

THE SPIRITED INVESTIGATION

NAME

Tom Lommel

Adventure Code: CCC-BMG-CORE03-03

Optimized For: APL 3



The culprit behind the incident at the planar portal has been identified. Adventurers must investigate the individual behind the foul play, determining the means and the motive. But an odd party and some even odder guests threaten the investigation.

A four-hour adventure for 1st-4th level characters

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *The Spirited Investigation*, a Convention Created Content D&D Adventurers League™ adventure, part of the official D&D Adventurers League™ organized play system.

*This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1st-4th level characters**, and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 3**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.*

Adjusting This Adventure

This adventure provides suggestions in making adjustments for smaller or larger groups, characters of higher or lower levels, and characters that are otherwise a bit more powerful than the adventure is optimized for. You're not bound to these adjustments; they're here for your convenience.

To figure out whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the total by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group's APL. To approximate 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

Some encounters may include a sidebar that offers suggestions for certain party strengths. If a particular recommendation is not offered or appropriate for your group, you don't have to make adjustments.

Before Play at the Table

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of 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. Become familiar with the adventure's appendices and handouts.

- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure--such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Playing the Dungeon Master

You have the most important role—facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You provide the narrative and bring the words on these pages to life. To facilitate this, keep in mind the following:

You're Empowered. Make decisions about how the group interacts with the adventure; adjusting or improvising is encouraged, so long as you maintain the adventure's spirit. This doesn't allow you to implement house rules or change those of the Adventurers League, however; they should be consistent in this regard.

Challenge Your Players. Gauge the experience level of your players (not the characters), try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to deliver the experience they're after. Everyone should have the opportunity to shine.

Keep the Adventure Moving. When the game starts to get bogged down, feel free to provide hints and clues to your players so they can attempt to solve puzzles, engage in combat, and roleplay interactions without getting too frustrated over a lack of information. This gives players "little victories" for figuring out good choices from clues. Watch for stalling--play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that players don't finish too early; provide them with a full play experience.

Adventure Primer

Adventure Background

Still recovering from the attack by the modrons and the orcs, the city of Melvaunt has fallen into a fitful stasis. The walls are mostly repaired, and the depleted City Watch remains vigilant against the frequent forays by the remaining modron and orc forces. A planar portal remains static outside the city walls, occasionally burping forth some monstrosity that must be defeated before it threatens innocent lives.

Intrigue also boils within the city limits. A plot to assassinate the Lord of Keys was just foiled, but the paranoia of further betrayal courses across Melvaunt like a bad fever.

There was an unexpected outcome from saving the Lord of Keys: the culprit behind the planar portal has been identified, a former Red Wizard by the name of Zerk Kimit. The mage is well-connected to powerful members of the Zhentarim however, so in order to gain some leverage, Captain LeCampe Eledstra has decided she must force a public confession from him. Zerk is unlikely to leave his estate so authorities can confront him. Fortunately, Zerk is holding an annual masquerade ball at his manor, providing Captain Eledstra with the opportunity she needs.

Location and NPC Summary

The following NPCs and locations feature prominently in this adventure.

Captain LeCampe Eledstra (le-CAMP el-LED-strah). LeCampe Eledstra is a human of late middle age. She's a decent woman who takes her job of protecting Melvaunt's ordinary citizens seriously. Eledstra is tall, thin, and lanky with a shock of unruly white hair through which she runs her fingers constantly whenever she's trying to think. She is very bad at playing political games, which is why she was only recently promoted to captain despite her many years of service in the City Watch. She knows this promotion means that if anything goes wrong, she is the one who will take the political fall. She suspects her superiors expect her to fail.

Zerk Kimit (ZAYR-ack KIM-it). As a newly-minted Red Wizard, Zerk Kimit was a standout master of conjuration and ritual magic. He deftly negotiated with

fiends and other extraplanar entities, researched lost rituals, and helped scribe vital teleportation circles that the arcane brotherhood used to further their nefarious goals across the Moonsea and beyond. Then, 15 years ago, he turned his attention to a more earthly pursuit: trade. While his magical expertise certainly helped, he found far greater power could be wielded through careful negotiation and a well-placed alliance. He purchased an old pirate captain's estate on the coast south of Melvaunt and devoted himself to business pursuits—both legitimate and otherwise. He soon became deeply enmeshed with the Zhentarim, who quickly learned to overlook his Red Wizard ties. Blue-eyed and balding, Zerk sports an unruly cinnamon-colored beard and has an easy, hearty laugh that hides a cold, calculating mind.

Solomon Fraeth (SAHL-oh-mun FRAY-th).

Large brown eyes, freckled yellow skin, and a wide thin-lipped smile give Solomon Fraeth a toad-like appearance. As a young man, Solomon fell in with the Zhentarim operating out of Melvaunt. Over the next 30 years he developed a reputation as a skilled fence who always found a buyer and never asked the wrong questions. Along the way Solomon diligently studied magic, although the Way of the Weave did not come easily. His career abruptly ended six months ago when Zhent leadership caught him selling cursed jewelry which carried demon fever. He quickly packed up and left Melvaunt, although occasional reports still place him in the area.

Haveril was a respected horsetrader and member of the Zhentarim,

Wollet Throade (WAHL-et THROW-day). Wollet is the son of a recently deceased horsetrader who was a respected member of the Zhentarim. Wollet is hapless and dim-witted, hoping to carry on his father's business but wholly unfit for anything other than drinking, whoring, and sleeping.

Grimbriar Manor. Formerly the estate of Captain Timber "Two-Knots" Hocknagel, this sprawling manse perched on the jagged coast of the Moonsea now serves as Zerk Kimit's home and office. Rumors say dark twisting stairs secretly connect the mansion to the sea caves below but few dare intrude on the Red Wizard's property.

Adventure Overview

The adventure is broken down into four parts:

Beginnings. A Most Unusual Affair. Captain Eledstra asks the adventurers to infiltrate a masquerade ball and extract a public confession from the Red Wizard who manipulated the planar portal threatening the city.

Part 1. Securing An Invitation. Since the gathering is invitation-only and the guest list was set months ago, the party must ambush one of the attendees on his way to Grimbriar. An ancient bridge over a dry riverbed provides a perfect choke point.

Part 2. A Purse Full of Tears. The Petitioners' Masquerade has already begun when the adventurers arrive. Multiple tests of skill have been set up around the estate of Grimbriar to determine who will step into the Circle of Six Daggers and issue a binding challenge. Meanwhile, the gossip is flying and some of the guests are acting a bit weird...

Part 3. Cross Your Heart and Hope to Die. The climactic event of the evening is the Challenge of the Six Daggers. But when the party challenges Zerk to a duel in the ritual circle, circumstances shift as an unpleasant truth is revealed.

Part 4. Sixty-Six Minutes to Kill. The party must locate the failed phylactery of the Red Wizard or suffer the wrath of an arcanaloth.

Adventure Hooks

Eledstra's Request. The adventurers are sent a message by a member of the City Watch asking them to meet with Captain Eledstra. She has a job for them if they're looking for work.

Faction Directive. The factions know there is much work to be done in the City of a Thousand Forges. They directed the adventurers to Melvaunt to fortify their position should the portal open or the forces of Thar become active again. This is particularly applicable to members of the Lords' Alliance, the Order of the Gauntlet, and the Harpers.

On the Run. If the previous adventures in this series went poorly, the adventurers might be in jail after failing to successfully deal with the possession spirits. If that is the case, Captain Eledstra frees them secretly and provides the same instructions as if they were working openly, except now they are also working to clear their names and expose the overall plot against Melvaunt.

Regardless of the hook, they speak with Captain LeCampe Eledstra about this mission.



BEGINNINGS. A MOST UNUSUAL AFFAIR

Estimated Duration: 15 minutes

When the players are ready, read the following text. If the characters have played any of the previous Core adventures from Baldman Games set in Melvaunt and assisted Captain Eledstra, she greets them warmly by name. Adjust the text if any of the adventurers played the previous adventures in the trilogy.

You find yourselves in the office of Captain LeCampe Eledstra, a high-ranking member of the City Watch. She clears a stack of paperwork off her desk, knocking a half-eaten chicken leg onto the floor. She gives an exasperated sigh and levels a tired gaze at you. She briefly rubs her forehead, then combs her lanky fingers through her unruly white hair.

"Recently an assassination attempt against the Lord of Keys was foiled. It was a bold plot. It was nefarious. But such is life in these chaotic times. We'll never see another normal day in this city until that portal is closed.

"Foiling the assassination turned up an unexpected bit of information: the name of the wizard who brought all of the spectral creatures through the portal." Captain Eledstra looks down and vigorously rubs at a blotch of ink on her thumb.

"Normally we'd send two dozen members of the Watch to go arrest this guy, but he has a lot of power, and we have no concrete evidence against him." She draws a long breath and shakes her head.

"Zerak Kimit. Lives a day's ride south of here, in a huge estate called Grimbriar Manor. He's not just a well-connected associate of the Zhentarim, he's also a member of the Red Wizards. Specializes in conjuration magic. A very nasty character, probably burn you to a crisp or banish you to some other plane before you could get two sword hits on the guy. Seriously, you're outclassed.

"Fortunately this isn't a smash-and-grab. Zerak hosts a big party every year: the Petitioners' Masquerade. Very exclusive affair, the guest list is set months in advance and no one gets in without an invitation. Participants compete in a sort of high-stakes game of Truth-Or-Dare, enforced by a soul-binding devil.

"That's where you come in. I need you to infiltrate the party, win a spot in the binding ritual, and coerce a confession from Zerak in front of the assembled guests. Once he's publicly admitted his involvement, the Zhents will have no option but to disavow him, and then we can arrest and question him.

Captain Eledstra toes the disheveled remains of her chicken leg with a worn leather boot. "A Red Wizard, a devil, and a soul-binding ritual... should be a piece of cake."

The adventurers likely have questions. Use the bullets below to guide that conversation:

- About a year ago a portal appeared in Melvaunt which periodically opened and released waves of modrons to attack the city. At the same time, orcs from Thar attacked the walls of Melvaunt.
- Truushee the Sage and others used magic to move the portal outside the city, causing the attacking modrons to run headlong into the orcs. This, and only this, saved the city from total destruction. Melvaunt still suffered great amounts of damage and significant loss of life.
- Recently, the portal activated and brought terrible undead spirit creatures through to possess innocents, attack the city, and wreak havoc on the countryside. The City Watch is feeling the strain of fighting such an overwhelming threat.
- Information found in the previous adventure in this series (**CCC-BMG-CORE03-02: The Ghostly Infestation**) indicated the wizard who used the

portal to bring in the ghostly infestation was named Zerak Kimit.

