



HORROR IN THE HOUSE OF DRAGON

M.T. BLACK

INTRODUCTION

Horror in the House of Dagon is a Dungeons & Dragons 5E adventure designed to be completed in about 3–5 hours of play.

The combat encounters have been calculated to present a tough challenge to four characters of 3rd level; that is, APL (average party level) is 3. Information is supplied in the text explaining how to scale the encounters to APL 1, APL 2, or APL 4. Statistics for new monsters are provided near the end of this document.

Not every loose end is tied up in the following text, nor every possible reaction accounted for. Be ready to improvise, and do so with confidence!

Unless stated otherwise, assume NPCs have the stats of a **commoner**.

The adventure comprises four chapters:

CHAPTER 1—MISSING IN MIDCLIFFE: The party enters the village of Midcliffe just as a house bursts into flames.

CHAPTER 2—THE OUTCAST: The party visits an outcast and makes a shocking discovery.

CHAPTER 3—DEAD MAN'S MERE: The party treks through an evil and dangerous swamp.

CHAPTER 4—HOUSE OF DAGON: The party enters a strange temple, and is confronted by a horrifying sight.

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CHAPTER 1: MISSING IN MIDCLIFFE

Several days journey south of Neverwinter is the small fishing village of Midcliffe. Situated on top of low cliffs along the coastline, the village has two sets of stairs leading down to a couple of simple piers where a dozen fishing boats are moored. The village is a common stopover for merchants and travellers along the coastal road, and has both a tavern and inn with stables.

Read the following:

A fast-approaching storm, following days of drizzling rain and pervasive fog, has driven you from the road in search of a roof and warm fire. A tavern called The Weary Minstrel, in the village of Midcliffe, looks appealing; the glow of its windows cuts beckoningly through the chilly mist. Midcliffe itself consists of several dozen homes that sit on a bluff above the sea.

The smell of salt hangs heavy in the air, and underneath it, the rank odour of fish and damp decay is unmistakable and pervasive.

Midcliffe is home to about 40 families and has a population of nearly 200 men, women, and children. The populace is mostly human, though a few halfling and dwarven families also call the place home. Though a handful of farms skirt the village, most of the trade involves fishing, along with crafts and goods related to the anglers' lifestyle. The only governance is provided by a Constable, who is chosen by lot each year (the position is currently held by **Narisa Brightcast**).

EVOKING HORROR

This adventure relies on mood and atmosphere; following are some tips for evoking a feeling of unsettling horror in your players:

Simple Tricks Work

A careful choice of words when describing what the characters see can go a long way toward helping to create an air of tension and dread. Take time to detail the moulded clapboards that cover a building, the eerie mist that surrounds the PCs, and the strange scents that waft in the damp air of the swamp.

Use the Environment

Dim the lights if you like. Describe the sound of the persistent rain, or play sound effects in the background. When the party enters the marsh, add in distant thunder and lightning. Later, when the players enter the shrine, dim the lights further and start your favourite horror movie soundtrack, or something evocative like the *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor* by Bach. The more you get into the scene, by whispering, casting furtive glances, or putting fear into your voice, the more your players will get into the scene too.

Let the Tension Build

Don't tell the players the names of what they are facing (i.e. don't say, "Two giant toads leap from the bushes."); describe what they see, smell and feel (i.e. the cracking of branches, the thud of forms landing hard upon the trail, the putrid stench of a creature...). Don't rush the story, and don't rush the NPC's responses when the players talk to the villagers. The villagers are scared, hesitant, and uncertain; they should act like it.

A MYSTERIOUS FIRE

Assuming the PCs head toward the tavern, read the following:

Your goal is in sight: the tavern is only a few dozen feet away. But as you make your way across the sodden ground, there is a bright flash of light, followed by a booming thunderclap. When your eyes have cleared, you see that a building near the tavern is engulfed in flames. As you watch, you see it begin to collapse.

From inside, you hear panicked screams.

The house is a one-story structure of wood, sealed with wattle and daub, and topped with a thatch roof. Within seconds, the roof is burning. As the flames consume the building, the screams from within intensify.

Characters who enter the house see a large single room roughly 20' by 20', with a fireplace against one wall. A frightened girl of about 12 years old is huddled in a corner, screaming.

In the centre of the room, cackling with glee is a trio of three-foot-tall humanoid creatures, with black skin that looks like solid rock. Their eyes twinkle like embers as they gleefully shoot flames from their fingertips, and the fire around them strengthens. The creatures are **Magmin**, capricious fire spirits that delight in watching things burn.

Threats

3 x **Magmin** [MM p212]

In addition to the fire spirits, the burning house presents its own challenges.

The smoke gathers in the rafters of the peaked roof and is not an immediate threat. However, more burning thatch falls from the roof every round. Each round, a random PC must make a **DC 13 Dexterity** saving throw. On failure, the PC is struck by falling, burning thatch and takes **1d6 fire** damage.

The building collapses 15 minutes after the fire begins, and continues to smoulder for another hour afterwards. The magmin will not attack the girl directly, and she will follow any instructions the adventurers give her. However, the magmin are between her and the party.

Adjusting this Encounter

APL 1: Remove 1 **magmin**. Thatch does **1d4 fire** damage.

APL 4: Add 2 **magmin**. Thatch does **2d6 fire** damage.

Treasure

The family is poor, and there is little of value in the house. A quick-eyed adventurer, who succeeds on a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check, will notice a clumsy pentagram inscribed on the floor around the girl.

THE MISSING FISHERMAN

If the party fails to rescue the girl, she dies in the fire and the adventure is over. Assuming they manage to rescue her, she thanks them profusely. Read the following:

As she watches the remains of her house smoulder, the girl breaks down in tears.

“Please, you have to help me! You are warriors, and no one else knows what to do. My father—he’s gone. Someone took him! You have to find him; you have to save him!”

