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DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

60



THRONES OF PUNJAR

BY RICK MAFFEI
AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVEL 7





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AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 7-9

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INTRODUCTION

Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

Thrones of Punjar is designed for five characters of 7th through 9th level. A good mix of character classes is recommended to handle the challenges presented herein, and having a rogue in the party would prove particularly useful. Diplomacy and Insight are of great use in this adventure.

The setting of this adventure is the city of Punjar in the Known Realms. If you do not own the *Æreth* campaign setting, we recommend you locate the adventure in a large city in an arid locale.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

A rash of strange disappearances has overtaken the Devil's Thumb ward in the teeming city of Punjar. The populace is gripped in a wave of fear, and recent sightings of a frightful apparition in the area of the disappearances have only increased their apprehension. Days ago, the relative of an important ambassador went missing, and unless she can be returned unharmed, the city's reputation will suffer a terrible blow. The player characters must investigate the scant clues available, a trek that will expose a hidden cult of enthralled humans working at the whim of an abomination lurking in the dangerous sewer tunnels beneath the city. Yet another puppet master lurks behind this latest crime, pulling the strings, and if they are to be completely successful, the player characters must discover the involvement of the Punjar nobility in these crimes.

Loc	Pg	Type	Encounter	EL
1-3	11	C	<i>The Scarlet Dogs</i>	6
1-5	13	C	<i>Haroun and Jarib</i>	7
1-6	14	P/C	<i>The ghost of Jeya Furei</i>	5
2-1	16	T	Rusting Rungs	1
2-2	16	C	Mighty Otyugh	9
2-3	17	T/C	Green Slime Advanced Gelatinous Cube	5
2-4	18	T	Tilting Trap	1
2-6	18	C	Eight Thralls The Blacksmith	7
	20	C	Diplomacy Skill Challenge <i>Jacober, Apprentice</i>	6
G1-3	22	C	Bloodweb Spider Swarm	1
Incursion	24	C	Four Doomcreepers Two Thralls	6
Ambush	25	C	Three Doppelganger Thugs	5
Drink	29	T/C	Beluth	7
P2-3	32	T	Bolt Statue Trap	5
P2-6	33	C	Eight Alligators	7
P2-7	34	C	Seven Skum	8
P2-9	34	C	Eight Skum	9
P2-10	35	C	Four Elder Thralls	7
P2-11	36	P	Door Puzzle	1
P2-12	36	C	Nine Thralls <i>Callota</i>	9
P2-13	37	C	Two Wizard Thralls Six Advanced Dire Rats	8
P2-14	38	C/T	<i>Beluth</i> Thrall Barbed Net Trap	9
P2-15	39	C	Three Thralls Mutated crocodile	8
P2-17	40	T	Rolling Death Trap	5
P2-18	41	C	Mutated Thrall	6
P2-19	43	C	<i>Churldtyrch</i> , Albino Aboleth Four Skum	10

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

ENCOUNTER TABLE

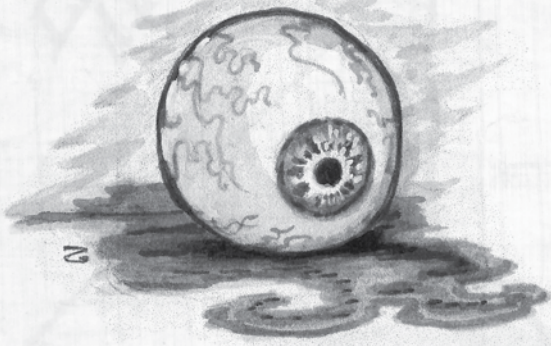
To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** — the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** — the module page number that the encounter can be found on. **Type** — this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** — the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in *italics* are classed NPCs. **EL** — the encounter level.

SCALING INFORMATION

Thrones of Punjar is intended for 5 characters of 7th through 9th level, but it can be easily modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Using characters averaging 4th level or below is not recommended. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

Weaker parties (4 or fewer characters and/or below 7th level): Remove one level from Haroun and Jarib in area 1–5. Remove two levels from the mighty otyugh in area 2–2. Remove two skum from the encounters in area P2–7 and P2–9. Remove two thralls from area P2–12. Remove two advanced dire rats from area P2–13. Remove the barbed net trap from area P2–14. Remove two skum from area P2–19.

Stronger parties (6 or more characters and/or higher than 9th level): The adventure should still be a challenge for stronger characters, but you might consider the following minor changes. Add a level to each of the Scarlet Dogs in area 1–3. Add a level to Haroun and Jarib in area 1–5. Add two more levels to the advanced gelatinous cube in area 2–3. Add another elder thrall to area P2–10. Add two more advanced dire rats to area P2–13. Add one level to Beluth in area P2–14 (and anywhere lese he appears in the adventure). Add two levels to Churlydytyrch in area P2–19.



A NOTE ABOUT CITY ADVENTURING

A city presents a unique adventuring environment—a combination of both unusual freedom of action and constraint for the player characters.

The environs of a large city offer the PCs (and players) a multitude of options for investigation and exploration, and any city adventure typically requires a more-experienced GM to “keep the players on track” from time to time. This should not daunt the GM, as the city environment also presents an unparalleled opportunity for role-play and NPC interaction. A city such as Punjar is filled with a profusion of interesting people, from the humble streetsweeper to the haughty noble. Each has his or her own unique agenda and mind-set... and each could introduce the PCs to yet more adventure!

A civilized city also presents some constraints, in the form of a system of law and order the like of which rarely exists deep in the average dungeon, ruin, or wilderness expanse. PC actions are limited, and those individuals displaying fierce magical power in public, or engaging in wanton destruction may well find themselves incarcerated. Good players will learn to balance the freedom a city offers with a bit of restraint. Often, the best-laid plans in cities are the subtle ones, and often, a well-voiced word can be as effective as a sharp sword.

THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW

The player characters may, at times, be tempted to approach local enforcers for help. Enforcement of the laws in Punjar is handled on a district-by-district basis, each ward having its own enforcers loyal to the ward's syndicate boss, or *Meh'a* (“braggart” or “boastful” in the city cant) and its own separate set of laws. As the wards reach outward, they get poorer and increasingly desperate, and the acceptance of the code of civilization gets weaker. Justice in the Devil's Thumb is particularly tricky, as the ward is filled with lower class citizens. However, it has a mixture of both high- and low-class establishments, as well—many of which are frequented by city nobles. For commoners and visitors, the laws are applied loosely, and those who have made generous “donations” to key city officials gain the best service... just as the poor gain little at all. Strangers are the least regarded, unless they represent something valuable to the true rulers of Punjar. The enforcers, known commonly as the *marfud* (“the rejected”), patrol and harass, but dislike intervening in street fights and similar situations. They do not enter the alleys in the more dangerous wards unless in large, well-armed groups.

In short, approaching the *marfud* for help wastes precious time (something the PCs do not have in abundance in this adventure), and may actually put them in greater danger. Those living in Punjar know the one immutable fact that governs the city: No one helps anyone without good reason, and no one is ever to be trusted.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

The following hooks can be used to get the players involved in the adventure:

- The characters are directly contacted by a slumlord and asked to help solve the mystery of the disappearances and to recover the ambassador's daughter. The lord is aware that the adventurers have made a name for themselves doing dangerous work, and he asks for aid while appealing to the PCs' honorable reputation.
- The player characters have been hired by the ambassador himself to uncover the truth and rescue his daughter. Fearful that the nobles of Punjar were moving too slowly and trusting them little, he decided to take action and send in his own group of investigators.
- The player characters overhear conversation in the streets regarding the disappearances and the sighting of the ghostly figure. When they are observed showing interest, the speakers direct them to parchments hanging about the Devil's Thumb asking for brave adventurers to help the city solve the mystery. The citizens state that if the characters are indeed "real heroes," they will get involved without hesitation and defeat this evil that plagues the city.
- If a good-aligned paladin or cleric is among the group, a local good-aligned cleric visits the PC and asks them to investigate the dangerous haunting of the Devil's Thumb and put the spirit to rest. The cleric provides holy water with which to cleanse the area after the deed is done. (If this option is used, the PCs should overhear talk about the disappearance of the ambassador's daughter from street vendors or the like.)

BACKGROUND STORY

DISAPPEARANCES

In the last few months, the citizens of the Devil's Thumb ward have grown suspicious and fearful. A number of strange disappearances have taken place in the alleys and streets of the ward, usually after nightfall, and rumors are rife. If these disappearances do not abate, the ward constabulary may be forced to impose strict curfews or other sterner measures to maintain order.

THE HAUNT

Adding to the complication of the recent disappearances, a spectral figure has been seen in the alleys near where at least one disappearance has taken place. This ghostly figure has made at least three appearances, the last to a fishmonger in the Devil's Thumb named Crudell. Exact descriptions vary wildly, but the figure is always described as transparent and fearsome in appearance.

THE OUTCAST

In the deeper recesses of the Lirean Sea, a freakish birth occurred, an aberration among aberrations. Churlydtyrch was a true rarity—an albino aboleth. The ghostly white aboleth was born physically weak, but is strong in the powers of magic and mental domination. The creature toiled in the study of magic, endlessly seeking ways to supplement its strength while enslaving creatures to act as its servitors. Despite the pale one's great talent for magic, it was an outcast in aboleth society, and soon found itself driven out of the aboleth-held areas.

After a period of wandering, and several near-fatal encounters with hostile members of its own kind and other creatures of the underdark (principally dark elves), Churlydtyrch plied the coast of the Southern Province and discovered an entrance to the deep sewers of Punjar. Initially hesitant, the evil creature soon discovered that dwelling beneath the city gave it access to both food and new slaves. Soon, with the assistance of its skum servants, Churlydtyrch soon secured a lair within a less-used area of the waterways and quickly set about enslaving every intelligent creature that stumbled upon its home. In a matter of months, the aboleth was comfortably encircled by servitors. Anxious to increase its personal power and discover further forms of magic, Churlydtyrch carefully enslaved some humanoids, but left them able to breathe air—so much the better to act as the creature's eyes and ears aboveground.

HOUSE ROHAMARI

Among the many competing noble houses of Punjar, House Rohamari sits on the lower end of the power scale. The House has depleted much of its wealth—indeed, they are far poorer than the other nobles would guess—and many of the Rohamari nobles consider the House to be in desperate straits. Other noble houses occupy positions of power in the Trader's Cabal or in the other official Punjar ruling councils, but House Rohamari is known only for its ownership of the Palace of Fortuity, a gambling establishment of some renown. The so-called Palace is little more than a tavern-sized structure, but the place turns a handy profit by catering to wealthy gamblers willing to brave the Devil's Thumb ward for a chance to win a tidy sum. By keeping a healthy share of the bets placed and charging excessive amounts for food and drink, the Palace has helped keep the members of House Rohamari living in the manner to which they are accustomed.

Unfortunately, the Palace of Fortuity is not the only gambling establishment in the Devil's Thumb. Approximately one year ago, House Malhaven established the House of Fate, a gambling establishment that soon threatened to rival the Palace for popularity. Needless to say, the panic among the Rohamari nobles was great. The elders of House Rohamari quickly grew to hate the Malhavens and seethed for revenge.

THE SERVANT'S TALE

A minor servant of the House Rohamari, one Adray, disappeared one day while running an errand in the Devil's Thumb. He was soon forgotten, but then, months later, he arrived at the doorstep of the Rohamari villa, emaciated and filthy, but alive. He told a harrowing tale to the nobles as they bound his wounds, a tale of being knocked down in an alley, pulled into the sewers, and dragged before a hideous, fleshy abomination that stared at him with three pulsing red eyes before he felt his very will being sapped away. His next memory was walking in the sewers near several lizard-like humanoids. Confused, but retaining a dim memory of his earlier encounter, he immediately fled. His flight led him to a tunnel infested with more of the humanoids, which quickly moved to surround him. However, with a strength born of fear, he evaded his captors and was able to find an access route to the streets above. He climbed to the street and fled without stopping to the villa, where he promptly collapsed.

A clever, ruthless Rohamari noble by the name of Beluth soon became aware of the servant's story. Tending to the servant personally, he saw to it that the man received the best of care and was reinstated in his former household. The servant was shocked to discover that his disappearance had occurred months before, as he retained no memory of the incident beyond the frightful initial encounter, but his gratitude was great. Beluth recognized the servant's description of the creature as matching tales he had heard in his travels of the water-dwelling aboleth, an intelligent fish-like creature that enslaved men. He withdrew from his fellow nobles to ponder over this discovery, and soon came upon a plan.

Unwilling to brave a possible encounter with such a creature himself, Beluth selected several young servants and sent each to a different alley in the area where Adray originally disappeared. Each runner carried a sealed scroll tube that carried a special message. The runners were forbidden to open the tubes, and knew nothing except that they were to meet a (fictitious) party in the alley to which they were sent. Eventually, all the puzzled servants returned except for the runner sent to a long alley called Slaughterstone. That servant did not return. Beluth, upon hearing the news, feigned distress and patiently waited for contact. A week later, his patience was rewarded.

AN EXPLORATORY MESSAGE

The aboleth's enslaved servants knew that all items of value discovered on new victims were to be presented, with the victims, to their master. When the Rohamari servant was dragged by the skum before Churlydtyrch, he bore the sealed scroll on his person. Churlydtyrch unfurled the scroll, and utilizing his magic, deciphered the words upon the vellum. The message offered the aboleth assistance, further victims, and expanded power if it worked with a man of the world above. The message also promised that a refusal or lack of response might be greeted by a huge party of armed men sent into the sewers below Punjar. The aboleth was angered at the threat implicit in the note, but it longed for more power and treasure. Faced with possible

BELUTH

Born into higher society, Beluth left the city in his youth, seeking greater exploits in the greater realms beyond Punjar. He traveled extensively, and in later years, he was an adventurer and member of the widely traveled Company of Five, a group of somewhat unsavory repute. He remained an adventurer until the fateful day that the Company entered the lair of a black dragon, an ill-fated encounter that left but two adventurers alive, one of them Beluth, and the other a seriously wounded human ranger. Realizing that the dragon was also grievously injured, Beluth swiftly struck out with his sword, coolly dispatching his remaining companion before moving to slay the dragon and capturing its horde for himself. It was a difficult journey, but Beluth managed the trek back to Punjar from the wilderness unaided. Using his newfound gold, he soon built the Palace of Fortuity and quit adventuring altogether.

He views the aboleth as a great opportunity—one that can gain his House great power, as the creature's enthralled slaves follow his bidding. Beluth is willing to gamble that if he can keep the aboleth aligned to his cause, the creature's ever-growing thralls are perfect fodder to throw against his enemies—perhaps even the Slayers themselves—while his noble house reaps the benefits. He is very careful to never meet with Churlydtyrch in person or allow himself to enter the sewers without a personal guard.

Beluth is an urbane individual, glib of tongue, charming, and a fast thinker. He speaks easily, but reveals little of himself or his family's private business. He radiates cool composure always, and his practiced sangfroid is legendary in Punjar's noble circles. He seems quite unflappable, but actually has a quick temper and greatly prefers entering all situations at a considerable tactical advantage. Beluth's public persona is that of the reformed adventurer and cultivated nobleman, but his family members and adversaries know him for what he truly is: a ruthless manipulator who delights in iniquitous behavior of every stripe.

Beluth always purposefully dresses in fine linens that indicate his station, and he was once quite handsome, but he now carries a permanent souvenir of his encounter with the dragon—much of the right side of his face is melted away to the bone, though his right eye was spared. Aware of the extreme reaction his face generates in polite company, he has taken to wearing a custom-made half-mask of studded leather that covers much of his right profile. His intense eyes are an unusual cerulean, and when Beluth is angry, his icy, implacable glance has been known to pause even experienced rogues in their tracks.

discovery and tempted by the offer, Churlydytyrch made the necessary arrangements to respond with a crude message of its own.

Communication between the two parties was slow at first, but eventually regular statements were exchanged, supplemented with fresh victims or bits of treasure for the aboleth. The “man above” offered to create a false cult based around the aboleth, to better to provide it with select victims and greater knowledge of the city above. Beluth, for his part, asked only that on rare occasion he be allowed to make use of the cult’s enthralled members for special tasks.

The aboleth agreed to the bargain, and in the coming weeks the creature’s body of victims increased, and the so-called cult was created. Soon a group of enslaved men toiled beneath the Palace of Fortuity, creating chambers dedicated to the worship of the “Secluded One,” a false deity based loosely on the Hidden Lord. Beluth used means both subtle and secretive to spread word of the cult, and slowly but surely lone men were lured to the cult chambers beneath the Palace with the promise of joining the cult of the “Secluded One.” Most were never seen again. The weak fell under the aboleth’s sway, and the strong were captured and held as a future meal for the aboleth or its minions.

Anxious to find a means of disgracing House Malhaven, Beluth soon found just the opportunity he had hoped for... the Malhavens would never endure the *dégringolade* that was sure to ensue. And so long as House Rohamari controls the creature in the sewers, they also control an expanding army of slaves with which to eventually ascend to the very throne of Punjar itself.

A HOUSE DISGRACED

Although Punjar is rife with internal squabbles, the city authorities generally try to “present a good face” to other neighboring cities and towns (even as they eagerly plot behind the scenes). The various noble houses often share the responsibility of entertaining high-ranking visitors, and recently it fell to the Malhavens to officially receive Ardwen Toldara, sole daughter of the Kassantian ambassador.

As the lass was being escorted through the Devil’s Thumb, tragedy struck—her party was ambushed and rapidly surrounded by unknown assailants. Mortally wounded, one of Ardwen’s guards lived long enough to reach the docks and call for assistance, but the ambassador’s daughter and the second guard were nowhere to be found. It is uncertain exactly where the attack even occurred, and a hasty search of the area provided no clues.

The Malhavens are desperate to find the girl and save face, and they have secretly used their political connections to involve the ward constabulary in the matter. The Kassantian ambassador has in the meantime demanded an explanation, and he is traveling to Punjar to investigate the matter personally. The authorities are urgently seeking a party with the bravery and abilities to quickly locate the ambassador’s daughter. If the girl turns up dead or remains missing for long, House Malhaven will be publicly disgraced and incur citywide opprobrium for months.

TIME

In this adventure, time is of the essence. The PCs are assumed to become involved in the adventure in the late afternoon. The PCs have two days to locate and rescue the ambassador’s daughter; otherwise, she will meet a gruesome fate at the hands of the aboleth cult.

BASIC CHRONOLOGY OF DAYS

DAY ONE (LATE AFTERNOON)

The heroes become involved.

DAY THREE (EARLY EVENING)

Ardwen Toldara is slain.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

The GM should refer to the Adventure Flowchart for a rough outline of the most likely order of events to take place in this adventure. In addition, the GM should carefully read the entire adventure before attempting play. Clues are provided so clever players may link one section to another, but depending on your group’s play style, you may have to give them some additional aid. At times of need, the PCs could receive additional information from an anonymous message, a bizarre dream, a soothsayer’s public prediction, or the like. Do not make it too easy for them—accomplishing the mission will be more satisfying for all concerned if the players put together the puzzle pieces on their own, and their characters’ victory is a legitimate one.

PLAYER BEGINNING

You entered the busy streets of Punjar mere hours ago, and your ears still ring with the sound of shouting drovers steering overloaded wagons through the sandy thoroughfares, and the cacophony of bellowing street vendors waving silks, kabobs, fruit, and all manner of items for sale. The city is a chaotic mix of cultures, races, and classes—rich, bedecked nobles push past filthy beggars, as young urchins dart about parties of gawking foreign visitors. The Devil’s Thumb is a grittier, rougher area of the city, but no less chaotic, filled with taverns, festhalls, and gambling dens, around which laborers, travelers, rogues, gamblers, con men, and rakes swarm like a cloud of angry hornets.

The coolness of the tent overhead gives you a moment’s respite from the late afternoon’s oppressive heat. On the table before you lies the only clue to the rash of disappearances: a scrap of paper bearing two names—the name of a man who claims to have personally seen the ghostlike being, and the name of the only person, a mere boy, to have spoken with Ardwen’s guard before he died. It is not much, but these clues are all you have—you have perhaps a day or two at most before Ardwen Toldara is to be given up for dead and your mission is deemed a failure.

NOTORIETY AND EVENTS

This adventure employs an optional Notoriety system. Certain PC actions or encounters will add to the party's *notoriety score*, which starts at zero points. Each encounter or action that can increase the PCs' notoriety score is noted. Certain locations have events connected with them; if the party notoriety score has reached a certain level, these events will be triggered. Some events are designated as *set events*; these events occur automatically and no specific notoriety score is required to activate them. The party notoriety score can also affect Wandering Monster checks (see next section).

WANDERING MONSTERS

The following encounters are presented as standard wandering monsters, but the GM is encouraged to purposefully roll for an encounter below when there has been a lull in the action, the players are growing too restive, or the PCs are having too easy a time of it. Note that player characters walking the streets of Punjar during the daytime pass and see many people, carts, pack animals, and other common city sights; the encounters detailed below are somewhat more out of the ordinary.

This adventure employs an optional Notoriety system, as described previously. Whenever the GM rolls on the Wandering Monster table below, he should add the party's current notoriety score to the roll (ignore totals over a 10). Thus, as the PCs become more involved in the intrigues of Punjar they risk drawing the attention of their enemies and exposing themselves to greater danger.

1d8 + Notoriety	Encounter
1	Filth from above
2-3	Overtured cart
4-5	Gang of Toughs
6-7	The Beggar
8	The Pickpocket
9	The Note
10	The Cobra master

FILTH FROM ABOVE

As the party walks alongside a building, the last player character in line unceremoniously receives the contents of a chamber pot down his or her back. The incident is merely an accident, the pot being emptied by a careless goodwife, and the GM is encouraged to play it to humorous effect.

OVERTURED CART

The PCs encounter a merchant with an overturned cart. One wheel of his cart is broken and several tuns of wine threaten to spill out of the cart's interior and onto the street. The fellow is desperately trying to control his horses and right the cart.

A PC employing a successful Nature skill challenge (DC 15, 3 successes before 2 failures) can quiet the horses, allowing the merchant to tend to his cart. It takes the man 20 minutes to fix the wheel well enough to resume travel.

If the PCs lend constructive aid of any sort, the merchant, one Najib, is most grateful. Note: If the PCs journey to the Palace of Fortuity at any point in the adventure, they encounter Najib there as he makes a wine delivery.

GANG OF TOUGHS (EL 5, XP 900)

The PCs are approached by a band of meh'as, accompanied by a harried-looking noblewoman. "These are the men that stole my goods!" she cries, pointing an accusing finger at the party. The squad draws weapons, and the leader asks the party to stop and face them slowly.

This is a case of mistaken identity, and the noblewoman (a lesser noble named Meleryn) has confused two members of the PC party for muggers who struck her from behind a few streets away. If the PCs keep their heads, a successful Diplomacy or Bluff skill challenge (DC 15, 4 successes before 2 failures) convinces the watch leader of their innocence. If a PC thinks to speak to Meleryn directly (which the watch members allow if the PCs aren't abusive), a DC 15 Diplomacy check or Bluff check jogs her memory and earns them a +2 bonus on Bluff and Diplomacy checks with the watch leader.

If the PCs cannot talk their way out of the situation or otherwise escape without fighting, they are asked to accompany the meh'as to the nearest bolthole, where it takes 1d3 hours to sort out the mess and clear the PCs of any accusations. If the PCs are foolish enough to attack the marfud, they fight back with deadly force. If any watchman falls, one surviving marfud blows into a tiny whistle for assistance (bringing an additional squad of 1d10 meh'as 3d6 minutes later).

Meh'as Enforcer (6)

Level 3 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid, human XP 150

Initiative +5

Senses Perception +6

HP 47; Bloodied 23

AC 20; Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 14

Speed 5

↑ Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon

+10 vs.AC; 1d8+3 damage, the target is marked until the end of the meh'as' next turn.

↑ Hampering Strike (standard; recharge 5-6) ♦

Weapon

Requires longsword; +10 vs.AC; 1d8+3 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Vigilant Guard

Enemies flanking a meh'as enforcer when the meh'as is adjacent to an ally gain no benefits from the flank, such as combat advantage.

Alignment Unaligned Languages Common

Skills Streetwise +7

Str 16 (+4)

Dex 15 (+3)

Wis 11 (+1)

Con 15 (+3)

Int 10 (+1)

Cha 12 (+2)

Equipment chainmail, heavy shield, longsword



THE BEGGAR

A gnarled old beggar squats here in the street and reaches urgently toward any PC happening past. “Pity an old traveler, being travelers yourselves. Take kindness on an old man, and knowledge may be yours.” He turns his blind, unseeing eyes toward the party, licks his crackled lips, and holds out his hands, waiting.

This poor wretch is Groddar Halpurn, one-time adventurer and traveler of the Known Realms. He became crippled after a tavern fight and fell on bad luck, eventually losing his possessions to unlucky games of chance. He now begs on the street for enough to feed himself. If given a few coins or decent food, he profusely thanks the party and begs them draw close. He then whispers, “All is not well at the Palace. Eschiva knows of the hidden evil. Seek her out.” He imparts no more, and persistent questions are met by whispered ravings and mutterings of “troubles below” as he crawls away, but little else of value.

THE PICKPOCKET (EL 3, XP 700)

Hardo is a halfling scoundrel in the employ of House Rohamari, and he has been paid to follow the comings and going of the PCs. During an opportune moment, he follows behind the party and attempts to either pickpocket or sabotage the last PC in line. Hardo attempts to lift a visible item of worth, targeting magical weapons first, then magical items (such as scrolls or potions), then smaller weapons. Failing this, he stealthily cuts purse strings or scabbard straps, weakening them so the straps or strings part sometime in the immediate future (the GM is encouraged to choose a particularly vexing time for this to occur).

If caught, Hardo will hurriedly attempt to talk his way out of the situation, claiming everything and anything—including being a halfling prince traveling incognito—to get out of the situation intact. If this fails, he does his best to break away and melt into the crowd.

Hardo

Level 8 Elite Lurker

Medium natural humanoid, halfling **XP 700**

Initiative +13 **Senses Perception** +10

HP 138; **Bloodied** 69

AC 24; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22;

see also *nimble feet*

Saving Throws +2

Speed 6

Action Points 1

↑ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+13 vs.AC; 1d4 + 5 damage

↑ **Rending Daggers** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

Hardo makes two dagger attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, the target suffers ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

↑ **Rogues' Feint** (minor; at-will)

+11 vs. Reflex; Hardo gains combat advantage against the target until the end of his next turn.

