



Down the River of Snakes

The yuan-ti have a demented scheme to bring the most vulnerable denizens of the small town of Ylraphon under their sway. Can the adventurers traverse the Flooded Forest, one of the most dangerous areas of wilderness in all Faerûn, in time to stop the machinations of the serpent god's fanatical priest?

A Two-Hour Adventure for 1st-4th Level Characters



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Introduction

Welcome to *Down the River of Snakes*, a D&D Adventurers League™ adventure, part of the official D&D Adventurers League™ organized play system and the *Convention content* for ***Snake River Comic Con***.

The adventure takes place on the Moonsea in the town of Ylraphon and around the Flooded Forest, in the *Forgotten Realms* campaign setting.

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. Familiarize 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.

Adventure Primer

Adventure Background

The Setting: Ylraphon Reborn

Ylraphon, pronounced "ILL-ra-fon" (or, more archaically, "Ee-YIL-ra-fon"), is a small but growing port just southeast of the mouth of the River Lis, on the southern edge of the Moonsea region, just north of the Vast. Elves from Myth Drannor built the first city here, which stood for nearly a thousand years before it was overrun by orcs, conquered by dwarves, and reconquered by orcs again, who ruled until humans finally took over. Yet in time, even the last human settlement here was destroyed by the events of the Rage of Dragons, and the nearby tree-filled swamp—the easternmost arm of the Cormanthor woods, known as the Flooded Forest—expanded hungrily to swallow the ruins. Now the town rises again, rebuilt into a bustling hive of gold-hungry adventurers, fearless pirates, and ruling merchant houses.

Today, there are three Ylraphons. Ylraphon proper is the small but thriving dockside settlement inside a recently erected Palisade. Second is the Old City, a ramshackle village of refurbished ruins just outside the port, where refugees from undone Mulmaster try to forge new lives. The third is Outer Ylraphon, which includes all the sprawling layers of ancient rubble and buried necropoli that surround the younger habitations. These spider-haunted ruins of the town's past incarnations sprawl out into the Flooded Forest, a wilderness as dangerous as any in Faerûn. Only behind the duskwood walls of the Palisade do the five houses of the Merchant Council and their newly-elected mayor hold sway. Real power lies with the local adventurers, whose exploration and plunder of nearby ruins drives the new economy. Thanks to their influence, Ylraphon remains a wild and lawless town, a frontier outpost on the borderlands of civilization.

Level Limits on Spellcasting Services

Ylraphon is a wild, uncivilized frontier settlement, and not long ago it had only one proper temple (The Moonwater). Spellcasting services are available, but limited according to the particular deity and their center of worship. Since recent growth and actions by adventuring heroes have helped found a new temple to Lathander and expand the existing shrine to Berronar into a full temple. The level limits on spellcasting services available are as follows:

- Bane (The Black Fane). *Max spell level 5th.*
- Berronar Truesilver, Moradin, Clangedin, or any other dwarf pantheon god (The Argent Hearth). *No limit.*
- Lathander (Morningrise Hall). *Max spell level 2nd.*
- Selûne (The Moonwater). *No limit.*
- Tymora (The Lady's Token). *Max spell level 3rd.*
- Umberlee (The Kraken's Grip). *Max spell level 3rd.*

Location and NPC Summary

The following NPCs and locations feature in this adventure:

Flooded Forest: The flooded Forest lies south of Mulmaster and north of Ylraphon and is home to many dangerous creatures. The swampy forest is constantly encroaching on Ylraphon.

The Serpent's Kiss: A powerful curse Sitalash has discovered, that can transform a great number of people into yuan-ti. The ritual for the curse requires preparing the targets for at least three seasons by feeding them special herbs and oils. Though the people of Ylraphon think they have contracted a disease, it is rather a powerful curse.

Adventure Overview

A yuan-ti plot to transform many innocent people in the refugee camp of Ylraphon's Old City into crazed serpentine hybrids has been discovered. Shali—a treacherous local agent of the yuan-ti warlock Sitalash with a part to play in the conspiracy—was defeated. But the struggle against her also revealed that the final ritual threatening the town will be performed in a lost temple some miles away, and now the characters are charged with journeying there to stop it.

At the Altar of the Smoldering Eye, once an orc temple to Gruumsh but now dedicated to the snake-god Meershaulk, the blasphemous rites will be completed within days. Reaching the unholy temple requires a 10-mile expedition through the Flooded Forest, the region's deadliest wilderness.

Fortunately, a secure location near the temple has been found, an ancient elven watchtower where the characters can rest and regroup. To ensure the success of an incursion into the accursed temple, the characters must traverse the dark swamp quickly enough to avoid being out in the open after dark, and leave themselves enough time to take a long rest before rising at dawn to conduct a protective ritual.

Arriving too late could spell catastrophe for the town of Ylraphon, leaving the characters little time to choose the right path, avoid fatal hazards, and fight residents of the monster-filled swamp—including rival lycanthropes clans, allies of the yuan-ti warlock, and possibly a black dragon and her fanatical cult. They must choose which battles to fight, and which to avoid, and they must choose wisely.

The adventure is broken down into four parts:

Part 1. The party discusses what must be done with Deribis, a Ylraphon council member and are given a magical candle to assist them.

Part 2. Crossing through the Flooded Forest is very dangerous, even during the day. The adventurers must make their way to an ancient elven watchtower.

Part3. This part contains additional encounters that may be faced in Part 2.

Part 4. The characters must clear the elven tower of danger before they can make the preparations to assault the Altar of the Smoldering Eye.

Adventure Hooks

Characters who are continuing from *SRCC1-1 Down the River of Snakes* do not need a special introduction into this adventure, as it continues the quest they have already begun.

For characters who have not played the previous episode, use the guidance below to determine how they became involved in these strange events.

Previous Adventures. If the characters have previously participated in adventures in and around Ylraphon, they may already be in the area looking for work or helping refugees from other Moonsea cities. The alliance of refugee leaders that governs life in the Old City, where many unfortunate expatriates dwell outside the walls of Ylraphon proper, have recruited the characters on an urgent quest to save many of those living here from a horrific curse.

Reinforcements. Characters may have been sent by their faction or another powerful group to help stop an evil ritual that could threaten the region of the southern Moonsea. They reported to Andorran Bree, the ranking priest at the local temple of Selune, who arranged for them join the urgent quest when it leaves in the morning.

Working for Phlan, Mulmaster, Hillsfar, Hulburg, or Another Major Moonsea City. Recent tumultuous events and political instability in many ports on the Moonsea coast have produced a large number of refugees. Many of these expatriates now seek safety in Ylraphon. The leaders in one or more of those cities sent the characters to look into the fate of those who fled. On arriving, the characters saw that most refugees live in the Old City, a makeshift village outside the Ylraphon walls. They also received word of an eldritch plot that will transform many of the Old City's residents into crazed yuan-ti if it isn't stopped. Deribis, a local leader, who fled Phlan herself during the rule of the Maimed Virulence, has recruited the characters for the quest to stop the ritual.

Emerald Enclave (Faction Assignment). Emerald Enclave characters are passed a message from an orc leader of their faction named Buhrell Caah. The message explains that a lizardfolk ranger called Calixa entered the Flooded Forest some time ago, seeking information about whether the powerful black dragon Throstulgrael (known to most as "Velvet") has returned to these lands. She was also seeking a local druid called Ilasera, whom Buhrell hasn't heard from in while. Finding Calixa and determining what her investigations turned up would earn members of the Emerald Enclave the gratitude of many of their faction's leaders.

Lord's Alliance (Faction Assignment). Lords Alliance characters receive a visit from Ayre Affapanov, daughter of an influential member of their faction, Zor Serge Affapanov. Despite his reputation as an ambitious, unforgiving, and ruthless noble, Serge is also the member of Ylraphon's ruling merchant council most concerned with the refugees living in the Old City. Ayre tells you the Serge wants the threat of the yuan-ti stopped, and quickly, with no room for error. Having heard of Deribis's plan, Serge charges Lords Alliance members with making sure they and their companions reach their destination before nightfall, rather than endangering the quest by staying out in the wilds after dark. He expects them to show leadership by keeping their groups focused and on track, rather than getting distracted by extraneous looting or the unnecessary slaughter of random monsters.

Part 1. The Path Ahead

Expected Duration: 15 minutes

Before the characters head out, Deribis gives them time to prepare while she seeks information from her own contacts. Read the following:

As directed, you meet the local leader Deribis at her office in the Old City at eight o'clock in the morning. When you arrive, she looks as if she hasn't slept a wink. Looking harried, she says she has crucial aid and information for your quest, but needs a little more time to finish arranging everything. Deribis offers to meet you at the north edge of town, next to a newly rebuilt wainwright's shop called One Good Turn, in one hour.

In the meantime, do you wish to make any last preparations for what will surely be a journey of several hours or more, across some of the most dangerous wilderness in all Faerûn?

During this hour, the characters can make any reasonable preparations they wish, including shopping for equipment. After asking around, one may find a shop in the Old City to purchase anything from the *Players Handbook* costing no more than 50 gp, and inside the wooden walls of Ylraphon proper, any item in the *Player's Handbook* may be purchased, regardless of cost. Both inside and outside the Palisade walls, however, the price of food is doubled, due to the impossibility of growing crops in the area.

Mud Boots

Characters may purchase a pair of mud boots for 5 gp. While wearing the boots on both feet, they ignore difficult terrain caused by mud. Mud boots cannot be equipped on mounts.

Anyone attempting to purchase a vehicle or mount for use in traversing the Flooded Forest can make a DC 10 **Wisdom (Survival)** or **Intelligence (Nature)** check (rangers and druids roll with advantage). Those who succeed realize the vehicles will be useless in the unstable mix of soil, vegetation, and fetid water that they will be traveling over, and that mounts will not speed up the time, and may even slow them down. Huge or larger mounts cannot move more than a quarter of their normal walking speed in the forest, due to the thick vegetation and terrain obstacles, but Large or smaller mounts are no more restrained than the characters are.

A. Deribis and the Mission

After an hour, Deribis reunites with the characters near the wainwright's shop and explains their mission in greater detail. Read or paraphrase the following:

When Deribis arrives to meet you, the small human woman is accompanied by an unusually tall and burly half-elf in a tabard of the Ylraphon Town Watch, with a wolf-pelt tied around his waist. He looks more like a tribal raider than a lawman.

"Friends, thank you for your patience," she says. "Your quest is of dire importance to many, and I have been doing my best to ensure your success. Let me introduce Trell Bannon, a—"

"Trell Bannon of the Fens," the half-elf corrects her.

"Yes, Trell Bannon *of the Fens*, a sergeant in the Town Watch, born and raised in these lands, who can guide you to a place where two hunting trails lead off towards your destination, the Altar of the Smoldering Eye.

"But first, I have important information to impart, which I obtained in collaboration with Andorran Bree, the High Initiate of the Moonwater, our local temple of Selune. We have some powerful magic to help you, but to make use of it, you must hurry on your way as soon as these matters are explained."

Deribis hands you three items. The first appears to be a thin, short candle, with a pleasant smell and the teeth and claws of some animal embedded in a spiral pattern from top to bottom. The second is a scroll case. The third appears to be a map.

Deribis summarizes the following information:

- When night falls tomorrow night, the first night of the new moon, the yuan-ti warlock called Sitalash will perform a ritual to transform many of the residents of Ylraphon's Old City section into his mad reptilian servants.
- The ritual will be performed at a converted yuan-ti temple, the Altar of the Smoldering Eye, once built by orcs as a sacred site for the worship of their god Gruumsh, but later claimed by yuan-ti as a holy shrine to their serpentine deities.
- The Altar of the Smoldering Eye is 10 miles away from Ylraphon in the Flooded Forest, an overgrown swamp full of monsters and punishing terrain as dangerous as any wilderness in Faerûn.
- Deribis even explored the possibility of teleporting the characters directly to the temple, but Andorran Bree determined it is protected by

hallow spells and other ancient enchantments that make this impossible.

- The one safe location near the temple is an old elven watchtower a half-mile away, which is magically protected by an ancient ward. It can only be entered with a passphrase Andorran found in a scroll from the era of Myth Drannor. (The passphrase is written on the scroll she handed out, which should be kept in the case for protection.)
- There are so many fell spells protecting the Altar of the Smoldering Eye that Andorran Bree has provided a magical item, called a mongoose candle, that will grant temporary immunity to these enchantments when it is lit and activated, but only for one hour while the candle remains lit. (This is the candle Deribis handed to the characters.)
- The candle is powerful, but can only be used once, and can only be activated with a ceremony held exactly at dawn. Only characters participating in the ceremony are protected from the evil magic of the temple.
- The ceremony to light the mongoose candle at dawn should be performed on the roof of the tower, where there is an old, dormant teleportation circle. Thanks to an enchantment added by a visiting associate of Andorran's, activating the candle will so reawaken the long dormant teleportation circle, sending images of the location back to Deribis's allies at the temple of Selune.
- When the characters complete their quest, the reawakened teleportation circle in the tower will be used to bring them back to Ylraphon. So, if they fail to activate the mongoose candle at dawn, the characters will face a long walk home.
- The final item Deribis presented to the party is a new version of the crude map found in the possession of Sitalash's agent in town, rendered by a paid cartographer. It includes Ylraphon, the Altar of the Smoldering Eye, and the elven watchtower. Unfortunately, the unexplored Flooded Forest in between is low on detail, so the characters must choose their own path.
- If the characters make it to the watchtower and light the mongoose candle tomorrow morning at dawn, Deribis will award them with 200gp.

Give the players **Player Handout 1: Watchtower Passphrase**, then read the following:

"You need to make good time. You have about 8 hours to reach the elven watchtower; after that, darkness will fall, and few survive travel in the monster-infested Flooded Forest after sundown. If you take more than 12 hours, you will not have time for a full night's rest before dawn, when you must light the *mongoose candle*. Since the ritual is to be performed tomorrow night, we won't get another chance. Good luck!"

If the same group of characters will not be continuing to SRCC1-3 The Altar of the Smoldering Eye:

You may explain further that the purpose of their quest is to open up the watchtower with the passphrase and use the mongoose candle to reawaken the teleportation circle there, allowing another group of adventurers to be teleported in from the temple of Selune to perform the final assault on the temple.

Once the characters know what they need for their mission, Deribis bids the characters farewell, leaving them in Trell's capable hands.

