

HIG1-06

Power of Choice

A One-Round D&D LIVING GREYHAWK®

Highfolk Regional Adventure

Version 1

Round 2

by Chris Tulach

The murder of councilman Telvest Lorewin at this year's Harvest Festival has the town of Highfolk fearful that the escaped assassin will strike again. When the mysterious killer is sighted once more, heroes are needed to bring him to justice. Will you succeed where other stalwart adventurers once failed? Recommended for sneaky and intrigue-oriented PCs. A two-round event, for characters levels 1-6.

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This is a RPGA Network adventure game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for playing the game (or this round of the game), but the actual playing time will be about three hours.

It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

Scoring the game for RPGA points: The RPGA has three ways to score this game. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use:

1. *No-vote scoring:* The players write their names and numbers on the scoring packet grid, you fill in the top of the grid. That is all. No one is rated. This method is used for people who are just playing for fun.
2. *Partial scoring:* The players rate the game master and the scenario on their player voting sheet, and provide personal information, but don't vote for other players. The game master rates the scenario and completes personal and event information, but does not rate the players as a team or vote for players. This method is used when there is no competition, but the convention coordinator wants information as to how the game masters are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.
3. *Voting:* Players and game masters complete the entire packet, including voting for best player. If this method is used, be sure to allow about 15-20 minutes for the players to briefly describe their characters to the other players, and about 5-10 minutes for voting. This method is used when the players want to know who played the best amongst them, or when the adventure is run in tournament format with winners and prizes. Multi-round adventures usually required advancing a smaller number of players than played the first round, so voting is required for multi-round adventures.

When using Voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in ***bold italics***. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

LIVING GREYHAWK Tier Structure

To determine the tier, add the character levels of all the characters. In addition, add the levels of any henchmen or animals according to the values on their certificates. Compare the total to the chart below to find the tier.

	<u>4 players</u>	<u>5 players</u>	<u>6 players</u>	<u>7 players</u>	<u>Lvl Cap</u>
T1:	4-12	5-13	6-14	7-15	4 nd
T2:	13-22	14-24	15-26	16-28	6 th
T3:	23-32	25-35	27-38	29-41	8 th

The level cap indicated the highest level of character allowed to play this adventure. Characters of levels higher than the highest level shown for the highest tier cannot be played.

Lifestyle

At the beginning of every scenario, each PC is required to pay upkeep costs matching the level of lifestyle they wish to maintain. The cost of each lifestyle will be indicated at the beginning of the **scenario**. The lifestyles, and the effects that each has on play, are:

Destitute	You have no living space, and must carry all your gear everywhere. You eat poor quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, your only change of clothes.
Poor	You sleep in poor accommodations, and eat poor quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, and have two sets of clothing.
Common	You have common lodgings, and eat common quality food. You have normal clothing for your profession (adventuring); nothing fancy. You probably have two or three sets of clothing.
High	You stay in good quality lodgings, and eat good quality food. You wear anything in value up to courtier's outfits, and generally buy a new set of clothing every two weeks.
Luxury	You have luxurious accommodations (twice the cost of good accommodations), and you eat excellent foods. You can throw a banquet for your friends every day, and frequently do. You wear clothing up to the value of noble's outfit, and buy a new set of clothes every week.

Lifestyles come with bonuses or penalties to Diplomacy, Intimidate, Disguise, and Bluff skill checks. These penalties, shown below, should be applied at the DM's discretion, and can

sometimes backfire—for example, a PC with a poor lifestyle would not have a penalty when talking to a beggar, but would when talking to a city official. A PC with a high lifestyle should have a penalty when dealing with a group of street thugs, where a PC with a destitute lifestyle might not.

DMs are encouraged to role-play these reactions whenever possible.

Lifestyle	Cost	Skill Modifier
Destitute 14 sp		-2
Poor	43 sp	-1
Common	12 gp	0
High	250 gp	+1
Luxury	500 gp	+2

Judge Introduction

In the first round of the event, the heroes heard talk of sightings nearby of the assassin from the Harvest Festival. Investigating the rumors, it was revealed that a Knight of the High Forest was watching over Jelvan Thaenmill's home. Just as the characters were beginning to talk, a group of shadowy attackers beset upon them.

After defeating the attackers, Varian (the Knight) told the PCs of what he knew regarding the Shadowclaw plot in Highfolk. While it wasn't much, it was enough information to let the heroes know that something bad is brewing in Highfolk. Varian also requested that the characters make haste to the town with the news for Paxana, the town constable. Despite Varian's requests, some parties may have questioned Jelvan to shed more light on the subject.

The heroes headed down the Quagflow Road towards Highfolk, and had a couple of interesting run-ins along the way. When they reached the gates of the city, the PCs realized that trouble was afoot. The gates seemed to be startlingly well manned, and the guards informed the heroes that no one was allowed to leave the town. It appeared as though the assassin had struck again.

Adventure Summary - Round 2

The second half of the adventure begins with the heroes entering Highfolk. The town is gripped with fear, as the assassin has claimed another victim. Home Guard patrols are about the community, watching for signs of suspicious activity. Paxana has declared that the assassin shall not escape this time.

The PCs have many options they may wish to pursue. The adventure allows the characters the opportunity to go through any of the encounters in no particular order. Even though it may seem to the PCs that time is of the essence, the assassin eventually escapes without the heroes ever encountering him.

Heroes heading to Paxana (the constable) find her hard at work to foil the assassin's escape. She gives the heroes details of what she knows, and listens to the PCs if they report what happened to them a few days ago (the attack outside Jelvan's home). Paxana admits that her Home Guard are too busy right now to waste time on dubious leads, but she suggests that the PCs head over to Nelia Gertrand's home (the other prospect), and see if there's anything important there.

Some heroes may decide to visit Telvest Lorewin's home (the first councilman killed over a month ago). There, they may talk to his wife, who is able to provide little in the way of useful information. If the characters are sneaky, they may find some information in Telvest's home that leads the heroes to believe that the councilman was not as scrupulous a man as once thought.

Heading over to the site of the murder, Rigert Bertleblom's home is still occupied by his family (a wife and two children). They are still too shocked to provide much information, and really don't know what's going on anyway. Investigating his bakery however, results in the discovery of a secret room. There, it can be determined that Rigert was obviously concocting some dangerous recipes.

If the heroes decide to go to the Merchant's Guild office, they are treated with guarded answers to their questions (after all, the PCs are not Home Guard). They can find out that both Telvest and Rigert were good friends, both hailing from the Shield Lands, and received their business licenses at about the same time.

Going to the Town Council for information gives the characters some information about the current prospects, Nelia and Jelvan. They also learn that Nelia never got along well with Telvest (and by extension, Rigert).

As the heroes are wandering around, a member of the Home Guard informs the PCs that the assassin has escaped again. He was sighted at the west gate, and then disappeared. The search has been called off. The gates are reopened.

The home of Nelia Gertrand (she is not present) provides the heroes an opportunity to investigate. Inside, the heroes find much in the way of information and danger. There is indication that Nelia knows about Telvest and Rigert's hidden lives. In addition, Nelia's servant has been murdered, and has become a sheet phantom. The creature that once was the servant makes a reference to the Shadowclaw as the PCs fight it. In another room, the heroes find a chest belonging to the Guildsmen of the High Art (Highfolk Wizard's Guild). A deadly cockatrice trap is released as the heroes look at the chest.

The characters may report any and all information back to Paxana when they are ready. It leaves them with a hard choice—report the theft of the chest in its entirety (thus eliminating Nelia from the election contest), or let the matter

slide based on information that Nelia may be working against agents of evil.

Player's Introduction

You enter the gates of Highfolk, taking in the words that the guardsmen said when you were being checked in. The assassin has stuck again! Looking about the town, it seems as though the only real activity about in the streets is the Home Guard patrols, recognizable from the sashes they wear over their shoulders or (for militia in the Defense Force) on their shields. Most other folks have gone indoors for the rest of the day, content to let the patrols do their duty in seeking out the assassin.

The PCs are free to go wherever they would like. The most likely place to head is the Constable's Office, located next to the First District Office (a guard post on the edge of the Elven District). They may however, head to any of the locales listed in any order they choose.

The Home Guard and You

The Home Guard has been alerted throughout the town, and they are on the watch for trouble or suspicious behavior. Several of the encounters presented below allow characters to gain information by way of larcenous behavior. The PCs must be careful, though, as the Home Guard is on the lookout for just such behavior.

The typical response team to a criminal or suspicious act is a group of five men or women, wearing leather armor and armed with clubs. They each wear a sash over their left shoulder, with a pin of Highfolk's symbol (the green-and-white checkerboard shield) attached. Most often, there are four guardsmen wearing red sashes (privates) and one in charge of the team, wearing a blue sash (corporal). On particularly large or troublesome disturbances, heavier weapons will be brought to the scene (usually halfspears and short bows), and every two teams will be lead by a sergeant (wearing a green sash). Given the current situation, all patrols have been equipped with the above weapons (but not all patrols have sergeants leading them). Every so often, when many teams are dispatched, a lieutenant (wearing a silver sash) or even the captain of a division (wearing gold) will appear on the scene. The constable herself wears the colors of Highfolk itself as her sash (green-and-white checkerboard).