- According to the dossier of information given to Captain Eledstra, Zerak pursued a path upward through the ranks of the Red Wizards until about 15 years ago when he purchased an old pirate captain's estate on the coast south of Melvaunt and devoted himself to business pursuits—both legitimate and otherwise. He soon became enmeshed with the Zhentarim, who quickly embraced him despite his Red Wizard ties. Blue-eyed and balding, Zerak sports an unruly cinnamon-colored beard and has an easy, hearty laugh that hides a cold, calculating mind.
- The Petitioners' Masquerade is an annual party hosted by Zerak. Many influential members of the Zhentarim attend, their identities shrouded under the lavish costumes the attendees must wear. It's highly secretive. Admitting you attend the Petitioners' Masquerade is a sure way to never get invited back.
- Teams compete in games of skill to win one of three spots in the Circle of Six Daggers. Those who step into the Circle can challenge anyone to a ritualistic duel. The winner can compel the loser to fulfill a six-word promise, enforced by a demon who takes their mortal soul if they don't uphold the promise.
- The games of skill vary from year to year, but they are generally in the style of twisted, high-stakes carnival games: dodging through a maze of blades or climbing a flaming rope suspended over a bed of nails.
- Zerak does not tolerate violence at the party: "bloodshed in anger is strictly forbidden."
- The Petitioners' Masquerade is tomorrow night. The adventurers must depart the following morning to arrive in time.
- As far as getting into the masquerade, Captain Eledstra is somewhat coy about that. Sources have provided the name of a noble who may be attending, but she doesn't want to reveal further details until the adventurers have accepted the mission.

After the adventurers have had the chance to get this background information, Captain Eledstra

offers them each 25 gp to infiltrate the party, attempt to secure a spot in the Circle of Six Daggers, and extract a confession from Zerak. If pressed, she provides an additional 25 gp per character to procure fancy costumes. Captain Eledstra can also provide horses, but that's the final concession she can muster. This mission is, after all, off the books.

If the adventurers agree:

Captain Eledstra nods approvingly. "Braver than I expected," she says, half to herself. Then she leans in.

"Wollet Throade is the son of Haveril Throade, who recently died due to a nasty bout of cackle fever. While Haveril was a respected horsetrader and member of the Zhentarim, his son is not. Wollet has spent the past 10 years cavorting in Silverymoon and only returned home when his father died. Along with the family business, he inherited his father's invite to the Petitioners' Masquerade and shall be traveling to Grimbriar Manor from Thentia.

"This makes him the perfect mark, since few would recognize Wollet's physique or voice. Furthermore, the road between Thentia and Grimbriar passes over Redthrush Gorge. The old crossing at Yonderhammer Bridge provides an ideal chokepoint to set up an ambush and waylay the young nobleman."

Captain Eledstra raises an eyebrow. "Now, I am not suggesting you cause harm to this young man who is likely out of his depth and short for this world already. But I do believe you could waylay him long enough to steal his invitation, impersonate his entourage, and get on with your mission before anyone was the wiser..."

She purses her lips for a moment in consideration.

"Then again," she says dryly, "who am I to tell adventurers how to go about the deeds that should be done in the depths of the wild?"

Before they leave, Captain Eledstra informs the party that, as a horse trader, Haveril Throade always picked the best stock for his personal use. They will be able to recognize Wollet's coach by the two large grey stallions at the head of the team.

Give the adventurers a chance to rest for the night and prepare in any way they see fit. If

they seem excited to go shop for specific, fancy costumes to wear to the masquerade ball, give them some creative freedom to follow their hearts.

When they are ready, continue on to **Part 1. Securing An Invitation.**



PART 1. SECURING AN INVITATION

Expected Duration: 40 minutes

The ride to Redthrush Gorge is uneventful but takes the most of a day. The masquerade starts at 8pm, and Wollet Throade's coach passes over the gorge around 6pm or so. If the party has not dallied, they should arrive around 5pm, although they can arrive earlier if they wish.

Yondammer Bridge stretches across the gorge. Thirty feet wide and ninety feet long, the bridge spans a river that dried out centuries ago. Legends say a cloud giant built it to load cargo for shipment across the Moonsea.

The bridge is composed of rough brown stone neatly cut to fit together. The center of the bridge widens out with an extra 10-foot wide section that juts out on the south side, creating a sort of viewing platform.

Running the length of the bridge on either side, a series of carefully-stacked stones form pillars which vary from 8- to 30-feet tall. The pillars are square and each side is approximately five feet across. A crude stone figure stands atop each one, weathered remains of more detailed sculptures.

The gorge has filled in greatly since the river ran dry. At the highest point, it's only 25 feet from the bottom of the bridge to the ground below.

General Features

The stone bridge is 90 feet long and 30 feet wide, except for the 40 feet wide center. Loose columns of stone along each edge rise anywhere from 8 to 30 feet tall.

Terrain. The area beneath the bridge is overgrown with scrub brush and small trees. A

narrow, meandering strip of gravel is the only remnant of the river which once ran here.

Weather. Overcast, hot, and humid. Common sense indicates a thunderstorm is brewing but the cool breeze that precedes rain is nowhere to be found. The air is stifling.

Light. Twilight begins early due to the thick cloud cover.

Smells and Sounds. Those who listen carefully will hear the melancholy call of the red thrush: *ee-oh-lay, ee-oh-lay.*

Angry clouds, sweltering heat, and oppressive humidity have steadily built with each passing hour of travel. The weather threatens rain but has yet to deliver.

"Redthrush Gorge" is a grandiose name for a 25-foot-deep gully overgrown with thickets of brush and small trees. However, the bridge that spans it is an impressive feat of ancient engineering. Ninety feet long and thirty feet wide, Yondammer Bridge has a central slab that juts out over the southern side of the gorge. Tall pillars of flat, stacked stone stand in parallel on each side of the bridge, some 8 feet tall, others as high as 30. Humanoid sculptures sit atop each one, although time and vandals have robbed them of their former majesty and elegance.

At either end, the scrub brush weaves its way out of the gorge and encroaches upon the road.

The Center of the Bridge. A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check

reveals three faint glyphs etched in a triangle in the center of the bridge. An Intelligence (Arcana) check DC 15 indicates ancient rune magic scribed of Giant origin. Channeling a level one arcane spell into any of the runes activates a weak reverse gravity spell in the center of the bridge, the area of effect is only 15 feet in diameter and 10 feet tall. It lasts for one minute. It cannot be activated more than three times per day, and each activation requires a caster to channel a spell of 1st level or higher into the runes.

Originally much stronger and more flexible, the circle once helped load and unload goods shipped on the river. Now it's more of a forgotten curiosity.

The Pillars. The pillars are 5-feet-square and composed of flat stacked stones. Time has caused some stones in the column to crack or weather away. Climbing a pillar requires a Strength (Athletics) check DC 10. The difficulty of quickly tipping one over depends on the height of the individual column:

- 10 feet or less – Strength DC 13
- 11-20 feet – Strength DC 16
- Over 20 feet – Strength DC 19

A DC 13 Dexterity saving throw DC 13 is needed to avoid 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage for each 10 feet of the pillar's height when it topples.

The Sculptures. Worn by the ravages of time and weather, the sculpted figures lack much in the way of identifying marks or details. Once depicting famous merchants and warriors, now they are crude humanoid shapes averaging 8 feet tall. Anchored into the top stones of each column, knocking one over requires a DC 16 Strength check. Anyone in the area where it falls must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 4 (1d8) bludgeoning for each 10 feet the sculpture falls.

The Scrub Brush. The thick foliage provides an excellent place to hide. A few thin trees here grow tall enough that if felled would fall across a good portion of the road.

DMs Note. The pillars are easier to knock over than the sculptures. That's intended since the sculptures are on top of the pillars and more difficult to get leverage on to topple over. The adventurers have time to set up the ambush but

remember that other people are coming to this party and blocking the bridge would also waylay them or at the very least cause additional rumors at the party about the bridge being blocked or partially blocked.

Also, there is no need to change this encounter based on party level. It is not meant to challenge the adventurers' resources.

Moving On

The options here should inspire plenty of creative ambush strategies. When the players are done plotting, read the following:

Six o'clock comes and goes. Then 6:30. Then 7:00. Other carriages and people on horseback pass by but not your mark. Finally, at 7:15, hoofbeats off in the distance signal the approach of a carriage. Two large grey stallions pull a bright green coach. A guard wearing a chain shirt sits next to the drover who whips the team forward toward Yonhammer Bridge.

The drover is a **veteran**; his companion is a **guard**. They both have a Passive Perception of 12. If they see anything unusual, they lean over and yell into the carriage window, but Wollet is running late and admonishes them to press on.

If the party prepped well, they get a surprise round. If anyone is spotted by the drover or the guard, they do not.

There are two more **guards** inside the carriage. Wollet Throade has the stats of a **noble** and is wearing an expensive owl costume with an ornate mask and flaps of leather for feathers. This takes his AC down to 12.

You may play out the full combat, play a round or two and call for Intimidation checks, or simply decide the guards' morale falters, as the situation warrants. Note that Wollet recently fired most of his father's staff in a fit of pique, so these guards are green and not particularly loyal.

Possessed of a high-pitched voice and a pale complexion that flushes in response to the most trivial irritation, Wollet Throade is, in a word, a ninny. Spoiled and impulsive, he lacks the wisdom and charisma to lead his father's business but he's

too proud to turn it over to his more capable sister, Valencia. Although he's not eager to be stranded in Redthrush Gorge, it wouldn't take much persuasion to convince him that a fate far worse might befall him if he lost a challenge at the Petitioners' Masquerade.

Wollet carries 25gp and an ornate leather scabbard, sized for a dagger. Embossed on the scabbard with swirling flourishes are the words

"The Petitioner's Masquerade. Viceroy of Owls." This scabbard serves as the official invitation. A trunk strapped to the back of the carriage contains additional owl costumes and masks. (The guards were to change into them once Wollet arrived at Grimbriar.)

When the party deals with Wollet and his guards, they must make haste for Zerak's estate. Even so, they are already late.



PART 2. A PURSE FULL OF TEARS

Expected Duration: 90 minutes

The adventurers compete in the various challenges set up around Grimbriar Manor. Success earns them special tokens: "Petitioners' Tears." The three teams earning the most tears win the right to step into the Circle of Six Daggers.