The Mongoose Candle

The ancient ancestors of the humans of the Shining Lands were the first to craft this single-use consumable magic item, made from the wax of boiling cinnamon and embedded with the teeth of a mongoose that died of natural causes. *Mongoose candles* were weapons against the various reptilian servitor races of the prehistoric empire of Okoth. When the candle is lit, the characters who participated in the ceremony to light it are immune to permanent location-based magical effects created by reptilian humanoids such as the yuan-ti for 1 hour. Whenever a lit mongoose candle stops burning, it melts away.

B. The Edge of the Flooded Forest

Routes through the Flooded Forest change often and are hard to map, but Trell grew up in the swamp area—they don't call him Trell Bannon of the Fens for nothing. He has never been to the area where the characters are headed, but he knows enough to get the characters started.

As Trell guides the characters, he says little. Explaining only that he has a watch shift coming up and cannot be away too long, but he has enough time to show them to a place where two old hunting trails lead off in the direction of the Altar of the Smoldering Eye as shown on the map, which doesn't show paths through the swamp.

Extremely loyal to his fellow Watch members, Trell refuses to leave them shorthanded, and he will

not shirk his shift accompany the characters further under any circumstances.

After a brisk 15-minute walk skirting the edge of the swamp, Trell leads you down a tiny game trail into the insect-infested, stinking wet mess they call the Flooded Forest. The Altar of the Smoldering Eye is 10 miles to the north, but Trell leaves you just south of a shallow, algae-infested pond, at a t-shaped intersection that branches off east and west around the water.

“My best guess is, either trail will get you where you are headed, whether you go east or west,” the hulking half-elf says as he turns to depart. “I have to get back. Be wary of more than just the beasts out here. I grew up among swamp folk, and while some are good people, few respect civilized folk, and most branches of my family can’t be trusted at all. And whatever, you do, don’t stay out in the swamp past nightfall. Make for that tower Deribis was talking about as quick as you can. After sundown, the real rulers of the swamp come out, and they’re far more dangerous than you or I.”

Trell heads back, leaving you with two routes, east or west. Standing at the edge of the swamp, you must decide your path.

The two paths represent different types of challenges. Down the west path lies a dangerous creature, down the east path the party will find the swamp is adversary enough. The party can make **Intelligence (Investigation)**, **Intelligence (Nature)**, **Wisdom (Perception)**, or **Wisdom (Survival)** checks to help them find clues that will help them choose which path they feel is optimal, per the following Pathfinding table.

Pathfinding

Ability Check DC	Pathfinding Clues Obtained
8	It seems that more travelers choose the east path.
10	Small animal tracks are sparser down the west path.
12	Small patches of razorvine are more prevalent down the east path.
14	Cutting through the swamp without following either path would be more direct, but could be more dangerous.

16	You find the rotting hind quarters of a crocodile. The creature’s corpse has been partially burned away by some corrosive substance. Taking that evidence along with some small black scales that lie nearby, you surmise there must be a black dragon active nearby, whose hunting range likely includes this entire area.
18	The western path shows no signs of razorvine, arrow-reeds, or other hazardous vegetation. It is harder to make out any tracks on the western path, since it is more solid and less muddy.
20	There are many tracks headed away from Ylraphon down the eastern path, but relatively few headed back this way.

Adjusting the Pathfinding Table DCs

Based on the same party strength you determine to adjudicate encounters, here are recommendations for adjusting the DCs of rolls on the Pathfinding Table to suit the characters’ likely effectiveness. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Reduce the skill check DCs by two.
- **Very Strong:** Increase the skill check DCs by two

If the characters fail to detect any clues about what dangers lie down which path, they will need to simply choose one. Once the characters have chosen their path and embarked, they enter the Flooded Forest.

Travel Pace

As they begin their overland travel, the characters must choose how fast they wish to move. The Temple of the Smoldering Eye is 10 miles away from where the characters enter the forest. Due to random channels of water, new flooding, quicksand, overgrown foliage, and the like, most of the Flooded Forest is difficult terrain. Even with mud boots, travel speed for the entire swamp is cut in half (see Chapter 8 in the *Players Handbook* under Travel Pace, pages 181-182), so the following table should allow you to determine how long it takes the characters to reach it, depending on how fast they choose to move at various points. If one of the characters is a ranger with a favored terrain of either forest or swamp, the group’s travel is not slowed, and the distance per hour listed in the table below is doubled.

Flooded Forest Travel Times

Pace	Distance/hr.	Effect
Fast	2 mi.	-5 to passive Wisdom (Perception) scores
Normal	1.5 mi.	—
Slow	1 mi.	Able to use stealth

Once the characters have chosen their travel pace, proceed to Part 2.

“Can We Take a Rest?”

As the ritual will be completed at sunset the following day, there is little time for a respite. Taking a long rest is essentially out of the question, since this will lead to the characters traveling several hours in the Flooded Forest at night, a deadly proposition. The characters may take a short rest, but given the distance they must travel, losing an hour puts them in greater danger of being in the swamp after nightfall. Also, there are few safe places to rest in the Flooded Forest. Without a powerful magical resource (such as a spell or magic item that creates shelter), a DC 10 **Wisdom (Survival)** check reveals that nearly any location other than the watchtower at the end would leave them vulnerable to attack by predators or worse.

The one place the characters could safely take a short rest without risking an encounter is, ironically, inside the pit trap in Part 2. If the characters try, have each member of the group roll percentile dice. If anyone rolls a 59 or lower, they are attacked by a number of **Crushing Wave reavers** equal to the number of characters (or a number of **bandits** equal to the number of characters if the APL is 1 or 2). These are slavers from Pa’s group (see the ***Pa and the Boys*** encounter in **Part 3: Encounters, Random and Otherwise**, for details).

If characters whose short rest is interrupted try again a second time, have them each roll percentile dice again, but let them have the short rest, no matter the result. When they begin traveling again after their rest, roll or choose an encounter from the table in **DM’s Appendix 1: Unforeseen Dangers**, then describe that situation and have the characters make any required rolls, enduring the consequences before continuing on.

Part 2. Into the Swamp

Expected Duration: 30 minutes

The adventurers delve into the Flooded Forest hoping to reach the Temple of the Smoldering Eye in time to halt the ritual. No matter which path they chose, the characters will not have an easy time of it, but each choice may bring with it certain advantages.

General Features

The general features of the Flooded Forest, which apply for the rest of the adventure as well as this session, are as follows:

Light. The PCs should be traversing the Flooded Forest during the day unless they spend too long in Ylraphon. Due to the high canopy created by towering duskwood trees, there is no direct sunlight anywhere in the swamp. If the sun sets while the characters are still traveling to the temple, the entire wilderness will be either heavily obscured or in total darkness until morning.

Visibility. Much of the Flooded Forest is shrouded by mists this time of year, which combine with trees, stones, and shrubs to limit visibility to less than 30 feet.

Smells. The Flooded Forest is a swamp and smells of decaying vegetation and rotting meat.

Sounds. The buzz of insects is constant, and can be heard even far outside the forest. The cries of hunting animals can be heard throughout the swamp, along with croaking amphibians, singing birds, and splashing fish. The occasional cry of powerful monsters can be heard, such as owlbears, dinosaurs, or even dragons.

Terrain. The soil is soft and treacherous, and the recent rains have made things even worse. If you need to improvise a map for any encounters in the forest, add at least two significantly-placed patches of mud, which serve as difficult terrain.

An Eerie Presence

Whichever path the characters chose, and whatever their pace, the first three miles of their trek involve no encounters. Tell the players how long it took them to travel those first three miles, based on their pace and the table above. When that is done, read or paraphrase the following:

Sample Maps

Sample maps for some of the encounters appear in *Appendix: Maps*. Feel free to create impromptu maps if you use miniatures.

Your first few miles of travel through the swamp are miserable yet uneventful. 60-feet above your heads, the thick canopy created by the towering duskwood trees is a black roof over the entire swamp, with not even a hint of sunlight poking through on this stormy, overcast day. The intermittent rain has raised a thick mist, and together with hanging vines and overgrown shrubs, it is hard to see more than a few paces ahead. In some places, patches of the swamp are dark as midnight even in the middle of the day. As you enter an area where a cluster of green-needed hemlock trees somehow grow tall in the sunless murk, something feels wrong. You have the sudden sensation of being watched.

The characters may roll DC 17 **Wisdom (Perception)** checks to determine the source of the eerie sensation. Those who fail detect only a smell of wood smoke and decay on the wind that quickly fades. Those who succeed discern both the scent and a rustling sound in the nearby trees, but only for a moment, and no evidence of passing creatures can be found. However, anyone who rolls 20 or higher notices something else, something real and substantial. Through the small gaps in the canopy above, they catch a quick glimpse of a black-winged shape flying over the Flooded Forest: a black dragon of indeterminate size and age.

The smells and sounds are only echoes of the deaths of a handful of elven rangers, who died here long ago fighting orc invaders. They pose no danger right now, nor does the dragon, who passes over quickly on its way to another part of the woods.

Allow the characters to be spooked by these goings on, and enjoy any ensuing paranoia, but don't let them waste any significant time in fruitless investigations. Instead, take a moment to confirm each character's current passive Perception score, including any modifiers for travel pace.

So long as at least one character currently has a passive Perception of 10 or higher, the party comes upon a disturbing but harmless sight: the skeletal corpse of an elven ranger, caught in the muck of the swamp, wearing tattered leather armor. Long buried but recently brought back to the surface, this corpse bears magical treasure. Strapped to its back is a quiver holding twenty arrows, ten of which are magical. The corpse also bears a duskwood quarterstaff, shod in sterling silver on both ends.

Treasure

10 +1 Arrows, silvered quarterstaff (can be sold for 50 gp).

Path 1. Big Game Hunters (West Path)

Following north along the west path, the going is fairly easy. There is a fair amount of solid ground.

Look at the passive Perception scores you confirmed earlier based on the characters' travel pace and note whether any of the characters currently have a **passive Perception** of 11 or higher. Inform those who do that they hear loud voices and movement on the other side of a rocky outcropping ahead.

Give any characters who detected this a moment to react and possibly signal their comrades to the presence of nearby creatures. Whether anyone noticed the noise or not, have all the characters make a group **Dexterity (Stealth)** check. If they were already moving stealthily, each character receives advantage on this new check. Characters who are not aware of the possible threat nearby roll at disadvantage if they were not already moving with stealth. If at least half the groups beat a DC of 12, let them know they believe they have a good chance of sneaking up on the group ahead of them if they approach carefully.

Around the corner of the jutting rock formation, there are five halflings (the leader is secretly a **wererat**, the others are three **bandits**) surrounding a large, seemingly enraged wild pig, half-impaled on the end of a large boar-spear held by the laughing leader. Like most boar-spears, this short weapon has a metal cross-piece behind the spear-head, designed to stop an enraged boar injured with the spear from working its way up the shaft to harm the wielder. It seems be doing its job, as the angry boar still has the weapon's point lodged in its haunches, tearing its flesh as it tries to get closer enough to attack. At this point, the boar seems to have nearly tired itself out trying to attack the wielder.

The halflings are taunting the boar with oddly personal and pointed insults, not like what hunters are likely to say to prey, and after a round or so the leader calls out, "Go on, you ignorant wretch, show us your ugliest face!" Defiant but exhausted, the wounded **wereboar** responds by changing into her humanoid form, that of a young half-orc girl in her early teens.

In transforming, she is able to wrench herself off of the silver spear-point that has savaged her right shoulder and upper arm, but this young wereboar still has only 6 hit points remaining. She has three levels of exhaustion, which halves her speed and gives her disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls,

and saving throws. The halflings essentially have her at their mercy.

If the characters approached carefully, and at least half of them succeeded on the group **Dexterity (Stealth)** check, they have the options of sneaking by unnoticed or attacking with surprise.

The halflings are members of the Steeltoes, a clan of halfling wererats and their kin that have a longstanding feud with the Bannons, a family of humans, orcs, and half-orcs dwelling whose leading members are all wereboars. The young half-orc woman, Nalya Bannon, is a member of the latter group.

If it comes to a fight, the Steeltoe halflings don't want their "prey" stolen, but they will still flee if they are losing, especially if the wererat leader, Abra Steeltoe, is killed.

Adjusting the Encounter

Here are recommendations for adjusting this encounter.

These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Remove all **bandits**.
- **Weak:** Remove two **bandits**.
- **Strong:** Add four **bandits**.
- **Very Strong:** Add one **wererat**.

Tactics

The wererats and bandits attempt to swarm the weakest looking enemy they see, encircling them to make targeting area spells difficult. They have fought adventurers before, and are familiar with the common appearance and tactics of spellcasters, but they are if surprised they fight cautiously, knowing the odds are not likely to be in their favor.

The wereboar Nalya is too weak to meaningfully contribute to the fight, and tries to stay out of melee, but if possible, she uses the Help action to aid an attack made by someone confronting her tormentors.

Diplomacy

As intelligent creatures, all the creatures here can be reasoned with. The Steeltoes will seek to bargain for the wereboar as their prize, but if they know they can't win, they will also bargain for their lives. They try to make it clear that the characters are intruding on an ancient conflict.

Treasure

The silver spear-head on the boar-spear is actual of old dwarven craftsmanship, looted from the tombs beneath the Old City. The spear itself is currently

considered silvered because of the tip, but the spear will break at the end of the next battle in which it is used, becoming unusable. The silver head of the spear can be salvaged, however, and it can be sold for 50 gp.

Alternately, a character with a nonmagical spear of their own can spend 10 minutes making an ability check with an appropriate tool set (such as smith's tools, tinker's tools, or woodcarver's tools) to swap out the existing head for this one, causing their existing spear to become silvered. On a failure, the existing spear is no longer usable.

The Steeltoe Bandits

The **wererat**, Abra Steeltoe, is a halfling, gaining appropriate racial traits (including Lucky, Brave, and Halfling Nimbleness, as well as Small size and a Dexterity increase to 17, granting it a +1 to AC and a +1 to attack and damage rolls with its weapons).