The Home Guard acts as a sort of on-the-spot sentencing committee. After making an arrest, the guardsmen confer to determine the sentence for the lawbreakers, and then state their finding to the criminal. This type of sentence is usually reserved for those that commit crimes of a fineable nature (e.g., burglary or vandalism). Some other crimes, such as assault without grievous injury, are also sentenced as necessary;

the punishment for such crimes is usually a jail sentence. A court handles the sentencing of the most violent crimes; in the interim, the prisoner is taken to a holding cell in one of the four Highfolk District Jails (located at each District Office).

Characters may run afoul of the Home Guard in their investigations. At any given time during the heightened patrolling of the town, there is a 20% chance that a Home Guard patrol is nearby (within 100 feet of the PCs). The Judge should feel free to adjudicate any interactions between the PCs and the guardsmen. It should be noted that the characters have the right to enter Nelia's home on the constable's orders. Typical statistics for guardsmen encountered are listed below.

Typical Home Guardsmen, War1: Medium Humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 8; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 leather armor, +1 Dex); Atks +2 melee (1d6, club), or +1 melee (1d6 [crit x3], halfspear), or +2 ranged (1d6 [crit x3], shortbow); AL Varies (usually CG, NG, or LG); SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0.

Str 10, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +1, Sense Motive +1 (+2 if human), Spot +2. **Feats:** Weapon Focus (club), Alertness (if human).

Equipment: Leather armor, club, halfspear, shortbow, 20 arrows, Home Guard uniform.

Typical Home Guard Sergeant, War2: Medium Humanoid; HD 2d8+2; hp 15; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 leather armor, +1 Dex); Atks +4 melee (1d6+1, club), or +3 melee (1d6+1 [crit x3], halfspear), or +3 ranged (1d6 [crit x3], shortbow); AL Varies (usually CG, NG, or LG); SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0.

Str 13, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Listen +2, Sense Motive +1 (+2 if human), Spot +2. **Feats:** Weapon Focus (club), Alertness (if human).

Equipment: Leather armor, club, halfspear, shortbow, 20 arrows, Home Guard uniform.

Punishment in Highfolk

Highfolk is generally a very easy-going place to live, and the folk that patrol the streets also take that attitude. Very minor offenses committed by citizens of Highfolk (such as public drunkenness and disorderly behavior) generally are "brushed off" with a "don't do it again" attitude. Characters that are from lands far away, or half-orc characters, may find themselves paying gold for a very minor offense, as per the forth category of offenses listed below. Remember that the guardsmen who are present usually sentence minor crimes on the spot.

Reconcilable offenses can be punished with jail time; generally this costs a character between 1 and 26 Time Units (going over the yearly Time Units takes the character out of play for that year, and counts against the next year's total),

with 2 to 6 (half a month to a month and a half) Time Units being the most common. Imprisonment in the Roots or death sentences remove the character from play until further notice; contact the Wisconsin Triad if such a punishment is handed down (there is a trial involved with such crimes).

**Irredeemable Offenses (punishable by death)
Usually meted out by the Highfolk Town Judge**

- Premeditated Murder.
- Arson in the Elven District
- Treason (this includes aid given to Iuz's forces that results in a compromise of the town's security)

Grave Offenses (punishable by imprisonment in the Roots)

Usually meted out by the Highfolk Town Judge

- Murder with intent
- Arson (anywhere in the town except elven district)
- Grievous assault (which results in the victim being unable to continue his/her livelihood)
- Intentionally harming Old Bough (the treant that lives in Highfolk Town)

Reconcilable Offenses (punishable by fine of usually half or more of the criminal's worth, or incarceration in the District Jail)

Usually meted out by the Home Guard

- Assault
- Unintentional death
- Bribery
- Forgery of official or religious documents
- Murder or grievous injury of an animal companion
- Burglary or theft of valuable items (100+ solars' worth) or animals of transportation
- Terrorizing the populace (through extortion, strong-arm tactics, etc., over a period of time)
- Vandalism of a recognized holy place (temple, shrine, etc.)
- Unintentionally harming Old Bough

Minor Offenses (punishable by fine of usually 5+ solars (gp), or deeds of recompense)

Usually meted out by the Home Guard

- Fraud/deception
- Theft of items
- Vandalism (except holy places)
- Assaulting an animal companion
- Slander

Encounter 1: Constable Eventhil

Read the following as the PCs approach the Constable's Office:

Heading to the border of the Elven and Merchant Districts, you see a long wooden building emblazoned with the green-and-white checkerboard crest of Highfolk. Outside stand four members of the Home Guard, armed similarly to those on patrol, but wearing chain shirts for armor and silver sashes on their shoulders.

These are lieutenants (female and male, various races (human, elf, half-elf); Ftr2; hp 18; Diplomacy +3, Sense Motive +3) that have been assigned to coordinate patrols and screen troublemakers from entering Paxana's office. They stop the characters, and check to see that they have good reason to bother the constable. If one of them mentions that they are here at the request of Varian Greenpath, a Knight of the High Forest, they are immediately escorted in and introduced. Otherwise, the PCs have to convince the guardsmen of their intentions. Read the following when the heroes have entered:

The interior of the building is a mess. Papers, maps, quills, and equipment are strewn all about. An older looking gnome exits from the back door as you enter. A slender dark-haired half-elven woman stands in the center of the room, staring at a map of the city. Home Guard militia stand near, waiting on her orders.

When the heroes enter, Paxana tells the men to patrol south of the Temple of Change, and relieve the existing patrol there. They exit upon receiving the order. Paxana appears to be very concerned, and her preoccupation with recent events results in her ignoring the heroes for a minute or two. After a moment, she realizes that new visitors are here, and strides over to meet the heroes. She has the following information to offer:

- I am glad that adventurers have decided to help out Highfolk again once more. Your assistance in augmenting my guard will be most appreciated.
- If asked about what is going on: It appears that our old friend from the Harvest Festival has struck again. A few short hours ago, several guardsmen found the body of Rigert Bertleblom, a gnome baker, dead from a throat wound in his shop. Upon hearing that news and other reports of a dark cloaked man moving throughout the town, I had the Home Guard close the gates while we conducted a search for the assassin. We are still looking.
- Rigert has been buried at the Temple of Change (dedicated to the Oeridian agricultural deities) in town. It is Highfolk's custom to bury the dead in a suitable location as soon as possible.
- Rigert was a member of the Highfolk Town Council, and the Merchant's Guild. Telvest Lorewin was a member of both of those groups as well.

- The assassin was probably the same man (or part of the same organization) that killed Telvest Lorewin at the Harvest Festival over a month ago. He died by poisoned wine.

- I'm sure there is some connection between the deaths, but we've yet to figure it out. Both victims knew each other well, and were good friends.

- Rigert has a wife and two children. They are not taking the death well at all, since it has only been mere hours since they found out. Telvest left a wife, who has since moved away from Highfolk to Verbeeg Hill.

- **If Paxana is informed about what has transpired at Jelvan's home:** Perhaps there is a pattern here. Jelvan Thaenmill and Nelia Gertrand are prospects running against each other in next week's contest. The Town Council seat contested is Telvest's old seat. Since the Home Guard is busy with their search for the assassin, if you could check in on Nelia and find out if there are any connections to what has been occurring, I would most appreciate it.

- You may enter Nelia's home and speak with her without inconvenience or undue duress. If anyone gives you any trouble, let it be known that you are there under orders of the constable. They can answer to me if this does not suit them.

- Please report back to me if you find out anything unusual or pertinent to recent events. I shall be here until the assassin is found, or the search proves fruitless. If I am not here when you return, leave a message with one of my lieutenants, and I will attend to any matters as soon as I am able.

The heroes have many different options to pursue. They may head directly to the Nelia's home, or may act on other hunches. The encounters that are presented (with the exception of Encounter 6) may be run in any order. Although the PCs may not realize it, there is no particular time element to their investigations.

Note to Judge: The characters do have license to search and investigate Nelia's home; however, they do not have any grounds on which to enter other residences. Some of the encounters below assume the PCs are able to dodge the Home Guard and slip into the building. Make sure to note when guards are nearby, and roll the appropriate opposed skill checks (usually Hide vs. Spot and Move Silently vs. Listen) to see if a character succeeds in evasion.

Paxana Eventhil, female half-elf Ftr4/Rog3: Medium humanoid (5 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 4d10 + 3d6; hp 38; Init +2; Spd 30; AC 18 (+2 Dex, +2 chain shirt); Atks +8/+3 melee (1d8+3 [crit 17-20], +1 keen longsword), or +7/+2 melee (1d4 [crit 19-20], masterwork silver dagger), or +7/+2/-3 ranged (1d8+1 [crit x3], +1 composite longbow); SA Sneak attack +2d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +4.

Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12, Forgery +6, Gather Information +12, Innuendo +12, Languages (Common, Elven, Goblin, Sylvan), Listen +6, Read Lips +12, Search +5, Sense Motive +12, Spot +6. **Feats:** Alertness, Leadership, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Equipment: +2 chain shirt, +1 keen longsword, +1 composite longbow, masterwork silver dagger, 20 arrows.

Personality Traits: Vigilant, easy-going (except during crisis situations like the current one), sly, insightful.

Encounter 2: Dead Councilman, Empty Home?

