

DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

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11 ORIGINAL ADVENTURES
HIGH RESOLUTION MAPS
VTT - ROLL20 MAPS

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG



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ELVEN TOWER ADVENTURES

Foreword



If you had told me two years ago that the famous Elven Tower crew was publishing material for a game I had written, I would have laughed in disbelief. It's been a strange few years since then, hasn't it? So much has changed in the gaming industry, and historical events have come to pass that have altered the landscape. But despite all the upheaval, a couple of core things still hold.

One: there are still phenomenal creators like Elven Tower Adventures putting out lovingly-crafted TTRPG material to an audience of equally passionate supporters/hobbyists.

Two: these creators and supporters are eager to delve forward into the dark dungeons of their incredible imaginations with their torches held high. The fantasy adventure game we all love is more than just a brand or a game system; it lives in what we make, draw, write, and play. Those things know no boundaries, rules, or limitations.

I'm deeply honored that Elven Tower's crew loves Shadowdark RPG enough to pour their hearts into designing material for it month after month. Their creative joy and enthusiasm come through full force in these pages! I hope you'll join them in making this game exactly what we imagine, and even more...

Happy adventuring, crawlers!
-Kelsey

Fresh Shadowdark RPG Content

THE THRONE OF DUST

The King of Dust shall judge all those who stand before its regal presence. Those deemed just are granted a wish. The king shall aid them succeed in life.

Book of Dust

The King of Dust is an obscure entity that appears in the origin myths of many cultures. Some think it was once an elvish king who was banished from the world of fey. Others believe it was a knight who chose to aid those in need and vanquish the unjust after death. And a few claim it is an otherworldly immortal being. But all theories have one thing in common: the King of Dust judges those who stand before its presence and issues a final judgment on their values and deeds. The king aids the just. But it also mercilessly orders the death of those with dark hearts.

The rumors of the blessings and gifts that the King of Dust has bestowed upon many people are only eclipsed by the countless folks who visited the king's sepulcher and never came back. Timeless guardians guard the place, but the greatest danger is the king's judgment.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Aid. The characters know of the King of Dust and seek its presence to retrieve important information, a powerful item, or for selfish purposes. The characters secure a map to the king's sepulcher and set out (0 XP).

Escorts. The characters are hired by a scholar, Sir Damahee. The scholar plans to visit the king's sepulcher to learn important information. The place is dangerous. The characters are bodyguards (40 gp, 4 XP).

RUMORS

d6	Details
1	People say the King of Dust was once the great ruler of a bygone realm. Nothing is known of that lost culture.
2	Legend has it that the king's sepulcher is well-guarded by immortal guardians and ghostly apparitions.
3	People remember a man who stood before the King of Dust decades ago. He was deemed just by the ghost ruler and became a wealthy merchant. He died years ago.
4	The King of Dust judges petitioners on their values and deeds. If they are found to be good, the fair king rewards them. Otherwise, the tomb guardians dispose of them.
5	Rumor has it that petitioners must wait for the king to appear in a room where they can commune with the dead. Some claim lost ones can be contacted there.
6	The king's judgment is delivered only to those who wish to hear it. No one is forced to stand trial before the otherworldly entity. Wrong-doers may just leave empty-handed.

Level 4 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas have light sources; the rest of the dungeon is dark. All denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Aura of Truth.** Areas 4 and 11 are enchanted. Creatures within cannot say falsehoods (DC 18 WIS per lie). On a fail, the person chokes before stating a false fact. They are not forced to say the truth, however.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	Four townsfolk (guards) arrive at the sepulcher seeking to change their stars. One of them expects to reunite with his brother in the Chamber of Waiting (area 11).
2	A woman's ghost appears. She tries to dissuade the characters from petitioning the King of Dust as she lost her husband and children to the ruthless king.
3	A deep voice speaks into the characters' minds: " <i>There shall be no mercy for those with darkened hearts.</i> "
4	1d6 skeletons approach the party. They brandish the obscure sigil that represents the King of Dust.
5	A chattering swarm of spiders emerges from a nearby crack in the wall and attacks a random character.
6	A random character steps on a pressure plate and triggers a barrage of poison darts to shoot from a nearby wall. The creature takes 3d6 damage (DC 15 DEX).

1. MAIN HALL

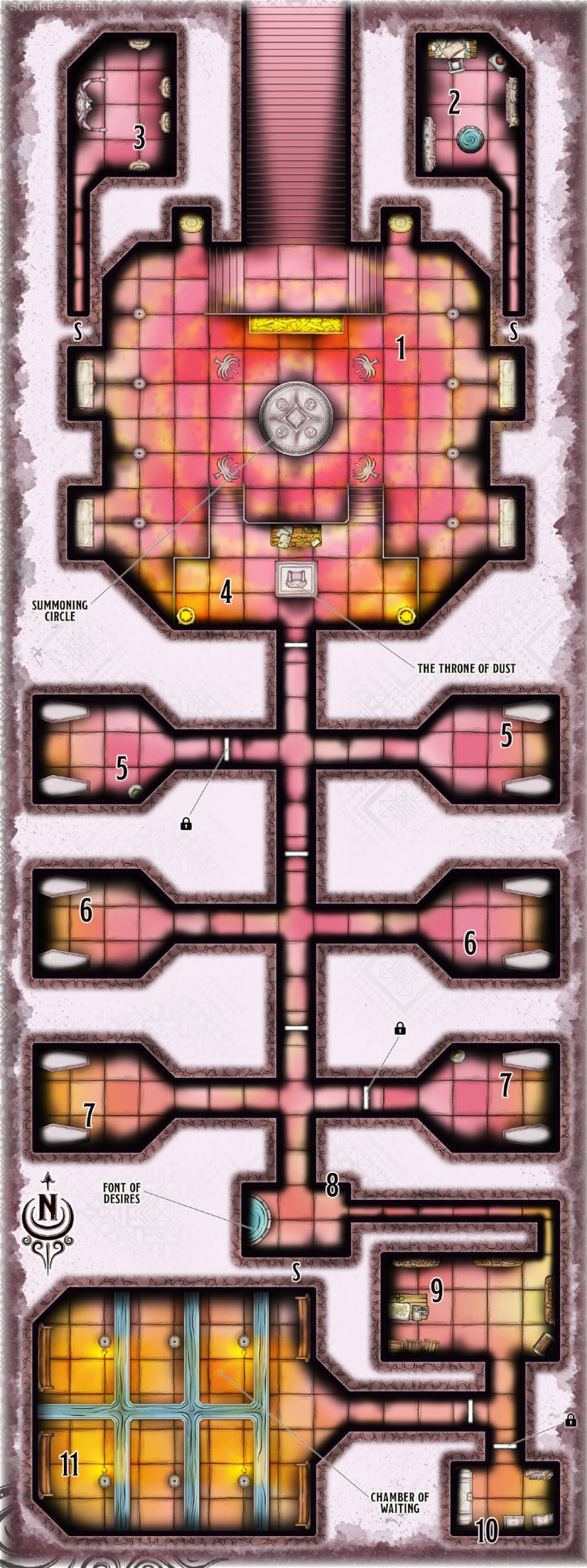
A long journey finally leads to a stone gate and a descending stairway into the king's sepulcher.

The landing opens to a grand chamber with a rune-scribed circle and a throne by the chamber's far end.

► **The Circle.** The runes in Primordial tell the tale of an old pilgrim who came to the king's presence and had his life changed forever after; his heart was pure and bright.

► **The Sarcophagi.** Each of the four enclosures contains the dusty remains of a bygone warrior. When the king commands it, their spirits return to fight for it.

► **Seeking Audience.** Creatures that stand on the circle experience a calling to venture further and find the Chamber of Waiting (area 11). When they come back here after that, the King of Dust shall receive them.



2. THE ARCHIVE

The narrow passage leads to a small archive with stone shelves and a circular pond in the center.

The magical archive self-updates once per month and keeps an accurate record of past petitioners and their fates. An *invisible servant* takes care of this chore.

► **The Petitioners.** Perusing the archive for 1 **crawling round** reveals that seven hundred and twelve people have stood before the King of Dust in the past two millennia. Among them, only thirty-five were rewarded by the king. The rest were slain in front of the throne.

► **The Pond.** The crystalline water is magical. Drinking from the pond is equivalent to a *potion of healing*. A creature can only be healed this way once per week.

3. CHAMBER OF OFFERINGS

A statue of Gede stands before four stone plinths that hold trinkets and keepsakes of a varied nature.

► **The Blessing.** Leaving an object of important sentimental value for Gede to keep awards a **luck token**.

4. THE THRONE OF DUST

The fabled Throne of Dust is where the king sits to judge those who seek its favor. The seat bears no marks or sigils but is surrounded by gray ashes.

► **The Throne.** Creatures that dare disrespect the King of Dust by sitting on the throne suffer a smoldering death (DC 18 CON). Nothing remains of the charred body.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** The table in front of the throne holds two random, tier-3 wizard *scrolls*, a *potion of healing*, and an unmarked gold medallion (15 gp).

► **The Trial.** After visiting the Chamber of Waiting and standing before the throne on the circle (area 1), the King of Dust appears and judges whoever stands on the circle. See **Development** for the outcome of this moment.

5. CRYPTS (FIRST LAYER)

The hallway splits into two and leads to mirrored crypts with unmarked, stone sarcophagi. They are filled with the ashes of countless failed petitioners. There is a 4-in-6 chance that when visiting any of the crypts, two **shadows** emerge from the enclosures and attack.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** The west crypt features a medium-quality lock (DC 14 DEX). A *circlet of wisdom* is hidden in the ashen remains within one of the sarcophagi.

6. CRYPTS (SECOND LAYER)

Both crypts feature unmarked and unlocked, stone enclosures. The lids on the east chamber are ajar and the remains within were manipulated recently (DC 16 WIS). The last visitors to the king's sepulcher are the culprits.

7. CRYPTS (THIRD LAYER)

A **ghost** emerges from one of the sarcophagi in the west chamber. Oddly enough, the apparition is not hostile. It speaks an old form of the Common tongue (DC 14 INT) and claims that he petitioned the King of Dust for aid a thousand years ago but was refused and slain on the spot. The undead assures the characters he had a clean conscience. The ghost only fights if attacked.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** The east crypt features a low-quality lock (DC 12 DEX), scattered in the ashes are 13 gp.

8. FONT OF DESIRES

The small, 2-foot-deep font contains clear water. The font's stone rim is carved with meandering runes and sigils of Gede and Saint Terragnis. There are 4d6 sp at the bottom of the font. An ancient tradition claims that leaving a coin earns the favor of the deities (DC 12 WIS).

► **Secret Passage.** Pulling a brick causes a section of the wall to slide inward and reveal a passage to area 11.

9. ROOM OF EFFIGIES

A quasi-translucent humanoid uses rock carving tools to craft strange, half-foot-tall busts of people who have come to visit the sepulcher. Some are accurate. Other effigies are severely deformed and stylized.

An *invisible servant* crafts busts of the party at the moment and places them on the wooden table. The degree of accuracy in the effigies amounts to how pure of heart each person is. Those of the darkest motives are deformed in the stone representations. This is a way to measure the risk of petitioning the King of Dust for aid. The GM must determine how accurate each character's effigy is according to their personality and past deeds.

10. SECRET VAULT

The door to this chamber features a high-quality lock (DC 18 DEX check) and has stood the test of time.

► **Treasure (6 XP).** The stone coffers contain 40 gp, 150 sp, and 600 cp. There are two *potions of forgetfulness*, two *potions of vitality*, and a *pearl of power*.

11. CHAMBER OF WAITING

Narrow canals flow with clear water along this chamber with six stone pillars and four wooden benches. Strange whisperings come from the water below.

The characters must remain in this chamber for 1 **crawling round** before returning to area 4 to see the King of Dust. During this time, harmless spirits emerge from the water canals to mingle with the characters. There is a 4-in-6 chance that deceased individuals that know the characters make an appearance here. This place is a great location to commune with lost loved-ones as they are bound to come sooner rather than later.

DEVELOPMENT

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their valiant deeds.

After the characters visit the Chamber of Waiting and return to the Throne of Dust (areas 1 and 4), the legendary King of Dust appears on its throne and gazes at those brave enough to stand on the stone circle and stand judgment. The GM must determine how strict and ruthless the King of Dust is meant to be for this adventure. Alas, the adventure background and evidence in area 2 point to a rather harsh judgment of those who come. If any person is found wanting and of a dark heart, the king orders their death. Four **wraiths** emerge from the sarcophagi to perform the king's grisly commands.

Conversely, those found to be just and pure are granted the King of Dust's favor. Each can state something they desire to know or to possess and the king shall grant their wishes. The king's harsh judgment is a failsafe against self-serving, greedy individuals. Those deemed just receive what they request with no limitations.



THE DRAGON FEVER

Not ambition, but recklessness. Not goals, but fantasies. The mind tends to see things differently when one's suffering from the foul dragon's fever.

Random Villager

F is a rare and unknown condition. But it is true. The dragon's fever appears from one day to the next. No one knows what causes it and not even the wisest sages or healers understand its origin. The world of men has made peace with this mystery and accepted it as part of their lives.

Fortunately, it is not lethal, but often the consequences of it are. Dragon fever makes a person become a 'hero'. Farmer or knight, seamstress or damsel, the person abandons their current home and activities, grabs all the gear available, and starts their new life as an adventurer.

This is all in their minds, though. Despite their motivation, a stable boy still dies when facing a mere goblin. And even swordsmen will walk to their deaths if they think themselves capable of saving the world.

It is a horrible disease of the mind that kills without killing. It feeds chaos into the world and makes innocents look for danger. One of the strongest signs of someone suffering from this affliction is the incessant dragon talk, and believing one is capable of killing such a beast.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

IT HAS BEEN a few decades since the historians in the capital found the dragon's shrine in the mountain skirts. Since its discovery, people have come up with all kinds of stories and crazy theories about its origin.

Heal the Fever. The heroes are hired to heal Harold Dunn, a noble's son. They are tipped about the location of the shrine and told that the spirit of an ancient dragon may heal the dragon fever. Is this true? (80 gp, 9 XP).

Dragon's Blood. One of the characters suffers from dragon fever. This person believes they are in truth a dragon. In a dream, they learn the location of the shrine and they feel compelled to go there. In their vision, the spirit in the shrine can transform them (0 XP).

Destroyers. The characters are hired by the capital's authorities. Their task is to destroy the shrine; a cleric of the royal court confirmed the presence of an evil dragon. He believes this shrine could be the source of all cases of dragon fever. Since people are desperate for a cure, and no other information has been found about this disease, they feel there is nothing to lose (120 gp, 11 XP).

Level 7 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Visible during the day. Area 6 is well illuminated but area 5 is dark. Denizens are **dark-adapted**.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	A group of twenty people (peasants) approaches. Three of them have come to be healed by the shrine. They have no proof this works, but they hope the myths are true.
2	Without intending to, a random character presses a brick on the wall (this can only occur in areas 4, 5, and 6). A heavy blade swings from one side of the dungeon to the other, hitting everything in its path (1d10 damage).
3	A tall, armored man (knight), followed by six thugs , arrives at the scene. The knight claims that dragons summoned him in a dream. He is to receive a message through the dragon shrine. He becomes hostile if the heroes want to enter too. Only he has the right to see the shrine and hear the dragon's message, he claims.
4	The shrine's magic sometimes breaks itself free and the world around it reacts in different ways. In this case, the bones in area 6 are reanimated. Eight skeletons emerge from the shrine or attack the heroes if they are inside.
5	A random character steps on a pressure-sensitive plate and triggers a trap (this can only occur in areas 4, 5, and 6). Poison darts are shot from the walls (1d10 damage).
6	Dragon fever strikes a character at random (DC 14 WIS). They immediately feel a compulsion to stand before the shrine. Their inner dragon is about to be born, they feel.

1. AREA OUTSIDE

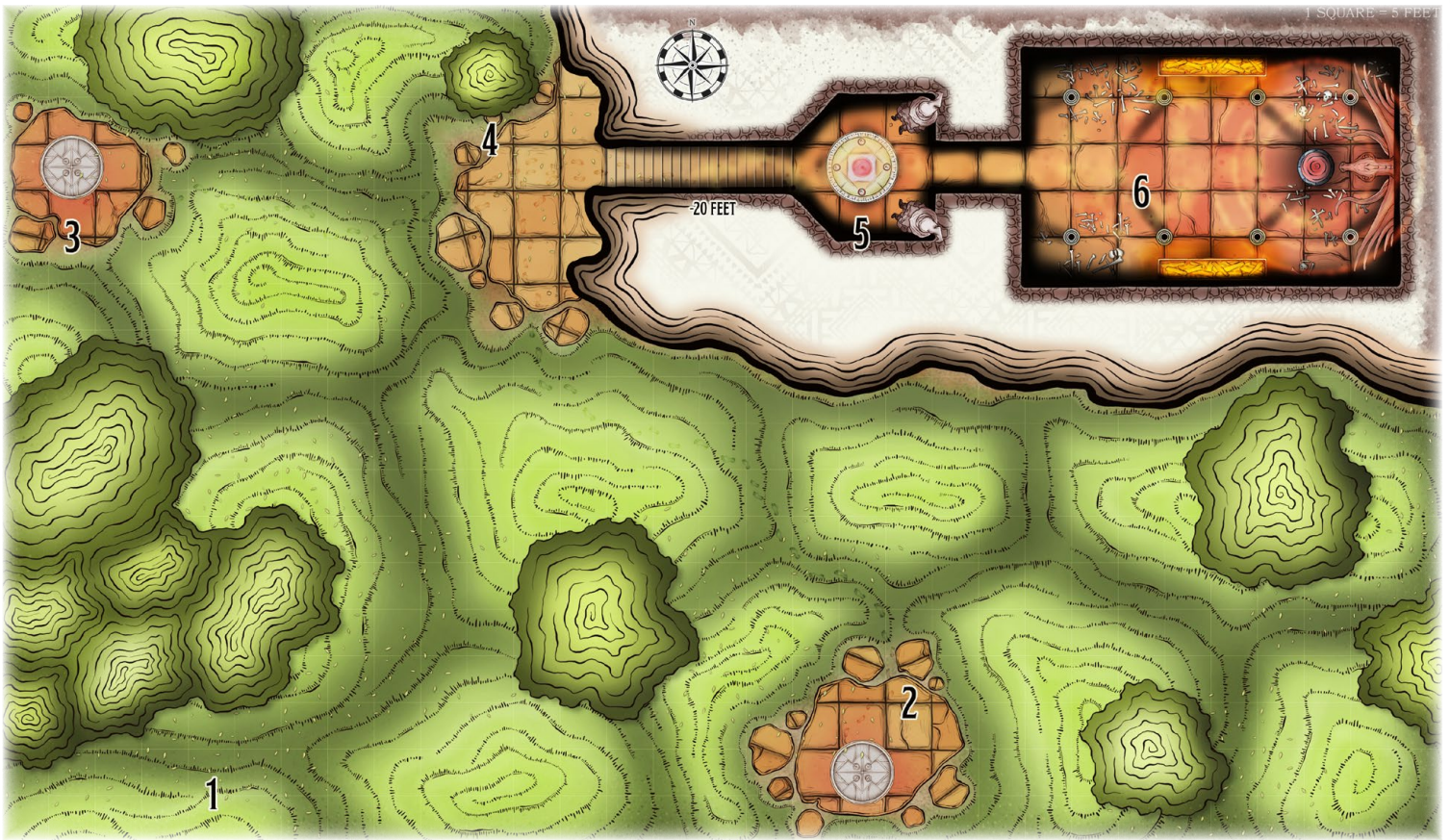
The characters approach the shrine from this side. They can see the circles of power from here (areas 2 and 3).

► **The Fever.** If one of the characters is sick, they feel an impulse to run into the shrine to seek the dragons' wisdom. This triggers traps (see **Random Events** 2 and 5)

2. EAST CIRCLE OF POWER

Grass and dirt have taken over most of the stone tiles but some still surround the rune-inscribed circle. This is one of the two seals that empower the shrine (see area 3).

► **Footprints.** A barefoot humanoid was here recently. The tracks go to both circles of power and inside the dragon shrine. The tracks are recent (DC 12 WIS).



3. WEST CIRCLE OF POWER

The second stone platform features a different rune pattern than its counterpart in area 2. Together, they spell a riddle (DC 13 INT). On a success, the heroes know this:

► **The Circles.** The stone golem in area 5 loses its power while two living creatures stand in both circles. They must remain there otherwise the golem activates.

4. SHRINE THRESHOLD

The face of a dragon is carved on the mountain rock above the entrance. Its features have been eroded by time and exposure. But enough details remain to infer that the author of this sculpture is a true master.

If the characters are too eager to stand before the shrine, they might not spot the trap on the descending corridor (DC 14 WIS). The steps slant downward and become a slide. All descending creatures fall right on top of the circle in area 5, activating a fire jet trap (see below).

5. DRACONIC CIRCLE

A magic circle with a symmetrical pattern of lines and runes stands before two human-sized stone statues.

► **Fire.** Standing on the circle triggers the trap. Fire jets burn all creatures in the room. The victims take 2d8 damage (DC 14 DEX for half).

► **Guardian.** One of the statues is a **stone golem**. It stops all people. Even ones afflicted with dragon fever.

6. THE DRAGON SHRINE

A grandiose sculpture of a red dragon dominates the chamber. Before it, a black steel cauldron holds a viscous red liquid. Countless bones lie scattered across the cracked dungeon tiles. In perfect harmony, eight columns flank the eerie chamber's central hall.

Regardless of the characters' reason to be here, six **skeltons** and three **wights** are their last obstacle. After combat, they are free to do what they wish in the shrine.

DEVELOPMENT

THIS ADVENTURE CAN end in many ways. Consider the following depending on the **Adventure Hook** chosen.

► **Healing the Sick.** The sick must drink from the red liquid before the dragon statue. This viscous, magical concoction represents the blood of a red dragon.

► **Inner Dragon.** The member of the party who had the dream suffers a transformation after drinking the blood. They become a half-dragon. The GM is free to decide how this may affect the abilities of the character in question. Or if this occurs to more than one character.

► **The Shrine is Destroyed.** The heroes trash the place and destroy the effigy. They spill the red liquid on the ground and burn the dungeon to ashes. A little after, they have a vision of an angered red dragon. Dragon fever does not subside either. Matters have just gotten worse...

TEMPLE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

They are fraudulent scammers. They offer cheap, bland salvation to those in need. In the end, this is just a ploy to conscript fools to their sect, I tell you...

Bailiff Joseph Barnes

The townsfolk worry about a recently founded sect led by an obscure priestess. They call themselves the Temple of Enlightenment and claim to have the answer to quench solitude, sadness, and lack of purpose. Many have joined the strange cult thus far. Most of them are lonely individuals, the homeless, and maybe even some pesky low-lives.

Priestess Argantha is an invoker of chaos and a devout Memnon worshiper. Two months ago, she moved into the region and found an old temple near the capital that was trashed decades ago. Memnon's temple was attacked by knights and the congregation put to the sword back then. But the priestess seeks to restore the Memnon's sect and increase the chaotic deity's reach.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Rescue. The sect has conscripted enough people that the locals are worried about their reach and power. In addition, some people have been taken against their will, or so many suspect. Bailiff Joseph Barnes hires the characters to raid the Temple of Enlightenment, dismantle the sect, and rescue any prisoners therein (60 gp, 6 XP).

RUMORS

d4	Details
1	The locals claim that the sect leader, a mysterious woman, has the power to influence and control weak minds.
2	Many claim that members of the sect have turned their lives around and become better people. Alas, no one can name a single example of such behavior.
3	The sect gathers in an ancient temple of Memnon that was abandoned until they restored it recently.
4	People blame recent robberies and raids in the northern roads on the Temple of Enlightenment sect.

Level 4 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas have light sources; the rest of them are dark. None of the denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Secret Doors.** Inspecting areas for 1 **crawling round** reveals the presence of hidden levers (DC 13 WIS check). Pulling them reveals access to hidden chambers.

RANDOM EVENTS

d8	Details
1	Eight cultists in ceremonial attire approach the party unsure of their unexpected presence (Reaction check).
2	A cultist with a trained hell hound follows the beast's instincts as it has detected the character's trail.
3	Priestess Argantha speaks into the characters' minds: "Abandon your quest and join us. It is still time to find solace." It occurs only if the priestess is aware of the party.
4	3d4 bandits approach the characters. These brigands loosely follow the cult; they were hired by the priestess.
5	In the temple, a random character triggers a pressure plate and a scythe swings from the ceiling. The character takes 4d6 damage (DC 14 DEX check for half).
6	A vision of a leonine warrior assails the characters' minds. Memnon beckons them to join the sect.
7	Supernatural wind blows through, snuffing out all light sources. The cultists promptly relight the braziers.
8	Memnon's chaotic influence causes a ravenous swarm of rats to gather near the characters and attack.

1. TEMPLE ENTRANCE

The temple is in ruins; nothing more than scattered rubble and broken pillars. It is located a mile from the city. Searching through the ruined remains, a descending stairway into the underground compound remains.

► **The Guards.** Four **soldiers** keep watch by the stairs. Before antagonizing the characters, they offer affiliation to Memnon's sect. To comply, the characters would have to surrender all their gear before entering the temple.

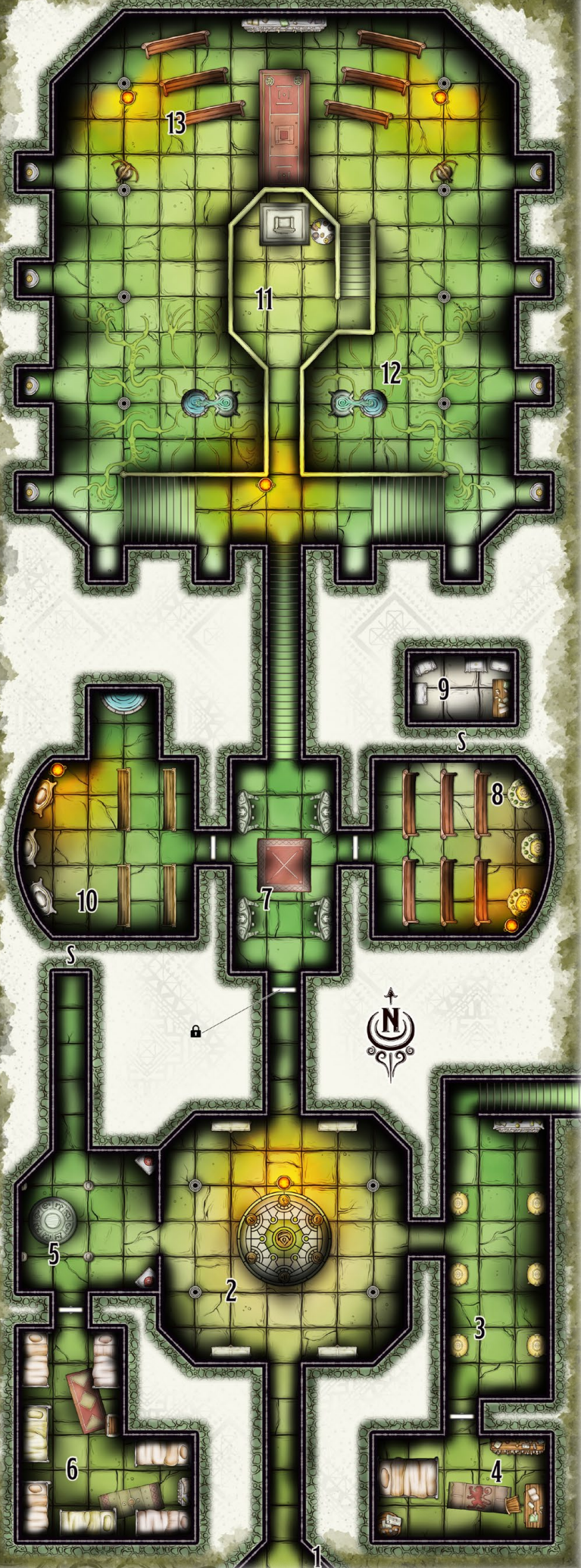
► **Alternate Entrance.** If the characters explore the outside of the temple for 1 **crawling round**, they find a staircase covered with planks. It leads down to area 3.

