

# Carnival of Horrors



Brian Hamilton



# CARNIVAL OF HORRORS

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**Introduction:** Who is responsible for the grisly murder of a carnival worker in the small town of Ashabenford? Why has the town's once amiable cleric retreated into isolation, shunning his duties as the organizer of the Fall Equinox Festival? Does the spirit of the druid haunting the town have anything to do with what's happening? If so, can the heroes uncover the connections before things get any worse?

A short adventure for 5th level characters

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## Introduction

Barnaby Tarmin's Carnival of Oddities and Delights has once again arrived in Ashabenford for the town's Fall Equinox celebration. Every year, for the past six years, the local children watch with excitement as the caravan wagons arrive and the colorful tents and streamers go up in the grazing fields to the north. When the highly anticipated week arrives, the carnival folk emerge from their tents and wagons, dazzling onlookers with their games, rides, and talents.

Perhaps the most anticipated moment of all is Barnaby Tarmin's Show of Wonders. Part freak show, part circus, Barnaby delights his audience with bizarre folk and creatures from around the world. Some townsfolk save up all year just for a glimpse of Adalinda the Snake Dancer and Azul the Turbaned Inferno. This year, the anticipation is fever pitch, for it is rumored that Barnaby has something new in store; something that the town is sure never to forget.

## Preparation

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You (the GM) need the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition version of the core rulebooks to run this adventure. This adventure uses the taint rules to give the adventure a more ominous feel, so you will want to familiarize yourself with these as well.

To get started, print out the adventure, including the maps. Read through the scenario at least once to familiarize yourself with the adventure, threats, and major NPCs (particularly their motivations). Text that appears in italics is player information that you can read aloud or paraphrase for the players at the proper times.

## Adventure Background

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Barnaby Tarmin is not the lighthearted, jovial clown that he appears to be. In reality, he is a gray jester, an evil fey creature heralding from a part of the Feywild corrupted by foul magic. Having arrived on the Material Plane through a planar breach created by the Spellplague, he became trapped when the druids of Oakengrove Abbey, led by Oakfather Gannon Durei, sealed the breach and erected standing stones in order to prevent the corruption of the Feywild from bleeding into this world. Unable to bypass the divine, magical wards sealing the breach, Barnaby began researching the rituals necessary to break them.

After decades of study, Barnaby believes he now has the answer. On the morning of the Fall Equinox, he will use a forbidden ritual to call forth the corrupting magic of his world at three key ley points, thus breaking the druidic wards.

The only obstacle to Barnaby's plans had been a druid, named Solomon Oatbringer. Solomon was the remaining caretaker of Oakengrove Abbey and protector of the stones sealing the planar breach. If Barnaby attempted his ritual before dealing with the druid, Solomon would have been able to restore the wards and thwart the gray jester's plans. To avoid this, Barnaby has spent the past six years posing as a carnival master, hoping that an opportunity might present itself to have the druid assassinated and to frame someone else for the crime.

Barnaby's efforts have not proved in vain. Having enslaved the local butcher, Borrin Blagworth, as a bleak one, Barnaby ordered the assassination of Solomon Oatbringer. He then had Borrin prepare the druid's body for use in the rituals needed to open the breach. With the rituals now complete, Barnaby has only to wait until the Fall Equinox to bring his plans to fruition.

## Adventure Synopsis

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The adventure begins when the PCs arrive in the village of Ashabenford in time for the annual carnival and celebration of the Fall Equinox. Before the festivities can get too far underway, the PCs are dragged into a murder investigation of one of the carnival workers.

Following the clues, the PCs uncover evidence of something far more nefarious at work. Errol Collsworth, the town's once charismatic cleric of Chauntea, is now paying homage to a vile blackthorn glaistig, named Shiara. Borrin Blagworth, the local butcher, has erected a dark altar in his salt house, with a headless body left on the altar as tribute. Galen Smallwater, a goodhearted young farmer, turns himself over to the town guard, claiming that he murdered the carnival worker. Through all of this, an omnipresent ghostly figure never seems too far away, haunting the PCs' footsteps wherever they go.

Eventually, the PCs learn that the ghostly figure following them is the spirit of Solomon Oatbringer. Solomon was the druid charged with protecting the standing stones. With Solomon dead and the nearest druid several days away, there is no one who can undo the damage done by Barnaby in time for the Fall Equinox. The PCs must now do whatever they can to prevent the dark creatures of the Feywild from escaping and overrunning the town.

## Adventure Hooks

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There are several ways that the PCs can be introduced to the events occurring in Ashabenford. Below are a few examples.

- The PCs are residents of the town of Ashabenford and have returned home to engage in the annual festivities.
- A member of the party, perhaps a druid or cleric of a nature deity, has heard of Ashabenford's Fall Equinox Festival and would like to visit the town in order to pay respects.
- The PCs receive a letter from a friend who lives in Ashabenford. The letter describes the annual carnival and festivities and asks that the PCs join in.

## Things to Consider

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Many of the events that occur in this adventure are open-ended, allowing players to explore different options and uncover clues as they go. Other events occur at certain points in the adventure, regardless of

the PCs' actions. Finally, there are events that only occur under certain conditions, depending on the PCs' actions.

Perhaps the most important event to consider is the Fall Equinox. The PCs have arrived in town the evening before the start of the carnival and the town's festivities. It is a five-day festival, which means that the PCs have a little over four days to solve the mystery before Barnaby Tarmin opens the portal to the dark fey realm on the fifth day. As the GM, you will want to keep track of the passage of time, just in case the PCs are unable to unravel all the clues before dawn on the day of the Fall Equinox.

## Ashabenford

As the PCs approach, they notice that several posters have been pasted on the walls and billboards of the town. "Come See Barnaby Tarmin's Carnival of Oddities and Delights," the posters read. "This week only! You won't want to miss it!" When they arrive, read or paraphrase the following.

This small town appears to be bustling with activity. Banners and streamers stretch from rooftop to rooftop over the western bank of the River Ashaba. In the grazing fields outside the city, brightly colored tents stand amidst red and gold colored wagons, with dozens of odd looking individuals darting back and forth between them.

In addition to the carnival, Ashabenford is in the middle of preparations for the Fall Equinox celebration. Every year at this time, the residents decorate the town and pay their respects to Obad Hai for a bountiful harvest year or to ensure his favor for next year.

### Information and Rumors in Ashabenford

The following information can be gleaned by making an Intelligence (History or Investigation) check. The check result determines the quality of the information. A high check result also gives all the information that would have been gained from lower results.

PCs who are proficient in other skills may use them to make certain checks at the GM's discretion. For example, PCs with Intelligence (Nature or Religion) might learn about some of the religious festivities while PCs with Intelligence (Arcana) may know something about the town's magical heritage.

#### 10-14

- Ashabenford is the largest town in Mistledale. Composed of rustic cottages, homes, and businesses, the town serves as a market center for the region.
- The cleric leading the festivities is a man named Errol Collsworth. He resides outside of town in a cloister near the Abbey of the Golden Sheaf.
- This is the sixth year that Barnaby's Carnival of Oddities and Delights has arrived in town in time for the Fall Equinox Celebration. Although many residents initially expressed alarm at the idea of having a carnival interfere with their religious festivities, they quickly changed their minds when

Reverend Collsworth embraced the carnival and incorporated it into their celebrations.

- Mistledale has no lord, but is instead governed by a council of six elected councilors. These councillors choose a seventh Mistran as High Councillor to command the Riders of Mistledale, a band of soldiers who protect the region. The current High Councillor of Ashabenford is a charismatic young woman, named Lauri Gordele. She resides in the House of the High Councilor on the eastern end of town.
- Captain Emrius Baergil is the captain of the Riders of Mistledale. A young, swift witted, widely liked man who never forgets a face or a name, he became captain at the age of 23. Captain Baergil is in Ashabenford keeping an eye on things during the festival.

#### 15-19

- In past years, Errol Collsworth was a charming, jovial man. He gave impassioned, uplifting sermons and would dance and cavort with his fellow villagers in celebration of the Fall Equinox. In recent years, though, he has withdrawn from society, giving dry sermons and letting his assistants arrange the Fall celebrations.
- Woodcutters have recently stumbled onto a set of standing stones deep in the Cormanthor Forest. According to reports, the stones are arranged in a circle, each one carved with beautiful, enigmatic runes. Nobody knows who built them or even what their purpose is.
- Clashes with the Sembians have forced the Riders of Mistledale to patrol the borders of the region. This has left Ashabenford somewhat vulnerable to local drow incursions from the House Jaelre drow of Cormanthor.

#### 20+

- Errol Collsworth isn't the only person who has withdrawn from public life in recent years. Borrin Blagworth, the local butcher, a once loud and obnoxious man, has become quiet and subdued, rarely saying anything to anyone. Meanwhile Solomon Oatbringer, a reclusive druid, has disappeared from society entirely.

- According to legend, a female spirit haunts a pool somewhere deep in the forests of Cormanthor to the north. Stories differ on the nature of the spirit. Some say it's the ghost of a woman who drowned in the pool while others say that it's a nymph or a siren. Regardless, the stories all agree that the woman has an enchanting voice and when she sings, her voice bewitches all who hear it.
- Although most have accepted the carnival into their religious celebrations, there are a few who refuse to go near it. These folk complain of coming home feeling depressed in past years, as if all the joy in their lives had been drained away. After days of

rest, they were able to shake the feeling, but the experience has turned them off to the carnival for good.

### **ASHABENFORD**

**Population:** 1,569

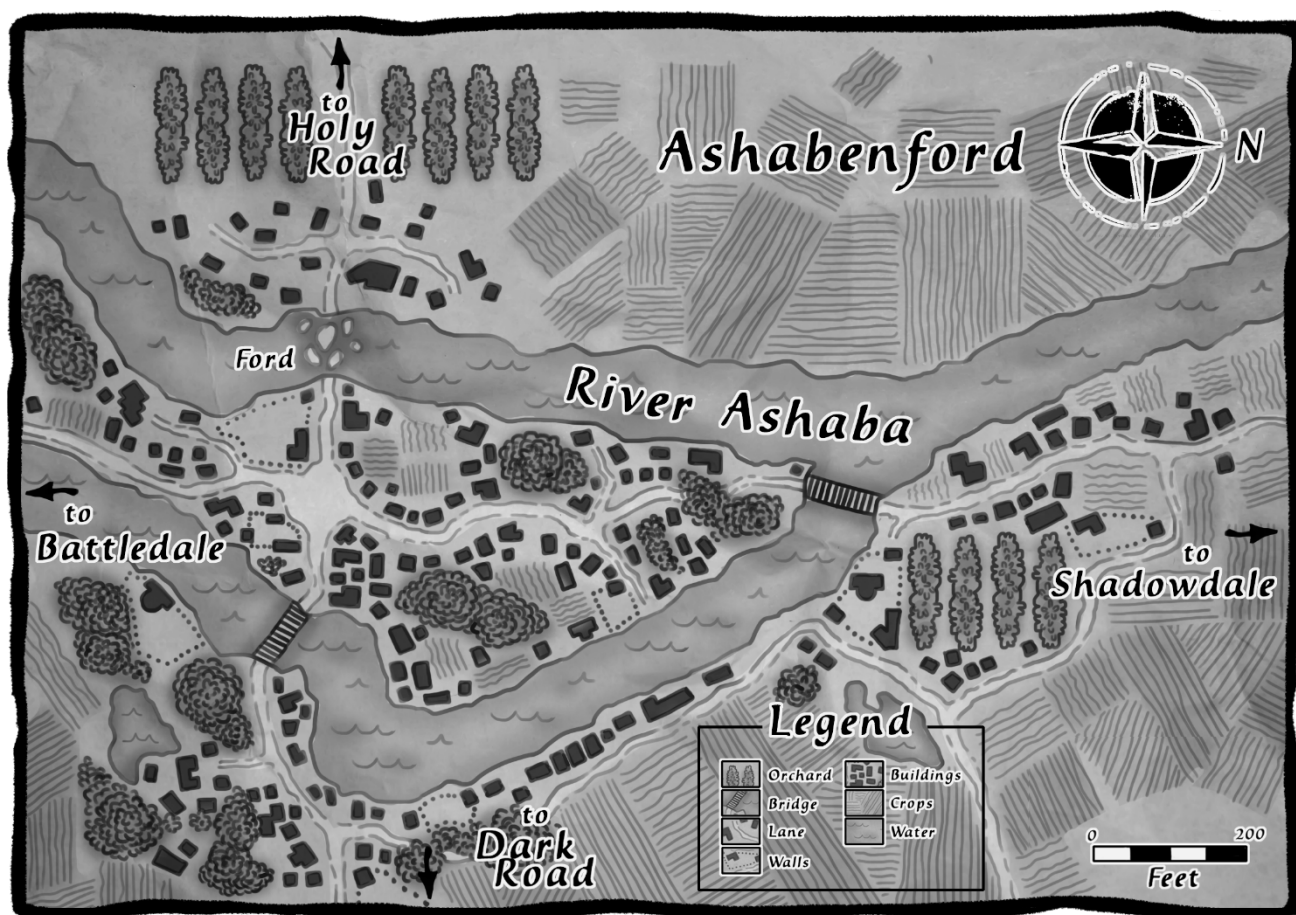
**Government:** Republic

**Defense:** 20 town guards

**Commerce:** Basic supplies plus common magic items

**Organizations:** Barracks of the Riders, Shrine to Chauntea, Temple of Tyr

**Authority Figures:** High Councillor Lauri Gordele (noble), Emrius Baergil (veteran).





## The Carnival

As the name implies, Barnaby Tarmin's Carnival of Oddities and Delights provides a panoply of activities designed to terrify, tantalize, and amaze. Below are just a few of the possibilities that await the PCs. Feel free to let them explore the carnival attractions at their leisure.