Telvest Lorewin's modest home lies in the heart of the Merchant's District. The front door is closed, and all of the window shutters have been shut tight.

Keep track of time when PCs enter the home. After an hour, a guard patrol passes close by the house. If the heroes are using lights to search (especially at night) or make loud sounds, the guards investigate.

The door is locked. A successful Open Lock skill check (DC 20) unlocks the door. The back door is similarly locked. Inside, the entire house has been stripped bare. Only some pieces of furnishings remain behind. A brief description of the rooms is listed below; note that it takes about an hour to do a thorough Search check (taking 20) in one room for one person.

- Kitchen. The cupboards are bare, and the drawers on the tables contain nothing. The backdoor is located here.
- Hallway. Completely bare and devoid of any furnishings.
- Bedroom. An empty wardrobe closet, chest of drawers, and bed frame are all that remain in here.
- Dining room. A large dining table without any chairs is the sole occupant of this room.
- Foyer. Empty hooks hang from the wall near the front door.
- Study. Here, an empty bookshelf lines one of the walls. There is also a desk (without a chair) here. The desk has two drawers on the right, three on the left, and one in the center. The center drawer has a false bottom (Search check DC 18 to detect). If the piece of wood is pulled up, there is a small leather coinpurse with 12 knights (old Shield Lands gold pieces), and a letter. Give the players Handout 1.
- There is nothing else of interest here.

Encounter 3: Rigert's Home

Rigert Bertleblom's home and bakery is located near the marketplace in the Merchant's District. When the PCs approach, read the following:

The smell of baked goods still lingers in the air as you near the short two-story structure that until just recently served as Rigert's bakery and his home. A chimney pokes out of the roof of the establishment. The lower floor of the building holds the bakery and shop; atop it lays the residence of the late Rigert Bertleblom. You cannot see any activity in the bakery through the windows. The shutters on the upstairs windows are all closed.

There is a front and back door to the place. Both doors are locked (DC 20 Open Lock check to pick either one). The front door leads (obviously) inside the bakery; the back door reveals stairs that lead up to the residence. The windows in the bakery are small (only about one foot by one foot in dimension); only small-size characters can fit through easily. Medium-size PCs (such as humans and elves) need to make Escape Artist skill checks (DC 15) to pass through. Rotund humans and dwarves cannot fit through the tiny windows. There are three windows on the lower floor—two in the front that lead into the shop, and one on the side leading into the kitchen.

Note that the guards are still watching this house, due to the recent murder here and the need to provide protection for Rigert's family (who dwell upstairs). A group of 5 guardsmen keep an eye on the home from various points around the block (positioned roughly 50 feet away at different angles). At least two guards are automatically successful in spotting the PC, unless someone distracts them (in which case, the distracted guards still get a Spot check (DC equal to the sneaking PC's Hide check)). Of course, other means of entry (such as *invisibility* spells) may permit one or more PCs entrance. Any guard who notices someone entering illegally gathers the others and approaches the individual entering to arrest him or her (involving a long period of questioning and a fine on the spot). Heroes are not approached if they just knock on the front or back door, but are watched.

If the PCs decide to knock on the back door, Camlee (female gnome Com1; hp 4), Rigert's wife, calls out to the knocker from atop the stairs. She is still very much in shock, and is very wary about opening the door for anyone, much less a total stranger. It requires a Diplomacy check (DC 25) to get her to open the door through normal convincing. If a hero mentions that they are working for Paxana to bring the murderer to justice (not entirely true), the DC for the Diplomacy check drops to 15. No character can make more than one roll; there are no retries. If, for some reason, the characters force their way in (or surprise her), she yells loudly for the guards

and runs to her children. She also does so if she hears loud noises from the shop downstairs.

If the characters convince Camlee to open the door, she talks to them at the bottom of the stairs, never venturing outside. Her voice is weak with fatigue and sorrow. She is only good for a few quick questions before she breaks down and closes the door.

- My husband was baking this morning when I heard a shout. I was upstairs tending to our little ones, Gilfert and Emilla (ages 14 and 26). When I came downstairs, he was already gone.
- The Home Guard was there when I got downstairs and to the shop. They wouldn't look at him until I insisted. He had been stabbed right through the neck.
- We buried him a few hours ago outside the south gate, near a copse of trees that we used for family picnics. Wendelson, a cleric of Wenta, presided over the ceremony.
- Camlee does not allow the characters to enter her home, or the shop.
- **If confronted about the trapdoor,** Camlee is confused. She says that the characters are obviously crazy, and slams the door in their faces.

Inside the Shop

Characters entering the shop notice still-fresh loaves of bread and sweet cakes on the wooden shelves. The front of the shop itself seems to be in fair order. A Search check (DC 15) reveals some drops of blood (not fresh) near one of the shelves. This is where Rigert was stabbed. Nothing else of note is found in the shop front.

An archway connects the shop with the kitchen. In here, it is obvious that Rigert was in the middle of his day's baking. Flour, dough, and other ingredients are everywhere. A stone oven sits open, awaiting fresh dough in its now-cold mouth. Utensils of all types hang from cords attached to the rafters. A door lies closed opposite the archway. A Search or Track check (DC 10) reveals that there are numerous footprints of a human or elven-sized boot in the flour. They continue to the doorway, and stop. The door (unlocked) leads down a short hallway to the back door and stairs leading up to the residence. The flour boot prints disappear a few feet down the hallway.

In addition, a successful Search check (DC 20) at the base of the oven reveals a trapdoor. Opening it requires a prying instrument of some sort, or one of the long-handled utensils works as well. It is relatively easy to open; no rolls are required. The trapdoor opens to a tight staircase leading downward 10 feet. It is sized for gnomes and halflings, and characters taller than 4 feet have to crouch or (for really big characters) crawl to get to the door at the bottom. Only two

characters can be on the stairs, plus one at the bottom by the door, at any given time.

A Trapdoor Leads to a Trapped Door

The iron-reinforced wooden door at the bottom is locked, and also trapped. The lock is of good quality (DC 30 to pick). The door is strong, and requires a Strength check at DC 23 to break down. Note that if the trapdoor is open and the door here is broken down, Camlee hears the noise and calls out her window for the guards (PCs can make a Listen check, DC 15, to hear Camlee calling out)

Trap: The door is also trapped with a fire trap spell (Disable Device roll at DC 29 to disarm it). A PC that sets it off takes 1d4+9 points of fire damage (Reflex save DC 19 for half damage), as well as any character on the bottom half of the stairs. A *dispel magic* spell requires a dispel check, DC 20, to undo the magic.

Rigert's Secret

The door opens up into a small wood-walled room, containing a wooden table, and many shelves. Most of the shelves are empty, but some have glass flasks and vials on them. More vials and alchemical supplies (enough here for a full alchemical laboratory) are scattered across the table. A successful Alchemy skill check (DC 10) reveals that the last person here was brewing or distilling something.

Most of the vials and jars on the table and shelves are empty. Two particular containers have substances of note. One of the glass flasks contains a syrupy, yellowish-orange liquid (alchemist's fire). Inside a mortar (a small bowl used with a pestle to grind solids) are the last few flecks of a black powder. Casting *detect poison* reveals it as poison, and a successful Alchemy skill check (DC 20) reveals the poison to be kolturan. Only if a PC asks if the substance is similar to that which killed Telvest Lorewin at the Harvest Festival (the character must have participated in *Bitter Harvest* to know), have the player roll a Profession (herbalist) check, DC 15. If successful, the answer is "yes", and they are also aware that the substance is kolturan.

Kolturan is a fast-acting, potentially deadly poison made from the leaves of the kolturan bush. The bush grows only in very arid areas, and is rare. It is quite unusual to have it turn up in Highfolk twice in such a short time.

There is nothing else of note in the room. Characters leaving the building may be subjected to the same degree of scrutiny from the guards as they would be entering the establishment.

Treasure from Rigert's hidden room:

- Flask of alchemist's fire. Value: 20 gp.

Encounter 4: The Merchant's Guild of Highfolk

At some point, PCs may wish to visit the Merchant's Guildhouse to see if more information can be obtained on the two murder victims or the two prospects for Telvest's seat (as all four are members of the Merchant's Guild).

The Merchant's Guild is a squat one-story oak structure. Outside the front door hang green-and-white checkerboard banners, flapping in the cool air. Mounted directly above the door are two linked gold coins, each about a longsword's length in diameter.

Garius Greybuck (male human Exp2; hp 10; Bluff +6, Craft [leatherworking] +9, Diplomacy +6, Sense Motive +6) greets the PCs when they enter the building. He is nephew to Olerer Greybuck (the owner of Greybuck Leathers, the finest leather goods shop in town); the last name might be familiar to some PCs. His uncle gave him the position of scribe and records keeper for the Guildhouse. He is quite aware of the value of information.

The office that Garius works in is covered in neat stacks of paperwork. Drawer-filled cabinets line the walls. A door in the back of the office leads to the meeting hall (currently empty).