☼ **Forest for the Trees...** (standard; sustain minor; encounter) ♦ **Charm**

Close burst 5; +11 vs. Will; Hardo is invisible to the target. Affected targets are unable to see Hardo for as long as he sustains the effect, until Hardo attacks, or until he is hit by an attack.

Combat Advantage

Hardo deals an extra 2d6 damage against any target he has combat advantage against.

Nimble Feet

Hardo gains a +2 racial bonus to AC against opportunity attacks.

Hard Target (immediate interrupt, when Hardo would be hit by an attack; encounter)

The attacker must reroll the attack and take the new result.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common

Skills Acrobatics +15, Bluff +13, Stealth +14,

Thievery +16

Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 21 (+9) **Wis** 12 (+5)

Con 15 (+6) **Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 19 (+8)

Equipment leather armor, 2 daggers

THE NOTE

A scrollboy approaches the PCs with a delivery. So-called *scrollboys* are common in Punjar; they deliver messages, small items, and sealed boxes to various parties; they are known for their speed, reliability, and discretion. The boy identifies the PC party on sight, hands over a sealed scroll to the nearest PC, and then waits patiently for a tip (any coin will send him on his way).

The scroll is a single tube sealed with an unstamped blob of red wax. Inside the tube is a rolled piece of parchment that states:

Cease your inquiries into matters that are not of your concern. Your continued involvement will only bring you great pain. This is your only warning.

Give the players handout A.

The scrollboy, if asked, knows nothing of the scroll's origins. He received the scroll and delivery instructions from another messenger. The scroll itself bears no clue as to its origins or author.

THE COBRA MASTER (EL 1, XP 500)

Read or paraphrase the following:

Squatting cross-legged in the sandy street is a wiry, heavily tanned man clothed in peasant garb. Buried in a sea of wrinkles, his lively eyes scan the crowd. A woven basket sits before him, and he is slowly threading a serpent of some type out of the basket with one rough hand, while waving for donations with his other hand.

So-called snake charmers are fairly common in most districts of Punjar. Some employ de-fanged or charmed reptiles, but most of the snake handlers work with the real thing. This snake is a venomous cobra, and the charmer is a street informer in the secret employ of the Rohamari House.

Tactics: Beluth has provided the cobra master with a description of the PCs and ordered him to cause them harm; as soon as the PCs are within range, he suddenly screams and hurls his snake at the closest PC, all the while acting as if he were bitten and the cobra broke away on its own. (The snake will attack the target PC once, and then, if left alone, slowly crawls away into the hastily parting crowd.) A successful Insight check (DC 16) sees through the deception. If confronted, the charmer flees or screams for the city watch. If all else fails, this craven cur begs for mercy, but he has no treasure on his person beyond a few silver coins or any useful information to impart.

Snake Charmer

Level 4 Minion

Medium natural humanoid, humanoid **XP 44**

Initiative +2 **Senses Perception** +2

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 16; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 12

Speed 6 (8 while charging)

↑ **Club** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+9 vs.AC; 5 damage.

⚡ **Cobra Strike** (encounter; at-will) ♦ **Poison, Weapon**

Requires snake; ranged 5; +9 vs.AC; 5 damage, and the snake charmer makes a secondary attack on the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +7 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+2)

Con 14 (+4) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+1)

Equipment cudgel

PART 1 THE DEVIL'S THUMB

Area 1-1

Daggers for Sale

Read or paraphrase the following:

A thin, heavily tanned boy, no more than 10 winters old, mans a tiny stand here. His voice carries over the surrounding din in a singsong pitch: "Daggers for Punjarans! Sharp daggers, long daggers, best daggers! Daggers and charms here! All best charms here for best Punjarans! Pretty charms, sharp daggers!"

Behind the boy is a ramshackle stand constructed of scrap wood that has numerous small shelves and pegs, all holding a variety of fancy khanjars (daggers) and numerous silver charms. He waves you closer; gesturing madly with his hands, and starts his pitch once more.

This boy is the only person to have seen Ardwen Toldara's guard before he succumbed to his chest wounds. He sells daggers (1–4 gp) or charms (1–6 sp). The daggers are cheap but functional. The charms are small icons and animals on chains—delicate items fashioned from pieces of scrap metal with a very light plating of silver. Mixed in with the charms is a black raven pendant (an *amulet of health* +2) placed there surreptitiously by a sneak thief on the run for later retrieval; a character carefully examining the charms and making a successful DC 15 Arcana check realizes the pendant is more than it seems. The boy is unaware of the magic item.

Tactics: The boy begins the encounter indifferent to the PCs, though he generally likes adventurers and chatting with interesting visitors to the city. If the heroes succeed on Bluff or Diplomacy skill challenge (DC 18, 3 successes before 2 failures), he relates his encounter with Ardwen's dying guardian. The guard emerged from the nearby alleys (the boy didn't see which exact one), clutching his stomach, and collapsed near the boy's stand, nearly knocking it over. Bleeding profusely, the burly man dropped his longsword and said that his party had been attacked.

Read or paraphrase the following:

"Creatures. Yes, he said something about creatures surrounding them," the boy says, a frightened look in his eyes. "That man was already dead but he didn't know it yet. He also said something about slaughter just before he died, but I don't think he was talking about his own murder, no I don't. He was clawed, that man—I know about daggers, you see, and it were no daggers did him in. He was still walking, but death was coming for him."

The boy pauses thoughtfully, and then smiles. "Do you want to buy a lucky charm, handsome sir? Perhaps it'll save you from death."

If asked specifically if the word *slaughter* means anything to him, the boy mentions Stoneway Alley. A PC can likewise make the connection between the guard's last words and the alley—a successful Streetwise check is required, at DC 15 if the PC was raised in the Devil's Thumb, otherwise the

check is DC 30. The boy can easily provide directions to the alley if asked, but he will not leave his stand or accompany the party.

Area 1-2

Fishmonger's Stand

Read or paraphrase the following:

The docks of Punjar are a busy place until nightfall. Sailing vessels tug fitfully at their moorings, causing battered pylons to groan in protest. Vendors and craftsmen hustle to and from boats, crying out to one another, while sweaty laborers struggle to unload ships of their cargo as quickly as possible. Other odd characters abound—vendors hawking wares, small children, sightseers, drunken sailors enjoying a few hours ashore, and others whose business is unknown.

As you approach the third dock, the ever-present smell of sun-baked seaweed is overwhelmed by the strong smell of fish. The end of the third dock that connects to the main boardwalk is a riot of tables, crates, and barrels, all teeming with fish of every type—stacks of bluegills, slender yellowjaws, carp, and barble, which in turn sit beside briny barrels packed with bigeyes and cod, boxes of stiff salted eels, and crates brimming with long-legged spinyshell crabs. Worn wooden signs tilting this way and that advertise prices for everything, and in the center of it all is a ram-shackle wooden counter, behind which sits a balding, rotund man. Two young assistants help the fishmonger, and he happily barks orders at them, leaning precariously back on his shipping crate "chair" as his does so. He talks notice of your approach and his thick eyebrows rise slightly.

This gentleman is Crudell Mann, fishmonger. He happily sells the party fish, but if they inquire about the ghost, he grows taciturn and cautious. If pushed to tell what he knows of the ghostly figure, he agrees to talk and promises to actually lead the party to the alley where his sighting took place... for a price. Crudell's business appears ramshackle, but it actually turns a good daily profit, mostly by providing seafood for the local eateries and festhalls. As of late, a group of rakes known locally as the Scarlet Dogs have begun demanding "protection" payments from him. The amount demanded by the gang has increased almost every week, and Crudell has seen his profits disappear overnight as a result. He offers the party a deal: if they drive off or slay the gang of ruffians, he will happily provide the information they seek.

Tactics: Crudell's attitude is unfriendly, as he values ridding himself of the gang more than any offer of gold. In Crudell's eyes, the adventurers are brave fighters and explorers by trade and present the perfect opportunity to rid him of a meddlesome problem. In the true Punjaran tradition, he cares not a whit about the fate of the ambassador's daughter (and voices that opinion if asked).

If the PCs agree to the bargain, Crudell tells them that the Scarlet Dogs patrol this dock area regularly, and if the PCs wander around the docks nearby they are certain to meet them sooner or later. Crudell has seen the apparent leader of the Dogs wear a gaudy brass belt buckle bearing a wolf's head. If the party returns bearing that buckle, that will constitute proof enough for Crudell that the PCs have met the Scarlet Dogs and emerged victorious.



One of Crudell's young helpers is in the secret employ of House Rohamari. He hovers about, ostensibly working but eavesdropping on as much of the conversation as possible. Once the PCs depart, he runs to his Rohamari masters to report. This may have consequences later for the party if they bed down for the evening at the Golden Hearth.

Notoriety: Accepting Crudell's mission earns the PC party 1 notoriety point.

Area 1-3 **The Scarlet Dogs** (EL 6, XP 1,226)

The Scarlet Dogs "control" a region of the Devil's Thumb that includes the wharf area. They collect weekly "collection money" from local merchants and shopkeepers—the ones that don't wish any harm to come to themselves or their goods—and they supplement these ill-gotten gains by mugging any strangers they come across. The Scarlet Dogs are not above shaking down beggars or the destitute, and many witnesses have reported their brutality and love of violence. Through well-placed intimidation and sheer ferocity, they have driven most of the other less-organized criminal element away from the area, and other street gangs, having met them and seen their fury firsthand, give them a wide berth. For the last 6 months, the gang has terrorized many local citizens and left two city watchmen for dead. The secret to their success is largely a simple one—the three brothers who constitute the heart of the Dogs are all werewolves. They are careful to change only at night (unless they consider themselves truly endangered), and they wear long, hooded cloaks, so their surviving victims have not yet reported anything more unusual than odd, growling sounds.

If the party lingers anywhere on or near the northern docks, there is a 1 in 6 chance per hour (2 in 6 after nightfall) that they will be observed by the Scarlet Dogs.

Tactics: The gang will assess the party for a moment, and then fearlessly approach them (following them out onto a dock if possible). As the Scarlet Dogs approach the PCs, read or paraphrase the following (alter as needed if the encounter does not take place on a pier):

You suddenly find yourself approached by five tall men wearing long reddish cloaks over leather armor. Four of them stop and grip their swords and crossbows, as another, apparently the leader, steps closer.

"Your group seems to have lost its way," he says, with a note of derision. "We'd be happy to show you the path back to the main streets... for a fee. A few weapons of fine make or a handful of gems seem payment enough. Simply place them down on the boards... slowly... and back away, so my, ah, associates can recover them, then we'll escort you back to the main thoroughfare." He levels his deep, glittering amber eyes at you from beneath his cowl. "Otherwise, ye may never leave this dock again."

Any PC making a Perception check (DC 18) notices the garish wolfs-head belt buckle the leader wears. Unless faced with a display of overwhelming power, the Scarlet Dogs do not depart unless they have obtained 2,500 gp worth of goods from the party or the party has been defeated. Sensing the danger the party faces, the brothers change to werewolf form immediately if there is a fight. Jawfat hangs back from the fight area, aiming his crossbow attacks at any obvious spellcasting PCs. or barring that, the strongest-looking fighters. The others attack to kill with sword and claw. The Scarlet Dogs know that their reign of fear will end if they lose a fight on their turf, and they do not retreat unless two of more members of their gang are slain.

Adjama wears a brass belt buckle adorned with the head of a snarling wolf. He will not willingly part with it unless panicked or dead.

Notoriety: If the PCs rout the Scarlet Dogs, they earn 1 notoriety point. If the party slays two or more members of the Scarlet Dogs, they earn 2 notoriety points.

Scarlet Dog (Adjama, Ashdir, Allar)

Level 8 Brute

Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger)

XP 350

Initiative +7

Senses Perception +11
low-light vision

HP 108; **Bloodied** 54

Regeneration 5

(if a scarlet dog takes damage from a silver weapon, its regeneration doesn't function on its next turn)

AC 20; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18

Immune moon frenzy (see below)

Speed 6 (8 in wolf form)

↑ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+12 vs.AC; 1d8 + 4 damage

↑ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Disease**

+12 vs.AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends) and contracts moon frenzy.

↑ **Blood Frenzy** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Disease, Weapon**

The scarlet dog makes a longsword and a bite attack against a bloodied target.

Wolf Shape (minor; at-will) ♦ **Polymorph**

A scarlet dog can alter its physical form to appear as a gray wolf or a unique. It cannot use its bite attack in human form and cannot make longsword attacks in wolf form.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common

Skills Bluff +9, Insight +11, Intimidate +9, Streetwise +11

Str 19 (+8)

Dex 16 (+7)

Wis 14 (+6)

Con 18 (+8)

Int 10 (+4)

Cha 11 (+4)

Equipment leather armor, longsword

Scarlet Dog Thug (Wahrin, Jawfat)

Warrior Level 8 Minion

Medium natural humanoid, human **XP 88**

Initiative +6

Senses Perception +6

HP 1: a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 20 (22 with *wolfpack*); **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18,

Will 18

Speed 6

↑ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+11 vs.AC; 6 damage.

⚡ **Crossbow** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

Ranged 15/20; +11 vs.AC; 5 damage.

Wolfpack

A scarlet dog thug gains a +2 bonus to AC while at least one ally is adjacent to it.

Alignment Evil

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +8, Streetwise +4

Str 19 (+8)

Dex 14 (+6)

Wis 14 (+6)

Con 15 (+6)

Int 11 (+4)

Cha 10 (+4)

Equipment leather armor, light shield, longsword, crossbow, 10 bolts in a case

Area 1-3a

Slippery Boards

This dock leans to one side, and the planks here are slippery with fish oil. Any individual running or charging here must make a successful DC 22 Acrobatics check or lose his or her balance and either fall prone (50% chance) or slide right off the dock into the 5-foot-deep water nearby (50%). Any individual struck for damage must likewise make an Acrobatics check. Characters beginning their movement in the first 10 feet of dock and failing the Acrobatics check have a 25% chance of falling prone and a 75% chance of landing in the crab vat (see area 1-3c).

Area 1-3b

Chicken cages

Four cages are stacked here, packed full of chickens. If an individual crashes into the cages, one breaks open, and the birds cluck and flutter madly about. Individuals in the immediate area must make roll a saving throw or be distracted (treat as dazed; save ends).

Area 1-3c

Crab Vat

A large vat brimming with live crabs sits next to the dock here, the fruits of a successful catch earlier this morning. Individuals landing (or thrown) in the vat automatically take 1 damage and must make a saving throw every round they are in the vat or be treated as dazed. The vat is 4 feet deep.

A RETURN TO CRUDELL

After the party faces the Scarlet Dogs, they will probably return to the fishmonger. Read or paraphrase the following:

As you again approach his stand, Crudell is busily shooing away several feral cats that have taken an interest in his product. He warily looks up, spots your party, and his eyes widen.

Crudell is surprised to see the party return. He is more surprised still when the party displays the wolf's head belt buckle. (He does not provide any more information without it.) He thanks the party profusely for "taking care of my little problem" and somewhat reluctantly agrees to take them to the alley in question.

As the group walks to the alley, Crudell retells his story: He was taking a shortcut through Stoneway (the alley) when a frightening apparition confronted him. The spectral being blocked his passage deeper into the alley, and as it floated toward him, he could make out facial features. It looked feminine, and it appeared to be attempting to speak... or scream... but it had no voice he could hear. He dropped his wares and ran home "like the wind," he says.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly Crudell stops in his tracks. He points a trembling finger at the entrance to a large alleyway ahead. "That be it. That is the place," he says, and licks his lips nervously. "I cannot go any farther ahead. I would think about where you're goin' and what you're doin', if ye take my meaning. You

don't want to go in there. But if you feel you must, I wish you luck." He gives a last fearful look toward the alley mouth and quickly departs.

SLAUGHTERSTONE ALLEY

Stoneway (oft nicknamed *Slaughterstone* because of the many bloody crimes enacted here over the years) is typical of many Punjar alleys. The street is cobblestone covered with a sparse layer of sand. The "walls" here are the sides of buildings; most are stone but a few are constructed of wood. There is no source of light here after dark. The well to the east contains potable water, which may be retrieved via a drop bucket.

Area 1-4 Old Saabir

Read or paraphrase the following:

You've entered a twisted tangle of alleys. The longest and most tortuous lies before you. A sign on the nearby brick wall labels the alley Stoneway (only the city's longest alleys have official names, but all have local nicknames), but some wag has carved the words Slaughterstone Alley on the wall nearby. The dirty cobblestones here are covered with blown sand and rubbish. A strong scent of offal seems to cling to the very stone here, and even the graffiti on the walls has been worn down by the passage of years to be unreadable.

Just inside the alley, a hunched old beggar sits; his head slumped against his knees. A disease of some sort has wasted away his limbs, making his age appear even greater than it is. He clutches his legs with his scrawny arms and doesn't react to your approach. A small brown-and-white monkey squats by the old man's side. The creature watches you studiously with its glassy black eyes and issues a single screech. The beggar looks up, studies your party with red-rimmed eyes, and silently reaches out a stick-like arm, turning his palm up.

The man, Saabir, has made his home in Slaughterstone Alley for many years, and he has grown numb to the violence and refuse around him. His companion, Minky, is what Punjarans commonly refer to as a "shoulder monkey,"

a common pet in the city kept by all the citizen classes. The harmless monkey is of the capuchin sort, and it flees if confronted.

If given any money, Saabir rapidly palms the coins and almost seems to smile. Regardless of whether any coins come his way, he soon wraps his bony arms tightly around his knees and resumes his former position. He has no interest in speaking with the PCs.

Area 1-5 Hidden Daggers! (EL 7, XP 1,600)

Read or paraphrase the following:

Two sleeping figures lean against the alley wall here. They lie on a rude bed of sand and rubbish, and are partially covered by rags and cloaks. They stir slightly at your approach, and one briefly glances your way through bleary, slit eyes before grunting and rolling over.

The two figures are thieves, Haroun and Jarib, who are very much awake and pretending to be sleeping beggars. They occasionally toss a coin to old Saabir (area 1-4), who whistles a warning when strangers enter the alley.

Tactics: Once the PCs walk past the two thieves, they spring to their feet and draw swords from beneath their cloaks, placing themselves between the PCs and the alley exit. They then confront the PCs, demanding gold (at least 50 gp per character, although they settle for half that if the PCs appear strong or loudly protest). If the PCs refuse to pay, Haroun and Jarib attack to kill. If confronted with flashy magic spells (*fire burst* or the like) or injured below bloodied, they immediately flee.

Haroun and Jarib employ this scam in several alleys in various quarters of the city, often using local beggars as lookouts, and they have found many easy marks in visiting merchants, lost visitors, and the occasional inexperienced adventurer. Haroun has a gold necklace in his pocket (worth 800 gp) and also carries 34 gp and 23 sp in a leather pouch. Jarib carries a dagger with a jeweled hilt (a tiny emerald worth 100 gp), 22 gp, 12 sp, and a silvered short sword.



Haroun

Level 9 Elite Lurker

Medium natural humanoid, human XP 800

Initiative +13 **Senses Perception** +8

HP 148; **Bloodied** 74

AC 25; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 20;

see also *dance of blades*

Saving Throws +2

Speed 6

Action Points 1

↑ **Poisoned Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Poison, Weapon**

+14 vs.AC; 1d4 + 5 damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

↑ **Nimble Cut** (standard; recharge 5–6) ♦ **Poison, Weapon**

+14 vs.AC; 1d4 + 5 damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends). Haroun may shift 2 squares before and after this attack.

Dance of Blades

Haroun gains a +2 bonus to his AC and Reflex defense if he has one creature adjacent to him, or a +4 bonus if two or more creatures are adjacent to him.

Combat Advantage

Haroun deals an extra 2d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target he has combat advantage against.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Skills Stealth +14, Thievery +14

Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 18 (+8)

Con 14 (+6) **Int** 14 (+6) **Cha** 14 (+6)

Equipment leather armor, dagger, empty poison vial

Jarib

Level 9 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid, human XP 800

Initiative +8 **Senses Perception** +4

HP 192; **Bloodied** 96

AC 27; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 21

Saving Throws +2

Speed 6

Action Points 1

↑ **Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+16 vs.AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.

↑ **Grab and Stab** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

Requires short sword; +14 vs. Reflex; a Medium or smaller target is grabbed until escape), and Jarib makes a secondary attack on the target. *Secondary Attack*: +16 vs. AC; 2d6+4 damage, and the target suffers ongoing 10 damage each round the grab is maintained.

↑ **Evasive Reaction** (immediate interrupt, when an enemy hits Jarib with an attack with combat advantage; encounter)

Jarib makes a melee basic attack, and shifts one square.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Skills Athletics +13, Stealth +11

Str 18 (+8) **Dex** 14 (+6) **Wis** 10 (+4)

Con 16 (+7) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 18 (+9)

Equipment leather armor, silvered short sword

Area 1–6

The Apparition (EL 5, XP 1,000)

Read or paraphrase the following:

A chill seems to pass through the alley despite the lack of wind and the warmth of the day. This area has a sense of wrongness to it, and you are suddenly possessed with an intense feeling of dread.

If the PCs continue forward, read the following:

At your feet, little wisps of mist appear and slide about, blocking your view of the dirty cobblestones underfoot. Suddenly, with unsettling quickness, the mist increases and coalesces into a vaguely human-shaped form before you. The cold mist shifts and writhes and forms details of a female face with wispy, trailing hair, an open mouth, and dead black eye sockets. The phantom reaches out a long white hand in your direction...

Tactics: Allow the PCs a melee round to act. If they attack the figure, it responds in kind. It does not communicate with hostile individuals unless they cease fighting and assume a non-threatening pose. If the PCs do not attack, proceed with the following description:

The face of the apparition looks pained, and after a moment, the mouth again opens and it speaks in an unearthly whisper, “Help me.” It points to the rear of the alley with long spectral fingers, and then turns back to you. Somehow, although you cannot see eyes, its dark sockets seem to peer straight through you, and into your very soul.

The incorporeal form cannot communicate further, except to repeat its message and gesture again. If the party attempts to move past it toward the end of Slaughterstone Alley, it moves aside and dissolves back into the mist. If the party instead retreats, the ghost issues a single anguished howl before disappearing.

This is the ghost of Jeya Furei, a young but dedicated cleric of Delvyr. Worship of Delvyr in Punjar is rather limited given the size of the city, but the priesthood maintains a small fane and does what it can in a metropolis where guile and money count for much. Jeya encountered rumors of evil cult activity in the Devil’s Thumb and decided to investigate personally. She learned much, but soon found herself surrounded by the aboleth’s enthralled pawns, and she was overwhelmed. The cleric was viciously cut down, and her corpse was thrown into the lair of an otyugh (area 2–2). Fueled by an indomitable will, unshakable faith, and a hunger for vengeance, her spirit returned as a ghost, and she has tried to alert heroic folk to the evils below the streets.



Ghost of Jeya Furei

Level 10 Elite Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 1,000
Initiative +12 Senses Perception +9; darkvision
HP 52; Bloodied 26
AC 26; Fortitude 19, Reflex 21, Will 24
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** insubstantial
Saving Throws +2
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing
Action Points 1
↑ Ghostly Caress (standard; at-will) ♦ **Necrotic** +15 vs. Reflex; 2d6+4 necrotic damage.
※ Horrific Wail (standard; recharge 4–6) ♦ **Fear, Psychic**
 Close burst 5; +11 vs. Will; 3d6+6 psychic damage, and the target is weakened and immobilized (save ends both)
 Deathbound
 Jeya cannot voluntarily move more than 20 squares from the place where she died. If she is forced beyond this range, she is weakened and unable to use its *horrific wail* power until she moves back within range.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +14
Str 14 (+7) Dex 18 (+9) Wis 11 (+5)
Con 14 (+7) Int 11 (+5) Cha 22 (+11)

Area 1–7 The Way Down

Read or paraphrase the following:

The alley ends a short distance ahead of you. Heaps of rubbish, old crates, and food scraps fill the area, and several rodents dart into the shadows at your approach. The stench here pervades your nostrils—a powerful smell of garbage, decay, and beneath that, death.

The rats are harmless, and retreat at the approach of the PCs. Most of the rubbish is mere garbage, but a successful Perception check (DC 20) reveals a broken silver bracelet (worth 10 gp) sized for a human woman’s wrist. Close examination of the chain bracelet (Perception, DC 15) reveals the initials “AT” stamped onto one flattened link. Allow searching PCs a second Perception check (DC 20) to discover a metal grating beneath an old crate.

The grating is hinged and unlocked, and can be swung upward with a DC 20 Strength check (two PCs may combine efforts if desired). Beneath the grating is a square shaft leading down into the darkness. Metal rungs have been set into one wall of the shaft (see area 2–1 if the PCs continue).

THE SEWERS SECTION ONE

This section of the Punjar sewers has fallen into serious disrepair, and few workers venture into these dangerous tunnels. The water level is high, about 6 feet deep in areas, and the water threatens to spill over the narrow walkways in places. The sewage current is fairly strong here, and the slimy coating on the floor beneath the water makes it very difficult for the average-sized human to stand stationary in the water for any length of time. The cracked walls are festooned with streaks of oddly colored mold and slime. The smell of the sewage in the tunnels is nearly overpowering to the uninitiated.

Sewer tunnels are typically 15 to 20 feet high, but smaller tunnels (those with a width less than 15 feet) are often only 10 feet high.

PCs spending any length of time in the sewers may contract a disease called the shakes; swimming in the water here doubles the chances of contacting this disease. Any PC running or charging on the slippery walkways must make a DC 15 Acrobatics check or slip off the walkway.

WANDERING MONSTERS

There is a 15% chance (1–3 on a d20) per half hour that the characters will have an encounter while walking (or swimming) through a tunnel.

1d6	Encounter
1–3	Three Visejaw crocodiles
4–5	Two Crush grip constrictors
6–7	Two Shambling mounds
8	One Chuul

Area 2–1 Rusty Rungs (EL 1, XP 500)

Read or paraphrase the following:

Dirty iron rungs are set into the northern wall of the shaft, perhaps 20 in all, spaced out every one and a half feet or so. The other walls of the shaft appear to be smooth stone streaked with old stains.

Allow each PC climbing on the rungs a Perception check (DC 16)—a successful check reveals the sound of rushing water below.

