

ARCANIS

THE WORLD OF SHATTERED EMPIRES



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AUTHORS

Cody Bergman, Samuel Cluck, Patrick Kapera, Henry Lopez, Robert J. Schwalb, Jeffrey Witthauer

DEVELOPMENT

Henry Lopez

COVER

Santi Casas

INTERIOR ARTISTS

Pat Loboyko, Nakarin Sukontakorn

CARTOGRAPHY

Keith Curtis

LAYOUT & GRAPHIC DESIGN

Ruben Smith-Zempel

5€ RULES

Pedro Barrenechea, Cody Bergman, Scott Horn

ART DIRECTOR

Jim Beck

EDITING TEAM

Cody Bergman, Henry Lopez

PLAYTESTERS

Paul Baughman, Alex Bok, Jackie Clifton, Eddie Santos

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ARCANIS THE WORLD OF SHATTERED EMPIRES CREATED BY

Henry Lopez



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HARVEST HOUSE

An adventure for three to five Heroes of level 1 to 4 by Patrick Kapera.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Tick tock, the moonlight walks across the wild frontier.

The world sleeps and the monsters stalk, but there's no need to fear.

Tonight, we feel no danger. No terror. No dismay.

We have the strength of a stranger, and his name is Old Grey.

The quiet, unassuming settlement of Moonswallow is nestled at the branch of a small tributary of the Vulg River, several miles north from the Kingdom of Milandir's coast in the Duchy of Eastmarch. The village gained its name because its position in the gentle, rolling hills of the area causes it to almost entirely vanish from the landscape once the sun sets. It's said that one of the early founders watched the village fade away under the rising moon as he rode home.

Moonswallow is in a highly contested area that is regularly assaulted by roving bands of Khur Gi marauders. The villagers developed a healthy respect for the dangers that surround them every day, but over the last several years they've benefitted from the help of an adventurer who visited, lingered, and eventually stayed. This adventurer took it upon himself to safeguard the area, on his own when he was there and with trusted allies and hirelings when his wanderlust drew him away.

The adventurer's proper name is Kerenyaga val'Abebi. To the locals, however, he is known as Old Grey.

Old Grey

None in Moonswallow have spoken Kerenyaga's given name for years. Early on the village children nicknamed him Old Grey after the shocks of ashen hair that explode from his head and tumble down his smiling face. Now even the village elders have adopted the appellation, and many locals cannot remember another.

Old Grey is the lifeblood of the village community. An alchemist by trade, he brews potions to heal the sick and nurture each year's precious crops. An Altherian by birth, he teaches the children of far-off lands and all the subjects they wouldn't normally be exposed to in the region.

Every year at the harvest festival Old Grey entertains the villagers with incredible tales of his journeys, and into these long narratives he stages grand moments when he reveals wondrous gifts for the locals, especially the children. This year Grey promised something truly special, a surprise for the whole village. He talked of a great legacy he would leave behind, something that could serve the town long after he was gone.

Old Grey never made it to this year's festival. He never emerged from Harvest House, the sprawling manor he spent his sizable fortune to construct. Some claimed they saw a light in the windows of the place, a candle or a lantern. Whether it was Old Grey or a trick of the moonlight, the children went without new stories, and the town went without its special gift.

Visits to Harvest House found it empty, Old Grey gone. The manor rooms, always open to all in the village, were empty and quiet. There was no sign where the village protector had gone or why.

Heartbroken, the people of Moonswallow shuttered Harvest House and let it sit. They hoped against hope that Old Grey had merely been called away on one last grand adventure, that nothing more sinister had happened. They prayed he would return soon, to spend his twilight years with them as he planned.

The Mystery of Harvest House

In the weeks since Old Grey's disappearance, many disturbing events occurred near the village. The carcasses of livestock and local animals were found at the outskirts of town, completely drained of blood. Locals found unidentifiable tracks leading from Harvest House to their homes, often right up to the windows closest to the children. Sometimes, when the night is particularly still, the children even say they hear something tapping at their shuttered windows.

Recently, two groups of villagers ventured into the manor, seeking the source of the trouble. The first group never returned and the bodies of the second were later found in the fields, drained just like the animals.

Something is terribly wrong at Harvest House, and it's time to bring in professionals to solve the problem.

The Truth of the Matter

Old Grey really did have something special planned for this year's harvest. He applied everything he learned in a long career as an alchemist and blended it with his new clock-making hobby to create little protectors for the town: tiny homunculi he called *Tick Tocks*, which were born of metal, gears, and chunks of his own flesh.

Gruesome as these creatures were at first, Old Grey hoped to nurture them, to disguise their nature and train them to defend the settlement from the attacks that were so common before he arrived. Most importantly, they would become companions and defenders of the children, keeping the kids happy and safe long after Old Grey was gone. But first the Tick Tocks needed to be finished, and that required flesh and blood.

Old Grey had a plan. He brewed potions to improve his stamina and dull his nerves, and after the first few Tick Tocks were created he taught them to make the incisions when he was asleep. He healed with more potions and the process would repeat until the Tick Tocks were finished.

Had anyone known what Old Grey was up to they would have called him mad, but he was determined. He knew something had to be done to safeguard the village when he was gone as he was dying. Poisoned on his last adventure, Old Grey knew he had limited time left in this world.

Old Grey was sure his body could withstand the process. His calculations were flawless, and he'd checked them countless times. Alas, he was wrong, and one day — weeks before the harvest festival — Old Grey perished during one of the procedures.

Only one of the Tick Tocks was done to Old Grey's satisfaction at the time of his death. She was the first he'd made, and she was exceptional. Her head was a small bulb of glass, lit from within by a tiny sliver of floating mercury. Until she could talk this was her only means of communication, the light flaring and dimming in response. Later, as she learned to feel in myriad ways this light became a reflection of her emotional state, brightening when she was happy or excited, and dwindling when she was sad or afraid.

Old Grey named her Aurora, and over the long months he spent building the others he spoke of them only to her. Aurora learned more of the work than any of the others and in the end, she learned to hate it, and to hate them for killing her maker. Her father.

The rest of the Tick Tocks are unfinished and unstable. They continue to operate on Old Grey's corpse, driven to revive him so he can complete them. His body is more gears and metal than flesh and bone now, and the missing blood pumps through the tubes and valves in-between. Only a little more is needed, and Old Grey will finally live again!

Draught of Brawny Diminution

Potion, very rare

Description: This draught is stored in unassuming glass vials normally, owing to the resources of its creator. When opened, the vapors released smell sweet and intoxicating, but have a bitter aftertaste when drunk.

History: While creating a veritable army of minion constructs known as Tick Tocks, the alchemist Kerenyaga val'Abebi found it difficult for his aging and weary hands to work on such small mechanisms. Looking for a way to better work on his creations, he experimented with brews to shrink him in size, eventually finding inspiration from tiny insects native to his adopted homeland around the Milandisian Duchy of Eastmarch. Using this potion, he could work on his constructs as if they were normal sized creatures, though only for short periods.

Abilities/Effects: When you drink this magical potion, you shrink to approximately one-twelfth your normal size with your strength seemingly amplified despite your small size. For 1 minute your size changes to tiny and your Strength score becomes 19 while under the effects of this potion. All items you are carrying shrink along with you, with weapons dealing damage as if they were tiny-sized weapons.

If the effects of this potion end while you are in an area smaller than your normal size, you immediately are reduced to 0 hit points and are considered to have failed your first death saving throw.



Getting Started

The Heroes are drawn to Harvest House by rumors of trouble near Moonswallow or hired by the villagers to discover what's really happening at the manor. Though not positioned on any major trade routes or roads, the village has something of a reputation both for Harvest House and its occupant, and news of something dire happening in the area around quickly.

As the adventure begins, Aurora is hiding in the building, evading the other Tick Tocks and searching for a way to stop them from remaking Old Grey in their image.

OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE

The Village

The Heroes may decide to simply march up to Harvest House and look around but those willing to spend a little time in the village can learn much more about the location and its owner. No rolls are required to learn any of the following, as the locals are more than happy to discuss their protector, his home, and the events of the last several weeks.

- Old Grey spent nearly everything he had on Harvest House. He brought in architects and builders from all over to help with the manor's construction, wanting every detail just right. Curiously, he declined all assistance from the locals. *"No one should labor to build their own gifts,"* he said. The locals found the decision strange but honored the request.
- After the manor's completion, everyone in Moonswallow was invited to visit anytime they wanted. Old Grey hosted elaborate dinners and guided tours of his large collections. He even brought visitors into his workshop at the rear of the building, though he asked that no one touch anything there. No one did. After all, many of the projects there seemed delicate and fragile.
- At Harvest House, Old Grey took up clock-making. He'd always been fascinated with machinery of all sorts, and his advancing age left him slightly obsessed with time. He told many locals that tinkering with precious gears and springs soothed him, calming a soul that would otherwise yearn for the horizon.
- Very recently Old Grey appeared weak and distracted. In the weeks prior to his disappearance more than one local witnessed him stumble and grip his sides and legs as if he were wounded. Old Grey waved off help, assuring everyone that it was merely the rigors of age. *"All the more reason you need my gift,"* he would say before returning to his manor at the edge of town.
- Should the Heroes ask about the two groups of townsfolk who ventured into Harvest House, they're told that the first entered through the front doors, in the southwest of the building. The second entered through the east and clearly ran into trouble in one of the display rooms, where Old Grey's collections are stored. That display room is a mess, with clear signs of a struggle and blood on the floor and windows. All this is visible from the outside of the manor. No one has entered since the second group was slaughtered and dumped in the fields outside.

The Trails and the Tapping

The weird tracks leading from Harvest House to Moonswallow are easily spotted from a safe distance. They stay away from established paths and move with purpose. In places it seems like tiny spikes have been driven into the soft earth, while in others the tracks are shallow and flat, like something lightweight and the size of a human thumb was pressed into the ground. No one has any idea what made the trails. They don't match any creature native to area, though everyone agrees they're made by something that walks on two legs.

Most disturbingly, the tracks accompany the trail of blood leading from the east side of the manor to the site where the bodies of the second group of locals were found.

Only the children of Moonswallow heard the tapping at their shuttered windows. They describe it as a series of irregular knocks, like someone asking to be let in. The children brave enough to look through the windows afterward found more of the strange trails leading up to their houses, but whatever made them had already scurried away.

THE HOUSE

Entering Harvest House

The manor is situated on a hill overlooking Moonswallow and its fields. Paths from the village lead alongside the fields and up to a veranda built around the southwest corner of the building. Another branching path leads to a small garden nestled between the two forward wings of the house.

Large, thick double doors are found at the veranda and atop a set of stairs on the east side of the manor. A small single door leads into the house from the garden and a servant's entrance is tucked away at the back, between the workshop and the dining room. None of these doors are locked when the party arrives.

Huge windows face out from every side of the house except the northeast corner, where the workshop is found. This room, the kitchen, the pantry, and the lavatories are the only rooms not visible from the outside.

Signs of a fight are obvious looking into the room beyond the east door (Collection 2 on the map). Many of the pedestals and tables here are knocked over, glass cases are shattered, and blood stains the floor. These stains continue past this door and into the fields where the second group of locals was found, but there's far less blood than the Heroes would expect from the number of people who entered the room.

Inside Harvest House

Once the Heroes enter Harvest House they become targets of the Tick Tocks, who view them as the final missing component they require to revive their creator. Even if the Heroes were diligent in asking questions at Moonswallow, they have limited information and are unlikely to know what to expect inside. Early attacks from the Tick Tocks should be surprising as their context is not clear unless the Heroes spend some time investigating the house.

Refer to each room description for typical ways the Tick Tocks interact with the Heroes as they proceed through the building. Keep track of damage the Tick Tocks inflict with their blood-draining weapons as this determines whether Old Grey is revived in the final encounter.

Clues and other findings are described for each room, though one vital item is left for the GM to place. A new magic item, the *Draught of Brawny Diminution*. There are enough doses for each Hero to use it once, and all these doses are kept in individual vials and hidden somewhere in the manor. These items are placed at the GM's discretion and may be found at any time during the adventure. Think of the *Draught* as a way to solve a problem the Heroes may face, or just a way to introduce something new when the pace of the adventure slows down. If desired, Aurora can reveal the location of the potions.

The Tick Tocks

The intent when making the Tick Tocks was not only to produce sentient creatures that could protect Moonswallow after Old Grey was gone, but also to offer companionship and help to the children of the village. This is why all the Tick Tocks, save one, were intended to look like dolls that could belong to kids of either gender. Unfortunately, many of the Tick Tocks are incomplete. Some or all of their clothes and skin is missing, and they look just as horrific as they do cheerful.

The Tick Tocks are about 5 to 7 inches tall and extremely agile. Except for the few that are still missing limbs, they enjoy full range of motion and can climb, leap, or run like any healthy humanoid of their size.

Most of the Tick Tocks see through complex crystal lenses made to resemble human eyes. When these lenses reflect light, they look like tiny glowing furnaces. The Tick Tocks blink mechanically and the furnaces suddenly vanish for a second every time they do. These lenses afford the Tick Tocks full sight even in total darkness, though not necessarily in all types of light (such as infrared).



The gears, tubes, valves, and other inner workings of each Tick Tock are encased within their torsos and limbs and their noise is entirely concealed so long as this case remains intact. However, damage to a Tick Tock cracks and eventually shatters this casing, allowing a Tick Tock to be easily located by sound, granting anyone searching for them advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks based on hearing. Once a Tick Tock is reduced to half their hit points or suffer a critical hit their chest case is shattered.

Wisdom (Perception) checks based on sound may be thwarted by areas of loud noise. For example, many rooms in Harvest House contain clocks. While these clocks are functioning, they mask part of the sound made by a Tick Tock's assembly. Canceling out any advantage the characters may have to locate the Tick Tocks based off sound.

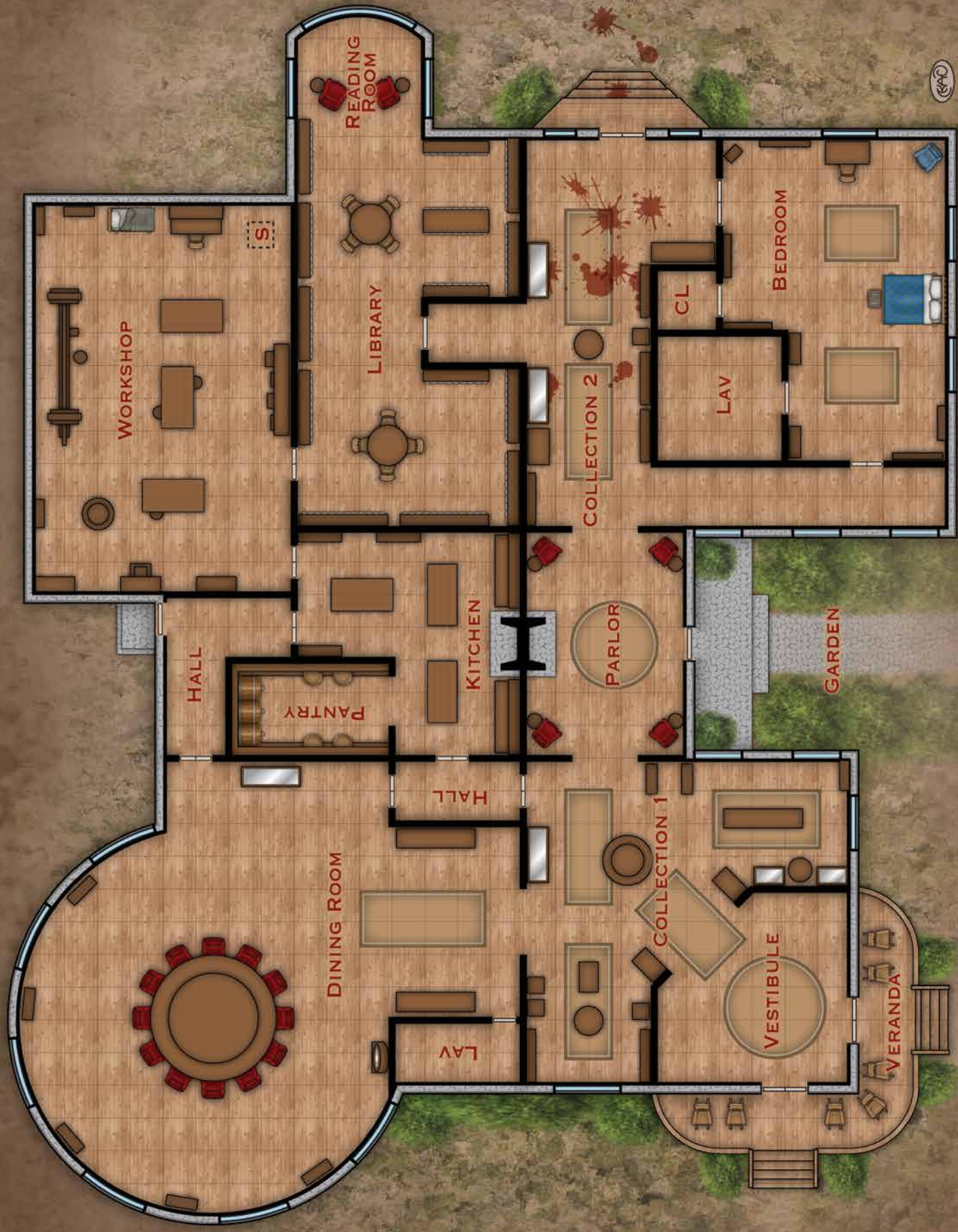
These Tick Tocks are wholly focused on completing their work to revive Old Grey. Some carry syringes like melee weapons and a few have replaced their limbs entirely with blood-draining apparatus. With these weapons, they will seek to harvest blood from any Hero that may enter the house, using that blood in their efforts to revive Old Grey.

There are as many Tick Tocks in the manor as you need to challenge the party. You can have an encounter consist of any number of Tick Tocks, with a number equal to the size of the party (1 per Hero) being considered a difficult fight for lower level Heroes. The idea is to nip at them, little by little, and leave them with just enough resources to fight the final fight. Please remember that the Tick Tocks are more interested in harvesting the Heroes' blood than fighting to the death. Once they have acquired this blood, feel free to have them withdraw into their tunnels.

Keep in mind when running these encounters, the characters will not have a chance to take a long rest unless they leave the manor, something the Tick Tocks will simply not allow. Short rests will very difficult as whatever room they choose will have tunnels the Tick Tocks can use to attack the characters.

If the characters have a particularly bad encounter allow them to block off a room and have a short rest.

For Tick Tock stats, please see page 16.



HARVEST HOUSE

5 FEET

The Tick Tock Tunnels

Planning for the Tick Tocks, Old Grey had the manor builders incorporate many small passages through the walls, floors, ceiling, and surrounding grounds. These are just large enough for the homunculi to enter, and they're one of the reasons Old Grey didn't let anyone from Moonswallow help with the construction.

The tunnels aren't shown on the map because they can be anywhere the GM desires. They can lead through any wall, under any floor, over any ceiling, or anywhere else that helps drive the action forward. Entrances can be introduced behind wall trim or decorative paneling, under shelves or at the back of wall-mounted cabinets, through loose floor stones, literally anywhere the GM can use them.

The Tick Tocks use the tunnels to scout rooms and intruders, and to stage sneak attacks. Anytime the homunculi attack from an undiscovered tunnel for the first time in 10 minutes or more, make a secret Dexterity (Stealth) check for them, comparing it to the Heroes' passive Perception. If the Tick Tocks win this check, they benefit from surprise in the resulting combat.

If the Heroes are in a room filled with clocks or other machinery the Tick Tocks will utilize the room's clocks to mask their initial attack. Have the Tick Tocks roll a Dexterity (Stealth) check with advantage against the passive Perception of the Heroes. An unsuccessful check does not instantly alert the Heroes of the Tick Tock's presence, instead tell them that they notice some of the clocks are "out of sync" with the others, though with so many clocks in the room it's impossible to perfectly pick out ones. When the Tick Tocks attack, those Heroes are not surprised.

Once the Heroes find a *Draught of Brawny Diminution*, or use a shrinking potion they already have, they can enter the Tick Tock tunnels. This not only lets them take the fight back to the Tick Tocks, and maybe get surprise every so often themselves, the tunnels can also be used to reach many parts of the manor quickly and easily. The tunnels also lead directly to Old Grey's lab.

Bedroom

Old Grey positioned his personal bedroom to directly overlook Moonswallow. From two southern-facing windows the Heroes can make out nearly all the locals' homes. Meanwhile, a single large window facing east offers an impressive view of the village fields.

A heavy four-poster bed is located with its head against the southern wall, between the village-facing windows. A writing desk is located in the southeast corner, from which Old Grey could look out the eastern window as he wrote letters to his distant friends. The floor is decorated with large rugs woven from fine Altherian wool, and the walls are covered in shelves with various curios and comforts from the same region (including an incense rack and burner, ornamental weapons, and minor costume jewelry).

Anyone pausing to examine the shelved items finds a crest pin bestowed to an officer of the Shining Patrol, the military force responsible for protecting the Republic of Altheria from incursions by the Ssethregoran Empire. Like the rest of the objects in the room, this has little monetary value.

A tall grandfather clock is found in the northeast corner of the room, beside the double doors leading into the eastern collections room. This clock's sound is deep and steady, which Old Grey preferred when trying to sleep, and the noise partially conceals any Tick Tocks in the room. The clock is durable and is considered to have 30 hit points.

Tick Tock tunnels lead up through two legs of the four-poster bed, while another leads down into the wall between the lavatory and the closet, emerging atop the decorative trim in the former and onto a tall shelf in the latter. The Heroes can locate these entrances with either a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check or a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tick Tock Attack: The Tick Tocks don't attack in this location unless they have surprise or some other significant advantage. The large windows in the room make it too easy for their prey to escape, or for outsiders to see them, and the single source of gear noise means one of their biggest tactical benefits could easily be negated.

Old Grey's Collection

Roll (d10)	Item
1	A precision astrolabe made of simple steel
2	A map of any location in the Known Lands (GM discretion), drawn by Old Grey himself
3	The pelt of a large canine creature, branded with an arcane symbol
4	A vial of Old Grey's favorite spice, no longer available through legitimate trade channels
5	A Coryani decus coin (sp), the first coin Old Grey ever earned from a completed job
6	A flask, passed around over campfires as Old Grey's former adventuring party shared stories
7	Something pickled that vaguely resembles a large, irregularly shaped eye
8	The chains Old Grey was bound in during an unfortunate visit to the Pirate Isles
9	The mold of a footprint Old Grey has yet to identify
10	An Altherian compass that Old Grey relied on to get him through dangerous terrain

The Collections

Two long galleries bisect most of the manor north to south and contain all of Old Grey's most prized trophies from decades as a successful adventurer. These items hang on interior walls, sit on pedestals, and lay in display cases throughout these long spaces but none are particularly valuable. Old Grey sold nearly everything of real worth to fund the manor, and to make the best life he could for the people of Moonswallow. Both collection rooms are normally kept clean and tidy but have gone neglected the past several weeks. They are lit by candle sconces set several feet from the carpets and collections.

Should the Heroes ask about what's hanging in any particular frame, standing on a pedestal, or sitting in a case, the GM can roll on the table below. If the Heroes sack the entire room — an action that should elicit certain consequences from the locals and possibly the Milandisian authorities — they gain everything listed on the table, and several other objects of the GM's choosing.

Clocks of myriad types stand and hang in both rooms, masking the sound of damaged Tick Tocks. There are too many of these timepieces to realistically damage or destroy them all, making the collection rooms much more likely sites for an ambush.

The eastern collection room is where the Tick Tocks ambushed the second group that previously explored the manor. This room's carpets are heavily stained with blood.

Tick Tock tunnels lead into the collection rooms behind wall-mounted objects and in the base of the pedestals. One cleverly placed tunnel — newly dug since Old Grey's death — exits behind one of the candle sconces. Via this tunnel a Tick Tock can make ranged attacks with advantage. If desperate, the Tick Tocks can also light and toss the candle to start a fire as a distraction or prelude to attack. All tunnels in the collection rooms require a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to locate except for the candle sconce exit, which requires a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check to locate. If the Heroes are not being harassed, they may make an Intelligence (Investigation) check instead of a Wisdom (Perception) check to find these tunnels.

Tick Tock Attacks: Because of the clocks in this room, the Tick Tocks have advantage on all Dexterity (Stealth) checks to sneak up on the Heroes.

Dining Room

Old Grey made sure his home's dining room was large enough to host nearly any gathering. He hoped to invite many people into the manor to share good meals and great stories. Sadly, the dining room sits abandoned now.

Windows here face the cold, stark northwest hills. The cavernous chamber is dominated by a large circular table

with a rotating ring, so anyone can reach any dish from any seat. Plush, tall-backed chairs surround the table, all tucked neatly into place and unmoved for weeks.

A wide chandelier hangs from the rafters in the conical roof. A ladder tall enough to reach the chandelier's unlit candles is located in the southern hall leading to the kitchen.

As a courtesy to guests who may not share Old Grey's love of timepieces, there is only one clock in the dining room — a tall and thin model standing in a corner and easily visible from the master's seat at the table. This clock runs silently and provides no sound cover for the Tick Tocks.

Before Old Grey's death he used the adjacent lavatory while laboring in the workshop, so there are signs of recent use therein (lathered and dried soap and beard gristle in the washbasin).

Tick Tock Attacks: There are no clocks here, and the Tick Tocks do not have advantage when sneaking upon the Heroes. However, there are Tick Tock Tunnels in the chandelier and rafters that cannot be seen from the ground without a DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check, and other tunnels near the ground requiring a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice when the Heroes enter the room. As such, they may strike seemingly out of nowhere

Garden

Old Grey cultured the manor's exterior garden as a meditative hobby. The manual labor calmed him during breaks from tinkering in the workshop or developing the Tick Tocks in the laboratory. The garden hosts rows of flowers grown from seeds collected all over Arcanis, though weeds encroach on all sides.

Tick Tock Attacks: The Tick Tocks leave the Heroes alone in this location. There are no Tick Tock tunnels here, as Old Grey saw no reason for them. No clocks are found in the garden.

Kitchen & Pantry

The center of the kitchen is given over to food prep tables and a large oven is located on the south wall which shares a chimney with the parlor's fireplace. Stoves flank the oven, with pots and pans hanging above and to the side on wall hooks. Everything in the kitchen is carefully planned out and strictly organized. In its time this room operated with peak efficiency.

Alas, the kitchen and the walk-in pantry have not seen much use recently. All the perishables are cleared out and the rest sits unused and ignored. As the Tick Tocks have no need for food, these rooms are the perfect hiding place for Aurora, the one Tick Tock not intent on draining the Heroes of their blood and restoring Old Grey to "life."

Aurora's hideaway is located in a mostly empty wine barrel in the pantry. A small knothole in the barrel lets Aurora see the pantry entrance, requiring a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot.

Aurora may be encountered anywhere in the manor, but this is an excellent place to introduce her to Heroes who are consistently opposing the other Tick Tocks. She may lead them through the manor, staging an ambush of her own. Aurora is eager for allies but she's neither stupid nor reckless. She's also hesitant to befriend strangers unless they prove themselves first. Those who earn her trust learn everything she knows about the Tick Tocks and what's happening in the manor, though she always paints Old Grey in the best possible light. Aurora isn't aware of the hidden laboratory as she was awakened in the workshop. When possible, Aurora steals the other Tick Tocks' weapons and hides them in various places in the kitchen and pantry (inside the bread box, wedged inside sacks of grain, and so on). This keeps the items hidden from the Tick Tocks using the kitchen rafters to travel through the house.

Aurora

Unlike the other Tick Tocks, Aurora was made for Old Grey. Her case is constructed of sturdy glass, showing all her inner workings through her torso and limbs. Her head is a tiny glass bulb with a bit of mercury floating in the middle, so she acts as a source of dim illumination out to 5 feet. This light flares when she's excited or happy, and she can intentionally flare it as well; in these cases, she provides bright illumination out to 5 ft. and dim illumination out to twice that distance.

Aurora wears a pretty powder blue dress Old Grey found at a trader's stall in Censure. She was not designed to fight and has no weapons, though she isn't against defending herself when necessary. Since Old Grey's death she's been biding her time, looking for a way to prevent the other Tick Tocks from reviving their creator. Aurora has set up a hideaway in the pantry where the others don't typically go, and if she feels the Heroes could be potential allies she may lead them there or reveal herself elsewhere in the manor.

For Aurora's Stat Block, see page 17.

Tick Tock Attacks: The only tunnels here open onto the rafters, making them hard to notice also requiring a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice, with Heroes who possess the ability to see in darkness having advantage on this check. A lone wall clock hangs in the kitchen, above the food preparation area. It runs quietly and does not grant the Tick Tock advantage on their Dexterity (Stealth) checks to sneak up on the Heroes.

Library & Reading Room

Every wall of the library that isn't a door is lined floor to ceiling with tightly packed shelves of books. Old Grey collected volumes from all over, in every language, even those he couldn't read. He was also fastidious about their organization, so the library is relatively easy to navigate through any common subject the Heroes might want to research (and a few obscure subjects as well).

The children of Moonswallow frequently borrowed books from Old Grey, accounting for the many gaps here. The greatest number of missing books are in the sections dedicated to clocks and alchemy, which may give the Heroes an idea what to look for elsewhere in the manor (the former are in the workshop and the latter are in Old Grey's underground laboratory).

The library is free of clocks, as a courtesy to visitors who may want to read in silence. However, a metronome is located on one of the shelves. This device is off when the Heroes arrive, but the Tick Tocks may turn it on to hide the sound of their inner machinery if any of them are damaged. Have the Heroes roll Wisdom (Perception) checks with the highest roll noticing the sound of the metronome suddenly coming to life.

A small extension of the library juts out to the east. Large windows face north and south, and nearly the entire eastern wall of the extension is given over to a curved window overlooking the fields outside. The extension contains two large and extremely comfortable reading chairs, each with a small table beside it. On the southern table the Heroes find a half-empty glass of spiced alcohol, a burnt-out hand-rolled cigar, an inkwell, and a journal closed over a quill. The last page of the journal reads as follows.

"The days are short now. I am sleeping more than I am awake, but it will all be worth it. Soon this place, the only place I have called home since leaving my station so long ago, will be safe. Nothing else matters, certainly not a few weeks of lost sun and slow healing."

"Aurora warned me today that I look frail and that I hesitate halfway up the stairs. She cares for me so. If the others have half the soul she does Moonswallow will be in good hands for generations to come."

Looking back through the previous few pages, the Heroes learn that Old Grey was working on a special project in his "laboratory" (a word that comes up frequently but matches the description of no room in the manor). "Aurora" is mentioned often as well, always with fondness, but the journal never reveals her true identity.

Reading through most of the journal takes a couple hours (this could be done as part of a short rest), at least, though doing so would risk further Tick Tock attacks. Should the Heroes find the time later to finish this and the other

journals on the library shelves, they learn much of Old Grey's personal history: that he was born to a minor branch of the val'Abebi family in the southern fortress-city of Semar in the Republic of Altheria; that he disliked the Republic's intense bureaucracy and rigid social customs; and left the country after his tour of duty in the Shining Patrol ended. Many of Old Grey's adventures are documented as well, and the GM can easily use the journal to lead to any number of new adventures. Perhaps the Heroes can tie up some loose ends that Old Grey left behind...

Tick Tock Attacks: The Tick Tocks move behind books on the shelves, and in tunnels under the floor throughout this room (the laboratory is directly beneath this room and the workshop). If combat happens here, the Tick Tocks push books from the shelves to clear the way for ranged attacks and use any remaining books as cover. Heroes who close with a Tick Tock almost always find it gone, ducked into the closest tunnel. A damaged Tick Tock may be tracked through the tunnels behind the shelves with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check. A successful check allows a Hero to attack the Tick Tock through the wooden back of the shelves with a suitable weapon (e.g. a sword, arrows, etc.). If the metronome in this room is operating, the Tick Tocks have advantage on their Dexterity (Stealth) checks to sneak up on the Heroes.

Parlor

Centrally located between the Collections and the Garden, this sitting room is where visitors were brought when Old Grey wasn't yet ready to meet them. A large fireplace is positioned on the north wall, sharing a chimney with an oven in the kitchen. Mirrors are hung above and to the sides of the fireplace, reflecting the view in the garden. This makes the parlor look much, much larger.

Tables with candelabras stand beside comfortable, padded chairs and low tables in all corners of this room. Throw rugs and thick carpeting complete the décor, and also deaden the sound of footfalls.

Most impressively, the entire concave ceiling is, at first glance, a mural which seems to change depending on the hour of the day, depicting either the sun, the dark moon Aperio or the green moon Viridis, passing overhead (the sun if the Heroes arrive during the day, with Viridis or Aperio if they arrive at night with the exact appearance coinciding to their current states). This mural has an odd, mesmerizing effect on anyone who looks at it for more than a few seconds, requiring them to make a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw to avoid sitting down due to a sudden rush of vertigo.

The ceiling is in fact a massive clockwork construct. The sun and moons slowly pass through the mural from east to west, keeping pace with the natural sky. Old Grey designed

this architectural feat himself. It was his favorite timekeeping device in the manor and he sometimes left visitors waiting so they could discover it for themselves.

The massive clock makes very little noise — only a low sliding sound every 60 seconds as the sun or the moons, the “minute hand,” shifts position. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the sliding sound is coming from the ceiling and staring up for another minute reveals the source and the mural's true operation.

The device is vulnerable to direct damage and the Tick Tocks have exploited this weakness to create a violent trap for intruders. They've tunneled into the space above and accessed the machinery controlling the clock and pried and warped critical parts. Three (3) Tick Tock guards remain to finish the job should anyone enter the room. Right before the Heroes leave the room the sun or one of the moons click forward, the entire ceiling groans, rumbles, and explodes downward, sending jagged metal shards, giant gears, and other debris raining down on anyone below. This also shatters the mirrors on the north wall, covering the floor in broken glass.

Falling Ceiling

Mechanical trap

The Tick Tocks cause the machinery in the clockwork mechanism in the ceiling to fail, falling on anyone below. All creatures within this room must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 2d6 piercing damage and 2d6 bludgeoning damage as debris falls on them, taking only half damage on a successful saving throw.

After the ceiling falls, the entire room is considered to be difficult terrain, and any creature not wearing shoes or similar garments suffers 1d4 piercing damage every 5 feet they move while in this room.

Tick Tock Attack: If the Heroes are sufficiently injured after the ceiling falls, the Tick Tocks may attack with their darts from the edges of the wrecked ceiling. If they think they can defeat the Heroes, they may even leap down to engage the wounded in melee.

Veranda & Vestibule

The manor's front entrance is large and impressive by design. Old Grey still had a bit of aristocratic blood coursing through him when he commissioned the manor, and he wanted a grand face for Moonswallow as it grew into the respected, thriving community he knew it could become.

The covered veranda and the staircases leading up to it are built with heavy, imported wood. The railings are decorated with hand-carved depictions of the Storm God Hurrian, and rocking chairs face the west and south.

Inside, the vestibule is a tribute to local history. The back walls on either side of a large doorway leading into the western collection are covered in wood reliefs telling the story behind Moonswallow's name. Inward-facing lamps focus all the light on these walls, leaving the exterior windows to light the rest of the room.

Tick Tock Attack: There is only one Tick Tock tunnel here, leading down behind the relief and into a small alcove inside the wall. Here a single Tick Tock watches for intruders through a small eyehole. This eyehole is hidden in a busy part of the image (requiring a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot). This Tick Tock waits for any intruders to leave before heading back to warn the others that newcomers have arrived. There are no clocks located on the veranda or in the vestibule, so the Tick Tocks do not have advantage on their Dexterity (Stealth) checks to sneak up on the Heroes.

Workshop

As the Heroes enter this room, read the following aloud.

"The room beyond the double doors is pitch black and must be relatively soundproofed given the noise that immediately assaults you. The ticking, clanking, and groaning of dozens of clocks operating in tandem is all you can hear from the moment you open the doors."

This is where Old Grey brought unusual timepieces he found in his travels. He would gut them, examine their contents, and learn from them, then build new clocks of his own design. The room is a chaotic mess of work tables of all shapes and sizes, with equally mismatched cabinets and shelves lining the walls. Finished and unfinished clocks of myriad styles are strewn across these tables, along with the tools used to assemble them.

A large foot-cranked lathe dominates the northern wall. Many clock parts are found here in various stages of completion. These eventually migrate out onto the tables, but many haven't made it that far.

A large antique desk is pressed up against the east wall, with a roll-down top that's currently open. This desk is as disorganized as the rest of the room, with a dizzying array of tiny gears, screws, and other bits scattered across its surface and several hand-drawn schematics rolled up and tucked into cubby holes at the back of the workspace.

One of these schematics illustrates the mechanism of the elaborate ceiling in the Parlor. It may yield some coin from the right buyer. Also, at the desk: a tiny arm from one of the Tick Tocks, left behind during their manufacture. An unmade cot is within stumbling distance. Books from the library are stacked beside the cot and several child-drawn pictures are stuck to the wall above.

The workshop is normally lit by alchemical lanterns, but the Tick Tocks destroyed them all or moved them to the lab. Until a light source is available, the Tick Tocks are impossible to track in this location. Even when damaged they benefit from total concealment.

