



CCC-GHC-BK1-01

ADVENTURERS LEAGUE

INTO THE BORDER KINGDOMS



Journey to the Border Kingdoms in this
adventure for characters of 1st & 2nd level



INTO THE BORDER KINGDOMS

Night falls on the Border Kingdoms, a land rife with conflicts and schemes, where lords, counts, dukes, kings, and emperors rise, proclaim themselves, and are swept away with the speed and regularity of waves crashing upon a shore. As you settle in for the evening at a quaint little roadhouse by the name of Harker's Cleaver, all seems quiet. Were the stories of this turbulent region just that, or have the Border Kingdoms yet to reveal their true nature?

A Two-Hour Adventure for 1st and 2nd Level Characters



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ADVENTURERS LEAGUE

INTRODUCTION



ELCOME TO *INTO THE BORDER KINGDOMS*, AN introductory D&D adventure that is part of the official D&D Adventurers League™ organized play system.

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1st-2nd level characters**, and is optimized for **five 1st-level characters**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure. Players with ineligible characters can create new 1st-level characters or use pregenerated characters.

The adventure is set in the Border Kingdoms, a tumultuous region of the Forgotten Realms on the southern shore of the Lake of Steam. During play, the characters fight off an attack by skeletons on a small roadhouse where they have stopped for the evening. Once the battle is over. They have the opportunity to investigate the reason for the attack.

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 specific 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 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. Familiar yourself 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 the players don't finish too early; provide them with a full play experience.

THANK YOU

The Adventurers League could not exist without talented and dedicated Dungeon Masters to bring its smelly trolls and evil necromancers to life. Being a DM isn't always easy, but it can be rewarding, and we certainly appreciate your time and effort!

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Cover art: Jason Braun

Border Kingdoms Map: Wizards of the Coast

Faction images: Wizards of the Coast

Skeleton image: Jacob E. Blackmon

Tactical battlemaps: Dave Zajac

Snake shield image: Matthew Sargent

Elf image: Matthew Richmond

Sarcophagus puzzle images: Dave Zajac

Adventurers League “We Want You” promotional image: Wizards of the Coast

A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT ENCOUNTER SCALING

Into the Border Kingdoms is optimized for a party of five characters. When running an adventure at a large convention such as Gamehole, it is common to have seven players at a table, which has the potential to affect encounter balance. The “Adjusting the Encounter” sidebars within the adventure are developed for an average party, but just like real life, one size doesn’t necessarily fit all.

Players have a tendency to bring their best and brightest to shows like Gamehole, and a group of seven optimized characters can easily overpower the recommended party strength you determine at the adventure’s start. As a DM, you can—and should—adjust each encounter’s difficulty to present a challenge for your players.

If the characters are overcoming combats too easily, increase the recommended strength level of the encounters by a step (from **average** to **strong**, for example). If needed, you can also increase the number of monsters or maximize their hit points to make things a little harder. In some cases, you may even need to increase the difficulty by two steps, just be careful not to make things unwinnable.

Remember, adjusting or improvising is encouraged, so long as you maintain the adventure’s spirit!



INTO THE BORDER KINGDOMS

THE BORDER KINGDOMS ARE A FAVORED DESTINATION FOR adventurers who want to proudly and boldly conquer a realm or establish their own new kingdom.

— The Sage Meriadas of Westgate

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Evil of an unknown origin stirs in the Border Kingdoms. Not the evil that is sometimes fostered in the hearts of those who desire great wealth or great power, but a purer evil that seeks to destroy life itself. As of late, the taverns, inns, and feasthalls of the region are full of talk about the dead rising with uncommon frequency. It is troubling news, especially given the Death Curse that recently plagued all of Faerûn.

Parts of Talduth Vale have been visited by this evil, and the dead now walk in its wake. Nearly ten days ago, a malevolent trapper by the name of Kysul Morgan drunkenly stumbled home after being kicked out of Hawker's Cleaver, a roadhouse near the border of the Vale and Hawkgarth. Along the way, he spied a cloaked figure in an old, overgrown graveyard just off the game trail leading to his cabin in the woods. With a mixture of curiosity and fear, he watched as the dead clawed themselves free of the earth around its dark form. When it finished, it turned and moved in his direction. Frozen in fear, Kysul watched in terror as it approached. To his surprise, the creature did not attack. Instead, it laughed with a hollow echoing sound before claiming Kysul's heart as already dead.

The creature, its features hidden by a heavy cloak and the darkness, promised Kysul great power and long life if he would serve it. The trapper dared not refuse. With a wave of its hand, it gave Kysul control of several skeletons and other undead creatures and told him to wait in the graveyard's mausoleum for its return.

Nearly ten days have passed since the encounter, and Kysul has remained in the graveyard, only leaving for short periods of time to hunt and retrieve belongings from his cabin. The cloaked figure has yet to return, and the trapper is growing restless with the undead as his only companions...



ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

Into the Border Kingdoms consists of three parts.

Part 1: Hawker's Cleaver. The characters have stopped for the night to rest and drink at a small roadhouse when skeletons attack the establishment. Following the attack, they have the opportunity to learn where the undead may have come from, and a wealthy elven traveler staying at the roadhouse asks them to investigate further.

Part 2: The Dead Disturbed. The characters explore an old, overgrown graveyard several miles from the tavern in hopes of finding the cause of the attack. When they arrive, they find Kysul Morgan holed up in the graveyard's stone mausoleum. The trapper and his undead minions attack the party.

Part 3: The Crypt Beneath. In this optional encounter, the characters explore the crypt beneath the graveyard's mausoleum, where they encounter the spirit of Lord Arnwell Grundor and have a chance to claim his treasures as their own.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The characters may already have their own reasons for being in the Border Kingdoms, but if not, the following adventure hooks can be used to draw them into the story.

Faction Orders. Reports from the Border Kingdoms speak of the undead rising with increasing frequency, and after the Death Curse that recently plagued Faerûn, everyone is on edge. If another epidemic is in the making, the factions want to know about it and hopefully stop it before it spreads. You are to travel there and see what you can learn.

Travelers. The Border Kingdoms have always drawn individuals looking to make a name for themselves, or those who would serve a fledgling lord, a duke, or even a queen or king in an effort to better themselves and their station. You are no exception.