Along the way the adventurers mix and mingle with other guests, hear gossip, and discover clues that all is not what it seems here.

General Features

Gimbriar Manor has the following features.

Terrain. The estate perches on a cliff overlooking the Moonsea. It's a steep, rocky drop to the shore below. Rolling fields choked with thickets surround the manor, a natural feature of the landscape Zerak counts on for protection.

Weather. The humidity climbs. It would be a hot, uncomfortable night out of costume.

Light. Inside Grimbiar, sconces host eternal tongues of continual flame. Outside, it varies. Most events are well-lit with lanterns mounted to tall poles, but shadows crawl along walls where no challenge is taking place.

Smells and Sounds. The kitchen churns out a steady array of appetizers, filling the air with the scent of roast duck, dainty buttered rolls, warm plum compote, and more. The din of gossip and speculative chatter is broken by oohs and aahs or applause when a team does something notable.

Ceilings. Unless otherwise indicated, ceilings in Grimbiar are 20 feet high.

Setup. Approaching Grimbiar Manor

Read the following as the party approaches Grimbiar:

A sprawling, two-story mansion rises up off the rocky cliffs overlooking the Moonsea. Lanterns mounted atop 10-foot poles cast flickering pools of yellow light upon the grey stone walls. Grand windows have been thrown wide in the hopes of capturing the slightest breeze. Inside, costumed figures cavort, cackle, and consume as servants pass silver platters of roast duck and decanters filled with plum wine. The masquerade is well underway.

Unless the party is using stealth, continue:

A silver-haired man wearing the formal attire of a servant greets you: "Ah yes, the Viceroy of Owls," he says with a practiced tone, "we have been expecting you. My condolences on the loss of your father." He bows and then hands you a small map of the estate printed on bleached paper and a purse of purple silk. "The Petitioners' Challenge began an hour ago. I'm afraid the clock puts you at a bit of a disadvantage. My name is Gherald. I am the House Steward here at Grimbiar. If there's anything my staff or I can do to make your stay more enjoyable, do not hesitate to ask."

Unless the party has an immediate request or question, Gherald leaves them to enjoy the party.

The Petitioners' Challenge

Players not understanding the purpose of the Petitioners' Challenge can learn from NPCs:

- Seven events run at the estate. Each offers a different type of challenge: intellect, athletic prowess, etc. A team cannot attempt a challenge more than once.
- Successfully competing in an event earns your team small red glass beads called "Petitioners' Tears."
- Each challenge is overseen by a masked figure in a long black cloak: a Proctor. Proctors are responsible for dispensing Petitioners' Tears and ensuring no one cheats. They neither speak nor respond to bribes or cajoling. Speculation runs rampant that they are lawful fiends summoned to ensure fair and equal judgment.
- The challenges are just a prelude to the real competition of the evening.
- When the clock strikes midnight, the three teams with the most beads earn a silver dagger. One member from a team takes that dagger into the main event: The Circle of Six Daggers.

If they openly ask about stealing Petitioners' Tears, they are quickly informed anyone caught stealing forfeit all their Tears and become ineligible for the competition. And the Proctors are very observant.

The Circle of Six Daggers

If the players ask about the Circle of Six Daggers, use these bullet points to help explain:

- This is the main event of the Petitioners' Masquerade.
- Anyone who has won a silver dagger can step into the Circle of Six Daggers and challenge another person to a duel. The first person to draw blood with their dagger can compel the loser to speak one truth, forgive one debt, or obey six words for one year.
- Only two people are allowed in the circle at a time: the challenger and the person they challenge.
- Anyone who steps into the circle must swear on their mortal soul to obey the outcome.
- This ritual is enforced by a devil, summoned and trapped within the circle by Zerak.

- Everyone is in masquerade costume, but you may call someone into the circle by pointing or speaking their actual name aloud.

The ritual is high stakes, but it has become a time-honored way to settle scores, break up business monopolies, or escape a debt.

Exploring the Estate

Challenges may be taken in any order. The party can wander from event to event as they see fit, doing all or some. The only rule is that they can't compete in any event more than once. If they don't seem particularly interested in some of the challenges or you're running tight on time, feel free to announce that midnight is approaching and move on to Part 3.

Clues are available as the group mingles at the party. Review **Appendix 1: Assorted Gossip** and mix them in as the party explores.

A. Grand Hall – The Clockwork Colossus

Host to one of the most popular events in the Petitioners' Challenge, shouts, cheers, and general crowd exhortations echo from this large ballroom.

The rich mahogany paneling and elegantly tiled floor of this ballroom contrast to the violence taking place in its center. A raised stage—ringed with ropes—is erected here, surrounded on all sides by oak bleachers. A shield guardian lurches around the 20-foot square ring, swatting its foes with brutal accuracy. Three halflings in duck costumes warily circle the guardian and try to smash tiny glass orbs of colored paint affixed to its body, while a fourth halfling lies senseless in the corner of the ring.

The halflings fight on behalf of The Duck of Death (actual identity: Thagmar Shankshaver) and he's very frustrated (and very vocal) about their poor performance in this event.

The Competition. The task is to go three rounds against Borgha the **modified shield guardian** and hit as many orbs of paint as possible. Borgha's fists are covered in thick padding that makes all damage nonlethal. Borgha also has a special ability: if an opponent misses it with a melee attack, it

can use its reaction to make an attack against that opponent.

Borgha’s amulet is worn by a bored **mage** named Sylvio Grennotch. This Proctor cannot be bribed, but Sylvio loves three things: secrets, magic knowledge, and chocolate. With the proper bribe and a successful Persuasion check against his +1 Wisdom bonus, he tilts the match in the party’s favor enough to grant them advantage on their attacks. At the end of each bout, Sylvio recharges any spells used and rests Borgha long enough for it to regenerate to full hit points.

Scoring Matrix: The Clockwork Colossus

Orb Location	Armor Class	PTs	Qty
Torso	17	1	14
Arms	21	2	8
Head	25	5	4

Scoring. The paint orbs are installed on Borgha’s torso, arms, and head. A player must call out which body part they are targeting. There are 26 orbs worth 50 total Petitioners’ Tears (PTs) to be earned. At the end of round 3, the Proctor rings the bell and calls off the shield guardian.

Special Note: Before each bout, Sylvio makes sure Borgha is charged with a counterspell set to counter the first thunderwave cast at it. Sylvio cannot recharge this effect during the match. Otherwise, area of effect spells go off as normal. Adjudicate them as you see fit. For instance, if a spell does half-damage on a successful save, then perhaps Borgha found a way to turn and shield its body and only half the orbs are broken. Don’t penalize clever play, however.

The adventurers need not roll damage, as hitting an orb is enough to break it—but single melee attacks only break a single orb.

B. Music Room – The Fortress of Bone

The ornate doors to this room are closed but unlocked. Through the leaded glass panes, it’s easy to see (but not hear) the contest playing out.

The ornate harpsichord against the east wall and the half-dozen violins hung around

the area highlight the music room. Grand 20-foot tall windows to the south frame the jagged line of a rocky cliff which overlooks the churning Moonsea. Forty or so masked partygoers watch a plump woman with pale blue eyes and small steel-rimmed spectacles evaluate a row of five elven women, dressed in swan outfits. After a long pause, the woman on the right draws a slow breath and says “A boat.” The bespectacled woman consults a thick brown book in her lap, nods, and the crowd applauds enthusiastically. As the room Proctor hands out the Petitioners’ Tears, the bespectacled woman levels a look over her glasses and booms, “Neeeeeeeeext.”

This event is a riddle contest. Even the name of the contest is a riddle of sorts. (The competition takes place inside the Fortress of Bone. – the participants’ skulls.) The woman administering the test is a well-known tutor in Melvaunt, Burnadette Muglash. She is severe and humorless.

The five elven women play on behalf of the Swan Queen (real identity: Marya Elkenfire).

The Competition. Each adventurer is asked one riddle. They receive 10 Petitioners’ Tears for correctly answering it on their own, or 4 points for answering it with help of one of the other party members. They receive 0 points if they give a wrong answer. When every adventurer has had the chance to answer one riddle, the group is asked if they wish to attempt a bonus riddle. If they get it right, they get 20 bonus points, but if they get it wrong, they lose 20 points. A selection of riddles is provided in the **Appendix 2: Fortress of Bone**. The first riddles are relatively easy but get progressively harder.

C. Library – Accomplishments & Embellishments

Closed tall double doors made of banded redwood inset with mahogany flourishes lead to the library.

The shelves of this library run floor to ceiling. Glass doors protect row upon row of books, from mundane topics like **A Botanist’s Guide to the Fauna & Flora of the Sword Coast**

to more esoteric titles such as **Care and Feeding of Your Hellhound**.

However, the books here are not the attraction. The tables have been pushed to the east wall, and a small stage has been constructed in the north end of the room. A large half-orc dressed in chainmail and wearing a cape made of falcon feathers regales the crowd with a rollicking story as four other half-orcs in similar attire guzzle wine from clay jugs and shout slurred cries of, "Yarr... yarr! Tis true me cap'n, tis true!!"

Ghosts of Pirates Past. An adventurer can make an Intelligence (Investigation) check DC 12 to recognize the crew onstage who have, in a brash breach of protocol, thrown away their falcon masks. Anyone with the Criminal background has advantage on this check. The contestants are a notorious group of half-orc mercenaries known as the Yellowscar Bridgebreakers. (They are called that because they always break their victims' noses.) Their leader is Grumaash Yellowscar. The Falcon Lord (real identity: Solomon Fraeth) hired them.

Unfortunately for the Falcon Lord, the magic which realigned the planar portal outside Melvaunt to attract the spirits of the damned had one other side effect: it woke the soul of Pirate Captain Timber "Two-Knots" Hocknagel and his crew, who were buried here on the estate. They have possessed the weak-willed Yellowscar gang and, after a century or more awaiting reward in the afterlife, they have been gorging themselves on food and drink. They are very loud, very drunk, and very much uninterested in listening to the Falcon Lord's orders.

Grumaash/Two-Knots finishes his tale with a bellow: "Yarr! An' that's how I set fire to tha Golden Munkey and sent forty-four souls a-straight to tha bottom a' tha sea!" He then chugs the last drams of ale from his jug, salutes, belches loudly, and trips headlong off the front of the stage – to raucous applause.

