

THE BATTLE OF ELMWOOD

**DAVE BRAINARD, BEN HEISLER, AND PAIGE LEITMAN, WITH AMPLE ASSISTANCE
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Adventure Code: ELMW1-3



As the Greengrass Festival gets under way, one might have a sneaking suspicion that something is awry. Will the adventurers be able to save their new home in the Battle of Elmwood?

A four-hour adventure for 5th-10th Level Characters

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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 ELMW1-3 The Battle of Elmwood , a D&D Adventurers League adventure, Part Three of the Misaligned Trilogy

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

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

The D&D Adventurers League

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

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

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

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

www.dndadventurersleague.org

Preparing the Adventure

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

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

Before Play at the Table

Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information:

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

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

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

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

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

Adjusting the Adventure

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

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

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

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

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

DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

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

Running the Adventure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Downtime and Lifestyle

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

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

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

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

Spellcasting Services

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

Acolyte Background

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

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

Spellcasting Services

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

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

Disease, Death, and Recovery

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

Disease, Poison, and Other Debilitating Effects

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

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

Death

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

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

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

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

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

Elmwood Overview

Though Elmwood has been a peaceful neighbor of Mulmaster for centuries, it was destroyed two years ago by a mishandled fire devastation orb 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, and the Underdark. The little town is growing as it rebuilds, and 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) had other problems with the fall of Zhentil Keep, and the threat of Moander was forgotten for more immediate needs. Moander then rose from death a few decades ago, but 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 empowered some of its ancient sites and mad cult members. In Elmwood, this means 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 went to Elmwood before the Celebration of Greengrass, one of Chauntea's high holy days, and discovered the town's grain was magically contaminated. The local town council asked the adventurers to consult a sage who lives on the River Lis. After an encounter with the awakened forest guardians, the sage directed the adventurers to investigate a lost temple of Moander in the Rimwood. There, the characters checked for any unusual activity at this lost temple to Moander, and brought back a seed for the sage to study. The adventurers found a lot wrong with the local plants and fought through the overgrowth to extract a seed. Upon returning, the sage used a divining ritual to determine the source of the contamination. From the ritual, the sage learned that some echo of Moander's power is stirring and that the characters must warn Elmwood. This warning to find a way to stop the spread of Moander's corruption is the last the sage is able to give before the ritual drives him 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.

In the previous adventure (ELMW1-2: *The Lost Sanctum*), the characters were asked by the Elmwood Council to go into the Rimwood to Grypht's sanctum and retrieve a ritual that would protect Elmwood from Moander. After tangling with some necromancers, along with the guards and puzzles of the Sanctum itself, the characters were given the ritual. They arrive in Elmwood just as the Greengrass festival is starting.

Characters who have the "Late to the Party" story award from ELMW1-2 start this scenario with a level of exhaustion, a consequence of rushing back to Elmwood.

Adventure Overview

This adventure consists of five parts. See DM Appendix 1 to help with understanding the flow of the adventure. Encounters 3, 4, and 5 have multiple options, and the players much choose which path they will take in each encounter.

Part 1 The Greengrass Festival. The adventurers find Elmwood in the midst of the Greengrass Festival, with the cult of Moander already hard at work stealthily capturing citizens and leaders. The crowds of people are oblivious to the threat, and proudly wear garlands and flower crowns which colt hide cult influence. The adventurers meet with Constable Aliana Mathnir, who fears the worst, and asks them to gather up the council and keep an eye out for trouble.

Part 2 Finding the Council Members. The adventurers move about town, trying to locate the councilors. As they do so, they have a chance to notice some unusual events, and to intervene as one of the councilors is spirited away by cultists of Moander. After the characters rescue the councilor, the Constable and rescued councilors start devising a plan to deal with the threat. As the discussion reaches a close, the cultists launch an all-out attack on Elmwood.

Part 3 When Cultists Attack. The adventurers rush to blunt the onslaught. They must choose to either secure the Temple of Chauntea by completing a ritual to protect it from Moander, or to gather up villagers and bring them to safety while the council takes care of the other.

Part 4 Gearing Up. With many of the townsfolk gathered in the safety of the Temple, the Constable asks the adventurers to help prepare the counterattack. They must choose whether to escort a group of militia to the armory so they can equip for the battle, or to retrieve a cache of fireworks and alchemist's fire from the Stone's Dwarf Inn to burn away Moander's growth.

Part 5 The Final Push. The party makes their way into the Middens of Elmwood, where the Voice of Moander has been raising monstrous plant creatures from the trash. After breaking through her final defenses, the adventurers confront the cult leader to put an end to the menace facing Elmwood.

Pacing the Adventure

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

Stage	Playing Time
Part 1: The Greengrass Festival	15 mins
Part 2: Finding the Council Members	50 mins
Part 3: When Cultists Attack	50 mins
Part 4a/5a: Gearing Up/Final Push	50 mins
OR Part 4b/5b: Gearing Up/Final Push	50 mins
Part 5c: Voice of Moander	50 mins
Conclusion	5 mins

Adventure Hooks

Ideally, the characters begin this adventure immediately following ELMW 1-2 The Lost Sanctum. If this is the case, then they have spent the past few days returning to Elmwood from Gryph't's Sanctum, carrying vital information about the return of the dark god Moander, and more importantly, a ritual that can protect against the Darkbringer's malevolence. The adventurers start at the edge of town with various celebrations around them.

Otherwise, the adventurers find themselves in Elmwood with the Greengrass Festival in full swing. After a few minutes of enjoying the celebration, the adventurers are contacted by Constable Aliana Mathnir. She is very well-informed regarding the heroes of the Moonsea region, and calls one of the adventurers by name (either the one with the greatest Renown total, or the most visually distinctive) and asks for help. The Constable is concerned that followers of a dead god are gathering in Elmwood, and she would like the adventurers help her keep an eye out for potential trouble.



PART 1. THE GREENGRASS FESTIVAL

Expected Duration: 15 minutes.

The adventure begins at midday on the first of Kythorn, when Elmwood celebrates the Greengrass Festival. If the adventurers have just completed ELMW 1-2 *The Lost Sanctum*, and have successfully collected the information about Moander from Grypht's sanctum, as well as the ritual to ward off the Darkbringer's influence. They have spent several days traveling through the Cormanthor forest, and have just completed a long rest, unless they begin play with the "Late to the Party" story reward from ELMW1-2, in which case they do not gain the benefits of a long rest and instead begin play with one level of exhaustion from the forced march to return to Elmwood by the start of the Greengrass Festival.

The adventurers who have not played ELMW 1-2 *The Lost Sanctum* are approached by Constable Aliana Mathnir. She has just learned of the threat posed by the Cult of Moander, and recognizes the adventurers thanks to their renown. Adjust interactions with the Constable appropriately if this is the case.

General Features

The Common Gardens has the following general features:

Light and Visibility. It is a bright, sunny spring day, with a few fluffy white clouds drifting overhead. A light haze of pollen gives everything a golden glow.

Sounds. Singing, cheering, and the happy babble of crowds. A group of musicians tune their instruments in a bandstand near a wide area for dancing, while hawkers, entertainers and food stalls shout for attention.

Smells. The scent of flowers is heavy throughout the town. Near the food stalls, this scent is complemented by the aroma of roasting meat, baking bread, sweet honey and exotic spices.

If the characters have or have not played the previous adventures in this series (ELMW1-1 and 1-2) then their perceptions of Elmwood and the reactions of the townsfolk will vary. If you have a group that has a mix of characters that have and have not played these adventures, the proceed as if all characters had played the adventures, and explain as needed to make the narrative make sense to all of the players and characters.

Proceed with the following text if characters have completed ELMW1-2:

It has been a hard few days of travel to get back to Elmwood, with sporadic thunderstorms on the edge of town that have churned the road to thick mud. Fortunately, the sky is clear as Elmwood comes into sight. Bright green leaves burst from the orchards and fields surrounding the rebuilt town, and the air is heavy with the powerful scent of flowers and fresh growth. The broad earthen streets of Elmwood are packed with throngs of people who are singing, dancing, eating and drinking to celebrate the beginning of spring. Locals and visitors alike are bedecked with garlands and crowns of flowers and greenery.

If the characters have not played previous Elmwood adventures, use this introduction:

You've heard of a great party all up and down the Moonsea occurring at the rebuilt town of Elmwood, the Greengrass Festival. A celebration of Chauntea, life, love, marriage, and the beginning of spring await you as you spy the town on the Moonsea, surrounded by orchards. As you approach there is the powerful scent of flowers and fresh growth. The broad earthen streets of Elmwood are packed with throngs of people, singing, dancing, eating and drinking to celebrate the beginning of spring. Everyone is wearing garlands and crowns of flowers and greenery. As you arrive, you are beckoned in to join in the fun!

The Greengrass Festival is the grand celebration in Elmwood that draws in families from nearby farms, as well as travelers and merchants from the Moonsea and beyond to celebrate spring and the rebirth of the town. It is a long-standing tradition for attendees to wear flowers in their hair and about their bodies, which should be troubling to characters who know that thralls of Moander often have plants growing from their bodies. Adventurers who have played ELMW1-2 should be in a hurry to find Constable Aliana Mathnir and report their findings. As they search the crowds, use the following brief encounters to bring the festival to life:

- A rush of dancers sweep through the party, separating them briefly as they drag the adventurers through a few steps.
- A lovely halfling woman offers the adventurers a sample of delicious-smelling seed cakes. (Make note of which characters eat some; those characters must make a DC 10 Constitution save when they confront the Voice of the Darkbringer to avoid gaining a level of exhaustion as the Dark Seeds they ate attempt to subvert them).
- A group of musicians are tuning their instruments. They seem to be drunk, as they are all far off key.
- A group of dwarves hand the adventurers mugs of herb-scented green beer from one of the kegs on their wagon. It is delicious and refreshing.

After these encounters, the adventurers find Constable Aliana Mathnir as she patrols the festival, keeping an eye on things and working to stop trouble before it starts. When she spots the adventurers, she hurries them into a relatively quiet alcove to receive their report. Once she has the information from Grypht's sanctum, she asks the adventurers to help her gather the councilors (give them Player Handout 1) at the Elmwood Hall so they can decide what to do about the Darkbringer's threat.

If the table does not have characters who have played a previous Elmwood adventure, the Constable seeks them out based on their renown. She then hurries them into a relatively quiet alcove

and explains that there has been a threat leveled against the town by followers of the Darkbringer, Moander. An adventurer that the Elmswood Council hired to find a solution was found outside of town, suffering from grievous wounds. He was brought into the church of Chauntea to recover. With a new group of adventurers in town, she'd like to hire the characters to help defend the town quietly. She offers to pay the party 750 gp to work for her through the Greengrass Festival, at least until she is certain of safety. If the characters agree, she asks the adventurers to help her gather the councilors (give them Player Handout 1) at the Elmwood Hall by the time the next band starts up so they can decide what to do about the Darkbringer's threat.

Roleplaying Aliana Mathnir

Aliana is a short and muscular dark-skinned woman with blue eyes and brown hair that is kept at shoulder length. She has a scar along her face that she when cultists activated a devastation orb in the town two years ago. 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 efficient 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."

If the characters have played ELMW1-2, read or paraphrase the following before explaining the Constable's offer:

Through a break in the crowd, you see the Constable talking down a pair of red-faced rowdies on the verge of coming to blows. Aliana Mathnir is a dark-skinned human woman, notable for her welcoming smile, slightly marred by a burn scar down her cheek. She has an air of command which easily cows the much larger toughs. As the ruffians slink away, Aliana catches your eye, and her face brightens as she cocks her chin toward a sheltered nook. The Constable seems to desire a quiet word with you.

Once the adventurers have a chance to share what they learned in Grypht's sanctum and to accept the Constable's offer to aid the town again, the Constable asks them to help gather the other councilors. Since the cult's plans are already in motion, she asks that the heroes spend no more than an hour gathering who they can. They should head to the Elmwood Hall (which she points out to the characters if they are new to town) when the band starts playing the beginning of the dance. Read or paraphrase the following if they relay what they learned in ELMW1-2:

"This news you bring is truly troubling. Thank the merciful gods that you returned before these madmen did anything more than taint our grain. Please, help me gather the other councilors to the Elmwood Hall so we can decide how to respond. Time is pressing, so join us there when the band starts playing, regardless of who you have found."