2. MAIN HALL

A circular, floor mosaic displays the seven sigils of Memnon, the Lion of Chaos. Each rune represents the acceptance of each of the fundamental sins.

This chamber is directly below what used to be the antechamber on the surface. Light used to flow from stained glass above but the aperture collapsed a while ago.

► **The Mosaic.** The mosaic represents the spirit of chaos and the red-maned, leonine entity, Memnon. This is Madeera's twin, a being whose ultimate ambition is to rend her sister's cosmic laws (DC 13 INT check).



3. URNS OF ASH

Six gilded urns hug the walls of this otherwise empty chamber. Each is branded with the rune for 'saint'.

► **The Bookshelf.** The shelf is a deadly decoy. The books are blank. Interacting with any of them triggers a poison needle trap that deals 4d6 damage (DC 15 DEX check).

► **The Urns.** The ashes of some followers of Memnon were placed here; a place of honor in their faith (DC 17 INT). Removing any of the lids triggers a magical ward that alerts Priestess Argantha of the party's presence.

4. PRIESTESS ARGANTHA'S QUARTERS

The private quarters for a single person. An embroidered rug with a leonine warrior stands next to a wooden desk crammed with scrolls and papers.

The priestess spends little time in this room, preferring to share time with the loyal sectarians in area 13. A scroll on the desk contains Memnon's Prayer (see area 7).

► **Treasures (0 XP).** The rug is of fine craftsmanship (10 gp), a *potion of healing* is stored on the bookshelf, and a *spell scroll of speak with dead* lies on the desk.

5. CIRCLE OF TELEPORTATION

The half-foot-tall, stone circle etched with arcane markers is a focus for the *teleportation* spell. Priestess Argantha may flee here if she fails to stop the characters and attempt to use her *spell scroll of teleportation* to escape.

6. COMMON ROOMS

Triple bunk beds line the walls of this chamber. The rancid stench of humanity pervades this room. It has been severely overcrowded by cultists as of late.

► **Cultists.** When the characters come, there are 2d6 sect members (**peasants**) at any given time. They emerge into area 5 if the characters make noise there.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** The wooden chest contains a leather pouch with 12 gp and six ornate daggers (2 gp each).

7. ROOM OF GUARDIANS

The door to this chamber is locked (DC 15 DEX check). Some cultists have the key to this lock (1-in-6 chance).

Four statues of armor-clad knights brandishing a lion sigil stand with their arms and empty hands spread.

► **Inanimate Guardians.** Each of the statues is a magical construct guardian (**gargoyle**). They only allow cult members or prospect converts down into area 11. The characters' presence triggers them to attack when the party least expects it. They can be triggered to stand down if a character recites Memnon's Prayer to fool them into accepting them as cultists (DC 16 WIS).

8. CHAPEL OF ENVY

Rows of wooden pews lead to three pedestals with many jade-stone trinkets and shallow gilded pots.

Six sectarians (**peasants**) sit in prayer by the eastern pews. They antagonize the characters verbally as they are unarmed and attempt to flee to area 11 if possible.

▶ **The Pedestals.** A wretched curse on the pots and trinkets causes anyone who touches them to suffer painful cramps at the worst possible moment once per day. When the curse is triggered, the person can do nothing but grovel for 1 minute (DC 18 CON check).

▶ **Treasure (1 XP).** Collectively, the rough, jade figurines are worth 15 gp when sold as a lot. Alas, the cramping curse is spread to anyone who touches them.

9. SECRET VAULT

The hidden room contains four stone chests and a wooden shelf with papers and scrolls in disarray.

▶ **Treasure (7 XP).** The chests contain 50 gp, 100 sp, 640 cp, and a silver ingot (10 gp). The wooden shelf contains one of each of the following scrolls: *shield of faith*, *cleansing weapon*, *pillar of salt*, and *speak with dead*.

10. CHAPEL OF PRIDE

Three statues of a shape-changing, granite-like substance stand by the curved, west wall. The effigies appear to take on the form of whoever approaches.

▶ **The Statues.** Each magical representation imitates whoever stands in front of them and displays them in the best form possible. Warriors are presented as more muscled and confident than they are, for instance. In Memnon's belief system, one must embrace the exalted image with pride while understanding the distance one must go to achieve the ephemeral stone representation.

▶ **Guardians.** Three sect members (one **cultist**, one **soldier**, and one **gladiator**) stand by each of the statues and are startled by the statues' sudden changes when the characters enter the chamber. They fight fiercely.

11. SEAT OF CHAOS

The descending stairs lead to the raised level of a large cathedral-like chamber. A large stone throne overlooks the congregation on the chamber's far side.

Priestess Argantha sits on the throne and preaches to her congregation about the gift of power that Memnon has given her. She is initially unaware of the party.

▶ **Sneak Attack.** A character may attempt to sneak behind the throne and hide from the congregation in area 13 to attempt to attack the priestess from hiding or to take her hostage (DC 18 DEX check). On a fail, the final encounter begins as written (see area 13).

12. FONTS OF DESPAIR

Crystalline, glimmering water flows from two pitcher-shaped fonts onto circular, 2-foot-tall ponds.

Drinking the water heals 1d6 hit points. After 1 hour elapses, a toxin in the water deals 3d6 damage. For the sect, it is a trial of passage to survive this ordeal.

13. THE BLIGHTED CONGREGATION

Sitting on the wooden pews are three **cultists**, two **soldiers**, one **gladiator**, and seven **peasants**. They are loyal to Priestess Argantha (**mage**), who sits on the raised throne (area 11). The zealous congregation does its best to protect the priestess but may stop in its tracks if she is taken prisoner (see area 11). Otherwise, the overconfident priestess orders her followers to take the characters into custody to be used as ritual sacrifices for the all-mighty Memnon. If things go sour for the sect, Priestess Argantha abandons her loyalists and uses her Levitate ability to escape toward area 5 to teleport away.



SHAPESHIFTER CLASS

Ruleset for a new Shadowdark class by James Mishler and Jodi Moran-Mishler

SHAPESHIFTERS ARE WILD folk dedicated to keeping the balance of nature in the face of encroaching civilization; savage warrior-cultists who seek to cast down civilization and return humanity to the status of beasts; valiant scions of ancient shapeshifting lineages who use their abilities to protect animals and two-legged peoples alike from terrible enemies and foul sorcery.

Weapons: Club, crossbow, dagger, javelin, longsword, mace, shortbow, shortsword, spear, staff.

Armor: None

Hit Points: 1d8 per level

Animal Friend. You have Advantage on all Reaction checks with natural animals (this works with animals that are non-magical and non-monstrous).

Animal Speech. Shapeshifters have the ability to communicate with all manner of ordinary animals via gestures and sounds. Beginning at 5th level, you may communicate with magical animals as well (see list below).

Primary Form. At 1st level choose one of your known animal forms as your primary form. You roll all shapeshift checks for that form with Advantage.

Shapeshift. You possess the shapeshift ability, see below. You begin to play at 1st level knowing a number of levels of animal forms equal to 1 plus your Charisma modifier (minimum of 1 level). 0-level animal forms count as ½ level for this purpose. Refer to the Animal Forms table at the end of the class description.

SHAPESHIFT

You can shapeshift into the forms of natural animals (creatures that are non-magical and non-monstrous).

Beginning at 5th level you may learn and shapeshift into the form of certain magical animals, such as griffons, pegasi, owlbears, and the like.

The shifting form requires one combat round, during which you cannot otherwise move or take any actions. You may shapeshift from your natural form to an animal form, or from one animal form into another animal form.

Shifting into an attuned animal form (see below) requires a Charisma check, known as a shapeshifting check. You make a shapeshifting check by rolling 1d20 + your Charisma modifier. You may change back to your natural form without a check.

The DC to successfully take on an animal's form is 10 + the chosen animal form's level.

Results. If you succeed in your shapeshifting check you take on the form of the desired animal. If you fail your shapeshifting check, you do not change form. You may try that form again after you take a complete rest.

Critical Success. If you roll a natural 20 on your shapeshifting check, you maximize the hit points of that form (see below). If your current hit points are greater than the potential hit points of the chosen form, you instead heal 1 hit point per level of the form, up to your maximum natural hit points.



ON THE MATERIALS PRESENTED HEREIN

The materials presented in this booklet are an optional, additional class to supplement those presented in the Shadowdark core rule book. This class is to be used only at the prerogative of the Game Master. Please consult with your Game Master before you roll up a shapeshifter for their game.



Critical Failure. If you roll a natural 1 on your shape-shifting check, you do not change form. Additionally, if you were in another animal form, that form also ends, and you revert to your natural form. You also lose the use of the attempted form until you successfully spend time re-learning it (see Learning Animal Forms below).

Learning Animal Forms. You may learn a new animal form by spending enough time with and studying the target animal type. You must first befriend the target animal using animal speech and roll a *curious* or *friendly* Reaction check. Alternatively, you can do so by earning the animal’s friendship through word and deed.

Once curious or friendly, you must spend one day with it per the animal’s level, studying its movements, actions, and way of life (4 hours for a 0-level animal). At the end of this period, make a Wisdom check against a DC equal to 10 + the animal’s level. If you succeed, you have successfully learned this animal’s form.

If you fail, you may try again after a similar period. If you critically fail, you somehow manage to anger or upset the animal and it flees or attacks you. This animal can no longer be your subject study.

Many animals have progressively larger and more powerful forms, i.e., normal – giant – dire – huge. You must learn the normal form of an animal before you can learn the giant form, the giant form before the dire form, and the dire form before the huge form.

Attuning Animal Forms. You may learn and know as many animal forms as you desire, however, you may never be attuned to, and thus have access to, more animal forms than a number equal to your level plus your Charisma modifier (minimum 1) at a given time.

When you attune to an already known animal form, it requires having an open “attunement slot” (perhaps forgoing currently attuned animal forms) and spending one hour in uninterrupted meditation to gain attunement with the desired animal form(s). You may forgo attunement and gain attunement with as many animal forms as you wish, up to your maximum, in the same hour.

Beginning at 5th level you may learn and know the forms of magical animals, as listed below (your GM might add or subtract magical animals from this list based on their campaign setting requirements. Settle this entire list with your GM so you know what to expect at high levels).

Clothing and Equipment. Your clothes and gear magically change shape with you. They are inaccessible while you are transformed into animal form.

Animal Form Level. When you shapeshift into an animal form, you are considered as being of your level, regardless of the animal’s level.

Animal Form Hit Points. When you shapeshift into a new animal form, roll hit points based on the level and the Constitution score of the chosen animal. If the total is higher than your current (or even maximum natural) hit points, keep the new total.

When you revert to your natural form you revert down to your maximum natural hit points if that total is less than your current hit points. You revert to your natural form when you are reduced to 0 hit points.

Animal Form Stats and Attacks. You use the animal form’s STR, DEX, and CON stats. Use your talent-based melee, ranged, and check modifiers (if any). You use the animal form’s natural attacks (claw, bite, sting, etc.). You keep INT, WIS, and CHA stats.

SHAPESHIFTER TALENTS

2d6	Talent
2	Choose an additional primary form from among known animal forms
3-6	+1 to melee or ranged attacks
7-9	+2 to Wisdom or Charisma stat or +1 to shapeshift checks
10-11	Gain one additional animal form attunement slot
12	Choose a talent or +2 total points to distribute stats

SHAPESHIFTER CLASS TITLES

Level	Lawful	Neutral	Chaotic
1-2	Cub	Whelp	Talon
3-4	Guide	Stalker	Claw
5-6	Protector	Hunter	Ripper
7-8	Guardian	Chaser	Slaughterer
9-10	Master of Forms	Master of the Wild	Master of Savagery

ANIMAL FORMS

Animal	Lvl	AC	Attacks	Move
Ape	2	12	1 fist (1d6), 1 rock (1d4)	N (Climb)
Badger	1	11	2 claw (1d4)	N (Burrow)
Bat	0	12	1 bite (1)	N (Fly)
Bat, Giant	2	12	1 bite (1d6)	N (Fly)
Bear, Brown	5	13	2 claw (1d8), Crush	N (Climb)
Bear, Polar	7	13	2 claw (2d6), Crush	N (Climb)
Boar	3	12	2 tusk (1d6), Gore	N
Camel	2	10	1 hoof (1d6), 1 spit (1d4)	2N
Cat, Domestic	0	13	1 bite (1)	N
Centipede, Giant	1	11	1 bite (1d4 + P)	N
Crab, Giant	5	15	2 pincer (1d8 + C)	N (Swim)
Crocodile	4	14	2 bite (1d8)	N (Swim)
Deer	2	13	1 antler (1d6)	2N
Dung Beetle, Giant	2	13	1 horn (1d4 + K)	N
Eagle	2	13	1 rend (1d4)	2N (Fly)
Elephant	7	14	2 tusks (1d8), Charge	N
Ferret	0	13	1 bite (1d2)	N
Fish, Trout	1	12	1 bite (1d3)	N (Swim)
Fly	0	10	none	N (Fly)
Fox	1	13	1 bite (1d3)	N
Frog, Giant	2	12	1 tongue and 1 bite (1d6)	N (Swim)
Goat	1	14	1 butt (1d4)	N
Gorilla	4	12	2 rend (2d6)	N (Climb)
Hawk	0	12	1 rend (1d2)	N (Fly)
Hippopotamus	5	12	2 bite (1d10)	N (Swim)
Horse	2	11	1 hooves (1d6)	2N
Hyena	3	13	1 bite (2d4)	N
Leech	0	9	1 bite (Attach)	N (Swim)
Leech, Giant	2	9	1 bite (1d4 + Attach)	N (Swim)
Lion	3	12	2 rend (1d8)	N
Mammoth	9	15	2 tusks (1d12)	N
Mastiff	1	11	1 bite (1d6)	N
Moose	4	11	2 antler (1d6)	2N
Otter	2	14	1 bite (1d6)	N (Swim)
Owl	1	13	1 rend (1d3)	N (Fly)
Panther	3	14	2 rend (1d6)	N (Climb)
Rat	0	10	1 bite (1 + D)	N
Rat, Dire	2	12	1 bite (1d6 + D)	N
Rat, Giant	1	11	1 bite (1d4 + D)	N
Rhinoceros	5	14	2 born (1d8), Charge	N
Scorpion	0	11	1 sting (1 + P)	N (Climb)
Scorpion, Giant	3	14	1 claw (1d6 + G), 1 sting (1d4 + P)	N (Climb)
Shark	3	11	1 bite (1d10)	N (Swim)
Shark, Megalodon	8	13	3 bite (2d8)	2N (Swim)
Skunk	1	11	1 stink (attracts monsters)	N
Smilodon	3	12	2 bite (1d6)	N
Snake, Boa	2	12	1 bite (1d4), 1 constrict	N (Climb)
Snake, Cobra	1	12	1 bite (1 + Poison)	N
Snake, Giant	5	12	2 bite (1d6), 1 constrict	N (Climb)
Spider	0	11	2 bite (1 + Poison)	N (Climb)
Spider, Giant	3	13	1 bite (1d4 + Poison)	N (Climb)
Vulture	1	10	1 tear (1d4)	N (Fly)
Wasp, Giant	2	13	1 sting (1d6 + Venom)	N (Fly)
Weasel	1	14	1 bite (1d3)	N
Wolf	2	12	1 bite (1d6), Pack Hunter	2N
Wolf, Dire	4	12	2 bite (1d8), Pack Hunter	2N
Wolverine	3	13	2 claw (1d3), 1 bite (1d4)	N
Worm	0	8	none	N

Magical Animals	Lvl	AC	Attacks	Move
Ankheg	3	14	1 bite (1d6), 1 acid spray (2d6)	N (Burrow)
Ape, Snow	4	13	2 fist (1d6), 1 rock (2d6)	N (Climb)
Bulette	8	17	3 bite (2d6), 1 leap	N (Burrow)
Cave Brute	6	14	2 claw (1d8), 1 mandible (1d10)	N (Burrow)
Cave Creeper	4	12	1 bite (1d6), 1 tentacle (1d8 + T)	N (Climb)
Chuul	5	15	2 pincer (1d8 + G)	N (Swim)
Grick	4	14	1 beak (1d8), 1 tentacle (1d6 + G)	N (Climb)
Griffon	4	12	2 rend (1d10)	2N (Fly)
Hippogriff	3	13	2 rend (1d8)	2N (Fly)
Owlbear	6	13	2 claw (1d10), Crush	N (Climb)
Pegasus	3	12	2 hooves (1d6)	2N (Fly)
Purple Worm	12	18	2 bite (2d12 + S), Sting (1d10 + P)	2N (Burrow)
Roc, Greater	15	15	4 rend (2d10 + Grab)	2N (Fly)
Rust Monster	4	13	2 claw (1d6 + Corrosive)	N
Stingbat	1	12	1 beak (1d4 + Blood Drain)	N (Fly)
Wolf, Winter	5	12	2 bite (1d6), 1 frost breath	2N
Wyvern	8	15	2 rend (1d8), 1 stinger (1d6 + P)	2N (Fly)

Complete details on new animals – including many new normal, giant, dire, and even huge forms – will be available in the forthcoming **Expanded Animals**.



JAMES MISHLER GAMES SHADOWDARK PRODUCT LIST

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INFINITE AMETHYSTS

Oh, there's plenty to gain here. What I have for you is a business investment opportunity. Wouldn't you like to change your stars for good? Let's do this!

Garlen, Master Prospector



Life-changing opportunities seldom present themselves to the commonfolk. Most people remain in the social stratus they were born in; few can even aspire to climb a step above their parents or relatives. But when the time comes, it is crucial to act quickly before the opportunity vanishes.

Such a possibility appeared to Garlen, a Master Prospector who manages several mines on behalf of the crown. Garlen was given control and the right to mine a strange cavern close to Barleyton. Past prospectors have tried to establish a mining operation there in the past. They reported the presence of a silver vein and numerous, large-sized precious stones; amethysts. Unfortunately, the caverns are dangerous; strange violent creatures crawl in the dark. Many miners have perished.

Garlen has one month to make the place profitable before the rights to mine are passed on to someone else. He is desperate to clear the place and start mining.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Business Proposal. Garlen hires the characters to escort him into the mines, clear the place of threats, and find the main vein of amethysts. In exchange, Garlen offers to make the characters owners of a 15% stake in the mining business' profits. He promises a good residual income and similar opportunities in the future (0 XP).

RUMORS

d6 Details

- 1 Ten miners came back to Barleyton with a cartload of amethysts months ago. After squandering their money, they tried to do it again but got killed in the mines.
- 2 Garlen is from Barleyton. He was once a lowly miner but was either smart or lucky enough to climb up the mining industry. Now, he manages mines for the crown.
- 3 Regional rumors and gossip about the cavern's danger go back a few generations. The dark tunnels are dangerous.
- 4 A spelunker who delved into the caves came back with a skin rash and lung damage from breathing in there.
- 5 An old man claims people tried to mine the local veins almost 80 years ago when he was a child. They abandoned their operation weeks after some people died.
- 6 A swarm of enlarged, ravenous rats has been seen close to the mine entrance. Farmers often set up traps and measures to defend themselves from the rodents.

Level 5 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Areas with amethysts are dimly lit; the rest of the tunnels are dark. All denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Structural Integrity.** Once per hour, the coming and going of burrowing creatures causes rubble to fall from the cave ceilings. Large amounts of debris fall on a random character and potentially bury them out, dealing 6d6 damage (DC 17 DEX check for half damage).

RANDOM EVENTS

d8 Details

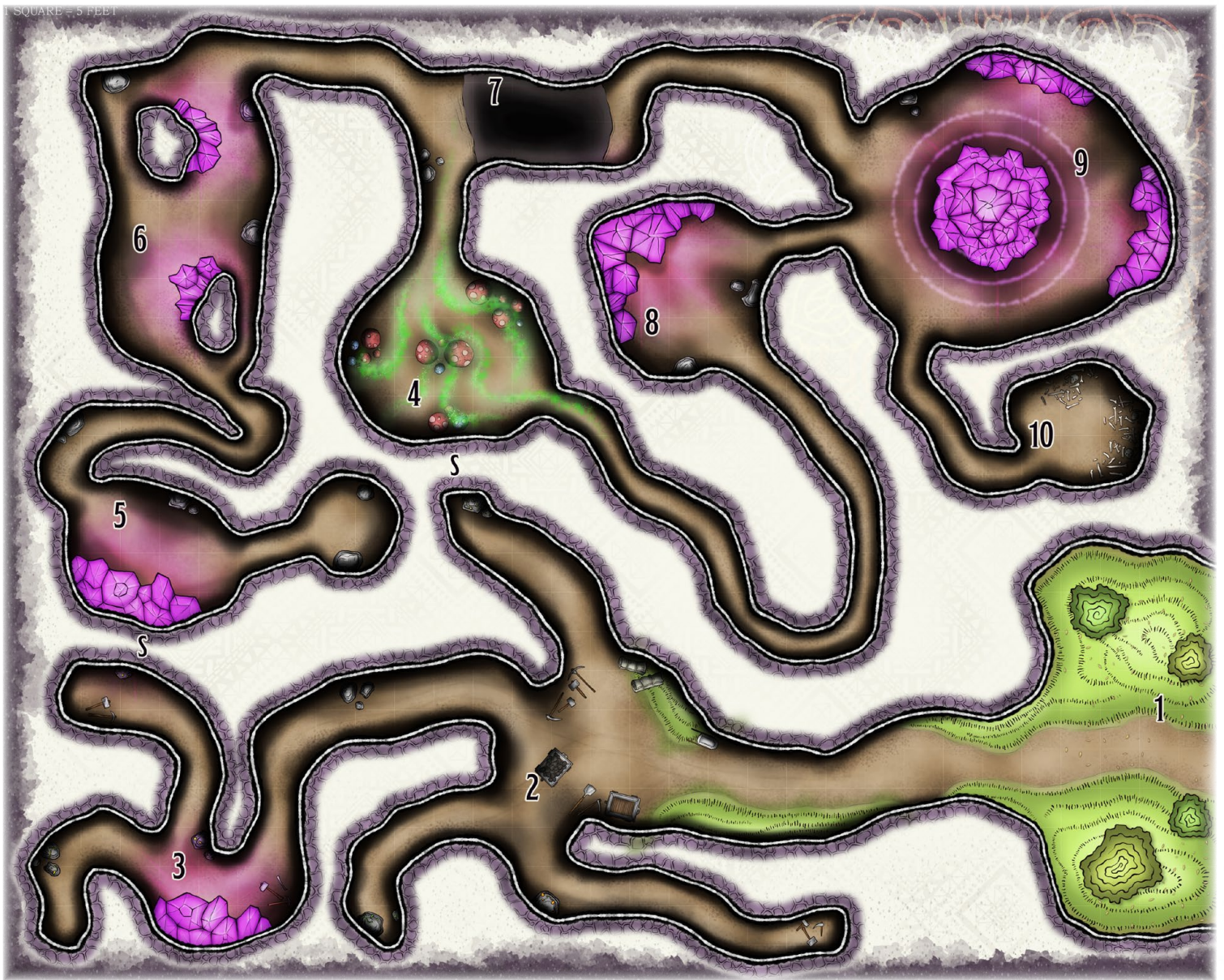
- 1 Two **swarms of rats** gather in the darkness close to the party and attack. They disband if reduced to half HP.
- 2 A **black pudding** drops from the ceiling on top of an armor-clad individual. It mindlessly fights to the death.
- 3 1d4 **giant dung beetles** emerge from the caverns and attack. They are territorial but do not pursue.
- 4 4d4 **goblins** stumble upon the party (**Reaction** roll). They carry pickaxes and shovels to mine amethysts.
- 5 2 **gricks** use their camouflage ability to hide in plain sight. They attack the last armored character.
- 6 An independent miner (**peasant**) arrives looking for ores. He antagonizes the party and tries to drive them away.
- 7 A strong wind current blows through the caverns, snuffing out fires and any uncovered light sources.
- 8 Two **giant bats** swoop from the dark ceiling and attack random creatures. They fiercely fight to the death.

1. ENTRANCE HALL

The well-trodden road from Barleyton leads to a rocky region in a sparsely forested area. The tracks of recent mine carts and prospectors are still fresh.

In the company of Garlen, it takes the party three hours to traverse the countryside and reach the mine entrance. Garlen (**peasant**) mentions that there must be abandoned tools and implements that he plans to keep as he expects none of the previous owners to claim them.

► **The Tracks.** The bootprints and wheel tracks are at least a week old. The characters recognize smaller prints of possibly goblinoid origin. In addition, rat droppings in the area far surpass the average for the region, there must be a large colony inside (DC 16 WIS).



2. MINE PROPER

Darkness gathers gradually as the tunnel reaches an area filled with abandoned tools, two carts, and a bifurcation into several, dark, narrower cave tunnels.

► **The Tools.** There are two working carts and enough shovels, hammers, and pickaxes for a ten-person crew. Two sleeping cots were also left behind by the last proprietors. Some tools show unnatural rust damage.

► **The Tunnels.** Four narrow, slithering passages open their way through the earth. Two of them reach dead-ends, one connects to area 3, and the northbound one leads to a collapsed tunnel. The characters can spend 1 **crawling round** clearing up the debris. It leads to area 4. Opening up the path causes the noxious spores to spill into the first 10 feet of this tunnel (see area 4).

► **Treasure (1 XP).** One of the mine carts is filled with rubble and coal. Among the debris hide five pounds of uncut amethysts. They can be sold for 15 gp to a jeweler.

3. FIRST AMETHYST VEIN

A crystalline formation of dimly-glowing, purple-tinted precious stones sprouts from the bare south wall.

► **The Amethysts.** If Garlen is present, he screams with joy when seeing the large formation. He explains that this is not the main vein and that cutting out the stones must be done with care lest the amethysts get ruined in the process. He shall bring enough capable craftsmen when the mines are cleared of dangerous threats.

4. NOXIOUS FUNGI

Water filters through the stone above and keeps the walls humid. Patches of boulder-sized fungal lifeforms attach to the chamber walls. The fungi produce a variety of toxic spore trails that cause skin rashes and severe damage to the lungs. Creatures that breathe the air in this chamber take 3d6 damage per minute of exposure (DC 14 CON check). Skin exposed to the spores becomes red and sore. This affliction lasts for 1d3 days.

5. DEN OF RUST

A mound of rubble may be removed in the same manner as described in area 2 to connect this chamber with area 3. The area contains a formation of amethyst crystals. A rust-like dust covers the crystals and walls of this chamber. They were caused by rust monsters (DC 14 INT).

► **Corrosive Vermin.** Three **rust monsters** inhabit the eastern cavern chamber. The characters' metal armor and weaponry attract these insectoids when they arrive.

6. GOBLIN SPELUNKERS

The clinking sound of metal on crystal grows louder in the proximity of this area. A team of distrusting goblin prospectors struggle to pick at the crystals.

There are eleven **goblins** in the room. They came from the Shadowdark from area 7. The goblins do not wish to fight but do not trust the characters easily due to past interactions with surfacers (**Reaction** roll with disadvantage). Unfortunately, Garlen is unwilling to split his earnings thinner yet. The prospector orders the characters to slay or, at least, drive off the 'filthy goblin thieves'.

► **Truce.** The characters can convince Garlen to trade with the goblins as they are solely interested in uncut stones. There must be a way to profit (**Reaction** roll).

7. CHASM INTO THE SHADOWDARK

The floor breaks and gives way to a dark chasm of untold depths. Dropping a stone reveals that the bottom must be at least 100 feet below (DC 15 INT). The chasm connects the mine to uncharted tunnels and the depths of the Shadowdark. The characters may access those regions from here. Regardless, it is advised to cover this opening for a safe mining operation (DC 13 WIS check).

8. THE RAT COLONY

The walls of this chamber and the nearby tunnels are dotted with hundreds of orifices. Small, red eyes glint from the apertures and the surrounding darkness.