The **bandits** are also halflings, gaining similar traits (including Small size and a Dexterity increase to 14 with an accompanying +1 to AC and a +1 to attack and damage rolls with their weapons). In addition, though they are not lycanthropes, their blood kinship to wererats grants them the following extra traits:

- **Werebeast Kin (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).**
When the bandit takes nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage that is not silver, they can use their reaction to reduce the damage by 3.
- **Longstride Shifting (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).**
As a bonus action, the bandit gains 3 temporary hit points, and for 1 minute it can Dash as a bonus action. For the duration, it also gains advantage on Strength checks and Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Talking to Nalya Bannon

Nalya is Chaotic Good in alignment and grateful if the characters helped her, but skittish enough to try to get away at the first sign of hostility, and a bit disoriented from her wounds and extreme exhaustion. She is eager to get back to her family for healing and rest and also to warn them that there are Steeltoe wererats and their kin in the Flooded Forest. She can share the following information in response to questions from the characters, though she is unlikely to grant any information for which she is not directly asked:

- The halflings were Steeltoes, members of a clan of wererats and their kin based on the edges of the Flooded Forest and Ylraphon's Old City. Nalya was out hunting when they took her by surprise.

- The Steeltoes have been feuding with Nalya's kin, the Bannons, out here in the Flooded Forest since before she was born.
- The feud was ended for a time by a druid claiming to speak for Malar, but her exposure as a false prophet has tensions rising between the two groups once more.
- If asked about Trell Bannon of the Fens, Nalya doesn't know Trell Bannon of the Fens personally, but if given his description she says they are probably related. Before the Bannons were granted "Malar's Blessing" (wereboar lycanthropy), they were a larger clan of human swampers, descendants of survivors of the dragon attack that destroyed Ylraphon a century ago. A branch of the family untouched by lycanthropy, known as the Bannons of the Fens, intermarried with some wood elves in the eastern part of the forest two generations ago. Since Nalya's own close relatives are now mostly half-orcs, she is guessing the two branches of the family would no longer get along.
- She knows of the Altar of the Smoldering Eye and its location. Her kinfolk recently took in the surviving members of a tribe of orcs called Clan Dragul, who were driven from their lair by adventurers. These orcs now burn with desire to reclaim the Smoldering Eye from the yuan-ti who hold it and reconsecrate it to its original purpose as a temple of Gruumsh. Many of Nalya's kin have been swayed by this notion, though most worship Malar.
- The yuan-ti who dwells in the Altar of the Smoldering Eye is named Sitalash, and he is a powerful warlock. He is said to be very clever, making deals with various creatures to help protect his home. Rumors say he is even on friendly terms with a black dragon dwelling nearby.
- Nalya's father, Jhag Bannon, is a warband leader, and recently he took a group of warriors to try to reclaim the temple, but they have not yet returned.
- Nalya can give abstract yet accurate directions which grant the characters a +2 bonus for the rest of the adventure on all **Wisdom (Survival)** checks related to finding the best path to the Smoldering Eye.

Roleplaying Nalya

Nalya Bannon is a child of the Flooded Forest, not yet an adult but still more inured to hardship than most civilized folk twice her age. This teenaged half-orc has premature streaks of gray in her reddish auburn hair.

- **Trait.** Nalya seldom speaks to anyone other than her Bannon kin, so talking to the characters is something of a novelty.
- **Flaw.** Nalya is wary of town dwellers, who she's been told know nothing and don't remember how to live free, so she is ready to bolt at the slightest sign of aggression.

As excited as she is by the “brave new world” talking to outsiders represents, Nalya distrusts the characters too much to accompany them on their quest. She leaves to seek her family as soon as she can, but takes steps to make sure she is not followed. If compelled to accompany them, she flees at the first sign of a fight.

Once this encounter ends, the players have now traveled an additional 5 miles on top of the 3 miles they traveled before happening upon the lycanthropes in the forest. Figure out how long it took the players to travel those 5 miles, based on their travel pace, then—depending on how long they spent interacting with Nalya and the Steeltoes—add an additional 10-30 minutes of time for the encounter.

Let the players know how far their characters traveled (8 miles) and how long it has taken them to reach this point. When that is done, move on to **Part 3: Encounters, Random and Otherwise.**

Path 2. Land of the Lost (East Path)

Your progress through the harsh terrain has not been pleasant. You seem to spend half your time traipsing through rivers and thick mud, only then to spend the other half climbing up and down steep hills. You have avoided several unpleasant hazards on the way, and at times you have had an eerie sensation of being watched, but thus far you have avoided a fight. Now, you appear to have wandered into a deep and ancient bog, and the way forward is no longer clear. How will you navigate your way out of this seemingly impassable marshland before you get into real trouble?

Ask each player what they do to help the group find their way out before they encounter further difficulty. Each should then make an ability check appropriate to the solution they propose. For rolls of **Dexterity (Acrobatics)**, **Strength (Athletics)**, or **Intelligence (Nature)**, the DC is 14, and for **Wisdom (Perception or Survival)** checks, the DC is 12. For other ability checks, the DC should be higher unless the player proposes a very logical or creative use of a skill or ability (such as making an **Intelligence (Religion)** check to recall yuan-ti religious

scriptures describing the lands around their temple in the Flooded Forest).

Keep going around the table, asking each player in turn and having them make appropriate ability checks. You will likely need multiple actions and rolls from each player. Each time a player succeeds, record that success, counting the total number of successes (you can use the check-boxes below to keep track).

Pass: ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ | ☐☐☐☐

Fail: ☐☐☐☐☐ | ☐☐☐☐

When the total number of successes equals twice the number of characters, or when the total number of failures exceeds the number of characters, this process ends. For example: For 5 characters, it ends once they have either succeeded 10 times or failed 6 times.

Either way, they move on to the next section, A Dangerous Path, but how well they did here will affect their difficulties later.

DM Advice: The Challenge of Ability Checks

Encourage the players to engage their imaginations during this encounter, giving real thought to the problem at hand and their own attempted solutions. Allow them to describe their own reasonable details in the environment along with their actions, such as fallen trees to use as bridges or hanging vines to climb. Grant advantage to a player the first time they put meaningful effort into thinking of ways to succeed.

When a character fails a roll using a skill that seems illogical (such as **Dexterity (Stealth)** check when there is no one to hide from), give a hint that skills and approaches directly applicable to the situation are more likely to succeed.

If a player has ongoing trouble inventing new actions for themselves, help them determine a simple action they can repeat, using a skill with which they are likely to have some success (such as a wizard with high Intelligence but low physical ability scores and Wisdom continually scanning the area for signs with **Intelligence (Nature)** checks). You want to reward players for trying to use whatever creative faculties they possess, as best they can, rather than simply giving recognition to the good fortune of already having a great imagination.

Creative uses of spells or other resources can also result in advantage, a reduced DC, or a full success. For example, casting the *water walk* spell to move across stagnant pools should count as a success.

1a. Unforeseen Dangers

By this point, the characters have found a navigable path towards their destination, but cannot avoid trouble entirely. Depending on how the series of ability checks they made in the previous section

ended, they will face one or more of the brief encounters on the table in **DM's Appendix 1: Unforeseen Dangers**. Do not use the same encounter more than once.

If the series of ability checks in the previous section ended with a number of successes equal to twice the number of characters, move on to the next section, Unforeseen Dangers, choosing or rolling only **one** encounter on the Unforeseen Dangers table, describing the situation and having the characters make any required rolls, enduring the consequences before they find their way again.

If the series of ability checks in the previous section ended with a number of failures exceeding the number of characters, choose or roll **two** encounters from the Unforeseen Dangers table, and make the characters roll the ability checks required for each of those options, enduring any consequences from each before they move on.

After the last Unforeseen Danger option has been encountered, the characters are almost out of the bogs. However, one last cunning trap (and its most recent victim) remain on their way forward. Proceed to the next section, **A Regrettable Fall**.

2a. A Regrettable Fall

By this point, all the characters need to do to get out of the misery of the ancient bog they wandered into is pass through one more section of swamp. Unfortunately, it is likely the most dangerous area they've been through yet. Read or paraphrase the following:

You are waist deep in sticky muck and overflowing rainwater as you navigate the last unavoidable stretch of the ancient bog. Most of this area is surrounded by impassable hills, covered in razorvines or sharp arrow-reeds, but 300 ft. ahead of you beckons a relatively flat patch of rocky solid ground above the water level, covered in simple swampgrass, which stretches west between the more forbidding rises. You just have to traverse this quagmire to reach it.

The characters must make a DC 11 **Strength (Athletics)** check to determine how long it takes them to reach solid ground. Those who succeed make it in less than 1 minute, where those who fail take closer to 2 minutes. Those who roll 5 or lower step into sinkholes from which they cannot extricate themselves easily, requiring another **Strength (Athletics)** check. The DC is 10 if the roll is made by another character helping them out, or 15 if it is the stuck character is rolling for themselves. Either way,

escaping the sinkholes requires an extra two minutes.

Characters who finally reach the solid path can press forward, but unless they are actively searching for traps or similar threats (in which case they can make a DC 13 **Wisdom (Perception)** check), only characters who currently have a passive Perception score of 13 or higher notice that a section of swampgrass 30 feet from the shore—a section which they must pass over due to the overgrown hills on either side—looks a little bit off. It conceals a cunning pit trap.

The Pit Trap

Cunningly camouflaged, the cover of the pit looks almost just like the rocky, grass-covered land around it.

Detection. Passive Perception of 13 or higher (or an active check against the same DC) notices something strange about the camouflaged area over the pit, but it takes a successful DC 12 **Intelligence (Investigation)** check to confirm that tall stalks of swamp-grass have been cunningly arranged to rise up from several fishing nets tied together. This grass-covered nets conceal a 10-foot square pit.

Disabling. If the trap is detected, it can be circumvented by simply walking around the outer edges where the netting is attached to cunningly hidden rocks. Characters who move half their walking speed or less do not need to roll, but those who move faster must make a DC 11 **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check when crossing, triggering the trap on a failure.

Trigger. Stepping onto the false floor triggers the trap.

Effect. The triggering character must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or fall into the 20-foot deep pit and takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall and 7 (3d4) piercing damage from sharpened arrow reeds set into the walls and floor. On a success, the character still falls in, but the damage is halved. In addition, the makeshift spikes are treated with a hateful poison that stops blood from clotting. If a character who fails the saving throw doesn't regain at least 1 hit point (by magical healing or any other means) in the next hour, they must make a DC 13 **Constitution saving throw** at the end of that hour, and every hour following until they regain at least 1 hit point.

Anyone who passes within 5 feet of the far edge of the pit who has a passive Perception of 10 or higher hears a voice from within the pit.

Opening or entering the pit trap (including by falling into it) or responding to the voice confirms that there is someone in the pit: Tubal Steeltoe, a halfling (secretly a **wererat**) who fell prey to a trap left by cunning wereboars. The wereboars are hated rivals of Tubal's kin (see the Big Game Hunters encounter for more on the Steeltoe-Bannon feud), so he tried to follow them. Right now, Tubal is feeling a bit foolish, and also a bit bleeding-to-death. He has 4

hit points left, and unless he receives help, he will be dead within hours.

XP Award

If the characters detect and avoid the pit trap, award each character 50 XP.

Talking to Tubal Steeltoe

Half-delirious from blood loss, and naturally talkative, Tubal is happy to converse, but first needs help, which he will beg for if necessary. Any kind of healing, of even 1 hit point, will stop his bleeding.

Born with sorcerous talents that made him a bit of a misfit in his family of halfling wererats and their kinfolk, Tubal decided to pursue his gifts. He enrolled as a student at the Brixmarsh school of magic in the Old City, only to face the mockery of his kin for “going soft and civilized.” On a recent expedition to gather spell components at the edge of the Flooded Forest, he spied a large group of the Bannon wereboars and their orc and human kin moving west through the forest.

Tubal decided to follow the Bannons stealthily and report back to his family to prove his cunning. Unfortunately, pit trap was more cunning. After he had already fallen in and suffered severe injury, the wereboars who had set the trap came back and put a few arrows in him for good measure, then left him to die, resetting their trap in case Tubal had companions.

If engaged in conversation while he is still at less than half his hit points, Tubal is open about being a wererat born into a clan of them, though he quickly notes that he “shouldn’t have told you that” and blames the revelation on the delirium of his injuries. Otherwise, he does his best to talk around it, speaking of his family and their feud with the wereboar-led Bannons without mentioning the lycanthropy of his own kin. Besides his plea for help and the regretful tale of his poor choices, Tubal also has the following information to share if engaged in conversation:

- Tubal’s relatives, the Steeltoes, comprise a close-knit clan of related families, dwelling mostly in underground tunnels on the edges of the Flooded Forest and Ylrathon’s Old City.
- The Steeltoes have been feuding with the Bannons, here in the Flooded Forest since before Tubal was born.
- The feud was ended for a time by a druid claiming to speak for Malar, but her exposure as a false

prophet has tensions rising between the two groups once more.

- Tubal spied on the Bannon warband for a while before they must’ve realized they were being followed. He overheard the leader, a wereboar called Jhag Bannon, talking about taking back something called the Smoldering Eye.
- The warband also talked about the yuan-ti who dwells in the Smoldering Eye, a powerful warlock said to have an alliance with a black dragon dwelling nearby.
- The warband isn’t hard to track, but proved more wily than Tubal expected. He believes the gods punished him for his hubris.

Roleplaying Tubal

Being the runt of the litter is even more torturous when it is a litter of wererats, and Tubal Steeltoe would be insane by now if he hadn’t discovered his magical potential. Conversing with him is an endless cycle of him taking things too far and then trying to walk them back—the same cycle that defines his life. He was desperate to escape life skulking underground, yet now he’s desperate to prove his worth to his family as well, and show those who belittled him his whole life what he can do.

Trait. Eager to connect with other people and communicate.

Flaw. Gets himself flustered easily, second-guessing what he’s just said and often talking too fast to explain himself or simply to keep up with a mind far quicker than his tongue.

If the characters find the tracks left by the warband, they can follow them all the way to the Altar of the Smoldering Eye. Doing so requires only a DC 11 **Wisdom (Survival)** check.

Tubal can be convinced to accompany the characters with a DC 19 **Charisma (Deception or Persuasion)** check, but only if he is fully healed, and even then, he is not of much use—the first time there is a fight, the trauma of his experience in the pit overwhelms him at the end of his first turn, and he spends every subsequent action to Dodge while using his movement to flee into the Flooded Forest. After that, it would take extreme effort to rebuild his confidence enough for him to go any further with the party.

