

THE LOST SANCTUM

by

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Adventure Code: ELMW1-2



Terrible news indicates that some vestige of the long-dead god Moander might be active in the forests near Elmwood. The Town Council is seeking clever adventurers to brave the perils of the Cormanthor forest to breach a lost wizard's sanctum in search of a way to protect the town.

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

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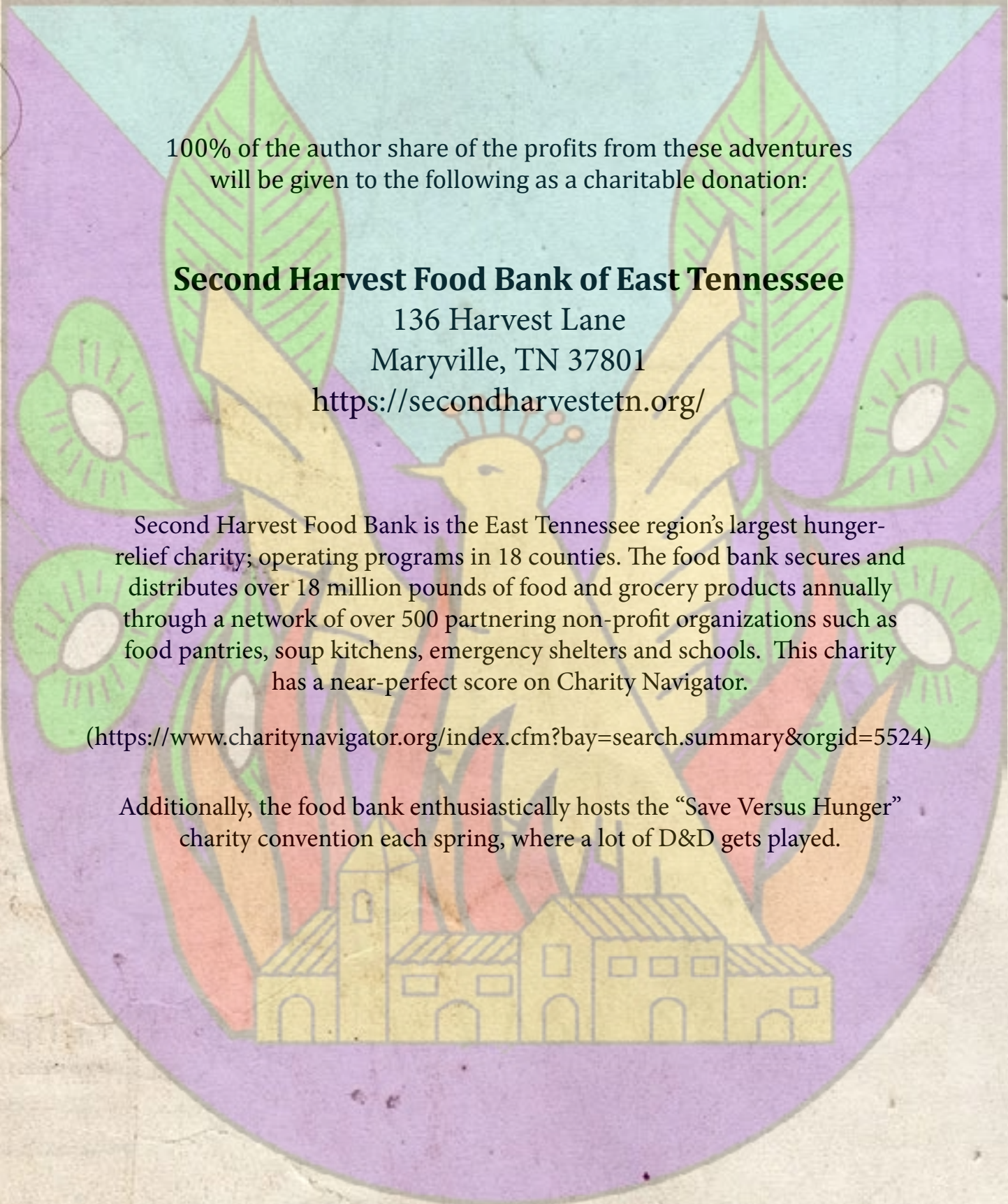
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100% of the author share of the profits from these adventures
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Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee

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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 *Tales of Good & Evil*, a D&D Adventurers League adventure, Part One of the *Misaligned Trilogy*.

*This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1st - 4th level characters**, and is optimized for **five 3rd-level characters**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.*

The adventure is set in the Moonsea region of the Forgotten Realms, in the city of Melvaunt.

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, Elmwood 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.

In the first adventure of the Elmwood Trilogy, the characters go to Elmwood before the Celebration of Greengrass, one of Chauntea's high holy days, only to discover the town's grain has been magically contaminated. The local town council asks the adventurers to consult a sage who lives on the River Lis. After an encounter with the awakened forest guardians, the sage directs the adventurers to investigate a lost temple of Moander in the Rimwood, where the the Rotting God was once worshipped. The sage tasks the characters with checking to see if there is unusual activity on at this lost temple to Moander, and bringing him back a seed for study. The adventurers find that there is much unusual and wrong with the local plants and battle through the overgrowth to extract a seed. Once the characters return, the sage uses a divining ritual to determine the source of the contamination. From the ritual, the sage determines that some echo of Moander's power is stirring and that the characters must warn Elmwood. This warning for the characters to return to Elmwood and seek a way to stop the spread of corruption is the last the sage is able to give before the ritual drives the sage insane. Following their return to Elmwood, the Constable assembles the Elmwood Council to determine the best answer for the potential rise of Moander's cult.

This adventure, the second in the Elmwood trilogy, begins with problem-solvers, adventurers, mercenaries, and the characters invited to the Elmwood Council meeting.

Adventure Overview

This adventure is divided into four parts: the introduction and call to action, two encounters with opposition in the Rimwood, three encounters in the Saurial mage Grypht's sanctum, and the conclusion. It is designed to be run in 4 hours.

Part 1: Introduction – The characters meet with part of the Elmwood Council, who reveal the events of ELMW1-1. As they discuss possible paths forward, it comes to their attention that an Saurial mage, Grypht, once faced the evils of Moander and may have left some ways of dealing with the god's agents. The town leaders direct the adventurers to a section of the Rimwood where his sanctum was rumored to be, and continue preparation for the Greengrass Festival.

Part 2: Death Stalks the Woods – The characters travel to the Rimwood and find they are not alone in seeking ancient knowledge. The characters must overcome a group of treasure-hunting necromancers.

Part 3: We Got Here First – The characters come to the site of Grypht's sanctum only to find that the necromancers have gotten there first. They must battle through the evil mages and their minions to reach the sanctum.

Part 4: A Chilly Reception – Grypht warded his sanctum with portals that summon all manner of ice creatures. The characters must be able to overcome the chilly reception to advance.

Part 5: The Long Sea Voyage – This puzzle, left behind by Grypht, challenges the characters for their reasoning and creativity, two of the first things to be impaired by the corruption of Moander.

Part 6: Grypht's Sanctum – Once the characters overcome the ice creatures and the puzzle, they need to interact with a Very Intelligent Magic Mouth (a near-sentient programmed illusion). VIMM shares the long dead mage's methods for protecting people and places against Moander.

Part 7: Conclusion – the characters travel back to Elmwood to find that the Greengrass Festival is in full swing. Armed with knowledge from the Saurial Grypht, they realize that Elmwood is in imminent danger.

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
Introduction	30 mins
Death Stalks the Woods	60 mins
We Got Here First	45 mins
A Chilly Reception	45 mins
The Long Sea Voyage	30 mins
Grypht's Sanctum	25 mins
Conclusion	5 mins

Adventure Hooks

This adventure begins in Elmwood, a tenday before the Greengrass Festival, a famous Chauntean fertility festival. Use one of the following hooks to draw the players into the story, or devise your own. Note that multiple hooks could easily be used, especially if the characters are not known to each other.

A True Threat. If characters took part in ELMW1-1, they are aware that the return of Moander poses a true threat to the area. The Elmwood Council is especially grateful to them for all they've done, and trust them to do more.

Party Preparations. Characters with the entertainer, charlatan, noble, or soldier backgrounds may be in Elmwood to help with the upcoming Greengrass Festival. When the danger is discussed, the characters are identified as adventurers and recruited to help keep the party on schedule.

Out on the Raggedy Edge. Characters with the Outlander or Hermit background may have heard of or been to the Rimwood before. Such characters are sought out by Shevarra Dyernina, a druid from the Glade of Eldath. She uses birds as animal messengers to reach the adventurers and guide them safely to Elmwood.

Faction Assignments: Each of the factions has been given a specific assignment ahead of time. Hand each player the appropriate portion of Player Handout 1.



PART 1.

INTRODUCTION

The adventure begins at midday, a tenday before the proposed start of the Greengrass Festival in Elmwood. Characters have either been invited by one of their factions or have come in from one of the other adventure hooks.

A Council Meeting

Read the text below when you are ready to start. If any characters took part in ELMW1-1, the Elmwood Council members thank those characters for bringing this information to light. For roleplaying notes for the available council members, see **Appendix: NPC Summary**.

Elmwood Hall is a sturdy two story building of new construction like most buildings in the recovering town of Elmwood. As workers set up ladders to hammer in the nails for bunting and other decorations for the upcoming Greengrass Festival, it's clear that the building was quickly made, but made to last. The double doors stand open and welcoming. Upon entering the building, you are greeted by a myriad of offices, with a small display board identifying the different office holders and their locations. The board identifies only one office on the second floor, that of the town constable.

You are soon collected by the bailiff, Ithsander Bashir, and guided to a large room on the main floor that has the nascent pungent scent that gives the town its name. Within, seated at a long, curved table, are a number of important people in the town of Elmwood, including the Priestess of Chauntea, leaders of some of the various groups that have come to call Elmwood home, and the constable herself. When you take your seats, refreshments are brought out and Constable Aliana Mathnir speaks up, "I'm sorry, we started early. A group of adventurers brought news of a threat to the town and we've been discussing how we can deal with it and keep the festival on track – if it doesn't go off without a hitch, we may never recover our prestige and importance to the Moonsea."

Roleplaying Ithsander Bashir, Bailiff

Ithsander is a male half-elf with gold hair, green eyes, and tan skin. He's a handsome, clean cut, neatly dressed man with perfect posture and an easy smile. He is Constable Aliana's secretary, clerk, accountant, bodyguard, and court bailiff. His official duties include keeping Aliana's appointment book, helping collect taxes, and keeping Elmwood Hall secure.

Ithsander is dedicated to the job and to Constable Aliana. He is confident and not afraid to stop others from entering her office when they lack an appointment.

Quote: *"Only those that have an appointment can see the Constable today, she is quite busy."*

General Features

Architecture. The central governmental building of Elmwood is a two-story Elmwood-frame building. It has been erected with a mix of human and dwarven styles, official and also defensible in the event of another disaster.

Light. The room is lit by windows that provide ample sunlight.

Smells. The council chambers of Elmwood Hall have a strong, soiled smell like many buildings in town that are of recent construction from hardy but smelly elm.

Sounds. The council chamber is quiet other than when the council members or adventurers are speaking. Outside, there are the sounds of laborers working to put the decorations up for the upcoming festival.