Two-Knots is more than happy to chat with anyone who approaches. His favorite topics in no particular order are:

- "This wine is bilge"
- "Let us set about commandeering a ship"
- "Me wine is out"
- "It's good to be back at Grimbriar"
- "Do ye have any wine?"
- "I set fire to a boatload of fireworks once"
- "Where can we get more wine?"

Adventurers who make an effort to indulge Two-Knots and gain his trust or affection may have an unusual interaction. Two-Knots pulls them in close and whispers, "Yeh know, there's more ta Grimbriar then meets tha eye... there are caves below... secret sea caves with twistin' tunnels. I spent the treasure I stashed there long ago, but the magic binding the password still holds. Ah, how I miss her, me first parrot. I miss her dearly, Lil Miss Peony Blackbutter..."

They may not recognize the significance now, but the sea caves provide a back door into the chambers below Grimbriar and "Peony Blackbutter" is the password. It is not essential for the party to learn this information to complete the adventure, but it is a shortcut they can gain for good roleplaying.

The Competition. The goal here is to improvise an entertaining tall tale, based on a random story title. The event is hosted by Shofinn Thedbenny, a spindly half-elf with a bald pate and a thin-lipped smile. Each adventurer must tell some portion of the story – whether they take turns line by line, word by word, or they each tackle a section. Players may take whatever actions they think enhance the performance: casting spells or cantrips, acting out portions of the tale, improvising props, etc.

At the end of their story, have each participant make a Charisma (Performance) check. If a player did a particularly good job telling or supporting the tale, grant them advantage on the roll. A results of 10-16 scores 2 points, 17-20 scores 5 points, and each result of 21 or higher scores 10 points.

Use the Story Titles for Accomplishments & Embellishments to generate a random title for the story. Roll a d6 for each column:

Story Titles for Accomplishments & Embellishments

d6

1	THE	Greedy	Goblin	WHO	Devoured	A	Castle
2		Lazy	Paladin		Punched		King
3		Skittish	Wizard		Befriended		Whale
4		Penny-pinching	Thief		Painted		Dragon
5		Slobbering	Cleric		Swindled		Ghost
6		Hungry	Henchmen		Tickled		Cow

Hazard Matrix: The Tower of Fiendish Folly

Section	Athletics DC	Trap Perception DC	Hazard	Trap Effect
10 ft	13	NA	None	None
20 ft	16	12	Spindle & Rope	Fall back 10 feet
30 ft	19	16	Breakaway Grip	Plummet to ground, 3d6 falling damage
40 ft	22	20	Flame Jets	2d6 fire, make a Dexterity save DC 14 to avoid falling 40 feet and taking 4d6 falling damage

D. South Terrace – The Tower of Fiendish Folly

A very popular event takes place here, and accordingly the enthusiasm of the crowd can be heard before the party even steps outside.

A throng of partygoers assembled on the wide marble terrace whoop, holler, and cheer those braving the Tower of Fiendish Folly. A twenty-foot diameter column stands on the manicured lawn beyond the terrace. The column is divided into four 10-foot sections studded with small handholds. Each section turns independently of the other. The entire structure is topped with a bouquet of colored flags. Four elves dressed in stork costumes scale the whirling tower. As they clamber up the spinning machine, grip points break away, handholds turn out to be loosely attached to long lengths of rope, and gouts of flame jet from recessed nozzles. Two elves fall headlong into the sand pit beneath the tower, one doggedly clings to a rope that whips him 20 feet off the ground, and the final elf narrowly pivots to avoid a face-full of fire.

The Stork Knight (actual identity: Illifiir) commands this team and looks on with calm and detached patience. One of the elves clambers over the lip of the tower and grabs a flag. The crowd roars, and the Stork Knight collects the prize.

The Competition. The goal here is to climb the spinning, trapped tower and grab one of the flags. Competitors score points depending on how high they climb: 2 pts for 10 feet, 3 pts for 20, 5 pts for 30, and 10 pts for climbing the full 40 feet and capturing a flag. If you fall to the ground, you are scored for the level you reached and your chance at the competition is over.

Using the Hazard Matrix. Half the grips on the tower are trapped. For each section of the tower, the matrix indicates: The Strength (Athletics) check necessary to climb that section, the Wisdom (Perception) check to detect if that handhold is trapped, the type of trap found in that section, and the consequence of failing to detect the trap. Because the tower is constructed over a pit of sand, a character who falls but succeeds at a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw takes half damage.

Suggested execution at the table. Use the following bullets to streamline play at the table:

- Have all participants roll their Athletics check simultaneously.
- If a player fails the Athletics check they are safe, they do not encounter a trap, they simply do not advance up to the next section of tower.
- Roll to determine if the remaining party members are encountering a trap this round (low roll= yes, high roll = no).
- Have all participants make their Wisdom (Perception) check, tied to the level of the tower they are on.

- If they succeed, they avoid the trap and successfully advance up to the next section.
- If they fail the Perception check, they suffer the effects of the trap.

Note. If you would like a visual representation to help you track this competition, you can sketch a 4-square tall and as many squares wide as there are adventurers on the grid. Use markers or minis to show where the adventurers are on the tower.

E. Banquet Hall – The Faerie Lights

This event does not make for much of a spectator sport, so while there is a large crowd assembled here, they are mostly mixing and chatting amongst themselves. The doors are open.

Tall double doors stand open, yielding entrance to the Banquet Hall. The sconces of continual light that normally illuminate the halls of Grimbriar instead have been dimmed to low candlelight. A constant din of chatter fills the air as partygoers gossip and speculate on the outcome of tonight's events. A high vaulted ceiling looms overhead.

Thin panels of wood stand in the northern end of the room, cut and painted to form the silhouettes of bushes and trees. Small glowing faeries appear at random throughout the fake scenery, scurrying from branch to branch and bush to bush. Twenty feet away, a team of dwarves concentrates intently as they hurl a barrage of silver-tipped darts at the scampering faeries. The dwarves wear ill-fitting, bright pink flamingo costumes complete with hooked beak masks and tall orange leggings.

The dwarves compete on behalf of The Marquis de Flamingo, who – underneath his pink, tailored costume – appears to be a dragonborn man with one arm. (actual identity: Shallinax the Mad). The Marquis wears a constant smile and shouts words of encouragement to his well-trained team.

A moment's observation reveals that the faeries are illusory. When struck by a dart they make a quiet popping noise and disappear.

When Shallinax's team has finished, the dragonborn takes a moment to approach the party. "Well, well, young Wollet. I don't suppose you remember, but we met once at your aunt's place in Melvaunt. Your aunt with the short gray hair? It must feel like ages ago. Anyway, look at you! What a strapping young man you've become! So handsome and imposing, I don't care what they say! At any rate, I hope you are skilled with a dagger, young Wollet! Tonight is your night! Tonight... is your night!" With that, the dragonborn gathers his troops and departs.

Players may find this suspicious. An Intelligence (History) check DC 18 reveals that a one-armed dragonborn mage lives in Melvaunt but his name is Parabald the Maimed, a friend of good and decency.

Note: Any players who have encountered Parabald in previous adventures and any members of the Harpers gain advantage on this check.

The Competition. Each participant gets three darts. They must select which target they are aiming at (brownie, pixie, or sprite) and make a ranged attack roll against that target. Each hit scores points as outlined below. Since the illusionary faeries only respond to the touch of the silvered darts, it would take some extraordinary creativity to cheat at this challenge.

Scoring Matrix: The Faerie Lights

Faerie Type	Armor Class	PTs
Brownie	16	2
Pixie	20	5
Sprite	24	10

F. West Courtyard – The Six Rings of Hell

One of the showier and more death-defying events, a lively crowd has gathered here.

Six nested rings made of metal pipe rise 30 feet from the midst of this large, well-tended courtyard. Five humans wearing pelican costumes swing from the rings, attempting to flip to the rings above and dodge shifting sections of oil and barbed wire. The crowd cheers raucously as, one by one, they pitch themselves ever higher.

The Pelican Prince (actual identity: Dorgan Haak) oversees this team with focused intent. These are no hired mercenaries: the five people on the rings are all his children. While two of them tumble to the ground, the other three make it all the way to the top. He gives a shout of exhilaration and warmly congratulates them, saying, “Well done, my kin, well done.” Then it’s off to a different event for them.

The Competition. This is a test of acrobatics. Portions of each ring are covered with some type of hazard. The rings spin, stop, and spin again at random speeds so getting the timing between jumps is tricky. The goal here is to swing to the very top of the nested circle. The first circle is 5 feet off the ground, does not spin, and does not require a check to reach. Each subsequent ring is 5 feet higher than the last, with the innermost ring being 30 feet off the ground. Competitors score points depending on the highest ring they swing to:

- 1 pt for Ring 2
- 2 pts for Ring 3
- 3 pts for Ring 4
- 5 pts for Ring 5
- 10 pts for Ring 6

Participants are scored for the last ring you successfully reached and your chance at the competition is over.

Hazard Matrix: The Six Rings of Hell

Target Ring	Min. Acro DC	Safe Acro DC	Hazard	Trap Effect
2	7	10	Oiled	Next check at disadvantage
3	10	13	Spikes	1d4 piercing damage
4	13	16	Razor wire	2d6 slashing, Strength save DC 10 or fall 20 feet.
5	16	19	Carrion crawler poison	Constitution save DC 13 or be poisoned for 1 min.
6	18	22	Shock pulse	2d6 shock damage, Dexterity DC 14 or fall 30 feet.

Using the Hazard Matrix. For each ring, the matrix indicates: The minimum Dexterity (Acrobatics) check necessary to swing to that ring, the level of check necessary to reach the next ring safely, the type of hazard built into that ring and the consequence of failing to arrive safely.

Suggested execution at the table. Use the following bullets to streamline play at the table:

- Have all participants roll their Dexterity (Acrobatics) check simultaneously.
- If a player fails to make the Minimum Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, they fall and take 1d6 of damage per ring they were on (not the ring they were targeting). Because the rings are constructed over a pit of sand, a successful Dexterity saving throw DC 12 means the character only takes half damage.
- If they make the Minimum Dexterity (Acrobatics) check but don’t make the Safe Dexterity (Acrobatics) DC, they swing to a trapped section of the target ring and suffer the effect specified.
- If the player makes the Safe Dexterity (Acrobatics) DC, they swing to an untrapped section of the target ring and are safe.

Note. If you would like a visual representation to help you track this competition you can sketch out a 6-square tall and an as many squares wide as there are adventurers grid. Use markers or minis to show where the adventurers are on the tower.