OR, if characters did not play previous Elmwood adventures, read or paraphrase the following before explaining the Constable's offer:

Through a break in the crowd, you see the Constable talking down a pair of red-faced rowdies on the verge of coming to blows. Aliana Mathnir is a dark-skinned human woman, notable for her welcoming smile, slightly marred by a burn scar down her cheek. She has an air of command which easily cows the much larger toughs. As the ruffians slink away, Aliana catches your eye, and her face brightens as she cocks her chin toward a sheltered nook. The Constable seems to desire a quiet word with you.

"Thank the merciful gods that you came to join us! We have suspicions that the Dark-bringer's minions are here to disrupt the festival. Please, help me gather the other councilors to the Elmwood Hall so we can decide how to respond to these potential threats. Time is pressing, so join us there when the band starts playing, regardless of who you have found."



PART 2. FINDING THE COUNCILORS

Expected Duration: 50 minutes.

The adventurers make their way about the Greengrass Festival seeking out the other councilors. As they do so, Moander cultists are also gathering up councilors in order to corrupt them.

Based on **Player Handout 1: List of Council Members**, let the characters decide whom to seek out. Regardless of their decisions, run each of the following encounters in order, inserting the chosen council member where appropriate. The adventurers will only have time to find three of the councilors before the band starts playing, signaling the time to meet the Constable at the Elmwood Hall.

If the adventurers elect to “divide and conquer” by splitting up, allow them to do so. Choose one of the adventurers (using whatever method you like) to find the first councilor, while the rest of the party keeps searching; once the first encounter has resolved, choose another adventurer to find the second councilor. Hopefully, that encounter raises some suspicions and the players decide to reconvene; if not, choose another adventurer to find the third councilor (ideally the one least capable of handling a combat encounter solo) and allow them to find the other adventurers relatively quickly. If that adventurer chooses to jump in alone, the other adventurers can hear the sounds of combat and get involved a round or two.

Use some of the following interactions to spice up the transitions from scene to scene:

- A gaggle of children rush past, shrieking as they chase a clockwork bird trailing colorful streamers.
- An elderly woman places garlands of flowers around the necks of passersby, including the adventurers, if they let her (Make note of any characters who accept; those characters must make a DC 10 Constitution save when they confront the Voice of the Darkbringer to avoid gaining a level of exhaustion as the Dark Seeds in the flowers attempt to subvert them).

- An elven man offers samples of freshly fried fish.
- A group of young women chatter happily about being married that evening in the traditional community wedding.

Easy-Peasy

The first councilor is right where Aliana expected them to be, doing what she expected them to be doing. It might take a few minutes to pull the councilor away from whatever they are up to, but once the adventurers mention the Constable’s name and the danger facing the town, the council member agrees to head to the Elmwood Hall shortly.

Bad Apple

The second councilor is not where the adventurers expect them to be. Asking around with a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check allows a character to quickly learn that the councilor they seek headed off with some festival-goers a few hours ago, walking towards the Middens. If the check is failed, the adventurers are still asking around when the councilor they seek comes ambling up.

This councilor has been implanted with a Dark Seed, and has been sent back to the festival with orders to bring other councilors to the Middens so they can be corrupted as well. Any adventurer with a passive Insight of 13 or higher immediately recognizes that the councilor is acting odd. During their interactions, roleplay or describe the counselor as glassy-eyed, spaced-out, and generally robotic. If the adventurers tell the councilor that they are to escort them to a council meeting, the council member is quite amenable to going along.

Should the adventurers accuse the councilor of acting odd, or mention Moander or the cult, the council member takes off running for the Middens. If the adventurers subdue the councilor publicly, word quickly spreads and they have disadvantage on subsequent checks dealing with party-goers.

If the adventurers let the councilor go, they hurry off to inform the cult that meddling heroes are about. Otherwise, a cultist witnesses the heroes escorting or taking down the councilor. In either case, the cult advances their plans in response to the adventurers' actions.

Rotten to the Core

The third councilor is not where the adventurers expect them to be, either. Asking around with a successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check allows a character to quickly learn that the councilor they seek just walked off with a some festival-goers a few minutes before, heading thataway. Similarly, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check allows a character to spot the councilor heading around a building with a couple of celebrants, just as they are suspiciously yanked out of sight by an unseen party.

Rounding the corner, you see a dozen festival-goers, gaily decked in garlands and crowns of flowers. They are huddled around a cart filled to overflowing with apple cores, chicken bones, and other garbage. There is no sign of (councilor), but when the revelers spot you, they draw hidden blades and rush to attack!

Twelve **Darkbringer Cultists** are led by a **Darkbringer Druid** (the druid has already cast charm person on the councilor, so has used a 1st level spell slot). Each of the cultists is a willing follower of Moander, and has been implanted with a Dark Seed containing a fragment of the god's twisted power. When a Darkbringer Cultist or the Darkbringer Druid is reduced to 0 hit points, the Dark Seed consumes the last of their life energy and grows rapidly, bursting from the body as a **Needle Blight** or a **Vine Blight** (in the case of the Darkbringer Cultists) or a **Shambling Mound** (in the case of the Darkbringer Druid) at the start of the cultist's next turn.

A **Vine Blight** sprouts if the cultist fell within 10' of an enemy, a **Needle Blight** if the cultist fell more than 10' away from the closest enemy; once six of a particular kind of blight have sprouted, all further cultists turn into the other, regardless of distance from enemies.

The process of a person being consumed and sprouting a blight is horrific; upon witnessing the transformation for the first time, a character must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or become Frightened until the end of their next turn.

Confronted with capable heroes, the followers of the Darkbringer are overjoyed by the chance to capture and corrupt such powerful individuals. The cultists open up with a volley of yellow mold flasks to soften up the PCs, while the druid focuses on dividing the heroes with spells. All are confident of rebirth upon death, and fight without fear. The cultists do not seek to kill the characters, far preferring to take them alive so they can join the ranks of those who worship Moander.

General Features

Light. This fight occurs late in the day under a clear sky, so there is ample sunlight.

Sounds. While this is farther away from the stage, the sounds of revelry are all around.

Houses. A row of neat houses stand on either side of a broad, packed earth road. The homeowners are all out enjoying the festival, so there are no witnesses.

Fences. These low fences demarcate neat gardens, but climbing over them in combat takes an extra square of movement.

Hand-cart. This large vehicle filled with trash stands at the corner, facing toward the Middens. The unconscious councilor is partly buried in the cart.

Adjusting the Adventure

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

- **Very Weak Party:** remove 6 **Darkbringer Cultists**, 3 **Vine Blights** and 3 **Needle Blight**; none of the Darkbringer Cultists have yellow mold spore flasks
- **Weak Party:** remove 4 **Darkbringer Cultists**, 2 **Vine Blights**, and 2 **Needle Blight**; only two of the cultists have yellow mold spore flasks
- **Strong Party:** add 2 **Darkbringer Berserkers**; after a berserker is reduced to 0 hit points, at the start of the berserker's next turn a gas spore erupts from its body and immediately explodes. A DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check can reveal the danger posed by getting infected by a gas spore's disease.
- **Very Strong Party:** add 3 **Darkbringer Berserkers**, who grow into gas spores upon death, as above

Developments

Once the party defeats the cultists, they can find the kidnapped councilor unconscious but otherwise unharmed, buried in the trash with a number of strange pods placed about their head and face. Just as the adventurers pull the councilor out, one of the pods bursts in a spray of seeds which quickly burrow into the trash.

Once the heroes get the councilor standing, the sound of sprightly dance music drifts from the town center, which is the signal to rendezvous with the Constable.

Treasure

The council member asks that the party make a brief stop at their home, which is on the way to Elmwood Hall. The councilor fetches two vials of antitoxin and a potion of fire breath as a reward.





PART 3. WHEN CULTISTS ATTACK

Expected Duration: 50 minutes

Council Meeting

The Constable has gathered three councilors and an acolyte of Chauntea, in addition to whomever the adventurers managed to bring in. When they hear of the cult attack and their monstrous transformations, the council begins devising a plan to deal with the threat. The heroes may take a short rest while the council talks, and are welcome to contribute to the discussion. If the characters do not know about Moander already, distribute Player Handout 2 with them as the council members share what they know.

The council plan boils down to three steps: gather the townsfolk in a central location; arm the militia to secure the area; and enact the ritual the adventurers (either the characters or the lone survivor) retrieved to create a ward against Moander's influence (if the characters do not have the ritual, then the acolyte of Chauntea reports that the survivor has awoken and has shared the ritual with the priestess there). Unfortunately, the cultists have been making their own plans, and as the councilors finalize their plans, screams ring out from the town. The attack has begun!

The Constable leaps to her feet, drawing her sword. The other councilors rise as well, some nervous, others angry, but all determined to protect their home.

"No time for more debate. We need to secure the Temple of Chauntea; it is the only place with the reagents necessary to complete the protective ritual (you brought back/the lone survivor returned with)! We must also gather up as many of the people as we can and get them to safety, here in the Hall or at the Temple. You take one job, we'll handle the other."

The adventurers have a choice of mission:

- Rush to the Temple of Chauntea to secure it. Once secure, they'll need to protect it while either they or the priestess enact Grypht's ritual against Moander.
- Or, they may head into the chaos to rally townsfolk and bring them to safety.

If the adventurers wish to secure the Temple, and do not have a ritual caster among them, a councilor tells them that Kamik Felicity, one of the priests, should be there. Hopefully, he will be able to perform the ritual.

If the characters wish to secure the temple but have not played ELMW1-2, a survivor from the group that brought the ritual back is convalescing there and will be able to help.

3A: Secure the Temple of Chauntea

The adventurers rush into the madness that has engulfed the Greengrass Festival. They are to make their way to the Temple of Chauntea, gather the necessary reagents from the stores there, and complete Grypht's ritual to create a secure refuge against the Darkbringer's forces.

The Greengrass Festival has descended into utter madness. All around, cultists decked out in festive greenery menace the townsfolk, herding them south and east. The Constable and the other councilors spread out into the crowds, rallying the people of Elmwood as they go. You must make your way to the Temple of Chauntea and use (Grypht's/the) ritual to create a refuge for the noncombatants. The knowledge that their loved ones are safe will allow the defenders of Elmwood to fight all the harder.

The adventurers are able to make their way to the Temple of Chauntea with little resistance. The cultists seem focused on moving groups of villagers out of town, and avoid those who appear able to put up active resistance. The adventurers are met at the door by one of the priests of Chauntea, Kamik Felicity, a tall, red-haired elf. If any of

the adventurers have participated in ELMW1-1 or ELMW1-2, Kamik recognizes them, and is relieved that help has arrived. Otherwise, it takes a successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince him to let armed strangers into the sanctuary; mentioning Constable Aliana Manthir grants advantage on this check.

Inside, thirty townsfolk mill about, anxious and frightened. Kamik is happy to bring out the temple's supply of reagents, and is willing to act as either the primary ritual caster, or a secondary participant. See the Appendix: Monster/NPC Statistics for Kamik's abilities. Grypht's ritual can protect an area up to 100 feet on a side, which is enough to encompass the sanctuary and the courtyard.

If the characters did not play ELMW1-2, there is also a bandaged human man with scraggly, curly black hair and ripped robes. He is wounded and paranoid. Kamik introduces him as the wizard Golan, the only survivor of a past adventuring party that the Elmwood Council hired to seek the protective rituals from the Rimwood in the Cormanthor. Despite his paranoia, Golan does have the ritual and has begun making preparations with Kamik, but he is very concerned that the minions of the Darkbringer will be alerted as soon as they begin. The priest and the mage will need the characters to protect them and the innocents if they are to succeed.

Roleplaying Golan

Golan is a young mage and has gotten more than he bargained for, and is worse off for it. Scarred and scared, he was unprepared to face the minions of a dead god and a frighteningly powerful group of necromancers so early in his career. He is eager to help, and also eager to warn others of the necromancers' threat to the area.