Three **swarms of rats** emerge from the floor and walls and attack the characters. If one of the swarms is defeated, the other two disband and flee into their burrows.

9. THE MAIN AMETHYST VEIN

The largest amethyst formation pierces the rough floor and ascends 15 feet in a glimmering display of opulence and nature. This is the main gemstone vein.

Garlen is ecstatic after finding this chamber and promises the characters that their efforts shall be well remunerated in the near future. Garlen says this is a gold mine.

► **Stone Guardian.** The amethysts in the mine are faintly magical as they focus the energy of the Material Realm. When the characters arrive, a **greater earth elemental** rises from the soil and attacks instinctively. Each round, there is a 3-in-6 chance that a mound of debris falls on a random character. The target takes 2d6 damage and is pinned to the ground (DC 14 DEX check).

10. POOR SOULS

The cavern is littered with a bed of bones. Some are humanoid but the majority belonged to reptiles and small mammals. The remains are of varied ages. Some are only weeks old, others must belong to the hapless miners that an old man claims to remember (see Rumor 5).

BUSINESS ENDEAVORS

TWO WEEKS AFTER the mine is cleared. Garlen's team of gemstone miners and jewelers arrive at the mine and start working. Garlen promises to pay the party their percentage of the profits once per month after all sales have cleared. He also explains that costs and risks must be equally split among all parties, the crown included. Some months may be more profitable than others.

Once per month, roll 3d100 - 100 to determine the characters' earnings. For example, a roll of 250 - 100 yields a profit of 150 gp for the party. On a bad month, a roll of 70 - 100 yields a loss/debt of 30 gp that the characters must pay to keep the mining operation running.



BLOOD ON THE SAND

By Elven Tower and Tom Cartos

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG



LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE

A MID-LEVEL SHADOWDARK ADVENTURE ABOUT CLEANSING THE DESERT FROM EVIL FORCES

ADVENTURE PRIMER

My peers warned me of a mysterious danger that might strike the rally. So, it is great that you'll be here to watch our backs if needed, right? Right!?

Post Data from Princess Apricot's Invitation



irates, sailors, and all people that live near the oceans or large bodies of water share one thing in common: they all respect the sea, the rivers, lagoons, and lakes. They understand how dangerous they can be and that one must be respectful of the ancient gods of the water. For the elements are never your friend, they are always neutral.

However, there is another kind of sea that frightens even the most experienced of heroes. A sea with no water, hundreds of waves but no foam. The sea of sand.

THE DRY SEA

THE LARGEST DESERT known to the world of men, elves, and dwarves earns its name rightfully. Traveling through the Dry Sea without enough gear, supplies, and help is a suicide mission. The merciless sands of this barren wasteland have taken the lives of many innocent travelers. Still, a few communities, towns, and even nomadic tribes thrive in these arid territories. They have found ways to circumvent their problems, like the lack of fertile land or their endless supply of scorched terrains.

These people have adapted to life in the hot climate of the Dry Sea and learned to not only like it but also embrace their way of life. And so, some of the settlements in the Dry Sea are even popular locations, visited by many.

THE ROYAL CAMELS' ARENA

THIS IS WITHOUT a doubt the most popular venue in the Dry Sea. People from all towns, settlements, and even the nomads come to witness the camel rallies. The denizens of this vast desert find everything in the races. Some get filled with excitement while others come to scream their lungs out and release inner tension.

And on the other hand, we have the powerful rulers of the Dry Sea, who come to make money. There is a great traffic of gold, jewels, and indentured servants behind the race's bets. Many lost souls end up with no money, no properties, no assets, nothing. And when they have no more to bet, they bet their lives. Thus, the situation grew over the years, and today, even servants can be employed as betting tools. Fortunately, this gave servants a higher status. A good, skilled servant can be extremely valuable in the bets. So, it is rare to mistreat the servants.

IMMINENT DOOM

UNBEKNOWNST TO EVERYONE, a cataclysmic event is about to strike the sands of the great Dry Sea. Deep within the sands, almost in the middle of the barren territory, is the Valley of Tombs. Centuries ago, things were different and many desert settlements have disappeared.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Level 5 Adventure

CAMEL RALLY

The characters' reputation precedes them and they are directly invited to the famous event. The letter has Princess Apricot's signature and seal. It would be considered a great insult to ignore or refuse her. The heroes have no clue of the events to come when they arrive (0 XP).

FRIEND OF THE NOMADS

The characters receive a calling in a dream. One of them is a druid or has a great connection with nature. The nomads send this astral message to ask for their help. In the dream, the heroes see an army of undead crossing the desert dunes. They travel to the Dry Sea. To reach the nomad camp, they must ask about their whereabouts at the Royal Camels' Arena (60 gp, 5 XP).

LIGHT BRINGERS

The priests of Ord expect a cataclysmic event to occur soon in the Dry Sea. They foresaw this in the stars. They ignore the nature of the threat, but they urge the heroes to question the people at the Royal Camel's Arena, the rally is the best place to investigate more (50 gp, 4 XP).

RUMORS

d4	Details
1	On their way to the arena, the characters hear travelers and other people talk about a mysterious red moon.
2	A camel racer has been the undefeated champion for over three years. Some start to suspect his methods.
3	The nomads of the Dry Sea are considered the natives of these sands. Most people respect them. But a few do not.
4	A few rulers of the Dry Sea did not attend the rally. Some people claim they were tipped off about something dire occurring at the event and decided not to come.

CAMEL RALLY

Hey, it's me, Dario! Have you met Louis? It's good to see new people and possible competitors! I just hope Howser does not win for the millionth time...

Dario

The Royal Camel's Arena was built almost a hundred years ago. It used to be a coliseum for gladiators and legendary warriors of yore. The means of entertainment change over the decades. After the gladiators, the arena became a stadium. People of the Dry Sea still play sandball but the professional league stopped existing three decades ago.

And so, the arena has been the most visited venue of the Dry Sea for more than thirty years. And today, it is more popular than ever. People from all over the kingdom and territories travel to witness the races. Some even dream of building a reputation as camel riders.

SETUP

THE CHARACTERS START their adventure at the Royal Camel's Arena, a day before the rally. Regardless of their reason to be here (see **Adventure Hooks**), they must spend their time speaking with the locals and learning more things about this mysterious danger that everyone talks of, but at the same time, know nothing about.

GETTING AROUND

THE CHARACTERS ARRIVE in town after a long, exhausting journey through the dunes of the Dry Sea. The Camel's Back is the perfect stop for newcomers. But they are free to visit any of the other areas first if they wish.

Town Features

► **Events.** Check for **Random Events** each time a new area is visited. There is a 4-in-6 chance for an event.

► **Climate.** The Dry Sea is always hot. Lack of proper attire is sure to cause some skin damage. Nights at the camel's oasis are fresh. A well-deserved delight.

► **Servants.** People under indentured servitude are easy to spot. They wear colored armbands. The colors help distinguish them and know their stations. Yellow, green, and red are for regular servants, with poor skills. Orange is used for servant warriors or gladiators. Purple is worn by the most skilled and valuable servants.

► **Religion.** Most of the denizens of the Dry Sea are followers of Ord, the unbending keeper of secrets. He brings equilibrium to their lives and hearts.

RANDOM EVENTS

d8	Details
1	While the characters move from one area to another, a young man on a camel rushes by them. A character at random takes 1d8 damage after being pushed and trampled by the inexperienced rider. It is all an accident, the trainee's tutor is right behind him. He apologizes.
2	An earthquake makes everyone stop in their tracks and stop talking mid-sentence. The seismic activity lasts a few seconds. As per the locals, this is the third time this occurs in a week. But the strange thing is that earthquakes were nonexistent in the Dry Sea (DC 12 INT). Some buildings are starting to show fissures and damage. It is imperative to investigate and find a solution.
3	The characters and some of the townsfolk witness a star falling from the sky. The locals claim this is considered a horrible omen in their culture and belief system.
4	A man approaches the characters and offers his camel for sale. It is a strong, healthy beast. He says the camel is trained for the local races, in case they wish to compete.
5	A caravan with many trade goods was supposed to arrive two nights ago. But they never made it. This is just yet another sign that something may be going on indeed.
6	Two gladiators have gone mad. They are enraged, out of their minds. Their uncontrollable fury can only be quenched by fighting. The characters may use lethal force or find a way to knock them out. Regardless of their choice, they learn after the attack the warriors were under the effects of a drug that makes people behave that way. Saving them earns the heroes a luck token .
7	Black smoke rises from the horizon. The heroes must walk for 15 minutes to see what causes it. As they come closer, they see wagons burning and blood everywhere. All the guards are slaughtered, faces down in the sand.
8	A pair of giant scorpions finds its way into town! The characters are right there to act on time, fortunately.

1. THE CAMEL'S BACK

The owner of this establishment is a bulky dwarf with a well-trimmed beard. His name is Boad, and he wears a straw hat that makes his head look like a mushroom.

The characters can get good food and rest here. If they ask about Princess Apricot, Boad says she is not here, but she can be found at the royal podium (area 4).

► **The Event.** The characters are not required to race (see **Getting Involved** below), and the heroes are free to abstain from the competition. They can bet good money, though. See **Camel Rally** for more details on this.



HOW TO PROCEED

THE CHARACTERS CAN meet people, ask around, and learn about the danger to come. Use the following pointers as the main events to consider while they are here:

► **Locals.** The heroes have a day to meet the locals before the race the morning after. They are expected to visit at least half of the numbered areas (see map).

► **Princess.** It does not matter if she invited them or not, the heroes may meet Princess Apricot and earn her favor if they compete and win to honor her royalty.

► **Race.** The main race. The heroes may or not participate in it. They can bet or just witness the events from their seats. Regardless of their choice, the race is interrupted on the last lap (see **Camel Rally** for more details).

2. CAMEL'S BLOCK

The characters may meet some of the camel riders, trainers, and other people in charge of the event's magic. There are a dozen people here. Consider the following NPCs when the characters approach to interact.

► **Dario and Louis.** Two of the most famous local camel riders. Dario is short and chubby while Louis is a bit taller and stringy. And, as if it were not enough for the funny-looking mustached duo, Dario wears only blue clothes but his brother prefers an all-white look.

► **Makem.** The best camel trainer in the Dry Sea. He supervises most of the operation, but he mainly checks on the camels' health condition and does tests for illegal substances on the riders' mounts before the races.

3. GENERAL SEATS

If the heroes were not invited by the princess (see **Adventure Hooks**), they must see the event seated here. Otherwise, they may accompany her at the royal podium.

4. ROYAL PODIUM

Individual chairs with purple velvet flank two throne-like seats. The luxurious furniture, the servants with purple armbands, and the smell of incense, opium, and exotic fragrances are all signs of Dry Sea royalty.

Princess Apricot is surrounded by more than a dozen people. Two **reavers** and one **mage** are her bodyguards. But they are decoys. Her real guards are the four **assassins** dressed as servants. They serve water, hand-feed her, and even massage her pale feet. But they are ready to take down anyone who poses a threat to her.

► **Royal Favor.** If Princess Apricot brought the characters to the Dry Sea, she feels responsible for their well-being. One of her **reavers** accompanies the heroes after the race's interruption (see **The First Race** below).

5. WAREHOUSE

If the characters come here, they witness a group of four **bandits** sneaking into the place to steal stuff. If confronted, the thieves offer to share half their loot if the characters stay silent about the crime (see below).

► **Treasure (1 XP).** A leather pouch with 14 gp, and enough riding tools and gear to sell for 20 gp. If the heroes share the loot or keep it all they are caught and lose the Princess's favor in case they had it (see above).

6. ENTERTAINERS' CAMP

If the characters approach, they meet some of the local performers and entertainers. They are magicians, singers, and the locally-famous flame-eaters.

► **Kalitu.** A small man wearing spectacles. He is a famous bard and local singer. He performs during the breaks and he is most popular for his floating disk where he stands and sings while flying all around.

7. TRAINERS' CAMP AND TRAINING PENS

This area is reserved for camels and their trainers only. The characters are offered to set up camp here or anywhere in the vicinities the day they arrive.

8. CAMEL'S MIRAGE, THE LOCAL OASIS

The heart of Royal Camel's Arena. It earned its name because even to this day, it is not rare for a person to witness strange events occur before their eyes.

CAMEL RALLY

ONE OR MORE of the heroes may participate in the race. The competitors are ready. And a total of eight riders (characters included, if any) must complete five laps around the track and cross the finish line first to win.

► **Betting.** The characters may bet all the gold they want with the bookies, for the rider of their choosing. However, the races have been fixed for the last couple of years.

The race starts! Everyone grabs their seat and watches. However, the race is interrupted (see **The First Race**).

► **Undefeated Champion.** The current champion is Howser. A large, tall, bulky individual with a camel that is as monstrous as him. And despite the many suspicions Howser and his elephant camel pass the drug tests. Truth is, Howser and Makem work together, and their mafia includes the head of the betting committee. Howser is not present in the camel's block (area 2). He makes his first apparition when the race begins.

THE FIRST RACE

► **Race.** The race is a test of stamina and pure physical strength. Riders must pass a DC 12 STR test for the first lap. The DC of the test increases by 1 each of the following laps. First place goes to the rider that passes the DC with the largest difference. Howser passes all 5 checks with a 16. Meaning he is most likely never going to lose. This is because his camel is a laboratory monster.

► **Caught Red-Handed.** Accusing Howser in public earns nothing. He is a celebrity, loved by many. The heroes must outsmart him and win the race. They can even cheat but not get caught. Howser's anger makes him confess in a fit of stupidity (see **The Rematch**).

► **Interruption.** On the fifth lap, a massive earthquake occurs. The ground opens and undead creatures emerge and attack the living. Local guards fight for their lives with some of the enemies. The characters must fight four **skeletons**, three **ghasts**, and two **wights**. No one knows what just happened. The Princess is fine but many lose their lives in the confusion (see **The Aftermath** below).



NOMAD CAMP

A good, experienced traveler has no fixed plans. And they are not intent on arriving. Their destination shall present itself at the right time.

Dry Sea Nomads' Saying

The nomads' history goes back hundreds of years. They are indeed the true natives of the Dry Sea. The predecessors of their tribes can be tracked farther down in history than any of the towns or settlements in the desert. Sadly, not everyone agrees on this, and this makes some people regard the nomadic tribes as foreigners or ill-minded invaders.

THE AFTERMATH

A COUPLE OF hours after the undead appear, a group of six nomads arrives in the arena. They bring medicine and offer their help to treat the injured or bury the dead.

The nomads say this event was no coincidence or random tragedy. These horrible things shall continue if the spirits of the Valley of Tombs are not appeased. If the natives contacted the characters via their dreams (see **Adventure Hooks**), two nomad scouts become their guides and escort the heroes to the nomad camp. Otherwise, the nomads apologize saying they must stay to help.

GETTING THERE

TRAVELING THE DRY Sea is not easy even for the experienced traveler. The characters must cross a few miles of dunes before finding the nomad camp (DC 14 WIS). Failing this check means they are lost. They stumble upon a pack of six barbarian **gnolls**. The hyenas may be persuaded to leave in peace with enough food or gold.

The characters have no trouble entering the camp armed if they are being escorted. Otherwise, four warriors ask them to leave their weapons before going in.

Area Features

► **Senses.** The camp has a strong incense and herbal scent. The smell of stew from a boiling pot and smoked leaves. All of it is accompanied by the sound of drums.

► **Disposition.** The nomads are jumpy and on the edge if the characters are unknown to them. If they were summoned here, the nomads treat them like family.

1. CAMP'S ENTRANCE

This is one of the many places the nomads revisit. The rock formation forms a gulf of sand. The heroes must climb the 10-foot-high steep of sand to see the rest.

TIDDAKAR

IN THE TIME the characters spend here, the nomads share their theories and suspicions. They reveal to the heroes that one of their people, a shaman named Tiddakar, abandoned the ways of their tribe months ago.

Since he left, strange things have occurred in the Dry Sea. The red moon, the earthquakes, the random attacks on caravans and travelers. The nomads cannot help but think that Tiddakar must be connected with this.

They also tell the heroes that Tiddakar must be drawing power and causing mayhem from the Valley of Tombs. They believe the shaman's powerful connection with the dead allows him to cause all these phenomena.

2. THE CAMPSITE

The nomads of the Dry Sea are experts at what they do. They have adapted to life in the merciless desert and they can pick up and make their camp in less than a day.

► **Friends.** If the characters were escorted here, a dozen nomads bathe them in gifts: tribal clothing to protect their skin from the sun, drinks to refresh themselves after their journey, and a palanquin is brought to whoever wishes to rest their legs on their way to their leader.

► **Strangers.** The characters and the nomads meet for the first time. They are treated with the utmost respect but with reserve. The characters are required to leave their weapons at the entrance (see **Area Features**).

3. A RITE OF PASSAGE

Five nomads motivate a young woman. She is about to drink a smelly, viscous concoction from a clay bowl. She does it in one gulp, and then one of her friends approaches a small lizard to her nose. The reptile disappears through her nostril, and she faints.

► **Rite of Passage.** The nomads see the heroes watching and invite them to approach. If the characters were escorted here by the nomad scouts, and if they accepted their gifts (area 2), the nomads consider it a great insult if they refuse to share in their tradition. It does not matter if the heroes and the nomads have met before. Refusing to share this rite is seen as an insult. The heroes must go through it to earn their friendship, or to keep it.



► **Process.** If any of the characters accept, they must drink the potion and allow the lizard to enter their heads (DC 14 CON). On a fail, the patient falls unconscious and experiences the astral journey in their sleep. On a success, they stay awake but in a deep, unbreakable trance. Reaching this state is a great sign of self-control. The effect lasts for 1 hour, and it earns them a **luck token**.

4. NOMAD WARRIORS

The nomads watch the characters' every move. If they accept their rite of passage (see above), they earn the warriors' respect. Three nomad fighters (**thugs**) offer to join them and help them find the Valley of Tombs.

5. THE AUGURY READER

The characters may visit the fortune-teller only if at least one of them accepted their tradition with the lizard.

► **Crystal Ball.** The shaman offers her abilities to the heroes. They may ask her three questions and she shall answer with "weal" or "woe". Just like the *Augury* spell, 3 times. The shaman is too tired to continue after this.

6. LEADER'S HUT.

The characters are only allowed to enter this hut if they leave tribute as a sign of respect. They cannot speak with the leader of the nomads directly unless he addresses them first. A dozen warriors guard him at all times.

► **Blessing.** If one or more of the characters experienced the tribe's rite of passage (see area 3) without passing out, the tribe leader gives them a gift. With fruit-made paint, he draws a tribal sign on their forehead, makes a reverence, and hands them a *staff of healing*.

DEVELOPMENT

THE NOMADS BELIEVE in prophecies. They trust the characters shall fulfill their roles in this chapter of life. The nomads inform the heroes that the Valley of Tombs is the ancient resting place for lesser deities but it was forgotten generations ago. They hold no proof, but they suspect that Tiddakar, a former tribe leader, is somehow responsible for all the chaos. The characters must hurry and find the Valley of Tombs before things get worse.

VALLEY OF TOMBS

You do not understand. We are the ones at fault. These lesser deities deserve to be known! And I'll make sure they walk on the sands among us once more!

Tiddakar

Historians and sages know little about this place. The Dry Sea is a hard place to find, a harder place to live in, and one of the hardest places to travel at. Hundreds of years ago, when the towns and settlements of the desert were different, and when some of the nomad tribes still venerated these lesser gods, the Valley of Tombs was beautiful.

But people stopped coming after a decade-long war. Little by little, the prayers and faith facts about these lesser gods were forgotten. These deities were forsaken to remain unknown and in complete darkness forever.

TIDDAKAR'S RESOLVE

THE NOMAD ROGUE, a misfit even among his own. Tiddakar was never the same after his rite of passage. He managed to keep his composure and did not faint when the lizard went through his nose. Something that very few accomplish. But the ordeal changed him.

He realized the nomadic tribes have forgotten their true ways. The lesser gods are their true guides and protectors. And he has made it his life's quest to take over the Dry Sea and renew the power of these long-gone deities. From the Valley of Tombs, he has amassed enough power to raise the dead from the graves, summon them, change the color of the moon, and control the land...

RANDOM EVENTS

d6 Details

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | An earthquake makes the characters lose their balance (DC 14 DEX). Inside a building, a random character takes 1d6 damage. Additionally, Ord's Thinker (area 9) is sucked into the earth and destroyed entirely. |
| 2 | Great winds hit the valley and the characters' visibility is reduced by half while they are outside (area 1). This weather effect lasts until the end of the adventure. |
| 3 | A random character steps on shifting sands (DC 13 STR). On a fail, half their body is buried and they are still sinking. Failing by 5 or more means their head is covered and they start to drown. Friends can help them out. |
| 4 | A locust swarm attacks the characters until slain. |
| 5 | Three giant scorpions summoned by Tiddakar appear near the heroes and attack. They chase them until slain. |
| 6 | The characters are attacked by a small horde of sixteen skeletons . The relentless dead fight until slain. |

Area Features

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every two **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Evil Bolstering.** All undead creatures have advantage on checks versus *turn undead* and *rebuke unholy*.

► **Underground Niches.** Three buildings (areas 3, 5, and 10) have descending stairs. Nothing but dust, spider webs, funerary niches, and decorative plinths lie below. There is nothing of value. If the heroes still investigate, they find tracks of the undead that came from there.

SET-UP

THE CHARACTERS MUST visit the Chapel of Enlightenment (area 3) to understand what to do in the four tombs that pertain to the lesser deities (areas 5, 7, 8, and 10). They have no way to know this. But hints about going to area 3 are found in each of the deities' tombs.

1. THE VALLEY

The place seems abandoned and empty when the characters arrive. But they realize they are in the right place when they approach and hear a voice in their heads:

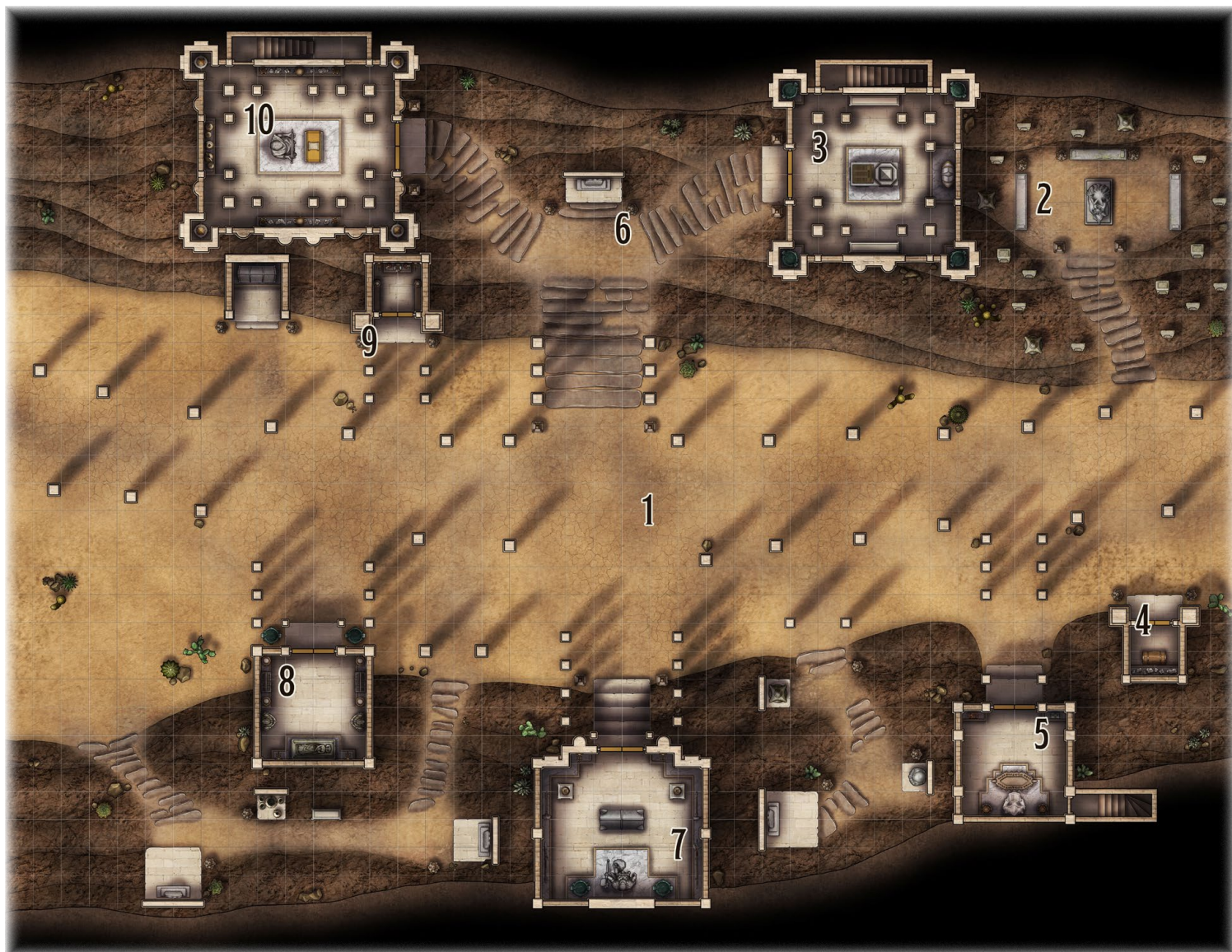
"No one can stop me now. I am the power of a thousand storms, the might of the wind, and the resilience of a mountain. This is your last day, you cur."

Tiddakar remains hidden after his message. If the nomads are present, they draw their weapons. They look around trying to spot where the voice comes from.

► **Welcome.** Right after the welcoming speech, a group of six **skeletons**, and six **zombies** come out of the buildings and attack. The skeletons remain at a distance to attack with bows while the zombies lunge forward.

2. STATUE OF THE GATHERER

This is "*The Gatherer*", a neutral celestial figure. A harvester of souls with no power to judge (DC 16 INT). Prayers are engraved on the stone slabs beside it. However, fragments of Ord and Gede's teachings are included too. They are depicted as guides of four lesser deities: the Sage Reader, the Warrior King, the Sleeping Lady, and the Holy Paladin. After their deeds in life, hundreds of years ago, their remains were buried in the Dry Sea.



3. CHAPEL OF ENLIGHTENMENT

This building contains important lore. The characters may spend one **crawling round** reading the inscriptions on the walls, columns, and the central plate. But they are attacked by a **wraith** before they finish.

The characters learn the names of the lesser deities buried in the tombs. They read about their deeds in life. And how this place was meant to be remembered. Their tombs were supposed to mean something to others.

► **Vision.** Once the wraith has been defeated, the former guides of the lesser gods, Ord and Gede, send a message through a vision: In it, a foul spirit corrupts each of the deities' tombs. They must be cleansed away.

4. GEDE'S TRIBUTE

This area is locked (DC 15 DEX). The wooden chest contains leather pouches with 389 sp. There are several tools, silverware pieces, figurines, and other mundane items worth 74 gp (5 XP). Plus, there are two *immovable rods*, a *pearl of power*, and a *tome of hadebe*.

5. TOMB OF THE SAGE READER

The characters feel strong auras coming from the two chained tomes with Ord and Gede's teachings. Before they act, three **imps** and two **barbed devils** materialize in the room. A red moon appears in the sky when the characters come out of this building after the fight. The desert dunes and the tombs are painted crimson red.

6. GRAVESTONE OF IMMORTALS

This slab has a long inscription with an ancient prayer on behalf of the four forgotten gods. The characters are likely to see this before going into the Chapel of Enlightenment (area 3). Pronouncing this prayer within any of the tombs grants a **luck token**. This occurs only once.

7. TOMB OF THE WARRIOR KING

The characters must defeat four **wights** inside this chamber. The wights wield ghostly versions of the weapons resting on the walls. The sky is covered in black clouds when the characters emerge from this building after the battle. Gray and white ashes start to fall from above.

8. TOMB OF THE SLEEPING LADY

The two statues are **gargoyles**. One of the iron chests is a **mimic**. A huge wall of sand covers the entire valley when the characters defeat the enemies.