The Elmwood Council

The Elmwood Council meeting has the following in attendance: Aliana Mathnir (Constable), Shayad (Priestess of Chauntea), Drake Holmstrumph (Leader of the Elmwood survivors), Thyra

Stoneshoulders (Leader of the Phlan Refugees), and Yao Seiju (Shield Company leader). There are other members (Alksuth Cork, Aranda Fletcher, Kala Namak, Larissa Aerasumé, and Nils Sankt) who have not been able to attend this meeting for various mundane and legitimate reasons. For more information about these individuals as well as RP notes, see **Appendix: NPC Summary**.

During the discussions, the characters have become aware of the following (if they haven't already from playing ELMW1-1):

- The grain in the silos has rotted. This is from some magical influence because the silos are warded by Chauntea to keep the grain ready to last through the harsh Moonsea winter. This means that the town has had to barter and seek outside supplies.
- A group of adventurers were hired to look into the matter and eventually found the Sage of Cormanthor. The sage urged them to look deep in the forest, and, upon their return, he was able to confirm that the rot was caused by the The Darkbringer, Moander, before the Sage fell prey to the dread lord's afflictions.
- Moander once plagued the area, particularly in Shadowdale, but his cult was destroyed. After the battle, one of the people who banished Moander (a Saurial called Grypht), disappeared.
- Thyra, the leader of the Phlan refugees who has heard plenty of tales of adventurers, speaks up about some things she's heard about Grypht. There was a group that came back to Phlan from seeking Grypht's sanctum. They'd come back without two members, and told stories of making it deep into the Rimwood. They'd found standing stones on the edge of one of the entrances into the Midwood deeper into the forest. These standing stones were clearly part of a powerful mage's sanctum. If she remembers correctly, the standing stones were called the Varlaros Stones.
- Yao Seiju of the Shield Trading Company claims that he's sent scouts and adventurers deep into the Rimwood before—but not in search of Grypht's Sanctum. He's heard about the Varlaros Stones, and his scouts reported some magical auras there before. He didn't have his

scouts look into it—risky business like that is what adventurers are for. His scouts are all deployed elsewhere, and it would take too long to recall them for this expedition, but the characters could probably reach the Varlaros Stones in a few days. He will share the scouting reports and maps to the Varlaros Stones with the adventurers with the agreement that they will not make or sell copies of these proprietary reports. If the characters make or sell copies, they gain the story reward of “Blacklisted by the Shield Trading Company,” in the rewards summary of this document.

- Shayad points out that with the festival in a tenday, the adventurers must go, find a way to protect the festival, and return before the festival begins. It isn't possible to delay the festival. Yao Seiju agrees, as they've already made costly deals for supplies to keep the festival on schedule.

At this point, Constable Aliana requests that the adventurers go to Varlaros Stones to look for Grypht's sanctum in hopes of finding a way to protect the festival from Moander's influence. She can pay 500 GP from the council's contingency fund to hire them on. To sweeten the pot, Shayad will offer each PC one spellcasting service free of charge once they have returned with the way to protect the festival. The woods are treacherous and difficult to traverse, and hiking by foot is the best way to navigate the woods.

The characters may have additional questions, and some Elmwood Council members have a few answers that may be helpful:

- It takes a few days travel through the Cormanthor forest to reach the Varlaros Stones in the Rimwood. Passing through the edge of the Cormanthor forest is to invite danger, as the ancient woods have been home to threats that have lasted longer than the elves. Characters should be on the lookout for the predators, both mundane and magical, that call the area home.
- With the fall of Netheril and Myth Drannor, the tumult in the Underdark, and plenty of other tales of loss in the Cormanthor forest, it is surrounded by rumors of lost artifacts and powerful relics. It's a hotbed for adventurers

and fortune-seekers, though many never leave the forest alive.

- In order to make the journey there and back in time for the festival, the characters will need to travel light through the magical woods. Whatever the solution is, it will have to be light as they won't be able to return in time with anything that requires a wagon.
- The festival can't be delayed because it falls on Chauntea's most holy day when her energy flows through the land. Even if they did move the festival to when the goddess' blessings weren't at their peak, there are people coming in from all over to be married for the festival and they can't move the weddings. The reputation of the rebuilt town also depends on the festival going off without a hitch to rebuild more of their economic and political alliances.

If the characters wish to recall information about Grypht or the Rimwood, they can do so by succeeding on the following ability checks, remembering more information on higher results, as indicated below:

Grypht

- DC 11 Intelligence (History): Grypht was a Saurial mage of some power who was an avowed foe of Moander. He rose to prominence a few hundred years ago fighting the second rise of Moander.
- DC 13 Intelligence (History): Moander actually brought the Saurials to Faerûn and the Saurials supposedly came from a mythic place called the Lost Vale.
- DC 15 Intelligence (History): Grypht's magical research focused primarily on evoking the power of ice. It would stand to reason that any defenses to his sanctum would probably deal with issues of cold.

The Rimwood

(Emerald Enclave members enjoy advantage on this check.)

- DC 11 Intelligence (History): The Rimwood is the outer area of the Cormanthor forest. Rumored to be ten to twenty miles wide, it is home to a variety of dangerous creatures.
- DC 13 Intelligence (History): There are rumors of a few paths through the Rimwood that were once elven trails or roads of even older civilizations that have been reclaimed. If you could find one of those, it might shave some time off of your travels, but it would be hard to make sure it's going where you need to go.
- DC 15 Intelligence (History): You've heard from some other adventurers that resting in the Cormanthor is difficult at best. Tales of the woods include playing tricks, such as shifting roots to prevent a good night's rest, trees bending to confuse maps, and illusions to thwart those that would explore it.

The Varlaros Stones

- DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana): You've heard of standing stones like these being focal points for magical energies and potent rituals. If Grypht was keeping his sanctum hidden, it would be easy to mask spells in the presence of the stones.
- DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana): You recall a story that the stones were the pivotal site of an ancient battle, and likely contain energies which would be potent if they could be harnessed.

Development

From here, the characters can stock up and make preparations for their expedition into the Cormanthor forest.



PART 2. DEATH STALKS THE WOODS

The initial travel to the Cormanthor forest takes a day, and from there, the journey into the ancient wood is challenging. While demonic presences have been largely sealed away from the Moonsea following the end of Season 3, the changes to the woods have left them more twisted and perilous than could be easily undone.

While the demonic influence on the Cormanthor forest is somewhat diminished, 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 forest find their dreams haunted with hopelessness from the many souls that have never returned from the wood.

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

You leave Elmwood, taking the road south, and reach the edge of the Cormanthor forest as the sun is setting. You find rest on your first night of travel with one of the logging camps that works the edge of the forest. It's a pleasant evening of timbercutters wanting to hear tales of your bravery. You're in fine spirits the following morning that you set foot into the forest itself. Soon the trees blot out the sun and you find yourselves making your way south toward the Varlaros Stones. A second day passes moving through the woods before there is a clear demarcation of the forest and the Rimwood. You are struck by the age and majesty of the place. There is power to be found in the ancient places of the world, and it is easy to imagine this wood standing sentinel at the dawn of Faerûn.

At this point, characters that are "outdoorsy" may want to use skills and spells to aid their passing through the edge of the Cormanthor forest. Spells work fine and may obviate the following skill

checks, DMs are encouraged to use their judgment as to how effective they are here in the area of the wood that is not magical. Characters can attempt one roll or the other as they travel, as they cannot split their attention between both.

A character who says they are using the Shield Company Scouting Reports gain advantage on this check. Only one character can use the Shield Company Scouting Reports in this way.

Navigation

- Roll failed: If the characters do not make at least a DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check, they are lost in the woods and suffer the additional rules for "Resting in Cormanthor" and also gain the "Late to the Party" story reward.
- DC 13 Wisdom (Survival): As you travel, you find yourselves able to pick up part of an old path here and there, but seem to lose it after a few minutes again. You aren't in danger of getting lost despite the tricks the forest seems to be playing on you. Characters who succeed at this level are affected by the "Resting in Cormanthor" rules.
- DC 16 Wisdom (Survival): You are able to find one of the lost paths, and with it the ruins of refuges heading south. As you move, the light in the forest seems just a little brighter and the trek a little safer. Characters who make this check are not affected by the "Resting in Cormanthor" rules.

Flora and Fauna

- Roll failed: If the characters do not gain at least a DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check, they are lost in the woods and suffer the additional rules for "Resting in Cormanthor" and also gain the "Late to the Party" story reward.
- DC 13 Intelligence (Nature): fair is foul and foul is fair, the forest in the Rimwood is overpowering and unnaturally strong in some places and completely wrong in others. Plants

that should not grow in this area are growing at unprecedented rates, and the animals are of unusual size and angry countenance at your presence. You are able to make your way despite the confusing and often contradictory signs to go deeper south into the woods. Characters who succeed at this level are affected by the “Resting in Cormanthor” rules.

- **DC 17 Intelligence (Nature):** Your knowledge of nature is able to lead you toward where it is more in harmony with your learnings, which happens to be along old paths that have grown over. As you move, you find ruins that you can rest in where the forest seems to contradict itself less.

Characters who make this check are not affected by the “Resting in Cormanthor” rules.

Resting in Cormanthor¹

The wood is unsettled by the influences of the demonic taint of the Underdark, making lingering there decidedly unpleasant. If the party decides to take a long rest within the wood, and it assumed they make three on their way to the Varlaros Stones, they may do so. However, upon completing the rest, the following applies:

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 the Cormanthor forest (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 the Cormanthor Forest

The lost souls of the Cormanthor forest 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.”

General Features

The general features of the Rimwood section of the Cormanthor forest 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 often touching, and most 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 for atmosphere.

Sounds. A thick carpet of springy pine needles dampens 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

1. See DDEX3-7 Herald of the Moon.

and the birds that prey upon them thrive.

Terrain. The area of the necromancer's dig is on a hill. Note the differences in elevation on the map. Going up over an elevation change line on the map requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check, and requires an extra square of movement.

Necromancers

As the adventurers move through the Cormanthor forest, they will find that they are not alone in the Rimwood. Soon they discover that a team of necromancers are here on their own tasks. This encounter will show the characters that there are dangerous folk in the Rimwood and will perhaps add some time pressure for the characters to get the protection rituals of Grypht—and promptly get out. Additionally, this encounter introduces persons and plots important to future Elmwood adventures.

You press through the thick growth of the Rimwood on your travels, finding areas that are overgrown with plants and danger. As you travel, the woods get darker and it is harder to find the path or make sense of directions that lead you south towards the Varlaros Stones.

As you travel, you find yourself hearing noises that have so far not been present in the forest. A rhythmic striking fills the air and echoes around the trees, and soon you come upon a curious sight:

A camp here in the Rimwood! There are a number of large humanoids digging with shovels and pickaxes at the base of a hill, and on the top of it there are a number of tents and a few people. You see a figure in heavy armor and a few in dark robes farther up the hill. There are a couple of tents you can see at the top of the hill, as well as a wagon and a few unsaddled horses. As you get closer, the stink of rot hits your nose.

General Features

In addition to normal Rimwood general features, the following applies to this area:

Wards. The necromancers have laid down wards over a broad area. These wards give the undead advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead. The Characters will notice these wards with a Passive Perception of 15 or higher.

Any spellcaster entering the area should be prompted to make a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check. On a success, the character will notice the wards and discern that that these wards can be partially undone by spending an action to make a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check or a DC 16 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check. The wards are disabled only after three successful checks. Each check takes an action.