Garius is more than happy to share what information he knows about Telvest, Rigert, Jelvan, and Nelia. He only shares the following information with a character that is living at a common lifestyle or better. However, his time is not free. He divulges any and all of the following information for 50 solars (gp) (40 solars with a successful Diplomacy check, DC 15) or the expenditure of 1 Influence Point in Highfolk Merchant's Guild:

- Telvest was a good man and a fine vintner. Even though his death is saddening, other vintners are planning to fill the hole left by his passing, both on the Council and in the wine market.
- Rigert Bertleblom's death today came as a shock to many. Even though he's not a very vocal member of the Merchant's Guild (and Grunther Sugarbaker makes far better desserts than he), he's never been one to rock the boat.
- Rigert and Telvest were really good friends, too. I know that since Telvest died, Rigert's been pretty withdrawn. I guess they both came to Highfolk about eight years ago from the Shield Lands. Made the journey all the way from Critwall, I hear. They got their business licenses at the same time as well.
- Jelvan's quite proud of himself. He has a lot of family money, but he doesn't really know the value of hard work. He seems to fit in well with the politicians, though. I

know that the Merchant's Guild is divided evenly on their support of him in the contest next week. Some feel that he has only his best interests in mind, while others think that his savvy might help the Guild's position in the Council.

- Nelia also comes from a rich family, but she doesn't act as such. I know that she's been championing honesty and integrity in the Merchant's Guild, and has promised to point fingers at those that aren't getting the job done on the Council if proclaimed the winner of next week's contest. Her chances of winning seem to be much slimmer than Jelvan's.

- **If Garius is given the note from Telvest's home:** That can't be from Telvest. It's not even in his handwriting!

- **If the heroes tell Garius that they suspect Telvest and Rigert were up to something:** That's ridiculous. I'm sure it's all just conjecture on your part. Maybe you should let the constable do her job?

Garius has no other information for the PCs (and there is nothing else to gain by sneaking in, except arrested). Under no circumstances are the PCs allowed to see any files (they may wish to do this to verify Telvest's handwriting). If the heroes accuse Telvest or Rigert of suspicious behavior, Garius gets visibly upset, and asks the characters to leave.

Encounter 5: Council Hall

If the heroes wish to stop here for information, read the following as they approach:

Council Hall stands as one of only a handful of stone structures in Highfolk. You can see several members of the Council standing outside on the stairs, talking to one another. Others can be seen through the arched windows of the meeting hall.

There are many Council members here, all talking about the upcoming contests. To gain information, have a character make a Gather Information skill check. Add up to a +5 bonus for good roleplaying as the characters interact with the important individuals listed below. The four individuals below have information pertinent to the investigation; each one also has a Gather Information DC listed. Both the DC and gold cost (30 gp) must be met. One roll is all that is needed, if sufficiently high enough (i.e., if a hero rolls DC 20, they need not re-roll for each individual). Alternatively, the gold cost for all individuals can be waived by a PC (the one making the Gather Information checks) that spends 1 Influence Point in Highfolk Town Council. All of the people below are on the Council.

- **Nuance Nightscandle** (female human Exp7; hp 48; Profession (midwife) +13) is

Highfolk's best midwife (being in the profession for over 40 years), having never lost a child. She delivered both of Rigert's children, and knew him well. She is greatly saddened by his passing. Nuance always regarded Telvest as a bad influence on Rigert. She informs the PCs that Telvest used to convince Rigert to go carousing in their younger days, which often lead to a night in the jail or a fine. **Gather Information: DC 12.**

- **Clyth Nettlepatch** (male human Clr5 (Ehlonna); hp 33; Diplomacy +6, Heal +11) is one of the Church of Ehlonna's representatives to the Council. He is young (25 years old), but very wise. He was the one that examined Telvest's body, as he was right there at the Harvest Festival when he died. He lets the heroes know that Telvest died from an herbal poison known as kolturan, which killed him almost instantly. He was not able to *Speak with Dead*. He saw Nelia at worship a few days after the incident, and she confided in him that Telvest was not all he appeared to be. She would not say any more of the matter, and Clyth let it go. **Gather Information: DC 20.**

- **Gylas Meadowdawn** (male wood elf War4; hp 28) is a noble brat who has squandered his seat on the Council. He is running in a contest next week, and will likely lose (although he still thinks he can pull it out). He doesn't remember much of the Harvest Festival when Telvest died, because he was drunk for most of it. If it weren't for a few adventurers, he would've taught a few human rowdies a thing or two about elven swordsmanship that day. Some PCs may have actually broke up the fight at *Bitter Harvest*; Gylas doesn't remember them, and only gets upset if one of the characters mentions that they were responsible for keeping the peace. He really would like to go to the Vesve's Tankard for a few drinks, and is more than willing to take an adventurer or two with him. He has nothing more important to share. **Gather Information: DC 10.**

- **Rekar Hammerstrike** (male hill dwarf Exp8; hp 58; Craft (armorer) +15, Craft (weaponsmithing) +15) is one of only 20 or so dwarves that claim Highfolk as a permanent residence. He and his clan run Hammerstrike Goods, the finest armorer and weaponsmith in town. He's done some custom daggers for Nelia before, and she's a good paying customer. Every time either Rigert or Telvest would come near, she would quiet down. Rekar doesn't ever remember her speaking to them at all. They were in wine making competition, of course. Yet here she is, running for Telvest's seat. **Gather Information: DC 15.**

During the first run of this event, please be sure to record on the Critical Events Summary any

hero that treats either Gylas or Rekar very positively. No other insights can be gained here.

Encounter 6: Dead Men Tell No Tales

Characters may get the idea (if of sufficient level) to cast *Speak with Dead* on the corpses of both Telvest and Rigert. The Temple of Change conducted both ceremonies. They may learn from the Temple of Change that both bodies are buried outside of town. Telvest is beneath a stone outside the east gate (the clerics can give directions). Rigert was buried earlier in the day, at a copse of trees just outside the south gate (again, directions can be provided).

The corpses are buried within range of the spell at both locations. Each corpse gets a Will save (as they resist). The saves are automatically successful. Do not let the players know this fact. Neither corpse gives any answers to the dilemma. If the Temple of Change is confronted by this, they admit to having performed a *Speak with Dead* spell on Rigert earlier today, just before burial. It was done at Paxana's request. They received no information. The clerics are unable to provide a reason why the *Speak with Dead* failed on Telvest; although Clyth Nettlepatch (cleric of Ehlonna - see above) received no result when he attempted at the Harvest Festival.

Encounter 7: Escaped! Again!

After the PCs have been walking around for a few hours, they begin to notice the gates being opened up. Guardsmen are returning to their normal posts and homes. The militia is standing down. Asking a member of the Home Guard what is going on provides the following information:

- It appears the assassin has escaped again! This time, he was spotted running for the east gate. We had surrounded him with troops. The archers stood ready at the wall. Then, quicker than a cat, he flicked some magic dust on himself and disappeared. By the time we had some magical support on the scene, he was gone.
- Paxana continued the search for another couple of hours, but it appears he has escaped again. She has ordered the gates reopened; people can once again come and go as they please.
- Some say that she's thinking about hiring some adventurers or sending out the Fifth District (the special operations agents) to go hunt him down. They're saying it's the only way to bring him to justice.

Encounter 8: Home of the Missing Vintner

Read the following when the PCs decide to visit Nelia's home:

Nelia Gertrand lives in a modest two-story structure that was obviously constructed from the choicest trees in the Vesve. Several small dysimar trees ring the home in a skeletal canopy. The windows are all shuttered up. You see no signs of activity in the small courtyard, either; perhaps Nelia is out?

Nelia has indeed left the town, only a few days ago. She lives alone, with her servant (Haglin) tending to matters while she's away. The PCs have Paxana's authority to investigate here, and may approach the doors (and even enter) without being questioned by the Home Guard.

Nelia has recently had a professional take care of her home. There are several magical and mechanical traps throughout the residence, just in case would-be thieves manage to slip in when the servant is out. Characters that are not careful may find the traps to be more than they can handle.

Consult Map 1 for an interior layout of the home. Outside is nothing more than a small courtyard with dysimar trees (thin, willowy trees with heavily blue-veined leaves). The windows and doors are all locked and trapped. Windows on the first level can be entered by anyone (small characters need a little boost). However, two glyphs of warding protect each portal. Both glyphs go off once a character enters the window or door. Listed below are the statistics for the doors and windows, as well as the traps on the outer doors (front and back) and windows. The door statistics are the same throughout the home (however, traps may not be present or may be different). The only exception to this is the front and back doors have an Open Lock DC of 30, while the check for the doors inside is DC 25.

Wooden Doors: 1 inch thick; hardness 5; hp 10; AC 5; break DC 18; Open Lock DC 30 (outside), DC 25 (inside).

Wooden Shutters: 1/2 inch thick; hardness 2; hp 5; AC 5; break DC 13; Open Lock DC 20.

Trap: On the outside doors and windows, two glyphs of warding have been placed. Two Disable Device rolls (or two dispel rolls) are required to be rid of the glyphs. The PC that sets off the glyphs is the target for both spells. A character can also pass freely by saying the phrase "owls in the night" (although how they would know to say that is anybody's guess).

Tier 1 (EL 4)

Glyph of Warding (searing light) Trap: CR 3; +8 ranged touch attack (2d8); Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28); dispel (DC 16). *Note:* A *read magic* spell allows a spellcaster to identify a *glyph* with a successful Spellcraft roll (DC 13).