Native. It is possible one or more party members may have grown up in the Border Kingdoms. If a player is a native of the land, grant him or her advantage on Intelligence (History) checks to recall information about the region and its past and current inhabitants.

PART 1:

HAWKER'S CLEAVER

Expected Duration: 45 minutes

The adventure opens with the characters taking a respite from a day of traveling through the Border Kingdoms. Nightfall arrived as they entered the lands of Talduth Vale, and they have stopped at a roadhouse called Hawker's Cleaver.

DM TIP

Since the characters may or may not have been traveling together, before continuing it is a good idea to let each player introduce their character and say a little about where they are from and why they are now in the Border Kingdoms.

After a day of making your way through the lands of the Border Kingdoms, you have stopped for the evening at a small tavern and inn named Hawker's Cleaver. The roadhouse lies near the border of Hawkgarth and Talduth Vale. You drew the stares of several locals as you entered, but after sitting down to a table, the tavern's patrons quickly resumed their conversations, leaving you and your companions to your own devices.

CHATTING UP THE LOCALS

Once the characters have settled in, they are free to engage the tavern's patrons. Six different individuals can be found working or drinking within Hawker's Cleaver. Each of them is detailed below.

Use this time to let the characters roleplay as they see fit. If they are interested in knowing more about the Border Kingdoms, allow them to make a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check and provide them with some of the information in the "About the Border Kingdoms" sidebar.

AMARILLA OTMOOR

A thick, heavysset woman of Calashite descent, Amarilla has curly brown hair and an amiable personality. She purchased Hawker's Cleaver six years ago when its original owner, Farin Hawker, retired to Thur to be near his grandchildren. While the establishment has always been a tavern, it once also served as a butchery, where Farin cured meats. When Amarilla took over, she closed the butchery and converted the space to sleeping rooms, creating a small inn.

While the Cleaver has no formal kitchen, Amarilla always keeps a pot of something stewing amid the hot coals from the fireplace. Her Calashite cooking has become somewhat of a hit with the locals.

ABOUT THE BORDER KINGDOMS

The Border Kingdoms are little more than names on a map to most folk in the Heartlands of Faerûn. Only a few sages and well-traveled merchants know anything useful about them, thanks to their ever-changing nature, and travel there being constantly hampered by incessant Borderer wars with each other and land-hungry satraps of Calimshan.

According to the sage Meriadas of Westgate: "The Border Kingdoms are the most favored destination for adventurers who want to proudly and boldly conquer a realm or establish their own new kingdom. Lords, counts, dukes, and kings rise, proclaim themselves, and are swept away with the speed and regularity of waves crashing upon a shore.

Few folk go there except those who want to carve out a place for themselves with a sword. Borders and even the names of the realms they define change with each passing month and even tenday; there is no such thing as an accurate history or even map of the Border Kingdoms, which are named thus because they stand in the way of Calishite expansion, their turmoil and stubborn strength defining the eastern border of that proud realm. South of the Lake of Steam, the Border Kingdoms spread east and south to take in all the lands drained by the River Scelptar as far as the Shieldmaidens (the hills at the western end of the Firesteap Mountains, just east of The Duskwood) and the rising land that defines the northern edge of the vast rolling grasslands known as The Shaar."

If you would travel there, Meriadas adds: "Take strong spells, trusty friends, and sharp swords, and you may live long enough to have a brief look around." Meriadas was writing in the mid-1300s DR, but his words remain true today.

If the characters spend time talking with Amarilla, they can learn the following:

- Talk of the undead walking and renewed fighting between the principalities within the Border Kingdoms has slowed travel considerably. Every night, Amarilla sees fewer travelers wanting a meal, a drink, or a room to rest in.
- If things don't pick up soon, she may be forced to find additional work on the side.
- Tonight's special is braised snake with nettles, spicy peppers, and wild garlic. It is 1 sp a bowl. A hunk of fresh bread to go with it is 1 cp.
- Amarilla has ale for 4 cp a mug and wine for 5 cp a cup. She stopped serving spirits because they made some of her clientele too drunk and mean.
- A room costs 5 sp per night.

BARRIC OTMOOR

A lean boy with close-cropped brown hair and big brown eyes, Barric is Amarilla's son of fourteen years. His light-brown skin speaks of a fairer parent, but Amarilla does not talk about the boy's father, and Barric never knew the man.

In spite of his young age, Barric is intelligent, attentive, and hard-working. He helps his mother with the cooking and cleaning, and even carries trays

of ale when things get busy. While he is kind and respectful to Amarilla, he finds life at Hawker's Cleaver boring. When not working, he reads any book he can get his hands on. He particularly enjoys tales about wizards and dragons and knights. Although he considers his chances unlikely, Barric hopes to one day study magic.

If the characters spend time talking with Barric, they can learn the following:

- Things have been slow around Hawker's Cleaver lately. His mother, Amarilla, puts on a good face, but Barric can tell she is worried.
- The only room currently rented is by an elf named Elswalth. He arrived early this morning. He has been drinking wine and taking notes in a journal since shortly after midday.
- Nothing exciting ever happens at Hawker's Cleaver—unless you count the occasional drunken scuffle as excitement.
- Barric thinks that magic is the absolute best. (Any character who displays the trappings of an arcane spellcaster immediately draws his attention, and the boy spends his time questioning the character about the arcane arts.)

KARSK THESKBORN

At nearly seven feet tall, Karsk is a hulking specimen, even for a half-orc. While his ample muscles, size, and mixed heritage might speak of violence to some, Karsk is a surprisingly even-tempered individual. Unlike many of his kind, his birth was not the result of violence. His mother was an orc from the Kingdom of Many-Arrows to the north, and his father an Uthgardt barbarian of the plains. Their love took them east to the nation of Thesk, where orc and human relations are more easily accepted.

Karsk's size made him a natural at mercenary work, but at twenty years of age, he gave up that life, moved to the Border Kingdoms, and began to study the teachings of Ilmater, the god of endurance and suffering. Since that time nearly eight years ago, he has taken up a life of farming and contemplation. He does his best to be a good neighbor, helping with the planting and harvest for those who have fallen ill or lost loved ones.

While Karsk no longer carries a weapon, he is still quite dangerous in a fight. (Karsk is a commoner with a 16 Str, 18 Con, and a fist attack.)

