

THE SAGE OF CORMANTHOR

Adventure Designers

JASON GONDING, ERIC MENGE, BEN HEISLER, AND PAIGE LEITMAN,
WITH AMPLE ASSISTANCE FROM JEREMY ARNOLD, DAVE BRAINARD,
ALBERT DEGENAAR, CALEB FOTH, JIM HARRISON, GINNY LOVEDAY, M.
SEAN MOLLEY, AND KEATON STAMPS.

Adventure Code: ELMW1-1



The grain has rotted in the town of Elmwood, which means people might starve, businesses and banks might fail, and endanger the town's already-precarious existence. Brave adventurers are needed to travel through the wild forest to seek the advice of the Sage of Cormanthor.

A four-hour adventure for 5th - 10th level characters

Producer: Baldman Games

Core Administrator: Shawn Merwin

Editing and Layout: Encoded Designs

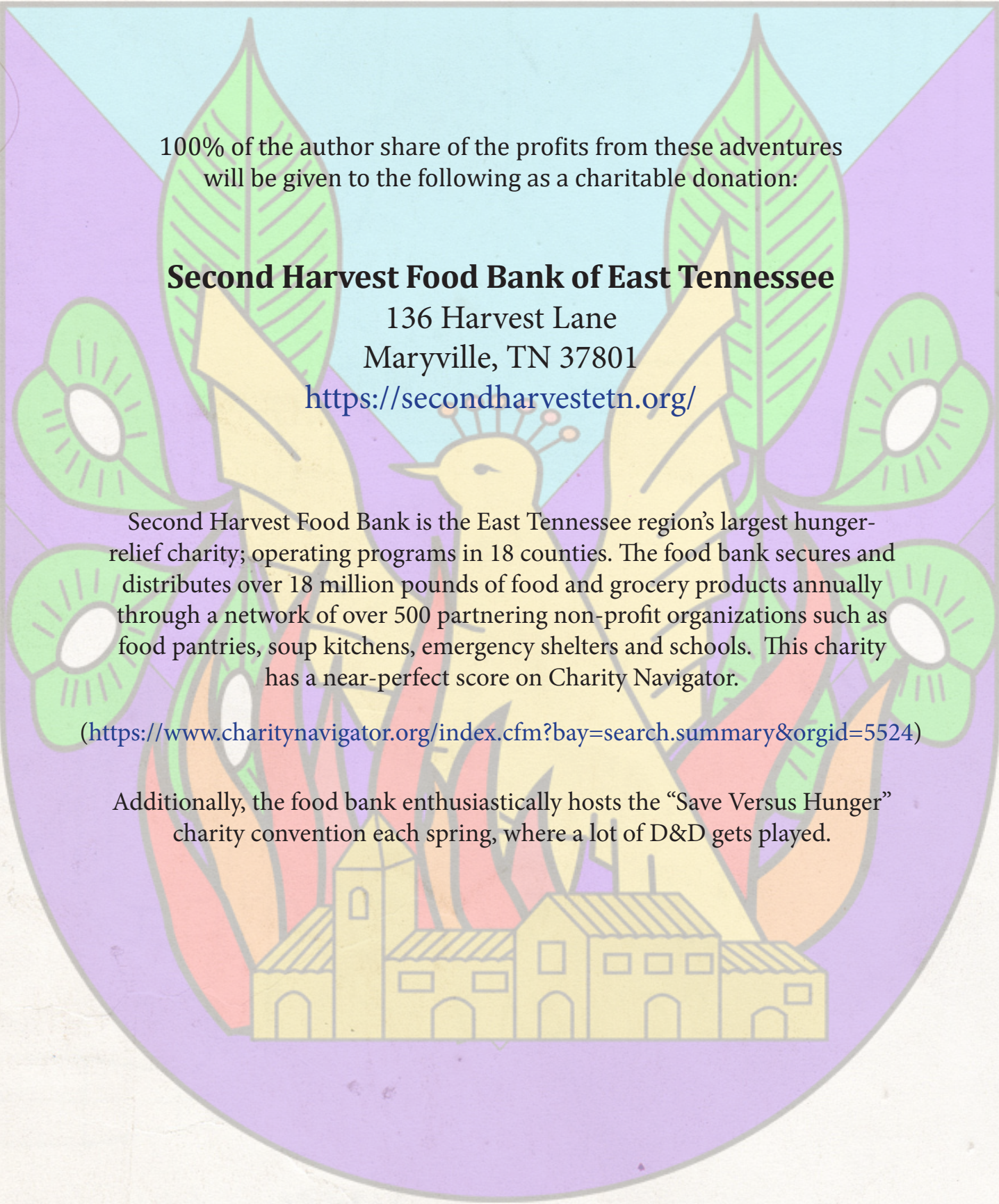
Organized Play: Chris Lindsay

D&D Adventurers League Wizards Team: Adam Lee, Chris Lindsay, Matt Sernett

D&D Adventurers League Administrators: Robert Adducci, Bill Benham, Travis Woodall, Claire Hoffman, Greg Marks, Alan Patrick

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, the dragon ampersand, Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, Dungeon Master's Guide, D&D Adventurers League, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. All characters and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast.

©2016 Wizards of the Coast LLC, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707, USA. Manufactured by Hasbro SA, Rue Emile-Boéchat 31, 2800 Delémont, CH. Represented by Hasbro Europe, 4 The Square, Stockley Park, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB11 1ET, UK.



100% of the author share of the profits from these adventures
will be given to the following as a charitable donation:

Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee

136 Harvest Lane
Maryville, TN 37801

<https://secondharvestetn.org/>

Second Harvest Food Bank is the East Tennessee region's largest hunger-relief charity; operating programs in 18 counties. The food bank secures and distributes over 18 million pounds of food and grocery products annually through a network of over 500 partnering non-profit organizations such as food pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters and schools. This charity has a near-perfect score on Charity Navigator.

(<https://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=5524>)

Additionally, the food bank enthusiastically hosts the "Save Versus Hunger" charity convention each spring, where a lot of D&D gets played.



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *The Sage of Cormanthor*, a D&D Adventurers League adventure, Part One of the *Misaligned Trilogy*.

*This adventure is designed for **three to seven 5th - 10th level characters**, and is optimized for **five 8th-level characters**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.*

The adventure is set in Elmwood and in The Lost Vale.

The D&D Adventurers League

This adventure is official for D&D Adventurers League play. The D&D Adventurers League is the official organized play system for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®. Players can create characters and participate in any adventure allowed as a part of the D&D Adventurers League. As they adventure, players track their characters' experience, treasure, and other rewards, and can take those characters through other adventures that continues their story.

If you're running this adventure as a part of a store event or at certain conventions, you'll need a DCI number. This number is your official Wizards of the Coast organized play identifier. If you don't have a number, you can obtain one at a store event. Check with your organizer for details.

D&D Adventurers League play is broken up into storyline seasons. When players create characters, they attach those characters to a storyline season, which determines what rules they're allowed to use to create and advance their characters. Players can continue to play their characters after the storyline season has finished, possibly participating in a second or third storyline with those same characters. A character's level is the only limitation for adventure play. A player cannot use a character of a level higher or lower than the level range of a D&D Adventurers League adventure.

For more information on playing, running games as a Dungeon Master, and organizing games for the D&D Adventurers League, please visit the D&D Adventurers League home at:

www.dndadventurersleague.org

Preparing the Adventure

Before you show up to Dungeon Master this adventure for a group of players, you should do the following to prepare.

- Make sure to have a copy of the most current version of the *D&D Basic Rules* or the *Player's Handbook*.
- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself while running the adventure, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use in a combat.
- Get familiar with the monster statistics in the Appendix.
- Gather together any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure--such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- If you know the composition of the group beforehand, you can make adjustments as noted throughout the adventure.

Before Play at the Table

Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information:

- Character name and level
- Character race and class
- Passive Wisdom (Perception)—the most common passive ability check
- Anything notable as specified by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Players that have characters outside the adventure's level range **cannot participate in the adventure with those characters**. Players with ineligible characters can make a new 1st-level character or use a pregenerated character. Players can play an adventure they previously played or ran as a Dungeon Master, but not with the same character.

Ensure that each player has an official adventure logsheet for his or her character (if not, get one from the organizer). The player fills out the adventure name, session number, date, and your name and DCI number. In addition, the player also fills in the starting values for experience, gold, downtime, renown, and number of permanent magic items. He or she fill in the other values and write notes at the conclusion of the session. Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet.

If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player's character sheet to ensure that nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array. Point players to the D&D Adventurers League Player's Guide for reference.

If players wish to spend downtime days and it's the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days now. Alternatively, they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters' spells and other daily options prior to the start of the adventure, unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give players hints about what they might face.

Adjusting the Adventure

Throughout this adventure, you may see sidebars to help make adjustments for smaller/larger groups, and characters of higher/lower levels than the optimized group. Most of the time, this is used for combat encounters.

You may adjust the adventure beyond the guidelines given. For example, if you're playing with a group of inexperienced players, you might want to make the adventure a little easier; for very experienced players, you may want to make it a little harder. Therefore, five categories of party strength have been created for you to use as a guide. Feel free to use a different adjustment during the adventure if the recommended party strength feels off for the group.

This adventure is **optimized for a party of five 8th-level characters**. To figure out whether you need to adjust the adventure, do the following:

- Add up the total levels of all the characters
- Divide the total by the number of characters
- Round fractions of .5 or greater up; round fractions of less than .5 down

You've now determined the **average party level (APL)** for the adventure. To figure out the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the following table:

DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than	Very Weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than	Average
5 characters, APL less than	Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent	Average
5 characters, APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than	Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than	Very Strong

Running the Adventure

As the Dungeon Master of the session, you have the most important role in facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You help guide the narrative and bring the words on these pages to life. The outcome of a fun game session often creates stories that live well beyond the play at the table. Always follow this golden rule when you DM for a group:

Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the adventure when possible.

To reinforce this golden rule, keep in mind the following:

- You are empowered to make adjustments to the adventure and make decisions about how the group interacts with the world of this adventure. Doing so is especially important and applicable outside of combat, but feel free to adjust the adventure for groups that are having too easy or too hard of a time.
- Don't make the adventure too easy or too difficult for a group. Never being challenged makes for a boring game and being overwhelmed makes for a frustrating one. Gauge the experience of the players (not the characters) with the game, try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to give each of them the experience they're after when they play D&D. Give everyone a chance to shine.
- Be mindful of pacing, and keep the game session moving along appropriately. Watch for stalling, since play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish too early; provide them with a full play experience. Try to be aware of running long or short. Adjust the pacing accordingly
- Read-aloud text is just a suggestion; feel free to modify the text as you see fit, especially when dialogue is present.
- Give the players appropriate hints so they can make informed choices about how to proceed. Players should be given clues and hints when appropriate so they can tackle puzzles, combat, and interactions without getting frustrated over

lack of information. Doing so helps to encourage immersion in the adventure and gives players "little victories" for figuring out good choices from clues.

In short, being the DM isn't about following the adventure's text word-for-word; it's about facilitating a fun, challenging game environment for the players. The *Dungeon Master's Guide*™ has more information on the art of running a D&D game.

Downtime and Lifestyle

At the beginning of each play session, players must declare whether or not they are spending any days of downtime. The player records the downtime spent on the adventure logsheet. The following options are available to players during downtime (see the D&D basic rules or the *D&D Adventurers League Player's Guide* for more information):

- Catching up
- Crafting (exception: multiple characters cannot commit to crafting a single item)
- Practicing a profession
- Recuperating
- Spellcasting services
- Training

Other downtime options might be available during adventures or unlocked through play, including faction-specific activities.