The girl is **Shareene Stormfell**; her father, **Heth**, is a fisherman and a widower who recently went missing. If the party agrees to help, she offers a family heirloom in return (she is currently wearing it herself). It is a silver necklace set with several small amethyst gems, which she insists is a lucky charm. As a piece of jewellery, it is worth about **65 gp**—however, one of the gems is, in fact, a *stone of good luck*. Shareene promises to give the charm to the party when they return the lost fisherman alive.

Shareene tells the party the following information in response to appropriate questions:

- Shareene is an only child and is 12 years old (“I will be 13 come Midwinter”).
- She last saw her father, Heth, two days ago, when he left to go fishing. He did not return that evening and no one has seen him since. His boat was returned to the dock, however.
- She has not told anyone that he is missing (“I keep thinking he’ll come home soon”).
- Heth is about 40 years old, has a shaved head and a large, gray-streaked beard.
- Heth does not have any romantic interests that Shareene knows of.
- Heth’s wife, **Sigrid**, died seven years ago during childbirth. The child did not survive either.

ROLEPLAYING SHAREENE STORMFELL

Shareene is the 12-year-old daughter of Heth Stormfell, a fisherman. She has lived her entire life in Midcliffe. Her mother died when she was very young.

Ideal: I love learning new things.

Bond: My father means everything to me.

Trait: Growing up without a mother made me very self-sufficient from a young age.

Flaw: I am very private, and sometimes don’t ask for help even when I should.

- **Zuri**, the smith’s wife, has never liked Heth.
- Heth sometimes went out after midnight—Shareene doesn’t know why.
- Heth recently developed an interest in magic, trying to learn some basic charms to increase his fishing haul. Shareene isn’t sure who has been teaching him; he doesn’t like talking about it. He had several magic scrolls in a wooden box. The box was hidden, but she knew where to find it.
- The fire spirits were her work. She couldn’t get the fire started because all of the wood got wet, and she recalled there was a scroll for fire summoning in her father’s box. She drew a pentagram on the floor and sat in it (she heard somewhere that would protect her), then read out the scroll. Instead of lighting the fire, the fire spirits appeared and began burning the house down (unbeknownst to Shareene, one of her ancestors was a sorcerer and there is strong *wild magic* in her blood—this is why she could use the scroll).

- *Shareene will not share this piece of information unless directly asked about Blagar.* She has always feared **Blagar the Outcast**, who repairs nets for a living, and lives on the outskirts of the village. She finds him creepy and repulsive.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

The party will probably wish to explore Midcliffe and ask around for clues. Below are the key locations and people:

The Weary Minstrel

This tavern has a large common room with a stone fireplace on both sides; with the bar and kitchen in the back. The human proprietors, **Helmaer** and **Cyna Brightcott**, live upstairs with their four children.

Besides meals and drinks, they also sell provisions to travellers. Helmaer is friendly though a little awkward, whilst Cyna is rather aloof.

The Golden Courtier

This two-story inn is run by the human widow, **Niserie Lackwell**, and her two sons. She had a third son, Gidion, but he went missing about a year ago. Six months ago, she had a nightmare about Dead Man's Mere (see below) and, following this hunch, she hired two adventurers to search the swamp for her son. The adventurers never returned.

Niserie is charming but often depressed. The inn has eight rooms, most of which are available. They also have a large yard and stable for wagons and horses.

Shrine to Azuth

In the middle of the village is a strange stone tower about 3' in diameter and 10' tall. It is a shrine to **Azuth**, the god of wizards, and was erected about a century ago by the mage **Kurskyn Boldstaff**, who was born in Midcliffe, but whose name is now forgotten.

Inscribed in Common around the tower are the following words—"Teach the wielding of magic, and dispense scrolls, items, and spellbooks throughout Faerûn that the use and knowledge of magic may spread. Encourage everyone to try their hand at wielding magic." A **DC 10 Intelligence (Religion)** check reveals that these words are attributed to Azuth himself.

A symbol depicting a ring of eight stars is engraved at points around the tower. A **DC 15 Intelligence (Religion)** check reveals that this is the symbol of **Midnight**, goddess of magic.

If someone offers a prayer to Azuth at the shrine between midnight and dawn, the spirit of Kurskyn will appear before them. She will then either answer one question or give the supplicant a magic scroll. If asked anything about Heth, she will say, "The answer lies with Blagar the Outcast". If asked for a scroll, she will give them a scroll with the spell *Protection from Evil and Good* on it.

The spirit of Kurskyn will appear no more than once per month.

Shrines to the Sea

At the end of each pier is a small shrine to one of the sea gods. The shrine on one pier is to Talos and consists of a 3' tall stone statue of the god, who is presented as an old man throwing a lightning bolt. The shrine on the other pier is to Umberlee, and consists of a 2' high glass sculpture of a pair of waves.

Anyone examining the shrine to Umberlee and making a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check will notice strange, silvery markings on the base. A **DC 15 Intelligence (Religion)** check reveals that this looks like a deliberate defilement. The markings are *aquan*, and say "All Hail Lord Dagon". The markings can be rubbed away easily—anyone who does this will be *blessed* (as per the spell) during their next combat encounter. In addition, the daily catch of fish at Midcliffe will increase markedly from that time onwards.

Frinary's Works

The dwarf **Frinary Ironthorn** is the village blacksmith and farrier. His wife Zuri sells simple supplies such as rope, pitons, shovels, lanterns, and oil. They have one daughter. Whilst Zuri is friendly and popular, most of the villagers find Frinary rather tedious and obstinate.

Zuri was once friends with Heth's wife, Sigrid, and has disliked Heth ever since Sigrid died, believing that he delayed too long before calling the midwife. She will be reluctant to help the PCs. If pressed, she will tell them she once saw Heth at the Shrine to Azuth in the early hours of the morning, which she thought was very



peculiar. She also says Blagar the Outcast is most likely behind any wrongdoing in the village.

Upon learning that Heth is missing, Zuri will insist that Shareene stay with her and Frinary.

The Outcast's Hut

About a mile out of town is the hut of Blagar the Outcast, who makes and mends nets.

Dead Man's Mere

About two miles inland from the village is **Dead Man's Mere**, an evil swamp that is home to many foul creatures. No-one of sense goes there.