### The Hill Giant of Borbo

A rail-thin man wearing a worn, velvet coat leans on a hammer in front of a 10-foot tall painted, wooden cutout of a hill giant. Nailed to the forehead of the giant is a brass bell, connected to a vertical, metal bar. As the people pass by, the man raises the hammer above his head and slams it down on a black sledge, catapulting a small weight up the vertical bar, striking the bell in the giant's forehead.

"Step right up folks and test your strength against the mighty hill giant of Borbo! If a nothing weakling like myself can strike that bell, imagine how easy it is! Only 2 copper pieces to win a prize!"

As the PCs walk by, the man with the hammer calls out to them. "You there!" he says, pointing to one of the weakest looking PCs in the party. "You look strong and strapping! What say you give it a try! Step on up, now, step on up!"

While the booth operator may have singled out one of the weakest looking party members, any of the PCs can try their hand at the game.

Although the man operating the booth makes it seem easy, the reality is he's a 1<sup>st</sup> level sorcerer who uses the cantrip *prestidigitation* to levitate the weight when striking the bell. For anyone trying to strike the bell with just the hammer, it requires a DC 20 Strength check.

Of course, the man operating the booth doesn't let onto the scam. Instead, he coaches the PCs, offering them 'helpful' advice about how best to strike the sledge. "It needs to be a fluid, sweeping motion, like this," he says, demonstrating for them. "Make sure you put your back into it. That helps. Also, it's best to strike the center. That's the sweet spot."

**Prize:** If any of the PCs manage to strike the bell, the booth operator congratulates them and hands them a ticket to see the nightly performance of Barnaby Tarmin’s Show of Wonders.

## The Ferris Wheel

A pair of half-ogres strain against a metal crank that turns a large, wooden Ferris-wheel. As the colorful carriages climb over the peak of the wheel, the riders point and gasp at the various sights they can see over the tent tops.

“Come ride the Ferris-wheel!” growls a carnival worker of short stature and long, mangy red hair. “Only 4 coppers!”

**Creatures:** The two half-ogres turning the ferris-wheel are bleak ones, controlled by Barnaby Tarmin. The ticket taker is an evil, gnomelike fey creature known as a spriggan.

PCs who succeed on a Wisdom (Insight) check (DC 20) notice that the half-ogres are listless and vacant in expression. If the PCs try to speak to them, the half-ogres say nothing as they continue to turn the crank mindlessly.

If the spriggan notices the PCs talking to the half-ogres, he approaches, saying to the half-ogres, “Come now, that’s no way to treat our guests. Let’s be polite and answer them.”

If the half-ogres have been instructed to speak by the spriggan, they answer questions tersely in one word sentences. At no point do they let on that they are being controlled or that anything is wrong. In fact, they have been brainwashed to believe that they’re working for the carnival willingly, so even *zone of truth* won’t reveal that anything is amiss.

If the PCs cast *detect thoughts*, they notice that the half-ogres’ minds are devoid of any pleasure or self-determination. While this explains their listlessness, the cause of it is still unclear. Probing deeper reveals that their thoughts are filled with images of a man in a grey jester costume. This, of course, alerts the half-ogres to the PCs’ probing and they will respond with hostility if the PCs are visible.

**Tactics:** Barnaby has instructed the half-ogres to obey the commands of the spriggan ticket taker, turning and stopping the Ferris-wheel as needed. Otherwise, they do not act unless attacked or provoked.

Though the half-ogres are unresponsive, they are not mindless, so they can use tactics such as flanking and ganging up on a single opponent.

Neither the spriggan nor the half-ogres have weapons on them while working the carnival. If the PCs attack the half-ogres for some reason while they’re working, the creatures each grab the nearest blunt instrument, such as a tent pole or a metal stanchion, and wield it as a club.

**Ogres (2):** hp 59 each. (See p. 237 of Core Rulebook III)

## Spriggan

*Small fey, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 14 (studded leather)

**Hit Points** 22 (5d6+5)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS    | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 10 (+0) | 8 (-1) | 10 (+0) |

**Skills** Stealth +6

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 9

**Languages** Common, Gnome

**Challenge Rating** 1 (200 XP)

**Enlarge (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).** For 1 minute, the spriggan magically increases in size, along with anything it is wearing or carrying. While enlarged, the spriggan is Large, adds 2d4 damage dice on Strength-based weapon attacks (included in the attacks), and makes Strength checks and Strength saving throws with advantage. If the spriggan lacks the room to become Large, it attains the maximum size possible in the space available.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The spriggan’s innate spellcasting ability is based on Charisma (spell save DC 10). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

**At will:** *produce flame*, *scare*, *shatter*

**Sneak Attack (1/turn).** The spriggan deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the spriggan that isn’t incapacitated and the spriggan doesn’t have disadvantage on the attack roll.

## ACTIONS

**Club.** Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit (1d4) bludgeoning damage, or +7 (3d4) bludgeoning damage when enlarged.

## Pop the Flumph

Inflated membranes painted white, with thin strips of yarn dangling from them and crude eyes painted on their surfaces, dangle from thumb tacks embedded in a corkboard.

"You've heard the stories folks," shouts a man in a faded waistcoat. "The mysterious flumphs, strange jellyfish-like creatures that float through the air! Well here they are, my friends! 3 coppers gets you five darts to try and pop the flumphs! Step up and give it a try!"

The rules of the game are posted inside the booth. Players of the game get five darts to try and pop three of the inflated membranes in order to win a prize.

The membranes each have 2 hit points and an AC of 11. Under normal circumstances, this would make it relatively easy to pop the balloons. However, the board is set 25 feet back, which means that players have disadvantage. The darts have also been blunted from considerable use, raising the effective AC of the membranes to 15. Finally, the membranes have been slightly deflated. This combined with the bluntness of the darts effectively doubles the hit points of the membranes to 4.

Of course, the carnival worker is running an 'honest game,' so if the PCs have their own darts, they are free to use them, removing the effective AC and hit point penalties.

**Creature:** The carnival worker is a tainted raver, named Kobbin. Though he is not much of a combatant, he is willing to milk players for all they're worth if he thinks he can get away with it.

**Tactics:** Despite the fact that the rules of the game are clearly written on the wall of the booth, Kobbin offers to teach the PCs the real rules of the game. These 'rules' are little more than nonsense he makes up on the spot in order to milk unsuspecting marks for more money. PCs can make a contested Wisdom (Insight) check to detect the ruse, opting to play by the rules as posted instead. If they fail their check, they are out an additional 10d4 × 3 copper pieces.

Although Kobbin is capable of defending himself, he will attempt to flee if the players try to attack him.

**Prize:** If the PCs manage to pop three membranes or if they are duped into playing by the "real rules of the game," Kobbin hands them a ticket to see the nightly performance of Barnaby Tarmin's Show of Wonders.

## Kobbin

*Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 10

**Hit Points** 6 (1d8+2)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS    | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 0 (-5) | 16 (+3) |

**Skills** Deception +5

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 0 (10 XP)

**Madness.** Kobbin is irretrievably mad. He uses Charisma instead of Wisdom when making saves against enchantment spells and charm effects, and has immunity to confusion effects. Anyone targeting Kobbin with a thought detection, mind control, or telepathic ability makes direct contact with his tortured mind and takes 1d3 points of depravity from that contact.

Kobbin cannot be restored to sanity by any means short of a wish spell. If restored to sanity, Kobbin loses all special abilities and becomes a normal commoner.

**Perpetual Rage.** Kobbin is constantly in a state of insane fury similar to a barbarian's rage. In this state, Kobbin gains advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws. He also gains a bonus to damage rolls when making melee attacks that use Strength like a barbarian and has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage. An effect that counters rage, such as the *calm emotions* spell, temporarily suppresses this ability.

**Taint.** Kobbin has a depravity score of 8.

## ACTIONS

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

## House of Fun

A large, pasteboard clown, its arms outstretched, hangs above the awning of a hastily built structure made of glass and wood. Between the clowns outstretched arms, the words 'House of Fun' have been written over the awning.

"Step right this way, folks, into the House of Fun!" barks a carnival worker. "Only 6 copper pieces gives you the experience of a lifetime! Come try it for yourself!"

The House of Fun contains a number of rooms, each with a series of mildly challenging obstacles to overcome. The rooms and their challenges are as follows.

- *The Spinning Hallway:* This cylindrical hallway is painted with alternating, red and yellow, diagonal stripes. In a separate room, a pair of carnival workers walk on the roof of the cylinder, turning it clockwise.  
The spinning hallway is 15 feet long. Anyone attempting to move through it must succeed on a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (DC 10). Anyone who fails by 4 or less can't move for 1 round. Anyone who fails by 5 or more falls prone.
- *The Ball Room:* This 20 foot by 20 foot room is filled with balls made of paper and paste painted in bright colors. Anyone attempting to cross the room to the other side must make Strength (Athletics) checks (DC 5) in order to swim through the balls. Since there are plenty of air pockets between the balls, there is no risk of drowning.
- *The Netted Bridge:* A net made of thick ropes ascends at a 45 degree angle to a platform 10 feet above. Anyone attempting to climb the net must make Strength (Athletics) checks (DC 0) in order to move.
- *The Hall of Mirrors:* This room is a labyrinth of glass walls and mirrors set at 90 degree angles. Navigating through the room requires three successful Wisdom (Survival) checks (DC 10). Anyone who fails by 4 runs into a dead end. Anyone who fails by 5 or more accidentally doubles back and must succeed at an additional Survival check in order to navigate successfully through the room.

**Development:** At some point while the PCs are navigating their way through the Hall of Mirrors, one of them spots the ghostly apparition of a bearded man in one of the mirrors. The man is dressed in tattered furs and leather and appears to be standing behind

the PC. If the PC turns to look, there is no one standing behind there and the face in the mirror disappears.

## Murder at the Carnival

After the PCs have had a chance to wander around the carnival and participate in one or two of the events listed above, the following events occur.

The PCs hear a woman scream. A moment later, they see four town guards rushing through the crowd. If the PCs follow the guards, read or paraphrase the following.

A crowd of onlookers stands around the entrance to one of the carnival's colorful tents. Inside, lying face down in a pool of blood, is a portly, gnomelike creature with red hair and mottled, yellow skin. His clothes resemble those of the other carnival workers. In his back are several stab wounds.

"All right everyone," says a young man with the badge of the Riders of Mistledale on his chest. "Let's everyone step aside. Give my men some room so they can have a look, shall we?"

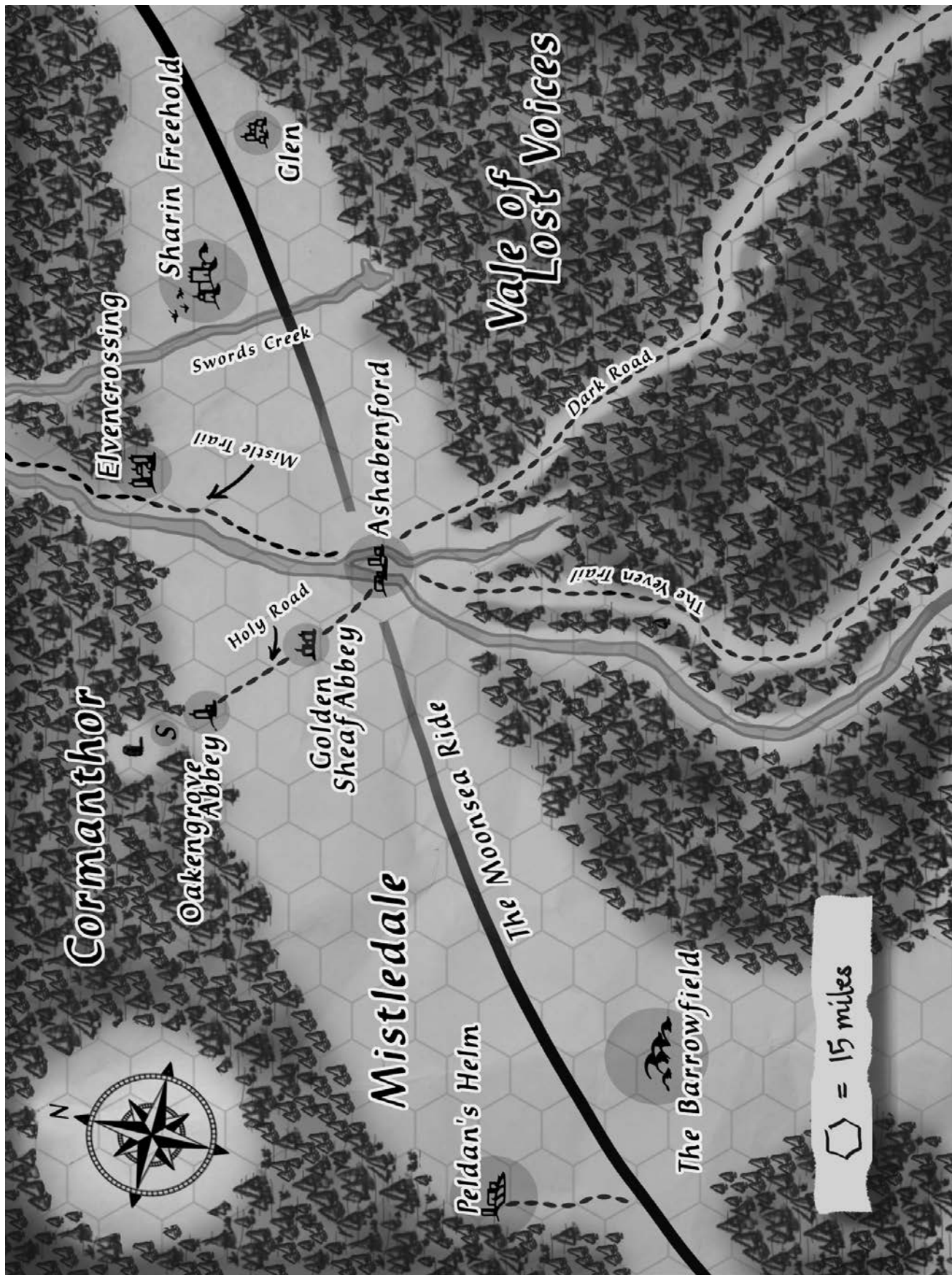
The man is Emrius Baergil, captain of the Riders of Mistledale. Approaching the body, he pushes it over with his foot. The crowd can now see that the creature's shirt has been torn open and the word 'SHEAF' has been carved into his chest.

