** etc.

Each creature wears a heavy metal collar. Creatures are only displayed here on event days; otherwise they are held in the barns (**A3**). Some of these cages have been smashed open

and are empty. Adventurers with a passive Perception of 12 can see that the remaining creatures are ill kept; they're emaciated, with matted fur, dull scales, and covered with feces. An adventurer who succeeds on a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Nature) check knows that these creatures are clearly drugged due to their dull eyes, listless movements, and vacant expressions.

Features of the Area

Metal Collars: The collars have an *arcane lock* glyph and no visible unlocking mechanism. The more valuable the creature, the higher the DC to force a collar open. For example, opening an Equestradon Rex's collar requires a successful DC 25 Strength check. The collars also have magical glyphs inscribed onto them that prevent the creatures from leaving the estate and other areas like the paddocks (**A8**). The collars allow creatures to enter those areas but not leave them unless deactivated. Adventurers that succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Acana) check notice both the spell and the glyph. Unless otherwise stated, all creatures have one of these collars around their necks. The password for the *arcane lock* is in Teddy's Office (**A5**).

A3. Creature Barns

These buildings are usually overcrowded, with a variety of different creatures. The stench is horrible, reeking of manure and sweat, and it is clear that the stalls haven't had a proper cleaning in months. One barn is for the more mundane creatures, while the other is reserved for the exotic.

Features of the Area

Barns: The buildings are made from sturdy oak wood with dirt floors. The doors are also reinforced oak and slide back on rollers. To open and close them requires an action. Inside, the stalls are all one size, with heavy oak doors and a thick metal bar across the front with a padlock.

Development (Barn #1): A pack of **4 displacer beasts** has cornered a group of 6 stablehands (**commoners**) in a stall, who are attempting to defend themselves but clearly losing. Already one of the stablehands is dead.

Development (Barn #2): Adventurers notice fresh tracks made by some large creature (the Equestradon Rex) leading into the building. This barn is devoid of workers. There is an eerie quiet, though chaos can still be heard outside. The adventurers hear scraping sounds coming from the back of the building, where they encounter **3 Equestradon Rexes** clawing at the door to one of the stalls, leaving huge gouges in the wood. Adventurers with a passive Perception of 15 can hear faint noises of distress coming from the inside of the stall. This is the Equestradon Rexes offspring.

Tactics: The Equestradon Rexes are trying to release their offspring from the stall, which can be unlocked with a DC 20 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) or Strength check. The 3 babies (treat as **riding horses**) aren't wearing collars. None of these creatures are aggressive, and as long as the adventurers don't attack, they remain docile. If provoked they fight defensively, attempting to get away.

A4. Food Prep Area

This area is where workers prepare all the food for the various creatures. There are several prep stations, and food is kept in a cold pantry via a trap door in the floor. Both doors have been

barred with various pieces of furniture as 6 workers (**commoners**) have taken refuge here. Adventurers who succeed on a DC 20 Strength check force the door. Alternately, a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Deception) check convinces the workers to open the door.

Development: Among the workers is Carol (**druid**), an undercover agent for D.R.U.I.D.S. (see Plot Hooks). Her mission is to gather information about Gerrod's shady business practices. If the adventurers aren't already agents of D.R.U.I.D.S., Carol tries to get the adventurers alone and enlist their help in finding evidence against Gerrod. She has heard rumors of frustrations with the Equestradon Rex training program but doesn't know specifics, as they are kept separated from the other creatures.

Rewards: Adventurers that have a passive Perception of 15 notice a shelf of potions that are used to drug creatures to make them more docile. These potions function like a *calm emotions* spell (Appendix B).

A5. Office & Guard Barracks

This was the office where the adventurers met Teddy. The door can be unlocked on a successful DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves' tools or forced open on a successful DC 15 Strength check. The office is well kept and smells faintly of old leather and cigars. There is one door that leads to a simple bedroom with a bed and end table. On the back wall behind the desk is a corkboard with the guard schedule and other important papers.

Attached, though not connected, to the office are the barracks where guards sleep. The single large room contains simple beds with a trunk at the foot of each. There is a locker at one end of the building, where weapons are stored when not in use. Among these weapons are *cattle prods* (**Appendix B**) and darts coated with *potions of calm emotions*.

Development: Adventurers who search the office, find a journal logging the various training programs for creatures in a desk drawer. Near the end is Teddy's frustrations with training the Equestradon Rex and how they aren't responding to the usual "methods".

On the cork board is a small scrap of parchment with the words "PW: Jurassic". This is the password for the *arcane lock* on the metal collars.

They also find a trunk under the bed, with various "trophies" of Teddy's from the creatures that he's trained over the years; displacer beast fur, various sized teeth, feathers, dragons scales, tanned reptilian skin and 1d4+1 Trinkets (**PHB**).

A6. Servants Quarters

The door is broken down, and the adventurers hear the sound of crunching bones and tearing flesh. Inside are 3 **Bronze Dragon Wyrmlings** making a meal of the workers who tried to hide in this room. The furniture is in shambles, and several beds are overturned, with bedding soaking up the blood on the floor. The wyrmlings fight defensively, only wanting to protect their meal. If the adventurers flee, they do not pursue, focusing on already downed prey.

Development: Adventurers can clearly see that the creatures are starving and motivated by hunger. Once the wyrmlings have been dealt with, adventurers with a passive Perception of 15 can hear a faint rustling from under one of the beds. If they look, they find one of the workers, badly injured but alive,

Hodgker (half-elf LG **guard**, he/him).

Hodgker is one of the few who know about the docile nature of the Equestradon Rex, working closely with Teddy, but only gives this information up on a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check. This check is made with advantage if the characters bribe him at least 50 gp.

Rewards: Interspersed throughout the broken furniture the characters find 43 gp, 6 sp, 8 cp, and 1d4 trinkets (**PHB**).



A7. The Main House

The main house is a two story, white colonial, that has a wrap around deck and 4 guards (**knight**) posted at the entrance. They will not let anyone in except for Gerrod or his household staff.

Features of the Area

Illusionary House: While the wrap-around deck is real, the house doesn't actually exist and was created by the spell *programmed illusion*. The front door is actually the entrance to a *magnificent mansion* spell. Only Gerrod and Teddy are allowed in. The storm cellar positioned at the back of the "house" and the broken window are real.

Storm Cellar: This area is a 30 foot by 40 foot laboratory where Gerrod conducts his experiments. There is a variety of alchemy supplies and tools on several worktables. On the eastern wall is a door that leads to an extradimensional hatchery.

Hatchery: This area is bigger on the inside, 40 feet square. The air is warmer and slightly musty. Adventurers who have metal armor and spend more than 5 minutes in here will start to get uncomfortable. Inside are several dozen eggs in raised straw crates that serve as incubators. There is also a small work station in the corner with more alchemical supplies.

Development: Adventurers with a passive Perception of 12 or higher hear a ruckus coming from behind the house. If they investigate, the basement window has been broken and **5 owlcats** are getting into mischief inside. There is a storm door with a padlock securing it shut. It can be picked on a successful DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or forced open on a successful DC 15 Strength check. A Medium or smaller creature could crawl through the broken window, but must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d4+1 piercing damage from the jagged pieces of glass.

Tactics: The owlcats are knocking things off shelves and desks, scattering parchment all over the floor. One of them has spilled and drank a *potion of growth* (**DMG**) and another a *potion of invisibility* (**DMG**).

Rewards: Though most of the potions are destroyed, adventurers can salvage 3. If they choose to drink them, roll on the Potions Miscibility Table **(DMG)** to determine their properties. They can also find Gerrod's notes on his exotic hybrid E.R. with a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The notes are heavily damaged from the destruction, but adventurers can make out the words "FAILURE", "Non-lethal", and "Euthanize at earliest convenience".

A8. Training Paddock

The paddocks are used primarily for training purposes, and have patches of grass with 5-foot-high fences.

Features of the Area

Fences: This area has been enchanted with a continual *wall of force* spell that interacts with the metal collars. The *wall of force* will let creatures with the collars into the area, but once inside won't let them out again unless the collars are disabled, or accompanied by a worker with an *keypass bracelet*.

Development: The paddock north of A3 is completely empty. In the far paddock there is a small herd of **warhorses** grazing.

A9. Estate Wall

The entire estate is surrounded by a 15-foot-high marble wall. The only exit is the wrought-iron gate, which the adventurers entered through near the south-east.

Features of the Area

Estate Walls: The wall has been magically enchanted with a continual *wall of force* spell that interacts with the metal collars on each creature. They prevent the creatures from leaving the estate. There is also a 10 foot *wall of stone* down below the visible wall, to prevent tunneling. Finally, an *alarm* spell encircles the outer perimeter, notifying Gerrod if it's triggered.

Development: On the north-west side of the fence 3 Equestradon Rex and are in combat with a group of 4 guards (**knights**). The guards are wielding **cattle prods (Appendix B)**. Adventurers with a passive Perception of 12 see large claw marks scratched into the wall.

Tactics: The guards shout for the adventurers to help. If the adventurers do nothing, the guards subdue the creatures in 1d4+1 rounds. The Equestradon Rex fight defensively, defending a 4th, who is unconscious on the ground and will die if not healed.

Part 3: Decisions

Using all the information that the adventurers have gathered in Part 2, they can choose to resolve the adventure in different ways.

1. Confront Gerrod

The adventurers confront Gerrod.

Developments: If the adventurers choose to, they can confront Gerrod, who is accompanied by Teddy and 2 guards (**knight**). After they finish exploring in Part 2, the adventurers automatically find him outside the main house (**A7**). Gerrod is displeased and makes several veiled threats to not cross him, emphasizing his influential connections.

Tactics: Gerrod casts *fire shield* on himself, if the adventurers become aggressive and hostile, readying for combat. If combat breaks out, the guards and Teddy defend Gerrod, while Gerrod makes ranged attacks and avoids melee. If Teddy and 1 of the guards are taken out of the fight, Gerrod uses *mass suggestion* to ask that the adventurers leave his estate and not return.

Rewards: Gerrod carries a spellbook (Appendix B) and a tiny replica of a chest. This replica is a *Leomund's secret chest*. If recalled, roll on the Treasure Hoard: Challenge 0–4 Table (**DMG**) for the contents of the chest.

2. Services Rendered

The adventurers collect their earnings from Gerrod.



Developments: After the chaos has been resolved, the adventurers seek out Gerrod and collect their wages. He pays the promised gold as well as a 1000 gp bonus each for keeping their mouths shut about any information they may have uncovered during the adventure.

3. D.R.U.I.D.S

The adventurers hand over the information they recovered from the estate to D.R.U.I.D.S.

Developments: The D.R.U.I.D.S. contact is pleased with the information. They promise to take care of the Equestradon Rexes and see that a proper, safe home is found for them. As a reward they offer the adventurers the opportunity to become members of D.R.U.I.D.S., and help out with other missions in the future.

4. Blackmailing Gerrod

The adventurers return to the noble with the information from the estate.

Developments: The noble is overjoyed at the information that the adventurers have managed to collect. They collect their 100 gp reward and the noble is indebted to them, and should they ever require a favor (within reason) they may return to collect on that debt.

Appendix A: Monsters & NPCs

EQUESTRADON REX

Large beast, neutral good

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 51 (6d10+18)
SPEED 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

SKILLS Athletics +6, Perception +4
SENSES passive Perception 11
LANGUAGES understands Common but can't speak it
CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

EQUESTRIAN CAMOUFLAGE. The equestradon rex has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks it makes to pass for a horse.

KEEN HEARING AND SMELL. The equestradon rex has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks based on hearing or smell.

PACK TACTICS. The equestradon rex has advantage on attack rolls against creatures if at least one of the equestradon's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

TRAMPLING CHARGE. If the equestradon rex moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the equestradon rex can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

MULTIATTACK. The equestradon rex makes two attacks, one with its claw and one with its bite.

BITE. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) piercing damage.

CLAW. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

WILD KICK. When the equestradon rex is subjected to an attack that would hit it, it can use it's reaction to strike out at an enemy within 5 feet of it. The target must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, or takes 15 (3d8+2) bludgeoning damage and be incapacitated for one round. If the creature is one size or more smaller than the equestradon rex, it is also knocked prone.

GERROD "JERRY" A. SICC

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

ARMOR CLASS 12 (15 with mage armor)
HIT POINTS 91 (13d8+ 26)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Intelligence +9, Wisdom +4
SKILLS Deception +7, Intimidation +7, Persuasion +7
SENSES passive Perception 10
LANGUAGES Common, Elvish, Dwarven, Draconic
CHALLENGE 9 (5,000 XP)

SPELLCASTING. Gerrod is a 13th level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). Gerrod has following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward, message, minor illusion, prestidigitation, thaumaturgy, sword burst*
1st level (4 slots): *alarm, cause fear, charm person, chromatic orb, detect magic, feather fall, ice knife, mage armor*, shield, silent image*
2nd level (3 slots): *arcane lock, dragon's breath, hold person, mirror image, pyrotechnics*
3rd level (3 slots): *blink, counterspell, erupting earth, slow, thunder step*
4th level (3 slots): *charm monster, confusion, fabricate, fire shield*, locate creature, polymorph, resilient sphere, secret chest*
5th level (2 slots): *animate objects, far step, mislead, seeming, synaptic static*
6th level (1 slots): *flesh to stone, mass suggestion*
7th level (1 slots): *magnificent mansion, mirage arcane*

** Gerrod casts these spells on himself before combat*

IMPROVED MINOR ILLUSION. When Gerrod casts minor illusion, he creates both a sound and an image with a single casting of the spell.

ACTIONS

DAGGER. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) slashing damage.

REACTIONS

ILLUSORY SELF (1/SHORT REST). Gerrod can create an illusory duplicate of themselves in an instant, almost instinctual reaction to danger. When a creature makes an attack roll against them, Gerrod can use his reaction to interpose the illusory duplicate between the attacker and himself. The attack automatically misses him, then the illusion dissipates.

OWLCAT

Small beast, chaotic good

ARMOR CLASS 13 Natural Armor
HIT POINTS 13 (3d6 + 3)
SPEED 40 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	8 (+0)

SKILLS Acrobatics +6, Perception +4, Stealth +6
SENSES Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 15
LANGUAGES -
CHALLENGE 1/4 (50 XP)

KEEN SIGHT. The owlcat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

FLYBY. The owlcat doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

ACTIONS

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

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

Owlcats are serene animals with delicate fur and feathers sought after by many collectors, but don't let their cuddly appearance put you at ease. These creatures are also fierce predators that deftly drop from above, targeting creatures their size or smaller. An owlcat's main tactic is to grapple a creature its size or smaller and drop it over a large height in hopes the fall does the work for it. Common folk call them Meowl.

With the DM's permission, a person who casts the find familiar spell can choose to conjure an owlcat instead of a normal owl.

Appendix B: Items

Cattle Prod *(Simple melee weapon, light)*

1 piercing damage + STR + 1d6 lightning damage. The first time this weapon deals damage to a creature on a turn, that creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become incapacitated until the end of its next turn.

Gerrod's Spellbook

Gerrod has a spellbook containing all of the spells he is able to cast.

Keypass Bracelet

Wondrous item, common (requires attunement)

This sleek electrum bracelet is inscribed with arcane glyphs. While you wear the bracelet, you can walk through the *walls of force* on the estate grounds.

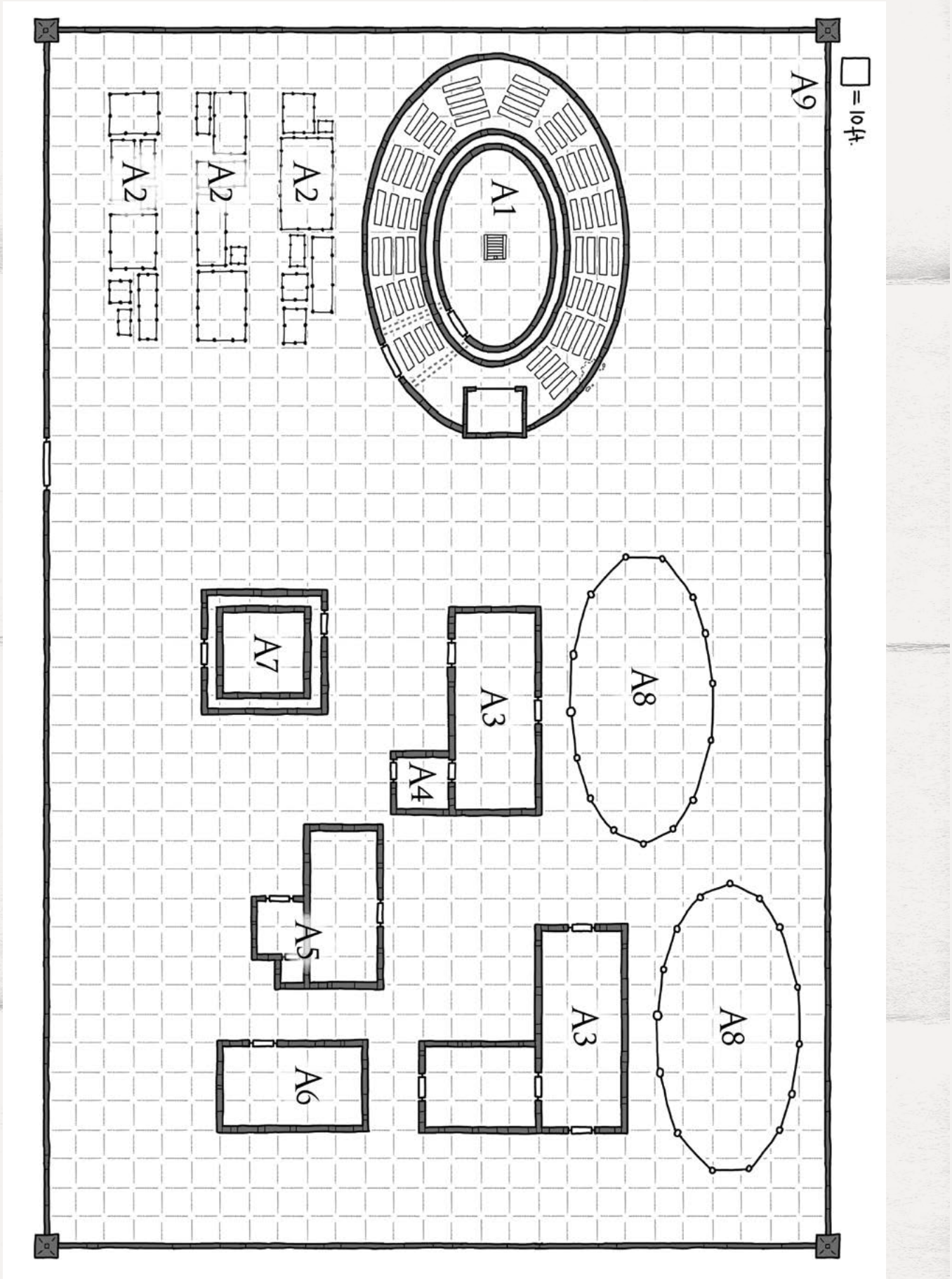
Potion of Calm Emotions

Potion, rare

A yellow amorphous blob is suspended and moving slowly in an opaque reddish liquid.