If the characters spend time talking with Karsk, they can learn the following:

- The Border Kingdoms are rife with greed and violence, but Ilmater teaches a better way. Only through compassion and endurance can a person hope to build a better world.

- While many talk of the walking dead, the hearts of the living are what should be feared, for within them grows a darkness that only Ilmater can light.
- Amarilla's stew is particularly delicious this evening. Who knew snake could taste so good?

ABOUT ILMATER

Ilmater is the god of suffering, martyrdom, and perseverance, renowned for his compassion and endurance. It is he who offers succor and calming words to those who are in pain, victimized, or in great need. He is the willing sufferer, the one who takes the place of another to lift the other's burden, to take the other's pain. He is the god of the oppressed and the unjustly treated.

ELSWALTH BRIGHTSTAR

An elf of considerable wealth, Elswalth behaves as a noble, even though he has no nobility in his family. While he is now in his middle years, he earned a small fortune earlier in his life by serving as a spymaster for House Ophal in Amn. He abandoned that post, changed his name, and fled to the Border Kingdoms when the head of House Ophal learned he was actually supplying all of the information he acquired to the Harpers, a faction to which he has always been dedicated.

Elswalth owns a small home in the nearby city of Emrys, but he spends much of his time and wealth traveling the Border Kingdoms to stay apprised of their ever-changing nature. With fine clothing, immaculately groomed long black hair, and deep-green eyes, he maintains the façade of a charismatic fop, but underneath, he is intelligent, thoughtful, and forever a loyal Harper.

If the characters spend time talking with Elswalth, they can learn the following:

- A sizeable force recently attacked Lord Immurt Sabrastar's keep in the Swordpoint Streams.
- The goodly lord suffered heavy losses during the attack, weakening his power.
- Some say several of the attackers bore the bright purple four-pointed star of Lord Tarlon Jarlglaeth, but that makes no sense, for the Lords and Ladies of the Swordpoint Streams have fostered peace amongst themselves and generally work together.
- Lord Tarlon Jarlglaeth denies any involvement.
- There are those who say that gaunt warriors of exceptional resilience fought beside the attackers during the battle.
- There are always wars, both of an open nature and of intrigue, taking place in the Border Kingdoms, but the recent talk of undead makes the situation particularly troubling. Whatever is happening in the region, it isn't good.

SERENA AND TAYLA

Elderly forest gnomes and lifelong companions, Serena and Tayla have seen much throughout their years. They moved to the outskirts of Hawkgarth when the Spellplague brought a prolonged drought to their original home in the Qurth Forest.

Both gnomes have weather-worn faces and long, grey hair, but Serena keeps hers pulled back in a braid, and Tayla lets her wild mane flow freely. While old, both are spry, quick-witted, and kind.

The couple makes their way to Hawker's Cleaver to play cards, drink wine, and partake in Amarilla's excellent cooking more than a few times each tenday. Although they are more than capable of surviving off of the land, they train messenger birds for coin, and in the fall, they travel to Emrys, Blackbarn, and Oeble to sell them.

The exact location of the gnomes' forest home is unknown. While some have looked for it over the years, none have ever discovered its location.

If the characters spend time talking with Serena or Tayla, they can learn the following:

- Dark times come to the Border Kingdoms. The creatures of the forest speak of walking death and a great evil. However, squirrels sometimes refer to the wild boars who dig up their stores of nuts as "a blight upon the land", so these insights could be exaggerated. The mind of a squirrel works in odd ways.
- Countless wars have ravaged the Border Kingdoms. A state of unrest is the normal way here. Whatever the cause, it too shall pass. Nature will hold the balance.
- Amarilla's stew is made with blackgrass vipers. They are vile, nasty creatures that often kill small animals for sport. In spite of their tendency for violence, Amarilla makes them taste delicious.

UNEXPECTED VISITORS

As the characters speak with the regulars in Hawker's Cleaver, a force of **six skeletons (S)**, sent by the trapper Kysul Morgan, makes its way to the tavern. You can begin this encounter as the players are winding down their roleplaying with the patrons. Another option would be to trigger the encounter if the players are taking longer than expected, and you feel like you need to keep the adventure moving.

The relative quiet of the roadhouse is broken as the windows of the building shatter, and skeletons wielding swords and bows clamber in through the openings to attack. All around you, people scream in terror, many fleeing toward the establishment's rear door.

Special. The skeletons surprise the characters and all of the patrons in Hawker's Cleaver. However, they use their movement and actions during the surprise round to make it into the building and take up the positions shown on the map.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

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

- **Very weak party:** Remove two **skeletons**.
- **Weak party:** Remove one **skeleton**.
- **Strong party:** Add two **skeletons**.
- **Very strong party:** Add four **skeletons**.

GENERAL FEATURES

The area has the following features.

Doors. With the exception of the front and rear doors, each door in Hawker's Cleaver is locked. Amarilla keeps the keys on a ring at her belt. Picking one of the locked doors requires a DC 10 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check.

Furniture. Squares mostly occupied by furniture (tables, chairs, the bar, etc.) are considered difficult terrain. Moving through them without a penalty requires a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

Light. Bright light from hanging lanterns.

TACTICS

Following the surprise round, the skeletons attack the nearest foes. They do not favor the characters over the patrons (treat them as **commoners**).

If a creature flees from the building, the skeletons do not pursue. They have been ordered to kill everyone in the establishment, and they follow that order unerringly, fighting until they are destroyed.

With the exception of **Karsk**, the other patrons flee through the back door on their turns. The brutish half-orc fights with his bare hands to make sure the others escape.

DM Note. To ensure he survives the attack, Elswalth Brightstar wears a *periapt of wound closure* beneath his finery. This item functions only for him, and it is not available as treasure for the characters.

TREASURE

One skeleton wears a gold insignia ring that bears the stylized symbol of a hawk with its wings spread and its talons extended. (See "After the Attack" for more information.)

DEVELOPMENTS

It is possible one or more of the patrons inside the roadhouse might fall during the fight with the skeletons. If this happens, allow them death saving throws as you would a normal character. Award characters that bravely or selflessly save a patron inspiration when the fight is over.

When the battle is over, any patrons who escaped the building slowly filter back in to check on the characters and those, such as Karsk, who remained behind to fight the undead.