"That's Kortle," says one of the carnival workers. "He worked the taffy booth."

If the PCs have visited some of the booths and attractions at the carnival, they recognize that the creature is of the same race as the spriggan ticket taker (see **The Ferris-Wheel**). With a successful Intelligence check (DC 15), they suspect that 'SHEAF' refers to the Abbey of the Golden Sheaf, a local temple dedicated to Chauntea, which lies several miles north of Ashabenford.

If the PCs can get close enough to examine the body, they can make a Wisdom (Medicine) check (DC 15). If they succeed, they recognize the stab wounds as those of a ceremonial dagger.

If the PCs offer their assistance, Emrius accepts it gladly. "We already have our hands full with the carnival," he says to them. "We're a small town, so we don't have a lot to give, but I'm sure I could scrounge up a small reward of some kind if you'd be willing to help."





# The Abbey of the Golden Sheaf

Twelve triangular fields fan out from a circular center, where the many spired abbey stands. Lanes circle the abbey and barns fan out between the fields, running arrow-straight to cut them into a foursquare pattern and then dividing each quadrant into three equal pie slices of cultivation. These fields are bounded by a broad road ringing them within the wall. The strip of land separating the two is planted as an orchard and herb garden. The wall itself, over which vines are trained, is an earthen bank as wide as a house lined on the outside by rubble.

Though not as large as its sister temple, the Goldenfields in the Sword Coast North, the Abbey of the Golden Sheaf covers three square miles, yielding the greatest harvests per acre for any human run farm in Faerun. It is said the Abbey has enough food stored to feed all the Dales for years and the clerics of

the temple wield a great deal of power and influence over the region because of it.

## 1. The Cloister

Inside the walls of the Abbey is a small, stone building with a roof of living sod. Above the door hangs a bundle of holly and mistletoe.

This small cloister has cells for each of the three clerics who tend to the fields and temple of the Abbey of the Golden Sheaf.

If the PCs make an Intelligence (Investigation) check while searching Errol Collsworth's cell (DC 25), they find a small journal tucked into a hollow in one of the walls. Most of the entries are written in a clear script, describing the cleric's thoughts about nature, his friendly conversations with a local druid of Silvanus, named Solomon Oatbringer, various religious rituals he's been required to perform, his relationship to his practitioners, past religious festivals, etc.

Near the end of the journal, the cleric's entries become nearly illegible. With a Wisdom (Insight) check (DC 20), PCs can get the gist of their content, most of which is about the cleric's trips to the woods of Cormanthor and his growing obsession with someone he calls, "The Lady of the Water."

## 2. Temple Interior

Inside the holy house dirt is packed down on the stone floors, with vines and creepers covering every surface. At the far end of the room is an altar carved with the image of the abbey's goddess flanked by stalks of wheat.

An Intelligence (Investigation) check while searching the altar (DC 10) reveals several bundles of incense as well as a wooden box. If the PCs open the box, they find the interior is lined with satin with a cross like impression in the middle. The box is otherwise empty.

### The Clerics of the Abbey

Although the PCs don't have a lot to go on, they have one important clue; the name 'SHEAF' carved into the victim's chest. Even if they fail their Intelligence check, with a successful Gather Information check (DC 15), the PCs learn from the villagers about the local temple. If the PCs want to know anything further, the villagers recommend that they speak with Errol Collsworth, the head cleric. The PCs might also try speaking with Clara Elkwood or Yavin Erenbern, who serve as acolytes for the temple.

#### Errol Collsworth



If the PCs wish to speak with High Reverend Errol Collsworth, the villagers direct them to either the temple or the cloister where the clerics reside. Both are located several miles outside the village.

Since Reverend Collsworth spends the majority of his time doting over the glaistig, Shiara (see **The Dark Pool**), there is only a 25% chance per day that the PCs will encounter him at either the cloister or the temple. If the PCs do not find him at one location, roll separately for the other.

Reverend Collsworth's clothes are mud spattered, covered with bits of twig and leaves. His hair is

disheveled and he smells as if he hasn't bathed in weeks. His responses to any of the PCs' questions are curt, one or two word answers. While he can confirm that the word carved into the carnival victim's chest likely refers to the abbey, he is oblivious as to why anyone would do such a thing.

The only thing that lifts the cleric out of his torpor is if the PCs mention the ceremonial dagger. "Can I see the dagger?" he asks them.

If the PCs do not have the dagger, the cleric waves his hand. "I can't help you then," he says and walks away.

If the PCs have recovered the dagger from Galen Smallwater (see **The Second Murder**), Reverend Collsworth identifies it as one of the temple's. He then turns and walks away with it, wondering aloud to himself how it could have fallen into the young man's hands. If the PCs ask him where he's going with the dagger, he tells them, "I must return it to the temple." If they ask him any further questions, he answers them curtly as before. Once the PCs are no longer in sight, he returns to Shiara's pool. (For full statistics on Errol Collsworth, see **The Dark Pool**.)

#### Clara Elkwood



Clara is the second highest ranking cleric in the local order. Because of her status, Reverend Collsworth has put her in charge of the local festivities. If the PCs wish to speak with her during the day they can find her at one of three locations. Roll d% once every 1d4 hours to determine her current location.

- 01-20 – Temple
- 21-29 – Cloister
- 30-00 – Festival

If the PCs ask about the word 'SHEAF,' Clara confirms their suspicions that it likely refers to the abbey, though she has no idea why someone would do such a thing. If the PCs ask about the ceremonial dagger, Clara knows nothing.

Clara is deeply concerned about the High Reverend. A once attentive and charismatic man, he has become taciturn, isolating himself in the woods for weeks at a time. While clerics of Chauntea often retreat into nature for extended periods as part of their religious practices, Reverend Collsworth's recent excursions have been abnormally prolonged, often to the detriment of his religious duties. She has tried following him, to find out what he's been up to, but his wanderings often extend until nightfall.

Although Clara has been trying to keep up appearances, she has been seriously considering writing a letter to their order about the matter. The only thing that stays her hand is her deep respect for the man and a belief that there must be an explanation for the High Reverend's recent behavior.

If the PCs offer to assist Clara in finding an explanation for Reverend Collsworth's recent behavior, she thanks them profusely.

### Yavin Erenbern



Yavin is a young man who has only recently joined the order and is little more than a glorified altar boy. If the PCs wish to speak with him, they can find him at one of three locations. Roll d% once every 1d4 hours to determine which location.

- 01-59 Temple
- 60-69 Cloister
- 70-00 Festival

Unlike Clara, Yavin has not been around long enough to remember how Reverend Collsworth used to be. As a result, he has little respect for the man. If the PCs ask about him, Yavin sighs and tells them, "He's just a lazy, cranky old man who should have retired years ago."

If the PCs ask about the word 'Sheaf,' Yavin confirms that it likely refers to the abbey. However, he can't fathom why someone would do such a deplorable thing.

If asked about the ceremonial dagger used in the murder, Yavin's eyebrows rise. "You said you think it was a ceremonial dagger?" If the PCs confirm, he frowns. "Listen... I don't know if it means anything, but a few weeks ago, after services, I saw a man kneeling before the altar. When I got closer, I could see it was Borrin, the local butcher. His face was streaked with tears and he was praying earnestly for forgiveness. When I asked him what was wrong, he said nothing. He just stood up and left.

"Then a few days ago, I was cleaning and I noticed a dagger missing from the altar. At the time, I thought maybe Reverend Collsworth had walked off with it again, but now I'm wondering if it wasn't Borrin who took it."



# The Butcher of Ashabenford

If the PCs have spoken with Yavin Erenbern from the Abbey of the Golden Sheaf (see *The Clerics of the Abbey*), it's possible that they will want to pay a visit to Borrin Blagworth's butcher shop in Ashabenford.

Borrin's Butcher Shop is located on the eastern side of Ashabenford. It has three rooms, the front counter area, the salt house, and the smokehouse. Should the PCs decide to pay a visit, the following events occur.

## 1. The Front Counter

Links of sausages hang from rafters and round packages wrapped in white paper are stacked neatly in piles on a shelf behind an oak counter. The spicy smell of salt and cured meat permeates the room.

**Creatures:** Borrin Blagworth is a heavy set man with no family and few friends. This makes him the perfect victim for Barnaby Tarmin.

Borrin became a bleak one a year ago when the carnival was last in town. Under Barnaby Tarmin's control, Borrin murdered the druid Solomon Oatbringer, beheaded him, disemboweled him, and dragged the druid's body back to his smoke house. There, he assisted the gray jester in performing a vile ritual designed to weaken the magical wards of the standing stones, allowing the taint of the dark Feywild to bleed through to the Material Plane.

Though firmly under Barnaby's control, Borrin still possesses a spark of his former humanity. Overwhelmed with guilt and grief at having murdered the druid and assisting the gray jester in his profane rituals, Borrin went to the Abbey of the Golden Sheaf and begged for forgiveness. When Yavin saw him (see **The Clerics of the Abbey**), Borrin fled the temple and returned to his shop. He now suffers his sins in silent despair.

**Tactics:** While Borrin's actions weigh heavily on his soul, he is still under the gray jester's control. If the PCs ask Borrin about Solomon Oatbringer or his tearful confession in the temple (see **The Clerics of the Abbey**), Borrin walks wordlessly into the adjoining salt room and locks the door. The door has an AC of 15 and 24 hit points. Picking the lock requires a Dexterity check (DC 15). If the PCs try to follow Borrin, he attacks them with a cleaver.

**Borrin Blagworth:** hp 67 (use the statistics of the Berserker on p. 344 of Core Rulebook III, replacing the greataxe with the following.)

**Cleaver.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) slashing.

## 2. The Salt Room

The salted carcasses of cows, pigs, and sheep hanging from the ceiling on long, iron chains give this darkened room an ominous aura. In the far left corner of the room, a pedal-powered band saw is stained with animal blood. To the right, a thick, wooden door stands firmly shut.

**Creatures:** The taint of the Feywild isn't the only thing that Barnaby Tarmin released into this world with his ritual. A pair of creatures, known as wirries, managed to escape as well. These creatures have taken up residence in the rafters of Borrin's salt room, waiting for the time of the Fall Equinox to unleash a campaign of fear on the town.

**Tactics:** The wirries begin combat by casting *invisibility* on themselves. They then remain hidden in the rafters, hoping to drive their victims mad with their unnerve ability. If the PCs should notice one of the wirries, the creature tries to retreat to a safe distance, if possible, where they can hide and continue to concentrate on their unnerve ability. Should the PCs corner them, the creatures cast *mirror image* on themselves and attack with their claws.

If Borrin is in the room, he attacks with his cleaver.