G. Reflecting Pool – Squirrel Rodeo

One of the more whimsical events in the Petitioners’ Challenge, the crowd gathered here mostly seeks fresh air. The event provides a distraction from socializing, but only a mild one.

A reflecting pool 10 feet wide and 40 feet long dominates the center of this cozy courtyard. Approximately 5 feet deep, the pool has been drained of water and six gnomes dressed as parrots scurry within, their elaborate feathered headpieces bouncing up and down and they hustle to and fro. A ripple of laughter and jeers passes through the crowd as the gnomes chase two dozen brightly-colored squirrels around the marble basin. Near the edge of the pool, a blue-

eyed, bald man, with an unruly cinnamon-colored beard and covered in face and head pain, laughs raucously. The folds of his satin parrot costume tremble with each hearty belly laugh. A bell rings. The gnomes hold up 9 squirrels and the man erupts with another spasm of laughter. “Do it again!” he cries as he slaps his hip, “Do it again!”

The man is Zerk Kimit, or – as he’s known tonight – the Parrot King. As the host of the Petitioners’ Masquerade, he does not wear a mask. Instead, colorful paints cover his face and bald head. Some revelers attempt to discretely explain that his team cannot compete again but Zerk shouts “No! Again! Do it again!” A DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals Zerk is confused and overly stubborn. If the party attempts to interact with him, he says, “Thank you for coming!” and then repeats back the things they say – sometimes as a seeming question (i.e. “The squirrels?” and sometimes as if in agreement (“Ah, the squirrels. The squirrels.”))

The situation here is that Solomon Fraeth normally gives Zerk commands to guide his behavior, but Solomon is so frustrated by the poor performance of his team that he has forgotten all about tending the wizard. And so the easily distracted Zerk is left to drift. Any extended interaction by the party reveals Zerk is not in full command of his faculties, although a “mad mage” is not an uncommon occurrence among members of the Red Wizards.

The Competition. The challenge here is to gather as many squirrels as possible in three rounds. (Use the stats for a **giant rat**, but with a speed of 40 ft.) The pool is filled with four types of squirrels, although that may not be obvious. The first three types are painted green, orange, and yellow, but the fourth type is invisible.

- Players may make a Strength (Athletics) check or a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to capture a squirrel.
- For each squirrel they are already holding, the DC goes up by 2.
- If they fail a check by 5-9 points they drop one squirrel which they are currently holding.

- If they fail a check by 10+ points they drop all squirrels they are holding.
- For each yellow squirrel a PC is holding at the start of their turn, they take 1d4 acid damage.
- An invisible squirrel’s general location can be detected with a successful Wisdom (Perception) check DC 15.

Scoring. Green squirrels are worth 1 point each, orange squirrels are worth 3 pts, yellow squirrels are worth 5 pts, and invisible squirrels are worth 15 points each.

Scoring Matrix: The Squirrel Rodeo

Squirrel Color	Trait	Check DC	Qty
Green	Normal squirrel	12	14
Orange	Greasy	15	8
Yellow	Secretes mild acid	12	4
Invisible	Invisible!	14 plus disadvantage	2

H. The Chamber of Mirrors

A Proctor stands watch outside this door to prevent anyone from accessing this chamber before the ritual starts at midnight, but players are a tricky bunch so just in case...

Forty feet in diameter, this octagonal room features enormous mirrors on each wall. Instead of the wood so commonly used throughout the rest of the estate, the flooring here consists of polished granite. A magic circle carved in the center of the chamber pulses with dim red crackling light. Inside the circle, a twisting column of inky smoke swirls aimlessly.

Anyone who isn’t bearing a special ritual dagger and crosses into the magic circle takes 14 (4d6) necrotic damage at the start of each of their turns. Those who stand outside the circle and successfully make a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check catch a glimpse of a reflection in one of the mirrors on the wall: a jackal-headed demon wearing spectacles standing in the circle and staring at them.



PART 3. CROSS YOUR HEART AND HOPE TO DIE

Expected Duration: 20 minutes

The climactic event of the evening: the Challenge of the Six Daggers. But when the party challenges Zerak to a duel in the ritual circle, circumstances shift as an unpleasant truth is revealed.

Kick off this portion of the adventure with the following:

The sound of a gong echoes throughout the grand hallways of Grimbiar. All around, the masked partygoers set down their drinks and plates, shuffling toward the center of the mansion. Murmurs of anticipation course through the crowd as they slowly file into the Chamber of Mirrors.

Assuming the party chooses to follow and enter:

Forty feet in diameter, this octagonal room features enormous mirrors on each wall. Instead of the wood so commonly used throughout the rest of the estate, the flooring here consists of polished granite. A magic circle carved in the center of the chamber radiates with a bright yellow glow. The smell of brimstone fills the air.

Inside the circle, a nine-foot-tall, jackal-headed demon holds a black, leather-bound tome. It peers balefully around the room over a pair of black iron spectacles. At six equidistant points around the circle, silver daggers levitate 3 feet off the ground. They keen with a high-pitched vibration and pulse with a malevolent blue glow.

Take a moment to compare the party's points with these standings:

Leader	Tears Earned
Marquis de Flamingo	210
The Swan Queen	198
The Stork Knight	181

The party likely performed well enough to place 1st. If they placed 2nd, the Marquis de Flamingo graciously lets them go first in the ritual saying with a deep bow, "I told you: tonight is your night." If they placed 3rd then the ritual proceeds from lowest qualifying score to highest (making them go first). In the event of a tie, placement goes to the group which is newest to the Masquerade – which is "Wollet."

If the party didn't score in the top 3, then announce the results as above, but the Marquis de Flamingo steps forward and commits an act of unexpected generosity: "My fellow petitioners," he says, "though I have earned a dagger tonight, I have no use for it. I owe no debts, seek no favors, and have no quarrels to settle. Therefore, I bequeath this dagger to none other than Wollet Throade." The Marquis bows before the party and hands them a silver ritual dagger.

After the scores and order of participation have been determined, move on to the ritual itself:

The jackal-headed demon snorts in a heavy breath. Its eyes glow with a shimmering blue light and its voice echoes with an otherworldly resonance. "Wollet Throade, you have earned a place in the Petitioner's Challenge. Do you or a proxy willingly step forth and, upon the pain of your mortal soul, and at risk of punishment by I, Priax the Binder, agree to the enter the Circle of Six Daggers?"

The chosen party member must say "Yes" or "I do" or otherwise verbally consent, or Priax the Binder goads an answer out of them. Once they do:

Priax the Binder gives a slight grin, runs a long tongue over its snout, and asks: "Whom do you challenge?"

Assuming they say "Zerak Kimit," read:

A murmur of consternation runs through the crowd. "The host?" an older woman

mutter. "No one has ever dared challenge the host!" Priax the Binder levels its infernal gaze on the wizard. "Zerak Kimit, you have been challenged. Do you, upon the pain of your mortal soul, and at risk of punishment by I, Priax the Binder, agree to the enter the Circle of Six Daggers?"

Zerak looks around the room defiantly. He steps into the magic circle and spits out the words: "I do."

Priax the Binder hisses and spits a tongue of blue flame onto the floor. It gives a heartrending howl and lashes out at Zerak with its long claws, plucking a silver amulet from around Zerak's neck. The mage crumples to the ground like a puppet with its strings cut.

"Forfeit, deception, and foul!" Priax cries. "This man's soul belongs to another!!!"

The demon wheels about to the only other person still standing in the circle. It leans in close, fetid breath pouring forth from flared nostrils. Its voice turns to a low, rumbling growl. "You, 'Wollet Throad,' have 66 minutes to bring me this man's soul or the covenant is sundered and I shall claim yours instead!" The demon throws the medallion defiantly to the ground.

The crowd cries out as panic takes hold. The partygoers rush for the door. No one, it seems, wants to see what happens when the covenant is sundered.

At this point, members of the party making a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check notice on the other side of the room that the Falcon Lord taps on a mirror and disappears through a secret panel

that quickly opens and closes. Solomon Fraeth has stepped into a magical elevator that descends to Zerak's workshop. A heavy iron barrier slides into place for 1 minute while the elevator is in operation.

If the party gained the trust of Captain Two-Knots in the earlier chapter, they may have learned that the sea caves provide a back entrance into the chambers below Grimbriar. The password is his beloved parrot's name, "Peony Blackbutter."

If the party has no clue how to proceed next, then Gherald the house steward enters, cradles Zerak's catatonic body in his arms, and begs the party for help. He explains that six months ago, Master Kimit attempted a rare and forbidden ritual: the Rite of the Blood Lich. All the apprentices who took part were slain in the ritual, and when the master came back from his workshops, he was a changed man: impulsive and easily distracted. The only other person to survive the failed rite was a business associate named Solomon Fraeth. Solomon moved into residence at Grimbriar, and Master Kimit seemed unusually swayed by the man's suggestions.

Gherald happily shows the party the secret door that gives entrance to the elevator.

The Silver Medallion. Examination of the silver medallion reveals a large emerald inset in its center. When held the emerald pulses as if with a heartbeat. The "heart" beats faster as it gets closer to the phylactery which holds Zerak's soul. The medallion can be used like a compass to navigate to the phylactery. Right now it "points" down.

From this point, it's a race against the clock.



PART 4. SIXTY-SIX MINUTES TO KILL

Estimated Duration: 90 minutes

This is a race against the clock to find the phylactery and bring it back to Priax the Binder. To abstract this, use a timer that fills up based on the skill checks made to overcome the obstacles in the way of obtaining the phylactery.

Take an index card or piece of scrap paper and write time passed on it. As the adventurers move through the sea caves underneath Grimbriar, they come to obstacles that they must overcome with a skill check. For each failed check, mark off one checkmark.

If they aid whoever is trying to make the check to circumvent the obstacle, ask them how they aid. However, if an aided check fails, mark off 2 failures instead of one. If they spend resources or have clever ideas you can grant them a +2 or even a +5 bonus, in addition to advantage.

A good example is if they use a spell that costs a spell slot or use a limited use item, it can grant a +2 or +5 bonus. Your choice on how effective it is in the situation.

If 10 checkmarks of time pass on the time tracking sheet, the party has run out of time: move directly to The Binder at the end of this section.

The Sea Caves of Grimbriar

These caves are still mostly rough and many of them fill up with water. It would be quite difficult to find one's way around down here, but fortunately the adventurers have a medallion that makes navigating the caverns fairly simple.

General Features

The Sea Caves of Grimbriar have the following general features.