When you drink this potion, you gain the effect of the *calm emotions* spell for 1 minute. If the potion is administered to an unwilling creature, the creature avoids the effects on a successful DC 15 Charisma saving throw.

Appendix C: Maps




Phil Jacobson

House of the Resplendent Obligation

Level 10| Ravnica

Carlos Cisco

Carlos Cisco is a professional playwright, screen and TV writer currently working as an ensign on the USS Discovery. He's been playing TTRPGs since he was a wee little sprat but never wrote one for anyone beyond the people already in his ready room. He took time away from cultivating mycelial fungus to write his first D&D adventure so he hopes that you enjoy it. With some much needed shoreleave on the horizon, prepare to see more TTRPG offerings from Carlos. He'd like to thank all his playtesters (and his artist, Phil Jacobson) for helping him get this on its feet. If you need advice running "House of the Resplendent Obligation," feel free to open a channel to @carlos_cisco and he'll be happy to answer any questions you have.

People across the 10th district of Ravnica are being incarcerated in a mysterious private prison for the simple crime of owing a debt. The Adventurers must find out why this is happening, who's responsible, and prevent them from continuing this practice.

This adventure is optimized for 5 10th-level characters. Guildmaster's Guide to Ravnica is required.

Adventure Background

Arrests in Ravnica have skyrocketed, and its prisons are overrun, so full that the Azorius Senate has contracted third parties. One party in particular saw an opportunity for profit—and power. Fellaña, a Deathpact Angel, has bought up debt contracts all over the city and leveraged that debt to coerce an Azorius Law Writer to make simple debts a jailable offense. Those without the ability to pay off their debts have been the most affected, but nobles and urchins alike have been rounded up and imprisoned. This adventure begins as an investigation, shifting into a prison break. What the adventurers don't know is that if they tarry, key NPCs in these prisons will die. But even in death, they continue to serve.

Adventure Summary

This adventure is an investigation throughout Ravnica. From the bureaucracy of New Prav to the dark alleys of the Sixth Precinct, they'll track down debts, search for arresting officers, and break into an unconventional jail, confronting its ostentatious warden.

Hook

Before beginning, discuss any debts the characters have accrued over the course of their adventures. Then exploit them. The adventurers are visited in the night by an Indentured Spirit who bears a missive that Vuliev, a member of the Obzedat Ghost Council, requests their services for a mission of the utmost discretion. If the party is interested in relieving themselves of their debts they will take this meeting first thing in the morning at Vizkopa Bank.

Part 1: Leverage and Lawmakers

This section focuses on information gathering, starting in an Orzhov Bank which leads to the halls of New Prav on a hunt for information.

Vizkopa Bank

> Sun glints off the golden spires of Vizkopa Bank, its towers haunted by Indentured Spirits and doors flanked by armored giants adorned in gemstones. While the Orzhov Syndicate has their share of cathedrals, this monument to opulence is the indisputable heart of the Church of Deals.

Two **Orzhov giants** flank the doors. Hundreds of **indentured spirits** patrol the skies. The giants don't respond if addressed. If the adventurers show them the missive, one of the giants escorts them to Vuleiv's office.

> Inside, glaring light bounces off the golden pillars creating a blinding effect forcing all who enter to bow their heads, as if in prayer.

The giant leads them to a second story office overlooking the bank floor.

Vizkopa Bank: Vuleiv's Office

Features of the Area

> Dominating the office is a massive, marble desk, seemingly carved up from the floor and covered in bas reliefs depicting the "charity work" of the Orzhov. Seated behind it is a hooded, ethereal figure, who, with a twitch of their finger, slams the door shut behind you. Thrulls with ottomans strapped to their backs, scurry out from behind the desk and prostrate themselves, forming seats for all of you. The ghost smiles and says, "Please, sit."

Vuleiv (Obzedat ghost, they/them) is a member of the Obzedat Ghost Council which runs the Orzhov Syndicate. Their ethereal visage is shrouded in a dark hood, and their voice is raspy and cold.

Roleplaying Vuleiv

Shrewd, suspicious, and conniving, Vuleiv feigns concern for the people of Ravnica. They explain the people are being rounded up for unpaid debts. The wise would place little stock in any selflessness Vuleiv displays.

Development

Vuleiv knows the following information:

- Unpaid debts are a jailable offense, putting the Orzhov's

business in jeopardy. **This has only recently become a crime.**

- Advokist Harrish (human **mage**, he/him): Vuleiv's personal accountant is missing. Witnesses spotted Azorius arresters, led by a minotaur, outside his home in Midori Park. There is no record of him in any Azorius prison. It's impossible to post bail since they cannot locate him. Vuliev offers to relieve the adventurers of any of their debts, provided Harrish is returned to Vuliev within 48 hours.
- Vuliev suggests starting in the Hall of Records in New Prahv, the Azorius Guildhall.
- Someone is using this mess to seize power and Vuliev doesn't know what the debtors are being used for. Any evidence recovered regarding this operation should be returned to Vuliev along with Harrish.

New Prahv: Guildgate

Vuleiv's information leads to New Prahv, the beating heart of bureaucracy.

The Guildgate is an imposing marble archway adorned with the triangular blue symbol of the Azorius Senate. You can't help but feel watched the moment you pass through the Guildgate. The three towers of New Prahv loom above you, monoliths of oppressive authority, where Archons patrol atop their Felidar mounts, ready to swoop in at the first sign of trouble. On the ground, hundreds of arresters are stationed to deal with any disorder.

Features of the Area

What's All This Then. Azorius arresters (human **soldiers**) are everywhere. They provide directions if asked.

Watchful Eyes. Troublemaking in New Prahv results in the swift arrest of the party by overwhelming force. **Note:** If the party is arrested, their bail will be paid by Vuleiv, and they'll be released the next morning. This puts them in debt to the Orzhov leadership, an unenviable position.

Prisoner Transfers. An adventurer with a passive Perception of 15 or higher notices a contingent of arresters escorting prisoners bound in magical shackles from the gates of the Lyev column.

New Prahv: Jelenn Column

The Jelenn Column is austere and maze-like. Its unadorned marble walls and endless rows of blue doors fog the mind of anyone unaccustomed to Azorius architecture.

Features of the Area

Hall of Records. The adventurers must find the Hall of Records through an Escher-like maze. Azorius guild members find it immediately. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) Check allows a character to navigate the maze. Failure results in getting lost for 3 hours.

After what felt like an exhaustive search, a blue door opens into a large circular room lined with countless shelves that extend up into darkness. Dominating the center is a circular desk that surrounds a blue-skinned humanoid. They immediately perk up when they spot you. "Did you get lost? Apologies for any confusion. How can I be of service?"

Docent Frahn (LG vedalken, they/them) is an illusory receptionist. If asked about the prisoner escort, Frahn reveals that prisons are at capacity, forcing them to contract out to private prisons which keep their own records.

Frahn happily provides the paperwork for any information requests. The party may request records on the following:

- Arrest records for Advokist Harrish
- Records of laws passed regarding debt
- Locations of third-party prisons.

Frahn presents a giant stack of papers for each request and informs the party that each request takes three hours to complete and another three hours to process, which would have them done just before closing.



Bureaucracy. Have the adventurers state reasons for their requests. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check decrypts the arcane legalese. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Deception) check writes a compelling request. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check with calligrapher's tools is required to complete the forms without penmanship errors. Two adventurers can work together on a form, granting advantage on a check. Each form requires at least two successes to get the requested information today, otherwise they must return the next day.

If the adventurers successfully request information, they discover the following:

Advokist Harrish Arrest Records. The arresting officer was Savok Bavas, a former Boros Legionnaire who enlisted in the Azorius Senate a year ago. Savok works a nightly patrol route in Midori Park. There's a lack of information on where Harrish was taken, which is irregular; such information should be in the records.

New Laws Concerning Debt. Numerous small amendments weave a complex legal web that makes debt a jailable offense, where those accused are to be imprisoned without recourse until trial. Frahn seems troubled, points out that the Law Writer responsible for these amendments is Tarem Nolk, and informs the party that he takes his evening meals on the 16th Floor balcony.

Third Party Prisons. The prisons seem stratified by the severity of the crime, but record keeping is spotty. A DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a number of low security

prisons near the Midori Park warehouses have been purchased by unnamed Orzhov "Philanthropists."

In the event the adventures completely botch their paperwork, Arlo Taff (human **spy**, he/him)—a Dimir Agent disguised as an Azorius record keeper—appears as if from nowhere and shuts down Frahn. "Change of shifts, now… how can the Dimir help you?" He only has a few minutes, but he can get information from two of the forms for the low, low price of 1000 gp. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) Check will reduce the price by half. He also knows about Tarem Nolk.

Development

If the adventurers pursue the lead on Tarem Nolk on the 16th floor, read the following:

> It's as if you can see the whole of the 10th District from the 16th floor balcony. Most of the pencil pushers have gone home for the day, but off to one side, the breeze swirls around a red headed man in blue robes, sitting alone on a bench.

Tarem Nolk (LN human **mage**, he/him) is a perpetually nervous fellow. If presented with the records and questioned, Tarem cracks. Tarem is desperate to tell the truth but a powerful *geas* prevents that. Pressing him causes Tarem to reveal the following:

- He's responsible for the amendments, having slipped them under the noses of the Judges. He did so under duress.
- For months he sought life sustaining treatments from the Orzhov for his daughter, who suffers from a rare disease. His debts were mounting.
- Soon, a visitor called. She healed his daughter and told him his debt to the Orzhov was done. She would take care of him as long as he took care of her.

The adventurers notice his body is wracked with pain. If they press him on who "she" is he'll say: "She calls herself the Arbiter of the Resplendent Obligation. Don't believe a word she says. The cost outweighs any boon Fellaña (Fey-Ahnya) gives." As soon as he utters her name, read or paraphrase the following:

> Lines of purple energy bleed out from Tarem's mouth. You hear sizzling and popping as his flesh warps. Tarem gives a pained look to the party before here stumbles to the edge of the balcony and throws himself off, plummeting to the plaza below. He's followed by the Archons, streaking down from the sky to investigate.

If the party doesn't make themselves scarce, they are subjected to harsh questioning and possibly arrest. As they leave, anyone may make a DC 20 Intelligence (History) check to realize that "Fellaña" is the name of a Boros Firemane Angel.

Cross-referencing the list of third-party prisons, they find the "House of Resplendent Obligation" listed in Midori Park but no exact location.

Development

Upon exiting New Prahv, the adventurers are approached by Xochi Bavas (LG minotaur **knight**, she/her). Xochi stands 7 feet tall at the horns, has jet black fur, and wears plate mail covered with a Boros Legion tabard.

Roleplaying Xochi (Soh-chee). Straight and to the point, she says she wants to locate her wife, Donah, a captain in the Boros Legion. She knows her brother, Savok Bavas, was the arresting officer, but she doesn't

have any idea why he would do this. She couldn't make heads or tails of the Azorius forms, and she is not on speaking terms with Savok.

Xochi makes it plain that any help locating her wife and the prison where she is held would be a great favor to the Boros Legion, indebting them to the party. Xochi knows the following:

About Fellaña. Xochi knows that Fellaña was known as the Magnanimous Justicar, and was a Boros Angel who defied orders and lost an entire legion in a failed campaign against the Gruul Clans. Unable to face punishment, she disappeared. Happened years ago.

About Savok. Appeal to his sense of justice. He may adhere to the letter of the law, but he's a Boros Legionnaire in his heart.

Part 2: Arresters and Angels

Using whatever clues they've found, the adventurers track down the mysterious debtor's prison.

Midori Park

While Midori Park is known as a warehouse district, its buildings are more akin to grand cathedrals. The streets are poorly lit and there's the glint of a knife around every dark corner.

Based on the information they have the party may want to search for either Savok or The House of Resplendent Obligation.

Search for Savok. Challenge the adventurers to come up with their own way of hunting Savok. If they want to ask the locals, have them make a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If they want to determine where a patrol route would likely be use Intelligence (Investigation). They must succeed at three checks before they fail at three. Failure results in the search taking all night and the party gaining a level of exhaustion.

Search for the House. Knowing only the name requires a DC 30 Intelligence (Investigation) Check. Failure results in the search taking all night and the adventurers gaining a level of exhaustion. Subtract 5 from the DC for the following:

- Confirming it's in Midori Park
- Getting a map from Savok
- Additional information (gained through spells like scry), at your discretion

Development

Savok and two arresters are on their patrol route. Savok Bavas (LN minotaur **champion**, he/him) has black fur, wears pristine plate mail, and carries a thick greatsword.

Roleplaying Savok. Dedicated to his job, to a fault, Savok doesn't question who is arrested or when or why. Lawbreakers must be dealt with. Someone can try to appeal to his sense of justice over the arrest of his sister-in-law with a successful Charisma (Persuasion or Deception) check:

- DC 20: He confirms the name House of Resplendent Obligation and draws them a map.
- DC 25: Only being inside once, it looked more like a cathedral than a prison. A towering, round building. No cells. He delivers the prisoners to the giants who guard the door. They change shifts at dawn.
- If the adventurers get aggressive with Savok he responds in kind.

Overconfident and brazen, he attempts to take the party alone, sending the other two "to get more manacles." If the party does not subdue Savok and vacate the area within 5 rounds, 20 more arresters arrive and attempt to arrest the party. If the party kills Savok, the arresters won't be so forgiving.

The House of Resplendent Obligation: Exterior

This strange, circular building is stuffed into a neighborhood of hard angles and sharp corners. It's a windowless, domed tower that extends at least 120 feet into the air. At its base is a small, square building with two Orzhov giants guarding the door.

Features of the Area

Illusory Terrain. If the adventurers ascend the tower they find an illusory stone dome at the top. A successful DC 19 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals an elaborate stained-glass window. The glass can be shattered, but doing so instantly alerts Fellaña. They can jump down to the catwalk on a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, taking 3d6 fall damage on a failure.

Forbiddance Zone. The entire structure is protected by a *forbiddance* spell, preventing teleportation in and out.

Locked Door. The front door is locked. One of the giants has the key. The lock is complex and requires a successful DC 25 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to unlock.

Creature. Two **Orzhov giants** guard the front entrance. They are utterly loyal to Fellaña but know little of her work. They accept bribes of 1000 gp each to walk away.

Tactics. They target spellcasters using their *Focus* ability before throwing rocks, closing the range gap and switching to battleaxes.

Rewards. Each giant wears golden rings and bangles worth 300 gp.

The House of Resplendent Obligation: Foyer

The building's foyer is as beautiful as it is haunting. The room is eerily silent and the air tastes stale. Statues line the path to a door across the foyer and stand in each corner of the 30 by 50 foot room, each depicting the same Boros angel.

Angelic Statues. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check recognizes these statues. Those within the Boros Legion succeed immediately. The statues depict Fellaña, the Magnanimous Justicar. Forcibly removed from their original homes, their bases are uneven and partially broken.

Doorway. A grand doorway stands opposite the entrance. A creature with a passive Perception of 17 or higher hears a soft scratching sound coming from the next room. The door is unlocked but is enchanted with a *glyph of warding* with a 5th level *charm person* spell (DC 19), which triggers when a creature comes within 30 feet of the door. Do not tell the players who is charmed, but make note of it for when they encounter Fellaña.

The House of Resplendent Obligation: Cathedral

The room is a three-tiered circle with a grand staircase opposite the door and two smaller stairs on the sides leading to the second tier. Each tier is 15 feet above the previous. On the highest tier, there are two spiral staircases on either side that lead to a catwalk 75 feet above the floor. Dangling from the ceiling is a chandelier.

The scratching sound becomes louder. The grey marble floor ahead of you is spattered with blood and bodily detritus. In the center is a 10-foot-square hole cut in the floor. The pit is filled with rotting flesh, the reek of which is masked by a cloyingly sweet scent. You stand below two larger, circular tiers lined with desks. At each desk sits a person feverishly writing, eyes bloodshot and fixated on the page. Directly above you is a chandelier that reflects the light, patterning the walls in luminescent pinpricks.

Features of the Area

Flesh Pit. The hole in the floor contains a mass of rotting flesh. Anyone touching the flesh must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned.

Spiral Staircase & Catwalk. The staircase rises 40 feet. There is a 10-foot-wide gap at the center of the catwalk, and a deadly 10-foot drop onto the Razor Chandelier.

Secret Switch. By the staircase rests a marble statue depicting Fellaña curled around a wounded figure. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the statue turns on its base. A DC 20 Strength (Athletics) Check moves it, causing the adjacent stairwell to sink into the floor and reveal a hidden alcove behind the stairs.