Other Shops

Midcliffe also has a bakery and a wainwright.

VILLAGE GOSSIP

If the party asks around, the following information should be revealed from any of the villagers (one or two items from each person asked):

About Heth

- No-one was aware that Heth is missing. The other fishermen assumed he has been fishing at night.
- Heth is well regarded in the town.
- Heth was never the same after his wife died, becoming very private.
- Some people have noticed that Heth makes a sign of respect when he passes the shrine of Azuth. He is the only one in the village who does this.

About Midcliffe

- Midcliffe was a prosperous village a generation or two back; now they are all very poor. Some blame the "Green Lady" (see below).
- Everyone in the village is well regarded—except for Blagar the Outcast.
- All the recent rain and fog is not normal; years ago, the village used to enjoy fine weather.
- More than a dozen villagers have gone missing in the last two years. Some think the village is cursed.

ADDITIONAL VILLAGERS

The DM can use the following character outlines to help populate the village with interesting personalities.

- **Berny Farheart:** human fisherman, pleasant, has no teeth
- **Fyn Quickwall:** human farmer, greedy, white hair. One of his daughters went missing about six months ago
- **Stolm Brawnholow:** human beggar, simple-minded, clean/fastidious
- **Narisa Felicast:** human wainwright, mischievous, likes to gamble. She is currently serving as Constable. She is concerned about Heth and will help the party if asked
- **Kera Frostbank:** halfling fisherman, pious, balding
- **Elin Buckcastle:** dwarven midwife, pious, brown hair, with a knack for art
- **Gamal Nightfist:** dwarven farmer, serious, twin-braided red beard

Local folklore

- It is said that tribute left to Umberlee at her shrine on the pier spoils, rots or corrodes very quickly. Some believe Umberlee has rejected the village for some unknown reason.
- It is said that if you pray in the right manner at the shrine of Azuth, the god will answer your questions and grant you favours.
- It is said that many years ago, an old crone came to the village seeking shelter from a storm. So repulsive was she, that all the villagers rejected her. There followed a flash of green light, and a beautiful woman with green skin and hair stood

before them. She claimed to be a powerful witch and promised to have her revenge on the village before she disappeared in a puff of smoke. The villagers call her the “Green Lady”, and believe she lives in the swamp.

About Blagar

- Everyone loathes Blagar the Outcast.
- Blagar is probably not human. “My sister saw his hand once and said it was all scaly.” He smells strongly of fish—worse than a fisherman.
- Blagar came to the Midcliffe about two years ago and lives outside the village on the edge of Dead Man’s Mere. He fixes nets for a living but rarely comes into the village proper.

- People rarely (if ever) go to Blagar’s house. He typically waits on the docks at the end of the day to see if anyone has work for him.
- Blagar always wears a large cloak with a cowl pulled over his face, even in the summer. It always smells of mould and damp, and occasionally a clear liquid drips from it.

These clues should lead the party to Blagar’s hut, which is about a mile inland from the village, and on the way to Dead Man’s Mere. The villagers can direct the PCs to the trail that leads there. If the PCs are struggling with the clues, Shareene will finally suggest they should talk to Blagar. Shareene herself will be very reluctant to go to Blagar’s hut, and will prefer to let the party take care of it.

Blagar and his home are described in **CHAPTER 2**.

CHAPTER 2: THE OUTCAST

Blagar Nightmarsh lives in a small hut about a mile from the village. Hidden in the bushes along the trail, about 100 yards before his home, are two giant toads which Blagar has trained as guards. They can be detected with a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check before they attack.

TOAD TIME

Read the following:

After a ten-minute march on the trail, the wilderness shifts inexorably to that of a wetland. Your footprints are deeper and more pronounced, and begin to fill with water when you lift your feet. As you proceed, the slimy ground sucks at your legs, and you have the disturbing impression that the ground itself is trying to pull you in.

The land seems darker somehow, and watchful; more than once you would swear you hear laughter from a cloud of buzzing insects. The chirping of birds seems less merry, and even the scampering wildlife in the underbrush seems unusually vicious and focused on some unfathomable task.

Suddenly, the bushes to your left shudder and large bulbous green creatures leap towards you on powerful legs. The stench of decay spews forth from their open mouths while tongues longer than a whip loll about. Their jaws open wider than you'd thought was possible, and it seems as if they are trying to swallow you whole!

Threats

2 giant toads [[MM p329](#)]



Adjusting this Encounter

APL 1: Remove a giant toad.

APL 2: Remove a giant toad.

APL 4: Add a giant toad.

Treasure

The giant toads carry nothing. However, about 10 feet off the trail (near the spot where the toads were hiding) is a small trove of decomposed corpses, with a few still wearing valuables. A search of the desiccated mess reveals **35 cp**, **13 sp**, a finely carved copper wristband worth **28 sp**, and a tarnished gold necklace that might fetch **40 gp** once cleaned.

BLAGAR NIGHTMARSH

Blagar has extremely poor hearing and counts on the toads to keep him safe from intruders. Thus, he is usually unaware of anyone who approaches his abode. His hut is a small one room structure made of deadwood, twine, and pitch, and serves as both a home and a workshop. Blagar can generally be found inside working on a net. While at his house, he does not wear his cloak, and is immediately recognizable as a human.

If the party enter or peer into the hut, read the following:

Hunched before you sits an ungainly human man, tall and angular, but oddly bulbous in the face. He is holding a large fishing net in his hands. His eyes are open incredibly wide, and he moves with exaggerated, stilted gestures. You hear him muttering under his breath in a strange, gurgling voice, but the

words sound like no language you have ever heard.

He is dressed only in an uncured leather loincloth, and periodically rubs his hands over his skin and mutters to himself disapprovingly. You can see that the fabric of the loincloth is dripping with moisture, which pools at his feet.