Quote: *"If the Darkbringers don't get us, the forces of Tyranne Epaline will. The necromancers were none too pleased we took their treasure from the Rimwood."*

General Features

Sanctuary. The sanctuary of the Temple of Chauntea is a wide, stone-floored area with thick, wooden pillars supporting a 30-foot high roof. It is used as a threshing floor during the harvest.

Furnishings. Furnishings are light and easy to stack. Feel free to add them being broken by area spells and missed weapon attacks to add to the chaos and destruction in the narrative.

Doorways. There is a doorway, large enough for a wagon to pass, in each wall, but the only way to secure them is with light wooden shutters, meant to keep out weather more than people. Breaking the shutters open requires a DC 13 Strength check.

Light. The Sanctuary is lit by continual flame spells, and is considered well-lit. Outside, it is still daytime and natural sunlight.

Performing the ritual takes a total of 1 hour and 10 minutes, during which time the caster(s) cannot leave the area, and must devote full time to it like casting other ritual magic (it is suggested that the characters have Kamik and/or Golan perform the ritual if they are present). After 45 minutes, the Voice of Moander becomes aware of the gathering power, and dispatches a force of a **Darkbringer Druid** and 7 **Darkbringer Cultists**, accompanied by a **shambling mound**, to disrupt it. They attack from two sides, bursting through the shutters. Adventurers who are outside may attempt to engage the cultists before they breach the sanctuary, so prepare to adjust the encounter appropriately.

The cultists also carry two Dark Seed packs, which they hurl into the crowd of villagers huddled in the middle of the sanctuary. Each Dark Seed pack corrupts four commoners, who then do what they can to disrupt the ritual, focusing on grappling the ritual casters and moving them outside the sanctuary.

Two of the **Darkbringer Cultists** (choose randomly) are hosts to fully-developed Dark Seeds; when slain, the seeds consume the last of their life energy and grow rapidly into **Darkbringer Horrors**, bursting out at the beginning of the cultist's next turn and acting immediately.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very Weak Party:** replace the **Shambling Mound** with a **Darkbringer Horror**, replace three **Darkbringer Cultists** with **Darkbringer Druids**; none of the cultists transform into **Darkbringer Horrors**
- **Weak Party:** replace the **Shambling Mound** with a **Darkbringer Grabber**, and only two of the cultists transform into **Darkbringer Horrors**
- **Strong Party:** add a second **Shambling Mound**
- **Very Strong Party:** add 2 **Shambling Mounds**, and a total of 3 cultists transform into **Darkbringer Horrors**.

Developments

If the party successfully repels the cultist attack without the ritual being disrupted, any corrupted townsfolk fall unconscious and the Dark Seeds infecting them soon die. The ritual also cleanses any dark seeds the adventures may have consumed earlier in the adventure. With the Temple of Chauntea as an unassailable stronghold, the Constable is able to rally the town's defenders and start to mount a counter-attack. Kamik rewards the party with a scroll of restoration, as well as using his remaining spells to help the party recover.

If the ritual is disrupted but the cultists are driven away, the ritual must be started anew. It is eventually successful, but repelling additional attackers depletes (Golan if he is present and) Kamik's stores, leaving him nothing to reward the party.

In either case, the Constable meets the adventurers at the temple shortly thereafter with a new mission. Proceed to Part 4.

3B Rescue the Townsfolk

Read or paraphrase the following:

The Greengrass Festival has descended into utter madness. All around, cultists bedecked with festive greenery menace the townsfolk, herding them south and east toward the Downs. The Constable leads the priests of the council toward the Temple of Chauntea, hoping to enact Gryph's ritual and create a refuge.

It has been a harrowing hour, gathering up small groups of villagers and directing them toward safe havens. The cultists have been herding people south and east, but have thus far avoided facing armed opposition. You have seen members of the town council and deputies leading people to the Elmwood Hall or the Temple of Chauntea, but now you spot a deputy leading a large group west, toward the Firewood Glade in the forest. Very strange...

General Features

Clearing. This encounter takes place in Firewood Glade, a clearing in the woods roughly 60 feet across.

Trail. A 10-foot wide trail leads through the forest towards Elmwood. Beyond the edge of the clearing, the woods are thick with undergrowth, providing plenty of cover for the Darkbringer's forces. Treat the undergrowth as difficult terrain that provides cover.

Light. The sun is low in the sky but it is still normal light conditions outside.

Deputy Umbero Marivaldi has seen the horde of plant monsters massing on the edge of the Middens, and does not like his odds of survival. Unfortunately, he was spotted by a group of villagers as he legged it out of town, and has acquired a growing train of terrified followers.

Umbero is a Turami man from the shore of the Inner Sea who ended up in Elmwood decades ago and survived the Burning. He is very large, has close cropped hair, and has his ears pierced numerous times. He has a sour look on his face, and is arrogant, rude, and unkempt. When the adventurers catch up with him in the Firewood Glade, he is trying to convince the villagers to let him leave “to scout” so he can desert in peace. Unfortunately for him, Umbero’s chosen escape route has taken him directly into a force of Darkbringer plant monsters poised to outflank Elmwood’s defenders.

Four **Darkbringer Druids** lead a force of 4 **Awakened Trees** and 8 **Needle Blights**, attacking from either side of the glade. The druids open the attack by hurling two Dark Seed packs into the crowd of villagers, corrupting four commoners who join the fight by attempting to grapple adventurers and drag them into the surrounding forest. Umbero Marivaldi (a veteran) makes a show of protecting the townsfolk, but as soon as an opening presents itself, he flees back down the trail. Characters with a Passive Insight of 12 or higher can recognize Umbero’s growing terror; he can be persuaded to stay and fight by taking an action to make a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very Weak Party:** replace the **Darkbringer Druids** with **Darkbringer Cultists**, remove two of the **Awakened Trees** and four **Needle Blights**
- **Weak Party:** remove one **Darkbringer Druid** and one **Awakened Trees**
- **Strong Party:** add three **Darkbringer Druids**
- **Very Strong Party:** add three **Darkbringer Druids** and two **Awakened Trees**.”

Development

If the party manages to defeat the cultists and to persuade Deputy Umbero Marivaldi to return to his duties defending the town, they can escort the villagers to the Temple of Chauntea, where Constable Aliana Mathnir welcomes their return, as well that of her deputy. She provides the party with a scroll of restoration and two potions of healing from the temple stores.

If the party allowed Umbero to flee, he had plundered the Constable’s cache of supplies before going. In either case, the Constable has another mission for the heroes. Proceed to Part 4.



PART 4. GEARING UP

Expected duration: 10 minutes (4a) or 40 minutes (4b).

With the Temple of Chauntea secure and some of the people safe, the Constable meets up with the heroes to make the next move in retaking the town. She offers them another choice of missions: recover incendiaries from the Stone's Dwarf Inn, OR escort a group of militia to the armory to get arms and armor.

Your short breather in the relative safety of the Temple of Chauntea is interrupted by the Constable's arrival. A trickle of dried blood mars her cheek, but her voice is strong and sure.

"You have my thanks for all you have done, getting the people of Elmwood to safety. At last we can begin our counterattack. There are many who would fight, but they lack weapons. Unfortunately, a strong force of the enemy bars the way to the armory.

"I also believe that Tinker Nimbledigit, our resident wizard, has a cache of incendiaries which would be very helpful in burning our way into the enemy stronghold. Unfortunately, we have lost contact with him, and we cannot wait for him to disarm whatever tricks he has in place at the Stone's Dwarf Inn.

"So, which of these little jaunts appeals to you?"

The adventurers have a choice between escorting a group of militia to the armory, battling their way through enemy forces, or getting past Tinker Nimbledigit's tricks and traps at the Stone's Dwarf Inn. Their choice here also determines which encounter they will face in Part 5. If the adventurers choose to undertake the "Arm the Militia" mission (a combat encounter), in Part 5 they will face the "Slimes, Molds, and Fungi" encounter (a skill-based encounter); if they choose the "Fetch the Fireworks" mission (a skill-based encounter), then in Part 5 they will face "Gulguthra!" (a combat encounter).

4A Fetch the Fireworks

The Stone's Dwarf Inn is an inn on the southern edge of the town. The gnome wizard Tinker Nimbledigit runs it in a fairly haphazard way, but he is well loved for his humor and good cheer.

General Features

Construction. The Stone's Dwarf Inn is three story solid stone inn with on no rational floorplan, and is full of odd angles and stairways that go nowhere.

Magical. The building radiates magic if examined.

The Stone Dwarf. Outside of the building is an entirely too lifelike stone dwarf.

When the group of characters approach the building, read or paraphrase the following:

Thanks to the Constable clearing the way, you make it to the Stone's Dwarf Inn virtually unchallenged. The place is shuttered up tight. As you walk up, the front door opens a crack, and a wizened gnome peers out, barking 'Go away! We aren't home!' before slamming the door closed. There is the sound of a heavy bar slipping into place.

This is an illusion created by Tinker. If the adventurers spend more than five minutes at the door, the illusion repeats. The door is locked, DC 18 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check to pick the lock, or DC Strength check to bash it in. Once the door is breached, a glyph of warding is triggered: the two characters closest to the door must make DC 14 Charisma saving throws or be banished, as the spell banishment, for 1 minute. When they return, a magic mouth on the dwarf statue says "*Mind your manners or your next time-out may be a bit chilly.*"

Once through the front door, the heroes find themselves in an eclectic common room, filled with knickknacks, curios, and bric-a-brac. It doesn't take long to look through the common room, kitchen, and half-dozen guest rooms, leaving a small locked door at the bottom of a short flight of stairs the only unexplored option. The first adventurer to set foot on the stairs must make a DC 14 Charisma

save or be teleported to the center of the Temple Gardens, leaving all their clothing and gear behind.

Another magic mouth, this one on a stuffed alligator hanging from the ceiling, says, *"You'll find your embarrassed friend in the temple gardens. Don't come back if you value breathing."*

The victim of the trap finds themselves standing naked in the gardens. They may get some pants and a basic weapon from villagers sheltering in the temple, and can rejoin the party by making a DC 10 ability check of some sort to avoid the cultists (Athletics to outrun them, Bluff to seem corrupted, Perception to notice approaching danger, ect). On a failed check, the adventurer suffers 2d10 damage from a run-in with the cult on the way.

The door itself is exquisitely crafted, with a massive, complex-looking lock. An illusion of an incredibly complex trap overlays the lock mechanism, one that seems like it would defy any attempt to bypass. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the trap to be an illusion, but if anyone says the word "illusion", the trap fades away and a dozen glyphs fade into view on the doorframe, similar to the ones that held the banishment and teleportation traps. They are fakes, however, a fact that can be revealed by a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check. The lock itself requires a DC 18 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check, or a DC 20 Strength check to bash in.

Inside is a crowded workroom, filled with all kinds of tools, from watchmakers' implements to gardening hoes. There are several illusions covering portions of the room; each can be found with a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

- An illusory rug covering a wooden chest sitting in a hole in the floor in the northwestern corner of the room. Inside the chest are a variety of valuable-looking, but ultimately worthless, trinkets, such as plated jewelry, glass gems, and brass coins.
- An illusion covering a large portion of the east wall. A section of shelving that appears to hold rusty pipes of various lengths and widths actually hold a large number of fireworks and several cases of alchemist's fire. An adventurer who passes within 5' of this section may notice

the smell of smokepowder with a DC 16 passive Perception.

- An illusion conceals a stout door on the north wall. If a creature touches the door, a magic mouth angrily shouts *"You have until the count of five to leave this place. Linger and die! 5. 4. 3. 2. 1."* When the countdown reaches one, a glyph of warding containing a cloud kill spell goes off, filling the room with toxic gas. Any creature in the room takes 5d8 poison damage, DC 14 Constitution save for half damage. The cloud moves away from the door at 10 feet per round, into vents Tinker installed under the stairs so the gas wouldn't get into the kitchen or common room.
- The door is strongly locked and barred; if the adventurers decide to go through it, Tinker uses a peephole to get a look at them. If he recognizes any adventurers from ELMW1-1 or ELMW1-2, he uses the message cantrip to tell a bad joke, judging their reaction to determine whether they are corrupted or not. An example: *"A ham sandwich walks into the Wayfarer's Rest and orders an ale. Halser Taletreader says 'Sorry, we don't serve food here.'"* It takes a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince Nimble to open up; any player who actually laughed at the joke has advantage on the check. Nimble and his wife are sheltering a dozen small children hidden away in his safe room. He is happy to hear that the Temple of Chauntea is secure and promises to join the Constable shortly with his fireworks.