Hidden Alcove. The alcove is 10x10 feet. A **servitor thrull** diligently transcribes the debt letters and logs them in a giant tome containing Fellaña's bookkeeping. This evidence is a comprehensive log of her activities and is sufficient for any interested parties. It mentions a vault hidden in the undercity.

Debtors. The writing desks are occupied by debtors of all stripes. Harrish and Donah are situated closest to the spiral staircases on opposite sides of the circle. They feverishly write letters to associates asking for money. They resist any attempt to remove them from the table, not by getting hostile, but with a desperate need to continue writing. This effect can be removed with a *remove curse* spell. If the characters have taken longer than 24 hours to get to this point, both Harrish and Donah are dead, serving as indentured spirits in the battle.

Razor Chandelier. The chandelier is constructed of concentric squares of razor-thin enchanted metal. Falling onto (or through) the chandelier causes 10d10 slashing damage. A successful DC 20 Dexterity saving throw reduces the damage by half, but then there's the 60 foot fall to contend with. Any character that dies as a result of the chandelier has their soul rent from their flesh, leaving the deceased as an indentured spirit in Fellaña's service.

Stained Glass Dome. A stained-glass dome caps the 100-foot tower. It's hard to see from the floor but from the catwalk you can make out what it depicts. Spiraling inward, it shows the story of the fall of a Boros Angel and her subsequent reinvention. All these images meet in the center where Fellaña is depicted in her current form with

wings of stained purple glass, ghostly skin, and jet-black hair.

Creature

Fellaña. Inspecting the catwalk causes **Fellaña** (LE deathpact angel, she/her) to descend. She directs any charmed adventurer to stand next to the hole in the catwalk, intending to push them through if combat starts. She takes full advantage of charmed adventurers, attempting to extract information about their debts so she can negotiate a deal. If the adventurers fail to inspect the catwalk, Fellaña prevents them from removing a prisoner, coming down to the ground to do it.

Roleplaying Fellaña. Vain, overconfident, and brazenly materialistic. Unlike Vuliev, Fellaña knows the Orzhov faith is hollow at its core. She has no designs on a coup but doesn't care that her profiteering has cut into their bottom line. Her motives are simple: profit and power. She talks openly about her plans because she believes the adventurers will either enter her service or be killed. She offers relief from their debts. Anyone *charmed* accepts her offer. If the entire party accepts Fellaña's offer, skip ahead to Concluding the Adventure. If the party refuses her offer she initiates combat by ordering the charmed adventurers to subdue their friends.

Tactics

Fellaña prefers the catwalk, which grants her partial cover from ranged attacks from below. She baits the adventurers, attempting to *charm* them so she can push them through the Razor Chandelier.

Take advantage of her lair's architecture, flight speed, and *Flyby* ability. If she is reduced to half her hit point maximum or less, she descends and barks at Harrish and Donah to "transcend their debt." Harrish and Donah use their full movement to throw themselves into the chandelier. Then she Disengages and flees.

Concluding the Adventure

If the party rescues Harrish, Vuleiv waives their debts. If the party rescues Donah they find a powerful ally in the Boros Legion.

If they return the evidence, what happens depends on to whom they return it:

Vuleiv

The Ghost Council will bring the proverbial hammer down on Fellaña, but no one ever knows, as the House of Resplendent Obligation continues its operation under new ownership. One day, there's a knock at your door. It's the Arresters. Here for you.

Azorius Senate

The Azorius crack down on a number of Orzhov dealings. This draws Orzhov ire and the adventurers will soon find a target on their backs. As far as the laws that made this possible? The Azorius Senate is notoriously slow when it comes to change. While the arrests have been halted the laws are still debated.

Xochi

Fiery vengeance is visited upon Midori Park, but the overzealous Boros are quite thorough in their "cleansing," turning several Orzhov operations to ash in the process. Midori Park is on fire for the better part of the next month and riots break out throughout the city, forcing the Azorius Senate to begin

deliberation on these laws.

Fellaña's Offer

She clears debts owed by the Party or their allies in exchange for service to her at the desks or bringing other valuable debtors to her. Her operation continues uninterrupted.

Fellaña Escapes

The adventurers can return the evidence to whomever they wish but they will have a powerful enemy with her sights on them. Fellaña is not a forgiving foe and will show up at the most inconvenient times to disrupt the adventurers.

None of the Above

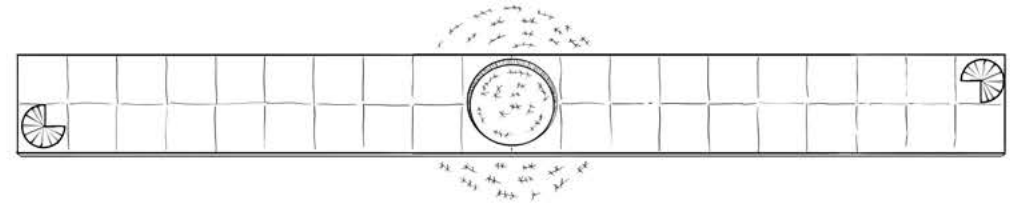
None of these options may be appealing in which case… yes, and!

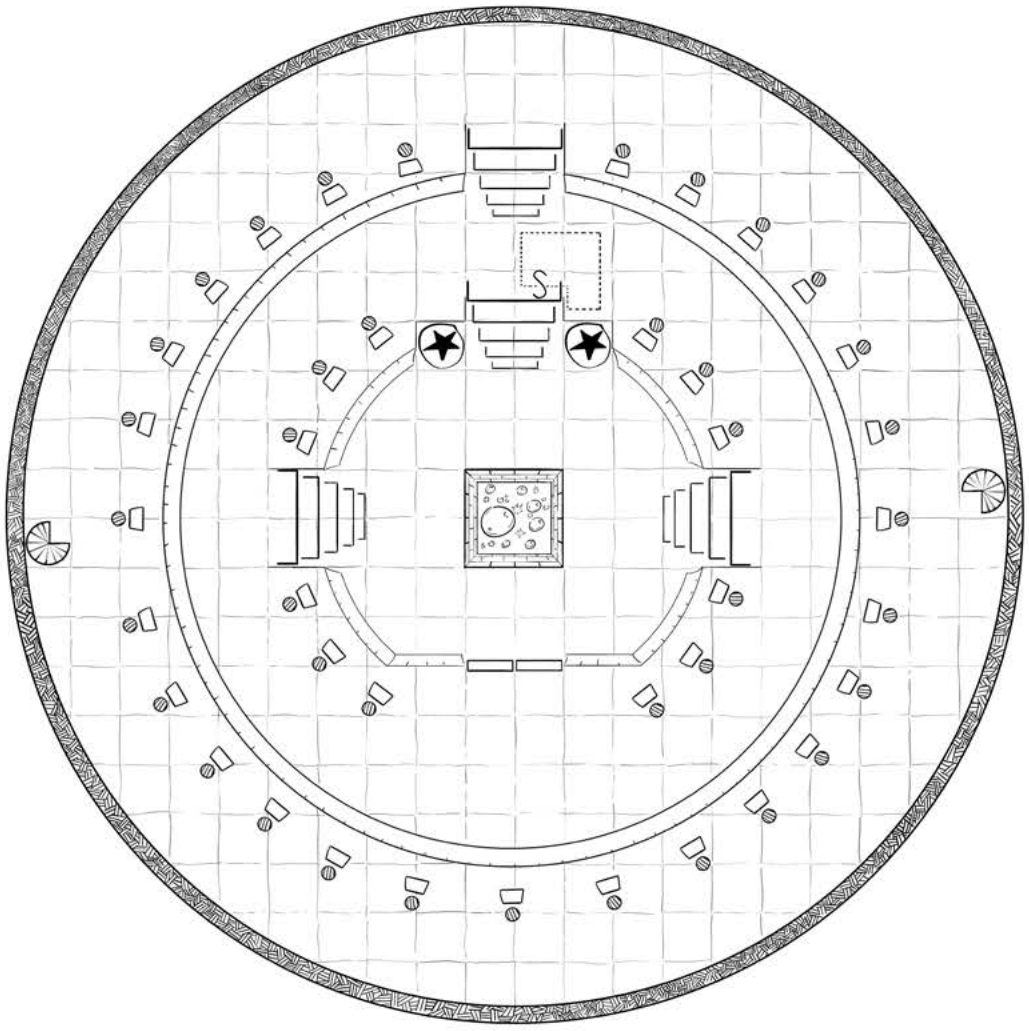
Continuing the Adventure

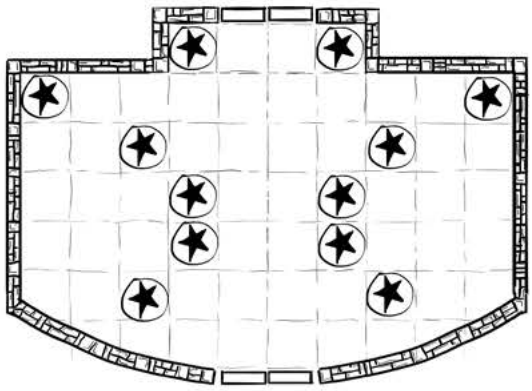
If the adventurers found the ledger under the stairs, it points them toward a vault located in the undercity containing Fellaña's collected debts. The circumstances would depend on how the adventure concluded.



Appendix A: Maps









Housing is a Goblin Right Too

Level 10| Setting Neutral
Allison Reilly

Allison M Reilly is a St. Louis-based budding RPG writer, who draws much of her inspiration from her 10+ years as a human rights activist. By day, Allison works in health care as a marketing professional. By night, when she is not writing or advocating for human rights, Allison enjoys playing video games and improving her art skills.

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No choice. No warning. Forcibly evicted. What's a goblin to do?

This adventure is optimized for four characters with an average party level (APL) of 10.

Adventure Background

In one year, Bostra will be hosting the Elysian Games. This is the first time in the 1000-year history of the Elysian Games that Bostra will be hosting, and they want to make a good impression for all the athletes and tourists visiting during the two-week event.

Therefore, the city of Bostra decided to build a new stadium. To make room for it (and remove what many call an eyesore), the city council decided to relocate the goblin colony and use their space for the stadium. To ensure the goblins aren't an eyesore and a nuisance during the games, they are to be relocated to government-sponsored housing just outside the city limits.

Adventure Summary

The adventure begins with a heated argument between **Mud-knuckles**, the leader of the goblin colony and **Porcius Antonius**, the captain of the Fraternal Order of the Guard. The Fraternal Order is in charge of evacuating the goblin colony and is delivering the news they need to leave and move to the government-sponsored apartments in one week's time. If they don't leave on their own, the Fraternal Order will force them to do so when they return in seven days. The characters help the goblins fight back and stay on their land. The Fraternal Order returns in one week, as promised, and the final showdown begins. Once the Fraternal Order is rebuked, the goblin colony gets to stay where they are.

Hooks

- The characters come across the scene between Mudknuckles and Porcius Antonius
- The characters meet the Fraternal Order, which is seeking temporary help to clear the goblins from the colony in one week's time

Housing is a Goblin Right Too

The Elysian Games are a year away, and most of the city of Bostra is brimming with excitement. Hosting the games is a big deal. The two-week event will boost the economy. It already has, with new construction, housing developments, and investments in infrastructure like plumbing and mass transportation. Thousands of visitors from all over the world will come to Bostra for the spectacle. The Elysian Games will present Bostra as a cosmopolitan metropolis and a hub of industry and progress.

Part of the new construction for the Elysian Games is a new arena, a state-of-the-art facility that can seat 10,000 people. Most of the competitions will take place in the new arena, and it is considered the crowning jewel of Bostra's preparations for the games. With the arena's location set, construction needs to start soon so it's ready in time for the Opening Ceremonies.

Part 1: Goblins Got to Go

At the entrance a small wooden sign reads in Goblin, "Goblin Colony." More than 250 goblins live in this colony, and it's obvious. Goblins of all ages are moving about; running, playing, chatting, trading, and minding the young ones. The entrance to the colony is the most open area here, about 5,000 square feet. Otherwise, the colony is crowded with buildings and narrow alleyways and stairways. Each building is 3 or 4 stories tall, each story a different color, much like houses or apartments stacked upon one another. Rickety wooden ladders connect each story, like snakes winding their way from the floor to the roof.

The Colony

Read or paraphrase the following:

> It's mid-morning and the sun shines brightly on a cloudless day. A goblin and a human are engaged in heated conversation at the colony entrance. The human is a bald, muscular man in early middle age, adorned in a shiny red and silver breastplate. He sits atop a white stallion and carries a red-plumed, silver helmet. A couple of lower-ranking guards flank him, also riding white stallions. He's a man of few words, but speaks with conviction. The goblin is tall for a goblin, just over 4 feet, with a gold earring in his right earlobe that shines against his short, black bushy hair. He wears a navy blue coat and bears a longsword across his back. Goblins of all sorts crowd around them at the entrance and watch the drama from the windows and rooftops.

Porcius Antonius (he/him/his lawful neutral human **gladiator**,) has come to tell the goblin colonists they have one week to evacuate and move to the government-sponsored housing on the other side of the city. Mudknuckles (he/him/his lawful good goblin, treat as **hobgoblin warlord**)

protests, demanding to know why they need to leave and who made this decision. Porcius' arrival is the first time any of the goblins have heard of the resettlement plan. Porcius dismisses Mudknuckles' concerns, saying the matter is settled. He'll return in a week and force any remaining goblins to leave. Mudknuckles continues to protest, but Porcius dismissively waves him off before signaling his guards to leave. Once Porcius leaves, the rest of the goblins slowly disperse and return to their business, leaving Mudknuckles to himself in the center of the entrance square.

Features of the Colony

After a brief conversation with the characters about what just happened, Mudknuckles leads the characters through the colony, taking a right at the entrance and winding through the alleyways and stairwells.

Although the buildings within the colony are taller than they are wide, the colony is sprawling. At times, it's a tight squeeze to pass through with goblins going every which direction, some stopped to talk, others pulling carts and selling wares.

Goblins wave and greet Mudknuckles, sometimes shouting to him from the windows and rooftops. Despite the crowds and the noise, Mudknuckles always take a moment to check in with those who meet him.

Encounter

After about 30 minutes, Mudknuckles and the characters arrive at the back edge of the colony, the farthest point from the entrance. It's quiet and covered in shadow from the wooded area lining the back



edge. Unlike the hustle and bustle of the rest of the colony, the back edge is unusually dead, save an occasional laugh or cart going by. As soon as the characters arrive at the back edge, giant scorpions skitter out from the treeline, 1 per character. The scorpions threaten because the colony and the creatures are competing for living space; they don't attack automatically, and they don't fight to the death.

During combat with the giant scorpions, Belgrollur (she/her/hers lawful neutral goblin **mage**) arrives to help after one round of initiative. Belgrollur is an elderly booyahg wielder with long wizened white hair who carries a *staff of fire*. Due to her age, she moves at half speed but her mind is still sharp.

After the giant scorpions are taken care of, Mudknuckles and Belgrollur thank the characters for their help. They come back to the topic of the evacuation. Belgrollur still has some snap in her staff. She wants to take on the Fraternal Order, and is willing to train some goblins to do so, but will defer to Mudknuckles and what he decides. Mudknuckles thinks there's another way, but doesn't quite see one at the moment, so he's fine with Belgrollur's idea. The colony needs their help, and they'll be happy to reward the characters however they choose to help.

Creatures

Five **giant scorpions**. When a scorpion is reduced to half its hit point maximum or less, it Disengages and flees.

Rewards

Defeating the scorpions builds good will with Mudknuckles and Belgrollur and assures them the characters can handle themselves in combat.

Part 2: Stand Down Fraternal Order

To stand up to the Fraternal Order, Mudknuckles and Belgrollur suggest talking to Taznaar (he/him/his lawful neutral dragonborn **commoner**) for help. Taznaar is one of several blacksmiths in Bostra and his shop is about a 10-minute walk due east from the colony. He does a lot of business with the goblins, making and fixing tools, and making crossbows and crossbow bolts. If there's a place to get weapons and armor for the goblins, Taznaar would know.

Taznaar's Blacksmith Shop

Taznaar is behind the counter polishing a grappling hook, with six more laying across the counter, some polished and others unpolished. Taznaar is a middle-aged red dragonborn with a greying snout. Military-style tattoos cover his chest and biceps. On the wall behind the counter is a round shield bearing the crest of an eagle surrounded by a ring of stars. To one side of the shield are three shortswords, on the other side are three crossbows.

If the characters start any conversation with Taznaar about his shop, his smithing, his tattoos or his background, he reveals he's retired from the Fraternal Order. A DC 12 Intelligence (History) check on the tattoos will also reveal this information. While in the Fraternal Order, Taznaar did some smithing but mostly spent his time training or dealing with petty crimes. He mentions the old abandoned armory just south of Bostra, recalling fond memories of his time there when he served. Taznaar offers what wares he has to help the goblins. If the players need more, Taznaar suggests checking the armory for other

weapons and armor.

What Taznaar has for sale:

3 hand crossbows at 75gp each

100 crossbow bolts at 1gp per 20

3 shortswords at 10gp each

4 scimitars at 25gp

6 sickles at 1gp each

1 club at 1sp each

4 maces at 5gp each

3 javelins at 1gp each

The Old Abandoned Armory

The road to the old abandoned armory leads south from Taznaar's shop, past the city's southern gate, and through the grasslands. Outside the city, the road switches from cobblestone to dust. The armory is visible and the looming stone building is about a 15 minute walk from the city gate and about 25 yards off the road. Besides the road and a treeline hundreds of yards in the distance, there are no other landmarks or buildings in the vicinity of the old armory.