Blagar's Story

Blagar will surrender at the first hint of violence. With a little prompting, he tells the party the following story, speaking in a gurgling voice, punctuated by frog-like croaks:

As you can no doubt see, I am not human at all. I am a member of an ancient race known as the kuo-toa, who dwell deep within the Underdark. At a young age, my kinsmen rejected me due to religious prejudice. Whilst most of my kindred worship Blibdoolpoolp the Sea Mother, I am a disciple of Dagon, Prince of the Depths!

I was forced to flee my home and finally made my way to the surface, where I eke out a miserable living amongst the folk of Midcliffe. I have no companions (save those toads which you have dispatched), and it has been many years since I last saw one of my own kind. I ask that you not reveal my identity, lest the villagers reject me.

Miserable as my life is, I have no desire to move again.

Following are some questions the party might ask Blagar, and his responses:

Have you seen, Heth?

Yes—I know Heth well, of course. He is a good man, who always pays on time and always has a kind word for me. Now that you mention it, I saw him two days ago, wandering into the swamp. I thought this was very strange behavior and called to him, but he did not answer.

Where do you think he went?

I know the swamp well. There are several paths through it, but the only place of interest nearby is an old cave about a mile into the swamp, heading east. There is a primitive altar there, erected in ancient times to some unknown god. I suspect that the villagers used to worship there in the old days. Perhaps he went there.

Why didn't you follow Heth?

I didn't think it was my business.

Why didn't you tell the villagers about Heth?

I did not realize he hadn't returned. The villagers don't really like me coming into town, anyway.

Is the swamp dangerous?

It does not deserve the evil reputation that the villagers have given it, but it can be hazardous to those who are not careful.

ROLEPLAYING BLAGAR NIGHTMARSH

Blagar is a 30-something human male, hailing from Neverwinter. He is thin and pale, and reeks of fish.

Ideal: I must do all in my power to establish the cult of Dagon, Prince of the Depths!

Bond: I will do anything to protect my “kinsmen” in the swamp.

Trait: I've been isolated so long that I don't really know how to converse with ordinary people. I often gurgle and croak when speaking.

Flaw: My childhood experiences, and exposure to dark magic, have driven me somewhat insane.

Why do you go into the swamp?

There is good fishing there.

Does the “Green Lady” live in the swamp?

I have never seen her, and I think she is just a superstition. Although I have, occasionally, seen a strange green light in the distance.

Will you show us to the cave?

Yes—Heth is a good man, and I'd like to help him.

You know you are a human and not kuo-toa, right?

I can assure you that I am kuo-toa!

A DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check will reveal that Blagar is speaking some truth mixed with falsehood.

The Strange Truth

Many years before, a **green hag** named **Morwen Bonechewer** was travelling through this area. She was the last surviving member of an infamous coven known as the **Daughters of Swale**. As it happened, she was

also a devoted worshipper of Dagon, the Prince of the Depths.

As Morwen passed through Midcliffe, the villagers treated her poorly. She vowed revenge, and after establishing her abode at the bottom of a deep pool in the nearby swamp, set into action a perverse plan intended to greatly increase the power of Dagon in the Realms.

Morwen first summoned a group of kuo-toa from the depths of the earth using her magical arts, and caused them to abandon their native faith and embrace the worship of Dagon. In due course, she uncovered an esoteric and depraved ritual that would incarnate an avatar of Dagon in the natural world in corporeal form. This malevolent and perverse ceremony required the sacrifice of much innocent blood over several years—a deed carried out by Morwen's kuo-toa servants in an old cave in the swamp.

Around this time, Blagar stumbled upon the vile site of these aberrant exploits. Originally from Neverwinter, he had become a pariah due to certain obnoxious personal habits. He left the city with a group of other outcasts but was soon driven away by their jealousies and violence. He then spent many years as a vagrant, wandering up and down the Sword Coast.

At first, Morwen decided to simply sacrifice him, as she had countless others. But then she realized he was a vessel she could use, and through powerful rites, eroded his sanity and warped his perception of self. He now truly believes he is kuo-toa and is loyal to Morwen and his "kindred". Blagar's role is to help provide victims for

DAGON

Worshipped by the kuo-toa and other evil aquatic races, Dagon is a demon lord who lives on a layer of the Abyss called the **Shadowsea**. Cults worshipping Dagon are known and feared for their practice of sacrificing innocents. No community with any decency suffers the presence of such a cult for very long.

the sacrifices. They usually target stragglers along the road, but occasionally he helps take a victim from the village.

At this point, Heth enters the story. Having discovered the secret ritual behind the Shrine of Azuth, he had been learning magic from the spirit of Kurskyn. One evening he asked the spirit what the greatest threat to the village was, and was told to "seek Blagar the Outcast". He went to confront Blagar and was overpowered by the man and his giant toads. With the aid of his kuo-toa allies, Blagar then dragged Heth to the old cave, to serve as the latest sacrifice to Dagon.

If the party decides to enter Dead Man's Mere, go to

CHAPTER 3.

CHAPTER 3: DEAD MAN'S MERE

Blagar will willingly take the party into Dead Man's Mere, hoping to abandon them to the dangers there. If the party doesn't wish for him to guide them, he will direct them to "take the trail east until you come to a red-colored tree. The old cave is near there."

When they enter the swamp, read the following:

The rain has given way to a chilly, pervasive fog. The mist swirls and ebbs through the trees and underbrush, giving the surrounding terrain a dreamlike, unreal quality. The area is dreadfully calm and each buzz, splash, and chirp is muffled like you are hearing it through a feather pillow. The smell of stagnant water, salt, and decay, wafts about with the fog.

Visibility

Visibility in the fog is limited to about 30'. Due to the strange quiet, characters have advantage on **Wisdom (Perception)** checks that depend on hearing.

Paths

The party enters the salt marsh along the trail in the southwest. If Blagar is leading them, he will take them to the first fork in the path, then give them a choice—the northern path is quicker, but it is over a very old and rickety bridge. The southern path is longer, and passes through some very marshy ground.

If they follow Blagar up the northern path, he will attempt to abandon them while they are on the bridge.

If they take the southern path, he will try and abandon them in the quicksand. These encounters are described below.