The characters will likely have questions of their own about the attack, and they are free to ask the survivors whatever they like. Providing they are alive, each survivor knows the following information:

- The insignia on the ring one of the skeletons was wearing belongs to House Grundor of Hawkgarth.
- The Grundor line ended just under a century ago. Many are buried in an overgrown graveyard several miles northwest of the roadhouse.
- The graveyard is near Kysul Morgan's cabin.

- Kysul is a trapper, but he hasn't been to the roadhouse in almost a tenday.
- Last time he was at Hawker's Cleaver, he got into his cups, and Karsk had to throw him out.
- Kysul earned a black eye during the fight.
- Some say Kysul only traps animals because he enjoys torturing them before he takes their lives, but that could just be a rumor. Either way, the man has a mean streak and a sour disposition. His love of drink doesn't help either.

- All undead hate holy water, but there isn't a priest near that sells any.
- Skeletons are easy to kill if you crush them with hammers or other weapons that deal blunt force.

- It's rare for the undead to attack in such an organized manner. Most undead simply wander aimlessly, searching for living creatures to kill.
- It should be easy to follow the skeletons' tracks. Undead aren't known to cover their trail.



CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

After regaining his composure, Elswalth approaches the party and asks for their help in figuring out why the undead attacked Hawker's Cleaver. He asks the characters to investigate, claiming those of wealth have a responsibility to protect the Border Kingdoms and all of its people. While he speaks truthfully, he also desires information concerning the attacks so that he can aid the Harpers in figuring out what is happening in the region.

During the conversation, Elswalth inconspicuously flashes a Harper pin under his lapel. He does so in a manner that only another Harper would recognize and watches for a reaction amongst those gathered. If any Harpers are in the party, he speaks privately with them at a later time, revealing his true purpose. He also asks them to investigate the reason for the attack on their faction's behalf.

The characters can leave immediately for the graveyard, or they can rest for the evening. If they decide to stay, Amarilla offers them free lodging, food, and drinks for their bravery. If she perished during the fight, one of the other survivors insists they stay at the roadhouse for the evening and depart for the graveyard in the morning.



PART 2: THE DEAD DISTURBED

Expected Duration: 45 minutes

An overgrown graveyard lies three miles northwest of Hawker's Cleaver. A well-used game trail through the woods connects it to the roadhouse. The trail is littered with the tracks of skeletal feet, broken branches, and trampled plants. The damage left by the skeletons is clear and easy to follow. Reaching the graveyard takes the party about an hour on foot.

A CABIN IN THE WOODS

The characters may wish to investigate Kysul's cabin in the woods. The cabin lies just north of the graveyard along the same game trail and is easy to locate. After making his deal with the cloaked figure, Kysul briefly left the graveyard and retrieved what little valuables he owned from the cabin. It now contains only a few partially tanned furs and other normal household items that Kysul opted to leave behind.

Kysul Morgan (K), three skeletons (S), two zombies (Z), and four crawling claws (C) reside within the graveyard. Kysul is able to control the skeletons and zombies, but the crawling claws rose in the wake of the cloaked figure's visit, and they now roam the graveyard looking for living creatures to murder. The claws have, thus far, left the trapper alone, and he has gone out of his way to avoid them.

Kysul has taken up residence in the graveyard's only mausoleum, a large stone structure that serves as the resting spot of Lord Arnwell Grundor, the final head of his house. The trapper has been waiting over ten days for the cloaked figure to return, only leaving the graveyard to hunt and collect a handful of things from his nearby cabin. Five bottles of rye whiskey were among the items Kysul retrieved from his home. During his stay in the graveyard, he has consumed nearly all of the spirits, maintaining a perpetual state of drunkenness that has only fueled his normal rage and hate.

Kysul's last dealings with the outside world were ten days ago at Hawker's Cleaver. That night, after a day of empty traps, he had been more angry and drunk than usual. When Amarilla refused to pour him another ale, he launched into a tirade, breaking his ceramic mug atop the bar. The pious half-orc, Karsk, came to the woman's defense, and after a short scuffle, Kysul found himself outside and face down in the dirt.

When he spied the cloaked figure in the graveyard while stumbling home, he initially assumed it was a drunken delusion, but the raw terror the form seemed to exude convinced him otherwise, and he hid among the trees out of fear and curiosity.

ABOUT KYsul MORGAN

The child of farmers from Owlhold, Kysul Morgan was born into a caring family with two older sisters and a younger brother. In spite of his family's love, Kysul could not overcome the darkness in his own heart. Sometimes, people are just born bad.

From a young age, he exhibited narcissism and a propensity for cruelty toward those weaker than himself. He tortured small animals, and on several occasions, mercilessly beat his younger brother.

At fifteen years of age, when his little brother was big enough to properly defend himself, Kysul ran away from home to live on his own. He tried making his way in several of the cities within the Border Kingdoms, but as a farm boy, he had no useful skills to ply there. Five years later, after finding an abandoned cabin in the woods, he settled near Hawkgarth and began trapping animals to earn a living.

While Kysul delights in tormenting the creatures before he kills them, the joy of such torture has grown stagnate over the past several years, and the hate and darkness within him stronger. It is just a matter of time before he overcomes his own cowardice and moves on from animals to people.

When the figure asked him to serve it, Kysul saw an opportunity to be more than a trapper. He also saw a chance to inflict his will upon more than just simple animals. He tried his best to wait for his new master to return, but the whiskey and the proximity of the walking dead imbued him with a mix of fear, hatred, and twisted power. In a drunken stupor, and still bitter about the treatment he received days earlier at Hawker's Cleaver, Kysul commanded a group of the skeletons to follow the game trail to the roadhouse and kill everyone inside. The undead obeyed without hesitation or question.

Since giving the skeletons their task, the trapper has sobered up somewhat. His undead minions have yet to return, and he now realizes his decision may have been foolish. Because of this, he has taken to fortifying the mausoleum, placing hunting traps in front of its entry to protect himself in the event that someone tracks the skeletons back to the graveyard. He has also ordered the remaining skeletons and zombies to patrol the area and to kill any creature that comes near. Allow each character to make a DC 9 Dexterity (Stealth) check as they approach. If half or more of the characters succeed, they surprise the undead.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

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

- **Very weak party:** Remove one **skeleton** and one **zombie**.
- **Weak party:** Remove one **skeleton** and all the **hunting traps**.
- **Strong party:** Add one **skeleton** and one **zombie**.
- **Very strong party:** Add two **skeletons** and two **zombies**.