If a PC examines several of the rungs closely, a successful DC 20 Perception check reveals ochre-colored streaks of rust marring many rungs. Two of the 20 rungs have been dangerously weakened by rust. If any character weighing more than 80 pounds steps onto the 5th or 15th rungs, there is a 25% chance the rusted metal will snap. If this occurs, the PC standing on that rung must make a Athletics check (DC 18) to secure their position or immediately fall to the bottom of the shaft and take falling damage (3d10 for the 5th rung and 1d10 for the 15th rung).

The smooth walls of the shaft are streaked with mold. Any attempt to climb these walls requires a DC 30 Athletics check to climb

Area 2–2

The Refuse Pile (EL 9, XP 2,000)

Read or paraphrase the following:

Fetid water sloshes over the narrow walkway here, leaving a greenish-gray film against the wall. The stench in this corridor is all but overwhelming, and the only sound is the faraway drip of water from somewhere above. At the end of the corridor is a mass of refuse piled against a far grating. The steadily running water sends little bits of garbage toward the mass, which float by lazily.

Lurking in this area is an otyugh that has camouflaged itself within the heap of rubbish (allow PCs a Perception check opposed by the otyugh's stealth check). Many years ago, this otyugh swallowed a number of potions by happenstance, causing it to grow huge and become a true horror of the sewers. This ugly horror is ravenous, as the aboleth's minions have not brought by edibles in a while, and it strikes out with its tentacles once prey comes within reach.

Lying just past the end of the walkway is a skeleton clad in rusted chainmail and a soiled surcoat emblazoned with the holy symbol of Delvyr (an arrow laying over an open book). There is nothing of value with the remains except for a serviceable mace and a sealed scroll tube stuffed inside a dirty haversack. The scroll tube contains a map. Show the players handout B. This is the body of Jeya Furei (see area 1–7). If the remains are brought to the surface or a prayer is said over the remains, her spirit is released to seek its eternal rest. If such an incident occurs, read or paraphrase the following:

A shining white form appears before you, hovering and translucent. You can make out the features of a young woman in armor, with arms raised.

“Thank you,” an ethereal voice whispers, “I beg you continue your quest and let justice be done, so my death was not without purpose.” The wispy form then grows brighter, and suddenly the intensity of the light increases to a blinding glare. Then it is gone. You and your companions are alone once again.

Delvyr, taking notice of the PC's kindness, instantly heals any injured character involved in liberating Jeya's spirit, allowing the PC to spend a healing surge and regain an additional 1d8 hit points.

The map represents the sewer tunnels and the Palace of Fortuity. A player character making a successful Streetwise check (DC 25, or DC 20 if the PC is native to Punjar) can identify the “PF” as possibly standing for the nearby Palace of Fortuity. If the PCs ask random citizens about the “PF,” there is a 5% cumulative chance they get the correct answer, but they spend 10 minutes per person, and there is a 1 in 4 chance the party gains one Notoriety point for each citizen they ask.

Mighty Otyugh

Level 9 Solo Soldier

Large natural beast XP 2,000

Initiative +7

Senses Perception +12
darkvision

Sickening Stench aura 1;
living enemies in the aura
are weakened.

HP 400; Bloodied 200

AC 27; Fortitude 25, Reflex 19, Will 19

Immune disease

Saving Throws +5

Speed 5, swim 5

Action Points 2

↑ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)

Reach 3; +16 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is pulled 2 squares and grabbed (until escape).

↑ **Pestilent Bite** (minor; at-will) ♦ **Disease**

Grabbed target only; +16 vs. AC; 2d10 + 6 damage, and the target contracts filth fever.

↑ **Tentacle Flurry** (standard; at-will)

The mighty otyugh makes two tentacle attacks.

※ **Filthy Spew** (standard; recharge 5–6) ♦ **Acid, Disease**

The mighty otyugh spews a tide of diseased bile and half-digested garbage; close blast 5; +12 vs. Reflex; 3d6+5 acid damage, the target is slowed and weakened (save ends both), and contracts filth fever.

Spying Eye

The mighty otyugh can hide beneath murky water or refuse, leaving only its eyestalk exposed. While doing so, it gains a +10 bonus to Stealth checks but is immobilized.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Skills Stealth +10 (+20 while using *spying eye*)

Str 22 (+10) **Dex** 13 (+5) **Wis** 16 (+7)

Con 20 (+9) **Int** 3 (+0) **Cha** 5 (+1)

Area 2–3 Death From Above... and Below (EL 5, XP 1,000)

A patch of green slime has adhered to the ceiling above this section of walkway. It is easily noticeable (Perception, DC 10) if the characters are looking overhead, otherwise give each character a DC 25 Perception check to discern the slime before they walk beneath it.

A few feet ahead of the green slime, a large gelatinous cube has taken up temporary residence on the walkway. The cube travels continually through the sewers, gliding up and down walkways and walls searching for rats (or larger animals) to eat. It mindlessly attacks any warm-blooded creatures it encounters.

Patch of Green Slime

Level 5 Elite Obstacle

Hazard XP 400

Perception/DC 10: The character notices the green slime on the cavern ceiling.

Nature/DC 20: The character notices the litter of small animal bones beneath the patch of green slime.

Init +3

Trigger: The green slime rolls initiative when a character enters the squares directly beneath it.

Attack

Standard Action **Melee 1**

Target: The creature beneath the patch of green slime

Attack: +8 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d10+4 acid damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends). *Special:* The patch of green slime attacks every round a target is beneath it.

COUNTERMEASURES

- A patch of green slime can simply be avoided if detected early enough.
- A character can attack a patch of green slime (AC 5, all others 10) with fire-based attacks. A patch is destroyed if 20 points of fire damage are inflicted upon it.

Advanced Gelatinous Cube

Level 7 Elite Brute

Large natural beast (blind, ooze) XP 600

Initiative +5

Senses Perception +4
tremorsense 5

HP 194; Bloodied 97

AC 22; Fortitude 20, Reflex 18, Will 16

Immune gaze; Resist 10 acid

Saving Throws +2

Speed 3; see also *engulf*

Action Points 1

↑ **Slam** (standard; at-will)

+10 vs. Fortitude; 1d12 + 6 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Engulf (standard; at-will) ♦ **Acid**

The gelatinous cube attacks one or two Medium or smaller targets; +8 vs. Reflex (automatically hits an immobilized creature). On a hit, the target is grabbed and pulled into the cube's space; the target is dazed and takes ongoing 10 acid damage until it escapes the grab. A creature that escapes the grab shifts to a square of its choosing adjacent to the cube. The cube can move normally while creatures are engulfed within it.

Translucent

A gelatinous cube is invisible until seen (Perception DC 25) or until it attacks. Creatures that fail to notice the gelatinous cube might walk into it, automatically becoming engulfed.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Skills Stealth +10

Str 18 (+7)

Dex 14 (+5)

Wis 13 (+4)

Con 17 (+6)

Int 1 (–2)

Cha 1 (–2)

Area 2–4 **The Tilting Trap** (EL 1, XP 200)

A 10-foot-long section of walkway here has been rigged to collapse. If more than 100 pounds is placed on the walkway, the stone crumbles. Those PCs standing on the trapped section when it collapses must make a DC 25 Acrobatics check or be uncontrollably pitched into the water beside the ledge.

PCs falling in the water take no damage, but they must make a roll a saving throw or drop whatever is in hand into the 6-foot-deep murky water.

(Characters diving to find lost items may make a Perception check (DC 15) to locate a single item, but if that item is not found within 3 tries, it should be considered permanently lost, barring forms of magical location.)

Area 2–5 **A Tiny Find**

Lying next to the walkway here, just under the water, is a single silver die. It is spotted on a successful DC 23 Perception check. Later the PCs may recognize similar silver dice in the Palace of Fortuity. (The die fell out of the pocket of a thrall that works at the palace of Fortuity.)

Area 2–6 **A Grim Welcome** (EL 7, XP 1,500)

Read or paraphrase the following:

This large cave smells of damp earth, and it appears to have been recently dug. Shards of stone from the broken sewer wall are scattered across the dirt floor. Standing toward the center of this area are eight dirty humans dressed in torn, muddy clothing. All are armed, and they surge toward you with unexpected speed, clearly intent on doing you harm!

Several enthralled humans (hereafter called *thralls*) are positioned in this newly dug cave, listening for intelligent intruders. Their continual duty is to remain here, standing guard nearest the only close access point to the streets above (excepting the secret entrance from the Palace of Fortuity).

Tactics: A thrall is always peering from the concealed door to their cave, and if any sentient being is spotted, the thralls sprint into sudden action. If they encounter a lone individual, they attempt to capture, otherwise they seek to slay any intruders. The enthralled humans are aware of the trapped ledge (see area 1–4) to the north, as they constructed the trap.

If the thralls meet with unexpected resistance, the aboleth receives the news telepathically and immediately focuses its concentration so it may see through the eyes of a thrall. The aboleth's slaves fight to the death.

One of the thralls is armed with a finely made kris sword. Examination of the sword (Perception DC 15) reveals a deeply etched "L" on the shoulder (base) of the blade. A successful Streetwise check (DC 14) reveals the sword to be the work of Devil's Thumb bladesmith Lerryn.

Notoriety: If the PCs battle these thralls, they gain 2 notoriety points.

Thrall (8)

Level 6 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid XP 250

Initiative +7

Senses Perception +4
low-light vision

HP 70; Bloodied 35

AC 22; Fortitude 19, Reflex 16, Will 15

Immune charm

Speed 7, swim 6

↑ Kris (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon

+13 vs.AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the encounter.

⚡ Kris (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon

Ranged 3/6; +11 vs.AC; 1d8 + 5 damage. The thrall must retrieve its kris before it can throw it again.

Marked Strike

A thrall gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls for each mark a target bears from it or one of its allies.

One Mind, One Advantage

If a thrall gains any combat advantage against a target, all thralls within 5 squares also gain combat advantage against the target.

Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Common

Str 20 (+8)

Dex 14 (+5)

Wis 12 (+4)

Con 14 (+5)

Int 10 (+3)

Cha 10 (+3)

Equipment kris, tattered rags

A DEAD END

Read or paraphrase the following:

Ahead the walkway ends approximately 10 feet after that the water flows into two small, round conduits. A slime-covered iron grating blocks entry into each pipe. Small bits of rubbish have collected against the gratings here. All that can be heard is the steady rush of water.

The grating is old, but it is constructed of thick iron. Two heavy locks (Thievery, DC 30) hold the grating shut. A DC 12 Streetwise check or DC 15 Perception check reveals that both locks are new. Forcing the grate itself is no easy task, requiring a DC 25 Strength check modified by a –4 circumstantial modifier due to the slippery floor, flowing water, and poor bracing. The passage through the pipes beyond is entirely underwater for the next 300 feet, and PCs traversing the pipes discover to their dismay that the pipes are blocked at the other end by an identical set of grates and padlocks. (Treat the grate and locks at the far end as identical to those already encountered, but opening the locks or forcing the grate from inside the narrow, water-filled pipes adds an additional –4 circumstantial modifier.) The GM should not prevent characters from attempting to travel through the pipes, but an examination of the pipes reveals them to be an uncertain route, and the heroes should be strongly encouraged to look elsewhere for access to the sewers beyond the grating.

From the Sewers to Topside: Following their adventures in the sewers, the heroes should have enough information to continue in their investigation above ground. Consult the DM's Flowchart for possible follow up locations in the heroes' quest.



THE BLACKSMITH (EL 6, XP 1,125)

Read or paraphrase the following:

The sounds of a blacksmith at work assail your ears before you see the shop, but soon it comes into view, heralded by a sign that says simply “LERRYN’S METALWORKS.” The tools of the trade abound: a huge bellows, the forge, a long quenching trough, and a low table holding all manner of tongs, hammers, and tools. Several tall wooden racks holding examples of the blacksmith’s craft ring the area; one holds swords and axe heads, one holds shields and crossbows, and yet another holds metal tools of all sizes. A constant wave of heat radiates from the forge, drawing the sweat from your brow.

In the center of the area, assisted by a younger apprentice, is a man that can only be the blacksmith Lerryn. This mountain of a man stands before his pentagonal anvil; a massive hammer

raised high, shaved head glistening with perspiration, and his muscular, dark-skinned arms looking as hard as carved mahogany. The hammer swiftly descends and strikes the steel with a loud CLANG, sending a swirl of sparks into the shimmering air. He notices your arrival, frowns, and slowly lowers his hammer to the ground.

A successful Streetwise check imparts the following about Lerryn’s business:

DC	Result
10	Lerryn runs a successful blacksmith’s business.
15	Lerryn specializes in forging weapons and takes great pride in his handiwork.
20+	Lerryn marks his finer weapons with a small L symbol.

Lerryn is a grim, no-nonsense man. He has little time for small talk, and doesn't suffer fools gladly. Getting him to relate any information requires a fairly difficult skill challenge.

SKILL CHALLENGE (TALKING WITH LERRYN)

Level 7 (875 XP); 8 successes before 4 failures; Diplomacy, plus Athletics and Streetwise.

Diplomacy (DC 19): The characters will need to be polite and accommodating with Lerryn if they expect to get any information from him.

Athletics (DC 15): Lerryn equates size and strength with skill, and a PC surreptitiously performing some feat of strength may impress the blacksmith. This does not count as a success or failure, but grants a +2 bonus or a -2 penalty to the next character's Diplomacy check.

Streetwise (DC 15): Lerryn likes locals, and mistrusts foreigners. A PC displaying some knowledge about Punjar softens his demeanor somewhat. This does not count as a success or failure, but grants a +2 bonus or a -2 penalty to the next character's Diplomacy check.

Bribery: Lerryn happily accepts bribes; for each 50 gp worth of bribes he receives, the PCs gain a +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks.

Failure: If the heroes fail to negotiate with Lerryn, he gets irritated, and orders them out of his shop.

If the PCs succeed at the skill challenge, Lerryn identifies the kris sword as his work and offers to name the customer for which it was made. The kris sword was constructed for Debos, a man who works over at the Palace of Fortuity, several weeks ago. The kris was actually one of many—Debos ordered at least 10 swords—and Lerryn thought it somewhat unusual, but the customer paid for the swords in advance, and that was good enough for him. He did not ask Debos about his need for the swords. (If asked to describe Debos, Lerryn provides a rough description that does not match any of the thralls the PCs may have encountered in the sewer.)

Lerryn's full-grown apprentice, Jacoder, was enthralled by the aboleth a week ago (he continues to breathe air). If he hears the party questioning his master about the sword's origins, he silently assumes a position behind the rack holding the heavy shields and crossbows.

Event: If Lerryn seems ready to provide the PCs information, and the party has 3 or more notoriety points, Jacoder will topple the heavy shelf over on Lerryn and anyone with 5 feet of him. (Up to two PCs may be targeted; assume those speaking with the blacksmith are within range.) Those before the falling shelf are targeted (+5 vs. Ref; 2d12 damage). Worse yet, the crossbows are loaded (Lerryn keeps them loaded for demonstrations and to have ready in case of trouble) and 1d4 of the crossbows fire (assume each strikes as +4 vs. AC, 1d6 damage) when the shelf is toppled, targeting a random individual, including Lerryn. The apprentice flees once the shelf has been upended; if he avoided the falling weapon rack, a furious Lerryn strikes at the young man with his enormous marteau (treat as a warhammer). Jacoder flees to the sewer or, if flight is impossible, fights to the death. If questioned, Lerryn states that his apprentice has been unusually quiet this last week, but as he dislikes idle talk, he thought little of it.

Lerryn's shop is currently stocked with six heavy shields, four short swords, six longswords, eight axe heads (which can be affixed to shafts Lerryn has in stock), four light shields, six crossbows, one hand crossbow, nine spearpoints (Lerryn is awaiting delivery of the shafts), three warhammers, and a wide selection of tools (awls, hammers of all sizes, etc.). Prices for the items in Lerryn's shop are standard plus a 10% markup.

Jacober

Level 6 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid XP 250

Initiative +7

Senses Perception +4
low-light vision

HP 70; Bloodied 35

AC 22; Fortitude 19, Reflex 16, Will 15

Immune charm

Speed 7, swim 6

↑ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon

+13 vs.AC; 1d4 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the encounter.

⚡ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon

Ranged 5/10; +11 vs.AC; 1d4 + 5 damage. Jacober must retrieve his dagger before he can throw it again.

Marked Strike

Jacober gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls for each mark a target bears from him or one of his allies.

One Mind, One Advantage

If Jacober gains any combat advantage against a target, all thralls within 5 squares also gain combat advantage against the target.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Str 20 (+8)

Dex 14 (+5)

Wis 12 (+4)

Con 14 (+5)

Int 10 (+3)

Cha 10 (+3)

Equipment dagger



THE GOLDEN HEARTH

If the PCs look for a place to spend the night in the Devil's Thumb, the Golden Hearth is the only inn available on short notice. The inn may be used by the PCs as a place to regroup and rest, but it can also be a dangerous place for them. If the PCs accumulate 4 or more Notoriety points before they spend the night here, enthralled minions of Churlydtyrch slip into the inn and attempt to assassinate them in their sleep (see the *Incursion* event)!

The Hearth (as it is known locally) is run by Mille Hawkcrest and her grown son Wyat. The Hawkcrests are originally from Archbridge. Mille inherited a run-down tavern called the Brass Lantern from her sailor-husband, after his boat ran into trouble and all hands were lost. She soon renovated and expanded the place, buying a nearby building and joining the two structures, and with the help of her son, she soon built it into a viable business.

The Golden Hearth is known throughout the Devil's Thumb as a cozy, safe—if unexciting—place to get a warm meal and spend the night. The rooms are small, but the taproom is warm (nights in Punjar can get surprisingly cool), the food decent, and the owners charge little. The Golden Hearth is tastefully furnished in comfortable, if well-worn furniture, and most visitors like the relaxed, homey feel of the place. A draft enters on cold nights where the buildings were joined years ago, and the floor tilts a bit in places.

The Inn serves only breakfast and a light supper. Breakfast usually consists of dark bread, porridge, cheese, and sometimes some fatty bacon. Available supper cuisine consists of fish dishes, smoked eel, sausages, dark bread, mutton, and whatever fowl there is to be had. Once a week, the leftovers are made into a thick stew and the resulting pottage is served at a reduced price. The Hearth serves local ales and mead, but nothing stronger, and those seeking stronger potables are directed to seek out the ward's other taverns and festhalls.

Prices

Ale, mug	3 cp
Mead, full glass	1 sp
Bread and cheese	1 sp
Breakfast	1 sp
Supper	3 sp

BRIEF NOTES ON THE STAFF

The GM is encouraged to use the following notes when fleshing out Golden Hearth NPCs:

Dora: Dora has worked as a serving girl for the Hawkcrests for 3 of her 18 years. She is pretty in a tomboyish sort of way, shrewd, a hard worker, and enjoys eavesdropping on the customers' conversations. Unusual folks gain her attention, and she is particularly awestruck when the occasional adventurers visits and takes great pleasure chatting with such individuals (during which time her nervousness causes her to repeatedly pour dishes and the like).

Hardken: Old Hardken happily tends bar and helps Mille and Dora in the taproom when things get busy. He enjoys nothing better than a good tale, and he often can be found out on the porch during the summer months spinning a good story to those that will listen. He fought orcs years ago ("And has the scars to prove it!"), but now considers himself too old for such quests.

Jon: This boy works in the kitchen as a scullion during daytime and early evening hours. Jon is a young human, perhaps 15 winters old. He is very dull-witted, but he adores his masters and co-workers (especially Dora, whom he secretly thinks is beautiful) and loves animals of all kinds, especially exotic ones.

Mille: This 60-year-old woman believes in rising early, turning in early, and working in-between. Ever since the untimely death of her husband, she has devoted herself wholeheartedly to making a success of the inn. During the early morning hours, she can often be found sitting alone in the taproom, cutting vegetables; later she moves into the kitchen to prepare the evening meals.

Wyat: Wyat, Mille's only son, remains bitter about his father's death and his own lot in life. He rarely smiles and devotes his energies toward helping his mother, about whom he is very protective. He dislikes adventurers, considering them merely "thieves of a different stripe," and frowns at nearly every customer he lays eyes upon, save the extremely young or very old (neither of which he has much time for). He spends his time making odd repairs at the Hearth or watching new boats arrive at the Devil's Thumb docks.

Area GI-1

Taproom

Read or paraphrase the following as the characters enter:

You have entered a large taproom furnished with wooden tables, benches, and chairs. Thick wooden beams support the ceiling, and each has been heavily carved with initials and sayings. The tables are sturdy but have likewise seen better days. To the east is a grand stairway flanked by a closed door; to the southeast is a long bar, manned by an elderly gentleman, and what appears to be the kitchen beyond; and a table in a more private nook lies to the north. About half of the tables are filled with folks drinking, eating, chatting, and laughing. The room smells of old smoke and cinders, an oddly comforting scent.

This large taproom can seat 60 people comfortably. At night a blazing fireplace illuminates the place with a warm glow and casts odd shadows about the room. The table in the northern nook is unoccupied. The bar is constructed from several barrels covered with a beaten tin and copper top that reflects light. Beneath the bar is a selection of local ales in small tapped casks.

Shortly after the characters enter, either Dora or Hardken will spot them (50% either) and bid them to "Sit anywhere ye like." Dora comes by shortly afterward to take their orders. Hardken stays behind the bar (which has no seats near it, as it is a serving bar and Dora fetches all drinks), but he happily strikes up conversation with any PCs that walk over.

None of the Hearth staff know anything about the aboleth, beyond having heard the tales of folk disappearing in the Devil's Thumb. If questioned specifically about the Palace of Fortuity, Hardken admits to having visited the place once or twice, but found it not to his liking. He doesn't know Beluth by name, but remembers a mean, sullen dwarf and a man with a scarred face who lingered about the place. The old barkeep has no opinions regarding the Rohamari clan if asked, but he doesn't trust any nobles in Punjar ("Stuffy folk, if you ask me—always knee-deep in their own plots and troubles!").

Carved into the northwestern-most pillar is a short sentence that has gone unnoticed by the staff: "It lurks below the streets." Examination of the pillar (Perception, DC 15) locates this carving and identifies it as recent (due to the specks of white-colored wood shavings in the carved letters). If the party returns to the Golden Hearth after this adventure concludes, the GM may allow the PCs to discover other mysterious carvings and clues that lead to future adventures.

Area G1-2 Kitchen

This area is crowded with worktables, cupboards, and small shelves holding foodstuffs and cooking utensils. Assorted cheese wheels and round black breads are heaped on a sideboard just inside the doorway. Two tapped casks sit against the far wall; one holds water and one holds mead.

Area G1-3 Cellar (EL 1, XP 300)

The cellar is used for food storage, although Hearth employees occasionally sleep here during summer months. The place is cool and dry, and the ceiling is festooned with cobwebs. The northern end of the chamber is heaped with boxes, bales of all sorts, and sacks of potatoes and tubers, piled against large casks of ale. A tall shelf holding other foodstuffs is against the northern wall. The western area, past the wall divider, is a seldom-used storage area filled with broken furniture, old casks, and extra firewood.

A swarm of monstrous spiders lurk beneath the broken furniture in the northern part of the storage area. If disturbed, they emerge and attack anyone within easy reach.

Bloodweb Spider Swarm

Level 7 Soldier

Medium natural beast (spider, swarm)

XP 300

Initiative +12

**Senses Perception +6
tremorsense 5**

Swarm Attack aura 1; the bloodweb spider swarm makes a basic attack as a free action against each enemy that begins its turn in the aura. In addition, an enemy that enters or starts its turn in the aura is slowed (save ends) by strands of crimson webbing.

HP 80; Bloodied 40

AC 21; Fortitude 16, Reflex 20, Will 16

Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks

Vulnerable 10 against close and area attacks

Speed 4, climb 4 (spider climb)

↑ **Swarm of Fangs** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Poison**
+10 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 2 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Skills Stealth +15

Str 14 (+5)

Dex 24 (+10)

Wis 16 (+6)

Con 16 (+6)

Int 1 (–2)

Cha 8 (+2)

Area G1-4

Private Dining Room

This room is comfortably furnished with padded chairs, a polished hardwood table, side tables and chairs, and a low-hanging chandelier. The door can be barred from the inside as well, though the staff knows how to slip a knife in the door crack and flip it up if needed. The room is available for a 5-gp surcharge over and above the cost of food and drink.

SECOND FLOOR

The upper landing is decorated with a few comfy chairs and a large, worn throw rug.

Area G1-5

Mille's Private Chambers

Read or paraphrase the following:

Through this door lies a sitting room, decorated in simple woven wall hangings and tasteful furniture. Three cushioned chairs are spaced about a circular throw rug. A large, well-used fireplace keeps the place warm. Two candlesticks in brass holders and a wooden dryad carving adorn the mantelpiece.

If the PCs walk through the unlocked door into the adjoining room, also read or paraphrase the following:

This adjoining room appears to be a woman's sleeping chamber. A bed heaped with knitted pillows, a tall cabinet, an ornate oak writing desk, and a small chair are the only furniture here.

The desk holds inn records and such. The cabinet contains only clothes and there are no real valuables in this or the adjoining room.

Area G1-6

Wyat's Private Chambers:

Read or paraphrase the following:

Except for a stuffed hawk in one corner and a small painting depicting a sailing ship on the far wall, this room is sparsely decorated. A low table holds a scattering of dishes and pewter mugs that stink of stale ale. A crossbow leans against the wall east of the door. Pegs by the door hold capes and other garments. A large trunk sits at the foot of the bed and a chest of drawers is against the north wall.

Wyat lives in the chamber across from his mother. The chest of drawers holds only clothes, belts, and battered footwear. The trunk seems to hold similar items, but a false bottom (Perception, DC 20) holds 48 gp and a leather bag holding four emeralds worth 50 gp each. Beneath the bed is a box that holds 20 crossbow quarrels.

Treasure: A section of wall behind the painting acts as the switch for a secret door (Perception, DC 15 after the painting is removed). If depressed, a section of wall pivots, giving access to a secret room behind the linen closets. The

area is largely empty, but a well-kept longsword is here in a fancy scabbard of dark leather, as well as a small sack. The sack contains the bulk of the Hawkcrests' fortune: 886 gp, a woven rug worth 400 gp, a silver service set worth 650 gp, and a *circlet of authority* (a gift to Mille's husband years ago from some mermen he befriended).

Area GI-7 Common Room

These rooms are available for 5 sp a night. They are furnished simply with a large bed (suitable for two persons), small table, chair, a small brass oil lamp, and an empty foot trunk. A few simple woodcarvings hang on the walls. A clay basin and ewer of water sit atop the table.