9. ORD'S THINKER

In case the heroes find time to think, spending a crawling round meditating here grants a **luck token**.

10. TOMB OF THE HOLY PALADIN

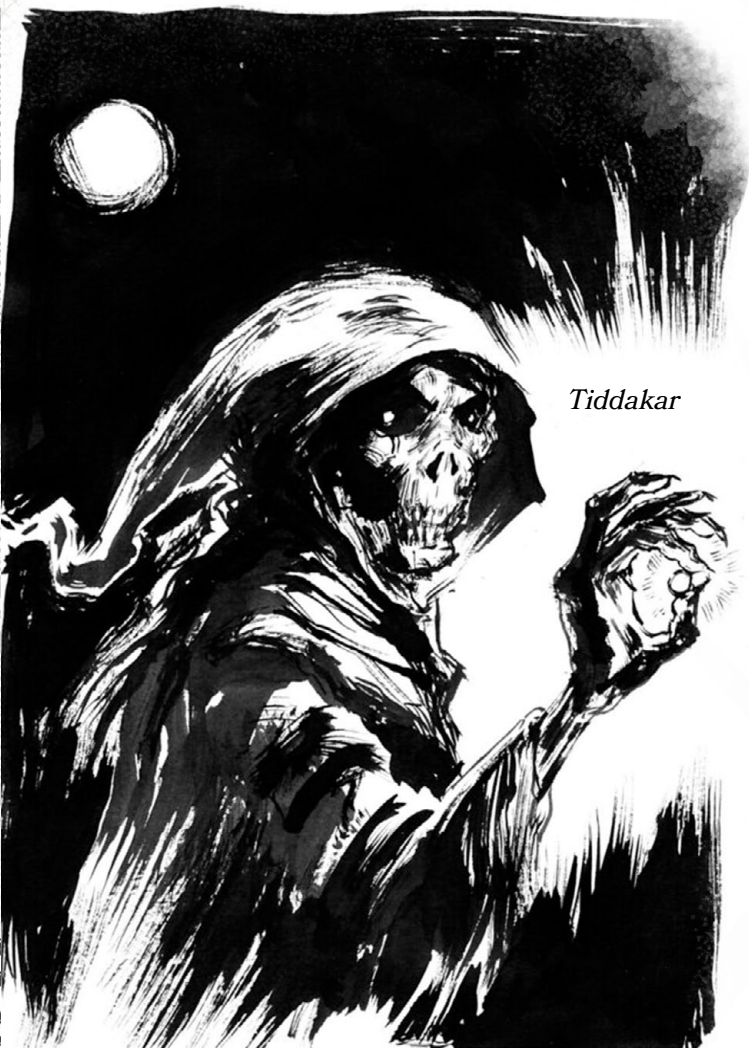
The characters can explore the area freely and nothing happens. When the characters lower their guard and decide to leave, the doors close, and one **wraith** and five **shadows** attempt to ambush the living (DC 14 WIS). A fail means the enemies have a surprise round.

CONFRONTATION

AFTER THE CHARACTERS visit all tombs and defeat the guardians there, they must confront Tiddakar outside. The valley will never be safe while the nomad rogue lives.

*"Nothing you've done has accomplished anything.
You cannot stop the rebirth of these forgotten gods!"*

► **Tactics.** The heroes find **Tiddakar** accompanied by one **ghast** and two **hell hounds**. The red moon, the falling ash, and the sandstorm make him look unbeatable.



Tiddakar

TIDDAKAR

A cunning, sorcerous shaman demon. Corruption has spread all over his body. The lack of a nose and the deep eye sockets are evidence of dealings with evil.

AC 12, **HP** 28, **ATK** 1 shadow blade (near) +5 1d8 or 1 spell +5, **MV** near, **S** +1, **D** +2, **C** +1, **I** +1, **W** +1, **Ch** +2, **AL** C, **LV** 6

Vanish (CHA Spell). Become invisible for 1d4 rounds.

Sandstorm (CHA Spell). DC 13. All within near-sized cube extending from Tiddakar 3d6 damage.

Mirage (CHA Spell). DC 14. Focus. All enemies within near of Tiddakar have disadvantage on spellcasting checks for the duration.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their deeds.

TIDDAKAR IS DEFEATED

The characters defeat their enemies and rid the Valley of Tombs of Tiddakar and his deluded ambitions. Regardless of their reason to be here (see **Adventure Hooks**), the nomads and all the people in the Dry Sea are thankful to the heroes, Princess Apricot too. They may return on time to Royal Camel's Arena for a lavish celebration day or the main race rematch (see **The Rematch**).

FAILURE

The characters are overwhelmed by their enemies and must flee. They are defeated. Tiddakar performs a ritual that brings back the four forgotten gods from the dead. However, they are but corrupted versions of their former selves, ready to spread evil in the land of the living and betray everything that Ord and Gede once taught them.

THE REMATCH

THE CHARACTERS ARE back and are local heroes. Everyone buys them drinks or meets them. If they participate in the race, all the people in Royal Camels' Arena hope they win. They still must compete against Howser and his monstrous camel, though (see **The First Race**).

The characters must win cleanly or find a way to outsmart the cheating rider. If he loses the race, Howser cannot control his anger and sourly says "*Makem, what is this?! I should win like I always do. You made sure of that with my marvelous mount, did you not?*"

► **Friends and Enemies.** Princess Apricot wants to know who fixed the races for almost three years. But she needs help finding out who Howser's benefactor truly is. Nevertheless, that is an adventure for another day...

TAXIDERMISTRY NIGHTMARE

People at large fear the monsters and strange creatures that lurk in the dark caverns and the Shadowdark below. They tell legends about them, fear them, and even give them a place in their nightmares. But, contrary to what many believe, true evil can be found nearby, even behind a neighbor's hypocritical smile. One must only look closely.

TERROR IN ARLINGTON

IN THIS ADVENTURE, a terrible threat assails the population of a large town, Arlington. For two weeks now, people and livestock have gone missing. But the worst is that strange, aggressive skeletons and patchwork zombies meander into town at night and attack any living creature they encounter with terrible ferocity.

Father Darlens inspected the remains of the defeated undead and declared that these abominations have been tampered with. Their body parts do not all belong to the same creature. Some of them are mismatched; deformities noticed at a glance. The townsfolk are fearful.

The culprit is Carl, the taxidermist and mortician. Carl lives on the outskirts of town. Months ago, Carl bought a necromancy tome from an obscure salesman. The arcane knowledge within allowed him to unleash his grim-mest fantasies about death. He must be stopped.

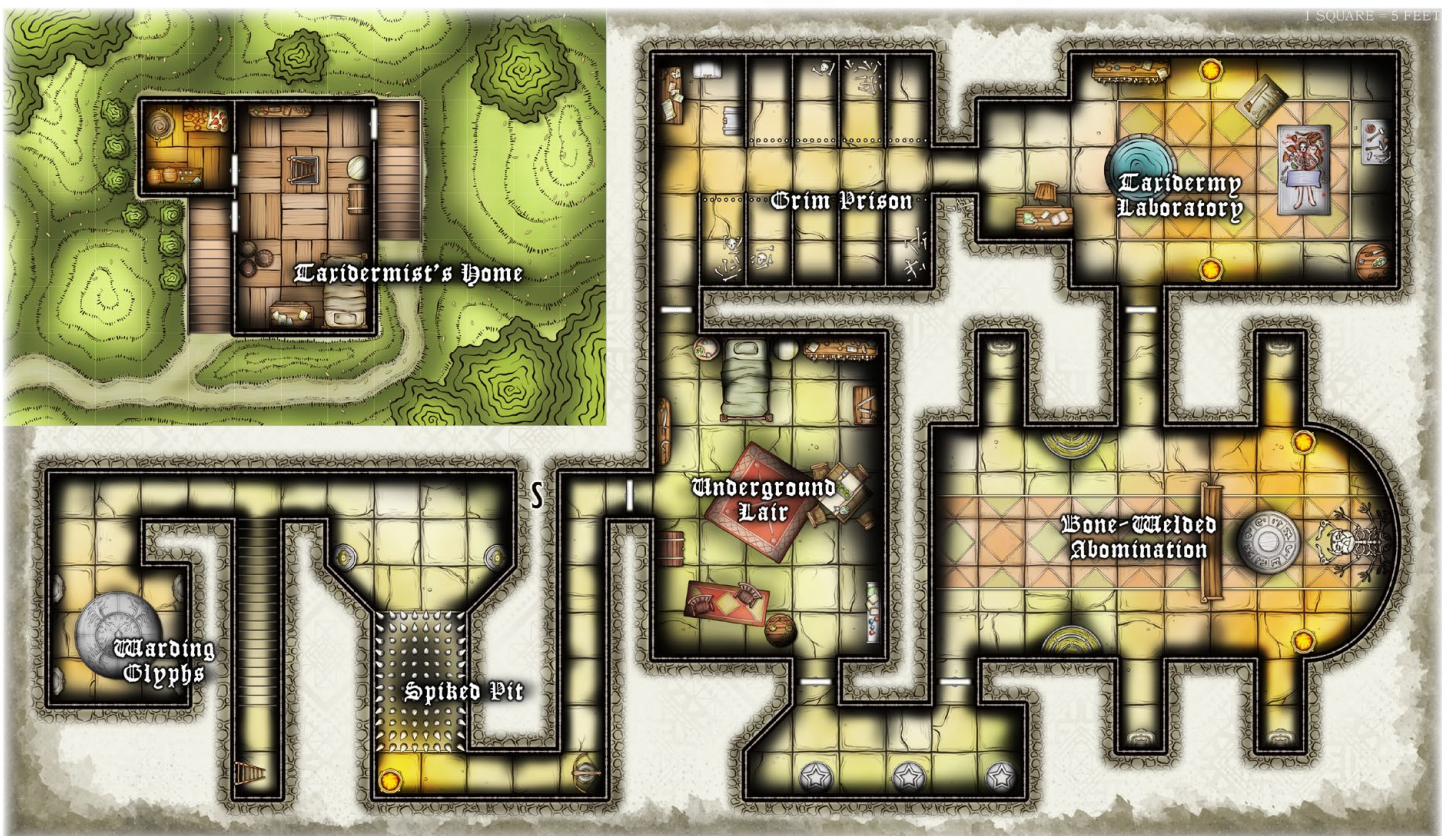
ADVENTURE HOOKS

For Faith. Father Darlens summons the characters and explains the situation. He claims that the locals already suspect the taxidermist after he missed several town meetings about the current problem. (30 gp, 3 XP).

Hunters. A devout priest in the party has a premonition about an undead-filled dungeon. They feel a compulsion to clear this place of evil and bring the culprit to justice. This preternatural sense directs them to the taxidermist's home outside of Arlington (0 XP).

RUMORS

d6	Details
1	A dozen people and twice as many farm animals have gone missing in recent weeks. People are desperate.
2	People claim that Carl, the taxidermist, is a dour, fellow. A miscreant who is only put up with for his useful trade.
3	People recall a strange hooded salesman who came by Arlington four months ago. He sold strange concoctions and moth-eaten tomes. Carl bought a tome from him.
4	Folks claim that Carl becomes strangely enthusiastic when a corpse arrives for preparation and embalming.
5	Carl must have a workshop in his basement; no one has seen any embalming tools or implements in his home.
6	The innkeeper recalls that Carl has mentioned many times how he wished he could learn magic, when drunk.



Level 1 Adventure

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 3 crawling rounds and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas have braziers with permanent **light** spells. The undead denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Evil Bolstering.** All undead creatures have advantage on checks versus **turn undead** and **rebuke unholy**.

RANDOM EVENTS

d4 Details

- Four mismatched **skeletons** approach with unsure footing and an irregular gait (half base speed).
- Four farmers with pitchforks (**peasants**) arrive at the house looking to arrest Carl. They join the party and fight alongside it. They have disadvantage on **Morale** checks.
- Two patchwork **zombies** approach from afar. The zombies charge at the party as soon as they see them.
- Jonah, one of the missing townfolk approaches the characters and begs for help. Jonah claims Carl dissected the other people and animals and reassembled them.

TAXIDERMIST'S HOME

The taxidermist's home in the countryside looks unsuspecting, if a little unkempt. The door stands ajar; countless footprints come and go from the house.

► **The Tracks.** Numerous tracks come and go from the main door. Some tracks reveal that some people were forcefully dragged into the home (DC 14 WIS check).

► **The House.** An open trapdoor leads down into the taxidermist's dungeon. Above, the house appears abandoned. The food in the larder is half rotten. There is nothing of value in the wooden containers and cupboards.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** Pushing a button reveals that the chest has a false bottom (DC 14 WIS check). There are 8 gp, 35 sp, and a *potion of healing* in the container.



WARDING GLYPHS

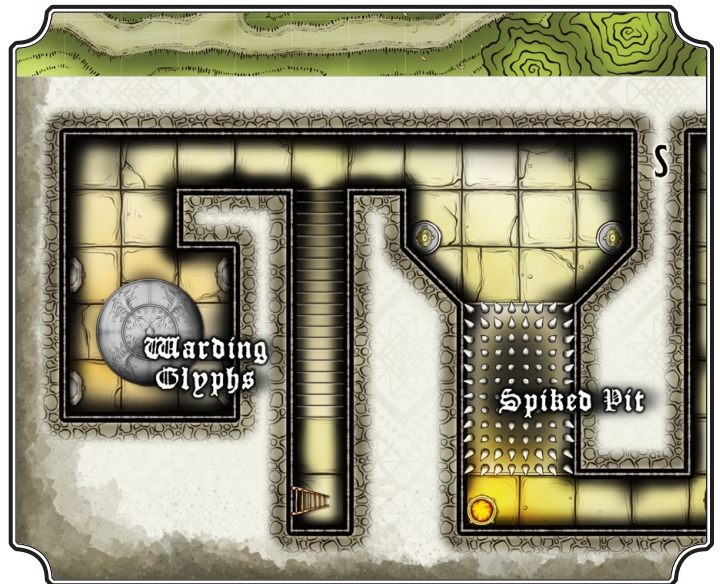
The trapdoor leads down into a narrow hallway with a stairway that descends 20 feet further. To the west, there is a chamber with a magic circle that Carl created.

Four standing sarcophagi line the walls of this small chamber. A one-foot-tall, stone, rune-scribed, glimmering circle ebbs arcane threads in the darkness.

After purchasing the necromancy tome, Carl sculpted this summoning circle and used it to craft some arcane implements and to cast powerful necromancy spells.

► **The Circle.** A wizard identifies the circle runes as those of occult necromancy incantations. They bind the soul to a carcass and use it to power the spell (DC 15 INT check). Something frowned upon by most mages.

► **Guardians.** Interacting with the circle causes the sarcophagi lids to open. Four ravenous **zombies** emerge from the enclosures and attack the characters.



SPIKED PIT

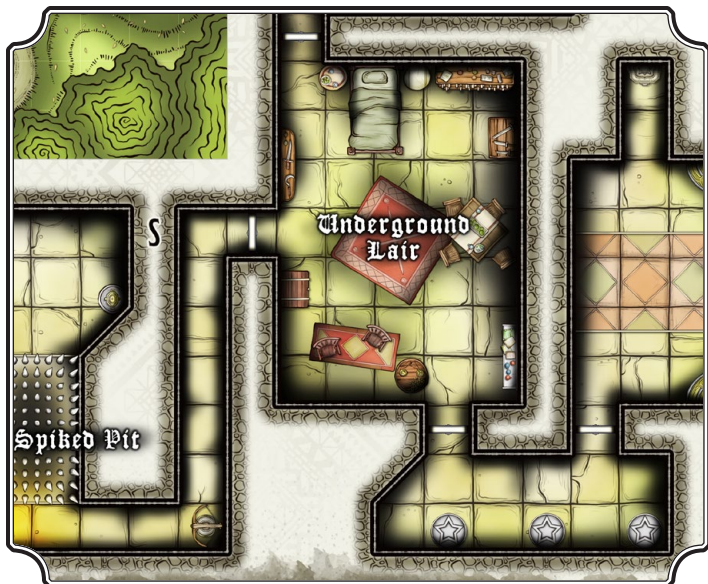
The hallway is broken by a 5-foot-deep spiked pit. Two gilded vases on plinths stand beside the pit.

► **The Pit.** Jumping across 15 feet is difficult (DC 16 STR). On a fail, the character takes 2d6 damage and may become impaled (2-in-6 chance). If impaled, they require help from another person to exit the pit.

► **The Shadows.** If a character falls into the pit, two **shadows** emerge from the vases and attack. The opportunistic shadows prioritize whoever is down in the pit.

► **Automated Crossbow.** Whoever crosses first to the south side of the pit triggers the clockwork contraption. They take 2d6 damage from a bolt (DC 14 DEX for half).

► **Secret Door.** A button reveals a passageway that bypasses the pit and crossbow (DC 15 WIS, see map).



UNDERGROUND LAIR

Carl's real home. The chamber contains a bed, wooden shelves and chests, a dining table, and two armchairs. There is food on the table and a still-warm cup of tea.

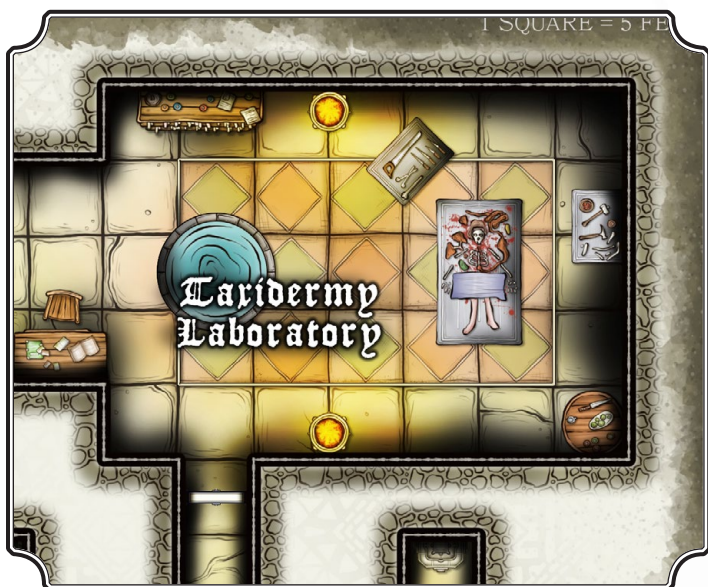
► **Treasure (1 XP).** There is a metal safe-box under the bed (DC 14 DEX to open). It contains 94 sp.

GRIM PRISON

Narrow wall sections divide this chamber into ten cells with iron railings and an alcove with a desk.

Carl and his undead minions have dragged people from Arlington's surroundings into these cells in the past few weeks. The poor folks spent their last days here waiting for the mortician to dissect them and use their body parts to craft ineffable, nonliving abominations.

► **Prisoner.** Unless he appeared in Random Event 4, Jonah (**peasant**) struggles to pick the lock of his cell with a piece of splintered bone. He begs the party for help.

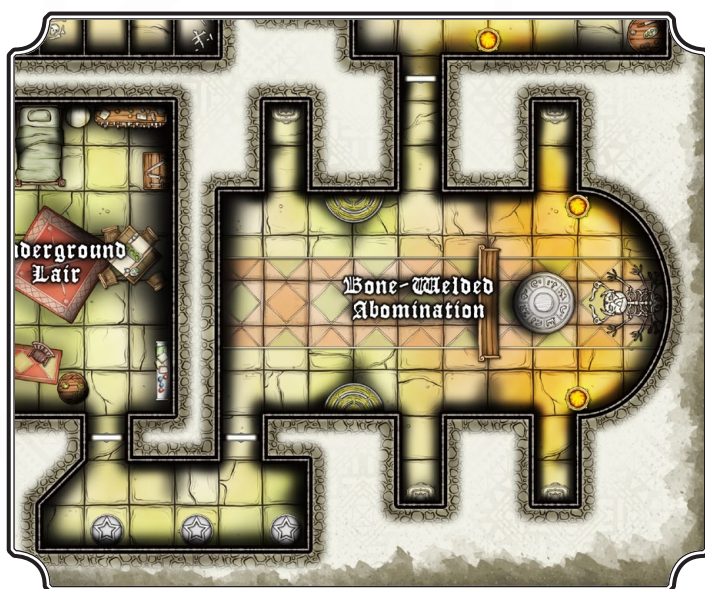


TAXIDERMY LABORATORY

A grim spectacle of taxidermy and torture is on display on the metal operating table. The dissected, disemboweled corpse's eyes move around in panic.

Carl used necromancy to dissect the person on the table and keep them conscious during the process. The person has become deranged by the baleful operation. A swift death would be a blessing. A healing spell such as *restoration* may still aid this person but the mental consequences of this ordeal may take a lifetime to heal.

► **The Tome.** The leather-bound, moth-eaten book on the table is the one that Carl bought months ago. It contains foul arcane secrets that are best not known. Studying the contents of this book may well turn a well-intentioned wizard into a foul, crazed-eyed necromancer.



BONE-WELDED ABOMINATION

The bones of dozens of beings have been assembled into a horse-sized, six-footed behemoth with large, insect-like mandibles. The wretched entity stands at the far side of a lavish, chapel-like, domed chamber.

Carl (**cultist**), the culprit of all calamities stands by the bone-welded abomination. He is surprised by the characters' intrusion but happy to see more potential subjects for his terrible experiments. Carl promptly orders the large skeleton to attack the characters at once. Carl is a necromancy apprentice and knows no spells that can aid him in this encounter. He is a terrible individual willing to dispose of others to further his knowledge and skills.

► **Bone-Welded Abomination.** Use the stats for the **gorilla** but keep the skeleton's **Undead** ability.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** Carl carries an *obsidian witchknife* which came tucked in the necromancy tome. He performed terrible dissections with it in the taxidermy lab.

ARTHURIAN ADVERSARIES

QUESTING BEAST

Mid-level Monster by Kevin Helock

Qhe sound of baying hounds is a familiar one to those who reside on the boundaries between humanoid civilization and the untamed wilderness of the forest. Most of the time this din is the result of hunting parties of human nobility, who use great packs of hounds to pursue and wear down all manner of creatures for sport. However, those well-versed in monster lore know that a creature called a questing beast can also be the source of the sound. Elusive and nomadic, this creature prowls dense woodland, mimicking the sound of a hunting party to frighten away the myriad creatures that came to fear humanity and thus deter any would-be challengers to its temporary home.

► **Crossbred Monstrosity.** A questing beast is as frightening to behold as it is confusing to look at. No one knows where the first questing beast came from, but they are a mixture of pieces of forest-dwelling animals with the head and neck of a snake, the torso of a leopard, the abdomen of a lion, and the legs of a deer. This combination makes the beast as swift and agile as it is strong and muscular, while its venomous fangs are a powerful weapon against the few creatures that dare challenge it.

► **Compulsive Bond.** A questing beast is accustomed to being feared. It mercilessly attacks creatures that run away from it. Creatures that express indifference to it, however, enthrall the beast with curiosity, causing it to follow and observe them from a distance. When a creature follows it without fear, a questing beast often forms a strange bond with them and begins to be dependent on their attention. It flees such a creature, but instead of completely eluding them, it turns the chase into something of a game, seeking to stay just ahead of its pursuer and keep them following as long as possible. Whenever the creature begins to lose interest, the questing beast leaves signs of its presence for them to find, or else appears to them at a distance to instigate a continued chase. If the creature completely loses interest in it, the questing beast is often so distraught that it falls into a deep sadness that can leave it sick for weeks on end or completely take away its will to live. So powerful is the bond that a questing beast forms with its pursuer that entire lineages of humans have made it their family mission to chase one, some out of anger at the long-lived beast's penchant for egging them on. But a few others do this out of pity at the beast's reliance on them.

QUESTING BEAST

An abomination to the regular eye. The neck and head of a slithering snake, a strong feline torso, and muscled deer legs. Something mesmerizing about it...

AC 14, **HP** 26, **ATK** 1 bite +6 (2d6 + poison) and 1 hooves +6 (1d8), **MV** near, **S** +4, **D** +2, **C** +2, **I** -1, **W** +2, **Ch** -1, **AL** C, **LV** 5

Keen Senses. The questing beast has advantage on Wisdom checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Poison. Targets of the Bite attack also take 2d10 poison damage (DC16 CON check for half).

Questing Cry. Each creature of the questing beast's choice that is within 120 feet of the questing beast and can hear it must succeed on a DC 13 WIS check or become frightened for 1 minute. If the check fails by 5 or more, the creature is instead charmed. While charmed in this way, a creature does anything in its power to protect the questing beast. A creature can repeat the check at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's check is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to this ability for the next 24 hours.



THE GREEN KNIGHT

High-level Monster by Kevin Helock

Though their curious and playful nature often motivates them to interact with humanoids from the material plane, the archfey are also wary of such meetings. In part, this is due to the threat that a powerful enough adventurer could pose to them, but more often they simply fear having their time wasted by boorish mortals lacking in joy, humor, and virtue. To combat this problem, the archfey created green knights, elite servants and guardians of the Seelie Court. Vested with great power, they are tasked with testing heroes to determine whether they are worthy of an audience with the Court—or even the right to live at all.

► **Tests of Many Faces.** In their true form, a green knight resembles a humanoid of imposing proportions whose armor has melded with the rest of their body in a mixture of elements evoking nature. They might have skin of bark or stone, hair of roots or flowing water, and eyes of crackling fire or shimmering moonlight. In this form, they challenge would-be heroes to gauge their attitude and skill, resorting to insults or implied threats if their challenges are not accepted but retreating from a battle before either party is fatally wounded. Later, they disguise themselves through magic to administer further tests, creating situations that encourage their subjects to abandon morals, break vows, and betray allies. While clever, their disguises often leave telltale signs of the knight's fey nature, from abnormally bushy beards to exceptionally rosy cheeks. Their cover is important for them. If a green knight believes its current disguise has been seen through, it shall abandon its current test and prepare a new, more elaborate one for later.

► **Justice and Growth.** When a green knight is satisfied with the results of its tests, it makes its purpose known, then assists its hero in finding the Seelie Court and recommends them for magical boons. If a hero is found to be evil beyond reasonable hope of redemption, the knight will not hesitate to take their life, while those heroes found lacking but not evil are simply barred entry to the Seelie Court. Normally, this judgment marks the end of the green knight's business; however, should it find a hero of great skill and virtue who nonetheless falls short of worthiness in some critical way, it may make it a personal mission to help their subject overcome their flaw. Once it has made this decision, the knight escalates the dangers and demands of its tests to push the hero to their absolute limits. Faced with such monumental challenges, a hero who is stubborn in their ways will surely die, while those willing to change even in the face of death earn the respect and protection of their fey observer, who will reward them richly for their success.

THE GREEN KNIGHT

A majestic knight clad in light green armor. Tall and muscled, but at the same time subtle and delicate.

AC 16 (plate), **HP** 44, **ATK** 3 greataxe +7 (1d12), **MV** near, **S** +4, **D** +1, **C** +3, **I** +0, **W** +3, **Ch** +4, **AL** L, **LV** 10

Magic Resistance. The green knight has advantage on checks against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The green knight's weapon attacks are magical.

Beheading Game. When critically hit by a melee attack with a slashing weapon, the green knight takes no damage and instead loses its head, which falls in a randomly determined space within 5 feet of it and facing a random direction. The green knight can survive and act normally in this state but is blind to any creatures not in its head's field of view. The green knight can reattach its head using an action while within 5 feet of it.

Punish Cowardice. Whenever a creature within 15 feet attempts to move further away from the knight, the green knight can force it to make a DC 14 CHA check, rolling with Disadvantage if the green knight's head is no longer attached to its body. On a fail, the creature takes 3d6 psychic damage and becomes frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the check at the end of each of its turns to end this effect.

Detect Thoughts (WIS Spell). DC 12. The knight perceives the target's immediate thoughts.

Illusion (WIS Spell). Self. DC 13. The knight creates a convincing visible and audible illusion that fills up to a near-sized cube in range.

Misty Step (WIS Spell). Self. DC 12. Teleport within near distance.