GENERAL FEATURES

The area has the following features.

Hunting Traps. For his protection, Kysul hid three hunting traps amid the grass and weeds in front of the mausoleum. Characters with a passive Perception of 12 or higher notice a trap before they step into the square containing it. Characters that fail to notice a trap trigger it when entering the square.

Hunting Trap Mechanics. When you use your action to set it, this trap forms a saw-toothed steel ring that snaps shut when a creature steps on a pressure plate in the center. The trap is affixed by a heavy chain to an immobile object, such as a tree or a spike driven into the ground. A creature that steps on the plate must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 (1d4) piercing damage and stop moving. Thereafter, until the creature breaks free of the trap, its movement is limited by the length of the chain (typically 3 feet long). A creature can use its action to make a DC 13 Strength check, freeing itself or another creature within its reach on a success. Each failed check deals 1 piercing damage to the trapped creature.

Iron Fence. A three-foot-tall iron fence surrounds the graveyard. Hopping over it requires a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check. Characters that fail the check fall prone in the square on the other side of the fence and lose the remainder of their movement.

Light. Varies by time of day.

Mausoleum. A large stone mausoleum dominates the northwestern portion of the graveyard. It is 15 feet wide by 20 feet deep and 10 feet in height, with a slightly-pitched slate roof. Aside from its stone front door, which no longer contains a functioning lock, there is no other way inside the structure.

Kysul has been using the mausoleum as a shelter for the past ten days. It contains a small brazier of hot coals for cooking and warmth, a bed roll, and his personal belongings (see "Treasure" for details). In addition, a stone statue of Lord Arnwell Grundor rests inside. (See **Part 3: The Crypt Beneath** for more information about the statue.)

Open Graves. Squares containing an open grave are considered difficult terrain. Moving through them without a speed penalty requires a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Characters that fail the check fall prone in the square.

Trees. The low-hanging branches of the trees in the graveyard provide half cover but do not impede movement.

TACTICS

The undead attack any creatures that come near the graveyard. The zombies and crawling claws move to engage the nearest foes in melee combat, while the

1 square = 5 feet



skeletons use their shortbows to attack from a distance. All of the undead fight until destroyed.

At the first sound of combat, Kysul throws open the stone door of the mausoleum (which opens outward to the west) and attacks with his longbow, targeting foes that approach the structure first. He uses his movement to take cover beside the doorway after his attacks, hoping to draw enemies into his hunting traps. The trapper fights until the undead have been destroyed before surrendering and begging for his life.

TREASURE

Kysul carries a dagger with an ivory handle and a quiver of *ehlonna* that contains 40 normal arrows. Amid his bedroll is an empty whiskey bottle, an odd metal badge bearing a coat of arms in the form of a snake with five skulls for heads, and his personal journal (see “Developments” for more information).



DEVELOPMENTS

If the characters take Kysul alive, he pleads and begs for them to spare his life. The man is wholly evil, but he will say or do almost anything to live. If he believes it will help his cause, he readily shares the information below.

- On the night of his altercation with Karsk, Kysul spied a cloaked figure moving amongst the graves in the graveyard.
- He hid and watched the figure out of fear and curiosity. With subtle movements of its gauntleted hands, it caused the dead to claw their way from the earth.
- After several minutes, it turned and looked right at him, as if the night and the cover of the trees in which he hid did not even exist.
- As the figure approached, stark fear overcame Kysul, but he dared not flee.
- It was shrouded in a heavy, black cloak, but Kysul could hear armor moving beneath the tightly-drawn garment.
- With the cloak's deep cowl obscuring its face, the figure spoke in a hollow, echoing voice. It claimed to be able to see darkness in Kysul's heart.
- It promised him great power if he would serve it, and Kysul dared not refuse. For his allegiance, it gave Kysul a metal badge bearing a coat of arms in the form of a snake with five skulls for heads.
- It commanded the skeletons and other creatures it had gathered to obey Kysul's wishes and told the man to remain in the graveyard until it returned.
- As Kysul waited for its return, he replayed his fight with Karsk over in his head. He despised the smug half-orc and the principles of his weak god.

- After ten days, Kysul assumed the figure was not coming back, so he sent a portion of the undead to the Hawker's Cleaver to murder Karsk.

Kysul does not willingly mention his darkest desires, but if the characters find his journal and spend time reading it, the picture of a deeply disturbed man with the heart of a monster becomes apparent. It is up to the party to decide what they must do with the trapper. There is no right or wrong answer. Let each player roleplay their character's decision concerning Kysul's fate, and feel free to award inspiration if they do it well.

If the trapper died during the fight, the characters can learn the bulleted information from his journal. Either way, delivering the journal to Elswalth Brightstar fulfills a Harper's commitment to discovering the cause for the attack on Hawker's Cleaver.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the characters defeat the undead and kill or capture Kysul Morgan, the main story draws to a close. If you need to be certain the adventure runs within the predetermined 2-hour timeframe, allow the characters to return to Hawker's Cleaver and share what they have learned Elswalth Brightstar. If you have time and wish to extend the adventure, proceed to **Part 3: The Crypt Beneath**.



PART 3: THE CRYPT BENEATH

Expected Duration: 30 minutes

If you are not playing this adventure in a fixed timeslot, or if the characters have done very well and you have time remaining, you can use the **bonus objective** below to extend the adventure's length.

A SQUAT STATUE

When the characters investigate the interior of the mausoleum, read the following:

The inside of the mausoleum is dominated by a stone statue of a squat man dressed in robes and wearing a sword. It is difficult to tell if its garb resembles that of a wizard or a priest. A triangular offering plate rests in the figure's palms. It is made of the same stone as the rest of the statue.

An inscription at the base of the statue reads:

*Here lies Lord Arnwell Grundor, the last of his line,
and the final head House Grundor. Courageous,
intelligent, and wise in life, may his well-deserved
rest be eternal and undisturbed.*

As you finish reading the text, you note the dais upon which the statue rests. It appears slightly raised above the floor of the mausoleum, as if the entire monument were floating just above the surface.