In addition, whenever a character spends downtime days, that character also spends the requisite expense for his or her lifestyle. Costs are per day, so a character that spends ten days of downtime also spends ten days of expenses maintaining his or her lifestyle. Some downtime activities help with lifestyle expenses or add lifestyle expenses.

Spellcasting Services

Any settlement the size of a town or larger can provide some spellcasting services. Characters need to be able to travel to the settlement to obtain these services.

Acolyte Background

A character possessing the acolyte background requesting spellcasting services at a temple of his or her faith may request **one spell per day** from the Spellcasting Services table for free. The only cost paid for the spell is the base price for the consumed material component, if any.

Melvaunt is a large city where any acolyte can find a friendly shrine or temple.

Spellcasting Services

Spell	Cost
Cure wounds (1st level)	10 gp
Identify	20 gp
Lesser restoration	40 gp
Prayer of healing (2nd level)	40 gp
Remove curse	90 gp
Speak with dead	90 gp
Divination	210 gp
Greater restoration	450 gp
Raise dead	1,250 gp

Spell services generally available include healing and recovery spells, as well as information-gathering spells. Other spell services might be available as specified in the adventure. The number of spells available to be cast as a service is limited to a **maximum of three per day total**, unless otherwise noted.

Disease, Death, and Recovery

Sometimes bad things happen, and characters get poisoned, diseased, or are killed. Since you might not have the same characters return from session to session, here are the rules when bad things happen to characters.

Disease, Poison, and Other Debilitating Effects

A character still affected by diseases, poisons, and other similar effects at the conclusion of an adventure can spend downtime days recuperating until such time as he or she resolves the effect to its conclusion (see the recuperating activity in the *D&D Basic Rules*).

If a character doesn't resolve the effect between sessions, that character begins the next session still affected by the debilitating effect.

Death

A character who is killed during the course of the adventure has a few options at the end of the session (or whenever arriving back in civilization) if no one in the adventuring party has immediate access to a *raise dead* or *revivify* spell, or similar magic. A character subject to a *raise dead* spell is affected negatively until all long rests have been completed during an adventure. Alternatively, each downtime day spent after *raise dead* reduces the penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks by 1, in addition to any other benefits the downtime activity might provide.

Create a New 1st-Level Character. If the dead character is unwilling or unable to exercise any of the other options, the player creates a new character. The new character does not have any items or rewards possessed by the dead character.

Dead Character Pays for Raise Dead. If the character's body is recoverable (it's not missing any vital organs and is mostly whole) and the player would like the character to be returned to life, the party can take the body back to civilization and use the dead character's funds to pay for a *raise dead* spell. A *raise dead* spell cast in this manner costs the character 1,250 gp.

Character's Party Pays for Raise Dead. As above, except that some or all of the 1,250 gp for the *raise dead* spell is paid for by the party at the end of the session. Other characters are under no obligation to spend their funds to bring back a dead party member.

Faction Charity. If the character is of level 1 to 4 and a member of a faction, the dead character's body can be returned to civilization and a patron from the faction ensures that he or she receives a raise dead spell. However, any character invoking this charity forfeits all experience and rewards from that session (both those earned prior to and after death during that session) and cannot replay that episode or adventure with that character again. Once a character reaches 5th level, this option is no longer available.

Elmwood Overview

Though Elmwood has been a peaceful neighbor of Mulmaster for centuries, the town was destroyed two years ago by a fire devastation orb that was mishandled by the Cults of Elemental Evil (DDEX2-2 Embers of Elmwood). There were few survivors. Since then it's been rebuilt and is a home for many refugees from Phlan, Hillsfar, Mulmaster, and the Underdark. The little town is growing as it rebuilds, and is changing rapidly due to the influence of the refugees.

Adventure Background

Over a thousand years ago, the elves of Myth Drannor battled the avatar of Moander (an evil deity of rot, corruption, and destruction) in its last remaining major temple, located on present-day Yûlash in the southwestern Moonsea area. The elves slew the priests of Moander, banished the Darkbringer, and sealed the essence of its avatar beneath the ruins. However, Yûlash (and the rest of the Moonsea) soon found more urgent problems with the fall of Zhentil Keep, and the threat of the ancient god was forgotten for more immediate needs. The ancient god rose up from death only a few decades ago, and was put down by a band of brave adventurers in the events of the book *Song of the Saurials*.

Zuggtmoy, the Demon Queen of Fungi, Lady of Rot and Decay, has been active in Faerûn in the past few years (given the events of *Out of the Abyss*). This has allowed some vestige of the dead deity Moander to stir in its slumber of death, which has in turn empowered some of its ancient sites and mad cult members. In Elmwood, this means that the town's grain has been magically contaminated by the power of Moander so that when it is used in the upcoming Greengrass festival, it can infect many people with a rotting sickness that will turn them into mindless vegetative slaves of the Darkbringer.

Adventure Overview

The Sage of Cormanthor consists of 6 parts. It is designed to be run in 4 hours.

Part 1: It's All About the Beer - The five factions communicate with the characters that they are needed in Elmwood. The characters arrive in Elmwood and learn that the grain has rotted.

Part 2: The Root of the Matter - The Constable, Aliana Mathnir, and the high priestess of Chauntea, Shayad, urge the characters to take a sample of contaminated grain and seek out the reclusive sage Salazar Bel Akash in Rimwood of the Cormanthor Forest.

Part 3: The Rimwood - The characters set out into Cormanthor Forest to seek out Salazar Bel Akash—grandson of Akabar Bel Akash, an adventurer who was once possessed by the spirit of Moander. During their trek, the characters run afoul of defenses that the elves of Myth Drannor created to protect against a return by Moander to Toril. The sample the characters are taking to the Sage has triggered the defenses.

Part 4: Sage Advice - The characters arrive at the home of Salazar Bel Akash. Salazar is disturbed by what the tainted grain sample may portend, but he is unwilling to make a definitive assessment without another sample with which to compare it. He tells the characters to go to the lost Temple of Moander, to see if any plants in the area bear signs of new activity or corruption. If the Darkbringer's presence is stirring, he asks the characters to bring back another sample.

Part 5: The Seed of Moander - The characters search among the ruins of the lost Temple of Moander and encounter the corrupted plant servitors of Moander. Upon defeating the creatures, the characters collect the sample Salazar needs.

Part 6: Sometimes the Abyss Gazes Back at You - The characters provide the sample of corruption to Salazar. He confirms that the grain contamination and the corruption are from the same source – Moander. Salazar tells the characters that he is going to attempt a ritual to banish Moander back to the Astral Plane but that the ritual is very risky. Salazar advises that if things go poorly, the characters must go to the Varlaros Stones and recover a contingency left behind by the wizard Grypht. (Grypht, like Salazar’s grandfather, is another individual with ties to Moander.) Salazar falls prey to the psychic assault of Moander and, instead of banishing the dead god, opens a portal to the Astral Plane. The characters have to defeat the transformed sage, now servitor of Moander, and must close the portal before it is too late. Afterwards, they return to Elmwood to inform the Constable of what has transpired.

Pacing the Adventure

The adventure is designed for **4 hours of play**. Use the table below to budget your time, adjusting the pace as necessary to keep on schedule. In a large public event, you’ll need to keep an eye on the clock.

Stage	Playing Time
Part 1: It’s All About the Beer	30 mins
Part 2: The Root of the Matter	15 mins
Part 3: The Rimwood	45 mins
Part 4: Sage Advice	20 mins
Part 5: The Seed of Moander	60 mins
Part 6: Sometimes the Abyss Gazes Back at You	60 mins

Adventure Hooks

It’s all about the Beer. If none of the faction introductions are suitable, then the characters have heard that there’s a new brewery in the Moonsea – **Mystic Grove Brewery**. **Catlin Littleleaf** is the proprietor and the rumor is that she’s about to uncask some really righteous brews for the Greengrass Festival. The characters might be there to sample them personally, or to pick up a load of beer for interested buyers in a caravan coming from Phlan or Hillsfar, or a noble house in Mulmaster.

The **Harpers** have asked the characters to check in with **Catlin Littleleaf** because they’re worried that Catlin’s problems with the grain supply might mean the refugees in town won’t have enough food.

The **Order of the Gauntlet** has asked the characters to consult with **Catlin Littleleaf** because they’re concerned that the rot in the grain may be supernatural in origin.

The **Emerald Enclave** have asked the characters to contact **Catlin Littleleaf** at Druid Brewing as a special favor, since the halfling has asked them directly for help.

The **Lords’ Alliance** wants characters to check in with **Catlin Littleleaf**. They’re supposed to be exporting her beers soon, and they are anxious to understand what’s gone wrong with the trade deal.

The **Zhentarim** are affiliated with Semyon and Daughters Bank, who owns the mortgage on **Mystic Grove Brewery**. They’ve asked the characters to check in on the brewery because the mortgage payment is late.





PART 1. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BEER

Expected Duration: 30 minutes.

As the characters enter town, read aloud the following text.

Elmwood, up from the ashes. It's common knowledge around the Moonsea that the place was burned to the ground a couple of years ago by one of the Cults of Elemental Evil that were plaguing Mulmaster. There were few survivors. You see the evidence of the great fire all over – there are so many ashes as part of the soil that the roads are gray and black. But, for all that, it's come back stronger than ever. You hear the accents of Mulmaster, Phlan, and Hillsfar refugees as you walk down the main street – as well as the sounds of hammering and sawing mixing in with the lapping of the waves of the Moonsea as the rebuilding proceeds. All of the buildings are painfully new and there are few trees growing in town at all other than a dense knot of fire-blackened elms on a hill on the west side of town. The blue-violet waters of the Moonsea are a sharp contrast to the bright green of spring vegetation and the gray of ashes. The scent of the Moonsea mixes and mingles on the chilly spring breeze, but you can always smell burned wood underneath it. At the moment the sweet smell of honeysuckle blends with roses and gardenias. Pure white, shocking pink, and ruby red flowers overflow from planter boxes and flower beds. Wreaths and garlands decorate the windows and doorways of every house and shop as far as the eye can see. Elmwood is preparing for a spring festival.

General Features

The general features of the Mystic Grove Brewery are as follows:

Terrain. The brewery has two large buildings and a modest home sized for little folk. The buildings are very new.

Light and Visibility. When the characters arrive in Elmwood it is late morning. There is fair visibility in all directions and minimal cloud cover. The brewery is brightly lit with plenty of glassed-in skylights.

Sounds. Elmwood is abuzz with activity. People are talking and going about party preparations. There is always hammering and sawing somewhere as the rebuilding continues. The sounds of the Moonsea waves lapping across the shore is audible through the main parts of town. The brewery is quiet other than Catlin's rant. There are sounds of fluid moving around in the kettles.

Climate. The temperature is typical for Tarsakh, the fourth month (40-45 °F, 5-8 °C), with a gentle cold breeze blowing in from the north across the Moonsea.

Smell. There is a powerfully terrible smell in the brewery. It's got elements of black mold, rot, and something left too long in the back of the pantry gone bad.

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters get close to the brewery.

Mystic Grove Brewery is not hard to find. It's a large building and several outbuildings just south of the Grove of Eldath and near the Temple of Chauntea. While the grove is quiet, the Temple is abuzz with activity. The brewery is a new building with shiny new copper boilers. The shingle that hangs by the door reads, "The Mystic Grove Brewery – Caitlin Littleleaf, Brewmistress & Proprietor." You see a few more people are converging on the brewery at the same time.