Area GI-8 Common Chamber

These rooms are slightly larger and slightly less Spartan than the common rooms, but otherwise unremarkable. They can be rented for 1 gp a night.

Area GI-9 Large Fancy Chamber

This is a well-appointed chamber, with fairly new furniture: a huge bed with a down mattress, small tables and chairs, a fireplace, and three small tapestries (worth 10 gp each) on the walls. A loaf of black bread, a wheel of spiced cheese, and bottle of mead are left on the table here daily, free of charge. The door to this room may be barred from within. This room costs 3 gp a night.

Area GI-10 Private Room

Sharanna, a renegade mage originating from the Barrier Isles, inhabits this small chamber. The elven mage is somewhat desperate, as she is down on her luck and has few friends she can count on. Her first priority is to increase her stash of magic and loot, and then to move northward to Freehold and better fortune. Sharanna is ruthless and shrewd, and hoards magic (particularly wands and new spells) above all other things.

Tactics: Sharanna claims to be a lone adventurer come to Punjar seeking a greater purpose, and if made a reasonable offer she rapidly join the PCs—and just as rapidly betrays them at the first opportunity, steals whatever magic she can lay her hands on, and then departs, never to be seen again. DMs can also use Sharanna as an opportunity to introduce a new PC in the place of one that died earlier in the adventure.

Sharanna dresses in revealingly slit black robes that match her long dark tresses, though she often throws a hooded gray cloak over her robes when traveling the streets. She is good looking, and uses this to her advantage when possible; however, her large violet eyes reveal hidden greed to those that look deeply enough. She is partial to jewelry, and always wears a number of expensive rings.

Area GI-11 Private Room

Kelic, a traveling priest of Choranus, currently occupies this room. Kelic is generally diffident and quiet, but occasionally he spouts out clerical teachings of Choranus or inscrutable prophetic statements his god has imparted to him in his dreams. He tends to impart augural meanings to any occurrence that is even slightly out of the ordinary.

Kelic received a strong, dire vision from Choranus a week ago that hinted to a shadowy, tentacled evil that would engulf Punjar. Aware of Punjar's dangerous reputation, but unwilling to ignore a prophesy, Kelic immediately traveled to Punjar, and his interpretation of the vision let him to the Devil's Thumb. He is unsure of anything else, and he is patiently waiting for any further glimpses his god may give him.

Kelic is friendly with the PCs, and if they listen, he eagerly speaks of his dire vision (which imparts only the vague information mentioned above). If shown the symbol of the triple eye (encountered in P1-3 and P2-1), he immediately breaks into a sweat and states that he saw the symbol prominently in his vision. If any of the PCs are worshippers of Choranus and can display a related holy symbol, Kelic embraces that PC as a brother and offers to assist the PC in any endeavor. (If asked by such an individual to join the party, he accepts if the party agrees to help him shed light on his mysterious vision.)

EVENT: DARK VISIONS

If the PCs expressed an interest in Kelic's visions, he invites them to participate in a ceremony. The ceremony is an obscure ritual associated with the worship of Choranus. If the PCs refuse, Kelic is not insulted.

If the PCs accept the invitation, the group must find a private, enclosed area. (Kelic states that a room at the inn will suffice.) Kelic then bars the door, shutters the windows, and bids everyone be seated. He lights candles at strategic locations around the room and sets fire to joss sticks, filling the room with the heady scent of incense. Kelic finally sits and asks everyone to clear his or her mind of idle thoughts and to breathe deeply of the incense. He spends long minutes praying to Choranus for guidance before lapsing into a steady and unearthly chant. The PCs slowly feel their minds wiped clear of distractions, and they achieve a calm state receptive to divine visions. The ceremony lasts 1d3 hours. Each PC present should make a Wisdom check; the visions gained from a successful check may be referenced on the following table:

DC	Result
8	The PC receives only very vague premonitions about an alien evil at work in Punjar.
12	The PC sees glimpses of sewer tunnels.
15	The words "the Secluded One" have some dire meaning.
18	The PC sees a hazy symbol (the <i>triple eye symbol</i>) swimming in a sea of roiling red water. Display player handout C.
21+	The PC can make out a tentacled entity of some sort, accompanied by a human shaped figure whose face is half-hidden behind a thick fog. (The first figure represents the aboleth, and the latter figure—the man with half a face represents Beluth Rohamari.)

The ceremony takes 1 hour to complete. Afterward, Kelic is exhausted, and he requires at least 6 hours rest before he can venture forth from the inn. He has gained no further visions beyond those already described, but he is very curious if the PCs have gained any insight from the blessings of Choranus. The player characters will feel drained after the ceremony, and those failing saving throw are *weakened* for the next hour.

Kelic has no treasure other than 48 gp and the +1 *quarterstaff* he carries.

Area G1-12 Linen Storage

These areas are stacked with clean towels, sheets, and blankets. The rear of each area has a shelf stacked with spare dishes, ewers, and flacons.

Event The Incursion (EL 6, XP 1,300)

This event occurs if the party has accumulated 4 or more notoriety points.

Well after midnight, while the PCs are (presumably) in one or more rooms, two minions of Churlydyrch steal their way into the inn. The enthralled humans stealthily find their way upstairs, move to the end of the western hallway, and unlatch the boxes they carry—each of which carries two doomcreepers—and swiftly depart. Drawn by the smell of warm flesh, the doomcreepers crawl under the door to the PCs' room(s) and attack them.

In the morning, the lifeless body of the barkeep Hardken is found prostrate on the taproom floor, unless the PCs find him earlier. (Hardken went downstairs for a late-night snack and ran smack into the intruders, who promptly drew their weapons and slew him. The *triple eye symbol* has been drawn on the wall in Hardken's blood. (Show the players handout C if needed.) The sight of the body drives Mille to near-hysterics, and her son races protectively to her side.

THE HARROWERS

The Harrowers, as they are commonly known, are a group of doppelgangers that operate in Punjar. They usually specialize in “acquiring special items,” but sometimes that mission has expanded to include outright thievery, kidnapping, and on rare occasions, murder. They seldom kill (and then the compensation must be good), and the Slayers begrudgingly put up with their presence in the city—if for no other reason than they are near impossible to track down and eliminate as a group.

As can be expected, the Harrowers prefer to accomplish their objectives by stealth and guile when possible. They are tenacious and skilled at working as a group. It is rumored that experienced city thieves know how to contact them, and they always use a “go-between” when communicating with an employer or prospective employer.

Their exact number is unknown.

If the thralls escaped and the PCs escaped serious harm: Wyat angrily vows revenge on the culprits and glares at the PCs. Wyat considers the PCs to be involved with the crime at worst (though he has no proof) or considers them to be loadstones for trouble at best, and he happily states his opinion. He demands the PCs leave the inn unless they can succeed at a Diplomacy skill challenge (DC 17, 3 successes before 2 failures), at which point he has a change of heart and begrudgingly tells them they can stay.

If the PCs managed to catch and defeat the thralls: Wyat hesitatingly thanks them, but he still considers them bad luck and wants to see them on their way as soon as possible. The PCs can stay at the Hearth for one additional night before he asks them to move on.

Doomcreeper (4)

Level 5 Controller

Tiny natural magical beast XP 200

Initiative +6 Senses Perception +9; blindsight 10

HP 63; Bloodied 31

AC 19; Fortitude 16, Reflex 18, Will 15

Speed 6, climb 6

↑ Mandibles (standard; at-will)

+10 vs.AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.

☼ Suffocating Trance (standard; encounter)

Close burst 5; targets enemies; +7 vs. Reflex; the target is restrained and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both).

Small Size

A doomcreeper can compress its body enough to squeeze through a 1-inch-wide crack. Cracks and other openings that are more than 1 inch wide do not slow the doomcreeper at all.

Alignment Evil

Languages –

Skills Stealth +11

Str 16 (+5)

Dex 19 (+6)

Wis 14 (+4)

Con 15 (+4)

Int 9 (+1)

Cha 10 (+2)

Thrall (2)

Level 6 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid XP 250

Initiative +7

Senses Perception +4

low-light vision

HP 70; Bloodied 35

AC 22; Fortitude 19, Reflex 16, Will 15

Immune charm

Speed 7, swim 6

↑ Kris (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+13 vs.AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the encounter.

⚡ Kris (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

Ranged 3/6; +11 vs.AC; 1d8 + 5 damage. The thrall must retrieve its kris before it can throw it again.

Marked Strike

A thrall gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls for each mark a target bears from it or one of its allies.

One Mind, One Advantage

If a thrall gains any combat advantage against a target, all

thralls within 5 squares also gain combat advantage against the target.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Str 20 (+8) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+4)

Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)

Equipment kris, tattered rags

Event **The Ambush (set event)** (EL 5, XP 1.050)

This set encounter should take place as the PCs are traveling through Punjar's streets, moving from one location to another (for example, moving from the Golden Hearth to the Palace of Fortuity).

As the PCs move through Punjar's bustling, crowded streets, some of Beluth's hirelings stationed in a ruined, fire-gutted house fire a salvo of crossbow bolts at them. The attackers are doppelgangers—four members of the Harrowers (see sidebar). The squad of creatures has taken position in the burned-out building, and they have waited here patiently in case the PCs came within range. After their opening salvo, they reload and discharge another volley before departing for their temporary nest.

If the PCs are wounded in the initial volleys and create a stir (crying out for help and the like), the crowd nearest the building disperses and a squad of city watchmen arrives 5d6 minutes later to investigate. No citizens aid the PCs. The doppelgangers slip out of the old residence in human form and blend into the crowd, changing form more than once if necessary.

Tactics: If the PCs quickly enter the building ruins, the squad leader and a crossbowman (*L* and *A* on the Ambush map, respectively) engage with hand weapons (maintaining the guise of rough-looking humans), while another doppelganger (*B* on map) eases up against the shattered wall in the hopes of stabbing any PC who happens past. The two doppelgangers on the second floor (*C* and *D*) remain there, one adopting a position on the far side of a weakened section of floor, and the other staying behind the western walls. The doppelgangers continue to fire crossbow bolts at the PCs for as long as the PCs are at least 30 feet away. Any weight beyond 50 pounds placed on the "trigger area" of the weakened floor collapses the whole weakened floor section, sending the whole section (and everything on it) crashing down to the floor 20 feet below. PCs within the 5-foot outer edge of the section may make a DC 20 Athletics or Acrobatics check to arrest their fall by grabbing a nearby ledge. (A successful DC 12 Strength check allows a PC to pull himself up without assistance.) The doppelgangers are well aware of the weakened floor section and studiously avoid it while fighting. Once the PCs approach the doppelgangers, the creatures retreat behind the broken wall sections, circling and attempting to split up the party, so they may assume the shape of one or more PCs. If a PC comes face to face with their own "mirror image," that PC must make a saving throw or hesitate, automatically losing initiative to the doppelganger on the following melee round.

If the leader and another doppelganger fall, the remainder try to flee if possible. They do betray their employer if captured, for fear of his terrible retribution, and they bear no insignia connecting them to House Rohamari.

Treasure: Each doppelganger carries a handful of gems: 1d6 bloodstones (worth 50 gp each) and 1d4 violet garnets (worth 500 gp each).

Doppelganger Thug (3)

Level 8 Lurker

Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger)

XP 350

Initiative +13

Senses Perception +10

HP 69; **Bloodied** 34

AC 23; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21

Speed 6

↑ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+13 vs.AC; 1d4 + 5 damage.

↑ **Crossbow** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
Ranged 15/30; +13 vs.AC; 1d10 +5 damage.

↑ **Shapeshifter Feint** (minor; at-will)
+11 vs. Reflex; the doppelganger assassin gains combat advantage against the target until the end of the doppelganger thug's next turn.

✧ **Cloud Mind** (standard; sustain minor; encounter)
♦ **Charm**

Close burst 5; +11 vs. Will; the doppelganger thug is invisible to the target. Affected targets are unable to see the doppelganger for as long as it sustains the effect, until the doppelganger attacks, or until it is hit by an attack.

Combat Advantage

The doppelganger thug deals an extra 2d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

♦ **Change Shape** (minor; at-will) ♦ **Polymorph**

A doppelganger can alter its physical form to take on the appearance of any Medium humanoid, including a unique individual.

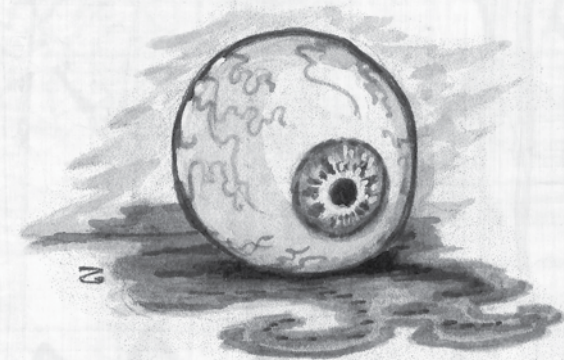
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common

Skills Bluff +15, Insight +12, Stealth +14

Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 21 (+9) **Wis** 12 (+5)

Con 15 (+6) **Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 19 (+8)

Equipment dagger



THE PALACE OF FORTUITY

Read or paraphrase the following as the players approach:

This large, one-level structure is solidly built with ornamental stonework all around. All the windows are heavily shuttered and the door is shut, but murmurs can be heard from within. Above the entrance, gilded letters read, "The PALACE of FORTUITY," and beneath, "All Are Welcome."

A successful Streetwise check imparts the following:

DC	Result
10	The Palace is a popular local gambling den. It has been in operation at least 10 years.
15	The Palace of Fortuity and the House of Fate are the only two gambling houses in the Devil's Thumb.
20	House Rohamari owns the Palace of Fortuity; their rivals, House Malhaven, own the House of Fate. The clans are rumored to be feuding.
25	Beluth Rohamari manages the Palace's day-to-day business. It is rumored that some Palace employees have been acting strangely and are active members in some sort of cult.
30+	Whispers link Palace employees to the worship of an entity known as the Secluded One.

Area P1-1 The Gambling Floor

Read or paraphrase the following to the players if they enter the building:

You've entered a large room full of activity. Citizens are seated around tables large and small, eagerly playing various games of chance. Fine furnishings are everywhere—polished tables, leather-upholstered seats, gilded moldings, fine goblets, pewter tankards, and other touches that lend the place an expensive air. The ceiling is lost in a sea of hanging silk bolts of all colors. Silver candleholders holding glass-domed candles jut from every wall, and there is nary a dark corner in the place. Toward the center of the room is a depressed area, with an ornate octagonal table bearing a star-like design on its top. Unlike most of the other tables, this unusual table is unoccupied.

To the northwest is a small stage, where a single dancer sways in accompaniment to soft music provided by a musician, though the tune is nearly drowned out by the cacophony of excited voices all around. To the southeast is a low bar, manned by a stocky, dark-bearded dwarf that marks you with a dour glance.

Most of the tables here are devoted to card gambling and dice games (such as knucklebones)—the house collects a small fee from each gambler before the start of any game, but the dealers wander freely amongst the tables and don't linger once games begin. Two tables (marked on the Palace of Fortuity map with an A) are different; each has a small

skull mounted in its center on a square of red felt. A pair of silver dice sits next to the skull. A successful DC 18 Perception check identifies these dice as mates to the one found in the sewer (area 2–5). These special tables are used to play a game called *stirgeskull* (see sidebar for details).

BRIEF NOTES ON THE STAFF

The GM is encouraged to use the following notes when fleshing out the Golden Hearth NPCs. (Notes regarding Beluth Rohamari are found earlier in this adventure.)

Druvir Ironarms: Druvir the dwarf originally hails from the town of Longdale in the Free Province of Thire. He traveled southward toward the warmer weather, catching a caravel from Rockport to Freeport, and then on to Punjar. The warmer clime and nature of Punjar appealed to him, and he decided to stay. Eventually he met Beluth and was hired to keep bar at the Palace, and he has been content these last 8 years.

Druvir is unfailingly loyal to both Beluth and House Rohamari, and he has been well rewarded with extra gifts in exchange for the occasional "favor." He ostensibly serves as the Palace barkeep, but Annas runs most of the drinks from the kitchen; his main job is watching for trouble and acting as a bouncer as needed. Druvir is fully aware of what is happening to the Palace's employees, as Beluth quickly admitted the truth to his trusted dwarf ally when pressed about it, and he is secure in the knowledge that Beluth will pay him well to keep this particular secret.



DRUVIR IRONARMS



ANNAS

Tactics: Druvir always wears his trusted +1 *throwing hammer* on his belt; its hilt is carved with 12 slashes—one for every life it has taken. If trouble occurs and he is outnumbered by more than two-to-one, Druvir releases his pet grick from the cage beneath his bar. The ill-tempered creature has been trained to attack on command.

Notoriety: Speaking with Druvir gains the party 1 notoriety point.

Eschiva: Eschiva has danced at the Palace this entire season. She dislikes much of the staff, but the tips are usually good (especially when folks are winning at the tables). She is beautiful; her brilliant green eyes peer out between jagged spurs of glossy black hair and hold the glance of any who walk near. She is well aware of her influence on the opposite sex, and isn't above charming her way into getting what she wants. She typically wears her unkempt hair to her waist and wears many jangling bracelets. Eschiva's grandmother was a full-blooded elf, and the elven blood has manifested itself in Eschiva's sharp features and large emerald eyes.

Development: Recently Eschiva has noticed a change in many of the staff, especially the normally talkative Esa, and she's aware that a server left the Palace one night, never to return. (The plucky server saw something odd in the basement, and was later captured but resisted the aboleth's *enthrall* ability. She ended up as a meal for the alligators...) Eschiva is not sure what is going on at the Palace, but her instincts have told her it would be salubrious to remain quiet... for now.

Eschiva is initially indifferent to the PCs, but a successful Diplomacy skill challenge (DC 15, 3 successes before 2 failures) improves her attitude and she admits to seeing changes in some of the staff. (If Eschiva witnesses a PC winning a wager in the Whirling Death game—described later—her attitude toward that PC is automatically improved without the need of a skill challenge.) Eschiva tries to subtly warn the PCs that something odd is happening to the Palace staff, and that Beluth is very dangerous. She

suspects something unusual is happening in the Palace basement, based on the odd comings and goings she has seen. She can direct PCs to the basement delivery door, although she does not have the key.

Annas: As server, Annas takes orders and runs out drinks and food to the tables. (Food orders take a *long* time—the better to keep the customer gambling.) Annas grew suspicious when Chatbert and Esa began acting oddly taciturn, and she made the mistake of expressing her fears to Beluth. Soon, she was ambushed on the way home one night and dragged before the aboleth, and so joined the creature's growing ranks of servitors. She rarely speaks.

Athias: The young Athias is a traveling bard who came to Punjar seeking adventure; instead, he has been forced to spend many hours in the Palace playing before crowds of gamblers that don't seem to hear anything beyond the jingle of coins. He is bored and constantly restless. He might join a group of young adventurers if asked, but he has a cowardly streak and ultimately turns tail at the first sign of trouble. Athias plays the *reapa*, a slender, 12-stringed form of lute indigenous to Punjar.

Resse: Resse is a newcomer to the Palace. He has been dancing here for two months, alternating shifts with Eschiva. The muscular young man is as vain as he is stupid. He notices little beyond his own nose, save for what appears in the nearest mirror. (If the PCs return to the Palace more than once, Resse will be dancing instead of Eschiva.)



ESCHIVA



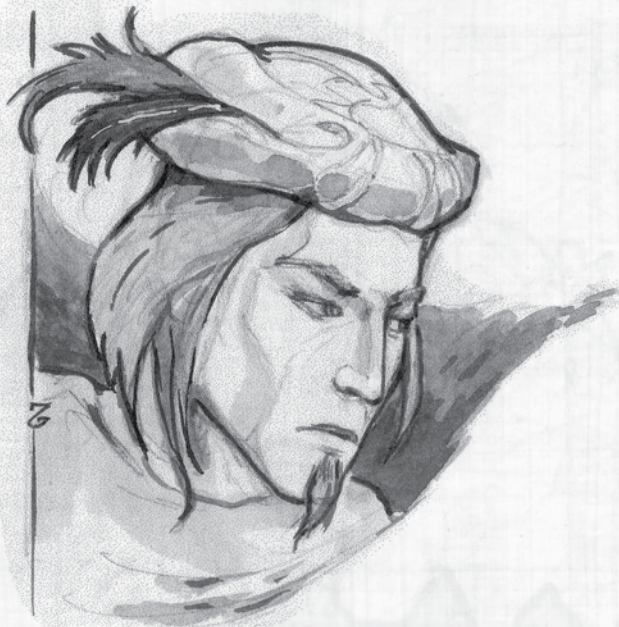
Cooks: Chatbert and Esa, a married, middle-aged couple, do the cooking and help Druvir with drink orders. One fateful day Chatbert discovered the false cask in the basement, and Beluth then asked he and his wife to stay late that same night... they have been thralls of Churlydtyrch ever since.

Dealers: Jacan, Debos, and Trent preside over tables in the Palace, running the games and watching carefully for any signs of cheating. (Cheaters are swiftly ejected from the premises; Beluth always sees that they are severely punished later, in one manner or another.) They silently deal cards or provide dice, but they rarely converse with customers, even to explain game rules. Debos was recently enthralled by the aboleth and is completely loyal to the creature. Jacan and Trent believe their suddenly silent fellow dealer is feeling ill these days, nothing more.

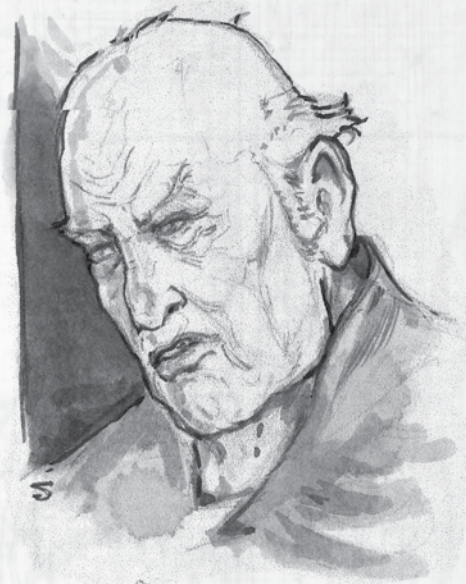
CUSTOMERS

A few sample customers are provided for the GM in the following section to be further developed as needed. When developing other customers, the GM should note that most patrons of the Palace are either the more affluent citizens of Punjar who have crossed into the Devil's Thumb to spend some money or city visitors; they are not the hard-working citizens in the immediate area.

The Aged Cleric: Lorvan is an elderly, dedicated cleric of Myna. He haunts the gambling dens of Punjar and has become a major nuisance to their owners. Lorvan watches others bet for hours, but never spends a gold piece, all the while singing the praises of Myna. Worse yet, his 88 years have taken their toll, and he has begun speaking to fellow clerics and other individuals that aren't there (some have been dead for years). He is harmless, but may dog the heels of gambling PCs and call attention to their every move. Clever PCs may actually be able to use him as a distraction. (Beluth, unlike Druvir, finds him rather amusing and has decided to wait until tomorrow or even the next day to have him thrown out into the street.)



ATHIAS



AGED CLERIC

The Tipsy Noble: Mora Isdane is a wealthy lesser noble "slumming it" for a thrill at the Palace. She is accompanied by her two retainers/bodyguards. She is betting wildly and losing money at a frightening pace, but her spirits are still up for the moment. If any PC sits at her table and wins a bet while she continues to lose, she soon blames that PC for her bad luck and swiftly becomes belligerent and insulting. If the PC(s) also loses, however, she hugs the PC and bellow for "another round of sherry for me and my new friends." If she is threatened with violence, her bodyguards intercede and try to intimidate those annoying their mistress; despite their fierce countenance and strong mien, they do not wish to come to blows if at all possible.

The Card Shark: Reynard has spent much of his life moving from one city to another, staying just long enough to bilk merchants and gamblers of small fortunes before moving on again. He has an astute eye for an easy mark, and once he identifies a good victim he ruthlessly deprives that rube of every last gold piece. Reynard is an expert at nicking cards, tilting wheels of chance, and loading dice—and is a very canny player besides. He rarely tries to steal from gambling establishments, finding it easier and safer to hoodwink individual gamblers. If possible, he enters into a game with a PC and tries to sway the odds in his favor. If confronted as a cheat, he refutes the charge, and then claims urgent business elsewhere, leaving as quickly and quietly as he can.

THE WHIRLING DEATH

If any PC enters the sunken area housing the octagonal table, all eyes in the room are quickly drawn to them. A dealer hastily approaches them, smiles submissively, and motions for them to be seated. A small crowd of customers gathers around, congratulating the PC(s) on their bravado. The GM should make it clear that leaving the pit without playing the game would, at this point, be awkward or embarrassing. If one or more PCs sit, a few brave customers



join them (most of these patrons are the burly, fearless sort and obviously not Punjar nobles). PCs in the pit making a DC 15 Perception check notice small droplets of blood here and there on the floor.

The so-called “Whirling Death” game may only be played with an even number of gamblers. Once the patrons are seated around the table, the game begins. Each player places a bet on the table: any coins, gem, or item of 1,000 gp worth or less (though bets lower than 50 gp are chuckled over). The dealer then draws out a black lacquered box from beneath the table, opens it, and lays a beautiful silver jambiya (dagger) on the center of the table. The dagger is of very fine make and is set with tiny rubies. As soon as it is placed, the dealer backs away. The dagger then begins slowly revolving of its own volition, steadily spinning faster and faster. The crowd almost seems to hold a collective breath. Then the dagger suddenly stops and flies directly at a random player (+10 vs. Reflex; 1d4+3 damage).

The individual targeted by the flying dagger loses his or her bet, those next to the targeted player on either side lose half their bets, and the individual directly *opposite* the targeted player wins twice his original bet. (If a player who has bet an object or gems loses half his or her bet, the dealer takes the wager and replaces it with half its value in coin.) All other bets on the table stay in play, and a player may increase a bet between rounds if desired (but never lower a bet). The dealer helps any injured player to his feet, wipes the dagger free of any blood as needed, and the game begins again.

The game traditionally proceeds for five rounds, but any wounded patron may gracefully exit without ridicule. Uninjured patrons leaving the game before the five-round sequence has ended will be the butt of much joking and ridicule. Likewise, any newcomer “toughing out” his or her first full game is now well regarded and Eschiva’s attitude level toward those individuals immediately improves. Once the game ends, and bets are paid and collected, the dealer seizes the dagger and locks it safely away in its box once again.