**Wirries (2):** hp 3 each.

## 3. The Smoke House

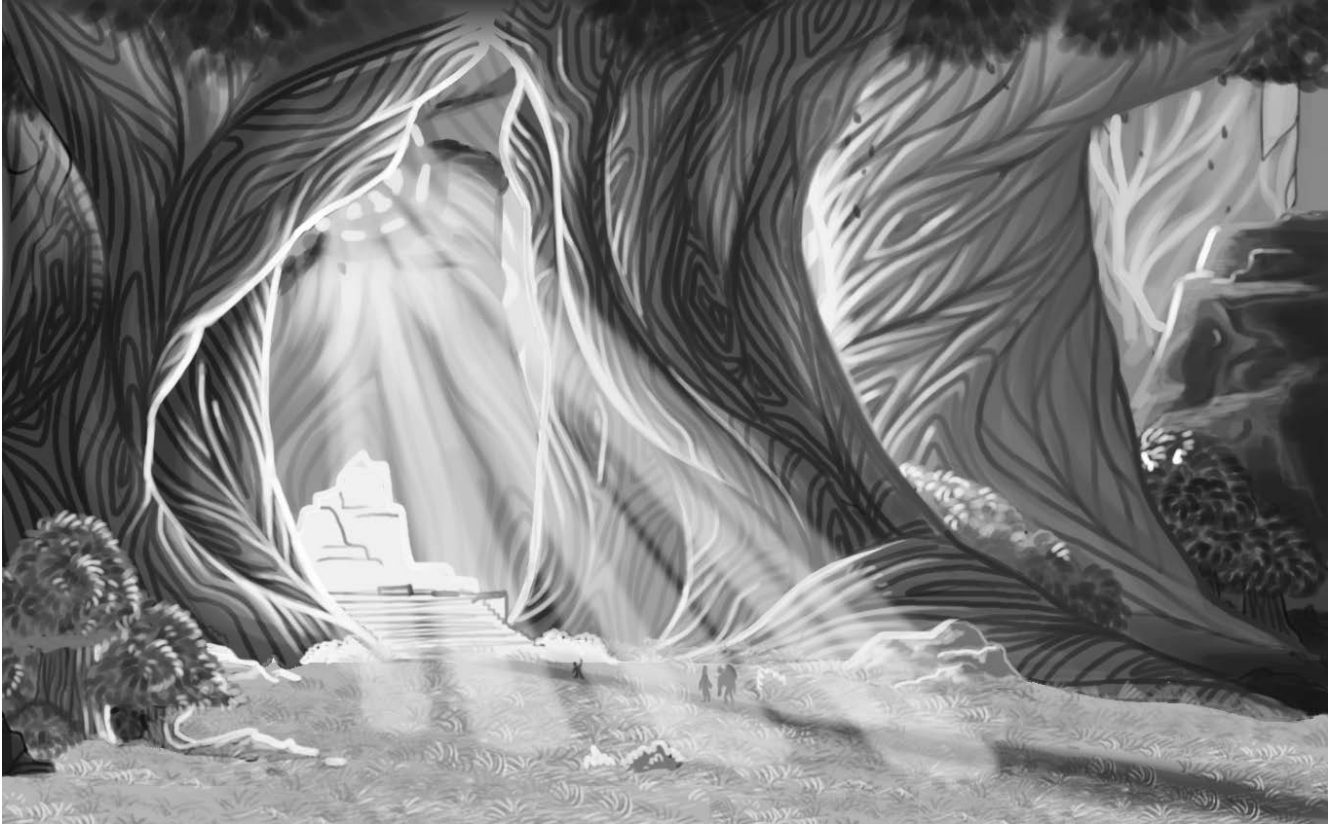
The room smells of cedar, charcoal, and putrescence. Melted candles with black, flickering flames line the walls. In the middle of the room, across an obsidian slab surrounded by a circle of arcane runes with two lines protruding from it, lies a headless body, purple and bloated with decay.

This is one of three ley locations that Barnaby Tarmin has used to weaken the wards on the druids' standing stones. The depraved magic used to conduct the ceremony has caused the taint of the dark fey realm to bleed onto the Material Plane. Creatures who enter this area must make Wisdom saving throws (DC 20) or take 1 point of depravity.

The body on the slab is that of Solomon Oatbringer. If the PCs turn the body over, they can see that the man's stomach has been cut open and his intestines removed, but no sign of them remain in the smoke house.

If the PCs search the man's body, they find a holy symbol of Silvanus hanging from his belt. PCs who succeed on an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) check (DC 15) recall that there is a sacred grove, called Oakengrove Abbey, located several miles north of the Abbey of the Golden Sheaf. Though the druidic sect tending it all but died out several decades before, there is one druid, named Solomon Oatbringer, who still tends the grove. A Gather Information check (DC 15) reveals this information as well.

If the PCs make an Intelligence (Arcana) check (DC 15), they realize that the candles' black flames are the result of foul, extraplanar magic bleeding into this room. They also realize that the lines drawn on the floor are tracing ley lines, the magical conduits of the Weave through which magic flows. This knowledge implies that there are at least two other ley points with which this ley point intersects (see **The Tainted Altar** and **Barnaby Tarmin's Wagon**). If they can find at least one more ley point, an Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC 10) should allow them to discover the third.



## Cormanthor

If the PCs follow up on the clue of the holy symbol found in Borrin's smoke house, they find their way to Oakengrove Abbey. At that time, the following events occur.

### Oakengrove Abbey

This crumbling stronghold is almost hidden by trees, but its outer shape is defined by a fortress ring studded with small towers. Inside the wall is a woodland alive with a variety of trees crisscrossed by small streams and meandering paths. At the heart of the ring is a hill crowned with a stand of impossibly tall oak trees. Overhead, the branches converge together, their autumn leaves forming a cathedral-like ceiling of reds and yellows.

Until recently, the temple of Oakengrove Abbey was tended by Solomon Oatbringer, the last of a druidic sect serving Silvanus in this region. Since his death, the temple has been abandoned.

If the PCs are alone when they first approach the abbey, they notice a ghostly figure dressed in druid's

robes standing near the entrance. This is Solomon Oatbringer, the druid who Borin Blagworth murdered. If the PCs try to approach, the figure turns and walks northwest into the forest. If the PCs continue to follow, the apparition leads them to **The Standing Stones**. If the PCs do nothing, the figure stares at them for a while in silence, then slowly disappears.

If the PCs investigate the scene, a successful Wisdom (Survival) check (DC 15) reveals a faint trail of blood that leads into the woods to the northwest. They also notice a set of drag marks that lead to the south.

If the PCs follow the trail of blood to the northwest, they find it leads to a small clearing about two miles into the forest (see **The Tainted Altar**).

If the PCs follow the drag marks south, they lead back to the main road and meet up with a set of wagon tracks. South of the Abbey of the Golden Sheaf, the wagon tracks blend in with other sets on the road and the PCs lose the trail. However, it's clear that the tracks were headed back to Ashabenford.

**Development:** If this is the first time that the PCs have visited this location, they can make a Wisdom (Perception) check (DC 10) to hear what sounds like a child crying out in pain. The cry is coming from the bone leaf about a half mile north of their current location (see **The Standing Stones**).

# The Standing Stones

If the PCs follow Solomon Oatbringer, (see **Oakengrove Abbey**), they come to a small clearing. At that time, read or paraphrase the following.

Massive, granite monoliths, carved with mysterious runes and symbols, stand in a rough circle in a grass clearing. Around the perimeter of the stones, the grass is green and lush. In the middle of the circle, the grass is fibrous and the color of pitch.

If the PCs make an Intelligence (Arcana) check, they recognize that the blackening of the grass in the middle of the stones is the result of foul, extraplanar magic bleeding onto the Material Plane. Although the wards prevent the corruption from spreading beyond the stones' boundary, creatures that enter the circle must make Wisdom saving throws (DC 20) or take 1d4 points of depravity.

# The Tainted Altar

If the PCs investigate the cry they heard (see The Standing Stones) or if they follow the trail of blood into the forest (see Oakengrove Abbey), they come to an obsidian slab. A circle of powdered chalk surrounds the slab with two additional lines of chalk radiating from it. Like the slab in Borin's shop (see The Smokehouse), these lines trace ley lines. If the PCs find at least one other altar (see The Smoke House and Barnaby Tarmin's Wagon), an Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC 10) reveals the location of the third.

On the slab is the head of a bearded man. Though decayed, it's clear that the face is the same as the ghost of Solomon Oatbringer. This slab is one of three that Barnaby Tarmin has used to weaken the wards sealing the dark fey portal.

Like the slab in Borrin's shop (see **The Smoke House**), the altar here is tainted. Creatures who approach within 10 feet must make Wisdom saves (DC 20) or take 1 point of depravity.

**Creature:** With the wards of the standing stones weakened, a bone leaf managed to cross over from the dark fey realm to the Material Plane.

**Tactics:** Hoping to draw the PCs closer, the bone leaf uses its illusory lure to generate an image of a crying boy of about eleven, his leg broken. If the PCs approach, the bone leaf strikes with its tendrils, using its slam attacks to ward off any creatures that remain free.

# Bone Leaf

*Large aberration, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural)

**Hit Points** 71 (8d8+35)

**Speed** 10 ft., burrow 10 ft.

| STR     | DEX    | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 23 (+6) | 8 (-1) | 20 (+5) | 8 (-1) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) |

**Damage Resistance** bludgeoning, piercing

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** Common, Undercommon

**False Appearance.** While the boneleaf remains motionless, it appears to be a white tree.

**Illusory Lure (Su):** A boneleaf can generate detailed but short-lived illusions, designed to lure prey into its reach. These usually take the form of something valuable lying among the trunks or of an injured individual crying for aid. This ability functions as the spell *major image*, except that this illusion lasts for only 5 rounds and the boneleaf must wait 2 rounds before using the ability again. Interaction with the illusion allows a Wisdom saving throw (DC 16) to disbelieve.

**Pervasive Sentience:** A boneleaf functions as an independent creature, but it is only a portion of a much larger whole. While boneleaves are encountered singly, they are not actually alone. If boneleaves are present in a given area, there are always 1d6+6 of them in the region. They are considered solitary creatures because each boneleaf in the group remains anywhere from 100 yards to a mile away from its nearest fellow. All the boneleaves in a group are in fact portions of the same creature, connected by miles of underground nerves. Anything one boneleaf experiences is known to all of them, so characters who encounter a second boneleaf after defeating the first will find it anticipates their tactics and abilities.

# ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The boneleaf makes two tentacle attacks.

**Tentacle.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* (2d6+6) bludgeoning damage plus (1d6) slashing from its razor sharp leaves, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). The boneleaf automatically deals its razor leaf damage to a grappled target, but can't make tentacle attacks against other targets with that tentacle. The boneleaf has four tentacles, each of which can grapple one target.

## Dangers of the Woods

The forests of Cormanthor are a challenging environment, filled with dense undergrowth, shallow canyons, and the occasional savage beast. For each hour that the PCs travel through the forest, roll d% to determine if they have an encounter.

- 01-30 – No encounter.
- 31-50 – Your path is blocked by dense undergrowth. Make a Strength (Athletics) check (DC 20) to hack your way through or a Wisdom (Survival) check (DC 15) to find a way around.
- 51-60 – A cliff of granite rock, about 15 feet in height, cuts through the forest. Make Strength (Athletics) checks (DC 15) to traverse the cliff or a Wisdom (Survival) check (DC 20) to find a way around. (Note: If one of the PCs ties off a rope at the top of the cliff, reduce the Climb DC for all other PCs by 10.)
- 61-70 – You encounter a giant boar leading a pack of four wild boars. Make a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check (DC 20) to try and calm the creatures down. If you fail, the creatures attack.

**Boars (4):** hp 11 each (see p. 319 of the *Monster Manual*).

**Giant Boar:** hp 42 (see p. 323 of the *Monster Manual*).

- 71-80 – A tree has fallen across a deep, fast moving stream about 15 feet across. You can make Acrobatics checks (DC 10) to walk across the fallen tree or Strength (Athletics) checks (DC 15) to swim across the stream.
- 81-90 – Make an opposed Spot check. If you succeed, you notice that the tree ahead has white leaves, giving you just enough time to react before it lashes out at you with a pair of vine-like tendrils.

**Boneleaf:** hp 73 (see **The Standing Stones**).

- 91-00 – A large creature flying overhead casts its shadow on the forest floor. Looking up, you can see the silhouette of a large dragon with emerald scales against the blue sky. You can make opposed Stealth checks to avoid being seen.

**Young Green Dragon:** hp 136 (see p. 94 of the *Monster Manual*).

# The Lady of the Water



There are several reasons that the PCs might decide to head into this region of the Cormanthor Forest. They may have found Reverend Collsworth's journal (see **The Cloister**), decided to assist Clara Elkwood in trying to understand the change in Collsworth's behavior, or they may have found Reverend Collsworth's behavior suspicious and decided to follow him.

If the PCs follow Reverend Collsworth, he meanders through the forest for approximately 6 hours before heading to his final destination (see **The Dark Pool**). PCs who are trying to track his movements must make a Wisdom (Survival) check (DC 15) every hour to stay on his trail. As they follow him, they may encounter other hazards as well (see **Dangers of the Woods**). If the PCs lose Reverend Collsworth's trail or they are exploring the Cormanthor Forest on their own, they can attempt a Survival check (DC 25) every hour to find Shiara's pool.

**Creatures:** A gang of four mischievous sprites have covered a nearby mudhole with dried leaves and have been looking for someone to prank. Seeing the PCs, the sprites decide that they've found their mark.

**Tactics:** Shortly after the PCs arrive in the forest, the sprites approach and ask what they're doing. If the PCs respond truthfully, the sprites follow them, heckling and pestering them, hoping that the PCs will eventually lose the cleric's trail. If this doesn't happen for a couple hours, the sprites get bored and try to speed things along by flying ahead of the PCs and sprinkling *dust of tracelessness* over the cleric's tracks. The sprites then hide and wait for the PCs to arrive.

If the PCs lose the cleric's trail or are unable to find Shiara's pool, the sprites tell them they know where it is.

"It's a nasty, little pond where a female water spirit lives. She's a vile thing; we don't like her. We can take you to her, though, if you'd like."

If the PCs ask why the sprites didn't mention this before, the sprites tell them, "It was more fun watching you lumber around the forest like a bunch of lost owlbeats."

If the PCs accept the sprites' help, the sprites lead them through the forest to the mudhole. The mudhole is approximately 5 feet deep. Any creature who falls into it is immediately soaked in mud. Creatures who fall victim to the prank have disadvantage on all Charisma-based checks so long as their clothes remain dirty (DC 20 Dexterity save avoids).

If the PCs take the prank well, the sprites swear to lead them to water spirit's pool for real this time. If the PCs still don't trust them, the sprites volunteer to submit to a *zone of truth* spell, in order to prove their sincerity. If the PCs accept their help, the sprites take them directly to Shiara's pool (see **The Dark Pool**). The journey takes about 2 hours.

If the PCs get belligerent or hostile, the sprites pelt them with their poisoned arrows before fleeing. If the PCs go so far as to kill one of the sprites, the remaining sprites come back with a treant, who demands that the PCs pay for a *raise dead* spell.