Allow the players to introduce their characters to each other.

When the characters investigate the rant, read the following:

"Ruined! Another batch ruined! The Moon-sea Pale Ale has fallen victim to this strange growth!" You hear a metallic whack and a string of wicked invective in a variety of languages.

As you look inside, you see a halfling woman looking disgustedly at a large kettle. Even to those who aren't brewers, it is readily apparent that something is definitely wrong with the smell coming from the wert in the kettle.

Spying you entering her establishment, the halfling gives you a shrewd, knowing look. "I bet you're adventurers. I know the type." The woman considers for a moment, tapping her fingers on her leg. "I tell you what... I'll pay you free beer, ales, and cider... FOR LIFE if you can help me save my brewery. This Greengrass festival is going to make or break me and I can't have cruddy beer for this. I just can't. I have a mortgage to pay and Semyon and Daughters doesn't take IOUs." She tilts her head to the side, considering further. "And I'll even extend the discount past death in the event you die and are brought back from the dead. What do you say?"

As you approach, you hear the anguished cries of a young woman inside.

Roleplaying Catlin

Catlin is a halfling that isn't at all intimidated by tall folk. She's direct and pragmatic. The typical halfling joviality is absent in her demeanor, though she's not rude or mean – she's just not bubbly. She is a survivor of the burning and worried about her business.

Quote: *"Oh hey, taste this? It's the new pale ale. I think it's going to be a winner."*

If the characters agree, Caitlin will tell them that she bought her most recent batch of ingredients from the Temple of Chauntea. She asks the characters to go to the Temple and see what's up with the wheat, barley, and hops, and get her some good clean ingredients. Here's what she knows:

- She'll pay for the ingredients, of course, she just needs them to be healthy. The last batch was rotted, apparently. She does not have any remaining samples of raw ingredients. She would go get the ingredients herself, but she desperately needs to get everything scrubbed spotless to try to make another batch. She had to let her help go after the last batch was ruined.
- The priestess of Chauntea is a nice lady named Shayad. She put a spell on the grain silos to keep the grain fresh, but maybe it failed?
- Shayad is helped by a priest named Kamik Felicity. Catlin thinks Kamik is a really nice guy because he and his partner adopted several of the children that were orphaned by the Burning – the explosion of a devastation orb in Elmwood two years ago.
- The Grove of Eldath just north of here are the only trees in town because the druids there protected the grove from the Burning. They also protected some of the townsfolk, including Catlin, which is why she calls this the Mystic Grove Brewery.

Developments

The characters proceed to the Temple of Chauntea to meet High Priestess.

XP Award

For agreeing to go to the Temple of Chauntea, the characters get 600 XP.





PART 2. THE ROOT OF THE MATTER

Expected Duration: 15 minutes.

The characters meet with the Constable and the High Priestess at the Temple of Chauntea.

General Features

The general features of the Temple of Chauntea are as follows:

Terrain. The Temple of Chauntea is situated on a rise near the center of town overlooking the nearby Temple Gardens.

Light and Visibility. When the characters arrive the room is well lit by sunny windows.

Climate. The air is cool with a cold breeze blowing in from the north from the Moonsea.

Shayad and Aliana Mathnir

You are taken to a garden enclosed by a small privacy fence. In the garden are two women. One is a half-orc wearing an apron over a roughspun robe and gloves while she tends to the plants in a flower bed. She's talking in low, concerned tones to a human woman dressed in plain clothes with the seal of Elmwood embroidered on her doublet. At your entry, both look up. The half-orc rises, dusts the dirt off her hands and onto her apron, and moves to greet you. "Ah... I had heard rumors that there were interesting strangers in town and I thought you might be heading this way. My name is Shayad and welcome to the temple of Chauntea." Her voice is rough, as you'd expect from a half orc, but her manner is kind and reasonable, and she looks over your group with wise green eyes. The human gives Shayad a glance, and picks up where the priestess left off, introducing herself. "I'm Aliana Mathnir, the constable of Elmwood. Closest thing you'll get to mayor, dogcatcher, purser, garbage collector, and chief dishwasher in this town. A most serious problem has presented itself at the worst possible time. All of the grain the temple has been storing—all of the wheat, barley, oats,

corn, and rice—has turned foul. It doesn't seem to matter if it had been freshly harvested or if it had been stored for quite some time. All of it now reeks of decay and has sprouted leafy tendrils."

Shayad says, "This will ruin the Greengrass festival, but worse, I fear the town may starve if we don't stop this now."

Aliana continues. "I'm aware," she says, picking her words carefully, "that some 'powerful groups' in the Moonsea area have become interested in our little town and seeing it prosper for a variety of reasons. While I could go to Mulmaster and ask for aid, that would make it look like we're not going to make it, and give them more ammunition to try to take us over as a wholly-owned protectorate of the city. We're not interested in having that happen so I'm very amenable to outside assistance. If you're here to help, then I'll disburse some funds to pay you to run a little errand into the forest to get us some answers for this particular problem."

"There is a sage who lives in the Rimwood of the Cormanthor forest named Salazar Bel Akash. He is an expert on many unusual types of plants and animals. Take a sample of the tainted grain to him, perhaps he will know what this is. I'll get you a map to his home. Please proceed with all haste, and return with his information as quickly as you can get it."



Roleplaying Aliana Mathnir

Aliana is a short, muscular woman with blue eyes and brown hair that is kept at shoulder length. Her skin is a rich brown color. She has a scar along her face that she got in the Burning. Prior to the Burning, she was a deputy, and took over when the constable was killed. She always offers a smile in greeting, and tries to get along with everyone. She likes to keep a neat and efficiently-running town, and is more than happy to overlook minor, nonviolent offenses, or let them go with some time in the drunk tank or fines to make up for damages. She is friendly and honest and likes to make everyone feel that they can come to her with any issues concerning the town.

Quote: *"Look, just get along, okay? We have bigger problems to deal with."*

Roleplaying Shayad

Shayad's stern countenance belies a calm serenity. Her main insecurity is the fact that she is a half-orc minority in a beautiful people's world. If she gets any hint that someone is surprised that she is the priestess because she is a half-orc, then they will find a cool welcome. If you engage her in conversation around breaking stereotypes, you will find she's got a lot to say. Shayad is a pacifist and loves to protect life. Even though there are those who do great evil, she feels that they can be shown the error of their ways and so she will argue and discuss their issues, but avoids physical fighting. Shayad survived the Burning in Elmwood, and was instrumental in getting the larger Temples of Chauntea to put up seed money to get the temple in Elmwood built.

Quote: *"Life is sacred and should not be thrown away, no matter how rotten the soul appears to be."*

The characters will likely have many questions.

What Shayad knows:

- Chauntea protects the crops stored here. There is a regular rotation of blessings and other spells placed on the silos and grain bins to supernaturally ward off rot and vermin.
- The rot was first discovered about a month ago. The clergy have been working diligently to try to contain and sterilize it, but have been unsuccessful.
- Even treatment with holy water, purify food and drink, hallow spells, and other magic doesn't reverse the rot.
- None of the other stored vegetables are affected, yet. Shayad is worried that the rot will spread.
- The Greengrass planting festival in a couple of tendays is one of Chauntea's most holy days. Her energy will bless the land and the people with fertility. Many local couples choose to get married during the festival. The farmers all celebrate it as a major holiday. If the grain is rotted it will cast a pall over the entire festival, which will be a major disappointment. The town's morale is still shaky after the Burning.

What Aliana Mathnir knows:

- Elmwood can almost support itself food-wise. This is a terrible setback and affects nearly everyone. The brewery can't brew beer. The bakery can't make baked goods. The inns can't sell beer or baked goods. Everyone's businesses fail and this means that Semyon and Daughters Bank is going to foreclose these businesses.
- The Greengrass festival is a chance for the town to show off its goods and set up trade deals. These trade deals are desperately needed to fund the rebuilding.
- The bigger problem is that a lot of grain goes to feed the refugees. Lack of grain could lead to food riots. Of course, the High Blades of Mulmaster would be delighted to send troops to pacify any riots and then the troops would never leave. Elmwood would just become Little Mulmaster which is a disaster all around.

- This sage isn't someone who comes into town. She learned about him from some of her elven allies in the Cormanthor forest.
- She won't just send townsfolk out to talk to the sage because she needs everyone here to get ready for the Greengrass festival. Plus, it's dangerous out there! All of the elven defenses have been weird since the Netherese dropped a flying city on Myth Drannor a few years ago. And there are well-armed and violent treasure seekers out there looking for relics from either culture.
- The Cormanthor forest has been especially dangerous in the last year or so. There was an outbreak of demons and madness and all kinds of problems in Hillsfar. While things seem to have settled down, the stirrings of evil magic in the ancient forest are enough to drive lesser folk crazy.
- The characters are to get there and back with all due haste. Aliana wants this handled well before the Greengrass festival starts.

Sample of the Tainted Grain

After a bit of conversation Shayad has a serious-looking wood elf underpriest go get a sample of the tainted grain. He returns in a few minutes with a lead box about eight inches on a side. He hands it to Shayad with obvious care.

"Thank you, Kamik," Shayad says, and opens the lid with deliberate, slow motions. Inside is a mass of green leafy tendrils sprouting from some fresh cut wheat and an ear of corn. Both grains are producing the exact same plant. The vegetation produces a acrid, foul smell of black mold, rot, and something like carrion. Both Shayad and Kamik draw back from the olfactory assault.

Allow the characters to make the following skill checks if they desire to do so:

An Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the following:

- DC 10 - This isn't even the right type of leaf for this type of seed.
- DC 15 - This rate of growth is not natural. Something is stimulating it.
- DC 20 - This species of plant hasn't been seen in Faerûn for over a century. It was supposed to have been wiped out.

An Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the following:

- DC 15 - To overpower the warding magics on the temple's storehouses would require an immense amount of energy.

What Shayad knows:

- All of the rot produces this type of foul smelling plant.
- Even the grains that don't have this growth on them develop it rapidly after leaving the warded grain silos.

Developments

Aliana Mathnir hands the characters a map to the Sage's house. The characters venture into the Cormanthor Forest to see the sage Salazar Bel Akash about the grain.

Treasure

Aliana Mathnir will offer the characters 300 GP (total). Shayad says that the Temple of Bane, the Temple of Chauntea, and the Temple of Selûne will match funds and give the characters another 900 GP (total) as all of the major faiths in town want to see this problem resolved. This is a total of 1,200 GP which is payable on the characters' return with the knowledge from the sage.

XP Award

If the characters accept the mission to visit the sage with the sample, award each character 600 XP.



PART 3. THE RIMWOOD

Expected Duration: 45 minutes.

Having obtained a sample of the rot, the characters venture into the vast forest to the south to speak with the sage to learn more about the threat to Elmwood.

The initial travel to Cormanthor takes a day, and from there, the journey into the ancient wood is challenging. The demonic presences in the Hillsfar area and Cormanthor forest have been sealed away from the Moonsea following the end of Season 3. However, the changes to the woods have left them twisted and perilous (as described in DDEX3-07 *Herald of the Moon*).

The foul magics that sprang from the Underdark have been drawn into the roots, trunks, and leaves of the forest's ancient trees. Certain emotions are heightened within the wood, and any travelers who linger there are likely to find themselves pushed to the brink of insanity. Those who sleep in the forest find their dreams haunted with hopelessness from the many souls that have never returned from the wood.