If the party takes a path that leads off the map, they will encounter a random monster every 500 or so yards (see below). These other paths exit the swamp after a mile or two.

If the party leaves the paths, it becomes *difficult terrain*, and they encounter a random monster every 100 or so yards.

DANGERS IN THE SWAMP

There are several dangers in the marsh aside from the cultists. The set encounters (such as "Giant Lungfish") are labeled on the map and described below. There is also a random encounter table, below.

In addition to the other hazards, while walking through the swamp the PCs will occasionally catch a glimpse of what appears to be a greenish humanoid figure in the distance. Upon closer investigation, it always turns out to be oddly shaped mushrooms, peculiar wood formations, slumps of offal, and the like.

Remember in all cases to play up the creepiness of the scene—describing an unnaturally intelligent glint in a swamp rat's eye, for example, not only adds to the atmosphere, it adds to the players' paranoia, and will likely cause them to draw connections that aren't there. You can use those connections to expand on the story and environment, helping to draw your players further into your game.

Random Encounters

The following table may be used to generate several additional encounters for the party as they travel through the swamp. The number of encounters is up to you; you should be guided by how long you want the game to go for, and what the party's appetite for combat is. Placement of the encounters is also up to you.

The average party level determines which dice to roll on the encounter table:

APL	Dice
1	1d4
2	1d6+2
3	1d6+6
4	1d6+8

Here is the encounter table:

Roll	Creature
1	2 swarms of rats [MM p339]
2	5 poisonous snakes [MM p334]
3	2 giant centipedes [MM p323]
4	1 crocodile [MM p320]
5	1 swarm of poisonous snakes [MM p338]
6	1 gibbering moulder [MM p157]
7	5 mud mephits [MM p216]
8	4 giant poisonous snakes [MM p327]
9	3 swarms of centipedes [MM p338]
10	10 stirges [MM p284]
11	3 crocodiles [MM p320]
12	2 giant spiders [MM p328]
13	14 giant rats [MM p327]
14	2 giant constrictor snakes [MM p324]



Bridge

The bridge is made from 3' wide slats of wood, suspended just two feet above the water (it was created many years ago by miners, who used it to pass through the swamp with ore-laden mules). The bridge is several hundred feet long, and has nearly rotted away in many sections. The mist is especially thick here, reducing visibility to about 15'. The swamp water smells rank, and ripples on the surface suggest creatures stirring beneath.

Collapse!

About 100' along the bridge, several planks will suddenly give way. The PC at the front of the party must make a **DC 15 Dexterity** saving throw or fall in the water. It is a 2' fall to the water which is only 3' deep, so the PC takes no damage. However, if they stay

in the water for more than 3 rounds, the **swarms of quipper** (see below) will attack.

Escape!

When the party is about 60' away from the end of the bridge, Blagar (if he is with them) will suddenly leap into the water and swim for shore. He swims at 20', so it will take him 3 rounds to reach the shore, before disappearing into the tree line (he knows the swamp very well, and can navigate it safely).

Since the water is only 3' deep, it is possible for a PC to wade through the water. If they choose to do so, treat it as *difficult terrain*.

Exactly 3 rounds after Blagar enters the water, two **swarms of quipper** will converge on the area. Any creatures still in the water will be attacked.

Custom Swimming Rules

While swimming, treat the water as *difficult terrain*. Characters in medium or heavy armor must make a **DC 15 Strength (Athletics)** check each round. On a failure, they must spend the next round resting by either treading water or standing on the bottom (if they are tall enough).

Threats

2 **swarm of quipper** [MM p338]

Adjusting this Encounter

APL 1: Remove a swarm of quipper.

APL 2: Remove a swarm of quipper.

APL 4: Add a swarm of quipper.

Treasure

None.

Quicksand

There is a pool of *quicksand* [DMG p110] here, about 60' in diameter. Have the characters in the first rank of the party make a **DC 13 Wisdom (Perception)** check. On a success, they will notice the patch has a slightly different color and texture to the rest of the swamp. On a failure, they walk into the quicksand, and the second rank of the party must make a **DC 15 Dexterity** saving throw, or they too walk into the quicksand.

To add to the challenge, you might choose for a wandering monster from the Random Encounter Table above to approach the party if they get stuck.

If the party spot the quicksand, it is quite easy for the them to circle around it.

Escape!

Blagar will use the quicksand as an opportunity to escape the party. If he is leading the party, he will suddenly sprint across the quicksand pit, stepping on pockets of safe ground that only he is aware of. Anyone running after him will suffer the effects of the quicksand, as per the DMG.

If Blagar is not in the front row, he will wait until the party is occupied with the quicksand, and will try and slip away from the trail, unnoticed. Have those nearest him make a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check; on a success, they notice him trying to leave; on a failure, they simply notice he is gone.

Will-O'-Wisp

In a stand of brush and trees, several dozen feet from the path live two **will-o'-wisps**. They will attempt to lure PCs toward them by appearing as yellow lantern lights, and causing a faint “help me” to be heard. If the PCs move toward the lights, they will walk directly across a shallow muddy grave containing 2 **ghouls**, who will attack. These are the remains of the two adventurers that Niserie Lackwell hired to look for her son. They encountered Morwen, who used her powers to transform them into their present state.

Once combat begins, the will-o'-wisps will flee using *invisibility*, hoping to return for the leftovers of the kill once hostilities have been settled.

Threats

2 **ghouls** [MM p148]

Adjusting this Encounter

APL 1: Remove 1 ghoul.

APL 2: Remove 1 ghoul.

APL 4: Add 1 ghoul.

Treasure

In the muddy grave which the ghouls have made their home, the skeletal remains of some unfortunate victim still wears the *Jade Pendant of Tag Horath* (a *necklace of adaptation*) around its neck.

Giant Lungfish

Lurking in this malodorous, stagnant pool is a horrific and repulsive amalgam of fish and salamander. Coated



with reeking slime and filled with a deep and insatiable hunger, the lungfish have hunted the swamps for decades unchallenged.

Despite their size, the lungfish are well disguised and easily blend in with the surrounding muck. They will attack any creature that passes by.