**Sprites (4):** hp 2 each (see p. 283 of the *Monster Manual*).

**Treant:** hp 138 each (see p. 289 of the *Monster Manual*).

## The Dark Pool

The vegetation in the area suddenly turns black, as if covered in soot, the leaves of the trees and bushes waxy and spiny. Through the trees, one can hear the hushed whisper of running water.

This area is under the effect of Shiara's tainted location ability. Any creature who enters immediately takes 1 point of depravity.

If the sprites are with the PCs, they point through the trees. "That's where she lives," they whisper. "The place is cursed. We won't go in there."

If the PCs enter, they eventually come to a natural pool at the base of a small waterfall. The pool is approximately 20 feet deep at its center. For purposes of Swim checks, treat the water as calm.

**Treasure:** PCs who swim under the surface of the pool can make an Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC 15) to discover the entrance to an underwater cave at the base of the falls. The cave extends about 20 feet behind the falls, then emerges into a larger cavern just above the surface of the water. Inside, the PCs find a pitch-covered, waterproof chest. Inside the chest are four *potions of greater healing*.

**Creatures:** A beautiful maiden bathes in the center of the pool at the base of the waterfall. Her feet don't touch bottom, yet the water around her comes only to her waist, as if she were standing on the floor of a shallow pool.

This is Shiara, an evil glaistig from the tainted regions of the Feywild. Like Barnaby, Shiara was trapped on the Material Plane after the druids sealed the planar breach. She has since taken up residence in the forest, feeding on the animals that live there.

Lounging on the shore nearby are four worgs. In the trees above, flocks of sparrows chirp eerily. If the PCs have been following Reverend Collsworth, he is here as well. If not, there is a 75% chance he is here when they arrive.

**Tactics:** Shiara is a shrewd opponent. She does not attack the PCs outright. Instead, she smiles warmly and approaches them, relying on her unsettling aura to bewitch one or two of them in the hopes that they might return later. If the PCs do return, she uses her beguiling song in order to feed on them.

If the PCs ask her about Reverend Collsworth, she admits that he came to her about a year ago and that he has come to see her many times since. If Reverend Collsworth is present, he confirms this with a nod. If the PCs ask about any of the following, Shiara responds as follows.

- *What do you know about the murder of a carnival worker in Ashabenford?* "I know nothing about it. I cannot go far beyond my pool and the affairs of your kind do not concern me." Note: If the PCs mentioned the murder to Reverend Collsworth previously, he does tell Shiara, in which case she admits to knowing about the murder. Otherwise, her response is the same.
- *Why have the plants in this area turned black?* "I come from a part of the Feywild where magic works differently. It often has strange effects on the living things of your world."
- *Why don't you return to your world?* "I am trapped here after falling through a planar breach that connected our worlds briefly. A druidic sect sealed the breach before I was able to return."

- *Where is this breach?* “It’s located in the middle of a circle of stones several miles east of here near a place they call the Oakengrove Abbey.”
- *What about the other tainted locations we’ve found?* “I know nothing about them. Whatever you have seen is the work of someone else.”
- *Do you have any idea who might be responsible for these other tainted locations?* “If I were to guess, I would say that it’s someone from my world who is stranded here like me. If they have not made peace with their situation as I have, they may be trying to reopen the portal and return home.”

If the PCs try to attack Shiara, she retreats underwater, relying on her animal friends to protect her. The animals attack the PCs mercilessly, the worgs working together to trip and bite opponents, while the sparrows swarm about, pecking and gouging at the PCs with their beaks.

If Reverend Collsworth is present, he casts *water walk* on himself and takes a defensive position above Shiara’s pool. He then casts *obscuring mist*, giving him some protection, before casting *shield other* on Shiara. On the following rounds, he bolsters himself and his allies with additional spells.

If the PCs try to pursue Shiara underwater, she begins combat by singing her beguiling song to whomever she believes is the weakest willed. She then attacks any creature who remains unaffected by her song, grappling them and hoping to subdue them with her bite and dagger.

**Errol Collsworth:** hp 27 (see the priest statistics on p. 349 of the *Monster Manual*).

**Shiara:** hp 71 (see Appendix for statistics).

**Swarm of Sparrows (2):** hp 24 each (see the swarm of ravens statistics on p. 339 of the *Monster Manual*).

**Dire Wolves (2):** hp 37 each (see p. 321 of the *Monster Manual*).

## SHIARA (BLACKTHORN GLAISTIG)

*Medium fey, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural)

**Hit Points** 71 (11d8+22)

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 50 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 11 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 15 (+2) | 18 (+4) |

**Skills** Deception +8, Persuasion +8

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

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

**Amphibious.** Shiara can breathe both air and water.

**Beguiling Song:** Shiara can attempt to beguile creatures with her song. Shiara sings, targeting a single creature she can see within 300 yards of the body of water to which she is linked (see Water Symbiosis below). The creature must be able to hear her for the song to take effect. The targeted creature must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by Shiara’s song for 24 hours.

A beguiled creature takes no actions other than to defend itself. (Thus, a fighter cannot run away or attack, but takes no defensive penalties.) A beguiled victim that moves within 5 feet of Shiara must make a DC 22 saving throw or be charmed. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by Shiara’s song for 24 hours. Shiara does not need to continue singing to keep a victim charmed.

Shiara can use her beguiling song both above and below the water.

**Innate Spellcasting:** Shiara’s innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). Shiara can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

**At will** – dancing lights, fog cloud, suggestion  
**1/day** – water breathing.

**Tainted Location.** The area surrounding the body of water in which Shiara resides is suffused with evil, transforming it into a tainted location approximately 500 feet in radius. The taint of the area remains so long as the base creature remains alive plus 2d4 days thereafter. Initial exposure to the area increases a creature’s depravity score by 1.

For every 24 hours a creature spends near Shiara’s lair, it must make a Wisdom saving throw to avoid having its depravity score increase by 1. A creature who spends 48 hours or more in the area has disadvantage on these saving throws.

In addition, creatures who fall asleep near Shiara’s lair have their sleep troubled by nightmares. They awake to find themselves fatigued and must make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 10 + each night spent in the area) or succumb to empty despair.

Creatures who succumb to despair no longer experience any sense of self-determination. They will not leave the tainted location willingly unless instructed to do so by Shiara. If Shiara is killed, her victims will wander listlessly until they find another tainted location to reside in. A *wish* spell or divine intervention is required to return any despairing creature to normal.

**Tap Despair.** Shiara can control the will of any creature who succumbs to the despair of her tainted location. She can control 33 HD of despairing creatures at any given time. She decides each day which of her victims she wishes to control.

**Unsettling Allure** Tainted creatures who approach within 30 feet of Shiara must make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 15) or have their minds consumed with depraved thoughts about her. These thoughts trouble their sleep, filling their dreams with images of her and the pond in which she resides. Each night, victims must make additional Wisdom saving throws (DC 15 + 1 per previous save) or find themselves sleepwalking back to her pond. Once the creature arrives in the area, it immediately falls asleep, where it is subject to the taint of her pond. This effect continues so long as Shiara's pond remains tainted or until a *remove curse* spell is cast on the victim.

**Water Symbiosis.** Shiara is mystically bound to the pool in which she resides. Shiara cannot move more than 300 yards away from her pool and still breathe normally. If Shiara strays farther away, she must hold her breath or immediately start to suffocate. Once Shiara has moved beyond the boundary of her connection, she cannot breathe normally until she has immersed herself in her own body of water.

## ACTIONS

**Blood Drain.** *Melee Weapon Attack* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by Shiara, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit* 4 (1d6+1) piercing damage. For each round grappled, the target loses 4 (1d6+1) hit points due to blood loss.

**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) piercing damage.

# Barnaby Tarmin's Show of Wonders

If the PCs have visited any of the carnival games (see **The Hill Giant of Borbo** and **Pop the Flumph**), they may have won prizes to see Barnaby Tarmin's Show of Wonders. If not, they can still buy tickets to the show for 2 silver pieces.

Barnaby Tarmin's Show of Wonders is a cross between a circus and a freak show, hosted by none other than Barnaby Tarmin himself. Audiences are

taken through a series of interconnecting rooms, each of which has a performer. Barnaby gives a brief description of the performer's origins and abilities while the audiences watch in awe.

There are seven performers in all, including Barnaby Tarmin. Each one described in detail below.

## Entrance to the Show of Wonders

A man in a gray jester's costume prances about in front of a large tent. Over the entrance, a large banner with red lettering reads 'BARNABY TARMIN'S SHOW OF WONDERS.'

"Right this way folks," says a jovial man in a jingling, jester's costume. "It's the show you've been waiting all year to see! Come in and see the sensual curves of Adalinda the Snake Dancer, the cunning of Sasha the Animal Tamer, and the pyrotechnics of Azul, the Turbaned Inferno!"

"It's all waiting for you inside! Please come in! You won't want to wait another year for this!"

If the PCs have tickets or are willing to pay the door price of 2 silver pieces, the man in the jester suit gathers them into a dark room constructed from wooden partitions. At one end of the room is a curtained stage lit by candles.

"Ladies and gentleman," the jester says to his audience. "What you are about to see is a show that will test you to your very limits. It is a show of the sensual. It is a show of the exotic. It is a show of the *terrifying*."

"Steady yourselves now. Prepare your minds for the impossible. Steel yourselves for the improbable. For this is a show unlike anything you've experienced before."

And now, without further ado, I bring to you my incredible... implausible... insatiable... Show of Wonders."

**Creatures:** The man in the jester costume is Barnaby Tarmin. Using *disguise self* to hide his pointed teeth, Barnaby passes himself off as a friendly clown with a twisted sense of humor.

**Tactics:** Barnaby uses his Show of Wonders as a front to feed on his unsuspecting audience members. As they laugh and applaud, he drains them of their joyous emotions.

There are seven rooms in the Show of Wonders. In each room, Barnaby uses his empathic feeding ability up to two times on his audience.

Usually, Barnaby feeds on each audience member once, so as not to arouse suspicion. However, if he thinks an audience member might prove to be useful as a bleak one, he focuses all of his attacks on that person.

Barnaby is never alone. During the day, he is surrounded by the performers in his Show of Wonders. At night, the ogres from the carnival (see **The Ferris Wheel**) sleep outside his wagon. If the PCs try to attack him, his allies come to his aid. For these reasons, Barnaby is an exceptionally difficult opponent to defeat.

### BARNABY TARMIN (GRAY JESTER)

*Medium fey, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 17 (chain shirt)

**Hit Points** 82 (11d8+33)

**Speed** 50 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 18 (+4) | 16 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 20 (+5) |

**Skills** Acrobatics +7, Deception +9, Performance +9

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

**Languages** Common, Sylvan

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

**Empathic Feeding.** Barnaby can drain joyous emotions from humanoid beings. He must be within 30 feet of a living humanoid who is experiencing laughter, joy, or similar emotions (this includes emotions evoked by magic, such as *Tasha's hideous laughter*).

In a single round, Barnaby can feed on up to 5 people at once. Any target who fails a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw reduces its Charisma score by 1d4. Targets whose Charisma scores are reduced to 0 are drained of all joyous emotions.

The results of Barnaby's feeding vary depending on the target. Anyone with more Hit Dice than Barnaby who is drained of all joyous emotions loses the ability to laugh or feel joy. Those of fewer or equal Hit Dice become "bleak ones." These targets lose all self-will and the capacity to feel positive emotions. Although not mindless, they undertake no actions unless ordered by Barnaby. They lose all abilities that rely on alignment or those that require Charisma, but otherwise retain all their capabilities. Barnaby can control up to 44 HD worth of bleak ones.

Barnaby feeds on emotions but is at his weakest just after feeding. For a number of rounds equal to the total points of psychic energy drained, Barnaby suffers from level 1 exhaustion and loses his magic resistance.

**Innate Spellcasting.** Barnaby's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17). He can innately cast the following spell, requiring no material components:  
**At will:** *Tasha's hideous laughter*

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

**Taint.** Barnaby has a moderate depravity score of 9.

### ACTIONS

**Sceptre.** *Melee Weapon Attack* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d4+4) bludgeoning damage, plus *tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 17).

## Adalinda the Snake Dancer

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"For our first act, from the rain forests of the southern continents, we present to you, Adalinda the Snake Dancer."

A yellow-skinned, gnome-like creature pulls the curtain back, revealing a woman with pointed ears, dressed in revealing furs. Draped across her shoulders is an enormous constrictor.

"This beautiful elven maiden" the jester continues, "was raised by the serpentfolk, an ancient race who blended their bloodlines with the cold blood of ophidians using forgotten magic. Marvel as she commands the snake, not with words, but with the sultry movements of her body, guiding it as it wraps its coils around her waist and arms."

"Now, if I can have someone from the audience to demonstrate the full control Adalinda has over this wily serpent."

Barnaby walks back and forth in front of the audience, using his scepter as if it were a dowsing rod. As he walks, he slowly shortens his movements until he hones in on someone.

"You," he says touching one of the PCs with his scepter. "Wait!" He looks down at his scepter as if there is something wrong with it and shakes it. Then slowly, he moves it to another person in the audience. "You!" he says pointing at a gentleman in the audience. "Come forward."

Bringing the audience member up to the stage, Barnaby has Adalinda dance sensuously around the gentleman. As she does so, her snake, Apep, slowly winds his way around the man's leg then around his body, provoking fits of laughter from the audience as the man looks increasingly uncomfortable. When the snake has wrapped itself entirely around the man's body, holding him immobile as he smiles nervously, Adalinda reaches out her arm out and the snake slithers over to her, releasing the man from its coils.