Tomb of the Opal King

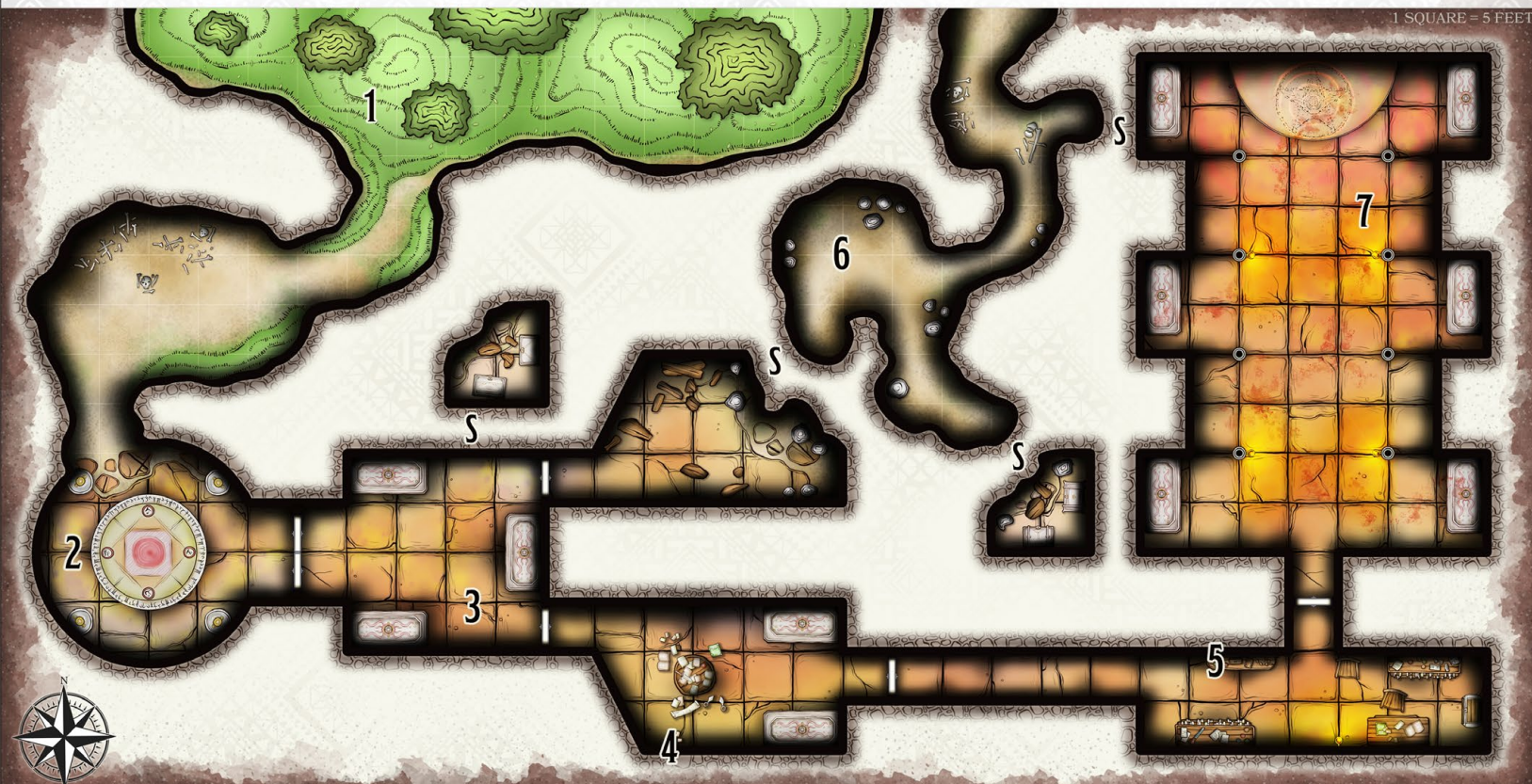


cholars and elves still remember the ancient goblinoid kingdoms. Their glory and sophistication rivaled those of any culture that came after them. Goblin mages could muster the elemental forces from the veins of the earth to create marvels of engineering and mighty magical weaponry. Their rich culture dabbled in philosophy, written history, and the arts. Alas, their unequaled mastery of weapon forging, strategy, and war spelled the goblins' demise. Like many of their brethren, a competitive compulsion to dominate others brought them to endlessly fight one another.

The last ruler of that powerful goblin kingdom was a witchcraft expert known as the Opal King. He carried a scepter that, legends claim, contained a cursed ruby with the power of consuming the souls slain by the king to give him extraordinary magical powers. The Opal King, consumed by greed and the desire to unify and rule all goblinoid tribes, waged war against all other chieftains and self-titled kings in the region. The war lasted for decades, it spilled torrents of blood of soldiers and goblin peasants. This wound was too deep; the goblin realms could not recover fast enough to drive away the human settlers arriving on longships. These human pioneers became the de-facto rulers. What was left of the goblin culture further split into smaller tribes and returned to their ancestral burrows under the surface and the varied mountain ranges. The Opal King was interred with his wretched scepter in a lavish tomb. The king's desperate spirit haunts this now-dilapidated dungeon. He exists in eternal anguish, despair, and regret of what was once within his reach.

1. An untrodden path traverses a sparsely forested region and leads to a rocky hill formation. A grand mausoleum once stood here. Careful explorers may unearth granite pieces of the ancient construction and identify the goblinoid runes still etched on the decrepit debris. An opening on the hillside leads to a bone-littered cavern. The remains belonged to past explorers who stumbled upon this place and tried to ransack the place. Unfortunately, they were slain by the spirit of the Opal King.
2. The circular chamber contains a one-foot-tall runic circle and four granite pedestals with gilded goblets on top. The magic circle glows faintly and still harbors an ember of the ancient magic that empowered it. A mage-user knows it both served as a teleportation circle and as a deadly trap that would burn any uninvited guests. Alas, the magic is too faint to work. The gilded goblets contain a faintly-magical, clear, water-like liquid that, when drunk, causes the throat and innards to burn like smoldering coals.

3. The chamber contains three copper-inlaid sarcophagi branded with the sigil of the ancient goblin mages. The mummified remains of three goblin mage-users lie within. They were once the Opal King's trusted advisors. Humans that walk into this chamber trigger the ancestral rage of the undead shamans. Three **shadows** emerge from the enclosures and attack. Pushing a button on the north wall causes a granite section to shift inward and reveal the secret vault behind. It contains two chests with 20 gp each.
4. The chamber contains a wooden table crammed with papers and scrolls and two copper-inlaid sarcophagi. The scrolls are a clever trap for curious individuals without respect for the ancient goblin traditions. A creature that interacts with any of the scrolls is instantly enraptured by them. They abandon all goals and motivations and become tied to the scroll. Only the strongest of restorative spells can undo this baleful charm spell.
5. The chamber contains a small archive/library. The loyalists who built the tomb and brought the Opal King and his honor guard's remains left this as enduring evidence of the might and deeds of the ancient goblin realm. It is unfortunate that a handful of goblins even know that this place exists. The books and scrolls contain slightly exaggerated recounts of the deeds of the Opal King's ascendancy. A set of obsidian, goblin armor is tucked in the wooden chest. It magically repels projectiles (3-in-6 chance).
6. After centuries of seismic activity and structural frailty, the tomb has partially collapsed and become connected to this network of natural tunnels. The caverns are inhabited by small critters and cavern reptiles. The meandering tunnels connect to the tomb's vault but the characters must first notice the collapsed tunnel that leads into it. The vault contains 100 gp, 2,500 sp, and the obscure Opal King's spellbook. A hidden tunnel connects to the northwest side of the main tomb, if the characters enter from here, they may catch the Opal King unaware of their presence.
7. Rows of pillars interspersed with lavishly-ornate sarcophagi lead to a raised niche. The ashen remains of the Opal King lie under a star-shaped inscription. When the characters arrive at this chamber, a mighty wind pushes back from the king's niche. Ethereal matter emerges from below and coalesces into the shadowy, ephemeral form of the **Opal King's Wraith**. The sarcophagi lids follow suit and slide aside to let the king's honor guard emerge from their slumber. The **goblin honor guards** wield curved scimitars, splintered shields, and tattered armor. The Opal King is resentful of the living; in particular of humans. The greatest danger is the king's fabled weapon, the Opal Scepter. A single touch of this opal-tipped artifact causes the immediate death of the victim. In addition, the target's soul becomes imprisoned in the opal for an eternity of despair.



STAIRWAY TO HELL

By Elven Tower and Alyssa Faden

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG



LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE

A LOW-LEVEL SHADOWDARK ADVENTURE ABOUT STOPPING A DEMON-SUMMONING MAGE

ADVENTURE PRIMER

We have foreseen it all. Summer Fort shall fall soon unless the demon is stopped. We shall all bask in cinders as hell takes over our dear motherland.

Chief Seer Damocles



Time and again, mages who dabble in obscure magic and incantations reach the limitations of the mortal body and their limited lifespan. Eager to learn more and achieve greater power in the least amount of time possible, the magic-users turn to shortcuts that are best left uncharted. These forbidden spells and binding rituals can bring forth and capture an entity from a different plane of existence. But with little to no option to harness its power. Thus, most attempts at this most-advanced type of magic end in regrettable failures and baleful invasions.

SEARCH FOR POWER

A **COMPETENT MAGE** named Raddaghark has recently made contact with a strange entity from hell, a demon. Raddaghark was once the apprentice of the court wizard and had a prominent future ahead of him. The crown even considered as the replacement of his tutor, once the old wizard retired from duty. Unfortunately, Raddaghark saw no glamor in such a life and resented his tutor for dedicating his life and magic to the benefit of the nepotist system of kings and queens. Raddaghark fled from his station and traveled the world looking for the power that his tutor could not offer him. After years of wandering the realm looking for answers, Raddaghark came across a well-hidden tome in an abandoned tomb. The book offered great power and an enhanced lifespan, provided the mage made contact with a demonic entity.

The spells collected a ruinous toll on Raddaghark's body but he was willing to risk it all for the everlasting rewards of success. The demon spoke to Raddaghark and gave him directions to a dilapidated ruin a two-day ride from Summer Fort. Within, the magician found a strange arcane artifact, a seemingly-endless, descending staircase that led to nowhere. The demon dictated to Raddaghark a complex ritual that would break an ancient seal and open the way to hell. Thus, the demon would be able to physically access the Material Plane and reward Raddaghark for his great efforts. Raddaghark is halfway through a complex incantation that allows Tragmuth, the demon, to have more influence over the region. Tragmuth, the Puppet-master bends the minds of mortals and makes them prone to instant aggressiveness and fits of rage. This has spelled doom for Summer Fort.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Level 2 Adventure

CALL FOR HELP

Summer Fort townsfolk grow restless, aggressive, and eager for blood-lust. Local authorities fear a revolution but are unable to pinpoint the reason for the populace's unrest. Only one faction has a clue about this, the seers. After hearing of the characters' past deeds, Seer Damocles sends an errand boy to summon them to the house of Worship in Summer Fort. From his visions, the seer knows that evil gathers by a ruined keep close to town. What causes the problem is anyone's guess (10 gp, 1 XP).

GLADIATORS

Rumor has it that the arena in Summer Fort has become the most popular spectacle in the last month with hundreds of participants and demand for great warriors. There is an open call for able fighters and veterans to participate in the upcoming games (10 gp, 1 XP).

RUMORS

d8	Details
1	A man was killed on the streets by a neighbor last night. Such a grim scenario happens twice a week. Unaffected civilians are worried about the increasing incidents.
2	At least a third of the population is affected by what can only be described as a will to fight and the impossibility to take an insult with stride. People are too jumpy.
3	People respect the seers' foreshadowing as they tend to be accurate the majority of the time, if only a little vague.
4	Spectacles at the arena are the most profitable business since so many people volunteer to participate.
5	People report a strange nightmare in which they climb down a spiral staircase that never ends while a puppet master controls each of their movements with strings.
6	The dilapidated ruin close to town was once the hideout of a perilous sect that was vanquished almost a century ago. People say the place is haunted by a foul entity.
7	The Emerald Palace was closed off a few days ago after a throng of enraged people broke into it. There are rumors that Queen Cannadi was injured in the attack and that some crazed insiders let the crowd into the palace.
8	People are worried about the poor that live in the slums as there is talk of an uprising. So far, the authorities have tried to direct the slum rebels to participate in the arena to ease their feelings, somewhat successfully.

SUMMER FORT

We don't even have enough space to house them all. This is the new era of gladiators! We have so many trainees we can host the greatest melee ever.

Lanista Gardug



Summer Fort was once a fortified settlement that saw bloody battles in wars so ancient that no one alive participated in them. After a period of terrible conflict, Summer Fort has enjoyed almost two centuries of peace. During this time, it has grown into a sprawling city with rich history and a cultural mixture. It is a trade center that connects many merchant roads and the beginning of a largely profitable river trade route. In time, the fort itself was remodeled into the Emerald Palace. The royal family moved here and declared it the realm's capital. For a long time, the arena was one of the most important spots in Summer Fort. The games are a profitable endeavor for the rich and great entertainment for the crows. Alas, the populace lost interest in the bloody games and the arena languished for a decade with a reduced audience until now.

HEATED BLOOD

RADDAGHARK'S FOUL ACTIONS have brought the demon's influence circle to Summer Fort. The demon enjoys wreaking havoc and causing unnecessary violence. Its influence has caused the arena to become relevant again. Hundreds come to quench their blood thirst by watching the games. The most aggressive enlist to participate in the grim gladiator games. But others seek change, a faction of rebels lead a heated crowd that broke into the Emerald Palace and gravely injured some of the royals, including Queen Cannadi.

Town Features

► **Events.** Check for **Random Events** each time a new area is visited. There is a 3-in-6 chance for an event.

► **Religion.** Most people worship Ord. However, a specialized Ord cult exists in Summer Fort in the form of the Seers. They use divination magic and rituals to foresee the future and help locals lead better lives.

► **Enhanced Aggressively.** The demon's influence affects a third of the population. Those vulnerable are aggressive, impatient, and foolish. They get into fights and issue threats that they have no fear of following through. There is a 2-in-6 chance that **peasants** are affected by the demon whenever the characters meet them. This may cause even the slightest disagreement to evolve into a shouting match or outright physical aggression.

RANDOM EVENTS

d8	Details
1	Two groups of people have a brawl outside a tavern. They quarrel about their favorite gladiator in yesterday's games at the arena. Two people are gravely injured.
2	Eight thugs approach the characters and demand they join their syndicate and pay 10 gp of subscription fees.
3	An opportunistic criminal tries to attract people to join their band of brigands. He claims that once they take over the Emerald Palace the city shall be free.
4	A desperate merchant calls for help after some thugs robbed him and ransacked his store in the Merchant District. He offers 5 gp to deal with the petty thieves.
5	A parade of this week's gladiatorial winners marches through the streets to attract attention to the next games. People cheer but some claim they are stronger and pick fights with the gladiators. It all devolves into a mess.
6	A royal envoy summons the characters to the palace. The Hand of the Queen wishes to speak with them about the recent developments and the seer's predictions.
7	An envoy of Lanista Gardug approaches the characters and commends them on their physical prowess. He offers them a spot at the gladiatorial games in two days.
8	A heated throng attacks civilians, ransacks homes, and destroys the city. Ten peasants approach the party and try to rob them. They cannot be reasoned with.

WEST GATES

Two gates connect with several rural paths and miles of farmlands. The roads bend southward and follow the river downstream in what becomes the Queen's Way, the most traveled trade route in the realm. If they come from afar, the characters arrive at Summer Fort from here.

THE SLUMS

Not known for being safe or calm, the slums have become home to havoc and violence. Tragmuth, the Puppet-master's influence over the townsfolk has disproportionately affected the poor. The current leader is Jodah, a blacksmith by profession but the head of the rebels now.

If the characters come to teach the rebels a lesson, they must contend with one **gladiator**, two **thugs**, two **peasants**, and Jodah (**peasant**). Arresting or killing these rebels delays future attacks on the palace for 1 week. In just a few days, a new leader rises to prominence and gathers the townsfolk for new waves of aggression. The heroes must deal with Raddaghark, the mage to solve this.



ARENA

The coliseum's recent increase in activity has the administrators struggling to keep up with the demand. Even more so after two of them and a lanista volunteered as fighters and died a few weeks back in the games.

Lanista Gardug, once just a gladiator trainer, out of necessity stepped up to direct the games and sort the abundant new participants, but he is a mediocre manager. Most people volunteering have no fighting abilities and are nothing but cannon fodder for more experienced fighters. Gardug seeks great fighters who can pose a challenge to the professional gladiators so that the games are less of a bloodbath (see **The Blood Games**).

EMERALD DISTRICT

The higher echelons of Summer Fort society live in this neighborhood. They are either holed up in their manors or work together to have entire streets closed off from the city. Still, even some of these secluded neighborhoods have been stormed by tycoon-hating crowds.

HOUSE OF WORSHIP

The characters are welcomed and brought inside to meet Chief Seer Damocles upon arrival, as was foreseen. The priest tells the characters that evil gathers in a ruined keep. It is a two-day ride from Summer Fort. He already sent a brave priest there, Seer Verbogden, to investigate. The characters should be able to find him near the keep. Chief Seer Damocles confesses that the omens for the city in the following weeks are clouded in doubt and duality. The city could eat itself in uprisings or it could be saved, provided the threat beneath the keep is destroyed. The chief seer presumes demonic entities are involved so he offers the characters five *scrolls of cleansing weapon* to combat the forces of evil. If there is no priest in the party, Seer Verbogden may use the magic scrolls.

EAST GATE

The east gate leads to narrow hillside trails. Gatherers use it to move upstream. Small communities lie nearby but the gate is a relic from wartimes when it was tactically beneficial to move troops to the northeast.

MERCHANT DISTRICT

Most merchants, accustomed to dealing with petty thievery and ruffians, are now guarded by hired muscle and mercenaries. The unaffected locals managed to capture and drive away aggressive individuals. Even aggressive merchants were driven away. The characters may earn 5 sp guarding a store for a day. There is plenty of work.

EMERALD PALACE

The Hand of the Queen, Lord Vallen, is looking for a small but effective, elite task force to put a stop to the rebel leader that gathers the populace in the city slums.

If the characters heed his call (see **Random Event 6**), Lord Vallen explains that when the horde broke into the palace, the rebels barely failed trying to murder Queen Cannadi. The queen is injured but recovering well. She is not granting any audiences at the moment, though.

Lord Vallen dismisses Chief Seer Damocles' claims of a demonic threat as gossip. He considers the upcoming uprisings a more severe threat. He orders the party, on the queen's behalf, to infiltrate the slums and arrest a man named Jodah. Once a blacksmith, he now leads what Lord Vallen describes as *'a heated throng of disgusting burglars, brigands, low-lives, and ne'er-do-wells.'*

THE KING'S FOREST

The sprawling, forested area behind the Emerald Palace was once a large forest where the royals would gather to hunt. The city swallowed the area almost a century ago and there is no game left. Still, the name stuck.

THE BLOOD GAMES

LANISTA GARDUG OFFERS the characters a spot in the upcoming gladiatorial games. He claims, in a goading manner, that the characters should not dare participate unless they are confident of their abilities because some of the professional gladiators are the strongest fighters in the region. Gardug also mentions that the prize for surviving all matches is 100 gp and a set of plate armor.

The party can act as a unit. They must survive five consecutive fights. There is a rest period between each encounter when they can rest. The fights are as follows:

1. Melee against ten **peasants**.
2. Two **lions**.
3. Four **thugs**.
4. One **gladiator** and three **peasants**.
5. Three **gladiators**.

Due to the excess of participants, none can escape a fighting match. Once a fight begins, it is fought to the death. Most end with gory, grim decapitations.

SETTING OFF

TO SAVE THE DAY, the characters must reunite with Chief Verboggden at the ruined keep. The structure is located in the countryside, northeast of Summer Fort. The characters cross the East Gates and follow the hillside trails upstream for two days to reach the source of evil.



RUINED KEEP

It is only through strict self-control and dedication that I have resisted the demon's compulsions. Be swift! This being is bound to assail your hearts too.

Seer Verboggdén

The ruined keep was once the headquarters of a perilous, demonic sect that scourged the region and recruited dozens of people until an order of paladins came and stopped them short. The knights trashed the place and put all the sectarians to the blade. But they missed the underground compound which was left untouched but abandoned.

The keep is located on a hill. It is overgrown with greenery and little more than a mound of bricks. The paladins who stopped the sect spread wretched rumors about the place and said it was cursed. Since then, most people do not dare approach the place out of crippling fear.

Seer Verboggdén stakes out the place since two days ago. He has seen demons emerge from the premises and has heard terrible screams. He used an animal messenger to let the chief seer of his observations.

Area Features

► **Events.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Smells.** A pungent stench of sulfur and decay comes from the underground compound beneath the keep. It grows stronger with proximity to the ruined edifice.

► **Demonic Influence.** The mind-bending power of Tragmuth affects common people and turns them into aggressive, danger-seeking individuals (DC 14 WIS). The characters, though, are not yet affected by it.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	Four dretch demons emerge from beneath the keep and rush toward the characters' position to attack.
2	A terrible roar breaks the utter silence from afar. A vrock demon approaches flying and uses its Screech attack.
3	Seven peasants from Summer Fort approach the keep. They are under Tragmuth's influence and have come to swear allegiance to it. These are the first cultists.
4	Clouds gather and a thunderstorm breaks. It lasts until both Raddaghark and Tragmuth have been defeated.
5	Two hunters (guards) arrive at the scene by chance. If offered at least 100 sp, they stay as hired muscle.
6	A piercing, soul-shattering, human-like screech comes from beneath the ruined keep. It is Tragmuth, the Puppet-master finally approaching the Material Plane.

KEEP'S ENTRANCE

The outline of a crumbling, stone construction stands against the horizon. It was once a fortified keep. Now, only meager, water-eroded ruins remain.

The main wooden doors are nothing but splinters now. Still, the first story of the keep can be accessed through any of the collapsed walls. The place seems empty.

BARRACKS

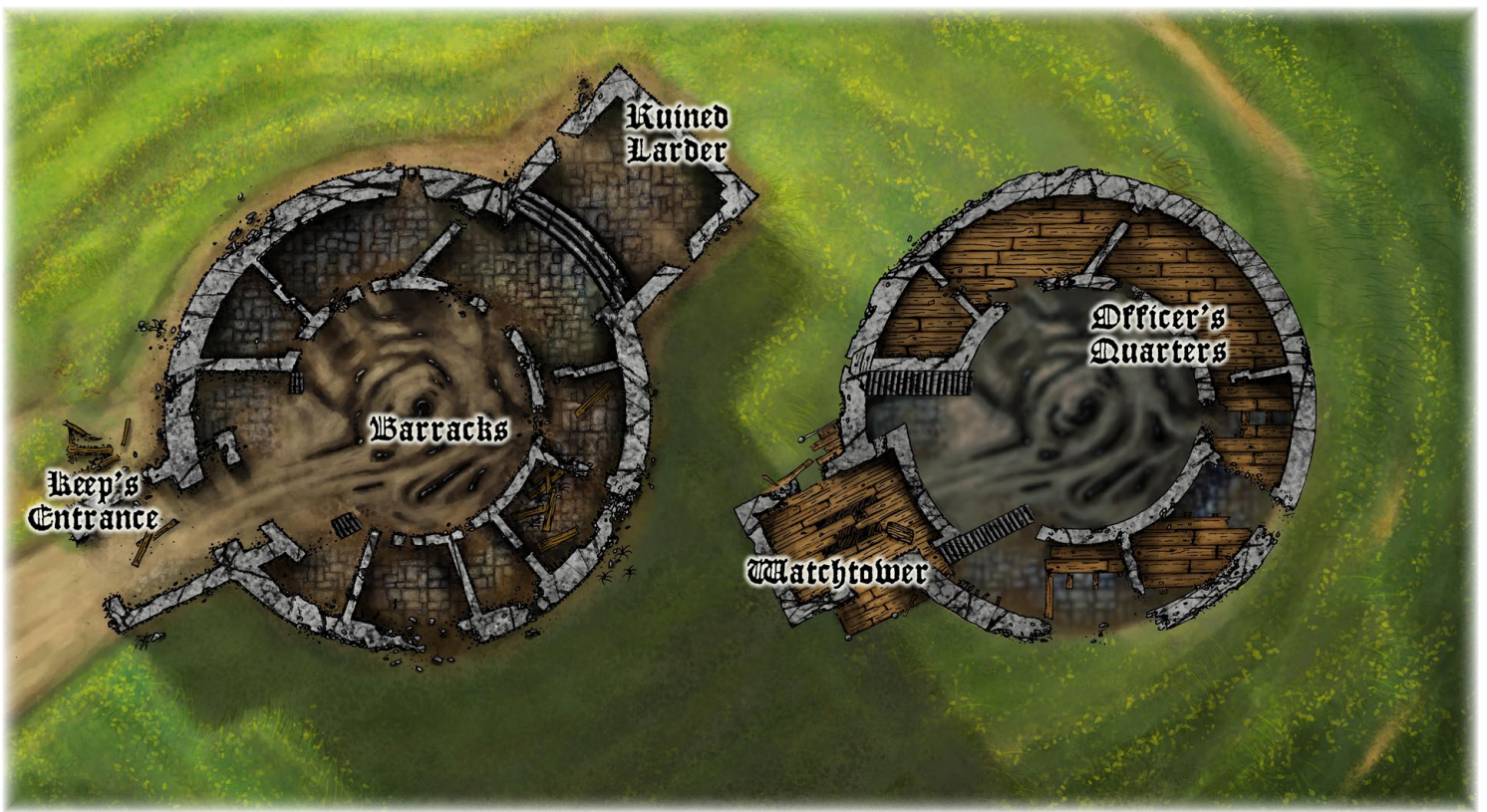
The inside of the keep is a calamity of destruction and debris. Two wooden ladders climb to the unstable second story. Plenty of footprints mark the floors.

► **The Seer.** Verboggdén (**acolyte**) approaches the characters here. He is helpful after learning that the chief seer sent them and reveals the presence of demons nearby. This is the first time Verboggdén enters the place. The valiant acolyte wants to prove himself to impress the chief seer as it may facilitate a rank promotion.

► **Tracks.** A good hunter notices that the strange prints converge in one of the decrepit side chambers (DC 14 WIS). Upon closer inspection, the prints lead to a hidden staircase. It leads to the dungeon's Main Entrance.

Seer Verboggdén





LARDER OF GLUTTONY

Three eroded steps climb up to what once was the keep's larder. A putrid stench of rotting food without a clear source permeates the dark, decrepit place.

A creature that walks into the larder triggers a vivid illusion spell. Metal shelves, packed to the brim with spoiled food magically materialize in the chamber. Any mortal creature present is subject to a delirious compulsion to gorge themselves on the food (DC 11 WIS check).

Alas, creatures that fail this test endlessly consume the rotten, illusory food that does not nourish them in any way. Days later the subjects perish of dehydration. An affected creature, if forcibly moved 30 feet from the larder is free from the mental compulsion to remain 'eating'.

OFFICER'S QUARTERS

Two wooden ladders climb to the second story and the watchtower on top of the entrance. Navigating the second story and reaching the Officers' Quarters requires jumping across 5-10-foot gaps (DC 13 STR check.)

Four skulls with living eyes within cages hang from the far wall. The crazed eyes move blankly around.

The skulls belonged to the sect leaders. They were slain by the order of paladins a century ago and their skulls were placed here. A spell keeps them awake and aware of their surroundings but they cannot communicate. The *restoration* spell frees their souls. But this deed earns the order of paladins' enmity as the faction still exists.

WATCHTOWER

The cracked walls of this chamber bear ancient markings etched on the eroded bricks. Some of the runes glow red, as if painted in glimmering blood.

► **The Floor.** The wooden planks are rotten and unstable. Creatures that walk around the room to examine the runes have a 3-in-6 chance of breaking a plank and falling into the entrance hall below, breaking the floor there, and opening a shaft into the dungeon's Alternate Entrance. Creatures that fall this way take 4d6 damage.