The Tick Tocks are not suicidal and retreat when overwhelmed. They use the tunnels — in many floorboards and are also behind the lathe and the desk — but avoid drawing attention to the full-size entrance to the underground laboratory. This is located under a table in the southeast corner of the room. Beyond the Tick Tocks avoiding this area, there are two other clues pointing to the entrance:

- The table in question is the only one clear of projects or other items.
- Any Hero lingering near the southeast corner of the room notices a rotting smell rising from the floor.

The entrance is revealed by pulling the table out from the south wall. The table swivels out and around until it's flush with the east wall. This reveals a spiral staircase leading down, again into darkness.

Tick Tock Attacks: This room contains the only full-size entrance to the lab and the Tick Tocks rally here to take down any intruders. They wait until most or all of the Heroes move deep enough into the room that they can attack from all sides, and then ambush with everything at their disposal. They leap from table to table, attacking mid-jump. They upend boxes of screws, nails, gears, and other sharp objects making the room difficult terrain. All creatures not wearing shoes or similar garments suffer 1d6 piercing damage for every 5 feet in this room.

Old Grey's Lab

As the Heroes descend the spiral staircase, read the following aloud. This text assumes the Heroes find a light source of some kind or can see in darkness.

The stairs descend, round and round, taking you ever deeper below the manor house. With every step the fetid stench worsens, until most in your party hold their breath and cover their mouths. Finally, the stairs leave off at the entrance to a long, narrow chamber.

The ground here is bare earth and the walls are cobbled stone. The musty smell of wet earth joins the stench, the source of which is a shadowed pit several feet ahead. This pit is four or five feet across, its mouth obscured by a cloud of flies.

Small basins line the walls on either side, each nearly full. Above the basins at semi-regular intervals are hooks that once suspended alchemical lanterns. The lanterns lay on the floor, most damaged and unusable.

Tiny tunnel entrances are visible on both walls and across the shallow, vaulted ceiling. However, none of the little creatures that have attacked you are visible.

Yet.

If the Heroes instead enter through the Tick Tock tunnels, likely using the *Draughts of Brawny Diminution*, read the following aloud instead. Again, this assumes a light source.

The tunnel finally ends with a sudden drop into a massive chamber. Well, perhaps not that massive if you were full-size. Bare earth is perhaps fifteen feet below and the chamber is no more than twenty feet wide. Both walls are made of cobbled stone, with basins of various liquids extending directly out from them at semi-regular intervals. Hooks for lanterns also line the walls but the lanterns lay on the floor now, most wrecked and useless.

A deep alcove is cut into the north wall. The alcove contains shelves of books along with burners, retorts, racks of vials, and other alchemical gear. Patches of bizarre mushrooms grow in the earth opposite the alcove.

The drone of many flies is heard to the east. A terrible stench assaults you from that direction as well.

The laboratory is a single long room measuring 45 feet east to west and 20 feet north to south. It is not shown on the manor map, sitting half under the workshop and half under the library. As in the workshop, the Tick Tocks have removed all sources of light, so the party must provide its own illumination.

The stairs exit into the east side of the room. The nearby pit is only a few feet deep and contains the drained corpses of the first group of locals to enter the manor. One of these bodies is missing large chunks of flesh as well, flesh that is now sewn into the Old Grey Golem. The offal in the pit is difficult to stomach and anyone approaching within a few feet of it must make a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw to avoid throwing up and suffering 1 level of Exhaustion for the next minute. At GM discretion any Hero who has experience dealing with putrefying flesh (such as a soldier or a healer) may have advantage on this roll.

If the Heroes enter through the Tick Tock tunnels, they arrive at roughly the center of the room. The two main features of this area are a small garden of exotic mushrooms along the south wall (worth potentially 15 gp to the right buyer), and an alcove in the north wall. Old Grey brewed potions and conducted other alchemical research in this alcove. If the Heroes thoroughly search the alcove they find the following:

- Three unmarked vials of any common or uncommon potion (GM discretion), each with 2 uses of the same contents
- Several books on alchemy taken from the library, worth 1,000 gp on the open market
- A journal documenting Old Grey's struggle to find the counter-agent for a powerful poison coursing through his system, the source of which is not identified
- A note, signed in Old Grey's hand

Random Vial Contents

Roll (d6)	Contents
1	Disorienting Poison: Constitution saving throw (DC 13) or suffer disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) and Intelligence (Investigation) checks for 1 minute.
2	Healing Potion: Restores 2d8 damage but the target also suffers from elaborate and extremely lifelike hallucinations for 1 minute. Affected creatures suffer disadvantage on attack rolls and may experience auditory and visual hallucinations, especially when making Wisdom (Perception) checks.
3	An explosive liquid which detonates when thrown. Dexterity saving throw (DC 13) or suffer 2d8 fire damage, half damage on successful save.
4	Draught of Brawny Diminution
5	A tincture that grants the ability to speak with the lab's mushrooms for 1 minute but removes that creature's ability to communicate with all other creatures (including their own allies).
6	A spoiled, acidic potion: Constitution saving throw (DC: 13) if drunk or suffer 2d8 acid damage, half damage on successful save.

"Dearest friends,

"I hope you never read this, for if you do it means I am gone. My calculations were flawed, and I have not survived the process.

"With luck, my little Tick Tocks remain. Please accept them with open arms. They are yours now. They will keep you safe when I cannot.

"Yours with love,

"K"

The basins lining the walls contain various long-term alchemical experiments. Each contains a different liquid, which may be used as a potion or spell effect at GM's discretion. Alternatively, all these experiments are spoiled and simply leave a bad taste in the mouth, or bleach whatever they touch (skin, clothes, hair, etc).

At the west wall of the room, the Heroes find what's left of Old Grey.

Suspended in an iron maiden-like body cage, Old Grey is still. His ashen hair conceals his face, but his body tells a tragic story. His torso and legs are warped and misshapen, covered in deep holes where chunks of his flesh have been surgically removed. Tubes pierce his chest and abdomen, through and under his ribs. They feed viscous pale green fluid into him from glass spheres that are held several feet off the ground on thin metal frames.

Several small, wooden buckets are fixed to pulleys around the body cage, each at a different height. Tiny cranks in each bucket hoist it up beside Old Grey's body or lower it down to the floor. All these buckets are empty.

The Tick Tocks use the buckets to reach parts of Old Grey and make the necessary incisions. They are in hiding now, choosing the right moment to attack.

From this point on the Heroes can easily interrupt scripted descriptions. Let them. This is their chance to seize the moment. It's unlikely they can completely circumvent the combat, but their actions may shift conditions in their favor.

If during this adventure the Tick Tocks have collected at least 50 hit points worth of blood from the Heroes, add the following immediately after finishing the text above.

Old Grey's eyes dart open and an inhuman moan escapes his withered lips. He struggles, then twists until his joints threaten to rip apart, and finally forces the cage open. He collapses onto the ground, the tubes tearing from his sides. Their vile contents spill out across the floor around him.

Amid the slime the alchemist fights for breath. His back heaves and his limbs shake. Then suddenly his head whips back and he unleashes a feral cry at the ceiling!

Old Grey, the Golem

This wretch is only awakened in the final encounter if the Tick Tocks collect 50 or more damage in blood over the course of the adventure. In this case they infuse Old Grey's remains shortly before the Heroes reach the lab and the golem is included in the last combat.

Either way the alchemist is a dire sight. His body is emaciated, and his features are sunken. Nearly every bone is visible through his thin skin, which is now nearly the color of his brittle hair. His eyes are vacant, betraying none of the vibrant humor the people of Moonswallow came to expect.

Old Grey's body is ravaged, what flesh there was removed to complete the Tick Tocks. Should his skin be torn or cut open, as it likely is during a fight, the Heroes learn that most of his organs have been replaced with crudely assembled machinery.

The golem's initial attacks are blunt and bare-handed, but his fragile body almost immediately begins to break with the force of his blows. First his fingers break and splinter until they become sharp claws. Those last a round or two and then even they snap off, leaving forearm bones the golem uses to thrust and gore. These last the rest of the combat, unless you'd like to eventually leave him a snarling, armless husk, rushing into Heroes to gnaw at their necks.

For Old Grey's Stat Block, see page 17.

The Heroes may assume from Old Grey's introduction that he is no threat, but they would be wrong. If the Tick Tocks have infused his body with enough blood the party now faces a fully operational golem. Sadly, the process of reviving the alchemist also shattered his mind, and so he's as warped and violent as his little defenders. There's also no way to stop the Old Grey Golem short of putting it down.

Whether the "Old Grey, the Golem" is awakened or not, immediately conclude with the following.



The walls erupt and you are besieged. On all sides you're assaulted by the tiny creatures that have been attacking you since you entered the manor. They're everywhere!

Have the Heroes attacked by as many Tick Tocks as you as GM feel comfortable throwing at them. If several Tick Tocks were damaged earlier in the adventure that escaped, now is a great time to bring them back into the adventure as adversaries.

The Tick Tocks know this is their last stand and defend their creator at all costs. They concentrate their efforts on Heroes attacking the Old Grey Golem, and then on the most threatening or effective party members.

If the Heroes are having issues fighting in the workshop, they are free to retreat to other parts of the house. As the battle progresses there will be broken lanterns throughout the room (see Old Grey's lair actions). The contents are highly flammable and may start a dangerous fire, quickly choking the room with smoke. The Tick Tocks don't need to breathe but most Heroes do, and this may be another reason the fight makes its way back to the manor.

ASHES TO ASHES...

Assuming the party survives the laboratory encounter the immediate threat is over. The last of the Tick Tocks are probably destroyed in the final encounter, along with the Old Grey Golem if it was awakened.

The people of Moonswallow meet the Heroes as they emerge from the manor and listen in horror to whatever the Heroes reveal about what took place inside.

The party is welcome to stay in the village as long as needed to recover, and anything the group collected or wants to take from Harvest House is theirs to keep along with the village's gratitude. Even if the manor is utterly destroyed, the people of Moonswallow consider it a victory. They can clear the wreckage and find their way. The party has saved them from a threat they couldn't have faced themselves.

With luck Old Grey's intent is discovered and made clear to the villagers. His remains, if they are found, are buried with care. Despite his tragic errors he is still loved by the locals.

If Aurora lives she asks to remain in Moonswallow, serving the village as Old Grey intended.

CODEx OF THREATS

Tick Tocks

Small Construct, unaligned

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 25 (5d8+5)

Speed 30 ft. (Climb 20 ft.)

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

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Skills Perception +2, Medicine +1 (see below), Stealth +5

Senses Darkvision 60 feet, *Passive Perception* 12

Languages Understand Low Coryani (common) but can't speak

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Pack Tactics. Tick Tocks has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of its allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Programmable Purpose. When built Tick Tocks can be infused with specific knowledge, giving them training and advantage with one particular skill (in this case, medicine).

ACTIONS

Hamstring – *Melee Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 3 (1d4+1) piercing damage, constitution saving throw (DC 13) or fall prone and reduce speed by half for 10 rounds.

Blood Draining Needle – *Melee Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 3 (1d6+1) piercing damage, collects blood equal to the damage dealt.

Darts (4) – *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage. Constitution saving throw (DC: 13) or suffer disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) and Intelligence (Investigation) skill checks for 1 minute.

Net Gun (Recharge 6) – *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit*: 0 damage. Large or smaller creatures hit by a net is restrained until it is freed. A creature can use its action to make a DC 10 Strength check, freeing itself or another creature within its reach on a success. Dealing 5 slashing damage to the net (AC 10) also frees the creature without harming it, ending the effect and destroying the net.

LAIR ACTIONS

Within the laboratory the Tick Tocks gain the following lair action.

Alchemical Deluge – The Tick Tocks throw random alchemical compounds at one of the Heroes. (Even if all of the Tick Tocks are destroyed, a random one at 1 hit point scampers out of a hole and throws a compound) roll on the Random Vail Contents table.

Aurora

Small Construct, unaligned

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 25 (5d8+5)

Speed 30 ft. (Climb 20 ft.)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12	16	12	14	12	10
(+1)	(+3)	(+1)	(+2)	(+2)	(+0)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Skills Perception +4, Persuasion +2, Stealth +5

Senses Darkvision 60 feet, *Passive Perception* 14

Languages Understand Low Coryani (common) but can't speak

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Programmable Purpose. When built Tick Tocks can be infused with specific knowledge, giving them training and advantage with one particular skill (in this case, persuasion).

Pack Tactics. Tick Tocks has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of its allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Punch – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) bludgeoning damage.

Old Grey

Medium Construct, unaligned

Armor Class 9

Hit Points 93 (11d8+44)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19	9	18	6	10	5
(+4)	(+1)	(+4)	(-2)	(+0)	(-3)

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

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

Senses Darkvision 60 feet, *Passive Perception* 10

Languages None

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Piecemeal Body. Old Grey's initial attacks are blunt and bare-handed, but his fragile body almost immediately begins to break with the force of his blows. After its first turn of successful attacks its fingers break and splinter until they become sharp claws, changing the damage type of its melee attack to slashing. After two more turns, even they snap off, leaving forearm bones the golem uses to thrust and gore dealing budging damage once again.

Unorthodox Construction. Any time Old Grey is subject to a critical hit, it may make a Constitution saving throw (DC: 20) to turn the critical hit into a normal hit.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Old Grey makes two slam attacks.

Slam – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage

LAIR ACTIONS

Within the laboratory Old Grey gains the following lair actions.

Crumbing Debris – A random character must make a Dexterity (DC 12) saving throw or suffer 1d10 damage from falling furniture.

Random Explosion – Lanterns fall to the floor and smash open, spilling lit oil and setting things aflame, the area becomes lightly obscured, any creature starting their turn in the lab suffers 1 point of fire damage, on their 2nd turn this damage increases to 1d4, at the end of Old Grey's 5th turn the lab is set completely aflame becoming heavily obscured and dealing 1d10 fire damage to anyone who starts their turn in the lab.

COLLATERAL DAMAGE

An adventure for three to five characters of levels 5 to 7
by Jeffrey Witthauer.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Arcane spellcasters on Arcanis are under constant threat from the Sorcerer King of Ymandragore and his army of vile Harvesters who seek to kidnap them. This threat forces them to stay hidden. To facilitate this, they have created a secret network of safehouses and allies across the continent of Onara known as the Sanctum of the Arcane. Should the Harvesters learn of one of these safehouses, however, their retribution is swift. The Heroes have come to a Sanctum that appears, to the outsider, to be a library, and are speaking with the Archmage who runs it in his office at the top of a tower. Unknown to the Heroes the Sanctum has become compromised, and during their meeting the Harvesters attack.

The Harvesters

The Harvesters discovered the existence of this particular Sanctum and sent a large force to destroy it. This force consists primarily of sorcerers and Ymandragoran Thralls, twisted creatures that serve as muscle to back up the Harvesters' magic. The Harvesters are led by Kul Damoth, a member of the Society of the Ordained Seekers, better known as the Ordainers. The Ordainers are the Sorcerer King's chief hunters and have the ability to "eat" magic and store it within themselves to gain more power. Kul Damoth attacks from the outside with *dispel magic* to take down the Sanctum's defenses, allowing the bulk of the Harvesters to *teleport* within. While Kul Damoth's apparent purpose is to destroy the Sanctum and kidnap or, if necessary, kill the sorcerers within, his true purpose is to break through the wards into the Sanctum's vault and recover any documents there that might expose other Sanctums across Onara. Kul Damoth is equipped with a Ymandrake Dueling Ring to help him in his task.



Ymandrake Dueling Ring

Ring, very rare (requires attunement)

Description: This ring is manufactured from gold and set with a black sapphire.

History: Crafted by the magewrights of Ymandragore specifically for Harvester hunter squads attacking a Sanctum of the Arcane, these rings allow the Ymandrakes to conserve their arcane might by making sure that any spells miscast are never wasted.

Abilities/Effects: If you are targeted by the *counterspell* spell or lose concentration on a spell due to a failed concentration check while wearing this ring, the spell level slots used to cast the spell are not lost but instead stored in your ring. This ring can hold up to 5 spell level slots at a time and drain away at a rate of 1 spell slot per hour. While spell level slots are stored in the ring you may use them to cast spells instead of utilizing your remaining spell level slots.



Getting Started

The Sanctum itself can be in any city on the continent of Onara. The reason for the Heroes being there can be anything the GM desires. Perhaps they have just performed a job for the Sanctum of the Arcane or are about to be hired for one. Perhaps they have a friend who is a mage or have a mage in their party. All that matters is that they are meeting with the Archmage and her assistant in her office when the adventure begins. The Sanctum is a two-story building with a tower in one corner that ascends for another two stories, and a hidden inner sanctum beneath the ground floor. The building appears to be a library, and it is only in the tower chambers and the inner sanctum that the magical nature of the building becomes apparent. The Archmage's office take up one quadrant of the top floor of the tower (room 4A on the map).

TOPSY TURVY

Start the adventure by reading or paraphrasing the following text.

Just as you are beginning your meeting with the Archmage a piercing alarm shrieks from everywhere. The archmage's assistant, an Illonian woman named Jacintha, cries out, "The alarms! There must be a threat to the Sanctum!" The Archmage rises and moves swiftly to a full-length mirror standing in the corner of her office. She passes her hands over the ornate mirror and mutters something in Altharin. For a brief moment her stern face is illuminated by the sudden green glow emanating from the glass, then the mirror reveals a view as clear as looking through a window. The view shown is the outside of the Sanctum, from a high angle. Robed and hooded figures surround the building, their black-swathed bodies perched upon discs that fly through the air.

"Harvesters," the Archmage spits.

"How did they find us?" asks Jacintha.

"That's not important now. They'll take down the wards!" The archmage closes her eyes for a moment, then opens them. "I've sent instructions to our sorcerer below."

Three figures step from the Sanctum, looking to the sky. One of the Harvesters, a tall, broad-shouldered man, begins making passes through the air with his hands, preparing a spell. Just as he is about to cast, one of the figures below raises his own hands. A bolt of energy shoots from his fingers, striking the Harvester. His flying disc does not falter, but the spell he is casting fizzles and dies. The archmage smiles tightly, but her smile fades when the ring the Harvester wears begins to glow. Again, he makes passes through the air with his hands, and this time is not interrupted. A bolt of sickly green light blasts from his fingertips toward the Sanctum. It strikes against an invisible barrier surrounding the building, briefly made visible in contact with the beam. And then with a flash of light the barrier is overwhelmed and vanishes.

"With the wards down we're vulnerable," the Archmage hisses, swiping her hand across the mirror. The view changes to the main room of the library. In a flash of light Harvesters begin appearing, flanked by what looks like thick-skinned, well-muscled humans with no mouths, slits instead of noses, and large, bulbous eyes with no pupils. Blades and shields are grafted to their arms instead of hands, and each has a twisting tentacle lashing out like a whip.

"We're being overrun," the Archmage gasps in horror. "I must try to gather reinforcements."

"Wait!" Jacintha cries out, "What about..." but the Archmage speaks an arcane word, and steps through the mirror, vanishing. "... us," the assistant finishes. "We're all alone."

No sooner has she said this than there is another flash of light, and a Harvester in emerald robes stands before you, flanked by a pair of the hideous monstrosities.

Enemies: 1 Emerald Flame Harvester, 2 Enhanced Ymandrake Thrall

Allies: Jacintha Firma (use NPC Mage)

Scaling Encounters: If the Heroes are above 5th level, add 1 Enhanced Ymandrake Thrall.

Immediately after the fight read or paraphrase the following.

The conflict seems to have focused Jacintha, and the fear in her eyes is now muted with determination. "The Archmage would never abandon us. She will be back shortly with reinforcements. In the meantime, we are not without defenses." She strides toward the scrying mirror and activates it with a chant and a pass of her hand. "Let me see who is near the Vault," she says. "I will contact them and tell them to unleash our golems."

The scene that appears is of a magical laboratory, well stocked with strange items that glow, spark, and fizz. The walls are of a rougher stone than the walls currently surrounding you. More importantly, there is a pitched battle going on between two Sanctorum sorcerers and two Harvesters. As you watch, a spell goes astray and slams into the magical equipment. There is a sudden explosion.

You feel the explosion shudder through the tower. There is a howling, a shrieking like the souls of the damned, noise that cannot be described, sheets of multicolored light streaming up through the floor and exiting the ceiling, and suddenly you are falling, falling... falling toward the ceiling!

The explosion has caused random magical effects throughout the building. In the top two floors of the tower, gravity has been reversed. Luckily the ceiling is only 10 feet from the floor, and Heroes may attempt to lessen that damage in various ways, such as tumbling (DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check) or grabbing hold of a fixture attached to the wall (DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to hold on). Grabbing hold of furniture does not work, however, as the furniture comes crashing up along with the characters.

Unfortunately for Jacintha, she will fail this save and is injured as a heavy armoire lands on top of her legs with a sickening snap and crunch. Her legs are broken, and she is in too much pain to cast spells, nor can she move without being carried (requiring a *regeneration* spell or time). Additionally, the scrying mirror is shattered.

If the Heroes will likely be at a loss as to what just happened, Jacintha can impart the following information.

- There is a hidden level beneath the ground floor of the Sanctum, accessible through a secret passage in the study reached through the last door on the wall across from the tower, the one right before reaching the entrance hallway. There is a further hidden trap door within the secret passage that leads to this inner sanctum.
- Two of the Sanctorum's most gifted sorcerer have been experimenting in one of the laboratories in the inner sanctum. An explosion in one of those labs could have devastating and unpredictable effects, like gravity reversing.

- If the Heroes follow the left wall within the inner sanctum they will reach the vault. Within the Vault are powerful golems that would make short work of these Harvesters.
- The golems are supposed to be activated by contingency spells if the Sanctum ever comes under attack, but the magical explosion must have stopped that from happening.
- The vault is so heavily warded that Jacintha suspects the wards survived the explosion. The wards can be deactivated by anyone carrying one of the Archmage's keys.
- The golems can likewise be activated by anyone carrying the Archmage's key who commands them "Defend the Sanctorum." Manual activation takes one minute (10 rounds).

Jacintha has one of the Archmage's keys and will give it to the Heroes. It doesn't look much like a key at all, but rather a smooth pebble. It is constantly warm to the touch. If the Heroes question whether they should simply flee, Jacintha will claim that the Harvesters will not let them escape alive, as in previous attacks, they eliminated all within and that activating the golems is their best chance of surviving.

HARVESTER, HARVESTEE

The remainder of this adventure is open ended. Refer to the provided map. The first order of business is for the Heroes to make it to the inner sanctum, the entrance of which is located at 1F. The following rules are in play.

- The outer walls of the Sanctorum are completely impenetrable due to the effects of the arcane explosion. Even if the Heroes remove the stone outer wall, they will find the building surrounded by a barrier of red-gold energy that absorbs all physical and magical attacks, allowing nothing through on any known plane of existence, including teleportation. Everyone outside, including the Archmage, is locked out, while the Heroes and the Harvesters are locked in. This makes truth Jacantha's claims from earlier that the Harvesters will not let them escape alive.
- Furthermore, the entire area is under an effect similar to a *forbiddance* spell, save that it does no damage to a particular type of creature.
- Besides Jacintha and the Harvesters, there are currently 3 sorcerers and 5 non-sorcerers still alive after the attack and the explosion. They are bound and secured in area 2E.

- Due to the magical explosion, magic has gone haywire within the Sanctum. There are random magical effects in each area. Whenever the Heroes change floors, or whenever roughly ten minutes of in-game time passes on the same floor, roll on the effects table in the Wild Magic Effects sidebar. At Second Floor and below add the modifier listed for that area to the roll.
- Interior walls are made of wood and can easily be smashed and broken down at GM discretion. The exception to this is the ground floor, which is magically reinforced to keep the inner sanctum secret and cannot easily be penetrated. Of course, smashing walls makes quite a bit of noise.

Wild Magic Effects

Roll 1d6 and add any modifiers due to location. The following results are in effect until the next roll.

1-2:	No Additional Effect
	All spells cast require a spell slot 1 level higher to take effect. The caster becomes aware of this once it is time to expend a spell slot, and they must choose to either expend a higher spell slot instead or let the spell fizzle.
3:	
	All spells are cast as if by a slot 1 level higher. So, a 2nd level spell slot expended to cast <i>cure wounds</i> behaves as if a 3rd level slot was expended.
4:	
	A 50% chance of being affected as by a <i>slow</i> spell on your turn.
5:	
	A <i>silence</i> spell is in effect over the entire area.
6:	
	All targeted spells do an additional 1d6 damage to the target.
7:	
	All spells do 1d6 damage to the caster. This damage happens after the spell is cast.
8:	
	Every time a spell is cast it has a 50% chance of affecting a random target.
9:	
	As <i>antimagic field</i> over the entire area. The wards on the vault are unaffected by this.
10:	

Players should not know what effect is in the area until their Heroes could reasonably determine it. For instance, *silence* is apparent immediately, but spells affecting random targets only become apparent the first time a spell went awry.

Other ways to use Wild Magic effects: The effects produced by wild magic are endless, feel free to create new effects on the fly that do not adversely affect the Heroes, such as skin changing color for example. If the Heroes are having a hard time of it, you can have a wild magic effect suddenly refresh the Heroes as if they had taken a short or long rest or maybe they get trapped in a pocket of static time, where they are actually forced to take an 8 hour rest when only seconds pass in the mortal realm.

Harvester Patrols

In each floor there are Harvester patrols listed, as well as what they are doing. This should be considered more of a guideline than a hard and fast rule. On the one hand, stealth-minded Heroes may be able to slip past the patrols. On the other hand, if Heroes can move straight through the Sanctum without interruption this will be an extremely short adventure. Patrols can be added or removed as needed to keep the adventure both exciting and enjoyable.

Patrols should be in the Heroes' way. Getting from point A to point B should never be straightforward. Ideally Heroes should have to communicate with each other and come up with an infiltration plan. If they put effort into this plan and use basic good judgment, let the basics of the plan work. However, do not let the plan go off without a hitch either. Throw in some complication that requires improvisation. Perhaps a patrol varies from its normal path, or one of the Harvesters is posted as guard while the rest of the patrol moves on, or the wild magic caused damage to the rafter the hero was sneaking across, forcing them to make some difficult Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks.

If the Heroes decide the best way to deal with a patrol is to attack it, be lenient at first. The zones of *silence* caused by the magical explosion are a good mechanic to keep other patrols from immediately being aware of the sounds of battle. However, if the Heroes are just bludgeoning their way through the adventure with no forethought at all, have the other patrols become aware of the battle and rush to help. The collective number of Harvesters in the Sanctum should be more powerful than the Heroes, after all.

If Heroes get in over their head and decide to run, let them. There are enough places in the Sanctum where they can lose themselves easily. Harvester patrols will communicate to the other patrols that there are intruders, and that will put the Harvesters on high alert. They will be more cautious and check more places for hiding Heroes. This might even be the reason that Kul Damoth begins spying on the Heroes with his scrolls of *scry*.

Ultimately the mechanics of the patrols are not nearly as important as their effect on the players. Keep things tense, make the Heroes be cautious and avoid patrols, but ultimately let them feel like accomplished Heroes who pulled off a daring plan.

Harvester Patrols: 1 or 2 Harvesters (either Emerald Flame Harvester or Ordainer Harvesters), 3 to 6 Enhanced Ymandrake Thralls, or 1 or 2 Hunter/Killer Thralls (GM's discretion)

Feel free to modify the enemies in these encounters to vary the combat even more.

A circular diagram of a building layout with a central courtyard. The building is divided into several sections labeled with letters in red circles: 'A' is at the bottom left, 'B' is in the center, 'C' is in the middle left and middle right, 'D' is at the top left, and 'E' is at the top right. The building has a thick outer wall and a central vertical corridor.

FLOOR TWO

The map shows a large central hall (C) with a grid of 4x8 tables. To the left is a curved staircase area with points A, B, and F. To the right is a small room with four sub-rooms: two labeled D and two labeled E.

FLOOR ONE

FLOOR ZERO



Fourth Floor

The Fourth Floor is under the effect of *reversal of gravity*. That means traversing this floor is very difficult, as what furniture was in the rooms is now in a smashed heap on the “floor.” Climbing, jumping, or other athletic or magical measures will be required to change levels. Unless otherwise noted, the ceiling is 10 feet from the floor. The top of each doorway is 6 feet high, which means the top of each doorway is 4 feet from the “floor” of the reversed levels.

4A

The Archmage’s offices. Jacintha will remain here, nursing her broken legs, until help comes.

4B

This stone hallway has a window at the far end, giving Heroes a dizzying view of the outside. Of note: gravity has been reversed, and thus the ground is above and the sky below. Also, the entire structure has been covered in a red-gold magical barrier that is impenetrable, as any attempts to climb out the window will show.

4C

Jacintha’s offices. There is nothing of note here, just mundane papers mostly dealing with running the library. All information regarding the Sanctorum of the Arcane is kept in the vault, not here.

4D

A conference room, currently empty.

4E

As the Heroes open the doors to this room they are greeted by a scene of complete chaos, in the center of the room, perched upon a crushed four post bed is a large roper, its tentacles whipping out killing and eating a variable menagerie of creatures. One, a small kobold spots the Heroes and runs straight at them screaming for help as a tentacle wraps around its leg.

These were the Archmage’s chambers. He had a collection of monster bottles, containing strange creatures he encountered over the years, all of which have shattered, releasing all the creatures at once.

Allow your imagination to go wild in this room, have several small and medium monsters, for example, rust monsters, a giant rat, giant scorpion, and so on, fighting each other, the roper, and once the Heroes are spotted the Heroes as they attempt to escape the impromptu slaughter.

Enemies: 1 Roper, any number of medium sized or lower, CR 1 or lower monsters native to Arcanis (GM discretion)

4F

These are the stairs “down,” meaning up in the reversed gravity. The ceiling does not rise with the stairs here, meaning that at point 4F the floor is 20 feet away from the ceiling. The ceiling of the hallway at 3B, however, is only 10 feet above the ceiling at 4F, so skilled climbing or piling up furniture should be able to scale the difference. This curved stair is the same curved stair as 3A.

Third Floor

The reversed gravity is still in effect on this floor.

3A

This is the same curved stair as 4F.

3B

As the Heroes enter this hallway, they will hear the thud of boots on the stone, unless the wild magic has created *silence*. A patrol of Harvesters has made the jump from floor the ceiling and are now beginning to patrol the tower. They are not doing a room-by-room search, so the heroes can avoid them by ducking into any of the rooms flanking 3B and waiting for them to leap “down” to Fourth Floor, or they can fight the Harvesters.

Enemies: 2 Ordainer Harvesters, 1 Hunter/Killer Thrall

3C

These are guest rooms used for those (usually sorcerers) staying at the Sanctorum who do not need the added security of the hidden sanctum. At the moment they are pretty smashed up since all the furniture fell to the ceiling when the gravity reversed, but Heroes can find 2d10 gp worth of mundane items and coin in each room if they search.

3D

This guest room is the only one that was occupied. Unfortunately, its occupant was killed when his bed crashed on top of him. However, his familiar survived, an Or’uth devil (also known as an Infernal scout). The Infernal scout, summoned through the deceased sorcerer’s val’Mehan Bloodline ability, is trapped in the sanctum by the effects surrounding it and is somewhat alarmed by what is going on.

The Or’uth devil operates per the *find familiar* spell and therefore cannot attack but may perform other actions. With its summoner dead it is free to make deals with the Heroes.

Of course, being recently freed it is just as likely to turn on the Heroes and alert the Harvesters to their presence.

Potential Allies: Or'uth devil (see Arcanis 5e Campaign Guide, or use imp)

3E

Once again, the stairs drop away, leaving a 20 foot gap between floor and ceiling at point 3E. This time, however, there is a twist – the reversed gravity stops half a foot past the ceiling of the Second Floor. Heroes who blithely climb toward the ceiling as they did in the previous floor will be in for a rude awakening as the gravity suddenly returns to normal, dropping them into 2B with a crash forcing them to make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 2d6 bludgeoning damage, or half damage upon a successful save.

Second Floor

Gravity is normal on this floor, but the Wild Magic effects are still rampant. Since the Heroes are growing closer to the center of the explosion, add a +1 to all Wild Magic rolls.

2A

This is the same as area 3E. Remember that gravity reverses itself once Heroes are past the ceiling of First Floor.

2B

This is a wooden landing with chairs set up for relaxed conversation, any of which could be used by Heroes or Harvesters as cover.

2C

A wooden balcony runs all around the Second Floor, giving an unobstructed view of the First Floor. There is a waist-high wooden railing at the edge of the balcony that provides half cover and can be ducked behind for full cover. A patrol of Harvesters walk a slow circle around the balcony and must either be avoided or fought. If a fight occurs too close to 2E, the Ymandrakes inside will likely hear and join in, unless a *silence* spell is in effect.

Note that the wooden balcony, and thus the ceiling of the studies below, can be destroyed. Clever Heroes might use that to drop into section 1E without having to deal with the Harvester patrols on First Floor. Destroying the floor will make quite a bit of noise unless a *silence* spell is in effect.

2D

These are chambers for people to read quietly or hold meetings.

2E

In this study the Harvesters have decided to keep their prisoners. There are currently 3 sorcerers and 5 non-sorcerers, which are all those still alive in the Sanctorum except for Jacintha. If freed, they will be of little help. All are low CR creatures and have expended all their spell slots. The prisoners are guarded by a large Harvester force. If the Heroes are finding things too easy, the GM can use some of these guards to bolster patrols elsewhere. It would be foolish for the Heroes to attack this force en masse, and this should be obvious to them.

Enemies: 2 Emerald Flame Harvesters, 1 Ordainer Harvester, 6 Enhanced Ymandrake Thralls, 2 Hunter/Killer Thralls (one starts hidden, hanging from the ceiling)

2F

These curving stairs go down to the First Floor.

First Floor

This is the main floor of the library. The floor here is magically reinforced stone that will repel any attempts to tunnel through. Since the Heroes are growing closer to the source of wild magic, add +2 to all wild magic rolls.

1A

This is the same as 2F.

1B

The main floor of the library is covered with shelf after shelf of books, providing ample cover and continuous obstacles. There are aisles through the shelves, but unless the Heroes are traveling parallel to one of the cardinal directions on the map (straight up, down, left, or right) movement should be considered through difficult terrain. Furthermore, line of sight becomes broken after only five feet, except along the same cardinal directions. Anyone who seeks it out can easily find whatever cover they wish, though the shelves and books are both flimsy and flammable. Two patrols are moving separately through the library. One is moving around the main floor, and the other is systematically moving into each room and checking it, before exiting and moving to the next room.

Enemies: 2 Harvester patrols (see Harvester Patrol sidebar)

1C

These are studies.

1D

These are storage closets. With a proper search check Heroes might be able to find common, mundane equipment. No adventuring gear, but common items such as tools, cloths, a broom, etc.

1E

This appears to be a study like all the others, but there is a secret door built into the back of the wall that leads to section 1F. It is closed and thus hidden, but a careful examination will reveal that it has been opened recently, indicating the Harvesters have already found it.

1F

This small passage ends with a trap door and a ladder leading down to the inner sanctum. The trap door is supposed to be flush with the stone floor and thus hidden, but instead it is ajar. Another indication that the Harvesters have already been through the door.

THE INNER SANCTUM

The inner sanctum has been carved out of the rock beneath the Sanctum library. Unlike the upper levels, the walls here are rough-hewn solid stone. Wild magic is running rampant here, showing itself in colored sparks dancing along the walls, and waves of visual and audio distortion. In addition, while magic has the same mechanical effects, its aesthetics are enhanced and made wild here. A *magic missile* might shoot out bolts of arcane lightning that graze along the walls as it careens toward its target. *Mage armor* might ripple and bulge in a lensing effect in front of the wearer's body. Be creative.

Every five minutes of in-game time the Wild Magic effect should change. The explosion happened at 0H, and that is where the effects are strongest. Within 30 feet of room 0H (roughly anywhere on the map left of room 0F), add +4 to each wild magic roll. Outside this area add +3 to each wild magic roll.

Kul Damoth and his hand-picked men are already in the inner sanctum, trying to get into room 0I, the Vault. However, Kul Damoth has been stopped by the wards. Using a *scroll of scry* he discovered that the Heroes were coming. He retreated to room 0G to wait for them to deactivate the wards, thus allowing him his final victory.

In addition to Kul Damoth there are 3 standard patrols of Harvesters (see Harvester Patrol sidebar) patrolling the halls and rooms of this level.

0A

This is where the ladder from First Floor's trapdoor leads.

0B

These are laboratories and classrooms used by the Sanctum sorcerer. Each time the Heroes enter, roll a d%.

d%	Result
1-50	Nothing of interest
51-75	on a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check the party finds a random uncommon magic item.
76-90	Wild magic. The first Hero in the room must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or have a 50% chance to either suffer 2d10 energy damage of a random type (half on a successful save) or recover 2d10 hit points. At the beginning of every round, if there are more creatures in the room, the wild magic effect goes off, targeting a random creature. On a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) check the party finds a random uncommon magic item which has somehow survived the rendering of magical powers in this room.
91-100	Gates were being studied in this room, and a bone devil wandered in just before the <i>forbiddance</i> spell destroyed the gate, trapping it. It is very angry and will attack the heroes.

0C

These small cells are used to provide sparse sleeping quarters for any sorcerers who must remain hidden, as well as providing storage space and other minor amenities. With successful investigation Heroes can find 1d4 gp worth of items in a few of these rooms, though most are empty.

0D

This was used as a mess hall for sorcerers residing here. Tables and chairs are still set up, though it clearly has not been used in some time (the Sanctum simply does not have the permanent population to justify its use).