If the characters investigate the statue (no check needed) they discover steel rollers recessed into the underside of the monument. These rollers allow the statue and its base to be pushed southward, revealing a short flight of stone steps that leads to a crypt below. While the rollers have rusted with time, two or more characters working together can easily move the statue.

ABOUT HOUSE GRUNDOR

Characters who succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (History) check know the following about House Grundor:

- House Grundor flourished over 100 years ago.
- Its members were known to train in the martial, arcane, and divine disciplines, often becoming trusted advisors to kings and queens.
- The Spellplague drove many of House Grundor's best and brightest mad, irrevocably diminishing its power and prestige.
- The Grundor line ended when its last survivor, Lord Arnwell Grundor, could sire no children.
- Lord Arnwell Grundor left his house's little remaining wealth to the Church of All Souls, a temple of six sanctuaries open to various faiths in Emrys.

THE GHOST OF ARNWELL GRUNDOR

Read the following when the characters descend into the crypt beneath the mausoleum:

A short flight of stone steps leads to a crypt of worked stone roughly the size of the mausoleum above. As you step from the stairs to its floor, bluish light filters through the lid of a stone sarcophagus in the center of the room. It coalesces into the form of a squat man in robes. The apparition closely resembles the statue you examined earlier. In a soft voice, it speaks, "I no longer sense the unrest of my kin. Are you responsible for ending their unnatural awakening?"

Lord Arnwell's ghost means the characters no harm. In fact, it is grateful for the service they provided in cleansing the graveyard. As long as they are polite and respectful, the spirit shares what it knows. If the characters attempt to harm the ghost, it simply vanishes and does not return.

- Lord Arnwell's spirit was called back to the material plane when something entered the graveyard about ten days ago.
- Fortunately, the priests of Kelemvor that interred him warded his crypt against necromancy and other magic that would control the dead.
- While the spirit does not know what type of being or creature woke the dead, it senses it was powerful and malevolent.

Before the ghost departs, read the following:

It's light dimming somewhat, the apparition speaks, "In life, I was a man of many talents. I prized the body, mind, and spirit equally. I kept little when I passed from the world of the living, but a few items remain in my sarcophagus. You have done my kin a service by returning them to rest. What little I have is yours, providing you have the means to retrieve it."
The spirit flickers slightly, and then fades from existence.

LORD ARNWELL'S SARCOPHAGUS

Before he died, Lord Arnwell oversaw the construction of his mausoleum and crypt. He infused his sarcophagus with magic to prevent any but the cleverest from gaining entry.

A complex magical puzzle secures the lid of the sarcophagus, preventing entry. The puzzle is in the form of a recessed circle near the center of the lid that looks similar to a clock face with three hands. Two handprints carved in the stone flank the circle.

To open the sarcophagus, a character must move the circle's hands to the correct positions and then touch both handprints at the same time. Doing so

causes the lid to slide gently to the side, revealing Lord Arnwell's bones and several of his personal items inside (see "Treasure" for details). Any creature that touches the handprints without the circle's hands set in the correct positions takes 4 (1d8) force damage.

The sarcophagus is made of stone and protected by magic, making it impervious to all forms of damage. The only way to open it is by solving the puzzle upon its lid.

In life, Lord Arnwell trained as a warrior, mage, and priest. He practiced all three disciplines equally. The answer to the puzzle is **strength, intelligence, and wisdom**, which correspond to the primary abilities of a fighter, wizard, and cleric. In addition, these words and their symbols are spaced evenly around the circle, to represent the equality Lord Arnwell gave to each. (See the image below for the solution.)

TREASURE

Lord Arnwell's sarcophagus holds his bones, a tarnished silver amulet bearing the insignia of House Grundor (a hawk with its wings spread and its talons extended) and a longsword that is actually a *moon-touched sword*. See **Player Handout 2** for details.

Special. The *moon-touched sword* is a common magic item. It is treated like a potion or scroll and can only be claimed by one character in the party.

RUNNING THE PUZZLE

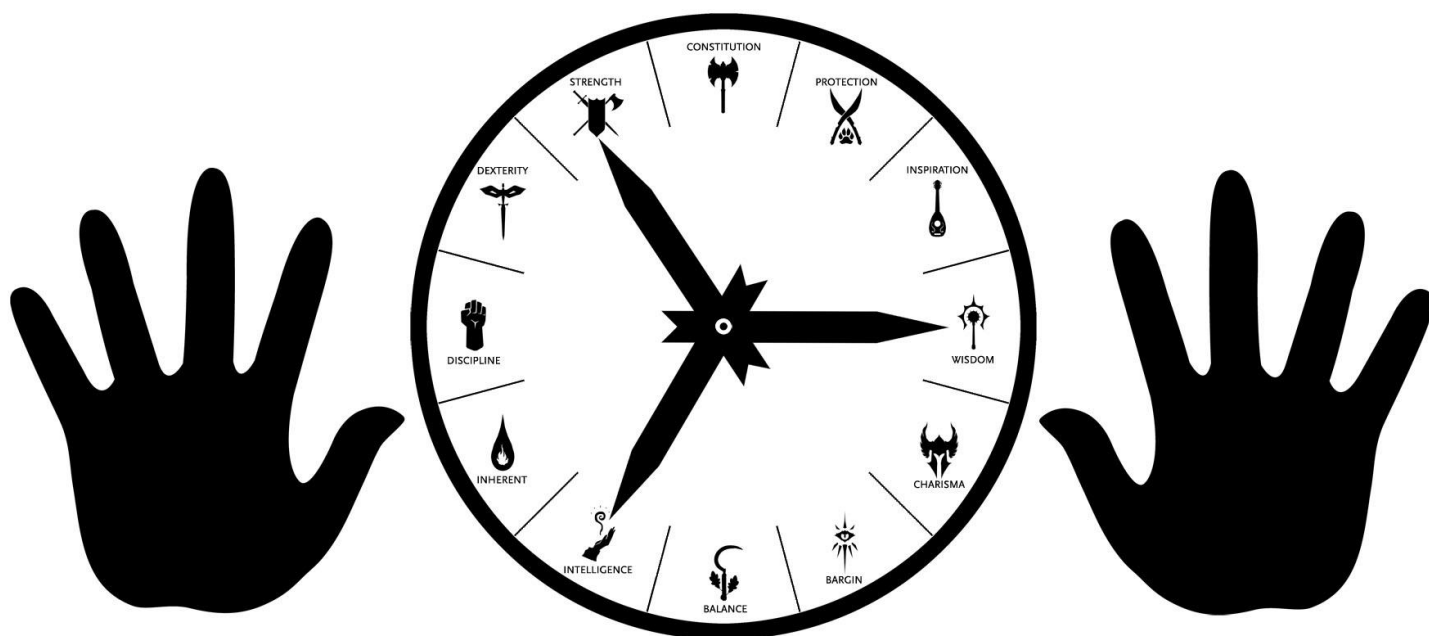
While you can describe the words and symbols contained inside the circle to the players, it is easier to give them **Player Handout 1** and let them look it over.