► **The Runes.** The markings were made by the ancient demonic sect. They are written in Diabolic. Seer Verbgden knows this language. The runes speak of an obscure demon named Tragnmuth, the Puppet-master. The demon influences the minds of mortals and causes them to do terrible things. This constitutes proof that the people of Summer Fort are victims of a foul demon.

► **The Guardian.** After reading the runes, a mighty demonic guardian is summoned to stop them. **Tragnmuth's Avatar** appears beside them and attacks.

TRAGMUTH'S AVATAR

A goat-headed, fur-covered, 10-foot-tall figure emerges from the ether. The fire of hell shines in its dark eyes.

AC 15, HP 25, ATK 2 horns +5 (1d8), MV near, S +3, D +2, C +2, I -0, W +1, Ch -1, AL C, LV 5

Gore. Deals an extra die of damage if it hits the same target with both horns.

THE HELLISH ASCENT

No! It should not be like this. Why? Filthy, treacherous demon! I brought you here. You owe me everything. Deliver what you promised abominate monster.

Raddaghark, the Puppet

Raddaghark's demon-summoning ritual has already occurred when the characters arrive. Tragmuth slowly ascends the endless spiral stairway and shall soon arrive. Raddaghark believes he is powerful enough to bind the demon with his magic but nothing is further from the truth; he is overconfident. The dungeon is filled with undead monsters and demonic abominations that emerged from the malignant stairway in anticipation of Tragmuth's arrival.

Dungeon Features

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** There are no light sources. All chambers are in complete darkness. All denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Doors.** All doors are locked or stuck (DC 14 DEX). Raddaghark keeps the only key in the Mage's Quarters.

► **Foul Aura.** The Stairway to Hell is a beacon of malignity that can be felt by any priest that concentrates on it.

► **Demonic Influence.** The power of Tragmuth is strong enough to affect anyone (DC 12 WIS). If affected, the characters become danger-seeking, violent individuals. If an affected character attempts an action that goes against this description, they must resist the demon's influence to carry forward (DC 20 WIS). Defeating Tragmuth, the Puppet-master ends this effect.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6 Details

- 1 Six **dretch demons** approach. Their faces have mutated to resemble people that the characters know. The demons speak and beg for mercy while fiercely attacking.
- 2 Three crypt **shadows** emerge from the ceiling and attack the least-armored character. They flee on turn 2.
- 3 A random character steps through a fine thread and triggers a swinging axe trap. The character takes 2d6 unless they are fast enough to jump away (DC 14 DEX check).
- 4 Four **skeletons** climb the Stairway to Hell and march toward the party. They wield blood-drenched scimitars. A would-be adventurer, Yaran (**soldier**), followed the party from Summer Fort. He wishes to join the party to begin a new life of dangerous adventures and rewards.
- 5 A random character steps on a pressure plate and triggers a poison dart trap. The character drops to 0 HP unless their body is strong enough (DC 13 CON check).

MAIN ENTRANCE

The narrow staircase descends 30 feet and into a small landing chamber. The room contains a few rotten crates and chests. They are empty and dusty.

► **Footprints.** An avid tracked identifies coming and going boot traps and the clawed prints of dretch demons (DC 13 WIS). All foot tracks circle around the chamber's east side when coming in or out of the compound.

► **Spikes Trap.** Stepping into the center of the chamber triggers a barrage of spear-like spikes to emerge rapidly from hidden holes in the floor. The creature who triggered the trap takes 4d6 damage (DC 15 DEX for half).

GRIM GUARDIANS

Tongues of fire are sculpted on the walls of this chamber. The domed ceiling features an eroded fresco of a dark figure holding a human as a puppet.

► **The Art.** The ceiling's depiction and the runes by the sculpted fire are congruent with the identity of Tragmuth, a mind-controlling demon (DC 16 INT check).

► **The Guards.** Four slim **ghouls** hide behind the stone pillars (DC 14 WIS to notice). When fighting, the blood-thirsty, ravenous ghouls prioritize wounded individuals. If a person is reduced to 0 Hit Points, all ghouls rush to the body to gorge on their flesh while ignoring attacks.

DEMONIC ALTAR

An obsidian effigy overlooks the chamber from a raised dais. It portrays a stringy, zombie-like, hatted figure holding two dark puppets by their necks.

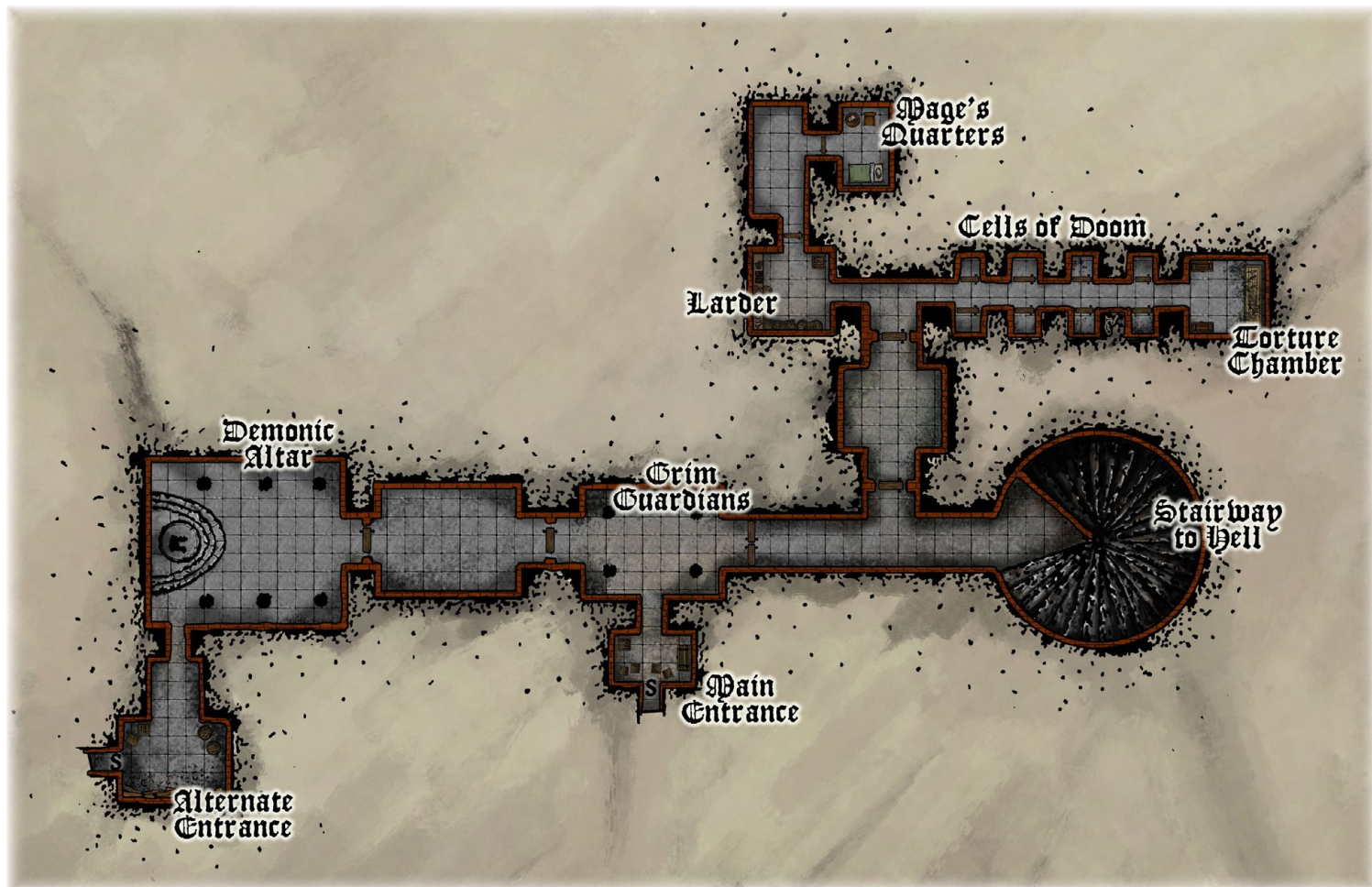
Wooden pews once furnished this chamber but only rotten splinters remain before the hellish, demonic effigy.

► **Influence.** Characters unaffected by Tragmuth's powers must pass the save again (see **Dungeon Features**).

► **Treasure (1 XP).** Inspecting the statue for 1 crawling round reveals the presence of a hidden compartment beneath it. It contains 14 gp, 26 sp, and a dagger.

ALTERNATE ENTRANCE

This chamber can only be accessed by falling from the Watchtower above. The characters can climb back up with ropes and climbing gear (DC 13 STR check).



LARDER

This chamber was once a larder and a storage room for the keep's commander and the cells nearby. An embroidered leather bag stands on one of the tables. It is a *bag of holding* that contains water and rations for the mage.

CELLS OF DOOM

The narrow hallway is interrupted by eight wooden doors with secure locks. Cries, groans of pain, and throaty utterances come from behind some of them.

When a cell door is opened, it contains any of the following at random. Skip repeated results (roll 1d8):

1. A tortured man named Han. He is close to dying.
2. A ravenous **ghast**.
3. Four wounded people crammed into a single cell. They are weak but can help the party if healed.
4. Four **dretches** crammed into the narrow chamber.
5. The cell room is empty.
6. The cell room contains discarded hip bones.
7. Three **giant rats** emerge and attack.
8. A wooden chest that contains 25 gp, 200 sp, 1,600 cp, two *potions of healing*, a *potion of vitality*, and a case with seven random priest *scrolls* (4 XP).

TORTURE CHAMBER

The room contains two wooden torture tables with leather straps and a long table with countless grim tools. The surfaces are bloodstained and were recently used by Raddaghark. Tragnmuth instructed the mage to perform terrible torture sessions on people kidnapped from the nearby roads as part of the demonic summoning ritual.

MAGE'S QUARTERS

The last door opens and a hooded figure emerges. The man wields a scepter embedded with obsidian. The mage promptly readies to cast a baleful spell.

Raddaghark (**mage**) knows that Tragnmuth is close to reaching the surface. He wants to be there to bind it. However, as he is also affected by the demonic influence, he cannot flee from this battle and has no sense of self-preservation. The mage fights until he is defeated. As the battle concludes, a loud, fiery sound comes from the south. Tragnmuth has arrived (see **Stairway to Hell**).

► **The Quarters.** The room contains a bed, a side table, and a chair. The dungeon doors' key rests on the table. The chamber is otherwise empty except for the chest.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** There is a chest under the bed. Within, there are 5 gp and Raddaghark's *spellbook*. The tome contains seven random wizard spells of tiers 1-3.

STAIRWAY TO HELL

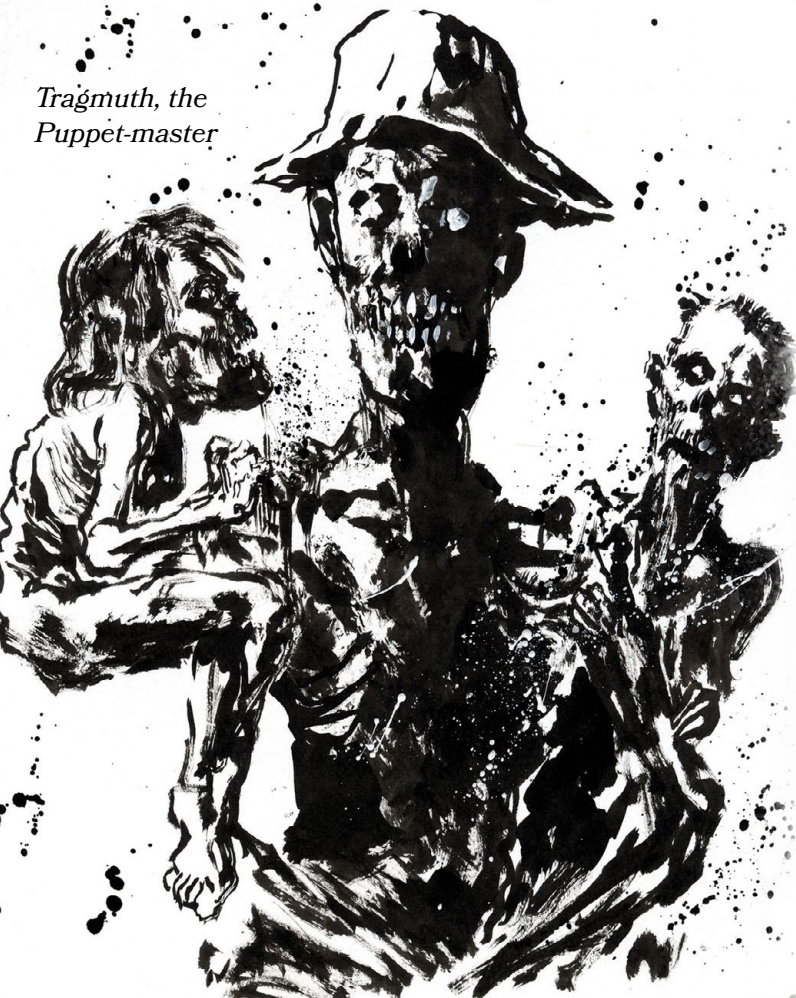
A descending, spiral staircase with scorched, obsidian steps appears to go down endlessly. The stairs are wide enough for a giant to go through them. A faint, red light seems to come from the depths below.

The stairs are an ancient artifact of untold power. They connect the Material Plane and the hellish realms where demons are spawned. If the characters descend, the spiral staircase goes on forever and reaches nowhere. Regardless of how long they go, it always takes 1 minute to reach the top again. The red light that comes from below is Tragnmuth ascending. But the characters cannot reach it either. It remains always just outside of their reach.

► **The Acolyte.** If Verboggdan is present, he claims this is the source of evil that assails Summer Fort. Verboggdan is unsure how to proceed and confesses to being afraid to descend into the hellish darkness below.

► **Tragnmuth.** The demon shows itself only after the characters encounter Raddaghark in his quarters. If the mage was arrested, he attempts to cast the ritual to bind the demon. Even if cast, it is unsuccessful. **Tragnmuth, the Puppet-master** promptly uses his Puppet Possess ability on the mage. It lasts for the encounter. If the mage is dead, the demon revives him for the same purpose. Raddaghark is conscious during the fight and resents this unlucky development (see **Epigraph**).

*Tragnmuth, the
Puppet-master*



TRAGMUTH THE PUPPET-MASTER

A 15-foot tall, lean, zombie-like, hatted figure holding a deformed puppet of Raddaghark, the mage by its neck.

AC 11, HP 27, ATK 2 draining touch +5 (1d8 + life drain) or 1 puppet possess, **MV** near, **S +3, D -2, C +2, I +0, W +0, Ch +4, AL C, LV 6**

Life Drain. 1d4 CON damage. Death if reduced to 0 CON. Upon such a death, the person becomes a permanent puppet under Tragnmuth's control.

Puppet Possess. One target, close range. Contested Charisma check. If Tragnmuth wins, the character's body is temporarily deformed into an abominate puppet in the demon's hand. It controls its actions for 1d4 rounds.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their deeds.

THE DEMON DEFEATED

The characters fight Tragnmuth's physical form as well as the puppet mockery that Raddaghark has become and are triumphant. The defeated demon crumbles into a mound of fiery embers and ash. Raddaghark shares the same fate; there is no scenario in which he survives.

After the demon is gone, the Stairway to Hell reverts to its initial behavior of endless descent. It is still connected to the abyss but it requires a tortuous summoning ritual for it to work. The obsidian stairs cannot be destroyed by means available to mortals. The evil artifact shall remain a terrible threat that must be guarded from cultists.

SUMMER FORT IS SAVED

The strange wrath-causing affliction subsides the moment Tragnmuth is defeated. People are immediately aware that their behavior was manipulated and the townsfolk take great measures to repair the damage and attempt to reunite with friends and family. When the characters return, they are welcomed by Chief Seer Damocles and Lord Vallen. They are pronounced heroes and a tournament in their name is scheduled in two weeks, when Queen Cannadi is expected to be well enough to attend the affair. Other patrons in town are interested in the characters' deeds and abilities too. There shall be no shortage of work for them in the future.

BUSINESS IN COLLAPSE

After the demon is defeated, the gladiatorial booming industry soon collapses back to its normal level. People like Lanista Gardug lose recently made investments they made in expectation of future work. Vengefully, the lanistas assemble a strike force of gladiators to assassinate the party. Alas, that is an adventure for another day...

CALL OF THE SHOGGOTH



By Elven Tower

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG

LEVEL 6 ADVENTURE



A MID-LEVEL SHADOWDARK ADVENTURE ABOUT ENCOUNTERING A WORLD-SHATTERING THREAT

ADVENTURE PRIMER

It is inhuman and impossible to understand. And yet, people who hear the shoggoth's call are inevitably drawn to the ancient monster's dwelling place.

Elvish Adage



he abominations spawned in the Far Realm are incomprehensible to mortal minds. A common brain cannot fathom the concepts, even if there were words to describe the deviant events that transpire in the plane of madness. It is seldom relevant as that plane is severely removed from our world. But sometimes, when the stars are right or when deluded mages will it, a connection is formed between the two worlds and an ineffable entity comes forth. Some priests believe these abominations are the scions of Shune, the Vile. They claim that the deity's agents work to displace Ord so she can control the vast flow of magic herself. But the evidence is little and inconclusive.

THE SHOGGOTH

OUT OF ALL the accursed monstrosities that inhabit the Far Realm, one of the most feared is the legendary shoggoth. It is a representation of madness and despair. The shoggoth is a massive amoeba-like creature made out of iridescent black slime, with multiple eyes forming and un-forming as pustules of greenish light in its protoplasmic body. Dozens of ephemeral pseudopod limbs emerge forth to grasp anything within reach. Mortal minds often crumble when directly witnessing the shoggoth. Its victims often just stare at its approach with a dull, empty gaze and unintelligible whispered babble and then are consumed by the shapeless abomination of reality.

Scholars claim that the shoggoth follows Shune's commands. Priests and paladins of the church of Ord have confronted this abomination to protect the Material Plane from Shune's machinations. Currently, the shoggoth lies contained in a decrepit temple of Ord. The hero, Sir Feravand, among others, gave his life centuries ago to bind the shoggoth into the statue of a phoenix. The flaming bird is one of Ord's representations. Ord is a neutral vessel capable of containing the worst of creatures. Alas, the temple becomes more frail as time goes on. Eventually, the shoggoth shall break itself free. But in the meanwhile, the loathsome being issues a mind-affecting call, directed mostly toward weak-minded individuals. Many have heeded this call. Its might is made manifest in a forlorn cavern. It takes the shape of a gemstone surrounded by aberrant tendrils. Many townsfolk are drawn to it to heed the shoggoth's calling.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Level 6 Adventure

DELUDED MINDS

More than a hundred hapless townsfolk have heeded an otherworldly call in their dreams. They left their homes and traveled to the cave where the shoggoth gem lies. This artifact is a physical manifestation of the trapped shoggoth as it slowly crawls its way to freedom. King Janus summons the characters and offers a reward for clearing the cave and finding what is hypnotizing people. It is crucial to save the townsfolk and track down the arcane origin of this otherworldly call (60 gp, 6 XP).

A QUEST FOR GLORY

The church of Ord has become aware that Shune's ancestral beast, the shoggoth, is soon to break free from its shackles. The church offers a scroll with *Ord's Ritual of Binding* that shall renew the ancient incantations so that the shoggoth remains incarcerated for centuries once more. Ord's pontiff pays the characters a symbolic reward for this valiant deed (10 gp, 3 XP).

RUMORS

d10 Details

- 1 Ord churches across the realm are more active lately. They pray more and put more effort into their sermons.
- 2 The townsfolk report strange memories from half-remembered dreams. They remember a tentacled being with a raspy voice uttering the word *'tekeli-li'*.
- 3 Ord's church fights the forces of Shune, the Vile. The evil deity's most fearsome threat is the legendary shoggoth.
- 4 So far, over a hundred people have left for the caverns. None have returned, not even those sent to find them.
- 5 The cavern is rich in mineral ores but has not been mined. Several prospectors have abandoned the place after experiencing visions and out-of-body hallucinations.
- 6 None have returned from the cave for 3 weeks.
- 7 Three hunters went to the cavern looking for their relatives. One of the hunters was found dead in the forest.
- 8 Two affected people were put away to prevent them from leaving town. They soon fell into a crippling madness.
- 9 Ord scholars claim that mind manipulation is an obscure art often used by entities from the forlorn Farm Realm.
- 10 Some people refuse to sleep out of fear. They claim to have had terrible nightmares they do not wish to relive.

THE SHOGGOTH GEM

I have seen it. The grand being from beyond. It spells great strange lessons to us. We cannot understand it yet but one day we shall unearth its hidden Lore.

Deluded Peasant

The characters are given precise directions to the would-be mining site where the townsfolk are said to have gone. It takes the party two days on the road to reach it. The shoggoth's will manifests in this place in the form of a large, glimmering gemstone and seven aberrant tendrils that surround it. The large gem amplifies the shoggoth's call. The peasants are drawn to the gem, which entralls them, whispers a summoning chant to them, and even gives some of them magical powers to protect the cavern from any non-affected invaders. They are cultists now.

Cavern Features

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for encounters every 2 crawling rounds and after a battle or loud noises (1-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some chambers have braziers with permanent light; the rest are dark. All denizens are dark-adapted.

► **Seismic Activity.** Once per hour, there is a 2-in-6 chance that any of the aberrant tendrils moves, causing a quake in the area. Debris falls from the cavern ceilings, dealing 2d6 damage to all creatures (DC 15 DEX check).

► **The Hum.** The hum of peasants chanting in area 7 can be heard from anywhere within the caves. When in close proximity, it is revealed the people repeat a chant in Primordial that the gem whispers to them.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	Eight peasants (cultists) approach and brand the party as intruders. They use their Deathtouch spell at once.
2	Four darkmantles drop from the cave ceiling and attack a random creature. The pack only wants to find prey.
3	The characters experience a wretched vision. A hulking, tentacled creature with dozens of eyes bursts from a large bird statue in a dark, ominous chamber.
4	The chants from area 7 suddenly raise in volume and a person screams in agony as the chant continues.
5	The shoggoth gem produces a magical pulse. All light sources in the cave are suddenly extinguished, magical or not. Complete darkness takes over the cavern.
6	A cloak uses its Screech ability before ambushing the party (DC 14 WIS to notice). It is afraid of bright light.

1. THE SURROUNDINGS

Two large iron braziers burn by the cavern's entrance. The trees within 100 feet of it have all withered.

► **The Braziers.** The braziers are filled with unburnt logs. The fire produces no heat. A spellcaster identifies the source of this flame as the **light** spell (DC 11 INT).

► **The Trees.** A strange blight sickens the trees. Their south-facing sides are blighted and dead.

► **The Patrol.** Each **crawling round** that the characters remain here, there is a 3-in-6 chance that a patrol of 3 **cultists**, 1 **mage**, and 6 **peasants** returns from the east. If alerted, a peasant bolts inside to warn the others.

2. THE MOUND OF BONES

In the darkness of this cavern, there is a mound of countless bones. Most are humanoid, others are not. Some bones appear to move when no one is looking.

The shoggoth gem has taken the lives of many peasants and even wild animals. After the sacrifices (see area 7), the bodies decay rapidly over the course of hours. The bones are then discarded and piled up here.

► **Ghastly Remains.** Inspecting the bone pile for 1 **crawling round** reveals there are at least 25 different bodies here. Inspecting the pile causes the remains to react; six **skeletons** emerge from it and attack.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** Hidden in the bone pile, there is a pouch with 10 gp and a **potion of invisibility**.





5. THE BLOOD VESSEL

A curved, tubular, limestone thing traverses this chamber. A golden vase lies by the north wall.

► **The Vase.** Cultists collect some blood from each sacrifice and pour it here. It is a heretic relic that contains a liter of blood. Destroying it awards 1 **luck** token.

► **The Tendril.** The aberrant tendril pierces the wall eastward. If inspected for 1 **crawling round**, its presence and nature defy explanation especially since drag marks on the floor suggest it has moved, slithering like a snake.

6. WHISPERS OF MADNESS

Four **cultists** converse in unintelligible babble. Their conversation is barely audible over the humming chant from area 7. Their speech is a strange mix of the Common Tongue and Primordial but even the content makes no sense. These hapless people are deranged.

7. THE SHOGGOTH GEM

A purple gemstone glows and pulses in the center of this cavern. Seven twisting limestone tendrils emerge from the stone walls and converge on it.

► **The Summoning.** When the party arrives, they are too late to stop the sacrifice of another person. The victim is stabbed in the heart and left to die. Their blood leaves the body and coalesces on the gemstone. Then, the fabric of reality is torn apart by the arrival of the **shoggoth spawn**. Most cultists swoon or run away in a panic when the aberration appears. Four **cultists** stay.

► **The Tendrils.** Careful inspection reveals that the shifting monuments have gotten closer to the gem over the course of weeks. They may be alive, running on a much slower time frame than any mortal could imagine.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** The cult leader carries a leather pouch with 30 gp, 250 sp, and two *potions of healing*.

► **Ord's Intervention.** Defeating the spawn allows Ord to intervene. Lightning destroys the gemstone and a magical gate to the ancient temple or Ord appears in its place. The gate leads to any of the dungeon's area 1.

3. FUNGAL GROWTHS

The bulking forms of fungal fruiting bodies by the walls expel threads of powdery, green spores.

The characters encounter the effect of the spores when squeezing through the narrow passage (see below).

► **The Spores.** Creatures that breathe the spores take 2d6 damage as they poison the lungs (DC 14 CON check). Repeat the check per each round of exposure.

4. THE ELEVATED LEDGE

A set of crude steps leads to a seemingly bottomless pit. The other side of the chasm is 20 feet across.

► **The Crossing.** It requires a DC 14 STR check to cross over jumping or climbing. Creatures that fall into the 40-foot-deep chasm take 4d6 damage (DC 14 DEX/half). The passage leads to a ledge that overlooks area 7.

SHOGGOTH SPAWN

An ineffable mound of slithering tendrils. Hundreds of ephemeral eyes and mouths appear on the protoplasmic, oil-like surface of this abominable creation.

AC 11, **HP** 34, **ATK** 2 slams +6 (2d8 + engulf), **MV** near, **S** +4, **D** +0, **C** +3, **I** -2, **W** -2, **Ch** -2, **AL** C, **LV** 7

Impervious. Only damaged by silver or magic sources.

Engulf. If a target is hit by both slams in same round, it is pulled into the shoggoth spawn's body and suffocates in 2d4 rounds. DC 15 STR on turn to escape.

TEMPLE OF ORD

Ord the Unbending has the power to create equilibrium in the world. Even if selfless sacrifice to contain evil is required, Ord gladly performs this deed.

Ancient Adage

The characters can use Ord's magic gate to reach the temple. It leads them to any of the four hallways labeled area 1. If the characters refuse to use the gate, a wizard or priest can examine the remains of the shoggoth gem for 1 day to identify the source of its power. The Temple of Ord is within a 4-day ride from the cavern. The only entrance from the surface is located in a sparsely forested area, among the ruins of a druidic observatory. This path of action leads the party to the northeast area 1.

The dangerous shoggoth is still trapped within the phoenix's statue but it may rise soon. The shoggoth's despicable influence affects the surrounding areas. Some of them are burial places of paladins and past pontiffs. The aberration's power rises undead remains and transforms the nature of physical objects too. It is crucial to confront the shoggoth and defeat it. Using the *Ord's Ritual of Binding* given by Ord's pontiff is the only long-term solution as the shoggoth cannot truly be destroyed.

Dungeon Features

- ▶ **Danger.** Deadly. Check for a **Random Event** every **crawling round** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).
- ▶ **Light.** Some chambers have braziers with permanent **light**; the rest are dark. All denizens are **dark-adapted**.
- ▶ **Secret Areas.** Close inspection of an area for 1 **crawling round** reveals the presence of a hidden door.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	Walls and floor shift into insane shapes that defy common geometry. For 1 crawling round , the characters struggle as they move in a four-dimensional world.
2	Two undead reavers emerge from the darkness and attack in a fit of merciless ferocity and bravado.
3	A random character steps through a trigger thread and activates a poison darts trap. All creatures in a 10-foot-wide area take 2d6 damage (DC 14 CON for half).
4	A wraith traverses the wall and attacks a random creature. It prioritizes priests and devout characters.
5	A random character has one of their limbs transformed into a slimy, translucent tentacle (DC 14 CON). The transformation ends when the shoggoth is defeated.
6	Ord's influence is made manifest as it mentally points the characters to the phoenix's statue in area 8.