Terrain. The caves are roughhewn and uneven.

Light. There is no light down here.

Smells and Sounds. The sounds of the surf can be heard in the distance, and the smells of the sea are strong and mixed with the dampness of the caves.

The Caverns. Unless otherwise indicated, the rough-hewn caverns are between 8 and 12 tall.

Peony Blackbutter

If the adventurers have the password from Captain Two-Knots ("Peony Blackbutter") and use the sea caves, they can circumvent the locked doors area of the sea caves.

Locked Doors

When the elevator opens, there is locked door 20 feet ahead. Behind that door is another locked door 5 feet beyond it.

The closest door opens inward toward the elevator, while the far door opens outwards away from the elevator.

They're both thick oak doors reinforced with metal and they have a band of force between the interior handles holding them shut, like a metal rope between both doors.

- Unlocking a door is a DC 12 Dexterity (Thieves Tools) check.
- Knowing there's something magical about the door is a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check or a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check.
- Disabling the magic between the doors is a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check.
- Knocking down the door is a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

Any failure results in accomplishing the task but costing time: mark a checkmark for each failed attempt.

Magical Wards

The magical wards shock anyone within them, doing a little damage and paralyzing them while setting off an alarm.

- A passive perception of DC 13 lets whoever is in front of the group realize something is wrong as the hair on their arms and the back of their neck stands up.
- Noticing the lightning wards is a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check or DC 13 Intelligence

(Investigation) check. If the PCs get a 16 or higher when searching for danger, they also find the alarm spell, which sounds like a gong being struck 10 times.

- Disabling the lightning wards is a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) or DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check and disabling the *alarm* spell is a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) or DC 18 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check.
- The adventurers can try the check to disable the wards as many times as they'd like but every failure costs them time. Mark a checkmark.
- If the lightning wards go off, any creature in the area makes a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. Those who fail take 5 (1d10) lightning damage and are paralyzed. They can speak but can't move. They can be carried and for expedience just say whoever is carrying them is encumbered. It also slows down the progress of the group so mark a check mark for every member who is paralyzed.
- If the alarm goes off the guardians in the final encounter are prepared for intruders and are well hidden to ambush intruders.

Ghostly Barriers

A number of shades have been conscripted by Zerk Kimit to be a barrier to this passage. They act like a laser grid defense system that drains the life and time from those who touch them. Read the following when the adventurers approach this area:

You turn a corner and see three dozen shades standing quietly in the tunnel. They stare forward, standing in their staggered formation, their faces seeing into nothing. After a few moments of watching they all shift, gliding into a new position, some now hovering off the ground, some partially in the walls ceiling and floor. After a few more moments they shift again, gliding into new positions.

Getting Through. Getting through here is about timing and understanding the pattern.

- Without understanding the pattern the ghosts move in, all checks are made at disadvantage.
- It's a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check to understand the pattern.
- Maneuvering through the ghosts is a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.
- If an adventurer fails their check, they touch a shade. The spectral creature screams, transforming the rest of the ghosts into horrific visages which combine into a wall of ghostly force and shove the adventurer back to the beginning. The adventurer must attempt a DC 13 Charisma saving throw. Failing the saving throw causes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage as they panic and tumble as they're shoved back down the hall and a checkmark gets added to the timer.
- When half or more of the adventurers make it safely through the corridor, the shades disappear.

A Fight with the Guardians

When the adventurers enter this area, read:

A glowing blue light emanates from a staff standing upright in the middle of this room. The medallion beats strongest when aligned with the staff.

The room is an elongated, uneven octagon with six support pillars surrounding the staff and holding up the 11-foot ceiling. Unlike the rest of the sea caverns, this area was carved out or shaped with magic, making the floor and walls much more even than the rest of the caverns.

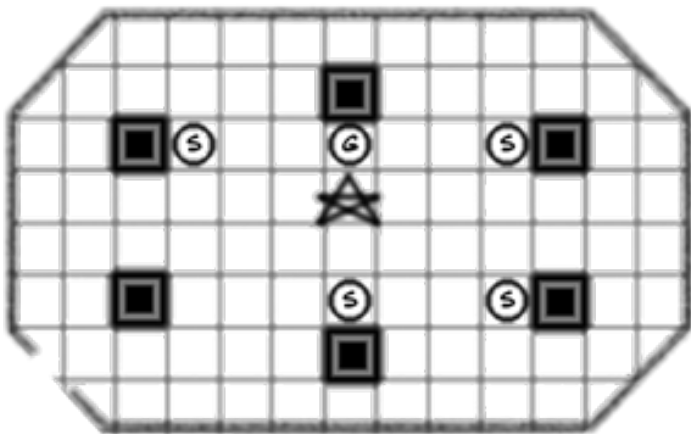
The phylactery is guarded by several undead creatures in the service of Zerk Kimit. There are **4 skeletons** and a **ghast**.

If the alarm went off while trying to get through the magical wards then the creatures are hidden behind the pillars and ready for intruders. If the alarm didn't go off then the creatures are standing around awaiting orders or for intruders as per the map. The skeletons obey the ghast, which has in the past functioned as a lab assistant to Zerk and is wearing a smock stained with chemicals and blood.

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Remove one **ghast**.
- **Weak:** Remove one **skeleton**.
- **Strong:** Add two **skeletons**.
- **Very Strong:** Add one **ghast**.



The Staff and The Binder. The amulet is part of the silver and wooden staff and can be attached to make Zerak's soul whole again. Once the staff and amulet are brought back together, the Binder appears in a cloud of noxious black smoke, immediately demanding the soul of Zerak Kimit.

If the adventurers hand over the staff and amulet, the Binder departs as it appeared: move onto the **Epilogue**.

If the adventurers fight the Binder, it kills them, takes the staff and amulet, and leaves. You can have the fight but the Binder is way out of the league of the characters, and there's no way it should lose.

A Confession. If the adventurers ask the Binder for a confession from Zerak Kimit, it agrees to assist since they did what it asked. The Binder takes the staff and amulet, concentrates, and dark energy passes between the objects. It hands the amulet to one of the adventurers. When an adventurer touches the amulet, they see a memory of Zerak Kimit performing a series of rituals to enslave spirits from the Nine Hells and modify the Melvaunt portal to draw them forth. With that done the Binder vanishes with the staff in a cloud of noxious smoke.

The Binder

If the adventurers fail to find the rest of Zerak Kimit's soul, the Binder appears before them.

With an explosion of noxious black smoke, the Binder appears before you and points at the one he addressed before.

"You have failed to bring me the soul of Zerak Kimit. You will take his place or I will not only take your soul but kill all of your companions."

If the adventurers fight, the Binder is way out of their league. If the adventurer who had the dagger goes along peacefully, the rest of the party survives. Move to the **Epilogue**.

Epilogue

The Adventurers have the Confession

If the adventurers have the confession, Captain Eledstra is happy about the work they have done, although she's a bit sad that Zerak Kimit is dead and can't stand trial. She pays them 25 gold each for their work and lets them know she'll be thinking of them if she ever needs another job in this vein done.

The Adventurers Don't Have the Confession

If this is how the adventure ends, then Captain Eledstra is pretty upset with the adventurers. The truth is she's just worried about not only her job, but what the Council of Lords might do to her.

If an Adventurer's Soul was Taken

If the Binder took one of the adventurer's souls, that character cannot be brought back to life in any way. See the **Soulless Survivor** Story Award.

Story Awards

If the adventurers succeeded in getting the confession on the silver amulet, then they all gain the **Captain Elestra's Regard** story award.

If they finished their bargain with the Binder, they all gain **The Binder's Interest** story award.

If one of the adventurers forfeited their soul, they gain the **Soulless Survivor** story award.

Rewards

Make sure players 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 (Min/Max XP: 900/1200)

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.

Combat Awards

Name of Foe	XP Per Foe
Ghast	450
Skeleton	50
Veteran	700
Guard	25
Noble	25

Non-Combat Awards

Task or Accomplishment	XP Per Char
Come in first place	300
Come in second place	200
Come in third place	100
Get Zerk Kimit's soul to the Binder	200

Treasure

The characters receive the following treasure, divided up amongst the party. Treasure is divided as evenly as possible. Gold piece values listed for sellable gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

Treasure Awards

Item Name	GP Value
Eledstra's Payment	25/character
Wollet's Wallet	25 gp
The Silver Dagger	100 gp

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 items are divided according to a system detailed in the D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide.

Amulet of Shielding

Wondrous Item, uncommon

Once used to confirm that Zerk's the one who brought in the spectral undead the PCs can have the amulet which functions as a brooch of shielding. While wearing this amulet, you have resistance to force damage, and you have immunity to damage from the *magic missile* spell.

Player Rewards

For completing this mission, the characters earn downtime and renown as described in the D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide (ALDMG).

Story Award

During the course of this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award:

The Binder's Interest. You've given a soul to the Binder to save your own or one of your friends. That kind of desperation and deal making is useful to the Binder and its piers. You're on the Binder's list of possible mortal assets.

Captain Eledstra's Regard. Being successful in getting the confession from Zerk has gained the favor of Captain Eledstra. In the future, you may be able to depend on her to help you get out of trouble or to gain the benefit of the doubt from the City Watch of Melvaunt.

Soulless Survivor. You gave up your soul to the arcanoloth known as the Binder. If you die, no magic can return your soul to your body. The lack of a soul has changed you though. Everything you eat tastes bland. Colors are less vibrant. Jokes are less funny, unless someone gets hurt. If you are every brought back to life, you hear a voice in the darkness say, "I'll let you live... this time!"

DM Rewards

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn DM Rewards as described in the D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide (ALDMG).

Appendix. Dramatis Personae

The following NPCs are featured prominently in this adventure:

The Duck of Death, Thagmar Shankshaver (THAG-mar SHAYNK-shay-vur). Dressed in a costume made of soft felt with a brown body, green wings, and a floppy duck bill, Thagmar looks and feels ridiculous. A dwarven trader, he made the trip all the way down from Ironmaster in the hopes of having a large debt forgiven by Dorgan Haak. Hot-headed, he is frustrated by the poor performance by his team of halflings. He has journeyed a long way and is humiliated by both the situation and the prospect it may all be for naught.

The Swan Queen, Marya Elkenfire (MAR-ya EL-kin-Fl-ur). Elegant in her silken hose and intricately stitched swan costume, Marya is a noblewoman from Melvaunt who became a widow eight months ago. Charming and insightful, she has many prospective suitors in town though she suspects many merely seek a piece of the fortune she inherited. She has entered the Masquerade in order to compel a truth from Solomon Fraeth: did he poison her husband?