There are no hints to the puzzle anywhere on the sarcophagus or in the crypt. The biggest clue to its solution is provided by Lord Arnwell's ghost before it departs: *I prized the body, mind, and spirit equally.*

If the party somehow angered the ghost, and it vanished before giving them the clue, they can always try to recall information about Lord Arnwell or House Grundor by making a successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check (see the "About House Grundor" sidebar for more details).

The goal of the puzzle is to highlight the problem-solving aspect of the game, but not all players are good at (or enjoy) puzzles. If the players struggle with the solution, allow their characters to make a DC 10 Intelligence or DC 10 Wisdom check, and provide them clues if they succeed. Since the puzzle is not essential to the plot of the adventure, it is fine if the characters leave it unsolved. They simply miss out on claiming some additional treasure.

Special. An extra copy of the puzzle with the hands below the circle has been provided in **DM Handout 1**. Print this copy on heavy cardstock and cut out the individual pieces if you wish to build a model of the puzzle with moveable hands. (A craft brad works nicely to secure the hands to the circle.)



ADVENTURE REWARDS

Upon completing the adventure, the characters each receive rewards based upon their accomplishments. These rewards include advancement and treasure, and may include special rewards, such as story awards or new downtime activities, as follows:

ADVANCEMENT AND TREASURE CHECKPOINTS

The characters receive 2 advancement checkpoints and 2 treasure checkpoints for completing the **story** objective below:

- **Story Objective:** Figure out why the undead attacked Hawker's Cleaver.

The characters receive 1 advancement checkpoint and 1 treasure checkpoint for completing the **bonus** objective below:

- **Bonus Objective:** Explore the crypt beneath the graveyard and successfully open Lord Arnwell's sarcophagus.

PLAYER REWARDS

The characters earn downtime and renown as outlined in the *Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide* for completing the adventure and any bonus objectives.

MAGIC ITEM UNLOCK

Characters completing the adventure's **story** objective unlock this magic item.

Quiver of Ehlonna. This brown leather quiver is equipped with a shoulder strap that bears intricate designs of oak leaves in varying shades of green. This item can be found in **Player Handout 2**.

DUNGEON MASTER REWARDS

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn **advancement and treasure checkpoints** and **downtime** as though you played the adventure, but none of the adventure's **player rewards**.

However, this adventure may qualify for rewards earned by completing DM Quests. See the ALDMG (*Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide*) for more information about DM Quests.

APPENDIX: MONSTER/NPC STATISTICS

COMMONER

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 4 (1d8)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

ACTIONS

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

CRAWLING CLAW

Tiny undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 2 (1d4)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses blind sight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Turn Immunity. The claw is immune to effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning or slashing damage (claw's choice).

KARSK (COMMONER WITH 16 STR AND 18 CON)

Medium humanoid (half-orc), neutral good

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 8 (1d8+4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

ACTIONS

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 bludgeoning damage.

KYSUL (SCOUT)

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Nature +4, Perception +5, Stealth +6, Survival +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Keen Hearing and Sight. The scout has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The scout makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

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

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, ranged 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

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.

ZOMBIE

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 22 (3d8+9)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Wis +0