"Now come, my friends," says Barnaby leading the audience through a doorway to another room. "There is much more to see."

**Adalinda:** hp 27 (see druid on p. 346 of the *Monster Manual*).

**Apep:** hp 13 (see constrictor snake on p. 320 of the *Monster Manual*).

## The Human Art Gallery

---

This room is much like the room before.

"For our next act," says the jester, "we bring you the Human Art Gallery."

The curtain is pulled back, revealing a man whose body is covered from head to toe with tattoos. The jester continues, "This man has a tattoo for every country he's ever visited. Behold the tribal mask on his chest. Marvel at the eastern landscape on his back. His body is a tribute to what this world has to offer."

"Now steady yourselves, for we have saved the best for last. As you know, there are many creatures who live beneath our feet in the cavernous realm known as the Underdark. These creatures have perfected a technique that allows them to take the very essence of shadow and use it to tattoo themselves. Braving the horrors of this underground realm, the Human Art Gallery has learned this technique and tattooed his own body with their magical shadow ink."

On the man's collarbone, a skull that was once inert suddenly enlarges and chatters its teeth silently at the audience. Undulating his shoulders, the Human Art Gallery causes the skull to roll back and forth across his chest. Then, pointing his hand at the ceiling, he flicks his wrist and the skull leaps up his arm, opens its mouth, and releases a dark bolt of energy at the ceiling. The audience claps and cheers.

"Now say goodbye, my friends, to our friend, the Human Art Gallery, for it is time to move on to the next room."

## THE HUMAN ART GALLERY

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 27 (5d8+5)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 13 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 15 (+2) |

**Skills** Arcana +3, Performance +4

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Skull Tattoo.** The Human Art Gallery can use this tattoo to convert his *shadow bolt* into a quasi-real, illusory version of a spell-like ability that deals necrotic energy damage. Targets of the Human Art gallery's shadow bolt must make a Wisdom save (DC 15) or take an additional 1d6 points of damage. Characters who make their save take half of this damage.

### ACTIONS

**Shadow Bolt.** Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

**Heavy Mace.** Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage.

## Azul the Turbaned Inferno

A burst of flame from the stage in the next room startles the audience even before they've had a chance to step in.

"Do not be alarmed, my friends, for it is only our next act, Azul, the Turbaned Inferno!"

The performer holds up a thin, metal torch, brings the lit end to his lips and spits out a cone of fire.

As the audience applauds, the man lights three more torches, while the jester takes a woman in the audience by the hand and leads her up to the stage.

"Now madame," the jester says to her, "for this next act, I want you to stand perfectly still. Don't be afraid. Even though this is a pyrotechnics show, your safety is very important to us. If we accidentally light you on fire, there's a bucket of water only three tents away."

As the audience laughs, the jester and the man in the turban begin juggling the lit torches back and forth to one another as the woman stands rigidly on the stage.

"Hold your applause!" says the jester as the audience starts clapping. "This part of the show demands our strictest attention! We cannot look away even for a moment," he says turning to the audience, "or utter a single word! To do so, would jeopardize the life of this lovely woman standing here!"

After a few more passes of the torches, the jester tosses them to Azul who places the lit ends in his mouth, extinguishing them one by one.

"Everyone give it up for this lovely woman as well as our performer Azul, the Turbaned Inferno!"

## AZUL, THE TURBANED INFERNO

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (studded leather)

Hit Points hp 33 (6d8+6)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 11 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) |

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Fire Breathing (Recharge 5-6):** The Turbaned Inferno can produce a burst of flame in a 15 ft. cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw (DC 13) or take 2d4 points of fire damage.

### ACTIONS

**Scimitar.** Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 3 (1d6) slashing damage.

## Grimelda the Human She-Wolf

On the stage in the next room, a young woman in a milkmaid's outfit sits demurely on a chair inside a metal cage. Folded on a table beside the cage is a cloth embroidered with white stars.

The jester approaches the stage. "Now you may be wondering why we have placed poor Grimelda here inside this awful, awful cage. She looks so sweet and so innocent, she couldn't possibly hurt a flea." He reaches through the bars and tickles her under her chin. The woman tries to bite at his finger playfully and the jester pulls his hand back. He waves his finger at her in mock disapproval. "But," he says, unfolding the cloth on the table to reveal a large, white circle embroidered in the center of the star field, "under the light of the full moon, she is no longer the innocent girl you see before you. Instead, she becomes a ferocious animal!"

He spreads the cloth over the cage, then pulls it back with a sudden jerk. Inside the cage, where once there was a beautiful woman, there now stands a snarling half-wolf creature.

"Do not worry," says Barnaby as he goes to the side of the stage, "she has only ever broken out of that cage once." He brings back a piece of salted meat and tosses it into the cage. Grimelda devours it voraciously. "Now we must move on, for there is still more to see."

**Grimelda the Human She-Wolf:** hp 58 (see werewolf on p. 211 of the *Monster Manual*).

## Sasha the Animal Tamer

The next room is a huge tent with a set of wooden bleachers facing a ring painted in reds and golds. Inside the ring several platforms, large enough for a horse, some hoops, and a large red ball.

"And now," says the jester, "for our final performance. Direct from the jungles of the Orient, we bring you Sasha the Animal Tamer!"

From a side entrance, a young woman rides an elephant into the center of the ring. Patting the creature's back, she gets it to lift its leg, providing a step for her to get down. She then commands the large animal to perform a number of tricks, including balancing on the large ball and standing on two legs on one of the platforms.

The show continues with the woman bringing in a continuous stream of exotic animals. Black bears, horses, and monkeys all step into the ring, performing increasingly complex feats for Sasha and her audience.

For her final act, Sasha has two spriggan roll a pair of tigers in cages into the center of the ring. When the spriggans depart, Sasha arranges four hoops, which she then lights on fire. Pulling a whip from her belt, Sasha opens the cages and guides the tigers through each of the flaming hoops, all the while keeping the other three at bay. She then guides the four tigers back into their cages and bows to raucous applause.

As Sasha departs, the jester takes the ring.

"Thank you all for coming out to see us tonight! I hope you had a wonderful time."

With that, two spriggan open two flaps, allowing the audience to exit the tent.

Tigers (2): hp 45 each.

**Sasha the Animal Tamer:** hp 16 (see scout on p. 349 of Core Rulebook III and replace skills with the following).

**Skills** Animal Handling +3, Nature +4, Perception +5, Survival +5

## Plot Events

There are a number of events that are pivotal to the plot, but which happen independently of any of the events already described. These events may occur at specific times, they may occur after the PCs make an important discovery, or they may be used by the GM to help move the adventure forward. These events are as follows.

### The Second Murder

Two days after Kortle is found dead (see **Murder at the Carnival**), there is another murder. This time, the victim is Kobbin. If the PCs have played any of the carnival games, they recognize Kobbin as the man who ran the balloon stand (see **Pop the Flumph**).

Once again, Solomon carves a message onto the victim's chest. If the PCs have not visited one of the following locations or picked up on the clues that will lead them there, the druid chooses one of the following messages to try and help them.

| Location                  | Message    |
|---------------------------|------------|
| The Standing Stones       | Oakengrove |
| Borrin's Butcher Shop     | Yavin      |
| Shiara's Pool             | Errol      |
| Barnaby's Show of Wonders | Jester     |

Shortly after the body is discovered, the town guard announce that they have a suspect in custody. Galen Smallwater, a young farmer, turned himself over to them along with the murder weapon. The town guard have put Galen in the stocks outside town hall and sent for a judge.

Although it is true that Galen wielded the murder weapon, he is not guilty of any crime. Possessed by Solomon Oatbringer, the druid used the young farmer to murder the assassins responsible for his own death.

If the PCs speak with Galen, he tells them, “The first time, I thought it was a dream... or a nightmare. I tried to forget it, but then they found the body at the carnival.

“That night, I looked for the dagger in my bedroom. It was under a loose floorboard, right where I had remembered hiding it in my dream. I didn’t say anything at first, because I still couldn’t believe that I had committed such a terrible crime. When it happened again, though, I couldn’t take it anymore and I turned myself over to the authorities.”

The next day, the judge arrives and Galen stands trial for his crime. If the PCs aren’t able to demonstrate that it was Solomon Oatbringer who possessed Galen Smallwater and committed the murders, the young farmer is found guilty of murder and hanged that evening at sundown.

## Barnaby Tarmin’s Wagon

While Barnaby spends most of his time seeing to the management of his carnival and hosting his Show of Wonders, he also spends a good deal of time in his caravan wagon. If the PCs are keeping tabs on him, if they make a Gather Information check (DC 20), or if they connect the ley lines from the other two altars (see **The Smokehouse** and **The Tainted Altar**), they learn that Barnaby’s wagon is located on the outskirts of the carnival with the words ‘CARNIVAL MASTER’ painted on the side.

Barnaby keeps his wagon locked at all times, requiring either a key or a Dexterity check (DC 20) to open it. If the PCs manage to open the wagon, read or paraphrase the following.

The wagon is dark, the windows painted over. The buzzing of flies fills the room. On the floor of the room, white lines and arcane runes have been inscribed with chalk. On an obsidian slab in the middle of these runes, maggots crawl over a pile of entrails.

The entrails on the slab are those of Solomon Oatbringer. Barnaby Tarmin used them in the final ritual to weaken the wards sealing the dark fey portal. Because of the dark magic used in the ceremony, the area here is tainted. Creatures who enter the area must make Wisdom saving throws (DC 20) or take 1 point of depravity.

If the PCs make an Intelligence (Arcana) check (DC 15) check, they realize that the lines drawn on the floor are ley lines and that the taint is likely extraplanar magic bleeding into this room. If the PCs have found one of the other altars (see **The Smoke House** and **The Tainted Altar**), an Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC 10) allows them to deduce the location of the third.

If the PCs make an Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC 25), they find a secret compartment near the back of the wagon. Inside, the PCs find an ancient tome with no title, its cover inscribed with arcane runes and diagrams.

Reading the tome requires 8 hours of intense study followed by an Intelligence (Arcana) check (DC 20). If the PCs succeed on this check, they realize that the tome describes a profane ritual used to weaken the boundaries between the Material Plane and the dark fey realm. If the PCs fail this check, they must study the tome an additional 1d4 hours, before they can make another check.

## Solomon Oatbringer

While it’s best to let the PCs uncover the clues on their own, if they are stuck on a particular plot point, the GM can use Solomon Oatbringer’s ghost to help jumpstart their investigation.

The druid is primarily concerned with the events surrounding his murder. To that end, he will want to lead the PCs to the altars where his head, body, and entrails are located.

**Solomon Oatbringer:** hp 45 (see the ghost statistics on p. 147 of the *Monster Manual*)



## Concluding the Adventure

Depending on where the PCs are in their investigations, there are a couple of ways that the adventure can play out.

### The Dark Equinox

If the PCs have not uncovered Barnaby's plot before the Fall Equinox, the townsfolk gather in the main square the evening before for a raucous celebration. There are heaping plates of food and large barrels of beer, all provided by the Abbey of the Golden Sheaf.

In the pre-dawn hours, Clara Elkwood gathers the people together for prayer followed by a moment of silence as they await the sunrise. At that time, read or paraphrase the following.

Rays of sunlight peek over the hills, piercing the grey twilight. The morning feels still and calm, the people of the town serene and peaceful.

Suddenly, a bolt of green, crackling energy springs from the butcher's shop converging with two more bolts rising up from the carnival grounds and the woods to the north. From this juncture, a fourth beam strikes the woods, causing them to pulse with green light.

The sky darkens. The sun turns a deep, blood red. Dark creatures crash through the butcher shop doors and windows, inciting panic in the crowds. From the east, a mob of rough looking men and women, led by a man in a gray jester costume, descend on the town with torches ablaze.

The mob descending on the town are the performers in Barnaby Tarmin's Show of Wonders (see **Barnaby Tarmin's Show of Wonders**), led by the gray jester himself. In addition, the carnival, town, and the Oak Woods have been overrun by evil creatures escaping from the dark fey realm. If the PCs try to enter any location in any of these areas roll d% to determine if they have an encounter with one or more of these creatures.

- **01-10** – No encounter
- **11-40** – 1d3 wirries (see **Appendix** for statistics.)

- **41-60** – 1d3 spriggan (see **The Ferris Wheel** for statistics.)
- **61-80** – 1d4 satyr
- **81-00** – 2d4 sprites

With the town overrun, Ashabenford's citizens retreat to the Abbey of the Golden Sheaf for refuge. Although the clerics send a messenger to the Riders of Mistedale, it will take 3 days for the messenger to get there and another 1d4+3 days before the messenger can return with help. Until then, the town must rely on the PCs.

The PCs have a few options at this point. They can continue with their investigation, in the hopes that they might find a way to reverse some of the damage caused (see **Closing the Breach**), they can stay with the townsfolk at the temple and defend them against any attacks from Barnaby and the fey creatures who have overrun the town, or they can leave and abandon the town to its fate.

**Creatures:** In addition to the many evil fey who have crossed over from the dark fey realm, a creature of pure taint has arisen from the standing stones. If the PCs return to the standing stones to try and seal the breach, the creature is there, waiting for them. If the PCs decide to stay with the townsfolk at the Abbey, the creature is drawn to the presence of innocents, seeking to destroy them.

**Tactics:** The taint elemental enjoys instilling fear in its opponents. To this end, it toys with them for a while; lurking in the shadows, letting itself be seen or heard briefly before hiding again. When it finally strikes, it strikes with its Surge of Malevolence combined with Power Attack to deal extra damage. If it strikes with significant success, it continues to use Power Attack to deal heavy damage to its opponents.