Notoriety: Playing a full five rounds of whirling death gains the party 1 notoriety point.

Event Wine Delivery (set event)

While the PCs are inside or near the Palace, Najib the merchant arrives with his wine cart. He enters the Palace to announce his arrival to the dwarf Druvir, and then moves his cart to the side of the building and begins offloading barrels at the side basement door.

If the PCs aided Najib in the *Overtured Cart* city encounter earlier in the adventure, he greets them with a cheery wave, saying, “I’d join your party for a drink, but I’m behind on my rounds and these barrels need delivering around back. Good luck in the games, and thank you folks again!” If the PCs speak with him alone, he readily relates that he delivers wine to the Palace once a week. He carries a key for the basement delivery door (area P1–3) on his belt, and if the PCs ask, he “accidentally” leaves the door open when he leaves.

Event A Drink with Beluth (EL 7, XP 1,500)

If the party is investigating the Palace, and they have 5 or more notoriety points, Beluth takes notice of the group and recognizes the PCs immediately. He waits until they are unoccupied, giving them a chance to gamble a bit if they wish, and then he emerges from the eastern hallway and casually saunters over. Beluth introduces himself as the owner and asks the PCs to join him for a drink at a private table.

If the characters refuse, a fleeting look of what might be disappointment flashes across Beluth’s features before he smiles broadly and says: “Another time perhaps. I wish you luck at the tables.” He then swiftly departs for the kitchen (from there to the chambers below to check on his special prisoner).

If the characters agree to a drink, Beluth is delighted. He bids them be seated in the private room (area P1–4) and calls for a bottle of his best wine. Moments later, a server arrives with a bottle and several gem-studded glasses reserved for special occasions. Beluth happily bids a PC to pour the wine, and (assuming they comply) he quaffs a mouthful and says, “Mmm. One of our better vintages, delivered here from Archbridge several winters ago.” He then offers a toast: “May fortune embrace us, and may we all get what we truly deserve.” He carefully clinks his glass with each adventurer’s glass in turn and drinks heartily.

The wine is quite normal, and in fact is an excellent vintage of port. The glasses, however, bear a subtle trap. One tiny red gemstone set on the circumference of each glass holds a drop of colorless poison, and releases its contents into the glass if tapped. As Beluth clicks glasses with each character, he is sure to tap his glass against the trapped gem on their glass. The poison is then released into the victim’s wine. The event goes unnoticed unless any PC makes a DC 30 Perception check. (If caught, Beluth acts astonished, calmly claims his innocence, and demands the PCs leave his establishment at once. If they do not comply, he whistles for the dwarf Druvir and his kitchen staff to aid him.)

Heroes drinking the wine are targeted by the poison: +15 vs. Fortitude; target falls a sleep for 5 minutes.

Regardless of whether or not the PCs drink their wine, Beluth asks them their purpose in Punjar, what they seek, their origins, and the like. During the conversation, Beluth acts very much the gentleman and observes every punctilio, aside from trying to poison the PCs, of course. He is a smooth conversationalist, supremely confident in his ability to handle any vagaries the adventurers might present, and he does his best to keep the PCs talking about themselves so he may learn about them. The GM should use the following sample question and answer text presented in the sidebar as a guide to how Beluth will respond to questions from the PCs. It is preferable that the GM paraphrase Beluth’s responses rather than read them verbatim.

STIRGESKULL

Strigeskull is a game played with two silver dice. The players make a wager, and then throw the dice into the open top of a stirge skull. The dice then emerge from the nose or mouth of the skull into a felt-lined reservoir. The sum of the original dice roll is recorded, and the player rolls a second time. The results depend on this second roll:

- If the player rolls higher, he wins double his bet.
- If the player rolls lower, he loses his bet.
- If the player throws “doubles” (2–2, 3–3, 4–4, etc.), he may roll again and total the second and third rolls together, provided he first pays a side amount equaling half the original bet to the dealer.
- If the player rolls the same value as the first roll (doubles or not), he has a choice: either lose the bet, or pay a side amount equaling half the bet to the dealer; in which case, the matching roll is discarded and the player gets a fresh roll.

There is a 1 in 6 chance that the dice emerge from the nose of the skull. This doesn't affect the wagering, but in such an instance, it is considered customary to tip the dealer (an amount equaling one tenth of the original bet is typical).

For Beluth's stats, please see page 39.

Tactics: *If all the PCs are affected by the poison:* Once the poison takes effect, Beluth, Druvir, and the kitchen staff quickly drag them off through the secret door, through the kitchen, and down to the sewers. There the PCs are placed in cages in area P2–13, only two characters to a cage if possible. The characters awaken there later (see area P2–13). Their weapons and possessions are placed in P2–15.

If some or none of the PCs are affected by the poison: A whistle from Beluth quickly brings both the kitchen staff and Druvir (all of whom are waiting just outside the door via a pre-arranged signal). Once aid arrives, Beluth happily withdraws from combat and allows his minions to fight on his behalf. He avoids any physical conflict *if at all possible*, not wishing to fight in the Palace. He bolts for the kitchen stairs via the secret door and heads for the relative safety of area P2–13, hoping that the statue trap (area P2–3) will kill or delay any pursuers. He makes his final stand in the caves.

Druvir

Level 8 Elite brute

Medium natural humanoid, dwarf **XP 700**

Initiative +5

Senses Perception +7;
low-light vision

HP 212; bloodied 106

AC 22; Fortitude 22, Reflex 18, Will 20

Saving throws +5 against poison effects

Speed 5

Action Points 1

↑ **Warhammer** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+10 vs.AC; 1d10+4 damage

⚡ **+1 Throwing hammer** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +11 vs.AC; 1d6+5 damage

↑ **Ridicule** (standard; recharge; 5–6) ♦ **Weapon**

Druvir may make an attempt to Intimidate a target, followed by a standard attack against that same target. If both Intimidate attempt and attack against the same target are successful, the target grants Druvir combat advantage until the end of combat.

⚡ **Ricochet Throw** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Weapon**

Druvir makes a throwing hammer attack, and if the attack is successful the weapon returns to his hand.

Combat Advantage

Druvir deals an additional 2d6 damage against targets he has combat advantage against.

Stand Your Ground

When an effect forces a dwarf to move—through a pull, a push, or a slide—the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

Alignment Evil languages Common, dwarf

Skills Dungeoneering +8, Endurance +10, Intimidate +4

Str 18 (+8) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 16 (+7)

Con 16 (+7) **Int** 12 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+4)

Equipment leather armor, +1 throwing hammer, warhammer

Area P1–2

Kitchen

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

This room appears to be a busy kitchen. Tables are filled with trays of tiny victuals: sliced cheese on bread wedges, roasted leeks in dough, stuffed mushroom caps, and more. Knives and implements are scattered about the tabletops. Bunches of herbs hang from the rafters with strings of dried sausages and garlic. In the rear of the room, two people wearing aprons turn slowly toward you, knives in hand.

This area doesn't contain anything out of the ordinary. The cooks Chatbert and Esa will motion for the characters to leave this area, calling for Druvir if necessary.

Area P1–3

Cellar Door

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

A ramp of pressed stones leads downward at an easy angle here and terminates after about 10 feet at a thick wooden door with metal bands.

This ramp is used for food and liquor deliveries, so goods may be brought directly into the Palace basement. If the door is examined, a successful Perception check (DC 15) reveals a symbol of some kind carved into the wood near the bottom corner of the door. (Show the players handout C). The door is locked (Thievery, DC 20).

Area PI-4 Private Room

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

A small chandelier illuminates this room with a soft golden light. A round, polished table dominates the area, surrounded by six comfortable chairs. A sideboard is against the western wall. The walls here are carved into long, decorative panels. A few ornate throw rugs are on the floor.

This area is a private gambling room, available for rent at 25 gp a night. The sideboard contains drinking glasses, tankards, a metal lockbox and key to hold gambling stakes.

If the PCs agree to Beluth's offer of a drink, he will take them here (see the aforementioned *A Drink with Beluth* event). In the event that PCs fall unconscious and Beluth retains control of the situation, Beluth has his enthralled servants drag the PCs out via the secret door.

Area PI-5 Beluth's Office

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

You have entered what appears to be a small but lavish office. A fine satinwood desk sits across the room with a high-backed, padded chair behind. Just inside the door is a sitting area with a low table, atop which is a platter holding a water ewer, crystal glasses, and a bottle of red wine. Throw rugs cover much of the floor and fine hangings adorn the wall. A hand-painted portrait on the wall behind the desk features two dark-haired men and a raven-tressed woman—all share the same steely blue eyes.

The hangings depict scenes of life in old Punjab (before the Night of the Long Knives) and prominently feature members of the nobility. The hand-painted portrait on the wall depicts Beluth and his older siblings, the current elders of House Rohamari. The wall hangings are worth 200 gp each; there are four in total. The painting is worth 500 gp to any collector of such portraits of Punjarian nobility. The desk holds mostly paperwork regarding the Palace and its weekly takes, but the bottom drawer has a false bottom (requiring a DC 20 Perception check to locate). Inside this secret area is but one sheet of parchment. Show the players handout D. The parchment is Beluth's list of enthralled employees and future victims.

Area PI-6 Servants Quarters

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

This Spartan room is furnished simply; it contains two beds, two small trunks, a worn chair, and a small side table with a scarred surface. There is a row of tiny wooden figurines on the table: a hawk with wings spread, a swordsman with his hands on his hips, a running dog, a crouching wolf, and a rearing horse. The posts of one bed also show an individual's skill at carving, as each has been carved into the likeness of an eagle in a slightly different pose.

Members of the wait staff wishing to spend the night typically use this spare room. (Beluth always retires to the Rohamari villa across the city after hours.) The current occupants here are the kitchen workers Chatbert and Esa. Neither individual has much in the way of personal possessions beyond a few small knickknacks and such. The small carvings are all Chatbert's, and he was an active carver and whittler of small limewood figurines before falling under the aboleth's spell. Each figure has a tiny carved *C* on its base (requires a DC 15 Perception check to discover).

Hidden beneath some spare clothing in one of the trunks, wrapped in a dirty piece of cloth and bound with twine, is an unusual wood figurine that represents a slug-like creature with tentacles. The workmanship of this figure is much worse than the others here, and the work is not signed on the base with an initial. A successful DC 20 Dungeoneering check identifies the sculpture as an aboleth. Chatbert carved the ugly sculpture after he became enthralled; his mind has clung desperately to his carving, one of the few hobbies he enjoyed or had time for, but the result is a hideous one.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO BELUTH

Tell me about yourself.

"There is little to tell, truth be told. I spent a time in your profession—an adventurer by trade—but tragedy struck and my life changed." He strokes the side of his leather half-mask thoughtfully. "The adventurer's life is truly a dangerous one. Now I run this humble establishment, meet interesting people such as yourselves, and manage to live in some comfort for my troubles. I am content. But enough of Beluth! Tell me all about your brave company."

Tell me about the Palace of Fortuity.

"The Palace is *the* place in the city for those with a true love of gambling. We of House Rohamari have proudly owned and operated the Palace for 11 years now, and it is still the most popular house of fortune in Punjab."

What do you think about these disappearances?

"It is a sad, terrible thing. The city is *so* very unsafe these days. Hopefully someone will find that poor lost child soon; the city should *never* have trusted her safety to those unprincipled Malhavens."

Do you dislike the Malhavens?

"I bear no acrimony toward them *personally*, but they have a bad reputation in the city and are not honorable folk."

Have you heard of cult activity in the Devil's Thumb?

"I know nothing of such things. Keeping things running smoothly here at the Palace takes all my time. It's hard work indeed. Would that I had the time for rumor and tall tales!"

THE LOWER PALACE AND SEWERS

This section of the Punjar sewers (beyond the palace basement rooms) has fallen into serious disrepair, and few workers venture into these dangerous tunnels. The water level is high here, about 6 feet deep in areas, and the water threatens to spill over the narrow walkways. The sewage current is fairly strong, and the slimy coating on the floor beneath the water makes it very difficult for the average-sized human to stand stationary for any length of time. The chipped and aged walls are marked with streaks of mold. The smell of the sewage in the tunnels is nearly overpowering to the uninitiated.

Sewer tunnels are typically 15 to 20 feet high, but smaller tunnels (those with a width less than 15 feet) are often only 10 feet high.

PCs spending any length of time in the sewers may contract a disease called the shakes; swimming in the water here doubles the chances of contacting this disease. Any PC running or charging on the slippery walkways must make a DC 15 Acrobatics check or slip off the walkway.

Area P2-1 The Wine Cellar

Read or paraphrase the following:

You emerge from the stairs into a large cellar. Before you are several tall shelves stocked with many bottles of wine. To the south is a row of large casks, most with spigots. To the far west end of the chamber, viewable between the wine shelves, four enormous tuns stand against the wall. The ceiling above is draped in dusty cobwebs.

The puncheons to the south hold port and dark ale. The bottled wine is normal, and those searching, find a bottle worth 6d10 gp for every 10 minutes devoted to the task. Three of the huge casks against the western wall hold liquid—various dark ales—but one is false and conceals a secret door (discovered with a successful DC 20 Perception check). Careful inspection of the tuns (Perception, DC 15) reveals that the false one is not as dusty as the others and bears a scratched mark (show the players handout C); if this is discovered, allow that PC a +4 circumstance bonus to any Perception attempt seeking secret doors in the immediate vicinity of the cask. The false cask front swings open to reveal a passage to area P2-3.

Area P2-2 Old Storage

The door to this room is locked (Thievery, DC 25). Read or paraphrase the following if the PCs enter:

This chamber is dusty and full of cobwebs, but there has been some foot traffic here. The northern part of the room is heaped with old crates, broken barrels, and junk, but your eyes are drawn to the southern half of the room. A wooden shelf there holds a row of skulls and several smaller items.

Beluth uses this grim area as a private trophy room, and only he has a key (although Druvir suspects the room's purpose). The five skulls belong to various individuals who crossed Beluth at some point, or inflicted some slight—

real or imagined—upon him. Also on the shelf is a golden necklace studded with tiny rubies (worth 4,900 gp) stolen from a noblewoman who spurned his advances, a broken garrote used in a failed attempt on his life (what first may appear to be rust stains on the wire are actually blood), and a bent holy symbol of Gorhan taken from the body of a courageous curate that spoke harshly of him in public.

Area P2-3 The Guardians (EL 5, XP 1,000)

Read or paraphrase the following:

Ahead the passage widens and two identical niches are to either side, each holding a man-sized statue. The statues, which face each other across the corridor, are each fashioned in the likeness of a robed man, cowl pulled over his face, standing with one hand extended toward the corridor as if reaching out for something.

Trap: PCs making a successful DC 15 Intelligence check discern an acrid, metallic scent to the air here. The area of floor between the statues is trapped (DC 25 Perception to locate), and if walked on, it sinks slightly and a bolt of electricity leaps between the outstretched hands of the statues to strike anyone between them. PCs below 5 feet in height are spared the jolt unless they wear medium or heavier metal armor or carry long metals weapons (such as a sword).

Bolt Statues

Level 10 Elite Lurker

Trap XP 1,000

Perception

DC 28: The character notices that the area between the statues is slightly out of balance with the rest of the floor.

Trigger: When a creature enters or begins its turn in a trapped square, the trap attacks.

Opportunity Action Close burst 3

Target: All creatures in the burst

Attack: +13 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d10+6 lightning damage, and the target is stunned (save ends).

Miss: Half damage, and the target is not immobilized.

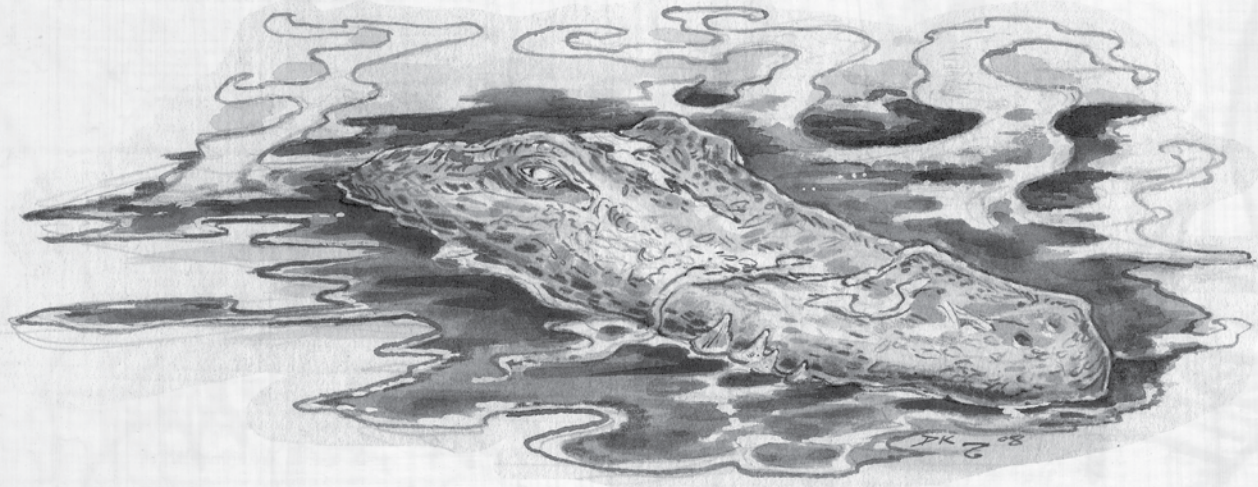
COUNTERMEASURES

- An adjacent character can disable the trap with a DC 28 Thievery check.
- A character making a successful Athletics check (DC 11, or DC 21 without a running start) can jump over the trapped area.

Area P2-4 The High Altar

Read or paraphrase the following:

This trapezoidal room is decorated in greenish-white wall hangings. In the center of the space is a massive altar of some kind; a crude, ghastly affair of stone carved with a hideous conglomeration of skulls, skeletal beings, and slug-like beings, all intermingled and squirming together. The top of the altar has a depressed recess, which is empty. To either side of the



altar, thuribles hang from the ceiling and issue forth tendrils of a sickly sweet smoke. The area behind the altar is painted with an effigy that resembles the statues seen earlier. Arrayed around the altar is an abundance of gems and jewelry spilling forth from many small trunks and coffers.

Suddenly a deep voice rings out: "You stand before the high altar of the Secluded One. Fall on your knees in supplication, state your desire, and leave a sacrifice before the altar."

The gems and jewelry is of the cheapest sort (a successful Streetwise check at DC 15 determines this easily enough). The assorted necklaces, bracelets, and armlets, 16 in all, are only worth 1d10 gp apiece. The gems, of which there are 38, are different types of quartz, obsidian, malachite, and turquoise, each worth 1d6 gp each. Some closed containers on the bottom of the stack are empty. A Magic Mouth ritual is the source of the voice. If characters leave the room and re-enter, the message will be repeated.

Hidden behind the altar is a secret door (Perception, DC 20) that is activated by pushing in a dark flagstone at the base of the wall.

Area P2-5 Ambush Room

This empty chamber is used by cult thralls to ambush potential victims. Beluth or others lead individuals interested in joining the cult to the altar to "make a proper sacrifice of obedience." Regardless of the sacrifice offered, the hapless individual soon finds himself ambushed by thralls emerging from the secret door. Beluth, if present, typically exits the altar room and spikes the regular door shut from the other side until the dust settles. Once the victim is overpowered and helpless, he or she is dragged before the aboleth.

Area P2-6 Eyes in the Water (EL 7, XP 1,400)

Read or paraphrase the following:

You have stepped through the secret door and emerged into a long sewer tunnel. A strong smell of sewage invades your nostrils. Patches of mold on the walls give forth a soft green glow. Overhead, water drips down from high above and a few small black shapes can be seen fluttering about. A short distance to the south, the walkway bends and a small bridge

leads over the dark flowing water. In the other direction, the walkway goes on for a longer distance before joining to another bridge.

Lurking in the water here are 8 enormous alligators. They slowly hold position in the water with only their brown eyes exposed, just south of the southernmost walkway bridge. If any prey walk south of the bridge or enter the water, they lunge to the attack.

These creatures were acquired near Bloodport by a noble seeking unusual pets; the noble later dumped the baby alligators into the sewers when they grew too large and hungry to manage. They have existed (barely) on the occasional rat, human, or even carrion, but more recently they have been thrown many victims by the skum and are far better fed than in the past. The alligators recognize the skum as a source of food and do not attack them; the thralls are not so fortunate, and two have so far fallen prey to the alligators' appetites. They attack their prey relentlessly, working as a team, and do not cease attacking until they or their chosen prey is dead.

Alligator (8)

Level 4 Soldiers
Medium natural beast (reptile) XP 175

Initiative +5 Senses Perception +3
low-light vision

HP 58; Bloodied 29
AC 20; Fortitude 19, Reflex 14, Will 15
Speed 6, swim 8

↑ Bite (standard; at-will)
+10 vs.AC; 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape). The alligator cannot make bite attacks while grabbing a creature, but it can use *crushing jaws*.

↑ Crushing Jaws (standard; at-will)
If an alligator begins its turn with a target grabbed in its jaws, it makes an attack against the grabbed creature: +10 vs.AC; 2d8 + 4 damage. *Miss:* Half damage.

Alignment Unaligned Languages —
Skills Stealth +8

Str 18 (+6) Dex 12 (+3) Wis 13 (+3)
Con 18 (+6) Int 2 (-2) Cha 7 (+0)

Area P2-7 Sentry Duty
(EL 8, XP 1,750):

The tunnels that connect areas P2-7 through P2-9 are water filled, and PCs navigating them must swim underwater. The cave areas emerge into somewhat stale but breathable air. Read or paraphrase the following:

You emerge from the scummy water into a small, air-filled cave. The dark clay floor bears numerous footprints from large, webbed feet.

If the skum have not yet been encountered, also paraphrase the following:

Standing in the mud before you are five fierce-looking creatures that appear to be a hideous mix of man and fish. Their muscular arms end in large hands tipped with talons, which they dispassionately flex and clench. They calmly watch as you emerge into the cave.

Tactics: This group of skum normally stands watch here, per Churlydtyrch's orders. One individual stands up to his neck in the fetid water outside the tunnel (at the position marked X on Sewer Map 2), watching the walkways for activity and silently swimming to gather his comrades if the need arises. If more than a sole intruder is spotted, the group grunts to their fellows in area P2-9 before heading out to attack or capture the interlopers. If the sentry sees the PCs fighting with the giant alligators, the skum join that conflict. These creatures have no treasure.

The floor here is deep mud and should be treated as difficult terrain for combat purposes.

Skum (7)

Level 6 Brute
Medium aberrant humanoid (aquatic)
XP 250

Initiative +6 **Senses Perception** +9
HP 86; **Bloodied** 43
AC 18; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 14
Speed 6, swim 8

↑ **Claws** (standard; at-will)
+9 vs.AC; 1d10 + 6 damage, and the skum makes a secondary attack on the same target. **Secondary Attack:** +7 vs. Reflex; the target is grabbed (until escape).

↑ **Worrying Bite** (standard; at-will)
Grabbed target only; +9 vs.AC; 2d8+6 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the skum's next turn.

⚡ **Blinding Mucus** (standard; recharge 5-6)
Ranged 5; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d8+3 damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the skum's next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Skills Athletics +14, Stealth +11

Str 22 (+9) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 5 (+0) **Cha** 6 (+1)

Area P2-8 Dreadful Art

Read or paraphrase the following:

This cave reeks of death and decay. Against the far wall are three skeletons dressed in torn clothing and ruined equipment. Each skeleton holds a different weapon—one a longsword, one a battleaxe, and one a halberd. A small pyramid of skulls has been purposefully piled here, for reasons unknown. The bones evoke an uncontrollable feeling of dread within you.

This grisly display has been created by the skum. They add skulls or random bones from time to time, and come to admire their work when they are bored. The weapons are normal, serviceable items. There is nothing else here of value.

Area P2-9 Servants of Churlydtyrch
(EL 9, XP 2,000)

Read or paraphrase the following:

Four man-sized, fish-like creatures stand here. The hunched creatures have webbed hands with long claws, finned backs, and baleful red eyes. Several rude mounds made of sticks and other refuse are spaced about the room—apparently nests for the creatures. Their heads swivel as you enter and they fix you with a flat gaze.

These skum quickly attack any daring to enter their caves. They are fearless and loyal to Churlydtyrch.

Hidden beneath two mounds of refuse near the cave entrance are another four skum, who silently wait until all the PCs are otherwise engaged before attacking. (Have the PCs make a Perception check against the skums' Stealth check.) These four will attempt to flank the PCs and cut off their means of escape if possible. The skum have no treasure.

Skum (8)

Level 6 Brute
Medium aberrant humanoid (aquatic)
XP 250

Initiative +6 **Senses Perception** +9
HP 86; **Bloodied** 43
AC 18; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 14
Speed 6, swim 8

↑ **Claws** (standard; at-will)
+9 vs.AC; 1d10 + 6 damage, and the skum makes a secondary attack on the same target. **Secondary Attack:** +7 vs. Reflex; the target is grabbed (until escape).

↑ **Worrying Bite** (standard; at-will)
Grabbed target only; +9 vs.AC; 2d8+6 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the skum's next turn.

⚡ **Blinding Mucus** (standard; recharge 5-6)
Ranged 5; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d8+3 damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the skum's next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Skills Athletics +14, Stealth +11

Str 22 (+9) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 5 (+0) **Cha** 6 (+1)

Area P2-10

The Plunge (EL 7, XP 1,400)

Read or paraphrase the following:

The murky water flows quickly over a drop-off here, falling at least 40 feet into a great octagonal room below. To the east and southeast, water flows from narrow pipes to spill down into the vortex below. Small rivulets of water run down the old cracked stonework to join the seething water below. The sound of running water here is very loud. The ceiling here extends upward at least 20 feet, and above you a glowing ball of light bobs about playfully.

If PCs allow themselves to be carried over the ledge by the current, they take normal falling damage (4d10).

The glowing ball of light is a lantern strung from the ceiling. The thralls use it to lure in prey drawn to light.

Below the end of the ledge, noticeable with a successful DC 30 Perception check, is a set of iron rungs leading down. The rungs are very rusty but safe; however, approximately 10 feet above the water, the rungs end and characters venturing down in that manner must jump or fall the rest of the way. PCs that travel halfway down the shaft (via the rungs or by other means) may notice a dark cave mouth to the south with a successful Perception check (DC 25). The actual cave entrance is the entrance to Churlydytyrch's lair, but the real entrance to area P2-19 lies to the southwest—an illusion covers it, and makes the cave opening appear to the southeast instead.