Features of the Area

Door. A dozen dark-brown stone steps lead to 6 black metal panels. Each of the panels has 4 vertical inlaid squares, but only the 2 middle panels have handles. The other four doors have had their handles removed. The remaining handles have a thick chain going through them and a padlock connecting the ends of the chain. Both the chain and the padlock are rusted. A successful DC 13 Strength check with a weapon against the chain breaks it. Alternately, the lock is opened on a successful DC 17 Dexterity check with thieves' tools.

Exterior. Broken windows dot the exterior of the building amongst the stonework. About 80 feet above the doors, the word "Armory" is carved into the stone. Below that, between the word and the top of the doors, is the crest of an eagle. The eagle crest on the building is the same as the one on the shield in Taznaar's shop.

When the characters open the doors, read or paraphrase the following:

> Upon opening the doors, a wet, moldy smell wafts toward you. The air is clear but damp. After years of vacancy and disrepair, parts of the stone roof have fallen through, and puddles have formed in the armory. The sunlight pours through the broken windows and the holes in the ceiling.

The Armory

The armory is a mere echo of the prestige it once held. In the center, a giant statue of a soldier stands at attention, his left hand in a fist across the middle of his chest. His right arm is along his side, clutching what could be a spear or a halberd as the end is broken off. A slow trickle of water drips from the broken end. The stone floor is in disarray, with cracks and muddy patches where stone used to be and puddles of varying sizes throughout.

Completely surrounding the statue is a putrid, stagnant, murky pool of water. The pool covers most of the Armory floor. If the characters touch the water in any way, water weirds attack.

Creatures

Five **water weirds** live in the large pool of water. The rotten stench of the water indicates the water weirds' neutral evil alignment. They fight to the death. If they fail to grapple a target, they utilize their *Invisible in Water* trait, in order to move and attack a different target.

Rewards

Once the water weirds are defeated, the pool can be traversed safely, and the characters can reach the trunk on the other side of the armory, which contains 3 suits of scalemail armor, 2 suits of studded leather armor and 5 shields.

Difficulty Adjustments

Make the following adjustments depending on party size and level:

If the character levels are between 5 and 10, don't change anything.

If the character levels are between 11 and 16, add 4 **ochre jellies**. They arrive after the first round of initiative through one of the holes in the ceiling.

Training with Balgrollur

Upon returning to the colony, Balgrollur has assembled 30 goblins who are willing to help stand up to the Fraternal Order. Some of them are wearing armor. Others have come with clubs or crossbows. They're in a 6 by 5 square formation, running laps around the entrance as Bellgrollur barks at them to keep up the pace.

Over the next few days, the characters will go through a series of skill challenges to help Balgrollur train the recruited goblins for the final showdown. The rules of the training challenge are as follows:

- The challenge consists of 7 checks, in order: Strength (Athletics), Dexterity (Acrobatics), Intelligence (Arcana), Wisdom (Insight), Wisdom (Perception), Charisma (Performance), and Charisma (Intimidation).
- The characters will roll first for each of the checks. This check is to demonstrate their proficiency and how well they teach the goblins that particular skill.
- The characters score a success on a result of 15 or higher (17 if the average party level is 11-16). If a majority of the characters succeed, then it counts

Number of Player Successes	Results	Number of Goblin Successes	Results
7	+2 in player initiative	7	+2 in goblin initiative
4-6	+1 in player initiative	4-6	+1 in goblin initiative
1-3	+1 in the acolytes' initiative	1-3	+1 in Porcius' initiative
0	+2 in the acolytes' initiative	0	+2 in Porcius' initiative

as a success in the challenge. If a majority fail, then it's a failure.

- After the characters roll, the goblins will roll. If the characters succeed their check, the goblins will get to roll with advantage. The goblins' roll determines how well they retain the knowledge of that skill.
- Use the **goblin boss** stat block to determine the goblins' modifiers for each check. A 13 or higher is a success for the goblins.

The overall results of the training impact the final showdown according to the table on pg. 168.

Final Showdown

Seven days after the argument between Mudknuckles and Porcius, exactly as he said, Porcius arrives at the colony with 12 acolytes (**guards**) on draft horses. The goblins who trained with the players and Balgrollur are in the 6 by 5 formation they practiced. Mudknuckles and Belgrollur are also present in front of the goblins. Goblins from the rest of the colony watch the scene from their windows and rooftops, but flee the colony entrance upon Porcius' arrival.

Ask the players to roll initiative. Also roll initiative for Mudknuckles, Belgrollur, the goblins, Porcius, and the acolytes.

Mudknuckles and Belgrollur

Mudknuckles and Belgrollur want to protect the colony and minimize the number of goblin deaths in this battle. They prioritize defending the goblins and attacking those who target the goblins. As previously stated, Belgrollur moves at half speed (15 feet) in combat due to her old age. Mudknuckles is a Medium-sized goblin, hence his hobgoblin warlord stats, but doesn't use the Javelin attack.

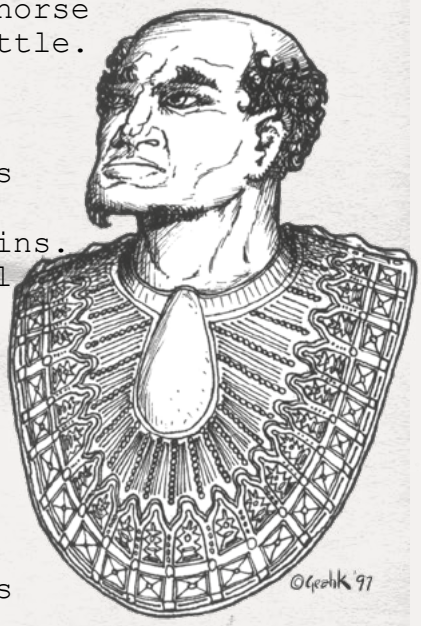
The Goblins

Leadership may not want them to die, but the goblins are ready to do so. That's why they trained in the first place. They attack whichever enemy is closest.

Although there are 30 goblins, the DM can roll once for all of their attacks. If the attack roll succeeds, roll for damage. Then, apply that damage 2/3n times across the appropriate number of enemies, where n equals the number of goblins. The goblins Disengage and retreat if fewer than 15 of them remain. This total does not include Mudknuckles or Belgrollur.

Porcius and the Acolytes

Porcius targets the characters first, followed by Mudknuckles and Belgrollur, and does his best to kill them. Because they're the strongest characters, Porcius believes killing them will put the rest of the goblins back in line. If the characters initiate the fight, Porcius has no qualms using lethal force. Unlike the acolytes, Porcius dismounts and engage in combat on foot. Porcius' horse never enters battle.



The Acolytes

All the acolytes except 3 will target the goblins. The other 3 will help Porcius. They're willing to fight to the death, but won't kill the goblins because killing weaker, poorly armed goblins is dishonorable to

them. Instead, the acolytes choose to knock goblins unconscious. If any of them engage with the players, Mudknuckles or Belgrollur, the acolytes fight to kill.

For simplicity, the DM can choose to have the 3 with Porcius conduct one attack and the other 9 conduct one attack. Or have each of the 12 do an attack. If choosing the former, the DM follows the same rules as the goblins (damage x 2/3n with n equal to the number of acolytes in the group).

Once Porcius dies or at least six acolytes die, whichever comes first, the acolytes Disengage and retreat. When an acolyte dies, their horse fights until it dies or the acolytes retreat. The draft horse follows the same fighting tactics as the acolytes.

Difficulty Adjustments

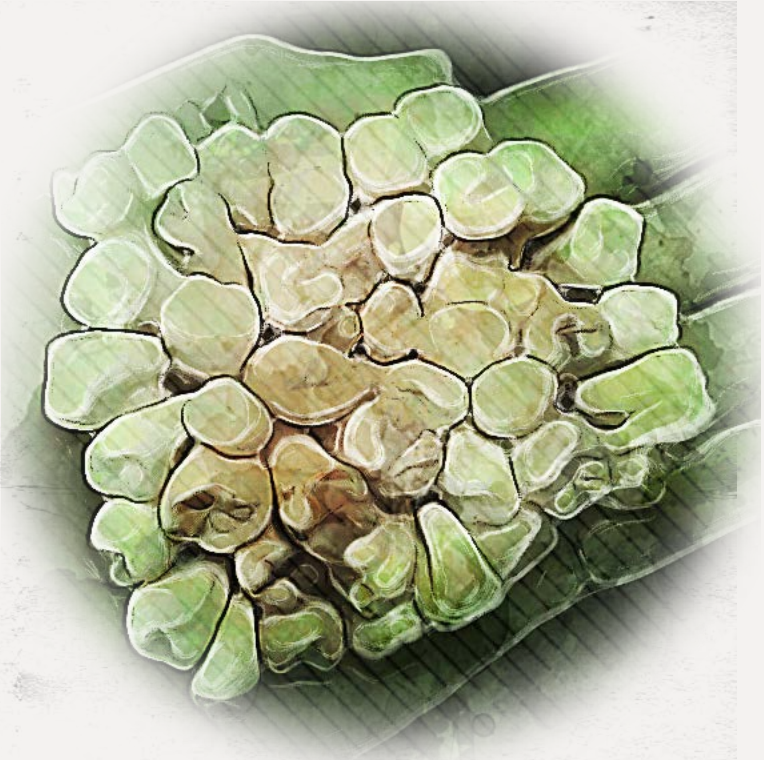
Make the following adjustments depending on party size and level:

If the character levels are between 5 and 10, make no changes

If the character levels are between 11 and 16, treat Porcius as a **warlord**

Concluding the Adventure

Mudknuckles, Belgrollur and the rest of the colony are incredibly grateful. Mudknuckles and Belgrollur are now allies and can be a source of knowledge and rumors for the colony and Bostra. The characters are now welcome in the colony and can stay whenever they need to. As a reward for helping them fight, on behalf of the entire colony Mudknuckles and Belgrollur give the characters 500 gp, a *potion of greater healing*, 3 *potions of climbing*, and a bag containing 47 humanoid teeth, one of which is rotten.



Mudknuckles and Belgrollur also recommend the characters leave the city before the Fraternal Order returns. They'll be able to handle defending the colony.

Continuing the Adventure

- The characters will be on the run and will have members of the Fraternal Order chasing them. They will chase the players 1d6 days and attack on sight.
- The Elysian Games still take place in a year or so, with the stadium in a different location. The characters can return to watch some of the competitions and check in on the goblin colony.
- The characters could also decide to enter the Elysian Games themselves and return in a year to compete.




TIER 3


Alison Huang

Escape from Prosperity Hills

Level 11| Eberron

Vall Syrene

Vall is a Northern Ireland based author and artist who focuses primarily on content for Dungeons and Dragons 5th edition. He is most notably known for his Mithral best-selling works, "100 Monster Hunts" and "The Greasemonkey's Handbook". Vall is an accomplished storyteller and game master, and has been running a Dieselpunk Cosmic Horror 5th edition campaign for the past 3 years.

You can find more work by Vall Syrene, both free and paid, on his blog at www.valldoesdnd.tumblr.com. Alternatively, his twitter handle is @valldoesdnd, should you like to follow his wild ramblings and campaign updates.

After The Last War ended many nobles still didn't consider warforged to be anything other than objects, and continued to treat them as such. Selina ir'Wilford, an established and well-known noble in Prosperity Hills, is using captured and 're-trained' warforged to benefit from the reconstruction projects the war effort created. The warforged workers have been kept under lock and key, seen as simple-minded objects and paid barely enough to afford the housing the noble 'graciously' provides for them. Trapped by ir'Wilford's security and with no means of financial escape, the warforged now have only one option—send out a cry for help through messages hidden in the very products they were forced to develop.

This adventure is designed for 4 - 6 10th to 12th level characters and is optimized for 4 characters with an average party level (APL) of 11.

Adventure Background

Selina ir'Wilford is a wealthy noble who has been amassing a vast collection of real estate in Prosperity Hills. Claiming to be providing safe work and housing for those affected by The Last War, Selina has been using her persona as a charitable philanthropist as a front, circumventing rulings governing treatment of warforged in Khorvaire by barely paying them enough to live, effectively trapping them by wage slavery.

Trapped in an endless cycle of work within Selina's on-site factory and 'protected' by her heavily-armed private security forces, these constructs are treated as nothing more than simple objects. Attempts at escape or rebellion are quickly crushed, and any deaths are quickly covered up as 'manufacturing accidents', or paperwork is filed to the appropriate authorities giving the impression the deceased in

question left the factory of their own volition for new pastures. The factory in Prosperity Hills supplies the various public services in the region with goods, such as furniture, beds, and clothing. Selina has ensured she holds a tight grip over supply and demand, allowing her to perform charitable acts of donation to local businesses and public services without compromising her vast fortune.

Adventure Summary

Chapter 1: A Cry For Help

The adventurers discover a message on a piece of furniture or object, which reads:

> "We are prisoners of Prosperity Hills. Send help."

The characters discover Prosperity Hills is owned by a rich noblewoman called Selina ir'Wilford who has a workforce of 100 of warforged trapped in a cycle of work in the factory within the Prosperity Hills Estate. In their investigations, the characters meet a warforged gardener in the estate called **Number 65**. 65 describes to the adventurers the living conditions within the factory, and explains the ir'Wilford Household is a well-loved house with connections to House Cannith, making simply killing her not advisable. The characters must choose how best to free the warforged: either by inciting a rebellion, or sneaking them out quietly.

Chapter 2: Assault on Prosperity Hills

During this chapter, the characters infiltrate the Wilford estate and must free the warforged workers. Once inside, the characters are presented with a choice: allow the warforged to rebel, creating a riot which reveals the truth about Prosperity Hills as they escape, or sneak the warforged out without notice. Should the characters incite a riot, they must defeat two stone golems guarding the exits to the estate before freeing the warforged. The longer the characters take to defeat the golems, the more warforged die at the hands of the other security forces. Should the characters instead sneak the warforged out of the estate, they must avoid alerting the security forces and fight only one of the guard golems silently to avoid sounding the alarm.

Chapter 3: Consequences

Upon his escape, 65 leads the characters to a hidden cache of treasure he has secretly amassed, awarding it to the characters in thanks for saving him and the others.

In both choices, one event remains the same: Prosperity Hills stops producing supplies required by the other towns, which over time results in weakening their infrastructure and leaving them vulnerable to raids from bandits and other nefarious groups. The characters must consider how best to solve this situation, if they choose to solve it at all.

Hooks

Hook 1:

> "You sit alone, propped up against the wall of the dingy tavern. Considering the events of the past few days, and drinking down the last, frothy mouthfuls of ale, your eyes catch a strange scratching on the mug's wooden base. Written with hurried hand, it says:

"We are prisoners of Prosperity Hills. Send help."

Hook 2:

" Heading over to bed down for the night, you notice a broken wheel, half buried in mud, twenty feet or so from the camp. Thinking it good firewood, you pull it out, clearing the dirt off it before dropping it on the rest of the wood pile. Strange markings catch your eye; words carved on the cart's wheels, which read:
"We are prisoners of Prosperity Hills. Send help."

Part 1: A Cry For Help

This outlines the first part of this adventure, introducing the discovery of the hidden message left by the warforged to the characters, giving them the opportunity to learn about Selina ir'Wilford, meet number 65, and formulate a strategy. This section is broken down into a number of different encounters, including a short paragraph you can read out to your players to help set the scene.

Encounter 1: The Mysterious Message

The adventure begins in a small, lively tavern, the Beggar's Knook. The tavern is run by a dwarven male called Irik StoneHammer (commoner, MM 345), who is friendly and approachable, but is uncomfortable around Kenku due to their strange speech. Beggar's Knook is filled with paintings and hunting trophies Irik has acquired over the years. A stuffed troll's head sits above the bar as a centrepiece, frozen in a fearsome silent snarl as its glass eyes glare at everyone on the first floor.

After establishing the hook, read or paraphrase the following:

The last dregs of your ale course through your exhausted frame. It had been a long day. The tankard sets down on the table with an audible thud, quickly drowned out by the roar of the bustling tavern. Glancing down, you notice a small message scraped into it's inside. Leaning in for a closer look, it reads *"Prisoners of Prosperity. Help."*

Features of the Area

Loud. The tavern is very lively, making conversations over long distances inaudible.

Crowded. The tavern's interior is difficult terrain due to the crowds.

The characters, upon discovering the message, can discover its origin in one of the following ways detailed below.

Speaking with the Owner

The character pushes their way to the bar and speaks with Irik about the strange message. On a successful check, Irik reveals the mug arrived with a delivery from Prosperity Hills this morning, a large estate owned by Selina Wilford, who supplies the towns and villages in the region.

Checking the History Books

The character thinks back to events prior to entering the tavern, remembering a delivery cart at the back of the tavern, with the name "Prosperity Hills" etched into its side.

Investigating the Design

The character investigates the mug's design and material, discovering it to be made from white oak. Asking around the tavern, the characters learn such oak is only known to grow within the grounds of the Prosperity Hills estate.

Once the characters have discovered the mug's origins, it is advised they make their way to the Prosperity Hills Estate. Alternatively, should the characters wish to find out more about Selina ir'Wilford, they can do so by asking the locals in the tavern, or Irik himself, who reveals the following:

- Selina is an extremely wealthy noblewoman, and the major supplier for goods of necessity in the region.
- She is a caring philanthropist, often donating beds and other items to the orphanages and hospitals in the surrounding towns.
- Many owe her a great debt, as they believe without her, their lives would've been very difficult.

Encounter 2: Selina ir'Wilford

Upon arriving at the gates to Prosperity Hills, red-brick factory smokestacks belch smoke from behind a beautiful noble manor, surrounded by a forest of white oak trees. Near the fence, a battered warforged is tending to the gardens, a watering can in one hand and a wheelbarrow full of supplies nearby. Upon arriving, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

> You follow the cobblestone roadway towards the huge wrought-iron gates barring you entrance into the Prosperity Hills Estate. A glistening black-stone gravel path, which winds its way through a forest of carefully planted white oak trees, leads from the front gates toward a large manor. Beyond the manor, you see the tell-tale smoke of a factory chimney billowing a dull haze into the sky.