If the PCs are seriously wounded and the taint elemental is still doing fairly well, it may not go in for the kill right away. Instead, it may use its *dimension door* ability to retreat for a couple rounds, giving them a chance to heal some of their wounds, making them feel like they have a chance, before delivering their final blow.

## HUGE TAINTELEMENTAL

*Huge Elemental, evil*

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** (14d12)

**Speed** 40 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 20 (+5) | 17 (+3) | 16 (+3) | 6 (-2) | 10 (+0) | 5 (-3) |

**Damage Resistances** acid, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, unconscious

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

**Languages** Sylvan

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

**Touch of Taint.** Anyone struck by a Huge taint elemental or who physically touches it, must succeed on a Constitution saving throw (DC 16) or gain 1d3 corruption points.

**Dimension Door 3/day.** A Huge taint elemental can, by spreading its tainted essence into the environment and instantly reforming at another point, duplicate the effects of *dimension door* spell. Doing this is a move-equivalent action. Unlike the *dimension door* spell, the elemental is permitted to take an action immediately afterward if it has any remaining in the round.

**Excessive Taint.** A Huge taint elemental has a moderate corruption and depravity of 16. It takes no ill effects from taint.

## ACTIONS

**Slam.** Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10+5) plus 1d3 corruption (Constitution DC 18 negates).

## Closing the Breach

If the PCs have uncovered Barnaby's plans before the Fall Equinox, they have a chance to prevent him from reopening the planar breach. By reading the tome from his caravan wagon (see **Barnaby Tarmin's Wagon**), the PCs learn that a *wish* spell, cast at each of the tainted ley points, can undo the damage caused by the gray jester, allowing the caster to seal the portal with a final *wish* spell cast at the site of the standing stones.

Unfortunately, neither the PCs nor the clerics of the town are high enough level to cast such a spell. Even if they were, Ashabenford does not have the herbs, oils, and incense necessary to perform the ritual nor are they large enough that they have a scroll available for purchase.

The only option available to the PCs is to send a message to the nearest city requesting a caster powerful enough to perform the necessary ritual. It will take approximately 3 days for a messenger to reach the nearest city and another 1d4+3 days before they can return with someone willing to perform the ritual.

In the meantime, the tome seems to suggest that the PCs can use Intelligence (Arcana) checks (DC 10) at each of the ley points to delay the opening of the portal for one day. This will require the PCs to inscribe a special diagram around each of the tainted ley points in order to prevent the taint of the other plane from bleeding through. The materials to create the diagrams cost 5 gp for each ley point. (see **Ashabenford**). If the PCs fail any of these checks, the attempt fails.

**Development:** If you want to make the conclusion of the adventure more dramatic, as the PCs are trying to ward the area around the standing stones, the taint inside the circle manifests itself as a huge taint elemental (see **The Dark Equinox** for statistics). Players will need to defend casters against the creature as they attempt to establish the magical wards necessary to seal the portal and prevent additional creatures from escaping.

# Appendix: New Monster

## WIRRY

*Small fey, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 21 (6d6)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 16 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 18 (+4) |
| [rule]  |         |         |         |         |         |

**Skills** Stealth +7

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

**Languages** Common, Sylvan

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Nimble Escape** The wirry can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The wirry's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). The wirry can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will – *invisibility (self only)*, *mirror image (self only)*

**Unnerve (Su):** Once per day, a wirry can concentrate on a 40-foot radius area, filling it with an aura of dread and fear. Within this area, a wirry can move objects as per the *unseen servant* spell and create unsettling illusions. Creatures within the area must make a Wisdom check (DC 14) each round or suffer from an escalating

condition of fear and agitation as described on the table below.

| Condition  | Effect                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Frightened | The creature has disadvantage on ability checks and attack rolls and can't willingly move closer to the source of its fear                                                   |
| Panicked   | As frightened, plus the creature drops anything it holds and must take the Dash action and move away from the perceived source of its fear, unless there is nowhere to move. |
| Hysterical | As panicked, plus the creature takes 1d6 points of psychic damage.                                                                                                           |

The conditions and effects produced by the aura continue so long as the wirry concentrates on the area. Once a wirry ceases concentrating, creatures in the area begin to feel their fear ebb by one condition each round until they return to normal.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The wirry makes two claw attacks.

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

# Appendix: New Template

## Blackthorn

Many fey enjoy a mystical, symbiotic relationship with nature which grants them sustenance and life. This relationship often transforms an area into an enchanted region suffused with life and magical creatures. In rare cases, though, when a fey has been thoroughly corroded by evil, the blackness of its heart bleeds into the surrounding plant life. Lush fields become black, weedy patches, supple vines turn thorny and choking, while the leaves of trees and bushes turn dark, waxy and spiny.

The corrupting effect that these fey have doesn't stop at the landscape either. Creatures who are exposed to the area become tainted, as well. For these reasons, the blackthorns are often reviled and shunned by other fey.

## Sample Blackthorn

Blackthorn is an acquired template that can be added to any fey creature who is mystically bound to a tree, pool, or other natural body (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A blackthorn uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

**Tainted Location.** A blackthorn suffuses the area to which it has been mystically bound with corruption, transforming it into a tainted location approximately 500 feet in radius. The taint of the area remains so long as the base creature remains alive plus 2d4 days thereafter. Initial exposure to the area increases a creature's depravity score by 1.

For every 24 hours a creature spends in the blackthorn's tainted location, it must make a Wisdom saving throw to avoid having its depravity score increase by 1. A creature who spends 48 hours or more in the area has disadvantage on these saving throws.

In addition, creatures who fall asleep in a blackthorn's tainted location have their sleep troubled by nightmares. They awake to find themselves fatigued and must make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 10 + each night spent in the area) or succumb to empty despair.

Creatures who succumb to despair no longer experience any sense of self-determination. They will not leave the tainted location willingly unless instructed to do so by Shiara. If Shiara is killed, her victims will wander listlessly until they find another tainted location to reside in. A *wish* spell or divine intervention is required to return any despairing creature to normal.

**Tap Despair:** A blackthorn can control the will of any creature who succumbs to the despair of its tainted location. A single blackthorn can control a number of its despairing creatures equal to three times its Hit Dice. The blackthorn decides each day which of its victims it wishes to control.

**Unsettling Allure** Tainted creatures who approach within 30 feet of a blackthorn must make a Wisdom saving throw or have their minds consumed with depraved thoughts about her. These thoughts trouble their sleep, filling their dreams with images of her and the pond in which she resides. Each night, victims must make additional Wisdom saving throws or find themselves sleepwalking back to her pond. Once the creature arrives in the area, it immediately falls asleep, where it is subject to the taint of her pond. This effect continues so long as the blackthorn's tainted location remains intact or until a *remove curse* spell is cast on the victim. The saving throw DC is 8 +

the creature's proficiency bonus + its Charisma modifier.

**Taint:** A blackthorn no longer acquires taint. For purposes of special abilities, its corruption and depravity scores are both considered to be half its Charisma score +1.

**Alignment:** Always evil (any).

## Tainted Raver

A humanoid or monstrous humanoid with at least mild depravity can become a tainted raver. When a creature becomes a tainted raver, it retains all its statistics except as noted below.

**Ability Scores.** The tainted raver gains a Strength of 14, a Constitution of 14, a Wisdom of 0, and a Charisma of 16 if his or her scores aren't already higher.

**Madness.** The tainted raver is irretrievably mad. It uses Charisma instead of Wisdom when making saves against enchantment spells and charm effects, and has immunity to *confusion* effects. Anyone targeting the tainted raver with a thought detection, mind control, or telepathic ability makes direct contact with the tainted raver's tortured mind and takes 1d3 points of depravity from that contact.

A tainted raver cannot be restored to sanity by any means short of a *wish* spell. If restored to sanity, a tainted raver loses all special abilities and becomes a normal commoner.

**Perpetual Rage.** A tainted raver is in a state of constant, insane fury similar to a barbarian's rage. In this state, a tainted raver gains advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws. It also gains a bonus to damage rolls when making melee attacks that use Strength like a barbarian of its level and has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage. An effect that counters rage, such as the *calm emotions* spell, temporarily suppresses this ability.

**Taint.** A tainted raver has a depravity score equal to half its Charisma score.

## Appendix: The Taint of Evil

Characters can acquire taint by entering an area, creature or object thoroughly suffused with evil. This taint can manifest physically, in which case it is called corruption, or mentally, in which case it is called corruption. Both are measured in points and

characters acquire anywhere from 1 to 4 points of corruption or depravity from exposure to evil.

In most cases, a character can attempt a saving throw to resist the effects of taint. Corruption allows a Constitution saving throw while depravity allows a Wisdom saving throw.

Any time a character acquires more points of corruption at one time than her current Constitution modifier, she must attempt another Constitution saving throw (DC 10 + points of corruption acquired) or be poisoned for 1d4 rounds.

Similarly, any time a character acquires more depravity at one time than her current Wisdom modifier, she must attempt a Wisdom saving throw (DC 10 + points of depravity acquired) or be incapacitated for 1d4 rounds. The effect ends if she takes any damage.

## Effects of Taint

Both corruption and depravity manifest in mild, moderate, and severe symptoms. To determine the severity of a character's symptoms, use the table below.

| Taint | Severity       |
|-------|----------------|
| 0     | No Taint       |
| 1-5   | Mild Taint     |
| 6-15  | Moderate Taint |
| 16-40 | Severe Taint   |
| 41+   | Dead/Insane    |

**No Taint:** Characters with no taint manifest no symptoms.

**Mild Taint:** Characters who gain their first point of taint cross the threshold into mild taint and must receive a *greater restoration* or *lesser restoration* within 24 hours to remove the taint. Characters who retain mild taint after 24 hours, manifest one minor physical or mental symptom from the descriptions below. Characters with mild depravity and mild corruption manifest one physical symptom and one mental symptom. Once characters manifest a minor symptom, only a *wish* spell or divine intervention can remove the symptom and return their taint to 0.

**Moderate Taint:** Characters who gain enough taint to cross the threshold into moderate taint must receive a *greater restoration* spell and have their taint level reduced to mild within 24 hours or be permanently afflicted with moderate taint. Characters who retain moderate taint after 24 hours, manifest one moderate physical or mental symptom from the descriptions below. Once characters manifest a moderate symptom, only a *wish* spell or divine

intervention can remove the symptom and return their taint to 0.

**Severe Taint:** Characters who gain enough taint to cross the threshold into severe taint must receive a *greater restoration* spell and have their taint reduced to moderate taint within 24 hours or be permanently afflicted with severe taint. Characters who retain severe taint after 24 hours manifest one severe physical symptom or mental symptom from the descriptions below. Characters with severe depravity and severe corruption manifest one physical symptom and one mental symptom. Once a character manifests a severe symptom, only a *wish* spell or divine intervention can remove the symptom and return the character's taint to moderate.

**Dead/Insane:** Characters who gain more than 40 points of corruption, die and rise 1d6 hours later as tainted minions. Characters who gain more than 40 points of depravity score go irretrievably mad and become tainted ravers. In either event, the characters are so irredeemably evil that they fall under the control of the DM.

## Symptoms

To determine the nature of a character's physical or mental taint symptoms, roll 1d10 and look up on the appropriate table below. Characters who gain enough taint to cross over into a higher level of taint gain the next symptom to the right on the table. For example, if Regdar's mild level of corruption is expressed as the mild physical symptom "feet curl," he will manifest the symptom "joint pain" if his corruption score rises to moderate.

### Corruption Effects

| d10 | Mild          | Moderate                | Severe                |
|-----|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1   | Dead eye      | Lips shrink             | Lich eyes             |
| 2   | Ear scabs     | Fingers and toes fuse   | Shriveled flesh       |
| 3   | Gums swell    | Bones thicken           | Great swollen growths |
| 4   | Feet curl     | Joint pain              | Spine twists          |
| 5   | Lumps         | Eruption of sores       | Wrigglers             |
| 6   | Odor of decay | Paralyzed face          | Nose rots             |
| 7   | Palsy         | Uncontrollable seizures | Skull deformed        |
| 8   | Skin seeps    | Blood eruption          | Internal corruption   |
| 9   | Skin sloughs  | Skin thickens           | Skin lichen           |
| 10  | Winded        | Chronic illness         | Lungs eaten away      |

## Mild Corruption

**Dead Eye:** Your eyes begin to cloud over, obscuring your vision. In combat, every time you attack an opponent that is lightly obscured, treat them as heavily obscured.

**Ear Scabs:** Your ears fill up with a crusty, scabrous substance. You have disadvantage on Listen checks.

**Feet Curl:** Your feet warp and curl inward. Your speed is reduced by 10 feet.

**Gums Swell:** Your gums swell, bleed and rot. You have difficulty pronouncing words clearly. Whenever you cast a spell with a verbal component, you must make an Intelligence (Arcana) check (DC10) or the spell fails to activate.

**Lumps:** Burning hot lumps rise up all over your body. You have a constant fever. Every time you try to run or charge you must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion.

**Odor of Decay:** You give off an unhealthy odor of decay. Animals find your smell repellent. Any time you interact with an animal, you must make a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check (DC 10) to get the animal to do what you want.

**Palsy:** Your muscles are prone to tics and quivery shakes. You have disadvantage on ranged attack rolls.

**Skin Seeps:** Your skin seeps greasy, yellow ichor. You have advantage on Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks to escape a grapple. You take disadvantage on Strength (Athletics) checks and Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) checks. Opponents have advantage when attempting to disarm you.