Four thralls, early victims of Churlydytyrch, lurk beneath the water close to the entrance to area 1-19. They cannot breathe air, and take damage if they leave the water for

longer than 10 minutes. They serve as the “backdoor guard” for Churlydytyrch, and remain hidden unless intruders enter the water and approach the entrance to Area P2-19.

Elder Thrall (4)

Level 8 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 350

Initiative +8 Senses Perception +5; low-light vision

HP 90; Bloodied 45

AC 24; Fortitude 21, Reflex 17, Will 16

Immune charm

Speed 6, swim 8

↑ Greatsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon

+15 vs.AC; 1d10 + 6 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the encounter.

↑ Surging Strike (standard; recharge 5-6) ♦ Weapon

Requires greatsword; the elder thrall makes a charge attack while swimming: +16 vs.AC; 2d10+6 damage, and the target is stunned (save ends).

Marked Strike

An elder thrall gains a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls for each mark a target bears from it or one of its allies.

One Mind, One Advantage

If an elder thrall gains any combat advantage against a target, all thralls within 5 squares also gain combat advantage against the target.

Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Common

Str 22 (+10)

Dex 14 (+6)

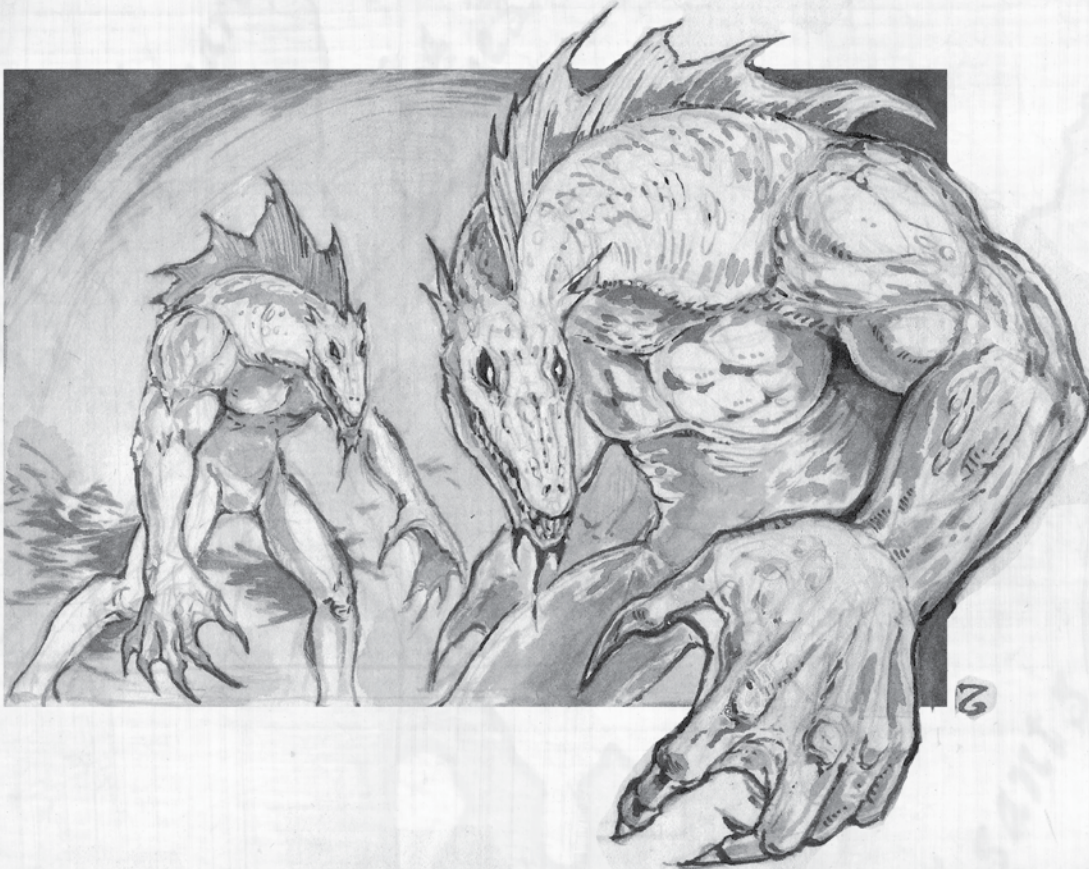
Wis 12 (+5)

Con 18 (+9)

Int 10 (+4)

Cha 10 (+4)

Equipment leather armor, greatsword



Area P2-11 A Sign of Troubles Ahead (EL 3, XP 750)

Read or paraphrase the following:

A faint outline of a doorway is here, but there is no handle of any sort—just smooth stone. In the center, just above waist level, are three protruding stone squares. Each square bears an unusual symbol. The squares and doorway block appear to be of recent construction when compared to the stonework elsewhere

Show the players handout E.

This special door blocks access to the western caves. The door opens when the blocks are rotated to present the symbols in the correct manner. Once all three symbols are aligned vertically the door silently swings open.

Each symbol square may be easily turned 90 degrees, either clockwise or counterclockwise. Each square “clicks” into place at 90-degree increments, and each may be turned in either direction any number of times. If the leftmost symbol is turned, the middle symbol also turns a like amount (this cannot be physically prevented without breaking the door mechanism). If the rightmost symbol is turned, the **leftmost** symbol also shifts likewise. Finally, if the middle square is turned, the symbols **to either side** also turn, i.e., all three squares turn together.

The door may be easily closed or opened from the western side. Closing the door returns the symbols to their original (incorrect) position.

Area P2-12 A Gathering of Thralls (EL 9, XP 2,250)

Read or paraphrase the following:

You have entered a rough-walled cave, approximately circular in shape. Shovels and pickaxes lean against a far wall. Except for a few large slabs of rock and some heaps of cloth and rags, the area is largely empty. The area appears to have been purposefully dug out, rather than being a natural formation.

Ten individuals stand here, motionless. They represent an odd grouping of Punjar society: three men dressed as day laborers, a man in beggar’s rags, two goodwives, a man and woman dressed in tattered noble garb, and two men dressed in leather armor. They take notice of your arrival, and wordlessly draw out wavy-bladed swords.

The majority of Churlydtyrch’s thralls stay here, typically standing idle or sleeping on the dirt floor until their master commands them. Once they become aware of intruders, they move to attack with unexpected speed.

Development: One of the thralls is a sneak thief named Calotta. She resisted the aboleth’s enslaving ability, but didn’t wish to become alligator food, so she is pretending to be under the creature’s spell. Eventually she will be found out, but she has maintained the ruse thus far. Calotta is desperate to escape but patient; she has eaten near-inedible food and slept on rags with the others, biding her time and awaiting the right opportunity. If the PCs do well in the fight at the outset, she immediately switches sides.

Otherwise, she hangs back and refrains from attacking the PCs while she gauges their strength. If allowed to join the PCs, she proves a trustworthy ally, but goes her own way once the party emerges from the underground. She is not above “borrowing” a small magic item or precious gem from a PC shortly before parting ways...

A large slab of stone to the west conceals a downward-sloping passage. Lifting the slab requires a DC 25 Strength check; two characters may combine efforts if desired.

Thrall (9)

Level 6 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid XP 250

Initiative +7

Senses Perception +4
low-light vision

HP 70; Bloodied 35

AC 22; Fortitude 19, Reflex 16, Will 15

Immune charm

Speed 7, swim 6

↑ Kris (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon

+13 vs.AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the encounter.

⚡ Kris (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon

Ranged 3/6; +11 vs.AC; 1d8 + 5 damage. The thrall must retrieve its kris before it can throw it again.

Marked Strike

A thrall gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls for each mark a target bears from it or one of its allies.

One Mind, One Advantage

If a thrall gains any combat advantage against a target, all thralls within 5 squares also gain combat advantage against the target.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Str 22 (+10)

Dex 14 (+6)

Wis 12 (+5)

Con 18 (+9)

Int 10 (+4)

Cha 10 (+4)

Equipment kris, tattered rags

Calotta

Level 2 Skirmisher

Medium natural humanoid (human)

XP 125

Initiative +6

Senses Perception +1

HP 34; Bloodied 17

AC 16; Fortitude 13, Reflex 15, Will 14

Speed 6; see also shifting melee attack

↑ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon

+7 vs.AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.

⚡ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon

Ranged 5/10; +7 vs.AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.

↑ Shifting Melee Attack (standard; at-will)

Calotta can move up to 3 squares and make one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. She doesn’t provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.

Combat Advantage

Calotta deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +11, Stealth +9, Thievery +11
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 16 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 10 (+1) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 14 (+3)
Equipment leather armor, 4 daggers, thieves' tools

Area P2-13 **The Hanging Cages** (EL 8, XP 1,750)

Read or paraphrase the following:

You have stepped into a large cavern that is almost square in shape. A ledge, perhaps 5 or 6 feet in width, runs around the circumference of the place. The center of the cave drops down about 10 feet to a dirt floor. Two huge beams of wood stretch across the depression, and suspended from each beam are two metal cages—some of which contain human-sized figures! You grimly note a gleam of bone from the nearest cages, yet you detect some feeble movement from the cages to the north. Beneath the metal hatches, dark brown shapes scamper across the floor.

Across the room, two men garbed in dark gray robes with drawn cowls emerge from another tunnel and separate, each walking onto a different part of the ledge. As they approach, the silent men draw wands from beneath their robes and level them in your direction.

The robed thralls are a pair of wizards that were lured to the lower chambers of the Palace by Beluth with promises of wealth. They came hoping to join the rumored cult and were ambushed in the altar room (area P2-4). Once they fell under the aboleth's spell, their wands were returned.

Tactics: The mage to the northwest quickly stations himself at the "corner" where the path bends (position *a* on map), and he fires his spells at potential victims, aiming along the pathways to target multiple individuals if possible. These thralls attack to kill and do their utmost to prevent the PCs from moving past them toward area P2-14.

Heroes attempting to move across the ledges and beams must succeed on DC 15 Acrobatics checks, or tumble 20

feet to the ground below. Additionally, anyone struck in combat while attempting to balance must immediately make a DC 20 Acrobatics check to avoid falling.

Two massive dire rats are foraging on the floor. They survive, albeit barely, on the occasional scraps and trash thrown down by Churlydtyrch's minions. Lapping at the blood dripping from the cages above has given them a taste for human flesh, and they attack anyone on the lower level. If a melee begins here, each melee round (beginning with the second) an additional 1 rat emerges from holes arrayed about the walls to join its brethren, until a total of six rats are engaged in the melee. The rats fight fearlessly and to the death.

The two southern cages each hold one skeleton, dressed in rags and without equipment.

The northwest cage holds an unconscious sewer worker who strayed into the wrong place at the wrong time. Arkhem tried to take a shortcut from one sewer section to another, got lost, and soon found himself surrounded by skum. He awoke here a day later with dim, haunting memories of being dragged before a great slug-like being with white flesh. (If an aboleth is described to him, he identifies it as the creature he encountered.) If armed, he gladly accompanies the party as a faithful retainer, but he does very much wish to return to his family in the Commons. If he emerges from the sewers alive, a small delegation from the Sewerkeepers Guild seeks out the characters in 2d4 days, and rewards them with a fine tulipwood box containing a platinum ring inscribed with a fish design and set with a tiny opal (as the eye of the fish). The ring is worth 9,000 gp.

The northeast cage holds a battered and bloodied merchant. This portly fellow, wounded but mobile, is named Otto Oschavam. He is a dealer in bolts of imported silks and cloth. Otto has nothing of value on his person—he claims that his jewelry was all confiscated—and no weapons, but he promises great riches to those helping him escape this dreadful place. If given a weapon, he accompanies the



party, but he moves slowly and flees at the first sight of trouble. Once he escapes the sewers, the party will never see him again (or the promised reward).

Note to the GM: If the PCs were drugged by Beluth in the Palace of Fortuity (see the *A Drink with Beluth* event), they awaken locked in cages here. The PCs are spaced apart, no more than two characters per cage. (If this has occurred, the skeletons have been removed from their cages and thrown on the floor below.) Unlike the other prisoners, the PCs awaken sans equipment, with their wrists bound in old iron manacles (Acrobatics, DC 15 to open). The lock on each cage requires a successful DC 20 Thievery check to bypass.

Thrall Wizard (2)

Level 8 Artillery

Medium natural humanoid XP 350

Initiative +5

Senses Perception +5
low-light vision

HP 68; **Bloodied** 34

AC 20; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 17

Speed 6, swim 6

↑ **Kris** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+13 vs.AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the encounter.

⚡ **Searing Bolt** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Fire**

Ranged 10; +13 vs. Reflex; 2d8+4 fire damage.

⚡ **Scorching Blast** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Fire**

Close blast 5; +11 vs.AC; 3d8+4 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Marked Strike

A wizard thrall gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls for each mark a target bears from it or one of its allies.

One Mind, One Advantage

If a wizard thrall gains any combat advantage against a target, all thralls within 5 squares also gain combat advantage against the target.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Str 16 (+7)

Dex 12 (+5)

Wis 12 (+5)

Con 14 (+6)

Int 18 (+8)

Cha 10 (+4)

Equipment robes, wand, kris

Advanced Dire Rat (up to 6)

Level 4 Brute

Medium natural beast

XP 175

Initiative +4

Senses Perception +7
low-light vision

HP 68; **Bloodied** 34

AC 16; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13

Speed 6, climb 3

↑ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Disease**

+7 vs.AC; 1d8+4 damage, and the target contracts filth fever.

Alignment Unaligned

Languages —

Str 18 (+6)

Dex 15 (+4)

Wis 10 (+2)

Con 18 (+6)

Int 3 (–2)

Cha 6 (+0)

Area P2–14

A False Prison (EL 9, XP 2,000)

Read or paraphrase the following:

This narrow area contains heaps of clothing, assorted gear and weapons, and other odd items. Everything has been pushed against the northern wall, with no apparent thought to organization. To the east is a massive wall composed of iron bars with several cross-members, all sunk into the stone to either side. An iron door leads into the small space beyond.

Note to GM: Modify the following paragraph as needed if Beluth has already been slain or captured:

A man dressed in fine linens and studded leather armor is speaking in hushed tones to a bedraggled young woman on the far side of the iron bars. The tall girl is dressed in a torn, soiled dress, and her matted hair hangs in tangled clumps. She leans wearily against the wall of her cell. The man turns at your approach, draws out a rapier, and says to the girl; “Fear not, you’ll stay safely behind those bars. Trying to free you would be their worst mistake.” Eyes narrowed and weapon drawn, he calmly awaits your approach.

The man is Beluth. He waits for the net trap to be triggered, baiting the PCs verbally if needed, before attacking. He seeks the exit immediately if he is reduced to bloodied status.

The items here are clothing and equipment taken from the aboleth’s victims. All types of clothing can be found, some bloodied or torn. Most of the garments are of the sort laborers from the Devil’s Thumb would wear, but there is also some fancier clothing as well. Intermingled in the pile is a regular longsword in a leather scabbard with embossed initials (“MB”), a hand axe, an awl, a case holding 10 silvered crossbow quarrels, and an *elven cloak* +2.

The prisoner is not the ambassador’s daughter Ardwen, but is instead a clever plant. Once Beluth got wind that the PCs were snooping about, he made arrangements for Ardwen to be moved elsewhere (see area P2–19b) and had a loyal thrall with the appropriate look (a former Palace server) put in her place. The thrall plays the role of the victim, not speaking but merely whimpering until released from her cell. She will then beam at her “rescuer” with gratitude... and then attempt to backstab a PC with her hidden dagger once the party’s attention is elsewhere. She carries no treasure or valuables.

Trap: A very thin but strong tripwire (Perception DC 25 to see, DC 30 if moving) runs across the floor at ankle height and then runs up the wall to a concealed net above. The net is painted to match the stone ceiling and is impregnated with many sharp hooks.

Beluth

Level 7 Solo Skirmisher

Medium natural humanoid, human XP 1,500

Initiative +9 Senses Perception +10

HP 320; Bloodied 160

AC 23; Fortitude 20, Reflex 21, Will 18

Saving Throws +5

Speed 6

Action Points 2

↑ +2 Rapier (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+13 vs.AC; 1d8+5 damage (crit 2d6+13).

↑ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
Beluth makes two rapier attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, the target grants Beluth combat advantage until the end of his next turn.

↑ **Wounding Strike** (standard; recharge 5–6) ♦ **Weapon**

Requires rapier; +13 vs.AC; 3d8+5 damage, and the target suffers ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

↑ **Dance of Steel** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Weapon**

Beluth makes three rapier attacks, shifting up to 3 squares between each attack.

Combat Advantage

Beluth deals an additional 2d6 damage against targets he has combat advantage against.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common

Skills Bluff +10, Diplomacy +10, Insight +10, Intimidate +10, Stealth +12

Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+5)

Con 16 (+6) **Int** 14 (+5) **Cha** 15 (+5)

Equipment leather armor, +2 rapier

Thrall

Level 6 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid XP 250

Initiative +7 Senses Perception +4
low-light vision

HP 70; Bloodied 35

AC 22; Fortitude 19, Reflex 16, Will 15

Immune charm

Speed 7, swim 6

↑ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+13 vs.AC; 1d4 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the encounter.

↘ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +11 vs.AC; 1d4 + 5 damage.

Marked Strike

A thrall gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls for each mark a target bears from it or one of its allies.

One Mind, One Advantage

If a thrall gains any combat advantage against a target, all thralls within 5 squares also gain combat advantage against the target.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Str 20 (+8) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+4)

Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)

Equipment dagger, tattered rags

⚠ Barbed Net Trap

Level 6 Obstacle

Trap XP 250

Perception

DC 22: The character notices that tripwire strung across the chamber.

DC 24: The character notices the hidden net.

Trigger: When a creature triggers the tripwire, the trap attacks.

Opportunity Action **Melee**

Target: All creatures in trapped squares

Attack: +9 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d10+2 damage, the target is immobilized and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

COUNTERMEASURES

- An adjacent character can disable the tripwire with a DC 25 Thievery check.

Area P2–15

The Created (EL 8, XP 1,750)

Read or paraphrase the following:

This rough-hewn cave appears to be a storage area. Several sealed barrels are here, and a large, rusty cage sits to the east. Three humans, armed with pickaxes regard you with a flat, hostile look and begin trudging toward you with axes raised, when suddenly, the cage door is smashed open! A hideous creature, resembling an alligator with a ring of tentacles around its head and three glowing red eyes, bursts from the cage, strikes aside one of the dirty humans with a clawed foot, and charges toward you!

The creature in the cage was originally a normal alligator that the skum captured. It has been subjected to magical experimentation and its mind has completely snapped, making it uncontrollable. The thralls and skum managed, at some loss of life, to imprison it in the cage a day ago. It has repeatedly thrown itself against the bars since that time, and the weakened cage door finally shattered. The creature is enraged and ravenous, and it attacks anything within range—be it thrall or PC.

The barrels hold water, salted beef, and fish in brine—supplies enough to keep the thralls alive. GM Note: If the PCs were imprisoned in the cages (area P2–13), their equipment is tucked here behind the barrels.

Thrall

Level 6 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid XP 250

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision

HP 70; **Bloodied** 35

AC 22; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15

Immune charm

Speed 7, swim 6

↑ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+13 vs.AC; 1d4 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the encounter.

⚡ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +11 vs.AC; 1d4 + 5 damage.

Marked Strike

A thrall gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls for each mark a target bears from it or one of its allies.

One Mind, One Advantage

If a thrall gains any combat advantage against a target, all thralls within 5 squares also gain combat advantage against the target.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Str 20 (+8) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+4)

Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)

Equipment dagger, tattered rags

Mutated Alligator

Level 10 Elite Soldier

Large aberrant beast (reptile) XP 1,000

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +8
low-light vision

HP 216; **Bloodied** 108

Regeneration 5 (if the alligator takes fire damage, regeneration doesn't function until the end of its next turn)

AC 28; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20

Saving Throws +2

Speed 6, swim 8

Action Points 1

↑ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+17 vs.AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape). The alligator cannot make bite attacks while grabbing a creature, but it can use *rending tentacles*.

↑ **Rending Tentacles** (standard; at-will)
If a alligator begins its turn with a target grabbed in its jaws, it makes an attack against the grabbed creature: +17 vs.AC; 3d8 + 6 damage. *Miss*: Half damage.

↑ **Swallow** (standard; at-will)
The alligator attempts to swallow a bloodied Medium or smaller creature it is grabbing; +15 vs. Fortitude; on a hit, the target is swallowed and restrained (no save) and takes 10 damage on subsequent rounds at the start of the alligator's turn. The swallowed creature can make melee basic attacks only, and only with one-handed or natural weapons. If the alligator dies, any creature trapped in its gullet can escape as a move action, ending that action in a square formerly occupied by the alligator.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Skills Stealth +12

Str 22 (+11)

Dex 15 (+7)

Wis 17 (+8)

Con 20 (+10)

Int 5 (+2)

Cha 8 (+4)

Area P2-16

Dire Experiments

Read or paraphrase the following:

A large stone table dominates this room. Several smaller tables are arrayed about the walls, and each holds a variety of small knives and cutting instruments, spools of thread, hammers, pliers, saws, and other odd items. Ominous rust-colored stains are spattered about the walls. Most ghastly, however, is the still figure lying on the table. The figure may have once been human, but the body has been cut open in several places, and the arms have been removed and replaced with greenish, scaled appendages.

This corpse is the remains of an extremely unfortunate victim that was subjected to magical and physical experimentation by the aboleth and did not survive the process. The carcass will be thrown to the alligators or the rats soon enough. Churlydyrch has begun using his thralls to conduct experiments remotely; the aboleth remains in the safety of his cave, seeing through the eyes of his slaves while they carry out his nefarious actions. Ultimately, Churlydyrch hopes to create ever-stronger slaves, or at least learn more about human anatomy in the process.

There is nothing here of real value. Four of the knives here are large enough to wield as daggers if needed. A DC 12 Perception check discerns traces of blood on many of the table instruments.

Area P2-17

Rolling Death (EL 5, XP 1,000)

This passage leads to area 1-17. Two illusory walls have been placed here, one to the west and one to the south, giving the appearance that this is a dead-end corridor. A successful Perception check (DC 15) reveals deep impact markings on the far eastern wall.

Trap: A weight-sensitive pressure plate is located in the western half of the corridor (position *x* on map). Anyone stepping on this plate triggers a deadly trap, loosing a heavy stone cylinder perched on a ledge behind the western illusory wall. The corridor behind the western illusory wall is steeply slanted, more so than the rest of the corridor, allowing the cylinder to gain a dangerous amount of speed before it emerges into view.

⚠ Rolling Death

Level 10 Elite Obstacle

Trap XP 1,000

Perception

DC 28: The character notices that hidden pressure plate.

Trigger: When a creature steps on the pressure plate, the trap rolls initiative.

Initiative +6

Standard Action

Melee

Target: All creatures in the passage

Attack: +13 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d10+6 damage, and the target is knocked prone, restrained, and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends all).

Miss: Half damage.

COUNTERMEASURES

- An adjacent character can disable the pressure plate with a DC 28 Thievery check.
- A character who makes a successful DC 19 Acrobatics check may tumble into the safety of the northern niche (see “A” on map) and avoid the roller completely. A character failing the Acrobatics check takes full damage from the trap.

Area P2-18 The Faithful One (EL 6, XP 1,250)

Read or paraphrase the following:

The tunnel ahead makes a sharp bend. A tall, robed figure steps out into the tunnel proper and moves to block the path ahead. The figure throws off its gray robe to reveal a muscular male form, but tentacles writhe on either side of its torso and three red, jellylike, vertically set eyes dominate its face. The thing raises a huge falchion overhead and charges!

Lurking in the small cave here is a thrall that has undergone magical experimentation and been “enhanced” by Churlydtyrch. The thrall’s mind has snapped from the process, and it is now forever loyal to Churlydtyrch. This thrall appears much as a shirtless human man, but it has four tentacles that emerge from its shoulder area and three vertically set eyes bulge from its head above its drooling mouth.

Mutated Thrall

Level 6 Solo Brute

Medium aberrant humanoid XP 1,250

Initiative +5

Senses Perception +4
darkvision

HP 304; **Bloodied** 152

AC 20; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 15

Immune charm

Saving Throws +5

Speed 7, swim 6

Action Points 2

↑ **Falchion** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+9 vs.AC; 2d4 + 6 damage (crit 2d4+14), and the target is marked until the end of the mutated thrall’s next turn.

↑ **Tentacle Rake** (minor; at-will)

+7 vs.AC; 1d4+2 damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the mutated thrall’s next turn.

⚡ **Slimy Spew** (standard; recharge 5–6)

Ranged 5; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d8+2 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Sure Strike

When attacking a marked target, the mutated thrall makes two attack rolls and uses the better result.

One Mind, One Advantage

If a thrall gains any combat advantage against a target, all thralls within 5 squares also gain combat advantage against the target.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Str 22 (+9)

Dex 14 (+5)

Wis 12 (+4)

Con 20 (+8)

Int 10 (+3)

Cha 10 (+3)

Equipment kris, tattered rags

Area P2-19 The Lair of Churlydtyrch (EL 10, XP 2,500)

If the aboleth has been warned about the PCs approach, read or paraphrase the following:

This area is encircled by marble pilasters and a number of earth-filled urns bearing small trees with tiny pink buds. Small chirping birds flit from tree to tree. The floor here is veined white marble, and in the center of the chamber, marble steps lead down into a round pool filled with indigo water. In the center, an ornamental fountain carved in the shape of a robed damsel tipping a water urn steadily fills the pool. Silver platters bearing fruit and sweetmeats sit on the far side of the chamber beyond the pool, as does a copper stand holding a sword made of shining crystal.

The above description is all illusion, an illusion generated





by the aboleth. The creature generated the illusion working from the memories of past and current thralls. Churlydtyrch lurks deep in the pool, out of sight, as do his three attendants. Churlydtyrch waits quietly, hoping that intruders make the mistake of entering the pool. If the PCs are too cautious or attempt to circumvent the pool, he and his servants attack.