Features of the Area

Front gate. The front gate (areas 8) is guarded by a stone golem (MM, pg, 170) and is magically locked from the inside (DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check can locate and remove the runic markings locking the gate)

Antimagic gems. There are small antimagic gems implanted in the branches of the oak trees. Each gem emits the effects of the *antimagic field* spell, forming an invisible dome over the Prosperity Hills Estate, designed to prevent escape or intrusion by means of the fly spell or other magical effects.

Forbiddance. The Prosperity Hill grounds are under the effects of the *forbiddance* spell. The spell's effects extends to cover both levels of the manor and factory, up to 60 feet above the floor.

Upon arriving, the characters see the warforged hobbling around near the iron fencing, watering the plants. He beckons them close, looking over his shoulder repeatedly before asking the characters for help. The warforged reveals he and other warforged are prisoners of Selina ir'Wilford, trapped within the confines of the estate and forced to work throughout the day and night in her factory. The warforged introduces himself as Number 65, revealing he was responsible for scrawling the message inside the ale mug. He wishes to escape with the

other warforged prisoners and set up a new life elsewhere.

Number 65 knows the following pieces of information, which he gives to the characters willingly:

Number of Workers. There are 100 workers currently in the estate. All of the warforged work in the factory. The factory can hold up to 50 workers at a time. Workers are rotated out every 12 hours. The ones that aren't working in the factory are instead looking after the grounds, or stacking crates ready to be delivered. They have 4 hours a day to rest.

Hatred of Warforged. Selina hates warforged, and doesn't allow them inside her manor. The manor is protected at all times by 10 **guards** (LE elves or human guards, MM pg 347). The guards are abusive and arrogant.

Magical Warding. The Prosperity Hills Estate is magically warded against intrusion; the oak trees create an *antimagic field* in their upper branches, preventing escape, and both the front and rear gates, while unlocked, are protected by extremely powerful magical traps.

Vigilant Guardians. Two **stone golems** patrol the estate at all times: one guards the front gate, and one guards the back gate, which is used as a delivery entrance.

Hopelessness. The warforged inside the estate have all but lost hope on escape. None of them are real fighters, and many have had their spirits broken by the guards. However, should they have the opportunity to take vengeance on their captors, they would surely do so.

Connections with House Cannith. Selina Wilford has deep roots with House Cannith, making her a valuable asset to them. Attacking Prosperity Hills directly would be seen as an attack on House Cannith, and as such would draw a lot of negative attention. Should Selina be assassinated, House Cannith would take it as an attack on them directly, and the local populace would view the characters as murderers of an otherwise innocent woman.

Development

After each piece of information is given, there is a 25% chance for the characters to be spotted by Selina, who is wandering the grounds accompanied by a stone golem. Alternatively, Selina spots Number 65 speaking to the characters after he runs out of information to give them. Read or paraphrase the following to introduce Selina to the encounter:

> You listen carefully to the old warforged's tale, taking note of the desperation in his voice. Suddenly, a sweet aroma of lavender and vanilla obscures your senses, clouding your mind and slowing your thoughts as a calm, friendly voice says, "Oh my! Stephen, these flowers are looking wonderful! Who are you speaking to, my dear?"

Selina speaks in a friendly manner, her mannerisms relaxed and gentle. She sparks conversation with Number 65, always referring to him as 'Stephen'. Number 65 returns the greeting promptly, and introduces the characters as a few passing adventurers interested in the blooming flowers. Characters with a passive insight of 12 or higher realise Selina doesn't believe him, but retains the appearance of doing so.

She 'reminds' 65 that visitors aren't allowed within the grounds, and forces him to move further into the estate before turning to the

characters and politely informing them that if they want any more details on the flowers, to speak with the town mayor. If questioned, she gives short, political answers; claiming 65 is struggling with an injury, so much of what he says is nonsensical. If a character attempts to intimidate her or persuade her further, Selina makes it clear that she is not to be trifled with before excusing herself from the conversation.

Part 2: Assault on Prosperity Hills

The second part of this adventure involves assaulting the Prosperity Hills Estate and freeing the warforged workers. This section can be approached in two different ways: either the characters sneak into the factory under cover of night and free the warforged while leaving Selina undisturbed, or they sneak inside the grounds and incite a rebellion, revealing Selina's terrible agenda and outing her to the town.

Infiltrating the Estate

The Estate is secured by guards who patrol the grounds day and night. Under cover of darkness, the characters must sneak into the grounds. Once inside the grounds, read or paraphrase the following:

> The grounds are patrolled by numerous guards, their lanterns flickering back and forth in the darkness. Cracks and bangs of production emanate from the factory, and the thunder of heavy footsteps betrays the presence of two stone golems, guarding each of the estate's gates.

The characters escape Prosperity Hills by either inciting a rebellion among the warforged or sneaking them out at night. If inciting a rebellion, upon being liberated, the warforged take up arms and storm across the grounds towards the front gate. The stone golems are summoned, but all guards become preoccupied fighting the warforged, and don't get involved in the golems' encounter with the characters. The characters must defeat both stone golems and unlock the gate to allow the warforged to escape. At initiative 3 on each round, 2d6 warforged are killed by the guards. If all the warforged are killed, the quest fails.

If the characters choose to sneak the warforged out, Number 65 tells them to leave via the rear gate, opting to avoid most of the guard patrols. The characters must sneak through the factory without raising the alarm, then defeat the stone golem and any reinforcements, or delay them while a character unlocks and opens the rear gate. The stone golem can't raise the alarm, but at the end of each round, if a character has made a particularly loud noise, or cast an explosive or bright spell and there are still guards on patrol, there is a 50% chance for them to notice the conflict and raise the alarm. Reinforcements alerted by the alarm arrive in 1d3 rounds. The warforged don't join the combat, instead taking cover 40 feet away from the characters.

Once the gate is open, it takes 2 rounds for the workers to flee.

Features of the Area

Iron Gates. The exits to the estate (areas 7 and 8) are magically trapped from the inside. The gates are unlocked, but opening them causes the traps within to trigger. When triggered, the trap explodes out in a bright burst of radiant light, alerting all creatures within the estate. In addition,

each character within 15 feet of the outside of the gate must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 10d10 radiant damage and is blinded for 1 hour. On a success, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't blinded. The trap can be dispelled with either a 4th-level *dispel magic* cast on the gate, or by making a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check to deface and disarm the triggering runes hidden on the bars.

Factory Interior (area 10): The interior of the factory is extremely noisy. Characters speaking at a normal volume can't be heard by creatures more than 10 feet away. Characters shouting can be heard up to 30 feet away.

Manor Interior (areas 9 and 11): The manor is protected by explosive runes, and certain rooms are also protected by *symbol* spells. These runes and symbols are detailed on the estate map.

Creatures

The grounds (areas 1 - 8) are patrolled by 30 (10d6) **guards** (LE elves and humans), and 2 stone golems. The guards move in groups of 10, and change locations every 10 minutes to one of exterior locations marked on the map. One golem guards the front (area 8) or rear (area 7) gates to the estate. Both exits are guarded at all times.

The manor and factory interior are guarded by 2d6 +3 guards. The guards change shift every 5 hours. The manor is also guarded by 4 animated armors, which are marked on the manor map with a blue X.

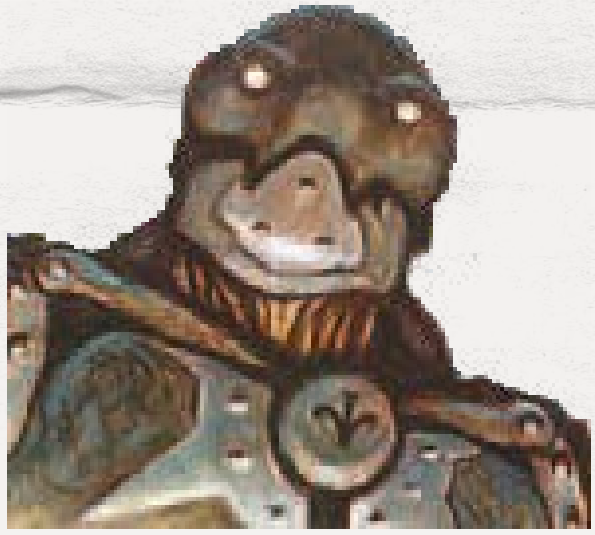
Tactics

If the guards see a character using healing magic, they shift their attacks to that character, ensuring they're dead before targeting others. One guard out of the group is dispatched to call for help. If they discover a dead or unconscious body, the guards sound the alarm. If less than half the guards remain in the combat and there are no more reinforcements, the guards flee.

The animated armors don't attack until a character either threatens Selina, Selina gives the order for them to attack, or the guards raise the alarm. Otherwise they remain inert and are unaffected by *symbol* spells or any explosive runes. The stone golem targets spellcasters or ranged characters with its Slow, before attacking with its Slam. If both golems are involved in the combat, they remain within 20 feet of each other and make their Slam attacks against the same target where possible.

The stone golems fight to the death.

Selina Wilford is a non - combatant. She wears a *bangle of protection and security* and *shawl of blessing and binding* (See Selina's stat block in Appendix B). If she is threatened, she uses these items in order to protect herself. If the characters choose to help the warforged incite a rebellion, she locks herself in her manor, surrounded by animated armors. A teleportation circle linked to a located belonging to House Cannith is hidden beneath the rug in her room. If she feels the battle is not going in her favour, she spends 10 minutes activating the teleportation circle before stepping



through it, in the process setting her room alight to cover her tracks.

Difficulty Adjustments

Make the following adjustments if the party is weak or strong:

If the party is very weak or weak, reduce the number of patrolling guards by 10 (to a minimum of 10). In addition, have one stone golem attack a different target to the other, and arrive 1d3 rounds after the first one has entered the combat if alerted.

If the party is strong, allow the stone golems to make 1 additional Slam attack each against a target. This additional attack triggers on initiative count 20.

If the party is very strong, increase the number of guards in the estate grounds by 10, increase both stone golem's hit points by 52 (5d10 + 25), and grant them the aforementioned additional Slam attack. In addition, any guards within 20 feet of an active stone golem can't be frightened and don't flee.

Chapter 3: Consequences

Once all warforged have been liberated from the estate, read or paraphrase one of the following paragraphs, depending on which option the characters chose:

Inciting a Rebellion

Shouts and cries of freedom ring in the air, the surviving warforged bursting forth from the estate in a rush of excitement. 65 hobbles towards you, stepping over the remains of the stone golems and clutching your hand in his. He looks at you with dim, fading eyes.

"I don't know where this leaves the rest of the community now the factory is gone, but they won't forget this." He gestures to the celebrating warforged, grabbing delivery carts and horses from the estate stables and preparing them for a long journey ahead.
"You've done a great thing today. Thank you."

Escaping Through the Rear Gate

Alarm bells pierce the night air as you get the last of the warforged out through the rear gate. Turning to leave, you take one last look at the vast, imposing factory, now lying inert in disarray. How this act will affect the region is yet to be seen, but regardless, you flee into the darkness with a grin on your face, the crackling of a crowd of wooden feet ringing in your ears.

Rewards

Upon escaping, number 65 reveals to the characters a hidden stash of treasure in the woods nearby the estate and offers it to them as a reward for helping them escape.

If 65 dies during the escape, one of the characters finds a small note from him attached to their belongings, informing them of the stash.

The stash contains the following items:

- 105pp, 2,100gp and 1,000sp
- Blue Sapphire (200gp)
- 3 rough-cut diamonds (300gp)

- A small leather bag filled with various gemstones (100gp)
- A small tapestry threaded with gold (500gp)
- Various paintings of nobles, lords, animals, and landscapes (1,000gp)
- A large chest containing fine wines and bottled seasonings (250gp)
- A *potion of animal friendship* (DMG)
- 2 *potions of greater healing* (DMG)
- An old copper ring (ring of spell storing)
- 3 3rd-level spell scrolls, one each of *fireball, haste, revivify*
- A gnarled wooden staff (*staff of striking*)
- 2 iron wands, covered in intricate dwarven runes (*wand of magic missiles*, and *wand of magic detection*)
- A handmade broom, wrapped in a fine silk (*broom of flying*)
- A small onyx carving of a dog. It has the name 'Bosley' engraved on its underside. (*onyx dog figurine of wondrous power*)
- A locked steel strongbox (Unlock DC 22), with an engraving on its front that reads "For Anita, May she find her peace". Inside is a silken black sheet, wrapped in a cotton scarf that smells faintly of rose petals (well of many worlds).

Continuing the Adventure

The liberation of the warforged has long-standing effects, both on the community, and the region as a whole:

- Without a factory to supply their arms and other defences, nearby towns and villages are much more likely to be attacked and raided by nearby bandits, bugbears or other creatures.
- Food shortages in the region begin to become apparent, now Selina's delivery wagons are no longer able to ferry supplies between communities.
- (If rebellion) House Cannith's enterprise in the region is called into question and Selina is arrested. This causes a widespread rift in the region as towns try to figure out whether her actions were legal or not.
- (If rear gate escape) Investigations are launched into the sudden disappearance of the factory workforce. Selina attempts to cover up her wrongdoings, and production halts in the region until she can organise new 'employees'.
- If Selina is killed (or at your option, if the warforged escape), House Cannith agents are deployed in the region 1 week after the events, and eventually begin tracking the warforged to their new home.

It is down to the characters how they choose to handle these effects. Do they check up on the new warforged community, only to find it in ruins due to House Cannith agents?

Consider how these regional effects could also interact with other neighboring regions. Could a noble declare war on the region, knowing it has been destabilized?

Appendix A: Monsters & NPCs

Selina ir'Wilford
Human female, lawful evil

Stat Block: Noble (MM, 348), with the following modifications: +3 Dexterity, +2 Intelligence, +1 Charisma, 45 (10d8) hit points, AC 16, Proficiency bonus + 3

Selina is a wealthy noblewoman who works for House Cannith. Under the guise of a charitable philanthropist, she exploits her warforged workers for her own financial gain. While not having magical prowess of her own, her fortune and connections in House Cannith have given her access to the following magical items:

- A *necklace of fireballs (6 beads)*
- A beautiful red velvet dress, adorned with inlaid eye-shaped gemstones *(robe of eyes)*
- A yellow diamond ring *(elemental gem)*
- *Amulet of proof against detection and location*
- Fine clothes, adorned with golden thread *(clothes of mending, XGtE)*
- A golden bangle that sparkles with a magical glow *(bangle of protection and security,* Appendix B)
- A golden lace shawl, embroidered with vines and symbols of nature (*shawl of binding*, Appendix B)

Appendix B: Items

Bangle of Protection and Security

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

While you wear this golden bangle, you have a +2 bonus to AC as long as you aren't wearing armor. In addition, the bangle has 3 charges. When you would take damage from an attack or spell, you can use your reaction and expend one charge to cast the shield spell, without requiring components or expending a spell slot. If you expend all 3 charges at once, you ignore the triggering attack or spell, in addition to the bangle's shield spell.

The bangle regains 1d3 charges daily at dawn.

Shawl of Blessing and Binding

Wondrous item, rare

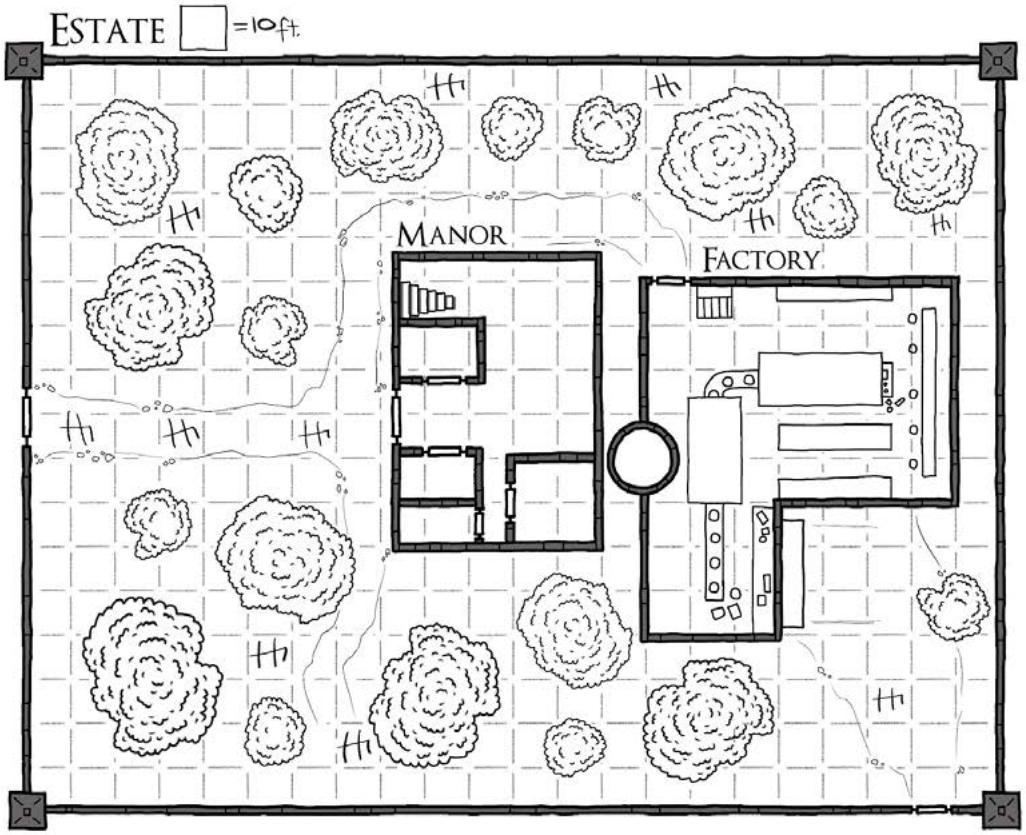
This intricately woven shawl measures 3 feet in diameter. While you wear it, a sweet scent covers you, granting you advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks against non-hostile creatures within 10 feet of you.