Glyph of Warding (bestow curse) Trap: CR 2; no attack roll required (-4 to all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks); Will save (DC 16) negates; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28); dispel (DC 16). *Note:* A *read magic* spell allows a spellcaster to identify a *glyph* with a successful Spellcraft roll (DC 13).

Tier 2 (EL 5)

Same as above, except that the *searing light* deals 3d8 damage, and the dispel check for both traps is DC 17.

Tier 3 (EL 6)

Same as above, except that the *searing light* deals 4d8 damage, and the dispel check for both traps is DC 19.

First Floor

1. The Foyer

The spacious foyer has cloak hooks along the north and south walls. Over the archway leading down the hallway is a curved green dragon relief carved into the oak.

There is nothing else of note here.

2. Sitting Room

The door to this room is closed and locked, but not trapped.

This room is decorated in dark green and blue silks. Four matching chairs and two couches are arranged around a cold fireplace. Three small end tables are positioned in between the furniture. The dark blue curtains are drawn shut.

There is nothing else of note here.

3. Dining Room

The door to this room is closed and locked, but not trapped.

A long dining table graces this room. Ten wonderfully carved oak chairs are in their proper places around the table. Two end tables flank the door. Here, the dark blue curtains are drawn shut.

There is nothing else of note here.

4. Servant's Room

The door to this room is open.

This room holds a small bed, a dresser, and a closet. It seems to be sparsely decorated, unlike the rest of the house.

A Search skill check (DC 20) reveals small flecks of black powder near the bed. Casting *detect poison* reveals it as poison, and a successful Alchemy skill check (DC 20) reveals the poison to be kolturan. Only if a PC asks if the substance is similar to that which killed Telvest Lorewin at the Harvest Festival (the character must have participated in Bitter Harvest to know), have the player roll a Profession (herbalist) check, DC 15. If successful, the answer is "yes", and they are also aware that the substance is kolturan.

Kolturan is a fast-acting, potentially deadly poison made from the leaves of the kolturan bush. The bush grows only in very arid areas, and is rare. It is quite unusual to have it turn up in Highfolk twice in such a short time.

Inside the dresser drawers are men's clothes, of good quality, but not the garb of a wealthy merchant or noble. A Search check (DC 15) uncovers a dagger under clothing in a dresser drawer.

5. Kitchen

The door to this room is closed and locked, but not trapped.

This clean and tidy room is a kitchen. A row of cupboards lines the west wall, and a large table sits in the center of the room. Along the east wall is a cooking area, with a small fire pit.

The kitchen has a variety of utensils and dinnerware. A successful Search check (DC 20) on the north wall reveals the outline of a secret door. Another Search check (DC 15) by the cupboards locates the mechanism for opening it (pulling the top drawer in and out 3 times quickly).

The door opens to a spiral wooden staircase leading 20 feet down. The staircase ends in a wooden door (go to 6).

Underground Area A

6. The Wine Cellar

The door to this room is closed, locked, and trapped.

Trap: Attempting to open this door releases a hail of needles (unless the trap is disabled by knocking on the right side of the door three times; it is possible to disable this trap through random circumstance, although not likely). At higher tiers, the needles are poisoned.

Tier 1 (EL 1)

Hail of Needles: CR 1; +20 ranged (2d4); Search DC (22); Disable Device (DC 22).

Tier 2 (EL 3)

Hail of Needles: CR 3; +20 ranged (2d4, plus medium-size spider venom); Search DC (22); Disable Device (DC 22). *Note:* Medium-size spider venom is an injury poison that deals 1d4/1d6 (initial/secondary) Str damage. The Fortitude save to resist is DC 14.

Tier 3 (EL 5)

Hail of Needles: CR 5; +20 ranged (2d4, plus sassone leaf residue); Search DC (22); Disable Device (DC 22). *Note:* Sassone leaf residue is a contact poison that deals 2d12 hit points initial damage, and 1d6 Con secondary damage. The Fortitude save to resist is DC 16.

Lining the walls to your left and right are racks and racks of wine bottles, filled with the Gertrand family's recipe. The room is built of wooden planks, and has a dryness hanging in the air.

A Search check (DC 22) on the wall opposite the entryway reveals a secret door. To open the door, another Search check (DC 12) must be made on the western wall's wine racks. There, one bottle of wine is attached to a cord. When pulled forward, it opens the passageway. If this happens, read the following:

A passageway cutting into the earth is revealed as the door slides open. The tunnel seems to continue on to the lengths of your vision.

This passageway continues on for over 2 miles, finally ending up east of Highfolk, in the middle of a small copse of trees. There is a campsite nearby, but no one has been here recently.

Second Floor

7. Guest Rooms

These doors are closed and locked, but not trapped.

This room reflects the dark green and blue style throughout the house. A comfortable-looking bed, spacious dresser, and closet can be seen from the doorway.

These are guest rooms, and are currently unoccupied. There is nothing else of note here.

8. Study

The door to this room is closed, locked, and trapped.

Trap: The door is trapped with a poison gas trap. It is possible for this trap to be disabled by accident. Undoing the lock in the wrong fashion is the trigger; if a character succeeds in an Open

Lock roll to unlock the door, there is a 10% chance that the trap is disarmed as well. Otherwise, a Disable Device roll (as normal) is necessary.

All Tiers (EL 6)

Poison Gas Trap: CR 6; no attack roll necessary (releases insanity mist); Search (DC 24); Disable Device (DC 26). *Note:* The gas trap affects all within 5 feet of the door. Insanity mist is an inhaled poison that deals 1d4/2d6 (initial/secondary) Wis damage. The Fortitude save to resist is DC 15.

This comfortable-looking room is home to bookshelves that line the walls, filled with tomes. Two plush sitting chairs and a desk round out the furnishings here.

The books are all on the art of winemaking. Many seem very old, and some are written in Elvish. They are worth a small fortune to a collector or vintner.

One of the desk drawers has a false bottom. Detecting it requires a successful Search skill check (DC 20). The bottom can be pulled out; under it lays a note and a ring. The note is **Handout 2**. The ring emanates faint magic if a *detect magic* spell is cast on it. A Spellcraft roll (DC 17) can determine that the magic school is transmutation.

Treasure from the desk in Nelia's study:

- Nelia's ring of sneaking. When worn, this jade ring gives a +4 enhancement bonus to the wearer's Move Silently skill. Value: 320 gp.

9. Nelia's Bedroom

The door to this room is closed, unlocked, and not trapped (it was trapped, but the gas trap has gone off, and has not been reset since then).

This room is lavishly decorated in the same motif as the rest of the house, except there are no windows here. A huge walk-in closet stands opposite the door. A long dresser with a round mirror the size of a halfling is found directly to the right of the door. In the center of the room is a large bed, with four delicately carved wooden posts leading up to a canopy. Upon the bed lay the motionless form of a man face down, dressed in servant's attire. You can see dried blood on the back of his neck and head.

Haglin, Nelia's servant, was murdered here very early this morning. He was an evil man, and had much work to do in his life. Therefore, because he was murdered in bed, he came back as a sheet phantom. His new form (the sheet phantom) is atop the canopy, lying in wait.

Tier 1 (EL 1)

Sheet Phantom: CR 1; Medium-size Undead (5 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 3d12; hp 20; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., fly 20 ft. (perfect); AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural); Atks +3 melee (1d4+2 subdual, buffet); SA Smother, improved grab; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., immune to blunt weapons, undead immunities, weaknesses; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0.

Str 15, Dex 16, Con -, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills: Listen +8, Move Silently +16. **Feats:** Blind-Fight.

SA: Improved Grab (Ex)—A successful attack indicates the phantom deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. (See Grapple on page 137 of the *Player's Handbook*.) **Smother (Ex)**—If the phantom succeeds at the grapple, it has wrapped itself around its prey. The following round, the victim must either hold her breath or begin taking suffocation damage. (This works just as if the character were drowning; see The Drowning Rule on page 85 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.) A victim can escape a sheet phantom's embrace by making an opposed grappling check or an Escape Artist roll against the phantom's grappling roll. While embraced, a victim can only use a Tiny weapon like a dagger, and then only if it was in hand when first enveloped by the sheet phantom. Damage inflicted on a sheet phantom while it encompasses a victim causes an equal amount of damage to the victim. Blunt weapons inflict full damage upon the victim but do not harm the sheet phantom.

SQ: Undead—Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage. **Weaknesses**—For all their deadly suffocation ability, sheet phantoms have a number of weaknesses. Holy water inflicts 1d4+4 points of damage per vial instead of the standard 2d4 points of damage. In addition, all fire-based attacks (normal or magical) inflict an extra point of damage per die. Finally, sheet phantoms recoil from natural sunlight and bright lights (like a *daylight* spell). If exposed to direct sunlight, sheet phantoms take 1d3 points of damage. They move at half speed during the day.

Tier 2 (EL 2)

Same as Tier 1, except for the following:

Sheet Phantom: CR 2; HD 4d12; hp 26; Atks +4 melee; SV Fort +1, Will +1. **Skills:** Move Silently +18.

Tier 3 (EL 3)

Same as Tier 2, except for the following:

Sheet Phantom: CR 3; HD 6d12; hp 39; Atks +5 melee; SV Ref +4. **Skills:** Listen +8, Move Silently +20.