If the aboleth has no warning or the PCs break the illusion, read or paraphrase the area's true description:

This oblong cave is humid and reeks with a foul, undeterminable stench. An odd, reddish-brown mold sprawls across the ceiling and walls. The dirt tunnel ends at the edge of a deep natural pool filled with brackish, slimy water. Several figures—four human-sized and one larger—lurk just beneath the cloudy water.

Tactics: When combat is joined, Churlydtyrch's attendants—four fanatically loyal skum—burst from the pool and attempt to drag intruders into the water.

Churlydtyrch

Level 7 Solo Artillery (Leader)
Large aberrant magical beast (aquatic)
XP 1,500

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +13
 darkvision
Mucus Haze aura 3; enemies treat the area within the aura as difficult terrain.

HP 328; **Bloodied** 164
AC 21; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 23
Saving Throws +5
Speed 5, swim 10
Action Points 2

↑ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)
 Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage (2d8 + 6 damage against a dazed target), and the target is dazed (save ends).

⚡ **Slime Orb** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Psychic**
 Ranged 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

⚡ **Dominate** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Charm**
 Ranged 10; targets a dazed humanoid; +12 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends). Churlydtyrch can dominate only one creature at a time.

🔥 **Slime Burst** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Psychic**
 Area burst 4 within 10; targets enemies; +10 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed (save ends).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 20

Skills Arcana +13, Dungeoneering +13, Insight +13
Str 20 (+14) **Dex** 16 (+11) **Wis** 20 (+15)
Con 18 (+13) **Int** 20 (+14) **Cha** 18 (+13)

Skum (4)

Level 6 Brute
Medium aberrant humanoid (aquatic)
XP 250

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +9
HP 86; **Bloodied** 43
AC 18; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 14
Speed 6, swim 8

↑ **Claws** (standard; at-will)
 +9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage, and the skum makes a secondary attack on the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +7 vs. Reflex; the target is grabbed (until escape).

↑ **Worrying Bite** (standard; at-will)
 Grabbed target only; +9 vs. AC; 2d8+6 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the skum's next turn.

⚡ **Blinding Mucus** (standard; recharge 5–6)
 Ranged 5; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d8+3 damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the skum's next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Skills Athletics +14, Stealth +11

Str 22 (+9) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 5 (+0) **Cha** 6 (+1)

Area P2–19a A Lonely Cell

Ardwen Toldara is here in this tiny cave, gagged and bound but otherwise unhurt. The ambassador's daughter itches for revenge against the aboleth and its minions, and she gladly accompanies a party so long as they intend to leave the sewers soon. Despite her ordeal, she is still spirited and more angry than afraid. If rescued and brought safely to the surface, she sees to it that the ambassador knows of the party's heroism.

Area P2–19b The Lesser Treasure of Churlydtyrch

Read or paraphrase the following:

This small niche holds many containers: two coffers, a trunk, an ornate sword, a small silk sack, and a fire-blackened helm. The items are stacked haphazardly but all appear to be of good make.

Treasure: The red silk bag holds 12 large black opals (worth 1,000 gp each), an *amulet of protection* +2, a +2 *flaming greatsword*, a *helm of battle* (level 9), a *rod of corruption* +2, 447 gp, 21 sp, and 90 cp.

Area P2–19c The Greater Treasure of Churlydtyrch

This small, sunken nook contains Churlydtyrch's greatest treasure... a clutch of five greenish-white aboleth eggs that are due to hatch within a week. If allowed to mature, the five young aboleths (two of which are albino) take up residence in the sewers; Churlydtyrch and his children settle for nothing less than dominating a large number of individuals in Punjab, with the hope of eventually taking control of the city. If left unchecked, even without their parent, the children of Churlydtyrch could possibly realize this goal.

THE AFTERMATH

If the PCs succeed in rescuing Ardwen Toldara, they gain great fame as heroes in both Punjar and Kassantia. The Kassantian ambassador invites them to a feast in their honor in his city one month hence, and if they attend, a special ceremony is held in their honor. Warlords, rangers, and fighters will be *knighthed*; wizards, sorcerers, and warlocks gain the title of *magi of Kassantia*, and other classes are named *elders of the realm*, and all PCs are given special gold medallions of Kassantia (worth 1,000 gp each). These titles and medallions have the net effect of granting the bearer a +4 circumstantial bonus to all Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks made in the Cristine Empire.

Fame however, comes at a price. The PCs will have made a lasting enemy of House Rohamari. If Beluth lives and escapes judgment, he spares no expense in bringing great woe to the PCs. Even if Beluth has been slain, he has an older brother and older sister—the true house elders—that will forever seek to make the PCs pay for their actions.

THUS ENDS THE PLOT BEHIND THE THRONES OF PUNJAR



FURTHER ADVENTURES

Should the characters conquer the threat posed by the aboleth mage Churlydtyrch and Beluth, further adventures await them in Punjar and beyond. Here are a few suggested ways the adventure can continue:

- Impressed by their heroism, Kelic (faithful cleric of Choranus) asks the PCs to help him liberate a stolen magical tome that is said to be held by a vampire working somewhere inside the noble ward of Punjar. The mission might include a trip to the City of the Dead and numerous battles versus the undead.
- The local Meh'a is annoyed that the PCs ran rampant through the Devil's Thumb without paying him the proper respect (or a decent bribe). He decides to handle the problem by using the Harrowers to frame one or more of the PCs for murder; thus eliminating an old potential rival and causing the PCs grief in the same deft move.
- House Malhaven, grateful at having their reputation spared, offer the PCs a job as bodyguards, enforcers, or mercenaries. The Malhavens, like all Punjaran nobles, have their own dark secrets and hidden agendas. The PCs may soon find themselves involved in shady missions and dealings, and good-aligned PCs might feel compelled to turn against their own employers to set matters straight.
- Aware of the party's accomplishments, the Sewerkeeper's Guild of Punjar asks the PCs to undertake a weeklong "scouting mission" through an ancient, deeper portion of the city sewers that has just been re-opened after 60 years. They assure the party that the mission isn't at all dangerous...

APPENDIX I NEW MONSTERS

DOOMCREEPER

Long favored by unsavory assassination cults of the Lostlands, use of the doomcrawler was first brought to Punjab by the Society of the Black Lotus. Their thugs made create use of the doomcrawler in violent plot to overthrow the masters of the Slayer's Guild. Today, the propagation and sale of doomcrawler eggs is outlawed in most civilized cultures, but the black, shiny eggs can be easily found in Punjab's black markets. A clutch of eggs sells can sell for 500 to 1000 gp. As in all instances, the buyer must beware, as the "false crawler egg clutch" is a scam plied on many a would-be assassin.

DOOMCREEPER LORE

A character can learn the following with a successful nature check.

DC 15: The shiny doomcrawlers can enthrall their prey, paralyzing them to the point of suffocation.

DC 20: Doomcrawler eggs are illegal to possess, but can be sold for great profit on the black market.

Doomcrawler

Level 5 Controller

Tiny natural magical beast XP 200

Initiative +6

Senses Perception +9
blindsight 10

HP 63; Bloodied 31

AC 19; Fortitude 16, Reflex 18, Will 15

Speed 6, climb 6

↑ Mandibles (standard; at-will)
+10 vs.AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.

☼ **Suffocating Trance** (standard; encounter)

Close burst 5; targets enemies; +7 vs. Reflex; the target is restrained and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both).

Small Size

A doomcrawler can compress its body enough to squeeze through a 1-inch-wide crack. Cracks and other openings that are more than 1 inch wide do not slow the doomcrawler at all.

Alignment Evil

Languages —

Skills Stealth +11

Str 16 (+5)

Dex 19 (+6)

Wis 14 (+4)

Con 15 (+4)

Int 9 (+1)

Cha 10 (+2)

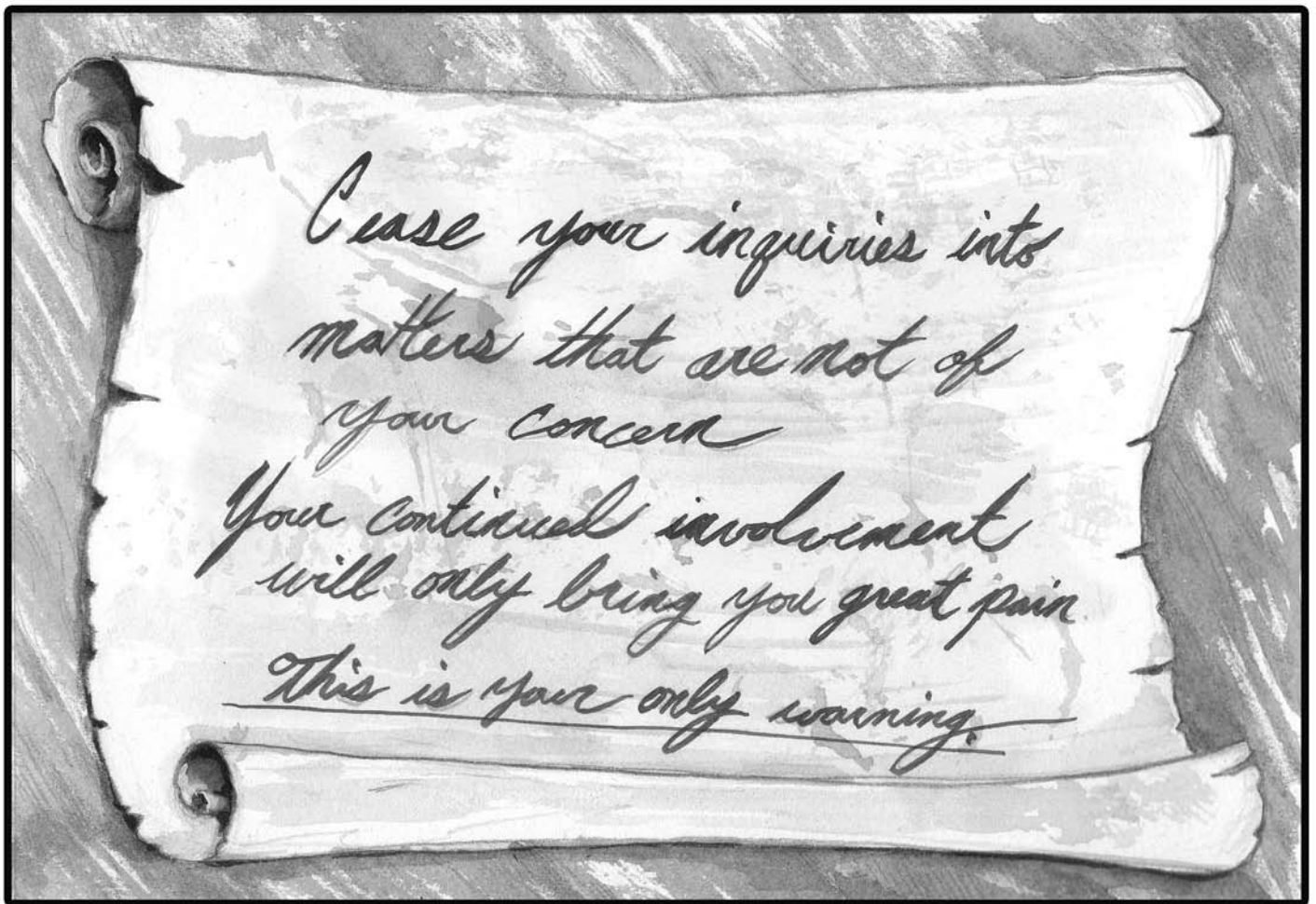
DESCRIPTION

This creature resembles a horrid combination of a spider and a centipede. The long, writhing body is sheathed in glistening black chitin and propelled forward by many small legs. The head of the creature is roughly round and somewhat thicker, and it bears six larger legs, large mandibles, and emerald-colored compound eyes. Two tiny feelers, originating above the mouth, wag restlessly in the air.

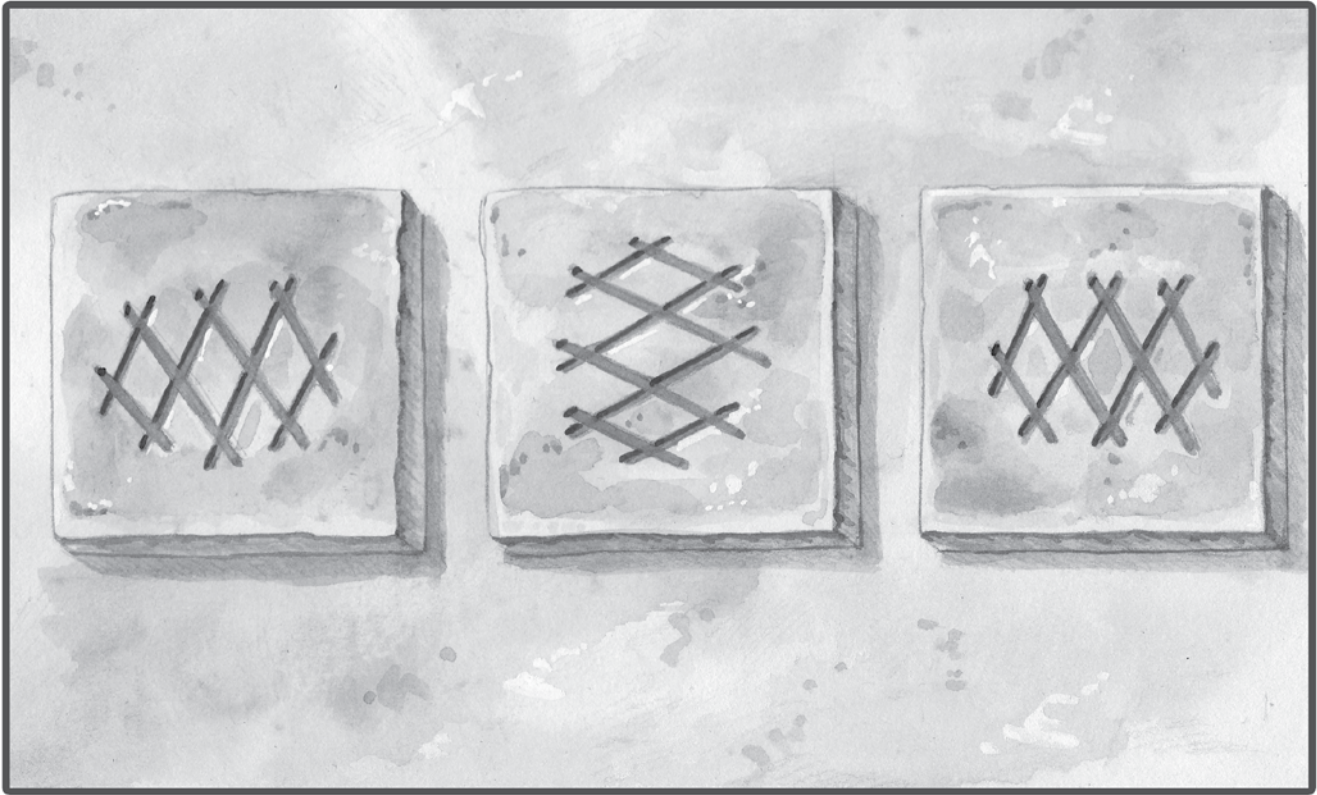
DOOMCREEPER TACTICS

Doomcrawlers prefer to surprise their prey, squeezing through cracks into places where larger beasts cannot pass. Laying in wait, they enthrall unwitting foes, while their kin swarm over their unwitting prey with their snapping, scissor-like mandibles.