Threats

4 giant lungfish

Use the statistics of a **crocodile** [MM p320], with the following change:

Camouflage. The giant lungfish has advantage on **Dexterity (Stealth)** checks made to hide in wetlands.

Adjusting this Encounter

APL 1: Remove 2 giant lungfish.

APL 2: Remove 1 giant lungfish.

APL 4: Add 2 giant lungfish.

Treasure

One of the lungfish has a gilded old helmet traced with ornate carvings in its stomach. The helmet provides no protection if used as a piece of armor, but is worth **200 gp** to a knowledgeable collector.

THE RED BONE TREE

When the party nears this object, read the following:

The fog parts for just a moment to reveal a strange sight: a dark tree covered in a slimy, sickly, blood-red moss. The tree itself is taller than any other you have seen in this marsh and would make an excellent landmark if not for the persistent, clinging mist.

As if responding to your thoughts, the fog closes in once again and the sight is lost in the obscuring grey.

When the party is 30' from the tree, they can make out some additional details:

The mists still press in around you hungrily, but now you can see that the red slime-covered landmark is no ordinary tree.

Standing before a small stony rise, the trunk is made of hundreds of misshapen lumpy bones. The branches are disjointed and spindly, and what looked like moss from a distance, is flesh and intestines hanging from the limbs.

The entire growth is a dark, slick red, but mottled here and there with flecks of white and black. What stands before you is a monument to insanity and evil, formed from the bones and sinews of innocents!

This vile sculpture was created by the kuo-toa as part of their repugnant worship of Dagon. Anyone wishing to count the bones will estimate that perhaps fifty men, women and children were sacrificed to form the structure.

Tin Whistle

If the PCs search the tree, on a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check, they will find an old and rusty tin whistle amongst the bones of the main trunk. Anyone trying to play the instrument must make a **DC 15**

Charisma (Performance) check. On success, they hear a soft, whistle-like voice say the following:

My mistress, Celestine Ambersong, was slain by the hag Morwen Bonechewer, in sacrifice to the evil god Dagon. Avenge her death, that she may rest in peace! Take me to the shrine, and I will bring you good fortune.

Anyone bearing the whistle will have advantage on their initiative and attack rolls while fighting the Cult of Dagon in **CHAPTER 4**.

Cave Entrance

The party will easily locate an opening in a rocky hillock beyond the tree, which leads to the shrine in

which the kuo-toa perform their rituals. A faint smell of smoke, rotting flesh, and other foul odors wafts profanely from the opening.

If Blagar is with the party at this point, he will flee. He will attempt to enter the cave, but failing that, he will run into the marsh. If he makes it into the cave, he will be shouting warnings to his allies as he goes. If he escapes into the marsh, he will try to lose pursuers by travelling through pools of water wherever possible, and using his swim speed to his advantage.

The cave and its contents are described in **CHAPTER 4**.

CHAPTER 4: THE HOUSE OF DRAGON

When the party enters the cave, read the following:

The opening in the rocks leads into a serpentine passageway with rough, packed walls which rise at unsettling angles; at no point are they perpendicular to the floor. The sides of the passage are intermittently set with stone blocks and carvings; a cursory look shows they depict lewd and nauseating scenes of cruelty and violence.

The tunnel curves erratically back and forth before opening into a large chamber. Read the following:

The tunnel, with its depraved and unnatural walls, winds downward into the bowels of the hillock and finally opens into a large chamber. Light from several smoky torches emanates from ornate sconces, embedded in the wall to your left.

Centered near the back of the chamber, as if skulking at the edge of the torchlight, stands a low, wide stone pedestal carved with strange and obscene runes. The pedestal is surrounded by thirteen stone columns that rise crookedly toward the cavern's angular ceiling.

Atop the pedestal squirms a dark mass of flesh, pulsing and thrashing to some unknowable rhythm. Tentacles undulate languidly across the floor, and the bulbous form of each glistens with wet slime. You are just able to make out that each tentacle

slithers its way to one of the columns, and that each column has a human-sized figure bound to it. Some of these figures writhe weakly, but most hang limp; their struggles having proved as futile as their prayers.

The chamber is silent, save for the faint rustling of the still-defiant victims' efforts, and a soft gurgling sound that throbs in time with the palpitating mass on the altar.

The pulsing mass of flesh is an embryonic **dagonspawn** (see **NEW MONSTERS**). It is about 6' in diameter and 3' high. Thirteen tentacles emerge from it like a tangled web, each thrust down the throat of a sacrificial victim bound to a stone column. All the victims are unconscious, even those who continue to struggle. A successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Perception)** check allows a party member to identify one of the weakly struggling captives as Heth (using the description provided by Shareene).

Also in the cave are 4 **kuo-toa** and 2 **kuo-toa whips**. These are the creatures that Morwen lured into the swamp to assist with her iniquitous rituals. If Blagar managed to escape and arrive at the cave first, the kuo-toa will be surrounding the dagonspawn, and ready for combat.

If Blagar did not manage to warn them, they will be in the smaller cove at the back of the cave, where there are some sleeping mats and rations, as well as a small wading pool. In this instance, the party may be able to surprise them.

Threats

- 4 kuo-toa [MM p199]
- 2 kuo-toa whips [MM p200]
- dretch (2 created per round) [MM p57]
- 1 dagonspawn (embryonic)
- Blagar Nightmarsh (he will not fight, but will cower in the corner)

Tactics

The kuo-toa are skilled fighters and some parties will find them challenging. They will spread out to negate area spells and will attack in a semi-circle, using their nets to try and restrain the party, before attacking with their spears. On the first round, one of the kuo-toa whips will stand back from the melee and cast the *bane* spell.

One round after combat begins, the dagonspawn will begin transforming its victims (all of whom are on 0 hp) into dretch, 2 per round. The dretch will burst free of the bonds and immediately charge into the melee.

The dagonspawn will start the transformations with its longest-held victims (including Gidion Lackwell, son of the innkeeper). Heth, as the most recent victim, will be the last one transformed.