Learning More About the Competition

The others are a group of necromancers looking for lost artifacts for their mage-lord. They are unaware of any larger plot connected to Moander. The necromancers are wary, but not immediately intent on violence. They will make an effort to talk to the characters first, if possible. Eventually, they ultimately see the characters as a source of additional undead labor. Give the players about 5 minutes to consider what they're going to do; then encourage them to make a decision in-character. If they spend more than 10 minutes thinking about what to do, then the necromancers spot the characters and start heading toward them but keep their labor between them and the player characters.

Characters can glean further information by succeeding on the following ability checks, gathering more information on higher results, as indicated below:

History

- DC 12 Intelligence (History): This group looks well organized and like they have good discipline. They also look relatively unsupported, which means they must have a larger vanguard somewhere nearby. It's possible if you engage these people, more will come.
- DC 15 Intelligence (History): The crest on the flag near the tents is an uncommon one, and it doesn't seem to belong to any of the factions or major players around the Moonsea.

Arcana

- DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana): Those robes are wizards robes of some sort.
- DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana): Judging by the way he holds that staff, that's a necromantic overhand grip. Typical of the school.

- DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana): This isn't the kind of work appropriate for an archmage; these are likely to be some wizard's minions.

Religion

- DC 10 Intelligence (Religion): There's something off about how methodically those diggers keep digging.
- DC 12 Intelligence (Religion): Only undead or constructs have that kind of supernatural endurance.
- DC 15 Intelligence (Religion): Those look more like zombies than anything else. They're tough and strong, but easy to hit. You need to hit them really hard or with holy power to make them stay down.

Perception

- DC 7 Wisdom (Perception): It looks like a variety of ogres.
- DC 10 Wisdom (Perception): If you can see the group from here, it's likely they can see you right back unless you get into cover.
- DC 12 Wisdom (Perception): The workers don't seem to be armed, and the people don't seem to be paying any attention to them. What kind of worker needs no supervision?
- DC 15 Wisdom (Perception): They don't seem to be actively looking around too much; they probably think they're alone here. If you went around to that copse of woods, you could probably get within 50 feet of them if you were quiet.

Talking to the Necromancers

If approached by the characters, the necromancers immediately call the zombies to attention and put the creatures between the adventurers and themselves. Despite this defensive posture, the necromantic delegation is entirely happy to talk to the characters for a while before resorting to violence. They want to know more about the characters and how they came to the Rimwood—information potentially useful to their lord Tyranne. Keep the necromancers' agenda in mind and try to extract that information from the characters before giving them of the necromancers'

information. Some groups will immediately set upon the necromancers and attack, which is also an entirely valid way to approach the encounter.

What the necromancers know:

- They know the name and faction of the character with the highest renown. If the character's faction is Zhentarim, the necromancers don't actually mention the Zhentarim, but they indicate that they know for whom the adventurer works.
- They are searching for ancient fragments of prior civilizations here, particularly Netherese magic items.
- It's possible that Netherese relics rained down here as part of the final fall when Elminster brought Netheril down.
- They serve a necromancer mage-lord named Tyranne Epaline. Julnar is one of her apprentices. They speak of her with great respect and are unwilling to give the characters more information than that.

What the necromancers want to know:

- What are the characters doing here? Who sent them? Where are they from?
- If the PCs mention the sanctum, the necromancers want to know where it is.
- What do the characters know about the contents and defenses of the sanctum?
- If Moander is mentioned, the necromancers want to know as much as the characters will tell them.

Roleplaying Hallvor, Deathguard

Hallvor is a brawny human man in his early twenties with dark brown skin and dark, perceptive eyes. His scalp is shaved bald, and he has a filigree of bright yellow tattoos across his scalp, face, and neck. He's wearing a gold torc, that sparkles with deep red rubies and shining onyx—seemingly some sort of mark of rank. He smiles quickly and has a friendly easy-going demeanor. He's not looking for a fight, but he won't back down from one, either. He is a vicious combatant and prefers to deliver a swift coup de grâce to downed opponents—thereby making them

more susceptible to his masters' necromantic practices.

Quote: "Hah! Don't mistake my reluctance to start a fight to mean I'm unwilling to finish one."

Roleplaying Julnar, The Apprentice

Julnar is a handsome half-elven man in his mid-thirties, with fair skin that tends to freckle and dark hair down just past his ears. His face and his brown eyes are thoughtful. He's extremely curious, and always looking for his own advantage. While he is confident his group can handle the characters in a fight, he seeks to chat them up first to learn what they know.

Quote: "I'm quite curious to know what you're doing so far from civilization. Perhaps we don't trust each other, but that's no reason to draw steel immediately."

The Limits of Diplomacy

Once the necromancers feel that they've extracted all the information they can from the characters, they decide the conversation is over and intend to add the adventurers' bodies to the zombies working for them—and any good pieces of gear among them to their gift for mage-lord Tyranne.

"Hah," Julnar the Apprentice says, "excellent. Well, thank you for the intelligence." He rubs his hands together with eagerness. "We will now use you to replace the manpower we've lost. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for your excellent service to the glory of mage-lord Tyranne Epaline. Perhaps you'll even have a place of honor as a ghoul or a wight in her vanguard someday."

Julnar flicks his wrist and a spectral form appears next to him. "Go to our mage-lord, and tell Lady Epaline that soon we will have a gift—the bodies of [Name of the character with the highest renown] and [his/her] minions. Tell her she was right: sooner or later we'd need to bloody the nose of [character's faction]." The spectral form nods and sinks into the earth, and the necromancer and his forces turn to face you. "I'll try to make it quick in thanks for your cooperation."

At that, the necromancer mage Julnar and his knight defender Hallvor ready to fight. Between them and the party are their workforce of eight ogre zombies. Their six commoner servants scatter away from the battlefield. Refer to the "Dig Site" map.

Map Details

- Going up over an elevation change line on the map requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check and counts as 1 square of difficult terrain. If the check is failed, they cannot pass at that square this turn.
- The pit is difficult terrain.
- The locations of the wards are shown on the map. Those are the locations where the characters can take actions to disable the wards.
- The starting locations of the mage, knight, and ogre zombies are shown.
- The camp with the tents and wagon are in the northwest corner of the map.
- The characters approach from the southeast.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very weak party:** Remove four **ogre zombies**.
- **Weak party:** Remove three **ogre zombies**.
- **Strong party:** Replace the **knight** with a **gladiator** and remove one **ogre zombie**.
- **Very strong party:** Replace the **knight** with a **gladiator**, replace the **mage** with an **archmage**, and remove five **ogre zombies**.

Suggested Tactics

You may choose to use these tactics if you believe it is appropriate for your game. The necromancer mage's retinue will fight to the death. They have no fear of death and they have much more fear of Tyranne. If somehow captured by the characters, they will say nothing. If charmed, they will tell the characters about the glory of their mage-lord and her plans to exploit and take over the nearby lands to bring peace and the glory of undeath to the Moonsea.

The knight draws his greatsword and heads into combat. His first action is to use his Leadership ability which gives his allies 1d4 to attack rolls and saving throws (critical to helping the mage make concentration rolls to maintain invisibility). The knight will focus on engaging the front line fighters. He will save his reactions to parry attacks.

The mage is already under the effects of Mage Armor. He opens with Greater Invisibility (cast on himself) and then targets low-Constitution spellcasters and ranged combatants in the back line with Cone of Cold. He will seek to put Fireballs on low-Dexterity characters in heavy armor or lower hit point combatants. He will attempt to Counterspell Spirit Guardians and healing spells, as well as large area of effect spells that include him in the area. If he is the last one alive, he will stealthily flee (remember the advantage to Dexterity (Stealth) checks to move silently in the Rimwood) with invisibility if able.

The zombies are there as cannon fodder. They'll screen the mage to keep the characters off him.

If the opposition is enhanced due to party APL:

Julnar the archmage has already cast Mage Armor on himself. He will open with Time Stop. He will then move to an appropriate distance away, cast Greater Invisibility on himself and then catch heavy armor characters or non-spellcasters in a hemispherical Wall of Force (so the party is separated), or as many characters as possible in a Lightning Bolt cast as an 8th level spell. He will attempt to Counterspell Spirit Guardians and healing spells. He will seek to put Cone of Cold on low-Constitution ranged combatants, try to Banish particularly powerful combatants. If his concentration is broken, his next spell will be Globe of Invulnerability. If he is in melee combat, he will cast Misty Step to escape or use Shocking Grasp and then move away when his attacker can't use reactions. Remember that as an archmage, he casts as an 18th level caster, meaning his cantrips deal 4d10 damage (Fire Bolt) and 4d8 damage (Shocking Grasp). If he is the last one alive, he will stealthily flee (remember the advantage to Dexterity (Stealth) checks to move silently in the Rimwood) with Invisibility if able.

Hallvor the gladiator will try to shield bash front line opponents to the ground, to try to set up the ogre zombies to attack with advantage. He will ready an attack action (if necessary) to go right as the ogres move into melee range with a character. He will save his reactions to parry attacks.

If the fight is too long because of the high hit point values of the ogre zombies, then they will fall apart when the necromancer is dead.

Developments

Following the encounter, if the characters go looking for the scattered commoners, they find their bodies full of self-inflicted wounds—and that all of them are missing their tongues. If the characters want to take a long rest after the fight, they find that the necromancer's wards (if they are still intact) protect them from the "Resting in Cormanthor" rules. Do remind them that the situation in Elmwood is dire. From the necromancers' encampment, it is another day of travel to reach the Varlaros Stones.

Treasure

The knight and mage have a cache of 200 gp of travelling funds. Additionally, Hallvor (the knight) has a heavy gold torc, with deep red rubies and shining onyx worth 500 gp. Julnar (the mage) has a silver dagger, which is largely worthless, but the large amethyst in the pommel is flawless with deep indigo highlights and is worth 500 gp. Additionally, they've already dug up some interesting Netherese artifacts including a white gold tiara with moonstones, an ancient ivory wand chased with platinum, and an ancient text of Netherese history. To the right collector, the collective set of these items would be worth a total of 300 gp. Additionally, they find Julnar's spellbook (with the spells in his stat block, depending on whether he is a mage or an archmage).



PART 3. WE GOT HERE FIRST

This encounter also occurs in the Rimwood and the conditions of the previous encounter still apply.

Paraphrase the following when the characters press on depending on their actions:

The next day of travel passes more or less uneventfully for a haunted, shifting wood. Finally, you reach your destination: a large clearing in the forest that feels like an opportunity to finally breathe after the claustrophobic confines of the forest.

The success is fleeting, though, as you find that among the standing stones are a number of banners and a small camp – the banners of Mage-Lord Tyranne Epaline. Unlike last confrontation, however, there is no time for you to formulate or plan or attempt diplomacy or stealth before the camp rises to action to face you!

A figure in a dark robe emblazoned with the symbol of mage-lord Tyranne Epaline emerges from near the stones and points angrily in your direction. As she does, ominous silhouettes of floating orbs, crowned with waving eyestalks, emerge from around the stones near the robed figure. As you ready to face the mage and its beholder allies, there is an explosion of earth, as figures start digging themselves out of the ground near you, accompanied by a terrible stench of rotting flesh and hungry hisses.

Warned by Julnar's spirit (or by Julnar himself if the mage apprentice escaped), this encampment has prepared for the adventurers. Multiple Alarm spells have been set in the wood to respond to any who do not bow in supplication to the Mage Lord, and have detected the characters in their approach.

The necromancers have found the Varlaros Stones and are seeking to understand the magic around them and trying to find the entrance to Grypht's sanctum.