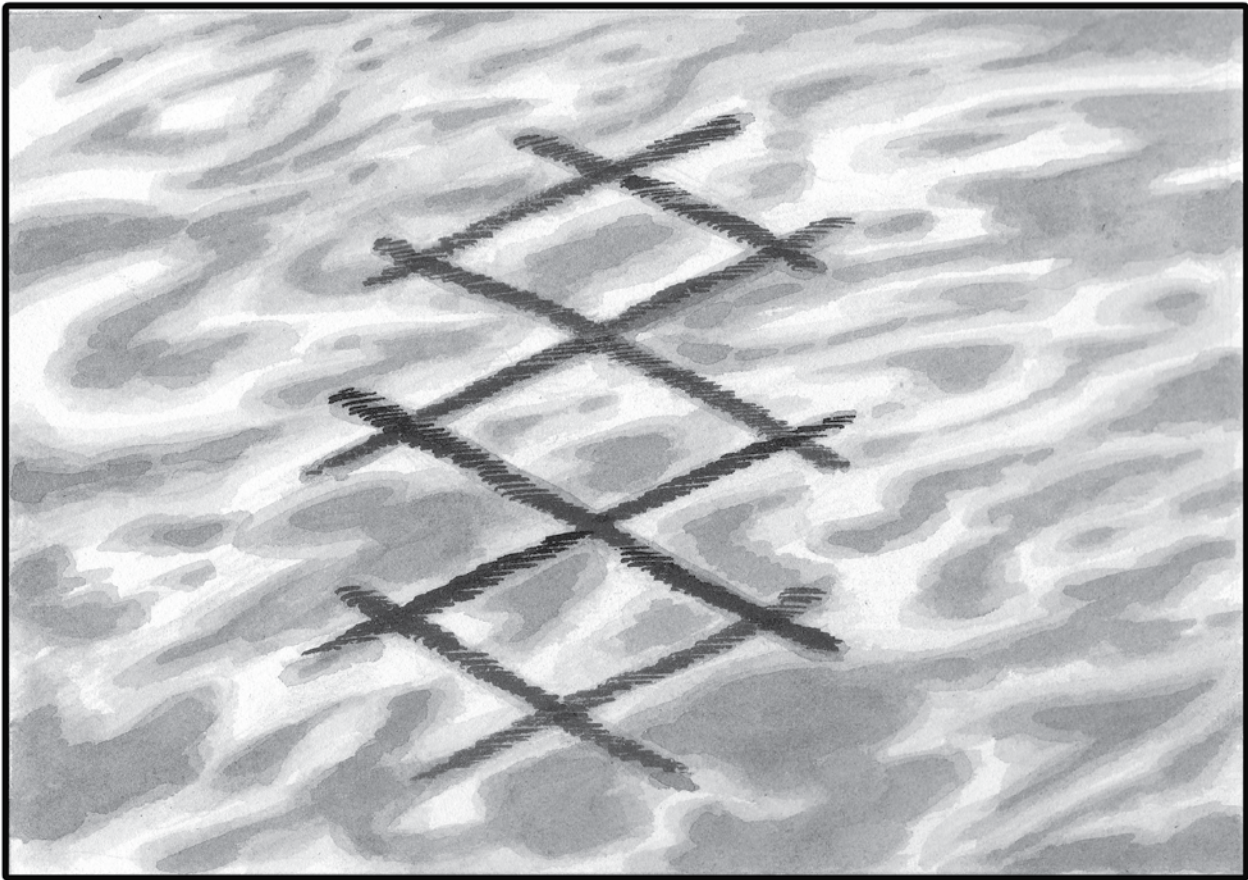


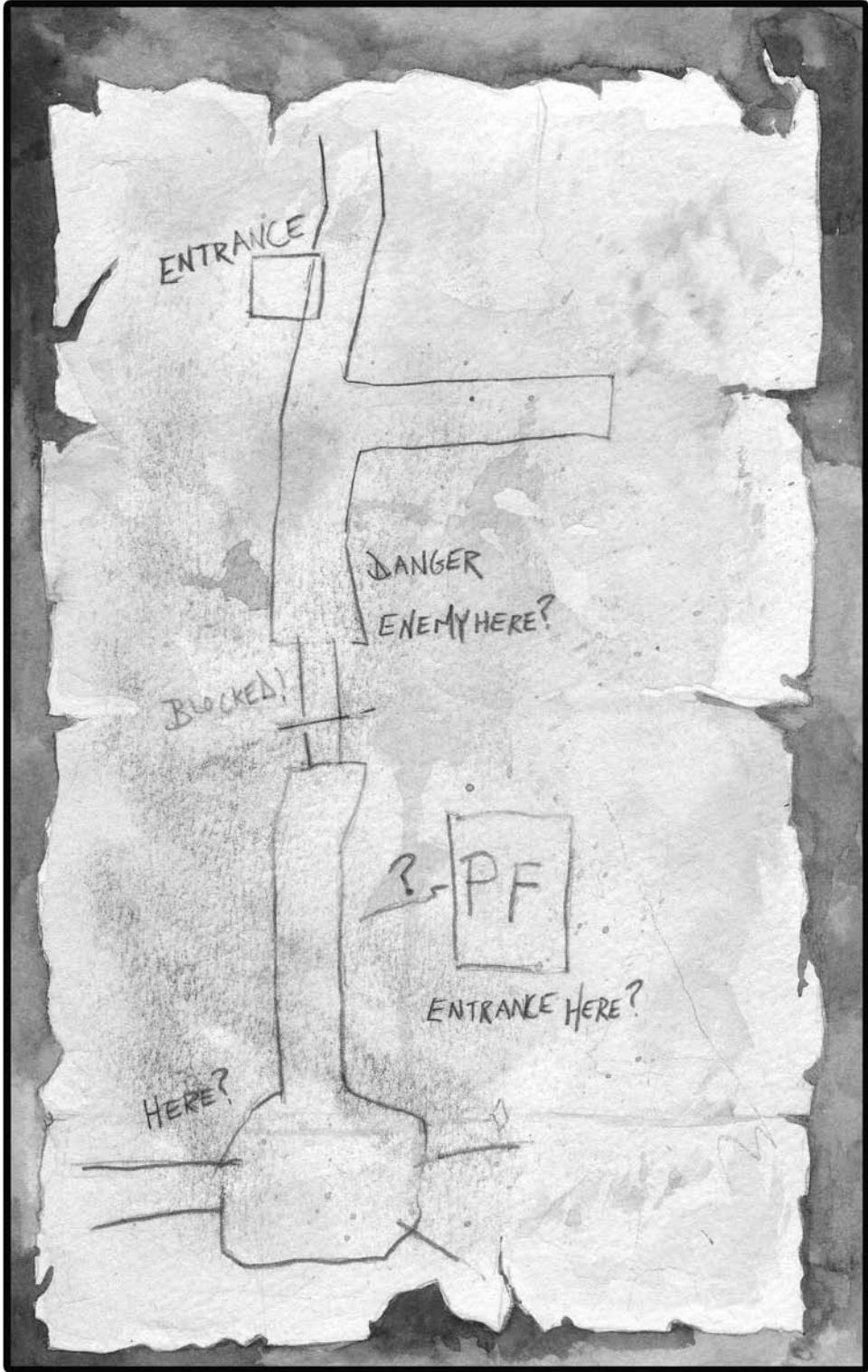


HANDOUT A

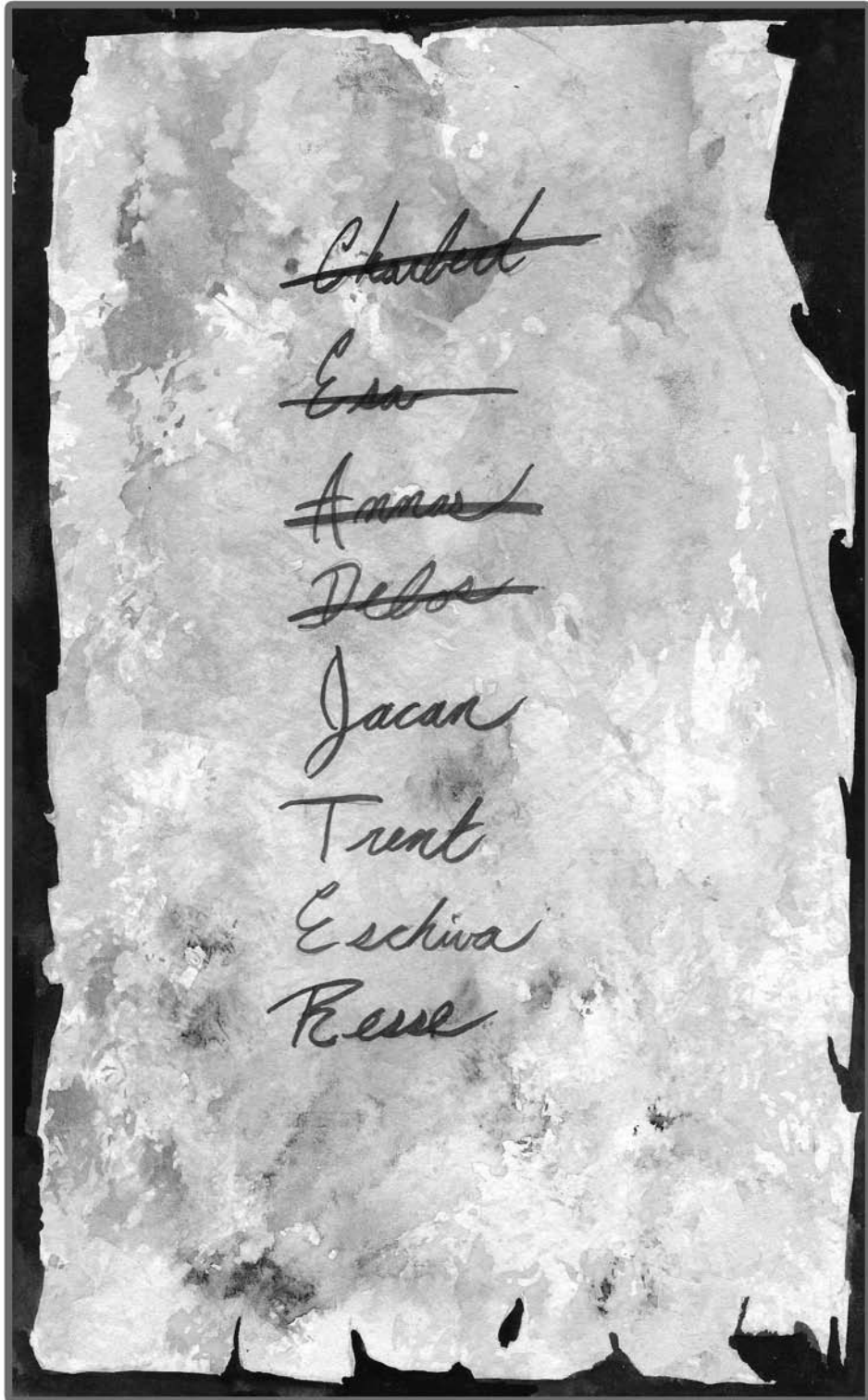


HANDOUT E
HANDOUT C





HANDOUT B



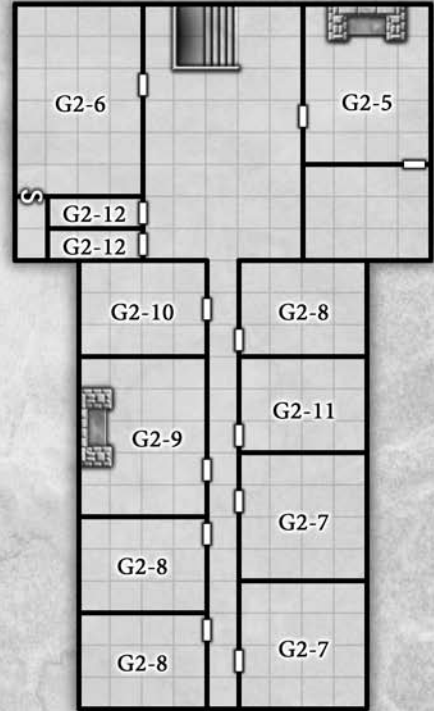
HANDOUT D

Ground Floor



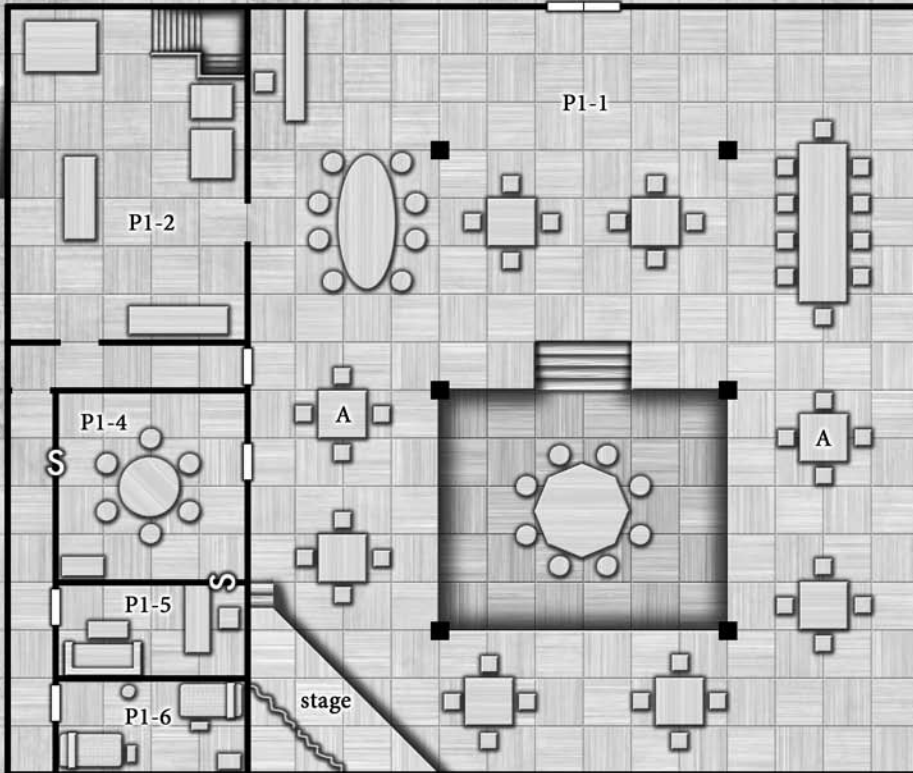
THE GOLDEN HEARTH

Second Floor



1 square = 5 feet

P1-3

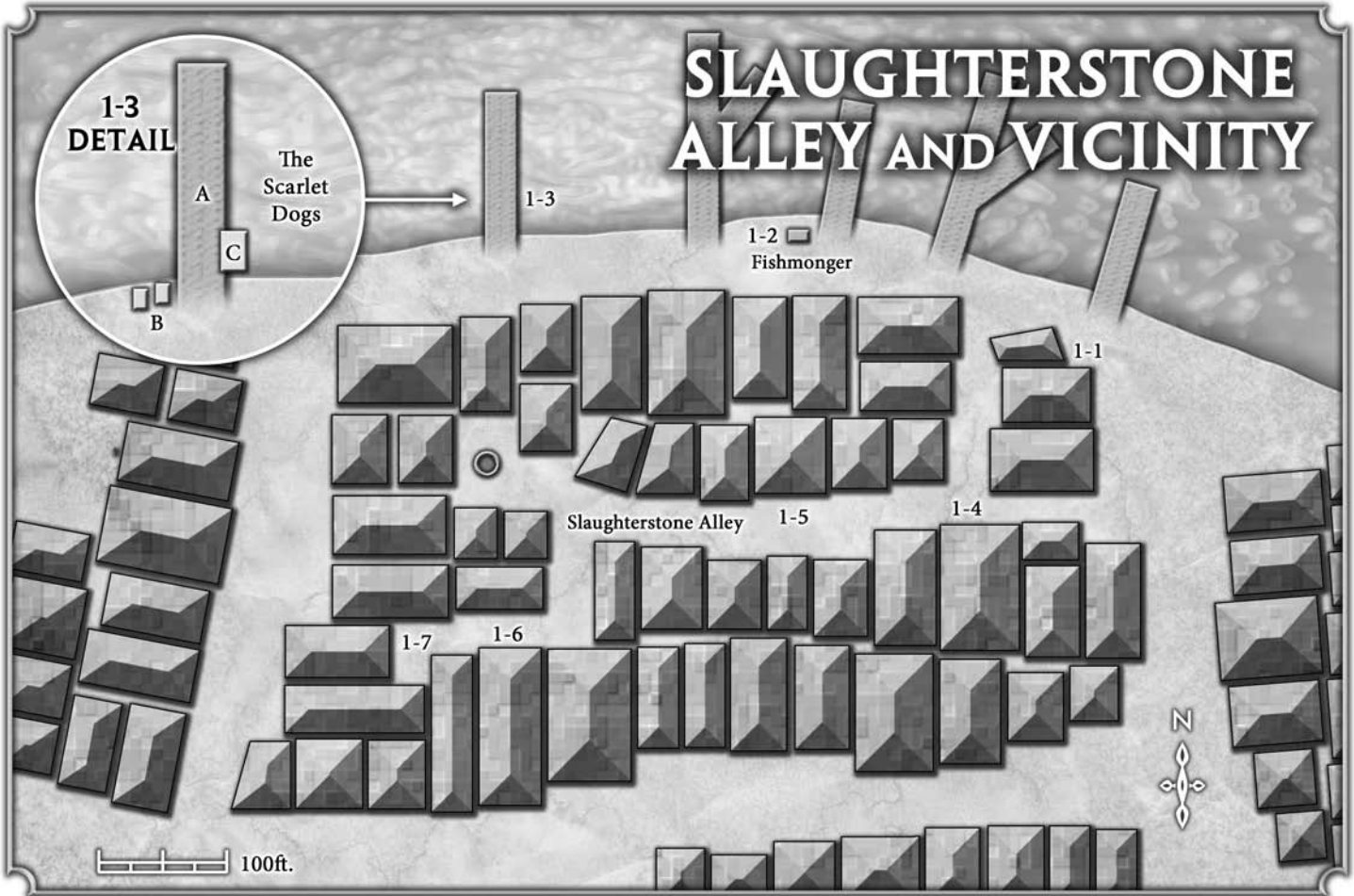


THE PALACE OF FORTUITY

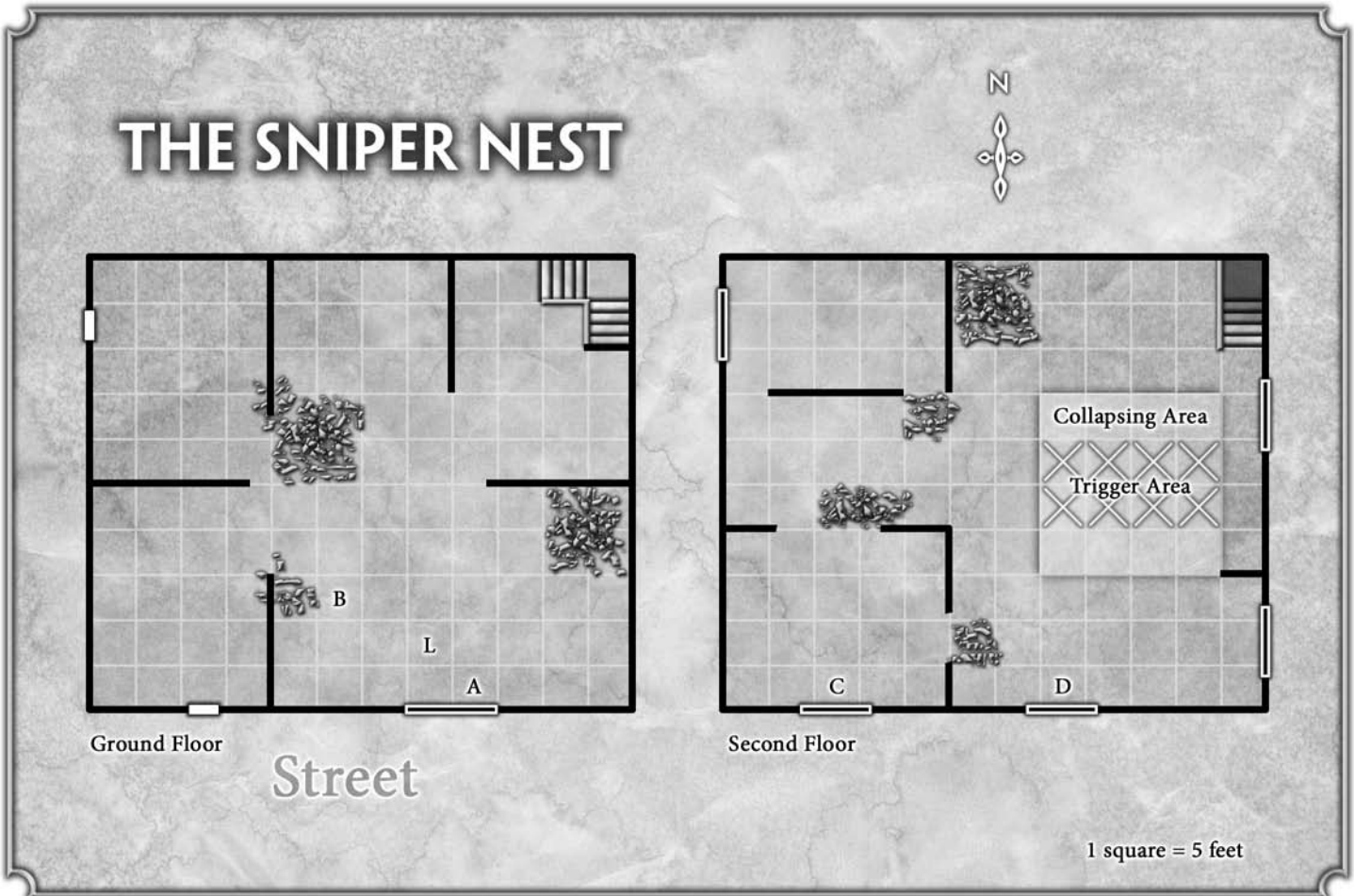


1 square = 5 feet

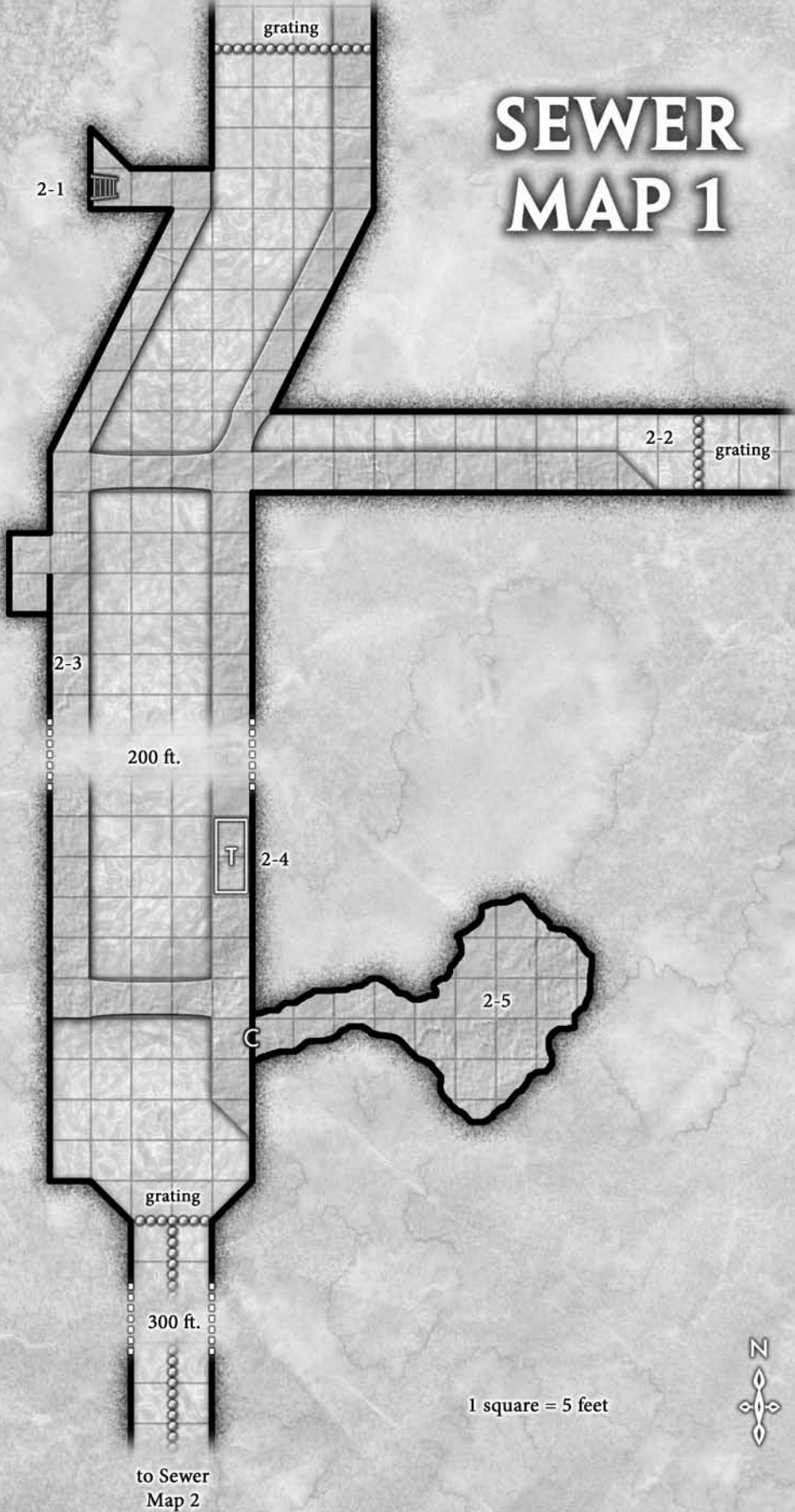
SLAUGHTERSTONE ALLEY AND VICINITY



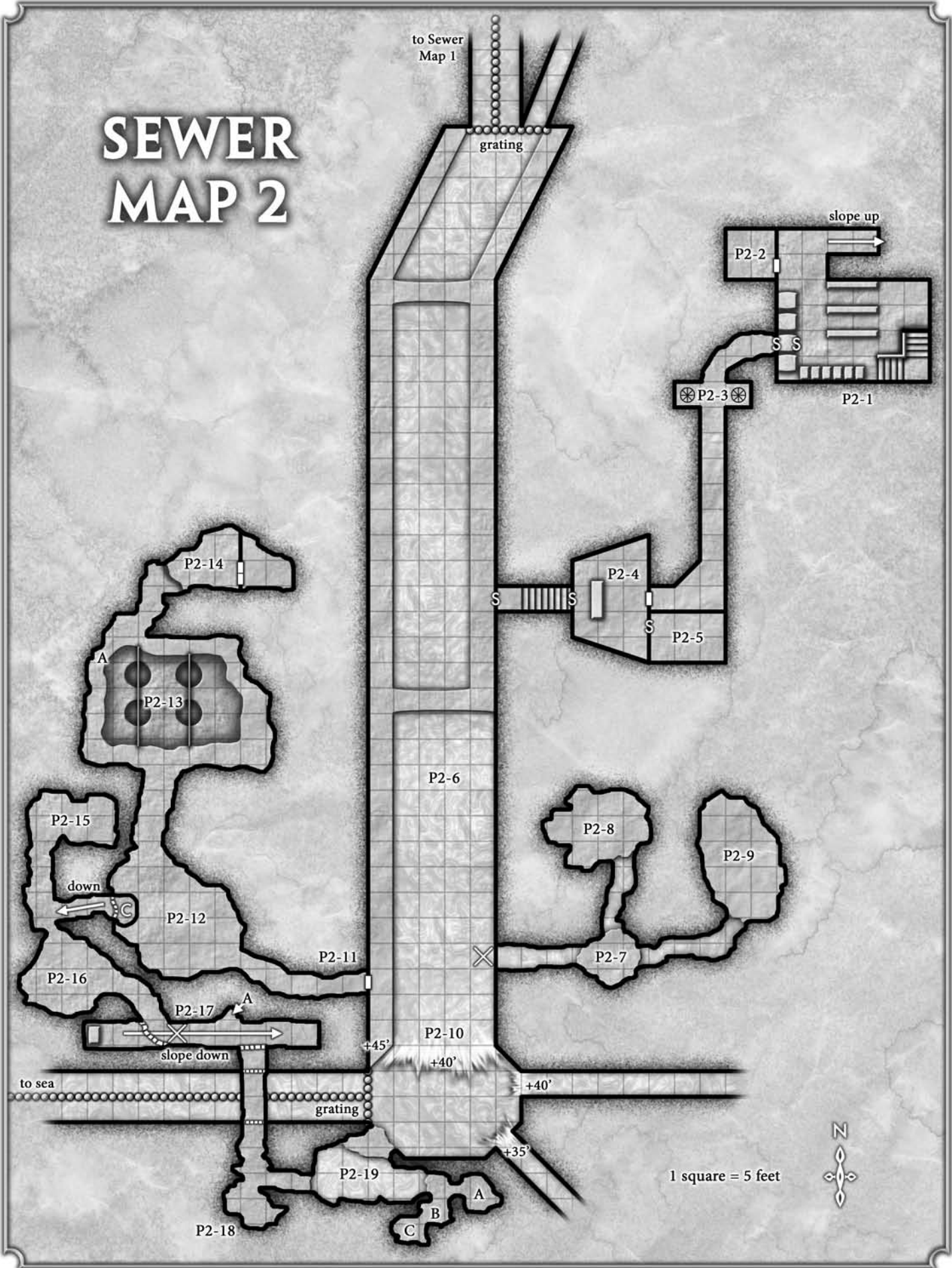
THE SNIPER NEST



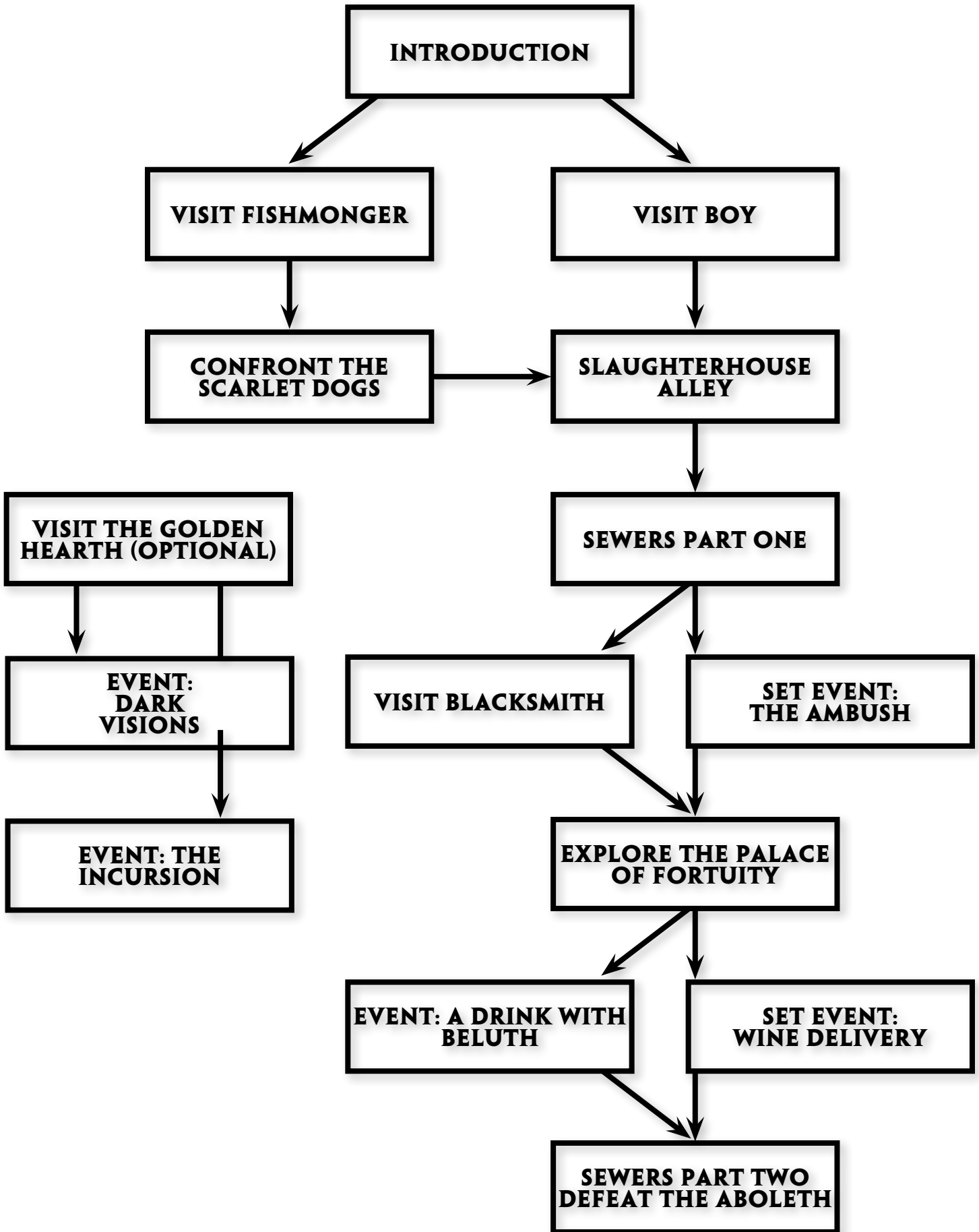
SEWER MAP 1



SEWER MAP 2



**GAMEMASTER HANDOUT
THRONES OF PUNJAR ADVENTURE FLOWCHART**



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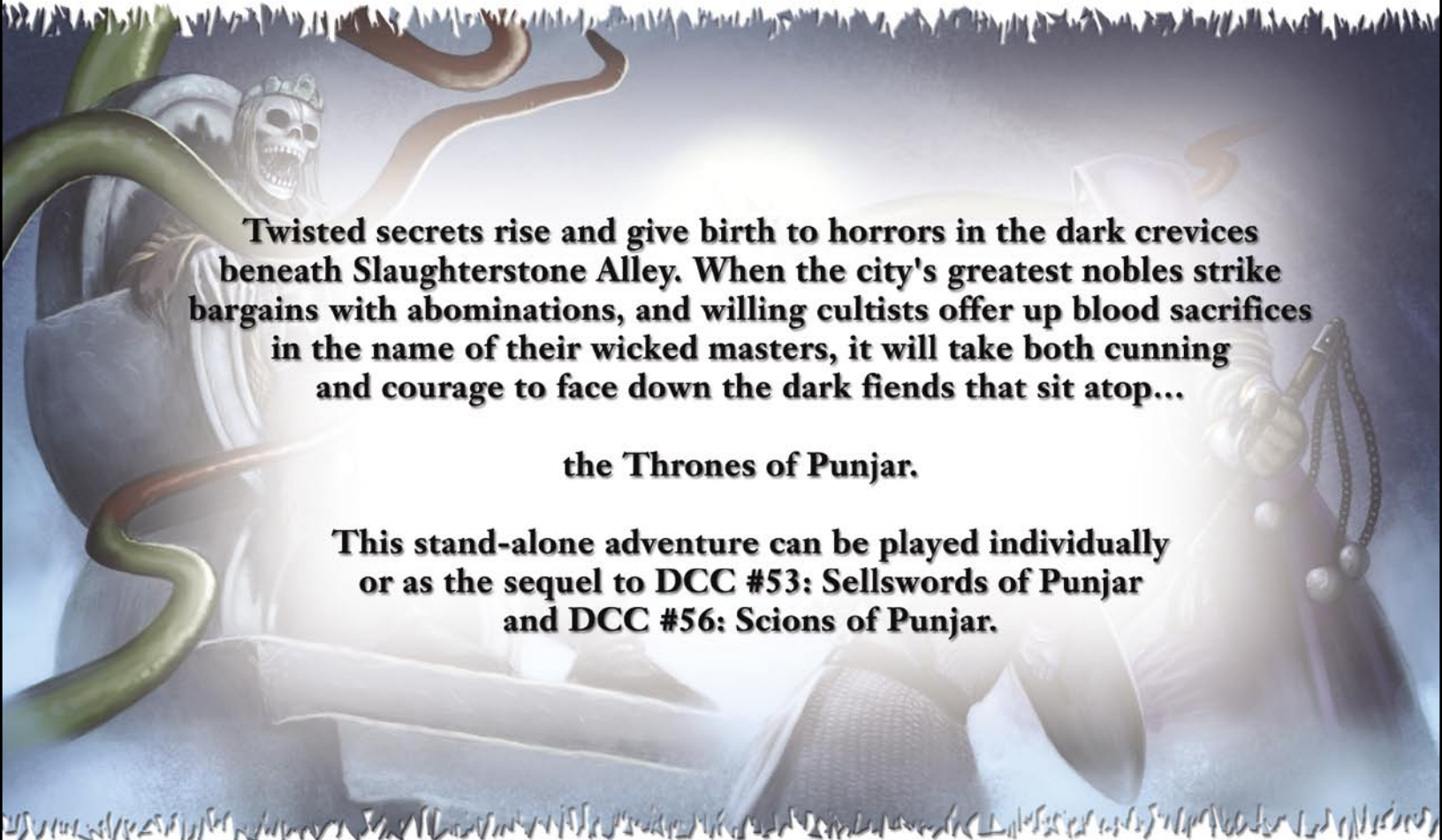
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