1. ENTRANCE HALL

The broken-down hallways connect to empty chambers and collapsed passageways. The northeast path leads to an entrance on the surface. If the characters use Ord's gate, they arrive at any of the four entrances (roll 1d4).

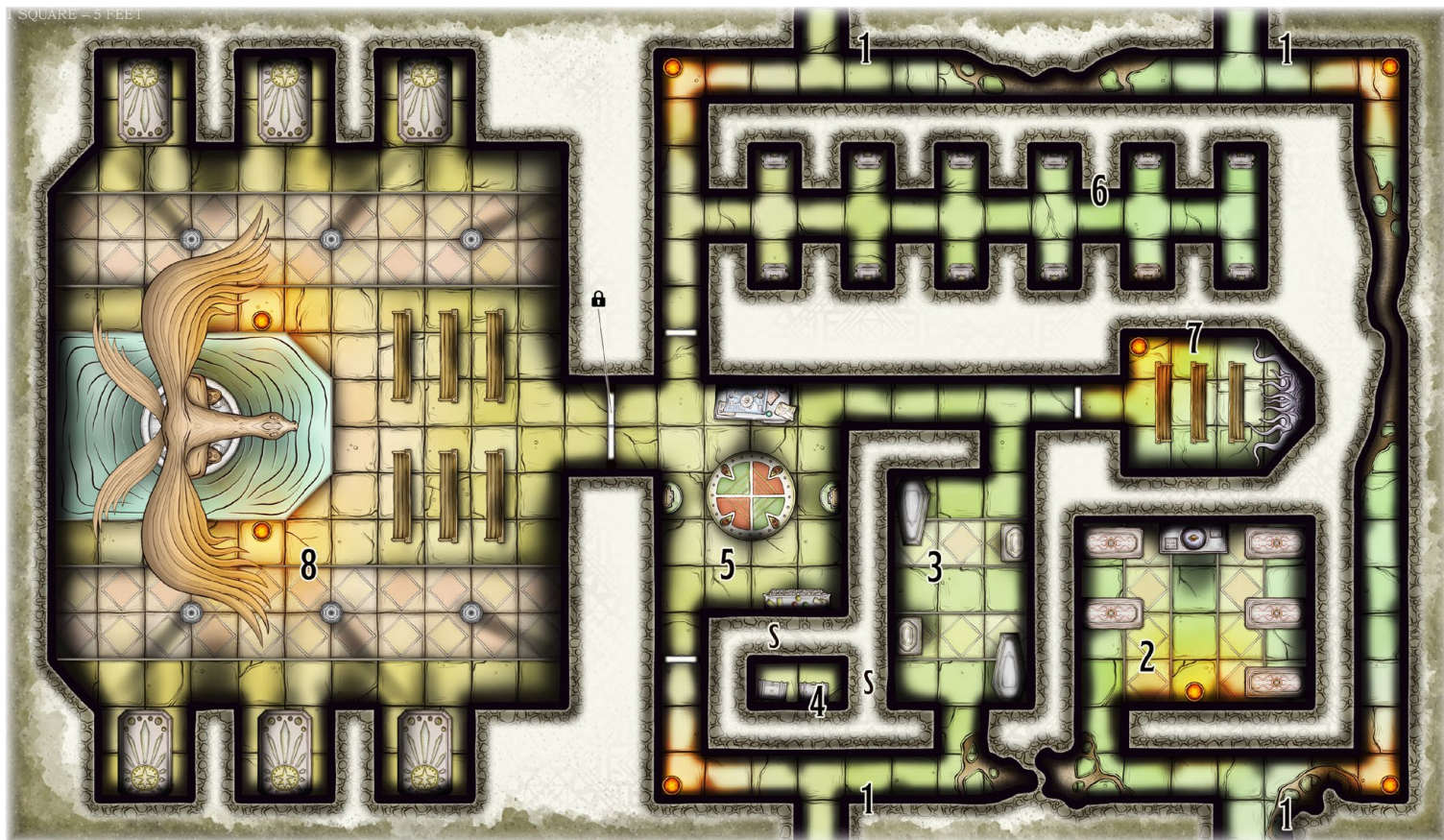
2. TOMB OF PRIESTS

Five copper-inlaid sarcophagi hug the walls of this chamber and flank an altar with a gilded vase on it.

▶ **The Sarcophagi.** The runes on the lid spell the name of great priests of Ord who died in martyrdom. Their remains have been tainted by the shoggoth. When the characters arrive, the lids are thrown aside and five **ghasts** emerge. They still wear their priestly attire.

▶ **The Vase (3 XP).** The vase is filled with holy water. A character can douse an undead creature in the dungeon with it to instantly destroy it (ranged attack). It can be used twice this way. The engraved vase is worth 30 gp.





3. GRIEVING SOULS

The ethereal apparitions of four holy warriors stand by their burial places. Their somber looks reveal their internal struggle, despair, and painful existence.

Four ghosts inhabit this chamber. They are, as of now, still impervious to the shoggoth's influence. However, they regard what has become of the Temple of Ord with shame and regret. They know that the shoggoth is soon to break free and wish they could do something. One of the ghosts, Sir Feravand, participated in the shoggoth's binding ritual centuries ago. Unfortunately, he cannot help as they are bound to their timeless caskets. The other ghosts, as a precursor of the shoggoth influencing them, feel indifferent about the current affairs.

► **Anger.** If any of the **ghosts** learn that the characters plundered the vault (area 4). They consider this an insult to the Church of Ord. They deem the characters heretics, bow with deference, and sentence them to death.

► **Unlikely Aid.** If the characters help Sir Feravand by dispelling the warding runes in area 5, the ghost joins them on their shoggoth-binding adventure.

4. SECRET VAULT

The chamber contains two locked stone chests (DC 17 DEX). Each container bears the rune of Ord.

► **Treasure (10 XP).** The chests contain 50 gp, 400 sp, 950 cp, a *potion of healing*, and the *staff of Ord*.

5. BYGONE ARCHIVE

Scrolls and dusty tomes lie on a metal table and a bookshelf. A rune-inscribed magic circle takes over half the floor. It brandishes Ord's shield-shaped seal.

The room contains biographical recounts of the deeds of all people interred in the temple. It also contains a collection of epic poetry that dates back to the foundation of Ord's church, among humankind settlements.

► **The Runes.** Spending 1 **crawling round** studying the runic circle reveals that Ord's magic keeps the interred spirits in check. Alas, it malfunctioned for all the undead under the shoggoth's influence. A wizard can use the *dispel magic* spell to neutralize this ward for 24 hours. This allows the ghost of Sir Feravand to help (see area 3).

► **Treasure (2 XP).** The collection of epic poems is unique. It can be sold to a university for 20 gp.

6. TOMB OF PALADINS

Twelve paladins were interred here at different times in the last four centuries. Engraved, marble plaques on the standing sarcophagi lids spell their names, their deeds, and the manner of their death. Most of them died battling the forces of evil in the name of Ord's church.

► **Existential Anguish.** The souls of some of the paladins have been thoroughly impacted by the shoggoth's power. Four **wights** emerge from their caskets in a haze of confusion, hatred, and unfiltered insanity.

7. MUTATED ALTAR

What once was an altar to Ord, the Wise, has now become a monstrosity of stone tentacles. When not seeing it directly, it appears to move and breathe.

The key to access area 8 is held by one of the stone tentacles. If a character attempts to reach it, the tentacle moves farther into the mess of limbs. To grab it, a character must walk into the multiple stone pseudopods and be embraced by the mutated altar. This event carries the risk of halving the character's Intelligence (DC 16 INT).

8. GREAT HALL OF ORD

The reinforced steel door can only be opened with the key in area 7 or the best of tools (DC 20 DEX check).

The statue of a phoenix, one of Ord's many forms, stands proud in the church-like chamber. Alas, the statue's surface is broken as a cyclopean tentacled entity, eyes, and serrated mouths bursts from within.

The characters arrive just in time to confront the great **shoggoth** before it is unleashed upon the world. The vile creature lunges at the party with undiluted cruelty. Only the strongest of adventurers can aspire to survive against this fearsome opponent from the Far Realm.

► **The Enclosures.** Six sarcophagi in the chamber's alcoves flank the statue's remains. Each contains the remains of a mighty paladin. They were resolute enough, even in death, to withstand the shoggoth's power.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** Collectively, the stone sarcophagi contain 22 gp, 86 sp, one *potion of legendary deeds*, two *potions of healing*, and a *spyglass of true sight*.

THE SHOGGOTH

A mammoth being of slithering tentacles surrounding a protoplasmic, amoeba-like body. It is the source of madness and nightmares incarnated in physical form.

AC 13, **HP** 40, **ATK** 2 pseudopod slams +7 (2d8 + engulf) or spell +4, **MV** double near, **S** +4, **D** +2, **C** +4, **I** +1, **W** +1, **Ch** -1, **AL** C, **LV** 8

Impervious. Only damaged by silver or magic sources.

Insanity Presence. Upon first seeing the shoggoth, creatures lower than LV 7 become mesmerized and can't take actions for 1d2 turns (DC 14 INT check).

Engulf. If a target is hit by both slams in same round, it is pulled into the shoggoth's body and suffocates in 2d4 rounds. DC 16 STR each turn to escape.

Confusion (INT Spell). Target can't take action and moves in a random direction for 1 turn.

CONCLUSION

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their deeds.

THE SHOGGOTH DEFEATED

IN ITS DEATH throes, the shoggoth diminishes in size and is severely weakened. A character can deal the killing blow and be done with it. Unfortunately, as the shoggoth cannot truly die in the Material Plane, this is but a temporary measure. The aberration is unleashed as soon as it reforms in 1d8 months. Conversely, if the characters cast *Ord's Ritual of Binding*, the phoenix's statue is repaired and the befoul shoggoth is put back in its timeless prison. This is not eternal, as few things can be, but the shoggoth may remain there for centuries to come. Others shall deal with it then in the future.

A HERO'S WELCOME

WHEN THE CHARACTERS return to town, a festival is thrown in their stead as the townsfolk and King Janus thanks them for the return of the mind-affected peasants; all who survived in the cave promptly returned to town days later in a state of confusion. Ord's pontiff is thankful, the characters' deeds have brought lasting peace.





BLOOD WITCH

SHADOWDARK CLASS BY PAUL BEEL

Blood Witch

This witch has learned the unusual art of controlling other creatures' blood. A blood witch feels a connection to this crimson liquid. They

control it like a wizard controls magical energy. This is an ancient Protorian craft that is still practiced by some strong-willed individuals. A blood witch is a powerful ally.

Details: Weapons: Scythe, dagger, staff

Armor: None.

Level: 1d4

Blood Witches can cast Witch spells. Follow spell casting rules included with the Witch class included in the Shadowdark Cursed Scroll Zine #1.

Blood-Curdling. The Blood Witch can cause a creature's blood to thicken and curdle. This causes the creature to move slower, making it difficult to move or attack. The victim must succeed on a DC 12 CON check+Blood Witch's level. Failure means their movement is slowed by half and the creature takes a -2 penalty to AC and DEX checks. That creature can only move or attack in their turn, they cannot do both. This effect lasts for 1d4+Blood Witch's level rounds.

This skill can only be used 2 times per day.

Blood Strike. A Blood Witch can siphon a creature's blood from their body just by touching them. This inflicts an injury on the creature. The Blood Witch rolls a DC 12 CON check+ Blood Witch level. If the Blood Witch succeeds, the victim must roll a number of its hit points dice equal to its level and takes that much damage. The target may make a DC 12 CON check to reduce this damage by half.

This skill can only be used 2 times per day.

Lava Blood. The Blood Witch can cause the blood of a creature to heat up to an extraordinary temperature. This makes the victim intensely sick causing 1d6 damage for three rounds. Add 1d6 of damage for every odd level. The creature is allowed to roll a DC 15 CON check to resist this effect.

This skill can only be used 3 times per day.



BLOOD WITCH TALENTS

2D6	TALENTS
2	You control your blood to restore 2 additional hit points
3-6	Gain advantage on a Constitution check (re-roll if duplicate)
7-9	+2 to Constitution or +1 to blood casting checks
10-11	You gain +1 to your AC
12	Choose a talent or +1 point to distribute to an ability score



BALANCE OF THE ELEMENTS



By Elven Tower and Laser Lluis

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG



LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE

A LOW-LEVEL SHADOWDARK ADVENTURE ABOUT RETURNING BALANCE TO THE WORLD

ADVENTURE PRIMER

... and yet, we are just ants in a world of giants. Forces and agents beyond our comprehension pull the strings of our lives, and we are too small to notice.

Seeing Beyond the Ordinary Vol. II



General folk and people believe the world was created by the gods. Their divine status and power beyond imagination created trees, plants, animals, and the air they breathe. But how much of this is true? Can mortals prove the existence of primordial creatures? Sages and historians often spend their entire lives answering these questions.

Mages, scientists, and other far-fetched professions prefer a different approach. The evidence of magic, arcane forces, and the power hidden in ancient artifacts make them believe that the gods are not the sole actors in the world's creation. These wise researchers have concluded that everything in the universe is formed by tiny particles, and cells, which in place give shape to atoms.

Their discovery might be too much for most. But people with broader horizons and open-minded brains think otherwise. They claim that all objects and living things in our plane of existence are formed by the four main elements or energies fire, water, earth, and air.

These four, combined in smaller or greater quantities, are responsible for everything we see, smell, and touch. Their theory is called "*The Balance of the Elements*".

OGOKNAK, THE LIZARD KING

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER, many leaders say. And Ogoknak, the leader of the lizardfolk clans is no exception. In addition to his great fighting prowess, he has always stood out because of his keen mind and careful attention to detail. He is a strategist and technical planner.

Ogoknak is an avid reader and he often looks for ways to get his hands on ancient tomes of history, philosophy, and arcane theory. He is no magician but his council and advice are usually sought by lizardfolk shamans.

Revelation. It took the eldest of the lizardfolk shaman five decades to understand something written in the stars. Endless nights of observation until the truth was finally revealed. "*Anyone who controls the four core elements possesses the strings to shape the world. The master of these elements shall become master of the world*" are the words the shaman spoke to Ogoknak. The leader of the lizardfolk started a new life quest. Find, understand, and grasp the power of these elements.

OGOKNAK'S RESOLVE

THUS, FOR THE last 5 years, Ogoknak tasked himself with learning everything he could about the four creators of the universe. As per the revelation in the stars, these are fire, water, earth, and air. His journey took him to a large, dense forest. The Evergreen Woods is the name that the locals, Whistleton's villagers, chose for it.

His research has brought him this far: he knows the power he seeks is located in a synthetic world. A demi-plane that was created with arcane magic as a means to protect the core elements. It can be accessed only by crossing a magical gate. The heart of the Evergreen Woods is said to have a potent, commanding arcane nucleus. And Ogoknak shall use it to obtain what he wants.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Level 5 Adventure

GAIA'S FRIENDS

The characters or at least one of them have a deep connection with nature and the world around them. A vision strikes them at night. They see the Evergreen Woods and the people of Whistleton. However, in this dream, the forest is a dry, dead wasteland. Famine assails the people, who live among squalor in a ruined town. They feel compelled to go and find answers as soon as they can (0 XP).

HEROES NEEDED

The people of Whistleton are having a bad time. Their rainy season has been hot and dry and no one knows why. Nights are freezing but mornings have a hot blazing sun. And one crazy day, it even snowed for two hours before switching to heavy winds and rain, but not enough to make up for the entire summer. The heroes' reputation precedes them. They are summoned by Whistleton's authorities to help them solve this mess (60 gp, 5 XP).

A LIZARDFOLK'S RESPONSIBILITY

The characters or at least one of them are lizardfolk. They receive letters from their home clan describing what Ogoknak is trying to do. If he gets away with his evil plans, the entire world might see lizardfolk as enemies. They cannot allow him to ruin the reputation of an entire race and let Ogoknak feed his selfishness (0 XP).

WHISTLETON

I have summoned you for the pressing matter of the changing weather. My assistant is also a wizard. He may have more information to assist you.

Duke Erling Sorensen

Uhis town earned its name because of the sound the wind makes when blowing through the many trees within. These nice singing breezes are well-received by the good people of Whistleton. They are familiar with sunny, calm weather. Except for their rainy season, when they tend to deal with the occasional and short lightning storms.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

THE LIZARDFOLK LEADER is currently trying to find a way to overcome the obstacles before him within “*The Elemental Trials*” (see map 3). He has not succeeded as of yet, but his attempts have not all been in vain. His presence in the temple of the elements is enough to destabilize the balance required for the world to work properly. The four guardians do their best to stall Ogoknak but, sooner or later, the lizard king will find a way to overcome their defenses and take over their might.

IMPOSSIBLE LIFE

THE FOUR ELEMENTS’ struggle has taken its toll on the people of Whistleton. The weather is erratic and it has been too unpredictable, not even logical at times.

The townsfolk ignore what is going on. They do not know that Ogoknak, the lizard king, is the culprit of these strange changes but one thing is certain. The people need rain, and they need their normal climate back.

This is only the beginning. Whistleton is the first town to be affected because of its proximity to the Evergreen Woods, where Ogoknak crossed the arcane gate.

Town Features

► **Events.** Check for a **Random Event** each time a new area is visited. There is a 3-in-6 chance for an event.

► **Atmosphere.** People are a bit jumpy and confused. They are happy to see adventurers arrive. The bravest approach and ask for their help. If heard, they follow up by prompting the heroes toward the High Keep.

► **Weather.** The **Random Events** table presents several weather-related events. Nevertheless, feel free to describe to the heroes how the temperature and climate dramatically change throughout the same day.

RANDOM EVENTS

d8	Details
1	The characters walk from one location to another when they hear a massive thunder strike near the town. Another one a minute later, and the minute after that. No rain comes with the lightning, and this lasts for 1 hour.
2	The characters stumble upon a group of five thugs preying upon a couple of scared merchants in an alley. The bandits are forcing them to deliver their goods, or else... It starts to rain! The villagers and everyone in town start shouting and celebrating. Their euphoria does not last long, though. As if their cheerful tone displeased the gods, the rain stops after just 1 minute. People’s frowns and annoyance at the situation are heard as well.
3	A lesser water elemental emerges from the river. The creature seems confused and lost, it lashes out at everything and everyone it sees. The heroes arrive just in time.
4	The temperature decreases. It is so cold that people’s breaths are visible. Just when the cold becomes almost unbearable, the weather changes and it is warm again.
5	An itinerant merchant approaches the characters to sell his wares. He offers sunscreen made with bee wax, winter clothes, and some meat jerky and spirits.
6	The weather becomes as hot as the most merciless desert for the majority of the day. People seek refuge from sunlight. Not being familiar with this kind of climate, a couple of people faint due to sudden heatstrokes.
7	A lesser air elemental surprises the townsfolk. The creature seems confused and lost. It lashes out at everything around it. The heroes arrive just in time.
8	

1. TRAVELING ROADS

Roll 1d4. The characters arrive in Whistleton from one of the four traveling roads. Regardless of where they enter the town from, they understand why this place earned its name: the gentle breeze, combined with stronger air currents creates a unique melody in the form of whistles.

2. THE HIGH KEEP

Surrounded by a 10-foot-tall wall, and guarded by a plethora of guards, is the High Keep. The atmosphere within is not welcoming, though. People seem startled and jumpy. The situation is too stressful.

The construction of this keep was almost a hundred years ago, during the times of war, when these territories were highly contested. The river, the trees, and the fortified wall make this a marvelous vantage point.



► **Quest.** Duke Erling Sorensen is the highest figure of authority in Whistleton. He may summon the characters to ask for their help (see **Adventure Hooks**). Alternatively, the heroes may earn an audience with the duke after they learn of their current weather problems.

The duke's wizard-advisor shares with the heroes his main suspicions. First, powerful arcane energy radiate from the Evergreen Woods. Second, his crystal ball showed him a large, scaled humanoid delving into the ancient elvish woods. This may be important for a lizardfolk in the party (see **Adventure Hooks**). Lastly, his artifact showed him fire, water, earth, and air together.

► **Deductions.** Indeed, the Evergreen Woods possess a powerful core. It is an elvish relic that lives in the heart of the forest, within a large tree (DC 17 INT). The scaled humanoid must know more about this or is perhaps behind it. A lizardfolk in the party identifies this figure as Ogoknak. The heroes may be familiar with the theory of the elements (see **Adventure Primer**). The crystal ball's visions mean the spirits of nature are in danger.

3. MERCHANTS' DISTRICT

The characters may purchase simple gear and items here. If the heroes spend time sightseeing or buying anything, roll for a **Random Event** an additional time.

4. THE WHISTLING BRIDGE

This bridge earned its name because the whistling of the wind against Whistleton's trees is the loudest at noon while standing in the middle of the bridge. Many villagers have the habit of coming here at least once a week to be bathed in the natural music of their hometown.

5. WHISTLETON'S ALE

The characters are free to stop and have a drink at the largest tavern in town. Laura Perchings is the owner of the establishment. She likes to talk and share rumors.

► **Rumors.** Laura is happy to gossip. Two days ago, a pair of scared travelers claimed they saw a crocodile walking upright near the woods. Also, a foreign merchant swears he saw a horse made of fire before reaching town. Laura never heard anything like this before.



TOWARD THE EVERGREEN WOODS

THE CHARACTERS TRAVERSE the woods but are intercepted before reaching the forest's core. The party's composition may dictate how this encounter unfolds.

► **Elves Present.** If at least one elf travel with the heroes, the Evergreen Woods elf tribes remain neutral. A scouting party of six **elves** meets them, and introduces themselves. They offer to escort them to the forest's core.

► **No Elves.** The inhabitants of Evergreen Woods are wary of trespassers. Four **elves** and four elf **thugs** intercept the party and demand they turn back. The heroes may try to persuade them to allow them to pass and try to help (DC 15 WIS). If they succeed, they are escorted to their leader. Failure means they may pass as long as they surrender all weapons. Failure by 5 or more causes the elves to attack the characters immediately.

► **Lizardfolk.** The elves do not ask questions and attack on sight if a lizardfolk is part of the heroes' group. The characters are attacked by six **elves**, four elf **thugs**, and their leader, who wields an impressive shield and a massive gauntlet with bone claws (see image).

6. TEMPLE OF ORD

If the characters come here and state they came to help Whistleton, Father Reynolds is glad to add his grain of sand. He gives the heroes three *potions of healing*.

THE ELVES OF EVERGREEN WOODS

OGOKNAK FOUGHT HIS way into the forest and entered the elves' ancient tree by force. The elves of these woods are weary of foreigners and intruders by nature. And the lizard king's feat to hack and slash his way into their home left some deep scars, mainly in their pride.

► **Disposition.** The elves do not want any more intruders, regardless of the nature of their visit. They are neutral to the heroes if an elf walks among them. They remain uncertain and reserved if no elf is present. However, the elf wardens are hostile and attack on the spot if a lizardfolk is part of the heroes' group. See **Toward the Evergreen Woods** in the next column to know more about the elves' reactions.

ELF TRIBE'S LEADER

Taller than his peers, his face is painted with mud and tree sap. His battle cry freezes their enemies' hearts.

AC 16 (bulette shield), HP 21, ATK 1
bulette claw (1d10) and 1 shield
bash, MV near, S +1, D +3, C
+1, I +1, W +2, Ch +2, LV 4

Feyblood. ADV on DEX checks in the wilds.

Shield Bash. DC 15 STR or become prone.



Ogoknak, the Lizard King

THE EVERGREEN WOODS CORE

You have bested me in single combat. You are a true warrior. May the gods of the woods and the moon guide you. May my weapons strike true for you.

Elf Tribe Leader

The Evergreen Woods have a long history. They go back to the times when humans had not arrived in these lands. Not even the High Keep in Whistleton existed. But the inhabitants of these forests have been there all along. The elves saw the goblin empires rise and fall, they witnessed the realms of men come and settle, and they are present now.

THE FOREST CORE

THE ELVES CONSIDER their home, the woods, sacred. This is not only for religious or tribal reasons. It is because they understand that nature and the elements are the ingredients of life. They respect nature in all its forms, the four main elements even more so.

The heart of the woods holds incredible power. This energy can be used to create doors between worlds. The lizard king, Ogoknak, employed its energy to enter the elements' sanctuary by force. The elves are hesitant. It is forbidden for them to cross the sacred gate.

Area Features

► **Events.** Risky. Roll for a **Random Event** every 2 **crawling rounds** and before entering the tree (4-in-6 chance).

► **Weather.** The forest is also subject to sudden climate changes. Describe abnormal changes in the weather every hour. For instance, strong winds to snow, warm sunlight to freezing snow that falls for a few minutes, etc.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	Two centaurs arrive at the scene. They take the elves' side in case the characters are their enemies.
2	Abnormally strong winds hit the forest. It is harder to walk (DC 11 STR). On a fail, a creature cannot move and stays in place, fighting the wind. Failing by 5 or more means a creature loses its balance, falling to the ground.
3	An earthquake shakes the ground for about half a minute. All creatures are knocked prone (DC 13 STR).
4	The forest core pulses greatly, causing an unseen wave of suddenly released arcane energy. Creatures in a 300-foot radius are paralyzed for 1 round (DC 13 CON).
5	Vanishika, from a safe spot at the treetops, strikes a random creature in the woods with a fiery sunbeam. This attack may target elves too (<i>flame strike</i> spell).
6	It becomes dark, like night. Visibility is reduced by half.

HEROES' ARRIVAL

THE CHARACTERS REACH the core. They were either escorted, brought by force, or they found their way through the woods on their own. Regardless, they shall still find obstacles to overcome before entering the sacred tree.

1. WELCOME

Two dozen elves stand before a giant tree. They are in deep meditation, asking their gods for guidance. When the heroes reach this area, consider the following:

► **Being Escorted.** The characters either travel with an elf or negotiated. And thus, agreed to surrender their weapons to be brought here. The leader of the elves still has a challenge for them (see area 3 below).

► **Enemies.** The heroes travel with a lizardfolk and had to fight the angry elves before coming. Ten **elves** and one elf **mage** intercept the heroes in this area to stop them.

The elves flee combat when reduced to half their hit points. However, if the heroes wield the bulette weapons, the elves react with ire and anger. They curse the heroes and fight until slain in a desperate attempt to avenge their leader.



Vanishika



2. TREE ROOTS

If friendly, the elves share with the visitors one of their tribal costumes. They ask the heroes to cut a small part of the tree and drink its sap. It has a nasty, sour flavor, but it helps regain strength. Drinkers gain a **luck token**.

3. THRESHOLD

If the characters were escorted, the leader of the elves meets the characters here. The heroes must earn the tribe's respect and trust. The elf leader proposes single combat. He shall be the judge of their prowess.

The **elf tribe's leader** measures the strength of any one of the heroes. The elf stops the fight before it gets lethal, regardless of the winner. He does not require death to prove one's worth. Therefore, if a character succeeds, he lends them his *bulette weapons* to aid them in their quest. But if the characters lack honor or lethally wound the elf, all other elves attack (see **Enemies** above).

BULETTE WEAPONS

► **Shield.** +2 AC. The wearer can make a **shield bash** attack. DC 12 + STR / DEX or be knocked prone.

► **Gauntlet.** This weapon is considered magical. It does 1d10 damage, and the wearer keeps the hand free.

THE FIRE SPIRIT

THE STRONGEST BUT least predictable of the elements. It floats above the core and speaks to the heroes when they cross the threshold. A fiery voice in their minds says:

"I care not who sent you. I care not who you are. And I care less if you befriended the elves or if you destroyed them all. I, Vanhishika, won't allow more damage. You shall not pass. You shall not best me!"