Tactics: When a hero comes close to the bed to investigate, the sheet phantom drops on that person from above. That character is automatically surprised, unless they were suspicious of the canopy. Everyone else can make a Spot check (DC 12); those that succeed can take a partial action in the surprise round, as they see a bloody white sheet with glowing green eyes drop from the canopy of the bed. Haglin (as the sheet phantom) attempts to suffocate the character it initially attacked, all the while screaming in a ghastly voice, "The Shadowclaw are all around you! You can't defeat what you can't see!" Keep in mind that if it envelops a PC, damage is dealt to both the sheet phantom and the character. The sheet phantom fights until destroyed. A complete entry for the sheet phantom can be found in **Appendix B**.

Development: If the sheet phantom is commanded by a cleric that uses negative energy, the following information can be gained:

- I was with the Shadowclaw for many years, and a year ago, I moved in as a servant for Nelia. My missions before mostly involved killing officers in the Furryondyian and Shield Lander armies. They were interesting, and challenging. I did so enjoy those days.
- My contacts never told me why I was sent here; only to gather whatever information I could about Nelia's activities, and speak into a rose crystal about my findings once a week.
- The job here was relatively boring; I have learned nothing that seemed out of the ordinary, except that Nelia is an exceptional thief and an astute merchant.
- I don't know who or what killed me, only that I must have died from a dagger or sword wound. Oh well; this existence is much better than the last.

After the battle, a search of the room reveals mostly mundane things. There is no rose crystal to be found. It seems as though Nelia has a taste for fine clothing, as her dresser and walk-in closet are covered in clothes. A character that rolls a Search check (DC 22) in the closet finds a secret door along the back wall. A successful Search check (DC 18) near the bed results in a strange finding. It appears that one of the legs of the bed has a cord attached to it, and runs into a hole in the floor. Pulling up the leg (or bed) pulls on the cord, which opens the secret door in the closet. A wooden staircase spirals down into the darkness.

Underground Area B

10. Nelia's Treasure Vault

The staircase continues downward, many paces deep. At the bottom it opens up into a stone room. A large wooden chest inlaid with gold sits in the middle of the otherwise empty room.

Consult Map 1. On it, there are "T" marks. These are the places that have pressure-sensitive traps in the room. The traps have the same function, and once activated, do not activate again. Finding a trap requires a Search skill check (DC 25); disarming one requires a Disable Device check (DC 22). Each square must be found and disabled separately; failing the Disable Device roll activates the trap.

Trap: If a character steps in the 5-foot square labeled "T", the ceiling opens up and drops a nasty cockatrice surprise on the PCs. Any character in the room may make a Spot check (DC 15) to notice the cockatrice(s). Heroes that make their Spot checks may act in the surprise round with a partial action.

Tier 1 (EL 3)

Cockatrice: CR 3; Small Magical Beast (3 ft. long); HD 5d10; hp 18; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor); AC 14 (+1 size, +3 Dex); Atks +4 melee (1d4-2, bite); SA Petrification; SQ Petrification immunity; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +2.

Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7. **Feats:** Alertness, Dodge.

SA: Petrification (Su)—A cockatrice can turn beings to stone with a touch. Creatures hit by a cockatrice must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or instantly turn to stone.

SQ: Petrification Immunity (Ex)—Cockatrices are immune to the petrifying ability of other cockatrices, but other petrifying attacks affect them normally (a medusa's gaze, gorgon's breath, a *flesh to stone* spell, etc.).

Tier 2 (EL 5)

Same as Tier 1, except there are two cockatrices (18 and 22 hp).

Tier 3 (EL 7)

Same as Tier 1, except there are four cockatrices (18, 20, 22, and 27 hp).

Tactics: The cockatrices drop in on the surprise round, and each gets one attack on the PCs as they fall (as their partial action). They fight fiercely and to the death, as they are cornered (and hungry).

Once the battle is finished, the characters may examine the chest. Upon the top of the chest is a symbol of a golden wand, on a blue field, with a green bolt of fire shooting out of the tip of the wand. There is a red star in the upper right hand corner of the blue field. Heroes who are wizards or sorcerers from Highfolk recognize it instantly as the symbol of the Guildsmen of the High Art (the wizard's guild). Characters that make a successful Knowledge (local) check (DC 15) (or

members of the Guildsmen of the High Art) recognize that the red star is the personal flourish of Wilmont the Sagely, one of the two founders of the guild. The chest is not trapped, and not locked. Inside, the heroes find a black and silver wand.

In addition, heroes that are successful in a Knowledge (arcana) skill check (DC 12) realize that cockatrice feathers can be quite valuable as quills in scribing magical scrolls. A successful Wilderness Lore check at DC 10 allows a hero to pick out 6 feathers that are suitable for quills. One character may attempt this check; if it fails, 1d3 quills of the six are broken when plucked.

Treasure from Nelia's treasure vault:

- Wand of web (2 charges). Value: 180 gp.
- Cockatrice feathers (up to 6). Value: see below.

The Attic

The attic is only accessible from the window (which is locked and trapped) on the roof. In the attic, there is a cage with the cockatrice(s) inside. When the trap in the treasure vault is triggered, the floor drops out of the area where the cage sits. The creatures fall (or fly) down a shaft to the treasure vault.

Conclusion: More Questions than Answers

Paxana and the Tough Choice

Once the heroes have gathered some information, they may wish to head back to the constable. They may share whatever information they wish with Paxana. Of course, omitting certain details or lying may change the actions that Paxana takes to ensure the safety of Highfolk.

If the heroes let Paxana know that Nelia is up to no good (whether telling her about the cockatrices or the stolen chest), she orders the Home Guard to keep a watch out for her return. Paxana lets the PCs know that she will be detained when she arrives. If the charges hold (which they do), Nelia is sentenced to spend 2 years in the Roots, and (of course) has to step down from the Council contest.

If the heroes tell Paxana that Jelvan, Telvest, and Rigert may be (or have been) involved with the Shadowclaw (or at least up to something suspicious), she summons members of the Fifth District (the special operations guardsmen) to retrieve Jelvan. The agents bring Jelvan in for questioning. He is forced to step down from the Council contest, but is not found guilty of any wrongdoing.

If the heroes tell all they know, Paxana does as listed above, and the Council seat formerly

occupied by Telvest Lorewin goes unfilled for another six months.

In any case, Paxana thanks the heroes for their service to the town. The Town Council receives word of their deeds, and honors the heroes with a night of toasts at the Vesve's Tankard.

Returning the Chest to Wilmont

If the heroes decide to return the chest they may have found to Wilmont, he is very thankful for its recovery. He does not ask where the PCs found it, but mentions that he does have a reward for the wand's recovery. He presents the characters with another wand, one of *ray of frost*.

If the heroes mention the cockatrice feathers, Wilmont seems intrigued. He offers to take the feathers and return half of them when specially treated. Wilmont says that the treated feathers may be handy one day when a hero wishes to create certain magic items. He also says he can give one a minor enchantment that allows the feather to be used as a quill, perfect as a focus for scribing scrolls. Wilmont makes good on his offer, and gives back half (round down) the feathers; one of them bears the enchantment he spoke of a few days before.

If any characters have been petrified, Wilmont says that he can restore them, but at a price. The first casting of *stone to flesh* he does for free, but the characters do not receive any Influence Points for the Guildsmen of the High Art (they are all burned in exchange for the spell). Each additional *stone to flesh* will cost the heroes 600 solars (gp). **There is also no guarantee that the petrified PC comes back to life; a Fortitude save (DC 15) must be made, or the character dies in the process.**

Treasure gained from the conclusion:

- Influence Point in Highfolk Town Council (if the heroes report back to Paxana).
- Influence Point in Guildsmen of the High Art (if the heroes bring back the chest).
- *Wand of ray of frost* (25 charges). Value: 187.5 gp.
- *Cockatrice quill pen*. This pen has been magically treated, and is the perfect focus to use to scribe scrolls. Any character scribing a magical scroll that possesses the pen cuts the gold piece cost of doing so by 20%. This pen does not in any way affect the XP cost or Time Unit requirement for scribing scrolls. Value: 250 gp.
- Cockatrice feather. This feather was taken from a cockatrice, and has been treated in such a way that it will not decay. Value: 50 gp.
- Cockatrice feather. This feather was taken from a cockatrice, and has been treated in such a way that it will not decay. Value: 50 gp.

Even though your hunt for the assassin ended up being fruitless, you have uncovered other dangers to the people of the Faidells. The investigations you have done leave more questions than answers. Who were those attackers outside Jelvan's home? What role, if any, did Rigert and Telvest play in all this? How much do Nelia and Jelvan know? To what depths have the Shadowclaw burrowed in Highfolk? You know that Paxana and her Home Guard won't sleep until the questions have been answered, and have a feeling that you'll be called upon again to assist in uncovering more of the mystery.

End of Power of Choice

Experience Point Summary

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the discretionary roleplaying experience award. The roleplaying award should be given for consistent character portrayal and contribution to the fun of the game. You can award different roleplaying amounts to different characters.

Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

Encounter 1

Reporting to Constable Eventhil right away	25 xp
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Encounter 2

Finding Telvest's note	50 xp
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Encounter 3

Finding Rigert's alchemical laboratory	25 xp
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Encounter 4

Talking with Garius Greybuck	25 xp
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Encounter 5

Gathering information from the Council	25 xp
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Encounter 8

Finding Nelia's note	50 xp
Defeating the sheet phantom	75 xp
Defeating the cockatrice(s)	100 xp
or	
Avoiding/disabling the cockatrice trap	150 xp
Bringing back the chest to the Guildsmen	25 xp

Discretionary roleplaying award	0-50 xp
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Total possible experience	500 xp
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Treasure Summary

Player characters may keep items from the scenario that are listed on the treasure list below or which meet the following conditions:

1. The item must be non-magical and specifically listed in the text of the adventure (e.g. armor on foes). If it is not listed in the text, the characters cannot keep it. Items of this nature can be sold for 50% of book value, or recorded on a log sheet.
2. Animals, followers, monsters, henchman, and so forth (any living being, basically) may not be kept from a scenario for any reason unless the treasure summary lists the being specifically. It is okay for the player characters to form relationships with NPCs, but these will not be certified and cannot bring material benefit to the character. Contacts (sources of extra information) must be specifically certified.
3. Theft is against the law, but may be practiced by some player characters. Items that are worth more than 500 gp, that are of personal significance to the owner (including family heirlooms), and all magical items, will be discovered in the possession of the character by one means or another. The character must return the item and pay a fine equal to three times the value of the item stolen. Alternatively, or if the character cannot afford the fine, the character may be incarcerated for a period of time dependant on the region and value of the theft. In addition, the PC caught receives campaign-decided penalties for being known as a thief, such as Infamy. For other stolen items which meet the criteria in #1 above, use your judgment and the circumstances within the game to determine whether a PC thief gets away with the theft or not.

Any item retained according to these rules, which does not have a certificate, will not ever have a certificate issued for it.

The campaign staff reserves the right to take away any item or gold acquired for things it later finds unreasonable but which were allowed at the time.

Encounter 3

Flask of alchemist's fire from Rigert's alchemical laboratory. (1 lb., glass flask, 20 gp, rarity: common): This item is described on page 113 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Encounter 8

Nelia's ring of sneaking from Nelia Gertrand's study. (1/10 lb., jade ring, 320 gp, rarity: rare): When worn, this jade ring gives a +4 enhancement bonus to the wearer's Move Silently skill.

Wand of web from Nelia Gertrand's treasure vault. (1/2 lb., black and silver wand, 180 gp, rarity: common): 2 charges.

Conclusion

- Wand of ray of frost given by Wilmont in exchange for the wand of web.

Wand of ray of frost (1/2 lb., bluish white wand, 187.5 gp, rarity: common): 25 charges.

- Cockatrice quill pen given to the PCs by Wilmont.

Cockatrice quill pen (Neg. weight, golden brown feather, 250 gp, rarity: unusual): This golden brown quill pen has been magically treated, and is the perfect focus to use to scribe scrolls. Any character scribing a magical scroll that possesses the pen cuts the gold piece cost of doing so by 20%. This pen does not in any way affect the XP cost or Time Unit requirement for scribing scrolls.

- Cockatrice feather given to the PCs by Wilmont.

Cockatrice feather (Neg. weight, golden brown feather, 50 gp, rarity: common): This feather was taken from a cockatrice, and has been treated in such a way that it will not decay.

- Cockatrice feather given to the PCs by Wilmont.

Cockatrice feather (Neg. weight, golden brown feather, 50 gp, rarity: common): This feather was taken from a cockatrice, and has been treated in such a way that it will not decay.

- Influence Point in Highfolk Town Council
- Influence Point in Guildsmen of the High Art

Handout 1

This is a note found in a desk drawer of Telvest Lorewin's home.

I thank you for your payment. It is good to work with someone who pays well enough that I may give my family all they wish. I have forwarded along the minutes of both the Council meetings [which rarely have any discussion worth mentioning] and the Merchant's Guild. I am certain that the information contained within those documents will serve you well. If you take my advice that I gave you when we last talked, the Home Guard should suspect nothing.

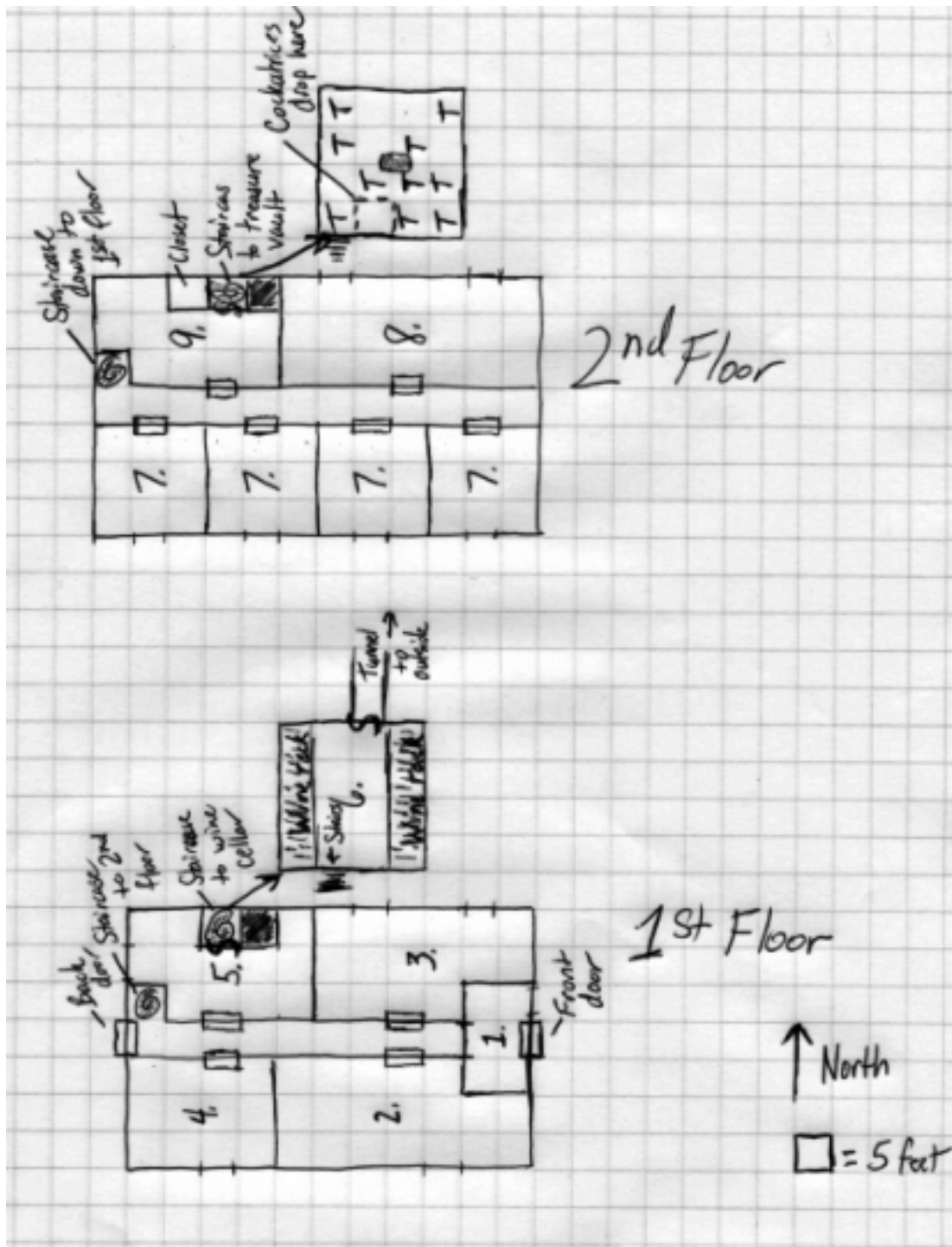
Handout 2

This is a note found in a desk drawer in Nelia Gertrand's home.

*To my brothers and sisters,
It seems that the insects have begun to leave their crawl spaces. I fear that we may have tipped our hand a bit too soon, but no matter. The deed has been done, and now we must move forward. It appears that Telvest Lorewin, Rigert Bertleblom, and possibly Felvan Thaenmill may be among those who seek to do Highfolk, and by extension us, harm. I am taking steps to prevent the spread of the disease - I have recently announced that I am running for Highfolk Town Council. Perhaps then, being that close to danger, I will get the answers we desire.*

Map 1

This is a map of Nelia Gertrand's home, useful for the DM to set up Encounter 8.



Appendix A: NPC and Monster Statistics

Encounter 1

Paxana Eventhil, female half-elf Ftr4/Rog3: Medium humanoid (5 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 4d10 + 3d6; hp 38; Init +2; Spd 30; AC 18 (+2 Dex, +2 *chain shirt*); Atks +8/+3 melee (1d8+3 [crit 17-20], +1 *keen longsword*), or +7/+2 melee (1d4 [crit 19-20], masterwork silver dagger), or +7/+2/-3 ranged (1d8+1 [crit x3], +1 *composite longbow*); SA Sneak attack +2d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +4.

Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12, Forgery +6, Gather Information +12, Innuendo +12, Languages (Common, Elven, Goblin, Sylvan), Listen +6, Read Lips +12, Search +5, Sense Motive +12, Spot +6. **Feats:** Alertness, Leadership, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Equipment: +2 *chain shirt*, +1 *keen longsword*, +1 *composite longbow*, masterwork silver dagger, 20 arrows.