General Features of the Rimwood

The general features of the Rimwood section of Cormanthor are as follows:

Trees. The shallow-rooted blueridge and needleleaf pines that grow here are well-suited to the Rimwood's sandy soil. The trees are around fifty or more feet tall.

Light. The trees in the Rimwood are tall enough and spaced close enough together that they only allow dim light to penetrate to ground level.

Sounds. A thick carpet of springy pine needles covers the Rimwood forest floor, reducing footfalls to near silence and granting advantage to creatures attempting to move silently.

Fauna. Thick vegetation makes larger mammals less common in the Rimwood and winged insects and the birds that prey upon them thrive.

Madness. Any time characters take a long rest in

the Rimwood, they are subject to the madness of the Cormanthor.

Resting in Cormanthor

The wood is unsettled by the influences of the demonic taint of the Underdark, making lingering there decidedly unpleasant. Travel to the sage's residence will take at least one long rest.

Exhaustion: Resting within Cormanthor does not permit a character to recover levels of exhaustion. Long rests otherwise function as normal in terms of resources recovered.

Madness: Upon completing a long rest, each character must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, their madness level increases by 1 and they are affected by the Madness of Cormanthor (see below).

Madness Level

Level Effect

- 1 Short-term madness (lasts 1d10 minutes)
- 2 Long-term madness (lasts 1d10 x 10 minutes)
- 3 Indefinite madness (lasts until cured)



Madness of Cormanthor

The lost souls of Cormanthor are able to exert their influence on the region and those who travel through it in the different forms of madness that characters may develop. Upon reaching madness level 3, instead of rolling on the Indefinite Madness table on page 260 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, roll on the following table and the character gains the madness listed below. Have the player note it on his or her character sheet.

If the roll results in a madness already possessed by the character, reroll until a new result is reached.

01-20 Despair: "I often become withdrawn and moody, dwelling on the insufferable state of life."

21-40 Hatred: "I am compelled to make the weak suffer."

41-60 Gloom: "I have no compunction against tampering with the dead as we will all die soon."

61-80 Discouragement: "All our efforts are for naught as we will never escape this wood."

81-100 Hopelessness: "I am awash in the awareness of life's futility."

The forest is a tapestry of a thousand shades of green. Bushes and saplings reach up for any sunlight that peeks through the canopy of the towering trees that rise up like giants about you.

A sky heavy with clouds is partially obscured by the foliage. You cannot see the lightning through the trees, but thunder rolls overhead. A slow, steady rain falls on the forest, pattering on leaves and dripping down through the branches.

The characters should have brought enough food and water on their journey. If not, they will have to forage along the way. Cormanthor has abundant food and water sources and only requires a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check. However, this reduces the character's overland speed depending upon how long they spend foraging.

Ancient Elven Defenses

Regardless of which path the characters take to reach the sage, they encounter some of the residual defenses the elves erected against the followers of Moander. This encounter happens about three miles away from the sage's cottage.

The slow drizzle continues, making everything damp. The path threads its way through a steep ravine. The slopes of the ravine are littered with exposed boulders that are covered in lichen.

In the center of the ravine, you see the glint of white marble of the ruins of an elegant elven pavilion. Time and the weather have worn it down to a stone court, with tumbled pillars, and a shattered roof. Standing among the ruins is a statue of a male elf in ancient armor. Runes inscribed in mirror-bright silver metal shimmer down its body, even in the gloomy rain. The head, shoulder guards, and vambraces are inlaid with semiprecious gemstones that still sparkle under a coating of grime and moss.

The elven ruins and the ravine are protected by a **shield guardian** and two **galeb duhr**. The shield guardian is the marble statue in the fallen pavilion. The galeb duhr are posing as rocks at the top of the ravine -- one on each side.

The shield guardian activates when it senses that someone in the group is carrying a sample of Moander's rot (even if it is in an extra-dimensional space). It waits until the party is directly on the ruined pavilion before it acts.

When the adventurers head into the Rimwood, read the following:

It is 15 miles from Elmwood to the edge of Cormanthor. The tilled fields near Elmwood give way to pastures, which in their turn give way to meadowlands. Storm clouds loom on the northern horizon as civilization slides away behind you until all that is left is a narrow path snaking its way through fields and stands of trees. At some point, you realize that there are no more fields, just trees as far as the eye can see in all directions, and you know you have entered the ancient elven forest.

It's another 20 miles from the edge of the forest to the sage's cottage. Traveling through the forest counts as difficult terrain for overland travel (PHB p182) even when they are on the path, because of winding nature of the trail. Note this does not affect druids with the Land Stride feature or parties with a ranger with the forest favored terrain.

The guardian steps down from its pedestal and informs them, in Elvish, that it has identified them as corrupted by the touch of Moander. Accordingly, they must be destroyed for the good of the Elven Court. Attempts to persuade the shield guardian to halt its attack are in vain.

Avoiding the Ravine

Avoiding the ravine requires the characters to scale the steep slope of the ridges on either side. If the characters attempt to do this, the galeb duhr notice their efforts and animate boulders to move to the top of the ridge and attack. Their efforts draw the shield guardian.

The characters can go around the ridge to another gap, but if they do, they stumble on another pavilion like this one.

Features of the Area

The ravine has the following important features.

Slope. The sides of the ravine are very steep and are difficult terrain. The slopes count as downhill for galeb duhr and animated boulder movement.

Rain. A light rain falls throughout the encounter. It has no effect on combat, but may matter for spells, such as Call Lightning.

Elven Ruin. The elven ruin is made of crumbling marble. The galeb duhr use the crumbled edges to roll up onto the pavilion. Some of the areas are full of marble chunks, making them difficult terrain.

Teleport Runes. If a creature touches these runes, they activate and instantly teleport the creature to the spaces indicated on the map at the top of the ravine slope.

Traps. Three of the pillars still contain the enchantments on them to protect the pavilion. It is a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice the arcane writing on the side of the pillar. These areas detect as magical.

The trap activates when more than 20 pounds of weight is placed on the pressure plate, causing the pillar to release a 30-foot cone of cold and ice. Each creature in the cone must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Wedging an iron spike or other object under the pressure plate prevents the trap from activating. A successful dispel magic (DC 13) cast on the pillar destroys the trap.

Adjusting the Encounter

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative

- **Very weak party:** Remove 2 galeb duhr
- **Weak party:** Remove 1 galeb duhr
- **Strong party:** Add 1 galeb duhr
- **Very strong party:** Add 1 galeb duhr and 1 shield guardian

Suggested Tactics

You may choose to use these tactics if you believe it is appropriate for your game. The shield guardian opens with a cone of cold and attempts to catch as many of the characters in its area of effect as possible. The shield guardian then engages with the characters, confident in its regeneration ability. If pressed, it may use the Disengage action at your option to retreat to lure characters into triggering the traps.

The galeb duhr are indistinguishable from a normal bolder because of their False Appearance. Both use their Animate Boulders ability to animate two. Because they don't want to chance losing concentration, the galeb duhr do not move (which would break their False Appearance) until both of its boulders are destroyed or about to be destroyed. They then join the attack on the characters.

Once down at the bottom of the ravine with the characters, the boulders and the galeb duhr attack then try to reach the teleport runes to teleport back up to the top of the ravine.

The shield guardian and galeb duhr will chase the party for three rounds if the characters try to flee or run through them.

If time is short, the galeb duhr de-animate when the shield guardian is destroyed.

Treasure

The shield guardian's runes are inlaid with mithril. In addition, the head, shoulder guards, and vambraces are inlaid with semiprecious gemstones. These pieces can be sold to an artificer for 1,800 gp.



PART 4. SAGE ADVICE

Expected Duration: 20 minutes.

The characters meet the Sage, Salazar Bel Akash, and seek his advice.

General Features

The general features of the area are as follows:

Terrain. The sage's house is packed with bookshelves which are full of books and curiosities.

Light and Visibility. The house is well situated in a clearing, so there is ample light and visibility outside his home. The inside of his home is well lit by magical lights that provide bright illumination.

Climate. The air is cold with a gentle breeze blowing in from the west.

Finally arriving at the home of Salazar Bel Akash you find a pleasant cottage on a hill overlooking a stream that meanders through the forest. The walls are stone and the roof is made of wooden beams covered with slate shingles. Along one side of the house is a pen with three brown and white goats with long floppy ears. All three regard you curiously, and baa for attention. There is a bell on a post in the yard.

If the characters attempt to approach the cottage without first ringing the bell, the goats all bleat more loudly and beg to be petted. They nibble harmlessly and adorably on the characters fingers and clothes and are looking for treats. In either case, the door is opened by a Salazar Bel Akash in just a moment.

Roleplaying Salazar

He is a gentle soul but is more interested in the past than the future. If his knowledge seems to be important, or pertinent to any conversation, he gets excited and his speech accelerates to the point where he's difficult to understand.

Quote: "Oh, sorry I didn't see you there, my research keeps me so busy."

A tall half elven man with amber skin, almond shaped brown eyes, and black hair comes to the door, looking bemused. He's holding a book in his hand, one finger acting as a bookmark. The goats bleat at him and he goes to pet one briefly. "Hello," he says, "I don't often get visitors. What brings you here?"

If the characters mention being sent by the Constable or the High Priestess of Chauntea he will invite them into his home. If they mention the tainted grain sample he will pale visibly, but invite them in nonetheless.

The sage's cottage is a study in controlled chaos. There are tables devoted to inspecting ancient fragments of Elvish pottery and sculpture. A bookshelf groans under the strain of so many books crammed into it. There are jars filled with a collection of gruesome appendages, including a beholder eyestalk. In one corner of the room near a window is a small potted plant, it's leaves and branches trimmed to exemplify the ongoing struggle of taming nature. The sage clears off a table and asks to see the sample. In fact, you can see some of the tendrils lengthening as the sage looks on in abject horror.

Unless one of the characters closes the lid first, he will compose himself to snap the lid shut, place the box on the table, and set several heavy books on top of it.



Perhaps I should tell you about my grandfather. I fear it is relevant to what is happening.

"He was possessed by the spirit of the dead god Moander - lord of uncontrolled growth and rot. Eventually - with the help of a few adventurous individuals - he was able to free himself and banish Moander forever. Unfortunately, I suspect that he did not do as thorough a job as we all would have liked."

Salazar pauses for a moment in deep thought then looks back up at you.

"There is only one way to know for sure. There is a ruined temple to Moander on the far bank of the river Lis. It's only a few miles away. I actually chose to make my home here so I could keep an eye on it. It is abandoned now, but the plants growing all around it were corrupted root, branch and stem. It is a shunned place. There are remnants of Moander's influence growing there in the form of giant corpse flowers. Bring me the seed of one of these so I can compare it to the sample of rotted grain you brought me. I pray that I'm mistaken. The seed will dispel any doubts."

"Salazar gives the characters directions to find Moander's lost temple and a fuller description of what the flower looks like.

If asked why he doesn't go himself, he points out that he's just a sage, not a field researcher, and that sort of active work is far better suited for adventurers.

Developments

The characters head back into the Cormanthor Forest to seek out the Seed of Moander for the sage Salazar Bel Akash. If the characters wish to take a long rest, Salazar becomes agitated. He thinks it's very important to Elmwood that the characters find out whether or not this is Moander's influence right now. However, he cannot and will not force them to leave his house, and they can take a long rest there if they insist on it.



PART 5. THE SEED OF MOANDER

Expected Duration: 60 minutes.