0E

A kitchen used for the mess hall. Also, it has clearly not been used in some time. Heroes can find some rations here, as well as knives and other utensils.

0F

This long room is currently set up with a long table and chairs as a conference room, though it has also been used as a training room for young sorcerers. Padded mats and target dummies are set against the wall.

0G

This small lab is locked with an *arcane lock* cast by Kul Damoth, who is hiding within with his men. Should the Heroes enter this room Kul Damoth will silently cast *invisibility* on himself and his team, as they do not wish to confront the Heroes until they have broken the wards. If he is forced to cast this spell he will have one less 2nd level spell slot when he faces the Heroes.

0H

This lab is currently a nightmare of magic gone wild. It was the epicenter of the magical explosion that tore through the Sanctorem. In this room roll on the wild magic table every round in which a spell is cast. Furthermore, add +5 to the wild magic rolls. If an 11 is rolled, roll twice on the table for that round (ignoring further 11s). Finally, every round a random character is targeted (with a +8 bonus) to be hit for 1d10 points of energy damage of a random type. This is not a safe place.

NICE JOB BREAKING IT, HERO

Room 0I is the vault. It is currently protected with indestructible, impassible wards that manifest as a shimmering blue field of energy surrounding the room. The Heroes may enter by touching the Archmage's key to the energy field, which causes the ward to vanish for 10 minutes.

Read or paraphrase the following.

As soon as you touch the stone to the glowing blue field, it vanishes. There is a sudden rush of energy as the chaotic magic outside the Vault funnels within. Sparks of every color imaginable dance off the walls, and the air shimmers and warps.

Behind the now-vanished wards is a hexagonal room. Across one of the far walls is a map of the region, with locations marked in red and lines indicating you know not what linking them. Across the other far wall is a massive scroll case, containing a treasure trove of documents. Along each of the other four walls stands a mighty golem, shining with iron.

To activate each golem, someone holding the Archmage's key must stand directly in front of it (within five feet) and say, "Defend the Sanctorem." It then takes 1 minute (10 rounds) for the golem to fully activate.

Once the Heroes drop the wards, Kul Damoth and his men leave room 0G and begin heading for the Vault.

As soon as the Heroes are fully within the room (or sooner if one of the Heroes moves ahead of the others) read or paraphrase the following.

No sooner have you entered the Vault than the doorway is darkened by none other than the broad-shouldered Harvester with the ring that you saw through the scrying mirror leading the attack. He is soon joined by two other humans, and two of the hideous monstrosities.

The Heroes face Kul Damoth and his entourage. If the players are having a hard time of it reduce Kul's spell slots as he previously cast *invisibility* (spell using his 2nd level spell slot) and an *arcane lock* in a previous scene. But if the Heroes can handle it simply assume that Kul used scrolls to cast all the spells earlier.

Kul Damoth will not wait to make speeches. He knows full well that if the Heroes activate the golems, it is over for him and his men. However, he is quite chatty during combat, and each round on his turn he will gloat a little.

The magical energies of the vault collide with the arcane energies unleashed by the explosion to make magic go wild during this fight. Every round, make a Wild Magic roll with a +4 bonus.

Enemies: Kul Damoth, 2 Ordainer Harvesters, 2 Hunter/Killer Thralls

Kul Damoth's Gloating

- "Thank you for dropping the wards. I was getting quite frustrated."
- "Do you know what is here? Information on other Sanctorem throughout the continent!"
- "With this knowledge my Master will be able to harvest sorcerers from their very sanctuaries!"
- "I, Kul Damoth, shall be given honor by my Master!"

Eventually either the Heroes will defeat the Harvesters, or the golems will activate and defeat the Harvesters. Either way, once the golems are activated they will head out of the vault and make short work of any remaining Harvesters.

CONCLUSION

Once the Heroes return to rescue the prisoners, and hopefully get Jacintha out of the tower before gravity reverses yet again, read or paraphrase the following.

It is another six hours before you can finally leave the Sanctum. Six hours of the magical fallout from the lab explosion dying down, and six hours too of the Archmage, with the promised reinforcements, carefully dispelling and unweaving the barriers from the outside.

Finally, the red-gold glow evaporates, and the Archmage rushes in along with a half-dozen others.

"Is everyone all right?"

As the Heroes inform the Archmage of what happened, those with her will be seeing to the medical needs of the survivors, as well as beginning to remove items from the Sanctum. If the Heroes ask about this last, or once they are finished telling their story, read or paraphrase the following.

"This Sanctum is compromised. We will have to evacuate, and quickly, before the Harvesters can send another team. We will scatter to other safe places and lay low until we can determine just how we were exposed, and how badly. But it could have been so much worse. Had it not been for you, not a single mage would have survived the attack, and the Harvesters would have stolen vital information that would have exposed the entire Sanctum of the Arcane. Thank you."

If the identity of the Heroes becomes known, they likely will gain some infamy with the Harvesters of Ymandragore. Regardless, they will gain quite a bit of fame with the Sanctum of the Arcane. They will be rewarded with Kul Damoth's Ymandrake *Dueling Ring* and might be rewarded with other magical items and favors besides.

Future adventures may deal with helping the members of the Sanctum relocate and discovering just how this Sanctum was exposed to the Harvesters. The Archmage, at the very least, had her identity as a mage exposed publicly, so she will have to hide for the time being. She may beseech the Heroes to help her salvage some of her life or tie up loose ends.



CODEx OF THREATS

Harvester, Emerald Flame

Medium Humanoid (Human)

Armor Class 13 (mage armor)

Hit Points 49 (9d8 + 9)

Speed 30 feet

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9	10	12	14	14	16
(-1)	(+0)	(+1)	(+2)	(+2)	(+3)

Skills: Arcana +4, Perception +4

Damage Resistances: Fire

Senses: Passive Perception 14

Languages: Low Coryani

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Metamagic, Alter Element (3/day): Emerald flame sorcerer change the damage type of any spell they cast to fire.

Shape Flame (3/day): Emerald flame sorcerers can cause fire to flow live rivers. When they cast a spell that deals fire damage, they can alter the spell's effect of their choosing.

Kissed by Flames: All fire spells they cast produce emerald flames and deal additional damage equal to their charisma bonus.

Spellcaster: Emerald flame sorcerer are 5th-level eldritch spell casters, their spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +4 to hit with spell attacks).

Cantrips (at will) Fire bolt, light, mage hand, shocking grasp.

1st level (3 slots). Burning hands, mage armor, thunderwave.

2nd level (3 slots). Flaming sphere, hold person, scorching ray, shatter

3rd level (2 slots). Counterspell, fireball, lighting bolt

ACTIONS

Fire Bolt: Ranged Spell Attack: +5 to hit, range 120 feet, one target. Hit: 13 (2d10+3), Fire damage.

Staff: Melee Weapon Attack: +5, reach 5 feet, one target, Hit: 2 (1d6-1), bludgeoning damage.

Harvester, Ordainer

Medium Humanoid (Human)

Armor Class 13 (mage armor)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 +18)

Speed 30 feet

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9	10	14	16	14	12
(-1)	(+0)	(+2)	(+3)	(+2)	(+1)

Skills: Arcana +4, Perception +4

Senses: Passive Perception 14

Languages: Low Coryani

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Magic Resistance: Ordainers gain advantage on all saving throws against magic.

Absorb Magic: When targeted by or within the area of a spell or spell like effect Ordainers may, as a reaction, absorb the entire spell effect gaining a number of Arcane points equal to the spell level slot used to cast the spell.

Also, as an action they may absorb charges from magic items at a rate of 1d3 charges slots gaining an equal amount of Arcane Points.

Lastly, they may attempt to absorb spell level slots directly from spell casters. As an action they can force one creature with 5' to make a Wisdom saving throw or lose 1d4 random spell level slots granting the Ordainer a number of Arcane points equal to the number of levels absorbed.

All arcane points gained in this manner dissipate after 1 minute.

Metamagic: Ordainers may use arcane points gained from their Absorbed Magic ability to power the following metamagic effects. Ordainers have access to the following metamagic abilities (see sorcerer class for details)

Careful q spell, twinned spell

Additionally they possess a unique metamagic ability

Empower Arcane Bolt (X Points): When using their Arcane Bolt attack (see below) the Ordainer may increase the attack's damage by Hit: 4 (1d8) force damage for every arcane point spent.

Spellcaster: Ordainer sorcerers are 5th-level eldritch spell casters, their spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +4 to hit with spell attacks).

Cantrips (at will) Arcane bolt (see attacks below), shocking grasp, light, mage hand

1st level (3 slots) Grease, magic missile, shield

2nd level (3 slots) Invisibility, misty step, scorching ray

3rd level (2 slots) Counterspell, lighting bolt

ACTIONS

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

Arcane Bolt: *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 120 feet, one target. Hit: 5 (2d10), Force damage.

Kul Damoth Harvester, Ordainer

Medium Humanoid (Human), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (mage armor)

Hit Points 160 (20d8 + 60)

Speed 30 feet

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Skills: Athletics: +3, Arcana +7, Perception +5

Senses: Passive Perception 15

Languages: Low Coryani

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Magic Resistance: Ordainers gain advantage on all saving throws against magic.

Absorb Magic: When targeted by or within the area of a spell or spell like effect Ordainers may, as a reaction, absorb the entire spell effect gaining a number of Arcane points equal to the spell level slot used to cast the spell.

Also, as an action they may absorb charges from magic items at a rate of 1d3 charges slots gaining an equal amount of Arcane Points.

Lastly, they may attempt to absorb spell level slots directly from spell casters. As an action they can force one creature with 5' to make a Wisdom saving throw or lose 1d4 random spell level slots granting the Ordainer a number of Arcane points equal to the number of levels absorbed.

All arcane points gained in this manner dissipate after 1 minute.

Metamagic: Ordainers may use arcane points gained from their Absorbed Magic ability to power the following metamagic effects. Ordainers have access to the following meta-magic abilities (see sorcerer class for details)

Careful spell, quicken spell, subtle spell, twinned spell.

Additionally, they possess a unique metamagic ability

Empower Arcane Bolt (X Points): When using their Arcane Bolt attack (see below) the Ordainer may increase the attacks damage by Hit: 4 (1d8) force damage for every arcane point spent.

Spellcaster: Kul Damoth is a 7th-level eldritch spell caster, and his spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks).

Cantrips (at will) Arcane bolt (see attacks below), shocking grasp, light, mage hand

1st level (4 slots) Arcane lock, grease, magic missile, shield

2nd level (3 slots) Hold person, invisibility, misty step, scorching ray

3rd level (3 slots) Counterspell, dispel magic, fireball, lightning bolt

4th level (1 slot) Phantasmal Killer



ACTIONS

Side Sword – Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6+3) piercing damage.

Arcane Bolt: Ranged Spell Attack: +7 to hit, range 120 feet, one target. Hit: 5 (2d10), Force damage.

SPECIAL

Kul Damoth possesses an Ymandrake dueling ring that he will use to its full effect.

Ymandrake Thrall, Enhanced

Medium monstrosity (bio-construct)

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 58 (9d8+18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16	14	15	5	12	10
(+3)	(+2)	(+2)	(-3)	(+1)	(+0)

Skills Athletics +4, Perception +3, survival +3

Senses passive perception 18

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Enhanced Senses: Thralls gain advantage on all Wisdom (Perception) skill checks.

Flesh Crafting. Thralls can cast alter self at will.

Mage Trackers: Once a Thrall hits an arcane spell caster with a tentacle attack it gains advantage on all Wisdom (Survival) skill checks to track that caster for 48 hours.

Pack Tactics. Thralls have advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the thrall's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack – Thralls make three melee attacks.

Gladius – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) piercing or slashing damage.

Flesh Tentacle – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) bludgeoning damage.

REACTIONS

Mage Hunter – When an adjacent creature casts a spell, the thrall may use their reaction to make a melee attack against that creature.

Ymandrake Thrall, Hunter/Killer

Medium monstrosity (bio-construct)

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 90 (12d8 + 36)

Speed 30 ft., Climb 30 ft

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

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +6, Wis +5

Skills Acrobatics +6, Perception +5, Stealth +8, Survival +

Senses passive perception 19

Languages telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 5 (1,800)

Enhanced Senses. Hunter/Killer thralls gain advantage on all Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Hunter. Hunter/Killer thralls have the chameleon like power to blend into their surroundings. Thralls gain advantage on all Dexterity (Stealth) checks. Additionally, if the Thrall remains still for 1 action they are considered to have concealment, allowing them to hide in plain sight, and remain so until they move or attack.

Killer. Once per turn, the Hunter/Killer thrall deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when it hits a target with a claw attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the thrall that isn't incapacitated, and the thrall doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Magic Eaters: Hunter/Killer possess the innate ability to "eat" magic. These thralls are considered eldritch sorcerers equivalent to a 5th-level spell caster, their spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks).

Hunter/Killer Thralls may cast *counter spell* or *dispel magic* 3 times, regaining all expended uses after completing a long rest. When a thrall successfully counters or dispels a spell they gain 5 temporary hit points, which remain for 1 hour.

Mage Trackers: Once a Hunter/Killer Thrall hits an arcane spell caster with a claw or tactical attack it gains advantage on all Wisdom (Survival) skill checks to track that caster for 1 week.

ACTIONS

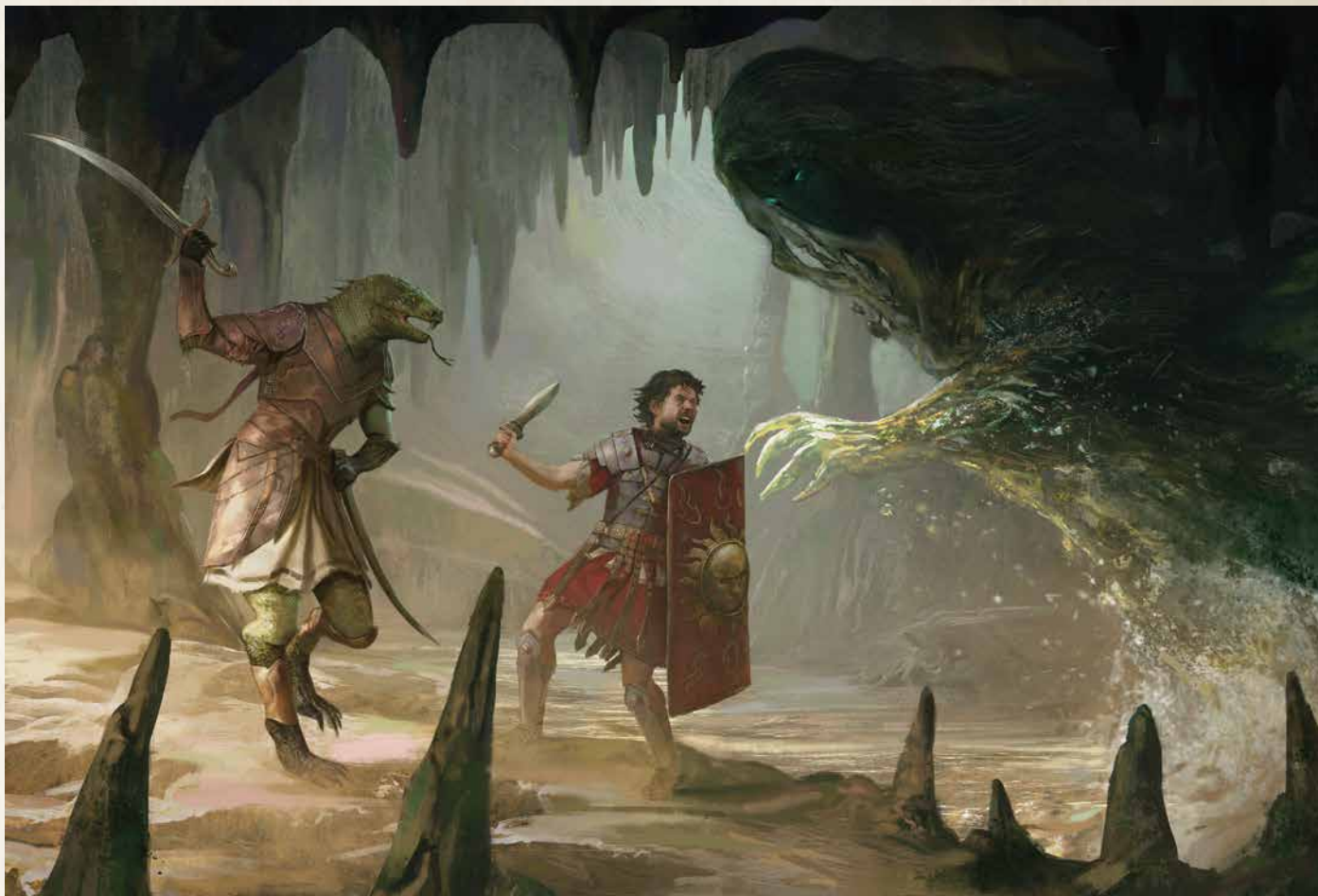
Multiattack – Hunter/Killer thralls make three melee attacks.

Claw – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) piercing or slashing damage.

Flesh Tentacle – *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) bludgeoning damage.

REACTIONS

Mage Hunter – When an adjacent creature casts a spell, the hunter/killer thrall may use their reaction to make a melee attack against that creature.



UNINTENDED VICTIMS

An adventure for three to five characters of level 6 to 8 by Cody Bergman.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Thousands of years ago, the human followers of the Pantheon of Man and the elorii fought a devastating war against the followers of the God known only as “the Other”, or to the elorii Umor. During this war, the Pantheon of Man and their human followers turned against the elorii and their gods. As the elorii retreated into the forests, a few uttered Kurenthé death curses—destroying their own souls to fuel powerful magical effects—that blighted the lands in a last-ditch effort to defeat humanity. These curses twisted the lands of the region in many strange ways.

However, these curses did not just affect the humans who were chasing the elorii from their territory and into the forests. The lands themselves were alive with their own spirits, neutral forces that hold dominion over aspects of nature

from rivers to trees to the very air breathed. While these curses devastated the human armies, granting the elorii time to retreat, they also affected the animals and environments. Many spirits and creatures were destroyed, while others were driven mad as their environment was twisted and corrupted.

Such as the spirit that held sway over a tributary of the Sans River.

While the spirit was too powerful to be obliterated by the Kurenthé curse, the elorii’s desperate gambit was sufficient to twist the land, the animals, and the spirit itself. The force of the curse altered the flow of the Sans River, causing it to pool and stagnate, forming the Blighted Bog. With the collecting of the waters in the bog, many parts of the once dry land became flooded, including the lowest levels of an ancient Mârokene temple in the region. Traumatized by the corrupting force of the death curse, the spirit of the river (and through it, the creatures of that land) became savage and hateful towards others.

This changed recently when the spirit found creatures passing through its domain that held promise for its salvation. These creatures, specifically val of bloodlines descending from the Goddess Saluwé (the Goddess of Nature and the Earth) held within them divine power which supported the regrowth and reclamation of corrupted lands. Hungry for a possible cure for its madness, the spirit now wishes to collect these beings in hope that it may absorb their essences to cure itself of the trauma it has suffered and put right the crime which was done to it.

Zulsihan, the Spirit of the Blighted Bog

There are beings in the world so ancient that they never even had a true name. Such is the case of Zulsihan, the spirit who held sway over what is now the Blighted Bogs in the northern reaches of the Blessed Lands. These spirits are often invoked by shamans in more primitive and tribal cultures throughout history for various boons, with shamans entering mystical bargains with these beings. It is through one of these bargains with an ancient race known as the gar that this spirit first gained its name: Zulzana, the Lady of the Waters. For untold millennia, this spirit existed relatively peacefully with the creatures that passed through these lands and took the rise and fall of the races of Arcanis in stride. After all, while creatures live and die, and empires rise and fall, nature abides.

Following its scouring by the Kurenthé curse, the spirit began lashing out at all creatures around it. The magi of the Imperium of Man warded the area, subduing the spirit with their arcane might, but since the fall of that mighty empire, the wards have faded, and the spirit awoke with an even greater hunger and rage. After returning to the area following the fall of the Imperium, the gar who had long communed with the spirit were slowly changed, with the shamans and tribes affiliated with the spirit becoming more violent and cruel. They now call the spirit Zulsihan, the Water of Teeth. In the millenia since the God's War, the marshes have become hostile to all life not already twisted by Zulsihan or the curse, and Zulsihan itself lived only to cause pain to those around it.

That is, until it found a potential cure for its condition. . .

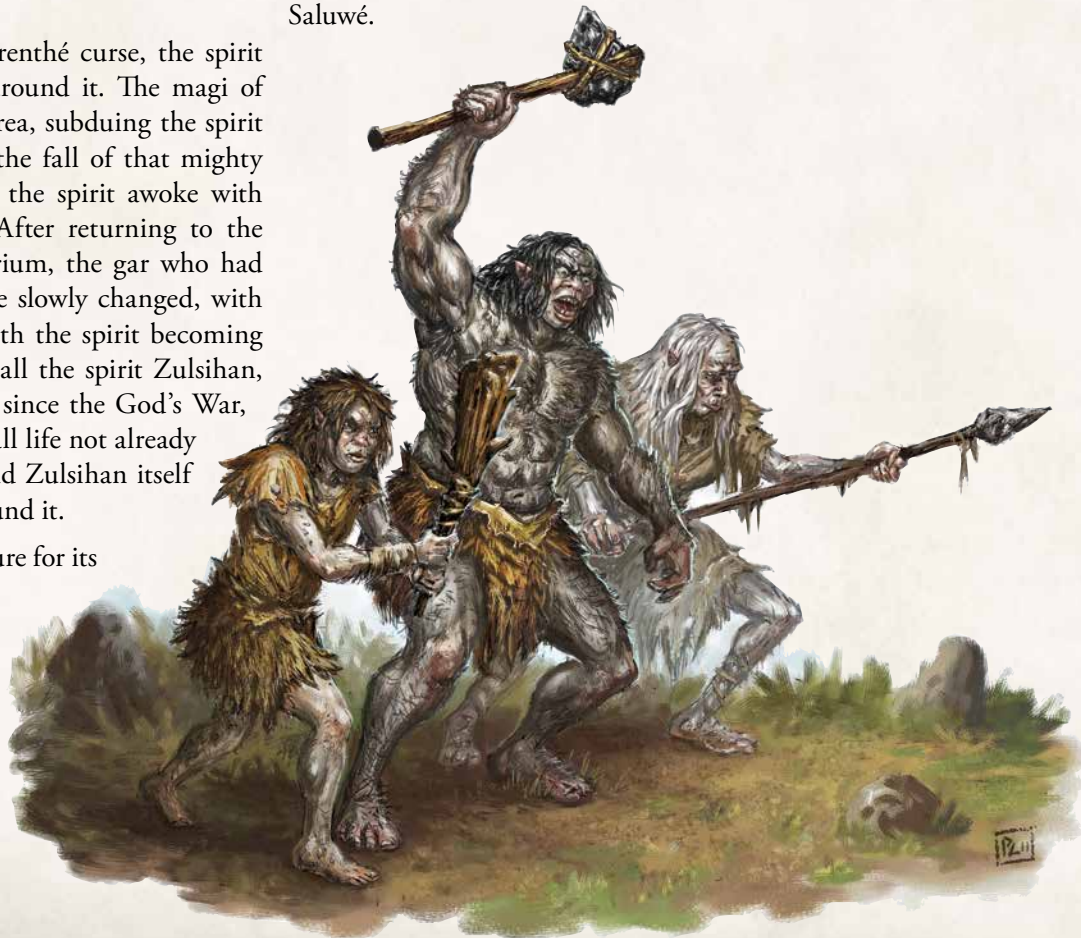
The Gar Zul, the People of the Bog

One of the most ancient races of Arcanis, the gar are primitive nomadic beings who wander the world in small tribal groups. Not typically considered the most intelligent of creatures, they are strongly tied into the spirits of the land and nature, living in harmony with these forces. While they may interact with other races, they tend to avoid contact with the settled empires of the world who disregard the spirits of the land.

One of these tribes once ranged throughout the southern Vastwood forest north of the Blessed Lands, but civilization has pushed them out of their territory and into the Blighted Bog.

Always in touch with the spirits of their territory, the shamans of the tribe came under the influence of Zulsihan. The madness of that spirit corrupted the gar, slowly turning them into one more extension of the spirit's power.

Now, the warriors of this tribe live only to serve Zulsihan, and the shamans act like priests of the powerful, but mad, spirit. They are now based in the ruins of an ancient eloran temple to their dead-god Mârok, which due to that god's role as the Elemental Lord of Earth is built primarily in underground chambers. They act as its servants in the world, doing the jobs the lesser creatures of that land cannot. This includes the kidnapping of val with the divine powers of Saluwé.



Hide of the Beast

Armor, very rare (requires attunement)

Description: Crafted from the skin of a fierce predator, like a bear or a wolf, this hide armor is fashioned to give the appearance of that creature.

History: Warriors of various barbaric tribes, such as the Yhing hir and Chauni, hunt a fearsome local predator and bring its carcass back to their shaman. Invoking the spirit of the predator and appeasing it through animal sacrifices, the shaman convinces it to merge again with its former hide, granting the wearer its power.

Abilities/Effects: While worn, this armor grants a +1 bonus to your Armor Class. If you possess the Rage ability, you have advantage on all Charisma (Intimidation) checks. In addition, you can Wild Shape as a druid, using your character level as your druid level. Once you use this ability, you cannot do so again until the next dawn.

Girdle of Mârok

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

Description: This belt is made from hundreds of tiny granite plates that are magically held together to form a band of moving stone.

History: The elorii of Belestor crafted five great artifacts, one for each of their gods, during the height of their empire. For Mârok, the greatest Mârokene artificers crafted a girdle that granted tremendous power over the element of earth. While only one such artifact was ever created, and subsequently lost in the fall of Belestor, it inspired elorii artificers to create the *Girdles of Mârok* in lesser imitation. Because the original girdle was lost during the Great Betrayal, these items became symbols of what the elorii had lost due to the humans. The Mârokene who sacked the First City at the fall of the Theocracy of the Cleansing Flame wore *girdles of Mârok* proudly during their inexorable march of vengeance.

Abilities/Effects: While wearing this belt, your Strength score becomes 19. This ability has no effect if your Strength is already 19 or higher. In addition, while you are wearing this belt and in direct contact with the earth, you gain resistance to acid damage.



Getting Started

This adventure begins on the edge of the Blighted Bog. This land is located near the northern trade routes through the Blessed Lands region near the headlands of the River Sans. The Heroes can be brought to the region due to news of disappearances of traders and pilgrims in the region. One potential hook would be that they were hired by a noble val'Dellenov, from either the Milandisian Duchy of Sylvania or the Coryani province of Balantica, to retrieve their heir who went missing in the region.

The Heroes should not know that there are ruins within the Bog, just the people they are in search of were kidnapped or went missing near it and evidence points that they were taken into the area. You may have the Heroes learn of rumors of ruins in it, or of tribes of gar within, but few people dare travel into the Bog itself. There are reports of many twisted creatures, including a type of shadowy creature with glowing red eyes that is rumored to kill any who attempt to enter.

If you wish, you may include investigative segments prior to the adventure where the Heroes question the local Andyar tribes of the region: humans who scrape out a living in the blasted plains of the Blessed Lands. The Andyar groups around the Sans River tend to be more prosperous than most due to the fruits of the river. They speak a pidgin of the most common trade languages of the region (Low Coryani and Low Khitani) though it should not be difficult to find someone who can speak any common language. For more information on the Andyar and the Blessed Lands in general, please refer to the *Blessed Lands: Codex Geographica, vol. I*, now available.

THE BLIGHTED BOG

The Blighted Bog has long been feared by the people of the area. Corrupted at the end of the God's War when the elorii uttered their blasphemous Kurenthe death curse, the land is now hostile to all forms of sentient life. The locals of the region refuse to enter the swamps, saying that only those with a death wish would go in there.

It is also where all your evidence points to the string of disappearances that have been reported along the Northern Trade Route of the Blessed Lands. If those people are still alive to be rescued, they must be in there, somewhere.

Assuming that the Heroes enter the Blighted Bog, please continue with the following.

Not even the swamps of the ssethric empire of the south could have prepared you for the sheer misery of the Blighted Bog. Setting foot into the fetid mire, you quickly find yourself covered by flies and gnats, while half-rotten trees pop out of the misty surface like corpses. The whole land seems to have an air of despair, and while within it you feel as though someone is draining you of your will to live.

The Bog itself is considered difficult terrain, with creatures moving at half their speed while within the Bog itself.

When the Heroes enter the Bog, have them make a DC 10 Charisma saving throw every day that they are in the Bog. On a failed saving throw, roll for that Hero on the long-term madness table. This condition remains in effect while that Hero is in the Blighted Bog, including in the Temple. This condition may be removed through normal means, such as the *lesser restoration* spell, however the cause of the madness does not simply go away. Every time the Heroes take a short or long rest, they must make another DC 10 Charisma saving throw. A Hero may only be subject to 1 madness at a time. Shamans or other Heroes with a connection to the spirits at GM's discretion have advantage on this saving throw as their patron spirits fight to keep the madness at bay.

Shamans and Between Worlds

In the Arcanis 5e rules system, the Shaman class has access to the Between Worlds ability, which allows them to sense the presence of spirits and disturbances in the spirit realm. Should a Hero with this ability use it, they will feel assaulted by the overpowering force of Zulsihan's rage. Those Heroes must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or become stunned for 1 minute as they fall to the ground screaming in rage and cannot gain any useful information.

Resting in the Blighted Bog

Heroes are more than welcome to take as many long and short rests as they wish while in the Blighted Bog, however doing so will cause them to immediately fail at least 1 Environmental Challenge roll (see below) or trigger an additional attack by bog apes (again, see below). The Bog is to be treated as a hostile entity and seeks to kill the Heroes.

Environmental Challenges

While travelling in the Bog, have the players choose a single Hero to be the party's guide. That Hero must make 3 separate DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) checks, which the other players may assist with. For each successful check, they will avoid one of three environmental challenges detailed below within the Bog.

Challenge 1 – Festering Disease

As you travel through the swamp, you are swarmed by strange looking, vibrantly-colored mosquitoes. For everyone you kill, it seems that another dozen spring up in their wake. Soon it becomes impossible to kill them all before they begin biting you.

Wasting Illness

Have the Heroes make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw to prevent them from catching the wasting illness carried by the mosquitoes, becoming infected on a failed saving throw. In 1d4 hours the Hero will begin to suffer the effects of this illness, suffering 1 level of exhaustion.

At the end of every long rest, an infected hero must make another DC 13 Constitution saving throw, losing 1 level of exhaustion on a successful save, or suffering an additional level of exhaustion on a failed save. This disease may be treated with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) or Wisdom (Herbalism Kit) check, which will grant a Hero advantage on all saving throws against this disease.

Challenge 2 – The Grasping Vines

As you move deeper into the Bog, you find that there are many low-lying vines along what little solid ground can be found. You at first are glad that you finally have something more solid than the muck and moss of the Bog to walk upon, as the vines at least give something resembling a sense of solidness to the ground.

That is, until you notice the crystalline bones of a large crocodile like creature which has been completely encased in the vines.

Vampire Vines

Natural Trap

The Heroes are 40 feet from the outer edge of the vine field, which is considered difficult terrain, when the vines attack. The vines start to snake up their legs, secreting a green slime that softens and splits the Heroes' skin.

Any Hero that starts their turn within the vine field suffers 1d6 necrotic damage and must make a successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or become entangled.

At the beginning of their turn any Hero entangled by the vines must make a successful DC 10 Athletics (Strength) skill check to break free of the vines. Heroes who attempt to cut themselves free with weapon which deals slashing damage gain advantage on this skill check.

Challenge 3 – Sucking Swamp

Your footing within the Bog has always been treacherous, but thus far you have been able to make forward progress. However, as you attempt to wade your way through yet another expanse of hip-deep water, you find you cannot move your leg. Attempting to pull it out of the mud, you feel as though the mud itself is pulling back against you, pulling you deeper into the muck.

Hungry Muck

Natural trap

The muck of the Bog seems to have a mind of its own and is actively trying to suck living creatures into it. To escape, the muck affected creatures must move 20 feet from their present location. Any time an affected creature attempts to move, they must make a successful DC 10 Strength saving throw to continue to move (although they are still in difficult terrain), but on a failed saving throw they make no further progress in the muck.

For each failed save, increase the DC of the Strength saving throw by 2 as the muck sticks them in place. Any Hero fails a DC 20 Strength saving throw, are considered to be pulled below the surface of the water and begin to drown and eventually suffocate as they sink below the surface.

Another Hero who is adjacent to the trapped Hero may make the Strength saving throw for their ally, but to do so they cannot take any other action that round. Reward out of the box thinking with Advantage on their saving throw, such as throwing a rope over a tree branch above to pull themselves up. Heroes with a natural swim speed need only make one saving throw or may totally bypass this trap if they said they were swimming though the bog when possible.

The Local Wildlife

The Heroes are being tracked by one of its most deadly predators in the Bog: the bog ape. These creatures are not natural beasts but are the final result of the Kurenthé curse and Zulsihan's madness on sentient beings within the Bog. Most bog apes were originally gar, but many humans have also been changed over the centuries into these creatures. They appear to be roughly humanoid with dark, thick, matted coats and glowing red eyes.

The bog apes attack the Heroes from hiding, with heroes possessing a passive Perception of 15 or more not being surprised.

You step out of the knee-deep water onto clear solid land. Before you can take an opportunity to rest and dry your boots, you notice two pairs of glowing red eyes. This obviously does not bode well for you.

Enemies: 2 Bog Apes

THE TEMPLE SURFACE

The Heroes arrive at the surface portions of the ruined Temple of Mârok, which has been taken over by the Gar Zul as their primary village.

As you break through the final layer of the swamp, you see before you what appears to be the ruins of a temple or other major gathering place. The structure itself appears to be a round area some 100 feet across, enclosed by ruined columns and partially covered by a mostly-collapsed dome. Within the flat area are dozens of small hovels and huts, with many campfires lit. Milling about are dozens of brutish looking gar, some bedecked as warriors, while others appear to be women and children.

Allow any Hero to make a DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check (elorii automatically succeed on this check) to identify this structure as the ruins of a Temple of Mârok, the elorii Elemental Lord of the Earth. These temples are typically built above large underground caverns, with the surface only being used as a public square while the true temple to Mârok being found below ground.

The Heroes cannot make out more than this without moving closer. Particularly stealthy Heroes may attempt to sneak into the camp unnoticed. While this may work to an extent, be aware that gar and humans (or other playable races) are different enough physically that it would be difficult to be mistaken for one another; the village is rather small and well-populated with a 30-foot area cleared of foliage which makes it very difficult to avoid all notice, and the community is extremely insular, which means that they know the identity of their neighbors very well and any strangers would be quickly recognized.

When the Heroes are inevitably spotted, please read the following.

As you make your approach, a grunted cry is let out by one of the sentries of the village. Faster than you thought possible, the entire village flies into motion as women, children, and the infirm moving towards a spot at the center of the village, while a group of warriors move to intercept you.

The non-combatant gar are moving towards the entrance of the underground temple and while the Heroes are fighting it will be noticeable that the entire village seems to have disappeared entirely.

The Heroes face 6 gar warriors. These gar warriors are specially blessed by the tribal leaders and all wear *Hide of the Beast* and use it to shape-change into large savage wolves (use stats for Worgs) shifting back to their natural form once their

COLUMNS

BOG

1 SQUARE
= 10 FEET

HUTS

LAND

TEMPLE OF MÂROK

GAR VILLAGE

UPPER LEVELS

LOWER LEVELS

1 SQUARE
= 5 FEET

FROM ROOM 3

4
ANCIENT
ARMORY

1
GAR
FAMILIES

ENTRANCE
HALL

2
STOREROOM

INNER SANCTUM

(KAC)

beast from is reduced to 0 hit points. They will continue to fight until killed. Anyone else who uses the Hide of the Beast will find that for some reason they cannot shape-change into the form the gar did.

Enemies: 5 Gar Warriors (may shift into Worgs as needed)

If the Heroes wish, they may search the village to see if they can find any evidence of the abducted people. While they may find various sundry items, such as jewelry, weapons, etc., they will find no direct physical evidence of any of them. The majority of the items found are very primitive in nature, with little of it having any real intrinsic value. However, they will notice the entrance into the caverns of the temple below.

THE UNDERGROUND TEMPLE

Without any evidence of missing people in the gar village, you find yourself standing before an opening into the earth. Unlike the lands around you the opening appears to lead into a dry cavern that must be fairly large as there were several dozen gar who fled below when you arrived.

Assuming the Heroes go into the lower level, they will come across several rooms. The complex itself is designed to hold several hundred people for up to 3 days and contains a number of rooms carved into the natural cavern below the temple. The temple delves over 100 feet into the earth, giving plenty of room for adventure. The exact floorplan of the temple is not necessary, and you may feel free to put in as many rooms as you like.

Detailed below are several possible scenes to include in the temple as they descend into the inner sanctum at the bottom-most level of the complex. These need not be done in any particular order.

Resting in the Underground Temple

Heroes are more than welcome to take as many long and short rests as they wish while in the temple complex, however doing so risks additional attacks by 6 or more gar warriors. They are actively attempting to defend their homes and will not willingly let the Heroes rest and relax while they are invading it.