Personality Traits: Vigilant, easy-going (except during crisis situations like the current one), sly, insightful.

Encounter 8

9. Nelia's Bedroom

Tier 1 (EL 1)

Sheet Phantom: CR 1; Medium-size Undead (5 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 3d12; hp 20; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., fly 20 ft. (perfect); AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural); Atks +3 melee (1d4+2 subdual, buffet); SA Smother, improved grab; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., immune to blunt weapons, undead immunities, weaknesses; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0.

Str 15, Dex 16, Con -, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills: Listen +8, Move Silently +16. **Feats:** Blind-Fight.

SA: Improved Grab (Ex)—A successful attack indicates the phantom deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. (See Grapple on page 137 of the *Player's Handbook*.) **Smother (Ex)**—If the phantom succeeds at the grapple, it has wrapped itself around its prey. The following round, the victim must either hold her breath or begin taking suffocation damage. (This works just as if the character were drowning; see The Drowning Rule on page 85 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.) A victim can escape a sheet phantom's embrace by making an opposed grappling check or an Escape Artist roll against the phantom's grappling roll. While embraced, a victim can only use a Tiny weapon like a dagger, and then only if it was in hand when first enveloped by the sheet phantom. Damage inflicted on a sheet phantom while it encompasses a victim causes an equal amount of damage to the victim. Blunt weapons inflict full

damage upon the victim but do not harm the sheet phantom.

SQ: Undead—Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage. **Weaknesses**—For all their deadly suffocation ability, sheet phantoms have a number of weaknesses. Holy water inflicts 1d4+4 points of damage per vial instead of the standard 2d4 points of damage. In addition, all fire-based attacks (normal or magical) inflict an extra point of damage per die. Finally, sheet phantoms recoil from natural sunlight and bright lights (like a *daylight* spell). If exposed to direct sunlight, sheet phantoms take 1d3 points of damage. They move at half speed during the day.

Tier 2 (EL 2)

Same as Tier 1, except for the following:

Sheet Phantom: CR 2; HD 4d12; hp 26; Atks +4 melee; SV Fort +1, Will +1. **Skills:** Move Silently +18.

Tier 3 (EL 3)

Same as Tier 2, except for the following:

Sheet Phantom: CR 3; HD 6d12; hp 39; Atks +5 melee; SV Ref +4. **Skills:** Listen +8, Move Silently +20.

10. Nelia's Treasure Vault

Tier 1 (EL 3)

Cockatrice: CR 3; Small Magical Beast (3 ft. long); HD 5d10; hp 18; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor); AC 14 (+1 size, +3 Dex); Atks +4 melee (1d4-2, bite); SA Petrification; SQ Petrification immunity; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +2.

Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7. **Feats:** Alertness, Dodge.

SA: Petrification (Su)—A cockatrice can turn beings to stone with a touch. Creatures hit by a cockatrice must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or instantly turn to stone.

SQ: Petrification Immunity (Ex)—Cockatrices are immune to the petrifying ability of other cockatrices, but other petrifying attacks affect them normally (a medusa's gaze, gorgon's breath, a *flesh to stone* spell, etc.).

Tier 2 (EL 5)

Same as Tier 1, except there are two cockatrices (18 and 22 hp).

Tier 3 (EL 7)

Same as Tier 1, except there are four cockatrices (18, 20, 22, and 27 hp).

Appendix B: Sheet Phantom from *Dragon* #276

Power of Choice

APPENDIX: THE SHEET PHANTOM AND SHEET GHOUL

SHEET PHANTOM

Medium-Size Undead

Hit Dice	1d12 (20 hp)
Initiative	+3 (Dex)
Speed	20 ft., fly 20 ft. (perfect)
AC	17 (+3 Dexterity, +4 natural)
Attacks	Buffet +3 melee
Damage	Buffet 1d4+2 subdual
Special Attacks	Smother, improved grab
Special Qualities	Undead, darkvision 60 ft., immune to blunt weapons, weaknesses
Saves	Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0
Abilities	Str 15, Dex 18, Con —, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15
Skills	Listen +8, Move Silently +5
Feats	Blind-Fight

Climate/Terrain Buildings
Organization Solitary (1)
Challenge Rating 1
Treasure None
Alignment Chaotic evil
Advancement Range 4-6 HD (Medium-size); 7-9 HD (Large)

SHEET GHOUL

Medium-Size Undead

Hit Dice	1d12 (25 hp)
Initiative	+2 (Dex)
Speed	30 ft.
AC	18 (+2 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks	2 claws +3 melee, bite +0 melee
Damage	Claws 1d3+2, bite 1d6+2
Special Attacks	Acid spray
Special Qualities	Undead, darkvision 60 ft.
Saves	Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0
Abilities	Str 14, Dex 15, Con —, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 14
Skills	Climb +6, Hide +4, Jump +6, Listen +10, Move Silently +8, Search +6, Spot +8
Feats	Multi-Attack, Weapon Finesse (claw)

Climate/Terrain Any land or underground
Organization Solitary (1)
Challenge Rating 2
Treasure Standard
Alignment Chaotic evil
Advancement Range 5-8 HD (Medium-size); 9-12 HD (Large)

A sheet phantom is the undead manifestation of an evil person who died in bed, embodied in the bedsheet that covered the corpse. It has no facial features save two glowing, green eyespots. Sheet phantoms glide effortlessly through the air by an innate form of telekinesis.

Combat
Sheet phantoms attack by dropping upon unsuspecting prey and suffocating them in the folds of their bodies.

Improved Grab (Ex): A successful attack indicates the phantom deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. (See Grapple on page 137 in the PH.) If the phantom succeeds at the grapple, it has wrapped itself around its prey. The following round, the victim must either hold her breath or begin taking suffocation damage. (A character can hold her breath for 2 rounds per point of Constitution. After this time, the character must make a Constitution check (DC 10) in order to continue to hold her breath. The check must be repeated each round, and the DC increases by +1 for each previous success.) If the victim runs out of breath, she falls unconscious (0 hp). In the following round, she drops to -1 hit points and is dying. In the third round, she suffocates. A victim can escape a sheet phantom's embrace by making an opposed grappling check or an Escape Artist roll against the sheet phantom's grappling roll. While encumbered, a victim can only use a Tiny weapon like a dagger, and then only if it was in hand when first enveloped by the sheet phantom. Damage inflicted on a sheet phantom while it encompasses a victim causes an equal amount of damage to the victim. Blunt weapons inflict full damage upon the victim but do not harm the sheet phantom.

Undead: Sheet phantoms are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, and disease. They are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Weaknesses: For all their deadly suffocation ability, sheet phantoms have a number of weaknesses. Holy water inflicts 1d4+4 points of damage per vial on a sheet phantom instead of the standard 2d4 points of damage. In addition, all fire-based attacks (normal or magical) inflict an extra point of damage per die. Finally, sheet phantoms recoil from natural sunlight and bright lights (like a daylight spell). If exposed to direct sunlight, sheet phantoms take 1d3 points of damage. They move at half speed during the day.

Spawn
A sheet phantom can merge with the body of any humanoid it slays. The process takes about 12 hours, after which time the victim and sheet phantom transform into a sheet ghoul.

A sheet ghoul is the result of a sheet phantom merging with its humanoid victim. It looks like a normal ghoul, but closer inspection might reveal wispy strands of white material clinging to its face like cobwebs or a decaying shroud. This is the remains of the sheet phantom's linen form.

Sheet ghouls devour carrion and freshly killed prey.

Combat
Sheet ghouls rend with their claws and bite with their sharp teeth.

Acid (Su): A sheet ghoul's breath weapon is a fine spray of powerful stomach acid that inflicts 1d8+1 points of damage, or half that with a successful Reflex save (DC 14). The acid stream has a range of 10 feet and can target only a single victim. A ghoul can spray acid in melee combat, but it cannot use its bite attack if it uses the acid spray. Spraying acid is a ranged attack, so using this ability in melee combat provokes attacks of opportunity.

Undead: Same as sheet phantom.

Sheet phantoms silently glide by drawing over their victims and suffocating them.

Critical Events Summary - Conflagration in Highfolk

1. Did the heroes refrain from attacking Varian Greenpath?

Yes No

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 2. Did the heroes talk with Jelvan Thaenmill? | Yes | No |
| 3. Did the heroes report all they learned from Varian to Paxana Eventhil? | Yes | No |
| 4. Were any of the heroes arrested for breaking into homes? | Yes | No |
| 5. Did the characters discover Telvest's note? | Yes | No |
| 6. Did the PCs mention to Garius that they were suspicious of Telvest and Rigert? | Yes | No |
| 7. Did the heroes discover Nelia's note? | Yes | No |
| 8. Did a PC keep Nelia's ring? | Yes | No |

Please list the character name, player name, and RPGA number of any character that was awarded Varian's elven thinblade.

If a character reacted positively to Emerilda's advances, please list the character name, player name, and RPGA number of that character.

Please list the character name, player name, and RPGA number of any character that got along well with Gylias Meadowdawn.

Please list the character name, player name, and RPGA number of any character that got along well with Rekar Hammerstrike.

Briefly state the information that was given to Paxana about the findings in the characters' investigations.