Tubal in Combat

Tubal has the normal statistics of a **wererat**, except as follows:

- Alignment is Neutral
- His Intelligence and Charisma are both 14 (+2)
- He has the racial traits of a halfling (including Lucky, Brave, and Halfling Nimbleness) though this does not raise his Dexterity.

- **Spellcasting.** Jubal is a 3rd-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). He knows the following sorcerer spells:
Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*, *blade ward*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*

1st-level: *mage armor*, *expeditious retreat*, *shield*

2nd-level: *suggestion*

- **Sorcery Points.** Tubal has 3 sorcery points. When he casts a spell, he can spend 1 or more sorcery points to gain one of the following benefits:

Quickened Spell: When Tubal casts a spell that has a casting time of 1 action, he can spend 2 sorcery points to change the casting time to 1 bonus action for this casting.

Subtle Spell: When Tubal casts a spell, he can spend 1 sorcery point to cast the spell without any somatic or verbal components.

Once this encounter ends, the characters need only move a few dozen feet past the pit trap to be free of the ancient bog that made their journey so unpleasant.

The characters have now traveled an additional 5 miles on top of the 3 miles they traveled before they began encountering the Unforeseen Dangers, but unfortunately those obstacles and this last trap cause their journey to take quite a bit longer than it should have. Figure out how long it would take the characters to travel 6 miles, based on their travel pace. Let the players know that is how long it took their characters to travel the last 5 miles on the east path.

Let the players know how far their characters traveled in total (8 miles) and how long it has taken them to reach this point. When that is done, move on to **Part 3: Encounters, Random and Otherwise.**

Treasure

Tubal has 25 gp on his person and a duskwood wand worth 5gp. He offers the 25 gp as a reward if the characters aid him.

Path 3. Blazing a Trail (No Path)

Choosing this direction saves the characters some time, but at the cost of more greater danger. They will face many of the brief encounters on the table in **DM's Appendix 1: Unforeseen Dangers.**

When the characters start off the path, have them roll a group **Wisdom (Survival)** check (DC 15). If at least half of them succeed, they stay on the right track, otherwise they wander into difficult territory and become a bit fatigued, giving each character a -2 penalty on their next initiative roll.

As the characters continue their pathless route, choose or roll **two** encounters from the **Unforeseen Dangers** table, and make the characters roll the ability checks required for each of those options, enduring any consequences from each before they move on. Do not use the same encounter more than once. Once the characters have endured these challenges, proceed to the following encounter, **G'Day, Mate!**

G'Day, Mate!

After wading through fetid ponds, clinging mud, overgrown brambles, and other hazards, you finally make your way onto a patch of firm ground on the edge of a treacherous, lake-like section of bog. Your relief at stepping onto something solid is marred by the realization that this would be a suitable place for an ambush. Spooked, you look around and at first think you see something moving in the water, but then all is still.

Five crocodiles, pets of Sitalash, are out looking for a meal and they may have just found one. These predators are more wily and cunning than most of their kind, and attempt to approach the characters by stealth.

Tactics

The crocodiles have advantage on their **Dexterity (Stealth)** checks due to the favorable terrain. As a result, the DC to detect them is 17. Unless the characters are actively searching for threats, they use their passive Perception score to detect the crocodiles rather than rolling a check.

Because of their hunger, the crocodiles can take the Dash action as a bonus action during their first turn of combat.

Diplomacy

A DC 15 **Wisdom (Animal Handling)** check will keep the crocodiles from attacking the character that made the check, unless that character attacks them or assists another in attacking them.

Treasure

If characters take 10 minutes to skin and defang the crocodiles, they can sell the hides and teeth for 40gp.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very Weak:** Remove three **crocodiles**.

- **Weak:** Remove two **crocodiles**.
- **Strong:** Add one **giant crocodile** and remove all **crocodiles**.
- **Very Strong:** Add one **giant crocodile** and remove four **crocodiles**.

Once this encounter ends, the characters have now traveled an additional 5 miles on top of the 3 miles they traveled before they began encountering the Unforeseen Dangers, but cutting out the many expected twists and turns of either path have allowed them to traverse those 5 miles much more quickly. Figure out how long it would take the characters to travel 4 miles, based on their travel pace, then add 5 minutes for their fight with the crocodiles (or 15 minutes if they stopped to skin and defang them). Let the players know that is how long it took their characters to travel the last 5 miles on the east path.

Let the players know how far their characters traveled in total (8 miles) and how long it has taken them to reach this point. When that is done, move on to **Part 3: Encounters, Random and Otherwise**.

Part 3. Encounters, Random and Otherwise

Expected Duration: 30 minutes

Only two more miles separate the characters from their final destination, where they can rest, and an ancient causeway makes the going here much easier. However, some unusual sights await them in this last part of their trek, as well as two combat encounters. There are multiple options for each of those two encounters, depending on your own choices and the decisions of the characters. If they can overcome these encounters, they arrive at the tower at last. Read or paraphrase the following:

As you begin the last two miles of travel to reach your destination, you encounter the extremely wet terrain indicated by your map. Some time ago, the mud and water both began to stink even more terribly, twisted vegetation made passage even more miserable, and the uneven mist became even thicker and more confusing. Now, swatting aside the low branches of the drowning trees, you emerge into a flat lake of black water with a sulfurous smell. Most of your remaining journey seems to be under open sky rather than thick canopy, which you can see despite the obscuring fog, but the prospect of slogging through a large body of foul water is daunting nonetheless.

Thankfully, your map also guides you to a long but narrow ancient causeway that allows you to walk rather than swim. This old but well-built walking track is made of great blocks of creamy white travertine stone, browned on the sides by the waters but still seemingly stable. At this time of day, parts of it may descend a foot or two underwater, due to the tides of the nearby Dragon Reach, but following it should lead you directly to the tower. The mist makes it hard to see in the distance, but at times you can even make out the welcome sight of the watchtower itself at the end, looming high over the dark waters.

The characters find that the first mile of the causeway is not difficult terrain, and their travel pace for that mile is doubled. After that mile, however, most of the uneven track is submerged by about a foot, making the last mile difficult terrain once more. In places, the causeway is also broken, or interrupted by a muddy hill or a grove of tenacious trees from before this area was flooded, but there is always enough stable ground nearby to keep moving and get back onto the path.

During that first mile of travel, the mists worsens, limiting visibility to about 20 feet. Keep track of the time based on the party's previous progress and current travel pace.

When Darkness Falls

If at any point the characters have been traveling for longer than 8 hours, three things occur:

- **Forced March.** Unless the characters have taken a short rest (which, as described earlier, would be very difficult), their travel becomes a *forced march*. For each additional hour of travel without rest beyond 8 hours, the characters still cover the appropriate distance for their pace but must each make a Constitution saving throw at the end of the hour. The DC equals 10 + 1 for each hour past 8 hours. On a failed saving throw, a character suffers one level of exhaustion.
- **Nightfall.** Night begins to fall at the 8-hour mark, and the sky is completely dark 15 minutes later. The combines with the thickened nighttime fog to make any area without a light source heavily concealed by darkness. Even with a light source, anything more than 15 feet away is completely concealed by a dark fog impenetrable to darkvision or even a warlock's *Devil's Sight* invocation.
- **Additional Obstacle.** A hazard the characters could've steered clear of more easily by day becomes a greater threat at night. Roll or choose an extra new encounter from the table in **DM's Appendix 1: Unforeseen Dangers**, then describe that situation and have the characters make any required rolls, enduring the consequences before continuing on.

Once the characters have traveled a mile along the causeway, they begin the last mile of their journey, as described in the next section, **The Final Stretch**.

The Final Stretch

As the tall elven watchtower grows closer, and the characters begin the final mile of their journey, they encounter some kind of trouble that bars their way to their destination. Remember that shallow water, mud, and other obstacles mean that this entire encounter takes place on difficult terrain. Roll or select one of the encounters listed in this section from the table below.

If the encounter will take place at night, use either **Hunters and Hunted** or **Pa and the Boys**.

d6 Roll	Encounter
1-2	A. Pa and the Boys
3-4	B. Hunters and Hunted
5-6	C. Dreams of a Would-be Red Wizard

A. Pa and the Boys

Off in the distance, you can faintly hear the twangy sounds of a mandolin. Something moves slowly, intentionally towards you. A wide shallow boat lit by a dim lantern comes into view. Two silhouettes can be seen riding on the boat, partially concealed by shadows and the rising mist. A gravelly, hissing voice in the fog says, "You smell them folks, boy? Smell like slaves."

"Them don't look like slaves," a younger voice answers.

"They will," the hissing voice replies, and laughs.

These semi-human slavers have willingly been transformed by Sitalash's earlier attempts to perfect his ritual. They were a family of swamp-dwelling humans who once sold waylaid travelers to the Cult of the Crushing Wave and joined their faith, but have now happily found a new customer in the yuan-ti, as well as a new twisted religion.

The group consists of a barely human patriarch and his slightly less corrupted sons. "Pa" is a **yuan-ti pureblood**, and the younger man on the boat with him is his youngest son, a **bandit** he calls "Runt." Swimming beneath the boat, hidden by it, are Pa's other sons, three **Crushing Wave reavers** bearing longswords lined with the teeth of swamp snakes.

All bear various serpentine mutations, but most are cosmetic, except for those related to their aquatic lifestyle. In addition to their other traits, Pa and his boys can all **breathe underwater** and have **swimming speeds of 30 feet**.

If this encounter occurs at night: First make any adjustments, as suggested by the following Adjusting the Encounter sidebar, but then replace all **Crushing Wave reavers** in this encounter with **sea spawn**.

Tactics

Their swamp-boat is moving at 30 feet per round as well, and brings the slavers right next to the characters just before the first time one of the slavers acts. They all attack as soon as possible, but those accompanying the boat underwater do not emerge until they attack.

Diplomacy

Appeals to decency or reason have no effect on Pa or his boys, but they can be bribed to leave the characters alone for 100 or more gp, though this requires quick-thinking roleplaying or a DC 15 **Charisma (Persuasion)** check.

Treasure

One zombie wears a platinum Purple Dragon signet ring unmarred by the swamp's corrosion, worth 60 gp.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very Weak:** Remove **yuan-ti pureblood**, remove two **Crushing Wave reavers**, add two **bandits** (Pa becomes the only Crushing Wave reaver, his sons are all bandits).
- **Weak:** Remove two **Crushing Wave reavers**, add one **bandit**.
- **Strong:** Add two **yuan-ti purebloods**.
- **Very Strong:** Add three **yuan-ti purebloods**.

B. Hunters and Hunted

A mossy hill protrudes from the waters to interrupt your path about 50 feet ahead. You occasionally think you see a light or lights flitting over the hill, like flies over a heap of dung.

If the characters approach the lights openly, or move stealthily but fail to avoid notice (**Dexterity (Stealth)** checks for this encounter are DC 12), the undead source of the light, a **will-o'-wisp**, turns invisible and moves into position to attack alongside its allies, two **zombies**. The will-o'-wisp is the soul of a traitorous War Wizard of Cormyr who fled justice during the reign of King Azoun IV, and the zombies are long-dead human Knights of the Purple Dragon sent to track him, but all three died bitter in these dangerous wilds. In death, the zombies are mystically connected to the will-o'-wisp, noticing the characters whenever it does.

The dancing lights start to move further away, then vanish, leaving only shadows and silence. After a moment, there is a startling splash as rotted arms rise out of the water behind you, their clumsy hands clawing at you.

Once the characters get a good look at the zombies, they can see that they were the useless, corroded remains of armor emblazoned with a purple dragon symbol.

If this encounter occurs at night: Characters with a passive Perception of 19 or lower are surprised by the zombies. Each zombie gains advantage on its first attack roll against a surprised character.

Tactics

Even if the characters manage to sneak up on them, the undead attack aggressively as soon as one of them sees living creatures, and the will-o'-wisp tries to sneak over and attack invisibly if it can.

Diplomacy

Characters openly displaying symbols of Cormyr or of a lawful good deity who seek to make any kind of connection with the zombies can use an action to make DC 15 **Intelligence (History or Religion)** checks to awaken the undead knights' memories of their vows in life, causing them to spend their next turn dodging before their dead minds cloud once more. If this occurs, you may choose to adjudicate that further roleplaying may even keep the zombies from attacking longer, though the zombies themselves cannot respond verbally and only barely understand what is happening.

However, such appeals to history enrage the will-o'-wisp; it has advantage on attack rolls against characters whose words or appearance cause the will-o'-wisp to associate them with Cormyr or a specific lawful good deity.

Treasure

One zombie wears a platinum Purple Dragon signet ring unmarred by the swamp's corrosion, worth 60 gp.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very Weak:** Add one **zombie**, remove **will-o'-wisp**.
- **Weak:** Remove **will-o'-wisp**, replacing it with one **specter**.
- **Strong:** Add three **zombies**.
- **Very Strong:** Add another **will-o'-wisp**.

C. Dreams of a Would-Be Red Wizard

Travel upon the ancient stone causeway you've found has greatly sped your progress, but you see something ahead. It looks like sort of a crossroads, a 30-foot circle of stone above the water level where the broken remains of a second causeway intersect with the one you follow. Two human-like figures in red stand at that junction, making no efforts to draw weapons or avoid notice. The taller figure raises a hand in greeting.

This is a human **Thayan apprentice**, Edwina Odesseiron II, and her bodyguard, Kurtz, a red-

skinned orc **Thayan warrior** of a species magically bred by the Zulkirs of Thay. Their intentions towards the characters are mostly peaceful... sort of.

Though Edwina sports the bald, tattooed head and elaborate red robes of a Red Wizard of Thay, this arrogant young woman is not yet a member of that order. She is descended from a former Red Wizard (either her grandfather or her grandmother, sources differ on the gender) who was cast out of the order, so despite her Thayan ancestry Edwina must work harder to earn the order's favor. When she heard one of Thay's leaders, the Zulkir Dar'lon Ma, was in Mulmaster, she went to the Thayan district and sought an audience. He politely informed her that she needed to be more "tested and seasoned" before she could be considered for membership in the Red Wizards.

In response, based on old tales of knights, Edwina has found her way to a crossroads in wild place, where she seeks to challenge any passing spellcasters to a duel of magic. She then intends to go to Dar'lon Ma with a list of those she has defeated. Unfortunately, in the very remote location she chose, the characters are the first likely prospects she has seen.