A necromancer (one of Julnar's rivals) is lying in wait for the characters. She sees this as an opportunity to both make up for Julnar's foolish ambition and to replace him as one of Tyranne's chosen servitors. This mage has called in favors to command two zombie beholders and is directing a pair of ghouls to slay the characters.

General Features

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 often touching, and most are around fifty or more feet tall. The vegetation in the areas marked as difficult terrain provides half cover (+2 AC) and is lightly obscured (Wisdom (Perception) checks are at disadvantage).

Light. The trees in the Rimwood are tall enough and spaced close enough together that they only allow dim light for atmosphere.

Sounds. A thick carpet of springy pine needles dampens 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.

Wards. The necromancers have laid down wards over a broad area. These wards give the undead advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead. The characters will notice these wards with a passive perception of 15 or higher. Any spellcaster entering the area should be prompted to make a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check. On a success, the character will notice the wards and discern that that these wards can be partially undone by spending an action to make a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check or a DC 16 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check. The wards are disabled only after three successful checks. Each check takes an action. The locations of the wards are shown on the map. Those are the locations where the characters can take actions to disable the wards.

Graves: The ghouls and ghosts dig themselves out of the ground, leaving behind disturbed earth that is difficult terrain. If there are additional undead, place them as needed, with difficult terrain around them.

The Standing Stones. The standing stones resonate violence and bloodlust, and characters standing inside the circle of stones enjoy the effects of a critical hit on a natural roll of 19 in addition to 20. The stones lose this ability if moved or separated.

Foes. The starting locations of the mage, ghouls, and beholder zombies are shown.

Characters. The characters approach from the west.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very weak party:** Remove one **beholder zombie** and two **ghouls**.
- **Weak party:** Remove one **beholder zombie**.
- **Strong party:** Add one **ghast** and two **ghouls**.
- **Very strong party:** Add three **ghasts** and two **ghouls**.

Suggested Tactics

You may choose to use these tactics if you believe it is appropriate for your game. The necromancer (mage) and the zombie beholders start 80 feet away if possible (well out of the range of most undead turning effects and the short range of crossbow snipers).

The beholder zombies target characters with eyebeams every round. The mage casts Greater Invisibility on herself (to protect herself), and then casts Cone of Cold on apparent spellcasters in the back. Ice Storm and Fireball require Dexterity saves, so she will preferentially target spellcasters and heavy armor fighters with those spells. She will also attempt to Counterspell Spirit Guardians and healing spells, or other spells as appropriate. If the mage is the last one alive, she will stealthily flee (remember the advantage to Dexterity (Stealth) checks to move silently in the Rimwood) with Invisibility if able.

The ghouls (and/or ghosts) take an action each to dig themselves out of the ground, and then move toward the characters. Their job is to make sure the front line doesn't reach the beholders and the mage. The ghosts will move in to make sure as many characters are in the stench aura as possible (particularly low-constitution spellcasters). Remember that ghosts (and ghouls within 30 feet of ghosts) have advantage on saving throws versus turning. The ghosts will let the ghouls attack first (ready as needed) in the hopes that they can bite paralyzed characters. Hits on paralyzed characters are automatically critical hits.

As a reminder for your convenience, here is the paralyzed condition:

PARALYZED

- A paralyzed creature is incapacitated, can't take actions or reactions, and can't move or speak.
- The creature automatically fails Strength and Dexterity saving throws.
- Attack rolls against the creature have advantage.
- Any attack that hits the creature is a critical hit if the attacker is within 5 feet of the creature.

The necromancer and all of her allies fight to the death, and refuse to allow themselves to be taken prisoner.

Treasure

The necromancer has a grotesque jeweled demon skull among her belongings. It is plated with electrum, and is covered in a pavé of moonstone, quartz, chalcedony, and obsidian. The horns have an elaborate scrimshaw of runes in infernal. It is always warm to the touch. A particularly depraved sort of collector would likely pay 1,000 gp for it.

She also has a scroll of blight (rare), a scroll of speak with dead (uncommon), and a scroll of bestow curse (uncommon).

Developments

If the characters want to take a long rest, they can do so now without interruption. If the characters take two long rests in the Rimwood outside of normal travel, make note of it to give the characters the story award "Late to the Party."



PART 4. A CHILLY RECEPTION

The old wizard knew that the followers of Moander are particularly susceptible to cold. He set up guardians that would capitalize on that weakness and test anyone seeking his knowledge.

It takes cunning to find the remains of Gryph't's tower, or stronghold, near the standing stones. All you find are piles of worked stone, perhaps the remains of a long-fallen structure, all overgrown with decades, if not centuries, of vegetation and lichen. An inspection of the ruins shows, however, that some subsurface areas are still somewhat intact. You find a gaping hole in the earth, at the bottom of which is visible a gray and white tiled floor, hidden behind a thicket of briars. As you enter the tunnel, the temperature drops precipitously, chilling your equipment. Water condenses on metal buckles and weapons, and your breath steams in the air. You notice the condensation starting to turn to frost. There's a flicker of silvery white light ahead.

The characters can navigate the tunnel however they like and take whatever reasonable precautions they need. The tunnel walls and ceiling are coated in brown mold (see checks below), but there is a safe, if frigidly cold, path through the middle of the 15-foot-wide tunnel.

The larger room ahead is cold but is lit by some sort shimmering portals and a magical barrier that closes off an arched doorway on the far side of the room. The room is quiet as a chilly tomb. There are a number of deep scratches in the gray and white tile floors indicating some long-ago conflict occurred here.

General Features of the Sanctum

Temperature. The whole complex is frigidly cold because of brown mold (and other magics). The ambient temperature is just above freezing. The chill is intentional—to keep Moander's faithful out, or at least keep them at a disadvantage. Be sure to remind the players that their characters' breath steams in the air, that they have goosebumps if they have no cold weather gear, that the water in their waterskins has turned to icy slush, and that the cold is pervasive.

Lighting. The lighting is soft, watery, and eerie but counts as bright light.

Brown Mold. Brown mold is growing in the entrance tunnel. A passive Wisdom (Perception) check of DC 13 or higher notices the growth. The brown mold helps keep the sanctum cold. If the players do not already know about brown mold, the characters can make successful Intelligence (Nature) checks to learn more about it, with successively more information resulting from higher check results, as indicated below.

- DC 10 Intelligence (Nature): The splotches of fungal growth on the surfaces of this room are brown mold.
- DC 12 Intelligence (Nature): The harmful effects of brown mold extend a mere 5 feet from the growths. The hazards should be simple enough to avoid.
- DC 14 Intelligence (Nature): Brown mold thrives on heat, undergoing sudden spurts of growth in response to exposure to flame.
- DC 15 Intelligence (Nature): Despite an apparent affinity for cold, brown mold succumbs quickly to effects that chill or freeze.

Brown mold feeds on warmth, drawing heat from anything around it. A patch of brown mold typically covers a 10-foot square, and the temperature within 30 feet of it is always frigid.

When a creature moves to within 5 feet of the mold for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, it must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Brown mold is immune to fire, and any source of fire brought within 5 feet of a patch causes it to instantly expand outward in the direction of the fire, covering a 10-foot-square area (with the source of the fire at the center of that area). A patch of brown mold exposed to an effect that deals cold damage is instantly destroyed.

Atmosphere. The underground ruins of Grypht's sanctum are cold, stony, and full of echoes. This is a lonely, creepy place, with an ominous sense of foreboding. It's almost more of a mausoleum than a wizard's home.

Portals. The portals are silvery, shimmering, and inert before the characters enter the room.

The Portals Open

Once at least one character enters the room, the first set of portals opens. The DM should roll initiative for all three of the following groups of creatures. During the first round, five **ice mephits** emerge on their initiative count. During the second round, four **winter wolves** emerge on their initiative count. During the third round a **young white dragon** emerges on its initiative count. On round four, the portals fail to allow frost giants to enter, and on round 5, the portals open but whatever was going to come through is gone.

Suggested Tactics

You may choose to use these tactics if you believe it is appropriate for your game. The mephits will lay down fog clouds to blind the characters and will then try to herd them into a formation that makes it easy for the dragon to catch them all in a breath weapon. The dragon has blindsight, so the mephits' Fog Clouds will give the dragon cover (and advantage on attacks against blinded foes in the fog cloud). The winter wolves will move in, breathe on as many characters as they can and then focus attacks on spellcasters and lightly-armored foes in the back ranks. The wolves will stay together so they have advantage on attacks and will try to knock enemies prone, particularly if they can do so in front of the dragon. The dragon uses its breath weapon immediately when it enters combat, and then savagely attacks the front line.

Round 1:

There is a wash of magical energy, and concentric rings of blue-white light form in the silvery portals along the walls. Bright motes of power drift to the floor as the magical portals flicker. Several small, fast creatures fly out of one of the portals and zoom toward you, giggling wickedly.

The portals let five **ice mephits** into the area as an initial test.

Round 2:

The concentric circles of light pulse and sway, and large wolves with bright blue eyes lope out of the portals. Their icy-white fur is thick, and they do not seem to be at all discomforted by the cold.

In the second round, a pack of four **winter wolves** enter the area.

Round 3:

Again, the magic of the portals pulses, and only one doorway has shifting movement within it. A white, hissing, reptilian form comes through the portal with an angry stride. The creature's body is 10 feet long, but its writhing neck and tail extend past that. It looks at you malevolently. Its jaws drop open and an icy blast rolls through the room.

On the third round, a **young white dragon** enters the fray.

Round 4:

Two exceptionally large portals activate, and you hear drums and horns, and the crash of giant footsteps. A pack of blue-skinned giants in iron armor and furs start striding toward the portals. One of them is bouncing a boulder the size of a pony in the palm of her hand. Suddenly, the portal makes a harsh static buzz, and then a loud pop, and goes dark before the giants are able to push through.

On the fourth round, there are no additional combatants.

Round 5:

Another portal opens, and a blast of frozen arctic air rolls through the already frigid room. You see nothing but a blank, twilight arctic tundra past the portal.

On the fifth round, there are no additional combatants.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very weak party:** Remove four **winter wolves**.
- **Weak party:** Remove three **winter wolves**.
- **Strong party:** Add one **young white dragon** and remove two **winter wolves**.
- **Very strong party:** Add one **young white dragon** and add one **winter wolf**.

Developments

Once the chilly reception has been dealt with, the shimmering barrier in the archway opens, and characters can move to the puzzle in the next room. They can take a short rest with no problems. If they choose to take a long rest remind them that the situation in Elmwood is dire but within the sanctum they are immune to the effects of “Resting in the Cormanthor.” If the characters take a long rest in Grypht’s Sanctum, award them the “Late to the Party” story reward.





PART 5. THE LONG SEA VOYAGE

The characters enter the sanctum, only to discover a wickedly clever puzzle.

As you move deeper into the ruined passageways under the mountain, you emerge into a wider chamber, some forty feet across and sixty feet long with a ten-foot-high ceiling.

Dominating the center of the chamber is a shallow, tiled pool at the base of a podium. The top of the podium is etched with markings, and the tiles that make up the pool are similarly marked.

On the other side of the podium, there is a small stone boat about a foot and a half long. There are a number of holes in the side of the boat, perhaps indicating it was meant to be manipulated without getting into the surely frigid water.

Past that, there is an archway much like the portals in the previous room on the opposite wall. There must be a way here to open it.

If the characters approach the podium, hand them Player Handout 2 – the Long Sea Voyage.

The “Ship Puzzle” map shows the general conformation of the room.