Moander's Lost Temple is a primitive ziggurat squatting beside a foul meadow. The open area is filled with a riot of plant life not meant to be. Even the shapes of the plants are unsettling and vaguely menacing. Scattered around the perimeter of the open area are shallow pools about 30 feet across. The air is thick with a putrid smell reminiscent of black mold, rot, and the sickly-sweet stench of rotting meat.

At this point, the plants that encircle Moander's Lost Temple are dormant and harmless. The characters can hack away at them with no reaction. The sheer size of the open area means that the characters will have no real effect on the plant life, which will grow back over the course of a few days.

Finding the Seed

The Seed of Moander can be found as the stamen of a titan arum (also known as a corpse flower) that grows in the center of one of the pools (DM should pick one).

Searching through strange and twisted vegetation is exhausting work. The clear air of the forest is gone, leaving you exposed to miserable clouds of biting insects. Thick pollen settles on you, coating you in yellow dust.

But your efforts pay off. At the center of one of the pools is an enormous flower that rises 8 feet above the water. The seed itself is a cancerous yellow stamen that projects from a bruise-purple bloom that nestles in the plant's pale green leaves, which are the color of moldy flesh.

The characters can approach the flower without difficulty and plucking the Seed of Moander requires a Strength of 10. It weighs about 15 pounds. Removing the Seed causes the plant life in the area to animate and turn on the characters in an effort to return the seed to the corpse flower.

As you pluck the seed loose, the plant life goes mad and writhes to life. Long vegetative tentacles sprout from the pool reaching for you, and from the other pools as well. Incredibly large dandelions bloom and go to seed in seconds, and the fluffy white airborne seeds start drifting around on the breeze, but they sweep toward you with a malicious intelligence. Lurid purple thistles twist and grow, shooting javelin sized thorns at you in a wild frenzy.

The plant life that attacks the characters includes three different **corpse flowers** (treat as **Ropers**), 20 **dandelion puffballs** (treat as **gas spores**), and 15 **animated thistles** (treat as **needle blights**). The puffballs appear as enormous ripe dandelion heads and do not resemble beholders. The needle blights resemble overgrown thistles with unnaturally vivid purple stalks.

The three corpse flowers (Ropers) are each situated at the middle of their ponds and cannot move.

Features of the Area

The Lost Temple of Moander has the following important features.

Vegetation. The Seed of Moander creates a sphere of Plant Growth (as per the spell) centered on it. The land within 100 feet of the Seed becomes extremely difficult terrain that requires 4 feet of movement for every foot of actual movement. This effect can be dispelled, but reasserts itself after one round.

Pool. The pool is 2 feet deep. This counts as difficult terrain but does not require an Athletics check.

Adjusting the Encounter

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative

- **Very weak party:** Remove 2 **ropers**
- **Weak party:** Remove 1 **roper**
- **Strong party:** Add 5 more **gas spores**
- **Very strong party:** Add 10 more **gas spores** and 5 more **needle blights**

Tactics

You may choose to use these tactics if you believe it is appropriate for your game. Given the large number of delicate foes, have each group go on one initiative (do not roll initiative for each individual). Do not have all the dandelion seeds (gas spores) and animated thistles (needle blights) appear at the same time. Five dandelion seeds and five animated thistles spawn each round on 20, and act on their group's initiative. The puffballs and thistles form randomly within 60 feet of the Seed of Moander. Note that the corpse flowers (Ropers) are rooted and immobile.

All the plant life has the single focus of returning the Seed of Moander to the corpse flower. They concentrate their attacks on the character holding the Seed. Remember that the Seed has an aura of Plant Growth within 100 feet, which causes everything to be extremely difficult terrain (4 feet of movement per foot of actual movement) inside of that area.

The corpse flowers use their tendrils to grab and reel in the holder of the Seed back to them.

The dandelion puffballs float toward the person with the seed and try to touch them. The thistles use their needle attack to pop puffballs near a character to trigger the puffball's Death Burst attack. The puffballs have a disease attack that can potentially cause death. Unless the characters have a way of curing disease, the affected characters could face severe consequences on the way back to the Sage.

The thistles also use their needle attacks to attempt break spell casters' concentrations.

The dandelions and thistles will chase the characters for 10 rounds if they attempt to flee.

If time is short, the gas spores and needle blights disintegrate when the roper is killed.

Developments

Ideally the characters will deal with the plants. If the party is killed, the sage will beg some of the elves that live in the Cormanthor forest to retrieve their bodies and their equipment. An elven cleric will be willing to raise the party for standard spellcasting fees, then fade back into the forest.





PART 6. SOMETIMES THE ABYSS GAZES BACK AT YOU

Expected Duration: 60 minutes.

The goats greet you with friendly bleats as you return to the sage's residence. Salazar Bel Akash greets you with equal enthusiasm, rapidly closing the seed into a lead box.

Once upstairs, Salazar produces a tuning fork, an ancient copper amulet, and a delicate rod carved from a single piece of red crystal. He proceeds to poke and prod the seed for several minutes. He pauses occasionally to weave a complex pattern in the air over the seed with the rod.

Eventually he sets his tools aside and turns to regard you. "The tainted grain and Moander's Seed are both the product of the same foul being - somehow it is exerting its influence on Toril once more!"

"While you were gone I did some research." He smiles broadly, "I have good news and even better news. The good news is that I've found information related to an individual named Grypht. He was instrumental in defeating Moander in my grandfather's time. My information indicates that he left behind a contingency measure in a place called the Varlaros Stones located deep within the Rimwood of the Cormanthor forest. This contingency should allow us to rid Elmwood of Moander's influence. The precise location isn't provided by my sources, but it is in this general area."

Salazar pulls out an atlas of Faerûn and indicates where the contingency should be located.

"The even better news is that I believe I can replicate the ritual Grypht used. If it works you won't have to take the long trip to find the old wizard's sanctuary."

Salazar gestures at the warding circle on the far side of his library. "Come, let me start this ritual. Hopefully we can solve this here and now... I'm going to create a magical link between this sample of the tainted grain and all the other grain that is similarly afflicted. The presence of the seed will allow me to focus on just the taint of Moander. Then I can open a portal to another dimension and cast the taint into it. When the seed goes through the portal the link will draw the rest of the taint with it."

His face becomes resigned. "Of course, should things go completely awry... well... you must inform the folk of Elmwood quickly. They're to quarantine the grain immediately. Subject it to killing frost. That's the sovereign remedy against Moander's servants. It's imperative you let them know as fast as you can. Also, if you would, please take care of my goats. They've been my only companions for so long and they're terribly useful. See that they're cared for, please."

The characters are welcome to ask Salazar a few questions before he begins, but they will be unable to dissuade him. Here is what he knows. He won't volunteer this information, but will happily answer questions.

- The ritual is dangerous but far less dangerous than letting a mostly-dead god of rot run rampant around the Moonsea region.
- His famous grandfather was working on a variant of this ritual, and Salazar thinks he's finally tweaked it to work.
- The characters cannot help with the ritual. If an additional magic user was to help it would set up unpredictable ripples through the weave that would make the magic harder to control.

Intelligence (Arcana) Checks

- A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check will indicate that the theory is sound.
- A DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check will indicate that any errors in the ritual could cause a backlash of magical energies that is likely to be fatal to Salazar.

The Ritual

Salazar has set up the library for the ritual.

The library has a large section of the floor covered in a silver, rune-inscribed circle. Precious gemstones and candles mark the magically significant points around the circle. Salazar places the seed in the center of the circle next to the box containing the tainted grain. The sage kneels at the edge of the circle and begins to chant in an unknown liquid tongue.

"Lä! Lä! Moander phiguli! Ayuk'vulgtmm vugt-lagln! Moander phtagn!"

At the crescendo of his chanting, his eyes fly wide open and he screams with inhuman intensity. His body swells impossibly and flesh and organs tear with a terrible sound. Rustling leaves sprout out of rents in his skin. Whipping tendrils issue forth from his eye sockets and ears, and an immense, bilious green eye gazes out of what was once Salazar's mouth.

A sepulchral voice issues forth from the portal, "You sought to unmake me, yet you are unmade! Kill them all and open the way fully for my return!"

As the creature that was the sage slimes forward out of the tear in reality, black mold pours out of the netherworld waving moist, sticky rhizomes at you and bringing with it an overpowering stench of mold and rot.

Salazar's attempt to banish the taint of Moander to the Astral Plane has failed and he has been turned into a Yochlol for his temerity. Salazar the **Yochlol** attacks with two **black puddings**. Salazar's careful summoning circle puts an effect on the room where creatures with a connection to Moander are vulnerable to cold damage.

General Features

Terrain. The sage's library is very neat.

Light and Visibility. The room is well lit by continual flame torches in the corners of the room.

Climate. The room is cool, but not cold.

Adjusting the Encounter

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative

- **Very weak party:** Replace the **Yochlol** with a **Barlgura**
- **Weak party:** Reduce the **Yochlol's** hit points to 110
- **Strong party:** Add 2 **tendrils (vine blights)** that come through the portal one per round.
- **Very strong party:** Add 6 **tendrils (vine blights)** that come through the portal two per round.

Tactics

You may choose to use these tactics if you believe it is appropriate for your game. The Yochlol will

try to cast dominate person on the most powerful rogue or fighter in the group. It will concentrate physical attacks on lightly-armored spellcasters. If time is short, the black puddings and vine blights decay rapidly when the Yochlol is dead.

Developments

The characters defeat the hideous creature that once was sage Salazar Bel Akash.

As Salazar's remains crumple to the floor of his library the portal begins to fold in on itself. The sepulchral voice you heard earlier rasps, "Fools! You cannot contain me. I am loosed upon this world again. Cower in fear for my wrath is unending."

The characters can rest in Salazar's house for as long as they like, but remind them that Salazar urged them to go to Elmwood as quickly as possible.

When the characters go outside Salazar's goats have turned into three small, ivory goat figurines.

As you recover and leave Salazar's home, the goat pen in the front of the house is eerily silent. Instead, there are three small statues of goats on the front step of the house, still warm to the touch.

The adventurers depart the sage's home in the forest with the notes he compiled about Grypht and the contingency the wizard left behind.

Treasure

Figurines of Wondrous Power – Ivory Goats.

If the characters search Salazar's library, they find a scroll of Mass Healing Word (3rd level, uncommon), and two potions of healing.

Conclusion

The characters return to Elmwood with the information they have obtained. The characters will either have to rest in the Cormanthor forest on the way back to Elmwood or they will have to take one level of exhaustion to force march through the night.

You return to Elmwood with the information about the threat Moander poses to the people of Elmwood, and the whole Moonsea region.

The town is continuing with the preparations for the Greengrass festival. The energetic bustle of the town seems to present a nearly idyllic image of peace and prosperity... but how long can that last?

Rewards

Make sure note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

Experience

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes, and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards are listed per character. Give all characters in the party non-combat experience awards unless otherwise noted.

Combat Awards

Name of Foe	XP per Foe
Bargura	1,800
Black Pudding	1,100
Galeb Duhr	2,300
Gas Spore	100
Needle Blight	50
Roper	1,800
Shield Guardian	2,900
Vine Blight	100
Yochlol`	5,900

Non-Combat Awards

Task or accomplishment	XP per Char.
Going to Mystic Grove Brewery and talking to Catlin Littleleaf	600
Going to the Temple of Chauntea and talking to Shayad and Aliana Mathnir.	600

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **4,500 experience points**.

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **6,000 experience points**.

Treasure

The characters receive the following treasure, divided up amongst the party. Characters should attempt to divide treasure evenly whenever possible. Gold piece values listed for sellable gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

Consumable magic items should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the DM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

Treasure Awards

Encounter 2: 1,200 GP. Payment from the Constable and major temples in town for going to see Salazar Bel Akash.