Room 1 – The Gar Families

This room appears to have once been some sort of barracks and is carved from a wide expansive cavern. The room itself is reasonably well illuminated by torches, which reveal over a dozen young gar children huddling in the corner. In front of them are a group of gar women armed with whatever items are available to them, hissing and growling threats in your direction.

Any attempts to converse with the gar will ultimately be met with failure as their language is not known by non-gar except in very specific circumstances. Spells that allow one to understand languages will only reveal that the gar are infuriated that the Heroes have trespassed on their territory and are driven by their ‘god’ to defend their land. They will not back down in defense of their children, their territory, or reveal secrets of their ‘god.’

The Heroes may retreat, at which point the gar will not pursue the Heroes. However, if they decide to slaughter the gar civilians, who will fight to the death to protect their children, use the stats for the gar warriors but have them only have 10 hp and attack with regular clubs, dealing 1d6+3 bludgeoning damage. If the Heroes do not spare the gar in this room, all subsequent gar that the Heroes face are treated as though under the effects of a *bless* spell. This effect lasts until the end of the adventure and cannot be dispelled.

Fate Point System

If you are using the Fate Point system presented in the Arcanis 5e rules set, this is an unheroic act and at GM discretion you may feel free to reclaim any unspent Fate points from party members that kill unarmed gar.

Room 2 – The Storeroom

You round a corner in the caverns and find yourself in what appears to be a larder of some sort. There are many clay jars stacked through the room, as well as strips of dried meat from a variety of animals, some of which look particularly bizarre.

As you enter the room you see several are broken, spilling the grain that they once held onto the floor. Additionally, you notice that the room itself feels hazy, as if someone had kicked up a cloud of very fine dust into the air. Looking past, you see that there is a single gar near an exit opposite to you, holding a torch.

Assuming the players do not make the connection that the room is full of grain-dust, which is extremely flammable, allow them to make a DC 10 Intelligence check to gain this information.

If any Hero says that they are going to try to kill the gar holding the torch, have them roll initiatives. The gar warrior gains advantage on their initiative roll as they were expecting the Heroes, but unlike gar warriors he only possesses 10 hit points. If the Heroes manage to kill the gar before it can throw the torch at the grain to set the dust alight, they will avoid the trap.

If the Heroes either do not attempt to down the gar, or the gar survives long enough to set the grain alight, the dust will be ignited engulf the room in flame. Everyone in the room and within 20 feet of the room's door way must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 8d6 fire damage, with those succeeding in their saving throw only suffering half damage.

Room 3 – Break the Line!

After searching the storerooms, you find no additional evidence of the people who have gone missing. Continuing down the tunnels, you find a half-dozen gar warriors waiting at what appears to be the top of a stairwell, waiting for you. They do not look happy to see you, and begin grunting and growling challenges in your direction.

Here the heroes face 6 Gar Warriors but treat these gar as if they are enraged, gaining resistance to all bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing damage. If the Heroes killed the women and children gar earlier in the adventure, they are also considered to be under the effects of the *bless* spell.

Enemies: 6 Gar Warriors (considered to have the Rage ability of a Barbarian or Fury)

The gar will do their best to block the stairwell, but if a Hero begins using area-effect attacks they will disperse as appropriate. They will focus their attention on the most dangerous foe possible, hoping to whittle down the Heroes as much as possible before they reach the home of their 'god.'

Room 4 – The Ancient Armory

Unlike many of the other chambers in this complex, this one appears to be sealed with a rather ornately carved door, depicting images of stalactites and stalagmites, with many armed elorii fighting insectoid creatures below ground. You attempt to open the door, but find that it is locked.

The room is locked, requiring a DC 20 Dexterity (Thieves tools) check to unlock, though the door will open without any roll needed for any Mârokene elorii who places their hand on the door.

Within the room you find what appears to be a small private armory, including an elaborately decorated stone cabinet with crystal-glass facing. Within are a pair of longswords that appear to be in remarkable shape for blades several thousand years old, as well as an elaborately decorated girdle made of hundreds of tiny granite plates that are magically held together to form a band of moving stone.

The swords are a matching pair of +2 longswords.

The Girdle can be identified as the *Girdle of Mârok* by using the *identify* spell.

THE INNER SANCTUM

Reaching the bottom of the stairwell, you find yourself on what must be the lowest level of the cave system. The space itself is a large cavern that could easily hold several hundred people, but now appears to be flooded. The walls glisten with moisture in the torchlight, and a thin stream of water cascades from a small crack nearby. At the center of the chamber there appears to be a large shrine-like statue, easily 30 feet tall. However, its features have been worn away by centuries of erosion from the moisture in the chamber

Allow the Heroes to make a DC 20 Intelligence (Religion) check to identify this as the inner sanctum of a Temple to Mârok. Non-Mârokene elorii gains advantage on this skill check and has the DC reduced by 5, while Mârokene elorii automatically succeeded.

Near the edge of the water are a trio of gar wearing more elaborate costumes than those you have previously seen, intoning some sort of rite while a pair of brutish looking guards stand watch. Before them, half-submerged in the water, are a group of human-looking figures. Half of the figures appear so desiccated to almost appear as mummies, despite being immersed in the water. The other half look very much alive but emaciated as though they have not eaten in months. Around those who still appear alive, the water glows with an eerie yellow light, diffusing the further away from the captives it extends.

Stopping their chanting, the gar snarl in your direction, and launch themselves at you.

Enemies: 2 Gar Warriors, 3 Gar Shamans

These gar believe that Zulsihan is their god and will fight to the bitter end to defend the ritual.

If any of the Heroes are playing a val'Dellenov, a val'Haupt, or a val'Holryn who manifests val'Dellenov bloodline powers who entered the room will automatically feel a pull upon their souls towards the water, and must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the beginning of each turn or suffer 1d4 necrotic damage.

The gar were not actually performing the ritual, but simply intoning prayers and benedictions to Zulsihan. As such, the val'Dellenov will continue to be drained of life while the combat is happening. There are a total of 10 val'Dellenov, 1 val'Haupt, and 2 val'Holryn in the water. Both val'Holryn, the val'Haupt, and 4 of the val'Dellenov are already dead leaving 6 val'Dellenov still alive.

Should any of the still – living val'Dellenov be removed, please read the following.

As you pull one of the val from the water, the room echoes with a primal scream. Suddenly, the water itself forms a humanoid figure of strange beauty. Looking to you, a voice echoes into your mind.

“What are you doing?! I need these creatures to heal myself from what they did to me. From what scions of the elements did! Their curse on their way into the forest damaged me, and it is only through these beings and their connection to the new nature Goddess that I may be healed!”

Assuming they do not make the connection, allow the Heroes to make a DC 10 Intelligence check to understand that Zulsihan is referring to the elorii as the “scions of the elements,” a DC 15 Intelligence (History) check to know the curse refers to the Kurenthé curse that scoured the Blessed Lands during the God’s War, and a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check to know the new nature Goddess to be Saluwé, of which the val'Dellenov are Her scions.

If the Heroes wish, they may perform a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check to identify this as the physical avatar of a water spirit (Shaman and other primal casters automatically succeed in this check). These avatars represent a portion of their essence that has taken physical form to interact with mortal creatures. While destroying it will not kill the spirit, as it represents only a small portion of its essence, it disrupts their essence and weakens the spirit until it can recover.

If the Heroes do not immediately put the val'Dellenov back in the water, continue with the following:

The spirit howls in your mind. “How dare you defy me! You are just as wicked as the scions of the elements that soured these lands thousands of summers ago! I will destroy you as they attempted to destroy me when they uttered their curse!”

Enemies: Avatar of Zulsihan, Spirit of the Blighted Bog

Zulsihan will preferentially target (in order): any Hero who removed a val'Dellenov from its water, any elorii in the party, and any scion of Saluwé within the party. It will not specifically target any surviving gar but is willing to deal area-of-effect damage to them if it also targets its preferred targets.

Once the Heroes defeat Zulsihan and the gar, read the following.

As your blow lands on the avatar of the spirit, it begins to lose cohesion, falling back into the pool. All of your minds echo with a feeling of horror not your own, as an image of a tranquil stream and green, rolling hills. Nearby, you see what must be hundreds of beings fleeing into the forests just on the horizon while a single figure stands defiantly. Opposite to them is an army of thousands of armored figures, launching javelins and arrows towards the lone figure. Suddenly, the figure erupts into a wave of arcane energy, causing the very earth to writhe before you are blinded by a flash. When you can see again, the landforms have changed, the army appears as nothing more than bones, and the once tranquil stream has spilled its banks.

During this vision, you feel as though your very body has been scoured by sand. You feel violated, damaged, wronged.

Your vision returns to normal as you see the avatar of the spirit receding back into the water. As it disappears..It may be a good idea to leave quickly, lest it recover.

As long as the Heroes do not delay significantly, they should be able to revive any surviving val'Dellenov. They are weak, and barely coherent, but they will be able to move on their own power with assistance if the Heroes are able to heal them even slightly with *acure wounds*, for example.

CONCLUSIONS

With the avatar of the water spirit disrupted, the gar seem to have their fighting spirit removed and begin to withdraw. By moving quickly, you are able to extract yourself from the Blighted Bog with only a minimum of threat. However, even as you leave, the feeling of dread and anger you felt while within it starts becoming palpable again.

This will not be the last time that you hear of that water spirit.

CODEx OF THREATS

Avatar of Zulsihan, Spirit of the Blighted Bog

Medium elemental (Spirit)

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 140 (16d8 + 64)

Speed 40 feet, Swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14	20	19	14	14	18
(+2)	(+5)	(+4)	(+2)	(+2)	(+4)

Saves. Dexterity +8, Wisdom +45, Charisma +7

Skills: Perception +5, Arcane +5

Damage Resistances: Cold; piercing, slashing, and bludgeoning from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities: Poison

Condition Immunities: Poisoned

Senses: Darkvision 120 feet, Passive Perception 15

Languages: telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Zulsihan fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Primal Spellcaster: Zulsihan is an 8th-level primal spell caster with spell casting and innate spell casting abilities. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks).

4th level (2 slots). Counterspell, confusion, conjure minor elementals

Innate Spells 1/rest each: Enemy of my enemy*, fog cloud.

ACTIONS

Slam: *Ranged Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. Hit 18 (6d6), bludgeoning damage target must succeed in a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. This is considered a magical attack.

REACTION

As Water: When attacked with a melee or ranged weapon attack, Zulsihan may use its reaction to reduce the damage dealt by the triggering attack by half.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

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

Crashing Waves (Costs 2 actions): Zulsihan turns into a massive wave of water exploding in all directions, forcing all creatures within 30 feet to make a Strength saving throw or fall prone, she reforms in any unoccupied space 30 feet of her previous location.

Chilling Touch: Zulsihan casts *Chill touch*

Rushing Waves: Zulsihan moves 30 feet, this movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Gar Shaman

Medium Humanoid

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 85 (13d8+26)

Speed 30 feet

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15	12	14	10	14	16
(+2)	(+1)	(+2)	(-0)	(+2)	(+3)

Saves. Wisdom +4, Charisma +5

Skills: Athletics +4, Perception +4, Arcane +2

Senses: Darkvision 60 feet, Passive Perception 14

Languages: Gar

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Savagery: After taking the dash action the Gar Shaman may make a single melee attack as a bonus action.

Spiritual Patron: Gar Shaman gain advantage on all saves vs spells that grant the charmed condition, the spell *confusion*, and spells or effects that impart madness.

Primal Spellcaster: Blessed by Zulsihan his Shaman gain a mix Primal and Innate Spell Casting. The Gar Shaman is a 5th-level primal spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks).

Cantrips (at will). Ice bolt (see actions), light, mage hand, poison spray.

3rd level (2 slots). Counterspell, witch bolt.

Innate Spells 1/rest each: Enemy of my enemy*, misty step, fog cloud.

ACTIONS

Ice Bolt: *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 120 ft, one target. Hit 13 (2d10+3), cold damage.

Staff: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 feet, one target. Hit: 6 (1d6+3), bludgeoning damage.



Bog Ape

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 98 (13d8+39)

Speed 40 feet, 40 feet climb

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18	14	16	6	10	6
(+4)	(+2)	(+3)	(-2)	(0)	(-2)

Saving Throws: Strength +7, Constitution +6

Skills: Athletics +7, Perception +3, Stealth +5, Survival +3

Damage Resistances: Cold; piercing, slashing, and bludgeoning from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities: Poison

Condition Immunities: Poisoned

Senses: Darkvision 60 feet, Passive Perception 13

Languages: None

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

Brute. The Bog Ape's claws deals one extra die of its damage when they hits with it (included in the attack).

ACTIONS

Multiattack: Bog Apes make three melee attacks with their claws.

Claws: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 feet, one target. Hit: 12 (2d8+4), slashing damage.

Rock: *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5, reach 25/50 feet, one target, Hit: 10 (2d6+4), bludgeoning damage.

Gar Warriors

Medium Humanoid

Armor Class 16 (bone and hide armor)

Hit Points 27 (5d8+5)

Speed 30 feet

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16	14	16	10	12	9
(+3)	(+2)	(+3)	(-0)	(+1)	(-1)

Skills: Athletics +4, Perception +3, Survival +3

Senses: Darkvision 60 feet, Passive Perception 13

Languages: Gar

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Savagery: After taking the dash action Gar Warriors may make a single melee attack as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack: Gar Warriors may make two melee attacks.

Great Clubs: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 feet, one target. Hit: 9 (1d12+3), bludgeoning damage.

Javelin: *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5, reach 25/50 feet, one target, Hit: 7 (1d6+4), piercing damage.



HEART'S BLOOD, FIRE'S VENGEANCE

An adventure for three to five Heroes of level 7 to 9 by Samuel Cluck and Henry Lopez.

ADVENTURE INTRODUCTION

Forty years ago, the resurrected Sword of the Heavens conquered the capital of Canceri and left it in the care of his followers, the Nierites of Erduk, while he blazed a trail of blood and fire across the continent. When he disappeared during the campaign, the Erdukeen continued the occupation of the city in the hopes that he would return to lead them. Their occupation of the city was brutal and unforgiving, with the citizens of Nishanpur suffering under their cruel rule. As with all such regimes, they were eventually overthrown but, in its wake, the dead and the broken remained as a testament to their rule.

One of the Erdukeens' victims was a shop keeper by the name of Ralich Tortum and his young son. After the death of his boy, Ralich vowed vengeance on the Nierites and the inhabitants of the city for their complicity. After forty years, his vengeance is at hand.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The great city of Nishanpur is the capital of the Theocracy of Canceri and a stronghold for the val'Mehan family. It is known by many names – the Heart of Evil, the City of Devils, but most commonly as the City of Secrets. It is a bastion for the worshippers of Sarish, the God of Sorcery, Forbidden Knowledge, and Blood. Not all priests of Sarish

are members of that exulted family, as many humans have risen to hold that rank, but the game of politics and power is not for the weak and some are driven from their perch of influence.

One such victim of these machinations was the family Tortum, an ancient vassal family to the val'Mehan since the days of the Imperium, who were the guardians of a pair of ancient Sarishan relics, the Gauntlet of Garoth and a dagger called the Eye of Sarish. With their fall from power, the family was stripped of their holy relics as well as their social status. To keep from starving, the Tortum patriarch scrapped what few coins he had and favors he could call upon and established a small shop in Nishanpur's Trade Quarter to keep from starving.

This humble shop, the *Heart's Blood*, a place where various and sundry supplies can be purchased, was eventually inherited by the patriarch's great-grand son, Ralich Tortum, who lived content plying his wares with his young son, Bralich. When the Sword of the Heavens returned, the small family found themselves suffering under the Erdukeen's yoke. They were subjected to extensive fines, taxes, and random searches, which incensed Ralich.

When the Swords of Nier did a routine contraband hunt in some of the merchant's stores, seven-year-old Bralich clutched a small chest and wouldn't let the Nierites open it. Dragging the two out to make an example of them, Erdukeen captain announced to the gathering crowd that they would brook no resistance. Begging the Nierites to stay their hand, that he was just a child, the Nierite tore the box from the boy's frantic clutch and threw him bodily across the room. With a sickening crunch, Bralich lay unmoving, his neck broken from the force of the blow. Within the chest was found a drawing of his mother, who had died bringing him into the world. With a sneer, the Nierite captain told the shop-keeper he should have taught his child to respect authority and led his men through the assembled crowd without a second look.

Heartbroken, Ralich's tear-filled eyes looked at his neighbors for aid, but found not even pity in their cold hearts. On that day, Ralich vowed vengeance on not just the Erdukeen, but the entire population of the city, who he saw as complicit in the death of his son by their inaction.

It has taken forty years, but Ralich's cry for revenge is finally at hand. Shortly after the attack, he began recruiting others who had suffered at the hands of the Nierite invaders and formed a small cult. To gain funds, the group harassed the Erdukeens and stealing valuable items as well as coins from their Nierite coffers. When the Erdukeen were finally driven from Nishanpur, many of those Ralich recruited left the group, the rage within their hearts having cooled with the focus of their hatred gone. For a few others, the passing decades did little to slake their thirsts for blood. They all agreed that the evil inherent in the city allowed the Erdukeen

to act with impunity and that it must be cleansed.

Ralich was told the tales by his grandparents about the power they once wielded and the relics that were taken from them. He recalled the sacred place hidden away deep below the ground in the Corpse Quarter, where a ritual could be conducted where gate could be opened to one of the many Hells, unleashing a torrent of infernals upon the city. Ironically, it was created as a final, desperate defense centuries ago against the predations of the Sword of the Heavens. His defeat and subsequent sorcerous imprisonment made its usage obsolete, but the secret of its existence was entrusted to the Tortum family.

Ralich's plan is to open the gate and unleash these devils and demons upon the unsuspecting city and wiping out their foul existence. To do this, he requires the Gauntlet of Garoth and the Eye of Sarish. He spent years researching where they were taken generations ago, and discovered that the gauntlet was in Nishanpur, while the dagger was the city of Vrain.

Spending every *baht* he had saved, Ralich hired the notorious Corvalis, a citizen of the Coryani Empire who rose in the criminal underworld to rule his own corner of the illicit trade that flourished in Canceri. Corvalis was able to acquire the gauntlet in short order, as it lay forgotten in a storeroom in the Temple of the Keeper of Mysteries. The Eye of Sarish was a more difficult matter as it rested in Hunder, the holy city of the Nierites, but was eventually retrieved.

Corvalis' possession of the dagger has given him horrific nightmares and causes him to hear the whispers of the damned from Hells where the infernals await release. Over the days it has taken to journey from Hunder to Nishanpur, the smuggler's paranoia and jumpiness has eroded the confidence his men have in him, as well as his own sanity. To make matter worse, word of the dagger's theft has reached Nishanpur ahead of him, making being caught in possession of the dagger a dangerous proposition. In addition, his notoriety and distinctive appearance makes smuggling the relic to Ralich problematic.

Determined to rid himself of the relic, Corvalis and his men have taken up residence in the Dark Gathering, an inn just outside the Trade Gate of Nishanpur, where travelers who arrive after sunset are forced to stay until the city's gates reopen in the morning. Here the exhausted criminal keeps an eye out for a likely group he can induce or coerce into delivering the dagger to Ralich and hopefully rid himself of these hauntings.

Enter the Heroes.

The city maintains a 'dead zone' of 30 yards around the city walls to prevent the freeing of those undergoing ordeals of exposure, as well as to aid in the interdiction of any smuggling of contraband over or through the city walls. Guards will use their crossbows on anyone off the main roads that approaches the city walls as soon as they get within 30 yards. No warning is given. If those approaching survive the initial volley and manage to run back outside the dead zone, the guards do not pursue them.

PART ONE – INSCRIBING THE CIRCLE

Introducing this Adventure

The Heroes are traveling to Nishanpur for their own reasons, be it mercantile, visiting friends or family, or just passing through, and arrive too late to enter the city proper. All the city's gates close promptly at dusk and no amount of pleading, cajoling, or bribery will allow them to enter until the next morning. Like others who arrive after the sealing of the city, they find themselves in an inn called the Dark Gathering. Here they can find shelter, good food, and exchange their current currency for the native one.

The Dark Gathering has quite a number of guests this evening and offers the Heroes a chance to gather some information about the city they are about to enter, buy some last-minute provisions, or make some quick coin. The Heroes will immediately note that the rather than the boisterous noise common to many such establishments, a susurrus flows about the common room as people speak in whispers for the most part. Should the Heroes inquire, a pretty young woman, Kyra the tavern maiden, says that in Nishanpur, it is considered very rude to speak about a whisper and that this habit extends to most who stay at the Dark Gathering. The only exception to this are the bards that arrive a few hours after sunset to entertain the assembled guests.

GM's Note:

Unless this scenario is being played at a public place where it is impractical, it may enhance the players experience to run the scenario encouraging the players to whisper while communicating among themselves or NPCs.

Any Heroes that have any performance skills and wish to add to the evening's entertainment may do so. While loud musical instruments or bawdy performances will not be received well, tragic songs or ballads and epic tales will

go over well with the current audience. A successful DC 10 Charisma (Performance) check will net the Hero 20 sp and quiet applause.

While the entertainment is going on, a child with a small ball made of twine will approach one of the Heroes and start playing a game of catch. The boy, Cyrik, is the son of the tavern maiden that is serving them. Unless the Heroes ignore the little tike, she will be grateful and make sure that they have extra servings of food and that their wine isn't as watered down as it would be otherwise.

Among the crowd of locals are a group of Yhing hir traders, a pair of grim Tir Betoqi dwarves, and some Nerothians, their dark robes and shaved heads marking them as followers of the God of Death. One of the dwarves reaches up and plucks down a poster on the wall, one of a few plastered about the common room. Should the Heroes also take notice of the poster, they will read that a reward of 1,000 gp is offered for the return of a Sarishan holy relic known as the Eye of Sarish, an ornate ceremonial dagger.

The Yhing hir merchants are from the Khur Gi tribe and are led by Nadaef. They travelled to Nishanpur in search of a Sarishan skilled in dealing with bestial infernals. Earlier in the season, members of their tribe captured a pair of hell-horses and wish to breed the infernally tainted equines.

The pair of Tir Betoqi dwarves (Rodil and Saluex) are seeking a merchant willing to sell the dwarves Sarishan steel weapons. Though its ben quiet since the last Crusade of Light repelled the infernal invasion, there are stirrings on the other side of the wall and the king of Tir Betoq is seeking to bolster their inventory of weapons that can harm the fiends.

The Nerothians are from the crumbling city of Ventaka, here to petition the ruling Nihang Council for funds to shore up the crumbling infrastructure.

The Carrot and the Stick

As the crowd of locals begin to thin and the other travelers are head off to their rented rooms, the door opens, and five figures enter. Four are humans who quickly move about the room while the fifth, a gnome, approaches the Heroes table and sits down without invitation. They can see that this figure is a small man dressed impeccably in a dark tunic and leggings. The man has a haunted and furtive look about him, scanning the room quickly. His eyes bear dark circles as if he hasn't slept in many days.

A DC 16 Intelligence check (Cancerese Heroes have advantage on this roll) will reveal that this is Talmus Corvalis, a powerful influence in the local underworld. When he introduces himself, he does so slowly and with exaggerated diction, as if trying to impress those he addresses, a habit he picked up in his younger years.

The criminal will not introduce himself, but will say the following as a way of greeting:

Nishanpur, the City of Secrets

Nishanpur is a large city, a trade hub, and serves as the capital of the Theocracy of Canceri. The City of Secrets earns its sobriquet from this hum of barely-discernible voices. While in public, everyone whispers, whether it be in everyday conversation or heated arguments. Even when under attack, or frightened, the natives are likely to respond not with screams or shouts, but with unsettling silence. There is a virtual taboo against loud noise or speech. Residents begrudge even the noise of falling objects here, and those who create such noise, even unintentionally, may receive startling or embarrassing attention. The ignorant traveler who speaks loudly here is likely to receive a range of responses: they may find themselves quickly being hushed, or the person they are speaking with may simply stare at them with incredulity and disgust.

The city is also unique in its strict adherence to the law, which are enforced by a police force known as the City Guard or simply, the guardsmen. This force is augmented by military orders, such as the Knights of the Red Fist, highly trained soldiers who ride bestial infernal mounts called the melatorn, that have the unique ability to detect metal by scent, and members of the Nierite military, who act as officers in the City Guard.

While it is impossible to condense the city's body of law into a few paragraphs, the following are the more salient laws that may impact the adventure.

No arms and armor except those of Sarishan steel (a holy metal to Sarishans) are permitted within the city walls

This means exactly what it says. The only exception is for flintlock pistols and their ammunition, and only for those legally able to carry these weapons. This law largely serves to keep the populace under control. By allowing the citizenry to carry small knives or daggers, the rulers of the city have set up a system where the commoners can protect themselves to a degree, but do not have the means to resist or rebel against the current power structure.

Keep in mind that Nishanpur is a trade city; the law forbids weapons, but not tools. A woodsman carrying one small axe or a smith with his forge-hammer may pass through the gates, but someone with war axes or warhammers could not. The guards will permit each person to keep a single dagger, regardless of material, and "walking sticks" (quarterstaves) are not generally taken. Any other weapon, and any type of armor,

is strictly forbidden, unless the item is made of Sarishan steel. (Non-metal armors cannot be made of Sarishan steel, so they are not allowed at all.)

Strike not another, except in self-defense

Strike not a priest or their representatives

The members of the City Guard fall under the descriptive umbrella of the representative of the priests. Therefore, attacking members of the policing force is a punishable offense.

Enter not a temple, except with the permission of that temple's priest

Steal not from a priest

In all of these cases, the underlying rule is simple that there is no legitimate excuse for defying a priest or their representatives. In the Theocracy of Canceri, striking a priest will always carry a harsher penalty than striking a commoner, and judges reject self-defense as a justification in these cases. This assumes that the guilty party survives until the trial. On the rare occasions that cases of assault or theft from a priest goes to trial, the punishment is usually twice that leveled for any other crime. Wergilds of slavery, entombment, or slow death are common in these cases.

Interfere not between a slave and his master

Slavery is legal and something of a cherished institution here in Canceri. Freeing slaves or intervening between a master and slave is the one case of theft that the authorities generally punish in Nishanpur, outside of theft from a priest. Interference between a master and slave carries a minimum fine of 500 gp, and killing or freeing a slave incurs a further penalty of several times the slave's replacement cost

Approach not the city walls, except to enter the gates

The city maintains a 'dead zone' of 30 yards around the city walls to prevent the freeing of those undergoing ordeals of exposure, as well as to aid in the interdiction of any smuggling of contraband over or through the city walls. Guards will use their crossbows on anyone off the main roads that approaches the city walls as soon as they get within 30 yards. No warning is given. If those approaching survive the initial volley and manage to run back outside the dead zone, the guards do not pursue them.

"I have a proposition for you, one that will net you some extra coin for just delivering a object to another party. My men inform me that you're not locals, which is what I need. My face is a bit too well known in the city, and the guards at he gates know my men, so some fresh faces is what I need right now.

"I have a small item, light as a feather and easily concealable – an old dagger, if you must know, that I need to have delivered to a buyer within the city. The buyer will be waiting for me tomorrow for delivery. I'm proposing that you deliver the dagger in my place and I'll let you keep the payment he owes me, 300 gp. I'll even sweeten the deal by adding another 50 gp for any inconvenience this may cause you. What do you say?"

The Heroes will likely have questions or may react negatively to Corvalis' impertinence if they are high-born or used to being treated with deference.

If they ask to see the dagger, he'll produce the object, wrapped in an oil cloth. The sheathed dagger has an ornate handle with a large red ruby affixed to the hilt. The ruby has an imperfection, a black line that causes the jewel to resemble an eye. The sheath looks to be made of some black reptilian hide and looks very old.

Should any Hero take the blade out of the sheath to admire it, they'll see that the blade's steel emits a faint glow. As the Hero admires the blade, it will seem to move of its own volition and nick the person holding it, drawing out a

Eye of Sarish

Dagger, legendary, unique (requires attunement)

Description: The sheathed dagger has an ornate handle with two large red rubies affixed to the either side of the hilt. Both rubies have an imperfection, black lines and a blotch in the center that causes the jewels to resemble an eye.

History: One of the twin holy relics of Sarish, the Eye of Sarish is meant to work in concert with the Gauntlet of Garoth to ensure that its ultimate power is not abused. Forged by the Sarishan Sorcerer-Priest Garoth during the time after the fall of the Imperium of Man, the relics were designed as an ultimate doomsday weapon against the unstoppable force of the avatar of Nier, Leonydes val'Virdan, the Sword of the Heavens, should he move against Nishanpur. Together, the relics can open a portal to the Hells, unleashing a torrent of infernals to overrun the Nierite army. After the threat passed, the items were entrusted to a val'Mehan vassal family, the Tortum family, for safekeeping. After their fall from grace centuries later, the gauntlet and dagger were separated and lost to history.

Abilities/Effects: This dagger grants you +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. In addition, when you hit a fiend with this magic weapon it takes an extra 2d6 force damage. Aside from being the bane of infernals, the Eye of Sarish is feared for one reason. It is said to house the souls of a thousand of Sarish's minions. Their presence has corrupted the metal itself. The metal feels slightly warm to the touch and constantly exudes a faint, but foul odor. Any time you successfully strike a creature with this weapon you may use your reaction to deal an additional 2d6 acid damage.



Gauntlet of Garoth

Gauntlet, rare, unique

Description: The ancient Sarishan priest Garoth val'Mehan created this gauntlet to safeguard the Eye of Sarish. Forged from Sarishan Steel, this gauntlet has a greenish tinge and is inscribed with several runes. The gauntlet itself has overlapping armor plates over the fingers, allowing the wearer a fair degree of digital manipulation. When clenched in a fist, the plates over the knuckles form sharp, little blades.

History: See *Eye of Sarish* entry.

Abilities/Effects: You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with unarmed attacks made with this magical gauntlet. Also any time you successfully hit with the Gauntlet of Garoth you deal an additional 1d4 piercing damage if the creature struck is also an fiend the runes on the gauntlet flare up dealing an additional 1d8 force damage.

Additionally, any time the Eye of Sarish is within 60 feet of you, you may use a bonus action to cause the blade to instantly teleport into the hand wearing the Gauntlet of Garoth, if you are holding something with that hand this ability simply fails to activate. You may use this ability two times, regaining all expended uses after completing a long rest.

few drops of blood. Corvalis will give a lop-sided smile and comment that it must like the Hero.

A DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check will reveal that Corvalis is far more nervous about the situation than he is letting on. With a successful check, the Heroes will suspect that Corvalis might be willing to pay a higher price than what was initially offered.

If asked if this is the Eye of Sarish that is on the posters plastered about the inn, Corvalis will say that he has no idea as he was never told if the object was named. He will not divulge where or how he came into possession of the dagger.

If the Heroes refuse to do business with Corvalis, he'll call over one of his men, who will place a small ball made of twine in front of the Heroes. Corvalis will shake his head and say that he much preferred to do this without resorting to violence. If the Heroes look around, they'll see that Kyra and her son are no where to be seen, while the waiting staff are huddled behind the bar, looking frightened and pale.

Corvalis' meaning is clear, either they'll smuggle the dagger into the city or the woman and her child die. The two are not in the common area, as they were taken outside. Any trouble or a refusal will see them killed before the Heroes can do anything to stop it. If the Heroes still refuse, Corvalis will sigh and get up to leave. Kyra and the boy will be found nearby with their throats slit, just another death in the mean streets of Nishanpur. The Heroes will be left unmolested and the adventure for them is over.

Should they agree to do what Corvalis asks, so long as the two innocents are not harmed, the Coryani expatriate will smile and nod, saying that they made the right decision. Corvalis will tell them that their contact will meet them at the Merchant's Square at dusk tomorrow. The buyer will be leaning on a large walking stick painted red. They are to approach him and say that they are 'Servants of Sarish'. He doesn't divulge any further information about the identity of the contact.

If the Heroes ask for suggestions on how to get the dagger into the city without being caught, the smuggler will give the following suggestions. They can use an old smuggling route he knows using the sewers, but he's lost some men who used that route, so they can do so at their own peril. Or they can enter through the Trade Gate and hide the dagger from the guards. Since they aren't known criminals, there's a very good chance that they can get through that way. He'll have another of his men at the Merchant's Square watching. Once the dagger is delivered, Kyra and the boy will be released unharmed.

He'll remind the group that weapons and armor are prohibited in Nishanpur, so unless they are going by way of the sewer, they'll need to secure their equipment at the Dark Gathering. The inn keeper will keep their equipment safe, if the Heroes are performing the work to save Kyra and the boy. If not, standard rates will apply.

If the Heroes agreed to smuggle the dagger without Corvalis having to resort to threatening Kyra, he will hand them the 50 gp, in good faith. In truth, Corvalis is eager to turn the dagger over to the buyer, as he has been unable to sleep since acquiring the relic. He has been having visceral nightmares with infernals chasing and then torturing him. He wakes up two and three times a night, usually a strangled scream dying in his throat. It is this anxiety that is behind his generosity, as he hopes by delivering the dagger will make his nightmares end. Of course, he'll reveal none of this to the Heroes.

Entering the City

How the Heroes proceed is up to them, but the three likeliest paths forward are either to sneak into the city through the sewers, smuggle the dagger through the city gates, or turn over the dagger to the authorities for a reward.

...And I'll Take the Low Road

If the Heroes decide to enter Nishanpur by way of the old smuggling route through the sewers, Corvalis will provide a guide who will lead them to the entrance of the primary sewage outlet but will not take them through the sewers. The route is a confusing maze of tunnels and pipes, but the Heroes are given directions to an exit that will lead them to a back alley, where they may exit unobserved. They are also given a small, localized map with the path drawn out for them.

The entry into the sewer system is blocked by a grate, which is locked with a complex lock and looks sturdy enough to resist blows with a heavy implement. To further complicate matters, the entry way is guarded by four soldiers. Of the four guards, one is napping beneath a makeshift lean-to, while the other three are playing dice, just off to the side of the grate, though in plain view of it.

Enemies: 4 Nishanpur Guards

Once dealt with, the lock on the grate will need to be picked or the grate broken. The grate can be broken by the Heroes but will require many minutes of pounding away at it (consider the grate to have 100 hit points), all of which will gain the attention of other guards. A Hero may pick the lock with a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Pick a Lock) check. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check will reveal there is a mechanical trap on the grate's lock. If tripped, a poisoned pin will be triggered.

Poisoned Pin

Mechanical Trap

As you fumble with the lock, you manage to trigger a hidden trap. From the lock juts out a small pin with a terrible poison. You must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or suffer 4d6 poison damage and 1 level of exhaustion. If you succeed at this save, you suffer half of the damage and do not suffer exhaustion.

After entering the sewer, the Heroes may follow the map to the exit, which will take most of the day, due to the winding nature of the path. Feel free to describe the foul stench that wafts out of the tunnel, the filth that they are wading through, at times waist deep, as well as the cloying odors that not only offend their nostrils, but linger on the tongue, as well. Appropriate to a city of its size, the sewers are fairly large. The tunnels are approximately 10 to 15 feet across and are arched to support the weight of the city above it.

The Lair of the Beast

Hours after they began their journey, the Heroes will note that the number of bones, mostly of small animals, but many increasingly of humans, floating on the sewage, or litter the small and infrequent walkways. Large amounts of unidentifiable refuse floats and bobs in clumps on the fetid water.

A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check will make the Hero aware that something is slowly moving beneath the surface, just before the Gibbering Moulder erupts up from among the refuse and attacks. Its amorphous form quickly forms pseudopods to attack, while numerous orifices seem to form about its body, spewing vile liquids through its gnashing teeth.

Enemies: 1 Advanced Gibbering Moulder

Once the creature is dispatched, the Heroes can finish their journey, eventually finding the landing marked on their map. The exit is a small, unlocked grate at the top of a ladder whose metal rungs are bolted to the wall. They emerge in a secluded back alley, safe, albeit looking much worse for wear, and with an odor that is indescribable. The time appears to be just before dusk. If they hurry, they can meet their contact and be done with this unsavory business.

Through the Trade Gate

The Heroes have decided to try and smuggle the dagger into the city by hiding it in some fashion and walking through the Trade (or other) Gate. Though Nishanpur is the ancestral stronghold of the val'Mehan family in Canceri, it is also the capital of the nation, and the seat of government. As such, large numbers of the other two prominent val families, the val'Mordane and val'Virdan, are found here. The local constabulary is made up of local citizenry, though the majority of them are Nierites. The city guard is led by an elite fighting force known as the Knights of the Red Fist, who patrol the city and its environs mounted on bound infernals known as melatorns. These creatures are summoned from the Hells and have beast level intelligence. They are useful as they are able to smell metal and differentiate different types from a distance, allowing the knights to stop caravan before entering the city and letting them know that metal weapons are illegal within the bounds of the city.

Before the Heroes approach the gate, they should have some idea of how they are planning to smuggle the dagger into the city. As they approach the gate, they'll see that the gate is manned by a squad of twenty or so guards, set in groups of two, checking those entering the city. Along with the Heroes there are dozens of other travelers, on foot and mounted, along with a handful of wagons laden with trade goods.

Normally, concealing a weapon, such as a dagger or a short sword would not be that difficult, but as the Heroes pass by the third set of guards, they see a Knight of the Red Fist holding the reigns of a melatorn. The bat-like creature is sitting placidly as a wagon passing before it, as it has been trained as to how much metal a contrivance like that should possess, when it suddenly perks up and begins to focus in the Heroes' direction. At a whistle from the knight, the guards immediately begin paying closer attention, knowing that someone here may be concealing an illegal metal object.