General Features of the Room

Temperature. The whole complex is frigidly cold because of brown mold (and other magics). The ambient temperature is just above freezing. This is intentional to keep Moander’s faithful out, or at least keep them at a disadvantage. Be sure to remind the players that their characters’ breath steams in the air, that they have goosebumps if they have no cold weather gear, the water in their waterskins has turned to icy slush, and that the cold is pervasive.

A. The Boat. The boat is warm to the touch and, when examined, has the words “first”, “second”, “third”, and “fourth” etched into it, which can be made out from above. The holes on the sides and top of the boat also look like they could easily fit the tip of a 10-foot pole or the butt of a common spear to make it easy to manipulate in the pool without touching the water. The boat is about a foot and a half tall.

B. The Pool. The pool is about eight inches deep, and the floor of it is made of marked tiles that correspond to the grid on page two of the Long Sea Voyage Handout. The liquid of the pool is below freezing temperatures and actively hazardous. Anyone who touches the liquid must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. Characters who fail the saving throw suffer 22 (4d10) cold damage, and characters who succeed suffer half that amount.

On a failed attempt to speak the command word jets spray the frigid liquid into the air, and everyone in the room must make a Constitution saving throw or suffer damage as if they had touched the liquid. The spray doesn’t reach to the ceiling, so the brown mold there is not killed.

C. The Portal. On the opposite end of the room, there is an inactive portal. When the command word “azure bonds” is spoken, it activates and leads into the next area. If examined with a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character can tell the activation mechanism linked to the pool, pillar and boat. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check leads to a character understanding that it is operated by a command phrase.

D. The Podium. The podium is not magical, and its etched story tells the tale on the Long Sea Voyage handout.

Watch the time – if the players are getting frustrated after a few minutes, give them a hint. Give them another hint or two if they need it. Reward good puzzle solving with inspiration.

In order to solve the puzzle, the players must cut out the boat, and then put it on the proper positions on the map. When they do, they should record the letters shown in the first, second, third, and fourth positions in that order. The captain's log indicates that they ship should be pointed west at the star in 1, 8 (READ). Then north towards the heart in 6, 1 (ONLY). Then east toward the club in 12, 2 (COLS). Then south toward the smiley face at 9,9 (TWOOF). Then east toward the X at 11, 11 (OURP). Then south toward the X at 11, 11 (RIME). Then north toward the Z at 2,3 (ROWS).

READ ONLY COLS TWO FOUR PRIME ROWS

If you then look at the puzzle and read columns two and four, prime rows only (2, 3, 5, 7, and 11), you get the letters AZURE BONDS.

If someone looks at the puzzle and sees the words "AZURE BONDS" and correctly surmises that's the password, then consider the puzzle solved.

Developments

After completing the puzzle, another doorway magically opens revealing Grypht's inner sanctum. If the characters take a long rest in Grypht's Sanctum, award them the "Late to the Party" story reward.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	H	T	R	O	N	♥	T	S	A	E	L	Z
2	M	A	Y	B	L	O	O	D	R	U	N	♣
3	+	Z	F	O	R	K	B	O	X	A	C	E
4	W	O	R	T	H	L	E	S	S	Z	O	T
5	V	U	O	N	Y	X	N	W	♦	F	L	S
6	T	H	E	P	A	S	S	W	O	R	D	!!
7	S	R	O	D	E	☠	M	A	L	I	C	E
8	★	S	T	A	R	L	I	T	G	O	J	W
9	B	A	Q	E	D	X	☹	☺	☺	V	E	X
10	P	R	E	♠	C	I	P	N	O	R	U	M
11	U	E	W	S	A	U	R	I	A	L	X	Z
12	L	I	V	E	S	O	U	L	H	O	L	Y



PART 6. GRYPHT'S SANCTUM

The sanctum is empty, as Grypht has long since moved on. He has left a number of resources, however, and a unique assistant to help him and his disciples. This assistant remains here and can provide the characters some exposition, a ritual to protect against Moander, and a special gift to aid them.

The rest of what is left of Grypht's tower is a few collapsed tunnels. You manage to find enough open passages to travel about forty feet, where another silvery ward fades in front of you. Inside is a large room made of lighter stone. It's cool, clean, and there are many large silver basins of water nearly five feet across, with walkways between them.

General Features

Light. The room is full of silvery light that comes from no apparent source. Everything is clear and sharp edged in the light.

Atmosphere. There is no dust here. The room is spotlessly clean, to the point that it looks unreal.

As the characters explore the room, a magic image appears:

With a shimmer of bright yellow energy, the figure of a dark-skinned human woman with elaborately coiffed dark hair and glowing yellow eyes flickers into existence. The figure is translucent and insubstantial, and is surrounded by yellow motes of light. She looks over the group. "You must have passed the tests that Grypht set. Excellent. In that case, you are indeed the heroes that I have been waiting for. I am not actually a person, but rather a semi-autonomous spell. You may think of me as a Very Intelligent Magic Mouth." The woman smiles pleasantly. "Please tell me who you are, and why you are here? Additionally, I must inspect your ears, noses, and throats..."

It's important the characters roleplay with VIMM for a while. Doing so will help them internalize the story narrative.

Roleplaying VIMM

VIMM is curious, intelligent, and possesses a somewhat acerbic wit. It is direct, and doesn't possess much in the way of empathy. Its main goal is to assist and inform those who make it to the sanctum in defeating Moander.

Quote: *"That question is irrelevant. What you actually seek to know is..."*

What VIMM knows:

- Before the VIMM will talk to the characters, it must look into their ears, noses, and throats. When asked about that, it points out that most followers of Moander have plants growing inside their heads, and it is just making sure that the characters are not infected. Stress this as an important diagnostic characteristic of followers of Moander.
- Grypht set it up to become active when someone passed the tests. It doesn't know how long it's been because it doesn't experience time when inactive.
- VIMM doesn't know where Grypht went or what became of him.
- VIMM is insubstantial, and cannot move or touch physical items.

"Please go to that cabinet, and take out all three vials on the second shelf. Pour them into this basin here. This will go much easier if one or more of you can help with the scrying." Over the next while, the Very Intelligent Magic Mouth calls up and interprets images in the basins of water.

In the water, you see a huge plant creature striding through a green forest leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. The image fades and then reappears, showing a group of reptilian humanoids with oddly shaped frills and horns building a huge pile of dead trees. Again, the silent images shift, and you see an eerie, low bog where the soil glows red with a hellish hue, and a black river slides past like a

torrent of oil. A huge body of plant vines with many mouths and eyes on stalks is quickly covered in white ice, falling apart and cracking into brittle pieces. This is some place not in the mortal realm! The scrying pool is dark for a long time, until you see a horrid, yet lovely, female figure with long delicate veils of lichen. Her whole body is made of mushrooms and fungus. It's hard to guess at her size until demons and myconids bow at her feet, tiny in comparison to her gargantuan stature. Where she walks in the Underdark, plant life above her writhes and coils, bursting with fecund rot, and some of the mutated plants coil out of the ground, hauling humanoid corpses up as they bloom. You can see that some of them have mouths in the palms of their hands, and that they are gnashing their teeth hungrily, rotting tongues sticking out and tasting the air. The grotesque tongues grow into towering plants, each topped by a pulsing seed.

Any character who wants to help may make a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check. To determine how many extra points of information are learned, sum the total of checks that were made, minus the checks that were failed. These successes add to the clarity of the scrying and allowing VIMM to provide more information.

Characters always learn that:

- "I will teach you a ritual that will ward off the influence of Moander from an area. It's a variant on the hallow spell that takes some time to cast. It will also serve to remove or suppress Moander's influence on the recently infected if you can get to them quickly enough, much like a cure disease spell specifically for this purpose." VIMM teaches the characters the ritual over the course of 8 hours, and gets them to write it down.
- "I will also speed your journey out of the Cormanthor forest, and protect you from the insidious influence that has taken root among the ancient trees."

Extra information the characters may learn for each successful check:

- "Apparently, a powerful demon lord associated with rot and corruption, Zuggtmoy, has been active in the world. Her presence—the woman

of mushrooms and fungus in the vision—stirred up an echo of Moander's power."

- "What is stirring now... I cannot be sure what it is. I believe it is merely an echo, a remnant of Moander's power. The spells woven into this place cannot ascertain how 'alive' Moander really is."
- "One interesting thing about Moander's influence is that it thrives on decay. The undead are immune to it, as are those things that were never alive, like golems."
- "Elmwood is the nexus of infection. That makes sense. The town is a trade hub. Surely the cultists of Moander will use the festival to contaminate the food supplies of the region with the Seeds of Moander."
- "Seeds of Moander are semi-magical parasitic plant seeds. They allow the dead god or one of his powerful cultists to take over the mind of a creature as they germinate and sprout. This kills the host's personality, drive, and artistic sensibilities. The infected have plants growing out of their ears or noses or mouths, and their internal organs slowly transform into vegetable matter."
- "The persons and creatures infected by Moander's influence, and the creatures of its cult, are generally quite sensitive to cold, hence the defenses here."

Finally, the VIMM has a last gift for the characters before they leave:

"Now, before you go, I have something else for you that might help you resist the machinations of Moander's followers. Please open this cabinet, and then open the false back." Behind the false back are two tubes of faintly gleaming and intricately knotted gold wire. "Those are Deft Armbands of Serendipitous Magical Protection, constructed in the ancient Saurial way. They were originally a gift for Gryph't but as he's nowhere to be found, and Moander's cultists are active, you should have them."

Developments

If the characters want to take a long rest they can do so without interruption, and within the sanctum they are immune to the effects of “Resting in the Cormanthor.” If the characters take a long rest in Grypht’s Sanctum, award them the “Late to the Party” story reward. At this point they should be ready to leave the sanctum and go back to Elmwood.

Conclusion

If the characters have gained the “Late to the Party” story reward, read the following:

Realizing that the Greengrass festival is starting, you force march through the night in order to make it on time.

As the characters have finished in the Rimwood, read the following:

As you depart the Rimwood, the thick growth of trees does not seem as threatening and misleading as it did on the way here. Though the VIMM appeared to be an illusion, its gift holds true and the paths out of the dense Rimwood and into the edge of the Cormanthor forest are without threat. Despite the gifts from VIMM, it still takes a few days to pass to the edge of the forest. The timber cutters’ camps are empty – everyone has left for the celebration.

You press on and as you approach through muddy roads, you can see that the preparations for the Greengrass festival were completed in your absence, with banners and archways set along the road leading into the town. As you draw nearer, off-beat music, just out of tune, fills the air.

At the entrance to town, makeshift horse stalls have been erected and plenty of carts are parked, and people fill the streets. Humans, elves, dragonborn, and more are all dressed for the occasion in what passes for finery in greens and golds. And each of them wears a wreath of vines or a crown of flowers. Who knows how many of them could be in Moander’s thrall, with their drunken dancing, the loud and off-beat music, and festive garb disguising the dread god’s influence

As the realization settles over you, a young, dusty-skinned human girl and a gnome approach, each wearing flowery crowns and arms outstretched with coils of vines and flowers. Excitedly they announce, “The food came early and the party’s already going. We made these just for you. Join us!” Do you join the festivities or leave while you still can?

The adventure continues in ELMW01-03 for those brave enough to join the festivities!



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
Archmage	8,400
Beholder Zombie	1,800
Ghast	450
Ghoul	200
Gladiator	1,800
Ice Mephit	100
Knight	700
Ogre Zombie	450
Mage	2,300
White Dragon, Young	2,300
Winter Wolf	700

Non-Combat Awards

Task or accomplishment	XP per Char.
Puzzle	1,200

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.