Adjusting this Encounter

APL 1: Remove 2 kuo-toa whips and 1 kuo-toa. Dagonspawn has 35 hp and creates lemures [MM p76] instead of dretch.

APL 2: Remove 1 kuo-toa whip and 1 kuo-toa. Dagonspawn has 65 hp and creates manes [MM p60] instead of dretch.

APL 4: Add 2 kuo-toa. Dagonspawn



creates 3 manes [MM p60] per round rather than 2.

Treasure

In the alcove, among the pallets and gear, is a wooden crate that has the kuo-toa treasure. Most of what is here has been salvaged from victims and includes:

- A delicate silver bracelet with a broken clasp, worth 30 gp.
- A necklace with a hematite pendant, worth 50 gp.
- 175 cp.
- 50 sp.
- 125 gp, 25 loose and the rest bound with leather thongs into cylinders of 20 gp each.
- 3 cracked agates worth, 5 gp each.
- 2 flawless agates, worth 10 gp each.

- One rough chunk of onyx that looks like it was broken off a statue, worth **30 gp**.

Around the neck of one of the kuo-toa is a leather thong with a large eyeball coated in varnish. Engraved on the thong are the words “Morwen Bonechewer”. This is a magic *hag eye*, originally created by the Daughters of Swale. Morwen, the last member of this coven, can see through it and uses it to scry on the happenings in the cave.

Conclusion

If the party kills the dagonspawn and kuo-toa, the threat to the Sword Coast will have been temporarily averted. The storm will lift with the next day’s sunrise, bringing renewed hope and enlivening the spirits of the villagers.

If the dagonspawn survives, it will slowly grow stronger and will find other worshippers to bring it power. It may emerge as a threat once again to the party in the months or years to come.

If Morwen survives, it will take her some time to determine the identities of those who stopped the ritual, but she will do so. If the PCs take the *hag eye*, identifying and tracking the party becomes much easier.

If the party returns Heth safely to his daughter, Shareene is beyond delighted and rewards the party with the family heirloom she promised. Heth is visibly sad to see it go but agrees it is a more than fair price for the great service the party performed. Neither Heth nor Shareene knows anything about the charm’s specific powers.

WHERE IS MORWEN BONECHEWER?

Morwen, the Green Lady, is a **green hag** [MM p177]. She is responsible for the creation of this perverse shrine, but she chooses to dwell in another part of the swamp. She is not present in the cave when the PCs attack but will be aware of what happens through the hag eye.

You may *optionally* choose to have Morwen herself ambush the party on their way back through the swamp, although this is not recommended if the party is less than APL 3. Alternatively, you may choose to turn Morwen into a long-term adversary, one who begins to plot the downfall of the PCs.

Heth and Shareene will also sing the praises of the heroes to everyone they meet. Such praise may bode ill for the characters if their descriptions fall upon the wrong ears...

NEW MONSTERS

DAGONSPAWN (EMBRYONIC)

The unnatural progeny of ancient profane rituals, mutated flesh, and stolen life force, a dagonspawn is a minor incarnate avatar of the evil god Dagon. It uses its tentacles to drain the life and sanity from those around it. Even in its embryonic form, it is dangerous. If allowed to mature (a process that takes 6 years) it becomes very powerful indeed.

Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 113 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15	12	16	12	12	10

Saving Throws Con +6, Wis +5

Senses darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Abyssal

Challenge 3 (700xp)

Traits

Magic Resistance. The dagonspawn has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Abyssal Drain. A creature that begins its turn *grappled* by a tentacle suffers **2 necrotic** damage. In addition, the dagonspawn gains 2 hit points at the beginning of its turn for each creature it has grappled in its tentacles.

Once a creature has been reduced to 0 hit points, the dagonspawn will continue to draw sustenance from it for a full *13 months* until the poor victim's vital energy is utterly exhausted. Alternatively, the dagonspawn can use its dark powers to transform the victim into a *dretch*. This takes 1 round, and it can complete 2 transformations at a time.