Developments

If the adventurers bring the incendiaries back to the Temple of Chauntea, they can take a short rest while they are adapted for martial use. If they manage to convince Nimble to join the Constable at the Temple, he gives them two flasks of alchemist's fire. Otherwise, Nimble comes in later, having contacted the Constable via sending. In either case, while the adventurers are taking a well-earned rest, he uses alchemist's fire to turn the festive fireworks into incendiary rockets. Proceed to Part 5, in which the adventurers will face the encounter "Gulguthra!" before moving on to "The Voice of Moander."

4B Arm the Militia

Many townsfolk are willing to fight, but have no weapons or armor. The Constable asks the adventurers to protect them as they make their way to the Shrine of Tempus, where Hammer Granthar Copperhelm keeps an armory hidden beneath the altar.

Read the following when the characters take on this mission:

Two dozen hard-eyed men and women stand before you. Some carry broom handles, broken chairs, a few even have large rocks. They are all determined to fight, but to survive long, they will need proper gear. Fortunately, the local priest of Tempus is the sort to be well-prepared.

By this point, the cult has gained a more aggressive footing. Roving bands of marauders infest Elmwood, and a strong force is between the Temple of Chauntea and the Shrine to Tempus. If the adventurers have a scout ranging ahead, allow that character to make a DC 11 Dexterity (Stealth) check to get close enough to the shrine to spot the cultists ransacking the place. Otherwise, the adventurers and their charges just stumble into the area.

Features of the Area

Open Air. The Shrine to Tempus is an open-air altar, surrounded by a ring of large pillars

Pillars. The pillars are hung with broken shields, shattered blades, and tattered battle-flags. Any creature that is pushed into a pillar takes 1d10 piercing damage from the jagged shards adorning it.

Hallow. The entire area is under the effects of a hallow spell which provides all creatures within immunity to being Frightened. (Also note that that it hedges out celestials, elementals, fey, fiends, and undead; this includes paladin mounts and familiars).

Altar. Under the altar is a large hidden chamber containing weapons, armor and shields to outfit fifty. It takes a combined Strength of 35 to move the altar (note that as long as enough townsfolk survive, they can help to move the altar).

Light. The sun is setting and there is dim light.

A **Darkbringer Druid** commands four **Darkbringer Berserkers** and three **Corrupted Owlbears** captured in the forest. The berserkers are host to fully developed Dark Seeds; when they are reduced to 0 hit points, it consumes the last of their life energy to quickly grow into a gas spore, which explodes at the start of the berserker's next turn.

The militia members are guards, but without equipment they would be easy prey for the cultists. If necessary, they can snatch up weapons dropped by cultists, but until properly equipped, they are not effective combatants.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very Weak Party:** remove one **Darkbringer Berserker**, one **gas spore**, and two of the **Corrupted Owlbears**
- **Weak Party:** Remove two **Corrupted Owlbears**
- **Strong Party:** Add a **Darkbringer Berserker** and a **gas spore**
- **Very Strong Party:** The **Darkbringer Druid** also has a fully-developed Dark Seed; when the druid is reduced to 0 hit points, it grows into a **Shambling Mound** at the start of the druid's next turn.

Developments

Once the cultists are eliminated, the adventurers can open up the altar cache, allowing the militia to arm themselves. If at least 20 of the militia survive, the Constable gives the adventurers a potion of greater healing out of the medical supplies she had set aside for the mission. If the party lost more than four of the militia to the cultists' attack, the supplies are used trying to get the fallen back into the fight.

In either case, the party may take a short rest. The Constable wants them as fit as possible for the counterattack she is planning. Proceed to Part 5, where the adventurers will encounter "Slimes, Molds, and Fungi" before moving on to "The Voice of Moander."



PART 5. THE FINAL PUSH

Expected duration: 10 minutes (5a) or 40 minutes (5b). 50 min (5c).

The townsfolk are as safe as they can be, and those willing to fight are as equipped as possible. The Constable has identified the Middens as the most likely location for the cult's leaders, so she has ordered an all-or-nothing attack.

If the adventurers completed **4B: Arm the Militia** encounter, Elmwood's fighters cut a path through the cult's lines for them. However, the party must deal with some insidious traps before they can confront the Voice of Moander and break the cult once and for all. Proceed to the encounter **5A: Slimes, Molds, and Fungi**.

If the adventurers completed the **4A: Retrieve Fireworks** encounter, the adventurers must fight their way through the cult's line, but the makeshift artillery barrage has burned away many defenses. Proceed to the encounter **5B: "Guluthra!"**

Once the heroes have made their way past either the active or passive defenses, they face the leader of the cult in encounter **5C: The Voice of Moander**.

The sun has set after hours of fighting, but there seems to be no end to the cultists and their abominations. Lurching out of the smoke, Constable Aliana Mathnir smiles when she sees you, then winces as she opens a scabbed-over gash on her cheek.

"We seem to have dealt with most of the human cultists, but more and bigger plant monsters keep joining the fray. With the light dying, I fear that we are lost if we cannot stop these creatures at their source. The cultists seem to be protecting something in the Middens, which also seems to be the birthing place of these foul things. What say you, my friends: one last push? For Elmwood!"

General Features

The following general features apply to all encounters in part 5.

The Middens. The encounters take place in the Middens. The ground is spongy and treacherous, with broken farm implements, derelict furniture, and all manner of garbage strewn about. Large heaps of compost are connected by rough paths the farmers use to drop off scraps and pick up fertilizer.

Light and Visibility. The sun has set, the red sky providing dim light, for now. Intermittent fires sputter among the damp undergrowth (if the adventurers completed the Retrieve Fireworks encounter, there are a number of larger fires and many charred-out patches).

Sounds. The battle rages all around, with clashing arms, screaming wounded, desperate battlecries and a strange, rustling susurrus of the plant creatures coming from all sides. Occasionally, bits of odd chanting can be heard from deeper in the Middens.

Smells. Drifts of smoke and the tang of spilled blood do little to distract from the overwhelming smell of damp rot and decay that pervades the Middens, like a compost heap turned over after a long, wet spring.

5A Guluthra!

If the adventurers completed the "Retrieve Fireworks" encounter, read or paraphrase the following:

Bloody and near exhaustion, the few remaining defenders of Elmwood jog southeast. The last rays of the setting sun turn Aliana Mathnir's sword into a blazing torch as she raises it high. 'This ends NOW!' The Constable breaks into a run, charging straight at the cultists and monsters massed around the garbage Middens. With a ragged cry, the rest of the Elmwood's fighters lurch after her. A screaming flurry of rockets suddenly shoots past, exploding in huge blossoms of flame. The disoriented cultists scatter, but hulking masses of filth burst out of the heaps of trash. Time for action!

As the few other defenders of Elmwood engage the remaining cultists, the adventurers must deal with a more monstrous threat: otyughs raised from the filth of the Middens and infused with the Darkbringer's power by the Voice of Moander.

Three **Darkbringer Otyughs** burst out of the compost heaps around the party, surrounding them. The south-eastern edge of the map is a raging inferno as marked on the tactical map; any creatures entering or ending their turn in the area suffer 2d10 fire damage.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very Weak Party:** remove one **Darkbringer Otyugh**; the Otyughs are hit by the fireworks barrage, and start the encounter with 80 hit points each
- **Weak Party:** The **Otyughs** are hit by the fireworks barrage, and start the encounter with 80 hit points each
- **Strong Party:** The **Darkbringer Otyughs** surprise the party
- **Very Strong Party:** The **Darkbringer Otyughs** surprise the party; in addition, when they burst from the garbage heaps, they fling burning garbage in all directions, dealing 4d6 bludgeoning damage and 2d6 fire damage to other creatures within 20 feet; a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw allows a creature to take half damage.

Treasure

The characters find a *Staff of the Woodlands* among their vanquished foes. Note that this treasure is not available twice. Characters can only do encounter 5A OR 5B, but not both.

Developments

After the characters have bypassed the challenges here, proceed to section 5C The Voice of Moander.

5B Slimes, Molds and Fungi

If the adventurers completed the "Arm the Militia" encounter, read or paraphrase the following:

Bloody and near exhaustion, the remaining defenders of Elmwood jog southeast. The last rays of the setting sun turn Aliana Mathnir's sword into a blazing torch as she raises it high.

'This ends NOW!' The Constable breaks into a run, charging straight at the cultists and monsters massed around the garbage Middens. With a roar, the people of Elmwood slam into the writhing horde. They batter a gap in the line of cultists and monstrosities. Now, it is up to you to confront the source of this madness!"

The Constable and other defenders of Elmwood have engaged the bulk of the cult defenders, but the Voice of Moander has had days to augment the defenses of her lair. Whichever path the adventurers take, they encounter a patch of yellow mold, carefully cultivated under a layer of mulch to protect it from the sun, and a tripwire trap that releases a barrage of clay pots filled with green slime. Note that the dim light conditions apply disadvantage on Perception checks, which reduces Passive Perception by 5. If the party is using a brighter light source, it will be impossible for them to attempt stealth checks against the Voice of Moander.

The approach to the Voice of Moander weaves among massive piles and heaps of trash and rotting compost. Pathways roughly 15 feet wide meander among the mounds, limiting vision to no more than 60 feet at any given time.

Should the adventurers elect to clamber over the mounds rather than go between, they find them to be slow going, and they still need to cross the trapped area between heaps. They can manage a glimpse of a twisted tree near the south-eastern edge of the Middens, which seems to be source of the chanting.

Yellow Mold: The outer approach to the Voice of Moander's lair is carpeted with patches of yellow mold, carefully protected from the sun by thin layers of mulch. Unless the adventurers are prodding the ground ahead of them, whoever is in front steps right into a patch.

When disturbed, yellow mold ejects a cloud of spores that fill a 10-foot cube centered on the disturbed patch. Any creature in the area must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) poison damage and become poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the creature takes 5 (1d10) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a successful save.

Sunlight or any amount of fire damage instantly destroys one patch of yellow mold.

Green Slime Launcher: The inner approach to the Voice of Moander's lair is spiderwebbed with tripwires. It takes a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice a slightly-raised tripwire among the mulch, filth, and tangled vines that fill the Middens; note that dim light imposes disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks based on sight. If the trap is set off, a hail of clay pots rains down in a 30' radius, centered on the triggering character, which shatter in sprays of green slime. Each creature in the area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw; on a failure, the creature is exposed to green slime; if the creature fails by 5 or more they suffer a direct hit, and any non-magical armor they are wearing has its AC bonus permanently reduced by 1.

Green slime deals 5 (1d10) acid damage when a creature is first exposed, and the creature takes the damage again at the start of each of its turns until the slime is scraped off or destroyed. Against wood or metal, green slime deals 11 (2d10) acid damage each round, and any nonmagical wood or metal weapon or tool used to scrape off the slime is effectively destroyed.

Sunlight, any effect that cures disease, and any effect that deals cold, fire, or radiant damage destroys a patch of green slime.

Treasure

The characters find a *Staff of the Woodlands* among the trash in the Middens. Note that this treasure is not available twice. Characters can only do encounter 5A OR 5B, but not both.

Developments

After the characters have bypassed the challenges here, proceed to section **5C The Voice of Moander**.

5C The Voice of Moander

After battling through the cult's last defenses, the adventurers can finally confront the Voice of Moander, the source of all the evil that has beset Elmwood. At the southeast edge of the Middens, the Voice raises wave after wave of plant creatures to hurl against the defenders of Elmwood. If the adventurers are not carrying a light source, they can get within 60 feet before needing to make a group Dexterity (Stealth) check to get closer. If they are carrying lights, or fail to beat the passive Perception of either the Voice of Moander (who has disadvantage on her Passive Perception due to her chanting) or of her corrupted treant companion. If successful in their stealth, the Voice is on the ground, but if unsuccessful, she begins hidden among the treant's foliage. Read or paraphrase the following, adjusting as necessary depending upon whether the Voice of Moander is hidden in the treant or not.