The Falcon Lord, Solomon Fraeth (SOL-oh-mun FRAY-th). Solomon might look dashing in his form-fitting leather falcon costume if it weren't completely at odds with his squat, toad-like physique. Quiet and conniving, he hopes to compel Dorgan Haak to readmit him into the Zhentarim. However, his team has been possessed by the spirits of Grimbriar's former tenants and they are far more interested in carousing than they are competing. Solomon rubs his hands obsessively and seethes with frustration as he watches his plans unravel before his eyes.

The Stork Knight, Illifiir (IL-eh-FEER). Tall and lanky, with a strength that belies his slender frame, Illifiir has traveled farther than anyone else to attend this affair: Illifiir is a githyanki warrior. He has a halting and precise command of the Common tongue and little aptitude for socializing. His elegant stork costume appears to have been fashioned from burnished mithril. Illifiir would use the Challenge to force Zerak to fulfill a promise: help find the silver sword Nerveslicer.

The Marquis de Flamingo, Shallinax the Mad (SHALL-en-NAX). Quick with a smile and bursting

with enthusiasm, Shallinax the Mad is a one-armed dragonborn mage in a pink velvet flamingo costume. Mischievous and relentlessly optimistic, his attitude may be working because his team of dwarves is the envy of all in attendance. If pressed, Shallinax admits he has a debt he needs forgiven. The ultimate truth is that Shallinax is a Harper agent planted in deep cover to help ensure the success of the party's mission.

The Pelican Prince, Dorgan Haak (DOR-gun Hawk). A long-time, established member of Zhentarim inner circles, Dorgan serves the operation as a moneylender and financier. He never lets friendship get in the way of business. When it comes to family, however, it's a different story. Dorgan is fiercely proud and loyal to his five sons. His pelican costume is fashioned from fine layers of silk that proves to be both striking and comfortable. If he wins a Challenge, Dorgan would compel Wollet Throade to turn over the family horse trading business for one year.

The Parrot King, Zerak Kimit (ZAYR-ack KIM-it). As the host of the event, Zerak does not need to wear a mask but he has covered his face and balding head in paint and wears brightly colored robes of woven brocade. Zerak smiles easily but in that not-particularly-reassuring way that makes you wonder if he actually recognizes you. Stubborn yet easily distracted, he often repeats things he's just heard. Zerak fields a team mostly for the entertainment. As host it is considered impolitic for him to challenge his guests and vice versa.

Gherald (JHER-uld). The House steward at Grimbriar for almost three decades, Gherald knows better than to ask questions about the master's affair. Skilled in etiquette, and an utmost professional when it comes to making sure the guests are properly attended to, Gherald has a fierce loyalty to his master and harbors quiet suspicions about the new house guest, Solomon Fraeth.

Priax the Binder (PREE-ax). Nine feet tall and jackal-headed, Priax is the demon at the center of the Circle of Six Daggers. The arcanaloth wields immense power but is obligated to oversee and enforce the strictures of the evening's ritual. Priax does not necessarily seek to kill, it may instead imprison, enslave, or demand a life debt from those who break the covenant which has drawn it onto this plane.

Appendix:

NPC / Monster Statistics

Giant Rat

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 7 (2d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Keen Smell. The rat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

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

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Guard

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 16 (chain shirt, shield)

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 any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Actions

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

Ghast

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 36 (8d8)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Damage Resistances necrotic

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

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

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

Actions

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

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

Priax the Binder, Arcanaloath

Medium fiend (yugoloth), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 104 (16d8 + 32)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Int +9, Wis +7, Cha +7

Skills Arcana +13, Deception +9, Insight +9, Perception +7

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

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages all, telepath 120 ft.

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

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

At will: *alter self*, *darkness*, *heat metal*, *invisibility* (self only), *magic missile*

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

Magic Weapons. The arcanaloath's weapon attacks are magical.

Spellcasting. The arcanaloath is a 16th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The arcanaloath has the following wizard spells prepared:

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

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *identify*, *shield*, *Tenser's floating disk*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *mirror image*, *phantasmal force*, *suggestion*

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

4th level (3 slots): *banishment*, *dimension door*

5th level (2 slots): *contact other plane*, *hold monster*

6th level (1 slot): *chain lightning*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*

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

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage. The target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Teleport. The arcanaloath magically teleports, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.

Veteran

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

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 any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Actions

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

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

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

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

Shield Guardian (modified)

Large construct, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 142 (15d10 + 60)

Speed 30 ft.

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

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

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

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

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

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

Skeleton

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (armor scraps)

Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Actions

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

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

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

Actions

Multiattack. The guardian makes two fist attacks.

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

Reactions

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

Noble

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 15 (breastplate)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Deception +5, Insight +4, Persuasion +5

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any two languages

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Actions

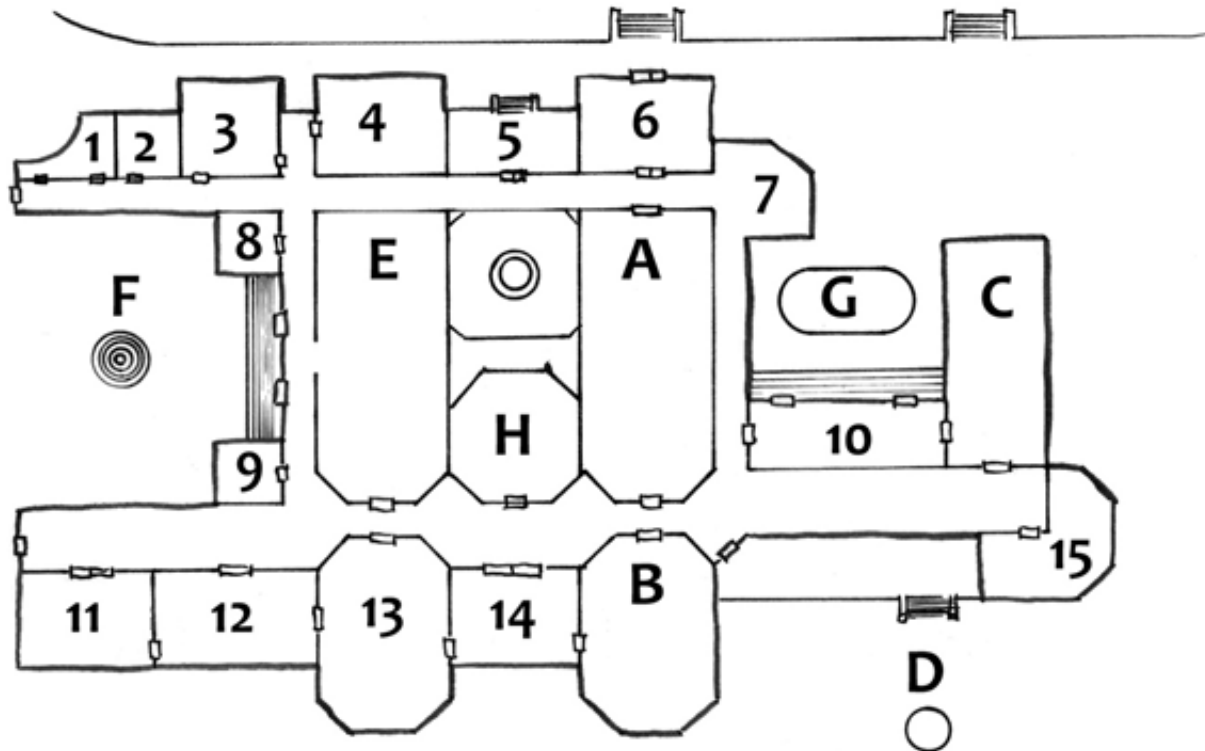
Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Reactions

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

Appendix. Maps

Grimbriar



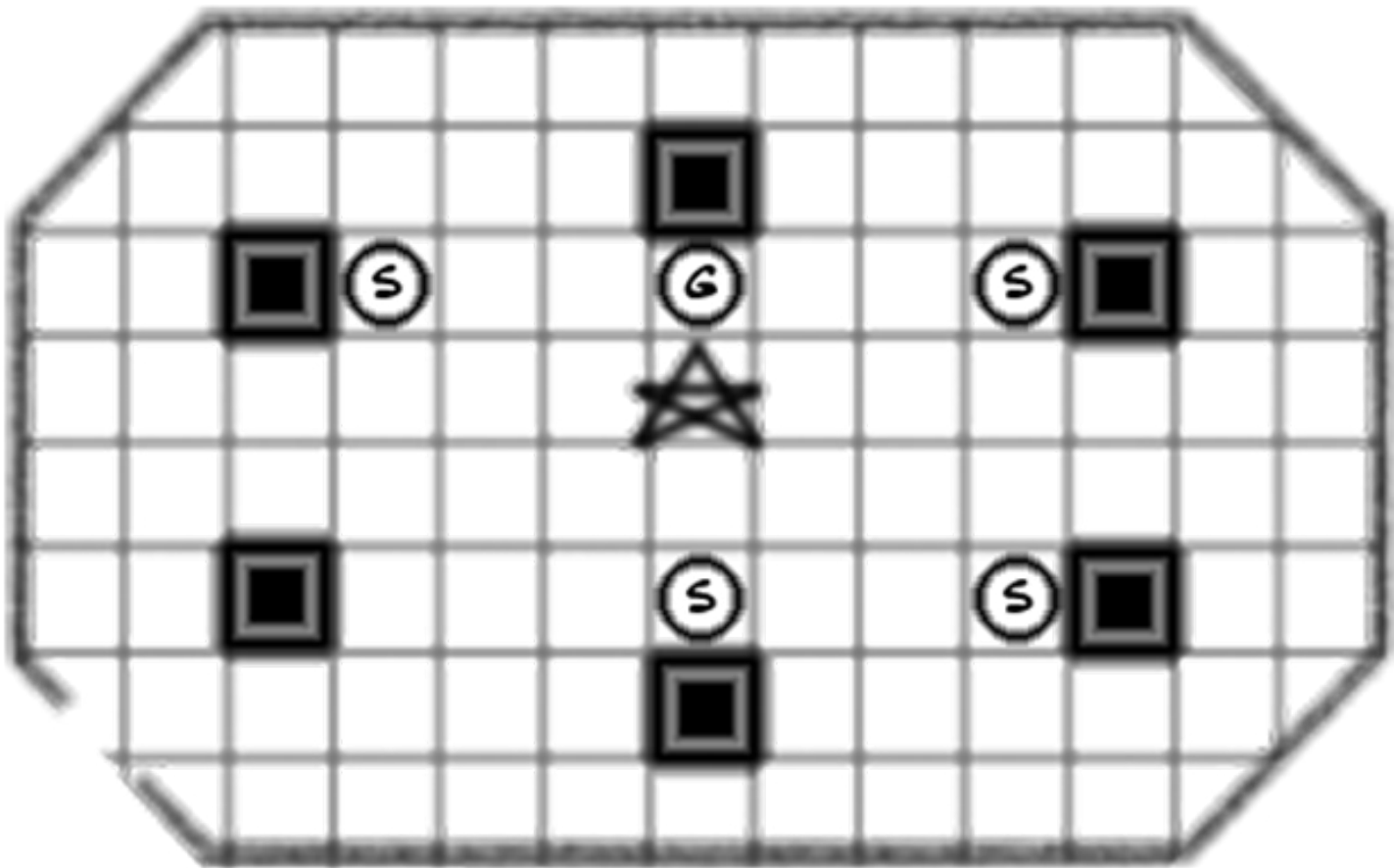
Event Rooms

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| A. The Clockwork Colossus | D. The Tower of Fiendish Folly |
| B. The Fortress of Bone | E. The Faerie Lights |
| C. Accomplishments & Embellishments | F. The Six Rings of Hell |
| | G. Squirrel Rodeo |
| H. Chamber of Mirrors | |