Part 1: 200 gp. A heavy gold torc, with deep red rubies and shining onyx worth 500 gp. A silver dagger, which is largely worthless, but the large amethyst in the pommel is flawless with deep indigo highlights and worth 500 gp. Interesting Netherese artifacts including a white gold tiara with moonstones, an ancient ivory wand chased with platinum, and an ancient text of Netherese history. To the right collector, this collection would be worth 300 gp.

Part 5: The necromancer has a grotesque jeweled demon skull among her belongings. It is plated with electrum, and is covered in a pave of moonstone, quartz, chalcedony, and obsidian. The horns have an elaborate scrimshaw of runes in infernal. It is always warm to the touch. A particularly depraved sort of collector would pay 1000 gp for it.

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.

Permanent Magic Item Distribution

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.

Bracers Of Defense

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

While wearing these bracers, you gain a +2 bonus to AC if you are wearing no armor and using no shield.

The bracers are two arm-sized tubes of faintly gleaming and intricately knotted gold wire.

Scroll of Blight (4th Level)

Scroll, Rare

This scroll contains a single *blight* spell. A description of this item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Scroll of Speak With Dead (3rd level)

Scroll, Uncommon

This scroll contains a single *speak with dead* spell. A description of this item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Scroll of Bestow Curse (3rd level)

Scroll, Uncommon

This scroll contains a single *bestow curse* spell. A description of this item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Mage Spellbook

Cantrips *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation.*

1st level *detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield.*

2nd level *misty step, suggestion.* **3rd level** *counterspell, fireball, fly.*

4th level *greater invisibility, ice storm.*

5th level *cone of cold.*

Archmage Spellbook

Cantrips *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation, shocking grasp.*

1st level *detect magic, identify, mage armor, magic missile.*

2nd level *detect thoughts, mirror image, misty step.*

3rd level *counterspell, fly, lightning bolt.*

4th level *banishment, fire shield, stoneskin.*

5th level *cone of cold, scrying, wall of force.*

6th level *globe of invulnerability.*

7th level *teleport.*

8th level *mind blank.*

9th level *time stop.*

A Favors and Enmity

If the characters became lost in the Cormanthor, took two long rests in the Rimwood this adventure outside of normal travel, or took a long rest in Gryph't's Sanctum give them the story reward "**Late to the Party**". The consequences of this story reward will be made clear in a future adventure.

Because things have gone awry when the characters get back to Elmwood, they cannot collect their 500 GP from the council or their free spellcasting service from Shayad. Give the PCs the "**We owe you one!**" story reward. They can exchange it for the gold and free spellcasting service in any future Elmwood adventure, provided that Shayad is alive.

If the characters made copies of or told people about the Shield Trading Company maps and scouting notes to the Varlaros Stones, give them the story reward "**Black Listed by the Shield Trading Company.**" This story reward gives them disadvantage on social rolls with Shield Trading Company members.

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 **1,00 XP, 500 gp, and 10 downtime days** for running this session.



DM Appendix: NPC Summary

The following characters feature prominently in this adventure. Other town characters are available as part of the backdrop; please refer to the Elmwood Campaign Narrative for information about them as needed.

Aliana Mathnir, Constable of Elmwood (ah-lee-ANNA MATH-near)

A short, but muscular woman with blue eyes and blond hair that is kept at shoulder length. 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 prior constable was killed. She always offers a smile in greeting, and tries to get along with everyone. She is well liked by all even when she is enforcing the law. Can be found anywhere around town as she likes to patrol the streets when she can. When in town she will help townsfolk with small tasks as she likes to be helpful. The Greengrass festival is the pride of her town, and she's not going to let the festival be cancelled unless it's absolutely necessary.

Roleplaying Aliana: Aliana tries to make sure that all get along with her, even when she is doing something they do not like (such as collecting taxes). She likes to keep a neat and efficiently running town. 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."*

Why she is important to the story: Aliana is part of the driving force to keep the Greengrass festival going as planned. She also offers the characters a monetary reward for finding the cure or way to stop the spread of the blight that is suspected of being caused by Moander.

Shayad, Priestess of Chauntea (shy-AD)

A half-orc of stern countenance, Shayad is an exceedingly calm and rational woman. A pacifist, she has devoted her life to the people and lands around Elmwood. The Greengrass festival is the greatest point of the year for her, and she is both worried about the town and the festival due to the recent troubles of supernatural rot.

Roleplaying Shayad: Shayad is calm and peaceful woman. She does, however, react poorly to those who make comments disrespectful of her heritage or who act surprised that she is a high priestess. She is a pacifist at heart and will try to dissuade others from violence if possible. Though insecure about being in the minority, she is still very confident in her abilities and enjoys the love the village has given her and Chauntea.

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

Why she is important to the story: Shayad is part of the driving force to keep the Greengrass festival going as planned. She offers to reward the characters with a free spellcasting service if they can return with protection before the festival begins.

Drake Holmstrumph

Drake is an aging man who's gradually slowing down. What he lacks in youthful energy, he makes up in experience and wisdom. He lost his whole family in the Burning and it's turned him into a bitter man. However, he's one of the oldest Survivors left in Elmwood and the town looks up to him. His ship is the Red Lock (the bowsprit is a red-haired sprite, who was carved to look like his wife). He is a merchant captain, and is well versed in all the trade routes of the Moonsea. Drake is a fearless captain, and he regularly ran the Phlan blockade to get supplies into the city (for an excellent price).

Roleplaying Drake: 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. He's got a mercenary mindset.

Quote: *"Aye, I can get you where you need to go. The question is, what can ye pay for it?"*

Why he is important to the story: The Survivors of the Burning (the destruction of Elmwood two years ago) are an important power bloc in Elmwood. Drake is desperate to keep anything else from happening to Elmwood just as it's starting to recover.

Thyra Stoneshoulders

Thyra is tall for a dwarf, and has a lovely plump figure. She dresses in nice gowns that show off her figure in deep clear gem colors. She's gracious and has a very sharp wit that's started more than a few arguments. She's the barkeep at the Silvery Gem. Thyra is a refugee from Phlan, and keeps a sketch of Fat Mar (a good friend of hers) in the bar behind her. She used to serve drinks for him at the Laughing Goblin before it was destroyed by Vorgansharax. She's become the unofficial speaker for the Phlan refugees, and enjoys reminiscing about the good times.

Roleplaying Thyra: Thyra is professional and warm as a barkeep, and enjoys getting drawn into philosophical conversations.

Quote: *"Hah, that's a good one. Want another round of cabbage soup? Just like the good old days."*

Why she is important to the story: Thyra supplies important details about the Varlaros Stones.

Yao Seiju, Shield Company Leader (YA-ow See-Juu)

Yao Seiju is a half elf that strongly favors his Shou ancestry. He is handsome, erudite, polite, well-educated, good to his word, and a ruthless businessman. He is popular around town, and known to be generous, and often buying a round for the whole bar at some establishments in town. Yao Seiju is extremely friendly and enjoys chatting up any person of quality that he meets to find out more about what's going on and who's in town. He is substantially invested in the Greengrass festival occurring on time as it is one of the most fertile times for making business deals, and he has already paid for grain from rival towns on the Moonsea to supply the festival.

Roleplaying Yao Seiju: 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. He is willing to do whatever is necessary to make a profit.

Quote: *"If I do this for you, what's in it for me?"*

Why he is important to the story: Yao is one of the council members pushing for the Greengrass festival to not be delayed. He knows about the Varlaros Stones, and offers the characters the scouting reports to lead them there.



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 Holmstrum (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 innkeeper 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

Ape

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 19 (3d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages –

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The ape makes two fist attacks.

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

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 25/50 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Bandit

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-lawful alignment

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages –

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Actions

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

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Knight

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +4, Wis +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Brave. The knight has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Actions

Multiattack. The knight makes two melee attacks. Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

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

Leadership (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). For 1 minute, the knight can utter a special command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature that it can see within 30 feet of it makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand the knight.

A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if the knight is incapacitated.

Reactions

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

Mage

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 40 (9d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +6, History +6

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages any four languages

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Spellcasting. The mage is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to

hit with spell attacks). The mage has the following wizard spells prepared:

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

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *misty step*, *suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fireball*, *fly*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility*, *ice storm*

5th level (1 slot): *cone of cold*

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Gladiator

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 16 (studded leather, shield)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +7, Dex +5, Con +6

Skills Athletics +10, Intimidation +5

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Brave. The gladiator has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the gladiator hits with it (included in the attack).

Actions

Multiattack. The gladiator makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. and range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Shield Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 9 (2d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Reactions

Parry. The gladiator adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the gladiator must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Archmage

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 99 (18d8 + 18)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +6

Skills Arcana +13, History +13

Damage Resistance damage from spells; non magical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing (from stonewood)

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any six languages

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

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

Spellcasting. The archmage is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The arch mage can cast disguise self and invisibility at will and has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, identify, mage armor*, magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, mirror image, misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fly, lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, fire shield, stonewood**

5th level (3 slots): *cone of cold, scrying, wall of force*

6th level (1 slot): *globe of invulnerability*

7th level (1 slot): *teleport*

8th level (1 slot): *mind blank**

9th level (1 slot): *time stop*

*The archmage casts these spells on itself before combat.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Ogre Zombie

Large undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 85 (9d10 + 36)

Speed 30ft.

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

Saving Throws Wis +0

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 8

Languages understands Common and Giant but can't speak

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Ghoul

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Ghast

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 36 (8d8)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Damage Resistances necrotic

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Stench. Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the ghast must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the ghast's Stench for 24 hours.

Turning Defiance. The ghast and any ghouls within 30 feet of it have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Beholder Zombie

Large undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 93 (11d10 + 33)

Speed 0 ft., fly 20ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	8 (+1)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Wis +2

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands Deep Speech and Undercommon but can't speak

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 +the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 14 (4d6) piercing damage.

Eye Ray. The zombie uses a random magical eye ray, choosing a target that it can see within 60 feet of it.

1. **Paralyzing Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.
2. **Fear Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.
3. **Enervation Ray.** The targeted creature must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 36 (8d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
4. **Disintegration Ray.** If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 45 (10d8) force damage. If this damage reduces the creature to 0 hit points, its body becomes a pile of fine gray dust.

If the target is a Large or smaller non magical object or creation of magical force, it is disintegrated without a saving throw. If the target is a Huge or larger non magical object or creation of magical force, this ray disintegrates a 10-foot cube of it.

Ice Mephitis

Small elemental, neutral evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 21 (6d6)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +3

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning, fire

Damage Immunities cold, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Aquan, Auran

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Death Burst. When the mephitis dies, it explodes in a burst of jagged ice. Each creature within 5 feet of it must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4 (1d8) slashing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

False Appearance. While the mephitis remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary shard of ice.

Innate Spellcasting (1/Day). The mephitis can innately cast *fog cloud*, requiring no material components. Its innate spellcasting ability is Charisma.

Actions

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

Frost Breath (Recharge 6). The mephitis exhales a 15-foot cone of cold air. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5 (2d4) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Winter Wolf

Large monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d10 + 20)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities cold

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Giant, Winter Wolf

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The wolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

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

Snow Camouflage. The wolf has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in snowy terrain.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Cold Breath (Recharge 5–6). The wolf exhales a blast of freezing wind in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Young White Dragon

Large dragon, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 133 (14d10 + 56)

Speed 40ft., burrow 20ft., fly 80ft., swim 40ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	6 (-2)	6 (-2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +3, Con +7, Wis +3, Cha +4

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities cold

Senses blindsight 30ft., darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Ice Walk. The dragon can move across and climb icy surfaces without needing to make an ability check. Additionally, difficult terrain composed of ice or snow doesn't cost it extra movement.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) cold damage.