The **Corrupted Treant** has already used its *Animate Trees* ability, but the animated trees have already been destroyed. The **Voice of Moander** (drow priestess of Lolth) has lost her *Summon Demon* ability once she severed her connection to the Demon Goddess.

Pressing deeper into the Middens, the sounds of battle fade behind the heaps of trash. The sound of chanting is clearer now, a high, hoarse voice calling out maddening syllables. A line of trees stands on the far side of a clear area, but the voice seems to be coming from the top of a larger tree a few yards away from the rest, covered in broad shelves of fungus and patches of rot.

The Voice of Moander tries to remain hidden in the branches of her corrupted treant ally, using her spells to support its attacks by summoning beasts and disrupting the enemy. If the party managed to approach without alerting her, she uses her *levitate* ability on her first turn to get among the branches and take cover.

While in the corrupted treant's branches, the Voice of Moander has half cover (+2 to AC and Dexterity saving throws), and enough concealment to hide if she so desires. She moves about the corrupted treant's branches as if they were difficult

terrain, but does not need to make an ability check to do so as the treant is actively helping her; she may improve her cover to three-quarters (+4 to AC and Dexterity saving throws) by moving to put the bulk of the treant's crown between herself and an enemy. She tends to remain 20 feet off the ground.

In order to confront the Voice of Moander in melee while she is so protected, a character must climb up the treant by first making a DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check to clamber up into its branches, which will provoke an attack of opportunity from the corrupted treant. Moving about on the treant requires the same check, and the character moves at half speed while climbing. The corrupted treant has advantage on any attacks it makes against an enemy in its branches, and focuses its attacks on such creatures, as they are the greatest threat to the Voice of Moander.

The Voice of Moander and her allies fight to the death. Once she is slain, the plant monsters are no longer motivated by her malice, and simply wander off to a damp spot to put down roots. The surviving cultists scatter.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very Weak Party:** replace the **Corrupted Treant** with a **Shambling Mound**, the **Voice of Moander** has already used all of her 4th and 5th level spell slots
- **Weak Party:** Replace the **Corrupted Treant** with a **Shambling Mound**; the **Voice of Moander** has already used her 5th level spell slots
- **Strong Party:** The **Corrupted Treant** has the use of its Animate Trees ability, and has already animated two nearby trees. The **Voice of Moander** uses minor illusion to make the chanting come from one of the animated trees, and she and **Corrupted Treant** wait to act until the adventurers engage the trees
- **Very Strong Party:** The **Corrupted Treant** has the use of its Animate Trees ability, and has already animated two nearby trees. The **Voice of Moander** uses minor illusion to make the chanting come from one of the animated trees, and she and **Corrupted Treant** wait to act until the adventurers engage the trees. Add a **Shambling Mound** which enters the battle in the second round, and approaches from the rear.

Conclusion

When the Voice of Moander falls, read or paraphrase the following:

With a last, desperate shriek to a dead god, the Voice of Moander falls. As she does, the animated plants suddenly lose their malevolent thirst for slaughter and simply wander aimlessly.

Lacking their horrific allies, the people of Elmwood are able to drive off or kill the remaining followers of the Darkbringer over the course of the night. The death toll was surprisingly light, as the cultists were more interested in converts than slaughter, but many brave defenders were still slain battling the plant monsters.

When the last of the mindless plant monsters is cut down, Constable Aliana Mathnir addresses the massed defenders of Elmwood. 'You have all done well. Our home is safe. Now get some rest!' Ignoring her own order, the Constable hurries on to deal with putting the town back together, pausing briefly to give you a tired, thankful smile.

In the days that follow, Elmwood's Greengrass festival goes on at a much

subdued level, but the party does go on. Catlin Littleleaf of Druid Brewery makes sure everyone has more than enough libations, and thanks to your efforts, there's enough food for everyone. There are many marriages over the next few days and you are invited to all of them as the heroes of Elmwood.

As the Greengrass festival winds to a close, Aliana Mathir and some of the rest of the townsfolk seek you out.

"Look, I've been talking to folks and," she rubs her chin as she smiles at you. "And folks want you to stick around. I've been talking to the platt-writer, the guy who figures out property boundaries, and we'd like to give you a little piece of Elmwood for your very own if you'd like to stay here, and maybe build a house or a shop on it, you know?" She gives you a grin. "You make this place feel a little safer. It's been a rough couple of years, and you're just the kind of people we want to have here as we rebuild."

The constable gives you a wry smile, and offers out a brand-new property deed.

"Welcome home, adventurer."



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
Awakened Tree	450
Corrupted Owlbear	700
Corrupted Treant	5,000
Darkbringer Berserker	450
Darkbringer Cultist	50
Darkbringer Druid	450
Darkbringer Grabber	1,100
Darkbringer Horror	700
Darkbringer Otyugh	1,800
Elmwood Commoner	25
Gas Spore	100
Needle Blight	50
Shambling Mound	1,800
Vine Blight	100
Voice of Moander	3,900

Non-Combat Awards

Task or accomplishment	XP per Char.
Every Non-Named Elmwood Citizen (commoners and guards) that survives an encounter	100 xp
Kamik Felicity survives uninfected	200 xp
Golan Survives uninfected	200 xp
Deputy Umbero Marivaldi survives uninfected	200 xp
Finding and saving Tinker and the children	500 xp
Survive Encounter 5A: Slimes, Molds, and Fungi	750 xp

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.

The grateful townsfolk take up a collection to reward the heroes who saved Elmwood, which, combined with some loot found on the cultists, totals 3,000 GP.

Character with the story award "**We Owe You One**" from ELMW1-2 receive an extra 500 GP and can cross that portion of the story reward off.

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

Permanent magic items are divided according to a system. 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.

Staff of the Woodlands

Staff, rare (requires attunement by a druid)

This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. While holding it, you have a +2 bonus to spell attack rolls.

The staff has 10 charges for the following properties. It regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff loses its properties and becomes a nonmagical quarterstaff.

Spells. You can use an action to expend 1 or more of the staff's charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *animal friendship* (1 charge), *awaken* (5 charges), *barkskin* (2 charges), *locate animals or plants* (2 charges), *speak with animals* (1 charge), *speak with plants* (3 charges), or *wall of thorns* (6 charges).

You can also use an action to cast the *pass without trace* spell from the staff without using any charges.

Tree Form. You can use an action to plant one end of the staff in fertile earth and expend 1 charge to transform the staff into a healthy tree. The tree is 60 feet tall and has a 5-foot-diameter trunk, and its branches at the top spread out in a 20-foot radius. The tree appears ordinary but radiates a faint aura of transmutation magic if targeted by detect magic. While touching the tree and using another action to speak its command, word, you return the staff to its normal form. Any creature in the tree falls when it reverts to a staff

Scroll of Lesser Restoration (3rd Level)

Scroll, Uncommon

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

Potion of Healing

Potion, Uncommon

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

Potion of Greater Healing

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

Potion of Fire Breath

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

Antitoxin x2

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

Alchemists Fire x2

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

Favors and Enmity

Characters that successfully completed this adventure earn the story reward "**Home Sweet Home**". Reward them with Player Handout 3.

This character has been given a plot of land in Elmwood by the Elmwood Council to use as their permanent residence. This plot of land can be either sized for a comfortably large house in the main area of the town of Elmwood OR about an acre of bare land out in the farmlands for some crops or a ranch, a barn, and a farmhouse. Future Elmwood adventures will have more information about how to upgrade this residence.

Renown

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

Downtime

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

DM Rewards

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

Appendix:

NPC / Monster Statistics

Awakened Tree

Huge plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 59 (7d12+14)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	6 (-2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (3d6+4) bludgeoning damage

Corrupted Owlbear

Large plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 59 (7d10+21)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	2 (-4)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, frightened, paralyzed

Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

Languages -

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The corrupted owlbear makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its claws.

Beak *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (1d10+5) piercing damage.

Claws *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8+5) slashing damage.

Corrupted Treant

Huge plant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 138 (12d12+60)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	8 (-1)	21 (+5)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Condition Immunities yellow mold spores

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Druidic, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

False Appearance. While the corrupted treant remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal tree.

Siege Monster. The treant deals double damage to objects and structures.

Actions

Multiattack. The corrupted treant makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (3d6+6) bludgeoning damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 60/180 ft., one target. Hit: 28 (4d10+6) bludgeoning damage.

Animate Trees (1/day). The corrupted treant magically animates one or two trees it can see within 60' of it. These trees have the same statistics as a treant, except they have Intelligence and Charisma scores of 1, they can't speak, and they have only the Slam action option. An animated tree acts as an ally of the treant. The tree remains animate for 1 day or until it dies; until the treant dies or is more than 120 feet from the tree; or until the treant takes a bonus action to turn it back into an inanimate tree. The tree then takes root if possible.

Darkbringer Cultist

Medium humanoid (any race), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Deception +2, Religion +2

Condition Immunities yellow mold spores

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/8 (50 XP)

Dark Devotion. The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Actions

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

Yellow Mold Flask. The cultist hurls a flask containing yellow mold spores at a space within 15', which bursts to fill a 10' cube. Any creature in the area must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) poison damage and become poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the creature takes 5 (1d10) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a successful save. Each cultist carries one flask of yellow mold spores; if the cultist is reduced to 0 HP while carrying a flask, there is a 50% chance that it shatters in a cloud extending 5' from the cultist; the flask automatically breaks in this fashion if the cultist takes 5 or more Thunder damage from a single effect.

Darkbringer Druid

Medium humanoid (any race), neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (16 with barkskin)

Hit Points 27 (5d8+5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10(+0)	12(+1)	13(+1)	12(+1)	15(+2)	11(+0)

Skills Medicine +4, Nature +3, Perception +4

Condition Immunities yellow mold spores

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Druidic, Sylvan

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. The druid is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following druid spells prepared.

Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft, shillelagh, thorn whip*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person, entangle, longstrider, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *barkskin, hold person*

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit (+4 to hit with shillelagh), reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if wielded in two hands, or 6 (1d8+2) bludgeoning damage with shillelagh

Yellow Mold Flask. The cultist hurls a flask containing yellow mold spores at a space within 15', which bursts to fill a 10' cube. Any creature in the area must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) poison damage and become poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the creature takes 5 (1d10) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a successful save. Each cultist carries one flask of yellow mold spores; if the cultist is reduced to 0 HP while carrying a flask, there is a 50% chance that it shatters in a cloud extending 5' from the cultist; the flask automatically breaks in this fashion if the cultist takes 5 or more Thunder damage from a single effect.

Darkbringer Berserker

Medium humanoid (any race), chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (hide armor)

Hit Points 67 (9d8+27)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	12(+1)	17(+3)	9(-1)	11(+0)	9(-1)

Condition Immunities yellow mold spores

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

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

Actions

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d12+3) slashing damage.

Darkbringer Grabber (Spore Servant Chuul)

Large plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 93 (11d10+33)

Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19(+4)	10(+0)	16(+3)	2(-4)	6(-2)	1(-5)

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, frightened, paralyzed

Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

Languages understands Common, but can't speak

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The darkbringer horror makes two pincer attacks.

Pincer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6+4) bludgeoning damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 14) if it is a Large or smaller creature and the Darkbringer grabber doesn't have two other creatures grappled.

Darkbringer Otyugh (Spore Servant Otyugh)

Large plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 114 (12d10+48)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	11(+0)	19(+4)	2(-4)	6(-2)	1(-5)

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, frightened, paralyzed

Senses blindsight 30' (blind beyond) passive Perception 8

Languages - (can follow telepathic orders from the Voice of Moander)

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Limiting Telepathy. The otyugh can magically transmit simple messages and images to any creature within 120 feet of it that can understand a language. This form of telepathy doesn't allow the receiving creature to telepathically respond.

Actions

Multiattack. The otyugh makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its tentacles.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8+3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw against disease or become poisoned until the disease is cured. Every 24 hours that elapse, the target must repeat the saving throw, reducing its hit point maximum by 5 (1d10) on a failure. The disease is cured on a success. The target dies if the disease reduces its hit point maximum to 0. This reduction to the target's hit point maximum lasts until the disease is cured.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8+3) bludgeoning damage plus 4 (1d8) piercing damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 13) and restrained until the grapple ends. The otyugh has two tentacles, each of which can grapple one target.