Encounter 3: The Shield Guardian's runes are inlaid with mithril. In addition, the head, shoulder guards, and vambraces are inlaid with semiprecious gemstones. These pieces can be sold to an artificer for 1,800 gp.

Encounter 6: Figurine of Wondrous Power – Ivory Goats. Scroll of Mass Healing Word. 2x Potions of Healing.

Potion of Healing

Potion, common

A description of this item can be found in the *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Scroll Of Mass Healing Word (3rd Level)

Scroll, Rare

A description of this item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Permanent magic items

D&D Adventurers League has a system in place to determine who is awarded permanent magic items at the end of a session. Each character's logsheet contains a column to record permanent magic items for ease of reference.

If all the players at the table agree on one character taking possession of a permanent magic item, that character gets the item.

In the event that one or more characters indicate an interest in possessing a permanent magic item, the character that possesses the fewest permanent magic items gets the item. If there is a tie in the total number of permanent magic items owned by contesting characters, the item's owner is determined randomly by the DM.

Figurine of Wondrous Power - Ivory Goats

Wondrous item, rare

These ivory statuettes are always created in sets of three. Each goat looks unique and functions differently from the others. Their properties are as follows

- The *goat of traveling* can become a Large goat with the same statistics as a riding horse. It has 24 charges, and each hour or portion thereof it spends in beast form costs 1 charge. While it has charges, you can use it as often as you wish. When it runs out of charges, it reverts to a figurine and can't be used again until 7 days have passed, when it regains all its charges.
- The *goat of travail* becomes a giant goat for up to 3 hours. Once it has been used, it can't be used again until 30 days have passed.
- The *goat of terror* becomes a giant goat for up to 3 hours. The goat can't attack, but you can remove its horns and use them as weapons. One horn becomes a *+1 lance*, and the other becomes a *+2 longsword*. Removing a horn requires an action, and the weapons disappear and the horns return when the goat reverts

to figurine form. In addition, the goat radiates a 30-foot radius aura of terror while you are riding it. Any creature hostile to you that starts its turn in the aura must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute, or until the goat reverts to figurine form. The frightened creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. Once it successfully saves against the effect, a creature is immune to the effect for the next 24 hours. Once the figurine has been used, it can't be used again until 15 days have passed.

Renown

Each character receives **one point of renown**.

Downtime

Each character receives **10 downtime days** at the conclusion of this adventure.

DM Rewards

You receive **300 XP, 150 gp, and ten downtime days** for running this session.



Appendix

Elmwood at a Glance

DMs can use this information as needed to help flesh out encounters in Elmwood proper.

Population. Approximately 1,500 and growing.

Races. Humans are the most numerous demographic (50%). Elves (15%) and half-elves (25%) are the most common nonhumans.

Alignment. Elmwood tends toward lawful (as influenced by Mulmaster) and towards neutral.

	LAW	NEUTRAL	CHAOS
GOOD	8%	31%	8%
NEUTRAL	18%	18%	0%
EVIL	10%	7%	0%

History of Elmwood - Elmwood is an old town which was founded 1,300 years ago. It has no valuable natural resources worth stealing (like gems or precious metals). The long history of the town is both peaceful and boring. They have been exporting fish and fine elm wood to Mulmaster for centuries. As Mulmaster grew in size and might, Elmwood became a vassal of the “City of Danger”. The nobility of Mulmaster (particularly the Culkin family) bought some of the land and began to manage it directly. About two years ago. The Cult of the Eternal Flame accidentally detonated a devastation orb in Elmwood. When the orb detonated, it created a 1-mile-wide area of intense, extreme dry heat for a full day. Wildfires started within the first hour. Anyone who didn’t flee was caught in the fires. For the next hellish day, people tried to save what they could from the burning. Most of the population was killed, and the vegetation and buildings were burned.

Elmwood Today - In the wake of “The Burning,” Elmwood was destroyed, but the survivors decided to rebuild. Since then, houses and inns and industries have been rebuilt, and the land cleared by the Burning has been turned into a patchwork of farms. The area is alive with the sound of hammering all day as new buildings are built.

The various disasters happening around the Moonsea in Phlan, Hillsfar, Mulmaster, and the Underdark have led to a refugee crisis in the area – but Elmwood needs people! The unstated policy is that anyone is welcome, as long as they are willing to keep the peace and work the land.

Culture - Crime is relatively rare, due, to the Order of the Gauntlet and the Lords’ Alliance lending their influence and manpower to peacekeeping in Elmwood. There is also a strong social pressure for everyone to do their part for the common good because the memories of the Burning are still fresh.

There is friction between the survivors and the refugees. The survivors are having to process their whole social order changing. While the survivors are sometimes not good hosts, the refugees are sometimes not good guests.

Climate - Like the rest of the Moonsea region, Elmwood is quite cool (consider the climate to be similar to Montreal, Canada). Elmwood is cool in the summer (highs about 70°F, 20°C) and cold in the winter (highs around 20°F, -6°C).

Economy - Elmwood exports timber and fish and there is a small merchant fleet that calls Elmwood home. While Elmwood now produces some crops, meat, and dairy, they still must import food until agricultural production becomes self-sustaining. Goats and sheep do well in Elmwood, as they are small enough to be herded into barns during the long cold winter. Industry in Elmwood is starting to grow given the need to rebuild. Any complex specialty items must be purchased in Mulmaster.

Government - Elmwood has never been big enough to have much of a formal system of government. In the past, a constable was chosen by popular assent. Given that the rebuilding is a much larger effort, Elmwood has expanded its government services. The constable has appointed six deputies. These officials can arrest lawbreakers, as well as assemble and lead a militia.

Organizations

Refugee Groups - There are semi-organized groups of Phlan, Hillsfar, and Drow refugees.

Survivors - The Elmwood survivors tend to stick together.

Elmwood Council - The Council meets every week or so. The Elmwood council consists of: Aliana Mathnir (Constable), Alksuth Cork (Head of Sailfollowers), Aranda Fletcher (Head of Greenstriders), Drake Holmstrumph (Leader of the Survivors), Kala Namak (Deputy, Leader of Hillsfar Refugees), Larissa Aerasumé (Priestess of Selûne), Nils Sankt (Priest of Bane), Shayad (Priestess of Chauntea), Thyra Stoneshoulders (Leader of Phlan Refugees), and Yao Seiju (Head of the Shield Trading Company).

Greenstriders - The Greenstriders are a semi-official professional organization of foresters and scouts that cooperate with each other to bring in timber.

Sailfollowers - The Sailfollowers are a tightly organized group of shipping captains, fishers and sailors. They bargain as a group to make sure shipping deals are handled fairly and to prevent arguments over fishing grounds.

Semyon and Daughters Bank - This bank has underwritten most of the loans in Elmwood, so it's in their best interest to see that the town is protected, well managed, and prosperous so people can pay back those loans.

Shield Trading Company - This is a small merchant house that has opened up a warehouse, an inn, and a trade office in Elmwood to capitalize on trade in the area.

The Factions

The Harpers - want to make sure the refugees are not abused and are not cultists of the dragon or elemental evil, or mad. The contact for the Harpers is Ragnir Nejit, the innkeep of the Silvery Gem.

The Order of the Gauntlet - has two major goals. The first is to check the influence of the Church of Bane and to promote justice and peace in Elmwood during the rebuilding. The faction contact for the Order of the Gauntlet is Granthar Copperhelm who runs the local shrine to Tempus.

The Emerald Enclave - is making sure that the farms are set up appropriately, and that people aren't taking too much timber from the forest for rebuilding. Rogon Stragoth is the official faction contact. The druids circle in the Grove of Eldath is very friendly with the Emerald Enclave.

The Lords' Alliance - want to boost trade and security so that the area is peaceful and prosperous. Norin Steelstrike is the faction contact for the Lords' Alliance. She works at the Shield Trading Company.

The Zhentarim - are making money and gaining influence over important people in the area. The banker from Semyon and Daughters - Fiorei Semyon - is the faction contact for the Zhentarim.

Important Locations

Elmwood Hall - is a new, sturdy two-story building made out of elmwood. The downstairs hosts the offices for the city officials. The upstairs is the Constable's office and home.

The Grove of Eldath - was a shelter during the Burning, and the survivors are grateful to the druids there. The grove itself was mostly burned to the ground, except for thirteen giant elm trees.

Karsure's Axelworks and Smithy - produces fine elmwood: wagons, carriages, wheels, and various metalwork (but not weapons). The smith can silver weapons for normal costs.

The Last Book Boardinghouse (poor 2 sp/day) - is a ramshackle mansion that was not burned entirely to the ground, and has been partially repaired. The rooms are very basic, but they're clean. The boardinghouse does not serve food.

Moline's Sundries and Equipment - sells adventuring gear, weapons and armor in the Players Handbook worth less than 100 GP. A variety of goods is displayed through the front windows.

Oghma's Ointments and Unguents - is run by the only apothecary in town. It sells alchemist's supplies and other reasonable alchemy and herbalism items.

The Phoenix House (wealthy 4 gp/day) - is a large public house and inn that is elaborately and expensively furnished. It caters to adventurers. There are a few conference rooms as well as a well-stocked wine cellar and extensive hot baths.

The Phoenix Monument - is a memorial marker for all of the people who died in the Burning. It is a large fountain with a golden phoenix rising from ashes lit by continual flame spells.

The Refugee Barracks (squalid, 1 sp/day) - is where refugees can live for free. The cost is paid by taxes on the other citizens of Elmwood.

The Shield Trading Company - is a trading house along the docks.

The Shrine to Tempus - is a small military field camp and open pavilion.

The Sign of the Shield (aristocratic, 10 gp/day) - is the finest inn in Elmwood. It is owned by Shield Trading Company and is mainly used for their business.

The Silvery Gem Inn (modest 1 gp/day) - is comfortable, friendly, and has really delicious cabbage soup. It is the official central meeting place for the Phlan refugees.

Stone's Dwarf Inn (comfortable 2 gp/day) - is a whimsical inn run by a gnome illusionist. Children go to school there in the mornings. There is a very lifelike stone dwarf in the front yard.

The Temple of Chauntea "The Bounty of the Goddess" - contains a large structure and elaborate gardens. Many farmers and ranchers are adherents of Chauntea.

The Temple of Selûne "The Path of Silver Light" - is the center of faith in Elmwood, and the oldest religious faith in town. The prior temple was destroyed in the burning, and rebuilt with help from the elves. Many survivors and elves pay their respects here.

The Temple of Bane "The Black Lord's Fist" - is newly built by philanthropists from Mulmaster. Given that this is the official faith of Mulmaster, the Temple is very important in Elmwood.

The Wayfarer's Rest Tavern (modest 1 gp/day) - is a modestly priced inn that caters to the docks area in specific. Ship captains and officers stay here.

Elmwood Council

Aliana Mathnir, Constable - LN female human Veteran. Brown hair, blue eyes, brown skin. Aliana is more interested in the greater good than in penalizing every small infraction. She likes to keep a neat and efficiently running town. She is friendly and honest. Likely at Elmwood Hall.

Alksuth Cork, Head of Sailfollowers - CG male human Bandit Captain. Bald head, gray eyes, brown skin. Alksuth has a sharp wit and a booming voice. He's gregarious, if somewhat ill-tempered. He likes to ask a lot of questions and see what makes people tick. Likely at the docks.