If the characters come closer, Edwina engages them in conversation, but her condescending arrogance is immediately clear:

"Hail, travelers. I am Edwina Odesseiron II. You simians may merely refer to me as 'Milady,' if you need a less... syllable-intensive workout. I seek no direct hostility with you, but I am honorbound demand a duel of magical spells with one of your group before I allow you to pass. Who is your greatest spellcaster? Who thinks themselves worth to test themselves against my superior mastery?"

The characters may not have a spellcaster among their number. If this is the case, Edwina rolls her eyes and offers to test her mettle against their "cleverest warrior." Otherwise, she refuses to accept anything but a spellcasting duel to "first blood" before she lets the characters pass. If she is defeated, she offers a prize: an exquisite white onyx pendant worth 60 gp. If she wins, the winner must sign a prepared document stating Edwina defeated them and that her skill is superior.

Edwina's dueling rules are simple. Dueling until "first blood" means until one participant is reduced to half their hit points or fewer. She chose this location because of the 30-foot wide circle of stone, which she calls "the dueling ground." The two

duelists stand outside the circle, on opposite ends of it, until her bodyguard Kurtz strikes his shield with the butt of his longsword, signaling the beginning of the duel.

The duel ends when one participant is reduced to half their hit points or fewer, or when one is incapacitated or surrenders. No one but the two participants is allowed to interfere or enter the circle until the duel ends. Anyone breaking the rule causes the duelist they support to lose.

Edwina used up a consumable magic item to place the following effects on the “dueling ground”:

- No spells cast inside of a 15-foot radius sphere from the point on the ground at the circle’s center affect those outside the sphere.
- Within the circle, any creature reduced to 0 hit points is instead reduced to 1 hit point and incapacitated for 1 minute.

If the characters refuse to duel, Edwina nods to Kurtz, who draws his longsword and says, “Then I guess we do this the normal way. But fair warning, you’d do better if you just gave the lady her duel.” If the characters do not relent and agree to a duel, Edwina and Kurtz attack.

Playing Edwina

An egocentric, sneering young wizard, Edwina has never been to Thay but stories from her family have caused her to idolize the Red Wizards. She adheres to her own code of honor and theoretical politeness, but she cares little for the company of others, believing her intelligence and magical talent make her superior.

Edwina is Lawful Evil and has the same statistics as a normal **Thayan apprentice**, except for the following adjustments:

- Edwina has 16 hit points (if dueling, adjust this to be a close number of hit points to her opponent)
- She has an Intelligence of 18 (+4), giving her a spell save DC of 14 and +6 to hit with spell attacks.
- She has no 2nd-level spell slots.
- She has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Playing Kurtz

Orcs are known for their chaotic fury, but this one was bred to have the discipline and manner of a disciplined soldier. Kurtz claims to have come to Edwina via a “family connection.” but she does not know he is a member of the rebel faction called the Thayan Resurrection, who seek to overthrow Thay’s current rulers. Privately, Edwina’s quest to become a Red Wizard amuses Kurtz, but he hopes it positions him to help the cause.

Kurtz is Lawful Neutral and has the same statistics as a **Thayan warrior**, except for the following adjustments:

- Kurtz is an orc.
- He knows the booming blade cantrip.
- As a reaction when Edwina is attacked, Kurtz can teleport to an empty space he can see within 5 feet of Edwina or her attacker. If he wishes, he can cast booming blade on the attacker as part of the same reaction. (Kurtz won’t use this trait during a duel unless rules have already been broken.)
- He has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Tactics

Edwina keeps her distance, especially from melee types. Kurtz doesn’t get involved unless the duel rules are broken or the characters refuse a duel, but if he is involved he keeps himself between melee attacks and Edwina. Kurtz does his best to attack unarmored characters, and when he picks a target, Edwina attempts to inflict damage on the same one.

Diplomacy

Edwina cannot be talked out of a duel, but respects the outcome of such a conflict.

Treasure

If defeated, Edwina yields an exquisite onyx pendant worth 60 gp.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very Weak:** Edwina only has 11 hit points and an Intelligence of 15 (spell DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). Kurtz has 45 hit points and a Strength of 12 (effectively a -2 to his normal attack rolls, weapon damage, and Strength saves).
- **Weak:** Kurtz has 45 hit points and a Strength of 12 (effectively a -2 penalty to his normal attack rolls, weapon damage, and Strength saves).
- **Strong:** Edwina has 27 hit points and 3 2nd-level spell slots. Kurtz has 18 AC and can cast *booming blade* as a bonus action.
- **Very Strong:** Edwina has 27 hit points and 3 2nd-level spell slots. Add one **Thayan warrior**, with the same statistics and adjustments as Kurtz.

Development

Once they deal with whatever challenges they encounter in this section, the characters are only 300 feet away from the elven watchtower. Proceed to **Part 4: Just When You Thought It Was Safe to Get Out of the Water.**

Part 4: Just When You Thought It Was Safe to Get Out of the Water

Expected Duration: 40 minutes

When the characters reach the end of the causeway, they can walk up a crumbling 10-foot granite staircase to stand upon a stony promontory, where they see that their destination stands surrounded by overgrown thorn-bushes a mere 300 feet away.

However, one more battle awaits the characters, presaged by a dead lizardfolk at the top of the stairs. Their actions will determine which one of two final They can choose to pursue and fight Sitalash's black dragon ally, or push on to the tower and fight some mind-controlled guardians the yuan-ti has enchanted.

The Message

Read or paraphrase the following:

The causeway leads to an ancient 10-foot staircase at its end, and your wet feet make squishing sounds as you climb its crumbling steps to stand on a rocky outcropping overlooking the black lake. The land from here to the tower looks like stable earth and stone, with a clear 300-foot path leading the rest of the way through overgrown thorn-bushes.

However, when you come up out of the fog, a gruesome sight awaits you: The face-down fresh corpse of a lizardfolk woman, the limbs and torso on the right side of her body almost entirely melted away by a corrosive substance. A pool of this acid still sizzles with foul-smelling fumes as you approach.

Seven feet away, a leafless sapling pokes up from between the cracks in the stone, and an oddly calm raven perches in its branches. The raven grips a scrap of paper in its beak.

The lizardfolk is Calixa, an Emerald Enclave scout. Searching her carefully reveals two items of note. First, one of the three small brass piercings on her left eyebrow bears a tiny engraving of an antlered stag, a symbol of the Emerald Enclave. Second, beneath her body is a distinctive shortsword in a leather sheath,

The lizardfolk came to this area seeking rumors that the black dragon Velvet had returned to the area. Instead, she found, a manipulative wyrmmling called Naëlldyrroq, known by the nickname Nadir.

Calixa discovered Nadir's lair, and fled thinking she had escaped its notice. She was in the process of sending a message to her Emerald Enclave contacts when the dragon took her by surprise with a torrent of acidic breath from the sky.

The trained raven that would have carried Calixa's message escaped harm, but did not receive instructions, and so it stuck around, trying to puzzle out what it should do. It holds the unfinished note in its beak, and doesn't want to let it go. Forcing it to do so requires a DC 15 **Dexterity (Sleight of Hand)** check to remove it without tearing it. A DC 12 **Wisdom (Animal Handling)** check will convince the raven to part with the paper willingly.

Give Player Handout 2: The Lizardfolk's Message to your players, which contains the text of the note, if they obtain it. It includes directions to the lair of the evil black dragon Nadir, but ends mid-sentence in a blot of splattered ink.

Emerald Enclave members who retain this message to give to Buhrell Caah or send it to him via the raven complete the assignment for their faction.

The raven can be commanded with a DC 10 **Wisdom (Animal Handling)** check and small morsel of food to do one of two things: Deliver this message to Buhrell Caah, the intended recipient (an Emerald Enclave agent who keeps a rookery in Phlan), or simply fly away to the nearest person it knows (a navigator for the Chiang Emporium in Ylraphon).

Treasure

Calixa's weapon is a distinctive magical *shortsword+1* called the Foxblade, described more fully described in the listing of magic items in the Rewards section.

Other than the magical sword, Calixa has very little of value left intact on her person, except some small brass eyebrow piercings, a bundle of alligator tail jerky (6 days rations), and a bag of acorns for the raven. These possessions can be sold for a total of 4 gp at the Hunter's Market in Ylraphon.

Development

If the characters choose to follow the note's directions to the dragon's lair, proceed to **A. Nadir of Despair**.

If the characters press on to the elven watchtower, proceed to **B. The Dark Tower**.

A. Nadir of Despair

The directions to the lair of the black dragon Nadir are perfectly accurate. The wyrmmling dwells under

the open air, within the high round walls of her shattered tower. The tower's walls form a stone circle 60-foot wide that rises 40 feet up from the surface of the lake in which they stand. Beneath the surface, the water within the tower is 20 feet deep. 10 feet above the surface of the water, the tower's interior is ringed by a circular walkway, 5 feet wide, that runs along the entire circumference. A tall arching portico leads from the walkway to the outside of the tower, and from that exit, a 15-foot bridge of woven vines leads down like a ramp to the shore southwest of the tower.

The other way in besides the ramp is the hole described in Calixa's note. This is a 5-foot wide breach in the northwest tower wall just below the surface of the water.

When the characters arrive, torchlight shines out into the fog from the tower's narrow windows. Nadir's amphibious worshippers are celebrating her in one of their high incomprehensible ceremonies. The **black dragon wyrmling** is in the very center of the tower, partially submerged, and her worshippers—six of the small frog-like humanoids known as **grungs**—surround her, floating on three 10-foot-by-5-foot rafts crafted of reeds. On each raft, two of the purple-skinned grungs stand, holding torches and chanting.

Grung Poison

The grungs here are all of the purple-skinned variety. Any creature poisoned by one of these grungs feels a desperate need to soak itself in water or mud. Until it is no longer poisoned by the grung, the creature can't take actions or move except to soak itself or to reach a body of water or mud. (This added effect only occurs when the grung inflicts the poisoned condition on a creature, not when it inflicts poison damage.)

Nadir's Special Traits

Nadir is unusually strong for a dragon her age. She has 54 hit points, but if reduced to 27 or fewer she immediately flees in the safest and quickest way possible.

In addition, magical experimentation with her yuan-ti ally Sitalash has given Nadir a unique trait: When she uses her breath weapon, she can choose for it to inflict poison damage or necrotic damage instead of acid damage. If her grung worshippers would be affected, she will inflict poison damage (to which grungs are immune).

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Nadir takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects. Nadir can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

- Pools of water that the dragon can see within 120 feet of it surge outward in a grasping tide. Any creature on the

ground within 20 feet of such a pool must succeed on a DC 15 **Strength check** or be pulled up to 20 feet into the water and knocked prone.

- A cloud of swarming insects fills a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a point Nadir chooses within 120 feet of it. The cloud spreads around corners and remains until the dragon dismisses it as an action, uses this lair action, or dies. The cloud is lightly obscured. Any creature in the cloud when it appears must make a DC 15 **Constitution saving throw**, taking 10 (3d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Wearing *insect repellent* such as that available in Chult, provides advantage to the save. A creature that ends its turn in the cloud takes 10 (3d6) piercing damage.
- Magical darkness spreads from a point Nadir chooses within 60 feet of it, filling a 15-foot-radius sphere until Nadir dismisses it as an action, uses this lair action again, or dies. The darkness spreads around corners. A creature with darkvision can't see through this darkness, and nonmagical light can't illuminate it. If any of the effect's area overlaps with an area of light created by a spell of 2nd level or lower, the spell that created the light is dispelled.

Nadir knows she is young for a dragon, but she is also bright and ambitious. She intends to spend the next century or so laying the groundwork for a network of influence across the South Moonsea. Her alliance with Sitalash is a part of this; she distrusts yuan-ti, but wants the future allegiance of those in the area. She is also very curious to see if the ritual works.

Nadir's grung worshippers wandered into the Flooded Forest through a mysterious, wandering portal from Chult that has bedeviled many adventurers over the years. Given their strictly caste-based society, they were lost without the structure of their larger tribe, and after Nadir spared their lives in their first encounter they came to worship her power and leadership. Each of these grungs would die for Nadir.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very Weak:** Nadir cannot use lair actions. The **grungs** all have 1 hit point each.
- **Weak:** Nadir cannot use the *cloud of swarming insects* lair action. Five of the **grungs** only have 1 hit point each.
- **Strong:** Remove two **grungs**. Add one **grung elite warrior**.
- **Very Strong:** Remove all **grungs**. Add three **grung elite warriors**.

Tactics

Nadir flies above the characters or swims beneath as necessary to retain tactical advantage and avoid

being forced to focus on heavily armored defenders. Keeping her distance helps her flee if she is reduced to half her hit points or fewer. Offensively, she would rather take out spellcasters and archers first. The dragon uses her breath weapon in the first round and again as soon as it recharges. She relies on her Lair Actions to rearrange the battlefield to her liking.

The grungs can make a 25-foot long jump without a running start, so they can quickly close the distance with distant opponents. They fight to the death, even if Nadir flees.

Diplomacy

A DC 17 **Charisma (Deception or Persuasion)** check can be made to offer Nadir some kind of deal that would increase her power, though she believes betraying any of her current allies would be counterproductive. The grungs start or stop attacking at Nadir's command, but otherwise are too fanatical to be reasoned with.

Treasure

Nadir keeps a hoard of ancient coins from the lost dwarf kingdom of Roldilar in a sunken chest at the bottom of the flooded tower, worth a total of 115 gp.

Development

If the characters drive off or defeat the dragon and its worshippers, they must still move on to the elven watchtower to complete their mission. They are only 850 feet southwest of it, and can walk there without incident. When they do, proceed directly to the

Conclusion.

B. The Dark Tower

Read or paraphrase the following:

A mere 300 feet from the edge of the lake, the elven watchtower stands upon a solid foundation of the same granite that comprises the rocky promontory and stairs. Tall shrubs of a spiny local variety of buckthorn encircle the tower, protecting it with their thick, pricking branches, but a 10-foot wide path meanders through the various overgrowths.

If the characters already went to the lair of the black dragon Nadir: The way forward is clear, because the creatures who would have confronted the characters here have shaken off the mind control effect compelling them to do so. You can proceed directly to the **Conclusion**.