Darkbringer Horror (Spore Servant Hook Horror)

Large plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d10+20)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	2 (-4)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, frightened, paralyzed

Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

Languages understands Common, but can't speak

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The darkbringer horror makes two hook attacks.

Hook. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6+4) piercing damage

Umbero Marivaldi, veteran

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

Armor Class 17 (splint)

Hit Points 58 (9d8+18)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 3 (450 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. Nama makes two spear attacks; if Nama is wielding a spear in each hand, she may make a third spear attack

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20 ft./60 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6+3) piercing damage, or 8 (1d8+3 piercing damage) if wielded in two hands.

Acid Breath. (1/short or long rest) creatures in a 5 ft. by 30 ft. line must make a DC 14 Dex saving throw, taking 3d6 acid damage on a failure, or half that on a success.

Elmwood Commoner

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 4 (1d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Actions

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



Elmwood Guard

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 11 (2d8+2)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Actions

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2 bludgeoning damage

Gas Spore

Large plant, unaligned

Armor Class 5 (natural armor)

Hit Points 1 (1d10-4)

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

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

Damage Immunities poison

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

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

Languages -

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

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

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



Giant Spider

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d10+4)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	11 (+0)	4 (-3)

Skills Stealth +7

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

Languages -

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

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

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the spider knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

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

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Web (Recharge 5-6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. Hit: The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Kamik Felicity, Priest of Chauntea (Priest)

Medium humanoid (half-elf), neutral good

Armor Class 13 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 27 (5d8+5)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)

Skills Medicine +6, Persuasion +3, Perception +6, Religion +4

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Fey Ancestry. Kamik has advantage on saving throws against being Charmed, and is immune to magical sleep.

Divine Eminence. As a bonus action, Kamik can expend a spell slot to cause his melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) radiant damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If the priest expends a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

Spellcasting. Kamik is a 5th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following cleric spells prepared.

Cantrips (at will): *light*, *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds*, *healing word*, *sanctuary*

2nd level (3 slots): *augury*, *lesser restoration*

3rd level (2 slots): *beacon of hope*, *dispel magic*

Actions

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

Shambling Mound

Large plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d10+48)

Speed 20 ft., swim 20'

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Stealth +2

Damage Resistances cold, fire

Damage Immunities lightning

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, yellow mold spores

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages understands Common, Druidic and Sylvan but can't speak

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Lightning Absorption. Whenever the shambling mound is subjected to lightning damage, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to the lightning damage dealt.

Actions

Multiattack. The shambling mound makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit a Medium or smaller target, the target is grappled (escape DC 14), and the shambling mound uses its Engulf on it.

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

Engulf. The shambling mound engulfs a Medium or smaller creature grappled by it. The engulfed target is blinded, restrained, and unable to breathe, and it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the mound's turns or take 13 (2d8+4) bludgeoning damage. If the mound moves, the engulfed target moves with it. The mound can have only one creature engulfed at a time.

Voice of Moander (Drow Priestess of Lolth)

Medium humanoid (elf), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (scale mail)

Hit Points 71 (13d8+13)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +4, Wis +6, Cha +7

Skills Nature +4, Perception +4, Religion +4, Stealth +5

Condition Immunities yellow mold spores

Senses darkvision 120', passive Perception 16

Languages Elvish, Undercommon, Sylvan

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Fey Ancestry. The Voice of Moander has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. The Voice of Moander's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights*

1/day each: *darkness*, *faerie fire*, *levitate* (self only)

Spellcasting The Voice of Moander is a 10th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following spells prepared.

Cantrips (at will): *guidance*, *minor illusion*, *poison spray*, *shillelagh*, *thorn whip*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person*, *cure wounds*, *entangle*, *longstrider*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person*, *spike growth*, *web*

3rd level (3 slots): *conjure animals* (2 giant spiders), *dispel magic*

4th level (3 slots): *blight*, *confusion*

5th level (2 slots): *insect plague*, *mass cure wounds*

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Voice of Moander has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Multiattack. The Voice of Moander makes two quarterstaff attacks.

Quarterstaff. Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit (+6 to hit with shillelagh), reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if wielded in two hands, or 7 (1d8+3) bludgeoning damage with shillelagh



Vine Blight

Medium plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d8+8)

Speed 10 ft.

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

Skills Stealth +1

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, yellow mold spores

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Actions

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

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

Needle Blight

Medium plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8+2)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, yellow mold spores

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

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge ¼ (50 XP)