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

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

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

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

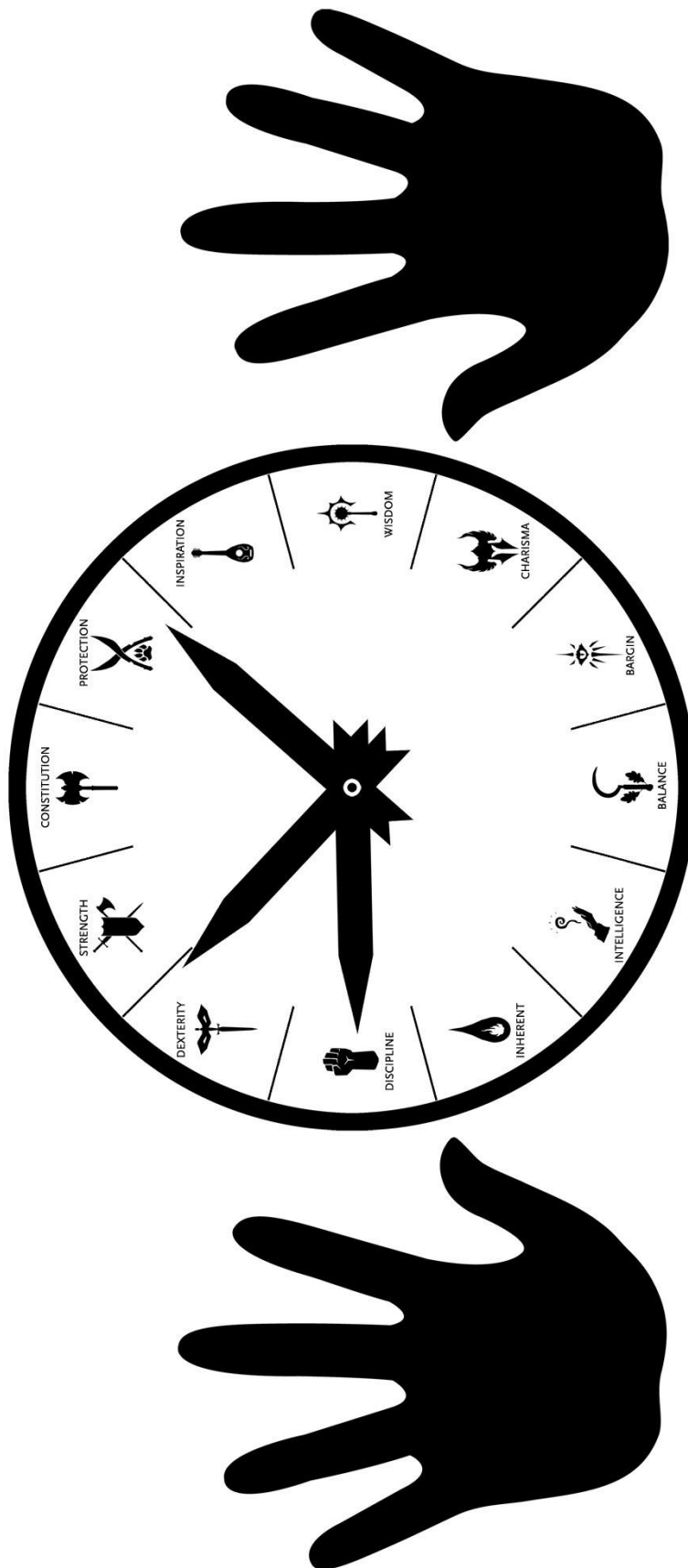
ACTIONS

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



WE WANT YOU

PLAYER HANDOUT 1



PLAYER HANDOUT 2

During the course of the adventure, the characters may unlock or acquire the items below. If you are distributing these to your players, print as many as you need to ensure all eligible characters receive a copy. Alternatively, allow each player to take a picture of the information with their mobile device.

QUIVER OF EHLONNA

Wondrous item, uncommon, Table F

This brown leather quiver is equipped with a shoulder strap that bears intricate designs of oak leaves in varying shades of green.

Each of the quiver's three compartments connects to an extradimensional space that allows the quiver to hold numerous items while never weighing more than 2 pounds. The shortest compartment can hold up to sixty arrows, bolts, or similar objects. The midsize compartment holds up to eighteen javelins or similar objects. The longest compartment holds up to six long objects, such as bows, quarterstaves, or spears.

You can draw any item the quiver contains as if doing so from a regular quiver or scabbard.

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

MOON-TOUCHED SWORD

Weapon (longsword), common

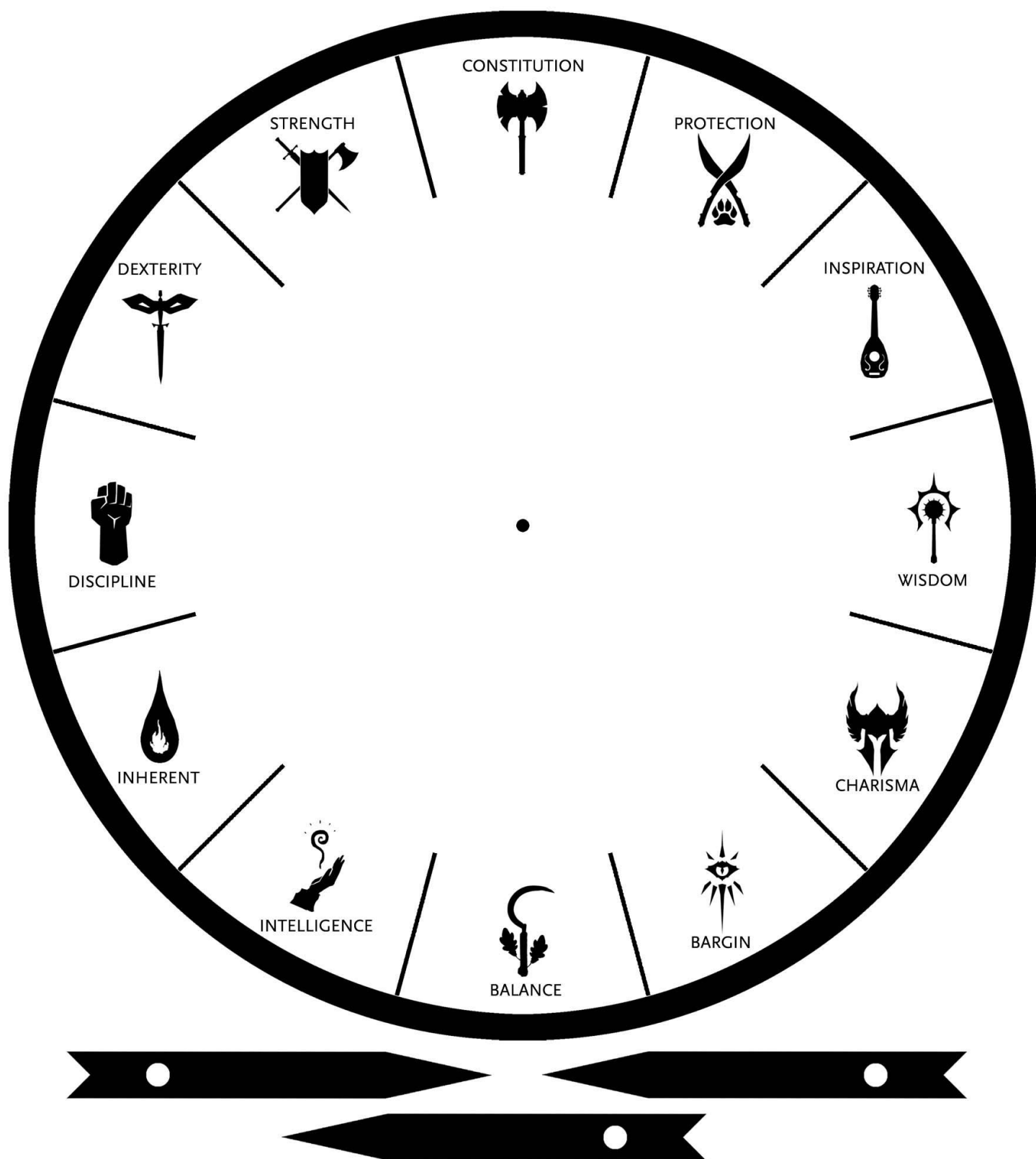
The blade of this longsword is etched with a hawk that has its wings spread and its talons extended.

In darkness, the unsheathed blade of this sword sheds moonlight, creating bright light in a 15-foot radius and dim light for an additional 15 feet.

This item can be found in the *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*.

Special. The *mooned-touched sword* is a common magic item. It is treated like a potion or scroll and can only be claimed by one character in the party.

DM HANDOUT 1





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