If the characters went straight to the tower after finding the lizardfolk corpse: Some unwilling defenders hide amidst the briars 100 feet from the tower. They are under Sitalash's mental sway, compelling them to attack the characters.

These defenders are led by Jhag Bannon, a **wereboar** who has been reduced to 39 hit points in a previous fight. Jhag is accompanied by kin from his tribe, an orc **spy** and two **tribal warriors**, the last remnants of his warband.

The Bannon Tribal Warriors

Though they are not lycanthropes, their blood kinship to wereboars grants all **tribal warriors** in this encounter the following extra traits:

- **Werebeast Kin** (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). When the tribal warrior takes nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage that is not silver, it can use its reaction to reduce the damage by 4.
- **Beasthide Shifting** (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). As a bonus action, the tribal warrior gains 3 temporary hit points, and for 1 minute it gains a +1 bonus to AC. For the duration, it also gains advantage on Strength checks and Wisdom (Perception) checks.

The Bannons are a clan of both human and orc ancestry, and Jhag's warband came to reclaim the Altar of the Smoldering Eye's orcish heritage. The temple was originally consecrated to the orc god Gruumsh, but was claimed by yuan-ti after humans drove orcs out of the area. The Bannons worship Gruumsh as part of their own eclectic pantheon of both human and orc gods, which they believe is led by Malar, and consider the yuan-ti occupation of Gruumsh's temple sacrilege.

Recently, the Bannons took in Gruumsh worshippers from the orc clan Dragul, who had been driven from their lair by adventurers. Once these zealots discovered that the Bannons knew where the Altar was, they called for the yuan-ti to be driven out. Their most fanatical warriors joined Jhag's warband on a crusade to do just that.

Unfortunately, those faithful orcs were some of the first to die when they faced various guardians Sitalash had placed outside the temple. Despite taking many casualties, Jhag and his warriors destroyed the guardians and pushed forward, only to be defeated by the Altar's magic. An enchantment on the temple's grounds compels intruders to serve the yuan-ti.

Under this magical influence, Jhag and his comrades now defend the temple they originally came to liberate, and seek to destroy the characters. They are hidden 100 feet away from the

watchtower, in an area where a 10-foot wide path is the only way through the thick thorn-bushes. Jhag hides in boar form behind the bushes on the left side of the path, while any allies hide in the bushes to the right. Both groups wait 40 feet away from the path in their respective direction.

Adjusting the Encounter

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

- **Very Weak:** Remove **spy**. Remove all **tribal warriors**. **Jhag Bannon's** injuries have reduced him to 26 hit points before this encounter.
- **Weak:** Remove all **tribal warriors**. **Jhag Bannon's** injuries have reduced him to 26 hit points before this encounter.
- **Strong:** Remove **spy**. Add 3 **tribal warriors**. **Jhag** has his full 78 hit points.
- **Very Strong:** Add 3 **tribal warriors**. **Jhag** has his full 78 hit points.

Tactics

Jhag and any allies call out war-cries when the characters step past the thorn-bushes in which they are hiding, beginning the battle but hoping the characters will come towards them first and possibly split their numbers. Characters with a **passive Perception** of 9 or lower are surprised.

In boar form, Jhag seeks to use his Charge trait to attack a creature within 40 feet on his turn, whereas the others close in just enough to make their ranged attacks at short range.

Diplomacy

These creatures are under an effect equivalent to a *dominate monster* spell cast with an 8th-level spell slot, and cannot be reasoned with while they are under its effects. They will attack until they are killed or until they are incapacitated, which ends the effect. If the characters keep anyone alive to interrogate, creatures who have not already had the mind control effect ended by being incapacitated receive a DC 16 **Wisdom saving throw** every 10 minutes against it. If they are no longer affected by the mental compulsion, Jhag and his allies will happily trade their information for freedom, but wish to return to their clan before

Treasure

Jhag carries two elaborate holy symbols—one of Malar, one of Gruumsh—as talismans against evil magic, each expertly carved of polished duskwood by his clan's artisans. These can be sold to a

worshipper of those gods or to an art collector in Ylraphon's Hunter's Market for 40 gp each.

Development

If the characters defeat Jhag Bannon and any companions he may have, or if they decide to run away to the safety of the tower, they need only continue the last 100 feet to the tower's entrance, which they can do without incident. When they do, proceed directly to the **Conclusion**.

Conclusion

Expected Duration: 5 minutes

Read or paraphrase the following:

You have arrived at the ancient elven watchtower, an imposing structure of expertly cut black dolerite stone, oddly well-preserved in this ancient, all-consuming swampland. The outline of a doorway is carved on the solid stone, along with images of two solid oak trees and a flowing river.

To enter the tower, the characters merely need to utter the passphrase "*Al hond ebrath, uol tath shantar en tath lalala ol hond ebrath*," as shown on the handout they received at the beginning of the adventure, **Player Handout 1: Watchtower Passphrase**.

When the passphrase is spoken, the carved door shimmers with magic and becomes a real passageway. It opens, but after the last characters, it closes again and becomes a mere carving once more.

If the characters took more than 12 hours from the time they entered the Flooded Forest to enter the tower, they earn the **Took Too Long** story award.

Lords Alliance characters complete their faction assignment if they took less than 8 hours and 15 minutes from the time they entered the Flooded Forest to enter the tower.

Inside, the characters find five empty stories, lacking furniture, windows, or any features of interest except intricate wall carvings, a spiral staircase leading up through the floors to the roof, and the millennia-old teleportation circle inscribed on the ground of the 5th floor. Read or paraphrase the following:

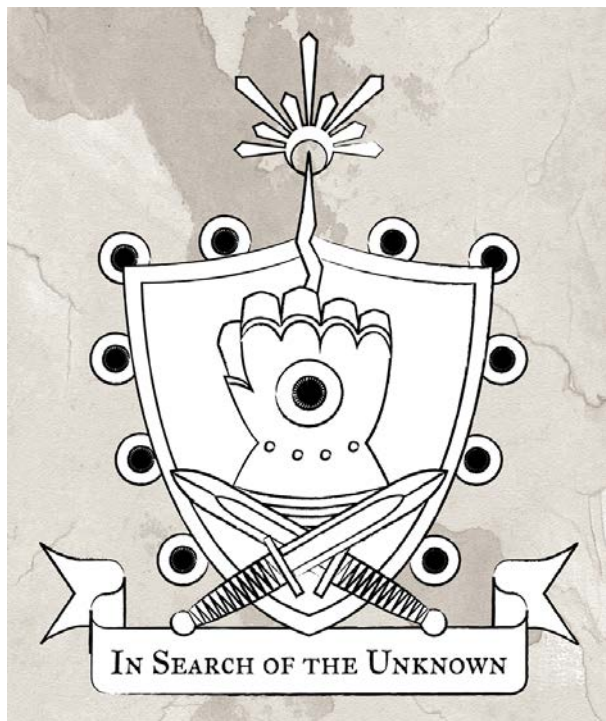
From the roof of the ancient watchtower, you can see the forest thins to the west, offering a good view of the yuan-ti temple, the Altar of the Smoldering Eye, a squat half-buried structure only half a mile away. The image of a giant eye carved onto the temple's roof emits a dim phosphorescence, and it gives you a deep feeling of unease. It is easy to believe the building you see now is the site where such a foul ritual will be completed tomorrow night. Despite a lack of visible defenders between you and the temple, you sense that the most difficult part of the struggle to stop the yuan-ti has yet to begin.

For now, however, you are safe within the tower, and have earned some rest after a long journey.

Characters who will not be continuing on to *SRCC1-3 The Altar of the Smoldering Eye* activate the *mongoose candle* at dawn the next day and are teleported back to Yraphon, where they receive their 200 gp reward.

Characters who will be continuing on to *SRCC1-3 The Altar of the Smoldering Eye* will have the bag with the 200 gp in gold teleported to the tower at dawn the next day, after the *mongoose candle* is activated and the teleport circle in the tower is functional once more.

Adventurers Guild



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

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
Bandit	25
Black Dragon Wyrmling	450
Crocodile	100
Crushing Wave Reaver	450
Giant Crocodile	1800
Grung	50
Grung Elite Warrior	450
Sea Spawn	200
Specter	200
Spy	200
Thayan Apprentice	450
Thayan Warrior	450
Tribal Warrior	25
Wereboar	1100
Wererat	450
Will-o'-Wisp	450
Yuan-ti Pureblood	200

Non-Combat Awards

Task or Accomplishment	XP per Character
Reach the watchtower by nightfall	300
OR	
Reach the watchtower in less than 12 hours	200
OR	
Forego a long rest because you took too long	200

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is 450 **experience points**.

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is 600 **experience points**.

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
Calixa's Possessions	4 gp
Crocodile Skins and Teeth	40 gp
Edwina's Onyx Pendant	60 gp
Jhag's Holy Symbol of Gruumsh	40 gp
Jhag's Holy Symbol of Malar	40 gp
Nadir's Hoard	115 gp
Pa's Strongbox of Coins	60 gp
Purple Dragon Signet Ring	60 gp
Reward from Deribis	200 gp
Silvered Quarterstaff	50 gp
Silver Spearhead	50 gp
Tubal's Gold	25 gp
Tubal's Wand	5 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*.

Shortsword+1(Foxblade)

Weapon (shortsword), uncommon

This shortsword appears rusted at first glance, but that is due to the unique crimson-orange color of the metal. Combined with this color, a triangular white mother-of-pearl inlay near the hilt causes the blade to resemble the coloring of a fox's tail. The crossguard is made of the same unique crimson metal, set with round yellow and black stones made to resemble vulpine eyes. This description matches that of a magical weapon lost during Ylraphon's destruction by dragons in the 14th century. Said to have been crafted by forest gnomes, it was known as the Foxblade.

In addition to the +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon, the bearer gains a +2 bonus on initiative when they are not incapacitated.

Potion of Healing

Potion, uncommon

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

Arrows +1

Ammunition, uncommon

A description of this item can be found in the Dungeon Master's Guide. Also, these arrows make a hissing sound when drawn from their quiver.

Story Awards

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

Took Too Long. You took too long to reach the tower, and do not have enough time to complete it by activating the magical candle you were given at dawn unless you do not take a long rest. Mark this down as either **"Took Too Long: Short Rest Only"** or **"Took Too Long: Unprotected by the Candle."**

If you choose **"Took Too Long: Short Rest Only"**, take the benefits of a short rest, then record your current hit points, spell slots, uses of features and traits, and other resources that might be restored to some degree by a long rest. You begin your next adventure in this exact state (subject to any expenditures of downtime or any benefits to gaining a level if you gain one).

If you choose **"Took Too Long: Unprotected by the Candle"**, you can take a long rest, but you do not benefit from the magical candle's protections against the defenses of the temple. (If you play the adventure *SRCC1-3 The Altar of the Smoldering Eye*, this will be a major disadvantage.)

Characters receive this story award if it took them more than 12 hours to enter the elven watchtower.

Local Pursuit. You have become involved with a local institution in Ylraphon. You may choose **one** (and only one) of the "Local Pursuit" story award options described in **Player Handout 5Y: Local Pursuits** for successfully completing this adventure. This signifies your character having the opportunity to become more involved with day-to-day life and significant institutions in Ylraphon. You may gain only one of the story award options listed for completing this adventure, though you may later gain additional ones if other adventures grant these story award options.

This award is available to characters who successfully completed this adventure.

Ylraphon Adventurers Guild. You may join the Ylraphon Adventurers Guild if you reached the elven watchtower, if you obtained one of the Local Pursuit story awards (as described above), or if you are willing to pay 50 gp initial dues as described in **Player Handout 5Z: The Ylraphon Adventurers Guild**. This grants access to the Guild Delving downtime activity described in that handout, as well as other benefits to be seen in future modules set in Ylraphon.

This award is available to characters who successfully completed this adventure.

Renown

Each character receives **one renown** at the conclusion of this adventure.

Members of Emerald Enclave characters who obtain Calixa's message for Buhrell Caah or send it to him via the raven receive **1 additional renown point**.

Members of Lord's Alliance characters who entered the elven watchtower before nightfall receive **1 additional renown point**.

DM Reward

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:

Nalya (Nahl-Yuh). Nalya Bannon is a child of the Flooded Forest, not yet an adult but still more inured to hardship than most civilized folk twice her age. This teenaged half-orc has premature streaks of gray in her reddish auburn hair.

Tubal (Two-ball). Being the runt of the litter is even more torturous when it is a litter of wererats, and Tubal Steeltoe would be insane by now if he hadn't discovered his magical potential. Conversing with him is an endless cycle of him taking things too far and then trying to walk them back—the same cycle that defines his life. He was desperate to escape life skulking underground, yet now he's desperate to prove his worth to his family as well, and show those who belittled him his whole life what he can do.

Edwina (Ed-Wee-Nah). An egocentric, sneering young wizard, Edwina has never been to Thay but stories from her family have caused her to idolize the Red Wizards. She adheres to her own code of honor and theoretical politeness, but she cares little for the company of others, believing her intelligence and magical talent make her superior.

Kurtz (Ker-ts). Orcs are known for their chaotic fury, but this one was bred to have the discipline and manner of a disciplined soldier. Kurtz claims to have come to Edwina via a “family connection.” but she does not know he is a member of the rebel faction called the Thayan Resurrection, who seek to overthrow Thay's current rulers. Privately, Edwina's quest to become a Red Wizard amuses Kurtz, but he hopes it positions him to help the cause.

Appendix. Monster/NPC Statistics

Bandit

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

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Actions

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

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

Black Dragon Wyrmling

Medium dragon, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +3, Wis +2, Cha +3

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +4

Damage Immunities acid

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Draconic

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Amphibious. The dragon can breathe air and water.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage plus 2 (1d4) acid damage.

Acid Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales acid in a 15-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Crocodile

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 19 (3d10 + 3)

Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	2 (–4)	10 (+0)	5 (–3)

Skills Stealth +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Hold Breath. The crocodile can hold its breath for 15 minutes.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the crocodile can't bite another target.

Crushing Wave Reaver

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (shield)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	8 (–1)

Skills Athletics +4, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Actions

Sharktoothed Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands. Against a target is wearing no armor, the reaver deals an extra die of damage with this sword.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Giant Crocodile

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (9d12 + 27)

Speed 30 ft., swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

Hold Breath. The crocodile can hold its breath for 15 minutes.