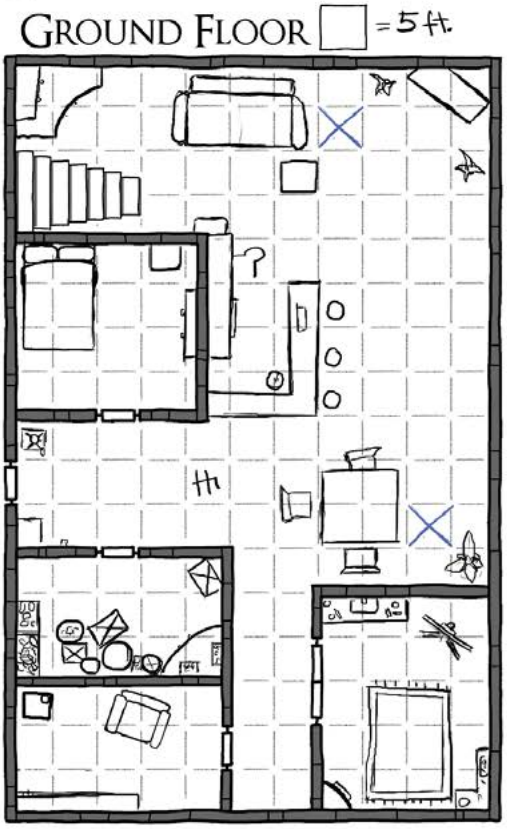
You can use an action to speak the command word and throw it at a Large or smaller creature you can see within 60 feet of you. As the shawl travels through the air, it transforms into a mass of grasping vines. Make a ranged attack roll with an attack bonus equal to your Dexterity modifier plus your proficiency bonus. On a hit, the target is restrained until you speak the command word again as a bonus action to and release it. Doing so, or if you miss with the attack roll, causes the vines to contract and become a shawl once more. The shawl then returns to you at the start of your next turn, as long as you are within 60 feet of it.

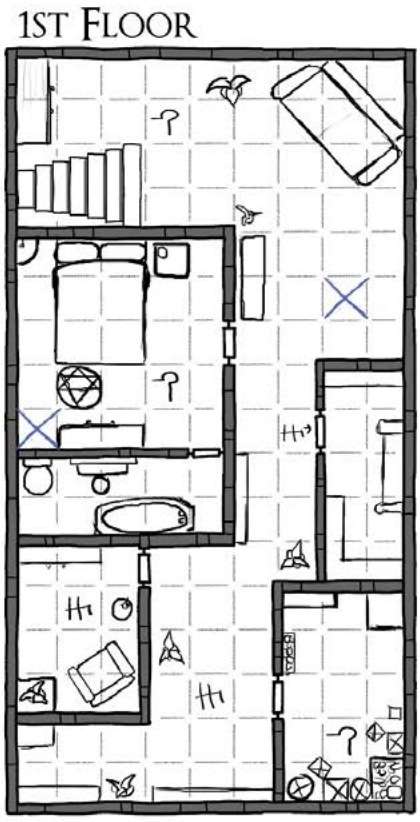
A creature, including the one restrained, can use an action to make a DC 20 Strength check to break the vines. On a success, the shawl is destroyed and the restrained creature is freed. If the creature fails the check more than 3 times, any further attempts made by that creature automatically fail until 24 hours have elapsed.

Once the shawl has been used in this way, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

Appendix C: Maps







GLYPH OF WARDING (DC 18 EXPLOSIVE)

SYMBOL (DC 18)


Amelia Ng

The Gods That Die By Our Hands

Level 13| Forgotten Realms/ Neutral

Ashley King

"Ashley "Shadowheart" King is the"Trash Queen of the Underdark" and an active community organizer in the Oklahoma D&D scene. They are an avid gamer, cosplayer, LARPer, and writer. When not rolling dice, they're reading Tarot Cards and contemplating the intersection of pop culture and spirituality.

As the Trash Queen of the Underdark, Ash has studied current Drow culture in D&D and has come to the conclusion that someone needs to get in there and rewrite... well, everything. Current lore suffers from the mysogynistic and racist overtones of the past. "The Gods that Die by Our Hands" is intended as a look at how an overhaul could begin - by dropping Lolth and rejecting her ideals. Ash detests religion that is based on fear and control, and feels that many religions are manipulated by tyrants to lost their spiritual roots, twisted to suit the desires of the powerful instead of being a tool to uplift the collective spirit.

Connect with Ash on twitter @lashadowedheart or on Facebook at Chaos Fox to get your cards read.

A visionary drow anarchist has been captured by the matron of a slave-trading drow house. Your job is to rescue them and bring down an entire drow noble house in the process.

This dungeon is optimized for five 13th-level characters.

Adventure Background

In the Underdark there exists a community of drow who have rejected the teachings of Lolth. Brought together by a visionary called "The Walker Between the Worlds" they have called their community "Anarkia" for they live outside of the law of Underdark society. Dangerously close to their community is an outpost controlled by House M'Fal'an, highly traditional Lolthites. Over the years, the Walker has led many lower-ranked drow away from this outpost, and has also arranged increasingly aggressive guerrilla attacks on the slave caravans traveling to and from the location.

But the Walker has disappeared, and their followers fear the worst. The Walker's loyal lieutenant has continued to lead the community in their absence, but he feels the loss deeply and is prepared to do anything to get them back, alive. What the people of Anarkia don't know is that Matron Yazara of House M'Fal'an has uncovered their location and wishes to make an

example of the "renegades". She'll begin by executing the Walker…

Adventure Summary

The adventure begins as the party meets Kaali, trusted lieutenant of the Walker, and raids a House M'Fal'an slave caravan. Kaali uses the raid to ensure the party deserves his trust. Afterwards, he leads the party to Anarkia. Upon arrival, the party is introduced to the community and their beliefs. They also learn about the Walker and what has happened to them. Kaali enlists their aid to rescue their leader from House M'Fal'an. The party must gain access to the outpost and make their way into House M'Fal'an to find and rescue the Walker from Matron Yazara. Spurred on by either the rescue or death of the Walker, the slaves of House M'Fal'an decide that enough is enough and revolt against their masters.

Hooks

A Call To Action. A drow renegade named Kaali has put out a call through secretive channels for adventurers to assist with raids on the slave caravans of a wealthy noble house. It's highly unusual to get such a request from a drow, even a renegade.

Silence the Infidels. Whispers are circulating about a community of drow that has broken away from the traditions of Lolth. Agents of a noble house are willing to pay great sums for any information concerning a mysterious "Walker Between the Worlds."

The Gods that Die by Our Hands

Deep in the Underdark a revolution is stirring. Spurred on by a visionary heretic, it has grown into a thorn in the side of House M'Fal'an and is cutting into the profits they make from the slave trade. Recently, House M'Fal'an has captured the so-called "Walker Between the Worlds"—a drow who has rejected Lolth and is encouraging other Drow to do the same. The Walker's lieutenant Kaali will do anything to secure their freedom. To help him achieve his goals, he has called upon adventurers in the hope they will be able to free the Walker before it's too late.

Part 1: A Test of Ethics

After meeting Kaali, the renegade drow reveals his plan to raid a slave caravan soon passing through a cavern known to the locals as Katharsis. Long ago, the cavern was home to a hot spring and bathhouse where locals would come to relax, but they were abandoned when an earthquake destroyed the bathhouse and drained the spring. The caravan is coming from House M'Fal'an's outpost and Kaali hopes that the Walker will be among the slaves being transported. He won't reveal this hope to the party until he is sure he can trust them, and the only way they can do that is to free this group of slaves.

The Cavern of Katharsis

The cavern of Katharsis is a common route used by the slave caravans of House M'Fal'an. It is the most direct route to transport stock to other Underdark cities, which makes it the best place for the party set up an ambush. Give the party a chance to scope out the layout and set up any defenses they'd like before reading or paraphrasing the following:

"Get into your positions. The caravan should be coming from the south," Kaali says, moving to one of the outcroppings and slipping into the shadows to wait. You almost begin to lose track of time as you watch to the south for any sign of the caravan. Minutes creep by in the gloom until you see the glow of dancing lights and hear the guards approaching. The time to prove yourself is now.

Features of the Area

Size: The cavern is approximately 40 feet wide by 80 feet tall and about 200 feet long, running north to south. Assume the caravan starts 150 feet away from the party's position.

Terrain: Rocky and rough-cut, the remains of the bathhouse and empty pools are still visible. There are many places where a creature can hide and gain three-quarters cover. Most prominent are rock ledges that run almost the entire length of the cavern approximately 20 feet off the cavern floor.

Lighting: Phosphorescent lichen and fungi provide dim lighting throughout the cavern.

Creatures

The caravan is led by a **drow house captain** and a guard complement of five **drow elite warriors**.

Kaali (CG male drow) will provide assistance to the party; use the stats for a drow elite warrior but swap the Hand Crossbow for a Longbow and remove the poison. Kaali can also use the Multiattack feature to attack twice with his longbow. He prefers hit-and-run tactics, changing his position often.

Tactics

This particular caravan is a trap set by House M'Fal'an to lure Kaali into the open, but only the caravan captain knows. She has been commanded to capture Kaali to further weaken Anarkia and will focus her attention on him, using non-lethal attacks. She will command her warriors to deal with the "interlopers" and holds no reservations about killing the party.

If her warriors are killed, the captain will abandon her orders to capture Kaali, Disengage, and attempt to escape. If successful, she reports to Matron Yazara about the party's involvement, making things more difficult later.

Developments

While the slave caravan is a trap, it is still transporting enslaved "goods" that Matron Yazara has already written off as a loss. The warriors are not above utilizing these slaves as "meat shields" against the party. There are 15 slaves of various races (treat as commoners) chained together in groups of 3. Kaali is watching the actions of the party towards these slaves; if they avoid hurting them or actively work to protect them during the fight, Kaali later displays his trust to the party by leading them to Anarkia without interrogation.

If the party does not make any effort to protect or free the slaves, Kaali treats the party harshly and insists they be blindfolded before he leads them to Anarkia so they cannot know the route. A successful **DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check** changes Kaali's attitude.

If the party captures the captain alive, she refuses to speak unless a character succeeds on a **DC 20**

Charisma (Intimidation) check. She then reveals the caravan was a trap. In addition, she informs the party of the Matron's plan to kill the Walker and attack Anarkia within the next tenday. The captain's loyalty runs deep, and even if she talks, she makes every effort to escape and return to her Matron.

Rewards

Searching the bodies of the fallen drow, the party finds two small carved bone statuettes of Lolth, a golden locket with a portrait of a Drow child, and a pair of engraved bone dice, altogether worth 200 gp.

Searching the captain reveals two *potions of greater healing*, a *spell scroll of command*, and a *spell scroll of entangle*.

Part 2: Anarkia

Kaali brings the party to Anarkia, offering a chance to rest and recover from the fight before they head off to the outpost of House M'Fal'an. Anarkia was founded on a simple idea: everyone is equal, and everyone has a right to freedom. Since its founding by the Walker, it has become a thriving community that spits in the face of traditional drow society. For this "sin," House M'Fal'an has decided to destroy them. Read or paraphrase the following:



You are led through a confusing array of tunnels, the recently freed slaves following in stunned obedience, until finally the tunnel opens into a cavern that takes your breath away. There is soft light here and, oddly for the Underdark, chatter and laughter. A dozen or so children, mostly drow but you spot a couple of young orcs and a dwarf or two, come running up to Kaali, all begging for tales of adventure. He waves them away with a gentle smile as adults come forward with blankets and food, taking the newly freed slaves into their care. Then he turns to you, his smile becoming wistful. "Welcome to Anarkia."

Anarkia

Founded by the Walker Between the Worlds, Anarkia is a hidden settlement that originally served simply as a meeting place for the followers of the Walker. As their movement grew, people began to set up permanent residence, vowing to help the Walker free both slaves and drow from "the poisonous ideals of Lolth."

Features of the Area

Kaali gives the party a brief tour of the settlement. It was inspired by orcish tribal communes, as orcish slaves are popular among the drow for their strength and durability as manual laborers. The main portion of the population are common drow, as even they are often victims of the slave trade and many don't share the same machinations as their nobles. The next most populous race are orcs.

Area 1: Mushroom Farms. The bulk of Anarkia's diet comes from mushrooms grown in one of several "farms." They are tended communally and there is a "take what you need" policy

in place; as long as the farms are maintained, everyone eats.

Area 2: The Central Market. A centralized trading hub where residents come to trade hand-made goods with one another. The stalls are open to whoever has something they wish to offer the community and Anarkia exists entirely on a barter system of "trade what you wish." No money changes hands in the market.

If the party seeks potions, they can find *potions of greater healing* in the Marketplace, traded by a half-orc herbalist. She exchanges the potions for whatever the party wants to offer, but she impishly tries to "upsell" them by saying they must do something ridiculous to earn the potions, such as singing a bawdy song or doing a handstand.

Area 3: Sleeping Areas. Anarkists are free to come and go as they like and usually end up resting in one of the many tents or small buildings scattered about the cavern. Some families lay claim to a particular area by marking it with a special symbol, but most are open for anyone to use.

Area 4: The Walker's Home. The largest dwelling in the cavern belongs to the Walker. They share the space with Kaali and have personalized it with hanging fabrics and painted murals on the walls. There are no chairs, but instead a large, low table and plush, colorful cushions.

Developments

Kaali's tour ends at the Walker's Home, where he invites the party to sit down and share a bottle of mushroom wine while he explains the stakes.

Kaali reveals the following to the party:

Anarkia is both a community and a movement: they believe that everyone is equal and everyone deserves freedom.

- The Walker Between the Worlds began to spread their ideas in the M'Fal'an outpost before they were exiled, but they still maintain contacts there. The Walker was branded a heretic because they realized that the Lolthite religion was entirely built on the ideas of subservience and slavery. "All drow are slaves to Lolth's will, so the revolution begins with a change of ideas and a rejection of that religion."

- Both Kaali and the Walker are outcasts in Lolthite society. They are both "gender traitors": Kaali is a transman, a fact that would get him outright killed anywhere else. The Walker is non-binary, but will pass themselves off as femme as needed.

- For these heresies, the Walker was marked as an enemy of the state. Matron Yazara of House M'Fal'an has been attempting to capture them for years; now it appears she has succeeded.

- Kaali wants the party to go to the M'Fal'an outpost and discover what has happened to the Walker, and if they are still alive he wants the party to rescue them. He has little to offer in terms of payment, but says the party is welcome to take whatever they wish from the outpost.

- If the party interrogated the caravan captain, Kaali also asks them to act as a strike team, to hit House M'Fal'an before they have a chance to launch their assault.

Kaali invites the party to rest in Anarkia, taking what they need for the next part of their journey.

Part 3 - The Markets of Flesh

After the party has a chance to rest, Kaali has one of the other members of the community lead them to the M'Fal'an outpost. Kaali stays behind in Anarkia to either settle the newly released slaves or, if the party interrogated the House Captain, prepare for House M'Fal'an's attack. The outpost is about a half-day's travel from Anarkia; the party's guide refuses to get too close to the main gate, bearing a healed-over slave brand on their arm, and instead gives them directions to reach the gate before leaving to return to Anarkia.

Features of the Area

House M'Fal'an's outpost is settled in a large, easily defendable cavern. Its defenses have been well-laid over the years and House M'Fal'an employs loyal guards known for their cruelty towards the lower classes and especially towards a branded slave. This has kept the common people of the outpost under House M'Fal'an's thumb, but has also created a breeding ground for revolution—the slaves are tired of the constant atrocities and with the Walker Between the Worlds emboldening people with their anti-Lolth ideals, it wouldn't take much to set off this powder keg.

General Features

Lighting: The main areas are brightly lit with permanent faerie fire spells that make the buildings glow.

Sounds: The Slave Market is a cacophony of sound, with auctioneers barking out prices for slaves on the auction block, the shuffle of feet, and the rattling of chains. The residential areas of the outpost grow more quiet the further they are from the Slave Market.

1. The Main Gate

A large gate seals the cavern off from the rest of the Underdark, 30 feet wide by 25 feet high and made of a dark metal emblazoned with the seal of House M'Fal'an. This gate serves as the main entry in and out of the cavern, but it is never fully opened and the guards stationed here are tasked with inspecting every cart and person that enters and leaves.

There are 10 drow guards, 2 drow elite warriors, and a drow mage guarding the gate at any time. They can quickly summon guard patrols from the Slave Market if a fight breaks out, and if it looks like a full-scale assault is under way, they will shut the gate fully, which takes 2 Rounds.

If the party plans to enter the outpost peacefully via the gate, they must submit to inspection from one of the guards. They can bypass the inspection with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Deception) check. Charisma (Intimidation) checks automatically fail.

2. The Slave Markets

The Slave Markets begin immediately beyond the Main Gate. Slave trading is the specialty of House M'Fal'an, who pride themselves on providing obedient stock, and the Slave Markets are where the majority of gold changes hands. House M'Fal'an pays raiding parties to go to the surface for fresh stock, then representatives of other drow Houses from all over the Underdark come and pay good money for House M'Fal'an slaves.

The Slave Market is patrolled by groups of 1d6 drow with 1d4 drow elite warriors as their patrol leaders and a **drow mage** for magical support and crowd control. There are 6 of these groups patrolling the Market at any one time.

3. The Slave Pens

These three areas of the Outpost are where new slaves awaiting processing are kept. They are dimly lit, dirty holding pens with few comforts. At any one time, there are 5d10 **Commoners of various races being held in each of these pens.**

4. Residential District

Beyond a 20-foot-high fence of smooth stone stand the residences of the common drow who live and work in the outpost. There are two gates, one to the north and one to the south, that provide access to this area. The residents are highly suspicious of any non-drow in this area and tend to automatically assume that such persons are slaves attempting to escape the pens.