Vanhishika, the flaming deer uses the stats of a **greater fire elemental** but has INT +1, CHA +1, and this spell:

► **Flame Strike (WIS spell).** A pillar of fire immolates one creature within range. The target takes 2d6 damage.

Vanhishika's anger fades at half its hit points. It tells the heroes they must hurry and stop the scaled intruder before he inflicts irreparable damage upon the world.

4. FOREST CORE

A massive, pulsing bulb of green flesh, leaves, and roots. It produces enough light to illuminate the inside of the tree. Fireflies hover over it in circles.

The characters feel the core's energy caress their bodies. The bulb opens. The door to the elements' home is a sphere of blinding green light. There is no time to waste.

THE ELEMENTAL TRIALS

You cannot stop me! I shall become the master of the elements, and the entire world shall bend the knee before me and the rest of my kin, the lizardfolk!

Ogoknak, the Lizard King

This pocket plane is home to the four main elements. The origin of this artificial plane is unknown. But it has housed the ancient primal forces of fire, water, earth, and air for eons.

The characters travel through the portal and reach the main dungeon of this adventure. They stand before the elemental door (area 1) when their magical journey ends.

Dungeon Features

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Spirits.** The four elemental guardians are immortal. Even when defeated, they reform after 24 hours.

RANDOM EVENTS

d4 Details

- | d4 | Details |
|----|---|
| 1 | A primordial slime falls from invisible ceilings. The pocket plane knows how to defend itself from outsiders. |
| 2 | Two void spiders cross the last portal taken by the heroes as if chasing them. They fight until slain. |
| 3 | The demiplane trembles. Debris falls from invisible ceilings. All heroes take 1d8 damage (DC 13 DEX).
The elements' home shows signs of chaos and corruption. It snows in the chamber of fire causing mist, the chamber of water freezes, it rains in the chamber of earth and grass starts to grow. And, thunder and black clouds invade the chamber of air. Nothing is as it should be. All areas become difficult to walk on, see, or move around in. Depending on the climate changes. |
| 4 | |

1.- THE ELEMENTAL DOOR

The characters appear before this large door. Four divisions feature the bas-reliefs of a flame, a body of water, a mountain, and the air. This interesting art is a visual representation of the balance of the elements.

2. TRIAL OF FIRE

The characters have already met the fire spirit, Vanhishika. In a fit of rage, the fire guardian left this realm and stood by the gate in the woods to guard it. It makes a second appearance here. Vanhishika explains that astral bindings forbid it from helping the heroes in this plane.

► **Traps.** A **salamander** appears if a marked tile is pressed (see map). Touching the lava does 1d12 damage. Complete submersion means instant death.

3. TRIAL OF WATER

The characters must find a way to cross the blue gate in the chamber of fire to reach this area. They fall into the water the moment they cross. But nothing stops them from swimming to solid ground (see map).

THE WATER SPIRIT

THE KINDEST OF the four is the element of life. Suvarnamukhi, the floating otter speaks in the heroes' minds:

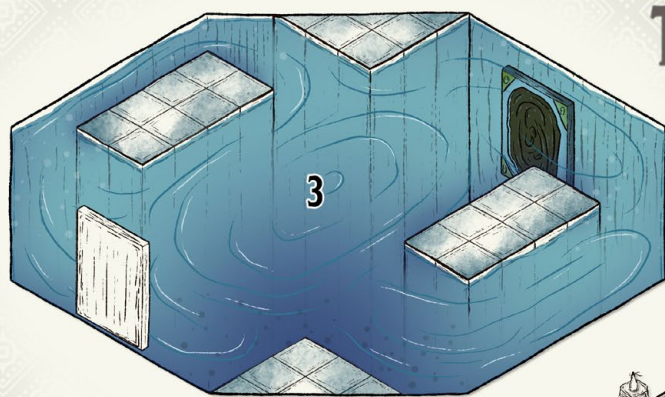
"I shall not fight you for you are not my enemies. I apologize for my sibling. Vanhishika cannot contain the rage of her flames. I couldn't stop the lizard man, and my station prohibits my involvement. Good luck!"

Suvarnamukhi uses the stats of a **greater water elemental** but has INT +1, CHA +1, and the *control water* spell. The water spirit does not talk and is hostile if the characters were cruel and killed the elves or her sister.

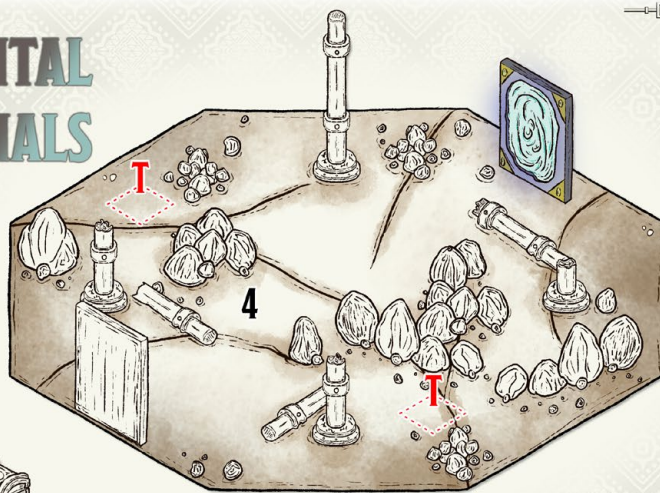


Parthivendra

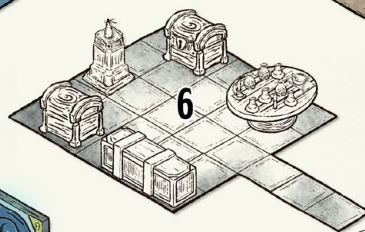
THE ELEMENTAL TRIALS



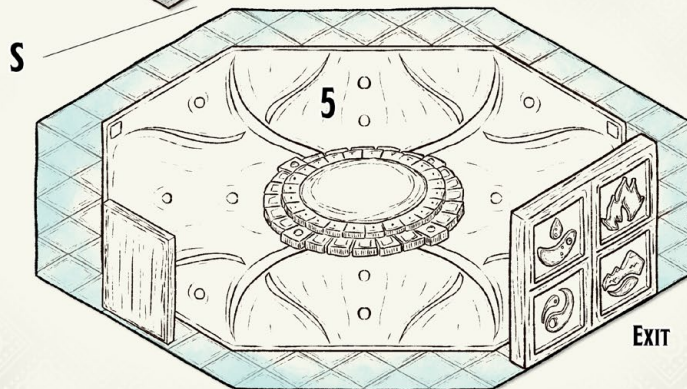
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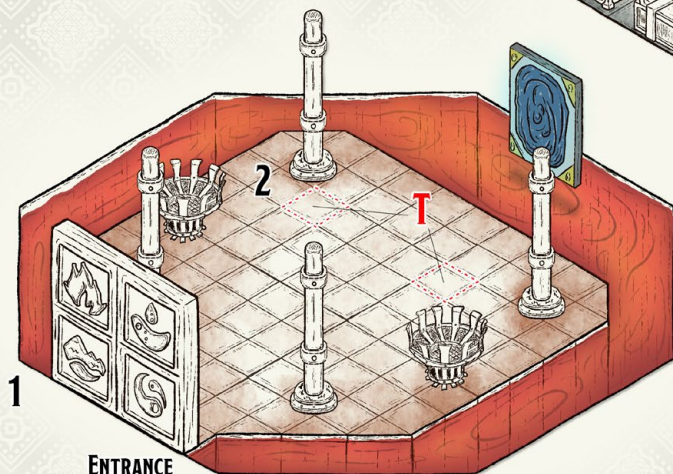
EARTH



FIRE



WIND



ENTRANCE

S

4. TRIAL OF EARTH

The heroes swim down and cross the portal. They reach the chamber or earth. Inside, the ground starts to shake and tiny debris falls. A preamble to something greater.

THE EARTH SPIRIT

THE STRONGEST WILL, and the more determined of the elements. The rock panda bear delivers its message:

"I am Parthivendra. I remain neutral to all things, including my siblings' view of the world. I shall do my job as a guardian, even if I failed to stop the scaled warrior before. Still, I hope you succeed, heroes."

Parthivendra uses the stats of a **greater earth elemental** but it has INT +1, CHA +1, and the *pillar of salt* spell.

► **Traps.** If a creature steps on any of the marked tiles (see map), a giant boulder falls on them dealing 2d8 damage (DC 14 DEX for half). Plus, a **gargoyle** comes to help its master. It was invisible against the rocks in the area. Parthivendra fights until it is reduced to 0 HP.

5. TRIAL OF AIR

The characters pass the trial of earth and reach the last chamber of this pocket plane. And Manojavaya's home.

THE AIR SPIRIT

THE HEROES ARRIVE just in time to see Ogoknak and his goons fight the spirit of air. The lizardfolk cannot pass through a wall of air. It keeps them imprisoned in a circle at the center. But the spirit of air, a misty fox, Manojavaya, looks like it will not hold much him longer.

"I'm reaching the end of my strength. Please, strangers. Help us restore the balance of this world. I am Manojavaya, and I promise you shall be rewarded."

Use the stats of a **greater air elemental** but Manojavaya has INT +1, CHA +1, and the *wall of force* spell (but it is made of air). The air spirit is weak (half its hit points) and cosmic laws forbid it from helping the heroes. But if the characters' intentions are evil, Manojavaya does not ask for help and considers them enemies as well.

CONFRONTING OGOKNAK

THE CHARACTERS WITNESS Ogoknak break free. Then he speaks (see Epigraph). They must fight **Ogoknak, the Lizard King**, and the six **lizardfolk** that are loyal to him. The lizard king does not hide his anger if there is a lizardfolk in the group. The lizard king prioritizes this character and curses them for their racial betrayal.

OGOKNAK, THE LIZARD KING

A massive humanoid lizard, with scales swollen by muscles. His body wears scars of a thousand battles.

AC 16 (plate mail), **HP** 31, **ATK** 3 greatsword +5 (1d12) **MV** near (swim), **S** +3, **D** +1, **C** +2, **I** +1, **W** +2, **Ch** +1, **AL** C, **LV** 6

Bloodied. One additional greatsword attack and +2 damage while reduced to half its hit points.

6. TREASURE ROOM

This room contains the bounty of a lifetime. The heroes would be set up for life, and their generations to come too if they took everything inside this chamber. The artifact that Ogoknak covets is here too: the *scepter of balance* has the power to control all elements. But it must stay here, protected by its guardians.

► **Treasure.** If the characters helped the four elements, they are thankful. They allow each of them to take one item from within the treasure chamber as a token of their appreciation. The heroes may take anything they wish, except the *scepter of balance*. If the heroes play dirty and take more treasure than they should, or if they mess with the *scepter of balance*, things get ugly (see **Adventure Conclusion**).

Manojavaya



Suvarnamukhi

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their deeds.

OGOKNAK IS DEFEATED

The characters defeat the lizard king and stop him from getting his hands on the *scepter of balance*. They respect the elements' wishes and take one thing from the treasure chamber. If they want gold, they may take 100 gp each. The GM is free to determine what artifact, weapon, or magic item suits each of the heroes best. The heroes do not antagonize the four guardians as long as they only take one thing and leave the *scepter of balance* alone.

THE ANTIHEROES

The characters murdered the elves, fought all the guardians, and took over the entire treasure vault, including the *scepter of balance*. They become a world threat and the situation escalates. Gods' agents and guardians of time, cosmic protectors known as *Inevitables* shall find the gone-rogue heroes. They must be stopped at once!

BUILDING A REPUTATION

Duke Erling Sorensen is glad to see the characters return safe and know that the weather problem is fixed for good. The village organizes a feast to honor their new folk heroes. The village folk ignore that the entire world was in danger. They cannot comprehend the magnitude of what the heroes just did. But their involvement in this matter does not go unnoticed. Higher forces of authority shall contact the heroes for even more dangerous missions. But those shall be adventures for another day...

SACRED REMAINS

To become a saint has something in common with the legendary philosopher's stone. You must not desire it or want it. It must come to you naturally.

Ord's Teachings, Vol. IV

The gods created the world and the creatures within it. Most religions describe mortals as servants of the divine creators. And as such, dreaming of immortality is ill-regarded. People should not aspire to become equal or better than the deities. Those who do are often deranged mages, necromancers, or mad reavers possessed by evil weapons.

But what happens to kindhearted souls who wish to be remembered for their deeds? Those who want to hold a place by the deity they followed and respected their whole lives. There is an alternative for these divine warriors; becoming a saint. But very few attain this honor.

SAINT ZALATHAR

A CENTURY AGO, Zalathar, the Kind walked as a mortal. His deeds in life were such that archbishops and archpriests from all around gave him the status of a saint even before his death. When his time came, people built statues of him, prayers were written to honor him, and his remains were buried in a Sacred Tomb of Ord.

However, realizing the value of this man's bones, traps, and immortal guardians were placed therein. To this day, there have been many attempts to get hold of Saint Zalathar's remains, but no one has succeeded as of yet.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Protectors. The church of Ord takes great pride in its saints. Zalathar, the Kind is no exception. Church scouts observe the tomb at all times and they report any anomalies. Last week, they spotted a group of suspicious people nearby. Three days later, one of the scouts died, his throat was slit open. Two more scouts were murdered in the following days. In response, the church recalls the scouts, expecting an intrusion to the tomb, and hires the characters to protect Saint Zalathar's remains from these murderous would-be robbers (50 gp, 5 XP).

Pillagers. A criminal guild called "*The Hand of the Lost*" hires the characters after two failed attempts to pillage the tomb. Their reputation precedes the criminal antiheroes and the guild requires them to enter the Sacred Tomb of Ord and steal Saint Zalathar's remains. The guild sends three **thugs** to help (70 gp, 7 XP).

Level 4 Adventure

► **Danger.** Dangerous. Check for a **Random Event** every **crawling round** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Areas 3 and 5 have light sources; the rest of the dungeon is dark. All denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Holy Aura.** The guardians of this tomb are infused with divine energy. All denizens of this dungeon have one **luck token**. The GM is free to use it as they see fit.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	A random character steps on the wrong tile and triggers a trap. Slits open on the wall and poison darts fly. The target takes 2d8 damage (DC 13 CON for half).
2	A magical ward targets intruders (DC 12 INT). This works like the <i>confusion</i> spell on a random character.
3	A random character pushes the wrong brick on the wall. The triggered trap releases a sharp blade from above. The target takes 1d12 damage (DC 13 DEX for half).
4	An invisible stalker approaches the characters from behind. This creature is bound to protect this place forever. Its tracking ability is meant to locate Saint Zalathar's remains. It flees if reduced to half its hit points, so the immortal guardian can track the bones if they are stolen.
5	Five animated armors appear and fight! These magical apparitions disassemble when reduced to 0 hit points.
6	A seraph angel appears. It helps the heroes if they are here to protect Saint Zalathar's remains. Otherwise, the angel sees them as robbers and fights to the death.

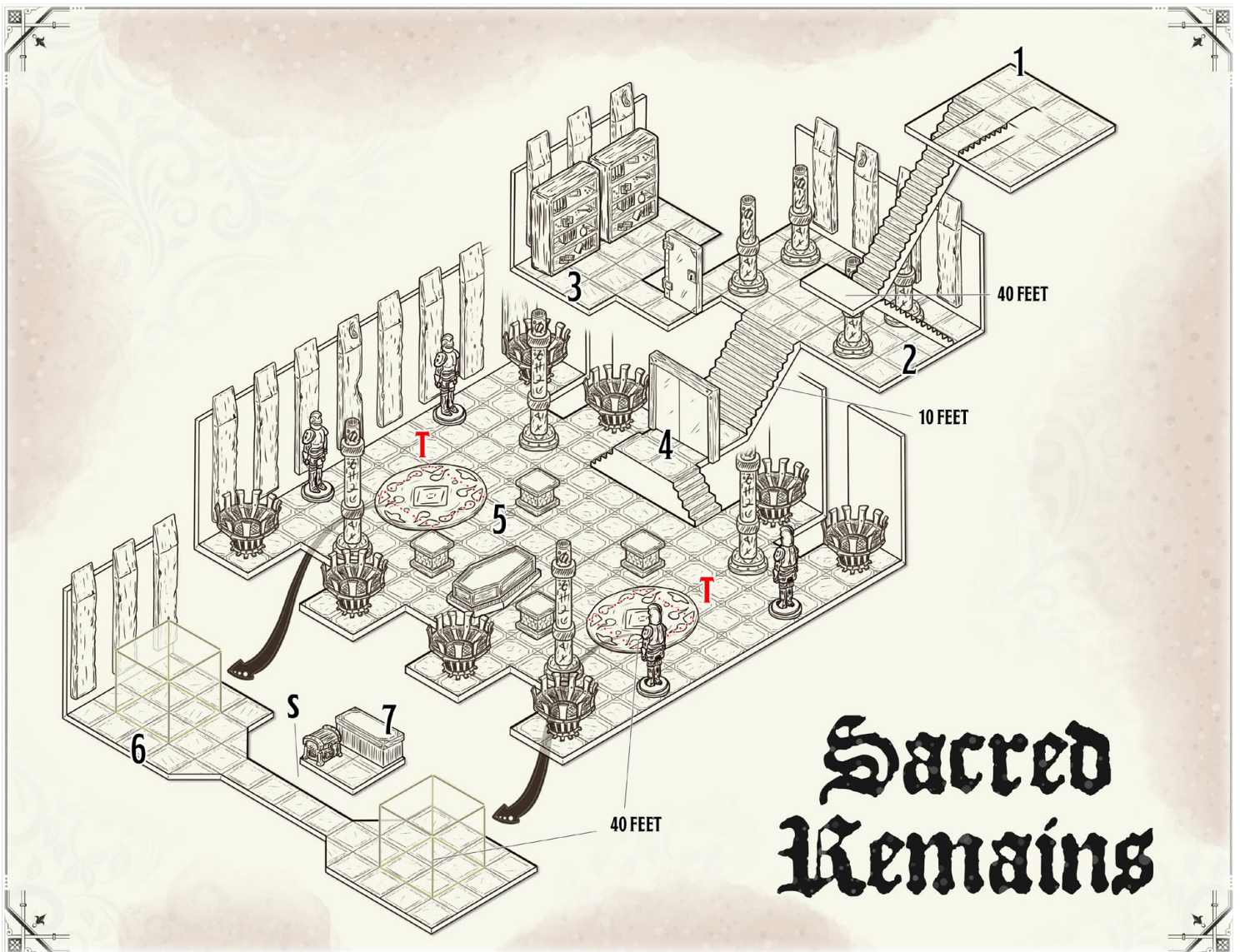
Note. If the characters have come to protect the tomb (see **Adventure Hooks**), they are too late. The robbers are inside. The tomb's defense mechanisms are on.

1. DESCENDING STAIRS

The characters travel for a couple of days. Their uneventful journey takes them to a mountain range. Following the trail between the mountains for a couple of hours reveals an entrance. A dark tunnel ends by a stairway.

► **Welcome.** The characters reach the landing. A set of switchback stairs descend further. The statue here is the first guardian (**gargoyle**). The heroes are surprised unless they spot its faint movements (DC 15 WIS).

► **Note.** If the heroes were hired to protect this place, this statue is destroyed on the floor. The robbers did it.



Sacred Remains

2. MAIN LANDING

Saint Zalathar's remains have been buried here for almost a hundred years. The tomb's walls feature the wear and tear caused by the passage of time.

There are two ways to go from here. However, both paths are blocked by a closed door or gate (see below).

► **Library Door.** The lock of this door can be opened with the right tools (DC 13 DEX). If the heroes attempt to destroy it, magical runes explode and all creatures in the room take 3d6 damage (DC 13 DEX for half).

3. LIBRARY

This room contains tomes and books on religion. If the heroes spend a **crawling round** searching this place, they find a leather-bound book with golden strappings that reads: *The Story of Saint Zalathar, the Kind*. This book is worth 100 gp to the right buyer (10 XP).

► **Pillagers.** If the heroes came to protect the place, they find two **cultists** and three **thugs** here. The robbers did not expect visitors, they fight until slain.

4. SACRED GATE

The crystal doors of this gate are magical. Images are projected in them, and the people in these fully-colored illustrations move. Saint Zalathar's most meaningful deeds can be seen and learned here.

The gate is locked but it will open if the characters recite any of Saint Zalathar's prayers, provided they know one (DC 13 INT). If they do not know any, they may find many of these prayers within the library, in the tome *The Story of Saint Zalathar, the Kind*. Whoever pronounces the prayers to open the gates earns a **luck token**.

► **The Gate.** There are no locks to be picked. The only other way to open this door is by wrecking it. An *augury* spell would describe woe regarding this course of action, though. The heroes would have to attack and destroy the crystals where Saint Zalathar's deeds appear. Breaking the door is easy but it is considered a divine transgression. If the characters resort to this to advance, they trigger a trap: two **wraiths** coalesce from the shadows and the broken glass. They attack the heroes until slain.

5. SAINT ZALATHAR'S REMAINS

The walls of this large chamber feature the same decoration as the rooms above. But the north and south alcoves display bas-reliefs of Saint Zalathar.

What occurs in this area depends on the characters' reason for being here (see **Adventure Hooks**).

► **Protectors.** The characters open the gate. There are bodies on the floor, blood everywhere. But the leader of the intruders and some of his goons are still standing. The characters must fight four **bandits**, two **thugs**, two **cultists**, and the leader of the thieves (**knight**).

On round three of the fight, one of the bodies on the floor moves. The **bandit** was just knocked out. Taking advantage of the fight's noise and confusion, the first thing he does is open the lid of Saint Zalathar's sarcophagus.

► **Pillagers.** The characters must defeat the main guardians of the tomb to even approach Saint Zalathar's remains. Two **seraph angels** appear and fight until slain.

► **Traps.** The rugs cover trapdoors. Creatures that step on them fall 40 feet, land in the tomb's prisons (area 6), and take 3d6 damage (DC 13 DEX for half).

► **Saint Zalathar.** Opening the sarcophagus is a divine transgression. It is a vile act that defiles the entire Sacred Tomb of Ord. Whoever opens it shall face the wrath of Saint Zalathar's spirit (**domini angel**). The saint is mad with rage for having to deal with mortals' stupidity and blind ambition. It cannot be reasoned with until it is reduced to half its hit points. At this point, protectors of the tomb shall be spared and Saint Zalathar apologizes.

But whoever wants the saint's bones must defeat the domini angel outright. But doing so earns the enmity and wrath of the church of Ord. See **Conclusion** for details.

6. DIVINE PRISONS

Walls of sacred, invisible light cover these 10-foot squares. The bones of tomb robbers and old pillagers lay on the ground. A great calm bathes the prisoners. It robs the victims of any desire to be free.

The trapdoors in area 5 connect to these magical prisons. These horrible devices cause the person within to feel calm and content (DC 13 WIS). On a failure, the victim has no desire to be free or come out. Creatures may repeat this save every hour. Otherwise, they may try to climb the 40-foot shaft up (DC 17 STR).

7. VAULT

If the heroes spend a **crawling round** searching, they spot the hidden lever they must pull to reveal this area.

► **Treasure (6 XP).** The characters find leather bags with 78 gp, a bag of rare spices (15 gp), a gold censer (70 gp), a *kytherian cog*, and a *war horn of the angels*.

CONCLUSION

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their valiant deeds.

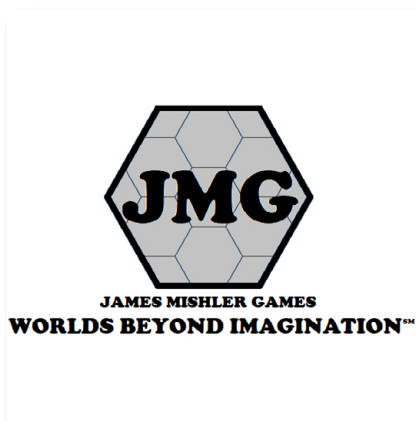
SERVANTS OF ORD

The characters enter the tomb and remove all threats. They stop the thieves before irreparable damage is done and the Sacred Tomb of Ord is saved from corruption. The heroes become local celebrities and the church or Ord grants them the title of "*Ord's Falcons*". This is a great honor among the Ord, the Unbending community.

DEFILERS

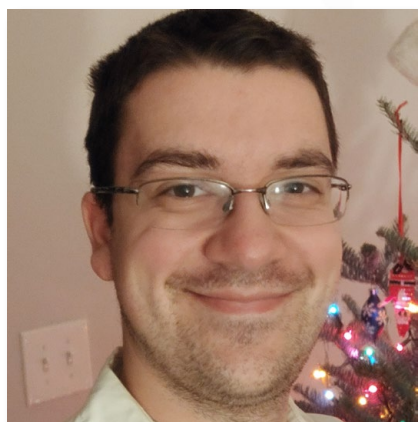
The characters defeat the angels and wreck the place. They steal everything they can and remove the saint's remains from this sacred resting place. They are either true to their word and bring the bones to *The Hand of the Lost* or keep the holy remains for themselves. Either way, the characters become the most-wanted enemies of the church of Ord. They shall be hunted day and night until the bones of Zalathar, the Kind are returned.





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James started playing role-playing games with the Moldvay/Cook edition and never lost his love for Old-School gaming. He worked full-time in the game industry for most of his adult life, fulfilling life-long dreams of working with his heroes, Gary Gygax and Robert Bledsaw I. Today he publishes supplements for Shadowdark and Labyrinth Lord with his wife, Jodi, his endless font of inspiration and wisdom. James and Jodi live in the wilds of Wisconsin with Jack and Lucky, two gold dragons disguised as cantankerous cats.



KEVIN HELOCK

Kevin Helock is a writer who has been running games of D&D for the last five years, and recently began running them professionally on [StartPlaying](#). When he isn't writing or running games, you can probably find him reading several books at once, breaking out of an escape room, or bothering someone about Godzilla. His other work can be found in [The Best Teen Writing of 2016](#), [Sanctuary Magazine](#), [Santa Fe Writer's Project Quarterly](#), [Radon Journal](#), [Little Patuxent Review](#), and on Steam, where he helped make the turn-based strategy game [Don't Get Bit](#).



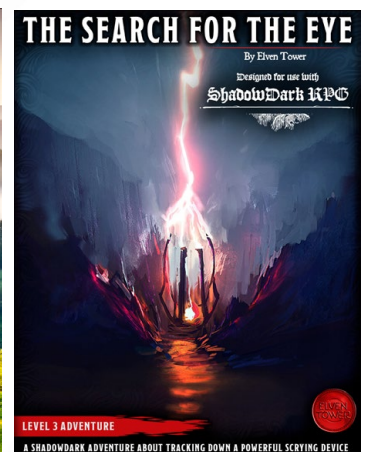
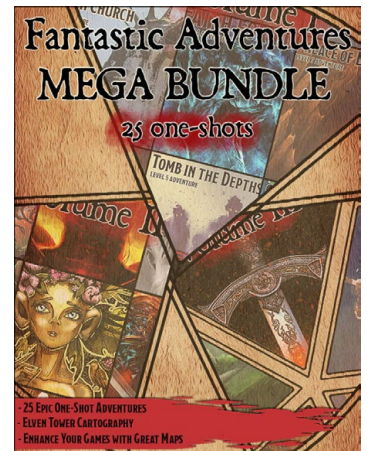
PAUL BEEL

Paul began gaming back in the 1980s playing Battletech and has studied and played TTRPGs like D&D B/X, OSE, Dungeon Crawl Classics, and Shadowdark. He is writing his own world setting for Shadowdark called Moonrise and plays in a weekly Shadowdark campaign. On the Shadowdark Discord, Paul is known as TheGreenZap.

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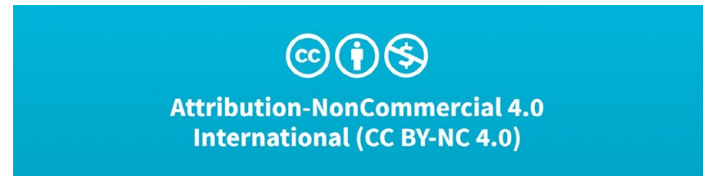
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