Actions

Multiattack. The giant crocodile makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the crocodile can't bite another target.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Grung

Small humanoid (grung), lawful evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 11 (2d6 + 4)

Speed 25 ft., climb 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +4

Skills Athletics +2, Perception +2, Stealth +4, Survival +2

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Grung

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Amphibious. The grung can breathe air and water.

Poisonous Skin. Any creature that grapples the grung or otherwise comes into direct contact with the grung's skin must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute. A poisoned creature no longer in direct contact with the grung can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Standing Leap. The grung's long jump is up to 25 feet and its high jump is up to 15 feet, with or without a running start.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 5 (2d4) poison damage.

Grung Elite Warrior

Small humanoid (grung), lawful evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 49 (9d6 + 18)

Speed 25 ft., climb 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +5

Skills Athletics +2, Perception +2, Stealth +5, Survival +2

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Grung

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Amphibious. The grung can breathe air and water.

Poisonous Skin. Any creature that grapples the grung or otherwise comes into direct contact with the grung's skin must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute. A poisoned creature no longer in direct contact with the grung can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Standing Leap. The grung's long jump is up to 25 feet and its high jump is up to 15 feet, with or without a running start.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 5 (2d4) poison damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 5 (2d4) poison damage.

Mesmerizing Chirr (Recharge 6). The grung makes a chirring noise to which grungs are immune. Each humanoid or beast that is within 15 feet of the grung and able to hear it must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned until the end of the grung's next turn.

Sea Spawn

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 20 ft., swim 50 ft.

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

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Aquan and Common but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Limited Amphibiousness. The sea spawn can breathe air and water, but needs to be submerged in the sea at least once a day for 1 minute to avoid suffocating.

Actions

Multiattack. The sea spawn makes three attacks: two unarmed strikes and one with its Piscine Anatomy.

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

Piscine Anatomy. The sea spawn has one or more of the following attack options, provided it has the appropriate anatomy:

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

Poison Quills. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned 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.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 12) if it is a Medium or smaller creature. Until the grapple ends, the sea spawn can't use this tentacle on another target.

Specter

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

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

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

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

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The specter can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

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

Actions

Life Drain. *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the

creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Spy

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 27 (6d8)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Deception +5, Insight +4, Investigation +5, Perception +6, Persuasion +5, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages any two languages

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Cunning Action. On each of its turns, the spy can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The spy deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the spy that isn't incapacitated and the spy doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Actions

Multiattack. The spy makes two melee attacks.

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

Hand Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Thayan Apprentice

Medium humanoid (human), Any non-good alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Arcana +4

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Thayan

Challenge 1 (450 XP)

Doomvault Devotion. Within the Doomvault, the apprentice has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Spellcasting. The apprentice is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spell casting ability is Intelligence (Spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *firebolt*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*

1st Level (4 slots): *burning hands*, *detect magic*, *mage armor*, *shield*

2nd Level (3 slots): *blur*, *scorching ray*

Actions

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

Thayan Warrior

Medium humanoid (human), Any non-good alignment

Armor Class 16 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Thayan

Challenge 1 (450 XP)

Doomvault Devotion. Within the Doomvault, the apprentice has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

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

Actions

Multiattack. The warrior makes two melee attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Javelin. Ranged *Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit*: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Tribal Warrior

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (hide armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

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

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, or 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Wereboar

Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger), neutral evil

Armor Class 10 in humanoid form, 11 (natural armor) in bear and hybrid form

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. in boar form)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +2

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Orc (can't speak in bear form)

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Shapechanger. The wereboar can use its action to polymorph into a boar-humanoid hybrid or into a boar, or back into its true form, which is humanoid. Its statistics, other than its size and AC, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Charge (Boar or Hybrid Form Only). If the wereboar moves at least 15 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with its tusks on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Relentless (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). If the wereboar takes 14 damage or less that would reduce it to 0 hit points, it is reduced to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Multiattack. The wereboar makes two attacks, only one of which can be with its tusks.

Maul (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Tusks (Boar or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Greataxe (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 10 (1d12 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wereboar lycanthropy.

Wererat

Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger), lawful evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills, Perception +2, Stealth +4

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Senses darkvision 60 ft. (rat form only), passive Perception 12

Languages Common (can't speak in rat form)

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Shapechanger. The wererat can use its action to polymorph into a rat-human hybrid or into a giant rat, or back into its true form which is humanoid. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is not transformed. It reverts to its true form when it dies.

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

Actions

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid form only). The wererat makes two attacks one of which is a bite.

Bite (Rat or Hybrid form only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid it must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wererat lycanthropy.

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

Hand Crossbow (Humanoid or Hybrid form only). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Will-o'-Wisp

Tiny undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19

Hit Points 22 (9d4)

Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	28 (+9)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Damage Immunities lightning, poison

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, necrotic, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Consume Life. As a bonus action, the will-o'-wisp can target one creature it can see within 5 feet of it that has 0 hit points and is still alive. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw against this magic or die. If the target dies, the will-o'-wisp regains 10 (3d6) hit points.

Ephemeral. The will-o'-wisp can't wear or carry anything.

Incorporeal Movement. The will-o'-wisp can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Variable Illumination. The will-o'-wisp sheds bright light in a 5- to 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional number of feet equal to the chosen radius. The will-o'-wisp can alter the radius as a bonus action.

Actions

Shock. *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) lightning damage.

Invisibility. The will-o'-wisp and its light magically become invisible until it attacks or uses its Life Drain, or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell).

Yuan-ti Pureblood

Medium humanoid (yuan-ti), neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 40 (9d8)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Deception +6, Perception +3, Stealth +3

Damage immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The yuan-ti's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). The yuan-ti can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *animal friendship* (snakes only)

3/day: poison spray, *suggestion*

Magic Resistance. The yuan-ti has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The yuan-ti makes two melee attacks.

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

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison 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

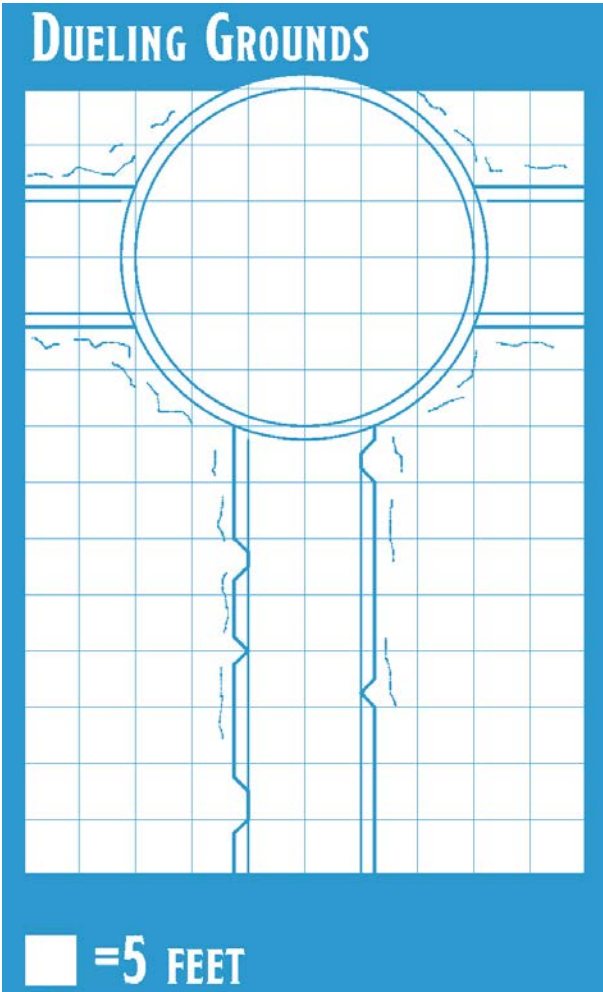
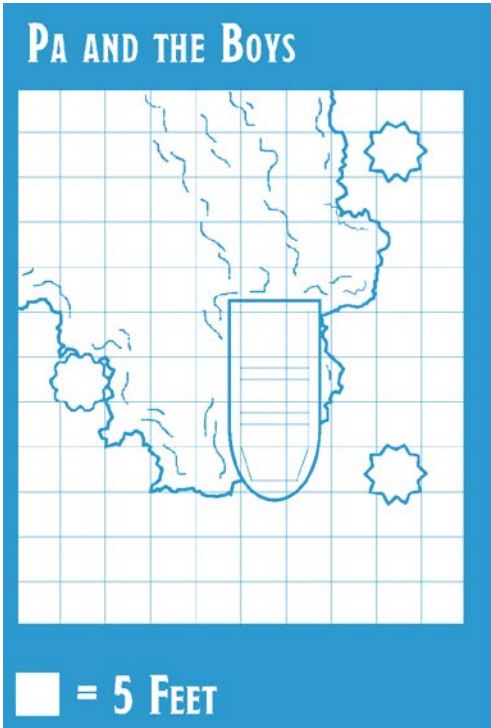
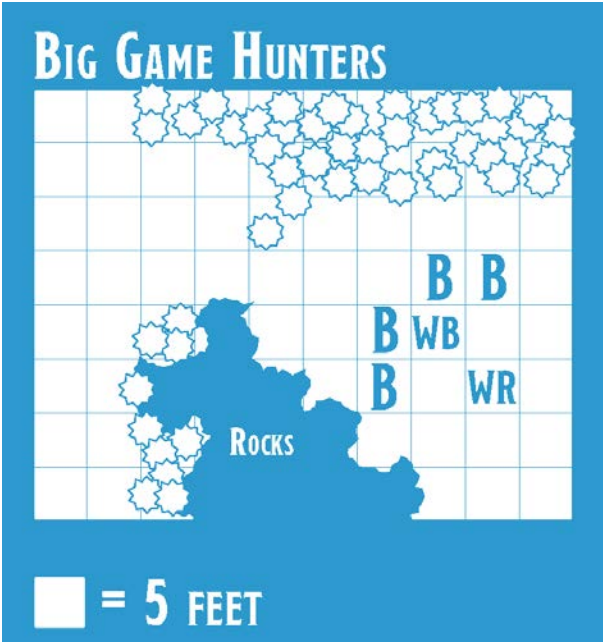
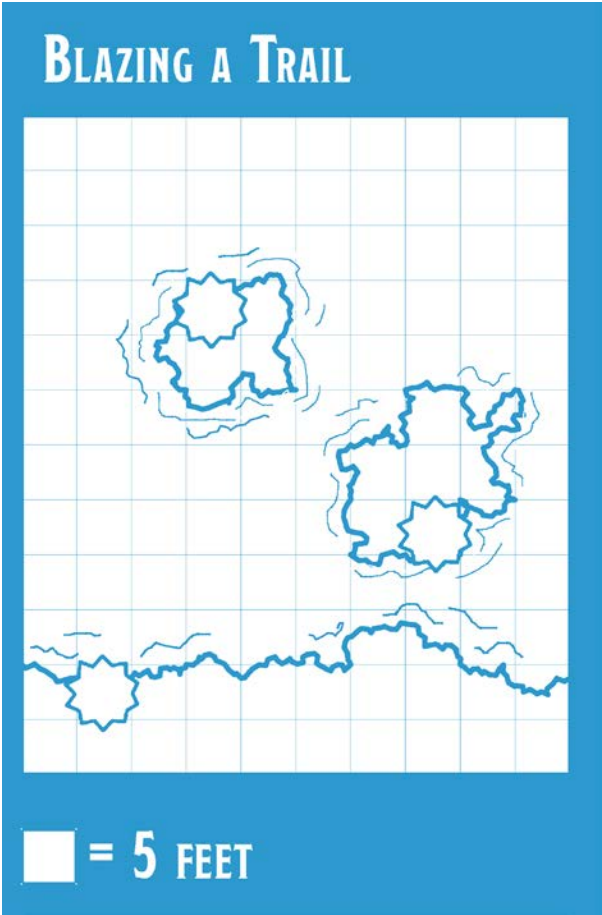
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

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.

Appendix. Maps



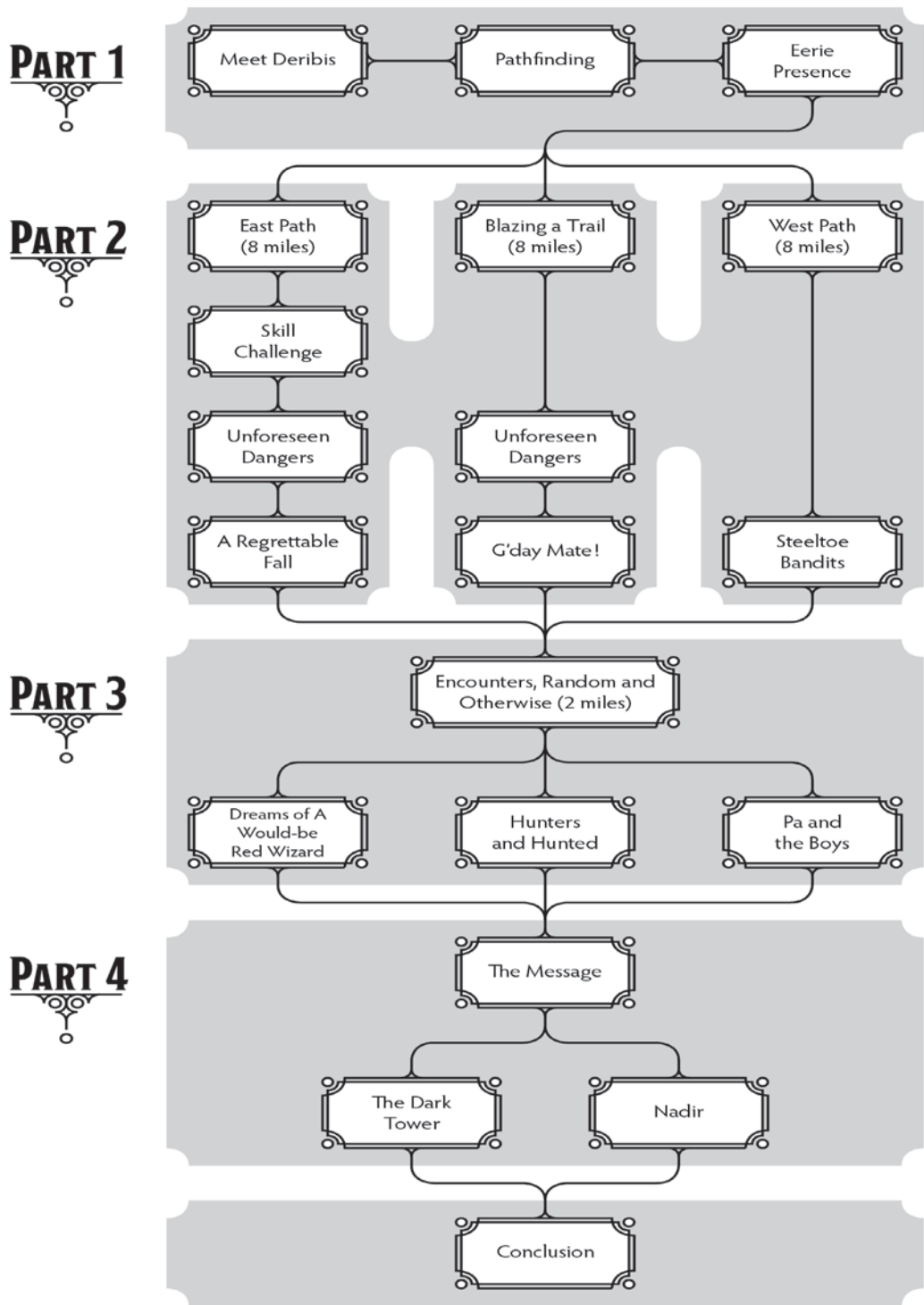
DM Appendix 1: Unforeseen Dangers Table

Role or choose from this table when indicated in the adventure to generate a threatening obstacle for the characters. If you use more than one brief encounter from this table in the same session, do not use the same one twice, and try to avoid using more than one that involves rolling too many of the same ability checks.