The guard patrols here are the same as those described in the Slave Market above. There are 3 patrols roaming the area who stop and question any non-drow they find. A successful **DC 18 Charisma (Deception) check** avoids a confrontation.

5. The Matron's Palace

Beyond the residential district is another fence. This one is 30 feet high and made of wrought iron in the shape of spiderwebs. Beyond the fence lies the palace of House M'Fal'an. It is a grand building with harsh, jagged architecture meant to invoke the might and fury of Lolth. The area around the palace is kept darker than the rest of the cavern and is considered **dimly lit**.

There is a single gate that allows entry into the palace grounds. It is locked and appears unguarded, but if the party tries to unlock it, two **drow shadowblades** utilize their Shadow Step ability to teleport in and attack. Only a character with a passive Perception of 19 or higher notices the shadowblades before they strike. The palace gate's lock requires a successful DC 25 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to open.

There are two entrances to the Palace: the main entrance described below and a side entrance. The main doors are not locked, but the side entrance requires a successful **DC 20 Dexterity check** with thieves' tools to unlock.

General Features

Halls & Ceilings: The main hallways are 10 feet wide with 15-foot ceilings.

Lighting: The corridors and rooms of the palace are dimly lit with sickly green faerie fire.

Areas of the Palace

Area 1: Entry Hall. The 20-foot-wide double doors open into the entrance hall. If they weren't alerted by the party attempting to open the main gate, the 2 drow shadowblades are stationed outside these doors.

Area 2: The Barracks. When not on duty, the house guards rest here. The room is sparsely decorated with 8 cots and a footlocker at the end of each. The footlockers are all locked (DC 12), but only contain personal items belonging to the guards. At any time there are 2d4 drow elite warriors resting here.

Area 3: Armory. A simple room containing weapons and armor for the guards.

Area 4: Slave Master's Quarters. This room is occupied by House M'Fal'an's slave master, a particularly cruel drow house captain. The party can clearly hear the sound of a whip hitting flesh from outside the door. Upon entry they find the slave master punishing one of the kitchen slaves.

Area 5: Slave Holding Areas. When not doing tasks around the palace, the slaves of House M'Fal'an take what little rest they can here. The door to this area is locked and the slave master carries the key. Alternately, the lock is opened with a successful **DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools**. There are 2d6 **commoners** huddled here and will happily flee if the party gives them the chance.

Area 6: Treasury. The treasures of House M'Fal'an are stored here. Matron Yazara holds the only key to the locked door, which is trapped with a glyph of warding (**DC 19 to dispel magic checks**) that will go off if anyone attempts to pick the lock (which requires a **successful DC 25 Dexterity check with thieves' tools** to open). The glyph is an explosive rune which deals thunder damage. If it goes off, it summons any House M'Fal'an guards who hear it.

Inside is the following: gems and jewels worth 7,500 gp total, an amulet of the planes, a +3 rod of the pact keeper, and an Ioun stone of intellect.

Area 7: Kitchens. A drow chef directs 4 slaves here. All use **commoner** stats and will not put up a fight if threatened.

Area 8: Pantry. Food and fine wines are stored here.

Area 9: Mess Hall. This is the palace's dining hall. 3 slaves (commoners) are currently cleaning here and run to the kitchens if threatened.

Area 10: Lolth's Chapel. The central-most area of the ground floor of the palace and the grandest room in the whole place is House M'Fal'an's private chapel to Lolth. It is a large room, lit by flickering candles, with an altar and impressive statue of Lolth at the south end. There are two secret doors on the east and west walls that are spotted on a **successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check** or **passive Perception of 20 or higher**. The doors open easily once found, and open into the hallways. They are intended to allow guards to move quickly into the chapel if needed.

When the party enters this room, read or paraphrase the following:

> Standing before the chapel's altar is a menacingly beautiful drow matron, her tentacle rod in hand. "Submit to the will of Lolth and all this will be over," she croons at the figure crumpled before her. Bloodied but defiant, the Walker looks up and spits at her feet.
>
> "Kill me and my name will echo through the Underdark," they rasp. "Your evil only makes us stronger."

Developments

Once the party enters the chapel, Matron Yazara (LE **drow matron mother**) pauses the Walker's execution to demand to know who they are and why they have broken into her home. If they answer, she welcomes them and declares she is killing the traitor in Lolth's name. If they refuse to answer or try to intervene, she attacks. If the drow house captain in Area 4 hasn't already been killed, they hear the fighting and alert the guards resting in Area 2 before joining the battle. When her allies and minions arrive, the matron dismisses the adventur-



ers and turns her attention to executing the Walker. After 3 rounds, the Walker (CG **drow mage**) will join on the side of the party if they are still alive.

Treasure

Once Matron Yazara has been killed, the party can use her key to gain access to the Treasury without triggering the **glyph of warding**.

Concluding the Adventure

Once Matron Yazara has been killed, if the Walker Between the Worlds is still alive they thank the party for the rescue before taking the house symbol from around the Matron's neck. The Walker asks the party to come with them to announce the Matron's death, which will trigger a slave riot. Emboldened by the party's actions and the Walker's words, the slaves overthrow their captors. If the party wishes to assist, utilize the Guard Patrols encounters from the Slave Market.

If the Walker dies, the party needs only to draw public attention to the body and the Walker will be declared a martyr by their followers in Anarkia and the outpost. If the party wishes, it won't take much to start a slave revolt. The best way to start the riot is to announce the death of the Walker or the Matron, or to release those being held in the Slave Pens.

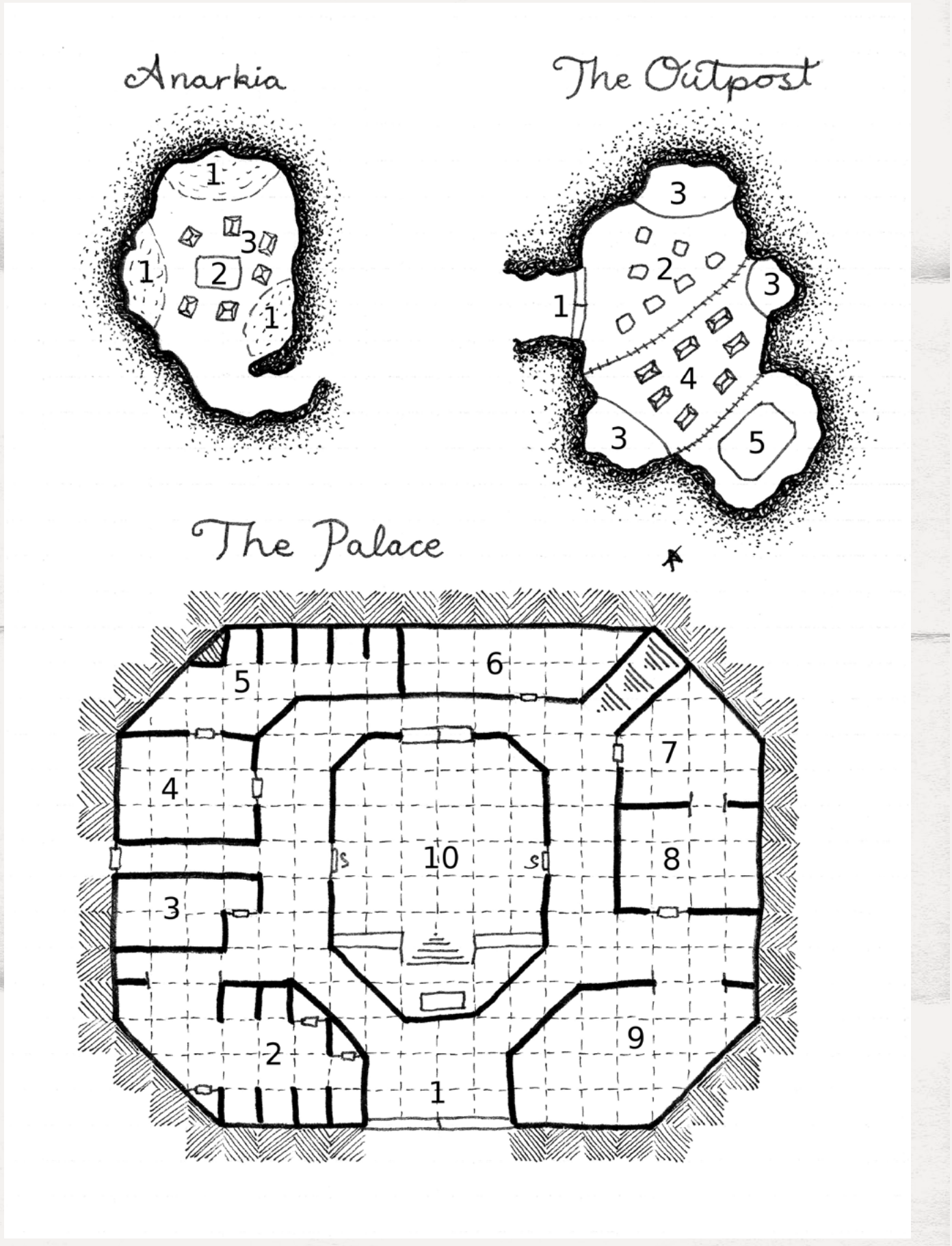
Continuing the Adventure

With the destruction of House M'Fal'an, Anarkia has proven to be a new power in the Underdark. More like-minded drow who wish to live outside of Lolth's traditions begin to flock to the settlement. As the movement continues to grow, it will attract more enemies who will seek to stop them. To combat this, the Walker asks the party to stay and help plan their next movements against other nearby drow Houses closely aligned with House M'Fal'an.

If the Walker is martyred, it leaves a power vacuum in Anarkia. Kaali is a good tactician, but he doesn't quite have the charisma of the Walker. He needs assistance if Anarkia is to continue to flourish in the wake of the Walker's death, especially with the influx of new residents from House M'Fal'an who may or may not have embraced the Walker's ideas.



Appendix C: Maps




TIER 4


Luciella Scarlett

The Devil to Pay

Level 17| Setting Neutral
Ashton Duncan

Ashton Duncan is a freelance writer and editor out to slay dragons and write stories. When she's not eating the rich, Ashton works as senior producer at Roll20 and contributes to other DMs Guild projects such as Friends, Foes, and Other Fine Folks, 12 Days of Midwinter, and Infernal Magicks. Ashton will lead the Princess Project anthology in 2020.

You can catch Ashton on twitter @ashtonnduncan for more on magical girls, her dog, or some dice she's rolled recently. She accepts warlock pact applications in the form of puns and Petrarchan sonnets.

Diamonds are forever, and they cost a lifetime: Dismantle an exploitative diamond mining operation and free the miners trapped unknowingly in a contract with the arch-devil Mammon.

This adventure is optimized for a party of four 17th-level characters.

Adventure Background

The de Veres family, owners of a profitable diamond mine, artificially inflate the stone's prices. In return for their life-giving diamonds, the de Veres accept payment in gold. If you don't have gold, your life's labor and soul will do. The de Veres family is not a family at all, but disguised devils tasked with harvesting souls and wealth led by a singular, corrupt human—Marina de Veres. This sandbox adventure fights tyranny with swords and fireballs.

Adventure Summary

The adventurers begin in a city not far from the mining compound and are quickly given reason to investigate the promises of the de Veres diamond mine. At the compound all is not as it seems, as the area is blanketed in a *mirage arcane* spell. Inside, the heroes discover the horrible truth in an explorable area consisting of the mine, the miner's camp and the de Veres mansion.

Hooks

Hope (She/her)

Work advertisements plaster the nearby city, promising long life and new opportunities. The bottom of the advertisement has contact details on tearaway pieces and many are already missing. The party watch a woman tear down the whole ad. She deposits it into a

sack and moves onto the next. She's wearing gloves. If an adventurer decides to tear down an ad, they must roll 1d6. On a six, the advertisement gives the tearer a wicked paper cut. The character takes 2d6 magical slashing damage which can't be reduced in any way, almost as if the paper had malicious intent.

The woman's name is Hope, and she is a red tiefling with unruly curls and a crease in her brow. If asked to explain herself, she says, "I'm from this hellhole, and I won't let them lure any more good, desperate people there." Hope can describe the poor working conditions and the daily toils of the mine, as her parents are both miners. Her father, Lucas, first entered the workforce to pay for a diamond and the resurrection when Hope died of a childhood illness. The family moved to the de Veres compound and after a mine collapse killed Lucas, her other father Neil joined the workforce to pay for Lucas' diamond and resurrection, rather than adding it to Lucas's own debt. She isn't sure whether they're both dead now or "something worse." They can't leave, she knows, "because their debts will crush them as sure as the rocks will." Lucas and Neil aren't dead, though they have both accumulated more life debts since Hope escaped. It's possible to rescue them along with the other miners in the camp.

Litwynn (They/them)

The party observes an overflowing shipment of diamonds. One falls off and rolls to their feet. It is a diamond worth 300 gp. There are no repercussions for pocketing the diamond. The cart doesn't stop until it reaches the local temple, where two priests await its arrival. The driver—a figure shrouded in a dark cloak—hands the elder a sack it scoops from the back of the cart. Should a player make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, they discern a purple arm shrouded in an ornate golden cuff extending from the cloak. This figure is a **bearded devil**. The elder, a human man, weighs the diamonds and nods, then turns to the younger priest beside him. "I know it's horrid work, but it's for the greater good! Think of those we will save, not those we cannot." The younger priest, a half-elf named Litwynn, looks about to protest, but solemnly sits at the back of the cart. If the priest catches sight of the party as the cart pulls away and exits town, they look around before beckoning the party to follow. At a rest stop for the horses the priest sneaks away to reveal they perform resurrections in a nearby mining town. They are anxious because they've heard terrible stories about the work conditions of the laborers and the horribly shortened lives they lead. The priests, who act as shift leads, must bring the miners back to life over and over again. Litwynn can serve as an ally using the **priest** stat block.

Part 1: The Accounting and Valuation of All Things

From the outside, the de Veres mining operation appears to be every bit the advertised pastoral fantasy. It has clean, bubbling brooks and chirping birds. The reality, however, is far more bleak. The area falls within the one-mile-square effect range of mirage arcane, disguising the ten-foot-tall fence of spiked logs, the strip-mined and barren land, and a grayish wasteland where not even animals seem to tread. The front gate is barred by thick metal bands on the outside. *Mirage arcane* does not disguise the inhabitants of the town, however, who appear dirty, malnourished, and—very often—injured or ill, and the illusion does not extend inside the walls.

A chipper attendant is a **bearded devil** disguised as a halfling. The devil asks the party's names and reasons for coming. The disguise is only perceivable through magical means such as *detect magic* and *true seeing*. Any answer approximating "work" grants them entry and the bearded devil opens the gates. The devil turns the party away for any other answer, claiming the village is a "bit too full right now, but please come visit us another time!" If a player makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, they locate the entrance to a hidden contraband tunnel dug under the fencing. It is big enough for one Medium humanoid to squeeze through at a time.

The bearded devil goes by "Lucy" and is happy to give the party non-answers and excited marketing spiels about "a new lease on life," but does not answer questions. Instead, the devil encourages the party to take a look around themselves and locks the gate behind them. When the party enters the gates, read the text below:

> Inside the gates, the façade falls away. The gray-brown dirt is dry, the mines a massive, hateful split in the earth surrounded on all sides by spiked logs. A small, dirt path leads down to a haphazard cluster of makeshift buildings that seems to serve as the miner's residences, ringed on one side by a small, dirty stream. On a hill overlooking the mines is a dilapidated manor. It seems unlikely that anyone does or could live there, but there's smoke coming from the chimney.

From here, the adventure is a sandbox. It is possible for the party to march up to the house and dive into the final showdown. The hooks should provide the necessary motivation to explore the rest of the compound.

Part 2: The Diamonds and the Rough

Miner's Camp

> At the edge of the ramshackle camp, a rack of worn but well-tended pickaxes awaits a much larger workforce. You can hear children playing, small shrieks of joy as small figures bob and weave between canvas tents pitched with the same stakes that ring the camp. At the center of the camp a tendril of smoke rises from a communal oven made of bricks the same color as the dry dirt. Many adults sit around it, speaking lowly as they mill grain, chop root vegetables, and tend to the fire. Another group sits at the small stream, scrubbing ragged clothes against riverbed rocks.

The party can roleplay encounters in the miner's camp wherein they might learn more about the situation and meet some NPCs. The miners' contracts are stored inside the manor. They believe they are inside the massive, golden vault some of them have glimpsed. If using the Hope hook, Lucas and Neil are there and eager to hear of their daughter's successes. The miners infrequently see Marina de Veres touring the camp and barking orders, but her two adult children are often off in the city recruiting.

The miners are not available until sunset, when they filter back to the camp from the mines. Until then, family members like spouses and children can elaborate on the miner's untenable situations. The miners are diverse in race and gender identity. The miners or their family members can explain their situation is the result of what the de Vere's family calls "charity": Indentured service the mine as compensation for the diamonds used

to resurrect loved ones. The long-term miners say this with bitterness and hopelessness. The newest miners—aware they have been duped—still remember the hope the de Veres' offer of diamonds brought. The miners each tell a similar tale of grief, desperation, and hope in the form of diamonds. They never thought the work would be this hard, or dirty, or grim, but they know that every diamond they mine is another life saved, and they hope the good outweighs their hellish lives.

The miners don't know that the poor living and work conditions of the camp and mine are calculated. If one were to die before their indentured time finished, the cost of the diamond to resurrect them would add to their bill. The arduously long contract for such service includes—under a subsection of a subsection—the fact that failure to finish such service before dying of old age demands forfeiture of the signer's soul to the service of the archdevil Mammon.