Other Rooms

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Cloak Room | 6. Vestibule | 11. Pantry |
| 2. Storage Room | 7. Aviary | 12. Kitchen |
| 3. Billiards | 8. North Sitting Room | 13. Breakfast Room |
| 4. Trophy Room | 9. South Sitting Room | 14. Salon |
| 5. North Terrace | 10. Art Gallery | 15. Den |

Guardians of the Staff Map



Appendix #1: Assorted Gossip

Gossip Item	True/False	Plot Relevance
Six months ago, Zerak fired most of his apprentices in a fit of anger.	Half-true	High
In the past 4 months, Zerak has sold off many of his finer belongings and had them shipped to a unknown merchant in Waterdeep	True	Medium
Zerak does not seem to be himself tonight, the strain of invoking the ritual may be getting to him.	Half-true	High
The cliffs along the coast are riddled with sea caves. They say pirate treasure is buried there, including a ring that allows one to control sea creatures.	True	Medium
Last month, Marya Elkenfire secretly married a bard visiting from Silverymoon.	False	Low
The furnishings and decorations hanging in the halls of Grimbriar simply aren't as extravagant as in years past.	True	Medium
Anyone who sheds blood in violence tonight risks releasing the demon in the Chamber of Mirrors.	True	High
The Falcon Lord paid a visit to the estate seven months ago and then never left.	True	High
The Pelican Prince is a Harper double agent.	False	Medium
The Marquis de Flamingo is secretly working for the Cult of the Dragon. This is a scouting/recruitment mission.	False	Low
A pirate captain originally built this estate. He and his crew are buried in the sea caves below. Strange guardians protect their graves and treasure.	True	High
The Falcon Lord personally decided what title each guest would have, over the objections of Gherald, the House steward.	True	Medium
Zerak has bound several invisible stalkers to the estate. Those who wander and poke their nose into private rooms run the risk of getting attacked by his guardians.	False	Medium
The Duck of Death is so high strung because he gambled away his family battleaxe in a high stakes game of dragonscales. He's here to win it back.	False	Low
Gherald the House steward has a small silver ring which enables him to become invisible whenever he twists it.	False	High
Be careful what you say, the Stork King can read lips.	Half-true	Low
There's something invisible in the drained reflecting pool where they hold the Squirrel Rodeo, possibly a poltergeist. A traveling merchant crossed Zerak and the wizard had him drowned in the pool and then strung up as an example.	Half-true	Medium
The Falcon Lord has a greedy taste for fine gems and jewelry.	True	Medium
The Swan Queen suspects her husband was poisoned. As a result, she only drinks wine that she brought herself.	True	Medium
Three years ago someone died falling from the Tower of Fiendish Folly and Zerak ordered the corpse roasted and served to guests.	Half-true	Low
The Pelican Prince has been quietly setting up a series of meetings in Waterdeep to vet possible brides for his sons.	True	Low
The books in the library will cry out an alarm if they are removed from the premises.	False	Low
The stifling heat will not let up until someone has sworn their soul to the demon of the Six Daggers.	Half-true	Low

Appendix #2: Riddles

I pass before the sun, yet make no shadow. What am I?

A: Wind

What's black when you get it, red when you use it, and white when you're all through with it?

A: Charcoal

Halo of water, tongue of wood. Skin of stone, long I've stood. My fingers short reach to the sky. Inside my heart men live and die.

A: Castle

If you throw me from the window
I will leave a grieving wife.
Bring me back, but in the door, and
You'll see someone giving life!
What am I?

A: The letter 'n'

When you need me, you throw me away
But when you are done with me, you bring me back
What am I?

A: An anchor.

If it's information you seek, come and see me.
If it's pairs of letters you need, I have consecutively three.
What am I?

A: Bookkeeper

Mouthless but I will tell you a name that is not mine, I will show you the years I have seen but I have no eyes, Memory I have but I have no mind.

A: Gravestone

We are little creatures; all of us have different features. One of us in glass is set; one of us you'll find in jet. Another you may see in tin, and the fourth is boxed within. If the fifth you should pursue, it can never fly from you. What are we?

A: Vowels

The Queen of the Heavens gathered Her most loyal subjects. There were:

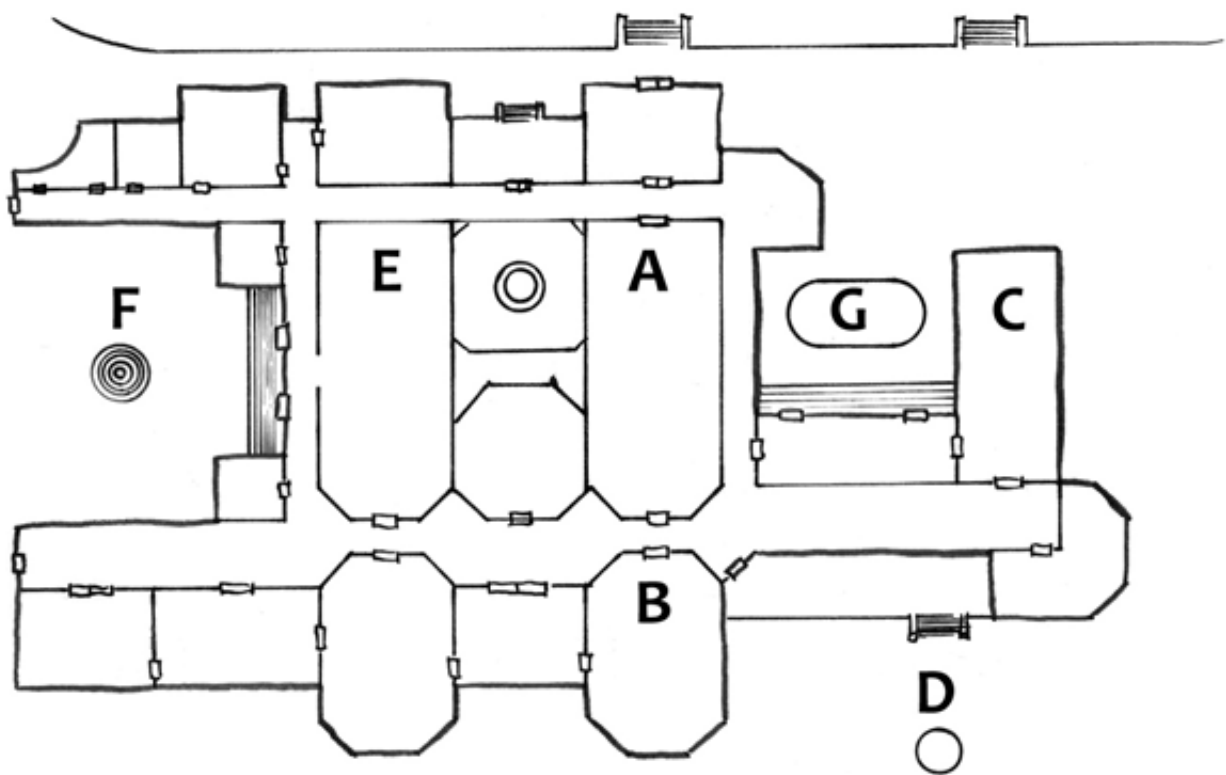
- 16 eagles
- 06 ravens
- 68 cardinals
- 88 finches
- Some bluejays
- And 98 sparrows

...Given what you know, exactly how many bluejays were there?

A: 87 is the best answer. 78 or L8 would also be acceptable. If you write the numbers in order (16, 06, 68, 88, ??, 98) and then look at them upside down, they form a sequence: 86, ??, 88, 89, 90, 91. It's important to say "zero six ravens" or "oh-six ravens" and not just "six ravens."

The Petitioners' Masquerade

Grimbriar-by-the-Sea



Events

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| A. The Clockwork Colossus | D. The Tower of Fiendish Folly |
| B. The Fortress of Bone | E. The Faerie Lights |
| C. Accomplishments & Embellishments | F. The Six Rings of Hell |
| | G. Squirrel Rodeo |

Please arrive promptly.

The Petitioners' Challenge begins at 8pm

Player Handout #2. Story Award

During the course of this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award. If you are printing these out for your characters, print as many as you may need to ensure that any eligible character receives a copy:

The Binder's Interest

You've given a soul to The Binder to save your own or one of your friends. That kind of desperation and deal making is useful to The Binder and its piers. You're on The Binders list of possible mortal assets.

Captain Eledstra's Regard

Being successful in getting the confession from Zerak has gained the favor of Captain Eledstar. In the future, you may be able to depend on her to help you get out of trouble or to gain the benefit of the doubt from the City Watch of Melvaunt.

Soulless Survivor

You gave up your soul to the arcanoloth known as the Binder. If you die, no magic can return your soul to your body. The lack of a soul has changed you though. Everything you eat tastes bland. Colors are less vibrant. Jokes are less funny, unless someone gets hurt. If you are every brought back to life, you hear a voice in the darkness say, "I'll let you live... this time!."