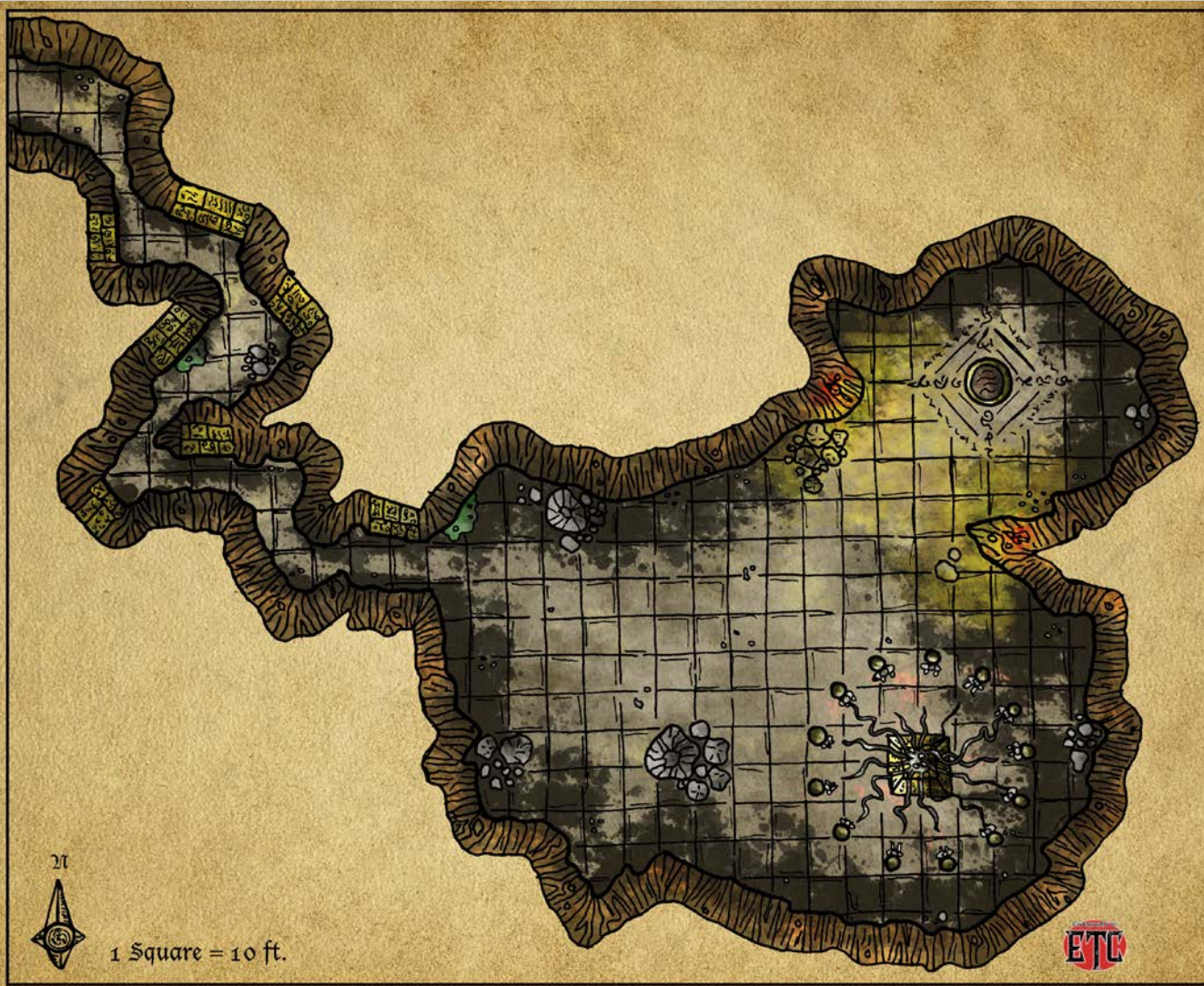
Actions

Multiattack. The dagonspawn makes as many tentacle attacks as it has tentacles.

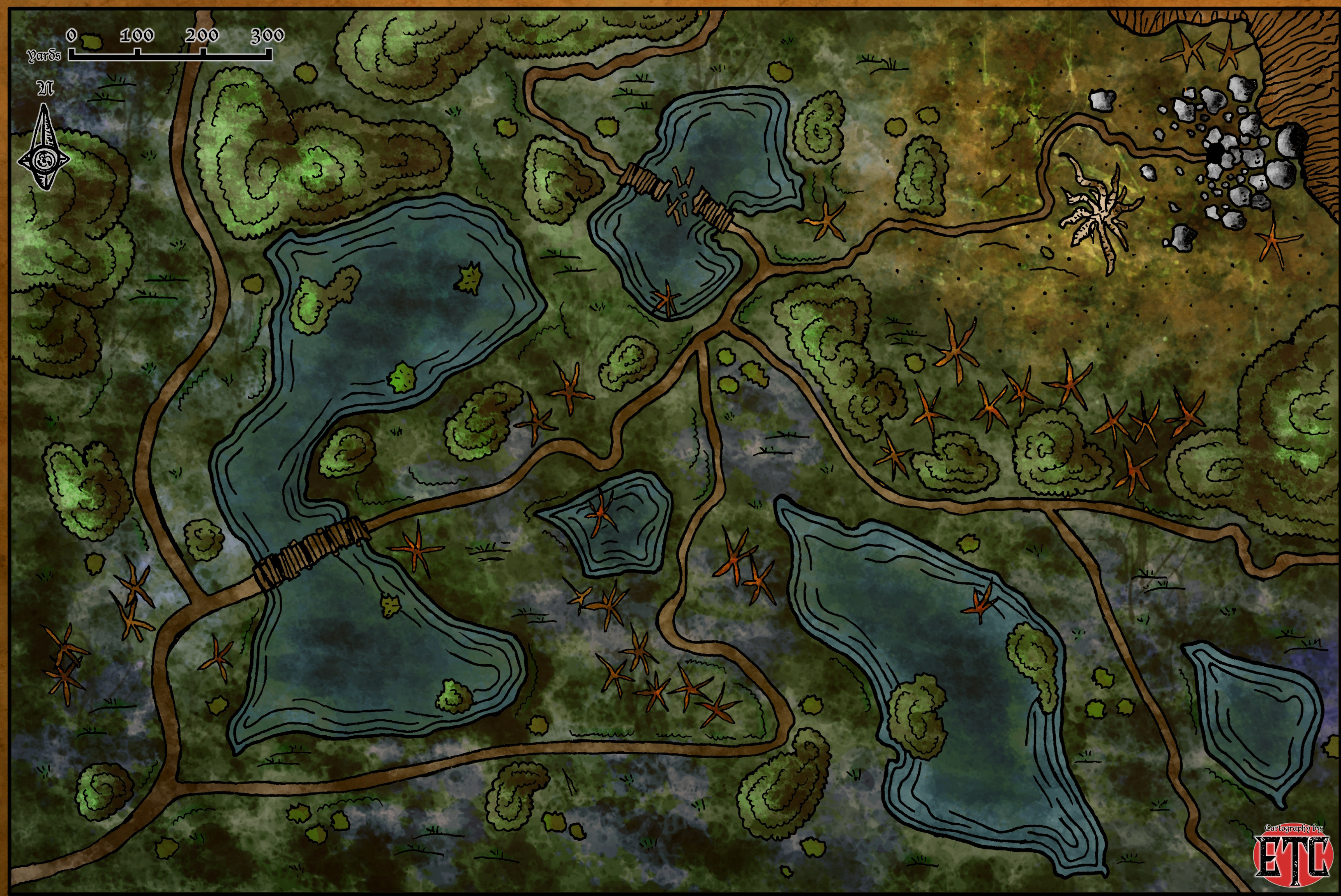
Tentacle. *Melee weapon attack:* +3 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4+2) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the tentacle can't be used to attack another target. The tentacles may be targeted for attack. Each tentacle has an AC 13 and 5 hit points.

MAPS





0 100 200 300
Yards





1 Square = 10 ft.