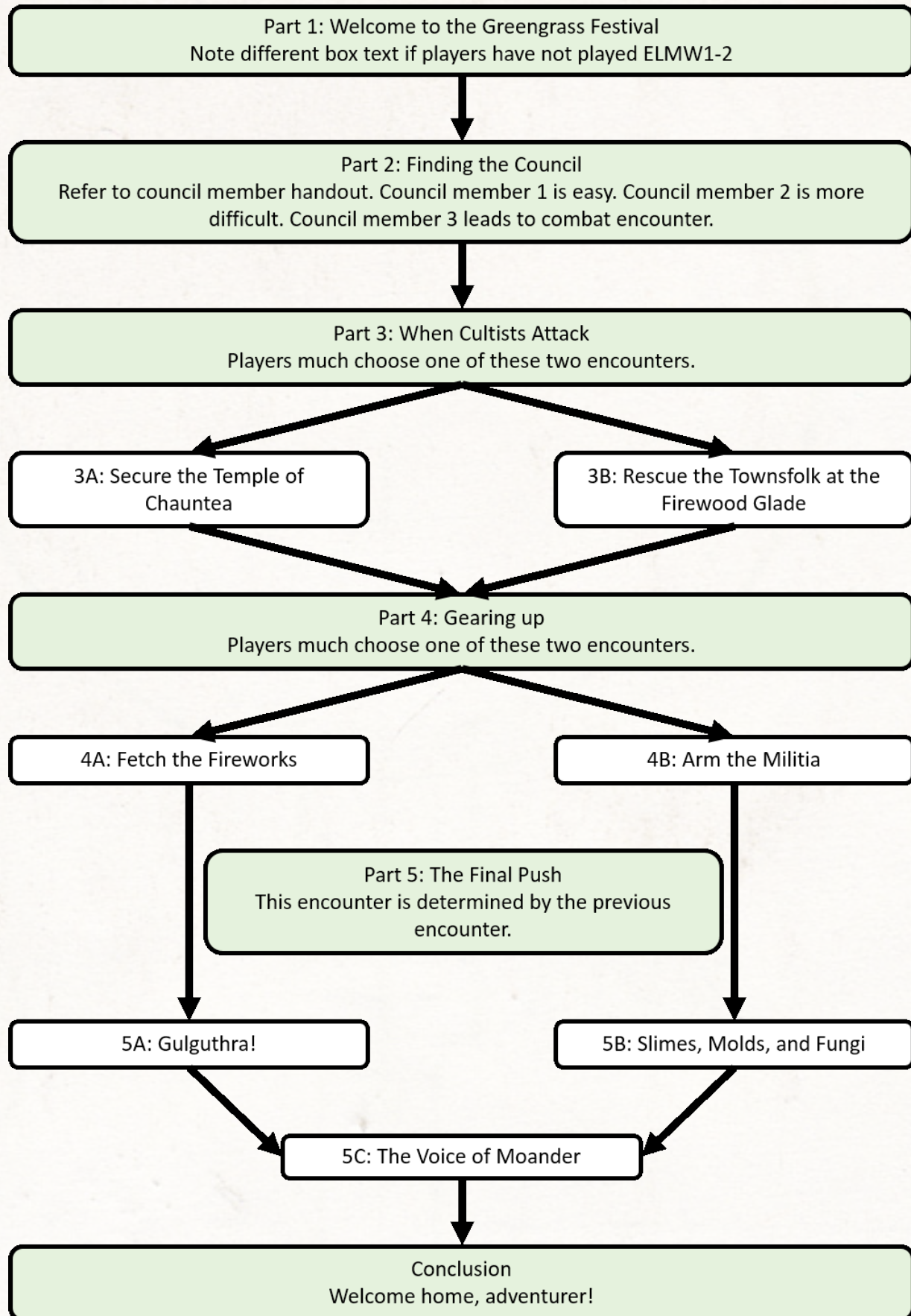
Actions

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

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

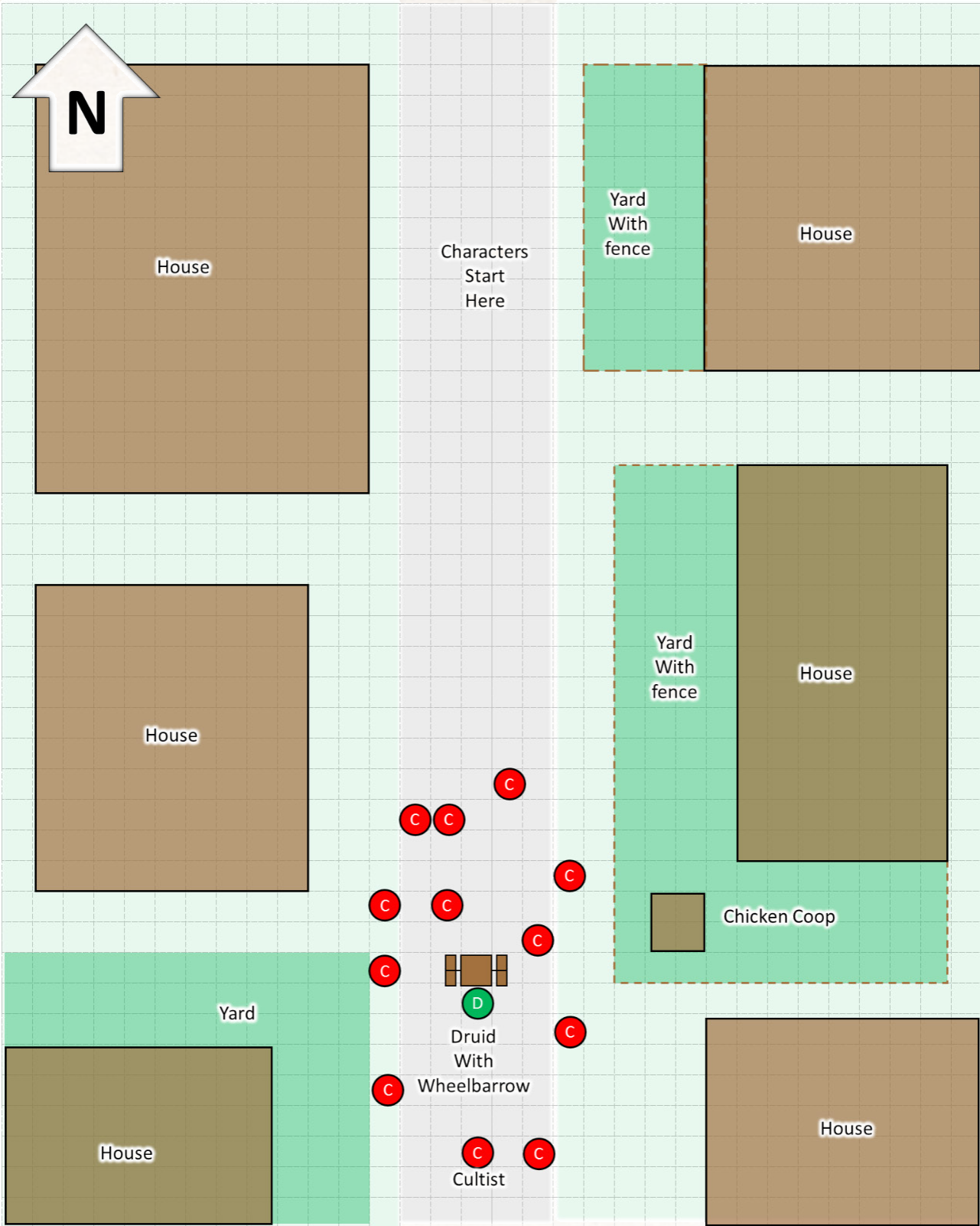


Appendix: Adventure Flowchart



Appendix: Maps

Rotten to the Core



1 square = 5 feet

N

Difficult Terrain Provides Cover

Bushes are 1/2 move to go through, provide cover

Difficult Terrain Provides Cover

Reflecting Pool

Difficult Terrain No Cover

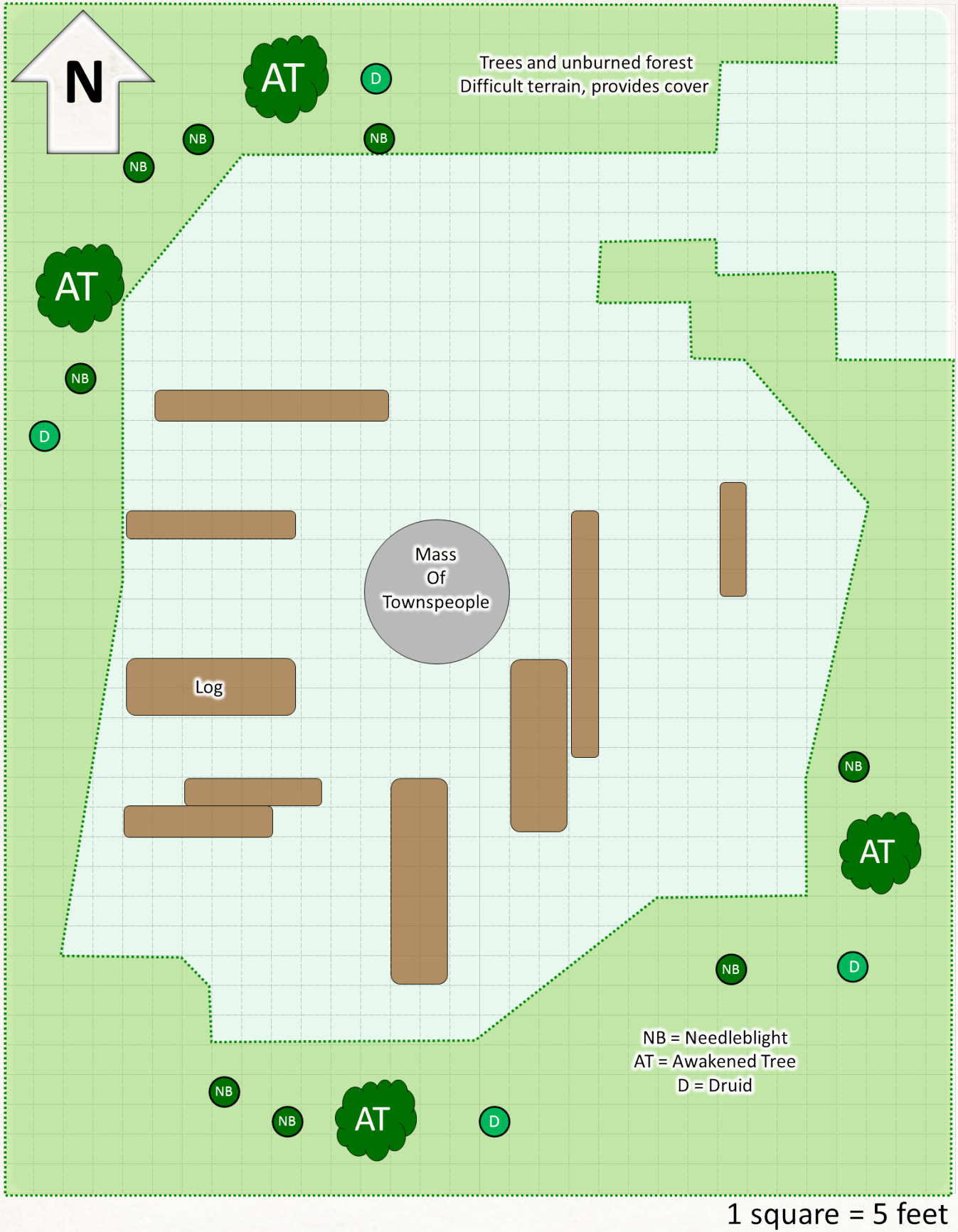
Stone Sundial

Bushes are 1/2 move to go through, provide cover

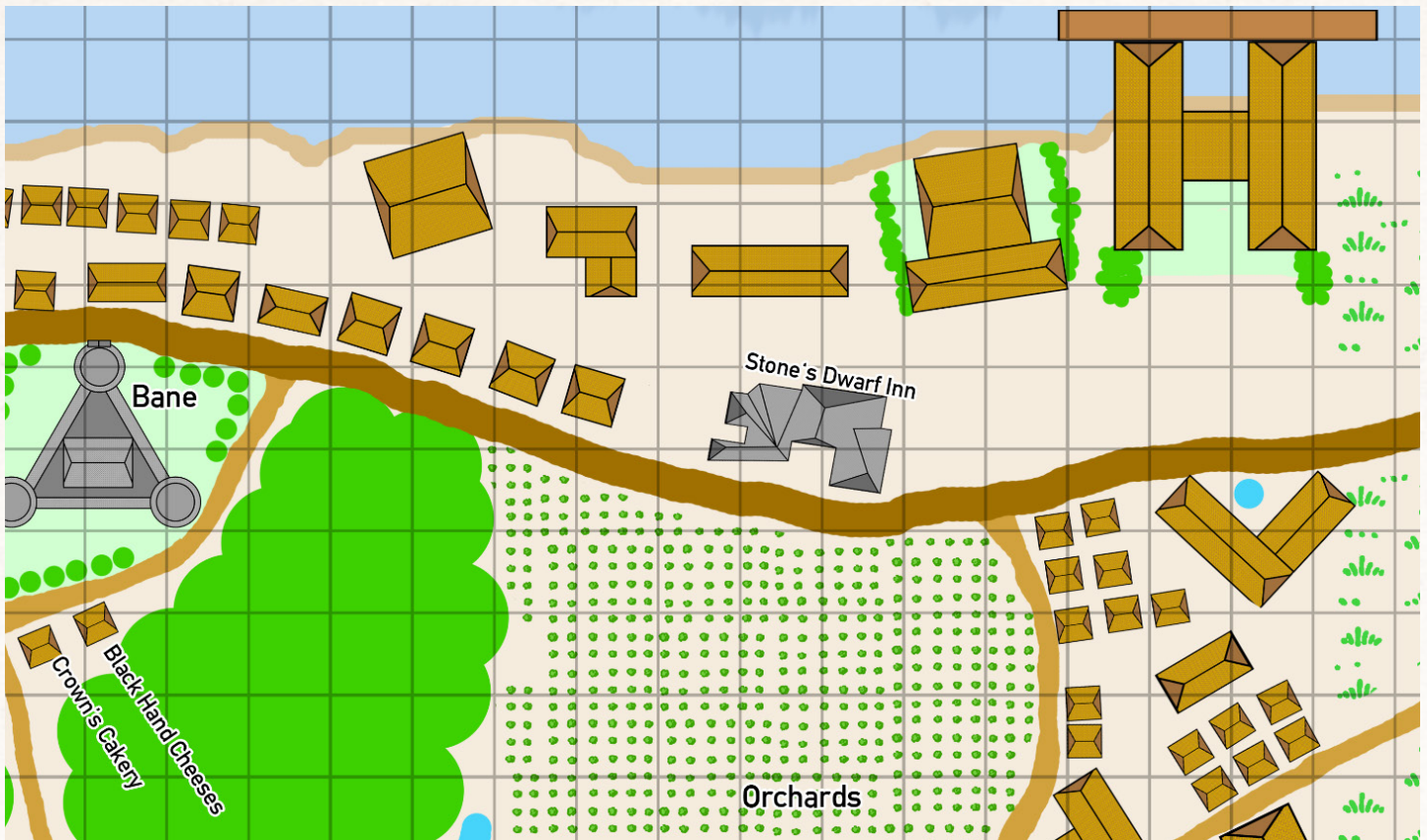
C = Cultist
SM = Shambling Mound
D = Druid