As the Heroes are loosely clumped together with several other travelers, they have a few seconds before they are stopped and searched. The guards ahead have begun searching others before the Heroes carefully, going so far as to search bags and containers, as well as patting them down. If the Heroes are carrying any other non-Sarishan steel weapons, such as swords or armor, the melatorn begins to zero in on them.

Unless the Heroes have a plan on how to get by the guards and the melatorn, they will be caught, the dagger and any other weapons and armor confiscated, and promptly arrested. As the Heroes step forward, the melatorn becomes agitated, and its rider, Captain Volus, calmly walks over and begins questioning the group. He'll ask in a polite voice, while the guards search their property and person, the following questions. Who are you? What is your business in Nishanpur? Are you aware that it is against the law to bring weapons and armor into the city and that there are harsh penalties for doing so?

Make the Heroes aware that there are a score of guards present, along with Captain Volus, and that while it is possible to fight your way out, fighting into the city is a foolish, as squads of guards, Nierite soldiers, and various priests of Sarish, Neroth, and Nier will eventually surround and kill them, their corpses animated by the Nerothians as cheap labor. Attempts to conceal the dagger is futile, for while the guards might be fooled, the melatorn's supernatural ability will zero in on the item and sniff it out.

Once the dagger, and any other arms and armor, are found, they Heroes are surrounded and ordered to surrender. Captain Volus will come forward and say, *"Trying to smuggle in the Eye of Sarish, eh? I admire your audacity, if not your intelligence. By order of Hegrish val'Mordane, the Dark Apostate of Canceri, you are under arrest. Come quietly and you won't be harmed."*

If, at the GM's discretion, the Heroes are somehow able to smuggle the item in, they should be able to proceed to making the exchange. However, if caught, the Heroes may try a final gambit, attempting to bluff Captain Volus into believing they were bringing the dagger in for the listed reward. If they successfully make a DC 20 Charisma (Deception) check, they convince the captain that they are indeed returning the dagger and events proceed similarly as noted in the following section **Claiming the Reward**.

If they fail to convince the Captain of their intention to return the dagger, they will be stripped of any all and weapons and armor (legal or not) and taken to a nearby guardhouse under heavy guard.

Claiming the Reward

The Heroes have decided to turn the dagger into the authorities for a reward. Though Nishanpur is the ancestral stronghold of the val'Mehan family in Canceri, it is also the capital of the nation, and the seat of government. As such, large numbers of the other two prominent val families, the val'Mordane and val'Virdan, are found here. The local constabulary is made up of local citizenry, though the majority of them are Nierites. The city guard is led by an elite fighting force known as the Knights of the Red Fist, who patrol the city and its environs mounted on bound infernals known as melatorns. These creatures, summoned from the Hells and have beast level intelligence. These creatures are useful as they can smell metal and differentiate different types from a distance, allowing the knights to stop caravan before entering the city and letting them know that metal weapons are illegal within the bounds of the city.

Approaching the guards openly and revealing that they have the sought-after dagger will have the Heroes quickly surrounded by the guards, though they will not have their weapons drawn. One of the guards will summon Captain Volus, who will ask the Heroes to state their business. He will ask to see the dagger and confiscate it, assuming the

Heroes turn over the actual dagger. The Captain is aware of the theft of the relic and its description.

After searching the Heroes for any illegal weapons and armor, he will escort them to the nearby guard house, saying that they will be given their reward for returning the stolen item once they have answered a few questions.

PART TWO – ENACTING THE RITUAL

Tying Up Loose Ends

If the Heroes have snuck into Nishanpur through the sewers, they find themselves in a secluded back alley just before dusk. Finding directions to the Merchant's Square is not difficult, though they may garner strange looks and wrinkled noses at the state of their attire. When they arrive at the designated place and time, the merchants are starting to pick up their wares, and the area is mostly deserted. An older man leaning on a large walking stick painted red stands off to the side.

Approaching the man and saying the proper phrase, that they are “servants of Sarish,” the man will smile and introduce himself as a faithful servant of Sarish, also. He will ask for the ‘item,’ the dagger and quickly inspect it to ensure that it’s authentic. Any attempt to change the true Eye of Sarish for a fake will meet with an immediate scowl and a demand for the relic.

Assuming the true Eye of Sarish is offered, he will hand over a leather pouch with the agreed upon payment of 300 gp. Hemmet is a senior member of the cult and has been tasked by Ralich to meet with the Heroes and eliminate any loose ends, ensuring that Hemmet cannot be described. There are several other cult members lying in wait to ambush the Heroes. They are lying in wait, until Hemmet is safely out of the area before striking. Hemmet is confident that the Heroes will die, so he will not make any sudden or aggressive actions and appears completely in control. Any Wisdom (Insight) checks will show that he is sincere and is willing to let them check the payment. He will not hand over payment until he has the dagger in his possession. If asked why he wants the dagger, Hemmet will merely say that he is a collector of antiquities and leave it at that.

If the Heroes are reluctant to hand over the dagger or attempt to rob Hemmet and keep the dagger, possibly to turn it in for a reward, the ambush will be triggered. Ralich is nearby supervising the situation from atop a two-story building. He will use the Gauntlet of Garoth to call the Eye

to him. Unless the Heroes have hidden the dagger elsewhere and outside the radius of the Gauntlet’s power (60 feet), it will materialize in Ralich’s grasp. He will refrain from doing this unless the Heroes refuse to give up the dagger.

If the Heroes somehow discover Ralich, there will be three additional cult members with him, that are willing to give their lives so that he may escape. They have all waited so long to finally make the city pay for its crime, that they will do whatever is necessary to guarantee its success.

Before the Heroes can leave the area, the trap is sprung, and they are ambushed by bowmen on the rooftops, as well as cultists charging to meet them in hand-to-hand combat.

The Heroes have 30 rounds before the authorities arrive to investigate the disturbance, although they will be able to hear them approaching 10 rounds before they reach at the scene. At the end of the 30 rounds, the 20 guardsmen will arrive and attempt to arrest anyone still standing. Unless the Heroes attempt to fight their way out of the situation, they will be taken to the guardhouse for murder, carrying illegal weapons, and associating with wanted cultist.

The Heroes can attempt to flee and elude the guardsmen but will need to succeed in a series of 5 Dexterity (Stealth) checks (DC 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14) to do so.

As the last of the engaged cultists falls, the Heroes will notice that one of the group hung back and flees into the night. The Heroes may try to chase him down, but the head start, and the maze-like layout of the streets make it impossible to do so.

If the Heroes end the threat, they can make their way out of the area before the guards arrive, escaping their notice, and continuing into the city unmolested.

The Interrogation

Whether the Heroes were caught attempting to smuggle the dagger or turned in the dagger for a reward, they will be taken to a guardhouse to be interrogated. If arrested, the Heroes are stripped of their weapons and armor, will have their wrists and feet chained, and paraded through the streets to the guard house. The chains will prevent the Heroes from running, but allows them to walk, albeit in a jerking motion. The Heroes can attempt a DC 16 Dexterity check to escape the chains without being noticed. The GM should feel free to modify this based on circumstances. Additionally, any attempt to cast spells or shape change will be noticed by the guards, who are keeping a close watch on them requiring a DC 15 primary spell casting attribute (Stealth) check. If caught doing so, the guards will assume the Heroes are trying to escape and attack.

If the Heroes are being escorted, the guards will remain professionally polite, but not friendly. They will surround the Heroes unobtrusively but will not be overtly aggressive.

The guardhouse is a small two-story building made of solid stone with only one entrance. Towards the rear of the building, and through a barred door, is a hallway with a small office and a series of jail cells made of iron bars. If arrested, the Heroes will be placed in one of the cells. The other four cells are currently filled with other criminals and malcontents. They will be unchained when placed in the cell,

If escorted in, the Heroes will be asked to wait in the office for the commanding officer to arrive. The dagger will not be left with them. If asked, Captain Volus will reply that it's being kept in a safe place while this is all sorted out.

Hours pass before the commanding officer, a Nierite with flaming red hair by the name of Haron val'Virdan, arrives. Clean shaven and fastidiously dressed, the Commander will ask the Heroes the same questions, though the tone of the interrogation will vary depending on whether they are incarcerated or not, being either polite or intimidating and threatening.

After introducing himself as Commander Haron val'Virdan, he'll ask how the Heroes came into possession of the dagger. If the Heroes were arrested, he'll add, *"I want to know how long you've been associated with the cultists and what you plan to do with the dagger? We have witnesses who will attest to your presence in Hunder when the dagger was stolen and your association with known members of the cultists. Confess now and I'll show leniency. How long have you been working with Ralich? Where is his current whereabouts? Talk!"*

If the Heroes voluntarily came in, he'll take down their information and after being satisfied that they have nothing to do with the cultists, he'll turn to authorize their payment. If any of the Heroes are former military, constabulary, or a val'Virdan, and asks about the cultists, Haron will reveal the following information.

"Approximately forty years prior, the city was occupied by a foreign military force known as the Erdukeen, a people who follow a more brutal and unforgiving version of the worship of Nier, the God of War and Flaming Destruction. While eventually driven out of the city, and back to their own lands, the people of Nishanpur were treated harshly under their rule, with hundreds dying, often for the most minimal of infractions. Some of the citizenry formed rebel groups to undermine the Erdukeen rule. One of the most effective ones was led by a man named Ralich Tortum, who carried out acts of vengeance for the death of his young son.

"After the defeat of the Erdukeen, Ralich's band disbanded for the most part, but a small inner group remained loyal to him. Ralich blamed not just the Erdukeen, but the city as a whole, for standing idly by and allowing the depredations of the occupiers to continue. He especially saw those Sarishans that collaborated with the Erdukeen as culpable for the deaths that occurred during that time. Over the years, there have been sporadic attacks around the city, as well as assassinations of officials, all laid at the feet of Ralich and his band of cultists.

"I've heard rumors that he's been searching for two artifacts for years, the Gauntlet of Garoth and the Eye of Sarish. The fact that the dagger is in the city, makes me believe that another attack may be imminent."



Jailhouse Break

No sooner does the Commander turn to leave the room, that an explosion rock the building. A large, jagged hole is torn into the wall, as an eruption of hail of dust, stone, and mortar, fills the area. On the other side of the wall lies a small courtyard and alleyway. Having taken the brunt of the explosion, all of the guards, including the Commander, in the area are lying on the ground. A DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check from within the cell or a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check when at the commander's side will reveal that some are injured, while others appear to be battered and unconscious, but have escaped serious injury.

If the Heroes were locked in a cell, the explosion has ripped and twisted the bars apart, allowing them to escape easily into the room. Through the cloud of smoke, the Heroes can see standing in the hole are several beings in hooded cloaks, brandishing weapons. If the Heroes leave them alone, the cultists will ignore them and begin to kill the unconscious guards.

The Heroes can attempt to find and take their confiscated weapons (or the weapons of the guards) and escape, leaving the cultists to finish killing the helpless guards. A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check will allow them to locate their equipment, though illegal weapons and armor (those confiscated if they tried to smuggle them into the city), are held in a separate area of the building. If they wish to search the entire building, guards will intervene to recapture them.

If the Heroes intervene to save the guards, the cultists will quickly turn to attack them. These cultists are well armed, while the Heroes are most likely unarmed and unarmored.

Alternatively, if the Heroes escape out the hole, they will quickly run into a group of guards from the Trade Gate that were alerted by the explosion and rushed over to investigate. Seeing the Heroes leaving, they decide to attack first and ask questions later.

If the Heroes decide to search for the Eye of Sarish, they'll not be able to find it. In the midst of the confusion caused by the explosion and subsequent battle, Ralich used the Gauntlet of Garoth to retrieve it and quickly exit, leaving his fellow cultists to eliminate any that may impede the ritual.

Enemies: Either guards (NPC Veterans) or cultists (NPC cultists), with an appropriate number at GM's discretion.

Rewards and Consequences

If the Heroes defended the guards and defeated the cultists, other guardsmen will arrive just as the last opponent falls. Commander Haron val'Viridan will groggily stand the guards down stating that the Heroes risked their lives to defend the others. Since they have proven they are not in league with the cultists, their legal equipment will be returned to them and they'll be free to go. If they were arrested for attempting to smuggle in the dagger, the Commander will use his prerogative to release them as a reward for their aid.

If the Heroes wish to take any of the illegal weapons or armor from the cultists they can attempt to hide them from the guards, who are not paying as close attention to them as previously. A DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check will allow them to sneak out with the weapons and armor hidden from sight.

If the Heroes chose to escape and fought the guards but did not kill any of them, they may flee with their equipment, but will be hunted as accomplices of the cultists. Make a note if any of the guards were killed, as this will make the final scene even more difficult, as the commander and guards will attempt to bring them to justice, assuming the city is still standing.

A Cry for Help

At this point in the adventure, the Heroes are either running from the guardsmen, or are making their way through the city after their battle with the cultists. Hours after their encounter, whether being pursued or not, but before they settle in for the night, the Heroes will be contacted by one of the cultists, a man named Cael.

Cael appears to be wounded, though not gravely. He is a young man, in his early twenties, of average height and build, wearing the same style robes as the cultists, and would be nondescript were it not for the blood dripping from his back. After catching the Heroes attention, he steps back into the alley. The Heroes may be wary of another ambush, but Cael is alone, sliding down to the ground, leaving a long smear of blood on the wall.

Obviously shaken and frightened, he begs the Heroes to listen to him. He says he's been searching for them, as he can't go to the authorities. He believes they would arrest him on sight and refuse to hear what he has to say until it was too late. He explains that his parents are part of the cult, blaming the first the Erdukeen and then the city as a whole for the death of their parents, his grandparents. As children, they were forced to live in the streets, destitute and living a life of misery. They eventually met Ralich and the others, finding others that shared their burning hatred and desire for vengeance.

As a child, he would hear the stories and it was something that made him feel special, knowing that someday every slight and insult against him would be repaid a thousand-fold, but it was always just a fantasy. Now that Ralich has the Gauntlet and the Eye of Sarish, they say they're going to actually destroy the city and everyone in it.

The Eye of Sarish is a key that, along with the Gauntlet of Garoth, can unlock a doorway straight to the Hells, creating a tiny version of the Time of Terror, unleashing unbound infernals of all types, too many for the Sarishan priests to deal with before the fiends devastate the city. The last thing they need to enact the ritual, is a blood sacrifice. The cultists

expected Cael to die along with them to finish the ritual, but he was not willing to make that final sacrifice. He turned to flee and was attacked by the guardian stationed at the entrance to the ritual chamber.

Wounded and panicked, Cael knew that the guards wouldn't listen to him in time, and with no one else to turn to, he sought the Heroes out. He saw them fight and believes they're the only ones that may be able to stop Ralich before it's too late. Cael can direct the Heroes to the place where the ritual is to take place, an ancient and secret underground chamber built during the age of the Imperium. The entrance is in the Corpse Quarter, near the ruined palaces when the Devil-Kings ruled the city in the Time of Terror.

If the Heroes ask about the guardian at the ritual entrance, Cael will not be able to do more than give a vague description of a large, skeletal creatures. Its claws raked his back, causing his wound. It didn't pursue Cael, so he believes it is bound to the area.

If Ralich was able to take the dagger from the Heroes' possession, and ask how this was done, Cael can inform them that the Gauntlet has the power to summon the Eye of Sarish to it over short distances. The two items must be used in conjunction with one another to unlock the doorway into the Hells.

If the Heroes do not wish to stop the cultists for whatever reason, they may choose to leave Cael where he is or turn him into the authorities for a reward of 50 gp., assuming they are not wanted criminals themselves.

However, if they agree that Ralich and his cult must be stopped, Cael will take them to the entrance of ritual chamber, urging them every step of the way to hurry.

PART THREE – THE SUMMONING IS COMPLETE

The Guardian at the Threshold

The journey to the Corpse Quarter is either a quick walk through the streets of Nishanpur or a game of hide-and-seek as the Heroes dodge patrols of guardsmen, depending on whether they are wanted criminals or not. Cael unerringly takes the group to an area known as the ruined palaces of the Devil-Kings, an area takes up a full fourth of the Corpse Quarter. Here, crumbling facades of brick, tile, and

stone serve as the last reminders of the rule of the ancient Devil-Kings. Once, these were huge, horribly magnificent structures, towering over the mundane buildings of the city's human inhabitants. Now, weeds and vines choke the rubble, with bits of grotesque statuary poking out of the leaves now and again. Only the ubiquitous gargoyles of Nishanpur seem at home here, though no one can quite remember who put them in place, or when, or why.

Cael guides them to an abandoned, windowless stone building, telling them that's the entrance to the cult's ritual room. The small building is a one room affair, with an uneven floor of broken flagstones, with a half-rotted wooden door, slightly ajar. Despite any misgivings the Heroes may have about Cael, he is earnest in his belief that if Ralich is not stopped, everyone he knows will soon die at the hands of other-worldly horrors. The former cultist isn't knowingly leading them into an ambush, nor is the door/entrance trapped in any way.

Once inside, 40-foot by 40-foot chamber, Cael will point to a trap door that will lead to the ritual chamber. If the Heroes are still unarmed, there are a few short swords, daggers, and leather armors within a locked, wooden chest, that the cultists use to stage their attacks. Cael will point this out to them.

Any Wisdom (Search) checks about the chamber will reveal no one hidden and no sign of the guardian that attacked Cael. Once the Heroes are ready to go downstairs, but before they do so, the guardian will explode out of the trap door, skewering the hapless Cael, who was unfortunately standing beside the entrance downward.

The guardian is a large monstrosity, with bits of rotted meat hanging off a skeletal frame, whose bones are inscribed with numerous runes. So swift is its attack, that it was able to rip the trapdoor off its hinges and impale Cael upon the sharpened, spear like talons upon one hand. With the element of surprise lost, it turns to face the Heroes, an unholy glow gleaming in its empty eye-sockets.

Enemies: 1 Guardian

Once the Heroes have dealt with the guardian, they may continue the now open trapdoor and confront the leader of the cult and put an end to his nefarious plans.

The Door is Unlocked

As the Heroes descend into the darkness below, they find themselves in a dimly lit spiral staircase, its steps worn smooth from years of feet treading upon them. During the descent, the air begins to cool, then becomes chilly, until finally, the air is frigid as they arrive at the bottom. The stairs open into a chamber, the stones of the wall and floor slick with perspiration from the cold.

Torches in sconces light the way down a passage covered in glyphs and runes. A successful DC 15 Intelligence check (worshippers of Sarish have advantage) will reveal that the symbols are supplication to the God Sarish, in His aspect as *He Who Strides the Planes*. The passage ends with a pair of maintained wooden doors, bound with bands of iron. The wood itself seems to breathe ever so slightly, as light emanates through the planks of the door and from beneath it. The only sound that can be heard from behind the closed doors are the slight rustling of iron chains moving.

When the doors are opened, read or paraphrase the following:

The doors open smoothly on well-oiled hinges, revealing another chamber, long and rectangular in shape. It's ceilings and walls carved out of the living rock, with pillars engraved with intricate carvings, supporting the vaulted ceiling above. Hanging like curtains strung above are numerous rusted chains, barbed and repellent to the eye, others lie on the floor, forming patterns. A faded mosaic laying out an intricate arcane pattern is marred by the dozen nude bodies, their life blood puddling about them.

In the very center sitting cross legged is an emaciated, elderly man, nude but for a loin-cloth, a metallic gauntlet with a greenish tint, and a holy symbol of Sarish, archaic in form, hanging about his neck. Directly before him is the ancient dagger, the Eye of Sarish, placed within a slot in the very center of the mosaic. He is sitting up straight as you enter, his rheumy eyes overflowing with tears. Long slashes have cut through the arteries of his arm, and he's slowly bleeding out on the mystic circle. As you enter he says in a pained and sad voice, "You've come to stop me, haven't you?"

This is Ralich, last of the Tortum family, vassal of the val'Mehan, keepers of the twin holy relics known as the Gauntlet of Garoth and the Eye of Sarish, and the Opener of the Way. Ralich will be more than happy to converse with the Heroes, as the longer he keeps them talking the more time the rip to the Hells has to open. He doesn't fear that the Heroes will stop him, as he's already completed the ritual. The Heroes have already lost – they just don't know it yet. Feel free to have Ralich relate the entire plot and backstory to the Heroes. At this point, he has nothing left to hide. His life, the life of his fellow cultists, and, he hopes, the people of Nishanpur, are over.

The room is long and rectangular, approximately 60 feet across and 120 feet long. The ceiling is 12 feet high where it meets the wall and extends to a height of 40 feet at its apex. There is a chain every 15 feet dangling from the ceiling. The chains drop to the same height, approximately 6 feet off the ground. There are other chains of varying lengths spread about on the floor in bizarre patterns.

Once the Heroes move to within 30 feet of Ralich (and the Eye of Sarish), the air about them will begin to bubble, like a

black and oily water in a roiling boil, and a horrendous wail, much like what a thousand throats screaming in sobbing anguish might sound, fills the chamber. A red, angry light suffuses the room, banishing the shadows, turning them into crimson sheets of light. The winds within the chamber begin to pick up, swirling about, and growing in strength.

As the Heroes approach closer, Ralich will smile and say, "You cannot stop this. It is already too..." His words are cut short as several iron chains burst through his chest. His eyes grow wide in shock for a moment before they roll to the back of his head. Behind Ralich stands a creature clothed in living chains, that undulate and sway like iron vipers, waiting to strike.

The creature steps into the world, dripping ectoplasmic gore and somewhere, deep inside their minds, the Heroes hear a voice as clear, cold, and final as death say, "Flee, mortals. I have not had sport in ages. Run...and let me enjoy hunting you down, like the animals you are."

Closing the Doorway to the Hells

This fight can become complicated as it has many moving parts, so GMs should feel free to remove or add elements of the combat, as they feel necessary.

The Winds of the Hells: The wind howling throughout the chamber are not normal gusts of air, but supernatural in nature. Think of the winds blowing around the room as a tornado centered upon the Eye of Sarish. Any Hero asking for and succeeding in a DC 13 Wisdom check or Intelligence (Investigation) check will realize that while the winds seem to be changing direction and speed about the chamber, it becomes very stable and predictable around the dagger. Given its supernatural origins, spells and effects that control the air or nullify environmental effects, such as *freedom of movement*, either have no effect or grant advantage on checks. Note that the infernals the Heroes will face in this combat are native to the Hells and are immune to the effects of the Winds of the Hells.

Winds of Hell

Magical environmental effect

As the portal to the Hells is open, the winds that blast that evil plane of existence buffet the Heroes and anyone else around them. Unless the creature is within 25 feet of the Eye of Sarish, on every creature's initiative roll 1d4. On the result of 4, they are subject to a gust of wind and live embers. They must succeed at a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or suffer 2d6 fire damage and are knocked prone. On a successful saving throw, they take half damage and are not knocked prone.

With the exception of dark kin, creatures that have resistance to fire (such as val'Emman Heroes) gain no benefit against these infernal flames.



Moving Towards the Eye of Sarish: Starting at a 25 foot radius, any Hero that attempts to move towards the center can only move 5 feet at a time. To do so requires a successful DC 5 Strength (Athletics) check to move the first 5-feet, with each successive 5-foot increasing this DC by +5 (DC 10, DC 15, etc). Thus, to reach the dagger, a Hero must make five separate successful Strength (Athletics) checks. Failure means being pushed back 5 feet and an additional successful Strength (Athletics) check at the appropriate DC. Another failure and the Hero are pushed back 5 feet and must repeat the process until they hold their ground or are knocked completely out of the wind bands. If a Hero wishes to remain within one of the bands they've moved into requires a successful Strength (Athletics) check of the appropriate DC, but they gain advantage to the roll.

Pulling out the Eye of Sarish: Most Heroes will instinctively understand that the Eye of Sarish is responsible for the opening to the Hells and the only way at their disposal to close it. Unfortunately, pulling the dagger out is impossible without using the Gauntlet of Garoth to do so. Once the Hero has the Gauntlet, pulling the Eye of Sarish out is a simple task.

The Gauntlet of Garoth: Unfortunately for the Heroes, the Gauntlet of Garoth is still in the grasp of Ralich, whose corpse is swirling approximately 10 feet above the floor about the dagger. The Heroes will somehow need to reach Ralich's body to retrieve the relic.

The Infernals: Initially, the Heroes will need to contend with one (1) Chain Devil, but more infernals are noticing the passage and are heading towards it. While it is not recommended that the infernals swarm the Heroes, the threat of such a thing happening should give them a sense of urgency to closing the opening to the Hells. Depending on how the Heroes are faring against the Chain Devil, the GM should add another into the combat as listed below or when additional infernals of varying power coming through as needed. Remember: these infernals are immune to the Winds of Hells effects.

Destroying the Eye of Sarish: As a desperate gambit, the Heroes may wish to attempt to destroy the dagger. The Eye has an AC of 20 and 10 hit points.

Enemies: 1 Chain Devil, Round 5 – Bone Devils, Round 9 – 1 additional Chain Devil, Round 13 = 10 Imps, etc., until Passage to the Hells is closed.

Closing the Passage to the Hells

If the Eye of Sarish is removed by using the Gauntlet of Garoth from the center of the arcane circle, or it is destroyed, the portal to the Hells is instantly shut. No further infernals can enter this Mortal Realm and the Winds of the Hells effect ends.

Any infernals still alive when this occurs will still need to be dealt with, but if the Heroes appear too weak to do so, feel

free to allow Commander Haron val'Virdan and a squad of a dozen guardsmen to appear and help mop up the remaining threats.

If, however, the Heroes killed guardsmen during their escape from the guardhouse, the commander will order the destruction of the infernals first and then turn on the Heroes. If the Heroes are still wanted by the authorities, but did not kill any of the guardsmen, they will be free to go, with the commander's gratitude.

In any case, if commander confiscates both stolen relics, he will pay the reward offered for their return to the Heroes, 1,000 gp. to the group (not each).

Concluding the Adventure

If free to move around the city, the Heroes may wish to either continue on with the business that brought them to Nishanpur in the first place or return to the Dark Gathering Inn outside the city to confront Corvalis. The smuggler has long since gone, but whether they kept their end of the bargain by attempting to smuggle in the dagger or not, they'll find that Kyra and her son were released once the Heroes were past the city gates. It appears that the wanton murder of innocent bystanders from the city he does business in is a line even Corvalis was not willing to cross. In gratitude, the owner of the inn waives any fees for them, stating that they are always welcome to stay and eat here free of charge.

Further adventures in Nishanpur are available to the Heroes, as the Tir Betoqi dwarves will need assistance in transporting valuable weapons through Canceri and the Hinterlands to their mountain enclave. Alternatively, the Yhing hir may be willing to sell a hell-horse foal to one of the Heroes, if they can prove their worth. Of course, if they are still wanted fugitives, the Heroes may wish to leave Nishanpur behind and explore other areas of the Known Lands, until the nightmarish events that just transpired are a distant memory.

CODEx OF THREATS

Cultist

Medium humanoid (human)

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Cancerese, Low Coryani

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. The fanatic is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spell casting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks).

One of the cultists has the following eldritch sorcerer spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *hideous laughter, magic missile, whirling blade*

2nd level (3 slots): *enemy of my enemy, scorching ray*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The cultist makes two melee attacks.

Scimitar. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Nishanpur Guards

Medium humanoid (human)

Armor Class 17 (splint)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Cancerese, Low Coryani

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

ACTIONS

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

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

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

Heavy Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

Gibbering Mouther, Advanced

Large aberration

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 170 (20d10 + 60)

Speed 10ft., swim 10ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16	8	16	3	10	6
(+3)	(-1)	(+3)	(-4)	(+0)	(-2)

Condition Immunities prone

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 12

Languages –

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Aberrant Ground. The ground in a 10-foot radius around the mouther is doughlike difficult terrain. Each creature that starts its turn in that area must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or have its speed reduced to 0 until the start of its next turn.

Gibbering. The mouther babbles incoherently while it can see any creature and isn't incapacitated. Each creature that starts its turn within 20 feet of the mouther and can hear the gibbering must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature can't take reactions until the start of its next turn and rolls a d8 to determine what it does during its turn. On a 1 to 4, the creature does nothing. On a 5 or 6, the creature takes no action or bonus action and uses all its movement to move in a randomly determined direction. On a 7 or 8, the creature makes a melee attack against a randomly determined creature within its reach or does nothing if it can't make such an attack.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The gibbering mouther makes one bite attack and, if it can, uses its Blinding Spittle.

Bites. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. Hit: 53 (12d6+4) piercing damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is killed by this damage, it is absorbed into the mouther.

Blinding Spittle (Recharge 5-6). The mouther spits a chemical glob at a point it can see within 15 feet of it. The glob explodes in a blinding flash of light on impact. Each creature within 5 feet of the flash must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded until the end of the mouther's next turn.

Guardian Golem

Large construct

Armor Class 14

Hit Point 133 (14d10 + 56)

Speed 20ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20	9	18	3	8	1
(+5)	(-1)	(+4)	(-4)	(-1)	(-5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

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

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 12

Languages –

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Magic Resistance. The Guardian has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects. However, this effect does not apply against spells cast by worshippers of Sarish (including but not limited to Sorcerer-Priests, Holy Champions, and Death Mongers). Instead, it has disadvantage on saving throws against these spells.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Guardian makes two claw attacks and may use its blood storm ability if able.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) slashing damage. If the target is a living creature, it also takes 11 (2d10) necrotic damage.

Bleed. (Recharge 5-6, only usable on a turn a creature takes necrotic damage from the Guardian's claw attacks). All creatures within 20 feet of the Guardian must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, they take 28 (8d6) magical slashing damage, or half as much on a successful saving throw.



SHADOW OF THE SERPENTMEN

An adventure for three to five Heroes of level 8 to 11 by Robert J. Schwalb.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Ko Jajani is an influential merchant from the Hinterlands operating out of the trade city of Mil Takara, one of the larger and wealthier Yhing hir settlements in the recently created Duchy of Eastmarch. He has a reputation for being a collector of rare treasures, and unusual antiquities plucked from the ruins littering the countryside. His most recent acquisition was *Greendeath*, a magical blade of unknown origin discovered in the northern reaches of his homeland. The merchant procured the blade from an unscrupulous treasure hunter called the Silt Fox, a Khur Gi woman. This young woman had other treasures to sell, but Ko Jajani spotted the blade on her hip and had to have it. When she ignored his offers of gold, he used an enchantment to part

her from the blade. Two days later, *Greendeath*, a small chest of jewels worth than 600 gp, and the thief were gone.

The merchant suspects Silt Fox of robbing him. He confirmed this by consulting a local Larissan priestess and having her use her gifts of divination. He covets the blade, and the theft has damaged his reputation. Luckily, the Silt Fox cut herself while robbing him and Ko, ever the resourceful magician can use those few drops of blood to track the thief with a minor magical bauble called a *bloodglass shard*. Unable to bring back the weapon himself due to other constraints on his time, he hired the Heroes, entrusting them with the *shard* and sending them forth to recover his goods. In exchange for their service, he told them they could keep any material wealth found on the thief except for the blade and promised to pay them an additional 500 gp upon their return with the *shard* and the weapon. Ko Jajani is a dangerous man and the Heroes who cross him make for themselves a significant enemy.

The Silt Fox

From the day she plundered the tombs in the Hidden Canyon of Zhu, bad luck has followed the Silt Fox. It started with small things, equipment breaking and items going missing, but life became more difficult as jobs turned sour, marks turned out to be penniless, and deals went bad. After being beguiled and robbed by Ko Jajani, the Silt Fox became convinced the mummified serpentmen of Zhu, in their jeweled sarcophagi, had cursed her. The only way the curse can be lifted, she believes, is to return the sword and make an offering of treasure to the slumbering ssanu. Thus, she stole the weapon back from the merchant along with a chest of jewels and made off toward the hidden canyon she stumbled upon almost a year ago. She knows Ko is not likely to let her theft go unpunished, so she wasted no time and pushed herself to return to the place where everything went wrong.

Silt Fox is correct; she is suffering under a curse placed upon her when she cracked open the sarcophagus of a high priest of Wantiir, the ssethric lord of the dead. The curse has been subtly influencing her ever since she left the canyon, tormenting her as punishment for her thievery. The curse upon the blade forced her to steal it back and now drives her to return the sword to where it belongs.

The Silt Fox is a young human woman who moves with a swagger belying the anxiety she feels about her situation. Patched studded leather covers the bronze skin of her lithe body. Her hacked black hair, sticking out in all directions from her head when not wrapped in a scarf, describes her thoughts about personal appearance.

Use the NPC Assassin to represent Silt Fox's fighting ability if needed. Other stats regarding Silt Fox will be given as needed.

Getting Started

Come up with a suitable reason for the Heroes to be in Mil Takara, which is easy if your campaign takes place there. The Heroes might have stopped in Mil Takara, one of the largest city in the Duchy of Eastmarh and a major trading hub of the region, for supplies or some downtime. If the campaign takes place somewhere else, you might run a short adventure beforehand to get them into the area, perhaps in pursuit of another magic item pried from the ruins speckling the cruel wastelands of the Hinterlands.

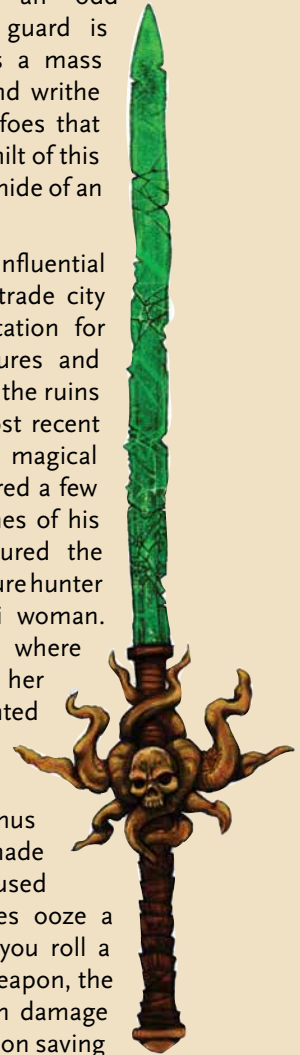
Greendearth

Weapon (longsword), rare (requires attunement)

Description: Fashioned from an odd green crystalline material, its guard is made from iron and resembles a mass of tentacles that slowly move and writhe about attempting to latch onto foes that are attacked by the weapon. The hilt of this weapon is wrapped in a dull-grey hide of an unknown beast.

History: Ko Jajani is an influential merchant operating out of the trade city of Mil Takara. He has a reputation for being a collector of rare treasures and unusual antiquities plucked from the ruins littering the countryside. His most recent acquisition was *Greendearth*, a magical blade of unknown origin discovered a few years back in the northern reaches of his homeland. The merchant procured the blade from an unscrupulous treasure hunter named the Silt Fox, a Khur Gi woman. While she refused to disclose where she found the unsettling blade, her frequent excursions in the haunted Canyons of Zhu point to that as *Greendearth's* place of origin.

Abilities/Effects: You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. When used in combat, the sword's tentacles ooze a greenish yellow fluid. Any time you roll a 20 on an attack made with this weapon, the target struck suffers 2d10 poison damage and must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute.



The adventure assumes the adventurers have already signed onto the mission and have been using the *glass* to pursue the Silt Fox across the Hinterlands for several weeks when the adventure begins. Of course, you can choose to start the adventure earlier. You can roleplay through the hiring of the Heroes, their time in Mil Takara, and the pursuit across the Hinterlands. In particular, the crossing of the Silt Sea is rife with adventure opportunities, as the Heroes must find some way to navigate that treacherous landscape. During their chase, the Heroes might encounter a few monsters, engage Silt Fox in a chase, though she *must* get away, and deal with the various hardships imposed by traveling over an inhospitable landscape. Such an expansion could add depth and greater challenges for the Heroes to overcome, but it should ultimately culminate in the Fox Hunt encounter.

Bloodglass Shard

Wondrous item, uncommon

Description: This leaf-shaped shard of mirrored glass measures 9 inches in length and 6 inches wide at the base but tapering to a point. Most *bloodglass shards* have flecks of blood around the edges.

History: Once a common tool during the ancient Imperium of Man, the *Bloodglass Shards* were used by a group known as the Blood Hunters in the service of the val'Mehan family. Since the end of the Golden Age of Man, the shards are usually found solely in the possession of rich and powerful Sarishans who employ them to hunt down those that have crossed them.

Abilities/Effects: As an action you may smear a bit of blood from a creature on the surface of the glass. The blood gathers into a bead that remains on the surface no matter what it touches or how the device is handled until you smear blood from a different creature onto the glass's surface. When you hold the shard parallel to the ground, the bead of blood slides across the glass to point the direction the owner of that blood is.

If the creature is more than 1,000 feet from you, the bead of blood stays at the edge of the glass. If the creature is less than 1,000 feet from you but more than 500 feet, the bead moves halfway to the shard's center. Finally, if the creature is within 500 feet of you, the bead moves to the center.

FOX HUNT

Start the adventure by reading or paraphrasing the following text. Alter the text as needed if you decide to expand the adventure to play through the negotiation and the pursuit.