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

Cold Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales an icy blast in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Captain's Log

Before I came to Finder and Crusader, I travelled far seeking knowledge of Moander. One part of my journey was by sea to seek allies. If you can decipher the captain's log, you may count yourself among them in the unending fight against Moander.

Here begins the record of the voyage of the Passed Phrase, a fine two-masted schooner out of Melvaunt. May Umberlee's blessings always be upon this ship and her crew. As Captain 'tis my sacred duty to record all the landmarks we visited and events that transpired upon our journey on the Moonsea.

As is the right and proper custom, whenever we drop the anchor, it will always be with our bowsprit pointing directly at the island in front of us, not covering that island on our sea chart. We don't want the ship to run aground, after all! Also, at no time would any part of our ship ever leave the confines of the sea chart. I'm not brave enough to take my vessel into uncharted waters.

Our voyage began, as all voyages should, with the navigator aiming us straight and true at the brightest star on the horizon. We were facing west, praying for favorable winds.

Our course turned us to the North, where we found ourselves visiting an island filled with fair maidens. Half the crew had declared their undying love and leapt overboard, before the ship's wizard realized that it was the foul magic of the sirens luring them to their deaths! Fortunately we were able to recover most of the men, although I had to lash a few of them to the mast as we sailed away. Okay, okay, I had to lash myself to the mast too.

Making a hasty getaway, I ordered the helmsman to point the ship East. We soon reached a well-known haven for pirates and ne'er-do-wells of all sorts. I'm not ashamed to admit that I have a few such types in my own crew. Still, we had to dip into the emergency rum stash and club a few of the men unconscious to drag them out of the bars and back onto the ship.

The men were all smiles when we reached our next destination, on a heading due South. Quite a pretty island it was, and the natives were friendly. We sold our cargo and made some repairs. Even better, I traded a few worthless trinkets for a treasure map!

X marks the spot, they always say, and 'twas true in this case also. The map was a bit unclear, but I finally figured out the right island to dig on, because it was the only one on my sea chart whose row and column numbers were the same. And they said all those years of Arr-ithmetic wouldn't help me in Captain School! Ha! We pulled up to the island facing East and started digging.

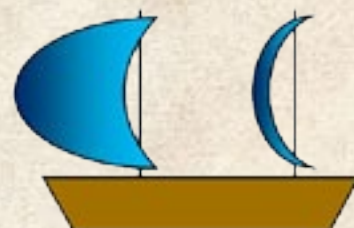
The map turned out to be trickier than I realized, though. Several of the landmarks we needed could only be found when the shadows were cast in the right direction. We had to pivot the ship ninety degrees, but still pointed at the same island, before we were able to read the map properly and dig up the treasure.

Our hold laden with riches, 'twas time to take our ship and crew home. I needed a good night's sleep for sure after all those months at Zee. Er, I mean, sea. We had a few options, but I liked the look of a little island where I could point the ship North and have the star that guided us when we first set out covered by the stern. It's always good luck when you can end a voyage on the same omen where you started it.

And that's the whole story! Mayhap by following this tale and reconstructing the stops we made on our voyage, you can learn something of value.

Sea Chart

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	H	T	R	O	N	♥	T	S	A	E	L	Z
2	M	A	Y	B	L	O	O	D	R	U	N	♣
3	+	Z	F	O	R	K	B	O	X	A	C	E
4	W	O	R	T	H	L	E	S	S	Z	O	T
5	V	U	O	N	Y	X	N	W	♦	F	L	S
6	T	H	E	P	A	S	S	W	O	R	D	!!
7	S	R	O	D	E	🌸	M	A	L	I	C	E
8	★	S	T	A	R	L	I	T	G	O	J	W
9	B	A	Q	E	D	X	☹	☺	☺	V	E	X
10	P	R	E	♠	C	I	P	N	O	R	U	M
11	U	E	W	S	A	U	R	I	A	L	X	Z
12	L	I	V	E	S	O	U	L	H	O	L	Y

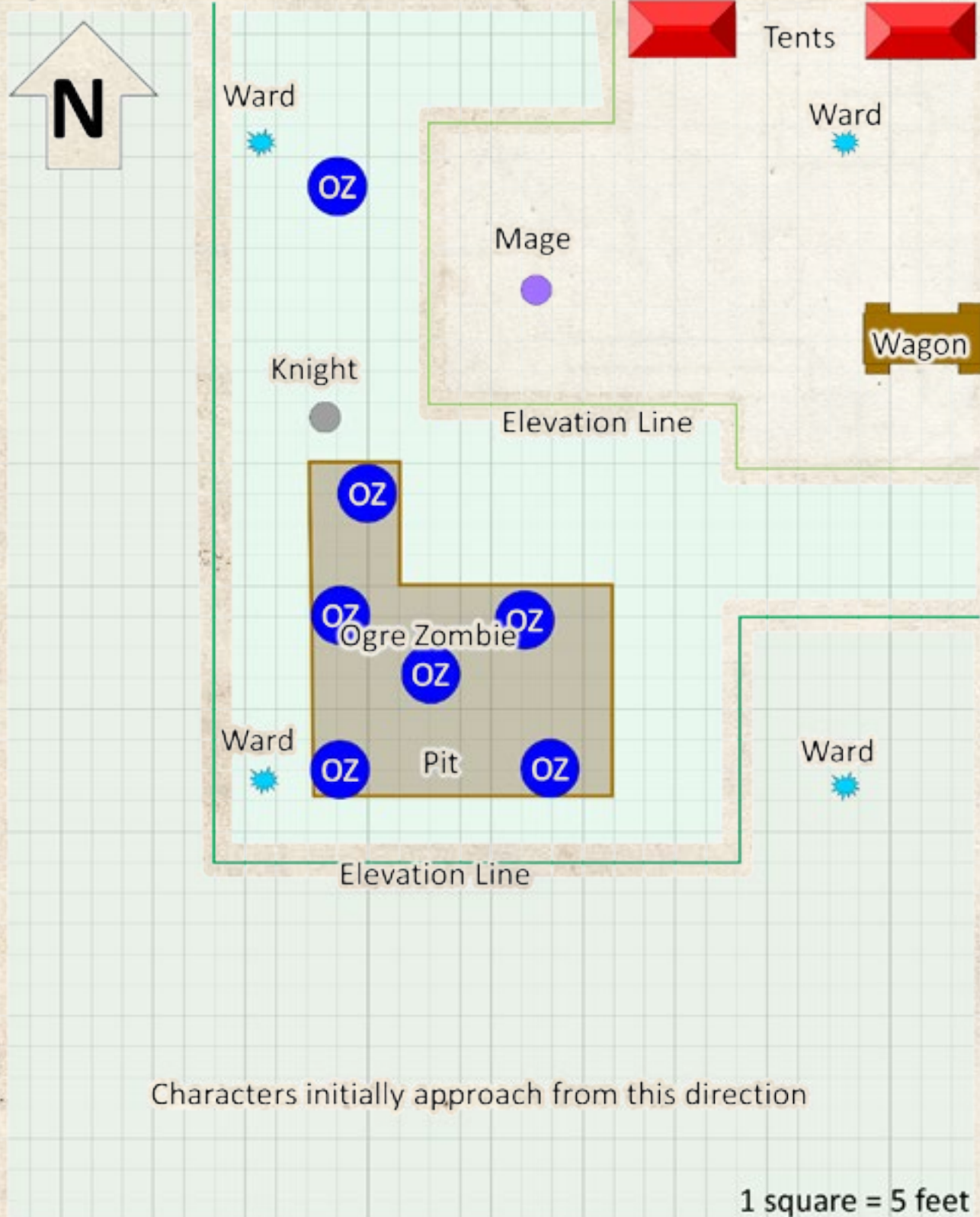


Cut ship out and place on map. Read letters visible in front of the sails.

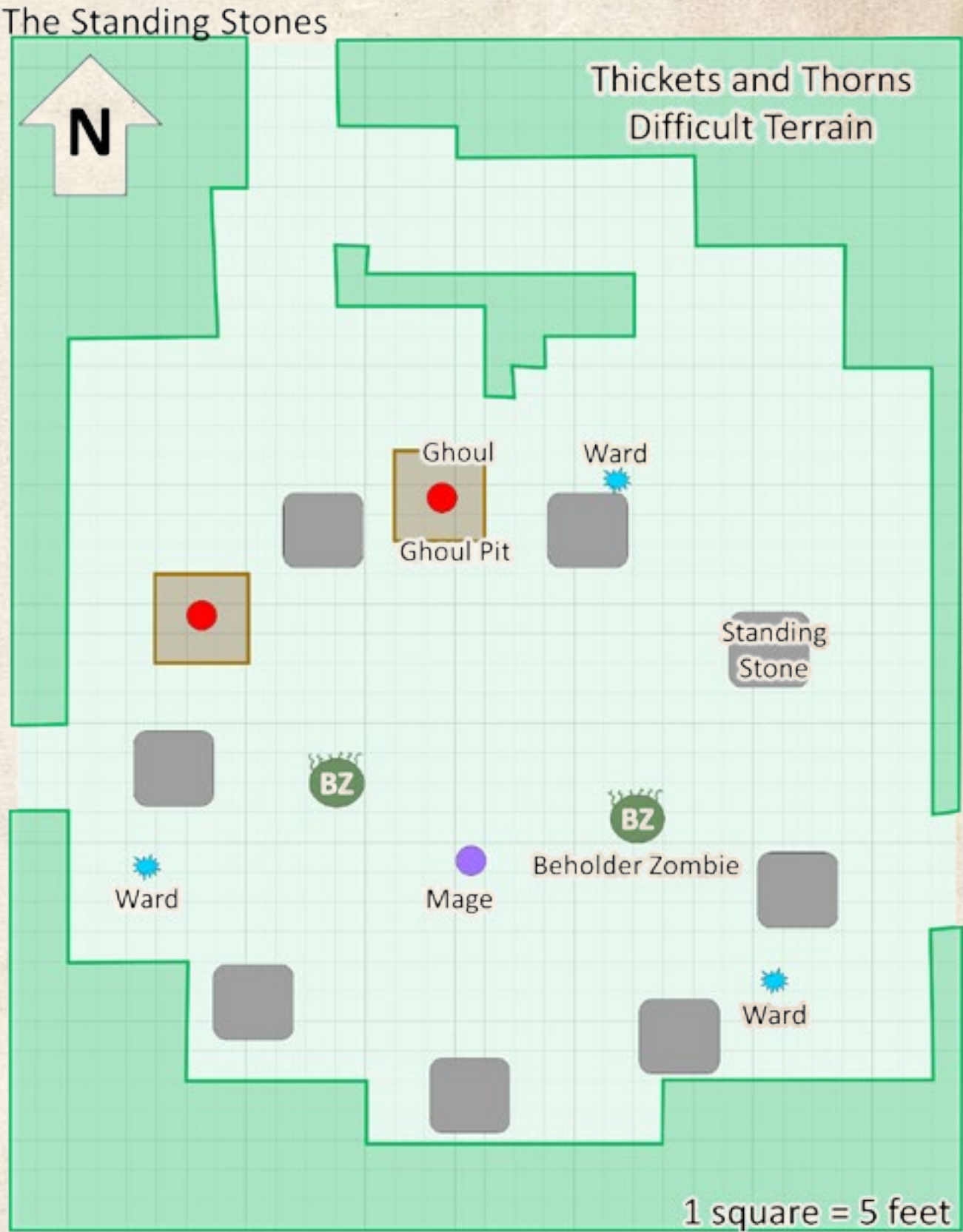
Side view of boat

Map - Part 2 Death Stalks the Woods "Dig Site"