39

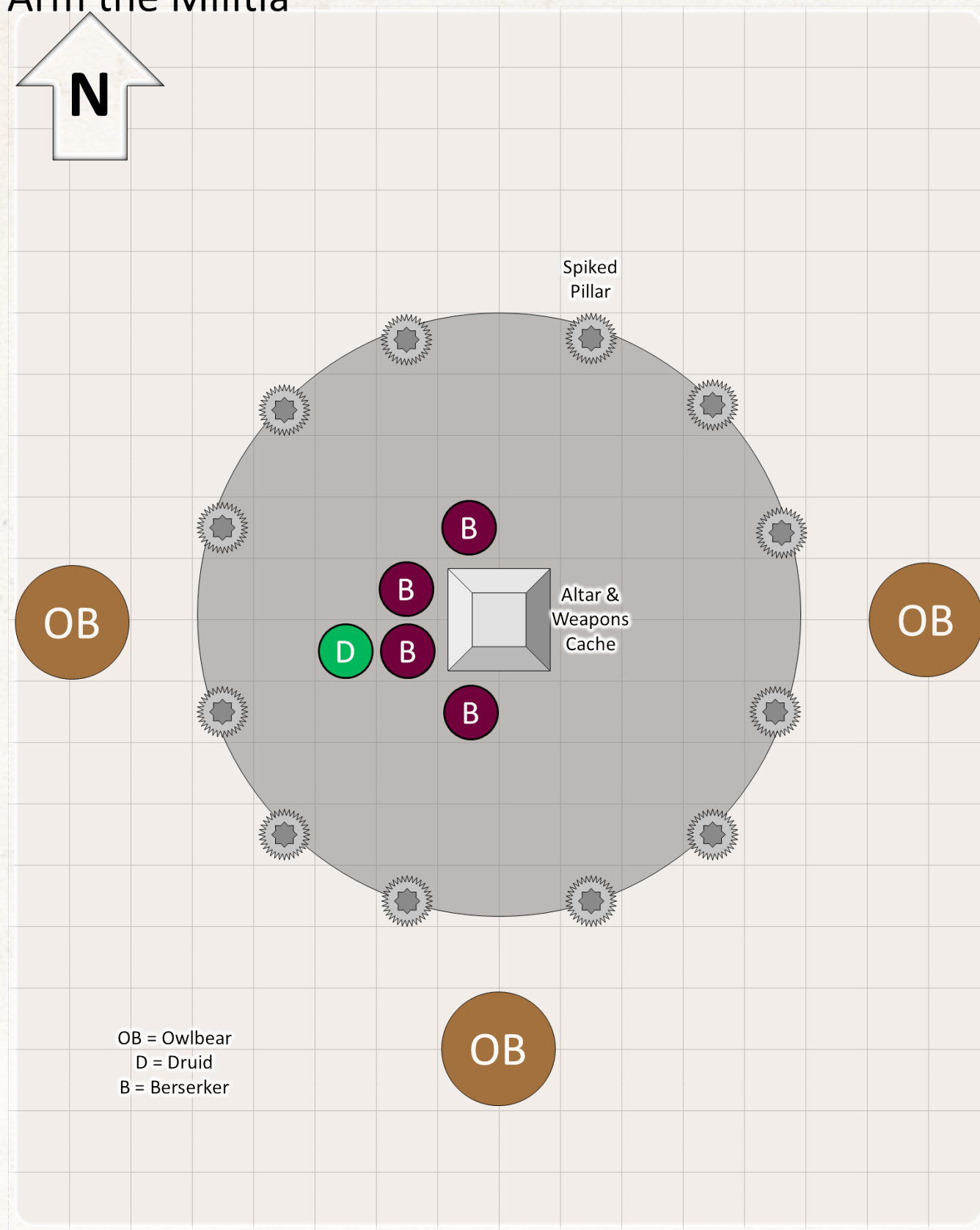
Rescue the Townsfolk



Fetch the Fireworks

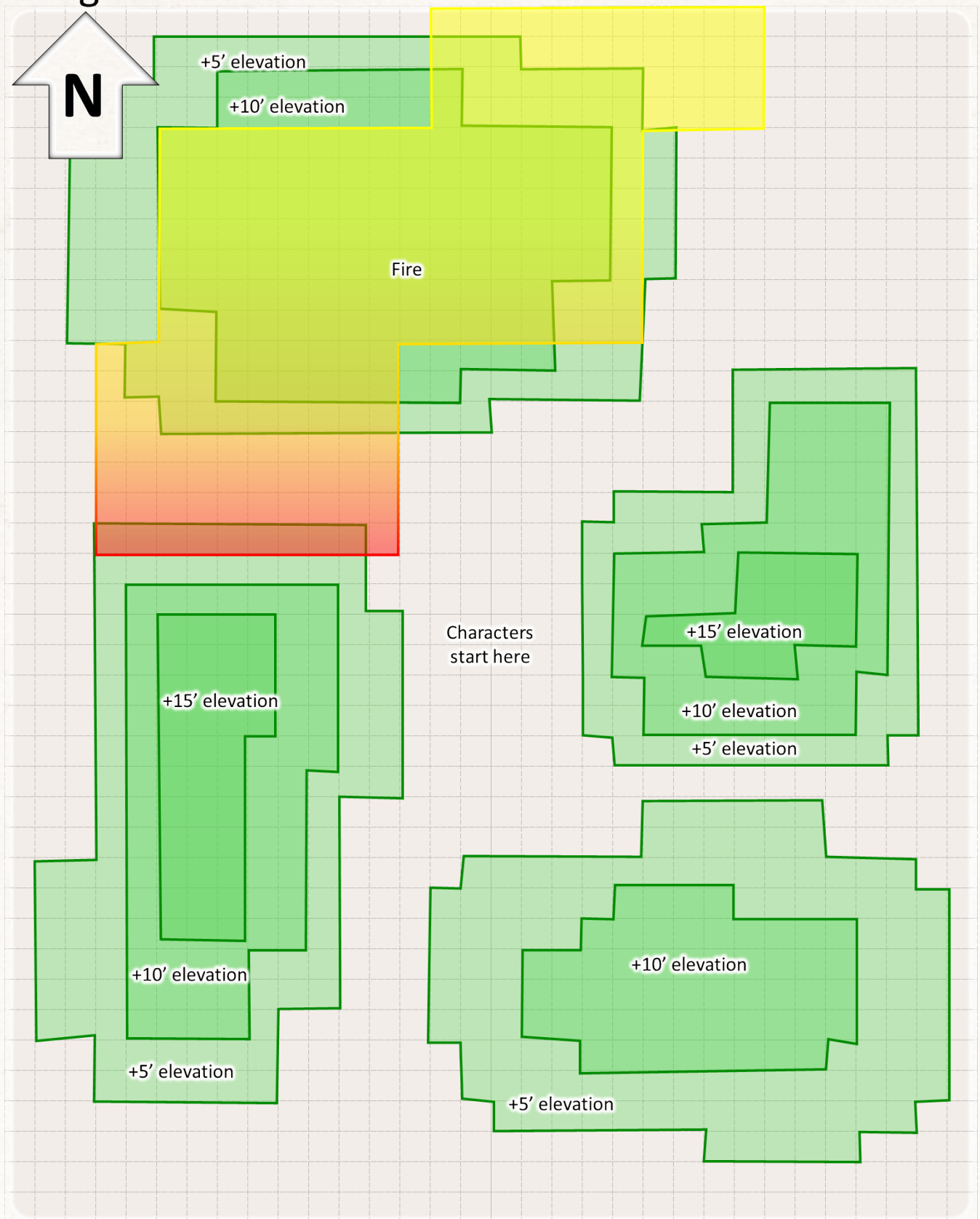


Arm the Militia



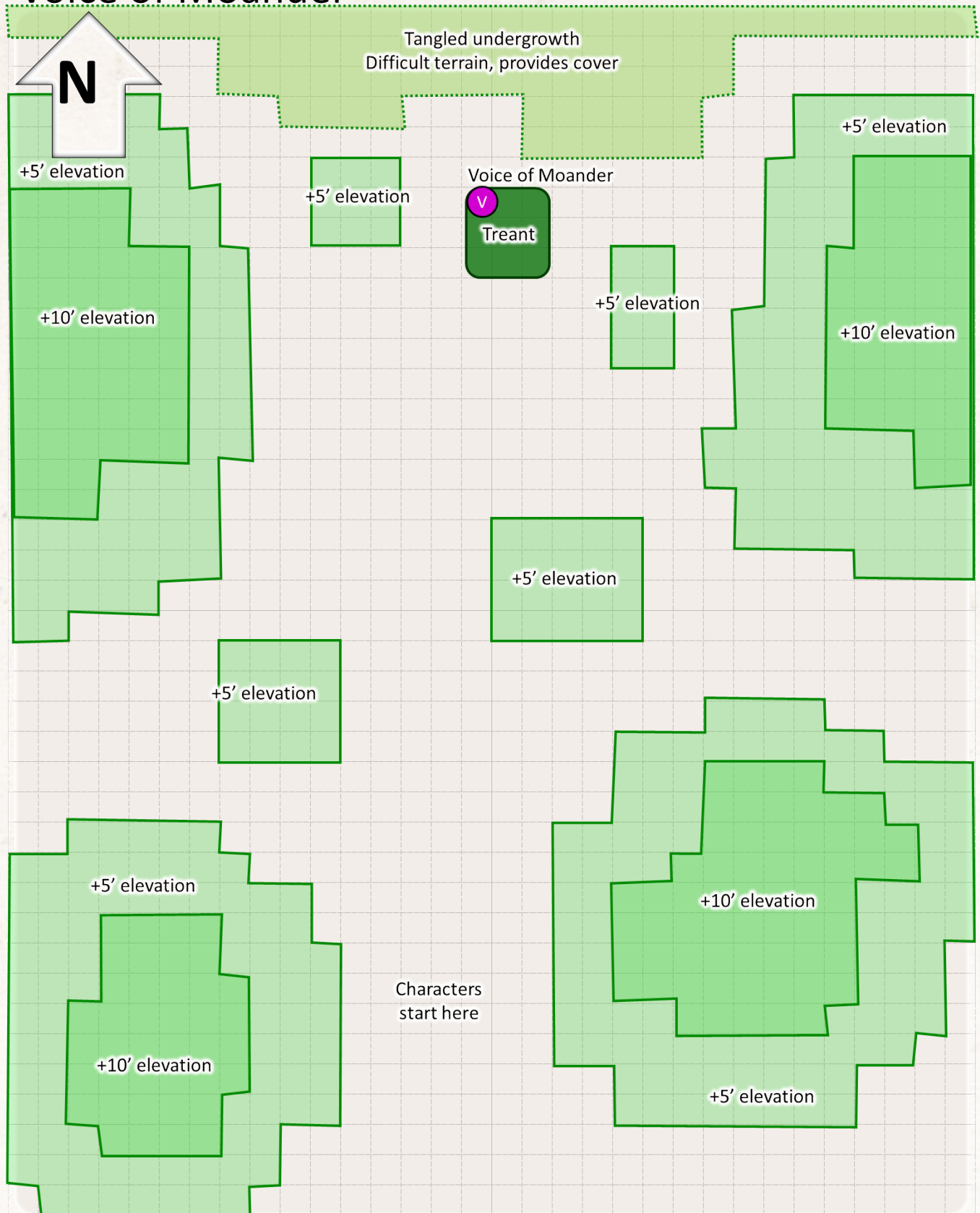
1 square = 5 feet

Gulguthra



1 square = 5 feet

Voice of Moander



1 square = 5 feet

Appendix: Player Handouts

Handout 1: List of Councilors and their Likely Locations

- **Constable Aliana Mathnir** (already found)
- **Alksuth Cork**, a bald human male, gnarled and heavily tattooed; he is likely to be overseeing the wrestling matches near Black Hand Cheeses
- **Aranda Fletcher**, a very tall half-elven woman, with blond hair and a pronounced limp; she is one of the judges at the Beautiful Pig competition at Prici's Threads and Gowns
- **Drake Holmstrumph**, an older, gray-haired human man, most likely at the docks drinking with other survivors of the Burning
- **Deputy Kala Namak**, a black-scaled dragonborn female, assigned to patrol the festival; she could be anywhere
- **Larissa Aerasumé**, Priestess of Selune, a strikingly beautiful half-elf who strongly favors her moon elf heritage; she is likely sketching festival goers in exchange for donations to charity at the Wayfarer's Rest Inn
- **Nils Sankt**, Priest of Bane, an extremely old human male, who hobbles about with the aid of a long cudgel carved with a fist; he is likely heckling at the dunking booth near the Refugee Barracks
- **Harvest Mother Shayad**, Priestess of Chauntea: an imposing half-orc woman, likely to be found in the temple gardens shooing people away from her prized flowerbeds
- **Thyra Stoneshoulders**, a tall, lovely dwarf woman, most likely serving food and drink at her inn, the Silvery Gem
- **Yao Seijou**, head of the Shield Trading Company: a short, slender man with long, black hair in a ponytail, wears expensive clothes, probably at the Shield Trading Company compound working



Handout 2: Moander the Darkbringer

The saurian archmage Grypht devoted a great deal of time and energy to researching Moander the Darkbringer, and even more to developing methods to combat the god's power.

The cult's primary means of spreading its influence is through the use of Dark Seeds. A creature implanted with one of the corrupting pods quickly falls under the thrall of the Darkbringer, free will suppressed by the desire to serve. Willing thralls retain a good deal of their prior personalities, but unwilling victims are utterly dominated by the dark god's will. They tend to have a fixed, glassy stare, slightly jerky movements, and no sense of humor, or sense of anything that brings joy.

The Dark Seeds continue growing in their hosts, eventually replacing their flesh and even vital organs. Unwilling victims can last as long as a tenday before being fully corrupted, but the seeds grow much more quickly in the willing. In either case, those infected with a Dark Seed are identifiable by the plant material that grows from their bodies: green, leafy tendrils, even flowers. The host grows sickly if these growths are denied light and air for too long, so cultists trying to blend in tend to wear corsages, boutonnieres, wreaths, and such to camouflage the corrupting growths.

Grypht's crowning achievement was a powerful ritual that could hedge out creatures imbued with Moander's power, and even kill the Dark Seeds within a host.

Any character with the Ritual Caster class feature who is able to cast 3rd level spells can enact Grypht's ritual. It has a 1-hour casting time, so ritually casting it will take 70 minutes. The ritual requires pure water and healing herbs, worth 100 gp. When completed, the ritual wards an area up to 100 feet on a side against creatures infected with Moander's power. Such creatures must make a Charisma saving throw in order to enter the warded area. If successful, repeat the saving throw at the start of each of its turns or fall unconscious for 1 minute. If an infected creature fails 3 such saves, the Dark Seed within dies; the creatures gains a level of **Exhaustion** for each day it has been infected, so long-time cultists die when their Seed does. Casting the ritual in the same place every day for a year renders it permanent, or it can be tied to a hallow spell.

While casting the ritual, the caster is considered to be concentrating, as if on a spell. If interrupted, the caster can defend herself, but must use either an action or a bonus action each round to maintain the ritual. If the caster leaves the area, or loses concentration, the ritual ends and must be started anew.

Several casters can undertake the ritual at the same time. It doesn't increase the speed of the casting but the ritual is not interrupted unless all the participants lose concentration or leave the area. As long as one ritualist is continuing the ritual, a caster who had lost concentration, or left the area, may rejoin the ritual as an action.

Handout 3: Welcome Home, Adventurer!

The grateful town of Elmwood would like to thank:

for saving our community from the forces of evil. We have reserved a plot of land for you to build a house, shop, farm, or ranch in the town of Elmwood. While, for now, this plot is just bare ash, we hope you will want to put down roots in Elmwood.

Welcome home, adventurer!

Constable Ahiana Mathnir

Harvest Mother Shayad, Priestess of Chauntea

Larissa Aerasumé, Priestess of Selune

Niko Sanket, Priest of Bane

Deputy Kala Namak

Yao Seijou

Aranda Fletcher

Alksuth Cork

Thyra Stoneshoulders

Drake Holms triumph