For weeks, you have pursued the Silt Fox across the Hinterlands. She led you through wild dust storms, over lands crawling with vicious creatures, and into traps you only just managed to escape. No matter the troubles, the blood droplet on the mirrored surface has pointed the way to the thief and following it has taken you into a region of flat lands known as the Silt Sea. Obtaining a silt skimmer, a flat-bottomed boat built to traverse the Silt Sea, from a local tribe of Yhing hir, you've headed north across the undulating waves of sand and silt, avoiding rivers of ash and slit sliding across the wastes from the nearby volcanic Shaulk Mountains. Having navigated the perilous landscape and evaded the strange ash drakes swimming through the stuff, you have emerged onto solid ground that stretches for as far as you can see, a flat expanse of salt encrusted earth speckled with blackened, stunted trees.

Another silt skimmer has been dragged onto the "shore," and was probably left by your quarry.

The Silt Fox made landfall here, abandoned the craft, and then headed across the salt flats toward the canyon. Halfway there, a band of hyena men picked up her trail and pursued her. They captured her to bring her back to their master, the Cackling Prince, who rules over this clan from his mighty fortress.

The Heroes might gain a few clues by looking around. Aside from a pair of oars, the skimmer is empty. With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check a Hero inspecting the ground observes faint tracks in the dust, with each gust of hot wind erasing more and more of them until they disappear altogether a few feet away.

On the horizon, the Heroes see a plume of dust about a mile away. Success on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that creatures moving at speed away from the heroes created the plume of dust. Comparing the blood drop on the class and the direction that the plume of dust moves shows the Heroes that their quarry is in the same direction as the plume.

If the Heroes give chase within a few minutes of moving onto solid ground, they will see a group of hyena men fighting over some items, including a saddle bag. The humanoids are fighting over Silt Fox's belonging but turn to face the new threat the Heroes pose. Fearing their master more than death, the hyena men fight to the death. The hyena men are not interested in parlaying.

Enemies: 6 hyena men (use gnolls)

Once dealt with, the Heroes discover that the items being fought over include a worn saddle bag bearing all the marks of Yhing hir craftsmanship, a set of lock picks (average quality) and a small silver coin, its markings completely faded and unintelligible. This is the Silt Fox's lucky coin, which she has a habit of unconsciously rubbing while she's thinking.

Horde of the Hyena Men

The Heroes can see the horde about halfway across the salt flat, undoubtedly where Silt Fox was taken.

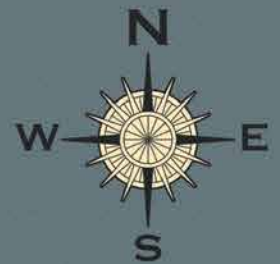
Beneath a flock of circling buzzards, a great stone fortress climbs above a cloud of dust, smoke, and heat shimmers, looming over the plain. Even from the distance, you can hear the noise of many creatures emanating from the place.

A great gathering of hyena men, thralls of the unhinged Cackling Prince who rules from the Fortress of Lamentations, spreads across a low rise between two deep fissures a few miles from the Hidden Canyon of Zhu. The land all around the encampment is broken, rife with fissures and canyons as if some great giant clawed the salty ground. The Heroes can avoid the searching hyena men and reach the area where Silt Fox is being held.

ARCANIS

THE WORLD OF SHATTERED EMPIRES

HINTERLANDS



Patrols

Four bands of 10 hyena men (as gnolls) and 1 hyena man Lieutenant (as Gnoll Pack Lord) hold four positions around about 1 mile from the Fortress and rabble around it. One group occupies a spot to the south of the fortress, another to the west, another to the east, each of which is about 1-1/2 miles apart, while the last roams between these points. Given the flat terrain, the hyena men can see up 2 miles in all directions—reduced somewhat by the heat shimmers. This vantage point gives the hyena men advantage to spot heroes trying to sneak into the fortress. Heroes must make a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) group check in order to pass unseen.

If a patrol spots the Heroes, they move to engage the hyena men group, intent on capturing and taking them to their leader. Start the hyena men at 100 feet from the party. Each time a hyena man in a patrol dies, have the entire group make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the group flees for the Fortress or fights to the death if prevented. If the fight continues, on the fourth round, the fight will be seen by another patrol. On the fifth round, 8 hyena men enter combat at a distance of 100 feet. The other hyena men and their lieutenant will move toward the Fortress to raise the alarm. As before, each time a hyena man in the patrols dies, the patrol makes a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw, or they flee toward the Fortress.

The Encampment

Over two hundred hyena men gather in groups of 8 to 12 all around the Fortress of Lamentations, which is described below. Each group will have 2 to 4 human slaves. All slaves are restrained by manacles that are easy to unlock (DC 10 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check). In all, there are forty groups, each sitting, sleeping, eating, fighting, barking, or pulling apart slaves and building dung fires to chase away the evening's cold. At night, the hyena men here are oblivious to intruders, allowing the Heroes to make a DC 15 group Dexterity (Stealth) test to go unnoticed. If the Heroes attack a group of hyena men, each round make a Wisdom saving throw DC 15 for the remaining hyena men. If they succeed, they have been awoken by the commotion. 4 hyena men will enter combat each round, starting at a distance of 80 feet. After six rounds of combat, or if a loud spell effect, such as *fireball*, goes off, 4 hyena men lieutenants will arrive, starting at a distance of 80 feet from the combat.

Tracking the hyena men that took the Silt Fox is a simple task (DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check) as they went in a straight line towards the camp and stopped at the first dung fire. With a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, Heroes will notice a pole sticking out of the ground next to the dung fire with the Silt Fox chained to it.



There are 10 hyena men and 1 hyena man lieutenant in this group, along with three human slaves, plus the Silt Fox. The hyena men are currently asleep but will fight to protect their offering to the Crackling Prince if awoken. Entering their campsite unnoticed requires a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check. The lieutenant has *Greendeath* wrapped in an oilskin cloth next to its sleeping mat. It requires a DC 20 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to remove the blade without waking the lieutenant. The manacles on Silt Fox are easy to unlock (DC 10 Dexterity (Pick a Lock) check).

If the Heroes grab *Greendeath*, and leave the Silt Fox to her fate, you can salvage the adventure by having the curse move to one of the Heroes before they leave the region, compelling him to return the sword to the tomb.

Unheroic Acts and Fate Points

If you are using the Fate Point system presented in the Arcanis 5E rules set, this is an unheroic act and at GM discretion you may feel free to reclaim any unspent Fate points from party members that refused to save Silt Fox.

If the Heroes rescue the other slaves, they will go quietly, but lack food, water, and resources to tackle the desert alone. The Heroes will have to ensure their safety until the end of this adventure. The Heroes will automatically know this without any rolls.

The hyena men grossly outnumber the Heroes, which makes a straightforward assault on the horde more of a suicide mission. Even if the Heroes manage to take out a few camps, they run the risk of discovery and bringing down the whole horde on their heads. Should the hyena men take the Heroes alive, they will strip them as they did the Silt Fox and add them to their collection of slaves. This adventure ends at this point for the Heroes.

Heroes that rescue Silt Fox and the other slaves should receive inspiration (one Fate Point if you are using the Arcanis 5E rules set).

Allow Heroes to come up with plans to rescue Silt Fox and reward them with advantage for clever plans. The Heroes might use magic to disguise themselves or conceal their movements. Or, they could wait until late in the night, when the hyena men are most lax, kill a few guards, and use stealth to sneak through the camp. Another option is to enlist the aid of the three slaves. They are desperate to be free, but also know their situation: they have no food or water, and they're middle of nowhere. If freed, they might be convinced to revolt against the hyena men, which can play out any way you choose. A DC 15 Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Nature) check will give the heroes information on the hyena men and their habits.

Talking to the Silt Fox

At first grateful for the rescue, the Silt Fox will turn unfriendly once she knows what the Heroes want. She won't surrender the sword or the jewels without a fight, and she most certainly won't go back with them to the "bastard" who hired them. Improving the Silt Fox's disposition will require a Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Deception) check against her passive Insight of 17 to bring her disposition to friendly. Attempting to bully the Silt Fox is possible with a DC 14 Charisma (Intimidation) making her amenable to bargaining with the Heroes, but they will have lost any loyalty they might have built with her. While she will try to cover it, she will become hostile to the intimidating heroes, and try to find a way to turn the tides on them if intimidated (DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check to determine she has turned hostile). Reward good role playing by giving the Heroes advantage on their social skill rolls.

If they manage to befriend or bargain with the Silt Fox, she will tell the Heroes her side of the story, explaining about the curse she thinks dogs her, being double-crossed by Ko Jajani, and her intention to return the sword to the crypt she plundered. She warns the Heroes that if they take the sword, the curse will affect them too, and even if they hand it over to the merchant, it will still follow them as it did her. She implores the Heroes to help her return the weapon to the crypt and, if they do, she will return with them to Ko Jajani if they insist or will press them for aid in dealing with the greedy scoundrel who hired them. Heroes who agree to help the Silt Fox end the curse and face Ko Jajani should receive a Fate point.

If the Heroes kill the Silt Fox and grab *Greendeath*, you can salvage the adventure in one of two ways: You can have the hyena men go after them in force or have the curse transfer to one of the Heroes. If the hyena men attack, the Heroes are faced with dozens of vicious humanoids, which force them to evade the horde and move into the Hidden Canyon by chance. Alternatively, have the curse pass immediately to them, compelling the Hero possessing the sword to return it to the crypt. Killing Silt Fox in cold blood is a non-heroic act. Feel free to take a Fate point from any Hero that participates in her death.

Facing the Cackling Prince

If the Heroes are enjoying battling hyena men and you wish to continue their adventure by confronting the Cackling Prince, have one of the hyena men take the sword to the Prince before the Heroes even arrive. This will force them to follow the blade into the fortress and a clash with the mad offspring of Ni'ri Hegoth, the Hyena Queen. This should be attempted only with higher level Heroes as the Cackling Prince is not only surrounded by dozens of retainers, but is also a cambion, his father being a devil.

Raising the Stakes

If the Heroes find the adventure unchallenging to this point, have the Cackling Prince learn of the trouble besetting his camp. He becomes enraged and sends his minions scouring the wastes for signs of the Heroes and the Silt Fox. If this occurs, the heroes will not have time to rest before making it to the canyon. If the Heroes attempt to rest, they will be beset by a band of 30 hyena men and 3 lieutenant hyena men. They will harry the Heroes until they reach the Hidden Canyon. The magic of the Hidden Canyon is too powerful for the hyena men to overcome. If the Heroes make it into the Hidden Canyon, any remaining hyena men will give up the chase, and move away from the canyon. Should the Silt Fox escape, the Heroes can give chase and discover the Hidden Canyon 2d6 hours afterward and pursue her into the canyon.

The Fortress of Lamentations

Dotting the landscape of the Hinterlands are many fortresses built by the master masons of the Auxunite Empire that once dominated the region. Thousands of years old and abandoned for just as long, the citadels are squat, ugly buildings, built from local materials. The stronghold claimed by the hyena men is one of these bastions.

Claimed by one of the many offspring of the Hyena Queen, the Cackling Prince is the result of Ni'ri Hegoth's practice of mating with powerful infernals that escaped the Fiendish Expanse far to the north. The Cackling Prince has slowly built up a personal army, rivaling that of his malevolent mother, hoping to one day unseat her as head of the Cult of the Jackal.

The Cackling Prince commands his horde from within the ancient stone fortress. Scraps of wood and metal, bones, and other artifacts plucked from the wastes lie strewn about the throne room at the feet of the Prince, who sits upon his seat made from the hull of a skimmer. He's always attended by two comely, naked human slaves: one male and one female. The slaves are chained to his chair and have had their eyes gouged out and tongues torn from their mouths.

Tethered about the chamber by heavy iron chains are dozens of slaves of many races of humanoids though most are human. These slaves huddle in the shadows, trying to escape the Prince's notice. The hyena men leave the dead in chains until they find a new slave to take their place, so scraps of skin, broken bones and mangled bodies litter the ground.

The Prince rarely leaves his throne room, preferring to gorge himself on plundered food, rut with his slaves, and consume any offerings his raiders make. He is unreasonable and greedy, and while cunning, has little knowledge of the world outside his small realm. So long as he has superior numbers to protect him, he has no interest in negotiation, and attempts to deal with him will most likely end with an order to his troops to capture the Heroes, strip them, and throw them in chains.

THE HIDDEN CANYON OF ZHU

The canyon is a magically concealed fissure about 4 miles from the Fortress of Lamentations.

Serpentmen Sentinels

The ssanu, or serpentmen, raised stone statues around the Hidden Canyon to warn away travelers millennia ago. Each statue was carved to look like a 10 foot tall ssanu and has been layered with potent spells to ward the canyon from trespassers. The statues stand encircling the canyon, each 50 feet apart. Heroes seeking entry into the canyon must contend with their potent magic.

Mirage: The statues cast a permanent illusion over the canyon to make it appear from outside the ring as if it was just a stretch of empty terrain. As the Heroes move closer and investigate, they can make a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check to determine that there is an illusion masking the ground. Airborne creatures more than 20 feet above the ground automatically fail this test.

Compulsion: Creatures coming to within 50 feet of a statue must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature cannot willingly approach the statues or the canyon. Every hour, they can make another saving throw to overcome the effect. An affected creature will move away from the canyon but will have no conscious reason as to why they are moving away. No argument or logic will convince them that they have turned away from the canyon. This creature though can be forcefully carried into the canyon. On a successful saving throw, the creature becomes immune to this effect for 1 hour. Creatures that can't be charmed are immune to this effect.

The Canyon

Once the Heroes get past the sentinels, they can enter the canyon, at which point you should read or paraphrase the boxed text.

The mirage clears away as you pass through it to reveal a deep fissure. The canyon floor is littered with bones heaped in pyramidal piles, broken vehicles, and gear. Macabre mobiles of wagons and sails hang from the craggy canyon walls, their skeletal crews still at their posts. Dark caves dot the walls at different angles along the trench.

The canyon is 5,000 feet long and averages 200 feet wide. The ground slopes down toward the back until the cliffs rise one hundred above the bottom. Debris, as described, covers the canyon floor. There's enough to block sight lines after about thirty feet.

Kobolds have heaped humanoid and animal bones into pyramidal piles. The shattered and broken vehicles hanging from the walls and scattered across the canyon floor are from the various wagons used by merchants, Coryani chariots scavenged from the time of the Fifth Crusade of Light, flying creatures, and the remains of the people to whom the vehicles belonged. Heroes searching through the wreckage can find old equipment, possibly treasure, and risks. For every 10 minutes of searching, the Hero must make a DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check or disturb the unstable piles, taking 2d4 damage from falling debris. They can then make an DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to find something of value. Use the table below to determine what was found. Additionally, any Hero actively searching for treasure will have disadvantage to Wisdom (Perception) checks to detect an ambush (this lowers passive Perception by 5).

Canyon Treasures

d20 Treasure

1	A random uncommon magical item.
2-3	Coins worth 10 gp to a collector, or 1 gp if melted down.
4-5	A gemstone worth 10 gp
6	A random weapon or armor that would be worth 100 gp to a collector.
7-10	A journal that would be worth 15gp to a collector.
11-14	An object of art or historical significance worth 25 gp to a collector.
15	Maps worth 30 gp to a collector. (This could also lead to further adventures)
16	Scripture or Prayer book worth 35 gp to a collector.
17	A gemstone worth 50 gp
18	A gemstone worth 100 gp
19	An art object worth 250 gp
20	A random common magical item.

Guardians of Zhu: The undead ssanu compel the service of several creatures to protect their tombs from robbers and the descendants of the creatures guard the canyon still. Currently, the Death's Head ss'ressen egg clutch and their kobold slaves, live within and watch over the canyon. The Death's Head egg clutch has served Pit Talasis since its founding and now reside in this canyon protecting their master's remains. The ss'ressen fight with all the predatory cunning they possess, leaving it to their minions to keep their foes busy.

The Death's Head egg clutch rotates three patrols around the canyon. If the Heroes manage to kill a patrol, other members of the egg clutch will take their place. Also, if they discover the bodies of fallen allies, they become extra vigilant about their patrols and scour the valley and caves for intruders. Make a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check for the ss'ressen and do this at disadvantage if the Heroes made efforts to hide the bodies. Burning the bodies will automatically alert the ss'ressen.

Every hour the Heroes spend in the valley, roll a d6. On a 1, a patrol will ambush the party.

Enemies: 15 kobolds, 5 Death's Head ss'ressen, and 1 Death's Head ss'ressen priestess

The priestess uses magic to cover their attack, giving them advantage on the group's Dexterity (Stealth) check against the Heroes' passive Perception scores to take them by surprise (any member of the party that is searching has their passive Perception reduced by 5).

If three patrols are killed, the ss'ressen will retreat to their cave, and fortify their position. They will not risk any more of their own people. After 1 day, they will send out a unit of 4 kobolds to keep an eye on the party (passive Perception of 18 to see them), and 3 units of 4 kobolds each to set traps and tricks to lure the Heroes.

The traps will cause debris piles to fall on the Heroes: DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, or take 3d6 damage, and be buried under debris. On a successful save, the Hero takes half damage, and is not buried. It will take characters 3 rounds to free comrades. During this time, a unit of kobolds will attack if unobserved (passive perception 18).

Enemies: 15 kobolds with vials of Alchemist's Fire

The kobolds will throw Alchemist Fire, then flee.

The Death's Head ss'ressen have small treasure hoards hidden in the valley. Heroes searching for a horde have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to spot ambushes. A DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check can be made each hour. On a successful check, the Heroes have found a horde. If the party rolls a 1 on their Intelligence (Investigation) check, they will have stumbled upon another patrol. There are 3 hordes, and each horde contains 200 gp worth of gems and coins, three randomly determined common magical items, and one uncommon magical item. The ss'ressen and kobolds carry nothing of value besides their weapons and the weird bone fetishes they embed under their skin.

Death's Head ss'ressen

Created ages ago by ssanu biomancers in the employ of Pit Talasis, the Death's Head egg clutch, as with other ss'ressen, were hatched to serve their serpent men masters. When Pit Talasis was banished, the entire clutch joined them, protecting their lords throughout the arduous journey to the east and throughout their exile. As the ssanu of the Pit began to die out, the ss'ressen priestesses of Wantiir performed the rites that extended the serpent men's existence and placed them in a death trance, to await the time of their resurgence.

Ordered to protect the Pit's tombs, the clutch, along with thousands of kobold slaves, attempted to recreate their society, but over time and without the guidance of the ssanu, the clutch began to degenerate into a more primitive and savage version of their former selves. Millenia later, they barely remember why they stay in the canyon region, guarding thousands of tombs, crafting weapons and tools from bone and stone while revering the few remaining enchanted metal weapons in their possession.

The Caves

Scores of caves dot the canyon walls, each leading deep underground to potentially interesting places to explore. The caves grant access to the Endless Dark, a series of tunnels and caverns that riddle the ground for hundreds of miles in all directions from the canyon. This vast network is used by many kinds of subterranean creatures as well as others to travel surreptitiously. Of the caves found here, only the Cave of Scales pertains to this adventure and is described below. However, if you want to expand the adventure, you can develop the other caves and stock them with monsters and mysteries, treasures and secrets awaiting discovery. The Random Caves table provides you with a small set of options for use in case the Heroes decide to explore or shelter in a different cave while in the canyon. The cave where the Death's Head ss'ressen and kobolds live is highly concealed and is not described in this adventure.

Caves

3d6	Description*
3	The cave is 3d10 x 10 feet deep and has 3d6 tunnels that lead off to other caves. There's a 5% chance for the cave to be inhabited by 3d4 kobolds.
4-5	The cave is 4d6 x 10 feet deep. Bones, rubbish, and scat cover the floor. If the Heroes rest in this cave, there's a 50% chance 1d6 Death's Head ss'ressen and 2d6 kobolds find them.
6-8	The cave is 3d6 x 10 feet deep and has 1d4 - 1 tunnels that lead off to other caves. There's a 10% chance for the cave to be inhabited by: 1—1d4 swarms of poisonous snakes; 2—1d6 giant spiders; 3—1d2 giant scorpions; 4—2d6 giant bats.
9-12	The cave is 1d6 x 10 feet deep. The Heroes can rest in this cave (see the section on resting below).
13-15	The cave is 3d6 x 10 feet deep and has 1d4 - 1 tunnels that lead off to other caves. There's a 10% chance for the cave to be inhabited by: 1—1d4 swarms of poisonous snakes; 2—1d6 giant spiders; 3—1d2 giant scorpions; 4—2d6 giant bats.
16-17	The cave is 1d6 x 5 feet deep and has 1d6 - 1 tunnels that lead off to other caves. There's a 10% chance for the cave to be inhabited by 3d4 kobolds.
18	The cave is 2d6 x 5 feet deep. The ceiling is unstable and might collapse. Each hour the Heroes spend in the cave; there's a 1% chance the ceiling falls in. The chance increases to 100% if a creature casts a spell that deals thunder damage inside the cave. A Hero inspecting the cave can detect whether its unsafe nature with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Dwarves make this check with advantage. If triggered, a 10 foot-radius section of roof centered on a point you choose collapses. Each creature in the area under it must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 26 (4d12) bludgeoning damage and falls prone on a failed saving throw, or just half as much damage on a successful one. The cave becomes impassable until the debris is cleared away, which takes 1d6 hours of work from one creature. Each creature that contributes to clearing away the rubble halves the time it takes.

*Caves are generally 1d6 * 5 feet wide, but can be wider at your discretion, up to half the cave's depth.

Resting

If the Heroes pause for a short or long rest within the canyon, they will be ambushed by a patrol. This attack disrupts the rest. Attacks will continue to happen until all 3 patrols are destroyed, or the Heroes stop taking rests. Even then, due to the regional effects of the lair, each Hero must succeed at a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw, or not benefit from the rest.

If the Heroes failed to turn the Silt Fox's disposition to friendly, and they decide to take a long rest after all of the patrols have been destroyed, but before entering the caves, the Silt Fox will take the opportunity to escape and replace *Greendearth* in the sarcophagus. During the second watch, she will attempt to recover the blade and sneak out of camp, making a Dexterity (Stealth) check against the Passive Perception of the person on watch (use NPC Assassin). If the party detailed any precautions that they were taking, or said that they were keeping an eye on Silt Fox, then the person on watch has advantage (give them +5 bonus to their Passive Perception as long as they do not have any other ability, feat or item that gives them advantage to perception or a +5 to passive perception). If a Hero is carrying *Greendearth*, Silt Fox will make a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check against the passive Perception of the person who has *Greendearth* (if they took special precautions, then give them advantage on their passive Perception as above). If the Silt Fox is hostile to the Heroes, she will attempt to assassinate the Hero with the blade, and then try to escape with the blade.

If Silt Fox is successful, she will return the blade to the sarcophagus, where High Priest Herekza will kill her for her sacrilege and impudence (her body will be found in the Well of Sacrifices). The high priest will awaken his 10 guards. High Priest Herekza will sense the presence of "lesser beings" in the gorge, and plan to ambush the Heroes. The Heroes will be able to finish their rest, but they will be forced to face the full weight of the final threat of the adventure early, and perhaps unprepared/unarmored (that is up to you, the GM).

If the Silt Fox returns the blade while the Heroes rest, then the regional effects of the lair will increase; have the Heroes make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice that the area has become colder than normal. The faithful of Beltine and Neroth, val'Ishi, and val'Mordane will know that something has awoken. Shamans using *Between the Worlds* will also sense this disturbance. Shaman with the Dreamer Patron, or Psions using the expression for *Sensitive to Psionic Impressions*, will gain a vision of Herekza leading an army of the undead.

If the Heroes attempt to rest outside of the canyon, they will be found by one of the Cackling Prince's patrols.

The only safe place to rest will be at the edge of the canyon, next to one of the statues. They will not be bothered by the Death Head's ss'ressen patrols or the hyena men and will be

outside of the regional effects of the lair. If the Heroes have encountered the Death Head's ss'ressen and are looking for the best place to make camp, you can have them make a DC 17 Intelligence (History) or Wisdom (Survival) check to realize that camping at the base of the statues is the most tactically advantageous spot to camp. A long rest though will result in the Silt Fox attempting to steal the blade if the Heroes have not changed her disposition to friendly and take it back to the sarcophagus.

Wantiir, the Ssethric God of the Dead

Long before the creation of the elorii, the Empire of Yahssremore venerated the deity Wantiir. He was the God of Death in the Ssethric Pantheon until the ssanu of Pit Talasis attempted a coup against the ruling family. Pit Talasis took Wantiir as their patron deity and filled the Death God's priesthood with members of their pit until the two groups became synonymous. Death comes to all mortals eventually, and so the services of Wantiir's priests were sought by all other pits. This unprecedented access to the inner sanctums of the various other ssanu pits allowed the cagey priests to uncover secrets which they sold or used to their advantage. So wealthy and influential did they become that the Emperor elevated Pit Talasis in the court and a priest of Wantiir served as personal advisor to him and several of his successors.

Preening with pride, power, and wealth, Pit Talasis overplayed their hand by attempting to have Wantiir elevated above the other ssethric deities, which in turn would require all the other priesthoods to serve them. This so outraged the clergy of Kassegore and Yig that, for the first time in millennia, they worked in concert to undermine and utterly destroy Pit Talasis' power base and prestige.

The worship of the death god, except when dealing with burial rites, was outlawed and the priests of Wantiir, along with the rest of Pit Talasis were banished to the furthest reaches of the Yahssremoran Empire, a place now known as the Hinterlands. Cut off from their people and stripped of all their wealth and power, Pit Talasis slowly died off, until only a handful remained.

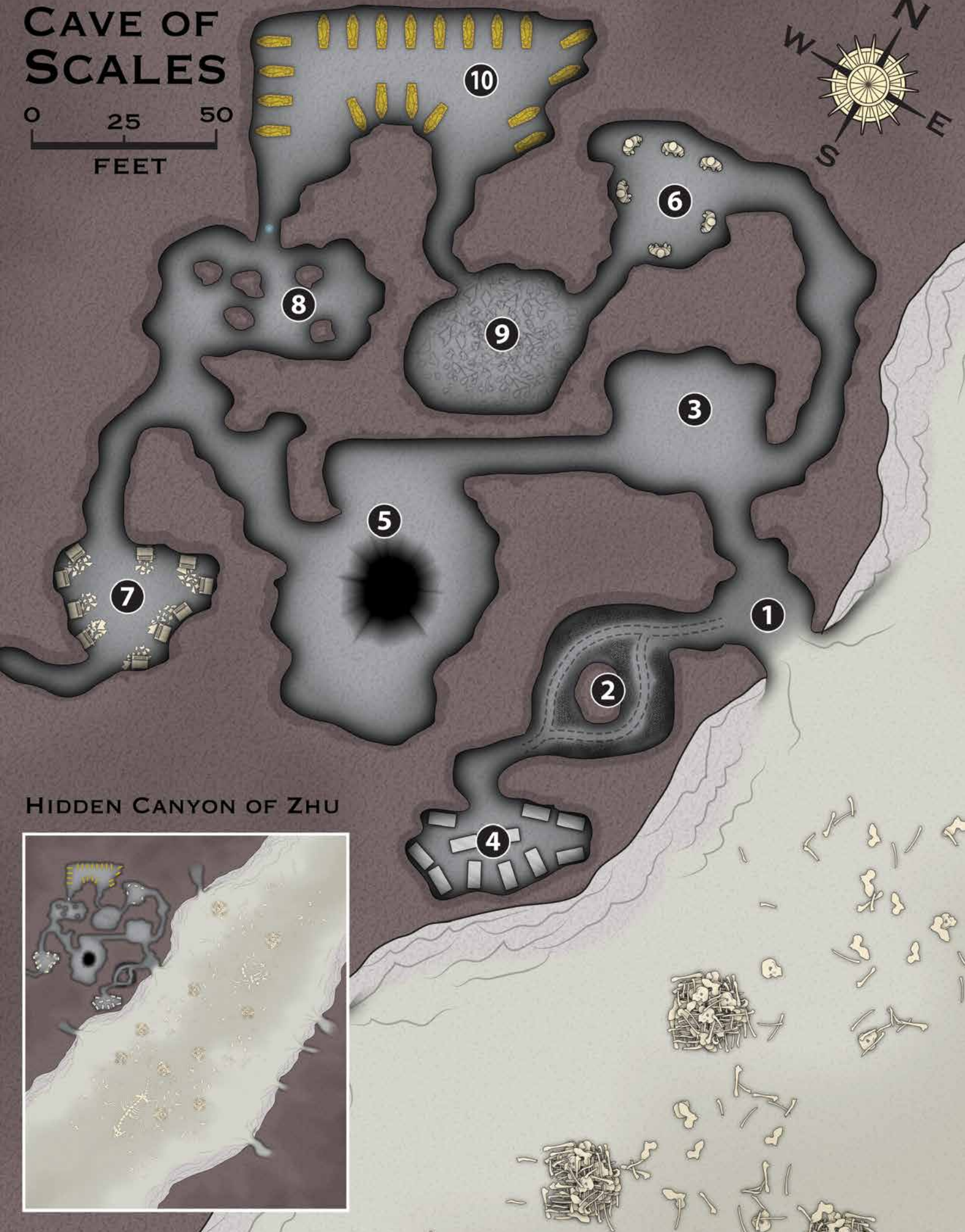
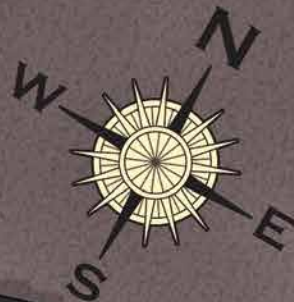
Believing that their time would come once again, the death priests performed unholy rites upon the dead, so that they might rise when called upon to serve their descendants and regain their seat of power. Time passed and the last High Priest of Wantiir, Herekza felt the reach of his beloved deity. He instructed the Death's Head egg clutch to entomb him with *Greendearth* in the hopes that someday, his people would rise once more.

With the last of his life ebbing, he laid a curse upon the blade, for tomb robbers were always the bane of his ilk, and the last of his followers performed the final rites that would grant him a sort of immortality. There Herekza slept for untold millennia until his slumber was disturbed by a young Yhing hir thief.

The tomb complex in which Herekza rests is just one of many in the Canyon of Zhu and makes for fertile ground for further adventuring.

CAVE OF SCALES

0 25 50
FEET



HIDDEN CANYON OF ZHU



Cave of Scales

The Silt Fox plundered the sarcophagi inside what she calls the Cave of Scales. If she's with the Heroes, she leads them to the cave, which is just a few feet above the canyon floor and can be easily entered. If she's not with the Heroes but got here ahead of them, the Heroes can follow her tracks to it easily. If the Heroes got here before the Silt Fox, if she's dead, abandoned to the hyena men, or for some other reason, any Hero with a passive Perception above 15 notices markings on the rock near the cave mouth. This Hero will realize that these marks are made by someone digging hand and footholds to climb the stone wall to reach the opening above. If all else fails, any Hero affected by the curse will feel pulled toward this cave.

Cave Features: The cave mouth opens onto a small complex of caves connected by tunnels. The floors throughout are uneven, though not so much they slow movement, generally free of debris. The walls and ceiling have been worked with hammer and chisel, and anyone inspecting the workmanship and gets a successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check—dwarves can benefit from the Stonecutting trait—determines the caves were worked by kobolds. Ceilings are half as tall as the cave's largest dimension, and the tunnel ceilings are 7 feet high. Unless otherwise mentioned, the air is still and faintly musty throughout all the locations, and connecting passages are dark.

This is the lair of High Priest Herekza. While within the cave system, dark, necromantic energies have tainted the very rocks around this tomb. Regional effects of Herekza's lair are:

- All light sources, including magical sources, provide only one-half the normal illumination while within the cave system. Magical light produced by val'Assanté and the divine casters of Illiir are unaffected by this.
- Any effect that heals hit points is less effective within the Cave of the Scales, as the necromantic energies drain living energy, resulting in their effects being reduced by half. Healing magic from val'Mordane, val'Ishi, and the divine casters of Belisarda, Beltine, and Neroth are unaffected this.
- The entire gorge is tainted by the magic and sacrifices performed within these caves, making the entire region eerie and disturbing. Heroes must make a successful DC 10 Wisdom saving throw to gain any benefit from a long or short rest.
- Within the Cave of the Scales, all attempts to cast *animate dead* result in the formation of *ss'ressen skeletons* (see Room 5). These skeletons are unique to this cave system.

Using the Silt Fox

If the Silt Fox reached the caves before the Heroes, you can use the following method to determine what she does while the Heroes explore the caves. First, roll a d8+1 to determine in which area she is when the Heroes move into Room 1. Each time the Heroes move into a new area, roll a die. On an odd number, she stays where she is. On an even number, she moves to another room, away from the Heroes. If the Heroes enter the room containing her, she hides; Heroes with a passive Perception of 16 or above will spot her. On a success, she's hidden at the location described in the **Hiding Place** entry. If the Heroes search the room, they can find her hiding place on a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If found, she might try to convince the Heroes to help her or she might fight them to escape capture. See the

Talking to the Silt Fox sidebar for more details on her behavior.

If the Silt Fox reaches Area 10 with the sword, she restores *Greendearth* to the sarcophagus she robbed and leaves the jewels on the floor. The curse affecting her ends and, feeling the heavy weight of the compulsion on her mind lifted, she flees the caves by the shortest available route. The Heroes might encounter her as she heads out, but she's not interested in a fight. If the Heroes attack, she defends herself until she can get away. She will not surrender, however, and will not be returned to the merchant Ko Jajani. She would rather die.

If the Heroes threatened or abused her, she will leave once the sword and jewels are returned. She will then attempt to trap the Heroes within the cave by causing a cave in close to the entrance of the cave.

Room 1 – Cave Entrance

The cave mouth leads into the Caves of Scales.

The cave beyond the yawning opening is roughly 30 feet by 40 feet. One tunnel leads north, while a second extends to the east. Powdery dust, like chalk, covers the floor, partly hidden by bits of bone, fur, and scraps of dried skin. Strange wavy symbols are etched into the walls.

The north tunnel leads to Room 3, while the west tunnel connects to Room 2. Any Hero examining the floor can see boot prints in the powdery dust heading north, though the dust thins out and vanishes in the connected cave. The symbols on the walls are the sigils of Wantiir, the ssethric god of death. A DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check will reveal that the symbols are similar to other ssethric religious symbols. A DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check will reveal that this is an unknown ssethric God, apparently forgotten by the other ssethric races. A DC 15 Intelligence (Linguistics) check will allow the Heroes to translate the name Wantiir for this ssethric god, and the name Pit Talasis.

Shamans who have activated *Between the Worlds* will sense spirits within the cave system. This will also alert the valka to the presence of the Heroes (see Room 3).

Room 2 – Infested Cave

Heroes in the tunnels connecting to this cave who have a passive Perception score of 12 or higher can hear a faint hum. A DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies the hum as the chorus of hundreds of beetles.

Glittering black jewels cover the walls, floor, and ceiling of this cave except for a narrow, 5 footwide path that meanders toward the tunnel on the opposite wall. The path splits around a central pillar, offering two routes around it to the other side.

What appears to be jewels are in fact hundreds of beetles and the humming noise comes from them. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies them as such. So long as the Heroes keep to the clear path, they can move through the room. However, straying from the path, touching, harming, or interfering with the beetles causes them to gather into 1d4 + 1 swarms of insects (with a burrowing speed of 5 feet) that immediately attack. The swarms fight until destroyed and pursue fleeing Heroes throughout the complex and beyond. Heroes with *Speak with Animals* can communicate with the beetles without causing them to swarm. The beetles have limited intelligence but can tell the Hero that there is “old dried meat that tastes bad” in the cave system.

Enemies: 1d4+1 swarms of insects

Hiding Place: The Silt Fox hides behind the pillar at the room’s center, moving quietly to stay out of the Heroes’ sight.

Room 3 – Guardians

The area’s two tunnels lead to the various tombs of the ssanu followers of Wantiir. Passing through the chamber awakens the tomb’s guardians, a pair of valka.

Valka

The valka are the celestial servants of the Ssethric deity Wantiir, acting as guardians of his temples and his followers’ tombs. The valka eschew sunlight, preferring to operate during the night and in darkened places. Valka do not live upon the Mortal Realm but are summoned there from the Winding Catacombs of Cerlerax, the domain of Wantiir.

Believed to be the souls of the devout that were granted this gift by their undead deity, valka are implacable and relentless when dealing with those that desecrate sites holy to them. Though intelligent creatures, the valka will not negotiate or be reasoned with, unless the speaker is a Ssethric.

This chamber appears empty but for the piles of cracked bones that lie strewn and in piles across the chamber’s floor.

It is almost impossible to cross the chamber without alerting the guardian valka. As the group enters, roll a 1d6 per person crossing the chamber. On a roll of a 1, that person can pass unmolested. On any other roll, the pair of valka will materialize and attack the Heroes. It takes them one round to fully materialize in the center of the chamber. Should the Heroes run into one of the connecting tunnels, they will follow and attack there.

If there is a shaman among the Heroes that has activated *Between the Worlds*, they will sense the presence of the valka, and likewise, the valka will be aware of the shaman. The shaman can attempt to communicate with the valka and can convince them to allow the Heroes to pass unmolested with a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The only condition is that the Heroes do not disturb any of the dead within the tomb or attempt to take anything from the tomb. This test automatically succeeds if the shaman says that they are returning *Greendearth*.

Enemies: 2 Valka

Hiding Place: The Silt Fox hides behind a pile of bones.