Dig Site

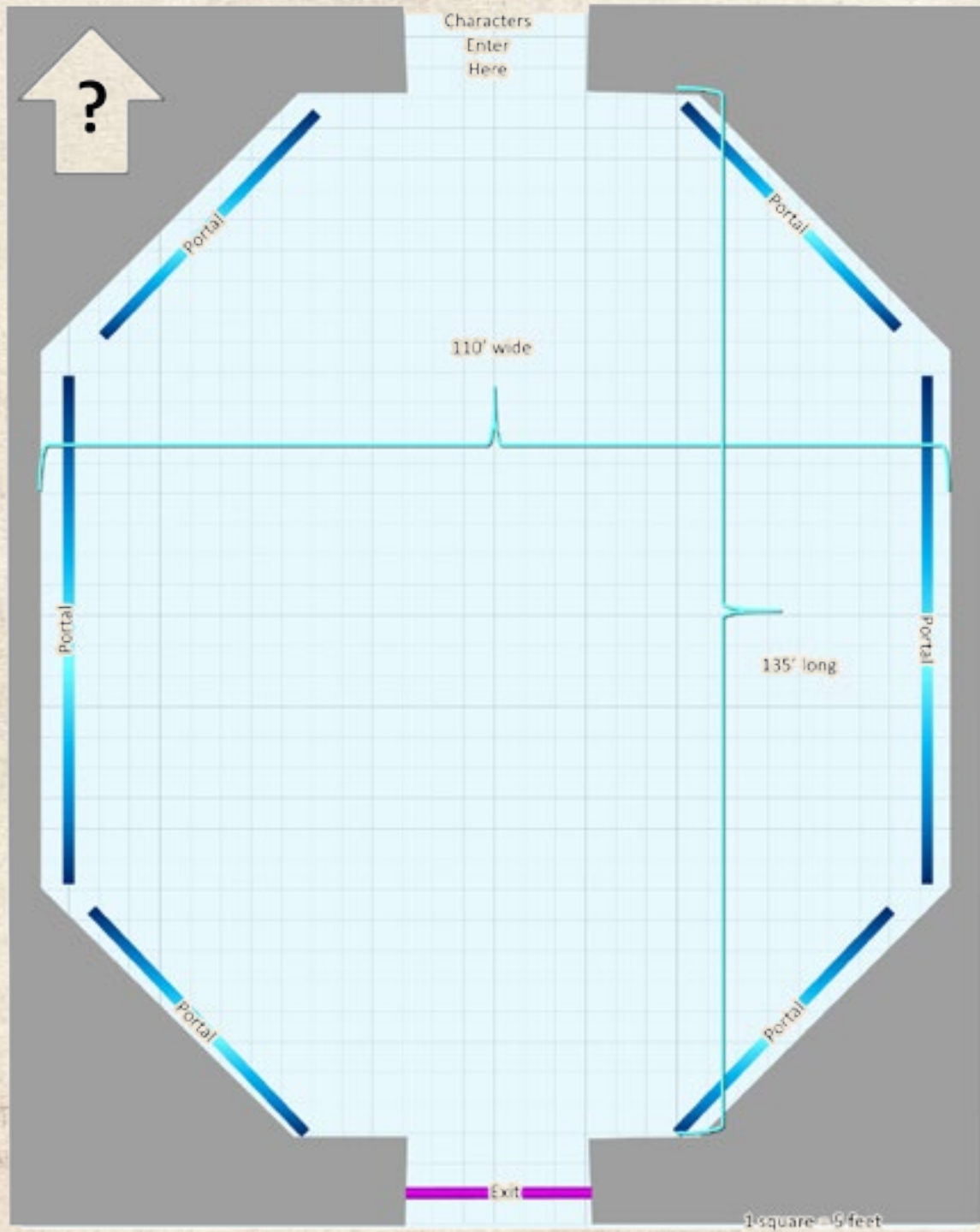


Map - Part 3 We Got Here First "Standing Stones"



Map - Part 4 A Chilly Reception

Chilly Reception

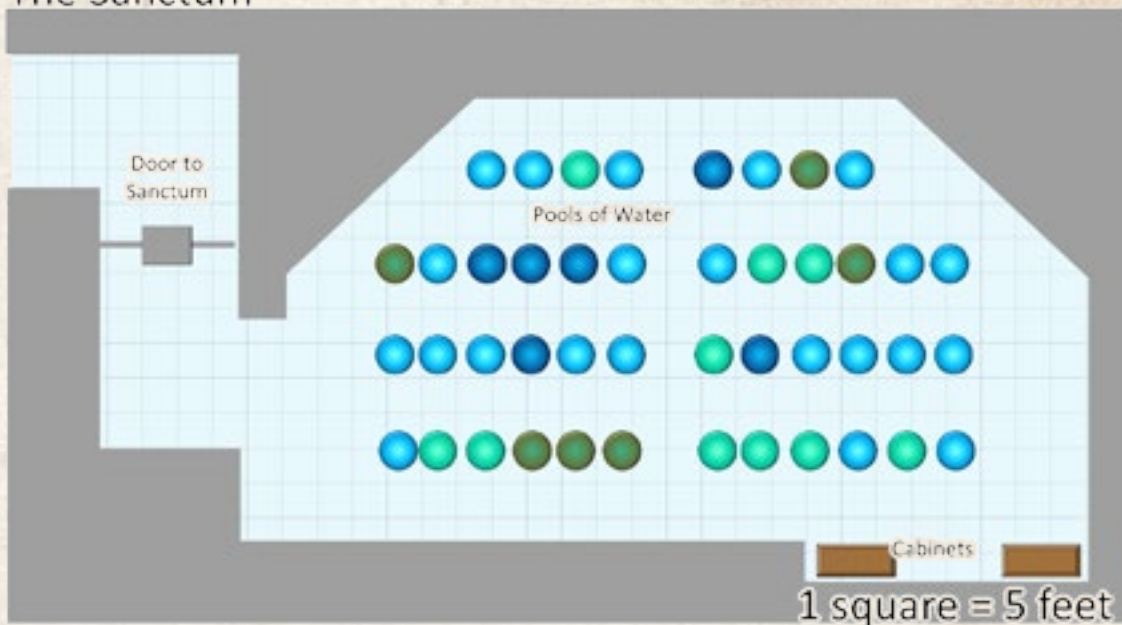


Map - Part 5 Long Sea Voyage and Map - Part 6 Gryph't's Sanctum

Sea Voyage



The Sanctum



Travel Map





We've heard that the cult of Moander is on the move – or maybe the dead god itself. This is particularly troubling to us because a number of our agents fell under it's influence about a century ago and betrayed our order. We're better than that! Watch for Moander – it will seek to take over people and twist them to it's will.

All of the grain in town is rotted. Other adventurers found out that was Moander's work. We need that food for the refugees and everyone else in town. So far, people are sharing food, but with the Greengrass festival starting in just a few days, we need to get this solved, and quick. Look for **Town Constable, Aliana Mathnir**. Word is she's sending people out into the Cormanthor Forest to the Varalos Stones. There's supposed to be some sort of sovereign contingency against Moander in an old wizard's cave there. Aliana's most likely at the **Town Hall**.

Ragnir Nejir

Innkeep of the Silvery Gem



Some adventurers brought news that the grain in our town rotted because of Moander. MOANDER? REALLY? That jerk is suposda be dead. Hundreds of years ago. This is what happens when you leave a job half done!

Anyway, I been watching out for people, no one's starving', least not yet. On the other hand, we still ain't got no grain either, and the whole Greengrass thing is coming up in a tenday or so. I'm suposda marry about seven couples that day. Gonna be sad if they can't have wedding cakes.

Aliana Mathnir the town constable came by. Says she's gotten some intelligence about some sorta anti-Moander contingency out by the Varalos Stones in the Cormanthor. Anyway, someone's gotta go look into it, and I guess that's you. Aliana's having a meeting at **Town Hall** pretty soon – you should go look in on that meeting.

Granthar Copperhelm

Priestess of Tempus



The druids say that the plants near town are wild and evil. I hear that some adventurers say that some dead old god named Moander is the reason why. And that it rotted all of our grain.

It's a bad omen for all of this to be happening when we're almost to the Greengrass festival. It's not just a party – it's a regionally important ceremony. The festival allows various earth and fertility spirits to rejuvenate the land and will increase our harvest. We need it to go off just right, or people are going to starve.

Check in on **Aliana Mathnir** at **Elmwood Hall**. I hear she was talking to Elias over at the Temple of Bane to get funds to organize an expedition out into the Cormanthor to find a cure. The Cormanthor is still twisted since that demon thing out in Hillsfar a year or so ago. Drives folk mad. Watch yourselves there. Plus there's all sorts of heavily armed types wandering around in there.

Rogon Stragoth



We have a huge problem. The Greengrass Festival is going to be starting soon and we have no grain for bread or cakes, and no local beer. This isn't just a party-planning problem! If Elmwood looks like we aren't self-sufficient, Mulmaster is just going to take us over as a protectorate. We'd lose all local autonomy and our tax burden would skyrocket. No one wants to see Elmwood get turned into "Little Mulmaster". PLUS do you have ANY idea what that would do to local trade? One of the reasons Elmwood has grown so much so fast is that it's taken on shipping from Phlan and Hillsfar (and, truthfully Mulmaster) because the corruption level here is low and it's a safe town. If we get taken over, Mulmaster will take all our trade business over because they don't care if we starve!

I'm ranting. Sorry. I'm really frightened. Talk to **Aliana Mathnir** at **Elmwood Hall**. Yao Seiju, my boss at the Shield Trading Company, is donating some high level business intelligence to solving this problem.

Norin Steelstrike

Shield Trading Company, Undersecretary



People still can't pay their mortgages that they owe the bank. The brewer and the baker have no grain, the inns have no beer and bread. Since we hold most of the mortgages, we're going to be penniless if they default on those loans – which means I can't pay the Black Network. It's really in the Zhentarim's best interest for you to help me. We have to fix the curse on the grain. And BEFORE the Greengrass festival or we're going to lose a bunch of trade contracts.

I've spent the last week up in Mulmaster lying as fast as I can to cover the bank's losses here in Elmwood. I've taken out a couple of personal loans to start covering up the debts. If this goes any further south, I'm just going to have to change my name and move to Waterdeep and hope my sisters can't catch me.

My spies say that the town Constable, **Aliana Mathnir** is having a little get together at **Elmwood Hall** to talk options about the rotted grain thing. Get in on that.

Fiorei Semyon

Semyon and Daughters Bank, Mulmaster



I hope you'll be able to make it to a town council meeting we're having at **Elmwood Hall** to discuss how Moander's influence has caused the grain in Elmwood to rot and how we can reverse it.

The sage's information that there was a contingency at the wizard Gryph's sanctum at the Varalos Stones was critical. We'd like to send you and a small group into the Cormanthor forest. The map the sage gave you to the Varalos Stones was imprecise, but a local has come forward with an exact map.

Aliana Mathnir

Town Constable