Aranda Fletcher, Head of the Greenstriders - NG female half elf Scout. Blond hair, brown eyes, golden skin. Aranda looks out for others but only if they are willing to help themselves. Likely at Wayfarer's Rest Inn.

Drake Holmstrumph, Leader of the Survivors - NE male human Guard. Gray hair, dark eyes, brown skin. Drake is suspicious of anyone who's not a survivor of the Burning, and comes off as rather cold until you get to know him. Likely at the docks.

Kala Namak, Deputy, Leader of Hillsfar Refugees - LE female dragonborn Knight. Purple eyes, black scales. She is patient, thoughtful, and cunning. She uses her reputation and position as a shield and is more likely to threaten her way into finding what she wants/needs. Likely at Elmwood Hall.

Larissa Aerasumé, Cleric of Selûne - NG female half elf Cleric 9. Black hair, blue eyes, black skin. Larissa is a calm and thoughtful woman. She has a penchant for seeing all parts of life, the good and the bad, as part of Selûne's divine plan. Likely at The Path of Silver Light temple to Selûne.

Nils Sankt, Cleric of Bane - LE male human Cleric 9. Bald head, blue eyes, white skin. Nils is quite cranky about being old. He remembers better days and likes to tell people about how it used to be. He will argue about almost anything. Likely at The Black Lord's Fist temple to Bane.

Shayad, Cleric of Chauntea – NG female half orc Cleric -9. Brown hair, green eyes, gray skin. Shayad is calm and peaceful woman. She reacts poorly to those who make comments disrespectful of her heritage. She is a pacifist at heart and will try to dissuade others from violence if possible. Likely at The Bounty of the Goddess temple to Chauntea.

Thyra Stoneshoulders, Leader of Phlan Refugees – LN female dwarf Guard. Red hair, brown eyes, rosy skin. Thyra is professional and warm as a barkeep, and enjoys getting drawn into philosophical conversations. Likely at the Silvery Gem Inn.

Yao Seiju, Local Leader of the Shield Trading Company – LE male half elf Noble. Black hair, brown eyes, golden skin. Yao Seiju is a calculating man that likes to live the luxurious life. He is willing to make a deal on most anything as long as he can get the better end of it. Likely at the Shield Trading Company.

Faction Contacts

Ragnir Nejit, Harpers – NG male dragonborn Knight. White eyes and white scales. He is extremely secretive and serious about Harper business. He owes his life to the Harpers for rescuing him from the Hillsfar arena. Ragnir is a no nonsense kind of guy. He knows the lay of the land and so he expects to get what he deserves. He doesn't want to see anyone hurt, but a little cut or bruise is just a learning experience. Likely at the Silvery Gem Inn.

Granthar Copperhelm, Priestess of Tempus, Order of the Gauntlet – N female dwarf Priest. Black hair, brown eyes, brown skin. She's a gruff soldier, formerly from Phlan, but has taken well to being a leader and protector in Elmwood. Likely at the Shrine to Tempus.

Rogon Stragoth, Emerald Enclave – N male half orc Scout. Brown hair, brown eyes, gray skin. He works closely with Shevarra Dyernina and the other druids in Eldath's grove as well. Rogon is very secretive with his association with the Emerald Enclave. Rogon does not put up with racial hatred – he got enough of that in Hillsfar to last him his whole life. Likely at his ranch or out in the forest.

Norin Steelstrike, Lord's Alliance – LN female dwarf Spy. Brown hair, black eyes, copper skin. She keeps this work completely separate from the Shield Trading Company and takes her responsibilities deadly seriously. Norin is inquisitive and asks questions whenever she thinks it is appropriate. Likely at the Shield Trading Company.

Fiorei Semyon, Zhentarim – LE female human Noble. Black hair, dark eyes, mahogany skin. The rest of Semyon and Daughters doesn't know that she's in bed with the Black Network, so she's extremely circumspect with her dealings for faction business. Fiorei thinks before she speaks, and has a "can do" attitude. Of course, she always makes sure that the things that get done benefit Semyon and Daughters. Likely at the Sign of the Shield.

Appendix:

NPC / Monster Statistics

Barlgura

Large fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (8d10+24)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +6

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

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

Languages Abyssal, Telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The barlgura's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13). The barlgura can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components

1/day each: *entangle*, *phantasmal force*

2/day each: *disguise self*, *invisibility* (self only)

Reckless. At the start of its turn, the barlgura can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls it makes during that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its turn.

Running Leap. The barlgura's long jump is up to 40 feet and its high jump is up to 20 feet when it has a running start.

Actions

Multiattack. The barlgura makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its fists.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. (10 ft. in demon form), one target. Hit: 11 (2d6+4) piercing damage.

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. (10 ft. in demon form), one target. Hit: 9 (1d10+4) bludgeoning damage.

Galeb Duhr

Medium Elemental, Neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (9d8+45)

Speed 15 ft. (30 ft. when rolling, 60 ft. rolling downhill)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, paralyzed, poisoned, petrified

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Terran

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

False Appearance. While the galeb duhr remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal boulder.

Rolling Charge. If the galeb duhr rolls at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits with a slam attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. Hit: 12 (2d6+5) bludgeoning damage.

Animate Boulder (1/Day). The galeb duhr magically animates up to two boulders it can see within 60 feet of it. A boulder has statistics like those of the galeb duhr, except it has Intelligence 1 and Charisma 1. It can't be charmed or frightened, and it lacks this action option. A boulder remains animated as long as the galeb duhr maintains concentration, up to 1 minute (as if concentrating on a spell).

Gas Spore

Large plant, unaligned

Armor Class 5

Hit Points 1 (1d10+-4)

Speed 0 ft., fly 10 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (-3)	1 (-5)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)	1 (-5)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, prone

Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 5

Languages –

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Death Burst. The gas spore explodes when it drops to 0 hit points. Each creature within 20 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 10 (3d6) poison damage and become infected with a disease on a failed save. Creatures immune to the poisoned condition are immune to this disease.

Spores invade and infect a creature's system, killing the creature in a number of hours equal to 1d12+ the creature's Constitution score, unless the disease is removed. In half that time, the creature becomes poisoned for the rest of the duration. After the creature dies, it sprouts 2d4 Tiny gas spores that grow to full size in 7 days.

Eerie Resemblance. The gas spore resembles a beholder. A creature that can see the gas spore can discern its true nature with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check.

Actions

Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. Hit: 1 poison damage, and the creature must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or become infected with the disease described in the Death Burst trait.

Needle Blight

Medium Plant, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8+2)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 9

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge ¼ (50 XP)

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. Hit: 6 (2d4+1) slashing damage.

Needles. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (2d6+1) piercing damage.

Roper

Large Monstrosity, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 93 (11d10+33)

Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-3)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages -

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

False Appearance. While the roper remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal cave formation, such as a stalagmite.

Grasping Tendrils. The roper can have up to six tendrils at a time. Each tendril can be attacked (AC 20; 10 hit points; immunity to poison and psychic damage). Destroying a tendril deals no damage to the roper, which can extrude a replacement tendril on its next turn. A tendril can also be broken if a creature takes an action and succeeds on a DC 15 Strength check against it.

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

Actions

Multiattack. The roper makes four attacks with its tendrils, uses Reel, and makes one attack with its bite.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. Hit: 22 (4d8+4) piercing damage.

Tendril. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 50 ft., one target. The target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until the grapple ends the target is restrained and has disadvantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws, and the roper can't use the same tendril on another target.

Reel. The roper pulls each creature grappled by it up to 25 feet straight toward it.

Shield Guardian

Large Construct, Unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 142 (15d10+60)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

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

Languages understands commands given in any language but can't speak

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Bound. The shield guardian is magically bound to an amulet. As long as the guardian and its amulet are on the same plane of existence, the amulet's wearer can telepathically call the guardian to travel to it, and the guardian knows the distance and direction to the amulet. If the guardian is within 60 feet of the amulet's wearer, half of any damage the wearer takes (rounded up) is transferred to the guardian.

Regeneration. The shield guardian regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Spell Storing. A spellcaster who wears the shield guardian's amulet can cause the guardian to store one spell of 4th level or lower. To do so, the wearer must cast the spell on the guardian. The spell has no effect but is stored within the guardian. When commanded to do so by the wearer or when a situation arises that was predefined by the spellcaster, the guardian casts the stored spell with any parameters set by the original caster, requiring no components. When the spell is cast or a new spell is stored, any previously stored spell is lost.

Actions

Multiattack. The shield guardian makes two fist attacks.

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. Hit: 11 (2d6+4) bludgeoning damage.

Reactions

Shield. When a creature makes an attack against the wearer of the guardian's amulet, the guardian grants a +2 bonus to the wearer's AC if the guardian is within 5 feet of the wearer.

Yochlol

Medium fiend (demon, shapeshanger), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d8+64)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Int +5, Wis +6, Cha +6

Skills Deception +10, Insight +6

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Abyssal, Elvish, Undercommon

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Shapeshanger. The yochlol can use its action to polymorph into a form that resembles a female drow or giant spider, or back into its true form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

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

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

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

At will: *detect thoughts*, *web*

1/day: *dominate person*

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

Actions

Multiattack. The yochlol makes two melee attacks.

Slam (Bite in Spider form). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. (10 ft. in demon form), one target. Hit: 5 (1d6+2) bludgeoning (piercing in Spider form) damage plus 21 (6d6) poison damage.

Mist Form. The yochlol transforms into toxic mist or reverts to its true form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is also transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

While in mist form, the yochlol is incapacitated and can't speak. It has a flying speed of 30 feet, can hover, and can pass through any space that isn't airtight. It has advantage on Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution saving throws, and it is immune to nonmagical damage.

While in mist form, the yochlol can enter a creature's space and stop there. Each time that creature starts its turn with the yochlol in its space, the creature must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. While poisoned in this way, the target is incapacitated.

Vine Blight

Medium Plant, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d8+8)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Skills Stealth +1

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 9

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

False Appearance. While the blight remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a tangle of vines.

Actions

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. Hit: 9 (2d6+2) bludgeoning damage, and a Large or smaller target is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the blight can't constrict another target.

Entangling Plants (Recharge 5-6). Grasping roots and vines sprout in a 15-foot radius centered on the blight, withering away after 1 minute. For the duration, that area is difficult terrain for non-plant creatures. In addition, each creature of the blight's choice in that area when the plants appear must succeed a DC 12 Strength saving throw or become restrained. A creature can use its action to make another DC 12 Strength check, freeing itself or another entangled creature within reach on a success.