**Skin Sloughs:** The skin on your face peels off in long, papery strips, leaving unsightly red patches. You have disadvantage on Charisma (Performance), Charisma (Persuasion), and Charisma based skills listed under Other Charisma Checks.

**Windled:** You are constantly short of breath and feel like you can't get enough air. You gain one level of exhaustion every three rounds during any combat.

## Moderate Corruption

**Blood Eruption:** In moments of intense activity, blood gushes from your nostrils and ears. At the beginning of any combat encounter, you must make a Constitution saving throw (DC 15) or be sickened for 4 rounds. This effect is the same as poisoned.

**Bones Thicken:** Your skeleton warps and thickens. You add 1d4 to all Strength based checks and subtract 1d6 from all Dexterity based checks.

**Chronic Illness:** You are plagued with a phlegm-laden, wracking cough. You also suffer occasional

bouts of vomiting, often at specific times of day. You have disadvantage on Fortitude saves.

**Eruption of Sores:** Open, painful sores, some leaking blood or pus, erupt on your body. You have disadvantage on Strength and Charisma-based checks and skill checks.

**Fingers and Toes Fuse:** Your fingers and toes web and fuse. You have disadvantage on your attack rolls. Whenever you cast a spell with a somatic component, you must succeed on an Intelligence (Arcana) check (DC 10) or the spell fails to activate.

**Joint Pain:** Your joints, particularly your knees and elbows, sometimes flare up in sharp pain. You have disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws.

**Lips Shrink:** Your lips pull back into a frozen rictus, exposing your teeth and gums at all times. You have disadvantage on all Charisma-based ability checks and skill checks.

**Paralyzed Face:** Your facial muscles grow so feeble that you can no longer smile, frown, or show any emotion. Food dribbles from the corners of your mouth when you eat. You have advantage on Charisma (Deception) checks and disadvantage on all other Charisma-based ability checks and skill checks.

**Skin Thickens:** Your skin thickens, cracking and turning leathery. You gain +1 natural armor and have disadvantage on all Dexterity-based ability checks, saving throws, and skill checks.

**Uncontrollable Seizures:** You suffer from uncontrollable seizures that wrack your body with spasms. You have disadvantage on initiative rolls.

## Severe Corruption

**Great Swollen Growths:** Great swollen growths appear on your body. Creatures attacking you have advantage.

**Internal Corruption:** Though your corruption is not visible to others, the inside of your body is a festering cesspool of corruption. Bloody pus pools in your body cavities, strange growths develop on your organs, or tin limbs or heads bud beneath your skin. You have disadvantage on all Constitution saving throws.

**Lich Eyes:** Your eyes rot away, leaving eerie green flames in their empty sockets. You gain darkvision and can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only in shades of grey.

**Lungs Eaten Away:** Your lungs are eaten away from the inside, resulting in wet, labored, painful

breathing. You always suffer from at least level 1 exhaustion.

**Nose Rots:** The flesh of your nose rots away, leaving skull-like openings. Subtract 1d6 from all Charisma-based ability checks and skill checks.

**Shriveled Flesh:** Your flesh shrivels and clings to your bones, making you unnaturally gaunt. When you manifest this symptom, reduce your hit point maximum to half.

**Skin Lichen:** A black, lichenous growth spreads across your skin, causing a constant itching that interferes with any physical activity. You have disadvantage on all Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution-based ability checks, saving throws, and skill checks.

**Skull Deformed:** Your skull becomes enlarged, distorted and deformed. You have disadvantage on all Intelligence and Wisdom-based ability checks and skill checks. You also subtract 1d4 from all Wisdom saving throws.

**Spine Twists:** Your spine twists and your back hunches. Subtract 1d4 from all Dexterity-based ability checks and skill checks.

**Wrigglers:** Parasitic worms protrude from your sores, sapping your strength. Subtract 1d4 from all Strength-based ability checks and skill checks. You have advantage on Charisma (Intimidate) checks and subtract 1d6 from all other Charisma-based ability checks and skill checks.

## Depravity Effects

| d10 | Mild          | Moderate          | Severe          |
|-----|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1   | Aggressive    | Treacherous       | Murderous       |
| 2   | Bestial       | Deranged          | Unbalanced      |
| 3   | Compulsive    | Hysterical        | Unresponsive    |
| 4   | Crazed        | Jittery           | Craven          |
| 5   | Disoriented   | Hallucinating     | Paranoid        |
| 6   | Mildly Phobic | Moderately Phobic | Severely Phobic |
| 7   | Neglectful    | Distracted        | Enthralled      |
| 8   | Opinionated   | Solipsistic       | Hubristic       |
| 9   | Prophetic     | Delusional        | Apathetic       |
| 10  | Sycophantic   | Weak-Willed       | Fatalistic      |

### Mild Depravity

**Aggressive:** You are easily angered and cannot hide your feelings. In combat, you try so hard to hurt your enemies that you neglect your own defense. You gain an extra attack when you take the Attack action on your turn, but opponents have advantage when attacking you.

**Bestial:** You take on a ferocious, wild demeanor. You have advantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling)

and Charisma (Intimidate) checks. You have disadvantage on all other Charisma-based ability checks and skill checks.

**Compulsive:** Pick a compulsive ritual to adopt. For example, you and your equipment are never clean enough. You can only break out of the compulsive pattern by eating bugs, which sometimes disagree with you. Once each day, make a Constitution saving throw. If you fail, you are poisoned for 8 hours.

**Crazed:** You can no longer cope easily with sudden changes in circumstance. If you are surprised at the outset of an encounter, for your first action, you have an equal chance of charging your opponent or taking the Dash action to run away for 1 round.

**Disoriented:** You lose track of events. If you are surprised at the outset of an encounter, you are incapacitated.

**Mildly Phobic:** You gain a mild phobia, which requires you to succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC 10) or become frightened whenever you encounter the object of your phobia.

**Neglectful:** You disregard hygiene and cultural mores. You have disadvantage on Charisma-based ability checks and skill checks.

**Opinionated:** You are so wrapped up in commenting on everything you hear that you are often caught off guard. You have disadvantage when rolling initiative.

**Prophetic:** Your dark dreams torment you with strange visions of things that might occur in the future. You zealously proclaim a different prophecy each week, making sure everyone you meet knows what is about to transpire. Your DM determines what prophetic insight you envision each week (10% are actually accurate!). In addition, you must also make a Wisdom saving throw each day (DC 10) or take 1 level of exhaustion, the ill effects of continual nightmares.

**Sycophantic:** You fill the air with a torrent of unctuous flattery of your companions, opponents, or imaginary friends. You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks. Enemies have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to hear you.

### Moderate Depravity

**Delusional:** You're convinced that the world is an illusion and that you and your companions are being controlled by inhabitants of a distant, alien realm. You have disadvantage on Wisdom-based ability checks and skill checks.

**Deranged:** Your grasp on reality becomes tenuous. You have disadvantage on Intelligence-based ability checks and skill checks.

**Distracted:** You pay more attention to the whispers in your mind than to your surroundings. You have disadvantage on all skill checks.

**Hallucinating:** You see things that aren't there and often have trouble sorting reality from your imagination. At the start of any combat, you must make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 10) or be affected as per the *confusion* spell for 1 round.

**Hysterical:** Everything you meet is hilarious. It takes a short time to perceive the humor; then a laughing jag overwhelms you. During the second round of a combat encounter, you lose either your ability to move or take an action.

**Jittery:** You are easily startled and spooked. If you are hit in the first round of combat, you must take the Dash action to flee from your attacker.

**Moderately Phobic:** You gain a moderate phobia, which requires you to succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC 10) or take the Dash action to flee from your opponent. Each round on your turn, you must succeed on an additional Wisdom saving throw or continue fleeing.

**Solipsistic:** You believe that you are the only thing that matters in the universe. As a result, whenever you are struck in combat, you have to make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 15). If you fail the save, you take an additional 1 point of damage per die of damage received.

**Treacherous:** Any time the chance to make an attack of opportunity presents itself, whether against an opponent or an ally, make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 15). If you fail the save, you must make the attack of opportunity, even if the target is your closest ally. If presented with multiple targets, determine randomly which you attack.

**Weak-Willed:** The constant presence of demonic voices whispering in your ears has sapped your will. You have disadvantage on Wisdom saving throws.

## Severe Depravity

**Apathetic:** You withdraw into yourself, losing contact with the world. You gain disadvantage on all Charisma and Wisdom-based ability checks and skill checks.

**Craven:** You become a lily-livered coward. In combat, you must make a Wisdom saving throw each round (DC 10) or take the Dodge action.

**Enthralled:** You are drawn to and fascinated by evil. You no longer have the will to strike it down.

Whenever you fight an evil opponent, you always have disadvantage and you always attempt to knock the opponent out rather than killing it.

**Fatalistic:** You become oppressed by negative, defeatist thinking and are convinced there's little you can do to save yourself from a horrible fate. Subtract 1d6 from all saving throws.

**Hubristic:** You regard yourself as superior to all things, even the gods. Divine healing has no effect on you.

**Murderous:** You experience irresistible murderous urges. If a creature falls below 0 hit points in your presence, you stop everything else you are doing and move to deliver the final, killing blow. You cannot distinguish between an ally and an opponent. Any creature who falls unconscious is vulnerable.

**Paranoid:** You grow overly suspicious, even of your closest companions. In combat, you cannot avoid watching for signs of treachery. Whenever one of your allies engaged in combat makes an attack and fails to hit, you become suspicious that the ally is secretly a traitor to your party. You take a -1 penalty to any rolls you make during that turn, since some of your attention is focused on monitoring the suspected traitor's activities. If more than one ally fails to hit, the penalty is cumulative.

**Severely Phobic:** You gain a severe phobia, which requires you to succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC 15) or take the Dash action to flee from your opponent. Each round on your turn, you must succeed on an additional Wisdom saving throw or continue fleeing. This symptom replaces your previous symptom of moderate phobia.

**Unbalanced:** Your unstable mind makes you unpredictable, particularly in combat. You are automatically confused on your first turn in any combat and every other turn thereafter.

**Unresponsive:** Your senses are dulled and you lose the ability to discern the truth of the world around you. You have disadvantage on all Wisdom ability checks, saving throws, and skill checks.

## Taint and Alignment

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As characters acquire more corruption, and particularly as they acquire more and more depravity, they are increasingly inclined toward evil acts. The stench of evil clings to a character with at least moderate taint. Characters with moderate corruption register as undead to a *detect evil* spell. Characters with moderate depravity register as fiends. Any actual alignment change is up to the DM's discretion, but as a rule of thumb, characters with moderate taint

are neutral at best, while characters with severe taint are usually evil.

### Deities and Codes of Conduct

Clerics of good deities risk divine displeasure if they acquire too much taint. Divine warnings might begin when clerics acquire moderate levels of corruption or depravity, or perhaps even sooner. Clerics who acquire severe levels of taint are considered to have grossly violated the deity's code of conduct. They lose all spells and class features until they atone and reduce their taint to at most moderate levels. Alternatively, clerics can choose a new deity who is willing to overlook their transgressions.

Paladins who acquire moderate levels of taint lose all spells and class features and cannot advance further in the paladin class until they atone and reduce their taint to at most mild levels. Alternatively, they can choose another class or, at the DM's discretion, take the Oathbreaker paladin option that appears on p. 97 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

### Cleansing Taint

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It is possible to remove taint from characters in several ways, including through divine intervention, the use of spells, or the performance of good deeds. Taint cannot be removed unless the tainted character wants to be cleansed. If an increase in taint causes a character's corruption or depravity score to cross over into a higher taint level (for example, shifting from mild to moderate), neither taint score can be reduced to a lower taint level unless quickly treated (within 24 hours) or through use of a *wish* spell or divine intervention.

### Divine Intervention

Characters who are properly remorseful can seek divine intervention from a good-aligned deity to remove their taint. If a deity chooses to intervene, it removes sufficient taint to place targets at the highest threshold of the next lower taint level, regardless of how much time has passed. A deity can intervene on behalf of any number of targets, although many require targets to undertake a quest on their behalf before bestowing their favor.

### Spells

The following spells can reduce taint scores when cast outside tainted areas. No character can have a taint score reduced by any particular spell more than once per day, although different spells can reduce taint if cast on the same character in the same day.

*Greater Restoration:* This spell reduces the character's corruption and depravity scores by 1d4+1 points. If used within 24 hours of a taint threshold

being crossed, it can reduce taint to below that threshold.

*Lesser Restoration:* This spell reduces the character's corruption and depravity scores by 1 point. If used within 24 hours of the target's acquiring enough taint to qualify as mild taint, it can reduce the taint below that threshold.

*Wish:* This spell removes sufficient taint to place the target at the highest threshold of the next lower taint level, regardless of how much time has passed.

### Good Deeds

Simple good deeds are not enough to remove taint. Characters wishing to reduce their taint score through good deeds must undertake a specific ritual under the guidance of a cleric devoted to a non-evil deity. The ritual prepares the character to undertake the deed.

Each deity's faith has a list of ritual good deeds the faithful can perform to prove their dedication to the deity. For example, the faithful of Silvanus can choose to plant seedlings in areas that have been denuded of plant life. Adventuring is never part of such a good deed and a character who undertakes an adventure prior to completing her deed must begin again with the ritual.

The good deed must be repeated every day for a week. Characters who complete a good deed reduce their depravity score by 1 point. Characters can continue to perform the same good deed for another week to continue losing depravity or can return to the temple to undertake the ritual again and begin a different deed.