Room 4 – Chapel to Wantiir, Ssethric God of Death

Long before even the elorii were created, the ssanu adherents of Wantiir consecrated this chamber in his name.

In the center of the chamber is a weathered stone altar, the many glyphs and sigils carved upon its sides barely visible due to erosion and time. A depression is etched into the surface of the altar, in the form of a sword.

A slight pressure nudges you away from the entrance as if the room doesn’t want you to enter.

The floor seems to writhe and heave gently under the light.

All about the floor are hundreds of snakes, coiled up in mating balls about the altar. These snakes are venomous but harmless as they indulge in their mating ritual. They are indigenous to the area and are drawn to this room to procreate. As long as they are not attacked, they are not dangerous to the Heroes. If the Heroes disturb the snakes, they are treated as two swarms of poisonous snakes. Heroes with the ability to *Speak with Animals*, can convince the snakes to leave with a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The snakes will tell the Hero that they find this space comforting. Speaking to them is not considered a disturbance.

Enemies: 2 Swarms of Poisonous Snakes

The altar itself is steeped in the power of Wantiir, and it’s that power that is gently pushing at the Heroes. Faithful of Beltine or Belisarda, val’Ishi and Ardakene elorii must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or gain the poisoned condition. val’Mordane and divine casters of Neroth feel

energized while in this room and have advantage on all attack rolls, saving throws and ability checks. Shaman Heroes who took the Ehtzara archetype will recognize this as a shrine they must tend to fulfill their geas (make note of whether the Ehtzara Hero fulfills their geas). All other clerics, holy champions, eldritch sorcerers (Sorcerer-Priest of Sarish Tradition), shamans, elorii and val will feel a general sense of unease in this room. Looking directly at the altar will cause the Heroes listed above to make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or gain the poisoned condition.

If any of the Heroes seek to desecrate or destroy the altar, a pair of valka will rise from the altar and attack the Heroes. Once the valka are dealt with, the altar can be destroyed. Shamans with *Between the Worlds* active will sense the presence of the valka and will sense their intent to protect this location.

Enemies: 2 Valka (see Room 3)

The depression chiseled into the altar's surface is a perfect match for *Greendearth*. Should the sword be placed in that space, it will lock and cannot be removed by any means short of physically destroying the altar.

Placing *Greendearth* upon the altar is meant to be a signal that the time of Wantiir has come again. The High Priest Herekza will signal this event by placing the sword upon the altar, awakening his mummified followers from their long sleep.

Should this occur, the 10 ssanu mummies from Room 7 will reanimate and move to the high priest's chambers (Room 10). Should the Heroes not arrive at Room 10 in the next 20 minutes, the mummies will be ordered to hunt them down and toss them into the sacrificial well in Room 5.

If an Ehtzara tended to the shrine, the High Priest will order the mummies to bring them the shaman, as he needs a new servant. The mummies will inform the party of this before attacking, assuming that at least one of the Heroes can speak Ssethric. The Ehtzara can attempt to bargain for the lives of their comrades and will be considered to have advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Deception) checks, but no matter what, the Ehtzara will have to remain with Herekza until they can escape. If they fail, the other party members will be tossed into the Well of Sacrifices if caught or incapacitated.

A DC 20 Intelligence (Linguistics) check will allow the Heroes to piece together the name Wantiir from the glyphs and sigils on the altar. A DC 20 Intelligence (Religion) check will allow the Heroes to determine that the other glyphs and sigils deal with death.

Placing Greendearth Upon the Altar

If the Heroes replace *Greendearth* before they deal with the mummies and or the high priest, the final encounter is deadly. Give them clues through Wisdom (Perception), class features and racial abilities to realize that something has changed in the caves if the mummies are awoken.

Hiding Place: The Silt Fox hides under the altar.

Room 5 – The Well of Sacrifices

A wide hole in the middle of the floor is a sacrificial well, littered with countless skeletal remains.

There is a large hole in the middle of the floor. Countless bones litter the bottom, while whole skeletons of some humanoid creature are embedded around the entire circular surface. At the very bottom, something shines in your light, though whether it's metallic or a gem, it's impossible to tell. Around the wall, are the remains of murals

The pit at the center of the room drops 50 feet to a bottom littered with thousands of bones. The pit itself is 25 feet deeper, but so many bodies have been dropped into the well, that it's impossible to see. Dozens of skeletons of ss'ressen are embedded into the sides of the shaft.

In the center of the bone pile is a tarnished silver medallion, with a small green gem. The gem is enchanted so that should it be removed or disturbed, the ss'ressen skeletons (see below for stats) will push themselves off the side of the shaft and scramble up, attacking any non-ssanu in the chamber, killing them and then tossing their bodies into the shaft.

Tossing the medallion back into the shaft does not reset the skeletons.

Enemies: 12 Ss'ressen Skeletons

A DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check will allow the Heroes to understand the purpose of this chamber. A DC 25 Intelligence (Religion) check will allow the Heroes to interpret the murals as the faithful being given immortality by sacrificing their soul to an unknown god (Wantiir). A DC 25 Intelligence (Linguistics) check will allow the Heroes to translate the name Wantiir, and they will find the name Herekza.

Casting *animate dead* within this chamber has a powerful effect as 3 ss'ressen skeletons will animate, and will have twice the number of hit points.

Hiding Place: The Silt Fox clings to a rent in the wall of the pit about 30 feet down from the floor.

Room 6 – Magical Trap

Before being entombed in sarcophagi, the serpentmen placed several magical traps to prevent their enemies from disturbing the rest of their priest. Most of the traps have failed, and evidence of them has faded away, but the one protecting this room remains.

Six – foot tall stone statues depicting cadaverous looking ssanu stand around the periphery of this cave. The floor at the center of the room is polished so that it gleams. A harsh chemical odor fills the air.

A magical trap protects this room. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the odor belongs to a corrosive substance, while a spell or other effect that can sense the presence of magic, such as *detect magic*, reveals an aura of conjuration around the statues. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals small holes in each of the statues' faces, and the stone around them are polished as well. A passive Perception of 14 will allow the Heroes to spot the small holes and the polished stone.

The trap activates when a Small or larger creature moves 15 feet or more onto the polished area of the floor, which covers all but the 5 foot wide perimeter. Each statue spews corrosive mist to fill a 40-foot radius sphere centered at the point in the middle of the room.

Acid Mist

Magic trap

Each creature in the affected area (40-foot radius from center of the room) when the mist appears or that ends its turn there must make a DC 13 Strength saving throw or take 3d6 acid damage, or half damage on a successful saving throw.

It takes 1 hour for the trap to reset, during which time creatures can safely move across the center of the room. The area of mist is heavily obscured and lasts for 1 minute or until a wind of moderate or greater speed (at least 10 miles per hour) disperses it.

Hiding Place: There is no place to hide in this room as the Silt Fox bypassed this chamber.

Room 7 – Shattered Sarcophagi

Within this chamber are the remains of Herekza's followers. Robbers plundered this room long ago.

Ten emptied stone sarcophagi stand against the walls of this cave, the lids of each shattered on the floor. An equal number of desiccated bodies of serpent humanoids lay all twisted among that ruin.

Nothing of value remains in this room. Inspecting the sarcophagi and their broken lids reveal numerous chipped sockets from which the thieves chipped away the gemstones. The mummified ssanu corpses are wrapped in stained linens and the rotted scraps of silk finery.

Ssanu Mummies

The ssanu of Pit Talasis dedicated their mortal lives to the worship of Wantiir, the ssethric god of death. After their fall from power, the disgraced Pit was banished to the furthest reaches of the empire. Along with their Death's Head ss'ressen and a veritable horde of kobold slaves, the ssanu settled in a hidden canyon, biding their time to return once more to prominence within the Empire.

As centuries passed, the long-lived serpent men began to grow old and eventually die. In accordance with their beliefs, each ssanu was mummified and a rite was enacted that used their soul as a catalyst to turn them into undead, where they could hibernate for as long as necessary, awaiting the time when Pit Talasis would rise again.

These mummies are unconscious and inanimate until *Greendeath* is placed upon the altar. If *Greendeath* was placed upon the altar, these ssanu mummies awaken and make their way to the high priest's burial chamber. The desiccated bodies will no longer be in this room.

The tunnel on the cave's southwestern wall winds deeper into the earth, where it either peters out after a few hundred feet or connects to a larger warren of tunnels and caves as you wish. This is a great way to expand the adventure and add new dangers and treasures.

If Heroes want to burn the corpses, they can as long as *Greendeath* has not been placed on the altar. This will have the effect of reducing the potential numbers of enemies. Burning the corpses though will cause 2 valka to appear to defend the dead. Any Hero with a restriction, tenet, geas or taboo regarding disturbing the dead will be affected with the consequences if they allow the dead to be desecrated in this manner.

Enemies: 2 Valka

Hiding Place: The Silt Fox hides beneath a mummified corpse.

Room 8 – Unstable room

A malfunctioning magical trap causes sporadic bursts of magical energy to sweep across this room.

Blackened, warped stone covers the floor, wall, and ceiling of this room. Scorched stone columns stand throughout the chamber. In the center of the north passage, you can see a speck of blue light.

The bead of light, actually a small ball of fire, is all that's left of the original trap, which was once a curtain of magical flame blocking the passage to Room 10. A spell or other effect that can sense the presence of magic, such as *detect magic*, reveals an aura of evocation around the blue light.

Creatures can easily move around the hanging blue light, but it tends to explode at random intervals. The Heroes might witness such an explosion while exploring this room.

Malfunctioning Fireball Trap

Magic trap

Roll a die whenever a creature moves to within 10 feet of the hanging blue light. On an odd number, the small ball of fire explodes, creating a 30-foot-long cone of flame and then dissipates. Each creature in the affected area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or taking 6d6 fire damage and becoming blinded for 1 minute or take half this damage and are not blinded on a successful saving throw. Once the blue light explodes in this way, it returns to its normal size. Every round the Heroes stay in this chamber, roll a d6 to see if the flame ignites once again, doing the same amount of damage listed above.

If the Heroes take the time to watch the flame, with a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, they will start to determine a pattern to the explosions. The blue light seems to dim moments before it explodes. If the Heroes figure this out, they can make an Intelligence saving throw to move past between explosions. Failure indicates that the flame explodes, but they will gain advantage on their Dexterity saving throw.

Hiding Place: The Silt Fox hides behind one of the columns.

Room 9 – Rubble-Strewn Cave

The ceiling in this cave collapsed long ago, covering the floor with rubble.

The cave's floor is strewn with broken rock, ranging in size from boulder-sized slabs to pebbles. While it appears possible to climb over the rubble, it looks unstable.

The cave's floor is difficult terrain. In addition, any Hero moving across the floor must make a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or slip, fall prone, and take 1d4 damage from landing on a jagged rock.

Hiding Place: The Silt Fox hides in the rubble.

Room 10 – Vault of the Jeweled Sarcophagi

One of many chambers found in this tomb, it was from this room that the Silt Fox discovered *Greendearth* and to which she hopes to return it.

Some twenty stone sarcophagi, each encrusted with bright, glittering gems stand in this large, quiet cavern. Each lid bears the likeness of a thin, scaled humanoid with the head and tail of a snake.

The gems covering the sarcophagi could make the Heroes quite rich, as each tomb is covered in jewels worth 60 gp. A spell or other effect that can sense the presence of magic, such as *detect magic*, reveals an aura of necromancy around the jewels. Each minute a Hero spends chipping away at the jewels frees 10 gp worth of stones.

However, each gem stone freed from the mummy case carries with it a curse, which causes the thief to suffer from the effects of a *withering curse* for **each** stone taken. The curse takes effect 24 hours after the theft. Remember that the effects of the curse are cumulative, so if they took 6 gems, they take the damage inflicted 6 times over.

Shamans with *Between the Worlds* active will sense a spiritual disturbance every time a gem is removed. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check will let them realize that there is a curse on this room, but not the exact nature of the curse.

Withering Curse

The curse strikes the Hero if they attempt to leave the room with the gems, after that they must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw for **each** gem. On a failed save, the Hero takes 2d6 necrotic damage, is poisoned and is cursed with Mummy's Rot. On a successful save, they take half damage and suffer no other consequences.

One sarcophagus stands open; its exterior is covered in exquisite and precious gemstones, worth over 5,000 gp. Within lies the withered remains of large ssanu, resplendent in black silk robes that seem new despite their antiquity, and adorned with golden thread. This is the High Priest Herekza, who wears silk robes and golden jewelry worth 500 gp.

High Priest Herekza, who was awakened when the sword was stolen, has been awaiting the opportunity to punish the tomb robber that took the weapon. He will remain inactive if his minions, the ssanu mummies, have not awakened, but will attack if the Heroes attempt to desecrate his tomb or body.

If his minions are awakened by the blade being placed on the altar, he will join the battle at the most opportune time to aid his minions.

Once Herekza is defeated, have the Heroes make a DC 20 Intelligence (Religion) check. Faithful of Neroth and val'Mordane have advantage on this check. If successful, the Heroes will know that the heart of Herekza will need to be burned to ash to prevent his return. Once Herekza's heart is destroyed, the region's effects will begin to diminish, completely ending in 2d6 days. Also, the curses on the tombs end, and the Heroes are free to take *Greendearth* and loot the tomb.

Variable Events

If the Silt Fox reaches this room ahead of the Heroes, she restores *Greendearth* to the sarcophagus she had robbed. Once it is restored and the curse lifted, the Silt Fox intends to flee the complex by the shortest available route, vowing to be done with the serpentmen and their dark magic. She will not make it, as Herekza will rise to punish her for her sacrilege and impudence. If the Heroes are in the cave system, they will hear the sound of battle coming from the tomb. The Silt Fox could be dead when the Heroes arrive, or they could arrive in time to save her (she is down and starts making death saves).

Should Silt Fox arrive at the canyon or cave system ahead of the Heroes, she will go to Chapel to Wantiir and replace the sword. Herekza will kill her for her sacrilege. There is no hope of the heroes finding her in time to save her if she is this far ahead. The Heroes will then have to face Herekza and his minions.

If the Silt Fox is with the Heroes, she does as described above, unless the Heroes prevent her, in which case, the high priest mentally commands his followers, if they are awake, to attack the party, fighting until they're destroyed.

CONCLUSION

The adventure might end in several different ways. The Heroes might capture the Silt Fox and drag her back to the merchant she robbed. If the curse is still in effect, it may affect one of the Heroes, forcing them to carry the weapon back to the canyon. Or, the Heroes might dog the Silt Fox's steps the whole way, encountering her just as she rids herself of her burden, in which case they could stop her murder at the hands of the high priest, capture her, reclaim the sword, and bring both to the merchant. The best outcome is for the Heroes to help the Silt Fox, learn the truth about what happened to her, and destroy the undead ssanu priest. She might enlist the Heroes aid to get revenge against the merchant or she might become a useful ally in a future adventure.

The Hidden Canyon of Zhu has many other tomb complexes deep within it, awaiting further exploration. Questions still remain, such as why didn't Pit Talasis try to conquer and colonize the area? Are there other undead ssanu in a rich tomb elsewhere in the canyon? Additionally, the Fortress of Lamentations is just a short distance away.

The Heroes may leave the Canyon of Zhu only to be confronted by dozens of hyena men, waiting to take them before their mad prince.



CODEx OF THREATS

Death's Head Ss'ressen

Medium humanoid (ss'ressen)

Armor Class 15 (bone mail)

Hit Points 48 (6d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Str +4, Con +6

Skills Athletics +4, Survival +2

Senses: passive Perception 10

Languages: Ssethric

Challenge: 1 (200 XP)

All Things Die On your turn, you may have your Necrotic Touch ability also affect non-living creatures. Once you use this ability, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.

Necrotic Touch: Death's Head ss'ressen drain the life of any living creature that they come in contact with except members of their own egg clutch. Every physical attack on a living creature, or round spent grappling a living creature, that creature must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or have their hit point maximum reduced by 2. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Ss'ressen Frenzy: When ss'ressen of a different egg clutch are within 30 feet of the Death's Head ss'ressen, they must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or fly into a Frenzy gaining advantage on all melee attacks but granting advantage to anyone attacking them in turn.. This frenzy ends only when there are no ss'ressen of an unrelated egg clutch within 30 feet.

ACTIONS

Multiattack: Death's Head ss'ressen make two melee weapon attacks or two ranged attacks.

Spear: *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage one handed or *Hit:* 6 (1d8+2) piercing damage two handed.

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

Tail Sweep: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit* 5 (1d6+ 4). If the Ss'ressen Skeleton is successful in the Tail Sweep, they can attempt to shove their target as a bonus action. If the target fails, they are knocked prone.

Death's Head Ss'ressen Priestess

Medium humanoid (ss'ressen)

Armor Class 15 (bone mail)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14	10	14	10	16	12
(+2)	(+0)	(+4)	(+0)	(+3)	(+1)

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +6

Skills Insight +6, Religion +3

Senses: passive Perception 13

Languages: Ssethric

Challenge: 4 (1100 XP)

All Things Die On your turn, you may have your Necrotic Touch ability also affect non-living creatures. Once you use this ability, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.

Necrotic Touch: Death's Head ss'ressen drain the life of any living creature that they come in contact with except members of their own Egg Clutch. Every physical attack on a living creature, or round spent grappling a living creature, they must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or have their hit point maximum reduced by 2. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Ss'ressen Frenzy: When ss'ressen of a different egg clutch are within 30 feet of the Death's Head ss'ressen, they must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or fly into a Frenzy gaining advantage on all melee attacks but granting advantage to anyone attacking them in turn.. This frenzy ends only when there are no ss'ressen of an unrelated egg clutch within 30 feet.

Spellcasting: The Death's Head priestess is a 8th-level spellcaster that uses Wisdom as her spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14; +6 to hit with spell attacks). The Death's Head priestess has the following spells prepared from the class' spell list:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*,
1st level (4 slots): *bane, command, cure wounds, inflict wounds*
2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness, hold person, silence*,
3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, bestow curse, dispel magic*,
4th level (2 slots): *death ward, stone shape*

ACTIONS

Spear: *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage one handed or *Hit:* 6 (1d8+2) piercing damage two handed.

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

Tail Sweep: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit* 5 (1d6+ 4). If the Ss'ressen Skeleton is successful in the Tail Sweep, they can attempt to shove their target as a bonus action. If the target fails, they are knocked prone.

High Priest Herekza

Medium undead

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 97 (13d8 + 39)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18	10	17	11	18	16
(+4)	(+0)	(+3)	(+0)	(+4)	(+3)

Saving Throws: Con +8, Int +5, Wis +9, Cha +8

Skills: Athletics +9, History +5, Religion +5

Damage Vulnerabilities: Fire

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

Condition Immunities: Charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages: Ssethric

Challenge: 16 (15,000 XP)

Magic Resistance: Herekza has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Rejuvenation: Herekza gains a new body in 24 hours if its heart is intact, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of the heart.

Spellcasting: Herekza is a 11th-level spellcaster, and spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). Herekza has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, mending, resistance, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *command, shield of faith, spirit claws**

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, mummify*, silence*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, counterspell, dispel magic, shed skin*, spirit guardians*

4th level (3 slots): *divination, guardian of faith, necromantic poison**

5th level (2 slots): *contagion, insect plague*

6th level (1 slot): *blade barrier, circle of death*

Spells with (*) after their name are new spells that can be found at the end of the adventure.

ACTIONS

Multiattack: Herekza can use Dreadful Glare, and then make one attack with his Rotting Fist, or use Constrict followed by one attack with his necrotic bite.

Rotting Fist: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 21 (6d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with mummy rot. The cursed target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) for every 24 hours that elapse. If the curse reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and its body turns to dust. The curse lasts until removed by the remove curse spell or other magic.

Necrotic Bite: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 21 (6d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on two DC 16 Constitution saving throws. The first save is against mummy rot, and a failure has the effects described under Rotting Fist. The second save is for his venom, and a failure causes an additional 14 (4d4) poison damage and gains the poison condition.

Constrict: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained, and Herekza can't constrict another target.

Dreadful Glare: Herekza targets one creature he can see within 60 feet of it. If the target can see Herekza, it must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened until the end of the high priest's next turn. If the target fails the saving throw by 5 or more, it is also paralyzed for the same duration. A target that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the Dreadful Glare for the next 24 hours.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

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

Attack: (Costs 1 legendary Action) Herekza makes one attack with its rotting fist, constrict, or uses its Dreadful Glare.

Summon Serpents: (Costs 1 legendary Action) Herekza summons forth a host of serpents to attack his foes. Poisonous snakes come out of holes and crevices of the chamber to attack one target and then disperse. The snakes have a *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the horde's space. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage. The target must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Coiled Serpent: (Costs 2 legendary Actions) Herekza can spring up to 20 feet, and pounce on a target. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If prone, Herekza can immediately use his Constrict attack.

Blasphemous Word: (Costs 2 legendary Actions): Herekza utters a blasphemous word. Each non-undead creature within 10 feet of the high priest that can hear the magical utterance must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of Herekza's next turn.

Hypnotic Gaze: (Costs 3 legendary Actions): Herekza gazes into the eyes of the target, attempting to mesmerize them. Herekza targets one creature he can see within 60 feet of it. If the target can see Herekza, it must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or will immediately walk defenseless up to 30 feet toward Herekza (this movement takes place outside of the target's normal turn). Herekza and his minions have advantage on any attack against the target. The effect ends at the start of the target's next turn.

Lair Actions (Only within the Vault of the Jeweled Sarcophagi)

On initiative count 20, losing initiative ties, Herekza can take a lair action to cause one of the following magical effects; Herekza can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Herekza rolls a d6 and regains a spell slot of that level or lower. If Herekza has not spent spell slots of that level or lower, nothing happens.
- Until initiative count 20 of the next round, all light sources (mundane or magical) in the chamber are extinguished. Anyone attempting to cast a radiance based spell must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. If they fail the save, the spell is not cast, the slot is wasted, and the caster takes 1d8 necrotic damage per level of the spell cast. If the save succeeds, they take half the necrotic damage, but the spell succeeds.
- Herekza calls upon the might of Wantiir. Until initiative count 20 of the next round, any healing magic used, which is already limited by the region, will give Herekza, or a minion he designates, half of the hit point total scored from the healing spell.

Regional Effects

- All light sources, including magical sources provide only one-half the normal illumination while within the cave system. Magical light produced by val'Assanté and the Faithful of Illiir are unaffected by this.
- Healing is less effective within the caves (only in the cave system), as the necromantic energies drain living energy, though healing magic from val'Mordane, val'Ishi, and the clerics of Beltine and Neroth are unaffected. Their magic work normally. Potions and mundane forms of healing, including the Ranger's Herb Packets are also affected by this necromantic aura.
- The entire gorge has been tainted by the magic and sacrifices performed within these caves, making the entire region eerie and disturbing. To rest, Heroes must make a successful Wisdom saving throw DC 10.
- Within the Cave of the Scales, all attempts to cast Animate Dead result in the formation of *ss'ressen Skeletons* (These skeletons are unique to this cave system).

Ssanu Mummies

Large undead

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (9d10 + 18)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16	8	15	6	10	12
(+3)	(-1)	(+2)	(-2)	(+0)	(+1)

Saving Throws: Wis +3

Damage Vulnerabilities: fire

Damage Resistances: bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities: necrotic, poison

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

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages: Ssethric

Challenge: 4 (1,100 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The ssanu mummy can use its Dreadful Glare and makes one attack with its rotting fist or constrict.

Rotting Fist: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with mummy rot. The cursed target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) for every 24 hours that elapse. If the curse reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and its body turns to dust. The curse lasts until removed by the remove curse spell or other magic.

Constrict: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained, and the ssanu mummy can't constrict another target.

Dreadful Glare: The ssanu mummy targets one creature it can see within 60 feet of it. If the target can see the ssanu mummy, it must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened until the end of the ssanu mummy's next turn. If the target fails the saving throw by 5 or more, it is also paralyzed for the same duration. A target that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the Dreadful Glare of all ssanu mummies (but not that of High Priest Herekza) for the next 24 hours.

Ss'ressen Skeletons

Medium undead

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 24 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities: bludgeoning, radiant

Damage Immunities: poison

Condition Immunities: exhaustion, poisoned

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages: Ss'ethric, Ss'ressen

Challenge: 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The ss'ressen skeletons can make two attacks.

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

Tail Sweep: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit 5 (1d6 + 4). If the ss'ressen skeleton is successful in the Tail Sweep, they can attempt to shove their target as a bonus action. If the target fails, they are knocked prone.



Valka

Medium Celestial (Ssethric, Undead)

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6	18	16	12	14	15
(-2)	(+4)	(+3)	(+1)	(+2)	(+3)

Skills: Stealth + 7

Damage Resistances: acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities: necrotic, poison

Damage Vulnerability: radiant

Condition Immunities: charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses: darkvision 60ft. blindsight 30ft., passive Perception 12

Languages: Telepathy, Ssethric

Challenge: 8 (3,900 XP)

Incorporeal Movement: The valka can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object. The valka can, as a bonus action, disengage with an enemy by moving into the floor or wall.

Sunlight Sensitivity: While in sunlight, the valka has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Innate Spellcasting: The valka's spellcasting ability is Constitution (spell save DC 15). The valka can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components:

At will: *Detect evil and good*

3/day: *Animate Dead*

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The valka makes two attacks with claws.

Claws: Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) necrotic damage. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution save or be unable to heal until the end of its next turn.

Constrict: Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) necrotic damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained, and the valka can't constrict another target. One each subsequent round, in lieu of another attack, the valka can drain energy to heal it's self as per the spell Vampiric Touch (cast at minimum level).

Pounce: If the valka moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature, even through the floor or walls, and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the valka can make either an additional claw attack or constriction as a bonus action.

New Spells

Mummify

2nd-level necrotic

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Component: V, S, M (a handful of natron)

Duration: Instantaneous

You draw the moisture out of the flesh of your target, desiccating their flesh. Choose one creature that you can see within range to make a Constitution saving throw. The creature takes 2d8 damage and is restrained until the end of their next turn on a failed save, and half damage on a successful one and are not restrained. Creatures whose body has no water (such as a golem or a fire elemental) are not affected by this spell.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 for each slot level above 2nd.

Necromantic Poison

4th-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Component: V, S, M (must have a natural attack)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute.

You imbue your natural attacks with a terrible poison that leeches the life out of a creature. Until the spell ends, whenever you succeed in an unarmed attack against a living creature, your target must make a Constitution saving throw. If they fail that throw, their hit point maximum is reduced by 1d4. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the hit point maximum damage is increased by an additional 1d4.

Shed Skin

3rd-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 10 feet

Component: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You gesture towards a target and flay the top level of their skin. Make a ranged spell attack against a creature within range. On a hit, the target takes 3d6 damage. Until this spell ends, as an action you may animate the flesh removed as a zombie with a number of hit points equal to the damage dealt, which can be commanded as a bonus action to attack another creature as long as it is within 60 feet of you. If you issue no command, the animated flesh will only defend itself against hostile creatures. Creatures who do not have flesh (such as golems or elementals) are not affected by this spell.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or high, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 3rd.

Spirit Claws

1st-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Component: V, S, M (a scrap of cloth from a burial shroud)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You touch a willing creature with a natural attack. Until the spell ends, that attack now does necrotic damage instead of its previous damage type.





BURIAL OFFERINGS

An adventure for three to five Heroes of level 10 to 12 by Jeffrey Witthauer.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Abessian Dominion is ruled jointly by two *Phaerons*, one representing the human inhabitants of the area known as Myrantians, and the other representing their reptilian allies from Ssethregore. While the might of the ssethrics has helped secure Abessian independence, some Myrantians rankle at what they see as a foreign, and worse yet, heathen influence. Nomza was one such Myrantian, and she formed a small group of rebels and took to the vast desert known as the Forsaken Wastes. Her band would have been snuffed out quickly, but Nomza stumbled upon the ruins of a tomb from the ancient Myrantian Hegemony where Abdamose, one of the Necromancer Lords who once ruled the Hegemony, was buried over a thousand years ago. From Abdamose's sarcophagus Nomza looted the *Skull Scepter*, a powerful magic item that allowed her to raise undead servants to bolster her forces. She has been attacking the surrounding area, not only in the Abessian Dominion but also into the

territory of the Coryani Empire as well. The Heroes have been sent to end her threat, and after some searching they have tracked the rebels to Abdamose's tomb.

Abdamose

The theft of Abdamose's *skull scepter* has caused the ancient Necromancer Lord to rise from his grave, determined to retrieve it. As an intelligent undead he remained hidden for some time, gradually picking off Nomza's living followers one by one and using his powers to transform them into his undead servants. Shortly before the heroes arrive his spawn have become numerous enough for him to attack Nomza's forces directly. There are signs of battle throughout the tomb, and the Heroes will reach the burial chamber just as Abdamose and Nomza, along with their followers, are entering their final conflict. Abdamose believes that the retrieval of his *skull scepter* will return him to his rest.

Abdamose is depicted in art and on his sarcophagus as having the pincers of a scarab beetle set like horns upon his head. This is to show his mastery over death. His undead corpse still wears a helm crested with scarab beetle pincers crafted out of black metal.

Skull Scepter

Staff, very rare (requires attunement)

Description: Twisted and knotted strands of ashen wood weave together into this staff, opening to hold a carved sculpture of bleached bone topped with the skull of a human infant.

History: First crafted by the Necromancer Lord Abdamose in the Shadowed Age, his fellow lords and the Phaeron grew to fear him as he strode through Abessios with his undead retinue. Despite his trappings of power, however, Abdamose did not seek to rule the Myrastian Hegemony, and when he died, he was buried with his staff. The Phaeron quickly outlawed the creation of any other such object, and most of the Necromancer Lords agreed, fearing that the next wielder might be more ambitious. A handful of necromancers throughout history defied this ban in their quest for necromantic power, but after the Coryani conquest of the region, the temple of Beltine sought out and destroyed all the copies they could find.

Abilities/Effects: This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls. When held, you gain a +2 bonus to Armor Class, saving throws, and spell attack rolls.

The staff possesses 20 charges for the following properties.

Draining Strike: When you hit a living creature with a melee attack using this staff, you may use 1 charge as a bonus action to deal an extra 1d6 necrotic damage to the target. You recover hit points equal to half the damage dealt to the target.

Fortified Undead While the staff is in your possession any skeletons or zombies you create through the use of the *animate undead* spell gain a +2 bonus to all attack and damage rolls, 8 temporary hit points, and are considered to be 1 CR higher for effects such as Turn Undead.

Spells: While holding this staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells, using your spell save DC and spell attack bonus: *animate dead* (5th-level version, 5 charges), *create undead* (6 charges), *false life* (1 charge), *harm* (6 charges), *hold monster (undead only)* (5 charges), *speak with dead* (2 charges), and *vampiric touch* (3 charges).

This staff regains 2d8 +4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff retains its +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls but loses all other properties. On a 20, the staff regains 1d8 + 2 charges.



Getting Started

The Forsaken Wastes are a vast desert that borders both the Coryani Empire and the Abessian Dominion. The Heroes might be sent by the Abessians, the Coryani, or by an organization that hates undead such as the temple of Beltine, to track down Nomza. They might find Nomza's lair through tracking, by investigation, by fortune, or any number of methods. The adventure opens with the Heroes having found the Tomb of Abdamose, where Nomza has her lair, and they are preparing to enter. The tomb itself has partially collapsed and is almost completely buried in sand, with little remaining above ground save for the entrance that leads down into the earth.

DESERT REFUGE

The adventure begins deep in the desert of the Forsaken Wastes. The sand has been cleared away by Nomza's rebels to the bedrock in a long ramp, leading to a building of stone 6 feet high and 5 feet wide by 10 feet long. Stairs at the entrance descend into the bedrock for 10 feet, leading to the underground courtyard at 1A. Everything below is darkness, but there are two sconces for torches on the wall of the stairwell. One torch is still in its sconce, showing signs of having been recently used. The other is empty, having been lit and taken below by Nomza's rebels.

Tomb Structure

The tomb of Abdamose was carved out of the bedrock itself. The walls are hewn stone. The tomb is very old, and some chambers have collapsed as noted in the descriptions below, leading to lots of rubble. Unless otherwise noted, the following is true in all chambers:

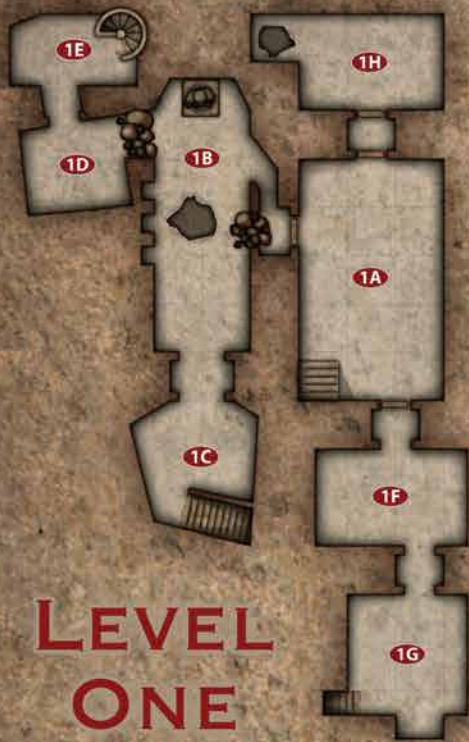
- The ceilings are 10 feet above the floor.
- The doors are heavy stone
- Nomza's rebels have installed wall sconces to hold torches at regular intervals
- The torches are currently unlit

Certain noted chambers are unstable, and prone to collapse. Any attack that does area damage might trigger a collapse. Keep a running total of all area damage done in a single area (double any force or thunder damage). After any area attack roll a d100. If the number rolled is equal to or lower than the total, heavy blocks from the ceiling collapse on friend and foe alike. A 100 always prevents a collapse.

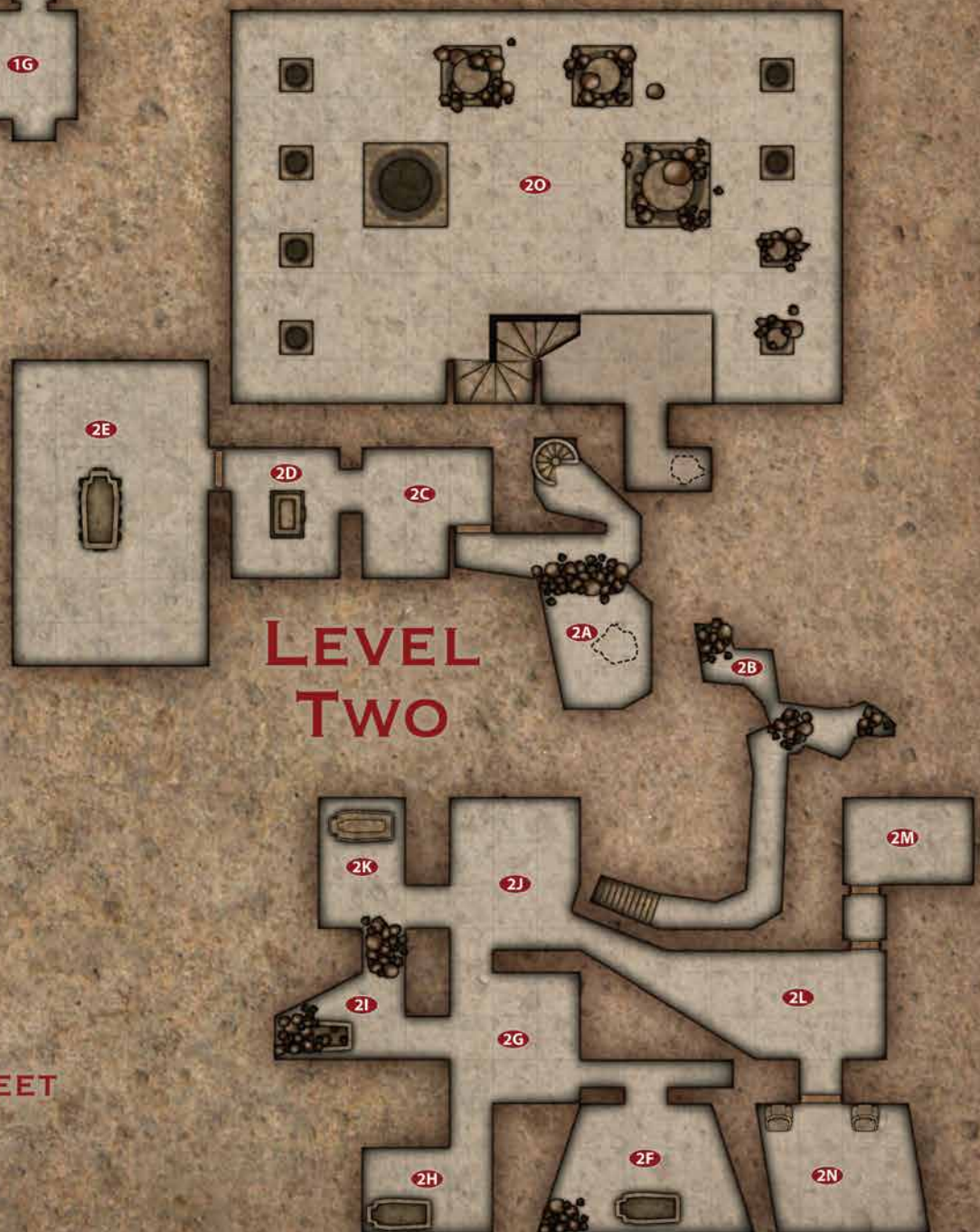
If a collapse is triggered, all creatures in the area must succeed in a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 4d6 bludgeoning damage, or half on a successful save. Regardless in the aftermath of a collapse, the passage becomes very difficult terrain, though not impassable.