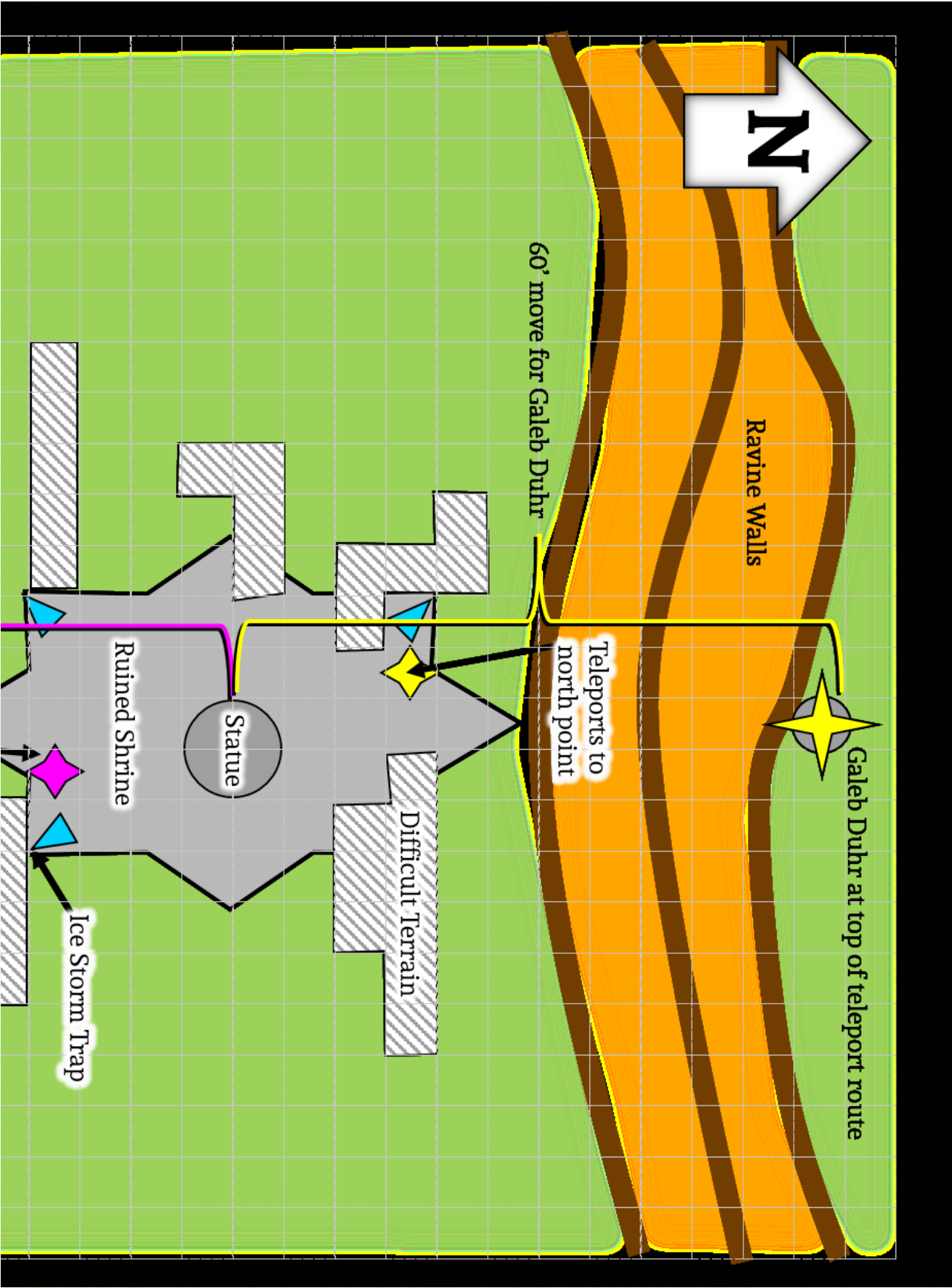
Maps

Elmwood - 100' grid



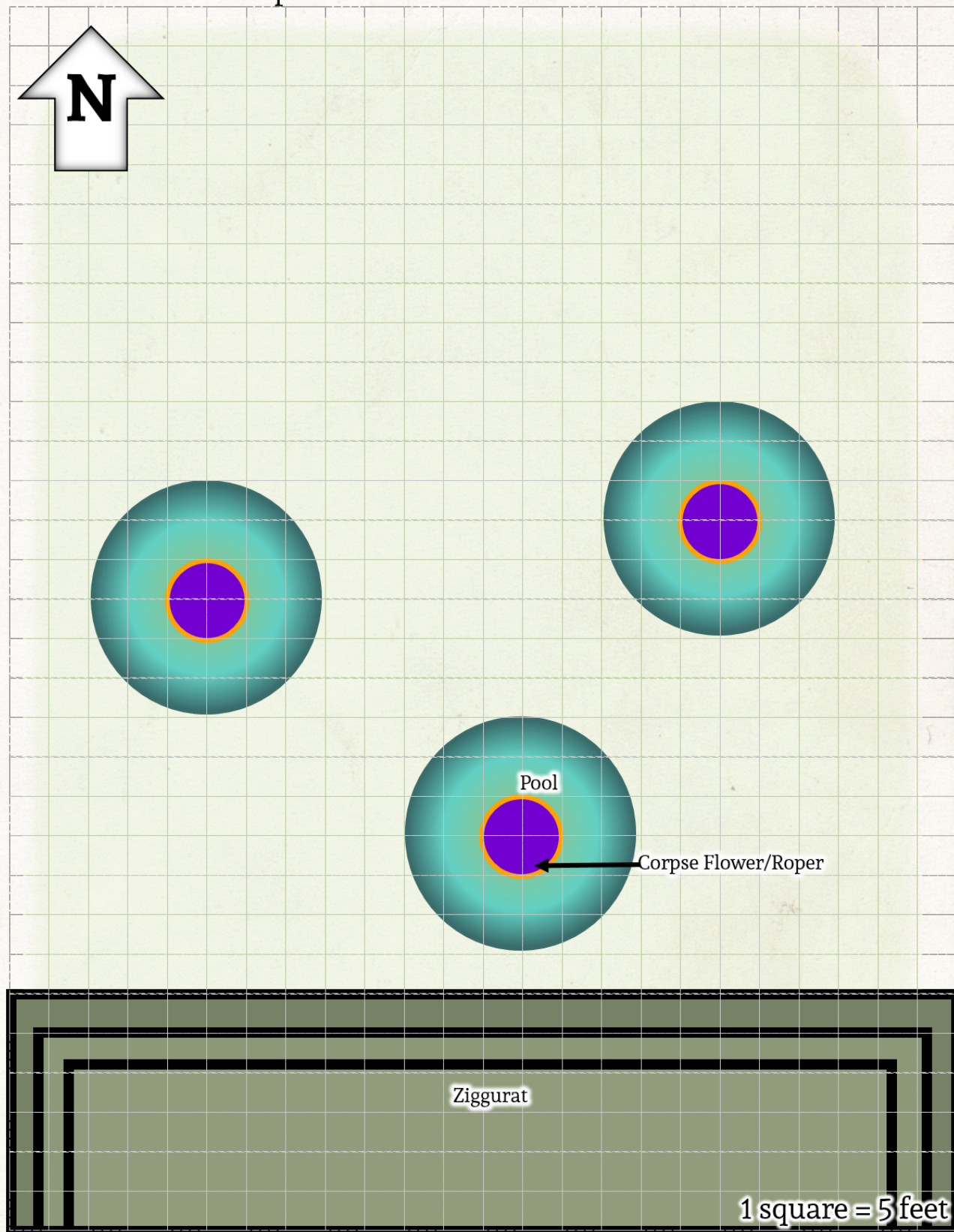


Encounter 3, 5' grid



Encounter 5, 5' grid

Moander's Lost Temple



Encounter 6, 5' grid

The Ritual



Why are you in Elmwood?



Fellow Harper, you are urgently needed in Elmwood, southwest of Mulmaster, on the shores of the Moonsea. As you may know, the village was burned to the ground by the Cult of Eternal Flame a couple of years ago. As they are rebuilding, they're taking in refugees from Phlan, Hillsfar, Mulmaster, and the underdark. We want to make sure these refugees aren't cultists – and we also want to make sure they're not abused. Elmwood has been feeding the refugees for free as long as the refugees have been willing to work with the timbercutters, the fishers, or farm. However, the grain supplies have gone bad, and I fear food riots. Check with **Catlin Littleleaf** at the **Mystic Grove Brewery**. She's had the bad grain ruin her beer. See if you can use that as cover to quietly figure out what's gone off about the grain and make sure the rot doesn't spread.

Ragnir Nejir

Innkeep of the Silvery Gem



I'm Granthar Copperhelm of the Order of the Gauntlet and I need help from whoever's nearby from our Order. Normally we don't do much in Elmwood other than help train the militia, and make sure the Temple of Bane doesn't get too uppity, and support the deputies and the constable in keeping order in town. However, there's a grain rot in town and I think it maybe supernatural in origin, but I'm a soldier, so what do I know, right? Send some folks to Elmwood – new Elmwood, whatever they're calling it these days – and have 'em check in with **Catlin Littleleaf** at **Mystic Grove Brewery**. She's getting the worst of it and she's a nice kid. Bank will foreclose on her if she don't get her brew right. Plus there's a big festival going on in a couple of Tendays. Greengrass. One of them earthy squishy nature holidays. Half of the people in the area will be in town. If somethin' ill is going on, I don't want all them people exposed.

Granthar Copperhelm

Priestess of Tempus



I'm relaying a message I got via animal messenger from Shevarra Dyernina, Glade of Eldath. She says that there's something wrong and sick in the woods, and that the trees are keening over it – even worse than the Burning. This is in addition to the usual madness that stalks anyone who sleeps in the Cormanthor forest – which is bad enough! She says that this is a terrible omen for the upcoming Greengrass festival. It's important to the natural world and the balance. I confess I didn't understand all of it, but save to say the druid thought it was very bad news.

I know some of the the grain has gone bad in Elmwood. I'm looking for help for **Catlin Littleleaf** at **Mystic Grove Brewery**. She came to me specifically seeking help from the Enclave. Bad grain ruined her beer and I'm afraid it's all connected. You druids would tell me it's all connected anyway, right?

Rogon Stragoth



I'm looking for help in Elmwood, southwest of Mulmaster. We have a rot in the grain here, and it's apparently ruining the beer at **Mystic Grove Brewery**. This is of concern to the Alliance because shipments of beer have already been bought and paid for – but not delivered. We have trade deals already in place and the lack of that cargo might upset them. I'm sure you understand it's important that Elmwood rebuild and continue on their previous trajectory toward managed prosperity. Please have staff contact **Catlin Littleleaf** at the brewery and render aid.

Additionally, the preparations for the Greengrass festival in a couple of tendays are going well, but if the inns don't have beer, or bread, because the grain is rotted, then it's going to be an economic nightmare. The losses will be entirely unacceptable.

Norin Steelstrike,

Shield Trading Company, Undersecretary



Semyon and Daughters has been paying our dues to the Black Network and it's time for you people to help us out! We hold the mortgages on many properties in Elmwood. **Mystic Grove Brewery** is late on their payment. Again. And it's just the beginning. The baker can't pay her mortgage. Some of the inns are late on their mortgages, too. If we don't get these payments in, we'll be insolvent! **FIX IT!** Get troubleshooters to the brewery and figure out what's going on. We don't want knees broken – we want these businesses to be profitable and paying their bills so we can keep paying **YOU!**

PLUS various scouts of the Mulmaster nobility will be here in a couple of tendays for this silly Greengrass druidic carnival. While I don't care about that, but I **DO** care about the investments here looking like good ones. We could be the target of a leveraged buyout otherwise!

Fiorei Semyon,

Semyon and Daughters Bank, Mulmaster



It's all about the beer.

You've heard there's a new brewery in the Moonsea – **Mystic Grove Brewery**. **Catlin Littleleaf** is the proprietor. There's a rumor going around that she's going to uncask some really righteous brews for the Greengrass festival in a couple of tendays. Maybe you want to sample it? Maybe you're working for interested buyers coming in from Phlan, or Hillsfar, or a noble house in Mulmaster?

AND, better yet, there's a big party going on. Every big town festival needs adventurers, right? The nobles will want fancy bodyguards, there are fat purses to be pickpocketed, important parishioners to minister to, and perhaps work to be found. Plus free food and drink. There's no reason an adventurer like you should miss it.