Below are some examples of miners and their family members:

Aunt Nura

An old, female halfling commoner (she/her), Aunt Nura refuses to leave her tent for fear of dying of anything but old age. She's made her family swear not to bring her back

Argenta "'Genta" Cooper

A scrappy human non-combatant of about fourteen years (she/her), Genta is not afraid of speaking her mind - a fact that worries her father. She is the informal leader of the children of the camp. Genta often makes sure that younger children have enough to eat

Callum "Copper" Cooper

A human miner guard (he/him), Copper is quietly building support for an armed rebellion within the camp to storm the manor and destroy the miner's contracts

Hew

An earth genasi commoner (they/them), they smuggle much of the camp's necessities in through the smuggling tunnel. The rest of the camp covers for their late-night activities as much as possible.

Mining Tunnels

The mining tunnels are a sprawling, labyrinthine network. Rickety wooden ladders descend from the surface. Even from aboveground one can hear the repetitive sound of metal striking stone.

After descending into the tunnels:

The tunnels are lit periodically by small, magical lights that float in corners. At the edge of the tunnel a thin, wooden board supports the ceiling, stone cracked around it. The air is stale, and the sounds of mining louder.

Features of the Area

Tight Squeeze. The ceilings of the tunnels are 5 feet high and are about 4 feet in width.

Lighting. Areas where only miners with darkvision are working are unlit.

If the party explores the mining tunnels, they meet more miners within the depths. The miners hesitate to stop too long, even to take a drink of water or perform necessary first aid. They fear that their day's labor will not count against their total debt. If the party engages a miner in conversation, assume that the miner continues working. They toss



rough diamonds into the shift lead's bucket during pauses in conversation.

A miner is happy to lend a pickaxe should a party member wish to mine for diamonds. The character must make a DC 15 Investigation (Intelligence) check. On a success, they discover a small diamond. Once revealed by the party or by a miner the shift lead grabs the diamond from their hands. No matter the size, they say "looks like a thousand gold diamond to me" before tossing it in a bucket. A DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) or Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals this is a massively inflated price. Questioning the miners yields a shrug, because "aren't all diamonds worth that much?" The miners' pay their debt through daily labor, not by diamond price.

Once every hour, roll a d6. On a six, the mine suffers a collapse, an all-too-common occurrence. The characters must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid 1d6 bludgeoning damage from falling rocks. Several nearby miners are also injured, and 1d4 miners are crushed. The shift lead says a quick, non-specific prayer to each with fingers grasped around a diamond from the bucket. Each comes back to life with stuttered breath and is immediately ushered back to work. The shift lead marks those diamonds down next to each miner's name in a chart. If the characters glimpse the chart, there is hardly a name without a few diamonds marked down as debts. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Nature) check regarding the mine or stonework reveals that the supports are wholly ineffectual.

The de Veres Manor

The house is dominated by a shining, golden vault built in the middle of the house with no regard to its surrounding architecture, which sags without proper support. Debris and trash lay in the corners of the house, with cobwebs shrouding the ceiling. Light filters in through holes in the roof, illuminating the piles of gold and diamonds littering the floor inside the vault. Two armored devils with large, scarlet wings and swords at their hips toss yet more riches into the vault.

Creatures

The vault currently stands open as two undisguised **erinyes** toss sacks of gold and large diamonds in, carefully avoiding entering the vault space.

Tactics

The erinyes attempt to lure the party into the vault by pretending to surrender. If their ploy fails, they strike, focusing on maneuvering the party into the vault.

The vault floor is inlaid with a symbol—an open pair of scaled, red

hands above a black diamond. The symbol can be recognized as the arch-devil Mammon's if players make a DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check. If anything or anyone, including the items the characters are wearing and the characters themselves, leave the vault room, the symbol shimmers and hisses. The metal becomes molten and rises into a **pit fiend**. It attacks immediately.

If the erinyes have not yet attacked, they do as well, but are careful not to step inside the vault. If one erinyes falls, the other attempts to shut the vault door, which takes one action to shut and one to lock. The characters have one hour of air (possibly less if a fire spell is used, depending on your discretion) and the vault is pitch black.

Once shut, a character inside the vault must make a DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check to open it again. On a failure of five or less the character or characters attempting the Strength check shift the inside of the door, revealing the lock mechanism, which can be unlocked with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves' tools. The characters can reattempt the respective Strength (Athletics) and Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) checks at your discretion. On the first day of every month the vault's contents are transported to the polluted swamp of Minauros, Mammon the arch-devil's domain in the Nine Hells.

Rewards

Roll for two items on Magic Item Table H and one item from Magic Item Table I in Chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Upstairs Bedroom

This once-lavish room has been converted into a conference room. The hand-carved, wooden headboard serves as the pinboard for a profit chart. Neatly-organized cubby holes line the walls, filled with scrolls with red seals. One side of the room sags, beginning to fall into the floor below.

Marina de Veres is a stately woman in a fine purple dress, impeccably clean and manicured. She wears her silver hair piled elegantly upon her head. She lectures two younger humans, pointing furiously to the slight dip in the extreme upward curve of the chart.

Creatures

Use the **balor** stat block for Marina with the following changes: Marina is a lawful evil Medium humanoid who does not have the *Death Throes* trait as she cannot die; if she's reduced to 0 hit points, she instantly regains one. She cannot be killed by instant death effects such as *power word kill*.

Tactics

The first time Marina is reduced to 0 hit points and regains one she laughs in relief, praising Mammon. The second time this happens she screams in pain, anger burning in her eyes. The third time this occurs she releases a wretched, abandoned scream before turning on any living devils as they've "betrayed" her.

Defeated and horrible, recognizing she has no path to win, Marina is a human who aspired to ascension—or, rather, descent. Once the leader of a far-reaching and powerful cult, Marina ceremonially sacrificed every soul within that cult to fuel her bargaining power with her fiendish lord, Mammon. In return for the souls and wealth she regularly deposits to his domain she has access to near limitless power on the Material Plane, and her own contract promising an afterlife of luxury and power at Mammon's right

hand. Or so she thought.

Like the miner's contracts, however, Marina, too, has been duped. Mammon never enters a deal he cannot profit from, and would never allow someone to leech from his hoard forevermore. Rather than granting Marina the luxurious afterlife she believes justifies her miserly and miserable time on the Material Plane, Mammon's contract stipulates that she must provide her value in souls each year she lives or else she is in violation of the terms of her contract. Until that date, he intends to keep her wholly and wretchedly alive, withering until she can no longer fulfill her contractual obligations and once again becomes his servant as a lemure.

Snotty and collapsed, Marina will reveal the method of destroying the miner's contracts, but her own is kept safe in Mammon's personal vault. She feels her life has been in the service of nothing, her dream afterlife stripped from her in a moment.

Rewards

Both Marina and the mariliths carry copies of *The Accounting and Valuation of All Things*, manuals that assesses the value of a soul in gold or other goods. If the characters flip through it, Marina sobs and asks them to look for her name, which has the value of "a thousand souls or more, I've given him that!"

Most of the scrolls found in the room are the miner's contracts. If a creature of non-evil alignment breaks the seal, that creature must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw, taking 6d6 psychic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. A successful DC 20 Intelligence check reveals the source of the issues in these contracts: in exchange for an appropriate diamond and services of a priest to perform *resurrections*, the miners enter indentured service in the de Veres mine. However, under a subsection of a subsection, it becomes clear that if one were to die in the poor living and working conditions of the mine before their indentured time finished, the cost of the diamond to resurrect them to serve out the terms of their service would also be added to their bill, and thus their length of servitude. Failure to finish such service before dying of old age demands forfeiture of the signer's soul to the service of Mammon.

A further DC 15 Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) check reveals that Mammon is the arch-devil of wealth, supposedly literally richer than gods. Mammon oversees trade in souls, profiting from lawful evil souls not bound by contract and acting as bureaucrat for those that are. Mammon does not enter any bargain that does not profit him, and those who try to strip him of his ill-gotten gains are nearly



guaranteed a horrible, bloody demise.

The remaining scrolls are primarily contracts made with prominent members of local temples that rely on bribery or extortion.

In Case of Emergency: Use Diamond

If the party experiences a total party kill, ask each of them if their soul is willing to return. "After all, there's still work to be done." If they are, the character wakes in the mines, stripped of all gear except basic clothing and a pickaxe. Each member of the party takes a -4 penalty to all attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks. Each time an character finishes a long rest, the penalty is reduced by 1 until it disappears. Even in this state, a party of their level should be able to handily dispatch with the **chain devil** guarding them. They can find their equipment and personal items inside the manor in a chest labelled "for sale", and they can find shelter with the local mining community while they recover. Be sure to emphasize the risk the miners are taking by sheltering them.

Concluding the Adventure

Marina de Veres is defeated, and in her defeat she is wretched, needy, and selfish. She would happily become the pet project of a compassionate soul, but once recovered she will return to her evil ways, again gathering souls in the hope of pleasing her master and—she hopes—grateful creditor. She does not see another path to escape from the contract to which she is sealed.

The most likely outcome is that players share at least a portion of their newfound wealth with the miners and the former mining town is abandoned. Bringing the contracts to hallowed ground or dousing them in holy water nullifies them, but it is likely that infernal retribution is afoot—the party have made a very powerful enemy in Mammon. Mine tailings, the remnant waste materials left over from diamond extraction, remain in pyramid-shaped piles. The environmental effect may leave the local water supply undrinkable and the mines a hazard particularly for adventurous children. Eventually, however, the earth reclaims the mine.

Hope

Hope is reunited with her fathers and goes into workplace safety activism. Her fathers are very proud.

Litwynn

Litwynn returns to the city and leaves their church, preferring to find their own "greater good." They start a free clinic in the city. If using the Litwynn hook and they have the non-miner contracts Litwynn will deliver their temple's contract back to the temple and take the others, too, launching an investigation into corruption throughout prominent priesthoods.

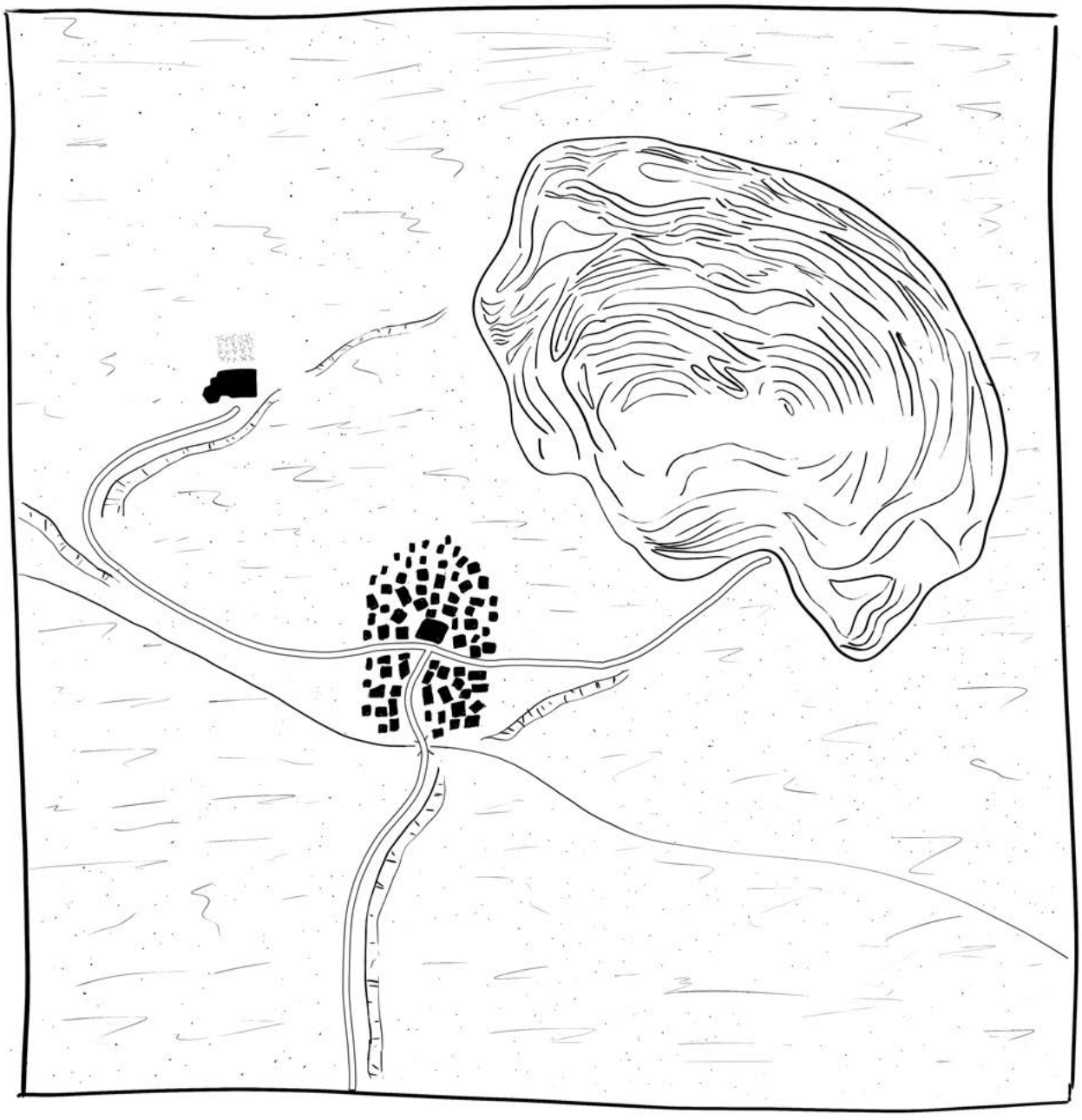
Continuing the Adventure

With the books and materials inside the house, the adventurers have the research materials to face Mammon should they choose to. Within the compound they likely find the motivation.

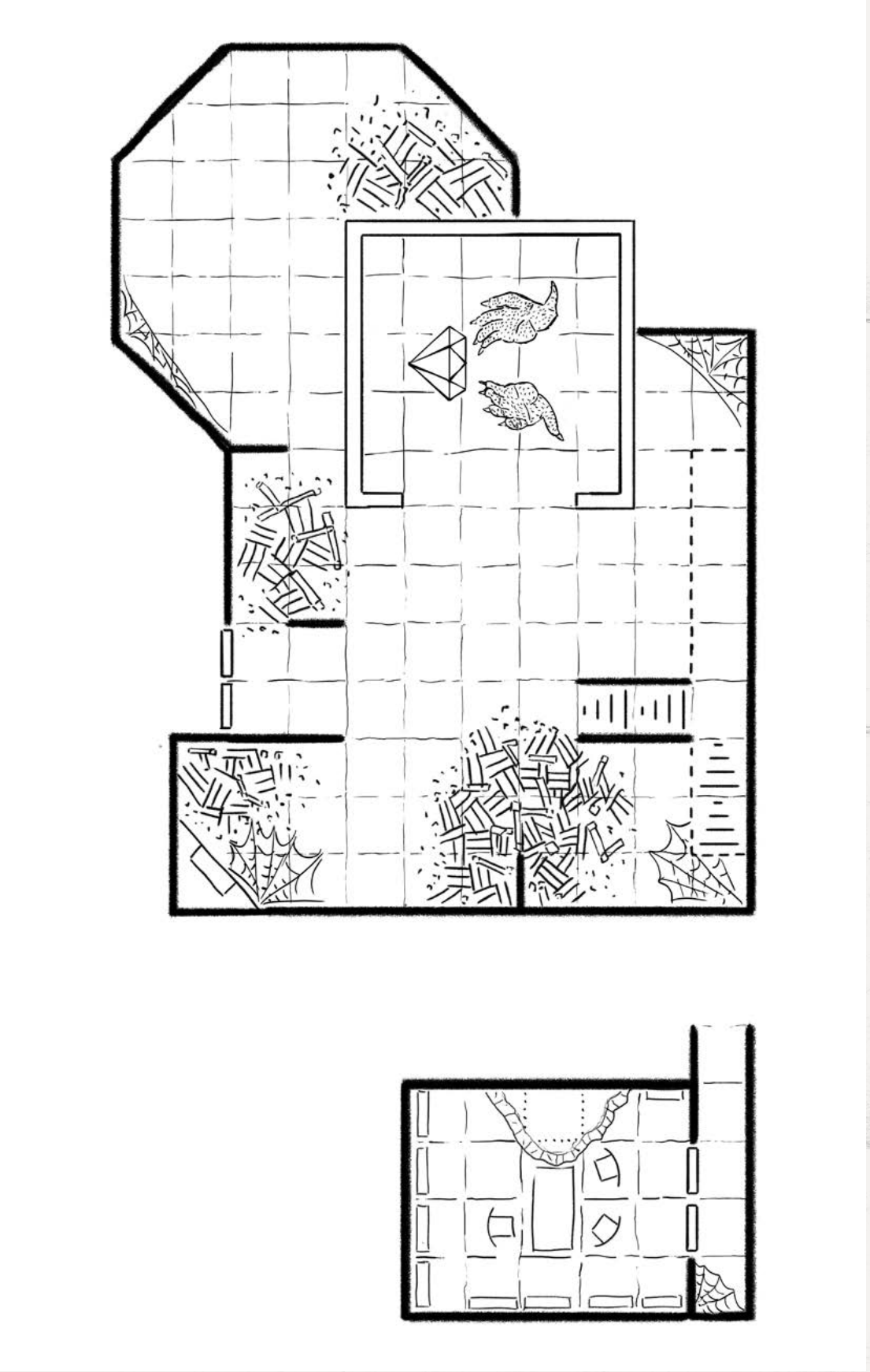
The characters are now wealthy and the apparent owners of a successful diamond mine. Any attempt to continue the commercial venture as-is would prove a failure, as the miners are no longer contractually bound. In addition to being an evil action, Mammon would not look favorably upon someone else profiting from his minion's deeds.

Appendix A: Maps

Area Map



The de Veres House Map





One Last Thing

They say it takes a village to raise a kid, and that's definitely true for Eat the Rich. More than 50 people came together to make this book... and dozens more stepped up to help by playtesting the adventures you've just read. So our final thank you goes to them:

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