TOMB OF ABDAMOSE

LEVEL ONE



LEVEL TWO



□ = 5 FEET

1A: The Courtyard

The Courtyard is clean and free from rubble with a perfectly level stone floor. The stairwell from the surface is in the southwest corner, and doors lead south (to 1F) and west (to 1B). There is a secret passage to the north, leading to a locked door just beyond (to 1H). The walls are decorated with murals showing Abdamose in life. He is depicted as a man three times as tall as any other figures, wielding the *skull scepter* in his hand and the pincers of a scarab beetle worn as horns on his head.

- On the eastern wall he is shown as a ruler over bowing people, holding his *skull scepter* aloft. Though he is shown in power, he does not bear any of the trappings of the Phaeron, indicating he was a lesser ruler (he was lord of a city, though that is not clear from the mural).
- On the south wall he is shown as a conquering warrior, smiting small figures of his enemies with the *skull scepter*.
- On the west wall he is shown leading six ghouls, the *skull scepter* raised high and glowing with power. Intelligence(Arcana) can be used to determine this is the result of two uses of the *create undead* spell or a similar effect, in this case, two uses of the power from the *skull scepter*.
- On the north wall he is shown with hands uplifted, supplicating at an altar. The altar is a black rectangle, and pressing it reveals the secret door to the north.

There are 10 death dogs chained in the southeastern corner of the courtyard. Their chains reach within 5 feet of the western door. They know Nomza's followers, and they fear to attack the undead, but they will attack the Heroes as soon as they enter the courtyard. If the Heroes move beyond the range of their chains, they will try to break them. This will require a DC 20 Strength check, after two unsuccessful attempts the dogs will stop their attempts to break the chains.

Enemies: 10 Death dogs

The Locked Door

The door to 1H is locked but has no keyhole or other mechanism. The mechanism has been built into the walls itself and can only be unlocked via the mechanisms in 2A and 2M. Both of these puzzle mechanisms must be solved in order to open the door. There is no visible exterior sign when the door is unlocked, save for the fact that it will open, but the activation of the mechanism makes a great deal of noise. When the door is closed, the mechanism automatically resets and re-locks, but there is a lever on the inside wall of 1H that will unlock the door without the mechanism.

1B: The Shrine of Glory

The entrance to this chamber from the courtyard (1A) has collapsed and is filled with impassable rubble. However, Nomza's rebels have dug out a rough-hewn passage to the north, as marked on the map. This narrow passage is considered unstable.

This narrow room contains three statues of Abdamose in niches on the west side, and a very lifelike statue of Abdamose on the north side of the chamber. This last is a statue to symbolize Abdamose's glory, so that he might be remembered for his accomplishments. The statue is a stone golem, but it is deactivated. It will reactivate if struck by any kind of electricity or magic and seek to harm any living creature it encounters.

The passage west to 1D is partially collapsed and considered difficult terrain due to the rubble. The passage south to 1C is clear. There once was a spiral stair in the middle of the chamber, but it has collapsed, and now is just a shaft with a central pillar leading down to 2A, which will require heroes to find their own way down.

Enemies: Stone golem (if activated, see room description)

1C: The Treasure Stair

This chamber is decorated with fading murals depicting the great wealth of Abdamose, including gold, jewels, and magic items. The staircase is partially crumbled, but still navigable, and descends to the corridor 2B.

1D: The Warning Room

This room is unstable. There are two corpses here of Nomza's cultists, slain by Abdamose's undead thralls. Examining the bodies with a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check will reveal that these cultists seem to have had their life force drained and have relatively minor wounds. This may be redundant, however, because as the Heroes are examining the bodies they will be attacked by a group of undead set by Abdamose to wander the halls looking for survivors.

Enemies: 5 Undead Spawn, See Codex of Threats

Scaling Encounters: If the Heroes are above 10th level, add 1 to 2 Undead Spawn per level above 10th.

1E: The Tomb Descent

The spiral staircase on the east side of this chamber is flanked by two statues of scarab beetles emblazoned with the symbol of Tzizhet, a star-fish like image with tentacles. The stairs lead to a passage that connects with 2C. The floor has collapsed on the western side of the room, allowing more daring heroes to avoid the passage and descend directly to 2C.

1F: The Trap Room

This room is decorated with faded and crumbling murals of Abdamose conquering various enemies, always depicted as about one third his size, showing many different features that indicate he fought many different nations of humans, as well as elorii and ssethric races. The passage south, to 1G, is trapped with a poison dart trap triggered by a pressure plate.

Poison Dart Needle

Mechanical trap

The passage south, to 1G, is trapped with a poison dart trap triggered by a pressure plate.

When the trap is triggered, a cloud of darts burst out of dozens of small holes disguised with plaster, the creature that triggers the trap and all other all creatures within 15 feet of the pressure plate suffer 1 piercing damage and 22 (4d10) poison damage, and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour.

A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows a character to deduce the trap's presence from alterations made to the lock to accommodate the needle. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disarms the trap, by locking the pressure plate. Unsuccessfully attempting to lock the plate triggers the trap.

1G: The Generals' Antechamber

The southern niche of this room contains a mural of four mighty Myrantian generals, behind which looms the figure of Abdamose. Each of the generals is marked with a different symbol on their armor: A hawk, a cobra, a scorpion, and a vulture. The stairs to the southwest lead to the stairs that leads down to chamber 2F. Halfway down, the stairs crumbled and are a ramp of loose dirt and rocks.

1H: The Temple Entrance

The stairs that originally led down to 2O have rotted away, leaving only a shaft. There is a knotted rope already secured that Nomza's rebels use to get up and down. Four of Nomza's rebels lay dead in this chamber, which shows the signs of a terrific fight against Abdamose and his undead. Several of Abdamose's undead were slain as well, but he was able to replenish his stock from dead rebels before he continued down to 2O.

Murals depict Tzizhet, the chief Myrantian god, a multi-tentacled monstrosity similar to a starfish with hundreds of arms, surrounded by images of death and destruction.

THE LOWER CHAMBERS

2A: The Undead Mechanism

This room used to be accessed from the hallway that led to 2C, but that passageway has been collapsed and is now impassable rubble. The only way to get to this chamber is from the shaft in 1B. This room is unstable.

Although many of the walls are collapsing inward, the southern wall still shows the first of two mechanisms needed to unlock the door to 1H. The southern wall depicts Abdamose holding the *skull scepter* high. Beneath him, depicted a third his size, are depictions of ghouls collected into groups. Each group sinks into the wall when pressed. There is a group of 2, a group of 3, a group of 4, and a group of 7.

This is one of the two mechanisms required to unlock the door to 1H. To activate this mechanism, Heroes must remember the mural on the west wall of the Courtyard (1A). Or they must make a DC: 25 Intelligence (Arcana) roll to realize *create undead* allows a caster to control ghouls in groups of 3 for each casting.

They must press in the group of 2 and the group of 4, to make a total of 6. This is the number of ghouls depicted in the mural in 1A, and the number of ghouls controlled with two castings of *create undead*.

Once the puzzle is solved there will be an audible grinding of machinery coming from within the walls, then a click as it stops.

2B: The Collapsed Passages

The stairway in 1C leads to these passages. These passages are unstable, and the rubble makes everything difficult terrain. The original passage was 10 feet high, but the accumulation of rubble has lowered this to 3 feet, requiring significant squeezing to wriggle through. Somewhere, buried under collapsed rock, are the treasure chambers of Abdamose. However, they are currently entirely inaccessible without a major excavation that is beyond the scope of this adventure. There are no wall sconces for torches here.

2C: The First Antechamber

The passage to this room leads from the spiral staircase in 1E. The passage is unstable, and the southern part, which originally led to 2A, is blocked with collapsed rubble. The door leading to 2C proper is stuck and requires a DC 15 Strength check to open it. This room is covered in murals depicting Abdamose, along with Myrantian writing that are

blessings of the dead, and prayers to Tzizhet. The script also contains invectives against tomb robbers and promises of vengeance from beyond the grave should they rob Abdamose.

With a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check the faint sounds of combat can be heard from 2E. The torches in 2D are lit, allowing faint light into this chamber.

2D: The Second Antechamber

The center of this room is dominated by an altar that has not been used in over a thousand years. This was where supplicants bring offerings to Abdamose to ask for intercession with the Gods. The torches in this room have been lit by Nomza's lieutenant.

It is easier to hear the sounds of battle in 2E from here, requiring only a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check.

2E: The Crypt of Abdamose

This large chamber is dominated by Abdamose's sarcophagus. The chamber is lit with the torch from Nomza's lieutenant, currently dropped on the floor (see below). The sarcophagus is open and contains no body, as Abdamose has risen from the dead. The lid of the sarcophagus shows Abdamose with his scarab beetle pincers rising like horns from his head, and an image of the *skull scepter* clutched in his hands.

In addition to murals showing Abdamose in a variety of triumphant settings, there is an inscription in Myrantian scrawled along the northern wall in blood. Abdamose wrote it using the blood of one of Nomza's rebels, whose rotting corpse is against the wall. It reads:

You have taken the skull scepter, that which I wielded as a symbol of my office. That which I took with me that they might know of my deeds in the afterlife. Without it I am unknown. By all the gods of Myrantis, I shall take back what is mine. You shall feel the wrath of a Necromancer Lord.

Of more immediate concern is Nomza's lieutenant, who was slain by Abdamose's undead spawn the moment the Heroes enter the chamber. There is no way to save him. Two other rebels are already dead beside him. Their killers remain and will turn on the Heroes.

Enemies: 3 Undead Spawn

Scaling Encounters: If the Heroes are above 10th level, add 1 Undead Spawn per level above 10th.

The lieutenant is carrying two parchments. One shows chamber 2O, its layout, including the temporary barricades erected, and the starting positions of Nomza and her remaining troops and undead.

The second parchment is a series of broken notes written by Nomza's lieutenant in Myrantian. The lieutenant was a scholar and expert on the history of the ancient Myrantian Hegemony. It was his knowledge that allowed Nozma to find

this tomb. Among the blood-soaked notes, the following can be gleaned:

- As Nomza feared, the undead are coming from the crypt of Abdamose.
- Abdamose the Necromancer Lord was believed to be dead and at rest. We were wrong.
- Taking the *skull scepter* must have awakened him.
- I believe Abdamose can create more undead thralls from those he kills. We must burn the recently dead or they will overwhelm us.

Finally, a careful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check of Abdamose's sarcophagus will uncover a large basalt key buried under the rotting funerary wrappings and shards of old pottery. This is the key to the locked door that leads to 2N. However, anyone taking anything from the sarcophagus is struck by a 7th level *bestow curse* spell (24 hour duration, target has disadvantage on Strength checks and saving throws, DC 18 Wisdom saving throw to resist).

The Generals in Other Worlds

The crypts of the generals contain clues to activating the mechanism in 2M. These clues are based on the geographical location of the generals' greatest battles, depicted with foes who surrounded the ancient Myrantian Hegemony in the lore of Arcanis. If you are running this adventure in another setting, alter the appearance of the foes to appropriate surrounding nations, and alter the solution to the map puzzle in 2M accordingly.

2F: The Hawk's Crypt

The staircase in the southwest corner has crumbled to rubble, becoming more of a ramp of dirt and rocks. It is connected with room 1G.

This is the burial chamber of the first of Abdamose's generals, the one depicted in 1G with a hawk crest. This room has started to collapse in the southwest corner, and the room is unstable.

Murals on the walls depict this general, a figure with a hawk crest slightly larger than his enemies and wielding a spear, fighting what appear to be lizard people. A DC 10 Intelligence (History) check will identify these foes as the Ssethregorans, which dwelled southeast of the ancient Myrantian Hegemony.

The sarcophagus of the hawk general is in the southern part of the room. The rise of Abdamose has triggered the rise of the hawk general as well, but he has lain dormant, and will continue to do so unless the Heroes disturb his sarcophagus. If they do so, he will rise and attack them. When they defeat the Hawk General they may claim his personal weapon, the Spear of the Hawk.

Enemies: Hawk General, See Codex of Threats

Spear of the Hawk

Weapon (spear), very rare, unique (requires attunement)

Description: The shaft of this spear is covered with a light-colored metal, inlaid with golden glyphs supplicating the Myrantian Gods. The spearhead is shaped to resemble the head of a hawk.

History: According to legend, a Tir Betoqi dwarven smith by the name of Arzamal was captured by Abdamose during one of his military campaigns. The dwarf, who was journeying back to his enclave across the Lauriol Sea, bargained for his life. An agreement was made that in exchange for his freedom, Arzamal would craft three wondrous items for the Necromancer Lord. The first of these was the Spear of the Hawk, which Abdamose gifted to Hennutehappi, the Hawk General.

Abilities/Effects: You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. In addition, you can make one attack with it as a bonus action on each of your turns. When thrown, a pair of ghostly wings emerge in the middle of the shaft. Immediately after the attack, the weapon flies back to your hand.

In his sarcophagus is a sickle engraved with a rune of Perseverance (very rare) and an Amalgamated Rune of Defence/Precision (Rare) see Forged in Magic: Reforged chapter 10 for information on Runes.

Enemies: Serpent General, See Codex of Threats

Serpent's Sickle

Weapon (sickle), rare, unique (requires attunement)

Description: The blade of this magical sickle is blackened and etched with scales as an asp, with the handle being carved to look as though the wielder is grabbing it just under the head. The wood used on the handle is a strange ebony wood, with the scales marked out in gold filigree.

History: The second item crafted by Arzamal the dwarf was the Serpent's Sickle. Used by Abdamose during his campaigns against the Ssethregorans, the Necromancer Lord presented it as a gift to his general Khalwhab, when he gave him the title of the Serpent General.

Abilities/Effects: This magical weapon is engraved with an Amalgamated Rune of Hatred (Elorii) /Vampiric (Rare). Additionally, as a bonus action you may cause the sickle to become flexible as if it were a snake, allowing it to be welded as a steel whip. You may return the sickle back to its original shape as a bonus.

2G: The Generals' Antechamber

This open room is decorated at each entrance. Above the eastern entrance is a hawk, above the southern is a serpent, and above the western is a scorpion. The northern entrance has suffered damage, and the image above it is no longer visible.

2H: The Serpent's Crypt

This is the burial chamber of another of Abdamose's generals, the one depicted in 1G with a serpent crest.

Murals on the wall depict this general, a figure with a serpent crest slightly larger than his enemies wielding a sickle, fighting humanoids with pointed ears against a wooded backdrop who are armed with arrows. A DC 10 Intelligence (History) check will identify these foes as elorii from the Fellglade, to the southwest of the ancient Myrantian Hegemony.

The sarcophagus of the Serpent General is in the southwestern part of the room. It is sealed and contains the embalmed remains of the serpent general. The stirring of Abdamose has caused his spirit to rise as an incorporeal undead, however, and he ambushes the Heroes from the sarcophagus, whether it is opened or not. The Serpent General was cursed long ago, the effect of which was to cause his soul to become anchored to his body. Due to this, the soul could not be consumed as the catalyst to transform him into an undead, nor could it transcend to its eternal rest. Being trapped in this way has driven him insane, but no less deadly.

2I: The Scorpion's Crypt

This is the burial chamber of another of Abdamose's generals, the one depicted in 1G with a scorpion crest. This room is partially collapsed and is unstable.

Murals on the wall depict this general, a figure with a scorpion crest slightly larger than his enemies wielding a khopesh, fighting humans with spears sprouting from the ground. A DC 15 Intelligence (History) check will identify these foes as holy champions of Saluwé from pre-Coryani Balantica, to the west of the ancient Myrantian Hegemony.

The sarcophagus of the Scorpion General is buried under the collapse of this room. This general did not rise as an undead due to the destruction of his body.

2J: The Vulture's Antechamber

This chamber is surrounded by warnings and invectives against tomb robbers in Myrantian, centered on the passageway to the west. Approaching the passageway causes Heroes to become frightened, per an *antipathy* spell and wish to move away from the passage. It requires a DC 15 Wisdom check to pass through. The litanies against the dead just above the western passage to 2K are magical and imprison the vulture general in his crypt. If the heroes take up the Vulture General's offer, they merely need to cause enough damage to the underlying stone to take off the top inch in order to break this ward.

2K: The Vulture's Crypt

This is not a burial chamber. There is no sarcophagus here. It is instead the prison of Abdamose's final general, the one depicted in 1G with a vulture crest. There are no sconces for torches here.

Murals on the wall depict this general, a figure with a vulture crest slightly larger than his enemies and surrounded with an aura of arcane power, fighting humans on horseback armed with lances. A DC 15 Intelligence (History) check will identify these foes as humans from Savona, to the north of the ancient Myrantian Hegemony.

The Vulture General is waiting patiently in the chamber. He is quite intelligent and speaks Myrantian and Altharin. If the Heroes do not speak either of these languages, he will cast *tongues*. He does not wish to fight, but instead wishes to escape his imprisonment. In exchange for the Heroes agreeing to destroy the wards in 2J that keep him in his crypt, he will give them information. If they refuse, he will attack them if they enter his chamber.

He can impart the following information:

- Abdamose was a powerful Necromancer Lord, one of the ruling class of the ancient Myrantian Hegemony.
- Abdamose led many military campaigns against the enemies of the Hegemony.
- When Abdamose died, his top generals were slain and buried with him.
- The Vulture General did not need to be slain, for he had been undead for a long time already. Nevertheless, he was still buried with Abdamose against his will. The Phaeron feared his power, believing only Abdamose kept him in check. He cursed the Phaeron as they dragged him into the tomb. It took the full might of the other Necromancer Lords to entomb him. (An exaggeration, but after being buried for centuries in solitary confinement, the Vulture General has gone slightly mad).
- He was imprisoned here with powerful magics, chiefly the ward outside, plus a spell that caused the weak-willed to shy away. (The ward also protects him from attacks or effects created outside his chamber, though he won't tell the Heroes that).
- He was given comfortable furniture and scrolls to read, but they rotted away centuries ago.
- His birth name is unimportant. The Myrantians knew him as "Nerterpywau", or "Vulture General". (In reality, he has long forgotten his name, along with many other details from his life).
- Recently Abdamose was disturbed and rose from his slumber. The Vulture General knows this because Abdamose's rise awakened him from torpor.

- He suspects tomb robbers entered the tomb. He knows because he slew one and caused the others to flee. They have left his chamber alone since then.
- He cannot recall all of Abdamose's military campaigns, but he remembers he fought against the Savonans to the north.
- The door to the great temple is locked and must be opened via two mechanisms. He does not know more than that, as the engineers did not see fit to tell him how his prison functioned.
- The *skull scepter* was the symbol of Abdamose's office. He alone had it, and it made him the most feared of the Necromancer Lords, even more feared than the Phaeron.
- To entice the Heroes to free him, he will offer them the riches he was buried with, such as opulent jewelry worth 1,200 gp. As a further inducement, he will promise them his *staff of the vulture*.

Enemies: Vulture General (if the Heroes attack him), see Codex of Threats

Staff of the Vulture

Staff, very rare, unique (requires attunement by eldritch or elder spell caster)

Description: This staff is made of some sort of blackened metal finely inlaid with gold filigree spelling out a number of ancient arcane spells in the Myrantian tongue. Topping the staff is a fine golden vulture carving, stooped upon the top of the staff as if awaiting its prey to die.

History: This staff was the final item crafted by the captive dwarf Arzamal and gifted to the Vulture General of the pre-Shadowed Age Myrantian Hegemony. He carried this staff into battle against his enemies for years, causing the people of that region to quake in fear at the very sight of the staff.

Abilities/Effects: This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. While holding it, you gain a +2 bonus to Armor Class, saving throws, and spell attack rolls.

The staff has 20 charges for the following properties. The staff regains 2d8 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff retains its +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls but loses all other properties. On a 20, the staff regains 1d8 + 2 charges.

Power Strike. When you hit with a melee attack using the staff, you can expend 1 charge to deal an extra 1d6 force damage to the target.

Spells. While holding this staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC and spell attack bonus: *contagion* (5 charges), *evil eye** (1 charge), *fear* (3 charges).

Pumping the General for Information

Some players may take the opportunity of speaking with an ancient, intelligent undead to garner esoteric pieces of historical information about Arcanis, particularly mysteries and other unknowns. As much as the Vulture General would like to tell them, he just doesn't remember much of his old life, besides the high points, such as the military campaign he led against Savona and his imprisonment. After being entombed and isolated, with no one to speak with, the general has gone from stir crazy to just crazy. He will promise to tell them all they wish, using information he no longer knows as a bargaining chip, but will be unable to fulfill his end of the bargain when pressed.

If the general is released, the dynamics of the adventure can change. The Heroes will likely wish to turn the Vulture General against Abdamose, arguing that it was his fault that he was entombed, but this gambit will fail. The general is not stupid and knows that his beloved Necromancer Lord had nothing to do with his imprisonment. Rather, it is the Phaeron who is culpable and who must pay the price of his treachery. Since that one is long dead, he will take his vengeance on the one now with that title. Seeing what they have unleashed, as the Vulture General, finally having someone to speak with, will wax maniacally about his intentions to destroy the Abessian Dominion, the Heroes may decide to destroy this menace. Not doing so and leaving innocent people at risk is unheroic and the GM is justified in taking away any Fate points the Heroes may have, assuming that system is being used.

2L: The Treasure Antechamber

This is a plain chamber, lacking the decoration of previous areas. The passages to the south and north were originally hidden, but both walls have been knocked through by Nomza's rebels. The north passage leads to 2M, while the south leads to a locked door. The basalt key found in 2E fits this door, which leads to the treasure chamber in 2N. However, there are two traps.

If someone attempts to force the door without a key, either by disabling the lock or by brute strength, it triggers a magical fireball.

Fireball Trap

Magic trap

When someone attempts to force this door, a blast of flame erupts from the enchanted entryway, striking all creatures within 20 feet. Creatures are subject to a *fireball* spell cast at 5th level (dealing 10d6 fire damage) with a saving throw DC of 17. Once this effect is triggered, roll a d6. On a 5-6 the effect resets.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check can identify the nature of this effect before setting it off, and a successful *dispel magic* (DC 17) spell removes this enchantment.

2M: The Map Mechanism

This is the second mechanism needed to unlock the door to 1H, along with the mechanism in 2A.

Against the eastern wall is a crude and partially damaged map of the ancient Myrantian Hegemony, with four circular grooves surrounding the map. Set in each groove is a seal with a glyph of, from outermost to innermost, a hawk, a serpent, a scorpion, and a vulture. The glyphs can be slid with some effort around their grooves, allowing them to be placed at any direction relative to the map.

A DC 15 Intelligence (History) check will reveal that the map is of the ancient Myrantian Hegemony, and more importantly that it is oriented with west in the uppermost position, as was traditional among the ancient Myrantians of the Shadowed Age, as it symbolized death, with the setting of the sun.

The mechanism is activated by sliding the four glyphs to orient them with the directions of the generals' most famous battles, as depicted on their murals in their crypts.

The solution is:

Hawk oriented to the lower left (Southeast)

Serpent oriented to the upper left (Southwest)

Scorpion oriented to the top (West)

Vulture oriented to the right (North)

Once the puzzle is solved there will be an audible grinding of machinery coming from within the walls, then a click before it stops.

2N: The Treasure Room

While Abdamose's treasures are buried under collapsed rubble, the treasures of his generals are found here. Most of the treasure is too heavy to easily remove, but Heroes can find 14,000 gp worth of pottery, jewelry, and other treasures to sell, plus the following magic items.

- Crown of Darkness (*very rare*, Forged in Magic: Reforged pg. 105)
- Gauntlet of Immaculate Defence (*rare*, Forged in Magic: Reforged pg. 116)
- Potion of Invulnerability

Two mummies are in sarcophagi standing upright on either side of the door. They remain dormant unless any of the treasure is touched. If this occurs the sarcophagi will open, and they will animate with a desire to kill any intruders.

Enemies: 2 Greater Mummies, See Codex of Threats.

20: THE FINAL CONFRONTATION

This room is an ancient temple to Tzizhet. Although in some disrepair, there are still many murals showing Tzizhet in all his multi-tentacled horror scooping up the souls of his enemies and devouring them in his ever-consuming maw.

This room is well lit with torches and braziers. It is not unstable, however if half of the remaining small pillars or the remaining large pillar are destroyed it will become so. If the remaining large pillar is destroyed, each additional small pillar that is severed adds a 25% chance per round of the entire chamber collapsing. This percentage is added to any roll required due to area attacks in the unstable area.

The room is 30 feet high from floor to ceiling. The Heroes arrive from the southern door onto a balcony that is 20 feet above the surrounding floor, with a winding switchback staircase to the west that leads down to the ground level. There is no railing on the balcony, though there are the crumbled remains of one. Broken pillars to the east are at the balcony level, allowing heroes particularly skilled at jumping or with the ability to fly higher perches should they please.

Nomza and her rebels had been using this as their main base of operations and war room. She has two of her living followers remaining, plus the undead she has created with the *skull scepter*. She is preparing for her final stand to the northeast of the room, behind makeshift barricades made of upended tables.

Abdamose and his undead spawn, including a few freshly made from Nomza's followers, have gathered in the southwestern part of the room. They are about to begin their final conflict when the Heroes enter. If the Heroes approach stealthily, they may be able to hear Abdamose demanding the return of his *skull scepter*, and Nomza saying that he should be helping her free their people from foreign interlopers. They both speak Myrantian, of course.

If the Heroes continue to wait, the sides will attack each other. However, allow each side Wisdom (Perception) checks to realize the Heroes are there.

If the Heroes are noticed, each side will attempt to make allegiance with them. However, they will not wait long. If the Heroes do not pick a side, then the fight will become a free-for-all, with both opponents seeking to kill the Heroes and each other. Remember that both Abdamose and Nomza are capable of creating new undead from living creatures slain during the battle.

Nomza's Arguments

Nomza will use the following to convince the Heroes to come to her side. She speaks Low Coryani in addition to Myrantian.

- She will appeal to any citizens of the Abessian Dominion to help her drive the ssethrics from their land, appealing to their patriotism.
- She will promise any foreigners that she will cease attacking their citizens (This is a lie and she has no intention of honoring it).
- If the Heroes are predisposed against the Abessian Dominion, she will slyly point out that a civil war between her rebels and the ssethrics will keep the Dominion from attacking others.
- She will paint Abdamose as a tyrant and dangerous necromancer, who savaged the land during the Shadowed Age and is too dangerous to let live. While inconsistent with what she was saying earlier, she realizes that Abdamose will not join her cause. To continue wielding the *skull scepter*, she will need to destroy it and realizes that having the Heroes as allies is her best chance to achieve this.

Abdamose's Arguments

Abdamose will use the following to convince the heroes to come to his side. He does not speak Low Coryani but does speak Altharin and Myrantian.

- He seeks only his *skull scepter* before returning to his slumber. (This is mostly true. He is fairly certain retrieving the *skull scepter* will return him to his rest, but if it does not he has no intention of remaining in his tomb.)
- He will let the Heroes leave unmolested once his *skull scepter* is returned to him.
- He will paint Nomza as a dangerous tomb robber who cannot be trusted with such power.
- The Abessian Dominion is a pale version of his beloved Myrantian Hegemony and has no desire to "rescue" it or rule. He wishes to go back to his slumber, awaiting Tzizhet's call.

Enemies (fighting Nomza): Nomza (use NPC Priest), 2 cultists (use NPC Cultist), and as many undead as can be made using the *animate dead* and create undead spells from the *skull scepter*.

Enemies (fighting Abdamose): Abdamose, 4 Undead Spawn

CONCLUSION

The conclusion depends on the outcome of the final battle.

If the Heroes helped Abdamosse retrieve his *skull scepter*, he is as good as his word and intends to return to his final rest. However, he demands the Heroes leave his tomb at once, and leave behind anything they might have robbed from him. If the Heroes refuse, or are caught trying to smuggle out treasure, he will fly into a rage and seek to kill them.

If the Heroes helped Nomza, she will size them up. If she believes she can kill them with her remaining forces, she will attempt to do so before they have a chance to recover from the fight. If not, she will pretend gratitude and let the heroes leave. In the next few months she will rebuild her forces, and then return to attacking the surrounding land. If she made any promises to the Heroes about sparing their nations, she will break that promise. If the Heroes were hired to defeat Nomza and stop her rebellion, this outcome will cause a great deal of trouble for them with their employers.

If the Heroes let the Vulture General escape, he will vanish into the Forsaken Wastes. He is a very powerful and evil creature, and future adventures may have to deal with the consequences of letting such a powerful undead loose.

Other future adventures may involve the ssthetic portion of the Abessian Dominion sending an expedition to excavate the remainder of the tomb, particularly the treasure chambers still buried under rubble. Heroes may have to protect that expedition or be hired by enemies of the Dominion or its Myrantine leaders to sabotage the expedition as it would be against their tenets of leaving tombs undisturbed. They might also be hired by collectors of antiquities to rob the expedition.

If the Heroes end up with the *skull scepter*, they will have to decide what to do with it. It is a very powerful item, but also would be considered blasphemous by any temple outside of the Abessian Dominion, and especially heretical by the temple of Neroth. Many factions may seek it out, either to destroy it or to use it for fell purposes.



CODEx OF THREATS

Abdamose

Medium undead

Armor Class 17 (mage armor)

Hit Points 127 (17d8+ 51)

Speed 30 ft. ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12	18	16	16	15	20
(+1)	(+4)	(+3)	(+3)	(+2)	(+5)

Saving Throws Cha +10, Wis +7

Skills Arcane +8, Perception +7, Religion: +8

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

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses passive Perception 17

Languages Myrantian

Challenge 13 (10000 XP)

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

Regeneration. Abdamose regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point. If Abdamose takes radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of his next turn.

Spellcasting. Abdamose is an 18th-level eldritch spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks).

Abdamose knows the following spells:

Cantrips (at will): *Chill touch*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *Detect magic*, *identify*, *mage armor*,* *magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *Ray of enfeeblement*, *misty step*, *blindness/deafness*

3rd level (3 slots): *Counterspell*, *fly*, *lightning bolt*, *vampiric touch*

4th level (3 slots): *Banishment*, *blight*, *stoneskin**

5th level (3 slots): *Contagion*, *scrying*

6th level (1 slot): *Circle of death*, *globe of invulnerability*, *create undead*

7th level (1 slot): *Finger of death*

8th level (1 slot): *Mind blank**

9th level (1 slot): *Imprisonment*

*The Abdamose commonly casts these spells on himself before combat.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Abdamose makes two attacks with his unarmed strike or any melee weapon (he currently is in possession of a ritual dagger with which he was buried but can use his scepter just as effectively)

Unarmed Strike. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage, if he possesses it.

Dagger. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Abdamose can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Abdamose regains 1 spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Spell Deflection (2 legendary actions). When Abdamose successfully counters a spell he may opt to reflect the spell back upon the caster.

Necromancer Lord (1 legendary action). Abdamose may cast *charm monster* on any undead within range, this spell does not count as a spell cast on his turn.

Cantrip (1 legendary action). Abdamose casts a cantrip.

Greater Mummy

Medium undead

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 91 (13d8 + 26)

Speed 30 ft. ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20	8	15	6	10	12
(+5)	(-1)	(+2)	(-2)	(+0)	(+1)

Saving Throws Wis +3

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Myrantian

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The mummy can use its dreadful glare and makes one attack with its rotting fist.

Rotting Fist. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 20 (5d8) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with mummy rot. The cursed target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) for every 24 hours that elapse. If the curse reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and its body turns to dust. The curse lasts until removed by the remove curse spell or other magic.

Dreadful Glare. The mummy targets one creature it can see within 60 feet of it. If the target can see the mummy, it must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened until the end of the mummy's next turn. If the target fails the saving throw by 5 or more, it is also paralyzed for the same duration. A target that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the dreadful glare of all mummies (but not mummy lords) for the next 24 hours.

Hawk General

Medium undead

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 126 (18d8 + 54)

Speed 30 ft. ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20	15	16	12	13	14
(+5)	(+2)	(+3)	(+1)	(+1)	(+2)

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Myrantian

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Life Sense. The Hawk General automatically detects all living creatures within 60 feet. This sense is blocked by 3 feet of wood, 1 foot of earth or stone, an inch of metal, or a thin sheet of lead.

Recall Hawk's Spear. If the hawk general is ever disarmed of his spear he may recall the spear to his hand as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Hawk General make three attacks, one of which may be its dreadful glare. Due to the spear's quality, the Hawk general may make an additional attack with his spear as a bonus action.

Spear of the Hawk. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60, one target. Hit: 10 (1d6 + 7) piercing damage plus 20 (5d8) necrotic damage.

Dreadful Glare. The Hawk General targets one creature it can see within 60 feet of it. If the target can see the Hawk General, it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened until the end of the Hawk General's next turn. If the target fails the saving throw by 5 or more, it is also paralyzed for the same duration. A target that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the dreadful glare of all mummies (but not mummy lords or other undead generals) for the next 24 hours.

Serpent General

Medium undead

Armor Class 15 CR: 5

Hit Points 84 (12d8 + 36) CR: 6

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	16	16	12	14	15
	(+3)	(+3)	(+1)	(+2)	(+2)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Myrantian

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Life Sense. The Serpent General automatically detects all living creatures within 60 feet. This sense is blocked by 3 feet of wood, 1 foot of earth or stone, an inch of metal, or a thin sheet of lead.

Incorporeal Movement. The Serpent General can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the Serpent General has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Serpent General may attack with its life leach ability twice

Life Leach. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 21 (5d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or else the Serpent General regains a number of hit points equal to half the damage dealt. If the Serpent General suffers any radiant damage it cannot regain hit points through the use of this ability until the end of its next turn.

Vulture General

Medium undead

Armor Class 15 (mage armor)

Hit Points 108 (18d8 + 36)

Speed 30 ft. ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (++2)	18 (+4)

Skills Arcane +5, Deception +8, Insight +6, Persuasion +8, Sleight of Hand +6

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Myrntian

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Life Sense. The Vulture General automatically detects all living creatures within 60 feet. This sense is blocked by 3 feet of wood, 1 foot of earth or stone, an inch of metal, or a thin sheet of lead.

Eldritch Spellcaster. The Vulture General is a 9th-level eldritch spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). The Vulture General knows the following eldritch spell prepared (note he has already used one spell slot to cast mage armor)

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*

1st level (3 slots): *detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fireball, tongues*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, wall of fire*

5th level (1 slot): *dominate person*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Vulture General may make two attacks, one of which may be its dreadful glare.

Staff of the Vulture. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) budging damage plus 20 (5d8) necrotic damage.

Dreadful Glare. The Vulture General targets one creature it can see within 60 feet of it. If the target can see the Vulture General, it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened until the end of the Vulture General's next turn. If the target fails the saving throw by 5 or more, it is also paralyzed for the same duration. A target that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the dreadful glare of all mummies (but not mummy lords or other generals) for the next 24 hours.

Undead Spawn of Abdamose

After decades of experimentation Abdamose was able to develop his own, unique, form of undead. Undead Spawn are created through the use of the spell *create undead*.

Undead Spawn

Medium undead

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 93 (11d8+ 44)

Speed 30 ft. ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	18 (+3)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +6, Wis +3

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +6

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

Condition Vulnerabilities Charmed (when applied by their creator)

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Myrntian

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Regeneration. Undead spawn regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point. If the undead spawn takes radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of its next turn.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the undead spawn has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Chained Control. When these creatures are first created they are imbued with a magical matrix which connects them to any zombies they create. If they are charmed by their creator all zombies under their control (see life drain) are also charmed by their creator.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Undead spawn can make two longsword attacks or two longbow attacks. It can use its life drain in place of one longsword attack.

Life Drain. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. Any humanoid slain by this attack rises 24 hours later as a zombie under the undead spawn's control. Unless the humanoid is restored to life or its body is destroyed. An undead spwn can have no more than twelve zombies under its control at one time.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands.

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

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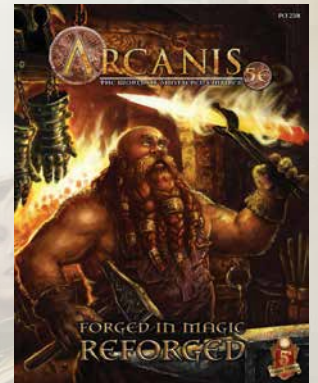


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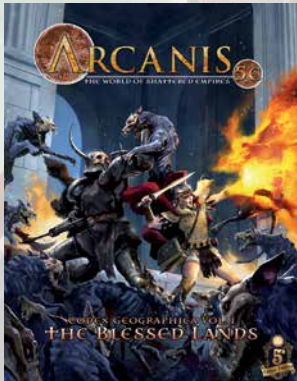
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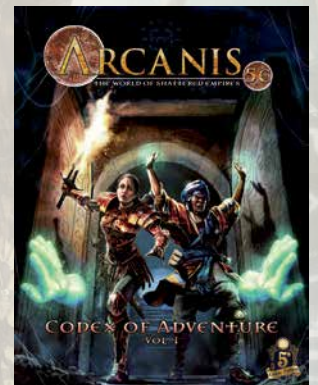
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