Unforeseen Dangers

D6 roll	Encounter
1	Every character needs to make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Each character that fails steps into a pool of quicksand, and must make a DC 12 Strength saving throw. On a success, they grab a nearby hand-hold and can pull themselves out before they fall in too deeply. If they fail, their escape takes much more effort, and they suffer one level of exhaustion.
2	Every character needs to make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. Those who fail were breathing too heavily as the group went over a fungi-covered hill and breathed in sentient, psychic spores, forcing them to make an DC 12 Intelligence saving throw. Those who fail take 1d6 psychic damage and are overcome with the urge to bury their faces into patches of the mushroom-like fungi and breathe in more spores, forcing them make another a DC 12 Intelligence saving throw at the start of each of their turns. Failure causes them to fall prone and take 1d6 more psychic damage, while a success ends the effect.
3	Every character needs to make a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Intelligence (Nature) check. Each character that fails steps into some razorvine and must make a DC 10 Dexterity save or take 5 (1d10) points of slashing damage.
4	Every character needs to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Handle Animal) or Charisma (Intimidation) check. Each character who fails finds themselves swarmed by leaping, poisonous frogs, spooked by the party's approach, forcing that character to make a DC 12 Constitution save or take 11 (2d10) poison damage and become poisoned for 1 minute. During that minute character takes 5 points of damage at the start of each of its turns and can make another DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turn to end the effect.
5	Every character needs to make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Charisma (Intimidation) check. Those who fail must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw due to being seen as weak by a pack of invisible, insubstantial orc spirits. Characters who fail are briefly possessed by one such sprits, taking 5 (1d8) psychic damage from the seeing the long-dead orcs' memories of how, in life, they were ejected from their tribe for being puny, causing them to hate all living creatures they see who remind them of their fate. The next time each character who took this damage rolls initiative, they are frightened until the end of their first turn in the combat, as they endure a brief flashback to these same memories.
6	Every character needs to make a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check. Each character who fails brushes against what appear to be a number of rusted dwarven shields hanging from the nearby trees, and must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw to avoid infestation by russet mold spores. Those who fail become poisoned, and take 7 (2d6) poison damage at the start of each of their turns from sprouting mold. They may repeat the Constitution saving throw at the end of each turn, ending the effect on itself on a success. A character reduced to 0 hit points by this damage dies, and two vegpepymies sprout from their corpse 24 hours later if they are still dead.
7	Each character needs to make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Each character who fails trips a wire that sets off a trap, firing poison darts at that character. The darts are treated with a derivative of orange grung poison, and each character must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw. Those who fail take 5 (2d4) poison damage and are frightened of their allies for one minute after. The next time each character who took this damage rolls initiative, this paranoia flares up again, and they have disadvantage on their first attack roll if they are within 5 feet of one of their allies.
8	Every character needs to make a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check. Each character who fails has disturbed a slimy green ooze that clings to an outcropping of rock and must make a DC 12 Dexterity save or be covered with acid. A character covered with acid takes 5 (1d10) points of acid damage when covered and at the end of their turn. They can spend an action to use a tool or weapon to scrape off the slime. Any non-magical tool made of wood or metal is destroyed if used to scrape off the slime. If a character dies from this damage, their armor is destroyed as well.

DM Appendix 2: Adventure Flow



Player Handout 1.

Watchtower Passphrase

The passphrase you are given to enter the elven watchtower is “Al hond ebrath, uol tath shantar en tath lalala ol hond ebrath.” It is a slightly archaic phrase in Elvish as it was spoken in the era of Myth Drannor, meaning “A true friend, as the trees and the water are true friends.”

Player Handout 2. The Lizardfolk's Message

The message on the scrap of paper—written in the Common tongue in a scratchy yet heavy and deliberate hand—reads as follows

Buhrell Caah—

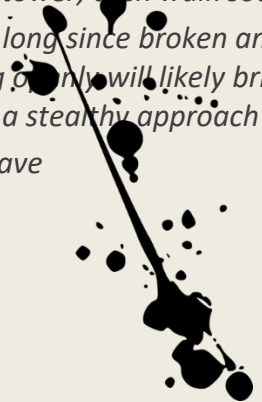
First, the Enclave needs to send someone down here. Our old contact, the druid Ilasera, is nowhere to be found, and disquieting rumors whisper her fate.

As to my quest, the dragon Throstulgrael has not returned to the Flooded Forest, but a young dragon Naëlldyrroq—who the swampfolk call Nadir—is here, allied with a yuan-ti called Sitalash for some fell purpose. Fighting a dragon is far beyond my strength, so I send word to you and your circle of allies.

Nadir is a crafty black female, worshipped by a circle of strange humanoids who fight and die at her command. Her lair is along the edge of the shallow pond some called the Black Lake. To find it, start at the promontory near the old elven watchtower, then walk south 800 feet along the water's edge.

You will see the remains of a second tower, long since broken and flooded, jutting out of the Black Lake's water like broken teeth. Approaching it will likely bring an attack, but a thick patch of tall bulrushes to the northwest of the lair allow a stealthy approach to a hole in the crumbled tower wall.

I believe my spying was undetected, and I have



Player Handout 3. Magic Item

During the course of this adventure, the characters may find the following permanent magic item:

Arrows +1

Ammunition, uncommon

Arrows: □□□□ □□□□

These arrows make a hissing sound when drawn from their quiver.

Shortsword+1(Foxblade)

Weapon (shortsword), uncommon

This shortsword appears rusted at first glance, but that is due to the unique crimson-orange color of the metal. Combined with this color, a triangular white mother-of-pearl inlay near the hilt causes the blade to resemble the coloring of a fox's tail. The crossguard is made of the same unique crimson metal, set with round yellow and black stones made to resemble vulpine eyes. This description matches that of a magical weapon lost during Ylraphon's destruction by dragons in the 14th century. Said to have been crafted by forest gnomes, it was known as the Foxblade.

In addition to the +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon, the bearer gains a +2 bonus on initiative when they are not incapacitated.

Player Handout 5X: Story Awards

The characters can earn the following story awards during play.

Took Too Long

You took too long to reach the tower, and do not have enough time to complete it by activating the magical candle you were given at dawn unless you do not take a long rest. Mark this down as either **“Took Too Long: Short Rest Only”** or **“Took Too Long: Unprotected by the Candle.”**

If you choose **“Took Too Long: Short Rest Only”**, take the benefits of a short rest, then record your current hit points, spell slots, uses of features and traits, and other resources that might be restored to some degree by a long rest. You begin your next adventure in this exact state (subject to any expenditures of downtime or any benefits to gaining a level if you gain one).

If you choose **“Took Too Long: Unprotected by the Candle”**, you can take a long rest, but you do not benefit from the magical candle’s protections against the defenses of the temple. (If you play the adventure *SRCC1-3 The Altar of the Smoldering Eye*, this will be a major disadvantage.)

Characters receive this story award if it took them more than 12 hours to enter the elven watchtower.

Local Pursuit

You have become involved with a local institution in Ylraphon. You may choose **one** (and only one) of the “Local Pursuit” story award options described in **Player Handout 5Y: Local Pursuits** for successfully completing this adventure. This signifies your character having the opportunity to become more involved with day-to-day life and significant institutions in Ylraphon. You may gain only one of the story award options listed for completing this adventure, though you may later gain additional ones if other adventures grant these story award options.

This award is available to characters who successfully completed this adventure.

Ylraphon Adventurers Guild

You may join the Ylraphon Adventurers Guild if you reached the elven watchtower, if you obtained one of the Local Pursuit story awards (as described above),

or if you are willing to pay 50 gp initial dues as described in **Player Handout 5Z: The Ylraphon Adventurers Guild**. This grants access to the Guild Delving downtime activity described in that handout, as well as other benefits to be seen in future modules set in Ylraphon.

This award is available to characters who successfully completed this adventure.

Player Handout 5Y: Local Pursuits

If you successfully completed this adventure, you may choose one “Local Pursuit” story award. This signifies your character becoming involved with significant Ylraphon activities or institutions. You may gain only one of the story award options listed below for completing this adventure, though other adventures may offer additional ones.

Local Pursuit: Healing the Sick

You have spent time working with the healers of Ylraphon to help people recover from the Serpent’s Kiss. Record the story award *Local Pursuit: Healing the Sick*. Immediately before or after an adventure set in Ylraphon, you may spend 5 downtime days helping the city healers. Once during your next game session after this activity, you may inform your DM you are using this benefit to roll a Wisdom (Medicine) check to stabilize a target within 5 feet as a bonus action instead of an action.

Local Pursuit: Swamp Guide

Your experience navigating the shifting landscape of the Flooded Forest can be put to good use guiding others who need to travel through that deadly wilderness. Repeated return trips to the area give you an instinctive for keeping your footing on treacherous terrain. Record the story award *Local Pursuit: Swamp Guide*. Immediately before or after an adventure set in Ylraphon, you may spend 5 downtime days guiding hunters, scavengers, and others through the nearest parts of the Flooded Forest. Once during your next game session after this activity, you may inform your DM you are using this benefit to gain advantage on a Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to jump over an obstacle, climb natural terrain, keep your balance, or avoid falling.

Player Handout 5Z: Adventurers Guild of Ylraphon

The Adventurers Guild of Ylraphon is a loose-knit league of “dungeoneers, tomb-robbers, errant crusaders, swashbuckling mercenaries, and sundry formidable scalawags of all races and vocations” (according to its charter). It represents adventurers’ interests in town and helps regulate the profitable exploration of the surrounding ruins.

Joining the Guild

To initially join the Adventurers Guild of Ylraphon, a character must speak to Jotan Silverhammer, lieutenant guildmaster and volunteer sergeant of the Town Watch. There is no cost if you discovered the cause of the illness affecting the Old City, or if you obtain one of the *Local Pursuit* story awards (described in Player **Handout 5y: Local Pursuits** or appearing in other adventures), due to your substantial contribution to prosperity of the Old City. Otherwise, initial dues are 50 gp, with additional payments of 12 gp a month. These costs are waived, however, for volunteers either who work three shifts a month for the Town Watch. In game terms, this means a character must spend 50 gp to join, and to remain a member, whenever they spend downtime, they must spend an additional 4 gp for every 10 downtime days they spend (though you may be able to substitute downtime for this cost, see below).

If a character who owes these dues fails to pay them as soon as they spend downtime, they must pay them by the end of their next game session or they lose all benefits of guild membership, and must pay the 50 gp initial dues again to regain them.

Benefits of Membership

Members of the Adventurers Guild may delve local ruins in search of treasure. They gain access to the *Guild Delving* downtime activity before or after any adventure set in Ylraphon.

New Downtime Activity: Guild Delving

Immediately before or after an adventure set in Ylraphon, you may spend up to 30 downtime days (minimum 10) to attempt to research, find, and explore some of the ruins of Outer Ylraphon in search of treasure. In the presence of the DM, roll percentile dice and add the number of days spent on

this downtime activity, comparing the total to the Treasure Seeking Results Table on this page.

d100 +

Downtime

Spent	Result
1-35	A fatiguing and fruitless cavern exploration. You spend 10 gp on expenses and gain 4 levels of exhaustion. For each downtime day you spend recovering before your next adventure, you remove one of these exhaustion levels.
36-50	A difficult and taxing trudge through the Flooded Forest. You gain 2 levels of exhaustion. For each downtime day you spend recovering before your next adventure, you remove one of these exhaustion levels.
51-65	A strange and discouraging affair. You make only enough to recuperate half of your lifestyle expenses.
66-79	A lengthy but unremarkable overland trip. You recuperate half your lifestyle expenses and gain 2d12 gp.
80-89	A profitable expedition to the Underdark. You recuperate half your lifestyle expenses and gain 1d4 x 10 gp.
90-99	An exciting delve into a lost dwarven tomb. You recuperate half your lifestyle expenses and gain 1d6 x 10 gp.
100-109	An unexpected discovery of a long-lost merchant house compound. You recuperate all your lifestyle expenses and gain 1d8 x 10 gp, as well as a book on the history of a Sword Coast city or town. (Have your DM select a title for it.)
110-119	A lost shrine. You recuperate all your lifestyle expenses and gain 1d10 x 10 gp as well as a holy symbol for a deity of your choice.
120 or Higher	Altar of the Ghost Hound. You find a millennia-old shrine to a god you cannot identify, with treasures laid upon an altar deep beneath the ground. You recuperate all your lifestyle expenses and gain 1d12 x 10 gp as well as a <i>potion of healing</i> . <i>If this is the first time you have rolled this result:</i> You also gain a shining copper cloak-pin bearing the image of a flaming spirit hound. Write down “Copper Pin of the Spirit Hound” as a separate story award on your logsheet.